

THE WORLD BANK

MOZAMBIQUE :

POST-CONFLICT LAND ALLOCATION PROCESS

Interviewer: Rebecca B. Chavez

Interviewee: Roberto Chavez

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MILLER REPORTING CO., INC.  
507 C STREET, N.E.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20002  
(202) 546-6666

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. CHAVEZ: My first question is can you tell us about the background of these land questions after the peace agreement?

MR. CHAVEZ: Well, yes. Let me start by telling you a little bit about the process. The peace agreement that ended the war in Mozambique [was signed on October 4, 1992. The war had been going on for almost 20 years at that time--in fact, it had begun shortly after independence in Mozambique in 1975. So this was a long, protracted war where the Frelimo Government that came to power in independence was being pressured by its neighbors, first by Rhodesia and then by South Africa, to give up their Socialist views, if you like. And in fact it was a point of contact of the superpowers during the cold war.

But with the good offices of a certain group within the Catholic Church in Rome, the two sides got together. Frelimo and Renamo [ph.], and over several months beginning in the late eighties, early nineties, they hammered out a peace agreement, and it was signed, as I said on October 4, 1992.

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At that time, in fact, just a few weeks after the signature of the peace agreement, I was working at that time in Mozambique as an urban planner first and then as a country officer, and I was up in the norther Manika [ph.] Province near Tete [ph.] up near the Zimbabwe border in a very, very small town and was struck by the fact that here was some little town on the side of the road going from Manika to Tete, and people were coming out of the bush with literally almost no clothes on, dressed almost in bark and leaves.

And through interpreters, we asked--because they don't even speak Portuguese--why are you coming back? They said, well, there is peace, they told us.

And they were so sure about it, they were so certain that there was a peace agreement that in fact people were coming back from where they had been displaced in the country, and they were coming back from the neighboring states, both the refugees and the [inaudible], right after the peace agreement.

So among the donor community and the NGO community, we began to refer to this as "the people's

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peace," where the majority of the Mozambicans were actually going back and forth.

This is the context of what happened and how we got to this point in the peace agreement in a very summary fashion.

At this time, and to make this peace agreement work, the UN had established UNAMOS [ph.], the UN operation in Mozambique, and had put in charge of that Mr. Abaello [ph.], and his job was to bring in UN troops, and we had UN troops coming in from a number of countries, and to make the whole process, the supervision by the UN forces--make sure that the war was ended, that the parties disengaged and so on and so forth.

And in fact there really was no problem with this. In spite of the fact that the war had gone on for such a long time, there was a lot of good will, at least on the side of, as I said, certainly the people, that this war was over, and there were very few conflicts on the military side. Yet all the attention of the donors and of the Government, the UN, the multilaterals, including the World Bank, was focused on a single thing--that of demobilization of the two armies.

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So there were the two armies, Renamo and Frelimo, that came to a grand total officially of 90,000 troops--in fact, it was probably less than that--but this really occupied the main concern of the UNAMOS operation even as the UN humanitarian assistance coordination was getting under way--UNOAC [ph.], which was a sub-agency of the UNAMOS operation. And the whole focus of this very big operation and of all the donor support and the emergency funds coming in was in fact in trying to establish the peace to demobilize the two armies. The experience from other African countries was that if you didn't demobilize these armies, you were going to continue to have war.

And they did this; they did this very effectively, and there are a number of experiences where the Aldo Ajello [ph.] for UNAMOS, working with the donors, and particularly the like-minded group, which were the Nordics, the Swiss and the Dutch, plus the--no, I guess it was that group--plus the World Bank through its resident representative, which was myself--after being urban planner and country officer, I became resident representative in Mozambique in August of 1993 and so was in fact a witness to this whole process.

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And this group of donors was engaged by Aldo Ajello, focusing on a flaw, as we saw it, in the peace agreement that was the fact that there had been no funds set aside to demobilize the two armies, to pension off the troops so they would go home after they were demobilized. And all these centers throughout the country where we concentrated the troops of both armies were set up, and the process got under way, and the donors, the small group of donors that I mentioned, the like-minded group plus Canada, all got together and decided to establish a fund of \$20 million that would essentially pay off, pension off, all the soldiers who were being retired from the army, and the new army was being formed from the remainders of both of the two armies of Renamo and Frelimo and had a total of about--I think the goal was to have 12,000 or 13,000 troops in total.

