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## Democratic Republic of Congo

# SUCCESS STORY

## Ambassador James F. Entwistle and Ms. Pamela Schmoll: ProVIC Community Champions

Improving access to HIV prevention services and reducing stigma through mobile voluntary counseling and testing



Photo Credit: ProVIC

*US Ambassador Entwistle and his wife Pamela Schmoll look on as a health worker draws his blood at a ProVIC mobile HIV testing clinic in Bas-Congo province.*

**As a Champion Community under the Integrated HIV/AIDS Project in the Democratic Republic of Congo (ProVIC), the people of Kinzau-Mvueté are helping bring ProVIC's mission to life. In this and other targeted communities, ProVIC is using innovative approaches like mobile HIV counseling and testing (HCT) to bring services to the people who need them. Almost 70 percent of the 162,710 people tested by ProVIC during its second year were reached through mobile HCT services.**

June 2011 marked a historic moment for Kinzau-Mvueté, home to about 18,000 people in the western province of Bas-Congo, when they received a visit from James F. Entwistle, United States Ambassador to the DRC, and his wife, Pamela Schmoll. They spent time touring ProVIC's activities and talking to community members—including most-at-risk populations like commercial sex workers, people living with HIV/AIDS, and orphans and vulnerable children—to learn about their experiences and needs. The Ambassador and Ms. Schmoll demonstrated the US Government's commitment to helping address one of the country's biggest health challenges.

Ambassador Entwistle and Ms. Schmoll also made headlines by joining in local celebrations to inaugurate ProVIC's new mobile HCT tents. Demonstrating their solidarity and support, they lined up for couples voluntary HCT in front of the entire community. Inspired by this example, more than 170 couples lined up behind them.

The day was an empowering one for the people of Kinzau-Mvueté: by helping reduce stigma around seeking HCT, the Ambassador and Ms. Schmoll helped fuel demand for these critical services in the community. The Ambassador's gesture also supported the need for increased male participation in critical activities in the fight against HIV/AIDS. ProVIC is addressing this need: in Year 2, 54 percent of all individuals tested for HIV were men.

In Bas-Congo, and in the three other project-supported provinces of Kinshasa, Katanga, and Sud Kivu, ProVIC is expanding and improving HCT services through mobile HCT units that circulate day and night to reach people vulnerable to HIV. The project is also reaching people through community-based HCT, and by integrating HCT into public and private health facilities.

Working with communities to strengthen their ability to develop and implement HIV prevention strategies is part of ProVIC's driving force: the Champion Community model. At the heart of this model is the need to actively engage individuals, families, and their communities to collectively define and resolve their own challenges—thereby taking ownership of their own futures. ProVIC works with local and international partners at numerous levels—from the community and facility levels to the regional, national, and international levels—to help communities find sustainable ways to actively participate in the fight against HIV/AIDS.