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# NEWSBITES

Trimonthly Newsletter from WWF Madagascar and Western Indian Ocean Programme Office

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## Rosewood: Real political will needed

*After more than one year and several appeals from local, national and international communities, three praiseworthy initiatives were finally taken by the Malagasy HAT Government*

- Since the promulgation of the 2010-141 decree in April 2010 banning definitely ebony and rosewood logging and export
- Designation of a new Minister for Environment who has organized successive forest governance workshops and initiatives to break up the rosewood mafia
- Dissolution of the military Task force that was several times suspected to become the mafia accomplice



Apart from the 79 containers of rosewood logs that were still authorized for export in June 2010, several seizures were made in Comoros (300 tons) and in various parts of the Island. Below are some facts about the current situation:

- In April, one reported that there are still more than 1000 containers in stock of felled rosewood logs in Madagascar.
- The current main area of illicit logging is situated in Mananara-Nord since the remaining exploitable logs are scarce and too far in the forest of Masoala
- News papers questioned the sudden enrichment of some high military officials (Luxurious cars, house construction, etc...) : 5 colonels deriving

high profit through rosewood business and 18 through other fuzzy businesses

- A South-African journalist taking photos of rosewood stocks in the Northeast was arrested and his camera seized.
- Severe traffic upsurges of other endangered species are also recorded in many parts of the country (Lemurs- Tortoises- Crocodiles-etc...)

### Important questions remain

- How and when will the MEF and the concerned administration units will reverse the situation and install a transparent and legal management system for the seizure and use of illegally felled logs, which if utilised wisely can support the Government's costs for continued support to the environmental sector?
- When will the Madagascar authorities show a real political will and decide to take the bull by its horns to definitely put an end to this massacre endangering Biodiversity, Environment and the future of local communities and upcoming generations?

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## Representative's message



My Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As this is my last editorial for the Newsbites as Representative

of MWIOP, I would like to take the opportunity to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to you all for making my stay and work so rewarding. It has been an eventful 2 years, for many reasons, but I will remember it for the great team work we undertook and the many positive developments achieved, both internally in WWF and externally with our partners and communities, donors and government representatives.

However our work is not yet done and a shift in thinking and doing is required by Government in order to address the current environmental crisis. As Einstein said, "no problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it". We encourage constructive debates and support for this transitional government, to act in a positive and constructive fashion to protect the unique biodiversity of Madagascar.

We need to continue to adapt to the issues at hand. Traditionally, as conservationists we look to our skills in conservation to conserve the environment, yet it is the poor social, economic and political conditions that cause environmental degradation and exploitation. We need to refocus and double our efforts to support the economic and social contexts in which we work and focus on policy development and political will for truly sustainable initiatives in conservation and development.

This is the challenge I take forward in my new post as WWF's Director of Performance and Development for Africa and Madagascar Programme, and is certainly a challenge for us all.

Sincerely,

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## Political clash: Bis repetita?

Though some negative events and criticisms were registered during its organization (Power-cuts, Fake bomb, Participants claiming higher per diem, Journalists lynched by some participants, Absence of the International Community, etc...), the National Conference facilitated by the "Elders" (Raiamandreny Mijoro) with more than 4000 people from all over the highland took place from September 13th to 18th in Ivato-Antananarivo. Below are some of the resolutions developed by the 3 commissions (Constitution-Transition- Reconciliation) of the conference:

- The minimum age to rally for the Presidency is 35 years old

- The 4th Republic will be a mixed regime (Semi-presidential/ Semi-parliamentary), decentralized (Provinces, Regions and Communes- no district anymore)
- Establishment of the Justice High Court and the Justice General Inspection
- A consensual Prime Minister will be designated and a new government will be established
- The amnesty will be applied only for political prisoners sanctioned between 2002-2008
- The Ivato transition roadmap will be maintained and will be financed entirely by the HAT internal resources: Constitutional referendum on November 17, 2010, Legislative elections on March 16, 2011 and Presidential

elections on May 4, 2011. The HAT government also decided that the communal election will be held on December 20, 2010.

During the 6-day national conference, the HAT President and the Madagasikara movement gathering the three opponent parties made separately their Madagascar political tours in the regions sensitizing people on their convictions. The HAT President declared that he will do his best to adopt the resolutions straightaway whereas the Madagasikara movement emphasized that the national conference and its resolutions are still unilateral, have just been held to strengthen Andry

Rajoelina and the HAT power and will never be supported by the international community. These opposition parties expect that the Malagasy CSO coalition (CNOSC) will go on working through the political mediation and will organize a "true" national conference in collaboration with international mediators. Some dissident members of the Madagasikara movement participated in the conference but the political clash remains since there has not been substantial evolution with regards to the Maputo agreement signed by the four stakeholders a year ago.

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## Niall O'Connor is leaving MWIOPPO

After two years of service, WWF MWIOPPO is sad to see its Regional Representative, Niall O'Connor leave. A forester by profession, Niall completed his master thesis on small-scale tree nurseries in Kenya where he is now going back as WWF's Director of Performance and Development for Africa & Madagascar. Having lived in different countries in West Africa (the Gambia, Ghana and Guinea), he seems to have lost his heart to the African continent.

Niall is married to Kiki and they have three children aged 14, 11 and four. When they arrived in Madagascar, they had to face a difficult situation living right next to the then mayor of Antananarivo who was about to seize power early in 2009. "We woke up having 50 machine guns and three rocket launchers

pointing in our direction every morning" Niall says, "they even shot at me and my wife - it was enough to turn one off living near a president!"

