PROJECT

Her Future Her Choice

in Mozambique

May 2024

Since 1997, Pathfinder has worked across Mozambique to bring sexual and reproductive health (SRH) care to those who need it most.

Her Future Her Choice operates in select districts of Mozambique to remove barriers to critical SRH information and services for adolescent girls and young women, ages 10–24. Pathfinder aligns service delivery with country priorities, strengthens the link between supply and demand, and ensures providers respect and uphold the rights of girls and young women to access services with dignity and without stigma or discrimination.

Her Future Her Choice is funded by Global Affairs Canada, through Oxfam Canada as a principal recipient and consortium lead.

RESPONDING TO URGENT NEEDS IN MOZAMBIQUE

Population: 33 + Million¹

2 out of 3 people are under the age of 25

Women in Mozambique have an average of 4.7 children



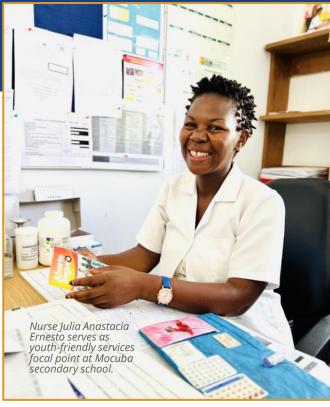


Photo: Luis Carriere

STORY OF CHANGE

Health Corner in Mocuba Secondary School Bridges Adolescents to Health Services

To expand access to SRH services and information and promote health-seeking behavior among adolescents and youth, Her Future Her Choice established a health corner at the Mocuba Secondary School in March 2021. The project facilitates regular visits by health providers to the health corner.

The health corner has proven to be a valuable tool for connecting adolescents and youth to health services. During the June–November semester, a total of 1,031 students (742 girls, 289 boys) were seen by a health provider at the health corner.

Julia Anastacia Ernesto, a maternal and child health nurse and youth-friendly services focal point, reflects on providing counseling to students at Mocuba secondary school:

"It is important to come to school, because there is a greater opportunity to work with many adolescents and young people of both sexes. I say this because not all adolescents arrive at the health facility on their own initiative. Not all teenagers would have come to [the health facility]—this due to lack of information, fear of entering the [health facility], or fear of being seen by people they know [...] I think all schools should have a school health corner."

Antonio Zeca, health focal point at Mocuba secondary school.

Geração

Geração

Antonio Zeca, health focal point at Mocuba secondary school.

Julia started making visits to the health corner toward the end of 2022, where she provided counseling on sexuality, prevention of gender-based violence, contraception, mental health, STIs, HIV, nutrition, safe abortion, circumcision, and menstrual health management. She and fellow health workers also offered contraceptive pills, male and female condoms, de-worming, iron salts, and referrals to health facilities.

According to Julia, girls generally visit the school health corner to learn about preventing pregnancies and different contraceptive methods. Some ask about safe abortion, and others want to know about their HIV status. Male students usually approach the health corner for condoms, and their concerns are related to starting sexual relations, testing for STIs and HIV, and circumcision. She also adds that health corners prevent school absenteeism.

Antonio Zeca, health focal point at Mocuba secondary school, agrees with Julia:

"I think that these services are good.
They have reduced pregnancies in school, support girls' continuation in school, improve girls' information for menstrual management [...] There are more students that seek [youth-friendly services] at the [health facility] because they are referred from the school. Adolescent pregnancy is still a serious problem, and many girls do not finish school because of it.
These visits help address that."



Photo: Luis Carrie

Mercia,16, and Pedro,17, students at Mocuba secondary school, consider the health corner a valuable resource. Mercia explains:

"I like it when the provider comes to the school corner, because it is easier to contact her about some questions that came up to me. If I did not have the school corner, I could go to the [health facility], but I would not always go there. The school corner makes it easier. [For] any doubt that I have, I do not need to leave the school—I already have a nurse here to clarify. I feel understood by the nurse in the corner, because she explains well and is friendly."

However, Mercia admits that there are other girls that still too ashamed or fearful to visit the nurse at the health corner.

Pedro also reports having a positive experience at the health corner.

