

## Pioneer Madagascar: Community-based Health, Livelihoods and Conservation





## What is the Azafady Pioneer Madagascar programme?

The Pioneer Madagascar programme is an award-winning volunteering initiative run by Azafady since 2001. The programme offers the opportunity to work alongside village communities with an international team of experienced project leaders on a range of construction work, conservation projects and educational activities in the traditional fishing and farming region of Anosy in southeast Madagascar. Living and working in some of the most beautiful and remote parts of Madagascar, Pioneer volunteers work across Azafady's three interrelated project areas over the course of the programme:

- **sustainable livelihoods development**
- **health-based infrastructure and education; and**
- **environmental conservation**

Volunteers on Pioneer work on a range of projects depending on local needs at the time. Typical projects include building schools in rural villages, constructing wells to improve access to clean drinking water, teaching local children crucial health education, and planting trees and building fuel-efficient stoves to help combat deforestation.

This award-winning programme has been designed to give motivated individuals an all-round **vocational experience** in the workings of a small development agency, an excellent background for anyone considering a career in the non-profit sector. Specifically, volunteers gain an understanding of how community-led development and conservation projects work on the ground, and how poverty and resource needs affect conservation in developing countries. Pioneer Madagascar is also offered as an internship for those wishing to gain experience and/or credit for a college or university course.

The Pioneer programme is designed as a **10 week scheme** although shorter periods (from 5 weeks) may be arranged by request. Programmes start in the first week of **January, April, July and October** each year.



## Why Volunteer with Azafady?

Azafady is not alone in offering you the opportunity to spend a part of your life overseas. What makes us different is that the Pioneer Madagascar programme is a not-for-profit scheme run by a registered charity (registered UK charity number 1079121) and Malagasy NGO. Funds generated by Pioneer are invested right back into our projects in Madagascar, rather than into a private company. We may not be able to offer you the glossy literature of other organisations, but what we can give you is a genuine, worthwhile volunteering experience.

The projects you will be working on during your time in Madagascar will be arranged as a result of the present expressed needs of the communities in the Fort Dauphin region and the surrounding rural areas. Your work is invaluable to the Malagasy people. As stated by the Mayor of Fort Dauphin:

**“For us here in this region, every extra volunteer means extra investment, extra employment and training, and a multitude of benefits.”**

**By joining us in Madagascar, you really will be making a difference.**

Azafady’s project coordinators are among an award-winning team. Azafady projects over the years have received many prestigious endorsements such as those from Sir David Attenborough, The Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and Duke Primate Centre.

We have won a number of coveted awards such as the Sting and Trudie Styler Award for Conservation & Human Rights, “Best Volunteering Organisation” at the 2007 Responsible Tourism Awards, and the Prix Pictet photography commission in 2009.

Pioneer Madagascar is an invaluable opportunity for you to gain on-the-ground experience that will assist you in pursuing a career in development and/or conservation work, with an organisation that has a proven track record in these fields. By volunteering with us it could help you to choose a new direction in life or to develop a career path you may already be on. It could be both a personal highlight and a practical stepping stone in a gap year or, for anyone at any time, a great way to go abroad for more than just a holiday.





## **Madagascar**

Madagascar is unique and one of the most fascinating yet least travelled areas of Africa. The sheer diversity of this island is astounding, from the people to the geography, climate, architecture and, of course, the wildlife. Brimming with endemic fauna and flora, Madagascar's ecological importance is unrivalled anywhere else in the world. 80% of the island's plant and animal species are found nowhere else on earth and as such Madagascar has been recognised as one of the planet's top conservation priorities.

Whilst biologically rich, Madagascar is one of the economically poorest countries on earth. Over 70% of the island's population of 18 million people live on less than 1 US dollar a day. Extreme poverty poses an enormous and ongoing threat to the island's staggering biodiversity, not least through deforestation caused by slash-and-burn agriculture. Many unique species have already been lost whilst many others, including some as yet undescribed by science, face extinction.

