

## MOZAMBIQUE AND THE COMMUNITY OF SANT'EGIDIO

### *Peace*

On October 4<sup>th</sup> 1992 Joaquim Chissano, the Mozambique President and secretary of the FreLiMo, and Afonso Dhlakama, leader of the ReNaMo signed a comprehensive peace agreement. The agreement ended 16-year civil war that had claimed one million lives and resulted in four million of displaced people.

The signing concluded a long mediation process at Sant'Egidio in Trastevere. Andrea Riccardi, the founder of the Community, Matteo Zuppi, the present archbishop of Bologna, Jaime Gonçalves, the archbishop of Beira who died in 2016 and Mario Raffaelli, the representative of the Italian Government, had been patiently fostering dialogue and directing negotiations between the belligerent parties in the old monastery in Trastevere, seat of the Community of Sant'Egidio, for over two years.

Since then, Mozambique has experienced long-lasting stability and constant development. A difficult and non-linear path, but also a great success story, an example of how a State can leave behind the enormous difficulties and sufferings of a civil war, to face the complex, but more manageable challenges - the economy, the wellbeing of its citizens, the international relations in a globalized world.

The Community of Sant'Egidio – that is formed by thousand people of all ages in the country - has continued to keep close to Mozambique from then on to achieve peace after defeating war. A generation, that has never experienced war, grew up in the '**Schools of Peace**' that the Community of Sant'Egidio has opened in several cities and villages all over the country. A large movement of '**Youth for Peace**' has spread to schools and universities, propagating a culture of solidarity and gratuitousness, a premise for a pluralistic and peaceful society.

Moreover, with BRAVO (Birth Registration against Oblivion) Programme [link: <http://segidio.it/yLXQ>], the Community of Sant'Egidio could register in Mozambique thousands of children that had no legal identity, in order to protect their civil rights. The Community has eventually backed political and diplomatic efforts to keep peace that have developed since 1992 and led to the signing of a final agreement on August 6<sup>th</sup>.

## *DREAM: a programme for HIV prevention and treatment in Africa*

The **DREAM Programme** (Disease Relief through Excellent and Advanced Means) was designed and set up by the Community of Sant'Egidio in 2002; it is at present active in **11 African countries** Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya, Republic of Guinea, Swaziland, Cameroon, Congo RDC, Central African Republic, Angola and Nigeria) with 48 clinical centres, in cities and in rural areas. Over 500,000 sick people have been treated up to the present day and **130,000 healthy babies were born to HIV- positive mothers.**

The programme stemmed from a revolt against resignation in front of 30 million infected with HIV that received no treatment in Africa. Such vast AIDS epidemic would have been genocide in a few years. DREAM is therefore the child of a dream (hence the name), that is to ensure equality between the North and South of the world by guaranteeing free access to a complete therapy and overall support for health, based on an economically compatible and replicable model in Sub-Saharan Africa and countries with limited resources. It includes health education, nutritional support, advanced diagnostics, staff training, practices to counter malaria, tuberculosis, opportunistic infections and especially malnutrition. This holistic approach makes therapy and even prevention effective.

### *DREAM in Mozambique*

Mozambique is the country where the first DREAM centre for antiretroviral therapy in Africa opened in the outskirts of Maputo in February 2002. Since then it has spread throughout the country, 13 health centres, about 10,000 pregnant women that adhere to a protocol preventing mother to child transmission. DREAM has treated over 200,000 people in Mozambique. A programme aimed at making possible and accessible not only antiretroviral therapy, but also the whole complex of measures and factors that could make it effective: advanced diagnostics, fighting malaria, tuberculosis, opportunistic infections, cardio-vascular diseases, diabetes, cancer and especially malnutrition. Everything is run by highly qualified local staff that uses two biomolecular laboratories, two nutritional centres in Maputo and Beira and a laboratory for basic needs in Quelimane.

The beneficiaries covered by the program are mainly people with HIV / AIDS and their families, but also pregnant women, children and particularly vulnerable groups.

