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Mozambique close to universal primary schooling

The Ministry of Education believes that Mozambique is close to achieving the main education target in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which is universal access to primary education. However, it recognises that the quality of education is still low.

The goal is that, by 2015, all children, both girls and boys, can complete a full course of primary education.

Senior staff, at a meeting in the central town of Gondola of the Ministry's Coordinating Council, have expressed satisfaction at the progress made in enrolling children of school age, but admitted there was still long way to go to lift the academic performance of those pupils.

"In terms of access we are positively advancing towards meeting the targets. Today we have reached about 90 per cent of the children of school age, both boys and girls", Eurico Banze, the spokesperson for the meeting, told journalists.

However, he noted continuing problems with children dropping out of school so that many fewer complete primary education than started it. "We are still concerning about the number who complete primary school", said Banze. "The finishing rates are low, and that's why we need to make an effort to overcome the problems affecting the quality of education and academic performance".

He admitted that in some levels of primary education, finishing rates are lower than 50 per cent. "That's not good", said Banze, "but efforts continue to be made so that we can attain significant levels".

There are particular challenges involved in keeping girls at school. At his speech opening the meeting on 21 August, Education Minister Augusto Jone said that, on average, 48 per cent of the pupils in primary education are girls, though in some provinces the percentage is lower.

"Efforts to increase the participation and retention of girls at school should continue to be made", said Jone, "by creating a safe and motivating school environment for both girls and boys, and encouraging the action of the School Councils in the communities".

One problem is the division of primary education into two levels. First level covers fifth to fifth grades, and second level sixth and seventh grades. However, there are many more first level than second level primary schools, making it difficult for children to conclude the full seven years of primary education.

The Ministry is thus working to transform First Level Primary Schools into Complete Primary Schools, covering all seven grades. The meeting was satisfied at the expanded opportunities for children to study sixth and seventh grade, particularly in the urban areas.

The Coordinating Council thought it important to continue the transformation, particularly in the countryside, where many children still have no easy access to second level primary schooling.

Pupil-teacher ratio improves

The number of pupils per teacher in Mozambican primary schools has fallen considerably over the past four years – but classes remain overcrowded.

According to Augusto Jone, in 2009 the pupil-teacher ratio was 76 to one. Today that figure has fallen to 65 to one.

This year 5.4 million pupils have enrolled in public primary education, and are studying in about 16,000 schools scattered across the country.

For the five-year term of office of this government, which ends in 2014, the target is to reduce the ratio to 60 pupils per teacher. But to achieve this goal the Education Ministry must recruit more teachers.

"In recent years we have been recruiting 7,000 to 8,000 teachers per year. This is the government's effort to reduce the ratio", said Jone.

The high number of pupils per class is generally regarded as a key factor in the poor quality of primary education, and in the fact that many children leave primary school without a clear grasp of reading, writing or simple arithmetic.

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

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Renamo still demanding "facilitators" for dialogue

The nineteenth round in the dialogue between the Mozambican government and the main opposition party Renamo on 2 September proved as fruitless as its predecessors, with Renamo insisting on the presence of "national facilitators and foreign observers" to conclude the debate on the electoral legislation.

The government rejected this demand months ago and considers that the debate on the electoral laws is over.

The head of the government delegation, Jose Pacheco, told reporters at the end of the round that Renamo believes the presence of facilitators and observers would make it possible to overcome the impasse over points in the Renamo document on the electoral legislation with which the government disagrees.

The main sticking point for Renamo is the demand for "parity" between itself and the ruling Frelimo Party on the National Elections Commission (CNE), a position that the Mozambican parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, rejected in a vote in December.

Deputies from Frelimo and the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM) voted against the Renamo proposal. However, Renamo has tried to revive its defeated proposal repeatedly in the dialogue with the government.

Pacheco said that by attempting to have the government endorse its proposal and then thrust it down the throat of the Assembly, Renamo was violating the principle of the separation of powers. The government has repeatedly stressed that, if Renamo wants to amend the electoral laws, it can submit such amendments through the normal parliamentary channels.

