

# **Called to Care Workshop Chokwe District, Gaza Province-Northern Limpopo Circuit of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Mozambique**

17<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> April, 2015



## **Acknowledgement**

First of all we want to thank the Almighty God for allowing us to run the workshop in Chokwe. Our gratitude is extended to Bishop Dinis Matsolo and his office staff for all the support, to Rev. Nelson Pene for promptly responding to our request to run the workshop in Chokwe, to Mr. Glen Williams for all the communication during the preparation of this event and for all the support provided by the Strategies for Hope UK. Finally our thanks are for everyone who was involved in the workshop, including the participants and the supporting team.

## **About Chokwe**

Chokwe is an Administrative District in the north of Gaza province in the southern region of Mozambique; it is also a municipality, located about 220 Kms northwest of Maputo City (the Capital city). It is mainly a rural area with a small urban area where there are local government and municipality offices, some small companies, and some services such as banks, hotels, gas stations and schools, including a boarding school. It has a high index of unemployment, and it is situated in the Zimbabwe corridor, where immigration of people from other areas or districts is noticeable, including Zimbabwean people who seek better living conditions. Almost every household has some family members emigrating to South Africa. All these factors, as well as prostitution, contribute to making this area highly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

## **Workshop**

The workshop started at 8:30 a.m., with meditation led by Reverend Nelson Pene opening at the Gospel by Matthew 22:39 which says: “Love Your Neighbour as Yourself”. In his opening sermon, Rev. Pene said that this workshop is a sign of Love, our brothers and sisters left Maputo and came here to show and share their love with us by equipping us with knowledge through this workshop. Therefore, after this workshop we are also invited to go out and share our love with those who are in extreme need; we have to teach our sisters and brothers in the community how to avoid infection and transmission of HIV. If we share our love and the knowledge we have acquired here, we will be playing our role in combating this epidemic that is killing people in the world.

Rev. Nelson Pene during the morning devotion on the two days.



## **Participants Introduction:**

Azarias Muchanga introduced the trainers' team and asked participants to introduce themselves. During the presentation it was observed that there were present in the workshop a pastor, an evangelist, Bible Woman, Circuit and local church stewards, women, men and youth department's leaders and Sunday school teachers, with a total number of nineteen (19) people: 8 males and 11 females.

## **Expectations**

Participants shared their expectations of the workshop. Almost all of them said that their main expectation is to be trained and acquire knowledge so that they will be able to train and teach others on issues related to HIV/AIDS.

Mr António Muchanga: “My greatest expectation is to leave this workshop capable to teach others on Strategies for Hope and to encourage people to live positively”.

Milda Boca (a young female participant): “I want to leave here with knowledge to give hope to my sisters and brothers who are suffering with HIV/AIDS”.

## Why Speak about HIV and AIDS at Church?

Talita Mahlalela spoke about the objectives of the workshop and said that we speak about HIV in church because the church is a place that gathers people from all social groups, races and ages. It has people who are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. The church is not isolated; it is located in a neighbourhood, surrounded by people with a lot of needs, including those suffering from this disease. The church is called to go out and help those who are desperately looking for help, providing them with food, clothes, spiritual healing and prayers; it has to speak about HIV and combat it.

## Training materials

The workshop used the Portuguese editions of three Strategies for Hope training materials, namely: Called to Care no. 2, *Making it Happen* and no. 3, *Time to Talk*, and the Portuguese version of the the film, *What can I do?*.



Azarias Muchanga and Talita Mahlalela addressing the participants.

## **HIV and Community – Who is the most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS in our community?**

This question was raised for participants to say who they think is the most vulnerable in their community; here are some of the answers:

Lucrência Nhavane: “Young people are the most vulnerable people in our community because they want to experiment everything, they misbehave”.

Mr Cossa: “Adults are the most vulnerable people because they do not care about condoms”.

António Muchanga: “Married people because they are unfaithful”.

