

The Power of Dialogue

Forced Displacement and Social Integration amid an Islamist Insurgency in Mozambique

Henrique Pita-Barros

ISEG – Lisbon School of Economics & Management, University of Lisbon



Lisbon School
of Economics
& Management
Universidade de Lisboa



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Motivation

Forced displacement has reached a new maximum – 76% of all displaced individuals are hosted in low and middle-income countries.

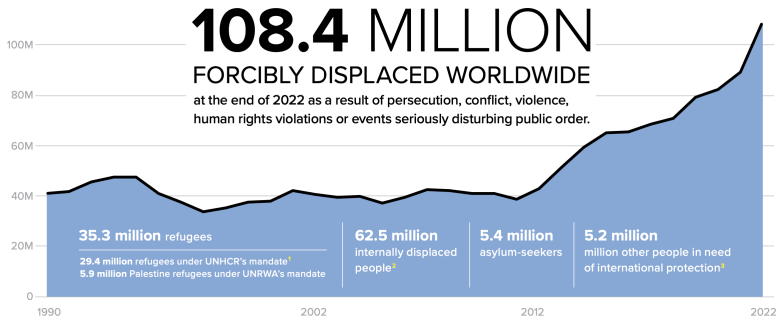


Figure 1: Forced displacement around the world. Source: UNHCR (2023).

Implications:

- ⇒ Social and economic shock that can have negative consequences to displaced individuals and host communities.
 - **Labor and housing markets** (Alix-Garcia et al., 2012; Depetris-Chauvin and Santos, 2018; Tsuda, 2022; and many others).
 - **Food security** (George and Adelaja, 2022).
 - **Wealth** (Alix-Garcia and Saah, 2009).
- ⇒ Tension and conflict between both groups.
 - Putnam, 2007; Rozo and Vargas, 2021; Albarosa and Elsner, 2023.
- ⇒ Obstacle to long-term economic development.
 - Zak and Knack, 2001; Sobel, 2002; Guiso et al., 2004; Easterly et al. (2006)

Most academic studies focus on the integration of displaced individuals using **resource focused** approaches:

- Centralized allocation of resources:
 - Social or economic incentives: Battisti et al., 2019; Caria et al., 2019; Beltramo et al., 2023.
 - Provision of public goods: Asaad et al., 2023.
- Most evidence shows such programs are effective
- They often require significant central planning and financial resources
 - not always available to local governments / international partners, particularly in low- and middle-income countries

Alternative: develop **community based** programs:

- Empowerment of local communities to promote the socioeconomic integration of displaced individuals.
 - + Flexibility in tailoring response to local contexts, and to focus in the roots of social frictions.
- Less central planning or financial resources.
- Their efficacy in integrating displaced persons or addressing the sources of social frictions (such as religious extremism) remain largely understudied.

Research questions

1. Do community based intergroup interactions reduce the prejudice against internally displaced persons (IDPs) and promote their integration into host communities?
2. Can intergroup contact also be effective in addressing the sources of forced displacement? (such as support for armed groups)

This project

Field experiment studying the social integration of IDPs and local hosts in Pemba, provincial capital of Cabo Delgado, Mozambique

Since 2017, an islamist insurgency led by the IS affiliate Al-Shabaab has disturbed the region.

Currently >1M IDPs ($\approx 43\%$ of Cabo Delgado's population)

IDPs in Pemba: 140K (41%)

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

ISIS fighters terrorize Mozambique, threaten gas supply amid Ukraine war

World Africa Americas Asia Australia China Europe India Middle East United

This nation's natural gas potential could rival Russia. But first, they need to fight ISIS

The New York Times

American Soldiers Help Mozambique Battle an Expanding ISIS Affiliate

Program of structured community meetings joined by local hosts and IDPs in Pemba, along Allport's Contact Hypothesis (1954).

- Contact Hypothesis: under appropriate conditions, intergroup contact may decrease prejudice between majority and minority groups.
- Meetings protocol:
 - Developed by me, in collaboration with the local community.
 - Framework of a *Public Dialogue* (Herzig & Chasin, 2006)
 - Topics covered:
 - Relationship between locals and IDPs.
 - Experience of IDPs escaping from insurgents.

Contextual background



Figure 2: The geographical location of Mozambique and Cabo Delgado. GDP per capita in 2021: USD 530 (USD 267 in Cabo Delgado). Source: Mozambique Statistics Institute (2021).

Contextual background: insurgency dynamics

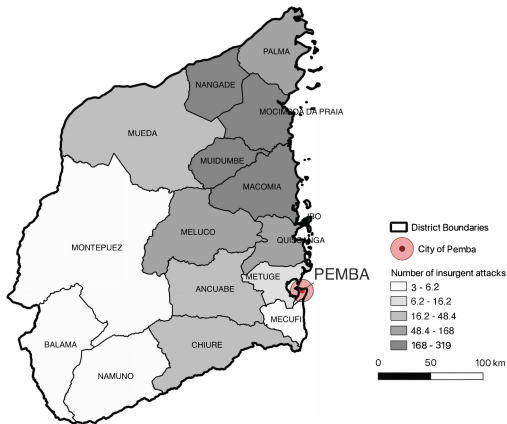


Figure 3: Number of attacks made by insurgents in each district of Cabo Delgado (October 2017 – August 2022). Source: ACLED Data.

