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**FY15 Q1 Quarterly Report**

**October 2014 – December 2014**  
**SIMAMA / RISE**



*Community radio airing SIMAMA messages related to agriculture and health*

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AV	Agent Villageois (savings and lending community agent)
AVA	Agent Villageois Agricole (Agriculture Village Agent)
AVE	Agent Villageois Elevage (Livestock Village Agent)
BXW	Banana Xanthomonas Wilt
BCC	Behavior Change Communication
CARG	Conseil Agricole Rural de Gestion (Rural Agricultural Management Advisory Board)
CODESA	Comité de Développement en Santé (Health Development Committee)
CMD	Cassava Mosaic Disease
DFAP	Development Food Aid Project
DIP	Detailed Implementation Plan
DVDA	Division Provinciale des Routes de Dessertes Agricoles
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EHA	Essential Health Actions
ENA	Essential Nutrition Actions
EWS	Early Warning Systems
FFA	Food for Assets
FFP	Office of Food for Peace
FFS	Farmer Field School
FY	Fiscal Year (October 1st - September 30th)
ICM	Integrated Crop Management
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
	INERA Institut National pour Recherche et les Etudes Agronomique (National Institute for Research and Agronomic Studies)
IPTT	Indicator Performance Tracking Table
LDC	Local Development Committee
LDP	Local Development Plan
LQAS	Lot Quality Assurance Sampling
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MT	Metric Ton
OCC	Office Congolais de Controle
PM2A	Preventing Malnutrition in Children under Two
PREP	Pipeline and Resource Estimate Proposal
PVS	participatory variety selection
RECO	Relai Communautaire (community relay)
SO	Strategic Objective
SENASSEM	National Seed Service (Service National de Semences)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association

## I. Executive Summary

Mercy Corps, in partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), is implementing the five-year SIMAMA/RISE program aimed at ensuring that vulnerable households and communities in North Kivu build and sustain their food security. The program focuses on improving agricultural production, controlling and eradicating crop disease, increasing household incomes, and preventing childhood malnutrition. Activities specifically address the challenges that vulnerable households face regarding food availability, access, and utilization. SIMAMA aims to build communities' resilience to shocks by introducing and encouraging the adoption of sustainable household coping mechanisms, while being able to engage more efficiently in market activities. The program includes a substantial focus on good governance to ensure that the results achieved are sustainable. This report presents the achievements and challenges during FY15 Q1.

During the reporting period, the FY14 ARR and Year 5 PREP were prepared, providing an opportunity for the program management team to adjust implementation plans and budgets for the final two years of the program with a strong emphasis on integrating activities across three Strategic Objectives (SOs). The detailed implementation plans (DIPs) for IY4 and IY5 were updated to detail results and expected achievements per SO and intervention areas (Katwe and Butembo).

Also during the reporting period, visits were made to the program by Food for Peace regional officers (Shannon Rogers, FFP Team Leader – USAID Kinshasa and Dieudonné Mbuka, FFP Development Assistance Specialist – USAID Kinshasa), as well as by Washington, DC based FFP Officer Marisa Traniello. Meetings were organized with SIMAMA's management to discuss challenges and program performance. Also during the reporting period, a half-day orientation on environmental compliance (Reg 216) was led by Emily Kunen (FFP Post-Crisis Environmental Advisor, USAID-Washington) and Dieudonné Mbuka.

On December 12, 2014, following a surge of insecurity around Katwe including events of ambush of both CRS and MC vehicles, activities in Katwe were temporarily put on hold. Security was also precarious in Butembo during the period, with some massacres of civilians that took place within 30 km of the program area. As of early January, activities have resumed in all program areas, though we continue to conduct security assessments in Butembo and Katwe to ensure the protection and safety of beneficiaries, staff, and assets.

Finally, the reporting period saw a transition of the SO1 Manager (Agriculture and Livelihoods). Mr. Alain Prenat was recruited and joined the program team on Jan 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015; bringing solid experience managing agricultural value chain programs, notably in the Kivus.

During this reporting period, the program accomplished the following activities:

### ***Related to SO1:***

During the reporting period, bio-certified bean seeds were distributed to farmers to be planted in Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and in their individual fields. Concurrently, the program committed resources for the training of the community agriculture extension agents (AVAs) in bean

cultivation. In addition, awareness-raising campaigns through local radio were conducted to support key behavior change messages around adopting improved agricultural practices.

