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# NEWSBITES



April - June 2010

Trimonthly Newsletter from WWF Madagascar and Western Indian Ocean Programme Office

## What's new?

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**Mangrove restoration:** An innovative approach -> [read more](#)

**Plateau Mahafaly:** Wonderful Baobab land -> [read more](#)

And more ...

## Logging: Great steps but...

*Decree 2010-141 prohibiting the logging, exploitation and exportation of rosewood and ebony was finally signed on 24 March 2010 while it was communicated to all environmental technical and financial partners only on 25 April.*

A subsequent ministerial note was issued to reinforce the prohibition of all circulation of these wood species on the national territory as well as of the issuance of any new exploitation and exportation permit.

These are all very good step forwards in attempting to solve the rosewood crisis although not sufficient to reassure WWF and other environmental partners for several reasons:

- There is no clear plan from the Government on what and how they will manage the current logged wood that is stocked in the SAVA region and what measures and sanctions will be applied to address the illegality of the wood.

- Moreover, on 30 April 2004, the Ministry of Finances and Budget requested that the restrictive measures on the bank accounts of rosewood exporters be suspended to allow them to prepare the next vanilla harvest season.

- In addition to several reports from the field confirming that the logging continues in Masoala and Makira, a shipment of 79 containers was allowed from the Port of Tamatave in May 2010 and 300 tonnes of rosewood were seized in Comoros in June 2010.

In May 2010, a new Minister



of Environment and Forests took office, with environmental governance as his main priority. A one-day information meeting was organized with all Malagasy environmental actors to discuss the issues around environmental governance – not just rosewood, but also wildlife trade, fires, extractive industries in protected areas, etc., thus reviving our hope that maybe a solution can be found soon with stronger political will.

In early June, Madagascar, through the Ministry of



Environment and Forests, submitted a proposal to enlist 120 species of *Dyospiros* and 50 species of *Dalbergia* (all Malagasy precious woods) to the Annex III of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES). This process has been supported by WWF and we are very proud with this outcome, however we are very conscious that Annex III is the weakest of all CITES listings and that this will merely make rose-

wood exports more complicated and subject to control rather than definitely stop it. However, we feel it is a good start to prepare for a future stronger listing as well as to mobilize international support from other CITES parties in enforcing the current decree and perhaps get better data on the actual trade.

Our press release on panda Nanie Ratsifandrihamanana [nratsifandrihamanana@wwf.mg](mailto:nratsifandrihamanana@wwf.mg) ■

## Representative's message



It is in a grim political environment, where the stakeholders seem to have agreed to disagree, that Madagascar celebrated with pomp its 50th Independence anniversary.

For its part, WWF MWIOPO will celebrate the year of Biodiversity with its partners in various towns of Madagascar.

A small step for institutions, a big step for Biodiversity...this is how we could address the two recent and important decisions on rosewood and the Nile crocodile. Certainly, there is still a lot to be done, but we remain optimistic. It is with a touch of sadness but also with pride that we announce the departure of our Regional Representative, Niall O'Connor, who has been promoted to Director of Programme Office Performance and Development for the Africa Madagascar Programme.

Nanie Ratsifandrihamanana

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Regional Representative a.i. ■



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## CITES bans crocodile product trade

*This decision was adopted during the 15th CITES conference held in Qatar from 13 to 25 March this year. Madagascar has been notified of a moratorium, which suspends the trade until September 2010.*

In 2006, a group of CITES members came to Madagascar to investigate the non-transparent crocodile product trade. Two problems were identified. The first one relates to breeding on crocodile farms. CITES stipulated that all parties should prohibit trade in products coming from such breeding farms, unless the trade complies with relevant regulations. It was feared that the farms could be used to white wash skins from wild crocodiles. CITES also identified a second problem; the monitoring of Nile crocodile populations in Madagascar.

ment. Then, a report was commissioned to “better understand the abundance and exploitation of crocodiles along rivers where *Crocodylus niloticus* were historically abundant”. It was found that the supervision and control of farms were insufficient, and that this situation boosts further abuse. In addition, information on numbers of individuals in the wild is not available to properly stipulate the annual trade quotas. In its recommendations, CITES suggested, that the “Strategy and Management Plan for Crocodiles of Madagascar”, should be updated and applied effectively. In addition, specific recommendations have been made, and led to the temporary suspension of *C. niloticus* products from one specific Malagasy farm for export. According to Andry Malalan’Ny Aina Rakotondrazafy, national member of the Crocodile Specialist Group, “people gen-



erally consider all crocodiles to be dangerous and therefore think they should be killed”. This is exacerbated by the fact that the culture of protecting crocodiles is disappearing in many parts of Madagascar. The consequences are severe for many crocodile populations because individuals are killed very young, and eggs are destroyed systematically. Most of the time, the hunting is done by specialized hunters from other regions. Local communities usually receive no economic benefits from the sale of crocodile products. If crocodiles were well managed, the crocodile industry would bring substantial economic

benefits for local communities and thus for the country. The price of crocodile skin reaches up to 4 USD/cm on the international market depending on its quality. In 2007 for example, the state earned more than 13 million Ariary in royalties with crocodile. This is over 28% of total royalties from trade in wildlife (fauna and flora), on a business volume of over 1.4 billion Ariary.