"I liked how the nurse explained and responded to my doubts, and I also liked [the talk she gave to the students]. I like to have the school corner, and when the nurse comes to school, it has advantages because it makes it easier for me not to leave the school for the [health facility]. Here inside the school, I receive counseling, and we also have access to condoms to prevent pregnancy."

Although the National Strategy for School and Adolescents Health's recognizes the efficacy of school health corners, the implementation of health corners is only possible with the school's support. Her Future Her Choice commends Mocuba secondary school for creating an enabling environment for adolescent and youth access to vital health services.



Teresa Ricardo's Progress in Stock Management

Despite challenges with health facility stock management, some have made progress after participating in training sessions facilitated by Her Future Her Choice.

Teresa Ricardo, a maternal and child health nurse providing youth-friendly services at Milange Heath Facility, is an example of such progress. Before training, proper stock management—particularly SRH commodities was a challenge at Milange Health Facility.

After participating in training on stock management and receiving post-training technical support, Teresa reflected:

Teresa Ricardo,
a maternal
and child
health nurse
providing
youth-friendly
services at
Milange Health
Facility.

"It is not enough to train health providers on clinical protocols, assisting adolescents and youth, and how to offer the methods—[it must] also include stock management. We could avoid waste of commodities and stock-outs, which can compromise service provision to adolescents and youth who seek our SRH services.

I need to ensure that no adolescent girl or young woman goes back home without the method she requested, since that could result in unwanted pregnancy, or she may come back seeking an abortion. I can see the stock problems have reduced in these services since I learned how to do it.

I can use the stock form now—I update the stocks as a routine. I also apply the principle of 'first in, first out' to reduce the risk of expiring commodities and wasting them. This is a gain for the whole health center! I wasn't aware before of how important this was! I didn't know how to manage the supplies and contraceptives before."



Shifting Mindsets at Milange Health Facility

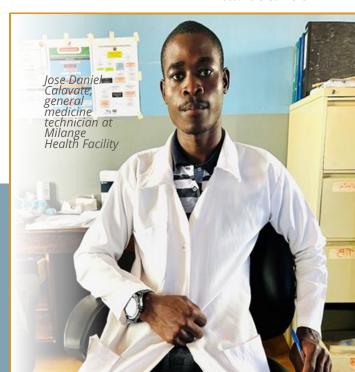
Jose Daniel Calavate is a general medicine technician at Milange Health Facility. He works in general screening services, the "entry point" of the health facility. In March, Jose participated in a sensitization session Pathfinder conducted on communicating with and providing counseling for adolescents and youth on SRH.

During the session, a Pathfinder clinical officer talked about the diversity among adolescents and raised awareness about sexual rights and sexual orientation. Participants, including Jose Daniel, expressed opinions about homosexuality as a contagious disease. He also believed that it could be "cured" through traditional treatments.

During the session, the facilitator addressed misinformation, myths, and prejudices around homosexuality, and Jose eventually understood that it was not a pathology.

He reported the information received had surprised him and had helped change his mind. He also said he would respect other options and sexual diversity without discrimination.

Jose's experience highlights how education and sensitization can change formerly rigid mindsets and create positive behavior change.



Promoting Human-Centered Health Care Services

Carima Horacio is a 33-year-old maternal and child health nurse at Nhaluanda Health Facility in Mocuba. She provides SRH services, including family planning consultations and antenatal and postnatal care.

In December 2023, she participated in the sensitization session conducted by a Pathfinder SRH expert in her health facility. The session focused on human-centered prenatal and postnatal care. The session also introduced the concept of obstetric violence. Carima was very impressed with the information and showed great concern. At the end of the session, she shared her thoughts with the group:

Carima Horacio, a maternal and child health nurse at Nhaluanda Health Facility in Mocuba.

"Now I am convinced that our attitudes and behavior made us commit obstetric violence without realizing it. From now on, I will pay more attention to pregnant women and our practices [in] the delivery room—such as hitting the thighs or face, pressing the belly [to] expel the baby, and other [actions] that are psychological and physical violence [that cause] a pregnant woman [to become] depressed, makes her not return to the health facility, or makes her not trust our services.

From today, this behavior will be overcome, and I will pass the information to other colleagues and traditional midwives who have also attended childbirth and refer pregnant women to the health facilities."