During the peak of the crisis, Niall had to take difficult decisions including temporarily closing the WWF headquarters in Tana time and again. He managed to ensure high level diplomatic and donor relationships even in this challenging environment. He restructured the MWIO Programme Office as soon as the situation allowed him to focus on that task. "I am proud to have a good team in place now and also to have a solid strategy to take our office forward for the next 5 years"

Niall enjoyed the rugged landscapes in Madagascar, the unique species, the ocean, and

the smell in the bush. Grown up in Ireland with forest and rivers as his play grounds, he has always enjoyed the forests and open space in his home country.



As Director of Performance and Development for Africa & Madagascar, Niall will support all offices in Africa to enhance their performance. He will coordinate pan-African issues so that experiences in one office can be shared with others, be it logistics or oil issues and many more.

"WWF is an excellent organisation. I appreciate the professionalism, the connectedness, the different people and the challenges. It's a place where I can grow and use my talents, but also a place to have fun working while you know you are doing something good for the world. I couldn't ask for more, except we include more livelihoods in our work to support the people that live in the areas we try to protect."

WWF MWIOPPO sees a passionate and visionary leader leaving, but is thrilled to continue working with him through his new job in Nairobi. All the very best Niall and thanks for everything! Keep the good ideas coming and visit us from time to time – we have good beer here too, you know...

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## Sustainable Land Management

*The arid south of Madagascar, from the calcareous Plateau Mahafaly to the Greater south of the Antandroy district, is caught in a vicious circle of "poverty-environmental degradation-poverty" with a shockingly 95% of the population living below the poverty line.*

The area nevertheless forms one of the most unique and biologically rich drylands areas on Earth, with a large number of plants and animals that are found nowhere else in the world. The natural habitat constitutes of spiny forest and harbors the highest level of plant endemism both at the generic (48%) and species (95%) in all of Madagascar.

### A multi-level approach

In order to stop, prevent and reverse further degradation, WWF/UNDP/GEF will be implementing "Sustainable Land Management (SLM)". SLM tries to combine 4 principles for an integrated approach. 1. land-user-driven and participatory approaches; 2. Integrated use of natural resources at ecosystem and farming systems levels; 3. Multilevel and multi-stakeholder involvement; 4 Targeted policy and institutional support, including development of incentive mechanisms for SLM adoption and Income generation at the local level.

The location for applying SLM will be south of Plateau Mahafaly, in a cultural transition zone from Mahafaly communities to Antandroy, a hotspot of social conflicts, migration and severe land degradation. Three subagricultural zones cover this area with very different bio-physical characteristics and social dynamics affecting degradation patterns and causes. Firstly, the littoral zone on white sands in the commune of

Androka. The zone was originally vegetated with a variety of shrubs and trees. Though there are many coastal villages dependent on fishing, most of the Mahafaly and Vezo populations living in this zone also practice a combination of agriculture and animal husbandry. Most of the original vegetation has therefore been cleared to make room for cultivation and/or overgrazed. Movement of sand dune is a big threat to vegetation and fields and as a consequence, several littoral communities are migrating to the interior zone.



The Second zone is the Limestone Plateau or calcareous agro-ecological region, found within the commune of Ampanihy and Maronlinta. This area supports relatively thick vegetation that has evolved under extremely hot, arid, and poor soil conditions. The area was inhabited principally by pastoralists until the latter half of the past century. However, since the early fifties, seasonal migrants from the littoral have been settling in forest pockets where soils were slightly deeper and agriculture could be practiced. Markets for both maize and, more recently, tobacco are fuelling slash-and-burn farming



in this zone. Given the already low soil fertility, the farmers produce only one crop before clearing more land, hence fuelling further encroachment into natural habitats. Abandoned areas are most often devoid of any vegetation. What is more, the same zone is plagued by the greatest social conflict relative to land use practices. Even sacred forest areas on calcareous soils are also being reduced in size, as respect for traditional taboos that protect certain sacred natural areas and species is eroding.

The third agro-ecological region is located in the interior and is considered the agricultural breadbasket of the region in years with plentiful rainfall. Traditionally coastal people cultivated these soils for part of the year, but following a pattern visible in the other two zones, permanent settlement has increasingly become the norm. The soils are being farmed intensively, and fallow periods are rare. Soil fertility maintenance has become a major constraint, as nutrient recycling from crop residues is lost due to burning and subsequent water-borne or

wind erosion.

For the first year of the project, WWF will work with its partners for a comprehensive analysis of the region looking into land-use, root causes of degradation and social and local dynamics such as land tenure, natural resources ownership, transhumance and migration.

In following years, the project will test and apply the SLM models in the five pilot communes, working through a network of farmers based on a participatory SLM approach.

Through a multilevel and multi-stakeholder involvement, the project will work with key institutions to facilitate policy enabling environment streamlining SLM from local to regional and national approaches and priorities.

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## Promoting best practices in industry: UNIMA, an outstanding example

*One does not need to look to other countries to find one of the most outstanding examples of responsible industry practices. Our own UNIMA is an entirely Malagasy industrial group that produces high quality shrimps and cashew nuts for export and it is difficult to find such a socially and environmentally responsible industrial consortium.*



This is true of the group's shrimp aquaculture venture operated by the company AQUALMA, its shrimp fisheries company in Nosy Be – the Pêcheries de Nosy-Be – and its cashew operations managed by the company VERAMA.

In 2006, UNIMA and WWF developed a partnership that aims to demonstrate how responsible business practices can be leveraged to create market/financial benefits. So far, our focus has involved researching the environmental, social and economic benefits of UNIMAs operations across its trawling, aquaculture and cashew operations. The results of these analyses demonstrate a clear commitment to preventing harmful environmental impacts and minimizing those that have been unavoidable.



In addition, UNIMA provides excellent working conditions for all staff and has invested considerably into improving education and health services as well as improved urban planning. Their contribution to both environmental protection and social development has far exceeded that required by Malagasy law, and the group rightly deserves praise for its endeavors.

