



INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

(MAJI YA AMANI)

Quarterly Narrative Progress Report

(October -Dec 2019)

Project Name: Integrated Water Resources Management

Target Areas: Ruzizi Plain (DRC)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Funded by the Netherlands through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Maji Ya Amani* (IWRM) is a project implemented by the IRC-led consortium comprising IRC, Stichting ZOA and Search for Common Ground (SFCG). The project is carried out in the Ruzizi Plain, South Kivu province, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Aligned with the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy (ISSSS), the 46-month intervention 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 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.

Luberizi *groupement*, the project implementation zone, is situated along a part of the western borders of both Rwanda and Burundi. The 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 living in the project intervention zone. Among other challenges, 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 report provides an overview on the progress made by the project during the fourth quarter of 2019 (October to December). Over the reporting period, the project implemented several activities towards achieving expected results, such as implementation of the water supply network maintenance strategy, ACEP coaching and facilitation of the water pricing process, the handover of the Sauti Ya Amani community radio building and equipment, the set-up of the Luberizi local development framework (CADEL), the facilitation of two retreats in Kinshasa and Murhesa (South Kivu) with a view to organize a Peace Forum in Luberizi, initiating the *Integrated Farmers' Plan*, the monitoring and coaching of COOPAILU for the first season of rice production using the newly rehabilitated irrigation system, and coaching youth in running and conducting Income Generating Activities / IGA through VSLA groups.

To ensure data-informed decision making and project progress towards expected results, the Maji Ya Amani team had conducted a mid-term review (MTR) in July 2019. Based on the findings thereof and on communications received from the donor, the project was able to strategize the remaining interventions by identifying and concentrating on specific priorities for greater project impact during the remaining 14 months. In this way, some activities will be given higher priority/importance while others could be dropped or given less importance, during the last project year (2020). The project has accordingly developed and submitted the workplan for the last year, and it was under review by the donor at the time of reporting.

ACCRONYMS

ACEPSKILU	: Association des Consommateurs d'Eau potable de Sange et Luberizi
CADEL	: Coordination des Actions de Développement de Luberizi
CIBEC	: Carrefour des Ingénieurs Bâtisseurs à l'Est du Congo
CICF	: Comité Interimaire de Coordination Foncière
CMGEL	: Comité de Maintenance et de Gestion d'Eau de Luberizi
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
MTR	: Mid-Term Review
MyA	: Maji Ya Amani (Water for Peace)
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organization
PNC	: Police Nationale du Congo
SFCG	: Search for Common Ground
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

After three years of implementation, there are observable changes in the Luberizi area as a result of project's presence and achievements to date. The community and the neighboring groupements are using safe drinking water with considerable benefits for their well-being. Farmers in the irrigated perimeter feel more confident after acquiring land titles. The presence of water in the main canal after the rehabilitation works on the hydro-agricultural infrastructures (dam and 5 Km of canal) is stimulating more interest in farming and will boost production/harvest hence improving the socio-economic situation.

Security-wise, the situation remained as volatile and unpredictable as in previous quarters, with reported cases of murder, abduction, robbery, and rape creating a tension among the local population. Indeed, during the reporting period, kidnappings have become a source of income for armed groups as liberation is only guaranteed after a victim's family has paid the ransom. Increasing cases of cattle theft were also reported, often resulting in clashes between the military and the armed cattle thieves in Luberizi groupement which exacerbated insecurities. We should note that the project organized awareness raising sessions with the military and the police for a better cohabitation with civilians.

As presented in greater detail in the *Semi-annual issues report*, the end of the year period particularly saw an increase of security-related incidents. Armed-groups have been very active during this period in order to get money for end-of-year celebrations. This was particularly intensified by movements of foreign armed groups who are also active in the region. The porous borders and reported cases of collusion with some local leaders and security personnel also make it easy for these groups to move around the area.

Regarding the impact of the incidents discussed above on the project, while they contributed to the overall environment of insecurity present in the project area they did not significantly affect project implementation and no project team or vehicle experienced any targeted incidents during their everyday field work. However, the consortium 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 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.

