

## Mozambique in search of resilience through resettlement areas

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### 1. Introduction

The Republic of Mozambique achieved independence from Portugal on June 25, 1975, following ten years of guerrilla warfare against Portuguese colonialism (1964-1974). Mozambique has an estimated population of 28,861,863 inhabitants in 2017 (according to the Third General Census of Population and Housing held in 2007) and a size of about 799,380 km<sup>2</sup> administratively divided by 11 provinces. The City of Maputo is the capital of the Republic of Mozambique and with Cabo Delgado, Niassa, Nampula, Tete, Zambezia, Manica, Sofala, Gaza and Maputo Province form the territorial division of the country. The official language is Portuguese, however there are several national languages (the main spoken are Makhuwa, Changana, Elomwe, Chisena, Echuabo, to name some).

The country is marked by a terrain that rises from the India Ocean coast in the form of “escalator” to the hinterland, and then to plateau and highlands in the west. Its rivers flow from west (hinterland) to the Indian Ocean. The largest and most important basin is that of Zambezi River; where the Cabora Bassa dam was built. Other major basins from north to south are Rovuma, Lurio, Licungo, Pungoe, Buzi, Save, and Limpopo. It is a tropical country marked by a wet and a dry season. The wet season occurs between October and April and the dry between May and September. The risk of drought is high in many areas of Mozambique, particularly in the central and southern areas, which would affects over 50% of the population.

The economy of Mozambique relies on agriculture, service, some industry, mining and fishery. MEF (2015) points out that the estimation of growth economy is about 2.6% per year and a GDP growth rate of almost 8% since the end of the civil war in 1992.

Between 1975 and 1994 the country was ruled by a single-party socialist system (FRELIMO government) and since 1994 with the approval of a new Constitution that instituted electoral system the successive governments were through General elections, which institute the rotation of the government in every 5 years. Since the first election of 1994 up to now

FRELIMO, the former national resistance of Mozambique, has been the same ruling party, with election results contested by RENAMO. The rotation has been of presidents.

Mozambique has for a long time been impacted by various political events, natural and economic fluctuations. This is related to political instability (civil war between 1976 and 1992; military hostilities that occurred in 2014 and was characterized by unknown number of people killed in Gorongosa district of central Mozambique; a war since the year of 2015), natural events (destructive cyclones that drive to floods; drought and some landslides in certain hills in southern area of the country) and economic fluctuations that have displaced thousands of people in temporary or definitive basis. These events acting solely or jointly have given the government the right to settle or resettle people. While the government has taken some measures to resettle those displaced by political instability, there has been less action to resettle those displaced by natural disasters and economic instability.

## **2. Mozambique and resettlement events**

The post-independence period is characterized by several events that obliged the Government to resettle forcibly its population. The first way of forced settlements was Communal villages. It was an attempt to secure the functionality of the Socialism (that proclaim collective work, collective properties including land and the denial of private property). The government claimed that communal villages would reduce hunger in rural areas, guarantying security of people as rural areas were target of armed attacks and to create development. As such, authorities, introduced “Production Operation” that sent thousands of people into Niassa province, situated in northwest country and the largest and less populated province of the country. An Operation designed to slow urban population growth that was increasing crime rates in cities, informality of economy (including sex workers, shoe makers, dressmakers, street vendors, etc.) and the growth of unemployment. The government defined these people who were not in formal system as unproductive.

Since early years of the independence up to now, destructive cyclones and floods across the country have displaced thousands of people. This situation has given the legitimacy of the government to create settlements. The argument of resettlement is the same that was used for creation of communal villages.

In the last decade, the country has seen a high rate of development projects related to mining exploitation in the context of gas and oil discovery in some Basins such as Rovuma in northern Mozambique. Most of these investments come from foreign investors. But the process has led to the displacement of a large number of rural populations. However, media,

human rights organization of civil society as well as ordinary people have denounced irregularities. The rationale of these denounces is the Government and Companies have not respected the rights of the people.

For years, Mozambicans have been forced to relocate. However, even though these experience only recently the country placed regulation of settlements. For instance, the National Policy of Natural Disaster (1999) regulates early warning and community participation. Then the Master-Plan for Prevention and Mitigation of natural Disasters (2006-2014) which seeks management of disaster risks and then the first National Plan of Resettlement and Reconstruction of 2007. This national resettlement plan envisages resettlement in locals where less prone to inundation and potential to economic growth.

