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Municipal elections – preliminary results

On 20 November, elections were held in 53 municipalities to elect mayors and local assemblies. We are publishing the preliminary results, which are not yet definitive. They still have to be verified by the National Elections Commission (CNE) and finally validated and proclaimed by the Constitutional Council.

Overall, the ruling Frelimo Party has won the vast majority of seats. However, the main opposition, the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM), has won in the cities of Quelimane and Beira and made a strong showing in areas once regarded as Frelimo strongholds.

In addition, MDM is protesting against the preliminary results in ten municipalities - Maputo, Matola, Beira, Quelimane, Chimoio, Gorongosa, Marromeu, Mocuba, Gurue and Milange.

Although MDM won overwhelming victories in both Beira and Quelimane, it is contesting the results, because it believes its margin of victory should have been even larger.

In Chimoio, Gorongosa, Mocuba, Milange and Gurue, the MDM says that the parallel count from its own polling station monitors indicate that it won.

Certainly, in Gurue the result was very close – almost a dead heat with just one vote separating the Frelimo and MDM mayoral candidates. The Frelimo candidate for mayor, Jahangir Hussen Jussub, won 6,626 votes, while his MDM opponent, Orlando Janeiro, won 6,625 votes, on a low turnout of 39 per cent.

All will now hinge on the votes declared invalid at the polling stations. There are 316 of these, and the CNE must look at all of them and decide whether the polling station staff made the right call.

In Milange, the parallel count found that Frelimo did indeed win. However, so far there are no such independent counts for Gorongosa, Chimoio, Marromeu or Mocuba.

The Tete provincial elections commission on 24 November declared that Frelimo mayoral candidate Celestino Checanhanza won 31,033 votes (65.9 per cent), while his MDM rival Ricardo Tomas won 16,109 (34.1 per cent).

In the municipal assembly, Frelimo won 30,689 votes (65.4 per cent). MDM took 16,232 votes (34.6 per cent).

MDM will be encouraged because it greatly improved on the opposition's performance at the last local elections, in 2008. The main opposition force then was Renamo, which won 12.2 per cent in the mayoral election and 12.5 per cent in the assembly election. The MDM has thus significantly reduced the Frelimo majority in Tete, and will have many more deputies than the five Renamo gained in 2008.

Renamo refused to take part in the elections. It will therefore not be represented in any of the municipalities.

Nampula elections annulled

The CNE has annulled the municipal elections in the northern city of Nampula.

The mayoral election was annulled because of a blunder on the ballot paper. The name of one candidate, Filomena Mutoropa, of the Mozambique Humanitarian Party (PAHUMO), had been left off. Since the CNE had accepted her as a candidate, it had no option but to annul the election.

There was also a serious problem with the ballot paper for the municipal assembly. However, this was not the reason given by the CNE for annulling the assembly election.

The assembly election did take place. However, in its ruling on the mayoral election, the CNE ordered that the vote for the Municipal Assembly remained valid, but that the ballot papers had to be kept and not counted until both sets of ballots were counted together.

The CNE instructed the Nampula Provincial Elections Commission that any movement of the ballot boxes be accompanied by representatives of the political parties. The provincial commission ignored these instructions, and the ballot boxes were transported to a warehouse without outside supervision. Thus there could be no guarantee that in the interim the ballot boxes had not been tampered with.

As a result, the CNE decided to cancel the municipal assembly election, and run both elections again. By law, the new election date must be the second Sunday after the original polling day. That will be 1 December.

The CNE blamed the printing company in South Africa for the mistakes on both ballot papers. Everything had been done correctly in Maputo, where both the CNE and representatives of the political parties had approved the proofs of the ballot papers. Somehow, these proofs were not used in South Africa, and the printing company perhaps used an earlier, and incorrect, draft of the ballot papers.

The CNE said that tight security meant nobody in Mozambique could see the ballot papers until they were opened in the polling stations on the day of the election. He said that the printer seals the ballot papers in plastic and in such a way that the front of the ballot paper cannot be seen and copied. There was thus no way to check the ballot paper until the plastic wrap was broken in the polling station.

Comfortable victory for Frelimo in Gaza

Frelimo looks set for comfortable victories in the municipal elections in the southern province of Gaza.

Three parties took part in the elections: Frelimo, MDM and ASTROGAZA.

