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## **FY16 Q2 Quarterly Report**

### **January – March 2016**

### **Resources to Improve Food Security in the Eastern DRC (RISE)**

### **“SIMAMA”**

AID-FFP-A-11-00008



*SIMAMA program participants drying their maize harvest before storage in Birambizo. Photo: Mercy Corps*

#### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

AID-FFP-A-11-00008  
Start Date: Sept. 1, 2011  
End Date: Aug. 30, 2016  
Report Date: January 29th, 2016  
Total Award: \$26,174,500

## Executive Summary

Mercy Corps, in partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), is implementing the five-year Resources to Improve Food Security in Eastern DRC (RISE) or SIMAMA 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 the period of January to March 2016, which correspond to FY 2016, Quarter 2.

The table below provides the summary of SIMAMA areas of intervention. For convenience, in this report, when referring to Butembo zone, Mercy Corps refers to the territories of Beni and Lubero; when referring to Birambizo zone, Mercy Corps refers to the territory of Rutshuru.

SIMAMA intervention areas		
3territories	5 health zones	55health areas of intervention
Ruthsuru	Birambizo	19
	Bambu	10
Lubero	Musienene	10
	Masereka	6
Beni	Kalunguta	10

The program's implementation continues as per its Year 5 PREP with no specific change to report. The period corresponded to the harvest season in the different program areas, characterized by reduced crops due to climatic issues (inadequate rainfall in Birambizo and too much sunshine in Butembo). In respect with SO2 Nutrition, the period was mainly marked with the last distribution of food commodities to PM2A participants. The governance SO3 component strived to move forward with the implementation of the exit strategy through capacity building of local groups partnering with the program. Details for each specific component are provided in this report.

### Program close out/exit strategy

SIMAMA continued the mainstreaming of the program exit strategy initiated within each SO. Two specific workshops took place in Goma (January 2016) and in Butembo (February 2016) to refine the strategy elaborated and train staff on the various aspect of the program coming up phasing down so that they deliver clear and consistent messages across the participating communities. In May 2016, the program will conduct three workshops will local authorities and

stakeholders to officially close the program, keeping in mind that all stakeholders are already informed about the program closure.

In March 2016, the first phase of staff contract terminations took place following the phasing down plan that was designed in December 2015 within both Mercy Corps and CRS. Right now and up to the end of May 2016, Mercy Corps will keep 60% of its capacity at field level to support the sustainability agenda/program exit plan, especially for SO3 local partners and SO1 value chain stakeholders. The M&E team will in addition stay fully on board to collect information and prepare the final reporting.

### **Final evaluation**

SIMAMA hosted the team of consultants from the Mitchell Group during the month of February 2016. Due to the very specific insecurity environment of North Kivu, the program provided logistics assistance to the consultants so that they could access safely the villages selected randomly. The Mitchell Group conducted a debriefing to SIMAMA management in Goma and expressed their preliminary oral satisfaction about the program results.

### **Finance**

The program undertook a budget revision completed in February 2016 to support the upcoming program close out. Projections shows that: monetization proceeds are 100% spent and 202e resources will be 99% committed; while ITSH funds are projected to be slightly underspent (by about \$100,000) by the end of the program.

### **Security Update**

While security was relatively stable in Butembo during the period, it continues to create obstacles in Birambizo with displacement of communities due to the persistent tribal conflict between Nande and Hutu communities competing for land control. Community displacements were sporadic and very spotted in specific SIMAMA communities. This situation perturbed the PM2A distribution although the program managed to complete the food distributions to children under 2 at the end of the quarter.

## **Strategic Objective 1: Agriculture and Livelihoods**

In the agricultural calendar in North Kivu, the period from January to March is harvest season for crops sown during the October to December period. As such, it is an intense work period for small farmers. During the quarter, heavy rains damaged some vegetable crops, notably around the areas of Birambizo and Musienene. The program estimates a 30% loss on cabbage and onion crops. Conversely, in Masereka and Kalunguta health zones, a dearth of rainfall stunted plant growth (mainly potatoes, cassava and beans) which in the long-term raises concerns for the quality of yields. Moreover, the climate impact raised prices for agricultural products in local markets. For example, a kilo of beans which last year cost \$0.50 is currently sold at a price of \$0.67. Similarly, in the Butembo area, the price of a kilo of potatoes increased by 55% due to the climatic hazard.

