



FINAL EVALUATION and DOCUMENTATION OF SEEDs

A Learning from pilot phase in Mozambique

Child Protection Community-led Approach (SEEDs) piloted in Manica Province between 2023-2024 by Save the Children International in Mozambique in collaboration with War Child Holland.



Save the Children



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Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	4
BACKGROUND.....	8
Objectives.....	9
METHODOLOGY.....	10
Learning timeframe.....	11
Study population.....	11
Data collection and management.....	12
Data collection tools.....	12
Data analysis.....	13
Ethical considerations.....	13
Limitations.....	13
SEEDS in ACTION: EVIDENCE AND LEARNING IN MOZAMBIQUE.....	14
Phase 1 – Preparation.....	15
<i>Community Selection</i>	15
<i>From community facilitator to Volunteer: Selection process</i>	17
Phase 2 – Learning.....	20
Phase 3 – Community Action Planning.....	21
Phase 4 – Action Plan Implementation.....	23
Phase 5 – Community Reflection.....	26
Phase 6 – Exit.....	27
ASSESSMENT RESULTS.....	28
FINDINGS.....	30
LESSONS LEARNED.....	31
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	32

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 2024, Save the Children Mozambique, in partnership with War Child Holland, implemented and evaluated the SEEDs community-led child protection approach in Manica District. This report presents the evidence generated through the pilot phase, highlighting the experiences, contributions, and learning emerging from communities, local stakeholders, and partners. The findings underscore the critical role that communities themselves play in creating protective environments for children.

The successful implementation of this pilot was made possible through strong leadership and collaboration across multiple levels such as from the global Child Protection Technical Advisor, **Caroline Veldhuizen**, whose expertise was instrumental in shaping the approach, strengthening the learning framework, and ensuring alignment with global standards. At the national level, the process greatly benefited from the dedicated support of the Child Protection Technical Advisor, **Imerson Cardoso**, whose continuous engagement, technical oversight, and field accompaniment ensured quality implementation and meaningful reflection throughout all phases.

Equally critical was the contribution of the community coaches **Abias Chidenga** and **Célia Macuacua**, whose close work with communities enabled the practical application of the SEEDs methodology. Their facilitation, mentorship, and commitment to community engagement were central to building trust, strengthening local ownership, and ensuring that the approach remained grounded in the realities of the communities.

Save the Children extends its sincere appreciation to the District Services for Health, Women and Social Action (SDSMAS) for their technical guidance and support in identifying and engaging target communities. Special recognition is given to community leaders and members in Chizipa and Guindingue, whose openness, commitment, and active participation enabled meaningful implementation and continuous learning throughout the process.

At the core of this initiative were the community volunteers, whose dedication and willingness to contribute their time and knowledge demonstrate the strength and potential of locally driven solutions. Their engagement reflects the importance of investing in community ownership as a foundation for sustainable child protection systems.

It is hoped that this report will support Save the Children Country Offices, partners, and stakeholders to reflect on current practices and draw on these insights to strengthen community-led child protection programming. By valuing local knowledge, fostering inclusive participation, and reinforcing community ownership, such approaches can contribute to more sustainable and contextually relevant outcomes for children.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context

The SEEDs (child protection community-led approach) was piloted by Save the Children Mozambique in partnership with War Child Holland in the communities of Chizipa and Guindingue in Manica District, in Manica Province, over 15-month period between 2023 and 2024. Implemented under the NORAD-funded “*Leaving No Child Behind*” project, the pilot aimed to strengthen community ownership of child protection, enhance local capacities, and generate practical evidence to inform Save the Children’s global Common Approach for community-based child protection.

Through a structured, six-phase process—Preparation, Learning, Action Planning, Implementation, Reflection, and Exit, the approach emphasized participatory analysis, inclusive engagement of adults and children, and locally available resources to respond to child protection risks.

Using participatory and inclusive approaches, the learning and assessment process combined different methods by applying continuous reflection embedded throughout implementation and Post-intervention assessment. Over the course of the six SEEDs phases, structured reflection sessions were conducted with community volunteers, community coaches, and Save the Children technical staff. These sessions enabled real-time learning, adaptive programming, and documentation of locally driven solutions. A Post-intervention assessment was conducted in March 2024, using qualitative data, including focus group discussions (FGDs) with children, caregivers, and volunteers, and Key Informant Interviews (KII) with community leaders. Child-friendly and participatory tools such as body mapping, community mapping, storytelling, and H-Reflexão were used to ensure children’s voices were meaningfully and safely included. Quantitative participation data were triangulated with qualitative findings to assess progress against programme outcomes. Across the learning phase, a total of 2,464 individuals participated in reflection sessions and related activities, from which 475 boys, 475 girls, 50 children with disabilities, 713 women, 713 men, and 38 adults with disabilities.

For the Post-intervention assessment, data collection was conducted in the same locations using Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 122 adults 19- 80 and 90 children aged 9-18 and interviews across seven neighbourhoods in Chizipa and Guindingue. In addition, programme monitoring data show that 449 individuals (240 children (119 girls; 121 boys from which 9 girls with disabilities and 3 boys with disability) and 209 adults (68 men; 141 women; 6 women from which with disability and 5 men with disabilities), including persons with disabilities) were meaningfully involved in reflection, decision-making, and community action processes related to child protection.

The objective of this learning report is to document evidence and lessons from the SEEDs pilot, assess the effectiveness of a community-led child protection model in strengthening protective environments for children, and identify opportunities and limitations for adapting and scaling the approach within Mozambique. This generates practical evidence on whether community-led processes can deliver measurable child protection outcomes with limited external input; to understand how community ownership, participation, and reflection influence sustainability; and to provide actionable recommendations for Save the Children, partners, and government stakeholders on how to replicate and scale the SEEDs approach across sectors and geographies.

Key Findings

The key Findings demonstrate that the SEEDs approach is effective and functional in strengthening community-based child protection. Communities exceeded programme targets, achieving 150% progress against a 40% target for community-led implementation of action plans, 111% progress on inclusion of vulnerable groups, and 86% progress toward volunteer capacity targets. Through participatory analysis, adults and children identified largely overlapping child protection risks, validating the relevance of child-centred methodologies. Community-led actions resulted in tangible and visible improvements in children’s safety and wellbeing, including the clearing of unsafe school routes, construction of small bridges to enable safe river crossings, and the building of annex classrooms to reduce long and unsafe travel

distances for younger children. In Chizipa, sustained community advocacy supported by facilitation rather than material assistance, led to the extension of border operating hours to 24 hours, significantly reducing children's exposure to transactional sex and informal labour associated with prolonged truck queuing.

The pilot revealed important contextual differences affecting effectiveness and sustainability. In rural Guindingue, limited prior exposure to external assistance contributed to stronger internal organization, local resource mobilization, and a faster transition to self-facilitated reflection and action. In contrast, in peri-urban Chizipa, historical exposure to humanitarian and development aid shaped expectations for material support and sustained reliance on community coaches. These differences underscore the importance of context-sensitive facilitation and phased transition strategies. The pilot also revealed key structural and social factors influencing effectiveness. Across both sites, replacing the term "*facilitator*" with "*community volunteer*" proved critical in managing expectations and reinforcing the principle of community ownership. Women comprised 87% of the volunteers, reflecting local gender norms that position women as primary caregivers and trusted confidants for children. While this enhanced child disclosure and caregiving sensitivity, it also underscored challenges regarding male participation and the need for more gender-balanced engagement. Low literacy levels among volunteers affected documentation and reduced autonomy, underscoring the importance of capacity strengthening and simplified tools for community volunteers.

From a sustainability perspective, SEEDs demonstrated strong potential where reflection spaces became community-led and embedded within local structures. In Guindingue, communities continued planning and initiating actions beyond the formal project exit, including preparations for additional classroom construction. While Chizipa showed slower progress toward autonomy, communities expressed commitment to maintaining dialogue and collective action spaces established through the approach. Compared with more conventional Community Child Protection Committee (CCPC) models in Mozambique which often face challenges related to volunteer motivation, incentives, and post-project inactivity, SEEDs places greater emphasis on prevention, collective responsibility, and continuous learning, enhancing prospects for sustained impact.

The approach is replicable and cost-efficient. SEEDs operates without financial incentives or material distributions, relying on local labour, social capital, and existing community resources. Significant protection outcomes including infrastructure improvements and policy-level change were achieved through advocacy and collective action rather than direct project expenditure. This positions SEEDs as a cost-effective complement to Save the Children's child protection, education, child rights governance, and resilience programmes, and as a viable model for humanitarian contexts such as Cabo Delgado, where community-driven mechanisms are critical due to limited formal services. However, it is highly recommended to engage other humanitarian actors on the approach to avoid potential constraints. SEEDs complements humanitarian interventions such as case management and child-friendly spaces by strengthening community systems that can sustain protection outcomes beyond emergency response phases.

