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FINAL EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE CONVENTION PROGRAMME

Consolidation of maintenance models and support for water and sanitation governance

- phase 2 -

- July 2023 – June 2026 -

Final report

Vincent Dussaux, November 2025

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Acronyms

ADC: Area Development Committee; representative body of all the development committees of a village

IA: Inter Aide

GFS: Gravity-fed system for drinking water supply (network with spring catchment)

AM: Area Mechanic, repair technician (circuit rider) in Malawi

CP: Convention Programme

WPC: Water Point Committee

DREAH: Regional Directorate of EAH (decentralised service), in Madagascar

WASH: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

HP: Hand Pump

MoU : Memorandum Of Understanding ; Partnership agreement

PT: Pump Technician; repair technician (circuit rider) in Sierra Leone

EQ: Evaluative Question

SDPI: District Infrastructure Planning Service, a decentralised service of the Ministry responsible for infrastructure at the district level in Mozambique

WD: Water Directorate / Water Department; Decentralised authority responsible for water at the district level in Sierra Leone and Malawi

WP : Water Point

WUA: Water User Association; user association for each gravity-fed water network in Ethiopia

WUAF: Water User Association Federation; federation of water user associations in Ethiopia.

WWO: Woreda Water Office; Water office within the Woredas, decentralised institutions in Ethiopia.

Executive Summary

Summary of lessons learned

Inter Aide is a pioneer in rural **maintenance, having developed highly relevant models, consistent** with sectoral strategies, and **recognised** by communities and key stakeholders in the sector.

The **results are achieved** (# WP maintained / functionality), and generate **positive impacts** (health, economy, inclusion, gender)

the **sustainability** of maintenance services is threatened by weaknesses inherent in the intervention contexts, the main ones being:

- The weakness of government **institutions**
- The low income of the target populations implies the need to **find significant revenue streams** beyond user contributions.

Summary of recommendations

1. Maintaining a cross-cutting presence

➔ Maintaining a cross-functional presence across all links in management services (construction, rehabilitation, spare parts supply, etc.)

➔ Disseminate recommendations regarding design and technical implementation

2. Formalise a differentiated mobilisation strategy for each stakeholder

➔ Targeting awareness-raising among stakeholders in the water sector regarding professional water management in rural areas as a specific outcome of the next phase of the Community Project, supported by a communication/influence strategy tailored to each type of stakeholder.

➔ Making the consistency of models with strategic and institutional frameworks a key point of advocacy

➔ Strengthen the participation of Inter Aide and its partners in the various exchange networks , at the national and international level

3. Optimise and adjust management models

➔ As part of the advocacy for management models, highlighting the roles and the financial and human resources needed to be allocated to government institutions

➔ Emphasize in the models the roles to be played by local authorities

➔ In the most restrictive contexts, consider evolving models towards less dependence on institutions.

4. Focusing discussions on the financial viability of management services

➔ Explain the technical and financial model of the management service, defining what should be covered by the service fees.

- ➔ Encourage stakeholders in the sector to establish financial support mechanisms for maintenance in rural areas (maintenance support funds, institutionalised subsidies, etc.)
- ➔ Clearly define the costs associated with maintenance services, linking them to a level of management quality and comparing them to the costs of rehabilitation or downtime resulting from a lack of maintenance.

5. To deepen knowledge on the management of drinking water supply infrastructure

- ➔ Disseminate a precise description of the models promoted by the CP in different countries, with a cross-cutting argument highlighting their strengths, to be developed collectively.
- ➔ Make the models explicit by defining the maintenance levels (preventive, curative, guaranteed service) provided by management services
- ➔ To characterise across the board the performance of service management and the quality of the targeted water service in order to establish a communication strategy on management (institutions, donors, etc.) and on the water service (users, local authorities)
- ➔ Consolidate monitoring and evaluation by linking quantitative indicators (#WP and operators) to qualitative indicators (level of maintenance / professionalism of the management service) and to performance indicators on the water service (functionality of water points)

6. Continue to develop inclusion measures

- ➔ Integrate universal access to water services into water service quality criteria and institutionalised service evaluation systems (e.g., SMR)
- ➔ Emphasize targeted training and support for women to strengthen their leadership within water governance bodies and their ability to access roles as repair artisans.
- ➔ Based on dedicated indicators, communicate on the gender-related social transformations observed in the programs

Introduction

This document constitutes the final report of the external evaluation of the 2nd phase of the Programme Convention financed by the AFD and carried out by Inter Aide, "Consolidation of maintenance models and support for water and sanitation governance", over the period July 2023-June 2026.

This evaluation was carried out via:

- the completion of 3 field assessments conducted by teams of local consultants;
- external cross-functional support from consultant Vincent Dussaux to define the evaluation methodology, frame field evaluations, and consolidate all lessons learned and recommendations.

This evaluation method was made possible by the fact that Vincent Dussaux had prior knowledge of the program's activities, having carried out the evaluation of the previous phase of the Program Convention, including 5 field missions.

Relying on local evaluators for the fieldwork component allowed us to benefit from their in-depth knowledge of local contexts and ecosystems related to WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene). Furthermore, now familiar with the maintenance models developed by Inter Aide and the program's achievements, these local evaluators will be able to contribute to communication on these topics, which are still relatively unexplored in the program's various intervention countries.

Conducting this cross-sectional evaluation required prior coordination with local consultants to ensure a clear understanding of the evaluation's objectives, particularly the issues and challenges related to each of the 10 selected Evaluation Questions. This facilitated a cross-sectional analysis and the consolidation of lessons learned. These adjustments encouraged local evaluators to focus on qualitative rather than quantitative aspects, a practice not common among many evaluators.

Evaluation methodology

Methodological approach and process

A scoping workshop was held on January 7, 2025 with the various Inter Aide sector heads involved in the Programme Agreement, the director and the cross-functional consultant, in order to validate the objectives of the evaluation and to identify the thematic areas of interest and capitalisation for Inter Aide: the adherence of the various actors to the maintenance models put in place by Inter Aide; the performance of maintenance services; the sustainability of maintenance services.

A series of interviews (February/March) with the various sector managers involved in the CP and the capitalisation officer then made it possible to understand the issues related to the CP and their evolution in reference to the evaluation of the previous phase.

An evaluation grid consisting of 10 evaluative questions (EQs) was determined and validated in a workshop (April 27), taking into consideration:

- Inter Aide's thematic areas of interest;
- the conclusions of the evaluation of the previous CP;
- the logical framework of the program agreement;
- the issues that emerged during the interviews with the sector managers;
- the classic evaluation criteria (OECD-DAC).

The evaluation grid is as follows:

1. What results have been achieved in terms of maintenance services?
2. the management models for drinking water systems in line with the sectoral framework?
3. To what extent have industry players adopted the management models?
4. Do the institutions have the capacity to fulfil their role in the maintenance models implemented?
5. What is the level of financial participation of users in the water service?
6. Is the water service financially sustainable?
7. Is the management service efficient?
8. To what extent are the chosen technical solutions viable?
9. Is the water service accessible to all categories of the population?
10. Does Inter Aide's work contribute to the empowerment of women?

