

WILL MOZAMBIQUE HAVE MORE THAN 100 MILLION INHABITANTS ON THE CENTENARY OF ITS INDEPENDENCE?

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INTRODUCTION

In 2075, when the country celebrates the centenary of the independence of Mozambique, it could have more than 100 million inhabitants (Figure 1). This is the forecast of five of the nine variants of the last World Population Prospects Revision published in June 2017 by the United Nations (UN)(UN 2017). Is this good news or bad? It depends.

It depends on one's perception of the relationship between population and economy, culture and other institutions in society. On the one hand, for those who think that the fact that Mozambique is sparsely populated is one of the reasons for promoting rapid population growth, the expectation of passing the 100 million inhabitants barrier within six decades is reassuring. On the other hand, for those who believe that a better standard of living for society as a whole, not just a small minority, depends more on the quality than the quantity of children, then rapid demographic growth brings enormous problems and challenges.

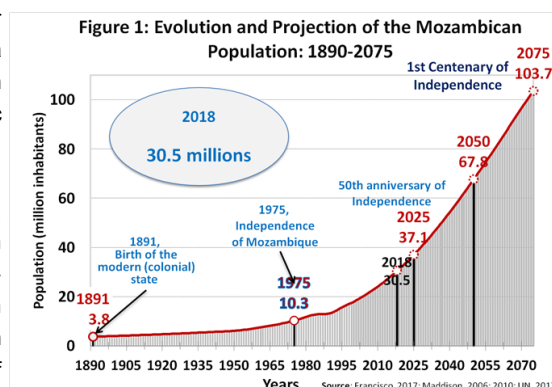
But before proceeding with this kind of debate, which can easily slip into a confrontation between beliefs and philosophical and ideological convictions, it is important to learn about and reflect on the range of possibilities presented by the main hypotheses, that are based on a combination of the components of population change – fertility, mortality and net migration (immigration less emigration). This is the focus of this text, and the discussion of whether maintaining high population growth rates is good news or bad will be left for another time.

1. Unprecedented growth rate

If the preliminary results of the 2017 Census are confirmed by the definitive data that the National Statistics Institute (INE) (2017) promised to publish on 30 June last, in the last decade the average annual growth rate was an unprecedented 3.5%. Since the birth of Mozambique, as a country and a modern state, with a nationally and internationally recognised territorial boundary, the Mozambican population has risen in both absolute and relative terms. But never before has the rate reached 3.5%. This is illustrated by the two graphs

presented in this text, which provide summary and complementary information on the absolute (Figure 1) and relative (Figure 2) evolution of the Mozambican population.

One part of Figure 1 shows the evolution of the population between 1891 and the present day, while the other part projects its growth up to 2075, based on the medium-variant of the UN 2017 Projection. The year 1891 is a crucial historical point of reference thanks to the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty of 11 June 1891 (Newitt 1997) that makes it possible to identify the number of inhabitants born or living in the territory at a given time. Until then, as in its neighbouring countries, Mozambique was nothing more than a rough draft of a country in gestation, the subject of numerous disputes.



Subsequently, more specifically 84 years after the country's borders were established, the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) launched an armed liberation struggle in the Mozambican territory under Portuguese colonial administration. When it proclaimed independence in 1975, FRELIMO not only ratified the borders fixed by the 1891 Treaty but also stated that Portuguese was the official language of the new sovereign state. Both decisions were crucial - politically, administratively and culturally - and also for shaping the composition, structure and size of the Mozambican population.

Mozambique has had regular population censuses every 10 years since 1950. The other essential sources of demographic data are vital records (birth, death, marriages, divorce and paternity, among others) estab-

lished in August 1930, through Legislative Diploma 254 that approved the Civil Registration Code. According to António Rita-Ferreira, an anthropologist and historian who studied and published extensively on Mozambican society during the 50 years he lived in Mozambique, from the 1930s onwards, local statistical records played an important role in reducing mortality. As Rita-Ferreira wrote in an email to the author of this text, two years before his death, commenting on IDeIAS N° 45 (Francisco 2012): "Few people know that it was mandatory for the results of these administrative censuses to be sent to the Directorate of Civil Administration Services in L. Marques". Rita-Ferreira also added, "There was thus a solid basis for checking the veracity of the statistical censuses held every 10 years".

Unfortunately, after independence the administrative registration of vital data was abandoned. Decree Law 21/76 revoked the 1930 Diploma, as if the registration system could not be freed from discriminatory aspects and made inclusive. So, in the words of the Anglo-Saxon proverb, it was decided to *throw the baby out with the bathwater*. The new Civil Registration Law 12/2004 only appeared in this 21st-century and its implementation has been slow. Consequently, many potential users have been denied an important source of demographic data; most citizens have been denied their fundamental right "to be counted". There are more and more censuses (population and electoral) that lack an independent basis for checking their degree of coverage and authenticity.

Despite the eventual limitations of the available data, using indirect and secondary data, today we know that in the 84 years between the birth of Mozambique and its independence the population increased 2.5 times. In the subsequent 43 years it increased 3.5 times. So, in absolute terms, over the last 127 years the population has multiplied more than eight times, with a particular characteristic shown in Figure 2.

Except for the temporary drop between 1980 and 1997, the population growth rate has constantly accelerated. However, according to the demographic transition principle, the tipping point will be reached eventually

and the current rate's trend will be reversed, moving towards a new population equilibrium.

It is still too early to know whether the 3.5% rate is the turning point for a new phase in the Mozambican demographic transition. If this is not the case, in the next decade it will approach 4%, putting Mozambique among the few countries with the highest growth rate: Oman (4.1%), Niger (3.8%), Guiné Equatorial (3.6%) (UN 2017).

