QUALITATIVE EVALUATION REPORT: OUTCOME HARVESTING

Early Warning Systems Activities and Community Projects of the Lafia Program

NOVEMBER 2021

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I. Introduction

1. Program Objectives

Lafia ("People at Peace") is a 2-year USAID-funded program implemented by Mercy Corps Mali in partnership with Think Peace, from October 2019 to September 2021. The program operates in the District of Bamako and the Kayes region and has three objectives related to conflict prevention which are: (1) Reduce the vulnerability of youth to involvement in resource-based conflict, political conflict, and violent extremism, (2) Traditional and religious leaders, women leaders, and government officials peacefully resolve inter-group conflicts and reduce drivers of conflict, (3) Local communities actively engage with government authorities and relevant civil society actors in the implementation of national policies to prevent violent extremism and promote reconciliation.

Achieving these objectives involves implementing activities that affect the perceptions, attitudes, and skills of key community actors. In short, the Lafia program's approach is to change community behavior. In such programs, the indicators for measuring social transformation are often not as easy to identify as those used in quantitative evaluations. In order to fill this gap, the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) team initiated this activity to collect the program's outcomes, starting with the Sport for Change activities.

2. Main Achievements of the Program

- Conducted 2 mapping exercises on vulnerability to violence and sources of resilience
- Created and facilitated 66 Sport for Change (S4C) clubs to engage 1,680 youths
- Implemented community initiatives that address risk factors for violence
- Built the capacity of community leaders on conflict resolution techniques
- Established early warning systems (EWS) for conflict prevention and management
- Facilitated fora and sensitization meetings to reduce tensions at the root of violence (including the issue of slavery)
- Established joint projects between communities and authorities to address conflict factors
- Strengthened civil society organizations, including youth associations, on the strategy to combat violent extremism
- Disseminated the strategy to combat violent extremism by civil society organizations
- Accompanied community leaders, local government actors, and Ministry of Reconciliation officials to share lessons learned from the EWS and develop a plan to integrate the EWS into national policy.

3. Objective of the Study

As part of the program learning process, Mercy Corps conducted a qualitative evaluation of the program through its MEL department, in August 2021. This evaluation consisted of collecting program outcomes through an appropriate approach called "Outcomes Harvesting".
This approach was proposed by Mercy Corps not only for outcome/impact evaluation in order to learn systematically from the Lafia program, but also to test the approach in order to refine and replicate it for monitoring and evaluation of other peacebuilding programs.

The evaluation mission was conducted by the MEL team in collaboration with the program team in the 10 communes of intervention of the Lafia program, meeting and interviewing participants in the two main targeted activities, namely the EWS and community projects.

This report presents the information collected and synthesized as part of this "outcome harvest" evaluation.

Key points of this report include:

❖ Evaluation methodology
❖ Outcome Harvesting/Results of Harvesting
❖ Lessons learned and
❖ Recommendations from the outcome harvest

It will also serve as a decision-making tool for future Lafia programming or any other program that aims to integrate EWS and community-based initiatives to reduce conflict factors. This qualitative evaluation follows on the heels of the Sport for Change evaluation two months earlier.

II. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The preferred methodology for data collection and analysis was the Outcome Harvesting approach. The Outcome Harvesting approach is based on the principle of looking for evidence of social transformation or behavior change between groups or communities, changes in regulations, formal laws, or cultural norms.

Outcomes are defined as changes in the "overall behavior" (such as actions, relationships, policies, practices) of one or more social actors influenced by a program intervention. For example, a change or incipient change in behavior with evidence across groups or communities; changes in regulations, formal laws, or cultural norms.

Unlike some evaluation approaches, "Outcome Harvesting" does not measure progress toward predetermined goals or outcomes, but rather collects evidence of what has changed and then, in retrospect, determines whether and how an intervention contributed to those changes. Outcomes can be positive or negative, intended or unintended, direct or indirect, but the link between the intervention and the effects must be plausible.