The DREAM programme is also committed in a widespread awareness-raising activity on care and prevention thanks to activists, especially women. The "Mulheres para o DREAM" having experienced the effectiveness of the DREAM method on themselves have chosen to help other patients. They are real testimonials that disseminate basic health information to guarantee the right to health to an ever-increasing number of people.

### *The DREAM centre in Zimpeto*

The DREAM centre in Zimpeto- that Pope Francis is due to visit on September 6th at 8,45 a.m. -aspires to become a reference for women's and children's care for the whole country. It is located in Ka Mabukwana neighbourhood, in the northern outskirts of Maputo. It is one of the poorest and most populated areas of the city with its 337,000 inhabitants; here health facilities are completely inadequate. HIV prevalence is estimated at around 23% of the adult population in Maputo.

The multipurpose centre, built on an area of 2,000 square metres, consists of four specialized wards. A department for treating HIV infection and for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission, another for the early diagnosis of women's neoplasms (cervical and breast cancer). A department for the treatment of tuberculosis that is first cause of death among HIV-infected people as well as one of the leading causes of death in Mozambique, and a fourth ward for malnourished patients, above all children.

The advanced laboratory structure allows monitoring treatment for HIV infection (through biomolecular analysis) and other associated diseases. The centre is also equipped with a solar energy plant, built thanks to an agreement between the Italian Ministry of the Environment and the Mozambican Ministry of Energy, and a rainwater recycling system so as to realize a very low environmental impact and a virtuous model of ecological intervention.

The centre benefits from a telemedicine programme that has been enforced by DREAM for a few years. About eighty European specialists working at Tor Vergata University in Rome, Carlo Besta Institute in Milan, the University of Pisa, the Italian National Institute of Health and others linked in a network have been offering high-level medical advice for free to people living in extreme poverty or in areas where diagnostic means are lacking.

A group of activists of 'Eu DREAM' association supports the centre in Zimpeto. These patients have become social and health workers after adequate training, they search for those who are having difficulty in adhering to the cure, they go to the patients' home and check their health and social conditions. Their activity is a great strength to ensure compliance. Cacilda Massango, coordinator of the Dream Centre in Zimpeto, received the popularity award "Woman of the year 2019" in Italy last June.

## *Cyclone Idai*

A violent cyclone struck Mozambique on March 14<sup>th</sup> devastating a vast region, including the city of Beira. It has left hundreds of victims and thousands of displaced people behind. The DREAM Centre for HIV care and the Nutritional Centre in Beira were seriously damaged. Nonetheless, the two centres provided a first shelter to hundreds of displaced people, who had lost everything and volunteers promptly started distributing food, water, medicines and clothes. DREAM workers decided to get to neighbourhoods and schools where the displaced people were staying. As the second access roads were restored, they tried to reach the most isolated villages surrounding Beira. Every day 1,000 hot meals are served to poor children at the Nutritional Centre.

Since April DREAM has been engaged alongside the WHO, the UNICEF and the Mozambican Ministry of Health, in a vaccination campaign that has reached thousand people to prevent the spread of cholera caused by the use of contaminated water after the cyclone.

## **DREAM FIGURES**

### **DREAM in Africa:**

**11** countries, **49** clinical centres, **25** biomolecular laboratories, **500,000** patients, including **18,000** children, **130,000** children born HIV free to HIV positive mothers, **200** training courses for medical and social workers attended by **15,000** professionals, **530** employees.

### **DREAM in Mozambique:**

**13** clinical centres, **3** biomolecular laboratories, **200,000** patients, including **10,000** children, **45,000** children born HIV free to HIV positive mothers, **110** training courses for **5,000** health professionals.

### **Zimpeto DREAM Centre:**

**3, 800** patients including **200** children, **500** children born HIV free to HIV positive mothers, **28** employees (2 doctors, 2 medical technicians, 2 pharmacists, 5 nurses, 1 coordinator, 1 midwife, 6 activists, 2 cleaner, 1 gardener, 3 biologists, 3 lab technicians, 1 clerk).