

Mozambique News Agency

AIM Reports

Report no.588, 4th December 2019



AIDS-related deaths fell by 20 per cent over five years

President Filipe Nyusi declared on 1 December that the number of deaths from HIV/AIDS in Mozambique fell by 20 per cent between 2014 and 2018. Speaking to thousands of people at an event in the northern city of Nampula commemorating World AIDS Day, President Nyusi said this decline was the result of joint work between the government and its cooperation partners.

“We recorded a 20 per cent reduction in HIV/AIDS-related deaths between 2014 and 2018. This is a noteworthy indicator, and it guarantees that more Mozambicans will lead long and healthy lives and reduces the possibility of their transmitting HIV to others who are not infected”, he added.

This progress, President Nyusi continued, took place during implementation of the actions envisaged under the Fourth National Strategic Plan against HIV/AIDS, for the period 2016-2020. He said this achievement had been recognised by the Joint United Nations Programme against HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) “as one of the cases of success in its recent report on HIV/AIDS in the world”.

The availability of the life-prolonging anti-retroviral treatment (ARVT) has greatly expanded. The President said that, at the start of this five year period, ARVT was available at 750 units of the national health service – but now it is available at 1,538 health units, which is 93 per cent of the total. The number of HIV-positive Mozambicans benefitting from ARVT has risen from 643,312 in December 2014 to 1,090,305 in June 2019.

Despite these advances, the HIV situation in Mozambique remains a matter of concern, said the President. The transmission of HIV from pregnant women to their unborn children (“vertical transmission”) remains extremely high, at an estimated 15 per cent of all pregnancies in 2018. Furthermore, there is a high dropout rate from ARVT. President Nyusi said 40 per cent of patients on ARVT stop taking the drugs within 12 months of beginning the treatment. He attributed this to the stigma and discrimination that HIV-positive people still suffer.

The President said that an estimated 13 per cent of the 350,823 people working in the public administration are HIV-positive. He thought it urgent that all sectors should recognise that HIV “is a work problem because if it is not managed and controlled, we shall always have the problem of replacing the staff we have prepared and trained to serve the country”.

President Nyusi stressed the role that communities can play in fighting the disease. “It is in the community that we find that we find the most effective responses in the

battle we are waging against HIV and AIDS”, he said. These responses include groups of peer educators and organisations formed by people living with the disease.

“There are many organisations of people who break the silence and are part of the communities”, he said, and these included people who are often marginalised, such as drug users and sex workers.

Society listens to community and religious leaders, said President Nyusi, and if they say the same things, then the message against HIV will reach their followers and beyond.

This was no time to slow down, the President stressed. “AIDS is killing, and with every passing day, we are losing friends and relatives. It is our responsibility to prevent the disease, and to treat those infected”.

“We appeal to all of Mozambican society to advance together and to guarantee that all children, youths and adults remain free of this disease, and that treatment becomes more accessible”, he said. “As the government, we shall continue to lead the national effort against HIV/AIDS and mobilise resources to fight this epidemic”.

Four die in artisanal mining incidents

Four people died on 30 November in two separate incidents connected with illegal artisanal mining in Gurue district in the central province of Zambezia.

According to the Gurue district administrator, Costa Chirembue, police shot dead two illegal miners at Magige, 30 kilometres from Gurue town. He said the incident occurred when police were trying to prevent illegal mining. An angry crowd then attempted to disarm the police, who opened fire in what Chirembue regarded as an act of self-defence.

Two other deaths occurred at Tetete locality, 60 kilometres from the town. According to the district police commander, Julio Armazem, two people who were digging for precious stones were swept away in a mudslide. A third person survived, but was seriously injured, and is undergoing treatment in Gurue district hospital.

New York jury acquits Boustani

A New York jury on 2 December acquitted Jean Boustani, a senior sales executive of the Abu Dhabi based Prinvest group, of all three charges he was facing in connection with the scandal of Mozambique's "hidden debts".

This term refers to the loans of over two billion US dollars that three security linked Mozambican companies – Proindicus, Ematum (Mozambique Tuna Company) and MAM (Mozambique Asset Management) – obtained from the banks Credit Suisse and VTB of Russia, based on illicit loan guarantees issued by the previous Mozambican government under the then President Armando Guebuza.

