



36-Month Report for
PROJECT MAHAMPY

Improving the Sustainability of Mahampy Reed Weaving as a
Women's Livelihood

November 2025

Summary

Context

Despite contributing less than 0.01% of global annual carbon dioxide emissions, Madagascar is considered one of the 10 most vulnerable countries to climate change.^{1,2} The number and severity of climate-driven extreme weather events are predicted to increase in the future, which, coupled with global aid cuts, will continue to exacerbate the challenges faced by people in the region.^{3,4} Communities are increasingly forced to adapt to challenging conditions and extreme weather events that disrupt all aspects of life, from food security, health, and livelihoods. With 81% of the population surviving on less than US\$2.15 per day, livelihood opportunities remain limited.⁵ Women are further restricted as they often lack access to more lucrative livelihood opportunities like lobster fishing, which are traditionally male dominated. These limitations stem from deeply entrenched cultural expectations and domestic responsibilities.

In Anosy, a southeastern region of Madagascar, weaving represents one of the few livelihood opportunities available to women. Traditionally women weave *mahampy*, a local reed (*Lepironia mucronata*), into mats and baskets to generate household income. This activity can be practiced in or close to home and with a flexible time commitment. Despite its cultural significance and accessibility, the economic viability of *mahampy* weaving is challenged by low return on investment and poor access to markets, resulting in insufficient income to support the daily expenses of weavers and their families.

Despite the economic and environmental importance of the wetlands to the region, the *mahampy* reedbeds are severely understudied. Fire, land degradation, and the unregulated harvesting of reeds threatens both *mahampy* weaving as a livelihood and the existence of a variety of threatened species and ecosystem services provided by the wetlands. Together, the dual pressures of a changing climate and limited market opportunities further compound these challenges, leaving Anosy's weavers struggling to sustain their livelihoods.

Project Overview

SEED Madagascar (SEED) aims to support the Mahampy Weavers' Cooperative, a group of women in Sainte Luce who rely on *mahampy* reed weaving for a livelihood, to increase the income generated from *mahampy* products. Building upon the success of the previous phase, SEED is supporting the Cooperative to improve sales at the Mahampy Weavers' Workshop (Outcome One), improve the financial resilience of the Mahampy Weavers' Cooperative and its members (Outcome Two), and improve reedbed management for livelihood security (Outcome Three).

Summary

Launched in September 2022, Project Mahampy Phase II has made significant progress under all three outcomes. This report discusses progress made across all three years of Phase II, with a particular focus on the last six months (March 2025 – August 2025).

The main achievements made over the 36 months are listed below:

- Meetings with resellers have been completed and advertising cards have been developed to increase sale potential through the Mahampy Weavers' Workshop (Outcome 1).
- Three technical weaving sessions were delivered by skilled members of the Cooperative through a train-the-trainer approach, sharing weaving knowledge and techniques. The last session, in November 2023, was attended by 55% of weavers in the Cooperative. As a result, weavers reported high confidence in producing mats with flat edges (Output 1.1).
- One workshop on value-added products was delivered through a collaboration with an external product development specialist and was attended by 54% of the Cooperative members. In the endline

assessment, weavers reported moderate-to-high confidence in sewing Value Added Products. (Output 1.2).

- An external extension was added to the Mahampy Weavers' Workshop. Additionally, shelving and storage solutions were installed inside to enhance the overall functionality of the space (Output 1.3).
- Weavers attended eight training sessions on departmental roles and responsibilities to improve Workshop operations. On average, the attendance rate of Cooperative members in departments pertinent to the training, was 62% (Output 1.4).
- Weavers completed the 30-lesson literacy training course with 67% of participants sharing that they use their new skills often (Output 1.4).
- During Project Year One, 63% of weavers participated in the 10-month education saving scheme, redeeming their savings to pay annual school fees. The scheme was repeated in Project Years Two and Three, with 53% and 37% of weavers participating respectively (Output 2.2).
- Two rounds of the alternative loan scheme have been completed, with all loans successfully repaid in both instances. A third round was initiated in April 2024 (Output 2.2).
- The new financial literacy training curriculum was designed and implemented, with all eight workshops completed. The average attendance of weavers was 82% with 67% of their partners also in attendance (Output 2.2).
- Altogether, 10 weavers involved in the participatory monitoring programme completed 24 months of wetland monitoring (Output 3.2).
- Data from the participatory monitoring programme and aerial drone surveys has been used to inform two technical reports on the health of the *mahampy* wetlands (Output 3.2).
- The market analysis was completed with data collected on current production and sales activities, incentives, and barriers in accessing the market.
- The endline assessment included individual surveys with all weavers, sub-cooperative focus groups, and department focus groups. Subjects of focus included confidence levels in technical skills learned, knowledge of roles and responsibilities, weaving skills, and the current cooperative structure.
- Construction work to repair workshop damage caused by Tropical Storm Jude is now complete resulting in a more resilient space.

