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KEY FINDINGS FROM THE WOMEN LEADERS' ADVOCACY WASH SESSION



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RANO WASH / Photo : Dahery Razaka

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Q2, RANO WASH and 18 representatives from the women leaders at community and regional level program held an advocacy workshop with officials from the public sector, including local government and several line ministries. The workshop's objective was to present women's leadership challenges and provide recommendations that senior officials can address respectively and transfer to higher authorities to discuss and take action.

The women came from the six regions where RANO WASH takes public, civil, and private sector actions. These participants included:

Public sector	Civil sector	Private sector
- Mayors	- President of OSCEAH	- Water System Manager
- Municipal Councilors	- Accompanying Technician	- Chief Operating Officer
- Technical Officer for Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene	- Technical manager	- Local Mason
- District Assistant	- Association and NGO manager	- Seamstress
	- Village agent of VSLA	

The workshop was also attended by the departments and teams of line Ministries, including:

Representatives of National and Regional Ministries:

- Ministry of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (DAH, MEAH Gender Focal Point and DREAH Vatovavy Fitovinany)
- Ministry of Population (Technical Advisor)
- Ministry of National Education (School Health Officer)
- Ministry of Budget and Finance (Budget Department)
- Ministry of Public Health (Head of Health Service)
- Ministry of Decentralization (Prefecture)
- Ministry of the Environment (Head of the Environment Department)

2 MAJOR FINDINGS ABOUT THE WOMEN AND GIRLS' CHALLENGES IN THE AREA OF WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE

It was shared by the women that strengthening the message on the rights and duties of men and women in WASH, the interactive discussions on social norms related to women's access to income-generating activities began to change practices, which helped communities to challenge some social norms.

2.1. Women's and girls' access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services is limited.

- All women know the importance of hygiene for their well-being and their families. But they often lack the capacity and skills to do so. Rather, they do not have adequate means to make good hygiene. For example, they cannot access drinking water, soap, toilets, showers, or appropriate sanitary pads during menstruation.
- Women are responsible for the maintenance of the home. Women have less time than men because of the expectations of managing the household and contributing to the fieldwork. Women are expected to be flexible, clean, hardworking, and respectful of men.
- Women of all ages want toilets and showers in their homes. The challenge is the lack of economic resources among women and the need to convince the man. Women do not have land. Construction work requires physical effort and specialization, which women do not have. They must negotiate with men who are the land owners and have physical and technical capacities for construction work.

2.2. Women's control and girls' decision-making spheres are weak.

- There are challenges in terms of decision-making at the household level. The man makes major decisions regarding selling, buying, and building. Women may be able to influence their husband's decisions, but the husband still reserves the right to make final decisions.
- At the community level, there is a lot of injustice against women and people with disabilities. Official laws and policies in Madagascar reflect gender equity, such as those against gender-based violence enacted last year. The challenge remains that many policies are not yet finalized, fully disseminated, or implemented.
- Violence and harassment, although illegal, are rarely reported or punished. Fear or risk of

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violence against women increases in times of stress, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic. Women may fear retaliation if they give their opinion on decisions.

- Women's low level of education limits their participation in decision-making at the household and community level, as they have less experience than men in expressing their thoughts or speaking in public.
- Leadership and Community Participation are also challenges. Men and boys are much more likely to participate in community decisions. Women and girls face many barriers to participation. Although they want to participate, they rarely find the time to do so because meetings are held outside their village, and they are expected to be close to home and perform their domestic duties.

2.3. Women and girls have precarious access to economic activities.

- Women are limited in their access to economic resources. Society allows men and young men to carry out income-generating activities, and they are allowed to travel far away from the village in search of employment. While most women do not dare to enter the business circle because they are primarily responsible for household activities, and most of their time is spent caring for the household, so they do not feel supported in income-generating activities.
- When they engage in income-generating activities, they are sometimes forced to move the household away, leading to disputes between the husband and the family. At the market level, only very active and confident women can compete with men. Society restricts women's income-generating activities because they are meant to provide reproductive activities, and men should look for an agent to provide for family needs.
- Civil societies at the community level, such as at the village and Fokontany level, comprise more women than youth. But at a higher level, the number of women is less and less reduced. Women are increasing at the formal hierarchical bodies level, the Fokontany, communes, regions, and decentralized territorial services.
- At the level of public authorities, women's representation in the decision-making space is very limited. For the Fokontany chief and the mayors, only 4% are women. It influences the decisions' quality, showing the gender inequality in almost all areas.



3. ADVOCACY ISSUES EXPRESSED BY WOMEN LEADERS IN THE FIELD OF WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE

3.1. Women from the public sector

Based on the skills required for the position and the capacity building already received, women leaders in the public sector express their needs:

- Institutionalization of the Technical Agent for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (STEAH) position in the organizational chart and allocation of a budget by the Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization
- Consideration of local capacities and skills for recruitment, particularly the valorization of women and young girls from the locality. For example, when recruiting staff for jobs in the locality, consider the existence of women or girls with the skills and competencies.

Support received by women leaders in the public sector

- * Roles and responsibilities of mayors, municipal councilors, and technical staff
- * Communal project management
- * Local governance
- * Program budget
- * Accountability mechanism
- * Fiscal collection

Establishment of basic social and health infrastructure that respects the specific needs of women, girls, and people with disabilities. For example, setting up baby corners for nursing mothers in the office, separating the women's and men's restrooms, and installing ramps or support points for persons with disabilities.

