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GENDER EQUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT

BACKGROUND PAPER

MOZAMBIQUE COUNTRY CASE STUDY: GENDER EQUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT

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Gender Equality and Development in Mozambique

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1. Introduction

Despite an impressive economic growth over the past decades and the fact that poverty reduction and gender equality have been high on the political agenda in Mozambique, standard indicators such as GDP per capita (ranked 197 out of 210 countries), the Human Development Index (ranked 165 out of 169 countries) and the Gender Development Index (ranked 123 out of 130 countries) all reveal that Mozambicans remain poor in overall as well as in gender equality terms. During the past five years former reductions in the poverty rate have also come to an abrupt halt. Important progress for women has been made in areas such as political representation (ranked 61 out of 116 countries under the Gender Empowerment Measure), education and health, but the socio-economic position of women remains weak and shows large variations between different parts of the country in key areas such as employment, agricultural productivity, income, and sexual and other types of abuse.

This article will outline some of the main policies and interventions for economic development and gender equality in Mozambique since independence in 1975, and assess key implications for the positions of – and relations between – men and women in the country. A central lesson, reflected in the continued differences between geographical regions and rural and urban social formations, is the resilience of historically and culturally situated gender relations. The most profound changes in gender relations in Mozambique are found in the wake of deep structural change affecting the socio-economic context in which people find themselves, such as war, urbanisation, labour migration, processes of commodification of social relations,¹ and impoverishment.

The Mozambican experience also reveals the limitations of the liberal economic policies pursued by the country (which do not ‘trickle down’ to the very poorest as envisaged); the ineffectiveness of a weak state and judiciary (which cannot follow up policy decisions at the local level); and the failure of ‘mainstreaming’ gender policies and interventions (which have effectively pulverised responsibility and made gender issues a non-committal ‘cross-cutting issue’ for government and donors alike). To be able to design relevant policies and interventions for the improvement of socio-economic conditions and gender equality, understanding and taking account of the regional and local differences in the position of men and women will be absolutely essential.

In the following, we will first present a broad framework for the analysis of development and gender equality in Mozambique (Chapter 2). This will be followed by an outline of the historical and cultural basis for the differences in gender relations across the country (Chapter 3). In Chapter 4 the focus will be on gender-related policy, legislative reform and representation. Chapter 5 will assess Mozambique’s changing political economy over the past three decades and its gender implications. In Chapter 6, the articulation between political and

¹ The term ‘commodification of social relations’ was originally coined by Comaroff and Comaroff (1997) and refers to the increasing importance of money in social exchange. People without access to money easily become marginalised and excluded, as the poor cannot afford to have outstanding claims.

economic developments and the local socio-cultural order will be analysed by presenting the most recent data on the position of women in Mozambican society. In Chapter 7, we will sum up and conclude the analysis.

.2. Analytical Framework

Gender relations are essentially socially constituted, and will hence be perceived differently and have different expressions in different socio-cultural settings (Moore 1994, Ortner 2006). Moreover, while differences in material conditions of income and assets between men and women are important, gender relations also involve questions of voicelessness and powerlessness in relation to institutions of society and the state, vulnerability to adverse shocks, and the ability to cope with these through social relationships and legal institutions (Whitehead et al. 2006). Finally, the possibilities for women to make use of increased opportunities and thereby improve their lives depend on their position in the household and their relations with men, making it necessary to perceive gender as an issue of social relations of power rather than men and women as separate social entities.

For an overall analytical framework, we will look to Bourdieu's (1990, see also Ortner 2006) notion that the social and cultural order (or 'structures') have a powerful, even determining effect on human action and the shape of events, but also that human agency and the nature of ordinary life play a role. There are always sites of alternative practice and perspective available, for example within the hegemonic socio-cultural configurations of gender, and these may become the basis for resistance and transformation. Bourdieu's approach also highlights economic position and social asymmetry as the most relevant dimension of both structure and action, meaning that the poor and vulnerable are more constrained and have a more limited range of alternative options than the better off. This way, poverty has consequences of its own in the sense that it channels perspectives and acts in directions that tend to perpetuate the structural position of the poor ('chronic' poverty).

Moreover, Bourdieu emphasises the primacy of *relations*. Society does not consist of individuals, he maintains; rather, it expresses the sum of connections and relationships in which people find themselves. In line with this, gender relations at the level of households and individuals are affected by external political and economic processes reproducing particular sorts of gendered statuses and roles with attributes that are congruent with socially established patterns of power (Moore 1994, Ortner 2006). This means that significant changes in gender relations depend on structural transformation in access to employment and income; control over means of production and other economic assets; and the socio-cultural context in which gender relations are played out as the lived experiences of men and women.

There is a basis for arguing that patriarchal culture and masculine social order is exceptionally strong in Mozambique (Sheldon 2002; Arnfred 2004). Patriarchy can most usefully be seen as a *bargain* or the existence of a set of rules and scripts regulating gender relations to which both genders accommodate themselves and acquiesce (Kandiyoti 1988). Men in Mozambique control most positions of power and influence both nationally and locally: they are generally better off in terms of employment and income as well as education and health; they control land and other basic means of production in the important agricultural sector; and for most women the social costs of not living in a conjugal union with a man are still high. However, we will also show that there are differences in the position of men and women in the matrilineal north and patrilineal south; in rural and urban areas; and between poor and better-off households – and that there are examples of women seizing opportunities arising from structural change and new social space.

3. A Brief History of Gender

Historically, the agricultural and matrilineal Bantu populations in northern Mozambique, such as the *Macua* and the *Lomwe/Chuwabo*, have been influenced by waves of Swahili/Muslim, Portuguese and Indian immigrants and traders, and by the Portuguese colonisers when they finally gained a foothold in the region in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Newitt 1995). The northern part of the country is still predominantly rural and matrilineal, with the Muslim population living mainly along the coast and depending upon a combination of agriculture and fisheries, while the population inland consists primarily of small-scale agriculturalists and commercial producers. In general terms, the north remains more ‘traditional’ than the southern and central parts of the country in terms of economic adaptation, socio-cultural organisation and gender characteristics, including limited economic participation, high levels of early marriage and low levels of literacy among women.

In the southern parts of the country, the predominantly patrilineal *Tsonga* (or *Ronga*, *Tswa* and *Shangana* sub-groups) were originally agriculturalists, cattle-holders and fishers (Newitt 1995). The Portuguese established the colonial capital in present-day Maputo in 1887 and the region came to be heavily affected by its proximity to South Africa from the early 19th century. A large proportion of adult men left to work in the mines, leaving women and children behind to take care of agricultural production. With independence and the removal of migration control, the population of Maputo grew rapidly as men as well as women settled in the expanding poor neighbourhoods or *bairros*. The economic development and migration in the south led to a higher degree of ‘modernisation’ and change in social relationships than in the rest of the country, with the large proportion of female-headed households in the region implying relative independence, although the high HIV-AIDS prevalence among women revealed their continued vulnerability.

In the central provinces of Sofala, Tete and Manica, the historical influence on the patrilineal *Shona* ethno-linguistic groups of *Sena*, *Teve* and *Ndau* have come both from Muslim and Christian migrants and traders, with the Portuguese having a very direct impact through the establishment of private agricultural companies or *prazos* as part of colonial control (Newitt 1995). After independence in 1975, the downfall of former colonial industries hit the central provinces hard and they also became the centre of the brutal war between Frelimo and Renamo (Norstrom 1997). The central provinces demonstrate that there is no simple and clear-cut dichotomy between ‘modernity’ and ‘tradition’ in gender terms: juxtaposed with a relatively high level of political and economic participation, the tradition of bridewealth or *lobolo* is still very important in the region and has significant implications for women’s relations with men.

Common for all regions of Mozambique is what we will argue in the following pages is a hegemonic patriarchal or male-dominated culture, being the combined outcome of historical influences and contemporary political and economic developments (Sheldon 2002). Historically, political powerholders in Mozambique were all men, who ruled over independent chieftainships. The Councils of Elders were composed of village headmen and cult priests who, with royal families, propitiated the ancestors’ spirits to bring rain and ensure an orderly universe (Arnfred 2004). In terms of the socio-cultural order, the Bantu culture, both in the matrilineal north and the patrilineal central and southern parts of the country, was also dominated by men, even though the most important men in the north were the matrikin (mother’s father or oldest brother). The matrilineal system defined women and their children as the ‘property’ of her own family, as opposed to the rest of the country where a woman and her children belonged to her husband and his family, symbolically and practically segmented

through the system of *lobolo*. There were influential women at the level of clans, royal families and extended family units, but they did not have any formal position of power.