2. Is exceeding 100 million in 2015 inevitable?

The future size of the Mozambican population will depend on the predominant combination of the above-mentioned three components of population change. For this reason, any discussion on the pros and cons of rapid demographic growth must start by taking into account the range of possible variants, such as those offered by the 2017 UN Population Prospects.

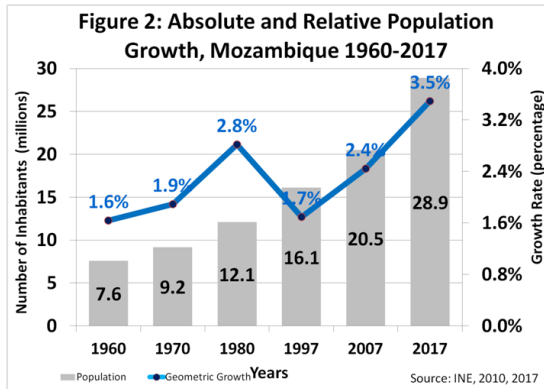
Table 1 summarises the population figures derived from the nine UN variants, focusing on four specific years. In addition to these variants there is also one INE (2010) variant covering the period 2007-2040. In order to compare the INE variant with the UN variants for the 2040-2075 period growth, a rate equal to the average rate in the 2030-40 decades was assumed.

Table 1 lists the 10 variants in two groups: less than and more than 100 million inhabitants in 2075. A closer point of reference has not been chosen, the 50th anniversary of independence, because there are only eight years until 2025, so there is minimal possibility of influencing the population size. But in the case of 2075, i.e. 57 years hence, there will be sufficient time to influence the future size of the population, for more or for less, depending on the choice made.

According to the projection methodology, most variants revolve around the effects of the various fertility hypotheses based on the other demographic parameters. Preparation of the average fertility hypothesis was the first step (UN 2017). Based on this, we can see that three variants predict populations of more than 100 million inhabitants in 2075: "medium fertility" (104 million); "high fertility" (125 million) and "constant-fertility" (207 million). Two other variants also indicate a population of more than 100 million: "zero-migration" (104 million) and "no change" (161 million).

So, those who believe that Mozambique must promote population growth in order to populate the country rapidly will find good reason for optimism in the five variants in the second part of Table 1. And not only because of the possibility of maintaining high fertility, inherited from an old demographic regime that is becoming increasingly unsustainable. The other variants, "zero-migration" and "no change", have no fewer sup-

porters among those who oppose an immigration policy aimed at accelerating economic and social development. An explicit and proactive immigration policy will easily awaken xenophobic ghosts, disguised as fear of recolonisation or "outsider" interference.



It must, however, be noted that those who defend rapid population growth face a major setback. Their approach is not politically correct, at least in the eyes of the international partners from whom the Government is trying to mobilise external savings that substitute, rather than complement, domestic savings. This setback has been circumvented, with more or less dexterity, by resorting to fair play, pretence and dissimulation.

Table 1: Population Forecast According to Nine Variants of the UN Projections and One by the INE, Mozambique, 2018-2075

2075 Projection		2018	2025	2050	2075
< 100 million inhabitants	Momentum	29	31	40	43
	Instant-replacement-fertility	29	31	42	50
	Constant-mortality	30	36	60	80
	Low fertility	30	36	62	85
	INE projection-2007-40+ext	28	33	57	98
>100 million inhabitants	Medium fertility	31	37	68	104
	Zero-migration	31	37	68	104
	High fertility	31	38	74	125
	No change	31	38	78	161
	Constant-fertility	31	38	88	207

Source: INE, 2010; UN, 2017

3. "The future belongs to God alone"?

Those who believe that rapid population growth will bring more costs than benefits also have five variants in the first part of Table 1 that indicate the various possibilities of avoiding exceeding the 100 million inhabitants threshold in 2075. But for this to happen, they will have to reject the idea that demography is fate; or that the number of children is a decision that should be left to the gods; or that the traditional pro-natalist culture must be preserved and ensure that the future remains hostage to the past.

Of the variants that forecast population levels of less than 100 million in 2075, two predict figures much less than this ("momentum" and "instant-replacement" variants). If they achieve the assumed containment and transformation, they will ensure that the population only grows to 43 and 50 million respectively. Two other variants ("constant-mortality" and "low fertility" indicate sizes in the order of 80 and 85 million respectively. Finally, the INE projection, the assumptions of which

differ little from the UN average variant, add little in terms of the national aggregate. The usefulness of the INE projection lies more in its disaggregation between urban and rural, or provincial and district levels. Despite the strong doubts and uncertainties about the quality and realism of the local data provided by INE in the absence of vital records, we must settle for the published projections.

4. Conclusion

Given what we know today about national and international population dynamics, it would not be unwise to admit that, sooner or later, the demographic growth rate of close to 3% a year will eventually reverse the current trend. However, before this happens, or when it does, it does not mean that population figures will also fall. On the contrary, the effect of inertia or the "demographic momentum" will continue to be felt throughout the 21st century.

Currently, some 850,000 are added to the population every year, the difference between 1.1 million births and almost 300 thousand deaths a year. But in 2050 there should be two million births a year. It is thus not impossible or unlikely that the 2075 celebration of the first centenary of Mozambique's independence will see more than 100 million Mozambicans. If this does not happen, it will be for various reasons, including the fact that in Mozambique too, as in the rest of the world, the deities ceased to be pro-natalist or at least as pro-natalist as today's defenders of rapid population growth.

5. References

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