

The Effectiveness Initiative in Mozambique

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The Effectiveness Initiative (EI) in Mozambique aims to reinforce community-based early childhood development (ECD) programmes in Mozambique through the results of an in-depth and process-oriented exploration. This exploration is centred on four community-based ECD initiatives. Its emphasis is on the views of the community members and – especially – those of the children. In working with community members, the most significant topics are how they manage and sustain *escolinhas* (community ECD sites); what makes the communities so resilient; and how outside organisations can effectively support communities in providing quality ECD programmes. In working with the children, the main focus is on the importance to them of their *escolinhas*.

The Mozambique EI team have brought together staff from the Associação da Criança, Família e Desenvolvimento and Wona Sanana (To see children) to work with the four communities, helping them to gather information,

analyse it and draw conclusions on what works and what doesn't in their community-based ECD initiatives, and on how they see these developing over time. The selected sites are Hulene, a peri-urban area in the outskirts of Maputo (the site of the main case study); and Masivila in Gaza, Itokhula in Nampula, and Palmera in Maputo (in each of which there will be a case study focussed on a theme that characterises that site).

The team has reviewed and adapted the EI Analytical Framework by discussing what it means for them and localising the concepts on which it is based. As a result, they have come up with a tool that allows them to introduce themes at field level and to start gathering data. It is called the *machamba* – farm or garden in the Shangani language – and it works by using the *machamba* as an analogy for an *escolinha*.

Using the *machamba* analogy

The *machamba* analogy enables the exploration of all the concepts from

the Analytical Framework that are relevant for the *machambas*, plus some new ones. It replaces the logic of the Analytical Framework with the logic of the *machamba*, a logic that makes sense to the community and its context. When people discuss the *escolinhas*, they do so in terms of what makes the *machamba* work, then come up with their equivalents in the *escolinhas*. The process progresses through four levels.

First, the set of elements that are needed to make a *machamba* work are identified. This is the level of 'What we have'. This means more than just what is the soil like, what tools and experience do we have, how would it support a particular crop. It extends to such factors as what happens without human intervention, and what is growing there already.

The second level is 'What this represents' – here the *machamba* relates to the *escolinha*: for example, perhaps the fertiliser represents the *animadora*; the growing seed the child.

The third level goes deeper, drawing out 'What this signifies' – this may signify the value of the *animadora*: her attitudes, skills, experience and so on.

Finally, the fourth level is about 'What this makes possible' – the potential that is there for children to grow within their communities, for example.

The method is still being refined by the Mozambique EI team internally and through tests conducted in two of the four selected sites. But it is already clear that there is sufficient space and scope in the analogy of the *machamba* to incorporate different perspectives; and that it strengthens the community's ownership and vision of the *escolinha* as it is discussed and challenged.

There are different ways of using the analogy. Some people see children fit in the *machamba* as seeds, some as land and some as the harvest. They explain:

When you start the machamba, you don't start from scratch, you don't remove everything from the land because that is foolish.

The children are seen in their context, interacting with what is already there for them. There are elements that feed into the process, and there may be secondary elements that are also fundamental to the strength of the whole process. For example, grass burning prepares the land:

If you don't get the land ready it turns into a negative element, yet if you get it ready it turns into an important strength.

What is the equivalent element in an escolinha? It would be difficult to introduce this in an abstract way, but easy to establish a comparison between the preparation of the soil and the mobilisation of parents to take children to escolinhas.

The machamba, just as the escolinha, is not only seen as what it is and what it represents, it is also seen in terms of what it will produce: the quality of the crop or the qualities of the children who will one day be adults, playing a range of roles in their communities.

What are the results of the escolinha? What is being nurtured and grown in

the escolinha that will be harvested and go back into the granary? Children who go to the escolinha benefit – for example, they become more clever and knowledgeable. When they take their place in their community as they grow and mature, they add new richness to what is there as they interact with parents and siblings, generating more knowledge among them. Discussions by community members take the analogy further, exploring the meaning of the child as an active participant in its environment.

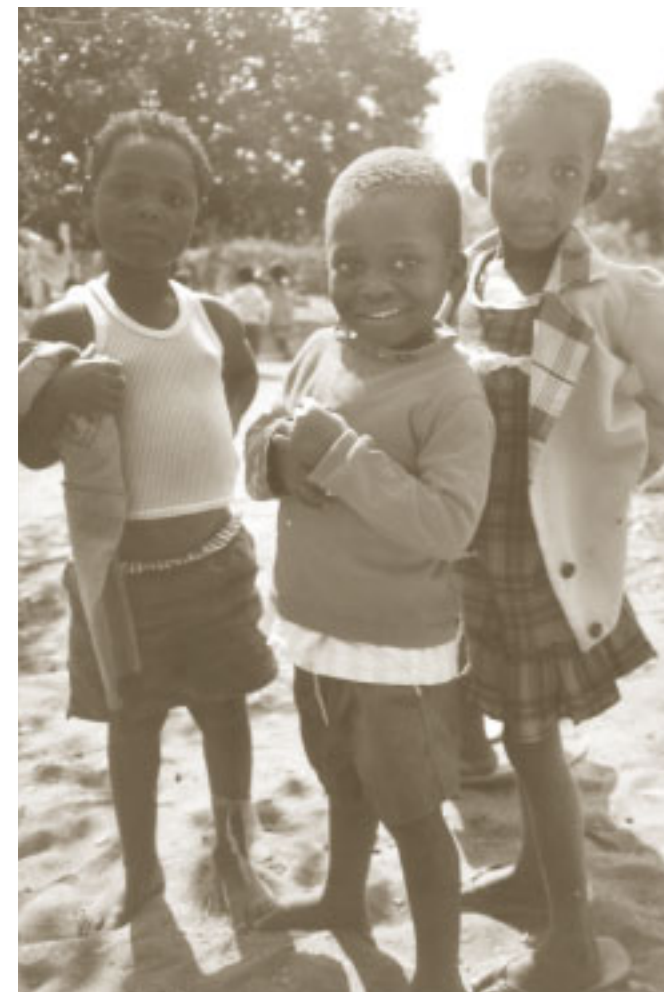
The machamba is also a way to bring in traditional knowledge that already exists in the community, recognising its value and linking it to the escolinha. One example is that of discussing the control of pests in the machamba: people grow medicinal plants in their machambas, which are also used to treat children's illnesses.

The challenges faced by the team now are how to systematise the variety of elements identified through using the machamba analogy and the communities' reflections about how they have related these to children and the escolinhas. These are complex

issues, yet the machamba is easier to work with than working directly with abstract concepts.

The use of the machamba analogy automatically ensures that the discussion is contextualised in a particular and specific way. The opinions of each person relate to the wider context that is established by everyone who contributes: everybody understands the relationship between what is being said and the escolinha. This has solved an important question for the team in relation to the EI: how to anchor the EI discussions in a permanent framework, in ways that make sense to the reality of the people they work with. The machamba analogy is highly effective in this respect. ○

This article draws on the Action Plan of the Mozambique EI Team and personal communications with the members of the team.



Mozambique: children at an escolinha
photo: Leonardo Yáñez, Bernard van Leer Foundation