The socio-cultural influence of Muslim immigrants and Portuguese colonisers did not alter the gender relations in Mozambique in any significant way: if anything, male dominance was even more pronounced among these population groups (Newitt 1995). Muslim men were in a strong position by virtue of their religion and the right to have several wives asserted their position as heads of large and dependent family groups. The Koran and relevant *sharia laws* also advocated the responsibility of men for catering for their wives and children in economic terms, making it a source of shame not to be able to do this or to depend on women's income (Bonate n.d.). The Portuguese colonisers for their part came from a predominantly patriarchal Latin and Mediterranean culture, and studies show that settlers, who often had a military or religious background and mission, tended to push the 'virtues' of male supremacy in their new African context (Stoler 1995). Interesting exceptions to the dominance of patriarchy are the Zambezi *donas*, who were prominent and powerful heads of *prazos* (leased crown estates) and *muzungos*, who were heads of Afro-Portuguese families (Newitt 1995).

While it is important to understand how the precolonial and colonial past impinges on everyday social and cultural practices and is used instrumentally in people's coping strategies, history and culture relate to contemporary social conditions in a dynamic way (Bourdieu 1990). Polygamy may be seen as oppressive and instigate poverty in large families with few means, but may also relieve women of heavy burdens in agriculture where they cooperate well. Dowry or *lobolo* may be a vital source of income for poor families marrying their daughters away but also ties women to the patriarchal family. The current prevalence of early marriage among girls in the northern Mozambique is related to cultural links between puberty, sexual maturity and virginity at marriage but also reflects a situation where poor families marry their daughters away because they simply cannot afford otherwise. The fact that a large proportion of women in Mozambique have an 'accepting attitude' towards domestic violence (UNICEF 2011) is linked to gender inequalities and a 'culture of corporality' but also reflects conditions of poverty in which many women still depend on men.

Contemporary gender relations and the economic position of men and women in Mozambique can only be understood as the *articulation* between the historical and cultural complexity of gender relations discussed above on the one hand, and development policies and interventions to be discussed in the following pages on the other.

4. Gender Policies and Representation

At independence, the socialist Frelimo government had as its explicit policy to work towards gender equality and the empowerment of women in the ‘new Mozambique’ that it wanted to create by involving them in political and economic life (Abrahamson and Nilsson 1995). The creation of the Organisation of Mozambican Women (OMM) was seen as an important vehicle for such a policy. They *did* accomplish something, particularly in terms of women’s political representation and employment in state farms, cooperatives and industries, which are vividly described by Urdang (1989) in her account of ‘everyday heroes’ from the mid-1980s. However, for the large majority of Mozambican women the implications of the socialist policies for their daily lives in their communities and households and for their relations to men were limited. In fact, Frelimo’s political decisions relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women were never really intended to change basic relations of provisioning and influence at the private and domestic level (Sheldon 2002).

The attempted implementation of socialist and gender policies in the public domain were interrupted by the ‘civil’ war between Frelimo and the opposition party Renamo from 1984 to 1992, during which over a million people died and four million people became displaced (Nordstrom 1997). The war created a deep political divide between regions supporting government forces and those supporting the opposition that remains until today. It split households and strained relations between the predominantly male soldiers and civilian women and children, with the latter suffering the most from the atrocities committed (*ibid.*). The war is still an intrinsic part of the explanation for the large proportion of female-headed households in areas particularly affected and experiences from the war contribute to the high level of domestic violence in Mozambique (Baden 1997; WLSA 2008).

Following the war, the liberalisation of the economy through structural adjustment and other related policies advocated primarily by the IMF and the World Bank had a more direct impact on gender relations than the socialist policies attempted after independence (Hanlon and Smart 2006). Studies show that women were the first to be laid off when the public sector was trimmed and when ‘unprofitable’ industries were closed down (Sheldon 2002), and the closure of state farms, cooperatives and agricultural marketing boards forced primarily women back to subsistence production (Hanlon 1996). Among the best-known cases is the ‘liberalisation’ of Mozambique’s cashew-nut production, which forced factories largely employing women to close down (Hanlon 2000). In cities and towns, the sacking of a large number of public employees – again with women being particularly affected – struck at the very heart of an emerging middle-class and at household survival (Espling 1999).

Since the early 1990s, Mozambique has continued to follow a liberal line in economic policy, albeit with an increasing emphasis on an ‘enabling state’. At the same time, gender equality has been put more firmly on the political map and women’s political representation has improved (Table 1). The 1990 Constitution states that ‘[t]he State promotes, supports and values the development of women and encourages their growing role in society, in all spheres of political, economic and social activities in the country’. Mozambique is the signatory of all regional and international initiatives aimed at promoting equal rights for men and women.² Important political vehicles for gender equality have been the establishment of a separate

² These include The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) from 1993; the Solemn Declaration of Gender Equality in Africa from 1994; the Southern African Development Community’s Gender Declaration from 1997; and the Optional Protocol to the African Charter on Human Rights and Peoples’ Rights and the Rights of Women from 2005.

Ministry for Women and Social Affairs in 2000; the establishment of Gender Focal Points and Gender Units to promote gender equality in most public institutions; the approval of the Family Law of 2002 and the Law Against Domestic Violence of 2009; and relatively strong gender-based NGOs, headed by *Forum de Mulher*, in an otherwise weak civil society context (FDC 2007).

Table 1. *Women's Representation in Higher Political Office in Mozambique (Per Cent)*

Political Office	2004	2008	2010
Member of Parliament	28.0	38.2	39.2
Minister	15.3	25.9	28.5
Deputy Minister	16.3	31.5	19.0
Governor	0.0	18.1	27.2
Permanent Secretary	11.7	31.5	24.0
District Administrator	n.a	20.3	18.3 *
Heads of Administrative Posts	n.a	11.0	9.7 *

Source: MPD 2010b. * Based on data from Nampula and Gaza (Tvedten et al. 2009 and 2010).

The large number of aid organisations in Mozambique have also established 'gender equality and women's empowerment' as a cross-cutting policy, ostensibly affecting all their development and poverty reduction initiatives. A Donor Gender Group was created in 1998, and transformed into a Gender Coordination Group a few years later to involve donors, the government and civil society in Mozambique in a concerted effort to further mainstream gender issues (Collier 2006). However, a number of evaluations show that the idea of 'mainstreaming' gender has weakened responsibilities and made gender into a non-issue for the majority of government institutions as well as donors (Mikkelsen 2002; Aasen 2005). Institutions that have managed to make gender an integral part of their programmes and projects include the specialised agencies UNIFEM and UNFPA, and bilateral donors such as Canadian Cida (Cida 2006) and Swedish Sida (Sida 2005). Important Mozambican NGOs that continue to work for gender equality are the umbrella organisation Women's Forum (*Forum de Mulher*); the Women and Law in Southern Africa Research and Education Trust (WLSA); and Women's Law and Development (MULEIDE).

Despite the emphasis on women's empowerment from the Government and donors and high female representation in Parliament, key gender-related policies such as the Family Law (AdR 2004) and the Law Against Domestic Violence (AdR 2009) are not yet having significant impacts on gender relations and the position of women in Mozambique (UNICEF 2011). There are several reasons for this. At one level, there is no *necessary* link between women's representation and women-friendly policy decisions. It has, for example, been argued that female members of Parliament were no more eager than their male counterparts to push for the Law Against Domestic Violence because 'they were afraid it would jeopardise the family as an institution' (Arthur 2008). Moreover, law-makers in Mozambique have tended to follow feminist arguments and international conventions rather than relate actively to the situation in their own country. By making polygamy illegal with the new Family Law, for example, they have effectively made it impossible for the approximately 30 per cent of Mozambican women finding themselves in *de jure* or *de facto* polygamous relationships to take their husbands to court (see below; see also Rosário 2008).

At the same time, the representation of women is weaker at the lower levels of decision-making, where policies are to be implemented, even though there are regional variations. In line with the historical and socio-cultural traditions outlined above, women are better

represented at the formal political levels of Districts and Administrative Posts in the southern and central than in the northern parts of the country (Tvedten et al. 2009 and 2010).³ Concerted efforts have been made to enhance women's representation in the new Institutions for Community Participation and Consultation (IPCCs) by defining a minimum representation of either sex at 30 per cent, but preliminary information implies that the proportion of women in these institutions is considerably lower, particularly in the north (Forquilha and Orre 2011). And finally, largely hereditary traditional leaders (chiefs, headmen and sub-headmen) and religious institutions (be they Christian, Muslim or other denominations) are stubbornly male in their representation in all parts of the country, being at the same time the institutions with potentially the most effective influence on issues of gender relations (Sheldon 2002; Schuetze 2010).

