



INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

(MAJI YA AMANI)

Quarterly Narrative Progress Report

(January –March 2020)

Project Name: Integrated Water Resources Management

Target Areas: Ruzizi Plain (DRC)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) is a project funded by the Kingdom of Netherlands through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DMoFA) and is implemented by the IRC-led consortium comprising IRC, Stichting ZOA and Search for Common Ground (SFCG). Aligned with the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy (ISSSS), the 46-month intervention is carried out in the Ruzizi Plain, South Kivu province, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The project aims at contributing to the reduction of violence and the increase in stability in the *groupement* of Luberizi (with a total of 28,800 beneficiaries) and 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.

Though the Ruzizi Plain is very 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 often volatile and susceptible to sudden changes. Indeed, the project implementation area is strongly marked by inter-community conflicts due to rivalry over the exercise of traditional power and a lack of cohesion and trust between the ethnic groups. In addition, Luberizi faces significant security and economic challenges. The area is prey to a proliferation of armed groups and the circulation of weapons, as well as frequent cases of cattle theft, kidnapping, rape, robbery, and conflicts between herders and farmers. Luberizi severely lacks opportunities for youth employment, in particular, leading to significant rural exodus to neighboring cities and neighboring countries (largely Rwanda and Burundi).

This reporting period (January through March 2020) saw a number of innovations including the extension of project activities, including setting up a watershed management committee with a multi-year watershed management plan; the initiation of Integrated Farmers' Plan; start of the rice production's first season using the newly and fully operational rehabilitated irrigation system. COOPAILU has also taken the lead in mobilizing the community in order to minimize risks that may hamper normal operation of the irrigation infrastructures.

Finally, the project implemented several activities towards achieving expected results in coordination with the three partner local NGOS such as the continued coaching of youths running and conducting Income Generating Activities through Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) groups.

ACCRONYMS

ACEP	: Association des Consommateurs d'Eau potable de Sange et Luberizi
CIBEC	: Carrefour des Ingénieurs Bâtisseurs à l'Est du Congo
COOPAILU	: Coopérative Agricole des Usagers de l'Irrigation de Luberizi
CPEHA	: Commission Provinciale en Charge de l'Eau, l'Hygiène et l'Assainissement
DRC	: Democratic Republic of the Congo
FARDC	: Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo
GBV	: Gender-Based Violence
I4S/ISSSS	: International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy
IFP	: Integrated farmer's Plan
IRC	: International Rescue Committee
IWRM	: Integrated Water Resources Management
MONUSCO	: United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC
MyA	: Maji Ya Amani (Water for Peace)
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organization
PAC	: Post Abortion Care
IFs	: Innovative Farmers
IFP	: PNC : Police Nationale du Congo
SFCG	: Search for Common Ground
SGBV	: Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SNHR	: Service National d'Hydraulique Rurale
SRH	: Sexual and Reproductive Health
STAREC	: Programme de Stabilisation et de Reconstruction des zones sortant des Conflits Armés
STAREC	: Stabilisation et Reconstruction à l'Est du Congo
TEP	: Tribune d'Expression Populaire-
VSLA	: Village Savings and Loans Associations
WASH	: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

IMPLEMENTATION ENVIRONMENT

While the end of the year period had particularly been characterized by an increase of security-related incidents, this quarter saw a security environment that was significantly less volatile, and as such, threats related to theft, abductions, kidnapping, extra-judicial killings, ransoming and murders didn't impact negatively the project implementation. Additionally, as a result of the peace retreats organized by the project last year, an armed group which participated in the Murhesa retreat in December 2019 surrendered, leading to an estimated 56 soldiers ceasing their activities.

However, this reporting period was characterized by the expression of frustration the community of Nyamugali village (in Luberizi *groupement*) who blocked project access to the project implementation zone for more than 2 weeks in early January 2020. The Nyamugali community (Bafuliro) are requesting the construction of a reservoir which they see as a non-negotiable priority and the fact that they don't have a reservoir while some other communities upstream the water pipes do have theirs is viewed as an ethnic bias. Negotiations conducted by the project consortium led to the lifting of the strike, enabling critical project activities to resume. Discussions held between the donor and the community during the donor visit in February further reduced the tension as they promised that the community's request would be further analyzed. The developments and outcomes will presented in the next quarterly report.