According to the Electoral Administration Technical Secretariat (STAE), in the six municipalities the results were as follows:

Xai-Xai

Mayoral election

Ernesto Chambisse (Frelimo)	28,132
Judite Siteo (MDM)	7,012

Municipal Assembly election

Frelimo	27,446
MDM	8,694

Macia

Mayoral election

Reginaldo Mariquele (Frelimo)	9,873
Joao Machelewe (MDM)	657
Jose Macuacua (ASTROGAZA)	893

Municipal Assembly election

Frelimo	10,488
MDM	798

Praia de Bilene

Mayoral election

Mufundisse Chilengue (Frelimo)	3,355
Silvestre Chipanga (MDM)	307

Municipal Assembly election

Frelimo	3,346
MDM	307

Chibuto

Mayoral election

Francisco Mandlate (Frelimo)	14,699
Tornado Praia (MDM)	1,570

Municipal Assembly election

Frelimo	13,925
MDM	1,450

Chokwe

Mayoral election

Lidia Cossa Camela (Frelimo)	15,230
Eleuterio Maswanganhe (MDM)	2,890

Municipal Assembly election

Frelimo	15,171
MDM	2,624

Manjakaze

Mayoral election

Maria Helena Langa (Frelimo)	6,367
Arnaldo Manhique (MDM)	495

Municipal Assembly election

Frelimo	6,303
MDM	506

All these results are provisional and will only become official when they are validated by the National Elections Commission (CNE).

MDM wins Quelimane

The Zambezia Provincial Elections Commission on 23 November announced the “intermediate results” of the municipal elections in the provincial capital, Quelimane, showing an overwhelming victory for the MDM.

In the mayoral election, the incumbent, MDM candidate Manuel de Araujo won 29,286 votes (69.6 per cent), while his opponent from the ruling Frelimo Party, Abel Henriques won 13,789 (30.34 per cent).

In the election for the members of the municipal assembly, the MDM won 27,792 votes (65.2 per cent) to 14,146 (33.2 per cent) for Frelimo. A minor party, PARENA (National Reconciliation Party), picked up 686 votes (1.6 per cent).

These results will give the MDM a substantial majority in the municipal assembly, giving Araujo the backing he has lacked since his election in a mayoral by-election of December 2011. Since then he has been hamstrung by an assembly dominated by his political opponents in Frelimo.

The Quelimane results are incomplete. The Electoral Administration Technical Secretariat (STAE) has admitted that the official results sheets (“editais”) for the mayoral election went missing from 39 polling stations, and for the assembly election from 25 stations. Announcing the results, the electoral commission blamed the disappearance of the results sheets on “vandalism” during the initial count at the polling stations.

This refers to the confrontations on the evening of polling day between the police and crowds of MDM supporters. However, the number of polling stations affected by these clashes was not as many as 39.

The law envisages a simple solution in such cases. The copies of the results sheets given to the polling station monitors from the political parties should be used. At every polling station, the staff are under an obligation to give the accredited monitors signed and stamped copies of the results, precisely so that they can be used in the event of any dispute.

The law states very clearly that if any sheets are stolen, destroyed or disappear, the signed and stamped copies “are sufficient proof for solving election disputes”. Furthermore, when results sheets go missing the relevant elections commission must activate the measures necessary to fill the gaps within 24 hours – that is, it must obtain the copies from the political parties.

The MDM says it has its copies from all the polling stations. If the local STAE or the City Commission thinks the MDM has forged signatures and official stamps, then it could compare the MDM’s copies with those that were given to Frelimo. Should Frelimo fail to cooperate, then a handwriting expert could be called in to verify the signatures. The problem is not insoluble.

A further headache for STAE is the payment of the allowances owing to the polling station staff. When the money was only being paid out very slowly, dozens of angry members of staff took to the streets and demonstrated outside the STAE offices in Quelimane and Nampula.

Frelimo ahead in Marromeu

The Sofala Provincial Elections Commission on 25 November announced the results of the intermediate count showing that Frelimo only has a narrow lead in the town of Marromeu, on the south bank of the Zambezi.

However, the huge number of invalid votes cast in Marromeu suggests that serious fraud has taken place.

The chairperson of the provincial elections commission, Samuel Malate, declared that the Frelimo candidate for mayor of Marromeu, Palmerim Rubino, won 4,518 votes (51.6 per cent), while his sole opponent, Joao Agostinho, of MDM took 4,235 votes (48.4 per cent).

In the election to the municipal assembly, Frelimo won 4,774 votes (55.7 per cent), and MDM 3,606 votes (42.07 per cent). A third party, the PDD (Party for Peace, Democracy and Development), obtained 191 votes (2.23 per cent).

In both elections, a huge number of votes were classified as invalid at the polling stations. For the mayoral election, there were 1,119 invalid votes, and for the assembly election 1,285 invalid votes. So invalid votes accounted for 10.9 per cent of all votes cast for mayor, and 12.6 per cent in the assembly election.