Disease-resistant varieties of cassava, banana and maize continue to be multiplied through existing and newly-formed associations, with special attention paid to Butembo communities this quarter. Activities in Butembo received special attention this quarter. The SIMAMA team collaborated closely with the provincial structure coordinating the fight against the Banana Xanthomonas Wilt (BXW) and participated in meetings to organize a mass campaign to sensitize communities on the disease.

### ***Related to SO2:***

A thorough review of the commodity management and distribution system was conducted this quarter, leading to effective improvements in staffing, documentation and procedures for commodity distribution and management. In parallel, CRS and Caritas undertook a detailed verification of PM2A beneficiaries. An automated system to manage the beneficiary database, food distribution and stock was put in place and tested during the November food distribution. Additionally, beneficiaries are now grouped by Mother Leader to facilitate monitoring and to improve food distribution practices through a group appointment system.

Moreover, to ensure continuous communication with communities, CRS and Caritas leveraged diverse channels, including local broadcasting structures (community radios), churches, local authorities, Mother Leaders and other community mobilizers, to share regular updates on the program and provide clear explanations on the procedures for PM2A implementation. However, the deteriorating security situation in the North Kivu negatively impacted implementation of certain activities during the reporting period; notably, SIMAMA was not able to complete the November or December PM2A distributions.

### ***Related to SO3***

For this period, SO3 activities focused on the capacity building of the 12 Local Development Committees (LDC) in Butembo area. The development plans for these LDCs were completed and six feedback sessions were organized to ensure the appropriation of these plans by communities and authorities at local level. In Birambizo, where development plans are already completed, trainings were dispensed to 14 local structures in charge of managing land disputes.

This period was also marked by the startup of the partnership with the Division Provinciale des Routes de Dessertes Agricoles or DPVA (Agricultural Division of Provincial Roads), through the capacity building of local structures in charge of the maintenance of the FFA projects (maintenance associations). Another area of collaboration between the Division Provinciale and the program was the monitoring of technical norms and standards on FFA sites.

Concerning support to the CARGs, activities were dedicated to assist the development of multi-annual plans for CARG Ruwenzori and strengthening capacities of CARG leaders in advocacy techniques and gender integration. In addition, the SO3 team carried on its effort in setting up Community Early Warning Systems and empowering Disaster Risk Reduction Committee.

Finally, SO3 led training sessions aimed at strengthening the organizational capacity of several SO1 community groups (such as Farmer Field Schools - FFS) and local associations. Other support, through revitalization workshops, was furthermore provided to SO2 partners, notably

CODESA (Health Development Committee) and RECO (Community relays) in Butembo and Birambizo.

## II. Program Activities

### Program integration and coordination

During the reporting period the program management team began regular coordination meetings between Mercy Corps, CRS and Caritas. This was with the aim of strengthening the integration of the program's various components, and we've already seen improvements in food commodity management, M&E, and effective integration between the SO1, SO2, and SO3 work-plans. For example, in November 2014, SO1 teams of Mercy Corps and CRS met regularly with SO2 teams to strategize on how to integrate specific activities that involved both SO1 and SO2 beneficiaries, notably vegetable gardening and small animal husbandry (rabbits and guinea pigs). Another positive result of the integration is that CRS shared improved varieties of cassava and maize seeds with Mercy Corps to implement Integrated Crop Management (ICM). The teams also discussed how to better harmonize activities in specific geographic areas to avoid possible duplication of efforts.

These regular coordination meetings have also been planned at the level of each field office (Katwe and Butembo). In close consultation with the program management team, the field-based team leaders will lead bi-monthly meetings to ensure better communication and coordination between SOs as they implement their work plans. Still planned for February 2015 is the merger of CRS and MC Goma-based teams in one office.

### Program Achievement during reporting period

<b>SO1: Smallholder farming households in target areas have increased and diversified production and profit</b>
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#### *IR 1.1: Smallholder farming households adopt integrated and sustainable farming practices*

One of SIMAMA's objectives is to gain farmer buy-in of the benefits of using bio-fortified varieties. As such SIMAMA conducted the distribution of bean seeds - G59 variety - a variety suitable for Birambizo agro-ecological conditions.