We should note that the consortium still upholds strict security measures to prevent any incidents, namely,

- *Setting and restricting hours of permitted movement:* Project teams were advised to avoid movements before 8 AM and after 4 PM. Furthermore, staff movements to the medium and high plateaus (including the watershed area) were sometimes not advised following clashes between the Congolese Army (FARDC) and armed groups in the area;
- *Abiding by humanitarian principles, Do No Harm and conflict sensitivity approaches:* The project upheld these approaches and consistently reinforces them for staff members throughout project implementation. This takes place during weekly all staff meetings and relevant refresher workshops whereby staff are encouraged to refrain from any subjective language, biased interpretation or reinterpretation of events occurring in the context, and attitudes and behaviors likely to negatively influence the context and thus endanger the local partners, the project and the consortium member organisations. Staff are also regularly reminded to abide by the principles of neutrality and impartiality in particular, to safeguard the confidence vested in them by the community while also ensuring their safety.

The project also regularly conducts conflict monitoring to assess the socio-economic and political dynamics in intervention areas to continually allow for broader understanding of current conflict trends and actors and hence envisage or adjust responses. The security situation is routinely checked on a daily basis and the project regularly uses information from INSO. The security monitoring mechanism in place within the consortium makes it possible to systematically take stock of any changes in the implementation context. This action is implemented in a discreet manner and each travelling project team is briefed in order to take into account the latest developments in the situation.

Finally, the reporting period has seen the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic towards the beginning of March 2020. The project put in place measures to ensure safety for staff, partners and beneficiaries. The staff members have been categorized into essential and non-essential staff; the nonessential were placed on leave for a three week period of high risk of contamination. Essential staff were either asked to work remotely when possible, and for those whose physical presence on the ground was estimated more than necessary they were kept in the office whilst ensuring hygiene and safety measures were in place.

KEY PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

➡ Increased and equitable access to land

In the framework of increased and equitable access to land, a series of activities contributing to the reduction of conflicts were carried out during the quarter. These include participatory land mapping in relation to the extension of the irrigated area such as Mukama block (113.5709 Ha) ; participatory land mapping in the two watershed pilot villages (Mugule and Katala villages) ; pursuing advocacy activities to ensure indigenous landless households and peoples have access to land in the irrigated perimeter.

➡ Access to drinking water: Determination of the number of water users and pricing strategy

Project support to ACEP allowed a review of the statistics of households that use water and thus make projections based on actual revenue as well as reassess the price mechanism to ensure easy and productive management. With the participation of technical services (SNHR, IPDR and CPAEHA) and politico-administrative authorities, new household statistics that actually use water were validated. Indeed, using systematic avenue by avenue count, the population living in the area using the drinking water is estimated at 16,412 peoples; that is 3,130 households. Based on the new figures, the stakeholders reassessed the pricing mechanism and validated the projections for payment determined by quantity of water used; which is in line with average income and the requirements for efficient management of water supply. ACEP will continue mobilizing contributions based on this newly agreed upon figures and pricing strategy.

During the reporting period, the project, in coordination with CIBEC (the firm contracted to put in place the water supply network) handed over water supply infrastructure to the provincial government. Indeed, it was necessary for the provincial government to ensure that this local community structure responsible for water supply day-to-day management have the skills necessary to respond to the duty. It is in this context that the Ministry in charge of rural development along with other stakeholders and with the support of the ministry in charge of energy and their specialized technical services set indicators to monitor ACEP's performance in managing water supply and ensuring maintenance over the infrastructure.

We should note that the component in charge of water and promotion of hygiene and sanitation (WASH) conducted a household survey in order to better understand the basic problems linked to the lack of hygiene and sanitation in the project area. The activity ensured a strong participation of all actors involving school brigades, Ruzizi health zone, hygiene teams based at health centers, members of community health clubs, etc.

The survey sought to identify the gap in household hygiene and sanitation promotion in a sample of 1,171 households compared to the data collected in the baseline survey conducted in January 2019.

The results are as follows:

- 61.5% of households have hygienic latrines, compared to 10% in the baseline survey;
- 57.64% had a hand-washing facility compared to 15% in the baseline survey;
- 63.79% of households had rubbish holes compared to 17% in the baseline survey;
- 64% of households had stalls for storing food and drinking water; compared to 19% in the baseline survey;
- 64% of households store drinking water in clean containers with lids, compared to 28% in the baseline survey;
- 521 households have been certified 'sanitized' by the Ruzizi health zone compared to 0 certified sanitized households in the baseline survey in January 2019.

Regarding water supply in Luberizi *Groupe*ment and maintenance triggered by failures on the infrastructures, the quarter was rather more stable than the previous ones. Indeed, during the quarter, only 4 breakdowns were recorded and completely and completely attended to; compared to the previous quarter when 14 breakdowns were recorded.

