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**Madagascar & Western  
Indian Ocean Programme**

## COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROJECT in Midongy du Sud



### Context

The Moist Forests in South-Eastern Madagascar contain a very rich biodiversity. The development of the flora and fauna therein is spectacular thanks to a very favorable climate. However, they are threatened by the activities of the local populations who depend on exploiting natural resources to live, on the forest in these circumstances.

With a view to the participatory management of forests with local communities, the WWF has been implementing the Community Forestry Project in Midongy du Sud in three stages since 2003, the second of which is ending this 2007. The project is funded by the Swedish National Development Agency (SIDA). WWF's mission is to protect, develop and restore the forest for the well-being of the local communities.

WWF's intervention sites in the Midongy du Sud region are located in the Forest Corridor between the Midongy du Sud Befotaka National Park and the Vondrozo Forest Reserve. The implementation is carried out in the framework of three main sections:

- Forest conservation;
- Gender approach, and,
- Development of alternatives to slash and burn cultivation (tavy).

### Realizations and impacts

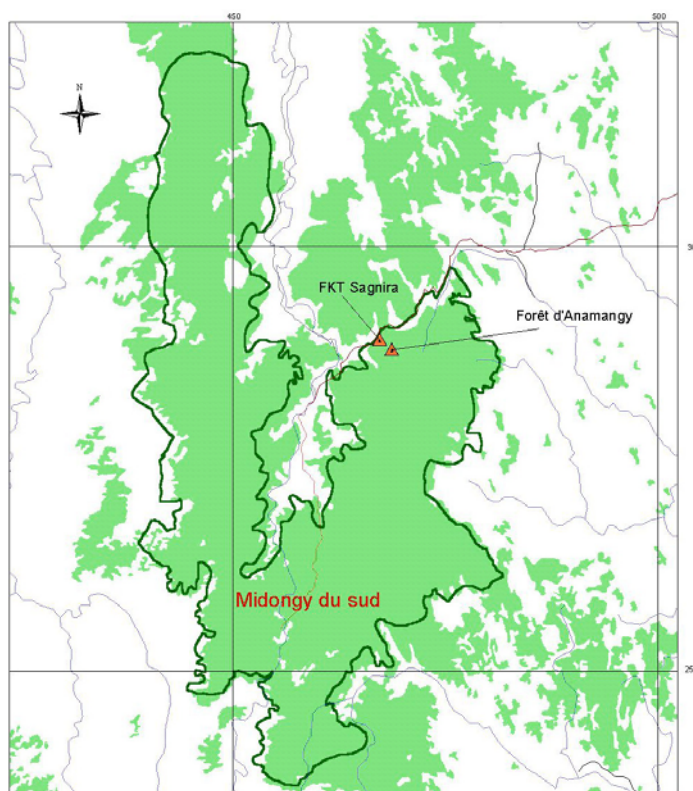
#### → Forest conservation

Five Grassroot Communities (COBAs) were structured to become responsible for the forest participatory management. Around 7,000 ha of forests were delimited, and their potentials were identified during a sampling-based inventory to which the COBAs participated. The development and management schemes are finalized and the officialization of the management transfers of these forests to the COBAs will be celebrated beginning of October 2007.

The Dinas (conventions between the local communities) governing the protection, development and restoration of the forests were elaborated at the grassroot level, then legalized by the administrative authorities. The COBAs already comply to them very rigorously.

The participatory management of the forest allowed to:

- Bring the number of tavys in natural forests down from 11 in 2004 to 02 in 2006;
- Totally eliminate illegal logging in the target forests in 2006 (two illicit exploitations in 2004).



## → The gender approach

Women are often relegated to an inferior rank compared to men in the Antaisaka society, whether in terms of decision-making or in the development of initiatives. Under the project, the WWF raised the COBAs' awareness on the importance of the synergy between women and men in economic development and for their well-being. Currently, women represent 43% of the COBA members, whereas this percentage was under 10% when the COBAs were first structured. To contribute to the well-being of the families, the WWF proceeded to build women's capacities, mainly in terms of cutting and sewing, and in truck farming. Most women now no longer depend on men in terms purchasing basic necessity products for the family (soap, sugar, salt, oil).

## → The development of activities alternative to tavy

In the past, rice was essentially grown through the practice of tavy. This is a deeply rooted cultural heritage. Tavy has led to the destruction of forests, the impoverishment of soils as well as that of farmers. Thanks to the "farmer to farmer" transmission method, new cultivation systems other than tavy are practiced in Midongy du Sud by pilot farmers, such as:

- Irrigated rice-growing through developments of marshy areas;
- Irrigated terrace rice-growing thanks to the construction of micro-dams on heterogeneous ground;
- The development of the "tanety"s through agroforestry systems.

## The challenges

The participatory conservation and management of the forests is one of the indispensable steps for the economic development of the COBA lands to be sustained. Ideally, the COBAs can ensure and take on the responsibility of the activities and responsibilities they were entrusted with at the end of the Project. In the future the WWF will thus center its interventions on:

- Technically supporting the COBAs in the implementation of the Development and Forest Management Schemes;
- Supporting and capitalizing of the gains with the five COBAs;
- Duplicating the activities undertaken in other Communes;
- Validating a development and management scheme of the Corridor in agreement with the Regional Development Plan (*Plan Régional de Développement*).

## Financing:

Swedish International Development Agency – WWF Sweden



WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

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