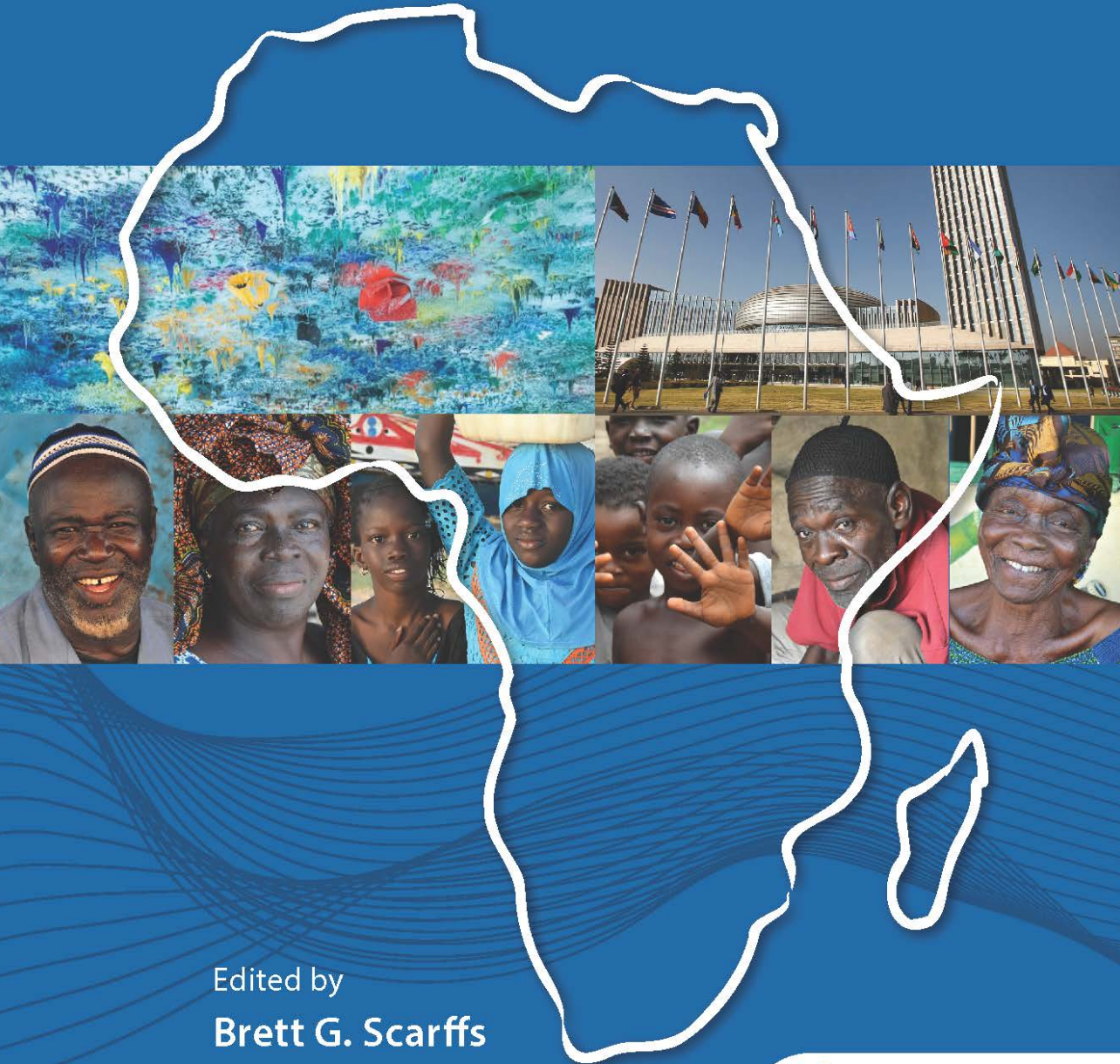


African Conceptions of Human Dignity



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6 CONCRETE CONCERN FOR BASIC HUMAN NEEDS

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INTRODUCTION: THE TORTUOUS ROAD TO HUMAN DIGNITY IN POST-COLONIAL MOZAMBIQUE

Mozambique obtained its independence from Portugal on 25 June, 1975, after ten years of armed liberation struggle. The popular mobilisation that supported the guerrilla war was based on a common understanding that the Portuguese colonial regime denied human dignity to Africans. Thus, the liberation struggle was regarded as the cornerstone for the restoration of human dignity. To materialise this goal, the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) combined guerrilla warfare with social services, particularly education, healthcare and food production. With independence, FRELIMO launched an ambitious programme aimed at fighting mass illiteracy, poor access to healthcare and lack of decent housing and jobs.²

The pages that follow present an overview of the history of human dignity in global perspective followed by a look at the assimilation of this concept in Mozambique. Thereafter, the chapter analyses the perceptions and experiences of human dignity in Mozambique according to statements of various segments of women and men. The chapter then takes a historical approach to looking at how the government and the people of Mozambique have perceived human dignity, taking that history up to the present day with a questionnaire and written narrative responses from Mozambicans surveyed for their views of the situation of human dignity in Mozambique today.³ The analysis takes into account government programmes

