



FINAL REPORT

**OF THE 'INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (IWRM) –
'MAJI YA AMANI' PROJECT**

**CARRIED OUT BY THE IRC-SFCG-ZOA CONSORTIUM IN THE RUZIZI
PLAIN FROM MAY 2017 TO DECEMBER 2021.**

Project Name: Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) – Maji ya Amani
Target Area: Ruzizi Plain, South Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)
Reporting Period: 01 May 2017 – 31 December 2021
Submission due Date: 31 March 2022
Contact Person: Adama Coulibaly, Country Director
E-mail: Adama2.Coulibaly2@rescue.org



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	2
LIST OF ACCRONYMS	4
1. INTRODUCTION	6
1.1. Nature and duration of the project.....	6
1.2. Project objectives	6
1.3. General context of project implementation	6
2. IMPLEMENTATION ENVIRONMENT.....	8
2.1. Intra-group tensions.....	8
2.2. Inter-group tensions.....	9
2.3. Insecurity	10
2.4. Project staff assaulted	10
2.5. Preventive measures against insecurity.....	11
2.6. Community expectations, strikes and threats.....	11
3. MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PROJECT	12
3.1. Outcome 1: People in the Luberizi groupement have increased access to land and therefore the conflicts over land are reduced.....	12
3.2. Outcome 2: People in the Luberizi groupement have increased access to water and therefore conflicts over water are reduced	14
3.2.1. Access to irrigation water.....	14
3.2.2. Access to potable water	17
3.2.3. In relation to promotion of hygiene and sanitation	18
3.3. Outcome 3. People (men, women and youth from different ethnic groups) in the Luberezi groupement have increased safe, secure, inclusive and equitable access to income generating opportunities.....	19
3.4. Outcome 4. People (men, women and youth from different ethnic groups) in the project area are aware of demographic pressure on natural resources and start taking actions to decrease this pressure.....	23
3.5. Crosscutting topics	25
4. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT (SWOT).....	29
4.1. Internal factors that were favorable to the realization of the MyA project (Strengths)	29
4.2. Internal Factors Unfavorable to Achievement (Weaknesses).....	30
4.3. External factors that favoured the realization of the project (opportunities)	31
4.4. External factors unfavourable to the realization of the project (threats).....	32

5. STRATEGIES DEVELOPED TO OVERCOME BARRIERS	33
6. MAIN LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT	36
7. PROJECT CLOSURE.....	38

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under the lead of IRC, a consortium of three international NGOs, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Stichting ZOA (ZOA), and Search for Common Ground (SFCG), carried out the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) project, called "Maji ya Amani" (MyA) in Swahili, in the Ruzizi Plain, South Kivu Province, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Implemented between May 1st, 2017 and December 31st, 2021, the multi-sectoral project funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, contributed to the implementation of the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy for Eastern DRC (ISSSS or I4S). The MyA project is organized around four objectives: (1) increasing access to land and reduction of land conflict, (2) increasing access to safe potable and irrigation water and reduction of water related conflict, (3) equitable and inclusive access to income generation opportunities, and (4) increasing awareness of population pressure on natural resources.

During the 56 months of project execution, including 10 months of no-cost extension from March to December 2021, the MyA project has had many achievements in line with its initial design, and also following adaptations made in relation to the context, which was characterized by the prevalence of security incidents and instability, inter-community conflicts, enormous agro-pastoral potential, a limited supply of basic public services and a resulting tendency for communities to make multiple demands and solicitations towards humanitarian and development actors.

The project has, among other major achievements, reduced intra- and inter-community conflicts and tensions in its area of intervention through several activities and opportunities for dialogue and community rapprochement. It built a large drinking water supply which supplies 2,931 households. It rehabilitated the hydro-agricultural system that irrigates the perimeter where more than 3,000 smallholder farmers produce enough to feed their families and expand their economic opportunities. It secured the land of the small-scale farmers living in the target area by facilitating acquisition of grouped land titles. It also provided buildings for and strengthened the capacities of local structures such as the Sauti ya Amani community radio station, ACEPSKILU, the community structure for drinking water management, and COOPAILU, the agricultural cooperative that manages the irrigation network.

Many other achievements are to the credit of the project and are detailed further in this report. However, the concern for sustainability throughout all the achievements has been permanent, as the instability of the context and certain constraints due in particular to poverty and the wait-and-see attitude of the population posed key challenges to long-term sustainability. Many lessons were learned from the implementation of the project. A version of these lessons learned has been produced in French in order to inspire other development actors in the DRC and to share experiences of the member organizations of the consortium that implemented the MyA project.

LIST OF ACCRONYMS

ACEP	: <i>Association des Consommateurs d'Eau potable</i> (in English: Association of Drinking Water Consumers)
ACEPSKILU	: <i>Association des Consommateurs d'Eau potable de Sange et Luberizi</i> (in English: Association of Drinking Water Consumers of Sange and Luberizi)
ASCODER	: Assise Communautaire pour le Développement Rural
BDR	: Bureau De Reboisement agro foresterie
CCRCC	: <i>Comité Consultatif de Règlement des Conflits Coutumiers</i> (in English: Consulting Committee for the Resolution of customary Conflicts)
CIAP-DDRC	: <i>Commission Interprovinciale d'Appui au Processus de Sensibilisation, Démobilisation et Réintégration Communautaire</i> (in English: Interprovincial Support Commission for the Process of Sensitization, Demobilization and Community Reintegration)
CICF	: <i>Comité Intérimaire de Coordination Foncière</i> (in English: Interim Land Coordination Committee)
CMGEL	: <i>Comité de Maintien et de Gestion de l'Eau de Luberizi</i> (in English: Luberizi Irrigation Water Maintenance and Management Committee)
CODESA	: <i>Comité de développement sanitaire des aires de santé</i> (in English: Health Area Development Committees)
COOPAILU	: <i>Coopérative Agricole des Usagers de l'Irrigation de Luberizi</i> (in English: Irrigation Water Management Association of Luberizi)
COOPEC	: Coopérative d'Epargne et de Crédit
COOSOPRODA	: <i>Coopérative de Solidarité pour la Production des Denrées Alimentaires</i> (in English: Solidarity Cooperative for the Production of Food Commodities)
COVID-19	: Coronavirus disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus
DRC	: Democratic Republic of the Congo
DWUA	: Drinking Water Users Association (= ACEPSKILU)
FARDC	: <i>Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo</i> (in English : Armed Forces of the DRC)
FP	: Family Planning
GBV	: Gender-based violence
IGA	: Income generating activity
IATI	: International Aid Transparency Initiative
IJED	: Initiative des Jacobins pour le Développement

IRC	: International Rescue Committee
ISSSS or I4S	: International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy for the Eastern
IWRM	: Integrated Water Resource Management
MONUSCO	: <i>Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en République démocratique du Congo</i> (in English : United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC)
MyA	: <i>Maji ya Amani</i> (in English : Water for Peace)
PI	: <i>Paysan Innovateur</i> (English: Innovative Farmer)
PIP	: <i>Plan Intégré du Paysan</i> (English: Integrated Farmer's Plan)
PNC	: <i>Police Nationale du Congo</i> (in English: National Police)
SFCG	: Search For Common Ground
SNV	: Service National de Vulgarisation
STAREC	: <i>Stabilisation et Reconstruction à l'Est du Congo</i> (in English: Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo)
TTWUA	: Tenge Tenge Irrigation Scheme Water Users Association
VSLA	: Village Savings and Loan Association
WHO	: World Health Organization
ZOA	: Stichting ZOA

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Nature and duration of the project

From May 2017 to December 2021, the MyA consortium carried out the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) project in the Ruzizi Plain, South Kivu Province, to support the Congolese Government in reducing conflict and increasing stability in the Ruzizi Plain, in line with the I4S strategy.

The initial project budget was USD 24,300,000 for a period of 46 months (May 2017-February 2021). During the project's nine-month inception phase, the project team conducted a total of 15 preliminary studies to enable a better understanding of the context and to define appropriate intervention strategies to reach approximately 28,800 beneficiaries. Following this phase, the actual implementation of activities started on February 1st, 2018.

A baseline study was conducted at the beginning of the project to determine the initial levels of the key indicators of the project logframe. In August 2019, a mid-term review led to certain programmatic reorientations to achieve greater impact and sustainability. At the end of February 2021, an end-of-project review, including a final survey, was conducted to examine and measure the level of achievement of results. A ten-month no cost extension was subsequently granted until December 2021 to allow the project team to complete certain activities, consolidate the achievements made to date, and ensure a comprehensive handover and closure of the project.

1.2. Project objectives

The overall objective of the project is to reduce conflict and increase stability in the Ruzizi Plain. In this region, the scarcity and poor management of natural resources, especially water and land, is the basis of competition between and within ethnic groups for access to and control of these resources.

The theory of change developed for the project posits that by promoting more inclusive local governance and conflict resolution structures and practices capable of bringing communities together and supporting transparent mechanisms for accessing and managing local resources, the following four objectives should be achieved:

1. People (men, women and youth from different ethnic groups) in the Luberezi *groupement* have increased access to land and therefore the conflicts over land are reduced.
2. People (men, women and youth from different ethnic groups) in the Luberezi *groupement* have increased access to water and therefore conflicts over water are reduced.
3. People (men, women and youth from different ethnic groups) in the Luberezi *groupement* have increased safe, secure, inclusive and equitable access to income generating opportunities.
4. People are aware of demographic pressure on natural resources and start taking actions to decrease it.

1.3. General context of project implementation

The Luberezi *groupement*, the geographical and operational target area of the project, is located in the chiefdom of the Ruzizi Plain, Uvira territory, South Kivu province, in eastern DRC. The area commonly referred to as the watershed area is the hilly and semi-hilly area bordering the Ruzizi Plain and forming part of the African Rift Valley. Given the natural proximity and connection between the two areas, the success, achievement and results of the project could not be sustainable without extending the project

actions to that area, therefore some interventions were also carried out in the watershed area. Beyond the Luberizi *groupement*, the project also reached five localities of the city of Sange through the supply of drinking water and ten villages of two *groupements* of the Bafuliru chiefdom (Lemera and Kigoma *groupements*) regarding the introduction of the Integrated Farmers' Planning approach (*Plan Intégré du Paysan* (PIP)¹ in French) and the protection of the Ruzizi River watershed through reforestation.

The general context of the Ruzizi Plain is characterized in particular by abundant water resources and fertile soils capable of supporting a large increase in agricultural production. But this production remains low due to insufficient access to irrigation water, difficulties in accessing land with numerous land disputes, lack of access to modern agricultural inputs and lack of use of techniques and farming practices improved by farmers. In addition, the environment is generally affected by the Barundi/Bafuliru conflict around the customary power of the Ruzizi Plain chiefdom and certain *groupements* of this chiefdom, such as the Luberizi *groupement*, experience recurring tensions between farmers and herders, activism of armed groups, illegal circulation of arms, poor economic opportunities and income for the inhabitants and especially for young people, rapid increase in the population and weak supply of public services by the State in terms of infrastructure, security and public governance.

From a socio-demographic perspective, the main ethnic groups living in the target areas of the project are the Bafuliru, who form the majority in the Ruzizi Plain with about 80% overall and more than 90% in the Bafuliru chieftaincy (watershed area), and the Barundi, who represent about 15% of the population in the Ruzizi Plain and less than 5% in the Bafuliru chieftaincy. Other ethnic communities include the Pygmy-Batwa, the Banyamulenge, the Bashi and Babembe communities, forming together about 5% in the Ruzizi Plain and in the Bafuliru chieftaincy. Several intra- and inter-group tensions and dynamics have been at play throughout the implementation of the project.

The Ruzizi Plain is one of the agricultural areas with high potential in South Kivu. It is located in the dry tropical zone and is one of the agricultural granaries of South Kivu. However, there are currently strong disturbances in the rainfall regime that affect agricultural production, destabilizing small producers. The inhabitants of the Ruzizi Plain live largely from agriculture, which is one of the basic economic activities and a source of income.

