

■ MOZAMBIQUE

Extreme need



With only three decades of independence, 16 years of a war that until 1992 devastated the country and indicators that point to it as one of the most disadvantaged countries in the world, the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals is urgent in Mozambique. Transparent governance will be essential in this effort.

Direitos Humanos e Desenvolvimento Comunitário

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In 2005 Mozambique celebrates its 30th anniversary as a country independent from Portuguese colonial rule. Its population surpasses 19.4 million¹ and is composed of numerous ethnic groups, originating from Bantu stock. The urban population is mainly Christian or Muslim and in the north the latter are more prevalent.

In 2004 the country enacted a new Constitution which substitutes the earlier 1990 Constitution. The most important framework for these two constitutions are the principles of a multi-party system and freedom of expression allowing those with diverse opinions to participate in the construction of democracy. These principles were absent from the country's first Constitution, enacted under the influence of Marxist ideology in 1975, the year of national independence.²

The new Constitution expands the guarantees for full respect of citizen's rights and freedoms creating more sovereign state agencies and mechanisms for application of these guarantees (Articles 56, 73 and 133).³

One of the least developed countries in the world

Mozambique is one of the least developed countries in the world. According to the Human Development Index it ranks 171st in a total of 177 countries, with a value of 0.354.⁴

1 National Statistics Institute (INE). "O País", 19 June 2005, www.ine.gov.mz/o_pais

2 In 1975 the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) declared independence and two years later adopted a Marxist-Leninist ideological orientation. In 1990 the Government started negotiations with the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO), favoured by that year's constitution that admitted a multi-party system. The UN intervened in 1992 offering a Peace Plan and in the 1994 elections FRELIMO's candidate and President since 1986, Joaquim Chissano, obtained more than 53% of the vote. Chissano was reelected in 1999. In 2005 Armando Guebuza, businessman from FRELIMO assumed the presidency.

3 www.zambezia.co.mz/downloads/Constituicao2004

4 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). *Human Development Report 2004. Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World*, 2004.

Around 70% of the inhabitants of suburban and rural areas have a domestic economy based on subsistence agriculture. Uncertainty about food availability is still a serious problem in many regions due to climate change. More than half of the population (53%) suffer from malnutrition and 26% of children under the age of five have low body weight for to their age.⁵

The proportion of people living below the national poverty line reaches 69.4%. Almost 38% of inhabitants live with less than a dollar a day and 78.4% with less than two dollars a day.⁶

Gross domestic product (GDP) growth was around 8% in 2002. Annual per capita yield was calculated at USD 230 in 2002.⁷ The Government's budget is still extremely dependent on foreign aid.

To fight against extreme poverty the Government adopted as its central objective the Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty in 2001 with the aim to promote human development and create a favourable environment for rapid, inclusive and ample growth.⁸ Its fundamental areas are education, health, agriculture and rural development; basic infrastructure, good governance and macroeconomic and financial management. This programme is totally unknown to the country's population, the majority of which is illiterate. It does not respond to reality and shows the State's negligence in its function as provider of basic services.

The new Government, elected at the end of 2004, committed itself to putting more emphasis on combating absolute poverty and on expanding the school system and the sewage system through participative governance. This is stated in the Government's Five Year Plan, but the Plan does not describe what activities are to be carried out.⁹ For the time being, efforts to improve the population's quality of life through poverty reduction programmes

5 UNDP, *op cit*.

6 UNDP, *op cit*.

7 Embassy of the United States of America in Mozambique; Ministry of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour. "Report on Human Rights Practices", February 2004, www.usembassy-maputo.gov.mz/direitos_human.htm

8 Government of Mozambique. "Plano de acção para a redução da pobreza absoluta", 2001, www.govmoz.gov.mz/parpa

9 Government Five Year Plan, 2004, www.zambezia.co.mz/documentos/programa

have been hampered by high corruption levels, which have distanced the State even farther from its public objectives.

Vulnerability

In 2002, 44% of Mozambicans were under 15 years of age; dealing with problems which affect childhood is top priority.¹⁰

Gender-related questions also require special attention, as women constitute a very vulnerable majority sector. Poverty as well as illiteracy indicators are very high among women. According to the United Nations Children's Fund, in 2000, 60% of men but only 29% of women were literate.¹¹ Also in that year, maternal mortality was estimated at 1,000 per 100,000 live births.

