

Livelihoods diversification in a changing environment



Mariamo Amade(left), learnt fishing from other women. Other than fishing, she is also a farmer and a potter.

ALP Community Stories

Mariamo Amade is a 35 year old woman. She and her husband are from the Gelo-Sede community, Angoche district, a community on the northern coast of Mozambique. The main livelihoods in the community are fishing and farming and the main crops produced are cassava and beans. Mariamo and her husband, as well as many of their neighbours, were victims of the cyclone Jokwe which affected many communities in Angoche district, in March 2008.

Mariamo learnt farming and pottery at a young age, while still living at her family home. She recalls that they used to grow rice, cassava and beans but since the early 1990s, due to a reduction in rainfall, it is no longer possible to grow rice and beans; she can only farm cassava. She used to harvest about 12 bags of cassava from one

hectare of land, but now she gets 6 bags of cassava which are only used for her family's own consumption. These low yields prompted Mariamo to engage in pot-making to supplement the family's sources of income. She increased the quantity of pots to earn more money and now makes 12 pots a month, while before she would make around 6 pots. The pots made are sold in a local market (that opens on Sundays) called Muetepua, located in a community about 5km from Gelo-Sede. Transport is very rare in the locality and she goes to the market on foot. She faces some challenges in her pottery work such as some pots breaking during baking and she does not always manage to sell the entire production. When she does not manage to get enough money from her sales to buy food for her family, she exchanges the pots for dried cassava. On the other hand

it takes 12 days to have good quality pots ready for sale. When Mariamo got married, she learnt how to fish from other women and began fishing as a way to help her husband, who is a fisherman like most of the men of the

Gelo-Sede community. Together with other women, she collects mainly shrimps, crabs and snails that are found close to the mangroves, while her husband fishes from a boat, using a hook and line further out in the sea. During the periods of low tides (about 15 days a month), she goes collecting in the morning and afternoon, spending about 4 hours each time. For Mariamo, harvesting seafood is a way of getting additional income and alternative option for food or at least food on a daily basis.

"The discussions during CVCA helped me to reinforce the idea that sitting and waiting does not produce anything, what makes things happen are our legs; it is important to act and not wait for things to happen by chance".

The money that her husband gets from selling fish is used for meeting basic needs in the home such as food and clothes. Mariamo's earnings from the sale of pots and products from fishing are divided between needs in the home and savings. The savings are kept in a savings groups Poupança e Crédito Rotativo (PCR – Rotating Savings and Credit), formed by 14 members from the community, both men and women. The PCR was introduced by one of the community leaders as a way of reducing the suffering of people and helping in the development process. Contributions to the PCR are made each Monday and the minimum amount contributed is 10 Mt (about 0.4\$USD). Mariamo's contribution is an average of 80 Mt (around 3\$USD) per month.

When asked about her motivation to adhere to the PCR she said: "The savings group is the opportunity I found to save money to build a decent house". After the cyclone Jokwe Mariamo and husband built a house locally called "rampata", meaning emergency home; Mariamo does not feel comfortable living in such conditions.

As part of the Adaptation Learning Programme (ALP) in Angoche district, led by CARE, Mariamo participated in a focus group discussion in May 2011 on the community's vulnerability to climate change impacts and their capacity to adapt. The process used CARE's Climate Vulnerability Capacity Assessment (CVCA) tool (www.careclimatechange.org/cvca).



Crabs, shrimp and snails are collected close to the mangroves.

Mariamo says: "The discussions during CVCA helped me to reinforce the idea that sitting and waiting does not produce anything; what makes things happen are our legs. It is important to act and not wait for things to happen by chance."

Mariamo is only one example of many women struggling to overcome the hardships of life in Angoche district. Many others need a hand to improve their livelihoods and support their families.

Their fight is worsened by the fact that most of their livelihoods are dependent on natural resources which are most affected by the changing climate, and their level of development is already very low. Therefore, the identification of resilient livelihoods and development opportunities is crucial to improve the adaptive capacity of these women and their families. For instance ALP will partner with local organizations to provide training on good agricultural practices and introduction of new crop varieties that are tolerant to the emerging weather patterns, as a way of diversifying the community's livelihoods.

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Story by Silene Bila, January 2012.

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