- 4,224 kg of G 59 /1-2 seeds were distributed to 4,224 program participants
- 135 kg of G 59 /1-2 seeds were distributed to 30 AVA
- 491 kg of G 59 /1-2 seeds were distributed to 109 lead farmers
- 750 kg of G 59 /1-2 seeds were distributed to 75 farmer groups

In late December 2014, 967 kg of bio-fortified base 1 seeds composed of COODMLB 001 varieties (230kg), G59 / 1-2 (336kg) and Namulenga (399kg) were purchased from INERA Mulungu. These seeds will be transferred to the seed multipliers supported by SIMAMA, who will then multiply them following the technical itinerary recommended by SENASEM and INERA. Delivery of such seed to multipliers is scheduled for late January. Each seeds multiplier may sow on average 60 kg of beans seeds on one hectare.

In addition, 10 fields matching the technical requirements for bean seed multiplication were identified during the period. The program is preparing a cooperation agreement with seed multipliers to make sure the latter apply best agriculture practice and guarantee that produced seeds (base 2) will be sold at an agreed price to SIMAMA's clients including farmers engaged in Common Interest Groups or farmers marketing their production.

48 Village Agricultural Agents (AVA), primarily responsible for operationalizing the Farmer Field Schools and 2 CARG delegates were trained in farming techniques for beans: for this purpose practical sessions on demonstration plots were organized and 4,424 households, including 1978 men and 2446 women, participated. Six topics were developed for this purpose:

- Choice of land for bean cultivation
- Soil preparation techniques
- Planting techniques
- Soil conservation techniques
- Integrated fight against diseases in bean cultivation
- Harvesting techniques and bean post-harvest handling

Also during the reporting period, Mercy Corps and CRS worked together to set up trials on Integrated Crop Management. For this purpose, CRS provided 30 kg of certified maize seeds and 500 linear meters of mosaic disease-resistant cassava cuttings. SIMAMA hired as well a consultant to undertake an Agriculture LQAS study. Results indicated that in general all the improved varieties of seeds introduced by the program are well-accepted and have been adopted by producers, as have the improved techniques promoted by SIMAMA. However, the study also identified several points for improvement. Currently, participant farmers are not very involved in CARG activities; additionally, participant farmers do not yet have a strong understanding of the concept of business for agriculture. In response, the program team is focusing greater attention on these aspects, and the program SO3 Team will increase CARG mobilization activities.

This quarter CRS worked with 9 new associations for the multiplication and diffusion of improved varieties of seeds for the three staple crops: banana, cassava and maize:

**Banana:** CEDERU added 1 ha for the multiplication of healthy banana suckers in Kalunguta Health Zone while in Butembo they work with 10 new macro-propagators. CEDERU established 3 new Farmer Field Schools (FFS) for BXW management in the Birambizo area and 5 in Butembo, where Caritas also established 4 new FFS.

**Cassava:** CEDERU installed 2 participatory variety selections (PVS) fields in Tongo (Bambu Health Zone) in collaboration with local producer groups.

Caritas and CEDERU installed 4.5 ha of fields for tertiary multiplication of African mosaic-resistant cassava varieties in Butembo through 7 new farmer associations. Once harvested, 80% of those improved variety cuttings will be distributed to local farmers while the remaining 20% will be used by the association members. 2 new associations work in Birambizo Health zone for the same purpose.

**Maize:** CEDERU is working with 2 farmer associations (1 in Birambizo and 1 in Butembo), each managing 1 ha of field, for the multiplication of certified, improved, high-yielding and disease-resistant varieties of maize seeds.

Nine radios operating in Birambizo have broadcasted an average of 2 programs per week during the period; other radio stations rebroadcasted the key messages several times a week. A total of 351 broadcast radio programs were produced. The program agronomists participated to interviews in relation to the topics above mentioned and those interviews were provided to radio partners for their dissemination.

***Regarding activities integrating SO1 and SO2:***

In December 2014, Mercy Corps launched a tender for the procurement of seeds (amaranth, eggplant, carrot, bean, cabbage) to support the homestead garden component targeting SO2 participants. The design of a curriculum for household gardening was also undertaken during the reporting period.

Also this quarter, the first rabbits generated by the multiplication program were distributed to SO2 program participants. Of the 129 households who initially received rabbits in Kibirizi and Kirima (Birambizo), 29 households have starting distributing the offspring to others in their group. Thus, at the time of writing this report, a total of 75 rabbits, including 22 males and 53 females, have been distributed to 22 new households (5 men and 17 women). Mercy Corps issued a tender in November to purchase a large quantity of rabbits and guinea pigs during FY15 Q2. In order to purchase only first quality/healthy animals, the program opened the tender to small lots and prepared for contractors a monthly dispatch plan.