Unemployment affects almost 60% of the active population¹² and is identified as one of the causes of poverty and criminality. Additional causes are the growing cost of living, the instability of the national currency (caused by very high inflation), the difficulty in accessing public services and drug use.

An unequal distribution of infrastructure, of qualified staff and of wealth favours the southern region at the expense of the northern region. For example, of the 300 lawyers in the country, less than 15 work in the north where almost 8 million people live.¹³

Citizen's lives are made difficult by the lack of food and road infrastructure, highways and bridges; in some regions, the nearest hospital or school is 20 to 50 kilometres away.¹⁴

More than 65% of the population have no access to safe drinking water and obtain water from rivers, pools and wells for daily use. Precarious sewage and lack of adequate housing make people vulnerable to natural disasters and epidemics, malaria being the principal and most frequent epidemic.

10 INE. "População", 19 June 2005, www.ine.gov.mz/populacao

11 UNICEF. "Panorama Mozambique" www.unicef.org/spanish/infobycountry/mozambique.html

12 www.ine.gov/publicações

13 Embassy of the United States of America in Mozambique, *op cit*.

14 Communitarian Development Organization. Investigation carried out in 2003 in the province of Manica, in the districts of Macossa and Tambara.

Over half the population illiterate

Among people aged 15 and older, 53.5% were illiterate in 2002.¹⁵ Only 4% of those who are literate have completed higher education and the majority live in Maputo.

Educational services are inefficient for Mozambicans, especially if they live in rural areas. The lack of school equipment, such as books, notebooks and pens; the shortage of teachers and insufficient school buildings make access to education almost impossible. Although basic primary school has been declared free of charge, payment has been demanded under the pretext of school maintenance and social action. Consequently, almost half of the school-aged children remain outside the national education system. In 2004, 60% of the children entered primary school, but only 52% of them reached fifth grade.¹⁶

Insufficient attention to health

Attention to health is also deficient. According to UNDP in 2003 there were two doctors for every 100,000 inhabitants and in 2004 only 44% of births were attended by qualified personnel. In 2002, vaccination against measles covered 58% of children younger than one year, infant mortality reached 125 per 1,000 live births, and 197 per 1,000 for under-five mortality.

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS continues to be of great concern. The disease affects about 16% of the adult population¹⁷ and life expectancy has dropped to 38.1 years. Were it not for the pandemic, Mozambicans would have a life expectancy of 64 years, according to global growth averages.

HIV/AIDS is the principal cause of death, after malaria. The number of orphaned children and the number of families supported by minors has been rising over the last ten years. In 2001 there were 418,000 orphans due to HIV/AIDS. It is estimated that one million children are directly affected by the disease.¹⁸ The pandemic also causes the loss of already scarce technical staff. This creates an obstacle for development and is the cause of the gradual reduction, 0.3% to 1% of national per capita yield, in the period 1997-2010.¹⁹

According to government data, 58% of people living with HIV/AIDS are women and young people; and 75% of those infected between the ages of 15 and 24 are women.²⁰ Although 44% of women and 60% of men are aware of at least two methods for

preventing HIV/AIDS, only 6% of the women and 12% of the men stated that they had used condoms during their last sexual relationship.²¹

High levels of corruption

After the signature in 1992 of the Rome Peace Accords between the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) and the Mozambique National Resistance, which put an end to almost 16 years of war, the country is experiencing a climate of peace that favours social, economic and cultural growth. Nonetheless, severe corruption in the public administration and the fragility of the judicial system are factors that impede socio-economic development.²²

In the province of Inhambane, corruption has been identified as the chief obstacle to economic development. In this province businesses spend an average of 9.5% of their liquid income on illegal commissions.²³

In 2003, the World Economic Forum's report on competitiveness in Africa placed Mozambique in 19th position among 21 countries for bribes in the area of importation and exportation, in 17th position for bribes to high government officials, and in 17th position for lack of independence of the judiciary.²⁴

In October 2003, the National Assembly passed the Anticorruption Law intended to halt corruption in the government, the police force, hospitals and schools.

