

EVOLUTION AND EVALUATION OF A NON-GOVERNMENTAL  
ORGANIZATION IN SOUTHEASTERN MADAGASCAR:  
A CASE STUDY OF AZAFADY

by

NICOLE L. MENARD

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Dr. Stephen Wooten, Chair of Examining Committee

8/21/08

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Date

Committee in Charge:      Dr. Stephen Wooten, Chair  
   Dr. Katie Lynch  
   Dr. Derrick Hindery

Accepted by:

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Dean of the Graduate School

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International environmental organizations in Madagascar have been criticized for using their power and influence to prioritize biodiversity protection over the needs of the Malagasy population. In this thesis, I examine these claims and evaluate the non-governmental organization (NGO) of Azafady in southeastern Madagascar through interviews, textual analysis, and participant observation. The administrative structure reflects a cross-cultural element, and funding from an international “volun-tourism” program significantly contributes to the implementation of Azafady’s projects. Despite this international influence, interviews with Azafady staff and Malagasy project

participants reveal that this NGO determines their goals according to priorities expressed by Malagasy residents. My data also show the importance of evaluation methods that include participant feedback and can illuminate disparity in perceptions of project results. Azafady exemplifies an exception to the rule of “coercive conservation” in Africa and signals effective ways to approach conservation and development in Madagascar.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Nicole L. Menard

PLACE OF BIRTH: Madison, Wisconsin

## GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene  
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

## DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Arts, International Studies, 2008, University of Oregon  
Master of Science, Environmental Studies, 2008, University of Oregon  
Bachelor of Science, 1996, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

## AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Conservation Biology  
Sustainable Development

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Teaching Assistant, International Studies Program, University of Oregon,  
Eugene, 2005-2008  
Teaching Assistant, Department of Biology, University of Oregon, Eugene,  
2005-2008

## GRANTS, AWARDS AND HONORS:

International Studies Thurber Award for Overseas Study, May 2005  
Environmental Studies Barker Award for Graduate Research, June 2007

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Purpose and overview of the study**

This thesis aims to advance the overall understanding of how conservation initiatives are implemented and perceived in Madagascar. Through a case study, I examine the non-governmental organization (NGO) Azafady which operates conservation and development projects in the southeastern region of Madagascar. I procured a ten-week-long internship with this organization from July 1- September 15, 2007<sup>1</sup> which enabled the participant observation and data collection I present and analyze in Chapters IV and V. The overarching questions I address through this case study include:

- How does Azafady determine their goals and implement projects in Madagascar?
- What are priority concerns identified by Azafady staff<sup>2</sup> and Malagasy participants<sup>3</sup>?
- How does Azafady evaluate their projects and organization?
- What are perceptions of Azafady and their projects according to Azafady staff and Malagasy participants?

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<sup>1</sup> I was also a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer in Madagascar from 2000-2002, where I worked on community development, ecotourism, and ecological monitoring projects near a national park in eastern Madagascar. This provided background experience and a general familiarity with Madagascar that contributed to this study.

<sup>2</sup> I use staff to refer to all people that work for Azafady, including the Director, field agents, construction workers, guides, and office volunteers.

<sup>3</sup> I use participants to refer to Malagasy people that were involved with Azafady projects.

While my research interests are indeed focused on Madagascar, the questions and findings from this case study can contribute to understanding the dynamic relationships between NGOs and their constituents in complex and contested environments. Including diverse perspectives is gaining acceptance in natural resource management through community-based efforts, creating councils to engage more stakeholders, and soliciting community feedback and participation. Evaluations can enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability of NGOs as they move from advocacy towards increased project implementation. Insights that help achieve those objectives and incorporate lesser-known perspectives or the feedback of participants can contribute to project sustainability on multiple levels.

I use political ecology as a theoretical framework for this study. In his book *Political Ecology*, Paul Robbins (2004) offers that this approach relies on “empirical, research-based explorations to explain linkages in the condition and change of social/environmental systems, with explicit consideration of relations of power” (p. 12). Through the seminal works of pioneers such as Piers Blaikie, Harold Brookfield, Richard Peet, and Michael Watts, political ecology has developed into a theoretical tool used to explore the variables influencing ecological degradation, environmental conflict, conservation, and resource control throughout the world. By examining these themes within a historical context and across spatial scales, political ecology can also be used to instigate change. A more thorough understanding of an issue, its causes, and the networks that connect them may yield opportunities for greater equity and sustainability within environmental management and give voice to marginalized groups.

## Overview of Madagascar

I present some general political, socioeconomic, and environmental conditions of Madagascar here to facilitate understanding and clarity throughout the rest of this thesis. Madagascar is the world's fourth largest island<sup>4</sup> and is located in the Indian Ocean, separated from the coast of East Africa by the Mozambique Channel (Appendix A). The country contains an ethnically diverse population stemming from initial settlers from coastal Africa, India, and Indonesia close to 1,500 years ago. Although considered part of Africa, Madagascar has substantial links to Asia as well. For example, the Malagasy language is in the Austronesian family and takes 90 percent of its basic vocabulary from the Maanyan language from southern Borneo (WWF, 2007a).

Madagascar was under French rule from 1896-1960 and experienced the exploitation of natural resources and the human population that was common in colonial relationships. The French colonial government banned the Malagasy practice of *tavy* for subsistence rice production and instead converted forests and prime agricultural land to coffee plantations for export revenue. Lucy Jarosz (1993) has shown how this resulted in a food shortage for the Malagasy people, forced farmers into wage work on cash crop plantations, and created a more sedentary lifestyle so the population could be taxed by the French government. These policies led to an insurrection in 1947 and Madagascar later gained independence in 1960.

The decades following independence have seen several transitions, yet the colonial legacy is an important component to contemporary power relations and political

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<sup>4</sup> At 587,000 km<sup>2</sup> Madagascar is slightly less than twice the size of Arizona or roughly the same size as Kenya (WWF, 2007a).

and social structures. In the 1970s, the Malagasy government established a commitment to nationalization, scientific socialism, and humanist Marxism (Kull, 1996). By the mid 1980s, the administration's ties to France had resurfaced and the government was more open to international relations. This led to a surge in global interventions over Madagascar's economic and environmental concerns. In 2002, Marc Ravalomanana was elected President and has reached out to new allies, notably the United States and South Africa, for economic and political support (Duffy, 2006). He encourages free-market oriented policies such as economic liberalization and is a self-made millionaire. In 2004, Madagascar was the first country to receive grants from the United States' Millennium Challenge Account<sup>5</sup> which recognizes countries with "good governance." Under the democratic leadership of Ravalomanana,<sup>6</sup> who was re-elected in 2006, many governments, donors, development organizations, scientific research institutions, businesses, and Malagasy citizens have expressed optimism for Madagascar's economic growth and human development opportunities.

The 2007 Human Development Report from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) reveals that Madagascar faces significant challenges. The country is

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<sup>5</sup> In 2002, President George Bush decreed that "greater contributions from developed nations must be linked to greater responsibility from developing nations." He then pledged aid money from the United States to be directed into the newly established Millennium Challenge Account. This account is "devoted to projects in nations that govern justly, invest in their people and encourage economic freedom" (White House, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> The previous President, Didier Ratsiraka, was accused of falsifying election results, mismanaging funds, and inhibiting development in Madagascar. Officials within his administration have been charged with jail time and hard labor; he lives in exile in France since 2003 (Azafady, 2003d).

ranked 143 out of 177 in the Human Development Index<sup>7</sup> and has a per capita GDP of \$271. The island's population reached 18.6 million in 2005 and only 26.8 percent is located in urban areas. That 78 percent of the Malagasy population is engaged in agriculture for subsistence and economic activity underscores the prevalence of the rural population and their dependence on the natural resource base.

Varied climatic conditions and vegetation zones are present throughout the island and ultimately affect the agricultural and economic opportunities for the Malagasy population. The climate of Madagascar is influenced by its geographic location in a tropical ocean, geological relief, and wind patterns. There is a 1,200 meter-long mountain ridge with peaks above 2,600 meters high that runs north to south along the length of the island (Appendix B). Madagascar is alternately affected by dry trade-wind conditions in the winter (May-September) and monsoon-driven tropical storms in the summer (December-March). When the trade winds from the east reach the mountain chain, it ensures regular rainfall on the tropical rainforest of the east coast and in the north. This area is also subject to more cyclones during the summer months (Jury, 2003). In contrast, the southwestern region has low rainfall and markedly drier vegetation types. The eastern rainforests give way to the central highlands and the western and southern parts of the country are covered with tropical dry forest. Spiny forest, xeric shrublands, and desert are found in the extreme south (WWF, 2007b) (Appendix C).

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<sup>7</sup> The Human Development Index (HDI) is an alternate way to measure a country's development by incorporating quality of life and human development opportunities rather than solely considering economic performance. It measures GDP per capita, life expectancy at birth, and adult literacy (UNDP, 2007).

As an island that separated from mainland Africa some 165 million years ago, Madagascar has developed unique flora and fauna of incredible variety. Approximately 68 percent of Madagascar's plant life, 92 percent of its reptiles, and 98 percent of its land mammals, including lemurs,<sup>8</sup> exist naturally nowhere else on Earth (WWF, 2008). Eighty percent of Madagascar's bird species are endemic and the island alone possesses more chameleon and baobab species than the rest of Africa (Mittermeier *et al.*, 1987, cited in Kull, 1995). This menagerie of plants and animals, along with the impact of socioeconomic pressures across the country, is the reason for Madagascar's status as one of the world's foremost "hotspots" of biodiversity (Myers *et al.*, 2000).

### **Overview of the thesis**

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter II contains a literature review which provides a background of the discourse on environmental protection measures and potential conflicts. I then address environmental protection in Madagascar and the global factors that influence national policy. I examine an emerging role for NGOs in Madagascar's conservation arena and discuss the evaluation of NGO projects.

Chapter III presents the setting for my case study. I provide an overview of the region and its environmental constraints, Azafady and its work, and the field sites and projects that were selected. I also detail the research methods used to obtain the information that guides this study and discuss their strengths and limitations.

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<sup>8</sup> Lemurs are represented by five families of primates unique to this island. Madagascar is home to 72 kinds of lemurs making Madagascar the world leader in primate endemism and the single highest priority for the conservation of primates (Conservation International, 2007)

Chapter IV integrates my interview, participant observation, and textual analysis data to compile my case study findings. I begin with a presentation of Azafady drawn from several guiding questions regarding their operations. I then complement that data with Malagasy perspectives on both Azafady projects and personal priorities.

Chapter V includes a discussion of the case study and allows me to elaborate on key points identified in Chapter IV within a broader framework. I approach this chapter using comparisons, considerations, and recommendations for the future.

Chapter VI concludes with a summary of my initial research questions and their answers as described in my findings. I consider the role of Azafady across spatial scales and under particular influences and then highlight the relevance of this thesis for conservation and development practitioners.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This literature review discusses environmental ideals as social constructs and introduces the human-nature dichotomy that influences environmental protection measures. I provide historic context to conservation in Africa and explore the national park model and alternatives that aim to include rather than alienate people. I then review the background of current environmental policies in Madagascar and explore arguments regarding the influence of international conservation organizations. I also include a discussion of NGO project evaluations to lay the framework for the case study which is examined in this thesis.

#### **Nature as a social construct**

Many environmental concepts taken for granted as shared universal truths are arguably cultural constructions that change according to developments in scientific knowledge and transitions in power structures and value systems. Candice Slater (2000) described the historic shift in the perception of the world's rain forests that coincided with its expanded currency as "symbolic capital" during the second half of the twentieth century. No longer considered a dark, dangerous jungle, the Amazonian rain forest was now a beautiful, lush Eden that became valuable not only for the goods it produced and contained but also for the positive associations it evoked and allowed others to market.



Similarly, William Cronon (1998) examined changes in the perception of wilderness during the mid 1800s from a “desolate” and “barren” landscape capable of inducing terror to the emergence of a “pristine sanctuary” untouched by civilization and human contamination. With rising conflicts over the value and use of both rainforest and wilderness areas during the last century, it is clear that these varied and fluid environmental perspectives have ramifications for ecological management and protection today.

For some, the appreciation and protection of nature includes an idyllic view of a landscape devoid of people, as though an environment is natural in large part due to the absence of humans (Terborgh & van Schaik, 2002). Many scholars have discussed the problems with this polarizing stance in detail (Peluso, 1993; Cronon, 1998; Neumann, 1998; Dizard, 1999). Applied historically, this belief ignores the reality that most areas of the world have been shaped by humanity in some way during both the past and the present. The irony of discounting the influence of people on the natural landscape before European presence is that they contributed to the “untouched” environment Europeans appreciated and wanted to preserve; however, native people were often expelled from these “pristine” areas by foreigners who felt humans were inconsistent with, and did not belong in, nature. Embracing this human-nature dichotomy enables certain environments (i.e., wilderness, national parks) to be “recreational”- a place to visit as a contrast to daily life that does include human presence and influence on the landscape. This is further discussed in the section on national parks, where a “fortress approach” to protect nature is shown to restrict or relocate resident populations yet encourage international tourism.

Another perspective regarding the human-nature interface is that humans should stop interfering with nature and “live in harmony with it.” While this view acknowledges that humans are a part of nature, many scholars note that this approach can still demonize populations that do live “close to nature” but don’t use it in a way that others see fit (Peluso, 1993; Cronon, 1998; Dizard, 1999; Neumann, 2000). This discourse has particular significance for conservation interventions in developing countries. Early European travelers valorized Africans’ relationship with nature that embraced “primitive simplicity” instead of the artificial, industrial life emerging in Europe and the United States (Adams & McShane, 1990). This preference that Africans continue to live in a “natural state” is commonly attributed to foreigners in contemporary contexts as well. Roderick Neumann (2000) has shown there is resistance from international conservation organizations to human activities that deviate from preconceived notions of “traditional culture” and practices in Africa. Hence, tolerable interactions with nature are constructed from a particular worldview that often denigrates residents’ use, however sustainable their actions, and privileges elite environmental ideals instead.

### **Historical background of conservation in Africa**

Adams and McShane (1990) described how foreigners have long held a romantic idea of Africa and attributed special value to the landscape and wildlife. Alongside this appreciation of nature emerged conservation initiatives fueled by several motives.

William Beinart (1990) suggests that conservation was often a means to influence or respond to the political and economic circumstances of the time. Scientific exploration in

small areas often led to government sponsored forays and political involvement in much of colonial Africa. At times, natural resources were protected only after economic interests had exploited them to a dangerous degree or the colonial government was developing trade and market opportunities. For instance, Nancy Peluso (1993) states that in many parts of Africa, game parks were originally established by colonial governments to protect the larger mammals Europeans valued for hunting and safari viewing. These areas were also set up with the intention to collect fees from hunters. This mode of conservation created a contrived nature designed solely for the tourists' experience and financial support which is arguably similar to the current context of national parks throughout Africa today.

### **Current debates surrounding international conservation**

Neumann (1998) has extensively detailed how ideas of nature, conservation, and Africa in the Western imaginary have been perpetuated around the world, serving as the initial impetus for the establishment of national parks in developing countries. National parks and other protected areas constitute substantial tracts of land in developing countries and have been growing exponentially during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While there were less than 600 protected areas world-wide before 1950, the next four decades saw this figure grow to almost 3,000 (Ghimire, 1994). Reasons for this rapid growth included the rising international concern with deforestation and biodiversity loss, the availability of foreign funding for nature conservation, and the possibility of generating foreign exchange earnings through tourism.

Increasingly, the preservation of biological diversity and the maintenance of ecosystems are seen as the crucial function of protected areas that retain Africa's natural environments and wildlife populations, even when this occurs at the expense of resident populations that live within or around park borders. Preservationist arguments from authors such as Terborgh (1999) and Oates (1999) include the moral imperative of biodiversity protection for the "common good," degradation of nature in the face of human pressures, necessity of strict protection, romanticized notions of ecologically-friendly local use of resources, and the urgency of the biodiversity crisis that merits ecological protection at any cost (Wilshusen *et al.*, 2002). National parks are noted for being "a haven for nature where people are excluded" (Terborgh & van Schaik, 2002) and "bounded spaces where the rights of wild nature have priority over human interests" (Neumann, 2004). This contrasts with other forms of protected areas that may allow regulated extraction or sustainable use by resident populations.

David Harmon (1987) argued that this transfer of the national park model from the United States to developing countries invites serious problems with ethics and resource management. This approach has been deemed "conservation colonialism" by critics and is especially misapplied when it becomes the centerpiece of protected area systems in nations whose governments are not wealthy and whose land is at a premium for the rural population. Yet, the national park model is also eagerly imported in some developing countries by political players who share the ideology of nature preservation or view parks as status symbols or sources of financial support.

Krishna Ghimire (1994) and Paul Ferraro (2003) have vehemently argued that parks privilege the access of some over others. The role of parks in encouraging tourism to developing countries is commonly emphasized, yet the “public” that enjoys the nature is often foreign. The national park model allows biological research and tourism for outsiders while residents’ access is prohibited or restricted. Peluso (1993) also suggests that this imposition of values portrays conservationists as heroes that protect nature from the destruction of resident populations.

Protected areas are often established in densely populated places to guard against human encroachment. As a result, governments, conservation organizations, and influential aid agencies have come to realize that nature preservation cannot be managed successfully without taking into account the subsistence and natural resource requirements of the local population. Wells and Brandon (1992) contend that “it is often neither politically feasible nor ethically justifiable to exclude poor people with limited resources access from parks and reserves without providing alternative means of livelihood” (p. 4). In this vein, attempts to offset residents’ losses have occurred through revenue-sharing with villages on the periphery of national parks, establishing income-generating opportunities, and providing employment from ecotourism (Peters, 1998; Wright, 2003). Joe Peters (1998) has shown that if economic benefits are procured from parks, they tend to go to the government, park managers, or elites. Even if economic and professional opportunities are present for residents, they can still be distributed unequally among people and populations and exacerbate tensions pertaining to the park and surrounding communities. Ferraro (1993) has further demonstrated that these economic

“benefits” may not offset residents’ opportunity costs and can actually erode socio-cultural norms.

The growing awareness that the long-term integrity of protected areas depends on the cooperation and support of resident populations led to Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs) in the 1980s. Throughout that decade, ICDPs grew to number over 100 worldwide, with more than 50 present in 20 countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Alpert, 1996). ICDPs aimed to link nature preservation with local livelihood needs so that the two goals foster each other. This approach uses a “buffer zone” of low intensity resource use around parks in developing countries to facilitate a dual and equal focus on biological conservation and human development (Alpert, 1996).

However, ICDPs have been criticized from several angles. While authors such as Katrina Brandon, John Oates, Carel van Schaik and John Terborgh argue that conservation with development does not protect species and their habitats, still others contend that conservation has remained the primary objective in many ICDPs and development opportunities are not always fully realized (Brechin *et al.*, 2002). Wells and Brandon (1992) also noted that a focus on development or compensation of lost resources can obscure the link with conservation and encourage emigration to the area to partake of economic opportunities. Langholz (1999) suggested that resource compensation or economic alternatives for residents does not always lead to reduced pressures on natural resources and Terborgh (1999) similarly asserted that ICDPs actually increase pressures on protected areas from human use. In addition, these projects are locally-based but externally funded. Christian Kull (1996) points out that while ICDPs aim to reach a point

where park management structures are self-sufficient and foreign control and support is no longer required, they are quite costly and most have proven ineffective. Oates (1999) offers that since the economic incentives cannot outlast the need to protect nature, most ICDPs are unsustainable.

