TERRAVIVA
Edition 1
SADC Summit of Heads of State and Governments
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Dreaming Big

Rail networks in Africa remain underdeveloped as only 10 percent of transport goes via rail. A train crossing the Namib Desert on its way from the Namibian port of Walvis Bay to the uranium - rich Erongo Region.
Credit: **Servaas van den Bosch/IPS**

By Jinty Jackson

MAPUTO - Mounds of sand and rubble are what are left of sections of Maputo's beachfront road as bulldozers, manned by Chinese construction workers, tear up the road that is being rebuilt. Southern Africa is under construction and the reminders are everywhere.

Amid the dust and earth-moving equipment, delegates from across the southern African region gathered in the Mozambican capital Jun. 27-28 at the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Infrastructure Investment meeting to try to galvanise the funding needed for an ambitious cross-border infrastructure network that will help make the region globally competitive.

Over the next 15 years SADC wants to set in motion an extensive revamp of existing infrastructure as well as building new logistics, including hydro-dams, power transmission lines, roads and railways, while boosting internet connectivity and broadband access across the region.

An estimated 64 billion dollars are urgently needed to fund the first phase of an "Infrastructure Master Plan" SADC adopted at a 2012 summit in Maputo and wants to start putting into motion. Over the next 15 years the total cost of infrastructure projects could run to 500 billion dollars.

"This number can be frightening, but if we do not invest now we will jeopardise our trade capacity," SADC secretary-general Tomaz Salomao admitted. "We have decided to do it now."

Poor infrastructure is seen as the biggest hurdle to economic growth across the region. Investors complain that weak infrastructure is one of the main pitfalls to operating in the region. In 2009, the World Bank estimated that the "infrastructure gap" cut two percent off national growth figures in the region per year.

How SADC will raise money to fund what is needed is the big question. Several countries have already set aside big amounts for infrastructure; South Africa committed 400 billion dollars in 2012. Regional integration is an obvious way to cut the cost of doing business for everyone.

For development financiers like the Development Bank of Southern Africa, the assurance that governments are prepared to work together on major cross-border projects is half the battle won.

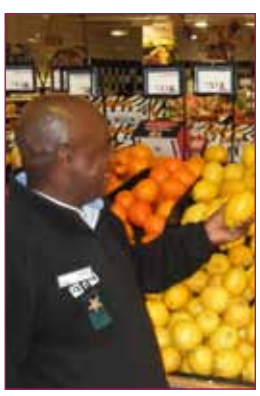
"For us as bankers that is a critical part. When we look at projects the first thing we look at is, does it have sponsor support from various governments? If you have that, you have ticked a major box," the general manager of the Development Bank of Southern Africa's Project Fund, Mohale Rakgate, told IPS.

The needs are enormous, and nowhere more so than in the power grid. The region lags behind West and East Africa in terms of access to electricity. Only 24 percent of its residents have access to electricity, and in rural areas the proportion is closer to five percent.

Malawi, Angola and Tanzania have yet to be connected to a common power pool, the Southern African Power Pool, set up by national electricity companies in 1995 to create a common market for power in the region. Bringing them in forms part of SADC's short-term infrastructure development goals.

Southern Africa is better placed than ever before to be able to finance its more ambitious dreams. Countries in the region have been remarkably resilient in the face of the global economic slow-down. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the region registered robust growth of 5.1 percent in 2012, which could accelerate to 5.4 percent this year.

Demand for the region's commodities is partially driving growth, according to the IMF. *Continued on page 3*



Is the Honeymoon Over for SADC and EU Trade?

By John Fraser

JOHANNESBURG - A dispute over South African lemon exports to the European Union was not the only sour note when leaders from both countries met for discussions on trade and other issues in Pretoria in July.

South African President Jacob Zuma met with José Manuel Barroso, president of the European Commission and European Council president Herman Van Rompuy on Jul. 18, to negotiate on streamlining the EU's relations with the entire Southern African Development Community (SADC) trade bloc.

Current negotiations will replace all existing agreements with SADC, including Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement (TDCA), with an over-arching Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

However, international relations consultant John Mare, who was a delegate at the SA-EU Business Forum, suggested that a new atmosphere has become apparent.

"I think things have become much more real for both sides, and that serious damage to EU-SA and EU-African trade, and supporting political relations, are on the verge of occurring - at an inopportune time for both sides," Mare told IPS.

> "The long-term relationships need to be built on fundamentals that are mutually beneficial."

Gert Gouws, the chief financial officer of South Africa's government-owned Industrial Development Corporation, who was a panellist at the Business Forum, told IPS he is "optimistic we will get a new agreement with the EU."

"Honeymoons, generally, do not last forever," he added.

"Long-term relationships need to be built on fundamentals that are mutually beneficial. There are many discussions taking place on a bilateral basis, and there are still interests by European business entities to invest in our region, in areas such as renewable energy, which will be of importance for years to come."

It became clear in the run up to the Summit that there was irritation on both the South African and the EU side at the current relationship.

South Africa's Trade and Industry Minister Rob Davies and his chief trade negotiator Xavier Carim hit out at a decision by the EU to impose a deadline of October 2014 for the implementation of the new EPA with SADC, suggesting that if this cannot be achieved some of South Africa's neighbours might find that existing preferential access for their exports to Europe will expire, without any new regime being implemented.

Davies suggested this might affect countries such as Namibia, Swaziland and Botswana in "brutal ways, with all kinds of employment and socio economic consequences."

EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht stressed that the European negotiators are under pressure from their farming lobby at a time when the EU's economy remains depressed.

He suggested that the EU already gives better access to South African exports than is granted by South Africa to EU imports.

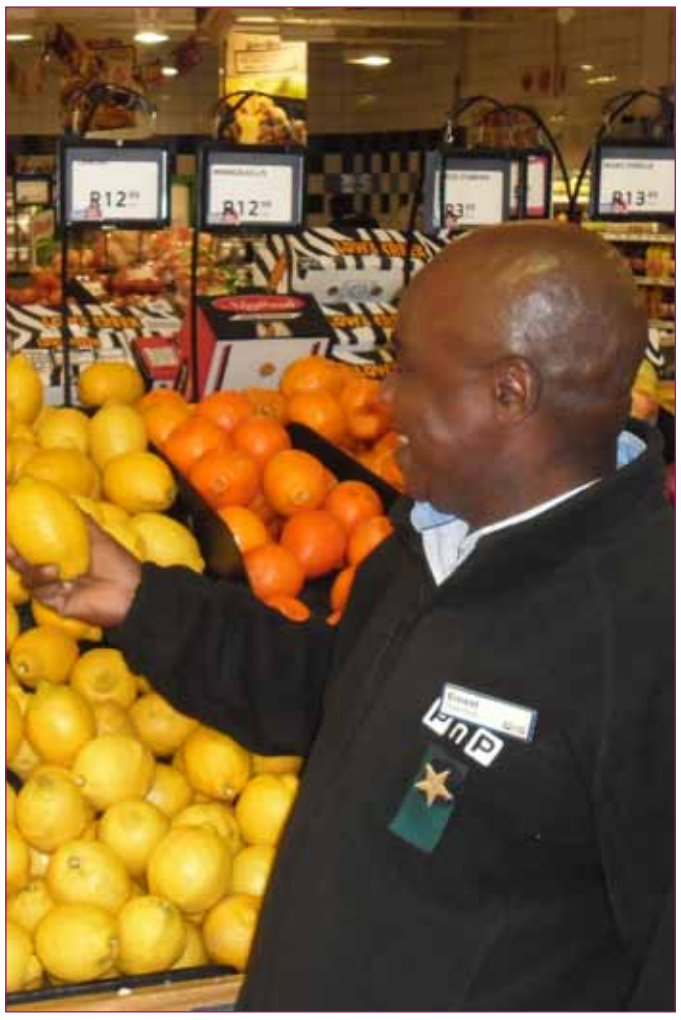
De Gucht warned that South Africa should not take it for granted that Europe will continue to make concessions unless its own interests are respected, and that also applies to investment - with the EU the source of 88 percent of past foreign direct investment in South Africa.

