

Distant Neighbors: Why Neighboring Countries Mozambique and South Africa Differ So Greatly in Gender Inequality

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Abstract

This article examines gender inequality in Mozambique and South Africa. These two countries share a common border, yet they are very different in terms of economic development and gender inequality. After examining the different degrees of gender inequality with regards to literacy, tertiary school enrollment and salaried employment, the article examines some of the ethical origins and existing ethical structures, including these two countries' level of child marriages, views on domestic violence, and access to modern contraceptives. All these examinations tend to support the hypothesis that gender equality improves not only the lives of women, but the lives of all people.

I. Introduction

When you think about the richest countries in the world, one underrated factor contributing to their economic success is relatively low gender inequality and relatively high observance of basic human rights. Differences in these social and legal issues go a long way when analyzing differences in basic economic measures, like income per capita.

This article examines gender inequality in literacy, education and salaried employment in Mozambique and South Africa, who currently rank, respectively 180th and 113th in the United Nations' Human Development Index (HDI).¹ It also examines the two countries' different ethical origins and structures, which are illustrated by different levels of child marriages, different views on domestic violence, and different access rates to modern contraceptives. These differences in approaches to women's rights and basic human rights help explain the disparity in the level of development, given that the similar location generally point in the direction of small disparities between Mozambique and South Africa.

This article is structured into six sections. Following this introduction, the second section provides a brief literature review. The third section offers some socioeconomic background information

¹ United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (2019), Table 1.

about Mozambique and South Africa. The fourth section examines some major differences in gender inequality, while the fifth section analyzes ethical origins and existing ethical structures in Mozambique and South Africa, which are illustrated by examining gender inequality and social norms. The sixth section wraps the key issues together in a conclusive manner.

II. Brief Literature Review

There is a growing amount of literature regarding the issue of gender inequality within education and employment in Mozambique and South Africa, with issues of empowerment coming to the forefront within the last decade. As the following paragraphs detail, Deutsch and Silber (2019), Gradin and Tarp (2019a and 2019b) focus on Mozambique, while Tripp (2001), MacDonald (2006) and Espi, Francis and Valodia (2019) focus on South Africa.

- Deutsch and Silber (2019) explain how the level of women empowerment in Mozambique affects the level of nutrition in children. By analyzing five key factors of empowerment (decision making, use of violence by husband/partner, attitude of the woman towards this use of violence, available information, material resources), the authors explain that the nutritional health of the child could be regressed and negatively impacted. Deutsch et al end up concluding that education of the mother most certainly effects the nutritional levels of the child, in turn displaying the need for empowerment of the women of Mozambique.
- Gradin and Tarp (2019a) detail how sustainable development goals and poverty reduction has been curbed by a raising wealth gap between the rich and the poor. Through the reinforcement of the idea of educating the household head (always male), Mozambique has made its economy more vulnerable by reducing the number of workers in the public and subsistence sectors. By analyzing rising consumption inequality, the authors detail a disproportionate growth path which disproportionately benefits males.
- Gradin and Tarp (2019b) discuss the gender employment gap in Mozambique with the shrinking of the country's agricultural sector and the expanding of the non-subsistence sector. The authors attribute this rising gender gap to two factors. The first factor they discuss is the low level of female human capital which is a result of the low educational attainment of females along with low literacy and Portuguese proficiency rates. The second factor is the reinforcement the head of the household (typically men) being employed in the more formal working sector and a low availability of female labor.
- Tripp (2001) details the role of South African women's groups in the early 1990s, which was a period of political reform processes and a period during which women become politically active and even running for president. Tripp discusses how this marked the beginning of new era for not only women empowerment in South Africa but other countries like Kenya and Libya, who all together are trying to change the fact that many African countries are among the lowest countries in the world in terms of female representation in government and parliament.
- MacDonald (2006) examines how policy regarding race and gender has changed in South Africa from making it a very patriarchal country to a country pushing for equal rights. The book discusses the history of South Africa's ranking on the HDI scale and how this change has been a reflection of revolving policies that have allowed for the expansion of education

among young females and also the expansion of the number of women in the work force instead of at home on a daily basis.