Carima's story illustrates the transformative impact of sensitization and education in health care. Her proactive approach is a powerful example of how health care providers can work together to create a more humane and respectful health care system.

STORY OF CHANGE

Transformative Change in Gender-Based Violence Services

Zaida Antonio Amalique is nurse at Brandao Health Facility in Milange district—and now a focal point for genderbased violence (GBV) services after receiving training from the Her Future Her Choice project.

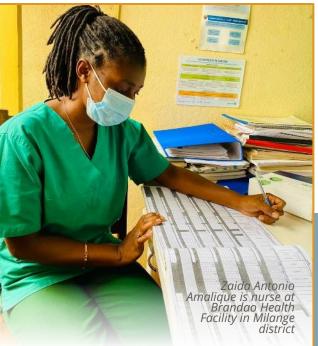
At baseline, the Brandao Health Facility scored 0% on compliance with Ministry of Health standards for GBV, with many underreported GBV cases.

The project trained health facility staff on GBV guidelines, procedures, and technical management of cases. The project also provided post-training follow-up and technical support. After staff underwent sensitization sessions and were trained on applying the GBV assessment tool, there was a significant increase in compliance with Ministry of Health GBV standards.

In June 2021, the health facility scored 43%. In February 2022, it improved to 85%. The health facility manager is now very active in supporting internal referrals. Zaida reports:

"I see the changes in myself and other colleagues. Now, I give priority to assisting GBV survivors. I didn't know, before project intervention, that there was a package of services to provide to survivors, particularly what to do in case of rape. We know now that victims of GBV should not be discriminated [against]. On the contrary, should be fully supported by the nurse. I write full details on the [survivor's] story and exam details and have improved in the registration ensuring the full file. We make sure our PEP kit is ready, and I control the supplies to avoid stock-outs.

I didn't even know what GBV meant before! I would have never imagined I would be able to take care of GBV cases that have reached our [health facility]!"



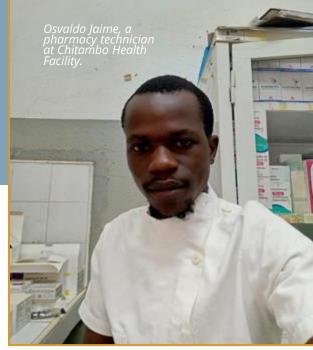


Photo: Luis Carriere

STORY OF CHANGE

Osvaldo's Progress in Stock Management

Osvaldo Jaime is a pharmacy technician at Chitambo Health Facility. Before receiving technical support and training in health commodity management from the Her Future Her Choice project, the health facility struggled with challenges like commodity stock-out. These problems were exacerbated by a new "intermediary warehouse" system, which introduced strict rules regarding requisition orders—particularly for contraceptives and other maternal and child health commodities. Because Pathfinder goes where the need is greatest, Chitambo Health Facility was selected for a technical support visit from the provincial and district warehouse manager.

During the visit, Chitambo Health Facility was assessed on various processes related to supply chain and stocks management to identify shortcomings.

Ultimately, the team discovered that Osvado was facing struggles with commodity management due to insufficient training. Osvaldo did not know how to correctly manage and register certain requisitions or sufficiently justify the internal and ambulatory distribution. To address these gaps in commodity management, Osvaldo received on-the-job training and participated in a one-day project-organized training on stock management in August 2022. This support has helped guarantee that the health facility receives commodities as needed and requested, and the health facility is now correctly reporting commodities consumption and stock status.

Osvaldo's experience highlights the importance of targeted technical support and training in strengthening the capacity of health care workers to manage essential supplies. The improvements at Chitambo Health Facility demonstrate that with the right training and support, even facilities facing severe challenges can achieve efficient commodity management—and work toward ensuring consistent availability of critical health supplies for patients.

District Task Force Improves Sexual and Reproductive Health Commodities Management

The establishment of district task forces to address the challenges in managing SRH commodities has proven to be a significant turning point in ensuring access to essential SRH services, particularly for adolescent girls and young women.

The districts of Mocuba and Milange faced escalating stock-outs of contraceptive methods and misoprostol, threatening progress made by the Her Future Her Choice project. In response, the project (Her Future her Choice) supported the creation of these task forces as a strategic measure to mitigate disruptions in commodity availability.