Aquaculture activity is based in Mahajanga and has its production sites in the Mahajamba Bay and points further north along the coast. It chose these remote areas because they need favorable environmental conditions such as unpolluted seas and because the low population density minimizes risks of social conflict with local communities and negative impacts from human activities on their production process. While the social and general environmental protection endeavors are now strongly established, both AQUALMA and VERAMA wanted to explore in depth the action plans they could implement to improve the biodiversity conservation around their sites of production. In response, WWF sent a conservation management expert to their operating sites in order to provide guidance. We are now examining the

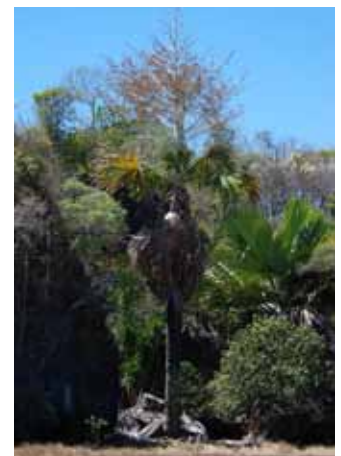


recommendations and further expertise will be provided to develop practical biodiversity conservation strategies and monitoring. Some of this expertise will be provided by other environmental NGOs keen to provide input and perhaps co-financing.

The UNIMA sites are home to some outstanding biodiversity conservation priorities. In the Mahajamba Bay, the vast mangroves are largely pristine and they are important to a rich array of aquatic birds, most notably around 10% of the world's total population of the endemic Madagascar teal. Looking at their more northerly sites, there is a spectacular archipelago of tsingy limestone islets with a highly distinct vegetation and significant numbers of aquatic birds such as the rare and threatened endemic Malagasy sacred ibis. But the prize must surely go to VERAMA's recent discov-

ery of a spectacular new palm species, *Tahina spectabilis*. Fewer than 100 individuals of this palm are known in nature and VERAMA has collaborated with the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew in the UK to establish ex situ populations in case an unforeseen event reduces the natural population which is confined to one very small area.

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## New Opportunities

### Seedling establishment of sustainable marine resources management: school scholarship for girls

Donor : Mac Arthur Foundation

Duration : 4 years

Status : Concept submitted to donor

The purpose of this project is to support the construction and refurbishing of the primary schools and allocate secondary school scholarships for girls for the villages of Maromena and Befasy, in the South West region.

### Inventoring the Biological Corridor of the Southwest Spiny Forest

Donor : WWF-SE

Duration : 9 months

Status : Concept submitted to donor

The project aims to undertake a biological inventory of the PK 32 Ranobe-Onilahy- Tsimanapetotse biological corridor.

### Development of identification manual for traded precious species from Madagascar

Donor : WWF-CH

Duration : 1 year

Status : Concept in preparation

The objective of this project is to develop sample references and an identification manual on the most traded species and training on their use for forest as well as custom officials.

### Saya de Malha Banks – A potential High Seas MPA” – donor : WWF DE

Donor : WWF-DE

Duration : 2 years

Status : Concept submitted to donor

The purpose of this project is to propose the establishment of Saya de Malha Banks as high seas MPA.

## New Projects

### MG0945: Developing A New Business Model For Providing Sustainable Energy In Rural Areas In Madagascar

Start date: July 2010

Planned end date: April 2011

Donor: WWF-SE

Summary: The project will prepare the introduction of an innovative solar cooker on a large scale in Madagascar in order to reduce the use of non-renewable energy supplies (charcoal, wood) for cooking and to provide electricity as an extra service to the households.

### MG0946: Creating Innovative Financing Mechanisms And Profitable Income-Generating Activities In The New National Park Of Fandriana – Marolambo

Start date: July 2010

Planned end date: June 2013 (but with yearly contract)

Donor: WWF-CH

Summary: The project will focus on identification, test and evaluation of creative financing mechanisms and income-generating activities compatible with conservation surrounding the new Protected Area of Fandriana – Marolambo. Through the implementation during three years of the Project, scaling up through the government/NGOs/communities is expected, in order to ensure the sustainability of biodiversity conservation. The project will develop other alternatives and explore potential for accessing domestic and international markets for agroforestry, new product possibly via fair-trade labeling.

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## New Staff



Rakotondrasoa Herinjato  
Chef de Projet Mangroves Côte Ouest  
01 juillet 2010



Fanohiza Claude  
Coordinateur Diana  
13 septembre 2010



Razafiarjaona Finoana Andritahina  
Miora  
Administrateur du Programme Holistique  
27 septembre 2010



Razafimaharavo Alain Andrianandraina  
Chef de Projet SLM  
22 septembre 2010



Rakotondrasoa Hasinarijaona Laza  
Chef de Projet Vondrozo  
24 septembre 2010



Mialisoa Randriamampianina  
Communications Officer  
27 septembre 2010



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## Extractive industries: the way forward

*WWF is increasingly aware that the mining, oil and gas industries must be addressed with respect to their impacts on biodiversity and the ecological health of our planet.*

Demand for metals and minerals is rising sharply as new industrial economies emerge in Asia and Latin America, while oil and gas exploration and production is moving into some of the most vulnerable ecosystems on earth as more accessible 'easy' reserves are exhausted. Nowhere is this more evident than in the African region including Madagascar. Furthermore, increased fossil fuel consumption appears to be accelerating an already rapid global warming process which may threaten some ecosystems and species. Already scientists are recording species shifts up mountain sides as the climate warms.

At present, in Madagascar WWF focuses principally on

civil society awareness of oil and gas development but we aim to increase its engagement with government and industry to promote best practices within this industry and mining that minimize the impacts on biodiversity through strengthened policy and improved operational practices. In parallel, we are strengthening our public awareness-raising initiatives that at present focus on local communities in oil exploration areas.