People at risk of death or in the context of compensations in the case of relocation due to development programs are accommodated in temporary or definitive settlements characterized by basic facilities, with minimal comfort and some challenges such as hostility and suspicion.

Resettlements are widespread as the country has been ravaged either by floods, cyclones, and drought or once for a while by landslides, by political instability and development programs. Causes of forced migration and its involuntary settlements are various, but the communality of those who are forced to move is they are re-settled “somewhere”. Unfortunately, these places are areas of all kind of conflicts. People often express their plights, even though compensation are given and the alternative places of their settlement.

In the event of natural hazards or political instability people under risk are accommodated in settlements, which in many cases, policy-makers do not consider the socio-cultural background of people who are settled. Unmet needs of displaced and some kind of discomfort including lack of confidence cause un-resilience. The rationale of this neglecting principle is “safety and accommodation come first and other issues later”.

Settlements receive all kinds of people who live there because their lives are in danger. People who settle in refugee camps or accommodation centers can come from all parts of Mozambique. Since after the independence from Portugal in 1975 and following the “call to the city as their right since during the colonial period were prevented to mix each other”. So, when a hazard hits any territory of Mozambique we expected to have settlement and accommodation camps that will gather different people. In these settlement camps we expect to have people who could see these areas as their previous places where they were living before hit by hazards or war or either development programs.

One of the issues that have been discussed in different forum is the decision to where to settle people in danger and how their needs (shelter, water, food and clothing) would be met. Other factors also have to be considered, such as the property (i.e., land) they lost, and access to public resources such as water.

Historically “settling” people it has been a focus of tension as people claim that they are settled in land that does not belong to them. Examples of settling people in “Communal villages”, “Resettlement Camps” or “Accommodation camps” have been affected by constant conflicts. Obviously the conflicts prevent resilience.

Securing shelter and safety to Mozambicans is state duty and consecrated in Article 91, article 1 of the Constitution that states: “All citizens have right of condign housing, being the duty of the State according to the status of the national level of development, creating adequate institutional conditions, norms and infrastructures”. This means that the State has to secure resilience of the citizens forced to move.

### **3. The meaning of resilience in the context of unstable economy, climate events and cyclical political instability**

Resilience is derived from hard sciences, such as ecology, physics, chemistry, etc. In the field of social aspects many authors, including Fridolin Brand, consider social resilience that is the ability of groups or communities to cope with external stresses and disturbances as a result of social, political, and environmental change.

A concrete example in Mozambique is represented by the communities who have been settled in re-settlement camps as a result of floods (Limpopo River) and coal mine projects (Tete province).

The first time that I interacted with people who lived Settlement Camps was in the year of 2001 after the “Great Floods of Limpopo” during that time I was doing my data collection for my master dissertation entitled “From civil war to floods: implications for internal migration in Gaza Province of Mozambique”. and then I visited “Aldeia da Barragem” (meaning “Dam village”), Chicualacuala District and the city of Xai-Xai in the same province. Five years later I met former refugees in Malawi and former internally displaced persons in Mandimba district, at this time in northern Mozambique. In both situations, I found that both females and males showed signs of unhappiness. This is partly due to the lack of the infrastructure, but mostly due to the lack of specific response of their needs based on their gender situation. During this contacts I understood that people were complaining about size of land that they

were allocated in these places of settlement, others complained about the loss of their neighbors, land where they use to do their crops, etc.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Mozambique has endured natural hazards, colonialism, civil war, socialism and has returned to the capitalist system. In Mozambique, forced population displacement is known to have taken place in the country even in pre-colonial and colonial times. During the pre-colonial period, slave hunting and later, coercive labor forced people to move into neighboring countries. At the beginning of the 1960s, thousands of refugees fled to neighboring countries such as Tanzania, Zambia, and Malawi and later to South Africa and Swaziland. After independence in June 1975, the repatriation movement was established. Unfortunately, there is no information about how many people were repatriated since the UNHCR was not involved. From 1976 up to 1992, the Civil War forced hundreds of thousands of people to also flee the country into neighboring nations. From 1975 up to now people are forced to leave their habitual residence due to natural hazards. Floods and Cyclones have forced people to move permanently within the country and to neighboring countries. The question that is not be responded properly is the degree of resilience.