Such extraordinarily high levels of invalid votes only occur when dishonest members of the polling station staff add an ink mark to the ballot paper to make it look as if the voter has tried to vote for more than one candidate. This fraud is well known from previous Mozambican elections and was condemned in the 2009 general elections by the National Elections Commission (CNE) and by the Constitutional Council, but nobody was ever prosecuted.

In the last municipal elections, in 2008, only 4.9 and 3.3 per cent of the votes in the Marromeu mayoral and assembly elections were classified as invalid at the polling stations.

No other municipality in Sofala comes near this level of invalid votes. In Gorongosa, two per cent of votes cast for mayor and 2.3 per cent of votes for the assembly were classified as invalid.

In Nhamatanda, the figures were 7.4 and 6.4 per cent, and in Dondo, they were 6.4 and seven per cent. Although not approaching the scandalous Marromeu percentages, the Nhamatanda and Dondo figures should also be regarded with suspicion. Unlike the Marromeu case, the number of invalid votes could not affect the Frelimo victories in Nhamatanda and Dondo.

The normal figure for invalid votes is anywhere between one and four per cent. Anything above five per cent suggests vote tampering.

The ball is now in the court of the CNE, which must review all votes declared invalid at the polling stations.

Daviz Simango winner in Beira

The Beira City Elections Commission on 23 November officially proclaimed MDM and its president Daviz Simango as the winners of the municipal elections.

Announcing the "intermediate count", the chairperson of the elections commission, Domingos Coimbra, said that Simango had won 68,503 votes (68.6 per cent of all valid votes), while opponent, Jaime Neto of Frelimo, won 31,300 votes (31.4 per cent).

As for the election of members of the Beira municipal assembly, MDM took 70,077 votes (67.8 per cent), while Frelimo won 32,568 per cent (31.5 per cent). Just one minor party contested the assembly election, PARENA (National Reconciliation Party), and won 772 votes (0.75 per cent).

There was a turnout of 55 per cent (113,615 registered voters). In both elections, five per cent of the ballots cast were classified as invalid.

This will be Simango's third five year term of office as mayor of Beira. He was first elected in 2003 as a candidate for Renamo. In 2008 Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama refused to run Simango for a second term. So he ran as an independent, easily defeating both the Frelimo and Renamo candidates. The following year he set up the MDM.

Simango ran into difficulties in his second term, because he had to work with a municipal assembly dominated by Frelimo and Renamo. But after these results, the mayor and the assembly are likely to speak with one voice.

Frelimo victory in Matola

The Maputo Provincial Elections Commission on 23 November confirmed that Calisto Cossa, the Frelimo candidate, has won the mayoral election in the southern city of Matola, but with Silverio Ronguane, the MDM candidate making a very strong showing.

Cossa won 79,975 votes (56.5 per cent), to 59,679 (42.4 per cent) for Ronguane. A third candidate, Joao Massango, of the Ecologist Party, took 1,561 votes (1.1 per cent).

In the election for the members of the Matola municipal assembly, Frelimo won 74,069 votes against 60,672 for the MDM. Seven minor parties were running for seats in the assembly but none of them won as many as a thousand votes.

Speaking to reporters after the announcement, Cossa said that his victory meant he now had "an added responsibility to serve better" the citizens of the city.

"During the campaign we spoke with the municipal citizens and we said that we were committed to Matola and the residents of Matola", he said. "We feel that with these results there was a full acceptance of the message we transmitted". The great winner of the elections, he added was Matola and the people who live there.

This victory is Frelimo's worst showing ever in Matola. In the 2008 municipal elections, Frelimo coasted to victory with almost 90 per cent of the vote.

Ronguane looked on his result as something of a triumph, pointing out that it was the best result an opposition party had ever obtained in the south of the country.

In the outgoing municipal assembly, the opposition (in the shape of Renamo), held just five seats "but, thanks to the work of the MDM, the opposition will now have more than 20 seats", he declared.

Frelimo declared winner in Chimoio

The Elections Commission in the central city of Chimoio on 22 November confirmed that the incumbent mayor, Raul Conde, of the ruling Frelimo Party, was re-elected for a further five year term of office.

Pereira Gama, the chairperson of the city elections commission simply confirmed the preliminary results announced the previous day by the Electoral Administration Technical Secretariat (STAE).

These were that Conde obtained 27,733 votes (53 per cent) while his MDM opponent, Joao Ferrao won 24,502 votes (47 per cent). For the election of members of the Municipal Assembly, Frelimo took 27,761 votes (53.4 per cent) and the MDM 24,267 (46.6 per cent).