## **Azafady Volunteers**

Azafady accepts volunteers from all over the world. Volunteers come to us from the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and much of Western Europe. Our projects are open to anyone over the age of 18 and are suitable for people on gap years, career breaks,

students or retirees. With 15-20 volunteers on each team, you will always find a diverse mix of people from many walks of life but each sharing Azafady's mission – to alleviate poverty, improve well-being, and preserve the unique and beautiful environments of south east Madagascar.

## **Internship**

Pioneer Madagascar is also offered as an internship for those wishing to gain experience and/or credit for a college or University course. The major difference between an intern and a volunteer relates to the amount of mentorship and self-evaluation.

There are several factors necessary for a successful internship programme and we understand that some colleges and universities may have special requirements for internships, it may be possible to adapt the programme to meet these needs. Please contact us for further details.

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**“I loved every moment of my volunteering with Azafady.**

**I enjoyed learning about the different departments of the NGO and being able to ask questions about how things really worked in practise.**

**I had a good time getting my hands dirty and was proud of what we achieved as a team.”**

**Rachel McKee, Pioneer, January 2008, UK.**

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## Pioneer Project Work

Volunteer work varies greatly depending on the time of year, project programmes and schedules of coordinators, but all itineraries have the essential aim of assisting with conservation and development work in southeast Madagascar.

Examples of the various projects you may be involved in are covered over the next few pages, they are listed under three main categories;

- Sustainable Livelihoods
- Health and Sanitation
- Environment

### Health and Sanitation

**Well Construction:** Clean water is of course vital to human life and a necessity to prevent the spread of diseases such as cholera that are present in Madagascar. Azafady, in the role of Regional Coordinator for the Africa-wide W.A.S.H. programme, is assisting the government of Madagascar to reach the goal of clean water for 80% of rural people by 2015. Volunteers will work with the Azafady construction team to build new wells requested by villagers and repair or improve existing ones. We aim that all groups will complete at least one water point during their time in Madagascar.

**Construction of Latrines:** This will typically be for a local school and links well with Health Education lessons provided for school children by Azafady.

**Health Education:** Through songs, role play and demonstrations, volunteers will work with Azafady's Health and Sanitation team to inform children about the benefits of hand washing, teeth brushing and using latrines. This is where those of you who like to show off can really shine! For the quieter members of the group, there is always work backstage!





## Sustainable Livelihoods

**School building:** The majority of Madagascar's population live in isolated rural communities, many of whom have little or no access to even basic levels of formal education. One of the challenges of the Malagasy government's Madagascar Action Plan (MAP) 2007-2012 is to create a successful primary education system by "increasing school capacities especially in vulnerable zones, through the development of school infrastructures, and the training and recruitment of new teachers." The government aims to construct at least 3,000 classrooms by 2012 to enable children aged 6-14 to be taught for at least a half-day, every day. As part of Azafady's *Project Sekoly*, volunteers are helping to address the high demand for schools in the rural commune of Mahatalaky. Mahatalaky is made up of 16 fokontanies, or villages, each of which is made up of several outlying hamlets. The commune is vast and communities isolated from each other. Many fokontanies have no formal educational services and children are forced to walk up to 20km per day to attend schools in other communities.

Most Pioneer teams contribute to a school-building project at some point on their scheme on which volunteers will be involved in everything from digging the building's foundations, constructing the walls and laying the floors, to painting the classrooms and building the benches ready for the first day of lessons.

**English Teaching:** In recent times, eco-tourism has become increasingly important for Madagascar's economic development and as a viable means of advancing the development of sustainable livelihoods among the Malagasy people. As a result, there has been increased support and demand by locals for the teaching of English as a means of capitalising on the opportunities presented by tourism and the increased presence and activity of international NGOs. Pioneer volunteers are assisting our permanent English teaching programme working with young unemployed youth in Fort Dauphin town and also teaching basic English to school children in the surrounding rural villages.

