Mozambique in 2007

Mozambique remains the donor darling, with aid rising. The economy continues to grow at more than 7% a year, but a series of reports pointed to increasing inequality and noted that growth is not reaching the poor. Floods and other disasters made their mark. Provincial elections were postponed.

Domestic Politics

Elections dominated the political scene. There should have been provincial assembly elections in 2007, followed by local elections in 2008 and national elections (for parliament and president) in 2009. However, parliament was very slow in enacting legislation and only approved new electoral legislation in different stages during March. Parliament appointed its members of the National Election Commission (CNE) only in May, with three members from the governing Frelimo party and two from the Renamo opposition. In June, these five selected eight further members from 62 candidates proposed by civil society organisations. The civil society members are all seen as being close to Frelimo. By law, the CNE president must be one of the civil society members and the CNE selected João Leopoldo da Costa, rector of the private university ISCTEM. The CNE serves for five years.

A revised constitution created assemblies in the 10 provinces, and they were to be elected before 19 January 2008. The date for provincial elections was first set for 20 December, then moved to 16 January 2008 at the height of the rainy season and finally parliament passed a constitutional amendment allowing them to take place at the same time as national elections in 2009. The electoral
law required a completely new registration and with the very late appointment of the CNE it proved impossible to undertake this exercise in time. Registration was also extended several times, and by early 2008 more than eight million of 10 million voting age adults had registered.

International observers had severely criticised what they saw as a unique secret vote tabulation process, which in 2004 allowed the CNE to exclude the results of more than 5% of polling stations and change the results of others without explanation. An analysis of the election results by the London School of Economics Crisis States Programme, released in 2007, found “that ballot box stuffing, improper ballot nullification, and (intentional) organisational failure took place”. Mozambique’s own constitutional council criticised the lack of transparency and said the CNE had acted improperly. The new CNE has also been accused of impropriety by the local press, because it ignored the clause in the electoral law which stated that CNE members cannot have other paid employment, yet most civil society nominees retained their old posts. Parliament did not modify the parts of the legislation allowing for secrecy and the new CNE refused to even consider more openness. At a 27 June meeting with Foreign Minister Alcinda Abreu, donors flatly refused to fund the election without assurances of transparency and international observation. The European Commission had already set up a budget line to fund the election, but withdrew the offer. Ironically, the fall in the value of the dollar against the euro and pound meant that budget support increased by enough in dollars to pay for the election and registration. However, the issue remained unresolved.

On other issues, there was a big push towards decentralisation, built around district planning. In 2007, each of the 128 districts was given Metical 7 m (about $ 240,000) for economic development and job creation. Local consultative councils were set up in