



# Gender mapping of Chiefs of Fokontany



## OVERVIEW

This article aims to analyze the findings of a review/study on women's political representation at the Fokontany level in RANO WASH intervention areas to provide recommendations to improve the representation (number and quality) of women in the spheres of political decision.

The research methodology is as follows:

- The study site concerns the fokontany within the 250 communes covered by RANO WASH in Alaotra Mangoro, Atsinanana, Vakinankaratra, Amoron'i Mania, Haute Matsiatra and Vatovavy Fitovinany region.
- Data was collected with members of the RANO WASH regional team, with subgrantee teams, with support from the project's monitoring, evaluation, and learning team.

- The analysis used three key areas for addressing and analyzing inequalities: i) laws and policies, ii) social norms, and iii) leadership and community participation.
- Discussions with 5 women and 5 men fokontany chiefs, 5 women and 5 men mayors, 2 women district chiefs, and local stakeholders were conducted to have a qualitative understanding.

## UNDERSTANDING THE FOKONTANY SITUATION

According to Article 2 of the decree fixing the organization, the functioning, and the attributions of the Fokontany, promulgated by the Ministry of Interior and Decentralization, the fokontany is the smallest administrative unit at the commune level. The fokontany, depending on the size of the agglomerations, includes hamlets, villages, sectors and/or districts. The inhabitants of the fokontany constitute the "Fokonolona." Several fokontany constitute the commune, which is the administrative subdivision of the district and is administered by a mayor.

Article 13 of the same decree states, "the fokontany chief is responsible for the general administration of the fokontany." It is a position paid for by the Ministry of Interior and Decentralization. He or she is assisted by his or her deputy in exercising his or her functions per the terms and conditions set forth in the implementing regulations.

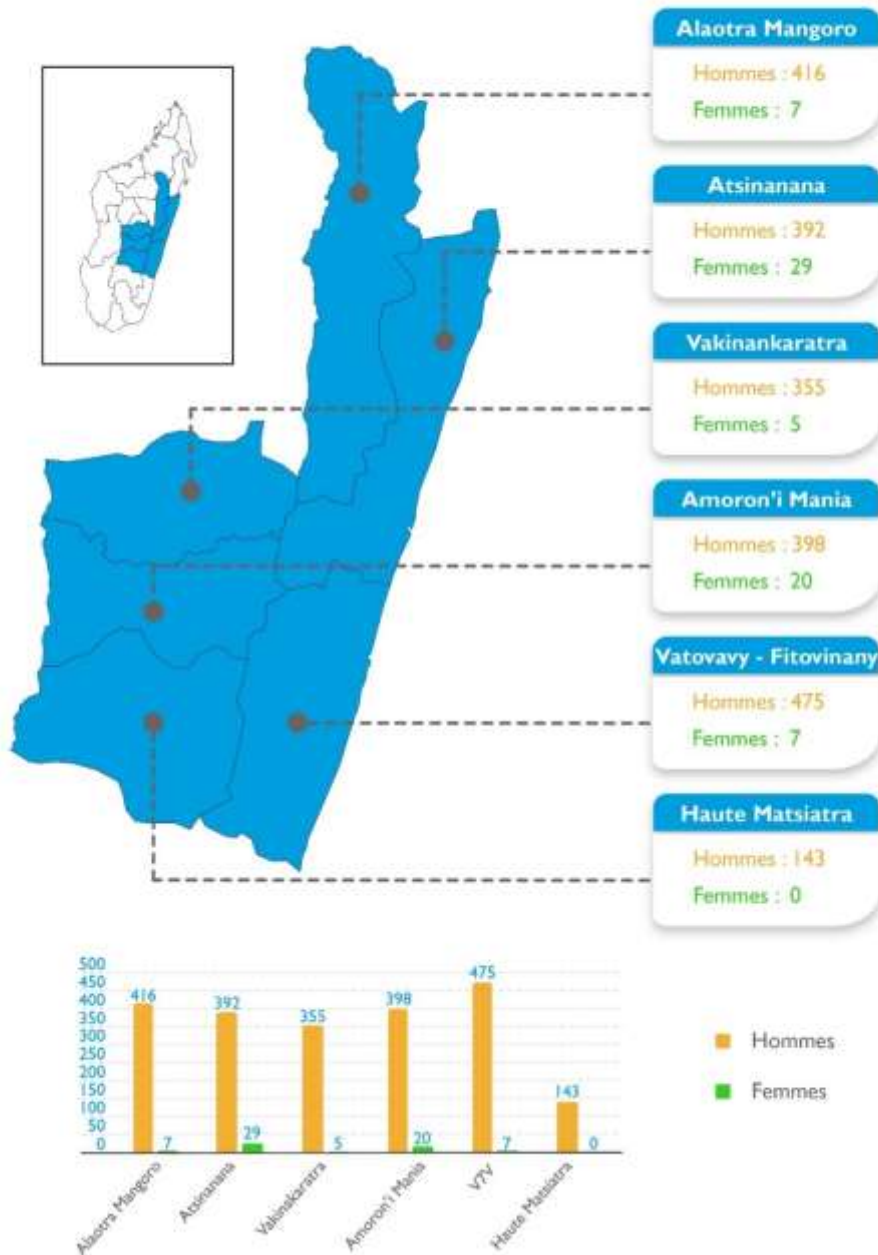
The following table outlines the number of fokontany within the 250 communes covered by RANO WASH and includes the gender distribution among the respective heads of Fokontany.

