

# **Country Report: Biometric Elections in Mozambique**



**Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)  
Mozambique**

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# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Key Findings .....	4
Key Recommendations .....	5
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Methodology.....</b>	<b>9</b>
Glossary.....	10
<b>Digital Identification in Mozambique: Current Trends and Developments .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Efforts by International Institutions.....	13
<b>Results and Analysis: Biometric Elections in Mozambique.....</b>	<b>15</b>
Institutional Framework for Biometric Elections.....	15
Electoral Management.....	15
Biometric Voter Registration and Biometric Voter System.....	16
Analysis: Mozambique’s Adoption of Biometrics for Elections.....	20
Impact 1: Biometric Technology and Reliable Voter Register .....	20
Impact 2: Biometric Elections on Digitization Agenda .....	24
Impact 3: Legal Framework for Privacy and Data Protection .....	24
<b>Conclusion and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>26</b>
Recommendations to Government.....	27
Recommendations to Civil Society Actors .....	27
<b>Reference List.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Annex 1: Relevant Government Institutions .....</b>	<b>29</b>

# Executive Summary

**This report focuses on Mozambique and is part of a multi-region research aimed to identify and compare the state of biometrics and digital identity threats, usage, and impact in Africa, the Balkans, Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and South and Southeast Asia.**

This report focuses on the use of biometric technologies for electoral processes, including voter registration, in Mozambique. It also briefly details Mozambique's ongoing digital identification and digitization drives, noting that they impact and are impacted by the biometric election's identification landscape.

Using the qualitative research methodology, the report details the creation of Mozambique's voter rolls and digitised voter management systems with the support of international and local private infrastructure providers, such as Innovatrics and Laxton Group. The report details the benefits, challenges, and risks of the progressive deployment of biometric elections, framed against the upcoming municipal elections (October 2023) and the general elections (2024).<sup>1</sup>

## Key Findings

- **Finding 1:** Digital identification conversation has continued to inch higher up in the Mozambique government's agenda influenced by international institutions, such as the United Nations and the World Bank.
- **Finding 2:** The State, through the electoral management bodies, holds a significant amount of personal, including sensitive, data related to those who register to vote in each election.
- **Finding 3:** The government of Mozambique has held biometric elections three times, in 2009, 2014, and 2019, steered by partnerships between government entities and private biometrics and identity solutions providers.

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<sup>1</sup> Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, 'Election Calendar,' <https://www.eisa.org/election-calendar/>, accessed 18 May 2023.

- **Finding 4:** Mozambique's elections are preceded by comprehensive biometric voter registration in all 65 municipalities. Mobile ID, a biometric digital identity solution and data-capturing system, was used for the most recent voter registration process, in the lead-up to Mozambique's upcoming municipal (2023) and general elections (2024).
- **Finding 5:** The 2023 preliminary voter registration statistics mark the first decline in registered voters since biometric elections were deployed in the 2008/2009 electoral cycle. This is attributed to several factors including (a) machine breakdowns in numerous registration posts, and (b) the failure to open some registration posts due to the delayed arrival of equipment.
- **Findings 6:** Mozambique does not have a stand-alone, comprehensive law on the protection of personal data to regulate the collection, processing, storage, and use of biometric voter data in digitised voter registers.

## Key Recommendations

- **The Government of Mozambique is urged to:**  
Align biometric voter registration with international best practices by addressing operational, technological, and infrastructural gaps hampering effective and inclusive biometric voter registration.
- **Civil society actors in Mozambique are urged to:**  
Engage lawmakers and parliamentary committees, and advocate for the enactment of a stand-alone data protection law.

The findings in this report serve as a call to action for the proper use and protection of voters' biometric data.

# Introduction

The Republic of Mozambique gained independence on June 25, 1975, after 10 years of a bitter armed struggle that put an end to almost five centuries of Portuguese colonial rule.<sup>2</sup> The Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), which had spearheaded the independence struggle, formed the governing party of independent Mozambique, and installed a Marxist-Leninist system. Under this system, FRELIMO titled itself as the sole representative of the Mozambican people without elections as a way of securing the people's legitimacy.<sup>3</sup>

The adoption of a new Constitution in 1990<sup>4</sup> paved the way for the first multiparty elections that were held in October 1994, effectively turning the Republic of Mozambique into a multiparty republic with a single legislative house.<sup>5</sup> Since then, all elections (parliamentary, municipal) in Mozambique have been based on the system of proportional representation, except for presidential elections.<sup>6</sup> Under this system, each of the country's 10 provinces plus the national capital city, Maputo, is considered a constituency. Under article 148 of the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique, the President is elected through a single constituency system, under which the winning candidate must garner at least 51% of the vote, with a second round being held between the two top candidates in case no one wins an outright majority.<sup>7</sup>

Every five years, the election cycle begins with the municipal elections in one year, to be followed by the general elections the next year. The timing of the 1998 municipal elections, one year prior to the general elections of 1999, has meant that every general election is preceded by municipal elections the year before. While this may benefit political parties

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<sup>2</sup> South African History Online, 'Mozambique gains independence,' <https://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/mozambique-gains-independence>, accessed 18 May 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Britannica, 'Frelimo,' <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Frelimo>, accessed 18 May 2023.

<sup>4</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique (2004, as amended in 2018), <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC117331/>, accessed 18 May 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Mozambique, Parliamentary Chamber: Assembleia Da Republica, 'Elections Held in 1994,' [http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2223\\_94.htm](http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2223_94.htm), accessed 18 May 2023; Britannica, 'Mozambique: Facts & Stats,' <https://www.britannica.com/facts/Mozambique>, accessed 18 May 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Article 135, Para 2, The Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique (2004, as amended in 2018), <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC117331/>, accessed 18 May 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Article 148 of the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique (2004, as amended in 2018), <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC117331/>, accessed 18 May 2023.

who may want to use the results of the municipal elections to gauge the level of their popularity, the multiplicity of electoral processes within a short period of time has proved not only to be very expensive, but also to deviate people's attention from other critical development issues, such as legal identification and digitisation, to concentrate on political campaigning.

Mozambique has held six general elections since 1994, with the number of registered voters growing from 6148,842 in 1994, when Mozambique held its first multiparty elections, to 12,900,000 during the last elections in 2019 (*see table 2 below*).<sup>8</sup> Mozambique's main political forces and parties include FRELIMO, the Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo), and the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM). Frelimo won the 2019 presidential and legislative elections, securing a two-thirds majority in the national assembly.<sup>9</sup> Mozambique will hold its sixth municipal elections on October 11, 2023, which will trigger the beginning of the upcoming electoral cycle that will conclude with the presidential, legislative, and provincial elections in October 2024.<sup>10</sup>

Critically, voter registration plays an integral role in ensuring that fair and transparent elections are held in Mozambique. Contextually, Mozambique's general elections have been a source of tension and election-related violence due to a general perception of electoral fraud and integrity concerns, as evidenced by the 2014 presidential elections,<sup>11</sup> with biometric elections carrying the promise of conflict prevention.

Building on this, the *Secretariado Técnico da Administração Eleitoral* (Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration or STAE),<sup>12</sup> a state body within the Mozambique National Electoral Commission (CNE),<sup>13</sup> engaged private biometric and digital identity infrastructure

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<sup>8</sup> IESE, 'Política, Eleições e Participação dos Cidadãos,' <https://www.iese.ac.mz/projecto-eleicoes-e-participacao-dos-cidadaos/>, accessed 17 June 2023.