Similar trends to reconcile nature protection with the needs of people gained momentum in the 1990s and include “community-based” conservation (CBC) efforts with “local participation.” Western and Wright (1994) and Agrawal (1997), among many others, have discussed the merit and obstacles of this approach. CBC reverses top-down implementation by focusing on the people who actually bear the costs of nature protection (e.g., when residents are not allowed access to forest products and are not given alternative means of income, materials, and food). Instead, CBC aspires to make local people the chief beneficiaries and custodians of their natural resources through legitimate participation and power. The goal is for residents to regain some control over the use of their resources through sustainable environmental management and, with direct or indirect conservation practices, improve their economic well-being (Western & Wright, 1994). This approach addresses the social justice issues of unequal access, external power, and disenfranchised groups seen within other environmental conservation strategies.

Still, there are several points of concern regarding CBC. Scholars duly recognize the challenge of “community” in this approach, where not all residents may be involved and participating in an equal way or representing similar interests within the community (Agrawal, 1997; Kull, 2002). The concept of “participation” receives similar critiques regarding who participates and the legitimacy of power and decision-making afforded

residents (Brechin *et al.*, 2002). Jeffrey Hackel (1998) notes that governments and conservation organizations alike are apprehensive that residents will not manage the environment in a way that satisfies their expectations and may be hesitant to hand over control to manage local resources. Both ICDPs and CBC, along with protected areas, have been implemented around the world with various outcomes and I will discuss their presence in Madagascar in the following sections.

### **Overview of environmental issues in Madagascar**

In the case of Madagascar, numerous parallels can be drawn from this discussion of conceptualizations of nature and its implications for conservation. Scientific studies, in particular, have been integral in disseminating information about Madagascar to the rest of the world and igniting international interest. In the contemporary context, Madagascar has entered into global recognition largely through the lens of conservation (Kull, 1996; Gezon, 2000). The predominant discourse about Madagascar centers on its amazing biodiversity which contributes to the perception of Madagascar as a last bastion of African wilderness and wildlife. Protection of the island's endemic species and the ecosystems that support them is therefore deemed an urgent priority for the international conservation community.

Accompanying this celebration of singular species in Madagascar is a crisis narrative of deforestation. Though deforestation rates have slowed to .55 percent per year during 2000-2005 (Conservation International *et al.*, 2007, cited in Raik, 2007), they remain high and impact hydrology, biodiversity, and carbon cycles. It is estimated that



Madagascar only retains close to ten percent of its primary vegetation (Myers *et al.*, 2000) yet considerable discrepancies exist about the extent and cause of this change in forest cover. Declining forests have been linked to the local practices of shifting or slash and burn agriculture called *tavy*, charcoal production, collection of fuel wood and construction materials, and mining excavations (Ingram & Dawson, 2006; Raik, 2007).

Global forces affecting deforestation in Madagascar include historical colonial exploitation, timber concessions and export, and political and economic factors (Jarosz, 1993; Kull, 2002). Lucy Jarosz (1993) has contextualized the past and present deforestation in Madagascar by showing that the colonial government exploited forest products from 1895 until 1940 under the guise of “rational” management until eventually they created forest reserves to assuage their own misuse. It is estimated that almost 75 percent of Madagascar’s primary forest was destroyed during the first 30 years of French rule (Jarosz, 1993). This historical background of intensive deforestation by colonial powers in Madagascar is an important consideration as rural people are castigated as the primary cause of declining forests (Wright, 1994; Kull, 1996). Kull (2004) has further explained the cultural importance of *tavy* which is often overlooked in conservation policies. Both Jarosz and Kull suggest that many of the current initiatives to mitigate deforestation (e.g., intensive agriculture, bans on *tavy*) are reminiscent of colonial imperatives and are thus met with similar resistance.

Examining nature conservation in Madagascar through the lens of social construction and political ecology helps to understand the diverse views of ecological use, management, value, and protection according to myriad groups. Paul Robbins (2004)

argues that these variations can often lead to contentious conservation efforts and conflicts over rights and access to natural resources. Indeed, the environmental values of the international community are arguably different than residents' conceptualization of nature as an ecological base for their livelihood. Anthropologists Kottak and Costa (1993) argue that much of the Malagasy population feels ignored due to the overwhelming conservation focus of the international community:

Many Malagasy intellectuals and officials are bemused and irritated that international groups seem more concerned about lemurs and other endangered species than about Madagascar's people....'The next time you come to Madagascar, there'll be no more Malagasy. All the people will have starved to death and a lemur will have to meet you at the airport' (p.337)

The international proclivity to preserve the environment while it is still in a "natural" state and highlight lemurs as charismatic "ambassadors for conservation" indicates that cultural values are at odds (Medley, 2004). This prominent focus on biodiversity as wildlife habitat elucidates the priorities of powerful international donors and conservation organizations in Madagascar and obscures the population's pressing needs and concerns (Kull, 1996). Like elsewhere around the world, conservation efforts in Madagascar struggle with the precarious balance of serious threats to both ecological and human viability.

### **Background to the conservation framework in Madagascar**

Madagascar entered into global environmental consciousness in the 1980s with the crisis narrative of rapidly disappearing forests and wildlife. In response, international

conservationists and donors began to promote environmental policies and protection. In 1988, the government of Madagascar prepared Africa's first National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) to be executed in three 5-year phases, starting in 1991.<sup>9</sup>

Conservation activities rapidly accelerated after the creation of the NEAP, which received over US \$120 million from foreign donors to aid in the initial implementation of the first phase (Gezon, 1997).

Several authors have examined some underlying factors of the conservation measures developed in Madagascar during this pivotal time. Madagascar incurred a billion dollar debt by 1980 to strengthen education, transportation, communications, and industrial development. These investments were stimulated both by northern pressure and national needs and brought Madagascar under the International Monetary Fund, World Bank's Structural Adjustment Program, and conditionality of aid (Kull, 1996; Duffy, 2006). The combination of concerns over economic and environmental conditions in Madagascar paved the way for subsequent conservation initiatives. Indeed, the development of a NEAP, guided by the World Bank, international donors, and NGOs, served as a requirement for the receipt of International Development Association (IDA) funds (Medley, 2004). Gezon (2006) argues that Madagascar's "NEAP corresponded, was conditionally linked, and was ideologically compatible with structural adjustment programs that were designed to make Madagascar competitive in a global capitalist market economy" (p. 140). This focus on conservation and sustainable development was very attractive to donors like the World Bank who were looking to improve their tarnished image from sponsoring environmentally destructive projects elsewhere in the

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<sup>9</sup> The dates of these three phases differ throughout the literature by 1-2 years

world (Gezon, 1997). By supporting conservation initiatives in Madagascar, a country thought to be on the verge of ecological disaster, donors gained clout and credibility for their “greening of aid” and could showcase their environmental commitment (Kull, 1996).

At this time, the Malagasy government was receptive to conservation interest and responded with concern as well as an open door policy towards international collaboration (Kull, 1996; Gezon, 2000). The concepts of conservation of natural resources and protected areas fit into an overall strategy for Madagascar to develop industry and international trade as well as address concerns over the population’s resource base. It is difficult to gauge if the national government was coerced into conservation policies by economic need or how ideas of environmental degradation would translate into conservation on Malagasy terms alone. Regardless, the conservation agenda in Madagascar is shaped to some degree by international dynamics and demands.

The first phase of NEAP (1991-1997) focused on the creation of protected areas<sup>10</sup> and the development of institutions and policies to oversee them. This period was characterized by the ICDP model and the creation of a Malagasy park service (ANGAP, or *Association Nationale pour la Gestion des Aires Protégées*) to help coordinate the management of these protected areas. While the park service remained to manage the protected area system, ICDPs were eventually discontinued in Madagascar due to the high cost, the need for habitats larger than those afforded by official protected areas, the ineffective linkages between conservation and development, and the centralized model that did not recognize specific local conditions (Gezon, 2006; Raik, 2007).

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<sup>10</sup> Kull (1996) lists 14 ICDPs and 3 new national parks that existed at this time.

The second phase of NEAP (1998-2003) was then designed to expand conservation initiatives to a landscape approach that still included participatory approaches to conservation and development. Lisa Gezon (2000) and Kimberly Medley (2004) describe the intention of recognizing the importance of environments beyond parks and peripheral zones. The landscape approach gives value to human impacted lands, like agricultural areas that affect food security, and intends to meet the needs of a broader population which is not exclusively in close relation to protected areas. Furthermore, this approach addresses the structural problems of ICDPs, where managerial authority was often in the hands of international NGOs or expatriates. Instead, the Malagasy park service replaced ICDPs as managers of protected areas, thereby diminishing the tendency of international actors to have undue power over Madagascar's environmental management and protection (Gezon, 2000).

In a move towards decentralization, a policy framework (GELOSE, or *Gestion Locale Sécurisée*) was established in 1996 to accommodate the Malagasy government's financial and administrative constraints in natural resource management and devolve some power to communities. Kull (2002) and Raik (2007) state that GELOSE contracts aim to promote better resource management and stewardship through local level decisions, policy making, and enforcement and are applicable to forest, pasture, wildlife, and water resources. With a requisite intermediary, often an NGO, acting as an environmental mediator between a community and the government, this legislation has allowed more opportunities for "community-based" forest management and conservation in Madagascar through contractual agreements, rights, and responsibilities recognized by

all parties. The policy of Contractual Forest Management (GCF, or *Gestion Contractualisée des Forêts*) further simplifies this process by requiring only the state and a village association and taking out the intermediate entity. However, Raik (2007) argues that these governance arrangements are substantially controlled and that the third parties, when present, can impart their agendas within the zoning areas and management plans. These GELOSE and GCF contracts comprised a significant component of the second phase of NEAP, with over 400 contracts currently existing throughout Madagascar.

The third phase of NEAP (2004 -2008) includes an initiative to expand the protected area network of Madagascar. During the World Parks Congress in South Africa in 2003, President Ravalomanana pledged to increase the protected areas from 1.7 million hectares to 6 million hectares by 2012 in accordance with the recommendation from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to maintain ten percent of the country's land area under protection (Raik, 2007). This proposed network is known as the System of Protected Areas of Madagascar (SAPM, or *Système des Aires Protégées de Madagascar*) and the majority of new protected areas are likely to be co-managed by communities partnering with government through structures and various intermediary partnerships set up through the GELOSE framework (Raik, 2007). Duffy (2006) notes that the meaning of protected area was changed at this time to include multi-use areas instead of solely national parks in order to become a more practical and locally acceptable endeavor.

### **The influence and evaluation of NGOs' conservation efforts**

Along with global economic forces, NGOs have played an active role in Madagascar. Duffy (2006) argues that environmental NGOs have an increasingly close relationship with the World Bank in this country that helped to facilitate the creation of the NEAP and work toward common ecological and economic goals. In Madagascar, international environmental NGOs like the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Conservation International (CI), and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) hold a position similar to bilateral donors or key financial institutions, which is unusual. These NGOs are especially powerful because of their willingness to criticize governments, private companies, and international institutions for their part in environmental failures and for their own credibility as “knowledge brokers” which can design and implement conservation visions in Madagascar (Duffy, 2006).

Duffy (2006) has shown that these NGOs work together with other actors, including donors and the Malagasy government, to determine environmental policy in several ways. They were often instrumental agents in the NEAP (as the operating agency of ICDPs or the liaison in CBC efforts), the organizers for debt for nature swaps, funders of conservation projects, and effective lobbyists to their home and Malagasy governments to advocate conservation agendas (Kull, 1996; Duffy, 2006). For instance, since the 1980s, WWF and CI have arranged US \$8 million towards debt for nature swaps, where the revenue released was targeted for specific conservation projects (Kull, 1996; Duffy, 2006). While the World Bank was the major funder of the NEAP, WWF was the primary donor for the organizations that implemented it (Gezon, 2000; Duffy, 2006). Furthermore,

CI and WCS were credited with persuading President Ravalamanana to increase the amount of protected areas in Madagascar, known as the “Durban Vision Initiative” (Duffy, 2006). Gezon (2006) concludes that Madagascar’s environmental policies have been “significantly molded by discourses and practices at nonlocal levels” (p. 140).

Madagascar’s visible transition to a democracy in 1993 attracted aid from countries like the United States and gave environmental NGOs even more influence on national politics (Kull, 1996). The influx and availability of big money served to change the nature of these NGOs when they, too, received much of their budget from multi- and bilateral aid and became embedded in the bureaucratic system of environmental conservation and management in Madagascar. Gezon (2000) described the changing role of NGOs as going from activism (advocating for new priorities in funding and programs) to directly managing conservation activities. Medley (2004) provides a similar assessment that environmental NGOs are “changing the nature of their influence from consciousness-raising groups with a social mission to public-service contractors driven by donor established markets” (p. 334). With this, NGOs have become involved in environmental conservation issues in Madagascar both as critics from the outside and as mechanisms in the implementing structure.

Yet can NGOs provide critical analyses of themselves in this emerging position? In addition to negotiating their responsibilities within the complex network of donors, governments, Malagasy residents, and other partners, NGOs need to thoroughly assess their work within this new role. Mac Chapin (2004) expressed his concern that, in general, growing international environmental NGOs with a large influx of funds may



focus on environmental protection at the expense of vulnerable people, discourage local participation, be heavily influenced by donors' agendas, hesitate to collaborate with other NGOs, and skew the presentation of program results to show only their best work while downplaying any faults. Gezon (1997) argues that NGOs' "monitoring and evaluation process must actively encourage an atmosphere of critical self-examination where projects may analyze both what went wrong and what to do better next time" (p. 469). This honest approach could foster constructive change and the flexibility to adapt to unforeseen consequences as NGOs navigate new roles and responsibilities in Madagascar.

To this end, Meyer and Singh (2003) describe a basic framework of two approaches that can be used to evaluate NGO project outcomes: objective/evaluation and subjective/participatory evaluation. The first refers to a standard paradigm of seeking quantitative facts in an objective, technocratic manner. Emphasis is placed on measurable variables such as timeliness, efficiency, and economic cost and these evaluations may maintain a focus on the technical perspective of NGO personnel. Medley (2004) cautions that these evaluations tend to focus on "numbers" and not the "quality" of local participation, where quantitative data are often provided to indicate project success but may not accurately reflect the impact and outcome of the project. For example, showing that 44 women received training does not necessarily mean that they were proficient at these skills, continued them after training, or gained the capacity to provide for their family on a regular basis. Though an objective evaluation tends to look at a project in isolation and at the "end" of its completion, it can serve as a valuable learning tool for the NGO and encourage accountability (Meyer & Singh, 2003).

The second evaluation technique described by Meyer and Singh (2003) concentrates on the qualitative aspects of the project, assessing what is taking place, and making recommendations accordingly. It is called a participatory evaluation because it attempts to evaluate intangible outcomes, such as gender relations or power dynamics, and consider the impact of the project as well as the influences on the project. Furthermore, this approach often takes place on a continuous basis or at intervals. Though the authors caution about other factors that can influence evaluations (e.g., the “audience,” the position and perspective of the evaluator, or when the evaluation takes place) they argue that the use of both techniques together can provide an improved approach to NGO project analysis.

Despite pioneering efforts from Robert Chambers and the growing consensus within many NGOs to include more participatory feedback, evaluations often lack the perspective of the local project participants. Medley (2004) states that absent from many NGOs’ monitoring assessments are “measures of participation that focus on local knowledge, or learning about...locally defined visions for sustainable development” (p. 334). Medley (2004) further showed that community interactions and feedback provided the best measure of how communities participated in local decisions and projects. Yet, this approach was dropped from the evaluation process in Madagascar because its effectiveness was only gauged by how it contributed to other goals of the organization (e.g., the amount of land protected or degree of village participation in projects). Gezon (2000) corroborated that social impact assessments are often ignored or used to serve the NGO and donor interests and echoed the call for more local participation in project

evaluations in Madagascar. This exemplifies the need to improve dialogue between NGOs and their constituents through participatory evaluations in order to move away from solely external actors creating and assessing conservation and development projects in Madagascar.

### **Summary**

This literature review introduces the conservation debate regarding ecological protection and the feasibility of combining environmental conservation with sustainable development. This argument is then applied to the contentious environment of Madagascar, where scholars have shown that international environmental NGOs have the power and support to determine policy and implement conservation programs but often do not critically evaluate their work or seek Malagasy feedback on projects.

My case study adds to this body of knowledge by interviewing an NGO about their motives, methods, and evaluation techniques regarding conservation and development projects in Madagascar. Furthermore, I contribute to the discussion on local perspectives by providing Malagasy responses concerning personal priorities and engagement with NGO projects.

### CHAPTER III

#### CASE STUDY SETTING

This chapter provides background information to contextualize the case study. First, I explain the development concerns and environmental challenges unique to this region of Madagascar. I then introduce Azafady's work and administrative structure followed by a description of the field sites and projects that I analyze in Chapters IV and V. I detail the methods of data collection and state the limitations of these methods as well as their strengths to inform the results of this study.

#### **Overview of the region**

This case study is situated in the Antanosy region of southeastern Madagascar (Appendix D). The largest town serving as a hub for the area is Tolagnaro, known also by its French name of Fort Dauphin. This coastal town with a population of close to 58,000 once served as an active port, evident by the shipwrecks off the coast and the remains of the French fort. There is no direct road from Fort Dauphin to the capital city of Antananarivo, but the region can be reached intermittently by roads going north up the east coast and south towards connecting road networks. These arteries from Fort Dauphin are not consistently paved and are often impassible during the rainy seasons. There is also a small airport to facilitate travel to different parts of the island for those that can afford it, namely tourists and businessmen.

The isolation of this area has resulted in very limited investment by the government or intervention by development organizations over the last several decades (Azafady, 2006b). The people of this region suffer from severe poverty which is exacerbated by inflation that has caused the price of goods and transportation to increase by up to 150 percent since 2004 (Azafady, 2006c). Accompanying this poverty are the highest rates of disease and infant mortality (34 percent in some communities) and the lowest rates of sanitation and literacy (98 percent illiteracy in some villages) found throughout Madagascar (Azafady, 2006c). These constraints pose significant risks to communities and inhibit development opportunities in the region.

### **Overview of environmental challenges**

While Madagascar is known for its overall biodiversity, the mountainous strip of eastern rainforest is especially renowned for its wildlife and tourism potential. Yet, the south also teems with plant and animal life in the spiny forest and coastal ecosystems. A notable part of the landscape in this region is the remaining littoral forests. These are a subtype of rainforests that occur on sand and exist only in fragments on the eastern coast of the island (Appendix E). Remaining stands are no more than 2-10 kilometers in width and are a top conservation priority for the country. Some scientists have identified littoral forests as one of five key areas that are crucial for the conservation of endemic plant species in Madagascar (Gouvenain & Silander, 2003).

The area of Fort Dauphin falls between the forested east and the arid south. These vegetation zones and the accompanying climate, along with the geographic location on

the coast in the Indian Ocean, impact the economic and agricultural opportunities of the region. The local climate limits the opportunities for economically viable crops like vanilla in the north or nutritious produce that can be grown in the highlands. Instead, the south is more focused on the cattle-based culture of Madagascar, where wealth is measured by how many cattle a man has and manhood is initiated by stealing the cattle of others (Jolly, 2004). The landscape allows for grazing, herding, and moving cattle to other pastures or markets and thus cattle can provide a source of meat, income, and status for some.