The federal prosecutors had charged Boustani with conspiracy to commit money laundering, wire fraud and securities fraud. However, the defence argued that the crimes did not take place in the United States, and Boustani had never set foot in the US before.

Three of the jurors, including the foreman, speaking on condition of anonymity, told the Bloomberg news agency that they did not see how federal prosecutors in Brooklyn had the authority to prosecute crimes that had not occurred in their jurisdiction.

This was despite the argument by the prosecution that Boustani did not have to be physically present in the United States to commit financial crimes under US law. It was enough for the conspirators to use elements of the US financial system (such as US corresponding banks). The crime of wire fraud, prosecuting attorney Mehta explained, involves the use of international or interstate wires, including phone calls, e-mails and all forms of electronic communication. Boustani did not have to send the wires personally, he just had to cause them to be sent. Similarly with securities fraud – Boustani was accused of being linked to the issuing of the Ematum bonds (for a total of 850 million dollars). But he did not have to sell the bonds personally.

Boustani was released since, under the US system, the prosecution cannot appeal. But the court now has to sentence the three Credit Suisse bankers, Andrew Pearce, Detelvina Subeva, and Surjan Singh, who entered guilty pleas to conspiracy charges and admitted taking bribes from Boustani. Prosecutors must also decide whether to pursue the case against the others named in the indictment, particularly former Finance Minister Manuel Chang, who has been under police custody in Johannesburg since 29 December 2018, fighting against extradition to the US.

Agreement reached between Gorongosa Park and Nespresso

Gorongosa National Park and the company Nespresso have signed a memorandum of understanding to promote the coffee industry in Gorongosa.

The National Park has been successfully persuading local farmers to plant coffee seedlings on the slopes of Mount Gorongosa since 2015. According to a press release from the park, at first 15,000 seedlings were

planted alongside native trees to support rain forest reforestation. Today, farmers on Mount Gorongosa are planting 200,000 coffee seedlings and 50,000 rain forest trees a year. "100 per cent of the Gorongosa coffee profits go back to Gorongosa National Park and its people", says the release. "Every bag of coffee directly supports the mission to serve Gorongosa National Park and the communities that surround it".

The memorandum of understanding adds Mozambique to Nespresso's programme to revive high-quality coffee production in regions where it was under threat by improving quality and increasing volume.

"Procuring these coffees every year and allowing production to grow and the communities to prosper is part of the impact Nespresso expects to see through collaboration with Gorongosa National Park", it added.

NESPRESSO was founded in 1986 to target "high-end" coffee consumers through a single portion espresso extraction system. NESPRESSO says its vision is to be the "Icon of Perfect Coffee Worldwide", and one of its main challenges is to ensure the long-term supply of high-quality coffee into the future.

Vale announces three-month closure of Moatize mine

The Brazilian mining giant Vale on 26 November announced that it will close down its coal mine in Moatize, in the western Mozambican province of Tete, for three months next year for "maintenance".

In August, the Mozambican subsidiary of Vale announced that in the second quarter of 2019 it registered an operational loss of US\$145 million, which followed a US\$120 million loss in the first quarter.

As a result of these continuing losses, the company has undertaken a review and is shifting its focus away from mining thermal coal to coking coal used in the production of steel. The price of thermal coal has been falling, in large part due to international electricity companies switching from coal-generated power to renewable energy or gas-powered generation which has lower carbon emissions and is less polluting.

Vale's partner in the mine and the Nacala Corridor railway and port project has confirmed that it expects to take a financial hit. Japan's Mitsui announced that "while Mitsui is now reviewing the amount of proven reserves based on the new long-term mining plan for the Moatize project, we hereby inform that recognition of impairment loss for the Moatize business is expected".

The closure of the mine will also have a negative effect on Mozambique's balance of payments: in the second quarter of this year Vale-Mozambique's revenue was US\$271 million. In addition, the company paid US\$3.6 million in royalties to the Mozambican state.

Alongside Vale and Mitsui, the state-owned Mozambican Mining Exploration Company (EMEM) holds a five per cent stake in the Moatize project.