Indeed the Assembly was willing to re-open the debate on the electoral legislation during the extraordinary parliamentary sitting held in the first half of August. However, Renamo refused to submit anything at all without first obtaining a "political agreement" with the government, and Pacheco made it abundantly clear that no such agreement existed.

Under the current law, Renamo should appoint two members to the CNE, and to each of the 11 provincial elections commissions, and the dozens of district and city commissions. However, these positions remain vacant, since Renamo says it will boycott the elections until the laws are changed to its liking.

Pacheco said Renamo had once again demanded the removal of the defence and security forces from the central district of Gorongosa. Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama is living in a camp at Satunjira, in the foothills of Gorongosa. Renamo has repeatedly claimed that the government is planning to storm Satunjira.

Pacheco made it very clear that the government was not about to move police and military units. He said that the defence and security forces are stationed on the ground in accordance with the needs to defend the interests and freedoms of citizens, and to defend the country's sovereignty, and there was no way that was going to change.

"As for facilitators and observers", said Pacheco, "we said that, if Renamo feels that it is weak in this dialogue, it has the right to strengthen its team however it likes. For the government, the solutions lie within the reach of Mozambicans and in Renamo's openness to make concessions".

There was no sign of any concession from the head of the Renamo delegation, Saimone Macuiana, who claimed there is an "electoral crisis", because the government will not accept the presence of facilitators and observers.

Renamo suggested as national facilitators the Vice-Chancellor of the Polytechnic University, Lourenco do Rosario and Anglican Bishop Dinis Sengulane (who have both met with Dhlakama in Satunjira), and anyone else whom the government deems appropriate.

As for international observers, Macuiana said that Renamo has been in contact with some members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), but did not mention which ones.

Irrigation schemes could end rice imports

Mozambican President Armando Guebuza on 31 August expressed optimism that with major irrigation schemes such as the one under construction in Xai-Xai district, in the southern province of Gaza, Mozambique will cease to be a net importer of rice.

Speaking to reporters after a visit to the Lower Limpopo Irrigation Scheme, the result of a partnership with the Chinese company "China Wanbao Oil and Grain", President Guebuza said that with the current expansion of the scheme, rice imports could be cut by 100,000 tonnes in the next few years.

Currently the irrigation scheme could produce on 14,000 hectares. Less was available in the 2011/12 agricultural campaign, the latest for which AIM has figures, when 13,000 tonnes of grain was produced.

By 2017, the Lower Limpopo scheme will bring 30,000 hectares under irrigation, and total production of 150,000 tonnes of grain a year (five tonnes per hectare) is envisaged.

President Guebuza noted that similar large-scale irrigation schemes are being built or rehabilitated at Chokwe (also in Gaza), and at Mopeia (in Zambezia). They offered the possibility of Mozambique becoming an exporter rather than an importer of rice.

The project also commits Wanbao to transfer technology to local producers. This should benefit about a thousand small farmers. A centre for intensive training in Chinese rice production techniques has been set up, capable of training 70 small producers working on a hectare each. They will then make the jump to becoming "emerging farmers" with an area of four hectares each.

During the training period, all the operations of this group will be funded and they will not have to bear any production risks.

Farmers using more than five hectares are assisted through extensionists. They do bear their own risks, and are responsible for mobilising credit.

The Lower Limpopo area could cover 70,000 hectares. There has been an irrigation scheme here since 1952, but it was damaged in repeated flooding, notably in 1977. By the end of the 1990s the scheme had virtually collapsed.

It was revived with a twinning agreement between Gaza and the Chinese province of Hubei in 2007, which included arrangements on technology transfer. In 2011, it was decided that the partnership should concentrate on the Lower Limpopo irrigation project

Anadarko optimistic about LNG schedule

The American oil and gas company Anadarko is confident that it can maintain its original schedule for constructing liquefied natural gas (LNG) facilities in the northern Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado, allowing the first exports of LNG to take place in 2018.

Speaking at the Maputo International Fair (FACIM) on 31 August, the Anadarko manager of corporate affairs, Roberto Abib, put the total investment required at between $25 and $30 billion – by far the largest investment made in any Mozambican industry.

The onshore processing units would produce between 3,000 and 5,000 barrels of LNG a day, during the projected 30-year life span of the project, said Abib.