Regions	Number of RANO WASH intervention communes	Chief of Fokontany Men	%	Chief of Fokontany Women	%	Total
Alaotra Mangoro	51	416	98%	7	2%	423
Amoron'i Mania	30	398	95%	20	5%	418
Atsinanana	51	392	93%	29	7%	421
Haute Matsiatra	20	143	100%	0	0%	143
Vakinankaratra	33	355	99%	5	1%	360
Vatovavy Fitovinany	65	475	99%	7	1%	482
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>2179</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2247</b>

**Only 68 of 2179 designed Fokontany Chiefs are women, or 3%** at the level of the 250 intervention communes, equal to all the fokontany in Madagascar. The women chiefs of Fokontany are mainly located in Amoron'i Mania and Atsinanana, where the community and women accept women's participation in decision-making, are more confident, and feel supported.

In addition, **only 10 of 2,169 Fokontany Chiefs are young people** under 30, and all men. Indeed, although each political party seems to have a structure and/or platform dedicated to young people, youths have limited presence in positions or appointments. This can be explained by society's low confidence in young people's leadership. The graphic below shows the sex distribution among Fokontany Chiefs.

## Répartition par sexe des chefs Fokontany

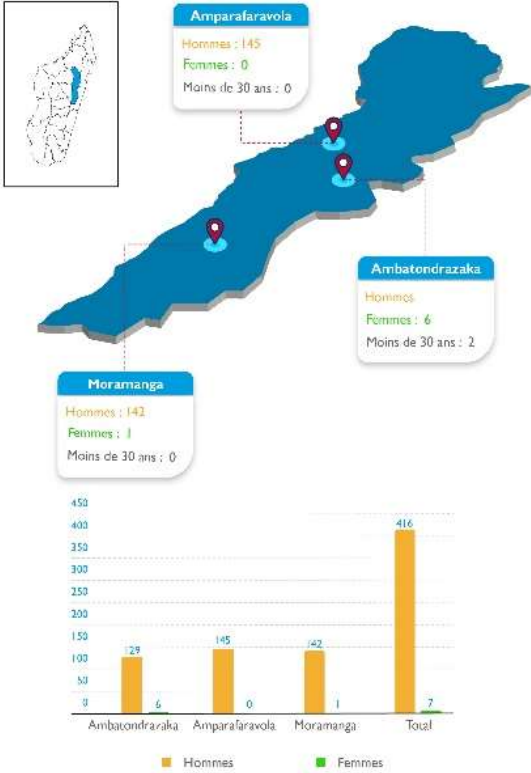


Among the 250 communes of intervention of RANO WASH, the study found the following results:

- Haute Matsiatra has no female Fokontany Chief for its three districts that cover 20 communes
- Vatovavy Fitovinany has 7 female Fokontany chiefs for 65 communes in 4 districts, and Mananjary has none and 5 women for Vakinankaratra in 33 communes for 3 districts
- Atsinanana and Amoron'i Mania have 20 to 29 women as Fokontany Chief for 30 to 51 communes, respectively

