

Ensuring good governance and quality of water services in rural Madagascar: Involvement of women as representatives of users, the "Solonten'ny Mpaka Rano" (SMR).



June 2024

Written with the contribution of Mylène Bobo, Technical Support Officers and the Inter Aide and Soakoja teams
in Madagascar

Proofreaders: Damien Du Portal, Tristan Salmon

IMPORTANT NOTICE

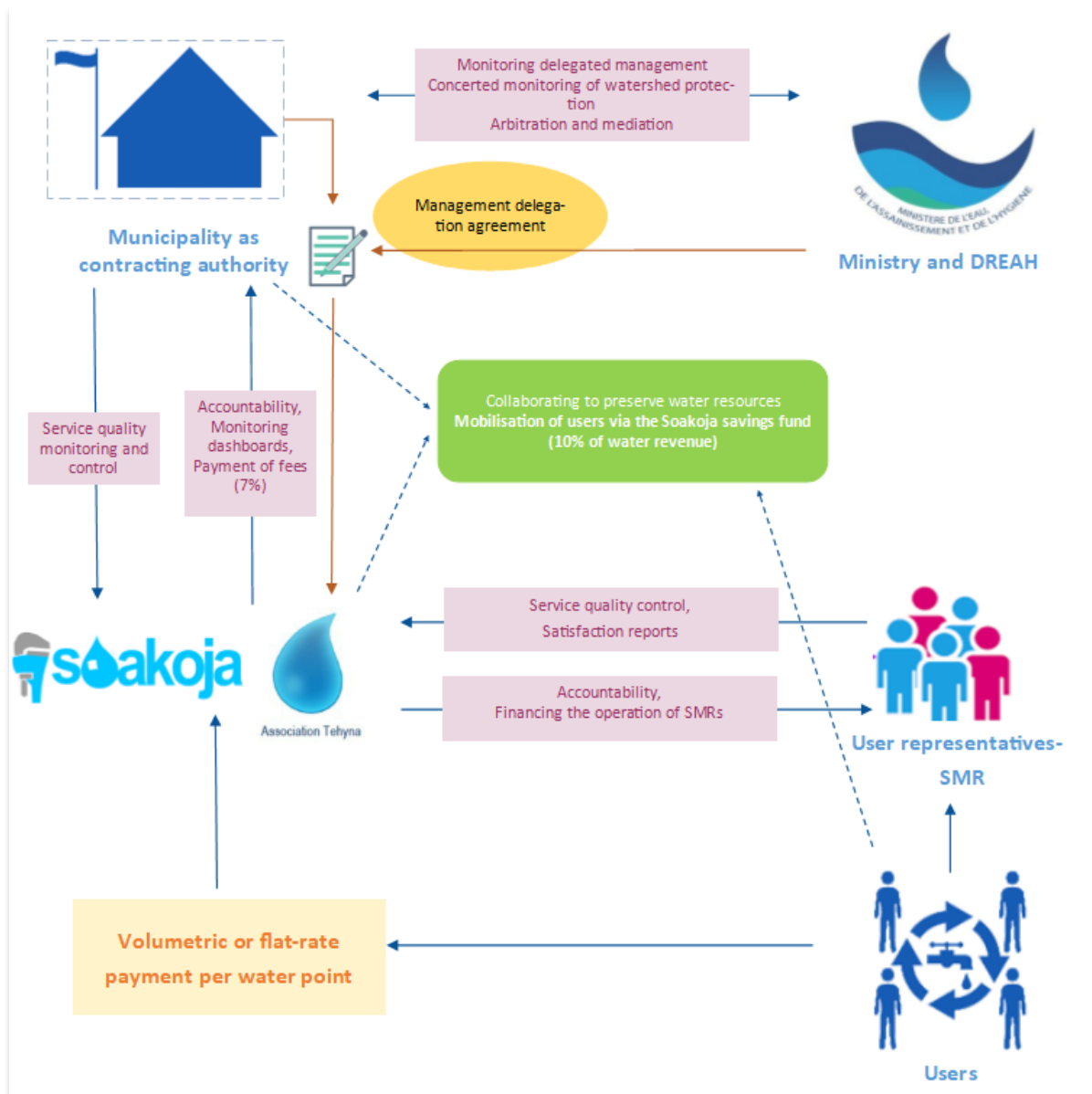
The "Pratiques" fact sheets and accounts of experiences are distributed as part of the network for the exchange of ideas and methods between NGOs that have signed the Pratiques network charter.

