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(Include the following information)

Awardee HQ Contact Name	Rebecca Inman
Awardee HQ Contact Address	45 SW Ankeny Street Portland, OR 97204 USA
Awardee HQ Contact Telephone Number	1 503 896 5725
Awardee HQ Contact Fax Number	1 503 896 5011
Awardee HQ Contact Email Address	rinman@mercy Corps.org

(Include the following information)

Host Country Office Contact Name	Mark J. Dwyer
Host Country Office Contact Address	02 Avenue Parallele, Quartier Volcans, Goma, North Kivu, DR Congo
Host Country Office Contact Telephone Number	+ 243 821 645 268
Host Country Office Contact Fax Number	<i>n/a</i>
Host Country Office Contact Email Address	mdwyer@cd.mercycorps.org

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ARR	Annual Results Report
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)
CEDERU	Centre du Développement Rural (Rural Development Center)
CBO	Community Based Organization
CDC	Community Development Committee
CDP	Community Development Plan
CIG	Common interest Groups
CMD	Cassava Mosaic Disease
DFAP	Development Food Aid Project
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FANTA	Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance
FFA	Food for Assets
FFP	Office of Food for Peace
FFS	Farmer Field School
FY	Fiscal Year (October 1st - September 30th)
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
LOA	Life of Award
LQAS	Lot Quality Assurance Sampling
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
MONUSCO	Mission of the United Nations for the Stabilization of the Congo
MT	Metric Ton
MYAP	Multi-Year Assistance Program
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PREP	Pipeline and Resource Estimate Proposal
PVS	participatory variety selection
SAPQ	Standardized Annual Performance Questionnaire
SENASSEM	National Seed Service (Service National de Semences)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VCA	Value Chain Assessment
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association
WFP	World Food Program

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Introduction

- Overview

Mercy Corps, in partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), is implementing the five-year *Resources to Improve Food Security in Eastern DRC* (RISE) program, known in Kiswahili as SIMAMA, aimed at ensuring that vulnerable households and communities in North Kivu build and sustain 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 adoption of sustainable household coping mechanisms, while being able to engage more on market-related activities. The program includes a substantial focus on good governance to ensure that the results achieved are sustainable. This report covers the period October 1, 2013 to 30 September 2014 (FY14), or the third year of the project's implementation.

Among the major events that occurred during the period, Mercy Corps contracted OXU to lead the program's Mid-Term Evaluation in January/February 2014 (*see evaluation report in appendix*). The SIMAMA program has taken into account the recommendations of this evaluation to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the program to achieve maximum impact. Intervention strategies specific to the three SOs have been re-defined to reflect: **a)** the need for better integration between the areas of focus (Agriculture, Health/Nutrition and Governance) and **b)** the program' shift in geographic focus due to the deterioration of the security situation in Rutshuru, when a drastic reduction in the activities in Rutshuru area was offset by the opening of the project on the area of Butembo (*see map appendix 4*). In addition, SIMAMA has revised its results framework to incorporate these changes, ensure gender is appropriately taken into account, and focus on better defined and achievable targets.

Finally, to support the integration of the program's strategic objectives, Mercy Corps and CRS have planned the creation of a project coordination unit, which will include key staff of Mercy Corps, CRS and Caritas. Starting in November 2014, the unit will meet regularly at Mercy Corps' office in Goma to continually improve coordination between program teams and ensure that activities are aligned appropriately to better achieve the program's objectives and goal.

During FY14, SIMAMA strengthened the enforcement of Humanitarian Accountability Principles across all activities to ensure that rights of communities and individuals are respected. Post-Distribution Monitoring has been conducted systematically, as well as post evaluation of activities to measure the quality of services provided and the participants' satisfaction. Both Mercy Corps and CRS are currently undertaking internal investigations to ensure the proper use of program resources; as well as to strengthen the systems and controls in place to adequately monitor the use of resources until the end of the program. During the 4th year of the project, efforts will be intensified and training will be provided to project staff.

Program activities have gained momentum over this reporting year, particularly in terms of SO1, as indicated in the IPTT (*see appendix 10*). During FY15 SIMAMA will not expand its work into new rural communities, but focus on the quality and scalability of interventions, with the aim of transferability and sustainability. Training of field staff will be a key component in the coming year, as well as strengthening administrative and logistical systems that support our implementation in the field.

- Insecurity

The security situation remains volatile in North Kivu, and during the month of September 2014, Mercy Corps and CRS conducted a joint assessment mission to determine the safety on the roads and the possibility of installing expatriate staff in Katwe. To date, travel between Goma, Butembo and Katwe are always made in a convoy with at least two vehicles.

At the time of writing this report, massacres of civilians still occur, particularly in Northern Beni (80 people have died in the last 30 days). The recent violent clashes were allegedly perpetrated by the ADF NALU rebel groups with origins in Uganda. Communities have reported human rights abuses within 25 km of SIMAMA program areas, and SIMAMA continues to monitor these events and the evolving context. In FY14, particularly in the first quarter of the year, security constraints had an impact on the program; notably, the opening of the Butembo base was delayed, and access to many SIMAMA communities for monitoring was often restricted due to insecurity.

-Commodities management

During the period, the program received a total of **2,817.39** MT, consisting of the following commodity tonnages: 1,560.22 MT of corn soy blend (CSB), 50.02 MT of vegetable oil, 927.25 MT of cornmeal and 279.9 MT of yellow split peas. There were no monetization commodities approved for this fiscal year; instead, SIMAMA received additional 202 (e) resources.

An inland freight contract was signed in June 2014 between Mercy Corps and Bollore Logistics Africa to manage the freight movement of FY14 direct distribution commodities from the port of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania to Goma, DRC warehouse.

