



INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

(MAJI YA AMANI)

Quarterly Narrative Progress Report

(March –June 2020)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, the IRC-led Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) consortium comprises also Stichting ZOA and Search for Common Ground as strategic and implementing partners. The project is implemented in DR Congo, South Kivu province, specifically in the Ruzizi plain, along the borders of both Rwanda and Burundi.

The official implementation period for the project ended in February 2021. A No Cost Extension (NCE) period of ten months (from March to December 2021) has been given for consolidation and ensuring smooth closure of the project. This report covers the period from March to June 2021. It provides an overview of implemented actions and key achievements made by the project during this period among those validated to be implemented during this specific period of NCE.

Although the implementation of activities was necessarily slowed during this period due to the time needed to agree upon the No Cost Extension (NCE) phase and the activities to be included in it – approved in June 2021 – the project team was still able to implement some of these activities and to make some key achievements. For example, the project continued discussions with the South Kivu Provincial Government to prepare for the handover of the project. A roadmap was defined and validated by the community and the key involved stakeholders.

In the land tenure area, after the project had made sure all of the irrigated perimeter was successfully and efficiently secured by 219 group titles issued by the relevant state authorities and covering around 1,035 hectares, this experience was scaled up in the watershed. To ensure this will be successful outside of the irrigated area, the project organized training sessions for RFC agents from the Chefferie of Bafuliru and provided them with information technology equipment such as computers and printers, smartphones and other surveying equipment such as a GPS and tracing papers. Electrification was carried out in the RFC office to further enable them to work effectively. The project additionally supported in the set-up of the Bafuliiru community land register and in the development of the Bafuliiru land charter. To support community members to easily reach service providers in relation with land tenure, the project is supporting the Territoire of Uvira in constructing the Land Affairs District Office. The buildings are almost completed; but at the time of reporting, there is still the finishing work to carry out. In addition, the project continued with facilitating the ongoing process of ensuring land access to currently landless community members.

Regarding access to drinking water, the project continued with coaching and capacity building of ACEP on accountability in drinking water management. Joint evaluation and monitoring activities of the drinking water supply and the co-management mechanism were conducted with relevant project stakeholders such as ACEP leaders and provincial authorities. These continue to take place in preparation for the handover process at the end of the project.

Regarding access to irrigation water, the construction of the extension for the main canal over a length of 6.5 km is continuing normally, even if water does not yet reach the Sango block in the quantities desired due to the topographical singularity of the area. At the same moment, the extension of the irrigated perimeter of Luberizi, in Mukama and Majambere continued. Finally, in this area, it is important to note that the strengthening capacity for COOPAILU continued as well in order to ensure this structure is able to manage sustainably the irrigation infrastructures after the project concludes.

The project facilitated and realized capacity building activities and funds mobilization through Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) groups with the objective to contribute to the promotion of livelihoods at the household level. The project also continued its support to setting up and revitalizing VSLA networks to ensure VSLA groups are stronger and can access more opportunities (particularly to more formal credits). Five networks / clusters, comprising around 8 VSLA groups each, were set up and/or revitalized. The project also continued supporting the promotion of entrepreneurship through the supervision of young people in their income generating activities.

Finally, the project team continued its efforts to promote social cohesion by holding solidarity-building activities and supporting safety and wellbeing initiatives among the community. A total of five (5) solidarity activities have been organized since January 2021, and these continued into the current reporting period. These activities were supporting and contributing to the construction of a maternity building in Nyakabere, the construction of four latrines for the market of Nyamugali and 4 latrines for the market of Mulenge, and construction of wooden fences to protect community water fountains in Kanga and Rugeje.

ACCRONYMS

ACEPSKILU	: Association des Consommateurs d'Eau Potable de Sange, Kigoma et Luberizi
ASCODER	: Assises Communautaires pour le Développement Rural
BDR	: Bureau de Reboisement (de l'Eglise 8 ^{ème} CEPAC)
CCRCC	: Comité Consultatif de Règlement des Conflits Coutumiers
CICF	: Cadre Inclusif de Gestion des Conflits et du Foncier
COOPAILU	: Coopérative Agricole des Usagers de l'Irrigation de Luberizi
DRC	: Democratic Republic of the Congo
ETD	: Entité Territoriale Décentralisée
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 (PIP = Plan Intégré du Paysan)
IJED	: Initiative des Jacobins Eleveurs pour le Développement
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)
NCE	: No-n Coast Extension
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organization
IFs	: Innovative Farmers (Paysans Innovateurs / PIs)
PNC	: Police Nationale du Congo
RFC	: Registre Foncier Communautaire
SFCG	: Search for Common Ground
SGBV	: Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SNHR	: Service National d'Hydraulique Rurale
SRH	: Sexual and Reproductive Health
STAREC	: Stabilisation et Reconstruction à l'Est du Congo (des zones sortant des Conflits Armés)
VSLA	: Village Savings and Loans Associations
WASH	: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