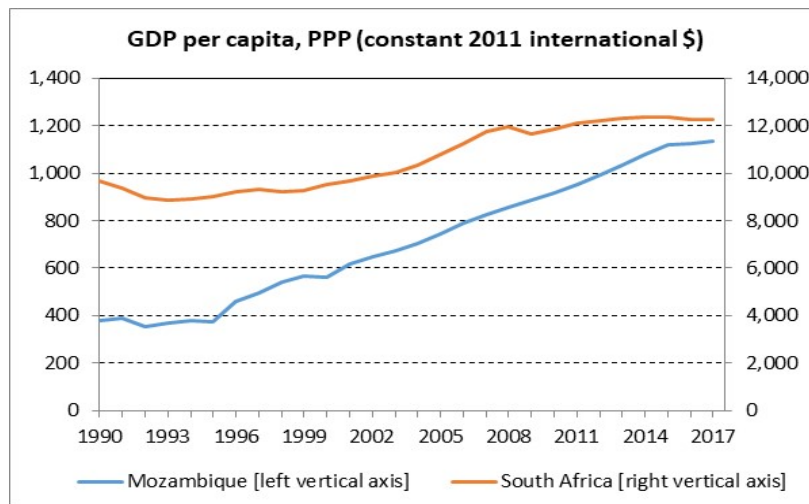
- Examining the data provided via South Africa’s Employment Equity Act (which was adopted in the years following the end of Apartheid), Espi, Francis and Valodia (2019) find that that women (and especially black and colored women) continue to be under-represented in high-skilled and management positions. They also find substantial gender pay gaps, though they questioned the reliability of these estimates due to a high number of apparent errors and inconsistencies in the remuneration data. They stress that more needs to be done to ensure that this data is appropriately processed and distributed, so that it can shed light on the state of women in the South African labor market and be used to effectively address inequalities in pay and representation.

III. Socioeconomic Background

Figure 1 displays the evolution of GDP per capita (adjusted for purchasing power parity) for Mozambique and South Africa, using the left scale for Mozambique and the right scale for South Africa. In 1990, South Africa had a GDP per capita of \$9,378, which dwarfed Mozambique’s figure of \$378. Following years of economic stagnation and even declines in GDP per capita during apartheid, South Africa’s democratic transition in 1994 created expectations of a dramatic turnaround in the economic performance.² However, while South Africa saw an overall increase in its GDP per capita from \$8,945 in 1994 to \$11,990 in 2006, this increase was far below expectations. Furthermore, South Africa’s GDP per capita then stagnated during the subsequent nine years, reaching \$12,295 in 2017.

Mozambique also saw some stagnation during the early 1990s, but its income per capita then rose drastically (in relative terms) from \$373 in 1995 to \$1,136 in 2017, which is slightly more than a three-fold increase during a period of 22 years (1995-2017). Despite Mozambique’s much higher growth rates, Mozambique’s GDP per capita is still less than one tenth of South Africa’s in 2017.

Figure 1: GDP per capita PPP (constant international \$), 1990-2017



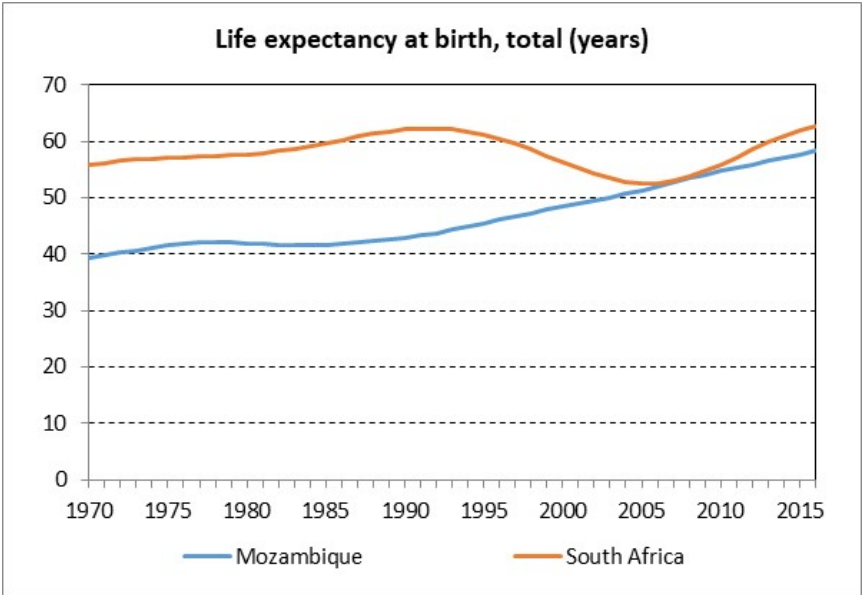
Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2019).

² Du Plessis and Smit (2006), p. 2.