In addition, the project systematically offers security briefings to project visitors (including consultants) working within the project zone and the neighborhood of the project base in Kamanyola. They are informed about the current situation and existing measures taken to mitigate risk, and are advised to behave accordingly. A welcome package also comprising contact information in case they are faced with an issue is provided.

Last but not least, depending upon the current context, training topics and/or the participants' needs, the project sometimes opts for venue relocation for some of the project activities to a location deemed safer for free participation and transparent and constructive contributions.

KEY PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

❖ *Partnerships and Coordination*

- ✚ As a project aligned with the I4S strategy, Maji Ya Amani is regularly taking part in the main events organized under the aegis of SSU and STAREC. IWRM/Maji Ya Amani is also active in the consultation framework of the actors working in the Ruzizi plain, which is organized under the aegis of the Uvira Territorial Administrator. Building on the momentum of CICF and the need for multi-sectoral involvement has meant that the ministries in charge of Agriculture, Land, Planning and CARG will now be more permanently involved in implementation and ensuring sustainability of the project.
- ✚ As part of institutional capacity building, enhanced ownership and sustainability, the project has just recruited three local NGOs to which are entrusted part of the project's activities in the fields of land degradation and control of erosion, conservation agriculture, hill slope and river bank stabilization (tree planting on hill tops and river banks, planting of thickets along contour lines) and water harvesting structures in the watershed. The partnership is going well and thanks to their experience and the fact that they had a presence and are already implementing activities in the area, the local organisations can implement in the watershed with greater levels of acceptance and fewer security threats.
- ✚ At the provincial level, after the newly appointed provincial government was again operational, the project organized two-day workshops in Bukavu with all ten provincial ministers and technical divisions in November to ensure their involvement in the project implementation, their awareness of the presence of the Maji Ya Amani project in Luberizi, and to take into account its contributions in their planning for the area. The consortium made presentations on the project's different objectives, the strategies/approaches used, the challenges and adaptation strategies adopted, collaboration and synergies privileged, as well as achievements to date. The government promised their support as needed. Afterwards, the ministers were happy to pay a visit to the project in the field to witness its achievements. They seized the opportunity to discuss with the beneficiaries and local leaders, and to provide some advisors to the project in order to ensure more impact and sustainability.
- ✚ At the territorial level, the project maintains close collaboration with Uvira territory and takes part in events whenever needed.

❖ *Maintaining Community engagement*

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

❖ Access to drinking water

Over the reporting period, the project pursued many activities, among them:

- ✚ To enhance governance over drinking water supply, management and use, the project continued providing coaching and various other forms of support to ACEP, and to the community structure that ensures water supply and maintenance management;
- ✚ Sensitization and mobilization efforts were made to ensure the community understands that the sustainability of the water supply relies on each community member's commitment to make monthly contributions;
- ✚ During the reporting period, an amount equivalent to at least \$831 was made available and saved in the relevant account. Despite some fluctuations throughout the months, a step forward was made as the community adhered to the water pricing principle and the contributions are now made regularly. However, we still observe a general downward trend explained by the fact that there were recurrent failures on the pipes supplying the biggest and most populated village: Nyamugali. Whenever there is a failure, the community advocates again for the construction of a separate reservoir for this village, and they tend to lose their interest in making contributions which naturally impacts the volume of savings. This has been raised to the donor during field visits and the recent meeting in Kigali;
- ✚ The water supply system experienced 14 failures over the quarter, down from 25 failures the previous quarter. All of them were attended to in a timely manner by a team composed of ACEP technicians under the coaching of an experienced technician from CIBEC, the firm that was contracted to put the system in place;
- ✚ The project prepared and facilitated the provincial government's validation of the maintenance strategy through the participation of key sectoral ministries whose technical and specialized services actively took part in the review and validation session. These were the services in charge of Energy, Rural Development, SNHR and CPAEHA;
- ✚ Regarding *hygiene promotion* the following actions were conducted:
 - ✓ The project carried out a mini-survey on menstruation management and its effects on girls in schools. The survey involved 80 girls and female teachers, as well as 128 male students and 16 male supervisors from the 8 beneficiary schools of the project.

