

LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONAL CASE STUDY RURAL COUNCIL OF BONGATSARA

Title: Grassroots democracy can save the lives of hundreds of people

The Mayor

"Gender Links helped me to put all the puzzles together"

Fact box

COUNTRY	Madagascar
COUNCIL	Bongatsara
Baseline score	69
Latest score	88
Population/audience	21 788
Contact person	Annick Rabearisoa
Designation	Mayor
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Gender Links started to work with this Council in 2012. The Council has since gone a long way. The Action Plan was signed during a big ceremony with a representative from Gender Links.

The Council was not aware about national, regional and international instruments and laws. The Mayor and councillors are grateful to Gender Links for all the work done especially using the articles of the Protocol. The Mayor said it herself "we always thought that since was signed by government it was a government instrument but did not realise how important the Protocol is for localities."

Fokontany (village) was not aware about gender concepts and gender discrimination. The Council has done lots of progress since working with Gender Links. Heads of Fokontany are now adding gender concepts to all training and sensitization campaigns that they facilitate.

All stages have been done and the Action Plan approved with a Steering Committee. There is a vibrant "Conseil d'ecoute juridique" or counselling centre for cases of gender based violence. The organisation works in partnership with the villages and the police and has been able to help lots of survivors. The Council has the policy of trying to solve the problem at village level where survivors are more comfortable, then to the Centre and if the worse comes to the worse then the cases are sent to the police.

The Council participates in the 16 days campaign and has put in place lots of projects to improve the lives of the community.

The Councillors are motivated and know the priorities of the community as well as the Council.

The main challenges are finance and the political instability. The other challenge of the Council is communication with other councils.

The Council is more aware on gender issues. Heads of villages take gender seriously and make it a point to talk on gender when they talk to the community. Heads of villages

follow courses regularly and help the community to set up income generating projects.

The score card itself is a benchmark. There is a whole chapter on gender equality in the report of the Council. "We distinguish ourselves in terms of gender equality". Women represent 51% of the population and 58% posts of responsibility are held by women at the Council. The choice is justified by competence and their commitment."

USAID, World Bank and other international organization give lots of support to this Council and change is happening on health, social aid and the environment

The Summit is a great platform to share best practices so that other localities can learn on what is being done in Madagascar but Gender Links can help in organising national summit region wise so that localities can share their good practices.