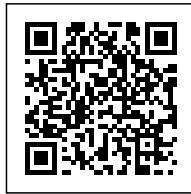


# SHARING KNOW-HOW ABBC & ASSOCIADOS

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## **The influence of Lisbon's legal elite is spreading to Africa, says Benjamim Mendes, Founding Partner of ABBC & Associados.**

Angola and Mozambique – former Portuguese colonies – are extremely active, he adds, as law firms look to profit from the business generated by the countries' natural resources – not least as the legal regimes in both jurisdictions are based on Portuguese law.

“Around ten Portuguese law firms have entered Angola, with five or so doing the same in Mozambique,” he says. “Our firm formed a partnership with VCA – Vitor Carvalho & Associados – in Angola last year and hope to finalise a deal in Mozambique before the end of 2012.”

Luis Filipe Carvalho, a Partner at ABBC, says that there are challenges for ambitious market entrants, however, Portuguese firms are prohibited from practising in both countries so have to form local alliances.

Angola's capital Luanda is also regularly voted the most expensive city in the world, with 40 percent of the population residing there. Mozambique is considerably more regionalised, but still not cheap. “The boom in oil and gas has made both countries very expensive,” Carvalho adds. “Hiring local lawyers and staff and finding office space can be costly.” And one area in which Portuguese firms are helping develop the local market, he says, is training lawyers.

“Really good local lawyers are hard to find,” says Mendes, “and standards are often below what international clients would expect from counsel”. This has put the emphasis on Portuguese law firms to hire and train local lawyers, both domestically and in Lisbon, creating an axis between Portugal and Africa. And these concerns over quality are where the Lisbon practices can really step in and make their mark.