To do this, this study was conducted in four main parts: information gathering, information processing and interpretation, results presentation and validation workshop, and documentation. Below are the details for the three activities.
1. Information gathering

It consisted of collecting detailed information from the program team, participants, and the community on how these approaches affected them. Specifically, it involved the following steps:

- **Step 1 - The Design phase of the "outcome harvest/results»:**
  The first step was to identify the main users of the outcome harvest (the program team) and their needs in the process. Based on this, the users of the "harvest" and the MEL team agreed on the type of information that should be collected (definition of learning questions or outcome track). As a result of this process, specific collection tools were drafted to guide the outcome harvest in the field. Next, the MEL team and the program team agreed on the information to be collected and the profile of people to be interviewed to answer the questions. The focus was on obtaining information about changes in social actors and how the intervention influenced them.

  - What are the understandings of the communities as well as the key players in the approach? What examples of the system’s usefulness can they cite or document?
  - Are the people in charge of the system in the different localities able to identify and report (or alert) incidents?
  - What concrete examples can community leaders on the response committees cite of how they respond to incidents that are reported to them?
  - Has the implementation of EWS generated behavioral or systems changes at the community level? If so, are these changes positive or negative? Can they be replicated?
  - Are the authorities, especially the mayor’s office, able to capitalize on the information collected through this system?
  - How is this information serving the communities?
  - What is the relevance of the various community projects that have been set up?
  - Have these projects made it possible to respond to the factors of violence?
  - How have the joint projects helped communities strengthen their relationships/collaborations with public services?
  - How can the projects inspire others to create other collaborations?

- **Step 2 - Literature review and drafting of preliminary outcomes/results:**
  The MEL team reviewed available project documentation (program proposal, quarterly reports, indicator plan, program baseline report, midterm study report) and wrote outcome/result descriptions from program reports and publications or other documents. The MEL team (harvesters) identified potential outcomes (i.e., changes in individuals, groups, communities, organizations, or institutions) and what the program did to contribute to them.

- **Step 3 - Engagement with informants in the formulation and description of field-level outcomes**
  The MEL team engaged directly with key informants, beneficiaries, and other program stakeholders to review descriptions of the outcomes/results identified from the document review and to identify and articulate additional outcomes/results. This was done through facilitated focus
group discussions, a workshop, individual interviews, observations with informants and external parties who can provide their perspectives on the program.

- Step 4 - Review and sorting of items

Harvest impact users and the MEL team (harvester) reviewed the final results and selected those to be verified to increase the accuracy and credibility of the impacts. The harvesters obtained the views of one or more individuals who were independent of the intervention (third party) but knowledgeable about one or more of the outcomes and the contribution of the activities.

**Sampling, methods, and selection of informants for "outcome harvesting"**: This evaluation is purely qualitative in nature, although follow-up data will often be used as evidence to support certain program effects/outcomes where appropriate.

Collection methods were purely qualitative and diversified for triangulation in order to draw scientific and sustained conclusions. These methods included:

- **Structured and semi-structured individual interviews**: Interviews with program staff, partners, participants and people (the community) who have information about the program were conducted in the program's intervention areas to collect data;
- **Focus group discussions**: These involved the program team and participants in the ten program intervention communes. They served not only to confirm the identified results, but also to identify new effects/results.
- **Collection and validation workshops**: A workshop was organized with the participants to confirm and identify the effects/results. A second workshop was organized with the staff for validation and feedback of the selected outcomes.
- **The observation method**: The observation method will allow to understand the context and to confirm some data collected during the other methods.