According to the survey, 70% of the participants have a relatively superficial knowledge about menstruation, as it is considered to be a taboo subject and is therefore not discussed openly. 60% of girls reported having a four to five-day menstrual period, but 90% of them are not able to afford adequate menstrual hygiene management products for the duration of this period, which requires them to re-use the same materials thus exposing them to the risk of infections. 20% of the girls surveyed reported that they don't go to school when menstruating, which can easily lead to dropping out from school because they are afraid of being embarrassed in front of their peers. Only 10% reported having consulted a doctor at health facilities about menstruation pains experienced. 100% advocated for menstruation kits to be provided, and 90% were very happy about and supportive of the project's support in the area.

Thus, integrating the menstrual hygiene approach into the beneficiary schools to address the constraints faced by female students, who quite often are prevented from attending classes while they are menstruating, became the central point of the hygiene and sanitation approach, with the school brigades then serving as the driving force for responsible sensitization and support of young girls on the control of menstrual complications, including any discrimination related to this condition. Maji Ya Amani accordingly provided menstruation hygiene kits and behavior change messages and trainings.

- ✓ In addition, the project facilitated an experience exchange visit with Community Health Clubs of Rwanda in the Ruzizi District on the essential standards for the establishment, monitoring and sustainability of Community Health Clubs. This assignment enabled the clubs' members accompanied by IWRM to be equipped with techniques for ensuring sustainability of the acquired knowledge. Thus, from 03 to 06 December 2019, four facilitators of Luberizi health clubs and three health providers from the Ruzizi health zone/DRC visited the achievements of community health clubs accompanied by the NGO Africa AHEAD - an expert in the districts of Kamembe, Butare, Gitambi and Bugarama/Rwanda. The objective was to perceive the best strategies likely to help these structures become more sustainable, especially strategies that have produced palpable effects in sites sharing contextual, ethno-geo-physical similarities with the Ruzizi plain in DRC.
- ✓ Finally, the setting-up and continued coaching of community health clubs has been a success in Luberizi. The project conducted sanitation sensitization sessions across the villages and trained 50 young entrepreneurs in the manufacture of latrine slabs. In their turn, the young entrepreneurs were able to raise awareness in their communities throughout their villages on the need for sanitation and clean latrines. As a result, 100 households were able to build latrines on their own, which led them to be declared healthy households. Each was provided with a certificate from the project. With a mass sensitization offered around this theme on *World Toilet Day*, celebrated on November 19th in Luberizi, we expect more results in the area in the coming quarters.

❖ Irrigation water

Regarding water for irrigation and its implications on agriculture, the consortium notes the following:

- ✚ Farmers were able to enthusiastically start a new agriculture season (A) thanks to the rehabilitation of the hydro-agricultural work that was completed on time, allowing for the presence of water in the canal for the irrigated perimeter in Luberizi (entire surface of 1,000+ Ha). With a capacity of 2m³/s at one liter per second per ha, the system satisfies both irrigation and livestock needs, and even facilitates fishing. It therefore allows the desired maximum agricultural access while leaving herders enough to access water for livestock needs and a potential for extending the perimeter up to 1,500 ha;
- ✚ After the hydro-agricultural rehabilitation works, it was necessary to divert the Tenge-Tenge river flow to the Luberizi River to limit siltation of the intake, for which the Tenge-Tenge River was responsible for more than 70%. Thus, this diversion was done by digging a channel whose excavation constituted an earth dyke;
- ✚ COOPAILU – The cooperative resulting from the restructure of CEMGEL which is the community structure that existed before the project start and that could ensure maintenance – has remained inclusive, after it allowed an ethnically varied membership to all community groups willing to adhere hence promoting cohesion while preventing tensions;

