

CHANGING LIVES



[RAJAOVELO Rivonarinjaka](http://gemcommunity.genderlinks.org.za/gallery/main.php?g2_itemId=21271)
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Men should be more involved in promoting gender equality

"Success comes from determination"

Fact file:

Name of beneficiary	RAJAOVELO Rivonarinjaka					
Country	Madagascar					
City/ Town/ Village	Antananarivo					
GL Programme	Gender and governance					
GL staff member submitting Changing Lives	Claudia RAKOTONIRINA					
Sex	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Male		Female			
Age Group	<input type="checkbox"/> 12 - 17	18 -30 <input type="checkbox"/>	31- 40 <input type="checkbox"/>	41 – 50 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	51 – 60	60 + <input type="checkbox"/>
Education level	Primary School <input type="checkbox"/>	Secondary School <input type="checkbox"/>	Tertiary <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Vocational <input type="checkbox"/>	Adult literacy <input type="checkbox"/>
First met GL	Year	2011	Event		Stage 1: council Miansto	
Encounters with GL since first meeting BB	2011: Stage 1-10 Rural council of Miantso March 2012: Madagascar first national summit April 2012: Regional summit August 2012: TOT Gender Links June-December 2012: GL trainer at Ankazobe council and Majunga council					

My name is RAJAOVELO Rivonarinjaka, Chief of staff within the rural council of Miantso, a little council at nearly 150 kilometres from the capital. My main task at the council is the management in general of all outstanding issues related to the council functioning. I am also member of different associations such as the "Association of Gender Sensitive Elected", the "Environment Focus" and the association of citizens for reconstruction of education system.

My first encounter with GL was in 2011 when they came to establish the COE concept in our council. Their arrival was welcomed by the mayor and all the councillors. After developing the objectives of the COE process, the council accepted to be part of this great initiative and then the process began. Even if gender issue is rather considered as a feminist cause in the general thinking, I decided to follow all the stages of the COE process with interest. I found it inspiring and interesting. I must say that I have learned a lot.

During stage 7-8, Gender Links announced the summit in our council. All the participants in the council were convinced that Miantso should participate in the summit because a considerable evolution in terms of gender equality was perceived within the council. In addition, the summit was a great opportunity for all the COEs in Madagascar to share experience and exchange expertise but also to measure the council's achievements. I decided to be the representative of the council at that time. That first national summit was a great challenge because we saw the participation of more than 36 councils all over the country. The battle was rude but at our great satisfaction, the council was selected among the three COEs to represent Madagascar during the regional summit. That first victory was an eye-opener for me. I knew that even if I am a man, I can give my contribution to support gender cause. I felt proud of myself and proud of my council. That first step brought us to the third annual gender justice and local government summit in Johannesburg.

GL Madagascar is a small office with large scale. When I came to GL Madagascar office for the first time, I asked myself how these three people do to catch all the work they are assigned and to make this NGO so well-known in Madagascar? What I want to say is that GL has an ambitious project in the country as well as in the region and the most amazing is that their entire projects are realized very quickly. In fact, the key problem in Madagascar is that many NGOs come to present many projects in Madagascar but at the time of its implementation, nothing is changing.



RAJAOVELO RIVONARINJAKA, regional summit, Johannesburg
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I can proudly say that GL actually changed my life. First of all, the thing that has changed is my vision of gender. After the first workshop held in my council, I was convinced that gender issue should be integrated in all development projects. I was convinced that women's involvement and actual participation in development process is vital. Secondly, I also changed my behaviour towards my wife and children. Now, I am assigning the same domestic tasks to both my daughters and sons; even my wife was greatly surprised by this change. In professional field, I am able to master gender concept and all the relevant themes and instruments related to gender, such as the SADC protocol on gender and development, the UNSCR 1325 on peace and security, etc. In terms of skills, it was during the first summit in 2011 that I touched a computer in my life, but now I am more than comfortable to manipulate it. And lastly, I am able to facilitate workshops on gender without the fear of criticism from male participants.

The council of Miantso evolved much in terms of gender. After my last workshop in the council, there were more than 10 women who were ready to be councillor and mayor candidates. I can say that this council would win the next COE summit if everything is going as planned.

To conclude with, gender issue is a long-lasting combat that needs the contribution of all citizens, men and women. Women and men should work together in all fields: politics, economy and social. In my opinion, the main challenge in Madagascar is the obedience of tradition and culture. Sometimes, gender concept is contradictory to the traditions of the Malagasy especially in the coast regions. However, the COE concept established by GL is an efficient tool to address the prevailing situation. Implementing this process in the most gender blind councils would advance greatly our work. We must admit that defying tradition and culture is difficult but success is never gained without determination.