IMPLEMENTATION ENVIRONMENT

During this period, two main variables influenced the context: the socio-political and security situation in the Ruzizi Plain that continued to be as volatile as in the past, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The latter impacted the DRC in general and the South Kivu Province, where the project is being implemented. Some of the activities grouping more than 20 participants were cancelled when it was not possible to respect social distancing, as per the Government's recommendation. Although training sessions could be organized (as the project team was able to take preventative measures and respect social distancing requirements), some important activities such as open community meetings in villages to discuss and collect directly feedback from beneficiaries as part of the project's accountability mechanisms could not take place because of the pandemic. The security situation remained volatile and unstable throughout the same period, with repeated crossings by foreign armed groups through the project areas in the Ruzizi Plain, which escalated looting, abductions, and other security-related occurrences in the area. Targeted acts of assassination, summary executions, robberies followed by burglaries, kidnappings for ransom, and demonstrations followed by barricades have also been reported.

Moreover, inter-community violence in the Watershed area resulted in the displacement of an estimated 2500+ households from the target area into the Ruzizi Plain, particularly in Luberizi and Bweyera, which are both located in the Chefferie de la Plaine de la Ruzizi, and in Kamanyola (where the project is based). Furthermore, the displacement of Banyarmulenge herders heightened tensions in the Ruzizi Plain, raising the prospect of further farmer-herder conflict.

In terms of impact on project activities, we note that the security situation did not deeply impact the implementation of project activities over the reporting period. This is mainly due to community acceptance of the project, but also can be attributed to the various security measures undertaken by the lead of the consortium, whereby field trips were to be conducted between 8 AM and 3 PM and only after a security check by the security officer of the consortium, who is in permanent contact with many security focal points in the area. Regular security updates were provided by the security officer of the consortium to consortia staff members enabling them to continue activities safely despite the risks presented by the operating environment.

KEY PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

During this quarter many actions were focused on preparing the community for the project's upcoming exit by increasing community ownership of the achievements of the project and helping them to contribute to their sustainability. This said, as the NCE work plan and budget were not formally approved yet, the project also focussed on the continuity and completion of activities that were set to close by the original project end date, as well as on the follow-up and support of the structures set up or revitalized by the project. Key milestones included:

COORDINATION

Exchanges and negotiations with the donor for the validation of the NCE work plan

The project was initially planned to close by February 28, 2021. However, the project staff and the Provincial Government of South Kivu conducted an analysis that revealed a need for an extension period in order to be able to properly and smoothly close certain activities that were not complete during this phase. This period would also be used for consolidation in order to properly prepare for sustainability of the project's achievements after project closure. This would require a thorough capacity building effort with the community structures set up or rehabilitated by the project to ensure the ongoing effective management of the infrastructure that the project has provided to the community. A series of exchanges and negotiations was therefore begun with the donor to agree on a no-cost extension (NCE) phase, which was approved on June the 14th.

Exchanges with the Provincial Government for setting a roadmap for the NCE period

As the project had already received an agreement in principle and the favourable opinion of the donor for a No-Cost Extension (NCE) period with a focus on consolidating the project's achievements and facilitating sustainability, the project began discussions with the Provincial Government for defining a roadmap for this period. Thus, on April 30, 2021, a workshop was organized in Bukavu with the four technical and sectoral ministries (the Ministry of Interior and Customary Affairs, the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and the Ministry of Land Affairs) that are partners of the project as well as the provincial

technical services working with the project. The project team expressed their concerns around key points on which specific support from the Provincial Government is expected. At the same time, the 4 Ministers expressed their expectations and recommendations for the project. This led to defining a common roadmap for the NCE period, which was then presented to the Luberizi community for enrichment and validation.

It was in this context that on May 13, 2021, a field visit with the four Ministries was organized. This was not only to validate the roadmap for the extension phase of the MyA project with the community and key partners, but also to officially announce to the community members the approved extension of the project period. In addition to representatives of the four ministries above representatives from four technical services at provincial level and five at Territoire level (including the STAREC) took part in this session. All the community structures set up or revitalized by the project were represented, as were community representatives, including members of the local administration. During this session, the key actions of the NCE phase were presented alongside the roadmap for achieving them. Important recommendations were formulated from these interventions, which led to the validation of the roadmap by all stakeholders.

ACCESS TO LAND

During the reporting period, the following activities were implemented:

Training of RFC agents from the Chefferie of Bafuliru and RFC equipment

The project organised training sessions related to three main topics:

- (1) The Land Information System (SIF in French) of the RFC and on land reform in DRC,
- (2) Land Registration and the RFC operating model, and,
- (3) The procedure for obtaining a certificate and registering a file.

To support the work at the RFC, the project provided them with information technology equipment such as four computers and two printers, five smartphones and other surveying equipment such as a GPS and tracing papers. Electrification was carried out in the RFC office to further enable them to work effectively.