The area has been selected as one of the priorities of I4S strategy and benefits from the presence of MONUSCO, the Congolese National Police and the Congolese Army (FARDC), as well as the interventions of a good number of humanitarian and development organizations.

Throughout the four years of implementation, the MyA project has experienced severe hardships given the context in which it was implemented. As indicated above, security instability is prevalent, with recurrent tensions between farmers and herders and between ethnic groups, the activity of armed groups and the illegal circulation of firearms in the zone. During this period, numerous cases of theft were recorded on national road No. 5 (between Kamanyola and Uvira), a route heavily used by traders from Bukavu, Uvira and Bujumbura as well as inhabitants of the Uvira and Fizi territories, which led to

¹ The PIP Approach, developed by ALTERRA - Department of Environmental Research of Wageningen University, seeks to transform small-scale subsistence farming households into more productive and sustainable farms through changing farmers' mind-sets and motivating them to plan and invest in their future through conscious collective action. It was introduced to the Maji ya Amani project after the Mid-Term Review in 2019. The approach comes from the Netherlands and has been implemented in Burundi over the past 10 years.

the need for increased security precautions and protocols by the consortium partners when accessing the project sites.

Beyond this precarious security context, the COVID-19 pandemic appeared in 2020, accompanied by restrictive measures enacted by the Government of the DRC, such as the wearing of face masks, social distancing and especially the ban of gatherings or meetings involving more than 20 people. Although training sessions with the project team, preventive measures and adherence to social distancing requirements have been put in place, some important activities such as open community meetings in villages to discuss and directly collect feedback from beneficiaries, as part of the project accountability framework and feedback mechanisms, could not take place as frequently as originally planned due to the pandemic. The project team was, however, able to pursue other community accountability and feedback activities, such as meetings with community leaders and elders and other representatives, suggestion boxes to collect face-to-face commentary, and interviews with outreach through Sauti ya Amani radio.

On the socio-economic level, due to the limitation of travel between the DRC and neighbouring countries during the pandemic, including Burundi and Rwanda in particular, certain products had become rare and expensive due to lack of competition on the market. This had an impact on the cost of certain activities for which these products were used the most. In addition, the closure of the borders with Rwanda as a result of the pandemic has led the project not only to increase movements to Bukavu which has become the only place of supply in relation to all the needs of the project, but also to make all these trips to Bukavu via a rough and long road, which increased some project costs.

While the pandemic had decreased in intensity in 2021, the security situation remained volatile during the first two semesters of 2021 with the recurrence of cases of cattle looting, robberies on national road No. 5 and demonstrations followed by barricades.

2. IMPLEMENTATION ENVIRONMENT

2.1. Intra-group tensions

Many succession conflicts have been recorded in the project implementation area with a particularly severe impact in the watershed communities. These have heavy consequences on family cohesion within the family contesting the succession process, with negative impacts on beneficiaries living in the same community. One of the most notable intra-family, intra-group tensions in the watershed area has been the succession conflict between the current *Chef de Chefferie* (Bafuliru chieftaincy), also referred to as Mwami, and his own uncle, who fiercely disputed the succession to the throne following the death of the previous *Mwami*. This conflict mobilized violence to the extent that the contesting uncle was obliged to flee into exile, and an underlying tension in the community remains between community members favorable to either side. Moreover, other forms of intra-group tensions are catalyzed around land and village border conflicts. Given the suspicion that some parts of the watershed communities are rich in ores, there is a fierce tension around where one village begins and where it ends. All these conflicts have the potential to mobilize tensions and violence in the communities. Moreover, the diaspora of the various communities also plays key roles in these intra-community tensions as they fuel the conflict with money and influence either for their own political considerations or economic interests.

2.2. Inter-group tensions

The main inter-group tensions in the area revolve around the different inter-community dynamics present, notably difficult relationships between communities, stereotypes and other group tensions around the control of lands and other natural resources, ethnicity, and identity. In general, inter-group tensions are characterized by the tendency of communities to self-isolate and avoid opportunities of collaboration with others translating into the perpetuation of negative stereotypes and refusal of intermarriage, attitudes of intolerance, and multiplication of acts of provocation. The Pygmy Batwa for example, have consistently reported that they feel marginalized by other communities who consider them as sub-human. One example raised is that, while some members of other communities would marry a Pygmy Batwa woman, men of the Batwa community are not easily accepted by the families of a non-Batwa community member. Other acts of discrimination are also reported around access to lands. Whereas the Batwa are referred to as indigenous peoples ("*peuples autochtones*" in French), they do not have enough access or power to claim any form of ownership over lands.

In the watershed area, the main inter-community tension has been between the Bafuliru and the Banyamulenge community. The primary source of this tension is the rejection of the Banyamulenge community members accused of being Rwandan instead of Congolese. This has catalyzed the tension between them and other communities, particularly the Bafuliru, Bayindu, Bavira and Babembe. In addition to this, farmer-herder conflicts bring another layer of complexity to the already difficult cohabitation between them. The Banyamulenge are mostly herders and regularly lead their cattle to different areas for grazing. The Bafuliru community members, on the other hand, are mostly farmers, and the clashes between the disparate interests of these two communities are sometimes violent and inevitably stoke further distrust and conflict. Whereas the provincial government has tried to regulate animal rearing and transhumance, the regulations are often not upheld by either farmers or herders. Recurrent farmer-herder conflicts are re-interpreted along ethnic lines and this has steadily weakened intercommunity relations.

Moreover, insecurity revolves around inter-community dynamics, especially the armed-group dynamics in the area whereby armed groups and armed group coalitions profess to defend their ethnic-communities against external threats or attacks from other community-backed armed groups, leading to a complex security environment. Armed groups of the Bafuliru, Babembe and Bayindu communities regularly raid the Banyamulenge herders' cattle to steal cows. In retaliation, the Banyamulenge-backed armed groups also attack other armed groups in an attempt to recapture their cattle or as preventive action against further raiding. The Banyamulenge are backed by two main armed groups, the Ngumino and the Twirwaneho. Repetitive fighting has led to a cycle of violence that no one group seems to be winning, to the destruction of villages and livelihoods, and to regular displacement of populations with related sexual violence, human trafficking and abject poverty resulting from the insecurity.

In the Ruzizi Plain, the main conflict dynamic is manifested through the Barundi-Bafuliru tension around the traditional power held by the *Chef de Chefferie*, a Barundi *Mwami*. The power of the Barundi Chef is contested by the Bafuliru, who represent about 80% of the population in the area and who refuse to acknowledge a Barundi Chef. This dynamic has been present since the colonial area and has led to repetitive episodes of violence in recent years. In 2012, the sitting *Mwami* was attacked and killed by a mob of Bafuliru on the eve of his reinstatement on the throne following a long period of exile in neighbouring Burundi. He was succeeded by his son and the same dynamic has continued since

then. This refusal to recognize a *Mwami* of the Barundi ethnic group has created a situation where in most villages and *groupements* of the Ruzizi chiefdom, we find two chiefs representing a duality of power: one installed by the camp of the *Mwami* and recognizing his power, who claims legal as well as traditional legitimacy, and another who is self-proclaimed, and who does not recognize the power of *Mwami* Barundi but who is supported by the vast majority of the population of his Bafuliru ethnic group and who therefore claims to be legitimate in his own right. This is particularly the case in Luberizi *groupement*, where the project was primarily implemented.

2.3. Insecurity

Almost all of the ethnic groups present in the area have their own armed groups or have alliances with some form of non-state armed group, though the Barundi have repeatedly denied having any. These armed groups are the primary cause of insecurity across the area. In addition, insecurity is sometimes caused by youth who are lured by armed groups in the absence of an efficient FARDC troop in the area, despite the army barracks located in Luberizi. Therefore, over the course of the project hundreds of security incidents were recorded. Incidents include car high jacking, kidnapping for ransoms, extrajudicial killings, cattle theft, burglaries, and unidentified gunshots and fighting. In addition to the internal and contextual dynamics described, the natural border formed by the Ruzizi River is a porous place where foreign armed groups are regularly reported as crossing. In addition, these foreign armed groups have been reported to forge alliances either with local communities in the project zone or with non-state armed groups.

The watershed area also experiences the same insecurity dynamics and has been reported as being the hideout of several non-state armed groups including local Maïmaï and foreign armed groups. Given the close proximity with the Uvira Highlands ("*Hauts Plateaux*" in French) which further communicates with the Highlands of Fizi and Mwenga, the watershed area like the Ruzizi Plain is also a passage route for armed groups of all factions. In many places of the watershed area, armed groups act as the undisputed authorities. Incidents involving community members and contractors in the target area early on in the project timeline cast serious doubts within the consortium as to whether proper implementation of the project would be possible. A Track II component was rolled out in 2018 to update the mapping of all non-state armed groups present in the area, and the consortium engaged in discussions with them in view of preventing future incidents.

2.4. Project staff assaulted

On July 29th, 2021, the Dutch Ambassador to the DRC visited the MyA project in Luberizi with the intention to visit various infrastructures constructed by the consortium. These included a water tank in Katekama, the irrigation water dam built on the Tenge-Tenge river, the offices of the irrigation water management association (*Coopérative Agricole des Usagers de l'Irrigation de Luberizi* (COOPAILU) in French), the drinking water management association (ACEPSKILU) and the Sauty ya Amani radio station. While the delegation was visiting the drinking water tank in Katekama, the consortium security officer went ahead with other members of staff to the Tenge Tenge water dam to ensure the place was secure for the ambassador to visit. They were assaulted by a group of five men armed with an AK-47 rifle and small arms including clubs, knives, and cutlasses. The assailants stripped them of all their mobile phones and money and ordered them to go back. Therefore, the consortium had to call off this part of the visit. While this incident did not involve any bodily harm, it was taken very seriously. This was the first time a security incident occurred to the consortium members' staff directly since the beginning of the project. The various analyses carried out subsequently led consortium members to

believe that the project and the Ambassador were not the primary target of the assailants, but that they wanted to take advantage of this opportunity.

2.5. Preventive measures against insecurity

In addition to direct talks and discussions engaged in with community leaders and non-state armed groups, the consortium implemented a series of measures to prevent security incidents and/or reduce their potential impacts on the project and its staff. In this regard, the project office was based in Kamanyola, about 25km away from the Luberizi *groupement*, where the consortium had initially planned to set up an office. Following a lack of consensus from the leaders of the two main ethnic groups on the place where the project offices should be built, the security situation and infrastructure in Luberizi was not deemed to be conducive to having the project offices based there.

In addition, the security officer of the IRC provided regular security updates regarding the context and any incidents reported, and this intensive context monitoring has allowed for adaptations to be carried out when needed to avoid, for the most part, serious incidents which could affect the project. However, these measures did affect the workplans for some time, as no field visits to the dam could be organized and no activities could be implemented in the watershed area periodically as access was not possible due to security concerns. Project staff were required to leave the field sites by 3pm and could not travel back before 8 am the following day to avoid potential road ambushes and other travel-related security threats. This required significant collaboration with community members to find convenient times throughout the day to carry out activities while ensuring the safety of project staff.

2.6. Community expectations, strikes and threats

The community of Luberizi has high expectations for development projects and tends to set short deadlines for development actors to respond. This was made clear to the project team from the very first moments of its arrival at the start of the project through certain remarks community members made in the opening meetings held with communities and proved to be true throughout the implementation period.

Throughout the project period, threats of demonstration and strike and actual demonstrations were staged by the youth and the community against the project or some staff of the consortium for various reasons. In the early years of the project, there were several claims of jobs being provided or project interventions being motivated by the underlying rivalry between ethnic communities on the one hand and geographic locations on the other. Due to the lack of jobs for even educated youth in the *groupement* of Luberizi, many had hopes that the consortium organizations would employ them. Therefore, there were demands for proportional recruitment in the project or geographic representation of villages in terms of local recruitment.