By the end of this reporting year, the SIMAMA program distributed a total of **3,332** MT of direct distribution commodities, including **216.67** MT of vegetable oil, **1,693.6** MT of CSB, **1,093.77** MT of cornmeal and **327.97** MT of yellow split peas in Birambizo health zone, Rusthuru territory.

Commodity type	Split Yellow Peas	Corn Soy Blend (CSB)	Vegetable oil	Cornmeal
FY14 Opening balances (kgs)	60,657	809,476	219,592	188,500
Quantity received during the year (kgs)	279,900	1,560,225	50,020	927,250
Quantity distributed during the year (kgs)	327,970	1,693,599.50	216,677.81	1,093,778
Commodity loans out (kgs)	150,000	-	10,003.30	500,000
Commodity repayments (kgs)	150,000	-		500,000
Losses reported during FY15	5,718	201,616.30	652.40	20 822.30
Book closing balances (kgs)	6,869.00	474,485.20	42,278.49	1 149.70
Physical closing balances (kgs)	6,867.00	474,960.40	45,290.00	1,175.00
Variances (kgs)	(2)	475.20	3,011.51	25.30
Excess/Loss commodity reported (kgs)	(2)	475.20	3,013.51	25.30

The program has continued to face major logistical challenges of accessing some of its commodity distribution sites, notably Kagando and Mulimbi, due to the extremely poor road network in some of these communities, especially during the rainy season. In an effort to address some of these logistical challenges, the commodity team has continued to effectively collaborate with more reliable local transporters to reach these locations.

With approval from USAID/FFP, the SIMAMA program disposed of 183.195MT of unfit direct distribution commodities as follows;

- a) 35MT of CSB in March, 2014 by incineration.
- b) 63.75MT of CSB in July, 2014 by composting.
- c) 89.445MT of CSB in September, 2014 by dumping into dormant volcanic vents.

The SIMAMA program finalized and submitted a pesticide evaluation and safer user action plan (PERSUAP) for warehouse commodities to USAID/FFP for approval; and the commodities team has started the implementation of key integrated pest management practices that are essential complements to fumigation.

In order to improve the overall management of SIMAMA Title II commodities while building the local staff capacity, the program recruited an international commodity advisor in May 2014 for a period of one year to work with the local commodity manager to strengthen the current commodity management systems and build capacity. The program also recruited two additional field-based food monitors to improve and strengthen the monitoring of Food for Assets and PM2A commodity distribution activities in Birambizo.

To avoid supporting ghost/ineligible beneficiaries within the PM2A program component, CRS undertook a physical verification process to verify the list of more than 30,000 beneficiaries in their database between July and August 2014. At the time of writing this report, two internal auditors from CRS headquarter in Baltimore are conducting an investigation in North Kivu. Mercy Corps and CRS are working jointly and the Inspector General (IG) Office has been informed of this situation. A final detailed report will be submitted to FFP as soon as possible.

-Budget analysis

Globally expenses were above the approved budget during FY14, however the overall level of resources was sufficient to cover the costs of activities thanks to the carryover of resources from the previous exercises. Program expenses amounted to \$ 6,667,118. Compared to the approved budget (\$6,063,942), this corresponds to an overspent of 10%. During FY15, the level of expenses will be aligned with the available level of resources. A full financial expenditures report is available in appendix 1.

Monitoring and Evaluation

SIMAMA Mid-Term Evaluation

The mid-term evaluation took place during the month of February 2014. Based on qualitative methods, the evaluation was conducted by the OXU Solution Company in Birambizo and Rutshuru,

with the purpose of validating the results achieved to date and the relevance of the project's strategies and activities against the expected objectives.

The SIMAMA program has taken into account the recommendations of this evaluation to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the program to achieve maximum impact. Intervention strategies specific to the three SOs have been re-defined to reflect: **a)** the need for better integration between the areas of focus (Agriculture, Health/Nutrition and Governance) and **b)** the program's shift in geographic focus due to the deterioration of the security situation in Rutshuru, when a drastic reduction in the activities in Rutshuru area was offset by the opening of the project on the area of Butembo (*see map of SIMAMA interventions in Appendix 4*).

Revision of SIMAMA Results Framework

In May 2014, the team revised the program's results framework to integrate the recommendations of the MTE. The final document, previously submitted to FFP, is available in *Appendix 9*.

Revision of SIMAMA IPTT and development of PIRS

The IPTT has recently been adapted with respect to changes made in the Revised Result Framework. A PIRS was in addition developed by Mercy Corps and CRS M & E teams. Please see:

- Appendix 10 :original IPTT for reporting SIMAMA activities during FY14
- Appendix 11: note explaining the variations in the IPTT between targets and achievement during FY14
- Appendix 12 SIMAMA revised IPTT for reporting during FY15 and FY16
- Appendix 13 : the explanation for the revisions to the IY4 changes to the IPTT. The revised indicators now align with the mid-term evaluation.
- Appendix 14 : SIMAMA developed PIRS

Strengthening of the monitoring system

During FY14, the SIMAMA team put in place a quarterly reporting system to enhance communication with USAID on the project's activities and to ease the management role of the coordinators by providing continuous information in respect with results against DIP and workplans. In addition, the program also developed and implemented new tools to improve the monitoring of activities; this includes the establishment of Post Distribution Monitoring and the set-up of Community Help Desks at food distributions sites for the Food for Assets component.

Monitoring of environmental indicators program SIMAMA

During the last quarter of FY14, tools were developed to improve systems for environmental monitoring in all applicable program areas per the EMMP. In September 2014, SIMAMA produced its first internal environmental monitoring report, with the objective of ensuring that best practices for environmental monitoring are shared among the program team and that any issues are addressed.

