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Madagascar & Western Indian Ocean Programme

“Protection of lemurs in the forest corridor of South Midongy”



Overall background

Various Projects in the big Forest Corridors of Ala Atsinanana are initiated by WWF Project. The purpose of its mission is to contribute to biodiversity conservation (flora and fauna) along with better living conditions of the rural population. The protection of lemurs in the two Protected Areas - Midongy Befotaka and Vondrozo – of the Forest Corridor is among WWF projects conducted inside the Ala Atsinanana ecoregion.

South Midongy is among the Districts with a high rate of afforestation in the South East region and the presence of Midongy-Befotaka National Park (192,198ha). Because of the population lifestyle, the living flora and fauna are threatened with extinction. The region of Midongy is almost isolated especially during heavy rainy seasons. As the South-East Region where Midongy is situated possesses a humid and tropical climate, dry season is very short, and even inexistant. Thus floods are frequent in this region, and farmers prefer the practice of « tavy » in order to reduce in their manner the risks for bad agricultural produce.

To diversify their food, the farmers are hunting in the forests, the lemurs being among their meat consumption. Some farmers even hunt them for sale.

Yet, the South Midongy area is very rich in biodiversity, and by not taking measures on making people aware of the importance of lemurs and their settlements, and of « tavy » alternatives, pressures on these natural riches will not cease to accentuate. To mention the lemurs only, a recent census in the Corridor indicated the presence of 10 species (13 species were recorded previously in the Midongy-Befotaka National Park)

The Project

To be complementary with the WWF Community Forest Management Project that is conducted in parallel within Midongy Forest Corridor, the present project was set up in November 2005. Its broad objective is to attenuate the pressures on two threatened species of lemurs (*Eulemur collaris* et *Haplemur griseus*) in general and on other lemurs. The final objective of the Project is to make the local population in the Midongy forest Corridor peripheries aware of the endemic species of lemurs and their importance.

To achieve, the Project focuses its activities on :

- Conducting studies to know the lemurs and their importance in the lifestyle of local population better ;
- Information, sensitization, education and communication so as to acquaint the local population with the importance of forests and lemurs ;
- Promotion of small breeding and fish breeding as alternatives to lemur hunting.



Achievements

The main attainments of the Project are :

- Completion of lemur census inside some plots of forests to be transferred to Basic Communities. From these census, the following species were identified : *Microcebus rufus*, *Avahi laniger*, *Eulemur collaris*, *Hapalemur griseus griseus*, *Allocebus trichotis*, *Cheirogaleus major*, *Daubentonia madagascariensis*, *Cheirogaleus major*, *Varecia sp.*, *Prolemur simus*. The census was carried out without any capture, and confirmation of the presence of the threatened *Allocebus trichotis* specie is left to be reinforced.
- A better knowledge of the lemurs by the local population. The Project was able to intervene inside three Rural Communities of the South Midongy District (Ambodisay, Tsararano and Ampatramary) and four Rural Communities of the Vangaindrano District (Ambongo, Bevata, Ranomena et Karimbary) ;
- Motivation of the rural population to get involved in the lemurs protection. The major part of population is illiterate and has never gone beyond the Midongy District. With the Project support, the population was able to understand the complementarity between sustainable management of natural resources and improvement in their lifestyle ;
- A series of trainings of 24 pilot farmers from COBA VONONA at Ampatramary, MMM at Menatraka, FITOVISA at Ambodisay , FITATSA at Tsararano, and FITABE at Bevaho-Ankalatany, concerning the promotion of short-term breeding. Depending on their concern and motivation, 09 farmers opted for poultry farming, 10 for cuniculture and 05 for fish breeding.

Impacts of the Project

- The COBA which collaborate with WWV are more involved in increasing awareness concerning the importance of lemur protection among its members.
- Thanks to the small breeding activities developed by the Project, farmers are aware that there exists other income-generating activities less tiring and exhausting than harsh lemur hunting in forests. The farmers could find other types of meat with better taste (such as rabbits) and, available throughout the year.
- Attenuation of pressures on the lemurs. The farmers have consented to give up lemur hunting (lemur traps disappeared, and lemur huntings intended for consumption or sale are practiced no more inside parts of the forests to be transferred).
- Small breeding practices are in great demand by other farmers nowadays. Nevertheless, in the framework of perpetuating their activities, the farmers under the Project guidance have written down their commitments to training their peers on techniques and transferring same number of animals they obtained through the Project support.



Project challenges

The Project is ending this year, but on account of the positive effects recorded, the main challenges are :

- Finding new financial sources to ensure sustainable lemur conservation ;
- Follow up and appraisal of pilot farmers ;
- Ensuring management of new farmers who indulge in this activity for a better efficiency ;
- Rolling out public awareness in other villages of the Corridor, thus extending the area of intervention and in addition, for a better protection of lemurs along with living conditions of the local population.

Financing : 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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