

Project Site: Mozambique

Background

Mozambique was the country selected in which to carry out this project. Located in southeast Africa, it has an area of 801,590 sq km and 2470 km of coastline. It is divided into ten provinces; Maputo, Gaza, Sofala, Manica, Inhambane, Zambezia, Tete, Nampula, Niassa and Cabo Delgado. There are 16 main ethnic groups, the largest being the Makua, Makonde, Sena and Shangaan. The official language of the country is Portuguese, but is generally only spoken by about 25% of the population. Indigenous languages belong to the Bantu family, with approximately 60 distinct languages and dialects spoken in Mozambique.

It is one of the least developed countries in the world, ranking 166 in the UNDP Human Development Report 1998. Under five mortality is 214 per 1000 live births (1996) and maternal mortality 1512 per 100,000 live births (1989-1995). Life expectancy at birth is 46.3 years (1995). Sixty percent of the 18 million population are illiterate, 37% have no access to safe drinking water (1990-96) and 61% have no access to health services (1990-95). Eighty-three percent of the labor force is agriculture based. In 1995 the Human Poverty Index was 48.5%.¹⁸

Mozambique today is a fraction of the country that only thirty years ago attracted a greater volume of tourists than South Africa and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) combined. The country was considered the third most industrialized country in Africa. Thirty years of near continuous conflict has left Mozambique among the ten poorest countries on earth.¹⁸

Mozambique's battle for independence from Portuguese rule began with the amalgamation of a number of small-time liberation groups in 1963 to form FRELIMO under the militant leadership of

Eduardo Mondlane. Facing attacks from FRELIMO and concurrent political changes in Europe, the Portuguese government agreed to the Lusaka Accord in September 1974 giving Mozambique its independence and transferring power to the Marxist FRELIMO party.

The country then entered into a twenty year civil war. RENAMO, the guerrilla army which initiated the war, was founded and supported by Rhodesia, South Africa, and right-wing American organizations which sought to promote a capitalist alternative to the socialist ruling party. The war claimed 100,000 lives and disrupted the countryside to the extent that roughly one-third of the population fled to the cities and neighboring countries. An estimated 800 hospitals and 2500 schools were destroyed. Facing pressure from overseas aid donors, FRELIMO changed its policy in 1990 to allow multi-party elections and by 1992 a cease-fire agreement was signed. Mozambique has been at peace since and has remained under FRELIMO rule following the first democratic elections in 1994. The United Nations reports that as of 1994, the large majority of war refugees and internally displaced had returned to their homes and communities.

Landmines

Extensive random and indiscriminate use of landmines during the years of conflict has left this country with one of the most severe landmine crises in the world.^{3,4,14} Landmines were laid to deny civilians access to water, fields, and fishing. Wells, health posts, schools and factories were common targets. Landmines were also used to protect roads, railways, and dams, and laid around the perimeters of villages and hospitals.¹⁴ The signing of the peace