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Project Ala

***In situ* conservation of *Microcebus tanosi, Avahi meridionalis* and *Cheirogaleus thomasi* in the Sainte Luce littoral forest, southeast Madagascar**

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Executive Summary:

Project Ala is an *in situ* lemur conservation project, establishing four habitat corridors between five fragmented patches of vital lemur forest habitat in a recently protected area of Sainte Luce littoral Forest (SLLF), South East Madagascar. The SLLF is severely threatened by deforestation[1], fragmentation[2] and degradation and without intervention, it is predicted a further 91% of the southern littoral forest will be lost by 2065[3]. SLLF fragmentation inhibits species' movement between disconnected areas of suitable habitat, decreasing population connectivity and reducing dispersal capacity. This threatens many species' survival by preventing gene flow between sub-populations, increasing likelihood of local extinction, particularly for the nocturnal *Avahi meridionalis* (Endangered[4]), *Cheirogaleus thomasi* and *Microcebus tanosi*, which cannot traverse open land between fragmented forest patches. Through connecting isolated forest patches with corridors, the project aims to increase viable lemur habitat, reunite discontinuous lemur sub-populations in the SLLF ecosystem, and thus secure the long-term futures of the local lemur species. Additionally, habitat corridors will benefit many other endemic flora and fauna species which are unable to disperse between habitat patches.

Target beneficiaries:

Project Ala will take place in Sainte Luce and will run a community engagement programme, including; education sessions for community members in forest threats, capacity building workshops for key stakeholders and annual mass mobilisation events to sensitise the wider community to environment and conservation issues. Project Ala will also run forest-based environmental education sessions in the free weekly conservation club and establish tree nurseries in two local schools as a practical demonstration of reforestation for the younger generation.

Objectives:

I. Four wildlife corridors connect five forest fragments, increasing overall forest connectivity and supporting the movement of species, with a focus on endangered lemur species
II. Sustainable, long-term SLLF management strategies are developed and implemented by informed and engaged community members and local stakeholders
III. SEED actively contributes to global conservation research on forest corridor effectiveness and biodiversity conservation strategies, with a focus on lemur conservation

Activities:

- Collect and plant 1800 acacia and 3600 native seeds in SEED's nursery
- Firebreak assessment with COBA and FIMPIA, by month 3 and construction of 16.6km of new firebreaks around corridors and remnants and erection of 30 fire mitigation signs
- Clear and plant four corridor sites (total area ~0.86ha) with Acacia and native seedlings and seeds, increasing protected forest habitat by 45.07ha (109%)
- Sensitise 200 community members in environmental issues through 6 education sessions
- Engage 2000 community members with conservation issues, through 4 mobilisation events
- Educate 200 young people in forest threats, tree lifecycles and lemur conservation
- Train 20 key stakeholders in forest threat mitigation and management strategies, through 6 workshops
- Monitoring of population abundance and distribution of lemur species, flora and fauna diversity and abundance in corridors, fragments and remnants, long-term wildlife corridor effectiveness and forest structure and composition

[1] Bollen, A., & Donati, G. (2006). Conservation status of the littoral forest of south-eastern Madagascar: A Review. Oryx, 40(1), 57-66
[2] Schwitzer, C., et al. (2013). Lemurs of Madagascar. *A strategy for their conservation*.

[3] Temple, H.J., et al. (2012). Forecasting the path towards a Net Positive Impact on biodiversity for Rio Tinto QMM. *SRO Kundig SA, Switzerland*.

[4] Andriaholinirina, N., et al., (2014a). Avahi meridionalis. [online] *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species: e.T136369A16115032.* Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2014-1.RLTS.T136369A16115032.en. [Accessed 10 May 2017].