

Mozambique News Agency

AIM Reports

Report no.418, 1st February 2011



Flooding hits south and centre of country

Rivers in the south and centre of Mozambique have been in flood during much of January due to heavy rains in the country and in neighbouring South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Over 30,000 people have moved out of their homes for higher ground, and several people have drowned.

On 30 January the Cahora Bassa dam, in the western province of Tete, increased the rate at which it is discharging water. All the measuring stations on the lower Zambezi are above alert level, and the Zambezi is rising.

According to Dulce Chilundo, director of the National Emergency Operational Centre (CENOE), the situation in the Zambezi basin was not yet of serious concern, although fields planted along the banks of the river are likely to be inundated.

Luis Pacheco, the Sofala delegate of the country's relief agency, the National Disasters Management Institute (INGC), agreed. There was not yet any need for the INGC to support any community in Sofala, "although many rivers remain above alert level".

But if Cahora Bassa is forced to further increase its discharges there will indeed be a danger of large scale flooding in the Zambezi valley.

The heavy rains and swollen rivers have made many roads in central Mozambique impassable, cutting off many small towns and villages.

In the south of the country the Limpopo River, which had been above flood alert level for much of its length in the last week of January, is now dropping. But the Maputo and Save rivers remain above alert level.

The number of people moved out of flood prone areas and to higher ground so far this rainy season, now stands at 30,599, according to the INGC.

Seeds for families hit by floods

The Maputo provincial government has announced that it is to provide seeds and other agricultural inputs to families whose crops have been destroyed by flooding in the Incomati and Maputo basins.

Provincial Governor Maria Jonas pledged that "the government will work to provide seeds for those families who are in great need, while others should acquire the seeds through agricultural fairs".

Flooding on the Sabie River, a tributary of the Incomati, has inundated 700 hectares of crops, while on

the Incomati at the district of Manhica 12,000 hectares of crops were destroyed.

Taking the province as a whole, 16,000 hectares of land, five per cent of the area planted, have been flooded.

"It's true that we have challenges, not only in terms of allocating seeds for the second sowings, but also in health education to prevent outbreaks of diarrhoeal diseases and of malaria", Jonas said. "So we are calling on the local authorities to continue promoting individual and collective hygiene among the public".

Six drown in Limpopo basin

Six people (three children and three adults) have died in the Limpopo river basin in the southern province of Gaza, following January's heavy rains – but Joao Ribeiro, general director of the INGC, disputes that any of them can be considered as flood victims.

The three adults were fishermen who took their boats onto the reservoir of the Massingir dam on the day when the dam opened its floodgates. Ribeiro told reporters that although a warning had been issued that the floodgates would open, the fishermen continued fishing.

They were near the dam wall, and when the floodgates were opened, the rush of the water overturned their boats and the three died.

As for the children, Ribeiro said that two drowned while bathing in the Limpopo while the third was swept away while trying to cross the river.

The flooding in the Limpopo valley has destroyed 16,334 hectares of various crops.

In the Gaza provincial capital, Xai-Xai, near the mouth of the Limpopo about 100 families have been displaced from their homes by torrential rains. According to Ribeiro, they were living in an area prone to flooding, and will be moved definitively to a new neighbourhood.

The government allocated a budget of 120 million meticais (about \$3.7 million) to respond to any natural disaster – but so far the INGC has used less than three per cent of this sum.

President Guebuza calls for gradual African integration

President Armando Guebuza told the summit of the African Union in Addis Ababa at the end of January that continental integration should continue to be gradual, setting up the necessary conditions for citizens and their institutions to take ownership of it.

Integration through common values was the main theme of the summit, attended by some 40 heads of state and government.

President Guebuza told the summit that the project of continental integration must take into account the sovereignty and complexity of the member states. "Our experience with SADC (the Southern African Development Community) shows that continental integration must continue to be gradual", he said.

He added that consolidating and internalising the principles and objectives contained in the Constitutive Act of the African Union are still a challenge for all African peoples and states, taking into consideration levels of social and economic development. The founding principles of the AU include respect for the sovereignty and independence of states, the promotion of peace, security and stability, and good governance.

