



Centro de Pesquisas sobre  
Governação e Desenvolvimento

## **Perspectives on the 2018 Nampula City By-election**

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## Summary

Based on an assessment of past elections, this Briefing Paper found that the level of political parties' participation in elections has played a significant role in increasing local election competition in Nampula City, Mozambique; and that this trend appears to be evident even when taking national elections into consideration.

This Paper predicts that the participation of candidates from the three major political parties in the forthcoming Nampula City by-election on 24 January 2018 will increase electoral competition to the extent of narrowing the margin of victory and/or leading to a second-round vote.

It also predicts that parties' participation and election competition will increase voter turnout but voter turnout is likely to be shallow. Political parties tend to be poorly funded to be able to mobilize the masses to vote. As a result, they will be more likely to mobilize only those who already identify with them and the strength of their party identification is high/very high. Independent voters are more likely to be disengaged from voting. This is in the context where ordinary Mozambican citizen's awareness about public affairs and politics, as shown by public opinion surveys, tend to be very low. However, the effect of this is something that still remains to be tested, mainly by conducting a post-election survey.

In order to boost voter turnout, this Paper suggests that more resources need to be allocated to the Electoral Management Body to conduct civic education on elections and democracy. Note that the highest level of voter turnout ever recorded in the country of 88 percent was for the founding democratic election in 1994 where there were significant resources from donors to raise awareness and educate citizens on elections and democracy. Since then voter turnout at the national level has reduced to 68 percent in 1999, 36 percent in 2004, 46 percent in 2009 and 48 percent in 2014.

**Key words:** voter turnout, election competition, elections, by-election, political parties, Nampula City, Mozambique

## Perspectives on the 2018 Nampula City By-election

### 1. Introduction

In 2017 on Mozambique's national Day of Peace and Reconciliation, 4<sup>th</sup> October, the Mayor of Nampula City was shot dead.<sup>1</sup> Following the electoral arrangement, the government has scheduled a by-election to be held on 24 January 2018.<sup>2</sup> Five political parties have put forward candidates for this by-election, namely: three parties with parliamentary representation (Frelimo, Renamo and MDM) and PHUMO and AMUSSI. The by-election candidates are as follows: Mario Albino (AMUSSI), Amisse Cololo (Frelimo), Filomena Mutoropa (PAHUMO), Carlos Saide (MDM), and Paulo Vahanle (Renamo).<sup>3</sup>

This election is expected to be a very competitive one, as it will be the first time that all three parliamentary parties will participate simultaneously in a local election. Frelimo has participated in all local elections so far conducted since the founding local election in 1998. Renamo boycotted local elections in 1998; the 2011 by-elections in Cuamba, Pemba and Quelimane; the 2012 by-election in Inhambane; and in 2013. MDM participated for the first time in local elections in 2013 after its formation in 2009.

The other reason to suggest that this election will be competitive is because Nampula City itself has seen competitive elections in the past and experienced alternation of power in the 2013 election (see Shenga 2013). Its broader geographical environment, Nampula Province, is a multi-member district (MMD) where the governing party Frelimo and the main opposition party Renamo have been sharing parliamentary seats at almost the level of 50:50 percent.<sup>4</sup>

Although the above provides a perspective of how competitive the Nampula City by-election will be, it does not provide information in detail. The aim of this Briefing Paper is to unpack Nampula City elections in more detail to find out how competitive they have been, so that it can better inform the competitors and other parties to the forthcoming Nampula City by-election. To do so, it will assess the levels of election competition of all elections so far conducted in Nampula City.

Alongside election competition, this Briefing Paper also focuses on voter turnout. This is relevant to do because election competition tends to be associated with voter turnout. In general, national constituencies with high levels of voter turnout (like Gaza) tend to be low in election competition while those with high levels of election competition (like Nampula and Sofala) tend to be low in voter turnout in Mozambique.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.verdade.co.mz/tema-de-fundo/35-themadefundo/63601-no-dia-da-paz-foi-assassinado-um-homem-que-desafiou-o-seu-destino>, accessed on 18 December 2017.

