



MAJI YA AMANI

ANNUAL ANALYTICAL PROGRESS REPORT

(Jan -Dec 2019)

Project Name: Integrated Water Resources Management

Target Areas: Ruzizi Plain (DRC)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Maji Ya Amani (IWRM) is a project implemented by the IRC-led consortium comprising IRC, ZOA and Search for Common Ground (SFCG). Funded by the Netherlands through their Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Ruzizi Plain, South Kivu province, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the interventions of this multisector project aim at contributing to the reduction of violence and the increase in stability in the *groupement* of Luberizi (with a total of 28,800 beneficiaries). The project is organized around four objectives: (1) increasing access to land and reduction of land conflict, (2) increasing access to safe potable and irrigation water and reduction of water related conflict, (3) equitable and inclusive access to income generation opportunities, and (4) increasing awareness of population pressure on natural resources.

The project implementation zone, Luberizi *groupement*, is located in the Ruzizi Plain which is situated along a part of the western borders of both Rwanda and Burundi. Though the Ruzizi Plain is rich with natural resources, including water that provides substantial opportunity for agriculture, livestock, and household use thereby creating a potential bond for communities divided along ethnic lines, the socio-political and security situation is known and continued to be volatile and susceptible to sudden changes.

This report provides an analytical view on the progress made by the project during the third year; that is 2019. Indeed, over the reporting period, the project made tangible progress towards the expected results. Some activities which commenced in Years 1 and 2 were completed this year - for instance, the land tenure process, the handover of the Sauti Ya Amani community radio building and equipment, the set-up of the Luberizi local development framework (CADEL), the construction and commissioning of safe water and irrigation water schemes, and the facilitation of two retreats in Kinshasa and Murhesa (South Kivu) with a view to organize a Peace Forum in Luberizi.

It is worth mentioning that after three years of implementation, there are observable changes in the Luberizi area as a result of project's presence and achievements to date. The community and the neighboring *groupements* are using safe drinking water with considerable benefits for their well-being. Farmers in the irrigated perimeter feel more confident after acquiring land titles. The presence of water in the main canal after the rehabilitation works on the hydro-agricultural infrastructures (dam and 5 Km of canal) is stimulating more interest in farming and will boost production/harvest hence improving the socio-economic situation. Additionally, many people are engaged in various income generating activities thanks to informal and formal credit initiatives and some of the people who fled Luberizi years ago following security and other incidents in the Luberizi area, are returning as they find life is improving. Despite the persistence of security threats, communities are engaging in more and more interactions (working together during for instance, project works, are part of the same VSLAs, same Community Health Clubs, etc.), cooperation, dialogue, cohesion and above all, are experiencing a new culture through which to deal with conflicts between formerly rival communities.

In terms of sustainability, the project also concentrated on developing and implementing a sustainability plan to ensure the community, hand in hand with state relevant technical services and all existing community structures (as applicable), can preserve the project's achievements over the following years after the project closes. This strategy was made known to the community and the relevant actors for further update and ownership on their part. Furthermore, with a new provincial government showing greater interest in taking over its' responsibilities, the project facilitated workshops and field visits with the local authorities to ensure they understand what the project is doing, what support is needed and how they can accompany the community with regard to sustainability.

To ensure data-informed decision making and progress towards expected results, *Maji Ya Amani* achievements/actions are continually monitored. A mid-term review (MTR) was conducted early in July 2019 and submitted to the donor. Based on the findings thereof, the project was recommended to prioritize the remaining interventions by identifying and concentrating on specific priorities for greater project impact during the remaining 14 months. In this way, some activities will be given higher priority/importance while others could be dropped or given less importance, during the last project year (2020).

ACCRONYMS

ACEPSKILU	: Association des Consommateurs d'Eau potable de Sange et Luberizi
BRALIMA	: Brasseries, Limonaderies et Malteries (RDC)
CICF	: Comité Intérimaire de Coordination Foncière
CMGEL	: Comité de Maintenance et de Gestion d'Eau de Luberizi
COOPABA	: Coopérative Agricole pour la Commercialisation Performante
COOPAILU	: Coopérative Agricole des Usagers de l'Irrigation de Luberizi
COOPEC	: Coopérative d'Épargne et de Crédit
COOSOPRODA	: Coopérative de Solidarité pour la Production des Denrées Alimentaires
FARDC	: Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo
FP	: Family Planning
GBV	: Gender-Based Violence
GBVIMS	: Gender-Based Violence Information Management System
I4S	: International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy
IRC	: International Rescue Committee
ISSSS	: International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy
IWRM	: Integrated Water Resources Management
MFI	: Microfinance Institution
MINOKA	: Minoterie de Kamanyola
MONUSCO	: United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MTR	: Mid-Term Review
MyA	: Maji Ya Amani (Water for Peace)
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organization
PNC	: Police Nationale du Congo
SFCG	: Search for Common Ground
SRH	: Sexual and Reproductive Health
STAREC	: Stabilisation et Reconstruction à l'Est du Congo
TEP	: Tribune d'Expression Populaire-
UNFPA	: United Nations Population Fund
WHO	: World Health Organization

1. IMPLEMENTATION ENVIRONMENT

The year 2019 marked the inauguration of a new head of state in Congo, with several changes in the administration including a new provincial government. To ensure newly appointed officials and state technical services are aware of Maji Ya Amani and its interventions, the project had to make the necessary contacts to present the project to new post-holders within the provincial government. The implementation of the project was not, however, significantly impacted by the changes in the context.