# CHIEFS OF FOKONTANY DISAGGREGATED PER DISTRICT AND SEX IN RANO WASH INTERVENTION AREAS

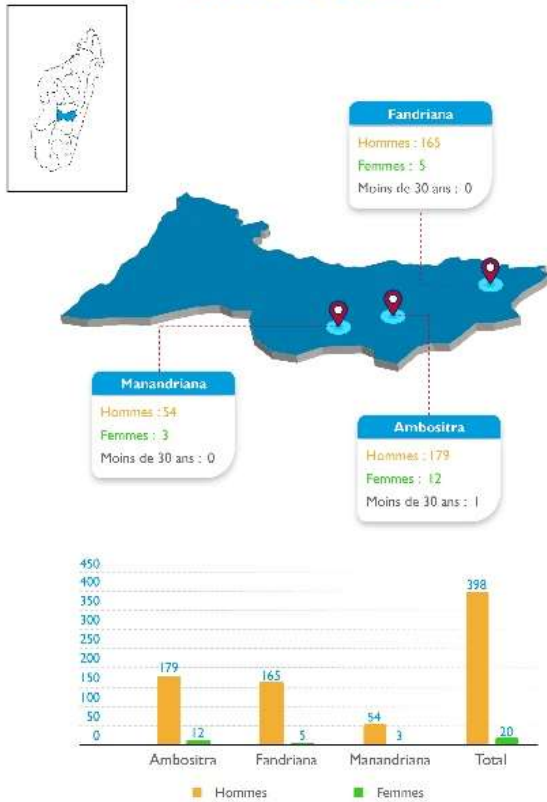
## Répartition par sexe des chefs Fokontany à Alaotra Mangoro



In the region of Alaotra Mangoro, in the three districts of project intervention, there are 7 women Fokontany chiefs: in Ambatondrazaka, 6 out of 135 Fokontany chiefs are women, and there are 2 young Fokontany chiefs, in Moramanga, there is only one woman Fokontany chief out of 145 fokontany, and in Amparafaravola all the Fokontany chiefs are men. Although in the same region, there is a difference between Ambatondrazaka.

*"The Fokontany chief of Anjirobaka in the commune of Manakambahiny Ouest is very dynamic. She dares to discuss with the 14 Fokontany chiefs in her commune, and is always ready for collaboration especially in the field of WASH. More than 10 villages in her Fokontany are currently self-proclaimed ODF". Sandrine, SAF FJKM area manager*

### Répartition par sexe des chefs Fokontany à Amoron'I Mania



*"The women fokontany chiefs generally come from already known and approved women's associations. Society trusts women more because they do not drink alcohol, which could lead to risks of social disruption; even drinking alcohol is a kind of social ritual in the locality."*

Mrs. Lucie, coordinator of AIM in Amoron'I Mania

In the Amoron'I Mania region, there are 20 women chiefs fokontany for the four districts of intervention. The district of Ambositra has 12 women fokontany chiefs, the district of Fandriana has 5 women fokontany chiefs, and 3 women fokontany chiefs in the district of Manandriana.

Compared to other regions, although the representation rate of women fokontany chiefs is low, there are more women fokontany chiefs in Amoron'I Mania, with 2 district chiefs out of four.

### Répartition par sexe des chefs Fokontany à Vakinankaratra



In the Vakinankaratra region, there are 5 women chefs fokontany for the three intervention districts. The district of Antanifotsy has as many women Fokontany chiefs as Antsirabe II's. For Betafo, there are no female Fokontany chiefs.

### Répartition par sexe des chefs Fokontany à Atsinanana



*"Collaborating with a female fokontany chief in the commune of Sahamatevina is very effective: she is always accessible for activities at the community level, she manages to gather the population for meetings, she is very dynamic, and the community approves of her."*

Rossignola ODDIT field agent, Atsinanana

In the region of Atsinanana, for the four districts of intervention, there are 29 women Fokontany chiefs: in Brickaville, 11 out of 107 Fokontany chiefs are women. In Mahanoro, only one woman Fokontany chiefs out of 26 Fokontany, and in Toamasina II, 7 out of 130 are women Fokontany chiefs, and 10 out of 158 in Vatomandry. Although in the same region, there is a difference between Ambatondrazaka and Amparafaravola.