The recent suspension by CITES will certainly have an impact on the crocodile industry. It is already affected by the current crisis, particularly after the drop of tourist visits. In addition, importers will turn to other supplier countries. It is hoped that due to this suspension, stakeholders in the industry will reconcile and work together to improve the sustainable management of this species.

[Our press release on the web](#)  
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A three-year-action plan (2007-2010) was established to improve crocodile management.

## The political clash is still going on

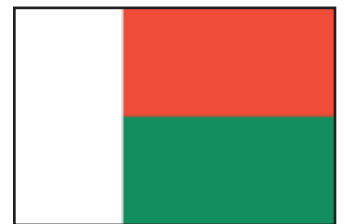
Three Ambassadors (Vatican-Turkish- Pakistan) recently delivered their accreditation letters to the Transition Government of Madagascar (HAT) though most of the international community members still maintain their non-recognition and insist on the establishment of a consensual and inclusive solution through the AU mediation.

Though his roadmap to effectuate unilaterally three major elec-

tions (Constitutional referendum in July- Legislative in September- Presidential in November) has been delayed again, the HAT President still ignores the claim of the three other movements to co-lead the transition to the 4th republic. Actually, the HAT government seems now to rely on the “Olobe” (Elders, greatmen) coalition to get some credibility in their strategy. “Olobe” is a new mediation group that consists of Christian and traditional elders from all over the country.

The HAT government announced solemnly a contract with a Chinese private company to exploit the Malagasy Iron deposit in Soalala.

On the other hand, the Madagasikara movement gathering the three opponent parties is still going on mobilizing and sensitizing the population in the main towns of the country vis- à- vis the consensual and inclusive transition process. People expected a political truce



by the end of June because of the 50th Independence celebration and the soccer world championship in South Africa. But everything seems calm.  
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## WWF reinforces policy capacity

*WWF MWIOPO becomes more proactive in facilitating the development of policy and legislative regulations to ensure long term sustainable conservation and development in three ecoregions (Madagascar Spiny Forests, Moist Forests and WIOMER)*

The WWF MWIOPO capacity to seriously tackle policy issues has recently been reinforced through the recruitment of a full time Policy Officer who will support programs and projects address the key policy issues that are needed to ensure upscaled and long-term conservation impacts.

WWF MWIOPO is grateful that WWF Norway has

accepted to help us make this important step.

For the upcoming months, the priorities are:

- Adoption of a REDD+ strategy that will ensure effective and sustainable forest resources management
- Restoration of the Malagasy Forest Governance after the 2009 upsurge of illegal log-

ging and exportation of rosewood. This includes the integration of Malagasy precious woods in CITES Appendixes

- Government engagement to a transparent and participatory process for the revision and validation of the National Adaptation Program in Madagascar
- Establishment of enabling conditions to ensure improved governance and environmen-

tal and social “net gain “on investments of extractive industries (Oil, Gas, Mining) in Madagascar

- Revision of the Malagasy Environmental chart in compliance with the existing environmental challenges (Climate change, Globalization, CSO involvement, etc.)

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## “This project pushed the region“

*The members of the steering committee for the RAMP-COI (Réseau des Aires Marines Protégées des pays de la Commission de l’Océan Indien) project implemented by WWF MWIOPO has met in Antananarivo for the fifth time since his creation and the kick off of the project in 2006.*

National focal points of all participating countries (Madagascar, Seychelles, Comoros, Mauritius and France/Réunion) were present as well as Malagasy government representatives and different partner NGOs such as CI, WCS and Blue Ventures.

One of the projects main objectives was the development of a regional strategy for conserving marine ecosystems and fisheries of the Western Indian Ocean Ecoregion. A draft of the strategy including a suggestion of 51 priority sites for marine conservation has been created by regional experts last December and is currently being reviewed by all participating countries governments.

Gina Bonne, “Chargée de

Mission” of the Indian Ocean Committee based in Mauritius was happy with the results of the RAMP-COI project. “I especially appreciated the eco-regional analysis that has been made which made us realize what we have and what we must protect. It was also a real success how we managed to bring all stakeholders on one table and make them realize that together we are stronger”



Fouad Abdou Rabi, a marine protected area manager from the Comoros Islands benefited from training provided by the project. “The Moheli Marine Park is a young park

and we learnt a lot from other parks in the Western Indian Ocean region. We have a clear vision and a well implemented management plan now. Yes, I think our park will soon be on the same level than others, thanks to this project!”