Extreme weather conditions and natural disasters such as cyclones, flooding, and drought also contribute to the challenges of this region. The area experiences frequent tropical storms and cyclones that disrupt agricultural harvests, destroy homes and infrastructure, and lead to food insecurity, malnutrition, disease and even death. Officials from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs called the 2007 cyclone season in Madagascar the worst “in the recorded history of the country” due to the six cyclones that ravaged the island (IRIN, 2007).

In addition, numerous environmental qualities inhibit the production of food including sandy soil, minimal water for irrigation, soil erosion, and lack of available or arable land. Some staple crops are eked out of the earth, such as rice and cassava, which are grown throughout the island. However, cassava production requires a significant amount of labor for weeding and rice production is often threatened by floods and droughts. For instance, heavy rains in 2005 prompted a humanitarian famine relief effort

from the European Union. These factors combine to make food security a serious pressure for the population.

Amidst this surrounding poverty, a proposal to mine ilmenite<sup>11</sup> along the southeastern coast of Madagascar was considered in the late 1980s and approved in 2002. This was touted as bringing much needed sources of employment for residents as well as national income. The operating agency is QIT Madagascar Minerals (QMM), a Malagasy company jointly owned by Rio Tinto PLC (United Kingdom) and the Malagasy government (Vincelette *et al.*, 2003).

While this mining enterprise may contribute to the local economy, it may also compound environmental degradation. The most serious concern is the destruction of the endangered littoral forests that is anticipated to occur with mining activities. In addition to the conservation value previously mentioned, local people in the 44 villages surrounding this mineral extraction zone rely heavily on forest products for fuel wood, construction materials, food and medicine, so the loss of forests is problematic from a subsistence as well as conservation perspective (Ingram & Dawson, 2006).

In light of the criticism that mining would progressively remove the remaining littoral forest fragments, QMM embarked on an environmental program to evaluate potential effects on residents and their environment (Vincelette *et al.*, 2003). This Social and Environmental Impact Assessment (SEIA) from mining and outside consultants predicted that mining would only hasten the inevitable outcome. Their assessments argue that if current deforestation rates remain, then this littoral forest would be completely

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<sup>11</sup> Heavy mineral sands mined in this area are a source of titanium oxide, principally the mineral ilmenite, which is used as a raw material for pigment production (Vincelette *et al.*, 2003).

gone anyway by 2040; furthermore, they contend that much of this forest is already degraded (Ingram & Dawson, 2006). Still, QMM plans to restore and replant areas after mining. QMM has also selected, in consultation with surrounding communities, some of the least degraded littoral forest fragments to be designated as conservation zones. However, it has been shown that permitted mining areas throughout Madagascar have overlapped with protected areas, potential protected areas, and mining-exclusion zones despite efforts to regulate these inconsistencies (Cardiff & Andriamanalina, 2007). This diminishes QMM's claims to conservation since protection within these zones cannot be ensured. A palpable tension exists between the socioeconomic needs, ecological vulnerability, and desires of those holding political clout in the area.

### **Overview of organizations active in the region**

Despite the isolation which keeps local needs in relative obscurity compared to other parts of the country and around the world, several international organizations do now operate in southeastern Madagascar. Large, multi-lateral organizations have an intermittent presence, working especially in the aftermath of a natural disaster or health crisis. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has responded with humanitarian aid and assistance to the many cyclones that have devastated communities (IRIN, 2007). UNICEF and the World Food Program (WFP) have also addressed children's malnutrition and identified that over half of the children between ages one and five are undernourished in the Antanosy region (Azafady, 2008b). Even with these large and influential organizations collaborating and contributing assistance, UN officials have



stated that local needs are great and donor supplies, human capacity, and financial support are quickly drained. They also lament the lack of publicity given to these disasters in the global media (IRIN, 2007).

Various NGOs also work in the area and cover environmental issues, community health, and economic development. A prominent conservation NGO operating in the south is the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), which focuses on wildlife conservation and forest management. Flora and Fauna International also works to conserve threatened species and ecosystems. CARE-International aims to alleviate risks through disaster management and food security programs. John Snow, Inc. (JSI) addresses health concerns through projects encouraging vaccinations and better nutrition. Some smaller grassroots NGOs, such as the Andrew Lees Trust and Azafady, have an approach that integrates social and environmental factors in their community development work. All of these organizations are international in scope, with offices in Europe or North America and key personnel positions filled by foreigners. Azafady is the subject of this case study.

### **Overview of Azafady**

Azafady means “excuse me” or “please”<sup>12</sup> in the Malagasy language. The organization has chosen to operate only in a small concentrated area of the region in order to most capably serve those most neglected but in need. Azafady has determined three priority areas of work: health and sanitation, sustainable livelihoods, and sustainable natural resource management. Their efforts to integrate these areas reflect the understanding that environmental concerns must be addressed through a framework that

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<sup>12</sup> Or “may it not be taboo to me” in a more literal translation.

is relevant to Malagasy people. Thus, environmental conservation issues are considered along with the population's more immediate concerns regarding health and subsistence.

Azafady describes itself as a Malagasy NGO, though there are international or cross-cultural elements to its organizational structure. Azafady was initially set up as a Scottish charity in 1994 and then become a registered charity in England and Wales in 1999. At the same time, Azafady developed an NGO that had Malagasy staff doing on the ground work in Madagascar which was funded by the UK charity.

There is an office in London, England that is the base for "Azafady UK" and an office in Fort Dauphin, Madagascar for "Azafady Madagascar." Azafady UK serves to increase public awareness internationally, raise funds for the NGO projects and overhead, and manage the initial stages (e.g., recruitment, travel, visas) of the Pioneer program which will be described shortly. Two full time employed staff and numerous volunteers operate the Azafady UK office (of which I only interacted with the Managing Director).

Azafady Madagascar is the NGO responsible for the administrative, financial, and technical aspects of the operations in the field. The NGO employs a handful of foreign and close to 50 Malagasy personnel. The founder and Director of the NGO is from Australia and has lived and worked in Fort Dauphin for close to 20 years. The administrative staff is comprised<sup>13</sup> of two British and several Malagasy employees, and the field coordinators and their support staff are Malagasy men and women from the region. There are also office volunteers, most of whom are Europeans that were Pioneers at an earlier time and have returned to work on a particular project (e.g., teaching English).

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<sup>13</sup> As of September 2007; the office environment, especially foreign personnel, is fluid and changing.

Additionally, Azafady runs a program for interns and volunteers from abroad called the Pioneer program. This opportunity allows “Pioneers” to be engaged in Azafady projects, gain work or life experience, and enhance their global awareness. Pioneers are required to pay significant costs for this experience (approximately \$3,900). There are four ten-week programs throughout the year, with each group comprising 15-25 Pioneers. This program greatly increases the funding for and foreign presence in Azafady projects.

The intent of my thesis is to examine how this multifaceted NGO operates and is perceived by Malagasy residents. Additionally, I assess how Azafady evaluates their projects both administratively and for the communities they serve. My internship through the Pioneer program allowed such investigations and findings from this case study can add to the body of knowledge regarding the range and dynamics of NGOs involved in conservation in Madagascar.

### **Overview of field sites**

My internship provided access to three main sites: Tsihalagna, Evatra, and Lanirano. Tsihalagna is a small, rural *fokontany* (group of hamlets) within the commune (district) of Mahatalaky in the Antanosy region of southeast Madagascar. Because it is a new partner community with Azafady, there are only estimates that the population is approximately 1,200 people. Tsihalagna is an inland *fokontany* located several kilometers from the hilly Tsitongambarika forest and is predominantly an agricultural community.

Tsihalagna is one of the most remote locations within this commune. Its three hamlets are situated five kilometers from the nearest road and are without health facilities,

safe drinking water, electricity, small shops and until recently, a school. Community members expressed the challenges their children faced to obtain an education and requested to work with Azafady to build a school. The nearest facility was 15 kilometers away but children from Tsihalagna were present in schools throughout the surrounding area in order to learn.

Furthermore, in the wet season the *fokontany* becomes inaccessible because of impassable rivers. The torrential rains and subsequent river velocity have prevented children from attending the available schools and isolate the village as a whole. I experienced this first-hand in late August 2007 when the rains and rising water levels necessitated that materials be left at this site because they could not be safely transported across the river. Due to the subsequent flooding of the area, the Azafady field crew (housed in tents) had to move into the newly constructed school building for shelter. In the dry season, crocodile attacks pose a real threat to river crossings as well.

Evatra has a total population of 1,151 contained within its two large and independent hamlets named Agnena and Ambanihampy. It is situated close to the degraded littoral forest within the commune of Mandromodromotra (Azafady, 2003b) Evatra is a coastal town and is a 15 kilometer walk from Fort Dauphin along a windswept bay; it can also be reached by boat along a backwater system of brackish lakes. This proximity to a major town that foreigners visit, along with the picturesque beaches featured in postcards, has also made it a tourist destination in recent years.

Azafady has been involved with the community of Evatra since they supported the residents in their fight against displacement by mining company operations in the late

1990s. Evatra was originally planned as the site of a port for mining activities, but the company had to withdraw and move it to another location.

Evatra is subject to the same natural resource pressures of other villages in the region, including droughts, cyclones, and limited firewood for cooking. In addition, it is a fishing village rather than agriculturally-based, so residents need to buy staple foods and vegetables. Coupled with the environmental factors, this can lead to food insecurity at times. Heavy rains in 2005 flooded rice fields and crop production was minimal. The price of imported rice and cassava then increased due to these crop failures (Azafady, 2007d). Currently, Azafady has projects addressing food security issues through home vegetable gardens and limiting forest degradation through the use of fuel-efficient stoves.

Azafady built a demonstration site and training center in Lanirano in 2003. Situated on the outskirts of Fort Dauphin, where the Azafady office is located, the Lanirano facility houses a tree nursery, gardens, beehives, classroom, kitchen, toilets, and a campground to accommodate Pioneers, visiting researchers, and other guests. The Lanirano annex is designed as part of the sustainable livelihood initiatives and aims to provide training in multiple skills and build capacity for residents in areas surrounding Fort Dauphin.

### **Overview of field projects**

I participated in several Azafady projects during the course of my internship with the Pioneer program; projects implemented at each site are described here. Azafady selects projects for the Pioneer program to be involved with and this process was

influenced by multiple factors. Though I was most interested in the environmental component of Azafady's work, the months of July-September are not the most conducive for agricultural and conservation projects in Madagascar due to the cold and rainy conditions. Instead, there was incentive to finish building a school before September so students could start their academic year on time.

Besides the seasonal considerations, Azafady's program was also guided by their available workforce. The organization receives increased applications for their Pioneer program during these months as many students and others find themselves on holiday from their academic or professional responsibilities. The high number of volunteers accepted during this time (25 compared to 8-22 for other seasons and years) increased the capacity of Azafady to complete projects that require significant funding and manual labor.

With this in mind, in 2007 Azafady embarked on their largest construction project to date armed with 25 Pioneers and 8 Malagasy staff. It took the majority of the summer to finish building a school, teacher's house, and school latrines in the new partner community of Tsihalagna. This construction consisted of physically demanding labor such as making and mixing cement, sawing and chiseling wood beams, constructing windows and doors, building school desks, laying rock foundations, digging pits, making and laying bricks and painting walls and trimmings. Because the partnership with Azafady is new, this work in Tsihalagna was coupled with opportunities to engage the residents in community mapping exercises and conduct household interviews to provide baseline information for future interactions and collaborations.

The remaining time was devoted to projects of shorter duration at two locations: Evatra and Lanirano. Unlike Tsihalagna, Azafady has a historical presence in Evatra over the last decade. In 2006, Azafady started new projects here that address the issues of food security and limited forest resources. Gardens can improve the diet by producing food that is nutritionally beneficial (whereas staples such as cassava are notably lacking in vitamins). They are also located next to the home so they are most accessible to the women who tend them. Pioneers followed up on several of the 15 women who had constructed gardens the previous year and assisted them in creating living fences from local leguminous species to prevent damage from chickens and goats.

Due the declining forest resources, “improved” stoves that are culturally appropriate (based on traditional cooking methods and available materials) and use less firewood are promoted by Azafady and other development organizations in the area (Azafady, 2007e). The role of cooking falls on women but firewood, if collected from the forest, is the responsibility of men. Firewood is also bought and traded in the market. These stoves can reduce labor and time spent collecting firewood, reduce the cost for families that purchase or trade goods for fuel, and act as a better fire protection barrier between cooking fire and the wood houses of the region. Pioneers built eight improved stoves for local recipients during the ten-day visit to this site. Importantly, time in Evatra also provided the opportunity to assess the outcomes of this Azafady project by conducting follow up interviews with 16 families that received improved stoves in 2006.

Pioneers also assisted the new extension agent in Evatra with creating a demonstration site that included a garden, living fence, composting bin, and beekeeping

operation. The gardens and beekeeping projects are meant to help women feed their families with better nutrition and provide excess vegetables or honey to sell. Activities require only sustainable products that are readily available for local residents (such as clay and ash for the stoves) and don't rely on outside or expensive inputs. The aim of the demonstration site and extension agent is to help train and motivate residents in these activities so they can eventually manage their chosen projects themselves.

Finally, there were intermittent stays of several days at the Azafady training center in Lanirano. Pioneers started at this location initially for orientation and language training. It then became a "home base" for the days between field stints where less demanding tasks could be completed for variety. Here, Pioneers assisted in Azafady's reforestation efforts by working in the Lanirano nursery to prepare seedlings for future replanting projects. They also taught English classes to Malagasy students who wanted to improve their employment opportunities in Fort Dauphin. The internship therefore allowed for an extended experience with a particular project and community in Tsihalagna and provided informative shorter stays at Evatra and Lanirano.

### **Overview of methods**

This study employs the use of interviews, textual analysis, and participant observation to answer the research questions stated in Chapter I. I conducted interviews with both Azafady staff and Malagasy participants to generate these answers. I received the approval of the Office for the Protection of Human Subjects (OPHS) and consent from the Azafady office to interview the NGO staff and Malagasy participants within the



context of my internship. That is, the Malagasy interviews obtained during this time period occurred because they were conducted with Azafady support and interest in the results.

Under this agreement, Azafady guides were used as translators but mainly as liaisons to the community (i.e., they knew the appropriate elders to initially consult or where the women who received stoves last year lived). My prior experience as a Peace Corps volunteer gave me an effective working knowledge of the Malagasy language. This allowed me to understand the interviews and prompt the guides for further questions or clarity. I also tape recorded all interviews with the Malagasy participants and the Director of the NGO, transcribed them, and cross-checked them against my notes for accuracy.

Interviews allowed me to pose particular questions to Azafady staff regarding the organization's philosophy, priorities, goals, and the implementation, outcomes, and impressions of their projects. I interviewed the Director of the UK office along with staff from the Malagasy NGO including: the Director/founder, two British office managers (including one woman), three Malagasy field agents, one female Malagasy extension agent, four Malagasy guides (including one woman), two British field supervisors (including one woman), and two members of the Malagasy construction team.

The administrative staff spends most of their time at the Azafady office in Fort Dauphin and makes occasional trips into the field where Pioneers or field agents are working. Malagasy field agents and their support staff divide their time between the office and extended work at their field sites. The guides spend almost all of their time

being responsible for and working with the Pioneers in the field. The Director provided generous interviews, the field agents and office staff also discussed their work and role in the organization, and the guides were sources of both administrative and “on the ground” knowledge. This variety of perspectives within Azafady staff contributed to my overall understanding of the organization.

I also consulted Malagasy participants in Azafady projects to provide their perceptions of Azafady’s work as well as other reflections about their own lives. I did not follow a uniform interview for all subjects but rather tailored my questions to the project and site to reflect that particular situation. I interviewed residents in Tsihalagna during visits to the six extended-family compounds of the three hamlets comprising the village. I presented open-ended questions about residents’ lives, their priorities and perceived needs, and their feelings about the school and its affect on their future. This took place in the afternoon, which resulted in the interviewees being mostly women tending to household duties, elderly people confined to their homes, and small children. The men were off assisting with the construction of the school and/or working in their fields. Interviews typically included 5-15 family members and lasted half an hour.

Additionally, I facilitated community mapping exercises to allow residents to discuss their water sources, agricultural fields and crops, forest resources, access to markets and healthcare, and family groups in greater detail. This provided valuable feedback for Azafady as this is the first substantial project in Tsihalagna and can serve as baseline information about the community and guide future efforts and collaboration.

In Evatra, I interviewed 16 of the 20 women that received improved stoves from an Azafady project the year before. I asked open-ended questions regarding why the recipient had the stove, the amount of fuel wood used with this technique, and the condition and limitations of the stove. Although questions were initially directed at the women who requested or used the stove, in almost every case the extended family would gather around and join in answering questions. This group feedback was more thorough and women took more time to answer questions if other family members were involved. Interviews included 1-6 people and typically lasted 15-30 minutes. These follow-up interviews proved to be an invaluable step in evaluating the impact of and Malagasy response to an Azafady project.

The textual analysis included a review of over 20 documents prepared by Azafady. These were either accessible from their website or provided by Azafady upon my request. I examined project completion reports; project funding proposals; updates on continuing projects; summaries of sites, previous work completed, and new tasks to finish; organization newsletters; and promotional materials. I also consulted relevant reports such as the UK Charity Commission and the government's Madagascar Action Plan. Textual analysis illuminated how Azafady determines their goals, implements their projects, measures results, and presents their organization and project outcomes to others. Azafady documents often provided historical and detailed explanations of projects that expanded on topics raised in interviews by Azafady staff. In this way, I could examine the projects of Azafady over a longer time frame and note their work in progress. Textual analysis also allowed me to compare document and interview findings. For instance, I

was able to note some discrepancies between project outcomes reported by Azafady and my experience with those projects in the field.

Participant observation allowed further examination of Azafady staff and Malagasy participants. The ideas, lifestyle, intentions, and challenges of Azafady staff were examined over the course of ten weeks of constant cohabitation and group work. I observed and interacted with Azafady staff during field work, administrative site visits, trips to the Azafady office in Fort Dauphin, social outings, and training and leisure time at the Lanirano camp. Participant observation, personal interactions, and daily experiences stemming from the consistent presence in Tsihalagna, Evatra and Lanirano also provided insights into Malagasy life and residents' involvement with Azafady projects.

In combination, these methods of collecting data produced a robust overview of how Azafady's projects are implemented and perceived within these communities. These findings are described in Chapter IV and guide my discussion of points of comparison, consideration, and recommendation provided in Chapter V.

### **Limitations and strengths of the study**

My internship did indeed provide first-hand insights into the work of Azafady. However, it was a limited exposure and this study reflects only a discrete ten-week period. I drew from my interviews and interactions with Azafady staff as well as organization reports as much as possible to maintain accuracy. Still, this study reflects my personal view of the organization at that point in time.

In addition, there were certainly impediments to independent research because of the full workload of my internship. I conducted interviews in addition to my primary responsibilities as an intern, where I assisted with the projects described earlier in this chapter during 10-hour work days. This was coupled by dusk arriving at approximately 5:30 p.m. in the Southern hemisphere during these months, which further constrained my ability to visit and interview Malagasy participants. These limitations may have affected who I was able to interview and the amount of time they had to talk to me.

The projects and field sites I could access and analyze were limited to those associated with my internship and were not randomly sampled. Tsihalagna's school construction project required an extended stay in a remote location which did not facilitate visiting other sites or talking to other organizations in the area. People interviewed and the projects considered here reflect only the small selection of Azafady undertakings that I was exposed to. However, I made every attempt to ask questions about the range of Azafady's work and consult reports covering all sectors and projects to provide a more comprehensive overview.

