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**EVALUATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
EXPERIENCES IN AFRICA**

**THE CASE OF MOZAMBIQUE**

By

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## Evaluation of Rural Development Experiences in Africa

### The Case of Mozambique

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#### Country Background

##### A. Colonial Legacy

Despite a well-endowed and diversified resource base, Mozambique received very little investment in infrastructure, productive capacity and education, during the colonial period. The result was an almost total lack of physical, economic and social infrastructure, one of the lowest literacy rates in the world, and an acute shortage of skilled managerial and technical staff. The latter problem now severely constrains the government's ability to undertake even the most basic policy analyses or planning activities. Black Mozambican literacy was under 10 per cent, and at Independence Primary School enrollment was under 40 per cent. In 1974-75 at the beginning of Independence, about 90 per cent of settlers left, including about 80 per cent of all skilled people in the country. This exodus also seriously disrupted the rural marketing network, a problem which has still not been resolved.

##### B. Post-Independence Economic Policy Changes

The period from 1974-1976 was marked by economic decline during the Transitional government of September 1974-June 1975, and then by crisis management measures which did halt the decline and restore growth from 1977 to the first half of 1981. During 1975-76 a lot of the crisis management involved the so-called "Defensive Nationalizations" which were a response to the nationalizations of parent companies in Portugal, and to the abandonment or gross mismanagement of enterprises of all sizes. Lack of trained personnel and import constraints led to many of these enterprises running at well below full capacity. This maintained employment, and kept open the possibility of reorganization using such skilled personnel as was available, but the underlying effect was inflationary. Industry did not become the motor of the economy, as was hoped at this time.

Such limitations on personnel led to a tendency to centralize decision-making, to rigidity, slow response to changing circumstances and mistakes in policy implementation. An attempt was made to save the "modern" agricultural sector of abandoned settler farms and plantations by nationalizing them. This sector was important to urban food supplies and to agricultural exports. The resultant focus on state farms led to various problems. Firstly, they tended to receive almost all agricultural investment, much of it in foreign exchange, but never achieved production levels which would have made this investment viable. Hence rather than being engines of growth, they were sources of waste and economic decline, adding to a growing foreign debt problem. Secondly, they proved unable to help the family sector of

agriculture, since the crops of both sectors were similar and so their machinery was needed for the state farms at the same time that the peasants needed help with ploughing, and so on. Thirdly, they tended to attract peasants away from their own farms, but lost them at crucial times in the agricultural cycle. Fourthly, they were expanded at the expense of land in the neighbouring family sector, causing resentment which was exacerbated by poor treatment of their workers.

The family sector received almost no investment, and the co-operative sector was treated as able to grow simply by "political mobilization". Some help or inputs were occasionally given to co-operatives, and indeed co-operatives were mainly seen by their members as a potential channel for state aid, rather than a mutually beneficial productive association. This passive approach to co-operatives was encouraged by the state regulation of them which stressed that they should only serve one function per co-operative. Thus a producer's co-operative could not also be a consumer's co-operative, or a marketing co-operative. Prior to the mid-1980s, co-operatives had to involve a pooling of resources into a common property of the members, so looser associations or "pre-co-operatives" were not encouraged. Later this policy changed, leaving many peasants confused.

In addition to co-operatives, the government tried to encourage communal villages, where an entire village would work on a common plot of land in addition to the family's individual parcel. The establishment of such villages involved aggregating relatively small settlements into much larger ones, and disrupted traditional claims on land usage, which nevertheless tended to reassert themselves contrary to government law. In some cases, the population had to be forced into such villages, and there was often some reluctance or resistance even where force was not used. As a result, by the early 1980s some villagers were abandoning their communal village, even though this meant loss of access to education and welfare services. In some cases, the distaste for communal villages was based on the fact that at times they were founded on the site of former Portuguese "fortified villages" where the population had been virtual prisoners to keep them away from influence by Frelimo during the Armed Struggle for Independence.

With the 4th Congress in 1983, Frelimo decided to break up the large state farms, selling some parts off to the private sector, and stressed the importance of small-scale projects for rural development. The government committed itself to greater decentralisation and flexibility, and to focussing more on the family sector of agriculture. These changes were in fact delayed, and those which required substantial resources could not be implemented because of the growing crisis in the areas of foreign debt and security.

