

Social tariffs for access to safe water with Soakoja, a Malagasy professional service provider for the maintenance of drinking water facilities



"Individual kiosk" at a facility managed by Soakoja for volumetric sales (Vavatenina District; Madagascar, 2024)

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Author: Jeanne Vella, Technical Support Officer

Proofreaders: Damien Du Portal, Tristan Salmon

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1. Context and presentation of Soakoja

Soakoja¹, is a Malagasy NGO set up in 2018 and a partner of Inter Aide.

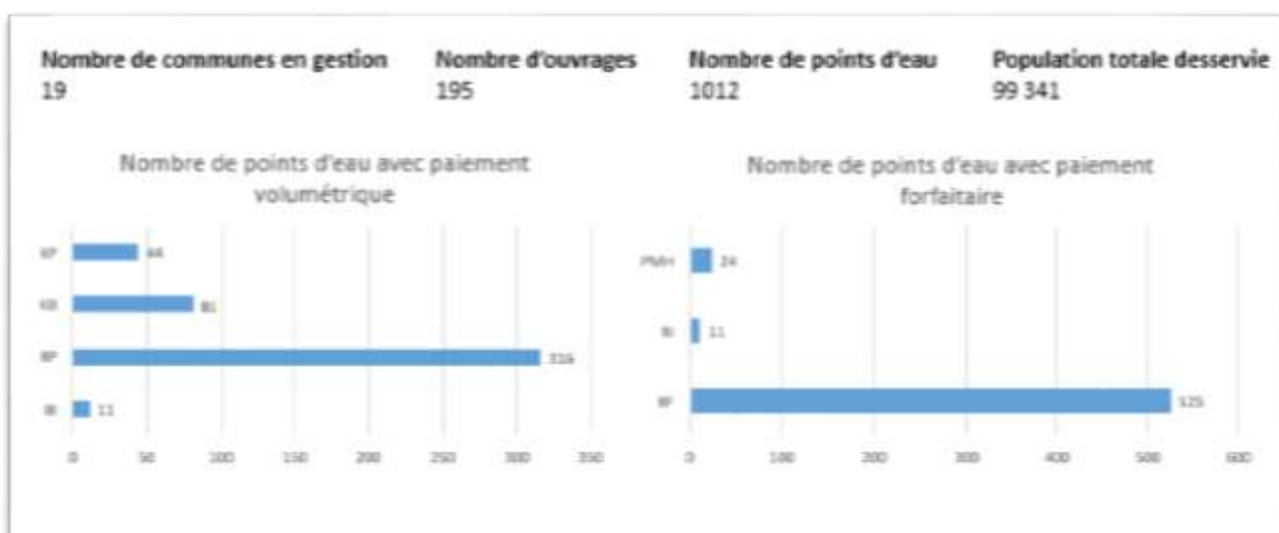
In the Analamanga region, Inter Aide's work includes supporting users and municipalities (project owners) in setting up and monitoring this service provider following the construction or rehabilitation of facilities. This support is provided to various players:

- Beneficiaries, through village gatherings to inform them of the role and duties of the service provider,
- The local authorities, by supporting them in their role as project owners.
- The Soakoja teams, working in close collaboration throughout the project.

Soakoja and Inter Aide have set up a **professional, not-for-profit management system based on a "Water for All" approach** to meet the operation and maintenance needs of small-scale drinking water systems in remote rural areas, and to deliver this essential service to vulnerable families.

Several remote rural communities in the Analanjirifo and Analamanga regions have opted for this service to manage their drinking water facilities (including small, "unprofitable" facilities that are of no interest to private, for-profit service providers).

Summary of municipalities and facilities concerned by delegated management



BF: standpipe (or "*borne-fontaine*"), BI: institutional tap (or "*branchement institutionnel*"), PMH: hand pump, BP: private tap (or "*branchement privé*"), KB: public kiosk in a shop (or "*kiosque boutique*"), KP: public kiosk at an individual's home (or "*kiosque privé*").

