

Maputo will gamble on schooling in 1995

By RACHEL WATERHOUSE: Maputo

THOUSANDS of anxious parents in Maputo are waiting for the results of a lottery which could decide their children's futures.

Never a gambling man, Castigo Filipe is one of them, forced to take a bet on his daughter's education.

Faced with the overwhelming number of children competing for a place at the city's few schools, the Maputo Education Authority has opted for a lottery.

Mr Filipe has entered his daughter for the lottery at two schools. "It's terribly unfair," he says.

"What happens to children who lose? They'll be marginalised for life."

Earlier this week, newly appointed Education Minister Arnaldo Nhavotso announced that the country's lack of schools would force more than a million Mozambican children — or almost half of those between the ages of six and 10 — to stay out of school this year.

In a country still recovering from 16 years of civil war in which schools and their teachers were targets of attack, the shortages in education are chronic.

The crisis is sharpest in rural areas, where the Renamo movement deliberately destroyed state schools.

Government sources estimate some 4 000 rural schools were destroyed or abandoned during the conflict, which ended in October 1992.

But some parents in Maputo are happy with the new lottery system: if nothing else, they say, it should stem the widespread corruption already pushing their children out of school.

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