**Improved food security:** Basic lack of food is an ongoing issue which claims many lives in Madagascar. For this component of the Pioneer program, volunteers assist in developing our demonstration and training sites both in town and in idyllic but very poor rural villages where the reality of life in Madagascar is impossible to ignore. Volunteers work on improved planting and harvesting techniques with improved crop varieties, and help us to develop our sites into thriving examples for the local community. A lot of emphasis is placed on implanting these project concepts into rural schools, working alongside teachers, parents and students to create school gardens, tree nurseries and teach other practical skills that are vital for the sustainable future of rural youth.



## Environment

**Setting up Tree Nurseries:** In 2007, for our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Azafady took on the reforestation of 80 hectares of barren land. Crucial to this on-going reforestation activity, we are in the process of setting up tree nurseries, both at our base in Lanirano and in a number of villages. We are currently focused on the propagation of large numbers of trees, both native and exotic, for this enormous task. Depending on the time of year Pioneers will also work on tree-planting and reforestation.

**Environmental Education:** Environmental education in its many forms is a key prerequisite for conservation. This has involved the building of a forest information centre in Sainte Luce, the preparation and presentation of posters, and working with local children to raise awareness of the need for conservation.

**Fuel-efficient Stoves:** Pioneers are helping Azafady promote the construction of “fuel-efficient stoves”, in an effort to reduce both the pressure on the forest and improve the health of local people and the time spent collecting firewood. The stoves promoted are simple and can be made from local materials, namely mud, grass and zebu dung. The stove creates an enclosed cooking space which requires less firewood and shorter cooking times as heat is not dissipated. Health is improved as there is less chance of burns and smoke vents help reduce eye and lung problems. Improved stoves use 60% less firewood, which has a significant positive impact on both forests and livelihoods.





## Weeks Pioneer Sample Itinerary

- 1** **Orientation:** While staying at Azafady's permanent lake-side campsite in Lanirano in Fort Dauphin, you will have time to explore the town and the group will receive a detailed orientation about Madagascar, local customs, and Azafady's work, and begin Malagasy language lessons. And a day trip to Nahampona Nature Reserve will allow you to get up close to several species of lemur.  
  
**After your initial orientation, Pioneer teams usually spend 2-3 weeks at a time working on projects in the bush, interspersed with a few days in Fort Dauphin.**
- 2-4** **Project One:** Pioneers' first project is often a school-building project which will see you living and working in a remote community, undertaking everything from mixing cement and laying foundations, to putting up the walls and painting the classrooms. You may also conduct community mapping sessions – interviews with local households to assess future needs. While in the bush Sundays are usually a day off to relax or take a day-trip to a local market or waterfall.
- 5** Return to Fort Dauphin for a few days to allow catching up on e-mail, shopping, showers, eating out for a change from rice & beans etc.
- 6-7** **Project Two:** The group will head out to the bush again to work on another project such as the building of well in a rural village alongside vital health education. Alternatively, you may return to your first project to continue the work there. Pioneer teams sometimes also work on projects located in the urban centre of Fort Dauphin in which case you would be based at the permanent campsite in Lanirano.
- 8-9** After returning to Fort Dauphin for a few days volunteers will start their **Third Project:** Typically this may involve working within the environment department on conservation projects in Sainte Luce, a beautiful coastal region which is surrounded by extremely rare and threatened fragments of littoral coastal forest where Azafady has been conducting conservation work for a number of years.
- 10** Your group will complete the third project and head back to Fort Dauphin for a couple of days before the end of the programme for a chance to have a project debriefing and a **final goodbye celebration**.

Please note this is a sample itinerary and should be referred to as an example only; projects vary, communities are different and every group is unique. As our work is driven by local communities' self-defined needs, and due to circumstances outside Azafady's control such as weather and transport, plans do change.



