

MOZAMBIQUE ANGOLA COMMITTEE

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MOZAMBIKAN SCHOOLS NEED THOUSANDS OF SLIDE RULES

The pocket calculator has pushed millions of slide rules into attics and store rooms. But in Mozambique the slide rule is in itself a major leap forward, and slide rules discarded in Europe can contribute to Mozambique's battle against underdevelopment.

Five hundred years of colonialism by Europe's least developed country has left Mozambique one of the world's poorest nations. Portugal trained few Mozambican technicians. And those it did train were really clerks intended to keep a check on the work, rather than technicians trained to solve problems. Their training was so backward, that at independence eight years ago Mozambican technical schools still did not use slide rules. Instead students were trained to use tables and to do laborious calculations by hand. Everyone, for example, learned the long hand method of calculating square roots.

Mozambique has committed itself to producing basic food, and clothing, and to providing health care and education, to everyone in the country by the end of the decade. This is a tall order for a country that came to independence with less than 15% of adults able to read. It means major industrial development and a massive expansion of education. And it means training thousands of technicians.

With the help of teachers from all over the world, technical education is being transformed to provide the practical training the country needs. Clearly it would be better to jump directly into the 1980's and give each student a pocket calculator. But Mozambique is so poor that it cannot yet afford to buy either calculators or the batteries to keep them running. Thus, as a temporary measure, students learn to use the slide rule, which is at least a major improvement over doing the square roots by hand.

For the past 2 years each student has been given their own slide rule, to use throughout their course and then to use on the job after graduation. The first slide rules were collected by maths teachers who returned to Sweden and Holland. 8,000 were sent from Holland. Another 10,000 were collected in Sweden but these were destroyed in Sweden, together with clothes and medicines, by right wing arsonists.

Thus there are no slide rules for the 5,000 students who are supposed to start using them in June 1983. We are therefore launching an urgent appeal for slide rules. Please help us by collecting slide rules in your institution or organization. For example, there are unused slide rules in schools, technical colleges and the like. Could you collect together as many as you can? Then send them or contact us to collect them.

We will pack them up and send them to Mozambique. Please also send us names and addresses of other people who might be willing to search for slide rules and we will mail them. We are enclosing copies of an article in New Scientist about our appeal, together with leaflets for you to display.

see 27 Jan. 1983

Tony Gifford

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Tony Gifford
 Chairperson

SLIDE RULES WANTED

The pocket calculator has pushed millions of slide rules into attics and store rooms. But in Mozambique your discarded slide rule would be a major leap forward and would contribute to Mozambique's development.

Since winning independence from Portugal in 1975. Mozambique has committed itself to producing basic food and clothing and to providing health care for everyone in the country. Technical education is being transformed to provide much needed practical training.

Mozambique cannot afford to buy calculators or batteries, thus, for the present, students learn to use slide rules and all technical students are given their own. The first slide rules were collected in Sweden and Holland. 5,000 more are required for students starting training in June 1983.

Search your attic or desk for your discarded slide rule and collect slide rules from your friends. But these will not be enough. There must be hundreds of slide rules stored away. For example your school, college, or university may have slide rules they no longer need.

Please collect as many as you can and send them to :

Or to Mozambique Angola Committee, 98 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3NF Tel. (01) 580 5404

The committee can be contacted if you need us to collect the slide rules or for any other reason.