The geographic/ethnic rivalries present were also a source of tension given that each community was claiming project interventions or infrastructure even irrespective of the results of technical studies conducted as part of the project. A notable example was the water tank referred to above, which according to the technical studies was not absolutely essential. However, the Bafuliru youth of Nyamugali considered that not having a reservoir built in their community would mean that communities of Mutarule-Katekama (predominantly inhabited by the Barundi) were more favoured by the project. This led to a strike in January 2020, which disturbed the implementation of several project activities for nearly a month. The strike started on January 18th and continued until February 12, when negotiations conducted by the consortium led to the halting of the strike.

Some disruptions experienced were also due to the fact that several activities that were planned and announced to the community could not be undertaken, for various reasons. A notable example was the planned construction of a building to serve as a project office in Luberizi which was later called off by the donor owing to the inability of communities (notably the Barundi and Bafuliru) to reach an agreement around the site on which to build this office. This led to false accusations of consortium staff embezzling the project finances intended for the construction of the office and required significant mediation and strategic communication with the communities to resolve these claims. Several other unsubstantiated rumours and claims were the causes of further disruptions of project activities or threats made to staff by community members, especially by the youth. Another example of disruption occurred when the youth of the watershed area, especially in Lemera area, opposed the collection of data on the basis that no data collector had been recruited from their zone. They only agreed to the data collection process after several interventions of community leaders and by the project manager.

3. MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PROJECT

During the 56 months of its implementation and despite the difficult context described above, the project team was able to carry out the majority of the activities included in the framework, as summarized in the various annual reports posted in IATI. The project's main achievements are summarized below.

3.1. Outcome 1: People in the Luberizi groupement have increased access to land and therefore the conflicts over land are reduced.

With the granting of 219 land titles grouped for 3,045 individual owners, land conflicts in this area have been reduced and the land of small producers is secured against spoliation and dispossession by political or economic actors in search of land.

The results of the final survey show that 74.1% of respondents attest to the reduction of land-related conflicts as a result of the work of the MyA project and 72% of respondents consider that intra-community and inter-community collaboration between members of community and local authorities around land management has had a positive impact on social cohesion.

In the perception of households, the improvement of access to land is taking place in a context of persistent land conflicts, particularly those related to boundaries, the inequitable distribution of land and conflicts between herders and farmers, despite the noted reduction in number of conflicts. 65.7% of households still attest to the existence of land-related conflicts against 68.3% who said so at the start of the project. However, with the introduction of mechanisms for managing these conflicts, in particular by the Interim Land Coordination Committee (*Comité Intérimaire de Coordination Foncière* (CICF) in French) and the local peace committees, the violence linked to these conflicts has decreased significantly and most land-related conflicts are now resolved in a peaceful, inclusive and participatory way. This contributes to the overall positive perception that the inhabitants acquire of their villages with 76.9% of respondents who say they are confident in a positive future for their villages.

In the final survey, 100% of respondents, including men and women from all ethnic groups, agree that the positive effects of land securitization through group titles on conflicts and social cohesion in Luberizi has been a gateway to reconciling legitimacy and legality (customary and law), such as for

example, the deed of transfer of rural land by the *Mwami* to make the process of securitization through group titles possible.

Through this securitization process, social cohesion has increased, beginning with the agreement of co-owners of the same title. The co-owners were brought to dialogue in order to find common positions on certain questions such as title conservation and water management, regardless of ethnicity, how and where will the title be kept, how to maintain the tertiary canals together, etc. This has had an impact on social cohesion as people who once did not speak to each other, or worse, were in conflict over the boundaries of their neighboring properties, suddenly found themselves friends with a common interest.

Result 1.1 : Local mechanisms for sustainable use and management of irrigated and watershed land for the exclusive benefit of local population are inclusive and functioning for land management including local authorities, "l'administration foncière", civil society and land users

Collective land security is a factor promoting the participatory management of community works, the growth of agricultural production, access to credit, social cohesion, support from development partners, settlement of land disputes, and associative dynamics (cooperatives). To provide the beneficiary population with easy access to land services and at the request of the provincial government, the project facilitated the construction of office buildings for the land district based in Sange, the State service in charge of issuing and managing land titles at territory level. Necessary equipment, notably furniture, was provided by the project at its closure to support the State in the continuation of land management responsibilities.

According to the endline findings, it was confirmed that three local mechanisms are in place, inclusive and functional. These are the CICF, the Agricultural Cooperative of Luberizi Irrigation Users (COOPAILU) and the Committee of Elders. From 44.2% at the baseline to 45% of beneficiaries are satisfied with the community land management, among them 26.4% of female and 27.1% of youth. 57.1% of community leaders (administration leaders, religious leaders, local associations and civil society leaders in target sites) reported being satisfied with the community land management.

While at end-line the project had not met its revised target of 60% of beneficiaries being satisfied with the community land management, it should be noted that at the time of the mid-term evaluation the project had exceeded the original target of 50%, with 54% of beneficiaries reporting satisfaction on this indicator, leading to an increase in the target at that time.

Towards the end of the project, the MyA project began an advocacy campaign to facilitate access to land for landless farmers. One of the preliminary steps was the identification of available community land to be granted to the landless. Unfortunately, through this process the project team became aware that some local administrative leaders had already distributed parts of this land to recipients who were not part of the target population, despite their commitments to facilitate the process as agreed at the beginning of the project through the signing of deeds of commitment to no longer sell or distribute the community land once the project had begun its land tenure and irrigation system rehabilitation activities. Following the discovery of this situation, the project team had to involve high-level provincial authorities to enable the return of the land to the communities for distribution to those landless farmers who had been selected through an inclusive, transparent, and objective process according to agreed criteria. As a result, at the time of the end-line survey, many in the population were unhappy with the attitude that some administrative leaders had displayed, leading to the sharp drop observed in the value of this indicator from 54% at the MTR to 45% at the end-line.

Result 1.2: Local users within the irrigated area and non-irrigated area whenever possible, especially vulnerable women and youth, have secure access to land

Land security around 1,190 hectares has been achieved for 3,141 farmers (among them 534 of female, which is about 17%) in total. Among these farmers, 3,045 are covered by 219 grouped land titles obtained through a largely participatory process that included community awareness and mobilization, close involvement of local, provincial and national land authorities, and participatory mapping. Resolution of boundary conflicts was mediated by the project team in collaboration with local authorities and all costs required for the establishment and signing of titles were covered by the project.

Moreover, 505 customary land certificates were issued by the chiefdom of Bafuliru, securing 2,686 plots and covering 1,408.18ha in Mugule and Katala villages, in the Lemera *groupement*. Additionally, the project advocated on behalf of 220 landless farmers identified. A process was undertaken for their settlement, with approximately 30 land titles grouped in the part of the extension of the irrigated perimeter over an area of approximately 20ha.

Through these efforts, the project has significantly improved the secure and sustainable access of households to land in the irrigated and non-irrigated area, from 4.10% of households at the start of the project to 40.8% of households of all ethnic groups.

Result 1.3: Local land users of all types (farmers, fish farmers and brick makers) of the catchment area have safe, secure and sustainable access to the natural resources of the catchment area

Thanks to project actions aiming at facilitating beneficiaries accessing the natural resources of the catchment area, including advocacy campaigns targeting decisions makers and sensitization sessions for local leaders and land users themselves, 64.2% (35.1% of female and 37.8% of youth) gained access since the start of the project, as confirmed by the endline evaluation.

Result 1.4: Local men and women of the different ethnic groups are aware of their rights and the procedure to claim their rights to land

The project conducted many trainings and sensitization sessions with leaders and direct beneficiaries in Luberizi, the watershed area and Lemera throughout the years, including the participatory mapping process, land and conflict mediations, various sensitizations, capacity building sessions and advocacy campaigns, without forgetting peace committee facilitations and mediation sessions. Some were directly conducted by project staff while others were conducted by local leaders trained and dedicated to this, such as CICF members.

The endline results show that 86.8% (46% female and 48.3% of Youth) know how to claim their rights to land.

3.2. Outcome 2: People in the Luberizi groupement have increased access to water and therefore conflicts over water are reduced

3.2.1. Access to irrigation water

Result 2.1: The Tenge-Tenge Irrigation Scheme Water User Association (TTWUA) is inclusive, transparent and accountable to the people it serves

As mentioned under Result 1.1 above, the Luberizi Irrigation Water Maintenance and Management Committee (*Comité de Maintien et de Gestion de l'Eau de Luberizi* (CMGEL) in French) was transformed into the Agricultural Cooperative of Luberizi Irrigation Users (COOPAILU). These committees were revitalized by the project, making them more inclusive, transparent and effective. Initially, CMGEL was a group of friends operating more for their individual interest than for the community. With the support of this project, it has been transformed into a cooperative of users to ensure it can be more operational and was renamed COOPAILU. The cooperative has been structured according to the law governing cooperatives in the DRC, with regulatory texts and management bodies set up in an inclusive and transparent manner. To operate transparently, this cooperative has organized and held four sessions for presenting activity reports to members.

At the endline, 68.2% beneficiaries (34.8% of female and 37.3% of youth) attest that COOPAILU is inclusive, while 49.3% beneficiaries (26.9% of female and 26,9% of youth) attest that it is transparent.

Result 2.2: The Tenge Tenge Irrigation Scheme is rehabilitated and extended to provide irrigation water to all concerned local users (e.g., farmers, shepherds, livestock keepers, and all those whose livelihoods depend on water)

The Tenge Tenge dyke/dam and the main irrigation canal, with a length of 11.5km, have been rehabilitated and extended over the course of the project period, with control of runoff water that affects the operation of the main channel by revegetation and 9km of secondary canals that have been created. The dam itself is 1.6m high, 8m wide, 58m long, and 2m deep with walls 0.5m thick. The canal has a watered area of 1,136.6m² with an average wall thickness of 35cm and a transport capacity of 2m³ cubic meters. This infrastructure supplies the irrigation network covering on the one hand the area of 1,035ha exploited by 3,045 people, and on the other hand the reserve land of 2,999ha belonging to the State.

Access to irrigation water and the proper management of this water offers opportunities to guarantee production by farmers and has significantly reduced conflicts related to access to irrigation water. At the start of the project, no water points for livestock were available as part of the existing infrastructure. By the end of the project, eight water points have been produced in the perimeter, with four for men located in the irrigated perimeter and four drinking troughs for cows. This was done to support herders to access potable water and, at the same time, to reduce conflicts between farmers and herders.

It should be noted that the existence of this earth dam dates back to 1952, with the first maintenance works taking place in the 1970s. Over time, the dam eroded and collapsed definitively in the early 2000s. Before the MyA project, it was very difficult for small producers, who exploited the irrigated perimeter, to access irrigation water for their land. With climate change and increasingly irregular rainfall, access to irrigation water had become a significant concern, an additional source of conflict and a brake on production, especially for rice. During the dry season the available water disappeared completely.

By the end of the project, 91.2% of local households of different ethnic groups have safe and sustainable access to irrigation water, as did all 3 offices built by the project for ACEP, COOPAILU, and the Sauti ya Amani radio station. Community satisfaction related to access to irrigation water increased from 10% of community members at the beginning of the project to 59.9% at the end of the project. The final surveys conducted showed that 80.5% of the households surveyed affirmed that the conflicts

related to the access and use of irrigation water have decreased since the start of the project with the realization of this infrastructure.

Result 2.3: The users of the Tenge Tenge water system act collectively to effectively operate and maintain the system, under the supervision of the TTWUA

Thanks to this project, and as previously mentioned, the CMGEL was transformed into COOPAILU. This cooperative body, which is in charge of the management and maintenance of the irrigation network, benefitted from significant capacity strengthening from the consortium, including support with attaining appropriate legal status, ensuring it has comprehensive and functional governing bodies, and support in cooperative structuring, the construction and equipment of an office, training and coaching sessions for officials on relevant topics including development of regulatory texts, management and operation of a cooperative, development of a business plan, as well as basic accounting and financial management.

Despite these efforts and achievements, only 20% of the maintenance needs in terms of labour are covered by the users, which is a risk for the cooperative's sustainability. Although this is high compared to where we started (0%), the project expectations were higher than what have been achieved. The reason for this level of achievement is due to the low engagement of community members and high expectations towards INGOs (see more details below in challenges and lessons learned).