**“The diversity of the programme was probably one of the best things about the scheme. With each new project we got a different perspective on Madagascar both geographically and through our experiences and relationships with the communities and project staff...**

**Being in Madagascar and volunteering was an excellent way to get a great big slap in the face. It has made me realise how incredibly luxurious a Western lifestyle is, but more importantly to value those things that are inherently a part of Malagasy people’s life, values and culture- simplicity and community...**

**It was a wonderful, incredible experience that has made me grow a lot. Thank you.”**



**Sasha Hunt, Pioneer, October 2009, Australia.**



## Practicalities

### Physical Demands

Volunteers should be prepared for physical work in a hot climate, adventurous road journeys, and long walks to reach remote and beautiful project sites. Depending on the work you are assigned, you will be digging, sawing, hammering and many more things besides. The work and lifestyle is challenging but incomparably rewarding and should be within the capabilities of any reasonably fit person. Although being in good physical shape is important, the ability to exhibit tolerance, patience and a good sense of humour when things get tough is just as essential. A typical day might start at 7.00am with breakfast and a Malagasy lesson for an hour, then you will work on project tasks from 8.30am to 5pm with a 2 hour break for lunch to eat, sleep, relax, do washing, sunbathe etc. This is the typical routine Monday-Saturday although schedules often change in the bush. Sunday is often your day to relax and take in some of the sights.

### Food

A resident cook travels with the team and is responsible for preparing meals for Pioneers each day. Food is simple, but tasty and nutritionally balanced. Meals mainly consist of rice and beans supplemented with fresh fruit, vegetables, fish and eggs

when available and there should always be enough honey or condensed milk to satisfy a sweet tooth. Chocolate, crisps, croissants and ice-cream are all available for sale in Fort Dauphin and there are some excellent restaurants serving well-cooked Western and Malagasy dishes at reasonable prices – think zebu steak and chips, fresh seafood and even pizza! A plentiful supply of treated drinking water will always be available however it is often possible to purchase soft drinks, bottled water, beer and rum from local stores, even in the remoter locations.

### Language

The working language used on Pioneer is English. However, many of our staff speak English as their third or even fourth language and in the more rural areas, very little English is spoken at all. For this reason, you will be offered daily language classes in Malagasy. How much effort you put in to learning the language is up to you – the more you try, the more you will enjoy your time in Madagascar. As a minimum we expect volunteers to be able to learn the basic greetings so you can be polite. A simple “salama” (hello) or “misaotra” (thank you) will go a long way to help you earn respect in local communities.





### Orientation

Before volunteers head out to work with local communities, we feel it is vital that you are fully briefed on the work of Azafady and the Malagasy culture. For this reason, during your first week as a Pioneer, you will undergo a detailed orientation about Madagascar, the Anosy region, local customs as well as an introduction to the work you will be doing over the next ten weeks. Malagasy communities have a complex system of **fady (taboos)** which is important that volunteers observe. For example, in Fort Dauphin it is **fady** to point, touch some ones head or buy salt after dark!

### Staff

A team of Malagasy staff travel and work with our volunteers at all times, primarily to ensure that the group is safe, but also as co-workers and to offer translation and advice on Malagasy culture, facilitating communication and positive interaction with the local communities. Also travelling with the group is the Pioneer coordinator. Often an ex-Pioneer, the coordinators' role is to ensure that the group is kept happy, healthy and busy! Azafady's English-speaking staff based in Fort Dauphin are also there to ensure that all your questions are answered and problems solved. This ensures that our volunteers have full support and encouragement to understand and appreciate the very different culture and environment that Pioneer will take you into.

### Communication with home

On arrival in Fort Dauphin, we will call or e-mail a nominated friend or relative to let them know you are safe. However, communications in Madagascar these days are much improved and it will be possible for you to stay in touch with home at intervals throughout the program. There is mobile phone reception in Fort Dauphin and it is possible to make calls and texts relatively cheaply if you purchase a Malagasy mobile. There is also a mobile phone at the campsite in Fort Dauphin which can receive incoming calls from family and friends. E-mails can be accessed at the local Internet café and friends and relatives can also send e-mails or post via the Azafady office in Madagascar. Although there is no e-mail or mobile reception in the bush, you will be able to access them every two to three weeks when you return to Fort Dauphin.