With regards to security, there were several major incidents during the reporting period. Though these incidents did not affect directly the implementation of the project, they have impacts on the context and thus indirectly affect the project and activities. The Eastern DRC is a zone with the presence of several active armed groups including foreign rebel groups reportedly from neighboring countries. An example from this year of the impact of such security incidents is the influx of cattle from the Haut-Plateaux into the Ruzizi Plain as a consequence of clashes between the FARDC and Mai-Mai groups or foreign groups, exacerbating an already fragile Farmer-Herder conflict in the project zone.

In FARDC's attempts to reclaim territories occupied by armed groups (both national and foreign), many incidents of fighting and tracking down militants took place in the Haut-Plateaux over the course of this year which increased insecurity and resulted in internal displacement of populations. The activism of Mai-Mai groups and the aforementioned foreign armed groups made the context a particularly risky one. Theft, abductions, kidnapping, extra-judicial killings, ransoming and murders remain issues of concern in the project implementation area. Moreover inter-community feuds sparked tensions and even cases of assassinations and murders were recorded.

Further details of security incidents which took place during this reporting period can be found in the Semi-Annual Issues Report covering July-December, submitted at the same time as this report.

It's worth noting that these incidents did not significantly affect the implementation of the project. However, given the environment of insecurity which they both reflect and propagate, the consortium observes strict security measures for personnel, including restricting movement before 8 am and after 4 pm in the project zone. Additionally, some events like fighting in the high lands (Haut-Plateaux) prevented all consortium partners from accessing the watershed upstream area for a period of approximately two months, causing inevitable delays to the project workplan. Once access was re-established, the consortium organized joint activities in the watershed and, when the local NGOs recruited by the project started working, it became easier to monitor the situation and continue implementation.

2. KEY PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

Outcome 1: INCREASED AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO LAND AND REDUCTION OF CONFLICTS

❖ *Land tenure process*

Building on previous project achievements as regards to the land tenure process and the validation of group land titles options, whereby a group of owners of plots in the irrigated area adhere to the co-management principle of a space where each one has a portion of land, the project successfully completed this process hand in hand with the community farmers and leaders, the provincial Minister of Land, the Luvungi "Land Brigade" and the department of Conservation of Real Estate Titles in Uvira. With more than 1000 Ha, 3000+ farmers, and taking into account results of the participatory land mapping, the farmers were grouped into 219 farmer groups all of which were issued a land title by the relevant authority this year. This land tenure process would never have been successful and completed without resolving pre-existing land-related conflicts. As of the close of Year 3 of the project, 100% of the land conflicts identified in the Luberizi irrigated perimeter have reached a level of mutual consent to be considered as resolved.

It was essential to put in place the agreed upon documents governing group titling and exploitation of the irrigated perimeter such as the « Acte de base », a document designed to ensure all the owners adhere to an agreement governing co-management of the space concerned by a group title, and that the allocation of these lands is not diverted thus ensuring that they are used exclusively for farming, taking into account the

growing seasons, irrigation schedules, and the obligation to continually exploit the spaces. Another one is 'la Charte de co-gestion' which is a set of rules governing activities and relationships among actors in the irrigated perimeter, natural resource management (in particular land and water) and mechanisms for payment of maintenance to ensure sustainability of the infrastructures.

According to the MTR report, the situation has significantly improved under this objective. Although we may still witness a limited number of conflicts over land in future, most of the beneficiaries attest that these are now well managed compared before the project. Another significant achievement reached this year was the finding that 84.8% of people in the area (49.6% of these being women) attest to knowing how to proceed to claim their right to land.

❖ ***Governance and safeguarding***

During the second quarter of Year 3, the project mobilized the community on safeguarding best practices and the need to actively participate in monitoring the behavior of staff and other stakeholders in order to make this intervention a more respectful framework and promoter of good practices. This was done through meetings aiming to promote protection for community members against any risk of abuse and exploitation, including sexual exploitation, by any participant or stakeholder in the project's activities.

❖ ***Accountability***

Giving an opportunity to the community to assess the project's interventions is essential in terms of accountability. During the first quarter of 2019, the project held an orientation session in Uvira around the scorecard approach's key components, including community involvement, scorecard steps and methodology, the actors involved, as well as the basic indicators for the evaluation of the quality of service.

Furthermore, the project convenes monthly meetings with the communities in the eight villages targeted to discuss achievements and programmatic projections and to gather the opinions of community members on the best ways to enhance efficiency and meet community expectations and project commitments. Progress made against recommendations made during previous community meetings is assessed/discussed and updates made as needed.