To this end, the following table describes the targets and samples for each collection method in the requested qualitative assessment. The study was conducted in 10 communes of intervention of the Lafia program (including two in Bamako and eight in Kayes).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sampling for evaluation data collection</th>
<th>Number of participants/per municipality</th>
<th>Total number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EWS + Community Projects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interviews with monitors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interviews with community leaders who are members of conflict resolution committees</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interviews with neighborhood leaders</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interviews with the mayor’s office</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group of 8 people with community members</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>72*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interviews with local authorities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Information Processing and Interpretation

From the information collected on the changes generated by the project in the field, the team made a typology to classify the effects induced according to the different activities carried out. The analysis of these data was done, and a database will be created to store the information. This stage also corresponds to:

- Step 5 - Analysis and Interpretation

The MEL team classified all the outcomes/results, in consultation with the program team at a workshop. The classifications were generally derived from the relevant questions; they were also linked to the objectives and strategies of Mercy Corps and Think Peace, the program, or other stakeholders, such as the funding partner. At this level, a database was needed to store and analyze the outcome/result descriptions. The program team interpreted the information and provided factual answers to questions about the outcome harvest. The database in question is called Outcome Matrix.

3. Results’ Presentation Workshop

At the end of the data collection and processing, Mercy Corps conducted workshops to present the results and validate them together. The workshops’ main objectives were to appreciate the evidence that will come out of the information from the field.

Due to the current context of the coronavirus pandemic, the workshop was organized on one day with a maximum of 30 participants. Thus, two workshops were organized, one in Bamako and one in Kayes. The participants in these workshops were elected municipal officials, community leaders, monitors, S4C coaches and community project participants. Both workshops were facilitated in a participatory manner with presentations of the changes/impacts identified in the field. The facilitation was done by the MEL team with the support of the program assistants as translators and moderators.

* Focus groups were only organized in 9 municipalities
### Participants in each workshop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>People involved</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Think Peace</td>
<td>Lafia Program Focal Point</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercy Corps</td>
<td>Program Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PAQ Lead</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peacebuilding and Governance Lead</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Program Assistant</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior MEL and Database Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEL Assistant</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representatives of participants and technical partners</td>
<td>Community Leaders</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Authorities</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Participants</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. Documentation

As a result of this study, this report has been written and will be shared with other stakeholders and/or the government.

### 5. Quality Assurance Measures for the Data Collected

Even before the data were collected, simulations were conducted to ensure that the way the questions were asked, the people who would answer the questions, and the questions themselves would not bias the results. The team also conducted consistency checks to ensure that the information collected was of high quality.
III. RESULTS OF THE “OUTCOME HARVESTING”

Following the data collection in the 10 communes where the program intervenes, the communities' assessment of the effects produced by the two main activities is, overall, very positive. Indeed, the salient results of the study highlight three levels of change:

- Attitudinal and behavioral changes at the individual level, especially among direct project participants, such as youth and community leaders,
- Community or group changes in relationships and bonds among community members
- Changes in peace, security, and other important types of outcomes collected.

1. General awareness and adoption of attitudes of peace within the communities participating in the program

Awareness, consciousness, and more involvement in community activities are the key words that came up in all conversations about the changes brought about by EWS activities and community projects. This result is particularly observed at several levels:

- Community members who have developed attitudes of peace, such as respect for others, patience, citizenship, etc., are more likely to have a positive attitude. "The strongest weapon is the word, it is dialogue," quoted a local leader, head of a neighborhood in Commune 2 of Bamako. By this, he meant that community members, including the leaders themselves, prefer dialogue based on respect for each other's opinions rather than engaging in disputes in the event of a disagreement.
- Trust is restored between community members on the one hand, but also between neighboring communities on the other. By implementing the community projects, relationships and collaboration between the communities themselves have been strengthened. The various meetings organized in an inclusive manner have allowed people who have not seen each other for a long time to come together to share a common goal. From these collaborations, a greater trust is born and consequently a decrease in the mistrust that could prevail. "...But today the community with whom we were in conflict for years, the TRUST has been restored between us. We collaborate, their misfortunes or happiness are ours now," said a member of the community of Guidime (circle of Yelimane).
- The communities' improved trust in their local authorities (religious and traditional leaders, professionals and local elected officials). Indeed, by actively engaging in EWS, leaders are increasingly recognized as capable of managing conflicts and tensions in their communities. Their legitimacy to reconcile conflicting parties was cited several times during data collection as an improvement following EWS and community project activities. "The community leaders were no longer considered by the community, they were bypassing their authorities to go either to the mayor's office or any government department for any minor or serious problem,
but thanks to the Lafia activities they have regained the trust and consideration that is due to them,” quoted a mayor during the outcome harvesting workshop in Kayes.