Set up of the the Bafuliiru community land register

Regarding the signature of the minutes of the customary land rights recognition, a process required to formalize the land registry activities, immediately after training, RFC agents were deployed on the ground to collect signatures at four levels: (i) from owners, (ii) from donors or sellers, (iii) from witnesses and finally (iv) from customary chiefs (notables or chiefs of villages, chiefs of *groupement* and Mwami). The publication of the results of participatory mapping activities has already been undertaken in the watersheds (in the villages of Mugule and Katala) and in the irrigated area.

A total number of 2522 signatures were collected, among them 2471 without any conflict and 51 cases with conflicts which will have to be solved with the community structures dedicated to this process. After this step, the project had to ensure that publication of the mapping results was done, and this was successfully completed.

Development of the Bafuliru land charter

In order to secure the lands of the communities in the Bafuliiru chefferie of, a team of consultants was formed to produce a draft community land charter which includes local customs, land tenure management, and terms for the acquisition and transfer of land rights. This was done with the support of a well-known land expert recommended by the DRC Government (Professor Séverin MUGANGU), and the draft charter will now go through a process of validation by the community.

Signatures of land applications format in the extension of the perimeter

The lands mapped in the extension and for which the land publication took place without any conflict were submitted for signature by the occupants. To date, 201 occupants have signed land applications. The process is still in progress at the time of reporting.

Construction of the Land Affairs District Office

During this period, the project started the construction of the Land Affairs District Office. To date, the buildings are almost completed; there is still the finishing work to carry out, which is mainly installing tiles on the floor, painting the walls, construction of septic tanks and soaks, and furnishing and equipping the building. The process is still in progress at the time of reporting.

Ensuring land access to the landless

Thanks to the land tenure process undertaken in Luberizi's irrigated perimeter, it became evident that some communities and/or villages – particularly those of the indigenous people (the Twa) – and some other areas do not have access to land within the irrigated perimeter for various reasons, which contradicts the aforementioned objective. Many community leaders appealed to the project to find a solution to this problem, specifically by locating areas of the irrigated perimeter in places that would facilitate the sharing of the communal resources developed with these underserved communities or villages.

Subsequently, the consortium member organizations advocated to the local chiefs and state officials (rural development services, the provincial planning division and the cadastral office, as well as the provincial government's Ministry of Land Affairs). This campaign resulted in the identifying of several plots of land for the benefit of the aforementioned groups. Search for Common Ground oversaw the process of formal identification of the community's landless farmers prior to the transfer of lands to the stated people as part of this process. This procedure was carried out in collaboration with the Luvungi Brigade Foncière, the state service in charge of land administration in the project region. In total, 293 people were identified, and the list was shared with all the involved stakeholders including the provincial administrations.

During the reporting period, the project provided support to the land distribution process with the assistance of local peace committees for the purpose of identifying potential problems and seeking to address them as the process progressed. This procedure resulted in the allocation of 18ha to approximately 40% of the identified beneficiaries. The Provincial Minister in charge of Land Affairs was asked to step in to help resolve some of the more challenging and delicate issues which presented themselves as part of this process, and the consortium is monitoring this activity closely in the hopes of reaching a conclusion that will allow landless farmers access to land as intended.

ACCESS TO DRINKING WATER & SANITATION

User fees for drinking water

During this period, both the pricing and the community mobilization to increase fund collection on the Luberizi-Sange-Kigoma network improved as project implementation progressed. During this reporting period, the consortium continued to see increases in the collection and mobilization of contributed funds for the maintenance of this water infrastructure.

The water management committee (ACEPSKILU) is collecting an average of 1,500,000 FC each month, whereas before it was less than 700,000 FC. There is still work to be done to reach the desired amount, but with the time, and with the involvement of chiefs and leaders, combined with more awareness raising efforts, the consortium is aiming to increase the amount collected, including by changing the pricing strategy as the project comes to a close. Instead of having a fixed amount of 1000 FC paid per household monthly, the ACEP will request water users to pay according to the quantity of water consumed by each household. This is more equitable and fair, it will lead water users to be more rational in their consumption on the one hand, but also it will make it possible to recover more funds and increase the amount collected on the other hand.

Coaching and capacity building of ACEP on accountability in drinking water management

During this period, the project conducted nine field visits and discussion sessions with ACEPSKILU leaders to ensure that they are correctly playing their roles in management of the water system and equipment maintenance.

During the field visits, the project teams held discussions with ACEP bodies in charge of water management, enquired about challenges faced, addressed feedback received and coached the ACEP bodies to ensure sound and fair management of the infrastructure and the water maintenance fees collected from water users. They additionally supported ACEP leaders to manage expectations and requests for individual household access, a principle which has not been authorized by the project to avoid unfair advantage of some individuals over others. These visits also provided an opportunity to provide technical capacity strengthening support to the lead technician of the ACEP and to help mediate any internal discussions between leaders as needed.

