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# Men engaged in the WASH sector



RANO WASH / Photos: Dahery Razaka Raiteromilana

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1. RANO WASH project .....4
- 2. Understanding men’s experiences in WASH.....5
- 3. Some testimonies and action plan of the men engaged.....6
- 4. Solutions..... 10
- 5. Lessons learned ..... 12
- 6. Looking Forward..... 12

## I. RANO WASH PROJECT

RANO WASH aims to provide equitable and sustainable access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services in Madagascar's rural areas 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.

### Gender-Based Violence

As part of the United Nation's global 16 Days of Activism campaign, the Ministry of Population, Social Protection and Promotion of Women, with the support of all its partners, launched its 16 Days of Activism Campaign to End Violence against Women in Madagascar under the theme: "Let's break the silence."

Before the launch of the "Let's Break the Silence" campaign, RANO WASH has been implementing its "Men's engagement for women's empowerment" approach for more than six months. Engaging men and boys is a key component of RANO WASH's gender and social inclusion strategy. This approach is used to reduce gender inequalities, especially harmful behaviors, through interactive discussions, which convey the importance of the complementarity of men and women according to society's roles and how these can lead to the adoption of healthy behaviors in WASH. As part of the "Let's Break the Silence" campaign, the project organized an exchange workshop with 26 "Engaged Men from the six intervention regions to support the initiatives undertaken by men in the WASH sector to promote a positive attitude on gender equality at the household and community level. This initiative was jointly conducted with the Regional Directorate in charge of WASH and the Regional Population Directorate of Amoron'i Mania. It also contributes to RANO WASH's Grow-up Sticker behavior change campaign by promoting the idea that a model household is one that has an equitable household division of labor and responsibilities between men and women. The Grow-up Sticker strategy places gender dimensions at the base of the trunk and serves as a lever to boost the adoption of the five key behaviors at the household level, and can be scaled up at the institutional and community levels.



Fig 1: Grow-up sticker

## 2. UNDERSTANDING MEN'S EXPERIENCES IN WASH

Malagasy society espouses gender-normative behavior for women and men, which affects the type of behavior and activities each gender can engage in.

In the WASH sector, some tasks have been separated for men, such as control of resource allocation decisions and management of water points or labor and materials for toilets. Since land inheritance in some Malagasy societies generally goes to men, this fact influences a family or community's decision to install a toilet. Similarly, income-generating activities are generally done by men because they can move easily outside their village and find more businesses.

However, chores related to water, sanitation, and hygiene services tend to be relegated to women and girls, including fetching water, cleaning toilets, and monitoring children's hygiene behavior. These activities are sometimes burdensome for women and girls because of the distance they must travel, the amount of time they have to spend on non-remunerative activities, and the fact that society accepts them well.

Many Malagasy sayings and proverbs reflect this attitude, limiting the equitable division of responsibility between men and women at the household and community levels. During the sharing session, the participants openly shared their experiences and the challenges that led them to their current positions.

Generally, in RANO WASH's areas of intervention, the following represent common situations:

- "Fadimbolana resa-behivavy" means that the topic of menstrual hygiene is reserved for women. This means we (Malagasy society) cannot publicly speak about menstruality, so men have nothing to do with menstrual hygiene.
- "Zaza mangery tsy an-drainy" means the child who poops does not belong to his father. Mothers must take care of the children when they poop and clean them.
- "Lemim-bady ny mangala rano" means that fetching water is socially intended for women and girls. Men who collect water in society's eyes are seen as men who have no personality and subordinate to women.
- "Lehe mila traka vola amin'ny kipahipahy, sasao soa ngehy misy fotaka, ko lehe kilonga pela tsa misasa ario agny fa membo fotaka" means that dirty leafy vegetables from the field can be washed for food. However, dirty young girls must be abandoned because they smell bad.
- "Tsy ny tany no fady fa ny vavam-bahoaka" means that it is not the geographical environment that forbids it, but society's judgments.

In Malagasy society, social sanctions punish men who do not assume the expected male behavior. This includes making fun of men, forcing them to leave society or communities, and society no longer trusting these men.

### 3. SOME TESTIMONIES AND ACTION PLAN OF THE MEN ENGAGED

The profile of the men engaged who participated in the event are:

- Fathers of families
- Young father
- Local promotor
- Local mason
- Traditional leaders (Ampanjaka, Tangalamena, Ray aman-dreny)
- Mayor
- Local tailor
- Young student
- VSLA group member



**Leonarivelo Appolinaire: a traditional leader named "Ampanjaka" from Manapatrana commune, Ikongo district, Vatovay Fitovinany region.**

*« As a traditional leader, I have a great role in improving people's access to water, especially for women and girls. For example, I mobilized men and women of all ages in my village to build a well together. I will use my traditional influence on women's and girls' well-being in the village by involving men like me and encouraging the men in the village to pay attention to the specific needs of women related to water and hygiene and to help them. »*

