



REPUBLIC OF MOZAMBIQUE  
Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare  
National Directorate of Children

**Communication for Development Strategy (C4D)  
for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Marriages**

# **Formative Research Report**

## Nampula, Zambézia, Tete and Manica provinces

N'weti Consortium

UNICEF

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## **Abbreviations**

C4D – Communication for Development  
CEA – Centre of African Studies  
CCPC – Child Protection Community Committee  
CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women  
CLC – Council of Local Leaders  
CS – Health Council  
COV – Orphaned and Vulnerable Children  
CP – Child Marriage  
CRC – Convention on the Rights of the Child  
DGF/FGD - Focus Group Discussion  
DHS – Demographic and Health Survey  
EI – Individual Interview  
GoM – Government of Mozambique  
KAP – Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices  
KII – Interviews with Key Informants  
MINEDH – Ministry of Education and Human Development  
MGCAS – Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare  
MISAU – Ministry of Health  
MYS – Ministry of Youth and Sport  
OPM – Oxford Policy Management  
PD – Positive Deviance  
SRHR- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights  
TBA – Traditional Midwives  
UEM –Eduardo Mondlane University  
UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund  
UNFPA – United Nations Fund for Population Activities  
VAWG – Violence against Women and Children  
WHO – World Health Organization

## **Glossary**

**Marriage:** Mozambican legislation defines marriage as a voluntary and singular union between a man and a woman with the purpose of establishing a family, through full sharing of life. The Family Law, Law no. 10/2004, stipulates that the legal age for marriage without parental consent is 18 years. However, the law also states that, when the parents or legal representatives of the child consent, marriage may, exceptionally, be contracted at the age of 16 years.

**Child marriage:** this is defined as a union of matrimonial nature which involves at least one minor. In Mozambique, child marriages mostly involve girls under 18 years of age and male adults. Most of these marriages can be classified as de facto unions, usually formalised through customary procedures such as payment of a dowry to the girl's family.

In IDS (2011) marriage is defended as the union or cohabitation between a woman and a man and takes into account the age at the first cohabitation. The marriage age is determined by the “age at the first union” or cohabitation. With the age perspective, relevant models were generated – cohabitation where the girl is under 15 years of age; and cohabitation where the girl is under 18 years old.

**Child:** Law no. 7/2008 on the Protection of Children's Rights states that anyone under 18 years of age is a child.

**Social Norm:** A series of widely shared beliefs and commonly accepted practices motivated by a desire to conform to a social expectation shared among an important reference group.

**Gender Relations:** This refers to the unequal social relations of power between men and women, which result from a social construction of the roles of men and of women based on sexual differences.

**Gender Norm:** A social norm intrinsically associated with gender relations.

**Gender Roles** These reflect the division of responsibilities based on gender. The empirical expectations of individuals or descriptive norms about the action of others is generally based on perceptions of gender roles.

## Executive Summary

The present document presents the results of the Formative Research to develop the Communication for Development (C4D) strategy in response to the high prevalence of Child Marriage in Mozambique, in line with the National Strategy to Prevent and Eliminate Child Marriage (2015-2019), led by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare.

Drafting this document covered data from an extensive bibliographical review<sup>1</sup> on the matter, and qualitative research in 8 districts of 4 Mozambican provinces, namely: Angoche and Rapale in Nampula; Maganja da Costa and Milange in Zambézia; Moatize and Angónia in Tete; and, Tambara and Gondola in Manica. In total, the field research covered a sample of 86 individual interviews and 41 focus group discussions, involving about 406 participants of various social profiles. The field research took place between April and June 2017.

The field research was an important stage in the formative research and sought to obtain important data on the perceptions and determinants that inform and help to understand the community environment and social constructions around child marriages in the eight districts covered, as well as to map the stakeholders, understand the construction and perceptions around the positive deviations, the communications channels and spaces available and accessible, and the services and actors who influence the adoption of practices related with child marriages.

The data flowing from the literature review indicate that there is a series of factors which contribute to the perpetuation of child marriages, ranging from: gaps in knowledge about the legal framework, attitudes and practices rooted in cultural traditions, unequal gender relations, and poor access to information, as well as disparities in access to education and health services. The question of poverty in Mozambique is mentioned as a key factor in the context of sustaining child marriages. More than half the country's population (54%) still lives below the poverty line of 18 meticais (MT) a day<sup>2</sup>.

**Scale of Child Marriages:** Mozambique has a level of prevalence of child marriage above that of the other countries of southern and eastern Africa, second only to Malawi. For the group of girls under 15 years of age, Mozambique has a prevalence of 14% compared with 13% and 10% for sub-Saharan Africa, and for southern and eastern Africa combined. For the group under 18 years of age, the prevalence in Mozambique is around 48%, against 39% in sub-Saharan Africa and 38% for southern and eastern Africa combined (UNCEF, UNFPA 2015).

**Prevalence of Child Marriage:** According to the data from the Demographic and Health Survey (IDS) of 2011, 48.2% of women aged between 20-24 years had married before they were 18 years old, and 14.3% before they were 15 years old<sup>3</sup>. The proportion of girls who marry when they are children varies between the provinces of the south and those of the centre and north of the country, where the rates are higher.

**Prevalence of Teenage Pregnancy:** As happens with child marriages, which mostly affect women, having children early is a social burden that falls more on girls than on boys. According to the analysis cited above, 40.2% of girls are parents before their 18th birthday, compared with only 3.8% of boys (of whom none reported becoming a father before they were 15 years old)

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<sup>1</sup> Also available as a separate entire document on bibliographical review.

<sup>2</sup> The situation of children in Mozambique, a portrait, 2014

<sup>3</sup> Undated. Statistical Analysis of Child Marriage and Adolescent Pregnancy in Mozambique: Determinants and Impacts. June 2014. Management (OMP) consultants Dr. Sebastian Silva-Leander, Barnali Basak, Patrick Schneider

(UNICEF, UNFPA 2015).

The studies reviewed in this document show that child marriage and teenage pregnancy remain major child protection questions in Mozambique, with more than 12% of girls aged between 15 and 24 married before their 15th birthday, and almost a third of all girls married before they are 18 years old. On average, girls have their first child 15 months after marriage and rarely more than 24 months after<sup>4</sup>.

**Trends:** Child marriages are beginning to show signs of decline among the more prosperous sectors of societies in all regions of the world, but are still frequent in Africa and in South Asia, confirming the thesis that this phenomenon is localised above all in the poorest and lowest income countries (Artur, 2010). In Mozambique, despite the discrepancy and limited comparability of the available data, the analysis commissioned by UNICEF and UNFPA, indicates that there has been an improvement, in percentage terms, in the weighted indicators used to analyse the child marriage trend over the period 1997-2011<sup>5</sup>. With regard to the indicator used to estimate the reduction in child marriages between the ages of 15 and 18, one notes that a reduction of 7 to 8 percentage points was found (statistically significant), but the same cannot be said about teenage pregnancy in the same period, which did not show any statistically significant changes. In almost all provinces, the modest reduction in the rates of child marriage have not been sufficient to compensate for rapid population growth, which means that even though the percentage of girls married while adolescents has declined, the absolute number of child marriages has increased.

With regard to **Notions and Conceptions about the Age of Marriage**, the results of the field research show that the **signs of puberty** are regarded as an important biological and social landmark for determining the maturity of girls for marriage. The recurrence of this type of perception has implications for the reproduction of cultures and practices which encourage the perpetuation of child marriages.

The **initiation rites** are a social space of complex, contradictory teachings, which frequently encourage the start of sexual activity and drive the initiates to involvement in sexual, matrimonial relations and/or child marriage. The diversity of topics and themes in which girls are instructed/initiated in the rites, apart from matters related with genital practices, include notions of self-care, domestic activities and cultivating the predisposition to take on roles charged with gender stereotypes, in relation to potential husbands, in that the instruction centres on how to please the man, both sexually and in carrying out household chores.

In general, the results of the research show that, although some interviewees mentioned chronological **markers (age)** as an important parameter for fixing the marriage age, in most cases an assertive ambiguity was noted in the reification of this practice, since even the cases where age was mentioned did not escape from the social and biological references that characterise the different stages of development of girls and boys. The research results show that the perception of most of the interviewees is that boys would generally be ready to marry and form a family between the ages of 18 and 24, linked with the perception that boys develop more slowly than girls, and that boys need to develop other social characteristics, going beyond the biological transformations taking place in their bodies.

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<sup>4</sup> UNICEF, UNFPA, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> According to the interpretation of CEPISA, in almost 30 years (1980-2007), child marriage in Mozambique declined by only 15% which means that some factors, including those related with discriminatory gender dynamics, and damaging practices, mentioned above, are being perpetuated inside Mozambican communities (CEPSA 2013).



The idea that girls should enter the matrimonial relationship in a position of subservience, **subordinate to their husbands and their husbands' families**, is not just propagated in the circuits of the initiation rites, but is also structurally embedded in the perception of men and of various members of the communities. The difference alluded to would be associated with the perception that girls under the age of 18 tend to question less the authority of their husbands (partners), and would be more subservient, while girls older than this would have a wide-ranging experience of life and a sharper capacity for questioning, which is perceived as a challenge to the power and “right” of male domination.

The research results pointed to the recurrence of narratives which stress the idea of **urgency to experience sexuality and reproduction**, resting on the perception that a woman's cycle of sexual life is relatively short, as well as the perception that what is regarded as a late start of sexual activities would imply wasted opportunities of generating children in each menstrual cycle. From this perspective, delaying the onset of sexual relations and not marrying before the age of 18, would represent socially reprehensible forms of losing opportunities for procreation, in that the sooner sexual relations are started, the more chance the girl would have of bearing “many” children throughout her reproductive life. Thus she could be recognised socially as a “complete woman”, in association with the value attributed to the capacity to bear children as opposed to women who have borne few or no children during their lives.

The research also documented a series of **Perceptions and Arguments for Marrying**. Among the main arguments invoked for marriage there stands out **social pressure**, associated with notions of **honour and shame**. The question of honour and shame was constantly mentioned as one of the reasons why families thrust their daughters into marriage, centred on the fear of the loss of virginity, unplanned pregnancy, and a social perception of the deterioration of the value of the girl on the emotional market and of intra-family transactions (avoid the deterioration of the value of the dowry). Girls who remain single for long periods become victims of inspection of their virginity and it is believed they could damage the reputation of their family.

Social pressure is also expressed as the perception of marriage as an opportunity to **express gratitude** to the parents (family and community) and as a blessing that not all girls and families would have the privilege to enjoy. For the parents, guaranteeing that their daughters marry should represent a great honour, especially when this marriage is strictly complemented by the rituals that accompany it. In the search for this social recognition, which also includes the circulation of money and goods, families tend to promote child marriage, in the name of the possibility of the social demonstration that their daughters are not possessed by evil spirits which would prevent them from marrying. Part of this conviction is based on the idea that the father cannot die without receiving the dowry.

The research results also indicate that, among some girls, marriage would be a resource through which they seek **self-determination and social prestige** in rising to the status of a married woman. In this discourse, which advocates the idea of acceding to “freedom through marriage”, the parents' house is seen as a space of less autonomy. This is one of the main reasons which drives girls to regard marriage as an opportunity to obtain resources and a secure and protected social space, as well as representing an opportunity of emancipation and the possibility of making choices with relative autonomy, in opposition to the perception that, in the domestic sphere, in her parents' house, she would be subordinate to her parents, brothers and other older members of the family. She would not be able to decide or determine her choices of food, leisure

and entertainment, and would have to submit to these members of the family in domestic chores and agricultural work. Attentive to the reductionism here, it is important to stress that the perception of marriage as an opportunity for emancipation reveals the tension that characterises the life of adolescents in families. A vast literature and literary genres describe the family as a space of tension and conflict, and a territory where resentments between the various members are expressed.

At the same time, throughout the research, ideas of **blaming the girls** were shown, where the girls are seen as responsible for the early onset of sexual activity and eventual involvement in child marriages. This line of interpretation stresses the idea of the erosion of values in the relations between parents and children, lack of respect towards what they regard as the most appropriate traditional advice. In this perspective, the involvement “by choice” of girls with older men in exchange for goods and money was mentioned in the interviews as among the other factors that favour the reproduction of child marriages, even when these take the form of bonds that are not specifically those of marriage (customary or legal) but relations qualified as **intergenerational or transactional sex**.

The invocation of **poverty and economic reasons**, in various shapes, as a motive for marriage was recurrent in all the research sites. The lack of material conditions to sustain oneself, the inability to cope with the difficulties of agricultural production, and the lack of money to keep girls at school (especially when they have to go into secondary education), as well as the need to satisfy other “whims” and needs of girls were stressed as the main reasons pushing girls towards marriage and/or sexual relations with someone who possesses resources, with the consent and/or guidance of the parents as an opportunity and strategy for overcoming their economic poverty. In one of the research sites (Manica), **the vulnerability**, to which **orphan girls** are subject was mentioned among the girls who avoided child marriage as one of the reasons for marriage. The **scarcity of opportunities for educational and professional progression** of individuals (girls and boys) was indicated as a factor which encourages marriage, even at a tender age, as a way of expressing individual accomplishment in a context of limited opportunities.

The research results also show that the **normative framework** which governs the occurrence of child marriages is not sufficiently publicised and lacks mechanisms to strengthen implementation at national level. The fact that the legislation on marriage opens an exception for 16 year old girls to marry, based on parental consent, can be interpreted in various ways. The lack of harmony in the legislation contributes to a tacit acceptance of child marriages, including for girls under the age of 16, by exploiting the notion of parental consent, especially if we bear in mind that the matter rarely comes to court in cases where the marriages are held between families and are governed by excessively fluid customary and traditional norms.

Furthermore, the skills of the professionals and communicators who play the role of guardians and promoters of messages that are expected to be transformative are also charged with legalist radicalism which makes it difficult to overcome barriers of “natural” resistance regarding negotiating and/or transforming social norms. If, on the one hand, the modern legislation needs to be stressed, on the other it must be recognised that this legislation does not rest on a vacuum, but on centuries old social practices, highly dynamic and changing, regardless of whether they damage the life, rights and health of the child. The labelling and confrontational language proposed limits the possibilities of establishing bridges and points of rupture which might guarantee the involvement of the “social brokers” (those who boost the introduction and/or adoption of new conducts) to the point of winning social acceptance with transformational potential.

The research sought to systematise data that illustrate the **Perceptions and Arguments for not marrying before the age of 18**. Among the multiplicity of factors invoked by the interviewees, **Avoiding Complications in Pregnancy and Childbirth** stands out. In all the research sites, it was repeatedly stated that there are many risks associated with girls (and boys) marrying before the age of 18, with a special focus on the risks associated with complications during pregnancy and childbirth (including the death of the mother and baby).

The interview results indicated that child marriage is also regarded as **damaging to the health, development and growth of the girl**, supported by various arguments enlisted to justify reservations towards child marriage. According to the interviewees, girls who marry when they are children are deprived of power, dependent on their husbands, and stripped of their fundamental rights to health, education and safety. Adolescence is also perceived as a phase of development in which these girls are in transition between childhood and the adult phase, and they would not be physically, mentally or emotionally prepared to become wives or mothers.

The research results also show that some of the interviewees believe there are no advantages in girls marrying before they are 18. On the contrary, there are disadvantages, associated with the **loss or interruption of studies, and the loss of opportunities for professional training**, which may compromise the future of girls and boys. However, for some members of the community, the school is a space where sexuality and sexual practices are promoted, and where girls become “rebels”, disobeying their parents and socio-cultural norms. The stigma built towards schools was reported with greater frequency in interviews with adult men, in association with their experience in solving problems of early pregnancy, child marriage, and the sexual harassment and rape committed by some teachers.

As for analysis of the characteristics and **perceptions towards girls who did NOT marry before the age of 18** (positive deviations), the research showed that multiple perceptions of this category of persons co-exist. In general, there is a positive assessment of the girls who reach the age of 18 or somewhat older without contracting customary or formal marriage. However, **negative and pejorative perceptions**, loaded with stereotypes against these girls and families were also strongly expressed in the discourses of the interviewees. In the research sites, it is socially established (based on supposedly traditional values) that it is desirable and advisable for girls to marry young. Those who tend to contradict this social expectation, by marrying relatively later (after the age of 18) have been slandered, and their conduct has been questioned because, from the viewpoint of those questioning their behaviour, they are subverting standardised norms of conduct. The negative connotation about girls who do not marry before they are 18, in some cases extends to their parents and relatives. Parents who refuse to give their daughters over to marriage prematurely have sometimes been censured, and accused of withholding consent to marriage because the fathers are allegedly sleeping with their daughters.

In general, the research results showed that there is a broad **positive appreciation of girls, boys and the families of the girls and boys who marry after the age of 18**. This appreciation was reported in almost all the research sites, where the importance was stressed of avoiding child marriage due to the risks the girls would be exposed to. The community leaders also stated that marrying after the age of 18 brings prestige to the parents, and these parents are thus often called upon to lead, or to play prominent roles in some community events (lectures, training etc.) which allows them to share their experience of educating their children. The characteristics of the positive deviant standards, such as, for example, not marrying before the age of 18, are seen by some people as beneficial in that they allow boys and girls to prepare physically and socially for success in married life and in other social spheres.

The girls who described their experiences of living in the community without marrying before they were 18, said they came **mostly from religious families**, which were relatively stable financially, or had members working in the public administration. The discussions of the characteristics of the positive deviations and their families, in almost all the groups, shared the same trend. Members of the groups shared the same perception that the positive deviations come from families with some possessions, in terms of land, animals and money. The discourses and narratives of the girls who avoided child marriage allowed us to understand that, in addition to the above characteristics, they live in family environments where they enjoy a relative space for dialogue and participation in family life. When girls who are 18 are not married, this is in part because their parents understand the need for them to study. The better financial conditions of their families are a reference point, but are not the primary condition for girls to marry or not, since there are also poor families which do not encourage their daughters to marry. The opening that these girls find inside their families was reported as the main factor making them resilient towards the labels and stereotypes of which they are victims.

As for **access to legal services for protection** against the violence against women and girls, as well as access to education and health, in the four provinces and eight districts of the research, the interviewees, with the exception of those working in the formal education, health and justice systems, showed a poor level of knowledge of Mozambican legislation, and particularly the legislation on child marriages.

With regard to the **means and channels of communication** to be used, the research stresses the dominance of radio in all the districts; of television in at least 6 districts; of road shows and mobile cinema in most of the districts; schools, health centres and door to door campaigns in all the districts; collective and community meetings with the involvement of local and religious leaders; lectures; use of social media on a very limited scale, as well as the staging of theatrical and musical pieces. All these means and channels for communication should deserve a structured focus of directed contents at the moment of developing the communication strategy, selecting some of them for inclusion in the framework for monitoring interventions.

As for the potential **stakeholders to involve in implementing the interventions**, in all the districts, the **community and religious leaders** were indicated as the most influential people to involve in education and awareness initiatives on child marriages. The religious leaders were indicated due to their strong influence over believers among whom they can spread the message.

Analysis of the field research results made it possible to draw up a series of specific **recommendations**, in terms of thematic focus and contents, to inform the development of the strategy of communication for behavioural change (C4D), as well as a considerable range of recommendations that can be capitalised upon in the various fronts of intervention and response to the challenges imposed by child marriage. Among the broad range of specific recommendations, we stress the following:

**Recommendation 1:** Perceptions on the signs of puberty: The C4D strategy should demystify the idea that the appearance of menstruation is a sign of the sexual maturity of the girl, stressing instead the need for the full physiological, psychological and emotional development of the girl.

**Recommendation 2:** Initiation rites. The C4D strategy should stress the educational potential of the spaces provided by the initiation rites, by promoting the inclusion and

adoption of contents that contribute towards reversing the current traditions that help perpetuate child marriages.

**Recommendation 3: Chronological Markers.** The C4D strategy should stress the importance of knowing the chronological age of the child, so as to guarantee that marriage takes place in accordance with the provisions of the law.

**Recommendation 4: Age disparities between men and girls as the basis for reproducing practices of male domination.** The C4D strategy should make visible the challenging dimensions of intergenerational relationships, in association with the discourse of male domination stressing the importance of generational balance in matrimonial and gender relations and rights.

**Recommendation 5: Narratives on the urgency of experiencing sexuality and bearing many children.** The C4D strategy should focus on improving knowledge about the risks associated with the early onset of sexual relations, and strengthening the messages on the benefits of delaying the start of sexual relations and promoting access to sexual and reproductive health services (family planning), and in demystifying the idea that having many children is a synonym of wealth.

**Recommendation 7. Social Pressure to Marry (Honour and Shame / Blessing and Gratitude).** The C4D strategy should stress the experience of sexuality in the perspective of law, and subvert the idea of the treatment of girls as sexual objects.

**Recommendation 8. Self-determination and Social Prestige.** The C4D strategy should affirm the importance of promoting harmonious relations of dialogue within families, and a balance in the distribution of domestic chores between boys and girls.

**Recommendation 9. Blaming Girls.** The C4D strategy should stress the unequal roles within family and community structures in decision taking responsibilities about the life and destiny of girls. It should demystify the idea of choices made by children and strengthen messages that promote the rights of children and discourage practices of transactional or commercial sex involving children.

**Recommendation 10. Poverty and Economic Reasons.** The C4D strategy should show a clear recognition of poverty and of economic adversities as part of the broader structural reasons that favour the perpetuation of child marriages. It should catalyse inter-sector collaboration to deal with the structural questions that compromise the all-round development of girls and boys.

**Recommendation 11. Normative framework.** The C4D strategy should promote a combination of persuasion, dialogue and repressive (punitive) measures conscientiously implemented by the stakeholders, institutions and communities committed to responding to child marriages.

**Recommendation 12: Complications in Pregnancy and in Childbirth.** The C4D strategy should address the risks related with early pregnancy, such as obstetric fistulas, complications in childbirth, and the likelihood of the death of the mother and baby.



**Recommendation 13:** Avoid Damaging the Development of Girls: The C4D strategy should stress that child marriages compromise the normal, all-round development of girls, pointing out the physical, mental, emotional and other dimensions.

**Recommendation 14:** Increase the Possibilities of Continuing Studies. The C4D strategy should stress the importance of girls and boys enjoying educational opportunities up to the highest possible levels, underlining the importance of education for individual and collective development.

**Recommendation 15:** Negative Perceptions of Girls Not Married after 18 Years of Age. The C4D strategy should stress the advantages of delaying marriage until the girl attains the age of 18, and is physically, mentally and emotionally developed, apart from enjoying the opportunity to continue her education.

**Recommendation 16:** Positive Perceptions of Girls who are NOT married after the age of 18: The C4D strategy should capitalise on the existence of a favourable environment which appreciates positively girls who marry after they are 18 years old, and empower these models as possible examples to be followed in each community

**Recommendation 17:** Profile of the Families of the Girls who have NOT married before they were 18. The C4D strategy should stress the importance of dialogue between parents and children about the challenges and dilemmas of child marriages, strengthening messages that promote delaying marriage until a more opportune age and time. The values of religions that do not promote marriage before the age of 18 may be considered by way of example, reference and social base of support.

**Recommendation 18:** Access to Legal Services for Protection against violence against girls and women, as well as access to education and health The C4D strategy should start from recognition of the limited levels of dissemination and appropriation of the instruments of the normative and legal framework that inhibit child marriages and should promote their instrumental dissemination. The education and health services should be capitalised upon as vehicles and spaces for the spread of information and knowledge about child marriages.

**Recommendation 19:** Means and Channels of Communication. The C4D strategy should structure multiple forms of using the available channels, specifying the objectives to be attained with each means and the specific content.

## Context

Across the world, more than 700 million women currently alive married when they were children. More than 1 in 3 – or about 250 million – married before they were 15 years old. According to the global classifications, Mozambique occupies 10th place in levels of child marriage, with almost one in two girls marrying before the age of 18 (48.2% of girls married before 18 - IDS 2011). Child marriage has increasingly become one of the most serious challenges of development.

Under International Law and the right of “free and full” consent to marriage, as recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) ratified by the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique, by resolution no. 4/1993<sup>6</sup>, child marriage is prohibited. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), (ratified by Mozambique in April 1994), governments have promised to guarantee the general protection of children and young people under the age of 18. However, child marriage and the series of implications for rights contained within it, substantially infringe these protections. The legal resort is envisaged in the Family Law of Mozambique (Law no. 10/2004) and in the Law on the Protection and Promotion of Children’s Rights (Law no. 7/2008), which stipulate 18 as the legal minimum age for marriage. This Law, however, has a gap which allows the marriage of girls under 16 years of age, with the consent of their parents. Thus, although child marriage is prohibited by law in Mozambique, girls are not effectively protected.

In 2011, the Mozambican Government (GoM), in partnership with civil society and UNICEF, launched the national campaign of Zero Tolerance for Violence and Abuse against Children, as part of the action seeking to raise the awareness of society to questions that affect children, including child marriage. In July 2014, the GoM launched a national campaign to prevent and combat child marriage at provincial level, and in December 2015 the National Strategy to Prevent and Eliminate Child Marriage (2015-2019) was approved, headed by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare. It is a fact that an important step has been taken, but there is still a great deal of work to be done. Young people of between 10 and 19 years of age account for approximately 23% of the total population (UNICEF, 2014). The negative impact on the economy is substantial. The strengthening of an adequate legal and political framework that discourages child marriage should continue to be one of the main priorities of the Government of Mozambique.

The gaps in knowledge, the attitudes and practices rooted in cultural traditions, unequal gender relations and poor access to information are some of the key factors that affect the welfare of girls, according to "A situação das crianças em Moçambique" ("The Situation of Children in Mozambique" - UNICEF, 2014). We should stress the "decisive influence of traditional institutions and practices at community level, including the initiation rites, which play an important role in the definition of experience and behaviours about the place of women in society and reproductive practices, particularly for adolescents in the North and Centre of the country". Socio-cultural practices and beliefs in which children are regarded as ready for marriage after the initiation rites, contribute to high levels of child marriage, according to IDS (2011). The high incidence of marriage among adolescents remains one of the most serious socio-cultural problems, despite some improvements in recent years.

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<sup>6</sup> BR, I Series, no. 22, of 2/6/1993

In response to the challenges imposed by the high prevalence of child marriage, UNICEF, in coordination with the MGCAS, decided to contribute in drafting a C4D strategy, starting from grass roots Formative Research, held in 8 districts in 4 Mozambican provinces with high levels of child marriage, seeking to identify cultural barriers, social norms and taboos which should be considered in informing the development and implementation of C4D initiatives about child marriages.

This investment is an important step in putting into practice the commitment of the Mozambican government to respond to the challenges imposed by child marriage, as stipulated in the National Strategy to Prevent and Eliminate Child Marriage (2015-2019).

This Formative Research Report is the initial result of the investment made in seeking contextual foundations for informing the development of a C4D strategy and an Operational Plan to support implementation of the National Strategy. The present document presents, in a descriptive and analytical manner, the results of the data collection in Manica, Zambézia, Tete and Nampula provinces in 8 districts, 2 districts per province, in addition to the data flowing from the bibliographical review.

The provinces covered by this research are Nampula (the province with the largest population in the country – 4,529,803<sup>7</sup> inhabitants), Zambézia (second largest population – 4,327,163 inhabitants), Tete (2,137,700 inhabitants) and Manica (1,672,038 inhabitants). These provinces, particularly Nampula and Zambézia, have some of the largest absolute numbers of adolescents married before the age of 18. The two provinces have, in total, more than half a million girls aged between 20 and 24, who married before they were 18 years old, and 56,323 who married before the age of 15. Manica registered 47,167 and 14,102 girls married before 18 and 15 years of age, respectively, and Tete 50,207 and 13,330 married before 18 and 15 years of age, respectively. This is expressed as an average of 55.2% of girls married before the age of 18, and 16.4% married before 15 in each of the four provinces<sup>8</sup>.

Through the formative research, the team drawing up the C4D strategy attempted to obtain important data on the perceptions and determinants that inform and make it possible to understand the community environment and social constructions around child marriages in the 4 provinces and 8 districts of the research. It also sought to map the stakeholders, to understand the construction and perception of positive deviations, the available and accessible channels and spaces of communication, and the services and actors which influence the adoption of practices related to child marriage.

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<sup>7</sup> National Statistics Institute of Mozambique (INE), 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Research commissioned by UNICEF / UNFPA / Coalition for the Elimination and Prevention of Child Marriage.



## Research Approach and Methodology

To undertake this research, the N'weti Consortium adopted participatory methodologies of Formative Research, the Positive Deviation approach, and resorted to a planning process based on multi-assets, informed by the framework of contributive analysis and by the socio-ecological model, combined with the model adopted by the ACADA of UNICEF.

### Bibliographical Review

At the initial stage of this work, the N'weti Consortium invested in a wide-ranging **literature review**. The review included existing publications on child marriage, the strategies used to deal with child marriage, studies which analysed social and gender norms and the social and economic barriers which nourish child marriage at community and institutional level in Mozambique and other relevant contexts, so as to expand the base of evidence and the understanding of critical factors linked to child marriage. The bibliographical review had three goals: i) to bring together information on studies, data and current analyses on social norms and behaviour related to child marriage in Mozambique and abroad, so as to build a repository of evidence about the main social factors and cultural norms that perpetuate child marriage; ii) to identify deviating practices that can be documented in Mozambique or abroad, and, iii) to inform the formative research, by maximising the current understandings about child marriage to guarantee that the planned research minimises duplication and is centred on the gaps in the research. The results of the bibliographic review are presented in an autonomous document and are also included in the triangulation and analysis of data throughout this formative research report.

### Methodology

The methodology adopted for the formative research followed an approach that **combines different techniques of qualitative research**, defined in close coordination with the relevant sections of UNICEF and the MGCAS. The methodological approaches adopted were applied to study attitudes, behaviours and motivations of individual and collective actors involved in questions related with the social aspects of reality, such as health and development. Mixed methods were used to triangulate results, combining results from the documentary review and of the qualitative formative research based on 8 sites, including Interviews with Key Informants (EI); mini-ethnographies to support the research approach of positive deviation, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and social network assessment.

**Positive Deviation (DP)** is an approach based on assets for the development sought, and amplification of solutions that already exist within a community. The Positive Deviation is defined as "*Individuals or groups whose behaviours and common strategies allow them to find better solutions for problems than their peers, although they have access to the same resources and face similar challenges*". This means that solutions to child marriage should be sought among persons or communities who share the same characteristics as those who practice child marriage.

The N'weti Consortium organised a two day **methodological workshop** involving pertinent sectors of UNICEF and MGCAS, as well as the main civil society stakeholders (CECAP), with the aim of making adjustments and deepening the methodological options, later reflected in the Research Protocol, and Guides for the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions.

All the interviews and focus group discussions were held in the language chosen by the interviewees and the research team included two local research assistants (two for each province and district) who supported the main researcher in conducting the interviews and focus group discussions in local languages and in Portuguese, in the interest of guaranteeing the broadest

inclusion of differing profiles of participants. Most of the interviews were recorded in audio, with informed consent, and were also registered in notebooks that were later transcribed.

### Sample Coverage and Profile of Participants

This research adopted a non-probabilistic sample, informed by a definition of a sample of several propositions, with the goal of involving in the research various categories of interviewees, individuals, social and professional categories most liable to be directly and/or indirectly covered by the matter under research. This sampling strategy allowed the research team to embrace a random selection of participants/interviewees from a pre-defined group of population strata and categories considered for purposes of the research.

The table below shows the **profile of participants, and the levels of coverage of the sampling universe** initially planned, by province and by district. A total of 96 in-depth interviews was initially envisaged, and 86 were actually held. Most of the interviews not held were of government officials who were not available at the time of the research. In addition, the research envisaged holding 40 focus group discussions (DGF), with an average of 8 participants in each session. All the DGFs envisaged were held, plus one to replace one group that was poorly representative.

#### Category of Participants, Universe and General Coverage of the Research

Category of Participants	Manica		Tete		Zambézia		Nampula		Total EI	Total DGF
	EI	DGF	EI	DGF	EI	DGF	EI	DGF		
Girls		2		2		2		2		8
Boys		2		2		2		2		8
Girls who avoided child marriage	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	8	8
Traditional Midwives, Matrons who practice Traditional Medicine	2	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	8	-
Initiation rites godmothers/godfathers / Practitioners of traditional medicine	2	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	8	-
Community leaders	2	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	8	-
Religious leaders	2	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	8	-
Adult and Elderly Women	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	8
Adult and Elderly Men	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	8
Education Sector (provincial)	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	4	-
Health Sector (provincial)	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	4	-
MGCAS (provincial)	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	4	-
SDMAS (district)	2	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	8	-
Community Health Representative	2	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	8	-
Child Protection Committee	2	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	8	-
Donor (provincial)	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	4	-
International NGO (provincial)	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	4	-
Local NGO (district)	2	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	8	-
CECAP (provincial)	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	4	-
<b>Total Envisaged</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Total Covered (Held)</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>41</b>

### Period in which the Research was held

Period of the Research by District<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Including days for travel and logistical arrangements

Provinces	Districts		Period
<b>Zambézia</b>	Maganja da Costa	Milange	20 April to 20 May
<b>Manica</b>	Gondola	Tambara	05 to 20 May
<b>Nampula</b>	Rapale	Angoche	05 to 20 June
<b>Tete</b>	Moatize	Angónia	05 to 20 June

In TETE province, in Moatize district, the research was held between 7 and 10 June in the Benga Locality headquarters, in the Moatize Town Administrative Post. The Benga Locality headquarters is about 13 Km from Moatize town. In Angónia district, the work centred on Macuangula village, which is part of Mangane locality in Ulongué Administrative Post, and took place between 12 and 14 June 2017. This village is about 15 Km from the district capital, Ulongue town, along the dirt road that connects Ulongue to the border with Malawi.

In MANICA province, the data was collected in Tambara and Gondola districts, between 08 and 19 May 2017. The research was held in the Nhacolo administrative post in Tambara and the Cafume and Amatongas administrative posts in Gondola.

In NAMPULA province, in Angoche district, the research was held from 6 to 12 June, in the localities of Nametória, Kilometre 12, Nahuloco, Bairro Phule and Namaripe, as well as the district capital. In Rapale district, the field work took place from 5 to 15 June 2017, and covered the district capital, and Namaita and Mutivaze localities.

In ZAMBÉZIA province, the research was held from 20 April to 20 May, in Maganja da Costa district, in the district capital and in Wediua, Cariua and Nante localities; and in Milange district, in the district capital and in Muanhambo, Tengua and Mongue localities.

### **Validation Workshop**

The preliminary versions of the formative research report were shared and discussed previously with UNICEF, MGCAS and other interested parties before the validation workshop held at MGCAS, called to discuss the results, the strategic recommendations and key questions to be broached during finalisation of the report and in drawing up the C4D strategy.

### **Ethical Considerations**

There was no record of any ethical challenges not foreseen in the Protocol. The approaches and processes for ethical review and supervision of the data collection and analysis were considered. The Informed Consent Protocol was read to each interviewee and participant in the Focus Group Discussions before the questions were asked. All the participants were assured that their answers will only be used for purposes of formative research and will not be used for direct attribution or citation, and will not be shared outside of the scope of the work of the research team.

## **1. Bibliographical Review**

The bibliographical review is an integral part of the Initial Report, which includes the protocol for the formative research, developed in order to inform the Development Communication Strategy of the Operational Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Marriage in Mozambique. These two products are in accordance with the National Strategy for the Prevention and Mitigation of Child Marriage, under the leadership of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare (MGCAS), with the support of UNICEF and its partners. The purpose of the Formative Research is to answer the following general question: *"How do families in communities where child marriage is the norm manage to avoid the practice with results that would be seen as desirable by other people in their community?"*

The bibliographical review covered publications which deal with questions related with child marriage, teenage pregnancy, policies and strategies developed and/or aimed at responding to the challenges imposed by the frequency of child marriage and teenage pregnancy. The focus of the bibliographical review was on synthesising essential statistical data for visualising the scale, the provincial prevalence, the trends and the regional, urban and rural characterisation of the phenomenon of child marriage and teenage pregnancy. In addition, the literature review sought to systematise the range of factors considered confluent or determinant for the occurrence of child marriages. A special focus in this literature review centres on an appreciation of the theoretical and methodological assumptions which guide the analysis of the “positive deviants”, as a way of approaching the subject in order to reverse the negative framework of child marriage, through capitalising on model standards of behaviour which stand out by contrasting positively with the predominant norms.

The literature reviewed includes both quantitative and qualitative studies (anthropological, sociological, legal and others). The main source of quantitative information is a statistical analysis on the situation of child marriage and teenage pregnancy in Mozambique (OPM, 2014, published in 2015 by UNICEF and UNFPA). The analysis provides quantitative data on the current incidence and the trends of child marriage and pregnancy in adolescence in the capital and in the various provinces of Mozambique, stressing their determinants and impacts. The chain of social determinants, gender norms, institutional, legal, structural, individual and communicative determinants are analysed in order to illustrate the social scenario within which child marriage occurs. The analysis of the existing qualitative sources on the themes of the study made it possible to outline fundamental points of the social and cultural dynamics and norms in which girls develop and which can influence their behaviour and that of their families and other influential members of the communities.