The city of Pemba



Figure 4: Satellite view of a section of Pemba.

The living conditions of IDPs



Figure 5: Living conditions of IDPs (Maringanha, August 2022).

The population increase in Pemba led to social friction between locals of Pemba and IDPs

Main sources of friction between locals of Pemba and IDPs:

- **Different social habits of IDPs:** hygiene, social behavior.
- **Unequal treatment felt by locals:** they don't understand why the government and international partners only support IDPs.
- **Competition** for access to scarce public services and infrastructures.
- **Safety concerns:** locals perceived there existed insurgents mixed with IDPs.

Source: focus group conducted by me before data collection started.

Baseline data suggested potential to improve the relationship between locals of Pemba and IDPs.

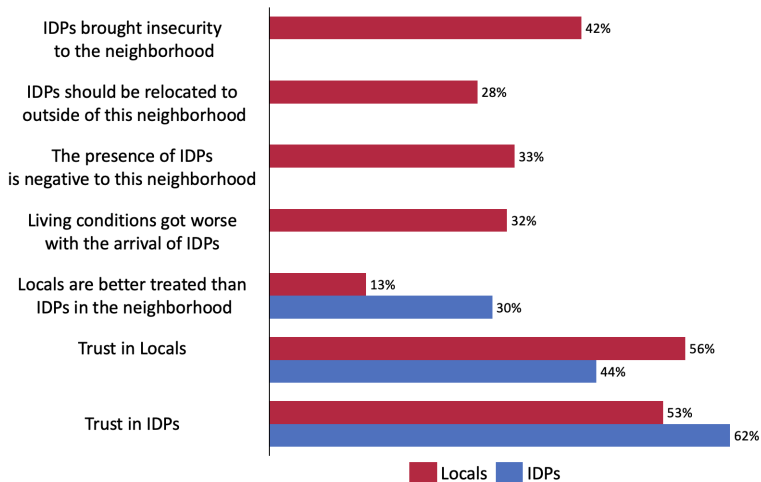
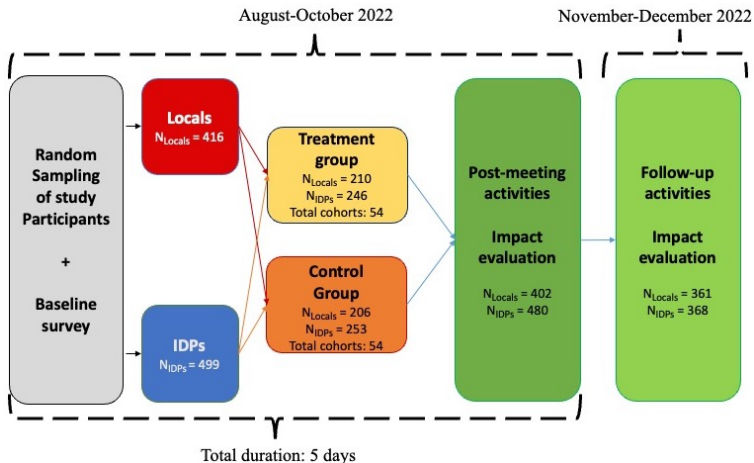


Figure 6: Main beliefs and attitudes of locals and IDPs towards each other.

Outline of the Research Design



Sample balance

Sample attrition

Community meetings: objectives

Public dialogue: *A conversation in which people who have different beliefs and perspectives seek to develop mutual understanding* (Herzig and Chasin, 2006).

Main objectives:

- Soften stereotypes;
- Develop more trusting relationships;
- Gain new perspectives on the costs of conflict;
- See new possibilities of interaction outside of the community meeting.

Framework

- Public dialogue (Herzig & Chasin 2006), Tailored to Pemba's context with the support of local community

Moderator

- Impartial and respected by locals & IDPs
- Religious leaders of the Islamic Council of Cabo Delgado

Duration

- 3 hours (morning / afternoon)

Participants

- Target of 8-10 participants, and 50% locals / IDPs

Meetings protocol (5-page MS Word document):

0. **Meeting rules:**

- Establishment of an environment where the Contact Hypothesis conditions may hold.

1. **Part 1. go around questions (2 hours):**

- The moderator asks a several questions. For each question, each participant has 1-3 minutes to answer.
- Questions are pre-defined and they relate to topics of daily life in the neighborhood.
- IDPs are also invited to voluntarily share their own stories escaping conflict and settling in Pemba.

2. **Part 2. open discussion (45 minutes):**

- The moderator lets participants discuss freely, only intervening if any meeting rule is broken.

Example of a community meeting



Figure 7: Community meeting in the neighborhood of Chuíba (09/2022).

Main messages reported by moderators

Locals:

- Lived next to IDPs (years, in some cases), but locals were not aware of their difficulties and stories escaping insurgents.
- Learning opportunity for locals.

IDPs:

- For many IDPs, community meetings provided the first opportunity of IDPs to tell their stories and expressing their feelings.
- Empowering moment for IDPs.