Mare said that he is optimistic that despite the rhetoric, "the EU is more willing to reach compromise on a mutually acceptable result, establishing a new trade regime."

"We are the largest trade partner of South Africa, and we plan to stay so," said Barroso."We see great potential in the relationship between the EU and South Africa."

And Zuma agreed: "We value this strategic partnership immensely."

The summit spotlight has now dimmed and trade negotiations between the EU and the SADC nations will continue in more discreet sessions.



A staff member inspects lemons at a Pick n Pay supermarket in Pretoria, South Africa. European Union concerns about South Africa's lemon exports have soured trade relations between the European bloc and South Africa.
Credit: John Fraser/IPS

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT ... A cornerstone of Southern Africa's development will be improved production capacity through innovative infrastructure.
Credit: Kristin Palitza/IPS

TERRAVIVA

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Rêver gros

Mais qui financera les projets d'infrastructure?

By Jinty Jackson

MAPUTO-Des monticules de sable et de gravats sont ce qui reste des sections de la route en bord de mer à Maputo, puisque des bulldozers, maniés par des travailleurs chinois, rasent la route qui est en train d'être reconstruite. L'Afrique australe est en construction et les signes sont partout.

Au milieu de la poussière et des engins qui enlèvent le sol, des délégués venus de toute la région d'Afrique australe se sont réunis à Maputo, la capitale du Mozambique du 27 au 28 juin, lors de la rencontre de la Communauté de développement d'Afrique australe (SADC) sur l'investissement dans les infrastructures.

Ils voulaient mobiliser le financement nécessaire pour un ambitieux réseau d'infrastructures transfrontalier qui permettra de rendre la région compétitive au niveau mondial.

Au cours des 15 prochaines années, la SADC veut lancer une vaste remise en état des infrastructures existantes ainsi que la construction de nouvelles logistiques, notamment des barrages hydroélectriques, des lignes de transport d'électricité, des routes et des chemins de fer, tout en renforçant la connectivité Internet et l'accès à une connexion à haut débit dans la région.

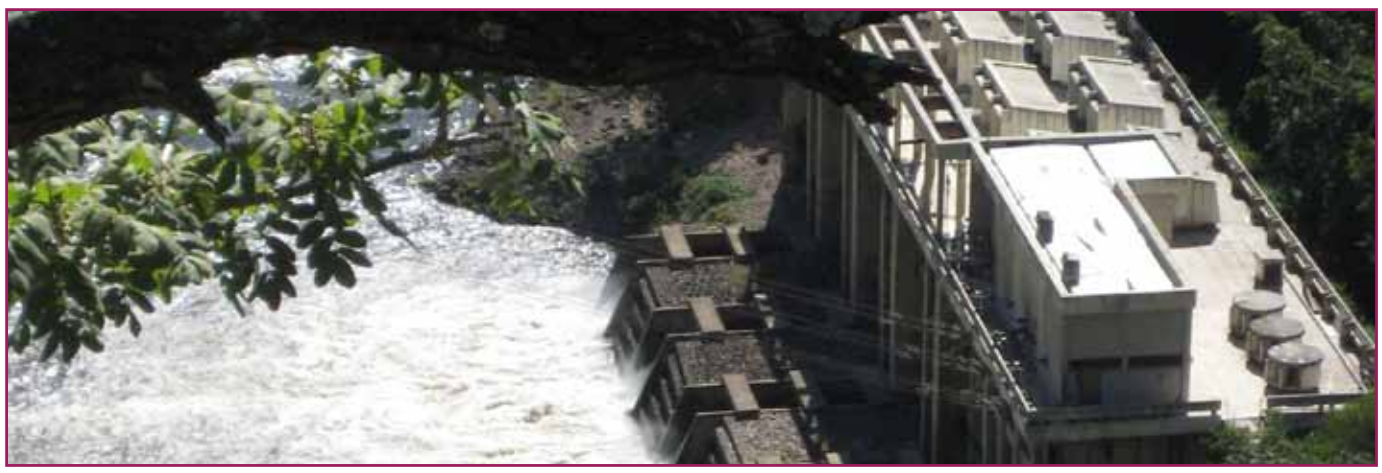
Environ 64 milliards de dollars sont d'urgence nécessaires pour financer la première phase d'un "Plan directeur des infrastructures" de la SADC, adopté lors d'un sommet en 2012 à Maputo, que l'organisation veut commencer à mettre en œuvre. Au cours des 15 prochaines années, le coût total des projets d'infrastructure pourrait atteindre 500 milliards de dollars.

"Ce chiffre peut être effrayant, mais si nous n'investissons pas maintenant, nous mettrons en danger notre capacité commerciale", a reconnu le secrétaire général de la SADC, Tomaz Salomao. "Nous avons décidé de le faire maintenant".

L'insuffisance des infrastructures est considérée comme le plus grand obstacle à la croissance économique à travers la région. Les investisseurs se plaignent que l'insuffisance des infrastructures constitue l'une des principales embûches pour opérer dans la région. En 2009, la Banque mondiale a estimé que le "déficit en infrastructures" a réduit de deux pour cent les taux de croissance nationale dans la région par an.

La grande question est de savoir comment la SADC mobilisera des fonds pour financer ce qui est nécessaire. Plusieurs pays ont déjà mis de côté d'importantes sommes d'argent pour les infrastructures; l'Afrique du Sud a engagé 400 milliards de dollars en 2012. L'intégration régionale est un moyen évident pour réduire le coût de faire des affaires pour tout le monde.

Pour des institutions de financement des projets de développement comme la Banque de développement d'Afrique australe, l'assurance que les gouvernements soient prêts à travailler ensemble sur de grands projets transfrontaliers est presque obtenue.