Joint Mercy Corps database for SIMAMA beneficiaries

In FY14, SIMAMA started centralizing into one single database program beneficiaries, to understand and monitor overlap between program activities (for instance SO2 PLW who benefited from SO1 activities.) The exercise proves its own limit and double counting of beneficiaries still exists in the database, however SIMAMA believes that by carrying out evaluations in sampled villages and then extrapolating to the total intervention area, reliable data should be available to understand the number of beneficiaries who received assistance from the different SOs. The exercise will be pursued during year 4.

A: Annual Food Assistance Project Activities and Results

SO1: By the end of the program, smallholder farming households in target areas increase and diversify production and profit.

During FY14, SIMAMA implemented SO1 activities in 4 Health Zones: Birambizo located in Rutshuru Territory, Masereka and Musienene in Lubero Territory and Kalunguta in Beni Territory. VSLA (Village Savings and Loan Associations) activities were continued in Rutshuru, Binza and Rwanguba Health Zones of Rutshuru Territory and in Karisimbi Health Zone of Nyiragongo Territory, yet with limited support from SIMAMA. The details of the activity implementation per geographical area can found in *Appendix 3*.

Despite some delays in the implementation of this component, due in part to the insecurity situation and the subsequent shift to another project area, the agriculture component has assimilated the lessons from the mid-term evaluation and built on its previous work and best practices to revise its strategy, which will be fully implemented in FY15. While FY14 activities focused on the production side, FY15 will implement full fledge its value chain activities.

In addition, throughout FY14, SIMAMA built practical linkages between SO1 and SO3 (governance), by working with Local Development Committees (LDCs) to plan Food For Assets (FFA) activities so that they contribute to improved food security and access to markets. Informed by barrier analyses during the reporting year, SIMAMA also designed behavior change communications campaigns involving theatre, music and film.

Specific achievements of FY14 in SO1 include:

- The completion of 2 value chain assessments in Birambizo and Butembo (Lubero and Beni Territories);
- The formation of 334 Farmer Field Schools in Birambizo and Butembo;
- Certification by SENASEM of 17 seed multiplication farmers and selection of an additional 40 seed multipliers;
- The launch of a cascade strategy for breeding rabbits and guinea pigs, expected to reach over 26,914 households by the end of FY15 (851 rabbits and 195 guinea pigs were thus far distributed to 248 households,); and,
- The formation of 120 new VSLA groups in Butembo and 91 SILC groups in Birambizo.

As mentioned above, in the first quarter of FY14 access to the field to monitor these activities was limited due to insecurity in Rutshuru Bwisha, while in Birambizo movement hours in the field were shortened.

IR 1.1 Smallholder farming households adopt integrated and sustainable farming practices

Capacity Building Activities

Farmer Field Schools: In order to reach an increased number of smallholder farmers with practical training on improved production techniques and practices, a total of 401 farmer field schools (FFS) were formed during FY14, reaching over 8,490 households. While 60 FFS were initially planned, SIMAMA followed the recommendations of the MTE to increase the number of FFS to reach a greater number of farmers. This number also includes 125 new farmer groups that were formed in the 3 Health Zones in Butembo area.

Number of Farmer Field Schools per intervention area and production type			
	FFS Birambizo	FFS in Butembo	# of households
Banana	9	5	490
Maize, beans, cassava, potatoes and vegetables production	267	120	9,675
Totals	276	125	10,165

In addition to those reached by the 401 new FFS, the program also trained 12,006 smallholder farmers from old farmer field schools on improved agricultural techniques. These FFS are carried out by Agriculture Village Agents (AVA – see paragraph below), on demonstration plots in which all trainings and practical demonstrations are conducted under the guidance of the AVA and supervision of the project agronomists. Demonstration plots were also used to test new crop varieties. Through participatory selection, 2 out of the 5 bio-fortified bean varieties under test in the 4 model farms and 24 demonstration plots were selected by the farmers for expanded production due to their higher yields, tolerance to pest, resistance to diseases, and culinary preference. The two varieties are G59/1-2 and CODMLB001, both produced by the National Institute for Research and Agronomic Studies (INERA) in DRC.

Fourteen FFS were specifically formed to aid in the fight against Banana Xanthomonas Wilt (BXW), including nine in Birambizo Health Zone and five in Butembo (Kalunguta and Musienene Health Zones), and reaching 490 farmers (343 women and 147 men).

Trainings of community-based extension agents

The AVA are the community-based extension agents responsible for providing training to producer groups via a FFS approach; each AVA is responsible for training 100 participants. The AVAs are selected because they are from the target communities, literate, interested and willing to give time to the groups, and nominated by the members of the producer groups they train. AVA are trained in four model farms established in Kibirizi, Kashalira, Kikuku and Bwalanda, and are then responsible for establishing demonstration plots within their communities to transfer knowledge in a very practical way.

In year 3, 80 AVA were selected and completed the first 5-day Training-of Trainers (TOT). Two more AVA training sessions (5-day and 3-day refresher trainings) are planned for November and December 2014. Conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture agronomists, the AVA training program covers conservation agriculture, agronomic practices, crop protection, harvesting and post-harvest handling and cross cutting issues like environmental protection.

The particular case of cassava and bananas

During FY14, 5,673 farmers (3,800 women, 1,873 men) were trained on means to fight against the African Mosaic Cassava disease, which resulted in 100 ha of cassava field healed from the disease in Birambizo and Rutshuru Health zones. 10,203 (6,836 women, 3367 men) members of producer associations were trained on improved agricultural techniques for cassava, maize and banana in Birambizo zone.

Four participatory varieties selection (PVS) on cassava were established with 15 farmer associations in Birambizo zone. The promotion of integrated crop management was conducted, leading to the establishment setting up of 20 acres of intercropping system including banana and soya in 19 sites in Birambizo.