Result 2.4: Enhanced dialogue and information sharing on water resource management between farmers and pastoralists, upstream and downstream communities, community members and local authorities through the activities of a Luberizi Sub-Basin Committee in line with the 2015 Water Law.

The project introduced the Integrated Water Resources Management approach by watershed (IWRM by watershed), with the establishment of the watershed management committee with a multi-annual watershed management plan to manage the catchment area. This committee, also referred to as the Consultation Framework for Village Development Committees (CC-CVDs), is decentralized to the level of each village. The sub-basin committee is in place and has been structured for its optimal functionality.

At the endline, 85% beneficiaries (50% of female and 45% youth) attest that the water basin committee is inclusive and representative of the communities since the start of the project.

Result 2.5: Luberizi Sub-Basin management plan elaborated with the participation of stakeholders from all relevant levels of government, all sectors and all affected communities, and based on relevant and accurate information on the sub-basin characteristics.

Although the management plan was elaborated later than expected, it is now available and is being implemented. In its elaboration, the project ensured the inclusion of stakeholders from all relevant levels of government, all sectors and all affected communities. It was ensured that the Luberizi Sub-Basin watershed management plan incorporates needs and preferences of all relevant stakeholders, including youth, women and the different ethnic groups. Compared to the overall participants, 40% of women and 50% of youth were involved in the preparation of the plan.

Result 2.6: Risk of resource degradation and local natural disasters is reduced

Through the introduction of the Integrated Farmers' Planning approach (PIP), the consortium noted the reforestation of the mountainsides by the local communities for the protection of the watershed in six villages, the planting of trees to combat erosion, and the protection of the irrigation canal with

plant cover (including 3 operational nurseries, 3,265km of planted hedges, 100ha of trees for erosion control and pasture improvement, and 3.5km of the irrigation canal protected with vetiver cuttings).

3.2.2. Access to potable water

By the end of the project, a drinking water supply system 72km long had been constructed, with a network extension of 10km. This system is equipped with 8 reservoirs and delivers clean water to an estimated population of 34,650 inhabitants spread over 5,640 households through 72 standpipes established (8 more than the 64 originally planned) in 12 villages, including 7 from the Luberizi *groupement*, 1 in the city of Sange and 4 in the Kigoma *groupement* (villages of Rugeje, Kanga, Kabere and Manamba), with 156 taps in the water system.

Before the MyA project, people traveled long distances to find drinking water and many people, especially women and children, were exposed to various abuses on the road, including rape and sexual violence. Illnesses related to the consumption of dirty water were common as well as conflicts related to access to drinking water. Since the drinking water supply carried out by the MyA project has supplied the population with clean water, the health and social situation has changed considerably for the better in the area. The results of the end-of-project survey carried out in February 2021 revealed that 99.5% of the beneficiaries surveyed declared having safe and sustainable access to drinking water thanks to the project. 88.6% consider that women now have a greater influence in the management of drinking water since the start of the project, and 74.5% of respondents affirm that conflicts related to access and use of drinking water has decreased since the start of the project in the Luberizi *groupement*.

2.7: A Drinking Water User Association (DWUA) and its sub-committees are established and trained to ensure they are transparent and represent the diversity of the local community

From the very beginning of the project, the project set up drinking water users committees. The Drinking Water User Association (DWUA) was renamed *Association des Consommateurs d'Eau Potable de Sange, Kigoma et Luberizi* (ACEPSKILU). The process of setting up the committee was inclusive and transparent: the members of the sub-committees were first elected in each beneficiary village. The elections were supervised by the project to ensure objectivity, transparency and inclusiveness in terms of gender, youth and ethnicity. Then, a total number of 25 sub committees were established with support of project. Afterwards, the members of these sub-committees met together in a general assembly to elect the governing bodies of the association. The same criteria related to objectivity, transparency and inclusiveness in terms of gender, youth and ethnicity were respected. This association was structured and reinforced accordingly to ensure its functionality.

At the endline evaluation, 85,1% (45.8% of female and 47.5% of youth) attest that ACEPSKILU is inclusive. 87.7% (48.3% of Female and 44.4% of youth) report that inclusiveness of the ACEPSKILU increased since the start of the project.

Furthermore, 87.7% beneficiaries (48.3% of female and 44.4% of youth) attest that ACEPSKILU is transparent. 87.7% of community members (48.3% of Female and 44.4% of youth) report that transparency of the ACEPSKILU has increased since the start of the project.

2.8: The DWUA and its sub-committees, together with community members, participate in the design, supervision and monitoring of the construction of Luberizi water supply system. The users of DWUA water system act collectively to effectively operate and maintain the system, under the supervision of the DWUA

As noted above, 72 standpipes have been established (8 more than the 64 originally planned) in 12 villages since the start of the project, including 7 in the Luberizi *groupement*, 1 in the city of Sange and 4 in the Kigoma *groupement* (villages of Rugeje, Kanga, Kabere and Manamba), with 156 taps in the water system. Local empowerment for the sustainability of the drinking water infrastructure management was critical to the success of this component, and the project team provided key support for the organization and operationalization of the Drinking Water Consumer Association (ACEP) to help it obtain legal status and structure itself with appropriate and functioning governance and management bodies. The project team further supported the ACEP with the construction of an office and the provision of necessary equipment, including small technical equipment necessary for the maintenance of the network for a set period of time following project closure, as well as with trainings and coaching sessions for officials on relevant topics.

The reinforcement of capacities provided also aimed to reassure ACEP members of its ability to manage this water from collection to management of user contributions in a sustainable way, which necessitated the revision of the pricing strategy and change of status/legal form from non-profit association to cooperative.

3.2.3. In relation to promotion of hygiene and sanitation

Result 2.9: Equitable access to toilets and other sanitary facilities in schools, health centres and in households

Over the project period, the consortium constructed gender-segregated toilets with hand-washing facilities for staff and students in 11 schools in the targeted area. These toilets also included appropriate access provisions for students and staff living with disabilities. In addition, latrines for staff and patients were likewise constructed in 4 health centers in the intervention area. These were segregated by gender and included access provisions for users living with disabilities. Each block of latrines also included sinks and private facilities for the washing and drying of menstrual pads for women and girls.

Through its sensitization session conducted, including yearly campaigns organized on selected international days (including those dedicated to water on March 22nd, to hand washing on October 15th, and to World Toilet Day on November 18th of each year), the project team also encouraged the construction of modern latrines in households in the intervention area. At the end of the project, around 800 self-financed latrines had been constructed by households thanks to the promotion and marketing of 50 young entrepreneurs trained in the sanitation market (sanmarket). A joint team composed of project staff, community representatives (CODESA) and representatives of the Ministry of Health at local level (i.e., health zones and health areas) regularly conducted household surveys to assess the level of implementation of the hygiene and sanitation education received. The objective was to identify households that met the hygiene and sanitation criteria in order to certify those that classified as being "sanitized", and to intensify targeted sensitization based on the results. The criteria that were being assessed were agreed with ministry representatives and included (1) the existence of modern and hygienic latrines in the household, (2) the existence in the household of devices for hand washing, (3) the provision of garbage pits or household waste management facilities in the household for vector control purposes, (4) the fight against open defecation, (5) food and cooking utensil hygiene, and (6) improved drinking water hygiene. After the sensitization activities, 521 of the 863 households were declared and certificated as clean and sanitized.

Result 2.10: Sensitization and training sessions on hygiene promotion and safe drinking water

The project has facilitated establishment of community health clubs in the four identified schools to increase awareness amongst youth members of the community. Members were trained in order to support these sensitization sessions in schools while other community leaders were also identified and trained for doing similar sensitizations in communities in all the villages.

The project conducted many awareness sessions aimed at supporting the population to develop better practices for handling and storage of drinking water. In addition, as this was part of component for defining criteria of certifying household as clean and sanitized, a total of 521 households were able to meet the criteria related to this component (see previous result for more detailed information).

3.3. Outcome 3. People (men, women and youth from different ethnic groups) in the Luberezi groupement have increased safe, secure, inclusive and equitable access to income generating opportunities

Overall, a visible increase in income since the beginning of the project was noted: 27.4% of the beneficiaries (15.4% of female, 16.4% of youth) report an increase of income since the start of the project. At the same time, 96.4% (48.7% of female, 47.7% of youth) perceive that the increase in local economic activities has a positive impact on security and social cohesion. At the endline, 33% (18.8% of female, 25% of youth) of respondents stated that they were engaged in income-generating activities in the last 6 months in the project's target communities.

Result 3.1: Farmers have the knowledge, skills, and access for improved agriculture and livestock practices (sustainable conservation, climate smart agriculture, demand-driven agriculture)

Over the course of the project, the consortium has observed a marked increase in improved agricultural knowledge and practices by farmers leading to an increase in agricultural production. In the final surveys conducted, 81% of farmers now apply improved agricultural practices while 53.7% declare that their agricultural production has increased since the start of the project.

53.5% (among them 24.9% of female and 29.4% of youth) show improved knowledge on the production of identified crops and/or livestock products for value chains.

The project supported various agricultural value chains such as rice, maize, cassava and vegetable crops as well as market garden crops such as tomatoes, onions, eggplants, etc. to which was eventually added milk production. Increased economic opportunity was achieved through the supervision of farmers in these promising value chains, in particular for farmers cultivating rice - whose average yield per hectare increased from 3 tons to 7.7 tons between 2018 and 2019 - corn with a yield of 3 tons per hectare, and fresh milk with an average yield of 3 liters per day per cow. The contribution of high-performance seeds, fertilizers, training in improved farming techniques, and connection to markets were also critical elements which lead to the improvements demonstrated.

At the endline survey, 53.7% farmers (26.1% of female, 27.6% of youth) showed an increase in total agriculture production. At the same time, 55.1% of targeted farmers declared that their sales increased on these value chains supported by the project.

Result 3.2: Farmers use agricultural inputs and small equipment suitable for the region

Regarding the rice value chain in particular, two high-performance rice varieties with high production potential and high yield were introduced to farmers in the community to boost rice production per

unit area: the Mugwiza variety, and Var Tayi and Kigoma variety. At the endline, 50.2% (24.9% of female, 25.4% of youth) of producers had access to or effective use of good quality inputs and small equipment.

At the outset, the Maji ya Amani project had originally intended to provide support to dealers of agricultural inputs to facilitate an increase in their sales. This activity had to be discontinued after the first round of access to inputs, however, as the results were not conclusive and those dealers who received loans did not pay these back as intended. As the inputs for this activity were not intended to be items donated, in line with the project's theory of change and efforts towards facilitating long-term sustainability, activities on this indicator were discontinued with the agreement of the donor who strongly recommend the project to avoid any kind of donation.

Result 3.3: Farmers use agricultural credit to increase production and to add quality and value to their agricultural products with better transformation and commercialisation

Rice farmers in the Luberizi irrigated area have been connected to the Equity Bank to facilitate access to agricultural credit. This is thanks to successful advocacy leading to the signing of a partnership with Equity Bank for agricultural credit to small producers and the opening of around 100 individual bank accounts to facilitate access to agricultural credit for innovative farmers in Luberizi, who are members of COOPAILU and the Cooperative for the Production of Food Commodities (*Coopérative de Solidarité pour la Production des Denrées Alimentaires* (COOSOPRODA) in French). At the endline, 59.3 % of the farmers (29.5% of female, 26.4% of youth) experienced an increase in agricultural production with the contribution of the credit. 52.7% of the farmers (27.1% of female, 26.8% of youth) added value to their products with the contribution of the credit.

The success achieved in the rice farming sector is also due to the land titles granted to rice farmers through the project. About 200 rice farmers are now experimenting with agricultural credit as a first trial.

The project facilitated two partner cooperatives, namely COOPAILU and COOSOPRODA, to have access to credit for marketing rice crops (credit for collecting production from rice farmers) following the linkage of these cooperatives with Equity Bank. This was made possible as a result of the investments and assets available to the two cooperatives which can serve as a guarantee.