<sup>9</sup> The World Bank, 'The World Bank in Mozambique,' <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mozambique/overview>, accessed 19 May 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, 'Election Calendar,' <https://www.eisa.org/election-calendar/>, accessed 1 June 2023. See also: The World Bank, 'The World Bank in Mozambique,' <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mozambique/overview>, accessed 19 May 2023.

<sup>11</sup> ACLED, 'Election-Related Conflict in Mozambique,' <https://acleddata.com/2014/11/06/election-related-conflict-in-mozambique/>, accessed 6 June 2023. See also: Reuters, 'Politically tense Mozambique starts voter registration,' <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mozambique-vote-idUSBRE94Q0FG20130527>, accessed 19 May 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Mozambique, 'National Election Commission (CNE) and the *Secretariado Técnico da Administração Eleitoral*,' <https://www.ecfsadc.org/members/mozambique-national-election-commission/>, accessed 19 May 2023.

<sup>13</sup> The STAE is responsible for conducting voter registration and is the custodian of the voters' roll. The National Electoral Commission (CNE) is the main electoral supervisory body. See: Mozambique - National Election Commission (CNE), <https://www.ecfsadc.org/members/mozambique-national-election-commission/>, accessed 19 May 2023.

providers to create a single electronic voter register and deploy biometric technology during national elections.<sup>14</sup> This first took place during the 2008 provincial and municipal elections, and revealed an emerging trend of African countries, including Angola and Rwanda, opting for biometric elections for varying contextual reasons.<sup>15</sup>

Generally, there is significant value in using biometric technology for voter registration purposes and subsequently utilizing national, legal, identification cards for verification. Generally, biometric technology for electoral processes can “reinforce voters’ trust in the electoral process with perceived reductions in electoral fraud,”<sup>16</sup> and enhance security, accuracy, efficiency, and inclusivity in electoral processes. In the Mozambique context, biometric voter registration has enabled more people to register as voters, thus enabling the exercise of their democratic and constitutional right to select their leaders.<sup>17</sup> Further, because of difficulties in acquiring national identity cards, people view the electoral card as an alternative for their identification.

Conversely, as this report details, it is critical to address various concerns that underpin biometric systems. For example, the processing of sensitive (biometric) data without an appropriate and comprehensive legal framework can give rise to privacy, data security and data protection violations. Additionally, the deployment of biometric systems is accompanied by steep financial and infrastructural implications, noting that these systems require specialized hardware and software to be used, regularly maintained, and audited.

Further, these systems require reliable internet connectivity and reliable power supplies for seamless operation, both of which are a challenge in Mozambique. Lastly, biometric

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<sup>14</sup> Innovatrics, ‘Using Biometrics to Clean Voter Register for Credible Elections,’ <https://www.innovatrics.com/references/using-biometrics-to-clean-voter-register-for-credible-elections/>, accessed 19 May 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Harrison Adewale Idowu, ‘Biometric Technologies and the Prospect of Sustainable Democracy in Africa,’ *Journal of African Elections*, <https://www.eisa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2021-journal-of-african-elections-v20n1-biometric-technologies-prospect-sustainable-democracy-africa-eisa.pdf>, accessed 19 May 2023.

<sup>16</sup> Alan Gelb and Anna Diofasi, ‘Biometric Elections in Poor Countries: Wasteful or a Worthwhile Investment?’ CGD Working Paper 435, Center for Global Development, <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/biometric-elections-poor-countries-wasteful-or-worthwhile-investment.pdf>, accessed 6 June 2023.

<sup>17</sup> Article 73 on Universal Suffrage: “The Mozambican people shall exercise political power through elections of their representatives by universal, direct, equal and periodic suffrage and by secret ballot, through referenda on major national issues, and through the permanent democratic participation of citizens in the affairs of the nation.” The Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique (2004, as amended in 2018), <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC117331/>, ‘Article 73, Chapter IV Political Rights, Freedoms and Guarantees,’ accessed 18 May 2023. See also: Law No. 8/2013 of 27 February 2013 regulating presidential and legislative elections, <https://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/africa/MZ/mozambique-law-no.-8-2013-of-27-february-2013/view>, accessed 19 May 2023.



systems carry the risk of false negatives or positives – i.e., the misidentification of individuals or the failure to recognize legitimate individuals – giving rise to exclusion and inequality, which can yield voter disenfranchisement or unequal access to the electoral process.

As rightly stated in a report by the Center for Global Development:

*“...the use of technology only needs to decrease the likelihood of serious post-election violence by a few percentage points to make it a worthwhile investment. The high risk of failure can be mitigated by recognizing that technology can only be helpful in some circumstances and by screening potential cases before committing to support them... [further] we argue that support for voter registration should include plans to harness its momentum to strengthen core identity management systems...”<sup>18</sup>*

## Methodology

**Table 1: Research Topic and Research Questions (by MISA Mozambique)**

<b>Research Topic</b>	Biometric Elections in Mozambique
<b>Research Questions</b>	How has Mozambique integrated biometrics into its voter registration processes?

To investigate Mozambique’s integration of biometrics into its electoral processes, and specifically voter registration (research purpose), this report adopted a qualitative approach using mixed methods. This was restricted to a desk review of relevant studies and reports. The researchers held informal and anonymised discussions with individuals. This research methodology is appropriate for exploring complex and nuanced topics such as biometric elections in Mozambique. Mozambique was selected as a focus country because of its ongoing deployment of biometric technologies into its voter registration processes. This research report was limited by time constraints.

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<sup>18</sup> Alan Gelb and Anna Diofasi, ‘Biometric Elections in Poor Countries: Wasteful or a Worthwhile Investment?’ CGD Working Paper 435, Center for Global Development, <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/biometric-elections-poor-countries-wasteful-or-worthwhile-investment.pdf>, accessed 6 June 2023.

# Glossary

<b>Biometrics</b>	A measurable physical characteristic or personal behavioral trait used to recognize the identity, or verify the claimed identity, of an applicant. This report details the collection of biometrics, namely fingerprints and iris scans. <sup>19</sup>
<b>Biometric Elections</b>	The use of biometric technology, such as fingerprints, iris scans, or facial recognition, in the electoral process.
<b>Biometric Voter Registration</b>	The use of biometric technology for the conduct of voter registration.
<b>Voter Roll</b>	Registry of voters used for verification of accuracy of individual voter's data.

<sup>19</sup> NIST, 'Glossary – Biometrics,' <https://csrc.nist.gov/glossary/term/biometrics>, accessed 3 February 2023.