## **1.1. Scale of Child Marriage**

According to the report from UNICEF and UNFPA (2015), across the globe more than 700 million girls and women who are currently adults married when they were children. Although there are records of a slowdown in this practice, one cannot yet glimpse a consistent reduction in child marriages. It is estimated that around 280 million girls are at risk of becoming brides before the age of 18. Taking into account the effects of population growth, this number could reach 320 million in 2050.

Mozambique is one of the countries with the highest rates of child marriage, affecting about one in every two girls. Mozambique is in tenth position in the world of countries affected by child marriage, bearing in mind the data on women aged between 20 and 24 who married when they were children, that is before their 18th birthday<sup>10</sup>.

The phenomenon of child marriage varies in prevalence between regions and countries, as well as within countries. Child marriages are most prevalent in South Asia (42%) and in sub-Saharan Africa which contains the 10 countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage. (UNICEF, UNFPA 2005).

Mozambique shows a prevalence of child marriage higher than the other countries of southern and eastern Africa, with the exception of Malawi. For the age group of below 15, Mozambican has a child marriage prevalence rate of 14% compared with 13% and 10% for Sub-Saharan Africa and southern and eastern Africa combined. For the age group of under 18, the child marriage prevalence in Mozambique is around 48%, compared with 39% in sub-Saharan Africa and 38% in southern and eastern Africa combined (UNICEF, UNFPA 2015).

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<sup>10</sup> MGCAS (2015). Strategic Plan for the Elimination of Child Marriages; Report of CECAP, UNICEF (2015).

## 1.2. Prevalence of Child Marriage

The statistical analysis requested by UNICEF and UNFPA (Mozambique) and by the Coalition for the Elimination and Prevention of Child Marriages (CECAP<sup>11</sup>), and undertaken by Oxford Policy Management (OMP), by Sebastian Silva-Leander, Barnali Basak, and Patrick Schneider (2015)<sup>12</sup> is one of the most systematic sources for visualising the scale and trends of child marriage in Mozambique. The analyses undertaken in this work are informed by data from the Demographic and Health Survey (IDS 2011), the Multiple Indicator Survey (2008), projections from the General Population Census (2007) and data flowing from the programmatic and administrative reports of the Ministry of Education<sup>13</sup>. According to the data from the Demographic and Health Survey (IDS) 2011, 48.2% of women aged between 20 and 24 had married before they were 18 years old, and 14.3% before they were 15 years old.<sup>14 15</sup>

The prevalence of child marriage, disaggregated by province, age group and sex, reveals significant differences. One of the most salient results is that there is a sharp difference in child marriage between boys and girls. In the sample extracted from IDS (2011) none of the male respondents married before the age of 15, and less than 10% of the total married before their 18th birthday. These figures contrast with the 48.2% of female respondents aged between 20 and 24 who had married before they were 18 years old and the 14.3% who married before they were 15<sup>16</sup>.

Among female respondents, the proportion who married as children varies between the southern provinces and the centre and north of the country, where the rates are higher. The northern provinces have the highest rates of child marriage among female respondents aged between 20 and 24. Among those who said they married before they were 15 years old, Niassa has a rate of 24.4%, followed by Cabo Delgado with 17.6% and Nampula with 17.1%. In these same provinces, the percentages of girls who married before they were 18 years old were 55.7%, 60.7%, and 60.3%, respectively. In the provinces of central Mozambique, 17.7% of girls in Manica married before they were 15 years old, 17.1% in Zambézia, 16.8% in Sofala, and 13.7%, in Tete while those who said they married before they were 18 years old amounted to 59.2%, 47.1%, 49.4% and 51.6% respectively.

In the south of the country, the respondents who said they married before the age of 15 were 11.2% in Inhambane, 7.1% in Gaza; 5.2% in Maputo Province and 2.5% in Maputo City. In these provinces, the number of respondents who said they married before they were 18 years old was 39.1% in Inhambane, 40.9% in Gaza, 25.6% in Maputo province and 14.9% in Maputo City.

The girls in urban areas begin to marry relatively later than girls in rural areas and follow this

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<sup>11</sup> CECAP & Oxford Policy Management. 2014. Study on child marriage and teenage pregnancy in Mozambique (2014).

<sup>12</sup> UNFPA, UNICEF. 2015. Statistical Analysis of Child Marriage and Adolescent Pregnancy in Mozambique. UNICEF, Maputo.

<sup>13</sup> UNFPA, UNICEF. 2015. Statistical Analysis of Child Marriage and Adolescent Pregnancy in Mozambique. UNICEF, Maputo.

<sup>14</sup> UNICEF. 2014. Child marriage, Teenage pregnancy and Initiation to Sexuality in Mozambique. Conceptual Note to influence social norms. April 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Undated. Statistical Analysis of Child Marriage and Adolescent Pregnancy in Mozambique: Determinants and Impacts. June 2014. Management (OMP) consultants Dr. Sebastian Silva-Leander, Barnali Basak, Patrick Schneider

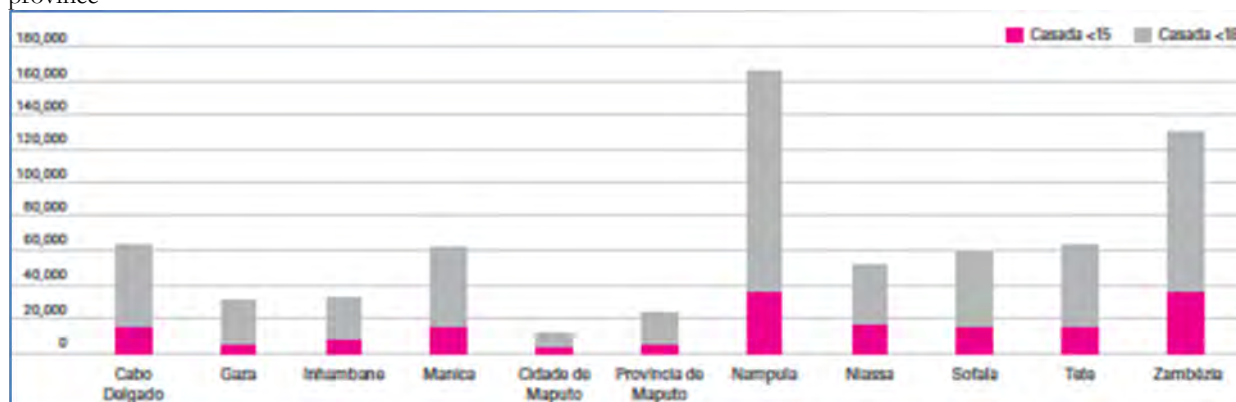
<sup>16</sup> According to the research report "*Análise Estatística de Casamento prematuro e Gravidez na Adolescência em Moçambique: Determinantes e impactos*" (UNICEF, UNFPA 2015), 14.3% of Mozambican girls between the ages of 20 and 24 had married before they were 15 years old, and 48.2% of adolescent girls married before they were 18.



pattern throughout their growth. The median age of marriage in urban areas is 19.6 years in contrast to rural areas, where it is 18.2. The disaggregation of data by area shows that there is a high proportion of child marriages in rural areas, with 16.1% of girls marrying before they are 15, and 55.7% before they are 18, while in the urban areas these figures are 11.5% and 36.1% respectively (UNICEF, UNFPA, 2015).

In general, although Niassa has higher rates of marriage before the age of 15, it is in Nampula and Zambézia that we find a greater number of girls exposed to child marriage. This is because these two provinces are more heavily populated than Niassa and thus have a high absolute number of child marriages. The provinces with the lowest number of girls married before they are 15 or 18 are Maputo City and Province, which combine low rates with relatively small populations (UNICEF, UNFPA, 2015). Figure 1, below, shows the weight of child marriage per province, in terms of absolute numbers.

Figure 1: Absolute number of women aged between 20-24, who were married before they were 15 or 18, by province



Source UNICEF and UNFPA 2015 (Calculated based on the projections from the 2007 Census and IDS of 2011).

Efforts to fight against child marriage are clearly necessary and urgent, with the main focus on the provinces with the highest numbers in absolute terms, as well as provinces with smaller populations, but with high rates of child marriage, such as Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Manica, which together account for a quarter of marriages of girls under 18 (24%).

### **1.3. Prevalence of Teenage Pregnancy**

Just as happens with child marriage, which mostly affects women, bearing children at an early age is also a social burden which fall more on girls than on boys. According to the analysis cited above, 40.2% of girls are mothers before the age of 18, compared with only 3.8% of boys who are fathers before their 18th birthday (and none of them said they had become a father before the age of 15). As for teenage pregnancy, the difference between rural and urban is somewhat less pronounced than in the case of child marriage (5.9% of girls in urban areas became pregnant before the age of 15, compared with 9.0% in the rural areas). This trend is associated with the greater occurrence of pregnancy outside of marriage in the urban areas (UNICEF, UNFPA 2015).

According to the estimates in the analysis of the OPM, the provinces with the largest number of teenage pregnancies are Nampula and Zambézia. In Zambezia the problem of girls becoming pregnant before they reach the age of 15 is particularly pronounced. 17,848 girls in Zambezia aged between 20 and 24 gave birth before they were 15 (this is 8.8% of all girls aged between 20 and 24). In Nampula, 51.5% of women respondents said they had their first pregnancy before they were 18 years old. In absolute terms, this is 107,553 girls (UNICEF, UNFPA 2015).

Child marriage and teenage pregnancy are closely related, in that the earlier girls marry the more likely they are to become pregnant when they are still children. Both groups of girls who marry when they are children (before they are 15 and before they are 18) are more likely to have children early compared with girls of the same age who did not marry. For example, 38.7% of girls who married before they were 15 also had children before that age, compared with only 2.7% or 2.6% who married between 15 and 18 years of age (IDS, 2011; UNICEF, UNFPA 2015). Overall, the average gap between marriage and the first child is only 15 months (IDS, 2011).

The studies reviewed in this document show that child marriage and teenage pregnancy remain major child protection questions in Mozambique, with more than 12% of girls aged between 15 and 24 married before they were 15 years old and almost a third of all girls married before their 18th birthday. In Niassa, more than a fifth of the women interviewed had married before they were 15 years old. Child marriage and teenage pregnancy are closely related because the overwhelming majority of teenage pregnancies occur among girls who married early. On average, girls have their first child 15 months after marriage, and rarely more than 24 months after marriage.



## 1.4. Trends

Globally there is a gradual decline in the practice of child marriage. According to the report from UNICEF and UNFPA (2015), currently 1 in 4 young women married when they were children. In the 1980s, this proportion was 1 in 3. More noteworthy progress in the last 3 decades concerns the decline from 12 to 8 per cent of girls who married before they were 15 years old. However, there are many disparities between countries and regions regarding the decline in the practice of child marriage.

The countries which have registered a rapid decline in child marriage are those in the Middle East and North Africa where the percentage of women aged between 20 and 24 who were married before they were 18 years old has fallen by half over the last three decades. South Asia has been marked by a decline in marriage of girls less than 15 years old from 32% to 17% in the same period, but marriage of girls under 18 years old persists as current practice.

Child marriages are beginning to show signs of decline among the more prosperous sectors of society in all regions of the world. They are still frequent in Africa and South Asia, confirming the thesis that this phenomenon is located above all in the poorest and lowest income countries (Artur, 2010).

In Mozambique, despite the discrepancy and limited comparability of the available data, the study commissioned by UNICEF and UNFPA indicates that there has been an improvement, in percentage terms, in the weighted indicators for analysing the trend of child marriages over the period 1997-2011<sup>17</sup>. With regard to the indicator used to estimate the reduction in child marriages between the ages of 15 and 18, one notes that a reduction of 7 to 8 percentage points (statistically significant) was verified, but the same cannot be said about teenage pregnancy in the same period, when there were no statistically significant changes.

Furthermore, when eventual changes are analysed in the absolute numbers of girls exposed to child marriage and teenage pregnancy, one notes that the number increased between 2003 and 2011, which means that more girls were married and became pregnant before the age of 18 in 2011 than in 2003 (55,834 and 84,834, respectively), despite the slight fall in the percentage of girls affected.

The most significant changes were registered in the percentage of women aged between 20 and 24 who had married before they were 15 years old, in Cabo Delgado and Nampula provinces. In these provinces, since 1997 there have been reductions of 45.2% (in Cabo Delgado) and 52.5% (in Nampula) of girls married before the age of 15 to about 17% in both provinces in 2011. The other provinces that recorded statistically significant changes were Gaza, Inhambane and Maputo City (significant to the level of 5%). In Gaza and Inhambane, the rate of marriages before the age of 15 increased over the period studied. None of the other provinces saw statistically significant changes in the period under study.

Based on the projections from the 2007 Census, an estimate was made of the change between 2003 and 2011 in the absolute number of women married before the age of 15. According to the estimates, the only provinces where there was a decline in the absolute number of girls married

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<sup>17</sup> According to the interpretation by CEPISA, in almost 30 years (1980-2007), child marriage in Mozambique has declined by only 15% which means that some factors, including those related with social and discriminatory gender dynamics, and damaging practices, mentioned above, are being perpetuated within Mozambican communities (CEPSA 2013).

before they were 15 years old, and over the period 2003-2011 were Nampula (-15,216), Zambézia (-7,180) and Cabo Delgado (-5,559). In all the other provinces, it is calculated that the population growth rate exceeded the rate of reduction of child marriages. The province that recorded a considerable increase in the number of married girls was Tete, where it is estimated that between 2003 and 2011 the number of girls married before they were 15 years old increased by 5,292. As for girls marrying before the age of 18, the greatest fall, in percentage terms, occurred in Nampula and Tete provinces, where the proportion of married girls fell from 82.3% to 62.3% and from 72.7% to 51.6%, respectively, between 1997 and 2011.

As for teenage pregnancy, the only provinces where there was a statistically significant decline at the level of 5% were Inhambane and Maputo City. In all the others, the changes registered were statistically insignificant. Alterations in the number of women between 20 and 24 years old who have had a child are estimated by using the projections from the 2007 census. According to these projections, it is calculated that the only two provinces which achieved a reduction in the absolute number of cases of teenage pregnancy in the 2003-2011 period were Nampula (-6,493) and Zambézia (-8,089). The province that saw a significant increase in the number of cases of teenage pregnancy was Tete where the number of pregnancies among adolescents rose by 4,278, between 2003 and 2011.

In verifying pregnancy before the age of 18, one notes that between 1997 and 2011, the rate of teenage pregnancy increased in three provinces. In one of the provinces (Inhambane, where the rate rose from 1.1% to 4.9%), the increase was statistically significant at the level of 5%. However, in Nampula a significant increase was noted in the number of girls who had their first child before the age of 18 (27,052 between 2003 and 2011).

In general, it is concluded that although in recent years there have been some reductions in the indices of child marriage, the changes remain statistically insignificant in most provinces, with the partial exception of the northern provinces, which recorded a statistically significant decline but from a very high starting point. Furthermore, in almost all the provinces, the modest reductions in the rates of child marriage have been insufficient to compensate for rapid population growth, which means that, even though the percentage of children married in adolescence may have declined, the absolute number of child marriages has increased.

Finally, in many provinces, the reduction in the levels of child marriage has not translated into a reduction in the indices of teenage pregnancies, due to the increase in births outside of marriage. In fact, four provinces have seen their rates of teenage pregnancy increase over the past 15 years.

The Population and Health Research Centre (CEPSA) estimated, from the data in the 1997 and 2007 Population and Housing Censuses, indicators on child marriages per district and drew up a cartographic representation in order to visualise better the regions, provinces and districts with greater and lesser prevalence of child marriages<sup>18</sup>. According to the CEPSA study, in 2007 more than a third of the girls under 18 years of age were married in 13 of the 146 districts, all of them located in the provinces of northern Mozambique, namely: Balama, Namuno, Chiure and Ancuabe in Cabo Delgado; Sanga, Marrupa, Nipepe and Ngauma in Niassa, and Mecuburi, Mogovolas, Lalaua, Namapa-Erati and Muecate in Nampula province.

In 1997 the average age at the first marriage of women was less than 16 years in 40 of the 146 districts of the country, but dropped to 14 districts in 2007: that is, in 2007, in the districts of

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<sup>18</sup> Arnaldo, C et. Al. 2017, Casamentos Prematuros em Moçambique: Que Distritos Estão Mais Afectados? CEPSA. Maputo.

Nipepe and Lichinga, in Niassa; Balama, Ancuabe and Chiure, in Cabo Delgado; and Mogincual, Mogovolas, Mecuburi, Moma, Morrúpula, Namapa-Erati, Lalaua and Angoche, in Nampula, the average age at the first marriage was lower than the exceptional legal age (16 years) for marriage. Taking the normal legal age for marriage, 18 years, 82 districts in 1997 and 77 in 2007 had the average age of marriage of women lower than the legal age.

Using two indicators, the percentage of girls under the age of 18 who were married in the last two population censuses, and the average age at first marriage, 16 districts were identified where the situation of child marriage is very worrying. In these districts, more than 20% of the girls under 16 years of age are already married, and the average age at first marriage is under 16 years. The table below shows the position of each of the 8 districts considered in the formative research.

Ranking of the Districts According to the Average Age at First Marriage in 2007

Ranking	District	Province	Average Age 1st Marriage
12	Angoche	Nampula	15.9
30	Milange	Zambezia	16.4
47	Tambara	Manica	16.8
50	Maganja da Costa	Zambézia	16.9
71	Gondola	Manica	17.6
88	Moatize	Tete	18.4
100	Angónia	Tete	18.9

Source: CEPSA, 2017.

## 2. Notions and Conceptions about Marriage Age

### 2.1. Signs of Puberty

In all the research sites, the appearance of the menstrual cycle is stressed as the main marker defining the social and biological age of the girl. Menstruation is repeatedly mentioned as the indicator used to distinguish children from women, in the sense that the latter would be able to reproduce and so should take up a different social status. There is also a change in the expectations of the social roles expected of them.

All the profiles of the interviewees in the 8 districts, both men and women, young and adult, pointed to the physical and biological transformations of girls as the most relevant characteristics for determining their marriage age. The menarche, the development of the breasts and of pubic hair in girls are regarded as signs that show the girl's readiness for marriage. The excerpts from interviews and group discussions below are illustrative of these ways of understanding and interpreting the biological development of girls:

*“In our tradition here, a 12 year old girl can marry because she is already big. She begins menstruating at 12. A person can send a daughter aged 12, 13 years”* (DGF, Adult Women, Angoche).

*“I don't know in terms of years, but here, in our culture a woman can marry after her first menstruation, and after she has attended the initiation rites. She's already grown. It doesn't depend on years.”* (EI, Adult Woman, Angoche).

*“It's not just the age, but also the physique of the girls, when they begin to undertake activities in the house well, when they begin to have large breasts. Then we can let them go and live with another person, because she is already prepared to marry and take care of a man”* (EI, Community Leader, Tambara)

However, although menstruation is widely mentioned as the main mark of the transition from child to adult, in the same communities and research sites, there are other perspectives and perceptions on the significance of menstruation. According to some data from the interviews, while some women point to the first menstrual period as the main indication that the girl is ready to marry, for other people the appearance of menstruation merely shows that the girl is starting to mature, and this maturity can only be regarded as complete when several other social factors are also observed in the life of the girl.

In Manica (Gondola and Tambara), where these perspectives were most polemical during the interviews, it was clear that among the participants in the groups of adults of both sexes, there is a minority who disagree with the idea that the physical and biological signs are enough to determine the marriage age of the girl. For them, the menarche does not determine that the girl is ready to marry, but only that she is ready to begin a transitional phase, which should culminate with adoption of the teachings and prescriptions of the initiation rites, as the excerpt below from a focus group discussions shows:

*“For a woman, apart from the breasts, when her first period appears, that is the time that she should go through a local ritual to teach her how to look after herself, how to clean her private parts, how to care for a man. For the man too. When he begins to be afraid and needs to play with girls, he is an adult”* (GFD, Men, Tambara).

From the reading that can be made of the above extract from the focus group discussion, the appearance of the first menstrual period is also understood as a moment indicating the biological transition of the girl, but not necessarily a transition to marriage or to immediate involvement in sexual activities, but as landmark showing the need to initiate the girl into other processes of education and self-definition through the initiation rites. According to this vision of the world, marriage should only happen after passage through the initiation rites. This perception is also found in all the research sites, for which the following example extracted from the group discussion in Angoche is sufficiently eloquent and illustrative:

*“The woman must have breasts, menstruation, and have attended the initiation rites. Then she can marry.”* (GDF, Women, Angoche).

The perspective that indications of girls’ readiness for marriage cannot be reduced to signs of puberty, is even stronger when it comes to boys. While among girls, the development of the breasts, the appearance of menstruation, pubic hair, and changes in the shape of the body can more easily be read as signs of readiness to marry (compulsively or voluntarily), among men the male signs of puberty, which were limited to the breaking of the voice, the appearance of a beard, wet dreams, and the desire for sexual relations, although regarded as signs of growth, are not necessarily seen as signs of readiness to marry:

*“A boy can only marry when he has responsibility. He may be 18 years old, but look in his pocket and see if he has the conditions to marry, see if he can buy a sack of celeste<sup>19</sup>, 5 litres of oil, cotton fabrics. Then he can marry because his condition is normal. I am over 20 years old, but I’m not married. I live with my sister, because I don’t have these possibilities. When I have possibilities, I will marry. Now I get hold of 50MT, I buy celeste and I eat. With somebody’s daughter, what would I do?”* (DGF, Boys, Angoche).

From a reading of the above extract from the group discussion, we can conclude that there is general acceptance that to recognise the readiness of boys for marriage, they should have developed a certain capacity to provide for themselves and for their potential wife and children. What is interesting about this perception is that the boys themselves cultivate this perspective, as shown above, in that they tend to accept that it would not be appropriate to pursue matrimonial goals without ensuring the availability of resources to support a wife and children, seen as dependents.

The findings of the field research are in line with the results of the bibliographical review which shows that the appearance of menstruation is understood as a mark that qualifies the girl for integration into adult life, as mentioned by Airhihenbwa (1995, cited by Nhamtumbo-Djivage et al., 2010). In this sub-section, it may be seen that, in the case of girls, the menarche (even if early) is stressed as a reference point physiological event, signalling the readiness of the girl for marriage, even though in some cases the need is added of complying with the initiation rites (which are generally of short duration, 2 to 3 months). Following these perspectives, marriage determines the passage of an individual into adulthood, and the birth of the first child makes effective the formation of identity and of belonging to the group of adults.

## **2.2. The Initiation Rites**

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<sup>19</sup> Maize flour.

Despite the broad focus on the fact that menstruation represents a defining mark in the readiness of girls for marriage, as expressed above, this recognition is accompanied with the need to observe certain processes of informing and educating girls about the practices and social expectations awaiting them in their new role and social circumstances. According to the interviews (adult men and women) the appearance of signs of puberty among girls indicates that they obtain a different status in the family, and are thus accompanied by an older family member (aunt, godmother or grandmother) in order to pass on knowledge about the body, bodily hygiene and even initial lessons about the care to be taken with a man and with the home, with a focus on sexuality, meals and ideas associated with respect/reverence, capacity to please the man, as well as subtlety and discretion in handling domestic problems. The parents are not among the figures who accompany/advise the girl after the appearance of the first menstruation. This role is reserved for aunts, godmother and other members of the family or the community who take a prominent position in this ritual function.

As was understood throughout the research and the previous bibliographical review, the start of menstruation marks the transition from adolescence to youth and, as from this phase, the girl becomes exposed to a range of teachings and education for marriage, since it is expected that at any moment she might embark on sexual activity and commit to marriage. These statements are backed up by the results of the interviews as shown below:

*“Menstruation marks the growth of the girls. When the child grows, she should go to the initiation rites to hear about the teachings of life, about how to respect her elders. As from 9 years of age, the child begins to grow. The child’s movement already shows that she has grown and so we send her to the initiation rites. We send her to the rites, because what is taught at the rites she does not learn in school, in school she learns other things. The school teacher doesn’t know anything about behaviour at home, so we send the girl to the rites to change her childlike behaviour. There, there’s no A, B, C, no exercise books or anything, but there is a tradition. A person goes in a child and comes out an adult, while at school they learn things from books”. (EI, Traditional Midwife, Milange, Mongue).*

*“In my tradition, it’s not me, the mother, who speaks with the girl, but the grandmother talks to her granddaughter about marriage and other questions of growth, health and hygiene, and this is so that she doesn’t understand what happens in her parents’ room. After this she is prepared to marry, because she now knows how to behave in the home and care for her family, her children and even her husband’s mother”. (DGF, Women, Gondola).*

*“After the girls and boys go to the initiation rites, this is the practice of the rites. In the rites they hear a lot of advice about how to care for the house, how to respect their elders, how to be a good housewife, they hear all of this at the initiation rites. They go to the rites when they are 12 or 13 years old. At the initiation rites, they teach education about how people live. The initiation rites are normally done in coordination with the churches. All Christians should take their children to enter the initiation rites. Normally the *bibi*<sup>20</sup> of the church, during the holidays, takes the names of 20 to 30 children for the initiation rites in the months of June and December. Now we don’t hold the rites during the period of classes. In my time I stayed for 6 months in the initiation rites, now they stay for 2 weeks, and it rarely lasts as long as a month” (EI, Woman, Practitioner of Traditional Medicine, Milange, Tengua).*

*“In the rites, they warn that now you are big, if you play around with any man, you will become pregnant”. (DGF, Adult Women, Milange, Muanhambo)*

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<sup>20</sup> Religious leader.



The results of the field research are in line with what was documented in the literature on the subject, which stresses that the girls, particularly in rural areas, and most frequently in the central and northern regions, participate in initiation rites run by the godmothers, matrons and “queens” of the community itself. According to Osório and Macuacua, these initiation rites are also an instance of socialisation charged with great violence against girls and boys (2013)<sup>21</sup>. According to these authors, the girls are “obliged” to participate by their own families, even during the first decade of life (when they are 5-6, 8-9 or 10-11 years old) and are taught during the rites to learn how to satisfy men sexually.

In the social and anthropological context, this dependence becomes more visible since the chronological age of the individual is less relevant than the events experienced as part of the group to which she belongs (birth, initiation rites, marriage, widowhood, disasters, etc.) and which mark the chronological stages of her life (Airhihenbuwa 1995). As for the capacity to negotiate roles and spaces, the authors consulted and the information collected from the interviews indicate that childhood, as a space for social performance, does not allow dialogue between children and adults,

The girls’ initiation rites include the practice of extending the labia minora from childhood, modifying the female body in accordance with aesthetic criteria, notions of femininity and of sexual pleasure for men (Bagnol E Mariano, 2009). After the first menstrual period, the girl is considered “prepared” or “ready” to begin sexual life, which happens while still a pre-adolescent, with serious risks for her health.

Osório and Macuacua (2013) also interviewed girls and dealt with the circumstances under which they rejected participation in the rites or refused a child marriage. The findings of these authors show that girls who reject child marriage do not necessarily reject initiation rites, while the girls who refused to take part in the rites also refused to be child brides. This indicates that there may be a correlation between the assertive attitude of those who refuse to participate in initiation rites, which has social implications, for example the risk of social ostracism.

Through reading the data flowing from this research, it is possible to conclude that the initiation rites are also understood as catalysts of the appropriate age for marriage, in that, as a delimiting mark, they establish and prescribe what is socially consented to for girls. Furthermore, the success of the rites also involves implementing the experience recommended in the rites, namely that the girls are ready for marriage and, being ready, they should find partners to experiment with and experience the teachings and recommendations of the rites, as the following extracts from the interviews show:

*‘It’s because of the initiation rites. There are parents who, when they see that their daughter is ten years old, they send her to the initiation rites. They learn everything there and there is no separation for 10 year olds. When they come back, they want to experiment everything. And the parents say ‘you were at the initiation rites, then you should marry’. At the rites there’s theory and practice about sex. After participating in the rites, when they return, they should experiment. And they are advised to experiment immediately after they leave, with someone who is not their boyfriend and without a condom. Furthermore, the rights of children are violated there. They are obliged to pull their labia minora, and if they don’t they are beaten by the matrons’.* (DGF, Girls, Maganja da Costa).

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<sup>21</sup> UNICEF. 2014. Casamentos Prematuros, Gravidez Precoce e Iniciação à Sexualidade em Moçambique. Nota conceptual para influenciar as normas sociais. Abril 2014 Ritos de iniciação na adolescência e conceito de virgindade:

*“The girls go to the rites when they are 13, 14, 15, 16 years old. From early on they receive explanations about sexual life and, when they return, they want to experiment. As a result, they become pregnant”.* (EI, Religious Leader, Maganja da Costa, Nante).

*“The girls go to the rites aged 12 and above. There they are told that, now you have grown up, when you leave her you can go and ‘shake ashes’. ‘Shake ashes’ means marrying or having sex. It’s enough for her to ‘take ash’ with a man, then right now she’s married. At the rites, the girl is told that when she leaves the ceremony of the initiation rites, she should look for a man. She shouldn’t bother about his age, because if she doesn’t ‘shake ashes’ with a man, her body will change, she will have stains, stains that will not disappear even with ointments and creams”.* (EI, Representative of CSOs, Milange, district capital)

*“Here in our zone, when the girls have gone to the initiation rites, they find a man to marry”* (DGF, Boys, Angoche).

*“I was working in a locality and I asked the men how old were your daughters when you married them off? They replied they were 18, and the women who were sitting on the mat replied, it’s a lie, they were 10 years old. Why am I going to allow my daughter to grow old? They go to the initiation rites when they are 7 or 8 years old. So I saw that the community accepts child marriage before the age of 18. The community says the girl should marry after she has grown up (first menstruation). The girl should marry before the age of 14, so that she can swell the belly of the man”.* (Representative of CSOs, Milange, district capital).

As the above extracts from the interviews show, the appearance of menstruation, accompanied by participation in initiation rites are the main markers of maturity and readiness of the girl to marry, and the end of the rites represents a still more important social marker since through this the individual experience of menstruation, which could be managed individually and within the family, is broadly socialised and written into rites which come to represent the collective definition of the role and status of the girl. At the same time the rites operate as peer pressure, in that girls who do not attend the rites are seen as outside the traditional standard and road map for girls’ development.

According to CECAP, some specific practices, such as the initiation rites, through which girls are regarded as ready for marriage, have contributed in a determinant manner to the high rate of child marriage in Mozambique. This reading of CECAP is corroborated by Nhantumbo-Divage et. al. (2010)<sup>22</sup>; Machatine (2014)<sup>23</sup>.

### 2.3. Chronological Markers and Capacity to Provide

During the interviews, the questions about chronological age raised comments and interpretations about the capacity to provide. With regard to chronological markers, such as age, as one of the requirements for determining readiness for marriage, the interviews with boys tend to show a perception that boys, in general, are ready to marry and form a family between the ages of 18 and 24 at the latest. Among the arguments invoked for this assertion the idea stands out that boys develop more slowly than girls and that boys need to develop other social characteristics going beyond the biological transformations in their bodies. This finding, specifically concerning the difference in marriage ages between girls and boys, was noted in the

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<sup>22</sup> Sónia Nhantumbo-Divage; José Divage & Miguel Marrengula, 2010. Child marriages in Mozambique: Contexts, trends and realities

<sup>23</sup> Machatine, Rosa Filisberto. 2014. Child marriage and its impact on development in Mozambique: Case Study, Chimoio city, Manica province. UEM Political Science Department. Maputo.



analysis that CEPISA (2017), made of the data from the Census and the Demographic and Health Survey (2001).

While for girls the availability to bear children and skills in domestic chores are, for most of the interviewees, necessary conditions for being considered fit for marriage, in the case of boys, the prime condition is that they are prepared to sustain a family, generate income, and ensure the well-being of their household, or can prove that they are able to do so.

The perception that a girl would be ready to marry, not only when the menstrual cycle or other signs of puberty show themselves, but when the girl becomes capable of complying with other social requirements, such as doing domestic chores, is even sharper when it comes to boys from whom it is expected that, before marrying, they should develop the capacity to provide for themselves and for others, with proven evidence that they can build a house and have some form of income. According to the interviewees, before boys express their willingness to marry they are encouraged to show their ability to carry out certain tasks and develop economic capacities to provide for themselves and for others, by undertaking agricultural work or involvement in informal trade and, in rare cases, have a fixed source of income in a formal job, as the interview extracts below show:

*“A boy is ready to marry from the moment that he has responsibility for himself, has a field, has some work that can serve to sustain himself and his family, and not depend on his parents”* (EI, Adult man, Rapale).

*“For men, more time is needed. Only the women (would need less time). They (the boys) are obliged to show good sense. This means they should learn how to handle themselves and to respect others”* (DGF, Boys, Angoche).

*“Knowing whether a girl is ready to marry is checked through the activities she undertakes in her parents’ house, for example domestic chores or even work on the field. Then, if she can do some minimum tasks, she is qualified to marry. It’s the same for the boy. When he can go to the field, when he can do something and go onto the street to sell things and make money, then he’s ready to marry”.* (DGF, Boys, Moatize).

*“It’s possible if you see someone that he’s helping the family. For example, there in the tobacco company, or in the vegetable garden, as a man he does everything. For example, there are these things of tobacco. It’s usual to do this thing of tobacco. If he can work with his guardian, he can marry. But since he’s a man, he may be 20, 21 years old, 21 or older. (DGF, Boys, Angónia).*

Although the focus on the capacity to provide falls particularly on the shoulders of boys, in terms of qualifications for marriage, girls are not exempt from having to observe some of these criteria. During the interviews, there was a clear expectation that a girl is only adequately developed for marriage, when she is able to do certain domestic tasks with zeal. Among tasks girls are expected to know how to do are cooking food with her mother, or on her own, cleaning the house, and looking after her younger siblings, as marks which show that the girl is prepared for marriage, as the following extract from a focus group discussion shows:

*“For me, the girl may be 18 years old, but if she doesn’t know how to do anything in the kitchen, if she doesn’t know how to cook or wash dishes, and I don’t know what else, then when she’s 18 she may not marry, she should wait to give time for her to try and learn how to work. When she is 19 or 20 years old, and she knows how to work, then they can let her marry. If she happens to know how to work when she’s 18, she can marry... for example, I’m from here, from Angónia, so if I’m 18 and I don’t know how to wash dishes, or to cook, or wash clothes for somebody, or even my own clothes, it’s difficult to marry”.* (DGF, Girls, Angónia)

Thus, just as society provides markers of maturity, resorting to signs of physiological and biological transformation, such as menstruation and the development of breasts, it also establishes that they are socially ready for marriage only when the capacity to undertake domestic chores, especially cooking, washing and farming, is guaranteed. But it is also recognised that these tasks can still be learnt in the husband's house. It should be noted here that learning about domestic tasks begins at a tender age, well before the first menstrual period, so that the list of tasks that girls must master before they are 12 years old is practically empty of content, since from very early on in life they have been involved in domestic chores.

In general, although some interviewees mention chronological markers (age) as an important parameter for defining the marriage age, in most cases an assertive ambiguity was noted in the reification of this practice, since even in the cases where age was mentioned, they did not break free from the social and biological references that characterise the various stages of development of girls and boys.

According to the results from the interviews, the start of adulthood varies between 16 and 18 years for girls. Those who say 16 marks the start of the adult phase allege that “recently the first menstrual period arrives very early”, when girls are between 9 and 14 years old, which is why many girls become pregnant very early. On the other hand, those who favour the age of 18 as marking adulthood relate this to readiness for marriage and childbirth. For them, only at this time would a girl be physically and mentally mature for accepting a marriage, becoming pregnant and giving birth with a minimum of risks to her own health and that of the baby.

*“A person should marry at the age of 15, 16, 17. If she's a child who wants to study, at this period she should be in school. If she wants to marry at this age, if someone appears to marry her, she can also marry.”* (EI, Traditional Midwife, Angoche).

*“The tradition here is to marry before the age of 18 or when still small. Because here there is no law that forbids it”.* (DGF, Girls, Milange, Muanhambo).

As for a chronological focus on a marriage age of above 18 years, this perspective generally comes from young people with some degree of schooling (mid-level education). Among most interviewees, there was a mixture of perceptions about the marriage age, but the perspective of biological markers was prevalent. Among the interviewees, there were no signs of knowing or observing the normative and legal prescriptions about the age of marriage, as shown in the section covering this later in this document.

#### **2.4. Discourse of the Urgency of Procreation**

Throughout the interviews, there also emerged what we call the “discourse of the urgency of procreation and of experience of sexuality”. The discourse of the urgency of procreation was shared by several interviewees, although some variations on this perspective were prevalent. Among the interviewees, there were also those who, although they did not argue that the appearance of the first menstruation should be considered as a defining mark in the transition from girlhood to the adult phase, stressing that the first menstruation at the age of 12, 16 or 17 does not grant the status of a woman ready for marriage, the same group of interviewees promoted the idea that, after the first menstrual period, not much time should pass before embarking on sexual and reproductive life, since this would amount to “underuse” of the girl's reproductive capacity, as made explicit in the following extract:

*“She shouldn’t let much time pass before becoming sexually involved with somebody because the girl would be losing children, because there is a time to start and a time to finish having children” (DGF, Adult Women, Gondola).*

In Gondola, the argument that after the appearance of the menstrual cycle the girl should not remain very long in her parents’ house, was still more strongly stated in the DGF with adult men, who argued *“the girl cannot stay at home just watching her periods go, this is a waste, this is losing babies”*. In response to this perception of “waste of children”, the parents tend to engage in negotiations with families of boys or adult men potentially interested in marrying their daughters, and promote the marriage.