<sup>2</sup> <https://noticias.sapo.mz/actualidade/artigos/eleicoes-intercalares-de-nampula-marcadas-para-24-de-janeiro>, accessed on 28 December 2017.

<sup>3</sup> WAMPHULA FAX Newspaper, of 15 December 2017.

<sup>4</sup> See election results at the National Electoral Commission and/or Constitutional Council.

Thus, at the municipality level, a similar trend can be expected: that more competitive municipalities (like Nampula City) will also have low levels of voter turnout.

Studies on election competition and voter turnout in Mozambique are scarce. Some include Shenga (2013) who assessed, among other things, election competition and voter turnout of local elections of 1998, 2003 and 2008 elections.<sup>5</sup> While Shenga (2013) assessed election competition and voter turnout of candidates who competed for the position of mayor, this Briefing Paper also includes the election competition of political parties for the Municipal Assembly. It is important to include election competition of parties in Mozambique because candidates tend to be pushed or backed up mainly by their parties. It is very rare that candidates succeed without party support.<sup>6</sup>

The data for all of these elections are available from the sources provided by the official institution that supervises elections – the National Electoral Commission<sup>7</sup> and the official institution that validates election results – the Constitutional Council/Court.<sup>8</sup>

## **2. Election Competition in Comparative Perspective**

This Briefing Paper measures election competition by the difference in percentage between the first and second most voted parties and/or candidates. If the percentage difference is very high then it means there are low levels of election competition. Conversely, if the percentage difference is very small then it means there is high election competition. For the purpose of this paper, ‘very competitive and/or competitive’ elections are those with a percentage difference that varies between 0 and 33 percent; ‘moderately competitive to less competitive’ are those with a percentage difference between 34 and 67 percent; and ‘none competitive’ are those with a percentage difference between 68 and 100 percent.

By comparing the election competition of mayoral candidates, the results in Figure 1 reveal that election competition in Nampula City has been increasing since the 1998 founding multiparty local election in Mozambique. The difference between the first and second most voted candidates in 1998 was very high (64.56 percent), meaning there was low election competition. This was because the main opposition party Renamo and other small parties boycotted this election nationwide, alleging irregularities in voter registration. But, in the subsequent 2003 election, election competition was high as a result of participation of the main opposition party.

Nevertheless, election competition declined in Nampula City even with participation of Renamo in the 2008 election. In the 2013 election, Mozambique politics witnessed

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<sup>5</sup> This also includes an assessment of the 2005, 2011 and 2012 by-elections, respectively, in Mocimboa da Praia; Cuamba, Pemba and Quelimane; and Inhambane.

<sup>6</sup> Exception applies to one (Daviz Simango) who managed to defeat both Frelimo (governing party) and Renamo (opposition party) candidates in Beira Municipality in the 2008 local election.