Edmar Casquinhas, the district pharmacy focal point in Mocuba, reflects on the remarkable progress made by the task force.

Edmar Casquinhas, District Pharmacy Focal Point, conducts pharmacy supervision.

Photo: Luis Carrier

He notes a considerable improvement in commodity availability compared to the previous year, with fewer stock-outs of various contraceptive methods, despite occasional stock-outs of emergency contraception at the provincial level.

Edmar attributes this success to the task force meetings, which have become instrumental in visualizing district trends, analyzing potential stock-outs, and seeking support from Pathfinder when needed. The task force's analytical approach has led to practical solutions, such as redistributing misoprostol from health centers without maternity services and addressing expired stock issues promptly. According to Edmar:

"This [task force] is an activity that is here to stay, and now the involvement of my colleagues from other sectors is remarkable. We also need to include other colleagues, as we have seen in the last recommendations. Of course, the subsidy component enhances this activity, this cannot be denied."

When asked if the task force will continue after the exit of the project, he affirms, "Yes, this initiative was embraced by the [District Services of Health, Women, and Social Action]. It is considered important, and I believe it will continue".

Improving Infection Prevention and Control at Brandao Health Center

In December 2022, Pathfinder assessed the quality of infection prevention and control at Brandao Health Facility in Milange district. The health facility only reached 50% of the Ministry of Health's quality standards. The assessment helped raise the health facility's awareness of infection prevention and control and commitment to improvement.

Olivio Inrebo, Director of Brandao Health Facility, remarked:

"Through this assessment, we found out that there were many issues we were not familiarized with. In fact, [we all] thought that [infection prevention and control] was just to keep the health center and its external areas clean. We were not conscious of how important it is to observe segregation, the methods of disposal of garbage—even less to make the correct use of our new infrastructure (new landfill)!"

Regarding the findings of the assessment, Olivio said:

"We learned that we lack a waste management plan, we do not have a guiding manual of waste management, and we do not comply with the process of final disposal of biomedical, common, and infectious waste. We were not burying, we were not making use of complete and proper [personal protective equipment] to handle the waste."

After presenting the assessment findings, Pathfinder assisted with designing a practical plan of action and trained health facility staff on using the new landfill. According to Olivio:



Photo: Luis Carriere

"One of the most remarkable actions we've taken after [the assessment] was closing the old landfill and starting to use the new one. Waste is no longer exposed; the risk of infection in the area decreases, and we feel that we are no longer polluting the area. This assessment woke us up in all aspects. Now, we have established a time to throw the waste, we try to follow what was recommended to us. Colleagues are more attentive."

The director mentioned pending issues and needs to respond to, but he is proud of this change.

STORY OF CHANGE

Strengthening Health Information Systems at the District Level

Carlos Xavier Nanga has been the district statistics focal point in Mocuba for almost as long as the Her Future Her Choice project has been in implementation. Carlos affirms that the project activities have improved his knowledge and technical skills around quality data and information systems, which equips him to better perform his work and support the health facilities. Carlos explained:

"I used to conduct supervisions to the [health facilities] and clean data. However, I was not really using tools or techniques to ensure quality standards. I also realized my limitations in analyzing data related to [SRH and family planning] consultations, and I lacked clear guidelines in this area."

Carlos has participated in some of Pathfinder's regular technical support visits to the health facilities. He has also participated in the application of the Routine Data Quality Assessment (RDQA). tool, which has been a crucial eye-opening opportunity.

Carlos Xavier Nanga, district statistics focal point in Mocuba.

"It was through the RDQA process that I really learned what quality standards we should aim for and also how to care about all stages: analyzing data from the primary source, ensuring the quality of filing, and verifying the data entry at HIMS," Carlos said.

He also noted that the project supports discussions of the district statistics meetings, and he can better access and analyze the data that is presented at the meetings.

Carlos' improved technical capacities now permit him to conduct more rigorous data analysis and provide better feedback and technical support to SRH providers who struggle with registering and managing data. Carlos' example shows that statistics technicians, despite their general initial training, need further support. In his case, it was also needed to improve his understanding of key SRH issues, especially contraception, to better assess data in this area.