**Razafindrabezandriny Lantonirina Robert: local seamstress of the commune of Ambatomena, District of Antsirabe II, Vakinankaratra region**



*"As a man, I was ashamed to work on women's hygienic materials. I defied my shame when I felt that my wife was supporting me. My family benefits from sanitary sewing pads: my wife and daughter use the products I have made. Friends of my wife, community savings, and credit group members also use the products and become collaborators because our demand is increasing daily. My daughter's friends who are in college are interested in the products. Since then, I realize that the frank collaboration of men and women can become good agents of change together."*



**RASOALAHY Etienne, a father in the Fokontany of Sahafitana, District of Moramanga, Alaotra Mangoro Region**

*"During my childhood, I helped my father with fieldwork. I began looking for a job to support the family when I married. I devoted all my time to productive activities. When the children arrived, I found that there was no lack of arguments at home for the slightest misunderstanding. I learned that my wife was overwhelmed with household chores, and I started helping her with the water collection, toilet, and shower facilities.*

*At first, the village men blamed me, but I recognize that my support in the household has made us more peaceful, cohesive, and productive. A few months later, men from the village also take responsibility for helping their families, and our village has become cleaner and more peaceful. All the same, I think we need to balance the taking of responsibility between men and women in a household so that no one is left out, especially in the area of WASH."*



**TAHINJANAHARY Tolotrinaiina Benjamin, 21 years old, young student and tailor in the Commune Ambalamahasoa, Haute Matsiatra region.**

*"I am currently in my last year of high school. I am passionate about sewing and practice sewing in the evenings at home.*

*I sew sanitary napkins and sell them at the village market. I am not ashamed to practice this activity. It brings me money that contributes to my studies and my family. Most importantly, it helps rural women access sanitary pads, which are always useful materials.*

*So far, I intend to continue my studies and go further. Still, sewing allows me to get into the market faster and to develop my relationship with various actors.»*



**SOLOMON, a Miranjaka<sup>1</sup>, a Tangalamena in the Fokontany of Mahatsara Gara, Commune Amboditandroho, District Toamasina II, Atsinanana region**

*"Mutual help between my wife and me allows us to reach our goals. When my wife goes to do the laundry in the rivers, I do not hesitate to prepare the meal. When the children arrive from school, I ask them to help my wife bring the basins full of clean clothes because it is too heavy. Changing the neighbors' behavior is not only through words but also through examples. The field of water, sanitation, and hygiene is a relevant area for practice."*

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<sup>1</sup> Miranjaka : A person in the village who defends gender equality and fights against violence.





**Razafindrainibe Dominique, mayor of the municipality of Ambositra II, Amoron'i Mania region**

*"The finding that mutual aid and complementarity at the household level generates good results and makes me more sensitive to gender parity within the administration of the commune I administer. The commune of Ambositra is composed of 23 Fokontany, with four female fokontany chiefs. Five out of seven of the members of the current executive committee of the commune are women. Five women were directly involved during the Communal Development Plan elaboration in water, sanitation, and hygiene. »*



**Naina Martin, a young father living in the Ambodifano fokontany, Ampasikely Commune, Amparafaravola District, Alaotra Mangoro region.**

*After three years of marriage, I started helping my pregnant wife while feeling the heavy household chores she endured when pregnant with our first child. The steps taken are communication with my wife, assessing workloads at home and in the fields, and concerted distribution of tasks. The greatest challenge is the commitment to act, sometimes despised by the community following the unusual occurrence of a man doing housework.*

*I collect water for the household every day. I fill the handwashing water in the device next to the toilet I*

*built.*

*Since I helped my wife with these activities, our family life has been going very well. Our children and we can enjoy cleanliness and good health."*

**TSABOTO a notable in the Commune Ankarimbelo, District Ikongo aged 66 years old, carries traditional life and respects the ancestral custom.**

At the very beginning of the project, this man considered open defecation taboo. He forbade having a father and his daughter use the same toilet. As an influential parent in the community, many people did not dare to contradict his instructions, particularly on building a toilet. He is also the assistant to the Fokontany Chief.

The project team encountered the same challenges when conducting each triggering event as part of the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach. Tsaboto always had various objections during community meetings despite the dialogue and testimonials facilitated by the field agent.

However, the radio program on the RAKAMA channel caught Tsaboto's attention. The radio program discussed the "Commune Madio" objective to eliminate open defecation in his entire commune. He began to reflect on the subject and continued to follow the program. While listening to the "PROGRAMME JOINT CONTEST MADIO," he said: *"I am convinced of the importance of the subject so hammered in before."* So, he decided to build a toilet for his family and divided it into two compartments to separate the men's and women's compartments.

Now he is calling on the community to follow his example. This notable reaction has caused a positive influence at the community level with the effect of oil stains, and now two other households have already built two toilets.