Recommendations

Recommendations to SCI or Organization implementing the approach

- 1. Adapt SEEDs for humanitarian and fragile contexts:** SEEDs should be used as a community stabilization and protection-strengthening approach. SEEDs can complement emergency interventions such as Child Friendly Spaces and case management by:
 - Supporting community-led identification of evolving risks;
 - Strengthening social cohesion and collective coping mechanisms;
 - Facilitating locally driven protection solutions during protracted crises.
- 2. Invest in facilitation capacity and mindset change:** Scaling SEEDs requires a deliberate shift from delivery-oriented programming to facilitation-based accompaniment. The pilot showed that facilitation style strongly influenced community ownership, with more directive approaches limiting autonomy, particularly in peri-urban contexts. Save the Children should:
 - Ensure programme managers, MEAL, and field teams are trained and aligned early on SEEDs facilitation principles to prevent reliance on indicator-driven implementation. Emphasize community

ownership, use of local resources, and adaptive learning, supported by ongoing mentoring and integration of qualitative, community-driven outcomes into MEAL systems.;

- Introduce phased facilitation models, gradually transferring leadership to communities;
 - Develop low-literacy facilitation and documentation tools to support volunteer autonomy.
- 3. Integrate community reflection into MEAL systems:** SEEDs demonstrated that structured reflection sessions are powerful drivers of accountability, adaptation, and sustainability. Integrate MEAL into ongoing community reflection sessions to ensure real-time learning, capture qualitative insights, and align programme adaptation with community priorities, strengthening ownership and responsiveness in both development and humanitarian contexts.
 - 4. Clarify volunteer roles within referral pathways** to avoid confusion between facilitation and case management, especially in humanitarian contexts.
 - 5. Use SEEDs as a bridge between humanitarian and development programming,** supporting continuity of protection efforts across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

Recommendations for Government Authorities (District, Provincial and National Levels)

1. Embed SEEDs within existing Community Protection Structures

Government actors, including SDSMAS and education authorities, should adopt SEEDs reflection and action-planning methodologies to strengthen existing Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs). The pilot demonstrated that SEEDs addresses key weaknesses of CCPCs such as low motivation and post-project inactivity by fostering collective ownership, prevention-focused action, and continuous learning.

2. Use SEEDs to strengthen multi-Sector coordination

SEEDs provides a practical platform for linking communities with formal systems. Successful advocacy for extended border operating hours in Chizipa illustrates how community-led dialogue can influence structural and policy-level change when supported by facilitation. Government actors should use SEEDs spaces to:

- Strengthen coordination between child protection, education, health, and local administration;
- Support community-led identification of systemic barriers affecting children;
- Improve responsiveness to locally identified priorities.

Recommendations for Donors

1. Support flexible, long-term funding models

SEEDs requires time for trust-building, social norm change, and capacity development, which cannot be achieved through short project cycles. Donors should provide flexible, multi-year funding that allows phased implementation and gradual transition toward community autonomy, particularly in fragile and crisis-affected contexts.

2. Prioritize value for money and sustainability

The pilot demonstrates that SEEDs is highly cost-efficient, achieving significant protection outcomes without material inputs or financial incentives. Donors should recognize and support SEEDs as a value-for-money investment that delivers sustainable outcomes by leveraging local resources, social cohesion, social capital, and community leadership.

Recommendations for Community Structures and Civil Society Organizations

1. Strengthen Inclusive Community Leadership

Communities should deliberately use SEEDs processes to broaden participation, particularly of children, men, persons with disabilities, and marginalized groups. While women's leadership was a strength of the pilot, limited male engagement remains a risk to sustainability and shared responsibility for child protection.

2. Apply SEEDs beyond Child Protection

Community groups and local CSOs should be encouraged to apply SEEDs tools to other priority issues such as education access, GBV prevention, disaster risk reduction, and climate adaptation. The pilot showed that once communities internalize the methodology, they naturally extend it to other challenges, reinforcing its replicability and transformative potential.

Key lessons learned

- Structured reflection strengthens accountability and sustainability: Regular reflection sessions enabled communities to track progress, adapt strategies, and reinforce shared responsibility.
- Community autonomy varies by context and prior exposure to aid: Rural Guindingue transitioned more quickly to self-led reflection and action, while peri-urban Chizipa required continued external facilitation.
- A planned exit process supports continuity beyond project support: Clarifying volunteer roles and sustaining dialogue spaces helped communities continue collective action after project closure.
- Sustainability can emerge even without formal continuation phases: Community initiatives, such as planning additional classrooms, demonstrated ongoing ownership despite the end of external facilitation.
- Community-led approaches are effective in resource-constrained contexts: Communities successfully identified and implemented context-appropriate solutions using their own resources.
- Adaptive facilitation and long-term engagement are critical: Flexibility, mentoring, and alignment with local norms enhanced ownership and effectiveness.
- Inclusive participation requires deliberate strategies: Sustained efforts are needed to meaningfully engage children, men, and marginalized groups.
- SEEDs has strong potential for scale as a socio-ecological model: The approach delivers measurable protection outcomes, strengthens social cohesion, and offers a cost-efficient, sustainable model for broader application.
- Community-led approaches deliver multiple protection benefits: SEEDs contributed not only to measurable child protection outcomes, but also to enhanced social cohesion, strengthened local systems, and shared responsibility for children's safety and wellbeing.



BACKGROUND

Mozambique continues to face significant challenges in ensuring a safe and protective environment for children. Despite progress in expanding access to education, health, and child protection services, many children remain at risk of violence, neglect, child marriage, and child labor. According to recent national indicators, 48% of girls are married before the age of 18, while 22% of children are engaged in child labor. Incidences of physical and sexual violence also remain high, with 1 in 4 girls (23%) and 1 in 5 boys (18%) report experiencing physical violence before age 18.

These risks are often compounded by poverty, limited access to services, and weak community-based protection structures.

In Manica Province, one of the country's most vulnerable regions, children are particularly exposed due to social and economic instability, migration, and limited formal protection services.

Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs) are present in many districts of Mozambique and play an important role in identifying, referring, and responding to cases of child protection. Over the past decades, Save the Children Mozambique has made significant investments in strengthening these structures. This includes building the capacity of community volunteers, providing training on identification and referrals, and supporting awareness-raising campaigns. At the national level, Save the Children has also led the development of child protection protocols and tools in close coordination with the Government of Mozambique, contributing to greater alignment between community mechanisms and formal protection systems. Despite these efforts, several structural challenges remain:

- **Resource and capacity constraints:** CCPCs are largely volunteer-based and often lack the financial resources, technical training, and logistical support needed to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Motivation of members can decline when there are no incentives or long-term support mechanisms.
- **Sustainability:** Many committees are established through donor-funded projects and risk becoming inactive once external support ends. Without integration into broader community governance structures or consistent local government backing, their long-term survival remains uncertain.
- **Coordination gaps:** While protocols and referral pathways exist, coordination between CCPCs, local authorities, and formal services (health, education, justice, and social welfare) is often weak. This leads to delays in response, poor case follow-up, and inconsistent protection outcomes for children.
- **Community awareness and social norms:** In some areas, harmful practices such as early marriage, corporal punishment, and gender-based discrimination remain normalized, limiting the effectiveness of community structures in promoting change.

SEEDs in Mozambique

The approach was implemented in Mozambique under the “Leaving No Child Behind” project, funded by NORAD and technically supported by Save the Children’s global teams. The pilot phase aimed to strengthen child protection systems by promoting inclusive, community-led approaches that ensure no child, especially the most vulnerable is excluded from protection and development opportunities. This was implemented as a contribution to respond to project indicators related to communities able to actively implement actions for protection and wellbeing of children.

The implementation combined financial support with continuous technical assistance, including guidance on methodology, tools, and adaptive learning processes. This collaboration enabled the contextualization of the approach to the Mozambican setting, while maintaining alignment with global standards and best practices in child protection, community engagement, and participatory programming.

These challenges underline the need for stronger investment in sustainability, integration, and ownership, ensuring that community-led mechanisms are not only established but also effectively linked to government services and supported over the long term. The SEEDs approach responds to this gap by emphasizing community ownership, inclusive participation, and the use of local resources, while working in alignment with national protocols and systems.

To address these challenges, Save the Children, in partnership with War Child Holland, introduced the SEEDs (Systemic, Empowering, Evidence-driven, and Developmental) approach—a community-led child protection model designed to strengthen local ownership and capacity. The approach is grounded in inclusive facilitation, where community members, including children, collectively identify local risks to children, prioritize harms, design context-appropriate solutions using their own resources, and reflect on progress over time. By adopting a socio-ecological lens, SEEDs promotes sustainability by building on the strengths, knowledge, and skills that already exist within communities.

Within Manica District, the communities of Chizipa and Guindingue were identified as priority areas for piloting a new, community-driven approach to child protection.

Over a 15-month period (2022–2023), Save the Children Mozambique in partnership with War Child Holland, followed six structured phases of implementation through mentorship from SC child protection global technical advisor. These communities were selected due to their vulnerability to child protection risks, including violence, neglect, and limited interventions from different actors.

The pilot aimed not only to strengthen child protection at the local level, but also to generate evidence on the effectiveness of community-led approaches in protecting children to inform a new SC child protection common approach.

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the outcomes of the pilot and document lessons learned, capturing evidence of change, community perspectives, and the challenges encountered. By documenting the experiences of the pilot phase, Save the Children seeks to inform future programming, scale up effective practices, and contribute to national and global learning on community-based child protection.



Objectives

Evidence gathered through this assessment will support decision-making at national and community levels, while contributing to global learning on effective community-based child protection models.

The assessment of the SEEDs community-led child protection approach was undertaken to:

- Document evidence and lessons learned from the pilot phase in Manica District, specifically in the communities of Chizipa and Guindingue.
- Assess the effectiveness of the community-led model in strengthening child protection systems, increasing community ownership, and improving the safety and well-being of children.
- Identify challenges and opportunities for adapting and scaling the approach within Mozambique's child protection framework.

- Inform future programming and advocacy by providing concrete recommendations for Save the Children, partners, and government stakeholders.
- Identify and evaluate actions taken by communities to promote child participation and protection during the implementation of the Seeds pilot approach in the district of Manica.

METHODOLOGY

The assessment of the SEEDs pilot in Manica District was conducted through a two-step process designed to capture both ongoing learning during implementation and endline evidence of change:

1. **Continuous Reflection During Implementation:** During the 15-month SEEDs pilot, learning and assessment were embedded into the implementation process through continuous reflection sessions conducted at the end of each of the six phases. These sessions brought together community coaches, facilitators, and the Save the Children Country Office Child Protection Technical Advisors (CPTA) to systematically review the progress of activities, discuss emerging challenges, and capture locally-led solutions in real time. This approach allowed the project team to identify successes and obstacles promptly, adapt strategies as needed, and ensure that community perspectives and experiences informed ongoing implementation.

