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## Special report on Gurué: 2/3 of polling stations suspicious, with misconduct on both sides

A close look at the election results in Gurué shows possible misconduct in 41 of 67 polling stations. This election was between Frelimo and MDM with Renamo playing only a minor role; it appears that both Frelimo and MDM were involved in fraud and misconduct. Three types of fraud were reported:

**+ Ballot box stuffing:** Gurué saw what appears to be a national phenomenon in these municipal elections, of polling station heads ("presidentes") handing out extra ballot papers to supporters of the same party, who then deposited the extra votes in the ballot box. In Marromeu a man was jailed for a month for attempting to put 10 ballot papers in the ballot box. In Massinga and Ilha de Moçambique, polling station heads were arrested for handing out extra ballot papers to voters. We discuss detection of this below.

Votes are counted at the polling station, and the polling station president holds up each ballot paper and declares "valid vote for X" or "invalid vote" or "blank vote", and the ballot paper is then put on a pile on the floor. If party delegates are not watching closely, this offers two possibilities of fraud:

**+ Using blank votes:** Typically 2% of voters do not mark their ballot paper and put a blank vote into the box. During the count, if no one notices, the

president will give some of the ballots to their preferred party. If there are fewer than 1% blank votes, we consider that suspect.

**+ Calling votes invalid:** Although the electoral law says that an X or fingerprint should be put into the correct square on the ballot paper, it also says a vote is valid if the intent of the voter is clear. A president who is so minded can be strict and reject the votes for one of the parties if the X or fingerprint goes outside the box, even if the intent is clear. Many votes can be rejected in this way. This seems to have occurred in Gurué. Nationally in this election, 2.76% of votes were invalid ("nulo"). But in Gurué 6.47% of votes were invalid, and at three polling stations the invalid votes were an impossibly high 21%, 19% and 18%. We consider invalid votes over 6% to be suspect and over 10% to be obviously incorrect.

The table on page 2 gives details of the 41 suspect polling stations, based on the EISA parallel vote tabulation (PVT) of all 67 polling stations.

### Everyone involved, even at the same school

The contest in Gurué was between Frelimo which governed Gurué until 2013, and MDM which won an election in 2013 which was forced to be rerun by the Constitutional Council due to fraud by the district and provincial elections commissions. Renamo boycotted the 2013 election. In contrast to the rest of the country this year, Renamo gained few votes in Gurué.

## Gurué 2018 municipal elections - Suspicious polling stations and an estimate of who gained and lost votes

Voting Centre	Polling station code	blank <1%	nulo >6%	stuff?	Fre-limo	MDM	Re-namo
Ep1 Magar projecto	410203		10.08%		↑	↓	.
EP1 Magar projecto	410204		17.09%	.	↑	↓	.
Ep1 Magar projecto	410205		6.77%	.	.	↓	.
Ep1 Magar projecto	410206B/07		12.79%	.	.	↓	.
Epc 25 de Junho	410402		9.67%	.	.	.	.
Epc 25 de Junho	410403		9.28%	.	↑	↓	.
Epc 25 de Junho	410407A		8.88%	.	↑	↓	.
Epc 25 de Junho	410407B08	0.52%	19.79%	.	↑	↓	.
Epc Aeródromo	410502		8.89%	.	.	↑	.
Epc Aeródromo	410501		9.00%	☒	.	↑	.
Epc Aeródromo	410505		20.51%	.	.	↓	.
Epc Aeródromo	410506A	0.79%	6.69%	.	.	↑	.
Epc Aeródromo	410506B/07	0.59%	6.51%	☒	↓	↑	.
Epc chá Gurue	410002		12.31%	.	.	↓	.
Epc chá Gurue	410003		10.57%	.	.	↓	.
Epc chá Gurue	410004		9.40%	.	.	↓	.
Epc chá Gurue	410005		11.25%	.	.	↓	.
Epc chá Gurue	410007			☒	↑	.	.
Epc chá Gurue	410008			☒	↑	.	.
Epc chá Moçambique	410603		7.33%	.	.	.	.
Epc Contape	410101		14.21%	.	↑	↓	.
Epc Contape	410103		9.18%	.	↑	↓	.
Epc Contape	410104		8.51%	.	↓	.	.
Epc Contape	410105	0.88%	18.10%	.	↓	↑	.
Epc Contape	410106A	0.89%	9.50%	.	↓	↑	.
Epc Contape	410106B/07		7.20%	.	↓	↑	.
Epc Moneia	409902			☒	.	↑	.
Epc Moneia	409903	0.92%	7.20%	☒	↑	↓	.
Epc Moneia	409905		9.02%	.	.	↓	.
Epc Moneia	409906		6.67%	.	↓	↑	.
Epc Moneia	409907		11.32%	.	↑	↓	↑
Epc Moneia	409908		6.14%	.	.	.	.
EPc Montes Namuli	410301			☒	↑	↓	.
Epc Montes Namuli	410305		6.33%	.	.	.	.
EPC Montes Namuli	410306	0.00%	9.68%	.	↓	.	.
EPC Montes Namuli	410307		6.20%	.	↓	↑	.
EPC Montes Namuli	410308	0.86%		.	↑	↓	.
ESG Gurue	409801		7.11%	.	↑	↓	.
ESG Gurue	409802		12.14%	.	↓	↑	.
ESG Gurue	409804		7.06%	.	.	.	↑
ESG Gurue	409808B/09	0.43%		.	↑	.	.
				.	.	.	.
Gurue average		2.37%	6.47%	.	.	.	.
National average		1.85%	2.76%	.	.	.	.