The fragility of the judicial system is mainly due to the lack of trained judges (the country has less than 200 judges), since many courts are run by staff without university training. At the same time, the number of public defence lawyers does not meet public demand.²⁵ There are two complementary systems of formal justice: civil and criminal law and military law. The Supreme Court of Justice administers the civil and criminal courts, while the Ministry of Defence administers the military courts.²⁶

Due to the deep penetration of the FRELIMO into the courts and state apparatus, the abuse of power and the impunity of violators is making it increasingly difficult to combat corruption and bad governance.

21 *Ibid.*

22 "Policia e Justiça, os piores no Relatório sobre Corrupção e Governança", 3 June 2005, www.stop.co.mz/news; the investigation of corruption and governance realized by *Austral Consultores* revealed that corruption in the public sector is serious or very serious, 34.9% consider the paying of bribes to be a common practice, 33.3% of businesses paid bribes to public services, 20% of users admit having paid bribes to public services, 12% of those interviewed declared having violated the rules of public contract building and 11% revealed having diverted funds.

23 Mosse, Marcelo. "Corrupção em Moçambique". 20 July 2005, www.zambezia.co.mz/content/view/329/1/

24 World Economic Forum. "African Competitiveness Report 2003". 20 July 2005, www.weforum.org/pdf/Global_Competitiveness_Reports/Reports/ACR_2003_2004/Index_Calculations.pdf

25 Supremo Tribunal de Justiça (STJ). Novo presidente de STJ empossado a 7 de abril", www.stj.pt/not_files/not02.html#08Abr2005

26 *Ibid.*

Between 2000 and 2004 the crime rate rose sharply. Some police agents and public officials operate as members of or accomplices to organized crime. Corruption extends to all levels, and the police, badly paid and lacking in professionalism, extort street vendors and use violence and arbitrary detention to intimidate people, preventing them from reporting abuses.²⁷

The prison crisis

Conditions in prisons are extremely hard and life-threatening. Two National Services of Prisons (DNP), one under the authority of the Ministry of Justice and the other under the authority of the Ministry of Domestic Affairs, run prisons in all the provincial capitals. The DNPs also send some prisoners to a prison farm in Mabalane and others to industrial penitentiaries in Nampula and Maputo. Prisoners barely get one meal a day, composed of beans and cassava flour. It is customary for families to bring food to prisoners, though there is the occasional anecdote of guards demanding bribes in exchange for authorization to do so.²⁸

A great number of deaths inside the prisons have been verified, mostly caused by disease. In 2005 some prisoners allegedly died of poisoning.

Prisons are extremely overpopulated, and generally house two to six times their maximum capacity. In 2001, the non-governmental National Association for the Support and Protection of Prisoners conducted an investigation into the country's prisons and verified that the Central Prison of Beira housed 705 inmates in a facility intended for 400; in Nampula there were 724 in a prison built for 100; and the Central Prison of Maputo, designed for 800 prisoners, housed 2,450. In contrast, the Machava Maximum Security Prison in Maputo, with a capacity for 600, held a considerably lower number of inmates. In prisons administered by the Ministry of Justice there were approximately 7,180 detainees.²⁹

Conclusion

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed upon within the context of the UN are a valid and essential tool for promoting socioeconomic advancement in a country like Mozambique, which faces great difficulties. The needs are extreme in all sectors and it is of the utmost urgency to deal with them. The MDGs are primary objectives that can only be reached if mechanisms are installed that will ensure accountability in the State apparatus, especially the judicial system. High levels of corruption in the public and private administration call for transparency as an urgent objective in the Mozambican reality.

It is hoped that the debt cancellation of 18 poor countries, including Mozambique, announced in July 2005 by the seven most industrialized countries and Russia (G8), will encourage greater investments in health and education, and in combating corruption. ■

27 Mosse, Marcelo, *op cit.*

28 Embassy of the United States of America in Mozambique, *op cit.*

29 *bid.*

15 UNDP, *op cit.*

16 *Ibid.*

17 INE. www.ind.gov.mz/indpnud/; 21 July 2005. Mozambique produces some 700 infections daily.

18 www.stop.co.mz/news, 16 July 2005

19 National Office of Planning and Budgeting; Ministry of Planning and Finance; International Institute of Investigation in Nutritional Policy; Purdue University. "Poverty and welfare in Mozambique: second national evaluation 2004, March 2004, www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0000777/P880-Mozambique_P_042004.pdf

20 Ministry of Health/INE. *Impacto Demográfico do HIV/Aids em Moçambique*. 2002.