

Strengthening Health Systems in the DRC

APPUI AU SYSTÈME DE SANTÉ EN RDC | ASSR

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT STRENGTHENS LOCAL OWNERSHIP

The royal blue paint on the walls of the Nkufulu Health Centre was peeling off leaving conspicuous white patches. Other walls were covered in dust and grime from years of rainy seasons and tropical storms with little time or means for upkeep. The centre generated barely enough revenue from modest user fees to cover basic expenses and staff bonuses, let alone renovation of the building itself.

During one of the regular community feedback sessions facilitated by the FCDO-funded ASSR project, community members identified the poor physical condition of the building as one of the problems that needed to be addressed urgently. This was recorded in a corrective action plan called the Recovery Plan (RP). Through continued discussions, it also became clear to the community that the health centre is part of their heritage and serves to secure the future of their children. The discussion then turned from problem-finding to problem-solving.

The community leadership council (CODESA) developed a budget for the desired renovations and collected money from those who could voluntarily contribute. After four months, an initial sum of 240,000 FC (\$120) was raised and the work of improving the walls was launched. Additionally, the community was able to buy cement to repair the health centre's latrine slabs which were cracked and uneven. Lastly, the CODESA decided to buy a megaphone for awareness-raising campaigns and a toolbox that included pliers and a hammer and nails for future centre upkeep.

Six months later, an FCDO contingency on a field visit to the Kasai-Central province visited the Nkufulu Health Centre. To everyone's surprise, instead of Provincial or Health Zone Medical Directors presenting the centre's activities, it was the Vice-President of CODESA, Mrs. Kabondja Mado, who explained with authority how the community had collaborated with health providers to ensure the co-management of the centre. She proudly stated, "This is our health centre! And when we pull together, look what we can do!"

Today, as a result of this successful interaction between the community, CODESA and medical providers, Nkufulu Health Centre is considered an exemplary model in the Kasai-Central province.



Nkufulu Health Centre before renovation



Nkufulu Health Centre after renovation

ABOUT THE ASSR PROJECT

Funded by the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) through UK Aid, IMA World Health is part of a consortium that includes SANRU, Pathfinder International and BAO Systems that is improving access to critical, quality health services in 50 health zones in the DRC. In partnership with the Ministry of Health, the project reduces mortality and morbidity of women, adolescents, children and newborns and improves community resilience by strengthening health systems. In French, ASSR stands for Appui au Système de Santé en RDC, which translates to Health Systems Support in the DRC.



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