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- 2 On the literature describing the successes and failures of post-colonial Mozambique economic and social programmes see Fitzpatrick J. 1981. "The economy of Mozambique: Problems and prospects", *Third World Quarterly* 3(1):77-87; Isaacman B and Isaacman A. 1981. "A Socialist Legal System in the Making: Mozambique before and after Independence", *Comparative Studies* 2:281-323; Young T. 1988. "The Politics of Development in Angola and Mozambique", *Africa Affairs* 87(347):165-184; Weinstein JM. 2002. "Mozambique: A Fading U.N. Success Story", *Journal of Democracy* 13(1):141-156; Bowen ML. 2000. *The State against the Peasantry: Rural Struggles in Colonial and Postcolonial Mozambique*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia; Addison T and de Sousa C. 1999. "Mozambique Economic Reform and Reconstruction", in McGillivray M, Morrissey O (eds). *Evaluating Economic Liberalization. Case Studies in Economic Development*. Palgrave Macmillan, London; Hanlon J. 2003. *Peace without Profit: How the IMF Blocks Rebuilding in Mozambique*. Oxford: James Currey.
- 3 Data collection consisted of administering a printed version of questionnaire to 82 people comprising 47 male and 32 females. It took place in Maputo city in June 2023. The questionnaire included open-ended questions that allowed people to speak lengthily about their experiences. The interviewees received a written and oral explanation of the aims of the research and were asked to read or listen to an introductory note. The information collected during the interview was subject to content analysis and quantitative analysis.

aiming at empowering people to fulfil their human needs, as well as bringing to light Mozambican peoples' actual perceptions of human dignity. The contention of this chapter is that in its almost five decades of independence, Mozambique has placed human dignity on top of its priorities; however, the implementation of this political agenda has produced mixed results due to a combination of factors, including, cyclical military conflict, corruption and other factors. The conclusion reached is that for Mozambicans to enjoy human dignity, the concept must entitle the access to basic economic and social rights, especially in context not just of poverty, but of extreme poverty. The chapter ends with concluding remarks about an approach of human dignity based on the satisfaction of basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, gainful employment and the ability to care for oneself and one's family.

HUMAN DIGNITY IN GLOBAL HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

It is very difficult to find an all-encompassing definition of human dignity, because human dignity touches diverse dimensions of human life and it has different meanings in different fields. As observed, the meaning of human dignity is ambiguous and blurred and its meanings are socially constructed in accordance with particular cultural and historical contexts.⁴ In an analysis of the historical evolution of human dignity, human rights law scholar Christopher McCrudden traces the origin of dignity to Roman times, when it meant *dignitas hominis* in reference to status honour and respect. In Roman times, the concept evolved to dignity of human beings as simply human beings, contrasted with animals. In the Middle Ages, the concept was used to distinguish human beings from other creatures. The idea was that human beings were created in the image of God. McCrudden goes on to observe that during the Enlightenment period, dignity was associated with Immanuel Kant's understanding, which placed the individual as the end and not simply as the means to the end. In this regard, the idea of dignity was related to autonomy. The French Revolution did not make explicit reference to human dignity, but its focus on equality and liberty challenged the aristocratic privileges paving the way to its entrance to the legal arena after the Second World War.⁵ It embodied a communitarian emphasis of fulfilling basic needs, such as food and shelter. In the nineteenth century, Europe and Latin America extended the definition of dignity to the abolition of slavery. In the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church reinforced the idea of creation of human beings in the image of God as the basis of human dignity.

More recently, in the twentieth century, human dignity occupied an important role in social and political movements, becoming a central organizing concept in the civil rights movement in the United States and in the articulation of feminist demands for women's equality and rights. It also played major role in the origins of

4 Shultziner D. 2003. "Human Dignity – Functions and Meanings", *Global Jurist Topics* 3(3).

5 Lanneau, R. 2018. "Human Dignity in France", in Becchi P, Mathis K (eds). *Handbook of Human Dignity in Europe*. Cham: Springer, Cham.

biomedical ethics and research.⁶ It was in the twentieth century that human dignity entered profoundly into legal, constitutional and international legal discourse including international human rights and humanitarian law, along with regional treaties and national constitutions.⁷ As professor of international law and diplomacy Oscar Schachter points out, human dignity features in the Preamble of the Charter of the United Nations as an ideal.⁸ It is also included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 1), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Art. 13), in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Art. 10), Principle VII of the Helsinki Accords; and the American Convention on Human Rights (Art. 5).⁹

The consistent reference to human dignity in international legal discourse shows broad consensus that all humans are equal in their dignity. As human rights law scholar Michael Barilan observes, “even the evildoers who may deserve to die share in the dignity of man.”¹⁰ Therefore, human dignity is characterised by its universality, equality, primacy and irrevocability – after all, in the last respect; humans are always humans, even when dead. Human dignity is a moral property innate to all humans. All humans are equally expected to respect each other’s human dignity with a primacy normative power that a few fundamental moral values carry.¹¹

