



Summary

Married and mother of four children, Mukundi Hélène lives in Buana Mayi (Cijiba, Cilundu HZ), a village of 448 inhabitants. This literate woman is well respected in her community. In 2018, she was elected president of the water management committee (WMC) of her village and is now leading a group of 7 persons (including 2 female) in charge of protecting the improved spring source catchment constructed by the USAID-funded Budikadidi project. Helene’s leadership has produced satisfactory results, for the greater benefit of the entire community.

Hélène and her collaborators succeeded in educating villagers on how to protect the ecosystem and the catchment areas. No one farms around the water point, nor defecates or has animals wandering around the catchment. Children respect the rule of not playing on top of the construction chambers. The fences built by Helene’s team efficiently protect the water point from small animals roaming around. The Buana Mayi water point never failed to provide sufficient water for all villagers, thanks to the Salongo (clean day) work, organized by the WMC weekly.

In April 2022, some parts of the cemented canal and wall started to deteriorate, eroded by torrential rains and too much sun heat. Helene and the WMC decided to fix it before it deteriorates further. They sent someone to Mbuji Mayi, 127 km from Buana Mayi, to purchase 1 cement bag (35,000 CDF or \$17.5) and some iron wires (70,000 CDF, \$35). They also paid the labor of the village mason up to 10,000 Fc (\$5). After all these expenses and with 24,000 CDF (\$12) remaining in their account, the WMC could not definitively correct the technical failure of the water source. An additional 90,000 CDF (\$45) had to be mobilized. Never short of ideas, Helene once again showed dynamism. She went to propose to the village chief a community fundraising strategy, based on a minimum contribution of 500 CDF (\$0.25) per household. The village chief and the Committee of wise men (a kind of board of directors) approved and promoted the initiative to the villagers. In one month, the village collected 105,000Fc (\$52.5); enabling the WMC to rehabilitate the water point.

Successful initiatives like this positively influence the perception of the role of women within the community, as much as they reinforce Helene’s leadership and her motivation to continue giving the best of herself leading the WMC. She is confident when she said “I can read a little, I can write a little, but I can lead meetings. The three women in my team do not know how to write, even signing the meeting minute is difficult for them. But we all believe that the role of women in protecting the water source is so important, so we remain in this committee as needed. I am so happy because no woman played such a role in our village development before. We have the chance to start that. Most importantly, we can save lives by providing safe water to the village.”

Hélène is one of the 30% of women in leadership positions in the 474 rural villages targeted by the Budikadidi project. In the region, men increasingly support women’s leadership position. During field surveys, some claim that women are effective in leadership positions. Women are seen as patient, accommodating and willing to make efforts to inform everyone in the group; which is a main ingredient to prevent conflicts.

Download

Date Published:  
3 May, 2023

Organization:

© 2025 Resilience Learning Activity. Some Rights Reserved.

*This Knowledge Management Hub is facilitated by the Resilience Learning Activity, that is USAID funded. For the Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG), RLA is the is the secretariat and the leading learning partner. The information provided on this Web site is not official U.S. Government information and does not represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) or the U.S. Government.*