Based on interviews conducted with sector leaders, with the capitalisation officer and the reading of the various project documents, an interim report was submitted in July.

Three field assessments were conducted in September by local consultants in Malawi, Ethiopia, and Madagascar, according to terms of reference that included the 10 key questions. The preliminary results of these assessments were presented to the relevant Inter Aide teams for comment and discussion.

This final report compiles all the information collected, presenting the various general lessons and those relating to the 10 EQs, and the general recommendations for the next phase of the CP or, where appropriate, specific to the different countries of intervention.

Terminology and focus of the evaluation

The theme of "maintenance" of water infrastructure is the main focus of the program agreement, but, by necessity, project activities sometimes address the broader concept of "water service, " to which maintenance contributes. Inter Aide is currently working on defining explicit terminology to clarify the use of terms such as "maintenance services," "infrastructure management services," and "water service."

In this assessment, we will simply distinguish between [1]:

- ***Access to water***

It corresponds to the main purpose of the action of Inter Aide and its partners, and can be evaluated according to different characteristics: quantity of water, quality of water, continuity of access, distance of the user to the water point, etc.

- ***Drinking water management***

This refers to the organization, activities, and resources that provide users with access to drinking water and ensure the sustainability of that access. Water management includes, in particular, equipment maintenance activities aimed at ensuring its proper functioning over time.

The evaluation therefore focused on water management services, with particular attention given to project activities aimed at ensuring the maintenance of equipment, or, in other words, developing maintenance services (a term used in NIONG).

[1]In accordance with the distinction made in SDG 2030 No. 6 relating to water

Lessons from the assessment

This chapter summarizes the lessons learned from interviews with sector managers, the general document review, and the three local assessments, based on the 10 Evaluation Questions selected by Inter Aide.

It includes cross-cutting recommendations for each of the EQs, and specific recommendations formulated by local evaluators on the 3 countries assessed in the field.

EQ1. What results have been achieved in terms of the development of management services?

The impact of the Inter Aide program in terms of developing maintenance services can be understood according to:

- *The number of water points benefiting from a maintenance service*
- *The level of maintenance implemented on the water supply systems*
- *The number of maintenance operators capable of performing maintenance*

1.0 Management models deemed effective

The entire evaluation was carried out with reference to the management models put in place by Inter Aide, which differ according to the 6 countries of intervention.

These models define, in particular, the roles of the actors involved in the management of water services.

These models are generally considered effective and relevant by all stakeholders in the sector.

Table 1: Distribution of the main functions related to water service management models in the 6 CP countries

Country	Ethiopia	Madagascar	Malawi	Mozambique	Sierra Leone	Guinea
Authority responsible for the water service	**Community**	**Municipality**	**Community**	**Community**	**Community**	**Municipality**
Management operator	Water User Association Federation **(WUAF)** , supported by the Woreda Water Office **(WWO)**	**Delegated NGO** (Tehyna / Soakoja)	**Water Point Committee**	**Water Point Committee**	**Water Point Committee**	Public Water Service Management Unit – **UGSPE**
Preventive maintenance	**Water Agent** (employed by the WUAF)	**hydraulics agent** , an activity gradually transferred to **delegated operators**	**Repairman** certified (contractual)	**Water Point Committee** (by a repairman/craftsman, currently being introduced)	Certified **repair technician (Pump Technician),** contracted	Currently being introduced
Corrective maintenance	**Water Agent**	**Maintenance Technician** Tehyna/Soakoja	**Repairman** certified (contractual)	**Repairman** certified	Certified **repair technician (**Pump) Technician), contracted	Certified **repair technician**
Monitoring and control of the water service	State Service **(WWO)**	**DREAH, municipality** and **SMR** (body representing users)	**Local authorities** (Traditional Authorities - TA- and Area Development Committees - ADC-)	State Service **(SDPI)**	State service (**Water Directorate**)	**Municipality**

1.1 A significant increase in the number of water points benefiting from maintenance services

The quantitative results obtained by the program go beyond the planned targets [2], with the number of water points or water systems under professional maintenance having increased significantly to reach a substantial number.

Monitoring the functionality of structures does not yet allow for the systematic determination of structure functionality rates.

[2]Based on the performance indicators for Phase 1 of the program

Table 2: Water points under management services, and population concerned (source: OG and R3 indicators of the logical framework)

Country	Ethiopia	Madagascar	Malawi	Mozambique	Sierra Leone	Guinea
Number of water points maintained in year 1 (June 23 to June 24)	992	748 public and 348 private	3,224	393	3,179	12
Target population (year 1)	285,000	116,000	800,000	120,000	800,000	3,600

1.2 Emphasis is placed on the professionalization of maintenance operators, who enjoy increased recognition.

The program also places strong emphasis on the "professionalization" of maintenance operators (see also EQ7), within the framework of maintenance models that are (or are intended to be) institutionalised (see EQ2). While water service management models often rely on a community and volunteer basis (water point committees, water user associations), maintenance is systematically carried out by a professional.

Table 3: Type and number of maintenance operators supported by the program agreement (source: interim report)

Country	Ethiopia	Madagascar	Malawi	Mozambique	Sierra Leone	Guinea
Maintenance Operator	Water Agent	Tehyna or Soakoja	Certified repair technician	Certified repair technician	Certified repair technician	Certified repair technician
Status	Employed part-time by the WUAF	NGO specialising in water systems management	Private operator, certified by the Water Department	Private operator, certified by the SDPI	Private operator, certified by the Water Department	Self-employed entrepreneur certified by SNAPE
Number of operators supported by the program (year 1)	141	2 NGOs (12 staff members in total)	303	37	44	1

The CP has largely contributed to the capacity building of maintenance operators, by training and equipping them (e.g., a tool for " grading " structures), and the 3 local assessments have shown that the know-how of these operators is now recognised by many key players (communities, local institutions, other projects).

In Ethiopia, Water Agents, mostly local farmers, are able to diagnose the condition of the various structures and carry out "type A and B" repairs (i.e., not requiring excessive technical or financial resources).

In Madagascar , the professionalism of Tehyna and Soakoja is attested by the fact that they are sought after by actors external to the project (DREAH, municipalities, international actors) to ensure the management of works not carried out by Inter Aide.

1.3 A heterogeneous level of maintenance depending on the intervention areas

The level of maintenance, which can schematically be divided into corrective maintenance (interventions when a breakdown is declared) and preventive maintenance (periodic maintenance and control services to avoid rapid deterioration and premature breakdowns), is not uniform in the different countries of intervention of the CP.

It should be noted that maintenance does not include certain repairs [3], either because they are costly (e.g., a complete pump replacement) or because they require a level of technical expertise that the maintenance operator does not possess. These repairs therefore remain subject to the occasional mobilisation of external financial and/or technical resources. This point is particularly emphasized in the three local assessments conducted.

In Ethiopia and Madagascar, communities subscribe to a maintenance service guaranteed by contract, meaning they pay in advance an operator who guarantees the functionality of the water point over a period of time.