In 2023, 19 municipalities (in the 2 Analamanga and Analanjirifo regions) have delegated the operation and maintenance of 158 rural facilities to Soakoja. For a population of nearly 100,000 people served by 560 water points with flat-rate tariff (public or institutional), 135 volumetric water points (public or institutional) and 316 private taps.

Soakoja is committed to guaranteeing the beneficiaries of those water points with: **continuous access to water** (intervention provided in less than 5 days) with **sufficient quantity** and **quality** and a **professional service**.

¹ <https://www.interaide.org/watsan/mada/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Fiche-Soakoja-septembre-2019.pdf>
<https://www.facebook.com/people/ONG-Soakoja/100063691952411/>

In rural areas in the Analamanga and Analanjirifo regions, more than half the population lives below the poverty line. The proportion of the budget that households can devote to water is very limited, or even non-existent for the most vulnerable.

In order to guarantee the access to a minimum quantity of water for basic consumption for vulnerable people, Soakoja is introducing social pricing in volumetric systems.

Volumetric vs flat-rate pricing

The facilities managed by Soakoja are gravity-fed networks (supplied by spring catchments) or wells equipped with hand pumps. Water production therefore does not use electricity or fossil fuels, and operation and maintenance costs are only slightly correlated with the volume delivered. It is therefore possible to introduce flat-rate fee for the service, which is advantageous for rural users who accept a service limited to public water points (standpipes or hand pumps). Volumetric pricing, on the other hand, is favoured in areas where cohesion between residents is not strong enough to allow them to organise payment. Consumers pay by volume, according to how much they use. This pricing system does not allow spontaneous solidarity, as in flat-rate pricing where the village can decide to exempt certain categories of people from payment.

2. Presentation of the social tariffs proposed by Soakoja for vulnerable users of facilities with volumetric sales

- Social Tariff (ST) arrangements

Soakoja has developed a social pricing system² designed to guarantee a vital minimum of drinking water to all households in the villages served by a volumetric sales system. Households that do not have the financial capacity to buy drinking water at the "normal rate" are covered by this social pricing system.

The standard rate for water sold at public sales points (kiosks³) in 2024 will be 50 Ariary per 20-litre container (i.e. around 0,01 euro for 20 litres).

Households eligible for the ST can buy **1 "social card" per month from the Soakoja agent:**

Cost of the social card: 100 ariary (equivalent to 0,02 euro for 600 litres/month).


It allows you to obtain a maximum of 30 containers over a 30-day period at no additional cost.

These 30 containers (of 20L) can be collected at the desired rate (1 or more per day) by beneficiaries, but cannot be accumulated from one month to the next (for reasons of card management and consumption monitoring). If the 30 cans have not been used during the month, they will not be carried over to the following month.

² There are different types of ST: <https://wikiwater.fr/tarification-sociale-ou-solidaire> (in french)

³ Water sales points in volumetric systems are called Kiosks, but they are installed in pre-existing locations: They can be shops selling various products ("Boutique Kiosks" or KB) or public water points installed in private homes when there is no shop in the targeted area ("Kiosque Particulier" or KP).

Model of the social card provided to social tariff beneficiaries (front and back)

Card : 100 Arirary	Card N°:
Month: _____	Family name:
	Firt name:
	Kiosk n°:

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30

Total number of 20L containers used:
Soakoja signature:

This card is specially designed to help vulnerable people benefit from the drinking water managed by the NGO SOAKOJA in the village of _____.

The card costs 100Ar. It entitles the holder to 30 jerry cans of drinking water. This card cannot be replaced within a month.

If you lose it and want to continue to use the benefits of this card this month, you will have to pay 600 ariary.

The service provider

- Collection of the social cards by eligible households

Households identified as beneficiaries must go to the local Soakoja office each month to collect their social card (beneficiaries can come in person or send someone with their national identity card). Collection days are fixed: generally on a market day or during the first week of the month, depending on the municipality.

In order to buy a new social card, households must return the old one to the local Soakoja office. This enables the service provider to check the number of jerry cans consumed, so that they can be deducted from the bill of the kiosk, and to compare these figures with those declared by the kiosk.



