



# NEW GENDER DYNAMICS FOR HIV PREVENTION



## WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY IN MOZAMBIQUE



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## Introduction

With a population of 19.8 million inhabitants, Mozambique falls into the group of Sub-Saharan African countries whose HIV prevalence continues to be extremely high, at 16%, with a tendency towards stabilization in the Central and Northern regions, and growth in the Southern region. Prevalence is higher in the provinces of Maputo (26%), Sofala (23%), and Zambézia (19%) (MISAU/INE,2007. In: UNAIDS, 2008).

In epidemiological terms, the HIV epidemic in Mozambique is characterized by a generalized profile, in other words, it is not concentrated in specific groups, but spread across the population. The results of population surveys indicate that the epidemic affects young women aged between 20 and 24 years three times more than men in the same age group. In men, prevalence is higher among the 30 to 39 years of age bracket (CNCS, 2004). Available data also show that the prevalence of condom use is low (CNCS, 2005; PSI, 2005, Prata, 2006). Multiple concurrent partnerships, transactional sex and cross-generational sex are considered determinant risk behaviors in the spread of the virus among the population. Reducing these practices may result in considerable impact on containing the epidemic (UNAIDS, 2008).

Existing qualitative studies, such as the CAP (behaviors, attitudes and practices), have identified socio-economic determinants and certain motivations related to the sexual practices mentioned above. Some authors describe them well (Bagnolle, 2003), but they do not elucidate the cultural complexities conditioning them. Furthermore, most of the qualitative studies carried out in the country have had a limited scope, since they basically involved urban areas (Karlyn, 2005; Hawkins, 2005) or younger populations. Although useful to suggest the association of factors, such studies do not attempt to explain the common determinants of high HIV prevalence in the provinces mentioned, or the intermediary, emotional and cognitive factors sustaining high-risk sexual behaviors.

It must be highlighted that several authors have called attention to information gaps in available literature on HIV risk behaviors, for example: little is known about the perspective of adults in transactional/ cross-generational type relationships (*"sugar daddies"* and *"catorzinhas"*) (Kuate-Defo, 2004; SADC Report, 2006), the perception of personal risk in marital and non-marital relationships in a context of *"trust"* between partners (Agha 2002), whether being married is a risk factor or protection against HIV for women (Luke, 2002), family and social expectations with regard to the sexual behavior of adults, and relatives' influence on cross-generational sex (Bagnolle, 2003). The motivations for fidelity and consistent use of condoms have also been underexplored in existing studies.

Recent studies and debates suggest that certain gender particularities in Mozambique favor the behavior patterns mentioned (Bagnolle, 2003; PSI, 2004; Karlyn, 2005; Fórum Mulher, SARDC WIDSAA, 2006). Taking into consideration individual and collective behaviors per social norms, interventions on gender norms could be effective in controlling the epidemic (Harrison et al., 2000; Campbel, 1997; Hawkins, 2005). Starting from this premise, and based on the literature review carried out by HCP on HIV transmission in Sub-Saharan Africa, the JHUCCP team designed adult-focused formative research, with the objective of **identifying intermediary**

**socio-cultural, cognitive and emotional factors sustaining high-risk HIV sexual behaviors in Mozambique, and also the more equitable gender behaviors which may be translated into “behavior models” to support communication programs.**

In specific terms, this research attempted to explore:

- The concepts of masculinity and femininity among adults, seeking to identify more equitable gender behavior ideals;
- The reasons for the relationship patterns (motivation, benefits, objective and subjective rewards);
- Expectations of men and women, implicit and explicit incentives in agreements regarding transactional sex;
- The perception of HIV risk in multiple concurrent partnerships, transactional and cross-generational relations.

It must be noted that although this survey is not the only one to research sexuality and gender in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is one of the few that has focused on adult men and women, thoroughly examining the socio-cultural, family and individual aspects that determine current sexual relationship patterns. This research is also the first in the field using projective techniques to facilitate broaching sensitive topics through discussions in the “third person”, assuming that by speaking of “others”, people will indirectly speak of themselves and their reality (Catterall, M. & Ibbotson, P., 2000; Wiehagen T. et al, 2007).

This report presents a summary of the research outcomes. Carried out between November 2007 and March 2008 in Mozambique, this survey’s findings present evidence of changes in gender values and norms which may be driven through the media to influence HIV prevention behaviors.