Finally, Caritas together with local producer groups in Birambizo is using the Purdue University Improved Cowpea Storage (PICS) bags to store 5,060 kg of soy seeds. These seeds will be distributed to PM2A beneficiaries in February and March to help them improve their diet.

***Behavior Change Communication:***

In collaboration with the BCC team, SO1 designed and conducted community awareness campaigns (using local radio) based on 6 themes::

- Integrated control against plant diseases
- Seed selection
- Involvement of men and women in homestead gardening
- Consuming rabbit and guinea pig for household health and nutrition
- Promotion of rural savings and lending activities in the villages
- Promotion of the business approach to agriculture

***IR 1.2: Male and female smallholder farmers and other targeted value chain actors improve their practices along the selected value chains***

In October 2014, SIMAMA undertook the sensitization of 436 farmers on new opportunities using profitability (Gross Margin) analyses. At the end of the process, sensitized farmers concluded that onion, garlic and beans were crops showing potential for profit. 2,180 kg of garlic bulbs and 21.8 kg of red onion seeds were then distributed to 436 households in the project area to keep the momentum and allow the selected farmers to move into the value chain component of the program.

***IR 1.3: Male and female smallholder farmers and other targeted value chain actors create an enabling business environment***

In partnership with the Ministry of Decentralization, two training sessions were organized in Butembo in December 2014 to improve the skills of local development committees (LDCs) in participatory planning. As part of the regular monitoring of the 17 LDCs already operational in Birambizo, the SO3 team visited the development committees to meet and give emphasis on their role in the selection and implementation processes of infrastructures related to connecting production areas to the markets.

In addition, all VSLA and SILC groups in Butembo and Birambizo continued to receive support and training during the reporting period. VSLA groups were trained on group organization and leadership, setting up bylaws, and how to manage savings among members and loan granting and repayment. In addition, the SO1 team started the preparation of the training module on entrepreneurship, to be rolled out to VSLA groups starting next quarter.

**SO2: Improved nutritional status among pregnant and lactating women and children under 5 in target areas**

***IR 2.1: Pregnant and lactating women and caregivers of children under 5 increase their utilization of counseling and health services in accordance with GODRC standards.***

During the reporting period, 1 joint supervision visit with the Health Zone Management Team was conducted in 4 health centers. It was noted that CPN (prenatal visits) decreased when SIMAMA stopped recruiting PM2A beneficiaries. In response, SIMAMA will reinforce the sensitization of communities through its Mama Leaders and RECOs, in close collaboration with the health posts.

The team also noted that counseling on Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA) has now been effectively and systematically included in the health centers' activities. 1,113 household visits promoting ENA and key family health practices were conducted by RECOs. 9 community meetings on ENA, EHA (Essential Health Actions) and other key health practices were conducted by RECOs and SIMAMA field staff.

In addition, SIMAMA participated in 3 Nutrition Cluster meetings where participants discussed nutritional alerts in IDP (Internally Displaced Person) camps and preparations for the mass campaign for Vitamin A and deworming for children under five.

Finally, the field team began distributing 1,500 branded sarongs to Mother Leaders and Father Leaders in December. Mother Leaders and RECOs in 12 health areas received 1,800 posters and 384 picture boxes (*boites à image*) on ENA.

***IR2.2: Pregnant and lactating women and caregivers of children under 5 adopt key preventive nutrition and health behaviors.***

This quarter, Mama Leaders and Papa Leaders conducted 7,673 household visits to reinforce education on health and nutrition. 529 cooking demonstrations (62 in Butembo and 467 in Birambizo/Bambu) were conducted using 3 recipes (2 on high energetic value meal for children

and 1 on balanced diet for children of different ages). The program team conducted 36 monthly meetings with Mama Leaders and Papa Leaders to discuss health and nutrition topics (exclusive breast feeding, cooking demonstration, EHA).

Due to the revision of the food commodity distribution process for PM2A participants and to introduce the updated beneficiary lists further to the verification exercise of the database, two campaigns to communicate information on the PM2A program (explanation of eligibility criteria, graduation process, and use of automated digitalized distribution methodology) were conducted by CRS this quarter.

As part of supervision, the BCC team used 6 QIVC (Quality Improvement Verification Checklists) with Mother Leaders to monitor the quality of their work. Findings were that Mother Leaders play successfully their role, however they still need to gain more skills in facilitating discussions/meetings and in using pedagogic tools such as the picture boxes (boites à images).

