

MOZAMBIQUE 166

News reports & clippings

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In this issue: Social & political news

HIV prevalence 11.5%

**Rebelo: Frelimo has replaced
debate with bootlicking**

Election law by September 2011?

Government says 'drug kingpin' Bachir is clean

Mozambique lending \$1 billion to United States

New Zambeze toll bridge at Tete

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HIV prevalence 11.5%

The prevalence in Mozambique of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, is now 11.5% among people aged between 15 and 49, according to the results of a national survey released by the Ministry of Health on 5 July and reported by AIM. Women are much worse hit than men: 13.1% of women aged 15 to 49 tested HIV-positive, as opposed to 9.2% of men.

The 11.5% prevalence is lower than the 15% previously reported, and results from a new, more accurate survey. Previously figures were based on blood samples from pregnant women attending around 40 "sentinel" health units across the country, which was not random and was biased toward urban dwellers. The new data is based on a sample of 6,232 households covering every district.

Infection rates are higher among better educated people, and among wealthier people. Reasonably well-off, literate people in towns are substantially more at risk than illiterate and penniless peasant farmers. Urban prevalence is 15.9% (18.4% for women, and 12.8% for men) compared to rural prevalence of 9.2% (10.7% for women, 7.2% for men).

AIDS is worse in the south of the country and in the Beira corridor. In Gaza province, 30% of women aged between 15 and 49 tested HIV-positive (but only 17% of men), reflecting Gaza's long history as a pool of migrant labour for the South African mines.

Health Minister Ivo Garrido said that AIDS has become the main cause of death and hospitalisation among adult Mozambicans. Only among children does malaria outstrip AIDS as a cause of death.

AIM gave provincial figures arranged from worst to least affected provinces (among people aged between 15 and 49):

Gaza: Women – 30%, Men – 17%

Maputo city: Women – 21%, Men – 12%

Maputo province: Women – 20%, Men – 20%
Sofala: Women – 18%, Men – 13%
Manica: Women – 16%, Men – 15%
Zambezia: Women – 15%, Men – 9%
Inhambane: Women – 10%, Men – 6%
Cabo Delgado: Women – 10%, Men – 9%
Tete: Women – 8%, Men – 6%
Nampula: Women – 6%, Men – 3%
Niassa: Women – 3%, Men – 4%.

Rebello: Frelimo has replaced debate with bootlicking

Jorge Rebello, a founder of Frelimo and former information minister, has launched a wide-ranging attack on Frelimo and, implicitly, on President Armando Guebuza. Within the party “analysis has atrophied, leaving us accepting everything that is given to us as certain, incontrovertible, and not to be discussed. Accepting everything is equivalent to bootlicking, which is one of the great ills of our society, where people try to please the boss [*chefe*] with all possible artifices.” He continued, “there is a lot of booklicking, and when the boots are clean, there is nothing more to do.”

Frelimo has developed a resistance to criticism and debate. “There is a strong opposition to criticism. When I speak of bootlicking, it is precisely trying to please the leaders by avoiding criticising anything. This is why there is an instruction to always present everything positively, while avoiding negative issues.” He continued that “we as Frelimo members must end the trend of banning discussions on major issues”.

Rebello was speaking 16 June to the youth parliament meeting in Maputo. He said that he agreed to speak to them because they were seen as rebels. “If it is true what is said, that you are rebels, then I am with you. Because I am a rebel.”

He called on young people not only to fight against poverty, but also against corruption, “bootlicking, flattery and adulation”. In a subsequent interview with the newspaper *@ Verdade*, he was asked about young people’s seeming lack of interest in politics and in noble causes. Some youngsters, he replied, “have assured me that this generation is not uninterested, but there are some people who promote this lack of interest, this distancing. Young people complain that they have no space to show their commitment to improving the life of the population”. But he went on to urge young Mozambicans to act for themselves, “instead of waiting for the chiefs or someone from outside to open a space inside the system and invite them to come in”.

Jorge Rebello’s comments are reported in the attached articles.

The *@ Verdade* article is on <http://www.verdade.co.mz/destaques/nacional/discussao-sobre-a-denominacao-das-geracoes-e-irrelevante.html>

There is a 50 minute interview with Jorge Rebello on YouTube, in five parts, embedded in the *@ Verdade* article.

The Savana article, “O Xiconhoca ja virou a regra”, 18 June 2010, is also on

Election law by September 2011?

