



# CROSS-BORDER ASSESSMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
APRIL 2024





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This cross-border conflict assessment (CBA) for the Daraja la Amani | Pontes de Paz project, sought to identify resiliency factors within cross-border communities that have the potential to contribute to community resilience to violence and, specifically, violent extremism (VE) recruitment and radicalisation in the borderlands of Northern Mozambique and Southern Tanzania. It gathered data to inform the project's interventions considering the conflict setting and dynamics in the cross-border region. Specifically, the study had four objectives:

- Understand the region's conflict dynamics, focusing on intersectionality and how the conflict affects men, women, young women, young men, and other vulnerable people.
- Identify push and pull factors of radicalisation and VE that attract communities to Violent Extremist Organisations (VEOs) and resilience strategies that could be strengthened throughout the project.
- Identify the existing (formal and informal) resilience mechanisms and forces for peace.
- Identify communities' security needs and priorities to draw the project's success indicators and the community-level resilience index.

The research primarily employed a qualitative methodology, incorporating a mixed-method approach and data triangulation. In Mozambique, data collection was conducted in the districts of Palma, Mueda, and Nangade through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with representatives of Law Enforcement Agencies, Local Government Authorities, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and Community Influencers, including local and religious leaders. Additionally, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held with community members. In Tanzania, data was gathered through a literature review and informal conversations during stakeholder meetings organized by the project, with a geographical focus on the Mtwara region.

## Key Findings

### Objective #1: Understand the conflict dynamics in the region.

- The dynamics of VE attacks in the region fluctuate, with periods of relative stability punctuated by escalations of violence. Until November 2023, the cross-border region experienced relative stability. However, several factors threaten to shift this balance, including: the withdrawal of SAMIM forces and the potential reduction of Tanzania People's Defence Forces (TPDF) in Nangade; the leadership transitions due to general elections in Mozambique (2024) and in Tanzania (2025); the potential changes in the Mozambique-Rwanda security agreement under Mozambique's new leadership and also influenced by the regional security dynamics; the ability of the insurgents to adapt; the



improvements (or not) in the relationship between Mozambican security forces and the local communities; and the potential resumption of Total Energies operations in Palma.

- Various stakeholders influence the conflict, assuming roles that can either escalate tensions or foster peace. Alongside primary actors - the VE members and the FDS (supported by SAMIM, Tanzania, and Rwanda) - other entities play significant roles. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), including UN agencies and CSOs at local, national, and international levels, as well as private sector companies, contribute to peacebuilding efforts. However, their actions can also unintentionally heighten tensions by exacerbating existing social and economic grievances around job opportunities and others.
- Beyond the direct consequences of violence - loss of life, infrastructure destruction, and displacement - the conflict has severely impacted cross-border communities. The closure of key border crossings, notably the Namoto-Kilambo post, has disrupted trade and mobility. Relations between security forces and local communities have deteriorated, trust among border populations has eroded, and there has been a surge in trauma and gender-based violence.

#### **Objective #2: Identify push and pull factors of radicalisation and violent extremism.**

- The primary push factors driving vulnerability in the cross-border region are feelings of marginalization and exclusion among local communities, compounded by the development of natural gas projects in both Mtwara and Cabo Delgado. These dynamics have deepened existing grievances, making communities more susceptible to radicalization and recruitment by extremist groups.
- Regarding pull factors, the research identified a diverse set of individual motivations that sustain engagement with VE and VEOs. These include a sense of adventure, aspirations for social status and respect, material incentives, anticipated rewards, and fear of reprisals from VEO members.
- Additionally, the research highlighted structural factors that create an enabling environment for extremist recruitment. Two key elements were identified: (i) Strong ethno-linguistic and religious ties among cross-border communities, which facilitate ideological alignment and recruitment; and (ii) The porous nature of the Mozambique-Tanzania border, which allows extremist networks to operate and expand with relative ease.



