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## MADAGASCAR MARINE PROGRAMME

### The Toliara Coral Reef System Conservation Project (Southwestern Madagascar)

#### Context

The southwestern coast of Madagascar supports the third largest coral reef system in the world. Known as the Toliara reef system near the largest city in the southwest, it extends from the north of the Mangoky River (Belo sur Mer) southwards to the village of Androka, a distance of more than 300 km. This region presents a wide variety of marine habitats (barrier and fringing reefs, shallow lagoons and abyssal slopes), and is also one of the very few places on earth where the fabled prehistoric fish «coelacanth» can be encountered. The Vezo people are the traditional inhabitants of the southwestern coast of Madagascar, and continue to practice a traditional lifestyle that is almost entirely dependent on the coral reefs and lagoons which are so characteristic of the region. Human pressure on these magnificent ecosystems are increasing exponentially, due to demography expansion in the region, which provokes an increase in commercial demand leading to intense resources exploitation. Likewise, lack of capacity is observed in terms of coastal community organization to face these uncontrolled overexploitation.

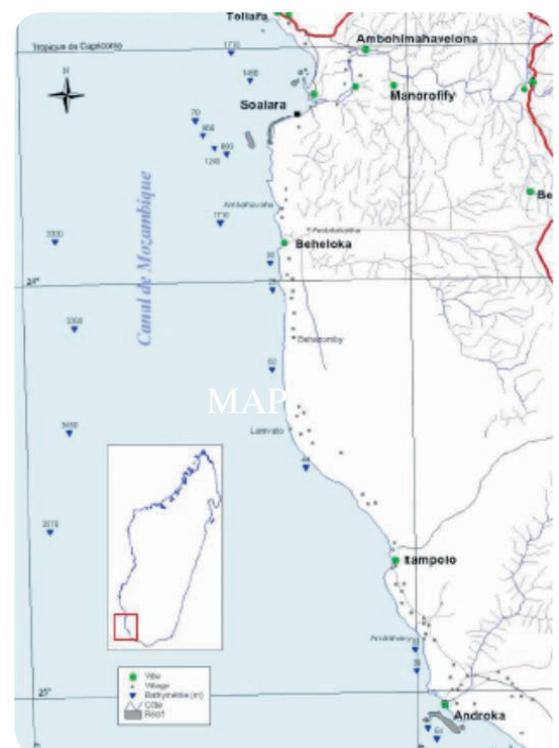
#### Project Objectives

This project aims at conserving this highly important coral reef system and at contributing to the well-being of human communities depending on its resources. Project objectives are to:

- Create a marine protected area (MPA) with several management objectives within the Toliara coral reef system;
- Improve the understanding of the Toliara reef system and its role in peoples' lives;
- Build local and regional capacity to manage the MPA effectively;
- Help communities to manage their own marine and coastal environment, and to take responsibility for its ecological health.

#### Project description

This project targets to reduce directly the above described threats and pressures by establishing a marine protected area (MPA), as well as to set up a better and wise ecosystem management and conservation. For the MPA creation process, the project intervenes in southern Toliara within the rural communes of Anakao, Beheloke, Itampolo and Androka in close collaboration with the National Authority for Protected Areas Management (ANGAP) and the local communities. Marine and socio-economic diagnosis provided the scientific justification for establishing the MPA, and in parallel, communication and awareness raising activities are led by the project agents together with village sensibilization committee members. For a better coordination among different initiatives at the regional level, the project propose to support the creation of a platform led by regional authorities and/or technicians from governmental agencies.



## Achievements

- Marine biological and socio-economic diagnosis realized in November 2006 and sites of biological interest identified. The villagers from Maromena and Befasy have created their community fisheries reserve called Tsitinginy (27 ha) with the assistance of ANGAP and the project staff;
- Capitalization of the information gathered during the diagnosis to be compiled in a final report and organization of the data to be a part of a database later;
- Improved understanding of the Toliara reef system and its role in the communities' lives by resource users through several awareness raising actions conducted by the project staff and different actors in the villages (Vintsy Clubs, theatre players, sensibilisation committees) for several months;
- Creation of 35 listening groups in Anakao, Beheloke and Itampolo;
- Two "Vintsy" environmental clubs within schools in Beheloke and Itampolo rural communes, created in the framework of environmental education;
- Public consultations conducted jointly with the NORAD-funded fisheries project (MG 910) to assess communities feeling if there is a need to sustainably manage natural marine resources and collect suggestions for solutions from them. Workshops were realized in 15 coastal villages and 4 Rural Communes, grouping community representatives from 63 human settlements.
- The marine conservation and sustainable fishery aspects incorporated at the level of communes' baseline documents (communal development plans);
- The National Authority for the Protected Areas Management (ANGAP) supported in setting up an action plan for the MPA creation;
- Catalyzation and participation in crucial on-site action coordination initiatives with the partners (Rodobey platform).

## Challenges

- Further support the official establishment of the MPAs and Community sites;
- Further strengthen the management capacity of local communities and other MPA managers;
- Support the development of a management plan of the coastal zone by integrating MPAs and Community sites;  
Contribute to the development of management tools and policies for these MPAs;
- Continuation of awareness raising actions in accordance with the social and cultural realities;
- Contribution to the well-running of the regional coordination of interventions in the MPA area mainly by taking part in revitalising the Rodobey platform.



## Funding

LODH (Lombard Odier Darier Hentsch)  
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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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