Anticipating infrastructure handover to the relevant state services

Joint evaluation and monitoring activities of the drinking water supply and the co-management mechanism were conducted with relevant project stakeholders such as ACEP leaders and provincial authorities. These continue to take place in preparation for the handover process at the end of the project. During the field visit for validation of the roadmap on May 13, 2021, this topic was also discussed with various stakeholders, including the Minister of Rural Development, to ensure the continued monitoring of drinking water activities; and the Ministry of Planning, who is also the signatory of the acts of co-management and of the procurement agreements. These agreements – which lay out the area covered by this network, the key actors and their respective roles, the pricing and management of water and of infrastructures, environmental protection measures, and also hygiene and water quality preservation measures – allow stakeholders to manage the infrastructure put in place by the project and ensure sustainability. This Minister was able to ensure project progress and determine whether earlier recommendations made to the project are being implemented, concluding that the project is on track.

Social Cohesion: Holding solidarity activities by supporting safety and wellbeing initiatives among the community

A total of five (5) solidarity activities have been organized since January 2021, and these continued into the current reporting period. These activities were initially planned for the last quarter of 2020, however, owing to tight deadlines, they were pushed back. All five solidarity actions were planned in collaboration with Search for Common Ground's listening clubs in the target locations.

The overall goal of these activities was to promote community awareness and acceptance of the roles played by listening clubs, particularly as the project comes to a close. They support relevant common initiatives identified by communities which are good opportunities for bringing different community members in conflict together for collaboration, cohesion, reduction of tensions and peaceful cohabitation. More specifically, the events brought together community members from a variety of backgrounds who might not have otherwise had the opportunity to interact, talk, and share ideas. Overall, 224 people took part in the five solidarity activities across the project target zones since they started in 2020 until April 2021. Women made up 23% of the total participants (with 104 women participating).

The specifics related to each of the five solidarity activities are as follows:

- **(1) Contribution to the construction of a maternity building in Nyakabere.** This started on January 27th 2021 and continued into the present reporting period. The village of Nyakabere in the Ruzizi Plain had no maternity building thereby forcing pregnant women to have to travel to neighboring Mutarule or Nyamugali on motorbikes to seek care or deliver their babies. Owing to insecurity and the impracticability of the road, it is often extremely difficult for women to travel for care. Therefore, the community decided to build a maternity hall to serve women directly in the community. The listening club of the village decided to support this work by contributing freely to the work on a volunteer basis. The consortium supported this initiative led by the youth of the listening clubs by providing materials for the construction, such as 10 bags of cement.
- **(2 and 3) Construction of four latrines for the market of Nyamugali and 4 latrines for the market of Mulenge:** The student listening clubs of Nyamugali and Mulenge decided to build 4 latrines (8 total) in the markets of their respective communities for the use of people who come to the markets on market days. The listening club members engaged in manual works to construct the latrines with the consortium supporting with construction materials such as wood and nails. The construction of both markets' latrines was finalized in April 2021.
- **(4 and 5) Construction of wooden fences to protect community water fountains in Kanga and Rugeje:** These activities started on January 28th 2021 in Kanga and January 29th 2021 in Rugeje, and were finalized in April 2021. The listening clubs of Kanga and Rugeje decided to engage in an initiative to enhance the protection of the water fountains built by the project which have provided the community with drinking

water. They decided to build wooden fences around six of the water fountains in their community in Kanga, and four in Rugeje, as a precautionary protective measure which would help ensure the sustainability of these infrastructures. The consortium supporting these efforts by providing wood and nails for construction.

ACCESS TO IRRIGATION WATER

During this period, some key activities undertaken earlier continued, mainly:

Construction of the main canal over 6.5km

The construction of the extension for the main canal over a length of 6.5 km is continuing normally. However, it should be noted that due to the topographical singularity of the area, particularly because of the mount of the military camp, water could hardly reach the Sango block. To correct this peculiarity, a section of 1.2 km needed to be revised. This led the contractor hired to carry out these works to exceed the deadline for completion and has led to overspending of 50 thousand USD against the budget for this activity.

The works carried out, including revisions to the original plan as a result of the issue noted above, were:

- Construction of the banks of the main canal including the bottom: 5 km of 6.5 km
- Establishment of the bottom on the correction of the singularity: 1.2 km
- Backfill and page on the part to be corrected: 1.2 km;
- Construction of spades (low walls to facilitate backfilling): 35 out of 35;
- Level increase on the correction: 1.2 km.

The extension of the irrigated perimeter of Luberizi, in Mukama and Majambere

Work on the extension of the irrigated perimeter ended in January 2021. Following the completion of the works in line with the terms of the contract, the contractor sent the consortium a correspondence notifying the members to carry out the field visit of the works in order to proceed to the reception and handover. To achieve this, a trial period was needed to analyze the operation of the extension's network.

So far, monitoring is in progress and till now there is no indication yet that the extension structures are malfunctioning. The works carried out in this extension were:

In Mukama:

- (1) Construction of the main canal (secondary considering the entire perimeter) leading to Mukama: 1800 ml including the bottom;
- (2) Digging 12.89 km of the secondary and tertiary canals;
- (3) 6 valves installed on the distribution to the secondary channels;
- (4) Construction of 16 water distribution boxes and slope work along the entire length of the channel built in masonry.

