

Grassroots Comics in Mozambique

- Report from a monitoring trip in February-March 2008

by Leif Packalen, World Comics Finland

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Mozambique – monitoring the grassroots comics project, report:

Leif Packalen, Chairman of World Comics Finland, was engaged in the initial stage of the UFF Finland comics project in 2005, together with Hanna Azevedo, Johanna Rojola and Lenio Ussivane. Together they ran a training of trainers (ToT) workshop in Chimoio with follow-up workshops in Chimoio, Maputo, Nacala, and Nhamatanda. 30 trainers were trained.

The objective of Leif Packalen's participation in the 2008 monitoring trip of UFF Finland with Birgit Nevala, was to assess the current situation of the project and advise project workers on the recent developments in grassroots comics as a development communication tool. He also ran a workshop with comic trainers.

His participation was on a voluntary basis; only his internal flights in Mozambique as well accommodation/food were paid by UFF during most of the trip.

Vantaa, April 14, 2008

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UFF Project description:

Comics with an attitude – information tool training in Mozambique

Project is based on a previous project, where **UFF Finland, World Comics Finland and ADPP Mozambique** held in 2005 a joint training program for ADPP social development projects, on how to make comics and use them as information dissemination tools.

This new tool was rooted into the system during 2006 through local workshops held in 5 locations: Chimoio, Nhamatanda, Beira, Nacala and Maputo. After the project period it became evident that there was a need to enlarge the group of people possessing this skill. For this reason UFF Finland and ADPP Mozambique wanted to continue the trainings during 2007-2009 and they received further funding from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

The training of comic trainers will continue to be implemented in ADPP teacher training colleges in Chimoio, Nacala and Maputo. The colleges will provide premises and facilities needed for the training sessions and the location of the colleges offer direct access to suburbs and villages in these areas. The trainers trained by this project will be key staff in this project. Within three years time there will be arranged six trainings for trainers. Each involves 10 people, in total 60 people are trained as comic trainers.

These trainers in turn arrange local workshops in connection with the teacher training colleges of Maputo, Nhamatanda, Nacala and Chimoio and HOPE centres in Maputo and Beira. During three years each teacher training college will arrange 10 workshops involving each 15 participants, in total 600 people. Each Hope project will arrange 24 workshops involving each 15 participants, in total 720 people. The people trained are teachers and activists, who eventually locate all provinces and through them the information travels deep into the countryside.



The objective is to lift the quality of life of poor and illiterate people in rural areas of Mozambique by information and to raise awareness in important development questions among poor and vulnerable people.

There are existing answers to many problems at hand already, but the knowledge, how to make use of them is lacking among the poor and most vulnerable people. With comics one can effectively bring out problems faced in the society and sensitive issues can be dealt with a humoristic tone.

Through wall comics it is possible to reach new groups of people in the streets, market places, schools and other public places. It is easy to approach and read. With minor equipment – paper and pens – one can produce effective and easily distributable educational information.



The "Formigas de Futuro" primary school in Chimoio. From Leif Packalen's sketchbook.

Sunday, February 24

Arrival in Maputo, meeting with Birgit Nevala, Annette Castella Larsen, and Anne Fisker at ADPP's office in Machava.

Monday, February 25

Arrival in Chimoio early in the morning. Meeting with Birgit Nevala, Petra Straková, Robert Williamson, Bente Jepsen and Anton Veldt in the Headmaster's office at EPF.

The general setup of the project work was explained and recent experiences recounted. The production of comics was already running quite well, and the procedures established. The system of laminating the comics (either by machine or hot iron) had proven very good.

The comics have been generally very well received as the messages have been straight-forward. The comics are seen by the workshop participants as an outlet for creativity and input for bold discussion on issues in the community.

Leif suggested that during the workshops, the participants should, if practical, make "field testing",

i.e. show their comics to people in the community and collect e.g. five opinions to report. This direct response will help the participants to understand how people read their comics. In the long term, the quality (readability) of the comics will improve.

Bente suggested that in the coming ToT-workshops more emphasis could be on how to teach drawing.

After the meeting, Petra showed how the comics are archived in the EPF production centre, as well as the scanning and laminating facilities.

Visit to the Primary School Formigas do Futuro, where we were received by Ms. Doca Paulo Musso-roro, and José Chindole, who is one of the leading comics trainers in Chimoio. The comics are pasted on boards and hanged in the hallways of the school in thematic compilations of nine comics per board. The comics are laminated or covered by plastic.

Chindole has introduced comics as a part of the "cultural" syllabus. There are two lessons per week, and the students (14 – 20 yrs) can choose from dance, theatre, music, art, etc. According to Chindole, the main problem for the children in making comics seems to be converting their stories into comics.