In general, the findings indicate that there are “windows of opportunity” that communication programs in Mozambique can use to encourage healthier sexual behaviors. To this end, it is important to highlight two types of findings: firstly, despite the primary role exercised by economic pressures in certain risk practices, it was possible to identify ideals of behavior among adults that may be strategically valorized by media. These are indications that men and women seek to establish more equitable gender relations, but resist behaving differently from the norm because they need to have social validation as well as peer recognition, understood inter-subjectively. This finding suggests that gender relations in Mozambique are in a process known as the “Spiral of Silence” (Noelle-Neumann, 1995). This phenomenon generally occurs when something, which is different in nature, tends to create controversy. The concept of “Spiral of Silence” refers to people’s silence when they feel/perceive that their opinion is not the dominant opinion. According to this theory, people do not express their opinion openly or act according to their preferences for fear of social isolation. With Mozambique having a society where traditional gender norms still guide the behavior of the majority of the population, it is to be expected that this fear is strong in those who think or behave differently to the norm. However, the Spiral of Silence is an indicator of change underway in both social norms and in the scale of values, which is seen as an opportunity to be capitalized on by communication programs, through creative strategies that provide social validation for opinions on more

equitable social behaviors, including peer support.

A second type of finding, in an in-depth process by JHUCCP, refers to the definition and possible dimensions of the concept of multiple concurrent partnerships (MCP). The first findings of this analysis suggest that Mozambicans identify several modalities of MCP, and each one, according to their opinion, has a different social acceptance. Through the expression “play the field” (*“andar fora”*), participants in the discussion groups describe different conditions giving rise to several categories of behavior that require different attention from the communication programs (Holman, 2008, ongoing report). Current literature on MCP shows that authors have classified the concept in sub-categories, based on a series of relationship characteristics, and according to paradigms in their areas of study that condition the manner in which the concept is defined and explored (Holman, 2008). Although several studies in Mozambique have dealt with this topic (Bagnolle & Chamo, 2003; Machel, 2001; Manuel, 2007; N’weti, 2007; and others), there is no detailed information on how adults conceive and speak of this type of behavior. This more detailed analysis seeks to contribute with a different perspective in dealing with the phenomenon, examining the particularities attributed to it by the participants, and the level of social acceptance of each particular situation beginning with how they discuss and describe “playing the field”. A report on the outcomes of this analysis will be shared at a later date.



## 1. Research Sites

The research was carried out in the provinces of Zambézia (districts of Mocuba, Morrumbala and city of Quelimane), Sofala (city of Beira and district of Dondo) and Maputo (districts of Marracuene and Boane). In each of the provinces/ districts, the CCP team worked with partner organizations to identify locations with distinct profiles, i.e., with urban, peri-urban and rural characteristics, so as to cover groups from different ethnic formations, economic conditions and diverse contexts.

## 2. Methods

- Research Design

The research was based on Qualitative Methods: discussion groups with men aged 25 to 50 years and women aged 25 to 40 years, and in-depth interviews with key informants. Group discussions were encouraged through projective techniques: the use of photographs, drawings, case studies and unfinished sentences (having participants finish incomplete sentences).

For the purpose of this study, these techniques were used to encourage the expression of feelings, values and attitudes regarding sexual behaviors and decision processes in relationships, through indirect questions, in other words, non-invasive questions (Donoghue, 2000). For example, instead of



asking a group of men: “Do adult men in this community have extramarital relations?” the facilitator showed a photograph of a man, accompanied by a woman, both with characteristics similar to those of the participants, and started the discussion by asking: “What do you see here?” The situations described by the participants, the sentences and intonations used, either positive or negative, reflected the practices and attitudes regarding the behaviors of the social group they represented, their social norms and gender behaviors.

In the projective approach, ambiguous scenes (photographs) invite a wide range of interpretations, and the participants are given the opportunity to comment on situations lived or witnessed without directly identifying their own experiences or the experiences of people known to the group, thereby avoiding the possibility of uncomfortable situations. For example, to introduce cross-generational sex, photographs and drawings depicting older men establishing some form of contact with adolescents were used. These materials gave rise to many discussions, normally revealing indignation with this phenomenon. The suggestive photograph of a couple in conflict also led to significant discussion in all groups and localities, and brought up the issue of domestic violence, a phenomenon that is normally silenced, showing the gender inequalities and subordination that mark the life of Mozambican women. In turn, a photograph showing an apparently happy family allowed participants, both men and women, to reveal the existence of different positive behaviors and express more equitable gender ideals.