Paradoxically, women are much more prominent at the very lowest levels of representation, where people are elected by their communities rather than appointed to office – even though there are regional differences also here (Tvedten et al. 2009 and 2010). In the city of Xai-Xai in the southern province of Gaza, women comprise more than 90 per cent of the heads of city quarters (*chefes de quarterão*) and neighbourhoods (*chefes de dez casas*), and in rural Gaza women dominate in community-based social institutions of education, health and water. In the northern province of Nampula women's representation at the community level is lower, but their political representation increases in urban contexts (Tvedten et al. 2009). Having said this, the problem is still that too little gender-related policy and legislative reform actually reach down to the local level and make an impact, including the Family Law and the Law Against Domestic Violence. There are cases of local NGOs and CBOs promoting awareness of such legal instruments and other gender issues in local communities, but their coverage is still limited and they often meet resistance in local (male-dominated) community courts.

The overall picture as regards gender-related policies and legislation in Mozambique, then, is that the instruments are largely in place but are still having limited impact on the real life of men and women. One problem is the very idea of 'mainstreaming', which seems to have weakened responsibilities and accountability in Government as well as among most donors. Moreover, when legislation with direct relevance for women is passed (such as the Family Law and the Law Against Domestic Violence) it tends to encounter socio-cultural realities and customary laws on the ground in the form of 'complex legal pluralities', which vary between different parts of the country and to which national legislation often does not relate. To have more of an impact, the policies and their accompanying interventions must be better communicated not only through the formal political and legal system but also through key opinion-makers in traditional, religious and other civil society institutions.

³ In the southern province of Gaza, 18 per cent of the District Administrators and 23 per cent of the Heads of Administrative Posts were women in 2009, with the equivalent figures for the northern province of Nampula being 14 and 16 per cent respectively (Tvedten et al. 2009, 2010).

5. The Economic Context

Mozambique has gone through three distinct economic periods since independence (Hanlon and Smart 2008; Clément and Peiris 2008). From 1975 to the mid-1980s, the country pursued a socialist economic policy with a centralised planning system and state ownership. While firmly based in Frelimo's own ideology, the policy was further reinforced by relations with the Eastern Block and the dearth of skilled personnel after the exodus of Portuguese colonisers. Suffering under the civil war and accompanied by forced 'villagisation' of the rural population and the establishment of state farms, the policy largely failed both to feed the population and to secure resources for the state (Hanlon and Smart 2008).

This was followed by a period of liberal economic policies in the form of a series of structural adjustment programmes from 1987 to the mid-1990s, meant to secure a quick transition from a planned to a market economy. The limited institutional basis for such a transition and the limited response of the rural and the urban population to market incentives inhibited pro-poor growth. At the same time *macroeconomic* developments did benefit from the peace dividend: largely unexploited assets such as mineral resources, agricultural land and rich fisheries waters, the rise of the new South Africa as a major trading partner, and a huge influx of foreign assistance all helped achieve macroeconomic stability and growth (Arndt et al. 2006)

From the mid-1990s, a process of 'accommodation' between the Government, the International Finance Institutions and Western European donors led to a combination of a liberal market-driven model for macroeconomic stability and growth and a state seen as a facilitator of private sector activity and responsible for social development (Hanlon and Smart 2008).⁴ Since 2000, efforts to combine macroeconomic stability and growth and poverty reduction have been made through the Government's Five Year Plans, accompanying annual Social and Economic Plans (PES), and a set of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PARPA). While the first PARPA I (2000-2005) emphasised the importance of macroeconomic stability and physical infrastructure as 'vehicles' for development and poverty reduction, PARPA II (2006-2010) emphasised the importance of the social sectors of education and health for enhancing the social capital of the poor and thereby enabling them to 'lift themselves out of poverty'.

The economic policies pursued have yielded macroeconomic successes in terms of real GDP growth (even though primarily driven by a few mega-projects); stability in the current account and fiscal deficit situation (helped by a large influx of development aid); and in curbing inflation (albeit with heavy government subsidies on key goods and services) (Table 2; see also EIU 2008, 2011). The mega-projects are first and foremost represented by large infrastructural investments: the Mozal aluminium plant outside Maputo, hydroelectric investment in the Cahora Bassa dam and the Benga coal project. Common to these is that they are either capital- rather than labour-intensive or dominated by traditional 'male' occupations in construction and transport (Castel-Branco and Nuno 2010). The formal labour market in the small-scale industry and service sector is also fiercely competitive in ways where women tend to lose out. Currently, 12 per cent of adult men and only one per cent of adult women in Mozambique have access to formal private-sector employment. The equivalent figures for the public sector are six and two per cent respectively (INE 2010).

⁴ As Renzio and Hanlon (2010) have pointed out, there were divisions within the Frelimo party, with one group rejecting the neo-liberal line and favouring a 'Nordic' model in which the state could have a more interventionist role.

Table 2. Macroeconomic Indicators for Mozambique 1990-2010 (Per Cent of GDP)

Item	1990	1994	1998	2002	2006	2009
GDP growth	1	6.8	10.8	8.8	8.7	6.3
Government expenditure	14	13	8	9	11	13
Current account balance	-17	-22	-10	-21	-11	-12
Trade in services	n.a.	23.8	16.1	21.8	16.1	17.1
Agriculture, value added	37	33	31	28	28	31
Industry, value added	18	15	22	23	26	24

World Bank dataset (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>) [Accessed 20.06.11]

Both Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers mentioned above made explicit references to gender, with the second recognising that the empowerment of women is a ‘decisive factor in endeavours to eradicate poverty’ (GdM 2005; see also PAP 2011). The more concrete gender policy measures advocated the importance of getting the economic ‘framework’ right, in the form of, for example, the establishment of gender focal units at central and provincial government levels, gender-sensitive budgeting, and revision of all legislation that is discriminatory towards women (Ibraimo 2006). However, this ‘framework’ has been only partially achieved: the political expression of the gender focal units at different levels is generally vague; the gender-sensitive budgeting is still in its infancy; and while there is an ongoing legal reform process it does not explicitly review laws that are discriminatory from a gender point of view (Namburete 2009).

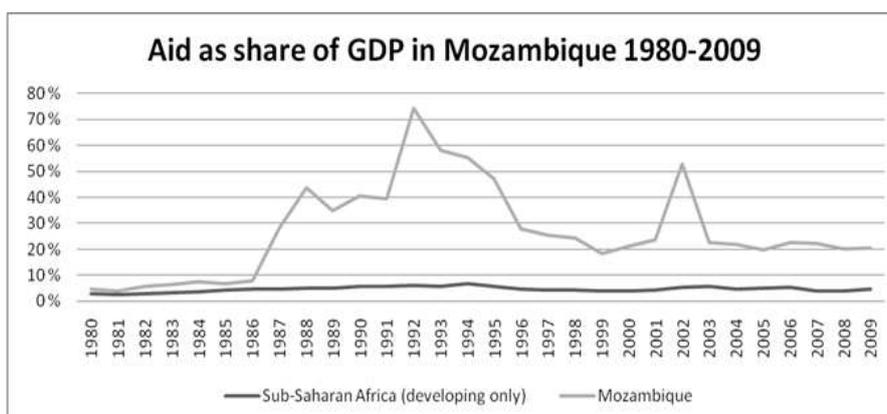
Sectors of particular importance for women, such as agriculture and informal trade, have hitherto largely been left to ‘the market’, with limited budget allocations and very few direct interventions aimed explicitly at women and female-headed households. Partial exceptions are interventions to support women through agricultural extension services and micro-credit schemes. The former has not been particularly successful, as female-headed households are characterised by having a very low rate of absorption of new agricultural technologies (INE 2010; see also Tarp 2000). Data are still limited from the District Local Investment Fund (OIL), which was initiated in 2006 and is the country’s most important micro-credit scheme, but preliminary information implies that women represent a clear minority of borrowers, even though they are best in honouring their loan obligations (RdM 2005; see also Orre and Forquilha 2009).

