MOZAMBIQUE CASE STUDY

Review of Technology-Based Interventions to Address Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation

UNFPA
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DATA-POP ALLIANCE

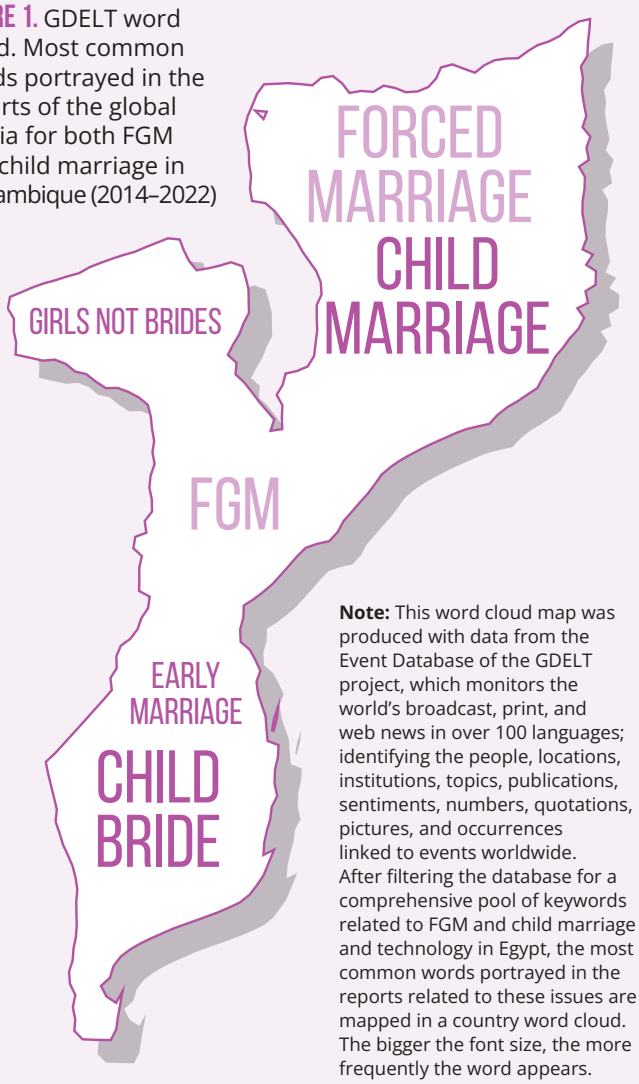
MOZAMBIQUE

MOZAMBIQUE OVERVIEW

Child marriage prevalence[1] (girls married before the age of 18 years, as a proportion of all girls)	53%
FGM prevalence[2]	–
Internet users[3] (proportions of the adult male and female populations)	30% of men 19% of women
Mobile phone ownership[4] (proportions of the adult male and female populations)	37% of men 26% of women
Level of government support for digital literacy[5] (scale 0–3)[6]	High: 3

NEWS ABOUT HARMFUL PRACTICES: WORD CLOUD MAPS AND NUMBERS OF REPORTS

FIGURE 1. GDELT word cloud. Most common words portrayed in the reports of the global media for both FGM and child marriage in Mozambique (2014–2022)



Note: This word cloud map was produced with data from the Event Database of the GDELT project, which monitors the world's broadcast, print, and web news in over 100 languages; identifying the people, locations, institutions, topics, publications, sentiments, numbers, quotations, pictures, and occurrences linked to events worldwide. After filtering the database for a comprehensive pool of keywords related to FGM and child marriage and technology in Egypt, the most common words portrayed in the reports related to these issues are mapped in a country word cloud. The bigger the font size, the more frequently the word appears.