The security situation deteriorated dramatically from mid-1981 with the relaunching of Renamo by the South Africans. This destabilization continues to the present day, with serious fighting in the centre of Mozambique (Sofala province) in October 1990, which seems to parallel a similar stimulation of unrest within South Africa itself in 1990. The two main aspects of Renamo activity have been (a) destruction of transport infrastructure and other major economic assets; (b) widespread terrorism with two main targets. Firstly, repeated attacks on farms and villages to make normal life impossible in the countryside, especially food production. Secondly, attacks on welfare services, including buildings and personnel. Thus the destabilisation has both economic aims and is an attack on rural social institutions. This makes rural participating development virtually impossible in the current circumstances. Over half the rural population has been forced to flee. Of a total population of about 13.8 million, over 1-2 million are displaced abroad, of whom around 1 million are in Malawi. This places a heavy burden on Malawi's population of around 8 million. Within Mozambique, about 4.6 million people are currently displaced. The cost to the infrastructure and loss of output is in the region US\$ 15 billion. The decline in real income is such that per capita income is estimated by various sources as between US\$ 100 and 150 per annum. Absolute poverty is over 60 per cent nationally, and possibly over 67 per cent in rural areas.

In response to this destabilization, and the drought which has affected much of Mozambique since the mid-1970s, Mozambique has changed policy from 1986, when it acceded to the World Bank, the IMF and the ACP as a way of strengthening and diversifying its sources of finance. In this context of structural adjustment, in January 1987 it launched the Economic Rehabilitation Programme. The national currency, the metical, which was 33 to 1 US\$ in 1983, was successively devalued so that in 1989 it was 710 to 1 US\$. The resulting inflation has not been matched by wage increases and is a contributory factor in the current widespread poverty. Mozambique is now one of the poorest countries in the world.

During the period 1975-81, it launched a successful literacy campaign, raising literacy to 25 per cent, and had very successful public health policies. These traditions have continued despite repeated destruction of health facilities. There is a lot of participation in constructing latrines and in other health measures. It has also been possible to sustain quite successful food and agricultural policies in the periurban green zones around the major cities, especially Maputo.

#### Rural Development Projects: the Context

For reasons briefly indicated, the decision of the 4th Congress and the Economic Rehabilitation Programme have not been fully implemented with regard to agriculture. This is also true of the decisions of the 5th Congress, which in 1989 conceded a greater

role to NGOs, but with co-ordination to be by the government. In fact, with 173 NGOs to co-ordinate plus 40 governmental agencies as well as all the Un agencies, including UNHCR, there has not been a clear co-ordination of their many activities, which have been conducted according to different views on development. This weakness has been exacerbated by the loss of key personnel to the growing private sector. The basic reason for this weakness, however, is the dependence on foreign aid which has been induced by the destabilization, the drought and to some degree by policy mistakes. The foreign aid received in 1987 was twice as great as the exports from Mozambique, in volume. One estimate is that GNP per capita is 140 US\$, while aid contributes another 60 US\$ per capita to real income. In other words, without foreign aid millions of Mozambicans would have died.

The effect of this foreign aid has been to create parallel organizational structures to those of the government, a certain amount of corruption by means of misuse of aid, and a loss of state control over development strategy. Despite being a large proportion of GNP, foreign aid is nevertheless far below the needs of the country. The 5th Congress attempted to deal with this by recognizing the importance of development strategies based on a high degree of popular participation. Specific measures were announced on the functioning of local development initiatives, the activities of community groups, social associations, small-scale projects, and co-operatives and producers' associations. Yet even when donors attempt to respect such guidelines, the very fact that they have the means to act, and often do not explicitly foster participatory approaches to development, weakens the impact of such government policies.

#### Case Studies: The Projects of Boane

To illustrate the difficulties of participatory rural development, even where the NGOs are actively attempting to foster it, the District of Boane near Maputo is examined. The full report will examine other case studies as well.

Boane is a town on the River Umbeluzi on which a dam has been constructed a little upstream in the Pequenos Libombos hills. This dam was completed in 1986 and is vital for a stable and adequate water supply to Maputo. Consequently it is extremely well guarded, as is the adjacent large cotton plantation owned by Lomaco, a venture of Lonrho. However, Boane itself is not secure and Renamo moves through the District at night, even though it is only 30 km from Maputo. This means that any rural development workers (or researchers) are potential targets and must return to Maputo by nightfall.

Boane is a priority district, one of four in Maputo province. There are four in each of the other 9 provinces. The criteria for selection as a priority district are:

1. Agro-climatic potential,
2. Existence of infrastructure;
3. Relatively good accessibility and security.

For these same reasons, such priority districts tend to have a high population density, since most displaced people are located in them, and security forces are concentrated there to reduce the danger from Renamo. In the case of Boane, many displaced people are repatriated from South Africa to which they have fled from less secure areas of Mozambique. A few of those who flee to South Africa are sold into slavery for less than 100 Rand per head. Others are illegal workers, or are forced to join Renamo for training in South Africa.