# Digital Identification in Mozambique: Current Trends and Developments

*Guided by the understanding that biometric elections and voter registrations rely on core identity management systems and will be impacted by advancements in the broader national ID, civil registration, and digital ID spheres, this section documents Mozambique’s digital identification drives. This section also magnifies the role played by international institutions.*

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As of 2023, the Republic of Mozambique (Mozambique) had an estimated population of 32 million people in a territory of 799,380 km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>20</sup> It is reported that “60% of the Mozambican population lack official civil identification,”<sup>21</sup> with 52.9% and *circa* 33% of the population possessing a national identity and voter cards respectively.<sup>22</sup> Mozambique is ranked as a low-income country with an ID coverage gap, where “more than one in three adults do not have an ID.”<sup>23</sup>

Further, Mozambique ranks low in the e-government development index (173 out of 193 countries), which assesses, *inter alia*, “how a country is using information technologies to promote access and inclusion of its people.”<sup>24</sup> The Alliance for Affordable Internet (2021) reported that only ‘4% of Mozambique’s population has meaningful access to the internet,

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<sup>20</sup> Instituto Nacional de Estatística – Moçambique, ‘Population 2023,’ <http://www.ine.gov.mz/>, accessed 22 May 2023; Britannica, ‘Mozambique: Facts & Stats,’ <https://www.britannica.com/facts/Mozambique>, accessed 22 May 2023.

<sup>21</sup> Idah Z. Pswarayi-Riddihough, World Bank Country Director for Mozambique, Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritius and Seychelles, ‘World Bank Supports Mozambique’s Efforts towards Access to Identification and Digital Transformation,’ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/10/22/world-bank-supports-mozambique-s-efforts-towards-access-to-identification-and-digital-transformation>, accessed 22 May 2023.

<sup>22</sup> Portal do Governo de Moçambique, <https://portaldogoverno.gov.mz>, accessed 9 June 2023.

<sup>23</sup> This is “based on data from the 18 low-income countries that were included in the survey—Afghanistan, Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Guinea, Haiti, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan, Togo, Uganda, and Zimbabwe—weighted to be regionally representative.” See: The World Bank Group & ID4D, ‘Global ID Coverage, Barriers, and Use by the Numbers: Insights from the ID4D-Findex Survey,’ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/953621531854471275/Global-ID-Coverage-Barriers-and-Use-by-the-Numbers-Insights-from-the-ID4D-Findex-Survey.pdf>, accessed 22 May 2023.

<sup>24</sup> According to the UN, the E-Government Development index “incorporates the access characteristics, such as the infrastructure and educational levels, to reflect how a country is using information technologies to promote access and inclusion of its people. The EGDI is a composite measure of three important dimensions of e-government, namely: provision of online services, telecommunication connectivity and human capacity.” See: UN E-Government Knowledgebase, ‘Mozambique,’ <https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country-Information/id/116-Mozambique>, accessed 22 May 2023.

with 29% of the population having basic access and 67% of the population being classified as ‘unconnected.’<sup>25</sup>

**Table 2: County Context**

<b>Mozambique: Country Context</b>	
<b>Population (Nos.)</b>	32,419,747 <sup>26</sup>
<b>National ID Cards (Biometric)</b>	52.9% of the population
<b>Voter Cards</b>	c. 33% of the population
<b>E-Gov Development Index</b>	173 of 193 <sup>27</sup>
<b>Internet Access (Meaningful Connectivity, 2021)</b>	4%

Generally, Mozambique lacks a fully operational, harmonized, and interoperable digital identity (ID) system. Despite Mozambique’s civil registration, vital statistics, and national identity systems being managed under three separate agencies and ministries,<sup>28</sup> each entity relies on the Unique Citizen Identification Number (NUIC) for each Mozambican citizen which is assigned at birth.<sup>29</sup>

The NUIC, which was approved and mandated under Decree 44/2010 as of November 2, 2010 is used by different government agencies for citizen identification and facilitates the issuance of citizens' documentation such as the *Bilhete de identidade* - Mozambique’s biometric national ID card capturing fingerprint data, the driver’s license, and passports, amongst others.

<sup>25</sup> A4AI, ‘Mozambique: Meaningful Connectivity – Fact Sheet,’ [https://a4ai.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/MC\\_Mozambique\\_FS\\_Screen\\_V1.pdf](https://a4ai.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/MC_Mozambique_FS_Screen_V1.pdf), accessed 22 May 2023.

<sup>26</sup> Instituto Nacional de Estatística – Moçambique, ‘Population 2023,’ <http://www.ine.gov.mz/>, accessed 22 May 2023.

<sup>27</sup> UN E-Government Knowledgebase, ‘Mozambique,’ <https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country-Information/id/116-Mozambique>, accessed 22 May 2023.

<sup>28</sup> UN LIA Task Force Secretariat, ‘Implementation of the UN Legal Identity Agenda in selected African Countries: Synthesis Report Review of the 10 Country Assessment Reports,’ <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/53rd-session/documents/BG-3f-UN-Legal-Identity-Agenda-in-selected-African-Countries-E.pdf>, accessed 1 June 2023.

<sup>29</sup> Club of Mozambique, ‘Mozambique: Parliament acknowledges need for unique national identification number,’ <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/mozambique-parliament-acknowledges-need-for-unique-national-identification-number/>, accessed 22 May 2023.

Crucially, for individuals to register as voters in Mozambique, they are required to produce identification documentation, such as the biometric ID card issued by the National Civil Identification Directorate (DNIC). This linkage is proving challenging with reports that citizens located in Maputo, Mozambique’s capital city, and its environs, are struggling to obtain national ID cards in 2023 due to “corruption and slowness in the issuing of identity cards.”<sup>30</sup>

To mitigate this challenge, voters can register using other documents such as a passport, driver’s license, official birth certificate, military ID, student card, or work card. Further, in the absence of any identification document, leaders at the ward level can use an affidavit, supported by witnesses, vouching that an individual is a resident in their area.

## Efforts by International Institutions

Post COVID-19 pandemic, the digital identification conversation has continued to inch higher up in the Mozambique government’s agenda influenced by international institutions, such as the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank.<sup>31</sup> Mozambique’s contextual realities (*highlighted above*) formed the basis for the UN’s selection of Mozambique as a pilot country earmarked for improvements in the registration and national identity database under the UN Legal Identity Agenda.<sup>32</sup>

Additionally, the World Bank, under the ‘Government of Mozambique’s Digital Governance and Economy (EDGE) Project’, approved a 5-year, USD 150 million grant to increase “access to legal identification, digital public services, and digital business opportunities” in the country, with an 80%-20% budgetary split for investments and technical assistance and capacity building respectively.<sup>33</sup> Explaining the rationale for this investment, the World

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<sup>30</sup> Club of Mozambique, ‘Mozambique: Users denounce corruption in issuing of ID cards,’ <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/mozambique-users-denounce-corruption-in-issuing-of-id-cards-231839/>, accessed 6 June 2023.

<sup>31</sup> Research ICT Africa & the Centre for Internet and Society, ‘Digital Identity in Mozambique,’ [https://researchictafrica.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Mozambique\\_3.11.21.pdf](https://researchictafrica.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Mozambique_3.11.21.pdf), accessed 23 May 2023.

<sup>32</sup> UNDP, ‘Having a legal identity is fundamental to human rights,’ <https://www.undp.org/africa/blog/having-legal-identity-fundamental-human-rights>, accessed 23 May 2023.

<sup>33</sup> The World Bank, ‘Mozambique Digital Governance & Economy - Project Information Document (PID),’ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/566401624978714983/pdf/Project-Information-Document-Mozambique-Digital-Governance-Economy-P172350.pdf>, accessed 23 May 2023.

