

Everyday struggles with HIV/AIDS in *Mafalala*, Maputo (Mozambique)

Margarida Paulo

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Abstract

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The HIV/AIDS epidemic is a huge problem in Mozambique. The aim of this thesis is to inquire into how some of the most vulnerable people in Mozambique, the urban poor, experience and understand the epidemic and the government's efforts to address it. The study is based on extensive anthropological fieldwork, including participant observation and a number of interviews in the urban area *Mafalala*, Maputo, and it seeks to understand and discuss how the HIV/AIDS epidemic in urban Mozambique relates to people's own voices, experiences, and understandings. By using a people-centered approach, where the needs and care of the people in the local context is in focus rather than specific illnesses, the study explores people's socio-cultural practices, ideas, and living conditions related to HIV/AIDS. With this approach, the healthcare delivery can only be improved and made more effective by being sensitive to both individual and social needs.

The theoretical framework is based on anthropological perspectives on global health and applied medical anthropology, emphasizing concepts such as social suffering, stigma, structural violence, gender values, and people-centered health delivery. The thesis shows that the HIV/AIDS epidemic in *Mafalala* is closely related to a situation of deep poverty, an everyday struggle for the most basic necessities, a patronizing and insensitive health sector, stigma, cultural perceptions, and gender values. Moreover, the study demonstrates that understandings, treatments, and local prevention efforts concerning HIV/AIDS are related to religious, spiritual, and ethnomedical practices, and it argues for an integrative approach where socio-cultural and medical approaches should be applied together in combatting what one informant has called "the illness of the century."

Key words: Mozambique, HIV/AIDS, Applied Medical Anthropology, Global Health, Social Suffering, Stigma.