

Exploring Community Perceptions of Poverty in Beira City, Mozambique

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Abstract

This article analyses the perceptions of urban communities in the city of Beira, Mozambique, regarding the concept of poverty. Using a qualitative approach, the research was based on face-to-face interviews with heads of households and community leaders from the neighbourhoods of Goto, Praia Nova and Munhava Central, complemented by direct observation and document analysis. The results reveal that poverty is understood by the participants as a multidimensional phenomenon, involving income insecurity, unemployment, food insecurity, limited access to basic services, education and exclusion from decision-making processes. Although participants of community studies acknowledge the existence of public policies and government programs to combat poverty, these initiatives are perceived as insufficient, sporadic and distant from local realities. The absence of effective mechanisms for community inclusion in the decision-making process emerged as a central element in understanding the gap between formulated policies and lived experiences. It is believed that incorporating community voices into the processes of formulating and implementing public policies is fundamental to addressing urban poverty more effectively and in a socially just way.

Keywords: Poverty, multidimensional poverty, community perception, Beira city

Introduction

Global poverty remains a persistent development challenge, requiring a clear conceptual understanding. Poverty is widely recognised as a contested and multidimensional concept, shaped by different philosophical and political perspectives (Chambers, 1995). Sen (1999) expands this understanding by emphasising that poverty involves not only income deprivation but also limitations in capabilities, opportunities and well-being. Recognising this multidimensional nature strengthens the analysis of deprivation and its underlying causes (World Bank, 2001). In Mozambique, poverty is defined as the inability to access basic needs and opportunities necessary for a dignified life (Ministério da Planificação e Desenvolvimento 2014).

The persistence of urban poverty in contexts characterised by economic growth challenges linear interpretations that associate macroeconomic development with automatic improvements in the living conditions of the population. For Todaro and Smith (2015), economic growth, while necessary, is not sufficient to guarantee poverty reduction, especially when its benefits are concentrated in specific sectors of the economy and do not translate into broad social inclusion. Scholars such as Castel-Branco (2017) argue that growth in Mozambique is less poverty-reducing than in neighbouring countries with lower growth rates,

reflecting its limited inclusiveness. In many developing countries, this growth has coexisted with high levels of inequality, job insecurity and social exclusion, revealing structural limitations in the development models adopted. Mozambique is no exception; this paradox is also evident. Despite the global and the implementation of successive national government strategies aimed at reducing poverty, such as the Poverty Reduction Action Plans (PRAPAs), Agenda 2025, the National Development Strategy (NDS-2015-2035) and other sectoral programs, poverty levels remain high, especially in urban areas (UNDP, 2022). World Bank (2022), states that the poverty phenomenon remains widespread, with 81.4% of the population living below the international poverty datum line in 2022. This reflects persistent structural challenges such as limited literacy and access to essential services (UNESCO, 2020).

From a multidimensional perspective, urban poverty extends beyond income to include deprivation in education, housing, sanitation and access to basic services (Santos & Salvucci, 2017). These authors state that some improvements have been observed, but significant deprivation persists, highlighting the need for more comprehensive and inclusive urban poverty reduction strategies.

The process of accelerated urbanisation, unaccompanied by a proportional growth in infrastructure, formal employment and social services, has contributed to the worsening of living conditions for large segments of the urban population. The City of Beira, one of Mozambique's main urban centres, is an example of this reality. On the one hand, it exhibits economic dynamism associated with its strategic location, port activity and commercial circulation. On the other hand, it faces high levels of socioeconomic vulnerability, aggravated by extreme environmental phenomena such as cyclones and recurring floods. These dynamics have contributed to the expansion of informal settlements, precarious employment and the intensification of socio-spatial inequalities, creating a complex scenario of urban poverty.

Given the specific characteristics of urban poverty, public policies to combat poverty often tend to be formulated from centralised and technocratic approaches that prioritise macroeconomic indicators and standardised solutions, with limited incorporation of local realities and the voices of the affected populations. The absence of effective mechanisms for the participation of poor tends to compromise the adequacy of interventions and their long term sustainability. In this context, understanding poverty from the perspective of the poor themselves becomes fundamental for a more realistic and contextualised analysis of the phenomenon. Incorporating the perceptions, experiences and survival strategies of communities living with poverty allows not only a critical evaluation of the effectiveness of existing policies, but also the identification of alternative paths for building more inclusive and sensitive responses to local realities (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007).