Two TOT (Training of Trainers) trainings were conducted for 69 trainers (47 men, 22 women) on BXW management in Musienene and Kalunguta Health Zones.

Input Supply

Distribution of improved agricultural inputs

To encourage the adoption of improved varieties of seeds that either offers a higher nutritional content (such as soybeans, bio-fortified maize, and vegetable) or higher yields (such as beans), SIMAMA distributed improved seeds to 9351 SO1 and SO2 participant households. Additionally, SIMAMA distributed rabbits and guinea pigs to 248 households in an effort to improve consumption.

Soybeans: In response to the demand of program communities, a total of 10,000 kg of improved variety of soy bean seeds (Imperial variety) was procured to be distributed to SO2 project participants to improve nutrition and dietary diversity. Specifically, 3,900 kg of soy bean seeds were distributed to 3,900 PM2A mothers in Birambizo for planting during the A2015 season (August 2014-February 2015), and 1,000 kg of soya bean seeds were distributed to 1,000 PM2A mothers in Butembo. For purposes of seed multiplication, 1,600 kg soy bean seeds were distributed to 40 FFS in the Birambizo area. The balance will be used in FY15 as follows: demonstration plots for learning purpose – 1000 kg; and distribution to PM2A participants for B2015 season planting 2,500kg.

Maize seeds: In addition to soy, 19,500kg of bio-fortified (Vitamin A) maize seeds were distributed to 3,900 PM2A mothers in Birambizo to improve the nutrition of their household. Each selected PM2A household in Birambizo received 5 kg of maize for planting during the A2015 agricultural season. The bio-fortified seeds distributed during the reporting period were produced in 25 Ha of secondary seed multiplication plots in Birambizo and Rutshuru by CRS.

Vegetable seeds: 262 SO2 participants, including 80 Mother Leaders, completed training in kitchen gardening and received a vegetable production kit comprised of vegetable seeds (50 gram cabbage and 20 gram each of eggplant, amaranth, spinach and onions) and a set of farming tools (a hoe, watering can, and a rake).

Bean seeds: Upon the results of the varietal selection, a total of 4,451 kg was distributed to 4,451 SO1 participants in Birambizo at the rate of 1 kg per participant for on farm trials.

Rabbits and guinea pigs

In IY2, 3 livestock multiplication units were constructed in Kikuku, Bwalanda and Kashalira, each stocked with 12 breeding rabbits. This approach, however, proved slow in meeting the demand of SO2 participants. As such, a scaling-up strategy was adopted involving training participants and directly distributing 4 breeding rabbits to each interested households once they had constructed suitable housing units. A total of 851 breeding rabbits were distributed to 248 SO2 participants (includes 105 rabbits from the multiplication units distributed to 35 beneficiaries at the rate of 3 rabbits per household). Given the increased interest by project participants and the limited budget, the strategy was modified further - to involve the grouping of the PM2A mother into groups of 4 households based on proximity and trust. While one mother will be responsible for raising this first batch of rabbits, the other mothers will visit and contribute. After the first six months, each female rabbit will have delivered an average of 5 to 6 rabbits, giving a total of 20 rabbits to be divided among the 4 mothers. The new strategy will be implemented in FY15 and will allow 16,800 SO2 households to receive rabbits or guinea pigs and be able to increase their consumption of animal proteins.

Cassava

23.5 hectares of tertiary multiplication plots for mosaic resistant cassava varieties (Sawasawa, Liyayi, Nabana, Mayombe, Sukisa, Disanga, Obama and Nsansi) were established with 21 farmer associations during FY14. This yielded 107,450 linear meters of disease-resistant cassava cuttings certified by SENASEM and INERA. The cuttings were distributed to 2,150 beneficiary (537 men and 1613 women) households. In addition, 2 Ha of a bio-fortified variety of cassava (01/1661) was established for cuttings multiplication in Rutshuru and Birambizo Health Zone.

Bananas

Activities related to prevention and control of BXW continued in FY14 involving installation of healthy banana plantations in Birambizo, Musienene and Kalunguta Health Zones. SIMAMA planted 12.5 hectares with 14,091 new disease-free suckers from 38 banana macro propagation sites. BXW-specific sensitization and tools were introduced throughout the year to inform producers and other community stakeholders on the disease cycle so that the pandemic can be prevented.

During the last quarter of FY14, and in collaboration with the North Kivu Provincial Ministry of Agriculture and the Catholic University of the Graben, Butembo, a SIMAMA agronomist identified and declared a new maize disease similar to maize lethal necrosis illness in the Tongo health area and in Kalunguta health zone. The Catholic University of the Graben sent samples of sick maize leaves for further laboratory tests in Nigeria. The results of the tests were still being awaited at the time of this report.

Seeds multiplication

In FY15, SIMAMA trained 22 bean seed multipliers and supplied them with seeds of 2 bio-fortified beans varieties, of whom, 17 were certified by the National Seed Certification Agency (SENASA) after satisfactory application of the standard seed production practices. An additional 40 interested seed multipliers have been registered to receive training from the National Research Institute (INERA) and the SENASA. INERA and SENASA will provide capacity building, base seed material, certification of the seeds produced and on-going technical support. The choice of the seeds to be multiplied corresponds to the result of the seed supply gap analysis and producers' preference.

Additionally, INERA Ngandajika provided SIMAMA with 500 kg of improved varieties of maize seeds: Mudishi 1 and Mudishi 3 varieties. They have higher yields, shorter cycle and are more resistant to pests and diseases. The seeds will be multiplied in farms in Birambizo and Butembo. SIMAMA also multiplied eight varieties resistant to the African mosaic cassava disease in 22 sites in Birambizo and Rutshuru health zones and banana suckers produced from 38 macro propagation sites in Birambizo and Rutshuru that were certified by SENASA and INERA/Mulungu.