This is a condensed version of the AIM daily news service - for details contact pfauvet@live.com

Four injured in Gondola ambush

Gunmen on 29 November opened fire on a bus Gondola district, in the central province of Manica, according to a report on the independent television station, STV.

The attack took place at about 06.00 in the area of Muda Serracao, about 75 kilometres from the Manica provincial capital, Chimoio. The bus, owned by the company Transportadora Etrago, was travelling from Maputo to Quelimane, capital of Zambezia province.

Four people were injured in the ambush, one of them seriously. All were treated in Gondola district hospital. The seriously injured person was transferred to the provincial hospital in Chimoio while the bus continued its journey to Quelimane.

This is the latest in a spate of ambushes on the main roads in Manica and the neighbouring province of Sofala, which have been attributed to the “Renamo Military Junta”, a breakaway from the main opposition party, Renamo.

According to unnamed military intelligence sources cited by the independent newsheet “Carta de Mocambique”, the defence and security forces have launched a manhunt, attempting to capture the Junta’s leader, Mariano Nhongo, dead or alive.

His current whereabouts are unknown, but he is believed to have left the Junta’s base at Piro, in the foothills of the Gorongosa mountain range.

Terrorists kill six in Macomia

Terrorists killed six people on 23 November in an attack against the village of Darumba, in Macomia district, in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, according to a report in the news sheet “Carta de Mocambique”.

As has become the norm in the insurgents’ attacks, the raiders burnt down dozens of homes in the village. They also burnt two sailing boats which were used to carry passengers from the mainland to the islands of Ibo and Matemo, and to the provincial capital, Pemba.

On 21 November, the terrorists attacked the nearby village of Goludo. Both Darumba and Goludo are in the Macomia administrative post of Mucojo.

The insurgents began their attacks in October 2017. A count of the attacks since then, undertaken by the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, shows that the insurgents have struck 229 times. A breakdown shows that, while only six raids were recorded in 2017, 60 attacks occurred in 2018, 18 in the first half of the year and 42 in the second half. The pace increased in 2019, with 69 attacks between January and June and 94 between July and 22 November.

The total number of victims is unknown, but it is thought that over 300 people have been killed. The raids have displaced tens of thousands of villagers. Data from the Cabo Delgado provincial government, cited by “Carta de Mocambique”, indicate that 68,000 people have abandoned their homes in the five most affected districts (Macomia, Mocimboa da Praia, Nangade, Palma and Muidumbe)

These internal refugees have fled to Pemba and other sizeable towns, and to islands off the Cabo Delgado coast.

Total and Gigajoule sign gas import agreement

The French oil and gas company Total and the South African Gigajoules group signed an agreement in Maputo on 27 November covering the import of the liquefied natural gas (LNG) that will be needed for a major gas-fired power station planned for Beluluane, on the outskirts of the Mozambican capital city Maputo.

Mozambique has the largest natural gas reserves in southern Africa – but the country’s own LNG factories are still several years away from the start of production.

Speaking to reporters after the ceremony, the Chief Executive Officer of the Matola Gas Company (MGC), Bruno Morgado, said the major benefit from the agreement will be “greater availability of gas, because the fields at Pande and Temane (in Inhambane province) will begin to decline in a more or less rapid manner”.

It is the Pande and Temane gas which is currently being exploited by the South African petrochemical giant Sasol. Most of the gas extracted by Sasol is sent by pipeline to its own chemical plants in the South African city of Secunda. But some is diverted to industries in Matola, and to gas-fired power stations in the southern region.

Morgado thought there will be a gap of seven or eight years before LNG from the Rovuma Basin will be fully available, “and in that period, it must be guaranteed that Mozambican industry has gas so that it can continue to develop”.

A further benefit from importing LNG will be the take-off of the Beluluane thermal power station. “This is a large scale project that will generate up to 2,000 megawatts of power. There wasn’t enough gas for this”, Morgado said.

The agreement was signed by the Chairperson of Gigajoule, Johan de Vos, and the representative of Total in Africa, Philip Olivier.

The project envisages a floating unit, anchored permanently in the port of Matola that will store and regasify the LNG. A start will be made on installing this unit in June 2020. It should be completed in 16 months. A pipeline will run from Matola port to the planned new power station in Beluluane, using the MGC’s existing infrastructure.

