



seed **madagascar**

sustainable environment, education & development

Final report on

**Project Sekoly: provision of school buildings and sanitation infrastructure  
for Mahatalaky EPP (primary school), Anosy Region, Madagascar**



**February 2015**

SEED MADAGASCAR

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## 1. Introduction

*'Ny fianarana no lova soa indrindra'*

*'Education is the best heritage'*

*- Local saying*

Madagascar is one of the most impoverished and least developed countries in the world, ranking 155/187 on the UNDP 2014 Human Development Index. Prior to 2009, the country was making slow but definite progress towards the Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education. However, political instability since the coup in 2009 has led to an 82% fall in national investment in education (World Bank, 2011), significantly impacting on the quality of education available to the island's children. In the remote Anosy Region in the southeast of the country, half of school-aged children have never been to school and, of those that do attend, more than a third do not complete primary education (UNESCO, 2012). As a result, the literacy rate in the rural commune of Mahatalaky, located in the Anosy Region, is only 27% (INSTAT, 2010)

Mahatalaky is the largest village in Mahatalaky Rural Commune and, as the commune centre, is an important regional hub. In addition to its EPP (public primary school), it has one of the few CEGs (public middle schools) in Anosy. Prior to this project, the EPP was extremely overcrowded, with 450 students being taught in only 4 functional classrooms, and some students being taught in an inadequate partially-roofed building. In addition, the first three grades only received half a day's schooling every day due to lack of infrastructure, and a shortage of benches meant students had to sit three or more to a bench. Latrines had also been neglected and consequently there was a pressing need to improve the sanitation facilities at the school.



View of the Mahatalaky EPP school complex before the new building. From left: functioning classrooms; ruined building; building in need of repair (lefthand classroom still in use); site of new building

Thanks to support from various funding bodies, SEED Madagascar (SEED) has been able to pursue the construction of new infrastructure at Mahatalaky EPP. This includes one fully-furnished brick school building containing two classrooms and a composting latrine block.

This report focuses on activities undertaken by SEED in Mahatalaky Rural Commune during the second half of the project, between October 2014 and January 2015.

## 2. Project activities

### 2.1 Preparation

Preparations for the school build began in July 2014 with meetings between stakeholders and recruitment of all necessary staff and volunteers. In October, two new international volunteers were recruited and joined construction activities, and a further three volunteers in January helped to complete project activities. Further details on preparation activities are detailed in the interim report previously submitted.

### 2.2 Completed construction activities

As previously reported, by October 2014 work had begun on both the classrooms and the latrine, as summarised below:

- Materials, staff and volunteers were transported to the site from Fort Dauphin.
- The foundations of the new classroom building were dug and filled with concrete; floors were filled with rocks; and brick walls and scaffolding were constructed.
- The latrine pit was dug and breezeblocks made for it.
- 25 school benches were constructed.

The following sections detail the progress of the construction work since October:

#### 2.2.1 Transport

- Remaining materials necessary to the build, including doors and windows, were sourced in Fort Dauphin and transported to the construction site at Mahatalaky
- The SEED construction team and international Pioneers and volunteers travelled out to Mahatalaky in October, and again in January to finish the building work

#### 2.2.2 The two-classroom school building

- The wooden crossbeam was raised to the roof
- The tin roof was fitted
- The scaffolding was taken down
- The floors and exterior area were filled in with concrete
- The walls were rendered and painted with layers of both chalk and white paint
- Teaching platforms were built in each classroom and painted
- Doors and windows were fitted and painted
- Blackboards were painted in each classroom

#### 2.2.3 The latrine block

- The pits were lined with breezeblocks
- Walls for the cubicles were built and painted
- The roof was fitted
- Doors were fitted and painted



Mixing the final batches of cement outside the new building



Painting the latrine

#### 2.2.4 Classroom furniture

- 45 remaining desk/benches were constructed, sanded and varnished ready for use in new classroom.

#### 2.3 Future activities

All that remains to be done at Mahatalaky EPP as part of this project is the official ceremony to handover the new facilities to the community (scheduled to take place at the start of March, in line with local requests), and for SEED's Community Health Agent to continue visiting the school to encourage the proper and sustained use of the latrine now that construction is complete. These visits will be conducted monthly until the end of the school year, with the agent running games and workshops to motivate students to use the latrines, alongside planning meetings and follow-up sessions with parents and teachers to ensure appropriate management and maintenance measures are adopted.