Angélica Ubisse: “Men are the most vulnerable because they have affairs out of their marriages; they bring diseases that they transmit to their spouses without telling them anything about their status or misbehaviour”.

Dúrcia Macamo: “Sex workers, because they are more exposed to the risk of getting HIV”.

Deolinda Mulhui: “Everyone, because all of us can be infected with the HIV virus”.

Azarias Muchanga thanked the participants for their responses and said, “Although Deolinda mentioned that all of us can be infected with HIV, you did not mention priests and pastors; can they not be contaminated with HIV because they are ordained?” Then he invited the participants to carefully watch Reverend Gideon Byamugisha’s video, *What can I do?*, and take notes so that everyone could say what they learnt from it.

### **Video Session**

After the showing of the Gideon Byamugisha video, *What can I do?*, participants were invited to share what they had learnt from it:

Mr António Muchanga: “I have learnt that we have to advise people living with HIV and those who are sick to comply with recommendations given by doctors so that they will live long”.

Mr Ezequiel: “We have to encourage people to never give up, even if they face challenges as Rev. Gideon did but never giving up. We have to pray with and for people; the church has to support people living with HIV.”

Evangelist Cossa: “I learnt that we have to encourage people living with HIV not to give up living because they are HIV-positive”.

Milda Boca: “Sometimes it is we the society or church that kill our brothers and sisters who are HIV-positive or we make their illness worse because we tend to stigmatize them. We are not supportive of our brothers and sisters who are infected and affected by this pandemic, because instead of being supportive of them, we unveil their situation to everyone.”

Sara Machel: “I acquired some tools to encourage those who are suffering with AIDS; I will use Reverend Gideon’s story as a living example to them. It is necessary to give support to people infected with HIV which can be moral and material support and prayers above all.”

Deolinda Zacarias: “I learnt that it is necessary to break the silence so that people can help us. However, not everyone is supportive; there are those who discriminate and stigmatize people suffering with AIDS.”

Dúrcia Machava: “I learnt that Reverend Gideon is brave and courageous by breaking his silence. It is now clear for me that everyone can be contaminated or infected with HIV; we used to think that HIV/AIDS was only for people of bad life but this video has shown that even pastors can and are getting infected. We have to stop judging people and help those in need.”

Mrs Ivone Nhaca Pene, (Women Association’s Chairperson): “I want to thank Reverend Gideon for being open about his HIV status. My appeal is that this video should be shown to everyone here in our country, so that people can reflect on it and change their attitudes. I think that most of our church societies are not yet prepared to see a pastor who confesses to being HIV-positive.”

Reverend Nelson Pene: “This is a great lesson for lay members and clergy, a pastor revealing his HIV status. A great lesson is that we should not spend time trying to find out how I was contaminated or who contaminated me, but to accept it and live positively by fulfilling with medical recommendations. If we find ourselves infected, we do not have to stop doing the work God called us for.

### **Summary of book-based discussions**

#### **- CtoC Book 3 (*Time to Talk*), Family Life, HIV and Church: Family Life and Discipleship:**

- **Glorifying God in your life**

A presentation based on the book was made, participants read the page containing the title above and interpretation was done after each paragraph, including in the local language. This was also done with the opening of the Bible.

Some questions such as “does the spreading of HIV in Africa mean that God does not care about us? An open discussion was done, and the final answer sustained with biblical scriptures is that God cares about all his creatures.

Reverend Pene said that this is not the time to focus on how HIV/AIDS came to be, whether it was created in a laboratory or not, if it was created with the objective of exterminating some human beings, but to accept that it exists and fight against it. AIDS is a universal disease; it does not only affect Africans but people all over the world.

