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News reports & clippings no. 135 from Joseph Hanlon

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Four files attached:

+ pdf of this mailing, with colour and formatting

+ development articles (most Portuguese)

+ press freedom articles in English and Portuguese

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DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

GUEBUZA INSISTS POVERTY HAS DECLINED

Those who say that poverty has not declined in Mozambique suffer from “a deficit of information”, that does not allow them to have a full view of what has been done over the past 16 years of peace and reconstruction, according to President Armando Guebuza. Speaking at a press conference in Dondo on 22 August, he said the idea that there has been no real reduction, or even an increase, in poverty, is completely wrong.

Instead, the country had changed dramatically from the scenario of desolation and absolute penury that marked the end of the war in 1992. Many Mozambicans had been pulled out of the pit of poverty to which the war had condemned them, and there could be no doubt that Mozambique was in much better shape now than 16 years ago.

Guebuza cited the expansion in the education and health services, in the national electricity grid, and in the fixed and mobile telecommunications networks clearly showed that “the Mozambique of today is much better than the Mozambique of yesterday. Previously, we scarcely had any of this, and this is all proof that we are overcoming poverty, that we are improving our lives, that poverty is on the decline”.

7 mn MT to districts - 1

Gebuza demands more transparency

“Consultative councils should give more information to the public, including the amount of money provided for each project, the repayment period, and the list of people lent money,” *Notícias* reported on 30 August, as the recommendation of President Armando Guebuza at the conclusion of his tour of Inhambane. The paper added that he warned that sometimes results need more time, and that “repayment could only be demanded after verifying ... that agricultural produce had been sold.”

7 mn MT to districts - 2

Call for expert help

The 7 million meticaís going to each district annually is doomed to fail without more expert help, writes Gustavo Mavie, director of the government news agency AIM, in *Notícias* (29 August, attached). It is a “laudable initiative”, he writes, but there are few people with the skills and ability to use the money well.

“It is obvious that the risk of failure is particularly high for our compatriots in the countryside, where illiteracy reigns, meaning those who analyse, select and approve the projects, as well as the beneficiaries of the funds, are, for the most part, people with little or no knowledge of economics, and even less of bookkeeping and management.” It is not to criticise the consultative councils to say this is the “blind leading the blind”.

The answer, he argues, is training for the use of the 7 million. In particular, he argues for “experts whose mission is to give technical assistance to new investors until the time they can continue on their own.” They would surely need to be accompanied closely until the first loans were repaid.

Another proposal (which has been increasingly widely proposed in rural areas) is to create machinery parks, which lease out machinery to the farmers or actually do the heavy work. This reduces both the investment needs of individual farmers and also means they do not need to become skilled at using and maintaining the machinery. Mavie writes that he has seen this system working well in Germany, and that it is used in other countries.

CRACKDOWN ON UNUSED LAND

More than 5 million hectares of land will be inspected to see if it is being used according to the licences granted, declared Agriculture Minister Soares Nhaca. (*Notícias* 26 August, 1 September)

Under Mozambican law, land belongs to the state and cannot be sold or mortgaged. But people can obtain long leases (DUAT, Directo de Uso e Aproveitamento de Terra). Individuals and communities who have used land for more than a decade can obtain permanent use rights (which also carry the right to negotiate with investors). Outside investors, foreign and national, can obtain 50 year leases (renewable once), which must be based on development plans. Mozambique’s land area is 78 million hectares, of which 36 mn ha is considered arable. Formal leases have been issued for 12 mn ha, according to the Ministry of Agriculture.

“We have situations in which, for example, people have been given 10,000 ha based on a plan, but a decade later than have not succeeded in using more than 100 ha,” Nhaca said. In that situation, the landholders will be fined or have their land area reduced, he said.

Over the past two decades, substantial tracts of land have been given to senior and even junior government and party officials. Often this land is left unused, and is being held purely for speculation, hoping that a foreign investor might lease it. Pressure is growing for farmland, particularly for biofuel, and outside investors are unwilling to pay the high rents being demanded.

The new crackdown should force officials to lower the rent they demand, or force them to give up some of the unused land.

Mphanda Nkuwa dam to start next year

Mozambique hopes to start work next year on the Mphanda Nkuwa dam on the Zambeze river, downstream from the Cahora Bassa dam. The project will cost \$1.65 bn and generate 1500 MW. (*Noticias* 20 August)

The project will be run by a consortium of the state electricity company Electricidade de Moçambique (EDM), the Brazilian firm Camargo Correia, and a new Mozambican company Energia Capital. Work will start as soon as funding can be organised, and the consortium hopes to obtain some of the money from the World Bank.

The project is linked to a new 1400 km power line to be built from Tete to Maputo. It will draw on electricity from Cahora Bassa, Mphanda Nkuwa, and a new coal-fired power station at Moatize. At present there is no north-south power line; Cahora Bassa electricity is mostly exported directly to South Africa and then re-imported for Maputo and the south of Mozambique.