2. Local leaders have acquired and used proven skills in conflict management and prevention. This is also one of the most sustainable outcomes of the project.

The CRC members and monitors have received several trainings on conflict prevention and resolution techniques. They were then given the opportunity to practice the skills they had learned and became very skilled in the art of mediation and reconciliation. Thus, the capacity building of local leaders is an undeniable change achieved through the projects. These local leaders are more confident and involved in the management of their communities’ affairs not only related to conflicts but even beyond. This result is seen in all localities. As many testimonies show, local leaders are more motivated, more committed and better able to manage tensions and differences within the community.

“Today, the community leaders of Guidime are dedicated and above all attentive to conflict management; they are equipped with adequate skills in conflict management through various training courses and the practice of conflict management”. Quoted the village chief of Guidime (circle of Yelimane).

"Thank God, I am a fulfilled instructor today, and it has allowed me to develop skills within myself, to become more interested in the problems of my community and especially to enhance my image and usefulness in my community. Quoted a Kayes instructor.

This change in attitude and confidence is something that the leaders have gained forever. They feel that this is the richest legacy of the project because they are present in the community even after the project ends. And they will continue to play their roles well as they have learned to do now.

« Thank God, even if the Lafia Project ends, we are confident that its activities will continue through us, the community leaders. What we have learned and what we are doing now to bring peace to the community, we will continue to do for life. Quote from a neighborhood leader in Commune IV.

3. Youth and women, once on the sidelines of conflict management, are now champions of peace in their communities

Prior to the Lafia Project, it was rare to see a youth or woman take the lead in the peaceful resolution of conflicts within the community. In fact, they were hardly considered or involved. Youth and women leaders were certainly active but focused more on defending their rights than
on preventing and managing conflicts within the communities. Today, with the support of the Lafia project, this situation has changed significantly. The project has favored the inclusion of all social categories in the implementation of EWS activities by selecting women and youth monitors as well as members of the response committees. This involvement has borne fruit, as youth and women leaders are now very involved at all levels in the management and prevention of conflicts within the communities. Better yet, they have not only gained more confidence to engage in discussions with local authorities and community elders, but their importance is also recognized by other community members.

"As a woman leader in Diadjj and through the response committee, I have been able to manage many conflicts in my village with the support of the village authorities. Sometimes, I am even asked by the authorities to take care of conflicts, especially cases of rape or domestic violence. Testimony of a woman leader in Yelimane

"Before the project, it was very difficult or impossible for me to sit around a table with the elders to discuss conflict issues. I was not interested, and they never invited me. I didn't even know that there were more peaceful ways to claim our rights. I thought we always had to shout or organize protests. But now, with the trainings I received and my involvement in EWS activities, I know a lot of people and I am very involved in the peaceful resolution of tensions in the community. Testimony of a young leader from Bamako.

"Personally, words really fail to describe what I have gained/loved the most through my participation in the various activities in general and the EWS in particular, of which I am a monitor. First of all, in addition to the trainings on conflict resolution techniques and the early warning system, I am solicited by my community to intervene in case of disputes. For example, three months ago in the Lafiabougou Sud neighborhood, thanks to my skills in conflict prevention and resolution, I was able to resolve a dispute between spouses that was about to end up in court. When asked how I proceeded, I favored dialogue and a framework for discussion without resorting to violence. Testimony of an instructor in Kayes.

