



MWIOPO

NEWSBITES JANUARY - MARCH 09

Country situation

The socio-political crisis that shook Madagascar and continues to shake it until now, began with a simple statement by the former President of Madagascar, Didier Ratsiraka, relayed by some TV stations, among which the Viva TV, belonging to the Mayor of Antananarivo, Andry Rajoelina, on 13 December 2008. As a result the Government then closed the channel. Andry then launched an ultimatum to reopen Viva but the Government ignored it. This led to Andry, with support from many others to start a "general strike". Since then, tensions continued to increase. In late January, the marches led to lootings, which ended up with several victims. Then on the 7 February, Andry proclaimed himself President of a High Authority of the Transition and called Monja Roindefo, Prime Minister. The first decision of this new "Government" was to take the State Palace of Ambohitsorohitra to set down "officially" the Prime Minister. Security forces fired at demonstrators resulting in 27 deaths and the start of the fall of the President and the country falling into disarray.

Following many attempts by civil society, international community to bring the sides together, which all failed, the resignation of members of the Presidents government on 17 March 2009, resulted in President Ravalomanana transferred his power to three army generals he appointed himself. However, the military mutineers and Rajoelina categorically denied the transfer decision, and following a very tense standoff between the two parties, finally, with military support, one of the generals, Hyppolite Raharison Ramaroson passed the power to Rajoelina. On 18 March 2009, the High Constitutional Court formalized Andry Rajoelina's power. Its formal establishment was held on Saturday 21 March 2009.



For a few weeks now, the new President of HAT, Andry Rajoelina has had to live with the constant attack of the international community condemning his coup d'état, with a growing resurgence of pro Ravalomanana supporters, with marches leading to rioting on the streets where previously, Andry was leading his own protests! unrest within his own camp with potential for former president Ratsiraka and family slowly trying to regain power, growing fears of another split within the military with ultimatums given for him to stand down from power, and an economy that is rapidly collapsing, due to the withdrawal of all bar few of the international donors.



Left: Marc Ravalomanana
Right: Andry Rajoelina

Former president Ravalomanana has indicated his imminent return, to regain power and ensure democracy! The marches continue to grow in size, with as many as up to 15000 at daily events. The civil service is growing restless, wondering where their salaries will come from as up to 60% is funded by bilateral aid, now frozen. The central bank is on strike, fearing ongoing interventions from the HAT, leading to fears of shortages in available cash. The regions, though calm are also carefully watching events, with ethnic lines of high plateau and coastal tribes on either side of the struggle.

Apart from that, it has been rather calm!

For WWF, we have taken to going back to work, monitoring the situation daily, enhancing all security measures, ensuring we regain a solid focus on our projects, continue with our restructuring and watch and wait for the impact of foreign donors pulling out funding one by one. Thus far, though the EC, US, WB, UN, IMF, AU, Germany, Norway, Japan, and others have already frozen bilateral aid, however, there is hope that due to the extreme poverty levels within Madagascar, that humanitarian aid will continue to flow, all be with certain regulations that none of it can be used to support work with the government in any way. The African Union suspended Madagascar from the Organization. SADC states that it does not recognize the new Government. Existing work funded by BMZ and USAID may then have to be reviewed to ensure that no policy work, government department support or any other support seen to validate the current regime is being implemented. Apart from this, and with the ongoing commitment of the network offices, we hope to maintain our current work plan into the future, undeterred by the political unrest.

Illegal exploitation !

Unfortunately, as a result of the unrest, illegal logging has increased dramatically in many national parks, as security forces and police fail to address the situation. Many communities have told us of heavily armed organized gangs leading the destruction, with little that communities can do to stop them. Alongside this, is the increase in the exportation of tortoise species (some reaching as much as \$10,000 on the black market!), and many other flora and fauna. While the transition government is dealing with the various other issues, WWF and others fear that this will go on unabated, unless we do something. Thus, WWF and the other international NGOs have written a communiqué to be printed in all media and aired on radio, highlighting our collective concern on the neglect of the environment, the failure to address illegal exploitation and committing to continue to support the protection of the Malagasy environment for the people of Madagascar. We have deliberately avoided any comment to indicate our support to the current regime. However, we are quite prepared to work with them in order to ensure we positively influence where we can.