Renewal of a social card by a beneficiary at the Soakoja office, CR of Ankazondandy, Analamanga, April 2024.

It is important not to multiply the number of intermediaries for the sale of the social card; direct sales are to be preferred.

- The role of kiosk owners and social tariff

The water delivered under the ST scheme is deducted from the volume billed to Kiosk owner by Soakoja. The cost of the social tariff is therefore endured entirely by the NGO Soakoja.

However, kiosk owners are obliged to serve ST beneficiaries (allocated to their kiosk) who present their card. Soakoja recommends that they keep track of the jerry cans consumed in a notebook or sheet to facilitate monitoring and billing deductions.

Soakoja also recommends that beneficiaries keep their social card at home and take it to the kiosks each time they come to collect a jerry can, so that there are no misunderstandings about quantities consumed.

Households can also decide to leave their social card at their kiosk and pick it up on renewal day to prevent it from being damaged (a recurring problem when children collect the water).

Kiosk users can report any comments or problems with the TS to Soakoja, when the maintenance agent comes to bill them each month.



Kiosk at a Shop, Antsahatanteraka, Ankazondandy municipality



Testimonial from a Social Card beneficiary

Mr Jean-Maurice and his family of 9 (2 parents and 7 children) benefit from the social card. Before the social tariff was introduced, his household didn't use the water kiosk because they didn't have the money. Now, thanks to the social tariff, they get 30 jerry cans a month. Once the social card has been used up, they buy a few cans of water at the normal rate until the end of the month. Social pricing has helped this family to gain economical access to water and to change their consumption behaviour.

3. Description of the stages involved in introducing Social Tariffs

Raising awareness and training stakeholders in ST

Social water pricing is one of Soakoja's commitments. Right from the start of Inter Aide's involvement (Inter Aide is in charge of building the facility and training stakeholders upstream of Soakoja's management):

- This mechanism is presented to the **local authorities** (rural municipalities, traditional leaders),
- The **kiosks**⁴ are also informed of the future introduction of a social pricing system (volume-based invoicing mechanisms and guaranteed access for the most vulnerable). **Raising kiosk operators' awareness of social pricing is essential to ensure their support.**

Soakoja is organising a 2-part workshop on social water pricing to bring together local authorities and kiosk owners.

This workshop takes place after the installation of the water point, once the kiosks have been identified and are active. An initial meeting with the local authority is necessary to prepare for this workshop. This will enable the main points of the workshop to be presented to the local authority and to ensure their support in this process.

⁴ Point of sale for water in volumetric systems. This can be a shop selling water (Kiosk in shop) or a private individual when there is no shop in the target zone (Private Individual Kiosk).

During this half-day workshop, ST will be presented in depth to all the participants, and then a number of points on the management and invoicing of ST will be discussed with the kiosks.

First stage:

- Introduce the **challenges** of ST,
- Reiterate **Soakoja's commitment** to guaranteeing access to water for the most vulnerable,
- Presentation of the **stages involved in identifying beneficiaries**.

It is essential for participants to approve to this mechanism if ST is to be socially accepted. The participants are therefore consulted on this occasion.

The **second phase** with the kiosks will enable us to:

- Show how **billing** will be adapted for the kiosks concerned,
- Advise the **kiosks to carry out simple monitoring** themselves on a separate notebook/sheet,
- **Remind the kiosks that they are expected to cooperate** in identifying beneficiaries and that Soakoja will decide on the final list (to avoid favouritism and so that water users do not think that the kiosks decide who is a beneficiary).

Identification of households eligible for ST phase 1: initial survey

An **exhaustive initial survey** is carried out by a facilitator during the construction phase. The facilitator will survey an average of 50 to 70 households per day.

Survey objectives and criteria:

- **Classify households according to a score representative of their standard of living**. This score ranges from 0 (representing a very low standard of living) to 6 (corresponding to the highest relative standard of living).
- **Criteria** (easily observable factors): condition of walls, roof, presence of electricity, household composition, indicators of vulnerability (people with disabilities, isolated elderly people, single adults with children, etc.).