Now we intend to increase outreach by generating interest among the Malagasy press to report objectively on mining, oil and gas developments in our country. We hope that the resulting increased public

awareness and interest will positively influence both government and industry. WWF cannot do this alone and is actively seeking partnerships with other environmental NGOs and civil society groups.

### Pan-Africa strategic plan

But we are not content to work only in Madagascar, priority country though it may be. Through 2010 we have been making links with our WWF colleagues throughout Africa in order to see how we can rise to the challenge of mining, oil and gas development throughout the region. The first step emanating from our brainstorming is to hold a pan-Africa strategic planning session in Uganda with WWF delegates

from that country, Madagascar, Tanzania, South Africa, Gabon, Cameroon, the RDC, Senegal, Norway and China. We will be joined by industry leaders who champion best practices with respect to social development and biodiversity protection as well as the Head of the World Bank's Mining, Oil, Gas and Chemicals Division with whom we have been exploring ways to cooperate in the future. We hope that this meeting will lead to new constructive engagements between government, industry and civil society groups such as NGOs that lead to stronger policies and the adoption of improved industrial practices throughout the African region.

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## A Marine Protected Area in Salary

A national workshop was held in Toliara in July, under the initiative of creating Marine protected areas and the establishment of seasonal fishing reserves in the Salary North Region. This meeting was initiated by the Ministry of environment and forests, the Soariake community association, the Manombo South rural village, and WWF. The first objective was to put all stakeholders on the same level of understanding on the importance of creating the North Salary MPA, within the Toliara reef complex. It also consisted in discussions to publicly validate the development plan and the types of

governance to be adopted for the future MPA. And finally, the 60 participants led a reflection on the strategies to adopt in order to ensure that the creation of the MPA would benefit local communities, whose livelihoods depend on marine resources.

Through the exchanges and discussions during this workshop, the participants agreed that the process of creating a protected area in a marine environment is not yet well defined, in comparison to the terrestrial protected areas. Thus the workshop was somehow an initial consultation to



discuss the specificities of marine protected areas, particularly the difficulties in the delimitation, interest discrepancies on the marine resources, and mostly the need to involve local communities. At the end of the workshop, the Ministries of fisheries and of Environment

and forests, agreed to hold discussions on the process of creating MPAs, but also to develop a strategy in order to revitalize the Environment – Fisheries Committee (CEP) which is currently dormant.

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## Celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity in Toliara

*Toliara contributed to the celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity by organizing an exhibition and a debate conference on "The conservation of tortoises in the Ala Maiky Ecoregion and turtles in the Atsimo Andrefana Region".*

Biodiversity was the main theme of the exhibition, and it was seen through WWF's conservation and development activities, and a special projection of a short documentary on the tortoises of the Ala Maiky.

As for the debate conference, it was marked by four interventions:

- Mr. Bernardin Rasolondrasana, Ala Maiky Ecoregional Leader (WWF): Conservation of the endemic tortoises of the spiny forest ecoregion of Madagascar,
- Ms. Vola Ramahery, South West Marine Coordinator (WWF), on: "Are marine resources inexhaustible?"
- Dr Garth Cripps, Researcher (Blue Ventures): The monitoring of the traditional fishing of marine turtles of the Velondriake association in Andavadoaka;
- Mr. Shane Abeare, Researcher (Reef Doctor): Miamby Fano – The Guardian of turtles.

The audience actively took part in the debates.

### Traffic prevention ineffective

Through the discussions, it was observed that the preventive actions against the traffic of tortoises were ineffective. Two main reasons have been pointed out, namely the timeliness of the actions and the lack of funding. Yet, it has been argued that the collection rate of radiated tortoises would be of "60,000 per year, mainly in

the different areas of the plateau Mahafaly." Another participant even reported "at least a dozen zebu carts left the coastal area to go to Fotadrevo each week." Other participants also suggested setting up captive breeding, in order to sale tortoise meat, but through an effective monitoring system. In general, everyone was unanimous on the need to deploy more consistent actions for the protection of tortoises. In this regard, the radio of the University of Toliara offered its services to help WWF produce information and awareness programmes on the conservation of tortoises.

Finally a coincidence stressed the urgency of the situation: during the conference, Sylvain a WWF officer in Ampanihy, sent an SMS reporting that poachers had just been arrested with 1475 tortoises and 12 bags of smoked tortoise meat.

### Endangered turtles

There is no policy on the conservation of turtles in Madagascar

though the country has signed several international conventions and laws forbidding the hunt and sale of such products. WWF, the Halieutic and Marine Science Institute (IHSM) and the Geneva Museum in the Melaky Region are establishing a conservation strategy. Blue Ventures reported that the green turtle and young females are the most hunted in the Andavadaoka region, while Reef Doctor reported that the capture of turtles in the Ranobe Bay has significantly increased in 2009. In general, everyone agrees that the conservation actions are cut short by stringent deadlines and therefore do not allow achieving significant results.

### Asia an animal traffic hotspot

In recent months, tortoises from Madagascar have been seized respectively in the airports of Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur. One again, these facts raise the urgency of developing and implementing an effective conservation policy for tortoises in Madagascar, and this should

### Animal in the spotlight

The spider tortoise or *Pyxis arachnoides* is among the four endemic terrestrial tortoise species of Madagascar. It is only seen in the spiny forests of the southern and southwestern region of the island, stretching from south of the River Mangoky in the west to the western slopes of the Anosyan montane in the east. This ecological region exhibits the harshest climatic pattern in Madagascar with as little as 200 mm of rain in average. The communities living there are among the most vulnerable in the country. The spider tortoise is classified as critically endangered according to the IUCN Red list (2009) and is among the 40 most threatened species in the world.



go along with the control and repression both at the frontiers and in the field. Indeed, we know these traffics are done through a chain, which depending on the circumstances may be "dormant" or revived when the circumstances allow it. This is especially the case during such times of crisis, but also when orders for pets rise globally. On this issue, Bangkok and Prague are currently the most-known platforms worldwide.