## Table key

↑ = vote higher compared to neighbouring polling stations  
= party gained votes  
↓ = vote lower compared to neighbouring polling stations  
= party lost votes  
stuff? = possible ballot box stuffing  
Based on information collected by EISA in its 100% parallel vote tabulation (PVT)

Both MDM and Frelimo were involved in fraud, often in the same school, probably related to the

alliance of the polling station head. Thus at Contape primary school, Frelimo gained extra votes in two suspect polling stations where MDM lost votes, but Frelimo lost votes in three others where MDM gained votes. At polling station 410105 there were 18% invalid votes, which were taken away from Frelimo. But at the same school at polling station 4101003 there were 14% invalid votes, which were taken from MDM.

At Cha Gurué primary school ballot box stuffing benefitted Frelimo, but at Aerodromo it benefitted MDM.

Some polling stations had all three types of fraud. At Aerodromo (410606B/07) this benefitted MDM but at Moneia primary school (409903) this benefitted Frelimo.

## An observer's story

The first step in the count is that the polling station president takes the ballots out of the box and simply counts them. An observer picks up the story: "We saw a couple of cases of two ballot papers together, but that sometimes happens because of the way the folded ballots fall into the box. But then the president pulled out five ballots folded together. That was impossible to occur accidentally - they must have been folded together and then deposited. The Renamo party delegate objected and insisted that the numbers be read out."

Ballots come in a book and must be torn out; the number on the ballot gives the number of the polling station and position in the book. Knowing the number would tell if the ballots were from that polling station and had been torn out of the book together. So it was an obvious request.

"The head of the polling station became alarmed. Said the polling station manual said the only thing that could be done at that point was to count the ballots - reading out the number would come later, by which time it would be impossible to tell which were these five ballot papers. The Renamo delegate insisted so the head of the polling station took out his phone and started to phone the police. The mood in the room was not to

have a confrontation, so the Renamo delegate backed down," the observer said. "Clearly intimidated, and realising that any fraud was against MDM and not Renamo, the delegate said nothing else. The MDM delegate did not appear to be paying attention and never spoke. Similarly the MDM and Renamo members of the polling station team said nothing.

"The count began and I saw the head of the polling station hold up blank votes and say 'valid vote for Frelimo'. And I saw many MDM votes held up and declared invalid because the X went outside the box. In my polling station there we no blank votes and many invalid votes! But no one said anything."

## Comment:

### Fraud in plain sight - but no one noticed

It appears that both Frelimo and MDM cheated in Gurué, and that the fraud was obvious, but hardly anyone noticed. What went wrong?

Opposition parties see the civil service as biased toward Frelimo because only party supporters are given jobs. Thus they see the only form of control is to have party representatives at all levels of the electoral system. At each polling station there are six party representatives - one each from Frelimo, Renamo and MDM as part of the polling station staff (at the "mesa" or table) and one each as a "delegate" or poll watcher.

When a polling station head ("presidente") holds up a blank ballot paper and says it is a vote for a

party, there are four people from other parties who do not notice and do not complain. Similarly for votes with a big X called valid for one party and not for another. This is fraud in plain sight which can only be done if no one notices.

Precisely in order to catch this type of fraud, the law requires the long and slow process of the president holding up each ballot paper for all to see, and stating clearly "valid vote for X" or 'blank vote" or "invalid vote". But the charade has no point if no one watches.

Both Frelimo and MDM appear to have cheated, and their party delegates and mesa members did not notice when the cheating went against them. It appears that parties gave instructions as to how to cheat, but not as to how to catch the other side cheating.

There is no point in having so many party people at all levels of the electoral system if they are not trained and incentivised. That means being taught what to look for, and being reminded they in the polling station not just for the money, but to defend their parties.