Lastly, as the cabinet reshuffle continues, we understand that the new Minister for Environment has started talks with the ministry, removed tourism from its authority, took back water under its control and although we had hoped for continuity among staff, has now removed the top 4 layers of senior staff within the Ministry, indicating now, very little hope of a smooth chance for continuity of our work with the ministry, if indeed the government lasts!

Since then, thousands of pro-Ravalomanana activists gather and demonstrate denouncing the coup. The events generally end with clashes between pro-Ravalomanana and the Pro-Rajoelina, with soldiers between the two parties, trying as best they could to manage the situation that is becoming increasingly more complicated.

The Impacts Of The Political Crisis On The Environment

This political crisis has had several direct negative impacts on the environment – some of these extremely concerning. The main causes of these impacts is the prevailing lawlessness as government and security forces' attention is focused on the political strife and as the transition proceeds from a weakened exiting government at the beginning of the crisis to a confused and inexperienced state now.



During the last months, the conservation community has been witness to:

- open and organized plundering, led by gangs of armed militia, of precious wood from several natural forests, including national parks such as Marojejy and Masoala, which have been declared World Heritage Sites. This has led to the closing of the Marojejy National Park to tourists on March 20, 2009. Park and Ministry staff has had to run away from the area under armed pressure, after the local offices of the Ministry of Environment and Forests had been looted and burnt earlier in January 2009. Some accounts mention 20 trucks a day out of the forests and probably 150 containers out of the port of Vohemar since the crisis began. There is a noted increase in the presence of Chinese buyers in the region. Calls for villagers to cut down trees and deliver to Chinese buyers are openly made on the local radios, despising all laws and regulations. The UNESCO has sent a letter on this issue to the government on 26 March 2009. It is important to note that illegal logging has always occurred in the Northern rainforests of Madagascar. However, the current aggravated situation is due to the re-opening of precious wood exports in January 2009 after several years of ban and 2) the lack of law enforcement due to the political crisis.
- Intensified smuggling of wild species especially reptiles such as tortoises, to the national and international markets. Again, tortoise smuggling is nothing new in the South, but because the Forest service and local authorities are not operational and more concerned with the political upheaval than law enforcement, several individuals are taking advantage of the situation. On March 17, the WWF team in Ejeda took part in the release of 104 smuggled tortoises back in their natural home; 121 animals had already been killed for their meat and 40 others died from mistreatment during transportation. Turtle consumption always increases during holidays and the upcoming Easter period is of significant concern, especially as local authorities are not functional and NGOs do not have the power to verbalize delinquents.
- Proliferation, due to the current impunity, of destructive practices such as illegal mining and slash-and-burn agriculture within several protected areas and environmentally sensitive areas.

In response to this, WWF called upon the conservation NGOs in Madagascar to issue a common statement (see last page) of concern and calling for urgent action by the authorities.

Other indirect negative impacts are likely to occur, as the social and economic effects of the crisis hits poor people. The closing of the Marojejy National Park for instance, is depriving local guides, porters, small business owners who once lived off the tourism business around the park, of their regular incomes. In former times of crisis, we have noticed that migration to forest areas increases as forests provide a free and open source of land, fuelwood, food, and other resources. People's reliance on natural resources will increase. The general atmosphere of lawlessness is a major factor of demotivation for those local communities engaged in forest management and trying to apply good governance principles on the ground.

From a policy point of view, it is yet unclear whether the new government will pursue the important commitments and initiatives taken by Madagascar during the last 4-5 years to reinforce conservation and wise management of natural resources. These initiatives include the tripling of the protected areas and the development of new 15-year Environmental Programme. However, it is clear that with the top staff of the Ministry of Environment changing, the prospect for continuity is extremely limited, and we will have to make a new and concerted effort to ensure the policy development and positive work of the past is maintained.

Finally, the suspension of foreign aid to Madagascar will have an important impact on the Ministry of Environment and Forests' capacity to efficiently undertake its work.



Throughout the crisis, WWF field offices generally have remained open and kept working with local communities and as much as possible with local authorities, to keep the momentum of our conservation work. Our relationship with local actors remains excellent and our field teams remain highly motivated and committed. We have initiated lobbying actions with the new government to encourage them to seriously tackle illegal logging and raise all the above issues.