- Motivation and compensation of local agents working in the water, sanitation, and hygiene sector. Women need less heavy work materials, flex time, and a work environment favorable to teamwork composed of female and male members.
- Strengthening of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models in all development sectors. The private sector in development programs is deemed to have more attention on equity issues in assigning jobs based on skills and abilities and the value of both men and women. Through their policy and conduct code, the private sector is more concerned with meeting people's differentiated needs by providing a range of services the public sector can complement.
- Equipment for each commune office to facilitate work. For example, office equipment, computer equipment appropriate to the socio-educational context, and simple communication materials to support public information activities.
- Equitable treatment of nearby and isolated communes in basic services to eliminate shocks and climatic damage, such as schooling, health, and transport services.
- Gender parity in the appointment of senior communal and regional authorities. According to the law, the district chiefs designate the Fokontany chiefs. After electing the mayors, who are mostly men, these district chiefs designate more men than women to the position of Fokontany chief with its committee members.

3.2 Women from the civil sector

Women in the civil sector include members of women's associations, village savings, and loan associations, and civil society organizations defending the population's rights to water, sanitation, and hygiene services.

As a Civil Society Organization, these women have identified their needs:

- Consideration of associations in development actions at different levels, such as VSLA groups, youth associations.
- Consultation of women's and girls' voices for projects in view at the village, communal and regional levels through consultation structures, civil society organizations, and networks.
- Support for promulgating and respecting women's and girls' rights related to land issues and the inheritance system, allowing them to enjoy full land rights on an equal basis with men, except for a plot of land for the construction of a toilet and shower.
- Equal treatment of male and female members in local, regional, and national representations, in the cession of speech, and in the prioritization and budgeting of the actions.

Support received by women in the civil sector

- * Rights and duties of civil society in water, sanitation, and hygiene
- * Roles and responsibilities of the civil society organization
- * Communal project management
- * Local governance
- * Leadership
- * Public speaking

- Finalization of the policy promoting gender equality and its application through implementing the decree in force.

3.3. Women from the private sector

Women in the private sector include women managers of the water system, staff of investor companies, and local masons.

Women public and private sectors face similar challenges. However, challenges of women working in the private sector, especially in the regions of the South and South East of Madagascar, including Vatovavy and Fitovinany, are rather in the acquisition of the first means of production and funds to initiate income-generating activities since most of them do not enjoy land inheritance rights, according to the customary rules that are more respected. The head of the company for construction work recruits men for specific positions, such as engineers and workers. Moreover, the company does not provide machines, vehicles, or motorized equipment to facilitate work requiring physical effort. However, positions such as controller and supervisor are assigned to women.

- Women and girls have little access to the means of production (land, livestock, technology). This situation places women in a relationship of dependence, even submission, which prevents them from engaging in viable economic actions and contributing to decision-making.
- Women have limited mobility. Activities around the home and not far from the village are the most socially acceptable for women.
- Women and youth are interested in the different training sessions. But sometimes, pieces of training are held far from the village, and women with family care responsibilities cannot attend the training sessions, even though they find it important. When no one in the family can help women with housework, accessing these training sessions is difficult.

Working in the private sector in the field of water, sanitation, and hygiene, the women leaders have identified their needs:

- Support to become more professional
- Capacity building focused on business expansion
- Protection of property rights
- Development of partnerships

Expand the network of private operators working in the WASH sector. The women confirm the importance of the training provided by the project. These are all useful for improving their service and expanding income-generating activities. The types of training touch on aspects allowing them to improve products, services, business management style, communication with clients, networking, and relationship development.

Support received by women leaders in the private sector

- * Technical training: construction of toilets adapted to the rural context, making of sanitary napkins and masks, and water system management
- * Training and coaching on entrepreneurship
- * Tips to strengthen marketing and sales communication
- * Simple financial management tools
- * Simplified project management
- * Linkage of these private operators with institutions (public, financial and private) that can support their initiatives
- * Organization of regional or national events to promote and spread the initiatives of these local operators.

4. LESSONS LEARNED AND LOOKING FORWARD

It was noted that both women and men could become good leaders. All public, civil, and private spheres are spaces where women with men can work and lead together for social and economic purposes. These recommendations are addressed to all WASH stakeholders, including the government, whose members were present.

As a group, the following actions were defined as crucial in moving forward:

- Give women the freedom and opportunity to be involved and co-manage. Women want to be more involved, consulted, and influenced in domestic, community, political, and economic decisions related to development activities. This is beneficial to both the woman and the community. Examples include organizing interactive discussions at the village level, allowing women and men to discuss gender roles, and establishing internal rules in formal and non-formal structures that promote equal expression.
- Strengthen women's skills and leadership. Promoting women's skills and leadership in local structures contributes to their development and encourages other women to join these groups. For example: organizing sessions to stimulate women to describe their needs and aspirations, holding literacy sessions, and training in public speaking for more meaningful participation in community decisions.
- Develop the role of men and boys, i.e., involve men and boys and women and girls in WASH activities and training. For example, exercises in the "men's engagement" approach involve men and women discussing norms and practices that prevent the development of everyone, especially women and girls. Local authorities at these sessions noted the women's skills, comfort level, and motivation to work with and for others.

Following the results of the advocacy workshop, activities should be pursued to strengthen women leaders further and to anticipate the emergence of young girls' leaders, including:

**Rural Access to New Opportunities in Water, Sanitation, And Hygiene
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- The advocacy agendas and priorities strengthening women's leadership will be shared at the level of the hierarchical bodies by the authorities who were present at the regional and national levels.
- Women's empowerment remains a major undertaking in various areas of development, including water, sanitation, and hygiene.
- Laws and policies governing the promotion of gender equality, economic production, and the protection of property rights for private operators are important needs for women investors in the private sector.
- The support of women in the civil and public sectors is fundamental through reorganizing structures or regulations that promote the involvement and empowerment of women and girls at different levels.

The authorities present made commitments to consider these situations and share within the limits of their competencies and in their areas of responsibility. They will share the results of this workshop with the relevant hierarchical bodies.



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