



**ADOLESCENT  
GIRLS** COMMUNITY  
OF PRACTICE



**Intentional Design Practitioner Report**

## Investing in Girls in Northern Mozambique

**By Cristina Alcada, Kátia Almeida, Ana Avillez, and Alexandra  
Machado (Girl Move)**

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<https://buildcommunity4girls.org/>

## About

**The Intentional Design approach has been foundational to the Population Council’s work since 2000, when on-the-ground programs to reach the most excluded girls in the poorest communities greatly expanded. This practitioner report is part of a series of 20 reports reflecting work in sites around the world from 2000 to 2020. The Intentional Design approach was implemented in these sites with nongovernmental and governmental partners who explored the question: Why invest in girls? Once that was understood, the Council offered learning tools to navigate the questions: Where do we work? With whom do we work? When, chronologically, in the girls’ life cycles are the most crucial moments? Which content is meaningful and realistic and builds girls’ protective assets? What does success look like for different segments of girls?**

In 2013, the Girl Roster tool was added when it was clear that many partners lacked the technical and scientific resources to establish the “universe” of girls in the places they had selected to work. Intentional Design tools—with the Roster being the most known and catalytic learning aid—have been utilized in South and East Asia; the Middle East; Central, East, and West Africa; North America; Latin America; and the Caribbean.

The Roster has been adapted for use in an array of sociodemographic contexts including dispersed rural villages, poor urban neighborhoods, conflict zones, refugee camps, densely packed informal/migrant-receiving settlements, high-risk HIV zones, before and after epidemics, as a rebuilding tool, and in Native American reservation communities. In every context, the Roster provided a transformative opportunity to see girls’ lives more systematically, drawing both quantitative and qualitative information. The efforts to estimate and segment the universe of girls has challenged initial assumptions about girls, families, safe and unsafe zones in communities, and the accessibility and relevance of services, even among those who felt they knew their community, including longstanding program staff. Across the board, practitioners report that on-the-ground application of the learning tools generates surprising and useful knowledge vital to shaping their work, assessing its reach, and articulating plans for expansion.

In the 20 reports that comprise this series, our partners share their experiences applying Intentional Design tools and principles. The reports represent just a few on-the-ground projects, but most of our partners report that the Intentional Design approach has taken root. We honor our partners for their honesty and dedication. They inspire us.

Judith Bruce and Sophie Soares

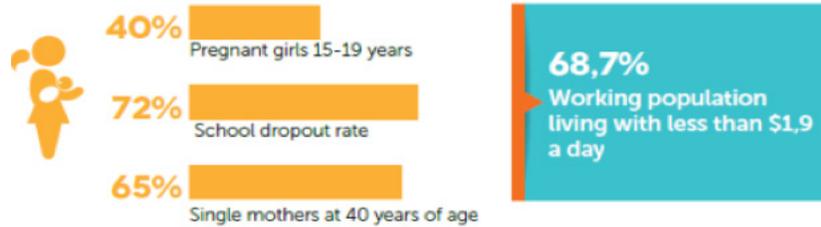
Authors, *Intentional Design: Reaching the Most Excluded Girls in the Poorest Communities—A Guide for Practitioners and Advocates*, from which these reports were excerpted.

# Investing in Girls in Northern Mozambique

By Cristina Alcada, Kátia Almeida, Ana Avillez, and Alexandra Machado (Girl Move)