From the history of human dignity, it is clear that there are several conceptions of human dignity. However, it is important to observe that one cannot speak about human dignity without considering “basic things every human being requires in any conceptualisation of a life worth living such as nutrition, shelter, healthcare, education, interpersonal attention encompassing recognition and regard and similar necessities.”¹² Thus, human flourishing is at the heart of human dignity. Moreover,

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- 6 See Lanigan BT (ed). 2009. *Human Dignity in Bioethics*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.
 - 7 McCrudden C. 2008. “Human Dignity and Judicial Interpretation of Human Rights”, *The European Journal of International Law* 19(4):656-671.
 - 8 Schachter O. 1983. “Human Dignity as a Normative Concept”, *The American Journal of International Law* 77(4):849.
 - 9 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, G.A. res. 217A (III), U.N. Doc A/810 at 71 (1948); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, G.A. res. 2200A (XXI), 21 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 16) at 49, U.N. Doc. A/6316 (1966), 993 U.N.T.S. 3, *entered into force* Jan. 3, 1976. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, G.A. res. 2200A (XXI), 21 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 16) at 52, U.N. Doc. A/6316 (1966), 999 U.N.T.S. 171, *entered into force* Mar. 23, 1976; American Convention on Human Rights, O.A.S. Treaty Series No. 36, 1144 U.N.T.S. 123, *entered into force* July 18, 1978, *reprinted in* Basic Documents Pertaining to Human Rights in the Inter-American System, OEA/Ser.L.V/II.82 doc.6 rev.1 at 25 (1992); Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), *Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) : Final Act of Helsinki*, 1 August 1975
 - 10 Barilan YM. 2012. *Human Dignity, Human Rights and Responsibility: The New Language of Global Bioethics and Biolaw*. Cambridge MA: The MIT Press.
 - 11 Barilan, *Human Dignity, Human Rights and Responsibility*, 94.
 - 12 Barilan, *Human Dignity, Human Rights and Responsibility*, 131.

according to physician and medical ethicist Edmund D. Pellegrino, human dignity is grounded in lived experience.¹³ Seen this way, it is important to pay attention to people's perceptions of their dignity as conceived and experienced in everyday life.

MOZAMBIQUE IN THE WORLD OF HUMAN DIGNITY

The previous section explored the origins and meaning of human dignity in global and historical perspective. It highlighted the fluidity of the concept while recognising its universalistic character. Now it is time to focus on how human dignity is perceived and experienced in Mozambique. As member of global and regional organisations namely, the United Nations, African Union, Southern Africa Development Community, Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries, to mention but four, Mozambique is a signatory of international and regional conventions that bind it to respect human dignity.¹⁴ Among these conventions, it is important to highlight the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the African Charter of Human and People's Rights. In addition, Mozambique is signatory of other important internationally binding instruments, such as the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals, which are particularly concerned with the well-being of humans and their environments, ensuring that no one is left behind in the provision of basic services that, as argued in this chapter, constitute the cornerstone of human dignity.

The determination of Mozambique to respect human dignity is highlighted in the first Constitution of 1975. Human dignity is also present in the policies adopted by the new government of Mozambique towards the well-being of its citizens. The first Constitution of the then People's Republic of Mozambique incorporated in eleven articles the framework of principles and norms related to universal values of human dignity.¹⁵ These principles prevailed in the new Constitution of 1990 and 2004. The Constitution of 2004 relates human dignity to the right to economic and social progress (Art. 19), to freedom of expression and information (Art 48, no. 6) and to social relations (Art. 119, no. 3), including the right of free consent to marriage.¹⁶ Emerging from out of a historical legacy of being a one-party state that curtailed individual freedoms, in 2019, Mozambique introduced a new Penal Code,¹⁷ a new Code of Criminal Procedure,¹⁸ and a new Code of Penalty Enforcement.¹⁹

13 Pellegrino, ED. 2009. "The Lived Experience of Human Dignity" in Lanigan BT (eds). *Human Dignity and Bioethics*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 355-372.

14 African [Banjul] Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, adopted June 27, 1981, OAU Doc. CAB/LEG/67/3 rev. 5, 21 I.L.M. 58 (1982), *entered into force* Oct. 21, 1986.

15 *Constituição da República Popular de Moçambique*, 1978. Maputo: Instituto Nacional de Livro e Disco.

16 *Constituição da República de Moçambique*, 2004.

17 Government of Mozambique. Penal Code. Law N°24/2019 of December 24, 2019.

18 Government of Mozambique. Code of Criminal Procedure. Law N°25/2019 of December 26.

19 Government of Mozambique. Code of Penalty Enforcement. Law N°26/2019 of December 27.

These important legal instruments, introduced the principle that, whether free or imprisoned, a person must be conferred human dignity and respect for rights. Having argued that the Constitution of Mozambique is aligned with international legal discourse of human dignity, it is now time to look how human dignity is achieved in practice with a focus on the history of provision of social and economic rights in Mozambique and development of the capacity of people to fulfil their human needs and the one of others, including family and extended relatives.

HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT OF HUMAN DIGNITY IN MOZAMBIQUE

On 25 June 2025, Mozambique will celebrate the jubilee of its independence from Portugal. Unlike the majority of African countries, Mozambique obtained its independence through a ten-year guerrilla warfare, which caused the death of thousands of people and destruction of key social and economic infrastructure. Just one year after independence, in 1976, Mozambique fell into a sixteen-year war that costed over a million lives and exacerbated the destruction of social and economic infrastructures.²⁰ After an interregnum of 21 years of peace, stability and national reconciliation, in 2013, Mozambique relapsed into localised military violence,²¹ which was aggravated by the eruption of the ongoing extremist and terrorist attacks in the Northern Province of Cabo Delgado.²² In addition to these military conflicts, a combination of political miscalculations, incompetence, corruption and cyclical natural catastrophes have transformed Mozambique into a difficult place to enjoy human dignity.²³

Thus, any attempt to comprehend the respect for human dignity or to evaluate the government policies towards the provision of basic economic and social rights must take into consideration this historical background. This chapter argues that since independence, Mozambique has been struggling to ensure that all citizens enjoy their right to dignity amid long spells of military violence and natural disasters. However, despite these inhibiting factors, a close look at the major policies of the post-colonial government shows a complex picture of the situation of human dignity. While all global indicators of human development index place Mozambique among the least developed countries in the world (185 out of 191 countries),²⁴ with high

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- 20 Honwana A. 1997. "Healing for Peace: Traditional Healers and Post-War Reconstruction in Southern Mozambique", *Peace and Conflict* 3(3):293-305.
 - 21 Vines A. 2013. "Renamo's Rise and Decline: The Politics of Reintegration in Mozambique", *International Peacekeeping* 20(3):375-393; Pearce J. 2020. "History, legitimacy and Renamo's return to arms in central Mozambique", *Africa*, 90(4):774-795.
 - 22 Mourier-Genoud E. 2020. "The jihadi insurgency in Mozambique: origins, nature and beginning", *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 14(3):396-412.
 - 23 Hanlon, J. 2010. "Mozambique: 'the war ended 17 years ago, but we are still poor'", *Conflict, Security and Development* 10 (1):87.
 - 24 United Nations Development Programme. 2022. *Human Development Report 2021/22: Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World*. New York: UNDP.

numbers of illiteracy, poor healthcare services and an indecent standard of living, the historical evidence shows that in some respects, such as affordable education, healthcare and access to land, Mozambique has made significant progress towards human dignity.

Inspired by the revolutionary's ideals of the 1960s and 1970s, when Mozambique obtained its independence, it adopted a centralised economy. This policy was clearly stated in Article 9 of the Constitution of 1975.²⁵ In effect, the state took the responsibility of planning the economy while tolerating some private initiatives.²⁶ A landmark of the newly independent country development programme was the commitment to provide free education and healthcare to all citizens. With illiteracy above 90 per cent at the time of independence, Mozambique embarked into massive education programme that saw secondary school pupils teaching adults in their community.²⁷ Relatedly, thousands of young men and women were awarded scholarships to pursue their studies in countries such as Cuba, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Soviet Union and Bulgaria,²⁸ to mention but a few. Interestingly, one of the criteria for the provision of these scholarships was ensuring that all districts and localities of the country were represented. Despite the growing instability caused by war, in short period, Mozambique succeeded in reducing illiteracy rates. According to AfriMap and OSISA, by 1980, illiteracy rates had fallen to 70 per cent.²⁹ In the health sector, the new government embarked on massive campaigns of immunisation that cut the rate of infant mortality.³⁰ In fact, the government accorded the healthcare as the basic right of every citizen, effectively free to all.³¹ According to international relations theorist Dan O'Meara, "in 1981, the World Organisation proclaimed Mozambique's preventive healthcare system as a model for the Third World."³² The success of the newly independent Mozambique government on healthcare is well illustrated by the increase of healthcare facilities. As it has been

25 *Constituição da República Popular de Moçambique* (Maputo: Instituto Nacional de Livro e Disco, 1978), 20.

26 On the discussion of Mozambique's socialist orientation, see Cahen M. 2007. "Checks on Socialism in Mozambique – what check? What socialism?" *Review of African Political Economy* 20(57):46-59.

27 AfriMap and OSISA. 2012. *Mozambique: effective delivery of public services in the education sector*. Johannesburg: Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA).

28 Piepiorka A. 2020. "Exploring 'Socialist Solidarity' in Higher Education: East German Advisors in Post-Independence Mozambique (1975-1992)", in Matasci D, Jerónimo MB and Dorés HG (eds). *Education and Development in Colonial and Post-colonial Africa: Policies, Paradigms and Entanglements, 1890s-1980s*. Palgrave Macmillan, 289-321.