At the RDQA round supported this period in the district, Carlos demonstrated his mastery of the tool and strong SRH data analysis competencies. Although the results of the RDQA in Mocuba this round have dropped (mainly due to unfortunate circumstances as detailed under activity 1221.2), he affirms that the health facilities are generally improving. Most importantly, he can better detect deficiencies and work with the health facilities to reverse them—not just at the 9 health facilities supported by the project in Mocuba, but the remaining 14 health facilities in the district as well.

Empowering a Gender-Based Violence Focal Point at Carico Health Facility

Ginoca Agostinho is a young medical technician at Carico Health Facility in Mocuba district. She has been working at Carico Health Facility for a year and a half, and she was also appointed as GBV focal point without prior training or experience in providing GBV care. However, she accepted the challenge and was eager to learn.

Ginoca is a very dedicated provider and has challenged herself to learn how to respond in her role as GBV focal point. From the beginning, she has made use of the support services from the Her Future Her Choice project—including technical support visits conducted by Pathfinder staff, training on the Ministry of Health's GBV quality standards tool, and provision of job aids and materials.

The project's support has contributed to significant improvements in the health facility's capacity for providing care to GBV survivors. The Carico Health Facility recorded an increase in quality standards met—from 31% in June 2021 to 85% in February 2022. This improvement was noted in the results presented at the Ministry of Health GBV assessment.

However, Carico Health Facility still faced some deficiencies in provision of GBV care. Since Pathfinder staff were aware of Ginoca's knowledge gaps and the deficiencies in GBV services provided in Carico Health Facility, Ginoca was invited to participate in a GBV module as part of an integrated training for SRH, which was conducted by the project in June 2022.

Ginoca found this training to be an excellent opportunity for her to increase her knowledge in GBV service provision. At the beginning of the module, her pre-test score was 6/20, which improved to a post-test score of 17/20 after completing the module.

After the training, Ginoca was able to identify—by herself!—aspects of Carico Health Facility's GBV care in need of improvement, including provision of services (particularly the PEP kit) and proper reporting. Ginoca reflected:

"The training gave me a broader view of the impact of GBV on the life of survivors and helped me learn about different types of violence [...] Now, I can define a GBV case accurately, and my clinical reports have gained in detail, which will help in the decision-making of the judicial authorities."

Ginoca now teaches other colleagues what she learned so that GBV survivors are treated with respect and dignity and offered the care they need.



STORY OF CHANGE

Nurse Leticia's Journey in Improving GBV Response at Muanaco Health Center

Leticia Maria Jose, 30, is a nurse at Muanaco Health Facility in Mocuba District. In her role, she is responsible for maternal and child health and works in the maternity ward. In addition, she has served as the health facility's GBV focal point since April 2020. She was appointed when Pathfinder, through Her Future Her Choice project, began supporting GBV services in the health facility. Before Leticia, there was no GBV focal point at Muanaco Heath Facility.

In February 2023, Leticia participated in project-supported training on using the new Ministry of Health forensic form, which she found helpful:

"That was a new tool for me, and I had trouble in identifying the sites (in the format that appears in the form) to describe the injuries. It was great to have the legal doctor facilitating the training, as he explained it very well. For example, it helped me understand the details around a ruptured hymen."

Leticia added: "The training helped me clarify doubts regarding reporting and about collection of the medical history of the client. The manual that was shared is very clear and summarizes well the information."

According to Leticia, the project has helped improve the way she attends GBV cases: "I learned techniques to address the patient, to provide first-line assistance."



At Muanaco Health Facility, GBV cases are usually attended by Leticia and a psychologist, but she admits that other colleagues should also be trained on how to manage GBV cases. She also expressed approval for the health facility's new space for clients seeking GBV care, which provides GBV survivors with more privacy and comfort. Leticia acknowledges that social perceptions around GBV is a great barrier for adolescents and youth to report GBV cases, as they fear their case will be publicized within the health facility.

Leticia shared a harrowing GBV case that she cannot forget. A very young girl, who was assaulted by an older cousin, was brought to the health facility by her mother and aunt for treatment. Leticia confirmed the assault and provided care. She encouraged the survivor's mother and aunt to report the case to the police, but the family wanted to solve it within the family. Leticia said, "This was before the training, and I didn't know I could also [submit] an anonymous report."