La SADC veut mettre en œuvre son programme Infrastructures

Par Adelard Obul'Okwess

C'est au cours du prochain sommet des chefs d'Etat et de gouvernement de la Communauté de développement d'Afrique australe (SADC) que sera lancée la phase opérationnelle du Plan directeur régional de développement des infrastructures de la sous-région. Le sommet se tiendra à Lilongwe, au Malawi, du 13 au 18 août 2013. Les chefs d'Etat et de gouvernement présents à Lilongwe devront adopter une déclaration dite «Déclaration de Lilongwe sur les infrastructures».

La déclaration a été préparée par les participants à la Conférence de haut niveau sur l'investissement en infrastructures de la SADC, qui s'est tenue les 27 et 28 juin 2013 à Maputo, au Mozambique. Cette conférence visait à étudier les voies et moyens d'accélérer l'investissement dans les infrastructures au sein de la SADC en leur assurant un financement adéquat. Cette conférence tripartite, initiée par le COMESA, la SADC et la Communauté économique d'Afrique de l'est (EAC) réunissait les ministres des Infrastructures de la sous-région et d'autres partenaires concernés par le financement du Plan directeur de développement des infrastructures en Afrique et du Plan directeur des infrastructures interrégionales du COMESA-EAC-SADC.

Concernant particulièrement la région de la SADC, le Plan directeur (Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plan -RIDMP) va se déployer en trois phases dont la première, le Plan à court terme, s'étale dans la période de 2013-2017, avec un coût estimé à 64 milliards USD. Le Plan est financé dans un premier temps par Trade Mark Southern Africa et la Banque de développement d'Afrique australe (DBSA). Le RIDMP repose sur six secteurs identifiés comme porteurs de développement sur l'ensemble de la sous-région: l'énergie, les transports... Ainsi la première phase concerne une panoplie de projets dont les financements sont déjà disponibles.

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Dreaming Big

Continued from page 1 ... But that is only part of the story. Southern Africa is more politically stable than it has been for decades, young people are increasingly taking advantage of new economic opportunities – particularly those presented by information technology – and prudent fiscal policies by governments have helped buffer countries from the crisis and helped build up foreign reserves

"These countries now have quite a lot of capacity to raise debt. The question is how much and how sustainable is it?" Graham Smith, programme manager for Trademark Southern Africa, a United Kingdom-funded programme to help boost regional integration, told IPS.

An obvious source of infrastructure funding is the African Development Bank. Infrastructure already makes up over 30 percent of its portfolio, but governments and the bank alone are not up to the task of raising the kind of finance that is now needed.

The bank is in the process of setting up the "Africa 50" fund that it hopes will be able to leverage some 100 billion dollars to finance infrastructure on the continent. The timing for the initiative is right, according to the bank. Quantitative easing in Europe and the United States will make infrastructure investments in the developing world more attractive.

"You are looking at mid-single to double-digit returns over a long period of time such as for roads or power projects," the African Development Bank's regional director Ebrima Faal told IPS.

Investment will not only come from outside, but from the continent itself, Faal believes.

"We see tremendous potential for pension funds. We also see tremendous potential for central bank reserves and other sovereign funds investment," he said.

Beyond development financing, SADC is setting a great deal of store in building what it calls "public private partnerships".

In Mozambique, the lack of rail infrastructure is hampering a coal rush in the northeastern Tete province. Brazilian coal company Vale had little choice but to finance the revamping of an old rail track through Malawi and down to a deep-water port on Mozambique's coast, in order to get its coal out. The company said it would spend 6.5 billion dollars on railway and port construction.

"Sometimes people think it is easy. It is not easy. For each dollar we invest in our mine we have to invest another in infrastructure to enable the project to be feasible," Vale's chief executive officer in Mozambique, Ricardo Saad, said.

Thanks to Vale's line, landlocked Malawi will be able to move its goods more easily to the coast as extra capacity is reserved for passengers and goods. And the line offers possibilities of linkages to Zimbabwe and Zambia.

The region's rail network is a mishmash of poorly maintained, insular systems that need to be painstakingly revamped and connected to each other for development corridors to become realities.

And concessionaires are seldom prepared to take all the risks involved in building infrastructure unless they are involved in high-yield activities like coal mining.

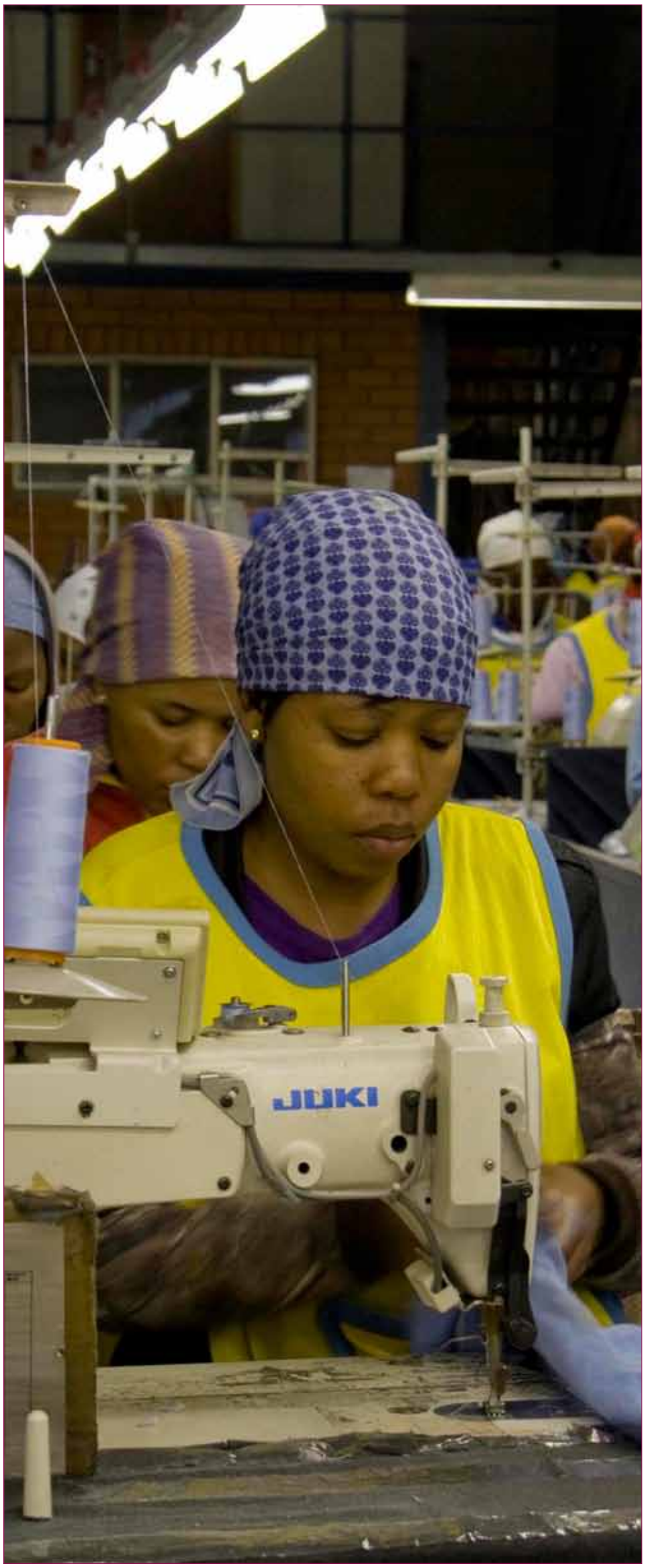
"Ports and power projects are the most likely to attract public-private partnership because you can ring-fence a long-term revenue stream," said Smith. Much of the rest, he added, "will be public-sector financed."