The presence of so many "refugees" means that rural development is made more difficult because there is a high turnover of people, since they return to their home villages as soon as possible. Consequently, participation remains at a low level. In addition, the presence of such displaced people can lead to conflict over land between the claims of the newcomers and the traditional rights to land exercised by those of local origin. Although such traditional rights are not recognized in the current law on land ownership, they have nevertheless continued to play a role, particularly in opposition to state farms and land belonging to rural producers' co-operatives. The disputes between incomers and locals which are to be found in Boane are typical of all parts of Mozambique where there are displaced people.

There are also conflicts over land between the small-scale family sector producers on the one hand, and larger private farmers agricultural enterprises and transnational corporations on the other. In the case of Boane, as well as a series of private farmers, a Mozambican company called Agrofarma has a large property, and Lomaco has the largest and best land of all, irrigated from the Pequenos Libombos dam. Feelings among the local peasantry against Lomaco are very strong. It is described as being almost like slavery, worse than colonialism. So these land conflicts are very fierce.

The district of Boane suffered from drought in the years 1981-83, followed by the devastating Typhoon Domoine which caused large-scale flooding, hundreds of deaths and considerable damage to the infrastructure. One survivor swam for twenty kilometers to reach dry land. (It caused even greater damage in Swaziland). There then followed five years of drought from 1984-1989. Consequently, the population of 40 thousand in the district has not produced and marketed into Maputo as much as in the past. In addition, such marketing as there was often made use of parallel market channels.

The Typhoon Domaine meant that before being a priority district, Boane had been an emergency district, and most aid which arrived was initially on an emergency basis, with no attempt at a

base line study or the other main phases of the usual project cycle. There was also poor co-ordination between the various donor agencies. Although the emergency period is now over, it strengthened the perception of the population that aid is a form of charity, to be received passively.

#### Peasant Associations and NGOs in Boane

There are currently two main participating associations<sup>1</sup> in Boane, each founded with support from a foreign NGO. Firstly, there is the Association of the Five Villages formed in 1985, with the donation of a tractor by the Canadian organization CVSC/SVCO. The leadership of the Association was formed by the secretaries of the Dynamising Groups of the villages involved. (Dynamising Groups were self-help groups formed during the Transitional Government of 1974-75 which manifested varying degrees of popular participation, but which carried out vital administrative functions until Frelimo was able to take over. After this they tended mainly to convey orientations and implement policies decided by government).

The Association of the Five Villages was seen by CUSO/SUCO to be operating under great difficulties with poor internal organization and insufficient democracy, but to be gradually improving. One of the difficulties in sustaining popular participation in any association which operates across more than one village is that lack of transport makes it very difficult for the membership to attend meetings. Even the leadership has some difficulty in ascertaining the situation. Yet given the scarcity of assets such as a tractor, aid agencies naturally wish the benefits of their use to be spread across the population in an area, which usually means organizations encompassing several villages. The result is often poor use of the assets, little or no participation by members and little or no internal democratic dynamic. Such criticisms were levelled at the Association of the 5 villages in 1988.

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<sup>1</sup> Such associations are seen by the government as different from the earlier type of co-operatives promoted in a top-down fashion until about 1984. In the former type, there was collective ownership of land and other means of production. The more gradualist approach developed after the 4th Congress favoured associations and pre-co-operatives, in which there was no collectivisation of either land or labour. In effect the associations are seen as service co-operatives, that is, ones in which access to services such as ploughing organized on a collective basis, often at prices below the going market rate for such services from the private sector. As indicated earlier, there is some confusion among association members as to the difference between these and the earlier forms of co-operatives.

The result was the formation in 1989 of a second association, the General Union of Peasants Associations and Co-operatives of the District of Boane. It was formed at meeting of peasants called following a survey of local problems by party and government bodies, in conjunction with the General Union of Co-operatives of Maputo and the Swiss NGO Helvetas. This general meeting of peasants criticised the Association of the Five Villages for not serving the majority of peasants, instead benefiting mainly the leadership. It called for a new structure which was not to be confused with the political leadership of the villages. The new Union which was created as a result was considered the legal successor to the Association, but the latter refused to hand over its equipment on the grounds that CUSO/SUCO had donated it to the Association, not the Union. Helvetas donated a tractor to the new general union, and both organizations continue to exist.