Bank's Country Director for Mozambique, Madagascar, Mauritius, Comoros, and Seychelles, Idah Pswarayi-Riddihough, stated that the current state of official identification:

*“leads to disenfranchisement and leaves large portions of the population, a majority of whom are women, without legal identity, preventing them from accessing schooling, and later in life financial services, pensions, formal jobs, entitlement claims, and property transactions.”<sup>34</sup>*

The EDGE project will be implemented by the National Institute of Electronic Government (INAGE), an agency that resides within the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST). A Project Implementation Steering Committee will be anchored at the MOST, with the involvement of the Ministries of Interior, Finance, and Justice.<sup>35</sup> The project executors are charged with increasing access to official identification, digital public services, and digital business opportunities, through four components.<sup>36</sup>

Targeted, emergency interventions continue to be prioritized to cater to the identification needs of internally displaced persons. Illustratively, the World Bank's Northern Crisis Recovery Project (NCRP) seeks to combine “ID and civil registration into a single process... [focusing] on those most likely to have difficulties obtaining official documentation,”<sup>37</sup> with support from the EDGE Project and Identification for Development Initiative (ID4D).

Building on this, the government of Mozambique is continuing to establish a digital institutional infrastructure in response to the push by international institutions and the local need for digitization in public administration. Illustratively, the digital infrastructure is being expanded to include other services, such as the management of public finances and revenue collection maximization.<sup>38</sup> In September 2022, the government approved the *Pacote de Medidas de Aceleração Econômica* (Economic Acceleration Measures Package or

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<sup>34</sup> The World Bank, 'World Bank Supports Mozambique's Efforts towards Access to Identification and Digital Transformation,' <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/10/22/world-bank-supports-mozambique-s-efforts-towards-access-to-identification-and-digital-transformation>, accessed 6 June 2023.

<sup>35</sup> The Ministry of Science and Technology and the National Institute of Information and Communication Technologies (INTIC) are listed as joint borrowers under the EDGE Project. See: The World Bank, 'Mozambique Digital Governance & Economy (P172350): Project Information Document,' <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/566401624978714983/pdf/Project-Information-Document-Mozambique-Digital-Governance-Economy-P172350.pdf>, accessed 23 May 2023.

<sup>36</sup> The World Bank, 'Mozambique Digital Governance & Economy - Project Information Document (PID),' <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/566401624978714983/pdf/Project-Information-Document-Mozambique-Digital-Governance-Economy-P172350.pdf>, accessed 23 May 2023.

<sup>37</sup> The World Bank, 'Identification and Civil Registration: A lifeline for displaced people in Mozambique,' <https://blogs.worldbank.org/african/identification-and-civil-registration-lifeline-displaced-people-mozambique>, accessed 23 May 2023.

<sup>38</sup> INTIC, <https://www.intic.gov.mz>, accessed 7 June 2023.

PAE). This seeks to “expand Mozambique’s economic development and diversify its economic activities through (i) tax incentives; (ii) debureaucratization; (iii) economic enhancement; and (iv) accountability.”<sup>39</sup>

# Results and Analysis: Biometric Elections in Mozambique

## Institutional Framework for Biometric Elections

### Electoral Management

Mozambique has a dual electoral management system. The National Electoral Commission (CNE) is the main electoral supervisory body, overseeing the operational activities of its state body, the STAE.<sup>40</sup> The STAE is responsible for conducting voter registration and is the custodian of the voters’ roll.

The CNE is constituted of 17 members, of whom seven are selected from among civil society organisations. The remaining 10 members are chosen by political parties based on the proportion of the number of seats they hold in Parliament. The chair of CNE must be selected from amongst the representatives of civil society and deputised by two representatives from the main political parties.<sup>41</sup>

In theory, the CNE is an independent body but in practice it operates as an extension of the political parties who are entitled to appoint some of its members. This arrangement was designed to be a confidence-building measure, given the 16-year history of armed conflict between the ruling party Frelimo and the main opposition RENAMO, which only ended with the first multiparty elections in 1994. To ensure that it had some measure of control against

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<sup>39</sup> Mayer Brown, ‘Mozambique Announces Economic Acceleration Package,’ <https://www.mayerbrown.com/en/perspectives-events/publications/2022/09/mozambique-anuncia-pacote-de-aceleracao-economica>, accessed 23 May 2023.

<sup>40</sup> Mozambique, ‘National Election Commission (CNE) and the *Secretariado Técnico da Administração Eleitoral*,’ <https://www.ecfsadc.org/members/mozambique-national-election-commission/>, accessed 25 May 2023.

<sup>41</sup> Act Number 6/2013 of 22 February, as amended and republished by Act Number 30/2014, of 26 September.

electoral fraud, RENAMO demanded that it should be represented at the level of the electoral management bodies.<sup>42</sup>

## **Biometric Voter Registration and Biometric Voter System**

### Overview

Voter registration is a fundamental step in Mozambique's electoral process. Generally, voter registration is important as it contributes to (a) ensuring that eligible voters are free to exercise their right to vote, (ii) avoiding multiple voting, (iii) facilitating voting operations by directing voters to their specific polling stations, and (iv) avoiding fraud through ballot stuffing.<sup>43</sup>

Mozambique's elections are preceded by a comprehensive voter registration in all 65 municipalities.<sup>44</sup> Voter registration seeks to establish the exact or approximate number of eligible voters for each election.<sup>45</sup> During the first two multiparty elections held in 1994 and 1999, voter registration was conducted manually, with the government capturing voter data in 'electoral books', i.e., large volumes of paperwork.<sup>46</sup>

Elections have traditionally been a source of tension and election-related violence in Mozambique, as evidenced by the 2014 presidential elections, with biometric elections carrying the promise of conflict prevention.<sup>47</sup> Guided by this promise and need to combat voter fraud and protect electoral integrity,<sup>48</sup> the Mozambique government, through CNE and STAE, commenced the revamping of its legacy voter register in June 2007 leveraging

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<sup>42</sup> Justo Venâncio Moisés Nauva, 'Evolução da Legislação Eleitoral em Moçambique: Análise de Mudanças Consecutivas na Composição e/vs. Estabilidade da CNE (1994-2014), 2014,' Eduardo Mondlane University.

<sup>43</sup> Ace Project, Purposes of Voter Registration — (aceproject.org), <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/et/ete/ete01/default>, accessed 6 June 2023.

<sup>44</sup> Club of Mozambique, 'Mozambique: Government creates 12 new municipalities – Watch,' <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/mozambique-government-creates-12-new-municipalities-watch-226840/>, accessed 6 June 2023.

<sup>45</sup> In the following year, the same exercise is held in other parts of the country for the general elections. Previously registered voters are encouraged to inspect the voters roll to verify their data. Those who will attain the age of 18 by the date of elections are also registered. The Electoral Act, <https://gazettes.africa/archive/mz/2002/mz-government-gazette-series-i-supplement-dated-2002-10-10-no-41.pdf>, accessed 6 June 2023.

<sup>46</sup> Researchers own input.

<sup>47</sup> ACLED, 'Election-Related Conflict in Mozambique,' <https://acleddata.com/2014/11/06/election-related-conflict-in-mozambique/>, accessed 25 May 2023. See also: Reuters, 'Politically tense Mozambique starts voter registration,' <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mozambique-vote-idUSBRE94Q0FG20130527>, accessed 6 June 2023.

<sup>48</sup> Innovatrics, 'Using Biometrics to Clean Voter Register for Credible Elections,' <https://www.innovatrics.com/references/using-biometrics-to-clean-voter-register-for-credible-elections/>, accessed 25 May 2023.



biometric technologies, which were piloted during the 2008 provincial and municipal elections and the 2009 presidential election.