### Objective #3: Identify the existing forces for peace.

- The research found that borderland communities have weak resilience against VE radicalization and recruitment, primarily due to the ongoing conflict, which severely impacts local livelihoods and heightens vulnerabilities.
- However, various resilience-building initiatives are being implemented at both national and local levels by state and non-state actors, including formal and informal entities, security forces, and civilians. At the national level, Mozambique and Tanzania have collaborated on countering VE and controlling illegal migration, among other security threats along the border. Locally, efforts include community policing strategies in Cabo Delgado and Mtwara, as well as community dialogues, livelihood restoration, and economic empowerment initiatives.

### Objective #4: Identify communities' peace and security needs and priorities.

- For border communities, peace and security priorities center on the ability to move freely without fear of attacks by extremists and their interactions with security forces. Locally developed peace indicators highlight that a sense of security is reflected in children attending school without fear, farmers working their land safely, and fewer incidents of mistreatment by security actors.
- Trust in government institutions is undermined by poor service delivery and perceptions of weak security enforcement, particularly in Cabo Delgado. Communities expressed a greater sense of safety in the presence of foreign forces, as they believe Mozambican security actors struggle to provide adequate protection. In contrast, Mtwara communities reported feeling safer due to the presence of community security infrastructures, which are more embedded in local structures. Locally identified indicators of peace include: provision of ID cards to residents who lost it during the conflict; support for children's education; timely feedback from security actors on reported cases; government authorities actively listening to community concerns.
- Cross-border communities see active participation in local governance as key indicators of peace. Specific signs include: community involvement in governance discussions on shared concerns; and willing participation in security meetings to exchange information on security and VE threats.



## Project Considerations

Based on the findings in this report, the following considerations are outlined for the project in relation to each of its outputs. However, they can also be adapted to other peacebuilding projects in the borderland region:

To ensure the project remains responsive to the evolving conflict landscape, it is essential to:

- Continuously monitor conflict dynamics, particularly the push and pull factors influencing cross-border communities' vulnerability to VE and VEOs, to inform targeted interventions.
- Regularly map the diverse stakeholders involved in the conflict, as the context grows more complex, to enhance strategic navigation and engagement.
- Integrate the community resilience index - developed from locally identified peace indicators - into the project's monitoring and evaluation framework. This will ensure alignment with community needs and priorities while enabling adaptive and context-specific responses.

Additionally, targeted efforts should be made to improve the relationship between security actors and cross-border communities. This can be achieved through:

- Targeted training for security personnel to enhance their engagement with local communities.
- Joint activities involving security forces and local communities to foster mutual understanding and rebuild trust.
- Expanding trust-building efforts beyond security actors to include key stakeholders, such as private sector entities operating in border areas and their respective local communities.

Furthermore, the project should prioritize strengthening established local community structures that serve as critical early warning and response systems, as well as platforms for civic engagement in local governance. These include:

- **In Cabo Delgado:** Community Safety Councils (CSCs) and Community Advisory Councils and/or the various Community Committees.
- **In Mtwara:** Ten Cell Units and Neighborhood Watch Groups.

By reinforcing these structures and investing in initiatives that reduce cross-border communities' economic vulnerabilities, the project can make a meaningful contribution to PCVE. A particular emphasis should be placed on ensuring the active participation of women and youth within



these structures. Their involvement not only enhances the inclusivity of PCVE efforts but also brings valuable perspectives that can improve the effectiveness of interventions.

Finally, the project should prioritize initiatives that directly address the primary drivers of VE and radicalization in the cross-border region. Key focus areas should include:

- Empowering youth and women through livelihood support programs that enhance economic resilience.
- Providing psychosocial and trauma assistance to individuals affected by conflict and violence.
- Preventing gender-based violence (GBV) through targeted interventions that promote community awareness and support systems.

It is important to recognize that many of the push factors driving VE are rooted in structural challenges such as inadequate access to basic services and persistent social and economic disparities. These issues go beyond limited economic opportunities and contribute to long-term vulnerabilities within communities. By addressing these systemic challenges, the project can help mitigate the root causes of VE and foster sustainable peace and stability in the region.