

SERIES

1st YEAR OF THE PRESIDENCIAL TERM

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EDITION 2

YOUTH, ECONOMIC INCLUSION AND REGIONAL INEQUALITIES



Young people were among the social groups most actively involved in the protests that followed the 2024 electoral results, not merely as an expression of political contestation but, above all, as a reflection of the deterioration of social and economic conditions experienced between October 2024 and March 2025. This level of youth engagement occurred in a context marked by high expectations generated during the electoral period, in which young people were repeatedly presented as a strategic priority of the new governance cycle.

Throughout the 2024 electoral campaign, during various public rallies

and meetings held mainly in provincial capitals and major urban centres, clear political commitments were made regarding youth job creation, access to housing, support for youth entrepreneurship, and the implementation of structural programmes with nationwide impact capable of addressing long-standing regional inequalities. These commitments were reiterated in speeches directed at young people, particularly during events held in Maputo, Beira, Nampula and Nacala, where emphasis was placed on transforming the so-called “demographic bonus” into a real opportunity for economic development and social stability.

In the first year of governance, the most visible initiatives announced for young people were the Youth City (Cidade-Jovem) project in Maputo, with a projected construction of approximately 6,000 housing units, and the Serviced Land Project in Faiquete, Inhambane Province, aimed at allocating around 1,200 residential plots. These initiatives were presented as concrete signals of the fulfillment of electoral promises in the area of youth inclusion. However, despite their symbolic and political relevance, significant doubts remain regarding their real accessibility and effective social reach.

The estimated costs associated with housing units under the Youth City project place them beyond the financial capacity of most young people earning the national minimum wage or slightly above it, substantially limiting the project's impact in terms of genuine youth inclusion. In this regard, the initiative diverges from campaign commitments that promised housing solutions aligned with the economic realities of working and unemployed youth.

Furthermore, the geographic concentration of these initiatives in the southern region of the country reinforces a historical pattern of territorial inequality, to the detriment of the central and northern regions, which continue to record high levels of

youth unemployment, economic informality and social exclusion. This imbalance contrasts with electoral commitments made during rallies in those regions, where promises of more balanced development and equitable distribution of opportunities across the national territory were reiterated. The persistence of such asymmetries contributes to growing frustration among young people outside the southern corridor and undermines the credibility of inclusion-oriented political commitments.

In the area of employability, despite public statements made during the campaign regarding the creation of job opportunities for young people, the absence of a coherent and integrated national youth employment strategy remains evident. Structured investments in infrastructure, processes of local industrialization and mechanisms for the gradual formalization of informal economic activities could provide effective pathways for income generation and youth employment. In this context, the so-called “international nhonguistas”, small-scale traders importing goods from South Africa and China, represent a consolidated economic reality that was referred to during the campaign as a potential target for supportive and integrative policies. Nevertheless, the policy approach

observed during the period under review leaned more towards restriction and control than towards the economic integration and productive support that had been promised.

Similarly, throughout the electoral campaign, frequent references were made to the agro-livestock sector as a privileged space for youth economic inclusion, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas. However, despite the country's recognized agricultural potential, no large-scale public programme was presented or implemented during the first year of governance to consistently and structurally promote youth participation in this strategic sector, highlighting a clear gap between electoral discourse and governmental action.

Although the Local Development Fund (Fundo de Desenvolvimento Local – FDL) was presented both during the campaign and at the beginning of the mandate as an instrument also suitable for financing youth initiatives, its capacity has proven to be manifestly insufficient when compared to the volume of applications and the scale of national demand. Limitations in coverage, combined with constraints related to allocation criteria, transparency levels and project sustainability, indicate that the Fund alone does not address the structural challenges of youth economic exclusion, contrary to the expectations created during the electoral period.

It is also important to note that, beyond the economic and social dimensions, young people remain largely excluded from the main decision-making bodies within the framework of the National Dialogue process itself. Despite having been repeatedly invoked during the electoral campaign as a central pillar of political renewal and national stability, youth have not been meaningfully integrated into the core structures where strategic decisions are taken. Their participation has been largely peripheral, consultative or symbolic, rather than substantive and influential.

As a result, youth organizations and movements have been compelled to seek alternative and informal pathways to make their voices heard, often having to advocate persistently for inclusion in spaces that should, by design, reflect the country's demographic and social realities.

This dynamic reinforces patterns of political marginalization and undermines the credibility of the National Dialogue as an inclusive process. In practical terms, the exclusion of young people from key decision-making organs weakens the legitimacy of the dialogue outcomes and perpetuates a governance model in which those most affected by unemployment, insecurity and social exclusion are simultaneously denied a seat at the table where solutions are formulated.

Overall, the gap between commitments made to young people during the 2024 electoral campaign and the measures effectively implemented in the first year of governance has contributed to high levels of youth frustration and disillusionment. In the absence of inclusive, sustainable and territorially balanced youth policies, the promise of youth empowerment risks remaining largely rhetorical, without effective translation into structural changes in the lives of Mozambican young people.

