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Madagascar / West Indian Ocean

ECOREGION CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT IN THE MALAGASY HUMID FOREST (VONDROZO FOREST CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT)

General Context

Vondrozo Forest Corridor is located within the Ex Province of Fianarantsoa and Region of Atsimo Atsinanana. The corridor is 70 km long and has an average width of 10 km. It connects the Forest Reserve of Vondrozo (18 000 ha) to the Special Reserve of the Peak of Ivohibe (3 145 ha) and constitutes, with its forests of low altitude, a significant forest richness of the Region.

Specificity of the forest corridor of Vondrozo lies in its wealth of biodiversity. It was listed there approximately 65 families of plants; seven species of lemurs including three diurnal; more than 60 species of birds, 32 species of amphibians and as many species reptiles. The majority of these species are endemic in Madagascar.

The Forest Corridor acts biological as bridge between the protected surfaces. This forest corridor of Vondrozo recently obtained the temporary statute of protection of New Surfaces Protected as an integral part of largest and complex forest corridor of Fandriana-Vondrozo.

In this Atsimo Atsinanana Region's , the pressures on the forests are also quite present because the populations that live there are made up of different ethnic groups (Betsileo, Tanala, Bara, Antaisaka, Antaifasy, Antemoro) whose main means of livelihood are agriculture and breeding. They are populations that always make the forests retreat increase, from the coast (seaside), up to the crest of the eastern cliff. In Vondrozo area, WWF is mainly working with seven Communes.



Project Vision and goal

The vision for the entire Ecoregion is: **“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.”**

Linked to this vision, the goal of the Project is **to improve the living conditions of the local populations through the sustainable and sustained exploitation of the natural resources**. In the Moist Forest Ecoregion in general and in the two intervention areas in particular, the way of life of the local populations rely on the use of natural resources (forest, land, water). The different functions of these natural resources (ecological, economic, and social) will therefore have to be maintained while offering the poor populations benefits that will enable them to come out of poverty.



Objectives

The overall objectives are defined according to the strategic axes:

- Community Forestry
- Conservation strategies of the corridors
- Education and Fight against poverty
- Exit strategies



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Achievements

- **Community Forestry:** 28 local associations structured. Forest inventories conducted in seven localities. Data analysis of these forest inventories and elaboration of management plan are on process. Management Plan. Following the surrounding populations request, seeing the actions WWF undertook in the neighboring communities, the team could expand their region of action in the north as well as in the south. As a result the inhabitants of the villages in Vondrozo corridor localities, following several sessions to raise awareness regarding the sustainable management of the forest corridor of Vondrozo, have come together and formed associations.
- **Conservation strategy of the corridor:** Raising awareness actions conducted with Participatory Appraisal Communities Actions within targeted villages.
- **Education and Fight against poverty:** The team could carry out other complementary activities launched after the second stage, such as the training the grassroots communities in order to improve their production systems. Moreover, twelve programs to raise awareness about the importance of environment have been broadcast. Capacity building grassroots communities was done through trainings that were complementary to those carried out in 2007. 17 associations from eight rural Communes could benefit from these trainings that focused on rice cultivation, basket composting, and short cycle farming. From among these 17 associations, seven associations applied rice cultivation and basket composting, and the 10 others adopted short cycle farming.

Challenges

- Getting the signature of at least 7 contracts of management transfers: All documents necessary for the signing are being prepared. The Forest Service the principle actor in achieving this objective, shares the same objective.
- Finalizing the management plans of at least five plots of forest for other associations: the Project is now gathering the relevant data and plans to complete the formation of these development plans within eight months, if there are no major setbacks.
- Supporting exchange visits between the associations for next semester: certain associations will finish signing their contracts for the transfer and will carry out many development activities. The grassroots communities that have not been involved will come to notice the progress made by others, and it is expected that they will follow the example.
- Ensuring commitment of administrative authorities



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