In theory, everyone is in favour of continental integration – the division inside the AU is between those countries such as Mozambique which believe that integration can only be achieved gradually, and those who are in favour of an immediate proclamation of some form of all-African government.

This latter position is most closely associated with the Libyan leader, Mummud Kadhafi. But he was not in Addis Ababa – with insurrections under way in the neighbouring north African states of Tunisia and Egypt he has decided not to attend the summit.

Stressing the theme of gradualism, President Guebuza added that in Mozambique particular attention is paid to national unity, to self-esteem, and to respect for cultural diversity. These matters are enshrined in the Mozambican Constitution, he said, alongside pluralism of expression, democratic political organisation, and respect and guarantees for fundamental rights and freedoms.

New governor and deputy ministers sworn in

President Armando Guebuza on 25 January swore Carvalho Muaria into office as governor of the central province of Sofala. Muaria replaces Mauricio Vieira, who died in December. Because of Vieira's poor health, for the previous six months Muaria had been interim governor of the province as well as Deputy Minister of Public Works and Housing.

President Guebuza swore in the new Deputy Minister of Public Works, Francisco Pereira, who was previously chairperson of the Board of Directors of the government's Roads Fund. Also sworn in was Deputy Minister of Development and Planning, Amelia Nakhare, to replace Maria Jose Lucas, who died on 2 January.

Phase three of coal terminal expansion concluded

The Maputo Port Development Company (MPDC) on 25 January announced the conclusion of phase three of the expansion of the Matola Coal Terminal, which is owned and operated by the South African company Grindrod.

David Rennie, the chairperson of MPDC and executive director of Grindrod, told reporters that phase three raises the capacity of the terminal from four million to six million tonnes of coal a year.

A pre-feasibility study is under way for a fourth phase in the expansion that will lift the capacity of the terminal to between 12 and 17 million tonnes a year, with a storage capacity of 1.4 million tonnes.

Before phase three, the terminal could only load 8,000 tonnes of coal and 12,000 tonnes of magnetite a day. But now, the maximum loading possible from the terminal is 30,000 tonnes of coal and 48,000 tonnes of magnetite a day. Rennie believes that it will be possible by 2030 to handle 50 million tonnes a year.

According to MPDC Chief Executive Officer Jorge Ferraz, the total investment envisaged by MPDC is \$750 million. Of this sum, \$323 million is to be invested by 2015. (This comes on top of \$258 million invested in the past 15 years).

Some \$200 million will be spent on rehabilitating existing quays and building new ones. The port consists of two complexes – the MDC quays and terminals (some of them dating to the 1960s) in Maputo, and the bulk terminals (for aluminium, coal, grain and fuel) at Matola. Between them lies an area that is undeveloped, where space exists for expansion.

Ferraz pointed out that in 2007 only five shipping lines were stopping at Maputo. That figure has now risen to 13, and there has been a 95 per cent increase in the number of ships calling at Maputo.

Key to MPDC's plans is the dredging of the entrance channel. A dredging vessel, the "TSHD Pelletier" arrived in Maputo in September, and this month completed its task of deepening the access channel from 9.4 to 11 metres.

Prior to the dredging the largest size vessel that the port could accommodate was 50,000 DWT (deadweight tonnes – the measure of how much a ship can safely carry). But now "Panamax" size vessels, of up to 80,000 DWT, can enter the port.

MPDC is 49 per cent owned by the publicly owned ports and rail company, CFM, and 51 per cent by the private sector consortium, Portus Indico. 48.5 per cent of Portus Indico is owned by Dubai Ports World, 48.5 per cent by Grindrod and three per cent by the Mozambican company, Mocambique Gestores.

The MPDC lease on the terminal was initially only for 15 years. But last year the government extended the lease by a further 15 years, so that it will only expire in 2033. MPDC regards this as a vote of confidence, which will help implement its master plan for the port and the mobilization of the investments required.

Repairs to Nacala Railway to cost \$231 million

The rehabilitation of the rail link between Malawi's commercial capital, Blantyre, and the Mozambican port of Nacala, in the northern province of Nampula, will cost \$231 million, with \$8 million reserved for emergency repairs.

