

## Dutch Secretary of State Visits the Sake-Kitshanga Road

### Helpage Rehabilitated Road as Part of IFDC-CATALIST's Activities in North Kivu, DRC

Feb. 15, 2011 – GOMA, Democratic Republic of Congo – The Netherlands' Secretary of State Ben Knapen visited the Sake-Kitshanga road in North Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Nearly 60 kilometers of the road were reconstructed by Helpage as part of CATALIST's road rehabilitation program in Central Africa's Great Lakes region. The Sake-Kitshanga road project created 273,070 man-days of employment using Helpage's HIMO labor-intensive works approach.



“This project exemplifies the progress that CATALIST is making in the DRC and the region,” Knapen commented. “Rehabilitating this road is contributing to the welfare of local residents and improving opportunities for commerce in the area.”

From left to right: CATALIST agronomist Sandra Kavira, Minister Ben Knapen and Samson Chirhuza, CATALIST DRC national coordinator. Photo by Patrick Otoweke

Samson Chirhuza, CATALIST National Coordinator in the DRC, provided an overview of the project by explaining its main activities in the Kivu provinces of the DRC including agricultural intensification, value chain development and road rehabilitation (implemented by Helpage). Chirhuza explained that CATALIST activities related to value chain development bring together all stakeholders, with the goal to build stronger, competitive value chains in the agricultural sector.

Sandra Kavira, a CATALIST agronomist in charge of the project's activities in South Kivu, explained that the project's promotion of Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) technology contributes to strengthening peace in the country. ISFM is the key to increasing agricultural productivity while protecting the environment and maintaining (or even enhancing) the soil resource base. ISFM strategies center on the combined use of mineral fertilizers and locally available organic amendments (crop residues, compost and green manure) to replenish lost soil nutrients. This improves both soil quality and the efficiency of fertilizers and other agricultural inputs (seeds, crop protection products and water). In addition, ISFM promotes improved crop management practices, measures to control erosion and leaching and techniques to improve soil organic matter maintenance. Farmers who have adopted ISFM technologies have more than doubled their agricultural productivity and increased their farm-level incomes by 20 to 50 percent.

–more–

“Before the project, different ethnic groups in the country were in conflict,” Kavira stated. “Today, with the surplus of production, men and women come together to decide how to best profit from their large harvests. They organize *warrantage* (an inventory credit system) together; seek markets for their excess produce together, etc. They are too busy to fight and are to some extent ‘forced’ to collaborate,” explained Kavira. “Many farmers are convinced that ISFM contributes to peace in the area. The population as a whole has a common objective and for this reason, no longer lives in conflict.”

ISFM has also contributed to solving gender issues in the Kivu. Kavira explained how ISFM brought stability to many marriages in the Kivu. “Most women did not have a say in their households and in the community before ISFM. Today, they make valuable contributions to increasing their households’ revenues. Interestingly enough, women generally produce more than men,” Kavira said. According to Kavira, this is explained by the level of participation and of focus shown by women in farming activities. They invest more time and effort and are more motivated than men. “Men on the other hand are busy in several activities and are not as focused as women are. It is only after seeing the kind of profit made by women that men follow. They only give full attention to agriculture when they realize it can be a good, stable source of income,” concludes Kavira.

###

IFDC Contacts:

Danielle Mbesherubusa  
IFDC-Rwanda  
+ 250 255 10 42 11  
[danielle@ifdc.org](mailto:danielle@ifdc.org)

Courtney Greene  
256/381-6600 ext. 357  
[cgreene@ifdc.org](mailto:cgreene@ifdc.org)