➡ Ensuring (continued) farmer's access to Water for irrigation

Despite all the current constraints, the project ensured the continued supply of irrigation water in the irrigated perimeter throughout the season, including calls also for maintenance. Aimed at ensuring continued operation of the irrigation scheme, maintenance consisted in solving the minor problems arising from the normal use of the irrigation scheme in addition to cleaning the secondary and tertiary canals. Normally, such activities call for less expertise and resources and are implemented by the community under the coordination of COOPAILU. During the period under review, all the maintenance activities carried out concerned mainly the dam where a high rate of silting was observed. The dredging works were carried out by the community at no financial cost.

In terms of capacity strengthening, the project provides support in terms of technical advice and guidance which is very important to ensure COOPAILU fully takes over the responsibility over the irrigation scheme to ensure sustainability even when the project has closed. This quarter, the project organized a workshop to define the administrative and financial procedure manual, roles and responsibilities including the implementation of water distribution mapping in the perimeter and finally training on leadership and the good governance key principles, leadership, rumor management and conflict transformation.

To protect the infrastructures against erosion by stabilizing its immediate surroundings, the project continues planting trees and grasses. The activity was led by the partner local NGO IJED that has been planting various tree species such as bamboos, palms, eucalyptus, etc. all around the dam and the main canal. This involved the community in a number of activities such as public consultation, site visits, preparation of nurseries for the different species that will be used for protection; the drilling of holes for the palm tree seedlings; planting of palm trees (along the canal) and flamboyant trees (at the dam site).

It is worth mentioning that hand in hand with the project team, COOPAILU and the community work to minimize risks that may hamper normal operation of the irrigation infrastructures. This include regular monitoring and making sure the rain water gets a way to the canal without causing damage to it. According to an analysis made by the project team, the drainage and sanitation of the entire village of Nyamugali pose problems for both the village and the irrigation network. Indeed, we observe a concentration of runoff water from roofs that have no outlet points which flows into the main canal, causing problems to the network itself. This encourages the erosion of village roads and in some places, the creation of rainwater stagnation ponds, which are a potential danger to the public health of the village. Among these problems are the destruction of the infrastructures, silting and clogging of the canals, and the potential risks that may be triggered by the chemical composition of the water.

In order to facilitate the management of the watershed, it is necessary to set up a watershed management committee with a multi-year watershed management plan. To facilitate the establishment of this committee, to create self-empowerment, to foster the development of local skills, the option of the IFP (Integrated Farmers' Plan) approach was chosen. Currently, for the setting up of the watershed management committee, the project is holding village assemblies to identify local representatives; at the same time, draw up the community problem tree, identify solutions, resources and assign responsibilities. For this purpose, three drafts are already available due to one draft per partner (as a result of the village assemblies in its area).

➡ Increase Income Generating opportunities

✚ *Provision of image boxes:* The Farmer Integrated Plan approach calls for trainings and accompaniment to the community to ensure they develop correctly their vision. To facilitate training the project provided each partner local NGO with at least image 50 boxes in Swahili. The choice of Swahili was motivated by the fact that it is the most widely spoken national language within the project's scope. There are 4 indirect PI (men) from Mugule who did not receive boxes because they were not budgeted but will be served soon. Each PI received a box of Images, markers, and papers to plan and draw their visions.

✚ *Raising awareness on the IFP approach:* In order to make the new and priority approach IFP approach known and visible in the community, sensitization events were held at community level, involving the community and local leaders. This activity aimed ensuring the right message is conveyed to the community in the intervention zone. This phase consisted in presenting the need for the integration of the IFP approach in the "Maji ya Amani" project in the process of change to work

towards sustainable local development. In order to achieve this development, the populations must be involved, be aware of the problems that need to be addressed, know why and how they should act (intrinsic motivation). T-shirts with messages related to the approach were distributed to farmers to wear at the different events of the project.

- ✚ *Selection of the Innovative farmers (IFs) in the 2 selected villages* : 50 IFs were chosen by the community members themselves in the two villages of Katekema and Mutarule under the management of the partner NGO IJED with a high participation rate; Katekema :110 households and Mutarule :123. One village of Mugule belongs to the Lemera grouping and the other Mulenge in the Kigoma grouping. The partner association in the Luberizi grouping selected 50 IFs by an IJED partner organization via the community. The IFP assistants visited each PI at its home for the final validation according to the different criteria.

We should note that after correcting and posting their integrated farmer plans on the walls in the households, we grouped the visions of 50 IFs, after the elaboration of their IFPs, into 6 categories according to each one's future vision. Some developed 2 to 4 IFPs according to the household's vision for a period of 2 to 5 years. In terms of percentages according to each household's future visions for the two IFP villages, we obtained the results as follows: housing improvement represent 25%, purchase of a motorbike stands for 15%, purchase of a plot 6%, construction of a house 22%, animal husbandry 15%, while income generating activities (IGA) take 17%.