Findings and Decisions	Implementation Observations and Adaptations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although there is a high unmet need among adolescent girls aged 10–17 for social support, education, and health protection across Mozambique, northern Mozambique was particularly underserved.</li> <li>• We have given exceptional thought to the different roles of mentors and the possible contribution to the levels of mentorship this could make to girls' enrichment, education, and protection.</li> <li>• We identified two different categories of mentors.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Change Mentors</b> (also known as super mentors) were identified early in the program; they brought exceptional skills and leadership to very deprived communities for girls who were severely bound by traditional practices. We initially recruited Change Mentors from Nampula City within Northern Mozambique because this provided the most talented pool. (Change Mentors are now selected from nationwide applications.)</li> <li>• Change Mentors then recruited <b>Lead Mentors</b> from the community. They are physically nearby, familiar to and with their community, closer in age (to the mwarusis, core beneficiaries aged 12–15). They are in college, or more likely secondary school, and can speak the language.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Even girls (and potential mentors) who attended school for six or seven years had poor academic skills (only 22% passed an equivalent of a 2nd- or 3rd-grade literacy test).</li> <li>• To overcome academic limitations, the training and socialization of mentors required special cognitive support, as well as confidence-building and community-engagement skills.</li> <li>• With beneficiary girls and Change and Lead mentors, <b>interactive and play-based content</b> are essential to enhanced learning.</li> <li>• Mentors should engage with local communities as early as possible, laying the foundation for sustainability and trusting relationships <b>vital to their ability to organize responses in emergencies</b> (Beira cyclone, COVID-19 pandemic, etc.).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was useful to pilot with a variety of segments before settling in on which segment(s) to focus on; while there was some interest in older, in-school girls (over age 15), we found it most fruitful to concentrate our resources on those 12–15 years.</li> <li>• A shorter program of the same content made more sense because in a one-year versus a two-year program, the same impact could be better achieved by the 7th-grade segment, and aligned with the school year (early February to December). The two-year-long program proved to be repetitive and would require (due to the connection to the other programs) a counterproductive change of mentors mid-process.</li> <li>• The most accomplished mentors are able to extend the program to other neighborhoods and cities, conducting the necessary technical mapping, engaging with the community, and making program decisions.</li> <li>• The age cohorts in the Output Tables were adapted to reflect Mozambican schooling systems and cultural patterns, including late entry; girls 8–11, 12–15, and 16–18 were grouped together.</li> <li>• We continue to be open to innovations tested around the world to unleash the potential of adolescents in vulnerable contexts as they may address weaker aspects of our intervention. We have successfully introduced:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Gamebook” technology to address decision-making skills;</li> <li>• Sports as a tool to address the “being a team” element of groups of adolescents;</li> <li>• Open Space as a tool to engage community members in seeing girls and themselves as partners in finding solutions that benefit the whole community;</li> <li>• Support replicas of the program led by former Change Mentors (as of 2020, three ongoing);</li> <li>• We are shaping a new generation of leaders that can envision and work toward a better future for all.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**FIGURE 1. GRAPHICS OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS' EXPERIENCE IN MOZAMBIQUE. (MOZAMBIQUE DHS 2011). ANALYSIS CONDUCTED BY SHELLEY CLARK ON BEHALF OF THE POPULATION COUNCIL USING MOZAMBIQUE DHS DATA. UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME MOZAMBIQUE.**

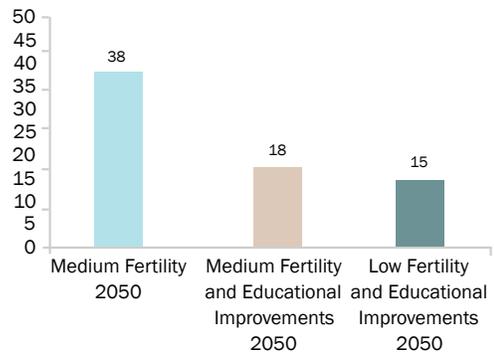


### Introduction: Girls' Lived Experience in Mozambique

In Mozambique, one of the poorest countries in the world (ranking 180 out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index 2017), 58% of the population is under 19 years of age. Many adolescent girls (mwarusis in the Mozambican language Emacuwa, largely spoken in Nampula, a northeast province of the country) are at a very high-risk stage in life and face challenges associated with the life transitions that occur during adolescence (including puberty) as well as communities' perceptions about their role in society (see Figure 1). Adolescent girls are often kept home for their safety and to do household chores. Furthermore, poverty can force girls into child marriage and exploitative sexual relations for economic security; families cannot support all their children and often see girls making up for resource scarcities.

The dramatic shift in girls' lives during young adolescence is very clear when looking at school attendance. Although 94% of Mozambican girls complete primary school, there is a steep decline in participation in education after the primary level. Only 24% of girls continue with secondary school, of whom 10% finish and 1% go to university (MISAU, INE, and ICF 2018). In Mozambique, school dropout coincides with key transitions in girls' lives. Almost half of the girls (48%) get married and have their first child (40%) before the age of

**FIGURE 2. PREDICTIVE IMPROVEMENT IN EDUCATION AND FERTILITY REDUCTION (WORLD BANK 2017)**

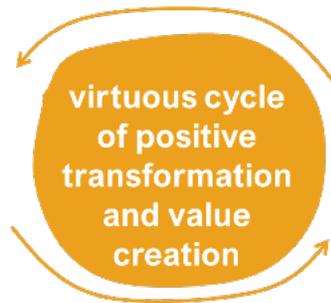


18 (UNICEF 2015). The World Bank reported in 2017 that projections from Mozambique show that “only by improving education and reducing fertility can Mozambique eradicate extreme poverty by 2050” (World Bank 2017) (see Figure 2).

