

Natacha Ikoli

Script

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These mothers to be are singing songs to celebrate new life – Though, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo child mortality rates is the worst in the world, they wish for their babies survive.

At the Kikula health centre antenatal classes inform mothers on what to expect in pregnancy, childbirth, staying healthy and protect their unborn babies from HIV.

25 years-old Claisse is four months pregnant with her third child. She decided to test for HIV infection. Before the test and in the privacy of a small room, a nurse counsels her on the impact being HIV positive would have on her life as well as her unborn child.

But she's in good hands; the nurses here have a passion for ensuring all children born in their clinic are healthy and HIV free.

Over the decade that she's worked, head nurse, Louise Ngone, has witnessed the fast-expanding prevalence of the HIV virus throughout Katanga. But in 2004, with UNICEF support, her clinic, along with 26 others across Katanga, introduced a prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) programme.

Louise and her team work hard to build trust with the pregnant women, particularly because many are too afraid to take the voluntary test, stigma here is widespread.

SOUNDBITE (French) Louise Ngone, Head Nurse, Kikula Health Centre: "For confidentiality reasons, we encourage the women to explain their status themselves to their husband. Once she has done that, we contact the husband so he can be tested. There are only a few husbands who agree to get tested. Some husbands have abandoned and divorced their wives without being tested themselves."

Congo now receives a grant from The Global Fund that provides free AIDS medicines and thus with access to treatment improving, public attitudes are changing.

SOUNDBITE (French) Louise Ngone, Head Nurse, Kikula Health Centre: "Now that we have the medicine, it is easier. Before, the husbands would ask, 'What are you going to do for me once I test? You won't give me anything except advice.' Now we can explain to them the importance of being tested and getting treatment."

The PMTC programme also focuses on outreach. With a strong network of health volunteers, like Elizabeth Ida Muteta. Elizabeth is a community leader, a schoolteacher and mother of ten children. She visits pregnant women at home to encourage them and their husband to test for HIV.

SOUNDBITE (French) Elizabeth Ida Muteta, Community Volunteer: "I volunteer to help the community change their behaviours. We need to educate the community and bridge the gap between the community and the health centres."

Shotlist

1. Wide shot health center
2. Medium shot mothers singing
3. Medium shot mother singing and clapping
4. Close up baby girl
5. Wide shot mother waiting with their baby
6. Wide shot nurse counselling mothers
7. Close up mother listening to nurse
8. Medium shot mother breastfeeding
9. Wide shot mothers listening to nurse
10. Close up nurse
11. Wide shot pregnant mother walking inside a room
12. Close up nurse writing on syringe
13. Medium shot nurse counselling pregnant woman
14. Medium shot mother and nurse
15. Close up arm
16. Close up blood sample being taken
17. Medium shot nurse checking pregnant women
18. Close up listening to baby
19. Medium shot nurse picking up baby
20. Wide shot nurse holding baby
21. Wide shot mother walking into center
22. Wide shot mother inside health centre
23. Close up baby sucking on thumb
24. Medium shot to mother and baby
25. Close up mother's hand and baby's hand
26. SOUNDBITE (French) Louise Ngone, Head Nurse, Kikula Health Centre: "For confidentiality reasons, we encourage the women to explain their status themselves to their husband. Once she has done that, we contact the husband so he can be tested. There are only a few husbands who agree to get tested. Some husbands have abandoned and divorced their wives without being tested themselves."
27. Close up mother's hand holding health card
28. Close up nurse talking with nurse
29. Wide shot streets
30. Wide walking women
31. Wide shot outreach worker walking inside a home
32. Wide shot outreach worker with mother and father
33. Close up outreach worker
34. Wide shot outreach worker counselling
35. SOUNDBITE (French) Louise Ngone, Head Nurse, Kikula Health Centre: "For confidentiality reasons, we encourage the women to explain their status themselves to their husband. Once she has done that, we contact the husband so he can be tested. There are only a few husbands who agree to get tested. Some husbands have abandoned and divorced their wives without being tested themselves."
36. Wide shot children eating candies
37. Wide shot street shots
38. Close up women getting her hair done

Though she is rarely informed of anyone's status, she plays a critical role in providing parents with a support system and prompting them to be tested.

In 2008, the Congolese Government approved a national strategy on PMTC to further expand services. But it requires a massive investment in the health system and infrastructure. And with less than 6,000 doctors for the 60 million Congolese people, there is a long way to go in strengthening the DRC's HIV and AIDS care health delivery systems.

This is Natacha Ikoli reporting for UNICEF television. Unite For children

ENDS

39. Wide shot market

40. Pan wide shot to billboard

2:51

Script

Same as above

Shotlist

Same as above