Birgit, Robert, Leif and Petra visited Catandica. We met, escorted by Eusebio Joaquim (EPF Centro Pedagogica), primary school teachers Odette C. Domingos, Victor Canido and Simao Xanasa of Escola Primaria 1 de Junho in Barué. They had all been participants in a comics workshop led by Joaquim.

Their experiences were over all positive. Their comics were seen as being “from the school”. They had felt it was easy to learn to make comics as they have a lot to say. The issues raised in the comics are such as premature marriage, sanitation, aids, forestry etc. Candido had used some of the comics in teaching the Portuguese language. Their comics were also happily received by the hospital and the municipal offices.

After the school, we visited EPF Centro Pedagogica, where Joaquim showed us the comics on display and demonstrated the lamination procedure with hot iron. In Barué many of the comics were produced using marker colours and/or marker colours were added on photocopies. This was done to increase their attractiveness to children.

In the evening Leif gave a presentation on grass-roots comics to the Chimoio EPF students in the big hall. About 100 students attended. Anton led the discussions.



Above: The wallposter comics are laminated for durability in Escola Primaria 1 de Junho in Barué. Photo: Leif Packalen

Below: Eusebio Joaquim shows how the comics are laminated with a hot iron in the EPF Centro Pedagogica. Photo: Leif Packalen



Tuesday, February 26

Birgit, Leif, Petra and Robert met Jacinto, teacher at the Primary School Josina Machel in Chimoio. He has run two workshops there, one for the pupils and one for the teachers. His experience was that the children had more ideas than the teachers, but had difficulties in writing them down for the manuscript. The themes of the comics by the children were malaria, aids, school issues, etc. The teachers had broader themes, such as environment and education. The comics were put up in the school and 60 laminated copies had been distributed in the community, in the market, at hairdressers, party offices, etc. Some of the originals were also here coloured with marker pens.

We drove to Gondola and had a meeting at TCE (Total Control of the Epidemic) office there. We were received by Restina Muganzikwa and Luis Zeferino. They had run two workshops; one in Matonga and one in Chitundu, both rural places. The reception of the training had been overwhelming, and the participants kept coming back to them for materials, demand for more workshops, etc.

The subjects of the comics were: water, cholera, child abuse, unwanted marriages, etc. When the comics were seen, many people came to ask for copies. We visited the community and saw comics put up in the market, on kiosks, school premises and even on the walls of private houses. The comics are laminated and are generally taken inside for the night. Volunteers have the task to remind some shopkeepers to put out the comics.



Above: Jacinto O. Joao, a teacher who has run two comics workshops at Josina Machel Primary School in Chimoio. Photo: Leif Packalen

Below: Luis Zeferino and Restina Muganzikwa of TCE, Gondola. Photo: Birgit Nevala



We left for EPF Nhamatanda and were received by Momade Amade, Paulo Joaquim Neves and Arnold Dique. We had a brief discussion, and went then into the nearby Lamego village, where we saw comics in the school buildings and in the police post.

Jacob Jorge, the comic trainer in Nhamatanda, collected the ten participants from EPF who had been in the workshops. They were all still very enthusiastic and listed their experiences:

I like the comics power programme because it uses creativity

- *The messages are good*
- *I learned drawing and it can be useful in the community*
- *I am so proud, my comics are still on the wall in the school*
- *Self-expression is important*
- *A great strategy for communicating*
- *It is a privilege to be part of Comics Power*

In the general discussion, which followed, some points were raised:

- The community is surprised to see this new way of communicating
- In the comics you can clearly see they are made by a fellow human being
- Nobody reads the hiv posters, no matter how colourful they are

When asked what part of making comics was most difficult, the students responded:

- To make the story (4)
- To make good drawing (3)
- To coordinate the story into panels (2)
- To reduce texts (1)



*Arnold Dique, Administrator at EPF Nhamatanda, checks out a wallposter comic in Lamego, a village near the college.
Photo: Birgit Nevala*



Above: Discussion with Jacob Jorge's comics workshop participants.

Below: Driving to our hotel in Nhamatanda late in the night. From Leif Packalen's sketchbook.