- ✚ In the IFP villages, 50 IFs successfully completed the training separately, i.e. 25 from the pilot village Rwenena on one side and 25 from the pilot village Katekema-Mutarule on the other. The themes developed included: the 3 principles of the IFP, the IFP activators of the IFP. A 2-day workshop on IFP integration in each village was organized to explain that an IFP covers the category of activities namely: agriculture, livestock, natural resource management, IGA. A second 2-day workshop was organized during this quarter to explain to IFs how to develop their action plan of activities to be carried out to achieve their IFP for 3 to 5 years. Topics included how to draw the current situation, elaborate the family card and do the SWOT/FFOM analysis, the importance of the household photo tree and how to draw its desired future situation (household/family dream).
- ✚ *Setting up nurseries for different tree species*: The installation of nurseries and seedlings took place in the 3 groupements namely Lemera, Kigoma and Luberizi. These nurseries received the different seeds selected by the community with assistance of project agronomists. These are Calliandra calothyrsus, Grevillea robusta, Eucalyptus spp, Maesopsis eminii, Cedrela serata, Markhamia lutea, Podocarpus usumbariensis, Acacia angustissima, Bamboo, flamboyant, Leucena, oil palm, flamboyant. These seedlings are growing very well in the different tree nurseries, maintenance and watering work is done on a daily basis.
- ✚ **Protection of hydro agricultural works**: using local labor the tree planting campaign was launched thanks to the sufficient quantity of seedlings in our Mutarule nurseries. The trees are essentially oil palm seedlings. Along the 5 km long irrigation (main) canal, 1143 seedlings were planted at a distance of 2.2 meters between trees and at 9 meters between the lines.

➡ **Creation of and Capacity-building for Peace Committees in the Watershed Area**

From February 2-10, 2020 the project undertook the identification and selection of community members to form the Peace and Mediation Committees in 10 villages of the Watershed area. In response to the recommendation by the donor for the project partner, ZOA, to scale up the titling activities in the Watershed area, these peace committees will contribute to this initiative by facilitating the identification and mediation of conflicts related to land in the two villages selected for the exercise. Moreover, the committees also have the responsibility of conducting mediation in relation to other forms of community conflicts.

The Peace and Mediation Committees were set-up in coordination with local leaders, chiefs of the target villages and of the Lemera and Kigoma Groupements. Overall, ten Peace and Mediation Committees were formed and one Central Committee was set up that plays the role of overseeing and coordinating activities undertaken by the village-level committees. Following the establishment of the committees, the project

conducted capacity-building training for the committee members covering the Common Ground Approach, Do No Harm, and mediation for community and land conflicts. The project team conducted the training in Swahili as it was determined that was the most beneficial language to increase knowledge among participants.

The training was conducted from March 10-17, 2020 in Lemera and Sange among the members of the 11 committees. Overall, **101 people** participated to this series of training of whom 29% were women. According to pre and post-tests evaluations, there was an 8.5% increase in knowledge recorded.

➡ **Mediation of community Conflicts**

This quarter, the Peace Committees of the Ruzizi Plain (set up previously in the project) and the newly organized Peace and Mediation Committees of the Watershed area successfully conducted meditations on several types of conflicts in their respective areas. Mediation on community conflicts was primarily related to disputes over **farmer-herder feuds, access to drinking water** and **inheritance**. In total, **51 conflicts** were referred to The project's Peace and Mediation Committees in the Ruzizi Plain and **18 conflicts** were referred to the newly set-up committees in the Watershed area; thus overall, 69 conflicts were successfully mediated by the Peace and Mediation Committees during this quarter of the project. Given that the Peace Committees of the Watershed area were only established in early February of this year, the 18 conflicts already mediated by the committees show that these committees were much needed and with the appropriate support, they could continue to play a critical role in the area. Additionally, it can be noted that the trends recorded during the previous reporting period in relation to mediating community conflicts remain very similar. The two types of conflicts that mentioned the most frequently were **herder-agriculture feuds** (at 49%) and **disputes over drinking water** (at 33%).

