

Mozambique launches Brazil-funded drugs plant to battle HIV

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Mozambique on Saturday launched a Brazilian funded pharmaceutical plant that will make anti-retroviral drugs to battle the HIV/AIDS scourge in the southern African country.

The factory -- built with \$23 million in aid from Brazil and \$4.5 million from that country's mining giant Vale -- will initially package drugs from Brazil but start producing the pills by the end of the year.

Mozambique has more than 2.5 million people living with HIV -- nearly 12 percent of the population -- but fewer than 300,000 of them now take anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs, according to the [health ministry](#).

ARVs suppress the [HIV virus](#), reducing sickness and death rates as well as the transmission of the virus that causes AIDS.

Brazil's Vice President Michel Temer attended Saturday's launch of what is thought to be Africa's first fully public ARV factory in Matola, along with Mozambique's Industry and Commerce Minister Armando Inroga.

"As of now drugs which were manufactured in Brazil will be packaged here in Mozambique, certified and distributed to the Mozambican people," Temer said.

"There is an excellent partnership between the Brazilian and the Mozambican people and there is an absolute integration between the two countries in both public and private sectors."

In 2010 Brazil's then-president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva visited the plant site and called it a "revolution" in Africa's fight against HIV/AIDS.

Brazil offers free ARV treatment to HIV-positive citizens, a programme that sparked controversy when it was announced in 1996 because of concerns about [drug resistance](#) and violation of pharmaceutical copyright.

But it has since been praised as a model for the developing world. The World Bank estimates the free medicine saved more than half a million lives.

Mozambican technicians and other staff for the plant are now being trained, some of them in Brazil, through a partnership with the Brazilian public health institution A Fundacao Oswaldo Cruz.

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