Yajoshi Basant Rai the Mauritian focal point adds “We definitely needed this project. It allowed us to do things we would have otherwise postponed. We were given the right support to reach the goals we had anyway.” She adds as an example an environmental assessment of the Balaclava Marine Park supported by the project which led to the development of a coastal habitat map. This survey was done in collaboration with the Albion Fisheries Research Center staff who

benefited of marine habitat survey training. A successful start of a regional process has found its end last week. Rémi Ratsimbazafy, head of project at WWF MWIOPO (Madagascar and Western Indian Ocean Programme Office) is satisfied with the activities despite certain difficulties. “The huge amount of stakeholders we worked with didn’t always make it easy to push things forward. Nevertheless it is extremely rewarding to see regional representatives finally work together for a common approach to conserve their marine resources. We need to keep lobbying now within government ministries to build momentum. Last but not least, we are talking about people’s livelihoods.”

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## World Environment Day in Ivohibe

*Ivohibe is a district with approximately 40'000 inhabitants. Its main town with the same name is situated in the southeast of Madagascar just outside the rainforest corridor. Rice fields and scattered hamlets with zebu, geese and chicken mark the landscape. It is an idyllic, peaceful and sleepy place. Not on Saturday June 5th though. June 5th was different.*

WWF in Ivohibe has organised the World Environment Day for the fifth time already. The celebrations started on May 31st already. WWF Staffs installed a sound system every night and played Malagasy music first. As soon as the crowd had gathered, Diamondra Andriambololona, socio-organiser at WWF, would start showing environmental movies. About one thousand people were there every night to learn about how to triple their rice production and appreciate the biodiversity of their region. The celebrations on Saturday started with a carnival. Students, Club vintsy members, the scouts, forest management associations, rice farmer associations – everyone showed up. WWF Volunteers painted the kids' faces in all colours. There were flowers, vintsy birds, chameleons, lemurs and pandas. 20 groups participated. One woman was disguised as a tree, other participants created

masks with pig faces or lemur heads.



As the carnival moved through the streets of Ivohibe, the different groups waved painted banners reflecting their concern for the environment. One group even built a stretcher carrying a mini forest with a real fire. They chanted "stop bushfires, save our forest!"

Local authorities finally gathered on the place in the heart of Ivohibe. François de Sale Razafimandimby, the «chef de cantonnement forestier» said «God gave us Nature but we destroy everything. Bushfires produce carbon emissions. We have to plant many trees!"

After the official speeches, a "Miss Environment" was about to be elected. Six girls were

shortlisted. What is necessary to protect our forests? Can you recall the name of a protected species we have here in Ivohibe? What do we have to do if we need wood? Prisca was the one, who knew it all. She was the proud new owner of a backpack and a WWF T-shirt.

Razafimanantsoa Mamy, Socio-organiser at WWF in Ivohibe was happy with the World Environment Day 2010. "It is just fantastic to see so many people stand up for our one and only planet and a common future. The energy and motivation that we can feel today will push all of them to fight even harder for the protection of our environment" he said.

About 15 associations have created a stand where they showed posters, farm products or illustration for the new rice technique SRI ("Système riziculture amélioré"). It was an opportunity for farmers to exchange experiences and get

the latest news from the surrounding valleys.

After the crowning of the best painting, best disguise and sketches, it was time to dance. Musicians claimed the stage and energetic youngsters animated the audience. At 10, the town hall opened its doors. Five minutes later everyone was moving as Oladad and Jerry Marcoss was on.

The party was taking an end only when the sun rose. Tired villagers returned to their homes while others were already up again. An incredibly inspiring day was over. A day where everyone was aware, that it is possible to halt degradation, to end famine and to adapt to the effects of climate change.

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## New Funding Opportunities

### Zo sy Aina ny Rano (ZARA)

Donor: USAID

Duration: 3 years

Status: Proposal submitted to donor, PACT (lead), GRET and WATER AID  
The ZARA program will contribute to the improvement of health services, economic development and reliable environmental management in line with USAID's strategic objectives for the health sector in Madagascar.

### Sustainable Water and Energy in Ampasindava and Mangoaka (EEDAM) Nosy Hara Marine Protected Area

Donor: ADEME, WWF FR, WWF CH, WWF FIN, WWF SE, E+CO, Département Finistère

Duration: 3 years

Status: Concept submitted to several potential donors, in partnership with Mad'Eole, Madagascar National Parks, Regional Office of Tourism in Diego/ORTDIS

The main objectives of the proposed project are: a) the adoption of behaviors and activities that respect the land and the marine environment of the

Mar Area of Nosy Hara by the population of Mangoaka and Ampasindava; b) to increase the resilience of the population and the marine and terrestrial ecosystems of the Nosy Hara, Ampasindava and Mangoaka area

### Appui à la commercialisation des bois licites et ceux issus des forêts certifiées de Madagascar

Donor: FAO/ UN

Status: Proposal submitted to donor in partnership with Association "Initiative Pour la Certification Forestière à Madagascar" (ICFM)

The main objective of this project is to contribute to the sustainable management of forest resources by supporting the marketing of wood following legal norms and legal frameworks that is to say legal wood from known sites and / or wood from forests certified or waiting for certification

### Climate change adaptation for vulnerable mangrove ecosystems in Tsiribihina and Manambolo, western Madagascar



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Donor: John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

Duration: 2 years

Status: Proposal submitted to donor

The purpose of this project is to strengthen practical experience in the development, implementation and monitoring of climate change adaptation strategies related to mangrove ecosystems.