In addition to agriculture, the informal sector is most important for the well-being of the Mozambican population in both rural and urban areas (Sheldon 2003; Francisco and Paulo 2006). The sector is affected by macroeconomic developments such as exchange rates (due to the dominance of goods imported from South Africa) and consumer price inflation, but in recent years the Government’s policy of subsidising key commodities such as bread flour, petrol, water and energy has been particularly influential. While breaking with important principles in its liberal economic policy approach and being a drain on public finances, the Government has perceived itself to have no choice, as evidenced by the riots in the capital city Maputo following price increases in February 2008 and September 2010 respectively. Otherwise, the informal sector has largely been left to its own ‘destiny’, with the involvement and role of women showing considerable variations in different parts of the country and in rural and urban areas (see below).

Official Development Aid (ODA) has played an increasingly important part in the economic development of Mozambique, representing around 45 per cent of government expenditure and

20 per cent of GDP, with peaks at the end of the civil war in 1992 and during the devastating floods in 2000 (Figure 1). According to Arndt et al. (2006), aid has made an ‘unambiguous positive contribution’ in the conflict, post-conflict as well as in the reconstruction period, even though they also acknowledge that the large influx of aid has tended to tilt the government’s attention in the direction of donors rather than the population and has been a heavy burden on local administrations. Renzio and Hanlon (2010) further emphasise the last point by stating that Mozambique has become ‘aid subservient’ and has lost the ability to define an independent position for its own development, albeit with two important exceptions: it has refrained from privatising land for fear of popular resistance, and has rejected caps on public spending on salaries for teachers and nurses for fear of not filling positions (ibid.).

Figure 1.



Source: World Bank (2011 a, b)

In addition to the Policy Support Instrument (PSI) agreed with the IMF, the size and structure of development aid is negotiated between the Mozambican government and a group of 19 donors through the so-called Programme Aid Partnership (PAP) in a complex process of Annual and Mid-Term Reviews leading up to an agreement on sector priorities (PAP 2011). The Millennium Development Goals have also been an important common point of reference (MPD 2010). Gender issues have been followed up by the Gender Coordination Group between the Government and donors mentioned above and have largely been treated as a separate ‘entity’, with few visible results in the form of gender-sensitive allocations in the State Budget (Collier 2006). The most important exceptions are in the social sectors, such as progress in girls’ access to primary education, reduced rates of maternal mortality (although it still remains one of the highest in the world) and improved access to water, which affects women’s use of time (see below; see also INE 2010; MPD 2010).

The development policies and changing economic context outlined above have yielded a rather bewildering picture in terms of poverty reduction in Mozambique (INE 2004; 2010). A sharp drop in the consumption-based poverty rate between 1996/97 and 2002/03 from 69.4 to 54.1 per cent has been overtaken by an actual increase in poverty from 54.1 to 54.7 per cent between 2002/03 and 2008/09. There are also considerable differences in poverty reduction between the northern, central and southern regions, as well as between rural and urban areas (Table 3). The main explanations put forward by the Government have been a standstill in productivity growth in small-scale farms, unforeseeable weather conditions in 2008 and high prices for food and fuel (MPD 2010). This has been contested by a number of commentators, who argue that the main problem is a lack of pro-poor economic policies directed at employment creation in rural as well as in urban areas (Cunguara and Hanlon 2010; van den Boom 2011).

Table 3. Poverty Headcount by Region (Per Cent)

Year	1996/97	2002/03	2008/09	Difference 96/97-02/03	Difference 02/03-08/09
National	69.4	54.1	54.7	-15.3	+0.6
Urban	62.0	51.5	49.6	-10.5	-1.9
Rural	71.3	55.3	56.9	-16.0	+1.6
North	66.3	55.3	46.5	-11.0	-8.8
Centre	73.8	45.5	59.7	-28.3	+14.7
South	65.8	66.5	56.9	+0.7	-9.6

Source: MPD 2010

For the government and donors, this has instigated a third set of development and poverty reduction policies under the upcoming PARP⁵ III (2011-2014) (INE 2010). These focus primarily on increasing production in agriculture and fisheries, employment creation in cities and towns, and social development, including social protection measures. All are explicitly directed at poverty reduction and are potentially important for gender equality and the empowerment of women (Table 4).⁶ In the remaining parts of this paper, we will take a more explicit look at the implications of the political and economic developments outlined above for gender equality and women's empowerment in Mozambique as they articulate with socioeconomic and cultural conditions on the ground.

Table 4. State Budget Allocations by Sector 2011(Per Cent)

Sector /Investment Line	Internal	External	Total
Agriculture and Fisheries	26	33	31
Employment	5	3	3
Human and Social Development	6	30	23
Macro-Economic and Fiscal Management	4	14	11
Governance	3	2	2
Support Pillars	8	16	13
Investments in Districts	10	0	3
Investments in Other Objectives	37	18	24

Source: Ministry of Planning and Development

⁵ The final 'A' has been removed from the Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty (PARPA), as the government argues that it has already eradicated *absolute* poverty.

⁶ Having said this, gender does not figure very prominently in the PARP III document and it is not listed as one of the support pillars or cross-cutting issues.

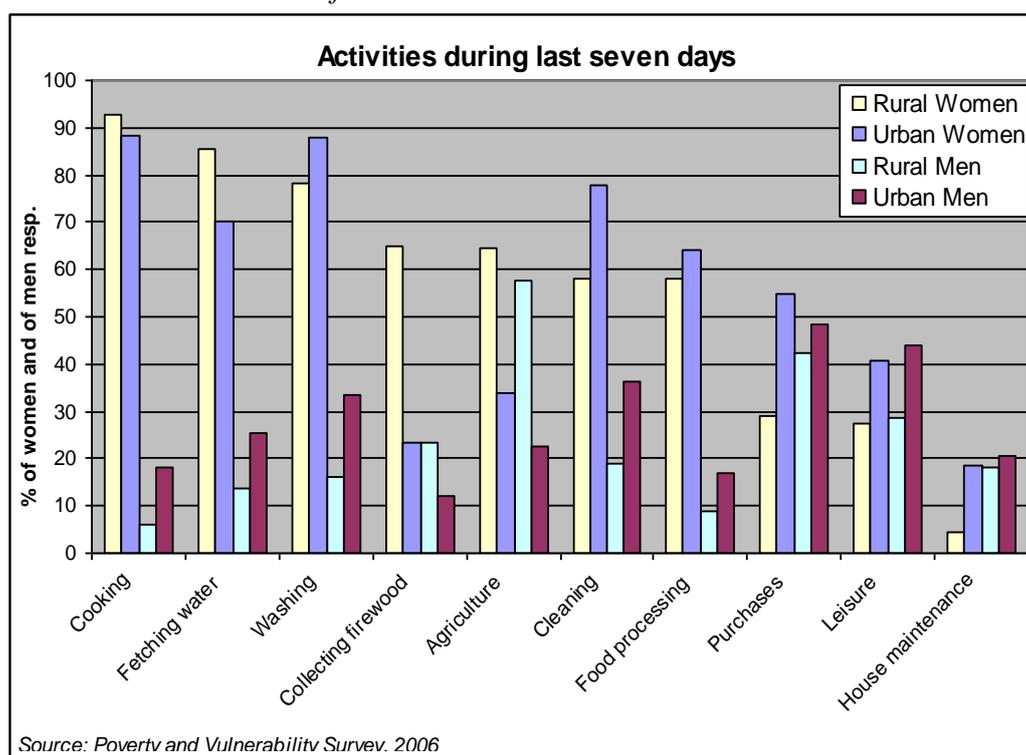
6. Gender Relations and the Position of Women

A recurring theme in the following pages is how the gender policies and economic developments outlined above have had varied impacts on gender relations and the position of women in different parts of Mozambique. As shown, ‘traditional’ culture and religion have the strongest hold on the situation of women in the northern provinces, while economic position is a more important determinant of the situation of women in the central and southern parts of the country. In all regions of Mozambique, however, men have more authority and power in the communities and within households than women and male-headed households are in a better economic position than female-headed households, even though we shall see that there are emerging signs of change in what has been perceived as a ‘feminisation of poverty’ (Collier 2006, UNICEF 2011).

