

Without dialogue there can be no human development



Mozambique's exports – and probably its tourist industry – will suffer as a consequence of the world crisis. Food security and rural development are under threat because direct investment is lacking and because incentives are paid for crops grown for biofuels rather than food. As there is no ongoing participative dialogue between the Government and the people, progress in human development is almost impossible in the short or medium term. The main challenges facing the country include strengthening democracy and making public administration fairer and more transparent.

Social Watch Mozambique
Custódio Duma¹

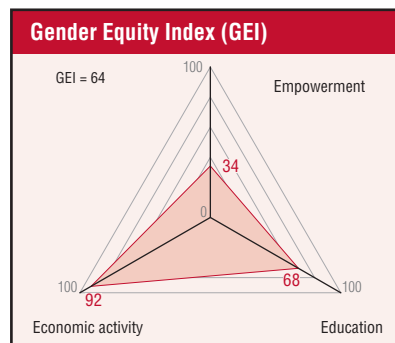
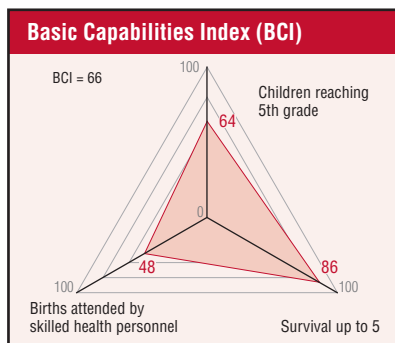
The Government claims that the global financial crisis will not affect the country's economy. In line with this stance it has adopted a policy of monitoring the economic sector, directly supervising the commercial banks and paying special attention to areas that can withstand the crisis such as energy and gas production. It has also announced through the Ministry of Development and Planning that the country needs USD 120 million to finance the 2009 balance of payments, and that this will serve to keep the macroeconomic indicators stable.

However, the Mozambique International Bank (Millennium Bim) has published a report forecasting that the nation's economy will shrink because the G-19 countries that finance more than half the national budget, and those that make foreign direct investments, will have negative economic growth. Prices for aluminium, tobacco, sugar, tea, chestnuts and prawns have fallen, which is expected to negatively affect export volumes, and this in turn will weaken activities that foster economic growth and hamper efforts to promote tourism.

Increasing inequality

According to official figures, the country enjoyed an average annual GDP growth rate above 8.5% in 2000–2007, but this fell to 6.2% in 2008 and is expected to be about 4% in 2009. However, the country's evolution in terms of human development and improving its people's quality of life is still fraught with contradictions. GDP is growing, but at the same time the cost of living is rising and consequently people's real incomes are falling. Social inequalities are becoming increasingly visible. According to UNDP,² Mozambique is 175th on a list of 179 countries ranked by their human development level.

As regards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the UN recognizes that progress has been made in three areas; poverty, infant mortality and maternal health. However, although the poverty rate did fall by 4% between 2000 and 2007, more than



half the population remains poor. There are wide variations between the different regions of the country. The further north one goes from the capital city, Maputo, located in the south, the worse poverty becomes. A 2007 population census shows that around 70% of the population still lives in rural areas, and more than 50% in the central and northern parts of the country.³ In the main cities, many families and groups of young people have been reduced to living in the open (in public spaces, on the streets or on rubbish tips) or in houses that are falling down. The unemployment rate is 30%–35% of the economically active population. According to one youth organization, the number of sex workers aged 14 to 25 has increased in the last five years.

In February 2008, the sharp increase in the cost of living sparked off a kind of people's revolt in Maputo made up mainly of women and school-aged children. This spread to the province of Gaza and the town of Manica, and for two days the main public services were paralyzed. The Government managed to prevent the conflict from having serious consequences by lowering fuel prices and subsidizing the cost of transport.

No transparency

Mozambique is approaching its fourth multi-party elections, and the ruling party is seeking the re-election of Armando Guebuza. Guebuza waged his 2004 campaign under the banner of the fight against poverty, and he blamed permissiveness and lack of interest in society for this and a whole range of other ills including corruption, lack of transparency in public administration and the poor functioning of public services. He maintained that poverty stemmed from

the fact that the people do not have a spirit of enterprise or make any effort to better themselves. He suggested that the colonial past had given people an inferiority complex that made it difficult, even today, for them to free themselves since the key to liberation is higher self-esteem.

This argument emphasizing self-esteem and the spirit of enterprise has been taken up and enlarged upon by the whole ruling class, but the real issue is that most of the people have little or no access to education, timely health services, safe and good quality transport, law and order or a whole range of other public services.

The population in general, and also foreign diplomats in the country, are deeply concerned by the way the ruling party and individuals near the seat of power are enriching themselves. There is widespread criticism of the way a privileged minority flaunts its considerable wealth in front of the poverty-stricken majority. Anti-corruption organizations like the Public Integrity Centre say the country badly needs a law to regulate conflicts of interest since its political rulers are almost all from the entrepreneurial class. One outstanding example of this is the President himself, who is a shareholder in dozens of enterprises operating in the country.⁴

Agriculture and hunger

More than half the population survives on subsistence agriculture, but there has been very little investment in this area. The proportion of the national budget allocated to agriculture is a meagre 3%–4%

1 Technical Team: Salvador Nkamate – Human Rights League, Karina Cabral – Mozambique Debt Group, Jorge Cuinhane – AWEPA, Naldo Chivite – MONASO.

2 UNDP. "Human Development Indices: A Statistical Update 2008." New York: United Nations Development Programme. Available from: <undp.org/en/statistics/data/hdi2008/>.