*TSABOTO, accompanied by the communities in the construction of his toilet*

## 4. SOLUTIONS

Among the male workshop participants, there was a rich discussion to increase awareness of men and boys to ensure they are equal partners in family and community life, leading to healthy behaviors aimed at human dignity. Discussion and exchanges on solutions took place during the session. Listed below are the solutions envisaged by men and young men to deal with the stereotypes displayed by society to support them to become agents of change promoting gender equality through the WASH sector:

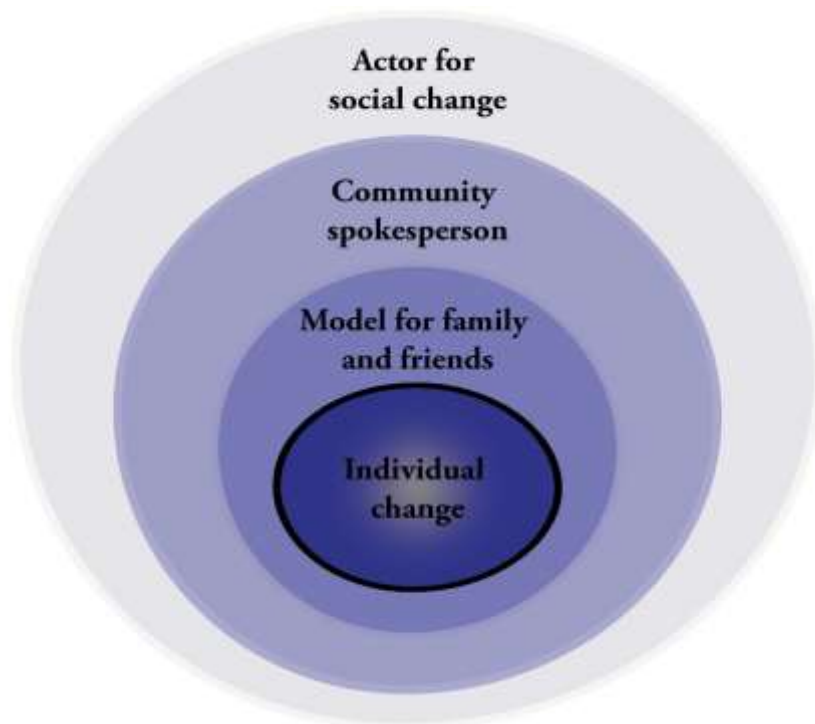


Fig : Spill-over of change

Support the access to and men's commitment to equitable water, sanitation, and hygiene services. Push for men's role in providing access to WASH services, including fetching clean water for drinking and washing, purchasing toiletries and bathrooms, and sanitary pads, and facilitate women's involvement in the decision-making process influencing control and access to WASH services for all

- Support in household chores by both parents and children. When everyone is involved in a family or community activity, women feel valued, and both men and women feel respected.
- Work with men who are holders of ancestral customs and habits, such as the Olobe, Tangalamena, and Ampanjaka, in challenging social norms to explore the right norms. This will ensure that the correct and safe actions are taken and that the social norms leading to gender inequity are meaningfully transformed.
- Establish a system of gender parity in committee composition or staff recruitment at different levels in different areas.
- Set up spaces of exchange, allowing men ready to commit themselves to women's empowerment to find solutions together, strengthen themselves to face social pressures on men, and provide spaces for mutual personal development.
- Support men who initiate attitudes promoting equality between men and women through promoting the benefits from an equitable distribution of responsibilities, which leads to the fulfillment of all.
- Communicate the good practices on men's engagement for women's empowerment widely, including through different audio-visual means.

## 5. LESSONS LEARNED

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

- Men engaged in WASH make efforts to break out of their gender-normative box.
- Men provide different forms of support to women and girls: physical assistance, provision of WASH services, listening and consideration in the decision-making process, encouraging women and girls to become leaders at the community level, and confidence in managing family assets.
- Engaged, adult, older and young men are proud of their attitude and behavior in supporting women and girls.
- Men's commitment to challenging gender-normative behaviors and activities makes the family more cohesive and effective.
- Men engaged in women's empowerment become strong agents of change in WASH.

## 6. LOOKING FORWARD

As a result of this workshop, which enabled men 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 results of this workshop will be shared at the community level, particularly with groups of men and boys supported by RANO WASH
- 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.
- RANO WASH encourages men and boys in all intervention regions to join the "Gender Sensitive Men's Group" at each regional office of the Directorate of Population and Women's promotion.
- Conduct village and commune-level discussions on masculinity and gender equality to discuss men's challenges with masculinity.
- Strengthen collaboration with traditional leaders, local authorities, and local social institutions to initiate and develop social analysis sessions to transform harmful social norms affecting access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services for all.
- In the long term, all the achievements and the process will be conducted at the national level to contribute to effective advocacy for men to become equitable and complementary partners with women in promoting positive gender attitudes in WASH.