These sessions provided a structured opportunity for adaptive learning and included the following steps:

Continuous Reflection Process



- a. **Review of Activities** – Community coaches and facilitators presented progress made during the phase, outlining key actions undertaken and initial results observed.
- b. **Analysis of Challenges** – Emerging difficulties and barriers were identified and discussed collectively, with contributions from facilitators, community members, and the Save the Children Country Office Child Protection Technical Advisors (CPTA).
- c. **Documentation of Local Solutions** – Locally-led strategies and responses developed based on the communities insights and ensure they informed both current and future actions.
- d. **Adaptation of Strategies** – Based on the lessons emerging from reflection, the project team and community actors adjusted implementation approaches to strengthen effectiveness and relevance.

- e. **Feedback Loop** – Outcomes from each phase were shared primarily with community facilitators and with community stakeholders to validate findings and reinforce ownership of the process.

2. **Post-intervention assessment Exercise:** At the conclusion of the SEEDs pilot, an Post-intervention assessment exercise was conducted to capture the outcomes and lessons learned from the community-led approach. This assessment employed a combination of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), engaging children, caregivers, community leaders, and facilitators to provide a holistic understanding of the pilot’s impact.

To ensure that the voices of children were meaningfully and safely included, participatory tools and exercises were used with both children and adults. These exercises encouraged active engagement, reflection, and dialogue, enabling participants to share their perspectives, experiences, and insights in an inclusive and culturally appropriate manner.

The post-intervention assessment generated qualitative and quantitative evidence on the effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability of the SEEDs approach. Findings highlighted how community-led processes contributed to strengthening child protection, enhancing local ownership, and fostering sustainable actions to safeguard children within their communities.

Learning timeframe

During the 15-month pilot, structured reflection sessions were held at the close of each of the six implementation phases to produce learning and improve the approach implementation. The Post-intervention assessment was conducted between 19 and 21 March 2024 with focus to analyse the achievement and impact of the project indicators.

Study population

The continuous learning and assessment of the SEEDs pilot in Manica District involved a diverse group of community members from seven neighborhoods: Células A, B and C, Chinhamudidi, Muchácata, Majah, and Kununguno. Over the course of implementation, a total of 2,464 individuals participated in reflection sessions and related activities, from which 475 boys, 475 girls, 50 children with disabilities, 713 women, 713 men, and 38 adults with disabilities. As part of the decision-making around 449 [209 adults (68 men; 141 women; 6 women with disability and 5 men with disabilities) and 240 children (119 girls; 121 boys and 9 girls with disabilities and 3 boys with disability)] participated in the sessions. This broad participation ensured that different perspectives, including those of children and persons with disabilities, were captured throughout the learning process.

For the Post-intervention assessment, data collection was conducted in the same locations using Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 122 adults and 90 children and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). Groups were organized to ensure inclusiveness and representation. Among adults, groups of around 15 participants per neighborhood were formed, involving local structures, religious leaders, traditional birth attendants, and other influential community members. For children, sessions were held mainly in schools to accommodate their schedules, as data collection took place during the school term. Child participants ranged in age from 9 to 18 years, while adult participants ranged from 19 to 80 years, with both sexes represented in each group.

District	Posto Administrativo	Community	Bairros	Crianças (09-18)	Com deficiencia	Adultos (19-80)	Com deficiencia	Total
Manica	Machipanda	Chizipa	Celula A	17	0	16	0	33
			Celula B	16	0	17	0	33
			Celula C	15	0	15	0	30
	Messica	Guindingue	Kununguno	0	0	14	0	14
			Majah	14	0	21	0	35
			Chinhamudidi	12	0	26	0	38
			Muchacata	16	0	13	0	29
Total				90	0	122	0	212

Data collection and management

The process of data collection and management for the SEEDs pilot assessment combined both continuous reflection during implementation and a Post-intervention assessment exercise. These two streams ensured that evidence was systematically gathered, analyzed, and validated throughout the pilot.

Data collection activities were led by a dedicated team of Save the Children staff, including the National Child Protection Lead, provincial Child Protection Advisor, MEAL Officer, Communications Intern, and two community coaches (Child Protection Officers). Field teams were organized into groups of three, each comprising a Facilitator, a Recorder, and a Photographer/Translator. This structure allowed for efficient facilitation of sessions, accurate documentation of findings, and visual capture of community processes where appropriate.

Prior to deployment, all team members received intensive training in qualitative data collection, the use and interpretation of instruments, ethical considerations, and techniques for facilitating individual and group interviews. Training emphasized safeguarding principles and the safe, respectful engagement of children and adults in line with Save the Children's standards.

During continuous reflection sessions, facilitators worked closely with community coaches to document progress, challenges, and locally developed solutions. These sessions prioritized inclusivity and ensured that insights emerging from communities were immediately fed back into the project cycle.

For the Post-intervention assessment, a range of participatory tools and methods were employed. These included individual and group interviews with children, parents, caregivers, and community leaders, as well as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with selected participants. Creative participatory techniques—such as community mapping, storytelling, and expressive methods like dance—were used to encourage open dialogue and allow children to express their views in playful and non-verbal ways. This approach proved particularly effective in capturing children's perspectives on sensitive protection issues.

Data management followed a systematic process. Notes, transcripts, and images were compiled by recorders, reviewed daily for quality, and stored securely to ensure confidentiality. Findings from both reflection and endline stages were then analyzed by the assessment team to identify recurring themes, document lessons, and assess the overall effectiveness of the SEEDs approach.

Data collection tools

During the SEEDs pilot, a combination of tools was used to ensure systematic and reliable documentation of evidence. For the continuous reflection sessions, the assessment team applied a standardized reflection form developed by the global SEEDs team, which included guiding questions to capture progress, challenges, and lessons learned. These forms were complemented by the Reflective Sessions Guidance, which provided coaches with a structured process for engaging communities in dialogue and documenting locally identified solutions. This dual approach allowed for consistency across all six phases of the pilot while also giving space for community-specific reflections to emerge.

For the Post-intervention assessment, additional tools were introduced to deepen analysis and validate learning. Structured Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guides and Key Informant Interview (KII) protocols were developed to capture perceptions from children, parents, caregivers, community leaders, and facilitators. These instruments focused on key dimensions of the SEEDs approach, including relevance, effectiveness, ownership, and sustainability, while ensuring that both adult and child participants could share their experiences in safe and accessible ways.

All data collection tools were designed to generate qualitative insights while capturing quantitative elements such as participation numbers and frequency of actions. The use of standardized templates and guides also ensured comparability of findings across neighborhoods and phases. To ensure that children's voices were central to the assessment, the process integrated creative and age-appropriate participatory tools. A key method used was H-Reflexão, a reflective exercise designed to help children express their perceptions of change in a simple, visual, and interactive way. Through this tool, children were invited to

share what they felt had improved (the positive side of the “H”), what challenges remained (the negative side of the “H”), and their recommendations for the future (the connecting bar of the “H”).

This exercise provided children with a structured yet flexible space to reflect on their experiences with the SEEDs approach, highlighting both progress made and areas needing further attention. The format was particularly effective for younger participants, as it encouraged expression beyond verbal responses, using drawings, symbols, and short statements.

In addition to H-Reflexão, other participatory methods such as drawing, storytelling, and small-group discussions were used to complement the process. Sessions were organized in schools, adapted to class schedules, and conducted with children.

For adult participants, the assessment employed interactive methods designed to encourage reflection, dialogue, and collective problem-solving. Exercises such as ranking of risks and priorities and storytelling were used to explore changes observed in the community, the effectiveness of local child protection efforts, and challenges that remained.

Data analysis

Data collected during both the continuous reflection sessions and the Post-intervention assessment were systematically analyzed to generate meaningful insights on the SEEDs pilot. Qualitative data from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), participatory exercises, and reflective forms were transcribed, organized, and coded thematically using a framework aligned with the objectives of the assessment. Emerging patterns, recurring themes, and illustrative quotes were identified to capture community perspectives on child protection, effectiveness of the SEEDs approach, and sustainability of locally-led actions.

Where appropriate, quantitative data—such as participant numbers, age, and sex—were compiled and summarized to complement the qualitative findings. Triangulation was employed across multiple sources and methods to ensure validity and reliability of the evidence. Findings were reviewed collaboratively by the assessment team, including facilitators and Child Protection Technical Advisors, to verify interpretations and ensure that results accurately reflected community voices and experiences.

Ethical considerations

The assessment adhered to strict ethical standards to ensure the safety, dignity, and rights of all participants, especially children. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all adult participants and assent from children, with clear explanations of the purpose of the assessment, their voluntary participation, and the option to withdraw at any time without consequences.

Special measures were taken to ensure confidentiality and privacy. Personal identifiers were removed from transcripts and records, and all data were stored securely. During participatory exercises, facilitators created safe and supportive environments, encouraging children and adults to express their views freely while minimizing any risk of harm or distress.

The assessment team was trained in child safeguarding principles, including recognizing and responding to disclosures of abuse, and followed Save the Children’s safeguarding policies throughout. Additionally, participatory methods such as H-Reflexão and storytelling were designed to be age-appropriate, culturally sensitive, and non-intrusive, allowing participants to share experiences in ways they felt comfortable.

Limitations

While the assessment generated valuable insights into the SEEDs pilot, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings:

- **Short implementation period:** The pilot was conducted over 15 months, which restricts the ability to measure long-term sustainability or impact on child protection outcomes. At the same, during the assessment period, the high need for continued support to communities was noticed as part of the exit

phase but also to build more confidence among themselves to implement actions without external support.

- **Sample size:** Although diverse groups participated, the number of respondents was relatively small and may not fully capture all community perspectives.
- **Self-reporting bias:** Much of the data relies on participants' self-reported perceptions, which may be influenced by expectations, social desirability, or recall limitations.
- **External factors:** Broader social and economic challenges in Manica Province, including poverty, migration, and limited-service availability, may have affected community participation and outcomes beyond the scope of the project.