Anadarko heads the consortium that has discovered large quantities of gas in Area 1 in the Rovuma Basin, off the Cabo Delgado coast. Similar discoveries have been made in the adjacent Area 4 by a consortium headed by the Italian energy company ENI.

Anadarko and ENI are working together to develop the processing facilities, and eventually to export the gas. The main markets are expected to be Japan and other consumers in the Far East.

Production wells must be drilled, and pipelines laid on the bed of the sea to carry the gas to land. In addition to the treatment and liquefaction plant (known as an LNG train), a port must be built for use by the cryogenic vessels that will move the LNG to the export markets.

An airport and housing for the work force are also among the infrastructures that are to be built.

The Anadarko/ENI plans will turn Mozambique into one of the world’s main producers of LNG.

The 30-year life span of the project is a conservative estimate, and it could be expanded by the discovery of further reserves.

ENI to pay $530 million capital gains tax

The Mozambican Tax Authority (AT) on 28 August announced that the amount of capital gains tax due on the sale of shares in Area 4 of the Rovuma Basin by the Italian energy company ENI to the Chinese National Oil and Gas Exploration and Development Corporation (CNODC) is $530 million.

ENI heads the consortium exploring for hydrocarbons in Area 4 where 80 trillion cubic feet of natural gas have been discovered.

ENI signed an agreement on 13 March with CNODC, who will pay $4.21 billion for 28.57 per cent of the ENI stake in Area 4. Since ENI held 70 per cent of the rights to Area 4, this equated to 20 per cent of the total stake.

The AT points out that this is by far the largest amount Mozambique has ever received in capital gains tax. The cash payment alone is equivalent to about 2.5 per cent of Mozambique’s Gross Domestic Product, and is 74 per cent more that the fiscal contributions of all the mega-projects put together in 2012.

On 3 September, ENI announced that it has made another major discovery of natural gas in Area 4. It stated that the Agulha well could contain between a between five and seven trillion cubic feet of gas. This was the tenth well drilled in Area 4, all of which have contained gas.

Ncondezi awarded mining concession

The Mozambican government has granted the London-based company Ncondezi Energy a mining concession for its integrated coalmine and power station project.

Under the concession, the company will have exclusive rights to mine the Ncondezi coal deposit for 25 years. The concession is in Moatize district, in the western province of Tete, not far from the existing coalmines run by the Anglo-Australian company Rio Tinto and the Brazilian mining giant Vale.

Alongside the mine will be a 1,800-megawatt power station, built in 300-megawatt phases.

Ncondezi states that its project “has unique advantage over other potential power projects in the region as it is solely dedicated to meeting Mozambican demand, it is scalable in 300MW units ultimately to 1,800MW, it is close to existing transmission infrastructure with available capacity and, perhaps most importantly, it is not dependent on the development of rail and port infrastructure projects”.

Unlike the other mining companies operating in Tete, Ncondezi’s priority is not high quality coking coal for export. Instead, it is concentrating on thermal coal for power.

“Production of an export thermal coal product and associated capital expenditure will be initiated only when rail and port infrastructure in Mozambique is sufficiently advanced”, says Ncondezi. “This approach has the dual benefit of an expected reduction in the start-up capital outlay for the mine and reduces Ncondezi’s reliance on third party rail and port infrastructure development for project operations to begin”.

Ncondezi has also concluded an addendum to its Mine Framework Agreement with the Ministry of Mineral Resources. This now states that the public Mozambican Mining Exploration Company “will be granted a five per cent free carry in shares of Ncondezi until the start of the mine’s construction”.

Ncondezi is also obliged to set aside a statutory five per cent equity participation for the Mozambican public at commercial market terms and spend at least $5 million on social development programmes.

According to the company’s Chief Executive Officer, Paul Venter, “the issuance of the mining concession marks a very important and significant step forward for the Ncondezi project. It secures the coal fuel supply for the power project, which materially increases the bankability of the Ncondezi project, and also fulfils one of the key conditions precedents to the Power Framework Agreement”.