The groups formed were, to a certain extent, homogeneous per sex and age, and the process for conducting discussions by the facilitator included the following steps:

1. Opening discussions on the roles of gender, masculinity and femininity, and ideals of behavior;
2. Presentation of ambiguous photographs without captions, followed by photographs with captions for appraisal and comments;
3. Case studies on concurrent sex;
4. Case studies on transactional and cross-generational sex; and,
5. Conclusion of sentences on HIV prevention behaviors.

## ● Discussion Groups

The discussion groups were conducted by local facilitators trained by the JHUCCP team in Maputo, with technical guidance by Maria Elena Figueroa, from the Baltimore staff, who personally participated in the first training session held in Zambézia. The capacity building activities in each province took three days and involved hours of lessons and field activities, with theory support on projective techniques, classroom simulation and field practice, and the opportunity was taken to pre-test and jointly review the instruments.

The groups had an average of 5 to 8 participants, and were led by facilitators of the same sex as the groups, with command of the local languages; the participants were given the choice of language used in the discussions. The sessions took, on average, 2 hours, and were recorded with the agreement of the participants. A total of 17 group sessions were held in Zambézia, 10 in Sofala and 10 in Maputo. In total, over 250 men and women were heard.



## ● In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were held with two types of informants: a) influential people in the community (traditional leaders, Christian leaders, teachers, godparents) and, b) adults differentiated by the communities for their “model” behavior, such as, for example, women acknowledged as leaders, men respected as “responsible,” among other qualities (marked in literature as “positive deviants” since they present non-conventional behaviors); also included in the discussion groups were some participants with positions that differed from the social expectations or who claimed to adopt HIV prevention attitudes. In addition to these profiles, it was considered appropriate to interview truck-drivers in Mocuba/Zambézia, since this district is characterized as being a corridor route.

Lasting approximately 30 to 45 minutes, the interviews with people of influence dealt with the perception of social norms, gender roles, prevalent sexual relationships in the community, and risk factors. As to the interviews with “positive deviants”, with a similar duration, the perspective was to understand the motivations, values and skills, among other cognitive and emotional aspects, which played a part in the adoption of prevention attitudes and/or affirmative postures in gender relations.

A total of 61 in-depth interviews were held, with 38 in Zambézia, 10 in Sofala and 13 in Maputo. These interviews were fundamental in addressing and/or enriching the information obtained in the discussion groups.

## ● Data Analysis Process

Operationally, the statements were systematized separately per rural and urban areas and per province, according to the previously established analysis categories. Following this, the similarities and differences between the statements were identified, according to the different areas in each province and finally between provinces. As is the norm in a qualitative approach, the interpretation was based on the following analytical resources:

- Arguments used on the same topic at different times in the statements;
- Recurrent Arguments/ Confirmation/ Underpinning;
- Different arguments to defend certain opinions;
- Same arguments used to defend opposite opinions;
- Relationship between the different opinions/ positions;
- Observation of connectives used to link sentences, more important/ less important / emphasis;
- Ambiguities;
- Silences/ Sharp interruptions/ Omission; and,
- Semantics.

### 3. Main Outcomes

As was previously mentioned, the findings show ambivalence among both men and women from urban and rural areas, with regard to the actual status of gender relations and couples' relationships. Although men justify, through culture, women's subjugation to masculine power, they also acknowledge and aspire to a marital life which has greater understanding, is peaceful and long-lasting. Women, in turn, state that they owe men respect; however, they wish their partners/husbands would have more consideration for their workloads; they want more dialogue and a better family relationship. However, these aspirations and desires for change are being constrained by peer opinion (mainly men), both from families and residential neighbors.

The perception of risk in sexual relations seems to be more present in women than in men. However, the woman's unequal social position forces her to comply with the wishes of her partners, even when she wants to have sexual relations using a condom. Appearance is a factor which contributes to minimize the perception of risk. The "trust" between partners is seen as an "excuse" for men and women to not protect themselves against HIV. Added to this is the fact that men perceive themselves as being biologically stronger than women, believing therefore that they run less risk than women of being infected. This perception leads men to blame the women when the infection appears first in the woman.