3 See: <www.ine.gov.mz>.

4 Mosse, M. "Corrupção em Moçambique: Alguns elementos para debate." 2004. Available from: <bvc.cgu.gov.br/bitstream/123456789/1644/1/Corrup%C3%A7%C3%A3o+mo%C3%A7ambique.pdf>.

per year, only a third or a quarter of what is spent on the security services. The State has implemented an incentive scheme to stimulate the production of jatropha, a plant that provides the raw material for biofuels, and encourage farmers to switch from food production to this crop even though a market for it has not yet been developed. One example of the dire consequences of this policy occurred in Mogincual, which suffered a famine in 2008 as a result of low agricultural food production because priority had been given to jatropha.⁵ The land that has been set aside for growing this crop, mainly in the provinces of Gaza, Manica, Solafa, Tete and Nampula, is very fertile, and in the years ahead this may mean a reduction in food production for family consumption, which will further intensify the problem of hunger. To make matters worse, specialized enterprises are planting other kinds of crops for export such as sugar cane.

Problems in education and health

According to UNICEF,⁶ more than a million children are growing up outside the education system, and the average teacher in Mozambique has to cater to 74 pupils. To improve the education system, enrolment fees should be abolished and there should be increased investment in infrastructure and teaching materials, as well as the number of teachers, and access to education for young people should be widened. UNICEF stresses that while significant progress has been made in expanding teaching in the country, this has not been accompanied by increased investment in the sector. It is known that around half of primary school teachers have no formal vocational training.

National health services reach only 30% of the people.⁷ More than 65% of children suffer from vitamin A deficiency. In 2008 the G-19 countries injected around EUR 308 million into the general budget and warned Mozambique that it would have to step up the fight against malaria (still the deadliest disease), cholera and HIV and AIDS. The programmes to prevent or combat diseases are very feeble and in any case they are concentrated in the main urban areas so rural populations suffer more.⁸ Other outstanding

problems in the health care field include the lack of qualified human resources to provide training in the sector and the need for greater technical and financial resources.

The HIV and AIDS situation is very serious. It is estimated to be spreading at a rate of 500 new cases per day⁹ and now affects some 16.2% of the population. The UN reports that the incidence is 1.7 times higher among women.¹⁰ It has been estimated that AIDS will reduce the country's per capita economic growth by 0.1%–0.3% per year. Life expectancy would also fall from 37.1 years in 2006 to 35.9 years by 2010.¹¹

Other challenges

The G-19 countries have also called on the Government to strengthen its capacity to guarantee social security and improve access to justice. They have expressed concern about excessive bureaucracy, lack of impetus in the fight against poverty and little progress in combating corruption, even though this has been identified as the root cause of numerous other ills that are putting a brake on Mozambique's development.

To address income inequality, in 2007 the Government set up a fund known as the "Seven Million Meticals" (the nation's currency, around USD 264,000) to stimulate rural districts by training people organized in associations to undertake local income-generating initiatives. However the fund has been severely criticized for having no clear criteria regarding its objectives or how it would be managed. The district administrations that have been put in charge are not competent in the management of banking or microfinance institutions. In addition, workers in these rural districts are among the lowest skilled in the country. It has been reported that fake associations have been set up to receive the money, more than half the debtors cannot be located and there are no guarantees that the loans will be repaid. Some critics claim that the real purpose of the fund is to maintain the visibility and presence in rural districts of the Frelimo party, which has been in power since 1975.

The Government has implemented a medium-term public sector pay policy in an effort to attract and retain skilled personnel, particularly in rural districts. But in practice professionals with higher levels of training prefer to seek employment in the private sector, where pay levels and working conditions are better.

In November 2008, the country was reorganized into 43 municipal councils (from the 33 that had existed previously). The scheme to continue decentralizing the sectoral funds is still in operation, and the same applies to how these funds are administered. However it has emerged that a large portion of the budget is not being administered at the local level but is still controlled by the central Government or the provinces. These resources have to be decentralized just as the administration has been. For this to take place, people have to be trained and the necessary infrastructure, electrical power grid, telephone network and banking institutions have to be developed.

Conclusion

While the Government has managed to maintain a policy that is applauded abroad, at home it has not maintained ongoing, inclusive and participative dialogue with the people, so it is almost impossible for there to be progress in human development in the short and medium term. Other big obstacles to development are the fact that the legal system is weak and there is discrimination in relation to party allegiances. So the problems remain: democracy has to be strengthened and public administration has to become fairer and more transparent. ■

5 Gil, F. "Atraso na assistência alimentar: Tragédia espreita Mogincual." Available from: <macua.blogs.com/moambique_para_todos/2009/02/atraso-na-assist%C3%Aancia-alimentar-trag%C3%A9dia-espreita-mogincual.html>.

6 UNICEF. "Países Africanos reunidos em Nairobi discutem abolição de taxas escolares". 5 April 2006. Available from: <www.unicef.org/mozambique/media_2877.html>.

7 Machava, J. R. "A situação da pobreza em Moçambique: diferenciações regionais e principais desafios". *Revista Eletrônica de Geografia*, 5(1), 2007. Available from: <cecemca.rc.unesp.br/ojs/index.php/estgeo/article/view/542>.

8 *Ibid.*

9 National Statistics Institute. "Contendo dados do HIV/SIDA." CD-Rom. 2004.

10 See: <www.unaids.org/en/CountryResponses/Countries/mozambique.asp>.

11 See: <www.unicef.org/mozambique/overview.html>.