The other conditions are agreements with the Mozambican electricity company, EDM, on purchasing the Ncondezi power, and on the construction of transmission lines. Venter said that these agreements “are in the final stages of negotiation and on track for signing by the fourth quarter of 2013.”

The government has also awarded 25-year concessions to the Indian company Midwest Africa and to Rio Tinto Mocambique (for its Zambeze Project).

Inactive companies may lose licences

Hong Ti Mineral and Kenmare Moma Mining may have their licences to explore heavy sands in Mogincual district, in the northern province of Nampula, revoked.

The licence for Hong Ti Mining was issued over four years ago, while that for Kenmare dates from 2010. So far there is no sign of either company carrying out any work on the ground. Under Mozambican mining legislation, the holders of such licences have up to five years to develop their activities.

Moises Paulino, the provincial director of Mineral Resources in Nampula, said the government is concerned at the lack of any sign of exploratory operations in Quinga, where the heavy sands are located. He said that when licences are not used, this prevents other companies from operating in the same area.

Mogincual is one of three districts in Nampula that contain mineral sands rich in titanium ores. Kenmare Moma Mining has been extracting ilmenite, rutile and zircon from the sands at Topuito, in Moma district since 2007. It has so far invested about $600 million in Moma.

Much more recent is the investment by the Chinese Haiyu Mozambique Mining Company in the heavy sands at Sangage in Angoche district. Haiyu began its operations about three months ago.

Pafuri border post remains closed

The reopening to the border post between Mozambique and South Africa at Pafuri in Gaza province depends on concluding rehabilitation work on the South African side.

The Pafuri post has been closed since major flooding in the Limpopo Valley in January.

Ludovina Manuel, the Gaza provincial delegate of the Mozambican Tax Authority (AT) said on 29 August that work on the Mozambican side of the border post has been completed. This consisted of general rehabilitation and the replacement of all the equipment destroyed by the floods.

Despite the floods and the closure of the Pafuri post, the customs services in Gaza had still managed to meet their target of collecting 222 million meticais ($7.4 million) in the first six months of this year.

The Pafuri border post is located in the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Park, and is essentially for tourists, who come to visit the two components of the Transfrontier Park: the Kruger National Park in South Africa and the Limpopo National Park in Mozambique.

The head of the post. Ilidio Xlhate, said Pafuri does not see much movement, even when the post is open. At peak times, such as the Easter holidays, 150 travellers a day use the post. However, at off-peak times the number can drop to as low as 20 a day.

Among the difficulties the border post faces are lack of water and electricity.

Drug trafficker caught at Maputo airport

The Mozambican police on 12 August arrested a Tanzanian citizen, identified only as Mateus, who was caught at Maputo International Airport carrying 70 capsules of cocaine in his stomach.

The Tanzanian had disembarked from an Ethiopian Airways flight. He had travelled from Sao Paulo in Brazil to Addis Ababa, and then took a connecting flight to Maputo.

This brings to 23 the number the number of people arrested so far this year in connection with drug trafficking – a dozen South Africans, six Tanzanians and five Mozambicans.

New programme to eliminate severe hunger

The Mozambican government and the European Union on 7 August launched a programme on accelerating progress towards achieving the first of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The MDGs are the set of goals, agreed by world leaders at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000, which should be achieved by 2015. The first of these is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, and the key targets are to reduce by half, between 1990 and 2015, the percentage of people with an income of less than one US dollar a day, and the percentage of people suffering from hunger.

The new programme is budgeted at €67.3 million ($90 million). €10 million will be contributed by the Mozambican government, while the rest will come from the EU.

The programme will concentrate on what are regarded as the three pillars of food security –the availability of food, access to food and nutritional quality.

The programme is intended to improve the production of farmers and small-scale fishermen, facilitating access to inputs such as seeds, fertilizer, fishing nets and other necessary equipment. The programme will cover an estimated 200,000 households in 46 districts in the centre and north of the country.

This support from the EU is part of a global "MDG Initiative", through which the EU is providing a billion euros for activities to support countries that risk not meeting their targets by 2015.

In Mozambique, the initiative will be implemented by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the government's Food and Nutritional Security Technical Secretariat (SETSAN), under the coordination of the Ministry of Agriculture.

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