

## Community Action Groups lead projects and strengthen resilience

### *How R4P engages the community to meet local needs through local activities*

The USAID-funded Resilience for Peace (R4P) program emphasizes community-led resilience efforts in 27 villages in five border regions in Northern Côte d'Ivoire. Through a participatory process, communities nominated 27 women and 27 men to form Community Action Groups (GACs) to gauge local needs and channel priorities in the implementation of public activities. Supporting community-led resilience efforts can mitigate the pressures generated by socio-economic shifts due to insecurity and strengthen the capacity of the community to cope with these threats.



*Community members choosing support beams*

In just five months, GACs completed 45 community activities around sanitation, hygiene, and public infrastructure rehabilitation. As part of the project's efforts to build long-term resilience and promote social dynamics that outlast activities, R4P provided targeted support through training community facilitators and financial support for the organization of certain activities. This support helps communities build relationships with government services and builds community cohesion.

*“Thanks to R4P and the GAC, we have mobilized many more people for these projects. To renovate this bridge, each volunteer helped mobilize others in their community. Together we finished construction in one day”* -- Sanzanou Village Chief

In Sanzanou, heavy rains destabilized a local, artisanal bridge, cutting off connections with neighboring villages. The local GAC organized its renovation and residents, including youth and women hauled wood, donated rope, and gathered gravel and sand to level and support the bridge. Women's groups participated with government civil technicians to erect a higher, longer, and more stable bridge. It was the first time a public work of such scale has been completed locally. The group immediately identified a second bridge needing repairs, and initiated action.

*“It was difficult to unite women and youth but now we are standing together and realizing our goals”* -- Local woman participant

Other completed GAC projects include the building of a teacher's lounge at a local school and brush clearing around public schools and police posts. In one village, youth gather every week to sweep and sanitize market grounds.

*“R4P has given us a new way of seeing things. This regular interaction with authorities has enhanced our relations with government. In fact, in our village, the military participates in our community soccer matches almost every evening! This friendship means we can pass on information very easily to authorities if we see things that are suspicious.”* -Community

In a recent radio interview, a community facilitator shared another unforeseen outcome of regular civil society interactions with government officials.

*“This experience has made us much better organized to plan and complete village projects”*  
-- Sanzanou Youth President

By demonstrating the power of advocacy and civil society action to GACs, they have been empowered to identify priorities and work with local officials to improve their communities.