To support the activities of farmers during this period, SIMAMA and its technical agricultural team intensified their efforts in the following areas: support for Farmer Field Schools (FFS), amplifying the campaign to combat and manage BXW, technical support to Producer/Multipliers (PM) and Common Interest Groups (GIC).

To prepare for the withdrawal of the program, many activities were carried out in collaboration with local authorities: touring agricultural activities with the agronomist of Bwito chefferie (Birambizo); joint visit of local authorities of Lubero territory (Territorial Administrator, ITAPEL and Environment Services) to the Musienene and Masereka health zones.

## **Agriculture Production**

### **Farmer Field Schools - homestead gardens**

During the reporting period, SIMAMA concentrated its efforts in providing refresher trainings to 187 FFS homestead gardens created in the first quarter of FY16. 2,002 members from 96 FFS (1,437 women and 565 men) in Birambizo and 2,129 members from 91 FFS (1,564 women and 565 men) in Butembo attended training sessions on the selection of good seed, integrated pest management, soil conservation and the harvest and post-harvest of homestead garden produce.

In the first quarter of FY16, the program distributed cabbage, carrot, onion and leek seeds to 187 FFS. In December 2015, cabbage, onions and leeks seedlings were planted in the fields and will be harvested in April 2016, in line with the objective of improving and diversifying household nutrition.

### **Prevention of crop disease (banana and cassava)**

#### *Cassava*

In the health zones of Musienene, Kalunga, Bambu and Birambizo, sensitization campaigns on healthy cassava cuttings continued for Producers multipliers, including plant protection monitoring and conforming to standards maintained by the national seeds authority, SENASEM, in the production and multiplication of certified cassava cuttings.

In Birambizo, to continue efforts against cassava mosaic disease (CMD), SIMAMA provided technical support to associations that installed 8 ha of healthy cassava cuttings during Q1 FY16 for agricultural production and multiplication. Along this line, the program expects to disseminate 160,000 linear meters of healthy cassava cuttings to project beneficiaries early in Q3.

#### *Banana*

In Birambizo, along with monitoring agronomists from ITAPEL and members of 38 FFS, 200 new banana producer groups (i.e. 5,000 farmers) were trained on the fight against BXW and the application of local laws in their respective communities.

In Butembo, with the involvement of 15 FFS for bananas, the campaign against BXW intensified and spread to new villages. The program also involved 201 banana farmers (110 women and 91 men) who, in turn, cleaned a total area of 180 hectares of their plantations.

SIMAMA also organized eight open field days during the month of January 2016. They widely promoted 23 healthy banana varieties and eight cassava varieties introduced and disseminated to producers in the areas of Birambizo and Butembo. Each open field day gathered hundreds of participants, including authority representatives, private sector stakeholders, individual farmers and members of producers' organizations. These events aimed at promoting crop disease prevention and treatment and showed examples of bananas and manioc produced in healthy fields.

## **Agriculture commercialization**

### **Common Interest Groups**

During the reporting period, the program continued to coach 76 CIG set up in Q3 FY15. The 76 CIG (33 in Butembo and 43 in Birambizo) engaged in the production and marketing of potatoes (7), beans (32), and onions (37).

As a result, the Central Cooperative of North Kivu (COOCENKI) trained 1,752 members of the 76 CIG in financial management and the development of an agricultural business plan. 82 value chain actors in the bean sector (CIG leaders, local authorities and CARG members) were trained on post-harvest value-adding processes (handling, treating, storage and packaging). In Butembo, 33 CIG leaders and eight local authorities received training on how to manage a collection and storage center for agricultural products (CCA). After the training sessions, the SIMAMA Project supported a CIG-led initiative for the construction of seven CCA.