As Figure 2 shows, with exception of 2007, South Africa has traditionally dominated Mozambique in terms of life expectancy. In 1970, the life expectancy of Mozambique was just 39.3 years, making it one of the lowest in the world.³ Mozambique’s life expectancy then increased relatively steadily over the next few decades, reaching 58.3 years in 2016. This is a significant improvement, but still low compared to the world average of 72.4 years in 2016.⁴

South Africa’s life expectancy figure was a modest 55.9 years in 1970, which increased to 62.8 years in 2016. South Africa’s modest increase in life expectancy over the last five decades is largely due to the decline in life expectancy South Africa experienced during 1992 to 2005, due to sharply increasing HIV/AIDS prevalence rates. Mozambique also experienced sharp increases in HIV/AIDS prevalence rates during the early 1980s, but was then able to decrease new infections,⁵ resulting (together with many other factors) in continued increases in life expectancy.

Figure 2: Life Expectancy at Birth (years), 1970-2016

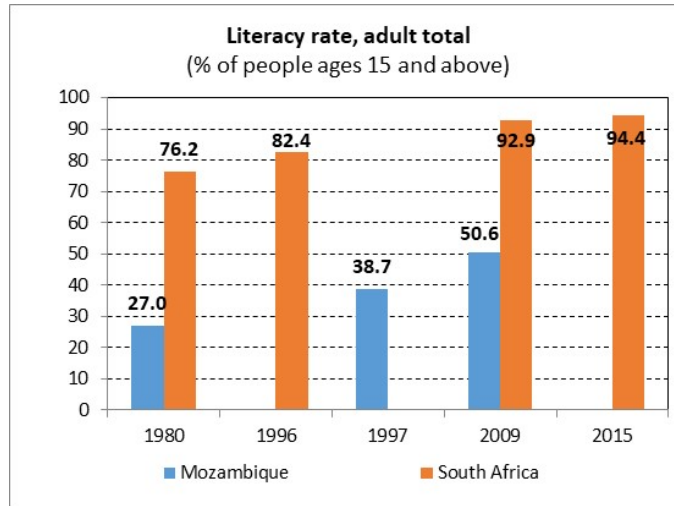


Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2019).

Another indicator, where South Africa and Mozambique differ greatly, and possibly the most in relative terms, is adult literacy. As displayed in Figure 3, in 1980, South Africa had a literacy rate of 76.2 percent, while Mozambique had a literacy rate of 27 percent. Though data is scarce for both countries, especially for Mozambique, Figure 3 shows that South Africa is relatively close to having all of its population ages 15 and above to be literate (the literacy rate was 94.4 percent in 2015), while only half (50.6 percent) of Mozambique’s population above age 15 has been literate in 2009, which is the last year such data is available for Mozambique.

³ World Bank (2019).
⁴ World Bank (2019).
⁵ Tripp (2001).

Figure 3: Adult Literacy Rates in Mozambique and South Africa



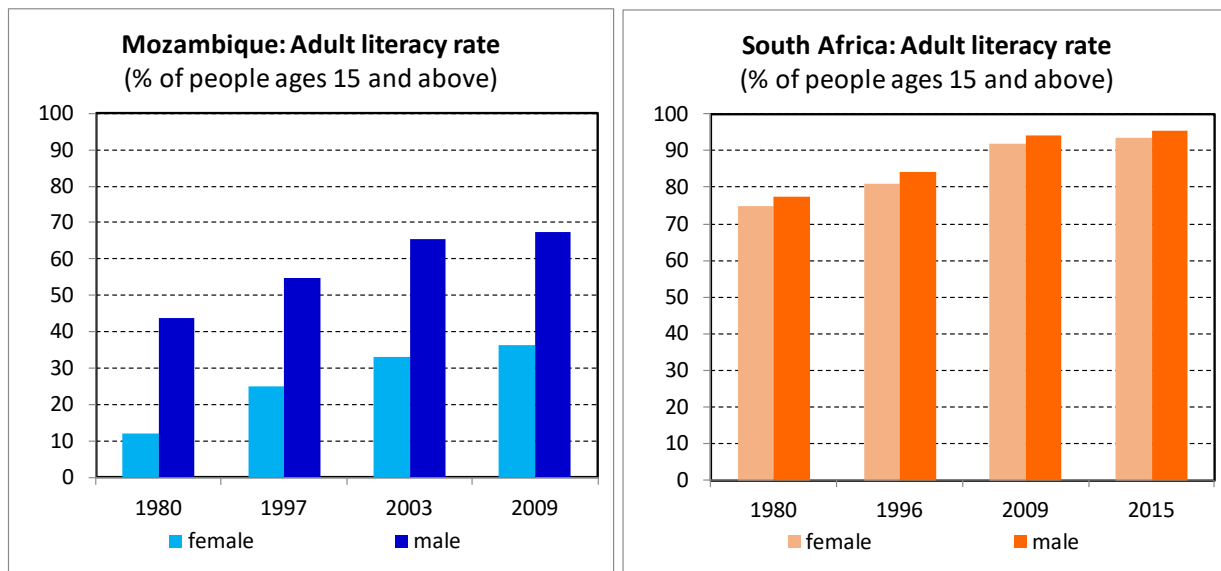
Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2019).