- ✓ *Farmer-herder conflicts* remain the leading cause of tension and conflict in the target areas. Although Peace Committees have succeeded in mediating farmer-herder related conflicts, there is still substantial effort needed to provide widespread knowledge on means of prevention of conflict between farmers and herders as well as on proper management of cattle, grazing rights and agricultural land management.
- ✓ *Disputes over drinking water* are the second leading cause of conflict in the target areas and are found to arise largely as the consequence of people asking for the implementation and enforcement of the rules governing access to water and/or demanding transparency in the management of the fountains. Communities' increased requests and demands for social justice relating to disputes over drinking water are revealing as to the impact of project activities in target sites. Several community awareness sessions have been conducted around the management and access to water and the communities increased emphasis on social justice is indicative of such sessions' impacts on the way community members choose to settle their disputes.
- ✓ The third leading cause of conflict in the target areas is *theft*, representing 9% of all the conflicts brought before the Peace Committees. The project team found that most security related incidents related in the project's implementation zones had a connection to economic livelihoods. This indicates that poverty and lack of economic opportunities remain some of the leading causes of tension in the project target areas. Additionally, a lack of livelihood opportunities also potentially encourages youth to join armed groups.
- ✓ *Succession conflicts* or *conflicts arising from inheritance of family assets* were the second leading cause of conflict brought to the Peace Committees, representing 22% of all the 18 conflicts referred in the Watershed area. Notably, a much smaller percentage of succession and inheritance conflict (6%) was recorded as being referred to the Peace Committees in the Ruzizi Plain. Therefore, the project team can infer that inheritance of family assets represents a key issue worth

exploring as part of the coming studies in the Watershed area specifically. Moreover, whereas the other conflicts referred to Peace Committees mostly occurred along ethnic lines, inheritance conflicts usually oppose members of the same family or group. Therefore, elements of family and in-group cohesion appear to be sources of contention in this area and are worth exploring in the coming conflict scan.

- ✓ *Witchcraft* related issues also appear to be a topic that is touched upon by communities in the Watershed area. Given that generally witchcraft is intertwined with traditional beliefs and usually accusations of witchcraft are difficult to prove, there is a need to conduct discussions with Peace Committees in order to find the appropriate ways to deal with such issues. Generally, people accused of witchcraft are often old people or young children and are beaten up and subjected to degrading practices which sometimes even result in death. Thus, Peace Committees contributing to mediating such issues have the potential to save lives.

Note: The Peace and Mediation committees are regularly supported by the project team who provide coaching on active listening, non-violent communication and instruction on filling out conflict reporting forms. Given the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the monitoring for this quarter was mostly conducted online.

➡ **Tribunes d'Expression Populaire (Town Hall-style Meetings)**

The project conducted **four** TEPs during this reporting period, engaging a total of **196 participants** (137 women and 59 men). The TEPs are town hall-style dialogue forums that aim to provide a platform for communities to engage directly with local and provincial authorities around issues of interest to them. By creating a space for horizontal, constructive dialogue between state actors and communities, the TEPs contribute to improved communication which can help to prevent and dispel rumors and eventually begin to build a more cohesive relationship between communities and authorities. The topics of each TEP are determined through a participatory discussion whereby communities and authorities agree on what are the most relevant and important topics that should be addressed in a particular community.

Topics discussed during this quarter related mainly to gender issues as part of the celebration of the International Day for the Rights of Women. Indeed, as the International Day for the Rights of Women fell during this quarter, the main topic discussed during the four TEPs revolved around the contribution of VSLA and CAG in the reduction of gender-based violence (SGBV) and discussing issues relating to the role of women in economic development in their respective communities. Discussions touched upon family planning, causes of SGBV, and the role of women leaders of the CAG and VSLA of the Ruzizi Plain in spreading community awareness around these issues. The majority of the members of these two community-based structures are women from all the eight villages of Luberizi groupement. The following recommendations arose from the discussions:

- ✓ It is recommended that men (particularly married men) be included in awareness activities about family planning, the management of family budgets and assets, VSLA and other topics pertaining to women, children and family;
- ✓ Engage religious and traditional leaders in dialogue pertaining to family planning, gender and the role of women in general in the society; and,
- ✓ The consortium should continue women empowerment and protection activities as they are very important to the project's aims.

➡ **Participatory Theatre Productions**

During this reporting period, no participatory theater productions were able to be implemented in the target areas due to Covid-19 outbreak. However, an exchange trip was organized with 4 members of the theater group of the Ruzizi Plain and 1 project staff to Goma during the "Festival Amani," an international artistic program that brings together performers and different types of artists from around the country and the world to celebrate peace from February 13th to 17th 2020. This was an opportunity for the local youth of Luberizi to

meet professional artists and learn from them. They also met and performed together with theater groups associated with the project in Goma and they were able to gain knowledge from each other's experiences by performing together before an audience of several hundreds of people. In their words, this trip was fulfilling and an experience that made them inspired to utilize their talents.