### Technical Infrastructure

To date, the government of Mozambique has held biometric elections three times, in 2009, 2014, and 2019, with CNE and STAE overseeing Mozambique’s transition. This was facilitated through partnerships with international and local, private, biometrics and identity solutions providers, including Innovatrics,<sup>49</sup> Face Technologies, and Laxton Group.<sup>50</sup> Innovatrics and an unknown Mozambican company deployed Mozambique’s first electronic voter registration system during the 2008/2009 elections. This system sought to “[prevent] duplicate votes and [ensure] that elections take place in the utmost democratic environment.”<sup>51</sup>

**Table 3: Mozambique’s Biometric Elections Infrastructure (Innovatrics, 2008–2009)**

<b>Mobile Electronic Voter Registration System (MEVRS)<sup>52</sup> (Innovatrics)<sup>53</sup></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>MEVRS:</b> This system leveraged Innovatrics’ ExpressID Automated Fingerprint Identification System (ExpressID AFIS) and integrated the mobile biometric solution provided by Face Technologies (Pty) Ltd (now Toppan FaceTech).<sup>54</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>ExpressID AFIS:</b> is “a biometric solution consisting of a computer database of fingerprint records, which is able to search and compare them to identify known or unknown fingerprints.”<sup>55</sup></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>For the 2008/2009 elections, Innovatrics provided:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>3,500 mobile voter registration systems:</b> 8-hour battery life with a fingerprint scanner capable of printing voter registration cards on-site.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<sup>49</sup> Innovatrics is an independent EU-based provider of biometric solutions. See: Innovatrics, ‘About Us,’ [About Us - Trusted Biometric Technology Partner - Innovatrics](#), accessed 25 May 2023.

<sup>50</sup> BiometricUpdate.com, ‘Mozambique deploys Laxton Group biometric voter registration solution,’ <https://www.biometricupdate.com/201805/mozambique-deploys-laxton-group-biometric-voter-registration-solution>, accessed 25 May 2023.

<sup>51</sup> Innovatrics, ‘Using Biometrics to Clean Voter Register for Credible Elections,’ <https://www.innovatrics.com/references/using-biometrics-to-clean-voter-register-for-credible-elections/>, accessed 25 May 2023.

<sup>52</sup> Innovatrics, ‘Using Biometrics to Clean Voter Register for Credible Elections,’ <https://www.innovatrics.com/references/using-biometrics-to-clean-voter-register-for-credible-elections/>, accessed 25 May 2023.

<sup>53</sup> Innovatrics, ‘Using Biometrics to Clean Voter Register for Credible Elections,’ <https://www.innovatrics.com/references/using-biometrics-to-clean-voter-register-for-credible-elections/>, accessed 25 May 2023.

<sup>54</sup> Face Technologies (Pty) Ltd, a provider of biometrics and card solutions, was acquired by global printing company Toppan Leefung and Toppan (Tokyo, Japan), through its South African-based subsidiary, Toppan Gravity in 2021. See: Toppan, ‘Toppan Gravity acquires the Government Identity Solutions Provider Face Technologies to gain a strong foothold in Africa,’ <https://www.toppan.com/en/news/2021/09/newsrelease210906.html>, accessed 7 June 2023.

<sup>55</sup> Innovatrics, ‘Glossary - AFIS (Automated Fingerprint Identification System),’ <https://www.innovatrics.com/glossary/afis-automated-fingerprint-identification-system/>, accessed 25 May 2023.

- ❖ **National Biometric Database:** with deduplication and fraud analysis.
    - **Electronic Voter Register:** Algorithms deployed to prevent duplicates in the register.
  - ❖ **Voter List Printing**
- **Result - Voter Registration:** Registration by STAE of 10+ million citizens in the electronic register.

During the 2018/2019 elections, LaxtonGroup provided an end-to-end election solution.<sup>56</sup> This was driven by NEC’s desire to deploy ‘a secure, mobile identity solution to create a Voters’ Roll that included all eligible voters, including those in remote and rural areas.’<sup>57</sup> The Laxton/Artes Gráficas consortium was awarded the voter registration tender, without bidding, for the 2023 voter registration process.<sup>58</sup>

*Table 4: Mozambique’s Biometric Elections Infrastructure (LaxtonGroup, 2018–2019)*

**Central Voter Management System (VMS)<sup>59</sup>**  
**LaxtonGroup (2018)**

- **CVMS:** This system leveraged an end-to-end election solution that includes “biometric voter registration hardware and software; a central voter management system; registration and election day supplies; election officer training; supply-chain management, and in-country project management and technical support.”
- **For the 2018/2019 municipal and presidential elections, LaxtonGroup provided:**
  - ❖ **4,900 Registration Devices:** new laptops and batteries with new Biometric Registration kits and thermal printers capable of issuing Voter IDs upon enrolment. This allowed voters to receive a verified ID to present on election day for quick verification on the Voters’ Roll.
  - ❖ **Biometrics and Digital Identity Infrastructure:** created using multi-modal biometrics and upgraded TEA’s servers (software and hardware).
  - ❖ **Central Database and Voters’ List:** with deduplication and fraud analysis, resulting in the creation of a credible National Voters’ Roll meeting international standards.
- **Result - Voter Registration:** Registration of 6.8 million citizens in the Voters’ Roll.

<sup>56</sup> LaxtonGroup is an identity solutions provider headquartered in the Netherlands, with global offices in the Americas, APAC, and EMEA. See: Laxton, ‘Company Profile,’ <https://laxton.com/company-profile/>, accessed 25 May 2023.

<sup>57</sup> Laxton, ‘Mozambique’s Highest-Ever Voter Turnout: Case Study,’ <https://laxton.com/mozambique-municipal-elections-2018-national-elections-2019/>, accessed 25 May 2023.

<sup>58</sup> Club of Mozambique, ‘Special report: The machines didn’t break down, they were tampered with | CIP Mozambique Elections,’ <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/special-report-the-machines-didnt-break-down-they-were-tampered-with-cip-mozambique-elections-238557/>, accessed 7 June 2023.

<sup>59</sup> Laxton, ‘Mozambique’s Highest-Ever Voter Turnout: Case Study,’ <https://laxton.com/mozambique-municipal-elections-2018-national-elections-2019/>, accessed 25 May 2023.

## Practicalities of Voter Registration: From Data Capture to Voting

Mobile ID, a biometric digital identity solution and data-capturing system, is being deployed for voter registration purposes in the lead-up to Mozambique's upcoming municipal elections scheduled for October 11, 2023.<sup>60</sup> The municipal elections will pave the way for the general elections, which are scheduled for October 15, 2024. Mozambique's latest voter registration period runs from April 20, 2023 to June 3, 2023, with citizens across all 65 municipalities being called to register if they intend to vote.<sup>61</sup> For this exercise, STAE targeted 9.8 million eligible voters and has installed 4,292 fixed registration posts and 3,192 mobile registration units.<sup>62</sup> On June 3, 2023, STAE announced that it had registered 8.3 million voters.<sup>63</sup>

Using the Mobile ID system, each registration team is equipped with its own kit comprised of a computer, a camera, a printer and a fully charged battery. All data can be captured within 3-5 minutes and is stored in the unit. The equipment also has fingerprint capability. During the recently concluded voter registration process, voters received a biometric personal voter's card (PVC) with a newly deployed QR code that entitles them to exercise their right to vote at the same place where they register.

