

SEX IN THE BUSH:  
NAVIGATING COMPETING  
SEXUAL NORMS AMONG  
MAKHUWA YOUTH IN  
NORTHERN MOZAMBIQUE

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# Introduction

- Study site
  - Nanatha – coastal, Islamic, matrilineal village in northern Mozambique
  - Eco-lodge
  - Anan Clinica
  
- Focus: youth sexuality and HIV

# Methods

- Ethnographic
- Participatory Action Research with local youth
  - ▣ Focus on research
- Phase I: focus on Anan Clinica, perceived problems sexuality and youth
- Phase II: 5 girls and 8 boys, age 10-19, group meetings 2/3 times a week, individual interviews

# PAR

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- Free listing
- Story writing – what do you want to change?
- Discussing topics based on stories
- Drawing a map of the village

# Free listing

- ▣ Finding the right words to talk about premarital sexuality
  - International discourse and ‘local’ discourse
  - *Sexualidade, mothelani/othelana/othelána, mararuwo/oraruwa?*
  - *Nkahimani ipalavra simpuanhanea mothelani? (Say words that have something to do with sexuality)*
  - *Muthu nnamoratawe iniri ya exeni? (What are the things you do with your boy/girlfriend?)*

# Story writing

- Salvador (m,16) & Alfredo (m,16): Today we want to bring an end to boys having sex in the bush, also in empty houses. Another thing that we want to change is that boys have sex with two girls. Also we want to finish that girls go with two boys. We want them to be very good. If the girl doesn't, she will get a disease and give this to the boyfriend. Boy and girl we need them to be good. In order to be good, girl and boy need to *understand each other* to avoid to get a disease. And we want to teach them that they need to use the contraception pill. For the boy we need him to use condoms. And we need to change to avoid having sex in the bush; that is not good.

# Discussing topics

- Sex in the bush
- STDs/HIV
- Using condoms
- Pregnancy
- Having more than one boy/girlfriend
- Initiation ritual
- Structural changes: economic development and democracia





# Individual interviews

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- More personal focus
- Ways of learning about sexuality and marriage
- Opinion on project and ideas future interventions

# Findings

- Tradition: female virginity and marriage ritual
- Tradition: exchanging sex for material goods
- Reality is at odds with 'traditional' norms, tradition and norms are changing as a consequence of (health) interventions, economic development, democracia
- Youth are navigating these competing norms

# Implications for practice

- Language is important
- HIV/reproductive health is embedded in larger discourse
- Participatory approaches – combined with ethnographic research – can be useful in analyzing sexual practices, and motivating youth to participate in the development of interventions which relate to their own struggles