➡ **Awareness of FARDC and PNC**

Over this reporting period, the project held 8 awareness raising sessions that touched 223 soldiers and police personnel (including 37 women). As a reminder, these sessions are aimed at shifting perceptions and attitudes of security actors which can eventually lead to behavior change through the use of constructive and positive communications. The main topics discussed included *Protection of drinking water infrastructures; Civilian protection and how it should be the new vision of the police; and Protection of people and their assets*. The sessions were an opportunity for the soldiers, police and civilians to learn about the rules governing relations with community members so that they can strengthen their relationships in an environment where the weak presence of state authorities and public services have caused increased sentiments of distrust towards governments (provincial and national) and towards security authorities in general.

➡ **Support to “Sauti Ya Amani”--the Luberizi community Radio Station**

The project continued to provide support to the Sauti Ya Amani radio station this quarter. Unfortunately, the radio transmitter, which was damaged during the previous reporting period could not be repaired despite all efforts to get it sent to a qualified technician in Bujumbura-Burundi. A replacement transmitter is planned to be purchased and this is included in the 2020 budget submitted to the donor and is awaiting approval. An assessment of “other equipment needs” was conducted and as part of the exit strategy, some radio equipment deemed necessary will be provided if feasible in order to strengthen the technical capacity of the Sauti Ya Amani radio station.

➡ **Conflict Sensitivity and Monitoring**

The project implementation zone has always been characterized by conflicts, tensions and potentially harmful rumors. Maji Ya Amani ensures that its interventions are conflict sensitive by inclusively identifying partners and issues to be addressed through the project. In addition to regular sensitization sessions and project all-staff meetings held each Monday, interactions with the community generate feedback that help direct the consortium's interventions. Regular meetings and dialogue with the community in the accountability framework promote contacts with local partners and other key stakeholders with possibilities of easily identifying any potential event or development that need adaptation or intervention to avoid escalation of tensions.

With the extension of project activities to the watershed during this fourth and last year, it is necessary to continue to closely monitor the situation in the areas to ensure no disruptions occur that would hamper the implementation. This is particularly true as the project is also implemented hand in hand with local NGOs to which some activities were entrusted. Finally, the tense situation due to the claimed reservoir in Nyamugali village is closely monitored in order to reduce tensions, as further claims for the construction of a reservoir specific to this village have resurfaced and are becoming more insistent. As mentioned previously, when failures occur on the reservoir which currently jointly serves Nyamugali and another village, residents tend to lose their interest in making contributions, which in turn impacts the volume of savings available for maintenance.

Over this reporting period, several analyses have been conducted and shared with the consortium and the donor. Topics covered include: farmer-herder conflicts, land grabbing attempts, emerging issues in the Watershed area (the new project site) and contextual challenges facing the project. Here is a summary of some of the analyses conducted:

- *Community expectations and demands with impacts on contextual conflict dynamics:* Changes to initial project plans that were shared with communities (through staff who are no longer with the project) has had the unfortunate consequence of setting high expectations among target communities. Though some of these initial promises are no longer part of the project priorities, for example the construction of the project office in Luberizi and a Water Tank in Nyamugali, the communities have continued to press the consortium in regards to such infrastructures. The demand for water reservoir led to some disturbances in the implementation of the project in January this year. *“It appears clearly that though there is water in Nyamugali, there is a sort of competition between the communities and failing to construct the Tank would lead the people of Nyamugali to believe that the project was meant only for the people of other areas, notably Katekama.”* -an excerpt from the analysis conducted by the project’s Project Manager. The project expects the formal approve during the next quarter.
- *Land grabbing attempts and the risks of inter community conflicts:* Irrigation has increased the value of lands in the irrigated perimeter. As a result, the land is attracting the lust of a lot of people including political leaders and even provincial administrative staff, who have attempted to grab some lands by taking advantage of the complicity of some local leaders. The consortium has conducted analyses and collaborated with provincial authorities, notably the Minister of Planning who has decided to annul the relevant deeds signed.
- *Emerging issues in the Watershed Area:* Analyses conducted in the Watershed Area have indicated that communities overall live in relative harmony. However, there do exist some stereotypes and discriminatory behaviors that affect intergroup relations, notably the refusal of other communities to marry into the pygmy community, succession conflicts that affect family cohesions, and the leading issues of farmer-herder conflicts and management of drinking water infrastructures.