### ***IR 2.3. Pregnant and lactating women and children under 5 consume a diet in accordance with national GODRC guidelines***

During the quarter, 232 PM2A beneficiaries graduated from the PM2A program, 48 deceased, and 5,144 moved from the women program to the children program. Please see the section on Commodity management for PM2A Beneficiaries served and commodities distributed during the quarter.

As previously reported, this quarter SIMAMA conducted an exercise to verify all names registered in the beneficiary list against the health centers' CPN registers in all 29 health areas targeted by the program in the Birambizo and Bambu Health Zones. The validated lists were used during the November food distribution but will be left open until March 15 to ensure all beneficiary lists are accurate per targeting criteria.

In support of SO2, the CRS BCC Team conducted 29 meetings with 48 local leaders and Health Agents in the 29 health areas of the program to increase their involvement in program activities, especially activities related to PM2A food distribution.

Finally, 2 meetings (1 in Goma and 1 in Katwe) were held between CRS/Caritas and MC staff to integrate SO1 activities (vegetable gardening and small animal husbandry) with SO2. This will help ensure that SO2 beneficiaries can have access to nutritious food to improve their children's nutritional status.

## **SO3: Strengthened community governance of food security in target areas**

### ***IR 3.1 Local Leaders, Local Development Committees, civil society, and government service providers collaborate to maintain accountability and transparency in regards to community food security concerns***

The reporting period was marked by the completion of the 12 Local Development Plans (LDPs) in Butembo by Local Development Committees (LDCs). Six validation and feedback sessions were organized (2 communities grouped into one session), targeting concerned communities, civil society actors and the local authorities. 150 people attended these validation and feedback sessions to ensure the appropriation of these plans by communities and authorities at local level.

In partnership with the Provincial Division of Decentralization, 8 LDCs (among the 12) received training in December 2014 on decentralization, local planning, and roles and responsibilities of CDCs in line with the decentralization policy in the DRC. This training benefited a total of 91 members, including 59 men and 32 women in Butembo.

As part of FFA activities, the SO3 team continued the setup of new maintenance committees in Birambizo. Five new maintenance committees were put in place during the quarter to ensure the durability of the community infrastructure made possible by USAID.

A partnership agreement was signed with the Division Provinciale des Voies de Desserte Agricole - DVDA (Provincial Division of agricultural in charge of feeder roads) to support the local actors in the technical monitoring of road rehabilitation projects and to certify the works after completion. The governmental agency plays as well a role in training and transferring technical capacities to road maintenance committees. 13 maintenance committees of rural roads (with 110 participants) received the first wave of training during the quarter in the areas of Tongo and Mutanda (Birambizo). In parallel, the SO3 team assisted these same maintenance committees in elaborating their management plan for the infrastructures; this activity included among others the maintenance tasks to be performed on a quarterly basis. FFA activities did not take place during the period and resumed in January 15.

In the DRC, “Salongo” is a traditional community mechanism through which citizens oversee community assets and organize work when needed. The Division Provinciale des Voies de Desserte Agricole, local authorities and concerned communities selected this mechanism to ensure the regular maintenance of the infrastructure rehabilitated through the program.

In regards to land issues, in Birambizo this quarter, local structures managing land disputes received a capacity building training focused on land tenure regulations in DRC, land acquisition processes and land dispute management. The attendance was composed of members of the CARG in Bwito and other conflict resolution structures operating at the local level, such as the Justice and Peace Commission, NRCF (a land conflict resolution network), FPJ (Youth Peace Forum); of CLPC (Permanent Local Conciliation Committees), local committees composed of the wises and CRC (conflict resolution committees). In total 51 people participated in this training, including 11 women and 40 men.

In respect with supporting the CARG agenda, activities were dedicated to assist the development of Multi-annual plans for CARG Ruwenzori and strengthening the capacities of CARG leaders in advocacy techniques and gender integration. In addition, SO3 carried on its effort in setting up community early warning systems (EWS) related to food security and empowering Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Committees. Two series of trainings were conducted in Birambizo, in the localities of Kishishe, Kilama, Bugina and Bambo. A total of 77 individuals (including 22 women and 55 men) members of Disaster Risks Reduction (DRR) committees, LDCs and local authorities received training on the establishment and functioning of Early Warning System (EWS) mechanisms. Currently, seven Community EWS are in place and operating in the localities of Kibirizi, Kabanda, Kirima, Kishishe, Kilama, Bambo and Bugina.

