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sustainable environment, education & development

Project Fano

***In situ* research and community-led conservation of loggerhead turtles in Sainte Luce, southeast Madagascar**



November 2017 – March 2018

SEED Madagascar

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Executive Summary:

Project Fano (Malagasy for sea turtle) is an *in situ* marine turtle conservation and research project, focussing on loggerhead turtles, *Caretta caretta*, in the Sainte Luce *fokontany* (village cluster) of the Anosy region, southeast Madagascar. This pilot phase will build the foundations for the long-term survival of the species through local conservation awareness-raising and work alongside the local community to implement a research and conservation plan. This project will collect and disseminate population and nesting data, forming a study that will ultimately challenge the IUCN's red list status for the Southwest Indian Ocean loggerhead turtle subpopulation. Enhancing the survival of loggerheads through raising local awareness of turtle conservation will also improve ecotourism opportunities.

Target Beneficiaries:

Project Fano will work within Ste Luce's three fokontany, in the Mahatalaky commune. The hamlet of Manafiafy sits adjacent to the turtle nesting beach, where eggs and nesting females have historically been harvested. Through community, stakeholder and Turtle Conservation Committee-led meetings, a community established management plan will be implemented, with the intention of building the capacity of a team of local guides and generating income for the community through eco-tourism. A 6km stretch of beach will be monitored during this pilot phase of the project.

Objectives:

- i. Establish an unprecedented data set on nesting loggerhead turtle population and hatchling success in the vastly understudied Sainte Luce area, adding to global scientific literature on loggerhead turtle nesting and hatchling success in the Southwest Indian Ocean
- ii. Establish and build the capacity of the Turtle Committee to collect data on nesting turtles and train four local guides to effectively monitor the turtle nesting beach in Manafiafy
- iii. Share information with the Sainte Luce community on turtle conservation through community meetings and conservation awareness-raising education sessions.

Activities:

- SEED will train and employ four guides from the community-led Turtle Conservation Committee, to monitor nesting populations and hatchling success on the 6km nesting beach in Manafiafy, daily from November 2017-March 2018
- 170 daily surveys; monitoring all nests along the study site conducted during the 2017/8 nesting season
- Findings disseminated through an academic research paper published after the 2017/8 nesting season providing baseline data on nesting success in the Sainte Luce region.
- Results of this pilot phase will be used to estimate local population and nesting success and serve as baseline data for a post-pilot project, with the intention of continuing research during each season to assess the conservation actions and long-term health of the local population.
- Two community meetings held by the Turtle Committee held between November 2017 and March 2018, engaging the community in project activities
- 10 hours of environmental education classes delivered to 200 young people by March 2018