29 AfriMap and OSISA, *Mozambique*, 32-3.

30 O'Meara D. 1991. "The Collapse of Mozambican Socialism", *Transformation* (14):94.

31 Walt G and Cliff J. 1986. "The dynamics of health policies in Mozambique 1975-85", *Health Policy and Planning* 1(2):150.

32 O'Meara, "The Collapse of Mozambican Socialism", 82.

pointed out, shortly after independence, the National Health Service quickly expanded from 400 primary healthcare units to 1,200 between 1975 and 1982.³³

Under the constitution of 1975, the land became state property. As the Constitution states, “the land and natural resources situated in the soil and subsoil, in territorial waters and the continental platform of Mozambique are property of the State.”³⁴ The ownership of land by the state was reaffirmed in the Constitutions of 1990 and 2004. In fact, the current land law of 1997 maintained this principle and ensured the respect for traditional rights of land ownership.³⁵ Unlike neighbouring countries, namely Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia, Mozambicans have access to large extensions of land for agriculture and habitation. The access to land reduces the vulnerability of people to national and international economic shocks by ensuring that in years of good rains, people in the villages had food and shelter. It also allows those who migrate to cities to have a homeland to which they may return if things do not go well in the city.

The experience of welfare state was short-lived. As early as 1983, Mozambique plunged into deep economic crisis as consequence of economic miscalculations, lack of qualified people to run the state enterprise inherited from colonial era, severe drought and expansion of civil war in the countryside, cutting communication network between the major cities and the countryside.³⁶ Secretly, the government of Mozambique began negotiations with the West, paving the way to the adoption of a structural adjustment programme in 1987.³⁷ This programme came with strings attached in the form of structural economic and political reforms. The nationalisation of health, education and some private companies was reversed.³⁸ Industry that was managed by state agents, fell into hands of private entities who were generally members of the ruling party without experience in business. The immediate result of this type of privatisation was the downfall of Mozambican industry and mass dismissals of workers. As development economist Christopher Cramer observed, the new owners of enterprises were undercapitalised and considered workers as labour liabilities and they failed to honour pension and retrenchment payments.³⁹ In short, time, thousands of workers were unemployed, losing their source of income and other social benefits. To make things worse, the IMF and World Bank

33 Cliff J. 1998. “Reconstructing Health in Post-War Mozambique”, *Association of Concerned Africa Scholars Bulletin* 50/51:3.

34 República Popular de Moçambique. 1978. *Constituição da República Popular de Moçambique*. Maputo: Instituto Nacional do Livro e Discto, 19.

35 Government of Mozambique, Land Law19/97 of October 1.

36 Bowen ML. 1992. “Beyond Reform: Adjustment and Political Power in Contemporary Mozambique”, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 30(2):255-279.

37 Kyle S. 1991. “Economic Reform and Armed Conflict in Mozambique”, *World Development* 19(6):637-649.

38 Cliff J, Kanji N and Muller M. 1986. “Mozambique health holding the line”, *Review of Political Economy* 13(36):7; Decreto Lei No.5/75, Boletim da República (BR) 1a No.24.

39 Cramer C. 2001. “Privatization and Adjustment in Mozambique: A ‘Hospital Pass’?”, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27(1):100.

recommended massive cuts in social services by imposing quotas in the recruitment of state employees in key sectors responsible for human well-being.

The adoption of a new constitution in 1990, introducing multiparty democracy and a liberal economy, consolidated an abrupt change from the socialist experiment. Education and health sectors, which had contributed significantly to the provisions of services that dignified Mozambican people after independence, began to drift into commercialisation. Public schools and hospitals became synonymous with incompetence, unethical practices and poor service delivery. According to public health researchers Paulo Ferrinho and Carolina Omar under-the-desk charging and pilfering were very common among health professionals.⁴⁰ In public hospitals, patients were frequently maltreated by dissatisfied and underpaid employees. In the education sector, millions of Mozambicans could not afford placing their children in private schools. Consequently, the majority of Mozambicans saw a decline in the access of services that had previously brought them dignity.⁴¹

The realisation of the first democratic elections in 1994 and the ones that followed in 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019, created conditions to bring into debate the role of state in society. A close look at the major political parties' electoral manifestos shows a great concern for the role of the state in creating conditions that ensured people were dignified as humans.⁴² In the same period, benefiting from freedom of expression, people went to the streets in protest against the deterioration of the living conditions in the major urban centres.⁴³ It is important to observe that despite the abandonment of socialist dispensation, Article 1 of the 2004 Constitution defines Mozambique as state of social justice. This means that within the parameters of the liberal economy essential services such as education and health continue to be offered free for the majority of poor Mozambicans. However, taking the example of health sector, the majority of the poor take months or even years to access specialised healthcare because the system favours those who pay extra fee in special consultations that are legally allowed in public hospitals. As public health researcher Rene Loewenson has observed, despite being entitled to exemptions from paying fees, in practice, the poor households have found these difficult to claim.⁴⁴ Some studies estimate that the number of people going to hospital was reduced by fifty to eighty per cent from 1987 to 1988 during the first year of the structural adjustment plan.⁴⁵ Because of this, an unknown number of people died from diseases that could

40 Ferrinho P and Omar C. 2006. "The human resources for health situation in Mozambique", *Africa Region Human Development Working Paper Series 91*. Washington DC: World Bank.

