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MOZAMBIQUE

CASE STUDY

Highway Paves Way to Development

Work on the EN1 highway boosts many aspects of Mozambique's economic development



Photo: AFRICON

Markets selling a variety of goods have sprung up along the new section of Mozambique's EN1 highway.

“This road will contribute to national integration,” says an engineer who worked on the project. “It’s the main link for economic growth from south to center to north. It’s the backbone of Mozambique and a highway of hope.”

Challenge

Mozambique's inadequate infrastructure, especially roads, has been an ongoing barrier to economic growth and development. The country stretches 1,550 miles (2,550 kilometers) north to south — twice the length of California — but civil war forced the government to abandon construction of a national highway in 1980. Seven years after the 1992 peace accord, the Estrada Nacional 1 — EN1 — remained unfinished. In some places, only a dirt track cut through the countryside. Other sections were an overgrown mix of gravel and surfaced road that had not been maintained in decades and ran through areas littered with landmines.

Initiative

USAID supported a project to complete the EN1, linking southern Mozambique and its two largest cities — Maputo and Beira — to the north, where much of the country's people and agriculture are centered. In 1999, USAID-funded road crews began constructing and rehabilitating 150 miles (240 kilometers) of the EN1 between Gorongosa and Caia, where the Zambezi River divides the country. The \$50-million project required workers to clear landmines and vegetation, and repair or build 27 bridges. It also included an HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention campaign for road workers, their families and surrounding communities, to help slow the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Results

The EN1 is now a paved, all-weather highway with modern signposting. The trip from Caia to Beira now takes four hours instead of 56. Produce from Zambezia Province in the north now reaches Maputo in the south, by land, for the first time. The EN1 has also revitalized the towns it runs through. In 1999, Gorongosa was virtually deserted. Today, the market offers electronic equipment, food, clothing and other necessities, and a new school nearby serves 500 students. Farmers are opening new land to cultivation of corn, cassava, cotton, beans and oilseeds now that they have access to a dependable trade route. Tourism may also become a growing part of the economy, as the highway segment will facilitate renewed development of Gorongosa National Park, a wildlife reserve that was virtually destroyed during the war.