

EDUCATION

SCHOOLING IN MOZAMBIQUE is free and open to all. Since the lack of skills at all levels is one of the greatest obstacles to development, education has been one of the government's major priorities.

The colonial school system discriminated sharply against black Mozambicans but since independence in 1975 there have been enormous improvements. Access to primary school has more than doubled, and has tripled to secondary schooling. In 1985 140,000 students successfully completed their fourth year as opposed to only 31,000, many of them Portuguese, in 1975.

By 1980, literacy campaigns in factories, farms and city suburbs had increased the literacy rate from 7% to 28% of the population. Adult education facilities have been created, teacher training massively expanded and university places increased. New technical schools catering for industry and agriculture have been opened, along with smaller skills training centres throughout the country.

Education has consistently absorbed around 25% of the state budget, and enrolment increased yearly until 1980, holding steady since then. The curriculum and the school system itself are adaptations of the colonial model, and are still undergoing a process of reform.

The relevance of education to useful working life and the links between school and community need to be strengthened. Shortages of funds and teachers, and the isolation and economic difficulties of most peasant families frustrate the goal of universal primary education. Only around 20% of those enrolling are women; this is a big step since independence, but equal access is held back by demands made on girls to continue domestic and agricultural work, especially in rural areas.

Townpeople are relatively privileged; secondary schools and colleges are concentrated in towns and food shortages make boarding facilities for students from rural areas difficult to maintain. Hunger and war have increased drop-out rates, particularly in the countryside. The MNR have killed or kidnapped over 300 teachers and burnt and robbed hundreds of schools.

But education remains a high priority. The thirst for learning is immense, with schools running three shifts from early morning to late at night. In Maputo many people walk miles into town, work an eight hour day, study for another four hours or so, and then walk back.

Scarce materials are put to good use, and an increasing range of textbooks is now produced in Mozambique. Many teachers have only one or two years more schooling than their pupils, and university graduates must often teach for several years before re-entering their profession. In isolated country areas, communities build their own schools and students may grow their own food. Yet still there are not enough places for all those who want to learn.

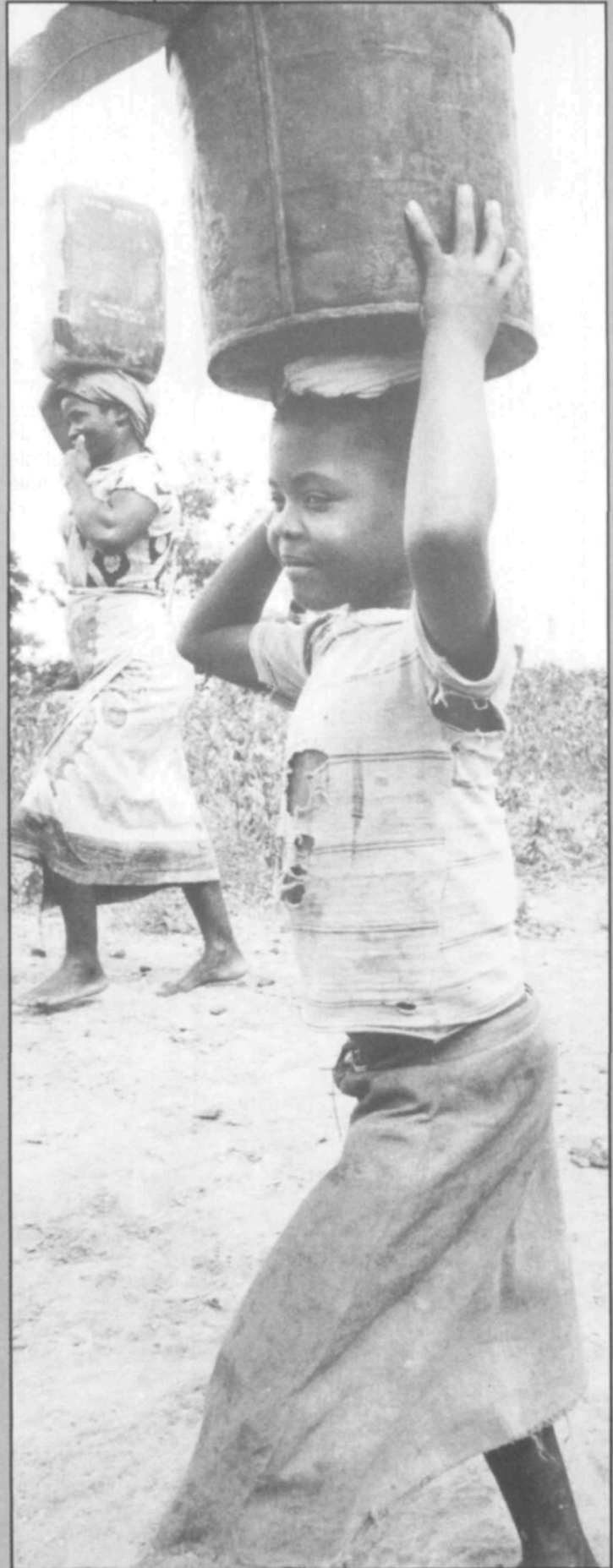


Jenny Matthews



Ian Bray

Chicalacuata — queuing for water brought by tanker from Zimbabwe.



Ian Bray

Women spend several hours each day fetching the family water supply.

WATER RESOURCES

ALTHOUGH WATER is abundant in much of Mozambique, organising adequate supplies for family and farming use is often difficult. About 60% of households rely on shallow, unlined wells, but even when these are relatively close to settlements, women may still spend several hours a day fetching the family water supply.