The interviews with boys also display the idea that girls should marry before they are 20 years old, together with the idea of urgency in experiencing their sexuality, bearing in mind that sexuality would have a specific time to be experienced. According to the interviewees:

*“Girls should marry before they are 20 years old, because women, by their nature, have a period for sexuality and procreation. Boys do not, and so can marry after they are 20, also because they need to be organised” (DGF, Boys, Gondola).*

The argument that the sexual life cycle of women is relatively short is also associated with the perception of women’s capacity to bear “many” children, which is also seen as the maximum expression of femininity and of being a woman, as documented in at least 3 of the research sites. According to the interviews, delaying the start of sexual relations and not marrying before the age of 18 are socially reprehensible forms of wasting opportunities to procreate, in that the sooner a woman embark upon sexual relations, the more chances she will have of bearing “many” children throughout her reproductive life. She may thus be socially recognised as a complete woman, together with the value given to the capacity to bear children, in opposition to women who have not borne children or who have few children over their life. The latter are also stigmatised as individuals who at the least were not “blessed by luck” or, more seriously, as someone punished for some offence because she must have displeased the ancestors or was used as a bargaining chip by relatives aiming at unworthy goals (such as rapid enrichment) by resort to sorcery and witchcraft.

The literature review points in the same direction, by generally stressing that the value of a woman is measured by her fertility and particularly by bearing sons. For most girls in Mozambique, access to sexual and reproductive health remains limited. Most married girls are not in any condition to control their sexuality, as noted in the analysis undertaken by UNICEF and UNFPA (2014).

## **2.5. Discourse of Male Domination**

The discussions about marriage age have ended up revealing another perception about why boys should marry relatively later or at an older age than girls. According to the interviewees, the boys should be between 20 and 25 years old and marry younger girls, aged between 16 and 18 because, from the viewpoint of the interviewees, the boys should be in a position where they can “dominate” the girls. The idea that the girls should enter marriage in a position of subservience, of subordination to the husband and to his family, is not merely transmitted during the initiation rites, but is also found structurally embedded in the perception of men and of various members of the communities in that the social values that define the forms of interaction between married men and women are broadly shared, according to the extract below:

*“The woman should be obedient and submissive to the man. A man who marries an older woman passes through humiliation and disrespect. We prefer marrying younger women because if you marry an older woman, she will lose respect for the man” (GFD, boys, Tambara)*

This discourse was also evident in Angoche, where, in the understanding of the interviewees, girls should marry before the age of 18, so that they remain submissive to their husbands or, as was explained through the interview:

*“...when she marries before the age of 18 she has many ideas. If she lives with her husband, she will respect her husband and her husband’s family, sweep, wash and do everything else at home. A 16 year old girl has these ideas but it’s not the same as one who is 18 or 19 years old, it’s different.” (DGF, Adult men, Angoche).*

The difference mentioned is linked to the perception that girls under the age of 18 tend to question less the authority of their husbands, and would be more subservient, while girls above this age would have a broad experience of life and a sharper capacity to question, which is regarded as a challenge to the power and “right” of male domination.

The discourse of “male domination” could go further, challenging the structure of power on which the power relations between men and women are based, much beyond the framework in which child marriages are expressed. However, to better visualise the results from the field, this research seeks to take into account the data collected through the interviews and the structured observation at the research sites.

## **2.6. Promises at Birth**

Although the interviews mostly showed that the main markers defining the marriage age for girls are the appearance of the first menstruation, attending the initiation rites and, in some cases, knowing how to do certain domestic chores or reaching the age of 18, in some interviews, held with adults of both sexes, particularly in Manica, there is the perception that the girl should be allocated a husband as soon as she is born. Thus when a girl is born, her maternal grandmother defines her value and spreads among community members the information about the existence of this “woman”. Obtaining this marriage depends on the negotiation and agreements between the family of the “baby woman” and the interested party, who may be an adult married and even polygamous man. He promises to contribute “something” to the growth and development of “his woman” until the agreed age, generally before she is 18, when he takes her effectively as a wife.

The representative of the SDMAS in Tambara reported the existence of some families who “sell” girl babies in their first month of life. This sale is sealed by the agreement between the grandmother of the minor and the older man who promises to provide the child with some assistance until she reaches adolescence or youth, since at this stage she can be delivered to the individual/family to whom she was promised. In this context of “selling” the minor, the girl is sometimes forced into marriage before she is 18 years old, because her parents fear that if she becomes sexually involved with someone that would imply opposition from her promised husband, and this might culminate in demands to pay fines or to replace her with another girl.

### 3. Perceptions and Arguments for Marriage

#### 3.1. Social Pressure (Honour and Shame)

The literature review stresses that the families which push girls into child marriage may be motivated by the belief that in this way they would avoid deterioration of the cost of “lobolo” (the price of the dowry) or a reduction in the value of the dowry as a result of the advanced age of the girl (the younger the girls are, the greater the likelihood that they are virgins, and consequently the higher their perceived value for the family); or to avoid the risk of the girl not finding a suitable candidate later. The high value placed on the girl’s virginity may encourage families to put their daughters into marriages while they are still children. The belief that the earlier a girl marries, the sooner she is safe from extramarital activities or unplanned/extramarital pregnancy is prevalent in various contexts. Girls who remain single for long periods became victims of scrutinising their virginity, and it is believed that they may damage the reputation of their family (UNICEF 2001; Bott et al., 2003; Mathur, Greene, and Malhotra 2003).

On this line of interpretation, the field data show that the questions of honour and shame are greatly present in the way of thinking and managing the expectations of families about the development of girls. At the various research sites, the question of honour and shame was constantly mentioned as among the reasons why families push their daughters into marriage. This question is centred on fear of the loss of virginity, unplanned pregnancy and a social perception of a decline in the value of the girl on the emotional market of intra-family transactions, as the interview extracts below show:

*“Often the girls are the guilty parties. It is enough for a girl to begin to show herself on the road. Afraid that they will become pregnant and bring shame on the parents, the latter prefer to oblige their daughters to marry”.* (DGF, Adult Women, Milange, Muanhambo).

*“In fact, we do not freely accept child marriage, but we have no way to avoid it because we understand that the girls look for the boys, even in the school intervals they go looking for boys, and afterwards this leads to pregnancy and we, as parents, have no alternative but to call on the family of the boy for them to marry”* (DGF, Men, Tambara).

*“The boys aren’t old enough to marry, but if a boy makes a girl pregnant he must marry her regardless of age, or whether he is working or not. Aged 25, a boy should marry because he’s already old enough, and doesn’t ask his mother for everything. He already has the idea of making his own way in life on his own”* (DGF, Women, Gondola).

*“When the boys leave looking for girls in the dark, in the end they bring problems. So we say they should get married to avoid problems and avoid their parents having to pay a fine because they have got the girl pregnant. So as soon as the boy begins to date, he should marry”* (DGF, Women, Tambara).

*“1 or 2 years after menstruation, she can marry. Because if she goes beyond this age, she can come home pregnant and we, as mothers, are filled with shame. If she doesn’t marry, they speak ill of you in the area, they begin to talk ‘you see that woman, her daughter’s a slut, she got pregnant, and her mother doesn’t seem to care”* (DGF, Adult men and women, Maganja Da Costa, Cariua).

*“Because of financial questions, here it’s very normal to marry young. I think it’s rather complicated, but my analysis is that people here marry young and later there are cases of violence, cases of rape. When the parents find out that their daughter is dating young, the parents complain and the adults prefer to take*



*responsibility for the minor who is often pregnant. Here this means “reducing the problem”, not letting the problem reach higher bodies, in this case the rapist sometimes gives her a home, or provides sustenance”. (EI, Health Service Provider, Milange, District Capital)*

*“Here girls under 16 already have babies, and if she has a baby, the parents oblige her to marry as soon as they discover that the girl is pregnant, and this happens even when they are 14, 15 years old. The girls get pregnant and they marry. The parents also feel the weight of their daughter when she is pregnant. They marry immediately, very young, because of money. It’s enough to see that this man can give me this or that, so she offers herself to him and can get pregnant. The worst thing is she doesn’t present him at home when she meets him, she just turns up pregnant, and her parents are going to ask who made her pregnant, and then oblige her to marry. They say ‘you should marry. Don’t give us headaches here at home’. (EI, Matron, Rapale)*

*“It is shameful to be pregnant and remain at the parents’ house. It is preferable to marry than to become pregnant while living at home. In addition to the girl being ruined, the family also feels that way. It’s contempt for people in the family, in the neighbourhood. And if she says ‘that’s the boy’ and he denies he’s the father ‘I’m saying nothing, it’s not me’, then the parents get offended” (DGF, Adult men, Angoche).*

When pregnancy occurs, the families tend to make arrangements for an immediate marriage. In Gondola, some of the women interviewed share the idea that there is no specific age for a boy to marry, but when he makes a girl pregnant he should marry because “nothing justifies a mother looking after a son who has a living woman”. Note that some girls marry because they become pregnant, rather than becoming pregnant because they marry. The situation is also valid for boys, because even if they have no immediate plans to marry, as from the moment they make a girl pregnant, they are coerced to marry her.

The notion of honour and shame is also present in matters of delaying the marriage, especially associated with the demands of the Catholic Church which requires that, if girls and boys are married by the church, they need to comply with the age requirement and other demands of a religious nature. In Tete (Angónia) one of the interviewees stressed that the Catholic Church was opposed to the marriage of minors:

*“It is common for girls to marry at the age of 18 because here in the community many have the habit of contracting religious matrimony. So to marry they must be 18 years old. And the girls who marry under the age of 18 are rare. Many of them are these girls who date, then become pregnant, and have a baby before the appropriate age. But this type of girl doesn’t stay in the marriage because here in the community it is forbidden to marry at this age. Because here the normal thing is that if a girl wants to marry, she marries in the church” (EI, Religious Leader, Angónia)*

Perceptions of honour and shame as catalysts for child marriage are portrayed by some authors who point to the fact that virginity before marriage is valued and protected (Nhancale, 2012). Failure to observe this restriction “carries a series of penalties in the event that the girl is not a virgin at the time of the marriage” (Mariano, 2009). Men desire a virgin girl “to cook in a clean saucepan”, where “clean” means that the womb should not have been touched by any other blood, that is, by the semen of another man (Ibid). The groups that practice ‘lobolo<sup>24</sup>’ give the bride’s parents a matrimonial compensation in goods or money which increases on condition that the girl is a virgin. The parents thus receive a prize for educating their daughter, and “conserving” her until marriage (Matsinhe, 2012).

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<sup>24</sup> Dowry, or bride-price

### 3.2. Social Pressure (Initiation Rites)

Some interviewees consider that the female initiation rites are a normative cultural practice which transmits content about eroticism. Through the rites, the girls are taught erotic seduction techniques and practices and, in some cases, are encouraged to involve themselves sexually with men (regardless of age), and as evidence that they had attained maturity and could/should marry.

Some interviewees stress that the initiation rites are a social space of complex, contradictory teachings and which sometimes encourage the start of sexual activity and push the girls to sexual relations and/or child marriage, as this statement from one of the interviewees illustrates:

*“I think the initiation rites encourage child marriage. This aspect are the songs of the initiation rites. They are songs very linked to sexuality, not in the positive, but in the negative sense. Inside, the way of living, the gestures they make lead to sexuality, the teachings lead in that direction. I shall sing a piece of music from the initiation rites, but it’s not in Portuguese: ‘the sun is entering for me, a woman, to be a slave of the sex of the man, when you see a snake with a large head, you mustn’t be afraid, you must take it and put it in the hole’. These teachings are given to 11 and 12 year old girls, and when they are leaving the initiation rites, there are drums with the following messages ‘get up and put it there, I’m not going to put it alone’, and even other children who did not attend the rites begin to hear this message of the music. In the initiation rites, they teach girls to hunt men, the girl should be flexible to hunt the man and have sex”. (EI, Representative of CSOs, Milange, District Capital).*

*“The parents don’t help, they want the children to marry young. The parents ask their daughters ‘do you have a boyfriend yet? If you can’t find a boyfriend, you can tell us’. The youths who go to school, are told ‘you’re running away from working on the field” (EI, Representative of CSOs, Milange, District Capital).*

*“The rites are organised by the churches. The parents tell the church that the ‘daughter’ has begun to menstruate, and the church organises other children and holds the initiation rites. The churches have people trained in giving advice to the children attending the rites. This happens in August and September. We send the children to the initiation rites, so that when the girl’s body changes, she knows how to take care of herself, when each thing changes, her behaviour also changes. In the rites we speak of marriage, when the girl marries before going to the rites she is taken to the rites to learn these contents about marriage” (EI, Religious Leader, Milange, Mongue).*

Some interviewees stressed that the initiation rites should not be seen as a passageway to child marriage, but a moment for learning cultural rules and norms, a moment of preparing for adult life, despite the stress on the perverse effects of the initiation rites, as shown by the extracts from interviews and group discussions presented above. Thus since the rites are described as an instance of socialisation and instruction of the girls, in matters of sex, sexuality, care of themselves and of the home, the rites may also have a transformative potential, if, as a space of learning, they could implement content that discourages the early onset of sexual activity and child marriage. Clearly the type of dialogue to be established between the current practices and initiatives seeking to eliminate child marriages does not flow in a linear and light manner, otherwise they would be permeated by politically correct discourses which are unable to subvert the persistence of practices established over centuries, which perpetuate social norms and instructions that reproduce child marriages.

### 3.3. Social Pressure (Blessing and Gratitude)

In some interviews, the idea was expressed of marriage as an opportunity to display gratitude to parents (family and community), and as a blessing that not all girls and families would have the privilege to enjoy. For the parents, ensuring that their daughters marry should represent a great honour, especially when the marriage is strictly complemented by the rituals that accompany it. From some of the group discussions held with women, it was possible to see the idea that the fact the girls had “succeeded” in marrying proves that they were not living under any evil spirit or spell (Mpfukua<sup>25</sup>), as shown by the following extract from an interview:

*“The families prefer to marry the girls early, before they become pregnant, because afterwards it would be shameful for the family. For families and the community, this practice is normal, because the knowledge they have is that this practice is normal. Girls who marry young are envied over those who have not yet married. They use the girls who have already married to encourage those who have not yet married to do so. The girls who don’t marry are told that it’s bad luck, that they have been cursed, or they even accuse the fathers of wanting to sleep with their daughters”. (DGF, Women, Milange).*

Part of this conviction is rooted in the idea that the father cannot die without receiving the dowry (bride price, lobolo, Massunguiro) of his daughter. If the dowry is not received he will die of resentment, and as a result the girl will be cursed. This curse will only end when acts of ritual compensation are held, even if later on. The notion of marriage (including child marriage) as a blessing, duty and obligation is widely interiorised and established as a socially accepted norm. Among the group participants and the interviews, it was also mentioned that some girls are forced to marry young before losing their virginity so that the parents can earn the fee from the Massunguiro ceremony, according to the interview extracts below:

*“The fathers oblige the girls to marry because of the bride-price (Massunguiro). They say they want the bride-price before they die. If they die, they say they did not enjoy ‘my daughter’s right’ (EI, Religious Leader, Gondola)*

*“Other fathers oblige the girls to marry because they say they should marry before he dies so that he can enjoy the bride-price. For these cases, if the father dies without receiving the bride-price, he dies murmuring that he may bring bad luck to his daughter, even that that she won’t have children, sometimes that she won’t marry and will live with the spirit of her father” (DGF, Girls who avoided child marriage, Tambara)*

*“In my area, they think it normal for parents to encourage girls to marry young, so that they can enjoy the bride-price money. Some parents say ‘you are my daughter and I decide. I am the one who says where my son or daughter should go’ ” (DGF, Girls who avoided child marriage, Gondola).*

One of the interviews with a religious leader in Moatize, indicated that another practice persists which helps reproduce polygamy, with the involvement of minors. This leader said that some families voluntarily encourage a particular son-in-law, regarded as prosperous and generous, to take a second daughter as a wife, even if she is a minor, as a way of expressing gratitude for “looking after our daughters” (spouses). The following interview extract illustrates this:

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<sup>25</sup>Mpfukwa is a spirit of a man which lives in the body of a woman, and prevents other men from approaching the woman’s body. The Mpfukwa emits a smell which inhibits men from approaching any woman who lives with a Mpfukwa. This Mpfukwa is a curse/punishment often caused by the father of the girl who died in anger without receiving the Massunguiro/lobolo.



*“Here in Benga we are not all from around here, others come from a long way away. We had that environment because, for example, if I marry into a house it was obligatory for them to give me a minor, a child perhaps 10 or 12 years old and say ‘this is your second wife because you like my work and behaviour as a son-in-law’. So they were offering me as a bonus or prize a girl, a minor, and this is called Mirongo. That is, I like the work my son-in-law does in my house, and I’m giving him a prize”* (EI, Religious Leader, Moatize, Benga).

The perceptions about Massunguiro were also reported and discussed in the groups of girls who avoided child marriage. For them, Massunguiro and Mirongo are negative factors that legitimise child marriage in the communities because, for the girls who avoided child marriage, this practice is used by older men to justify or force girls to abandon school and marry when children.

### 3.4. Self-determination and Social Prestige

Together with the series of reasons regarded as economic, other reasons were mentioned that prioritise the idea of self-esteem, autonomy, the self-determination of the girl, in the context of marriage, as opposed to the perception that in the domestic sphere, in the house of her family and her parents, she would be subordinate to parents, siblings and other older members of the household, unable to take decisions on her diet, or on leisure and entertainment, in addition to subordination to these family members in doing household chores and farming activities.

Among some girls it could be understood that marriage would be a way of dignifying the girl and establishing social prestige, by rising to the status of a married woman. In this discourse that advocates the idea of accessing “freedom through marriage”, the parents’ house is seen as a space of less autonomy, and as one of the main reasons driving girls to consider marriage as an opportunity to obtain resources and a safe and protected social space, as well as a possibility of emancipation and the possibility of making choices with relative autonomy, as witnessed by the following interview extract:

*“The girls want to marry young because many of them want to leave their parents’ house to win their own place too. They want their own home and to look after their own things; they want their own money and not to be ordered about by anybody else”* (EI, Adult Woman, Maganja da Costa).

*“I am more at ease at home with my husband than in my parents’ house. In my parents’ house I am given orders, but in my house, with my husband, I am the one who gives orders”* (DGF, Girls, Milange).

*“When she marries, the woman has flip-flops that her husband buys. You can eat food in your father’s house, but there’s food that you eat in your husband’s house while in mother’s house you weren’t eating. Things like capulanas and flip-flops, Mum isn’t going to buy for me”* (DGF, Girls, Angoche).

In deepening the question, it was possible to understand, in specific terms, what types of privileges were meant:

*“In your husband’s house you eat spaghetti, but not in your parents’ house. In your husband’s house you eat rice, but not in your parents’ house. In your husband’s house, you say ‘husband, today I want to eat this, and your husband is concerned to buy it, while in your parents’ house, you don’t determine the menu.”* (DGF, Girls, Angoche).

Despite the apparent reductionism portrayed in the above extract, which limits the scale of privileges to some dietary options that the girls believe they can enjoy in their husbands’ house,

the perception of marriage as an opportunity for emancipation shows the tension that characterises the life of adolescents in families. A vast literature and whole literary genres describe the family as a space of tension and conflict and where resentments between the various members is expressed. This is also the sort of matter that is rarely dealt with in communication initiatives. In detail, the extract also expresses the notion that the girl would be a subject (object) in motion and able to move between her parents' house and her husband's house, but not immediately thought of as her house too. This reading reflects the various forms of reproduction of gender disparities in relations between men and women, both in societies regarded as matrilinear and those that are patrilinear.

Analysis of the mobility of girls as opportunities for emancipation is broadly present in the available literature. Nhantumbo-Djivage et al, 2009, citing Osório 2011, from another angle, also bring to light the perception of some girls and families who see in child marriage an opportunity to emancipate the girl for her adult phase, which includes the self-management of her economic life. From this perspective, Nhantumbo points to the interest of the girls in becoming economically and socially independent as one of the factors in normalising child marriages in families and communities. The families that accept the girls tend, in turn, to regard the entry of a girl as an opportunity to use more labour for domestic chores and for promotion of the family economy.

### **3.5. Blaming Girls and Holding them Responsible**

A varied range of interviewees, at multiple research sites, regard child marriages, and the early onset of sexual activity between girls and boys as motivated by the “choices” and individual behaviour of the girls and boys themselves, circumventing the recommendations and advice of their parents and of other older members of the family, and of the community, including religious leaders. This interpretation stresses the idea of erosion of values in the relations between parents and children, lack of respect and disdain for what is regarded as the most appropriate traditional advice.

The interviews held in Tete (Angónia), Nampula (Rapale), and Zambézia (Maganja da Costa) emphasise that, for the community, the girls “give themselves very early to sexual practices”, against the advice of their parents, as the following extracts show:

*“Other parents advise their daughters not to marry before the age of 18, but when the child hears those words, she doesn't obey. She plays around outside, and later becomes pregnant and ends up marrying without being old enough”* (DGF, Girls, Angónia).

*They don't accept. We, the older women, advise them. The current girls don't accept advice... Proud... They don't listen, they don't understand, they're stubborn... Money, money is what is ruining the children. You find a child asking for money from a big man and he wants that child. That's when he takes out a lot of money and gives it to her. He doesn't give in vain. She becomes sexually involved, and later becomes pregnant. If she goes home to her parents, they don't want anything to do with her. She should marry. That's what's ruining the children”.* (EI, Traditional Midwife, Rapale).

*“The behaviour of girls today is not as in the past. In past years girls understood very well the advice of their parents and obeyed, but today, nothing! Things have changed. Today girls are only interested in*

*money. They don't want to know about advice. If their mother speaks, they'd rather go out and learn to drink cabanga<sup>26</sup>". (EI, Matron, Rapale)*

*"I know a girl who did not marry before she was 18. She follows the advice given by her elders. Those who don't follow the advice prefer to marry young without knowing what they will suffer later". (DGF, Girls, Maganja da Costa)*

For some of the interviewees, particularly adult men and women, teenage pregnancies are the result of early sexual initiation caused by the contents of television, for example soap operas, films or erotic videos. From the viewpoint of the interviewees, when a child watches television content of this kind, it awakens attention and curiosity, encouraging children to practice what they see in soap operas and erotic films, resulting in sexual initiation which sometimes results in teenage pregnancies, and the children who eventually become pregnant are obliged to marry. The following interview extracts bear out these interpretations:

*"As soon as a child watches a love film or a soap opera, particularly if she is ignorant of sexual matters, she immediately wants to experiment. Nobody agrees to bring up the children of their daughters and so the son should have conditions and afterwards marry". (DGF, Adult men, Rapale).*

*"Here is the most common thing. The families, the children do this very normally. Sometimes it's the girls themselves who introduce the boyfriend to their parents and say they want to marry. The parents can't do anything. It's that she's seen a neighbouring friend marry, and another has married, and she ends up wanting to marry as well, so that she's not left out. In general the families don't see any problem in girls marrying young." (EI, Provider of Educational Services, Angoche).*

The above extracts show that, in the midst of the weight of interpretation by parents and guardians in determining the moment of marriage, there co-exist parallel systems of social representations which tend to transfer the onus of reproducing the practice of child marriage to the girls and boys. This perspective is expressed through discourses which highlight the idea that because of contemporary consumerist influences, often referred to as "seductions of modernity", referring to access to TV and to social media which disseminate trends regarded as more permissive than local traditions, by encouraging adolescents to aspire to resources and consumer goods, some of which are regarded as superfluous, they would be inciting girls to begin active sexual life at a relatively early age, resulting in unplanned pregnancies. Those pregnancies are then used as an excuse for the families to demand that their daughters marry and do not "overburden" their original family with what is regarded as dishonour, as stated above.

From this viewpoint the "voluntary" involvement "by choice" of girls with older men, in exchange for material goods and money was mentioned during the interviews as a further factor favouring the reproduction of child marriages, even when these take on ties that are not specifically those of marriage (customary or legal), but relations of inter-generational or transactional sex. This line of interpretation, although it portrays practices and experiences that occur in society, should be approached carefully in communication initiatives so as not to distance and de-prioritise the weight that the social structure has in determining (taking decisions about) the authorisation, legitimation and/or tacit or silent acceptance of child marriages. The combination of communication approaches, directed at family and community structures, as well as girls and boys, should take into account the inter-penetrability of these dimensions, stressing the role of the family structures with inherent messages, and promoting education on sexuality (SDSR) for adolescents.

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<sup>26</sup> Fermented drink, brewed from maize bran.

### 3.6. Economic Reason and Structural Constraints

Some of the participants in the research said that marrying after the age of 18 is something that should be aspired to. This group of interviewees recognises that girls are marrying young and that this, in various ways, is damaging the health and lives of the girls. However, explanations about why there is such limited success in the aspiration to marry after the age of 18 allude to a multiplicity of factors, including reference to structural questions to justify having to marry young. The main argument invoked when they alluded to economic questions was poverty and the normalising culture:

*“People marry when they are still small. It’s normal here, so there’s no way of talking about it. It’s difficult for a girl to grow up and not marry”.* (EI, Elderly woman, Angoche).

During the interviews and at all the research sites, economic reasons of various kinds were repeatedly invoked. From the viewpoint of the interviewees, the lack of material conditions for the girls to support themselves, incapacity to tolerate the difficulties of agricultural production and of other ways of earning income, the lack of money to keep girls at school (particularly when they have to go into secondary school), as well as the need to satisfy other “whims” and needs of girls were stressed as the main reasons pushing girls into marriage and/or sexual involvement with someone who possesses resources.

The interviewees indicate that the lack of economic conditions for the survival of the family would “oblige” girls, with the consent of their parents, to marry young, viewing marriage as an opportunity and strategy for overcoming their condition of economic poverty. In this same line of interpretation, the interviews show that “because of the high cost of living” the girls are “obliged” to become involved in transactional and inter-generational sex, as a way of overcoming their lack of economic and financial resources in order to acquire goods they need. In the same transactional sex, the girl becomes pregnant, paving the way to the obligation to marry. According to the interviewees:

*“When the maize season ends, the families are without food, and the secret is to marry the children off early”* (EI, Religious Leader, Milange, Milange, Tengua)

*“It’s our reality to send the children to marry early, it’s something normal, but now, with information, with the lectures we are hearing that this marriage brings misfortune to the family, because the girl may die in childbirth, but for us here it’s a reality because of poverty”* (EI, Religious Leader, Milange, Mongue).

*“It’s very difficult for the girl to grow up and not marry. There’s a lot of suffering ... Marrying reduces it, because when you want to buy clothes for yourself, you have to buy for your daughter too, but if she marries, the husband buys it for her.”* (EI, Elderly woman, Angoche).

*“It’s poverty. Some choose to marry, but others are obliged to by their parents. Some men when they appear immediately speak with the parents. They say they liked the girl and want to marry her. The father likes the man and obliges his daughter to marry, because if she does not marry this man, her father cannot give her anything to eat. If she were to marry, she could eat in her husband’s house, she would be her husband’s responsibility. So if she doesn’t agree to marry, it’s because she already has something to eat”* (EI, Girl, Angoche).

Some girls interviewed say that peer pressure, poverty or the incapacity of parents as providers are also among the reasons that induce girls to marry older men, workers/people with some means of income, in the hope of obtaining resources to meet their needs.

The interviews stress the recurrence, among girls, of the idea that one of the viable alternatives for overcoming the economic limitations of their parents in providing resources to meet some of the girls' needs (uniform and other school material, beauty and hygiene articles) would be to take the path of marriage. The argument of the group of girls who avoided child marriage is based on the experiences and justifications used by their friends/peers who did marry as children. For their part, girls of the same age group who were child brides took as their basis their own situation to explain some of the needs which led them to agree to marry and to become pregnant before the age of 18. Under these circumstances, the notion of economic conditions is not expressed only in the question of the poverty of the girl's family, but also in the economic conditions they imagine the girl will find in her marriage family.

*"If, for example, I have nothing at home, my daughter met with Mr X and he gives her 10 Meticalis and she says, 'mum, Mr X has already given me this', and you say you're going to buy 'namaka'<sup>27</sup>, now we have lunch, he's not going to marry her? If the parents have authorised it, now if you say, look because this man has given you 10, if you threaten him, he won't continue". (DGF, Girls, Rapale)*

*"My friends are married and they married young because their parents were not sustaining them to go to school, others went around saying that it's better being married than going to school, because with school you're not going to earn anything, but what happens with them is that every day they have arguments with their husbands" (DGF, Girl, Tambara)*

*"People marry before they are 18. This is because they have no way of living. They have nothing to eat, nothing to wear, their parents are poor, life is working on the field. When the girl grows up, she has her ambitions and her parents can't manage to support her" (EI, Girl, Angoche).*

*"For me it's complicated, it varies from community to community, but here it depends on the conditions the child is experiencing (married woman). If she's living well, a normal life, there's no problem. There are families that accept it, because their daughters marry and are fine, regardless of age, but there are parents who don't accept it, they want their daughters to study, this happens, but here in the district capital, there's a 16 year old neighbour who's married, and in the neighbourhood nobody complains, because she's fine, and the other girls are even envious of her" (DGF, Girls, Milange).*

*"The parents want their daughters to marry, when they're virgins. They say they're ready to marry and this is associated to the fact that the girls in Malawi marry early. And here we have initiation rites, and as a virgin she goes to the initiation rites. But here the important factor is the conditions. She can marry young and have conditions, because she marries in order to have better conditions. The problem here begins when she marries, and her husband doesn't have conditions" (EI, Matron, Maganja da Costa)*

*"Other girls think of marrying early because they think that early marriage will relieve their suffering" (DGF, Girls, Moatize)*

Another dimension that was clear in one of the focus group discussions was the economic and social vulnerability of some girls. The vulnerability to which orphan girls are subject was reported among the girls who avoided child marriage as one of the reasons why some girls marry. This

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<sup>27</sup> Salted dried fish



was the only group among the interviewees which looked at the marriage of girls as resulting from the loss of their parents.

The question of orphanhood was mentioned in Gondola as one of the factors favouring child marriage, since orphaned girls living in the houses of relatives are sometimes encouraged to marry young. Associated with the aspect of the needs of the girl herself, it was also clear among the groups of girls and boys that child marriage among girls who attend school was sometimes happening because of the poor or non-existent capacity of the parents/guardians to meet some school needs (uniform, material and money for transport to school).

*“In my case, most of my friends are married, and they married when they were minors, because some of them are orphans and have no-one to sustain them, and these husbands are almost all older”* (GFD, Girls, Gondola).

The scarcity of opportunities for continuing education, or involvement in activities which allow the continual educational and professional development of individuals (girls and boys) seems to be a factor encouraging marriage, even at a tender age, as a way of expressing individual achievement in a context of limited opportunities, as the interview extracts below illustrate:

*“In Cariua and Muso localities, after young people have completed 7th grade, their opportunities to continue their studies are very limited unless they have a relative in the town. As an alternative, they end up marrying young. Some young men go and work in Beira or Maputo, others come looking for jobs in the town, so as to continue with their classes. For their part, the girls are limited to staying at home, because they are ashamed to become babysitters”.* (EI, Provider of Educational Services, Maganja da Costa)

*“They marry because they are in no condition to continue their studies. In other cases it’s even because of violence. For example, if my father had not obliged me to marry when I was 20 years old, I would have completed my studies, but my father said that since I was pregnant, I had to marry, and so I married”* (DGF, Girls, Rapale).

On the same subject, during the research, a peculiar segment of interviews was found in Nampula, particularly in interviews with leaders and matrons. Some people argued that the families who marry off their daughters before they are 18 cannot be classified on the basis of external and tangible aspects such as poverty because they are “bad people” who do not value their children, particularly their daughters. This perception may be connected to the experience of these people always saying “Even if I’m poor, I don’t sell my daughter... I do everything for her to study”:

*“Economic conditions... I’m not going to defend this, because they don’t have food, no. Not only do they have something that is talked of in the community. When the government says buy exercise books for the children, they say ‘we don’t work’, but if they don’t work, they don’t eat? Cultivating the field, isn’t that work? Now you’re going to say I’m not working, I don’t have a job..... But you woke up in the morning and took your hoe ‘I’m going to my little seed-bed to arrange sweet potato cuttings to give you something to eat’. You thought ‘I’m not from here, but I have to speak with so-and-so or the owners to ask for a place where I can make a field, ask for cassava to plant there’. This year, the second year you will have food, but now you’re just sitting down saying ‘my daughter, I’m marrying you off because of poverty’. What poverty, if you’re just sitting down and not looking? Will this food come, for example – in a concrete case, we are in Ramadan – if you do not fast, because the Indians didn’t bring anything to give me, or you can’t fast because the Indians didn’t give you anything. They’ll give it to you, go to your field, your friends there will give you something”.* (EI, Religious Leader, Rapale).



### 3.7. Legislative Windows and Communication Gaps

Public service providers and representatives of CSOs and NGOs interviewed reported that the fact that the legislation on marriage opens an exception for girls to marry at the age of 16, based on the consent/emancipation of their parents, is liable to various interpretations. From the viewpoint of the interviewees, this lack of harmony in the legislation contributes to a tacit acceptance of child marriages, including of girls under 16 years old, by exploiting the notion of parental consent, especially if we bear in mind that this legal framework is rarely called upon in court, in cases where the marriages take place between families, governed by excessively fluid traditional and customary norms, if we take into consideration that such marriages tend to involve only the families concerned and the local leaders who sometimes act to guarantee the marriages socially.

*“In our own country, we need to avoid contradictions in the interpretation of the law. The legislation should be linear and should not create room for 16 year old girls to marry as long as their parents approve. This opens space for malfeasance”* (EI, Social Welfare Worker, Chimoio).

*“It would be important to revise the legislation, because as it is, in future it could create difficulties for implementing strategic actions to prevent and fight against child marriage... as well as for appropriating initiatives of local advocacy in support of the girls subjected to child marriage”* (EI, Representative of CSOs, Milange).

Furthermore, the skills of the professionals and communicators who play the role of guardians and promoters of messages that are expected to be transformative are also charged with legalist radicalism which makes it difficult to overcome barriers of “natural” resistance regarding negotiating and/or transforming social norms. If, on the one hand, the modern legislation needs to be stressed, on the other it must be recognised that this legislation does not rest on a vacuum, but on centuries old social practices, regardless of whether they damage the life, rights and health of the child, At the sites researched, it was very clear that those who promote legal social reforms adopt a very confrontational posture, less open to dialogue, as the extracts below testify:

*“We have said we shall punish anyone who marries off their daughter early. (...) the punishment is to take the family to the head of the locality, and order them to clean in the party”* (EI, Community Leader, Milange)

*“We have to speak with the community about the disadvantages of marrying off a girl early. And we leaders, if we see a family practicing this act, we have to punish them, ordering them to clean the road, or a grave so that the others see this is not good”* (EI, Community Leader, Maganja da Costa).

The labelling and confrontational language proposed, as in the above extract, does not limit the possibilities of establishing bridges and points of rupture which might guarantee the involvement of the “social brokers” (those who boost the introduction and/or adoption of new conducts) to the point of winning social acceptance with transformational potential.

The merely prescriptive and punitive communication approach, not accompanied by argumentative and persuasive language, tends to exacerbate points and poles of confrontation, and potentially only has a limited reach, particularly in a context such as Mozambique where the law enforcement system is very fragile and unable to cover the vast territory of the county. That is, the Offices to Care for the Victims of Violence against Girls and other supervisory bodies are not present throughout the country and do not have the human and material capacity to

accommodate all cases legally. This is not sustainable. From this perspective, the combination of persuasive and repressive (punitive) approaches should be made wide use of and conscientiously implemented by the actors, institutions and communities committed to responding to the challenges imposed by child marriages.

In the interviews held in Manica, one of the questions that arose in the interviews was formulated by interviewees who asked:

*“Are these girls whose parents may permit/authorise them different from the other girls in the same age group?”* (EI, Representative of CSOs, Gondola).

This type of questioning, apparently inconsequential, may also represent an extraordinary opportunity for encouraging transformation through illustrative and comparative language, in which peer experiences, close family experiences, experiences of local and national exemplary individuals and families (champions) might be catalysts, by way of illustration, to prove the various possibilities of transformation, the social gains of girls, families and communities through strengthening practices which favour, for example, educational progress and the economic empowerment of girls by channels different from those traditionally enshrined in child marriage, expanding the opportunities to attain the rights of children, and of girls and ensuring, in the final instance, alignment in accordance with the law.