But in the meantime, there was a very parallel process going on to this, as I say, what was occupying the attention of the donors and of the government and of the multilaterals, which was the whole humanitarian assistance. The donors were also heavily involved in this and were funding it to a great extent. A great deal of the funds were going through UNHCR, and the High Commissioner for

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Refugees had a very effective representative in Alfredo del Rio [ph.] and was able to, in a very efficient way, begin to channel these funds using NGOs to build health posts and wells and basic facilities and infrastructure for communities that were returning after being abroad for in some cases 5, 10, 15, even 20 years.

And the UNHCR effort was focused mostly on about 1.7 million refugees. It is interesting to note that of this amount, the UNHCR actually only repatriated about 600,000 or 700,000 of these refugees, and the other almost million-and-some came back from the neighboring seven countries that border Mozambique, primarily from Malawi, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, to a lesser extent from Zambia, South Africa, and Swaziland, but came back and were being resettled through this process.

Now, this is sort of the background to where we were, say, a year after the peace agreement, where UNAMOS was in full operation; UNOHAC [ph.] under Bernardo was getting set up, and were doing a very good job of monitoring all the assistance by the various donors to overall emergency and development assistance that was going on throughout the entire country.

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UNHCR was very active in bringing back the refugees, and they started in 1992-1993 and essentially completed their job by 1995, if I am not mistaken, in one of the largest UNHCR operations anywhere and did so with tremendous energy, with innovation, using NGOs, using communities themselves, working with all the partners in different ways. They really did some terrific work and built upon the experience of the wild refugees in Malawi, where many of them had training, had education and other programs going on; they came back as groups in some cases and continued these programs.

So that's the background to this issue.

MS. CHAVEZ: Can you tell us what was the actual land issue?

MR. CHAVEZ: Well, as I said, there was a total of about 5 million displaced peoples and refugees as a result of this war in Mozambique--1.5, 1.7 million refugees who were in camps in these neighboring countries, and 3.5 million or so internally displaced peoples who were throughout the entire country. They had concentrated in the cities, in different towns--they had been displaced from their homelands.

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And what began after the peace agreement, this people's peace, was a spontaneous movement--first, it was a trickle, and then it started to increase--of people going back to their home towns. In fact, they were not waiting for UNHCR in general to repatriate them, but they were going by themselves to relocate to wherever they came from. And as I say, two-thirds of refugees and most of the interim displaced people all found their way home under their own power, with their own resources, and came to their towns.

Because the donor community and the Government and the UN were so focused on the whole demobilization of the troops, very little attention was being paid to a very central issue which was that of the resettlement of these 5 million people. So I at the time was curious about this as a planner, as an architect, and was trying to understand what the process was. During a number of field trips, I started to gather information and realized that there was a process of resettlement under way, but it had nothing to do with the Government or the UN or anybody else. It was totally spontaneous. It was the communities, it was the people coming back to their communities, and it was highly decentralized. And what we found was that it was basically

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the traditional authorities, and in some cases in the absence of traditional authorities, the elders and so on, it was local authorities who were respected by the communities who were making all the decisions on resettlement.

In one example, what took place in Zambezia Province, a group of us arrived in Gudue [ph.], which is up in the mountains where there was a former tea plantation that had been nationalized by the Mozambican Government. I was waiting for a ride into town and come upon the road two peasants, farmers, local people. One was reasonably well-to-do, and the other was as skinny as a rail. I started chatting with them and eventually learned that the first one had actually never left the town, had continued to work for the tea factory that had been nationalized so had a little payroll, and when the tea factory became inoperative, he stopped earning money from the company, the state-owned company, but he continued to work his plot of land and was doing reasonably well with some income occasionally from the company and under his own work.

The individual next to him was a cousin who in fact had joined Renamo something like 7 or 10 years back, and with the war over and demobilized himself, which was a

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very common phenomenon, had abandoned the ranks of the Renamo forces and simply walked back home. Upon arriving home, of course, his land and his house had been taken over by other displaced peoples. So I asked him how did you resolve this, and they explained to me that what happened was that they went to see the traditional authorities, the council of elders for their village, and they were advised of the following. This fellow in particular was told, look, this person occupying your land we put there because you were gone, and what we now want you to do is to let this person collect their harvest, and after they do so, we will move them to another part near the village, and this land, which we know belongs to your family according to the oral history traditions that we have in your community, you will get back. And this process took place.