During the drought years, wells, rivers and boreholes dried up in many areas. In the arid southern plains of Gaza and Inhambane provinces, scarce deep boreholes are the only source of water. Here women must travel some 10 to 20 km from home to the well; a round trip — and several may be needed — of up to 5 hours.

Many wells and boreholes were equipped with handpumps of various types by the Portuguese. Most are now broken-down, lacking spare parts and basic maintenance. Insecurity has worsened the problems; MNR attacks not only damage water sources but prevent access by maintenance teams.

Thousands of people suffered water shortages at Pambara relief centre on the Inhambane coast until the arrival of an EEC airlift of tools and well-digging equipment. Hygiene was poor, skin disease rife and crops withered. Women trekked repeatedly over 10km to bring salty water for drinking from seaside lagoons, the only source available. Without even buckets, supplies were confined to what the women could carry on their heads in old pots, tins and gourds. The only well-digging materials were inaccessible, at an old mission station not far away, but terrorised by the MNR.

In Chicualacuala, a semi-desert area bordering South Africa and Zimbabwe, water has to be brought in by railway tanker. The Portuguese had built an elaborate system piping water from the river 36km away, but this later became a prime target for bombing raids during the fighting for Zimbabwean independence. Their livestock almost wiped out by drought, the people of Chicualacuala are now largely dependent on food aid from abroad.

Large-scale irrigation for agriculture has, until recently, been practised only in the Limpopo valley, although two major dams in Maputo province are now nearing completion. Elsewhere construction and maintenance problems have beset smaller stone and earth-built dams.

For small farmers, irrigated dry season cropping is largely confined to manual irrigation methods, drawing water from rivers; motorised pumps having their own problems of maintenance and fuel. Skills and materials for flood- and rain-water catchment, small-scale terracing and dyke construction, which could improve water use and cut down erosion, are rarely found in Mozambique.

Alexander Joe



A military escort aboard a bus in Gaza province.

Alexander Joe



Often the only way to travel is to hitch a ride with the army.

A convoy of lorries from Zimbabwe and South Africa, protected by the Zimbabwean army, assembles to cross the Zambezi at Tete.



Julian Quan

TRANSPORT

MOZAMBIQUE'S COASTAL POSITION and good natural harbours give the country a key place in southern Africa's transport network, making the transport sector a big potential source of foreign exchange earnings. Because of this, Mozambique is responsible for transport within the member countries of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference, SADCC.

Today Mozambique's transport routes are prime rebel targets, serving the southern African interior but failing to link up Mozambique's own provinces. A single national highway runs north to south, but large sections are overgrown, inoperable after six years of hit-and-run attacks by the MNR. Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Zambia and Malawi, largely cut off from their nearest ports, must route the bulk of their trade through South Africa.

Moving around Mozambique itself is a major undertaking. Long land journeys are by military convoy only. Attacks are frequent; fuel shortages and maintenance problems compound the virtual paralysis. Unicef estimated that in 1985 only 30% of the transport fleet was working.

Some provinces suffer extreme isolation. From Lichinga in the far north west, the manager of a project promoting local industries wrote:

"We are separated from the port of Beira by over 1,000km of bandit and enemy activity. A railway connects Lichinga to Nacala port, but it is often attacked and there is an impossible pile-up of goods in Nacala. In February [1986] the train was derailed, killing 7, injuring 30, and tearing up 400 metres of track, spilling precious fuel and goods out over the savannahs . . ."

It is virtually impossible to persuade foreign hauliers to enter Mozambique. Goods have to be loaded from one truck to another at the border, or scarce Mozambican trucks must leave the country to pick up essential supplies. Tete province was cut off until supplies could be brought from neighbouring Zimbabwe although, as in Zambezia and Sofala, MNR ambushes still make many areas inaccessible to food distribution. The Zimbabwean army now protects the main highways from Beira and through Tete to Malawi.

Much of Mozambique relies on supply by boat, although the coastal transport network is badly run down. Coastal Inhambane and Zambezia, with big concentrations of displaced people, have virtually no port facilities. For over three years, more than half a million people in Inhambane have depended on food delivered by a single flat-bottomed barge, hired from the Seychelles by the UN's World Food Programme.

International shipping calls at the three major ports; Maputo, Beira and Nacala. All are congested, pilferage is high and the hinterlands are substantially cut off to road traffic. Suppliers rarely realise the difficulties in getting goods out of the ports and on to where they are needed. Air transport is the only sure way of linking up Mozambique's far-flung provinces, but inefficient and costly for delivering emergency supplies. The domestic airline is severely strained, and airports can be sites of emotional drama, as people struggle for places on already over-filled planes.

A handful of light aircraft, with a meagre supply of fuel, are the only safe way to reach many rural areas. In the smaller towns, people commonly appear at the airstrips whenever the buzz of an aero-engine is heard, desperate for a ride out. But there are places with overgrown airfields, where no-one knows if it is safe to land, if the plane will be shot at, or if the people have any food.

The rehabilitation of Mozambique's railway network is crucial to the success of SADCC and for Mozambique's own future prosperity. The railway lines, often poorly built in the first place, and now suffering from lack of maintenance, are subject to frequent derailments as well as MNR sabotage.

Mozambique's railways need not only repair, but protection from attack in order to keep them running.

Rehabilitation of the three international rail links is underway. Of these, work on the Beira line is partially complete and progressing well, and a stretch of the northern Nacala line, from Nacala port to Beira, is complete. Work on the remaining stretch, 350km from Nampula to the Malawi border, began in 1987, and, with funding from the British Government, work on the southern Limpopo line linking Zimbabwe with Maputo will begin shortly. However, there are still no funds for restoring Mozambique's internal rail networks.



Alexander Joe

A woman peasant farmer in Gaza province.