### 3.8. Summary of the Reasons for Marrying

Reasons Invoked for Marrying by district					
#	Reason / Factor	Place	W	M	Characteristics/Comments
1	<b>Appearance of menstruation, pubic hair and development of breasts</b>	All districts	X		Menstruation is regarded as the main marker defining the maturity of the girl. Since chronological and numerical age is not regarded as of great relevance in the research contexts, menstruation is the biological and social indicator based on which the girl is enrolled in the emotional market. Thus immediately after the first menstrual period, the girl is submitted to the initiation rites where she learns and perfects care for herself and for others. This care includes lessons about marriage which prepares her for the home.  <i>“For women, as well as the breasts, when the first menstruation appears, at this time the woman goes through a local ritual to teach her how to care for and clean her private parts. For the man too, when he begins to be afraid and needs to play with girls, he is already an adult”</i> (GFD, Men, Tambara).
2	<b>Teenage or unwanted pregnancy</b>	All districts	X	X	Among the interviewees it was repeatedly stressed that many girls are obliged to marry because they became pregnant, and the same happens with the boys who impregnated the girls. Teenage pregnancy is indicated as one of the reasons for child marriage.  <i>“The boys aren’t old enough, but it’s enough for a boy to get a girl pregnant, and he should marry her, regardless of age or whether or not he’s working. At the age of 25 a boy is old enough and doesn’t ask for everything from his mother. He already has an idea of getting by on his own”</i> (GFD, Women, Gondola)  <i>“There are girls who marry because the man asks the family for her hand, and other girls marry because they became pregnant. Those who marry because they became pregnant are more or less 13 years old. When the boys ask for their hand in marriage, the girls marry when they are 15 or 16 years old”</i> (DGF, Adult Women, Moatize).  <i>“When girls come back from secondary school pregnant, they should marry. That’s why many marry when they are still minors”</i> (DGF, Adult Women, Maganja da Costa).  <i>“I was in 8th grade, but at the same time I was dating. I ended up becoming pregnant and this forced me to marry. But I still want to study because I later separated from my husband, and he left me with the two children. If a school appears in this community, I would like to continue studying”</i> (DGF, Girls, Angonia).

Reasons Invoked for Marrying by district					
#	Reason / Factor	Place	W	M	Characteristics/Comments
					<p><i>“Girls who marry before they are 18, are sometime motivated by things they learn from the soap operas, when they see people sucking each other in the film they want to do it. But when pregnancy appears, it’s not worth denying it. People oblige them to marry, because if somebody gets a girl pregnant, he must look after the child that will be born because in today’s life it’s difficult to look after your own son or daughter plus their children”. (DGF, Adult men, Rapale)</i></p> <p><i>“When she married before the age of 18, she thought well, because if she went to school she would be a slut, and would come back pregnant from school. Everyone marries early, but particularly the girls. The girls here need money, it can be a 70 year old man, but they’ll accept. The men here have 4 or 5 wives. For example, our mambo (traditional leader) has 4 wives”. (Girl, EI, Milange, Muanhambo).</i></p>
3	Protecting the reputation of the family and preserving the value of the dowry	Tambara	X	X	<p>Among the interviewees there is a perception that after appearance of the first menstrual period, and the girl does not marry, she runs the risk of becoming sexually involved with somebody. If she becomes pregnant and/or it is known that she is having sex, this is seen as contributing to reducing her symbolic value on the emotional market. From this viewpoint, hastening marriage would seek to preserve the family’s reputation.</p> <p><i>“In fact we do not accept child marriage of our own free will, but we have no way out because we see the girls are looking for boys, even in the school breaks they are looking for boys, and this leads to pregnancy. As parents, there is nothing we can do but call on the boy’s family for them to marry” (GFD, Men, Tambara).</i></p> <p><i>“When the boys leave looking for girls in the dark, in the end they bring problems. So we say they should get married to avoid problems and avoid their parents having to pay a fine because they have got the girl pregnant. So as soon as the boy begins to date, he should marry” (GFD, Women, Tambara).</i></p> <p><i>“There are other mothers who do this because of this fear, they fear that their daughter will become pregnant, and the boy will deny he is responsible. Then there are others who prefer to marry off their daughters before they are 18 years old, but they always aware that this is wrong” (EI, Girl, Moutize).</i></p> <p><i>“When a boy reaches 20 or 25 years old without marrying, the community speaks badly of him. They say he doesn’t marry because he’s sterile. Because if he wasn’t sterile, he should already have married. Boys younger than him have already married and have children, The community says this about the boys” (EI, Matron, Maganja da Costa).</i></p> <p><i>“I think it should be after 18 years of age, but for the community, the younger the better. Their idea is they want to protect the girl so that she does not marry or become pregnant with someone not known to the family”. (EI, Religious Leader, Milange, Tengua).</i></p>
4	Poverty and satisfaction of the “basic needs” of girls	All districts	X		<p>Poverty in families was invoked as one of the reasons for girls marrying. The interviewees tend to indicate that, when the girl grows up, it is no longer the responsibility of her parents to continue supporting her. She should have a man providing for her to alleviate her parents who have few resources and these could be channelled to other needs.</p> <p><i>“It’s very difficult for a girl to grow up and not marry. There’s a lot of suffering ... Marrying reduces this. Because when you want to buy clothes for yourself, you also have to buy for your daughter, but if she marries, the husband buys it for her” (EI, Woman, Angoche).</i></p> <p><i>“Sometimes the mothers oblige the girls to marry. They look for husbands when they understand that the conditions at home are not good. When they find somebody who promises something, they accept because they think ‘it’s a chance to change my situation’” (EI, Girl who avoided child marriage, Gondola)</i></p> <p><i>“The advantage is that the husband brings what I want. He brings food. The advantage is that the husband buys capulanas Thus my father now rests” (DGF, Girl, Angoche).</i></p>

Reasons Invoked for Marrying by district					
#	Reason / Factor	Place	W	M	Characteristics/Comments
					<p><i>“In the case of girls, many marry because of poverty. It’s enough for her to see something with her friend, such as a capulana. She asks her friend and says don’t you have the money to buy this capulana. In these cases to have the capulana the girl must be involved with men, and can even marry early after becoming pregnant”.</i> (DGF Girls)</p> <p><i>“Yes. They marry traders, fishermen among others. Sometimes they do this to receive the bride-price money. So we said earlier this is really due to mental poverty”.</i> (EI, Community leader, Maganja da Costa).</p>
5	Value of the dowry/ Survival strategy	Gondola Tambara Milange	X		<p>In some districts, it could be seen that the girl’s marriage is understood as part of the economic and symbolic (bride-price) strategies, in that the parents and guardians of the girls force/encourage child marriage of the girls in order to enjoy the value of the dowry, since the family of a girl who is married on condition that she is a virgin receives an additional sum on top of what was requested as a kind of fee for the fact that they kept the girl a virgin.</p> <p><i>“In my area they think it normal that sometimes the guardians encourage the girls to marry early in order to enjoy the money from the bride-price. Some guardians say ‘you are my daughter. I decide and it’s I who say where my son or daughter goes’</i> (GFD, Girls, Tambara).</p> <p><i>“The parents oblige the girls to marry because of the bride-price (Massunguiro). The father says he want to enjoy the bride-price before he dies. Traditionally, if he dies without enjoying his daughter’s dowry, it creates problems”</i> (EI, Religious Leader, Gondola).</p> <p><i>“In the community, the older men make the girls marry young so as to get the bride-price. It’s sad and lamentable, because we don’t want our children to marry young because children/girls don’t know how to look after the home”</i> (GFD, Women, Gondola).</p> <p><i>“When the maize season ends, the households have no food. The secret is to marry off the children early”</i> (EI, Religious Leader, Milange, Tengua).</p> <p><i>“Generally it’s the relatives, because they think they’re going to get money. There’s an expression here in tcheua which says ‘you will never buy a banana which is almost rotten, while there is one that is good and new’<sup>28</sup> or ‘you eat a green mango with salt’</i> (Representative of CSOs, Milange).</p>
6	Have children early / Build a family	Maganja da Costa Milange Angónia, Moatize	X		<p>Some interviewees said there is a certain urgency in marrying since it would increase the possibility of beginning to bear children earlier, which could increase the number of children over time. Some families prefer to see their children marry well before they are 18 because they think they should not die without seeing their grandchildren, others because they think they should multiply the members of the family to maintain the lineage. In other situations, children marry to prove they are fertile, thus avoiding the social stigma that attaches to people considered infertile.</p> <p><i>“In the communities they think it good to marry a girl early. Because she will bear children early. But we are fighting for them to abandon this idea”</i> (Health Service Provider, Maganja da Costa).</p> <p><i>“Here it’s normal that after marrying, you can’t go for a year without bearing children. Because if a year passes without bearing children, the talk of the community is about this. ‘She married a long time ago, what’s she doing in the house?’ The father-in-law is even heard at the window shouting – ‘Hey there, strength, strength, we want children...’</i> (GDF, Girls, Moatize).</p> <p><i>“But there’s an advantage. The advantage (of marrying) is creating a family. Creating a family because this is why you marry. Because if this takes more than a year, you’ll be sent away ... ..”</i> (GDF, Adult men and women, Milange).</p>

<sup>28</sup> A person aged 18 or above is considered an old banana

Reasons Invoked for Marrying by district					
#	Reason / Factor	Place	W	M	Characteristics/Comments
7	<b>Blessing / Luck</b>	Gondola, Tambara Maganja da Costa	X		<p>The perception of a blessing is linked to the idea that married girls are considered blessed because they were not affected by evil spirits (Mpfukwa)<sup>29</sup>. Being unaffected by evil spirits also values the parents in the eyes of the community.</p> <p><i>“It’s a norm here, that when a girl grows and ‘is old enough’, she has to marry. If a man appears who wants to marry you, and you, the girl, refuse, your mother obliges you to marry and says ‘you’ve already grown up, you can’t stay at home any more. You must go to your own home. You can’t stay here until you’re 25 years old, because they may say you have an evil spirit, the Mpfukua. This spirit makes things go wrong in your life’. We believe this because Mpfukua is the spirit of a man that stays in the body of the girl which prevents her from being appreciated and even from marrying, and they say the girl smells bad. To get rid of the Mpfukua you have to go to the witch-doctor to remove it, and after removing it, things really change”</i> (GFD, Girls, Gondola).</p> <p><i>“The advantage of marrying is that you will have children and won’t be called a woman with the Mpfukua spirit, a woman who has her own home and is not just jealous of the others who married”</i> (EI, Girl, Gondola).</p> <p><i>“They say the girls who don’t marry are unlucky, or cursed, or they even accuse the fathers of wanting to sleep with their daughters”</i> (EI, Representative of CSOs, Milange).</p> <p><i>“They think it’s good luck when a girl marries young, or before she is 18’.</i> (EI, Religious Leader, Maganja da Costa, Nante)</p>
8	<b>Search for autonomy (freedom from the parents)</b>	Angoche	X		<p>The family space, living with the parents and other members, has been considered a place of extreme control, overloading girls with chores. The possibility of marriage is seen as an opportunity for the emancipation of the girl.</p> <p><i>“The difference is that she (married) will depend on her husband and I (single) will depend on mum and dad”</i> (DGF, Girls, Angoche).</p>
9	<b>Happiness with one’s partner</b>	Angónia	X		<p>Some youths interviewed said that marriage makes people happy due to the possibility of looking after each other, sharing ideas, opinions and property.</p> <p><i>“The advantage (of marrying) is being happy with one’s partner. But there’s also a disadvantage when they cease to understand each other”.</i> (DGF, Girls, Angonia).</p>
10	<b>Mbonano festivity (Traditional marriage)</b>	Benga - Moatize	X	X	<p>Traditional marriage, called mbonamo in Tete, is regarded as a motive for joy, union between families and sharing. It can offer an opportunity for family members to meet, eat and drink festively. It is considered a motive for pride and honour in families. Some interviewees consider the festivities as a potential motive for parents to seek to marry their daughters prematurely.</p> <p><i>“Other parents exert pressure even to eat mbonano. To marry is to eat mbonano. A ceremony celebrating that our child has married”</i> (DGF, Adult men and women, Moatize).</p>
11	<b>Capacity to provide</b>	Tambara Gondola Angoche Milange		X	<p>In some districts, the idea was stressed that boys should marry when they manage to obtain a source of income, and the men are regarded as those who should be the main providers – the capacity to provide for oneself and for others, mentioned as the capacity to build a house, to have a source of income (in agriculture or in informal trade). This capacity to provide is also described as “gaining wisdom”, “having responsibility”, and similar expressions.</p> <p><i>“These boys aren’t old enough, but it’s enough for a boy to make a girl pregnant and he should marry the girl, regardless of how old he is, or whether he works or not. At the age of 25, a boy is old enough and doesn’t ask his mother for everything. He’s old enough to make his way alone”</i> (GFD, Women, Gondola).</p>

<sup>29</sup>Mfukwa is a spirit of a man which lives in the body of a woman, and prevents other men from approaching the woman’s body. The Mpfukwa emits a smell which inhibits men from approaching any woman who lives with a Mpfukwa. This Mpfukwa is a curse/punishment often caused by the father of the girl who died in anger without receiving the Massungiro/lobolo.



Reasons Invoked for Marrying by district					
#	Reason / Factor	Place	W	M	Characteristics/Comments
					<p>“Boy 25 years old and above. Because that’s an age at which he may be employed and won’t depend on his father for survival. Better if he’s finished his studies. The boy commands the house so he should marry when he can provide something for the house, and the man should be older than the woman”. (GFD, Men, Tambara)</p>
12	Capacity to undertake domestic chores	Tambara Angoche Milange Moatize	X		<p>One of the criteria for determining readiness for marriage for girls is described as the capacity to carry out domestic chores (looking after children, washing clothes, going to the field) in addition to the signs of puberty:</p> <p>“Not only because of the age, but because of the physique of the girls, when they begin to do activities around the house well, when they begin to have large breasts, then we can let them live with another person, because she is already prepared to marry and look after the man” (EI, Community Leader, Tambara).</p> <p>“For me the girl can be 18, but doesn’t know how to do anything. I’m talking about that scene of cooking, she doesn’t even know how to cook, she doesn’t know how to wash dishes, and I don’t know what ...then when she is 18 years old, she cannot marry. She should wait until she tries to learn how to work. When she is 19, 20 years old, and she knows how to work, then they can let her marry.” (RapM 01).</p>
13	Imitation / Peer pressure / Parental pressure	Angónia Moatize Milange	X		<p>In some districts, the interviews revealed that some girls and boys marry to imitate, while in other districts the parents put pressure on their sons or daughters to marry, for multiple reasons, including those mentioned above.</p> <p>“There are others who get married just to imitate. Because somebody else married, they also want to marry. Because so-and-so got married, they think they should also marry”, (RpgM5).</p> <p>“Often it’s happened because of family poverty. For example, on a day like today, there are no meals, and there’s a neighbouring house where a girl has already married, perhaps it worked out, and the husband is trying to find food for her, so she is envious of these things. So she leaves and begins to date and marries”, (Traditional Midwife 02).</p> <p>“Sometimes it happens with the families themselves, even the father and mother. So if you don’t have that idea of marrying now, they put pressure on you. You haven’t yet reached the age you want to marry, but they are already talking to you, and already have a spouse for you. You’re there with that idea they bring to make you marry young. That’s what I can answer. Many youths don’t marry even with an objective. They even like to say that by year X I shall marry. But the parents put on pressure and they’re the ones who gave birth to you. You also cannot obey the orders they give”, (RpzB4).</p>
13	Lack of conditions for continuing to study	Angónia Moatize	X	X	<p>Lack of conditions for continuing at school was mentioned by the interviewees, particularly those who live in peripheral localities, as one of the reasons contributing to girls and boys resorting earlier to marriage, as a way of making sense of a life with limited horizons.</p> <p>“A person studies and reaches a point where she sees she’s making her parents suffer to give her conditions they don’t have and continue studying, or the parents themselves end up being unable to support her studies any longer. As from there she stops studying and ends up marrying. Both girls and boys, after they end seventh grade, have no way to continue their studies because locally it’s not possible. In the town it’s very expensive, and in the city even more so. When they stay in the community, they end up marrying” (Check source?)</p> <p>“There are other parents also who don’t send their child to study. She ended 7th grade here, but to go to town (to continue secondary education), nothing! Is this child going to stay? Is she going to marry? There are also others who are orphans. Now what will they do? She will marry”, (DGF, Girls, Angonia).</p> <p>“When I passed into eighth grade, I asked my father because I wanted to study, I wanted to continue studying. But my father said he had no conditions for me to continue studying. I stayed at home, a boy showed up and I married. Since they have a literacy school here, I continue to attend this school where I have also talked with the older women” (EI, Girl, Moatize).</p> <p>“It’s because of suffering. Because sometimes you go to the town to study, and the parents are unable to help. Then the girl thinks that by marrying, the suffering will stop, but when she goes to her marriage home, it’s worse”, (DGF, Girls, Angonia).</p>



Reasons Invoked for Marrying by district					
#	Reason / Factor	Place	W	M	Characteristics/Comments
14	Enjoyment of female sexuality	Gondola	X		<p>In Gondola the woman's marriage is understood as something special, particularly when it is associated with sexuality. This construction is based on the perception that the menopause limits, or shortens, the sexual life of a woman. Child marriage is thus seen as an expedient that will allow the girl/woman to enjoy her sexuality.</p> <p><i>"Normally the girls marry older men, because the woman has a limit for living without a man, since after the menopause the woman loses power. So women always have to marry an older man so that when the menopause arrives, the man is also already old"</i> (GFD, Women, Gondola)</p> <p><i>"Women lose their sexual power very early, while men don't... so when we marry and with an older man, we can live together until death, because when I reach that phase when I no longer can... he also will not want to go out, he will be tired"</i> (GFD, Girls, Gondola).</p> <p><i>"A person has sex, but not whenever he wants. But with your wife you can wake up in the morning and have sex, return at night and have sex ..."</i> (Focal group, boys, Angoche).</p>

## 4. Who do the Girls Marry?

### 4.1. Marriage with Older Men

In all the research sites, the various groups of interviewees stress that, in general, marriages occur between young girls and older men (with no clear limits on the interval in age difference), despite the variation in reasons and arguments to justify this pattern, with particular focus on reasons to do with economic power. The range of interviewees who point to economic arguments as the basis for marriage between young girls and older men, argued in the following terms:

*“The girls here in Nbacolo marry with young men and adults. The girls chase the older men and look at the economic condition of the older man, but sometimes the adult men entice the children and these girls, when they see they are not getting what they want, leave the first child marriage for a second”* (DGF, Adult woman Tambara).

*“The girls marry older men because they think that a boy of the same age group does not yet have a visible future, doesn’t have conditions”.* (DGF, Adult woman, Tambara).

*“They’re big people with bellies. Here people who have bellies are believed to have a lot of money, and so, in order not to suffer, the girl wants to marry with one of these. It’s enough for him to come with a motorbike and the parents hurry to accept”.* (DGF, Girl, Angoche).

*“Here it depends on them. The girl can choose. But on the islands it’s different. They marry older men to live well. They choose those who have goods like canoes, fishing nets, motorbikes. While here it depends on the sons.”* (EI, Adult, Angoche).

*“They marry older men. You find a 15 year old girl dating a man who is 25, 30, 40 years old. They say that nowadays these young men don’t work, they don’t have money, they want someone who has money.”* (EI, Boy, Angoche).

*“The girls mostly marry older men, because it’s poverty that determines these things. These girl look for older men because they know that they have money and then, man is man, he takes the girl and shortly afterwards she’s pregnant, and when she gets pregnant the girl comes to his house”.* (DGF, Adult man, Rapale).

### 4.2. Possibilities of choosing who to Marry

In some cases, the indication about the “choices” to marry tend to point to a relative autonomy of choice on the part of the girls. However, this apparent autonomy falls into the same patterns which characterise the narratives that indicate that girls marry older men in connection with economic conditions. The girls interviewed indicated as the profile of m n they “should” marry not always the profile of older men, but individuals/families that meet relatively stable economic and material conditions, which ends up flowing into the profile of considerably older men. The following extract from a group discussion is illustrative:

*“There are those who marry boys of the same age group, but often they marry older men. Since marriage is an instrument to guarantee the financial stability of the girl’s parents and her own, that stability can generally only be guaranteed by older people. Young men who wanted to marry mentioned the lack of money as a great obstacle to marriage, since the girls’ parents and sometimes the girls themselves don’t agree to marry them.”* (DGF, Girls, Milange).

Apart from the economic argument for why girls should, or tend to marry older men, during the interviews it was possible to see some reasons why girls and families do not regard boys of the same age group as ideal marriage partners. In group discussions with women in Tambara, it could be concluded that boys of the same age group are regarded as lacking means of subsistence. This is regarded, right from the start, as a reason to predict failure and many difficulties that the girls could face if they become involved in a relationship with people of this socio-economic profile:

*“They marry young people who are older than they are, but not old. With some exceptions they marry older men. ... In the community it is thought normal because they say that the boys annoy them, they don’t have any respect. So it becomes normal for girls to marry older men.”* (EI, Girl, Angoche).

*“...there are some who marry older men and some who marry younger men. Those who marry older men think they are more careful than the boys. And when she asks for something, he is able to give it – it’s enough to demand – oh, old man give me money to do this – the old man immediately takes out the money because he’s afraid she will run away since she’s 14 years old. The girls who choose to marry boys of their own age say ‘it’s better to marry a man of my age so that we grow old together, I don’t want to marry an older man because everything he has is based on white hair.”* (DGF, Adult women, Moatize, Benga,).

*“Girls become involved with adults because boys of the same age cheat on the girls, while those who are adults don’t cheat so easily, they always stay at home, with them the girls are accustomed to having all the benefits, while what the boys had to spend at home, they will give in the street.”* (DGF, Girls, Tambara).

### 4.3. Comparing Marriage with Young Men and with Older Men

The final interview extract above introduces the notion of cheating in emotional relations. Cheating by boys of the same age group, mentioned above by the girls, is not tolerated. But polygamy practiced by an older man is socially recognised and accepted, and the idea is valued that the women (wives) are agents in identifying new wives, as shown in the interview extracts below:

*“This apparent acceptance and co-existence in a context of polygamy is because the girls understand that the first wife has the responsibility to find a second wife for the husband, and so it is important to build a network of complicity between the women in a situation of polygamy.”* (EI, Representative of CSOs, Maganja da Costa).

*“For example, I married somebody adult and he said I had to find him a second wife, if I was to stay in the home.”* (DGF, Girls, Tambara).

For their part, girls aged between 18 and 24, some of whom married older men, reported that the girls marry “young older men” and not adults. This distinction was reported among girls who are already mothers living with older men.

*“The girls marry people of the same age group, but they marry adults, not old men with a 10 year age difference, because we don’t want to take orders from someone who no longer has any ideas of youth, also because when we begin life together the man is not able to send the woman away without anything. With someone of the same age group, we have to divide our property.”* (DGF, Girls, Gondola).

The same girls reported that the choice or preference for older men derives from the way in which socio-cultural values and norms are understood and transmitted. So for these girls, marriage to an older man may not be regarded as something negative because the community accepts these practices. They agree that stability, respect and consideration by the husband is visible and expressed when he is older than his wife. This shared perception is rooted in the power dynamic in gender relations, as seen in the following extract:

*“The man has to marry a younger woman so that he can dominate because the woman is not yet mature. Because our tradition says the man has to dominate at home and the wife has to listen.”* (GFD, Boys, Gondola).

*“We prefer to marry younger women because if you marry an older woman, she will lose respect for the man, because somebody else whom I can order around may arrive.”* (GFD, Boys, Tambara).

*“The boys often marry girls of the same age group because it’s understood that a boy cannot be dominated by a girl.”* (GFD, Women, Gondola).

#### 4.4. Marrying someone they can Dominate

Although there has been a trend to generalise that girls normally marry older men, in some sites there were discourses that pointed in a different direction, such as the case of interviews held in Tete (Angónia and Moatize) where it was mentioned “it’s normal for girls to marry young men of the same age group”, which does not mean they are the same age. As expressed in some interviews, and mainly in the focus group discussions with youths (girls and boys), the dominant idea is that “girls grow more rapidly”, and so there should be a slight difference in the marriage age, with the boy always older than his wife. This type of perception was also expressed in Manica, where the women interviewed (in Gondola) believe that a woman’s sexual life is short in comparison with the male sexual life and that women reach the menopause earlier than men reach the andropause, with risks of affecting the relationship due to lack of sexual interest on the part of the women, as the interview extract below shows:

*“Normally girls marry older people because the woman has a limit to living without a man since, after the menopause, the woman loses power, so the woman always has to marry an older man so that when she reaches the menopause the man is also already old.”* (GFD, Women, Gondola).

*“There are also those who marry boys of their own age, after the boy makes the girl pregnant at school. I saw two cases of girls who were staying at the student residence here in Rapale. They spent their time having sex with their colleagues and they were expelled. Others left the residence and had sex under a cashew tree, very shameful. And when they were pregnant in the residence, they were expelled because they couldn’t stay and have another child there. They had to go home and when they arrived their parents didn’t accept these games and ordered the two to marry.”* (EI, Community Leader, Rapale).

The discourse about the short life of a woman or her rapid growth goes further, and does not merely stress the urgency of a speedy start to a girl’s sexual life, but also an association with a perceived ageing of the woman which will later contrast with the potentially slow ageing of the man, seen as creating a situation inappropriate for the man who would have to live with an older woman or a woman who looks older.

*“The girls have generally married adults with a difference of three years. For questions of our culture, the man cannot marry a woman of the same age or older, because the woman grows quickly. If he marries a*

*woman of the same age, he runs the risk of later living with an old woman because the woman grows quickly”.* (GFD, Girls, Gondola).

In this discourse, what is clear is the reproduction of the belief that women exist to give pleasure to men, to bear children, and to carry out household chores, and should continue looking young. This discourse hides the social perception or social acceptance that reproduces the belief that men who are prosperous and successful in the communities studied would be those accompanied by relatively young women. This leads to the social ostracisation of the elderly, particularly women, who are often socially rejected by being accused of witchcraft, unless they have the social prominence to undertake tasks that put them in the centre, such as the management of community consensus, as matrons, traditional leaders and/or elders with a recognised and/or respected social role.

Apart from the aesthetic dimension, there is also the explicit allusion to male domination over women. According to the following interview extract:

*“When you marry a girl of the same age, there’s contempt, there’s no respect. The woman will not respect the man and this happens even in our communities. At home there are always problems caused by lack of respect, worse when the man is short and she is tall. It’s worse because the woman thinks they’re the same age, and the taller woman can hit him.”* (DGF, Adult men, Gondola).

The frequency with which boys marry older women was thought less than the frequency with which girls marry older men. For the boys who marry older women, the reasons are not very different from those that justify the same choice by girls, as we can read in the following statement:

*“There’s an exception in these cases. Because when a boy goes to an older woman he avoids costs because a 14 year old, according to a Tete musician, wants hair extensions, and the older woman doesn’t have these whims.”* (DGF, Men, Moatize).

## 5. Perceptions and Arguments for NOT Marrying before the age of 18

### 5.1. Avoid Complications in Pregnancy and Childbirth

In all the research sites there was repeated recognition that many risks are associated with the marriage of girls (and boys) before they are 18 years old. Among the multiple reasons invoked for not marrying before 18 there stand out the risks and complications in pregnancy and childbirth (including the death of the mother and the baby). The vulnerability of girls who marry early was portrayed from various angles, as shown in the following extracts from interviews:

*“The disadvantage of marrying and getting pregnant early is death in childbirth, the girl can stay sick forever, the child is only born by caesarean section. During the birth the child and/or the mother may die. Sometimes the mother may die and the child becomes an orphan.”* (EI, Girl who avoided Child Marriage, Tambara)

*“When a woman marries before she is 18, people already know she may have complications in hospital and bring misfortune on her parents because they must raise the money to pay the expenses of travelling to Nampula since there are almost always problems with the birth, and she could die when she is being operated on.”* (DGF Adult women, Rapale).

*“The benefits that a person who marries after the age of 18 may bring us are that, for the girl, no problems happen in childbirth, and at home there are not many problems concerned with looking after the husband, because there knowledge is more advanced.”* (DGF, Women, Moatize, Benga).

*“The advantage of marrying after 18 is that when a girl marries after she is 18 years old and has her baby, she is able to care for it. But when she marries early, before the age of 18, and has a baby, it’s her mother who has to care for the girl and her children.”* (DGF, Men, Angónia, Macuanguala).

*“The greatest disadvantage is the women’s health, the fistulas, because her body is not prepared to marry and become pregnant”.* (EI, Religious Leader, Milange, Tengua).

Some interviews showed also that the pains related with pregnancy and childbirth, even among adolescent girls, tend to be normalised and described as characteristic and there would thus be no particular reason for concern, since all women would pass through this kind of pain at the moment of giving birth. This approach of normalising the complications of pregnancy and childbirth causes constraints when problematising the complications related with pregnancy in adolescence.

*“I remember that I was in Dulanha and there was a 14 year old girl there. She was in the birthing room and it was her second birth. The parents didn’t know how old their children were<sup>30</sup>. The mother knew it was a risk, but said it was normal to experience that pain at that moment, because childbirth is painful”.* (Health Service Provider, Milange)

The available literature stressed that pregnancy in childhood contributes to reproducing multiple risks to the health of the girl and the baby. One of the aspects stressed is the question of chronic malnutrition. The results of the analyses made by the OPM show that the children of adolescent mothers are more malnourished than the children of older mothers. The difference is greatest between adolescent mothers and mothers over 25 years old. It is estimated that the children of

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<sup>30</sup> One aspect to bear in mind is that age is not important in the rural area or in the communities. Age is considered as from the appearance of the first menstrual period.



women aged between 25-34 (35-44) are 11.9% less likely to be chronically malnourished (14, 7%). The relation between the age group of the mother and child malnutrition is more pronounced in northern Mozambique.

The probability of the child's death seems greater in mothers under the age of 18, when compared with other age groups. Nationally, the children of mothers who are under 18 are 2.2% more likely to die, compared with those born to other mothers of reproductive age, although the basis for the differences is not very clear, and could be related to levels of wealth.

Women who marry early have higher rates of fertility when they are young. Nationally, women in the age group of 15-24 years who married between the ages of 15 and 18 had an average of 0.21 children more than those in the same age group who did not marry early (that is an extra 21 children per 100 women in this group). This means that women in the age group of 15-24 years who married between the ages of 15 and 18 had approximately the same fertility rate as women aged 25-34 years and who did not marry early. Women in this age group who married before the age of 15 were not significantly more or less fertile than those who did not marry so early.

Because, in most contexts, child marriage is followed by teenage pregnancy, the risk of maternal death and morbidity, as well as infant mortality, increases (UNICEF 2001; 2005; Bott et al. 2004; Mathur, Greene, and Malhotra 2003; Mensch, Singh, and Casterline 2005). Girls married as children are also at greater risk of violence from their partner (IPV) (Santhya et al. 2010) and of HIV/AIDS (Bruce and Clark 2004).

Socio-economic development, which is of crucial importance for the government, is also compromised by child marriage. Child marriages compromise the acquisition of education and human capital by girls, who are not in a position to contribute to the growth and development of their countries. National and international indicators of maternal mortality, education, food security, poverty eradication, HIV/AIDS and gender equality are affected negatively by high levels of child marriage. In short, child marriages compromise attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and poverty reduction targets.

Girls who marry as children are stripped of power, dependent on their husbands, and deprived of their fundamental rights to health, education and safety. These girls are making the transition from childhood to adolescence, and they are not physically, mentally or emotionally prepared to become wives or mothers. Their bodies are not physically prepared for childbirth, and so these girls are at greater risk of suffering dangerous complications during pregnancy and childbirth, in comparison with other groups of fertile women. It is a fact that teenage pregnancy and complications during childbirth are among the main causes of death for women in the 15-19 year age group and low and middle income countries. Data from the research undertaken by Oxford Policy Management (OPM) show that children born to child-mothers are at greater risk of malnutrition and death, not only in the neonatal period but until they are 5 years old. The data from IDS 2011 show that the mortality rate of children under 5 years of age (146 per 1,000 live births) is almost 40% higher among those born to women aged 15-19 than children born to mothers aged 20-29. Neonatal mortality is almost two thirds higher.

Girls who marry as children are also vulnerable to HIV infection. 11.1% of women and 3.7% of men between 15 and 24 years of age are HIV-positive. Young women have higher levels of HIV infection than young men in all age groups. HIV prevalence is higher among women than men in both urban and rural areas. HIV prevalence is higher in urban areas (10.1%), than in rural areas (6.4%). In general, a quarter of young people between 15 and 24 years of age had sexual relations before they were 15 years old. Women with secondary or higher education are less

prone to having sexual relations before the age of 15. The girls are also vulnerable to domestic violence.

## **5.2. Avoiding Damage to Girls' Development**

Some of the participants interviewed were not in favour of child marriage because they considered it damaging to the health, development and growth of girls in general, and gave several arguments to justify their reservations towards child marriage. One of the aspects indicated by the interviewees who question child marriage is that girls who marry early are placed in situations of vulnerability and risk, in that they would lose the support and protection of their parents, in communities where the belief that women exist to serve men, to obey the demands of the husband and of other members of the husband's family, is very widespread. According to the interviewees:

*“The girls no longer have a protector and no longer receive teachings from their parents. The girl goes to another house where she may suffer. She may tell her husband she wants to study, but sometimes the husband may refuse. The husband may deny the request saying the girl didn't come here to study but to look after me. They run the risk of giving birth through caesarean section because their wombs are still very weak.”* (DGF, Girls who avoided child marriage, Gondola).

Marriage before the age of 18 was said to endanger full compliance with the responsibilities expected of a woman after she has married. This interpretation is anchored in the construction of gender roles and social responsibilities of married women. According to the interviewees, before the age of 18, the girl does not yet have skills and experience in domestic management. Hence a girl who marries before she is 18 is subject to suffering and to being treated as a domestic servant in the house of her husband's family.

Some of the interviewees (Manica, Nampula, Tete, Zambézia) consider marriage before the age of 18 as a bad practice. As well as damaging the health of the girl and of her baby, it is a cause of instability in homes because it is a marriage built and based on inequality and marked by a difference in age between husband and wife:

*“There is no advantage because the person marries, goes to the house, but doesn't know how to look after herself, her child or even her husband. When the baby cries, she cries too.”* (DGF, Girls, Gondola).

*“There's a disadvantage because they bring shame to their parents, they seek suffering for them, they arrange problems for their own health, and they will stay poor and without anything”.* (EI, Community Leader Gondola).

*“Yes. There's a great disadvantage. The child isn't prepared to look after a home, she isn't prepared to marry, her body is not yet ready.”* (EI, Traditional Midwife, Tambara).

*“I don't see any advantage in marrying early, since those who marry early are not prepared for work, or for the fields, or for the harvest. Those who marry early have no idea and in their house they will just be a disgrace.”* (DGF, Girls, Rapale).

*“My daughter doesn't know how to wash dishes, she doesn't know how to take a bath, she doesn't know how to dress and when she marries she's not going to stay here so that she can learn. She doesn't know anything and when you go to visit her, you'll find her pallid.”* (EI, Religious Leader, Rapale).

*“There’s no advantage. Where they’re going they will suffer, because they will be domestic servants. Where they go they will be wretched. This child marriage is a bad situation. She is a child and if she becomes pregnant, she will not have a healthy baby.”* (DGF, Women, Maganja da Costa).

The bibliographical review stressed that the negative consequences of child marriage are considerable for the girls, their families, communities, and in the final instance the countries where this practice prevails. At individual level, child marriage deprives the girl of her basic human rights and marks the abrupt end of childhood, obliging her to make a rapid transition to adulthood and forcing the girl to take on roles and responsibilities before she is sufficiently prepared for them. Consequently, one of the first impacts of child marriage on the girl is that she is deprived of her adolescence and all the implications intrinsic to the transition (UNICEF 2001; 2005; Mathur, Greene and Malhotra 2003; Jain and Kurz 2007).

### 5.3. Increase the Possibility of Continuing to Study

The interviewees believed there is no advantage in a girl marrying before the age of 18. On the contrary, it has the disadvantage that she has to miss or interrupt her studies and the pursuit of educational and/or professional training opportunities, as the interview extracts below show:

*“There are parents who decide that their daughter should only marry after ending her studies, because a father is always happy when his daughter studies and gets a job. It’s we girls who don’t listen to our parents, and that’s why we’re in this state. But the parents always want their sons or daughter to study so that they don’t suffer. Even if her husband doesn’t give her anything, with her wages she can buy what she wants. That’s why parents always advise their daughters to go to school, but it’s the girls themselves who don’t listen”,* (DGF, Girls, Moatize).

*“My family doesn’t put pressure on me. They oblige me to study, but unfortunately there’s no money for enrolment, and that’s why I stopped. I can only marry after I have been trained to sustain myself and not depend on anyone.”* (GFD, Girl, Tambara).

*“This marriage doesn’t mean it’s the parents who usually want it. Few parents can want this idea of someone marrying as a minor.”* (EI, Community Leader, Moatize, Benga).

