



Monitoring and Evaluating Poverty Reduction Policies in Mozambique

STUDY 1: SOCIAL RELATIONS OF RURAL POVERTY

From the vantage point of a rural district in northern Mozambique, the development efforts by government and donors are visible through the enhanced capacity of the local administration and investments in education and health, but not where it really matters for poor people: employment creation and reasonable returns from their agricultural production, which currently are adversely affected by an absent or exploitative private sector. The very poorest are marginalised or excluded from social relationships with the extended family, traditional institutions as well as the state, underlining the need to give special attention to the chronically poor and destitute in rural areas.

Introduction

In Mozambique, the government and the donors have invested considerable resources and effort in economic and social development. Nevertheless, Mozambique is still one of the poorest countries in the world: 54 percent of its population find themselves below the national poverty line, and it is ranked 172 out of 177 countries in UNDP's most recent Human Development Report (2007/08).

This brief presents the first in a series of three participatory and qualitative studies on poverty in Mozambique, which includes a rural district in the northern province of Nampula (2006), urban districts in the capital city Maputo (2007) and a 'small town' district in the central province of Sofala (2008). 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 at the local level and ascertaining changes in the conditions, perceptions and relations of poverty after periods of three years (i.e. in 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively).

We hold the view that structural political and economic constraints have powerful effects on the lives of poor people, but also that there is room for human agency and social mobility. Methodologically, the studies are based on a 'qual-quant' approach in which we take existing quantitative data on poverty in Mozambique as our point of departure and contextualise and inform them through a combination of localised surveys focusing on social relationships and qualitative methodologies – including histograms, community mapping, force-field analysis, wealth ranking and Venn diagrams.

Structural Poverty in Murrupula, Nampula

Nampula is the second most populous province in Mozambique after Zambezia, with a population of 3.6 million. Agriculture is the dominant economic activity, historically with a mixture of small-scale, mainly subsistence agriculture and larger units producing cash crops such as cotton, cashew and tobacco. At the coast, fishing and coconut farming are additional important sources of subsistence and income. Nampula has a poverty headcount close to the national average of 52.6 percent. It also has the second highest illiteracy rate in the country at 65.1 percent and the second highest child mortality rate at 220 per 1000. The HIV/AIDS infection rate of 6.2 percent is lower than the national average of 16.2 percent.

Murrupula is one of 21 districts in Nampula and has a population of 102,000, of whom 29,000 live in the district centre Vila de Murrupula. The district is headed by a district administrator and divided into three administrative posts, with line ministries having parallel structures. In accordance with the Local Government Act (LOLE) of 2005, the district is in the process of acquiring more responsibility for planning, service delivery and development interventions. Increased popular control is to be secured through a new institution (IPCCs) for participatory planning. Despite all this, traditional authorities are still very much intact and their influence is considerable – from chiefs or *régulos* via the heads of matrilineal clans or *nihimos* to the village-based headmen or *cabos*.

Poverty and vulnerability in Murrupula cannot be explained without reference to the district's history as a centre for Renamo during the war and of a deep scepticism about the Frelimo government and its intentions. War and brutality also partly explain the continued importance of witchcraft (*feiticismo*) as an ordering force in local communities. There are no formal employment opportunities in the four communities under study except in education and health, and agriculture is key to employment, income and subsistence. Production is negatively influenced by low levels





of technology, but the potential is there in the form of ample and fertile land. Perhaps the most important constraint on increased agricultural production is the exploitative nature of relations of exchange, with traders paying minimal prices to producers who often do not have any alternatives.

Coping Through Social Relations

Coping strategies among households in Murrupula are pursued within a socio-cultural setting where tradition and a matrilineal kinship system still play a significant role. Households are relatively large and stable, with the majority (91 percent) being male-headed. In addition to the stress of poverty *per se*, high teenage pregnancy and child mortality rates are among the most important factors destabilising households.

People in Murrupula have clear perceptions about different characteristics of poverty and poor people. They separate structural conditions such as lack of employment, inadequate school and health facilities, and low prices for agricultural products from social conditions about which they can do something themselves, including ignorance, inadequate cooperation in the community, adultery and alcohol abuse. Three categories of poor households were identified. The first (*ohawa* and *ohikalano*) are households and individuals who are poor due to physical limitations or misfortune.