In Majambere:

- (1) Excavation of 7.98 km of canals (combined);
- (2) Cleaning of 13 secondary and tertiary canals with an average length of 10 km;
- (3) Construction and distribution of 13 boxes.

Construction of the CIRCO Sange office

In order to support the *Territoire* of Uvira and the South Kivu Government in its role of facilitating the land tenure process for the population in accordance with donor recommendations, the consortium accepted the solicitation of the Territorial authorities to construct a building in Sange to hold offices offering all the related services in the whole *territoire*. The construction of the CIRCO Sange office has been underway since February 9, 2020. At the time of reporting, all the structural works are almost completed and the finishing works are in progress. The works already completed are:

- Structural works: foundation, elevation of walls and the roof at 80%;
- Surface finishing: floor (*herisson* finished), plastering of beams, sill and columns, and plastering of interior walls;
- Placement of the rim board.

Strengthening capacity for COOPAILU

To ensure good infrastructure management after the project, the capacities of the farmers' organization that will take on this management should be strengthened. Thus, since the first phase of construction of the irrigation infrastructure, COOPAILU has been involved in all stages of the implementation of the project.

For its technical capacities, COOPAILU is involved in the construction through a tripartite contract with the contractors and the consortium so that COOPAILU provides the labor for the construction of these works. This makes it easier for the local community to gain experience and have a trained workforce that can perform the technical maintenance and upkeep of the structures.

During this reporting period, eleven field visits for coaching and monitoring sessions were provided to COOPAILU.

In addition to these activities above, the consortium also completed the following:

- Control of storm water that affects the operation of the main channel;
- Maintenance and optimization of the irrigation network;
- Design and application of an irrigation schedule; and,
- Design and implementation of a maintenance plan linked to the irrigation schedule.

INCREASED INCOME GENERATION OPPORTUNITIES / ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT

During this period, the border between Rwanda and the DRC has partially opened for small traders. The consortium organized a number of its beneficiaries into cooperatives to enable them to cross the border not only to sell products but also to source supplies.

In addition, the consortium concentrated its efforts on the following activities:

Capacity building and funds mobilization within VSLA Groups.

To contribute to the promotion of livelihoods in households, but also to encourage populations (especially women and young people) to further develop a spirit of savings and business, the ERD team continued its work supporting the 40 VSLA groups supported by the project. These 40 groups combine 996 (708 women, 288 men) members altogether.

The project also continued its support to setting up and revitalizing VSLA networks. Five networks / clusters, comprising around 8 VSLA groups each, were set up and revitalized with the support of the group leaders who acted as focal points.

In addition to the capacity building of focal points to enable them to support the 5 networks / clusters, the consortium offered coaching sessions to the 5 networks which have benefited from kits that can support their operation. These kits consisted of 5 boxes, 5 fabrics, ministerial notebooks and members' notebooks, and the project team monitored their use to ensure best practice and continued support where needed.

Promotion of entrepreneurship through the supervision of young people

To promote the economic sustainability of the groups of young entrepreneurs who benefited from cash transfers in the second quarter of 2020, and to avoid them working alone, a management committee of these youth groups was set up in October 2020 with the support of local leaders, the provincial ministry in charge of youth affairs and the President of the young people's group at the Luberizi Groupement level. The management committee is made up of youth leaders from each ethnic group in the local area who have been chosen by their peers in a general assembly of all 200 youth in contact with the project. 40% of these committee members are female. During the reporting period, to reassure themselves about the economic sustainability of the groups of young entrepreneurs, and to encourage young people to avoid mismanaging the funds received, a series of missions guided by youth leaders chosen by their peers who have taken part in capacity building sessions organized by the consortium were organized. During these missions, exchanges around the IGA of young people took place with all the members of the youth groups. The recommendations and advice provided earlier to the members of the youth groups in accordance with the challenges faced were evaluated. The results of these exchanges were positive even if the consortium noted that some of the youth were obliged to change their activities and conduct some which were

different from those identified in their business plan. This was done in order to adjust themselves to the current economic context influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Agricultural production IFP and agricultural value chain

Regarding the IFP approach, key implemented activities and achievements includes the following:

- Exaction of IFPs by PIs;
- Empowerment on the management of household resources and integration into the PI;
- Technical agricultural support; and,
- Effective access to formal credit, with 110 individual bank accounts opened and operational in favour of innovative farmer members of COOPAILU and COOSOPRODA.

110 business plans were elaborated, and 79 of them have been validated to receive agricultural credit during season A 2021. Additionally, out of 210 Innovative farmers who have been selected in the Luberizi irrigated area, 110 of them were eligible for agricultural credit.