41 See Beste J and Pfeiffer J. 2016. "Mozambique's Debt and the International Monetary Fund's Education and Health", *International Journal of Health Services* 46(2):366-381.

42 FRELIMO. *Manifesto Eleitoral 2019: Unidos, Fazemos Moçambique Desenvolver*. Maputo; RENAMO – UNIÃO ELEITORAL. 2004. *Por uma Mudança Tranquila*. Maputo.

43 Bowen, "Beyond Reform", 267.

44 Loewenson R. 1993. "Structural Adjustment and Health Policy in Africa", *International Journal of Health Services* 23(4):723.

45 Marshall J. 1990. "Structural adjustment and social policy in Mozambique", *Review of African Political Economy* 17(47):40.

have been cured if they had had the opportunity to be assisted timely. In schools, contrary to the initial policy of ensuring representation of all districts and localities in the provision of scholarships nationally and abroad, the introduction of a liberal economy brought admission exams to university and to scholarships. Because the majority of public schools have no adequate teaching conditions, the children of the poor became disadvantaged in comparison to the few minorities of political and economic elites who can afford quality education in private institutions.⁴⁶ This historical overview of the trajectory of Mozambique in the provision of basic economic and social rights that constitute the cornerstone for human dignity shows overall that the majority of Mozambicans witnessed the decline of the services that would have allowed them live with dignity.

PERCEPTIONS OF HUMAN DIGNITY IN MOZAMBIQUE

Beyond this historical perspective on human dignity, one can also get a good sense of the way that Mozambique has implemented policies towards well-being and human dignity, by considering the opinions on human dignity of different segments of Mozambican society. With this in mind, research for this chapter included interviews with Mozambicans from a number of walks of life.

Keeping in mind that human dignity entitles the provision of basic economic and social rights, this study began by asking if people had heard of the concept of human dignity. The overwhelming majority (91%) had heard of the concept of human dignity. People were asked to define human dignity in their own words. Their answers largely associated human dignity with rights and obligations. The following list presents the key ideas on human dignity, starting from those most frequently invoked. People associate human dignity with having minimum conditions of living; with respect, freedom, healthcare, employment, the right to constitute a family and to own a house; with provision of welfare by the state; with the right to life and mutual respect; with wellbeing, harmony and financial stability; with respect for the other; with the way someone positions themself in society; with being treated with respect just for the sake of being human; with acting with ethics and respecting social rules; with freedom of expression; with respect of human rights; with accessing education and employment; with the rational nature of humans; with human rights; with not stealing from the other; and with moral integrity of a person. These perceptions are grouped in two categories, namely, *fundamental economic and welfare rights* and *fundamental social rights*.

Fundamental economic and welfare rights

Under the constitution of Mozambique, the access to education, healthcare, housing, employment and food security is guaranteed to all citizens, irrespective of their race, ethnicity, place of birth and religion. This puts these rights in the category of

46 Mubai ME. 2021. "The Unintended Consequences of liberalization and austerity on higher education in Mozambique", *Africa* 91(9):602-19.

fundamental economic and welfare rights. To capture people's perceptions about these rights, participants in our study were asked whether they agreed with the definition of human dignity as access to education, healthcare, employment, decent housing, decent meals, fundamental freedoms, interpersonal respect and honour. More than 80% of Mozambicans, nearly the same between men and women, accepted this definition. In fact, their own definitions of human dignity overlapped with the definition of human dignity as something measured by the satisfaction of concrete needs such as the access to education, healthcare, employment, decent housing, decent or equilibrated meals, fundamental freedoms, interpersonal respect and honour. Considering the emphasis on human dignity as the access to social and economic services, it is worth noting that nearly all who responded the questionnaire had access to education. In the vast majority of cases, parents paid the interviewees' school fees while the state and spouses sponsored the remaining. It is important to observe that owing the socialist legacy, the tuition fees in Mozambican public institutions are subsidised by the state, making it possible even for families with modest income to afford sending their children to school.

As far as healthcare is concerned, only a quarter of the respondents claimed to have access to quality healthcare, including just under 15% of men and 40% of women. Likewise, only a quarter of the respondents claimed to have access to medical doctors when they needed, with 20% of male respondents claimed that they had access to medical consultation whenever they needed, compared to 37% of women. These statistics must be taken with a grain of salt because, on average, people said that waited for months and even years to access specialised treatment. As one woman said, "For people like me without money, it is difficult to have quality healthcare. I must follow long queues and at the end they will prescribe you a medication, which is not available in public hospitals pharmacies. If you want to see a specialist, it can take six months. People end up seeing their condition deteriorate or even die waiting for an appointment with a specialist."⁴⁷

Another parameter used to access the way people experience human dignity was access to housing. Among the interviewees, 57% of the interviewees own a house. Among the male interviewees, 43% responded that they owned a house, compared to 54% of the females. Among the males who do not own a house, just under a quarter are renting and two thirds live with their parents. On the other hand, among the women who do not own a house, only 19% are renting and 81% live in their parents' houses. It is important to note that the people who are living in their parents' houses are mainly between 20 to 30 years of age. This means that a growing number of people who were expecting to be living on their own are still dependent on their parents.

