

Citation for José Mauro Gonçalves Nunes

Mauro Nunes is no ordinary nurse. For the last 25 years he has worked with various NGOs such as Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), Save the Children and Africare in Brazil, Mozambique, Angola, Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Sudan, Indonesia, Haiti and Honduras. That makes him quite a globetrotter and a remarkable role model for young nurses.

As a child Mauro was inspired to become a nurse when the person who nominated him for this Award lodged with his family while she was doing her nursing course. He followed her into the profession despite misgivings from family and friends. On gaining his qualification he moved to Urucurituba, in Iranduba and Manacapuru, three very rural areas in the Amazon region in northern Brazil. After some years there, he began training and supervising 200 community health workers (CHWs) in over 30 municipalities in case management, health education and prevention of cholera in the Amazon region for the Brazilian Ministry of Health and the Brazilian Navy. This was already an indication of the work he would go on to do when he joined MSF, first working in Malange, Angola, and then in Niassa Province in Mozambique. His main concerns were early warning systems for infectious diseases such as measles, yellow fever, meningitis and cholera in Nigeria, Benin, Togo and Ghana. He set up projects to help people living in dangerous places in any number of Brazilian towns, cared for homeless people; started TB clinics, family health programmes, and was always looking to help the most deprived people. The list of projects he run is long and diverse, showing a real talent for spotting the most urgent needs to address. When time allows, since 2007 until today, he also works as a nurse in the surgical ward at the Federal Hospital dos Servidores do Estado.

In 2008 Mauro was health coordinator of the MSF mission in Khartoum, Sudan. In the same year he became training supervisor of the Brazilian Medical unit of MSF. In 2010 he coordinated the MSF Emergency Project to victims of the floods in Alagoas and Jequitinhonha Valley in Brazil. In 2011 he was the health coordinator of the cholera intervention in Port au Prince, Haiti, after the earthquake there. Later he coordinated projects for the Street Population and Commercial Sex Workers in Tegucigalpa, Honduras and also the Assessment mission of illegal Haitian migrants in the Amazon region, all for MSF Brazil. In the same year he found time to facilitate workshops for health and social workers working with street populations in São Paulo, Recife, Maceió, Porto Alegre, Goiânia, Salvador, Natal and Curitiba for the Ministry of Health. In 2012 Mauro was health consultant for Africare USA in Luanda, Angola, to identify new areas of intervention. Last year he was the coordinator of the Exploratory Missions in Angola and Mozambique for MSF to identify nutritional and health situations and cholera outbreaks.

The implementation of human rights and the alleviation of human suffering are always foremost in humanitarian actions, and Mauro is totally devoted to his duties and responsibilities. He has always considered access to health care as a human right, making it his top priority. One of his nominators described working with him in Angola in places where government armed forces (MPLA) were in control and in others that were under local guerrilla (UNITA) control. Mauro had to ensure that the people had access to medical care and adequate treatment by negotiating constant safe passage of drugs and medical supplies from one side to the other. The lack of trust on both sides generated huge tensions, but Mauro always managed to get the supplies delivered on time and without compromising the mission of MSF, nor the shipments themselves. It is clear that when he talks to student nurses in particular, he is an inspiration to them personally, and a great example of what nursing as a profession is achieving.