IV. Evolution of Gender Disparity in Education and Labor

IV.1. Gender Differences in Literacy and Tertiary School Enrollment

Perhaps one of the most important areas causing gender inequality is the difference in education provided to boys and girls. Mozambique and South Africa are opposites when it comes to gender equality of education. As was shown in Figure 3 above, in 1980, Mozambique had a much smaller overall literacy rate than South Africa, but what stands out even more is the gender disparity in literacy rates. As shown in Figures 4 and 5, the difference of adult literacy rates in Mozambique continues to be massive, while it is minimal in South Africa.

Figures 4 and 5: Literacy Rates by Gender in Mozambique and South Africa



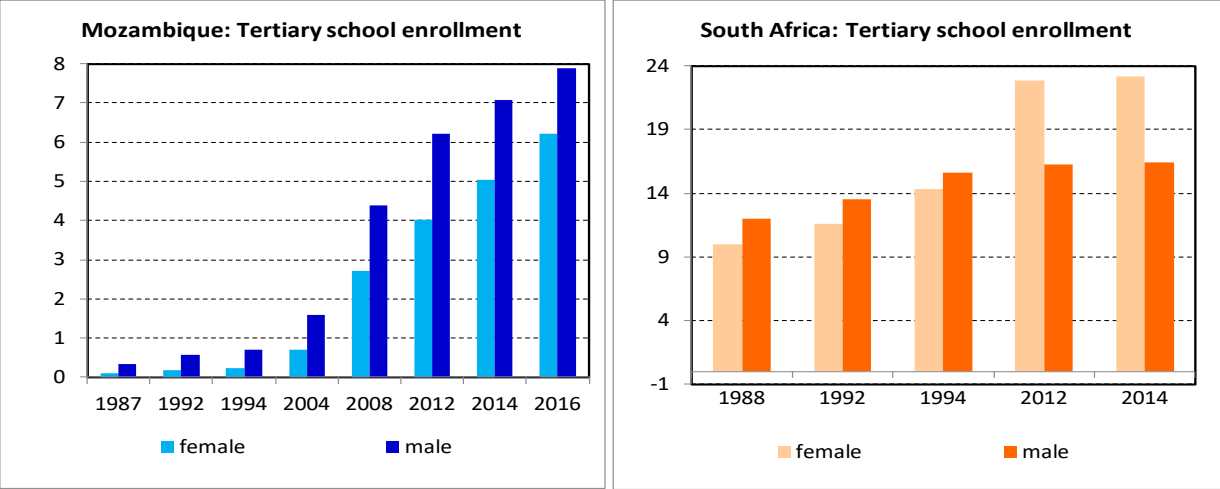
Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2019).

In 1980, 43.7 percent of Mozambique’s men were literate, compared to only 12 percent of Mozambique’s women, making them some of the most uneducated women at the country-level in the world. By world standards,⁶ South Africa had a high overall literacy rate of 75.7 percent in 1980, but the important difference to Mozambique is the minimal gap between men’s and women’s literacy rates: male literacy rate was 77.5 percent while female literacy rate was right behind this figure at 74.8 percent.

In 2003, the number of literate men in Mozambique had jumped to 65.6 percent, however the female literacy rate only increased to 33.2 percent, which implies that the disparity grew in absolute terms since 1980, though it decreased in relative terms. The percentage difference of literate males to literate females remained about the same between 2003 and 2009, which is the last year such data is available for Mozambique. One of many reasons for this disparity in literacy among adults in Mozambique is that many girls were pulled out of school, often before they even began primary school.⁷ While more and more girls have been enrolled in school, differences still existed in 2015 (which is the last year such data is available for Mozambique): net primary school enrollment was 87.3 percent for girls, while it was 91.9 percent for boys.