Improving Performance in Sexual and Reproductive Health Mentorships at Samora Machel Health Facility

The Samora Machel Health Facility in Mocuba district has been working tirelessly to improve the quality of family planning and SRH services. Nurse Ivone Policarpo, responsible for maternal and child health at this facility, has seen great progress in her service delivery practices after receiving routine technical support and mentorship via the DHIS2 application.

At the onset of the Her Future Her Choice project, Ivone faced significant challenges in providing SRH services, specifically regarding the contraceptive implant. During a supervisory visit in May 2023, her performance was assessed at only 71.13%, with errors in proper insertion due to errors with implant insertion, identification of the insertion site, and appropriate disposal of the applicator per national infection control standards.

Ivone Policarpo, maternal and child health nurse at Samora Machel Health Facility.

In response to these challenges, the project conducted regular mentorship visits using the DHIS2 application. During these mentorship sessions, Ivone received guidance on her service delivery practices and was encouraged to adhere to recommended procedures and standards.

Furthermore, Pathfinder provided routine technical support at the health center, with special focus in maternal and child health. After receiving mentorship and technical support, Ivone was able to address the gaps in her service provision and adopt safer, more effective practices. She reports that she is now able to provide high-quality family planning services with adherence to DHIS2 recommendations.

Ivone expressed gratitude for the support received from Pathfinder. With the skills acquired through technical support and mentoring, she feels more capable and confident in her role as an SRH provider.

Ivone has also demonstrated positive change in her awareness and behavior regarding SRH care provision. She recognizes the importance of continuous training and lifelong learning to enhance her skills and knowledge.

Going forward, Ivone will continue to implement the knowledge and skills she acquired through mentoring visits and technical support, with the ultimate goal of maintaining and further enhancing the quality of family planning services at Samora Machel Health Facility.

STORY OF CHANGE

Multisectoral Approach Yields Success

Recognizing that the district of Milange was experiencing high rates of GBV, unresolved GBV cases, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), the Her Future Her Choice project worked to improve GBV services to survivors—including referrals for legal action—and reduce STIs. Her Future Her Choice adopted a multisectoral approach, which included activities such as multisectoral meetings, training for health providers on GBV care and reporting, technical support to the multisectoral partners, and community outreach.

These actions were crucial for building health workers' capacities, raising community awareness, and ensuring that GBV cases were treated effectively and with urgency.

The success of this multisectoral approach for addressing GBV is exemplified in the response to the case of Cândida Alberto Joaquim, a 12-year-old survivor of GBV. After receiving essential care and psychological support per GBV care protocol, Cândida's case was successfully referred for legal action. Through close collaboration among the health sector, justice system, and community, the perpetrator was identified and sentenced to 19 years in prison after confessing to the crime.

The results achieved from the project's implementation are impressive. Health units began attending to GBV survivors, the community started reporting cases, and survivors began seeking help within 72 hours.



Photo: Luis Carriere

Cases that reached the police, prosecution, and courts were handled successfully, further demonstrating the efficacy of the project's multisectoral approach.

One key lesson learned from the Her Future Her Choice project's multisectoral approach is this: The participation of community leaders is essential for addressing resistance to change within the community and identifying areas with the highest rates of violence.

Looking to the future, it is critical to maintain support for health providers, continue community awareness sessions, and proactively address new challenges that may arise. Expanding and replicating this approach to other regions is also recommended, along with allocating adequate resources to sustain and expand GBV response.



Lessons Learned

- Multisectoral collaboration is key for effective GBV response.
- **2 Community engagement and sensitization** is crucial for raising awareness about SRH and GBV.



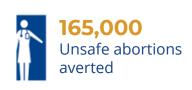
Photo: Luis Carriere

- **3** Capacity building for health workers, including training on reporting GBV cases, is essential for improving the quality of care provided to survivors.
- **4 Local leadership and ownership**—such as engagement with community leaders and local stakeholders—is instrumental in overcoming resistance to change.
- **5 Timely and effective response** to GBV, such as ensuring that GBV survivors seek help within 72 hours and that cases are promptly referred to the appropriate authorities, should be prioritized.





26%Clients adopted postabortion family planning



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