### Développement d'une réserve de Biosphère model dans le bassin de Mandrare, Sud-Est Madagascar pour la déforestation évitée et la résilience améliorée des écosystèmes et communautés au changement climatique

Donor: Agence Française du Développement (AFD)/FISONG

Duration: 3 years

Status: Proposal submitted to donor, in partnership with CARE

The objective of the proposed project is to reduce deforestation to fight against climate changes while improving local livelihoods, resilience of ecosystems and communities.

### Vintsy Clubs in Madagascar

Donor: Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation

Duration: 1 year

Status: Proposal submitted to donor

This second phase of the project is focused on WWF's exit strategy and ensuring the foundations for the sustainability of Vintsy clubs as environmental youth movements. It will therefore capitalize and consolidate the successes of the first three-year phase and will provide members of the Vintsy Clubs with opportunities to develop their capacities as environmental actors in their areas.

### Conservation of Toliara Reef Complex, Salary Bay and Ambola, Southwest Madagascar (Phase 2)

Donor: Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation

Duration: 3 years

Status: Proposal submitted to donor

Phase two of this project aims to consolidate the conservation achievements during its first phase by strengthening the management capacity of the local management structures running the marine reserves and the future MPA, as well as the concerned stakeholders.

## New Projects

### MG0942: Stabilizing Rural Populations through improved Systems for Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and Local Governance of Lands in Southern Madagascar

Start date: 2010

Planned end date: 2014

Donor: The Global Environment Facility - GEF

The objective of the project is to enhance capability of resource users so as to place SLM in the main stream of development practice and policy at local and national levels. Working with government decision-makers, technical agents from ministries and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and donors, it will support existing and new community-based stakeholder groups to adopt and disseminate appropriate cultivation and livestock management practices that will help to alleviate poverty and reduce threats to critically important natural habitats and their biodiversity.

### MG0944: Enhancing civil society capacity in forest monitoring and law enforcement, while creating sustainable livelihoods through entrepreneurship in two of Madagascar's largest forest blocks.

Donor: NORAD

Start date: 1 June 2010

Planned end date: 31 May 2013

The main purpose of the project is to combine a cost-effective, rapid and innovative forest monitoring and law enforcement systems with a package of locally adapted interventions incentivizing communities to maintain and enhance carbon stocks in the two most important biodiversity hotspots and forest blocks in Madagascar, the Northeast Moist Forest Triangle and the Southwest Spiny Forest Complex.

Ana Carina Santos Franco

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## Let's celebrate!

*"Biodiversity: development and reduction of poverty", this is the theme, which will be developed throughout the activities that will be organised during the International Year of Biodiversity.*

The launch of the celebration was held at the Botanical and Zoological Park of Tsimbazaza, Antananarivo, on the occasion of a major exhibition from 22 to 26 May.

Several government organizations and NGOs, including WWF, participated in these days of information and raising awareness. In relation to the theme of the celebration, it was an opportunity for all participants to promote innovative solutions facing the pressures that slyly destroy the biodiversity of the Big Island. In addition

to the loss of fauna and flora wealth, the traffic of animals and the excessive destruction of natural resources increase the extinction of species.

Moreover, during the celebration of the International Day of Biodiversity in Madagascar, one could notice that the all events, such as conferences, visits to protected areas, and expositions had one goal: to challenge everyone to take the necessary steps to stop the loss of biodiversity.

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## WWF and YoB

*Our programme for the celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity (YoB) started this June.*

Exhibitions and conferences will be held in Fianarantsoa, Toliara, Antsiranana and Antananarivo. The goal is to talk about and celebrate the richness of the Malagasy biodiversity, and at the same time inform people on the actions undertaken by WWF.

In Fianarantsoa, the celebration included an exhibition, which has been held on 18 and 19 June, as well as a debate-conference on "The destruction of habitats", led by Fara-Lala Razafy, Ala Atsinanana Eco-Regional Leader.

In Toliara, events will be organized during the month of July. The theme of the debate-conference will particularly concern

marine turtles and the radiated tortoise. These events are organised in partnership with the Alliance Française Starting from August, WWF also plans to organize a writing contest, aimed at enhancing biodiversity in the 22 Regions. The contest mostly targets young people, which is another way to involve them in the promotion and the conservation of biodiversity in their respective regions. The messages can be written in the form of an article, a story or a poem. The partnership negotiations for the organization of this contest are now well underway.

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## How did MWIOPO develop a Strategy?