### The team

You will be put in e-mail contact with the other members of your team approximately 6-8 weeks prior to departure, giving you the opportunity to co-ordinate your travel plans and discuss any last minute questions you may have. Often your travel plans may mean that you need to spend a night in Antananarivo en-route – if this is the case we can help arrange hotels and airport transfers and will book volunteers in the same accommodation where possible. This enables you to share the unique experience of arriving in Madagascar for the first time and gives you the opportunity to acclimatize and orientate yourselves with other volunteers.



### **Living Conditions**

Pioneers camp for the duration of the scheme and whilst camping facilities are provided, volunteers will need to bring their own tent. When in Fort Dauphin, volunteers will camp at the stunning lake-side site of Lanirano which is fully equipped with flush toilets and showers as well as electricity for charging cameras, ipods, mobile phones etc. Laundry services are also available locally. Whilst working in the bush, toilets are 'long drop' and we collect and treat water from rivers and wells. Although conditions will be more basic than you are used to, you will be camping in some of the most beautiful sites in the world – you will wake up to deserted beaches and forests teeming with wildlife right on your doorstep.

### **Fort Dauphin**

Azafady's Madagascar office is based in Fort Dauphin. Fort Dauphin (or Tolagnaro as it is also known) is the major town in south east Madagascar. It enjoys one of the most pleasant climates on the east coast. Built on a small peninsula, the town is bordered on three sides by beaches and backed by lush green mountains. It is a lively town offering a variety of restaurants and nightlife. You will find the people very inquisitive but a smile and 'salama' (hello) will almost always produce a smile back.

### **Free Time**

Of course, we want you to have a good time and see as many of the things that Madagascar has to offer as possible, and for that reason we will arrange times for little tours and some visits to sights of local interest as the programme allows. Volunteers will get a chance to visit Nahampoana Reserve for an up close experience with several species of lemur and there will also be opportunities to visit local markets, forests or simply relax and surf on the stunning beaches surrounding Fort Dauphin. We will endeavour as best we can to make sure you see as much local wildlife and experience as much local culture as possible within the context of the programme and we are happy to advise you on what to do in your free time if you want more.





## Health and safety

Whenever you travel overseas, or anywhere else for that matter, there is always a small element of risk. For Azafady, your health and safety is a priority whilst you are volunteering with us and we do everything possible to mitigate any risk factors. As part of our application procedure, you will have to complete a comprehensive set of medical forms so that we are confident you will be physically and emotionally healthy enough to participate on Pioneer. Prior to your departure, you will receive comprehensive briefing materials advising on all aspects of medical preparation including malaria prophylaxis, vaccinations, and general tips for staying fit and healthy. You will also be expected to bring a comprehensive medical kit with you for minor ailments in the field. Our health and safety protocols and evacuation plans are revised on a regular basis and when you arrive in Madagascar, a detailed health and safety briefing will form part of the initial first week orientation. You will also be assigned a “sick buddy” – someone from the group who will accompany you if you are ill and help monitor your health. With more than 10 years’ experience of operating in Madagascar, our well-trained and experienced Malagasy guides who accompany the team are adept at recognizing the early signs of common illnesses. Volunteers are accompanied by at least one of our guides 24 hours a day; even in periods of “time off” meaning that help is always on hand should it be needed. Our coordinators are trained in first aid and Azafady also employs three doctors who are often available to help and advise and prescribe medication where necessary.

A satellite phone travels with the team at all times meaning that the team can always be contacted in the event of an emergency. Azafady purchases comprehensive travel insurance for every volunteer (details of the policy can be provided on request) which, in the event of any serious medical issue, would repatriate the person to a suitable medical facility. We have fantastic relationships with all the communities in which we work which, together with good transport links, means we can quickly arrange for a 4x4 to bring volunteers out of the bush in the event of illness or other emergency. Our staff in Madagascar are in regular contact with the London office, giving us updates on the status of our volunteering teams. This enables any urgent problems to be communicated immediately to a volunteer’s emergency contacts.

