

**Land reform in SADC region  
-Mozambique land reform and poverty alleviation**

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## **I. Introduction**

Mozambique, a country with around 17.millions habitants, it has an extension of about 800 000 Km<sup>2</sup>. 47% of the population has 15 years or less, 70% live in the rural areas and more than 50% of the economically active population is peasant (farmer)<sup>1</sup> Only 4.100.000 people with more than 5 years can read and write of whom 2.600.000 are man and 1.500.000 women. The alphabetisation rate is about 60.5%.

This is the actual Mozambique. A country that got its independence on 25 June 1975 from the Portuguese's colonial regime.

These country early took by the local time situation, the socialism system. This system among other policies it stated that everything belonged to the State, and because everyone is part of the State it meant everything belonged to everybody (Nationalisation process).

The land was also taken from de "owners" and became State property. In 1986 because of the difficult economic situation the country was facing, Mozambique was nearly obliged to go into IMF and Word Bank to get supported.

In the beginnings of 1987 we had the so called Structural Adjustment Program for those Bretton Woods institutions. This meant the move from a centralised economy to a marked economy.

During the 80's until 1992 the country suffered a lot from a civil war between Frelimo (Government) and Renamo. The new reality lead to a changes leading to approval of the new constitution in 1990. The war made that lot of people had to leave some areas (where they were living on) to neighbouring countries or to other places (from province to province, district to district, village to village or from one place to another place). Is estimated that 1/3 of the population fled to neighbouring countries mainly to Swaziland, South Africa Zimbabwe and Malawi. Until today we still with some refugees in those countries.

This situation made that in the beginnings of the 90' Mozambique had to be classified as the poorest country of the world.

However in 1992, with the General Agreement on Peace, the country started a socio-economic recovering which went on strongly after the 1994 General Elections.

Within the SADC and according to UNDP, Mozambique has the lowest Human Development Index which is 0,341 compared to Mauritius in the first position with 0,765.

## **II. Land view at the time of transition**

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<sup>1</sup> I will mostly use the term peasant instead of farmer because we believe that in Mozambique we do not have until the moment farmers. I am not using it in a bad sense.

Simply I could affirm that before the independence black Mozambicans did not have land. After the independence Mozambicans started with the former land law to get access to land but this land law did few in terms of gender issues, land transmission, land rights, property and some other practical mechanisms.

So during the transition period land was taken seriously as it was stated and keep on being agriculture the basic element for the development. The policies were designed bearing that in mind. The poverty alleviation was there, of course policies designed they looked into it but in a collective perspective, I mean systems like co-operatives came-up to organise peasants to produce with better quality and sell on the market. One of the problem of those co-operatives it was that they did not recognise the individual capacity, they looked at the peasants as one thing, one homogeneous group, so, some were lassie and we saw many free riders. The other issue is that they were more social oriented than economic institutions.

So it was clear that the problem on land issues was there. The sector deserved a special attention due to the fact that the Government stated that agriculture is the base for development. Until today it is still in the Government program.

Everything was done trying to help the sector. The dynamic that the economy was going and the internal conflicts (on land) forced the Government to review the former land law.

Many lobby was done because we had the private sector with clear interest in terms of business plans while at the other side we have the peasants who mostly are being used by businessman to get only the interest of the last group. Those peasants are organised in Associations and they form the so called Civil society. NGO's like ORAM have an important role in disseminating the land law. But of course it was important to give answer to reality that was happening in terms of land conflicts, gender respect, land transmission, land ownership and other issues.

Because of those interests in 1997 the new land law was approved after a big struggle between the civil society that did not want the privatisation of land, what was the objective of the private sector.

The new land law brings apart from the major issue that concerns the fact that the land is a State property in terms that no one can buy it. You can buy infrastructure but not the land as such.

Also in the new land law it is clear that the women has the right to get a land (Tittle). It recognise the ownership through :

- (a) Requesting to the Government formally,
- (b) By occupation. The law accept that the persons who stays for more than ten years at least he has the right on that land.

## **II.I. The role of the traditional leader**

It is important to note that Mozambique is a big country divided into three parts (North, Centre and South). Each region has its specificity's. I would like to mention about the role of the traditional leaders. Although they have a big role in all country we can not compare with the role of the same leaders in Swaziland that is strong or South Africa that is so little. The traditional leaders still decide about land issues ( land transmission, conflict resolution, etc). Many things would be said but the essential it is that there is conflict in terms of who is the traditional leader and has to do with political situation. For instance traditional leader was (is) the person who by heredity take the role of leading the community but now because went Frelimo got the Political power took the socialism system that because of its structure did not allow traditional leader to have any role, than Renamo supported them. Now it became a political issue.

Let me remember that we have a decree saying at the local level we have communities leaders and that is different from traditional leaders. But traditional leaders still have a role mainly in the regions were they have high level of legitimacy.