Wednesday, February 27

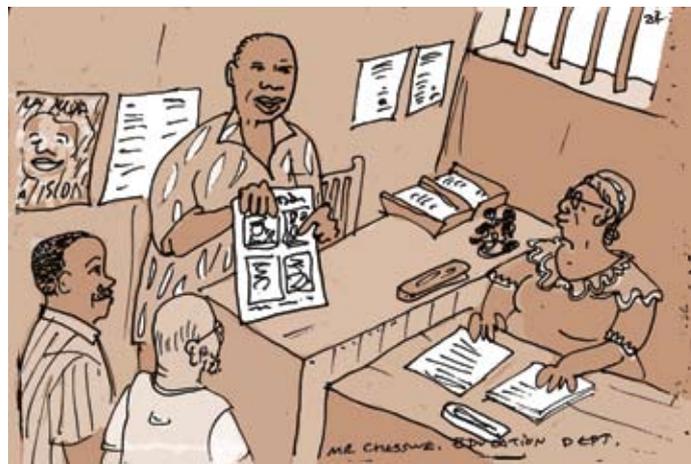
In the morning, Leif and Petra (with Arnold Dique and Jacob Jorge) visited Nhamatanda Education Department, and met Mr. Chessiwa, who expressed delight with the programme and saw it as primarily directed to children. He thought comics are great for communication between people. He did not, however, display the comics at the office (he was afraid somebody would steal them).

Then Leif ran a workshop for the comic trainers:

Jacinto O. Joao and Jose Chindole from Chimoio.
Eusebio Joaquim from Barué
Isabel Chifinha from HOPE Beira
Restina Musanzikwa and Luis Zeferino from TCE, Gondola
Jacob Jorge from Nhamatanda

All participants introduced themselves and shared their experiences. Most of them had run at least two workshops themselves and felt they were confident. All of them had used the basic manual and they felt it was adequate, but wished that all the comics in the manual should be from Mozambique (there are some Swahili samples in the manual now). The book "VIDA – best comics of 2006", produced by ADPP, was seen as a good tool in order to show what is possible to do with comics.

There was a discussion on how to organize the workshops in collaboration with a school, as this activity must be scheduled to fit normal school work. There was also a danger that a headmaster can put specific demands on the activity. On the selection criteria for participation in comics workshops, the female/male ratio was given due attention. Only about 50 % of the applicants can be accepted.



Mr. Chessiwa's office. From Leif Packalen's sketchbook.

Then we went through the WCF English-language "Training plan" (30 steps) and it was felt that a Portuguese-language version would be very helpful, especially for the new trainers.

Leif went through critique session techniques, and the trainers did some exercises on this. Special attention was given to how the critique is delivered.

The workshop ended with a demonstration of the 8-page booklet and the minibooklet formats.

A workshop for comics tutors in the ADPP network was held at EPF Nhamatanda. Photo: Petra Straková





We spent a lot of time in the car. From Leif Packalen's sketchbook.



Outside EPF Nhamatanda. Photo: Leif Packalen

Thursday, February, 28

In the morning, Leif and Petra (with Arnold Dique and Jacob Jorge) visited Liga Mocambicana dos Dereitos Humanos (LDH), Nhamatanda office. Ms. Elcina Ernesto Mabunda and Ms. Nilza Nataniel Zamdamela received us and told us how they use the laminated comics in the beginning of public meetings and group gatherings, then take the discussion further from there. They visit schools, workplaces, police stations, etc in the area. The main issues are violence against women and child rights.

Then we visited the Nhamatanda office for economic activities and were received by the director Gaetano Benedito and extension worker Andre Pita. Mr. Benedito was happy with the comics they had received and distributed to extension workers in the Tica, Matenga and Mentuchida districts. He suggested that the comics could be made also in the local language, as everybody did not know Portuguese. He felt the comics were well received mainly because they were made locally.



Ms. Elcina Ernesto Mabunda and Ms. Nilza Nataniel Zamdamela in the LDH office. Photo: Leif Packalen

Liga Mocambicana dos Dereitos Humanos (LDH), Nhamatanda office. Photo: Leif Packalen





Petra Straková (back) and HOPE Beira Director Erocel Monteiro in the HOPE Beira's meeting room. Photo: Leif Packalen

Then we all left for Beira, where Leif and Petra had a meeting with HOPE Beira Director Ms. Erocel Monteiro. HOPE Beira has had three workshops and the comics have been distributed both in laminated form and as photocopies. Their experiences were very positive and even other organizations in Beira have asked them if they can send participants to their workshops.

Here Birgit joined us, and we visited Escuela Comunitario XX Augusto Shingusura in the outskirts of Beira. Students reading wallposter comics at Escuela Comunitario XX Augusto Shingusura in Beira. Photo: Leif Packalen

Beira. Isabel Chifinha (comic trainer), Patti Cherve and Erocel Monteiro took us there. We saw the comics pasted on the walls in the school. The subjects were about studying, sex abuse, hiv testing, drugs, etc. Isabel had brought the participants from one of her workshops to meet us. There is a demand for more comics training in Beira, both by organizations and schools. Isabel said she can also teach comics directly, without distributing the manual. To make stories seems to be easy but younger children have great difficulties in making the right measurements in the comics.