In addition, the SO3 team provided technical assistance to eight SO1 local associations and community based organizations involved in FFS activities and seeds multiplication. 155 individuals (66 women and 89 men) gained additional skills in term of organizational management and association structuring.

In Kalunguta Health zone, RECOs (community health relays) and CODESA (Health Development Committees) received the support of the SO3 team, who facilitated a capacity building and revitalization workshop. The training was facilitated by ministry of Health staff in charge of supervising the Health zone. 38 members of CODESA and RECO benefited from this initiative, in accordance with DRC's Health policy in respect with the management of community-based health facilities. This session was aimed at strengthening governance in the health sector and improving the quality of services of the different services providers in the health area.

Finally, SO3 led training sessions aimed at strengthening organizational capacity of several SO1 community groups (such Farmer Field Schools) and local associations. Other support, through revitalization workshops, was furthermore provided to SO2 partners CODESA (Health Development Committee) and RECO (Community Relay) in Butembo and Birambizo, materializing the efforts of the Consortium to integrate together the three specific objectives.

### ***IR 3.2: Communities reinforce linkages with territory and provincial food security structures***

A partnership agreement was signed in December between SIMAMA and the provincial CARG to contribute to the implementation of the multiannual plan of the CARG in the province of North Kivu. Through this partnership, SIMAMA intends to strengthen the leadership of the provincial CARG and its ability to support local CARG activities and plans to deliver quality services to communities and smallholder farmers.

In Butembo, CARG Ruwenzori hosted a capacity building and revitalization workshop to support its multi-year planning process and foster gender mainstreaming in food security (31 members attended); and members of CARG Baswhaga received training on advocacy techniques (28 members attended).

## **III. Gender Integration**

During the reporting period, SIMAMA elaborated a gender integration strategy across all SOs, as reflected in the DIPs submitted with the FY5 PREP. A first training on gender and food security was conducted in Goma for 15 key staff (13 men, 2 women) and resulted in a strategy workshop for the same target group. To ensure gender integration in every SIMAMA activity, the Gender Advisor selected 19 (13 men, 6 women) Gender Focal Points among the SO's field staff. They were trained for three days (Butembo, 28-30 October 2014) on key gender concepts and on the legal framework on gender in DRC, and they became familiar with the specific tasks required of them and added to their job description.

The impact of the training was evident, as several suggestions came from the field on how to integrate gender issues in planned activities, including related to the structure of LDCs and CARGs; BCC media messages and activities; and VSLA targeting. In collaboration with a local NGO, the program also developed a ToT manual on positive masculinity and gender integration that was presented over a training of 4 days (9-12 December 2014) to the gender focal points, who have already begun reconstituting the training content to their teams. The program also hired a gender officer to help roll out these adjustments across all program components.

In addition, all SOs strategies were reviewed according gender lens. Thus, efforts are underway to strengthen female representation within SO3 associations (CARG, LDCs). 31 Baswanga CARG members (10 women, 21 men) were trained over 2 days (27-28 November 2014) and in

turn they've trained thus far 147 members of their associations and local administration bodies. Some delays were registered in implementing activities in Birambizo given to security concerns during December, but activities have now resumed with CARG and CLD members who will receive by the end of January trainings on gender and positive masculinity that they will replicate with their constituency according to an agreed plan. Similarly, SO1's Agents Villageois (AVA) received a first training on positive masculinity that they will replicate with the 112 VSLAs.

Finally, the SIMAMA gender advisor is currently working with our M&E team to conduct an assessment about decision-making and gender dynamics within VSLAs that will lead to recommendations for the recently established VSLA in Butembo. Decision-making and participation in public life are also at the core of the trainings organized for Mama & Papa Leaders and RECO. In fact, the Gender Advisor and a local organization (Dynamique des Femmes Juristes) are currently developing a ToT manual on female leadership that will be rolled out at the beginning of March throughout all the components. Finally, in collaboration with CRS Gender and Protection Specialist, the manual for a training session on Code of Conduct and basic protection principals has been prepared and it will be delivered in the field at the end of February.

#### **IV. Behavior Change Communication**

During the reporting period, the SIMAMA BCC program was able to mobilize large groups of participants within five locations (Kibirizi, Kikuku, Bambo, Nyanzale and Bwalanda/Katwe). Specifically, five SO3 SIMAMA theater productions took place in November 2014 on the following themes:

- Model Household: joint decision making process uniting couples
- Integrated communities: when women are engaged and valued
- Musavuli: thug or hero? A story to inspire youth

These same three productions will be presented in four SIMAMA sites around Butembo – Kabasha, Lukanga, Musienene and Masereka as soon as February 2015.