Pereira made his announcement at a ceremony attended by Conde, but not by Ferrao. MDM is contesting the results and saying that it secured a narrow victory in the elections.

Renamo attacks continue

Gunmen of Mozambique's former rebel movement Renamo on 22 November attacked a vehicle about 10 kilometres from the small town of Maringue, in the central province of Sofala.

The vehicle was carrying seven people in the back. Two of them were killed and two were injured, one seriously. The driver drove through the ambush, and sought assistance for the injured at the Maringue health centre.

However, because of Renamo attacks in the region, the health professionals, like most residents of the town, have fled, and the health centre has effectively been abandoned. Staff at the Maringue district administration, however, helped transfer the victims across the provincial boundary, to a health centre in Macossa, in Manica province.

In a second attack nearby, Renamo opened fire on another truck, but the driver managed to escape. The gunmen looted the truck of the foodstuffs it was carrying, and then set it on fire.

Renamo boycotts talks

The head of the Mozambican government's delegation to the talks with Renamo, Agriculture Minister Jose Pacheco, on 25 November accused Renamo of showing no interest in a serious dialogue that could lead to a solution to the grievances it had raised.

Once again, Pacheco and the other members of the government team took their places in Maputo's Joaquim Chissano Conference Centre and waited for the Renamo delegation to appear. Once again, Renamo boycotted the talks – even though it was Renamo that had requested the talks in the first place.

The Renamo boycott came as no surprise. Renamo has been demanding the presence at the dialogue table of national and foreign mediators and observers, and threatened that it would not take part in any more meetings unless these observers were present.

Last week the government said that, while it was prepared to admit Mozambican observers to the talks, it had no intention of extending that invitation to foreign organisations.

"We were here for a further round of dialogue, taking into account the exchange of regular correspondence through the appropriate channels, but Renamo has not appeared", Pacheco said. The reasons for Renamo's absence had not been communicated officially to the government.

As for Renamo's demand that third parties should be invited, Pacheco said the government is willing to discuss with Renamo the mechanisms leading to the participation of the Mozambican observers whom Renamo wants.

"The government and Renamo should review what could be the role of national observers in the dialogue", he said.

Despite Renamo's repeated boycotts, the government says that it remains open to continuing the dialogue.

Meetings between the two delegations have taken place since May, with an agenda provided by Renamo. But 24 rounds later the two sides have not advanced beyond the first

point on the agenda, which is Renamo's demand for sweeping changes in the electoral legislation.

Kidnappers jailed for between 13 and 17 years

The Maputo City Court has sentenced four people to prison terms ranging from 13 to 17 years for two cases of kidnapping and the possession of illegal weapons.

The defendants were also ordered to pay the first victim compensation of 19,800,000 meticaís (\$660,000) and the second victim 500,000 meticaís (\$16,666).

The larger sum was compensation for the ransom paid for the release of the victim, whilst the smaller amount was recompense for the theft of the other victim's car during the kidnapping.

The four men on trial were Arlindo Timana, Manoa Valoi, Inacio Mirasse and Alfeu Penicela. The first three had already been sentenced to lengthy prison terms in a separate kidnapping case that was heard by a court in the neighbouring city of Matola.

Both kidnappings took place in the Mozambican capital – the first in the street and the second in the car park of the building where the victim lived on Josina Machel Avenue.

The wave of kidnappings, targeting mainly business people of Asian origin, began in Maputo and the neighbouring city of Matola in late 2011, and subsequently spread to the city of Beira.

President Guebuza opens solar panel factory

President Armando Guebuza has stressed that the opening of the first solar panel factory in Mozambique will lead to a further increase in the number of families with access to electricity.

The President pointed out, "using solar panels, we have already illuminated 207 villages, 344 schools and 403 health units".

President Guebuza was speaking at the ceremony to mark the inauguration of the factory at the Beluluane Industrial Park on the outskirts of Maputo.

The factory was financed through a \$13 million concessional loan from the Export-Import Bank of India.

According to the chairperson of the National Energy Fund (FUNAE), Miquelina Menezes, the factory will manufacture solar panels with varying outputs. The panels will be used in the electrification of rural areas with a particular focus on education and health.

India has assisted with the building of the factory, supplying equipment and raw materials (photovoltaic cells, glass, aluminium and electrical components). In addition, 17 technicians travelled to India to receive training in production methods and equipment maintenance.

This is a condensed version of the AIM daily news service – for details contact aim@aim.org.mz

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