Despite these limitations, the assessment provides robust evidence based on the effectiveness of the SEEDs approach and offers practical lessons for scaling and adaptation in other settings.

SEEDs in ACTION: EVIDENCE AND LEARNING IN MOZAMBIQUE

The SEEDs approach was designed as a **six-phase process** to guide communities step by step in strengthening child protection through their own capacities, resources, and leadership. Each phase builds on the previous one, moving from community entry and volunteer selection, through collective reflection and planning, to implementation and review of actions. By following this structured pathway, the pilot in Mozambique not only tested the feasibility of the model but also created opportunities to document community-driven solutions and generate evidence on what works in practice.

Six Phases of the Seeds Community-Led Action Process



- **Phase 1 – Preparation:** Building trust with the community, introducing the SEEDs approach, and agreeing on shared expectations and a decision to collaborate around child protection.

- **Phase 2 – Learning:** Engaging the community in participatory reflection to understand local views of childhood, child harms, protection practices, and available resources.
- **Phase 3 – Community Action Planning:** Facilitating inclusive dialogue to prioritize child protection issues and co-create a community action plan, launched with a kick-off activity.
- **Phase 4 – Action Plan Implementation:** Supporting the community in carrying out its plan through regular facilitation, inclusive dialogue, and problem-solving.
- **Phase 5 – Community Reflection:** Reviewing progress, assessing outcomes, and identifying adjustments based on observed changes in children’s lives.
- **Phase 6 – Exit:** Jointly deciding whether the community continues independently or with ongoing support, marking the transition or closure of external facilitation.

This chapter presents a detailed account of how the SEEDs approach was piloted and implemented in Mozambique, specifically in the communities of Chizipa and Guindingue in Manica District. Structured across six phases, the pilot sought not only to test the feasibility of a community-led child protection model but also to generate concrete evidence and capture lessons learned throughout the process.

Each phase describes the key steps taken, the strategies applied, and the experiences of communities and facilitators, supported by evidence from field reflections, participatory assessments, and continuous learning exercises. Together, these insights provide a comprehensive picture of how SEEDs unfolded in practice, the challenges encountered, and the innovations that emerged to strengthen child protection at the community level.

Phase 1 – Preparation

The first phase of the SEEDs pilot focused on identifying target communities and selecting community volunteers to support child protection activities. The implementation team visited used different models to introduce the approach, select the communities and get acceptance for implementation.

Community Selection

Community selection was carried out in close collaboration with the District Services for Health, Women and Social Action (SDSMAS), which holds extensive experience in child protection at community level. As part of the process, SDSMAS responded to the key questions: “Which communities face the most pressing child protection issues, who are the actors operating there, and what are the main challenges affecting children?” Based on this analysis, SDSMAS provided an initial list of priority communities.

Save the Children Mozambique developed the following criteria to support community selection:

- Communities with at least 250 households.
- Selection of two communities with different levels of accessibility: one more remote and one closer to the district center.
- Communities identified as prone to child protection concerns, including child labor, exploitation, early unions, neglect, and sexual abuse and other forms.
- Communities with a high number of orphans and vulnerable children.
- Communities that had not previously been supported by the LNCCB project.

Image 1: Community consultation in Nhaucaca



Following this process, a total of 11 candidate communities were identified and visited multiple times by the SEEDs team. These repeated visits allowed for a deeper analysis of the context and functionality of each community, rather than relying on a single engagement. The process was both technical and relational, combining structured assessments with trust-building activities that created space for communities to openly share their perspectives.

During these visits, the team undertook several key steps. They began by *mapping existing referral systems*, which provided insights into how cases of child protection were identified and addressed locally. At the same time, the *size of each community* was confirmed to estimate the number of facilitators that would be required for effective coverage. Community members were also engaged in *discussions about the problems* most strongly affecting children, ranging from child labor and early unions to neglect and abuse.

Importantly, the process delved into local *perceptions and definitions of childhood*—how people in each community understood the concepts of “child,” “childhood,” “girl,” and “boy.” This revealed subtle differences in expectations, rights, and responsibilities assigned to children, which are essential to consider in program design. The team also explored habits, customs, and cultural practices to identify expressions and behaviors to avoid during facilitation, ensuring sensitivity and respect for community norms.

Attention was given to the *organizational structure* of communities: who leads, how decisions are taken, and which actors are most influential in shaping outcomes. Within this context, the SEEDs team identified both formal leaders and natural community influencers as potential candidates for volunteer facilitators. Community beliefs were also mapped to understand how traditional and religious norms might support—or hinder—child protection.

Image 2: Community consultation in Garuso



At the same time, the team examined the situation of marginalized groups, exploring why certain people were excluded from decision-making and how that exclusion affected children. Finally, household characteristics such as predominant sources of income and literacy levels were analyzed to better understand the socio-economic landscape in which child protection interventions would operate.

This holistic and participatory approach not only provided a comprehensive picture of the communities but also surfaced important insights.

For example, community members often preferred to frame interventions at the neighborhood level rather than the larger community, arguing that smaller units enabled greater ownership and more practical engagement. Such reflections highlighted the importance of listening carefully to community voices when designing localized approaches.

First-level leaders acted as the main entry point and expressed commitment to supporting the pilot. Remote follow-up visits with leaders and influential community members helped sustain engagement and build trust throughout the selection process.

The final selection of communities was guided by both the level of acceptance and the depth of engagement demonstrated by community members, while also ensuring representation of both rural and peri-urban settings where Save the Children had not previously worked. This approach was intended to test the adaptability of SEEDs across different contexts. The selected communities faced significant child protection

challenges, including early pregnancies, children engaged in artisanal mining, and unsafe migration practices. In addition, many households had low literacy levels and relied on limited income sources, with agriculture as the primary livelihood activity. Importantly, many community leaders emphasized that processes should be organized at the neighborhood level, rather than across larger geographical areas, to promote greater ownership, participation, and effectiveness of the intervention.

From community facilitator to Volunteer: Selection process

Within the SEEDs design, the role of facilitator was initially envisioned as a key figure to support implementation at the community level. However, in the areas where the pilot was introduced, this role carried a very different meaning. Based on community perceptions and prior experiences with other organizations, the figure of a facilitator was generally understood to be a paid or subsidized position, which contradicted the core principle of SEEDs as a community-led, volunteer-driven approach.

To address this challenge, Save the Children engaged in a series of discussions with the 11 shortlisted communities to contextualize and validate the criteria for facilitator selection. Throughout these consultations, many community members and leaders expressed reluctance toward using the term *facilitator*, highlighting several concerns:

- In their experience, organizations such as Pathfinder, ANDA, and CODESA employed facilitators as paid staff, often linked to material incentives.
- The term “facilitator” was associated with superior status and authority, someone accountable to an institution and supervised directly.
- Communities feared it would be difficult to understand why SEEDs “facilitators” would not be remunerated, raising doubts about whether people would remain engaged in child protection discussions without financial support.
- The presence of a facilitator was often linked to material benefits, such as seeds, tools, or other resources distributed during previous projects.

These perceptions risked undermining the principle of community ownership that SEEDs seeks to strengthen. In response, and based on the findings from these consultations, the designation of *facilitator* was formally replaced with *volunteer* across all implementation communities.

This shift in terminology proved crucial for aligning community expectations with the SEEDs approach, reinforcing that child protection within SEEDs is led by the community, for the community, rather than externally driven by paid staff.

Community Volunteer Selection: Experiences from Guindingue and Chizipa

The process of selecting community volunteers for the SEEDs approach unfolded in two very different ways across the pilot communities, reflecting the diversity of local decision-making traditions.

In Guindingue, the community opted for a **direct election process**. Community members gathered to vote for the individuals they trusted most to serve as volunteers supporting child protection activities. Interestingly, even though community coaches had already identified individuals with relevant prior experience in similar initiatives, these candidates were not chosen. The community explained that such individuals were not considered to have a positive influence or trustworthy reputation. This decision initially caused some discomfort among the coaches, who had to engage in reflection sessions to ensure they did not impose their own preferences over community choices. Ultimately, however, the process reaffirmed one of SEEDs’ core principles: **community ownership of decisions**.

In Chizipa, by contrast, the approach was based on **consensus among local leaders and influential members** such as religious leaders, elders, and other respected figures. These leaders proposed potential volunteers, and the wider community was then consulted to validate the final list. This method highlighted the importance of traditional structures in local governance and community mobilization.

Across both communities, a total of 15 volunteers were selected, of which 13 were women (87%) and only 2 were men (13%). This outcome was surprising for Save the Children, as women often face social and literacy barriers that limit their participation in community initiatives. However, community discussions revealed why women were viewed as central actors for child protection:

- Women spend more time with children and provide greater attention to their needs.
- They are typically the first point of contact when children want to reach their fathers.
- All requests to fathers are usually channeled through mothers.
- Children, especially girls, feel more comfortable discussing sensitive issues with women.
- Girls are socialized to avoid spending much time with men.
- Women were seen as more sensitive and willing to report child protection concerns.

These reflections demonstrated how **gender roles deeply influence community decision-making**. While the strong presence of women brought clear advantages, such as sensitivity to child protection issues, it also raised concerns about sustainability. In many communities, women have limited influence in decision-making forums, which risked limiting their effectiveness in broader advocacy or negotiation processes. Moreover, the relative absence of men highlighted the need to engage fathers and male figures more actively to ensure shared responsibility in protecting children.

Another key insight was that many of the selected volunteers already held supportive roles in community structures or informal leadership positions. While this strengthened their legitimacy, it also created the risk that they might be viewed as “case workers” or service providers rather than as community facilitators fostering inclusive reflection and action.

The selection process took place during the first quarter of the year, a period marked by heavy rains across much of Mozambique. These weather conditions created logistical challenges for frequent community visits, which sometimes delayed discussions and validation. Despite this, the process successfully concluded with strong community engagement and commitment.