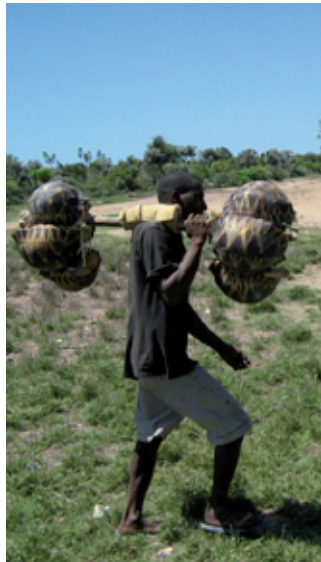
*Our new strategic plan is composed of a conservation plan outlining the strategic priorities, goals and actions that our office will focus on in the future and an operational plan outlining how these priorities will be met. The development of the Conservation Plan was done through a thoroughly participatory process at internal level within the WWF Network. Feedback from partners will also be sought at a later stage.*

The latest draft of the conservation plan identifies three main levels of intervention and seven priority strategic areas:

### Saving Biodiversity:

**1. Securing Priority Land/Seascapes:** WWF will support and promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resources management in selected priority land/seascapes, focusing on the maintenance of ecological networks and functions and linking them with the promotion of improved local livelihoods. In total, we will focus on 11 land/seascapes in which our role will vary from direct implementor to technical and financial support unit to local partners. We will continue to support the Malagasy SAPM and the new WIO regional MPA network.

**2. Saving Priority Species:** Our efforts will focus on marine turtles as part of WWF's global species goals and the endemic terrestrial tortoises of the Malagasy



south-west, as well as species and habitat conservation in priority land/seascapes

and continued support to the implementation of CITES in Madagascar.

### Promoting Sustainable Use:

**3. Sustainable Fisheries:** We will contribute to WWF's global Smart Fishing initiative on sustainable tuna and shrimp fisheries for the Western Indian Ocean region, while supporting improved traditional fisheries management in our priority seascapes.

**4. Sustainable Energy:** This strategic area will focus on promoting sustainable solutions to the current unsustainable use of fuelwood in Madagascar, through our work in the fuelwood chain in the south-west and the promotion of new renewable energy sources.

Addressing Enabling Conditions:

**5. Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Sector Policies:** Harnessing WWF's policy capacity at national and global level, we will target for Madagascar the key sectors of extractive industries, energy, forests, and agriculture.

**6. Promoting Good Environmental Governance:** We will do this by providing support to the Malagasy environmental society.

**7. Climate Change Adaptation:** climate change will change the way we do conservation therefore we will seek to integrate climate change science in all projects and programmes as well as build the capacity of conservation actors in Madagascar on climate change adaptation.

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## Eye to eye with fish and coral

*Velonjara Sonina and Georges, socio-organizers of WWF Toliara, as well as Rado Andrianaivo, DIANA Coordinator in Antsiranana followed an intensive 6-day training in Open Water Diving in Mangily near Toliara.*

According to the trainer, «Diving is a sport for lazy people». Indeed, diving does not require much effort: to move in the water, one just has to shake the palms and control his breathing. But the most important is to keep calm in the water in case of problems in order to do the appropriate actions.

The training took place from May 4th to 9th and was con-

ducted in two parts: Open water diving in the morning and theoretical courses in the afternoon.

During practical training, exercises such as descending, ascending, balance, mastery of the various diving equipment, buoyancy, communicating under water, and especially what to do in case of problems under water (oxygen deple-

tion, water in the mask, etc...) were performed.

“It was a very rewarding experience, exploring the seabed of Madagascar and its rich biodiversity”, said Rado Andrianaivo, definitely satisfied with his training. “This training will help me in tracking the evolution of marine biodiversity (fishes, corals, mollusks, etc..) in the Diana region and partic-

ularly in the Nosy Hara Marine Protected Area”, he added.

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## Volunteering in Madagascar a “priceless experience”

*The first Explore volunteer programme in 2010, reinforcing the Energy Environment Synergy in the South-West Region Project activities, successfully ended on May 9th.*

The first Explore volunteer programme in 2010, reinforcing the Energy Environment Synergy in the South-West Region Project activities, successfully ended with on May 9th.

In Andranohinaly, follow-up on planted plots showed very good results. Indeed, in some localities, 80 to 90% of all planted trees were still alive. The team worked a lot on awareness-raising during local meetings. They had the opportunity to explain the benefits of reforestation and how it can lead to natural succession of a forest. They insisted as well on the importance of protecting planted plots, and thus the importance of “Dina” (local rules and regulations established by people) and the creation of firebreaks. The two volunteers posted in this area transported plants from different areas to several villages. “I feel my experi-

ence was very successful. I gained knowledge of development and conservation in developing countries which was a goal of mine; gained a good understanding of the workings of a major NGO; gained valuable first-hand experience living with people in developing nations, their standards of living and daily lives; greatly improved my teamwork and communication skills”, said Ian Martin, a young Canadian who was based in Andranohinaly.