Numerous studies on poverty and urban poverty have been conducted over time, contributing significantly to the understanding of its causes, characteristics and impacts. However, this study stands out by analysing poverty from the perspective of the individuals who experience it. By giving voice to people living in poverty, it seeks to understand how they perceive their reality, the challenges they face in their daily lives and thus provides a deeper and more contextualised understanding of the phenomenon. This study contributes to the literature by producing original qualitative evidence about specific urban neighbourhoods in Beira, documenting how communities interpret public policies and filling a gap in local perceptions in Mozambican urban contexts.

Thus, this article aims to explore how urban communities in the city of Beira, specifically

residents of the Goto, Praia Nova and Munhava Central communities, perceive poverty. Stressing the role of social participation and lived experiences, the study seeks to contribute to the debate on more effective, participatory public policies that are better suited to the dynamics of urban poverty in Mozambique.

Research Methodology

The present research employed a qualitative research approach, guided by an interpretivist orientation, seeking to understand poverty as a lived and socially constructed experience. A case study design was employed, focusing on three urban communities in the City of Beira: Goto, Praia Nova and Munhava Central, which enabled an in-depth and contextually grounded analysis of the local dynamics of poverty. Participants of the study included three (3) community leaders and 25 heads of households distributed as follows: eight (8) from Goto, six (6) from Praia Nova and 11 from Munhava Central. Purposive sampling was used to identify individuals with direct experience of poverty and data were gathered primarily through face-to-face semi-structured interviews. To enhance the depth and credibility of the findings, interviews were complemented by direct observation and document analysis of relevant policy reports and programme documents. All interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis, which enabled the identification of recurring themes. According to Denzin (2012), the triangulation of multiple data sources, including interviews, observations and documentary analysis, strengthens the validity and credibility of the findings of the study. Ethical and legal principles were strictly observed by the author throughout the study. Participants of the three communities were informed about the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Informed consent was obtained before data gathering. To ensure confidentiality and protect participants' identities, pseudonyms were used, all identifying information was removed from the transcripts and data were securely stored and used exclusively for academic purposes.

Results and discussion

This section outlines and discusses the study's findings. The study aims to explore how urban communities in the city of Beira, Mozambique, specifically residents of the Goto, Praia Nova and Munhava Central communities, perceive poverty. The section is organised into key thematic areas that emerged from participants' accounts and reflect their perceptions and lived experiences of poverty. The identified themes are summarised in Table 1, which serves as a conceptual map of the analysis, linking the study's research question with the main findings that structure the discussion. Each participant was identified with pseudonyms: GT for Goto, PN for Praia Nova and MC for Munhava Central, followed by a number indicating the sequence of each participant.

Table 1: Participant's Perception of Poverty in Beira City- Emerged themes

Nr.	Emerg ed themes
1	Poverty as lack of basic needs (food, housing, health, clothes)
	Poverty as social exclusion
	Poverty as lack of job opportunities
	Poverty as lack of income
	Poverty as lack of Education

Source: Author, 2025

From emerged themes participants from communities of Goto, Praia Nova and Munhava Central, in Beira City, Mozambique, described poverty as a phenomenon that goes beyond a simple lack of monetary income. Although the scarcity of financial resources was frequently mentioned, it was understood as only one of several dimensions that structure the experience of poverty in daily life. Unemployment, informal work, instability of income sources and lack of educational opportunities emerged as central factors, conditioning families' ability to meet their basic needs.

Poverty as a lack of basic needs

The participants in this study understand poverty as the lack of necessities, in which individuals or groups are unable to meet their fundamental needs for a dignified and healthy life (Maggino, 2023). These basic needs essentially include food, housing, healthcare, education and clothing. According to some interviewees, access to adequate and nutritious food is essential for survival and individual development and its absence can lead to malnutrition and health problems. For instance, the participant MC-2 from Munhava Central said in Portuguese that: "Pobreza é limitação no acesso aos bens básicos como alimentação, vestuário e habitação."

Directly translated to English, means:

"Poverty is the limitation in access to basic goods such as food, clothing and housing."
Participant MC-2 (Munhava Central)

The interviewees also consider that having a safe and adequate place to live is crucial. Poverty can result in poor housing conditions, lack of shelter or unhealthy living environments. Access to healthcare services is vital, as poverty often prevents people from receiving proper medical care, leading to untreated illnesses and a reduced quality of life. Appropriate clothing protects the body against adverse weather conditions such as cold, heat, rain and sun. Without adequate clothing, people may be more vulnerable to illness and health problems. Education is seen as a fundamental tool for breaking the cycle of poverty and the lack of access to quality education limits employment opportunities and personal development. The participant MC-6 from Munhava Central commented that: "Pobreza é insuficiência de meios básicos para um indivíduo, por exemplo, alimentação, saúde e educação".