In preparation for the withdrawal of its teams, the program increased its collaboration with state services. In this vein, local authorities (Territorial Administrator of Lubero, Inspector of Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock (ITAPEL) of Lubero and Territorial Inspector for Rural Development of Lubero) toured the agricultural activities of the program.

Progressively, through the training activities organized, the CIG gained increasing technical and administrative autonomy. Supporting them throughout the chain of their commercial production, SIMAMA organized meetings for 18 CIG leaders and 14 potential buyers in the cities of Butembo, Beni, Goma and Kitchanga to discuss the base criteria to assess produce quality for beans, potatoes and onions. As an outcome of these meetings, a contact roster of potential buyers has been developed.

### **Seeds production and multiplication**

This quarter was typified by the production and marketing of bean and potato seed in the fields of Producers Multipliers (PM). The table below shows the distribution of PM activities by produce type. In the reporting period, 36 PM benefitted from technical support offered by SIMAMA.

No	Production	Number of seeds producers	Total
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		<b>Butembo</b>	<b>Birambizo</b>	
1	Bean	8	9	17
2	Potato	4	1	5
3	Corn	6	2	8
4	Soybean	4	2	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>22</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>36</b>

17 PM engaged in producing and marketing of bean seed. They produced 10.85 metric tons (MT) of certified seed, which they sold to CIG members and other farmers for a market value of \$11,094.

Of the five potato-growing PM, the one operating in Birambizo achieved a yield of 8 MT of seed. 4 MT were sold to CIG members for a sales price of \$3,600; he then kept the remaining 4 MT to expand his seed production in the B-season of 2016. In Q3 FY2016, the four PM in Butembo will reap an anticipated yield 28 MT of certified seed from 3.5 ha (estimated value of seed yield is \$25,200).

These 22 PM were trained on developing an agricultural business plan, financial management and post-harvest value-adding.

#### Seed certification

During the reporting period, the national seed service SENASEM retrained 36 PM (22 from Butembo and 14 from Birambizo) on seed production techniques and the process of the seed sector chain in DR Congo. It should be noted that all 36 PM are on the provincial register of certified seed multipliers.

The seed inspectors from SENASEM carried out inspections on: 12.9 ha of bean seed fields, 5.5 ha of potato seed fields and 5.5 ha of soybean seed fields. Before harvest, SENASEM certified all of the fields.

During FY16 Q1, 300 kg of soybean seeds were purchased from CAPSA Luotu and distributed to soybean PMs. As a result, the subsequent quarter yielded a partial harvest of 969 kg of certified soybean seed, which was disseminated among SO2 households in Birambizo and Butembo to support local production of corn-soy blend (CSB).

To support seed multiplication of Mudishi I and III varieties, eight maize PMs cultivated an additional four hectares of multiplication fields. These new fields have an anticipated harvest of 1.5 MT per hectare for June 2016.

#### Linkage of the value chain actors

The SIMAMA Project continues to cultivate linkages between PMs and regional input suppliers based in North Kivu, Rwanda and in Uganda. Thus, in February 2016, the 22 bean and potato PMs visited four North Kivu seed suppliers and they plan to source seeds from Rwanda and Uganda for the B-season in 2016. During their training on business plan development, the

Inspector of ITAPEL shared contacts with them to facilitate the seed import process, which is tax-exempted in DR Congo.

In Butembo and Beni, CIG leaders organized by product met potential buyers (COODEPROVI, CAUB, APMCO, COOCENKI, CENTADEI, COOPADEKA, COODAKI and finally COAKI, who makes potato chips) to discuss quality criteria for beans, potatoes and onions.

In Birambizo, CIG leaders were connected with potential buyers (ADEVEVI, UPROVEPA) and the primary wholesalers in Goma and Kitchanga.

### Price information system

The implementation of the price information system for agricultural products is progressing according to plan. A committee set up in local agricultural markets (administrative group level) collects price information that is then transmitted to CIG leaders either by telephone or on a data collection sheet.

