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## COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF ADOLESCENTS SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH PROGRAMMES IN MOZAMBIQUE: CULTURAL CHALLENGES

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Mozambique's adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) challenges are: early marriages, early pregnancies and HIV/AIDS. In 1999 the *Geração Biz* Programme (GBP) was created to address these youths' problems and improve their sexual and reproductive health (SRH). However, Mozambican youths continue to be exposed to risks related to their SRH. Academic literature recognizes that culture is the key in enhancing effective delivery of communication programmes. Concurrently, studies point to a lack of research analysing communication strategies of health campaigns. Given the country's wide variety in terms of language and culture, this study explores whether the GBP communication strategies take into account the country's complex cultural reality. This paper's aims are: (i) to gain insight into GBP communication strategies; (ii) to identify cultural challenges to these strategies; and (iii) shed light on the implications of these challenges for GBP. The study uses the four input factors of McGuire's Communication/Persuasion Model as its theoretical framework. Research methods included non-participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Research questions were based on McGuire Communication/Persuasion Model, and data analysed thematically using Nvivo Pro11. The results of this study shows that while interpersonal methods are used to deliver preventive messages, sociocultural approaches are often ignored and not used to reduce cultural barriers; (ii) the cultural challenges to ASRH issues include initiation rites, sexuality and broader SRH issues, language and parents' attitudes towards marriages; and (iii) these factors hinder effective delivery of program messages. Conclusions: The communication strategies used by GBP do not sufficiently take into account the sociocultural context of Mozambique. The taboos around sexuality have silenced open communication in this regard. Ideas of sexual abstinence, condom use and campaigns against early marriages stand in opposition to certain (static) orientations of traditional initiations. Therefore, there is need for training of community and initiation rites masters with relevant SRH messages; bridging of the gap between initiation rites and GBP orientations; using sociocultural approaches and audience segmentation for cultural sensitive messages; and translating GBP handbook in the Makua language.

### Biography

Lurdes Rodrigues da Silva is a lecturer at Eduardo Mondlane University - Mozambique since 2001. She holds a bachelors honours degree in Linguistics and a master in Educational Management and leadership. She has a passion in improving the health and wellbeing of adolescents in Mozambique.

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