Collaboration with local institutions

At the provincial level, SIMAMA has developed a strong relationship with the Rutshuru Territory Agriculture Inspector's Office, SENASA, INERA, the Provincial Agriculture Ministry (IPAPEL) and the Ministry of the Environment. Local chiefs, leaders, churches and communities are involved in program implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation activities, particularly with the newly developed Community Development Plans (under SO3) confirming the participation and oversight of communities and local authorities.

CRS is a member of the BXW Control Commission and works in collaboration with the Provincial Ministry of Agriculture of North Kivu, the FAO, Biodiversity International FERA, CIALCA, CIAT and IITA in efforts to bring BXW under control. SIMAMA also collaborates with 3 local universities: Catholic University in Bukavu, Catholic University of the Graben in Butembo, and University of Goma.

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

Post-harvest handling, storage and processing methods

Maize Seeds: 52 smallholder farmers (30 women and 22 men) were trained on proper drying and storage of maize seeds using the PICS bag (Purdue University Improved Cowpea Storage bag). The 52 farmers in turn trained 5,548 (3,718 women/ 1,830 men) members of their associations on the use of PICS bag. Each of the trained members of the associations received one bag to help with the promotion of those bags for storage. Local suppliers in the different locations have started stocking the PICS bag and the producers can access them based on their needs.

Bean/Bean Seeds: 600 beans producers and 22 seed multiplication farmers were trained on proper post-harvest handling and storage of beans for seeds and grain. The farmers were trained on the use of locally available containers – clay pots, metal drums and gourds for storage of seeds and grains. Capacity building activities around this theme will continue in FY15.

Value chain analysis and report

In October 2013 and April 2014, SIMAMA conducted value chain assessments in Butembo and Birambizo. The key constraints identified in the two value chain assessments were low productivity, poor post-harvest handling practices, high transportation costs for agricultural produce to markets, high and multiple taxes on produce of the targeted value chains, lack of actionable market information, lack of produce collection facilities / bulking facilities, lack of quality agricultural input supply system, and heavy post-harvest losses specifically due to theft by armed groups. The VCA were followed by discussions with value chain actors to propose interventions aimed at improving efficiencies along the value chains. From these analyses and discussions with producers, the following value chains were selected:

- Butembo: Potatoes, beans and onions (white)
- Birambizo: cassava, beans, onions (red) and seed multiplication

The criteria for selection of value chain include opportunities for profitability, low financial and knowledge barriers, government priorities, interest from producers and other value chain actors, large existing market demand both locally and in major urban centers, and opportunities for employment for women and youth.

The findings of the VCA have been used to engage the different value chain actors – producers, bulking agents / rural assemblers, transporters, rural and urban retailers, and large scale traders (millers/processor and wholesalers) in design of activities planned for FY15. The interventions will include meetings of value chain actors to improve the market operations and inter-actor understanding, post-harvest handling and quality improvement to meet market needs, informal mobile-phone based market information systems, and improvement of bulking facilities.

Please see Appendix 5 and 6 for Value chain assessment reports in Birambizo and Butembo

Creation of CIG and other value chain activities

Common Interest Groups (CIGs) are enterprise specific sub-groups formed from the general producer groups/associations. CIGs will form enterprises focused on one common crop selected for potential for value chain development; the target crops are onions, potatoes, cassava and beans. These will be formed in FY15, and will be the drivers of a larger effort designed to strengthen the four selected value chains.

[IR 1.3 Male and female smallholder farmers and other targeted value chain actors create an enabling business environment](#)

Smallholder farmers access financial services: The formation and training of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) is well under way. To date, 271 VSLAs have been formed in the Birambizo, Rutshuru, Rwanguba, Binza, Karisimbi Musienene, Masereka and Kalunguta Health Zones.

Progress of village savings and loan activities:

	Nyiragongo and Rutshuru Bwisha	Rutshuru Bwito	Butembo
	Karisimbi, Rutshuru, Rwanguba and Binza Health Zones	Birambizo Health Zone	Masereka, Musienene, and Kalunguta Health Zones
Total number of VSLA/SILC groups and number of members	- 61 VSLAs - Members: 1829 with 762 Women and 1067 Men	- 91 (SILC) - 2584 with 1477 women and 1107 men	- 120 VSLA - Members: 4282 With 2873 Women and 1409 Men
Status by end of FY14	- 60 VSLAs completed planned training and also completed the first cycle of operations. All of these completed at least 6 months of the 2 nd cycle. - 1 VSLA collapsed after the members were displaced when M23 forces set up camps in their village	91 SILC groups were formed during the second half of FY14 and therefore in the early stages of development	- All the VSLAs were formed during the second half of FY14. They are currently undergoing development training and have started mobilizing deposits from the members.

61 VSLAs were formed in Rutshuru, Binza and Rwanguba Health Zones in IY2 and their training and development was done in FY14, of which 60 completed training and the first cycle of operations during the reporting period. All the 60 started the second cycle of operation. The training and development of the VSLAs was supported by 10 Villages Agents (AV) who were trained by the project in the training and development of VSLAs. The one group was from areas that were the most affected by the insecurity caused by M23 occupation. The members were displaced and never returned. The 60 VSLAs include 1804 total participants.

In Birambizo, 22 VSLA Village Agents were trained, and they provided training and development support to 91 VSLA/SILC groups formed in the area. Total membership of the VSLAs is 2,584 with 1,477 women and 1,107 men.