At present, CIGs engage in regular over the phone commerce to trade produce with the principal agricultural buyers in North Kivu. CIG leaders inform their members at the weekly meetings they organize, where they discuss trade opportunities, product availability and prices. During the reporting period, a contact directory of potential buyers of onions, beans and potatoes was prepared and shared with the 76 CIG in Birambizo and Butembo.

### Rural saving and loans

#### *Butembo*

The 120 VSLA groups formed by Mercy Corps are currently in their second cycle. At the beginning of the second cycle, they held in total \$100,378 in savings (or an average of \$1,665 per group). Furthermore, 87% of members took out loans in the quarter of which 62.8% were repaid during the same period. 87% of those who took loans are women. The average loan per member is \$33, mainly used to purchase seeds and small agricultural tools.

SIMAMA established 120 VLSAs and since 2015 the communities themselves created another 170 VSLAs. The supplementary 170 VSLAs base their training on the seven module VSLA approach, as a result of 12 Village Agents (VA) who successfully obtained the necessary certifications to act as private security providers (PSP) after assessments by the SIMAMA Project and the Territorial Administrator. Therefore, 290 VSLAs in total work with the SIMAMA Project in Butembo under the management of 31 PSP.

#### *Birambizo*

The 191 Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) supported by SIMAMA since January 2014 closed on their second operating cycle, disbursing the resultant dividends amongst members. Currently, they are leading their third cycle, with an average savings amount per member of \$29.45. The value of an average loan rose to \$43.65.

In January 2016, the 22 VA who managed these groups underwent assessment by the CRS-SILC team. Amongst them, 19 were certified as PSP.



## **Strategic Objective 2: Nutrition**

This quarter, health and nutrition activities continued under SO2 in the 33 health areas of the four targeted health zones: Birambizo (19 health areas) and Bambu (10 health areas) in Rutshuru Territory; Kalunguta (two health areas) in Beni Territory; and Musienene (two health areas) in Lubero Territory.

Key activities implemented during the quarter include: training for health agents and community volunteers on health related topics; cooking demonstrations focusing mainly on locally available food and promoting two easily affordable recipes: homemade CSB and a recipe with balanced diet made of cereal (maize or sorghum depending on the place), pulses (beans or soya), vegetables (mostly cabbage or carrots) and palm oil; the distribution of rabbits to increase the availability of animal protein as well as provide an income-generating opportunity for vulnerable households; and targeted household visits allowing the RECOs to early detect and successfully refer malnourished children to the health centers. Finally, the PM2A food distributions were completed, with distributions of the last rations for March and April.

In addition, the SIMAMA team conducted several field visits in order to sensitize the local authorities and the communities about the end of the program as well as share information about the remaining activities: eight “Open Days” were conducted in project zones for the presentation of project achievements and exit strategies. Four joint visits with the PRONANUT, DPS and BCZ were also conducted with the purpose of further acquainting them with the project and providing the opportunity for them to consider options for assuming responsibility for certain activities.

From January, SO2 beneficiaries in Butembo zone started receiving the rabbits provided both for improved nutrition (easy and cheap source of animal protein) and for income-generation. The first set of 409 groups received each 1 male and 2 females to start the rearing. Once those genitors give birth, they rear the cobs until they become adult and then pass on the genitors to a second set of households. And so on until each of the 3 targeted household per group receive a set of 3 genitors.

### **Support for improved access to better quality health and nutrition services at the community level**

SIMAMA trained 35 Health Agents on the implementation of the improved growth monitoring approach for Birambizo/Kibirizi and Bambu Health Zones in order to support early detection of child malnutrition.

During the period, 365 RECOs were trained on communication techniques and the use of the tools (boites à image) used by the GoDRC’s to support the adoption of key family health practices. In addition to that, 479 RECO received refresher trainings on ENA/ IYCF and EHA messages.