We were then taken to Mutua, a community about 40 km from Beira. There HOPE Beira runs a youth club. We were received by the activists Alexandre and Lucio. In their first workshop 45 comics were made and distributed in the village, in shops on the market, on notice-boards, and in schools. The comics were made mainly by 7th and 8th grade students. One student expressed his desire to get another opportunity to make comics. Leif asked them if they had done any comics in the local language, but they explained it is spoken only; very few people know how to write it.

We asked what issues the comics were about, and the workshop participants who were in the meeting with us listed (three each):

Forest fires, malaria, early marriage, dogs, education, discrimination, forestry, saving water, weakness, too late to regret, deep friendship, good education, conservation, malaria, cholera, HIV-testing and safe sex.

Leif left the group here and checked into hotel Infante in Beira.



Above: Club Esperanza in Mutua. From Leif Packalen's sketchbook. Below: Birgit Nevala's photographs from the inside of the club.





AIPDC's office in Beira. José Muchanga (right). Photo: Leif Packalen

Friday, February, 29

Leif met with José Muchanga Mundoreva in the morning and later went to AIPDC, the organization José works for. AIPDC (Associação de Iniciação Para o Desenvolvimento a Comunidade) works with various programmes such as HIV-aids, sanitation etc.

José participated in 2005 in the comics workshop in Chimoio, and worked with HOPE Beira until April 2007 when he joined AIPDC as its Beira leader. José has informally taught some of his coworkers to make comics, and also continued to make and use comics in his own campaign work. AIPDC works in four locations in Beira and in Buzi and Gorongosa districts. For the moment, AIPDC is working on a sanitation programme together with ActionAid.

Leif explained the system of laminating the comics as he had seen it in ADPP. He also demonstrated the 8-page booklet.

José plans to propose creating comics for a sanitation campaign. Leif promised to have a look at the proposal and advise if requested. As it will be a local project, funding could be sought from the Finnish Embassy local project funds.

José had downloaded several instruction materials and videos from the WCF website.

Saturday, March 1

Leif left for Maputo.

AIPDC runs a sanitation campaign for ActionAid in Beira. Photo: Leif Packalen



Sunday, March 2

Birgit and Leif had a meeting at HOPE Maputo with Cristina Marques, Director, and Jaime Almirante Chaca, Programme Coordinator. Sarmento Simoes Preco (of EPF) Salvador José Nhantumbo and Jaime Alberto Mambuque, who all had worked as comics trainers, joined the meeting.

The programme had started in a hurry, but is now well under way. There is no lack of trainers and the workshops have established routines. HOPE Maputo has written a schedule which each trainer uses as a guide during the workshop. The document could probably also be helpful for others who run workshops.

We were told the different locations of the workshops and the plans for the 2008 workshops. There is an idea of training 15 TCE (Total Control of the Epidemic) Field Officers, who could then take the comics communication method further in their own network. There are also some remote areas, where transport money is required before a workshop can be arranged.

Sarmento suggested that all teachers that will go out in the rural areas (125 this year) should go through the comics training. There have been no difficulties in recruiting people for the training.

Cristina told about an exhibition of NGOs where the governor had visited. The governor had shown a lot of interest in the comics and had requested HOPE

to make comics in the local language Shangana. We were told that people are not very much used to writing in Shangana – the only readily available texts are the bible and hymn books. It was felt that it would be a good idea to try to have a workshop where the comics would be in Shangana, especially as there will be a new syllabus in primary schools which gives the option of being taught in a local language for the first years.

Leif asked about any difficulties in the workshop procedures, but all trainers insisted that things went well, the manual is easy to use and has enough information. Regarding the manual, it was suggested that the Swahili-language samples should be changed to Mozambican ones; now when there are plenty of them available. During 2007, 225 comics were produced in the HOPE Beira workshops.

There was a discussion on how the skill of making comics within the organization could be used for specific campaigns. In the workshops, the participants choose now from 12 - 15 themes, but for special campaigns HOPE could arrange a workshop with one theme only, or alternatively, collect a team from those who made the best comics. This advanced group could then work longer on their comics.