This youth and women's leadership has led to several initiatives at the community level. Several informal meetings to sensitize youth and women for the peaceful management of conflicts have been organized at the initiative of youth and women leaders. For example, a woman leader in Yélimane brought together the women of her community to create a women's association.

"The women were also disunited, but today their way of apprehending life has changed and from now on they know that they will go very far by having the same objectives, and the same goal which is to bring back peace between their husbands and their children, and thanks to this union they made a tontine which brought back 500000 FCfa and they are very proud of it and all that was possible thanks to the Lafia project.
4. Collaboration between local leaders and local authorities has improved and allows for better resolution of structural factors of conflict

A better knowledge of other leaders and the expansion of their network of influence are effects induced by the EWS activities and community projects. Indeed, community leaders report that through the activities carried out, they had the opportunity to rub shoulders with each other and to forge links. For them, these links are very important for sharing experiences, exchanging cases, and helping to resolve conflicts that go beyond the unique framework of their community and/or their commune.

The leaders of Bamako have understood this so well that they have created an informal framework for consultation between the leaders of the two communes for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. This framework is an initiative that emanates from them and testifies to an important change brought about by the Lafia project. Indeed, the framework represents an opportunity to strengthen local conflict prevention networks within the city of Bamako.

Second, collaboration is also strengthened between community leaders and local authorities. While this collaboration existed mainly between community leaders and the mayor's office, it was less strong between the latter and the judicial authorities and the police.

"We see today a strong collaboration between community leaders, the police, the court...", a leader of the commune II of Bamako.

This increased collaboration has facilitated conflict resolution at the community level. Cases of conflict that came directly to the police have been resolved amicably because the police are trying to involve them more and more. This collaboration between leaders and the police also brings communities and the police closer together. The trust of the communities towards the police force is strengthened as the collaboration with the leaders is reinforced.

"Following the recommendations made during the communal forum on EWS that brought us together at the Kayes Circle Council, I continue to work with key actors (community, other members of the response committee, relevant authorities) to structure and provide technical support to local conflict mechanisms to serve as early warning and conflict response mechanisms." 3rd Deputy Mayor of the urban commune of Kayes.

5. Peaceful conflict management at the community level

The conclusive and very remarkable effect of EWS is the increase in conflict resolution at the grassroots level. The strengthened capacity of local leaders, coupled with the increased confidence of communities in them, has resulted in most tensions and conflicts being referred directly to them. In addition, early detection of incidents by monitors and referral to response committees amplified these results. Community members testified that the management of
incidents at the grassroots level is transparent and more accepted by the parties in conflict. Several testimonies relating the simplest to the most complex cases are below.

"Thanks to Lafia and these conflict resolution methods, we can resolve our disputes peacefully without going through the competent authorities of the commune’s capital as we did before.

"Even in a large city like Bamako, our conflicts are settled in consultation with each other, without going to the police" Deputy Mayor of commune IV, Bamako.

"Nowadays, since its operationalization in my commune, the EWS has enabled all local actors who participated in the Mercy Corps training sessions to monitor the various incidents and often to anticipate inter-professional conflicts (between farmers and herders, which is fairly recurrent in the area) and also tensions related to inheritance slavery by relaying information to the members of the response committees in order to take preventive/palliative measures. Mayor of the rural commune of Koussané, Kayes region.

"About three weeks ago, two neighboring families were about to clash violently in my village because of land issues that date back about half a century. Thanks to the monitor’s alert and my quick intervention, there was a lull. For the peaceful resolution, the matter is currently at the level of the mayor’s office and is well underway. Councillor of the village of Samba Dramané, Kayes Region.

The community projects also had a positive effect on the peaceful resolution of conflicts at the community level. As communities had the choice to identify the factors of conflict and address them through community projects. These projects took various forms (awareness raising, physical achievements, forums, etc.). They also allowed the resolution of direct tensions at the community level as shown in the following testimony.