So they put him by the river for a while, and then, when the crop was collected, harvested, they gave him back his land. And these people built their own houses; they were just thatch huts, they were not very elaborate or big investments--but yet it required a great deal of organizing of the community, of coming to agreements, resolving conflicts, and so on and so forth.

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The remarkable thing is that this happened entirely without outside assistance at the local level throughout the country. We estimate if there were 5 million displaced peoples, a conservative estimate is that there may have been as many as 500,000, one-half million, land transactions--in other words, land allocations, reallocations, removals, displacements, whatever had to be done, these settlements, and so on and so forth.

And this was all done entirely spontaneously by local communities under no government or other program.

Furthermore, or equally interesting, is the fact that 2 years later, I looked into where things stood at the end of the resettlement process as UNHCR was packing their bags, getting ready to go home after having relocated 700,000 of this 5 million, and I started to inquire as to what the status of all this relocation process was.

There was one group funded by USAID, the Land Tenure Center of the University of Wisconsin, that was in fact, if not keeping track of this process, was looking into what the issues were in land and land disputes, and they had identified a number of areas where in fact there were issues. But largely, of these 500,000 land resettlement

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processes that took place, or land transactions, there were virtually no conflicts 2 years later except--except--when an outside authority, either the central government or the provincial government, had taken it upon itself to make community lands available to a third party, usually a forestry company or mineral exploitation or something like that, without any compensation or consultation with the community.

So these are essentially the facts of this process, and later on, we can draw a few conclusions.

[Interruption.]

MR. CHAVEZ: This is a follow-up to the interview by Rebecca Chavez with Roberto Chavez. This is Roberto Chavez with some lessons that can be drawn from the experience or conclusions.

The first question is the situation that took place in Mozambique replicable in other countries and other environments. I think we have to bear in mind that in the case of Mozambique, there were rather peculiar conditions. This is a country which has a relatively low population density. About 800,000-some square kilometers, almost half the size of Mexico has to support a population of only 15

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million. So this is very different from countries such as Malawi just north of Mozambique which are very heavily populated. So this is one criterion which is peculiar to the case of Mozambique.

But given conditions such as these, areas that meet these criteria, i.e., relatively low densities of population with strong cultural traditions, traditional authorities, respected local authorities in a post-conflict situation--this could apply to rural areas of many countries--this would appear to be applicable.

So it would appear that the experience of Mozambique possibly could be replicated if it met those conditions, such as in a country like Angola when, eventually, they get to serious resettlement, or other countries in Africa and elsewhere that meet these criteria, probably in rural areas, low-density areas, and so on and so forth.

A further aspect which can lead us to some lessons and conclusions is the relatively important aspect of public finance. Normally, resettlement operations in fact have a heavy component of public finance, and during the emergency

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phase, it is mostly with donor support, and it is frequently the first step in a long reconstruction process.

However, again, if we look at the case of Mozambique and we estimate or we realize that of these 500,000 land transactions, all the cost--it is not that there was no cost; there was very important cost if we were to add this all up--but all the cost was borne by the local communities. That is, the time spent by the traditional or local authorities in deliberating over these issues and making decisions; the councils of elders, where they were involved; having to rebuild their homes and clear land if it had not been cleared, and so on and so forth. These are all costs that were borne by the communities.

This leads me to think about in large-scale operations such as those following the resolution of a conflict, we should try to identify what are the components that can be borne locally by communities in the process, what are the costs, specifically, and components that communities can take full responsibility for and, therefore, full ownership for. So this might be another lesson, to go into these operations looking at what in fact can be done.

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Again, in the case of Mozambique, a lot of the resettlement costs were borne by UNHCR, but UNHCR settled less than 600,000 of about 1.5 million refugees who returned and a very small number of the other 3.5 million displaced peoples who returned to their places of origin during this whole process.

So again, these are all costs; they are costs that normally would be publicly-financed and in this case were borne by the communities, and I believe that this is also a lesson that should be looked into in these types of instances, and perhaps in other large-scale operations as well.

So with this, I would like to conclude my comments on the case of the Mozambique land resettlement process that was undertaken entirely by local communities with their traditional or local authorities in a highly decentralized fashion and with absolutely no intervention whatsoever from bilateral agencies, multilateral agencies, the Government, or even NGOs, local or otherwise.

Thank you very much.

[Conclusion of interview with Roberto Chavez.]