China's deepening role in the infrastructure sector was a matter not widely discussed in Maputo. The Asian giant already has a 20 percent market share of infrastructure contracting, according to a 2012 report by business consultants Ernst & Young. Chinese loans for infrastructure are growing and in 2011 close to 15 billion dollars in Chinese commitments were secured for infrastructure projects continent-wide.

"We are considering collaborating in transport and power projects. It is a big market from a business point of view," Jon Lee from China's Development Bank told IPS. The bank's presence in Maputo was the only sign of a real and burgeoning Chinese engagement on the continent.

"We are going to engage China big time," SADC's director of infrastructure and services, Remmy Makumbe, told IPS. "Our only concern about China is that it is mostly involved in bilateral arrangements rather than regional arrangements. We don't have a problem as long as they engage in bilateral projects that address a regional framework."

Relaxing Banking Rules for Expansion Across SADC



By John Fraser / Michelle Chifamba

JOHANNESBURG/HARARE - Forty-year-old Vivian Zivira, an agrodealer from Nyanga, in Zimbabwe's Manicaland province, says that women like her who farm communal land face significant challenges to secure loans to start income-generating programmes.

This is because banks take too long to process their applications, and charge high interest rates.

"It took me about six months to access my first loan because the banks wanted collateral, which I eventually provided through my husband. They gave me 5,000 dollars with 25 percent interest. Despite a very good repayment record, the bank could not increase the second loan," Zivira told IPS.

Leading bankers are concerned that the regulatory environment in some southern African states is preventing them from offering a full range of services to individuals and companies across the region.

Efficient and affordable financial services are crucial to both the development of businesses and infrastructure projects within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) – and in expanding the reach of banking to the millions who are currently outside the system.

The group chief executive officer of BancABC Douglas Munatsi told IPS that, on the surface, the banking rules in SADC states are similar from one country to the next, as they all stem from the international Basel guidelines.

"However, the reality is that some regulators don't apply the rules the same way, on issues such as the minimum capitalisation of a bank," he said.

"Sometimes the process is not as transparent as it should be. A country may have very positive investment rules, but labour laws can be very rigid, such as those covering expatriates in Botswana."

He explained that if a bank is to extend its reach across the region, it needs to be able to deploy people into new territories, but this is not always easy.

"This affects us, as we find limited skills in some places, but we are only allowed to move in a certain number of staff," he warned.

Mike Brown, the chief executive officer of Nedbank, one of South Africa's biggest banks, agreed that there are inconsistencies.

"The extent to which banking services are available freely between SADC states differs across the various products offered and the clients served by banks," he told IPS.

"In wholesale banking (bank services for companies) for example, the growing trade between SADC countries has resulted in banks developing trade finance solutions to facilitate the ease of intra-regional trade."

Brown noted that there has been "more limited" progress in providing banking services to ordinary customers – know as "retail" banking – because of a failure to date to harmonise regulations across SADC. He also cited exchange controls as an obstacle to expansion.

Brown noted that migrant workers, such as miners from neighbouring countries who work in South Africa, need to be able to send funds across borders to support their families back home.

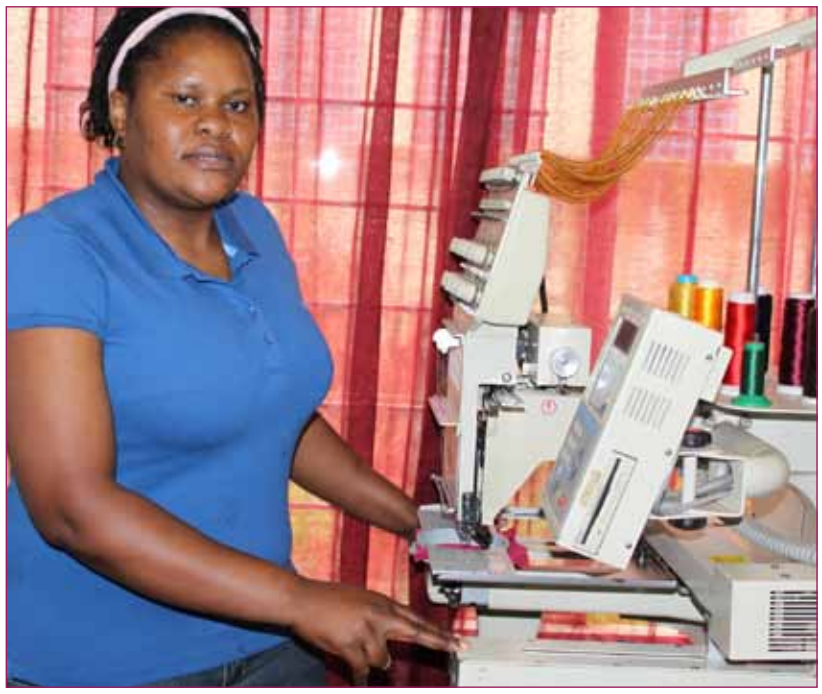
"Companies have emerged that provide cross border money remittance solutions. These include mobile operators and money remitting companies (such as Western Union and Moneygram). The cost of these services is still, however, high and prohibitive for many people - and not highly utilised," he warned.

Cas Coovadia, the managing director of the Banking Association of South Africa, said he believed there were no major issues affecting the offering of banking services between states.

"The SADC Banking Association has been working with the SADC Committee of Central Bank Governors to develop an integrated payments and settlement system, which will improve banking across states substantially," he told IPS.

However, he did warn that "the regulatory environment in some countries is still relatively weak. Infrastructure is another issue, particularly telecommunications. Political uncertainty in countries like Zimbabwe is another matter of concern."