FIGURE 2. Number of reports covering the topic of child marriage in Mozambique, compared with other countries (2014–2022)

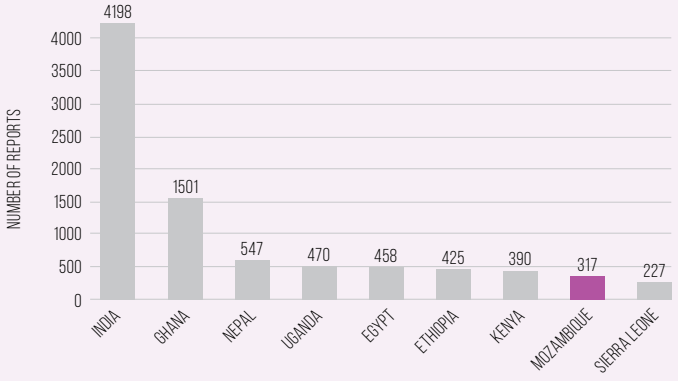
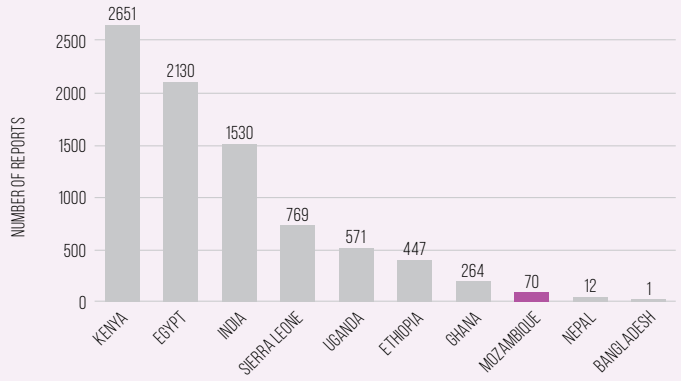


FIGURE 3. Number of reports covering the topic of FGM in Mozambique, compared with other countries (2014–2022)



Note: After filtering the GDELT project database for the actors, actions, and associated reports pertaining to child marriage and/or FGM in Egypt, it can be observed that there are a total of 458 reports corresponding to child marriage and 2,130 reports corresponding to FGM in the country.

THE CONTEXT OF CHILD MARRIAGE AND FGM IN THE COUNTRY

Mozambique has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world, and the second highest rate in the Eastern and Southern African subregion, affecting one in two young women. In 2020, the country was home to 4.4 million child brides. Of these, 1.6 million were married before reaching the age of 15. Child marriage prevalence has not significantly changed in recent decades. On the contrary, the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 who were married before age 18 increased from 51 per cent in 1991 to 53 per cent in 2015.7 In 2019, this practice was criminalized in Mozambique,8 but necessary progress to stop child marriage is far from being achieved.

In contrast to urban regions, where 36 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 had married before the age of 18, child marriage is more common in rural areas, where 56 per cent of women have been affected. Other drivers of child marriage in Mozambique, as found in other countries around the globe, include extreme poverty, gender inequality, insufficient access to quality education, cultural norms, particularly those pertaining to initiation ceremonies, and a high rate of teenage pregnancy.[9]

FGM, on the other hand, is a much less prevalent issue in Mozambique. There is no national data on FGM prevalence and it is reportedly not widely practised in the country. The exception is elongation of the labia minora in central Mozambique, which is usually not counted as FGM.[10]

THE TECHNOLOGY ENVIRONMENT IN MOZAMBIQUE

Despite ongoing technology advancements that have seen an increasing number of people incorporate electronic devices in their lives, there are still significant access inequities between the Global North and Global South, as well as gender gaps, which cannot be ignored. This is also the case in Mozambique, where access to electricity is low, with only 30.6 per cent of the population having access as of 2020.[11] Still, some progress has been made since 2010, when the proportion was estimated at 18.8 per cent. Regarding internet use, the quality and breadth of available infrastructure is scarce. The percentage of internet users in the country (measured by the proportion of households that have access and that have used the internet in the past 12 months) is only 9 per cent, which represents a very low level of penetration. Moreover, there is a considerable gap between male and female access of 36.7 per cent.[12]

