

SERVING THE
COMMUNITY IN 2
FUNCTIONS - PIRCOM
VOLUNTEERS and
APES

A LOCAL INITIATIVE

APES Success Story in Murrupula



Eight years ago, Jaime Colaço, Ana Maria Gabriel, Genita Cipriano, Sara João and Adelino Bonifácio were people like any other who lived a quiet life in the district of Murrupula, in the Nampula province in the north of Mozambique. Today they have become important people for their communities working hard as APES (Multi-Purpose Agents) for health promotion and disease prevention at the local level. They began by serving the community as volunteers of

How everything started

PIRCOM is a faith-based organization committed to improving the lives of the Mozambican population and since 2008 has been developing its activities in Murrupula, a district that is 79

PIRCOM – Programa Inter- Religioso contra a Malaria, an organization supported by PMI /USAID funds, and are part of a group of 38 APES in that district with 28 in active duty and 10 awaiting financial support for their integration . Thus, they saw their duplicate functions being, simultaneously, Volunteers and APES fruit of local initiative, activity that they perform with great dedication and dedication

km from Nampula, the provincial capital city. According to health officials, malaria is the of demand for health services by communities. The training of Volunteers for Dissemination Messages-Actions on Prevention and Treatment

of Malaria through Door-to-Door visits is one of the main activities of PIRCOM. The idea of the volunteers to become APEs was a local initiative motivated by the work they did and so contact the District Health Services expressing their interest and making themselves available for this purpose. Once the initiative was approved, a training technician was appointed and due to the lack of funding from the Health Sector for the expenses the community contributed to the payment of the health professional. The criteria for selection of APEs were based on their choice of community, their suitability and schooling (at least 4^a Class).

Helping the community

APEs provide preventive, curative and treatment care to their communities, and key actors at the community level are considered in Mozambique to extend primary health care to local communities, particularly at rural level. They work every day doing home visits and interacting with families to find out about their state of health. They treat and prevent diseases in both children and adults and in cases where they cannot treat refer patients to the health units. Their work allows some health services to be done in communities related mainly to the main causes of child mortality in Mozambique, such as malaria, diarrhea and acute respiratory infections. APEs carry out educational activities, promote sanitation and environmental hygiene as well as provide curative care to patients. Before embracing this dual function the larger parts of these APEs did not have much

information on how to deal with these diseases or with these health problems. This is the case of Adelino Bonifácio from the Mutacala Community, a PIRCOM volunteer since 2011. He says he did not know what it was to medicate, what were lectures and what the benefit was. Today he happily reports that through his work he has information on some diseases, he helps the community to prevent himself and knows how to treat them like for example to do the malaria rapid test.



APE Adelino Bonifácio doing malaria testing

Adelino Bonifácio feels happy about the work he does and says it is a pleasure to be able to help his community. Another APE from Murrupula is Sara João who cannot hide her contentment because she is involved in this noble activity. Sara, from the Community of Lupo, a PIRCOM volunteer since 2010, became an APE three years later. She feels very useful to the community for helping to inform about how to take care of their health and sees that the community already accepts the messages for example the use of the mosquito net. Sometimes she refers the sick people to the health unit that she cannot treat and then follow up to see if they have improved.

With this activity Sara says that she has changed a lot in her life, learned a lot about health issues and the monthly subsidy has been very important since it has helped buy what she needs for her survival.



APE Sara João working in the community

Jaime Colaço is also APE in Murrupula. Like his colleagues, is also a volunteer at PIRCOM, one of the first to join the organization. In 2010 he became an APE and comes from the community of Murrupa. Jaime Colaço is also a faith leader who does a lot of work from his congregation. Helping others and collaborating with the health unit to improve community health is what makes he feel proud. His happiness lies in the changes he sees in community behavior. Colaço even says that before the community had no latrines but now they are already building, they did not clean around the houses but today the yards are clean. When they get sick with malaria they already know that they can count on the support of the APEs. The APE work has given him a lot of experience and his life has also been changing. Today he has a land and a house obtained with support of the subsidies that he receives from his activity. Although the value is not very high but according to it has helped in the work of the field.

He like other APEs, trained for 4 months and had short-term training on HIV and AIDS-TARV and Family Planning. Regularly they go through refresher sessions to be updated in terms of content.



APE Jaime Colaço in full activity

Each APE has an essential drug Kit delivered to it by the health unit, meets with the supervisor every fortnight, and has monthly meetings to evaluate their work. Like Bonifácio, Sara and Jaime, other APEs, namely Ana Maria Gabriel and Genita Cipriano work to reduce diseases in the community. Each month they have a small subsidy whose claim for their smallness has been presented several times. In addition to voluntary work and activity as APEs they participate in health sector campaigns such as vaccinations. One difficulty they face is the lack of transport because they travel long distances daily to visit families but are motivated by the great work they

