

Baseline Assessment

Project "Supporting Post-Election Dialogue and Reconciliation in Zanzibar"

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Despite Zanzibar having experienced severe political tensions, in particular related to elections, recent political developments in both the Tanzania Federal Government and the Administration in Zanzibar have opened the room for greater collaboration among political parties and for increased involvement of civil society.

In this rapidly changing context, the project "*Uchaguzi Bila Zogo* – Supporting Post-Election Dialogue and Reconciliation in Zanzibar" aims at strengthening inclusive post-election dialogue and reconciliation efforts in Zanzibar. Specifically, the project, which is led by Search for Common Ground (Search) and will last two years (from October 2021 to April 2023), wants to improve the integration of high-level political actors into community-level post-election dialogue and reconciliation efforts.

The baseline assessment was conducted by the Agency for Peacebuilding (AP) between December 2021 and February 2022. It had the following objectives: (i) to assess the validity of the theory of change, the general objective and the expected results of the project; (ii) to collect the baseline values of the project indicators; (iii) to conduct a risk analysis related to *Do No Harm* and conflict sensitivity; and (iv) to provide recommendations for the project execution strategy. This assessment used a mixed approach that combined qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and integrated recent findings from a conflict snapshot and baseline study conducted as part of another project being implemented by Search in Tanzania, entitled "Strengthening Community Peace Mechanisms in Zanzibar project". This study was delivered by the same team of consultants in June 2021.

Overall, the data collected shows several opportunities for collaboration and positive interaction between the national government and Zanzibari communities.

The first finding is that there is a general need for more dialogue between policy-makers and their communities. A second opportunity for more collaboration is represented by the possibility of politicians to send positive messages, as represented by President Mwinyi's invitation to have more dialogue at the grassroots level. Vertical dialogue can be also supported by the use of technology, as it happens, for example, with the online application *Sema na Rais*. The improvement of the justice system is also another factor that has the potential to strengthen social cohesion and peaceful coexistence in Zanzibar.

Another significant opportunity is represented by improving civic awareness among policy-makers, *shehias* (the government administrative structure at the community level) and communities. Lastly, a crucial opportunity is also given by the role that youth and women can play in dialogue with policy-makers.

Furthermore, the baseline study highlights challenges and risks that should be carefully considered, especially related to conflict sensitivity and *Do No Harm*.

Firstly, it should be considered that some key figures play a significant role in blocking conversations between higher and lower levels. Secondly, the collaboration between the two parties can create the image of a marriage of convenience.

Thirdly, vertical dialogue presents some risks, especially on controversial topics. The project activities should be also informed by the fact that the social and economic gaps in Zanzibar remain very high and these could hinder the participation of some people or organizations, such as people with limited economic possibilities. Furthermore, history remains a divisive factor more than an element of unity. Moreover, the Tanzanian government does not publicly report or entertain discussions surrounding violent extremism.

Finally, from a gender perspective, it seems that some women or women's groups could be excluded if they do not have a safe space (e.g. activities for women only) to participate.

Against this backdrop, the baseline study provides the following recommendations:

- Dialogue should be run in a structured setting. Higher and Lower political and social actors are working under fragile settings, therefore, at least in the project's early stages, dialogue should run in structured environments.
- Vertical dialogue should include all political parties. The GNU is composed of the two main political parties, but the project should try to engage with all parties, also small ones.
- Start dialogue in less tense constituencies. This inclusive approach can provide an opportunity to rectify possible obstacles in dialogue before entering more sensitive places.
- Involve female members of the House of Representatives in planning some activities. Special seats for women at the Parliament represent an important public space for political participation.
- Support the use of the application *Sema na Rais* (SNR). The application is a channel of vertical exchange already in place and can be used also for concrete evidence and advice for the peaceful resolution of tensions and conflicts.
- Be aware of the risks in involving intermediaries in dialogue. Some key figures play a significant role in blocking conversation between high and lower levels (i.e. *shehias*).
- Refrain from engaging international experts to facilitate, or participate in, dialogue at the grassroots level. Involving local experts and stakeholders will help to reduce wrong perceptions regarding project objectives and will contribute to legitimate the project's activities.
- Make use of local influential figures to support horizontal and vertical dialogue.
- Avoid making reconciliation the central focus of the project. Dialogue should not necessarily be structured as reconciliation, but, instead, focus on concrete issues affecting the daily life of Zanzibaris, especially those who are usually not included in political processes and who have limited opportunities due to social and economic constraints.
- Continue to give a central role to youth and women. This attention is fully necessary to implement this project. Women need support both to safely engage in public spaces and to be trained on social and large-scale conflict transformation. Youth need to be fully part of the current political changes and to engage with local and national political authorities.