❖ ***Community feedback/complaint mechanism***

To allow the community to channel their complaints and/or other feedback to the project, Maji Ya Amani put in place a formal community response mechanism during the first quarter of 2019. A staff orientation session on the key principles and on the functioning of the reporting mechanism itself was held in advance in order to make staff aware of the need to respect the standards likely to be reported by communities. Subsequently, the project organized a community meeting to inform community members about the mechanism, including information on the cooperation of 12 focal points from different villages in which the forms are located and on how to direct complaints and/or feedback to the project. On this basis, at least four community responses were communicated to the project throughout the year, including the need for a reservoir in Nyamugali, support to the Sauti Ya Amani listeners' club, and Katekama Village's claim for pieces of land (plots) in the irrigated perimeter. These points of feedback have been duly followed up by the project and actions are being taken to address each of these points with the communities in question.

❖ ***Maintaining Community engagement***

Regarding community engagement, Maji Ya Amani brought together all stakeholders at the beginning of the project (September 2017), to ensure common understanding and respect of the project objectives to achieve expected project results. These included state technical services, community representatives from all layers/groups (local leaders, youth, women's groups, civil society, farmers, religious denominations, ethnic representatives, etc.). Their commitment to protecting both project staff and assets was laid down in writing, which also ensured they would be effectively involved in proper implementation of activities. This year, the project held a session to review and update the terms thereof with the same stakeholders, and requested that all actors holding a representation mandate or institutional authority sign the updated version

Outcome 2: INCREASED ACCESS TO WATER AND REDUCTION OF CONFLICTS OVER WATER

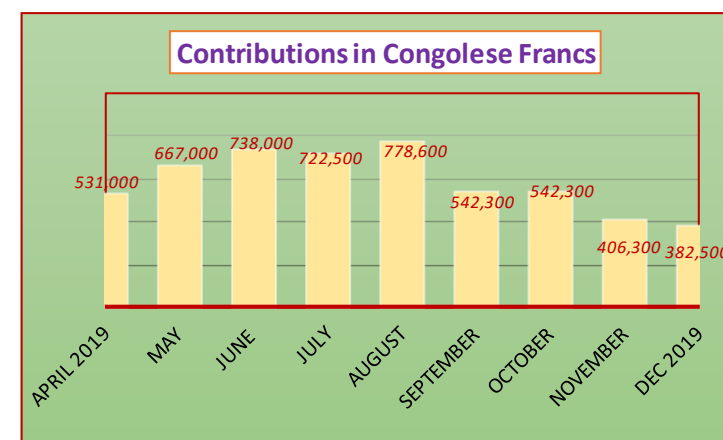
Under this outcome, the project is focused on both drinking water and water for irrigation. The project completed the water supply system spanning a total distance of 72 kms last year, and this year completed the

subsequent irrigation system (canal and dam). Installation and geographical distribution of the water taps was carried out through the villages, taking into account applicable standards. Currently, according to the Mid-Term Review, 97.2% of households use the new water system as their main source of safe water; 85.3% of beneficiary households have a water point at less than 500 meters from their dwelling, 80.4% fetch more than 40 Liters per day, and waiting time at the water point is less than 5 min for 66% of households.

To enhance governance of safe water management, the project helped set up and provided capacity building to the community structure called *Association des Consommateurs d'Eau Potable de Sange, Kigoma et Luberizi* (ACEPSKILU). This structure will ensure water supply and maintenance thereby ensuring sustainability even when the project is no longer operating in the zone. In terms of composition, this structure had to be as inclusive as possible, as water is not only vital and a long dreamed about basic need for the Luberizi community, but also a persistent source of interethnic tensions. The structure is composed of members from all the *groupements* supplied with water, namely Luberizi, Sange, and Kigoma. It is composed of 25 sub-committees from the 14 villages (8 villages of the Luberizi group, 6 villages of Kigoma and) and from 1 village in Sange. ACEP's central management is composed of 23 members (7 men and 16 women), of whom 16 are Fuliro, 4 are Barundi, 2 are Batwa and 1 member is from the Bashi ethnic group.

According to data collected during the mid-term review to assess the community's level of confidence in the structure, 83.7% of beneficiaries (among them 49.6% female) believe the structure is inclusive, while 73.9% among them (43.2% female) attest to its transparency. In addition, 71.8% among these community members (42.1% female) report that inclusiveness of the ACEPSKILU increased since the start of the project while 62.0% among these community members (35.4% female) report that transparency of the ACEPSKILU increased since the start of the project. 79.8% attest to having had good collaborations with ACEP and among them 77.3% consider that this collaboration has a positive impact on social cohesion.

In terms of capacity building, hands-on experience and technical support, the project provided the necessary trainings and support to ensure this structure has the capacity to perform on its own. These training sessions were held on various topics including the Congolese Water Code, financial management, commitment and communication, community management, etc.



