

Foundation module 1

Understanding childhoods

Section 2 Child development

Handout 1



Promoting child development in programming Case study

A separation from community and culture

In a northern province of Mozambique, an international agency had established an autonomous children's institution to respond to the perceived needs of orphaned and abandoned children. Located across a major river from a provincial capital, the institutional facilities were excellent, including material needs, educational programmes and staff-to-child ratio.

However, local people regarded the institution as an island, as the children had little or no contact with the community. The children did not attend the local schools and the institution had no formal relationship with community structures. The school's educational materials were not consistent with the Mozambican curriculum, children were not encouraged to maintain fluency in their local dialect, and the religious context of the institution did not account for individual children who had been raised as Muslims. Despite the obvious material privilege of the children in the institution, serious questions were raised about the long-term effect this would have on the children and the potential problems they might face in integrating with Mozambican society after leaving the institution at the age of 18.