Activities which commenced in the second quarter of 2019 to improve household access to income-generating opportunities are still ongoing. This includes mainly:

- Access to credit;
- Market access;
- Entrepreneurship plans; and,
- Monitoring of activities in the watershed by the consortium.

During season A 2020 (October 2020 to May 2021), the project team continued its support of the Access to Credit plan. 116 out of 210 innovative farmers' agricultural business plans were financed by Equity bank (BCDC) for season A2021 in Luberizi. The consortium specifically noted these following achievements:

- 116 effective agricultural loans to rice growers of Luberizi members of COOPAILU & COOSOPRODA including 22 for women (18%);
- 1 joint agricultural credit monitoring commission set up by COOSOPRODA & COOPAILU to ensure credit monitoring but also to minimize risks that would be linked to credit;
- 116 individual bank accounts opened and operational with bank cards capable of operating in all 26 provinces of the DRC for COOPAILU & COOSOPRODA cooperators,
- \$ 70,000 of marketing credit (4th cycle) effective with COOSOPRODA following the connection with the Equity bank BCDC. A Cash Express Equity BCDC counter is now operational in Luberizi. There is therefore the possibility of making credit repayments on the spot in full safety and security. On this achievement, we note:
 - 1 credit line of \$ 52,556 opened at Equity bank (BCDC) as a first agricultural credit trial for 116 rice farmers including \$ 34,428 (1st batch of 79 people) and \$ 18,128 (2nd batch of 37 people) for this season A 2021;
 - 1 individual commitment contract to repay agricultural credit within the deadline signed between the cooperatives and the beneficiary to facilitate the granting of the amount of credit requested, with the emphasis of its allocation on the right seed, agricultural inputs and payment for labour for cultivation operations.

Regarding access to the market, 2 hybrid Teja pepper nurseries were installed, including 1 in Luvungi and 1 in Mutarule / Katekama as part of the sales contract at Gashora Farm. 6 individual contracts were signed with local market gardeners, and 1 order form for 386 Tons of rice was signed with BRALIMA for the year 2021. On this achievement we note:

- 1 notification of the PICAGL project to COOSOPRODA was received for the allocation of a ZACCARIA SX-6 mini rice mill at shared costs;
- 20 Tons of rice seeds were made available by PICAGL to improve the production of rice farmers in the Ruzizi Plain; and,
- An advocacy session for the labelling of rice in the Ruzizi plain was conducted with the support of PICAGL.

Regarding entrepreneurship, monitoring of the integrated plans of innovative farmers was conducted, and credited was granted to IGAs & profitable business plans. Feasibility and profitability studies of the SB-10 huller were likewise carried out.

It should be noted that during this reporting period, the activities in the watershed led by the IWRM consortium members were on standby pending approval of the extension period of the MyA project in the Luberizi groupement. That said, some activities which could be pre-financed by the implementing organizations, such as those noted above, were carried out in order to maintain continuity and momentum to the extent possible, while activities requiring more significant budget allocations had to be postponed until formal approval of the NCE.

CONFLICT PREVENTION & MITIGATION AND PEACEFUL COHABITATION

Monitoring the impact of the intercommunity Youth Dialogue

Following increased engagement with Luberizi youth in 2020, informal discussions culminated in intercommunity youth dialogues hosted in Uvira from October 26th to 28th, 2020 and January 27th to 29th, 2021. On January 30, 2021, a restitution session was also planned in Luberizi. A total of 120 youth from various communities took part in the various programs indicated above, including a make-up of 30% women participants.

Indeed, for several decades and since the commencement of the initiative, this has been the first opportunity for the youth in Luberizi communities to sit down and discuss their difficulties in a non-violent manner. Notably, the dialogue was facilitated following a series of separate talks with youth from each community, as well as intercommunity preliminary meetings with youth leaders.

The opening ceremony of both sessions was attended by the two opposed *Groupement* Chiefs, the *Administrateur du Territoire* and representatives from the provincial ministry of youths. More specifically, the dialogue was held around the central theme of, “Pour que Demain soit Meilleur – *So that Tomorrow is Better*”. A participatory approach combining role-plays, mixed community and intra-community discussion, and breakout and plenary sessions was utilized and enabled the project team to encourage discussion on the following issues:

- (i) *What are our dreams for Luberizi?*
- (ii) *What went wrong between the youth of Luberizi?*
- (iii) *Which commitments do we want to make for a better future? And,*
- (iv) *What do we ask of other communities so that we live better together?*

Overall, the discussions were conducted in a calm and respectful tone. Representatives from each ethnic group was given the opportunity to voice their points of view and state their viewpoints without fear or intimidation. There was even discussion around the *Chefferie* conflict, which is the main source of disagreement in the Ruzizi Plain. Although no consensus could be achieved on this matter, the occurrence of youth freely discussing and presenting their opposing viewpoints can be considered a crucial turning point related to this issue. Overall, the participants agreed and committed to utilize conversation to resolve conflicts rather than turning to violence.

