

# Tulane's family planning research continues in the DRC with \$11 million Gates/Packard grant

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Carolyn Scofield [cscofiel@tulane.edu](mailto:cscofiel@tulane.edu)

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*Drs. Jane Bertrand and Julie Hernandez (left) and Dr. Arsene Binanga (right) manage an ambitious program of research, service delivery, advocacy, and capacity-building. (Photos provided by Jane Bertrand)*

Researchers at the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine (SPHTM) have received \$11 million from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation to continue their ground-breaking research and programmatic activity in support of family planning in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The research team consists of [Dr. Jane Bertrand](#), Neal A. and Mary Vanselow Chair in Health Policy and Management, Dr. Arsene Binanga, and [Dr. Julie Hernandez](#), both research assistant professors in health policy and management.

Despite the challenges of working in family planning in a country with high fertility norms and poor access to healthcare, the team manages an ambitious program of research, service delivery, advocacy, and capacity-building. As Bertrand explains, "Family planning contributes to improved health outcomes and the well-being of women and children; it also helps countries to achieve development goals."

Tulane first began its family planning work in 1980, when the country was known as Zaire. Having co-founded the Kinshasa School of Public Health in the mid-1980s, Tulane enjoys strong working relationships with members of the DRC public health community, many of whom received masters or doctoral degrees from the Tulane SPHTM. After a 20-year break from activities in the DRC due to political instability,

Bertrand returned in 2010 to re-engage and strengthen local efforts to advance family planning.

With this new funding from the Gates and Packard Foundations, Tulane will test innovative strategies of delivering contraceptive services at the community level through its AcQual III (“access and quality”) project, work to increase demand for contraceptive use, and strengthen local health systems with a view toward sustainability.

Tulane operates in the capital city of Kinshasa as Tulane International LLC, with a staff of 19 Congolese who support a total of six sponsored research projects throughout the country. As head of this local team, Dr. Binanga also plays an important role at the country level as the elected president of the national family planning stakeholders group.

Tulane’s family planning work in the DRC affords research and field experiences for doctoral and masters students from SPHTM. Bertrand and Hernandez remain based in New Orleans, but travel to Kinshasa several times a year. Their work translates into their classroom teaching back in New Orleans, further exposing Tulane students to development work in the international context.