Following the selection, volunteers participated in an initial training program facilitated by Save the Children. This was not a one-off event but rather the beginning of a series of thematic training sessions delivered throughout the phases of SEEDs implementation. Topics included communication with children, use of participatory tools and methodologies, and other highly relevant skills, especially for the learning and reflection phases. In addition, practical training sessions were often conducted where community coaches led real exercises with volunteers. These sessions not only strengthened technical skills but also built trust and confidence between the facilitators and the communities they served.

The training environment was characterized by openness, active contributions, and peer learning, allowing participants to share experiences and strengthen collective ownership of the approach. The quality of the training was ultimately determined by the participants themselves, whose enthusiasm and commitment ensured an effective start to the SEEDs journey.



Case Study: Gender Dynamics in Volunteer Selection in Guindingue and Chizipa

The first phase of SEEDs implementation in Mozambique required communities to select volunteers who would lead the locally driven child protection process. This stage unfolded differently across the two pilot communities, reflecting their unique governance and social structures. In Guindingue, the community opted for a direct election, allowing members to vote for the individuals they trusted most and in Chizipa, the approach was based on consensus. The outcome of both processes was striking: a total of 15 volunteers were selected, of which 13 were women (85%) and only 2 were men (15%). This result was unexpected, as women are often less represented in leadership and decision-making due to prevailing gender and social norms. However, community members explained the reasons behind this choice. Women were seen as spending more time with children, paying closer attention to their needs, and being the first point of contact when children needed to communicate with fathers. All requests to fathers are typically channeled through mothers, and girls, in particular, feel more comfortable discussing sensitive issues with women due to cultural norms that discourage them from spending time with men. Women were also described as more willing and sensitive in reporting child protection concerns.

While this outcome brought important advantages, such as strengthening children's comfort in disclosing risks and ensuring empathetic caregiving perspectives were integrated into protection discussions, it also raised critical challenges. Women's influence in decision-making forums at both household and community levels is often limited, which could reduce their ability to push for broader child protection agendas. Furthermore, the low number of men selected risked reinforcing the idea that child protection is primarily "women's work," potentially

weakening shared responsibility and the long-term sustainability of the approach. In addition, some of the women chosen were already active in community support structures, which created the risk of them being perceived as caseworkers rather than facilitators of collective reflection and action.

The volunteer selection process also highlighted how deeply social and gender norms shape community decisions. Cultural practices that restrict girls' interactions with men reinforced the perception that women should take on caregiving and protective roles. While this alignment supported the SEEDs model, it also risked perpetuating unequal gender expectations that exclude men from playing an active role in child protection.

Several lessons emerged from this experience. First, the process confirmed that community ownership matters: even when their choices challenged external expectations, allowing communities to make final decisions created legitimacy and trust in SEEDs. Second, gender balance is critical. While women's caregiving perspectives are essential, men must also be engaged to transform harmful social norms and share responsibility for child protection. Third, ongoing training and capacity-building proved vital in equipping volunteers with skills, building women's confidence, and creating opportunities to challenge gender stereotypes. Finally, the process underscored the importance of flexibility and persistence, as heavy rains during the first quarter created logistical challenges for community visits and slowed down discussions.

The key lesson for future phases is the need to deliberately seek balanced participation while using training and reflection spaces to progressively shift social norms and build inclusive, community-led child protection systems.

Phase 2 – Learning

The second phase consisted of helping community members identify the main child protection concerns that warrant the community's attention and follow-up. Using a participatory approach, trained community facilitators with support from community coaches led focused discussions in separate groups with adults and children, from which it was possible to identify a number of concerns regarding protection, education, and safety.



Image 3: Body mapping exercise with a group of children from the Kununguno neighbourhood in the Guindingue community

Before engaging in discussions with community members, facilitators received training on the tools, documentation processes, and of child participation strategies to ensure meaningful and effective involvement of children. Additionally, in the communities of Chizipa and Guindingue, participatory sessions were conducted with community facilitators to develop their respective Codes of Conduct and later validated by the community members. These codes establish acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, define the responsibilities and limits of action for community volunteers, and incorporate local mechanisms for reporting and resolving cases and conflicts, adapted to the reality and sociocultural context of both communities.

However, despite this training, facilitators at this level did not feel sufficiently confident leading group discussions. At the same time, communities themselves showed limited trust in the facilitators. As a result, community coaches assumed leadership of the entire process while community facilitators were co-facilitating.

Using participatory tools such as body mapping exercises with children and community mapping with adults, several concerns were identified in Chizipa and Guindingue. In Chizipa, the prevalence of transactional sex between children and truck drivers were identified as critical problem, child labour along the Manica border, cases of child neglect and/or abandonment, and risks to children's safety along the route between home and school (details in [video](#)). Participants emphasized that, beyond exposing children to multiple forms of harm, these issues significantly contribute to school dropout, increased rates of sexually transmitted infections, and early and adolescent pregnancies.

In Guindingue, in addition to concerns about children's safety on their way to school due to factors such as tall grass and the need to cross rivers, participants also highlighted the long distances children must travel

to access education. Notably, both children and adults raised similar concerns, indicating a shared understanding of the key risks affecting children in these communities.

Participants mobilization presented a significant challenge. A large number of women attended meetings under the expectation that they would receive material goods, influenced by previous experiences where mosquito nets had been distributed. Furthermore, past assessments conducted by other organizations, which promised distributions that never materialized, contributed to a broader lack of trust within the communities. Unfortunately, some of these expectations were reinforced by miscommunication from volunteers.

To address these challenges, the community coaches introduced informed consent and assent forms for all participants. These forms included clear and detailed explanations of the purpose of the discussions, as well as the conditions and potential benefits of participation. This approach not only helped to eliminate misunderstandings but also enabled better management of community expectations and ensured that participation was both voluntary and conducted in a safe and transparent manner.

Phase 3 – Community Action Planning

Following the initial phase of identifying and discussing child protection concerns in the areas of intervention, the process of developing community action plans was initiated. At this stage, both adults and children were engaged in identifying priorities, with the objective of ensuring that subsequent actions would directly respond to needs expressed by the communities themselves.

The process was conducted over approximately one month, during which separate sessions were held with adults and children, allowing each group to express themselves freely and in a manner appropriate to their context. A joint session was later organized to consolidate perspectives and agree on shared priorities. However, due to school attendance, it was not always possible to ensure the direct participation of children in all sessions. To address this limitation and ensure that children's voices were adequately captured, adult participants played an active role in consulting children at household level, gathering their views on key issues and potential solutions.

A notable feature of this process was the strong alignment between concerns raised by children and those identified by adults, which facilitated the prioritization process. Based on this shared understanding, action plans were finalized by adults through a participatory voting process,

leading to prioritize three concrete actions for each community or area. The entire process was characterized by strong community engagement, with ideas being collectively discussed, validated, and reinforced—typically requiring the support of at least two or more participants to confirm a given proposal.

As a result, out of the 13 communities initially engaged, 9 were able to develop concrete and contextually relevant action plans addressing the identified challenges.

Noting technical difficulties of the community facilitators related to the limited literacy, documentation, and facilitation skills of some community volunteers, a reflective session was conducted individually and collectively to assess gaps and together identify solutions. Through self-assessment exercises, open dialogue, reflection on perspectives and feelings, and the practice of active listening, several volunteers reported notable improvements in their skills. These included increased confidence in public speaking, enhanced reading and writing abilities, and a deeper understanding of key child protection principles and processes. These gains were perceived not only at the individual level but also as beneficial to their families and wider community.



Image 4: Community action planning in Cell A – the Chizipa community

Importantly, even prior to the full finalization of action plans, some communities demonstrated a high level of ownership and initiative. A notable example was the voluntary construction of two classrooms in the Chinhamudidi neighborhood, aimed at reducing the long distances children had to travel to access schooling. This initiative highlights the effectiveness of the approach in fostering collective reflection and promoting locally driven, sustainable solutions.

Overall, the Seeds approach contributed to strengthening social cohesion, encouraging communities to collectively reflect on their challenges and identify solutions collaboratively. Its relevance extended beyond the targeted areas, as other communities expressed interest in adopting the same methodology. Furthermore, communities already engaged in the approach began applying it to address other issues, such as gender-based violence and local resource management, demonstrating its adaptability and broader value. Despite these positive outcomes, several challenges were identified. Male participation remained limited, often due to competing responsibilities or discomfort in engaging in mixed-group discussions with women and other community members. To address this, facilitators sought the support of community leaders to strengthen the mobilization and sensitization of men, emphasizing their critical role in building a protective environment for children.

Additionally, it was observed that volunteers holding formal leadership positions within the community could both facilitate and complicate the implementation of the Seeds approach. While their status sometimes supported mobilization efforts, it also introduced power dynamics that could undermine the participatory nature of the process. In some cases, these individuals tended to exercise authority, limiting inclusive participation. Nevertheless, during the course of community mobilization, some community facilitators began informally taking on caseworker roles. Following a period of reflection, it became clear that several facilitators are embedded within existing community structures and, according to the referral pathways, are naturally positioned as key actors in identifying, managing, and resolving community-level issues.

This highlighted the need for targeted capacity strengthening to support such individuals in distinguishing their roles and promoting more inclusive engagement.

Furthermore, limited collaboration from some community leaders and neighborhood secretaries was noted, particularly in relation to mobilizing community members for participation in decision-making processes. Finally, seasonal factors—such as the onset of the agricultural campaign—negatively affected participation levels, underscoring the importance of aligning activity planning and timelines with community livelihoods and availability.

Phase 4 – Action Plan Implementation

Following the development of community action plans over a three-month participatory process, both pilot communities proceeded to implement actions aimed at addressing the child protection concerns previously identified. While the overall methodology was consistent, the implementation phase unfolded quite differently in each community due to contextual, social, and structural factors.