A number of commitments were made by the youth of Luberizi as outlined below:

- *Resort to dialogue as a means to solve all the conflicts and disputes that could arise among the youth and their respective communities;*
- *Organize regular dialogue sessions;*
- *Do their utmost to promote peace in their respective communities and live peacefully with all the communities;*
- *Avoid hatred and tribalism;*
- *Work together in the agricultural and cattle rearing sector; and,*
- *Monitor the project infrastructures and governing entities, cooperatives and associations at the community level to ensure good use and sustainability.*

During the reporting period, field visits were organized to follow up the results of the commitments made during these dialogues. Tangible progress has been observed in terms of positive and pacific cohabitation between ethnic and community groups. No situation of tension was observed between young people of various ethnic components as could be noted previously.

Support to the “Sauti Ya Amani” Radio Station

Over the course of the project, the consortium has outfitted a community radio station, Sauti Ya Amani, which launched its programming in May 2019. During the reporting period, Search for Common Ground closely watched the activity of the community radio station, particularly the quality of the programming, the observance of sensitive components, and the usage of materials provided. Simultaneously, SFCG followed up with state authorities, particularly the Provincial Ministry of Justice, in order to attain the F92 (the final approval of the association controlling the community radio station). At the end of this reporting period, this approval had not yet been received.

MONITORING PROGRESS

During this period, a final evaluation was conducted by an external consultant, and the report will be shared after its validation. The evaluation emphasized the project's significant results thus far. Specifically, it highlighted the lessened inter-community friction and the rapprochement between the two competing *Chefs de Groupement* in the target areas. Other notable features include the high quality of work produced by the community radio stations developed by the consortium as part of the project.

In addition, the implementation of planned monitoring and accountability activities was carried out in connection with the upcoming handover and closure of the project. Provincial Government and project staff were brought together to define a roadmap for the extension period of the project. Subsequently, a joint meeting was organized in Luberizi in order to validate this roadmap with the community and other key actors. At the end of this meeting, it was recommended that the project set up a joint technical committee composed of representatives of the Provincial Government appropriate to the actions of the project. This committee will not only be able to provide expertise likely to support the sustainability of the project following the consortium's exit, but also – in relation to the procurement of hydraulic infrastructure and other works built by the project – to prepare for their gradual transfer to the provincial government.

This committee will therefore aim for the following objectives and expected results:

- The key actions of the project are implemented in close collaboration with the Provincial Government;
- The expertise of state technical services is capitalized on by the project through a results-based approach;
- Monitoring of the achievement of the roadmap jointly validated between the project, the Government, the community and key partners is continuously ensured;
- The challenges, obstacles and barriers identified in implementation during the extension period are quickly resolved or anticipated with the support of the committee;
- The handing over of hydraulic infrastructures and other works and infrastructures built by the project to the Provincial Government is prepared in a participatory and progressive manner,

GENDER AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

To avoid worsening current issues or generating new ones, the project established venues for community participation that are both participatory and inclusive. These engagement platforms serve to lessen existing tensions between groups, while also fostering trust and relationship building. As a result, the project has made it a key priority to ensure programming involves the participation and representation of women, men, youth, and minority ethnic groups.

To ensure the inclusion of gender-specific topics, the project worked closely with the consortium's Gender and SGBV Cluster as part of all their operations, using our capabilities to enhance community awareness on gender-related issues. For example, the training sessions, the labor hired for infrastructure construction, the participatory theater and solidarity activities are all aimed toward including gender-specific considerations in their activity implementation strategy. Additionally, the consortium's provision of drinking water has helped to reduce women trekking several kilometers to get water, and thus contributed to limiting the related risks that entails.

Moreover, minority groups, especially the Batwa populations, have been included in all the project activities organized by the project. For example, the Batwa's traditional dancing groups have been part of cultural events conducted through the project and representatives of the population play a key role in community mediation

groups and have participated in all project-led activities. Further, the Batwa community have participated in all intercommunity youth dialogue sessions, have participated as radio hosts in our radio programming activities and account for 15% of the landless farmers identified.

In addition, during this reporting period, the activities carried out by MyA in the Luberizi *groupe*ment relentlessly adopt favorable attitudes to alleviate all forms of gender discrimination through inclusive actions. The introduction of the PIP approach is one of the illustrations. The approach holistically addresses the issue, operates at the household level and includes targeting root causes; gender inequality in particular, traditional and religious gender beliefs and violence, and negative aspects of the concepts of masculinity and power have been addressed through community action groups, while women's rights and needs are also taken up by these groups and local capacities to prevent and respond to incidents are improved. A capacity building plan to strengthen the Innovative Farmers (IFs/PIs in French) and support them is already in place and being implemented.

