

VOLUNTEER'S HEALTH CORPS

STORIES FROM THE FIELD





**Mosquito nets and sensitization campaigns
have changed radically our lives**

Embaló Family



No measles epidemic in Pirada

I'd never imagined I could be someone that could keep away one community from an epidemic. Pirada is a Guinean village located on the borderline with Senegal. Few months ago we were developing sensitizing health campaigns door to door with the families in the community to inform them how to prevent common illnesses and also to encourage them to visit the Health Centre whenever they feel ill.

During the door to door campaign I realised that one member of one family had red spots in his arms. The visit continued and I saw the same spots in other members of the families, especially children, so I thought it could be measles as most of them had also fever.

I phoned the Responsible for the Sanitary Area to inform him the cases I'd detected and to ask him what I could do. He came to the community and visited people affected to take tests to send to the laboratory in Bissau Capital. The following week we got the results and it was confirmed: Pirada was suffering a measles epidemic. The Sanitary Authorities of the Area organized a vaccination campaign in the community and no one else got measles afterwards.

I feel really useful being part of this project as I've realized many communities, especially those far from the city centres and near to the frontiers with other countries, have no much knowledge about hygiene and illnesses prevention.

Ayu Tamba
Volunteer



For the sake of the children

Two weeks ago we lost one child in Sonaco due to diarrhoea, he was only 4 years old and he has passed away.

We were doing our daily campaign door to door to talk to families about prevention diseases measures. One of the families had his son ill for many days but they hadn't taken him to the Health Centre as they thought he had just fever, so they kept him at home. We entered to the house to see the little boy: his body was already degraded, he had lost lot of liquid and his eyes were very white. We asked the family to take him to the Health Centre immediately but it was too late, the children ended dying in the hospital.

We feel really sad because that child could have been an amazing person in the future. His death could have been avoided if his parents had taken the child to the Hospital as soon as he got ill.

This case encourage us even more to keep day to day in the communities sensitizing all families to really take care of their health through prevention and also through visits to the Health Centre to be seen by a professional nurse.

Lorenço Mané
Volunteer



Adapting traditions for health improvement

The Corp of Health Volunteers has brought people to the Health Centre. Patients tell me there is a group of volunteers that informs them about hygiene and illnesses prevention and also encourage people to visit the Hospital.

Most of people don't come to the Health Centre as the traditions are still on the forefront and they prefer to visit the traditional healer. Having into consideration that reality, we visited the healer and asked him to contact to us when he receives patients with series illnesses that cannot be treated trough traditional methods such as paraplegia. Once we are contacted by him, we visit the community to take the patients to the Hospital.

The project is having a big impact in community's health as the Volunteers manage to send people to the Health Centre to be treated, especially those who live in far communities and are used to follow traditional methods visiting the healer.

Prevention is cheaper than recovery.

We work closely with the Volunteers: if we have any vaccination campaign we ask them to help us to promote it within the communities. At the end of each month we meet to share the results of their activities to evaluate them and take the needed actions for next month.

Jaucuba Biai

Responsable for Sanitary Area



We will never give up

We have a big challenge with one of the neighbours of Mafanco. He is an old man who has tuberculoses, however he denies it saying that is a curse someone put on him. It was one of the persons from the village that told us about that man being ill for so long. We visited him at his house and talk to him with the aim to encourage him to go to the Health Centre to see a doctor and give him a treatment, but we got no results. He is determinate to stay at home and not to visit any medical professional.

The big problem is not only that his life is at risk but also his families' life. In fact, one of his children, a 13 years old boy got also tuberculoses. He described us the symptoms and we accompanied him to the Health Centre, where it was given a treatment.

Few days later we talked again with his father to go with him to the Health Centre and get the same treatment as his son but he keeps denying. Despite of that, we won't give up and will visit him again until we success to get him to the Hospital but, to be honest, time is running out and also his health.

Areolino Bampuqui

Volunteer



Sensitizing through the mosque

Health is not in the pharmacy, health is in our hands, in our head, in the way we take care of our environment and hygiene. Many people in the community don't know that but thanks to the Volunteers people are starting to change their habits.

Volunteers came to talk to the village's chiefs to inform us about the activities they had planned for our community to be improved regarding to hygiene and environment. They suggested cleaning up the fountain was necessary as it is the place where we get water to drink from and it was dirty, with stagnant water all over concentrating rubbish and insects that were contaminating our water.

As Imam I called all young people of the community through the mosque's megaphone to help the Volunteers with all tools everyone had at his house. Thanks to that action now we have a clean fountain so our health and our children's health is not at risk.

I've also sensitized my community from the megaphone and I've informed them that its forbidden from now to clean any dishes or even the body in the fountain as it used to be. From now, and thanks to the support of the Volunteers, whoever dares to clean anything in the fountain will have to pay a fine of 500 xof (less than 1€).

We are very gratifying with the Volunteers as they have left their parents and their families to come here to help us and the changes are already visible.

Abudu Danso
Imam



VIH/AIDS: taboo in the village

VIH/AIDS is a taboo in the Guinean society. No one wants to know if is affected by it and those who got it, want to spread it to not to be the only ones.

This fear is reflected in the fact that most of people don't get the test to know if they are VIH/AIDS positive, so the Heath Regional Direction launched a campaign to persuade pregnant women to come to the Health Centre accompanied by their husband, so there is more pressure to get tested. Young people are the most sensitized and they come more often to the Hospital.

In Mafanco, we registered 2 cases of people infected by VIH/AIDS last month. The result comes from the number of people who really visited the Centre to get tested.

The main problem regarding to VIH/SIDA are the *Lost seen*: HIV-people that started the treatment but ended giving it up as their continuous visits to the Health Centre made neighbours suspect and they don't want people discover they are VIH/AIDS positive. One solution for this problem would be count on local activists to visit patients in their houses to give them the treatment which is free.

Taking these realities into consideration we focus our intervention on sensitization campaigns to get people to get tested and also we collaborate with the distribution of condoms.

Ayu Tamba
Volunteer



**Children are the best tool to pass
the message to the families
Mamadu Lamine-Volunteer**