

## **Practicing the Methodology for the Empowerment of Girls in water issues in the province of Nampula – Mozambique**

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### **Summary**

In Africa, particularly in Mozambique, women and girls are given the responsibility for providing water for their families. With the acute water crises that the country has been experiencing in recent years (long periods of drought), this group is increasingly vulnerable, thus hindering their development (professional, academic, social and physical, etc.) due to the scarcity of water and, or the distances traveled to access this liquid. Since independence, several projects have worked to ensure that communities have at least the right to drinking water. Most of these projects have worked directly with this group as a way of being included in decision-making spaces on the water issue, since they are the most affected. When we look at girls, the situation tends to get worse, especially at school, due to female health/hygiene care that has been compromised due to lack of water in these schools, as many of these girls drop out of school. The article in question analyzes the practices developed in a pilot project “ Empowerment of adolescent girls through training and innovation in water in northern Mozambique (Nampula) in 2021”. This is methodologically based on the sociocratic paradigm. The results indicate that these practices must be worked on and replicated in other similar realities as a method for empowering girls not only in the water field, but also in other fields.

## 1. Introduction

Water is a substantial and essential element for human life, which makes it necessary for it to be freely accessible to any individual, in a context in which only 2.7% corresponds to fresh water that can be used for consumption. Nowadays, the world lives in a scenario regarding the disposal of water reserves due to deficient sustainable development in the environmental component as a result of various climate changes.

Climate change is an important aspect when we talk about water resource management, as it affects the availability and quality of water, leaving women vulnerable to its impacts.

The time spent collecting water prevents girls from prioritizing education to improve skills that will be useful for their economic, social, and personal development, which has contributed to the failure of gender policy.

Mozambican gender policy foresees that women be allocated to leadership areas to reduce the asymmetries they face, but there is a desynchronization in the materialization of public policies.

Water management committees were designed in Mozambique so that populations actively participated in the process of managing water resources, an extremely positive initiative considering that they are the ones who benefit from water consumption.

This fact constitutes a disadvantage for women, as they are the most sacrificed in the water collection process, which compromises the achievement of objective 6 of sustainable development, which talks about gender equality, especially with regard to full and effective participation. Women and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in economic, political and public life.

If we look at the area of health and sanitation, we will also observe that women, who are mostly responsible for cleaning and sanitizing the family space, represent, according to Fernandes (2018), 60% of the workforce in the service sector, which makes their involvement in water management and improving basic sanitation important, in addition, women often have little knowledge about rationalizing the use of water resources. Involving them means giving them the opportunity to obtain knowledge about rationalizing water resources.

The article is based on a qualitative methodological approach. In which he describes an experience lived in Mozambique in the city of Nampula. The discretion is about reporting the intervention methodology on the Mwarusis ( adolescent girls ) who were part of the project .

## 2. Mini Theoretical Framework

The Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique - CRM (in 2004) <sup>1</sup>enshrines, in its TITLE XIV, the existence of “Local Power”. According to Article 271 of the Fundamental Law:

*“ 1. The objectives of Local Government are to organize the participation of citizens in solving their community's problems and to promote local development, the deepening and consolidation of democracy, within the framework of the unity of the Mozambican State.*

Local government aims to create structures and mechanisms that allow citizens to actively participate in solving problems that affect their communities. This suggests a participatory governance approach, where citizens' opinions and contributions are valued and integrated into political and administrative decisions.

It is also seen as a means of addressing and resolving the specific problems faced by local communities. This implies a decentralized approach to problem solving, recognizing that needs and challenges may vary from one region to another.

Therefore, what you can see is that it is a fundamental tool for promoting civic participation, solving local problems, boosting development and strengthening democracy, all within the context of national unity. In this logic, this power is extended to adolescent girls as an opportunity to understand their problems and then find solutions themselves. In this case, the issue of female hygiene and their concern with access to water and adequate sanitary facilities in their schools is an issue that girls themselves should discuss in times of the Covid19 pandemic.

This issue of giving the girl the opportunity to discuss her problems has been very minimal, as it is not believed that she has the capabilities to do so. But also for cultural reasons against the role of women in solving their problems. However, it is essential that she is trained to begin to see and understand her problems.

