

Assessing Mozambique's PARP/A 2006-2011

Local perspectives



Photo: Inge Tvedten

Six years of impressive economic growth and classical poverty reduction policies in Mozambique have demonstrated the limited extent to which this has 'trickled down' to the local level – with the country falling on the Human Development Index and poverty reduction having come to a complete halt. Important progress has been made in public administration, physical infrastructure, education and health, but deep structural changes will be necessary in order to generate employment and income and reach the 55 percent of all Mozambicans who remain poor.

Like most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Mozambique attempts to reduce poverty on the basis of Poverty Reduction Strategies ('Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty'/ PARPA II 2006 to 2010', and 'Poverty Reduction Action Plan'/PARP 2011-2014'). The plans and their implementation have been supported by international donors, who fund approximately 45 percent of the country's state budget.

THE STUDY SERIES

Through a series of six studies done in cooperation with the Ministry of Planning and Development (MPD), the local-level implications of poverty reduction policies and interventions have been monitored and analysed by focusing on the District of Murrupula in northern Mozambique, four bairros in the capital city Maputo, and the District

of Buzi in the central part of the country.

Each of the initial three studies (2006, 2007, 2008) have been followed up after a period of three years, in order to ascertain changes in the political and economic context and in social relations of poverty and well-being – by revisiting the same public institutions, the same communities and the same households as in the first round of studies.

The studies have been done against a backdrop of an apparent halt in the post-war poverty reduction, with Mozambique falling to the third lowest position in UNDP's Human Development Index and poverty having increased from 54.1 percent to 54.7 percent - albeit with considerable regional and rural-urban variations.

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While questioning the relevance of liberal development policies and the notion of economic growth 'trickling down' to the poor, the studies also reveal local-level dynamics of poverty and well-being with inherent potentials for upward social mobility for all but the very poorest – given the necessary structural changes.

METHODOLOGIES

A primary objective of the study series has been to capture changes in local perceptions and social relations of poverty and well-being, by using a combination of publicly available quantitative data, stakeholder-interviews, an adjusted household survey, and a set of qualitative and participatory methodologies.

While surveys are useful to map the distribution and characteristics of material poverty over space and time, people's own understanding of the dynamics of poverty gives equal weight to the social relationships within the households as well as with the extended family and community-based, traditional and public institutions.

Analytically we have held the view that political and economic structures have a powerful effect upon human action and the shape of events, but that there is also room for human agency and ordinary lives in the form of strategies and action for social mobility (Bourdieu 1990, Ortner 2006).

STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

The most salient overall finding of the project is the limited extent to which investments made to improve public policies and reduce poverty actually find their way to local villages and shantytowns in Murrupula, Maputo and Buzi. There are some interventions with concrete implications for local communities and the poor (see below), but there is a legitimate reasons to ask: "Where Does It All End Up?"

Politically, there has been a tendency towards a stronger hold on power of Frelimo at the expense of accountable local government and space for the political opposition. This has been accompanied by co-option of traditional authorities and restraints on local democratic processes - exemplified by decreasing voter turn-out and recent caps on community voices in selecting village and bairro leaders.

In public administration, there have been improvements in the competence and capacity at the level of district and municipal administrations. However, this has not been followed up at the lower tiers of Administrated Posts, Bairros and Localities, which are in the 'front line' of government. Decentralisation of governance has not been accompanied by adequate financial delegation.

Economically formal employment opportunities are still rare and difficult to access for people without means and connections. Agriculture is crucial but based on low levels of technology, with limited access to markets and with a dearth

of agricultural extensionists. And while the informal economy shows great dynamics, it is saturated and heavily concentrated around a limited number of goods and services.

Progress has been made in infrastructure. Electricity has reached most communities, even though very few poor households can afford to be connected. Improvements have also been made in the construction of roads and bridges, but more efforts are needed to connect smaller villages with improved tertiary roads. The main change has been the mobile phone, now owned by more than a half the population in the three areas under study.

Headway has also been made in education and health. The number of schools and classrooms as well as the proportion of children going to school has increased, even though the number of pupils and the teacher/pupil ratio has grown as well – reducing the implications for the quality of instruction. Girls have increased their school attendance rate more than boys, while women represent the overwhelming majority in adult education.

Health has seen similar improvements, with the proportion of households with sick members dropping considerably. However, the accessibility and quality of services vary, with many communities still lacking basic health facilities. The emphasis on improved treatment of diseases and access to medication has been done at the partial expense of preventive interventions in terms of improved hygiene, the use of mosquito nets etc.