During the quarter, as part of usual routine activities, the RECOs and Mamas Leaders conducted 5,320 household visits which allowed them to detect 4,551 case of moderate acute malnutrition and refer those cases to the appropriate health centers supported by PRONANUT, Caritas and International Medical Corps (IMC).

## **Collaboration with Health Structures**

The collaboration with health structures was further increased during the quarter. CRS distributed 500 posters on PNC 4 translated into Swahili to all the health centers, Mamas Leaders and RECOs in the program targeted zone. Moreover, four joint supervision visits were conducted in 9 Health Centers with the BCZ.

SIMAMA attended three Nutrition cluster meetings during which the participant discussed about gaps and ongoing interventions, including an additional meeting organized because of the increased number of IDPs settling in several IDP camps in North Kivu.

RECOs have been trained on how to screen malnutrition using MUAC. Owing to that, RECOs in the SIMAMA zone were able to identify 4,551 cases of moderate malnourished children and referred them to Health Centers. 1,375 of them were confirmed severely malnourished and properly taken care of in those Health Centers.

35 Health Agents were trained on CPS (Growth monitoring). For the period October-December 2015, they observed a 76.52% participation rate in growth monitoring in the targeted area. Other period results will be available for the next report.

Joint meeting between SO2 Team and the BCZ discussed about the future of the ML/PLs. The participants identified as important steps to explain to the ML/PLs how the RECOs are organized and how they works to facilitate potential integration that SIMAMA is discussing with the Provincial Ministry of Health.

## **Promotion of food and dietary diversification**

SIMAMA carried on implementing cooking demonstrations sessions focusing mainly on locally available food and promoting two easily affordable recipes: homemade CSB and a recipe with balanced diet made of cereal (maize or sorghum depending on the place), pulses (beans or soya), vegetables (mostly cabbage or carrots) and palm oil.

To support the targeted households and to allow them applying what they learned during the cooking sessions, 1,049 mothers involved in FFS activities continued receiving support on vegetable nurseries management, transplanting, harvesting, and storage; while 409 groups in Butembo received the planned rabbit genitors. For guinea pigs, the targeted beneficiaries were identified and grouped in 2,045 groups in total. They will receive the animals during quarter 3.

In addition to the continuous promotion of the homemade CSB in all the project sites, SIMAMA also produced a video of the methodology. The video will be finalized by the next quarter for future interventions and shared with staff, other actors and communities as a good practice and to reinforce the local CSB production.

## **PM2A**

This quarter marked the last for food distribution under the PM2A component. Project staff conducted four distributions during the quarter, one each for the months of January, February, March and April, the last of which was conducted during the last two weeks of March. The number of children under 2 who received food assistance is presented under the Food Commodity section. The distributions were coupled with intensified promotion of homemade

CSB and the increased availability of improved varieties of maize and soya seed, which constitute the main ingredients of CSB.

As part of the phasing out of the food distribution component of SIMAMA, the communities and the local authorities were well informed in advance about the last distribution. The distribution of the Food for Peace food commodities went very well with no issues to report; which was confirmed by the final Post distribution Monitoring surveys implemented.

#### PM2A food commodity distribution

During the review period, 253.31 MTs of commodities (CSB: 230.29MT and vegetable oil 23.03 MT) were distributed between January and March 2016. The decision to distribute the April rations was partly due to the need to ensure distribution and consumption of the CSB prior to the Best-Use-By-Date (BUBD) of May 2016. As agreed between Mercy Corps and USAID/FFP, the CSB tonnage in excess were transferred to the World Food Program.

A close and well-coordinated collaboration between the SO2 and Food Commodity Teams (CRS and Mercy Corps) allowed for the minimization of remaining food stocks in the field at the end of the last distribution.

The volume of food commodity and the actual number of beneficiary served within the PM2A program is reported under the Food Management section below.

### **Strategic Objective 3: Governance**

The SO3 component (governance) supports the two other SOs to strengthen the development structures they support, such as RECO (SO2) or producers groups, CIG and/or VSLA (SO1).