*“It’s better to marry after the age of 18, to allow the girl to marry after concluding her studies. Then she knows how to work and can help the family... I know a girl who didn’t marry before she was 18, but now she’s in Rapale studying. Here in the community only her parents live”.* (DGF, Girls, Rapale)

*“Then families like it when they understand that their daughter likes to study. They do business, they go to the field so that they can help the girl. They hope that the girls are mature (associated with age) before they marry. In this way, even when faced with social pressure for the marriage of their daughters, these parents don’t accept it”.* (EI, Girl, Angónia).

*“We also want to ask them to talk with the girls at school, because here the girls don’t go to school, there are very few girls, and the parents say: why study, if tomorrow you’re not going to be anyone. It’s enough for the girl to have breasts for her to stop going to school. Then we have Fumos (traditional leaders) who choose men for the daughters, and there are fumos who marry more than one woman and small girls.”* (EI, Traditional Midwife, Milange, Mongue).

*“It’s possible, but they’re rare cases. Only a few. Generally it happens when there is somebody more open in the family, or who has studied and lived in the town. Young people leave the district*

*for the town looking for jobs and intending to continue their studies. But these are rare cases.”* (EI, Educational Service Provider, Maganja da Costa)”.

The discourses about valuing education were also invoked by the girls who avoided child marriage, when mentioning the reasons why other girls had married before the age of 18. Essentially, they stress that failure to value “education” would be linked to the early age at which the girls married. According to the interviewees:

*“My friends are married and if they married young it was because their parents weren’t supporting them to go to school, others were saying that it’s better to marry than to go to school because with school you’re not going to earn anything. But what happens with them is that they’re arguing every day with their husbands.”* (EI, Girl who avoided child marriage, Tambara).

*“Sometimes girls want to marry because they also don’t value school, because school for them is a kind of entertainment. But when somebody doesn’t go to school and stays at home, it hurts and she ends up doing bad things.”* (GFD, Girls who avoided child marriage, Gondola).

However, for some members of the community, the school is a space which promotes sexuality and sexual practices and turns girls into rebels disobedient to their parents and to socio-cultural norms. The stigma built around schools was reported most frequently in the interviews with adult men, as a result of their experience in solving problems of teenage pregnancy, child marriage and sexual harassment and rape committed by some teachers.

The data from the bibliographical review show, essentially, that women who marry young conclude primary education less frequently than those who do not. Women who marry before they are 15 years old finish their primary schooling less frequently than those who marry between the ages of 15 and 18. Presumably this is related to the fact that the later the girls marry, the more opportunities they have to continue their education.

Child marriage is one of the main causes of girls dropping out of school. Analyses of the World Bank, using 1998-2008 data from national surveys, state that marriage, pregnancy and health were cited by 7% of households as the main reasons why girls are not enrolling in school. This proportion rises to 15% at the age of 14 years, 18.5% at the end of 15, and more than 20% as from the age of 16 years onwards. For the girls, these proportions are very high, since boys almost do not marry before the age of 18. The regressive analysis of IDS 2011 shows that child marriage is associated with a reduced likelihood that the girls will finish primary school (11.7% if they marry before they are 15 and -5.3% if they marry before the age of 18) and that they will start secondary school (-12.9% and -6.4% respectively) (World Bank, 2011).

Child marriage is associated, negatively, with girls dropping out of school, although the cause and effect relationship points in both directions: child marriage leads to dropping out of school, and dropping out of school may lead to child marriage. The evidence suggests that girls with low levels of schooling are more likely to marry young, and that child marriage dictates the end of the girl’s cycle of formal education. (Jejeebhoy 1995; Mathur, Greene, and Malhotra 2003; Mensch, Singh, and Casterline 2005). Lack of education and restricted access to peers limits girls’ access to support networks. Without skills, and without mobility and networks, their potential to overcome the cycle of poverty of their children and families is significantly compromised (Preston-Whyte et al. 1990; Zabin and Kiragu 1998).

#### **5.4. Not reaching the age of Majority, Bad Luck and Lack of Suitors**

There are similarities and relative differences regarding not marrying before the age of 18 between the girls and the boys interviewed. In some situations we find narratives indicating that the interviewees recognise that it is not appropriate for families to promote the marriage of girls and boys while they are still minors. In other situations, we find on the part of the girls a connection between feeling a minor and similar understanding on the part of the parents. One of the interviewees, who avoided child marriage, when questioned about the reasons for not marrying, gave the following answer:

*“Because it was before growing up. The family also didn’t say anything. They liked it. They didn’t talk about marriage. Men appeared and I said no. I wanted to study.”* (EI, Girl, Angoche).

*“I didn’t marry previously because I was a minor, and I need to grow up and for my ideas to mature.”* (EI, Girl, Rapale).

*“I left school and I went to help my mother farm. But I didn’t marry because men are difficult. They don’t appear and I can’t go and kneel to marry.”* (EI, Girl, Angónia).

*“I left school and I went looking for a son. I didn’t marry when I was 18, because first I had to date. I left school and I went to my boyfriend’s house. So I passed the age of 18 and I was 19 when I married. Another reason why I didn’t marry young is that I was living with my uncle in Marave and he was strict, he wouldn’t let me go out.”* (DGF, Girl, Moatize, Benga).

*“When I took seventh grade I was 16 years old, but my parents didn’t want to pay for my school any more, and so I wanted to marry. But I couldn’t marry until I was 18. My parents forbade me from marrying and said it was because I was a minor.”* (EI, Girl, Milange).

In the case of Angónia, the Catholic Church also plays an important role in dissuading child marriages, since all the believers/faithful who want a church marriage must observe the precondition of guaranteeing that the couple are both aged at least 18. According to the interviewees:

*“It’s because of the Catholic Church. In the Catholic Church they don’t allow girls aged 17 or less to marry. Only if they’re at least 18 years old.”* (DGF, Girls, Angónia, Macuanguala).

The social prestige associated with a church marriage favours observance of the condition that the newly-weds must be 18 years old. But it should be noted that this practice only has a small effect, bearing in mind the size of the territory, in which unofficial customary norms, and not religious norms, are predominant.

Based on the interviews, the Islamic religion may be regarded as a point of tension. Some say it is one of the religions which collaborates with child marriage. Others say those who permit children to marry do not understand Islam. Culture, starting with the initiation rites, is also evident in these crossroads of values and representations. There are those who say that the rites already prepared the girls for marriage and sexuality, while others say this preparation does not necessarily mean that the girl should marry.

Among the interviewees, particularly the girls who avoided child marriage, there were indications that some of them thought and would even have desired to marry as soon as possible, and only did not do so because they were “unlucky” and no would-be spouses appeared. Others said they did not marry because they were facing evil spirits. There are several versions of the narratives about evil spirits in some of the sites, with some of the interviewees stressing that this also



occurred because of the dissatisfaction of the parents and/or some prominent member of the family, for reasons not necessarily linked to the girl, in particular, but in association with some kind of intra- and inter-family dependence.

*“Because of the evil spirits. They’re evil spirits. I pray in the church. I go to church, but at night the demons come for me. That’s why I don’t marry.”* (DGF, Girl, Angónia).

### 5.5. Summary of reasons for NOT marrying before the age of 18

Reasons invoked for NOT marrying before the age of 18, by District					
#	Reason Factor	Place	W	M	Characteristics/Comments
1	Risks of health complications	Angónia	X	X	<p>In the multiple research sites, in almost all the groups of interviewees, with a few exceptions, the dominant perception is that child marriages contribute to health complications for the girl and the baby during pregnancy and childbirth. Among most of the interviewees, there was clear knowledge of the health complications that flow from child marriages, as some of the extracts below illustrate:</p> <p><i>“The girl dies in childbirth, she’s always ill, she gives birth by caesarean, during the birth the child and/or the mother may die. Sometimes the mother may die and the baby becomes an orphan.”</i> (EI, Girl who avoided child marriage, Tambara)</p> <p><i>“Some say... I’ve only heard it said, that when a girl who marries young gives birth, she may die.”</i> (EI, Woman, Moatize).</p> <p><i>“The danger is disease. Someone can catch a disease outside, play around outside, while the other is at home without having sex. That is the danger”,</i> (EI, Boy, Moatize).</p> <p><i>“With regard to the girls and families, the girl may marry before time, but when she marries before time, her body is not ready for marriage, nor is her mind mature. That’s why when she gets pregnant and gives birth, she dies, or the baby dies, or both she and the baby die. In the case of the boy, there are times when he stays at home (when he marries) as a minor. When he doesn’t have something, he immediately thinks of his parents and begins to cry. And then he can’t manage to reconcile the home”,</i> (EI, Girl, Angónia).</p> <p><i>“When the child marries, she becomes pregnant, sometimes she is operated on during the birth (caesarean) because of her age. The community laments.”</i> (EI, Matron, Angónia).</p> <p><i>“It’s very good to marry after 18 years of age because when the girl becomes pregnant after she is 18, she doesn’t suffer so much on the day of the birth. It’s also very good to send the children to school so that they can study like our visit here. It’s also necessary to hold meetings, because if they do this, many people will understand.”</i> (DGF, Adult women, Milange, Muanhambo,)</p> <p><i>“There’s no advantage. On the contrary, the woman suffers greatly at the moment of birth, she loses her studies, and runs the risk of stillbirths.”</i> (DGF, Adult women, Milange, Muanhambo)</p> <p><i>“For me, as I can say, for example, here a young man comes to win you to be married and I don’t know what ...and if you really want to be married, to have a belly and go to hospital, you don’t usually suffer, but when you’re 17 years old or younger, and go to hospital to give birth, you usually suffer a lot”.</i></p> <p><i>“It’s praiseworthy because we understand that the girl is at a good age and knows what she wants, and may not suffer from illnesses related with childbirth. As for the family of this girl, we regard them as good people who educated their children to marry when they know what they want for life.”</i> (EI, Health Provider, Gondola).</p> <p><i>“Right now, in general, as from the age of 20, the woman can marry. Because she is already prepared as a woman, the pelvis is now ready to receive the child, and she’s talked with the godparents. Before the age of 20 the child runs risks in pregnancy. A few days ago a 13 year old child from the community of the Josina Machel neighbourhood here gave birth. The child was premature and is in the incubator. Her pelvis couldn’t take it.”</i> (EI, Community Leader, Gondola).</p>



Reasons invoked for NOT marrying before the age of 18, by District					
#	Reason Factor	Place	W	M	Characteristics/Comments
2	<b>Need to continue studies</b>	Angónia	X	X	<p>Some interviewees, particularly girls and boys, said it was important to avoid marriage so that they could continue their studies, mainly when their parents or other relatives manage to sustain them and keep them in the town or city or where there is secondary or mid-level education.</p> <p><i>“The reasons vary from girl to girl. In my case, I didn’t marry before I was 18 because I was studying, but then my parents thought they could no longer pay for me to go to school. So when I became 18, I married.”</i> (EI, Girl, Moatize).</p> <p><i>“It’s very good to send the children to school, so that they can study, like our visit here. It’s also necessary to hold meetings, because if they do this, many people will understand.”</i> (DGF, Adult women, Milange, Muanhambo).</p> <p><i>“There are parents who decide that their daughter should only marry after ending her studies, because a father is always happy when his daughter studies and gets a job. It’s we girls who don’t listen to our parents, and that’s why we’re in this state. But the parents always want their sons or daughter to study so that they don’t suffer. Even if her husband doesn’t give her anything, with her wages she can buy what she wants. That’s why parents always advise their daughters to go to school, but it’s the girls themselves who don’t listen”,</i> (DGF, Boys, Benga).</p> <p><i>“My family doesn’t put pressure on me. They oblige me to study, but unfortunately there’s no money for enrolment, and that’s why I stopped. I can only marry after I have been trained to sustain myself and not depend on anyone.”</i> (GFD, Girl, Tambara).</p> <p><i>“It’s better to marry after the age of 18, to allow the girl to marry after concluding her studies. Then she knows how to work and can help the family... I know a girl who didn’t marry before she was 18, but now she’s in Rapale studying. Here in the community only her parents live”.</i> (DGF, Girls, Rapale)</p>
3	<b>Incapacity to manage the home and risks of health complications / poor maturity</b>	Tambara and Gondola	X		<p>Some interviews with girls and adult women invoked reasons associated with the capacity to manage the home to reflect on the disadvantages of marrying a girl under 18 years old, as shown in the texts below:</p> <p><i>“There is no advantage because the person marries, goes to the house, but doesn’t know how to look after herself, her child or even her husband. When the baby cries, she cries too.”</i> (GFD, Girls, Gondola)</p> <p><i>“There’s no advantage. Where they’re going they will suffer, because they will be domestic servants. Where they go they will be wretched. This child marriage is a bad situation. She is a child and if she becomes pregnant, she will not have a healthy baby.”</i> (GFD, Women, Gondola)</p> <p><i>“Yes, it’s a disadvantage. The child/girl is not ready to have a home. Her body is still not ready.”</i> (EI, Practitioner of traditional medicine, Tambara).</p> <p><i>“It’s after she has grown up and her body is ready, and she has learnt to respect the people of the house, her parents and also other people in the community. This is because when she’s a child, she should learn this respect, and when she grows up she won’t suffer or be offended”.</i> (EI, Religious Leader, Rapale).</p> <p><i>“The girl no longer has a protector and no longer receives teachings from her parents. The girl goes to another house where she may suffer. She may tell her husband she wants to study, but sometimes the husband may refuse. The husband may deny the request saying the girl didn’t come here to study but to look after me. They run the risk of giving birth through caesarean section because their wombs are still very weak.”</i> (GFD, Girls who avoided child marriage, Gondola)</p>
4	<b>Prohibition by the parents / Church</b>	Angónia	X	X	<p>Some interviewees say that one of the reasons for not marrying young concerns the decision of the parents, who prevent this practice because they think the girls are too young and they should continue their studies. Among the interviewees there are parents who believe girls cannot marry before reaching the age of majority. Also included is the need for their daughters to prioritise studies rather than marriage. Some interviews indicate that religion (Catholic Church) plays an important role in avoiding child marriages, because it does not authorise this practice.</p>

Reasons invoked for NOT marrying before the age of 18, by District					
#	Reason Factor	Place	W	M	Characteristics/Comments
					<p><i>“The parents speak. Other parents say that you have to study and tomorrow marry well, Now we hear that order. But playing around becomes more important than what your father is saying. You go to school and you spot a colleague there. Colleague, colleague, colleague, what happens is that you now forget about the school and are thinking about other thing. Many people say that you cannot marry early, you cannot do this early, you have to study, finish school and marry afterwards”, (DGF, Boys, Moatize).</i></p> <p><i>“There’s disadvantage because they shame their parents. They bring suffering to them, they arrange problems for their own health, they will stay poor and without anything.” (EI, Community Leader, Gondola).</i></p> <p><i>“Teachers, the pastors in the church, and the secretary in the community say that marrying young is no good. The parents always talk, saying that marrying young is no good. And grandparents. The grandparents also speak of this”, (EI, Boy, Angónia).</i></p> <p><i>“...For me, a man arrived and said he wanted to marry me, and my father refused...It’s a question of parents not wanting their daughters to marry when they’re 12, or 11 years old, like me, and my father didn’t want it. He’s not rich, he doesn’t work, but he doesn’t accept that just anybody can ask for me in marriage here. For him, I have to marry when I’m 21 years old.”</i></p> <p><i>“We say that no father would like his son or his daughter married before the age of 18. The idea is that they should marry after they are 18 years old. But since the behaviours are different, and because of lack of money, perhaps others may think that it is not important to marry only after the age of 18, but they suffer, and nobody wants to suffer”. (DGF, Adult men, Rapale).</i></p> <p><i>“There are other churches that allow it, but in the Catholic Church we don’t allow it, and here the majority pray in the Catholic Church”, (DGF, Women, Angónia).</i></p>
5	Lack of resources to sustain a family	Moatize		X	<p>The boys who think they do not have sufficient resources to sustain a family or a source of income such as a job or a profitable business opt not to marry.</p> <p><i>“The danger is that when the boy marries before the age of 18, he is unable to sustain the family”, (EI, Boy, Maganja da Costa).</i></p>
6	Lack of a suitor, and “evil spirits”	Angónia Moatize	X		<p>Some girls said they do not marry because of a lack of men asking to marry them. Many of these girls end up pregnant and become single mothers who are often accused by the communities of stealing the husbands of other women or of being witches.</p> <p><i>“I wanted to marry, but I didn’t find a man, and also my father banned me from marrying before I was 18 years old”, (EI, Girl, Milange).</i></p> <p><i>“This kind of girl, who still has not married, exists, but the reasons .. I, for example, have a niece who is now more than 18 years old and does not marry. She doesn’t marry because she is ill, she has evil spirits. These spirits are called malombo and when they are inside somebody’s body, they do not allow the girl to marry. It’s enough for a man to ask her hand, it is possible that she will punch the man, even run away, and thus suitors give up”, (DGF, Women, Benga).</i></p> <p><i>“I’m already 24 years old, and I’ve done mid-level education. I ought to marry. I don’t see anything else to do, but since I don’t have the means, I have to sit on my own.” (DGF, Boys, Angoche).</i></p> <p><i>“This kind of girl, who still has not married, exists, but the reasons .. I, for example, have a niece who is now more than 18 years old and does not marry. She doesn’t marry because she is ill, she has evil spirits. These spirits are called malombo and when they are inside somebody’s body, they do not allow the girl to marry. It’s enough for a man to ask her hand, it is possible that she will punch the man, even run away, and thus suitors give up”, (DGF, Women, Benga).</i></p>

## 6. Focus on “Positively Deviant” Girls and Families

### 6.1. Negative Perceptions about Girls who are NOT married after the age of 18

The results of the interviews held in all the districts and sites show the co-existence of multiple perceptions about the girls who did not marry before they were 18. But in general, there is a positive appreciation of girls who reached the age of 18 or somewhat older without engaging in customary or formal ties of marriage.

However, expressions of negative and pejorative representations, laden with stereotypes, seem strongly impressed on some of the things said by interviewees, which shows that while, on the one hand, there is a positive perception about not marrying before reaching the age of 18, on the other there are recurrent negative interpretations, expressed in the form of facetious terms used to describe or characterise girls who postpone marriage until after the age of 18. In the research sites, it is socially understood (based on supposedly traditional values) that it is desirable and advisable that girls should marry young. Those who contradict this social expectation, by marrying relatively later (after the age of 18) have seen their conduct questioned, and have been slandered, because, in the view of their critics, they are subverting what are regarded as normal standards of conduct. Girls who marry after the age of 18 are also not well regarded. They are considered as unlucky or as victims of misfortune to the point that nobody is interested in marrying them. From the extracts from the interviews, it can be concluded that there is a very clear negative weight in the references to these girls:

*“The community regards them badly. They even say they sleep with our husbands, and that’s why they don’t marry.”* (DGF Boys, Angoche).

*“Because we take baths, they call us whores; when we put on pretty clothes they say it’s money from somebody’s husband that paid for the clothes, they call us the guest’s sheet or blanket.”* (EI, Girl who avoided Child Marriage, Tambara)

*“People appear. Even in the market, the talk is this. People ask why don’t you marry? Your friends are married and eat what they want. I say I don’t marry because I’m still small. If I grow up, I’ll marry.”* (DGF, Girls, Angoche).

*“In my community they think I’m a woman with an evil spirit, ‘a woman with the spirit of man’ which makes a woman not marry, and whenever she has the opportunity to go home, she rapidly separates.”* (GFD, Girls who avoided Child Marriage, Gondola)

*“Friends look on us badly, they ask why we don’t marry, while I ask ‘why did you marry?’. ”* (DGF, Girls, Angoche).

*“We say that this one has been bewitched by sorcerers. Because here in the community when a girl reaches the age of 18 and is unmarried, we begin to say: why don’t you marry? All your friends have already married. The same happens with the boys.”* (EI, Practitioner of traditional medicine, Milange, Muanhambo).

*“Sometimes they regard me as a backward woman because I didn’t marry, and I didn’t become involved with young men in the area. This is no offence for me, because no-one else can take a decision for me to marry. It’s me who decides that. Because I have to find the ideal man for me.”* (DGF, Girls who avoided child marriage, Gondola).

*“They think we’re wasting time, they call us whores. When we walk in the street, people say we’re whores because we don’t have time to marry. They call us sluts because we’re studying, we don’t have children, and we don’t have husbands”. (GFD, Girls who avoided child marriage, Tambara)*

The same negative approach covers those girls in the 18-20 age group who, even if they have not had the opportunity to study, remain under the supervision of their parents. They are regarded as girls living with the spirit (m’pfukua) which repels men. Mpfukua would be the spirit of a man inhabiting the body of a girl. This spirit is said to smell bad, and so the girl would give off a bad smell, with the potential to drive men away. Likewise, a boy who does not marry and continues living in his parents’ house, is regarded as living with a spirit provoked by his mother, because she would want her son to become her slave.

The negative connotation about girls who do not marry before they are 18 in some cases extends to their parents and relatives. According to the interviews the families have also passed through similar situations of harassment. In at least two cases interviews with adult men (fathers) mentioned the fact that men always arrive asking for their daughters in marriage, but they have refused because they consider their daughters as minors, although their bodies are well developed. We were told in the interviews that sometimes it is thought that fathers refuse to hand over their daughters to marriage because they have some involvement with the girls themselves. These families who do not hand over their daughters for marriage, are also seen as unlucky families, or families that have some problem that can only be solved by resort to practitioners of traditional medicine (witch-doctors):

*“It’s also like that here, not marrying when the person is big is really bad luck. It’s the same for me, grown-up and unmarried, I can be seen as bad luck. A person even begins to seek out fortune-tellers. For an 18 year old girl, this happens because it’s a novelty. You see an 18 year old, she already has breasts, she’s been to the rites, she’s done everything, the others have married, but she doesn’t marry. Why?” (DGF, Women, Angoche).*

*“Yes, they begin to doubt. Why don’t the parents let the girl marry? She doesn’t marry, because she doesn’t get a man, or because there’s some problem with her or with the family? The parents go to the witch-doctor to do something for her to marry.” (DGF, Girls, Maganja da Costa).*

There is also the perception that girls who, after finishing mid-level education, go for many years without marrying, would be fated to live alone, to become “sluts” and to “steal the husbands of other women”, because they don’t want to marry in order to “play around” with the husbands of others. These girls, regarded as failures, are sometimes asked by the community “why did you study?” and are labelled as girls who wasted time during the years they attended school, in a context where school is considered something without much use. According to some interviewees “school doesn’t help in anything”.

In Tambara it was mentioned, in the group of girls, and repeated by a Provider of Social Welfare Services, by members of the CCPC and the group of boys, that the individual decision of wanting to be different could lead to expulsion from family life. For these girls are regarded as devaluing their parents because they have not received the Massungiro (dowry) for the marriage of a daughter.

## **6.2. Positive perceptions about Girls NOT married after the age of 18**

As indicated at the start of the previous sub-section, in general, the people interviewed showed there is a broad positive appreciation of the girls and boys who marry after the age of 18 and of their families. This appreciation was reported in almost all the 8 districts and research sites and by various types of people individually interviewed, or participants in focus group discussions. Some of the research participants stressed the importance of avoiding child marriage because they are aware of the risks to which the girl is exposed when she marries before the age of 18. The community leaders also said that marriage after the age of 18 brings prestige to the parents, and so these parents are sometimes called upon to lead or to play prominent roles in some community events (lectures, training etc.) which allows them to share their experience of educating their children.

*“People are happy and congratulate those families who take care of their children so that they marry later, and so they thank them and often say it’s a good start and that the girl is going to be a good wife and that the family will be successful in the future and will not have problems with its children. As for the girls, they are considered polite and an example to be followed. They are compared with those who behave differently.”* (EI, Community Leader, Tambara).

*“People say this is good because the boy and girl can have a prosperous home. They will be successful at home and will avoid many negative things. Families who educate their children to marry when they are older, after studying, are very good families.”* (EI, Traditional midwife, Gondola).

Read together, the above extracts from the interviews may signal the existence of an awareness of the advantage of marrying after the age of 18. Hence a favourable environment exists in these communities for the more structured implementation of communication initiatives with the purpose of eliminating child marriage from the communities.

The characteristics of the positive deviations, such as not marrying before the age of 18, were seen by some people as beneficial in that they allow boys and girls the physical and social preparation to make a success of married life. But others think it’s a waste of time, and so they label them as “those who don’t make children” or (in the case of girls) as someone “who commits incest with her father or stepfather”. Marrying young is partly seen as proof that the boy or girl is fertile, thus avoiding the pejorative attributes previously described.

In Moatize, when girls do not marry before they are 18, as well as being seen as an example of resilience, they may also deserve *mbonano*<sup>31</sup> in their marriages. They are also seen as girls who avoided the risk of teenage pregnancy and all the associated problems.

As for opinions about girls marrying after the age of 18, people think it would be praiseworthy and healthy in that it would be after the girls have reached the age necessary for the body to be developed and to support pregnancy and childbirth. However, from the viewpoint of the interviewees, this is just a dream because it is rare for girls to reach this age without becoming pregnant and without having been asked in marriage. For them to marry after the age of 18 is seen as “backward”. Interpretations include that girls marrying after the age of 18 are backward and their parents (particularly a father or stepfather) may be having amorous and sexual relations with the girl to the point of not allowing her to marry

*“The preference is to marry after 18, when she has already learnt something to sustain her family, and has studied until at least 12th grade. All fathers don’t like their children to marry before the age of 18 because life can be difficult.”* (DGF, Adult men, Rapale)

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<sup>31</sup> Traditional marriage festival similar to lobolo in southern Mozambique.



*“It would be ideal to marry at the good age of 18. The parents would be rested, but this doesn’t happen here in our community. Even if you go to other communities, you find that the same happens there”.* (DGF, Adult women, Rapale)

*“They think it’s important to marry after 18, because after 18 the body is ready. In the case of a boy, at least then he’s learnt how to farm a field to sustain the family. But although the parents want their children to marry after the age of 18...”* (DGF, Adult women, Rapale)

### 6.3. Profile of Families of Girls who do NOT marry before the age of 18

The girls who described their experiences of life in the community without marrying before the age of 18, said they came mostly from religious families, with relative financial stability, including parents who worked in the public administration. The discussions about the positive deviants and their families in almost all the groups followed the same path, explained by the fact that group members shared the same perception that the positive deviants come from families with some possessions, in terms of land, animals and money.

The discourses and narratives of the girls who avoided child marriage allowed us to understand that, in addition to the above characteristics, they live in family environments where there is space for dialogue and participation in family life.

When girls are 18 and unmarried, this is partly because the parents understand the need for them to study. The better financial conditions of the families are a reference point, but are not the primary condition for whether the girls marry or not, for there are families that have no material conditions, but even so they do not encourage their daughters to marry:

*“...For me, a man arrived and said he wanted to marry me, and my father refused...It’s a question of parents not wanting their daughters to marry when they’re 12, or 11 years old, like me, and my father didn’t want it. He’s not rich, he doesn’t work, but he doesn’t accept that just anybody can ask for me in marriage here. For him, I have to marry when I’m 21 years old.”* (DGF, Girl, Angoche).

*“I am very proud because I never went through this suffering of child marriage, and this helped me to finish 12th grade. Afterwards I’m going to take a course and, who knows, maybe later I’ll find someone to marry. My parents helped me a lot, and they’re traders.”* (DGF, Girl, Gondola).

The opening that these girls find in the family was reported as the main factor that makes them resilient to the stereotypical labelling to which they are subjected by some in the community, as is clear from the interview extracts below:

*“When these daughters are from families who studied, our parents help them, saying ‘let her speak, but she’s going to study’, but other parents can’t take it, hit their daughters and take them out of school to marry somebody you don’t want, because your father saw he has some head of cattle, a motorbike or other things.”* (EI, Girl who avoided child marriage, Gondola)

*“My family doesn’t put pressure on me. They oblige me to study, but unfortunately there’s no money for enrolment, and that’s why I stopped. I can only marry after I have been trained to sustain myself and not depend on anyone.”* (GFD, Girl, Tambara).

*“Since my childhood I always prayed. I asked God to help me not to marry before I finished school. I thank my father who also helps me, and says I can’t work now, I have to study. In my area, my neighbours have all married, and I am the only one left. My father works in the central market and my*



*mother is a peasant. She has the field and they talk with me. Sometimes I help my mother so that she is not alone in the house.” (DGF, Girls who avoided child marriage, Gondola).*

However, the cases of parental refusal are less common in these communities. Marriage with the endorsement of the parents has been a constant, and they take refuge in the argument about poverty. The interview data reveal other scenarios, such as the fact that some girls remain unmarried because no man interested in them has appeared. Moreover, even under the circumstances in which some girls are not married because their parents prevent it, a mentality can be noted that induces the girls to marry, expressed through the idea of “feeling grown-up”, as expressed in the interview extract below.

*“I would not like to marry a big person. Now I can marry (she is 17 years old). If someone comes whom I like, I will first ask if he’s going to enrol me in school or not. If he agrees, I want to, if he doesn’t agree, I don’t.” (DGF, Girls, Angoche).*

As can be noted, this statement was made by a 17 year old girl who was only included in discussions in the group, due to the social body. She feels fit for marriage even at her age, which allows us to conclude that the fact she is unmarried has more to do with her father than herself. For suitors have appeared asking for her hand in marriage, but her father refused. She also raises the condition of studying. It’s a condition with many fragilities, since the man may accept at the time, but in the private space of the home, the rules may change. This situation is difficult to reverse, since divorce also has its constraints.

Attending church, having space/opportunity to speak with the parents, participating in and having an opportunity to accompany family life and matters, autonomy in decisions about who to have relations with, when and how, are understood as some of the characteristics which help girls not to enter into child marriages. This type of perception is accompanied by an understanding that observance of the parents’ recommendations and advice, may contribute to the pride of the parents, under circumstances in which the girls observe the prescriptions. In the opposite case, where preservation of these values has no positive impact on the life of the girl, she is seen as a failure who is contributing to devaluing her parents. According to the interviewees,

*“The girls who are over 25 years old, are no longer in any condition to marry, but just to date forever, because no man will marry a woman after she’s 25, since she’s already played around a lot, and there must be something wrong with her”. (EI, Community Leader, Maganja da Costa)*

The scenario presented here is no different from the context of Tambara, where the positive deviants are at the same time valued and despised and regarded as people under a curse. In Gondola girls with characteristics of positive deviation, in a context where child marriage is seen as acceptable and normal, are labelled as “Urhee” girls, which, according to the interviewees, means “someone without an owner”, “available to be used”.

In Zambézia province, the families of the girls who do not marry before their 18th birthday, are generally described as those who live in the district capital (Milange). In the Muanhambo community, where the interview was held, the girls recognise it is more difficult to marry after the age of 18:

*“I know many girls, but they’re in the district capital, they live in the town. Here in the locality it is not easy to find. But in the town the environment is one of studying, since you can study up to 12th grade, but in the localities, this isn’t possible.” (EI, Girl, Milange, Muanhambo)*

Most of the friends of the girls who avoided child marriage interviewed in Rapale, are single. Among their friends there are those who are now married and live with their husbands, but the single women live with their parents or other relatives, such as brothers. It was noted that although these friends are single, they have children and do not live with the parents because they did not accept it (either paternity or the relation with the girl), and some had already married and divorced.

*“Some are single, living with their mothers and others live with their husbands. Many are single because nowadays men just impregnate girls and do not accept responsibility. One of them only lives with the husband.” (DGF, Girls, Rapale).*

#### **6.4. Profile of People Favourable to Delaying Marriage**

In Angoche, in the communities it was not easy to find (except for providers of public services) people recognised as favourable to marriage after the age of 18. There are exceptions of families who do not accept the child marriage of their daughters, but they don't make advocacy in the community, because child marriage is established as the norm or standard in the communities. Even those who do not agree keep silent, on the grounds that people should avoid giving opinions or interfering in matters happening in the houses of their neighbours.

We asked some girls if they knew anyone in favour of the marriage of girls after the age of 18. They all agreed on the following:

*“They don't exist. For the people here, all of us should already be married.” (DGF, Girls, Angoche).*

In one of the interviews, an adult man said he would like to be able to speak publicly about the question of child marriages, but he did not feel safe doing this on his own for fear of arousing hostility since it is a common practice. He said:

*“For me, it would be ideal to forbid minors from marrying. But on my own I can't say I don't want it, that I would like this to happen. There are many people in the community. It would be better if the secretary were to speak over the radio.” (DGF, Man, Angoche).*

In Tambara formal and informal actors were mentioned who could be involved in promoting standards of positive deviations. By formal actors is meant those who have received some instruction for this purpose, or because of their duties should do so publicly. They include social welfare, the local religious and community leaderships, teachers (although among the groups of girls these have been called “snakes”), and police officers<sup>32</sup>, for their role in detaining adults involved with girls, and solving cases of child marriage and rape.

Save the Children, through its regional programme, has community interventions aimed at preventing child marriage, where they have trained the godmothers of the girls' clubs set up around schools and communities. However, the figures mentioned by Save the Children were not referred to in any of the groups or interviews. Even the interview with the Social Welfare staff member did not refer to these actors.

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<sup>32</sup> The research team did not have the opportunity to interview this police officer.

Also in Tambara, the Johan Malang sect was indicated as one of the actors that could potentially be involved in initiatives to discourage child marriages, and promote the idea that marriage should represent the consummation of a blessing, reserved for girls and boys who have reached the age of 18 and meet the requirements for looking after each other – although there is also contradictory information about this sect, suggesting that it has promoted and perpetrated child marriage, and that pastors of the sect are involved in polygamous marriages with minors.

## **7. Focus on Access to Services**

### **7.1. Knowledge about laws and norms on child marriage**

In the four provinces and 8 districts where the research was undertaken, the interviewees in the communities, except for the providers of formal education, health and justice services, showed poor knowledge of Mozambican legislation, and particularly legislation on child marriage. In almost all the groups there was an average of 2 or 3 participants who mentioned the Family Law as the normative legal framework which governs the family. This scenario tended to be different among public providers and representatives of local NGOs who, in addition to the Family Law, mentioned the Penal Code as legal instruments governing family relationships, including child marriage.

In Tete, there was broad lack of knowledge by the interviewees of the laws and norms on child marriage. None of the interlocutors was able to refer to the legal instruments on child marriage – not even to local norms that might be regarded as prohibitive.

### **7.2. Treatment of Violence against Girls**

In the case of Manica, the interviews with representative of CSOs indicate that situations of violence against girls in all districts, at least in formal terms, follow the same path. At the first stage it begins with the identification of cases in the communities, through the community leaders, members of the CCPC. At this level the leaders and CCPC members approach the perpetrator of violence and the family of the violated girl to search jointly for some consensus between the parties. NGO managers mentioned that the family of the violated girl sometimes does not denounce the case to the police or to the Social Welfare authorities, thus constraining the success of community actions to prevent and fight violence against girls.

In the case of relatively well informed families, even after the solution or meeting between the leaderships and the families affected, the case is always channelled to the police, thus moving onto the second stage on path for dealing with cases of rape. When the family presents the case to the police, they seek to judge and condemn, but when we asked the interviewees if they knew anyone who has been tried for raping a minor, only a worker at the Tambara district women's affairs, health and social welfare services explained he had followed the case of some teachers charged with raping girls, and who were awaiting trial. This lack of knowledge could signal the incapacity of the authorities to condemn the rapists, or lack of knowledge in the communities of the channels for denouncing these cases.

The manager of a local organisation, the GCR, reported that communities sometimes do not denounce cases of violence for fear of reprisals, and of being negatively stereotyped as families who have permitted or been exposed to this type of violence. In the course of the interview, this service provider stressed that the community leaders, who should set an example, sometimes discourage denunciations to the police, for fear of “losing legitimacy”, and opening space for a “power vacuum”.

The third stage is reference to the services for later reintegration into the family through the accompaniment provided by the social welfare services with the family or in the boarding centre in cases where it is decided that the best place for reintegrating the girl is a boarding centre.

The interviews with the service providers allowed us to understand their familiarity with the chain of services to be provided to the violated girl. The social welfare workers interviewed in the two territorial levels (province and district) reported that all cases of rape against girls are referred to the police and health services. After they have received health care, the girls pass through a reintegration phase, in which they are often accompanied by CCPP members at community level.

In Nampula, among the interviewees in the communities, generally people were not aware of specific ways of handling cases of child marriage. They always spoke of standardisation. However, in the discourse of one of the secretaries of the Nahuloco neighbourhood, in cases where somebody is known to have married a minor, the case is reported to the bodies of the administration of justice in the neighbourhood, and later follow-up is made if necessary. The Coordinator of the Social Welfare area in the District Directorate of Health also indicated that the cases do not go unpunished:

*“There have been referrals to know how a father allowed his child to marry early. The person has to answer how, being a father, he let his daughter marry young. In principle, the Office of Gender and Children has intervened. When we discover situations of child marriages, we refer the case to the office.”* (EI, Provider of Health Services, Angoche).

In Rapale, Nampula, the Legal Aid Institute (IPAJ) is involved in dealing with cases of violence against girls. IPAJ has held lectures, community dialogues, and actions to raise awareness of members of the community to prevent violence.