DYNAMICS OF POVERTY

While the study-series shows that there has been overall improvement in public administration, infrastructure, education and health, then, this has generally not been converted into improvements in employment, income and poverty reduction in the three settings under study.

For the large majority of poor, the inability to improve their lives is first and foremost related to the continued limited access employment opportunities, to the low level of agricultural technologies and dearth of markets for agricultural produce, and to the saturation of – and limited innovation in – the informal economy.

Exceptions are improvements in agricultural production and marketing in Murrupula (mainly by larger external entities); an increase in formal employment in Maputo (largely accounted for by the current building boom); and special groups such as fishermen enhancing their income in Buzi (managing to exploit urban markets).

In addition, we have seen systematic differences in income and assets between communities with access to urban markets (Maputo, parts of Buzi) and those that do not. Not only are prices

for and access to commodities better among the former, but households with rural-urban relationships are also better positioned to pursue a strategy of exploiting both types of settings.

We have also seen systematic differences in access to public services between communities close to administrative centres and those that are not. Geographical proximity to the centre enhances the options for access to everything from quality education to social security benefits.

There are also differences in access to key public services between the poor and the better-off. The clearest example of this is the skewed distribution of resources from the Local Investment Fund, but access to basic public services also often requires initial investments in the form of bribes or other types of corruption.

The importance of traditional authorities for poverty and well-being have been reduced with the system of state remuneration, which has limited the independent voice of chiefs (*régulos*) and sub-chiefs. The recent change from local community elections to local government appointments of *bairro* secretaries have had the same effect.

There are, finally, differences in the importance of community based relationships (neighbours, friends etc.) between rural areas where they are still considered important and urban areas where such relations have become 'commoditised' in a context where money matters and people cannot afford to have outstanding claims.

To meet the challenges of poverty, households show great flexibility by effectively splitting up and/or taking in new members. The average size of households in our study – where we capture this permeability – is between six and seven members, with the formal national average using a more restricted definition being 4.9. Female headed households are nearly as large as male headed households, reflecting their *de facto* responsibility for taking care of poor and marginalised relatives.

While marriage remains the main basis for the household, an increasing proportion are made up of people living together without any formal or traditional consent and single (mainly female) headed household units. The former is increasingly common and accepted, but the latter is still negatively sanctioned in the communities and particularly in rural areas.

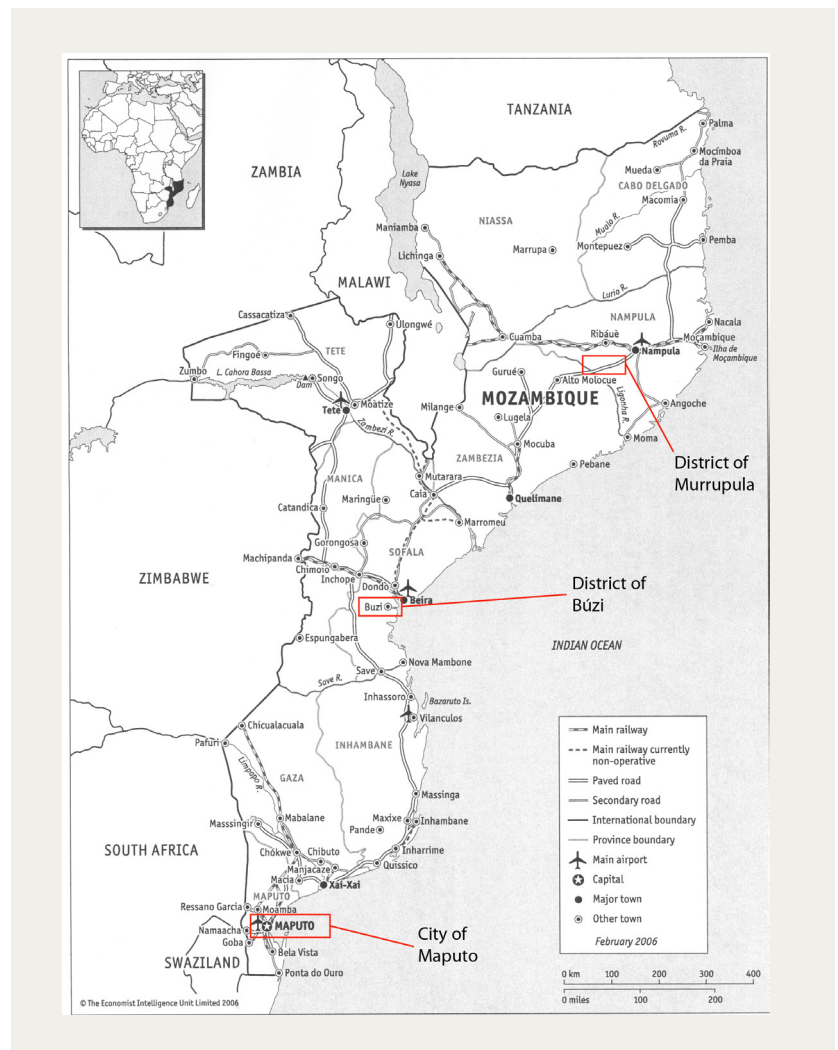
The extended family is seen by most people as being most important for solving problems in the household, reflecting both the continuity of tradition and the dearth of public structures for social protection. Community problems continue to be seen as best solved by