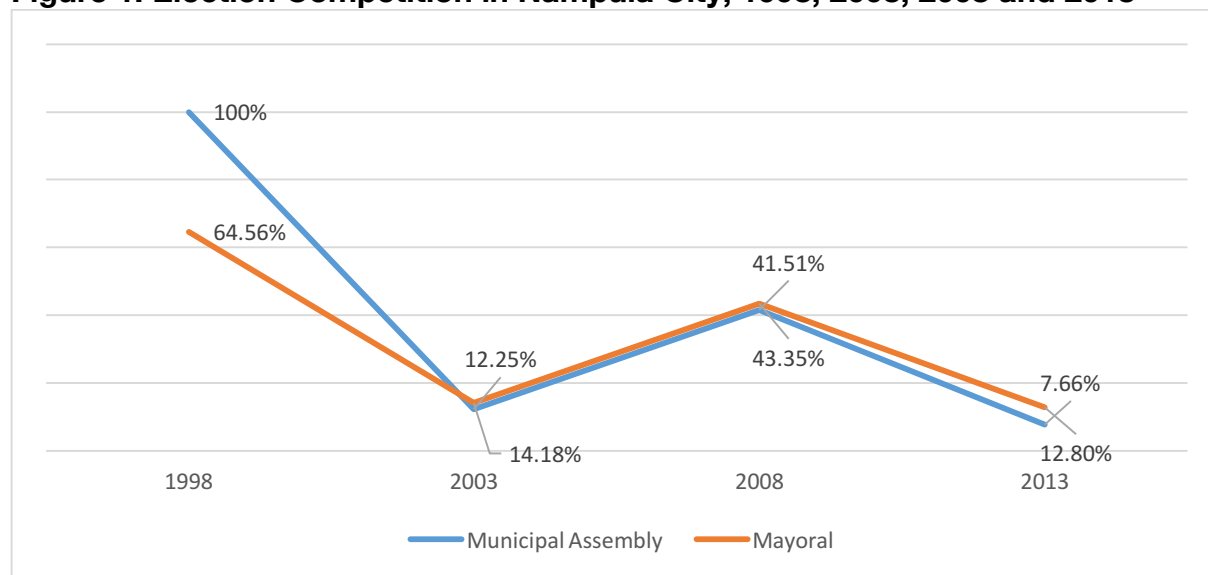
<sup>7</sup> [www.stae.org.mz](http://www.stae.org.mz)

<sup>8</sup> [www.cconstitucional.org.mz](http://www.cconstitucional.org.mz)

an entrance of a ‘new kid on the block’ – MDM – and an increase in election competition. The MDM political party, recently formed in 2009 (resulting from an internal misunderstanding within Renamo from the 2008 election)<sup>9</sup>, made a very significant effect in the 2013 election not only in Nampula City but nationwide. In the 2013 election, MDM won Nampula, Beira, Quelimane and Gurue municipalities and was very close to the winning candidates in other municipalities, including the country’s capital city of Maputo.

Moving to the comparison of election competition of political parties for the Municipal Assembly, an almost similar trend is observed, with the exception of the 1998 election (Figure 1). Political parties’ election competition for the Municipal Assembly was null in the 1998 founding multiparty local election, as only one party, Frelimo, competed against itself.<sup>10</sup> This was different to the candidate competition for the mayor where two Frelimo candidates: Dinosisio Cherewa (with 82.28 percent) and Eugenio Estevaso Fatima (with 17,72 percent) competed against one another.

**Figure 1: Election Competition in Nampula City, 1998, 2003, 2008 and 2013**



### 3. Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective

With respect to voter turnout, this is defined here by “the percentage of voters who cast a [valid or blank] vote at an election” (Pintor 2002:75) from registered voters. For the purpose of this study, voter turnout is ‘high and or very high’ if its percentage is