- **Changes in Sexual Behaviour that reduce the propagation of HIV**

This began with a presentation by Azarias Muchanga on this topic and a wide debate was open, with accusations from men to women and vice-verse, as well as people accusing the youth as the ones who are most at risk with their wrong attitudes. A heated discussion was observed on the topic: “*Why Married People Seek Sex out of their Marriages?*”

From that discussion, some opinions by the participants are quoted below:

Ivone Pene: “Why do we make others suffer? There is no need for that to happen. Men should be clear and straight to the point, in case they feel that the woman (wife) is not satisfactory to them, why not sit down and discuss and solve our problems? Why do you men not give yourselves time to sit down and talk with your wives? You just go out to seek for sex, but that increases the spread of HIV and AIDS. This is a bad behaviour. We need to talk and if we do not find a solution, we can even opt for separation instead of making one side suffer and above all that partner gets contaminated with the virus. Couples need to talk about their problems and solve them.”

Deolinda Nhavane: “Men must stop considering themselves as a hatchet or bees, as we read a statement saying that when the hatchet cuts more trees it is when it becomes sharpened and when a bee visits more flowers it is when it produces better honey, meaning that a real man is the one who have many sexual partners. This is a lecture to us, it tells us both, men and women, to avoid having many sexual partners because that increases the number of HIV infections.”

Samora Boca (a young man): “This discussion is a great lesson for all of us; we men have to use our psychology because everything starts from our eyes and affects our psychological system. Whenever we see a beautiful woman outside, we have to tell ourselves that my wife is the most beautiful woman in the world and I have to be faithful to her. That way of thinking will help us to avoid having an affair with other women and by that way we will be avoiding the risk of getting infected.”

Rev. Pene: “God created man and gave him the power to rule things, but he misinterprets that power and thinks that he has to be the chief of everything and everywhere, and when he does not find a space to feel as the chief, he gets frustrated and he seeks happiness out of marriage, which is wrong. He has to create ways so that he feels satisfied at home. Women must also cooperate with their husbands; they have to know what their spouses like and create an environment with them.”

Evangelist: “The culture prevailing in the Southern region of Mozambique, where men in their communities, especially in rural areas, believe that they do not have a special status if they do not have more than one wife; that belief makes men to be like bees. There is a need to educate people in our communities to change their behaviour because that belief leads them to contamination and spreading of HIV/AIDS.”

After a long discussion, some lessons drawn from that topic were:

- There is a need to educate both men and women to change their sexual behaviour.
- It is necessary to correct some myths or stereotypes existing in people’s minds, especially in those men who believe that having multiple sexual partners is a symbol of being powerful.
- Continuous dialogue between couples must be encouraged and that dialogue should be extended to their children who are becoming adults, in order to reduce risky behaviour that can lead them to HIV infection.
- A couple must not have taboos and secrets from one another, as any secret may bring doubts in their relationship that can cause conflicts between them, and one or both

may seek satisfaction outside of their marriage and consequently it is a risk of infection and that can destroy families. Therefore, couples must be friendly to each other and discuss issues affecting their marriage.

After that we opened to the page on advantages of changing attitudes that reduce the risk of HIV and four of the young participants said that they were amazed by what they had learnt, especially regarding delaying sexual activity and the benefits that it brings to young people. "I am going to share this message with my colleagues at school," said Durce Machava.

After the announcements and comments by one of the participants who was appointed by the trainees, (the "Bible women"), one of the elder participants briefly said: "We are very grateful for the lessons we learned today, which will help us as the church to develop our work on response to the fight against HIV/AIDS".

After that, Rev. Pene said: "At all the moments we should be with Jesus and hold him so that we never fall down, but at certain moments by being careless we do fall. However, being a God of love, He recovers us and holds us. These lessons about the disease that kills thousands of people all over the world are a clear example that God loves us and wants to see us well, free of HIV/AIDS. The lessons that we had today are an encouragement for us to change our attitudes before HIV/AIDS and recommend us to teach others."

Then he prayed for the closing of the working day.

These topics were given with the observation of coffee and lunch breaks. The working session of Day One came into end when it was 17:17p.m.

## **Day Two**

The second working day began at 8:00a.m., with a prayer led by Evangelist Cossa, then Reverend Nelson Pene led the morning devotion based on scriptures from the book of Ephesians 3:17-18.

