



Boundary representations are not necessarily authoritative.

BACKGROUND

Land and Climate

Located on the southeast coast of Africa, Mozambique covers 308,642 square miles (799,380 square kilometers). It is nearly twice as big as California. Coastal plains cover some 44 percent of the territory. High plains (700–3,000 feet, or 200–900 meters) dominate the north and central regions. Mountains and very high plains above 3,000 feet cover 13 percent of the land. The highest peaks are Monte Binga (7,992 feet, or 2,436 meters), Monte Namuli (7,936 feet, or 2,419 meters), and Serra Zuira (7,470 feet, or 2,277 meters). Of the country's 60 or so rivers, the largest include the Zambeze, Rovuma, Lúrio, and Save. Only 20 of the nation's 1,300 lakes are larger than 6 square miles (10 square kilometers).

Mozambique has a tropical climate; the southern plains are the most humid. The Zambeze Valley is somewhat drier but still has a tropical climate. The north and center tend to be hotter than the south, where temperatures average 75°F (24°C). Above 3,000 feet, the average temperature falls to 64°F (18°C). The vegetation is mostly dense forest and savanna.

History

Mozambique's first inhabitants were the Khoi-khoi and the San. Very little is known about them except that they were hunters and gatherers. Sometime around AD 300, Bantu tribes migrating to the area brought agriculture and iron with them. Arab and Asian traders made contact with local groups as

early as the seventh century; Arab trading posts flourished along the coast for many centuries.

By the 11th century, the Shona Empire (centered in present-day Zimbabwe) had established regional dominance. Their trading empire lasted until about the 15th century. The Maravi from the Great Lakes region invaded in the 13th century, and the Karanga Empire was established in the 15th century. New waves of immigration in the 18th century brought Tsongas, Yao, and Nguni to Mozambique. The Nguni came from the south and established the Gaza Empire. By the time Portuguese explorer Vasco de Gama reached the coast in 1498, Mozambique was home to various peoples with complex political, social, and economic systems.

By 1530, the Portuguese had expelled the Arabs from Sena and built various trading forts of their own; they made Mozambique a regular port of call for their ships. Most internal areas remained outside Portugal's control despite repeated incursions. Over time, Portuguese influence expanded to include political and economic control of these interior areas. In 1752, Portugal proclaimed Mozambique a colony and engaged in a flourishing slave trade. Many slaves, often sold by African tribal chiefs to Portuguese traders, were bound for plantations in Brazil.

Though outlawed in the 19th century, slave trading continued until 1912. Beginning in the late 19th century, the Portuguese shifted much of Mozambique's administration to private companies, mostly controlled by the British. These companies enacted a policy of forced labor called *chibalo*. Workers were paid low wages and forced to work in fields to generate exports for the Portuguese; these workers were also required to build roads and railways to service Portugal's

trade links.

Portuguese settlements expanded in the 1900s, especially after World War II. In 1960, during a protest in Mueda against *chibalo*, the provincial governor ordered soldiers to fire on the crowd. Six hundred people died, and the massacre galvanized opposition to Portuguese rule. Several political groups organized under the banner of the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), led by Eduardo Mondlane. In 1964, FRELIMO began warring against Portuguese colonial rule. Mondlane was assassinated in 1969 but remains an important national hero.

Portugal suffered heavy financial and troop losses fighting FRELIMO, and the war was partly responsible for the fall of Portugal's government in 1974. Portugal's new government negotiated the Lusaka Accords in 1974 with FRELIMO, which paved the way for independence in 1975. Ninety percent of the 200,000 or so Portuguese residents fled.

FRELIMO declared one-party Marxist rule under President Samora Machel. Civil war ensued. Southern Rhodesia and later South Africa supported the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO). The brutal war and then famine in the 1980s led to countless deaths and the destruction of Mozambique's economy. Machel died in 1986 and was succeeded by Joaquim Chissano. Peace talks led to amnesty (1988) for RENAMO fighters and a cease-fire in 1990. Further negotiations led to a peace accord in 1992 between President Chissano and the leader of RENAMO, Afonso Dhlakama.

