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Drinking water for Beheloke

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WWF Switzerland, WWF Madagascar and the Swiss Solar Spar Foundation inaugurated today a solar powered desalination and water treatment plant in the coastal village of Beheloke south of Toliara.

This water treatment unit is powered by solar panels. It pumps underground salted water, which is then processed and purified to provide about 5000 liters of drinking water per day. The desalination plant will serve the 2200 residents of Beheloke.

The southern coastline of Toliara belongs to the richest seascapes of Madagascar. It harbors more than 6,000 marine species, hundreds of coral, ten species of marine mammals, five species of sea turtles and even the famous coelacanth. It is a breeding area for whales and economically important for local fisheries.

In spite of this ecological wealth, the area also suffers the consequences of climate change such as diminishing rainfalls, which worsen the precarious living conditions of the local population. Access to drinking water has always been difficult for villagers who have to dig wells in the sand to extract salt water for their daily needs. The next place where they can buy drinking water is ninekilometers away and 20 liters cost 700 Ariary (25 Euro cents).

Water accessible to all

The new desalination plant now allows villagers to consume their own drinking water at an affordable price: 20 liters cost 250 Ariary. Moreover, it is a huge time saver, especially for women who can manage their time more efficiently.

The desalination unit was manufactured and installed by the Swiss company Trunz together with ADES. The latter provided technical assistance during installation and training.

The rural community of Beheloke, owner of the desalination unit, has entrusted the management of the infrastructure to the community association "Vezo Mitsinjo ny Ho Avy." This association aims to manage sustainably the marine resources on which fishing families depend. It has set up a water management committee, trained and supported by WWF's staff in the field to ensure the sustainability of this new approach. Local technicians have been trained to maintain the infrastructure.

The association educates villagers on water supply and sanitation. Representatives of traditional authorities are also involved by providing control and advice.

This project is a big step for community development in Beheloke and all partners will continue their efforts, given the dire need of drinking water in this area.

The integration of the social dimension in the conservation of the environment is essential: "It is through community empowerment that we can effectively manage our natural resources. Thus, it is important that these communities can improve their living conditions. Access to drinking water is vital to their health and well-being" says Voahirana Randriambola, WWF's Footprint Programme coordinator in



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