

Assessing the Implications of PARPA II in Rural Northern Mozambique 2006-2009



Photo: Inge Tvedten

This brief presents the main conclusions from the fourth in a series of six studies monitoring and evaluating Mozambique's poverty reduction strategy PARPA II by using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. It analyses the constitution and dynamics of poverty and well-being in the rural district of Murrupula in the Nampula Province, by revisiting four local communities and a total of 120 households three years after an initial study in 2006. The main conclusions presented below will be measured up to and compared with similar studies in the City of Maputo (2007-2010) and the District of Buzi (2008-2011) to get an overall picture and a basis for recommendations for the upcoming poverty reduction strategy.

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

Murrupula is a rural district in northern Mozambique, and hence represents a type of context in which a large proportion of Mozambicans find themselves. Our general assessment is that substantial changes have taken place in the period between 2006 and 2009. This first of all pertains to the district administration, which has become more efficient following from a combination of a clearer definition of its administrative responsibilities, electrification and computerisation of its administrative routines, and efforts to further educate its staff in public administration.

In terms of governance, the district is still characterised by 'upward accountability' in so far as the district management is appointed by the Frelimo government rather than elected by the population itself. At the same time, the new Institutions for Community Participation and Consultation (IPCCs) are in place at the levels of the district, the administrative posts and villages. While far from functioning optimally, they have invigorated participation by traditional authorities, other local leaders as well as parts of the population.

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Our general assessment is that substantial changes have taken place in the period between early 2006 and late 2009

... changes in poverty and well-being in Murrupula between 2006-2009 point in the direction of a three-sprung development

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In overall economic terms, the most noticeable development between 2006-2009 is an increase in agricultural production, accompanied by a stronger presence of markets in the form of external *comerciantes* and local *feiras*. An increasing proportion of households sell agricultural products. At the same time, there has been very little diversification in the direction of alternative crops, which is vital for improved nutritional standards. The bulk of the production increase is accounted for by external commercial farmers, but production has also increased among local producers.

At the same time, there are few if any signs of a larger diversification of the economy in Murrupula. There are still hardly any formal employment opportunities outside public administration, employment in health and education is out of reach of the local population, and although an increasing part of the households in our survey have supplementary income from informal economic activities, arable agriculture remains the dominant source of subsistence and income for practically everybody.

Our data related to employment, income and assets suggest that the majority of households have not seen any significant change for the better in the period 2006-2009, but an increasing minority have seen improvements primarily driven by increased agricultural production and enhanced prices for agricultural products. There are systematic differentiations between the communities close to (semi-) urban settings and markets and those that are not, and between male- and female-headed households with the latter still being the most disadvantaged in material and social terms.

HUMAN AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Household characteristics such as size and composition have changed between 2006-2009, underlining the flexibility and permeability of households as basic socio-economic and cultural units. There are also signs of an increasing proportion of female-headed households in the district, primarily implying processes of social exclusion and a feminisation of poverty.

In education, the number of schools and teachers has increased and more students attend, but this does not seem to have been accompanied by similar improvements in the quality of education.

Poorly educated teachers with limited incentives for working in rural communities remain a problem. And parents continue to take their children out of school for work (boys) and early marriage (girls).

In health important advances have been made in the form of an upgrading of health units, and a conscious strategy to reduce the population's scepticism towards the quality and intentions of the public health system. Still, however, the health situation in the district remains serious with negative implications not only for immediate well-being but also for longer-term coping strategies.

Social relations or 'capital' continues to be centred around the extended family (to solve domestic and other private problems) and traditional leaders and institutions (to solve community problems), with no significant increase in the utilisation of public or aid-related institutions beyond education and health.

POVERTY AND WELL-BEING

Our quantitative and qualitative data on changes in poverty and well-being in Murrupula between 2006-2009 point in the direction of a three-sprung development – which largely adheres to peoples' own (emic) distinctions of poverty and well-being: A minority of better-off households (*okalano*) have been able to exploit the new economic opportunities in agriculture and marketing, in some cases supported by funds from the 7 mn MT OIIL-initiative. A majority of households find themselves in poverty or transient poverty (*ohikalano*, *ohawa*), doing their best as small-scale agriculturalists against structural constraints in access to land, labour and markets and with few if any alternative options for employment and income. And on the lower end of the scale, the very poorest and most destitute (*opitanha*) are still not able to produce and earn enough to feed their families and depend on selling their labour to other farmers or on external support.