6.1 Gender, Employment and Income

In probing into the gendering of employment, it may be useful to start with a reminder about the total workload of men and women, which has implications for their flexibility in responding to development policies and interventions (World Bank 2007; O’Laughlin 2007). As seen from Figure 2, women have a far heavier workload than men in the areas of agriculture, cooking, fetching water, collecting firewood, cleaning and food-processing, while men have a heavier workload than women in purchasing and house maintenance, reflecting Chant’s (2006) argument of a feminisation not only of poverty but also of responsibility and obligation (see also UNICEF 2011).

Figure 2: Household Division of Labour



Looking more particularly at the issue of employment, the proportion of economically active men and women in Mozambique is relatively equal, at 78.8 and 82.0 per cent respectively (Table 5). The high rate of female participation is a reflection of their *de facto* responsibility for the well-being of their households, which leaves no room for inactivity even if the returns to labour are low. As seen, women are predominantly occupied in the agricultural sector (89.3

per cent), with commerce (5.5 per cent) and services (3.3 per cent) being the main alternatives. Men have a larger variety of occupations, with 67.5 per cent in agriculture, 10 per cent in commerce, 7.6 per cent in services and 5.5 per cent in government.

Table 5. *Participation in the Occupied Labour Force by Sector and Gender (Per Cent)*

Indicator	By Sector		By Gender	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Agriculture	37.9	62.1	67.5	89.3
Mining	83.7	16.3	0.7	0.1
Manufacturing	90.3	9.7	1.6	0.1
Construction	96.9	3.1	4.7	0.1
Transportation	96.0	4.0	2.3	0.1
Commerce	59.3	40.7	10.0	5.5
Services	65.1	34.9	7.6	3.3
Government	75.3	24.7	5.5	1.5
Rate of participation	44.6	55.4	78.8	82.0

Source: World Bank 2007

Women not only dominate the agricultural sector but also make up the majority of its unskilled labour, with ensuing low returns to labour. As many as 95.3 per cent of the working women in Mozambique are unskilled labourers either in agriculture or in the informal economy. Women form a concomitantly small proportion of the skilled and highly skilled labour force, where wages usually are considerably higher. In line with this, 5.9 per cent of adult men are formally employed in government and 12.4 per cent in the private sector, with the equivalent figures for women being 1.9 and 0.9 per cent respectively (World Bank 2007).

To understand and relate to the economic situation of women in Mozambique, then, their position and role in agriculture and the informal economy stand out as central. First of all, women in agriculture have a workload that if not heavier in physical terms is still more time-consuming than for men (ADF 2005; INE 2010). In some regions, particularly in the south, where a large proportion of households are headed by women, they tend to do practically all relevant tasks (clearing fields, taking care of animals, sowing, weeding, harvesting etc.), while in other parts of the country, clearing the fields, preparing the ground for cultivation and tending livestock is usually the responsibility of men. Studies also show that women are much less likely than men to grow tradable crops because they concentrate on basic foods to feed their family (Tarp 2000; ADF 2005).

An important aspect of the ‘feminisation’ of agricultural production has been that men move out of agriculture and into the private sector and self-employment in non-agricultural sectors to a higher degree than women. The share of economically active men in agriculture had fallen to 38 per cent by 2007, with women making up 62 per cent (World Bank 2007). Women’s limited options to leave agriculture altogether relate to issues such as gender penalties in the labour market, socio-cultural pressure to stay in the village and take care of children, and the importance of agriculture for feeding children, which is often the ultimate responsibility of women. However, preliminary data from the National Household Survey 2010 show a decrease in the proportion of women in agriculture from 89.3 to 75.1 per cent and a concomitant increase in the proportion in commerce from 5.5 to 11.6 per cent, which may indicate a shift in women’s livelihood strategies (INE 2010).

Looking at regional variations, agriculture in the northern province of Nampula is more subsistence-oriented and women there are also most susceptible to socio-cultural and religious pressure not to work outside the domestic domain (Tvedten et al. 2009). In the southern province of Gaza, women do produce cash-crops but are effectively barred from large-scale commercial/irrigated production and cattle farming (Tvedten et al. 2010). At the same time, the proportion of female-headed urban households involved in agriculture is relatively high in both regions: studies from Nampula and Gaza (Tvedten et al. 2009, 2010) show that as many as 40 per cent of such households continue to be involved in agriculture in one way or another, either through urban-based production or by ‘splitting’ households between an urban and a rural unit on a temporary or semi-permanent basis.

While considerably less studied than the agricultural sector, the informal economy in retail, service and production is an important alternative source of subsistence and income for women, particularly in urban areas (Francisco and Paulo 2006). However, as part of a process of what we have called a ‘commodification of social relations’ (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997; see also Tvedten et al. 2009), women in rural areas also increasingly depend on cash income for basic necessities and to maintain vital social relationships. The poorest simply cannot afford to have outstanding claims over a long period of time and tend to avoid entering into relations with people they know will not be able to pay back.

In a context where 30 per cent of the Mozambican population live in towns and cities, the structural changes of urbanisation have opened up new space for men and women in the informal sector (Espling 1999; Costa 2007). It is a sector with a heavy concentration on retail sales of beverages, foodstuffs and cheap imported commodities, particularly among women, with the (usually more lucrative) informal service and production sectors being dominated by men (Rosário et al. 2008). The sector seems to be characterised by a limited diversification in terms of goods and relies heavily on food and commodities imported from South Africa.

Also in the informal sector, there are significant gender variations between the north and south. Entering informal markets in urban as well as rural Nampula, 90 per cent of the *comerciantes* are men, even though more women can be found trading in less public places in their *bairros* and from their backyards (Tvedten et al. 2009). In Gaza the situation is exactly the opposite: women completely dominate the informal markets and act as intermediaries both between South Africa and Mozambique (as so-called *muceiros*) and in the market-places themselves (Tvedten et al. 2010).

The strongest signs of change in gender relations thus appear to be in urban areas. This is reflected in Table 6 below, showing that women in male-headed households in cities and towns have a stronger influence on decisions than their rural counterparts. However, it is still necessary for the large majority of women both in rural and urban areas to consult the male heads of the families before decisions are made regarding central aspects of their lives such as education, health and (albeit to a lesser extent) food.

Table 6. Decision-Making Responsibility in Male-headed Households (Per Cent)

	Rural Areas			Urban Areas		
	Head (m)	Spouse (f)	Both	Head (m)	Spouse (f)	Both
Education	100.0	0.0	0.0	88.5	2.6	9.0
Health	96.2	0.0	3.8	78.2	10.3	11.5
Food	64.2	20.8	15.1	65.4	19.2	15.4

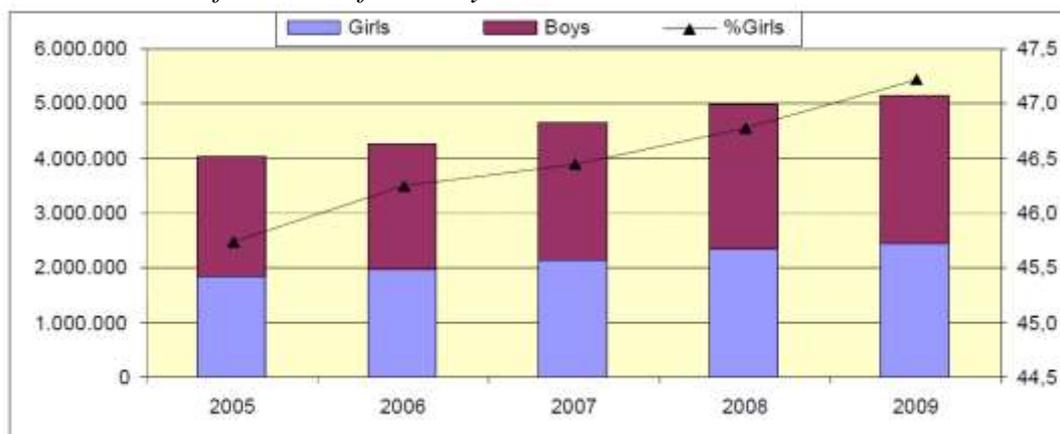
Source: World Bank (2007)

There are emerging signs of a more distinct change in urban areas following from the combined effect of unemployment and poverty among men, who are thereby losing the material basis for their superior position in households. In fact, women are sometimes defined as household heads in families where such men are present and the woman is the main breadwinner (Tvedten et al. 2009). There are also examples of women who establish female-headed households as they do not want to live with men who ‘spend our money and are all trouble’ (Paulo et al. 2007), even though the large majority of women still perceive marriage as an avenue both for economic security and for fulfilling socio-cultural obligations (see below).