Table 4: Maintenance levels by country of the CP

Country	Ethiopia	Madagascar	Malawi	Mozambique	Sierra Leone	Guinea
Corrective maintenance	X	X	X	X	X	X
Preventive maintenance	X	X	X	Starting	X	Starting
Service guaranteed by contract	X	X	In testing[4]			

Recommendations related to EQ:

- ➔ Refine the characterization of maintenance models by specifying the levels of maintenance and the limits of intervention of the management service ("major repairs", "rehabilitations", …)
- ➔ Continue to develop monitoring and evaluation processes for water points, by disaggregating indicators to distinguish the different levels of maintenance carried out on water points (preventive/curative in particular)
- ➔ Integrate the monitoring of a simple indicator of water point functionality

Conclusions and recommendations from local assessments:

Ethiopia

The evaluation demonstrated that the water supply network management model is highly effective and relevant. It has enabled the creation of a structured, community-driven system, achieving results that surpass those in areas not covered by the project in terms of infrastructure functionality and community accountability.

[3]Qualified in the "corrective maintenance" or "rehabilitation" program
[4]Testing a social enterprise model employing Area Mechanics (AMs), on a limited scope (small number of AMs and projects)

In the Woredas benefiting from the program, 143 WUAFs managing 739 WUAs (representing 1,715 water points) received follow-up support last year. Of these, 1,097 are category A water points, 15 are category B, 251 are category C, and 352 are category D. Maintenance records indicate that 801, 988, and 1,077 water points were maintained in 2023, 2024, and 2025, respectively, benefiting 132,023 people, representing a 34% increase.

Malawi

In Malawi, the management model is considered very effective and has clearly improved the sustainability of access to water for the population.

Madagascar

The NGOs Tehyna and Soakja are recognised by many local stakeholders (DREAH, NGOs, and elected officials) as professionals in rural water management. The number of functional infrastructure projects and the high level of user acceptance of service fees attest to their effectiveness.

EQ2. Are the management models for drinking water systems compliant with the sectoral framework?

2.1 The models rely heavily on the legal and institutional framework of the intervention areas

The program implemented by Inter Aide pays close attention to the various legal and institutional frameworks relevant to the six countries of intervention, frameworks which are thoroughly understood by the project implementation teams. The program's objectives, activities, and targets are defined in conjunction with the relevant national and local institutions, which are systematically involved in the key stages of infrastructure and management service implementation.

The water management models selected and supported by Inter Aide are based on the various national or provincial frameworks, and are systematically implemented in close collaboration with the relevant institutions, with which partnerships are frequently formalised.

2.2 Sectoral frameworks, however, are rudimentary and rarely implemented.

It should be noted, however, that the maintenance of water points in rural areas is generally not a priority for governments and ministries responsible for access to water; these frameworks are, for some of the 6 countries, very basic, or theoretical and rarely implemented (e.g., Guinea).

2.3 A desire for the co-construction of models, which clashes with the weakness of institutions

In practice, Inter Aide co-constructs with institutions (with varying degrees of involvement depending on the level of "motivation" and the resources available to them to act on the subject, see EQ 3 and 4) management models that are often pioneering and allow for the evolution or clarification of the legal and institutional framework, or feed into sectoral strategies (e.g., the Strategic Note on the management of water systems in rural Malawi, which incorporates the management principles supported by Inter Aide;

the national strategy in Sierra Leone on maintenance, developed by UNICEF, integrates the models supported by Inter Aide).

In Madagascar, faced with the failure of delegated management to commercial enterprises in rural areas, Inter Aide has developed a non-profit professional management model by local associations, which remains outside the existing regulatory framework based on the 1999 Water Code. While the regional directorates of the Ministry of Water recognise the value of this model for isolated low-income rural areas, advocacy efforts are underway to formalise this alternative model, which could be included in the ongoing revision of the Water Code.

Recommendations related to EQ:

➔ Making the consistency of management models with legal and institutional frameworks and their alignment with sectoral strategic orientations a key point in advocating for the dissemination and consolidation of models

Conclusions and recommendations from local assessments:

Madagascar

➔ Strengthen advocacy for NGOs to be officially recognised as legal operators of water services, relying in particular on Law No. 2001-026 of 2004 on company contracts and civil society.

Malawi

The program demonstrates a high degree of strategic alignment with Malawi's national water policy by addressing the complex challenges of service governance and technical and financial sustainability.

However, a deficiency in relation to sector standards was identified in the absence of regular water quality testing.

Ethiopia

Compliance with national and regional regulatory frameworks underpins the co-construction process. Sector actors operate in accordance with the 2012 regional regulation establishing WUAFs and WUAs for preventive and corrective maintenance, and the national strategic framework for the management of operation and maintenance of rural water supply (2018) of the Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy (MoWIE) .

Jointly designing the model with government stakeholders from the outset ensures adherence to and compliance with national and local frameworks.

EQ3. To what extent have industry stakeholders adopted water management models?

One of the obstacles to the development of maintenance in the countries where we work is the low priority given to organizing drinking water management services, particularly with regard to the construction of new water points, both by **national institutions and by some development operators** . Some projects still focus on building water access infrastructure without defining management methods, or by defining unsustainable methods that undermine the models supported by Inter Aide and its partners. Furthermore, the success and widespread adoption of professional management models also depend on the understanding and buy-in of the **communities benefiting** from drinking water services, which necessitates awareness-raising activities targeting them.

The challenges related to understanding and appropriation can be characterized according to the different types of actors and the role they are called upon to play in the water management service model.

Table 5: Level of adoption of maintenance models by type of actor (based on local assessments)

Type of actors	Issues related to the appropriation of models	Level of ownership (Ethiopia)	Level of appropriation (Madagascar)	Level of ownership (Malawi)
Communities	Water bill payment, use of certified tradespeople, subscription to preventive maintenance contracts	Very good	Very good	Good
Local authorities	Application of the model, conflict resolution	Very good (WUAF)	Good, needs strengthening (municipalities)	Okay, needs strengthening (TA, ADC)
Decentralised State Services	Support for the model (Monitoring, coordination and/or support for managers, monitoring of the spare parts supply chain)	Very good (WWO, Zones)	Good (DREAH)	Low (WD)
national institutions	Scaling up the model, evolving the legal and institutional framework in support of the model	Very good (Region)	Weak	AVERAGE
Other development actors (NGOs, donors)	Reproduction of models, collective reflection to improve the models	Partial, partial replication attempts	Partial, delegates solicited for systems outside the project	Partial: Repair technicians rehired from other projects *vs.* numerous projects without maintenance

3.1 . Strong community and local ownership

Local assessments have shown that communities and local authorities (water point committees in general, WUAF in Ethiopia, TA and ADC in Malawi, and municipalities to a lesser extent in Madagascar)

have integrated the principles of the management models and play a strong role in their implementation. This is also reflected in a significantly improved willingness to pay among communities (see WQ 5).

The program raises awareness among local communities and stakeholders through several types of activities:

- the implementation of tools for monitoring the management of drinking water systems, through which assessments are carried out and presented to the stakeholders concerned;

- the organisation of or participation in local information and communication meetings on issues related to the maintenance of water systems, or on the results obtained by professionalised management models;

- the production of communication /advocacy tools for professional management (e.g., video and podcast in Madagascar).