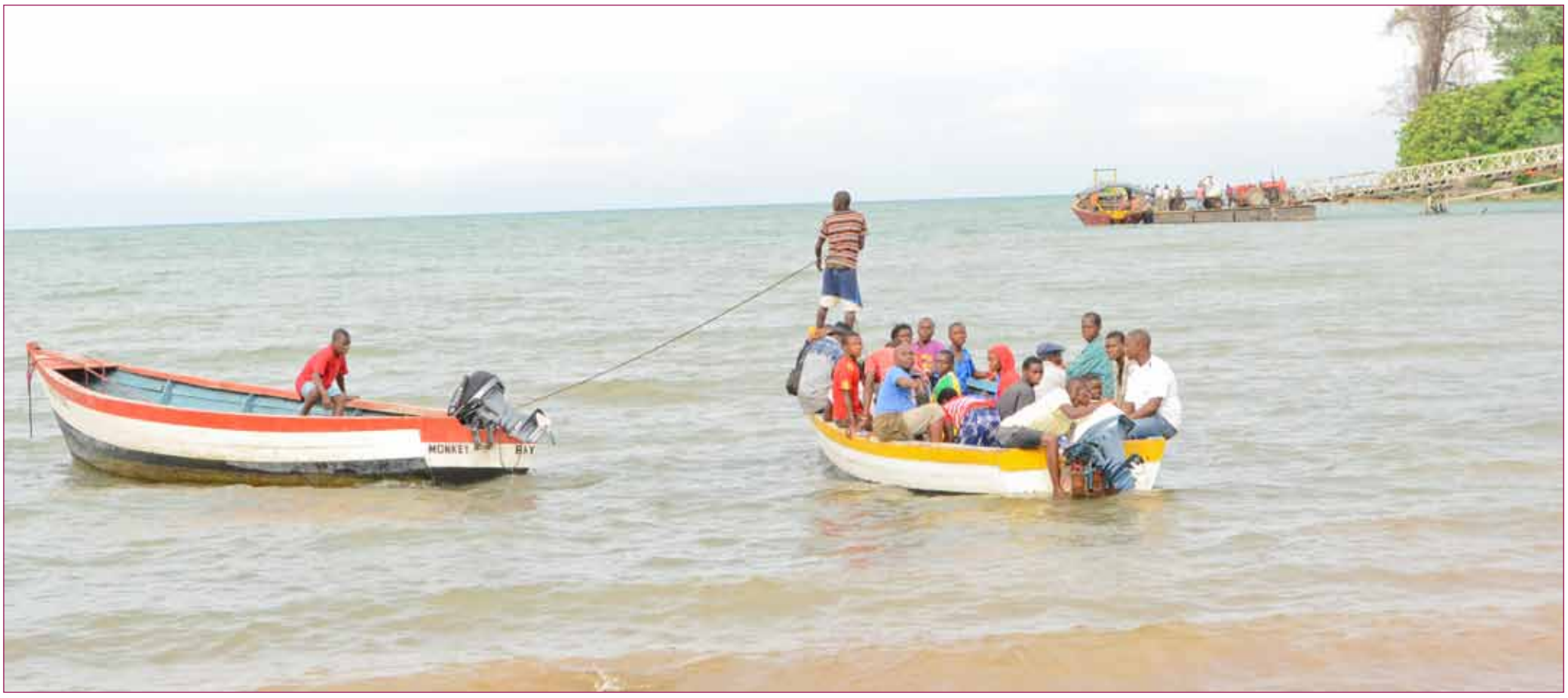
The chief operating officer of FNB Africa, Leonard Haynes, agreed that sound infrastructure plays a big part in a bank's ability to make its services available, and he highlighted the importance of telecommunications and stable electricity.



Left: Expanding businesses across SADC means relaxing some banking rules across the region. Pictured here are workers at a sewing factory in Maseru. Credit: Kristin Palitza/IPS

Right: Swaziland's Futhi Mngomezulu and her sister are doing brisk business designing and making emblems for school uniforms on their new embroidery machine. Though women in some southern African countries have difficulties accessing credit to start or expand their businesses. Credit: Mantoe Phataki/IPS

Part 1 of 3 part series



Fishing families on Lake Malawi, Karonga District. Many fisherfolk have said they have been beaten up and detained by Tanzanian police since the dispute over the lake began late last year. **Credit: Mabvuto Banda/IPS**

Lake Malawi Dispute Instills Fear in Fisherfolk

By Mabvuto Banda

KARONGA - Since he was nine years old, Martin Mhango from Karonga village in northern Malawi has known no other livelihood than fishing. And for the last 33 years he has been fishing freely on Lake Malawi – that is, until last October when he was detained and beaten by Tanzanian security forces.

"They stopped me, dragged me to the beach where they beat me up and detained me. They told me that I had trespassed and was fishing on the Tanzanian side," Mhango, 42, told IPS. "I was told to never fish on their side again. He had been fishing on both sides of the lake for years, he said, just as Tanzanian fisherfolk did.

The dispute over Africa's third-largest lake, which is also known as Lake Nyasa in Tanzania, dates back half a century.

Malawi claims sovereignty over the entirety of the 29,600-square-kilometre lake that straddles the borders of Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania.

Meanwhile, Tanzania says 50 percent is part of its territory.

The dispute between both southern African countries reignited when Malawi awarded exploration licenses to United Kingdom-based Surestream Petroleum in 2011 to search for oil and gas on Lake Malawi.

Tanzanian authorities want Surestream Petroleum to postpone any planned drilling on the lake until the dispute is resolved. But Malawi has remained defiant.

Last December, the Malawian government awarded the second-largest oil exploration license (after the Surestream license) to South African company SacOil Holdings Limited.

So far, oil companies have yet to begin drilling and are still exploring the centre of the lake, which has been cordoned off.

But several fishing families like Mhango's that work along Songwe River in northern Malawi are already caught up in this row, making the fisherman fear that the two countries will eventually go to war.

After the October incident, Mhango has been careful not to venture into the waters on the purportedly Tanzanian side, which has affected his livelihood.

A reduced catch has lowered his income from over 286 dollars per month to just 142 dollars.

"I have all my life been a fisherman and this is the first time I am unable to fish freely on the lake and I fear for my future," he said.

Josiah Mwangoshi, 52, remembers belonging to two villages when he was growing up – one on the Malawian side and another on the Tanzanian side.

"My village is right along Songwe River and I remember that when the river used to shift its course, we would migrate to the Tanzanian side and later on return to the Malawian side when the river shifted again," Mwangoshi told IPS.

"But I am now afraid that the Tanzanians may arrest me. I can no longer live and fish on the Tanzanian side where I also have a family, because it's now clear that the dispute is very deep," he said.

Reports of alleged beatings and harassment of Malawian fisherfolk in October last year forced Malawi's President Joyce Banda to cut off the dialogue that had started between the two countries.

The wrangle deepened when last November Tanzania published a new map shifting the boundary between Tanzania and Malawi to the middle of the lake.

Banda, angry with the new map and Tanzania's harassment of fisherfolk, called a press conference in the capital Lilongwe a few days later and announced that she had protested to the United Nations General Secretary and cancelled a planned state visit to Tanzania.

But Tanzanian High Commissioner to Malawi, Patrick Tsere, defended his country's actions saying that no Malawian fisherfolk have ever been harassed in Tanzanian territorial waters.

"Tanzania's security forces have never engaged in such behaviour. It's rather us who have been worried that Malawian planes have been seen flying into Tanzania territory without our permission," Tsere told IPS.

Many believe that the row over the lake has the potential to worsen if significant oil and gas is discovered.

"This dispute has been around for over 50 years but it has heightened and entered the public domain now because of the potential of oil and gas discoveries," Udule Mwakasungura, the executive director for the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation, a Malawian NGO, told IPS.

"Lake Malawi contains more than 2,000 different fish species — our worry is that oil exploration and its subsequent drilling will affect the fresh water ecosystem," he added.

