

Collaboration in remote Mozambique



The facts

The Cahora Bassa dam on the Zambezi River is one of Mozambique's most important assets, supplying electricity not only to Mozambique but also to neighbouring countries. During its construction in the 1970s a very large minefield was laid on its southern side, to protect it from sabotage during the War of Independence. Local communities lost their land and many people were killed and maimed in subsequent years. The HALO Trust started work at the dam in 2009 and by May 2014 had completely cleared 17km of the minefield, destroying 26,642 mines in the process.

Opening access

The dam is in a remote part of Tete province. Access to the minefield and affected villages was a serious challenge due to steep mountain passes and lack of roads. To create access, HALO called for assistance from the communities and *Hydroeléctrica de Cahora Bassa* (HCB). HCB provided bulldozers, and communities provided labour in 'food for work schemes' devised by HALO in conjunction with the *World Food Program* (WFP). The combined effort between local communities, a commercial enterprise, the WFP and HALO allowed access to previously inaccessible areas. HALO could then deploy armoured machines to dig out mines from areas that were buried beyond the search depth of metal detectors.

Affected communities

Nhanchenje and Nhancole, with a combined population of approximately 1,580 inhabitants, are two of the main communities close to, and most affected by, the former minefield. The main economy is subsistence farming. The minefields' presence greatly reduced local people's ability to cultivate land and rear livestock. It placed animals and herders in danger of injury and death. As food security was already severely impacted by pests and cyclical droughts, there was an urgent need for mine clearance, as well as wider initiatives to support locals.



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Supporting the elderly and their communities

The elderly were of particular concern as they were deemed most vulnerable. In response to ongoing challenges, HALO began a collaborative project to support the elderly with the NGO [HelpAge International](#). The project sought to stimulate the local economy by promoting both agricultural and livestock activities. It aimed to increase productivity in areas recently cleared of landmines and help build an array of sustainable business initiatives, all with a long-term goal of improving incomes and enhancing food security for the local communities.

Results

Key priorities for the communities were goat re-stocking and measures to boost agriculture. 510 goats and 800kgs of seed were distributed to 60 of the most vulnerable people nominated during community meetings. Ploughs, tools and ox carts were purchased and seven wells were built. In addition, 200 trees were planted, kraals (animal pens) were built and credit schemes enabled new start-up businesses to produce bread, dry fish, chicken and traditional beer, as well as shops to supply the communities with staples such as salt, sugar and oil.

Following mine clearance, 14.5 hectares of previously unusable land were opened up for cultivation for the elderly and their communities. Improved capacity promoted trade with neighbouring communities.



Creating long-term stability

In addition to the input of cash for credit, tools, seeds and animals, the long-term sustainability of the project was reinforced by building local knowledge and skills to empower individuals to continue the initiatives. Training was provided in organising and managing social funds, animal welfare, basic sanitation and hygiene. Mixed age and gender committees were established to manage initiatives in the areas of water and sanitation, veterinary services, social assistance, health and credit.

These experiences learned were shared with the local communities of Chissua, Massecha, and Matungulu, and with the Department of Agriculture. Through HALO's mine clearance and the partnership with [HelpAge International](#), the elderly and their communities now have a foundation for improved economic and financial security. This reduces their vulnerability and enables them to escape the cycle of fear and poverty, which previously dominated their lives.

Following 22 years of work in Mozambique, HALO has cleared 171,000 mines (around 80% of the total) and 1,100 minefields. This has unlocked agricultural land, helped lift rural communities out of poverty and enabled the development of major infrastructure. Now the people of Mozambique can live safer lives, free from the fear of mines.



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