Progress Detail

The project progress outlined below focuses particularly on activities completed between March 2025 and August 2025.

Impact of Tropical Storm Jude

In March 2025, Tropical Storm Jude, the strongest storm to hit the region since 1970, was the first recorded cyclone to traverse the south of Madagascar. The impact of the tropical storm was particularly severe as it came just two months after a devastating fire that damaged vast swathes of the countryside and followed the driest October to December on record.⁶ Tropical Storm Jude severely damaged the Weavers' Workshop, which acts as the primary production space and main point of sale for the Cooperative. The solar panel system sustained some damage and the roof was in a state of disrepair with the metal sheeting torn apart by high winds. As a result, rain was able to enter the workshop destroying most of the products inside and rendering the space unusable. Each product reflects countless hours of skilled craftsmanship and a considerable financial commitment from the weavers, who personally invest in purchasing *mahampy* to produce their items. Due to the damage sustained, the Workshop was closed, halting sales and leaving the Cooperative members without a space to work or generate income. Activities such as the data feedback sessions were also paused due to the lack of sales and recordings.

SEED repaired the damage to the Mahampy Weavers' Workshop and incorporated cyclone-resistant features, a standard design that has been successfully implemented across SEED's construction projects since 2022. In July,

SEED's construction team fully replaced the Workshop's metal roof sheeting and installed anti-cyclone measures, including concrete encasement around the roof's edge, a reinforced wooden ceiling, and strategically layered roofing sheets. These measures enhance the Workshop's structural strength and stability, significantly improving its resilience to the increasingly severe and unpredictable weather events driven by climate change. SEED also repaired the Workshop's solar energy system to ensure that the space remains well-lit for the weavers to conduct their work and for customers to view the products. Concrete pillars and partial concrete walls, approximately 1.5 metres in height, were also erected in the outdoor weaving area to provide further support and stability to the roof, making the area a more suitable and comfortable workspace.

After consulting with the weavers on developing an improved workspace environment, SEED installed a 2,000-litre rainwater harvesting system in September to collect water from the new roof, providing access to clean running water for drinking, cooking, and handwashing. Previously, the weavers had to leave the Workshop to collect water, often relying on unsafe sources, which reduced their working time and increased the risk of waterborne illness. Additionally, two fuel-efficient wood-burning cookstoves, cooking pots, utensils, plates, and cutlery were provided to address the lack of cooking facilities on site, enabling the weavers to spend more time weaving and managing sales without needing to return home for meals. Furthermore, SEED calculated the loss of income due to the damaged products that were displayed in the Workshop and adopted a combined approach to compensation, including partial product reimbursements, dissemination of weaving materials, and procurement of communal equipment for production. These reimbursements and investments are scheduled to coincide with the lean season to maximise their positive impact and help ameliorate the consequences of this significant financial loss.



Repairs to the Weavers Workshop in progress, with concrete pillars being installed in the outdoor weaving area to provide further support and stability to the roof.

OUTCOME ONE: Improved Sales at the Mahampy Weavers Workshop

Data feedback sessions

As part of directing workshop operations towards that of an independent business, all sales have been recorded in a logbook, including information on the weaver, the product sold, the price, and when it was sold. In February 2025, Project Mahampy began the process of feeding the sales data back to the weavers to incentivise production strategy and reflect on spending habits. As a result, this should lay the path for the weavers to be able to collect and distribute this data themselves in the future.

Unfortunately, the data feedback sessions were halted due to a lack of sales and recordings in the workshop caused by Tropical Storm Jude and the resultant damage to the Workshop and products. SEED however, produced a poster containing the core sales statistics for each sub-cooperative. The posters which were returned to the sub-cooperatives, highlighted the top three bestselling products, total income generated, and the total number of products sold by the sub-cooperatives since May 2024. Providing this information to the weavers strengthens their awareness of market performance and consumer preferences, helping them to make more informed production decisions. In turn, this promotes the design of business strategies and improved financial management, both of which contribute directly to the overall aim of improving sales at the workshop.