6.2 Education

Enhanced levels of education, particularly among girls, has been seen as one of the main strategies for poverty reduction in Mozambique, on the assumption that this will ease access to employment and improve well-being in family households (GdM 2005). There have been considerable advances in primary school attendance among girls the past few years, leading to an attendance rate nearly equal to that of boys (Figure 3). Attendance rates at secondary school level have also shown a positive trend among girls, even though there are considerable differences in the ratio of boys and girls between urban (1) and rural (0.75) areas. The overall female illiteracy rate in Mozambique has dropped from 74.1 per cent in 1997 to 56.0 per cent in 2009. In addition to more girls in school, a main reason for this is the prevalence of women in adult literacy classes, where they represent 78 per cent of participants on a national basis (MPD 2010).

Figure 3. *Evolution of Number of Primary School Students and Girls’ Attendance*



Source: MPD 2010

Having said this, the focus on enrolment and ‘quantity’ has hitherto not been accompanied by equal progress in quality and completion rates (INE 2010; MPD 2010). Recent data show a substantial deterioration in achievements in both reading and mathematics in Mozambique (Makuwa 2010). There are particular educational challenges in the northern provinces, where female attendance is lowest and the drop-out rate highest, due to a stronger perception of boys as future breadwinners and practices of early marriage and high teenage pregnancy rates among girls (UNICEF 2011). The southern province of Gaza has the highest girl-boy ratio and female completion rate in primary school, as well as the highest girl-boy ratio in secondary school (MPD 2010). An important challenge at all levels is to increase the number of women teachers, both to act as role models for girls and to reduce the reported problem of sexual harassment by male teachers (UNICEF 2011). Women represent 35 per cent of the

teachers in EP1 and 27 per cent in EP2, with the proportion dropping to 16 per cent for ESG1 and 18 per cent for ESG2 (MEC 2009).

Even with success in increasing school attendance among girls it will still take years before women catch up with men, as indicated by the vast discrepancy in adult literacy rates between men and women. The literacy rate is particularly low (28.8 per cent in Zambezia) and the discrepancy between men and women particularly high in the northern provinces (MPD 2010). In Maputo City, where the educational opportunities have been better and more equal for some time, there is both a much smaller discrepancy in the literacy rate between men and women and a higher overall female literacy rate, which currently stands at 88.2 per cent (MPD 2010).

Education and access to information are key elements in gender equality and the empowerment of women. In addition to education *per se*, there is currently a much larger proportion of men than women who have access to mass media information, particularly in rural areas (Table 7). With the increasing importance of mass media for the extension of information of relevance for gender equality and the empowerment of women (ranging from the implications of the new Family Law to information on variations in market prices on agricultural products), this is a serious concern. There are also, as may be expected, significant differences between the poor and the better-off in terms of media access.

Table 7. *No Access to Mass Media (Newspaper, Radio, Television) (Per Cent)*

Indicator	Urban/Rural		Quintile	
	Urban	Rural	Poorest	Richest
No access to mass media – men	9.0	31.2	41.7	3.5
No access to mass media – women	29.2	62.6	79.0	16.8

Source: MISAU (2005)

6.3 Health

Poor health among women and children has also been a particular concern in Government and among donors. While concerted efforts by the Government have contributed to improvements in the maternal mortality rate (dropping from 1000 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 500 per 100,000 in 2007) and in the under-five mortality rate (dropping from 245 deaths per 1000 in 1997 to 138 per 1000 in 2008), nutrition indicators in Mozambique remain serious with few or no signs of improvements across surveys (Table 8, see also UNICEF 2011).

Table 8. *Health Indicators by Province (Per Cent)*

Province	Under-Five Mortality	Malnutrition (Stunting)
Cabo Delgado	180	55.6
Nampula	140	42.1
Niassa	123	47.0
Zambézia	205	47.3
Tete	174	45.6
Manica	154	39.0
Sofala	130	42.3
Inhambane	117	33.1
Gaza	167	33.6
Maputo	103	23.9
Maputo City	108	20.6

Source: MISAU 2005; MPD 2010

There are no significant differences between girls and boys in mortality and nutritional status and hence no significant socio-cultural variations in the way boys and girls are taken care of and fed, but the nutritional situation is more serious in the north than in the south and in rural than in urban areas. The high level of malnutrition is likely to be the outcome of poverty; rural traditions favouring working adults when scarce rations are distributed; inadequate knowledge about differences in the nutritional value of foodstuffs; and a strong association of urbanism and ‘modernity’ with white bread and other low-nutrition foodstuffs as ‘staple food’.

Perhaps the most serious health issue in Mozambique, both in overall terms and from a gender perspective, is the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In Mozambique, women between 20-24 years have a risk four times higher than men of the same age of being affected by HIV/AIDS (MISAU 2010; see also Agadjanian 2005). The higher incidence of female HIV-AIDS infection is the result of men’s sexual behaviour, unequal influence in terms of decision-making around the use of contraceptives, as well as unequal knowledge about HIV-AIDS prevention methods (Table 9). However, the considerable difference in infection rates between the north and the south also testifies to differences in sexual behaviour and the impact of ‘tradition’ and religion on sexual relations between men and women (see above).

Table 9. HIV-AIDS and Knowledge of Prevention Methods by Sex (Per Cent)

Province	HIV-AIDS Prevalence		Knowledge of Prevention Methods	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Cabo Delgado	9.2	9.5	12.4	18.7
Nampula	3.3	5.5	60.0	39.5
Niassa	4.3	3.3	66.6	37.1
Zambézia	8.9	15.3	38.3	25.5
Tete	5.7	8.0	89.3	63.0
Manica	14.8	15.6	87.0	59.4
Sofala	12.6	17.8	77.3	38.9
Inhambane	5.8	10.0	80.7	39.1
Gaza	16.8	29.9	87.4	69.7
Maputo	19.5	20.0	83.9	73.0
Maputo City	12.6	20.5	56.5	64.5

Sources: MISAU 2010, INE 2009.

The international literature tends to emphasise the stronger sense of ‘responsibility’ among women and female-headed households for allocating resources to health, food, education and other basic necessities than men and male-headed households (Quisumbing 2003). For Mozambique, there is still scant information on this issue. Sender and Oya (2007:8) report ‘surprisingly strong results concerning the relatively successful performance of Mozambican divorced and separated women in educating their children, and in narrowing the gaps between the education of their daughters and sons’, and Tvedten et al. (2009, 2010) show that female-headed households in both Nampula and Gaza tend to give higher priority to children’s education and show greater care-seeking behaviour than male-headed households. An additional indication of a stronger sense of social responsibility among women than men in Mozambique is the lower proportion of female- than male-headed households who experience hunger, despite the former’s higher rates of poverty (Table 10). This shows that targeting social policies and interventions towards women makes sense from a development as well as from a gender perspective.

Table 10. *Households Who Have Experienced Hunger the Last 12 Months (Per Cent)*

Indicator	Rural		Urban	
	All Terciles	Poorest Tercile	All Terciles	Poorest Tercile
Male-headed	54.3	64.6	48.3	61.3
Female-headed	48.1	69.8	33.6	55.1
All	52.5	67.0	43.2	58.6

Source: World Bank (2007)

6.4 Social Organisation

As argued in the introduction to this paper, the social organisation of households as key social units reflects the social and cultural order of society at large and restricts or extends the agency of individual men and women. A large majority of households in Mozambique has a married head (i.e. formally married or in cohabitation), with polygamous heads, divorced heads and widowed heads making up approximately 10 per cent each (Table 11). The proportion of single heads, i.e. women or (much more rarely) men who are not divorced or widowed and live alone with children or other dependants is very small at three per cent (INE 2010; Fox and van den Broeck 2005; see also Kabeer 2007).

Table 11. *Composition of Households (Per Cent)*

Head Characteristic	1996/97	2002/03	2008/09
Married head	69	65	63
Polygamous head*	10	11	12
Single head	5	2	3
Divorced head	7	11	10
Widowed head	9	10	12

Source: Fox and van den Broeck 2005 * See alternative figures below.

The available data give a poor basis for analysing the position and role of women within male-headed households, as most statistics use ‘the household’ as the unit of analysis without probing intra-household relations and distributions of resources (INE 2009, 2010). The international literature on southern Africa shows that the decision-making power in male-headed households rests heavily with the man and that the expenditure pattern leans equally heavily towards the male household head – often with the man not disclosing his earnings to the wife or other family members (Quisumbing 2003). Studies from Mozambique show that married women have a stronger bargaining position in the matrilineal north, where they can return to their original household and have custody over their children, than in the patrilineal central and southern parts of the country, where the payment of *lobolo* attaches them more firmly to the husband and his extended family (Arnaldo 2002; Tvedten et al. 2009 and 2010).