- ✚ Maintenance work of the irrigation infrastructure is the responsibility of COOPAILU, especially for those parts that have undergone rehabilitation. For the non-rehabilitated parts and/or where damage is beyond the competence of COOPAILU, the project could exceptionally intervene; knowing that the community and technical services will have to manage such cases on their own when the project will have closed. All the maintenance work that has been carried out mainly concerns the dam, where a high silting rate was observed following heavy rains;
- ✚ In order to protect the infrastructure against erosion and to stabilize the surroundings of the structures, the project is planting hedges and soil protection and stabilization systems have been planned. So far, the project has already completed a public consultation involving the community to raise their awareness. The visit of the sites was carried out and preparation of nurseries for the different species that will serve as the protective barrier is underway;
- ✚ On each side of the canal, the land was high and steep for the first 250 meters of the canal and too close to the canal. This posed a high risk of soil failure, which could threaten the stability of the canal and canal banks. For this reason, earth movement (excavation) works were carried out to reduce the uplands close to the canal and thus soften the slopes of these banks. In addition to the stability of the soil and the prevention of breakage and landslides, the consortium now has easy access to the channel for maintenance, if necessary.

❖ **Increasing solidarity among the communities**

During the period under review, five solidarity-building events took place. These events brought together different categories of people around various themes of interest.

- ✚ Taking advantage of the International Day of the Girl Child celebrated on October 11th in Nyamugali, a solidarity-building event was organized hand in hand with the consortium's SGBV team. It brought together 234 girls and boys of various communities and villages of the Ruzizi Plain. After a conference around girls' rights and access to opportunities, these young girls showcased together traditional cultural and culinary practices. The opportunity was used to raise the awareness of boys on girls' rights and on issues of rape, bullying, harassment and more. This solidarity event was a unique opportunity for girls from different communities to come together, break barriers, build trust and be open to discuss their common challenges, and explore opportunities available to them;
- ✚ The second solidarity event was held around the use of drinking water in Sange (Nyakabere II). There have been conflicts reported between soldiers' families and community members around the water fountains. Whereas soldiers and their wives wanted pre-eminence in fetching water, community members want them to have the same access as everyone else. The event was aimed therefore to create a dialogue between both groups so that such issues are discussed and agreed instead of resulting in conflict or violence. The event, which combined a dialogue session and a football match, was attended by about 350 people of the community;
- ✚ The third event took place in Mutarule where some soldiers and police officers used to refuse to pay the monthly contributions while also wanting to fetch water at moments other than what had been decided by the water management committee together with the community. During the dialogue portion of this event, the commander of the FARDC sensitized his men on the importance of respecting the water fetching schedule. A football match was organized and the event was attended by about 280 people;

- ✚ The fourth and fifth events took place around drinking water in Nyamugali. They brought together the youth and the water management committee (ACEP) on the one hand, and women and the ACEP on the other hand. Both events related to the management of water at the fountains. The dialogue sessions of these events were opportunities for the community to express their grievances toward the committee and vice-versa. Community members had gained the impression that the ACEP mismanage the resources, including the money collected, and have their families fetch water at non-conventional moments. After these events, both groups agreed to abide by the rules governing the drinking water resources. Attendance at these two events was only 83 people, however, as there was no sporting event afterward.

Kindly note that, except for the first event, the remaining four solidarity activities ended with the signature of a commitment agreement between the different groups. These informal agreements ask the different stakeholders to commit to abide by the rules governing the infrastructures and seek peaceful means to settle their issues, finding alternatives to violence. Follow-up sessions are planned and the peace committees will make sure these agreements are respected.

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

The project conducted eight (8) TEPs during the reporting period, engaging about 350 people (of whom 107 were women) around issues affecting the targeted communities. The TEP is a town hall-style dialogue forum that aims to provide a platform for communities to engage directly with state 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/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 which are the most relevant and important for them to address.