In comparison, mobile technology has a bigger presence. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 49 out of every 100 inhabitants have a mobile cellular telephone subscription to a post-paid or prepaid service.[13] In this same year, 85 per cent of the population had access to 3G network coverage and 50 per cent to 4G coverage.[14] Mobile ownership presents a gender gap once again. According to the National Institute of Statistics, in 2017, 31 per cent of the population owned a mobile phone; broken down by sex, only 26 per cent of women were cell phone owners, whereas 37 per cent of men owned one.[15] In 2020, the mobile gender gap registered was 18.3 per cent in the country.[16] Furthermore, Mozambique saw modest technological improvements in the past years and internet affordability has declined, due to an increase

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in mobile phone post-paid tariffs along with a deterioration in the competitive environment, among other factors.[17]

An overview of the technological environment must not only consider statistics relevant to its access, but also to digital literacy. For the time-period 2017 to 2019, Mozambique experienced a year-on-year average growth rate of –3.58 per cent in the digital skills among its population, reaching a rate of 2.74 in a scale of 1 to 7.[18] Nonetheless, numbers of 2022 show that the literate population over 15 is around 60 per cent. In Mozambique, government support for digital literacy, measured in terms of number and quality of strategies aimed at enhancing this indicator, got a score of 3 in a scale of 0 to 3 based on research conducted by the Economist Impact.[19] This means that the government's strategy currently addresses digital literacy for students and teachers from the primary school level. Despite these efforts, the national female e-inclusion policies were rated 0 on a scale from 0 to 2. According to the criteria of Economist Impact, this indicates that the government does not have an active plan or strategy to promote internet access and e-inclusion for women, and that the gender gap in internet access is greater than 10 per cent. Women are excluded from the advantages of ICT to improve their well-being, as they are disproportionately impoverished and undereducated, and thus unable to find employment.[20]

MAPPING OF TECH INTERVENTIONS

The interventions mapped in this section stem from an initial landscape exercise conducted jointly by UNFPA and UNICEF, followed by a systematic review of publicly available data and information on technology-driven and technology-enabled interventions addressing child marriage and/or FGM in Mozambique. The compiled information was curated and complemented with insights emerging from key informant interviews conducted with local stakeholders.

CODING TYPE OF INTERVENTION

[◉] Technology-driven intervention/solution (tech is a core element)

[◐] Technology-enabled intervention/solution (tech is secondary to the intervention, there are other non-tech components)

♀ FEMINIST LENSES

The seventh column of the interventions table below identifies how organizations have included feminist lenses into the design and implementation of the interventions by highlighting four key aspects:

1 Consultation with experts and/or community leaders	Consultations with gender or thematic experts and/or local leaders were conducted during the development, implementation, and/or monitoring and evaluation of the interventions.
2 Consultations with target group(s)	The interventions incorporated, at any stage, consultations with the populations targeted, especially girls and women of different ethnicities, ages, sexual orientations, classes, and other social markers.
3 Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) instruments	Monitoring and evaluation activities were carried out to measure the intervention's progress and sustainability, and/or to generate disaggregated information, gender-sensitive/responsive indicators, and/or gender analysis frameworks.
4 Women- and/or girl-led organization(s)	The intervention was designed and/or implemented, partly or completely, by a women- and/or girl-led organization(s).

Additional descriptive information about the feminist lenses and potential intersectional approach (i.e., addressing ethnicity, language, class or other aspects of the target group's identity) is provided within the table, following the general description of each intervention, which can be identified by the use of this symbol [♀]. This analysis is based on information collected during semi-structured interviews with local stakeholders and/or publicly available information.

LINHA FALA CRIANÇA / 2009 – ONGOING / ⊙

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION(S)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL PRACTICE(S)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECHNOLOGIES USED	FEMINIST LENSES
• UNICEF • UNFPA • Plan International • Save the Children • World Vision • Girls Not Brides • Telecommunication companies (Tmcel, Movitel, Vodacom) • Ministry of Health • Ministry of Education and Human Development • Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Action	Linha Fala Criança	Child marriage	Nationwide	1. Service development and strengthening 2. Individual level empowerment 3. Family and community engagement 4. Economic empowerment	• Helpline • SMS messaging • WhatsApp • Traditional media (TV, radio)	1. Consultations with experts and/or community leaders 2. Consultations with target group(s) 3. M&E instruments