One indication of the position of women in male-headed households is the types of marriage arrangement. In general terms ‘living-together arrangements’ are less ‘committing’, as they are not formally or culturally grounded and do not involve the extended family in the same way as formal marriage arrangements.⁷ Men in informal relationships may feel a lower level of responsibility for the upkeep of their family, while women are in a better position to leave should the relationship not work. In this case, the national variations are primarily along rural-urban lines. In the northern province of Nampula, the proportion of informal marriage arrangements in rural and urban areas is 10 per cent and 34 per cent respectively (Tvedten et

⁷ One reason for this is the elevated costs of marriage with *lobolo*, increasingly elaborate and expensive weddings etc., and another is the fear of commitment linked to the AIDS pandemic (Rosário 2008).

al. 2009), and in the southern province of Gaza the equivalent figures are 39 per cent and 52 per cent (Tvedten et al. 2010).

A special characteristic of the social position of women in Mozambique is the large proportion of polygamous household units, even though data differ between the Ministry of Health at 18 per cent (MISAU 2005) and INE at 12 per cent (INE 2010).⁸ Equally relevant from the point of view of gender relations and the empowerment of women is the proportion of women who are part of polygamous household units, by definition a larger proportion than men. The available data show that as many as 31.3 per cent of all adult women in Mozambique are members of polygamous household units, ranging from 40.9 per cent in the southern province of Inhambane to 21.6 per cent in the northern province of Zambézia (MISAU 2005).

The reasons for the prevalence of polygamy differ between the different parts of the country, even though all socio-linguistic groups have a historical tradition of polygamy as a sign of wealth and prestige (Newitt 1995; Arnaldo 2002). In the southern provinces, where the prevalence is highest, tradition, dearth of men as a result of labour migration and oscillatory urban migration seem to have contributed to the importance of this marriage practice. In the northern provinces, the combination of tradition and the prevalence of Islam (which accepts polygamy) is central.

At the level of households and individuals polygamy may have negative consequences, not least for the second and third wives, to whom the husband often allocates less time and fewer resources. But the practice must also be understood with reference to the current economic and socio-cultural context of Mozambique (Rosário 2008). For poorer households depending on agriculture, a polygamous household implies better access to labour. And for many better-off men, having several wives still enhances prestige. In fact, polygamy is practised in all socio-economic groups and is on the increase, including within the best-off quintile (INE 2004 and 2010).

While polygamy is probably the most stigmatised form of household organisation among advocates of gender equality and the empowerment of women – as evidenced by its illegality in the new Family Law discussed above – it is just one of several alternative forms of social organisation. The prevalence of lovers (*amantes*) among Mozambican men and what may be termed ‘serial monogamy’, with marriages or short-term cohabitations following each other, is also well established (WLSA 2008). Moreover, a number of households seem to be ‘split’, with one part (usually the man with or without a lover) living in an urban area while the wife stays in the rural village with at least some of the children to practise agriculture. Unfortunately, the limited attention paid to urban-rural linkages in Mozambique makes it difficult to quantify the prevalence of such household organisation, but individual studies show that between 20-25 per cent of households are organised this way (Tvedten et al. 2009, 2010).

The increasing permeability of ‘complete’ households with a male head, a wife or wives and children is reflected in an increasing proportion of households being female-headed in Mozambique (Table 12). The Ministry of Health operates with a proportion of 26.4 per cent

⁸ The differences seem related to *de jure* polygamous households (where the polygamous relationship is based on customary law) and *de facto* polygamous households (which may also include permanent relations between lovers or *amantes*).

(MISAU 2005) and data from INE show an increase in the national average from 16.0 per cent in 2002/03 to 29.5 per cent in 2008/09 (INE 2004, 2010). The differences can partly be explained by disparities in definitions between *de jure* female-headed households (single mothers, divorced or widowed) and *de facto* (where a woman has the main economic and social responsibility and is perceived as the head by the other household members). There is hence uncertainty about the exact proportion of female-headed households in the country, but there is little doubt about their increasing prevalence.

Table 12. *Proportion of Female-Headed Households by Province (Per Cent)*

	National Household Survey (IAF) 2002/03	Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2005	National Household Survey (IOF) 2008/09
Cabo Delgado	17.4	21.5	18.3
Nampula	15.4	20.8	15.4
Niassa	12.6	21.6	16.3
Zambézia	14.3	21.4	17.1
Tete	14.4	23.2	14.3
Manica	11.0	23.0	13.9
Sofala	10.6	22.7	13.7
Inhambane	23.2	45.5	33.2
Gaza	24.9	53.6	40.5
Maputo	19.6	33.7	34.7
Maputo City	12.2	28.0	26.5
Total	16.0	26.4	29.5

Sources: MISAU (2005), INE (2004, 2010)

The proportion of female-headed households varies between the different regions. Generally, the northern provinces have the lowest proportion (Nampula 15.4 per cent) and the southern provinces have the highest (Gaza 40.5 per cent). In the south, the increasing prevalence of female-headed households is the outcome of deep structural changes as a result of male labour migration, urbanisation and social change, which have vested increasing responsibilities in women (Tvedten et al. 2009). In the north, the social costs for women heading household units in the ‘traditional’ socio-cultural context seem to be higher, and the economic opportunities to survive without an adult male in the household lower, than in the south (Osário 2001; see also Tvedten et al. 2010).

The large majority of female-headed households are headed by widows and divorcees, with a very low proportion of single mothers (Table 12; see also Chant 2003). Studies emphasise that divorcees and widows are among the poorest and most marginalised family units in Mozambique, where taking care of one's elders has traditionally been seen as a socio-cultural obligation (Arnaldo 2002; UNICEF 2011). One possible explanation for their marginalisation and social exclusion is that in a context of modernisation and commoditisation of social relationships, intra- and inter-family relations are increasingly determined by poverty and material well-being rather than traditional socio-cultural norms. Many poor families simply cannot afford to support old and unproductive family members such as old widows (Tvedten et al. 2009, 2010).

The low proportion of single-mother households in Mozambique is particularly noteworthy given the high rate of young girls who have sex at a very early age, and the concomitant high

number of young mothers (see below). One reason is the continued social costs associated with being a single mother in Mozambique and the related inclusion of such units into the single mother's original family, especially in the northern part of the country. Rosário (2008) claims that being a single mother in Mozambique is often associated with 'prostitution' and hence makes the women concerned vulnerable to abuse. Some single mothers also form parts of polygamous relationships, either formally through customary ceremonies or as 'publicly recognised' lovers or *namoradas* ('girlfriends'). In both cases, the woman may have a heavy responsibility for her own and her children's sustenance, and effectively be 'hidden' single-mother households (see below).⁹

Even so, there are indications of a change in the socio-cultural perception of women heading households in Mozambique, particularly in urban areas. There is an emerging trend of women in towns and cities being considered heads of their households even though a man is present, either because they are the main breadwinners or because they own the dwelling, which is a key asset in an urban context (Tvedten et al. 2009, 2010). Also, the proportion of self-proclaimed 'single mothers' is higher in urban than in rural areas, which may signal a change from the socio-cultural stigma traditionally attached to such a situation. Another sign of an emerging 'matrifocality' in household organisation is mothers, sisters and daughters living together without men because they prefer to do so both from an economic and a social point of view (Paulo et al. 2008).

6.5 Domestic Violence, Child Marriages and Sexual Abuse

One of the most disturbing aspects of Mozambican society, from a gender perspective, is the high incidence of domestic violence. Data show that 54 per cent of all women in Mozambique have been abused (UNICEF 2011; see also Arthur 2006, 2008; WLSA 2008). The high level of domestic violence seems to be related to a complex set of conditions that include a socio-cultural tradition of bringing up children 'by hand', experiences of violence from colonialism and war, and the increasing loss of status and social control by men, who use violence as a way to assert their masculinity. The practice of *lobolo* may also at least to some extent contribute to the use of violence as it symbolically transfers the woman into the property of the man and therefore legitimises the man's authority – be it physical or not – over the woman.