Azafady has an exemplary health and safety record and to date, have never had to evacuate a Pioneer out of Madagascar. Madagascar is, relative to many African countries, a safe country in which to travel and work. We have not had any major security issues with volunteers in the past and all our returning volunteers comment on the warmth and hospitality of the Malagasy people. It is very, very rare to encounter any opposition from local people. For those interested in further information on safety in Madagascar then please do look at the UK Foreign Office website [www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas). However, by the nature of this website they will emphasise negatives more than positives and therefore it is important to keep the information in context.



### Travelling after the programme

To participate on Pioneer you will need to arrange a three month visa – this leaves you more than two weeks free for independent travel after the project should you so wish. We find that the majority of our volunteers do wish to see a bit more of Madagascar after the program and will often decide to travel with other members of the team. It is best to be a bit flexible with your travel plans – that way you can chat to our staff on arrival and find out their recommendations and see what other members of your team are planning to do. Madagascar has an extraordinary array of wildlife, landscapes, and cultures for you to explore –the Avenue of the Baobabs in Morondava, the limestone tsingy at Ankarana, the largest of the lemurs (the Indri) at Andasibe or diving amongst the coral reefs of Nosy Be are just some of the highlights to consider.

### Flights

Azafady is able to advise you on the best routes, flight companies and travel agents to use when travelling to Madagascar. From the UK and Europe, Kenya Airways fly from London Heathrow to Madagascar via Nairobi, Air Madagascar and Air France fly from Paris, Air Mauritius flies from London to Madagascar via Mauritius, and there are also flights with Air Madagascar from Johannesburg which is serviced regularly by a many airlines. For volunteers coming from North America, Air France and Cosair fly from major cities in the US and Canada to Antananarivo via Paris, and South African Airways also operate flights from the USA to Antananarivo via Johannesburg. For Australian volunteers, the easiest way to fly to Madagascar is with Air

Mauritius who fly from Sydney or Perth to Antananarivo via Mauritius, or with South African Airways via Johannesburg. All international flights will arrive in Madagascar’s capital Antananarivo. You will then need to take an internal flight to Fort Dauphin (Tolagnaro) with Air Madagascar.





### How your minimum donation is spent

To have the opportunity to participate on Pioneer, we ask volunteers to raise a minimum donation of £2,000 for the 10 weeks. This is made up of a £500 initial deposit, which secures your place on the scheme, and a balance of at least £1,500 which is due three weeks before departure. The minimum donation is a donation to support the charitable work of Azafady. Funds generated by the programme support Azafady's projects in Madagascar, with some 90% of all donations to being spent in direct pursuit of our charitable aims. Approximately 40% of Azafady's income in the last financial year was generated through volunteers – vital support to our ongoing projects in the areas of health and sanitation, sustainable livelihoods and conservation. Funds raised by volunteers together with the extra workforce that they bring have achieved fantastic things. In the past two years, Pioneers have built 8 schools fitted with furniture, a well for clean drinking water, and boys and girls latrines, allowing access to education for some 2,000 children who previously had little or no educational opportunities; in the rural commune of Mahatalaky, 30% of people now have access to clean drinking water provided directly by ONG Azafady and the Pioneer Programme; and with Pioneer assistance, ONG Azafady now has 10,000 seedlings of two critically endangered species of palm in its nurseries.

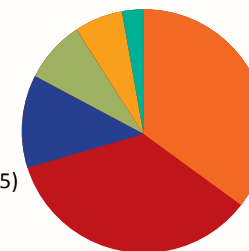
**Fund-raising:** Don't let the size of the required donation put you off! Azafady is there to support volunteers in raising this donation, with a wealth of fund-raising experience and resources

available to volunteers. All volunteers receive a substantial fund-raising manual and can use resources such as raffle tickets, collection boxes, Christmas cards, posters, online fund-raising pages, and even a lemur suit! You are of course welcome to simply pay the minimum donation from your own funds, although we do hope that, through fund-raising activities, volunteers will assist us to raise public awareness about the threats to the people and environment of Madagascar.