"In Madagascar, a session to share information on AI activities, the maintenance model promoted by the NGO Tehyna, and WASH sector regulations was held at the DREAH office, followed by broadcasts on local television. Refresher courses are planned for the second half of 2025, expanding participation to include municipal technicians so that access to regulatory knowledge reaches a larger number of people" (*local assessment, Estelle Herimpitia*).

However, challenges remain (Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone) where some communities still rely on informal repairers ("bush mechanics "), sometimes cheaper but less qualified, to carry out corrective maintenance, and where voluntary subscriptions to preventive maintenance are not yet widespread.

3.2. Weak and fragmented ownership within government authorities

Although the models are known and recognised as effective and relevant by government authorities (central or decentralised), the very limited resources dedicated to these subjects considerably limit their active participation in their implementation (see EQ 4).

However, there has been a significant increase in the adoption of models supported by Inter Aide in Ethiopia and Sierra Leone, with committed institutions working closely with Inter Aide to implement the models, and development actors committing to this path, although significant communication and lobbying efforts still need to be made to ensure that the adoption of these models becomes the norm.

3.3. Encouraging signs of reproduction and spread

In Madagascar, Malawi, and Mozambique, the professional management models promoted by Inter Aide are known and endorsed by numerous institutional and development actors, and inspire think tanks on rural water management (e.g., Malawi and Sierra Leone through their partnership with UpTime , Madagascar via Ran'Eau). However, the overall weakness of institutions (in terms of capacity for action, see EQ 4) is a significant obstacle to the widespread adoption of these models.

In Sierra Leone, Inter Aide is involved in a partnership program that extends the maintenance model based on approved PTs to works carried out as part of a program implemented by the NGO World Hope International and financed by a common donor, Charity Water.

In Ethiopia, the Woreda Water Offices encourage all stakeholders to adopt the management model based on Water User Associations (WUAFs) and Water Agents. This model will be integrated into regional water policy and implementation procedures, facilitating its replication by institutions in underserved areas . In Madagascar, the management practices implemented by Tehyna and Soakoja are praised by some Regional Directorates of Water Resources and Sanitation (DREAHs) and project operators (CRS, UNICEF, ADRA, etc.), who encourage them to take over the management of rural village infrastructure not built by Inter Aide (although there is a challenge related to technical design choices that can compromise the financial viability of the management).

Inter Aide's advocacy also involves its participation in national exchanges led by institutions (e.g., the General Assembly on Rural Hydraulics in Guinea) or studies that inform national strategies (Malawi, Sierra Leone), where it encourages the inclusion of management models in rural areas and shares its field experience.

3.4. Communication activities that appear heterogeneous and a strategy to be asserted

Communication and advocacy activities for maintenance models, however, vary considerably from one country to another (see the heterogeneous or even non-existent indicators for some countries). The communication strategy surrounding professional management models could be clarified by building upon a common foundation (cross-cutting arguments) and adapting it to the specific contexts of each country and the particularities of the different target audiences.

Recommendations related to EQ:

1. Targeting awareness-raising among stakeholders in the water sector regarding professional water management in rural areas as a specific outcome of the Community Project, supported by a **communication/influence strategy tailored to each type of actor.**
2. To be based on a **precise description of the models** promoted by the CP in different countries, with a cross-cutting argument highlighting their strengths, to be developed collectively.
3. Strengthen the participation of Inter Aide and its partners in the various **exchange networks, at the national and international level**
4. Emphasize in the models the roles to be played by **local authorities** (Malawi, Mozambique, Madagascar, Sierra Leone)

Conclusions and recommendations from local assessments:

Madagascar

- ➔ Maximize advocacy efforts to recognise maintenance models for the final phase of the CP via existing platforms (Ran'eau , WASH clusters, etc.)
- ➔ Clearly define the " branding " and "social marketing" actions of Soakoja and Tehyna: what key messages and what image to convey to the municipalities and users?

Malawi

At the community level (water point committees), although the culture of curative maintenance remains strong, preventive maintenance is developing in the areas supported by the program (which represents more than 75% of the interventions of the official Area Mechanics).

Water Departments have a low adoption of the models, largely due to a significant lack of capacity and resources dedicated to water service management.

- ➔ Strengthen the ownership of the models at the district level
- ➔ Launch coordinated communication campaigns aimed at changing behaviors, targeting communities and policymakers, to distinguish certified repairers from informal repairers.
- ➔ Raising awareness, particularly among faith-based NGOs, of the management model
- ➔ Strengthen exchanges between NGOs in the sector (particularly via the WESNet platform)
- ➔ Promote better coordination and collaboration between stakeholders in the WASH sector (ministries, local authorities, NGOs, private sector)

Ethiopia

Jointly designing the model with government stakeholders from the outset ensures adherence to and compliance with national and local frameworks.

Providing practical and easy-to-use tools (manuals, dashboards) is more effective than relying solely on policy documents to ensure the model is applied correctly on the ground.

- ➔ Advocate for the generalization and institutionalization of preventive diagnoses at the national level, by integrating them into the national legal framework

EQ4. Do the institutions have the capacity to fulfill their role in the maintenance models implemented?

The viability of maintenance models depends, to varying degrees depending on the model, on the ability of institutions to perform the functions and assume the responsibilities assigned to them (monitoring, control of management services, support and coordination of operators). To do this, they must have adequate resources and capabilities in technical, financial, and human terms.

4.1 Government institutions have limited capacity and resources.

The capacities (and therefore the authority) of the institutions responsible for the organisation and monitoring of the management of water systems are generally weak, with significant disparities across the 6 countries of intervention of the CP [5].

[5]particularly in Ethiopia where the institutions have far greater legitimacy and means of action than the other 5 countries

4.2 The performance of institutions remains largely dependent on the resources allocated by the program

Project teams implement different types of actions to strengthen the capacities of institutions:

- there provision of data concerning water systems and their management (Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia)
- the association of institutions at key moments relating to the organisation of water system management (e.g. training and accreditation of repair craftsmen in Sierra Leone, Malawi and Mozambique)
- A advisory support in the execution of tasks (e.g., municipalities in Madagascar, WD in Sierra Leone, Woredas in Ethiopia)
- A financial or logistical support (e.g., covering fuel costs for travel by WD focal points in Sierra Leone or Water Bureau Experts in Ethiopia)

These actions are often carried out within the framework of institutional partnership agreements (MoU : Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, currently under development in Malawi and Mozambique) which clearly define the tasks to be performed by the institutions and the support to be provided by the project.

These actions have led to significant progress in Sierra Leone and Ethiopia, where institutions supported by the program now carry out a large part of their responsibilities (but remain dependent on this support).

4.3 The overall weakness of institutional capacities strongly impacts the sustainability of the models

This general weakness leads Inter Aide and its partners to consider, in some cases, alternative models that are more autonomous from government institutions. For example, in Madagascar, the management model has evolved towards one less dependent on the capacities of institutions, and in Malawi, a model in which the organization and support of a network of repair artisans is no longer dependent on the capacities of the Water Department is being tested.