New electoral legislation should be presented to parliament (Assembly of the Republic, AR) in September 2011, first deputy chair of the AR, Lucas Chomera, said on 27 July. That is a full year later than demanded by donors at the time of their funding strike earlier this year, but would still allow approval well before 2013 municipal elections and 2014 presidential and parliamentary elections. This should allow more time for discussion of the laws with political parties and civil society. The Constitutional Council and domestic and international observers all called for a total rewriting of laws which have grown increasingly confused and contradictory over the past 15 years.

The three political parties in parliament (Frelimo, Renamo, and the Mozambique Democratic Movement, MDM) must submit their proposals this month to the AR's Commission on Public Administration, the body in charge of redrafting the legislation. In September the Commission will hold hearings and consultations with the extra-parliamentary parties, civil society, the outgoing National Elections Commission (CNE), and the Electoral Administration Technical Secretariat (STAE). Over the following year, the Commission will try to harmonise all the various proposals and present legislation to the AR plenary in September 2011.

Meanwhile, an independent report on media coverage of the 2009 campaign commissioned by the National Union of Journalists (SNJ) found that Frelimo Party received the greatest share of the coverage, not only on publicly owned media, such as Mozambican Television (TVM) and Radio Mozambique, but also in the print media, regardless of their ownership and political stance. In the first 20 days of the campaign TVM's daily "Campaign Diary" devoted 45% of its time to Frelimo, 34% per cent to the main opposition party, Renamo, 15% to the MDM, and 6% to the 16 minor parties standing. For Radio Mozambique, the monitors took the two daily news programmes devoted entirely to the campaign for 20 days selected at random and found Frelimo occupied 38% of the time, MDM 31%, Renamo 10%, and minor parties 22%. The report considered that the radio's tone towards all the competing parties was broadly neutral, while TVM was largely positive towards Frelimo. AIM points out, however, that Renamo did not have a presidential campaign in the first week, and concentrated its campaign in just a few provinces, which may have reduced coverage.

Government says 'drug kingpin' Bachir is clean

The naming of Mohamed Bachir Suleman (MBS) as a "drug kingpin" by United States President Barack Obama on 1 June has so far drawn a confused and limited response in Maputo. The designation makes it illegal for US citizens and business to conduct financial or commercial transactions with him or three of his businesses: Grupo MBS Limitada, Grupo MBS – Kayum Centre, and Maputo Shopping Centre. MBS is one of Mozambique's most prominent and wealthiest businessmen, and a major backer of Frelimo.

One of the first responses was that three Mozambican banks – Barclays, BCI, and Millennium-BIM - all closed their branches in the Maputo Shopping Centre. According to "Canal de Mocambique", buying anything from the shopping centre by credit or debit card is no longer

possible, because the banks no longer accept transactions over the card reading machines in the Shopping Centre. Bachir's youngest son has been excluded from the Maputo American School.

Bachir protests his innocence, and a month after the naming, on 9 July, Interior Minister Jose Pacheco told reporters: "I have already said that he has a clean record, and I repeat this". Pacheco said the government is waiting for the United States authorities to respond to requests for information on the alleged drug trafficking activities of MBS.

Interpol secretary-general Ronald Noble, on a brief visit to Maputo on 13 July, confirmed that the international policing agency does not have any file on MBS. But he then added pointedly that "Interpol will send a specialist to Mozambique to train a working unit that will investigate drug trafficking".

Interpol has a certain personal knowledge of southern African drugs trading. Jackie Selebi, the former South African police commissioner, who was President of Interpol from 2006 to 2008, was sentenced by a South African court yesterday (3 August) to 15 years in jail for receiving bribes from Glenn Agliotti, a convicted drugs smuggler. Selebi had close links to former South African President Thabo Mbeki.

AIM notes that the US is confident that they have a strong case against Bachir. Immediately after he had been designated as a "narcotics kingpin", Adam Szubin, the director of the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) declared "Mohamed Bachir Suleman is a large-scale narcotics trafficker in Mozambique, and his network contributes to the growing trend of narcotics trafficking and related money laundering across southern Africa." Noble himself is a senior American law enforcement officer, who in the mid-1990s was Undersecretary for Enforcement of the Treasury Department, which put him in charge of OFAC.

The Mozambican anti-corruption NGO, the Centre for Public Integrity (CIP), notes that although the government promises an investigation, it has not followed up previous international accusations of corruption. For example, last year in a British court, the construction company Mabey and Johnson pleaded guilty to bribing officials around the world, including more than \$400,000 to Carlos Fragoso, when he was National Director of Roads and Bridges in the Mozambican Ministry of Public Works. CIP points out that in Mozambique nothing has happened and apparently no action is being taken against Fragoso. CIP calls for a joint Mozambique-US task force to investigate Bachir.