"The tensions around water resource management were really worrying and a real threat to the social stability of my village. Thanks to the sensitization caravans (community projects) as well as our participation in capacity building workshops on mediation, prevention and resolution of inter-community conflicts, there has been a real awakening of awareness and social understanding. Currently, I hardly receive any complaints. Even in the case of disagreements, the parties themselves deal with them amicably. This is already a good sign." Diangoute Camara village councilor, Diéma Circle

6. Reducing conflict/violence within and between communities

Like any society, there is physical and verbal violence resulting from a variety of factors (intra-household conflicts, conflicts between family members over inheritance, resource management, and various other causes). However, when these incidents are poorly managed, they can lead to more generalized tensions and even violent conflicts between communities. Since the implementation of EWS, more than 150 conflicts/incidents have been resolved. The effectiveness
of EWS in resolving these factors is undeniable. In addition to the testimonies of the community members, the leaders and monitors are proud of several cases of which the main ones retained during the workshops are presented in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Type of conflict and description of the situation</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>Actors Involved</th>
<th>Status/resolution status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1  | Type: Land conflict (urban planning)             | Neighborhoods of Bencounda then Khasso, urban commune of Kayes, circle of Kayes | - Monitors  
- City Councilor  
- Ward Chief  
- Young leaders | The authority has suspended its project and the matter is being resolved |
| 2  | Description: It all started with tension over the management of public space (blocking of roads and arteries) between the community and certain very influential political authorities in the Kayes region. The latter wanted to expropriate the space at all costs for personal use. Thanks to the alert and the strong involvement of the monitor and community leaders through dialogue and communication, the tension has decreased significantly, and the conflicting parties have been able to find common ground. Calm is gradually returning. | Villages de Moussala puis Blazmir, commune rurale de Koussané, cercle de Kayes | - Community Leader  
- Monitor,  
- Mayor | Resolved |
| 3  | Type: Land conflict (linked to slavery), Exclusion of a family head from village benefits | Béma, circle of Diéma | Mainly community members and local authorities | Resolved |
4. Description: In Moussala, a man belonging to the so-called "slave class" was expropriated from his field (land) of 2 hectares that he inherited from his grandparent. Dissatisfied, the latter decided to lodge a complaint with the competent authorities in order to regain possession of his property. The case having aroused enough steps and negotiations on both sides. Currently, thanks to the recent awareness caravans on peaceful cohabitation and, above all, the role played by the members of the CRC (monitors and deputy mayor), the two parties have been able to sit down at the same table to discuss and reach an agreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village of Digui</th>
<th>Commune of Falémé (Diboli)</th>
<th>- Local Authority - Monitor - Village chief of Digui</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Problem being sensitive and especially of socio-cultural order, in the course of resolution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other salient testimonials are also cited below.

"In my commune, there were an incalculable number of mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of inter/intra-community disputes, but none of them managed to play the role of an early warning and rapid response system to inter and intra-community incidents/conflicts that arise within the communities concerned. Thanks to the EWS, we managed to stop a strong tension between young people over the management and use of the sports field. This tension was about to degenerate in the locality. Thank God and bravo to the monitors for the instantaneous alerts". Second Deputy Mayor of the rural commune of Béma, Kayes region

The most important conflicts for the company that have been managed are of this order:

- Gender-based violence (various assaults including sexual assaults) - Bamako and especially in the Kayes region,
- Conflicts between farmers and herders, Kayes region (see outcome 7)
- Conflicts related to tensions over descent-based slavery, Kayes region
- Insecurity in large cities linked to juvenile delinquency, Kayes region and Bamako district (see outcome 8).

