

## SUCCESS STORY

### Kangaroo mother care helps a premature baby survive

*Ambulatory kangaroo mother care consists of close monitoring of the premature baby to monitor weight, breastfeeding, and check for danger signs during periodic visits to the health facility while the mother carries the baby skin-to-skin on her chest during the course of her regular daily and nighttime activities.*



*Manzou Diarra, born premature, is in good health thanks to kangaroo mother care. He is 4 months old. Photo credit: Amadou Keita, SSGI/Save the Children.*

*“When the midwife informed us that my Manzou was under the weight of a normal newborn baby (2500 g), I was a little desperate, but at the first follow-up appointment, with his weight gain of 50g, we redoubled the courage because my baby must survive.”*

*–M. Vincent Diarra, father of the premature baby*

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Prematurity is one of the leading causes of newborn deaths. In Mali, 29% of neonatal deaths are due to babies born before 37 weeks of gestation (CHERG 2010). Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) is an intervention where the mother carries her baby skin-to-skin at the chest, with breastfeeding support and close monitoring by a health provider. KMC gives a chance to premature babies or those born low birth weight to survive and thrive, especially in countries where access to specialized neonatal care services are still lacking.

The USAID-funded Services de Santé à Grand Impact (SSGI) supports the Ministry of Health to improve the quality of maternal and newborn health services through training, supervision and coaching on obstetric and neonatal care, including KMC.

Mariam Coulibaly, a midwife at the Sanankoroba Community Health Center (CSCoM) in the Health District of Kati, received training on KMC in May 2016. She in turn trained her colleague, Ms. Madioula Sy, also a midwife, on KMC. The two midwives are recognized for their commitment and are proud of their abilities to take care of low birth weight newborns.

This enthusiasm enabled them to successfully manage 12 low birth weight newborns between August 2016 and December 2018. Among them is the son of Mrs. Roucky and Mr. Vincent Diarra. At 29 weeks pregnant in her 9th pregnancy, Roucky, 38, had complications and was referred to the National Hospital where she gave birth to Manzou on December 6, 2018, to a newborn of 1850 g via Caesarean section. After seven days in the hospital, she returned to the Sanankoroba CSCoM, where the Manzou was placed and followed in ambulatory KMC by midwife Madioula. This outpatient approach requires parents to visit the health facility twice a week for weight monitoring, breastfeeding and checking for danger signs such as fever or infection.

According to Mr. Vincent, the father, “When the midwife informed us that my Manzou was under the weight of a normal newborn baby (2500 g), I felt hopeless, but at the first follow-up appointment, with his weight gain of 50 g, we redoubled our efforts because my baby must survive. I even carried him in KMC on my chest”.

The proximity to the CSCoM allowed the couple to follow the appointments set twice a week for three weeks of follow-up. On, January 7, 2019, Manzou weighed 2600g.

According to Madioula, the midwife who monitored Manzou, “The KMC training offered by the USAID SSGI project has been very helpful. I feel proud when I manage to help parents save their low birth weight babies. Before the training, we referred premature babies to the Gabriel Toure Hospital in Bamako and if the parents did not go, the child returned home but I feared for their futures. But now, with the training I’ve had and the results I’ve seen, I can tell parents with confidence that their little babies can survive by practicing KMC.”

Since 2015, SSGI has trained 931 providers of 466 health facilities on KMC. Between 2015 and 2018, 48% of babies born with low birth weight were cared for with KMC in SSGI-supported facilities (Source: DHIS-MSHP).