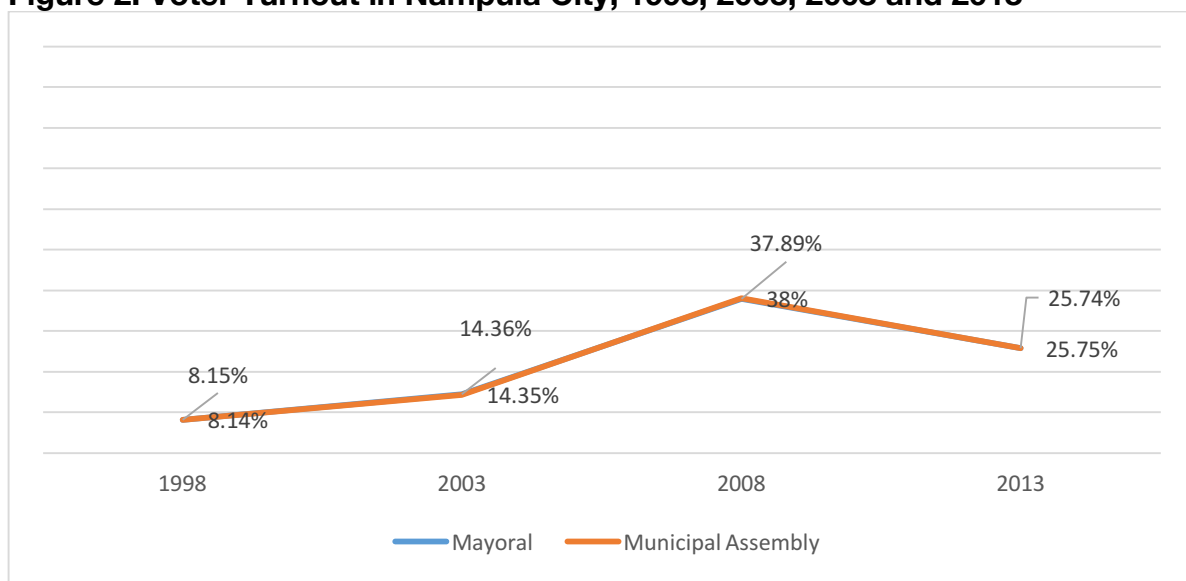
<sup>9</sup> Renamo decided that its mayor of Beira – Daviz Simango elected in 2003 - could be replaced for the 2008 election. But he refused and decided to compete as an independent candidate. As a result he managed to defeat both the Frelimo and Renamo candidates and in the following year he formed his own party incorporating members from his older brother’s party PCN and Renamo officials that served him during the 2003-2007 term.

<sup>10</sup> Remember, as outlined above, that Renamo and many other small parties boycotted the elections alleging irregularities in voter registration.

between 68 and 100 percent; ‘low and or moderately high’ if it is between 34 and 67 percent; and ‘very low’ if between 0 and 33 percent.

The data in Figure 2 illustrates low levels of voter turnout for both the mayor and Municipal Assembly elections in Nampula City. Since the main opposition Renamo voters were not mobilized in the 1998 election, due to Renamo’s boycott of the election, less than 10 percent of registered voters turned out in the founding local election. With participation of Renamo in the 2003 election, voter turnout did increase but not very significantly although it did increase further in the 2008 election to about 38 percent. It declined again in 2013, to about 26 percent, as Renamo withdrew from local politics in that year.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 2: Voter Turnout in Nampula City, 1998, 2003, 2008 and 2013**



Note: As voter turnout data of candidates for mayoral position and parties for the Municipal Assembly present no significant difference at all, Excel was not able to draw a second (blue) line. Figures away from the (brown) line refer to percentage for the mayoral election.

Comparing voter turnout of political parties for the Municipal Assembly with that of candidates for mayoral position, there is no significant variation at all. They are about the same (Figure 2).

#### 4. Taking into Account National Elections

Does considering national elections in the equation change the pattern of competition and turnout? The data in Figure 3 reveals first, that election competition in Nampula City appears to be more competitive at the national level than at local level elections. This might be explained by the fact that political parties use more resources to mobilise voters in national elections as opposed to local elections. During the 1994 national election the difference between the first and second most voted parties in Nampula City was very small (-0.77 percent), suggesting a very high level of election