After the devotion, Mr Ezequiel Quive summarized what was seen and discussed on the previous day, where he highlighted some of the issues such as who is the most vulnerable to HIV and that the youth was mentioned as the most vulnerable by the participants. Nevertheless, all of us are likely to be infected with HIV, including pastors.

He also mentioned other topics presented and discussed in the previous day and other participants added some points.

After that, Talita presented a topic on HIV and Children, where she urged the church members to be more engaged in child protection. She reminded participants that the church is called to play a role for the wellbeing of children and said that it is necessary to help children who are exposed to HIV/AIDS, and our country has many children who are heads of families because their parents died of AIDS. What do we do to help these children who are in this difficult situation?

Participants recognised that there are children in similar situations in their communities and that they have not done much in order to help them.

Then Azarias Muchanga raised the following question: “What and how can we teach our brothers and sisters (including children) to be protected from HIV/AIDS?”

The participants were divided into four groups, one for young women, one for young men, one for ladies, and one for gentleman. They first had to elect a chairperson and a reporter. They then started working immediately, and after the coffee/tea break they reported as follows:

### **Group I (Young Women)**

Our group discussed and decided to bring these issues which we think are necessary in order to help people:

- To advise people to use condoms
- To run lectures on HIV and its prevention
- To have their own hair clippers and other cutting tools.
- To do HIV testing

“One of the objectives of this workshop is to learn, then to teach others, so there are no wrong ideas,” said Azarias during the moment for questions and answers when some elderly people asked why convey a message for the use of condom instead of teaching people about abstinence. “We are brainstorming, and then we will select what are the most adequate ideas for us,” said Reverend Nelson Pene.

### **Group II (Mothers/Ladies)**

- To counsel people to use condoms
- To encourage them to do HIV testing
- To tell them to be faithful and trust their partners



The mothers' group decided to encourage people to be faithful to their partners and also to use condoms.

### **Group III (Fathers/Gentlemen)**

- Family education on HIV prevention and use of condoms
- Trust and faithfulness for couples
- To encourage them to pray and ask God to help them avoid being engaged in HIV risk activities
- To do testing in order to find out about their HIV status and for treatment in case of being positive.
- To motivate them to comply with treatments
- To teach them about abstinence

### **Group IV (Young Men)**

- We have to teach our brothers and sisters to be faithful to each other and not have sex out of marriage
- To teach people about changing their behaviour, avoiding doing things that may conduct them to contamination of HIV
- To teach people to be self-disciplined

All four presentations were followed by questions and answers, and discussion where necessary.

Apart from other issues which were presented by the groups, the moderator, Azarias Muchanga, said that it is important to teach young people about abstinence and adults about faithfulness, i.e., being faithful to each other. And in case these groups of people fail to abstain and to be faithful, they should use condoms.

Reverend Nelson Pene was asked if the church allows the use of condoms. He answered that yes, the church allows its members to use condoms as one of the preventive measures. The Church teaches that morality has to do with faithfulness and abstinence but, as it was mentioned, if people fail to do that, they have to use condoms to avoid infecting others or getting infected. The church does not want see people dying while they could avoid death.

As we saw yesterday from Reverend Gideon's video HIV/AIDS is not a sin. "It is a disease existing like any other," said Reverend Pene.



Talita Mahlalala did a presentation on HIV-related violence and stigma.

Talita Mahlalela did a presentation on HIV-related violence at home and in community and also on stigma. Participants were unanimous in saying that stigma and discrimination of people living with HIV is a bad attitude and should be discouraged.

Mrs Cossa: “Discriminating against people because they are HIV-positive is killing them. We, especially as Christians, have to show our love to people and encourage them to live positively.”

Chambal (a young man): “People look at the church as a place of salvation; therefore, it is our responsibility as the church’s people to accommodate those who are suffering with HIV and encourage them to continue living in a positive way”.

Ezequiel Quive: “I fully agree with what the previous participants have said and I want to add that instead of discriminating and stigmatizing people, we have to pray with them, asking God to strengthen them”.