Directly translated from Portuguese to English, means:

"Poverty is the insufficiency of basic means for an individual, for example, food, health and education". Participant MC-6 (Munhava Central)

Poverty is a complex phenomenon with many characteristics that can be influenced by economic, social, political and environmental factors. According to the interviews, it was noted that poverty is not limited to lack of income but encompasses a range of deprivations that affect people's quality of life and opportunities. Combating poverty, therefore requires integrated approaches aimed at improving access to these basic needs and promoting social and economic inclusion. In the three communities studied, Goto, Praia Nova and Munhava Central, both direct observation and face-to-face interviews revealed that residents face difficulties in accessing basic services such as healthcare, clean water, electricity and sanitation.

The analysis of official Mozambican documents, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) (2001–2005), presents a definition of poverty that aligns with the perceptions of the participants, where poverty was defined as the inability of individuals to ensure for themselves and their dependents a set of minimum basic conditions (food, water, shelter and health) for their subsistence and well-being. This definition closely reflects participants' perceptions, who similarly associate poverty with the lack of access to essential resources required for subsistence and well-being, rather than income alone.

Poverty as social exclusion

The participants' perceptions of poverty encompass several dimensions, one of which is social exclusion. Poverty linked to social exclusion demonstrates a form of social awareness, recognising it is not only a lack of resources but also a result of community exclusion. Most participants in this study associate poverty directly with a lack of basic goods and financial resources, but MC-11 gives a definition beyond material deprivation, understanding poverty as social exclusion and not being considered by society. He said in Portuguese:

“Pobreza é ser afastado da sociedade, não ser considerado como parte da sociedade...”.
 Participant MC-11 (Munhava Central)

Directly translated from Portuguese to English, it means:
 "Poverty is being excluded from society, not being considered as part of it...". Participant MC 11 (Munhava Central)

The concept of social exclusion is a complex and multidimensional process. Authors such as Hill and Stewart (2005), Morazes and Pintak (2007) and Sen (2010) conceptualise social exclusion as extending beyond the mere lack of material resources or income. There is a common understanding among these scholars that poverty involves exclusion from key spheres of social life, including participation in consumption, production, political processes and social interaction, thereby limiting individuals' ability to fully engage in society and exercise their rights as citizens. The social exclusion described by participant MC-11 connects directly with these theories: when someone “is not considered,” their social, political and cultural capacities are denied, which restricts their ability to participate fully in society. For example, even if a person has food, they may still be excluded if they lack political voice, social networks or community respect, as conveyed by these authors. Social exclusion also occurs through stigma, as society often labels the poor as incapable, lazy or inferior. The expression “not being considered” is very powerful; it can be understood as being unequal (as someone present but made invisible or devalued).

Poverty as lack of job opportunities

Poverty is widely recognised as a multidimensional phenomenon that goes beyond the mere absence of income. In African contexts such as Mozambique, where the informal economy is predominant and unemployment rates are high, lack of employment opportunities often emerges as one of the main determinants of poverty. This analysis is based on qualitative data collected through interviews and observations in three urban neighbourhoods (Goto, Praia Nova and Munhava Central). It explores how participants perceive poverty because of the lack of employment opportunities, highlighting the social, economic and structural implications of this relationship.

The analysis of participants' perceptions across the studied communities reveals that lack of job opportunities is one of the most central dimensions of poverty, as experienced and understood by residents. In all three contexts, it is mentioned either directly or indirectly as a condition that deeply undermines individuals' ability to meet their basic needs and achieve economic and social stability. In the Goto community, participants GT-2 and GT-8 clearly associate poverty with unemployment, with GT-8 going further by describing the situation of those who "live without direction," pointing to the link between joblessness and the loss of purpose or meaning in life. This perception shows that the impact of unemployment goes beyond the economic dimension, extending to psychological and social aspects such as self esteem, motivation and social integration.