The project facilitated a formal, operational agricultural credit test of USD 52,556 with Equity Bank for 116 innovative farmers (including 52 women) out of 210 targeted.² The original target of 210 was not met due to some farmers identified on the basis of the project's criteria noted above not meeting the separate criteria required by the participating bank despite the project's efforts.

154 individual bank accounts have been opened and are operational in Luberizi, including 30 for women farmers. Following advocacy from the consortium and taking into account the high level of insecurity in the area, it is now possible for rice farmers to use bank cards as well. USD 214,000 in credit marketing credit was granted to COOSOPRODA by Equity BCDC, including USD 70,000 (4th cycle at the end of December 2020), USD 30,000 at the end of March 2021 (5th cycle) and USD 14,000 USD in November 2021 (6th cycle). One Cash Express Equity BCDC counter is now operational in Luberizi with

² These farmers were selected based on a list of criteria. The main criteria include that they have to be a PI (Innovative farmer), have a plot of land in the irrigated perimeter, have a land titer for that land, be a member of one of the two cooperatives working with the project (COOPAILU or COOSOPRODA), and agree with the bank conditions, particularly the interest rate of 18% per year.

safe deposit and withdrawal functions. The resulting increase in yields observed has been the following:

- Rice: 3T to 6.5T yield per hectare;
- Corn: 1.5T to 3T/ha;
- Pepper 8T/ha; and,
- Milk: 1 liter to 3.5 liters/cow/day.

Result 3.4: Farmers are organized into representative associations that have strong organizational and advocacy capacity

Farmers are organized into two main cooperatives supported by the project: COOPAILU and COOSOPRODA with more than 50% of women among them (54% in COOPAILU and 50.1% in COOSOPRODA). At the endline, 63% (31% of young people) found that members of these cooperatives demonstrate increased organizational capacity.

Result 3.5: Farmers linked to markets

Key activities were developed with a view to connecting farmers to markets. The project facilitated two such connections through signed contracts with the private sector, one with BRALIMA Bukavu for 3,000 tons of rice per year and another with Minoterie de Kamanyola (MINOKA) for 500 tons of maize per year. To ensure the COOSOPRODA cooperative is able to deliver on the requirements of this contract, technical support has been provided regarding how to increase rice production, access the market and access credit.

To ensure the contract with BRALIMA is operational, the project made possible a cost-shared allocation of a unit for processing paddy rice into white rice, the SB-10 Huller, to the COOSOPRODA and COOPAILU cooperatives to guarantee the quality of white rice to be supplied under the contract with BRALIMA. At the endline, 48.5% (among them 21.6% of female and 27.1% of youth) experienced increase in sales on supported value chains. This represents a significant achievement, even if the overall target of 60% was not possible to meet due to the fertilizer previously procured from Burundi at reduced cost no longer being available due to the border closures that took place as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Some producers supported by the project necessarily turned to other crops, including those for household consumption, during this difficult time.

In addition, the World Bank's larger Great Lakes Integrated Agriculture Development Project for Africa (PICAGL) also targeted South Kivu province, including and MyA intervention areas, and aimed at supporting cooperatives and ensuring that value chain development is complementarity with others actors, among others. While this actor promised support to our cooperatives with a Zaccaria SX-6 mini rice mill, the consortium found that the promise was too slow to be realized while the project beneficiaries felt a real need and that they missed certain opportunities. Hence, the MyA project decided to act and donated a maize flour mill to the maize sector of Mutarule.

Result 3.6: Women's VSLA members and targeted youth have more access to financial resources

Through the establishment, training and supervision of 40 Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) composed of 996 members, the project has enabled young people to access formal and informal loans, while instilling in them the practice of saving. They were able to mobilize significant amounts and distribute these amongst themselves as credits, as has been progressively reported in previous annual reports. At the endline, the loan fund utilisation rate was to 63% while 48.5% % of women and youth

VSLA members who were already business owners experienced an increase in sales by the end of the project.

The average return on credit is 88.2% considering the provided deadline for returning, but it is 100% considering the end of the cycle. In fact, for those who cannot return back the credit on time, the amount is deducted while they are sharing at the end of the cycle.

These VSLA groups were inclusive in terms of gender (71.1 %, are female), age (74% VSLA members are less than 35 years old) and ethnicity (3 of the 40 groups are composed of 75 Batwa members). To increase sustainability, these groups were organized into clusters to facilitate a kind of networking between neighbouring groups, as well as to allow them to access greater amounts in formal credits through their greater numbers which enabled them to access more significant loans from MFIs that are then shared with each VSLA group and their members. Entrepreneurial skills (CEFE) training was also provided to these groups to facilitate best practices in managing these individual groups and clusters.

In addition to these 40 groups, the project also supervised 10 VSLAs created spontaneously. These “satellite” VSLAs were created by community members influenced by watching the operations and functioning of the VSLA groups created and supervised by the project.

The consortium also supported members of the project’s 40 VSLA groups to develop and implement business plans, with coaching sessions provided during implementation of these plans to increase their long-term effectiveness. A group of 200 young people (including 89 female) were selected through a transparent and inclusive process involving all the partners and stakeholders to support them to become entrepreneurs. Main selection criteria included young unemployed graduates, vulnerability to being enlisted in armed groups or to violent or uncivil actions, girls at risk of prostitution or sexual exploitation, and girl or women heads of households.

Coaching and mentoring of these 200 young people in entrepreneurship made them performant as they attested themselves. The project also facilitated farmers and young entrepreneurs to access formal credit through a partner named COOPEC Kalundu. Before facilitating access to credit for young people, the project first gave financial support to these young people via this COOPEC. This was done as part of the financing and start-up of their business plans developed after the training received. Subsequently, each young person presented his/her project to the COOPEC to obtain credit in order to increase his business. The amount received depended on the project. This has had a notable impact in youth engagement in running small business and income generating activities (IGA). From 13.6% (baseline value) to 33% (endline value), households report a significant commitment to IGAs, including for women and young people. This prevents the enlistment of young people in violent actions and in armed groups, thereby reducing tensions and security risks while increasing stability in the area, which is the overall objective of the project.

Result 3.7: People are more entrepreneurial and have economic skills and training relevant to local job markets

Within VSLA groups, trainings were organized on how to start and run a business or an IGA. 8.2% of beneficiaries were able to start a new business while 22.2% were able to expand an existing business. In addition from those trained within their VSLA groups, the 200 youth trained and supported in regards on entrepreneurship, developing a business plan and how to implement them can further be highlighted (see result 3.6 above for more details).

In addition, to maximize impact on this outcome, the project decided to integrate the PIP approach into the supervision of households. Teaching households to operate and maintain the irrigated perimeter, the PIP approach will further increase their level of empowerment and autonomy. While one part of the target area (the irrigated perimeter in Luberizi) was covered directly by the project (ZOA), another part was assigned to local implementing partners (as per the donor's recommendation), namely *Initiative des Jacobins pour le Développement* (IJED) in Luberizi but outside the irrigated perimeter, and the *Communautaire pour le Développement Rural* (ASCODER) and the *Bureau De Reboisement agro foresterie* (BDR) in the watershed area.

Through this process, in the irrigated perimeter, 189 Innovative Farmers (*Paysans Innovateurs* (PI) in French), who were trained on the PIP approach, successfully implemented their PIPs. They further committed themselves to training 10 new PIs for a total of 1,890 second generation PIs.

Out of the perimeter and in the watershed, 150 PIs trained, including 100 in 4 villages in the catchment area and 50 PIs outside of the Luberizi perimeter, successfully implementing their PIPs; and each PI trained at least 5 second generation PIP farmers

In order to extend this promising approach, 80 young entrepreneurs among the 200 from Luberizi, and 80 young VSLA members have also been trained on the PIP approach. This will further facilitate its integration within the VSLA approach.

Result 3.8: Local Youth access employment opportunities in latrine construction

50 young people were trained in the manufacturing of slabs for the improvement of latrines in households. These young people benefited from a starter kit allowing them to specialize in this field. This made it possible to couple the improvement of domestic hygiene and the improvement of the income of these young people through the sanmarket.

3.4. Outcome 4. People (men, women and youth from different ethnic groups) in the project area are aware of demographic pressure on natural resources and start taking actions to decrease this pressure.

Progress made against the indicator targets for this objective demonstrate that there has been an increase in community awareness of the inadequacy of the natural resources available in the face of demographic pressure in the Luberizi *groupement*. At the endline, 70.6% are aware that the available natural resources are insufficient to sustain the entire population of Luberezi. However, following discussions between the consortium and the donor in 2019 the previous emphasis on this component of the Maji ya Amani project was reduced to enable a pivot towards strengthening and further resourcing the other three Outcome areas – in particular the economic recovery and development activities.

Result 4.1: Three reproductive health facilities in the intervention area are duly equipped and have at their disposal materials and supplies to provide quality reproductive health services

In relation to the improvement of reproductive health services, key achievements to date include the provision of support for the four health structures in the intervention area for a better response to the demand for modern contraceptive methods. At the end of the project, all targeted reproductive health facilities have adequate spaces and are adequately equipped to provide quality reproductive health services.

Result 4.2: Reproductive Health providers in the supported reproductive health facilities have increased clinical skills to provide quality reproductive health services

The four health facilities supported by the project, Luberizi health center, Mutarule health center, Rwenena health center and Sange hospital, are providing family planning (FP) services which are youth-friendly and meet Ministry of Health and World Health Organization (WHO) standards.

The project also provided staff capacity building in regards to case management of gender-based violence (GBV) survivors. The twelve health care providers from the four structures selected as reproductive health providers working with the project, representing 100% of the target providers, have been trained and received monthly individualized family planning, post-abortion care (PAC) and GBV coaching visits. These providers remain committed to providing this care following the closure of the MYA project, and are receiving some support at a smaller scale from other actors to do so.

Nine of the twelve reproductive health providers, from three of the four selected structures working with the project and offering clinical care for sexual assault survivors, consistently met 80% of the quality criteria. The three providers who did not meet the minimum standard of 80% of quality criteria were referred to the relevant state structure, the Bureau de Zone de Sante (BCZ), which will support them to find other partners to continue the capacity-building efforts started by the Maji ya Amani project.

Result 4.3: People are aware of the availability and benefits of FP and PAC services and know how to access them

By the end of the project, 75% of the community members reached through awareness raising activities on family planning (FP) and post-abortion care (36% of female and 36% of youth) achieved a good score on the post-tests administered demonstrating their knowledge of FP and PAC and how to access them. A total of 1,046 new acceptors of modern contraceptive methods have been registered and are applying FP methods as a result of the project's efforts to spread awareness and information on available options and access.

Result 4.4: People are aware of the negative consequences of GBV and know which GBV-related services are available and how to access them

The project has also noted an increase in the prevention of and fight against GBV. Three of the four health centers and reproductive health care providers offering clinical care for sexual assault survivors (CCSAS) consistently meet 80% of quality criteria. The provider which did not meet the minimum quality standard by the end of the project was likewise referred to the relevant state structure, the Bureau de Zone de Sante (BCZ), which will support it to find other partners to continue its capacity-strengthening efforts.

75% of community members reached through awareness raising activities on GBV-related issues had a good score in the test related to this topic. To ensure greater sustainability, community action groups (including community-based health care workers for community support and referral to appropriate structures) have been established to embed the knowledge of available services and how to access them in the communities on a long-term basis.

Result 4.5: People (women, men from different ethnic and age groups) have better understanding of good governance, inclusive organizational skills and conflict prevention and resolution related to NRM

The number of people and local structures with knowledge and skills in mediation, inclusive dialogue and conflict resolution related to NRM within the community of Luberizi has also increased, with a final assessment demonstrating achievement of 64.8% against 51.2% measured in the baseline.

Result 4.6: Support the production and broadcast of radio programming to address issues related to social, economic, and political status of women in the Ruzizi Plain.

This result was removed from the logframe at the end of the inception phase as some topics were crosscutting and not only focused on one topic (see next chapter on crosscutting topics for more information).

Result 4.7: Inclusion of gender-focused storylines in comic books aiming to promote greater parity around decision making in the home and in the community

This result was removed from the logframe at the end of the inception phase as some topics were crosscutting and not only focused on one topic (see next chapter on crosscutting topics for more information).

