**Committee: Commission on the Status of Women**

**Country: Republic of Mozambique**

Mozambique is in a period of immense transformation. The economy has been growing at an average annual rate of 7%, a rapid growth. However this coexists with high social inequalities, low human development indicators and a tense political situation.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Mozambique has not made significant progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals and other agreed internationally agreed development goals. The country has one of the lowest human and social development indicators in the world, ranking at 185 out of 187 countries with a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.327 in 2012.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Topic 1: Women in sustainability**

*"When women are empowered and can claim their rights and access to land, leadership, opportunities and choices, economies grow, food security is enhanced and prospects are improved for current and future generations****",*** *Michelle Bachelet - Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women.[[3]](#footnote-3)*

Poverty is still predominant in the Republic of Mozambique, especially in rural areas and the Republic of Mozambique is one of the poorest countries in the world. More than 70 per cent of households stricken by poverty are located in rural areas. Farming is their primary source of food and income, but agricultural productivity is low.[[4]](#footnote-4) Farmers and fishers generally make enough to meet their households’ basic food requirements, with a small surplus in lucky cases. Low incomes spur from both farming and fishing, and most of the rural population survives at a level of insecurity.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Employment in agriculture provides income for 80% of the Mozambican population. In a predominantly rural country such as Mozambique, women will traditionally look after the home/family, while men primarily find jobs outside the home. The female heads of households in rural areas are particularly held back, both in time for employment and in income sources. Alternative sources of income outside agriculture are few. In times of scarcity, poverty stricken rural citizen do not always have a dependent food source.[[6]](#footnote-6)

With such a large economic dependence on the environment, the impact of unsustainable practices, the damages of natural disasters, and the effects of climate change/ variability are having large consequences in communities’ ability to provide for themselves, women in particular. This is hindering on the nation’s efforts to reduce poverty. [[7]](#footnote-7)

Women in Mozambique (54% of the population) still face significant challenges in participating in decisions that affect their lives and their families. As the ones who feel the impacts of environmental degradation, climate change, and related disasters the strongest as well as playing a central role as the “stewards” of natural resources (being responsible for securing food, water, and other resources for their families), Mozambican women play an important role and their voice needs to be heard and recognized, as they have the potential to be key agents of change in building resilience against poverty and inequality in their communities.[[8]](#footnote-8)

While still ranked at the bottom of the United Nations’ Human Development Index, the Republic of Mozambique has produced one of the largest numbers of women in parliament positions in Africa [[9]](#footnote-9), consisting of 40% women in parliament.[[10]](#footnote-10) This is, and will continue to be beneficial for women in Mozambique, to have representation in leadership roles, allowing their voice to be heard.