As Figures 6 and 7 show, there are also large differences between Mozambique and South Africa with regards to tertiary school enrollment. Though tertiary school enrollment increased during the last three decades for both males and females in Mozambique, the gender gap continues to exist, though it got smaller in relative terms. In 1987, only 0.09 percent of females were enrolled in tertiary education, compared to 0.33 percent of males, which is a ratio of 3.7 males per females. Nearly 30 years later, in 2016, 6.2 percent of females were enrolled in tertiary education, compared to 7.9 percent of males, which is a ratio of 1.3 males per females. On the other hand, though South Africa also had less females than males enrolled in tertiary education in 1988, 1992 and 1994, since at least 2012, female tertiary education has been considerably higher than male tertiary education. In 2014 (which is the last year such data is available for South Africa), 23.2 percent of females and 16.4 percent of males were enrolled in tertiary education.

Figures 6 and 7: Tertiary School Enrollment by Gender in Mozambique and South Africa



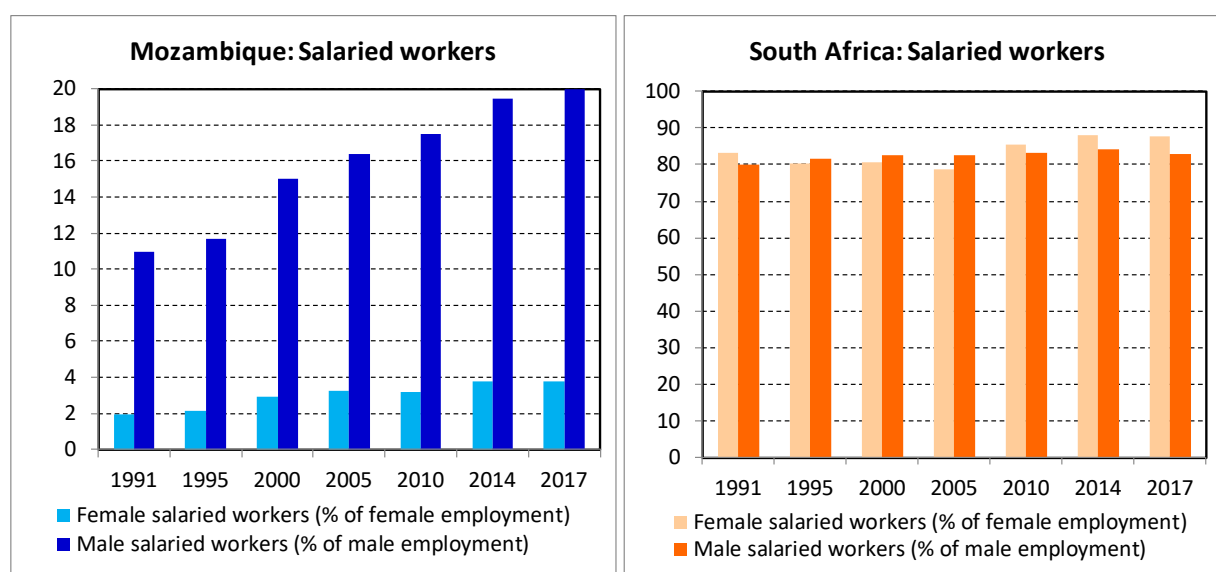
Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2019).

⁶ Based on World Bank (2019), the world average literacy rate was 67.1 percent in 1980.
⁷ Commonwealth of Learning (COL) (2016).

IV.2. Gender Differences in Salaried Employment

These gender differences in literacy rates and tertiary school enrollment have huge impacts on gender differences in employment, especially salaried employment. As shown in Figure 8, in 1991 (which is the first year such data is available), 10.9 percent of the employed Mozambican men had salary-based jobs, compared to only 1.9 percent of employed Mozambican women. Nearly three decades later, in 2017 (which is the last year such data is available), 20.0 percent of the employed Mozambican men had salary-based jobs, compared to only 3.8 percent of employed Mozambican women. In other words, while the percentage of salaried jobs increased for both men and women, the gender difference is basically the same in relative terms, which implies that Mozambique has made no progress with regards to this gender difference during the last three decades.

Figures 8 and 9: Salaried Employment by Gender in Mozambique and South Africa



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2019).

On the other side of the border in South Africa (shown in Figure 9), in 1991, 80.0 percent of employed men had a salary-based job, while 83.3 percent of employed women had a salary-based job. That is, in South Africa, the percentage of women with a salary among the employed women is marginally higher than the percentage of men with a salary among the employed men. This marginal gender difference then flips in 1995 (i.e., the percentage of women with a salary among the employed women is marginally lower than the percentage of men with a salary among the employed men), but then switches back in 2010 and remains slightly higher for women by 2017. However, considering the marginal and time-varying differences in South Africa, the conclusion is that there is overall no significant gender difference for this indicator in South Africa.