After these and other statements, Azarias invited the participants to stand up and play the “Chair Game”, where they had to choose the chair according to their opinion in relation to people with HIV. Surprisingly, all went to the same chair, justifying that they are against stigmatization and HIV is everyone’s problem, and it is cross-cutting issue. Today there are those who are infected and tomorrow we can be the one, so let us look at it as our problem and be supportive to each other.



Participants prepare to play the chair game.

After that Azarias thanked the participants and said, I would be very happy if you are all being honest about your attitudes for people living with HIV and if you could be indeed supportive to each other, and he told participants to have a ten minute break.

**Then it was time for CtoC Book No. 2 (Making it Happen – Fazer Acontecer),- Church and HIV Planning**

- SWOT Analysis
- How to conduct an internal and external evaluation

These topics were presented based on book number 2. Most of participants showed little knowledge on these topics, especially on SWOT Analysis.

There was a need to use some traditional examples and also to make use of the Changana language to better explain to people about internal and external evaluation.

After the lunch break, participants continued looking at this topic and in small groups they had to do the planning of HIV activities for the church.

The summary of the draft is that the church should:

1. Train the activists on HIV (to equip them with knowledge)
2. Design a guideline for their action/work
3. Fundraise
4. Establish possible partnership
5. Implement the Activities

Participants said that they are willing to put together the findings of working groups and design HIV guidelines and activities that they want to implement on faith-based responses to HIV.

After the afternoon tea break it was time for Olga Ubisse (Health technician), to do her Technical presentation on **HIV and Clinical Points of View, How to avoid contamination and correct use of Antiretrovirals.**



**Olga Ubisse doing her presentation.**

In her presentation she spoke about the penetration of the virus into the body and the cells, checking of CD4 and the phases of treatment. She mentioned when and how the treatment

should occur, how to properly take the antiretroviral drugs and what happens if someone gives up taking medication because he/she feels that they are getting well.

## **Section for Questions and Answers**

Here is the extract of two questions and answers which, among the other questions, were the big concerns for participants:

- Reflexion by Rev. Pene: “In a case a where couple of young people finds out that one of the partners is infected with HIV when they are about to get married, what would be the way out?”

- The way out is to counsel the one who is not infected that if he or she loves his/her partner they are free to get married and they can use condoms in their marriage.

- How can they have children?

- They will talk to a doctor and he/she will advise them about when and how to have a child who is HIV-negative, i.e., who is not infected with HIV.

## **Subsequent Steps**

The workshop participants committed themselves to replicate the training.

Reverend Nelson appointed a committee to put together different ideas from the working groups and encouraged the committee to work on organising material for the participants to continue with the training in their respective organisations.

He also said that he was appointed by the Christian Council of Mozambique to be HIV Ecumenical Coordinator in Chokwe District, where he will include the CtoC training at the ecumenical level and that he will invite the participants to attend more training courses on HIV/AIDS at the ecumenical level, then the activists group will be established at the church level.

## **Closing**

Talita Mahlalela thanked the participants and all those who were involved in the workshop, including those who cooked the meals. She once again thanked Reverend Nelson Pene for a prompt response when he was informed about the workshop and the rapid way of inviting the participants. Then the trainees thanked the trainers for the workshop.

“I am happy with this workshop and I feel capable to teach other brothers and sisters, using CtoC material. We have all gained something, it was a rich and useful workshop because the topics were quite important and interesting – thank you very much,” said Evangelist Cossa.

Then Reverend Nelson also thanked the organisers and said that Chokwe people were lucky to have the opportunity to attend the workshop. “To run such workshop is very expensive, so let us make a proper use of all that we have learnt. Let us disseminate these lessons to others who also need to learn,” said Reverend Nelson.

Having said that, Reverend Nelson Pene and Azarias Muchanga handed the certificates to participants. The workshop ended at 5:00 p.m. with the group photo and prayers.



Mr António Muchanga (on right), receiving certificate from Reverend Nelson Pene.