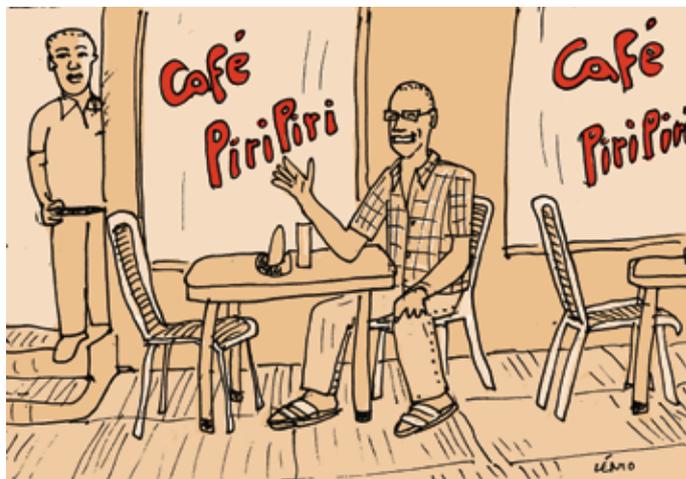
Later, Leif demonstrated the 8-page booklet. The trainers saw its advantages, but commented that to make these booklets, the group must be a little advanced.

In HOPE Maputo's office. From left: Jaime Alberto Mambuque, Jaime Almirante Chaca and Birgit Nevala. Photo: Leif Packalen



In the evening, Leif had a meeting with Lénio Ussivane, who participated as a trainer in the ToT-workshop in 2005. Lénio does not have any active role in the current comic project.

Leif left for Johannesburg the following morning.



Lénio Ussivane at Café PiriPiri. From Leif Packalen's sketchbook.



José Chindole (right) and his pupils look at wallposter comics in the primary school "Formigais do Futuro" in Chimoio. The comics are covered with plastic for durability. Photo: Leif Packalen

Conclusions:

It seems that the grassroots comic concept is very well accepted as a communication tool within the ADPP/EPF programmes. The basic knowledge and skills are now available and there is a clear plan on how to proceed. The comics project is functioning quite well and the production of comics in workshops and the training of comics trainers can proceed according to the plan 2008-09.

I had thought that the first batch of trainers (from the 2005 workshop) would still be more prominent in the project. Obviously, the clarity of the concept and the simple low-tech methods have made it possible to train new trainers quickly. This is a very positive finding.

By all accounts the strongest factor for the popularity of the comics is their local content. This was evident in all locations and in all discussions. For the creators of the comics, having had their say publicly, is a source of pride.



The activists of AIPDC in Beira paste new comics on their office wall. Photo: Leif Packalen

Recommendations – short term:

The training of trainers could be improved by making available a training plan (steps 1 - 31) in the Portuguese language to help the trainers to plan their workshops. Cristina's (HOPE Maputo) training schedule document should be shared to other groups as well.

The basic manual should be changed so that the samples of comics are Mozambican. There are plenty of comics available for that.

If it is feasible from a schedule point of view, to include “field testing” by the participants of the workshops, the direct reader response would probably improve the quality of the messages in the comics.

The 8-page booklet should be included in the training of trainers workshops.



Petra Sraková (left) shows to Birgit Nevala the comics, which have been collected from the workshops within the project. Photo: Leif Packalen

Challenges:

To improve the overall quality of the comics – reduce text, have more visual action, keep readability standards. Perhaps the trainers would need an occasional seminar or workshop, where they could exchange experiences and learn something new.

When more skills in making comics are available in the project network, the challenge is to be able to use them better for specific campaigning needs. Working groups for special campaigns could include a team of experienced comic makers.

Project archive in Chimoio. It is a good thing to know that all the comics will be archived electronically and the workshop reports, etc, can be made available to concerned parties over the Internet. This could also make it possible to invite outside academic researchers to study the material, if deemed worthwhile.

A wall of comics in the Josina Machel Primary School in Chimoio. Photo: Birgit Nevala

O MEU FUTURO



POR: SALMA ARMANDO CHUVA

HIV/SIDA



POR: ...



AMIZADE



...

HIGIENE



...

A FOME



POR: VÂNIA ARMANDO
EPC: JOSINA MACHEL

OS ACIDENTES DE VIACÃO



...

O ANIVERSARIO



POR: RAQUEL LINHARNE
OP: JOSINA MACHEL

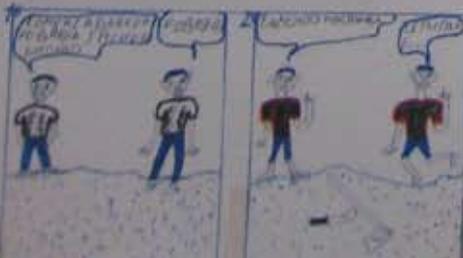
HOVA CROMATICA



A PESCA



APO BREZA



OS JOGOS