As illustrated in Figure 1 below, the card visibly displays voters' personal information, including (a) full name, (b) sex, (c) date of birth, (d) place of birth, (e) date of issue of the voter's card, (f) place of issue (i.e., voter registration place, also the pooling station), and (g) the voter's full residential address. It is unclear what data is captured in the quick response code (QR).<sup>64</sup> To verify that their data is correct, voters are required to show their national identity cards during registration.

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<sup>60</sup> Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, 'Election Calendar,' <https://www.eisa.org/election-calendar/>, accessed 1 June 2023.

<sup>61</sup> Club of Mozambique, 'Mozambique: Voter registration begins,' <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/mozambique-voter-registration-begins-236176/>, accessed 2 June 2023.

<sup>62</sup> Carta de Moçambique, 'Eleições Autárquicas: Arranca amanhã o recenseamento eleitoral (cartamz.com),' <https://cartamz.com/index.php/politica/item/13489-eleicoes-autarquicas-arranca-amanha-o-recenseamento-eleitoral>, accessed 9 June 2023.

<sup>63</sup> Africa News Bulletin, 'Mozambique: Provinces Dominated By Frelimo Once Again Have The Highest Number Of Registered Voters,' <https://africanewsbulletin.com/mozambique-provinces-dominated-by-frelimo-once-again-have-the-highest-number-of-registered-voters/>, accessed 8 June 2023.

<sup>64</sup> The original voter's card was paper based.



Figure 1: Biometric Personal Voter Card<sup>65</sup>

## Analysis: Mozambique's Adoption of Biometrics for Elections

The dynamic embrace of biometric technology and digital identity infrastructure has significant implications for the democratic process in Mozambique, with a specific impact on Mozambique's electoral systems and processes.

### Impact 1: Biometric Technology and Reliable Voter Register

Generally, biometric technologies for electoral purposes have been viewed as capable of refining and upgrading voter registers, with an accurate list of identifiable voters underpinning the free and fair electoral requirement. An accurate biometric voter register is also critical for demonstrating electoral integrity, which is critical for generating trust and ultimately averting conflict and election-related violence.<sup>66</sup>

Notably, a voter roll that promotes electoral integrity and credibility relies on three elements, including: “the **comprehensiveness** – the proportion of eligible voters included in the list, which ensures that electors are able to exercise their right to vote; **the currency of the list** – the extent to which information is updated, **and its accuracy** – the rate of error

<sup>65</sup> Club of Mozambique, 'Mozambique: Renamo asks for forensic audit on QR code inserted in voter cards,' <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/mozambique-renamo-asks-for-forensic-audit-on-qr-code-inserted-in-voter-cards-237920/>, accessed 8 June 2023.

<sup>66</sup> Harrison Adewale Idowu, 'Biometric Technologies and the Prospect of Sustainable Democracy in Africa,' Journal of African Elections, <https://www.eisa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2021-journal-of-african-elections-v20n1-biometric-technologies-prospect-sustainable-democracy-africa-eisa.pdf>, accessed 27 May 2023.

in names, addresses, gender, the date of birth.”<sup>67</sup> Thus, Peter Wolf, an expert on democracy and technology, describes the importance of a credible voter register as follows: “*A credible voter register confers legitimacy on the electoral process, helps prevent electoral fraud and ensures that every eligible voter can vote in an election and that they can do so only once.*”<sup>68</sup>

While STAE and CNE have managed to progressively coopt the support of private players to deploy increasingly technical and more comprehensive voter registers and systems, the **quality of the data in these registers has been questioned**. Following the 2019 elections, the EU Election Observation Mission noted the following:

*“Insufficient measures were taken to ensure the quality of the voter register. Neither did the CNE and STAE take steps to cleanse the voter register resulting in an undisclosed number of multiple registrations nor did accountable institutions address the concerns expressed by political parties and civil society groups in relation to the voter registration.”*<sup>69</sup>

While technology can support efforts to avert election-related violence and electoral fraud, the promotion of stakeholders’ confidence and trust in the electoral process depends on a **“reliable permanent voter register ... that accurately reflects the number of voters in each province.”**<sup>70</sup>

### **Impact 1A: Biometric Elections and Mozambique’s Number of Registered Voters**

Since the embrace of biometric elections from the 2008/2009, Mozambique has marked a 48.34% increase in the number of registered voters till the 2018/2019 cycle. However, the preliminary voter registration statistics from the STAE for the 2023/2024 electoral cycle demonstrate a 15.92% decrease in the number of registered voters, with reports indicating that 1.4 million people were unable to register.<sup>71</sup> This report notes that it is difficult to

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<sup>67</sup> Peter Wolf, ‘Introducing Biometric Technology in Elections,’ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/introducing-biometric-technology-in-elections-reissue.pdf>, accessed 27 May 2023.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> European Union Election Observation Mission, ‘Republic of Mozambique – Final Report General and Provincial Assembly Elections,’ 15 October 2019, [https://clubofmozambique.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/EUEOM\\_MOZ2019\\_Final-Report\\_EN.pdf](https://clubofmozambique.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/EUEOM_MOZ2019_Final-Report_EN.pdf), accessed 6 June 2023.

<sup>70</sup> European Union Election Observation Mission, ‘Republic of Mozambique – Final Report General and Provincial Assembly Elections,’ 15 October 2019, [https://clubofmozambique.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/EUEOM\\_MOZ2019\\_Final-Report\\_EN.pdf](https://clubofmozambique.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/EUEOM_MOZ2019_Final-Report_EN.pdf), accessed 6 June 2023.

<sup>71</sup> Club of Mozambique, ‘Mozambique Elections: 1.4 million potential voters not registered – AIM,’ <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/mozambique-elections-1-4-million-potential-voters-not-registered-aim-238699/>, accessed 6 June 2023.

conclusively determine whether the number of registered voters would have differed if Mozambique had continued to rely on a paper-based voter registration system.

**Table 5: Registered Biometric Voters, Mozambique<sup>72</sup>**

Election Year	Number of Registered Voters (Poax)	Change (%)
2009	9,871,949	[N/A, Baseline]
2014	10,964,377	11.07%
2019	13,161,063	33.32%
2023	8,300,000	-15.92%

On the surface, these figures demonstrate that the use of biometric technologies **may have positively impacted** voter registration drives across multiple electoral cycles, except for the recently concluded exercise. Illustratively, the sharp increase of registered voters between 2009 and 2019 reveals that an additional 3.289 million people were able to exercise their democratic right to vote in Mozambique’s during the last three electoral cycles.

**Table 6: Voter Registration as Gateway to Citizens’ Access to Identification**

**Voter Registration: Identification Gateway**

One of the unintended but positive effects of voter registration is its ability to function as a gateway for citizen’s access to identification. In some instances, voter registration has become an incentive for people to access some form of biometric identity document. This is the case in rural areas, where access to government services is usually difficult. Voter registration has become an incentive for people to acquire a document that can be used for identification, not necessarily for voting purposes.<sup>73</sup>

The relatively modest growth in the number of registered voters in 2009 and 2014 can be explained by issues related to local politics rather than a lack of enthusiasm by eligible voters to register.<sup>74</sup> The challenges raised in Table 7 below cast doubt on the efficacy of Mozambique’s biometric elections, with 1.4 million potential voters unable to register.

