

Trials and tribulations for

by Nina Miller

Mozambique freed itself from colonial Portuguese rule in 1975 after ten years of war.

Since then, its people have had to deal with the growing pains experienced by all newly independent states. At the same time, they helped Mozambique's neighbour Zimbabwe through the fight for black majority rule.

The implications of independence and of sharing a border with one of the most repressive regimes in the world, South Africa, are cause for a new struggle.

Catherine Harvey, field staff officer in Mozambique for Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO) came to campus Friday. She spoke with the Gateway about the changes in Southern Africa over the past five years and their effect on the people of Mozambique.

Mozambique is one of the poorest countries in the world: life can be harsh and unrelenting. Harvey says 80 percent of the population lives on subsistence farming, scratching a living from the ground.

The main staples are beans,

cassava, maize and peanuts. And while there is plenty of land for everyone, it is mostly arid and infertile. Most people have no tools, so "you are lucky if you get enough to eat," says Harvey.

Women bear the brunt of the hardships on subsistence farms. They do all the work, gathering wood, pounding maize into flour, digging for roots, looking after the children and walking five or six miles for water every day. This keeps the women busy from dawn till dusk.

Men often leave to work in the South African goldmines where conditions are cruel. This is a large source of revenue for the Mozambique government which gets paid half of its workers' salaries in gold.

The Mozambican government is trying to wean Mozambique from dependence on South Africa but does not yet support full economic sanctions. To do so would be political suicide, explains Harvey, because it would cut off the already small amount of foreign exchange. Economic sanctions against Rhodesia cost Mozambique \$560 million per year.

However, the number of men leaving to work in South Africa has dropped from 200,000 in 1973 to 30,000 to 40,000 now, says Harvey.

Even after independence, Mozambique was living under constant fear of insurgence by its white neighbours who bombed its agricultural land, agricultural storage areas, bridges and roads, further decimating an economy already in ruins.

Other countries and organizations like CUSO have been helping Mozambique survive.

After 200,000 Portuguese left the country in 1975, the lack of professional and trained people caused an almost complete standstill in production. And although there have been major improvements in all spheres: health, education, agriculture and industry, there is still a lot left to do before Mozambique can stand on its own feet.

At present there are only 15 Mozambican university graduates in the country, although a national university has existed for many years.



photo Kathy Kebarle

Catherine Harvey, CUSO representative

This is just one example of the racial barriers which were manifested in the society under Portuguese rule. Harvey says, although these barriers weren't legislated as in South Africa, it was just as repressive and in some ways worse.

Being the major economic power in the area, South Africa

treated Mozambique like her own colony. There were two different worlds in Mozambique, explains Harvey. The only blacks exposed to the luxurious cities and resorts of the whites were those who served the whites.

Racial tension and aggression were rampant. Now tourism has stopped, or

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