SO3 aims to strengthen proper mechanisms for local dialogue between these structures and Congolese institutions such as the CARG, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Chefferie to find common solutions to local problems and issues of food security governance.

SO3 also supports various local committees, including Local Development Committees (LDC), infrastructure management committees and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) committees to ensure the sustainability of their activities.

During the reporting period, the governance team supported the creation of workshops to share and review the program exit strategy with the Ministry of Decentralization, and linking the CARG with key actors in rural development, so that they can build and capitalize upon the achievements of the CARG.

#### **Supporting LDCs to implement local development plans**

As outlined in the program closure strategy, in Butembo, the SO3 component organized a workshop to evaluate and review the sustainability of LDC activities, under the leadership of the Division Chief of Decentralization of North Kivu province. Aimed at the Ministry and key stakeholders, the workshop set out to clarify the LDC activities that will continue after the program and to outline the support the Ministry will provide to maintain and advance the

program's achievements. During the mission, four LDCs (Kabasha, Kalunguta, Lisasa and Pabuka) were supported by the Ministry in the development of internal bylaws, as per a new government directive. Following this workshop, the LDCs and the Ministry jointly developed four action plans and capacity building plans. The development of LDC bylaws will continue in Q3 FY16 for the eight remaining LDC in Butembo and the 17 CLD in Birambizo.

During the quarter, SIMAMA identified six new projects from the local development plans in the Butembo area undertaken through the initiative of local communities: building a local market, equipping school classrooms, rehabilitating an agricultural feeder road, a community seed supply project and building a micro hydropower plant.

### **Resolution of conflicts linked to land disputes**

During the reporting period, the SO3 team identified and revitalized five new local conflict management structures (four in Birambizo and one in Butembo). Some customary practices prohibit the rights of inheritance for women and children. Without basic knowledge of inheritance laws, local structures have difficulty in raising awareness amongst traditional authorities to respect the laws in force during the mediation process. To better equip these structures, 38 members of Birambizo conflict management structures underwent two waves of training on Congolese inheritance laws. In addition, 39 members of were retrained on the peaceful prevention and resolution of land disputes. Of the 70 cases of land disputes recorded during the reporting period, 53 cases were resolved (including 32 in Birambizo and 21 in Butembo). These cases mainly consist of pastoralist-farmer disputes, land boundary disagreements, questions over inheritance rights and illegal occupation.

### **Organizational assistance to the CIG**

The SO3 component steered the CIG through the development of internal bylaws and their legal status. To date, the 43 CIG in Birambizo have drafted and had their members ratify the official documents, and their formalization and legal approval will be scheduled for next quarter. The same programming is planned for Butembo during the next quarter.

### **Assistance to the CARG**

To strengthen the bonds between CARG services and communities, 11 CARG subcommittees (8 in Birambizo and 3 in Butembo) were established through community elections led by the provincial level CARG. Each subcommittee is composed of a President, a Vice President and 3 facilitators. Members of the subcommittee were trained on the roles and missions of the CARG. The presence of these subcommittees at the lower-level facilitates exchange between the CARG and groups of small farmers and ameliorates collecting and disseminating agricultural price information.

To improve the quality of support provided by the CARG in response to community needs, six CARG activity assessment workshops were organized in Butembo and Birambizo. The SO3 team and the Provincial Coordinator of CARG in North Kivu facilitated the workshops, using the Community Score Card approach. The workshops showed the communities' level of satisfaction with the quality of support and services of the CARG. The assessment indicators evaluated showed a satisfaction between 50% and 60%, which indicates CARG activities still require

improvement. Following these workshops, the CARG and farmer associations jointly developed action plans to improve communication and exchanges. 302 community members (162 in Birambizo and 140 in Butembo) participated in the CARG activity assessment workshops.

With the financial support of the program, a round table discussion was organized on the sustainability of the CARG, with key actors in rural development from Butembo area. VECO, IFDC, German Agro Action, LWF, ESCO Kivu, the territorial administrators of Beni and Butembo, and AGRIPEL have all expressed interest in building upon the best practices of CARGs and supporting their priority activities. The program also funded the participation of the Provincial Coordinator of CARG in the workshop to share experiences between the CARGs in North and South Kivu.