This study was facilitated by the Azafady guides acting as translators between Malagasy residents speaking the Antanosy dialect and English-speaking members of the Azafady team. While the interview questions that I used matched my preliminary questions and were unchanged by the presence of Azafady translators, I acknowledge that this may have influenced participants' responses (e.g., participants may not want to say something negative about Azafady to the guides).

These limitations should certainly be considered for their impact on the results of this study. Yet, overall, my internship provided unique opportunities for research. I was able to directly question and participate in how Azafady operates its conservation and development initiatives in Madagascar. I was then positioned to compare my observations with Azafady reports and interview responses. Importantly, I was also encouraged to ask Malagasy residents about their perspectives. Together, these findings provide valuable insights that can contribute to our understanding of NGOs' role in the interface of human needs and environmental concerns.

## CHAPTER IV

### CASE STUDY FINDINGS

In order to understand the efforts of NGOs concerned with environmental conservation and their influence on residents faced with subsistence pressures in Madagascar, I interviewed Azafady staff about how their organization operates. I also interviewed 16 women in Evatra and the 6 extended-family compounds that comprise Tsihalagna to incorporate Malagasy perspectives and personal outcomes from involvement with Azafady projects. These questions and their responses, along with textual analysis of over 20 Azafady documents and participant observation during a 10-week period, are the basis for the material presented in this chapter and are used to address the research questions that guide this case study.

#### **Research questions**

To clarify the presentation and discussion of data in this chapter and the next, I reiterate my research questions here along with the variables that I use to answer them:

- *How does Azafady determine their goals and implement projects in Madagascar?*

I address the conception and purpose of this NGO as it informs Azafady's overall goals. I also describe how Azafady has determined their goals and works to achieve them. I provide an overview of Azafady's projects and their implementation within the three

sectors of their work. Information on funding, the Pioneer program, and community participation is also used to elucidate how Azafady conducts projects in Madagascar.

- *What are priority concerns identified by Azafady staff and Malagasy participants?*

I discuss particular priority objectives identified by Azafady and I complement this with feedback from residents in Tsihalagna who were asked about their priorities and perceived needs.

- *How does Azafady evaluate their projects and organization?*

I review the apparent methods that Azafady uses for project evaluation including donor and organizational reports, ongoing assessments, and independent evaluations. I discuss the use of Pioneer feedback as a means of monitoring projects and consider internal administrative evaluation methods.

- *What are perceptions of Azafady and their projects according to Azafady staff and Malagasy participants?*

I present Azafady descriptions of their status within the NGO community of the region. I also highlight reflective elements from interviews regarding their guiding philosophy. I provide data from interviews with Tsihalagna residents and women in Evatra, as well as describe participation levels at each site, to show Malagasy perceptions of Azafady projects.

### **Initial establishment and purpose of Azafady**

The impetus of Azafady included a focus on both assisting local populations with their development needs and encouraging ecological conservation. The founder of Azafady revealed that the NGO was created in 1994 in direct response to the contentious



mining issue in the area. He stated that mining prospectors were “dangling carrots and used the promise of schools, healthcare, and ‘development’ incentives to gain community support for mining.” Azafady was then established to “counter the mine’s propaganda and show that you can have ‘development’ without the mine” and without the trade-offs that contribute to environmental degradation. The Azafady staff argues that the mine has not delivered the promised economic opportunities for the region. Instead, mining operations have employed men from Europe and South Africa, increased sexual tourism, contributed to the area’s economic inflation, and likely had an impact on the area’s growing HIV and syphilis rates.

### **Determining organization goals**

An essential question I posed to the Director was how Azafady goes about selecting the goals that guide the organization’s projects. Many NGOs have been critiqued for following their own environmental agenda or development ideology that does not resonate with residents (Chapin 2004). Kull (1995) and Duffy (2006) both argue that conservation organizations in Madagascar have an inordinate amount of financial and political power in the country and decide for themselves what environmental problems to address and how. It therefore was relevant to establish how Azafady’s goals have been developed according to the founder of the organization. Azafady’s goals, as stated on their website (Azafady, 2007b), are:

- To support local communities by providing appropriate health & sanitation infrastructure and education

- To support local communities by helping to develop alternative sustainable livelihood strategies to improve their well-being
- To protect and enhance the unique environment of Madagascar and
- To provide an opportunity for people from ‘developed’ countries to get an understanding of the complex issues in conservation and development, gaining skills and experience at a grassroots level.

Azafady addresses these goals within the three sectors of health and sanitation, sustainable livelihoods, and natural resource management. Each sector has a coordinator and team of field agents that work with particular projects, funds, and intentions. Though now robust and well developed, these goals have evolved over time.

The Director described how Azafady’s initial priorities were decided by international board members from as far away as London. Soon it was recognized that the NGO practitioners in Madagascar would have a “better understanding of the life and development needs on the ground.” He stated that the organization’s goals were then determined by the NGO “as a reflex or response to the needs of the area.”

To begin, Azafady consulted other NGOs that had been working locally for some time in order to get an initial idea of these needs. For instance, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) already had established connections to communities and the challenges they faced. The concerns identified by WWF for the region included clean water, health care, and community forest management, which remain focal points of Azafady’s work. The Director specifically mentioned collaborating with and seeking advice from the regional director of WWF, who is an American that has also been working in Madagascar for close to 15 years. I will discuss the implications of foreigners holding head positions of NGOs in Madagascar in Chapter V.

The Director stated that Azafady also worked independently to first identify marginalized communities and then establish needs through participatory discussions with residents. The NGO chose to work in the most isolated places which were most impoverished (i.e., are least accessible by road or have the least access to water) in order to concentrate its efforts and use resources effectively in a limited area. As a result, Azafady works only in the rural communes of Mandromodromotra, Mahatalaky, and Manambaro and the urban commune of Fort Dauphin. This was partly influenced by collaborations with WWF to ensure that project sites did not overlap and more communities were served. Azafady determined their current goals through collaborative interactions with residents in partner communities because they addressed the daily needs of rural Malagasy people. The fourth goal of providing a cross-cultural opportunity was added in subsequent years, likely with the advent of the Pioneer program.

Additionally, botanical studies on the palm flora of the south initially brought the Director to Madagascar in the early 1990s. Along with his commitment to oppose the mine, this reveals his ecological interests which do not appear to dictate the work of Azafady. The goal addressed by the natural resource management sector incorporates conservation initiatives; yet this sector's work and budget is significantly smaller than the others and projects primarily address the population's need for firewood. For instance, in 2006, projects in this sector totaled approximately US \$49,000 whereas \$158,000 was spent for sustainable livelihoods and \$249,000 for health and sanitation (£ 24,971, £ 80,218, and £124,528, respectively) (Charity Commission, 2008). Overall, it seems that Azafady does not impose its own development agenda or prioritize environmental

concerns. If anything, an environmental focus is limited in order to address the basic needs expressed within their partner communities.

### **Selecting projects to achieve Azafady goals**

The Director articulated that Azafady is also guided by the national and international development objectives laid out in the Malagasy government's Madagascar Action Plan (MAP) 2007-2012 and the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). He stated that Azafady has tried to pick elements from both of these agendas that fit within their own organization's goals and "set targets that seem most achievable."

The Tsihalagna project I engaged in during 2007 reflects how Azafady projects can be requested by communities, aligned with their organizational goals, and further supported by even larger development plans. In 2006, Azafady received a request from Tsihalagna to assist in constructing a school building. The community needs were evident from the isolation from neighboring schools and illiteracy rates of up to 80 percent for children of this area. The request was also in agreement with Azafady's first goal to "support communities by providing appropriate....education" as well as international and national education goals.

The national government's MAP addresses creating a successful primary school system through a strategy "to increase school capacities especially in vulnerable zones through the development of school infrastructures and the training and recruitment of new teachers" (MAP, 2006). Azafady is contributing to this infrastructure and the Malagasy government's goal to construct 3,000 classrooms by 2012 (MAP, 2006).

Project Sekoly (“school”) is a new initiative from Azafady that aims to build a school each quarter with localized considerations. For instance, the additional construction of a teacher’s house in Tsihalagna addresses the recruitment of teachers and results from Azafady’s experiences identifying previous obstacles in education projects. The Director described how villages may receive a school building but cannot always secure a teacher, especially in very rural areas. Often teachers originate from a larger town and it can be challenging to recruit an educator to a remote location. Teachers may also live in a neighboring village but a having a house close to the school can eliminate or reduce the travel difficulties and other situations that lead to poor job performance and attendance.

Tsihalangna also experiences a lack of health facilities, sanitation, and clean water. There are only two health centers within the commune of Mahatalaky and the limited resources aren’t sufficient or readily available to the population of 32,000 (Azafady, 2007g). For instance, all six of the family groups interviewed in Tsihalagna said their closest health facility was located in the town of Mahatalaky, a 2-hour walk. These community needs are also addressed in Azafady’s first goal and are priority issues within the MAP. The government’s plan aims to educate communities on hygienic practices to reduce preventable illnesses; one identified strategy to accomplish this is to teach sanitation education in schools. In this vein, Pioneers also constructed a latrine on the school grounds with separate cubicles for boys and girls in order to facilitate education regarding hygiene and health.

Azafady’s projects have helped the Malagasy government works towards their ambitious development objectives. The MAP has set many national goals even higher

than the standards set forth by the MDGs. For example, the seventh goal of the MGDs (ensure environmental sustainability) has a target to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation (UNDP, 2007). Madagascar aims to have access to safe drinking water for 100 percent of the urban population and 80 percent of the rural population by 2012 (MAP, 2006). However, in 2004, only 50 percent of the country's population was using an improved water source (UNDP, 2007) which underscores that Azafady's contributions through water and sanitation projects are laudable. For instance, the Director was proud that 30 percent of the clean water sources in the commune of Mahatalaky are from Azafady projects.

Azafady has developed goals that address the basic needs of access to water, improved health, food security, and education in the region. The projects undertaken to achieve those goals follow local requests first but also consider national and international objectives. In many ways, Azafady's localized projects are addressing larger national development goals which cannot be achieved without collaborations between the Malagasy government, donors, and implementing partners such as NGOs.

### **Intent and implementation of projects within each sector**

As listed earlier, Azafady has three sectors of work to address their organizational goals: health and sanitation, sustainable livelihoods, and natural resource management. I do not provide an all-inclusive account of Azafady's projects here. Instead, I hope to give an overview of Azafady's activities within these sectors and how they are implemented. I

do this by referring to projects from reports, highlighting particular projects that coordinators discussed with me, and presenting projects in which I participated.

### *Sustainable livelihoods*

The sustainable livelihoods sector addresses poverty and environmental degradation in rural areas through training in income-generating and food security activities. Latena, the coordinator, articulated that lack of skills, financial resources, infrastructure, and a shortage of natural resources were factors identified to inhibit people's ability to produce food and provide for their families. Azafady constructed the demonstration site and training center in Lanirano under the sustainable livelihoods initiative. Since 2005, programs that aim to reduce these obstacles and transfer skills in multiple activities have been offered. These activities are also taught at field sites, as mentioned in Chapter III with the extension agent and demonstration site at Evatra.

The training programs at Lanirano were developed by Azafady through interactions with and requests from the communities surrounding Fort Dauphin. Latena described some key courses available and their importance for the participants. Food processing endeavors include learning how to smoke and preserve fish and make jam, both for consumption by the families as well as for profit. Agricultural activities such as improved methods of rice cultivation, cassava grafting, beekeeping, and gardening projects aim to enhance food security. Azafady also helps to train women in textile skills that can provide income for families, such as weaving, sewing, and needlework. During my stay at Lanirano, I saw evidence of training in progress: accounting classes for

women running small businesses out of their home; colored raffia drying in the sun for women to weave into hats and mats; men tending a garden of medicinal plants to provide natural and accessible remedies.

Azafady staff use a variety of methods to teach diverse livelihood strategies. Skills are taught to groups and individuals in a person-to-person setting in Lanirano's classroom. The demonstration site provides opportunities to learn through practical experience in the gardens and tree nursery. Audiovisual lessons may also be used for trainings if educators are not personally available; this medium can facilitate distance learning at alternate locations as well.

These courses were designed with the participants' needs in mind and follow an "apprentice" approach rather than a formal classroom setting to facilitate practice and competence in skills. Azafady also considers issues of time, expenses, and accessibility for students. A meal and arranged transport is offered to rural residents who would not be able to attend courses otherwise. This affects women in particular and the cost is covered from grants Azafady receives for sustainable livelihoods initiatives.

In the first six months of classes offered, 154 trainees finished courses like the ones just mentioned (Azafady, 2006b). From the number of people within working age (18-60) in the commune of Fort Dauphin and Lanirano's current demand, Azafady reports estimate that up to 3,000 people a year will be served by the training center (Azafady, 2006e). At times, Azafady struggles to balance the public demand with the limited educators, tools, funds, and classroom space (Azafady, 2008a). Residents around



Fort Dauphin not only attend training courses at Lanirano; close to 15 locally sourced people also play an important role in running the daily operations of the facility.

### ***Health and sanitation***

The health and sanitation sector works to provide primary healthcare for targeted communities through a mobile doctor, community pharmacies, health education, and water and sanitation infrastructure. Recently, other construction projects such as building schools were added to this sector to streamline the construction team's efforts and coordinate Azafady projects. For example, the school completed in Tsihalagna fell under a health and sanitation initiative.

Housseni, the coordinator of this sector, described Azafady's comprehensive approach to health concerns in the region. All projects are driven by direct requests from "beneficiaries" and local involvement at all stages. Azafady sends mobile doctors into villages to provide medical consultation, village trainings, midwife training, and STI/HIV education. Azafady also built 12 village pharmacies throughout the region, supplies them with medicines bought at highly subsidized prices, and trains the local pharmacy committee about ailment and treatment diagnoses. The program's health education component includes hygiene lessons about hand washing, dental health, and malaria and plague prevention. Azafady has worked with villages across the region to build infrastructure such as 32 wells and 5 spring boxes to allow access to clean water

(Azafady, 2006d). Azafady crews have also built SanPlats,<sup>14</sup> public latrines, and school latrines to reduce the spread of diseases.

The government of Madagascar has adopted the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) platform for all international initiatives promoted by UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the World Bank. The WASH<sup>15</sup> program aims to fight disease and poverty in the country using Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) methods promoted by the Ministry of Population. PHAST encourages communities to improve hygiene behaviors, manage water and sanitation facilities, and recognize the links between sanitation and health. Azafady has followed this lead and serves as the Secretary of the Fort Dauphin regional WASH committee, which has enhanced communication between branches of this sector. The PHAST methods have recently been integrated into all of Azafady's health, hygiene, water, and sanitation activities to further streamline collaborations between branches of its work (Azafady, 2006d).

The health and sanitation sector works within all the communes selected by Azafady and addresses their identified needs. Housseni mentioned recently completed specific projects for each commune: HIV/AIDS education and public latrines in the urban area of Fort Dauphin; a well and village pharmacy in Manambaro; a barrage to provide and protect access to clean drinking water in Mandronondramotra; and construction of

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<sup>14</sup> SanPlat is short for sanitation platform. It is a type of latrine that includes a reusable and easy to clean surface with elevated footrests and a drop hole in addition to a vent pipe to reduce the smell and presence of flies.

<sup>15</sup> WASH has been extremely successful in Africa by focusing on three main themes: hand washing, clean water sources, and using latrines.

spring boxes in Mahatalaky. I had the chance to see these types of structures and their importance in the communities I visited. A village pharmacy in Tsanoriha (a market town near Tsihalagna), the barrage in Evatra where dozens of women were constantly collecting water from a clean source and washing clothes, and SanPlats built in Sainte Luce provided a glimpse of Azafady's projects in action.

Housseni explained that the philosophy of the health and sanitation sector is to work in increments "so they can accomplish tasks little by little in many villages, instead of concentrating their efforts in only one area." This is facilitated by the large number (15) of field agents in this extensive program: 1 coordinator, 1 medical doctor, 1 health education manager, 6 construction workers, 4 health promoters, and 2 peer educators. Despite the small geographic area of Azafady's work, this sector has enormous impact on communities. The Project Salama ("health") proposal estimated that there are 10,000 direct beneficiaries from endeavors in this sector (Azafady, 2006d).

Sanitation proved to be a priority issue repeatedly identified by the Director. He felt that building latrines and educating the public about their purpose and potential for improved health and clean water was enormous. In the south of Madagascar, it is seen as strange to use a "house" to go to the bathroom. These new outhouses can be confusing and not used, either because the idea is bizarre or someone (i.e., the mayor) has deemed it "too nice to use" and keeps it locked. Azafady uses designs that are culturally appropriate for the area, which may include the open air option of the SanPlat technology (i.e., there are no walls but still a platform and ventilation pipe).

The Director recognized that this included an incredible change in behavior and attitude, but health risks are so evident and clean water so scarce in these areas that Azafady has engaged in education campaigns to encourage behavior and practices that can ultimately benefit these communities. Since these projects began, latrines have been requested in urban areas and even rural areas once residents see their effect in neighboring communities. This reflects the change that can take place and has encouraging health implications for the region.

### ***Natural resource management***

Encouraging good environmental stewardship is integrated into all of Azafady's sectors whenever possible. For example, materials used in the sustainable livelihoods projects are locally sourced and sustainably produced. The natural resource management sector focuses on urban area clean-up, rural tree planting, and biodiversity research. In the urban area of Fort Dauphin, Azafady responds to what the community identifies as their environmental needs. This often involves beach cleaning at different locations within the town. In 2005, Azafady implemented Project Tany Meva ("pretty land"), a sanitation project in Fort Dauphin that simultaneously addressed environmental and human health. Azafady built three bathroom facilities comprising two cubicles each, with capacity for 350 users, in the community of Ampotatra. The project was complemented by constructing a hand washing area (Azafady, 2006a). Previously, these residents defecated on the public beaches, as is common in Madagascar and other developing countries.

In rural areas, Azafady focuses on planting trees for sustainable use and reforestation. One of the main challenges to the organization is meeting the local demand for fuel wood. While the sustainable livelihoods staff helps to relieve pressure on natural forests by promoting the use of fuel-efficient stoves, this sector has tried to assist local people to find the fuel they need without depleting the very limited remaining natural forests.

Towards this end, Azafady's tree planting activities and tree nurseries have continued. Azafady has signed a contract with three communities (Sainte Luce, Ebakika, and Vohibola) and the Water and Forests Ministry to collaborate on Project Voly Hazo ("tree plantation"). This project aims to provide an alternate firewood resource and protect the Manafiafy forest located between Sainte Luce and Ebakika (Azafady, 2008b).

In 2007, contracts were signed with the communities and officials regarding 80 hectares of barren land. Thirty hectares of land closest to the villages will be planted with 36,000 fast-growing trees designated as a community woodlot for local use. The community managed lots will provide adequate fuel wood for these populations within approximately seven or eight years and will make a large contribution to the protection of the remaining forests. Azafady aims to complete reforestation of all 80 hectares by 2010 (Azafady, 2008b). According to Lala, the sector coordinator, the commune of Mahatalaky (which contains Sainte Luce) is set to plant 60,000 trees over 50 hectares in the next three years. Azafady is active in reforestation efforts with these communities and Lala estimated that overall this project will replant close to 150 hectares of barren land in the coming years. There is a palpable rush to complete this project while resources are

available (e.g., there is volunteer help to prepare seedlings), weather conditions are favorable, and community interest remains high. During my internship, Pioneers spent many hours over several days preparing small bags with compost which would later grow seeds for this replanting effort.