Multiparty elections in 1994 gave Chissano the presidency by a thin margin over Dhlakama, and FRELIMO gained a narrow majority in the National Assembly. The government reformed its policies and embraced a market economy. Investment poured in from South Africa and elsewhere, and people began to rebuild their country. Peaceful elections were held again in 1999 and again Chissano beat Dhlakama in the presidential race. After 18 years in power, Chissano declined to run for another term in 2004. He chose Armando Guebuza to succeed him as the FRELIMO candidate. Vowing to continue the economic reforms of his predecessor, Guebuza defeated Dhlakama in 2004 elections and went on to be reelected in 2009. In 2010, violent riots broke out over the rising cost of food in the country. Challenges facing the country include reducing poverty, encouraging foreign investment, growing the country's tourism industry, and tapping into mineral and energy resources.

THE PEOPLE

Population

Mozambique's population of 22.1 million is growing by 1.8 percent annually. The population is young; roughly 44 percent is under age 15. Most people (62 percent) live in rural areas. Maputo, the capital and largest city, has about two million residents. Nearly all Mozambicans are of African origin. The north is the land of the Makwa-Lomwé, who comprise about one-third of the population and follow a matrilineal social structure. Between the Zambeze and Save rivers are the Shona-carangas, divided into various subgroups.

The Tsongas dominate southern Mozambique and have a patrilineal structure. Smaller groups include the Shangana, Choje, Manyika, and Sena; the Maravi in Tete; the Nguni in the south; the Makonde in the far north; and the Asians and Europeans, who control the formal economy.

Language

Portuguese is Mozambique's official language and is used in government, education, and business. English is also prominent in the business world. Most Mozambicans speak neither Portuguese nor English but communicate in their native languages, including Emakwa, Xisena, Xitsonga, Xitswa, Ciyao, Cishona, Chuwabo, Cinyanja, Shikamonde, Cinyungue, Cicopo, Bitong, and Swahili. Each of these Bantu tongues is very expressive and melodic; words end in a vowel. Many people speak more than one language to aid in cross-cultural communication.

Religion

Most Mozambicans adhere to indigenous animist beliefs, even if they also profess a major world faith. Islam is common in the north and along the coast. About 18 percent of the total population is Muslim. Some 41 percent is Christian, the two biggest groups being Catholics and Zionist Christians. Much of the remainder exclusively follows traditional practices, which include a belief in witchcraft and ancestor veneration. If a person becomes ill or has bad luck, the situation is often attributed to a lack of attention toward the ancestral spirits. *Regulos* (traditional chiefs) and *Nhangas* (traditional healers, or witch doctors) have great influence over people in local matters; witch doctors are called *Mukulukhana* in the north.

General Attitudes

Mozambicans are fun-loving and see their country as a calm, relaxed place. They respect people who are hospitable and kind. While most people have few material possessions, they consider themselves rich in family associations. The family is considered society's most valuable institution. Parents frequently refer to their children as "my first fortune" or "my second fortune," and so on. Parents hope to achieve a good education for their sons.

Even society is seen as a family, and concerns or needs of the group are more important than individual desires. A generation gap has formed with the spread of Western values through formal education, music, and media. Younger people think of older people as too conservative, and the older generation feels the youth have become alienated from their traditional or national values. A similar gap exists between urban and rural populations. South of the Save River, wealth is measured by the possession of cattle. Those who own cattle are greatly respected and admired. In the north, productive plantations are the symbol of wealth.

Personal Appearance

Mozambicans are clean and well-groomed in public. Women wear skirts and blouses or dresses, as well as jewelry such as bracelets and earrings (especially in the north). Married women usually wear a *capulana* (wraparound skirt) tied about

the waist and a head scarf. In the north, a man who cannot provide his wife with at least one *capulana* each year is not considered deserving of her respect. Northern women typically wear two *capulanas* with a matching blouse. The *capulana* (in the north and the south) not only protects against dirt and wind but is also a symbol of respect. Women use *muciro* (beauty cream), made from grated plant stems mixed with water, to cleanse and beautify their faces. Urban women may wear pants, shorts, and T-shirts, which is daily attire for men. In large cities, government and office workers may wear a suit or the more traditional *balalaica* (two-piece safari suit), *goiabeira* (square-cut, embroidered shirt that is not tucked in), or *bubu* (long, loose-fitting shirt with open collar, worn over pants).

CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

Greetings

In formal settings, people greet one another with the Portuguese expressions *Bom dia* (Good day), *Boa tarde* (Good afternoon), and *Boa noite* (Good evening). They address others as *Senhor* (Mr.) and *Senhora* (Mrs.). If asked *Como está?* (How are you?), a person typically replies *Estou bem, obrigado* (Fine, thank you). For women, “thank you” is *obrigada*. Otherwise, people greet in their local languages according to situation and the relation between speakers. Men shake hands while placing left hands on right elbows to show respect. Close friends and women kiss each other on the cheek. When northern men and women meet each other, they clap hands three times before saying *Moni* (Hello). Urban youth greet informally with *Tudo bem?* (How's it going?) or a colloquial version of “Hi” (*Olá, Oi, or Alo*).

Rural people and even many urban residents often greet elders respectfully with *Bom dia mama fulana* (Good morning, dear Mother) or *Bom dia papa fulano* (Good morning, dear Father). In southern areas, greetings include inquiries about family, work, and other matters, and they may last several minutes. A younger person addresses an elder as *Tio* (Uncle) or *Tia* (Aunt), even if they are not related. Peers call each other by first name or nickname.

Gestures

Generally, it is impolite to use the index finger for pointing. People receive and pass objects with both hands or the right hand alone. During conversation, Mozambicans do not place hands in pockets or look elsewhere. It is poor manners to speak to seated adults while standing. Young people may greet or say good-bye with the “thumbs up” gesture. An extended arm with the palm facing up is used to indicate the height of a person; a palm turned down indicates the size of animals. To respectfully summon someone, hands are placed in a “T” shape. People nod to agree and shake their head to disagree. Public displays of affection are inappropriate, although friends of the same sex may hold hands while talking or walking.

Visiting

Families visit each other on weekends, particularly Sunday.

Most casual visits are unannounced, and hosts expect to welcome anyone who comes by. However, in some cases a guest will announce a visit in advance so the hosts can prepare. Where phones are not available, a note or a child may be sent ahead to inform the hosts.

In northern rural areas, visitors approach a home and call out *Odi! Odi!* (May I come in?). They are welcomed with the answer *Héé!* The southern call is the same, but the answer is *Hoyo-hoyo!* (Welcome!). In cities, visitors knock on the door or ring the doorbell. Hosts offer their visitors something to eat and drink whenever possible. Guests bring gifts only for birthdays, a new baby, or some other festive occasion.

Eating

Mozambicans start the day with *mata-bicho* (breakfast): tea with bread, sweet potatoes, manioc, or tapioca. If this food is not available, they eat leftovers. Rural people eat with the fingers of the right hand. Urban people generally prefer to eat with utensils, although they may also eat certain foods with the hand. Families eat around a table or a mat. When working in the fields, men usually eat separately from women. If guests are present, they receive the first or best portions of food. Meals are prepared on wood or charcoal stoves in many areas, but gas and electricity are common in cities.

LIFESTYLE

Family

Extended families are usually very large and live together even if space and resources are limited. Family members rely on one another to share resources and to help in time of need. Men who practice polygamy are supposed to provide a separate hut for each wife and her children. In many cases, several wives will have their houses close together and will share household duties. Children are taught to respect their elders and may be disciplined by any adult family member. A man is head of a family and provides financial support. When a father dies, the oldest son is responsible for the family's welfare. A woman raises her children and oversees their education. She also cares for the household and garden. Girls help their mothers with chores; boys look after cattle.

Housing

The majority of Mozambicans live in rural areas in one-room structures. Building materials vary by availability and include homemade mud or clay bricks, bamboo, palm fronds, and mud-covered beams. Roofs are typically thatched. Members of extended families live near one another. Villagers usually do not have access to electricity or running water, so families use pit latrines and collect water daily from wells, boreholes, or streams. Because most rural Mozambicans are subsistence farmers, they often live in plains near rivers, which makes them vulnerable to flooding. When rivers such as the Zambeze have burst their banks, tens of thousands of people have been displaced. Urban homes are generally built with cinder blocks and have corrugated metal roofs.