In 2017, among the employed Mozambican women, 84.8 percent worked in agriculture, compared to 60.1 percent of the employed Mozambican men.⁸ This sectoral gender difference is one of the sources for the gender difference in salaried employment as people working in agriculture do

⁸ World Bank (2019).

typically not have a salary in Mozambique.⁹ In South Africa, the sectoral gender difference was reverse in 2017 to that of Mozambique, with 3.8 percent of the employed women working in agriculture, while 6.9 percent of the employed men working in agriculture.¹⁰

The fact that Mozambique's gender inequality in literacy, tertiary education and salaried employment (shown in Figures 4, 6 and 8 above) have not improved significantly (if at all) during the last few decades indicates that Mozambique has not addressed deeper-rooted gender inequality in their society and culture. We will now review some more ethical issues related to the existing gender inequalities in Mozambique and South Africa.

V. Ethical Analysis of Gender Inequality

This section will be broken up into two subsections. The first subsection will be looking at ethical origins and existing ethical structures related to gender inequality in Mozambique and South Africa. The second subsection will look at specific aspects of gender inequality, which include societal norms held up through child marriages, domestic violence, the lack of modern contraceptives in these two countries.

V.1. Ethical Origins and Existing Ethical Structures

Rousseau (1751) describes an origin of ethics that upholds gender inequality. This important principle describes people as having interest in their own wellbeing and safekeeping. In Africa, this origin has been upheld through years of gender based discriminatory practices, with those having most of the wealth and power wanting everything to stay the way it is.

As it pertains to Mozambique and South Africa, Rousseau's principle tells two very different stories. South Africa's transition to a democratic state, especially the abolition of apartheid, South Africa become a more ethical country then they were just 30 years ago. Citizens have yielded great benefits during a time of greater gender equality so they would like to keep it that way and improve on issues regarding women.

In Mozambique Rousseau's principle is exemplified by the very few rich elites. Specifically, the top 10 percent who hold more than 50 percent of all wealth in the country.¹¹ These are the people who have helped keep ethical structures in place that allow girls to be pulled out of school and allows women to be beaten by their husbands. Given the lack of democracy and poor governance in Mozambique, this top 10 percent of the country are those who often make policy decisions regarding gender inequality producing ethical structures.

One of the hardest things to do when attempting to empower women in developing countries is to be able to help them take control of their lives. Buvinic (1983) and Moser (1989) have detailed five different policy approaches that could help reverse long upheld ethical structures that are out of line. They are the welfare approach, efficiency approach, anti-poverty approach, equity approach and empowerment approach.

Buvinic (1983) and Moser (1989) would most likely argue for the equity approach regarding Mozambique, as the equity approach is defined as attacking social, political and economic norms that are negative for women. A policy example of this would be the provision of mandatory and

⁹ Navarra (2019).

¹⁰ World Bank (2019).

¹¹ World Bank (2019).

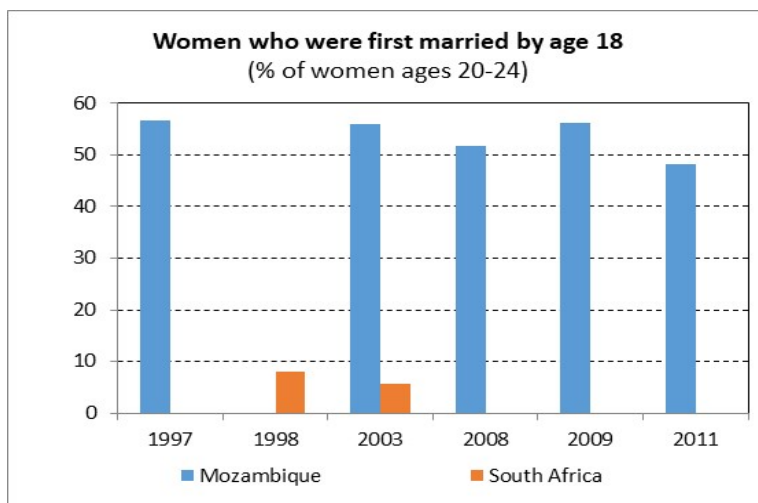
free school enrollment for every child. Similarly, the empowerment approach, which recognizes the need for women to gain power over their lives through changing unjust practices, which work to oppress women in a structural sense, would also be useful in Mozambique. An example of an oppressive cultural norm that the empowerment approach would look to reverse is that in 2005, over 50 percent of women believed their husband was justified in beating them.¹² In a country like South Africa, the efficiency approach might be more effective as South Africa is economically a much more advanced country. This approach suggests that women will become more productive and enhance economic output if more money is invested in them. This might include more money to educate women or employment programs for women.¹³

While it is hard to reverse the norms and cultural constraints of a country, it is possible to help empower women by giving them more individual opportunity through economic strength. Using the right development methods suggested by Buvinic (1983) and Moser (1989) can help achieve this. Buvinic and Moser might argue for the equity approach in attacking social, political and economic norms that are negative for women. A policy that is in line with this approach, like mandatory universal primary education, would ensure greater economic development and freedom for women down the line in Mozambique. For South Africa, the more appropriate way to advance women economically would be using the efficiency approach, which implies to invest more money and capital in women.