General recommendations related to EQ:

- ➔ As part of the advocacy for management models, highlighting the financial and human resources needed to be allocated to institutions
- ➔ In the most restrictive contexts, consider evolving models towards less dependence on institutions.

Conclusions and recommendations from local assessments:

Ethiopia

Budgetary and logistical gaps: government institutions do not have dedicated budgets for maintenance, vehicles and test kits, which hinders their supervisory role.

The performance of institutions remains largely dependent on the resources allocated by the program.

At the institutional level, will and technical knowledge will not be enough if a minimum of financial resources are not provisioned to cover operational costs (transport, communication) and to strengthen institutional capacities.

➔ Advocate for the establishment of budgets dedicated to the maintenance of water systems at the Woredas and Zones level, in order to extend the models to areas which do not benefit from project support.

Madagascar

The program does not target capacity building for institutions (DREAH), and has limited action at the municipal level (training in WASH sector regulations and municipal project management missions).

➔ Supporting the implementation of the STEAH/ATEAH in each municipal organizational chart, the recruitment and initial training for the municipal agent

Malawi

The evaluation reports a high level of efficiency and capacity of the “Village Heads” and the “Area Development” Committees ” (ADCs) in their roles in community mobilisation, implementation of maintenance models and coordination of relevant actors.

On the other hand, the evaluation shows that the involvement of district institutions (Water Departments) in the monitoring and evaluation activities of water points and the supervision of the activity of Area Mechanics is limited and depends heavily on the resources and support provided by the program.

➔ Integrate the ADCs into the official district planning and monitoring framework, with clearly defined terms of reference for their supervisory and coordination functions.
➔ Develop a formal capacity-building and resource transfer plan for district water offices, including co-financed budgets and monitoring equipment.

EQ5. What is the level of financial participation of users in the water management service?

One of the program's ambitions is to maximize users' financial participation in water infrastructure management services.

Across the six countries where the program is implemented, there is generally no problem with the ability to pay the set fees, as confirmed by local assessments. Optimizing user financial participation therefore involves:

- Users' willingness to pay (adherence to the management model, trust in the service)
- The ability of operators to raise funds
- The ability of local authorities to enforce payment

5.1 User contribution collection rates have noticeably improved

The **rate of collection of contributions** achieves excellent results in Ethiopia (100% for most WUAFs, obtained in particular through a notable strengthening of monitoring by the Woreda Water Office), as well as in Madagascar, but remains difficult to follow on models based on independent repair craftsmen.

5.2 Service reliability and financial management transparency are crucial to ensuring users' willingness to pay.

Willingness to pay is quite good in the areas assessed locally, and this result is largely due to the communities' appropriation of the model, achieved through numerous community awareness activities (see EQ 3), but also to the trust that users place in the maintenance manager/operator, itself closely linked to the financial transparency of the service as noted by the 3 local assessments.

5.3 Local authorities play an important role in recovery

The use of sanctions is rare, and non-payment issues are generally resolved through the intervention of appropriate local authorities. In Sierra Leone, for example, development partners (DPs) were encouraged to leverage the influence of various local authorities to resolve non-payment problems. The local evaluation in Malawi also highlights the important role played by community development agencies (CDAs), and in Mozambique, the program now emphasizes the accountability of traditional authorities regarding the management model.

5.4 The tariffs do not allow the management service to be financially balanced

However, it should be noted that the level of participation requested from users does not cover the full cost of the management service and is subject to various adjustments (significant increases in contributions in Madagascar and Sierra Leone). (see EQ 6)

Finally, the contribution of users is not only financial: most management models rely on a more or less significant voluntary community mobilisation which allows "savings" on certain tasks (e.g. collection of contributions, cleaning of the areas around water points, fence repair, etc.).

General recommendations related to EQ:

➔ Explain the technical and financial model of the management service by defining what is covered (or should be covered) by the service fees.

Conclusions and recommendations from local assessments:

Madagascar

Users pay between 3,000 and 6,000 Ariary per year, depending on the area, with rates adjusted to their ability to pay. A flat annual fee of 200,000 to 300,000 Ariary per water point ensures a minimum level of maintenance, although it does not cover all of the managers' expenses. Isolated cases of non-payment are linked to propaganda about free water, rumors about contract terminations, or unprofessional conduct by technicians. The two managers recently adjusted their prices to compensate for taking on tasks previously performed by the communities. User participation is now limited to cleaning and

collecting contributions, activities that would represent significant costs if the managers were to assume them.

Ethiopia

The IA/RCBDIA program has strengthened the autonomy of the federations, which now manage 80 to 100% of type B repairs, financed by contributions reaching 300 ETB per household per year (doubling the tariff in three years to offset 28.3% inflation). Willingness to pay has increased thanks to improved service reliability and greater awareness of the health benefits of drinking water. These tariff levels, higher than in woredas outside the projects (where tariffs as low as 10 ETB per household per year have been observed), are still insufficient to cover all the operating and maintenance costs of the water service.

The collection of fees owed by water user associations (WUAs) reaches 100% for most of the federations involved in the program.

Willingness to pay depends on perception of service, which implies that a reliable water supply and transparent financial management create a virtuous circle.

➔ Promote properly differentiated/segmented pricing systems for large consumers (e.g., restaurants) to improve fairness and cost recovery.

Malawi

Users pay monthly fees, typically ranging from 300 to 1,000 MWK per household, with 500 MWK being the most common rate. These fees are generally considered affordable and include exemptions for low-income groups.

These contributions are sufficient for routine preventive maintenance, but they are unanimously recognised as insufficient to finance major corrective maintenance work, which is often considered to be the responsibility of the District Council or the funders.

Financial opacity in some management committees, where communities do not see the link between their contributions and related expenses (spare parts, repairman payments), erodes user trust and their willingness to pay, creating a vicious cycle that threatens the viability of the community management model.

➔ Strengthen financial transparency by implementing and mandating the use of standardized digital financial management tools (e.g., mobile money) for collecting contributions and by establishing regular financial reports.

EQ6. Is the water management service financially sustainable?

6.1 A complex estimation of the costs associated with management services

The costs related to the various water management services put in place by the project are not yet fully understood, because in addition to the costs of "routine" maintenance operations, which are known, there are indirect costs (coordination, monitoring of services, training) which are more difficult to grasp.

Furthermore, certain "in-kind" costs (volunteer work by communities) can sometimes be overlooked and bias the comparison between professionalized management models and community management models (e.g., fundraising by villagers in the case of a flat-rate contribution per water point, whereas in the case of professionalization, this collection cost translates into the payment of wages, and is therefore carried over into the budget).

A comparative cost analysis must also take into account their level of performance (see EQ 7) and the scope of management services (inclusion of costly rehabilitations/corrective maintenance?).

Work on this aspect is underway [6], and is beginning to yield precise results on Madagascar and Ethiopia.

6.2 Management services heavily dependent on subsidies

These results show that the water service tariff (user contributions) is far from being able to cover all the costs, even direct ones, of management services (in 2024 in Madagascar, users' financial contributions covered 37% of the maintenance costs borne by Soakoja and 17% of those of Tehyna).