<sup>72</sup> Domingos Manuel do Rosário, Elísio Emanuel Muendane, ‘To be registered? Yes. But voting? – Hidden electoral disenfranchisement of the registration system in the 2014 elections in Mozambique,’ *Politique Africaine*, [https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E\\_POLAF\\_144\\_0073--to-be-registered-yes-but-to.htm](https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E_POLAF_144_0073--to-be-registered-yes-but-to.htm), accessed 6 June 2023. See also: European Union Election Observation Mission, ‘Republic of Mozambique – Final Report General and Provincial Assembly Elections,’ 15 October 2019, [https://clubofmozambique.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/EUEOM\\_MOZ2019\\_Final-Report\\_EN.pdf](https://clubofmozambique.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/EUEOM_MOZ2019_Final-Report_EN.pdf), accessed 6 June 2023.

<sup>73</sup> Information from the report researchers.

<sup>74</sup> Researchers’ own input: ‘In 2009, there seemed to be a foregone conclusion that then-incumbent President Armando Guebuza was poised to win his second term. This served as a discouragement for many people to register to vote. In 2014, the leader of the main opposition, the late Afonso Dhlakama, did not give a clear early indication that he was going to run, since he was holed up in the Gorongosa Mountains, due to the armed skirmishes that he was engaged in with the government, and that many of his supporters were not sure if he was going to run.’

The 2023 preliminary voter registration statistics also mark the first decline in registered voters since biometric elections were deployed in the 2008/2009 electoral cycle. This has been attributed to lack of experience from the staff, breakdowns, and interruption of power supply.<sup>75</sup> Significant voter registration challenges impact stakeholders’ confidence and trust in the electoral process, and ultimately the democratic process.

**Table 7: 2023 Voter Registration Challenge**

<b>Challenges: Voter Registration Process, 2023</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Centro de Integridade Pública (CIP), Mozambican NGO, revealed problems in implementation of biometric system during 2023 voter registration process.</i></li> <li>❖ <b>Core Challenge – Start of Registration:</b> CIP identified following challenges at the start of registration: (a) machine breakdowns in numerous registration posts, and (b) failure to open some registration posts due to delayed arrival of equipment.<sup>76</sup></li> <li>❖ <b>Core Challenge – Close of Registration:</b> On 6 June, reports indicated that on the last day of registration, “...there were enormous queues at many registration posts particularly in the central and northern provinces. They were frustrated by widespread power cuts, and by mysterious breakdowns of the computers and printers used in the registration posts.”<sup>77</sup></li> <li>• <b>Result 1:</b> these delays could have led to incomplete registrations and fewer eligible voters being registered in the system.</li> <li>• <b>Result 2:</b> mechanical breakdown of voter registration equipment and electricity cuts underscore the need to strengthen Mozambique’s supporting infrastructure and to build capacity of technical staff. These are required to address operational and infrastructural gaps that are hampering the streamlining of Mozambique’s biometric voter registration process.</li> <li>• <b>Result 3</b> – while breakdowns and delays occasionally occur where biometric technology is deployed in countries with infrastructural challenges, these reinforce opposition complaints that these are ‘deliberate tactics’ geared at slowing the registration process in areas where the opposition claims to enjoy greater support.<sup>78</sup> This challenge was flagged in the 2019 EU Election Observer Mission final report.<sup>79</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>75</sup> CIP, Prospects for Governance in 2023: 10 Risks should be Monitored in Election Year in Mozambique,’ <https://www.cipmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Prospects-for-Governance-in-2023-10-Risks-should-be-Monitored-in-Election-Year-in-Mozambique-.pdf>, accessed 9 June 2023.

<sup>76</sup> 360 Mozambique, ‘CIP Warns of Delays and Problems with Voter Registration Machines,’ <https://360mozambique.com/economy/cip-warns-of-delays-and-problems-with-voter-registration-machines/>, accessed 6 June 2023.

<sup>77</sup> Club of Mozambique, ‘Mozambique Elections: 1.4 million potential voters not registered – AIM,’ <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/mozambique-elections-1-4-million-potential-voters-not-registered-aim-238699/>, accessed 6 June 2023.

<sup>78</sup> Club of Mozambique, ‘Mozambique Elections: 1.4 million potential voters not registered – AIM,’ <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/mozambique-elections-1-4-million-potential-voters-not-registered-aim-238699/>, accessed 6 June 2023.

<sup>79</sup> “There were also allegations that authorities intentionally delayed the registration process in opposition strongholds and that registration brigades were concentrated in ruling party strongholds.” See: European Union Election Observation Mission, ‘Republic of Mozambique – Final Report General and Provincial Assembly Elections,’ 15 October 2019, [https://clubofmozambique.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/EUEOM\\_MOZ2019\\_Final-Report\\_EN.pdf](https://clubofmozambique.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/EUEOM_MOZ2019_Final-Report_EN.pdf), accessed 6 June 2023.

This report urges the government of Mozambique to urgently address the challenges with Mozambique’s biometric voter register and registration process to promote electoral integrity and credibility. Additionally, addressing these challenges will promote greater transparency and voter equality based on the principle of ‘one-voter, one-vote.’

### **Impact 2: Biometric Elections on Digitization Agenda**

This report argues that a correlation exists between the progressive deployment of biometric elections and a government's digitization agenda (*see Digital Identification in Mozambique: Current Trends and Developments above*). Critically, the implementation of biometric elections often requires the digitization of voter registration processes, data management systems, and election administration. This is aligned with the government's broader digitization agenda, under the EDGE Project, which is leveraging technology to improve public administration, and service delivery.

This report notes that the progressive deployment of biometric elections helps to generate political will for the broader digitization and digital identification agendas. Illustratively, a representative of the Mozambique National Institute of Communications (INCM), stated that while Mozambique still faces challenges with its system of formal legal identification, the “digital identification of voters contributes both to avoiding duplication of voters and to building reliable statistics.”<sup>80</sup>

### **Impact 3: Legal Framework for Privacy and Data Protection**

The State, through the electoral management bodies, holds a significant amount of personal, including sensitive, data related to those who register to vote in each election. Mozambique does not have a stand-alone, comprehensive law on the protection of personal data, and no enacted law defines sensitive personal data.<sup>81</sup> The Regulatory Authority for Communications agrees that legal mechanisms are required to avoid the inappropriate use

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<sup>80</sup> Interview respondent.

<sup>81</sup> DLA Piper, ‘Data Protection Laws of the World - Mozambique,’ [https://www.dlapiperdataprotection.com/system/modules/za.co.heliosdesign.dla.lotw.data\\_protection/functions/handbook.pdf?country-1=MZ](https://www.dlapiperdataprotection.com/system/modules/za.co.heliosdesign.dla.lotw.data_protection/functions/handbook.pdf?country-1=MZ), accessed 6 June 2023.



of voter registration data, and to ensure that such data is disposed once the purposes for which it was originally collected ceases to be valid.<sup>82</sup>

However, Article 41 of the Constitution provides citizens a right to protection of their privacy, whereas Article 71 specifies the need to ‘legislate on access, generation, protection and use of computerized personal data (either by public or private entities).’<sup>83</sup> To date, the implementing legislation has not yet been approved.<sup>84</sup>

Mozambique has enacted various sectoral laws that mandate privacy obligations,<sup>85</sup> but these do not provide protections for biometric data collected and stored in voter registers and electronic registers. Illustratively, the 2017 Electronics Transactions Act (ETA 2017) contains provisions for the protection of personal data and provides that any collection, processing, or electronic dissemination of personal data by a data controller must be precise, complete, and updated without prejudice to the subject’s confidentiality.<sup>86</sup> While the ETA touches on aspects of data processing, the law cannot comprehensively address the specific requirements and considerations involved in the collection and use of biometric data for electronic voter registers.