The lake has been witnessing a decline in fish stocks from 30,000 metric tonnes a year to just 2,000 tonnes over the last 20 years, according to a recent Ministry of Agriculture report read in parliament this February.

Last month, both countries presented their position papers after agreeing that the dispute would be mediate by the Southern African Development Community former heads of state, also known as the African Forum.

"We agreed with Tanzania that we will hand over the mediation to the African Forum and so far we have both presented our position papers. A mediation process should commence before the end of this month or early March," Malawi's Secretary for Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, Patrick Kabambe, told IPS.

Mhango and Mwangoshi have pinned all their hopes on the mediation efforts.

"I have been following news reports about this on the radio and my prayer is that the former African leaders resolve this issue once and for all," said Mwangoshi.

Mhango has similar hopes. "All I want is to go back and start fishing freely on this lake — because without that, my family's future is doomed."

For more IPS stories on water related development in the SADC region visit the Southern Africa Water Wire on Facebook or follow us @africawaterwire on Twitter

Q&A

President Shows Malawi the Way for Women

By Mabvuto Banda

LILONGWE - Malawi's President Joyce Banda knows a thing or two about women's empowerment. After all she is the first female southern African head of state.

But she has not had it easy. Banda had a tough job fixing a sputtering economy after taking over from her predecessor Bingu wa Mutharika who died in office on Apr. 5, 2012. In 2011 the country witnessed nationwide protests against Mutharika and the failing economy. The United Kingdom, Malawi's largest donor, had suspended 550 million dollars in aid after Mutharika expelled its ambassador for calling him an autocrat.

But she did succeed. Since taking office she has implemented of a number of austerity measures, which included selling the country's presidential jet for 15 million dollars and taking a 30 percent cut in her salary. She also embarked on a range of reforms that not everyone has agreed with. The most controversial has been cultivating closer ties with international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund, which is known for its heavy-handed austerity plans.

But in June, the World Bank said the country's economy was recovering, with manufacturing expected to grow six percent and agriculture 5.7 percent.

In September 2012, the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute reported that since Mutharika's increasingly autocratic rule ended, respect for democracy and human rights has returned to the country under Banda's presidency.

In an exclusive interview with IPS, Banda said that women's empowerment remained high on her agenda.

"The message I am trying to send is 'Nothing for us without us' – nothing for women without their involvement and inclusion. We need to make deliberate efforts and policies that will aim at eliminating the structural barriers posed by poverty and gender inequality in economic empowerment of women because such efforts will have long-lasting improvements on the welfare of a woman," Banda told IPS.

In June, Banda appointed Anastasia Msosa the country's first female chief justice. Msosa is just one of a number of women who have been appointed to high-level positions by Banda. In March, she appointed Hawa Ndilowe the first ever female head of the public service. Banda noted that even after women's active participation in the fight for independence in the 1960s and their involvement in liberation movements in Africa, "women did not get prominent decision-making positions to correspond to their inputs in the struggles."

Excerpts from the interview:

Q: Many scholars and activists say that there is a direct link between gender equality, good governance and women's empowerment and sustainable development. Do you agree with that?

A: Gender equality unlocks the potential of women and men to allow space for each other. And women's empowerment proactively enhances the capacity of women to participate in decision making and in matters that affect them.

Q: Since you came to power in April 2012, you have appointed a number of women in very influential positions like chief justice and head of the public service. You have also appointed more women to your cabinet. What is your agenda?

A: It is important that women's needs, aspirations and realities become central drivers of policies and programmes to increase maternal health care access and utilisation. Women must be empowered and have to be actively involved in all decisions related to their health and well being. As I have said many times before in different forums, we cannot talk about empowering a particular group without involving the group itself. No decisions should be made about women without women's involvement.

Q: Before you joined politics, you formed the National Association for Business Women, an organisation that lends start-up cash to small-scale business women. You also successfully set up a school to help educate girls. Why are you so passionate about this?

A: Women constitute the majority of our population in Africa. Therefore, when we talk about poverty, suffering and underdevelopment, we are talking mostly of women. That's why I believe that the promotion of gender equality, women's empowerment, improvement of maternal health and achieving education for the girl child is a transformational strategy to achieving development.

Q: Women's subordinate position in most African societies restricts the ability for them to take control of their lives to combat HIV/AIDS, leave a high-risk relationship or have adequate access to quality health care and education. What is your take on this?

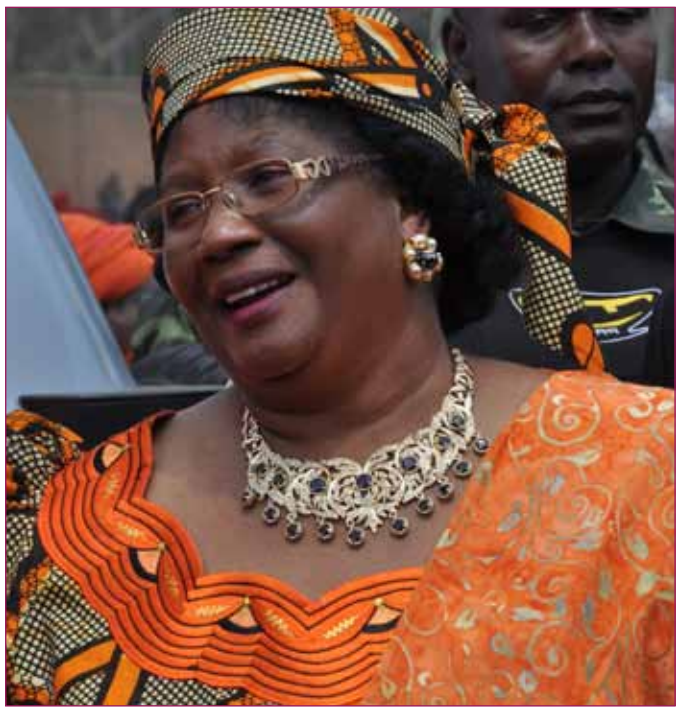
A: In Malawi women and girls between the ages of 15 and 30 experience very high rates of HIV/AIDS infection. The infection rate of women/girls is six times higher than that of men/boys in the same group and the reason is because of the low socio-economic status of women in addition to various cultural practices that prevent women from negotiating safer sex.

Q: So what needs to be done to change this?

A: We need laws that protect women and my government has managed to push through the Gender Equality Bill and it has been passed by parliament. We also need deliberate policies to push capable women into decision-making positions in every sector so they lead and help empower fellow women.

Q: Finally, what are your last thoughts on empowering women?

A: In most African countries, women have over time faced a variety of legal, economic and social challenges. These disadvantages placed women and girls at the margins of society. In most homes, girls lack opportunity to access education. It is typical that in most African families when resources are low they prioritise boys' education over girls'.