V.2. Child Marriage, Domestic Violence and a Lack of Contraceptives

When a young woman is uneducated, she often faces zero possibility of finding a good job, and hence, in many developing countries, she ends up marrying young, usually before age 18. This is especially prevalent in Mozambique, where long-standing cultural norms support and arrange adolescent marriages. As shown in Figure 10, Mozambique and South Africa tell very different stories on the percentage of women ages 20-24, who get were married by age 18.

Figure 10: Women who were first married by age 18 (% of women ages 20-24)



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2019).

¹² World Bank (2019).

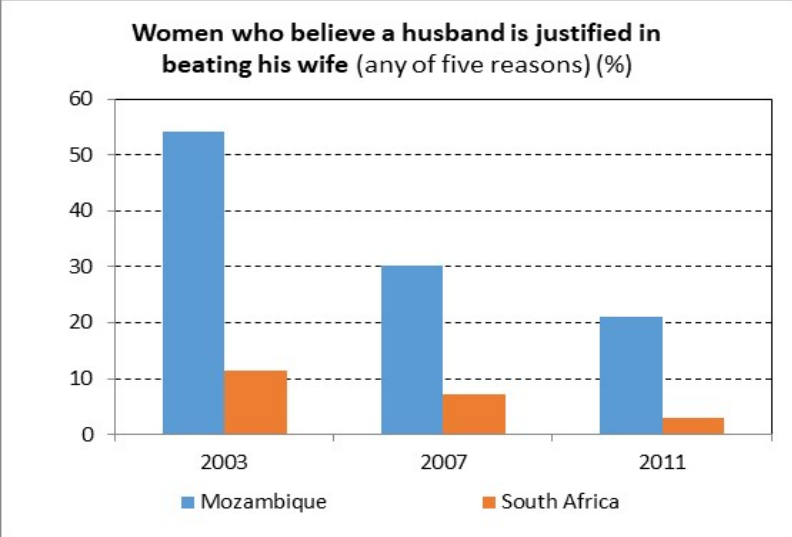
¹³ Moser (1989).

The earliest available data for Mozambique is 1997, when 56.6 percent of the women ages 20-24 got married by age 18. The data then shows some decreases but also an increase from 2008 to 2009, with another decrease in 2011 (the last year such data is available for Mozambique), when the a marginal decrease for 2003, a some decrease for volatility, yet by 2011, when the percentage of women ages 20-24, who get were married by age 18 was 48.2 percent. In other words, nearly half of the women ages 20-24 get married by age 18 in Mozambique. In South Africa, even though such data is only available for 1998 (7.9 percent) and 2003 (5.6 percent), these far lower percentages indicate a stark difference in child marriages between Mozambique and South Africa.

Government laws and policies can only go so far in protecting women if there still exists an overall cultural norm that drives gender inequality. Reversing these norms requires a mentality shift of both men and women. As seen in Figure 11, there is a huge disparity in the number of women in Mozambique and South Africa who believe their husband is justified to beat his wife under certain circumstances. In the data provided by the World Bank (2019), there were five such reasons a husband might beat his wife: if the wife argues with him, if she burns the food, if she neglects the children, if she goes out without telling him, or if she refuses to have sex with him.¹⁴

In Mozambique, an astonishing 54.1 percent of women believed that their husband was justified to beat them for any one of these five reason in 2003. This percentage then fell to 30.3 in 2007, and to 21.0 in 2011. In South Africa, the percentages for this indicator decreased from 11.4 percent in 2003, to 7.3 percent in 2007, and 3.0 percent in 2011.

Figure 11: Women who believe their husband is justified in beating them



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2019).

