



## HUMAN INTEREST STORY

### A Couple of Champions: Promoting Adolescent SRH in the Democratic Republic of Congo

**Joseph** Muhindo Nyondo and **Semerita** Kavira Kamundu are passionate champions of adolescent sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in a part of the world that has been traumatized by decades of conflict and turmoil. Joseph is Pastor of a Protestant church (Communaute Baptiste au Centre de l’Afrique) in Goma, the capital of Nord Kivu province in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Whereas, Semerita, Joseph’s wife, is a Professor of Psychology and Sociology at a nearby university (Université Libre De Pays De Grands Lacs). In addition, Semerita is a church leader, ministering to the needs of the congregation’s female members. As pastor and professor, both have seen too many girls whose lives have been derailed or destroyed by an unintended pregnancy .



*Rev. Joseph Muhindo Nyondo and Semerita Kavira Kamundu*

**“Our mission is to help young people to build a bright future by bridging the communication gap between parents and children so that parents can discuss sex openly with their children.”**

Organized religion is a dominant social force in Nord Kivu and many churches manage both primary health centers and schools. In 2016, CARE partnered with several Protestant churches to provide young people (15-24 years of age) who have grown up amidst crisis with the opportunity to create positive change for themselves and their community through better access to quality SRH information and services. It was in the context of this initiative, that CARE crossed paths with Joseph and Semerita. Referred by pastors from sister churches, Joseph invited CARE to speak about gender roles and sexual and reproductive health during the church’s annual youth week, which brings youth together to develop the skills needed for effectively dealing with the demands and challenges of life.

Adolescents and youth comprise 20% of the population of Nord Kivu. In a survey conducted by CARE and the National Adolescent Health Program in Goma, 34% of people aged 15-19 years and 81% of people aged 20-24 years said they were sexually active. Nearly one third of girls and young women who had ever been pregnant reported having an abortion. Unplanned pregnancies can have devastating consequences for young people, especially for unmarried girls who are highly likely to be socially marginalized, forced to leave school, kicked out of her own home and experience life-threatening pregnancy-related complications. Adding insult to injury, the father of the child usually bears few, if any, consequences for his role in the affair, often denying any involvement.

CARE International is working to reduce unintended pregnancies and deaths from unsafe abortion by supporting high-quality service delivery in 48 primary health facilities that serve more than one million people in four health zones in North Kivu province in eastern DRC. Between June 2011 and December 2016, CARE reached 57,265 new FP users with a wide-range of contraceptives methods. Adolescents comprise 17% of all new FP users and choose long-acting and reversible methods three out of four times.

CARE is committed to reducing poverty and social injustice by empowering women and girls and enabling them to exercise their right to decide if, when and how many children to have. For more information about CARE's family planning work in DRC, please contact Elizabeth Noznesky at [enoznesky@care.org](mailto:enoznesky@care.org) or visit CARE's wiki <http://familyplanning.care2share.wikispaces.net/>.

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