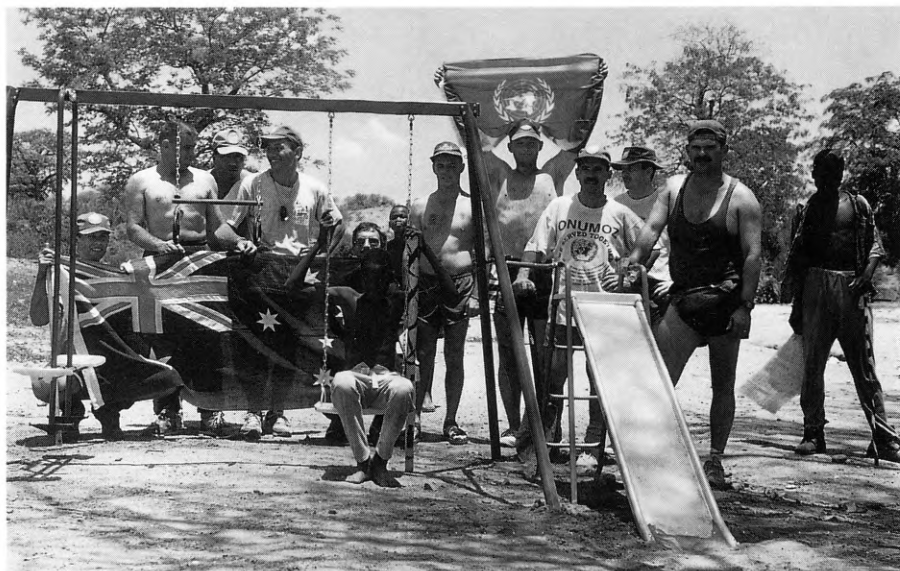


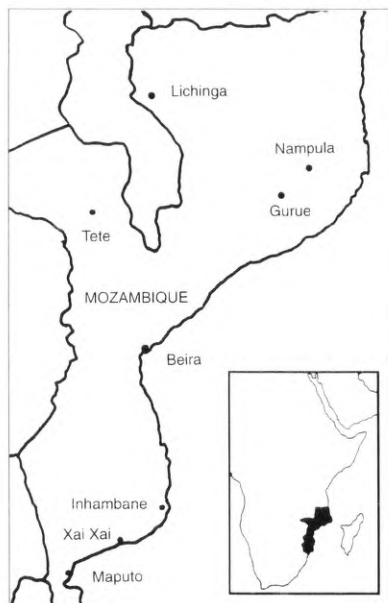
Having served with the AFP's 2nd Mozambique Contingent, Sergeant Frank Priest recalls that when the contingent left Australia accompanied by a load of confiscated leisure wear and donated playground equipment, little did its members know just how difficult it would be to organise the equitable distribution of the gifts.



The 'Anzac' construction crew finished an installation at a primary school in 55 degree heat.

One hundred days in Mozambique

By Sergeant Frank Priest
ACT Public Relations



The last you heard about the 2nd Mozambique Contingent was when we went off to Mozambique accompanied by 15,000 items of leisure wear carrying counterfeit brand names which had been confiscated by the AFP's Western Region.

You might also remember that we took with us 10 complete swing sets donated by Hills Industries Ltd. to be distributed among schools.

What ever happened to all those items?

Well, I can only tell you about what happened in the province of Tete where I was posted with Mick Calatzis. For the first time since the early days of Cyprus, an Australian contingent performing United Nations duties was dispersed in the field. The AFP Mozambique contingent members were posted throughout the length and breadth of that country. Therefore, each team has its own story to tell, however, Mick Calatzis and I can tell you how we went about our particular task.

The items arrived about two months into the mission giving Mick and I plenty of time to acquaint ourselves with Des O'Hanlon, Gerry Gonzales and John Kleise, members of the Australian Army Field Ordinance Squadron. We also made ourselves known to Mick Coulter, Quentin Whanau, Mike Skellem and 'Kel' Kelly of the New Zealand Army Field Squadron. These fine ambassadors later formed a formidable African chapter of an 'Anzac' force that became very much involved in the charity side of our mission in Tete.

Initially, we could not have anticipated that finding a couple of suitable sites would have been so much trouble. It seemed simply a matter of looking for a school or some other organisation that appeared to be in need of some basic playground equipment and clothing, and handing it over with the minimum of fuss, pomp and ceremony. But when the time finally came to identify the needy recipients, the task became almost an impossible one.