Evidence further shows that even one more year of secondary education can link girls to employment with 10–25% more income—a resource that can be used to support not only themselves but their families (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos 2004), and that given the work opportunity 90% of that income is invested back into the family (Fortson 2003).

## SUMMARY OF THE VIRTUOUS CYCLE OF POSITIVE TRANSFORMATION AND VALUE CREATION

**Empowerment of a new generation of women changemakers**, as disruptive leaders to change the world



**Model of mentorship promoting girls access to positive life rolemodels**, thus fighting school dropout and child pregnancy and marriage

This evidence frames the premise of the Girl MOVE Academy's work—that investment in girls not only benefits the girls themselves but empowers them to unleash their potential and have a greater impact on their families and home communities.

### Girl MOVE Academy's Interlinked Programs and Mentorship Model

#### The Program's Premise and Overall Structure

Girl MOVE aims to lead a new model of female empowerment that boosts the multiplying effect of women and girls' education. We strive for a world where all women have access to opportunities to become leaders and agents of positive change, able to contribute to the political, economic, social, and cultural development of their country.

Girl MOVE'S one-year program is aligned with the Population Council's Intentional Design approach, which focuses on establishing girl-only spaces (Step 6 of the Basic Model) with the support of the community (Step 9 of the Basic Model) in which girls can, with the support and guidance of mentors (Step 7 of the Basic Model), build protective assets (Step 8 of the Basic Model). Girl MOVE was the first organization to pilot this approach and the safe spaces methodology in Mozambique.

### Using an Evidence Base to Pilot Intentional Design in Mozambique

#### Deciding Where to Work

Girl MOVE Academy has been implementing its vision for girls (the BELIEVE Program) since 2014; our first challenge was to decide where to work, using data from the 2011 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) to identify at the provincial level where there were the highest concentrations of off-track, including out-of-school, girls. This analysis drew attention to Nampula Province, where indicators showed a higher prevalence of school dropout, early pregnancy, and child marriage rates than nearly every other province.

Within Nampula Province, we focused on Nampula City because we were seeking, within a poor place, a density of highly talented potential mentors and knew that university students resided there. Within Nampula City, we looked at peri-urban neighborhoods (to reach the most remote and poorest communities), combining the risks of rural world mentalities from parents and the risks of urban-like youth behaviors and risks (alcoholism, violence, idleness/unemployment, high number of displaced male workers, etc.). From this research we narrowed our priority areas to two possible neighborhoods and finally decided on Marrere, with a population of 8,000 people, indicating a pilot our size would be impactful

and relevant. Furthermore, Marrere was where we had a partner willing to introduce us to the community.

Marrere is a peri-urban neighborhood 12 kilometers [7 miles] away from Nampula City, strikingly underserved in services and basic facilities. Population data indicated that 60% of the Marrere population was 18 years or younger (4,144 people), of which 22% (943) were girls. In the following years, Girl MOVE Academy expanded its intervention to other areas in Nampula and Beira.

### **“Seeing” the Girls to Learn Whom (Which Segments) and When to Support**

In 2013, Girl MOVE Academy elected to apply the Girl Roster using pen and paper<sup>1</sup> in the Marrere community to capture a clearer picture of the “universe” of girls. The community was divided into seven subareas, mapped out crudely by locals and then using Google maps by program staff (see Figure 3). A field team comprised of one coordinator and four subteams (two mentors and one community adult) led the rostering. The subteams carried leaflets with them describing the BELIEVE Mwarusi program both in Portuguese and the local language Emacuwa.

Table 1 shows a summary of the information collected.<sup>2</sup>

The results indicated that among girls 8-18:

- 8% of girls (76/943) are married, and 6% (53/943) have children; 19% are under the age of 19, and a full 34% of girls aged 16-18 are married;
- 30% of girls (287/943) are out of school, 31% of those are 8-11 years old;
- 38% of girls (358/943) live with one or neither parent, 40% of those are as young as 8-11 years old;
- 35% of girls in school (8-18 years) are significantly delayed in grade for age.<sup>3</sup>

### **Post-Rostering Reflection on the More Specific Goals within Our Empowerment Strategy—Segment Selection**

The results reinforced the priority of preventing school dropout on transition to secondary schools (7th to 8th grade) while also preventing early/child marriage and pregnancy (noting that 34% of girls aged 16-18 were married).