Dating and Marriage

Dating is uncommon outside cities and is expected to lead to marriage. Among groups in the south, a groom pays a *lobolo* (bride-price) in the form of cattle or cash to the parents of the bride before the wedding. This is to compensate them for raising her. If a *lobolo* is too high, a couple might live together in a de facto marriage without a formal ceremony, but such a union is not legally recognized. Traditional wedding celebrations include as much dancing and feasting as the families can afford. Christians often marry in a church. Muslims also have traditional ceremonies. Polygamy is common in rural areas. It is culturally acceptable for married men to have girlfriends.

Life Cycle

Mozambique has some of the world's highest rates of infant and maternal mortality, so the birth of a healthy baby is a welcome event. Relatives and friends bring gifts to congratulate the mother.

In the past, many ethnic groups required adolescents to pass to adulthood through initiation rituals, but these are becoming less widely practiced. Young people, especially those in rural families, assume many adult responsibilities by early adolescence. Rural girls are often promised in marriage as early as age 12 and can be married soon after that. However, this rarely occurs in cities. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS has also shifted adult responsibilities onto young people. Children orphaned by the disease are typically cared for by their grandparents or oldest uncle, but in increasing numbers, adolescents are required to be the head of a household of younger siblings.

Funerals are extremely important events, and it is considered vital for everyone in the community to attend. Children do not attend funerals in rural areas, but in the cities they attend with their families. Relatives and friends give money to the bereaved family to help with expenses.

Diet

Staple foods include rice and a paste made from sun-dried cereals, usually cornmeal (called *upsa* or *xima*). Some people eat manioc meal as well. The country is rich in vegetables, which are eaten every day. Favorites include *cacana mboa* (pumpkin leaves), *nhangana* (leaves of *nhemba* beans), and *mathapa* (manioc leaves). Tropical fruits are abundant and are eaten as snacks or desserts. Peanuts and coconuts are often served with vegetables. When possible, people include beef, fowl, fish, and seafood in their diet. In the north, beef and fish are often eaten dried. Traditional drinks are made with a fruit base, meal, and fermented sugarcane molasses.

Recreation

Both men and women enjoy sports in Mozambique, and soccer is by far the most popular sport. Rural children frequently lack access to a real soccer ball, but they play soccer with balls they can make from plastic material, sand, and/or old clothing. Many Mozambicans enjoy basketball, handball, and volleyball, including beach volleyball. The wealthy may swim and play tennis. Most people like to go to the beach. *Ntchuva* and *murawarawa* are strategy games played on a board with 18 to 32 holes and two seeds in each.

Rules differ, but the overall object of the games is to collect the most seeds. Urban residents dance in discotheques. Men get together to drink at someone's home or a public bar. Theater is also popular. Women like to sing and dance; they may sing together when they do chores or cook. Traditional dancing provides amusement for everyone, and dance competitions are popular among different regions.

The Arts

Traditional arts vary by region and ethnic group. Music and dance are an integral part of most Mozambican communities' religious observances, festivals, celebrations, and entertainment. Artisans create ancestral masks and statuettes, often carved in ebony, for both decorative and religious purposes. Other folk arts include making clay sculptures and jewelry, body tattooing, weaving, and basket making.

The nation has produced a number of renowned artists. Painter Malangatana Valente Nguena helped preserve Mozambique's cultural identity throughout the struggle for independence and the civil war. He was instrumental in the establishment of the National Museum of Art and Center for Cultural Studies. Poet José Craveirinha was regarded as a national hero for his support of the independence movement and his efforts to promote African values and culture.

Holidays

Public holidays include New Year's Day, Day of Heroes (3 Feb.), Day of the Mozambican Woman (7 Apr.), Labor Day (1 May), Independence Day (25 June), Day of the Lusaka Accords (7 Sept.), Day of the Armed Fight (25 Sept.), and the Day of the Family (25 Dec.). People also celebrate local harvest festivals, at which the presiding elder calls on the ancestral spirits to bless all. Food and drink are symbolically offered to the spirits, and then everyone joins in a feast. Song and dance are always part of the event.