Fortunately, the situation does not seem to have major effect on the GAA funding for our programme thus far, but if the situation continues, it will be very difficult for donors to award new grants. However, we also have been able to take advantage of the crisis to push forward on the important internal issues of restructuring and updating our conservation strategy. **Overall, we are optimistic that we will be able to deliver on our conservation goals despite the situation.**

Initial contacts and collaboration with the Transition Government

On 30 March 2009, a few representatives of the NGOs involved in the common statement met with the new Minister. We introduced the NGOs and the work we do and presented the communiqué, explaining it will be broadcast in the newspapers the day after. The Minister did recognize this was a strong message important to act upon. He stressed his willingness to work with all of us and to tackle the problems in SAVA as a priority. He confirmed that he wants continuity in the work of the ministry (ie. pursue expansion of protected areas). We said that we were happy with the action plan for the SAVA.

The members of Madagascar National Parks (ex-ANGAP) board, including WWF met the Minister earlier. They discussed actions that need to be taken urgently and in the medium and longer term to address the illegal logging in the north. The Minister's priority is first to stop all logging in the national parks. Actions planned:

- sending a group of gendarmes from Antananarivo to reinforce the security forces in the region as well as a team from DCAI (forest control department). Unfortunately, a group of gendarmes that were sent were forced out of the area by local militia, highlighting the lawlessness and problem the environment is likely to face at this time.
- appoint a new CIREEF.
- send messages through the radio (national and local) and press on forest legislation, insisting that all logging is forbidden in protected areas and permit system.
- assess exports and stop further exports at the port of Vohemar (this has already started in collaboration of customs and Ministry of Finance), and cancel the legal text that opened the exports of stocks in January.
- assessment of current stock, it was suggested the stocks to be seized would serve as local contribution for infrastructure development in the rural areas and especially in parks and their periphery.
- collaborate with Ministry of Interior to control visa status of all the Chinese in the region.
- collaborate with Ministry of Communication and Chef de District to forbid radios to broadcast messages that are against the law (eg.: messages encouraging people to log in parks, etc.).

⇒ **Fact:** to date, it is estimated that 12,000 m³ of precious timber has been exported at a value of over USD 100 million! The situation is serious.



Despite the ups and downs Madagascar is experiencing and that the Programme has to face, WWF MWIOPO does not give up and is confident in the future.

NEW CONCEPTS:

Climate change adaptation in Diana Region

Donor: Mac Arthur Foundation

Life of Project Funding: 600,000 USD

Duration: 3 years

Status: Letter of Intent submitted on 15 February 2009
Promotion of marine and coastal management integrating climate change adaptation for the Diana Region.

Environmental education for women in the commune of Beahitse - Mahafaly Plateau

Donor: WWF-US

Life of Project Funding: 25,000 USD

Duration: 1 year

Status: Proposal submitted in March 2009
Empowering women of the Mahafaly Plateau to be active players in promoting improved natural resources management through literacy classes and capacity building.

Sustainable Land Management and Climate Change

Donor: BMBF (German Cooperation)

Life of Project Funding: 975,000 euros

Duration: 4 years

Status: Proposal submitted in March 2009
Research programme to improve understanding of climate change impacts on ecosystems values and functions in order to improve management of the Mahafaly Plateau region.

Water Resources Management on the Mahafaly Plateau

Donor: WADA-USAID-TCCC

Life of Project Funding: 400,000 USD

Duration: 3 years

Status: Expression of interest submitted to USAID Madagascar
Promoting water-friendly communities by linking freshwater conservation, improved water management, health and hygiene and water education with local schools in 4 villages on the Mahafaly Plateau.

From Hunting to Conservation: Vezo fisher community management of key turtle populations in Maintirano

Donor: USFWS via WWF-US

Life of Project Funding: 45,000 USD

Duration: 1 year

Status: Full proposal submitted to WWF US on 16 March 2009

Reinforcing the development and implementation of a marine resources management plan and community involvement in marine turtles conservation in Maintirano.

NEW PROJECTS:

MG0932 – Gestion durable des ressources naturelles pour la conservation de 3 régions hotspot de la biodiversité à Madagascar

Duration : 4 years

Donor : FFEM

Amount: EUR 776.296

The aim of the project is to protect the Malagasy biodiversity and to reduce poverty through development of durable exploitation, transformation and marketing channels of woody and non-woody forest products on the periphery of protected areas in the three hotspots biodiversity regions in Madagascar.

