mHealth for healthy babies

Background

Angola has a high child mortality rate. Yet one small change could reduce this death rate significantly. Exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months of life makes babies healthier and stronger, but only one in 10 Angolan babies under six months enjoys this benefit.

At the same time, Angola has a high mobile phone penetration: 74 subscribers per 100 inhabitants. Mobile phone technology can help families raise healthy children by bringing critical information directly to the hands of mothers and caregivers.

Project focus

Many mothers lack information about good child-rearing practices, but they have mobile phones that can deliver life-saving baby care tips. To turn this idea into a reality, SIPA joined forces with the non-governmental organisation, People in Need to start a neonatal mHealth program in March 2015.

Twice a week during the first six months after birth, mothers receive pre-recorded messages up to 90 seconds long promoting good practices on food, nutrition, hygiene and vaccination.

Purpose

Following an integrated approach, the project strengthens links among mothers, traditional birth attendants (TBA) and health staff.

Activities

TBAs improve their skills through training; this is crucial because they oversee more than half of births in Angola. They register mothers into the project and reinforce the messaging. In turn, mobile phone messages encourage mothers to engage with TBAs and to go to clinics for check-ups and consultations.

Location and target audience

The project targets 60 000 mothers and 360 TBAs in six municipalities in the Bié, Huambo and Huila provinces. After a six-month pilot phase in two municipalities in Bié, the project will expand to Huambo and Huila.
**Duration**

The project was established in March 2015 and will run until September 2017.

**Implementing partner**

The main implementing partner is People in Need (PIN)