To provide maximum support for continuous education, especially a transition to secondary school, the pilot aimed to reach 220 girls concentrated in these two in-school segments:

- Girls in school 12-15 years old between 5th and 7th grade (121);
- Girls 8-11 years old and 16-18 years old bordering those grades (61);

In the following year, we developed a pilot for out-of-school girls.

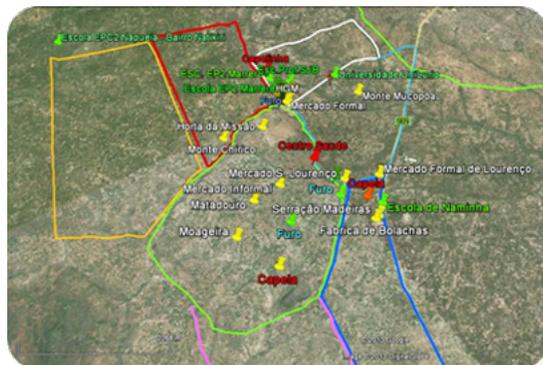
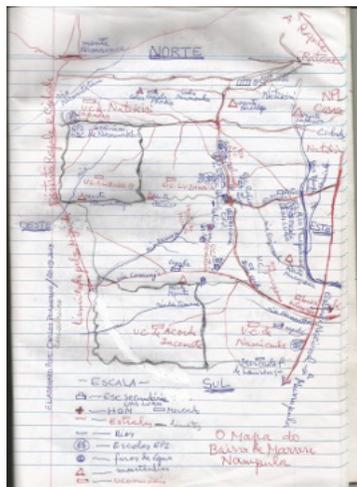
To reach the out-of-school girls age 15 and over, a mentor went house to house identifying out-of-school girls who had not been absent from school for longer than two years. We believed this would increase the chance that they would be more successful in a second-chance program. The mentors convinced them to join a program that would build their skills and reconnect them to education in some form. The group started with 5 girls and had 30 after two months. This success was due to a “mouth-to-mouth” and “face-to-face” campaign.

<sup>1</sup> At the time, the phone app version of the Girl Roster was still being perfected so using pen and paper was the better option for implementing the tool.

<sup>2</sup> It is notable that because the Girl Roster was administered by pen and paper, the Output Tables were not generated immediately. Therefore, program staff were able to summarize the tables in the way they saw fit, hence the difference in age breakdown from the standard Overview Output Table.

<sup>3</sup> The Overview Output Table does not display girls behind grade for age; the determination of this value comes from analysis of back-end information not displayed in the table.

**FIGURE 3. CRUDE RENDERING AND FORMAL MAPPING OF THE MARRERE COMMUNITY COMPLETED BY LOCALS AND PROGRAM STAFF, RESPECTIVELY**



**TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF GIRL ROSTER RESULTS FROM MARRERE COMMUNITY, NAMPULA PROVINCE, NOVEMBER 2013**

Age cohort	Unmarried				Married				Total
	In School		Out of School		In School		Out of School		
	Living with both parents	Living with just one or neither parent	Living with both parents	Living with just one or neither parent	Has children	Has no children	Has children	Has no children	
8-11	225	108	51	38	0	1	0	0	423
12-15	144	96	40	57	4	4	8	3	356
16-18	33	31	16	28	6	4	35	11	164
Total	402	235	107	123	10	9	43	14	943

## Initial Content

With respect to in-school girls, the pilot project in Marrere reached a total of 249 adolescent girls, which we refer to as *mwarusis*, or “butterfly” in Portuguese. The *mwarusis* were divided into 10 groups of girls in 5th, 6th, and 7th grades. With the support of 10 mentors and 10 guides, these groups met two times per week for 90 minutes, with the addition of one bimonthly house call,<sup>4</sup> all over the course of two years.

The curriculum emphasized four key areas:

- “I am,” building self-esteem and identity—build social skills and capital;
- “I know,” emphasizing academic skills like reading and math—build cognitive assets;
- “I am healthy,” emphasizing understanding basic public health interventions (such as making drinking water safe and homemade oral rehydration solutions—build health capital;
- “I have,” focusing on opportunities (including a job fair)—build economic capital.