It is keeping with the continuity of the pilot operations of local management and the value increase of biodiversity lead by the financing of FFEM since year 2000 in Madagascar. These operations have shown the capacity of the local community to put in place efficient structures of natural resources management, provided that interest is found and that they are well trained and well organized.

Mangrove conservation in western Madagascar: A vulnerability assessment

Duration : 14 months

Donor : MacArthur Foundation

Amount: USD 68,000

The project objective is to conduct a credible vulnerability assessment of mangroves in the Tsiribihina and Manambolo areas to provide solid baseline data for future conservation and sustainable management in the context of climate change.

The national vulnerability assessment workshop identified mangrove areas around Madagascar that are key priorities for climate-change-related conservation action. The project will assess the vulnerability to climate change of the mangroves in the Tsiribihina and Manambolo areas, which have the most expansive and developed mangroves in the country. This will contribute to ensure the long-term welfare of the western coastal communities and the survival of the region's exceptional biodiversity.



Environmental NGOs collaboration and communications:

A meeting of environmental NGOs was held on 6 March 2009 in Antananarivo, 19 of 30 invited NGOs attended the meeting to initiate the development of an Environmental NGO forum, to enhance collaboration and coordination of our work. It was mainly the NGOs based outside Antananarivo, which could not come, given the situation. We have also invited the 8 largest donors present in Madagascar, but despite their obvious desire to come, they could not do it, because of the situation. However, all expressed a positive response to the initiative and are willing to work closely with us in the future, should we launch the forum. Due to the current situation, this process is taking time, but we fully intend to follow up with the draft of a constitution for an umbrella organization, and seek funding for a small secretariat to coordinate data and information sharing as a first move. The UN fully supported the development of the forum and are willing to support it in many ways – a positive donor response.

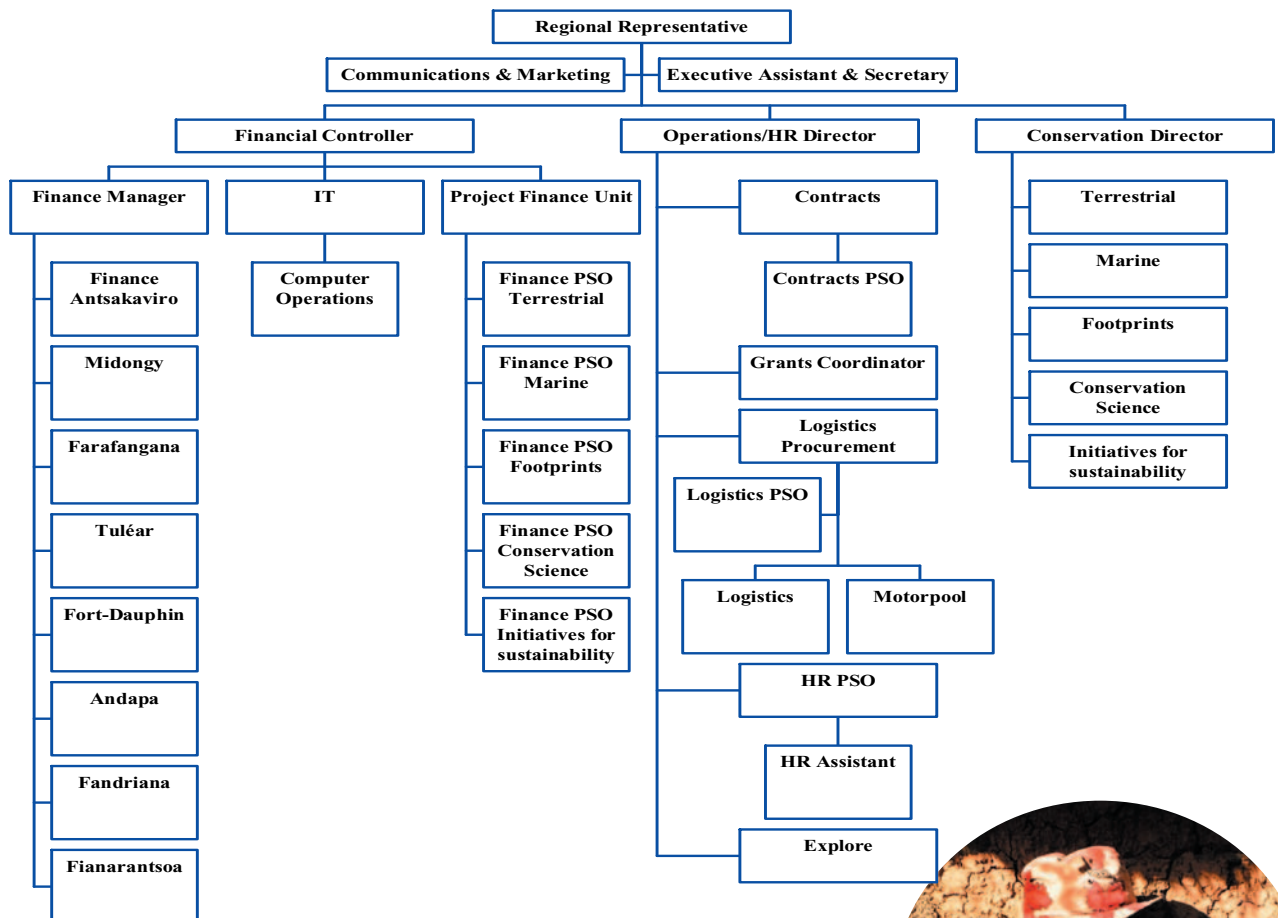
Restructuring:

The restructuring of the overall office and the conservation division was one of our main priorities for the first quarter of 2009. It has been very clear that the structure had to change due to the positive and rapid growth over the past few years, and in order to ensure appropriate line management, staff succession planning, efficient and cost effective management structures and a greater focus on field project support thus serious changes had to be made.

It has multiple objectives:

- Align with the Global Programme Framework (GPF), including Network Initiatives (NI), as well as with our national MAP and our own conservation strategy;
- Adequate succession planning, line management clarity and staff development capacity;
- Increase focus on systems and services and enhance efficiency and support to the conservation work in the field;
- Allow for more focused policy and dialogue development;
- Ensure overall effectiveness and cost efficiency.

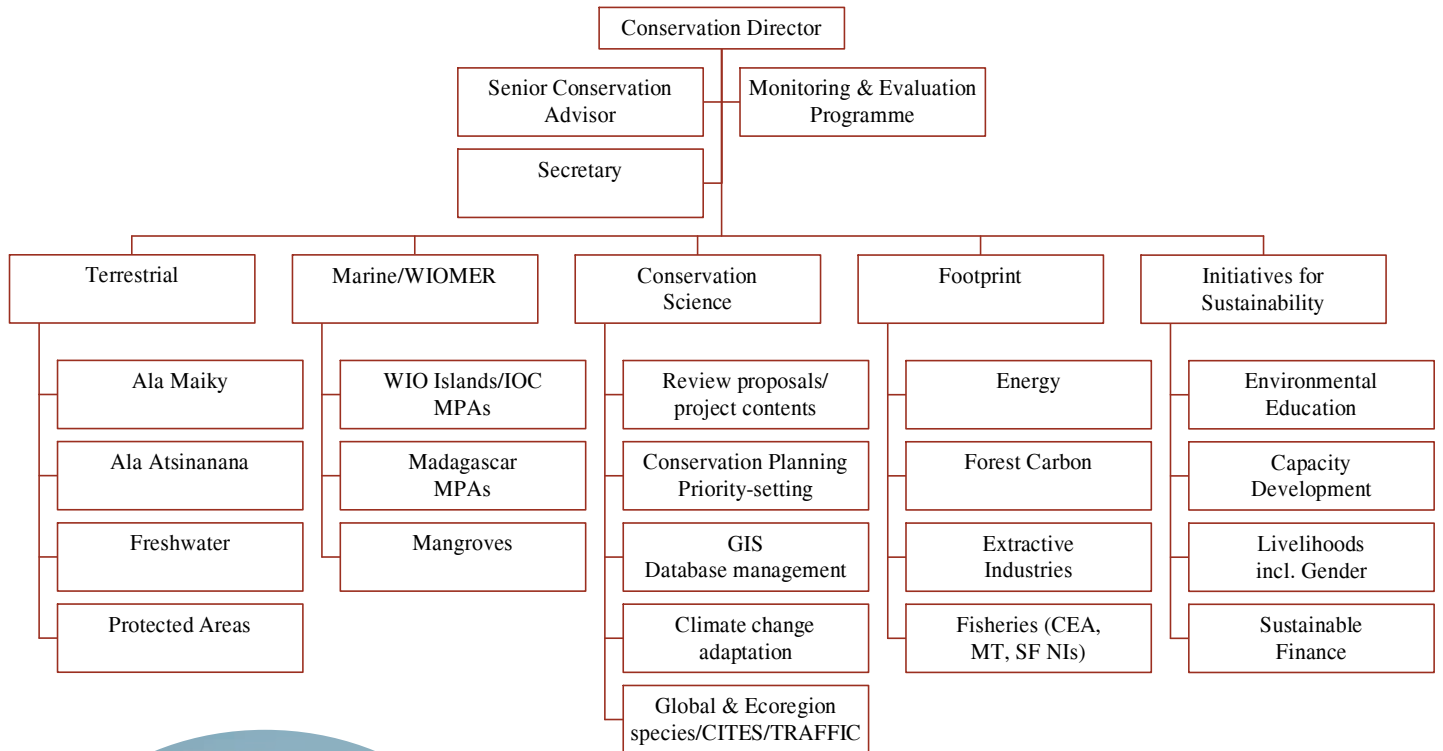
Office organigramme



Conservation Plan

The review of the MWIOPO Conservation Plan is underway to align with the GPF. A first workshop with all POs was held this month to agree on conservation values and drivers. A draft revised plan is expected for May 2009.

Conservation organigramme



Monitoring and Evaluation

We took advantage of the presence of Sheila O'Connor, Conservation Auditor, on sabbatical year in Madagascar, to help us in improving our system of monitoring and evaluation programme, especially in the following areas:

- review of program capacity maps to improve our KPI “conservation”,
- capacity building of MWIOPO staff in conducting audits of conservation and,
- support the development of assessment tools for community conservation projects.



Training session on « Project Proposal Development »

Given the global financial crisis that exists in the world today, we are aware that next few years will be harder; fundraising will become more difficult than usual. To rest on a sound basis, each project manager has to improve his/her skills on writing a good proposal. A 3-day training focusing principally on “Project Proposal Development” has been provided to all MWIOPO project managers.

Some positive examples of our work!

Raising awareness of village communities for sustainable marine conservation

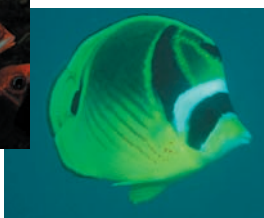
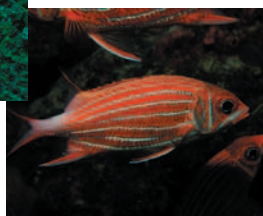