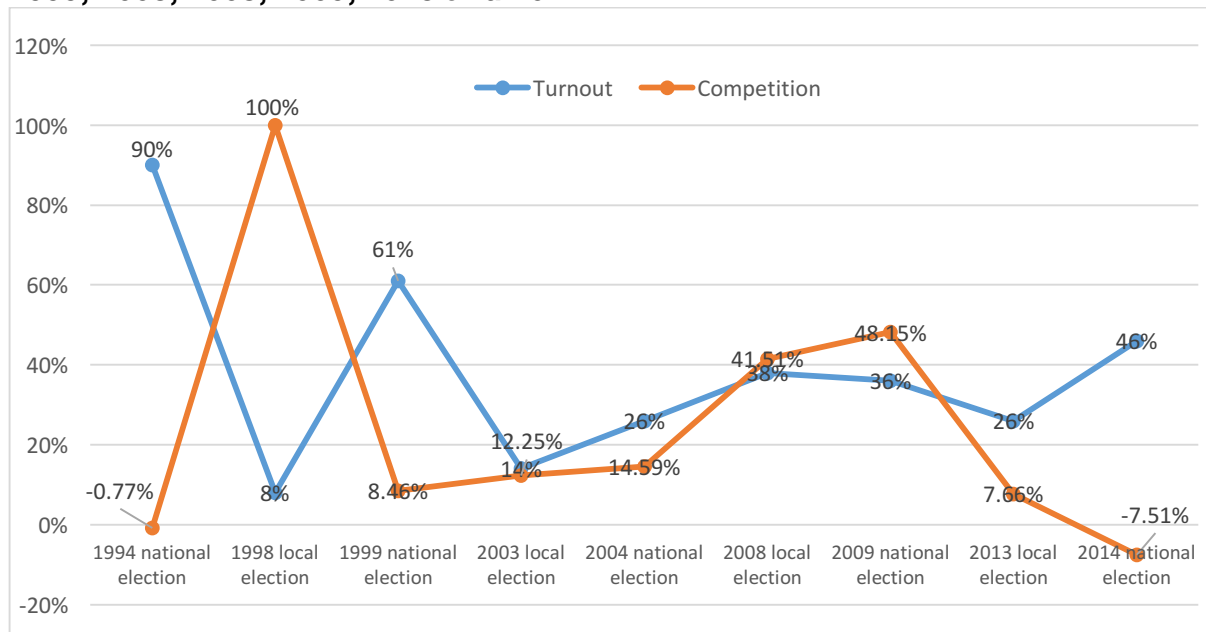
<sup>11</sup> The country was experiencing a period of political instability and the Renamo leader was entrenched in bush.

competition. In addition, that difference was negative suggesting that the opposition managed to get more votes than the governing party. This pattern occurred again in the 2014 national election (-7.51 percent) with the opposition getting more votes than that of the ruling party in 1994. But Nampula City declined in election competition in the 2009 national election (48.15 percent) and this level was higher than that of the local election in 2008 (41.15 percent).

Secondly, moving to voter turnout, national elections also seem to mobilize more voters to vote in Nampula City than local ones. The first two national elections (90 percent and 61 percent) mobilized more voters to vote than the first two local elections (8 percent and 14 percent). Although national elections mobilized less in the third election in 2004 (26 percent) compared to the third local election in 2008 (38 percent), it did pass local elections in the fourth election in 2009 (36 percent compared to 26 percent of local election in 2013).

Third, to finalize, the data still confirms that when election competition tends to be high, voter turnout tends to be low, even when taking national elections into consideration. Of the nine elections assessed, six appear to be high in election competition and only two appear to be high in voter turnout.

**Figure 3: Election Competition and Voter Turnout in Nampula City, 1994, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2008, 2009, 2013 and 2014**



For the national election, the data includes elections of political parties for the legislature. Information of candidates for presidential election was not considered.

## 5. Conclusion and Discussion

This Briefing Paper provides context for the forthcoming Nampula City by-election by comparing trends in election competition and voter turnout over time covering all elections so far conducted in Nampula City, using official election data. The main findings are that:



- Elections of candidates for the mayoral position and political parties for Municipal Assembly tend to be competitive while voter turnout is low.
- The level of participation by political parties played a significant role on election competition:
  - i. In 1998, election competition was shallow when only one party participated competing with itself;
  - ii. In 2003, election competition increased when the main opposition party participated competing with the governing party;
  - iii. In 2008, election competition declined, however, even when the main opposition participated competing with governing party; and
  - iv. In 2013, election competition increased when a new opposition party (MDM) participated competing with the governing party.