## Community Engagement

The community was supportive of the program, with community volunteers building a safe space classroom in which girls could meet and community leaders agreeing to a contract in support of the program. The space was built in Namigonha, a subarea of Marrere, to serve as a safe space and double as a school classroom. It lasted for two years. The contract stated that the school could use the classroom whenever it wasn't being used as a safe space. The space was built by the local community members, who were provided materials and were compensated

not only for the construction but for the long-term maintenance of the space. Unfortunately, although the community always respected the space and kept it safe, they breached the contract of maintenance, and we eventually declined to keep doing it on our own, so as not to encourage this behavior. Since the maintenance stopped, heavy rains washed away the room.

## Lessons Learned from the Pilots and Program Adaptation: Feeding a Continuous Process of Intentional Design

As of 2019, the program is in its fifth round of implementation and has trained and fielded 99 Change Mentors, 170 Lead Mentors, and reached more than 2,200 adolescent girls in six different neighborhoods across not only Nampula Province but also Sofala Province (see Table 2).

In the early phases of the program, we piloted programs with girls aged 8–11 and out-of-school girls 15 and over, and have settled on prioritizing girls 12–15 to assist school retention and transition from primary to secondary school.

The work in Sofala Province provided an unexpected learning experience when a severe cyclone hit the capital, Beira, doing significant damage. Two Senior “Warrior” Mentors and 30 local mentors had sufficient skills to mobilize an emergency response and protect the 325 girls in the program, and craft a community response, including identifying local support, a school building, and university engagement.

After each round of implementation, a quantitative and qualitative evaluation effort allowed us to learn from good practices and mistakes, and subsequently project improvements and aspects we wanted to keep.

<sup>4</sup> Mentors went to the *mwarusis*' family homes to get to know the family, gain their trust, explain what was talked about in the sessions, They checked out the surroundings to look for red flag risks and to gain a better understanding of economic difficulties and the composition of the family (such as whether there was a father present). Mentors always found a way to compliment the girl in front of her parents.

**TABLE 2. GIRL MOVE'S MENTORSHIP AND BENEFICIARY STRUCTURE**

<p>Change Mentors</p>	<p>Young women aged 22–30, university graduates from all over Mozambique, who mentor Lead Mentors and lead a team of 3 Lead Mentors in the mentoring of mwarusis (adolescents)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead team of 3 mentors in the process of safe spaces project and methodology</li> <li>• Be role models and mentor Lead Mentors</li> <li>• Do house calls for mwarusis and mentors</li> <li>• Define intervention plans for critical incidents and follow up on them with the team of Lead Mentors</li> <li>• Follow up on critical incidents from Lead Mentors themselves</li> <li>• Be positive role models to mwarusis and Lead Mentors</li> <li>• Ensure community engagement</li> </ul>
<p>Lead Mentors</p>	<p>Girls aged 16–21 who attend late secondary schools or university in Nampula. In teams of 3, they mentor a group of 30 mwarusis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit mwarusis</li> <li>• Facilitate sessions</li> <li>• Do house calls</li> <li>• Follow up on critical incidents (identification and intervention plan)</li> <li>• Be positive role models to mwarusis</li> </ul>
<p>Mwarusis (adolescent beneficiaries)</p>	<p>Girls aged 12–15 who are in their last year of primary school and live in vulnerable contexts in urban and peri-urban communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend tailor-made life-skills programs twice a week in safe spaces</li> <li>• Attend reading support sessions</li> <li>• Organize and participate in community events</li> <li>• Develop projects to benefit families and communities</li> <li>• In earlier pilots, included girls 8–11 and out-of-school girls 15 and older</li> </ul>

**Lessons Learned: Segmentation Priority**

- Recognizing the acute pressures on early adolescent girls, we selected girls aged 12–15 as the priority segment for the development of girl leadership and the group on whom we wanted to concentrate resources;

**Lessons Learned: Mentorship Is Core**

- All pilots affirmed priority to the mentorship relationship and its role in risk prevention, improvement of girls’ skills, and, when needed, rapid intervention;
- Mentors were able to make quick risk assessments, were given effective guidelines, and were able to act more and more autonomously in most common cases;

- Mentors' leadership and social entrepreneurship are maximized if they start the process of local community engagement early, laying the foundations for continued commitment to girls beyond the program.
- Lead Mentors' capacities are strengthened by:
  - "O meu projecto de vida com impacto" (Impactful life project) exercise: Mentors design their own life project, focusing on finishing university and on how to use their education to further the development of their community and country.
  - Application of the Change My Community Framework: Mentors develop skills such as empathy, self-esteem, and self-control; proactivity and responsibility; and critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving.