Mozambique lending \$1 billion to United States

Mozambique's foreign reserves are \$1.8 billion, according to the Bank of Mozambique Monetary Policy Committee on 8 July. The exact currency composition of the reserves is secret, but developing and emerging countries which do report say they keep 58% of reserves as US dollars and 29% as Euros. If Mozambique is typical, that means it holds \$1 billion in US dollars, probably as US bonds and deposits in US banks. Bonds are a form of loan, in which the bond seller (the United States in this case) promises to eventually pay the bondholder (Mozambique). So Mozambique is effectively lending \$1 billion to the United States.

Mozambique's debt to the World Bank is about \$1.2 billion. So, in effect, Mozambique is borrowing from the World Bank simply to lend that money back to the United States.

According to the IMF, US external debt jumped from \$6 trillion (million million) in 2002 to \$10 trillion this year. A lot of that was funded because the IMF put pressure on developing countries to increase their reserves – that is, to buy more US bonds, and thus lend more to the US. These loans, in turn, have been important in allowing the United States to pay for its current wars.

New Zambeze toll bridge at Tete

A new bridge over the Zambezi river at Benga, six kilometres downstream from the existing Samora Machel Bridge in Tete, will be built and operated by a private company. This consortium consists of the Portuguese companies Soares da Costa and Ascendi (40% each), and the Mozambican company Infra-Engineering (20%). Among the partners in Infra-Engineering are Tourism Minister Fernando Sumbana, former defence minister Tobias Dai, and Raimundo Pachinuapa, a former guerrilla commander in the war for Mozambican independence. Soares da Costa and Mota Engil, the largest shareholder in Ascendi, will build the bridge.

The bridge at Benga will be much stronger than the existing bridge, which is the main link between Malawi and Zimbabwe. "All the heavy traffic will use the new bridge, which is designed for maximum tonnage", said Francisco Pereira, chair of the Mozambican government's Road Fund. "The Samora Machel Bridge will be restricted to light vehicles and pedestrians". Up to 600 trucks a day use the present bridge. Long queues frequently build up, since only one heavy vehicle is allowed on the bridge at a time.

Cost of the bridge will be recovered by tolls, and Pereira estimates that over 30 years the consortium will pay \$144 million dollars in corporation tax and \$100 million in Value Added Tax (VAT) on the tolls.

Guebuza: Peasants must work hard to end poverty

In a July tour of southern Mozambique, President Armando Guebuza continually stressed that ending poverty depends of peasants working hard and never giving up. Addressing a rally in Alto-Changane, as part of a working visit to Gaza, Guebuza reiterated that the path to victory against poverty lies in hard work. In Catuane, he used the language of war and disease. Poverty is "the common enemy" which will be defeated through unshakable faith, and believing that it can be defeated. Poverty will be defeated, just as Portuguese colonial rule was overthrown.

He insisted that nobody has been sentenced to be poor for the rest of their lives, and the scourge can be overcome. Speaking in the local language, Guebuza illustrated the results of faith in victory, by giving the example of the peasant who, facing heat, cold, wind, rain, and many other adversities, will never abandon his cultivated fields, because he is determined to get rid of hunger. In a tour later in the month of Sofala, in Nhamadze, he called on Mozambicans to remain persistent in the struggle against poverty.

In his trips he has also been talking about the District Development Fund (FDD), known as "the seven million", since the initiative began in 2006 as an allocation of 7 million meticaís (now about \$200,000) each year for each of the 128 districts. The money is for loans for viable projects to create jobs and boost food production.

Guebuza admitted that there are still problems with repayment of loans and he said the government will reschedule the loans, taking into account the longer time needed to repay money invested in agricultural projects.

Guebuza reiterated the need for transparency in the activities of the District Consultative Councils, which are in charge of managing the fund. "Those who work with this fund must be transparent", he said. "They must inform the people about everything to do with the management of the fund. It's money that comes from our taxes, and so we must all be informed about how it is being used".

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NOTE OF EXPLANATION:
This mailing list is used to distribute two publications, both edited by Joseph Hanlon. This is my own sporadic "News reports & clippings", which is entirely my own responsibility. This list is also used to distribute the *Mozambique Political Process Bulletin*, published by CIP and AWEPA, but those organisations are not linked to "News reports & clippings"
Joseph Hanlon

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Mozambique media websites:
Noticias: www.jornalnoticias.co.mz
O Pais: www.opais.co.mz
Savana: www.savana.co.mz
Canal de Moçambique: www.canalmoz.com
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