In 2007, Azafady recorded that Pioneers planted over 3,500 trees in Sainte Luce (Azafady, 2008b). Lala asserted that the native trees they've used so far have grown just as well as the exotic species (Acacia and Eucalyptus) so commonly used for reforestation efforts in Madagascar and a tour of the tree nursery in Sainte Luce confirmed this. Azafady's aim is to ensure that at least 30 percent of the trees planted in Sainte Luce are native species. The field team from the natural resource management sector also identifies and collects seeds from the forest floor to be propagated in the nursery and facilitate native reforestation. This contributes to conservation of an endangered palm species that has less than 50 individuals left and important traditional uses (Azafady, 2007c).

Accounts from interviews and organizational reports further highlight Azafady's dedication to community-based forest management. Since 1996, limited funds have encouraged the Malagasy government to slowly devolve some control over forests to communities, in partnership with an intermediary funding organization. So far, this approach has used a 3-year plan where the Director felt that "once the third party leaves, the community is unprepared for management and falters." The Director reported that Azafady has been asked by 18 communities to be the liaison using this legal framework (GELOSE) and associated contracts. Of those requests, Azafady agreed to work with the

community of Sainte Luce to facilitate community forest management because they have already established trust and past experience in this partnership over the years.

Azafady also coordinates efforts in biodiversity research and reforestation. Lala reported that there are 17 blocks of fragmented littoral forest that remain in this region, only some of which are protected. Azafady supports biologists that study this vulnerable environment by allowing access to their campsites at Lanirano and Sainte Luce. During my stay at Lanirano, several independent researchers were there to inventory birds and lemurs in the region. Azafady was also in the beginning stages of collaborating with the Peace Corps to have a volunteer stationed at Sainte Luce to work with the community and monitor reforestation efforts. Examples from these sectors show the myriad ways that Azafady implements projects in Madagascar.

### **Funding considerations**

The Director was forthright in describing how procuring funds for a small development organization can be a challenge. Azafady has made a point to be creative in their fundraising and accountable to donors. As with other aspects of the NGO, the financial management of Azafady has evolved over time and affects their capacity to implement projects.

Azafady was initially established in 1994 through a large donation from the founding Director. Subsequently, other individuals provided thousands of donations of varying amounts through phone solicitations and fundraising drives. The Director explained that originally, only cash was sent from abroad to facilitate the work of the

NGO in Madagascar. He vaguely mentioned that when funds were continually “mismanaged” it was decided that more of a foreign presence was needed. By 1997, there were distinct responsibilities and accountability measures between the fundraising efforts of Azafady UK and the field efforts of Azafady Madagascar. The NGO also became more capable and independent at this time under the guidance of a “dynamic leader.”

With trust firmly in place, Azafady UK began to target specialized start-up funds available from donors. Some of these provided opportunities for consistent funding and continued relationships in the years that followed. Azafady now relies on generous donations from trusts, foundations, and government overseas aid departments in addition to private companies and individuals. A complete list of donors from the fiscal year 2006-2007 is shown in Tables 1 and 2. This reflects the variety of sources and the importance of unrestricted funds (donations not assigned for specific work) to Azafady, most notably through the Pioneer program and Lemur Venture which are discussed in the next section. Azafady’s considerable fundraising efforts are evident through its continued growth over the years. The organization has more than doubled its gross income from approximately US \$304,200 in 2000 to \$734,000 in 2007 (£153,809 and £371,165, respectively) (Charity Commission, 2008).

**Table 1: Total Unrestricted Income (in British Pounds) for Azafady during 2006-2007**

|                               |                |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Pioneer and Lemur Venture     | <b>167,027</b> |
| Metage Capital                | 11,000         |
| Tropiquaria                   | 1,571          |
| Roger Vere Foundation         | 500            |
| Miss KM Harbison Trust        | 500            |
| Flora and Fauna International | 500            |
| Other unrestricted resources  | 46,090         |
| <b>Total donations</b>        | <b>227,188</b> |

(1 £= 1.96 USD)



**Table 2: Total Restricted Income (in British Pounds) for Azafady during 2006-2007**

|                                |                |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Specific donations             | 16,690         |
| Isle of Man government grant   | 25,000         |
| States of Guernsey             | 22,500         |
| TRAID                          | 18,474         |
| Ruffed Whitely Laing           | 10,000         |
| Ferguson Charity Foundation    | 10,000         |
| Polish Government              | 7,348          |
| JP Morgan                      | 6,000          |
| TRAID                          | 5,791          |
| AB Trust                       | 5,000          |
| KPMG                           | 3,040          |
| Metage Capital                 | 3,000          |
| Mrs Pleasance                  | 3,000          |
| Lifecycle                      | 2,400          |
| Drinking Water Foundation      | 2,000          |
| Miss EF Rathbone Trust         | 2,000          |
| <b>Total restricted income</b> | <b>142,243</b> |

(1 £= 1.96 USD)

Azafady administrative staff mentioned the difficulties of competing against “bigger, shinier organizations” for limited financial support and the resulting need to appeal to donor interests and priorities to some extent in their project proposals. In general, Azafady has “tried to avoid big institutional donors” with particular requirements that might inhibit Azafady’s goals rather than further them. Donor stipulations can vary greatly depending on the source of economic assistance. For instance, aid organizations in Great Britain favor a human rights-based approach to development and those in the United States often require aspects of fighting corruption and supporting good governance. Azafady also receives funding restricted to certain areas of their work which can affect implementation of projects within each sector. For instance, Table 3 shows that

the health and sanitation sector has the largest budget (Charity Commission, 2008) which the Director revealed is funded by three main donors.

**Table 3: Project Expenditures (in British Pounds) for Azafady during 2006-2007**

| Project                        | Direct Project Expenditure | Management and Administration due to Project | TOTAL           |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--|-----------------|
| <b>Health</b>                  |                            |  |                 |
| Elephantitis                   | 8,114                      | 744  | 8,858           |
| HIV Awareness                  | 16,848                     | 1,544  | 18,392          |
| Salama                         | 60,780                     | 5,572  | 66,352          |
| Schools                        | 27,065                     | 2,481  | 29,546          |
| Filariasis                     | 1,264                      | 116  | 1,380           |
| Total                          | 114,071                    | 10,457                                       | <b>124, 528</b> |
| <b>Sustainable Livelihoods</b> |                            |  |                 |
| Lanirano                       | 53,499                     | 4,904  | 58,403          |
| Sustainable Livelihoods        | 14,748                     | 1,352  | 16,100          |
| English teaching               | 2,682                      | 246  | 2,928           |
| Music                          | 2,553                      | 234  | 2,787           |
| Total                          | 73,482                     | 6,736  | <b>80, 218</b>  |
| <b>Environment</b>             |                            |  |                 |
| Tany Meva                      | 6,421                      | 589  | 7,010           |
| Environment                    | 16,453                     | 1,508  | 17,961          |
| Total                          | 22,874                     | 2,097  | <b>24,971</b>   |
| <b>Azafady NGO</b>             | 22854                      | 1,843  | 24,697          |
|                                |                            |  |                 |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>233, 281</b>            | <b>21, 133</b>                               | <b>254, 414</b> |

(1 £= 1.96 USD)

Azafady uses several methods of financial accountability. Donors often require or request a fiscal or end of the year report while others prefer mid-term updates of some kind. There is an internal reporting system in place that facilitates dissemination of this information. The staff referred to a monthly report that the NGO sends to the London

office, which includes both a financial and narrative account of the organization's work. This discussion of organizational reporting is continued in the evaluation section.

Azafady provides further transparency in their accounting through detailed financial statements which are approved by the Charity Commission of England and Wales and are available to the public. To ensure that funding is well spent and the organization maintains a subdued presence, Azafady utilizes every option to be cost effective. This is reflected in their small and nondescript office in Fort Dauphin, consistent use of local transport, and reliance on volunteers both in Madagascar and the United Kingdom.

Of course, Azafady also reports on the progress and obstacles encountered within their projects. The Director did express that donors may not appreciate Azafady's responsive and adaptive approach to development and claimed that some are resistant to change within their plans. Azafady is especially reliant on unrestricted donations, like those from the Pioneer program, to provide available funds without prohibitive negotiations in these situations. Azafady strives to be fiscally efficient and accountable in order to operate the organization and implement projects responsibly in Madagascar.

### **Volunteer programs**

As indicated earlier, volunteers are an integral component of Azafady's funding base through the Pioneer program and newly established Lemur Venture. Combined, they provided 45 percent of Azafady's incoming resources in the fiscal year 2006-2007 (Charity Commission, 2008). Participants in these programs contribute the finances and

manpower that enable Azafady to implement many of its projects. Participants are required to provide approximately US \$3,900 and are encouraged to raise this money in order to promote awareness of both Madagascar and Azafady within their home countries (almost all Pioneers are from Europe and North America). Pioneers also pay their airfare to Madagascar, must have active health insurance, and cover in-country health costs. Within the summer 2007 Pioneer group, 20 out of the 25 Pioneers were diagnosed with malaria or had other illnesses that made health care a significant expenditure.

Despite these expenses, there is great demand for limited spaces in these programs. The Pioneer program was started in July 2001 with its inaugural group of eight volunteers and increased to 25 participants in July 2007 (Azafady, 2001). The program offers more than simply a tourist experience and entices those who are looking to make a lasting impact on the lives of local people and on the environment in southeast Madagascar. Azafady recently received an award for Best Volunteering Organization in the 2007 Responsible Tourism Awards and was also commended in the 2005 First Choice Responsible Tourism Awards (Azafady, 2008b). These accomplishments highlight Azafady's goal to promote cross-cultural understanding and provide a conscientious and interactive volunteer experience in Madagascar.

Some of the money procured from Pioneers goes towards food, housing, and transportation during their stay. As mentioned earlier, these arrangements are simple in order to be cost effective and put more money towards the actual projects (e.g., Pioneers sleep in tents and eat rice and beans throughout their stay). Azafady claims that "90 percent of funds generated by the Pioneer program are spent in direct pursuit of our

charitable aims” (Azafady, 2007a). Pioneer funds initially contributed to projects and the salaries of Malagasy staff only. However, the Director indicated that with the continued growth and scope of the NGO’s work, it is likely that those funds will be needed for some organizational overhead as well.

Azafady has recently created a new volunteer program to contribute funds and research assistance for lemur conservation. Lemur Venture was introduced in 2007 to run alongside the Pioneer program but allow a more specific and biological focus for participants. The program includes research to conserve Madagascar's endangered lemur species without the community interaction afforded Pioneers. Participants donate approximately US \$4, 350 (£2,200) for eight weeks of work that includes study on captive breeding at the national zoo (PBZT or *Parc Botanique et Zoologique de Tsimbazaza*) in the capital city of Antananarivo as well as field research in the southern forests where Azafady operates. As one of the few volunteer programs that allow lemur research as its focal point, Lemur Venture offers a unique experience. It is set to run four programs a year like its Pioneer counterpart and has spaces for about 16 participants. These programs have proven very effective for implementation of Azafady projects in that they operate at little cost to the NGO yet provide innumerable benefits. These programs are further examined in Chapter V.

### **Community participation**

In order to shed light on the ways there may or may not be local involvement within Azafady’s projects, I asked the Director to comment on Azafady’s reception to

and requirements for community participation within their work. Regarding which direction development requests go, the Director stated that initially Azafady identified communities in need and then established goals through participatory discussions with residents. To further encourage community ownership of a project, however, Azafady has adopted a procedure for determining residents' interest and dedication which requires that requests for project assistance are community-driven. Azafady uses PHAST methods in its health, sanitation, and water projects to establish which communities are responsive to and follow the guidelines of collaboration. This strategy includes a collective evaluation that results in community decisions about what intervention is most appropriate to serve the needs identified within the community. The PHAST process encourages participation of individuals in a group process, regardless of age, sex, class, or educational background and thus aims to include people who are typically left out of or underrepresented in decision-making processes (Azafady, 2007h).

Azafady will often have extension agents live in or regularly visit interested communities for a time to facilitate this process and gauge community ownership of the project idea. Extension agents are skilled and motivated individuals recruited from communities in the area, which can help eliminate the antagonism of "experts" or ethnic "outsiders" from the capital or elsewhere trying to assimilate and work in the Antanosy region. Instead, choosing and training local people provides an agent that is familiar with the area's issues and exemplifies another avenue where Azafady engages community involvement. Health extension agents are recruited locally; agriculture technicians are farmers from the region; local pharmacists are chosen by community group decisions;

and trainings and workshops are held at Lanirano and locally to ensure that extension agents are qualified and expand their capabilities over time.

The health and sanitation sector uses the PHAST methods to encourage several steps in particular. After determining local priorities, an extension agent will live and work in a community for 4-6 months before any “work” is done at all. This time is used to establish a health committee and educate residents about the connections between sanitation and health. The Director stressed that if the community doesn’t participate or recognize these links (e.g., between dirty water and disease) then no work is done.

If the community is indeed engaged in the PHAST steps of collectively identifying their health problems and determining possible solutions, then a technical team visits to assess the feasibility of water and sanitation infrastructure. Community participation and commitment is then required in the form of signed contracts that include what the residents will provide “in kind” (e.g., construction materials like sand; wood or planks; large or broken-up rocks; water) and promises to finish work by a specific date or general timeline. Examples of this for Tsihalagna included the provision of sand, rock and water to make cement on-site; transportation of materials to and from the loading site across the river; excavation of a pit for the latrines; and assistance in the construction of the school. The women receiving stoves in Evatra were to supply ash to mix with clay that Azafady provided. This is meant to encourage community ownership and buy-in rather than seeing the project as solely an outside effort or fix that is beyond community capabilities. Azafady waits until contributions from the community are prepared before

they will engage in construction. Upon completion, there is an inauguration of the infrastructure and periodic visits from the extension agents.

The Director noted there are different challenges for community participation in the sustainable livelihoods sector. Determining ideas for income generation involves an element of risk that must be seriously considered. Community members and extension agents must contemplate the potential failures and possible repercussions of project endeavors. At times, there is a tendency for development organizations to focus on “new” ideas. This can be a source of innovation; yet it also encourages the notion that new is better and that ideas from the “outside” are preferable. The Director described a tactic of Azafady to “add value” to something that residents already do and make use of materials that are present and available. He provided an example of women who could weave (e.g., hats, bags, mats) and made cell phone holders which were popular with both local and foreign patrons. Azafady has also been successful with small credit programs that allow women to market their localized handicrafts nationally.

Pilot projects within all the sectors have shown that if small numbers of people adopt new ideas or engage in new activities they can be an example to others. The Director acknowledged again that sometimes these changes are difficult and that trust is required in approaching these endeavors. Projects can succeed if people see the effort is effective (e.g., grafting techniques produce improved crops, clean water source reduces illness, using a toilet improves water quality). Motivated residents can become extension agents and train others. In the case of farmers, they may be compensated in some way for their efforts and risk. Field agents have found that local people need to see new ideas



implemented, to show others what they know, and to be a part of the process of determining their obstacles and creating solutions for themselves. Azafady has evolved and adapted its approach over time to include these forms of community participation which influence the implementation of projects. As the Director mused, “We used to go to them; now they come to us.”

### **Project evaluation**

In order to better understand this kind of adaptation within the organization and projects of Azafady, I examined the evaluation methods mentioned in interviews and reports. Azafady is required to write monthly activity reports to the London office and to validate project results and budgets to various donors and funding agencies. The Director also applauded President Ravalomanana’s initiatives to be more involved with development organizations working in Madagascar and to hold Azafady accountable through quarterly reports. However, reporting is not the same process as a critical evaluation to determine the actual impact of projects on individual Malagasy participants or discover how Azafady’s performance could be enhanced. Several Azafady reports reviewed did indicate problems encountered, anticipated solutions, and recommendations but these problems included financial constraints (e.g., the cost of materials exceeded the budget) or poor project design (e.g., the soil type inhibited creation of a fish pond) rather than receiving and responding to feedback from project participants (Azafady 2007f; Azafady, 2007h).

Most Azafady reports briefly mention that “ongoing monitoring and evaluation is an important part of our process and will feed back into implementation” (Azafady, 2006e, p. 6). Yet it is barely mentioned *how* these assessments take place or what the Malagasy participants’ feedback may include. Azafady reports and staff interviews present a fairly one-sided organizational view of project evaluations, such as “an evaluation was conducted in April.” Although Azafady follows Richard Chambers’ visionary Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods for determining and implementing projects in communities (Azafady, 2004; Azafady, 2007h), it doesn’t appear to be used as frequently for project assessment and follow-up. Similarly, though the initial stages of the PHAST methods used in the health, water, and sanitation initiatives include active community participation, that does not appear to extend to after a project is completed (i.e., steps for participatory evaluations after some time to gauge the impact or outcomes of the project are not mentioned). Regarding Malagasy perspectives of Azafady projects, the Director of Azafady UK mentioned to me that they “don’t have that kind of information or Malagasy narrative.”

Many Azafady reports outline some component of project assessment that is to take place in the future. Proposals for new projects stipulate that an evaluation will be conducted at the project’s completion. Progress reports for current projects call for continued monitoring with detailed timeframes for intended evaluations (e.g., every three weeks, 4-6 months after the project is completed, or after the first year of a new initiative). These intervals are laudable as they allow ongoing feedback that could encourage reflexive changes in the project (e.g., is the course covering material that is useful?) or

provide follow-up information to assess sustainability (e.g., is the toilet still being used? is the well broken?).

Frequent or on-going assessments appear most plausible at the Lanirano training center, where reports on the activities at this location reflect an open and participatory forum for discussing what is working and what could be improved. Incorporation of this feedback is shown by the addition of new courses and teaching methods in response to student demand along with other modifications such as providing meals or transport as described in an earlier section. The proximity to the Azafady office and the frequent classes allow regular contact and communication between project participants and Azafady staff. Having spent time myself at this location, it is clear that Lanirano is a venue for participant interaction and feedback that can contribute to evaluating and improving Azafady projects.

It is also evident from project proposals and training courses that Azafady considers gender issues within their work (Azafady, 2003a; Azafady, 2006e). This reflects some type of participant insight and may be encouraged by staff members concerned with gender equality. As a result, many training projects are more accessible and relevant to women because constraints such as time, division of labor, and money have been identified through participatory discussions. Azafady's staff consists of both men and women to accommodate the needs of their Malagasy project counterparts. For instance, a female extension agent was placed in Evatra to work with women's projects in particular, which will hopefully address some of the concerns that were raised during interviews.

Though evaluations during field site visits do take place, it is more difficult to evaluate projects in rural areas where Azafady is only intermittently present. The isolation of these project sites has been described along with the impressive undertaking of work attempted by overburdened staff (personifying the cliché of NGO workers as overworked and underpaid). Time at project sites is limited and the most common reason for not having regular participatory evaluations is the lack of time and personnel to conduct them in the field. Furthermore, Malagasy people are often away from their homes (i.e., herding cattle, washing clothes, tending shop, working in fields) and may be unavailable for follow-up discussions when extension agents visit.

To address this, reports show that Azafady has used independent evaluators when possible and “where funding allows” (Azafady, 2003c; Azafady, 2006b; Azafady, 2006d). For example, in 2002 Azafady embarked on an 8-week evaluation of the sustainable livelihood projects in 13 villages. This was a large endeavor and deemed necessary after several years of growth and change within the organization. The evaluation team talked to residents in all of these communities. The team asked residents to reflect on past and ongoing projects so Azafady could learn from successes and failures and adapt future plans (Azafady, 2003c). In this case, the evaluator was from Great Britain and flew in for this occasion and compiled a team of five Malagasy residents to assist her.