The design phase of the action plans was highly participatory and iterative, involving continuous reflection, dialogue, and validation among community members as [video](#). Through a series of structured sessions, participants collectively analyzed the root causes of the challenges affecting children, discussed possible solutions, and identified feasible actions that could be undertaken using locally available resources. This process emphasized inclusivity, with efforts made to ensure that both adult and child perspectives informed the priorities. The final plans reflected a shared vision, with clearly defined actions, roles, and responsibilities distributed among community members. Importantly, the process fostered a sense of ownership, which later influenced the level of commitment observed during implementation.

In **Chizipa**, an peri urban community context, the implementation of the action plan was largely community-led, with minimal external intervention. One of the priority actions focused on improving the safety of routes used by children to travel to and from school. These routes had previously been associated with incidents of theft, physical assault, and road accidents. In response, community members organized themselves into groups based on geographic zones, allowing for a coordinated and efficient effort to clear overgrown areas and improve visibility along these pathways. Women were particularly active in these activities, demonstrating strong engagement and leadership.

As a result of these efforts, children reported feeling safer and more confident attending school regularly. This perception was corroborated by teachers from nearby schools, who observed improvements in attendance and punctuality. This outcome highlights the direct link between community-driven safety interventions and positive educational outcomes.

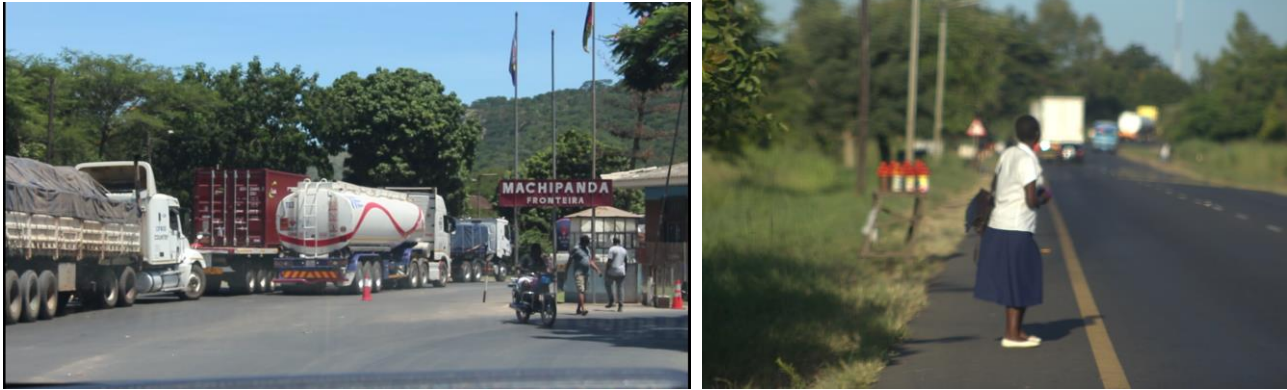
Another critical issue addressed in Chizipa was the prevalence of transactional sex and child labour in the border area. Through in-depth community discussions, participants identified underlying causes, notably the prolonged presence of truck drivers due to the limited operating hours of the border post. Boys often engaged in informal economic activities such as selling goods or providing domestic services (e.g., cooking and cleaning), while girls were more vulnerable to engaging in transactional sex in exchange for money or goods. These dynamics also reflected broader household economic vulnerabilities, where children's contributions were often essential for family survival.

*Image 5: Prolonged queuing of lorry drivers at the border
Prior to the Seeds pilot project - Chizipa Community*



To address this, the community, supported by the community coach and under the leadership of the local community leader organized a formal engagement with local authorities. During this dialogue, they presented the problem, its implications for child protection, and a proposed solution: extending border operating hours. The authorities responded positively, and within two months, the border began operating on a 24-hour basis. This outcome significantly reduced the prolonged presence of truck drivers and, consequently, the associated risks to children.

Image 6: Reduction in prolonged queuing of lorry drivers at the Border following the Seed pilot project – Chizipa community



This case clearly illustrates the critical role of the community coach as a facilitator and bridge between the community and formal systems. Rather than leading the implementation directly, the community coach provided guidance, clarified processes, and supported the community in navigating institutional channels to advocate for sustainable solutions.

Despite these successes, the community continued to express strong expectations for external support, particularly in the form of material assistance and more direct intervention from the implementing organization. There was also a clear preference for the continued involvement of community coaches in facilitating sessions. This underscores the ongoing challenge of balancing community ownership with expectations of external aid, highlighting the need for continued communication and gradual transition strategies to reinforce self-reliance while maintaining supportive engagement.

Guindingue

In the rural community, the implementation of the action plan was characterized by a high level of organization, collective responsibility, and progressive autonomy. Building on the participatory action planning phase which had involved identifying priorities, analyzing root causes, and agreeing on feasible community-led solutions. Members were organized into functional groups, each accountable to the wider community through regular reporting mechanisms. These included individuals responsible for treasury management, group representation, and specific task teams such as cleaning and construction. This structure enabled transparency, accountability, and sustained engagement throughout the implementation process. One notable reflection is that the clear delegation of responsibilities not only improved efficiency but also strengthened trust among community members, as each individual or group was visibly contributing to shared goals. The process of setting milestones and holding regular review meetings created a culture of accountability and continuous learning, where challenges were openly discussed and addressed collectively.

The action plan developed by the community focused on several key priorities. First, significant efforts were directed toward improving safe access to school. This included the clearing of pathways used by children and the construction of small bridges to enable safe river crossings. During the rainy season, these rivers posed serious risks, with reports of younger children being swept away due to the lack of safe crossing points. Recognizing the limitations of their own resources, the community took a proactive approach by engaging a private company operating in the area to request support in the form of timber for bridge construction. This reflects not only problem identification but also effective local resource mobilization and external engagement.

A second major component of the plan involved the construction of classroom spaces for younger children. This initiative emerged directly from concerns about the long and unsafe distances children had to travel to reach existing schools, which contributed to high dropout rates. With support from the community coach,

parents and caregivers-initiated dialogue with the headteacher of the nearest school, advocating for the establishment of two annex classrooms and the allocation of a teacher closer to their community. As a result of this collaboration, the school contributed some educational materials, while community members mobilized financial contributions to support construction.

Image 7: Engagement of women and men in the construction of an annex classroom in the Chinhamudidi neighbourhood, Guindingue community



Image 8: Children in class following the construction of the classroom



The implementation of this activity demonstrated strong coordination and division of labour within the community. Tasks were distributed according to existing capacities and social roles: women were primarily responsible for activities such as preparing building materials, flooring, and wall finishing, while men focused on structural elements such as timber installation. While this division reflects traditional gender roles, it also indicates that both men and women were actively and meaningfully engaged in the process it also indicates that both men and women contributed meaningfully to the implementation process and participated in decision-making spaces. Furthermore, the community established clear milestones for each phase of construction and held regular meetings to review progress, discuss challenges, and ensure accountability. Over time, the community began to recognize that their efforts extended beyond the construction of classrooms. They increasingly understood the interconnected nature of challenges affecting children's education and wellbeing, including access to water, sanitation, and broader protection concerns. This shift in perspective demonstrated a growing capacity for holistic analysis and long-term planning, which are essential for sustainable development.

A third key priority included community sensitization on the prevention of early pregnancies and premature unions, which were prevalent in the area. Respected and trusted community members were identified to

lead dialogues and disseminate key messages aimed at encouraging girls' continued participation in education. Despite these efforts, it is also important to note that deeply rooted social norms influenced the topic remained sensitive and, in many cases, taboo, with some community members reluctant to openly engage or acknowledge the issue.

In comparison to Chizipa, this rural community demonstrated a faster transition toward autonomy. This appears to be linked to several factors. Firstly, the community had less prior exposure to external assistance, which may have contributed to a stronger reliance on internal resources and collective problem-solving mechanisms. This suggests that, communities with prior experience of assistance may present difficult to acting collectively and create the sense of ownership. A key reflection in Chizipa relates to the nature of community engagement and prior exposure to aid. The community's previous experiences with external organizations appear to have shaped expectations, with many members associating participation in such processes with the provision of material support. This dynamic created a degree of dependency, even in the presence of demonstrated capacity to act independently.

Secondly, the approach adopted by the community coach played a critical role. Through open dialogue and facilitation techniques that emphasized local capacities and solutions, the coach was able to foster ownership and confidence within the community.

Conversely, in Chizipa, the coach's background in case management may have contributed to a more directive or technical approach, which, while helpful in addressing specific protection concerns, may have limited opportunities for the community to fully take ownership of the process. The use of specialized language and a more intervention-driven style may have reinforced perceptions that solutions should come from external expertise rather than from within the community itself.

These contrasting experiences highlight the importance of facilitation approaches that prioritize empowerment, simplicity of communication, and the strengthening of local agency in community-led processes.

Phase 5 – Community Reflection

The reflection phase was intentionally designed as a continuous and integral component of the overall process, applied throughout all stages of implementation. From the outset, during the action planning phase, communities were encouraged not only to identify priorities and define actions, but also to anticipate the need for ongoing learning, adaptation, and accountability. As such, reflection was embedded as a core practice, enabling communities to regularly assess their progress, identify successes, and adjust their approaches based on emerging challenges and lessons.

Throughout implementation, communities were periodically invited to reflect on their achievements, challenges encountered, and potential adaptations required to improve results. These reflective practices became particularly structured and prominent after the implementation phase, where communities conducted more in-depth reviews of the outcomes of each activity in relation to the priorities initially defined in their action plans. This process allowed participants to critically assess what worked well, what did not, and why, fostering a culture of learning and continuous improvement.

In **Chizipa**, reflection meetings were primarily facilitated by the community coach, who guided discussions using a structured reflection framework. This approach ensured consistency and depth in the analysis, but also meant that the process remained somewhat externally driven. In contrast, in **Guindingue**, community members increasingly took ownership of the reflection process, independently organizing and leading reflection sessions. These sessions were later shared with community coaches on a periodic basis, creating a lighter-touch support mechanism. This shift was influenced not only by the stronger autonomy developed within the community, but also by practical constraints, including limited financial resources to cover transportation and fuel costs for frequent visits to this more remote location.