MAMY Tiana Marie Isabelle, Fokontany chief of Manampisoa, Ambano commune,  
 RAZANADRAKOTO M. Cecile Elie  
 Fokontany chief of Antanetibe Taovala, Andranomanelatra commune,  
 They are both from the Antsirabe district, very dynamic and hold leadership positions in women's associations, VSLA groups, and community agents.

### Répartition par sexe des chefs Fokontany à Haute Matsiatra



In the region of Haute Matsiatra, there are no women Fokontany leaders for the three districts of intervention of RANO WASH. Social pressure regarding the leadership position of women in political positions is strong.

*"We can do a lot of things for the household and the community, but the position of Fokontany chief is made for men because they are the ones who have more ease of movement. They are more listened to at higher levels. We remain advisors and helpers,"* said a woman from Vohibato.

### Répartition par sexe des chefs Fokontany à Vatovavy Fitovinany



In Vatovavy Fitovinany, there are 7 women Fokontany chiefs for the five intervention districts, including 2 women each for Ikongo, Manakara, and Vohipeno, and only one woman in Ifanadiana. There is no female Fokontany chief in the Mananjary district.

*"Mrs. Bao Florentine is one of the female Fokontany chiefs and commune of Ambinanitromby, in the Ikongo district. She manages to ensure all the responsibilities of the Fokontany Chief, and she even manages to exceed the performance of male Fokontany chief"*  
Bruno Ny Tanintsika field agent

## HIGHLIGHTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

In the position of the Fokontany Chief, there is a very low representation of women. The potential for women's leadership and participation in political life is thus suppressed, and women are underrepresented in public administration, where key decision-making occurs.

**There are multiple reasons for this low representation of women in the position of Fokontany Chief.** Article 5 of the decree fixing the functioning and the roles of Fokontany chiefs stipulates that the district chief appoints the fokontany Chief and his or her deputy by order. It is noted that 29 of the 119 districts are women district chiefs<sup>1</sup>. The latter are chosen from a list of three names proposed by the mayor, selected among five names voted on by the members of the Fokonolona aged 18 years and over. However, it should be noted that 5% of women mayors<sup>2</sup>. In other words, the district chief is required to appoint as the head of the "fokontany" the person who has obtained the highest number of votes.

This presents a set of challenges: i) a popular vote does not directly elect the Fokontany Chief; ii) among the list of five persons proposed to the District Chief, there is no parity between men and women; and finally, iii) when the District Chief appoints a Fokontany Chief from the proposed list, he or she usually selects the men – as shown by the trends in the sex of appointed Chiefs. According to Malagasy civil society, one way to mitigate this disparity would be to hold a public meeting, *fivoriambe-pokonolona*, to designate the fokontany Chief publicly<sup>3</sup>.

In addition, the root causes and constraints in implementing measures for gender equality and women's empowerment in the political sphere relate to three dimensions<sup>4</sup>:

- **Socio-cultural and economic causes**
  - The Malagasy socio-cultural environment is based on the supremacy of man. Indeed, Malagasy customs have granted privileges to men
  - The lack of education (illiteracy) among women
  - Socio-cultural prejudices that reinforce negative gender stereotypes and roles
  - Sexual harassment committed by men against women
- **Political causes**
  - Poor social perception of political life among both men and women. Society assumes that only men are affected in the management of public affairs, and this attitude is perpetuated from generation to generation.
  - Lack of preparation for political life leads women and men to hesitate about taking over the management of public affairs. In Madagascar, there is limited training and safe space that helps citizens take political positions and support those already in place, especially regarding women.
  - Poor communication skills in terms of strategic formulation of development programs and convincing the population towards a development inclusive vision, where everyone finds their position as a useful member of society, especially women

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Interior and Decentralization, April 2021

<sup>2</sup> PROFIL GENRE PAYS REPUBLIQUE DE MADAGASCAR - Département Genre, Femmes et Société Civile (AHGC)

<sup>3</sup> Société civile engagée dans la politique

<sup>4</sup> Vos Droits et Comment faire entendre votre voix, USAWA- les femmes ont des droits- Héritier MP/ LIFCE



and marginalized groups, on the side of the potential, and in another side, the communication channels used do not allow the population to access clear information that supports them in making deliberate choices.

