

## **Sustainable freshwater administration in Nosy Mitsio island (Madagascar): the collaboration between NGOs and the newborn Community Water Management Committees**

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### **Abstract**

On the small island of Nosy Mitsio - as well as most of the volcanic archipelagos in the north west of Madagascar - some 2000 people live far from any services such as education, electricity, roads, mobile network and water access. In these islands freshwater aquifers are superficial and very sensitive both to climate change, as well as to saltwater intrusion from the sea. Since 2018 the Italian NGO "H4O Help for Optimism" has been implementing WASH projects in Nosy Mitsio island in close collaboration with local communities with the aim of improving public health conditions by ensuring access to clean water for all.

H4O started working with and for the villages to enable communities to design, build, maintain and manage the water resources. In order to achieve the project objectives, H4O Help for Optimism made the local population the main stakeholder in all phases of the project by creating Community Water Management Committees (CWMC) where each fringe of the community has the opportunity to express themselves, identify problems and priorities for action. The project is environmentally, technically and economically sustainable thanks to specialized training programmes provided by the NGO that ensures scalability of the project and the introduction of a user tariff which aims to cover operating and maintenance costs of the infrastructures.

This approach paid off when, in 2021, Madagascar's borders were closed due to COVID-19, but through an approach of "Smart-Cooperation" local population was able to independently build a drinking water supply, relying on the remote support of H4O. With the reopening of the borders, projects continued in 2022 and 2023 for the irrigation of new vegetable gardens and watering troughs for livestock.

The Community Water Management Committees administration and the collaboration with the NGO "H4O Help for Optimism" were further structured to enable local communities to manage freshwater for different uses and to ensure the small island's long term sustainability.

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