It is worth noting that, as usual, TEPs are organized to address specific issues within the community or with regard to project interventions. The TEPs discussed here were organized by SFCG in support of the WASH component on drinking water management, monthly community contributions and protection of water infrastructures. During these sessions, community members also raised a number of issues relating to water shortage, water wastage by children, perception/suspicion that some of ACEP members may be mismanaging funds collected through the monthly contributions, perceived abuse of power by fountain managers, etc. After the discussions, participants made recommendations that are subject to follow-up meetings by joint teams composed of community members and project staff.

❖ **Awareness-raising of FADRC and PNC elements on relevant topics**

The aim of these sessions is to shift the perceptions and attitudes of security actors, which can eventually lead to behaviour change through the use of constructive and positive communications. The activity follows a participatory, dialogue-based methodology to ensure that participants can engage and inquire about the themes in a way that is relaxed and “safe”. Over the reporting period, 15 awareness sessions were conducted for the FARDC and the PNC. These sessions targeted 404 soldiers and police personnel, of whom 53 were women. The main topics discussed were the following:

- Increased collaboration with the population to face insecurity toward the end of the year;
- Joint protection of water fountains between communities and soldiers; and
- Joint community activities between communities and the police.

These sessions were opportunities for many soldiers, police and civilians to learn about the rules governing relations with community members, and to strengthen their relationships. These were highly interactive, and

on each side there were commitments to collaborate better with each other. The project will organize follow-up meetings to ensure implementation of commitments and improvement.

❖ **Peace forum**

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

Held on October 15-16th, 2019, the Kinshasa retreat was organised under the theme: « *Leadership cohésif: Itombwe, Moyens plateaux, presque île d'Ubwari et Plain de la Ruzizi.* » This session saw the participation of 40 actors from all over the project area, including representatives of armed groups, people with an influence on the conflict dynamics, stakeholders of the Ruzizi plain, representatives from the national government, representatives of the national army of Congo, and other key and influential stakeholders. During this retreat, the stakeholders affirmed their shared willingness and commitment to participate in the whole process so that peace can reign in South-Kivu province. These stakeholders committed to support the sensitization of foreign armed groups to return back to their respective countries and to sensitize Congolese Mai-Mai groups to cease fire so that the community-based DDR advocated by the government of Congo can start.

As part of the recommendations of the Kinshasa retreat, a second retreat was held in Murhesa, Bukavu on December 16-21st, 2019, with all the leaders of armed groups of South Kivu Province. Several negotiations and discussions were conducted by SFCG hand in hand with the Governor of South Kivu Province, MONUSCO, national institutions in charge of demobilization, and key security bodies at the national and provincial levels. These discussions were aimed at getting the go-ahead in terms of logistics, security and authorization to bring the armed group leaders together. The event was successfully held with the effective participation of 29 out of the 34 armed groups of the South Kivu region. This event, which lasted 7 days including preparatory days, was attended by more than 130 Mai-Mai Leaders, and national and provincial government officials - including the Governor of South Kivu Province, national Members of the Parliament (MPs), national heads of security bodies and other partner organizations including International Alert, Initiative for Cohesive Leadership (ICL) and Interpeace.

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

In terms of resolutions resulting from the discussions held at the retreat, the following were particularly notable:

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

❖ **Conflict Sensitivity**

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. These interventions are planned and conducted in a way that takes conflict dynamics into consideration. The close monitoring of the context and contacts with local partners and other key stakeholders are important ingredients that help to identify any potential event or development that need adaptation or intervention to avoid escalation of tensions.

Specifically for now, the project is monitoring the situation closely in Nyamugali village, as further claims for the construction of a reservoir specific to this village have resurfaced and are becoming more insistent. As noted above, when failures occur on the reservoir which currently jointly serves Nyaumgali and another village, residents tend to lose their interest in making contributions, which in turn impacts the volume of savings available for maintenance.