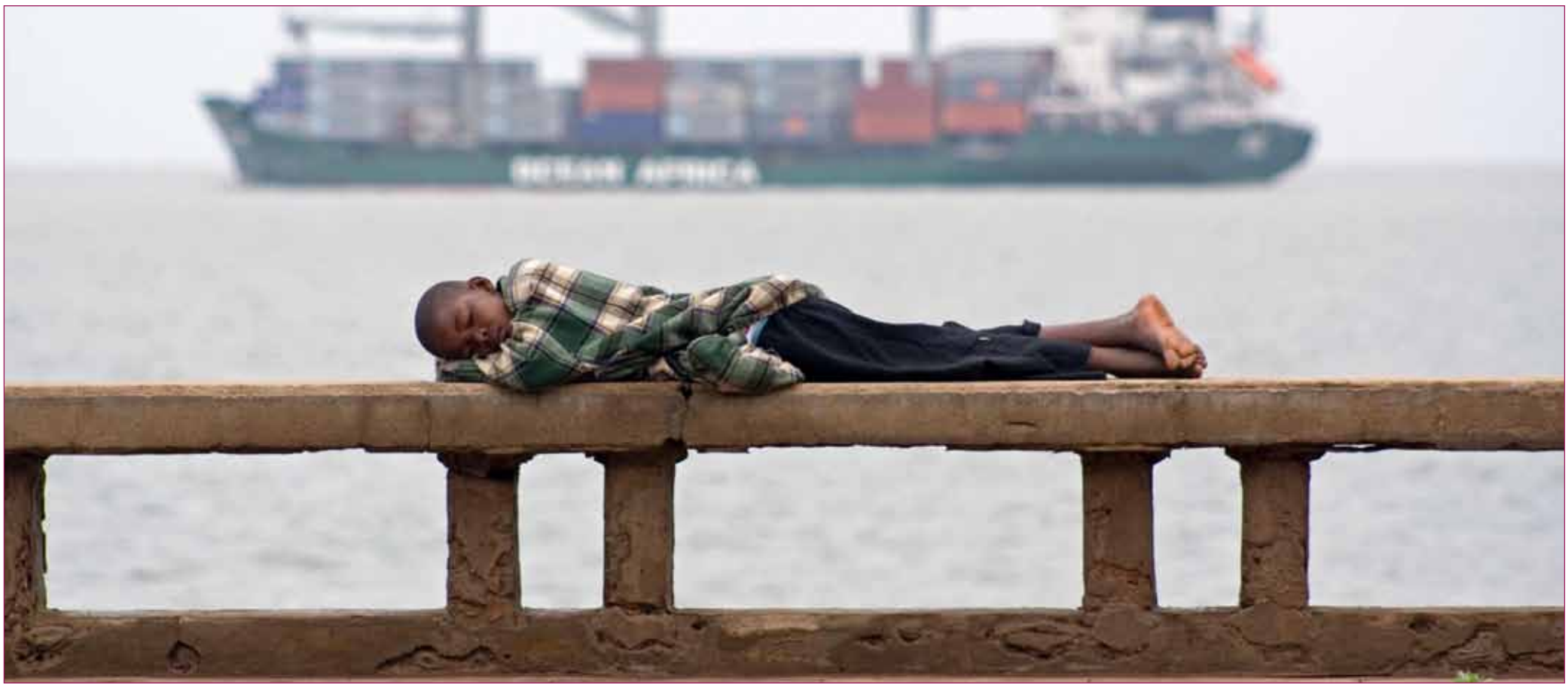
Malawi's President Joyce Banda says women must be empowered and have to be actively involved in all decisions related to their health and well being. **Credit: Katie C. Lin/IPS**

Sex-stereotyping on the part of parents, educators, religion, the media and society at large encouraged the practice that certain jobs are exclusively for men, and as a result the majority of women remained in the 'feminised' jobs. In some African societies, customary laws regarded adult women as minors and these women in most instances did not enjoy property and inheritance rights.

This increased their dependence on men. Treatment of women as minors manifested in formal provisions barring women from opening their own bank accounts and apply for credit in their own right, for instance. Women have not enjoyed access to factors of production like their male counterparts.

However, I am pleased that African women have not just sat back, and accepted being pushed into the margins of society. African women have risen up to claim their rightful place in society and are driving the agenda for their empowerment.

Women at an ICT workshop. Malawi's President Joyce Banda says African women are driving the agenda for their empowerment.
Credit: Susan Kinzi/IPS



In Mikindani, a port in southern Tanzania, oil tankers are a frequent sight. However, exploration has not brought economic prosperity to this area. **Credit: Thembi Mutch/IPS**

Stealing Gas from the Poor to Power the Rich

By Thembi Mutch

MIKINDANI - In Kilwa District in southern Tanzania local community leader and fisherman Salim Riziki stands next to a set of turbines, newly imported from Dubai, talking about the gas finds on Songo Songo, an island 15 km off the mainland.

The whirring sounds and lights from the turbines are in stark contrast to the mud and thatch houses and the few corrugated iron shacks in the village.

It is dusk. There are no cars on the road, and only the occasional labourer walks by, carrying a hoe, as the villagers make their way home. The Songo Songo gas discovery resulted in electrification in this village – but only for the lucky, wealthy few.

"Yes, we think this exploration is vital, but as citizens we are concerned. We need the truth, to have the information laid out for us so we can explore slowly what might be best for us. The government has told us their plans for hospitals, for schools, for electricity. They've told us on the radio, yes, but they didn't ask (if they could go ahead with the exploration)," Riziki tells IPS.

At the port of Mtwara, about 250 km south of Kilwa District, the frustration of locals reached a breaking point on May 22 when government buildings were attacked. Angry stone-throwing villagers surrounded the offices of the ruling Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party, which means Party of the Revolution in Swahili.

The government's response was extremely heavy-handed. Truckloads of soldiers from this East African nation's capital, Dar es Salaam, descended upon the port town. Tear gas and live ammunition were used and local sources say three people were killed, including a woman who was seven months pregnant.

But those who know the region say it has been a long time coming.

Mika Minio-Paluello of international NGO Platform tells IPS: "Militarisation by government and private firms is not unusual when oil and natural gas exploration occurs. Neither is the increase in violence uncommon. This is a repeat of Nigeria, Ghana, and Angola."

The riots were sparked after the government announced that the construction of a gas pipeline from Mtwara to Dar es Salaam would continue according to plan. That means that no facilities will be developed in Mtwara to process the gas. It also means that the 2006 exploitation of gas reserves in Mtwara's Mnazi Bay, which borders Mozambique, has not led to the growth of manufacturing and processing industries in the region that would have ultimately brought economic prosperity to this area.

Ishmail*, a resident of Mikindani, a neighbouring port 10 km south of Mtwara, wishes he could benefit from the gas discoveries.

"We are mostly sesame and cashew farmers, or at least most of us would be, if we had work. Unemployment here in Mikindani is a massive problem. Only eight to 10 percent of us work, and we are desperate," he tells IPS.

"What does a person need? Health, a happy family, a home, food, and work. We don't have that, or clean water. Our problem is that the government, over 650 km away in Dar es Salaam, has abandoned us … The gas will be exported to other areas, and here we will still be left without the basics," Ishmail says.

