

WHAT DO PARENTS OF CHILDREN UNDER 2 IN RURAL MOZAMBIQUE DO AND BELIEVE ABOUT CHILD DEVELOPMENT?



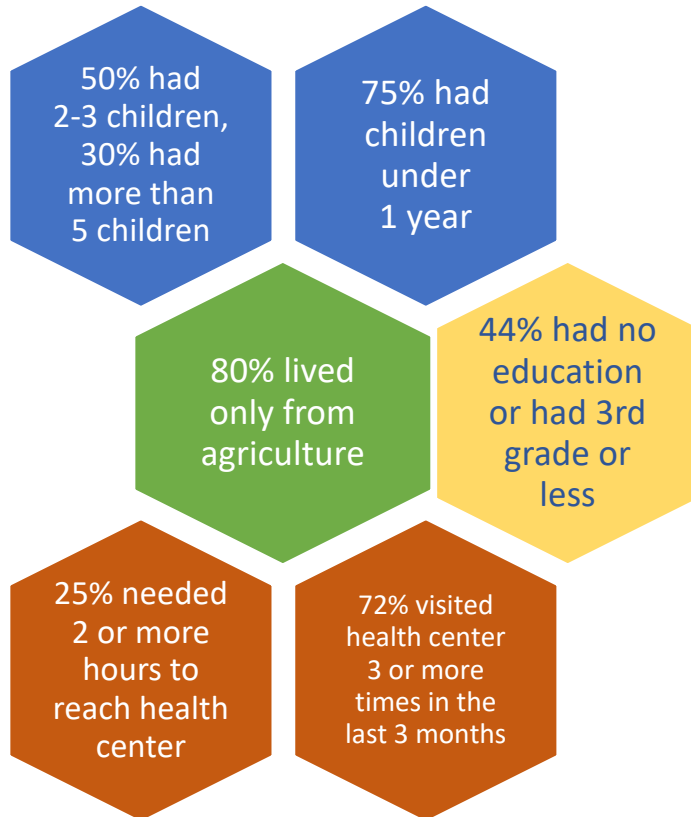
Insights from human centered design in Monapo, Nampula
2022-2023



Sample: 32 caregivers (30 mothers and 2 fathers) who agreed to participate in semi-structured interviews while waiting for services in four health facilities (Monapo sede, Monapo Rio, Carapira and Itoculo) during October-November 2022.



WHO ARE THE CAREGIVERS?



WHAT ARE THEIR DAILY ROUTINES?

Daily routines rotate around chores and care for children and include:

- Taking a bath, sweeping, feeding children
- Working in the field or cooking & selling food
- Fetching water
- Cooking and washing clothes
- Giving bath to children

Rest time is social time and includes:

- Talking to neighbours or family
- Watching a video
- Having dinner as a family

Only 7 caregivers (22%) mentioned playing with children as part of their daily routines.

TYPICAL DAILY ROUTINES

Abiba, mother of a 4-year-old and a 1.5-year-old:

“When I wake up, I go to the field. When I work, I let my 1.5-year-old daughter to sit on the ground and play on her own. When I come back, I prepare lunch and take a bath. I play with my daughter after lunch. Then I go to the church to practice the songs. Afterwards I go to the market to find something for dinner. I prepare dinner and then I rest.”



Fatima, first-time mother of a 7-month-old baby:

“When I wake up, I take a bath and go to fetch the water from the well. Then I wash the dishes and the clothes, and prepare porridge for the child. I go and talk to my sister-in-law. Then I look for some cassava leaves and prepare our xima (porridge) for lunch. After lunch I go to fetch water again and I take a bath while I am there. After I return I bath my daughter, dress her and give her something to eat. She takes a nap and I sleep with her. After my husband returns, I prepare dinner. Then I go to the neighbour’s place with my friends to watch a video. After I return, I go to bed.”



Faizal, father of 11-month-old twins:

“I take a bath, greet my children, and if they are well I go to work in the field. [If they are not well, I help the mother to take them to the hospital.] When I return, I take a bath, have lunch, and talk to my children by telling them stories. Then I go for a walk and when I return I bring some food for the dinner. After dinner I watch TV with my children and then I go to bed.”



IS THERE TIME FOR PLAY DURING DAILY ROUTINES?

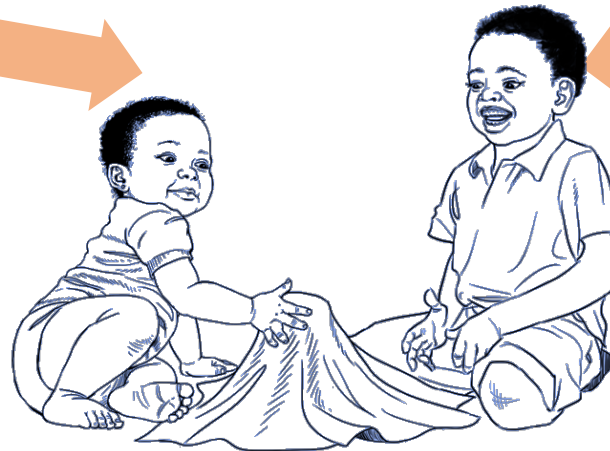
Almost 60% of the caregivers shared that they left the baby to play with older children or alone, and that they waited for down time to play.

