

# Challenges faced by female leaders in WASH, and the proposed solutions to address them



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## **DISCLAIMER**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. The goal of the RANO WASH project..... 4
- II. Understanding women’s experiences in WASH ..... 4
- III. On the journey of a female leader ..... 4
- IV. The challenges and barriers to leadership in wash ..... 5
- V. The solution? Support women in various fields..... 5
- VI. The dream of a female leader involves ..... 6
- VII. Successful, accountable women..... 6
- VIII. Looking forward..... 6

## I. THE GOAL OF THE RANO WASH PROJECT

RANO WASH aims to provide equitable and sustainable access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services in rural areas of Madagascar to enhance health and nutrition and protect the environment in 6 regions of intervention: Alaotra Mangoro, Atsinanana, Vatovavy Fitovinany, Vakinankaratra, Matsiatra Ambony, and Amoron'i Mania.

The project relies on its gender equity and social inclusion components to achieve its goal.

## II. UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN WASH

The project held an interactive workshop in Ambatondrazaka in September 2019 to discuss the pathways and challenges that female leaders face concerning WASH. High-ranked women from various sectors and districts in Alaotra Mangoro were present to share their experiences.

A panel discussion with four female leaders from the Alaotra Regional Directorate opened the discussions with their testimonies:

- Ms BE Katiucia, Regional Director, Ministry of Water, Energy, and Oil
- Ms RAZAFIMALALA Anja Clara, Head of the Administrative and Financial Department, Ministry of Population
- Ms ARIMANANA, Head of SMGSSE DRSP, Alaotra Mangoro
- Ms RANDRIAMANALINA Michela Dera, Journalist, TVM, RNM

The participants openly shared the experiences they acquired and the challenges they faced that led them to their current positions. These are further discussed in the following sections.

There were also exchanges between authorities and advice given among friends. Participants saw how important women are in their communities through this exchange process. Women have dignity and make great contributions to their community, but the journey to doing so isn't always easy.

Below are some takeaways on and encouragement from these female leaders to the next generation, a discussion on the common challenges and barriers women face, and a discussion on solutions and looking forward.

## III. ON THE JOURNEY OF A FEMALE LEADER

- Pursuing education is key: learn as much as possible and aim for higher education
- Participating in professional competitions is particularly enriching for women. It generates self-satisfaction and personal development in women in the working world
- At the beginning of her career, a young woman faces many challenges, including being looked down upon by experienced women in the workplace. Older people generally do not trust young people's maturity and capacity, especially women. This may present a negative introduction to the employment market for women.
- Always have an open mind for new ideas and opportunities, and have the courage to try them
- Participate and get engaged, first on the family level and then on the community level

## IV. THE CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO LEADERSHIP IN WASH

- Access to WASH services is limited, especially for women, girls, and children. Some examples shared by the participants included:
  - Fetching water is mainly reserved for women and girls, whereas you have to go to the hills or puddles far from the village.
  - The water used for hygiene is not good quality.
  - The quantity of water used is insufficient.
  - Women's and girls' toilets are far from the village, in a place with little privacy. They feel most uncomfortable defecating in the open air, especially in rainy weather.
- Women and girls are more likely to be infected by hygiene-related diseases: diarrhea, skin disease, etc.
- Women's participation in the business sector is limited due to a lack of access to training, autonomy, and distrust of certain donors or sponsors regarding women and young women.
- Few women run WASH services, especially in rural areas. Men are the main service decision-makers, even when they are not potential service users.
- Women have limited access to training because of the barriers associated with the remoteness of the training location.

## V. THE SOLUTION? SUPPORT WOMEN IN VARIOUS FIELDS

Among the female panelists and the workshop participants, there was rich discussion to increase awareness of women and girls' experiences with limited access and control in matters that concern them, as well as discussion and exchanges on solutions. The following lines list the solutions envisaged by women and young women to deal with these violent cases against women.

- Support the access to and engagement of women in WASH services. Pushing for women's right to access WASH services (clean water for drinking and washing, toilet, bathrooms, and sanitary pads during menstruation) will reinforce their health and dignity
- Family support in household chores on the part of spouses, parents, and children. When everyone is involved in a family or community activity, women feel valued, and both men and women feel respected
- Participation in local groups or organizations such as Women's and youth organizations.
- Support from local authorities for travel expenses for women to attend workshops or meetings held outside their hometown
- Partner support for materials needs
- More spaces for communication and exchange for mutual personal development
- Setting structures that meet the needs of women

## VI. THE DREAM OF A FEMALE LEADER INVOLVES

Although the conditions of women today need improvement, there is no shortage of dreams. Women's aspirations touch on various aspects, including relationships and the economy. The following points were articulated in a Declaration developed by the workshop:

- Full integration of female leaders in social and economic activities
- Engagement of local men and leaders to support women's leadership
- Women that are inspired to take action that enables them to grow and impact others
- Clean, healthy, responsible, and happy women in their careers and their households
- No more child, adolescent, and female victims of violence: physical and mental abuse, hunger, and lack of education and services.

The audience for the declaration is their communities and the local authorities.

## VII. SUCCESSFUL, ACCOUNTABLE WOMEN...

As a result of these discussions, the workshop participants outlined how women can succeed in their daily lives, relationships with others, and all they undertake. The following information provides information on these aspects:

- Prepared and ready to work
- Communicate effectively and strategically with a variety of people
- Work well and pay attention to all aspects of a situation (social, communication, economic, and development)
- Value quality and long-term results
- Possess a daily thirst for learning and studies
- Show initiative
- Focus on diversity
- Look for improvement

## VIII. LOOKING FORWARD

As a result of this workshop, which enabled women and young women to discuss issues of concern to them together, in collaboration with the various stakeholders in the field, RANO WASH is planning future activities that include:

- The workshop results will then be shared at the community level, particularly with groups of women and girls supported by RANO WASH, to develop their leadership (SLC, OSCEAH, VSLA, ...) in Malagasy.
- RANO WASH shares this information to share and raise awareness among men, women, institutions, and decision-makers through mass media for local, regional, or national radio broadcasts.
- This kind of discussion will be conducted at the community and village levels to bring to the table the challenges women face in terms of leadership. To better target the specific situation of women and girls, it is planned to have adult women and youth groups participate.
- In the long term, all the achievements and the process will be conducted at the national level to contribute to effective advocacy for women's empowerment and leadership in WASH.