Transactional sex, generally associated with cross-generational sex, is perceived as a situation of risk for HIV infection for either partner involved, because neither partner knows the other's previous sexual experiences. In cross-generational sex, the older man is perceived as being a potential STD/HIV transmitter, since he has generally had sexual relations with many different women. It must be added that many men appear to believe that having sex with an adolescent girl improves their own health. In this case, refusal to use a condom could be explained due to the importance given to the exchange of body fluids.

It must also be mentioned that the information obtained in the three provinces does not differ significantly. In other words, the results were similar, with small variations from one province to another and among urban and rural areas for some of the aspects examined. For this reason, the findings will be presented here together, pointing out the differences whenever these are significant.



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Social and Gender Norms: Obstacles and Opportunities for Behavior Change

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## A. Social and Gender Norms: Obstacles and Opportunities for Behavior Change

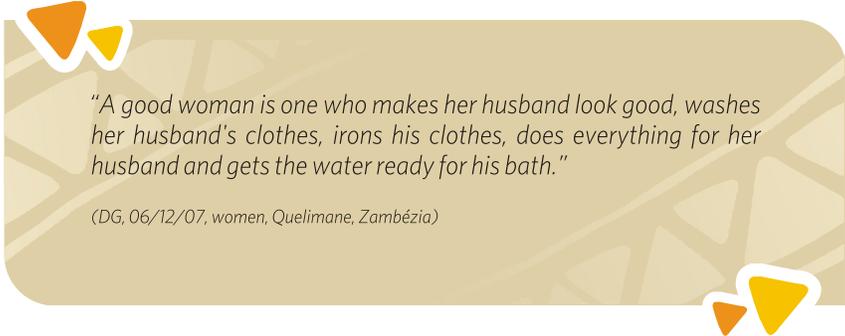
- Norms and Indications of Ruptures

As we mentioned previously, existing social and gender norms in Sub-Saharan Africa have been considered in current literature as determinant factors in HIV high-risk behaviors (Chatterji, 2004; Harrison et al., 2006; Luke, 2002; Pulerwitz et al., 2007). The authors converge on two explanations for this inference: these norms endorse multiple partners, and men's control over the sexuality and behavior of their primary partners.

Considering that the purpose of this research was to obtain information to help design communication programs, it was of interest to us to know to what extent social and gender norms operated as obstacles to behavior change in Mozambique, and what could be opportunities for those changes. For this, we sought to investigate how adult men and women understand those norms, how they answer to them, and what the cost of transgression represents for both men and women, in their family and social contexts. Also, we have tried to identify new values underway, their motivations, and how this is affecting the behavior of adults.

In that perspective, the research began with the exploration of the perceptions of masculinity and femininity among the participants in the discussion groups, asking what they considered to be a "good man" and a "good woman". These questions were sufficient to obtain information on traditional gender expectations, current gender behaviors, social control mechanisms and idealizations.

The information obtained confirmed that traditional gender roles constitute the identity reference of men and women, as is mentioned in other studies (Dahlbäck et al., 2003; UNAIDS, 2004; Bannon and Correia, 2006). In the opinion of men and women alike, men are responsible for establishing and supporting the family, and determining the rules for living together. The woman runs the home, which implies a series of obligations: having children, taking care of them and the husband, taking charge of the domestic chores and complying with the decisions of the head of the family. The man always has the final say in conflicts of management in the home. Some statements illustrate these perceptions, and the extent to which the woman revolves around the man.



*"A good woman is one who makes her husband look good, washes her husband's clothes, irons his clothes, does everything for her husband and gets the water ready for his bath."*

*(DG, 06/12/07, women, Quelimane, Zambézia)*



*"What we think is that the man is the male of the house, he secures the family, the man is responsible for everything, the other difference is that the man thinks of educating the woman...it happens that the man does that, he makes the rules for the woman, the man can educate the woman but the woman can also educate a man, but it is the man that lays down the rules."*

(DG, 13/02/08, women, Boane, Maputo)

*"I, personally, would like the woman, I think I am going to repeat, she should listen to her man as if she were listening to God, I mean, listening to a King, because the man is the woman's king, he is everything for the woman... if she speaks her mind to her husband, that is where there will be trouble (confusion, fights)"*

(DG, 13/02/08, men, Boane, Maputo)