Just as in Manica, in Nampula, according to the interviewees, in the communities no case was identified or recognised of anyone who had been coerced not to marry a minor, or had been punished or reprimanded for this reason. This lack of knowledge and normative legal silences, in the viewpoint of the communities, may be indicative of the difficulties of interacting, in formal legal terms, with the socially established normative and customary practices.

In Zambézia (Maganja da Costa) some organisations who undertake activities to fight against child marriage indicated that the type of assistance offered consists of sending the girl to the health unit, in cases where she is pregnant, in order to begin ante-natal care. Then they try to speak with the parents in the perspective of counselling and eventual mediation of possible conflicts that might arise between the families involved in a particular case, and they try to provide some support to the girls, as shown in the interview extract below:

*“We give our psycho-social support to vulnerable women and to the small girls who have babies and have no milk to give. Our support is more to boost their morale. For example, this year the government has no money and we have no <sup>33</sup>conditions to sustain the child.”* (EI, Health Service Provider, Maganja da Costa)

In Tete, through the representatives of the SDMGCAS, it was said that in cases of child marriages or violation of children’s rights, the case is referred to the Office to Attend to Cases of Violence against Women and Children in the district command of the police (PRM), which is responsible for handling such cases. Resort to the PRM was also mentioned in Milange, as a common practice, as shown in the interview extract below:

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<sup>33</sup> The denunciations come from the legal side, and we make the follow-up

*“For child marriage, we don’t have any intervention, but in principle when a child of short stature appears who is pregnant, we talk with them for them to go to medical consultations, and they are strongly advised to have their babies in the reference health units. Some are women at high obstetric risk. We give them shelter in terms of health for them and their babies, to reduce neonatal and maternal mortality. In cases where minors have been raped, we advise the girls and their families to go to the PRM and to the public prosecutor.” (EI, Health Service Provider, Milange).*

Despite the attention paid to the situations of sexual violence that are denounced, other forms of physical, psychological and social coercion of girls, such as their conversion into brides at a tender age, are not necessarily seen as forms of violence but as cultural practices regarded as socially acceptable.

### **7.3. Access to Health and Education Services**

In Angoche, access to health services was considered limited. The health units are a long way from the villages. Some women have given birth at home or on the way to hospital. There is no transport for urgent cases, which causes difficulty for the quality of the services. According to the health service provider interviewed, stocks of medicines have run out and corruption is increasing, resulting in illicit sales of medicines which penalises the public still further.

In Rapale, the health and education services are seen as providers of educational information about child marriages. They are mostly confined to the locality headquarters and district capitals. Communities distant from schools and health units live in relative isolation and with limited access to education about child marriage.



## 8. Focus on Means and Channels of Communication

### 8.1. Main Means and Channels of Information

In the topic on the main sources, channels and means of communication, it was intended to understand what sources young people prioritise as channels of communication, what are the preferred formats, and which are most easily accessible for young people of both sexes. During the focus group discussions, particularly with girls and boys, several channels of communication were listed as sources of information on various day-to-day matters. The table below lists the different channels/means mentioned by district and attempts to specify in the comments column, the specificities inherent to each source mentioned.

Means and Channels of Communication for the Prevention of Child Marriages

Means/ Channel of communication	Place District	Characteristics/ Comments
<b>1. Radio</b>	Moatize	The district has a radio station broadcasting from Tete city which covers almost all the communities. Most of the programmes are broadcast from the Tete provincial transmitter and many of these programmes are made in local languages. Although some communities have no access to electricity, many people listen to the radio. Hence radio programmes in local languages can have a great impact, since they can be listened to anywhere (at home, in the field, at the river, in hospital, in the car etc.).
	Angónia	The district has a repeater station in Ulongue town which covers almost all the communities. Most of the programmes are broadcast from the Tete provincial transmitter and many of these programmes are made in local languages. Although some communities have no access to electricity, many people listen to the radio. Hence radio programmes in local languages can have a great impact, since they can be listened to anywhere (at home, in the field, at the river, in hospital, in the car etc.).
	Maganja da Costa	The radios we have here are community radios. We shall use the radio to put the traditional leaders, the “fumos”, on the air to speak about child marriages. We shall first train the <b>fumos</b> <sup>34</sup> , the <b>sampadadas</b> <sup>35</sup> and the <b>régulos</b> <sup>36</sup> , if they hear the message well, and then they will know how to pass this message on in the communities (Church councillor/ deacon of the Catholic Church, Milange, Tengua, 17 May 2017)  The best means would be the Radio and lectures in the communities about child marriage. Because it is a community channel, the community radio reaches many communities.
	Milange	Radio and church, because television only works here when people have an aerial. The best would be the radio and the churches, because there is a high level of church attendance. Milange has many churches, in addition to those that are inside neighbouring Malawi.  Are there people in the community who could help in education, so as to delay the marriage age? If yes, who would these people be and what would be the best way of working with them? The people here trust in the churches, so we shall work with the religious leaders in this campaign against child marriages (Church councillor/ deacon of the Catholic Church, Milange, Tengua, 17 May 2017)

<sup>34</sup> Third level leader

<sup>35</sup> Second level chief

<sup>36</sup> First level chief

Means/ Channel of communication	Place District	Characteristics/ Comments
	Angoche	<p>In Angoche there is Radio Parapato, which was regarded by youth (boys and girls), but also by the adults, as the main means of communication.</p> <p>Radio Parapato presents itself as one of the main communication vehicles for the public. It broadcasts local news items and various educational programmes. It also transmits debates on child marriages and sexual and reproductive rights.</p> <p>The Parapato Community Radio was stressed as accessible for most people, and it would be opportune to invest in programmes that discuss and discourage child marriage on this radio, which has a wide reach in the district.</p>
	Rapale	<p>Rapale district has no community radio, but people in the communities of this district listen to educational messages on Radio Mozambique. As for television this is regarded as promoting deviant behaviour because of the content transmitted, centred on soap operas with erotic content, which would be inducing children to practice sex and erotic scenes.</p> <p><i>“Nowadays children have access to videos, particularly soap operas which ruin our boys and girls. Nowadays it’s enough to see on films or soap operas, some people have televisions and the children learn all this naughtiness on TV.”</i> (DGF, Adult men, Rapale-07.06.2017)</p> <p>It is said that educational messages are rarely transmitted on television, but it is advised that television be used, replacing soap operas with educational programmes. <i>“Instead of children watching soap operas and adult films on TV, they should watch educational films such as videos which talk about what age you should marry at. But don’t show children people making love. The children copy and as a result they marry young!”</i> (DGF, Adult men, Rapale-07.06.2017)</p>
	Tambara	<p>In Tambara there is a community radio which was mentioned by youths of both sexes as one of the means through which they and other members of the community have access to information about health, local events and death notices. They also said the community radio broadcasts “lost and found” notices. If someone loses or finds identification documents he can go to the community radio to announce this.</p> <p><i>“The RC (community radio) broadcasts social information about deaths of relatives. If someone has lost their telephone the radio also helps. The RC also advertises the type of trade that exists locally to expand to other areas. This helps us so that we have more buyers... Through the RC we also hear news about what is happening in the country, in the province, and even in the district.”</i> (DGF, Boys, Tambara)</p> <p>The Tambara Community Radio is located in the district capital (Nhacolo). It has experience in broadcasting health contents (HIV and AIDS, Malaria and mother and child health, particularly the importance of vaccinating children). The Community Radio also has experience in working with NGOs. For example, it receives annual financing from Save the Children under a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the District Health, Women’s Affairs and Social Welfare Services (SDSMAS) to broadcast programmes about sexual and reproductive health and the disadvantages of child marriages.</p> <p>The Community Radio and Mobile Brigades were also mentioned as among the most common means through which communities gain access to different types of information, including about child marriage.</p>
	Gondola	Gondola has no community radio, but is within range of the Radio Mozambique station broadcast from Chimoio.
<b>Television</b>	Moatize	At least Moatize town and the nearest communities receive the television signal. Furthermore many of the communities enjoy power from the national electricity

Means/ Channel of communication	Place District	Characteristics/ Comments
		grid. Although most of the population does not have enough money to buy a television set, there is much greater use of television than in Angónia, for example, and many people are able to watch television programmes in their own houses or the houses of neighbours. It is not, however, very widespread, but its use cannot be ignored.
	Angónia	There is a television repeater station in Ulóngue town, but its reach is limited. The lack of electricity in various communities and the fact that many of them do not have the money to buy television sets, means that TV is a less effective means of communication in this district. However, its use cannot be ruled out.
	Angoche Milange Maganja da Costa Tambara	In these districts the use of television is also on a small scale. It may have an impact on urban centres, but in the localities the scenario changes, since people there have no access to TV.
	Rapale	Although not very frequently, radios, televisions and witch-doctors were also mentioned. In the opinion of the interviewees, radio and television are very limited because not everybody in the communities possesses radio and television sets, as can be seen from the following extract: <i>“The youths here in Rapale seek information even with the parents that I mentioned, but sometimes they may hear a subject on the television, on the radio, but it has mainly been from people they live with... I’m not going to lie, I’ve never watched television, because there’s no television set in my house”</i> (EI, Boy, Rapale)
	Gondola	The public radio and television, notably STV, TVM and Radio Mozambique were mentioned as means of communication by most participants in the focus group discussion in Gondola district.  The television networks (STV, TVM, Zap and DST) are available in this district, which is very near the provincial capital.
<b>Road show Mobile Cinema</b>	Moatize Angonia, Maganja da Costa	Mobile cinema attracts crowds and could be important in campaigns against child marriage. But its high costs may not allow greater coverage. Interviewees mentioned it several times as a channel to take into consideration.  Mobile cinema was also mentioned in Benga-Moatize, as an important means of communication.
	Milange	The markets were mentioned as privileged spaces for sessions of the mobile brigades used by the health sector. <i>“Continue to use the caravan with the model the health sector has used</i> (EI, Health Service Provider, Milange, District Capital)
	Angoche	Documentaries and short videos were mentioned as having been used in the past to spread educational messages in the communities and it is believed they may also have a great mobilising and awareness-raising power.  In Angoche, the participants mentioned the projection of films, road shows, as attractive approaches for young people.

Means/ Channel of communication	Place District	Characteristics/ Comments
	Tambara	<p>Information is also spread in Tambara through mobile brigades. The market in the district capital, Nhacolo, was mentioned by youths where the mobile brigades hold night sessions. We understand that the mobile brigades are implemented by the local community radio. The representative of the SDSMAS also said that the mobile brigades are part of the strategy to spread information about health, child marriages, and children's rights, implemented by the social welfare services and Save the Children.</p> <p>The Mobile Brigades were mentioned as one of the most common means through which communities gain access to various types of information, including about child marriage. The markets were mentioned as privileged spaces for sessions of the mobile brigades implemented by the community radio. The sessions always take place at the market because it has a wall on which the images are projected.</p>
<b>Door to door campaigns, with or without drums</b>	Moatize Milange Maganja da Costa Rapale Gondola	Door to door campaigns are used in various programmes and are often the vehicle that has most impact, in comparison with collective meetings, because people can continue with their activities at home and even so have access to the information. More important still is being able to approach the family or members of the family rather than just one member of the family as can happen at collective meetings. These campaigns should be led by community leaders, as suggested by the informants so that residents are more receptive to them.
	Angónia	Door to door campaigns are used in various programmes and often have more impact than collective meetings because people can continue with their activities at home and even so have access to the information. More important still is being able to approach the family or members of the family rather than just one member of the family as can happen at collective meetings. These campaigns should be led by community leaders, as suggested by the informants so that residents are more receptive to them.
<b>Collective meetings</b>	All districts	<p>In almost all the focus group discussions, the means of communication in the community most highlighted were the meetings called by the community leader, or promoted by other actors in places where people gather, such as markets, and meetings with young people on the roads.</p> <p>In Angoche and its localities community intervention and dialogues are noteworthy and remain a most privileged means of communication. Throughout the interviews there was a heavy emphasis on the need for community meetings to be held by the community leaderships and other involved parties knowledgeable on the subject, and that they should prioritise dialogue and orality.</p> <p>The meetings are led by the community leader and address matters of community interest. Thus community leaders, as potential players for divulging the strategy to prevent child marriages, should be armed with information they can divulge in the meetings they chair.</p> <p><i>"...training and giving lectures in health units and schools. The community chiefs always speak in the church or mosque, although our children don't accept anything"</i> (DGF, Adult women, Rapale).</p>
<b>Plays and music</b>	Milange	Messages should be accompanied by music because later the person reflects (Religious Leader (Queen) Milange, Mongue, 18 May).
	Angoche	<p>Plays have been used in schools to speak of various matters. Strengthening theatre to spread messages about child marriage could bring added value.</p> <p>There are some musical pieces produced locally which deal with problems of child marriages. However, there are still only a few of them. It is fundamental to bank on this approach, because of the flexibility of music, which could have positive impacts.</p>

Means/ Channel of communication	Place District	Characteristics/ Comments
		In Angoche the interviewees said they had a great deal of interest in plays with educational messages, including the use of music with educational lyrics and messages, particularly in local languages.
	Rapale	Lectures have been an effective means of communication in spreading messages. Normally they are given by people trained in a particular subject. Lectures occur in various places that include health units, schools, fairs, churches, mosques and other places used for community meetings.
<b>Lectures</b>	Moatize	Lectures can take place in schools, in hospitals/health centres and in markets where people gather intentionally every day. This kind of lecture, if always given in the presence of community leaders to legitimate them, could have greater reach and effectiveness.
	Angónia	Lectures can take place in schools, in hospitals/health centres and in markets where people gather intentionally every day. This kind of lecture, if always given in the presence of community leaders to legitimate them, could have greater reach and effectiveness.
	Tambara	With regard to the topic, in almost all the groups lectures are stressed as the format used by various actors working on community mobilisation. The participants reported that through the lectures young people and the public in general have the opportunity to know more about various matters of public utility, including child marriages. Lectures in the communities in Gondola and Tambara are mostly given by health workers, and members of school councils, inside and outside the school. In Tambara a police officer named Jofrize was mentioned several times as one of those facilitating lectures in the community about sexual violence and child marriage (penalties and punitive measures).
	Gondola	<p><i>“Policeman Jofrize: he is a policeman who gives lectures on child marriage in schools, and when there’s a problem of child marriage and rape, he solves it.” (GFD, men Tambara)</i></p> <p>Some NGOs, notably Save the Children, hold lectures in the two districts inside and outside school. Some of the priority themes are health, HIV prevention, children’s rights and child marriages. Inside the school the lectures are held via members of the School Councils.</p> <p>The group discussions and interviews showed that the lectures inside and outside school are the most appropriate channels for access to information in the two districts.</p>
<b>Churches Mosques</b>	Milange	<p>In Milange, the communities are under strong religious influence. In the communities visited, the existence of established places of worship was noted. Places of worship are also used to discuss values in the community and to circulate information that is important for the life of the community.</p> <p><i>“We also have the churches, here we have many churches and many religions, ours and the others that come from Milange. When the service is over, the pastors usually have someone make use of “religious policy”. They know when to use psychology, since religious believers are great psychologists.” (EI, Health Service Provider, Milange).</i></p> <p><i>“People here trust in the churches. We shall work with the religious leaders against these marriages.” (EI, Religious Leader, Milange, Tengua).</i></p>
	Angoche	Mosques highlighted as an important source of information.
	Rapale	Mentioned as an important means of access to information and knowledge
	Tambara	Groups of young people who attend the catechism said that questions of abstinence are discussed in these groups.
	Gondola	The church was indicated as a place where girls have the opportunity to learn about health, abstinence, faithfulness, being young, marriage and its consequences. The

Means/ Channel of communication	Place District	Characteristics/ Comments
		<p>homogeneity of the group that participates in these sessions may be understood as an advantage insofar as the participants tend to share the same values. This could be a determinant factor for the promotion and adoption of some values and for implementing “collective effectiveness”.</p> <p><i>“The church also helps a lot because we manage to have a different way of thinking and of being in the community. For example, in my church the priests and catechists are there. They try to speak with young people and give advice about marrying after reaching the age for marriage. We know that not everybody listens to their parents. The priests are greatly concerned with the children and advise them what is right and wrong .....In my church we have a book which asks youths “what are young people” and we discuss a lot about this answer and we have the opportunity to discuss the various ways of being a youth and the type of person he should marry.” (GFD, Girls who avoided child marriage, Gondola)</i></p>
<b>Person-to-person conversations</b>	All districts Tambara Gondola	<p>Person-to-person conversations are important because they make it possible to go into the theme more deeply in a more private environment, although they have an area of coverage limited by time and human resources.</p> <p>Person-to-person conversations are important because they make it possible to go into the theme more deeply in a more private environment, although they have an area of coverage limited by time and human resources.</p> <p>All the forms of communication described do not dispense with person-to-person conversations which can mostly be carried out by activists endowed with knowledge of the theme.</p> <p>Person-to-person conversations are very important because it is through them that people share information. With father, mother, uncle, neighbours, friends and other members of the community, people pass information on to others. To this end, there must be a source where people seek information, and this source is all the social institutions and channels of communication that can be used to divulge the strategy.</p> <p>The girls in the two districts consider aunts and maternal grandparents as sources of information to dissipate doubts about sexuality, pregnancy and marriage. Thus we understand that the female figures in these two districts play an important role in the construction and passage of values and procedures that girls should have when they make the transition to youth and later to “head of household”.</p> <p>Thus the development of a package of CIP sessions on child marriage with a focus on questions of parenting aligned to the contents/actions for adolescents and youths, implemented for educator aunts and grandmothers could be a good strategy for promoting debate about child marriage between mothers and girls.</p>



Means/ Channel of communication	Place District	Characteristics/ Comments
<b>Initiation rites</b>	All districts	<p>The initiation rite godmothers were mentioned as an important means of information and education of girls, especially in matters of sexuality, child marriage and teenage pregnancy.</p> <p><i>“Here we work with the godmothers<sup>37</sup> of the initiation rites. We shall hold lectures for them. They talk a lot about sex in the initiation rites.”</i> (DGF, Girl, Milange, Muanhambo)</p> <p>In Angoche, the interviewees said that the space officially granted for learning about marriage and sexuality is during the initiation rites. The matrons, apart from questions related with care for oneself (of the body of girls and boys) teach how to live sexual life and how to relate and behave in a home.</p> <p>In Tambara some programmes about child marriage are broadcast on the community radio, with the support of Save the Children.</p>
<b>Social networks</b>	All districts	<p>The social networks are used by a small number of young people, particularly in the district capital and surrounding areas.</p> <p>In the more urbanised districts and localities or those closest to the provincial capitals (such as Moatize), with more regular access to electricity, some of the youths interviewed mentioned the social networks as one of the means of access to information.</p> <p>On the other hand, in districts that are relatively distant from the provincial capitals, with irregular access to electricity, such as the locality of Macuanguala, in Angónia, the use of social networks was not mentioned at all by the interviewees, even though all the mobile phone operators are present in these districts. Movitel is the most used.</p> <p>Although the Social Networks and telephones were mentioned as important channels and means of access to information in Moatize, during the interviews it was noted that most of the participants did not own telephones. In the case of Angónia, some of the community leaders involved in the research did not have telephones. Under current conditions, the use of social networks is still very limited.</p>
<b>Parents, uncles, aunts</b>	All districts	<p>Mentioned as an important means of access to information and knowledge.</p> <p>In Tambara, participants in the DGF mentioned parents and uncles as sources of information on questions concerning health, marriage and sexual relations. The family: In particular the uncles and aunts were indicated as community resources/assets, through which one learns, and doubts are clarified about sexuality, sex, marriage and norms that guide marriage.</p> <p><i>“We seek our uncles because it’s my family, and he has passed through various phases of life too; the aunts also help. For example, if your wife is going through women’s things, then you should talk to your aunt and not your uncle because the uncle is not going to help”</i> (DGF, Boys, Tambara).</p> <p>For boys, fathers and uncles are regarded as a source of information on questions concerning male health, marriage and sexual relations. These actors are understood by the boys as having some responsibility in passing on experiences of male life, for they give advice on procedures to take when facing indecision about marriage or pregnancy.</p> <p>Thus the development of a package of Interpersonal Communication (CIP) sessions on child marriage with a focus on questions of parenting aligned to the contents/actions for adolescents and youths, implemented for educator aunts and grandmothers could be a good strategy for promoting debate about child marriage</p>

<sup>37</sup> The girls go early to the initiation rites. At the Seventh Day church the initiation rites last a week, with or without menstruation. The midwives are the godmothers of the rites. The Jehovah’s Witness church does not hold rites, but all the others do.

Means/ Channel of communication	Place District	Characteristics/ Comments
		between fathers and sons.
<b>School</b>	All districts	Other communication mechanisms considered important both in Benga and in Macuanguala are the spaces promoted by NGOs, such as the School Council, the Community Health Committee, Interest Groups, Girls' Groups, and also the pupils and teachers. Indeed, in these communities, where the school is almost the only state institution apart from the locality post, it becomes a prominent body with an inestimable influence.
		The school was highlighted as a body with the potential and responsibility to contribute in the formation of society. <i>"The school should teach our children the risks of marrying early, and to study first and marry later. Because the situation here in our community is not good, the children have no respect for anything, they just remain ill-disciplined and this must be reduced". (EI, Religious Leader, Maganja da Costa)</i>
		For young people who have an opportunity to continue their studies, the school was mentioned as an important means of information and education.
		Mentioned as important means of access to information.
		In the two districts the School Councils were mentioned as spaces where members of the community have the opportunity to discuss matters concerning health and the concerns of members of the school community, including the specific needs of girls, through lectures given at the school by health activists and members of the school councils; in the class meetings because some teachers share information about child marriage and prevention of diseases such as HIV.
<b>Community Leaders</b>	All districts	Mentioned as an important means of access to information and knowledge. The community leaderships, although often cited as potential channels of community communication, do not succeed in reaching young people. The meetings they hold are attended mostly by adults and children (not adolescents and youths).

In all the sites researched, printed material (newspapers, magazines, leaflets, pamphlets and others) was considered the least appropriate means of spreading information. This perception is also shared by service providers which shows that the low level of literacy in rural communities is an obstacle to effective use of written and printed materials. However, during the interviews, there were some youths who said that printed materials could be of use for spreading messages about child marriage in the 15-25 year age group, particularly inside the schools.

## 8.2. Takers of Decisions about Marriage

In Tete, the decision about marriage is frequently attributed to the parents, and family members who tutor the girl. The interviews held, both in Moatize-Benga, and in Angónia- Macuanguala, and the various profiles of the interviewees, indicated that the marriage decision is attributed to the parents.

In Manica, the men and women interviewed in Tambara believe that although the decision to marry belongs to the sons/daughters themselves, sometime the parents are obliged to force or decide on the best moment for the boys and/or girls to marry. The men take refuge in arguments of a protectionist nature to justify/sustain their decision making power over the marriage of their children, and believe they can decide for their sons/daughters when they realise that they are already dating and have lost their virginity. According to the interviewees, when the

girls/boys begin dating, they become vulnerable to pregnancy and disease and become “people of bad conduct”. To avoid this trail of risks, the parents decide or force their children to marry, in order to preserve the family’s reputation. This line of thinking was gone into further above.

The data collected from the groups of boys and girls show the same trend, although with some nuances. For, when questioned about who decided about marriage, the girls, although recognising their right to decide on their own future, assume that the decision of the parents to force or decide for them makes some sense. Often they accept, considering it a blessing to offer this reward to their father, who should die happy, and thus they guarantee that the girls will suffer no curse in the marriage home.

Some girls who avoided child marriage, in some of the research districts, reported a different perception from those mentioned above, since for them the decision to marry is individual (for the boy and the girl). The girls who state this position also said they should have the opportunity to continue their studies in secondary education and only marry when they think the right conditions exist.

The girls interviewed in Maganja da Costa, Milange and Gondola stressed that the mothers have the power to decide on when the boys should marry, because they want a daughter-in-law to help with the domestic chores. The perception of the girls interviewed in these districts is corroborated by the boys who also said that their mothers put some pressure on them to identify and marry girls who can “help in the house and on the field”.

The results of the interviews held in Angónia show that the girls have no autonomy over their bodies. The power to decide over whether or not to marry lies exclusively with the parents. Some narratives of the girls show, for example, the circumstances under which the parents took a decision on marriage: “*A man came who wanted to marry me, but my father refused and said I was still a minor*” (DGF, Girls, Angónia). Asked whether, if the parents had accepted the man, and she did not want him, would she have been able to refuse, she answered: “*I would have had no way to refuse. I would have to accept*”.

A further example illustrating the parents’ power to decide on when girls marry is shown by the interview extract below:

*“I remember a girl who was told to marry at the age of 14. She was in seventh grade. The man already had 11 children. He is a prominent person in Angoche, about 40 years old and he wanted to marry a girl of 14. He saw her in the street, stopped and asked the girl “who is your father?” She answered, because here she has to answer, that’s what they teach. He then asked “where does he live?”. Then the man asked nothing more, he went to the house, and said “I want to marry your daughter. I am X from Angoche, I have X and I can give X for your daughter. They agreed. This girl came home from school one day and they said “you’re going to marry, we’ve found a husband for you”. She didn’t refuse. I asked “why didn’t you refuse?” She said “refuse or not, it’s not going to change anything” (EI, CSO, Angoche).*

Further testimony was given by a youth who said he witnessed a similar situation because the girl refused to marry:

*“I’ve already seen a girl being forced. The parents beat that girl because she refused to marry someone whom her parents wanted. He was bringing money there. The parents had nothing. He was bringing food, he had electricity installed. The parents told the girl to marry. She refused “that man is old, I don’t want him.” (DGF, Boys, Angoche).*

The girls are often powerless to refuse marriage after their parents have decided on it. Total dependence on their parents makes them submissive. In a dialogue with a girl who refused to marry, she told us that her father became angry and hit her. Seeking help, she went to the house of her older brother. He already knew what had happened, and he too beat her, which obliged her to go, with all her uncertainties, to the house of her mother, who welcomed her.

Although, in all the sites, the research recorded that it was the parents who took the decision about marriage, in Rapale it was documented that, in some situations, it is the boys and girls themselves who decide, without their parents' consent. In the opinion of the interviewees, these cases happen with boys and girls who did not obey the advice of their parents, misled by the money they may eventually have obtained through their odd jobs.

*“Nowadays the boys do decide because it is enough for them to have some odd job and have some money, and they think they can marry, and this starts giving their parents headaches, He thinks he’s independent and can marry, just because of a little money he earned from an odd job.”* (DGF, Boys, Rapale).

What one notes in this extract is that, although under some circumstances youths show agency in taking decisions about marriage, the collective perception is that this agency does not necessarily represent the free expression of the will of those involved, but a deviation from the norm and the tradition which determine that the parents should have primacy and the last word in decisions on marriage. When the youths take on this agency, they are seen as inverting values and usurping the “rights” and power of their parents.

### **8.3. Initiatives to Respond to Child Marriage**

In Rapale, contents on child marriage are contained in lectures given by the Social Welfare department in partnership with IPAJ, the Office to Care for Women Victims of Violence, and the Mozambican Women's Organisation (OMM) and happen every quarter in a period of up to a week, and in a locality or community previously chosen in accordance with the plan. The target groups for these activities have been the parents and the community leaders who, after receiving the information, have the task to transmit it to other members of the community, particularly the youths. The matters covered include child protection, domestic violence and child marriage.

*“...then there are certain activities which the agent undertakes which are not the job of Social Welfare as such. We join with other institutions, such as IPAJ, the Office to Care for Women Victims of Violence, and there are some social organisations such as the OMM and so on. We have a joint quarterly plan, and we shall hold lectures in the schools. We shall also go to the community so that we can publicise some instruments that can help reduce this question of child marriages.”* (EI, Social Welfare worker, Rapale)

Likewise, the health units hold lectures in the health units, schools and communities through the Adolescent and Youth Friendly Services (SAAJ) where the target groups are the users of the health services, pupils and the public at large. In terms of content, the themes covered include family planning, use of contraceptives and child marriage. On child marriage, the health professionals focus on information about the risks of early pregnancy, and of marrying as a child, and advise on the use of contraceptive methods.

The data show that adolescents learn about marriage through lectures organised by the health units in schools and communities, in the SAAJ (inside the Rapale health unit). In the health units, the target group for the lectures are users of the SMI services, while the target groups in schools are pupils of both sexes.

*“What we do is give lectures to those who come to the health units to inform the people in general out there, that they cannot accept child marriages. Recently the consultations are held in the SAAJ where we are explaining that a woman who is pregnant and has already married when she 14, 15, 16 years old is not ready for her marriage. When she becomes pregnant, the sector attending to these girls is in the SAAJ where the group of adolescents is cared for.” (EI, Health Service Provider, Rapale7)*

The existence of community based organisations was not mentioned, except for community groups such as 'Avante Rapariga' a group of girls in the community supported by Geração Biz to advise other girls to delay the age at which they marry; the 'health committees' formed by community and religious leaders. However, it was noted that there exist organisation such as N'weti, the Health, Women's Affairs and Social Welfare Services, IPAJ, OMM, and FDC which have held lectures at various levels, as seen earlier and have revived community structures.

During the field work, it was found that there are institutions involved in divulging and debating matters related with child marriage such as, for example: health units, the SAAJ, Social Welfare, IPAJ, FDC and Nweti, but the question posed concerns the coverage and frequency of the interventions of these institutions, because most of the interviewees had no knowledge of the existence of such interventions.

Also in Angoche, other providers of education and health services involved in the research, said they raise the theme of child marriage in their activities, particularly lectures. According to their testimony:

*“We work on child marriage and we make people aware that they should not marry off children too early so that they can go to school. Since this is a coastal area, children are more dedicated to fishing. So we spread information for girls and boys to go to school first before marrying.” (EI, Health Service Provider, Angoche).*

*“In this area, we raise the awareness of girls in all the schools to study more, in order to avoid unplanned and unwanted pregnancies, because we are talking about children both in primary education and in 12th grade. Our goal is to keep them at school. As from fifth grade, cases of pregnancy have arisen, among girls aged 11 to 16. We have noted girls dropping out of school, and this motivates us to raise awareness so that this does not keep happening.” (EI, Education Services Provider, Angoche).*

In Tete, child marriages are scarcely or not at all mentioned in the means of communication presented by young people. The informants rarely remember the themes broached even when they say they have heard something about this. One of the youths who said he had heard something about child marriage in Benga said the following:

*“Nothing, I didn't hear. It was only once, 2013 or 2014, they said you can't marry early, ending school in order to marry later. They said this about child marriage. But it's not today, it was a long time ago. Today no, or not yet this year. It was here in the community.” (DGF, Boys, Moatize, Benga)*

The extracts above show how incipient is the information about child marriage and how infrequently the theme is dealt with in the communities. In Angónia, Macuanguala, for example,



only one community leader said he had participated in a seminar organised by World Vision about child marriage. In addition to the leader, the chairperson of the Community Health Committee also said he was aware of child marriage from the books provided by NGOs such as World Vision which support it in its campaigns against child marriage.

Both in Moatize-Benga, and in Angónia-Macuanguala adult informants showed greater concern about child marriage and in both communities the older people accuse mainly the girls of choosing the path of child marriage of their own free will, and because they do not want to take advice from their fathers, mothers and other older members of the community. However, the discourse put forward is full of contradictions in that at the same time they say they advise the girls to marry after the age of 18, there were moments when they raised doubts about what is appropriate, for the girls to marry before or after the age of 18, which shows the inconsistency and even the tension between the knowledge and predominant practices about child marriage, if we take into consideration the following extract:

*“It’s good to marry after the age of 18, but I don’t know what is right. Whether it’s correct to marry after or before 18. So I would like this to be explained.”* (EI, Leader, Macuanguala).

The data collected in Manica (Tambara and Gondola) show that the theme of child marriage is broached in the communities of the two districts through lectures inside and outside the schools. The advantages and disadvantages of child marriages are the main contents discussed. In Tambara in all the groups it was mentioned that police officers also bring to this debate aspects related with denunciation and the punishment of people who promote and are involved in child marriage. Despite the apparent dissemination of the theme, it was found in almost all the groups there is minimal knowledge of the disadvantages of child marriage to the detriment of the importance of community denunciation mechanisms which could signal that the matter is being dealt with superficially or the community lectures on child marriage are not yet reaching the right people. The interview with the Social Welfare worker in Tambara and the Manager of Save the Children in Chimoio showed that in Tambara programmes about child marriage are regularly broadcast by the community radio. The representative of the programme Girls Child Right (GCR) also said that through the Girls’ Clubs inside and outside school, in the districts of intervention community dialogues and lectures are used to spread information about the disadvantages and risks of child marriages. They also manage cases and refer girls who are victims of child marriage.

The focus group discussions with girls and boys in Rapale showed that through the community radio, lectures, conversations with parents and leaders, the question of child marriages has been broached, speaking of the advantages and disadvantages of these marriages and strengthening the need for girls and boys to marry later. Among the most prominent aspects in these programmes is the need for girls to avoid early marriage and pregnancy, because their bodies are not yet ready to conceive, which could imply health complications during pregnancy and childbirth, with the risk that both mother and baby will die. According to the interviewees, pregnancy in adolescence was mentioned as involving “uncertainty between the life and death of the mother and baby”. The participants in the DGF also said the following about the content of teachings on child marriage:

*“For example, they say that child marriage is a risk, the man only wants to take advantage of you, and if you get pregnant, he will leave you. That’s a risk and the man doesn’t want to marry the girl. It can happen that the girl has health problems, a miscarriage, and the man who impregnated the girl should be held responsible. In this case the parents criticise the girl, saying why did you do this? why didn’t you consult before doing it? This isn’t good.”* (DGF, Girls, Nampula-Rapale)



In Angoche, child marriages are discussed in the communities in a very incipient form. The debate around them is very slight, as part of the discussions on family planning. Radio Parapato, for example, has a programme on Wednesdays and Fridays which discusses family planning, and expand it to child marriage. During the field work, it was not possible to identify programmes under way specifically aimed at matters concerning child marriage.

In Milange, apart from the services provided in health units, Save The Children was mentioned as one of the main organisations undertaking initiative to raise awareness about child marriage. The interviewees said that the trans-frontier trade with Malawi, has brought people together and encouraged transactional and commercial sex, involving Mozambican and Malawian traders and local girls. The health service provider indicated that, with the support of Save the Children, mobile brigades are set up in the district that deal with various themes in the communities, including child marriage.

*“Sometime we seek out Save the Children and sometimes they seek us out. When they have brigades for the localities, they take a social welfare worker, and we all work in health sector installations which brings us closer together. We go out in teams including Save The Children and we go into the communities where we speak and advise about the dangers of child marriage, teenage pregnancies and HIV.” (Health Service Provider, Milange)*

The representative of a CSO said that the Attorney-General’s Office has spoken about child marriage, and VBG, in coordination with the PRM’s Office to Care for Women Victims of Violence. The education sector was also mentioned as an important actor in transmitting messages about child marriages. In Maganja da Costa the interventions were stressed of some NGOs, such as World Vision (Ogumania), FGH and Save the Children.