However, the effect of political parties' participation in elections does not fully explain election competition – as can be seen from point iii above, party participation did not boost election competition in 2008. However, it did, at least, increase voter turnout, relatively, although that level of turnout was still shallow. With exception to the 2008 election, we observe that party participation in elections affects election competition positively: the high levels of party participation correspond with high levels of election competition. This finding is supported even when taking national election data in the account. Exception applies, however, with respect to the 2009 election, meaning that other factors intervened in the party participation and election competition relationship.

The prediction that this Paper advances from its comparison of all previous local elections in Nampula City, is that: participation of the three major political parties: Frelimo, Renamo and MDM in the forthcoming 2018 Nampula City by-election will increase its electoral competition. This could be to the extent that the percentage difference between the first and second most voted for candidates will be small/ very small and or lead to a second-round vote.

Theoretically, with increasing election competition one would also expect increasing voter turnout, as election competition increases masses mobilization of the electorate. But in the Mozambique context, as political parties tend to be poorly funded and ordinary citizens to be less aware about democratic politics and affairs,<sup>12</sup> election competition results from mobilization of only those voters who identify with political parties and the strength of their party identification is high/very high. Independent voters are less likely to vote. But, this (and other points indicated in 1-5 below are things that) still remains to be tested mainly through post-election survey data.<sup>13</sup>

In this perspective, the increased party participation and its positive relationship with election competition may increase voter turnout in the forthcoming Nampula by-election but voter turnout is likely to remain shallow.

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<sup>12</sup> See public opinion surveys from the Afrobarometer: [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org)

<sup>13</sup> As post-election surveys in Mozambique tend to not be embraced by donors, this remain far from being tested.

Other considerations, however, could affect voter turnout. These may include: the *personal characteristics of candidates; levels of institutionalization of their political parties; party image toward the electorate; election campaign dynamics; and civic (voter) education*, among others:

- 1) *Personal characteristics of candidates* play a major role affecting outcomes. Different types of personal characteristics can affect decision-makers in the legislative and executive to perform their roles of making policies, implementing and overseeing them and representing societal diversity (Seligman 1964, Matthews 1967, Rosenthal 1974 and 2009, Norris and Lovenduski 1995, Norris 1997, Shenga 2014). It also affects the leadership style of presidents as well as their performance (Greenstein 2009). Perhaps charismatic candidates, if any, would mobilize more voters to turnout than others in the 2018 Nampula by-election;
- 2) *Party institutionalization*. More institutionalized political parties tend to mobilize more voters to turnout than fragmented ones, as they tend to be more organized with strong party discipline and covering more spaces geographically;
- 3) *Party image*.<sup>14</sup> Parties whose image tends to be seen negatively (as rebels, anti-politics, anti-democratic, corrupt, etc.) by the electorate tend to mobilize less voters than those that are seen as more liberal and democratic;
- 4) *Election campaign dynamics* (Jacobson 1990, Brady and Johnston 2006). Parties that better organize their election campaigns, spend more money, produce better information to voters to assess candidates and/or parties in the election campaign may mobilize more voters than others;
- 5) *Civic education*.<sup>15</sup> Elections that benefit from large voter education produce high voter turnout. In Mozambique, the 1994 founding democratic election, which was largely funded by donors and extensively covered by media and other non-State actors (see de Maia 1996), produced a very high voter turnout (88 percent). However, in subsequent years, where donor focus has shifted from voter education to other sectors (such as health, education, monitoring of governance, state responsiveness, advocacy and extractive industry) voter turnout has been remaining increasingly low. It tends to be lately only the National Electoral Commission through its technical secretariat (STAE) that conducts voter education with low levels of donor's funding.<sup>16</sup>

Voter turnout can be affected by many factors. The above mentioned are just some that democratic practitioners, including: political parties, politicians, scholars, non-state actors, and donors, have to consider when analysing elections and promoting democracy.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/the-impact-of-party-leader-images-on-vote-switching-in-the-run-up-to-the-general-election/>, accessed on 4 January 2018.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2009/08/14/civic-education-to-boost-voter-turnout-in-afghanistan.html>, accessed on 4 January 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Donor funding on elections in Mozambique is mainly focused on election observation.

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