**Topic 2: Eliminating gender based violence**

A report from the World Bank estimated that worldwide, violence against women was as present a fatality among women in the reproductive age as cancer, and a much bigger cause of disease than car accidents and malaria combined. Overall, sexual violence, a form of violence against women, has emerged as a global priority for health.[[11]](#footnote-11) Statistical data suggests that violence against women is present yet widespread in Mozambique where one survey showed that 54% of polled women had been subject to physical or sexual violence by a man in their lives. [[12]](#footnote-12) In the Republic of Mozambique, factors such as education play a large role in child marriage; girls with higher levels of schooling are less likely to get married as children. In Mozambique, 56% of girls with no education are married by 18, compared to 10 percent of girls with secondary schooling, and less than one percent of girls with higher education are married by age 18. Women who were married before age 18 also have a greater chance of being a victim of domestic violence. [[13]](#footnote-13) The Council of Ministers in Mozambique approved the National Strategy for the Prevention and Combating of Early Marriage (2015-2019) in December 2015, and officially launched it in April 2016.[[14]](#footnote-14) The plan consists of 8 main goals: a communication and social awareness campaign; improving girls’ access to education, availability of sexual and reproductive health services, family planning, sex education, as well as support for married girls, and, finally, reform of the legal framework. [[15]](#footnote-15) The Republic of Mozambique is also anticipating enormous aid help from Canada, coming from the Healthy Women and Girls Project in Mozambique. Canada will provide $12.8 million to PLAN Canada, from 2016 to 2020, to fund a project in Mozambique to support the health and rights of women and girls.[[16]](#footnote-16) The Government of Mozambique recognizes gender equality as an essential component of social and economic development.[[17]](#footnote-17) Currently in the Republic of Mozambique, there are a number of ministries and organizations that are involved with addressing and combatting violence against women in Mozambique. In 2002, Ministry of Women and Social Action elaborated an action plan to combat violence against women and children. The plan lays out measures to be implemented by the government and by civil society organizations in order to address the issue and to fight violence against women. MMAS is also leading a partnership with other government institutions/ civil society organizations to encourage the adoption of new legislation under which domestic violence will be considered a crime.[[18]](#footnote-18) Mozambique has also signed several conventions and international declarations that prohibit acts of violence against women. Examples are the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which was put into action in 1997; the Gender Declaration of the Head of States of SADC (1998), and the Protocol for the African Charter of the Human Rights which highlights Women's Human Rights in Africa (adopted at the African Union Summit in 2003).[[19]](#footnote-19)

**Topic 3: Women in Education/employment**

The government of the Republic of Mozambique has strong political commitment to gender equality and the goal to empower women is strong. The next steps for the Republic of Mozambique are to reduce the gender wage gap and education available to girls, as progress in reducing the gender gap remains uneven.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Within communities in the Republic of Mozambique, women are at a particular disadvantage. They have considerably less accessibility to education than men and, therefore, fewer skills, and potential for income.[[21]](#footnote-21) While 94 percent of girls in Mozambique enroll in primary school, over half drop out by the fifth grade, and 11 percent continue on to study at the secondary level, only 1 percent continuing into college. [[22]](#footnote-22) There are almost twice as many men in school than women; the discrepancy is more uneven in the government universities, where men outnumber women 3:1. [[23]](#footnote-23)

In 2006, the literacy rate for adult women in Mozambique was an estimated 36%, about half men’s rate. The 2007 literacy rate among young women was 48%: though low in international perspective, a strong advance for the Republic of Mozambique compared to a decade earlier.[[24]](#footnote-24) After a period of strong growth, the enrolment of Mozambican girls in primary education in 2006 reached 73%. Yet, with less than 15% girls’ enrolment in secondary education remains very low. [[25]](#footnote-25)

Across Industries, women’s employment in the Republic of Mozambique was highest in agriculture (62%). In all other industries women made up minorities, though their presence was substantial in commerce (41%) and services (35%). Male-dominated sectors were and remained mining (16%), manufacturing (nearly 10%), transport (4%), and construction (3%). [[26]](#footnote-26)

With 83% in 2007, the overall labour participation rate of the 15-64 of age is comparatively very high, and with 89% for women even higher. In 2002-03, about 160,000 women were in wage employment, about 18% of all employed in the formal sector. [[27]](#footnote-27)

The Republic of Mozambique also has legislation put in place to protect women from the drawbacks of pregnancy and maternity. “b. During the period of pregnancy and after childbirth, female employees shall be guaranteed the following rights: as of the third month of pregnancy, not to perform night work, exceptional work or overtime, nor be moved from her usual workplace, unless it is at her request or necessary for her health or the health of the child; c. for a maximum of one year, to interrupt daily work in order to breastfeed the child, for two periods of half an hour each, or for a single one hour period when work is performed in a single unbroken shift, with no loss of remuneration in either case; d. not to be dismissed, without just cause, during pregnancy or for one year after the birth.” [[28]](#footnote-28) The Republic of Mozambique is open to social change and is starting to have, but is lacking stronger framework to integrate women into the workforce to achieve equality.

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