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## Conserving “Radiata” and “Pyxis”

*Radiated tortoise and spider tortoise - WWF’s past experience and its next priority actions*

Radiated and spider tortoises are both collected for bushmeat or pet. Radiated tortoise meat is a delicacy for Vezo, Antanosy and people from the High-Plateau during special events such as Christmas, Easter and Independence Day. A recent survey among 30 communities in the southwestern part of the ecoregion shows that the epicenter of the traffic is the coastal area of Itampolo-Androka. Tortoises collected from the Mahafaly Plateau are sent to the main meat markets such as Toliary, Fotadrevo, Lazarivo and Taolagnaro. No less than 10 zebu carts filled with tortoises transit across the Mahafaly Plateau every week. The sea route is mainly operated by Vezo people while inland routes are managed by members of the Antanosy community. People from all ages (6 to 60 years old) are involved and the size of each group can reach 90 people. Moreover, many traffickers are now armed and very dangerous. Tortoises’ habitats also have seen the highest deforestation rates in the past 20 years, ranging from 1.2% from 1999 to 2000, up to 2.52 to 3.94 % / year in some regions in 2000-2005. The main driver behind this loss is slash-and-burn practices, bush fires and charcoal production to supply Toliara and Taolagnaro markets.

### WWF’s past experiences

WWF’s work on tortoises, especially radiated tortoises started back in 1999 and they have focused on both fronts: preventive and repressive.

On the preventive side, from 2000 through 2007, deforesta-

tion rates in WWF’s intervention areas within the Mahafaly plateau - one of the main remaining havens for tortoises - decreased by 27% . Many community-based associations ban tortoises harvesting from their territories by imposing penalties as high as 50,000 Ar (about USD 25) for each seized tortoise. A network of 15 rural radios spanning across the ecoregion as well as 4 theater groups were established to raise awareness on conservation and development issues as well as to allow community members and focus groups to have their say in those issues. Most of these are still operational to date.

On the repressive side, thanks to joint operations with gendarmes, environmental authorities and Madagascar National Parks, 7,855 live tortoises and more than 4.8 tons of meat have been seized between 2001 and 2010. These represent 1.3 to 2.1 % of the estimated 600,000 tortoises collected from the ecoregion during that period (based on 60,000/year). Records of dossiers on tortoises during that period at the Tribunal of Ampanihy, show that 15 cases have been prosecuted involving 4,646 tortoises. Traffickers got jail terms between 5 to 24 months and fines between 0 to 10.8 million Ar (about USD 5,000). It is estimated that only 5% of all dossiers on tortoises are treated by tribunals as the MEF does not follow up on tortoise dossiers, leaving many untreated cases and unrecovered penalties.

These experiences have been marked by many constraints: leaks of information before con-

trol and seizure campaigns that jeopardized many of them from the start, corruption among gendarmes and environmental authorities, some gendarmes and other officials are themselves consumers of tortoises, communities were discouraged following the release of many traffickers they help arrest because of procedural flaws. But the main constraints that hindered long term impacts are the lack of specific and sustained funding for tortoises protection initiatives.

### WWF’s next priority actions

In its new 5 year conservation plan, WWF set as objective a significant reduction of tortoises harvesting in its two priority conservation landscapes: Mahafaly Plateau and Pk32 Ranobe. For this, a tortoise action plan has been developed and we have identified the following elements as the immediate priority for 2011 and 2012:

- Establish an information network along the trade chain and between actors (communi-

ties, gendarmes, justice etc ) to ensure a better tracking and follow up on controls, seizures, arrests and prosecutions;

- Set up and implement incentive schemes to encourage organized communities to continue in the monitoring of and intelligence sharing on illegal collecting;

- Enhance development initiatives in collaboration with development specialists (CARE, UNDP, WFP etc) especially in promoting alternatives to tortoises meat;

- Call for a better involvement of and support from the environmental civil society in tortoises trade monitoring and prosecution.

- Foster partnership with TRAFFIC, UNEP-WCMC and TSA on monitoring of trade;

- Enhance awareness raising and induce social behavior changes on tortoises conservation using social marketing tools;

- Seek innovative funding mechanisms for tortoises conservation using twinning, sponsorship by school children from western countries.

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# NEWSBITES

Trimonthly Newsletter from WWF Madagascar and Western Indian Ocean Programme Office

## Passionate about good stories

*The communications team is growing and so is our output. We are happy and proud to announce a whole bunch of new activities and media products.*

With the third Newsbites edition in a new design, you have one of these products before your eyes. If you type in [www.wwf.mg](http://www.wwf.mg) you'll see yet another newborn communication baby. With our communications officer Sylvain Rafiadana-Ntsoa being very well connected in Madagascar we continue to be in the papers on a regular base. Myself in my function as communications manager I focus on international media and management tasks. To get the stories from the field we join existing field trips from time to time. We visit projects, talk to people,

write up their stories and produce short videos. We train field staff so they can take good pictures and send their stories to us. Our allies at WWF International help us to spread the word by publishing our press releases, feature our on-the-ground-reports and help us putting up online campaigns. Tinah Andrianjaza, our Brand, Event and Website Officer, is busy organising national events like Earth Hour and conferences for the Year Of Biodiversity. She also takes care of our brand and updates the website. With an intensive training in desktop publishing, she

will be able to create flyers, handouts, factsheets and brochures by herself. Last but not least we welcome Mialisoa Randriamampianina our new communications officer, who

will replace Sylvain after his retirement in four months time.

