Mozambique

Officially the Republic of Mozambique (Portuguese: Moçambique or República de Moçambique, is a country in south-eastern Africa. It was explored by Vasco da Gama in 1498 and colonized by Portugal in 1505. By 1510, the Portuguese had control of all of the former Arab sultanates on the east African coast. Mozambique (Moçambique) was named after Muça Alebique, a sultan.

I. Provinces and districts

Mozambique is divided into ten provinces (províncias) and one capital city (cidade) with provincial status. The provinces are subdivided into 129 districts (distritos). The capital is named “Maputo”.

1. Cabo Delgado
2. Gaza
3. Inhambane
4. Manica
5. Maputo (city)
6. Maputo
7. Nampula
8. Niassa
9. Sofala
10. Tete
11. Zambezia

At 309,475 square miles (801,590 km²), Mozambique is the world's 35th-largest country. It is comparable in size to Turkey.

II. Politics

Mozambique is a multi-party democracy under the 1990 constitution. The executive branch comprises a president (Armando Guebuza), prime minister (Luísa Diogo), and Council of Ministers. There is a National Assembly and municipal assemblies. The judiciary comprises a Supreme Court and provincial, district, and municipal courts. Suffrage is universal at eighteen.

III. Foreign relations of Mozambique

Mozambique's foreign policy has become increasingly pragmatic. The twin pillars of Mozambique's foreign policy are maintenance of good relations with its neighbors and maintenance and expansion of ties to development partners.

In the years immediately following its independence, Mozambique benefited from considerable assistance from some western countries, notably the Scandinavians. USSR and its allies, however, became Mozambique's primary economic, military, and political supporters and its foreign policy reflected this linkage. This began to change in 1983; in 1984 Mozambique joined the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Western aid quickly replaced Soviet support (mainly aid by countries of the E.U. Relations with Portugal, the former colonial power, continue to play an important role as Portuguese investors play a visible role in Mozambique's economy.

Mozambique is a member of the Non-Aligned Movement and ranks among the moderate members of the African Bloc in the United Nations and other international organizations. Mozambique also belongs to the African Union and the Southern African Development Community. In 1994, the Government became a full member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, in part to broaden its base of international support but also to please the country’s sizable muslim population. Similarly, in early 1996 Mozambique joined its Anglophone neighbors in the Commonwealth. It is the only nation to join the Commonwealth that was never part of the British Empire. In the same year, Mozambique became a founding member and the first President of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP).

IV. History

The Bantu were farmers and ironworkers. By the early twentieth century the Portuguese had shifted the administration of much of Mozambique to large private companies, like the Mozambique Company, the Zambezi Company and the Niassa
Company, controlled and financed mostly by the British, which established railroad lines to neighboring countries and supplied cheap – often forced – African labor to the mines and plantations of the nearby British colonies and South Africa. Because policies were designed to benefit Portuguese immigrants and the Portuguese homeland, little attention was paid to Mozambique's national integration, its economic infrastructure, or the skills of its population.

i. Struggle for independence

Calls for Mozambican independence developed apace, and in 1962 several anti-colonial political groups formed the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), which initiated an armed campaign against Portuguese colonial rule in September 1964. As FRELIMO’s political campaign gained coherence, its forces advanced militarily, controlling one-third of the area of Mozambique by 1969, mostly in the northern and central provinces.

By 1974 the Portuguese army knew that, especially in Mozambique, the colonial wars were unwinnable. After a socialist-inspired military coup in Portugal overthrew the dictatorship in 1974, Portugal affirmed its intention to grant independence to its remaining colonies.

Mozambique became independent on June 25, 1975.

After independence, FRELIMO rapidly established a one-party state allied to the Soviet bloc. FRELIMO eliminated religious schools and the role of tribal chiefs.

ii. Civil War

The new government, under president Samora Machel, gave shelter and support to South African (ANC) and Zimbabwean (ZANU) liberation movements while the governments of first Rhodesia and later South Africa (at that time still operating the apartheid laws) fostered and financed an armed rebel movement in central Mozambique called the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO). Hence, civil war, sabotage from neighboring white-ruled states such as Rhodesia and the Apartheid regime of South Africa, and economic collapse characterized the first decade of Mozambican independence.

Also marking this period were the mass exodus of Portuguese nationals and Mozambicans of Portuguese heritage, a weak infrastructure, and government nationalization of privately owned industries. During most of the civil war, the government was unable to exercise effective control outside of urban areas, many of which were cut off from the capital.

Machel's successor, Joaquim Chissano, continued the reforms and began peace talks with RENAMO. The new constitution enacted in 1990 provided for a multi-party political system, market-based economy, and free elections.

The civil war ended in October 1992 with the Rome General Peace Accords, brokered by the Community of Sant'Egidio. Under supervision of the ONUMOZ peacekeeping force of the United Nations, peace returned to Mozambique.

By mid-1995 the more than 1.7 million Mozambican refugees who had sought asylum in neighboring Malawi, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Zambia, Tanzania, and South Africa as a result of war and drought had returned, as part of the largest repatriation witnessed in Sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, a further estimated four million internally displaced persons returned to their areas of origin.