In all these moments, my daughter is playing with her siblings.

I play with my child after I am done with chores.

When I wash dishes, he plays with his toys alone.

I play with my child after lunch.



IS THERE TIME FOR PLAY DURING DAILY ROUTINES?

Close to 40% of caregivers described using daily routines or chores to play and talk with their children.

When I wash clothes, my son plays with the water that I use for washing.

I play with him while I am selling at my [market] stall.

I play and talk with him while I am cooking or washing dishes.

When I go to fetch water I carry my child with me and I play with him while we wait in line.



HOW DO PARENTS PLAY WITH THEIR CHILDREN UNDER 2?

There was a lot of warmth and joy between parents and young children during playtime.

The main play activities for under 2s were:

- ✓ to call the child (by name or by “papa” or “mama”)
- ✓ to bounce him or her up and down to make them laugh.



As children got older (18 months or so), caregivers played by sending them on small errands.

HOW DO PARENTS PLAY WITH THEIR CHILDREN UNDER 2?

A few caregivers shared examples of questions they asked their children, to stimulate them.

*"Do you want to play
with your sister?"*
(6 month old)

*"How are you feeling?
Are you angry?"*
(22 month old)

*"Where is your
papa?"*
(6 month old)

*"Do you like your
papa?"*
(6 month old)

*"Do you want to
take a bath?"*
(5 month old)

"Are you sleeping?"
(22 month old)



Most questions just required YES / NO type responses
or could be answered with gestures.

CAREGIVER PERCEPTIONS OF IMPORTANCE OF PLAY

For 60% of the caregivers, talking and playing with the child is important because it helps the child learn from parents.

"It is for her to learn to practice everything I teach."

"The child learns when we talk..."



For 50% of the caregivers, play is important because it helps them notice whether the child is sick or healthy, or whether she has some disability.

"A sick child does not play."

"I see that the way she plays today is different from the way she played yesterday."

For one in five caregivers, play is important because it creates proximity between parent and child, and socializes the child.

"... when you do not play with your child, she will be afraid of you..."

"... for him to learn to play like other children do..."

PRESENCE OF PLAYTHINGS AT HOME

All but two caregivers mentioned that a child has at least one plaything at home.

Most common playthings were:

- Shakers
- Dolls
- Cars
- Balls.



Additionally, 30% of caregivers mentioned “unstructured” materials such as bottle caps, plastic containers, pieces of wood or cloth. And about as many caregivers described showing pictures to children (for about, in the books.)

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CHILD DEVELOPMENT: SHOULD ONE TALK TO A CHILD WHO CANNOT YET TALK BACK?

87% of caregivers thought that it made sense to talk to babies even if they could not talk back, because:

- *“it is for them to learn to hear and to talk”*
- *“the child will become confident and close to parents”*
- *“the child will become accustomed to people”.*



13% of caregivers, however, believed that the child was too small to talk to and as a result:

- could not hear
- could not understand or respond.

“It does not make sense to talk a small child, because he does not respond when you talk.”

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CHILD DEVELOPMENT

SHOULD FATHERS BE INVOLVED WITH NEWBORNS?

Most mothers agree that fathers should assist with a newborn:

- It helps the child get used to and like the father
- It allows the mother to do other chores
- It's father's obligation
- Fathers enjoy it
- Father's care will help baby develop.



Just 5 caregivers thought that the man cannot touch a newborn, because:

- He does not know how to hold such a small child
- Other men (but not the father) cannot touch the newborn.

WHAT DO CAREGIVERS APPRECIATE ABOUT BEING PARENTS?

Most of the caregivers (over 80%) appreciated that their children would help them, now or in the future.

It's good to be a mother. I like it because the children help with household tasks.



I like very much to be a mother because I know that one day they will help me economically, and if I get sick, they will take me to the hospital.

I like to be a mother, because after my daughter grows up I can send her to bring water for me.

WHAT DO CAREGIVERS APPRECIATE ABOUT BEING PARENTS?

One quarter of the caregivers (25%) felt proud to be called "mother" or "father". Some justified that being a parent was a respected role in society.



WHAT DO CAREGIVERS APPRECIATE ABOUT BEING PARENTS?

Finally, a small group of caregivers appreciated being parents because their children made them happy.



I like to be a mother most of all because I do not have my own mother, and so my children bring me joy.

I like to be a mother because the children often relieve me of sadness.

I like to be mother because when I play with him, I forget about sad things...

WHAT FRUSTRATES CAREGIVERS AS PARENTS?

Only 30% of the caregivers felt some frustration in their role as parents. Of these, the majority felt frustrated that they could not sustain their children due to high cost of life.



A difficult life makes me dislike being a mother.

I do not see what to give to my child, because my husband abandoned me.

The cost of life is high, so I do not see what to give to my children to eat.

HOW ARE WE USING THESE INSIGHTS IN PROGRAMMING?



We share with caregivers examples of how to bring play into daily routines.



We teach caregivers that a child can hear in utero, during antenatal care, and explain the value of talking to the baby before and after birth.



We engage fathers in talking and holding their babies, already in antenatal care and maternity wards.



We model rich conversations and suggest types of questions that caregivers could ask children.



We address caregiver motivation and caregiver perception of importance of play, during counselling.