➡ **Agricultural activities in the irrigated perimeter**

The activities carried out in the irrigated perimeter by the rice producers are satisfactory. These 7 blocks of the irrigated perimeter have been sown by the crop without the support of the project, nevertheless 34 tons of fertilizers were distributed by the two heads of the Luberizi group. Following limited capacity, the community took time to make fields ready for sowing in the SANGO block, which may impact harvest. In other blocks, the paddy rice harvest is expected to take place soon though we anticipate that there shall be a drop in yield this season compared to the 2018-2019 season, when the project provided assistance in terms of agricultural inputs and mechanical ploughing to enhance farmers’ interest in agriculture and hence boost production. During this season there will be an average of 5-6 tons per hectare against rarely of the last season A 2018-2019 of which there is an average of 8 tons/Ha.

➡ **Progress of the agricultural value chain component**

The project pursues the search for a partner that would support beneficiaries in accessing formal credit. It’s in this sense that we held four working sessions respectively with COOPEC Kalundu, COOPEC Ruzizi, *Mains de bâtisseurs* and PAIDEK to reflect on/discuss the possibility of giving access to formal credit to small producers of rice, corn, pepper, milk and partner cooperatives & other actors of the value chains. A maximum agricultural credit value was calculated: \$675/ha for rice farmers and \$500 for corn farmers. A draft collaboration agreement has been drawn up in anticipation of a possible signature to facilitate access to credit for small producers in the form of a loan. Also, four focus groups carried out respectively with the partner organizations ADCP, CAPML, BDD and UCADI in relation to the pepper sector.

In a view to link producers to companies, four purchase contracts are currently under negotiation with MINOKA for grain maize, COOTPA for fresh milk, COOSOPRODA for white rice and GASHORA Farm for chilli pepper in favor of small producers or small producers’ organisations in Luberizi. A screening of the direct & indirect actors of the chilli and fresh milk sectors of the Luberizi group is under way at this moment.

It's worth noting that the project is technically supporting pepper farming (varieties popularized by Gashora Farm) over an area of 10 ha of in the Ruzizi plain, precisely in Katogota & Kamanyola. Also, a visit was organized with the managers of the GASHORA FARM in Kigali for the chilli market and 1 visit to the MONOKA for the grain maize market. Five farming steps proved to be relevant to benefit from a possible credit: ploughing, agricultural inputs, maintenance work, weeding, transport & purchase of packaging.

➡ **Economic recovery and development**

This quarter, the 34 VSLAs put in place, revitalized and supported by the project saw increased results compared to the previous quarter. Savings shifted from \$11,913,411 to \$ 26,470,588 with a corresponding rate in growth for the credit granted to members (from \$ 12,205,888 to \$ 17,352,940). These exponential increases are justified by two aspects: firstly, the fact that the old VSLAs have increased the purchase value on the one hand; secondly by the fact that this reporting period was a harvest period and during which all the members gave their weekly contributions without any delay. It was observed that, in preparation for the agricultural season B, members used VSLA groups to request seasonal credits--VSLAs progressively becoming a lever likely to promote value chains.

To enhance transparency and cohesion, this aspect was reinforced by outcomes of discussion Groups between VSLA Members and their spouses which was an opportunity that enabled actors to discuss the constraints linked to their participation in VSLAs across households and the best mechanisms to ensure that this participation strengthens participatory and responsible management of household resources.

With the aim to better support young entrepreneurs, the project trained 850 people (614 Women-236 Men) heads of VSLA member households and 200 youths (98 Women-102 Men) in entrepreneurship. All of these clients benefited from the guidance on conducting job market analyzes. The youths opened their group accounts at COOPEC Kalundu to benefit from financial services; namely savings, credit and support for entrepreneurship advice, micro management and networking opportunities.

During this quarter, the various rapprochement and awareness activities conducted by the project in conjunction with IRC's SGBV as part of the International Day for Women Rights contributed to raising awareness among communities on violence towards women and issues pertaining to the well-being of women, especially related to topics of economic empowerment.

➡ **GVB/FP/Reproductive Health**

During this quarter, the project organized joint supervision activities with the Health Zone. Also, project interventions in this area aimed strengthening GBV/RH activities with the Batwa by an assessment of women and girls' specific needs in terms of GBV PF SAA, menstruation management, male-female-youth exchange in 2 villages where live the Twa community (Mutarule and Mapendo, and creation of a GAC committee only for Batwa within the framework of implementing community awareness and orientation activities on different themes in FP SAA and GBV.

MONITORING PROGRESS

Through its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) unit, the project routinely collects and analyzes data in order to determine whether or not the project activities are on track, to inform decision-making as to relevant actions to maintain or increase successes while identifying areas for improvement. Currently, the project has been implementing some of recommendations resulting from the mid-term review conducted in 2019 and incorporated into the 2020 work plan. For instance, the project is systematically enhancing sustainability and community ownership over project infrastructures; making sure the community are taking over maintenance.

