



Monitoring and Evaluating Poverty Reduction Policies in Mozambique

STUDY 3: SOCIAL RELATIONS OF RURAL-URBAN POVERTY

Many communities in Mozambique find themselves in the rural-urban interface, either by being small towns or rural areas in the vicinity of cities. There is growing evidence that the households and individuals who manage to establish and maintain rural-urban linkages experience improved living conditions and upward social mobility, while those who are in 'captivity' in rural villages and urban slums experience impoverishment. The apparent increasing inequalities in Mozambican society can only be dealt with by ceasing to view rural and urban areas as separate entities and to see them, rather, as intricately linked and part of the same social formation.

Introduction

This brief summarises the third in a series of three qualitative studies on poverty in Mozambique. The series also includes studies of the rural district Murrupula in northern Mozambique (2006) and four bairros in the capital city Maputo (2007). The studies will be used as baselines for monitoring and evaluating Mozambique's poverty alleviation efforts, by following the implications of government policies and interventions in the three selected sites to ascertain changes in the structural conditions and social relations of poverty after a period of three years (i.e. 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively).

Research-based information is recognised as important for the implementation of Mozambique's poverty reduction strategy (PARPA). Key quantitative data are found in national censuses, household and expenditure surveys and demographic and health surveys published by the National Institute of Statistics (INE), and further analysed by national, as well as international, institutions. While these yield important information on the mapping, profile and determinants of poverty, it is also recognised that they should be complemented by participatory and qualitative analyses to better understand the dynamics of poverty and the coping strategies of the poor.

In doing this we have relied on a combination of focal-point interviews, localised surveys and qualitative methodologies – including histograms, community mapping, force-field analysis, wealth ranking and venn diagrams. Our analytical approach highlights

the importance of political and economic structures for explaining poverty and inequality, but also acknowledges human agency and ordinary lives. Poverty is broadly understood as being a lack of income and assets to attain basic necessities in the form of food, clothing and shelter; a sense of voicelessness and powerlessness in relation to institutions of society and the state; and vulnerability to adverse shocks.

This brief focuses on four communities in the District of Buzi in the central province of Sofala, all finding themselves in the rural-urban interface. Sofala currently experiences two apparently contradictory developments: The province has been hit hard by a sharp decline of its former industrial and agricultural base, but has also seen remarkable improvement in the socioeconomic conditions as measured by the proportion of the population finding itself above the poverty line.

In Buzi we see traces of both developments, in the form of increasing inequalities between the part of the population who have managed to establish and maintain links with the urban district centre and the city of Beira, which represents options for employment, marketing of agricultural products, income generation and superior access to social services – and those who do not and are 'captive' in rural areas.

The Political and Economic Context

The District of Buzi fulfils most if not all the criteria for becoming a municipality with relative political

and economic autonomy, but remains a district apparently due to widespread support for the opposition party. While a dynamic and well-governed political entity, the district administration still depends on strong and influential traditional authorities for popular mobilisation and tax collection. The traditional authorities have to balance the partial co-option by the state with their social and spiritual roles in their local communities.

The 'Seven Million MT' scheme for local economic development, to be administered by the District Consultative Council, with representatives from the state and civil society, has invigorated political and economic participation in Buzi. However, it has also led to accusations of bias against the most marginal communities and favouritism based on political affiliation and economic position, which needs to be addressed through greater transparency and accountability.

There are three important external conditions affecting the economy of Buzi: One is the fate of the Buzi Company, which used to employ thousands of people in its agro-businesses, but that has now come to a virtual standstill with an uncertain future. A second is the reoccurring natural disasters of floods, drought and cyclones, epitomised by the flood in 2000, which is still affecting the life-situation of many inhabitants. The third is the influence of urban areas, with the dynamic Vila do Buzi and the city of Beira representing opportunities for employment, commerce and social services for those in a position to constructively relate to them.

Agriculture is currently the economic backbone of the District, done in combination with small-scale industry and trade for households in position to pursue several income-earning alternatives. Fishing represents an important source of income in the coastal communities of the District, and is also a buffer in times of crisis for people from other areas. Access to education has improved considerably the past few years, but the health situation is still very serious with high child mortality rates and a HIV-AIDS infection rate of 25 percent.