A female participant, who stood out in one of the groups for having questioned the traditional gender norms, summarized the general feeling of Mozambican women in that context:



*"An African man does not ask the opinion of his wife. The woman has to respect her husband. Regardless of how much the woman may help with some money in the home, the man does not change; he continues to think in the same way. An African man thinks that the woman should yield to her husband. The woman should simply listen to the husband's idea. The woman's idea is never valid. African men are superior to their wives, because the assets in the home belong to the husband and not to the couple"*

(E, women, DP, 20/03/08, Beira, Sofala)



These statements mark the prevalent feature in couples' relationships in the study area: the man decides and the woman obeys; this model is typical of patriarchal-based family systems. However, the situation is not consistent: during the exploration of men and women's roles, the participants discussed situations that present windows of opportunity (ideals, aspirations) in current gender relations. For example, women say they feel safer with a man who shares in the domestic chores, and take this behavior as proof of love.



*"I feel good, I feel like a strong woman because my husband likes me and is happy to help me with the domestic chores, he does not like to sit around doing nothing, he likes to know that the bucket of rice or of sugar belongs here, so he has to get up and sweep."*

(DG, 14/02/08, women, Boane, Maputo)

*"Women like this kind of man because they feel valued and they lessen the workload".*

(DG, 24/03/08, men, Dondo, Sofala)



Above all, women and men become aware of the need for change in their domestic arrangements (with greater participation by men) to make family life easier and to ease the burdens on the woman:



*"At other times, the man may cook because I may be in the field and he leaves work and gets home before I do and does not find any pot on the fire, but there are children that have to go to school or it may be that we do not have any children but we may be hungry, and he can help, getting things ready... but currently, since we are living the democracy, men are beginning to open up... if everyone starts work at 7:30 and leaves at 15:30, the first one to get home begins to prepare things, but this did not happen before"*

(DG, 14/02/08, women, Boane, Maputo)

*"Many men leave everything for the woman to do; even if he is at home seeing everything, he leaves it all, it cannot be only the woman taking care of the children by herself, the men can also do it."*

(DG, 15/02/08, men, Guava/Marracuene, Maputo)



Looking at the photograph of an apparently happy family, participants from all groups reiterated their desire for change:



*"This man lives happily with his wife; that thing of saying that I am the man of the house and therefore I am in charge does not exist here. Everything that is done in the home is done based on understanding and coordination"*

(DG, 28/11/07, men, Morrumbala, Zambézia)

The women mentioned that they would like their partners to talk to them, to respect their opinions, and include them in their leisure time, and some men commented on the need for greater dialogue between couples:

*"I would like him to be a good companion, always present, a person who can listen to you when you want to talk of a specific issue, who respects your opinion, knows how to correct something that is not correct nicely, be a brother, on those "men's Friday nights", take his wife to where he goes."*

(DG, 20/03/08, women, Beira, Sofala)



*"Nowadays it is not like before; now there is AIDS and couples sometimes need to talk about this evil that is killing many people. In addition to being infected through sex, a woman can become infected by using a neighbor's needle... On the other hand, when he goes or comes from work, it is impossible to know for a fact who he is involved with out there, he may be having unprotected sex and it is necessary for couples to talk. Or they can be talking of family planning or the use of condoms."*

(DG, 15/02/08, men, Guava/Marracuene, Maputo)



- Peer, Family and Community Pressure for Traditional Roles to be Maintained

Men, particularly in the rural areas, were very apt to be influenced by the opinions of their peers, direct family members or neighbors regarding their behavior in the home, particularly when dealing with tasks traditionally attributed to women.



*"Others because they would be embarrassed by their own family, if they were found washing clothes, they would say that our son was married."*

(DG, 13/02/08, men, Boane, Maputo)

*"In the rural area this practice is not accepted, for example: If a father who lives in the country comes to visit his son who lives in the city, and finds him helping his wife, when he returns to the country he will speak ill of his son, saying that he was placed in the bottle, he married a white, our son is the servant because in the country there are tasks that are only for men and tasks that are only for women".*

(DG, 20/03/08, men, Beira, Sofala)



The women had the same opinion regarding peer pressure:



*"This type of man is seen by his friends as being mad, because what he does is not good. His friends say this because in their homes they do not do what this man does."*

(DG, 25/03/08, women, Dondo, Sofala).

