

# A bid for prosperity

Mozambicans have taken the initiative in ending poverty in their country

**Fikile-Ntsikelelo Moya**

Government and civil society organisations in Mozambique have come together to attempt to push back poverty caused by 15 years of post-colonial-rule civil war.

Civil society has formed itself into what it calls the G20, a group of (initially 20 but now more) diverse organisations.

Paulo Cuinica, its executive director, says the G20 is a platform for civil society organisations, NGOs, peasant farmers, business associations, research institutions, academics, faith communities and trade unions to engage with governments and the donor community. It is the relationship with government, civil society and the donor community that makes the Mozambique effort different to many similar anti-poverty initiatives in many African states. With such a relationship, Mozambique is poised to achieve better poverty reduction results.

For Cuinica, the benefit has been that the three sets of parties (government, NGOs and donor communities) are able to jointly monitor the process and identify failures or achievements early on.

"We are also able to identify areas of concern and discuss how we can overcome them. Donors have been forced to organise themselves [as opposed to previously, when individual donors put money in the same projects to the exclusion of others that were equally deserving], it gives the Treasury direction and enables governments to define priorities of the country and channel the money accordingly," says Cuinica.

The donor community is essential for Mozambique as it contributes between 50% and 60% of the country's national budget.

One of the G20's main achievements has been the agreement over how to define poverty and ways of alleviating it.

Poverty is not only determined in monetary terms or the universal "living on a dollar a day" measurement.

Cuinica says poverty is broadly defined as lacking access to those



Because different rural communities in Mozambique have varying needs, for example the provision of water or education, poverty alleviation efforts are being coordinated so that as many different projects as possible receive funding. Photographs: Paul Botes

"things" a community needs to better their lives. In one community this could be running water and in another [farming community] it could be access to markets while in another still, it could be the lack of schools.

"Sometimes you find a community that says we are poor because we don't have opportunities," says Cuinica.

But it is not as easy as it sounds.

"Try to accommodate areas of common concern. We don't always have agreement over labour law, minimum wages and so on."

The Foundation for Community Development (FDC) is an affiliate of the G20 involved in advocacy work.

Marta Cumbi, the FDC director for cooperation and advocacy, says its main contribution to the coalition is to advocate for social justice programmes. "These include policies that are essential for development projects

to take place, such as equal education for all. If there is no advocacy, things tend to lag behind.

"We have to advocate to ensure that children, especially girls, have equal access to social justice. Someone has to provide and someone has to demand [that rights are enshrined]," says Cumbi.

The Poverty Observatory is another poverty-alleviation initiative. "It is a transparent and engaged way that treats all stakeholders as equal partners [and includes participation of government at the highest level] for the purpose of sustained and effective poverty reduction. And it is working to drive down poverty, in large part because of the inclusive and participatory model used," says Cumbi.

The Mozambican government has launched its second five-year Plan of Action for the Reduction of Absolu-



te Poverty (Parpa II) following extensive consultation between the government, civil society and international partners and donors.

Cumbi says the relationship between all players should be emphasised if the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are to be achieved. "At the present pace neither Mozambique nor other countries in Africa will achieve the MDGs. Resources are not coming as they should. Some donors are not delivering the right amounts at the right time as promised.

"This requires that African countries or countries in the [political] south become less reliant on donors," said Cumbi.

Research institute Cruzero do Sul is a member of the G20. Its research coordinator, Dipac Jantilal, says though some progress has been

made, Mozambique has some way to go before it can declare itself to have defeated its post-colonial and civil-war foe of poverty.

"The United Nations Development Programme's human development indicators showed that Mozambique is 173rd of 177 countries the UNDP tracks. That has not changed much in the last few years," says Jantilal.

He says that a Parpa II survey showed that 54% of Mozambicans were officially classified as poor. Rural poverty was more rife than urban poverty and women-headed households worse off than those led by men.

Jantilal concluded: "There is some progress and hope. But there will be more progress as the voices of those who need to be heard are heard. The strategies to reduce poverty will be improved as the participation grows."

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