SOCIETY

Government

The Republic of Mozambique is a multiparty democracy. Candidates are directly elected by popular vote. Coalition governments are formed when a party does not have a majority of votes in the legislature. The president (currently Armando Guebuza) is head of state and holds most executive authority. He appoints a prime minister (currently Aires Bonifacio Ali) from among members of the 250-seat National Assembly to serve as head of government. The president and members of the assembly serve five-year terms. The judicial branch consists of a Supreme Court and administrative, labor, customs, and maritime courts. The voting age is 18. Local leaders are village heads and appointed district administrators. Many cities also directly elect mayors.

Economy

More than 80 percent of Mozambicans are engaged in agriculture, especially farming and herding cattle. Fishing is also an important livelihood and industry. Export crops include cashews, tea, cotton, timber, copper, fish, and shrimp.

Small-scale mining is found in some areas. Much industry centers on the processing of raw materials such as aluminum, iron, fertilizers, and cement. Sales of electric power generated by the Cabora Bassa Dam (one of the world's largest) are growing. After 1994, the government encouraged more private investment and foreign aid, and the government privatized more than nine hundred state institutions. Tourism, titanium and natural gas mining, and more hydroelectric projects are being developed. Challenges include expanding economic prosperity to areas other than around Maputo, relieving poverty, and curbing malaria and HIV/AIDS. Many Mozambicans work in South African mines and industry. The currency is the *metical* (MZM), a name derived from a gold measure used by Arabs before the colonial era.

Transportation and Communications

The average person travels on foot or by various forms of public transportation (buses, taxis, etc.). Only the wealthy own private cars. Traffic moves on the left. The existing highway system does not connect all regions of the country. Many roads are impassable every year in the rainy season. The best roads extend out from Maputo. Like the main roads, rail connections lead mostly to neighboring countries rather than to regions within Mozambique. Although the country has a long coastline with three major ports (Maputo, Beira, Nacala) and rich river basins, maritime and river transport are not well developed.

Two private television channels broadcast in Maputo, but public television reaches nearly every provincial capital. Broadcasts are in Portuguese. Radio broadcasts reach more people and use nearly all major languages as well as Portuguese. Provincial capitals and the main districts are connected by telephone via satellite. Cell phone use is growing. People also communicate via radio, letters, or word-of-mouth.

Education

Schooling is not mandatory. While two-thirds of eligible children enroll in elementary school, less than 10 percent pass to the secondary level. Fewer than one-third of adult women are literate; most rural women have no formal education. Urban children have greater access to schooling. Portuguese is the language of instruction in public schools. Since most rural children do not speak Portuguese when they begin school, it is difficult for them to learn fundamental skills in the early years. There are a growing number of private schools, mostly in Maputo, which are taught in English. Three universities and other advanced institutes provide higher education; they are concentrated in Maputo.

Health

A small fee is needed to access public health services. For those who can afford it, private service is available in public hospitals and at private clinics. Mothers and children receive free preventive care. Rural people may have to travel long distances to seek medical care. They turn to a traditional healer for many ailments. Malaria, intestinal diseases, malnutrition, and tuberculosis are common. Leprosy and meningitis, as well as cholera, also threaten many people.

More than half the population has no access to clean drinking water. Mozambique has one of the world's highest rates of HIV/AIDS infection: 13 percent of adults aged 15 to 49.

AT A GLANCE

Contact Information

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POPULATION & AREA

Population	22,061,451 (rank=52)
Area, sq. mi.	308,642 (rank=36)
Area, sq. km.	799,380

DEVELOPMENT DATA

Human Dev. Index* rank	165 of 182 countries
Gender inequality rank	111 of 155 countries
Real GDP per capita	\$900
Adult literacy rate	64% (male); 33% (female)
Infant mortality rate	104 per 1,000 births
Life expectancy	42 (male); 41 (female)

*UN Development Programme, Human Development Report 2010 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).