In addition, ACEP's water system maintenance sub-committees were organized while an experience exchange visit between ACEP Luberizi and similar water associations was organized as well with a view to strengthen capacity for the newly set up association. The project further provided various materials including a generator that will help ACEP perform routine maintenance. This will also help ensure technical failures on the water pipes are attended to as needed. Finally, a session was held after the water pricing and sensitization sessions conducted

within the community to ensure the beneficiaries are making the necessary monthly contributions that are collected and saved in COOPEC Sange.

Despite some fluctuations throughout the months, the community largely adhered to the water pricing principle and the expected contributions are, for the most part, being made. As shown in the graph above, however, we observed a downward trend towards the end of 2019 resulting from recurrent failures on the pipes supplying the biggest and most populated village: Nyamugali. The challenges observed with providing sufficient access to this community, which arise from the particular position of the village in relation to the slope of the hills around it and the difficulties in finding long-lasting solutions to carry the required amount of water from the hills and reservoir in a neighbouring village to Nyamugali, has led to increasing calls from this community for the construction of a reservoir specifically for Nyamugali village. As a result, monthly contributions have decreased until an agreement can be reached, impacting the volume of savings overall. A feasibility study for this new reservoir has been duly carried out, and at the time of reporting the consortium is currently in discussions with the Embassy regarding its construction.

Regarding water for irrigation, the project conducted the rehabilitation of two major hydro-agricultural infrastructures, namely the canal and dam. To be able to perform the rehabilitation, it was first of all crucial to develop design options and, based on cost-effectiveness, identify one and present it to the community and relevant state technical services to ensure accountability. The dam design chosen will allow water to flow 2 m³/s from the dam to the main canal. To ensure construction activities are conducted at reasonable and competitive costs and by firms with the necessary expertise to ensure infrastructure quality and completion in the proposed timeframe, an open solicitation/selection process was launched on June the 1st by the provincial Ministers of Infrastructures, the Minister for Land and Agriculture, and the Minister for Home Affairs for both the rehabilitation of the dam and the main canal over a distance of 5km.

To ensure quality infrastructure, we should note that the selected firms' activities were monitored daily by a committee composed of a firm specialized in construction control activities and representatives from the community. Activities were also conducted using local workforce, taking into account gender balance and youth inclusion during the communities' rotation to the works to facilitate social cohesion and enhanced ownership over the infrastructures to be put in place.

As a result, activities were completed in a timely manner, allowing for the presence of water in the canal and for farmers to enthusiastically start a new agriculture season (A). For the irrigated perimeter in Luberizi, the entire surface (1000+ Ha) will be irrigated at a rate of 1l/s/ha (i.e. 1 m³/s). In addition, the system allows herders to access water for livestock needs.

For now, the infrastructure is fully operational and flows an average of 2 m³ of water per second in the main canal to such an extent that the entire irrigable area is fully irrigated. The system satisfies both irrigation and livestock needs, allowing for one liter per second per ha, and allows the desired maximum access while leaving behind the possibility of extending the perimeter up to 1,500 ha.

As discussed in previous reports, before the project's start a community structure (CEMGEL) was managing distribution of irrigation water and provided maintenance – though with huge technical limitations. It suffered from a lack of inclusiveness, as only people from the Bafulirhu community were members, hampering social cohesion. In order to ensure more inclusiveness and community participation, members were sensitized by the project on the tremendous need to seek more inclusiveness so that the structure may be a collective work of all the Luberizi community. An overhaul process was then initiated, opening the door to membership to all those interested in the irrigated space--hence leading to more inclusive management bodies. Membership was then granted to all ethnic groups willing to adhere to its terms.

CEMGEL was, therefore, restructured and became COOPAILU; a cooperative, ethnically inclusive body composed of 1,600 members. The project revitalized and accompanied it, providing support in many areas (technical, administrative, legal, etc.) to ensure it can effectively manage the irrigation system, including providing maintenance. A management charter was developed and the various organs were trained to ensure land administration is supported in terms of capacity building, hard and soft archiving of land titles, and land mapping using GIS tools.

We should note that this structure is growing stronger, more transparent and inclusive; according to the MTR, 40.1 % of those surveyed believe that COOPAILU is transparent; 28.4 % find that transparency has increased, 62 % feel that it is inclusive. The project will continue working hand in hand with the structure to ensure they can operate autonomously to take over the role they are assigned as regards sustainability. Activities to support this effort will include organizing General Assemblies, and continually sensitizing the community to make contributions so as to be able to support and organize maintenance needs.

It's also worth discussing the commemoration of the International Water Day that was organized in Luberizi (Nyamugali village) on March 22, 2019 under the theme "Leave No One Behind". The day was celebrated in a sensitizing environment whose main objective was to rally as many people as possible around protection actions, conservation and management of water works. Thus, several themes with specific messages were conveyed throughout the day; among others the contribution to water services, respect of water fetching hours, promotion of hygiene and cleanliness around the water works, protection of the water network infrastructure, conservation, and transport of water. This event was attended by the Administrator of the territory of Uvira and emphasized the need to make contributions. The impact of this event taking place in Nyamugali, a village that had initially been reluctant to make contributions for water use to ensure maintenance and hence

sustainability of the water supply system, was observable in the following months as shown in the graph above.