### Lessons Learned: Content and Design

- Shorten the programs (we scaled back gradually from 24 months to 12 months);
- Align the program with the school year to make sure mentors accompany the girls through national exams and enrollment in secondary-school processes.
- Introduce game-based programming to enhance learning, especially for intensive financial literacy and savings programs, and supporting sexual risk and relationship decision-making.
- Assess and reinforce reading skills as a formal part of program content; when we applied the international standardized test for literacy skills in 2nd and 3rd grades to girls attending 6th and 7th grades, we realized we needed to shift the school support component, which became a "literacy fast track" program.<sup>5</sup>

### Lessons Learned: Adapting to Other Settings and Autonomy

- We piloted in urban and peri-urban settings in both Nampula (North) and Sofala (Beira, center) in different provinces, confirming its utility in relatively high population settings.
- Graduate program participants (mwarusis) were encouraged to start meeting in their own groups, with reduced supervision by Lead Mentors and supported by purposeful connection to local women's groups; we are evaluating this sustainability strategy.

### Lessons Learned: The Importance of Ascertaining Girls' Sexual Exposure

- We implemented the Ascertaining Sexual Relationships Types (ASERT) tool in a focus group style and learned how common transactional sex is among adolescents 12–15 years old and also among the college students mentor segments (Lead Mentors).

### New Directions

We will intensify our core mission to promote a new generation of female leaders for Mozambique. These mentors will shape change through providing relatable, positive role models for girls from their home communities, use their acquired skills to communicate effectively with traditional power structures at local and national levels, generate qualitative and quantitative information, and design evidence-based innovations for the common good.

- We will continue to acknowledge and disseminate success and good practices among partners—to drive coverage with quality while never shrinking from frank assessment of what works and what does not for different groups of girls—making their lives, their education in the broadest terms, and their role as catalytic leaders the central subject.

<sup>5</sup> In collaboration with Girl MOVERS, we developed a literacy program based on the Paulo Freire methodology, running once-a-week sessions facilitated by mentors. The program is based on going from the girls' realities to concepts translated in words. Results from the pilot showed incredible results in terms of literacy (66.8% correct answers by the end of the pilot) but also in terms of girls' self-esteem, and gaining the families trust in the program.



## A Wider Reach for Girl Move through Movimento M—A National-level Engagement

Girl MOVE has used on-the-ground learning to inform national policies, such as the National Strategy to Prevent and Reduce Child Marriage (2016) and the Gender Strategy of the Ministry of Education and Human Development (2016–2019).

Specifically, we have recommended a preventative (acting early and with high saturation in at-risk communities) rather than reactive (after a girl is pregnant, has dropped out of school) line of action. We insist investments are made directly in girls themselves as a priority, rather than engaging all those around them as objects, not subjects, in their own change. We urge that clear and objective indicators for specific segments of girls, with emphasis on hotspot communities, are built into the plans. At the formal presentation of the National Strategy to Prevent and Reduce Child Marriage (2016–2019), Girl MOVE shared its risk-prevention model, which has been made available to all Movimento M members.<sup>6</sup>

Girl MOVE Academy is an active participant of the National Coalition for the Elimination of Child Marriage (CECAP) and a member of the Girls Not Brides Global Network. Furthermore, in 2018 Girl MOVE Academy has been welcomed as an affiliate to the Ashoka Network of changemakers.<sup>7</sup>

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For more information, please visit:  
[www.girlmove.org](http://www.girlmove.org) Girl MOVE Academy  
(video).

<sup>6</sup> This report can be found on the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Action’s website: [http://www.mgcas.gov.mz/st/FileControl/Site/Doc/9996estrategia\\_casamentos\\_prematuros\\_2016\\_2019\\_002.pdf](http://www.mgcas.gov.mz/st/FileControl/Site/Doc/9996estrategia_casamentos_prematuros_2016_2019_002.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> ASHOKA is the biggest network of social innovators in the world, reaching 3,500 fellows globally. ASHOKA coined the term “social entrepreneur” and has now evolved to a vision of a world where Everyone is a Changemaker.

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