Gurué was not sophisticated misconduct; it was simple fraud in plain sight because the watch dogs were asleep. *jh*

## What we look for

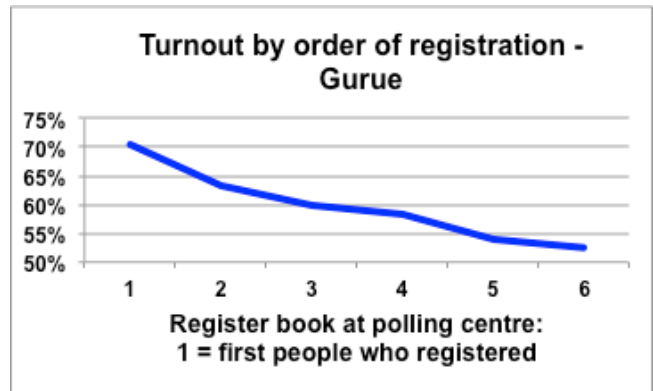
Looking for indications of fraud requires some care and caution - and the table of 41 polling stations cannot be seen as proof, but only as suspicious and an indication that something is wrong.

We do two things. First is to compare polling stations within the same polling centre - in Gurué all polling stations are classrooms in a school. Because everyone registering at the school lives around the school, it is usually assumed that all the polling stations in a school will have similar results (although obviously not exactly the same). Thus voters at Aerodromo primary school tended to back MDM while those at cha Gurué primary school tended to back Frelimo. We can compare adjoining classrooms to look for unexpected and suspicious differences between the polling stations. In the table we look at the 41 suspicious polling stations and ask if the parties did better or worse than in surrounding non-suspicious polling stations.

We use numbers to identify suspicious polling stations. Any polling station with less than 1% blank votes is suspicious. Any polling station with more than 6% invalid votes is suspicious, and any polling station with more than 10% of invalid votes is highly suspicious.

Looking for ballot box stuffing is more complex, because of the wide variation in turnout. We compare within a school to look for polling stations which have a suspiciously higher turnout than others. But we have to take into account that people who registered early are more likely to vote.

All voters registered between March and May this year. They registered at the polling centre, usually a school, where they vote. When a register book of 800 voters is filled, that book is assigned to a polling station (usually in a classroom in the school) and a new book started. The voter is given a photo id card with the polling station number, which has the first four digits for the polling centre (4101 for Contape primary school) followed by 01



for the first register book, 02 for the second book, etc.

In doing comparisons of turnout, one must take care, because the people who register early also turn out to be keen voters. Thus in Gurué the first polling stations, with register books 01, have a turnout of 70%, this falls to 63% for 02, and slowly down to close to 50% for the fifth and later books. Thus if we are looking for ballot box stuffing, the polling station number matters because it tells what turnout would be expected.

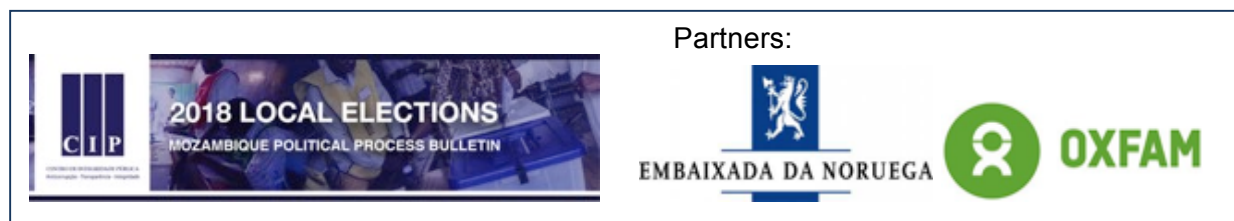
## Provocative police actions

Police used tear gas and rubber bullets against a large MDM election rally in the centre of Gurué on 29 September as they tried to clear a path for a Frelimo march to pass. Police had already arrested two MDM activists the day before, claiming they had attacked a Frelimo member. They were released without charge.

Then on 4 October Honordino Hilário was shot by a policeman in a village 13 km from Gurué. A leading figure in the MDM campaign, Hilário had spent the day mobilising MDM members at the local tea plantation, Unidade de Produção de Chá n.º1. He had not been in conflict with the police, MDM said.

Votar Moçambique called action against the rally "disproportionate and could be interpreted as intimidation", and "vehemently condemned police excesses" in the town.

During the count on the evening of 10 October, the electricity was cut for 20 minutes and police fired gunshots and tear gas outside Gurué secondary school; counting stopped but then resumed.



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