Employment is another indicator of human dignity. People were asked whether their employment was secure and whether their salary was enough to cover basic monthly needs (meals, transport, healthcare, education of children). Only fifty-two people answered this question comprising 35 males and 17 females. Amongst the

47 Interview with male consultant by M. Mubai, Maputo, 24 June 2023.

men, only a little more than half (54%) consider their employment secure. On the other hand, nearly two-thirds (65%) of women consider their employment secure. To the question of whether their salary was enough to cover basic monthly needs, only 50 of the 82 people included responded. Male respondents who considered that the salary covers basic needs were 36% compared to 24% of the women.

The study also accessed human dignity looking at the contribution of informal jobs. Among the 82 participants, 36% identified themselves as working in the informal sector and these were equally divided between men and women. When asked whether their income was enough to cover basic monthly expenses, just over a quarter of men responded that it was, but only one woman respondent employed in the informal sector reported adequate earnings. Finally, 21% of respondents, nearly two thirds of whom were men, identified themselves as unemployed and expressed disappointment with the state of their human dignity. Some went as far as to consider themselves useless to their family and society. There is a growing number of unemployed young graduates. Some join the informal sector, where they do activities that have nothing to do with their training. Thus, as far as the access to employment is concerned, data shows human dignity continues to be a mirage to a majority of people who participated in the study. The words of two interviewees capture well the sentiment of the people. One reported, "I am unemployed since 2018. I feel bad because I cannot solve my family's problems,"⁴⁸ and another added, "I am feeling bad. Our society makes bad judgements of unemployed people like me."⁴⁹

Food is another parameter used to access human dignity in this study. People were asked how many meals they have per day and whether they ate what they would like to eat. Overall, one male and one female respondent claimed to have one meal a day. Nearly one third of the men, but only 12% of the women have two meals a day. Between a quarter and a third of the men and one quarter of the women have three meals a day. When combined, both male and female respondents have more than two meals a day, 26 men (44%) and 42 women (52%) respectively. One female respondent was the only respondent who claimed to have four meals a day. Because the quality of food matters, the participants were asked whether they eat what they would like to eat. Between a quarter and a third of the participants, evenly divided between men and women said, they ate what they would like to eat, but nearly three quarters said that they did not eat what they would like to eat. These answers say a lot about the contribution of food to human dignity. It means that people are not happy with what they eat. Considering that many have expressed that their income was not sufficient to pay for basic needs, one understands that people are eating just to fight hunger and not for considerations of diet, health and enjoyment.

⁴⁸ Interview with unemployed man by M. Mubai, Maputo, 21 June 2023

⁴⁹ Interview with unemployed man by M. Mubai, Maputo, 24 June 2023.

Fundamental social rights

Fundamental social rights govern Mozambicans, including fundamental freedoms, respect, family and death. These rights are important, because they create an enabling environment for the realisation of human dignity. This understanding reveals that material and immaterial dimensions of human dignity are intertwined. In line with constitutional rights in Mozambique, the study measured the relationship between fundamental liberties and human dignity. People were asked whether, in their experience, they regarded themselves as free to express their thoughts without fear, to choose religion freely and to participate in political life without fear of interference. On freedom of expression, 20% of the men and 10% of the women acknowledged that have freedom of expression. On the other hand, nearly 40% of men and 30% of women think that they do not enjoy the freedom of expression. On freedom to practise religion, similar percentages of women and men, nearly 45%, claimed to have freedom to profess the religion of their choice. Only relatively small numbers of women (9%) and men (3%) claimed that they did not enjoy the freedom of religion. Finally, on the freedom to participate in political life without fear of interference, equal percentages – 11% of men and 11% of women – claimed to enjoy the freedom to participate in political life. However, 43% of men and 36% of women consider that they do not have freedom to participate in political life without interference. Overall, only 22% of people felt free to exercise political rights. These numbers are key for the measurement of how human dignity is perceived and experienced, because the sense of lack of freedoms prevents people from fully enjoying their rights, including political rights, which are key in defining human development agenda, thereby affecting people's enjoyment of human rights and, by extension, human dignity.

The study also asked whether people, as members of the Mozambican society, felt respected as individuals and human beings, a question to which 76% of people responded. Nearly 40% of men and 30% of women claimed to feel respected, while equal percentages of men and women, approximately 16% each, did not feel respected. The reasons behind the feeling of not being respected included violation of fundamental rights, social conditions, unemployment of qualified people, the abuses by the police, lack of respect for human rights, poor service delivery, being single woman and poverty, to mention but few.