SIMAMA pushed for greater sharing and dissemination of the CARG North Kivu Annual Bulletin, to enhance the committee's visibility and to share activity progress with various rural development stakeholders.

During the reporting period, CARG scored many significant and tangible results from their advocacy efforts, including:

- In Kasinga (Butembo), the CARG committee obtained land from the area chief to construct an agricultural market. Today, the market is in use.
- Leaders of Baswagha and Masereka CARGs (Butembo) pressed for the setting aside of land on which to construct of Agricultural Collection and Storage Centers. As of now, seven plots had been granted by the authorities of the Chefferie for the construction of the warehouses; the CCAs are now built and ready to begin accepting agricultural produce from CIG, especially potatoes.
- In Birambizo, CARG Tongo undertook an initiative to defend small holding farmers against the predatory practice of wholesalers who would buy produce without weighing, resulting in lower sales prices for farmers. As a follow up, CARG Tongo circulated a note stipulating buyers must now use scales to certify the produce weight and in turn, pay farmers a fair price for their crops.

### **Disaster Risk Reduction and Early Warning Systems Response**

18 performance evaluation workshops were conducted for 18 DRR committees and early warning systems (EWS) (six in Birambizo and 12 in Butembo) to help them plan their activities after the close of the program. This exercise identified the following weaknesses: too little public participation in the implementation of DRR plans and a lack of ownership of DRR and EWS plans by some local authorities. In response, SIMAMA organized refresher sessions for 179 members (50 in Birambizo and 129 in Butembo) of relevant committees on community capacity to manage effectively their committees.

To raise community awareness on risk reduction and mitigation, the DRR committees collaborated with six partner radio stations on informational and awareness programming (3 in Birambizo and 3 in Butembo).

In accordance with DRR priorities, the DRR and EWS committees initiated 11 activities to reduce risks of disasters and catastrophes, (four and seven in Birambizo and Butembo respectively) during the reporting period. The activities focused primarily on small drainage

works, installation of lightning rods, reforestation and watershed protection and planting erosion control hedges.

### **Food For Assets**

In this quarter, FFA activities supported 7,403 unique beneficiaries who received 488.49 MT of food rations in exchange for their work on projects.

#### ***o Fish Ponds:***

For the reporting period, after to their technical certification by SENAQUA, seven fish ponds built by the project were handed over to their communities, represented by their management committees. Official handover ceremonies were organized in Kibingu and Kabizo in the presence of Bwito Chiefdom authorities and provincial representatives from SENAQUA, following a technical verification of all seven ponds. Given the high level of insecurity near Birambizo, local authorities committed to establish a system to monitor and secure the ponds to ensure the investments are properly managed.

To enhance the sustainability of the fish ponds, the SO1 team conducted trainings for the seven pond management committees on business plan development and operational management. As a result, 86 committee members (17 women and 69 men) received the training and each management committee now has its own business plan.

SIMAMA also organized exchanges between fish pond management committees to discuss challenges and share best practices. The members of the seven management committees toured a private fish farm operation in Rutshuru to enhance their knowledge of managing a fish farming project.

#### ***o Road Rehabilitation:***

During the reporting period, eight road rehabilitation projects that started late in year 4 were completed with a total of 33 km rehabilitated. The official unveiling of these roads to their communities will be scheduled for the next period. The project also supported the maintenance committees who performed maintenance work on the roads previously rehabilitated. 180 km of roads have been maintained during the reporting quarter.

To protect the roads from the risks of erosion, SIMAMA provided the maintenance committees with 7,000 eucalyptus seedlings, which were planted alongside rehabilitated roads in the towns of Butare, Kagando, Bishigiro, Kanaba, Marangara, Ruza, Bundase and Kakoro.