- Lack of will among decision-makers to recognize and implement national, regional, and international legal instruments that promote women's participation
  - Lack of policy framework or policy guides addressing women's issues about their access and control of exploitable resources for the development of all
- **The legal causes**
    - The national policy on equality between women and men in Madagascar is obsolete and is currently being updated and implemented through a decree of application
    - The electoral law lacks incentives for integrating women into electoral lists for leadership positions.

**The consequences of the low representation of women in the position of Fokontany Chief** are numerous:

Article 12. The Fokontany Chief is in charge of the general administration of the Fokontany. He or she is assisted by his or her deputy in exercising his or her functions according to the modalities fixed by the regulatory texts of the application.<sup>5</sup>

Article 14. The main activities of the Fokontany Chief are the following - to elaborate with the community a vision for the development of the Fokontany; - to provide leadership, change, and initiative in the conduct of development projects of the Fokontany; - to carry out the duties of a particular nature entrusted to him/her by the mayor.<sup>6</sup>

- Suppose women are under-represented in decision-making bodies, such as at the Fokontany level, with reference to these responsibilities. In that case, there is a risk that the men in power will not consider the population's social needs.
- This situation has several negative consequences, including the gender disparity characterized by an under-representation of women in decision-making and the risk of non-consideration of the fundamental needs of the demographic majority of 52% of the population that constitute women.

So, the consequences of the low political participation of women affect both women and society. Especially for the WASH sector, when developing a community development plan, there is a risk that the plan will not address the specific needs of women and girls and the needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups to whom women are more susceptible. This situation will need to involve prioritizing activities and allocating resources, especially budgetary ones. If not, any development program risks not addressing the root causes of poverty, and the situation will always remain the same.

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<sup>5</sup> DECRET N° 2009-890 Fixant l'organisation, le fonctionnement et les attributions du Fokontany

<sup>6</sup> DECRET N° 2009-890 Fixant l'organisation, le fonctionnement et les attributions du Fokontany

## **LOOKING FORWARD**

Although efforts have been made in Malagasy law and policy recognizing the equal access of men and women to power structures and women's empowerment, combined with the efforts of national and local stakeholders, much remains to be done.

### **RANO WASH has contributed and will continue for the next period to support women in reaching strategic decision-making positions through its interventions**

- Popularization of the rights and duties of women and girls related to water, sanitation, and hygiene
- Advocacy with mayors for the adoption of a gender balance in the constitution of the executive committee
- Support men who are committed, sensitive, and ready to defend the causes of women and girls to become equal partners responsible for the development of everyone and the whole community
- Advocating with men, traditional leaders leading to the facilitation of gender mainstreaming in the locality through the conduct of social analysis and action addressing harmful social pressures limiting women's and girls' access to and control over resources and assets
- Advocating for gender balance through the different coordination structures set up, such as the Local Concertation Structures (LCS), the SRMO, the OSCEAH
- Training and sharing sessions with women and girl leaders to enjoy a space of mutual reinforcement and mutual support and to inspire other women, girls, men, and boys
- The dynamism of local women's NGOs and associations such as VSLA, where women are in the majority and where they are empowered with the knowledge and skills they need to empower themselves at the socio-political level

### **Other action lines to strengthen women's access to decision-making and the importance of mentorship in the professional sphere among women sphere are below:**

- Advocacy on gender equity with district leaders and mayors through the ministries in charge of decentralization and the interior and the government and legislative parties involved
- Set up, respect, and follow up mandatory or incentivized provisions in the electoral law for the integration of women in the electoral list in leadership positions
- Reminder and implementation of procedures to ensure compliance with existing laws and decrees defending the rights of women and girls
- The emergence of initiatives organized by women leaders such as women mayors or women chiefs on Fokontany associations, which are carriers of change
- Development of women's skills and organize civic education and gender awareness programs for voters
- Combined research for the fokontany chief and deputy fokontany chief, if there is parity, and in which can we create a contact network
- Support an awareness-raising campaign to increase the representation of women in decision-making positions.
- Analyze monitoring/evaluation/feedback process for leaders, especially for fokontany Chief, and see if there is an accountability process that shows who is doing a good job, greater transparency and accountability leading to greater efficiency
- Conduct a comparative study of the performance of female and male leaders at the fokontany, commune, and institutions levels.