Additionally, the project integrated a menstrual hygiene approach into community schools to address the constraints faced by female students who quite often are prevented from attending classes while they are menstruating. Through school brigades, the project facilitated sensitization sessions whereby the topic of menstruation was openly discussed and presented as a normal part of the everyday life of girls instead of as a taboo. The Maji Ya Amani team provided menstruation hygiene kits and behavior change messages and trainings, placing particular emphasis on the need for menstruation to be handled appropriately and with the necessary hygiene measures available, as well as addressing the idea held by some within the community about the onset of menstruation signifying that girls should drop out of school to get married.

In relation to hygiene promotion, the project set up and supported Community Health Clubs which started sensitization sessions in all villages. As a result of this CHC approach, 521 households built hygiene and sanitation facilities using local material with their own resources. These were certified by the project as well sanitized according to fixed criteria. In addition to this, the 50 youth who have been trained in constructing latrine slabs continued sensitizations of households in using improved toilets. The World Toilet Day celebration in November 2019 was a further opportunity for a mass campaign around the importance of toilets for healthy households and healthy communities.

Outcome 3: INCREASED SAFE, SECURE, INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO INCOME GENERATING OPPORTUNITIES

Under this outcome, the project was able to deliver and witness significant changes within the community. As per the Mid-term Review report and the project's everyday experience with the community, the following improvements have been observed:

- ❖ **Farmers have the knowledge, skills, and access for improved agriculture and livestock practices (sustainable conservation, climate smart agriculture, demand-driven agriculture):** The percentage of people engaged in income-generating activities in the last 6 months is 42.9% (among them 24.0% Female) in 2019 while it was 30.2% (19.1% female) in 2018. The project is continually coaching youth through 34 VSLA groups, presenting them with opportunities for accessing formal credits. The project is on the way to supporting this access to formal credits through linkages to local MFIs. In 2019, 48.6% VSLA members who were already business owners experienced an increase in returns while only 27.2% (14.1% female) had this experience in 2018. The average credit repayment rate was 87.6% in 2019 against 85% in 2018 during the cycle; at the time of reporting it is 100% at the end of a cycle.
- ❖ In 2019, 38.5% of farmers (women accounting for 20.2%) reported an increase of income since the start of the project against 20.1% (7.5% female) in 2018. In relation to agriculture and value chains, 54.3% of farmers (29.2% female) show improved knowledge on the production of identified crops and/or livestock products for value chains compared to 31.2% (11.6% female) in 2018. In addition, 40% of farmers (20% female) have an increase in total agriculture production in 2019 against 11.6% (4% female) in 2018.
- ❖ During Season A 2019, an assessment of agricultural activities pursued in the area was carried out. Based on calculations of yield squares and testimonies from rice producers, the average yield of rice was calculated to be 8 tons per hectare. This is a record in the Luberizi groupement, where according to testimonies from local producers and agronomists, the highest previous yield did not exceed 3 tons per hectare.
- ❖ **The number of farmers using agricultural inputs and small equipment suitable for the region has increased:** 44.3% of producers (among them 23.4% Female) have access to or effective use of good quality inputs and small equipment (compared to the total number of farmers supported) in 2019 against 38.7% (17.6% female) in 2018. Farmers use agricultural credit to increase production and to

add quality and value to their agricultural products with better transformation and commercialization: 31% of farmers report that their agricultural production has increased with the contribution of the credit in 2019, against 1% in 2018.

- ❖ Regarding linkage of farmers to markets, the project has observed 55.1% of targeted farmers (among them 32.6% female) whose sales increased on supported value chains, compared to 20.1% (9.5% female) in 2018. Rice producers were connected/linked to BRALIMA while maize producers were linked to MINOKA. We should note that the project was able to facilitate a public-private partnership allowing COOSOPRODA members to secure a contract for the delivery of 350 tons of rice per year. Also, this innovative practice followed, on this same basis, the granting of a formal agricultural credit to COOSOPRODA by EQUITY BANK for a first loan of \$70,000.00 USD and a second loan of \$40,000.00 USD.
- ❖ **People in the project area have gained more entrepreneurial and economic skills relevant to local job markets through training.** In 2019, 42.9% of beneficiaries (among them 24.0% female) started a new business, compared with 11.1% (7% female) in 2018. In addition, 30% (26.9 female) expanded an existing business in 2019 against 17.1% (11.6% female) in 2018. Local Youth now have access to employment opportunities in latrine construction. 50 youth learnt how to build latrines and retained business skills after training, and the project has observed 72 self-financed latrines by households due to the promotion and marketing of these 50 young entrepreneurs trained.

We should also note that thanks to project coaching, the 34 VSLAs were able to save \$12,658 USD by the end of 2019. The saving culture gained more interest this year amongst the communities targeted, and especially in the last quarter where we note an increase of up to 56.26% of the amount they had by end September 2019.