Also, innovative ways to design rabbit's cages have been demonstrated to large audiences in the communities of Kibirizi, Kikuku, Bwalanda, Lueshe, Mutanda, Kirima and Khashalira during the "SIMAMA Rabbit Cage Contest". SIMAMA was able to gather more than 450 cages all over these community sites. More than 30 winners have been given bicycles, radio sets, cage materials, and of course rabbits in exchange of their winning cages. Along with the contest, the program veterinarians were able to widely disseminate the basic techniques on how to breed rabbits.

Finally, SIMAMA sponsored radio broadcasts continued through the reporting period, with 60 radio shows per month broadcast by fifteen SIMAMA radio partners. The same is happening with the dissemination of the SIMAMA radio spots, at a pace of thirty spots broadcasted per day. In regards to visual media productions, three short films – tomato cropping, The ABC of rabbit breeding, and tree planting – will be added to the SIMAMA cinema caravan as soon as February 2015.

## V. Commodity Management

In an effort to strengthen local staff capacity in the management of program commodities, the program conducted an all commodity staff refresher training in Katwe. The training mainly targeted 50 field based staff including store-keepers, commodity distribution officers, food monitors and M&E staff and mainly focused on USAID/FFP acceptable standards and regulations of managing Title II commodities, sharing field best practices in managing warehouses and commodity distribution. In addition, CRS received support from 2 CRS HQ staff and recruited one expatriate consultant to advise on strengthening and improving the commodity management and distribution systems. The consultant attended the November distributions in order to better understand the process. These reviews led to 66 recommendations on how to improve the system, which were put into action points that will be implemented in the following months.

During this period, Tattamangalam Ramachandran, Mercy Corps' HQ-based Food Commodity Specialist, made a follow up support visit to the program in order to review the program's commodity management and distribution systems and to make recommendations. Dieudonné Mbuka, a Food Security Specialist from USAID/FFP Kinshasa, also visited the Mercy Corps commodity warehouses in Goma; where he conducted a thorough independent warehouse inspection activity to establish whether Mercy Corps was complying with USAID/FFP commodity management best practices.

This quarter, SIMAMA continued the process of transitioning to an improved system that leverages Information, Communication and Technology for Development (ICT4D) to manage beneficiary information, facilitate food distributions and manage commodities. The program distributed cards with bar codes to beneficiaries and recorded information on verified beneficiaries using iPads. This process will continue in the following months.

Mercy Corps advertised in the local print media the inland freight tender for the movement of 2,790MT of direct distribution commodities from the port of Dar es Salaam to Goma warehouses from March 2015 to January 2016 and the contract is expected to be awarded and signed in January 2015.

In accordance with U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) 22 CFR (211) (8) (9) (11), Mercy Corps transferred **US\$30,828.72** and **US\$1,525** to Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) as settlement of in-country third party claims for loss of commodities by Catholic Relief Services field staff.

### **Commodities received during the quarter**

The Program received from the port of Dar Es Salaam a total of **2,409.32MT** in December 2014 comprising of **1,323.575MT** of corn soya blend, **776.85MT** of cornmeal, **189.32MT** of vegetable oil and **119.575MT** of yellow split peas. This is part of the direct distribution commodities which was called forward by the program in Quarter 3 of FY14. During this period, Alberic Lwanzo, Commodity Manager, travelled to the port of Dar es Salaam to oversee and coordinate the commodity discharge process at the port along with Bollore Africa Logistics, Mercy Corps' contracted inland freight forwarder and Intertek, Mercy Corps' contracted discharge surveyor.

Finally, SIMAMA also received this quarter **10MT** of vegetable oil as a loan repayment from ADRA.

### Commodities distributed during the quarter

There was no food for asset commodity distribution activities conducted during the quarter, notably due to a pipeline break in cornmeal and yellow split peas stocks, but also per requirements of the agricultural calendar. PM2A distributions were also postponed during the month of October 2014, during the beneficiary re-verification process, and activities resumed in November 2014 only to be interrupted during the last week of November and the entire month of December 2014 due to high levels of insecurity and banditry in Birambizo health zone. November distribution could not take place in 4 of the 28 distribution sites namely Kasoko, Katsiru, Kishishe and Mutanda.