As a final factor, keeping in mind that human dignity is part of the social and cultural fabric of society, the study asked if it was easy to constitute a family and whether an adult single person is treated with dignity in society. They were also asked whether marriage confers human dignity and if the dead are treated with dignity. On the first question, nearly identical percentages of Mozambican men and women, nearly 17% of each group, said that it was easy to constitute a family. However, 40% of men and nearly a quarter of women claimed that it was difficult to constitute a family. On the question of whether single adults are treated with dignity, nearly a quarter of men but just 5% of women answered yes, while nearly identical percentages of men and women, just over a third of each, answered no.

On the relationship between marriage and human dignity, seventy-seven people responded as follows, nearly half of men (47%) but just under a third of women (31%) thought that marriage confers human dignity. Nearly identical percentages of men and women, only about 11% of each group did not consider marriage a condition for human dignity. It is important to underline that the inability to marry in a society that regards marriage as a key element of dignity in the area of social and cultural rights is nearly as important a factor as employment is in the category of economic rights in determining human dignity.

Finally, on the relationship between the living and the dead and human dignity, more than a third of men (37%) and just under a quarter of women (24%) claimed that the dead are treated with human dignity. On the other hand, nearly identical percentages of men and women, close to 20% of each group, thought that the human dignity of the dead is not respected. Among the reasons human dignity of the dead is not respected, people mentioned the commodification of death, vandalisation of tombs, exhumation and mutilation of human bodies for ritualistic purposes and the abandonment of ceremonies in the memory of the dead. As one man said, "In this country there is no respect for the dead. Some people see death as business, others do not respect the cemeteries and they vandalise tombs, still coffins. There are also people who mutilate corpses for ritualist practice, particularly the bodies of people with albinism."⁵⁰ The link between the living and the dead is part of African society's beliefs. In African societies, the barrier between the living and the dead is liminal; thus, the way people treat or relate to the dead appears to play a significant role in consideration of human dignity. These data on the social and cultural dimensions of human dignity regarding death provide interesting information on the way human dignity is perceived.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the constitution of Mozambique and other relevant legal instruments consider human dignity as fundamental for the development of the country in various ways. In fact, the historical record shows that the government of Mozambique strove for human dignity despite operating within a context of prolonged war, inexperience, incompetence, corruption and abrupt political transformation. The abrupt transformations from the Marxist-Leninist socialist experience to liberalisation and multiparty democracy, derailed the dream of the founding fathers of the nation of building a society based on economic and social justice. As Mozambique approaches the celebration of the jubilee of national independence in 2025, ordinary Mozambicans are keen to access how they perceive and experience human dignity in everyday life. From the data collected, it appears that Mozambicans are aware of the right to be treated themselves and to treat others with dignity. They also associate human dignity with access to the fundamental economic, social and political rights set forth above.

50 Interview with male consultant by M. Mubai, Maputo, 22 June 2023.

The data showed that people have access to education, but they are gradually losing the benefits of education because of growing unemployment, particularly among young graduates and youth in general. When human dignity is measured through the access to healthcare, people do not experience it, because they have no access to quality healthcare due to declining service provision in public hospitals and low income, which prevent them from going to private hospitals. Decent meals are another parameter used to measure human dignity in this study. Overall, people claimed to have more than two meals a day. However, the fact that they are not happy with what they eat raises questions about human dignity.

Fundamental civil and political freedoms, such as freedom of speech, religion and political participation, are key indicators of human dignity. The results of this study show that the majority of Mozambicans surveyed do not feel free to speak their mind and to engage in politics. The only freedom they experience is freedom of worship. Considering that one of key elements for human development is freedom to express one's opinion on key issues, including the debate over laws and development programmes, the sense of lack of freedom curtails the right to human dignity. Because of the reported limited freedom, people feel disrespected by the ruling elites.

At the social and cultural level, the study showed that amid economic, political and social uncertainties, it has become difficult to build a family. This is very important observation, because the interviews also showed that a single adult does not enjoy full respect in the community or neighbourhood. Moreover, the fact that marriage is regarded as instrumental for human dignity relegates the majority of people out of this right. Finally, given the importance of faith and belief in both God and the ancestors in Mozambican society, the study analysed the relationship between the living and the dead in the context of human dignity. Overall, people consider that the dead are treated with dignity but when looked in detail, there are some preoccupations with the way people treat the dead. Specifically, cases of mutilation of corpses for rituals, vandalisation of tombs and "diabolisation" of traditional ceremonies to honour the dead are considered as menaces to human dignity.

This chapter departed from the principle that discussions of human dignity will be regarded as too theoretical and abstract if they do not include an emphasis on basic and fundamental economic and social rights. In fact, the chapter brought experiences that demonstrate that for Mozambicans, access to concrete social benefits including education, healthcare, housing and food is understood as enabling broad enjoyment of human dignity. Therefore, fundamental freedoms emanated from international, regional and national regulatory instruments only make sense if translated into concrete benefits including material, moral and spiritual.