The average accrued saving and lending by group members for the project was \$42 in comparison to a target of \$40. The average loan accessed by members was \$56 against a target of \$40. The percentage of loan recipients without credit default was 57% against 75%, and this was attributed to high loan default by loan recipients from 3 VSLAs in Monigi area of Nyiragongo, whose businesses were affected by the M23 occupation.

Additionally, 120 VSLAs have been formed in Butembo. To support the training and development of the new VSLAs, a training of trainers (ToT) for 20 VSLA Village Agents was also completed during the period. The agents have been engaged for a period of 12 months from July 2014 to train and provide support for the development of the VSLAs. Each agent is in charge of 6 VSLAs located in specific sites.

SO2: By the end of the program, the nutritional status among pregnant and lactating women and children under 5 is improved in target areas

This third year of the project has been marked by an increased collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH) and other stakeholders. SIMAMA signed a MOU with the MoH to solidify this

collaboration: joint supervision, joint training, mutual support and sharing of information are part of the MOU. Also, with 122 men joining the program as Father Leaders, SIMAMA increased men's involvement in Health and Nutrition activities, helping to mobilize peer collaboration and support for their wives in Health and Nutrition decisions.

In order to respect the full 1,000 days requirement for food support to targeted beneficiaries by the end of the project, SIMAMA ended beneficiary registration this year around April 2014. With the existing beneficiaries, SIMAMA then conducted a thorough exercise to verify that the program is serving properly-identified beneficiaries. This process started in late July 2014 and is expected to finish by end of October. At the same time, SIMAMA also started increasing more integration between the SOs. PM2A beneficiaries are now involved in SO1 activities to give them sustainable access to nutritious food: soya beans, vegetable gardens and meat from small animals.

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.

Significant efforts have been made to increase demand for health services among pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and caregivers of children under 5 (CU5) and to support health care providers in providing high quality preventive care. Continued trainings in antenatal and post natal care (ANC and PNC), Integrated Management of Childhood Illness, Essential Nutrition Actions (ENAs) and Essential Hygiene Actions (EHAs) have reinforced the knowledge and skills of 119 health service providers. To reinforce the capacity of community level volunteers, 977 Mother Leaders (ML) and Relais Communaitaires (RECOs) were trained in ENAs and EHAs. Starting in May 2014, joint supervision and monitoring visits were initiated in collaboration with zonal and provincial government actors to health centers on a monthly and quarterly basis, respectively. These serve as a mechanism to determine whether health service providers have integrated the information learned at trainings in their work and to identify key weaknesses, gaps in staff knowledge and supply needs, such as equipment, medication and health forms. In FY15, all facilities will be re-visited to observe whether the challenges identified were addressed.

Participation in monthly UNICEF nutrition cluster meetings has served as a forum for advocacy, allowing staff to learn and share needs identified in the project area with other members. In FY14, SIMAMA brought to the cluster's attention a deficit of inputs for nutrition rehabilitation in Birambizo. In response, Save the Children will provide Plumpy'Nut to health centers in approximately six Health Areas (HAs). This will support the efforts of 431 RECOs (181 from last year and 250 from FY14, including 164 men and 86 women this year) in detecting and referring cases of moderate acute malnutrition in the community to the clinic for follow-up care.

MLs and RECOs, who continue to serve as primary channels of communication, progressed in promoting appropriate care-seeking behaviors among the target group—PLW and caretakers of CU5. These volunteers promote key BCC messages among the target population, encouraging women to visit a clinic for pre and post natal care, and upon identifying signs of danger. To examine the uptake of these and other positive nutrition and health behaviors, two nutrition Lot Quality Assurance Sampling (LQAS) Surveys were conducted and the analysis of the second LQAS is underway to examine trends, which will inform FY15 programming priorities. To further examine the barriers to attendance at four ANC visits during pregnancy and PNC, the BCC team carried out guided group discussions which will inform the creation of new messages in FY15.

IR 2.2 Pregnant and lactating women and caregivers of children < 5 adopt key preventive nutrition and health behaviors.

Mother Leaders continued to serve as leaders in promoting ENAs, EHAs and key family health behaviors among PM2A participants through home visits, culinary demonstrations and presentations by ML theater groups. The number of Mother Leaders rose significantly last year from 205 to 977 (897 in Birambizo/Bambu and 80 in Butembo). 977 MLs and Father Leaders (FLs) have been trained in ENAs. MLs have been trained also in breastfeeding counseling and are active with cooking demonstrations and home visits. Given that ML and FL recruitment finished in July, FY15 should see a marked increase in the number of activities implemented at the community level.

During FY14, SIMAMA welcomed 122 FL in 18 Health Areas in Birambizo/Bambu. FLs support the increased integration of men into family health and nutrition issues so that they can support and facilitate the uptake of these behaviors by their wives and other family or community members. FY15 will see a greater focus on FL, who will be increasingly leveraged to influence peer fathers in supporting their wives in the adoption of positive nutrition and health behaviors. FL will focus largely on those activities related to hygiene, gardening and animal raising.

Another significant channel for behavior change has been local radio. Twelve radio journalists trained in effective communication of messages disseminated key messages to their communities. Beginning in FY14, seven messages were aired twice a day seven days a week for four months in four local languages. Some messages were replaced, and again seven messages aired for four months.

RECOs and MLs continued to promote the Government of DRC's key family health practices in the community. Last year, 14 government-endorsed key family health practices were translated into local languages and tested. In FY15, translated IEC materials in local languages will be printed and distributed to ML, RECOs and health centers.

One strategic change made last year to increase opportunities for group education was to divide PM2A participants into Neighbor Groups of approximately 40 individuals; each group is led by a Mother Leader. This grouping was done to allow for more group-level education sessions while home-visits will be reserved for special cases where individual follow-up or attention is necessary. It will also provide more opportunities for peer contact and learning among the mothers and a more efficient unit of targeting for SIMAMA, such as for distribution and support for soy cultivation as well as rabbit and guinea pig raising.