Outcome 4: PEOPLE ARE AWARE OF DEMOGRAPHIC PRESSURE ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND START TAKING ACTIONS TO DECREASE IT

With regard to reproductive health promotion and GBV work, a review of case management tools was conducted this year and involved health providers and voluntary psychosocial focal points. With the support of UNFPA and IMC, the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) has been made more explicit and assisted-data collection has been carried out to demonstrate best practices to providers through this active learning method.

Over the course of 2019, the IWRM team noted an increased awareness within the community of demographic pressure on natural resources, and an increased uptake of actions to decrease it. All of the 4 targeted health facilities of the action area providing family planning (FP) services, which are youth-friendly and meet Ministry of Health and WHO standards, are currently supported. 73.4% of people are aware that the available natural resources are insufficient to sustain the entire population of Luberezi. Over the course of 2019, 1,046 people opted for and applied FP methods with the support of the project (compared with 735 in 2018). Community mobilization activities were in fact so successful that after a series of participatory theater events approximately 600 women went the following day to health centers to seek family planning advice and support.

Additionally, three reproductive health facilities in the intervention area have been duly equipped this year and have at their disposal materials and supplies to provide quality reproductive health services with adequate spaces. In the supported reproductive health facilities, 45 reproductive health providers have been trained (among them 9 in FP, 7 in PAC and 29 in GBV) and have increased clinical skills to provide quality reproductive health services. In addition, they are receiving monthly individualized FP, PAC and GBV coaching visits. Three of the 4 supported reproductive health providers offering clinical care for sexual assault survivors are consistently meeting 80% of the quality criteria, and the project team is continues to provide further support, coaching, and accompaniment to the other health facility to help it improve the quality of care provided and meet this standard.

SOCIAL COHESION, SECURITY GOVERNANCE, CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

➡ Town hall meetings (*Tribune d'Expression Populaire--TEP*)

To create a space for horizontal, constructive dialogue between state actors and communities, the town hall meetings organized by the Maji Ya Amani team contribute to improved communication which can help to prevent/dispel rumors and eventually begin to build a more cohesive relationship between communities and authorities. During the period under review, the project conducted sixteen (16) town hall meetings engaging 775 people (470 men and 305 women) around issues affecting the community. The sessions constitute a dialogue forum that aims to provide a platform for communities to engage directly with state authorities around issues of interest to them. Topics are determined through a participatory discussion whereby communities and authorities agree on which are the most relevant and important for them to address.

It is worth noting that most of the topics discussed during the TEPs are in relation to the interventions of the other clusters of the consortium; in particular the WASH Clusters. Topics discussed include: Good governance and peaceful resolution of conflicts around drinking water, the need for the community to pay a monthly contribution and how that money is managed; discuss the rules governing the water infrastructures (irrigation and drinking water), and perspective sharing between soldiers and community members on the issue of security. Each meeting is followed by recommendations and a joint committee (of participants) is set up to follow the implementation of the recommendations.

➡ ***Sensitization of the national army (FARDC) and the police (PNC)***

Security Sector Reform is part of the overall Search for Common Ground conflict mitigation strategy. As part of Maji Ya Amani, the different FARDC and PNC bases of the Uvira territory regularly conduct awareness sessions. The aim of these sessions is to shift perceptions and attitudes of security actors which can eventually lead to behavior change through the use of constructive and positive communications. The activity follows a participatory, dialogue-based methodology to ensure that participants can engage and inquire about the themes covered in a way that is relaxed and “safe”. Most of these sessions are conducted jointly with civilians from the host community. These sessions also served to conduct dialogue between communities and soldiers as they share their perspectives, challenges and find commonalities.

Over the reporting period about 69 awareness sessions were conducted for the FARDC and the PNC, reaching approximately 3246 soldiers and policemen, of whom 771 women (24%). The sensitizations are mainly conducted by peer soldiers within their camps or barracks, but sometimes, civilians are also associated with these discussions. Topics covered include:

- Civilian protection: « Right to life»,
- Civilian protection : « Freedom of expression»,
- Protection of the project infrastructures (irrigation/drinking water),
- Collaboration with civilians to tackle insecurity,
- Joint police and community activities,
- Right to information and freedom of expression,
- Police harassment,
- Duties and rights of a police officer on duty,
- A police officer of the people,
- Alleged collaboration between some soldiers and armed groups, the Mai-Mai,
- Bodily tortures,
- Military professionalism,
- Distinction between civilians and fighters during attacks,
- Non-assistance to people in danger.

In preparation for this activity, the project developed two facilitation guides and two “Image Boxes” (boîtes à images)¹. These tools help our staff guide a constructive conversation with the soldiers/police that steers them towards new perspectives, perceptions, and attitudes. While each session had its own specific points/themes (see above), generally, all included elements around what potentially positive roles the FARDC/PNC can play within their communities.

➡ **Community dialogue sessions (Herders/Farmers)**

¹ These are pictorial situations that depict soldiers/police exhibiting positive behaviors, fulfilling in a superior way their duties, and working towards building social cohesion

The project's community mediation and mobilization approach is based on dialogue between the various stakeholders. However, hereinafter, the project team specifically limited the designation "community dialogue" to events aimed at fostering dialogue and constructive discussions between groups that were in opposition. Community dialogues conducted over the 2019 period thus related mainly to Herder-Farmer feuds.