Electricity grid reaches 73 districts

The national electricity grid has reached 73 of 128 districts, and should be extended to 80 districts by the end of the year, according to Electricidade de Moçambique (EDM). (*Noticias* 29 and 30 August)

Tighter customs control promotes local chickens

Tighter controls on imported (largely Brazilian) chickens have created space for Mozambican chicken producers to expand. Commercial chicken production is up four-fold in four years, according to Jake Walter of Tecnoserve. (*Noticias* 25 August, attached)

After 20 years of support by the Brazilian development bank, Brazilian small scale producers now have the lowest costs, and Brazil has become the world's largest exporter of frozen chickens. But there has been a problem that shiploads of chickens are bought for resale in the middle East, and if they are not sold as they get close to the end of their shelf-life, they are dumped at low prices in east Africa.

To beat this, Mozambican customs now only allows import of frozen chickens within 80 days of their being killed, and ensures that all customs duties are paid. This pushes up the price enough to make local chickens competitive. This has been matched with government help on animal health and units to produce day-old chicks, as well as campaigns to eat national rather than imported chickens.

But Walker warns that the Mozambican chicken industry still faces a problem of lack of government support – both with help to invest in production of feed and other inputs and construction of slaughterhouses. Very high interest rates also restrict growth, he says.

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David Aloni dies

David Aloni, one of the few Renamo intellectuals, died of a heart attack on 30 August at age 68. For a period in the 1980s he was detained in a re-education camp, and developed a strong hostility to Frelimo. He joined Renamo after the 1992 peace accord, and became a Renamo member of the

first multi-party parliament. He was also a member of the high-level, all-party group that drew up the Agenda 2025 development strategy and later became a member of the Council of State,

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PRESS FREEDOM

Journalists convicted in secret trial

Three journalists from the weekly *Zambeze* were convicted on 29 August of libeling Prime Minister Luis Diogo and sentenced to six months imprisonment, converted into a fine at the rate of 30 meticaís a day – 5,400 meticaís (\$220) each. Fernando Veloso, Luis Nhachote and Alvarito de Carvalho were tried under a clause in 1991 state security legislation that had never been used before, which says that libelling certain high figures of state constitutes a security offence.

The trial was controversial on two grounds. First, instead of waiting for Diogo to bring a libel suit, the Maputo branch of the Public Prosecutor's Office brought the case under the security law, and rushed it to the front of the queue, so the case was heard in weeks instead of years. Second, it was held in secret until provisions of the 1926 fascist Portuguese penal code and a 2007 Mozambican law which permit trials to be held in secret in limited circumstances. (Journalists have also been tried in secret in Pemba and Beira.)

The weekly *Savana* reported that President Armando Guebuza first heard about the case on television, and was annoyed about the Maputo prosecutors using national security legislation without first talking to central government. Earlier this year, Maputo prosecutors were criticised for interrogating a popular rap artist, Edson da Luz (who uses the stage name Azagaia) about the supposedly violent lyrics he had written in a song about the riots against minibus fare rises on 5 February.

The offending article accused Diogo of not being Mozambican, and was blatantly false. It was part of a long running campaign by *Zambeze* against Diogo's husband, lawyer Albano Silva, and in defence of some criminals he helped to jail, including the murderer of investigative journalist Carlos Cardoso.

The article was based on the nationality law introduced after independence. It stated that people born outside Mozambique but who had lived more than half their lives in Mozambique were entitled to Mozambican nationality, if they applied within three months of the proclamation of independence. But a discriminatory clause in the law stated that Mozambican women who married foreigners lost their Mozambican nationality (no such penalty was suffered by Mozambican men who took foreign wives). Silva was born in northern Portugal, and *Zambeze* claimed that by marrying him in 1981, Diogo lost her Mozambican nationality. In fact, Silva applied for Mozambican nationality in September 1975 and was granted it two years later.

Media expanding, but pressure on journalists increasing, say MISA

Independent media is expanding rapidly. There are now over 60 radio and television stations in the public, private and community sectors, and over 25 regular publications. Over 900 people work on the editorial side of the media, ranging from volunteer producers in local community radios to professional journalists on the national media.

In Maputo, there has been an "enormous opening" to the press. However, the Mozambican media is also facing increasing harassment from the courts, prosecutors and district administrators,

particularly as one moves away from Maputo, according to Tomas Vieira Mario, recently re-elected chair of the Mozambican chapter of the regional press freedom body, MISA (Media Institute of Southern Africa).

"In the districts, freedom of the press is still something strange for the great majority of local public authorities", he said. Both district administrators and provincial branches of the Public Prosecutor's Office were violating the fundamental rights of journalists.

The figure of the district administrator, Vieira Mario argued, had so far escaped all the reforms that have reshaped the Mozambican state, and "he continues, essentially, to be the leader of the colonial state – the chief of the village." The administrator "is still a centralizing figure ... who believes that he is the centre of power. This is reflected in everything that goes on in the district. Sometimes a simple survey in the district can be stopped if the administrator has not been informed. He can order the survey stopped to find out who the people are, where have they come from, and why are they doing this work. As for freedom of the press, basically he doesn't know about it".

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