

## Community Empowerment for Sustainable Livelihood and Poverty Reduction in the Nile Basin.

The Congolese Nile basin area neighbors Rwanda and Uganda. The area is mainly powered by several activities among them agriculture (crop and animal farming). Through network development, many stakeholders have come on board to promote livelihoods and reduce poverty in this area. One such group is the **Solidarité des organisations des femmes et jeunes producteurs Agricoles pour le Renforcement des Capacités d'Auto promotion (SOFEJEP)**, a CSO, and member of DRC NDF. It was created in 2005 by a consortium of members' CBOs. The core objective of SOFEJEP is to support and empower women and young farmer producers in their efforts to reduce poverty in their communities.

### Problem

The area of Makisabo, Ndarayi, and Kabarole is an area located in Beni territory, collectivity of Ruwenzori, catchment of Basongola area in the North Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The total population is estimated at 27,934 households (139,670 inhabitants).

The population of this area suffers from high levels of poverty among the productive community. The shelter quality and size (less than 2 meters high) is so poor. High levels of produce post harvest losses due to poor quality and/or insufficient storage facilities are in common in Beni (maximum food storage is 300 kg). In addition, the losses of production are characterized by arson (unpredicted criminal fires) during or after the harvesting period. This year, one individual member lost 80 bags of rice paddy (800kg) in two consecutive fire accidents on his house.

The activities in Beni particularly agriculture suffer insufficient and/or no institutional and government support.

The zone is relatively peaceful and this has led to **SOFEJEP** and its partners to establish community projects that reduce poverty levels and increase production for sustainable development in the DRC Nile Basin.

SOFEJEP established farmers' groups, organized and conducted training and other workshops so as to share knowledge on organizational, institutional and capacity building that enable the farmers' groups to lead, present and defend their positions towards social, economic and cultural aspects; as well as taking responsibility of their own development.

### Outcomes

Despite the low institutional and government support, women in Beni are mobilized to promote their development through SOFEJEP, a member of DRC NDF and that advocates for better life and sustainable development in Beni, Nile Basin.

Farmers (453 women and 37 men) were organized into farmers' groups and associations. A total of five training workshops were organized including:

- Mechanization of agriculture and conservative farming,
- Control of water in agricultural production,
- Woman and development and HIV,
- The role of the forest in climate change adaptation, and
- Gender

## NBD success story: CSO engagement in sustainable resources management in Nile Basin.

Through the process, a few tractors were acquired from the government and a total of 490 farmers were trained and are now practicing conservation agriculture - trees on the farms are protected and the farmers are conscious of the ecosystem. In the project area, 1567 trees (eucalyptus) were planted by farmers after the training.



**Table 1: Crops and their respective quantities obtained**

| Crop  | Quantity (tons) |
|-------|-----------------|
| Rice  | 55 tons /15ha   |
| Maize | 35 tons/8ha     |
| other | 60 tons         |



The NDF treasurer, who is also a member of SOFEJEP, is undertaking rice farming and mechanization.

The yields are increasing and farmers have started selling their produce in the villages. The farmers' associations in Makisabo, Mavivi, Ndarayi, Kabarole and Lubiriya Eastern city of DRC are very committed to producing diversified food crops and selling them in the neighboring country Uganda, especially those from which they are getting more income. This has greatly improved their livelihoods.

### Lessons learnt

- In the near future, irrigation will be widely used in crops production (rice, wheat, maize...) in the DRC Nile basin but its impact on natural resource management should be closely monitored to avoid high risks of environmental degradation.
- Advocacy is a way of empowering women for development in Africa and in DRC in particular. The change in life of the woman has a positive consequence and changes the whole family life.

- A woman is a pillar of the development. Reducing taxes on agricultural production is a best way that government can promote woman's activity for sustainable development in Nile Basin. In view of this, gender is an issue to tackle in all aspects of human development, particularly in Nile Basin, a shared vision with all of NBD members in DRC. There is still a long way to go due to strong culture beliefs and practices in DRC.