In Ankilimalinika, the group of four volunteers carried out activities related to coal production and reforestation. They focused on promoting a new coal production technique and the importance of obtaining a transportation permit. They attracted and sensitized almost 500 people in more than 30 villages. They conducted the planting of about 9,400 trees in 6 areas, and raised aware-

ness in several villages on the importance of protecting planted trees. Besides, they intervened in some public and private schools and played theatre about the forest and its importance, utilization and protection. They also explained the water cycle. “I definitely gained priceless experience of traditional Malagasy culture. Living and working as part of the village community is definitely a major factor in the success of our experience”, said Maia Tanner, from UK.

Their work has already been heard abroad. Robert Montgomery, from Australia and volunteering in Ankilimalinika has been interviewed by the ABC Radio 702 Sydney, the second largest radio station in Sydney, while he was still in the village.

“The interview aired Friday 30 April 2010, the program had at least 100,000 listeners. I was asked about the Explore Programme, the work I was doing for WWF and my time in Madagascar in general. According to friends and family back in Australia the interview came across as light-hearted and positive and it gave a good overview of my experience with Explore and WWF.”, he said.

Upon the end of the programme, the two groups handed in three films to WWF, presenting their stay in the



field, conveying messages in favour of WWF MWIOP’s conservation efforts and showing some cultural aspects of the country.

The 2nd wave of 6 volunteers for this year also arrived and has been installed in Ivohibe since May 29th. They are from: UK, Sweden, Canada, Germany, Ireland, and Belgium. Hosted by the Holistic Programme of Forest Conservation and the Reinforcement of Civil society in Ivohibe, they are buckling down to a wide range of activities in four surrounding communes. As a prelude to their interventions, they already contributed to the celebration of World Environment day by organizing a treasure hunt contest in schools and awarding prizes to the winners. They also painted funny animals and slogans on carnival participants’ faces.

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## Ndranto Razakamanarina

Get to know Ndranto, our new Policy Officer, whose objective is to “Contribute to the improvement of the standard of living of rural communities through the facilitation of effective and sustainable development and environmental activities”.

Ndranto, 49 years old is married and has three lovely children.

After 5 years at the High School of Agronomy (Forestry Option) in Antananarivo, Ndranto consolidated 21 years of technical and strategic experience and an array of regional, high level and international relationship in Environment and Rural Development.

At WWF MWIOPO, Ndranto acts as an analyst on policy issues of relevance to WWF conservation goals and priorities and promotes the integration of global, regional and national policy issues in the WWF conservation plan and communication strategy.

A very dynamic person,

Ndranto is also the actual President of Alliance Voahary Gasy, a coalition of Malagasy Environmental CSOs and President of Malagasy Forest Engineers.



He firmly believes that formal education and effective communication are the essential keys for rural area develop-

ment. According to Ndranto, “the environmental issues that WWF MWIOPO is facing nowadays among many others are the upsurge of natural resources trafficking, the extension of slash-and-burn cultivation and Climate Change impacts. But, actually, all of these are the effects of a very bad governance of natural resources which is in turn a continuous lack of political willingness of the Malagasy Government. The Malagasy Forest administration lacks resources and is too politicized”.

For him, to overcome these problems, all stakeholders should work together to:

- Facilitate the strengthening of the Malagasy Civil society to work and pledge for

Environment and Natural resources

- Convince the Forest and Environment Administration to take the lead to develop a new and appropriate Malagasy Environment Action Plan, to collaborate effectively with the existing stakeholders (NGO, CSO, Private Sectors, Other Ministries, Regional partners) and to enforce effectively and objectively laws and local governance

- Convince the in-country international Conservation NGOs to cooperate with professional development programs and organizations to improve rural livelihoods in the peripheral zones of Protected Areas

- Improve CBO living conditions and strengthen their power, rights and responsibilities.

## Mission accomplished for FLR

The project of support to local populations in their efforts to restore forest goods and services in the forest landscape of Fandriana – Marolambo in Madagascar is known as “Forest Landscapes Restoration” or FLR. The Project lasted 4 years (2005 to 2009) and was funded by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Fondation Ensemble and WWF.

The FLR approach is implemented to improve human well-being and to restore the ecological integrity of forests. In Madagascar, WWF is the first organization to develop this approach, which aims to be participative and which includes:

- Bringing back the functions and optimizing the benefits of forests, beyond plantation;
- Direct impacts on the communities and their living standards;

- Seeks a balance in the land use across the landscape;
- Doesn't seek to recreate the past but looks towards the future. We are proud to announce:
- The adherence to the restoration objectives and the population's management of the activities within 70 associations;
- The acceptance of the FLR approach by various stakeholders;
- The establishment of active res-

toration areas and/or plots of approximately 500ha, and passive restoration of forest services by all stakeholders.

- The implementation of improved agriculture as alternatives to slash and burn.

In 2005, the Project started by organizing a national workshop bringing together most of the stakeholders and those interested in the FLR

approach, with the participation of the WWF network.

In the same way, a national workshop was organized for the closure of the Project to share the achievements of the Project. At the end of this workshop, the participants were unanimous about the importance of the efforts that were made, and the positive impacts of the Project on the landscape and in the lives of the villagers.