It is important to emphasise that these factsheets are not prescriptive and in no way claim to "say what should be done"; they simply present experiences that have produced interesting results in the context in which they were carried out. On the contrary, the authors of "Pratiques" have no objection to these sheets being reproduced on the express condition that the information they contain is given in full, including this notice. If they are quoted, the source (Réseau Pratiques) and the authors must be mentioned in full.

Local NGOs Soakoja and Tehyna (Inter Aide's local partners) provide rural municipalities with a professional monitoring-management-maintenance service for hand pumps (installed on hand dug wells and boreholes) and on gravity-fed networks. In 2024, the management of 306 systems serving almost 750 public water points and close to 350 private water points) supplies a population of around 115,000 inhabitants in 29 rural municipalities in the Analanjirofo, Analamanga, Atsimo-Atsinanana and Fitovinany regions¹.

To ensure user satisfaction and guarantee optimum quality of their drinking water services, these delegated Service providers refer to "representatives of the water users" known in Malagasy as "Solonten'n'y Mpaka Rano" (SMR).

Roles and responsibilities of the main stakeholders involved in the management and monitoring of facilities



¹ Districts (and regions) of intervention of the local NGOs, in 2024 :
 - Soakoja : Fénérive-Est and Vavatenina (Analanjirofo), Ambohidratrimo and Manjakandriana (Analamanga)
 - Tehyna : Farafangana (Atsimo-Atsinanana), Manakara (Vatovavy Fitovinany)

WOMEN, MAIN USERS OF DRINKING WATER SERVICES

Women are the primary users of water services on a daily basis and are therefore the best informed about the level of service in their village.

In the villages where the service providers Soakoja and Tehyna operate, water point users elect women to act as spokespersons towards representatives of the municipality and the service providers.

The "Solonten'ny Mpaka Rano" (or "Representative of the Water Users" in Malagasy) are elected by the users of each village. They are the official representatives of the users, most particularly during the annual feedback workshops on the results of the water service for which all representatives are present, including the Regional Water Directorate (DREAH). On this particular occasion, the SMRs provide feedback on the compliance of the service through **4 commitments made by the Service provider**, which they can easily evaluate. The water service guarantees:

- ☑ **sufficient quantity of water** all year round
- ☑ **water quality** (no turbidity, no unpleasant odours, etc.),
- ☑ **a repair time of less than 5 days** (downtime after telephone call) in the event of a breakdown,
- ☑ **professional service provision** (good communication from maintenance staff).



Mme N'Tena, SMR for the village of Anambotaka - Mahavelo, Farafangana, April 2024.

Each SMR represents the users of one or more water points in a given area (usually a village)². In this way, the SMRs contribute to water governance in their municipality and help to monitor the quality of the service provided by the Soakoja and Tehyna.

The main roles of the SMRs are:

- ☑ **Represent water point users,**
- ☑ **Gather villagers' opinions** (via daily discussions or the organisation of dedicated meetings),
- ☑ **Take part in the annual feedback meeting** with the Municipality, the Service provider and the Regional Water Directorate representatives (see last paragraph of this document),
- ☑ **Report to users on the discussions and decisions taken** at the annual meeting,
- ☑ **Validate the work carried out by the hydraulic agents³**
- ☑ **Contact the Service provider in the event of a breakdown**
- ☑ **Contact the local authority in the event of a problem with the operator**

² There may be several public water points in a village (particularly in the case of public standpipes served by a gravity-fed network), so the SMRs may represent the users of several water points. In the case of villages served by wells equipped with hand pumps, they generally represent the users of a single water point.

³ For gravity-fed water supply systems, the hydraulic agents (or local technicians) are people from the communities, trained to carry out regular cleaning of the catchments and their surroundings, as well as the tanks. These agents are paid by the manager via daily allowances.

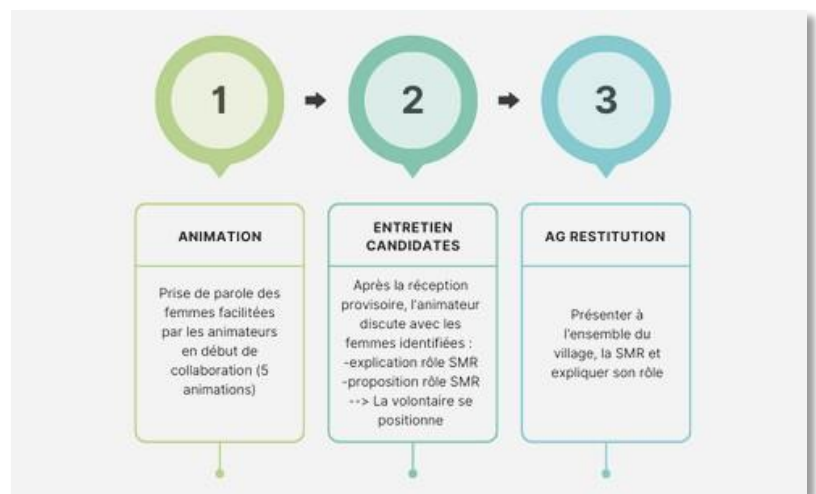
PROCESS FOR IDENTIFYING OR RENEWING "SOLONTEN'NY MPAKA RANO"