#### 8.4. Participants to Involve in the Response to Child Marriages

Institutions and Actors Active in Implementing the Response to Child Marriages by District

Entity / Actor	Place	Characteristics / Comments
NGOs / CBOs	Moatize	The Apoio Amigo Foundation (FAA, with the support of World Vision, has worked with several programmes to support communities with a heavy focus on health (mother and child health) and education. Through this collaboration, a network of community activists and community midwives has been set up which is integrated into the various health centres. Furthermore, the FAA is interested in eliminating child marriages. Hence its network of activists and the social capital it has already won among the communities could be of great assistance in implementing the response to child marriages.
	Angónia	World Vision has various programmes to support communities with a strong focus on health (mother and child health). Through World Vision, a network of community activists and community midwives has been set up which is integrated into the various health centres. Furthermore, World Vision is interested in eliminating child marriages. Hence its network of activists and the social capital it has already won among the communities could be of great assistance in implementing the response to child marriages.
	Maganja da	AMME, AMODEM, Caritas and FGH have worked on matters related to child

	Costa	marriage.
	Milange	World Vision (Ogumania) and Save the Children are involved in initiatives to respond to child marriages.
	Angoche	Girls in Development, Education and Health (REDES). REDES works specifically with girls, promoting programmes which seek to strengthen the self-determination of girls.  JUNTOS undertakes entrepreneurial activities among adolescents and youths.
	Rapale	The Community Development Foundation (FDC). Some educational materials observed during the field work were produced and distributed by this organisation.
	Tambara	
	Gondola	In Gondola, Save the Children has a strong component of reviving and creating school councils. This can be used to implement actions to strengthen the capacities of School Council members on questions of child marriage and pregnancy for interventions within the school.  The Ten Mitchen Boarding Centre collaborates with Social Welfare in Gondola and has received vulnerable girls, violated girls and girls recovered from child marriages. This boarding centre, as well as sheltering the girls can be considered for actions/visits by teams to identify girls who have suffered the trauma of child marriage and/or rape.  The World Education Programme is being implanted in Manica province/Gondola. Its interventions are directed within the school. Through the programme it is expected that girls regarded as vulnerable will be given school allowances and scholarships, in addition to the revival of school clubs. Because it provides allowances and scholarships for girls it can be considered an indispensable actor since its interventions can be fundamental for mitigating, sheltering and reintegrating girls who were exposed to child marriage, and to keep the girls at school.
<b>Community and Religious Leaders</b>	Moatize	The Community Leaders in Angónia exert an almost absolute influence over their communities. Their words and decisions are taken into consideration by the communities and nothing is done without their authorisation. This influence that the community leaders have could be an added value for implementing the programme.
	Angónia	
	Maganja da Costa	In Maganja da Costa the importance of involving religious leaders is also mentioned.  <i>“Since many members of the community go to churches and mosques, the religious leaders (Xebes and Anciões) should be trusted to guide the families in educating these children, the women not to accept marriage without being old enough... trust the community leaders, they can ensure the message reaches the youths.”</i> (DGF, Adult men, Maganja da Costa).
	Milange	According to the interviewees, the community structure in Milange is very strong. The Mambos, Queens, Chiefs and Religious leaders are seen as people of great influence in the community.
	Angoche	They are considered as people who are highly esteemed in the communities and who are an effective channel of communication in their territories. However, it is important to note that that their role is more prominent and respected among adults than among youths But they are still fundamental since for young people there are other communication alternatives which would find it difficult to reach adults and the elderly.
	Rapale	The involvement of the religious leaders in communicating the strategy could be an advantage, and to this it only necessary to train them. The community and religious leaders play an important role in the life of the community, they chair the community meetings, and the religious services in churches and mosques and, as such, they are an important platform for communicating the strategy.  <i>“Since many members of the community go to churches and mosques, the religious leaders (Xebes and Anciões) should be trusted to guide the families in educating these children, the</i>

		<i>women not to accept marriage without being old enough... trust the community leaders, they can ensure the message reaches the youths, but even with this campaign if the government does not act as we say, everything will be in vain because each father speaks with his son". (DGF, Adult men, Rapale)</i>
	Tambara	In Tambara it was said that during the meetings with the communities the community leaders usually spread information about preventing child marriages. And the leaders considered as “champion” examples can be used as examples to disseminate good community practices of mobilisation to prevent child marriages and pregnancy.
	Gondola	
<b>Traditional midwives</b>	Moatize	The traditional midwives are highly respected among the women of Angónia and Moatize due to their fundamental role in the ante-natal period and in the births. This role gives them influence among the women, particularly the younger women.
	Angónia	
	Maganja da Costa	The traditional midwives are in transition between the “modern” and “traditional” health systems, which legitimises them in the eyes of both the health centres and the communities of which they are a part. Thus their perspectives and recommendations on matters concerning sexuality and family planning have been relevant in the spaces where they operate, mainly outside the health units, which makes them essential people for permanent work.
	Rapale	The traditional midwives are regarded as women who also work as advisers in the communities where they live. They assist at home births and some have a linkage with the health service, and assist women giving birth in the health units. Others are responsible for transmitting community values and norms about marriage and adult life during the female initiation rites.
<b>Parents/Uncl es</b>	All districts	Parents and guardians are the first social actors with the responsibility to educate their children in the family.  <i>“It can even be the child’s parents giving information, because even if a person goes to school, if there’s no good behaviour at home, even going to school makes no difference. Education really begins at home, and the parents should be the people who educate their children, and these children should hear and obey what their parents say”. (DGF, Boys, Milange)</i>
	Rapale	Parents and guardians are the first social actors with the responsibility to educate their children in the family. Even in cases where the child decides on her own to marry, it is the parents who take the final decision.  <i>“If the matter is marriage, first I’m going to speak with my parents and ask if I can marry or know the age for marring or having children. For example, when I was still studying in seventh grade, my father obliged me to marry and as soon as I heard this, I couldn’t bear it. I kept it to myself for two days and then explained the situation to my mother. Since I had just come out of the initiation rites, I returned and told her I didn’t know what is done after marriage, and I wasn’t old enough to marry, and I didn’t really know what is done in marriage”. (EI, Girl, Rapale)</i>
<b>Community Health, Education and Child Protection</b>	Moatize	The Community Health Committees or Agents are important allies in the response to child marriages in Angónia because they already know the problem and are inserted/recognised/accepted in the communities. Since they are people of the community, they will be able to facilitate and disseminate implementation of the response.
	Angónia	

<b>Committees and Councils</b>	Gondola	<p>Members of the CCPC are experienced in community work, in identifying and referring cases of child marriage. They play the role of guardians of girls in the communities, and they should therefore be empowered to continue identifying and referring cases.</p> <p>The interviewees say that the fortnightly meetings of members of the School Councils can be used for training/recycling them about prevention and monitoring the degree of implementation of the legislation or sector norms on preventing child marriage.</p>
<b>Providers of Public Services: Education, Health, PRM Social Welfare</b>	Moatize	<p>Involvement of nurses. The Health Centres, in the communities where they exist, are seen as authorities since they are places where almost everybody goes for one reason or another. In addition, health agents know the problem of child marriages and their consequences. With good coordination, nurses can be an important ally in implementing the response against child marriages.</p> <p>In Moatize teachers are an “authority”. They work with children and youths, but also have influence over parents and guardians. Exploiting this social capital may be an important element in the response to child marriages.</p>
	Angoche	<p>Boys and girls work in the SAAJ focusing on matters of Sexual and Reproductive rights</p>
	Rapale	<p>SDSMAS<sup>38</sup> and SDEJT<sup>39</sup></p> <p>Traditionally these institutions operate as vectors for communicating the strategies for education and health development among others. These institutions should be consolidated in divulging the strategy for preventing child marriages through establishing partnerships with projects of Geração BIZ, SAAJ<sup>40</sup> which have been undertaking activities to educate adolescents and youths.</p> <p>The SDSMAS, through the health units, social welfare and SAAJ are potential actors for implementing the strategy for combatting child marriages. And for its part so are the SDEJT, through the schools and school councils. The district has 15 health units and 120 schools which can be used to contribute implementation of the strategy.</p>
<b>Youths</b>	Maganja da Costa Milange	<p>The youths of some neighbourhoods said they were willing to collaborate in various ways with the programmes to be undertaken, and showed commitment to strengthening the agendas that might be beneficial to their territories. Some of the forms they mentioned were to do with the theatre, classes.</p>
	Angoche	<p>The activists have been youths who voluntarily joined various civil society organisations to publicise specific contents. They are very well known in the various communities and their announcements have been regarded as legitimate. They also have a high mobilising capacity.</p>

<sup>38</sup> District Health, Women’s Affairs and Social Welfare Services

<sup>39</sup> District, Education, Youth and Technology Services

<sup>40</sup> Adolescent and Youth Friendly Services

	Rapale	Avante Rapariga group (activists and mentors). This is a group of girls set up in the community with the goal of implementing sexual and reproductive education of young people and adolescents. The existence of this group was noted in the district capital and in Namaita locality.  <i>“The activists go to school to pass information on to pupils. They speak to the pupils about child marriages. Here in the community the activists can also gather under a mango tree to pass information on to the youths. The groups of activists were trained in the community. (EI, Girl, Rapale)</i>
<b>Matrons (of the initiation rites)</b>	Moatize	The transition from girl to woman involves the matrons. They guide the initiation rites and instruct the girls about the various aspects of care and experience, Much of what the girls experience and the way they deal with their bodies, and their expectations of life to some extent result from their passage through the rites and indispensably the matrons.
	Tambara	In Gondola and Tambara there is a “modern” version of Godmothers. The Godmothers in the Communities are responsible for accompanying the girls in the areas of intervention of Save the Children. The Godmothers are a kind of “model mothers” who have under their management up to 10 girls in a particular area, with the responsibility of following their development and growth. They are also responsible for making the girls and their parents aware of the disadvantages of child marriage and pregnancy.
	Gondola	
<b>Other state and Parastatal bodies</b>	Rapale	IPAJ and ICS <sup>41</sup> These bodies undertake joint activities integrated with the SDSMAS in the prevention of child marriages, such as, for example, legal and social assistance. Since they are not represented at district level, they travel from the provincial capital to the district to intervene in the matter.  <i>“...then there are certain activities which the agent undertakes which are not the job of Social Welfare as such. We join with other institutions, such as IPAJ, the Office to Care for Women Victims of Violence, and there are some social organisations such as the OMM and so on. We have a joint quarterly plan, and we shall hold lectures in the schools. We shall also go to the community so that we can publicise some instruments that can help reduce this question of child marriages.” (EI, Social Welfare worker, Rapale)</i>  <i>“Once IPAJ and the Mass Communications Institute came to speak about this. They taught that children should not marry before they are 18 years of age, and that we should control the children so that they do not marry before that age.” (DGF, Adult women, Rapale)</i>

### Highlights:

In all districts, the Community and Religious Leaders were indicated as the most influential people to be involved in education and awareness initiatives about child marriage.

The religious leaders were indicated due to their strong influence over believers to whom they can spread the message. They should be invited by the community leader. According to the interviewees, preferentially, the community leader has the legitimacy to invite or choose whoever it may be, and it is up to the work team to train and instruct the people chosen by the leader for the intended work.

The Community Health Committee and the traditional midwives (although there is no longer anything traditional about them since they work at the health posts) are considered fundamental for the success of any campaign.

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<sup>41</sup> Mass Communications Institute

Although Teachers have been considered as important actors to involve in the initiatives responding to child marriages, there is also a certain distrust about their ability to observe high standards of attitude and behaviour, and not to become sexually involved with girls. They are often accused of making girl pupils pregnant, and of spreading information and content that is counterproductive for the goals of eliminating child marriages, as the following interview extracts show:

*“But take care, because the teachers themselves also marry pupils.” (DGF, Girls, Angoche).*

*“For the girl to pass the grade, she has to go to bed with him. This happens a lot in the secondary schools. Yesterday when I was leaving school with my friend, a teacher came up to my friend saying that he wanted to marry her. She said ‘I don’t want to’. But when these things happen the teacher even fails the pupil. Whether they want to or not, they have to marry.” (DGF, Girl, Angoche).*

*“What I understood is that it has a lot to do with the culture, with what they’re used to. They have teachers here who are professionals and have studied at university, but they still think that child marriage is not a bad thing, but something acceptable. It’s normal. I have heard teachers say that 75% of the population are women, and so men have to marry lots of women, otherwise many women will remain on their own. Teachers say this to the girls.” (EI, Woman representative of a CSO).*

Like teachers, community secretaries and leaders were also cited as being complacent towards this reality. Practices are considered rooted in individuals, who regardless of their knowledge and the places they occupy in society, cannot shake them off. Since there are those who really want to work with them to spread the messages, it is important that they too should be educated in advance.



## Conclusions and Recommendations

Although child marriage is forbidden by law in Mozambique, girls are not effectively protected by the legal framework and the persistence of child marriage is generalised. According to the research report "*Análise Estatística do Casamento Infantil e Gravidez na Adolescência em Moçambique: Determinantes e Impactos*" (2015), 14.3% of Mozambican girls between 20 and 24 years of age married before they were 15 years old and 48.2% of adolescent girls married before they were 18.<sup>42</sup>

The literature review shows that there is a series of factors which help perpetuate child marriage, ranging from: gaps in knowledge; attitudes and practices rooted in cultural traditions; unequal gender relations; poor access to information, and disparities in access to education and health services. The question of poverty in Mozambique is mentioned as a key factor in sustaining child marriage. More than half the country's population (54%) still lives below the poverty line of 18 meticais (MT) a day<sup>43</sup>.

**Scale of Child Marriage:** Mozambique shows indices of the prevalence of child marriage higher than the other countries of southern and eastern Africa, except Malawi. For the group of girls under 15 years of age, Mozambique has a prevalence of 14% compared with 13 and 10% for sub-Saharan Africa, and for southern and eastern Africa combined. For the group under 18 years of age, the prevalence in Mozambique is around 48%, against 39% in sub-Saharan Africa and 38% for southern and eastern Africa combined (UNCEF, UNFPA 2015).

**Prevalence of Child Marriage:** According to the data from the Demographic and Health Survey (IDS) of 2011, 48.2% of women aged between 20-24 years had married before they were 18 years old, and 14.3% before they were 15 years old<sup>44</sup>. The proportion of girls who marry when they are children varies between the provinces of the south and those of the centre and north of the country, where the rates are higher. The northern provinces show the highest rates of child marriage among women correspondents between 20 and 24 years old. For those who said they had married before the age of 15, Niassa recorded a rate of 24.4%, followed by Cabo Delgado with 17.6% and Nampula with 17.1%. In these same provinces, the proportion of girls who married before the age of 18 was 55.7%, 60.7%, and 60.3%, respectively. In the provinces of central Mozambique, the percentage of girls who said that had married before they were 15 years old was 17.7% in Manica, 17.1% in Zambézia, 16.8% in Sofala and 13.7% in Tete, while those who said they married before the age of 18 were 59.2%, 47.15, 49.4% and 51.6% respectively.

In the south of the country, 11.2 per cent of the respondents in Inhambane said they had married before they were 15; 7.1% in Gaza; 5.2% in Maputo Province; and 2.5% in Maputo City. In these same provinces, the percentage of respondents who said they had married before the age of 17, were 39.1% in Inhambane, 40.9% in Gaza, 25.6% in Maputo province and 14.9% in Maputo City. The girls in urban areas begin to marry relatively later than girls in rural areas and follow this pattern throughout their growth. The median age of marriage in urban areas is 19.6 in contrast to rural areas, where it is 18.2. The disaggregation of data by area shows that there is a high proportion of child marriages in rural areas, with 16.1% of girls marrying before they are 15,

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<sup>42</sup> Research commissioned by UNICEF / UNFPA / Coalition for the Elimination and Prevention of Child Marriages.

<sup>43</sup> The situation of children in Mozambique, a portrait, 2014

<sup>44</sup> undated. Statistical Analysis of Child Marriage and Adolescent Pregnancy in Mozambique: Determinants and Impacts. June 2014. Management (OMP) consultants Dr. Sebastian Silva-Leander, Barnali Basak, Patrick Schneider

and 55.7% before they are 18, while in the urban areas these figures are 11.5% and 36.1% respectively (UNICEF, UNFPA, 2015).

The target provinces for this initiative are Nampula (province with the largest population in the country – 4,529,803<sup>45</sup> inhabitants), Zambézia (second largest population in the country – 4,327,163 inhabitants), Tete (2,137,700 inhabitants) and Manica (1,672,038 inhabitants). These provinces, particularly Nampula and Zambézia, have some of the highest absolute number of adolescents married before the age of 18, due to their large populations. The two provinces have, in total, more than half a million girls aged between 20 and 24, who married before they were 18 years old, and 56,323 who married before the age of 15. Manica registered 47,167 and 14,102 girls married before 18 and 15 years of age, respectively, and Tete 50,207 and 13,330 married before 18 and 15 years of age, respectively. This is expressed as an average of 55.2% of girls married before the age of 18, and 16.4% married before 15 in each of the four provinces.

**Prevalence of Teenage Pregnancy:** As happens with child marriages, which mostly affect women, having children early is a social burden that falls more on girls than on boys. According to the analysis cited above, 40.2% of girls are parents before their 18th birthday, compared with only 3.8% of boys (of whom none reported becoming a father before they were 15 years old). In terms of teenage pregnancy, the difference between rural and urban is relatively less pronounced than in the case of child marriages (5.9% of girls in urban areas become pregnant before the age of 15, compared to 9% in rural areas). This trend is associated with the greater occurrence of cases of pregnancy outside of marriage in urban areas (UNICEF, UNFPA 2015).

According to the estimates in the analysis of the OPM, the provinces with the largest number of teenage pregnancies are Nampula and Zambézia. In Zambezia the problem of girls becoming pregnant before they reach the age of 15 is particularly pronounced. 17,848 girls in Zambezia aged between 20 and 24 gave birth before they were 15 (this is 8.8% of all girls aged between 20 and 24). In Nampula, 51.5% of women respondents said they had their first pregnancy before they were 18 years old. In absolute terms, this is 107,553 girls (UNICEF, UNFPA 2015).

Child marriage and teenage pregnancy are closely related, in that the earlier girls marry the more likely they are to become pregnant when they are still children. Both groups of girls who marry when they are children (before they are 15 and before they are 18) are more likely to have children early compared with girls of the same age who did not marry. For example, 38.7% of girls who married before they were 15 also had children before that age, compared with only 2.7% or 2.6% who married between 15 and 18 years of age (IDS, 2011; UNICEF, UNFPA 2015). Overall, the average gap between marriage and the first child is only 15 months (IDS, 2011).

The studies reviewed in this document show that child marriage and teenage pregnancy remain major child protection questions in Mozambique, with more than 12% of girls aged between 15 and 24 married before they were 15 years old and almost a third of all girls married before their 18th birthday. In Niassa, more than a fifth of the women interviewed had married before they were 15 years old. Child marriage and teenage pregnancy are closely related because the overwhelming majority of teenage pregnancies occur among girls who married early. On average, girls have their first child 15 months after marriage, and rarely more than 24 months after marriage.

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<sup>45</sup> National Statistics Institute of Mozambique (INE), 2011.

**Trends:** Child marriages are beginning to show signs of decline among the more prosperous sectors of society in all regions of the world. They are still frequent in Africa and South Asia, confirming the thesis that this phenomenon is located above all in the poorest and lowest income countries (Artur, 2010).

In Mozambique, despite the discrepancy and limited comparability of the available data, the study commissioned by UNICEF and UNFPA, indicates that there has been an improvement, in percentage terms, in the weighted indicators for analysing the trend of child marriages over the period 1997-2011<sup>46</sup>. With regard to the indicator used to estimate the reduction in child marriages between the ages of 15 and 18, one notes that a reduction of 7 to 8 percentage points (statistically significant) was verified, but the same cannot be said about teenage pregnancy in the same period, when there were no statistically significant changes.

Furthermore, when eventual changes are analysed in the absolute numbers of girls exposed to child marriage and teenage pregnancy, one notes that the number increased between 2003 and 2011, which means that more girls were married and became pregnant before the age of 18 in 2011 than in 2003 (55,834 and 84,834, respectively), despite the slight fall in the percentage of girls affected. As for teenage pregnancy, the only provinces where there was a statistically significant decline at the level of 5% were Inhambane and Maputo City. In all the others, the changes registered were statistically insignificant. Alterations in the number of women between 20 and 24 years old who have had a child are estimated by using the projections from the 2007 census. According to these projections, it is calculated that the only two provinces which achieved a reduction in the absolute number of cases of teenage pregnancy in the 2003-2011 period were Nampula (-6.493) and Zambézia (-8.089). The province that saw a significant increase in the number of cases of teenage pregnancy was Tete where the number of pregnancies among adolescents rose by 4,278, between 2003 and 2011.

In general, it is concluded that although in recent years there have been some reductions in the indices of child marriage, the changes remain statistically insignificant in most provinces, with the partial exception of the northern provinces, which recorded a statistically significant decline but from a very high starting point. Furthermore, in almost all the provinces, the modest reductions in the rates of child marriage have been insufficient to compensate for rapid population growth, which means that, even though the percentage of children married in adolescence may have declined, the absolute number of child marriages has increased.

As regards the **Notions and Conceptions about the Marriage Age**, the research results stress that the **Signs of Puberty** are considered important biological and social markers to determine a girl's maturity for marriage. In all the research sites, the appearance of the menstrual cycle is stressed as the main marker defining the social and biological age of the girl. The menarche, the development of breasts and public hair are regarded as signs that the girl would be ready for marriage. The recurrence of this type of perception has implications in the reproduction of cultures and practices which encourage the perpetuation of child marriages, in that the appearance of menstruation, which can occur between 9 and 12 years of age, is still seen as the defining marker of the girl's maturity for marriage.

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<sup>46</sup> According to the interpretation by CEPISA, in almost 30 years (1980-2007), child marriage in Mozambique has declined by only 15% which means that some factors, including those related with social and discriminatory gender dynamics, and damaging practices, mentioned above, are being perpetuated within Mozambican communities (CEPSA 2013).

Although menstruation is widely mentioned as the main mark of the transition from childhood to adult life, in the same communities and research sites, there are other perspectives and perceptions on the significance of menstruation, which stress that the appearance of menstruation merely shows that the girl is starting to mature, and this maturity can only be regarded as complete when several other social factors are also observed in the life of the girl.

According to this perspective, the appearance of menstruation should be understood as an indicative moment of the girl's biological transition, but not necessarily a transition to marriage or to an immediate involvement in sexual activities, but as a delimiting marker of the need to initiate the girl in other forms of education and self-definition which should go beyond the initiation rites and of conforming to the legal age for marriage. This type of focus and approach should be strengthened in the context of developing the communication strategy.

The findings of the field research are in line with the results of the bibliographical review which show that the appearance of menstruation is understood as a mark which qualifies the girl for inclusion into adult life, as Airhihenbwa mentions (1995, cited by Nhamtumbo-Djivage et. al., 2010). In this sub-section, one concludes that, in the case of girls, the menarche (even if early) stands out as a reference point physiological event, signalling the readiness of the girl for marriage even if in some cases it is added that the initiation rites should be complied with (which generally are of short duration, lasting 2 to 3 months). Following these perspectives, marriage determines the passage of the individual into adulthood, and the birth of the first child makes effective the formation of identity and membership of the group of adults.

**Recommendation 1: Perceptions on the signs of puberty:** The communication strategy should have a strong focus on explaining the menstrual cycle and demystifying the idea that the appearance of menstruation is a sign of the sexual maturity of the girl, stressing however the importance of chronological age as the legal parameter for marriage, as well as stressing the need for the girl to have the time necessary to enjoy full growth, in biological and psychological terms, in addition to the importance of benefitting from educational and professional opportunities.

The research results also allow us to conclude that, if on the one hand the appearance of menstruation is understood as a physiological mark that would define the girl's readiness for marriage, the **Initiation Rites** perform the role of a social marker and space for instructing the girls, with a strong orientation towards the start of sexual life and involvement in marriage. The initiation rites represent a social space of complex and contradictory teachings and which sometimes encourage the start of sexual activity and push girls towards involvement in sexual relations and/or child marriage. The variety of topics and themes in which the girls are instructed/initiated in the rites, apart from matters related with genital practices, include notions of self-care, domestic activities and cultivating a pre-disposition to take on roles loaded with gender stereotypes, in relations with potential husbands, insofar as the instruction centres on learning how to please the man, both in sexual terms and in carrying out domestic chores.

The results of the field research are in line with what was documented in the literature on the subject, which stresses that the girls, particularly in rural areas, and most frequently in the central and northern regions, participate in initiation rites run by the godmothers, matrons and "queens" of the community itself, and that the practices and teachings in the rites are loaded with physical violence and reproduce gender stereotypes.

Since the rites are described as instances of socialisation and instruction of the girls, in matters of sex, sexuality, care for themselves and the home, the rites may also have a transformative potential, if, as a space of teaching, they could include contents which discourage the early onset of sexual activities and child marriage. Evidently, the type of dialogue to be established between the current practices and the aspirations of initiatives that seek to eliminate child marriages does not run in a linear and light form, otherwise they would be permeated by politically correct discourses which are unable to subvert the persistence of practices established over centuries, which perpetuate social norms and instructions that reproduce child marriages.

**Recommendation 2: Initiation rites.** The communication strategy should contain specific focus on the practices of the Initiation Rites, stressing the educational potential of these spaces of socialisation, but putting forward messages that can empower the use of the space provided by the rites to incorporate and adopt content that help reverse the current traditions that contribute to making girls vulnerable and to exposing them to unsafe vaginal practices, and cultivate teachings which perpetuate gender disparities, as well as placing the girls precociously in sexual initiation and involvement in child marriage.

As for **Chronological Markers**, such as age, as one of the requirements for determining readiness for marriage, in general, although some interviewees referred to the chronological markers (age) as an important parameter in defining the marriage age, in most cases an assertive ambiguity was noted in the reification of this practice, since even in the cases on which they referred to age, they did not escape from the social and biological references that characterise the different stages of development of girls and boys. The research results indicate that the perception of most of the interviewees is that boys, in general, are ready to marry and form a family between the ages of 18 and 24 at the latest. This goes along with the idea that boys develop more slowly than girls and that boys need to develop other social characteristics going beyond the biological transformations in their bodies. This finding, specifically concerning the difference in marriage ages between girls and boys, was noted in the analysis that CEPISA (2017), made of the data from the Census and the Demographic and Health Survey (2001).

The data on marriage ages showed the dominant perception that boys should marry relatively later, or at an older age, than girls. According to interviewees, the boys should be between 20 and 25 years old and marry younger girls, aged between 16 and 18, because, from the viewpoint of the interviewees, the boys should be in a position where they can “dominate” the girls. The idea that girls should enter marriage in a position of subservience, subordinated to their husbands and their families, is not merely spread by the initiation rites, but is also structurally embedded in the perception of men and of various members of the communities. The difference alluded to would be linked to the perception that girls under 18 years of age tend to question less the authority of their husbands, and would be more subservient, while girls older than this age group, would have broader experience of life and a sharper capacity to question, which is understood as a threat to the power and “right” of male domination.

**Recommendation 3: Chronological Markers.** With regard to chronological age, it is recommended that the communication strategy should stress particularly the importance of knowing the chronological age of the child, so as to guarantee that marriage takes place in accordance with the provisions of the law. The communication strategy should also stress, above all, the perspective that observance of the chronological age for marriage is also associated with the period regarded as necessary for girls and boys to develop physically, psychologically and socially, and so that they may enjoy the



educational and/or professional opportunities that have the potential to improve the living conditions of individuals.

**Recommendation 4:** Age disparities between men and girls as the basis for reproducing practices of male domination. With regard to this aspect, the communication strategy should make visible the challenging dimensions of intergenerational relationships, in association with the discourse of male domination and female subordination, stressing the importance of generational balance in matrimonial and gender relations and rights.

The research results point to the recurrence of narratives which stress the idea of **urgency to experience sexuality and reproduction**. In the discourse of the urgency of procreation, the idea is put forward that the sexual life cycle of a woman is relatively short, as well as the perception that the supposedly late onset of sexual activities would imply wasted opportunities of bearing children in each menstrual cycle. According to the interviewees, delaying the start of sexual relations and not marrying before the age of 18 represent socially reprehensible forms of losing opportunities for procreation, in that the earlier the start of sexual relations, the more chance a woman has of bearing “many” children during her reproductive life. She may thus be considered someone socially recognised as fully a woman, in association with the value granted to the capacity to bear children, in opposition to women who have borne few children or none at all. The literature review points in the same direction, in highlighting that, in general, the value of a woman is measured by her fertility, and particularly by bearing sons.

**Recommendation 5:** Narratives on the urgency of experiencing sexuality and bearing many children. With regard to these aspects it is recommended that the communication strategy focuses on the importance of better knowledge about the risks associated with the early onset of sexual relations, including health and vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections, high risk pregnancy, and the implications of having to reconcile the childbirth cycles and the opportunities for individual development of girls and boys. The messages on the benefits of delaying the start of sexual relations should be anchored in access to sexual and reproductive health services (family planning), and in demystifying the idea that having many children is a synonym of wealth.

In just one site, the research found reports of the occurrence of Promises at Birth, whereby the girl, as soon as she is born, is promised to a man or a family, which should pledge to contribute “something” to the growth and development of “his future wife” until the agreed age, normally before the age of 18, when he effectively takes her as a wife.

**Recommendation 6.** Children Promised at Birth. Understanding of this type of custom should be deepened in follow-up research, to ensure that this type of practice is discouraged and, potentially, framed in law.

The research also documented a series of **Perceptions and Arguments for Marriage**. Understanding these arguments is highly relevant for understanding the factors, arguments and circumstances under which the marriages occur, as well as for visualising the foundations for the occurrence of child marriages. With this knowledge, it is possible to establish strategies, dialogue and communication that can contribute to opposing the arguments which help encourage child marriages.

Among the main arguments invoked for marriage, there stands out Social Pressure, associated with notions of **honour and shame**. The field data show that the questions of honour and



shame are greatly present in the way of thinking and managing the expectations of families about the development of girls. At the various research sites, the question of honour and shame was constantly mentioned as among the reasons why families push their daughters into marriage, centred on fear of the loss of virginity, unplanned pregnancy and a social perception of a decline in the value of the girl on the emotional market of intra-family transactions. The results of the field research are corroborated by the data from the literature review, which stress that the families who push girls towards child marriage may be motivated by the belief that in this way they would avoid the deterioration of the price of the dowry or a reduction in its value due to the advanced age of the girl. The belief that the sooner the girl marries, the sooner she will be safe from extra-marital activities or from unplanned/extramartial pregnancy is prevalent in various contexts. The girls who remain single for long periods become victims of the scrutiny of their virginity and it is believed that they could endanger the reputation of their family.

Social Pressure is also expressed through the perception of marriage as an opportunity for the **expression of gratitude** to the parents (family and community) and as a blessing that not all girls and families would have the privilege to enjoy. For the parents, ensuring that their daughters marry should represent a great honour, especially when the marriage is strictly complemented by the rituals that accompany it. In the search for this social recognition, which also includes the circulation of money and goods, the families tend to promote child marriage in the name of the social demonstration that their daughters are not possessed by evil spirits that would prevent them from marrying. Part of this conviction is rooted in the idea that the father cannot die without receiving the dowry (bride price, lobolo, Massunguiro) of his daughter. If the dowry is not received, he will die of resentment, and as a result the girl will be cursed. This curse will only end when acts of ritual compensation are held, even if later on. The notion of marriage (including child marriage) as a blessing, duty and obligation is widely interiorised and established as a socially accepted norm.

**Recommendation 7. Social Pressure to Marry (Honour and Shame / Blessing and Gratitude).** The communication strategy should stress the importance of thinking about sexuality in the perspective of law, and developing messages that can subvert the idea that girls should be viewed as sexual objects, whose value centres on their virginity, and would encourage the use of sexual and reproductive health services. Likewise, the communication strategy should focus on problematising and discouraging the search for prestige through holding “lobolo” festivities involving child marriage, as well as demystifying the idea that girls who postpone marriage should be considered cursed, and instead stressing the importance of providing time for their full development and the pursuit of educational and professional opportunities.

The research results also indicate that, among some girls, marriage would be a resource through which they seek self-determination and social prestige, in rising to the status of a married woman. In this discourse, which advocates the idea of accessing “freedom through marriage”, the parents’ house is seen as a space of less autonomy, and as one of the main reasons driving girls to consider marriage as an opportunity to obtain resources and a safe and protected social space, as well as an opportunity for emancipation and the possibility of making choices with relative autonomy, as opposed to the perception that in the domestic sphere, in the house of her family and her parents, she would be subordinate to parents, siblings and other older members of the household, unable to take decisions on her diet, or on leisure and entertainment, in addition to subordination to these family members in doing household chores and farming activities. Despite the apparent reductionism portrayed in the above extract, which limits the

scale of privileges to some dietary options that the girls believe they can enjoy in their husbands' house, the perception of marriage as an opportunity for emancipation shows the tension that characterises the life of adolescents in families. A vast literature and whole literary genres describe the family as a space of tension and conflict and where resentments between the various members is expressed.

**Recommendation 8. Self-determination and Social Prestige.** The communication strategy should affirm the importance of promoting harmonious relations within families, and a balance in the distribution of domestic chores between boys and girls, as well as highlighting the challenges that girls who marry early may face in the homes of their husbands, where they carry out domestic chores, added to the weight of matrimonial relations, teenage pregnancy and motherhood.

At the same time, throughout the research, ideas of blaming the girl were evident, whereby girls are seen as responsible for the early onset of sexual activity and eventual child marriage. This line of interpretation stresses the idea of erosion of values in the relations between parents and children, lack of respect and disdain for what is regarded as the most appropriate traditional advice. From this viewpoint the “voluntary” involvement “by choice” of girls with older men, in exchange for material goods and money was mentioned during the interviews as a further factor favouring the reproduction of child marriages, even when these take on ties that are not specifically those of marriage (customary or legal), but relations of inter-generational or transactional sex.

In all the research sites, the various groups of interviewees stress that, in general, marriages occur between young girls and older men (with no clear limits on the interval in age difference), despite the variation in reasons and arguments to justify this pattern, with particular focus on reasons to do with economic power. In some cases, the indication on the “choices” to marry tend to point towards a relative autonomy of choice on the part of the girls. However, this apparent autonomy falls within the same patters that characterise the narratives indicting that the girls marry older men in association with economic conditions. The girls interviewed gave as the profile of the men whom the “should” marry not always the profile of older men, but individuals/families who possess relatively stable economic and material conditions, which ends up flowing into the profile of considerably older men.

**Recommendation 9. Blaming Girls.** The communication strategy should stress the unequal roles within family and community structures in decision taking responsibilities about the life and destiny of girls. It should demystify the idea of choices made by children and strengthen messages that promote the rights of children and the duties of parents and discourage practices of transactional or commercial sex involving children, putting into action, where appropriate, the relevant legal provisions.

Poverty and economic reasons to marry. In all the research sites, economic reasons of various kinds were repeatedly invoked. The lack of material conditions for the girls to support themselves, incapacity to tolerate the difficulties of agricultural production and of other ways of earning income, the lack of money to keep girls at school (particularly when they have to go into secondary school), as well as the need to satisfy other “whims” and needs of girls were stressed as the main reasons pushing girls into marriage and/or sexual involvement with someone who possesses resources. The interviewees say that the lack of economic conditions for the survival of the family would “oblige” the girls to marry early, seeing marriage as an opportunity and a strategy for overcoming their condition of poverty. In this same line of interpretation, the interviews indicate that “due to the high cost of living”, the girls are “obliged” to become

involved in transactional and inter-generational sex, as a way of overcoming their lack of economic and financial resources in order to acquire goods they need. In the same transactional sex, the girl becomes pregnant, paving the way to the obligation to marry

The interviews show, with particular stress, the recurrence, among girls, of the idea that one of the most viable alternatives for overcoming the economic limitations of their parents in providing resources to meet some of the girls' needs (uniform and other school material, beauty and hygiene items) would be to take the path of marriage. Under these circumstances, the notion of economic conditions is not expressed only in the question of the poverty of the girl's family, but also in the economic conditions they imagine the girl will find in her marriage family.

A further dimension that was clear at one of the research sites was the economic and social vulnerability of some girls. The vulnerability to which orphan girls are subject was reported among girls who avoided child marriage as one of the reasons why some girls married.

The scarcity of opportunities for educational progress, involvement in activities which challenge the continued educational and professional development of the individuals (girls and boys) was mentioned as a factor encouraging marriage, even at a tender age, as a way of individual expression in a context of limited opportunities.

**Recommendation 10. Poverty and Economic Reasons.** The communication strategy should show a clear recognition of poverty and of economic adversities as part of the broader structural reasons that favour the perpetuation of child marriages. However the emphasis of the messages should be centred on catalysing inter-sector collaboration to deal with the structural questions that compromise the all-round development of girls and boys, and encourage the maximum use of educational opportunities, or making use of professional activities, and discouraging parents, families and communities from taking advantage of young and vulnerable girls. However, the weight of this strategic axis should focus on the social protection services and the government's responsibility to reduce economic asymmetries.

The research data show that the normative framework that governs the occurrence of child marriage is not sufficiently publicised and it does not have mechanisms that are sufficiently available to strengthen implementation nationally. Public service providers and representatives of CSOs and NGOs interviewed reported that the fact that the legislation on marriage opens an exception for girls to marry at the age of 16, based on the consent/emancipation of their parents, is liable to various interpretations. This lack of harmony in the legislation contributes to a tacit acceptance of child marriages, including of girls under 16 years old, by exploiting the notion of parental consent, especially if we bear in mind that this legal framework is rarely called upon in court, in cases where the marriages take place between families, governed by excessively fluid traditional and customary norms, if we take into consideration that such marriages tend to involve only the families concerned and the local leaders who sometimes act to guarantee the marriages socially.

Furthermore, the skills of the professionals and communicators who play the role of guardians and promoters of messages that are expected to be transformative are also charged with legalist radicalism which makes it difficult to overcome barriers of "natural" resistance regarding negotiating and/or transforming social norms. If, on the one hand, the modern legislation needs to be stressed, on the other it must be recognised that this legislation does not rest on a vacuum, but on centuries old social practices, regardless of whether they damage the life, rights and health

of the child. The labelling and confrontational language proposed limits the possibilities of establishing bridges and points of rupture which might guarantee the involvement of the “social brokers” (those who boost the introduction and/or adoption of new conducts) to the point of winning social acceptance with transformational potential.

**Recommendation 11. Normative framework.** The merely prescriptive and punitive communication approach, not accompanied by an argumentative and persuasive language tends to exacerbate points and poles of confrontation, with potential for only a limited reach, especially in a context such as the Mozambican, where the law enforcement system is very weak and incapable of covering the vast territory of the country. From this perspective, the combination of persuasion, dialogue and repressive (punitive) measures should be broadly stressed and conscientiously implemented by the stakeholders, institutions and communities committed to responding to the challenges posed by child marriages.