[Open discussion reports](#)

Community meetings improved locals' tolerance towards IDPs in the short-term and perceptions in the medium-term.

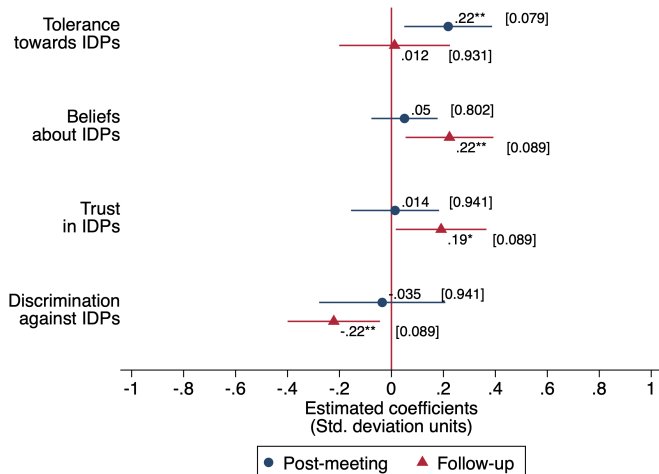


Figure 8: Confidence intervals at the 90% level. P-values adjusted for multiple hypothesis testing at the post-meeting / follow-up phase are presented inside squared brackets.***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% critical level.

Community meetings immediately improved the social integration of IDPs

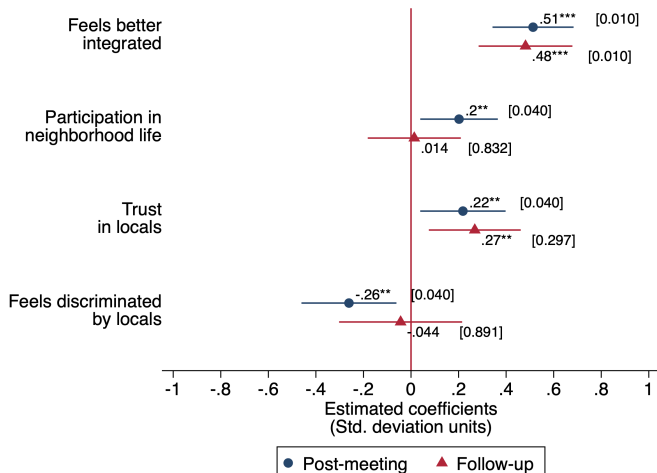


Figure 9: Confidence intervals at the 90% level. P-values adjusted for multiple hypothesis testing at the post-meeting / follow-up phase are presented inside squared brackets.***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% critical level.

Community meetings decreased preference for insurgents among locals and IDPs

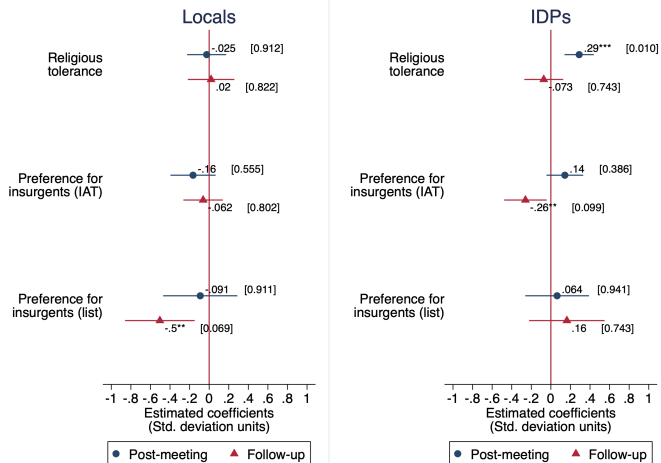


Figure 10: Confidence intervals at the 90% level. P-values adjusted for multiple hypothesis testing at the post-meeting / follow-up phase are presented inside squared brackets. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% critical level.

Key take-aways

- New evidence that **short but tailored intergroup contact** has the potential to **generate positive long-lasting effects** (in alternative to long and sustained interactions).
- **New application of intergroup contact** and Allport's Contact Hypothesis: improvement of **religious tolerance**, and contribution to **counterinsurgency** strategies and **de-radicalization**.
- **Community based approaches** are also **effective** promoting the social-integration of forcibly displaced people.

Systematic overview of results

Literature comparison

Spin-off project being implemented at larger scale:

- 1 year program with 4 community meetings.
- Are there increasing / decreasing returns of intergroup contact?
What is the optimal dose of intergroup contact?
- How do the effects generated by community meetings spillover to non-treated individuals?
- Co-funded by IGC and J-PAL CVI. Data collected.

Collaboration with the Government of Mozambique and IGC:

- Request to transform community meetings in policy. Workshop to transfer knowledge to government officials predicted for 2024.
- Currently piloting follow-up research:
 - Rebuilding social-capital among IDPs of Cabo Delgado who return to their homeland.

Thank you!



Paper



www.henriquepitabarros.com

pitabarros@iseg.ulisboa.pt

henrique_pita_barros@brown.edu