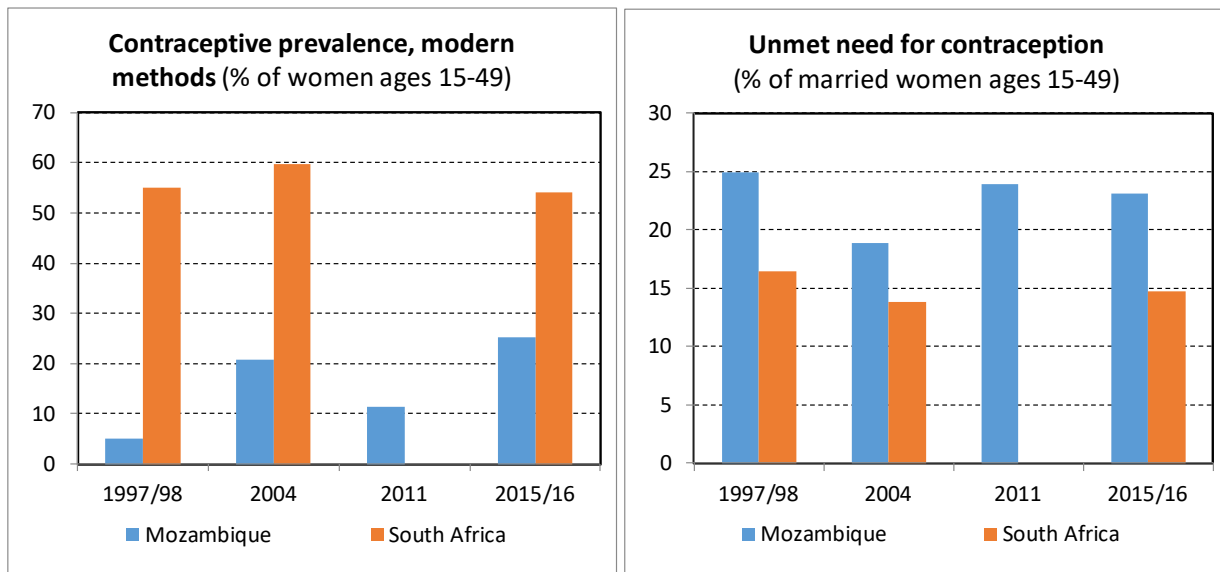
Another issue that holds back women is the limited availability of modern contraceptives. As seen in Figure 12, in South Africa the prevalence of modern contraceptive has remained relatively stable, which was 55.1 percent in 1988, then rose to 59.8 percent in 2004, before dropping to 54 percent in 2016. Mozambique tells a very different story. In 1997, just 5.1 percent of women were using modern methods of birth control. This number climbed to 20.8 percent in 2004, before seeing

¹⁴ World Bank (2019).

a regression back down to 11 percent in 2011, again proving Mozambique’s lack of commitment towards pursuing gender equality. This figure would eventually rise back up to 25.8 percent in 2015, which is however still far below the contraceptive use of South African women ages 15 to 49.

Beyond the contraceptive prevalence, Figure 13 shows the unmet need for contraception (as a percentage of married women ages 15-49). This data on the unmet need for contraception is largely consistent with the relatively low contraceptive prevalence in Mozambique and the relatively high contraceptive prevalence in South Africa. Mozambique’s unmet need for contraceptives (as a percent of married women ages 15 to 49) has varied between a minimum of 18.9 percent and a maximum of 24.9 percent, while South Africa’s percentage varied between 13.8 percent and 16.5 percent.

Figure 12 and 13: Contraceptive Prevalence and Unmet Need for Contraceptives



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2019).

VI. Conclusion

The source of economic disparity and life expectancy in South Africa and Mozambique has a lot to do with the oppression of many peoples, but specifically gender inequality. Through analyzing gender disparity in literacy, tertiary education, and salaried employment, it becomes clear that Mozambique is discriminating far more against women than South Africa. Our subsequent analysis of ethical origins and structures, which were illustrated by examining the level of child marriages, views on the acceptance of domestic violence, and access to modern contraceptives further supported that Mozambique’s lower level of development is caused by a high level of gender inequality.

There are solutions, but they will require shifts in thinking about the seriousness and consequences of gender inequality. how to treat and respect women. Still, the most important factor to helping women is peace within the country and the absence of armed conflict. Currently, Mozambique is in the middle of a continuing political crisis, amidst allegations that there was vote rigging in the

most recent election.¹⁵ This political tension and potential for another civil war undermine ethical structures that promote gender equality and basic human rights.

After having a stable political society, it is up to governments and civil society to set policies and standards that will ensure the equal treatments of all its citizens. This could include a mandatory primary education for all children and adult literacy education, regardless of gender. Beyond education, there must be opportunities for women in the workplace. As Mozambique and especially South African become increasingly dominated by industrial work, these opportunities will be there, it is just about putting women in the right positions.

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¹⁵ Sinclair, Smith and Tucker (2018).

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