Poster that was given back to the Taratsy Mahavotsy Mpandray Sub-Cooperative which details the number of products sold by the sub-cooperative since May 2024. The poster outlines the 93 total products sold, the top three bestselling products, and the total income of 1,570,200 MGA (£263.18) since May 2024.

Sales

Activities under this outcome have led to a significant improvement in financial performance over time. Roles and responsibilities have promoted improvement in workshop operations, strengthening individuals' capacity in fulfilling their roles across departments. Technical weaving sessions have led to improved quality of traditional products, as well as the introduction of products designed to target tourist markets.

From March 2025 to August 2025, the last six months of Project Year 3, the total weaver's income has totalled 2,810,000 MGA (£476.35). This is a slight decrease from the first six months of Project Year 3 which totalled 3,019,200 MGA (£511.81). The income per weaver was marginally lower for this period at 43,906 MGA (£7.44) compared to 46,449 MGA (£7.87) in the first six months of Year 3. It is important to note that there was a disruption to sales and recording, as Tropical Storm Jude had a severe impact on the Workshop, leaving it unusable and damaging the majority of the weaver's products. Despite this disruption, average sale price rose sharply from 18,410 MGA (£3.12) to 25,779 MGA (£4.37). The increased average of sales highlights the resilience of the cooperative and the strength of its position in the market, despite challenges in the face of less production power since Project Year 2. With workshop repairs completed in July, the cooperative is now well-positioned to rebuild momentum, restore sales, and raise both the total earnings and income per weaver equal to, or beyond previous levels.

OUTCOME TWO: Improved Financial Resilience of the Mahampy Weavers' Cooperative and its Members

Education Saving Scheme

The weavers continued to participate in the Education Saving Scheme in Project Year three saving money from September 2024 until the start of the school year, in September 2025. A total of 24 members participated, representing 37% of the cooperative. Each member saved an average of 43,375 MGA (£7.25), with 1,041,000 MGA (£174.20) the total amount saved. The least saved by an individual was 4,000 MGA (£0.66) and the most saved was 280,000 MGA (£46.85). The annual cost of sending a child to an Ecole Primaire Publique (EPP), the equivalent of a primary school, is 60,000 MGA (£9.92). Only five participants saved 60,000 MGA or more, but this rises to nine participants when interest and the bonus is included. Savings were distributed at the beginning of September 2025, aligning with the start of the school year. By facilitating the Weavers to set aside funds for educational expenses, the scheme strengthens saving practices, encourages good spending prioritisation habits and contributes to improved financial resilience.

Financial Literacy Training

To further support weaver's ability to manage household finances, SEED developed a financial literacy training curriculum pilot in Project Year One. Phase Three saw the activity's broader implementation in November 2024. Acknowledging the feedback and results from the financial literacy training pilot, the new gender-inclusive curriculum was designed to build upon existing financial management and address knowledge gaps. It incorporated tools and structures tailored to the local context, aligning with the participants' capabilities.

Weavers completed all eight workshops including sessions with topics on spending, budgeting, saving and investments. The final recap session and the endline assessment were completed in July. Motivation was high for the duration of the programme with 40 women attending all the workshops.

Results from analysis of the baseline Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) survey showed that participants were very confident in planning during the lean season but also possessed poor spending prioritisation habits. The results from the endline assessment showed an increase in prioritisation for clothes (13.2%) and school fees (5.7%). A significant drop in the prioritisation of cigarettes (21.8% decrease) and coffee (18.5%) was also shown, however, alcohol ranked slightly higher with a 3.7% increase.

In the baseline survey, household maintenance (23%), household goods (23%), and education fees (19%) were highlighted as financial goals to attain using the knowledge learned from the curriculum. The results of the endline assessment showed that while most households (76%) reported not having achieved their financial goals at present, 90% were confident that they would be able to achieve their financial goal in the future. Very high saving confidence was also seen following the financial literacy training, with all participants stating that they could now save money. The training program has enhanced weaver's financial knowledge and saving confidence, which strengthens not only individual, but cooperative wide financial resilience, strengthening *mahampy* weaving to be a more sustainable livelihood now and in the future.