There is also an apparently widespread 'acceptance' of the use of violence among men and women alike, which shows the continued force of patriarchy as a socio-cultural phenomenon (Table 13). 54 per cent of women state that men have the right to beat them under certain circumstances, such as leaving the house without informing the husband or refusing sex. An attitude of 'acceptance' is more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas, and more prevalent among the poorest than among the better off as well as among those with the lowest educational levels (MISAU 2005). At the same time, however, while a certain use of force may be seen as acceptable, brutal violence with bodily harm is usually accepted neither by local communities nor by individual men and women. In fact, excessive physical violence is seen as an acceptable reason for leaving a male partner, even though many women will not be in an economic position to do so (Tvedten et al. 2007, 2010).

⁹ Yet another possible reason is the very conception of 'female-headedness': women who have children with a man with whom they have no contact and from whom they have never received economic support may still claim to be 'married', thereby enhancing their own and their children's social position.

Table 13. *Attitude towards Domestic Violence by Province and Gender (Per Cent)*

	Accepting Attitude Domestic Violence	
	Men	Women
Cabo Delgado	41.8	50.3
Nampula	40.2	62.0
Niassa	24.2	55.3
Zambézia	43.0	41.5
Tete	38.6	67.5
Manica	59.2	58.6
Sofala	53.9	47.1
Inhambane	38.7	68.5
Gaza	52.6	58.8
Maputo	23.7	57.3
Maputo City	40.1	30.5

Source: MISAU (2005)

Mozambique has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world (UNICEF 2011; see also Otoo-Oyortey and Sonita Pobi 2003). 18 per cent of Mozambican girls aged 20-24 are married before the age of 15 and 51 per cent before the age of 18, and the average age at first marriage among girls varies from 16 years in Nampula to 20 in Maputo City. Traditionally, early marriage was a way to form political or economic alliances between lineages and clans, and having young wives (young girls often became the second or third wife in a polygamous union) was a sign of wealth and prestige (Arnaldo 2002).

Today, girls in the poorest quintile of the population are more likely to marry early than girls from the better-off quintiles (UNICEF 2011). For many poor households, marrying away children is a strategy to reduce the pressure on their own household and acquire additional resources, either directly through *lobolo* or by having fewer mouths to feed and in expectation of future support from the husband (Bagnol and Ernesto 2003). Marrying young may have severe consequences for the development of children, who ‘lose’ part of their childhood in both social and psychological terms (Jensen and Thornton 2003), and married girls are much less likely than their unmarried peers to attend school and to get employment (UNDP 2001; UNICEF 2011).

The young girls who find themselves in the most difficult situation are those who become pregnant before they have entered a marital union. Not only do their children represent an additional burden for their own household, but they also reduce the chances of getting married in the future. As seen from Table 14, the proportion of girls who have had sex before the age of 15 is particularly high in the northern provinces, which are also the provinces with the most limited use of contraceptives and the highest proportion of child mothers. For women with one child it is still possible to find a husband, but with more than one it is practically impossible for a woman to find a husband willing to support both her and her children (Tvedten et al. 2009 and 2010).

There is, finally, widespread sexual abuse in Mozambique, particularly in schools (UNICEF 2011; see also WLSA 2008). According to the Ministry of Education (quoted in UNICEF 2011), 80 per cent of girls recognise that sexual abuse occurs in schools and communities, 70 per cent report that teachers use sexual intercourse as a condition for promotion between grades, and 50 per cent state that not only teachers abuse them but also boys in their peer group. At the same time, 22 per cent of the girls interviewed did not recognise forced

intercourse as abuse and as many as 35 per cent did not consider that verbal harassment constituted abuse.

Table 14. *Sex before Age 15 by Province and Gender (Per Cent)*

	Proportion of Men/Women Having Sex before Age 15	
	Men	Women
Cabo Delgado	42.7	45.0
Nampula	31.4	36.6
Niassa	33.4	45.5
Zambézia	19.1	35.2
Tete	31.1	16.7
Manica	14.2	24.9
Sofala	21.1	22.2
Inhambane	35.0	25.1
Gaza	40.5	21.3
Maputo	15.0	17.3
Maputo City	19.5	15.8

Source: MISAU (2005).

7. Conclusions

Our analysis has revealed the complexity of the political and economic developments in Mozambique over the past few decades, as well as the intricacy of the notion of gender and the position of men and women in the country. In terms of its political economy, Mozambique has gone through changing paradigms of socialism, neo-liberalism and current liberal economic policies with an emphasis on social development. The direct links between policies and interventions on the one hand and developments in gender relations and the position of men and women on the other are intricate, as they articulate with historically situated local socio-economic and cultural conditions that vary between different parts of the country and between rural and urban social formations.

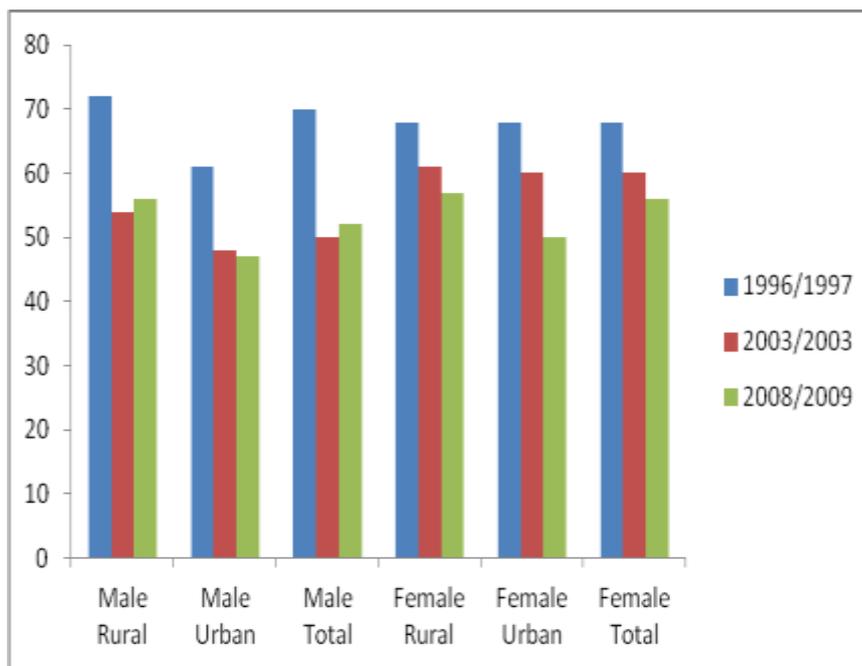
The point of departure for our analysis has been that Mozambique is a highly patriarchal society, with gender relations having been affected by deep structural change in the form of war, migration, urbanisation and a general ‘commodification’ of social relations. In this changing context, individual men and women have different room for agency and upward social mobility. In general terms we have argued that while access to and control over economic resources is a main constraint on the agency of women in the ‘modern’ southern parts of the country, the gender implications of culture and religion are more determinant factors in the more ‘traditional’ north, at the same time as urbanisation and urban life has opened up social space for women in both contexts.

The changing development paradigms and their accompanying policy interventions have had the most direct impact on the macroeconomic situation in Mozambique. At the same time the social sectors of education and health have seen improvements in terms of gender equality and equal opportunities; the economic situation for the large majority of Mozambicans depending on small-scale agriculture and the informal economy has largely been left to the ‘invisible hand’ of the market, with limited improvements for men as well as women; and legislation aimed at regulating gender relations has had little impact as it has not reached down to local villages and shantytowns.

The question of whether the past few decades of structural change and development interventions have improved the situation of women in Mozambique relative to that of men cannot easily be answered ‘yes’ or ‘no’. The social indicators presented in this paper – albeit improving – reveal that women are still inferior to men in terms of education, health and sexual and other forms of abuse, both as members of male-headed households and as individual women. A main challenge is that the state and the judiciary are not sufficiently strong to implement legal instruments such as the Family Law and the Law Against Domestic Violence at the local level, and that the laws themselves do not take regional variations in the position of women sufficiently into consideration.

In terms of poverty, women in Mozambique still have limited control over household resources and female-headed households are still poorer than their male-headed counterparts. However, to end this paper on a slightly optimistic note there are emerging signs of change that we have attributed to structural change: Data from the recent National Household Survey (INE 2010) confirm that female-headed households are experiencing a more consistent drop in poverty rate, particularly in urban areas, which is in line with our analysis of enhanced socio-economic space for women in cities and towns.

Figure 4. *Poverty Headline by Sex of Household Head and Urban-Rural Areas.*



Source: MPD 2011 (Pers. comm.)

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