→ [See the "Initial survey form" analysis grid in the Appendix \(in French only\)](#)

Using the **analysis grid**:

- initially, exclude households considered to be well-off at first glance (presence of a motorbike, zebus, television, etc.) vi the "Quick Score" box on the analysis grid,
- Special cases: use the "joker" box so that the presenter targets the household as vulnerable, regardless of the score obtained. It is then necessary to give details in the "Remarks" box.



Household survey in a hamlet served

Identification of eligible households, phase 2: Interviews and visits

Following the initial survey and the workshop on social pricing, **households with a score of 0, 1 and/or the joker box ticked** are selected for the second identification phase:

- **Interview conducted at the kiosks.** This exchange aims to identify households that buy little or no water at all for economic reasons. If new households are identified by the kiosk, they are added to the initial survey list. **This exchange also helps to ensure that the kiosk understands and agrees to ST.**
- **Home visits to households pre-identified** (by the initial survey and the kiosks) by a member of the Soakoja team. Objective: assess these households to find out whether they buy water from the kiosk, or understand why they do not. Failure to adhere can be linked to lack motivation (proximity of a traditional well, doubts about the value of buying water from the kiosk, existence of social conflict, etc.) or money (additional cost of a water carrier in the case of very low income, mobility handicap),
- After the interviews, the **sources are cross-referenced to obtain a final list of ST beneficiaries.** The information collected and the ultimate list are shared with the Soakoja employee responsible for the area. The final list of people is drawn up by the Soakoja employee in charge of the area and by the person who had conducted the interviews.

Validation of eligible households and information for Kiosks and beneficiaries

- **The list of beneficiaries is submitted to the local authority for approval.** The local authority team may make recommendations based on the specific situation of certain beneficiaries (social conflict, etc.). A copy of the list of beneficiaries is left with the local authority.
- **The kiosks are then informed** by a visit from a Soakoja agent.
- **Households benefiting from social tariffs are informed** by a home visit (VAD) that they are eligible following a survey carried out by the service provider. They are informed of the procedures for recovering the social card and the benefits it offers.

Follow-up to Social Pricing

Soakoja monitors social card consumption by household and by kiosk during kiosk invoicing visits. The maintenance agent ensures that the kiosk does not encounter any difficulties with the social tariff or with its beneficiaries. **The volume consumed by each kiosk's social cards is deducted from the bill when it is prepared.**

The social card recovery day therefore enables the service provider to find out about the quality of service and the satisfaction of users.

Annual updating of the list of beneficiaries

- **Visit to households already benefiting from the scheme** to inform them of the updated lists and collect information on their financial situation and water consumption,
- **Interviews with kiosks** to confirm the data collected previously and pre-identify potential new households,
- **Visits to households pre-identified by the kiosk,**
- **Drawing up the final list and validating it with the municipality,**
- **Visits to households to inform them** whether they should remain on, be removed from or be added to the list.

Appendix

Example of an initial survey form (in French)

Commune : Ankazofandy		Village : Anosy Est		Animateur.trice : Noellah														
District : Manjakandriana		Date : 30/01/2024																
		<i>Si signe de richesse évident -> fin de l'enquête</i>																
Numéro Ménage	Prénom et Nom	Âge	Composition famille	Score Rapide		Toit		Sol		Lumière		Mur		Composition du ménage		Score Total	Joker carte sociale	Remarques & indication maison (si joker ou score 0/1)
				Zebu, moto, élevage d'animaux, CANAL+ et autres (écrire raison)	Tzy mizy	Toit en tôle	Toit en paille ou autre	Sol en ciment ou en brique	Terre battue	Electricité par fournisseur, panneau solaire	Rien ou petit panneau solaire (radio, ...)	Briques cuites	Argile, briques crues	RAS	F ou H seule avec enfants, personnes âgées isolées, PSH			
75	Narinja Ravitoto	34	3 ²		0		0		0		0	1			0	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	Femme seule avec deux enfants en bas âge
76				1													<input type="checkbox"/>	
77	Dada Be Njaka	83	1		0		0		0	1			0		1	2	X	Homme seule aveugle sans famille proche, maison en face du kiosque à eau 3
																	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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