

Cut-off of National Road No. 1 isolates Northern Mozambique and reveals, once again, serious deficiencies in road infrastructures

- Since 1:00 pm this Saturday, the road traffic on National Road No. 1 is blocked due to the cutting of the road in Nicoadala district, Zambezia province. The National Road No. 1 (EN1) is the only way that connects the south and the north of Mozambique and the road cut yesterday leaves the provinces of Nampula, Cabo Delgado and Niassa isolated from the rest of the country.



The heavy rains that have fallen in the last few days in Zambezia caused the overflow of the Eledje River and the consequent destruction of the aqueduct that links the two banks. The re-establishment of the road depends on the reduction of the water level, so the authorities are still unable to say when the circulation of people and goods will be restored. The isolation of the northern region of Mozambique will have economic consequences, since the EN1 is the main road used to ensure the supply of different provinces of the country.

In Nampula, the road that connects the provincial capital to the Angoche municipality is also closed to traffic. Following heavy rains caused by the passage of cyclone “Gombe”, one of the rivers crossed by the road connecting the city of Nampula to Angoche overflowed and dragged the metal bridge. Now, it is becoming routine the destruction of infrastructure with every storm that rages in Mozambique. And the roads and bridges are the ones that suffer the most.

This situation comes at a time when the government is advocating the construction of climate change resilient infrastructure as a way to minimize the effects of natural disasters. But what we see on the ground is that every time a tropical storm, cyclone, heavy rains and floods affect the country, public infrastructures are destroyed, especially classrooms, hospitals, roads and bridges. In some cases, these infrastructures were built less than a year ago. On the other hand, there are situations where infrastructures built decades ago resist the extreme events.

In fact, the cutting of roads and destruction of bridges reveals that the government is not investing in climate resilient infrastructure. It makes no sense that every rainy season the country witnesses the isolation of several regions due to the cutting of roads and destruction of bridges inaugurated a year ago.

In March 2019, the then Minister of Public Works, Housing and Water Resources visited the bridge over the Revúbuè River, on National Road No. 7, which separates the municipalities of Tete and Moatize, in Tete province¹. At the time, the 400 meter bridge built in 1965 had been destroyed by floods registered during the passage of the Idai cyclone. As part of the reconstruction of infrastructure destroyed by Idai, the rehabilitation of the bridge over the Revúbuè River was awarded to the Portuguese construction company Mota Engil in August 2019.

Budgeted at USD 3.7 million, the works were executed in one year and the bridge



was reopened in October 2020. The National Roads Administration (ANE), a public institute under the Minister of Public Works, Housing and Water Resources, assured that the bridge rehabilitation works had been designed to ensure the resilience of the infrastructure. “Which means that in case we have water currents of the same magnitude again, they will not damage the infrastructure,” said ANE’s representative in Tete, Jeremias Mazoio².

The rains that fell in the last days of January due to the passage of tropical storm “Ana” caused the flow of the Revúbuè River to rise. The bridge did not resist the strong current of water. The infrastructure described as resilient to extreme events by ANE did not withstand the first test. Quoted by the newspaper

Carta de Moçambique, Mota Engil says that the rehabilitation work on the bridge over the Revúbuè River was done based on the project designed by the consulting company, MZ Betar. The hydraulic studies were also carried out by MZ Betar, the same company that did the supervision.

“Our work was only the rehabilitation of the devices between the pillars and the platform, the sidewalks and guardrails,” said engineer Jorge Martins, from Mota Engil, quoted by Carta de Moçambique³. In other words, the bridge builder denies any responsibility in the destruction of the bridge over the Revúbuè River. The then Minister of Public Works, Housing and Water Resources appeared to inform that the Government was mobilizing metal infrastructure to repair the

¹ <https://recac.org.mz/index.php/2019/03/12/machatine-visita-a-ponte-sobre-o-rio-rovubue/>

² <https://www.dw.com/pt-002/mo%C3%A7ambique-a-vida-em-tete-um-ano-depois-das-cheias-do-rovubue/a-52720445>

³ <https://cartamz.com/index.php/politica/item/9828-reabilitacao-da-ponte-sobre-o-revubue-mota-engil-diz-que-sua-intervencao-foi-parcial>

damage caused to the bridge, namely the gap opened by the current of water. Osvaldo Machatine made no reference to the need to investigate what actually happened to the bridge, which was inaugurated less than two years ago, to collapse.

At the same time, the intense rains that fell due to the passage of tropical storm “Ana” also caused the flow of the Licungo River to increase, destroying the metal bridge that connects the districts of Namacura and Maganja da Costa, in the province of Zambézia. The bridge over the Licungo River was inaugurated last December by the former Minister of Public Works, Housing and Water Resources, and was built to replace the old infrastructure destroyed by the 2015 floods. Its rehabilitation cost the state treasury 900 million meticaís, and the works were carried out by a Chinese company, highly praised by former Minister Machatine at the infrastructure’s inauguration ceremony.

“All national companies were unanimous in saying that they were not up to this challenge, especially under the conditions set by the Government. And the CRBC Company was the only one that took on this project within the constraints that we faced. It is not normal for us to do this because we pay, but we know how difficult this negotiation was and



what we still have ahead of us to be able to fulfil our commitments with this company”, said the governor⁴

The CDD argues that the Government should open an independent investigation to find out the real causes of the destruction of the

two recently inaugurated bridges. It doesn’t make sense that infrastructures handed over less than a month ago are once again in need of a new repair. The time has come for the State to start holding those involved in substandard public works accountable.

⁴ <https://4vesreporter.com/2021/12/17/joao-machatine-inaugura-ponte-sobre-rio-licungo/>



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