These results corroborate the overall feedback on "professionalized" water management services in rural areas, which suggests that the financial balance of these services can rarely be achieved by relying solely on tariff revenues [7].

6.3 The sustainability of management services requires finding significant financial resources in addition to tariff revenues.

The financial balance of water management services can be sought either by mobilizing financial resources external to users (local, national, international subsidies), or by seeking balances on a larger territorial scale.

On the first point: some donors co -financing the program are now willing to finance the operation of water services in areas where the standard of living of users cannot cover all the costs.

On the second point: in Madagascar, an economic balance for water management associations could be achieved by combining profitable water systems (e.g., volume-based sales for household connections) with others that are less profitable or not profitable at all. This solution is currently being explored by the Soakoja association.

General recommendations related to EQ:

- ➔ Continue to clearly define the costs directly or indirectly related to maintenance services, linking them to a level of management quality, and comparing them to the costs of rehabilitation or downtime resulting from a lack of maintenance.
- ➔ Encourage stakeholders in the sector to establish financial support mechanisms for maintenance in rural areas (maintenance support funds, institutionalised subsidies, etc.)

[6] See the tool for monitoring management services during development.
[7] See: https://www.globalwaters.org/sites/default/files/a_roadmap_for_system_strengthening_final.pdf

Conclusions and recommendations from local assessments:

Madagascar

Direct revenue from the water service covers the labor and material costs of the two community-based managers. Salaries, benefits, and other operating expenses are thus covered by subsidies. According to the NGO Soakoja, a water point operates at a deficit of approximately 550,000 Ariary per year on average without subsidies.

In 2024, subsidies accounted for 63% of Soakoja's revenue and 83% of Tehyna's revenue.

- ➔ Support the implementation of an organizational and financial diagnosis of the 2 management delegates in order to determine the best organizational and financial structure taking into account the extent of their territory of intervention and the level of service they aim for.
- ➔ Supporting the two delegates in reflecting on and developing a business plan while keeping in mind their social (and possibly environmental) impact on their activities

Ethiopia

The project has introduced a system for periodically reviewing and updating tariffs to account for inflation and rising costs, as well as bulk purchases and stockpiling for later use. This also helps offset the inflation-induced price increases of recent months. This practice ensures the financial viability of the model.

- ➔ Link WUAFs to local microfinance organizations and establish a "Major Repairs and Renovations Fund" at the regional or local level, which WUAFs can access through a co-financing application process.

Malawi

The economic balance of Area Mechanics is sometimes compromised by an intervention area that is too large in relation to the means of transport at their disposal.

User financial contributions are insufficient to guarantee a reliable service, which compromises the overall financial balance of the model.

While the financial model allows for routine maintenance, it lacks sufficient funds for major repairs and infrastructure replacement. This precarious financial situation threatens the long-term sustainability of water services. Sound financial planning, including diversified revenue streams and user contributions, is essential.

- ➔ Create, or advocate for, a permanent district-level fund that supports communities in financing repairs that cannot be covered by user contributions.

EQ7. Is the water management service efficient?

7.1 Professionalizing maintenance operators as a cornerstone of performance

The program aims to increase the performance of services through the upskilling and provision of resources (tools) for maintenance managers and operators (the "professionalization").

The professionalization of maintenance operators is implemented through the following activities:

- **training** sessions for maintenance operators (technicians, shopkeepers) and local coordinators of maintenance services (committees, federations, etc.) on financial management functions, technical monitoring, etc. in Sierra Leone, Malawi, Mozambique and Guinea
- support for management operators, either through the project or through institutions (through institutions in Ethiopia and through the project in the other 5 countries **)**
- Networking via "federation" type structures (Sierra Leone, association of PTs, PuTAs) or the organization of "peer-to-peer" meetings between repair artisans (Malawi, Mozambique, Guinea **)**
- The implementation of **technical and financial monitoring mechanisms** (functionality, receipts, financial audits) facilitating transparency and accountability of the service
- The creation or consolidation of **tools** designed to facilitate maintenance operations (e.g., a " grading " tool for water points, supporting diagnosis; monitoring dashboards; etc.).

Inter Aide teams and interviews conducted with key stakeholders during local assessments report a qualitative improvement in maintenance linked to the increased capacity of maintenance operators and the improvement of intervention procedures and monitoring tools.

As an illustration, in Sierra Leone, the networking (federations) and training (entrepreneurship) of Pump Technicians now allows them to carry out certain interventions, on technical or social levels, autonomously and therefore more efficiently.

7.2 Objectify performance by defining it in a cross-cutting manner

Even though indicators and targets are set for the capacity building of maintenance operators in certain areas of the program (e.g., evaluation of PTs in Sierra Leone, of AMs in Malawi, of maintenance agents in Mozambique), the performance of drinking water system management services has not yet been defined precisely and across the board [8].

The qualitative results of the evaluation could be objectified and measured in the next phase of the CP by defining cross-cutting indicators relating to the performance of management services [9].

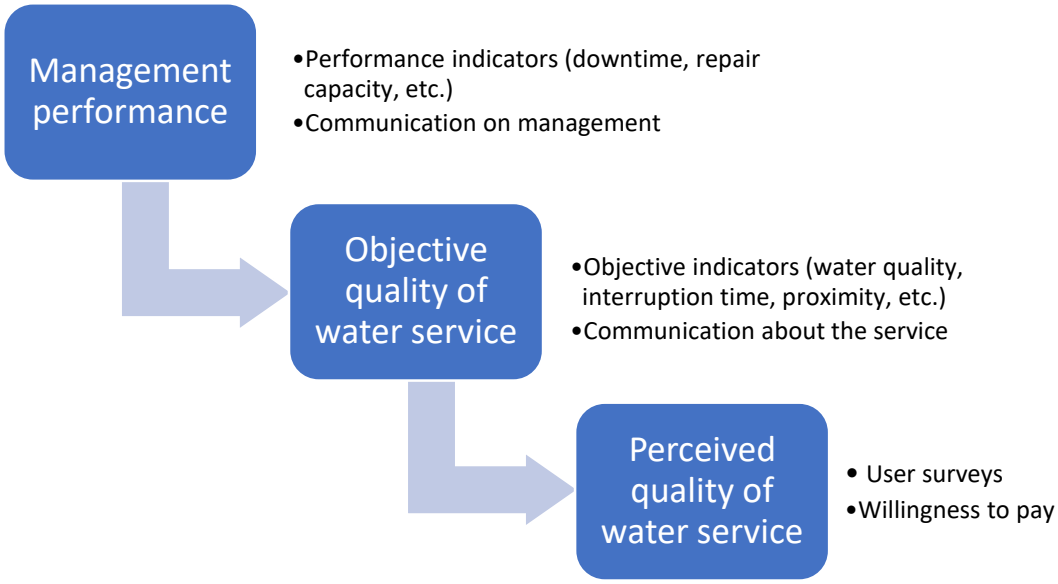
7.3 The quality of service provided to users as a benchmark

[8]The following concepts are mentioned in the various documents relating to the program: "quality of maintenance and repairs carried out", "easy access to quality spare parts", "transparent pricing", and above all a "minimum interruption time of access to water".
[9]This aspect is addressed in the management services monitoring tool currently under development.