North Salary Bay and Ambola have a rich biodiversity almost intact. The marine ecosystem has not yet suffered significant damage and pressures of anthropogenic origin. WWF, in collaboration with WCS, led advocacy, education and information sessions in the area of North Salary. Several discussion sessions were conducted in order to empower communities and local authorities in the 6 villages of intervention. 24 villagers have represented their villages during travel initiation in Andavadoaka (village located at 150 km north of Toliara) to interact with the local association Velondriake, including the successful creation of marine reserves and the application of community management of marine habitats. All these actions

encouraged fishing communities to support the establishment of marine protected areas and establish reserves for the fishing season. In addition, the villagers of Salary proposed areas for protection and those of Ankaramifoka decided not to use the beach seine fishing technique, which uses nets with very small mesh. The local populations, beneficiaries of these marine resources, are aware of the current decline of marine natural resources and actively participate in the project.



Empowerment of local authorities for the protection of marine turtles in Maintirano:

Local regulations for the protection of sea turtles were developed in a participatory workshop in conjunction with the Management Committee of the Marine Environment of the Melaky Region. The mayor and the members present decided to develop a Communal Order from decisions validated by local communities. From that day on, even if the Order has not been yet promulgated, the significant decrease of turtle's carcasses had already been noted on the beaches of the Barren Islands.



Vintsy Club - An awareness that gains ground

“Katrafay” Vintsy Club, from the Public Primary School in Ebelo, Amboasary district has implemented a program of reforestation and a school tree nursery. The school works in partnership with the “gendarmerie” of Ebelo for the reforestation of its land. The partnership has been such a success that the idea came from the gendarmes to educate all people passing by their offices. They expressed their desire to be an outlet of the magazine Vintsy. Recognizing the challenges of environmental issues in Madagascar, three other “gendarmerie” followed the example. These initiatives were followed by the promotion of “green gendarmerie” in the regions of Anosy and Androy.



