

Para Presidente Ver¹ - For the President to See

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This is an English version

By Joseph Hanlon and Adriano Nuvunga

Irrigation pumps installed in Nante, Zambézia, following the visit of President Armando Guebuza in May 2010, have never been used. In his State of the Nation address to parliament in December 2010 President Guebuza cited Nante as an example of increasing rice production. But it is not happening. Because there is no irrigation water, local cooperatives have only been able to produce small amounts of rice.

As part of one of his open presidency (presidência aberta) tours, President Armando Guebuza on 21 May 2010 visited irrigation schemes at Munda-Munda and Intabo, in Nante, Maganja da Costa, Zambezia. In a public meeting he said rice production in the area could be increased 5 to 7 times. (*Notícias* 21 May 2010) And he announced that within 45 days electric pumps would be installed in both irrigation systems with a capacity to irrigate 1000 hectares, compared to 200 ha at that time.

Cepagri (Agriculture Promotion Centre, Centro de Promoção da Agricultura) was given the job, and rushed to meet the deadline – drawing protests as cashew and mango trees were cut down to allow electricity lines to be installed quickly. Pumps and motors were installed at Munda-Munda and Intabo, and connected to electricity. It is said one pump was tried, and immediately burned out the motor. Neither pump was ever used again.

When CIP visited on 27 August 2012, we were shown the pumps. But only after repeated questions did local people admit they had never been used. People seemed too embarrassed or too afraid to say anything. When the President's wife, Maria da Luz Guebuza, visited Nante on 29 March 2011, no one mentioned the pumps. When we asked the president of the Associação Munda-Munda, Adetino Luis, he said simply "we are peasants" and cannot resolve this; "it is up to our partners [international donors] to resolve this problem." Officials from ORAM and APAC (Associação de Promoção de Agricultura Comercial) looked shame-faced, and said they only helped to organise cooperatives and did not deal with production or pumps.

Roberto Albino, Director-General of the Zambeze Valley Development Agency (Agência de Desenvolvimento do Vale do Zambeze), and formerly Director of Cepagri, in an e-mail to us on 3 September, noted that the Dutch are financing a project in Nante and suggested they should resolve the pump problem. But Sergio Ussaca at the Dutch embassy said the pump is not an issue for the Dutch: "the government must deal with this".

Albino in his 3 September e-mail blamed the peasants in Nante. He said: "We made a big investment in production cooperatives but until today they have not created their own capacity to direct their members (small producers) in a way that they could carry out their productive activities without outside support."² And he said that the cooperatives had not been able to find a way to pay for electricity so could not sign a contract with the electricity supplier EDM.

¹ "Para ingles ver" is something done entirely for show, based on the passing in 1831 of a Portuguese anti-slavery law, at the demand of the English, but which was never enforced.

² "Houve um grande investimento nas cooperativas de produção, mas até hoje não se criou capacidade destas poderem gerir os seus membros (pequenos produtores) de forma que possam realizar as actividades produtivas sem apoio externo."

But further investigation showed that the real problem was with the initial installation. The motors installed by Cepagri did not match the pumps they installed, so they could not work, so were never handed over to the local communities. A new Japanese-Vietnamese joint rice project in Intabo is dependent on irrigation water. It concluded that the pump and motor installed by Cepagri could not be used, so without publicity they are being replaced in time for the coming season. But nothing is being done at Munda-Munda.

Neither Roberto Albino nor Abdul Mussuale, the new director of Cepagri, responded to further requests for clarification.

Two questions remain:

- 1) Who will tell the President that the pumps, motors and electricity were installed in 45 days as he insisted, but have never worked and cannot work?
- 2) Who is responsible for replacing the pump and motor at Munda-Munda that will never be used.

But hidden behind this may be another issue – an ongoing struggle for the land. These two irrigation schemes were developed by a private company in the colonial era and taken over as a state farm at independence. With the war the state farm was badly damaged and abandoned in the mid-1980s. When the war ended, peasants took over the land that they said had been stolen from them in the colonial era, and with some donor help began to grow rice. Intabo was badly damaged in the floods of 2001, but local communities did what rehabilitation they could.

Peasants have occupied the land in good faith for more than 10 years, so have a right to stay there under the land law. Government officials stress that local people will never be forced off the land, but the government has consistently refused to issue DUATs (occupation titles) to local associations or individual farmers, saying it is still state farm land. Before it was abolished, the Gabinete do Plano de Desenvolvimento do Zambeze (GPZ, Zambeze Development Plan Office) unsuccessfully tried to take the land to give to big investors.

The Zambeze Valley Development Agency has replaced the Zambeze Development Plan Office, but Albino made clear that there is still a plan to give some of the land to big investors. In his 3 September e-mail, he said: "The Zambeze Agency wants to intervene in the Nante irrigation, in collaboration with Cepagri and the provincial government, to find a more sustainable development model for this and others in a similar situations. This means strengthening the cooperation between small producers and the small and large private sector."³

Could it be in the interests of some people that the pumps never work and that peasants never succeed in growing more rice, so land can be handed over to big companies.?

³ "A Agencia do Zambeze pretende intervir no Regadio do Nante, em colaboração com o CEPAGRI e o Governo Provincial para encontrar um modelo de desenvolvimento mais sustentável para este regadio e outros em igual situação. Isso passa pelo fortalecimento de parceria entre os pequenos produtores e o sector privado de media e grande dimensão."