❖ **Participatory theatre productions**

Participatory theaters are designed to influence community members' behaviors. The project conducted 28 participatory theatre presentations during the period under review, reaching out to an estimated total number of 5,347 people (2,203 women and 3,144 men and children). Theater presentations are very helpful, as they help the project dramatize everyday community behaviors with an intention to support positive change in the behaviors of viewers. Themes dealt with during this period were the following:

- Conflicts around the drinking water infrastructures of Maji ya Amani;
- Community awareness against SGBV and domestic violence as part of the *16 Days of Activism*;
- The importance of the use of toilets, rather than open defecation, as part of World Toilet Day celebrated each 19th of November;
- The contribution of community members on the protection of water fountains;
- Land conflicts between farmers on land boundaries;
- Herder-farmer conflicts on animal straying; and,
- Intra-family land conflict related to heritage.

It is worth noting that more than 50% of the theater pieces carried out were in support of activities organized by other consortium components, notably WASH and SGBV.

❖ **Support to the radio Sauti Ya Amani**

Through SFCG's technicians, the project continued its support to the Sauti Ya Amani Radio Station. In addition to the continuous onsite coaching relating to the use of editing software and radio program production, Search conducted an evaluation of the energy capacity of the radio station, with a view to allowing the radio station to broadcast for longer than the current four hours a day. In addition, the radio transmitter was damaged during the reporting period and SFCG provided support in finding a temporary replacement transmitter while the damaged one was repaired.

❖ **Economic recovery and development**

With regard to economic recovery, the project focused its interventions on promoting youth entrepreneurship through the identification of promising markets in order to better guide young entrepreneurs towards more reassuring horizons that would enable them to easily sell their products and services at competitive prices. At

the end of this analysis, a readjustment of the business plans of 40 groups of young entrepreneurs was carried out, with a view to meeting the new requirements that have characterized each specific sector.

Additionally, ensuring coaching and accompaniment to the 34 VSLAs has led to encouraging results in terms of capacity to finance agricultural value chains. The savings at the level of the VSLAs increased from \$7,121.70 USD (for the previous quarter) to \$12,658.00 dollars (for the current quarter), i.e. an increase of 56.26%.

❖ **Value chain component reorganization and transfer to ZOA**

During their project visit in August 2019, the donor instructed the project to rethink value chain activities and strategy and to have them implemented under ZOA's Agricultural Production component. IRC transferred the activities to ZOA and a consultant was identified and given the responsibility to support the new strategic direction of value chain activities for the remaining period. He proposed:

- Strengthening value chains around a solid agri-food company and on the basis of the "formal commitments" of the stakeholders;
- Access to financial institutions for producers and their cooperatives/Farmers' Organizations for working capital/ input credit on commercial terms, preferably in the form of "value chain financing" modalities;
- Strengthening the commercial and management capacities of cooperatives/OPs through training and exchanges, but above all through an intensive coaching system; and
- Capacity building of MFIs and MyA Project partner banks, e.g. in the analysis and granting of agricultural credits and credit (working capital, small equipment) to FOs.

The project started implementing these recommendations, and will be focusing on this in the coming period.

❖ **Introducing the *Integrated Farmer's Plan (IFP)* approach**

During the period under review, the project continued implementing activities to secure, enhance or foster access to income generating opportunities. To start with, the project proposed to initiate the approach known as Integrated Farmer's Plan (IFP) to be implemented in the watershed area. To do so, a project team organized an exchange visit to Burundi to learn from projects that have been implementing the approach.

To ensure the whole consortium/project understands this approach and anticipates possible interactions, it was necessary to hold a session whereby presentations were made on the approach itself and the urgent need to integrate it into the Maji ya Amani project's process of change towards sustainable local development. To achieve this development, it is necessary that the populations are aware of the problems that need to be addressed, that they know why and how they should act (intrinsic motivation) and that they adopt an attitude to move forward through meaningful actions taken together with others. It is of paramount importance that users of the watershed are aware of the importance of sustainable management of the watershed in order to continue producing what they need in a sustainable manner. As part of the introduction of the approach, the following activities were conducted:

