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SUCCESS STORY

Relay agent AVEC :A job that gets everyone moving



The RANO WASH project financed by USAID has integrated the Village Savings and Credit Association (VSCA) approach in its intervention areas. This concerns the adoption of healthy behaviors, the use and the investment on WASH products and services. Therefore, the WASH associations are very dynamic community socio-economic structures. Thus, behind each Village Savings and Credit Association is a hardworking and talented person called «relay agent». In Alaotra Mangoro, Moramanga district, Sabotsy Anjiro commune, ONJA RAFALINIAINA Voahirana is in charge of it. She is selected by the RANO WASH project, funded by USAID and is trained to perform the tasks assigned to her. But what are the roles of a relay agent?

Motivational role

The relay agent is first and foremost a motivator. He visits villages and persuades people to form village savings and loan associations. «But before I do that, I have to inform the local authorities that I am going to a town so they are not surprised,» Onja said of his efforts. The «link agent» gathers people when they arrive at a location and informs them about the operation and rules of the village savings and credit association. He then leaves them to think about it and returns in two or three days to meet with those interested in joining the village savings and loan association.

Founder of a village savings and loan association

When it gathers between 15 and 20 people, it can move on to the constitution of the group. It is in this process that everyone is empowered. Personally,» says Onja, «I try to find out the profile of each person who is interested so that I can offer them a responsibility based on their skills. So I propose to the group that this person takes on this responsibility, but the members choose what they want and the idea of the majority counts.

Moderator and trainer

Different people are grouped in a village savings and loan association and their knowledge is certainly not the same. The FDW organizes meetings before the start of the contributions to share all the information about AVEC. He teaches the members how to calculate the amount of money available for the loan according to the investment and what the interest rate is. The loan officer is available to answer all the members' questions. This avoids tension and promotes transparency. «And when members are used to it and have mastered the operations of the organization, the bridge agent is always in control.

Advisor and mobilizer

The «relay agent» is also a pillar of the village savings and loan association in all its activities. In the framework of the AVEC competition launched by the



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RANO WASH project financed by USAID, the support of the «relay agents» was effective. The theme was «Access to drinking water for all».

Thus, for Onja in particular, she convinced the AVEC of her region to participate by advising them a project of installation of social connections so that the inhabitants will have access to drinking water.

Following her campaign, AVEC Fanantenana has actively financed the installation of four social branches in the Sabotsy, Anjiro and Ambodimanga neighborhoods. Twenty-five households benefit from this program and pay 50 ariary for a 20 liters jerry can whereas the previous price was 100 ar. In addition, the water is well treated and therefore clean. For the disabled and the elderly, water is free.

It is true that these were made possible by the efforts of the members of the village savings and credit association Fanantenana, but Onja, the «relay agent,» played an important role. «Without Onja, our efforts would have been in vain because he himself is responsible for all our achievements,» said the president of the Fanantenana village savings and credit association.

Being a relay agent: a profession

Relay agents are trained by the USAID-funded RANO WASH project to be independent and professional. Their main activity is the sale of support services such as setting up, running, training in financial education or other topics according to the needs of the groups. Thus, they are paid by the AVEC groups they support. «I accompany 10 AVEC groups and each one pays me per intervention or monthly. The amount earned is from 200 Ariary per member per intervention to 50 000 Ariary per group per month. A sum that allows me to help to support my needs». To draw from it that it is a strategy creating employment in particular for the women. Onja is an example.

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Fitovinany :A network of 11 masons entrepreneurs created thanks to the launching of «kabone mandamina»



Literally meaning comfortable toilets, «Kabone Mandamina» is the name given to the prototype toilets built by 11 local masons from Fitovinany, including 3 from Lokomby. They have combined their skills to build latrines that meet the needs and expectations of the inhabitants of their region.

The traditional single hole latrine is the most common type in rural Madagascar, while other models are ignored. However, the traditional model is not compatible with many places and cultures. Also, its shape does not appeal to everyone. Therefore, the RANO WASH project through International Development Enterprises (or IDE) has launched the Market Based Sanitation (MBS) for «kabone mandamina». These are toilets that adapt to the needs of each resident. To do this, surveys were conducted to capture residents' perceptions of their preferred toilets.

Toilets to standard

According to the survey results, IDE designed the target criteria. Paying attention to the expectations of the latter, the eleven local masons proceeded to the construction. The latrine models follow the hygiene standard and are comfortable at the same time. Eight prototypes came out as with circular, square, aluminum or breeze block superstructure, cover slabs, defecation slabs, circular, square, elevated or buried pits. All of them are distinguished by the absence of smell.

Only the 35 orders received with promise of purchase during the exhibition session demonstrates the interest of the public to the «kabone mandamina». On their side, the masons have a great ease to promote the products. The first order on Lokomby was built in three days by three people. Afterwards, the eleven masons entrepreneurs have the ambition to gather their skills by setting up a company specialized in the construction of «kabone mandamina».

Market Based Sanitation (MBS)

The promotion of «kabone mandamina» is considered market based sanitation. It is called the creation of a market for sanitation goods and services. First of all, it increases the access to sanitation as the local population is a potential customer, a new beneficiary.

At the same time, it creates employment for the residents, like these 11 local masons. They are the official providers of «kabone mandamina» construction services in the Fitovinany region.

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SUCCESS STORY

When the promotion of washable sanitary napkins changes a life...



Lucie, divorced, mother of 3 children, is a local seamstress from Ilaka Est, a woman leader and entrepreneur in the Atsinanana region.

The RANO WASH Project had recruited her to be a village agent who creates Village Savings and Credit Associations (VSCAs) in the commune of Ilaka Est in 2017. But seeing his ease in raising awareness, the project gave him a training on the making of washable sanitary napkins and asked him to also raise awareness among young girls and women in the village. One thing leading to another, her mastery of the subject has made the making and selling of these towels her main source of income after rice farming.

At the beginning, she was making by hand and managed to make 5 sanitary napkins per day at most. In doing so, she borrowed a sewing machine from other members of AVEC, of which she was a member, in order to be able to produce up to 50 pieces per week at a selling price of 2,500 ar per pad. Her works are differentiated by a branded packaging with her own brand «Sehylla». She is also very active in her association by borrowing a certain amount of money to increase her rice production and she repays with interest after a few months. These two activities have allowed her to build a house and open a grocery store.

On the occasion of the celebration of World Menstrual Hygiene Day, the RANO WASH project funded by USAID in the Atsinanana region, participated in a Health Population Environment activity on May 30, 2022, a first. It is an intersectoral approach where initiatives in these 3 areas are carried out in an integrated manner in partnership with other organizations such as PSI and ONN in the Park of Ivoloïna, Commune Antetetzambaro. As part of the implementation of this PES approach, RANO WASH has given WASHS kits to Madagascar Flora and Fauna Group and has selected 8 of the most dynamic and productive seamstresses to equip them with a sewing machine, including Lucie.

Her «Sehylla» washable sanitary napkins are displayed and sold in her new large grocery store. These activities allow her to live comfortably and send her children to a private Catholic high school. Seeing her success, her husband even tried to take her back, but having gained confidence through her financial independence, she did not want to return to a married life.

She is proud to present her products and is not ashamed to raise awareness. «Our job is not only to make washable sanitary napkins. We are aware of the fact that we contribute to the health of women and girls...» she explains.

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