This process is mainly carried out by Inter Aide's teams in Madagascar, in partnership with the rural municipality (contracting authority) and the delegated managers (Soakoja and Tehyna). Inter Aide's involvement ensures objectivity in the selection process and prevents the manager from being in the position of "judge and jury". The role of the user representatives is to act as a counter-power. In the long term, the staff of rural municipalities that delegate management of the water service should be able to lead the process of selecting or renewing SMRs.

The women identified to play this role in their village should be able to communicate easily with the users of the water facilities.

Methodology:

1. **The pre-identification of women as "Solonten'ny Mpaka Rano"** takes place during the successive water management events organised by Inter Aide and its partners. These meetings are designed to introduce the principle of the water service to users. The facilitators take advantage of these formal assemblies to identify as potential SMRs any women communicating easily in those villages.
2. **A women's workshop** is organised by the facilitator to bring together village users and explain the SMR's role to them beforehand. This workshop facilitates discussion between the women (any questions or suggestions).



- At the end of the workshop, the women can put forward their candidacy for the election. The facilitator can prepare the candidates through individual meetings (home visits). Applications are not closed at the end of the workshop: women can also apply until the end of the discussion with the candidates (stage 3).
3. Once the presentations are over, **the facilitator discuss with the pre-targeted candidates** in order to :
 - Re-explain the roles and responsibilities of SMRs
 - Offer the role to those who have volunteered
 - Hear the position of the women volunteers
 4. **Election of a female SMR:** A general assembly is held to elect the SMR using the "hat" method. The idea here is to bring the community together on the day of the election. The candidates sit facing the assembly and a hat is placed behind each of them. Voters then come one by one to place a pebble (or other common object) in the hat attached to the candidate of their choice.

To avoid influencing other people's votes, voters are invited to pass their hand through each hat one after the other and discreetly place the pebble in the hat of the person they wish to vote for. Once all the voters have passed through, the host counts the pebbles in each hat for everyone to see. Note that it may be appropriate for the candidates to vote first, so that they do not feel influenced by the final results of the election. If one of the candidates obtains more than 50% of the votes in the first round, she wins the election and the results are announced to the meeting. Failing this, a second round may be held.



At the end of the election, minutes are drawn up and signed by the local authorities present, who then officially announce the result and present the elected RSM to the whole community.

- 5. Organisation of a general meeting within the village** to present the new RSM and her roles. This last stage is essential to ensure that the SMR is clearly identified by the community, and that all users are reminded of the 4 service guarantees, the SMR's role and the procedure for communicating with the service provider (in the event of a breakdown).

ROLES OF SMR DURING ANNUAL FEEDBACK MEETINGS



Annual communal meeting in the presence of the municipality representatives, the Regional Water Directorate (DIREAU) and Soakoja (Hambatoharanana), March 2023

The elected SMRs are invited to meet during the **Annual Communal Meeting**, in the presence of the **municipality representatives**, the **Regional Water Directorate** and the **Service provider**. They are asked to express themselves individually to assess the satisfaction of the beneficiaries they represent, by confirming or questioning the four guarantees.

Preparation:

The SMRs are collectively preparing to report their observations in each commune at a **preliminary workshop**. By making it possible to identify and report any problems with water facilities, the role of the SMRs become responsible for the accountability of the service. In this way, they can share and consolidate their arguments for the attention of the Service provider or other stakeholders in the water service.

Restitution during official meeting:

To **ensure that the service is accountable**, each SMR presents a report on the **4 guarantees** on a flip chart or other medium.

The **Service provider presents its financial statement to all** those involved in the service. The SMRs can thus find out about the expenditure incurred on the facilities over the past year, and can report on this to their respective communities.

Lastly, it is an **opportunity for the parties involved to discuss the management of hydraulic structures**.

The Service provider also is in position to collect the opinions, requests and any difficulties (ongoing breakdowns) of the SMRs.



A "typical" annual report schedule



Annual communal meeting in the presence of the municipality representatives and Tehyna (Mahavelo), May 2024

Réseau Pratiques

Partage d'expériences et de méthodes pour améliorer les pratiques de développement

<https://reseau-pratiques.org>