Commitment of a township Council

The Mayor of Ambohidratrimo (a township near Antananarivo) was passing by a high school where there was a training session in “écopédagogie”. Teachers there expressed the need to have running water within the school to implement its projects on environmental activities. Indeed, water had been cut, as the school couldn’t afford the payment of the invoice to the operator. The Mayor then called for the restoration of water within the school, at the expense of the Council and the school was able to start its environmental activities.



Charcoal producers responsible for reforestation

The Energy Program of WWF MWIOPO is conducting reforestation for energy oriented programmes in the South West of Madagascar, covering the Ala Maiky ecoregion. The objective is to reduce human pressure on natural forests due to uncontrolled exploitation of timber resources to meet the energy needs for cooking in Toliara. The villagers, many of whom pursue the profession of charcoal production, carry out reforestation of species adapted to the production of charcoal. It will, in the medium and long term, maintain the supply of energy source for the population, ensure a sustainable activity for population in the charcoal industry, while preserving the forest which is rich in biodiversity and vital for the ecological balance of the region. The strong motivation of the villagers helped to reforest an area of 120 hectares with different varieties of trees spread over 5 towns.



Food for Reforestation

As part of its Anjagne Project, Care International is involved in 7 municipalities facing food troubles in the South. These municipalities are concerned with the traditional management of New Protected Areas: Ankodida, Vohitsandria, Corridor between Parcels I and II of Andohahela National Park, Ifotaky and Vohitsiombe-Ekintso.

However, during the lean period, the populations of these municipalities overexploit natural forests for wood energy and planks. They are also hunting protected animals such as turtles and lemurs.

Recognizing that communities managing NPAs should be assisted during the lean period, WWF decided to work with Care International. This has enabled the Management Committees of the sites to be members of the platform of dialogue established by Care at the commune facing food troubles.

As part of this platform for consultation, management committees have the right to explain the situation and propose solutions. This facilitates the subsequent intervention of WFP projects through “food for work” or “food for reforestation” or “food for literacy”.





Communiqué

The tree must not hide the forest: the loss of Malagasy Heritage

During the last 20 years, Madagascar has undertaken significant and exemplary efforts to stop environmental degradation, effectively manage natural resources and preserve its unique biodiversity in the pursuit of sustainable development.

Beyond their inherent value, these natural riches – which are a source of national pride – also guarantee the benefits and services that are essential to the daily lives of the rural majority of the population, providing them among other things with water, food and energy. These natural resources also guarantee the development of the agriculture, fisheries and tourism sectors.

We, non-governmental organizations working to conserve these natural resources for the long term well being of local communities, hereby express our deep concern at the current devastation occurring to the country's natural resources:

- Open and organized plundering, sometimes using firearms, of precious wood from several natural forests, including national parks such as Marojejy and Masoala, which have been declared World Heritage Sites.
- Intensified smuggling of wild species, especially reptiles such as tortoises, to the national and international markets.
- Proliferation, due to the current impunity, of destructive practices such as illegal mining and slash-and-burn agriculture within protected areas and environmentally sensitive areas.

These deplorable acts will only further impoverish the country and deprive future generations of the Malagasy people from their unique natural heritage.

This situation once again compromises the efforts that have been achieved up until now to help local communities to preserve their resources from individuals attempting to plunder the national heritage for their own short term benefits.

We hereby call upon the competent authorities and all Malagasy citizens to urgently take action to stop and punish such acts so that natural resources are no longer held hostage to political crises and post-cyclone emergencies.

Through this appeal, we confirm our commitment to work for the biodiversity of Madagascar and for the well-being of the local communities, who are the stewards of this natural heritage. We invite each citizen to recognize that the sustainability of the development of the country depends upon its natural resources and we call on every individual to take responsibility.

Antananarivo, March 27, 2009

World Wide Fund for Nature - Madagascar and the Western Indian Ocean
Conservation International - Madagascar and the Indian Ocean islands
Wildlife Conservation Society - Madagascar
Missouri Botanical Garden
Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust
Institute for the Conservation of Tropical Environments
The Peregrine Fund
Fanamby
Madagascar Fauna Group
Man And The Environment
Plant Resources of Tropical Africa