Social Relations of Poverty and Well-Being

Our survey shows that households in Buzi are larger, and the proportion of female-headed households higher, than data from INE indicate. De facto rather than de jure definitions better reflect reality on the ground: Many households have key members residing outside the main household dwelling as part of a strategy of 'split households', and many single mothers are largely responsible for themselves and their children within their natal households.

Average income and expenditure is relatively high in Buzi, but there are consistent differences between the urbanised Vila and Nova Sofala (through its proximity to Beira) on the one hand and the more rural Estaquinha and Bândua on the other. The former have a higher proportion of households involved in non-agricultural small-scale industries and trade than the latter – where a larger proportion are 'trapped' in their rural livelihoods.

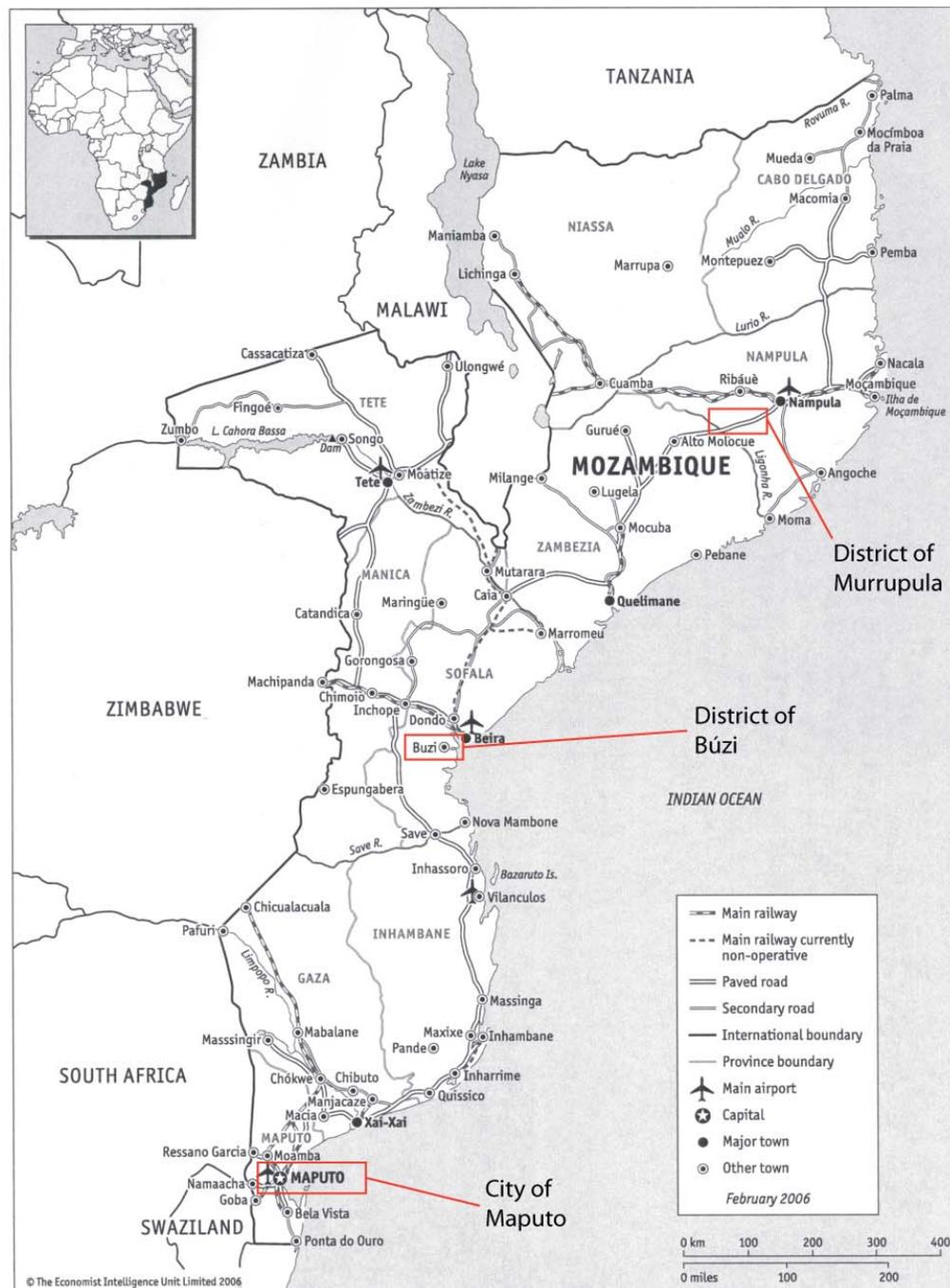
People in all four communities have clear perceptions of different categories of the poor and the better-off, entailing social characteristics as well as options for social mobility: Some households are so poor that they need help and support from the outside to cope (the 'destitute poor' or *umbwa*). Some households work hard and do their best, but do not manage to improve their lives under the present structural constraints (the 'chronically poor' or *mulombo*). Some households are poor because of misfortune and bad luck, but would be in position to improve their situation if their fortune and luck were to change (the 'transitory poor' or *kombo*).