Since management services are a means of providing service to users, their performance must be correlated with the quality of service provided to users.

The local assessments attempted to measure users' perception of the quality of service provided, according to key criteria selected by the Inter Aide teams during the evaluation of the previous phase.

The assessments show a **very positive perception of the quality of water service** by users in Ethiopia and Madagascar, while in Malawi the results are of little use [10].



General lessons and recommendations related to EQ:

- ➔ To characterise across the board the performance of service management and the quality of the targeted water service
- ➔ In order to establish a communication strategy on management (institutions, donors, etc.) and on the water service (users, local authorities)
- ➔ In the longer term, define measurable indicators

Conclusions and recommendations from local assessments:

Madagascar:

" Continuity of service, proximity of water points to the place of consumption and transparency of management: high performance according to the stakeholders interviewed."

[10]The evaluation was unable to conduct a study based on a specific questionnaire administered to users.

" The quantity and quality of water" are variables and depend on external factors (resource depletion, social conflicts).

" Universal access / financially affordable": function of community organization.

➔ Timely payment of contributions by users can be taken as an indicator of their satisfaction (excluding cases of breakdown) and could also be a proxy indicator of the performance of the service provided by a manager.

Ethiopia

On the professionalization of management services:

Local water officials are the cornerstone of a rapid response and sustainable operation.

Providing practical and easy-to-use tools (manuals, dashboards) is more effective than relying solely on policy documents to ensure compliance on the ground.

At the level of management operators, the WUAFs rely on the voluntary work of their members who, except for the Water Agent, are volunteers.

➔ Implement modest incentives to retain volunteer WUAF leaders. These could include annual membership fee waivers or community support for leaders' agricultural activities.
➔ Strengthen WUAF skills in long-term financial planning and the creation of reserve funds for future asset replacement.

Regarding the perception of the quality of water service:

Users consistently report high levels of satisfaction with the service's reliability and the quantity of water available. Water quality is generally considered high, but periodic testing is still necessary to confirm this. Nevertheless, some areas report shortages during the dry season and turbidity during the rainy season, highlighting the need for ongoing water quality monitoring.

Malawi

The effectiveness of the management model is impacted by a largely insufficient number of Water Monitoring Assistants (WMAs) at the Water Departments level and also of certified repair craftsmen in certain areas.

EQ8. To what extent are the chosen technical solutions viable?

8.1 Robust technical solutions facilitating maintenance

The maintenance of drinking water systems is closely linked to technical choices: the design of the drinking water system, the technologies chosen, must take into account local skills to work on the equipment, the economic capacity to finance a repair, and the availability of spare parts.

Inter Aide and its partners draw on their many years of experience in implementing drinking water systems to learn principles that facilitate their maintenance. These principles are shared with other stakeholders, primarily national institutions.

It should be noted, however, that while robust and easy-to-maintain systems remain preferred, the professionalization of management allows for the retention of certain more sophisticated technical choices, thereby increasing the quality of service provided to users (e.g., Madagascar).

8.2 Significant differences exist between hand-operated pumps and gravity-fed networks, particularly related to the spare parts supply chain.

Maintenance models prove to be more complex to organize on PMH than on gravity networks, due to greater complexity of intervention (particularly on high-tech pumps, such as those of the India Mark 3 type, common in Madagascar) and difficulty in obtaining the quality spare parts necessary for pump maintenance.

In most countries, the weak organization of the spare parts supply chain and/or the heterogeneity of pump models represent a significant constraint to the self-sufficiency of PMH maintenance. The program is therefore involved in organizing the supply chain (partnerships with suppliers of quality parts, establishment of shops reselling parts locally) in Malawi, Mozambique, and Sierra Leone, as well as in parts management by PT associations in Sierra Leone.

8.3 Extending maintenance models to works not carried out by the program requires precautions

The program's maintenance models are being implemented on many wells or boreholes equipped with PMHs carried out by other projects or actors (Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone [11]), after verification of the "maintainability" or rehabilitation of the structures.

With regard to gravity networks, the extension of the models (Ethiopia, Madagascar) to works not carried out by the program is often made difficult by the fact that the design and operation choices of water works are not always compatible with sustainable maintenance.

To address this, Inter Aide works to disseminate key considerations and recommendations for the design and construction of infrastructure to ensure optimal maintenance. The PROCEED program in Ethiopia specifically aims to generalize these design practices across multiple Woredas (districts).

General recommendations related to EQ:

The quality of maintenance services is closely linked to the technical design choices and the quality of the execution of the works.

The technical solutions promoted by Inter Aide (affordable, relatively easy to implement, and aligned with social organizations and the local economic fabric) have largely contributed to the operationalization of the models and are particularly relevant in a context of economic fragility.

[11] In Sierra Leone, this represents 500 projects not completed by the program, out of the 3645 that were maintained.

- ➔ In advocating for management models, disseminate recommendations in terms of design and technical implementation.
- ➔ Maintaining a cross-functional presence across all links in management services (construction, rehabilitation, spare parts supply, etc.)

Conclusions and recommendations from local assessments:

Madagascar

The technical solutions implemented by the program (GFS and HP) are viable, in the sense that the structures can be maintained by locally trained agents and via locally available spare parts.

At the GFS level, the main technical risk is linked to the drying up of the sources and the lack of strict adherence to the source protection perimeters.

The involvement of the future service manager in the key stages of the implementation of water systems (e.g., installation of a pump) ensures that the works comply with the procedures and resources of the manager.

- ➔ Supporting municipalities in establishing source protection zones, in order to mitigate the risks of reduced flow and guarantee water quality

Malawi

The spare parts supply chain has significant weaknesses. Price fluctuations, occasional quality problems (counterfeits and poor part durability), and stock shortages lead to delays or inefficient repairs.

- ➔ Consolidate the network of certified spare parts suppliers and establish strategic warehouses through partnerships (e.g., ESS ESS) to guarantee parts availability and quality
- ➔ Train local shopkeepers in financial management and create working capital to stabilize their stocks
- ➔ Formalise service agreements between water point committees and shops to secure payments and supplies.

Ethiopia

On gravity systems, which are simple in design, economical and easily maintainable with available local skills, and of high quality execution, the management model is highly viable.

However, this model encounters significant difficulties when applied to hand pumps. Indeed, spare parts are considerably more expensive, difficult to source reliably, and local technical capabilities for repairing more complex mechanical components remain limited.

The beneficiaries highlighted several problems related to the design of systems mainly implemented by other NGOs.

➔ Ensure, through regional regulations, that the technical designs of all new constructions and standard operating and maintenance procedures for AI/RCBDIA, regardless of the implementing partner, adhere to the principles of simplicity, local maintainability and climate resilience.
➔ Develop a specialist support strategy for non-gravity systems, including exploring the possibility of bulk purchasing or duty-free importing common spare parts for hand pumps, offering advanced training to selected water officers, and considering partnerships with private suppliers and maintenance service providers.
➔ Extend standardized training to all Water Agents to include manual pumps and, for some agents, at least preventive maintenance of motorized boreholes and electromechanical systems.