The second (*wiacha* and *ovelavela*) are households and individuals who have violated socio-cultural norms through their own behaviour. The third (*opitanha*) combines these two and consists of destitutes who are unable to improve their lives. People's perceptions of poverty focus on the role of men, reflecting the widespread perception that men are responsible for the well-being of their households and that they are to blame if the household suffers. Female-headed households are seen as 'victims' through divorce, widowhood, unwanted pregnancies or other misfortunes. Very few households in the communities under study are identified as 'better-off' or 'rich'. Only one category (*okalano*) is regarded as deserving its wealth by having worked hard, while *opwalatha* and *orela* are viewed with scepticism as their wealth is closely associated with witchcraft and sorcery.

For people in Murrupula, the most important set of social relationships for coping with poverty in daily life as well as in times of crisis is the extended family. Most young households settle close to the wife's family and the maternal uncle is an important person for guidance and practical support. The clan or *nihimo* is a broader category of people recognising common descent and is relevant mainly for people with resources to enter reciprocal relations with people outside the immediate community. People also relate to traditional authorities (*régulos*, *cabos* and *curandeiros*) for help in solving conflicts and illness, but these are usually not in

a position to give material support. Churches and mosques remain important for social and economic support, but few civil society and aid organisations have found their way to Murrupula. The state is only rarely identified as relevant for people's coping strategies, with the partial exception of education and health.

In general terms the better-off households are characterised by a wider set of social relationships than the poorest, as they are in a better position to fill such relations with material content in a rural setting where money is becoming increasingly important. The very poorest tend to be socially marginalised or excluded, as they do not have any options for contributing with labour or material means in a context where reciprocity is central.



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 Inge Tvedten, Margarida Paulo, Carmeliza Rosário: "Opitanha": Social Relations of Rural Poverty in Northern Mozambique, CMI Report R 2006: 16. The report is available in English and Portuguese at www.cmi.no Technical editor: Inger A. Nygaard. Photos: Inge Tvedten

Some Preliminary Policy Implications

The three initial studies on social relations of poverty in Mozambique (2006-2008) primarily serve as baselines for the monitoring and evaluation of the Mozambican government's policies for poverty alleviation. Here we present a set of broad policy implications arising from our baseline study that we believe are important to follow up for alleviating poverty in remote rural areas like Murrupula.

- The definition of 'the household' as the key analytical unit used in censuses and national household surveys in Mozambique should be reassessed to better reflect realities on the ground, and combined with questions putting emphasis on social relationships of individuals and households that are vital for the survival of the poor.
- If the state and its poverty alleviation efforts are to have an impact in areas like Murrupula, there is a need to further strengthen the local government's human and economic resources in line with the intentions in the Local Government Act.
- In the foreseeable future, in areas such as Murrupula the state will continue to depend on traditional authorities for community mobilisation, development inter-

ventions and tax collection. Their work should be formalised and remunerated in order to ensure that the traditional authorities work for the state.

- Improved access to markets and improved bargaining positions vis a vis external traders are important for enhancing production and income from agriculture. Both should be further developed through improved road networks, the development of associations and possibly some form of marketing board to reduce the exploitative nature of current relations with traders.
- Most people realise the potential importance of education for improving their lives. However, many children do not go to school due to poverty, domestic work and early marriage/pregnancy amongst girls, who tend to drop out first. Access to education should be improved and provisions should be made for young mothers to continue their education after childbirth.
- Illness, malnutrition and child mortality remain a serious problem in rural areas. Scepticism about state health institutions and their intentions and a concomitant preference for traditional doctors have negative

implications, but much can be done to improve the status of the formal health system and combat malnutrition through targeted information.

- Communities and households are largely caught up in a dependency syndrome after years of colonialism and war, but also express a willingness to contribute with what they have (primarily labour but also through taxes and fees) to improve their own situation and that of their communities. This should be better exploited through reciprocal 'contracts' between the state, civil society and the communities.
- The very poorest households and individuals in districts such as Murrupula are characterised by non-involvement in state and community institutions (including those of education, health, the church and associations), and are marginalised or excluded from traditional family networks due to their inability to contribute in a setting where relationships have to be reciprocal. For these, targeted interventions and social protection measures will be necessary.

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