### **III. Land reform and Poverty Alleviation by the Government**

Poverty is the incapacity of individual to be able to provide for himself and those who depend on him, an entire minima basic conditions to their subsistence (MPF,1998a)

It is important to see that Mozambique has 10 provinces and the poverty incidence is as bellow described:

1. Niassa - 70,6
2. Cabo Delgado - 57,1
3. Nampula - 68,9
4. Zambezia - 68,1
5. Tete - 82,3
6. Sofala - 87,9
7. Manica - 62,6
8. Inhambane - 82,6
9. Gaza -
10. Maputo province - 65,6
11. Maputo city - 47,8

Within the Government theres initiatives like PROAGRI and now within the IMF and Word Bank framework the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP); the Government had already the program they just adjusted it to the IMF and World Bank criteria's.

The first PRSP was designed for 2000 to 2004, now up-dated for 2001 to 2005. Among other objectives it aimed to improve the conditions of life in the rural areas.

They give priority in the poorest corners of the country the:

- families with depended people,
- families with only one income resources, mainly the subsistence agriculture,
- peasants with smaller plots (*machambas*)
- families chaired by women (widow, single mother)

The program aim to reduce the poverty in 30% for the next 10 years.

Attached to these we have the strategy for food security that was approved by the council of Ministers in December 1998 and is defined as physic economic access, of all individuals, at any time, to get sufficient food in order to be able to sustain an active and health life (GDM, 1998,MPF1998).

This program aims also to:

- Reduce inefficiency,
- Allow a flexible structure for commercialisation (initiative of ORAM with UNAC, Agrarius for a Rural Bank and an Institution for commercialisation),
- Increase the level of peasants in terms of extension services (from 17,5% to 27%),
- Increase the proportion of families that use animals for helping in the field (from 4,9% to 5,3%). ORAM has a similar project.
- Facilitated peasants do get credit in rural credit,
- Guaranty that the local community participate in real terms in the community management of natural resources,
- Promote rural communities to intervene at local investments, trough partnership,
- Develop a warning system for cases of calamity (e.g. Floods)

The important task now is to create a middle class of Mozambicans (peasants) that can go into a fast truck process and try to get the land law operational and efficient as well as their respective rules.

In the future perspectives I see problems like the revision of the land law and because the private sector is well organised then they might achieve what they have been looking for: land privatisation. The other issue is that the actual land law does not solve parietal ownership of land.

One of the best things of the actual land law is that it open the opportunity and possibility for anyone to get land.

Although I have underlined that land in Mozambique cannot be sold, many people do sell it, of course no one accept that he is selling/buying a land; They sell/buy what is there. What is happening is that the private sector is offering money to poor “owner” of it mainly in the fertile areas or near cities, villages. It means that the poor peasants will lose land and will be trough to far as possible and that will limit development for them, mainly if we look to situation of Mozambique in terms of infrastructures, access to new communication and information technology (e-mail, Internet). It is vital to know that the problem in Mozambique is not the land law as such but is the implementation of it.

ORAM is now designing schedule for partnership between communities and actors from private sector. This is to help communities have firstly the land title than

establishing the appropriate partnership . From here we expect they can have high income and benefit from the investment that would be made in their communities.

Mozambique has a good climate and potential for developing agriculture. So ORAM is preparing a program with the aim of establishing a Rural Bank and an Institution for Commercialisation.( See annex).

#### **IV. The donors role.**

I am personally too much critical to donors view. In Mozambique it seems that donors they simply want to fund small projects and mostly without, in my point of view, a good (broader) impact in terms of poverty alleviation. They might fund a project of 2 or 3 years to distribute seeds. After the project there is no capacity to go on mainly because there is no permanent structures to continue with it.

What I realise is that donors do not “want” to fund sustainable programs, but small projects. I believe in a said which says that you do not have to give the fish to somebody, teach him how to get it. Unfortunately in Mozambique few places, few NGO’s can deny a proposal from donors when realising that it is not the most appropriate for the country. Some time National NGO,s, they even change their programs (while knowing that is the best for the country) because the donors want it to be like this or like that.

I am still thinking about the role of donors in poverty alleviation process which I am really sure is vital but until the moment not well driven.

The strategic options are from the Government presented in the PRSP and PROAGRI. At ORAM we presented the proposal in the Annex.

#### **V. Lessons learned on Mozambican land reform**

A civil society organised can achieve good results, as it happened with us that we could stop the land privatisation.

It is important to note that Mozambique had changed three times the police: before the independence, after the independence (1975 - 1996) and from 1997 until today.

A relevant element is that Mozambicans are improving in terms of opportunities that the land policy is offering. It is also obvious that some people use the law to underline their own interest that some time are not towards the spirit of the law.

It is easy to realise that the new land law mixer the positive law and the customary (traditional) law. This has enabled to minimise in a high level the land conflicts. Even for conflict management it has allowed the establishment of a local committee were some members of the community are part and they mitigate when conflict arises.

Finally says that the relation between land reform and poverty alleviation in Mozambique is there. However for me I think poverty alleviation is more than land

reform connection, it has to do necessary with all process from land reform, production (meaning getting better inputs, mechanisation), commercialisation well structured and functional in an efficient way, meaning collecting processing and putting into market. Finally increasing ability to bargain and in having power to negotiate the better price in the market, which means being able to cover local, regional and international market. This would increase the income and we would really be fighting against poverty.

Note that land reform in connection to poverty alleviation meant not only to have the land but also to make it productive so that the owner can become self sustainable. Now, the question is how to develop a strategic plan to do so? The point is not what to do but how to do?