EQ9. Is water accessible to all categories of the population, including the most vulnerable?

The program does not have a formal strategy to identify, within the targeted communities, any potentially vulnerable or marginalized population categories and ensure that they benefit from services.[12]

9.1 Financially accessible water services in the "CBM+" models

When water payment is a flat rate, which remains the preferred option because it allows access to the service for vulnerable people without volume limitations, Inter Aide assumes that communities organize themselves to ensure equitable access to the service.

Field assessments confirm that vulnerable households (elderly, disabled and poor people) are exempt from payment, and no populations have been identified as excluded from the service.

In cases where Inter Aide deems social cohesion insufficient, pricing is based on volume, and a social tariff is implemented. To this end, teams work with local authorities to target vulnerable households/individuals, enabling them to access services at an appropriate rate.

9.2 Physical accessibility not taken into account, and equity concerns

However, the assessments note that:

- The lack of price differentiation between users with high and low consumption volumes (e.g., restaurants, institutions vs. households) can be perceived as a lack of fairness.
- The conditions for exemption from payment could be clarified.
- accessibility of the works (for children and people with disabilities) is not guaranteed.

General recommendations related to EQ:

[12]Except in Madagascar where, in the case of water kiosks with payment according to the volume consumed, the communes and traditional leaders are associated with the program teams to identify the most vulnerable people, recipients of "social cards" to benefit from a reduced rate.

➔ Integrate universal access to water services into water service quality criteria and institutionalised service evaluation systems (e.g., SMR)

Conclusions and recommendations from local assessments:

Madagascar[13]

Water is accessible to all segments of the population, including the poorest. For flat-rate pricing systems, communities freely decide to exempt certain users, and water is generally provided free of charge to temporary residents (for festive and funeral events, weather-related incidents, etc.). Water managers arrange payment plans for those with irregular incomes.

Malawi

The financial accessibility of the service is good: exemptions for the elderly, disabled and destitute, community support.

Physical accessibility is poor: lack of ramps and equipment adapted for children, the elderly and disabled people.

The decision-making participation of vulnerable groups is low: marginalized groups excluded from committees; women in leadership positions but systematically excluded from technical training.

➔ Establish clear and community-approved criteria for contribution exemptions for vulnerable households
➔ Impose inclusive design standards (ramps, child-friendly equipment) for all new water points and rehabilitations, drawing inspiration from good practices already implemented.
➔ Improve inclusion monitoring: strengthen the monitoring and evaluation system with the collection of disaggregated data on the inclusion of the most marginalized groups.

Ethiopia

Equity measures include waiving fees for vulnerable households (e.g., the elderly, people with disabilities, and low-income families) and utilizing community labor for cleaning and protecting water points. No cases of service refusal have been reported, indicating that the principles of inclusion are being effectively implemented. However, equity concerns remain when uniform rates are applied to high- and low-volume users (e.g., restaurants and households) in smaller growth centers, highlighting the need for differentiated pricing systems.

The main challenges include some difficulties in accessing water points due to agricultural encroachment, the exemption from payment for some (new residents, transient users), and tariff inequity where large institutional consumers (restaurants with 12 jerrycans/day) pay the same flat rate as ordinary households (2-3 jerrycans/day).

[13]Note: Water systems for which volume-based payment and "social tariffs" have been implemented were not included in the local assessment on Madagascar.

EQ10. Does Inter Aide's action contribute to the empowerment of women?

Phase two of the program agreement saw the implementation in each country of tools to monitor the presence of women in key positions in water systems management.

The program implements measures aimed at:

- encourage women to apply for these positions;
- them and strengthen their skills in the exercise of their responsibilities;
- to support their legitimacy in relation to their community or family.

10.1 Encouraging but variable results depending on the context, often marked by a very present patriarchal culture

The results obtained vary depending on the context, many of which are marked by a very present patriarchal culture.

Local assessments show very encouraging results in Madagascar, notably through the development of SMR functions carried out exclusively by women, in Ethiopia where more and more women are taking decision-making roles within user federations, and in Malawi where they represent a significant part of repair artisans and village water point committees. Results are progressing in Mozambique and Guinea where women constitute an important part of water point committees.

In Sierra Leone, initiatives are encountering significant difficulties.

General recommendations related to EQ:

➔ Continue and even strengthen training and support programs for women to enhance their leadership roles within water governance bodies and their ability to access positions as repair artisans.

Based on dedicated indicators, communicate on the gender-related social transformations observed in the programs Conclusions and recommendations from local assessments:

Madagascar

SMR women in Fitovinany and Atsimo The women of Atsinanana have undergone a significant political evolution: they now actively participate in communal decisions, identify with the whole of the commune rather than with their own community alone, and play an influential role in the payment of water services, thus overturning the tradition that reserved this role for older men.

Decision-making circles with a strong female presence systematically include children who learn and become informed about EAH, a dynamic that contributes to the future sustainability of the service since these children will become the contributors and decision-makers within 10 to 15 years.

Men drawing water has become a common practice at village events, with men now sharing domestic tasks with their wives, a change seen as irreversible as it simplifies family organization.

In Analanjirofo, reselling water at the kiosk has become a source of supplementary income for women, and, although financially modest, this activity allows them to expand their social networks and access information, the type of access to water being associated with different socio-economic statuses and levels of community influence.

➔ Documenting gender-related social transformations for capitalization and sharing

Malawi

The Inter Aide program has made significant progress in women's participation and leadership within water point management committees, where they frequently hold key positions (chairs, secretaries, treasurers) and often constitute the majority of members. The presence of female technicians (approximately 15%) has notably helped to challenge traditional gender norms in the districts of Ntcheu and Mangochi , where patriarchal culture typically restricted women to domestic and agricultural roles.

The program has generated tangible benefits in terms of empowerment, including the acquisition of leadership skills, income enabling significant investments (building houses, school fees), and above all a considerable saving of time freeing women for income-generating activities.

However, economic empowerment remains the weak link: entrepreneurial initiatives remain small-scale due to limited access to capital, insufficient business skills, and cultural practices that favor men in the economic sphere. Furthermore, in Malawi in general, women are systematically excluded from technical skills development, with many female committee chairs and secretaries having never received training, held back by fear, lack of self-esteem, and cultural norms.

➔ Integrate a microfinance component and business management training to provide women with the capital and skills necessary for income-generating activities
➔ Supporting women repair artisans through targeted mentoring, confidence building, and leadership training

Ethiopia

The management model has transformed women's lives by reducing water collection time from 1-1.5 hours to less than 30 minutes, freeing up time for rest, hygiene, girls' schooling, and income-generating activities.

Women are now actively participating in governance structures (WUA and WUAF) with leadership roles (cashiers, controllers) and are applying the rules for protecting water points and community hygiene.

Cultural norms, domestic burdens, and security concerns continue to prevent women from accessing high-level strategic and technical leadership positions, necessitating targeted efforts for qualitative empowerment.

➔ Organize leadership training for women members of WUAF to prepare them to assume roles such as president, secretary and Water Agent.