



BILL & MELINDA
GATES foundation

THE JIM IN ACTION: HUMAN IMPACT



© UNICEF

At the heart of a child-friendly community in the DRC

In the urban-rural health area of N'sele, hundreds of community outreach workers have been mobilized to help improve the health of children and pregnant women.

By John Ngombua (translated from French by Holly-Anne Whyte)

Marie-Thérèse, a community outreach worker, has been visiting Micheline regularly for several months. "Thanks to Marie-Thérèse I know I'm four months pregnant and I'm going to antenatal consultations," says Micheline, who is on her third pregnancy.

Aged 20, Micheline has already been through a terrible ordeal. "I lost a child," she explains. Micheline was not monitored during her first pregnancy and gave birth to a premature baby who died soon after. A few months later, she became pregnant again and gave birth to a healthy baby girl thanks to Marie-Thérèse's advice.

Micheline and Marie-Thérèse live on the outskirts of the city of Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo. As part of the "Child Friendly Community" initiative set up by UNICEF, with the support of the JIM, 1,571 community outreach workers carry out home visits to 350 families identified in the area. "Our role is to count the number of

children and to identify those who are disabled or malnourished. We also encourage parents to register children aged 0 to 5 years at the registry office and provide guidance to pregnant women," says Marie-Thérèse.

Marie-Thérèse visits Micheline regularly to monitor her pregnancy and to make sure that her daughter Keren, aged 11 months, is in good health. "It was at Marie-Thérèse's insistence that my little girl had all her vaccinations," says Micheline, who also registered her daughter's birth with the civil registry office. To make registration easier, subsidiary registry offices have been built in the area.

Through the "Child Friendly Community" initiative, children also attend preschool consultations and receive essential medicines from health centers in the area. The community outreach workers are trained and equipped to provide life-saving support to children and pregnant women.



© UNICEF/UN0521805/MOLALA

If you can help ensure this vital project succeeds, please contact Kelly Procida at kprocida@unicefusa.org.