Over the reporting period, four (4) community dialogues were held on the Farmer-Herder conundrum. These sessions were important opportunities for both parties to express their own perspectives in relation to the issue. The mechanism has worked very well as the different communities can agree on constructive management of the incidents whereby they agree on solutions on their own without going to the police or to other local justice authorities.

➡ **Community conflict mediation**

As part of its conflict mitigation strategy, the project has set up peace mediation committees in all the 8 villages of the *Groupe*ment of Luberizi. They all received several capacity building trainings and subsequently in-situ coaching on a monthly basis with the Search team. As a result, these groups have been empowered to conduct mediation in community conflicts and in other forms of conflicts in the area. During 2019 these community structures successfully mediated approx. 138 community conflicts in the Luberizi *groupe*ment. It is worth mentioning that land mediation is not counted as part of these community mediations. Most of the conflicts addressed revolve around the following issues:

- Disputes over drinking water (between community members, civilian and military families)
- Farmer-herder feuds (mostly along ethnic lines)
- Cattle theft
- Farm product theft ; and
- Abuse and dispute in public places.

We should also note that the community radio station Sauti Ya Amani was built, equipped, and handed over to the community in May 2019. The construction and handover of this radio station is a key achievement as it is the result of a long mediation with communities who had separate rival radio stations. The staff of the radio station are from all the communities and work together collaboratively.

➡ **Community Participation**

The level of community participation in the project was increased over the course of 2019 thanks to the accomplishment of the majority of the commitments made by the project. This allowed for effective interaction with the project team through, for example, community accountability meetings. Coupled with the involvement of technical services, partnership management and stakeholder engagement has been easier and more productive this year. There has been a greater involvement of Twa communities and of adolescent girls in order to overcome the difficulties highlighted in community surveys around the barriers to participation for certain groups.

➡ **Conflict Sensitivity**

The implementation of the project during this period focused on how each action affects conflict and cohesion. In the land sector, for example, the effect of group land titles on the collective future of the farmers concerned was taken into account – a principle that guided the actors in the composition of the CICF's various bodies at the end of its restructure process. Additionally, as with the water supply works, the launch of the rehabilitation works on irrigation infrastructure took into account the need to distribute income among villages, ethnic groups, gender and youth and led to a mechanism that facilitates access to the largest number and ensures ethnic, age and gender representation through the works.

It's worth mentioning that project staff are regularly reminded to abide by this approach, given the sensitivities in the project implementation zone. Also in November 2019, the donor sent an expert to assess how conflict-sensitive Maji ya Amani project is.

➡ **Partnerships and Coordination**

The project is aligned with the I4S strategy and takes part in the main events organized under the aegis of SSU and STAREC. IWRM/Maji Ya Amani is also active in the consultation framework of the actors working in the Ruzizi plain, which is organized under the aegis of the Uvira Territorial Administrator. The restructure of the CICF gave rise to the need for multi-sectoral involvement, which has meant that the

ministries in charge of agriculture, land, planning and CARG will now be more permanently involved in implementation and ensuring sustainability of the project.

The project also recruited three local NGOs to which are entrusted part of the project's activities in the fields of land degradation and control of erosion, conservation agriculture, hill slope and river bank stabilization (tree planting on hill tops and river banks, planting of thickets along contour lines) and water harvesting structures in the watershed as part of institutional capacity building, enhanced ownership and sustainability. So far, the partnership is going well and thanks to their experience and the fact that they are from the project area, these local organisations can implement in the watershed with no security threats.

Peace forum

The project additionally has the mandate to organize a peace forum in the Ruzizi Plains, with the objective of celebrating peace and stability. The event follows a series of consultations and mediations with stakeholders at all levels in order to discuss challenges, issues and obstacles to peace. Over the reporting period, the Track II mediations succeeded in bringing together leaders of armed groups of the area and sat them together to discuss and agree on a common agenda. This is a significant achievement, as many organizations had tried previously and did not succeed. In Year 3 of the project, Maji Ya Amani convened 2 security retreats; one in Kinshasa and another in Murhesa, Bukavu.

Held on October 15-16th, the Kinshasa retreat was organised under the theme: « *Leadership cohésif: Itombwe, Moyens plateaux, presqu'île d'Ubwari et Plain de la Ruzizi.* » This session saw the participation of 40 actors from all over the project area, including representatives of armed groups, people with an influence on the conflict dynamics, stakeholders of the Ruzizi plain, representatives from the national government, representatives of the national army of Congo, and other key and influential stakeholders. During this retreat, the stakeholders affirmed their shared willingness and commitment to participate in the whole process so that peace can reign in South-Kivu province. These stakeholders committed to support the sensitization of foreign armed groups to return back to their respective countries and to sensitize Congolese Mai-Mai groups to cease fire so that the community-based DDR advocated by the government of Congo can start.

