

## Educational videos spark lively debate, helping rural communities adopt healthy behaviours

The warm morning breeze wafted around Idalina Jackssine as she paused to compose herself. Sharing her experience was difficult, but she was passionate to do it to help persuade others.

*“Some of my family members wanted me to give birth at home, but I did not accept that. If I had delivered at home, I could have lost my baby and even my own life. There were complications and I had to have a caesarean.”*

Community members, old and young, mostly women, sat on the white plastic chairs neatly laid out in the grounds of the somewhat dilapidated Mulotane Health Centre in Boane District, rural Mozambique. Swatting at the ever-persistent mosquitos, some nodded in agreement as they listened.

Idalina was sharing her story after the group of community members had watched a screening of a 10-minute video on the benefits of giving birth at a health facility instead of at home. The screening is part of a novel approach by a small local health charity to help educate local communities and promote healthy behaviours. This community, like so many other rural areas, is often neglected when it comes to access to life-saving basic health education.

*“I’m so glad my father supported me. And thanks to the money that I saved for an emergency I did not have any problems getting to the clinic. But I was even prepared to go by tractor if necessary,”* shared the young mother.

After nearly losing her baby, she’s determined to help spread information on the importance of giving birth at the community health facility, so others don’t have to experience the worst. That’s why she’s so glad the local health charity is trying innovative ways to truly reach people with essential health and positive wellness information.

### **Supporting communities to improve their health and wellbeing**

Strengthening community-based health services is a proven method of increasing the health and wellbeing of communities. It brings health care services to the people and improves local knowledge, leading communities to make healthier choices and take positive action to improve their health and wellbeing.

The project is part of the PATH Window of Opportunity (WinOp) Project that is supporting local community-based organisations to integrate technology to help educate communities to take control of their health outcomes through positive behaviours.

The WinOp project trained and supported the local organisations to produce 12 short videos dealing with common community practices and obstacles around desired behaviours. These include the importance of attending antenatal and post-natal care, promoting births at health facilities, exclusive breastfeeding, childhood nutrition, and the importance of play and stimulation for young children.

The organisations use low-cost, portable video equipment to produce the videos. They also receive guidance from a local advisory board that includes PATH, health government officials, community opinion leaders, and representatives from provincial and district health services.

All elements of the videos are designed to ensure they are appropriate and applicable to the local context, such as featuring local community members and speaking in local dialects.

Health facility staff are also trained as video facilitators who use the videos as a tool to spark debate and discussion with community members to clarify what they have learnt and raise other health questions and concerns they may have.

*“Our community members can identify with the characters in the videos because their stories reflect their daily life,”* said Amelia Xavier, a maternal and child health nurse at Mulotane Health Centre, who facilitates some of the screenings and post discussion. *“It’s inspiring to see how they respond so positively to the messages.”*

To date, the videos have been screened in the waiting areas of 27 health facilities across the District, as well as at community forums, such as mothers’ group meetings, community gatherings, or health committees.

Early evaluation results show that they are helping community members better understand the importance of using health services and encouraging more discussion around critical maternal and child health concerns.