International oil companies are drilling from Somalia, down along the East African coast to northern Mozambique. They include the BG group, Statoil (which is a 40 percent shareholder of Exxon), Royal Dutch Shell, Anadarko Petroleum Corporation, Petrobras, Total, BP and Aminex.

> "The central government treats us with contempt. We are the forgotten children ..."

But the theme of lack of information about the oil and gas explorations and drilling comes up repeatedly in interviews along Tanzania's southern coast.

"The central government treats us with contempt. We are the forgotten children," Sultan*, a tailor in Mtwara, tells IPS. He and the rest of the residents of Mtwara have not benefited from the oil and gas. And neither have the people from Kilwa and Lindi (about 100 km north of Mtwara), which also lie on Tanzania's southern coastline.

Sultan's own home has no electricity, and he "borrows" from the line running outside his shack in the central market so that he has enough light to see his treadle or hand-cranked sewing machine.

But despite being marginalised from the benefits of the gas discoveries, local communities are too afraid to speak out publicly.

Rob Ahearne, a lecturer at East London University in the United Kingdom and author of the study titled, "Oil and gas, citizenship, modernity and change in southern Tanzania", tells IPS: "The communities themselves are wary of talking, they are scared of spies or informers from CCM, and are wary of being identified as troublemakers.

"These are very marginalised areas, they feel it's a private affair, and there are very few cohesive community forums. Even from village to village there's very little trust," he says.

According to several consultants involved in environmental management, the foreign oil and gas companies are actually exceeding what is required of them – both in community consultations, and environmentally. But this is partly because European environmental management audits are much stricter than those followed by Tanzania.

In addition, every oil company working in Tanzania has to donate 100,000 dollars a year as a basic registration cost to the central government, according to Ahearne's study.

Additionally, the Tanzanian government has asked for 60 percent of all revenues.

However, there is no information in the public sphere about where the money will be deposited, whom the tax will benefit, and the quotas for local employment.

And, with Tanzania's extremely weak implementation of its Freedom of Information Act, accessing this material is impossible.

However, despite three months of trying to contact Tanzanian Minister of Energy and Minerals Professor Sospeter Muhongo, he would not talk to IPS. All efforts to get Tanzanian ministers to comment on governance issues or community consultation exercises also met with dead ends.

One government employee, who preferred to remain anonymous, tells IPS: "You can discuss ethics and philosophy when you have a full belly. Our people do not have that."

However, Nnimmo Bassey from NGO Oilwatch Africa tells IPS that transparency is not the problem.

"The ultimate solution is not transparency in the petroleum sector – you simply will not get it. The sector will not agree to pay environmental costs that they externalise. The ultimate solution is to leave the oil in the soil. And the coal in the hole, as we say."

Bassey is cynical: "Fossil fuel civilisation has reached its dead end. We must accept that. Anything further just means going over the precipice."

*Surname withheld to protect identity.

Zimbabwean Women Major, but Silent, Contributors to the Economy

By Michelle Chifamba

HARARE - In Sasa village in Masholand Central Province, women like 45-year-old Esnath Mashaire have become entrepreneurs, farming produce to sell at the local community market.

On communal land, they grow a wide variety of vegetables ranging from tomatoes, onions, beans and cabbages that they sell to supplement their formal income.

Years of economic meltdown severely impacted on the lives of many Zimbabwean citizens. With a high unemployment rate, estimated at more than 80 percent, informal trading proved to be the main source of livelihood after the collapse of the formal economy. Many say that the government has not come up with measures to support small to medium enterprises (SMEs).

The majority of Zimbabwean women contribute to the economy through SMEs but their efforts seem insignificant as they are ignored by institutions that could provide them with support.

"Many women in this village engage in market gardening on an individual or family level because we do not have enough farming space to grow our gardens," Mashaire told IPS.

"Capital has also become one of the major constraints, which prevent us from growing enough. Thus our businesses do not grow to international standards for export. However, we managed to provide local markets with fresh vegetables," she said.

The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe directed banks to commit 30 percent of their loans to spur the growth of SMEs.

According to the RBZ, businesses classified as SMEs should have an asset base of between 10,000 and two million dollars and an annual turnover of between 30,000 and five million dollars. However, most small businesses here do not have this high asset base or an annual turnover.

According to a report compiled by Ernest and Young, for 2011 - 2012, "70 percent of the economically active populations were excluded from access to formal financial services."

Minister of Small and Medium Enterprises and Cooperative Development Sithembiso Nyoni admitted that SMEs were failing to expand due to high interest rates and stringent lending conditions.

Economic analysts maintain that the contributions by women entrepreneurs remain unnoticed, despite the fact that they contribute effectively to the economy.

"If one million women who are involved in small scale businesses like vending are able to make an average of two dollars per day the country makes two million dollars a day and 728 million a year. As small as they are in their individual capacity, collectively they are an important group of people who contribute effectively to an economy that needs serious support," labour economist Paidamoyo Makoti told IPS.

United Nations Development Programmes Zimbabwe economic advisor Udo Etukudo said it was important for developing countries to promote financial inclusion from SMEs.

"Banks need to find a more progressive way to support smaller players. SMEs play a big role in developing economies. The banks are the fuel and without them, there is no development for the sector," Etukudo told IPS.

The majority of Zimbabwean women contribute to the economy though their efforts as informal traders. **Credit: Michelle Chifamba/IPS**

La SADC veut mettre en œuvre son programme Infrastructures

Suite de la page 8 ... Les deux autres phases, celle à moyen terme entre 2017 et 2022, puis celle à long terme entre 2022 et 2027 vont coûter respectivement USD 428 millions et USD 558 million. Les projets retenus dans le Plan directeur sont ceux qui favorisent de manière claire l'intégration sous-régionale. Dans le secteur de l'énergie, par exemple, le Plan à court terme prévoit 9 grands projets d'interconnexion régionale entre les pays qui disposent d'énormes ressources énergétiques et d'autres qui en ont moins. Certains de ces projets, comme celle d'interconnexion énergétique entre la Zambie, la Tanzanie et le Kenya, entre dans le cadre du Programme de développement des infrastructures en Afrique (PIDA), mise en route en 2010 par l'Union africaine. L'objectif est de parvenir à augmenter l'accès des populations de la sous-région à ces ressources et ainsi booster le développement industriel des pays membres.

Dans le domaine des transports, les projets retenus visent à relier douze des quinze pays de la SADC en mettant en exergue les corridors transfrontaliers existants ou à construire. C'est, par exemple le projet de la route Trans-Caprivi, déjà opérationnel entre la Namibie et la Zambie en partant de Walvis Bay et qui devrait s'étendre à la République démocratique du Congo dans le tronçon Ndola-Lubumbashi. Il en est de même de la réhabilitation des chemins de fer existants, qui permettraient de relier les océans Indien et Atlantique de telle sorte que ces infrastructures touchent même des pays du COMESA et de la Communauté des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Est (EAC) comme le Kenya. Tout il est prévu des projets institutionnels dans le domaine du transport aérien, ou de la mise en place d'une autorité régionale de concurrence en matière de transport multimodal.