3.5. Crosscutting topics

The MyA project included various crosscutting activities and actions to enable the project team to reach the set targets and to ensure greater impact and sustainability for the targeted populations.

Many ways to connect populations and communities in this area have been explored, including the following:

- Awareness-raising sessions on the goals and processes of the project for all community members,
- Training meetings, dialogues and social mediation around community conflicts,
- Community solidarity-building activities,
- Use of media, mainly Sauti ya Amani radio and the implementation of listeners' clubs,
- Platforms for political expression (*Tribunes d'Expression Populaire in French*),
- Encouraging communities to work together on the water supply network and the irrigation system network,
- Forming groups of young entrepreneurs going through similar trainings and processes so that they can learn from their peers as well as from the project's support,
- Sensitization sessions for FARDC and PNC on project objectives and approach,
- Community dialogues organized between farmers and herders,
- Youth dialogues to discuss common concerns and ways to mitigate them together,
- Three Peace Forums (retreats) held,
- Participatory theatre sessions to enable discussion of topics of communal interest and raise awareness,
- Listener feedback to improve next production and broadcast ,
- Co-production with the Sauty Ya Amani radio station and comic book production to increase sensitizations on key topics including peaceful cohabitation,
- Sensitization of VSLA on topics across Outcomes to achieve greater impact and to reinforce the support provided,
- Active inclusion of the community in the participatory land mapping process carried out,
- Organization of Community Health Clubs,

- Creation of a mini cultural centre for community outreach around the values of peace (including peaceful cohabitation and tolerance),
- Permanent monitoring of conflicts through community mobilizers identified in the area, and
- Discussion and negotiation sessions held during difficult situations and demonstrations.

The cumulative effect of these connectors and bonding opportunities has been instrumental in reducing conflict, increasing social bonding and local peacebuilding.

Overall, the MyA project has undeniably induced significant changes in the environment of Luberizi and the Ruzizi plain. The project has contributed to the reduction of conflicts in the Luberizi *groupement*, to strengthening of intra- and inter-community social cohesion and to increasing local economic activities. This observation has been shared by all actors and confirmed by the final survey, notably concerning conflicts related to access and use of water, conflicts related to access and use of land, as well as other violent conflicts observed within the different communities.

In addition, the project further enabled many households to improve their living conditions in terms of their housing, food, clothing, and even the way of thinking for some, which is a result of the multisector approach of this project. Beside the increased income generated, other factors that contributed this include broadening certain beneficiaries' perception of other (previously unknown) areas, for instance by participating in project activities in Uvira and other cities, discussion with many different actors, sensitization sessions, etc.

The Maji ya Amani project was of great relevance, as it responded to real needs and problems of the communities of the Luberizi *groupement* related to access and use of water and land resources, improvement of governance of these resources, and increased agricultural production and income opportunities.

As a result of the project, the perception of future stability in the *groupement* by the households surveyed at the end of the project is high, including among women and young people. 78.9% of respondents, men and women of all ethnic groups, said they had confidence in the current and future stability of their environment compared to 27.2% at the start of the project.

88.9% of the beneficiaries of the project find that the collaboration of the actors in the resolution of conflicts at different levels (local, territorial, and provincial) has been effective and the conflicts between actors involved in security have been resolved at 100%. There is a strong decrease in mutual distrust (between ethnic groups of members of different groups of communities), which was noted in many testimonies while discussing with beneficiaries and external observers/other actors. This is due to continuous sensitization sessions held over the course of the project, as well as the communities' joint participation in the multiple activities organized by the project.

"Before the arrival of the project, the two leaders of Luberizi groupement could not even greet each other, nor even participate in the same meeting together, which is not the case today." This and similar comments are very often heard from project beneficiaries questioned on what they appreciate as project impacts, and confirmed by observations and even by those concerned (notably chiefs) themselves. It is therefore safe to say that the project has created a good and strong foundation that the provincial government can build on in its continued efforts to establish peace, security and development in the area, especially to resolve in a sustainable way the long-standing issue of governance and ethnic tensions in the area.

The project also built and equipped a community radio station, the Sauti ya Amani radio station, which was inaugurated in May 2019. Thereafter, the project provided support to ensure the staff had the necessary capacity and resources to effectively operate the station. This formed part of the exit strategy to ensure sustainability of its operation. In addition to the capacity building and in-situ coaching from 2019 up to the end of the project, the consortium also provided other types of support to the radio, including advocacy and lobbying, for instance to ensure that official documents are issued in a timely manner. This radio has become a powerful tool for communication and pacification in the community. It particularly played a key role in sensitizing beneficiaries during the period that the project was not able to gather more than 20 persons at a time for project activities at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and was instrumental in communicating with communities about the pandemic and on other important issues as well.

As a direct output of the capacity-building support provided, the radio staff designed the concept of a radio program intended to raise awareness of the importance of peace for development. The “Tuungane Kwa Amani na Maendeleo” is a radio programme devised and co-produced by the radio staff to produce meaningful programs independently. From the programme start date in May 2020 to December 2020, 24 broadcasts/shows were produced with the support of the project. Other broadcasts/shows included local news editions, entertainment programs, debates, information and announcements. The radio staff is fully equipped to continue to produce quality programs in the future. One of the many highlights related to this radio station includes the visit and 20-minute interview of the Vice Governor of the South Kivu Province in June 2020, who was visiting the MyA project in Luberizi. At the end of the visit, he expressed his appreciation for the professionalism of local youth and congratulated the project for building and equipping the radio station. He commented that many radio stations in Bukavu do not have the capacities displayed by the Sauti Ya Amani radio station.

For all intents and purposes this radio is the result of the merger of two small radio stations that co-existed before the arrival of the project, which operated on rudimentary means and each claimed to belong to an ethnic community. It is therefore a radio station that has come to bring together two antagonistic and rival groups, which, today, work in an inclusive and professional way together.

The project has also strengthened social cohesion and local governance, in particular with the establishment and/or consolidation of community structures for conflict resolution such as the CICF and local peace committees.

The local peace committees installed and operational in the villages of the Luberizi *groupement*, the CICF, the Committee of Elders and the Consultative Committee for the Settlement of Customary Conflicts (*Comité Consultatif de Règlement des Conflits Coutumiers* (CCRCC) in French) of the Bafuliru chiefdom today enjoy significant credibility and wide local recognition as important structures for the resolution of land conflicts, social conflicts, customary conflicts and others and contribute a lot to peace and social cohesion. The community and the group leaders are increasingly referring cases of land disputes to the CICF. Even the head of the Bafuliru chiefdom has already referred cases of land disputes to the CICF, a sign of recognition of the competence and specialization of this structure in terms of land mediation. Numerous incidents of violence throughout the project implementation area have been mitigated and resolved thanks to the work of the local peace committees created by the project. More specifically, the peace committees resolved 116 community conflicts in 2018, 138 in 2019, and 474 conflicts in 2020. Half of all these conflicts are disputes between herders and farmers, as conflicts related to transhumance still remain one of the main causes of inter-communal violence

according to different studies carried out within the framework of the project. However, the fact that the CICF is gaining in recognition and has been able to resolve hundreds of disputes over the past years is a promising sign.

There have been many opportunities for reduction of tensions and conflicts and to increase communication and inter-community exchanges: in particular thanks to the organization of a variety of community outreach activities such as dialogues between social groups in conflict, a series of dialogues between young people in Luberizi, education on social cohesion through popular theatres and the *Tribunes d'Expression Populaire*.

A beneficial collaboration between the consortium and the authorities and technical services of the State was also established during the implementation of the project. The MyA project has continuously involved key ministries (for agriculture, rural development, land affairs) and relevant state services at all levels (cadastre, land titles, agriculture, National Service of Rural Hydraulics, etc.) not only in the implementation of project activities but also in the search for solutions such as land tenure security in the irrigated area. This has made it possible to simplify procedures and deadlines and to obtain land titles at reduced costs.

As an example, the Luvungi Land Brigade saw its capacities strengthened by the project and participated effectively in the securitization process, and the land district benefited from a building that will long serve to improve its work for the benefit of the population. The project observed strengthening of confidence between the police forces (FARDC and PNC) and the populations of Luberizi, through popular forums, sensitization sessions, frameworks for exchanges between the communities and the forces of the order as well as civil-military solidarity activities.

The project likewise set up accountability mechanisms for its own activities. Trust between the project team and the beneficiary community has been created and established through accountability and transparency actions such as regular organization of consultations, meetings, and exchanges on points of clarification between the project team and the beneficiary community depending on the situation. This is one of the reasons why the project never observed a total blockage of its activities despite the difficulties encountered and the situations of tension in the community which could have had serious effects.

The MyA project has constantly ensured the principles of Do No Harm and conflict sensitivity throughout the implementation period, and the staff has been constantly sensitized and trained on the principles of neutrality, impartiality and conflict sensitivity. Regular context and conflict analyses, the sharing of emerging concerns and risks, and the revision of certain decisions has followed as necessary. This made it possible to maintain regular dialogue with the beneficiaries, throughout sometimes difficult situations of resistance to the project, the spreading of rumours, or the rise of hostilities with regard to the project around certain activities or certain agents.

As an example, a school was constructed using sustainable materials in response to community demand from the Batwa population of Mulama village. The construction of this school was not initially planned but was the result of in-depth discussions and negotiations between the project and the local community, where the water sources that fed the larger network were captured. Out of respect for the considerations, beliefs and customs of the local population who consider themselves owners and protectors of these sources from their ancestors, after many negotiations, and after obtaining the donor's agreement, the project built this school to make a necessary gesture to the local population to acknowledge the sharing of this resource with the wider population.

4. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT (SWOT)

Several internal and external factors contributed to the success of the project, while others presented challenges or obstacles. Without being exhaustive, the main favourable and unfavourable factors were as follows:

4.1. Internal factors that were favorable to the realization of the MyA project (Strengths)

- 1) **The high relevance of the project and its integrated approach:** The project sought to solve real problems and needs identified through field studies. The integrated approach combined interventions related to issues of access and use of water and land resources, governance of these resources, economic opportunities, control of demographic pressure, social and ethnic conflicts and stability of the Luberizi *groupement*;
- 2) **Work based on annual work plans with flexibility and adaptations according to the evolution of previous work and the context.** Every year, an annual work plan was elaborated and submitted to the donor. Its elaboration was based on the validated work plan, but taking into consideration the evolution of the context, real needs identified in implementation, and lessons learned, which allowed the program a useful degree of flexibility;
- 3) **The clear distribution of responsibilities for the implementation of the different components of the project between the three partners of the consortium: IRC, ZOA and SFCG.** In addition to regular grant review meetings, thematic meetings were also organized to clarify roles and responsibilities and to clearly define the support expected from each consortium member to ensure effective collaboration;
- 4) **The location of the project office and field implementation staff closer to the project action area in Kamanyola:** The collaboration between consortium members was also strengthened by the proximity of sharing the same building and was a big factor for ensuring positive results for the project;
- 5) **Openness of the project to dialogue with the community:** At many junctures, there have been complaints and protests, some more justified than others. The project has always kept an open door to dialogue, and has always communicated through the various channels and accountability mechanisms put in place to take community and stakeholder feedback into account. This approach consistently led to an unblocking of a given situation;
- 6) **The involvement and participation of all ethnic groups (Bafuliru, Barundi, Banyamulenge, Batwa and other groups living in the Luberizi *groupement*), community leaders and the two chiefs who dispute the leadership of the *groupement* in decision-making, planning and carrying out project activities:** The project has always worked in an inclusive way. It is important to note that this way of working has sometimes been criticized by some actors who thought being very inclusive was not the appropriate way to solve the problem of duality in Luberizi. However, the consortium persisted with this approach as part of its strong commitment to the humanitarian principle of Do No Harm;