Another avenue for assessment comes from Pioneers after working on projects at field sites, though this may be biased by their perspectives or priorities. My group of 25 Pioneers sat down together after each time at a site and collectively answered questions about our work to report to Azafady. Some did this earnestly and thoughtfully; others

napped or rushed through the exercise so they could get to town as quickly as possible. Still, this group evaluation does provide some insights from people who were intimately involved with a project. Pioneers were able to report on their concerns about projects and make suggestions for future work and other Pioneer groups.

An isolated occurrence during my internship raised the consideration of evaluation measures within the organization as well. That is, beyond how Azafady projects affect Malagasy participants, how do Azafady's operations affect the staff? While Pioneers were in the field, the British couple employed as our project coordinators were fired and suddenly removed from the field. This was shocking and upsetting to the group of Pioneers, a complete surprise to the couple, and it immediately placed much responsibility on the head guide. There were different explanations for this scandal that did not reveal any concrete "truths." It therefore became evident that internal evaluations regarding NGO operations and communication among personnel are just as important as examining the feedback from Malagasy project participants.

### **Azafady perceptions of their organization**

I asked the Director how Azafady perceives itself in the scheme of conservation and development work in the region. He recounted Azafady's alienated position during the 1990s because it was adamantly opposed to the mining operations proposed during that time. He argued that QMM published their "environmental work" which he believed exaggerated the existing deforestation rates to minimize their impact on the environment. Although Azafady took a position of independence, neither facilitating nor inhibiting the

mining company's ability to secure their needed permits, the Director was adamant that an "us/them" mentality arose and was instigated by QMM. He incredulously described how the NGO was perceived as a "coercive, dangerous" organization by others.

The Director felt that because of their convictions, Azafady was excluded from some partnerships with other NGOs working in environmental conservation who were funded in some way by QMM, such as CARE, USAID, Kew Gardens, and Flora and Fauna International. In fact, these diminished relations contributed to Azafady becoming more independent around 1997, whereas before they worked closely with others. The Director seemed proud that Azafady has still not taken any money from QMM.

In 2002, when the mining permit was granted, Azafady accepted the decision and recognized the need to collaborate with other NGOs and even work with the mining company itself to mitigate environmental damages. The Director expressed disappointment that some former partners "went cold" in their working relationship, although he feels that now things are improving. Azafady continues to work independently to protect the area's natural resources and human welfare and (re)build relations with organizations in the area. This is essential as Azafady needs to collaborate in order to meet communities' demands. For instance, there have been over 195 independent requests for water infrastructure in the commune of Mahatalaky. The Director lamented that there are many communities that have completed the PHAST methods and are "ready," but as of now Azafady cannot meet this demand. Azafady strives to be a valued partner in local development and feels that cooperation with compatible organizations is underway.

Overall, the Director described Azafady as a work in progress and cautiously explained past problems and how the organization has learned from them. He articulated that Azafady is always trying to improve upon their methods and he identified evaluating risks of projects and investing in staff training as particular activities that he would “do differently.” The Director consistently emphasized Azafady’s conscientious, human-rights based approach to development that aims to be inclusive and adaptive to the needs of the residents they work with. Azafady reports claim that “we have a reputation across the Antanosy region as an organization which is there not to impose solutions but to assist the community in bringing to fruition their needs and wants” (Azafady, 2007, p. 7). The Director seemed proud of the organization and what Azafady has been able to accomplish despite, or perhaps because of, its small scale.

## **MALAGASY PERSPECTIVES ON AZAFADY PROJECTS AND PRIORITIES**

### **General perceptions of Azafady in Tsihalagna**

This backdrop of Azafady’s work, insights from the staff, and the intent of the particular projects I worked on provide a setting to incorporate Malagasy perspectives on these ideas and development interventions. On a very basic level, I wondered how project participants understood and recognized Azafady as an organization. In rural areas of Madagascar, an organization’s development projects may not be associated with them as a particular NGO but rather some nebulous “development” entity. If there are several *vazaha* (foreign) development workers consulting with communities in the area, it may be even harder for locals to distinguish who represents what organization. Since Azafady

works in remote locations where not many other NGOs are present, I thought that Malagasy residents would not be likely to confuse Azafady's work with that of other organizations.

Still, throughout my interviews with six extended family groups in Tsihalagna, any reference to a past project, such as a women's garden project implemented under WWF some years ago, was identified as "your project" (meaning that it was from Azafady) even though Azafady had not worked there before this encounter. This type of confusion is problematic if it obscures the objectives of the NGO's work.

For instance, there were times where Azafady's priorities and capabilities did not appear to be clear to residents in Tsihalagna. After successful completion of the school, a prominent village elder then mentioned that the community would greatly benefit from a bridge to allow safe crossing of the river at all times of the year and facilitate transport. Infrastructure of this magnitude is outside of the scope of Azafady's funding, skills, and overall goals. The elder's request could reflect a viable approach of "there is nothing to lose and everything to gain" by identifying a need to a new partner in development. Yet it also suggests that, at this point, Azafady's goals and limitations were not entirely clear to residents of Tsihalagna. Azafady was simply perceived as "having" – having materials, having technical skills, having a means to answer the community's development request even if through a connection to another organization or donor that could make this request possible.

However, Tsihalagna is a new community partner and it is understandable that residents' perceptions of Azafady may be flawed. So what, then, were the attitudes



towards the actual projects that were completed by Azafady in Tsihalagna? Not surprisingly, all the members of the family groups I interviewed expressed extreme satisfaction with the school building and optimism for the opportunities it presented their children. All but one family said they will send their children to study there. This family didn't say that they would not send their children to school, only that this decision would be influenced by the workload of the household.

Residents in Tsihalagna expressed the favorable perception that Azafady addresses a community need. This sentiment is likely corroborated by the fact that many villages around Tsihalagna have worked with Azafady and provide evidence of collaboration through schools, village pharmacies, and water infrastructure. Almost anywhere we walked or drove yielded an opportunity for the guides to point out some projects Azafady had recently completed, clearly identifiable by their logo on these structures. Azafady's impact is visible on the landscape and provides a physical testament to meeting the needs of rural communities. Pertinent examples of this for those interviewed included Azafady responding to Tsihalagna's specific request to build a school facility and providing a well for access to clean water (which was implemented by the construction team right before we arrived).

### **Project participation in Tsihalagna**

This rural area with almost no *vazaha* exposure had residents which were very curious and eager to be involved in the school construction project. Dozens of men came to the school site, initially to gawk and soon after to join in the building process. Women

fetches a constant supply of water for mixing cement. They emerged at the site, one after the other, carrying colored buckets full of water on their head. Children went to the river to collect sand and each carried according to their abilities. Tiny children brought tiny baskets of sand; young girls and boys balanced larger baskets on their head.

After a few days and increased social interactions, the novelty wore off a bit. This did not decrease participation; it just meant that fewer people showed up to assess the work progress and foreigners on the school site. Residents worked intermittently throughout the day to ensure that “in kind” donations were honored in addition to attending to their household needs. The presence of a motivated elder was instrumental to completing these tasks. This man was on the construction site every day and could often be heard shouting at residents to collect more sand, rocks, and water; his clanging of the schoolyard bell called the community to action.

A compelling story about the significance of the school includes heartfelt thoughts from Mahavaliky, a man known to all the Azafady staff and Pioneers. He was one of the first villagers to jump in and help build the school, breaking the invisible barrier created by unfamiliarity with *vazahas*. On one of our last nights in Tsihalgana, many from the community came to say goodbye. The elders took turns speaking, as is the custom, about our combined efforts and what the school meant for their future. Then Mahavaliky spoke. He expressed that the reason he joined in building the school so often and so heartily was because he wanted his kids to have an education and he could help make that happen. Hearing participants’ sentiments and seeing the active participation from residents highlighted this community’s commitment and collaborative spirit.

Indeed, residents did welcome Azafady into the community. Throughout these daily interactions, faces became familiar and friendships developed. In Tsihalagna, I was personally invited into people's homes, Pioneers were taken to see how local rum is processed, we participated in celebrating a child's circumcision, and much of the community came to welcome us upon our arrival and wish us well at our departure.

### **Assessments in Tsihalagna: residents identify priorities**

Among the six family groups interviewed, there was consensus that food was a priority. Women in Tsihalagna stated their interest in growing food to feed their families and to sell the surplus in the nearby marketplace for profit. Their diet consists mostly of rice, cassava, sweet potatoes, and bananas. Protein consumption was minimal. Three families said they eat meat once a week, one said only on market days, and the two others said only rarely. Women were interested in learning "new farming techniques" to diversify their crops and grow greens and fruit such as lychee. They also expressed interest in farming inputs such as watering cans and pesticides.

In general interactions in Tsihalagna, residents clearly stated their need for clean water. Within families interviewed, three specifically stated clean water and access to bleach to purify water was a priority need. Four families reported using rice paddies as their water source and two families used the river. Cattle walk through and defecate in both of these bodies of water. Families also mentioned how the availability and location of water changed according to the time of year (i.e., wet or dry season). Azafady recently

constructed one well in Tsihalagna which has improved these conditions. One family in a compound located farther away requested a well in a closer location.

Something Azafady wanted to know was where residents go to the bathroom. Participants seemed to think this an odd question as bodily functions and health issues are culturally often considered quite private in Madagascar. Three families vaguely motioned “over there” and then specified in the field, away from the rice paddy (which was a source of water), and away from the river (where residents also washed their clothes). The other three families looked sheepish and didn’t answer. A latrine is not usually identified as a priority in rural areas and was brought up only once by participants in my interviews in Tsihalagna. Like many other developing countries, villagers usually relieve themselves in their fields when working and often use nearby water (streams, the ocean) to defecate in. Sanitation and health is a connection that is not always made by rural populations.

Again, my interviews in Tsihalagna took place in the afternoon with primarily women, elderly males, and small children as the men were off working in the fields and/or helping to build the school. While I specifically asked the women in these families about their perceptions of the school, opportunities for men to express themselves often came during the work day as we constructed the school side by side or when there was a formal community visit where men talked at length. In ways, I heard more from women during this time because men were not around. While women were important to talk to regarding topics such as collecting water and growing food, it is possible that men would have identified different priorities. Regardless, Azafady seems capable to assist in these

water and sustainable livelihood requests that can guide future collaborations in this community.

### **General perceptions of Azafady in Evatra**

The village of Evatra has seen Azafady be their supporters in past mine issues and collaborators in several projects, including infrastructure that is commonly acknowledged as beneficial to the community. Azafady previously constructed a school and barrage that undoubtedly contributes to the education, health, and ease of daily life in Evatra and current projects include home gardens and fuel efficient stoves.

Still, from my experience there, it appears that residents dispassionately see Azafady largely as an outside force, or with the inclusion of the Pioneer program, as tourists. This is in large part because Evatra is a tourist destination. Furthermore, Evatra has not benefited from the tourism potential. There is one small hotel that is owned by a foreigner. Guides from nearby Fort Dauphin bring tourists to the beach and around the village. Tourists primarily contribute to the local economy through buying snacks from residents' small shops.

Azafady also brings in its large groups of 15-25 Pioneers that can make quite a spectacle in the community. Alongside the work they do, these Pioneers often appreciate the area in ways that are typical of tourism (and atypical of Malagasy life) - hikes in the hills, swimming in the ocean, and strolling through the village trying to get glimpses of daily life. Pioneers also frequent the local shops to purchase their favorite snack foods and beer, which only exacerbates the idea that Azafady consists largely of potential

patrons. This can lead to residents conceptualizing the organization of Azafady in those same terms- visitors, guides (with money), tourists.

### **Project participation in Evatra**

Even if residents of Evatra do see Azafady as a local NGO invested in their community, their participation is noticeably lacking. Azafady guides noted almost daily that “the people here are lazy” in response to residents’ limited involvement in projects. This was especially stark in comparison with the zealous participation from the community of Tsihalagna. When Pioneers made improved stoves for women and brought the necessary clay, the women in Evatra were only required to contribute ash collected from their cooking fires. Many said they didn’t have it or that they couldn’t be troubled to provide it, thus breaking the Azafady contract that requires some “in kind” contributions from participants.

Perhaps Evatra’s status as a tourist location has caused a decline in the motivation or expectation to actively participate in Azafady projects. Residents were regularly seen calling out to tourists demanding the food they just bought at the shop or asking for pens, hats, and whatever was visible. Sometimes they received these gifts in their outstretched hands, astonished. This culture of handouts may have extended into interactions with Azafady as well.

There was almost no general interaction with residents of this community. Perhaps people in Evatra are more private within their community or more introverted because they could not differentiate between general tourists and Azafady Pioneers.

Additionally, these sustainable livelihoods projects allowed interaction with individual women for the most part, not the whole community like the experience in Tsihalagna. Men seemed more comfortable addressing Pioneers in work and social settings, so this may have been a factor. The demonstration site where Azafady staff and Pioneers camped was further up the road and away from hamlets, which could have compounded this isolation as well. The new extension agent lived in Evatra only during the week; on the weekends she returned to her family in Fort Dauphin. This might also have contributed to the perception of Azafady staff as visitors. Interestingly, Azafady guides were not integrated or embraced by this community either, after all these years.

### **Evaluations in Evatra: the improved stove project**

I talked to 16 out of the 20 women in Evatra that received improved stoves from Pioneers the year before. The other four were unavailable or had moved. Visits to these women's houses and accompanying interviews facilitated an assessment of the stove project and how it affected their lives. In every single instance, the stove was currently nonfunctional. Two women said that the stove had recently broken or cracked (within the last few weeks or month). Five reported that it was ruined within the first month; they admitted that they didn't follow the directions to wait several weeks before use to allow it to dry completely.

This project is implemented under a sustainable livelihoods initiative, which does not use the PHAST methods requiring community-driven requests or commitment. Instead, this project, like many in the sustainable livelihoods sector, falls under Azafady's

category of trying to meet residents' needs with ideas that are sometimes new and may be accepted or rejected by participants. Some women did identify benefits to the stove. Four said it cooked faster, and two said it helped to keep the wind out (and the fire going) and protected the house from fire.

Some responses from other women suggest that they perceived this Azafady project as an unsolicited handout rather than a response to an expressed need. During the interviews, six out of sixteen women did not know the intention of the stove (i.e., why would it be used rather than a conventional stove). When asked why they had the stove, answers included: her father gave it to her; she heard about it at a village meeting; and she went to a meeting about a garden and got a stove instead. The other three women said "because others had one." Obtaining a stove because Azafady offered it to them or someone else had one isn't quite the same as being receptive to Azafady's innovative ideas or learning from others' example, however. Because these women did not fully understand or actually desire the stoves, they were not invested in its use or upkeep.

The remaining four women identified that they wanted the stove because it used less wood. All but two of the 16 women reported that the men in their family collect firewood. Families collected firewood for cooking at various intervals: daily, twice a day, every two days and every three days. Daily collecting was reported most often from five families. Eight families also said that they bought firewood at times, with costs ranging from 100-1000 Ariary<sup>16</sup> a day. When asked how much wood was collected for the traditional (old) stove versus the improved (new) stove, the amount of wood used with

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<sup>16</sup> This is approximately 6-60 cents in American currency but represents significant expenditures for Malagasy people, perhaps equivalent to a meal.



improved stoves was always less. As Table 4 shows, whether the measurement was number of sticks, the cost of buying firewood, or the number of times that wood was collected, the amount of firewood used decreased with the improved stove.

**Table 4: Averaged Data for 16 Improved Stoves in Evatra<sup>17</sup>**

|                                       | <b>old stove</b> | <b>new stove</b> |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| average number of sticks used         | 7                | 10               |
| average expenditures for wood         | 560 Ariary       | 162.5 Ariary     |
| average frequency for collecting wood | 2 days           | 3.3 days         |

1 USD = 1,639.27 Malagasy Ariary

Though some women did state that “less wood was used” in their initial description of why they had the stove, only two women interviewed tried to fix the stove for continued use (albeit unsuccessfully). It seems that if using less wood was recognized and valued by both the men collecting it and the women cooking, then it would result in collective action to repair or replace the stoves in this project. Instead, women stated they were too busy, didn’t know how, were “waiting for the *vazaha* to fix it,” found a new use for it (e.g., holding ash, supporting the wall), or viewed it as garbage.

When asked if they would like to learn how to make or repair the stove, nine women said yes which reflected technical barriers that inhibited them from using and maintaining the stove. Other women’s answers seemed non-committal. One woman said she already knew how to fix it but didn’t because she was “busy weaving.” Six said they didn’t want to learn how to fix the stove and stated their lack of time and resistance to collect the materials needed (ash) and to go to the demonstration site to learn.

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<sup>17</sup> The data include answers from all 16 participants. Even though five women only used their new stove for weeks or one month, they reported differences in these variables for that short time and so are included.

In general, the perspectives of Malagasy residents within partner communities reveal that requested projects are most successful. These tend to be physical, showy structures where the benefits are clearly understood and immediately seen. The new school building in Tsihalagna was welcomed by residents for the opportunities it would provide their children; the barrage in Evatra was appreciated and used daily because clean water is so necessary. Harder to gauge is the attitude towards projects attempting to address community needs through trial and error strategies. Women in Evatra understandably may lack the commitment for new projects with less discernable benefits, like the improved stoves. Residents in these communities varied in their levels of participation and seemed to hold different ideas regarding their role in collaborations with Azafady.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CASE STUDY DISCUSSION**

This chapter reviews information presented throughout the thesis and expands on key ideas through comparisons and considerations within a broader framework. I discuss the priorities of Azafady and Malagasy participants and review aspects of the field sites, particularly participation, which impact Azafady's development initiatives. I also consider the impact of the Pioneer program on Azafady's operations and examine the role of Azafady over local, national, and global scales. Assessment of an Azafady project reveals the importance of soliciting Malagasy feedback and evaluation modifications are suggested.

#### **Priority comparisons between Azafady and partner communities**

By comparing the stated goals of Azafady and priorities identified within partner communities, many similarities arise. Perhaps the most obvious priority for residents is food security. Toward this end, Azafady has dedicated a training center to building capacity in agricultural techniques and income generation and assists with home gardens. Communities are undoubtedly behind initiatives such as building schools and wells and Azafady is clear about its commitment to providing access to education, improved health, and clean water sources. However, it will be worthwhile to see if literacy rates improve in the coming years. Embracing education may be a new idea for rural families and it will

be important for Azafady to determine if communities value what the school can provide along with the actual building itself. Azafady strongly embraces sanitation as a main priority as well, noting links between health and hygiene. This is not identified as a top concern by most rural Malagasy residents, although the concept is gaining acceptance through positive examples in neighboring villages.

The natural resource management sector strives for a balance between biological conservation and addressing residents' need for firewood and forest products. The Director is a botanist and is deeply concerned with protecting the remaining littoral forests in the area; the Malagasy perspective is clearly utilitarian, where residents expressed the priority of procuring fuel wood sustainably, easily, and cheaply. Azafady has several tree nurseries that yield species for daily use along with forest replanting, so that both goals are met to some degree. Similarly, through the community-based forestry initiatives, Azafady recognizes that communities will engage in forest conservation if their needs are also addressed (i.e., there are designated areas for traditional use, commercial use, regeneration, and conservation). This exemplifies Azafady's approach to not "force nature conservation" but instead make it relevant to residents, even if it involves some degree of compromise on their part.