### Direct distribution commodity stocks in country during the quarter.

Period	Corn Meal (MT)	Yellow Split Peas (MT)	Corn Soy Blend (MT)	Vegetable Oil (MT)	Total (MT)
Oct-14	1.175	6.867	474.963	45.290	<b>528.295</b>
Nov-14	1.175	6.867	1,500.395	46.339	<b>1,554.776</b>
Dec-14	778.005	126.437	1,692.877	235.238	<b>2,832.557</b>

### Total number of PM2A beneficiaries served and commodities distributed during the quarter.

Period	Pregnant women and lactating mothers	Children under 2	Total beneficiaries served	Corn soy blend (MT)	Vegetable oil (MT)	Total (MT)
Oct-14	0	0	<b>0</b>	0	0	0
Nov-14	5,594	9,872	<b>15,466</b>	101.187	9.2796	<b>110.4666</b>
Dec-14	200	485	<b>685</b>	4.410	0.411	<b>4.821</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>105.597</b>	<b>9.6906</b>	<b>115.2876</b>

### Total Food for Assets beneficiaries served and commodities distributed during the quarter.

Period	Households reached	Vegetable oil (MT)	Split yellow peas (MT)	Cornmeal (MT)	Total (MT)
Oct-14	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Nov-14	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Dec-14	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

## VI. Monitoring & Evaluation

During the reporting period, SIMAMA conducted a qualitative post-assessment of the seeds (soy, beans, garlic and maize) that were distributed to farmers in the targeted communities. Only the report on the bean seeds distribution is finalized as of today; it tells that the activity was successful: seeds were good quality and showed high levels of germination and growth; and farmers were happy with the introduction of this new variety of seeds and they wish to continue using these seeds for their next crop.

In addition, one Data Quality Assessment focused on SO1 activities was implemented in Butembo. This exercise allowed cleaning and updating of VSLA participants' list. In addition, the knowledge and skills of Village Agents, in charge of training VSLA groups, were assessed and qualified as satisfactory.

A training on Reg.216 conducted by USAID in October 2014 helped the SIMAMA M&E team and key program staff better addressing environmental considerations within the program, and following the training the program EMMP was revised.

In respect to food commodity management, and in line with standard practices, the M&E Departments of both Mercy Corps and CRS conducted monthly warehouses physical inventories in Goma as well as in CRS secondary warehouses located on near PM2A distribution sites.

In response to the case of vegetable oil diversion (final report submitted to FFP) and potential ghosts beneficiaries within the PM2A Program (investigation still ongoing) the focus was on improving the data management of pre-distribution and post-distribution data and related training was conducted both for M&E database team and field staff.

Finally community "Help Desks" were systematically rolled out at all PM2A distribution sites and claims were recorded and then analyzed during the November distribution. The help desk system will continue for future distributions, and each complaint will be addressed.

## **VII. Challenges and Lessons learned**

- The recent involvement of the Division Provinciale des Voies de Desserte Agricole into the road/FFA component increased the commitment of the maintenance committees and local authorities and proved to be an effective way to prepare concretely local stakeholders for the project's phase out.
- The Office Congolais de Contrôle (OCC) revised its commodity sampling methodology for all shipments arriving in-country. Originally, commodity samples under 5kgs were collected per bill of lading, however with the new changes in place since December 2014, the OCC begun collecting samples per truck off loaded at the warehouse in Goma. Consequently, this led to more commodities being collected for samples and also increased unbudgeted sampling and testing costs to the program. However Mercy Corps has protested in writing to OCC regarding these changes and further discussions are expected to be held to resolve the impasse.
- Due to high levels of insecurity and banditry activities in Birambizo health zone during the last two weeks of December 2014, food distributions were suspended, and with the arrival of new shipments from the port of Dar es Salaam this had a significant impact on Mercy Corps storage capacity in Goma. Mercy Corps rented a private

warehouse in Goma in December 2014 for a period of two months to store additional commodities.

### **VIII. External Coordination**

SIMAMA contributed to and participated in the celebration of the World Environmental Day that took place in Bwito (Birambizo) on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Promotion materials with USAID marking and messages for healthy nutrition were distributed to community volunteers who assisted the organization of the event.

On November 26, SIMAMA joined the North Kivu land tenure coordination meeting in Butembo, and on 4-5 December, 2014, program staff attended a round table of development actors organized to secure the financial resources required for the annual Investment Plan (2014-2015) in the territory of Lubero (Butembo).

### **IX. Success stories**

Please see in annex