traditional institutions, even though many are losing credibility.

As reflected in the local vernacular, there are three main categories of poor and three main categories of better-off in Murrupula, Maputo and Buzi — based on peoples' ability to relate to the structural constraints and types of social relationships presented above.

The destitute poor (*opitanha, xiculungo, umbwa*) are captured in poverty by not being able to maintain social relationships, only being able to make short-term or ad hoc decisions to cope on a daily basis, and being unable to make economic or social investments for the future. They are often, but not necessarily, single-headed and matrifocal. No focus-household in this category managed to improve their situation during the three year interval between the studies.

The chronically poor (*ohawa, xantumbuluku, mulumbo*) work hard and do their best, but do not manage to improve their lives under the present structural constraints. They may have access to sufficient land and labour but nowhere to sell their produce, be able to invest in small-scale trade but unable to expand their business,



People distinguish between six categories of the poor and the better-off, each with their own dynamics and options for social mobility.

or they may not have the social relations necessary to break the cycle of low income and vulnerability to sudden shocks. While some of the focus-households in this category improved their situation, none managed to escape being poor.

The transitory poor (*ohikalano, xangamo, kombo*) are poor because of misfortunes and bad luck, but have sufficient resources and social relationships to improve their situation over time with favourable conditions (such as access to Local Investment Funds). Several households in this category (including people with low-paid formal employment) did manage to improve their situation over the period of three years, with most (but not all) being male headed.

The identified categories of better-off households also show a remarkable congruence between the three study-sites and over time: Some are part of extended families that have 'always' been well off (the 'permanently rich'); some have become well-off through their own hard work (the 'worthy rich'); and some have become rich through luck, chance or political contacts (the 'newly rich'). A number of these households improved their situation during the three-year period in question – showing the potential of the economic context for those in a position to exploit it.

POSSIBLE POLICY INTERVENTIONS

For further poverty reduction to take place, three main types of interventions will be necessary. One is to remove the political and administrative coercion at local level by separating the government from party politics; give more space to the political opposition, accompany the current administrative decentralisation with fiscal decentralisation, and react more firmly against the pervasive small-scale corruption that inhibits local initiatives.

A second is to focus on the removal of structural constraints for employment creation by facilitating rural-urban interaction through investments in infrastructure; support agriculture by promoting improved technologies through effective extension services and better access to agricultural markets; and improve access to credit for small-scale entrepreneurs by reinvigorating the Local Investment Fund.

And the third is by protecting the very poorest from destitution by targeting and improving interventions for social protection (government, civil society); starting experiments with different forms of cash/resource transfers to the poorest families; and by supporting women and/or female headed households in innovation and access to new markets in the informal economy in order to further their economic independence and hence the well-being of children.

This brief is a summary of the main findings from the following reports:

Tvedten, Inge, M. Paulo and C. Rosário. *'Opitanha. Social Relations of Rural Poverty in Northern Mozambique*. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute. 2006 and 2009.

Paulo, Margarida, C. Rosário, Tvedten, I. *'Xiculungo'. Social Relations of Urban Poverty in Maputo, Mozambique*. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute. 2007 and 2010

Rosário, Carmeliza/Picardo, Rachi, I. Tvedten and M. Paulo. *'Mucupuki'. Social Relations of Rural-Urban Poverty in Central Mozambique*. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute. 2008 and 2011

All six reports are available in English and Portuguese at www.cmi.no/publications