The General Union has 612 members, and has two co-operatives as constituent organizations. There are also six village associations, which are not considered by the President to be full constituent members of the General Union, but which have around 1500 members in total. Each village association has its own book-keeper. The General Union runs the risk of developing at the expense of these associations, since it is the organization which deals most frequently with the NGO and government bodies. Yet members of these six village associations "officially" have access to the tractor for ploughing at a price which is half that charged by the private sector. How-real such a service is cannot easily be decided, since the General Union is beginning to function in a manner similar to that of the Association of Five Villages.

The President of the General Union told me that the Union's main concern was education and training of the peasants, but an evaluation study commissioned by Helvetas describes its activities in this area as weak. Much of the main effort of the General Union seems to have gone into the rehabilitation of an abandoned house as its headquarters. There is little attention to its internal organization or to the village associations which despite the President's remarks are considered constituent member organizations by government and Helvetas. The priority given to seeking external aid, rather than mobilizing collective resources generated by the membership, makes it relatively easy to ignore the demands of the village associations. There are what seem to be well founded accusations from several sources that the assets of the General Union are used by the leadership for personal purposes.

Such practices would certainly explain the treatment of the NGO's attempts to monitor and evaluate the activities of the General Union as being "external interference". The very low economic return on resources, especially on the use of the tractor, would be consistent with the diversion of resources into parallel market activities, with the tractor being-used for transport rather than agricultural production.

In many respects the General Union seems typical of many of the earlier co-operatives to be found in various parts of Mozambique, whose problems have been documented by both the university there and by the Ministry of Agriculture, especially the National Directorate of Rural Development. These problems include: (i) a concentration on marketing rather than production, which is perhaps understandable when the marketing infrastructure (both physical and institutional) is so weak. The result is frequently a diversion of state and donor resources into parallel markets; (ii) an associated diversion of collective resources to private use, usually by the leadership of such co-operatives or associations; (iii) lack of accountability to the membership, and of reporting to outside bodies on the use to which resources have been put; in other words, lack of democratic administration; (iv) inequality among the membership, with the leadership being in a privileged economic position.

In the case of the General Union, such tendencies have led to occasional conflicts with Helvetas over control even of Helvetas' own resources in the district, particularly its jeep and truck. Given the very heavy workload which Helvetas personnel have to bear, it has been very difficult to monitor the activities of the General Union. The priorities for Helvetas' own activities have been defined in a complex process of dialogue with the party and government and with the target communities. This dialogue has not been very systematic, particularly in relation with different levels of government. Maintaining this dialogue with the target communities while also attempting to monitor and evaluate the activities of the General Union has been made more difficult by the need to return to Maputo every night.

### Conclusions

In terms of the criteria for evaluating participatory rural development projects, it should be clear that the example discussed from Mozambique does not rate very highly on any of them. There is reason to believe that this example is fairly typical of such attempts at fostering participatory development in Mozambique. The very NGOs themselves have difficulty in recruiting and retaining good field staff, and where a base line study is attempted, the participatory element is usually rather limited and geographical coverage of the target area is usually weak.

With regard to equity, it should be evident that the effect is usual to increase inequality, rather than the reverse. Literacy and even the ability to speak Portuguese (if not write it) gives certain people an advantage in acting as intermediaries between the local population and the state or NGOs. Numeracy is an even greater source of monopolisation of assets. These factors, together with the legacy of the former "administrative" approach to the creation of participating institutions which tended to foster

passivity among members, have tended to combine to make it easy to use co-operatives and associations for private purposes and personal economic advantage.

These same factors have also reduced and often destroyed the institutional effectiveness of many such organizations. The result has been the ending of many co-operatives. In the case of sustainability, it is evident that the Association of the Five Villages and the General Union could not survive without the aid of NGOs, and until the resources are used in a way that is economically productive this will remain true. The environmental sustainability of such organizations is not really an issue, since they have a very limited impact on the environment anyway. Population density at the moment is a much greater environmental issue, with overcultivation of the soil. This can only be solved with the end of the war.

Finally, these participating organizations have little effect on growth and positive change, except insofar as they have helped foster the growth of parallel markets. The main sources of economic growth and positive change have come from non-participatory activities by NGOs, and more importantly, at least in the case of Boane, from a variety of government programmes to aid the peasantry, including the employment of a team of 14 extension officers projects, to improve the water supply and the marketing infrastructure.

Addis Ababa, 20 November 1990.