To operationalize handover as the project closes, 19 road maintenance committees with a total of 204 members (159 men and 45 women) received refresher training courses from the DVDA on road maintenance techniques and on their roles and responsibilities as members of the maintenance committee. 120 technical guides on road rehabilitation were presented to maintenance committees, local authorities and CLDs around Birambizo.

#### ***o DRR Projects***

As part of supporting the implementation of DRR plans, SIMAMA continued providing guidance to communities managing seven projects to build drainage canals to prevent flooding in or near homes or fields.

## **Gender Integration**

To reinforce gender integration within the SO1 agriculture component, seven training sessions on gender and positive masculinity were held for 395 members (253 women and 142 men) of 19 CIG in Birambizo. As a result, these trainings will increase men's awareness of, and appreciation for, the role of women in commercial agricultural production.

Along the same lines, 444 members of women and youth associations (297 in Butembo and 147 in Birambizo) received training on gender and female leadership, to build their capacity to advocate for greater participation in income-generating and economic activities.

In Butembo, 56 community leaders including the AVAs (SO1) and Papa and Maman Leaders (SO2) also benefitted from trainings on gender, positive masculinity and women's leadership. It is expected that these leaders will pass on their knowledge to their respective groups.

## Commodity Management

During the quarter, SIMAMA carried out the food distributions to the FFA and PM2A participants as planned, in order to prepare for the smooth close down of the program. SIMAMA received in February 2016 the visit of a USAID/FFP Development Assistance Specialist who visited the program to provide clarification on the QWICR reporting systems and monitor the program food commodity stock.

Four PM2A food commodity distributions were conducted during the period, with two distributions taking place in March 2016 to cover both the March and April distributions. The PM2A component is now closed; no more distribution will take place. In March 2016, Mercy Corps received FFP's approval for the transfer of its CSB in excess to WFP School feeding program in Goma. The transfer was completed early in April 2016 with a final tonnage of MT110 transferred. The food commodity pipeline for the PM2A component has reached the zero balance. PM2A community stores were emptied and retroceded to their landlords.

Three food distributions took place during the period to support the implementation of the FFA component. The last and final distribution of FFA commodities will take place in May 2016, one month later than the original projections; SIMAMA staff presence has been adjusted to ensure proper management of the food commodities.

### Commodities received during the quarter

The Program received from the port of Dar Es Salaam a total of 159.075 MT of Cornmeal and 169.1 MT of yellow Peas between January and March 2016 as the final quantity of FY16 approved food commodities allowance for direct distributions.

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

Period (End of)	Corn Meal (MT)	Yellow Split Peas (MT)	Corn Soy Blend (MT)	Vegetable Oil (MT)	Total (MT)
Jan.- 16	551.33	167.07	268.33	72.40	<b>1,059.11</b>
Feb. -16	314.88	145.91	204.40	48.24	<b>713.42</b>
Mar. - 16	413.23	127.70	110.07	34.27	<b>685.27</b>

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

Period	PLW	Children under 2	Total beneficiaires served	Corn soy blend (MT)	Vegetable oil (MT)	Total (MT)
Jan.- 16	0	12,027	<b>12,027</b>	72.16	7.22	79.38
Feb. -16	0	10,648	<b>10,648</b>	63.89	6.39	70.28
Mar. - 16	0	15,706	<b>15,706</b>	94.24	9.42	103.66
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>230.29</b>	<b>23.03</b>	<b>253.31</b>

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

Period	Households reached	Cornmeal (MT)	Split yellow peas (MT)	Vegetable oil (MT)	Total (MT)
Jan.- 16	1,307	57.49	18.19	4.31	<b>80.00</b>
Feb. -16	5,022	236.38	70.95	17.72	<b>325.04</b>
Mar. - 16	1,308	60.72	18.21	4.53	<b>83.46</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>354.59</b>	<b>107.35</b>	<b>26.56</b>	<b>488.49</b>

Commodity losses

Just minor losses will be reported during the next QWICR report, most of the losses occurred while commodities were detained by contracted transporters. At this stage Mercy Corps does not anticipate to submit any DMCR for the period.