The research sought to systematise data to illustrate the **Perceptions and Arguments for not marrying before the age of 18**. Among the multiplicity of factors invoked by the interviewees, the following stand out:

Avoid Complications in Pregnancy and Childbirth: In all the research sites there was repeated recognition that many risks are associated with the marriage of girls (and boys) before they are 18 years old, especially the risks and complications in pregnancy and childbirth (including the death of the mother and the baby). The vulnerability of the girl who marries was portrayed from various angles, despite the persistence of some approaches that defend the normalisation of the complications of pregnancy and childbirth. During the interviews, it was also understood that the bodies of girls under 18 years of age are not physically prepared for childbirth, and so these girls are at greater risk of suffering dangerous complications in pregnancy and childbirth, in comparison with other groups of fertile women.

**Recommendation 12: Complications in Pregnancy and in Childbirth.** The communication strategy should address the risks related with early pregnancy, complications in childbirth, the likelihood of the death of the mother and baby, and reiterate the connections with chronic malnutrition.

Avoid Damaging the Development of the Girl: The results of the interviews indicated that child marriage is damaging to the health, development and growth of girls in general, and gave several arguments to justify their reservations towards child marriage. Girls who marry early are stripped of power, dependent on their husbands and deprived of their fundamental rights to health, education and security. These girls are making the transition from childhood to adolescence, and they are not physically, mentally or emotionally prepared to become wives or mothers. The bibliographic review stresses that the negative consequences of child marriage are considerable for the girls, their families, communities and, in the final instance, for the countries where this practice prevails. At individual level, child marriage deprives the girl of her basic human rights and marks the abrupt end of childhood, obliging her to make a rapid transition to adulthood, forcing the girl to take on roles and responsibilities before she is sufficiently developed to do so. Consequently, one of the first impacts of child marriage on the girl is to deprive her of her adolescence and all the implications inherent to the transition.

**Recommendation 13:** Avoid Damaging the Development of Girls: The communication strategy should stress that child marriages compromise the normal, all-round development of girls, pointing out the physical, mental, emotional and other dimensions.

Increase the possibilities of continuing Studies: The research results also indicate that some of the interviewees believed there is no advantage in a girl marrying before the age of 18. On the contrary, it has the disadvantage that she has to miss or interrupt her studies and the pursuit of educational and/or professional training opportunities. This may compromise the future of girls and boys. However, for some members of the community, the school is a space which promotes sexuality and sexual practices and turns girls into rebels disobedient to their parents and to socio-cultural norms. The stigma built around schools was reported most frequently in the interviews with adult men, as a result of their experience in solving problems of teenage pregnancy, child marriage and sexual harassment and rape committed by some teachers.

The data from the bibliographical review show, essentially, that women who marry young conclude primary education less frequently than those who do not. Women who marry before they are 15 years old finish their primary schooling less frequently than those who marry between the ages of 15 and 18. Presumably this is related to the fact that the later the girls marry, the more opportunities they have to continue their education. Child marriage is associated negatively with girls dropping out of school, although the cause and effect relationship points in both directions: child marriage leads to dropping out of school, and dropping out of school may lead to child marriage. The evidence suggests that girls with low levels of schooling are more likely to marry young, and the child marriage dictates the end of the girl's cycle of formal education.

**Recommendation 14:** Increase the Possibilities of Continuing Studies. The communication strategy should stress the importance of girls and boys enjoying educational opportunities up to the highest possible levels, underlining the importance of education for individual and collective development.

As for the analysis of the characteristics and **perceptions about the girls who did NOT marry before 18 years of age and their families** (positive deviants), the research showed that multiple perceptions co-exist about this category of person. It should be stressed that, in general, a positive appreciation dominates about girls who reached the age of 18 or a little more without entering into a customary or formal marriage.

However, expressions of negative and pejorative representations against these girls and their families, laden with stereotypes, seem strongly impressed in the discourses of the interviewees, which shows that while, on the one hand, there is a positive perception about not marrying before reaching the age of 18, on the other there are recurrent negative interpretations, expressed in the form of facetious terms used to describe or characterise girls who postpone marriage until after the age of 18. In the research sites, it is socially understood (based on supposedly traditional values) that it is desirable and advisable that girls should marry young. Those who contradict this social expectation, by marrying relatively later (after the age of 18) have seen their conduct questioned, and have been slandered, because, in the view of their critics, they are subverting what are regarded as normal standards of conduct. Girls who marry after the age of 18 are also not well regarded. They are considered as cursed by evil spirits or victims of bad luck to the point that nobody is interested in marrying them.

The negative connotation about girls who do not marry before they are 18 in some cases extends to their parents and relatives. Fathers who refuse to hand over their daughters for child



marriages have sometimes been censured and accused of being involved with their own daughters. For this reason they agree to them marrying young.

There is also the perception that girls who, after finishing mid-level education, go for many years without marrying, would be fated to live alone. They are considered failures, despite attending school, in a context where school is considered something without much use, since it does not provide job opportunities.

**Recommendation 15: Negative Perceptions of Girls Not Married after 18 Years of Age.**

The communication strategy should stress that, although the communities have the habit and tradition of girls marrying early, the ideal is to delay marriage until the girl attains the age of 18, and is physically, mentally and emotionally developed, apart from enjoying the opportunity to continue her education.

Positive Perception about girls who NOT married after 18 years of age: The research results showed there is a broad positive appreciation of the girls and boys who marry after the age of 18 and of their families. This appreciation was reported in almost all the 8 districts and research sites and by various types of people individually interviewed, or participants in focus group discussions. Some of the research participants stressed the importance of avoiding child marriage because they are aware of the risks to which the girl is exposed when she marries before the age of 18. The community leaders also said that marriage after the age of 18 brings prestige to the parents, and so these parents are sometimes called upon to lead or to play prominent roles in some community events (lectures, training etc.) which allows them to share their experience of educating their children.

The characteristics of the positive deviations, such as not marrying before the age of 18, were seen by some people as beneficial in that they allow boys and girls the physical and social preparation to make a success of married life.

**Recommendation 16. Positive Perceptions of Girls who are NOT married after the age of 18:** The communication strategy should capitalise on the existence of a favourable environment which appreciates positively girls who marry after they are 18 years old, and empower these models as possible examples to be followed in each community

Profile of the Families of the Girls who did NOT marry before they were 18 years old: The girls who described their experiences of life in the community without marrying before the age of 18, said they came mostly from religious families, with relative financial stability, including parents who worked in the public administration. The discussions about the characteristics of the positive deviants and their families in almost all the groups followed the same path, explained by the fact that group members shared the same perception that the positive deviants come from families with some possessions, in terms of land, animals and money. The discourses and narratives of the girls who avoided child marriage allowed us to understand that, in addition to the above characteristics, they live in family environments where there is space for dialogue and participation in family life. When girls are 18 and unmarried, this is partly because the parents understand the need for them to study. The better financial conditions of the families are a reference point, but are not the primary condition for whether the girls marry or not, for there are families that have no material conditions, but even so they do not encourage their daughters to marry. The opening that these girls find in the family was reported as the main factor that



makes them resilient to the stereotypical labelling to which they are subjected by some in the community. Attending church, having space/opportunity to speak with the parents, participating in and having an opportunity to accompany family life and matters, autonomy in decisions about who to have relations with, when and how, are understood as some of the characteristics which help girls not to enter into child marriages. This type of perception is accompanied by an understanding that observance of the parents' recommendations and advice, may contribute to the pride of the parents, under circumstances in which the girls observe the prescriptions. In the opposite case, where preservation of these values has no positive impact on the life of the girl, she is seen as a failure who is contributing to devaluing her parents.

**Recommendation 17.** Profile of the Families of the Girls who have NOT married before they were 18. The communication strategy should stress the importance of dialogue between parents and children about the challenges and dilemmas of child marriages, strengthening messages that promote delaying marriage until a more opportune age and time. The values of religions that do not promote marriage before the age of 18 may be considered by way of example, reference and social base of support.

With regard to **levels of access** to legal services, for protection against violence against girls and women, as well as access to education and health, the research results show that in the four provinces and 8 districts the interviewees in the communities, except for the providers of formal education, health and justice services, showed poor knowledge of Mozambican legislation, and particularly legislation on child marriage. In almost all the groups there was an average of 2 or 3 participants who mentioned the Family Law as the normative legal framework which governs the family. This scenario tended to be different among public providers and representatives of local NGOs who, in addition to the Family Law, mentioned the Penal Code as legal instruments governing family relationships, including child marriage.

In the case of Manica, the interviews with representative of CSOs indicate that situations of violence against girls in all districts, at least in formal terms, follow the same path. At the first stage it begins with the identification of cases in the communities, through the community leaders, members of the CCPC. At this level the leaders and CCPC members approach the perpetrator of violence and the family of the violated girl to search jointly for some consensus between the parties. In the case of relatively well informed families, even after the solution or meeting between the leaderships and the families affected, the case is always channelled to the police, thus moving onto the second stage on the path for dealing with cases of rape. The manager of a local organisation, the GCR, reported that communities sometimes do not denounce cases of violence for fear of reprisals, and of being negatively stereotyped as families who have permitted or been exposed to this type of violence.

In Rapale, Nampula, situations of violence against girls have been approached with the involvement of the Legal Aid Institute (IPAJ), which has held lectures, community dialogues and activities to raise the awareness of members of the community to prevent violence. Despite the attention paid to the situations of sexual violence that are denounced, other forms of physical, psychological and social coercion of girls, such as their conversion into brides at a tender age, are not necessarily seen as forms of violence but as cultural practices regarded as socially acceptable. In general, at all the research sites, access to health services was regarded as limited. The health units are located in areas distant from the villages. In Rapale, health and education services are seen as providers of educational information about child marriages, but are mainly confined to the district capitals and locality headquarters. Communities a long way from the schools and hospitals are relatively isolated and have limited access to education about child marriages.

**Recommendation 18.** Access to Legal Services for Protection against violence against girls and women, as well as access to education and health. The strategy should start from recognition of the limited levels of dissemination and appropriation of the instruments of the normative and legal framework that inhibit child marriages and should promote their instrumental dissemination. The education and health services should be capitalised upon as vehicles and spaces for the spread of information and knowledge about child marriages.

As for the Means and Channels of communication to be used, the research highlights the predominance of the Radio in all districts; Television in at least 6 districts; Road show and mobile cinema in most of the districts; schools, health centres, and door-to-door campaigns in all the districts; collective and community meetings with the involvement of local and religious leaders; lectures, use of social media on a very limited scale, in addition to musical and theatre shows. All these means and channels for communication should deserve a structured focus with contents aimed at the moment of developing the communication strategy, selecting some to be included in the monitoring table of the interventions.

In all the sites researched, printed material (newspapers, magazines, leaflets, pamphlets and others) was considered the least appropriate means of spreading information. This perception is also shared by service providers which shows that the low level of literacy in rural communities is an obstacle to effective use of written and printed materials. However, during the interviews, there were some youths who said that printed materials could be of use for spreading messages about child marriage in the 15-25 year age group, particularly inside the schools.

With regard to the potential actors to involve in implementing interventions, in all districts the Community and Religious Leaders were indicated as the most influential people to be involved in education and awareness initiatives about child marriage. The religious leaders were indicated due to their strong influence over believers to whom they can spread the message.

The Community Health Committee and the traditional midwives (although there is no longer anything traditional about them since they work at the health posts) are considered fundamental for the success of any campaign.

Although Teachers have been considered as important actors to involve in the initiatives responding to child marriages, there is also a certain distrust about their ability to observe high standards of attitude and behaviour, and not to become sexually involved with girls. They are often accused of making girl pupils pregnant, and of spreading information and content that is counterproductive for the goals of eliminating child marriages,

Like teachers, community secretaries and leaders were also cited as being complacent towards this reality. It is recommended that, if it is intended to work with these actors, in order to spread the messages, it is important that they too should be educated in advance.

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## Appendix 1 – Profiles of the Provinces and Districts of Research

### Tete Province

Tete province is in the extreme west of the central region of Mozambique, lying between the Republics of Malawi and Zambia, to the north-east, and the Republic of Zimbabwe to the south. Internally, Tete borders on the provinces of Zambézia, to the east, and Manica and Sofala to the south.

The province covers an area of 98,417 Km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 178,967 inhabitants, and a population density of 18.13 inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup>. Its socio-linguistic and cultural mosaic is diverse and very rich. Among various groups, it has the Nyungues, Chewas, Angunis or Angonis, Maraves, Tawala, Nsenga and Nyanja (often considered the same as the Chewas) The Nyungues are the largest group, followed by the Chewas. The strong connection with the drum and dance culture of these peoples is represented by the Nhau, regarded as heritage of mankind by UNESCO.

Tourism, the epicentre for which is the majestic Zambezi river, the extractive industry (fundamentally coal mining), agriculture and livestock are the main economic activities of a province which is also home to the largest source of electricity in the country, the Cahora Bassa dam, and to informal trade which is the main livelihood strategy for much of the population. Even so, the province's main urban centres, Tete City and the town of Moatize, both located on a transit corridor carrying people and goods from the port of Beira to the countries of the hinterland bordering Tete, are characterised by high levels of poverty.

### Moatize district

Moatize district is 20 Km from Tete city. It borders to the south with the districts of Tambara, Guro and Changara and Tete municipality, to the north with the districts of Chiúta and Tsangano, and to the west with Chiúta and Changara districts and with the Republic of Malawi. It has a surface area of 8,428 Km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 215,092 living in 47,873 households. The population density is 25.52 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. Women account for 51.3 % of the total population of the district and men for 48.7%. The population of Moatize is mostly young with 50% aged between 0 and 14 years, 47.7% between 15 and 65 years and only 2.8% are aged 65 years and above<sup>47</sup>.

Moatize district has 10 health centres and 2 health posts, with a total of 39 general beds and 70 maternity beds. This is a ratio of 0.87% beds per 1000 inhabitants. The coverage rate for ante-natal consultations is 179.4% and for institutional births it is 95.5%, while there were 460 births assisted in the community. The coverage rate of post-natal consultations in the districts is 69.6%<sup>48</sup>.

As for **education**, Moatize district has 134 schools. Of these 129 are primary schools (107 EP1 and 22 EP2). The remaining 5 schools teach the first cycle of general secondary education (8th,

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<sup>47</sup> INE – General Population and Housing Census 2007 – District Social and Demographic Indicators – Tete Province. Maputo, 2012; Ministry of State Administration. Profile of Moatize district – Tete Province. Maputo, 2005.

<sup>48</sup> INE. Statistics of Moatize District. Maputo, 2010.

9th and 10th grades). At the time of the census, the data from which are used here, the district had no second cycle secondary school. The number of primary school pupils (EP1 and EP2) is 425,676 of which 46.8% are girls, while in secondary education there are 47,598 pupils of which 40.8% are girls. The number of children of school age outside of school, in the 6 to 13 year age group, is about 175,623 in the district and the illiteracy rate among the population aged 15 years and above is 84.7%<sup>49</sup>.

Like most of the societies north of the Zambezi River, the matrilinear system dominates in Moatize, although men have the greater decision making power at all levels of society. The practice of polygamy, which has been losing some ground, is rooted in the culture of the peoples of the district who regard it as a symbol of power and prestige. 41.3% of the population follow the Sião or Zione religion. The Catholic Church occupies second place with about 28%. The Jehovah's Witnesses, with 13.3%, occupy third place, while the Evangelical Churches have 11.9%<sup>50</sup>. But it is important to mention that during the field work other churches such as Begoca were mentioned several times, and the Old Apostles Church was among those most highlighted after the Catholic Church.

The coverage of the mass media is relatively limited. The radio, which is the medium with greatest coverage, reaches 52.4% of households. Television reaches 3.7% and the telephone only 0.3% of households. Computers are among the media least used, covering only 0.1% of households<sup>51</sup>.

### **Angónia district**

Angónia district is located on the plateau of the same name which is in the extreme north-northeast of the province. It borders to the north on the districts of Marávia and Chiúta and the Republic of Malawi, to the northeast and east with the Republic of Malawi, to the south with the district of Tsangano and to the northwest with the district of Macanga. The district covers a surface area of 3,259 Km<sup>2</sup>, with a population of 298,815 inhabitants in 71,538 households. It has a population density of 91.68 inhabitants per Km<sup>2</sup>. There are 154,926 women which is 51.8% of the total population of the district. There are 143,889 men, or 48.2% of the population. Its age pyramid shows a young population, with 47.7% between 0 and 14 years old, 48.9% aged between 15 and 65 and only 3.4% aged 65 years old and above<sup>52</sup>.

Angónia district has 1 rural hospital, located in the district capital, Ulongué town, 8 health centres and 1 health post. The health units have 51 general beds and 38 maternity beds, which is a ratio of 0.25 beds per 1000 inhabitants. The coverage rate of ante-natal consultations is 93.9%, that of institutional births is 42.2% and that of post-natal consultations is 53%. There were 862 births assisted in the community.<sup>53</sup>

As for **education**, Angónia district has 197 schools. Of these, 191 are primary schools (167 EP1 and 24 EP2). There are 5 general secondary education schools, 4 teaching the first cycle, and one

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Ministry of State Administration. Profile of Moatize district – Tete Province. Maputo, 2005.

<sup>51</sup> INE, General Population and Housing Census 2007 – District Social and Demographic Indicators – Tete Province. Maputo, 2012.

<sup>52</sup> Ministry of State Administration. Profile of Angonia district – Tete Province. Maputo, 2005; INE Moatize district statistics. Maputo, 2010.

<sup>53</sup> INE. Angónia District Statistics. Maputo, 2010.

the second cycle. The latter is located in Ulóngue where there is also a boarding home for pupils from other parts of the district. The district has one technical and professional school. There are 72,209 primary school pupils, of whom 47.7% are girls. Secondary education has 6,933 pupils of whom 38% are girls. The number of children of school age aged between 6 and 13 who are outside school is 32,644 and the illiteracy rate in the district is 81%. Only 24% of the population over 5 years of age is attending or has attended school<sup>54</sup>.

The population of Angónia district is predominantly from the Nyungue, Chewa and Angoni ethnic groups. Due to the high level of illiteracy, only 7% of the women speak Portuguese. The percentage of men who speak Portuguese is not large, particularly in the rural areas. In their culture, the population of Angónia combines components that form part of other socio-cultural groups in Mozambique, such as the Nyungues and Nyanjas with whom they have interacted for centuries, and cultural elements from neighbouring Malawi with which they share various traits. The Cicewa language itself, also called Cinyanja, includes several words from Malawian languages as well as more influence from English than from Portuguese, for example.

The Roman Catholic Church, is the majority church among communities in the district. However, other churches, such as the Zambezi Evangelical, the African Abraham Church, the Assembly of God, and the Jehovah's Witnesses, are also influential.

The coverage of the mass media is relatively limited. Radio covers 49% of the households in the district, television covers only 1.6%, the telephone 0.2% and computers 0.1%. Electricity reaches only 2% of the total number of households<sup>55</sup>.

## **Manica Province**

Manica Province is located in the Centre-West of the country, along the border with Zimbabwe. The total area of the province is 61,661 Km<sup>2</sup>, about 7.7% of the total surface area of Mozambique. To the north, Manica borders Tete province, along the Luenha and Zambezi rivers; to the South, Gaza and Inhambane provinces along the Save River; to the east Sofala province, while to the west it borders the Republic of Zimbabwe. Because of its location, Manica province occupies a prominent position in the economic context, because of the ease of contact with the rest of Mozambique and with other countries of SADC<sup>56</sup>.

The Province is crossed by the roads and railways that link the Port of Beira to Zimbabwe, which constitute the Beira Corridor, and by the pipeline which carries fuel to Zimbabwe. It has road links with Tete, Zambézia, Sofala and Inhambane province, connecting the central, northern and southern zones of the country<sup>57</sup>.

The population of Manica province is part of the Shona ethno-linguistic group, a people of Bantu origin. The combination of historic and geographical factors creates a linguistic mixture, consisting of Chindau (26.9%), Chitewe (22.6%), Chisena (13.3%), Chimanika (11.8%) and Chibárue (9.1%). Despite these variants, in general all the ethno-linguistic groups have similar uses and customs, and an identical socio-political organisation, based on a patrilinear regime, where marriage is preceded by a matrimonial compensation<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> INE. *Statistics of Angónia District*. Maputo, 2010.

<sup>56</sup> Government of Manica (2011), *Manica Province Strategic Development Plan, 2011-2015*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*

In terms of economic activities, the following stand out: agricultural production and marketing, livestock (cattle, goats, poultry and pigs), forestry operations (native and exotic species), mining, general trade, tourism and communications (mobile and fixed phones and Internet), banking, insurance, fuel supplies, supply of building materials, computer science, energy supply<sup>59</sup>. The Province has 10 Districts, namely: Tambara, Guro, Macossa, Bárue, Manica, Gondola, Sussundenga, Machaze, Mossurize and Chimoio City, and 34 Administrative Posts, subdivided into 100 localities<sup>60</sup>.

### **Tambara District**

Tambara district is 375 Km from the provincial capital Chimoio. It borders to the north with the Zambezi River which separates it from Tete province; to the east with Sofala province; to the south with Macossa district and to the west with Guro district<sup>61</sup>.

It covers an area of 4,299 Km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 50,000 inhabitants<sup>62</sup> in 2012. Women account for 53.0% of the total population in the district, and men for 46.9%. The population of Tambara is mainly young. 54.8% are aged between 0 and 14 years, 42.7% between 15 and 65 years, and only 2.4% are aged 65 years and above.<sup>63</sup>

In terms of the **education** network, Tambara district has 32 schools. Of these, 35 are primary schools (21 EP1, and 14 EP2). The remaining 4 schools teach the first cycle of general secondary education (8th, 9th and 10th grades). There are 9,688 primary school pupils (EP1 and EP2) and the gross enrolment rate in First Level Primary Education is 114%, which shows a high level of school coverage at this level. Since the ideal age for attending EP1 is from 6 to 10 years (for concluding this level without failing any year), this figure of over 100% reflects late entry into school, failures, and school dropouts, so that there are a high number of EP1 pupils who are over 10 years old<sup>64</sup>.

According to the source cited above, the **health network** consists of 6 Health Centres (1 Type 1 and 5 Type II), and 16 first aid posts, supported by 47 staff (1 doctor, 8 mid-level technicians, 23 basic technicians and 15 support staff). Despite evolving at a good pace, the number is insufficient, and gives the following levels of coverage: (a) One health unit for each 8,282 people; (b) One doctor for 50,000 people; and (c) One health professional for each 1,562 inhabitants of the district<sup>65</sup>.

The people of Tambara derive from the fusion of several ethnic groups, namely Sena, Nhúngue, Tonga and Bárue. As for religion, there are several creeds in the district, and representatives of their hierarchies, in coordination with the district authorities, have been involved in various social activities. The dominant religion is the Sião/Zione religion, practised by the majority of the population of the district<sup>66</sup>.

The mobile phone network works in the district, with a coverage of 30km. It is estimated that 2,000 people have access to the network from Nhacolo. There are projects to install new mobile phone services in Nhacolo and Nhacafula, which could increase the number of beneficiaries.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> INE, 2015,

<sup>61</sup> INE, 2015

<sup>62</sup> Ministry of State Administration and Public Service, (2014) Profile of Tambara district, Manica province

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> Ibid

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

<sup>66</sup> Ibid

## **Gondola District**

Gondola district is 26 Km from Chimoio city. To the east, it borders with Nhamatanda district (Sofala province), to the west with the Vanduzi administrative post (Manica district) along the Buemalanga river, to the north with Macossa, Barué and Gorongosa districts, along the Pungué river, and to the south with Sussundenga district, along the Revué river<sup>67</sup>.

Gondola district covers an area of 5,766 Km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 310,429, equivalent to 17.9% of the population of Manica province. Women account for 50.4 % of the total population of the district and men for 49.6%. The population of Gondola is mostly young, with 18.2% between 0 and 4 years old, 30% between 5 and 14 years, 46.2% between 15 and 64 years and only 2.5% aged 65 years and above<sup>68</sup>.

Gondola district has 227 **schools**. Of these, 208 are primary schools (136 EP1 and 72 EP2). The remaining 19 schools teach the first cycle of general secondary education (8th, 9th and 10th grades). There are 79,877 primary school pupils (EP1 and EP2) of whom 48% are girls, while there are 10,841 secondary school pupils, of whom 37.8% are girls.<sup>69</sup>

Gondola district has 13 **health** centres and 1 district hospital, with a total of 99 general beds and 30 maternity beds. This is a ratio of 0.3 beds per 1000 inhabitants. The coverage rate of ante-natal consultations is 105.45%, of institutional births it is 64.7%, and the coverage rate of post-natal consultations is 78.6%<sup>70</sup>.

Administratively Gondola is divided into 6 Administrative Posts (Inchope, Amatongas, Cafumpe, Macate, Zembe and Matsinho) and 17 localities. The population of Gondola derives from three main ethnic groups, namely Chiuté, Ndau and Sena. Most of the population follows the Sião or Zione religion with 38.7% followed by the Evangelical churches with 24.2%. It is important to mention that 23.4% of the population does not profess any religion<sup>71</sup>.

## **Nampula province**

Nampula province is located in north-eastern Mozambique. It covers an area of 81,606 km<sup>2</sup> which is about 10% of the national territory (799,380 km<sup>2</sup>). Nampula is bounded to the east by the Indian Ocean, to the south by Zambézia province, to the north by Cabo Delgado province and to the west by Niassa province.<sup>72</sup> It consists of 23 districts and 7 municipalities. Four of these are cities (Nampula, Nacala, Ilha de Moçambique and Angoche) and 3 are towns (Monapo, Ribáuè and Malema)<sup>73</sup>. This province does not border on any other country. As for the distribution of the population, women are in the majority accounting for about 51%. The province has an area of 79,010 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 3,985,613 inhabitants, according to the 2007 census. It is the most populous province in the country<sup>74</sup>. Nampula province is characterised by massive entry of people emigrating from their own countries, mainly from the

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<sup>67</sup> MAE, (2005), Profile of Gondola district, Manica province

<sup>68</sup> INE, (2013) Statistics of Gondola district

<sup>69</sup> Ibid

<sup>70</sup> Ibid

<sup>71</sup> Ibid

<sup>72</sup> (Government of Nampula province, 2010)

<sup>73</sup> (Annual Report of Nampula province, 2016)

<sup>74</sup> Data located in: <http://www.portaldogoverno.gov.mz/por/Mocambique/Geografia-de-Mocambique/Provincias-e-Distritos>

Great Lakes region, in central Africa. Most of them come as refugees, and end up settling in the province. There is also mining in the province, which has recently grown in importance in the country.

In socio-linguistic terms, the population of the province speaks the official language, Portuguese, and Macua with a variation in the coastal area, specifically in Angoche district, where a mixture with Arabic has led to *koti*. As for religion, the majority of the population is catholic (39%), followed by Moslems (37%), and others (including Zione/Siã, Evangelical/Pentecostal, Anglican, atheists, animists, etc.)<sup>75</sup>

Agriculture and formal and informal trade are the main economic activities of the population of Nampula province. The current socio-economic stage drives some people to extract mineral resources, above all in Moma district.

In the **health** area Nampula province, with over 4 million inhabitants faces serious problems related to medical care, due to its weak structure and health network. As for education, the illiteracy rate was estimated at 46.5% for men and 77.4% for women according to the 2007 Census.

### Angoche district

Angoche district is in the south-east of Nampula province. Its territory covers both parts of the mainland and islands, with a total area of 3,535 Km<sup>2</sup>. It has the following boundaries: North: Liupo district; South: Larde district; West: Mogovolas district; while to the East it is bathed by the Indian Ocean.<sup>76</sup>

It has 4 Administrative Posts, namely: Angoche-sede, Boila/Nametória, Namaponda and Aúbe. The district also consists of 10 Localities (Parta, Sangage, Napruma, Mepapata, Mutucute, Gelo, Naiculo, Muliquiua and Siretene, all on the mainland, and Catamoio which consists of 21 Islands). The population of the district is estimated at 332,197 inhabitants according to the INE projections for 2016.

There are 19 health units in the district, classified in the following manner: 1 Rural Hospital, 11 Type II health centres, 1 Type I health centre and 6 health posts.

From the socio-cultural and religious viewpoint, in Angoche district, like the rest of Nampula province, the largest ethno-linguistic group is the *Amakhua*, who in general occupy the mainland part of the district.

However, in the Angoche islands and part of the district capital, the *Akoti* predominate. They are a sub-group which, in cultural terms, results from contacts in the remote past with the Arab and Swahili world, leaving strong influences today in uses and customs. In general in the district, traditional law within families, including the lineage system, is predominantly matrilinear, but men are dominant in decision taking within the families and in traditional society.

As for religion, Islam and Catholicism are dominant. The former, however, has a larger number of believers in the Angoche islands and coast. Other religions are the Assembly of God and the African International Assembly, and animists, all co-existing in peace and harmony.

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<sup>75</sup> (INE, 2007)

<sup>76</sup> Data provided by the Angoche district government.



## **Rapale district**

Rapale district is located in the centre of Nampula province, west of Nampula city. It is bordered to the north by Muecate and Mecuburi districts, to the south by Mogovolas district, to the east by Meconta district, and to the west by Murrupula district.

It is a district with rural characteristics, with an area of 3,675 km<sup>2</sup> and a total population of 301,125 inhabitants (148,863 men and 152,262 women). 57,888 people in Rapale are between 15 and 24 years old. 29,013 of these are boys and 28,875 are girls<sup>77</sup>.

There has been increased investment in education and health allowing expansion of the school and health networks. In education, the district has a network of 82 EP1 schools, 34 EPC, 3 ESG1 and 1 ESG2, giving a total of 120 schools. There are more boys than girls at school. Despite this increase and significant evolution of the sector, the number of schools is insufficient. This is worsened by low pass rates and high drop-out rates in some localities, because of many child marriages and emigration of young people.<sup>78</sup> According to SDEJT 2016, the number of girl pupils becoming pregnant increased from 8 in 2015 to 15 in 2016. In 2016, of the 15 pregnant pupils, three were at secondary school and 12 were in primary education.

As for health, the health network in the district consists of 15 health units (1 Type I health centre, 5 Type II health centres and 9 health posts). Although it is evolving at a good pace, it is insufficient as shown by the following coverage figures: one health unit for each 16,866 people; and one bed per 1,421 inhabitants.<sup>79</sup>

There are several primary health care programmes at various levels, namely: environmental health, which is being undertaken in all the health units, as well as in mobile brigades and in places of public interest; occupational health which consists of working visits to companies to vaccinate the workers, as well as all others who handle foodstuffs; reproductive health, child health care, nutrition, school health; vitamin A supplementation; expanded vaccination programme and mental health. The epidemiological picture of the district is dominated by malaria, diarrhoea, and STDs and AIDS which, taken together, account for almost all cases of illness notified in the district<sup>80</sup>.

## **Zambézia Province**

Zambézia province is located in the centre-north region of the country, bordering to the north with Nampula and Niassa provinces, to the south with Sofala, to the West with Malawi and Tete province and to the East with the Indian Ocean.

The province covers an area of 103,478 Km<sup>2</sup>, with a population of 3,890,453 inhabitants and a population density of 37.2 inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup>. It has a diverse socio-linguistic and cultural mosaic, in which the main groups are the Chuabos, Lomwés, Maganjas and Senas.

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<sup>77</sup> (INE, 2007)

<sup>78</sup> (MAE, 2012)

<sup>79</sup> (MAE, 2012)

<sup>80</sup> (*Ibid*)

Agriculture, fishing, mining and tourism are the main economic activities of the province, which also counts on a major contribution from the informal sector as the main survival strategy for much of the population.

### **Maganja da Costa district**

Maganja da Costa district is in the south of Zambézia province. It borders to the north with Ile district, to the West with Mocuba and Namacurra districts, to the South with the Indian Ocean, and to the East with Pebane district. Maganja da Costa covers an area of 7,674 Km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 276,000 inhabitants living in 72,971 households, with a population density of 36.08 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>. Women account for 53.2 % of the total population of the district and men for 46.8%. The population of Maganja da Costa is mostly young, with 50% aged between 0 and 14 years, 47.8% between 15 and 65 years and only 2.2% aged 65 and above<sup>81</sup>.

Maganja da Costa district has 1 district Hospital, 8 Type II health centres and 9 health posts. 10 of these health units have functioning maternity facilities. It is important to note that there is one health unit per 16,777 people, one doctor for each 100,000 residents and 1 bed per 6,500 inhabitants<sup>82</sup>.

The coverage of ante-natal consultations is 74.4% and of institutional births 33%. There were 621 births assisted in the community. The coverage rate of post-natal consultations in the district is 47.1%<sup>83</sup>.

Maganja da Costa district has 173 schools. Of these, 170 are primary schools (148 EP1 and 22 EP2). 2 of the remaining schools teach the first cycle of general secondary education (8th, 9th and 10th grades), and one teaches the second cycle. There are 68,513 pupils in primary education (EP1 and EP2), of whom 39.2% are girls, while the secondary schools have around 3,490 pupils of whom 23.8% are girls. The pupil/teacher ratio is 88.5 for primary education and 41.5% for secondary education<sup>84</sup>.

The number of children of school age outside of school, aged between 6 and 13 years, in the district is 30,125 and the illiteracy rate among the population aged 15 years and above is 64.5%<sup>85</sup>.

The population of Maganja da Costa district is predominantly from the Lomwe ethnic group with 37.4% and the Chuabo with 31.4%. There is also a Sena minority of around 0.1% and other unspecified ethnic groups with 27.3%<sup>86</sup>.

As in most of the societies north of the Zambezi River, the matrilinear system predominates, although the men have the greater decision making power at all levels of society. Polygamy is not foreign to the societies of the province, but its predominance is tending to decline.

Most of the population follows Islam, although there is also a strong presence of Christianity and other religions.

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<sup>81</sup> INE. *Statistics of Maganja da Costa district 2008*. Maputo, 2010.

<sup>82</sup> Ministry of State Administration. *Profile of Maganja da Costa district – Zambézia Province*. Maputo, 2012.

<sup>83</sup> INE. *Statistics of Maganja da Costa district 2008*. Maputo, 2010.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> INE. *Statistics of Maganja da Costa district 2008*. Maputo, 2010.

<sup>86</sup> Ministry of State Administration. *Profile of Maganja da Costa district – Zambézia Province*. Maputo, 2012.

The coverage of the mass media is not yet satisfactory. The radio, which is normally the medium with the largest coverage, only reaches 33% of the households. Television covers 0.6% and telephones only 0.1% of households.

## **Milange district**

Milange district is located in the northwest of the province. It borders to the north with Mecanhelas district in Niassa province and Gurué in Zambézia, to the south with Morrumbala district, to the southeast with Mocuba district, to the east with Namarrói and Lugela districts and to the West with Malawi.

The district covers an area of 9,858 Km<sup>2</sup> with an estimated population, as of 1 July 2012, of 588,840 inhabitants, with a population density of 59.8 inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup>. There are 303,598 women, which is 51.6% of the total population, and 285,241 men, or 48.4%. The age pyramid indicates a young population, with 20.8% aged between 0 and 4 years, 27% between 5 and 14 years, 49% between 15 and 64 while only 3.2% of the population is aged 65 and above<sup>87</sup>.

Milange district has 1 rural hospital and 1 district hospital in the district capital, 11 health centres and 4 health posts. The health units have 91 general beds and 40 maternity beds, which is a ratio of 0.2 beds per 1000 inhabitants. The coverage rate of ante-natal consultations is 83.8%, of institutional births 25.9% and post-natal consultations 75.1%. There were 3,520 births assisted in the community<sup>88</sup>.

Milange district has 398 schools. Of these, 394 are primary schools (322 EP1 and 72 EP2). There are 6 general secondary education schools, 4 teaching the first cycle and 2 the second cycle.

There are 186,010 pupils in primary education, of whom 46.1% are girls. Secondary education has 6,952 pupils of whom 38.9% are girls. The pupil/teacher ratio is about 86 in primary education and 44.9 in secondary education. The number of children of school age outside of school, aged between 6 and 13 years, is 58,009 and the illiteracy rate in the district is 78.5%<sup>89</sup>.

The population of Milange district is mostly from the Chuabo (27%), Lomwé (25%), and Sena (0.4%) ethnic group. Other, unspecified groups account for 43%. Portuguese is one of the least spoken languages, spoken by only 3.1%.

The Zione church is the majority religion, followed by 26.4% of the population. But other religions are also well represented in Milange: Catholic Church 21.8%; Evangelical Church 14.8%; Anglican Church 3.8%; Islam 1%. There are also people of no religion (6%) and other religions (25.2%)<sup>90</sup>.

Coverage of the mass media is still incipient. By way of example, radio reaches only 50% of households in the district, television only 1%, telephones 0.1% and computers 0.0%. Electricity reaches only 2% of households<sup>91</sup>.

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<sup>87</sup> INE. Statistics of Milange District. Maputo, 2102.

<sup>88</sup> INE. Statistics of Milange District 2008. Maputo, 2008; and INE. Statistics of Milange District. Maputo, 2012.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> INE. Statistics of Milange District. Maputo, 2012.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