Given the strong link between nutrition and hygiene, as well as findings from the Lot Quality Assurance Sampling (LQAS), last year a greater emphasis has been placed on hygiene. An EHA training was integrated into SIMAMA with an adapted training module created in partnership with the Provincial Health authorities. An initial Training of Trainers was held for the Health Zone and SIMAMA nutrition and BCC field agents. Agents have trained over half (500) of MLs and FLs; the remainder will be trained in FY15. The Health Zone will train RECOs and health service providers in FY15. Nutrition and BCC agents have also carried out 27 demonstration sessions promoting low-cost appropriate household tools, including tippy taps and dish drying racks to reduce the risk of hygiene related diseases and contaminants. In FY15, FLs, MLs and RECOs will scale-up this effort in their communities.

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

Fortified corn soy blend and oil are provided as a nutritional supplement to PLW and children 6-23 months as a means to safeguard their nutritional status during the 1,000 day period. The PM2A rations are distributed in Birambizo/Bambu HZs, where until April 2014 pregnant women could register at their first ANC visit. Registration is now closed, however pregnant women registered before April will continue to receive commodities until six months after the birth of their child, at which point the infant of each of these mothers will receive commodities from six to 23 months of age. Mothers receive 7.5 kg of dry corn-soy blend and 600 mL of oil while infants 6-23 months of age receive 6 kg of CSB and 600 mL of oil. In June and July 2014, the SO2 team carried out a thorough verification process of all program beneficiaries to ensure that all women receiving rations are eligible for those rations.

Based on the signed Recipient Status Report from CRS, SIMAMA distributed 1,693.6MT of CSB and 134.56 MT of vegetable oil this year. It served in total 26,914 recipients composed of 13,990 mothers and 12,924 children. Please note that with the beneficiary verification process going on currently, updated figures might be provided later.

In FY14, SO1 and SO2 made great strides in improving strategies for integrating nutrition and agriculture activities; and this will accelerate in the coming year. To support the consumption of diverse foods, particularly those rich in iron and vitamin A, the SO1 team led market gardening and animal raising activities, providing technical support and distributing seeds, rabbits and guinea pigs to select MLs for cascade distribution (see SO1 results). The team faced various challenges with the approach and monitoring system, and both were revised for FY15. To promote dietary diversity, 200 members of producer associations have been trained in ENAs. In FY15, nutrition agents will support agriculture monitors in carrying out culinary demonstrations. For better integration, joint targeting was carried out in Butembo, where household dietary diversity will be a major focus for SO2. As described above, soy bean seed distribution will be followed by training on making corn-soy blend for sustainable production of a nutritious porridge for young children. This will be a major activity in FY15.

MLs carried out culinary demonstrations to promote 47 recipes using micronutrient-rich locally produced foods. Although the target number of culinary demonstrations was not achieved, it increased significantly from IY2. With the last round of ML having been recruited in July, the number of culinary demonstrations in FY15 will continue to increase.

SO3: By the end of the program, responsive government structures and participatory governance mechanisms in target areas reinforce community resilience to food insecurity

Through SO3 activities, SIMAMA builds the capacity of local authorities and local development structures, and strengthens linkages between civil society and local decision makers, to ensure that food security gains can be sustained over the long term. In year 3, following MTE recommendations, SIMAMA worked on strengthening local development committees, improving transparency and

accountability in the management of food for assets (FFA) activities, and reinforcing the role of the rural agricultural management structures, or CARGs. SO3 activities reached 7,121 participants, including 40% women and 222 representatives of local government. During the reporting period, the program faced challenges; notably, given the Ministry of Agriculture's limited capacity to strengthen the CARGs, SIMAMA increased its advocacy efforts to enhance the CARGs' visibility and mobilize resources from other sources for their development.

The SO3 team complemented SO1 and SO2 objectives by supporting the development of 12 local development plans in Butembo, in partnership with (and while building the capacity of) two local organizations.

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.

Constitution of Local Development Committees (LDCs) and training on decentralization:

During FY14, 17 LDCs in the area Birambizo were revitalized and/or reconstituted in accordance with the laws of decentralization in the DRC, ensuring women were represented. In partnership with the Provincial Division of Decentralization, SIMAMA provided capacity building activities on local planning, and the definition of roles and responsibilities of LDCs. A total of 83 committee members participated, including 34 women and 49 men. For the Butembo area, 11 LDCs were also established and will benefit from capacity building assistance in FY15.

Capacity building of local authorities, decentralized services and civil society representatives:

As part of the gradual transfer of competencies to the decentralized territorial entities and civil society, four dissemination workshops on decentralization (including one in Birambizo and three in Butembo) were organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Decentralization. They reached 178 participants including 31 women and 145 men. Also implemented through this partnership were two trainings on local planning directives and the management of public contracts for 80 people (65 men and 13 women).

Food for Assets and Local Development Committees: During FY14, 61 Food for Assets projects were implemented, allowing 8,691 households to earn food rations, for a total of 1,425 MT of commodities distributed (1,036 MT of cornmeal, 310.7 MT of yellow split peas and 77,8 MT of vegetable oil).

FFA projects are in three categories : **a)** rehabilitation of 156 km of feeder roads, improving access to markets for isolated villages (37 projects); **b)** construction of seven fishponds initiated to improve food security and diversity in surrounding communities; and **c)** 17 initiatives for tree nurseries and tree planting.