The estimated cost was given by Victor Lungu, the director of the planning and transport department in the Malawian Ministry of Transport and Public Infrastructure, based on the findings of a study into the project financed by the European Union.

The study found that after the rail line has been rebuilt a train will take just 38 hours to travel between Nacala and Blantyre, compared with the current journey time of between 5 and 7 days.

The current state of the line restricts train speeds to 20 kilometres per hour. According to Lungu, when the line has been rehabilitated the trains will be able to travel at speeds of up to 70 kilometres per hour.

The Nacala railway is the backbone of the Nacala Development Corridor, an area of development that includes parts of Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique.

Alternatives to prison under consideration

The Mozambican government plans in April to analyse a bill that should drastically reduce the prison population by allowing courts to impose sentences other than prison terms for minor offences.

Justice Minister Benvinda Levi made this announcement on 28 January at a ceremony where senior prison officials were sworn into office.

Once the full cabinet has given the bill the green light, it will be sent to the country's parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, for approval. Initially it was hoped that the bill would be passed in October 2010, and would become effective this year, but the procedures have fallen behind schedule.

Mozambican prisons have an unenviable reputation for overcrowding, and poor standards of diet and hygiene. There are currently about 15,000 people in the country's jails – but 35 per cent of them are remand prisoners awaiting trial. Most of these could safely be allowed to wait for their trials at home.

Many others have committed minor offences for which they are sentenced to a few weeks or months in jail. The proposals for "alternatives to prison" envisage courts giving such offenders non-custodial sentences, such as forms of community service.

Keeping minor offenders in jail is expensive. The National Prison Service (SNAPRI) estimates that the Mozambican state would save the equivalent of \$6 million a year if it adopted alternatives to prison sentences.

The government's Legal Reform Technical Unit considers that the new measures to be considered should include community work, sentences served in an open or semi-open regime, and an extension of the time that prisoners are allowed to visit their families.

Two new banks authorised

The Bank of Mozambique has authorised two new banks to operate in the country.

The first is the National Investment Bank (BNI), set up by the Mozambican and Portuguese governments under agreements reached last year. The Portuguese and Mozambican states each hold 49.5 per cent of the capital of the BNI. The third shareholder, with one per cent, is the Commercial and Investment Bank (BCI), which is the second largest commercial bank in Mozambique.

The bank has been created to finance large scale development projects, and its initial capital is \$500 million. The chairperson of the BNI is Adriano Maleiane, a former governor of the Bank of Mozambique.

The second new bank authorised to start operations is the Banco Unico. The Portuguese groups Amorim and Visabeira have set up a management company, Gevisar, which will own 70 per cent of the shares of Banco Unico.

The remaining shares are held by Mozambican institutions and individuals, including the National Hydrocarbon Company (ENH), and the private companies Agro-Alfa and Intelec.

The capital of Banco Unico is expected to reach €70 million (\$96 million) within the first three to four years.

The spokesperson for the Bank of Mozambique, Waldemar de Sousa, told reporters that the entry of two new banks is recognition of the growth of the Mozambican financial system and that the country is able to attract new investments to the financial sector.

TB lab inaugurated

Health Minister Alexandre Manguela on 26 January re-inaugurated the country's main tuberculosis laboratory, remodelled and equipped with funding of over \$1.5 million provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The National Tuberculosis Reference Laboratory is located within the grounds of Maputo Central Hospital, and is now equipped with the most recent technology for diagnosing tuberculosis, including drug resistant tuberculosis.

The rate of prevalence of tuberculosis in Mozambique is 504 cases per 100,000 inhabitants, and Mozambique is in 19th position in the 22 countries that still have a high tuberculosis burden.

Data from 2007/2008 indicate that 3.5 per cent of new tuberculosis cases in Mozambique are caused by the multi-drug resistant strains of the bacterium.

For his part, Todd Amani, Director of the USAID office in Mozambique, said he hoped the laboratory would contribute to improving the provision of public health services.

Seven sentenced for theft in Tete

The Tete Provincial Court on 21 January sentenced seven people to jail terms of between four and 20 years for the theft of over 20 million meticaís (\$617,000) from the National Social Security Institute (INSS).