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<sup>1</sup>CRM, Article 271 of the Fundamental Law. 2004

The stages of problem solving are, according to Polya (2006)<sup>2</sup>, understanding the problem, highlighting information, collecting data, preparing a resolution plan, executing the plan, results and establishing a new strategy until reaching an acceptable solution.

Polya (2006) considers that problems accentuate the student's curiosity and allow them to develop their creativity, initiative, exploratory spirit and creation of strategies and procedures to solve problem situations. This process is as important as finding the correct answer.

Teaching based on problem solving “presupposes promoting in students the mastery of procedures, as well as the use of available knowledge, to respond to variable and different situations” (POZO; ECHEVERRÍA, 1998, p. 09)<sup>3</sup>.

The SDGs (17) comprise a commitment to address the challenges that girls and women face in their daily lives. Part of these challenges is access to quality healthcare, promoting the well-being of all people, at all ages (SDG3), and ensuring access to inclusive, quality and equitable education. Promote education for all (SDG 4), achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (SDG 5), ( UNRIC, 2016).<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, girl empowerment is an issue that is fundamental and established by various legal instruments, and which is considered essential for the girl's well-being. This is strongly recommended by the SDG agenda, which emphasizes that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) involves ensuring that all girls and women have the conditions to realize their potential and participate in equal opportunities in family and community life and in social organizations around them. national, regional and global scale.

Schools without toilets suitable for use represent the extreme of a situation that, even when less unhealthy, corrodes the future that education promises, especially for the menstruating population. But even in schools where there are bathrooms, the situation is far from ideal.

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<sup>2</sup>POLYA, George. The art of solving problems. Translated by Heitor Lisboa de Araújo. Rio de Janeiro: Interciência, 2006.

<sup>3</sup>POZO, JI; ECHEVERRÍA, MDPP Learning to solve problems and solving problems to learn. Porto Alegre: Artes Médicas, 1998.

<sup>4</sup>UNRIC – United Nations Regional Information Center for Western Europe. 2016. Guide on Sustainable Development. 17 Goals to transform our world. Lisbon: UNRIC

The issue of toilets is not simply conditions for the girl to take care of changing her sanitary pad. It is also a space for privacy, often necessary for a breather when menstruation is accompanied by pain and discomfort. When we look at the Mozambican reality, many schools lack bathrooms and if they exist, they are unable to function as bathrooms. Therefore, methodologies and spaces must be found so that girls can discuss their problems.

### **3. Intervention Methodologies**

The methodology implemented by Waterlution in Mozambique aimed to train local facilitators, carry out workshops adapted for the Mwarusis and promote a community celebration. Each step played a crucial role in developing and implementing innovative solutions, based on systems thinking and solution *design*, related to water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH) and permaculture, which worked towards empowering 5 Girl Movers (Young female graduates) and 100 girls aged 12-15, at Pedreira and Merrere Sede schools in Nampula, Mozambique, to increase their leadership and agency in decision-making about water in their community and in their schools (a critical community resource for WASH).

The methodology consists of 4 phases:

#### **3.1. Training Facilitators**

It constituted the first fundamental step in this process. The team of local facilitators was primarily made up of education and WASH consultants, where capacity building sessions and workshops on WASH, permaculture and gender equality were held for Girl Movers (young women who have recently finished university or finalists).

To the challenges faced in their communities, Girl Movers participated in seven training sessions adapted to the local context. Training facilitators was a crucial step in the process of implementing initiatives related to WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene). The main idea was for them to participate in conducting and leading activities, ensuring that interventions were culturally sensitive, adapted to local needs and effective in promoting positive changes in communities.

This team of local facilitators was primarily comprised of education and WASH consultants. These professionals were selected based on their prior experience in education, knowledge of the local

context and understanding of the specific challenges faced by communities in relation to access to safe water, adequate sanitation and hygiene practices.