7. Tensions between farmers and herders, a major source of conflict, are resolved in several communities

The EWS has allowed local actors and Lafia to monitor the various incidents and often anticipate inter-professional conflicts (between farmers and herders, which is fairly recurrent in the Kayes region). These conflicts are so important that several community projects have been held on the
themes of awareness of the pastoral charter and natural resource management. The testimonies of community leaders and members report that the past winter season (a period of increased tension between farmers and herders) was the calmest in recent years. Tensions have decreased significantly because farmers and herders have understood the messages that have been sent. Also, the leaders of the different communities have intervened in a preventive manner to avoid incidents (field damage) in the areas. The communities have taken the initiative to discuss and leave space (cattle tracks) for the passage of animals.

"... As for the sensitization and dissemination of the agro-pastoral charter between herders and farmers as well as the transhumance convention, this has contributed significantly to clarifying and explaining the content of the charter within the community. This has helped to curb the tendency to spread misinformation and to calm the social climate in order to prevent conflicts between the different socio-professional categories. Thanks to the caravans, radio and television debates, we can deduce that the herders and farmers were able to discuss at length the pastoral calendars that were the subject of tension in our locality. Young leader, farmer in the circle of Yélimané.

"The Lafia project has thought particularly of us farmers. All the problems we suffered in the past have been resolved because this year we spent the winter with very little tension. We have even celebrated this in the past few days because we are particularly happy with the peaceful climate that is increasingly prevailing between us and the other communities." A leader of the pastoralists in the Kayes region.

8. Reduction of factors related to crime and juvenile delinquency as a by-product of community projects

Giving leaders the choice to discuss with community members to propose appropriate projects that address the conflict/tension factors in their areas. The most salient impacts, especially in the Bamako district, include the following:

- The installation of streetlamps at the Mamadou Sarr high school in Lafiabougou and the Mamadou M’botch high school in Sébénékoro in April 2021 in order to fight against insecurity in school spaces. These spaces are now secure, which has facilitated the access of students to light for learning. This has also reduced the attacks, the robberies that took place at night because the place was very dark, and people did not dare to frequent it or take the path at night. But today it is very busy even at certain late hours of the night. This change was corroborated by several leaders of the two communes of Bamako.

- Mirage project (drawing on the walls conveying messages of peace) on the walls of the Mamadou Sarr high school and the town hall of commune 4 in Lafiabougou in April 2021 with the aim of raising awareness among the population through images bearing messages of peace or the fight against violence (e.g., drawings showing the inappropriateness of carrying a weapon, violence in the school environment, etc.). As a side effect of the drawing, the
young people of the high school were inspired by the messages to make a sketch of sensitization during the festivities in schools.

- Project of talk-debate and sensitization on the depravity of morals, the sale and consumption of narcotics and the proliferation of small arms: the sensitization was strongly carried out by the monitors, the town hall, the traditional chieftains, the Recotrad, the representative of the commission fighting against the proliferation of small arms in Commune 2, the police and the court. This has had the effect of reducing the depravity of morals, reducing the sale and consumption of drugs in the commune to the point where it is often the consumers who denounce the sellers. As a result, the police station, supported by the monitors and community leaders of Commune 2 who participated in the LAFIA program, implemented an operation called "founounou" whirlwind operation, the purpose of which is to raid neighborhoods and catch drug sellers and users. Thus, the reduction in the circulation of small arms and the decrease in the taking of narcotics are effects cited by the leaders and the police station. The latter is recording fewer and fewer cases of robbery or drug taking in neighborhoods like baradji, niaréla, bozola.

This reality is also cited in the Kayes region as presented in the testimony below.

_The various multimedia campaigns on drug use have helped to reach the youth and inform them about this unhealthy practice. "We, mothers, are really happy with these initiatives aimed at raising the awareness of our children. Representative of the women leaders of the village of Diguila, commune of Bema, Kayes region._

**IV. LESSONS LEARNED**

The richness of the exchanges during the harvesting of the effects made it possible to identify several lessons learned. Some are related to the difficulties of implementation and others to the successes of these activities.