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## Connected to the world - [www.wwf.mg](http://www.wwf.mg)

People from 142 countries have already visited our WWF MWIOP website and visitors increase by 35% every month. People stay for almost ten minutes and the most visited page is the job page. With

Madagascar being a French speaking country we are busy constructing a French page, too. Join us on Facebook and Twitter!

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“Whenever we think about our content we have to focus on the target audiences we're trying to reach. One of the key tools we use in that process is the creation of imaginary characters who personalize the average visitor of our website. These profiles are based on information gathered through feedback from users, online surveys and web metrics. This is very helpful in making us think on how our content should be structured and presented. When we know who we are talking to, it becomes easier to define content that is easily accessible and valuable to readers.”

“I am proud to see articles on our activities on the internet”

Nosy Ranaivosoafo, Project Officer Plateau Mahafaly

“Spreading the word on the internet makes us more visible and helps us to communicate with donors and the whole world”

Voahirana Randriambola, Footprint Programme Coordinator

“I usually check [www.wwf.mg](http://www.wwf.mg) first thing in the morning and often I read things about our office or our programme I haven't known yet”

Fernando Zarur, Specialist Online Content, WWF International.

Anjara Andriamanalina, GIS specialist





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# NEWSBITES

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## Volunteers help Women's Associations

Hosted by the Holistic Programme of Forest Conservation and the Reinforcement of Civil society in Ivohibe during 10 weeks, the second wave of volunteers in 2010 has packed up leaving good works behind them.



"We'll be staying! Thank you for your visit!" said Seraphine, one of the volunteers, when the Project Manager of Ivohibe and the Explore Coordinator went to see the volunteers upon their arrival, a very meaningful presence that put an end to their stay in Ivohibe! It is generally the same reluctance among volunteers when comes the time to leave for good the place they had gotten attached to in a few weeks. They've got accustomed to see and work with Ivohibe's villagers who, so far from technologies and comfort, live very simply in nature, yet with whom they could feel the deep meanings of life.

In all, they'd been working with 7 COBAs (field community-based partners).

By holding "Development" workshops which targeted the members of each COBA, they wanted to help communities define the word 'development' through discussion, and to identify their visions for the future. Then, "Forest" workshops were organized in the eastern COBAs pointing out the forest as a key-element of development, the interactions between water, wood and food. Theoretical supplies were

followed by helping the villagers install tree nurseries. Besides, the volunteers screened a variety of wildlife documentaries from the Planet Earth series during their final visits to the COBAs. These are films showcasing biodiversity.

**Addressing the Gender Issue** workshops for women were held and focused on the role of women in the community so as to arouse the latter's interest in creating women's association. The COBA Avotra led by women was a model to illustrate the message relating to women's potentials in social life. An interview of its vice-president was filmed and was screened in every COBA so as to raise everybody's awareness. It was such a rewarding work for the volunteers to have helped create a women's association in two COBAs, as the eastern part of the country is one of the regions that are mainly characterized by a patriarchal society. Along with this activity, nutrition workshops intended for women only were initiated by the volunteers and were very much appreciated. They were meant to outline the major food groups constituting a balanced diet and guide them to make the most of

local vegetables, and thus emphasize the importance of diversifying vegetable production. Communication between COBAs is very important as sharing is an energizing means which helps communities move towards their objectives. It was the rationale for filming COBA Avotra which was later screened in every COBA. The Radio Project was also launched by the volunteers with a view of disseminating the COBA's efforts among the other ones. Seven programs were recorded, composed of interviews and entries produced during an environment-themed regional song contest across all seven COBAs. They will be aired by Radio AVEC in the neighboring district of Ihosy.

Education, a key-component of development was not outdone. The volunteers scheduled activities for children in each community where they performed a short play about the importance of respecting plants and animals. They also organized drawing sessions during which children drew pictures on the theme of 'Nature is our Future'. Approximately seventy-five sec-

ondary students in the CEG and Lycée of Ivohibe were provided with English lessons and could improve their ability to speak English while learning more about environment and its protection. The volunteers were involved as well in "SRI - Système de Riziculture Intensif" as improved techniques for intensive rice production. They helped the inhabitants of a nearby village to plant two rice-fields.

The group was very productive in video filming: you can see many of the above-mentioned activities in 8 video films it has produced. Three of them have a Malagasy version each and will be much of help for field activities and for Malagasy students.

The next group is already in the field. They are from Austria, Spain, USA and two Malagasy for the first time! They are working with the Moist Forest Management Project and the Holistic Programme for Forest Conservation in Vondrozo till December.

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# NEWSBITES

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## Forest management against deforestation

*How can we fight against deforestation and what role do community based forest management associations play? WWF's work on Forest Management Transfer in the Midongy-Vondrozo Forest Corridor shows what can be done.*

"The Midongy Forest Corridor is located in the Southeastern part of Madagascar within the Region of Atsimo Atsinanana. The corridor area is around 170,000 ha and covers a patchwork of landscape rich in forest, fallow, lake and marshland. WWF MWIOPO was present since 2003 in Midongy area and, later on (2005) in Vondrozo locality, fulfilling its mission and vision stated as: "The moist forests of Madagascar are conserved, restored and sustainably used thus maintaining representative biodiversity and providing economic benefits and ecological services to the Malagasy people"

WWF MWIOPO supported forest management transfer

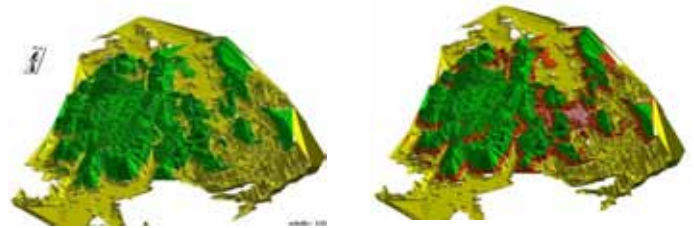


to local population for a better management of natural resources. This continued support is conducted under the framework of the Malagasy law 97-017 providing for forest management transfer (allowing the local population to manage the forest surrounding their village). WWF thus is promoting forest management transfer within the forested corridor. Currently, WWF's

team with Community Based Associations (COBA) could put in place approximately 64,000 ha of forest under the COBA management, which represents 37 % of the forest corridor.

