Improving access to formal justice services for SGBV survivors through mobile courts in Nampula, Mozambique

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The Context:

36.2% of women report experiencing physical violence from the age of 15 onwards

7.9% report SGBV within the last 12 months

High rates of early marriage, adolescent pregnancy and HIV-AIDS
The Context:

Strong legal regulatory framework for SGBV in Mozambique, but actual application is weak

60% of Mozambique’s population live in remote areas where customary law/traditional conflict resolution processes are main mechanism for bringing perpetrators of SGBV to justice

Often inadequate protection of women/girls’ rights or sufficient consequences for the perpetrator.
Mobile Courts Pilot:

• A major constraint in access to justice is the physical distance between formal courts and remote rural areas.

• The EGC Project is supporting the expansion of the Government of Mozambique’s pilot Mobile Courts initiative into three rural districts of Nampula Province.

• Goal: to bring formal justice services closer to people living in remote/rural areas.
Mobile Courts Pilot:

- Mozambique’s Supreme Court implemented a pilot Mobile Courts initiative with UNDP in Maputo from April-July 2021

- Second pilot implemented with World Vision in 3 rural districts of Monapo, Murrupula and Nacaroa in Nampula Province from Nov-Dec 2021

- Nampula pilot facilitated 4 out of 8 planned Mobile Court sessions, addressing 12 out of 21 planned cases, all involving forms of SGBV and violation of women/girls’ rights.
Workshop & Launch

• Collaborative Mobile Courts planning workshop held in October 2021

• Inaugural Ceremony for the mobile court in rural districts provided opportunity to raise awareness on human rights, laws and services related to SGBV

• Local youth-led child rights groups, such as the Child Parliament participated in the launch, along with local media
Mobile Trials

• Addressed large 3 yr. case backlog

• 12 cases ended and sentences ranging from 20 days to 8 yrs of imprisonment

• Types of crimes included Physical Violence, Property Violence, Rape, Early Marriage, Sexual Acts with Minors, and Sexual Harassment
Initial Impact:

• Revolutionary **milestone** in local access to justice by the citizens

• Citizens **avoid cost of travel, food and living expenses** in a city where they may not know anyone (knowing that the courts can take several days to process the same case.)

• **Significant for marginalized groups** in remote areas, including those with mobility challenges
**Initial Impact:**

• Several cases of rape of minors resulted in prison sentences

• The Supreme Court noted the importance of the defendants being sent immediately to jail in front of everyone present

• Reinforced the reality of legal consequences for SGBV crimes not only for the perpetrators themselves but also for the general population, strengthening the case for reporting
Lessons to be applied in Phase II:

• Many significant lessons learned during phase 1 that will be critical to apply in phase 2

• More coordination & awareness raising in communities needed ahead of time to ensure people involved in each case are present.

• Justice agents need refresher training in child-friendly communication, safeguarding and protection to ensure child-sensitive and gender-responsive approaches during hearings (stronger coordination with technical CP & Gender staff)
Lessons to be applied in Phase II:

• The ability of the mobile courts to draw crowds from surrounding community presents both opportunities and risks. E.g.:
  • Sends strong message to local community that no one is above law and GBV perpetrators will be prosecuted
  • While a tent or building is provided to keep proceedings private, individuals arriving or departing easily seen.

• Integration of psycho-social services into Mobile Courts is critical, including follow-up with survivors in the weeks following the session
Next Steps:

• Complete action plans to address the lessons
• Strengthen complimentary strategies in local Police SBV units and health centres
• A new round of mobile court hearings will take place during last quarter of 2022.
• Document experience of phase 2, including interviews with past participants
• Formal mid-line evaluation of the intervention in 2024
Obrigada ! Thank you !