The capacity building sections and workshops held were planned and structured to address different aspects of WASH, permaculture and gender equality. The Girl Movers received specific training to improve their facilitation, communication and problem-solving skills, enabling them to lead training sessions in an effective and engaging way. Furthermore, the Girl Movers were identified as one of the main beneficiary groups of this training process. These young women were selected based on their leadership potential, motivation and interest in promoting positive change in their communities.

During training, the Girl Movers were exposed to a variety of topics and skills, including innovation, systems thinking, solution design, WASH and permaculture. The objective of this training was to enable Girl Movers to effectively lead workshops and support Mwarusis (girls) in developing creative and sustainable solutions to challenges faced in their communities.

The training sessions were adapted to the local context, taking into account the cultural, social and economic realities of the communities involved. Throughout the training process, the Girl Movers were encouraged to develop practical skills such as group facilitation, effective communication, conflict resolution and teamwork. Furthermore, they were encouraged to apply the knowledge gained in their own communities, promoting awareness of WASH-related issues, encouraging the adoption of hygiene practices and facilitating the implementation of sustainable solutions.

### **3.2 . Knowledge transfers**

In turn, we moved on to other activities , where the Girl Movers , carried out 12 adapted *workshops* (6 by schools), which included the participation of the Mwarusis, another key group for this program, and community members. During the Mwarusis Workshops, the trained facilitators ( Girl Movers ), led workshops adapted especially for the girls participating in the program. These workshops were designed to be participatory, inclusive and culturally sensitive, taking into account the local context of the northern region of Mozambique. In the hygiene component, girls were taught how to take care of their menstrual hygiene, in order to avoid poor care and the appearance

of infections (personal hygiene) and domestic (waste management), community leadership, gender equality.

Meanwhile, each workshop addressed specific topics related to water, sanitation, hygiene and permaculture, using interactive methods and techniques to promote learning and active participation of the Mwarusis. The topics covered in the workshops also included issues such as access to drinking water, sustainable management of water resources, specifically how to conserve rivers and lakes in the community, permaculture techniques for sustainable agriculture, among others.

The facilitators also worked closely with the Mwarusis to explore these anticipated themes, encouraging the exchange of ideas, teamwork and creativity in the search for innovative solutions to local challenges in the WASH component. In addition to practical and educational activities, Mwarusis Workshops also provide a safe and supportive space for girls to express their concerns, share experiences and strengthen their personal and social skills. This aspect of the program was essential in promoting the confidence, self-esteem and empowerment of the Mwarusis, enabling them to become agents of change in their communities.

At this stage the mwarusis also received guidance on how to adapt the workshop materials to ensure they are culturally relevant and accessible. Mwarusis Workshops were created to be highly interactive and focused on the needs and experiences of the participating girls, using a variety of teaching methods such as group discussions, practical activities and reflection exercises. Facilitators work closely with the Mwarusis to explore these themes, encouraging active participation, the exchange of ideas and the development of practical solutions to challenges faced in their communities. The workshop environment was safe, inclusive and encouraging, allowing girls to freely express their opinions, share experiences and strengthen their personal and social skills.

In these workshops the Mwarusis learned to identify their problems and seek viable local solutions to the same problems. This was done by the girls, where they made visits to their neighborhoods to observe the phenomena. They then had time to produce their solutions through a prototype representation.

### **3.2.Presentation of local solutions**

This was the peak moment of the project 's intervention . At this stage, the Mwarusis presented their solutions for each problem identified during the workshops and visits to the communities. Here, the Mwarusis, when presenting their proposals, began by explaining the identified problem and solution and then explaining the sustainability of their project . This moment was designed to be a community celebration. These projects were presented to communities, parents and guardians of the Mwarusis, school directors , Directors and representatives of provincial government institutions and the city of Nampula, the media.

The Community Celebration marked the end of the program, this was a moment of celebration and recognition for all Mwarusis and community members involved, in a context in which the program had direct beneficiaries such as 100 Mwarusis and 5 Girl Movers , and the indirect ones that are members of the communities, relatives and relatives of the Mwarusis, local government (health, education, institutions that manage water) and male students.

This moment served as a space for dialogue between the main beneficiary groups and local communities, in order to reach as many people as possible, taking into account the restrictions that were in place at the time due to Covid 19.