In Praia Nova, the association between poverty and unemployment is even more recurrent. Participants such as PN-2, PN-4, PN-5 and PN-6 emphasise that the absence of employment leads to a lack of money and food insecurity, directly affecting the ability to support one's family. These statements illustrate how unemployment not only limits access to economic resources but also exacerbates other dimensions of poverty, such as hunger and social exclusion. The participant PN-6, for instance, highlights the connection between unemployment and the inability to ensure basic food security, reinforcing the view of poverty as a condition of extreme deprivation. He said in Portuguese that:

"Pobreza é não ter emprego, dinheiro e comida para alimentar a família". PN-6 (Praia Nova)

Directly translated to English it means: "Poverty is not having a job, money and food to feed the family." PN-6 (Praia Nova)

In the case of Munhava Central, although the word "employment" is not frequently used, the lack of financial resources and the inability to meet primary needs such as food, housing, clothing and health are constantly mentioned by MC-3, MC-4 and MC-6. The convergence of the participants' narratives across the three communities reinforces the notion that, for them, the absence of employment undermines access to basic rights and leads to situations of marginalisation. This view supports theoretical approaches that understand poverty as a deprivation of fundamental capabilities (Sen, 2010). Furthermore, the participants suggest that employment opportunities are scarce, informal or poorly paid, contributing to the intergenerational reproduction of poverty.

Therefore, the analysed data confirm that, in the participants' perceptions, poverty is inseparable from the lack of employment opportunities, with unemployment being not only a symptom but also a structural factor in the condition of poverty in the studied urban contexts. This reality underscores the need to consider the right to decent work as a central element in any poverty reduction strategy.

Participants' perception that poverty is intrinsically linked to the lack of employment resonates with several contemporary theoretical approaches. Many authors emphasise that work is more than a source of income; it is also a means of social inclusion, access to citizenship and personal fulfilment. According to Sen (2010), poverty should be understood as a deprivation of capabilities and the absence of employment drastically reduces people's choices, preventing them from meeting their basic needs and participating fully in society. Similarly, Castel (1995) argues that work is one of the main axes of social integration. For the author, the loss or absence of employment leads to social disaffiliation, which implies not only economic fragility but also the marginalisation of individuals from networks of solidarity and social institutions. This can

be observed, for instance, in the statements of GT-8 (from Goto) and MC-11 (from Munhava Central, who associate poverty with loss of direction and social exclusion.

From an economic perspective, Sachs (2005) identifies unemployment as one of the structural pillars of poverty in developing countries. He argues that without access to formal and sustainable employment opportunities, populations remain trapped in cycles of poverty, depending on informality, external aid or subsistence economies. This reality is particularly evident in contexts such as Mozambique, where the formal sector is limited and most jobs are precarious. The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2019) reinforces this understanding by asserting that working poverty results from the scarcity of decent jobs. The ILO maintains that decent work, with fair wages, social protection and guaranteed rights, is an essential condition for overcoming poverty, especially in urban contexts marked by inequality and exclusion. Thus, the perceptions expressed by the study participants not only reflect individual experiences but also align with a broader theoretical understanding that poverty, as a multidimensional phenomenon, is profoundly aggravated by the lack of decent employment opportunities, which in turn perpetuates cycles of inequality and social exclusion.

Official documents from the Government of Mozambique: PARPA I (2001–2005), PARPA II (2006–2009) and the PQG (2015–2019), were designed to accommodate several objectives, one of the most important being the development of agriculture and basic infrastructure in both rural and urban areas, to ensure job opportunities. However, through direct observation in the three neighbourhoods studied, it was evident that there are no visible infrastructures supporting government programmes aimed at poverty reduction. This demonstrates a clear gap between government discourse (public policies) and the lived realities of communities.

Poverty is a lack of income

Poverty, as a lack of income (from a monetary perspective), is traditionally associated with the lack of sufficient income to meet basic survival needs. Although the multidimensional nature of poverty is now widely recognised, income deprivation remains one of its most immediate and visible expressions, especially in urban African contexts. Based on perceptions gathered from three urban neighbourhoods in the City of Beira, Mozambique (Goto, Praia Nova and Munhava Central), it is noted that lack of income emerges as a central element in the popular definition of poverty.