V. Demographics / Culture

The north-central provinces of Zambezia and Nampula are the most populous, with about 45% of the population. The estimated four million Macua are the dominant group in the northern part of the country; the Sena and Shona (mostly Ndau) are prominent in the Zambezi valley, and the Shangaan (Tsonga) dominate in southern Mozambique. Other groups include Makonde, Yao, Swahili, Tonga, Chopi, and Nguni (including Zulu). Bantu people comprise 99.66% of the population, the remaining 0.34% include Europeans 0.06% (largely of Portuguese ancestry), Euro-Africans 0.2% (mestiço people of mixed Bantu and Portuguese heritage), and Indians 0.08%.

Despite the influence of Islamic coastal traders and European colonizers, the people of Mozambique have largely retained an indigenous culture based on small-scale agriculture. Mozambique's most highly developed art forms have been wood sculpture, for which the Makonde in northern Mozambique are particularly renowned, and dance. The middle and upper classes continue to be heavily influenced by the Portuguese colonial and linguistic heritage.

Portuguese is the official and most widely spoken language of the nation, because Bantus speak several of their different languages (most widely used of these are Swahili, Makhuwa, Sena, Ndau, and Shangaan — these have many Portuguese-origin words), but 40% of all people speak it — 33.5%, mostly Bantus, as their second language and only 6.5%, mostly white Portuguese and mestizos, speak it as their first language. Arabs, Chinese, and Indians speak their own languages (Indians from Portuguese India speak any of the Portuguese Creoles of their origin) aside from Portuguese as their second language. Most educated Mozambicans speak English, which is used in schools and business as second or third language.
i. Religion

According to the 1997 Second General Population and Housing Census, the religions of the polled population were as follows: 24.2% identified themselves as Roman Catholic; 24.25% claimed to not be affiliated with a religion; 18.7% adhering to Zionism (an African form of Christianity); 17.8% of the population were cited as Muslims; 11.45% as other non-Catholic Christians; 3.6% as “other”.

ii. Music

Mozambique has distinct styles of music and distinct patterns of use of instruments. Some of the music styles fall into the classification of Lusophone musical culture.

VI. Economy

The official currency is the New Metical (as of 2007, 1 USD is roughly equivalent to 25 Meticals), which replaced old Meticals in rate thousand to one. US dollar, South African rand and recently also Euro are also widely accepted and used in business transactions. The minimum legal salary is around 60 dollars per month. Mozambique is member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The SADC free trade protocol is aimed at making the South African region more competitive by eliminating tariffs and other trade barriers.

More than 1,200 state-owned enterprises (mostly small) have been privatized. Preparations for privatization and/or sector liberalization are underway for the remaining parastatal enterprises, including telecommunications, energy, ports, and the railroads. The government frequently selects a strategic foreign investor when privatizing a parastatal. Additionally, customs duties have been reduced, and customs management has been streamlined and reformed. The government introduced a value-added tax in 1999 as part of its efforts to increase domestic revenues.

The resettlement of war refugees and successful economic reform have led to a high growth rate: the average growth rate from 1993 to 1999 was 6.7%; from 1997 to 1999 it averaged more than 10% per year. The devastating floods of early 2000 slowed GDP growth to 2.1%. A full recovery was achieved with growth of 14.8% in 2001. In 2003, the growth rate was 7%. The government projects the economy to continue to expand between 7%-10% a year for the next five years, although rapid expansion in the future hinges on several major foreign investment projects, continued economic reform, and the revival of the agriculture, transportation, and tourism sectors. More than 75% of the population engages in small scale agriculture, which still suffers from inadequate infrastructure, commercial networks, and investment. However, 88% of Mozambique's arable land is still uncultivated.

The government's tight control of spending and the money supply, combined with financial sector reform, successfully reduced inflation from 70% in 1994 to less than 5% in 1998-99. Economic disruptions stemming from the devastating floods of 2000 caused inflation to jump to 12.7% that year, and it was 13% in 2003. The Mozambique's currency, the Metical, devaluated by 50% to the dollar in 2001, although in late 2001 it began to stabilize. Since then, it has held steady at about 24,000 MZN to 1 U.S. dollar. New Metical replaced old Meticals in rate thousand to one on January 1, 2007 bringing the exchange rate to 25 (new) MZN to 1 USD.

Imports remain almost 40% greater than exports, but this is a significant improvement over the 4:1 ratio of the immediate post-war years. In 2003, imports were $1.24 billion and exports were $910 million. Support programs provided by foreign donors and private financing of foreign direct investment mega-projects and their associated raw materials, have largely compensated for balance-of-payments shortfalls. The medium-term outlook for exports is encouraging, since a number of foreign investment projects should lead to substantial export growth and a better trade balance.

MOZAL, a large aluminum smelter that commenced production in mid-2000, has greatly expanded the nation's trade volume. Traditional Mozambican exports include cashews, shrimp, fish, copra, sugar, cotton, tea, and citrus fruits. Most of these industries are being rehabilitated. As well, Mozambique is less dependent on imports for basic food and manufactured goods because of steady increases in local production.