CHALLENGES

The time needed to agree upon No Cost Extension (NCE) phase, which was approved in June 2021, resulted in necessary delays of activity implementation. Consortium members had already pre-financed a significant amount of project activity in 2020 and were not able to continue pre-financing until the NCE phase was formally approved. Because of this, some important activities which were supposed to start earlier did not start, including activities for securing key infrastructures, especially for irrigation and drinking water, the offices of ACEPSKILU and COOPAILU, and supporting youth in their economic activities – especially those exposed to violent activities or vulnerable to being enrolled in armed groups. The consortium members met on June 23rd and 24th to organize an exchange session for re-planning and revising the calendar for activity implementation. For some activities, the implementation strategy and approach have to be revised and adjusted according to the remaining period.

The Coronavirus pandemic has also significantly delayed certain tasks and activities due to the measures taken by local and national authorities and the closure of borders for the supply of some materials and equipment (for instance, hardware materials for some activities, especially those related to construction of infrastructures to be provided by the project).

As a result, activity implementation could not be conducted as originally desired or planned. Some sessions grouping more than 20 participants had to be limited. At the same time, some activities were relocated or postponed due to security issues. As in the past, even during this period, the collaboration between the consortium partners and the security department of IRC significantly helped to prevent security incidents related to project implementation. However, some of the preventative measures which have had to be taken to ensure staff safety and security have required modifications to the implementation plan. For example, due to the security situation in the Ruzizi Plains during the reporting period, field missions were forced to cut off at 15:00 to allow staff to return to base before dark. Such measures have made it difficult to ensure that the principal targeted participants in planned activities can take part, as they often work during the morning and afternoon hours when the consortium team can freely move to conduct activities. As a result, some activities have been altered to be conducted on Sunday mornings to allow for greater participant availability, but this has also presented a challenge, as Sunday is not generally suitable for theater in the community context given the religious importance of Sundays to a large portion of local citizens.

The limited travel to Rwanda and Burundi due to the COVID-19 pandemic did not facilitate certain operations for staff and beneficiaries, and even to partners and service providers. This made unavailable some products and services from these countries that would normally have been available. Alternative materials were secured from local markets but at a higher cost than anticipated before the onset of COVID-19.

Another challenge to be noted here is related to the lack of collaboration of the community in respecting agreements and their commitments in some activities, such as in the construction phase of some infrastructures. Concerning irrigation water, although water in the canal is now plentiful and permanent, farmers in Luberizi are not harmonizing their agricultural work with that of their neighbors to ensure the greatest returns. Many farmers continue to cultivate independently, without reference to the agricultural calendar, and the question of payment of fees to service providers like COOPAILU continues to present a challenge. Despite awareness raising sessions conducted by the consortium throughout the project period to explain the need for these payments and their role in ensuring the long-term sustainability and maintenance of the services set up by the Project after its exit from the area, there is a prevailing idea in the community that any infrastructure and services put in place by development actors must always be free of charge. The project has already raised these challenges with the provincial authorities, and they have been taken into account in the project roadmap for the extension period.

The Provincial Government were also to support the COOPAILU in order to recover fees which were credited to a group of beneficiaries. These have to date not been reimbursed, despite sensitizations and follow-ups by the project team, and the matter has been referred to the Provincial Government which will support managing these kinds of situations.

Another challenge concerns the limited human resources available to the consortium at this late stage of the project. Due to the reduction in staffing within IRC, especially for the GBV & RH component after discussions with the donor last year, some activities planned for this quarter – particularly monitoring and coaching sessions – were not easy to conduct with the level of staff available while still maintaining good results.

Unfortunately, the wait-and-see attitude of some beneficiaries and community members who would like all outputs of the project to be provided free of charge, is still observed. This was observed during field visits where the consortium still receives solicitations, demands and requests for material support despite the many awareness-raising sessions (popular theatre, local radio broadcasts, and direct discussion sessions) which have been held throughout the project period on the reasons for the way the project's outputs have been structured.

LESSONS LEARNED

As the consortium recognizes that youth is the specific category to which the project will focus particularly on during the extension period, building trust among youth is essential for the project's success. When the project team succeeded in fostering trust among the community's youth in 2020, the project experienced significantly fewer setbacks. Organizations must therefore develop trust from the start of projects in order to achieve acceptance and community ownership. Fostering trust also involves motivating youth and this is evident during this reporting period as the consortium has witnessed Luberizi youth having launched increased measures to reduce inter-community violence.

Both the Ruzizi Plain and the watershed area's community mediation organizations have acquired significant community recognition and as such, the rising frequency of community conflicts successfully mediated by peace committees demonstrates that those committees are increasingly gaining recognition inside their communities as reliable forces capable of contributing to peace.

Given that community acceptance is not always universal, it is key to build on the acceptance already won and stress the neutrality of the project while ensuring good collaboration with authorities at higher levels. This was observed again during this period while the project's activities and timeline were slowed while awaiting the formal approval of the NCE. Throughout this period the project team maintained regular and open communication with all stakeholders and partners to ensure that all parties were aware of the developing discussions around the NCE and to manage expectations accordingly. This was a very successful effort and helped to maintain the trust established between the project team and the community, which will be essential in the coming months as the project draws to a close.