**Table 8: Data Protection Concerns**

**Biometric Elections: Data Protection Concerns**

- **Mission and Purpose Creep:** Biometric registers and centralised voter management system pose significant risks for data subjects, namely Mozambican citizens, and foreign nationals. Data in biometric registers and centralised systems can be used for purposes beyond those envisaged under electoral laws in Mozambique, or for purposes beyond the original purpose. This can expose voters’ data to various data breaches, including unauthorized access, identity theft, amongst others. In Mozambique there are no legal safeguards to ensure that voter registration data is restricted by the purpose limitation. E.g., it is not a crime for anyone who has a copy of the register to pass information to others.

<sup>82</sup> Interview respondent.

<sup>83</sup> Articles 41 and 71, the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique (2004, as amended in 2014), [https://cdn.accf-francophonie.org/2019/03/mozambique\\_const-en.pdf](https://cdn.accf-francophonie.org/2019/03/mozambique_const-en.pdf), accessed 24 May 2023.

<sup>84</sup> DLA Piper, ‘Data Protection Laws of the World - Mozambique,’ [https://www.dlapiperdataprotection.com/system/modules/za.co.heliosdesign.dla.lotw.data\\_protection/functions/handbook.pdf?country-1=MZ](https://www.dlapiperdataprotection.com/system/modules/za.co.heliosdesign.dla.lotw.data_protection/functions/handbook.pdf?country-1=MZ), accessed 6 June 2023.

<sup>85</sup> These include: the Civil Code (Decree-Law no. 47344, of November 25, 1966, in force in Mozambique through Edict no. 22869, dated September 4, 1967); the Penal Code (Law no. 24/2019, of December 24, as amended by Law no. 17/2020 of 23 December); the Labour Law (Law no. 23/2007, of August 1); and the Electronic Transactions Law (Law no. 3/2017, of January 9).

<sup>86</sup> Electronics Transactions Act of 2017 (ETA 2017), <https://lexafrica.com/2017/08/review-of-the-electronic-transactions-act-in-mozambique/>, accessed 6 June 2023.

- **Inappropriate Use of Voter Registration Data:** Without a comprehensive data protection law safeguarding registers/systems that collect/store extensive personal, including sensitive, data, there is a high possibility that electorate data may be misused. In Mozambique, the requirement for voters to provide their full address during registration exposes them to potential risks if this information is mishandled, particularly due to the prevalence of political violence during elections.
- **Data Storage, Retention, Deletion:** There are no guarantees that voters' personal, including sensitive, data shared with the electoral management bodies will be securely stored, and the storage safeguards will exist. Additionally, the data retention period of voters' data is unclear, with the rules around data deletion once the election cycle has passed being more unclear.
- **Data Subjects Rights:** While the Electoral Act allows for registered voters to inspect the full register to ensure that their data is correct, individuals find it difficult to raise objections about the processing of their personal data, particularly preventing its use for direct marketing.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This report has shown that the use of biometric technology has had a progressive and positive impact on increasing the number of registered voters between the 2008/2009 and 2018/2019 electoral cycles in Mozambique. Additionally, progressive voter enrolment using biometric technology (i.e., fingerprint and facial recognition), reinforces the importance of technology in Mozambique's political and democratic systems, fostering support for digital identification and digitization initiatives.

Conversely, this report finds that the collection and storage of large amounts of personal and sensitive personal information carries significant risks for voters in Mozambique. Despite the existence of sectoral laws, voters' data protection requires the enactment of a comprehensive law governing the protection of personal data, which Mozambique lacks. The absence of this law creates ambiguity regarding crucial issues related to the usage of voters' data for specific purposes, among other concerns.

Considering the upcoming 2023/2024 municipal and presidential elections and the continued deployment of biometric technologies and voter management systems in Mozambique, this report proposes the following recommendations to government, and civil society.

## Recommendations to Government

We urge the Government of Mozambique to:

- Operationalize Article 71 of the Constitution and enact a comprehensive, stand-alone law on the access, generation, protection, and use of computerized personal data (either by public or private entities) This law should reflect international and regional best practices on data protection.
- Mozambique’s electoral management bodies, the CNE/STAE, should enhance the diligent management of voters' biometric data. Specifically, the CEN/STAE should:
  - ❖ Conduct impact assessments prior to each biometric voter registration process to evaluate the effectiveness of data privacy and protection measures.
  - ❖ Develop robust data protection policies and notices tailored to the management of voters’ biometric and personal data, and publicly avail the notice to the general public.
- Align biometric voter registration with international best practices by addressing operational, technological, and infrastructural gaps hampering effective and inclusive biometric voter registration.

## Recommendations to Civil Society Actors

We urge CSOs promoting digital rights in Mozambique to:

- Engage lawmakers and parliamentary committees, and advocate for the enactment of a stand-alone data protection law.
- Engage electoral management bodies and campaign for best practices in voters' biometric data management.

# Reference List

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The Electoral Act of Mozambique (6/2013 of 22 February) as amended and republished in Act number 30/2014, of 26 September.

The African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection (as adopted on 27 June 2014).

# Annex 1: Relevant Government Institutions

Institution	Role
<i>Electoral Management</i>	
National Electoral Commission (CNE)	Independent and impartial body responsible for supervising voter registration and electoral processes.
<i>Secretariado Técnico da Administração Eleitoral</i> (Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration or STAE)	Overall responsibility for the technical and administrative implementation of voter registration and elections.
<i>Digital Government</i>	
National Institute for Electronic Government (INAGE)	State Body: The backbone of e-government services, developing programmes for government use and offering maintenance services for the e-government domain.
National Institute for Information and Communications Technology (INTIC)	<p>ICT regulator tasked with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring a secure environment for information and communication technologies.</li> <li>• Registration and licensing of ICT services providers.</li> <li>• Establishing rules governing the functioning of the ICT sector.</li> <li>• Monitoring the extent to which legislation and other rules pertaining to ITCs are adhered to.</li> <li>• Promoting policies and best practices in the use of ICTs.</li> </ul> <p>Implemented the Electronic Government Network (GovNet).</p>
Regulatory Authority for Communications (INCM)	Responsible for regulating, supervising, inspecting, sanctioning and representing the postal and telecommunications sectors, as well as managing the radio frequency spectrum and numbering.
Centre for the Development of Financial Information Systems (CEDSIF)	Government digital financial management platform. At the core of CEDSIF's operations is the government's Digital Financial Management System (e-SISTAFE).
<i>Legal Identification</i>	
National Directorate for Civil Identification (DNIC)	The issuer of national identity cards.
National Immigration Service	The issuer of passports (citizens) and residence permits (foreign nationals).
National Institute for Road Transport (INATRO)	The issuer of driver's licenses.