- 🚧 **Preliminary diagnosis – constraints related to herds and pastures:** The project includes a diagnostic study to identify the constraints and opportunities to improve pastures in the Luberizi *groupement*. According to figures given by herders from Luberizi, the cattle population is estimated at 15,000 herds throughout the area. This estimate takes into account cows coming from the middle and Highlands of Uvira due to the high level of insecurity in that part of the territory. It should be noted that tensions between herders and farmers are rising due to the increased presence of cows from these areas in lands

where they would not previously have grazed. Cases of theft or attempted theft of cows in various villages have been recurring since November 2019. Concerning the pastures, the Luberizi *groupement* does not have spaces reserved solely for this purpose, as a result of which the project began advocacy efforts related to this issue due to livestock farmers taking advantage of the uncultivated areas to turn them into grazing land.

Recruitment of three local NGOs

Given the new IFP approach and the need to implement activities in the watershed and to enhance local ownership and sustainability, the project recruited three local NGOs to which are entrusted part of the project's activities in the fields of land degradation and control of erosion, conservation agriculture, hill slope and river bank stabilization (tree planting on hill tops and river banks, planting of thickets along contour lines) and water harvesting structures in the watershed as part of institutional capacity building, enhanced ownership and sustainability. So far, the partnership is going well and thanks to their experience and the fact that they are from the area, the local organisations have been able to implement in the watershed with no security threats. The NGOs are providing IFP assistants whose role is to accompany technically the community in the implementation of the IFP approach.

Identifying IFP villages and sensitization sessions

Six IFP villages were selected by the IFP assistants from partner organizations, based on the analyses carried out in the 18 villages covered by the project, distributed as follows:

- 6 villages in the Lemera *groupement*,
- 4 villages in the Kigoma *groupement*, and
- 8 villages in the Luberizi *groupement*.

These analyses focused more on the organizational criteria of a community in relation to the degree of trust and collaboration.

A «Pilot Village Selection Grid» tool was designed to enable IFP Assistants to select two villages, via the different criteria established for evaluating the villages. The evaluation criteria are grouped into 5 components: (1) organization and leadership (2) participation and leadership; (3) effective collaboration; (4) mutual trust; and (5) ecological awareness. In total, 18 villages have been sensitized on the approach in Luberizi, Lemera and Kigoma *groupements*, with a total of 701 participants.

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 conducting reflections on how best to implement recommendations resulting from the mid-term review report conducted in 2019. The project is in the process of incorporating these recommendations into program implementation via the 2020 work plan.

GENDER AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

The project takes very seriously the imperative to ensure that all community groups are represented in all project activities and bodies of the different community structures. These include ethnic groups, gender and

youth community members. This is true of all the works the project has put in place, including the trainings, meetings, workshops, and surveys conducted.

As above, the project team realized that it was critical to enhance in particular the participation of members of the Twa ethnic group in the different activities, no matter the number of participants, so as to allow them to take part. The team then organized further presentations to Twa community members after a given activity. The consistent participation of Twa leaders is required to ensure that they also acquire sufficient expertise alongside the rest of the community and overcome a tendency towards self-exclusion that effectively separates them from the rest of society.

CHALLENGES

Aware that the project is steering towards its end, the community has begun to request interventions that do not necessarily reflect the new project priorities agreed with the donor. The project maintains communication and intensifies community meetings to ensure they understand the changes taking place aim at more project impact.

LESSONS LEARNED

- (1) The close monitoring of the context and contacts with local partners and other key stakeholders are important ingredients that help to identify any potential event or development that needs adaptation or intervention to avoid escalation of tensions;
- (2) When the community is already accustomed to project interventions, planning and achievements as presented during monthly community meetings, abrupt changes in project priorities require preparation and deeper explanation to ensure they understand the reasons behind any changes. This helps maintain their commitment to support the project.
- (3) Extension of IWRM activities to the watershed is likely to enhance project acceptability in the communities.
- (4) We notice increased ownership as community structures are showing greater enthusiasm as they are being accompanied and prepared to take over some of the responsibilities for infrastructures' sustainable management.