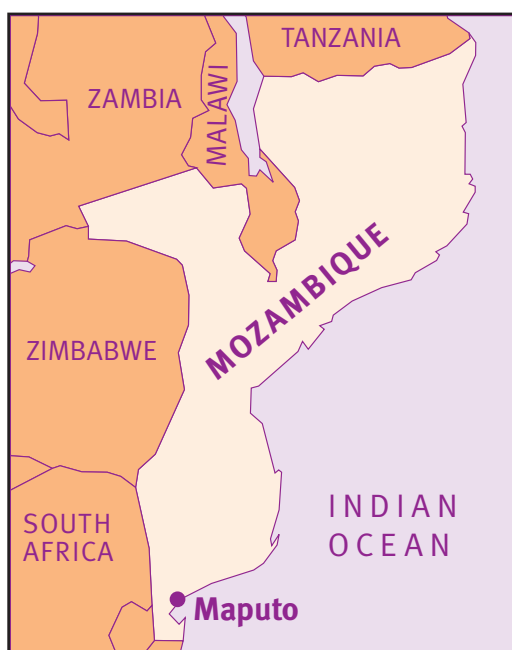


Introduction

The land of smiles, Mozambique is a country of exceptional beauty and variety, combining soft sand, azure waters, palm trees, unspoilt beaches and coral reefs with lakes, open plains, forests and a rich array of wildlife. Described by the Mozambican government as a country 'ripe for rediscovery', the nation is putting its divided past behind it and looking forward to a future of promise.



History

Bantu settlers, arriving from the north, founded the great Mwenemutapa Empire. The highly developed empire established trading links with India, Persia, China and most of the Arab world.

Lured by the promise of gold, Vasco de Gama landed in Mozambique on his way to India. Portuguese trading posts were built along the coast and by the 16th century the area became an important port of call for ships on the way to the east. Part of the region's attraction was ivory and later slaves.

Portugal remained in control of the area for the next four centuries. The indigenous people cultivated the land for the benefit of European leaseholders, keeping Mozambicans in a permanent state of serfdom. However, it wasn't until the Transvaal gold rush in South Africa that the interior of the region was penetrated.

As the 20th century progressed Portuguese settlers began taking over vast tracks of land, creating a white supremacy. Growing resentment amongst the locals led to many calls for independence and later the founding of freedom organisations like the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo) in 1962. Eduardo Mondlane, leader of Frelimo, began a guerrilla warfare campaign and by 1969 a fifth of the country was under his control. Mondlane was assassinated in the same year but the war continued until independence was granted in 1975, under the leadership of Samora Machel.

Peace was short-lived and civil war broke out between the government and the newly formed black independence movement, Renamo. For the next 16 years Renamo waged a terror campaign, crippling the country. The civil war claimed the lives of over a million people either in conflict or because of starvation.

In 1990 the government renamed itself the Republic of Mozambique, abandoning its commitment to Marxism and implementing many of the changes demanded by Renamo.

In 1992 the civil war ended and in the elections two years later, Joaquim Chissano, leader of Frelimo, was elected. Armando Guebuza succeeded him in the 2005 elections.

Current challenges

- ▶ Mozambique is one of the poorest countries in the world with around 50 per cent of the population living on less than 60 pence a day and a further 70 per cent of the population living in poverty.
- ▶ More than a million of Mozambique's 19 million people are HIV-positive and the adult infection rate is 12 per cent and rising. The virus has orphaned approximately half a million children.
- ▶ Mozambicans rely heavily on agriculture for an income with four out of five Mozambicans involved in subsistence farming. The floods of 2000 and 2001 affected about a quarter of the population and destroyed much of the country's infrastructure.
- ▶ Only 40 per cent of the population is literate and there is a huge need for education initiatives to be set in place.

BMS involvement in Mozambique

BMS World Mission is supporting a pre-school programme as part of the Mozambique Baptist Convention outreach. This project links with BMS work in São Paulo and the World Mission Board of the Brazilian Baptist Convention. Lynne Brown, a BMS long-term worker and previously a volunteer, visited Mozambique in 2002 and is now working in Angola.

Background information

The land

Mozambique (just over 309,000 square miles) is situated on the south east coast of Africa beside the Indian Ocean. Its neighbours include South Africa and Zimbabwe in the south and Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia in the north. The coastal lowlands rise to the central uplands, to the northwest are high plateaus and to the west mountains. There are three types of vegetation: savannah, dense forest and open forest.

Despite many large rivers, like the Zambezi and Limpopo, flowing through Mozambique to the sea, the country experiences recurrent drought in the south, causing an increased migration of the population to urban and coastal areas. The country has over 100 basins, approximately 1,300 lakes and about ten dams. The Cabora Bassa, Africa's largest hydro-electric power dam, lies in the north west of the country.

About 45 per cent of Mozambique's land is suitable for agriculture although a significantly lower percentage of the land is cultivated. The country's fertile land has the potential to produce enough food for its own people and for export. Amongst the main agricultural products are maize, sugar cane, tobacco, rice, tea and citrus fruits. Prawns are Mozambique's largest single export.

The country is rich in mineral resources such as gold, gemstones and bauxite.

Religion

According to the 1997 census about 50 per cent of the population is Christian, ten per cent is Muslim and five per cent animist. Prior to religious freedom being granted at the end of the 20th century, Protestants were persecuted first by the Portuguese, then, following independence, missionaries were expelled, Christian leaders

intimidated and imprisoned, and churches destroyed. The changes in 1982 brought greater freedom resulting in an increase in church membership and a huge need for trained leaders.

There are 120 Baptist churches in Mozambique with about 40,000 members.

Prayer points

- ▶ Pray for God to use the Baptist Convention of Mozambique to reach the spiritual and physical needs of the Mozambican people.
- ▶ Pray for God to raise up trained leaders to help disciple the many Mozambicans coming to Christ.
- ▶ The people of Mozambique have known great suffering – civil war, drought, flooding, exploitation, economic suffering and death. Pray that men and women of integrity and wisdom would be placed in positions of leadership and influence to lead the nation into economic, social and spiritual revival.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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