The differences between the two contexts further highlight how the reflection phase was shaped by both capacity and context. In Guindingue, the ability of community members to self-facilitate reflection demonstrated a higher level of internalization of the approach, as well as strengthened leadership and collective accountability. In Chizipa, while reflections were meaningful and guided, there remained a greater reliance on external facilitation.

Complementing these ongoing reflection processes, a comprehensive participatory assessment was conducted jointly between Save the Children International (SCI) and the communities. This assessment aimed to systematically assess key achievements, challenges, innovations, and overall outcomes of the intervention. Through inclusive dialogue and joint analysis, the process further reinforced community ownership, validated local perspectives, and generated valuable insights to inform future programming and scale-up.

Phase 6 – Exit

The exit phase was strategically designed with a strong focus on developing sustainability and continuity mechanisms, ensuring that communities would be able to maintain and build upon the progress achieved without ongoing support from the organization. Rather than being a standalone stage, this phase was gradually introduced from phase 4 onwards, allowing sufficient time for preparation, capacity strengthening, and the progressive transfer of ownership to community structures.

As part of this process, two dedicated meetings were specifically to discuss both the consolidation of the action plans and the organization's exit strategy. These sessions provided a structured space for open dialogue on the future of ongoing initiatives, roles and responsibilities, and the mechanisms required to sustain collective action. The final meeting concluded with a community gathering, creating an opportunity to celebrate achievements, reinforce relationships, and symbolically mark the transition toward community-led continuity.

A central component of this phase involved co-developing strategies with the community to ensure that activities could continue independently, without external facilitation. The facilitation team intentionally built on positive feedback from community members, who had consistently highlighted the sessions as valuable platforms for collective dialogue, problem-solving, and mutual accountability. These testimonies were used to reinforce the importance of sustaining such spaces, encouraging community members to continue organizing regular discussions as a means of addressing emerging issues and supporting one another.

Volunteers were also guided through reflective exercises to help them recognize the tangible changes that had occurred within their communities as a result of their efforts. This process aimed to strengthen their sense of purpose and responsibility while reinforcing an important principle by promoting inclusive leadership, humility, and collaboration as key drivers of sustained impact.

Despite these efforts, some challenges remained. In particular, it was not possible to fully finalize strategies to ensure the introduction of phase 2 of plan implementation. However, important groundwork was laid to support continuity, the community established clear intentions and initial actions toward the construction of an additional classroom at the 1° de Maio annex school in the Chinhamudidi neighborhood, demonstrating sustained commitment to improving access to education.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Outcome		Target	OVERALL % PROGRESS	CUMMULATIVE ACHIEVEMENT
Outcome 1	% of actions within community action plans or strategies that are planned, led and implemented by the community	40%	150%	60%
Outcome 2	% de povoações alvo onde grupos vulneráveis incluindo crianças que informam que estão incluídos nas reflexões, tomadas de decisão e acções comunitárias sobre questões de protecção da criança	60%	111%	66.67%
Outcome 3	% de Voluntários comunitários que demonstram a capacidade necessária	70%	86%	60%

Outcome 1: % of actions within community action plans or strategies that are planned, led and implemented by the community

Outcome 1 had a target of 40%, with an overall progress of 150% and a cumulative achievement of 60%, demonstrating that the programme not only met but significantly exceeded its planned level of progress and initial expectations. This strong performance reflects the effectiveness of the community engagement and empowerment strategies implemented throughout the programme.

This achievement can be directly linked to a series of deliberate and well-structured activities aimed at ensuring inclusive participation, particularly of vulnerable groups. To effectively engage communities, Save the Children conducted a mapping of influential individuals across all target locations, who then supported community mobilization efforts. This was complemented by initial meetings to introduce the approach, establish trust, and build positive relationships with community members. In addition, door-to-door visits were carried out to strengthen trust and encourage participation. In total, 17 meetings were conducted across communities to introduce the approach and support the development of action plans.

During discussions with community facilitators, several groups were identified as typically excluded from decision-making processes due to stigma and social barriers. These included widows, pregnant women, children, persons with disabilities, individuals struggling with alcohol use, and traditional healers. In response, a tailored action plan was developed to promote inclusion. This included facilitating open discussions within the broader community about inclusion, identifying accessible venues for persons with disabilities, and creating safe spaces for children's voices to be heard, including mechanisms for children to provide feedback to parents.

Out of the 13 communities initially engaged, 11 continued with the approach through to the learning phase, and 9 successfully developed community action plans. However, not all communities were able to fully implement their plans, largely due to a continued expectation of external support. Overall, approximately six priority actions identified in the plans were implemented by the communities.

The participatory design of the action plans played a critical role in these results, as communities were able to identify their own priorities and locally appropriate solutions, thereby increasing ownership and commitment. In both Chizipa and Guindingue, communities took the lead in implementing concrete initiatives such as clearing school pathways to improve child safety, constructing small bridges to facilitate safe crossings, building classroom spaces to reduce travel distances for children, and engaging local authorities to address structural challenges, such as extending border operating hours.

Furthermore, continuous reflection sessions and the gradual transfer of responsibilities from facilitators to community members contributed to strengthening community autonomy and capacity. Although some level of dependency on external support persisted—particularly in Chizipa.

Outcome 2: % of target populations where vulnerable groups, including children, report being included in reflections, decision-making and community actions on child protection issues

Outcome 2 had a target of 60%, achieving an overall progress of 111% and a cumulative achievement of 66.67%, slightly exceeding the initial target. This indicates that the programme was effective in promoting the inclusion of vulnerable groups—particularly children—in reflection, decision-making, and community actions related to child protection.

In total, approximately 449 individuals were reached and actively included in these processes, comprising 209 adults (68 men and 141 women, including 6 women and 5 men with disabilities) and 240 children (119 girls and 121 boys, including 9 girls and 3 boys with disabilities). These results were largely driven by the intentional use of participatory and child-friendly approaches throughout the programme. A combination of separate and joint reflection sessions for adults and children, body mapping exercises, and household-level consultations enabled meaningful engagement. While children's direct participation was sometimes constrained by school attendance, mechanisms were put in place to ensure their voices were still captured. In many cases, parents and caregivers consulted children at home and brought their perspectives into community discussions, ensuring that children's views informed decision-making processes.

Out of the six actions implemented as part of the community action plans, all were informed by children's perspectives, although only five were fully adopted and implemented by adults. These actions reflected key priorities raised by children, including improving safety on the way to school through cleaning pathways, reducing children's involvement in street-based economic activities such as selling snacks, and installing simple wooden structures to allow safer river crossings. In addition to the actions formally included in the community action plans, adults independently initiated and implemented complementary measures, such as providing school uniforms and sandals for children. This demonstrates that the process went beyond structured planning and triggered a broader sense of responsibility and responsiveness among community members. This reflects a shift from passive participation to proactive engagement, where community members not only respond to identified priorities but also take initiative to address additional needs raised particularly by children. It suggests that the approach contributed to strengthening local ownership, increasing awareness of child protection issues, and fostering informal advocacy at household and community levels, where adults begin to champion children's rights and wellbeing without relying solely on external facilitation or predefined actions.

Despite these efforts, the process revealed some limitations in fully consolidating children's direct participation in the action planning phase. In several instances, children's engagement remained indirect, mediated through adults rather than through consistent direct involvement in decision-making forums. Nevertheless, the strong alignment between issues raised by children and those identified by adults demonstrates that children's perspectives were effectively considered.

Outcome 3: % of community volunteers demonstrating the required capacity

Outcome 3 had a target of 70%, achieving an overall progress of 86% and a cumulative achievement of 60%. This reflects moderate progress, indicating that while meaningful improvements in volunteer capacity were achieved, the target was not fully attained and important gaps remain.

The progress observed can be largely attributed to the continuous and embedded capacity-strengthening approach adopted throughout the programme. A total of 15 community volunteers (12 women and 3 men), including 6 from Chizipa and 9 from Guindingue, were actively engaged. They participated in initial training sessions, ongoing mentoring, and hands-on involvement in facilitating community discussions, documenting key issues, and mobilizing participants. This practical exposure was critical in reinforcing learning and building confidence over time.

In addition, more than 91 reflection sessions were conducted with community volunteers, creating regular spaces for learning, feedback, and adaptation. Among these, five sessions were specifically dedicated to the co-creation of a code of conduct, helping to establish shared principles and accountability standards, while two sessions focused on strengthening volunteers' skills in engaging with children and effectively using participatory tools during the learning phase. This structured reflection and learning opportunities, combined with peer-to-peer exchange and real-life practice, significantly contributed to improvements in volunteers' confidence, particularly in public speaking, facilitation, and their understanding of child protection concepts and principles.

Despite this progress, several challenges affected the pace and depth of capacity development. Low literacy levels among some volunteers limited their ability to effectively document discussions and manage written records. In addition, limited prior experience in facilitation made it difficult for some to confidently lead sessions, especially in more complex or sensitive discussions. Although refresher training was organized to address these gaps, some volunteers continued to require tailored and ongoing support.

Another important factor influencing this outcome was the dual role of some volunteers who also held leadership positions within their communities. While this sometimes facilitated mobilization and coordination, it also introduced power dynamics that could affect the participatory nature of discussions, with a tendency in some cases to dominate conversations or unintentionally influence decision-making processes.

Overall, despite these constraints, the results demonstrate a positive trajectory in capacity development. Many volunteers acquired valuable and transferable skills that extend beyond the programme itself, contributing to their personal growth, increased self-confidence, and enhanced ability to support community-level processes. This foundation provides a strong basis for sustaining community-led initiatives, although continued investment in capacity strengthening—particularly in facilitation, literacy, and documentation—will be essential to achieve deeper and more consistent impact.

