

# Sisters Care for Orphans in the Congo

By Sister Marie-Jeanne Kuntonda, SNDdeN



Sr. Jeannette Nkanga, SNDdeN feeds an infant in the hospital in Ngidinga.

**W**omen in Congo bear the load of work in the home and in the fields. Women fetch wood, find food and prepare daily meals while attending to all the needs for their families. The work continues even while women are pregnant. Lack of good nutrition, poverty, malaria, infectious diseases, complications of HIV/AIDS and the

inaccessibility of good health care contribute to high mortality of women following the birth of their babies. The babies become abandoned orphans, left to fend for themselves without food, clothing, shelter or education. The Sisters have assumed responsibility for more than 50 orphans in the towns and villages where we minister: Kimwenza, Kisantu, Kisenso, Kitenda, Lemfu, Mpese, Ngidinga, Nselo and Pelende.



We are daughters of St. Julie who devoted herself to the care of orphans at the beginning of our Congregation.



Sr. Sylvie Nkosi, SNDdeN shows three little children how to till the soil and plant the seeds, (top photo) while Sr. Marie-Jeanne Kuntonda, SNDdeN helps the orphans in harvesting the vegetables (bottom photo).

## Sisters of Notre Dame Face Challenges

In Ngidinga, the Sisters of Notre Dame are responsible for twenty orphans. The three youngest children are 10 months old. The two eldest are older boys in the last class of secondary school; they are 18 and 19 years old. With familial care, resources from our work and gifts from donors, we help these orphans in their growth and education, so that they may be eventually integrated into society. Many miseries in our society result from orphaned children. Taking responsibility for these orphans constitutes a great challenge.

Our clinics and schools provide medical care and educational fees for the children which is an enormous relief for their extended families. The Sisters require physical, psychological, moral and spiritual energy to face the stress of trying to provide personal care and attention, as well as material necessities for these children.

The sharing of resources in Notre Dame enables us to give the orphans assistance for education, basic human needs, and help them become responsible



The orphans love to gather around Sr. Patience Mpela, SNDdeN while playing around the convent in Ngidinga.

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members in society. We teach them to work in order to take charge of their own lives later in the future. The older children work in the fields and gardens. The younger children prepare juice which they sell to provide money for some food.

**The greatest challenge for the Sisters is help the orphans move beyond inadequate conditions.**

🌿 We keep four orphans close to us because there is not a single family member able to take care of them. These four are all in one room with the little they have as personal possessions.

🌿 We are concerned about responsible care of the baby orphans, before entrusting them to their extended families at an early age. We want to protect them from infectious diseases which kill children from birth to 5 years of age in the Congo.

🌿 We do not have a single space to teach our orphans how to read write, nor how to manage a home.

We are concerned about young women who are beyond school age and have been abandoned. These young women are numerous. As the other orphans, they need St. Julie's care and concern in our time. We look for ways and means to teach them how to survive as useful members of society. The Sisters are searching for a viable solution.



Caring for twin babies is a joy and happy responsibility for Sr. Henriette Ngengi, SNDdeN.