Throughout this management transfer, the WWF team also developed alternatives to slash and burn cultivation, which is one of the main causes of deforestation and forest degradation in this part of Madagascar. Obviously, people in these remote areas were struggling alone, trying to improve their lot in life using this practice, thus securing a productive land without moving all year long in search of new, fertile soil. The support from WWF therefore is essential for a better management of resources (forest and derived products, and soil fertility). Among the alternatives developed, the following options are worth mentioning: Improved rice system cultivation, market gardening, duck and poultry, rabbit farming, fishing pools...The final goal of all these activities is to protect biodiversity and reduce deforestation.

**The importance of COBA's**  
As an example, in the commune of Maliorano, a team with satellite images and data gathered from the fields developed a simulation of deforestation. Two figures are shown to illustrate these simulations.



The forest cover in green in 2005 is shown by figure 1. Other colors indicate agricultural land use and space for habitation.

■ Deforestation in 2010 with WWF follow-ups and support to COBA  
■ Projection of deforestation between 2010 and 2020 without WWF follow-ups and without support to COBA

From 2005- to 2010, the purple color indicates the deforestation occurred in the fields. It reveals that deforestation continued within the Commune of Maliorano albeit at a lower rate. That deforestation still occurred is explained out as an evidence of the hard time COBA have sharing their time between control-related activities and their busy daily lives. From 2010 to 2020 (figure 2), simulation was done with deforestation data gathered from the fields and Forest Services.

Indeed, these two figures demonstrate how important the presence of COBA in reducing deforestation is. We can safely conclude that forest management transfer is one step onward for saving rainforest. But as conservation needs to be conducted along with rural development, the next step probably will be the follow-up of alternatives scaling up and, their impact in providing economic benefits to local people.

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# NEWSBITES

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## Nosy Tanihely - A Local Initiative Turning into a Success

*Nosy Tanihely, a small islet of 10 ha, is located south of Nosy Be which is among the top tourist destinations in Madagascar (between 16 000 and 22 000 tourists in 2006). WWF MWIOPO helped to protect this unique place.*



Nosy Tanihely attracts tourists including foreigners as well as locals due to its terrestrial environment which constitutes a shelter for 90 species of plants, 11 species of reptiles, 13 species of birds, 2 species of lemurs and a dormitory for hundreds of fruit bats. Nosy Tanihely is also famous for its nice beaches and beautiful underwater features. Indeed, coral reefs surrounding the islet have a relatively good condition in the Nosy Be areas (110 species of corals) with an abundance of fish life (154 species).

Since the sixties, Nosy Tanihely has been subject to conservation measures such as the prohibition of fishing activities in 1966, the designation as marine reserve in 1968 and the extension of the marine reserve up to 500 m (around 310 miles) seaward from the beaches in 1995. Unfortunately, those measures were not effectively enforced

and hence the terrestrial and marine environment has suffered obvious pressures such as invasive species (rodents), disturbance of resident animal population, coral reef degradation, overfishing, and beaches pollution from organic wastes left by picnicking activities. This alarming situation has led Madagascar National Parks, the national authority for protected areas management, the World Bank Growth Pole Project and local partners such as the Urban Commune and the Regional Tourism Office of Nosy Be to collaborate together in order to set up a marine protected area with legal status for Nosy Tanihely and this for a long-term conservation perspective linked to



responsible and sustainable tourism. Following this initiative, Nosy Tanihely received a temporary status as marine and coastal protected area in August 2008.

Having a great interest in this local initiative, the Indian Ocean Commission, an inter-governmental structure for regional cooperation with funding from WWF and the French GEF (FFEM), decided to support the local scheme through the Project "Marine Protected Area Network" implemented by WWF Madagascar and Western Indian Programme Office (WWF MWIOPO).



Therefore, a Memorandum of Understanding between the WB Growth Pole Project and WWF MWIOPO was established. This MoU aimed at bringing new tourism infrastructure investments to the new marine park to make it fully operational. These investments are the construction of an interpretation Centre, circuit paths, welcome huts, information panels and ecological toilets, the installation of demarcation and mooring buoys, the

rehabilitation of the lighthouse building and the purchase of a patrol boat. In order to effectively and efficiently manage the newly created marine National Park, an innovative new partnership was established. Indeed, an Association was created in March 2010, regrouping Madagascar National Parks, the Urban Commune and the Regional Tourism Office of Nosy Be with joint and equal responsibilities. In this process, each entity brings in a particular experience to power the local plan. The inputs range from the protected areas management for Madagascar National Parks, to the promotion of sustainable tourism for the Regional Tourism Office, to the integration of the process into the local development for the Urban Commune of Nosy Be.

Nosy Tanihely National Park actually has been fully operational from its official opening in March 2010. Despite the pertaining political crisis, the planned tourist visitors has increased two to three times the expected scenario in the business plan, thus making Nosy Tanihely National Park reach its financial autonomy for this first year. Nosy Tanihely National Park is now becoming the pride of local populations of all of the Nosy Be areas.