Separately volunteers need to cover their own pre-departure costs including flights, visa, personal equipment, medical preparations and vaccinations, which are typically in the region of £1,000 - £1,500 (these can sometimes be fundraised too, with the prior agreement of Azafady) and a standard Country Registration fee of £95 paid to Azafady. The Registration fee (due 3 weeks prior to departure) covers all aspects of police and commune registration costs in Madagascar, as well as compulsory inclusion in Azafady's comprehensive travel insurance policy which Azafady purchases for every volunteer (details of the policy can be provided on request).

#### Charitable expenditure based upon Azafady's June 2009 Audited Accounts

- Sustainable livelihoods (£178,545)
- Health-related (£177,293)
- Conservation (£62,809)
- International awareness raising (£42,661)
- General management and administration (£31,355)
- Fundraising (£14,484)



(full accounts available on request)



## Case study

**Lisa Bass, Pioneer Programme October 2007.**

“I’d always wanted to volunteer for a bit abroad but I guess like most people I just never got around to it. Work and relationships always got in the way and then one day I just decided to go for it and took a 3 month sabbatical from my job.

This was a once in a life time opportunity so I chose to go to the place I had always longed to visit – Madagascar! I signed up to Azafady’s Pioneer Program as the organization came over as totally committed to working with communities and made no bones that if volunteers were only there to have a bit of a holiday and dictate what they wanted to do - then this wasn’t the placement for them. If however you fancied giving 100% then you would be living and working in some of the most beautiful scenery in the world, with people who wanted to share every aspect of their culture with you and because of this, you would have an experience that would forever be ingrained on your soul. I wanted something that was hard but rewarding and totally different from sitting at a desk job with the pace of life that has become the norm in Britain - and I found it! Getting up at 5.30a.m. each day to a fantastic sunrise, working in a brilliant and motivated group of volunteers, living with local guides and villagers who taught you everything about the local culture and history and knowing that every single placement that you

worked on made a real difference to the lives of the villagers that you had come to know. It hit home just what taking a few weeks out of your life means to people when the Chief of the village we were working at welcomed us. He explained that he had been praying for us to arrive safely as since Azafady had built a well in a neighbouring hamlet two years ago, not one child had died from disease. In a country where 1 in 10 children die before their fifth birthday, this was humbling and from that moment on no-one ever doubted the reason why we were all there.

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One of the most emotional moments of my volunteering experience occurred when we all gathered around the well that we had built and pumped the first clean, safe drinking water for that village.



### Case study *continued*

From the moment I went to the airport to catch the plane home I knew that I just wanted to be back in Madagascar. I gave myself a month to make sure that this wasn't just a bad case of holiday blues, and then handed in my notice. I am now returning to Madagascar for a year to assist Azafady in policy development. I have never thought I would be so taken with the country, the people or Azafady that I would pay my own salary to go back. I've given up a good job, great social scene and comfortable house back in the UK to live in a place where the electricity and water are sporadic, food is basic to say the least and there is no salary at the end of the month. And yet, I know that I have got the best of the deal!"



**Lisa Bass, Pioneer Programme, October 2007.**

### Application procedure

To apply for a place on one of our Pioneer teams you can download an application form from our website [www.madagascar.co.uk](http://www.madagascar.co.uk) or request one from [info@azafady.org](mailto:info@azafady.org)

Complete and return your application to Azafady and we will endeavour to inform you within 7 days whether we can offer you a place. Places are limited to approximately 20 people on each team, departing early in the months of **January, April, July and October** each year. With the success of our volunteer programs to date, we anticipate a high demand for places. So even if you are only thinking about joining one of the Pioneer groups, please complete the application form to let us know you are interested and to reserve your place.

Azafady is a full member of the