In order to meet people's expressed needs, Azafady often has initial projects in communities that are most relevant to residents in order to make a substantial difference in their lives and gain their trust. After this is established through successful collaboration, Azafady may suggest other projects that they feel will benefit communities even if it doesn't address what Malagasy people would consider their first priorities. Examples of

this include starting projects such as building school facilities, wells or barrages for clean water usage, or local pharmacies that people can see and make use of right away. After this relationship is formed and secure and people have seen benefits, residents are more open and willing to try other projects such as latrines, income generating activities, or reforestation projects. This provides a balance of old (meeting basic needs) and new (projects that require some education and acceptance) within Azafady's work to address communities' concerns and priorities.

### **Site comparisons**

The communities of Tsihalagna and Evatra and their different responses to Azafady's development efforts merit discussion. These two sites provide a comparison for how Azafady operates and is perceived in different locations. In addition, the villages themselves illuminate how places, people, and conditions affect development projects. Locations differed between a rural remote village and a coastal village near a large city. Participation at these sites ranged from being involved at every step and working side by side to not being engaged and expecting the organization to present the finished product. The contexts varied from being open to the new experience of working with a development organization to feeling skeptical of foreigners from mining and tourist interactions.

The intent of this comparison is not to present these places in a simplified fashion as "good site, bad site." My experiences and impressions were certainly influenced by the amount of time I spent at both locations, the level of social interaction, and the

enthusiasm of the residents. Other Pioneers and Azafady staff have encountered completely different sentiments and situations, as is evident from positive accounts in earlier newsletters regarding Evatra's beauty and residents' engaged participation with medical teams over extended periods of work.

Rather, the significance of this comparison is that it reveals the complex situations that require Azafady to adapt to particular nuances while working towards their conservation and development goals in rural Madagascar. The diverse communities and contexts where Azafady works have necessitated the evolution that has taken place within the organization and is still on-going. It is this reflex to need, rather than insisting on one way of operating, that allows Azafady to experience project successes within some communities and adjust methods and try again in others.

### **Participation comparisons**

This comparison also highlights the different levels of participation that Azafady experiences. Thomas-Slayter and Sodikoff (2003) describe several levels of local participation which are applicable to this study of Azafady projects. *Passive participation* is unidirectional communication from a development agency to members of the community. This type of interaction is often paternalistic and tends to promote dependence rather than self-reliance. *Reactive participation* is usually controlled by a development agency, where they may require community donations of labor, money, or other resources. Here, the initiative lies outside the community and there are rarely ongoing forms of community participation or project activity. *Active participation* is

instigated by the community itself, where residents are the agents of change, though they may act in concert with outside sources of funds, technical assistance, or other resources.

Tsihalagna is an example of active participation, where residents initiated the request for building a school with Azafady, provided their community contributions in raw materials, and galvanized efforts to help construct it. In this case, the project benefited the entire community, which likely facilitated the degree of participation. At Lanirano, Azafady similarly responded to requests from residents in the area regarding their preferred training courses and techniques. This, in addition to ongoing monitoring, helped encourage participation in group training to build skills. Finally, Evatra is shown here as participating passively in the improved stove project, dependant on Azafady to make and repair stoves that they may use for a time. Without personal incentive, this project has floundered, yet opportunities to identify obstacles exist and may increase participation on some level. This highlights that, in addition to the other factors contributing to the differences at these locations, the type of project inevitably played a large role in community response.

### **Project sustainability considerations**

Project sustainability is a prominent concern for NGOs. The prevailing sentiment among the 25 Pioneers viewing the improved stove project in Evatra was discouragement. Entering homes to see cracked, broken, and unused stoves was disappointing. Hearing that some women received stoves just for the novelty and were not invested at any stage of the project was also disheartening. Pioneers expressed these concerns to the Director

and questioned if the project would continue with this level of disengagement among the women.

The Director maintained a sympathetic view toward the community of Evatra. He held a larger, historical perspective of the hardships that residents have endured which are surely beyond what I can imagine (e.g., the contentious mining issue, cholera outbreaks, famine). He held firm in his stance that even though it has been a challenging area to work in at times (corroborated by disgruntled guides), the community of Evatra has real needs that Azafady will not ignore. Regarding Pioneers' apprehension about the effectiveness of the stove project, the Director offered his view that perhaps it was a handout but "handouts are fine and sometimes needed." He further offered that Azafady "has never been taken advantage of" in Evatra throughout their work there.

Handouts may still contribute to an overall goal, even if the "gift" is not understood or requested by the community. For example, if the stoves in Evatra were functional, most of the women would continue to use them, which would indeed reduce the amount of firewood collected from the forest. This provides incentive for Azafady to learn how to make a longer-lasting stove, ensure that women know how to fix or make the stoves themselves, or follow up earlier with repairs and feedback from the women.

In Tsihalagna, the latrine pits on the school yard will need to be rotated after five years and the community will eventually need to dig a new pit and move the outhouses. When the guides confided that this often is not done by communities, Pioneers again expressed frustration to the Director that their efforts were not sustainable. He recognized that demands on time and resources can be too high for residents to take on new



responsibilities themselves (such as making a stove or digging a latrine pit). Yet, this project will contribute to Azafady's goal of addressing health and sanitation for a time at least. It is the hope of the NGO that those initial years using the latrine will build confidence in the community that a latrine contributes to improved health and sanitation. Then, residents may be more invested and likely to build their own latrines in the future to reduce fecal contamination and illness.

### **Volunteer considerations**

Another interesting aspect of Azafady's implementation is the use and indeed dependence on the Pioneer program. Although this program substantially contributes to Azafady in many ways, it also brings up a few points of concern. Most Pioneers are 18-25 years old, many of whom have not left their own countries before. They require the guidance and language translation of the guides every day. The guides support the Pioneers in many ways and are required to be "on duty" to supervise them in town, at night, in the field, prepare some meals for them, and perform other duties like language training. In addition to all of this, guides are responsible for coordinating tasks and actually working on assigned projects in the field as well as acting as a liaison between communities and each Pioneer group. Combined with the administrative work that accompanies each group, the Pioneer program places a significant strain on Azafady staff both in the office and the field.

It was vehemently argued by the Director and foreign staff during orientation that having the spectacle of 20 or so *vazahas* adds to the importance of the project in

communities and certainly to the interest of the Malagasy residents. Perhaps that line should be tread lightly. An overwhelming presence of foreigners can rightly seem like a detached outside project rather than something for and from within a community. Does making a project “more visible” through the inclusion of numerous foreigners enhance the project and make it more “important” in the community? Azafady staff argue that it does.

At the very least, volunteers should always be aware that they are then representing Azafady and missteps can reflect poorly on the organization. Although “cultural sensitivity training” takes place, every group has its drunken mishaps and misunderstandings in communities. It is shown that ideas about the organization, its work, and its methods are not always fully understood. That can be problematic if the behavior and activities of volunteers can be seen as representative of Azafady itself and jeopardize future work.

To accommodate Pioneers, Azafady also considers the overall volunteer experience. This means including activities in the 10-week period that can lift the spirits of volunteers during bouts of hard physical labor or homesickness, such as visits to the beach and lemur watching at nature reserves. Despite a clear lecture from Azafady staff that voluntary service that benefits local communities is the first priority, there can be a sense of entitlement by Pioneers about how their time and money should be spent. The Director revealed that it was partially this thinking that led to time at Evatra and Lanirano during my internship. Evatra is a beautiful location that was purposefully chosen as a place of “downtime” in between challenging periods of construction in Tsihalagna.

Lanirano is in close proximity to the urban comforts of Fort Dauphin. Times spent in these settings were meant to placate the volunteers to some degree and provide changes in location even though there was minimal work to be done. In this way, the presence and dependence on Pioneers dictates the schedule and activities of Azafady at least some of the time.

Finally, there are no qualifications needed to be a volunteer. That is, these participants are not necessarily bringing any experience or skills except for their donations of time, money, and labor. This is often evident during the implementation of projects, perhaps especially the construction projects that require hard physical labor and the use of rudimentary tools to create a school building literally from scratch with raw materials. Malagasy and Azafady staff alike commented that the construction projects could get completed much quicker if the Pioneers *weren't* there “contributing” their efforts. That begs the question of what could be accomplished in their absence and if volunteer presence is inhibiting completion of certain projects overall or at least in a timely fashion. Apparently, this trade-off is worthwhile and the time and energy devoted to Pioneers is offset by the enormous financial contribution they provide. Like being influenced by large and powerful donors, Azafady is responsible to and in this case, for, the Pioneers that support the organization’s endeavors.

### **Local/Global considerations**

The critique of international NGOs’ excessive power and influence over environmental policies in Madagascar provides a general backdrop for this study. In the

past, there have been a large number of foreigners in charge of conservation organizations and development interventions in Madagascar. Indeed, many still remain. In the case of Azafady, the Director is the founder and obviously very invested and attached to the organization and its causes. Even so, one British administrative employee confided that she has asked him to consider “stepping down” to allow a new Director. That may be simply to infuse the NGO with a fresh perspective, avoid burnout for the Director, or allow a Malagasy counterpart the opportunity to lead.

Since the Pioneer program is a large part of Azfady’s operations, having some European administrative staff perhaps facilitates communication with both the Directors of the Malagasy NGO and also the London office. These individuals also work very closely with the Pioneer program regarding logistics, organization, and project planning and may better understand the nuances of foreigners in this context. For this reason, the field project coordinators of Pioneer endeavors were also *vazahas* who could communicate and empathize with Pioneers during extended stays in rural areas. Again, these coordinators tended to be individuals who had already been a Pioneer at some point and were therefore familiar with Azafady and its work in Madagascar. Thus, some international staff seems necessary to efficiently run aspects of Azafady projects.

Foreign administrative and field staff, along with volunteers, do not seem to have a dominating presence in the NGO, however. Azafady makes efforts to distance itself from the “NGO-landscapes” elsewhere in Madagascar, evident by Land Rovers, increased office space, flowing funds, and conspicuous presence (Kull, 1996). Azafady does not operate as a British NGO that happened to relocate to Madagascar. The

revolving door of foreign volunteers does not create a traveler's "youth hostel" atmosphere, either. Whether because it is expensive to volunteer in Madagascar or through imposed time restraints, there are very few volunteers at the same time. The large number of Malagasy staff allows Azafady to use Malagasy as its primary working language, be exceptionally aware of communities in the area, and adhere to cultural norms that are extremely important in Madagascar. In this way, Azafady exemplifies a cross-cultural, rather than international, NGO, where people of different nationalities work together with their combined strengths to implement the development visions expressed by Malagasy people in partner communities.

The presence of foreign staff and influences leads to an interesting question, however - what makes a "local" NGO? It seems to be an important distinction since the Director is adamant that Azafady is a Malagasy NGO. Though Azafady is quite independent on the ground, there are still connections and obligations to the office in London and the finances they procure. There is an element of power and control in many NGO relationships where funding will likely always come from abroad and donors will have some impact on the way the NGO operates. So what determines the status of a "local" NGO? Is it the location of the main office, composition of the staff, size of the organization, source of funds, guiding philosophy, years of experience, or level of interaction with residents in the area? These questions are valid considerations in the discourse of international influences on the cultural and environmental landscape of Madagascar.

Classification as a “local” NGO can perhaps exude an air of legitimacy, relevance, and authenticity that organizations are eager to adopt. It may conjure up images of motivated and informed citizens, advocacy, fewer political appeasements or financial strings, and the commitment to issues and solutions that relate to people of the area. Yet why should those qualities be limited to “local”? Duffy (2006) described the network of actors that preside over environmental policy in Madagascar as “neither wholly national nor completely global, but are instead a complex mix” that exhibit elements of both (p. 734). In the same way, the term “cross-cultural” may bridge the divide between contested meanings of local/global NGOs and their work in Madagascar. Rather than losing credibility for surrendering the “local” title or alienating others with an “international” reputation, viewing Azafady as a cross-cultural NGO importantly implies a fair exchange of both local and global elements within the organization.

### **NGO/State considerations**

These indistinct boundaries are applicable in other circumstances in Madagascar as well. For instance, what transpires when the state is unable to implement development initiatives that are increasingly addressed by NGOs of all kinds? Lindenbergh and Bryant (2001) identified how the weakening of governments in developing countries has created new dilemmas for NGOs. NGOs may try to function as a substitute for the state and provide basic services, as is the case with Azafady. However, without the assistance of the government, NGOs have the difficult task of trying to build communities alone or with other agencies. NGOs may also pressure the state to become more involved and

adopt a stronger role, although Madagascar faces serious economic, infrastructure, and legal constraints in that regard. The Director reiterated that international aid is the main funder for the Malagasy government. Most Malagasy people do not earn a taxable income, although a tax system applied to land and salaries is under consideration and gaining importance. The land ownership system is also an impediment to development. The Director had experienced residents' hesitancy to invest in land (i.e., agricultural or conservation practices) while there is no legally recognized ownership and government is capable of reclaiming land at any time.

Still, the Director was positive in his depiction of Azafady's relationship with the current Malagasy government. He castigated the previous administration, citing Ratsiraka's disinterest in their development efforts, the necessity of bribes, and the abuse of power that hindered many progressive development programs and environmental policies in Madagascar. He lauded the initiatives and involvement of Ravalamanana and stated that Azafady finally had a "proper collaboration" with the Malagasy government. The Director felt the government has created an atmosphere that is conducive to development in Madagascar and encourages achieving their mutual goals, each according to their capabilities.

### **Evaluation considerations and recommendations**

Azafady is clearly taking many opportunities to call for and conduct project evaluations. Interviews with women in Evatra highlighted that consulting participants is an invaluable way to inform and improve Azafady's operations. Findings from my

interviews do not reflect that Malagasy perspectives are never considered in Azafady's work. Instead, they show how useful participants' feedback is to project evaluation and evolution. This section describes recommendations for improving Azafady's methods of implementation and evaluation.

- *Improve project sustainability with participation*

In development theory and application, participatory planning is generally thought to increase the mobilization and capacity of local people to act for themselves (Aune, 2003). Thomas-Slayter and Sodikoff (2003) similarly describe advantages for development projects when participation, leadership, and initiative are based within local communities. Interviews in Evatra highlight that this participation component is lacking, yet integral, for the sustainability of the improved stove project. Because the women in Evatra didn't specifically request the stoves for themselves, identifying the barriers to participation, which are perhaps gender specific, could help to overcome some of these obstacles. This seems possible through the extension agent in Evatra, who could ask further questions to learn what would be most appropriate and accepted by these women to encourage their investment in the project. She could also follow up with the women that are most interested to see if they can serve as a positive example or motivation for others. This community participation reflects the ideal approach described by the Azafady Director as "working with versus giving to."



- *Enhance project implementation through education and capacity building*

The interviews with women in Evatra suggested that the educational and training process of the stove project is flawed because women were not well informed on the purpose of the stove and its benefits for families. Nine out of 16 women also wanted to repair their own stove but did not know how, reflecting a poor transfer of knowledge and capacity-building skills. When eight new stoves were constructed during this visit (separate from the visits and interviews), Pioneers saw that women were not present when the stoves were made. Instead, a band of *vazahas* came in and rolled clay and ash together to magically create a stove that the women then knew nothing about. Women understandably considered themselves recipients rather than participants in this endeavor. Again, the extension agent in Evatra can be an on-site source of teaching and training for women considering this project. Requiring that women be involved in making the stoves would help ensure that those with stoves truly want them. Women would simultaneously learn how to repair their own stove because they would be part of the process.

- *Approach evaluations through groups and influential leaders*

PHAST methods and Azafady reports encourage end of project evaluations yet the NGO faces limited time and staff. I interviewed individual women in Evatra and it did take several hours over several days to conduct a basic evaluation of the stove project. To address this constraint, group evaluations could be considered. Just as one woman in Evatra mentioned that she attended a meeting for a project she was interested in, participants could also converge to provide their feedback and collective experiences

with a project. While the constraints of group dynamics are noted (e.g., shyness, hesitancy to speak honestly in front of others, women not speaking in the presence of men), this approach could work well in some situations and is a viable option.

I have also seen several examples of engaged and motivated leaders who encouraged residents to show up for particular meetings to share their perspectives on projects with others. This might be easiest to facilitate if there is a project that affects most of the community (e.g., a well or school). This is an effective step to add to the methods that Azafady currently uses, where extension agents could inform communities that this group evaluation is a part of the participation requirement. Discussions in the form of “town meetings” could be expected to take place at certain intervals after the project is completed to follow up and ensure satisfaction and sustainability.

- *Invest in project evaluations with participant perspectives*

Lindenberg and Bryant (2001) argue that evaluation, like any other function, requires organizational commitment of funds and staff to make it happen. Evaluations should be incorporated into staff schedules and the organizational budget to ensure that they occur rather than relying on “if there’s time” to conduct such a necessary assessment. Critical and interactive evaluations should be made a priority to allow the projects to be most effective for all involved. This means an evaluation not just by the field agents and project technicians, but also by the Malagasy people served by the project. It is essential to determine if there is a disconnect between Azafady’s perceptions of their work and Malagasy responses to it.

Interviews in Evatra show that narratives from project participants are informative and should be incorporated into the evaluation procedure to minimize disparate perceptions. Azafady newsletters and reports were touting the improved stove project as an unequivocal success because 20 women acquired stoves in 2006. The Director similarly declared that “the stoves have really taken off in Evatra” during discussions with Pioneers. These organizational reports did not match up with the project results of 16 nonfunctional stoves. This chance to examine the project through interviews with the Malagasy women using these stoves in 2007 exemplifies the need for regular and descriptive feedback from participants, not just technicians’ assessments. In this way, both the objective and participatory evaluation measures that Meyer and Singh (2003) describe are useful. Detailed responses provided illuminating ideas of what could work better next time and underscored the necessity of narrative accounts in evaluations from project participants like Medley suggested.

Since Azafady experiences severe time and staff limitations that often inhibit thoughtful and participatory evaluations in rural areas, perhaps they should look to other resources. Lindenbergh and Bryant (2001) argue that time and skill are needed to extrapolate useful findings from evaluations; many NGOs even have a particular evaluation unit within their office that can dedicate their efforts solely to project assessment. It may be possible to include among the Azafady volunteers someone who focuses solely on evaluating projects for their 6 month stay, requiring neither Azafady funds nor taking time away from the field staff’s responsibilities. Alternatively, Azafady could allow Pioneers to perform some degree of evaluation more often to add to

Azafady's understanding of how their projects impact Malagasy participants.

Furthermore, Azafady documents report seeking funding sources to improve the training of Azafady staff and other ventures. Perhaps some funding efforts should be dedicated to supporting the evaluation process, whether hiring outside personnel for independent evaluations or additional staff for the sole purpose of assessing and enhancing Azafady's work in Madagascar.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

As discussed in the literature review, conservation can be a contentious issue. Amidst the critiques and grave concerns that many NGOs are exerting their own environmental agenda in Madagascar, I examined a particular NGO in southeastern Madagascar as a case study. I interviewed the staff of Azafady to determine their approach to conservation and development and Malagasy project participants at two locations to establish their priorities and perspectives. I supplemented this data with textual analysis of Azafady documents and participant observation to add dimension to the study.

The data reveal that Azafady determines the organization's goals through interactions and consultations with Malagasy residents. In contrast with compelling evidence that many NGOs maintain an environmental focus in the face of dire human development needs, conservation is actually the smallest component of Azafady's work. Despite the environmental interest expressed by the Director, Azafady does not prioritize or excessively promote a conservation agenda. Instead, Azafady priorities closely match up with residents' responses of food security, access to clean water, and education though the NGO advocates sanitation projects that may not resonate with rural populations.