Participants from the Goto community made explicit reference to the lack of money or economic means. They stated in Portuguese:

“Pobreza na minha óptica é uma pessoa sem condições”. Participant GT-1 (Goto)

“Pobreza é falta de condições, porque quando não tem condições a pessoa fica sem nada”.
Participant GT-3 (Goto)

“Pobreza é falta de dinheiro para alcançar os seus objectivos”. Participant GT-5 (Goto)

Directly translated from Portuguese to English, it means:

“In my view, poverty is a person without conditions”. Participant GT-1 (Goto)

“Poverty is lack of conditions, because when one has no conditions, the person is left with nothing. Participant GT-3 (Goto)

“Poverty is lack of money to achieve one’s goals”. Participant GT-5 (Goto)

The expressions “without means” and “lack of money” point to a view of poverty as an insufficiency of financial resources, which undermines the achievement of goals and the fulfilment of basic needs. The idea of “being left with nothing” illustrates how the absence of income directly affects the quality of life.

For participants from the Praia Nova community, the lack of income is also strongly present. They stated in Portuguese:

“Pobreza é não ter nada, não ter dinheiro e não ter família para ser feliz”. Participant PN-1 (Praia Nova).

“Pobreza é falta de emprego e de dinheiro”. Participant PN-5 (Praia Nova)

“Pobreza é não ter emprego, dinheiro e comida para alimentar a família”. Participant PN-6 (Praia Nova)

Directly translated from Portuguese to English, it means:

“Poverty is having nothing, having no money and having no family to be happy.” Participant PN-1 (Praia Nova).

“Poverty is lack of employment and money.” Participant PN-5 (Praia Nova).

“Poverty is not having a job, money and food to feed the family.” Participant PN-6 (Praia Nova).

Here, in Praia Nova, lack of money is presented as a central element, interconnected with other forms of deprivation such as food and social support. The answers reinforce the relationship between lack of income and food insecurity, demonstrating the role of money as a mediator of access to subsistence.

The answers from the Munhava Central community reveal a more detailed understanding of poverty as the insufficiency of financial resources. They stated in Portuguese that:

“Pobreza é incapacidade financeira de suprir necessidades primárias”. Participant MC-3 (Munhava Central)

“Pobreza é ter pouco dinheiro. Enquanto uns têm muito dinheiro, outros têm pouco. Dinheiro não é distribuído de forma justa para todos”. Participant MC-4 (Munhava Central)

“Pobreza é falta de recursos financeiros e alimentação”. Participant MC-5 (Munhava Central)

“Pobreza é falta de recursos necessários para que possa ter uma vida estável”. Participant MC-3 (Munhava Central)

Directly translated from Portuguese to English, it means:

“Poverty is the financial incapacity to meet primary needs.” Participant MC-3 (Munhava Central)

“Poverty is having little money. While some have a lot of money, others have little. Money is not distributed fairly to everyone”. Participant MC-4 (Munhava Central)

“Poverty is lack of financial resources and food.” Participant MC-5 (Munhava Central)

“Poverty is lack of the necessary resources to have a stable life”. Participant MC-8 (Munhava Central)

The participants not only identify lack of income as the core of poverty but also criticise the unequal distribution of wealth, suggesting an awareness of structural factors that sustain economic inequality. Income deprivation is directly associated with the inability to meet basic needs, reaffirming the central role of income in determining living conditions. The perceptions expressed by the participants of Munhava Central reflect a classical and still prevalent understanding of poverty as a lack of sufficient income, whether in the form of money, financial resources or economic means. This approach aligns with the absolute monetary model of poverty, according to which a person is considered poor when their income is insufficient to acquire a minimum basket of goods and services (World Bank, 2001, as cited by Ferreira et al., 2015; Joliffe & Prydz, 2016).

The critique of the unequal distribution of wealth (as in MC-4’s testimony) finds support in authors such as Piketty (2014), who argues that the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few prevents the equitable circulation of resources, thereby exacerbating socioeconomic inequalities. In the Mozambican context, these inequalities are reflected both in access to employment and in the distribution of income between the formal and informal sectors. The United Nations (UNDP, 2022) also acknowledges that, although poverty is multidimensional, access to income remains an essential variable for ensuring rights such as education, health, housing and food. The lack of income thus becomes a transversal barrier to the exercise of economic and social citizenship.

Furthermore, Bauman (2005) advises about the risks of a society in which those without income are “out of the game,” that is, excluded from the circuits of consumption and consequently, from full participation in urban life. This exclusion is evident in the participants’ statements of Goto, Praia Nova and Munhava Central. Expressions such as “having nothing” or “being left with nothing” expressions that indicate extreme vulnerability associated with the lack of income.