The investment will be more than US\$2.5 billion and the project will supply power to Botswana and Eswatini, as well as to Mozambique and South Africa. Mozambique would become a hub, selling gas on to island countries such as Madagascar and Mauritius.

As for where the LNG will come from, Morgado explained that “the origin is not specific, but it will come from Total’s international portfolio. The great advantage of working with Total as a shareholder and partner is that we shall manage to guarantee price stability”.

New chair of ENPCT takes office

Prime Minister Carlos Agostinho do Rosario on 28 November called for the National Company of Science and Technology Parks (ENPCT) to be expanded throughout the country.

Speaking at a ceremony in Maputo where he swore into office the new chairperson of the ENPCT, Juliao Cumbane, Rosario said the company should become a source of revenue to reduce its dependence on the state budget.

The Prime Minister said the ENPCT should design, build and operate Science and Technology Parks throughout the country. He added that land has been identified for two new parks, in the northern port city of Nacala, and at Estaquina, in the central province of Manica.

So far, however, there is only one Science and Technology Park, at Maluana, in Maputo province, covering an area of 950 hectares. Rosario called for its rehabilitation and said it should bank on modern and economically viable infrastructures. He urged Cumbane to opt for permanent dialogue with other institutions and to establish partnerships with national and foreign companies.

To ensure technological development, Rosario said, research and innovation are necessary. The company, he added, should also promote an entrepreneurial spirit, and linkages with the business sector, in order to confer commercial value on the products created in the Science and Technology Parks.

Cumbane pledged that he will work to meet the demands and expectations of the government for the strengthening of the Science and Technology Parks. He takes over at ENPCT from Flavia Zimba, whose term of office recently ended.

New water treatment station inaugurated

President Filipe Nyusi on 28 November inaugurated the water treatment station at Corumana, in Moamba district, some 70 kilometres northwest of Maputo, which is a key part of the government's plans to solve the water crisis that has been affecting Greater Maputo since 2014.

Maputo, the neighbouring city of Matola, and the districts of Boane and Marracuene have drawn their water supply from the pumping and treatment station on the Umbeluzi River. The flow of the Umbeluzi depends on the water stored in the reservoir behind the Pequenos Libombos dam, but over the past five years, there have

been times when the level of the water in the reservoir fell to below 20 per cent, forcing restrictions on the amount of water that could be pumped to greater Maputo.

The government has looked further north, to the Corumana dam, as an alternative source of water for Maputo. The new treatment station can handle 30,000 cubic metres of water a day, which will be pumped along a 95-kilometre mains pipeline to the water distribution centre in the Matola suburb of Machava. In addition to boosting the Greater Maputo water supply, the new station will also treat the drinking water for the nearby communities of Corumana itself, Moamba town, Sabie, Pesse and Tenga.

The treatment station will only start operating on 20 December after thorough cleaning of the piping.

At the ceremony, President Nyusi declared that the challenge of water supply and sanitation is one of the priorities of his governance since it is intrinsically linked to the development of human capital and the welfare of the population.

In recent weeks, President Nyusi has visited Cabo Delgado and Nampula in the north and the central provinces of Zambezia, Manica and Sofala, inaugurating new water systems in districts and municipalities. Now he intended to continue the same work in the rest of the provinces – Gaza and Inhambane in the south, Tete in the west and Niassa in the far north. He promised that “we will only rest when the last Mozambican citizen has water”.

All administrative posts to be electrified by 2024

All of Mozambique's 416 administrative posts are expected to be electrified by 2024 as a step towards universal access to electricity by 2030. This target was set by the government at a recent meeting called to assess the progress in expanding and deepening the electricity network by the publicly-owned electricity company, EDM, and the National Energy Fund (FUNAE).

The government is planning for electricity coverage to increase to 63 per cent of the population by 2024 from its current rate of 34 per cent. This will involve an average of 300,000 new connections per year fed either by EDM or through mini-grids supplied by solar power or mini-hydro plants.

Earlier this year, EDM completed the electrification of all 154 district capitals. The last districts to be electrified were Luabo, Mulevala and Derre, in Zambezia province, and Doa in Tete.

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