Azafady staff and organization documents corroborate that project design and implementation primarily follows participatory methods, especially community projects using the PHAST steps required for the health and sanitation sector. Active participation is more challenging in the creation of innovative, individual projects that are designed to address residents' needs and often fall under the sustainable livelihoods sector. Data show that projects under the natural resource sector address both residents' daily needs and Azafady's conservation concerns. Fund-raising efforts in London and the Pioneer program prove to be essential components that allow Azafady to implement these projects in Madagascar while simultaneously increasing the international aspect of the NGO.

Malagasy residents in Tsihalagna reported that Azafady projects addressed their expressed needs, while the majority of women interviewed in Evatra showed apathy toward the improved stove project which was in its second year. Instead, requested projects were considered most successful by Malagasy residents and Azafady staff alike.

Azafady is concerned with evaluating its projects but is faced with time and staff constraints. Ongoing participatory feedback is most evident at the Lanirano training center where there is frequent contact with project members and ample opportunities to assess progress. Whenever possible, Azafady has employed independent evaluations and engaged participant feedback and Pioneer insights. Interviews evaluating the improved stove project in Evatra show the importance of participant perspectives for Azafady's effectiveness with fledgling projects and emphasize Medley's (2004) assertion that community feedback is invaluable for NGO evaluation and enhancement.

These findings regarding Azafady's role, responsibilities, and results are important for conceptualizing NGOs' conservation endeavors across scales. The questions and responses generated in this study present an opportunity to better understand elements of a particular NGO in Madagascar. Azafady articulated that they are taking great pains to ensure they address conservation and development in the ways that are most relevant to Malagasy residents in the Antanosy region. This NGO exhibits admirable traits that others could emulate- adapting to each situation, maintaining a focus on local needs, providing training, encouraging sustainability, engaging communities, empowering underrepresented people, and fostering collaboration with people and partners.

As Gezon (1997) notes however, "understanding success and failure in conservation is more complex than looking at individual project designs" (p. 464) of NGOs. Rather, it requires looking at local projects within national and international contexts. Despite these singular qualities which have brought much success in their efforts, Azafady's transitions over the past decade correspond with descriptions about the changing roles of NGOs in Madagascar from Gezon (2000) and Medley (2004). From a position of advocacy against mining in southeastern Madagascar, Azafady moved into a mode of action and implementation that has increasing influence on conservation and development activities in the area. Instead of support from large financial institutions, however, Azafady is funded largely by young idealists who experience their work first-hand. Despite Azafady's growth in size and scope over the years, the organization has

remained primarily accountable to their partner communities rather than a bureaucratic system where they operate on the periphery.

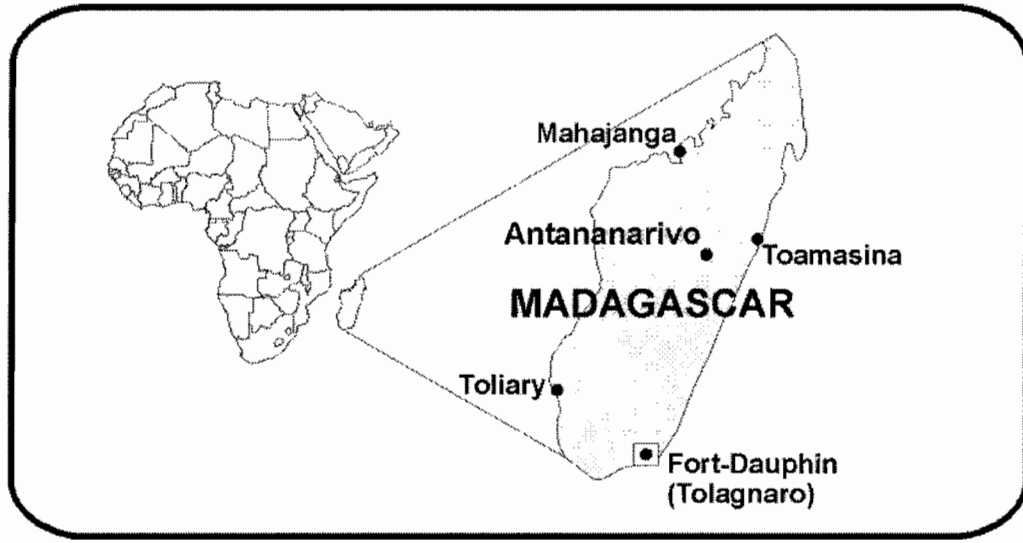
Azafady also exhibits some characteristics applicable to NGOs around the world. Azafady is contributing to meeting Madagascar's national development objectives through projects that address basic needs. As Lindenbergh and Bryant (2001) describe for many developing countries, Azafady does take on the role of the state in some ways as this NGO assumes the responsibility for providing a substantial number of educational facilities and clean water sources requested throughout the area.

Azafady's work on local conservation and development issues can therefore be considered within the political ecology framework of national and global pressures. These include such factors as economic incentive to endorse mining, the limited ability of the state to create development opportunities, the changing political administration and their motivations, environmental policy determined by a powerful range of global actors, and international disputes over appropriate ecological protection measures. Thus, Azafady exemplifies cross-cultural and far-reaching ways to move toward human and environmental sustainability within the debate of influential international environmental organizations in Madagascar.



**APPENDIX A**

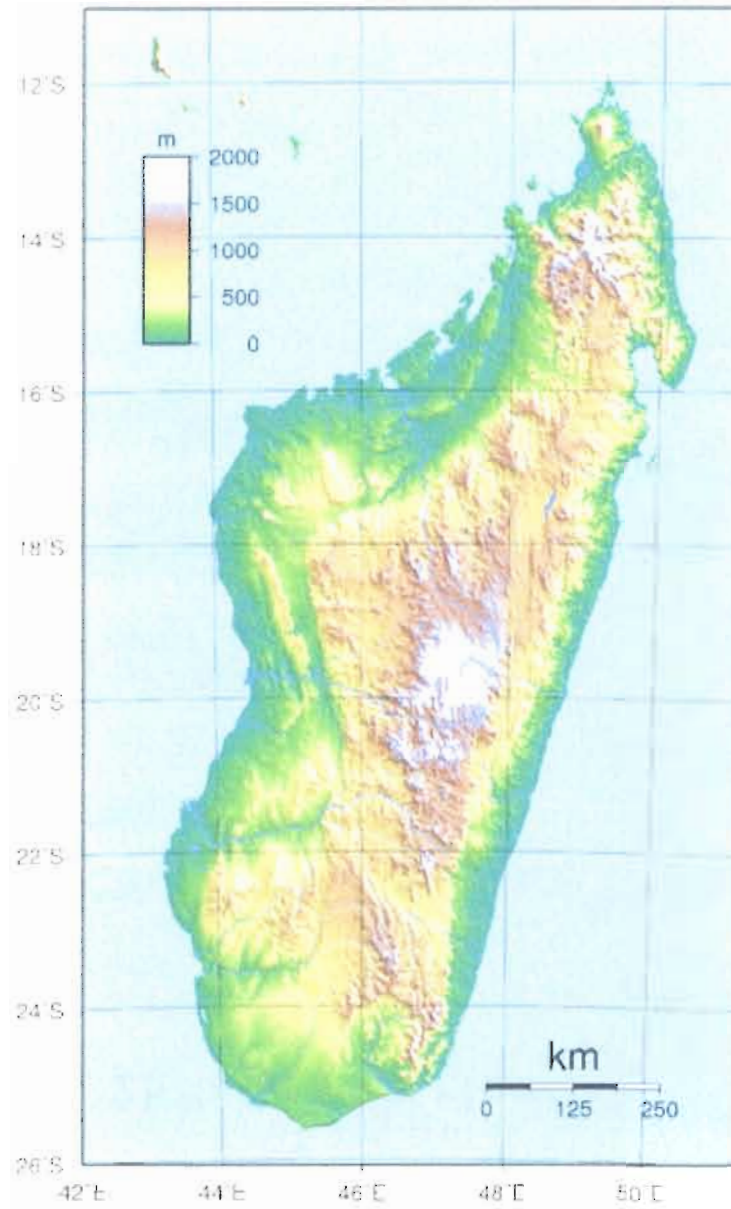
**GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION AND SCALE OF MADAGASCAR**



source: Azafady, 2003b

## APPENDIX B

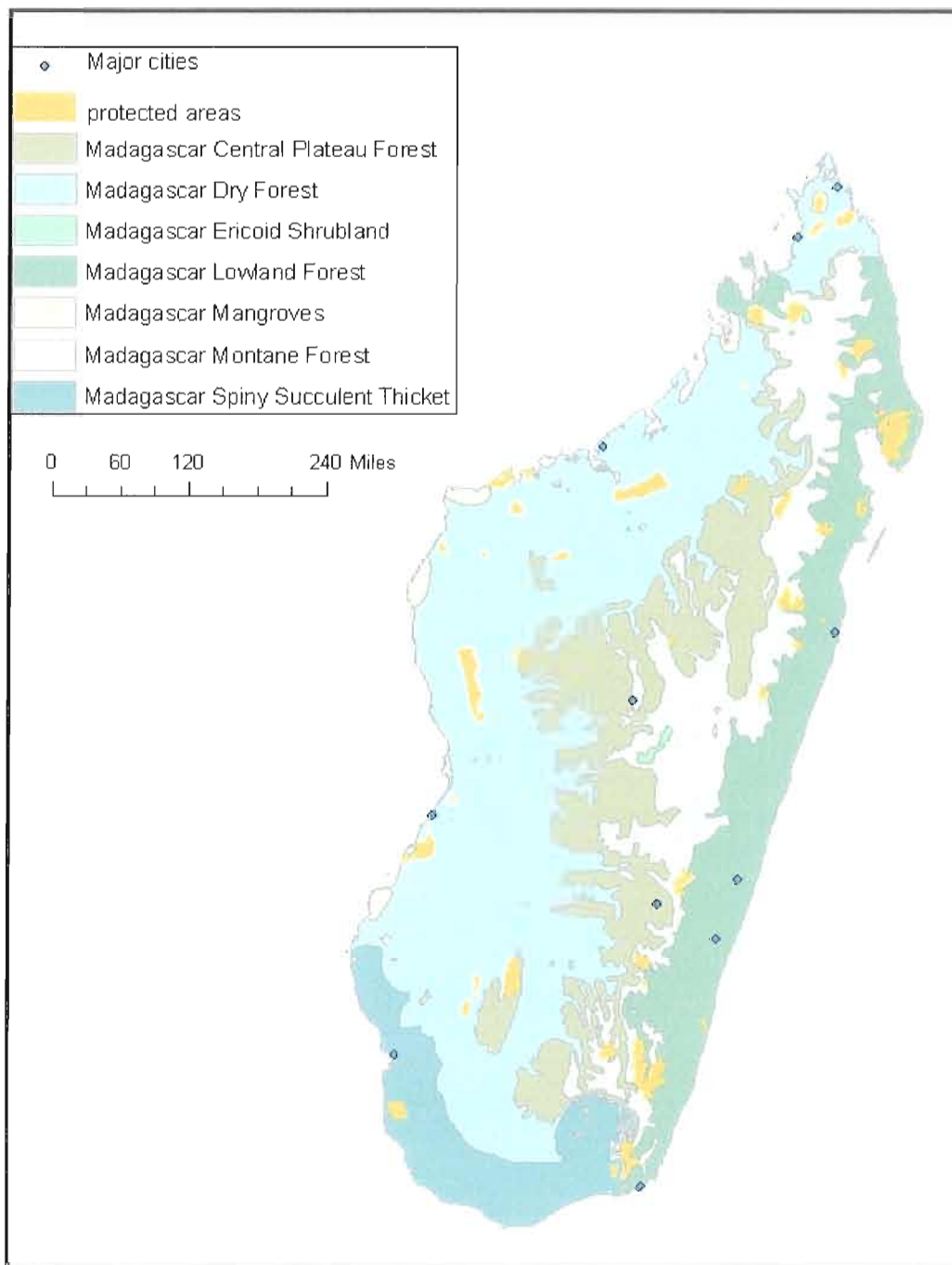
## GEOLOGICAL RELIEF MAP OF MADAGASCAR



source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Madagascar\\_Topography.png](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Madagascar_Topography.png)

## APPENDIX C

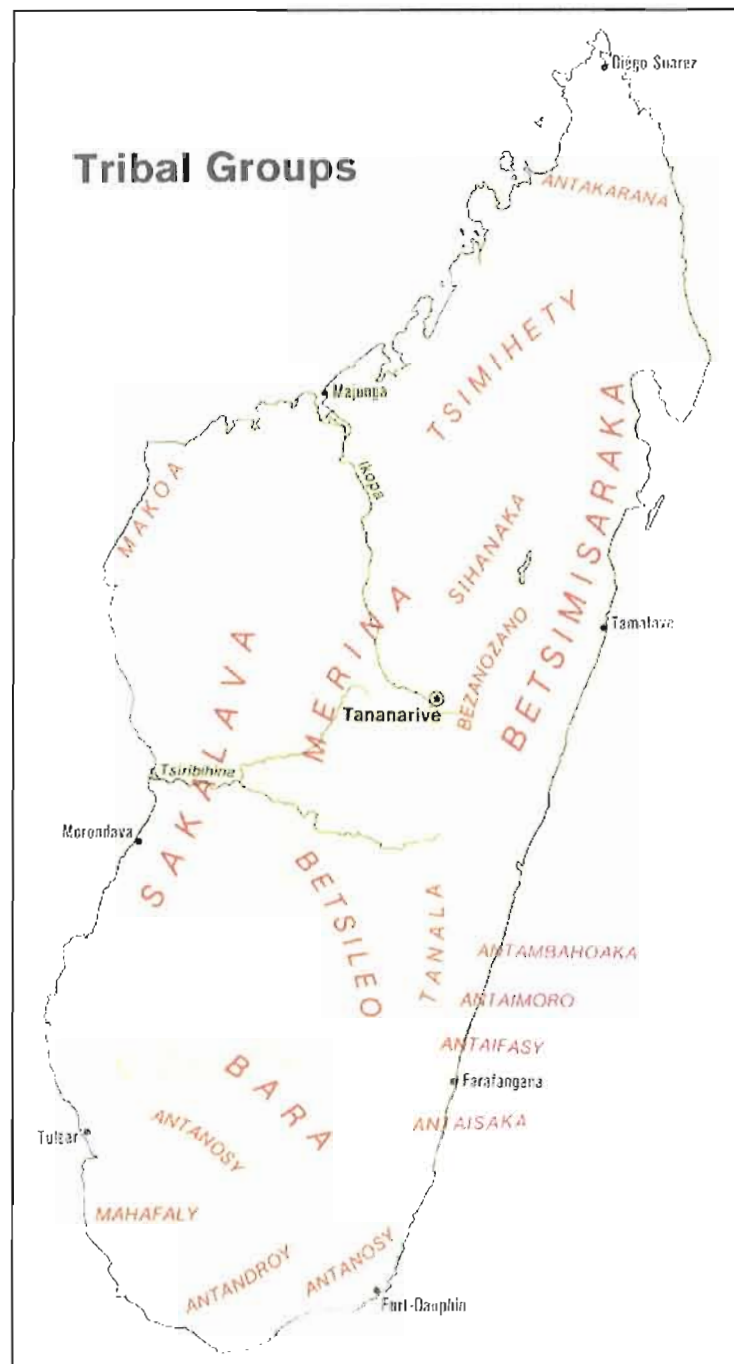
## VEGETATION ZONES IN MADAGASCAR



source: WWF, 2007a

## APPENDIX D

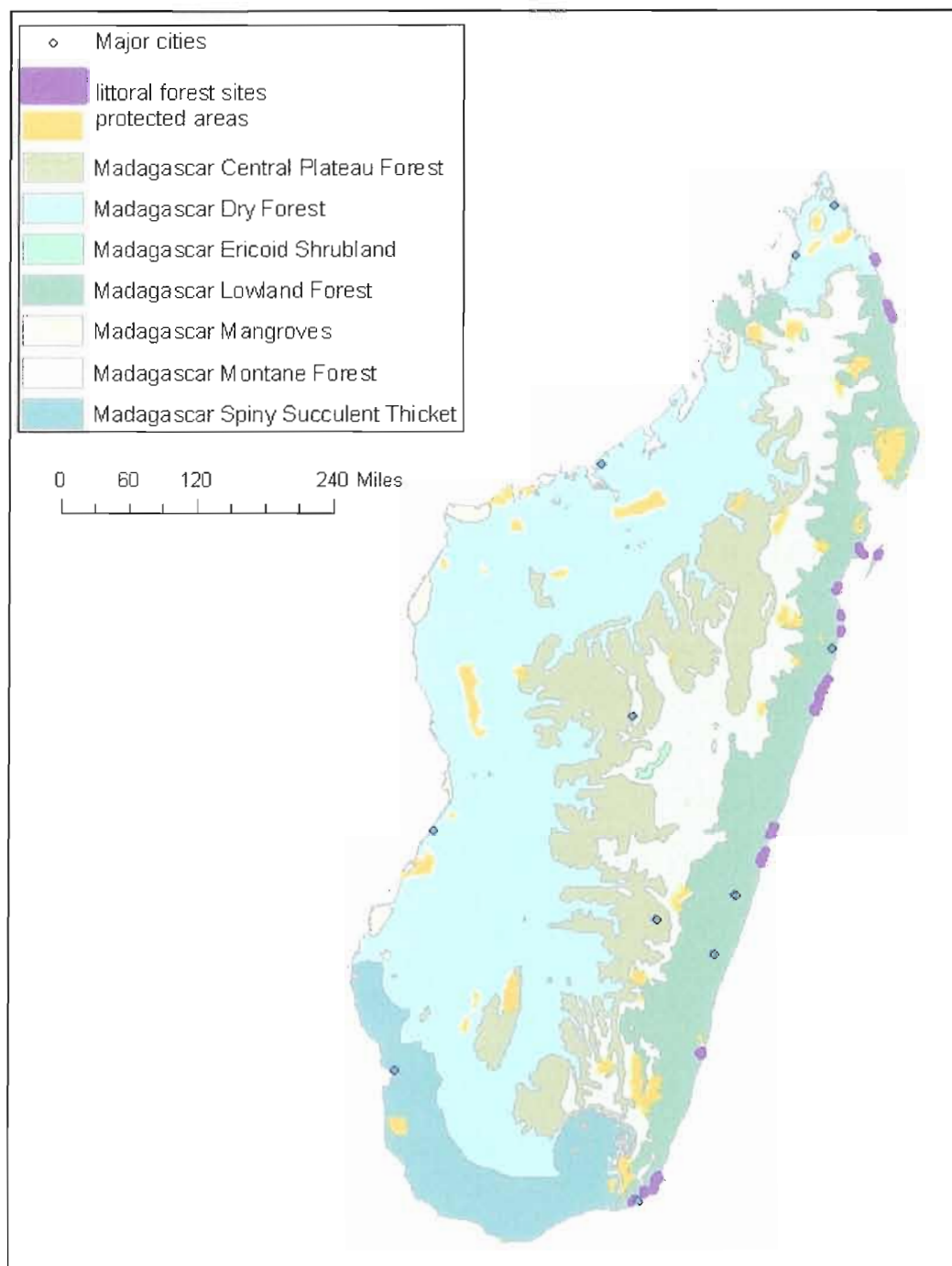
## CULTURAL MAP OF MADAGASCAR



source: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/madagascar.html>

## APPENDIX E

## REMAINING LITTORAL FOREST SITES IN MADAGASCAR



source: WWF, 2007a

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