

## Challenging global health through a socio-anthropological lens [Medical Anthropology Europe (MAE)]

Medical anthropology as a prism in the humanitarian response to the cholera epidemic in Mozambique 2023-2024. The experience of Doctors with Africa CUAMM INGO

Edoardo Occa (University of Milan - Bicocca Doctors with Africa CUAMM)

### Paper short abstract:

Evidence from the field is presented on the humanitarian response to the ongoing epidemic in Mozambique where anthropology emerges as a key tool for understanding behaviors and working on prevention and reduction of risk factors with the communities involved in an effective and conscious way

### Paper long abstract:

In Mozambique, a cholera epidemic has been underway since February 2023 involving almost all the provinces of the country, further aggravated by Cyclone Freddy which devastated the province of Zambezia. Doctors with Africa CUAMM in collaboration with the local government and with the support of Unicef operates in the humanitarian response which aims to identify cases, create sanitary cordons, sanitisation and prevention activities.

For all this to be effective, my experience as an anthropologist in working with communities, local committees and village leaders allows us to understand the social and cultural determinants and to co-design response strategies and resilience mechanisms compatible and embodied by the population.

Investigating the social structure as well as community decision-making processes, gender and generational relations leads to grasp the social watermark that determines the response of communities to the interventions proposed by the NGO and the health system.

Analysing together with the communities the imaginary that the quantitative data on epidemics tell about the communities was also an essential exercise to problematize the statistical-centric approach of humanitarian interventions to grasp local perspectives, logics and adaptations.

Working across 4 provinces, around 25 districts, hundreds of villages and thousands of interlocutors, the anthropological perspective becomes a grammar of listening and for coordinating the response on the various levels involved.

In strategic terms, the ongoing experience becomes a relevant case study for rethinking the quantitative epistemology of the "Global Health mind-set" in favour of more focused attention to the assumptions that medical anthropology suggests