GENDER AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

We should note the presence of water faucets placed in the villages of the Luberizi groupement as part of the water supply. Luberizi has significantly contributed to solving the burden of water chores among community members. Traditionally, girls and women have the duty to draw water for the households they belong to. Before the faucets appeared in the villages, girls and women had to travel kilometers per day with a 20-liter can on their heads. The faucets have saved them not only time, but also helped to protect them from being exposed to road accidents, attacks, kidnapping and rape by armed groups. The benefits of the water faucets also extend to people with low mobility, such as the elderly or people with disabilities.

In addition, hand in hand with various actors, the project contributed to a mobilization session in Luberizi involving political and military authorities, the office of civil affairs of MONUSCO and INGOs active in the area through a reflection session on the situation of women in UVIRA territory and a series of popular expression forums led to the recommendation that there is a need for a plea to be conducted in Kinshasa in order to allow women in the plain of Ruzizi to recover peace and that the atrocities undertaken in the territory of Uvira by non-state armed groups end, that the question of the duplicity of power maintained be definitively resolved.

CHALLENGES

The implementation of the project over the first quarter encountered two main challenges in addition to the recurrent security situation which has an impact on the implementation of the project's work plan. The two central reasons behind the disruption of activities related to issues related to youth in Luberizi calling for the construction of a water reservoir in Nyamugali and; secondly, the governmental measures mandated as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The disturbances caused by the strike of youth in Luberizi demanding for the construction of a water tank in their community led to a number of disruptions to project activities over the month of January, 2020. Overall, most of the month of January and a small of February was dedicated to facilitating negotiations with the youth in Luberizi.

Furthermore, from the beginning of March, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a number of further disruptions to project activity, most notably in relation to the decisions made by the national government which led the consortium to conduct a review of its activities involving gatherings of people. Whereby all activities that bring together people, especially community awareness activities championed by The project, including Tribune d'Expression Populaires, Participatory Theater, Community Health Workers, VSLAs, Solidarity Activities, Coaching of Peace Committees and Listener Club activities, etc., were forced to be put on hold for the time being. The collaboration between the consortium partners and particularly, the security briefing provided by IRC, significantly helped to prevent security incidents related to project implementation and various activities were conducted by the three organizations without any recorded major incidents. At project level, the occurrence of the COVID 19 pandemic led to a slowdown in activities and a definition of measures adapted to each context in order to preserve the life and well-being of the staff, partners and communities with which the project interacts. As mentioned previously, adaptations were made for staff who are able to work remotely.

We should note, however, that in March 2020, five project staff members were conducting project activities in Lemera when a clash broke out between the FARDC and Mai-Mai armed groups in the area. The clash halted the activities being implemented but the staff members were ultimately able to wrap up said activities, leave the area and safely return to the project base in Kamanyola. This led the project to limiting movements of the project team the following days.

Peace Forum in the Ruzizi Plain

This reporting period did not see the implementation of the Peace Forum in the Ruzizi Plain due to disruptions to the project such as the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the project did continue to conduct its underground Track II engagements with armed group members and other relevant influential groups. A

follow-up meeting regarding the Murhesa retreat that was scheduled for March with representatives of armed groups and major stakeholders in the process was unfortunately postponed due to the measures taken by the government to fight COVID-19.

LESSONS LEARNED

- (1) Extension of IWRM activities to the watershed using local NGOs is likely to enhance project acceptability in the communities and make context monitoring more effective
- (2) The interconnection and shared support of the axes between the IWRM project and the IRC CONCASE project made it possible to cover all the necessary package in order to better guide the actors on the management of GBV, PAC and FP. Indeed, when IWRM takes care of the awareness and structuring aspects, the need for inputs is covered by CONCASE, thus making it possible to cover all the needs necessary to promote the use of FP as a birth management mechanism and; in parallel, ensure effective management of GBV cases. Hence, this interaction led to a progressive acceptance of FP methods, with an average of 100 new acceptors in the Luberizi *groupement* during the quarter.
- (3) Project is ensuring hygiene and sanitation in different places including some facilities. According to health professionals, good hygiene and sanitation in health facilities strengthens patient confidence and improves the attractiveness of the facility. According the Manager of the Mutarule health facility, they were able to note that thanks to the endowment of the health center with clean latrines and other sanitation infrastructures, they noticed increase in patient' attendance rate which shifted from 60% to 75% in three months.