The Community Celebration was a significant event that recognized and celebrated the achievements of the Mwarusis and the positive impact of the program on the community, where the girls had the opportunity to share their experiences, success stories and lessons learned with community members, local authorities and others partners involved in the project. The celebration included cultural presentations, inspiring speeches, project displays and interactive activities that highlighted the progress achieved and reinforced the ongoing commitment to sustainable development in Nampula.

In short, this celebration included activities such as the delivery of certificates of completion to the Mwarusis; sharing of test results and interactive dynamics to obtain feedback on the results.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1.Short-term results**



The results were obtained through a quick study of the Mwarusis and communities. Therefore, the first phase may be to present short-term results: "Girls acquire solid knowledge about WASH; innovation in WASH and Permaculture and community engagement skills" this indicates an approach that emphasizes girls' education in relation to WASH ( Water , Sanitation and Hygiene ), innovation in the field of WASH and Permaculture, and the development of community engagement skills. This result suggests a focus on empowering girls so that they can not only understand the basics of WASH, but also engage in innovative activities related to WASH and Permaculture, while being encouraged to play an active role in their communities.

#### **4.2.Long-term results**

These results will show that there has been a development in activities that contribute to increasing the girl's confidence. Which means they managed to have the potential to boost girls' confidence, suggesting that these activities were selected or designed with that specific goal in mind.

The Mwarusis acquired leadership skills. There is an appreciation for the level of competence achieved in relation to women's leadership. This may indicate a recognition of the value of female leadership and a celebration of the knowledge and skills acquired by Mwarusis in this field.

The important results for Mwarusis is the satisfaction of trust. The Mwarusis are happy with their confidence growing or strengthening. This can be interpreted as a sign of success or achievement for them, indicating that they have achieved an important goal related to their self-esteem and capabilities.

The other impressive result is due to the fact that there was more attendance at school among teenagers participating and not participating in the project .

Still the girls learned a lot about innovation and technology on WASH issues. This phenomenon indicates that there is a correlation between the increase in school attendance and the participation of the Mwarusis in the project. This suggests that participation in the project is associated with greater attendance at school by adolescents.

Analysis considered both adolescents who participated in the project and those who did not participate. Comparing these two groups allows us to assess the impact of participation in the project on school attendance.

On the other hand, it could mean that the project had a positive effect on the school attendance of the participating teenagers, compared to those who did not participate. This can be interpreted as an indicator of the project's success in promoting education and school engagement among the teenagers involved.

## **5. Final considerations**

By using this methodology, the aim was to create above all a holistic and participatory approach to promoting positive change in communities, empowering local facilitators, involving girls in educational workshops and celebrating the progress achieved. This process not only built practical knowledge and skills, but also opened space for strengthening community ties, promoting gender equity that inspires a culture of collaboration and innovation in favor of sustainable development.

Considering the context of Mozambique, where there is limited access to drinking water, there are still structural challenges in dealing with the issue of WASH, making it necessary to implement other actions that allow water to be reused.

A recreational innovation in the WASH component consists of the creation or use of low-cost biodegradable detergents for communities that could allow the reuse of water used in washing clothes, for example, in such a way that it is used for other purposes, such as irrigation of plants or agricultural fields

The city of Nampula, for example, is made up of some streams, but, however, the water management infrastructure (drainage ditches) is extremely deficient, so much so that water cannot be reused due to its level of pollution, requiring investment to restructure this type of infrastructure throughout the city. An interesting fact is that currently the Mwarusis can promote dialogues in their communities about the management of solid and liquid waste that is thrown into streams as a way of containing pollution of existing water spaces.

The introduction of a pre-paid water system, by the institutions that oversee this area, can also be an effective solution that would help to promote low water consumption practices and sustainable use of water, bringing consumption awareness and encouraging water conservation. available water resources.

This practice would also help in the process of equity in access to water in communities, in a context in which institutions that manage water resources have prioritized high-consumption consumers, such as companies and factories.

These and other innovations can also contribute to improving practices related to WASH in Mozambique. However, taking into account the specific challenges, there must be continuous work to create solutions suited to the local context.

## **6. Bibliographic references**

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