

Community-based HIV counselors make the difference: Testing more couples and families in Nampula

Offering HIV testing and counseling services for couples and families in their homes is one SCIP strategy to increase the proportion of people who know their sero-status.

Families in the Ratane neighborhood of Memba District are witness to the successful collaboration between community health activists and community-based counselors. Activists sensitize their families as to the importance of being tested for HIV and identify at-risk individuals, especially those couples interested in being tested at home. This information is then forwarded to community counselors.

In the Ratane neighborhood, Manuel was frequently ill. His family did not know what else to do and explained the situation to the SCIP activist during one of her house visits. The activist promptly coordinated with the community counselor, who went to Ratane to visit Manuel and his family.

Manuel received HIV counseling with his family and immediately accepted to be tested for HIV. His wife and four children (including a daughter with a child under 2) also agreed to be tested. After receiving their results, Manuel and his wife were referred to the health center in Memba to continue the necessary steps.

The activist continues to visit Manuel and his family regularly to provide support, emphasizing the benefits for clients at the clinic, the importance of adhering to follow-up appointments, how to protect their children and other family members from tuberculosis, the value of airing the house, sharing information on diet and nutrition, conservation and treatment of drinking water, and providing condoms.

The counselor returns to visit the family every two months to measure blood pressure and to share important information with the family of Manuel: malaria prevention, diarrhea risk reduction, reinforcing tuberculosis prevention measures, reinforcing messages on water treatment and conservation, nutritional counseling and the benefits of adhering to treatment. He also promotes family planning methods and provides free condoms, demonstrating correct and consistent condom use; signs, symptoms, advantages of treatment and where to receive treatment for sexually-transmitted infections.

Depois do primeiro contacto entre o conselheiro leigo e a família Manuel em Dezembro do ano passado, até ao momento o conselheiro já fez duas visitas, a ultima foi a 10 de Março e nas suas palavras:

- Life has a new meaning for us now. Now we know the sero-status of all family members at home. Before the counselor visited we thought that the children were sick with the same illness but now we know that the kids are healthy. We learn new things with each visit of the counselor,

key information which really makes a difference in our lives. Manuel is no longer bedridden because of tuberculosis.

The counselor was impressed with the improvements. “I was surprised in my later visits because before you could hear Manuel’s cough from the entrance to their home, and this time I found him helping out with family chores. I was motivated to continue visiting this family because they welcome my visits and I could see the improvements – the family was healthier and more confident.”