- 7) **Good collaboration with local, territorial and provincial authorities:** Collaboration with law enforcement (FARDC, PNC) and with state technical services such as the Cadastre, the Land District and the Land Brigade, the National Service of Rural Hydraulics (Service National de l'Hydraulique Rurale (SNHR) in French), state agronomists, the Environment Service (ACE), has led to easier facilitation of project activities and greater sustainability of results achieved;
- 8) **The establishment, revitalization and support of local structures** (CICF, local peace committees, COOPAILU, ACEP, Sauti ya Amani radio, listening clubs, etc.) for the implementation of activities, the appropriation of project work and preparation for the sustainability of achievements;
- 9) **The realization of the infrastructures long desired by the local population** (the water supply and the hydro-agricultural system) meeting the primary needs of drinking water, hygiene, health and food production;
- 10) **The fact that the implementation of the project has been entrusted / given to a consortium (of three large organizations (IRC, ZOA and Search for Common Ground) with complementary capacities and expertise**, which made it possible to approach with competence and complementarity the different aspects of the project while maintaining a certain integration. The experience of the member organizations of the consortium in the various technical fields and also in terms of financial, administrative, logistical and security procedures was critical to the successes achieved by the project;
- 11) **The presence of key technical or managerial positions in the field which were filled by qualified and competent staff**, who were highly motivated and ready to take risks in the interest of the project;
- 12) **The flexibility of the staff and their continuous adaptation to the changing local context**, particularly the security context and the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic during the project implementation period;
- 13) **The integration into the project staff on the ground of members of the different ethnic groups present in the Luberizi groupement**, which led to greater inclusion and social cohesion for these staff members both at work and in the community and, on a wider scale, to greater ownership of the project by the communities they belong to;
- 14) **Demonstration of the success of the project through achievements with visible results and impact in addition to water infrastructure:** Examples include land titles, ACEP offices, COOPAILU, Sauti ya Amani radio, increased yields and rice production, access to credits, and access to better sanitation and hygiene, among others, which reassured the local population of the intentions and ability of the consortium to carry out the objectives of the project and led to greater community buy-in and participation as a result;
- 15) **The restricted geographical radius of the project area (Luberizi groupement and a few villages in the city of Sange and the Bafuliru chiefdom)**, which made it possible to easily cover the entire intervention area with limited resources compared to projects covering large geographic areas.

4.2. Internal Factors Unfavorable to Achievement (Weaknesses)

Among the factors which posed a challenge to the project the following were most notable:

- 1) **The slowness of execution of certain works by the companies contracted for their realization:** In the execution of certain works, the project very often called on external companies to provide a certain

number of services. Some performed in an exemplary manner while others, fortunately few in number, had various difficulties which sometimes had the potential to reflect poorly on the project. This was particularly the case of the company to which the project had entrusted the work of rehabilitating the irrigation canal. Fortunately, with a commitment to dialogue and flexibility on everyone's part, the consortium negotiated a solution with this contractor.

In addition to this, delays in execution were also occasionally experienced due either to changes in programming by the project teams or to the prolonged period of consultations and negotiations with the beneficiaries in the event of misunderstandings or tensions;

2) Weak community participation of the beneficiaries in the realization of certain works in their favour due to the planning carried out by the project and also the local tendency to wait and see (see section 4.4 below).

3) The carrying out of certain activities in a manner prioritizing speed of implementation rather than taking the time to consider and plan more comprehensively, such as exchange or learning visits organized for young entrepreneurs too quickly without taking into account their learning needs;

4) Promises made to beneficiaries, which were sometimes misunderstood and exaggerated by those beneficiaries: In some instances, messaging from the consortium was misinterpreted and conflicting understandings around expectations of the beneficiaries vs. what had actually been communicated. This fuelled complaints, accusations, suspicions, and moments of crisis of confidence.

4.3. External factors that favoured the realization of the project (opportunities)

1) Strong support from the authorities at the provincial level (especially provincial Ministry of Planning, provincial Ministry of Agriculture, provincial Ministry of Land Affairs, provincial Ministry of Interior, provincial coordination of STAREC³, Provincial Inspectorate of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, etc.), as well as at the territorial and local levels, and the competent technical services of the State. This has made it possible to resolve many of the questions and challenges posed by security and community constraints over the course of the project. Sectoral ministers themselves organized many field visits to the project, including participation in steering committee sessions. One steering committee was presided over by the Vice Governor in December 2020, with participation of Provincial Members of Parliament elected in the project action area;

2) The availability of significant, flexible and well-managed funding with close support from the donor who regularly went to the field and could thus better understand local demands and challenges. There were three consortia funded by the same donor under the I4S strategy: Water For Virunga (W4V), FARM and MyA. Peer monitoring visits were regularly organized to ensure an exchange of experiences and lessons learned. This was an important opportunity for the donor to monitor these projects and then take timely measures to preserve continuity of the projects including MyA.

In addition to donor visits, the project hosted other various visits by government partners such as partner and sectoral ministers and senior staff of the implementing organizations (e.g., staff at

³ STAREC was launched by the Congolese Government, with the support of the United Nations system and development technical partners. It was primarily designed for armed conflict-affected areas, especially in eastern DRC, and aimed at restoring State authority in Eastern DRC. The plan works towards the rehabilitation of administrative infrastructure, and is also involved in the fight against poverty and impunity regarding the numerous exactions and violations committed in this part of the country. The Plan is also working towards inter-communal reconciliation and good governance.

national, regional and head office level). This allowed for timely advice and guidance, and correction and anticipation of errors;

- 3) **Almost permanent accessibility by road to most villages in the project area, even in rainy seasons;**
- 4) **The significant agricultural and hydraulic potential of the area with fertile land and abundant water resources.**

4.4. External factors unfavourable to the realization of the project (threats)

- 1) **Persistent insecurity in the Ruzizi Plain, as in all of eastern DRC in general, leading to a volatile and unstable politico-security context:** Many reported incidents had an impact on the implementation of the project. Cancellation, postponement and/or relocation of activities remained the most critical threat to the project throughout the implementation period;
- 2) **The local context of multifaceted conflicts** (dualism of power at the level of the *groupement*, ethnic conflicts, farmer-herder conflicts, conflicts related to natural resources) which enormously feed prejudices and suspicions;
- 3) **The presence and activism of armed groups in the area and the related insecurity that affects the activities, personnel and property of the project;**
- 4) **The wait-and-see attitude of the beneficiary population** following the existence of prior donations as a means for providing humanitarian intervention. The population of the Ruzizi Plain and, more particularly, the communities of Luberizi demonstrated a significant wait-and-see attitude caused by the free distributions of agricultural inputs and the execution of infrastructural works by NGOs and other development actors who had implemented in the area before the MyA project without any requirement for either monetary or physical contributions by beneficiaries to increase buy-in and sustainability. This was not only a problem with MyA, it was also the case with other actors and projects that wanted to make local participation and contribution a prerequisite. Some even had to give up working in the area and go elsewhere;
- 5) **The expectations of young people in Luberizi**, which made people initially believe that the project was going to become ‘the big employer for all’ in the area. The project team had to engage in significant expectation management and strategic communication with community stakeholders to mitigate the challenges presented by this misunderstanding of the purpose and intent of the project;
- 6) **The negative influencing of the population by some community leaders due to their personal and individual interests and as a result of certain hopes and expectations not met by the project;** Throughout the project, there have been parties who were not awarded supply contracts, for example, or who were not involved in project activities in the specific manner in which they had hoped to be to further either their organizations’ or their personal interests. In most instances the project team has been able to communicate strategically and effectively to manage expectations and explain the rationale for the decisions taken, but in some instances these parties have taken their grievances back to the community and tried to foster resentment towards the project and its operating team. These occurrences have required considerable diplomacy and strategic engagement to ensure transparency in the project’s decision-making to the greatest extent possible and to bring communities back on board.
- 7) **The prevalence of certain local pressure or action groups** which sought to obtain maximum benefits from the project in their own interest;

8) **The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 which slowed down the performance of activities for the remainder of the project:** Many constraints were put in place in terms of the conditions for implementing activities to ensure that both implementing staff members and beneficiary communities stayed safe and mitigated the potential spread of the virus. This manifested as movement restrictions, and restrictions on gatherings (such as training activities and community awareness meetings). Borders were also closed with neighboring countries (Rwanda and Burundi) which complicated the supply of goods, services and finance (closure of Bugarama accounts), as well as travel to Bukavu, the capital of the province housing the provincial partners and services, service providers and offices of consortium.

9) **Political instability:** Many changes took place at the head of political institutions at the provincial and territorial level throughout the project period, including three changes of governments with the latest taking place towards the end of the project in August 2021, and two changes of Administrator of the Territory. This causes a lack of continuity in the vision of the partners with these entities. Many partners and actors who knew the project and the context very well and were committed to supporting it changed overnight, and the project had to work quickly to explain and be able to regain the trust and commitment of the new actors.

5. STRATEGIES DEVELOPED TO OVERCOME BARRIERS

Faced with a difficult and unstable context, the MyA project had to develop several strategies for adapting and overcoming obstacles in order to continue the implementation of the project throughout the years.

From the start, the project set up **community structures** or revitalized existing structures that consortium members have supported previously to ensure they were operational. Some examples include Sauti ya Amani radio station, ACEPSKILU, COOPAILU, CICF, and the peace committees. In addition, the project team put in place **feedback and accountability mechanisms** including suggestion boxes, community meetings, and a Committee of Elders made up of local leaders representing all components of society, including local administrative leaders and civil society, with geographical, ethnic, socio-professional, gender and age inclusivity aspects taken into account. All these structures and mechanisms have been used to raise awareness and promote dialogue (as communication channels or as interlocutors) in order to find solutions at different times when there was a need to overcome certain obstacles, barriers or challenges. This is one of the reasons that the project did not experience any more serious, disruptive events despite the very difficult context.

With regard to security, the consortium had to develop strategies to circumvent related obstacles by maintaining strict security measures to prevent incidents, including the following:

- **Restrict travel to specific times:** Project teams were advised to avoid travel before 8am and after 4pm. In the consortium's experience in the region, most of the recorded incidents took place either before 8am (when the army/police is not yet on duty) or after 4pm (when the military/ police leave their day duty stations) along the road. Sometimes it was a question of not moving before 9pm or after 3pm depending on the situation.
- **Respect for humanitarian principles:** The project respected the humanitarian imperative Do No Harm and adopted conflict-sensitive approaches. In its actions, staff members were

frequently reminded of the obligation to maintain these standards throughout project implementation. This took place in staff meetings and through relevant emails in which staff were encouraged to refrain from subjective language, biased interpretation of events in the context, and attitudes and behaviours that might negatively influence the context and thus endanger the local partners, the project and the member organizations of the consortium. Staff were also regularly reminded to respect the principles of neutrality and impartiality, in particular to safeguard the trust placed in them by the community and to ensure their safety.

- **Security briefing for project visitors:** All project visitors (including consultants) were briefed on security in the project area and the vicinity of the project base at Kamanyola. They were informed of the current situation and the mitigation measures taken and were advised to behave in accordance with the recommended precautions. A welcome kit also including contact information in case they were confronted with a problem at any time.
- **Relocation of sites for certain project activities:** Depending on the context at any given time, the sensitivity of the training subjects and/or sensitivity around the participants and the need for them to feel free, the project sometimes chose to change the location of planned activities to avoid areas of insecurity and/or to avoid exacerbating tensions within the community.

Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, the consortium had to develop strategies to circumvent the obstacles linked to this threat. Although the pandemic and related government measures to mitigate the spreading of the virus within the country deprived the project of the possibility to implement some key actions, such as broader meetings and more inclusive community meetings to reinforce greater accountability, the project continued to implement other activities in strict compliance with the measures taken in this area, putting in place preventive barrier measures for the protection of project teams, beneficiaries, partners and other stakeholders.