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# NEWSBITES

Trimonthly Newsletter from WWF Madagascar and Western Indian Ocean Programme Office

## “He who has eaten protects lemurs”

*No other people in Africa eats as much rice as the Malagasy. Rice fields can be seen everywhere. By 2025 the Malagasy population is expected to double. How can they be feed? How can the growing demand be met without using more land, destroying more forest, doing more slash-and-burn? The SRI approach is one of the solutions.*



The Ivohibe forest corridor lies between Andringitra National Park, and Pic Ivohibe Special Reserve in the Ala Atsinanana (eastern humid forest). If you think of a town in the middle of lush green forest you are wrong. Small remnants can be found on top of steep mountains and in narrow valleys the rest has been cut down. Ivohibe has 40,000 inhabitants and most adults are rice farmers. Malnutrition is common and the people are poor, trying desperately to make a living on their rice fields.

Patrick is a technical trainer at WWF in Ivohibe and is proud to be part of an innovative project aiming to alleviate poverty among the local population and making room for conservation efforts. He teaches “SRI” (Système rizicole intensifié) a new method to grow rice. “It’s very simple” he says. “You have to plant the young rice plants when they have two leaves only. You have to put a single plant in each hole. You have to leave 30 to 40 cm between the

plants. And last but not least, don’t drown them; rice is not an aquatic plant!” This method is quite different to the traditional one. No wonder farmers are sceptical. So, does it work?

Randriamanantsoa Philbert attended one of WWF’s training sessions last year and learnt how to plant rice the SRI-way. He started with 30 acres. A couple of days ago, he brought in his first yield - 9 tons instead of the normal 2 tons! He beams with pride. He has also learnt how to plant vegetables during the contra season. “Now I want to plant more acres according to SRI. I hope to yield 14 tons/ha next year, just like a friend of mine”

Patrick from WWF Ivohibe admits that it takes a while to convince farmers – and their wives. He knows of a case where the wife packed her bags when her husband started SRI and went back to her parents. “You will kill the whole family!” she shouted. After the yield,

she came back joyfully. Her husband has tripled his yield from the first try. This farmer has become a “pilot farmer” and agreed to raise awareness among his neighbours.

WWF agents in Ivohibe hope to start an avalanche, a rice revolution. “Not only can we solve Ivohibe’s problems, but farmers can also start selling the surplus they make with SRI”. With the newly founded rice farmers association, WWF has taken an important step for its efforts to be sustainable and bear fruits. The 37 members are willing to share their experiences, thus making sure their region is self sustainable and their kids can eat.

### More Rice - less deforestation?

How can SRI help to stop deforestation, one of Madagascar’s major problems? Already, people in and around Ivohibe have started abandoning the burning of agricultural waste, thanks to SRI collateral effects. Instead they make compost which they use for vegetable gardens. Indeed, with a tripled yield, they won’t have to cut down more forest for land use. With a full stomach, they can think ahead, envisioning how to protect their richness. What is more, they will have money to plan reforestation activities.

The heads of all WWF offices in Africa gathered this year in Kenya. They pledged that now is the time to act against poverty in Africa. They had always realised how difficult it is to talk about

conserving biodiversity when people are hungry. The Lake Naivasha Statement is a testimony of their will to take the lead within the WWF Network for poverty alleviation. In Madagascar for instance, WWF has been working with communities for 47 years already. In the eastern humid forest, most of WWF’s work is focused on improving livelihoods. “Our experience in poverty alleviation is huge” says Niall O’Connor, Regional Representative of WWF MWIOPO. “Our staff is trained to do conservation work without forgetting the human perspective. It is great to see a community getting healthier and wealthier. And nature benefits from that too”.



The Mpanjaka is a traditional leader, the King of the Bara. This 80 year-old-personality still is a rice farmer, and since last year has been implementing the SRI method. “I have always been interested in planting trees. With SRI and a bigger yield I have more time to sacrifice for reforestation activities”. With wise, shining eyes and a conscious smile on his lips, he adds: “He who has eaten enough will protect the lemurs”

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# NEWSBITES

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## Echati Kassidi - A Climate Witness from the Comoros



I should be about seventy years old, but I'm not quite sure. I have six children, two boys and four girls. They're all grown up now and have all had children themselves... too many to count! One of my sons has three wives!

I've lived in Nindri on the west coast of Anjouan all my life. Now I live in a new quarter of the village near the sea with my oldest daughter and her family. When I was a girl, the village was very small – this quarter didn't exist then. I lived most of my life in the old quarter of the village in a traditional thatch house, but now lots of people are building concrete houses.

My husband and I used to work in the fields together growing bananas, cassava, taro and sweet potatoes, and we also used to fish in the traditional way. But my husband died over ten years ago, leaving me in charge of the household. I carried on working in the fields until

I was too old – it's hard work climbing up the mountains to reach our fields. Now I live with my oldest daughter and help with cooking and looking after the house.

When I was younger, we produced lots in the fields, there were lots of fish and octopus to catch and the climate was cooler. Now it's hotter, and it's much harder to make a living. We have big problems.

After my husband died I could manage to produce enough to get by on our land, but now the same land doesn't provide enough.

I think much of our problems started with the cyclone in 1950. I was just a little girl, but I remember it as if yesterday. It was devastating, ripping up every single tree. As a result, I believe, the soil suffered and erosion started. There was really heavy rain that took the soil away. Since then, every time a cyclone is blowing, our agriculture is being ruined and our fishing too.



Adding its toll, the dry season now is longer than usual, thus causing less rain to fall and more sun to shine.

When we were young we weren't allowed to go into the forest because it was then owned by the French. After Independence and in the aftermaths of the cyclone, people started going up into the mountains to clear fields and grow crops.

My father was a farmer too; he worked for the colonial plantations. I think during his youthful years the fields were even more productive than when I was young. With each generation passing, the land produces less and less. In the future it will surely produce still less.

I don't know what my children and my grandchildren will do – even if they go to school there are no jobs. At least, when the colonists were here there were jobs; now there is nothing to do.

I can't foresee what's going to happen in the future, it's like I am blind. If erosion continues or if we get another cyclone, I don't know how we will survive save a miracle from God.

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## NEWSBITES

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