### 3. Conclusion

Completion of Project Sekoly in Mahatalaky was slightly delayed, with construction work finishing in January 2015, rather than December 2014, following heavy rainfall which hindered progress. However, with work now complete, Mahatalaky EPP is able to provide a safe, comfortable and sanitary environment and, crucially, a full day's education for its 94 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students. 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is the stage when pupils begin to be taught a new range of subjects, and simultaneously to be taught in French, and is consequently a very important time in their schooling. Now all 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students can attend school all day, every day, in an environment conducive to learning. This will make them more likely to pass their end of year exams and graduate to the next grade and subsequently on to high school. SEED are still seeking funding for the repair activities to the existing unusable school building, following which the remaining two grades are also anticipated to be able to attend school all day.

In addition to the new classrooms, the new latrines will increase the number of usable latrines on site for all 450 pupils from four to seven, greatly helping to reduce the number of days lost to diarrhoea and further improving educational opportunity and student wellbeing. SEED's community health agent will continue to work with the school and community over the coming months to ensure the continued use and management of the latrines into the future. Positive impacts of the project's activities at Mahatalaky are expected to continue for years to come, due to the increased capacity of the primary school, as well as the improved quality of the learning environment available to students. This in turn will enhance their educational prospects, supporting the local human resource base and promoting long-term sustainable development in the region.



## Appendix 1: Mahatalaky EPP Case Studies

**Name:** Christine

**Job:** Teacher (3<sup>rd</sup> grade)

Christine lives nearby Mahatalaky EPP, in Mahatalaky village, and teaches a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class of 44 students. Students have a much bigger subject load after entering their 3<sup>rd</sup> year, including geography, history, life and earth sciences, and art – and the language of instruction changes from Malagasy to French. However, despite this increased workload, Christine only has half a day to teach her class every day, due to a lack of space.

The new building will allow these students a full day of school at this crucial time, and Christine is very pleased about this, despite the fact she will not get paid any more for the extra teaching hours. She is a government-employed teacher and has been teaching for over 30 years. However, she would not classify herself as experienced, as the curriculum changes so frequently she continually has to learn it afresh.

When asked what else could be done to make her job easier, Christine said that the school will still need more classrooms on top of this new building, and that one of the current buildings is desperately in need of repair. They also still need more benches due to overcrowding; in many classes, three students are sharing a bench designed for two. Finally, Christine notes the inadequacy of government supplies, as they do not get enough books for the number of students, meaning those who cannot afford the resources themselves cannot go to school.



**Name:** Thierry Pierrot

**Job:** Headteacher

Thierry has been teaching at Mahatalaky EPP since 2001, and in the role of head teacher since 2008. He lives nearby the school in Mahatalaky village. He thinks the two major problems the school currently faces are a shortage of benches and a lack of classrooms; he wants all students to be able to attend full time, but there is not enough space for this, and the number of students is continuing to rise. In 1<sup>st</sup> grade, the 141 pupils are taught in two large classes, as the school only has two teachers for this level: one provided by the government, and one paid for by parents. The parents cannot afford to pay for another one. In addition, there is not enough space for pre-school students on site, so they are currently borrowing a building in the village.



Thierry says the new school building is very important, as it means the 3<sup>rd</sup> years will now be able to attend full time, as well as the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> years. He also thinks the new latrine is very important for the student's hygiene; they previously had only one block for everybody. In the future, he would like to see a building for pre-school on site, and the capacity for all students to attend all day.

**Name:** Fome

**Year:** 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

Fome is 14 years old and in his 3<sup>rd</sup> year at Mahatalaky EPP. He lives in Tsiharoa, about an hour's walk away from Mahatalaky, so leaves his house at 6am every morning. There are around 50 children in his class, and he currently only attends school in the morning. His favourite subject is geography, and outside of school he likes to revise his studies.

Fome thinks the new building is good for the school, and that it is good for him to have a new classroom. Right now his classroom is dark and leaks, but the new classroom is light and dry. Fome will now be able to come to school for a full day.



**Name:** Vavriny

**Year:** 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

Vavriny is 11 years old, and lives in Sarodrano, a 30 minute walk from school. She has four sisters and two brothers who all attend Mahatalaky EPP, and there are 50 students in her class. Though she is in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, she has been attending the school for 4 years, as she missed a year due to sickness. Vavriny's favourite subject is maths, and she likes going to the market and playing with her friends after school. However, she is very pleased about the new building as she would like to come to school all day. Also, she thinks having a brand new classroom will be good, as her classroom now has no windows and leaks.