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Trimonthly Newsletter from WWF Madagascar and Western Indian Ocean Programme Office

## Restoring a unique mangrove ecosystem

*It's late in the afternoon and the sun paints the world in golden colors when Philémon Eugène walks towards the mangrove forest of Ambondrolava. He is being trained as an ecotourism guide by the Belgium association "Honko". (www.honko.org)*



While he walks on small muddy paths between vast reeds fields, Philémon explains the economic value of this grass: "People here cut 'vondro' as we call it to make roofs. Most of the people in Ambondrolava make their living with it. Ambondrolava literally means 'large vondro field'".

In the 1950s many people immigrated into the area to cut vondro. They found it an ideal place to live with enough wood for their cooking needs. Eels, a Malagasy delicacy, were abundant between the mangrove prop roots. Swimming crabs added more protein to the diet while terrestrial crabs were and still are not eaten. It's 'fady' or taboo to eat them, no one can explain why. After much of the spiny forest around the village had been cut for firewood, people started cutting down mangrove trees. And therefore started biting the hand that feeds them.

Philémon shows us a huge saline plant to the right. The seawater is pumped to the basins, where it evaporates, leaving nothing but salt. "This is so sad," says Philémon, "one businessman cut down a large area of mangrove trees for his

own benefit, and for so many others nothing was left!"

Mangroves form a unique and extremely rare ecosystem. They are rich in life, providing both food and a safe haven for coastal and marine creatures. Although they only occupy less than 200,000 square kilometers in the whole world, they are extremely important, both from an ecological and economical point of view. Mangroves stabilize shores and filter water coming from inland, preventing the reefs from getting covered with sediments.



When Carola Zardo and Benjamin De Ridder first came here in 2007, most of Ambondrolava's mangrove forest was cleared or seriously degraded. They founded the association Honko (Malagasy for 'mangroves') and started working together with the local community to restore the unique ecosystem. "We knew that it was important to have the community on board, because we want to create something sustainable that can be run by the them in the future" says co-director Zardo, an Italian nature conservationist. She leads the environmental education program at Honko and trains the guides.

Honko also sponsors a PHD student and several License and Master students from the University of Toliara.



Honko, in partnership with WWF Toliara, has created a mangrove tree nursery. After having studied the conditions in the different zones, they plant the species that can actually survive under the given conditions. "This area is the most complex mangrove system in Madagascar," says Carola Zardo. She laughs and says, "This makes it complicated but interesting". 50 hectares have already been restored – 250 remain. "That's about 250,000 plants," says Benjamin de Ridder, co-director and marine biologist. "But we have already achieved a lot," he says, "Most villagers are now conscious of the importance of the forest. They are happy about the project and cutting for charcoal has decreased. We also show them how to build improved stoves as a cooking alternative." The sun is about to go down. Philémon leads the small group over wooden planks into the hearth of the mangrove forest. It's Mosquito time - and they feast on 8 human legs. The huge mangrove trees with their ribbon roots and cannonball-shaped fruits are impressive. Henintsoa Rabemananjara

from WWF Toliara is happy with what he sees. "We started supporting Honko because we have a project on landscape conservation. The marine component of this project focuses entirely on the bay of Ranobe. We work with Honko as well as Reef Doctor, because they are experts in what they're doing."

Little crabs are waving with their one huge claw to scare us away as we walk back to the information center. The last sunbeams caress the mangroves and the reeds of Ambondrolava. The second chance for this unique ecosystem must not fail.

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### Did you know?

Mangroves have an unusual way of reproducing. Most species are viviparous, that is, their seeds germinate while still on the mother plant. The resulting seedling, called propagules, continue to develop on the tree until mature and then fall and are either embedded in the soil beneath the mother tree or dispersed by water. After a while, the propagule continues to germinate allowing the young plant to establish itself once a suitable habitat is encountered.



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## Plateau Mahafaly, wonderful Baobab land

*The vast Mahafaly plateau is one of the driest places in Madagascar. The rare raindrops immediately dry up in the lime soil, and water sources are very rare. It can get extremely hot here during the day. Men and cattle seek shade to hide from the burning sun. Everything slows down.*

“The lack of water is one of the biggest problems in the Plateau Mahafaly, ” says Soarinosy Gladys Ranalisolofo, WWF Project Officer for the project ‘Water Resources Management for the Mahafaly Plateau’, “and people have problems growing food to maintain a healthy diet. That’s why we created an inventory on all water points in the plateau and then worked out plans how to sustainably manage the



water”. WWF field staff promoted the use of *Moringa oleifera*, a traditional African food plant. This is a fast growing and very drought-resistant tree. Its leaves are highly nutritious and can be eaten like spinach. Its seeds are used for water purification. “We worked with women’s associations and showed them how to cook the leaves” adds Nosy, as she is called by everyone.