The categories of better-off households also show a remarkable congruence: There are some better-off households that are part of extended families that have 'always' been well-off (the 'permanently rich' or *muthende*). There are some households that have become well-off through their own hard work (the 'worthy rich' or *mucupuki*), and there are some households that have become well-off through luck or chance and that like to show-off their wealth (the 'newly rich' or *kuganha*).



There are, finally, important local processes of marginalisation and social exclusion through which the very poorest easily become excluded from the vital social networks of the extended family, the church, civil society organisations and the state.

In a patrilineal setting, women seem to be particularly susceptible to social exclusion – as indicated by the large proportion of widows living alone under dismal conditions. Other social groups experiencing social isolation are HIV-AIDS victims and orphans.



Briefs of a series of participatory and qualitative studies done in cooperation with the Ministry of Planning and Development in Mozambique.

The brief is based on Carmeliza Rosário, Inge Tvedten, Margarida Paulo: *'Mucupuki'. Social Relations of Rural-Urban Poverty in Central Mozambique* CMI Report R 2008: 14. The report is available in English and Portuguese at www.cmi.no
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Some Preliminary Implications

While being aware of the political tension related to Sofala and districts like Buzi as areas of the opposition, there are good political as well as economic reasons for declaring Buzi a municipality and giving it more autonomy in its efforts to develop further and alleviate poverty.

The current dismal state of the previously very important Buzi Company functions as an impediment to further development both in agro-industry and other sectors, and the fate of the company should be clarified by its owners and the government as soon as possible.

The district administration and the traditional authorities in Buzi generally seem to have found ways to cooperate constructively, but further effort should be made to better separate the state apparatus from the party to avoid future tension.

The 'Seven Million MT' scheme has revitalised popular political and economic participation in Buzi through the Consultative Councils, but the growing perception that the money primarily goes to party affiliates and

the better-off must be dealt with by securing a transparent and fair distribution of the funds.

The local radio station (Radio Buzi) has huge potential for effectively disseminating public information, educational programmes and communication within the district, and its future should be secured with funding from the government and/or aid organisations.

The government and donors alike should reassess their current scepticism towards integrated rural development programmes. Renewed efforts should also be made to support the establishment of associations in agriculture, among small-scale traders and in the form of savings and credit societies – with the particular goal of empowering women.

The importance of relations with urban areas for economic development (employment and trade) and upward social mobility should lead to intensified efforts to improve communication with the Vila and Beira, by road, waterways (rivers and ocean) and telecommunication.

In particular, efforts should be made to support the marketing of agricultural products from the more marginal areas in the district where the purchasing power is so low that it inhibits increased production. Publicly supported local and adapted alternatives to the previous 'marketing boards' should be considered.

For the poor and marginalised who are compelled to remain in their local communities where options for employment and income are small, targeted interventions should be pursued by government as well as aid agencies.

For the physically able, food for work programmes are a good way to combine community development and income generation for the poor. For the elderly, the sick and the handicapped, systems of direct support should be improved by decentralising decision-making to the level of localities.

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