Lessons learned related to program successes:

- EWS are catalysts for leadership at the local level and boost trust between communities (horizontal cohesion) and between communities and authorities (vertical cohesion). This strengthened cohesion effectively guarantees the reduction of violence factors in the intervention zones.
- Community-based initiatives (community projects) have the advantage of allowing communities to manage/prevent factors of violence that are not perceptible at the time a project is drafted. When successfully implemented (within financial management standards), these initiatives boost the work of the EWS and have the visual effect that communities see that their leaders are truly engaged in solving their daily problems. As a result, these community initiatives also have an impact on vertical and horizontal cohesion while targeting concrete actions.
✓ Gender-based violence, descent-based slavery, and anti-crime and anti-narcotics issues were not central to the project’s formulation. However, these issues became very important when it came to empowering communities to manage conflict. These issues require the involvement of other specialized actors (police, justice, organizations fighting gender-based violence, and technical services) whose relations with the leaders have been improved.

✓ The composition of the working groups (SAP and community projects) has taken into account their values. This has meant that traditionally, conflicting actors cannot refuse the peace demands of CRC members. This has been a success factor.

Lessons learned related to difficulties or fears:

✓ Although the monitors and members of the CRCs are involved and receive some operating expenses, their activity requires a lot of time and financial resources (especially in communication costs). This means that they spend more time volunteering and less time on their economic activities. These factors can be limiting to their full involvement over time.

✓ The sustainability of EWS is always an open question, especially when the project will stop providing communication and operating costs. However, the commitment of the communities and the relationships forged presage a continuation of their activity even after the project. The form may change slightly, but what is certain is that the alerts will continue, and the leaders will deal with them with fervor and agility.

✓ The budget allocated to each community project has been flexible to address various types of issues. However, the amount was always deemed insufficient to cover all the needs (for example, 10 streetlamps when the needs were much greater).

✓ In the framework of the fight against drugs, the denunciation of drug sellers was not easy at the beginning and even risky. But with the sensitizations, the members of the community were able to do it.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of data and lessons learned from participants, partners, staff and other program stakeholders, the recommendations are as follows:

Three important recommendations for next steps:

1. For future EWS interventions, test coverage of all villages in a commune with a higher number of monitors.
2. From the outset, reflect with the various participants on solutions for a better institutional anchoring of the EWS and also test approaches for empowering the EWS that could guarantee their sustainability.
3. The budget for community projects is insufficient for the ambitions in urban areas. For greater results, Mercy Corps should consider approaches that allow for larger amounts of funding, although the level of control and involvement of the structure will be necessary.
4. Train monitors on conflict management and not just reporting.
Recommendations made by participants who were left wanting, particularly in relation to community projects:

5. Increase on the number of monitors per commune and delegate 1 of the other monitors to supervise the other two;
6. Increase the amount of money allocated to monitors and RC members for the follow-up, collection and transmission of incidents
7. Increase the number of training and capacity building sessions for young leaders and local authorities
8. Extend the duration of the LAFIA project and add other localities
9. Involve women more in the various socio-cultural activities and translate the content of the pastoral charter and the transhumance agreement into the local language
10. In addition to sports and training activities, include other components such as youth entrepreneurship, education
11. Creation of a literacy center for young people
12. Add IGA components for youth and women
13. Add awareness-raising components for the importance of education (the importance of going to school) for girls
14. Creation of an exchange and orientation center for young people on the dangers of drugs and the depravity of morals
15. Renewal of the project is highly recommended with more means to motivate the actors involved. Because people have the good will but do not have the means (especially in the district of Bamako).
CONTACT

Dèrè Rachelle Lougue
Senior Database and Monitoring & Evaluation Officer | MEL
dlougue@mercycorps.org

Alliou Traoré
Program Manager | Program
atraore@mercycorps.org

Moussa Altine Amadou
PAQ Lead | PAQ
almoussa@mercycorps.org

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