Like the rest of Mozambique, the people of the province of Tete and its capital city, which bears the same name, had suffered the same fate as the rest of that country. Seventeen years of war and

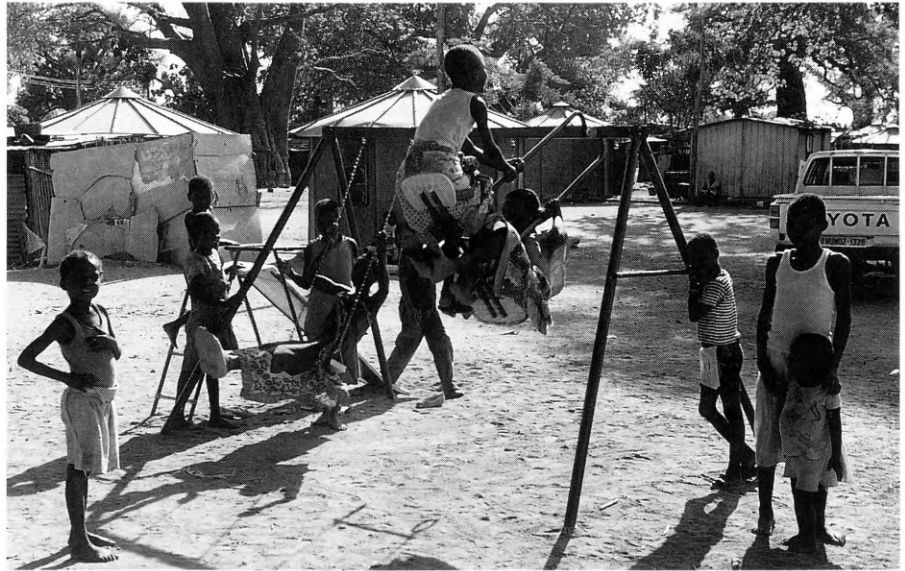
civil unrest has had its effect on everything. The buildings and associated infrastructure were run down and in an advanced state of disrepair. Out of all this, Mick and I had to find suitable and/or worthy sites to locate the swing sets. The distribution of the clothes was another problem which we would have to deal with later.

After an amount of serious effort we finally identified two sites for the erection of the swings with the assistance of the Australian Army. One was located at a primary school and the other was a camp for itinerant workers and their families. Believe it or not, the chosen sites seemed to have less facilities than what was available throughout the rest of the city of Tete. Undoubtedly there were other needy cases in the area, but we only had two sets of swings to give away.

It wouldn't mean much to identify these locations by name because it wouldn't mean much to someone who hasn't been there, but it is sufficient to say, however, that the children at both locations had probably never had the joy of playing on a set of swings before.

When the time came to put the swings up, the 'Anzac' force fronted up armed with shovels, picks and spanners ready to do battle.

The first set of swings was put up at the primary school. Despite the soaring temperatures of between 45 to 55 degrees celsius the job was completed quickly. As an added precaution, the footings of the



The donated swing sets required innovative repairs due to enthusiastic use.

swings were cemented into the ground in an effort to deter would-be thieves.

As soon as the job was done, all the students ran out of the school and gathered around the swings eager to have their turn. Sadly, they had to wait until the next day, to allow the concrete to dry sufficiently. The following day the swing set was attacked with a vengeance and, within the first week, a metal ring attaching the swing chain to the frame had been worn completely through with the constant use by about 150 eager children.

A similar thing happened at the workers' camp after the second set of

swings was erected. On that occasion the plastic seat of the swing gave way under the pressure of tiny little feet after constant use over the period of a couple of days.

When it came to the distribution of the clothes, Mick and I sought the assistance of the province Roman Catholic Bishop and his priests. Well, not all of the clothing reached the Bishop.

The streets of the city of Tete, like most cities in Mozambique, have a fair share of 'street kids' — homeless or forsaken children, often war orphans who eat, live and sleep in the street, relying on handouts to survive.

A group of about five of these children, who normally hung around together, took a liking to the Aussies and eventually one of the children was unofficially adopted by the Australian Army boys and they found him a home. Anyway, prior to giving the Bishop our allotment of clothing Mick was 'accosted' by a group of likely lads and held to 'ransom'.

In a moment of weakness he gave them all a pair of shorts and two T-shirts each. In effect, I think Mick had the distinction of supplying this gang with their first set of 'colours'. At least the gang's new colours were green and gold.

Overall, this charitable side of our mission was a success, of which every member of the AFP can feel justifiably proud.



Abandoned street kids in Tete became the best dressed when they 'bailed up' the AFP's Mick Calatzis.