

# Diet of a Mozambican peasant: Drought, locusts and Renamo

Argus Africa News Service

MAPUTO. — Life in and around the village of Nipepe in Mozambique varies between hardship and horror as hunger, drought and a locust plague are interspersed with attacks by Renamo rebels.

After the biggest attack, in January 1989, Renamo occupied the village for eight days. Townsfolk say 40 people were murdered and every building in the village wrecked, including the school, the health clinic, shops and government offices.

"We don't know what Renamo wants," said peasant farmer Mr Luis Mota.

"They don't let us cultivate fer-

tile land. They take our tools. When we manage to produce a little, they raid us.

"Where I used to live, about 20km from here, I could grow enough food to last for a year. Now I have managed to harvest enough maize to last for two months."

The situation in Nipepe has been made worse by late rains this year. Peasants planted three times and saw three crops fail before the rains came.

Those who still had seed shared with their neighbours.

At last the rains came and the meagre crops sprouted and grew. Then locusts came and ate most of them.

Today, the people of Nipepe survive largely on food distributed by aid agencies.

In the only shop rebuilt after the Renamo occupation, donated second-hand clothes are offered to a few with money.

Mr Lino Assimo has set up a wooden stall alongside the shop where he sells soap, salt, matches, buttons and needles, but his shelves are mostly empty. The goods have to be brought on foot from the nearest source in Nam-pula and Cabo Delgado, more than 200 km away.

Those who travel the route do so at night, hiding during the day, to avoid encountering Renamo or the Mozambican army.

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