Linha Fala Criança (LFC) is a non-profit organization. Its mission is to respond to children in need of protection and to provide support to cases of VAC, including abuse, negligence, exploitation and traffic of minors, and child marriage.[21] The helpline was launched in 2009; since then, anyone can confidently call the toll-free number (116), or access this service via SMS messaging or WhatsApp. The call attendants are adequately trained to deal with different incoming cases. LFC receives an average of 14,000 calls a year; however, in 2020, they received over 200,000 calls. In fact, UNICEF provided resources to scale up the capacity of this service given increasing demand during the COVID-19 pandemic.[22] Users seeking information on SRH are channelled to SMS BIZ, and only about 350 calls a month are reports of VAC.[23] The data on VAC is computed into a database and disaggregated by province.[24] Such cases are referred to corresponding service providers in the areas of health, justice and social action.[25] The information gathered through this helpline is also shared with policy- and decision-makers to inform action plans around issues that impact children in the country. In addition, LFC conducts sensitizing workshops in schools as well as economic empowerment activities for youth, and collaborates with UNICEF and UNFPA in different capacity-building activities for mentors across the country, reaching almost 14,000 girls across various districts.[26]

♀ This intervention integrates an intersectional feminist approach by leveraging information collected through calls from users to inform decision- and policymaking. Moreover, the helpline provides attention in local languages, and dissemination campaigns in radio focused on VAC and COVID-19 prevention are also conducted in local languages.[27] As noted above, monitoring activities are also carried out regularly.

SMS BIZ / 2015 – ONGOING / ⊙

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION(S)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL PRACTICE(S)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECHNOLOGIES USED	FEMINIST LENSES
• UNICEF • UNFPA • Rapariga Biz • Telecom-munication companies • Spotlight Initiative • Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Action	UNICEF	Child marriage	Nationwide	1. Individual level empowerment 2. Family and community engagement	• Digital platform • SMS messaging • Chatbots • Live chats • Social media	1. Consultations with target group(s) 2. Women-led organization 3. M&E instruments

SMS BIZ, known as U-Report in other countries where the same platform is available, was launched as a pilot in 2015, as part of Geração Biz[28] – a multisectoral programme promoting SRH among the youth since 1999.[29] In a context in which speaking about SRH topics is taboo, SMS BIZ allows young people to voice their concerns while maintaining confidentiality and strengthening their human rights. Today, over 400,000 U-Reporters have subscribed to the platform, of which 41 per cent are girls.[30] Given its success, the initiative was scaled up to the national level in 2017, after reaching more than 50,000 users in the previous year. During the pilot stage, a partnership was established with Rapariga Biz (community dialogue groups) to implement a mentorship programme. This resulted in more than 3,000 Rapariga Biz mentors (i.e., young girls) being equipped with mobile access to an SMS-based peer counsel service to train them and address their questions and concerns regarding sensitive topics.[31] SMS BIZ also tested the girls' knowledge through polls, which helped to reinforce learning and identify knowledge gaps. Three innovative technologies are embedded in the SMS BIZ platform: (1) RapidPro (open software supported by UNICEF), on which the back-end functionality is built; (2) CasePro, which provides the interactive interface and dashboards; and (3) SMS messaging. To increase its reach, the service is also available via social media and WhatsApp, where young people can communicate more freely.