Lack of access to education

In all three communities, education emerges as a structural factor and is recognised as central to the fight against poverty. Lack of equitable access creates a cycle that perpetuates poverty. From the participants’ perceptions, it was evident that in Goto, Praia Nova and Munhava Central, there is an awareness that schooling represents a way out of poverty. However, inequalities in access mean that only children from wealthy families can study continuously. For example, in Goto, participants GT-4 and GT-6 emphasised that the absence of education limits access to employment and increases vulnerability to crime and marginalisation.

The participant GT-4 said in Portuguese that: “a pobreza é falta de escola, ir na escola é bom porque com isso consegue estudar, para trabalhar e conseguir emprego para sustentar a família”.

Directly translated from Portuguese to English, it means: “poverty is the lack of schooling; going to school is good because it allows one to study, to work and to get a job in order to support the family”. Participant GT-4 (Goto)

The participant GT-6 said in Portuguese that: “o que causa a pobreza é falta de emprego, pessoa quando não trabalha e nem vai para escola pode ir para rua começar a roubar só para poder sobreviver”.

Directly translated from Portuguese to English, it means: “what causes poverty is the lack of employment, when a person does not work and does not go to school, they may go to the streets and start stealing just to survive”. Participant GT-6 (Goto)

In Praia Nova, PN-5 explicitly points out that the lack of education is one of the roots of poverty, while in Munhava Central, MC-5 and MC-9 reinforce that education is a determining factor. For example, MC-9 said: “Quem vem de família com dinheiro é que consegue estudar, esses acabam por ter mais oportunidades para sair da pobreza”.

Directly translated from Portuguese to English, it means: “only children from wealthy families have access to it and those who study develop the skills needed to escape poverty”. Participant MC-9 (Munhava Central)

From the statements described by participants GT-4, GT-6, PN-5, MC-5 and MC-9, we can say that within the range of possible poverty perceptions, education emerges as one of the central factors that must necessarily be acknowledged. From the review of the related literature, Mihai, Tatan and Manea (2015) consider education as a reducing risk element of high poverty, in the sense that it may prevent the occurrence of another generation that is poorer. This is consistent with the views expressed by participants across the three communities studied, meaning that in Beira City, Mozambique, people living in poverty know sending their children to school will give them better opportunities than they did not have. The authors further observed that the predominant body of theoretical debate concerning the role of education in development and economic growth and consequently in combating poverty, is focused on the productive aspect, in the economic sense, of education.

Generally, the findings of the study based on face-to-face interviews, direct observation and document analysis suggest that in an urban context such as Beira City, communities of the study perceive poverty as multidimensional. This means that they suffer from multiple simultaneous deprivations: limited access to food, decent housing, sanitation, unemployment or highly irregular informal incomes, precarious access to education and healthcare. Understanding the community perception is crucial for the government in addressing public policies aimed at reducing poverty at the local level.

Future research could adopt comparative perceptions of poverty among different Mozambican regional cities: Nampula (North Province), Beira (Centre Province) and Maputo (South Province). Further studies may also analyse differences between formal and informal neighbourhoods, as well as comparative studies between vulnerable coastal cities (climate) and

inland cities. It would also be very interesting to develop a research based on gender, since, while this research, it was observed that many poor families are headed by women. Integrating quantitative approaches could provide complementary evidence and reinforce the multidimensional understanding of poverty as a lived and experienced.

Conclusion and recommendations

This study explored how community of Beira City, Mozambique perceive Poverty, specifically in the communities of Goto, Praia Nova and Munhava Central. Understanding how residents interpret the concept and reality of poverty was essential for situating the study within the lived experiences of urban communities. The findings reveal that, for the participants, poverty is perceived as a multidimensional and deeply contextualised condition extending beyond income deprivation. Across the three communities, residents described poverty as a combination of limited access to food, decent housing and sanitation, unemployment or highly irregular informal incomes, precarious access to education and healthcare. Participants also expressed that poverty generates social exclusion, insecurity and restricted life opportunities, determining their daily struggles for survival. For many, the sense of poverty is aggravated by the cyclical destruction of assets and livelihoods caused by climate shocks, which perpetuate vulnerability and make it difficult to achieve long-term stability.

Thus, poverty in Beira is understood as a condition that affects both material well-being and social dignity. The empirical literature and the findings of the study shows that the main limitation of poverty-reduction efforts lies not in policy design but in the weakness of implementation. It is therefore recommended that the local Government concentrate more on monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, conduct regular audits of social programs and ensure transparency in the allocation of benefits. Ensuring permanent community participation in the decision-making process and adopting a community feedback system in activities where communities are involved, can help overcome some of their concerns.

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