In a next step, the project aimed to continue not just with *Moringa*, but with other tree species as well. WWF set up seven tree nurseries and trained 96 tree nurses. The deal was simple. The first year, they were working for free, in the second year they managed the tree nurseries themselves and had a share in the profit. “In the second year they had already produced 80’000 plants – it has become a business, a source of income for people” says Nosy. They could even pay back what WWF has invested and, therefore, have become truly autonomous. But who buys and plants those seedlings?

Since 2003, WWF has been helping to establish so called COBAs (Communauté de base) in the Mahafaly Plateau. A COBA is a community asso-

ciation that is trained to manage its forest itself. It is responsible for the sustainable use of their natural resources. Each COBA is committed to planting a new tree for each one it has cut. In return, the people of the COBA can keep the revenues from the harvested wood and spend the money on community projects. Communities with COBAs are empowered to defend their territory and to resist intruders who want to clear wood in their area.

“Now we have started growing vegetables” Nosy’s eyes show pride, when she talks about her project. WWF staff helped to establish vegetable gardens in the vicinity of nine water points. “And the great thing is that other villages now do the same – without our help!” Nosy mentions a small village called Ankilimidega. The local population has been watching the project’s activities for 2 years and has asked many questions in villages, where WWF worked. “Now they have everything, they have *Moringa* trees, a vegetable garden, a management committee...”

Of course there are also threats that need to be addressed. The rainy season for instance is changing and, therefore, village elders cannot predict the rain any more. The WWF project bought 30 pluviometers. Interested villagers were shown how to collect the data. As a result they should be able to react according to the collected data in two to three

years. The rainfall data have an additional advantage: The local population starts making the link between forest and rain. “They talk a lot about the fact, that villages without forest get 20mm of rain, while villages with forest areas can get up to 100mm in one night” says Soarinosy Ranalisolofo.

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## Baobabs

The legend says that when the gods became jealous of the majesty of these trees they turned them up-side down to humiliate them. But even reversed, the Baobabs have kept their charm and dignity. Adapted to aridity they can grow for a thousand years and survive three years without a single drop of water. Their size (up to 30 meters!) and their age give them a mysterious and mythic touch.

Of the eight species of baobabs in the world, seven are unique to Madagascar. Its fruits are used to cure diarrhea, pox, measles and scurvy. Its porous trunk acts like a water reservoir. In times of droughts, people cut the baobab’s trunk to gain access to that stored water. In some areas, Baobabs are considered endangered.

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*“Before they grow so big, the baobabs start out by being little.”*  
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

### Animal in the spotlight



The humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) is between 12–16 metres long and weighs approx. 36 tons. The channel between Ile Ste Marie and the Malagasy mainland is well known for its humpback whales passing by as is Ifaty on the southwestern coast of Madagascar.

Large groups of several hundreds make their annual migration from the Antarctic to Ile Ste Marie where they calve, nurse their young and engage in courtship rituals between June and September. Humpback whales can get out of water entirely, and fall down with impressive flurries of foam. They remain endangered, despite the current ban on commercial hunting.



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## Ezoendraza – a climate witness

*My name is Ezoendraza from Bekinanga and I am 43 years old. I am a Mahafaly from the royal Andriambonarivo clan. I have 12 kids, six boys and six girls. They are between 11 years and one week old. I have two wives to whom I am married according to our traditions. My father built this little hamlet in 1950. I have been living in it all of my life.*



Most people in my village belong to noble and royal families. Behind our village is the Rehindy sacred forest where the spirits live and our noble ancestors lie.

I am a cattle breeder by profession. But besides that, I do many other things to make sure my family has all they need. I am a farmer also and a tax collector and a police officer. I am municipal secretary and the secretary of the forest managers association of Bekinanga. I do all of those things because I am really dynamic and I went to school. My father was a cattle breeder and so was his father before him. Cattle diseases are my

biggest problems. But so is the management of pastures. When my father was young there were only two types of diseases. There was no famine among the cattle either. In 2009 our animals had to experience the first famine. Before that, only humans suffered from it.

The three seasons have changed a lot. The dry season is eight instead of five months long. In the old days, the forest was thick and without any cleared areas. The people didn't cultivate much; a small lot of land was enough. No one sold zebus just a couple of goats here and there to buy rice. When people started to grow maize in 1975, they started to clear the forest. There were many lemurs, tortoises and guinea fowls in the forest.

I love the forest. It lives and it's generous: For house construction and cooking wood. The ani-



mals are in direct relationship with God. He hears their complaints and gives rain where there are forests and animals.

But because there was not enough rain we didn't have enough to eat. So we had to clear more land. And now that the forest is gone we get even less rain. And our cattle suffer from new diseases.

If the drought continues, my children won't be able to be cattle breeders like me. They will have to become employees. They will have to study. I dream about my children being salesmen in case they won't be successful in their studies.

Drought and the death of my cattle scare me so much, since I don't know how to support my family otherwise. What's a cattle breeder without a flock? Soarinosy Gladys Ranalisolofo [sgranalisolofo@wwf.mg](mailto:sgranalisolofo@wwf.mg)  
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### NEWSBITES

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