♀ This intervention integrates an intersectional feminist approach by regularly using polling and surveys to hear from young people directly about issues that matter to them. The feedback helps to craft new messages, and to improve the service in general. With the same purpose, all activity data are continuously monitored in the platform. SMS BIZ is available in four main local languages in addition to Portuguese and is easily available even in rural areas. The core collaboration with a women-led organization such as Rapariga Biz also enhances the feminist approach.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND MASS MEDIA CAMPAIGNS DURING COVID-19 / 2020 – 2021 / ◐

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION(S)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL PRACTICE(S)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECHNOLOGIES USED	FEMINIST LENSES
• UNICEF • UNFPA • Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Action • Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative	• UNICEF • UNFPA	Child marriage	Nationwide	1. Individual level empowerment 2. Family and community engagement 3. Service development and strengthening	• Mobile telephones • SMS messaging • Child helplines	1. Consultations with experts and/or community leaders 2. M&E instruments

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Global Programme incorporated the use of digital technologies across several of its activities in Mozambique to bridge the gap brought about by mobility restrictions. For example, following the suspension of mentorship sessions in safe spaces, the Global Programme provided psychological support and coping strategies via phone to both mentors and mentees across the country.[32] Unfortunately, not all the 4,800 mentors have access to mobile phones, and sessions were sporadic rather than following the regular programme cycles. Additionally, laptops and modems were procured to maintain communication with and continue capacity-building of government officials and key partners. Furthermore, UNICEF and the Government of Mozambique, with support from the Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative, created a training package on case management services and psychosocial support for families and children that was delivered in face-to-face sessions or remotely.[33] Virtual meetings were also hosted to ensure that cross-sectoral child protection/case management committees continued to meet, which enhanced the participation from subnational and national partners.[34] UNFPA organized technical webinars on child marriage to share information and advocate for gender equity.[35] In terms of communication and visibility, mini radio drama series and radio spots were broadcast on local radio in Portuguese and local languages.[36] Mass media (traditional and social media) campaigns that included child marriage and COVID-19 messages reached over 1 million individuals.[37]

♀ This intervention integrated an intersectional feminist approach by ensuring that both girls and boys (target groups) continued to have access to mentorship opportunities during the pandemic, and by ensuring that mass media messages were shared in local languages. The reach of these campaigns was also measured.

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ENDNOTES

1 AIDS indicator Survey, as cited in UNICEF (2021e)

2 Statistical data not available

3 Gallup (2019), as cited in Economist Impact (2022)

4 INE (2017), as cited in ITU (2022)

5 Economist Impact (2022)

6 The score on government support for digital literacy, on a scale from 0–3 (low to high), reflects a government plan or strategy to address digital literacy for students and/or teachers – through the design and development of courses in ICT skills, computer science, programming or other classes for students; and through ICT capacity-building courses for teachers. A zero score indicates that the government does not have such a plan/strategy, neither for students and nor for teachers; a score of 1 reflects a plan for student digital literacy but without including teacher capacity-building; a medium score of 2 indicates a current plan for both; and the highest score of 3 reflects a plan addressing both students and teachers, and with the courses and capacity-building starting at the primary school level.

7 UNICEF (2022a)

8 USAID (2020)

9 UNICEF (2021g)

10 FEMNET (2022)

11 World Bank Data (2020j)

12 ITU as cited in Economist Impact (2022)

13 ITU, as cited in World Bank Data (2020k)

14 ITU as cited in Economist Impact (2022)

15 INE (2017), as cited in ITU (2022)

16 ITU as cited in Economist Impact (2022)

17 Economist Impact (2022)

18 World Economic Forum (2019)

19 Economist Impact (2022)

20 Gillwald et al. (2019)

21 Linha Fala Criança (2022)

22 UNICEF and UNFPA (2021d)

23 Linha Fala Criança (2022)

24 Information obtained from an interview with representatives from Linha Fala Criança

25 Child Helpline International (n.d.)

26 Information obtained from an interview with representatives from Linha Fala Criança

27 Ibid.

28 Interview with UNICEF Mozambique representative

29 UNFPA (2008)

30 Interview with UNICEF Mozambique representative

31 Billow and Chang (2017)

32 UNICEF and UNFPA (2021d)

33 UNICEF and UNFPA (2021e)

34 UNICEF and UNFPA (2021d)

35 UNICEF and UNFPA (2021e)

36 UNICEF and UNFPA (2021d)

37 UNICEF and UNFPA (2021e)

REVIEW OF

TECHNOLOGY-BASED INTERVENTIONS

TO ADDRESS CHILD MARRIAGE AND FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

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