The heaviest sentence, 20 years, was given to five senior INSS staff, who conspired to steal money earmarked for paying pensions.

They are the former Tete provincial delegate of the INSS, Augusto Zenguele, the head of administration and finance in the Tete delegation, Sergio Ntefula, the treasurer, Maria Manuel, and two INSS accountants, Manuel Cadeado and Mouzinho Coutevela.

The court found their co-accused, Danilo Valy, a worker at the Tete branch of the country's largest bank, the Millennium-BIM, guilty of facilitating the movement of fraudulent INSS cheques, and hence the withdrawal of funds. He was sentenced to ten years.

Cinesio Caetano who collected the stolen money from the bank was sentenced to four years.

The thefts began in 2005, and were only discovered in early 2009. Given the complexity of the case, the investigations took about 22 months.

National stadium handed over to government

The Mozambican government on 17 January received the country's new national sports stadium from the hands of the Chinese contractor.

Attending the ceremony were the Deputy Minister of Youth and Sport, Carlos de Sousa, and the Chinese ambassador, Huang Songfu.

The stadium, in the outer Maputo suburb of Zimpeto, has seating for 42,000 spectators, and has been built to Olympic standards.

Huang Songfu declared that the delivery of the stadium was "a very important moment for China", which greatly admires the Mozambican people for their efforts first in the battle for the country's independence, and now in the fight against poverty.

"The Chinese people are very proud to participate in this struggle against poverty", he said, stressing that the Chinese funding (\$65 million) for the stadium takes the form of a long term loan at low interest rates.

Work on the stadium began on 28 April 2008, and it was initially scheduled to be ready in the first quarter of 2010.

To allow consolidation of the turf, the first football game to be played in the new stadium will not be played until March or April.

Solution in sight for passenger transport

Minister of Transport, Paulo Zucula has guaranteed that the crisis of passenger transport in Maputo, characterised by huge queues at the city's bus stop during the rush hours, will soon be solved.

Fifty new buses for private operators are already in Maputo, and will soon be operational.

Zucula added that the government has ordered a shipment of buses from China that should soon arrive in Maputo to strengthen the current fleet of the publicly-owned bus company, TPM.

This is in addition to a further shipment of 150 buses from the Indian company Tata, which will arrive in the next four to five months.

Zucula recognised that the new buses will not definitively solve the problem, since traffic in Maputo, particularly on the main routes in and out of the city, is also severely delayed by rush hour traffic jams.

"We must be very creative in finding a way to minimise the problem", said Zucula, who raised the hypothesis of introducing road traffic innovations, particularly during peak traffic times, in order to cope with congestion and speed up the flow of traffic.

Among the measures under consideration, said Zucula, was the introduction of bus lanes, and an extension of the current one-way system. Thus two main thoroughfares that run parallel through central Maputo, 24th July Avenue and Eduardo Mondlane Avenue, could become one way streets, with traffic flowing in opposite directions during the morning rush hour of 06.00 to 08.00. Such measures, he believed, could reduce congestion by more than 50 per cent.

The government also intends to acquire articulated buses which can hold up to 170 passengers.

Heavy trucks banned from Maputo

Maputo City Council has introduced a by-law that will ban heavy trucks from municipal roads from 06.00 until 20.00, as from 1 February.

The measure applies to all vehicles with a gross weight of over 22 tonnes, except for trucks entering or leaving Maputo port which must follow a route laid down by the Council. Truck drivers who disobey the by-law will be fined 10,000 meticaís (\$308).

This is a condensed version of the AIM daily news service – for details contact aim@aim.org.mz

Mozambique News Agency, c/o 26 Withdean Crescent, Brighton BN1 6WH, UK. Tel: +44 (0)7941890630 - mozambique-news@geo2.poptel.org.uk

Subscription Rates (24 issues)	Individuals	Institutions
UK	£15.00	£25.00
Europe	£25.00	£40.00
Rest of the World	£30.00	£50.00

Overseas subscribers are requested to pay in sterling. If payment is made in another currency, add the equivalent of £6.00 to cover bank charges.