



## SUCCESS STORY

### AXxes project opens the door to Primary Health Care (PHC) in Kolwezi

#### Health District



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Kolwezi Health District is located, in the North-West of Katanga Province, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The population estimated at 647 688 majority being Mine workers. During the Mobutu era, Kolwezi was popularly known as 'Poumon du Zaire', meaning the lung of Zaire, (former DR Congo) because of its capacity to produce Copper and Cobalt at that time.

Before 1998, health care was provided by Gecamine and SNCC (a rail road company). Employees were treated for free but other people were obliged to pay. Catholic and Protestant mission organizations were also active in providing health care in rural areas.

The District experienced two wars; the eight day war (in 1977) and the six-day war, which destroyed most of the well defined infrastructure including health facilities. In addition, as a result of poor investment and neglect by the Government, health services have become non-existent and morale and motivation among health workers have deteriorated. The state is incapable of ensuring the application of any minimum standards in the existing services. Where services are functioning they depend heavily on user fees and external funding from missions, donors and NGOs particularly from UNICEF, UNFPA, Global Assistance for Vaccination and Immunization (GAVI), GTZ and Damien Foundation. However, assistance provided has been partial and often vertical covering certain areas yet failing to address health care holistically.

Faced by this difficult situation, the only hope was to find a partner who would provide health care assistance as a total package "Appui Global". Project AXxes is an integrated health program funded by USAID and adopts the National Health Care Policy through the Ministry of Health. AXxes will run for three years from September 2006 and is implemented by four partners including ECC, World Vision, CRS and Merlin in Eastern and Southern Congo.

Access to health services is perhaps one of the most important issues facing Congolese people. Conservative estimates of health facilities coverage show that 37 percent of the population, or approximately 18.5 million people, have no access to any kind of health care. Through the practical interventions implemented by this three-year project, it is hoped that the PHC infrastructure will be restored and health care services rendered to the groups that need them most and at an affordable cost. Doctor Leon Manda, the District Medical Officer in Kolwezi could not hide his joy at the beginning of project activities by WV in his area, as he commented that, "I have been the MID for this District for almost ten years. All this time my dream has been to see someone intervening in Appui global. I am proud and ready to go for retirement now because this dream has come true. Our health personnel have begun an intensive training which I believe that coupled with supply of medicines and equipment we will ensure quality services in the days to come".