Out of these 61 projects, SIMAMA has set up 25 maintenance committees, including representatives from the LDCs. In addition, SIMAMA worked with communities to minimize any potential environmental impact of the FFA projects by following USAID's environmental guidelines for small scale activities. Women's participation in these projects accounted for 57%. The number of participants for this year is 18036 compared to the 20,900 expected (86%). To ensure the most

vulnerable households were included, SO3, in collaboration with the LDCs, conducted 6 awareness sessions on the selection criteria of beneficiaries in Birambizo.

The FFA process followed a collaborative approach, involving LDCs, the SIMAMA team and its local partners in the selection of FFA projects. These projects were identified based on the priorities included in the LDPs.

Training of local civil society organizations

In addition to the two organizations directly implementing FFA (who receive direct support from the program team), SIMAMA also trained 9 local CSOs on organizational management to help them better implement FFA activities and manage future community development projects. As part of improving social accountability, three sharing and awareness sessions on procedures for managing FFA activities and fighting against fraud took place in the area Birambizo.

Additionally, four training sessions on gender mainstreaming were organized for local associations in Birambizo and Rutshuru including associations of youth and women. In total 225 people were trained (51% women). Following this training, gender committees were set up to educate communities on Gender and Equity principles and women's participation in decision-making.

Training on land conflict management

In partnership with UN-HABITAT, SIMAMA organized 2 training of trainer (ToT) sessions on land tenure laws and mechanisms for resolving land disputes in Goma and Butembo for 98 members of CARGs and local authorities.

SO3 also proceeded to identify and diagnose local patterns of land mediation from which a series of dialogues will be conducted in year 4. 14 land management structures have been identified in Birambizo, and capacity building on land laws and their revitalization in the management of local land-mediated mechanisms is planned for October 2014.

Local leaders and community stakeholders establish Disaster risk reduction (DRR) and Early Warning Systems and Responses (EWS-R) mechanisms

Constitution of Local DRR and EWS-R sub-committees within the LDCs: Community meetings involving LDCs on the roles of the DRR Committee and the structure formation process were conducted, and 13 committees were created in 13 locations in Birambizo. For the Butembo area, LDCs are already set up and DRR Committees will be established in FY15.

Cascade trainings on disaster risk reduction and EWS-R: In support of the communities in the development of their risk reduction strategies, the SO3 team led diagnosis and risk and vulnerabilities analysis in 12 localities; currently, 10 DRR plans (of 17 planned) have been developed jointly with the communities and 11 training sessions were conducted for the implementation of a continuous monitoring system of the food security situation. The targets of these training sessions are LDCs, members of DRR committees and representatives of local associations. The project has trained 261 participants (89 women and 172 men) on DRR and 84

people on the EWS. In Butembo, DRR and EWS activities will be scheduled for the first quarter of FY15.

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

Capacity building of CARGs

In FY14, SIMAMA assessed the needs and capacity of 1 of the 2 CARGs supported by SIMAMA in the Butembo area, and an action planning workshop was organized. A CARG in Ruwenzori, selected upon the recommendations from the provincial CARG, will receive a needs assessment during the first quarter of FY15. Training in advocacy techniques was provided to 30 CARG members in Birambizo, and a similar training is planned for Butembo in FY15. This training is designed to assist CARGs in advocating locally on land-use or other relevant local development issues.

Information Sharing between Ministry of Agriculture and the CARGs

In close collaboration with local authorities, SIMAMA set up a reporting and information sharing system between the local CARGs, the Provincial Advisory Council (PAC-CARG) and the Ministry of Agriculture. Although the system is in place and operational, continuous support will be provided next year. The provincial and central Ministries routinely receive reports of meetings and exchanges conducted by the CARG in relation with agriculture production and food security.

Quarterly workshops on Food Security

In FY14, SO3 supported three CARG quarterly workshops (out of four planned) organized to share and learn from one another, discuss action plans for the next period, and give CARGs a platform to express their needs. Capacity building sessions were provided during the workshops focused on: the harmonization of CARGs relationships with authorities; functioning mode of CARG Advisory Councils; and advocacy techniques and sharing on agricultural laws.

B. Challenges and Lessons Learned

Community empowerment and impact sustainability

Communities in SIMAMA project areas have been used to receiving emergency assistance for almost two decades; they are used to receiving and accepting all assistance offered to them even if sometimes the help is not best targeted. By further engaging communities in the design and implementation of project activities, by fostering the community empowerment agenda, SIMAMA has learned the importance of community accountability, which would in cascade translate into the demand for more accountability from the project staff.

Program implementation

PVOs implementing DFAPs in Eastern Congo face many challenges on the day to day, ranging from logistics, procurement, coordination, staff turn-over, food commodity management, security ... and

all of these challenges requires time and energy and divert managers from one essential topic: training human resources. In this context of transition from emergency to recovery and development, the trainings offered by initiatives such as TOPS on commodity management, nutrition or agriculture are very valuable and cost effective. Over the implementation year we've observed the positive impact of external and internal training events, and have learned that it is important to plan for professional development of staff so that we can continue to improve performance in this challenging environment.

Gender Integration

Gender dynamics in SIMAMA project areas are partially understood (see December 2012 gender assessment); however more detailed analysis is needed if gender wants to be integrated across all implemented activities, especially regarding female decision making and positive masculinity. Roles and responsibilities are clearly attributed to men and women (especially in Birambizo) and to ensure that no negative backlash will result from SIMAMA interventions, it is necessary to reinforce the integrated approach across all components (household-target vs. individual target). To this end SIMAMA created a network of male and female gender focal points that after been trained by the Gender Advisor will be the main responsible for a cascade set of trainings and constant monitoring of the implementation of gender integration strategy and action plan. The latters were agreed-upon after rounds of discussions among Gender Advisor, COP, components managers, team leaders and field staff and offer the much needed integrated approach that should contribute to effective gender integration.

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