- At the project office/base, the project set up additional hand washing facilities with soap and water. Routine hand washing was mandatory for staff and others entering offices. Hydro-alcoholic gels were distributed to all offices and vehicles for continuous hand disinfection throughout the day. Routine body temperature sampling for people entering the office was carried out to determine the health status of everyone without exception. Guards were likewise trained on preventive measures.
- Training sessions and sensitization were provided to staff on COVID-19, and information and regular updates on the epidemiological situation were provided in order to maintain awareness about the pandemic. Posters were put up at the entrance of the project office and in meeting rooms with messages about COVID-19 to promote pandemic awareness and prevention for all visitors who were community members.
- Since the start of the pandemic, meetings, awareness-raising and capacity-building sessions were held in small groups of no more than 20 people. This required more resources and time than initially planned. In all the events organized, respect for social distancing required having a minimum distance of 1,5m between two people, and participants had to wash their hands or regularly use a hydro-alcoholic solution and have their body temperature taken before the start of an activity.
- To facilitate mass campaigns and sensitization despite these restrictions, the project used Sauti ya Amani radio station to ensure key messages were delivered to Luberizi and with the

neighbouring population. These measures allowed the continuation of key project activities while ensuring the protection of project staff, beneficiaries and community members.

With regard to episodes of resurgence of inter-community tensions, open discontent, demonstrations or protests against the project, the strategies used were the adaptation of security measures for staff, the organization of mediation meetings, dialogue and negotiations with the groups concerned and members of the community. All tensions and/or conflicts ended with reaching a clarification, a compromise and the continuation of the work of the project.

The project was based on the principle of accountability through communications and community awareness-raising oriented towards behaviour change. The presence of Radio Sauti ya Amani greatly facilitated communication with the beneficiaries and the transmission of messages of peace. This instrument has played a great role in the search for peace and in the achievement of the results expected by the MyA project, alongside the remarkable work of the local structures for conflict resolution and peace awareness.

With regard to youth unemployment which remains a significant challenge in the project area, some young people had the opportunity to be employed in some project activities and earn an income. The opportunities narrowed as the project drew to a close. In 2021, only the construction of the land district offices in Sange and some work on the irrigation canal provided paid employment opportunities for local youth, contrary to the beginning of the project where there were many more opportunities.

The MyA project succeeded in fostering the creation of profitable IGAs in the project area outside of direct employment with the project itself. Many young members of the community are currently running successful IGA and small businesses as a result of the support received through the project.

With regard to the wait-and-see attitude and the demands and solicitations towards the project and humanitarian and development actors in general, the project decided to stop direct subsidies and donations. This was also recommended by the donor and supported by the provincial government. However, according to the beneficiaries, donations were entirely justified for a rural development and socio-economic stabilization project, and the project had to work hard to foster acceptance by the local populations through awareness sessions organized as accompanying measures.

Unavailability of key staff, especially towards the end of the project, was another significant obstacle. Some staff on whom the consortium relied on to implement key activities had to leave the project to take up positions elsewhere, and in the last extension period further staff members left the project. The project proceeded to the recruitment of replacements and worked rapidly to update these new colleagues on the remaining work to be accomplished and to reorganize the allocation of work including the accumulation of roles. Despite these efforts, the consortium could not guarantee the same speed of implementation as it had previously done.

It has been the combination of the different strategies set out above that has allowed the project to continue and achieve the positive results of which it is proud at this closing moment.

6. MAIN LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

Many lessons were learned by the three member organizations of the consortium as a result of the execution of the project. A document compiling lessons learned was produced in December 2021 with the support of a consultant. This collection capitalizes about 50 lessons learned classified into the following four categories:

- 1) Lessons in relation to the four specific objectives of the project and related activities;
- 2) Lessons related to the cross-cutting aspects of the project (e.g., reduction of conflicts and stabilization, gender balance and participation of women and young people, risk management and adaptation to the context);
- 3) Lessons in regard to relations, collaboration and work with project stakeholders (direct beneficiaries, community leaders, local structures, state technical authorities and services, financial backer); and
- 4) Lessons related to coordination, consortium work, monitoring and evaluation and internal management of the project.

Among these the consortium notes the following 13 key lessons learned, selected as an illustrative sample:

- 1) The success of the securitization process that led to the granting of grouped titles to farmers in the Luberizi irrigated perimeter was obtained due, among other factors, to the resolution of pre-existing land conflicts in the perimeter in a very participatory manner and to the drafting and consensual adoption of the rules that should govern the grouped titles and the co-management of the spaces covered by them. Participatory mapping and prior management of existing land disputes is a key to the success of the land securitization process. A grouped securitization obliges the co-owners to collaborate well for the management of their common title.
- 2) The continued involvement of administrative authorities and state technical services at local and provincial level both in the implementation of project activities and in the search for appropriate solutions, such as on the issue of land tenure security in the Luberizi irrigated area, makes it possible to obtain services at reduced costs and with simplified procedures (case of grouped titles).
- 3) Visible and quick-impact achievements meeting the basic needs of the community, and in particular of all ethnic groups, such as drinking water and irrigation infrastructure in the Ruzizi plain, create valuable opportunities for social outreach, cohesion community, conflict reduction and stabilization of areas affected by conflict and violence. They build trust between local communities and the external stakeholders who fund and/or implement them.
- 4) Even in a situation of major ethnic conflicts with the presence of armed groups, the fact of federating the commitment around a major common interest that solves a problem for all, such as the supply of drinking water or the rehabilitation of the irrigation system, creates collaboration and rapprochement, and reduces tensions between groups of beneficiaries.
- 5) The establishment, from the beginning of the infrastructure construction works (supply, irrigation, various buildings), of an inclusive community structure to support the work, maintenance and sustainable management, as well as ongoing support and the reinforcement

of the technical and organizational capacities of this structure, are key factors for the success of a community infrastructure project.

- 6) To be more effective and have a high economic impact, the supervision of farmers in promising value chains (such as rice in Luberizi) should focus more on the link in the chain considered to be the least solid and which can boost a value chain.
- 7) When community mediation and conflict resolution organizations set up by the project or pre-existing ones (CICF, local peace committees, Committee of Elders, CCRCC) are strengthened and led by dedicated community leaders, they become more accepted, better appreciated, and much sought after by members of different communities and by local leaders for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. This creates an increased capacity of communities to deal with conflict prevention and resolution themselves. This capacity is an important step towards sustainability in terms of conflict management and local peacebuilding.
- 8) Land conflicts, conflicts related to water management and conflicts related to the functioning of community structures have been reduced in the Luberizi *groupement* thanks to the activities of the MyA project, but they have not disappeared. The work of the local mediation and peace structures that the project has supported should be continued and supported by other actors after this project. A development actor or a project of a few years cannot definitively resolve conflicts that have taken a long time in a community. For more sustainability, it is imperative to have strengthened local inclusive structures to continue the work after the departure of the development agent or the closure of the project.
- 9) The acceptance and ownership of the project by the beneficiaries goes hand in hand with the level of involvement and community participation in the project and increases with the increase in communication, transparency, and the practice of accountability by project stakeholders.
- 10) When the wait-and-see attitude is sufficiently anchored in the communities of a local environment, it constitutes an obstacle to obtaining significant local contributions to the realization of the project's activities and becomes a challenge on which it is necessary to work sufficiently through awareness-raising and the involvement of several influential actors, otherwise the sustainability of the project's achievements remains hypothetical.
- 11) In a community where the population is not sufficiently informed about the realities of project management, it is absolutely imperative to know what to communicate with them. Transparency is important but communicating down to the smallest detail sometimes leads to misinterpretations and creates expectations in the minds of beneficiaries, which becomes a major obstacle to the realization of project activities.
- 12) Proper implementation of a consortium project requires, beyond the clear division of responsibilities between consortium member organizations, a certain level of harmonization of procedures to guarantee, on the one hand, compliance with working rules and on the other hand, the flexibility necessary for the progress of operations. The lack of this level of harmonization is a source of friction between organizations with consequences on the quality of the collaboration and on the image projected to the beneficiaries.
- 13) Consortium work with complementary experiences between member organizations, a common commitment to the success of the project and close support from the donor who understands the difficulties of the local context are factors that give a high resilience capacity for the continuation of the project despite local conflict and security circumstances which may be of a nature and magnitude to discourage the continuation of the project.

7. PROJECT CLOSURE

Despite the many achievements, and as mentioned in a formal notification letter submitted to the donor on 17 November 2021, **the consortium was unable to complete several activities which had been planned for the No-Cost Extension period**, notably:

- Activity 3.11 - “Set up a sustainable framework for Very Small Enterprise (VSE) (IRC / 20,000 USD)”
- Activity 4.2 - “Support integration of young people demobilized from armed groups using the CEFE and / or L2E approach of the IRC (IRC / 1,500 USD)”
- Activity 4.4 - “Support young demobilized with Very Small Enterprises (VSE) start-up kits in cash transfer (IRC/ 8,000 USD)”
- Activity 4.3 - “Advocacy for the adoption and clarification of the DDRC legal framework and clarification of the role of institutions (STAREC and CIAP-DDRC) / SFCG” / 15,000 USD.
- Activity 4.4 – “Consultation, coordination and learning with provincial institutions, NGOs, Projects and EKN Experts (Dutch Embassy) around the issue of armed groups, DDRC and democratic dialogue (SSU, MONUSCO, CORDAID, VNGi, Interpeace) / SFCG” / 13,000 USD
- Activity 4.5 - “Support to institutions (CIAP-DDRC, SATREC, Ministry of Planning, FARDC, SECAS, etc.) for monitoring the ceasefire with the actors in the field (coordination of non-state armed groups) / SFCG” / 10,000 USD, and
- Activity 4.6 - “Ongoing sensitization of non-state armed groups in view of the DDRC and facilitation (mediation and sensitization) of community reintegration of armed group members who express the will to return to their respective communities. (SFCG) / 13,000 USD.”

The majority of these activities were judged by the consortium to be highly inadvisable to implement due to two main factors:

- 1) Implementation in the context of the dual power structure in Luberizi and the security concerns arising therefrom – a situation which has continued to evolve and develop following the consortium’s last communication to you on this subject in August – would jeopardize the level of social cohesion already achieved by the project and might exacerbate tensions which are already high in the area.
- 2) Implementation would effectively be duplicative or out of step with the changes that have been made to the DDRC process at the national level in DRC.

In the specific case of Activities 4.2 and 4.4, due to delays in the adoption process for the new DDRC-S program at the national level and new orientations by the national Government, the consortium was not able to carry out and complete these activities by the planned project end date.

However, no significant impact at outcome or result-level due to the non-implementation of these activities has been observed and, in the case of those activities which are now to be carried out by the government of DRC, the consortium is hopeful that this shift will be beneficial to the overall sustainability of the DDRC process.

The official closing ceremonies of the project were organized in Uvira on December 16th, 2021, in the presence of all key stakeholders. These were preceded by a field visit the previous day, in which the sectoral ministries of the Sud Kivu Government and all the actors who have been involved in the

implementation took part, including provincial and territorial technical services, administrative leaders from local to provincial level, leaders of partner structures set up and/or revitalized by the project as well as representatives of the direct beneficiary community. These latter participants took the opportunity to present their personal testimonies on the positive changes brought to them by the project in their own words. The field visit allowed participants to realize by themselves the achievements of the project before the closing ceremonies.

During the closing workshop, various partners intervened to express their appreciation for the achievements the project was able to make despite the multiple challenges that the project faced and the difficult conditions in which the project was implemented. They did not fail to voice their gratitude to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the three consortium member organisations. Many of them mentioned that they wished the implementing organizations (IRC, ZOA and SFCG) put further effort into mobilizing more funding from donors to extend such achievements to other localities, where similar needs are still felt.

Despite the assurances of their peers, some presented their concerns about the capacities of the local partner structures and the grassroots administration to be able to perpetuate and make profitable the achievements of the project. According to them, the words of thanks to the sponsors and the consortium are not enough, the results should still remain observable many years later. This was the biggest recommendation made to the local administration and the structures in charge of managing the infrastructures built and/or rehabilitated by the project.

The governmental and administrative partners requested that the donor and the three implementing organizations assign them a certain number of materials and equipment that were used by the project to assist them in continuing the management and oversight of the activities which will continue following closure of the project. These have been provided as agreed to support the ongoing work of these partners as the Maji ya Amani project officially closes.