As part of the recommendations of the Kinshasa retreat, a second retreat was held in Murhesa, Bukavu on December 16-21st with all the leaders of armed groups of South Kivu Province. Several negotiations and discussions were conducted by SFCG hand in hand with the Governor of South Kivu Province, MONUSCO, national institutions in charge of demobilization, and key security bodies at the national and provincial levels. These discussions were aimed at getting the go-ahead in terms of logistics, security and authorization to bring the armed group leaders together. The event was successfully held with the effective participation of 29 out of the 34 armed groups of the South Kivu region. This event, which lasted 7 days including preparatory days, was attended by more than 130 Mai-Mai Leaders, and national and provincial government officials - including the Governor of South Kivu Province, national Members of the Parliament (MPs), national heads of security bodies and other partner organizations including International Alert, Initiative for Cohesive Leadership (ICL) and Interpeace.

The seven-day retreat dealt with the following topics: (i) Modalities and calendar for the organization of the rupture with their foreign allied armed groups, (ii) Modalities of facilitation and preservation of humanitarian access in the zones under the control of armed groups, (iii) Modalities of prevention and internal sanction against violence and abuse committed on civilian populations, (iv) Modalities of establishing liaison mechanisms between leaders of armed groups and institutional forces of the country (per sector), (v) Action plans for the cessation of hostilities and community-based DDR.

In terms of resolutions resulting from the discussions held at the retreat, we can mention the following:

- All the leaders of armed groups present at the Murhesa retreat committed to cease hostilities as of December 23rd 2019;
- Sensitization of foreign armed groups to leave Congo peacefully and on their own;
- Commitment to allow access to humanitarian actors to their respective zones without threats or attempt of kidnapping;

- Close collaboration with national legal institutions to send their members who might have committed imprescriptible crimes.

3. New project perspectives: Changes in Project Strategy

1. To ensure communities make a substantial contribution to the different project works/investments, a community contribution will be a prerequisite going forward for any investment in equipment or real estate to be made for the benefit of the community. This has resulted in a suspension of several ongoing calls for tenders to ensure that this approach is appropriate for the communities. In the previous year, pending the rehabilitation of the dam and full exploitation of the irrigated irrigation scheme and following two seasons with no harvest, the project had been obliged to boost production by providing in-kind support to farmers consisting of seeds or cuttings for rice, maize and cassava sufficient to exploit 850 ha ploughed land, resulting in 265 ha planted in the irrigated area with rice, 93 ha with maize and 40 ha with cassava. This year, the project didn't offer any subsidies or grants to the community. They were instead encouraged to make contributions, where possible, to ensure long-term sustainability of the project's achievements even when interventions are no longer carried out by the project. This approach is in keeping with the project's sustainability plan.
2. In 2019, the project dropped the zero-tillage approach which had been supporting farmers in the catchment area with agricultural techniques and inputs as the approach was not showing any observable impact in the communities;
3. After the third year of IWRM implementation, it was important to revise the work plan and budget for Year 4, taking into account the results of the Mid-Term Review on the one hand, and the recommendations of the meeting with the Donor in Kigali at the Dutch Embassy on 17 December 2019, on the other hand. On this basis, priorities and de-prioritizations, as well as proposals for applicable strategies, were identified and discussed taking into account the context.

The aim of this new orientation is to enable the Maji Ya Amani project to carry out its interventions in the Ruzizi Plain with greater impact and efficiency during this last period of the project, while ensuring sustainability of all the achievements so far recorded: that is, maintenance of the drinking water supply network, maintenance of the canal (main and secondary) and the dam, prevention and transformation of conflicts with a particular emphasis on the watershed where the farmers-herders problem is rife by putting forward tools such as the Radio Sauti ya Amani and the conflict monitoring system. It should be pointed out that these changes result in programmatic, administrative and budgetary implications on the 2020 planning.

4. In August 2019, the donor instructed the project to rethink value chain activities and strategy and to have them implemented under ZOA's Agricultural Production component. A consultant was therefore identified and given the responsibility to support the new strategic direction of value chain activities for the remaining period. He proposed:
 - ✓ Strengthening value chains around a solid agri-food company (in aggregation or transformation) and on the basis of the "formal commitments" of the stakeholders;
 - ✓ Increasing access to financial institutions for producers and their cooperatives/Farmers' Organizations for working capital/ input credit on commercial terms, preferably in the form of "value chain financing" modalities;
 - ✓ Strengthening the commercial and management capacities of cooperatives/OPs through training, exchanges but above all through an intensive coaching system;
 - ✓ Capacity strengthening of MFIs and banks partners of the MyA Project, e. g. in the analysis and granting of agricultural credits and credit (working capital, small equipment) to FOs;
5. For the remaining period, the project is planning to extend its interventions to the watershed, extend the irrigation perimeter to ensure access to landless farmers, introducing a new approach known as the *Integrated Farmers' Plan*. The activity will involve three local NGOs identified through a call for tenders. The evaluation of the bids submitted was made and ZOA is in the process of contracting with

two local non-governmental organizations to assist in the implementation of watershed management activities.