

Mozambique

GEOGRAPHY

Mozambique, a nation slightly smaller than New South Wales, is located on the southeast coast of Africa. Several rivers cross Mozambique, including the Zambezi, and vegetation ranges from rainforest to grassy plains to semi-desert. The climate is hot and humid from October to March (the rainy season) but generally dry for the rest of the year. Both droughts and floods cause problems for farmers.

PEOPLE

There are 10 major ethnic groups in Mozambique, and more than 30 languages are spoken. Due to its colonial past, Portuguese is the official language, but English is increasingly used. There is religious diversity; as well as many animists there are large groups of Christians and Muslims.

HISTORY

Little is known of the earliest inhabitants, but Bantu-speaking people settled in Mozambique before 100AD. They had contact with Arab traders, and engaged in farming, cattle raising and making iron tools.

The trade in gold, ivory and slaves became a great source of wealth for the Portuguese who arrived in Mozambique in 1498. In 1885, the area was officially recognised as a Portuguese colony. Private companies established plantations and used slave labour to grow cotton, sugar, sisal and tea for export.

After years of sporadic resistance, an organised campaign against Portuguese colonial rule began in 1920.



World Vision works with local health authorities in Mozambique to ensure that children receive immunisations against preventable diseases.



Map courtesy of The General Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin

When peaceful protest failed, the Mozambican Liberation Front (FRELIMO) embarked on an armed struggle. After 10 years of intense guerrilla war, the Portuguese finally pulled out in 1975. They left a nation desperately short of teachers, doctors, infrastructure and funds.

The FRELIMO Government introduced major reforms in agriculture and key industries, and they strengthened education and healthcare. However, the new government faced opposition from Portuguese interests and neighbouring countries. A guerrilla army (known as RENAMO) formed and was equipped to undermine the Mozambican Government through the destruction of essential services. Seventeen years of brutal conflict caused 1.5 million people to flee and created 200,000 orphans. FRELIMO and RENAMO eventually reached a peace agreement in 1992. Multi-party elections were held, United Nations observers withdrew, and many refugees returned home. Ever since, Mozambique has been trying to rebuild a devastated economy, with limited infrastructure (power networks, roads, schools, clinics) particularly in rural areas and improve social services.

ECONOMY

Agriculture is still the mainstay of the economy, yet only 10 percent of arable land is under cultivation. Two-thirds of the people are subsistence farmers, cultivating small plots using hand tools. Maize and cassava are the staple food crops, but also grown are other cereals, groundnuts and beans. Important cash crops include prawns, cashew nuts, tea and sugar. Unfortunately, due to poor roads, many farmers don't have access to markets that could take their surplus.

Landmines were a terrible disincentive to rural development in the 1980s and early 90s, but they have nearly all been cleared from the north of the country and clearance work is ongoing in the south. Mozambique's small manufacturing sector processes agricultural materials and it has significant mineral and energy resources, including coal. The Cahora Bassa dam also supplies hydro-electricity to South Africa as well as Mozambique. Several good natural harbours and rail links to neighbouring countries are potential sources of revenue.

The government has shifted from a state-run economy to a free market approach, to satisfy conditions for loans from the International Monetary Fund. However, key industries such as cashew nut processing and fishing have been affected by other nations' moves to protect their own trade. Privatisation of state enterprises has led to increased urban unemployment. Mozambique remains heavily indebted and still dependent on foreign aid.

LIVING CONDITIONS

In terms of average income, Mozambique is one of the world's poorest countries. This is an outcome of years of colonial neglect followed by years of war. Many households struggle to meet their own needs – poor urban families spend more than 70 percent of their income on food, and a crop failure can be disastrous for farmers. The basic diet of white maize or cassava made into porridge is high in carbohydrates but lacking in protein, vitamins and minerals. Rural villages are usually groups of circular straw or mud houses built near the fields. Many households rely on rivers, lakes or wells whose water is not safe to drink.

It is a slow process to rebuild health posts and schools destroyed during the war and to extend services across the country. Despite efforts to train health workers, many pregnant women still do not receive antenatal care. Malaria, measles, diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections and tetanus are significant health problems. The incidence of HIV and



Through child sponsorship, many children in Mozambique are gaining improved access to education, healthcare and greater opportunities for the future.

Comparatively speaking...

CATEGORY	MOZAMBIQUE	AUSTRALIA
Population	23.4 million	21.5 million
Urban population	38.4%	89.1%
GNI per capita (US\$ PPP)	\$854	\$38,692
Population with an improved water source	42%	100%
Adult literacy rate (% age 15 and above)	54%	99%
Population living on less than US\$1.25 (PPP) a day	74.7%	0%
Under-5 mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	130	6
Life expectancy at birth	48.4 years	81.9 years

Source: United Nations Development Programme
Human Development Report 2010

AIDS is increasing, especially along major transport routes. The number of orphans and vulnerable children is also growing. Poverty, gender inequality, malnutrition and poor sanitation contribute to illness and many child deaths.

EDUCATION

There has been a significant increase in enrolments at primary school, but a shortage of trained teachers, materials and classrooms leads to low pass-rates and consequently, large numbers of drop-outs. Access to education beyond grade five is even more limited. Many adults are unable to read and write.

Mozambique faces a considerable challenge in providing for the needs of its growing population. However, there have been some slow improvements in human development measures, as the government and development agencies continue to focus on the education and health of Mozambicans.

WORLD VISION AUSTRALIA IN MOZAMBIQUE

- supports primary healthcare programs that train local health workers so that they can educate and immunise children and educate families about disease prevention and sanitation;
- provides agricultural and business training for farmers' associations so they can increase food production, food security and cash income to improve nutrition;
- works with rural communities to install pumps, tanks and toilets to improve access to clean water and sanitation in rural areas;
- focuses on improving the quality of education for children through initiatives including school facility upgrades and teacher training.

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