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In Portuguese: <https://www.lusa.pt/article/35821684/governo-moçambicano-defende-diálogo-face-a-tumultos-em-xinavane-newsletter>

English translation responsibility of Joseph Hanlon

The Xinavane strike and the new Land Policy - a commentary by Marcelo Mosse

What happened in Xinavane Wednesday was not a mere exacerbation of labour conflict. It was a reflection of an erratic land management in Mozambique, which favours big capital to the detriment of peasant populations. And of multinationals that discard corporate social responsibility and throw labour legislation down the toilet. And the government does nothing!

The violent strike was not led by permanent workers. It was seasonal workers and communities, whose land was taken as part of the sugarcane expansion, who decided to rebel

The Xinavane sugar factory is operated by Tongaat Hulett, a South African multinational that has fallen into crisis in recent years following the falsification of accounts by senior managers with the collusion of the auditor Deloitte

That financial crisis also affected operations in Mozambique but, with new management, the factory was moving towards normalisation. However, that normalisation was happening at the expense of the workers and the local communities. Management increased the workload but did not review salaries, laid off seasonal workers and froze social responsibility that helped local communities with Health and Education. Their land has been integrated into the sugarcane plantation; they live off small beds with vegetables. The new management has withdrawn the supports. But the perks for the expatriate staff are whopping

One fact: the Xinavane factory enters cyclically into a labour crisis. This year began in that vein. On 31 January, the 4,000 permanent workers went on strike. The issue was a wage adjustment and the payment of bonuses for the last two years. There was arm wrestling and a moratorium. And more recently, an agreement between the bosses and the permanent workers, although not everyone agreed

But what about the seasonal workers? They were excluded and the working hours of permanent workers were increased. This prospect of permanent unemployment and a community framework of poverty, the absence of social responsibility, the feeling that the factory is not there to help you in the local growth and of its people, were the fuel that started the fire

The perception of those who live day-to-day life at Tongaat Hulett is that the multinational is occupying more and more of the communities' land, taking away their right to use land they inherited or have occupied for a long time. This alleged usurpation of land is done with the authorities turning a blind eye.

This is a picture that is repeated throughout the country. There is a general trend of usurpation of community land by big capital and of obtaining DUATs [land use titles] of dubious legitimacy. Look at the case of Indian magnate José Parayanken, of Mozambique Holdings, and his rubber monoculture enterprise, in the former Madal tea plantation in Lugela District.

On the other hand, the old dilemma of the failure of corporate social responsibility, precarious labour relations and promotion of local content (labour progression of natives, for example)

So the new Land Policy should take these and other issues into account, such as establishing a regulation of the relations between the Big Concessions and the rural communities so that they are protected

I do not know if this is what is intended. The wounds are deep. And to heal them, it must be acknowledged that they exist. I have yet to see a transparent and incisive diagnosis of land management in Mozambique, one that acknowledges all its evils and vicissitudes, and from there starts a policy to correct the problems. (Marcelo Mosse)

Marcelo Mosse is editor of *Carta de Moçambique*