FINDINGS

The SEEDs pilot implemented in the communities of Chizipa and Guindingue in Manica District demonstrated that community-led child protection approaches can meaningfully strengthen local ownership, collective action, and protection outcomes for children. Over the 15-month implementation period, communities consistently engaged in identifying risks, prioritizing solutions, and implementing actions using locally available resources. Evidence from reflection sessions and the Post-intervention assessment shows that both adults and children shared a common understanding of the main risks affecting children—including unsafe school routes, exposure to transactional sex, child labor, early pregnancies, and neglect—which reinforced the relevance of participatory and child-centered methodologies.

The pilot also highlighted the importance of adapting the SEEDs model to local realities. In both communities, the term *facilitator* carried expectations of payment and authority. Reframing this role to *community volunteer* helped reinforce the principles of community ownership and collective responsibility. Women represented the majority of selected volunteers (87%), reflecting cultural norms that position them as primary caregivers and the first point of contact for children. While this created a nurturing foundation for the process, it also revealed gaps in men's participation and underscored the need to deliberately engage fathers and male leaders in child protection efforts.

Community action planning and implementation processes revealed substantial differences between the two settings. In peri-urban Chizipa, community members took action to improve the safety of school routes and advocated successfully for extended border operating hours, reducing children's exposure to risks associated with prolonged queuing of truck drivers. However, dependency on external support remained more visible, influenced by previous experiences with humanitarian or development organizations. In contrast, rural Guindingue demonstrated higher levels of self-organization and autonomy, benefiting from a capacity-building approach that emphasized local resource mobilization and gradual empowerment.

Community members independently led initiatives such as constructing small bridges, building annex classrooms, and organizing prevention dialogues, indicating stronger sustainability prospects.

Across both communities, the embedded reflection process was a critical driver of learning and adaptation. Regular review meetings allowed community members to assess their progress, identify challenges, and adjust their strategies. While Chizipa required more consistent support from community coaches, Guindingue transitioned more quickly to self-facilitated reflections, signaling increasing confidence and ownership. These differences emphasize the need for facilitation strategies that are flexible and context-sensitive.

Overall, the SEEDs pilot exceeded its targets for community-led action and inclusion of vulnerable groups. A total of 449 individuals including 240 children participated meaningfully in reflection and decision-making processes, with children's perspectives influencing all actions implemented. Community volunteers demonstrated significant progress in facilitation, communication, and problem-solving skills, although low literacy levels continued to limit full autonomy in documentation and session leadership. Despite these gains, the assessment also identified persistent structural challenges, including limited male engagement, power dynamics linked to volunteers who are also local leaders, and ongoing expectations for material support, especially in Chizipa.

SEEDs approach has strong potential to strengthen community-based child protection systems when supported by continuous mentoring, clear role definitions, and deliberate strategies to foster inclusivity and sustainability. The pilot also highlights the importance of aligning programme timelines with agricultural seasons, investing in early trust-building, and integrating community-led reflection mechanisms within broader monitoring systems. Together, these insights offer valuable direction for scaling and adapting SEEDs within Mozambique's child protection landscape.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Training alone is not sufficient to ensure facilitator readiness; confidence and practical facilitation skills require continuous mentoring and accompaniment.
- Community trust is a critical prerequisite for effective engagement and cannot be assumed, even when facilitators are trained.
- Develop and implement clear protocols to manage situations where facilitators act as caseworkers, ensuring ethical and safe responses.
- Children and adults often share similar perceptions of risks, reinforcing the validity of participatory child-centered methodologies.
- Introducing informed consent and assent processes improves transparency, trust, and voluntary participation.
- The approach contributes not only to problem identification but also to strengthening social cohesion and collective responsibility.
- Community engagement processes can trigger early action, even before formal plans are finalized, demonstrating increased ownership and motivation.
- Flexible approaches (e.g., consulting children at household level) are essential when direct participation is constrained, so it is important to explore potential opportunities.
- Supporting accountability mechanisms embedded within existing community structures is more effective in promoting transparency, strengthening collective ownership, and ensuring the sustainability of community-led actions.
- Structured reflection tools (e.g., guided questions) improve the quality and depth of analysis, especially where facilitation capacity is still developing.
- Regular reflection enhances accountability, as communities are able to track progress against their own plans and commitments.

- Embedding reflection as a continuous process throughout implementation strengthens learning, adaptability, and overall programme effectiveness

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Save the Children or Implementing organizations

- **Establish regular mechanisms to assess community perceptions, trust, and feedback:** Continuous assessment of trust and expectations helps teams adapt engagement strategies early, especially in contexts where past aid experiences have shaped dependency or mistrust, as observed in Chizipa.
- **Develop and apply clear communication strategies to manage expectations:** Explicitly communicating the non-material nature of SEEDs from the outset reduces misunderstandings, prevents participation driven by anticipated incentives, and reinforces community ownership.
- **Clearly define and formalize volunteer roles within referral pathways:** Volunteers sometimes acted as informal caseworkers due to their standing in the community; clear role boundaries and guidance are essential to safeguard children, protect volunteers, and maintain the integrity of community-led facilitation.
- **Adopt phased facilitation and leadership transfer models:** Community Coaches should progressively shift from leading to co-facilitating, and eventually mentoring, enabling volunteers to build confidence and autonomy without compromising quality or inclusion.
- **Align activity timelines with community calendars and seasonal realities:** Planning activities around agricultural seasons and livelihood demands improves participation, reduces dropout, and demonstrates respect for community priorities.
- **Institutionalize reflection as a core programme component.:** Reflection should be planned, resourced, and implemented across all phases, as it proved central to learning, accountability, and sustainability particularly where communities transitioned to self-led reflection.
- **Ensure strong internal alignment during approach set-up:** Early involvement of Project Managers, MEAL, and Communications teams supports a shared understanding of SEEDs' participatory and adaptive nature, which differs from conventional results-driven programming. During the approach set-up phase, including initial trainings, it is essential to actively involve key programme staff such as the Project Manager, MEAL, and Communications teams to ensure strong internal alignment, ownership, and a shared understanding of the approach's principles. This is particularly important as such approaches often differ from the more results-driven and time-pressured nature of conventional programming, and require a shift in mindset towards participatory, adaptive, and community-led processes.
- **Integrate community-led reflection outputs into MEAL systems:** Incorporating community insights into formal monitoring strengthens adaptive management and ensures local realities inform programme decisions. MEAL functions should be embedded throughout these community reflection moments rather than operating as a parallel process to ensure that community-generated analysis, priorities, and feedback directly inform programme decisions. This includes adapting tools to capture qualitative insights, strengthening real-time learning loops, and aligning indicators with community-defined changes. By doing so, programmes can enhance responsiveness, reinforce community ownership, and ensure that both development and humanitarian interventions remain grounded in local realities and evolving needs.
- **Institutionalize SEEDs as a Flexible Community Engagement Model:** Integrate SEEDs as a core *community engagement and accountability approach* across Child Protection integrated in Education, GBV, Resilience, Climate Adaptation, and Humanitarian programmes. In locations where SCI already implements programmes, SEEDs can be layered onto existing interventions (e.g. CCPCs, CFS, school-based programmes) rather than introduced as a standalone project.
- **Adapt SEEDs for armed conflict and insecurity contexts:** Simplify and compress SEEDs phases for conflict affected settings while retaining reflection, participation, and community ownership, focusing on:

- ✓ Adaptation for conflict settings (e.g. Cabo Delgado):
- ✓ Shorten learning and action planning cycles.
- ✓ Use smaller, safer dialogue groups rather than large community gatherings.
- ✓ Emphasize protection prioritization, harm mitigation, and social cohesion.

Recommendations for Community Coaches and Facilitators

- **Gradually transition from facilitation to mentoring roles:** Coaches should focus on building community capacity to independently facilitate reflection and dialogue, as demonstrated by Guindingue’s successful transition to self-led processes. In SCI-established locations, transition staff roles from *implementers* to *community coaches*, emphasizing accompaniment rather than delivery.
- **Use simple, low-literacy facilitation and documentation tools:** Tailored tools enable broader volunteer participation and reduce dependency on external staff, especially in rural and low-literacy contexts.
- **Promote inclusive participation deliberately:** Coaches should actively encourage the engagement of children, men, and marginalized groups to avoid reinforcing existing power dynamics and ensure shared responsibility for child protection.

Recommendations for Government Authorities (District, Provincial, National)

- **Integrate SEEDs reflection and action-planning methods into existing community structures.** Applying SEEDs tools within Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs), school councils, and local development forums can address sustainability gaps and strengthen prevention-focused action.
- **Use community-led platforms to address structural and systemic barriers:** SEEDs spaces can facilitate dialogue between communities and authorities to resolve issues beyond community control, as seen in successful advocacy for extended border operating hours.
- **Strengthen linkages between formal and informal systems:** Regular engagement with community-led processes improves coordination across child protection, education, health, and social services.

Recommendations for Donors and Funding Partners

- **Provide flexible and long-term funding:** Community-led approaches require time for trust-building, social norm change, and capacity development; short project cycles risk undermining sustainability.
- **Recognize SEEDs as a cost-efficient, value-for-money approach:** The pilot demonstrated that meaningful protection outcomes can be achieved without material inputs by leveraging local resources and social capital.
- **Support SEEDs across the humanitarian–development nexus:** Funding should enable SEEDs adaptation in humanitarian settings affected by climate shocks or armed conflict, where community-driven protection mechanisms are essential.

Cross-Cutting Recommendations for Scale Across Sectors and Contexts

- **Adapt facilitation intensity to context:** Rural, aid-naïve communities may transition faster to autonomy, while peri-urban or crisis-affected contexts may require longer accompaniment.
- **Use SEEDs as a multi-sectoral platform:** The approach is applicable beyond child protection, including education access, GBV prevention, disaster risk reduction, and climate adaptation.
- **Plan exit strategies early and progressively:** Sustainability is strengthened when exit is introduced gradually and communities are supported to maintain dialogue and action spaces beyond project support