A weaver saving with the Education Saving Scheme

OUTCOME THREE: Improved Reedbed Management for Livelihood Security

Participatory Monitoring Programme

Since the project began, a group of 10 weavers have led 24 months of data collection across five wetlands. The programme sought to understand the most sustainable form of *mahampy* reed harvesting by assessing which of two harvesting techniques, referred to as pulling and cutting, led to the quickest regrowth of reeds. The purpose of the data collection would be to share the information with the weavers and facilitate the creation of a data-backed reedbed management strategy. This data was supported by eight aerial drone surveys of the wetlands, analysing changes in the landscape over time and presenting a broader assessment on the health of the wetlands.

The Participatory Monitoring Programme concluded in August 2024 after two years of data collection. Statistical analysis of the data was completed with support from SEED's Conservation Research Programme (SCRIP). A technical report was later released, with the findings concluding that there was a slight difference observed over time between the two reed collection methods. Due to a lack of consistent scientific oversight however, there were some discrepancies in the collection and recording of data between the two years of monitoring. The second year of monitoring had greater scientific rigor and produced more reliable data than the first year. After some preliminary analysis on the second-year data, it was concluded that there is not enough evidence to justify

investing a recommended two further years of research into sustainable harvesting methods. The emphasis will now be on ensuring SEED's resources and capacity are focused on continuing to develop Mahampy as a livelihood for community members.

Output Progress Bars

Below is a summary of project outputs that are either completed, in progress, or delayed.

Complete or in progress and on track In progress with slight challenges In progress with serious challenges	
Output 1.1 Traditional products are marketable to <i>mahampy</i> resellers	Completed
Output 1.2 Cooperative members have increased capacity to produce high quality, marketable Value-Added Products	Completed
Output 1.3 The Mahampy Weavers' Workshop is an effective space for weavers to store, sell, and weave <i>mahampy</i> products	Completed
Output 1.4 Cooperative members have increased capacity to manage Cooperative operations	In progress and on track
Outcome 2.1 Reduced participation of Cooperative members in the mat money system	Completed
Outcome 2.2 Improved confidence and ability of Cooperative members to manage their personal finances	Completed
Outcome 3.1 Established ecological baseline of the <i>mahampy</i> wetlands	Completed
Outcome 3.2 Recommendations for reedbed management developed	Completed
Outcome 3.3 Reedbed management strategy developed by the community	Activity Cancelled
Outcome 3.4 Improved understanding of fire mitigation practices within the community	Completed

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

During the last 36 months of Project Mahampy: Phase II, SEED followed a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework to ensure the project remains responsive to emerging challenges and learnings.

Below is an overview of updated participant information:

- The Mahampy Weavers' Cooperative now includes 64 members, down from 112 due to internal disagreements within the Cooperative.
- The age of members ranges from 20 to 71, with an average age of 44.
- The Cooperative is divided into sub-cooperatives based in the five local communities' Cooperative members live within: Mahefa (7 members), Fanatenana (16 members), Soamandroso (5 members), Taratsy Mahavotsy Mpandray (17 members), and Soa Gny Rary Ste Luce (20 members).
- Each member fulfils a departmental role; members are roughly equally dispersed between the Sales (18%), Quality Control (22%), Stock (23%), Materials (22%), and Cleaning departments (15%).

To maintain the relevance and effectiveness of activities, regular informal focus groups, surveys, and interviews with Cooperative members have been held to evaluate impact and inform improvements. Feedback on the literacy curriculum, participatory monitoring program, and financial initiatives, including the alternative loan and education savings schemes, has been thoroughly reviewed, guiding adjustments for enhanced participant outcomes. Attendance data is also examined to gauge engagement levels. This approach ensures that activities remain responsive to the evolving needs of Cooperative members.

Financial performance also improved significantly during the three years of the project. In Project Year One, the Cooperative achieved total sales of 4,277,500 MGA (£707.34). The most frequently sold product was priced at 15,000 MGA (£2.48), while the average sale price was 11,346 MGA (£1.88). In Project Year 2, the Cooperative saw a significant increase in total sales, reaching a figure of 6,809,500 MGA (£1,126.04). During this period, the mode of product sales remained at 15,000 MGA (£2.48), but the average sale price rose to 17,733 MGA (£2.93). This represents a 59% increase in total sales and a 56% increase in average sale price during this period. In Project Year 3, the Cooperative achieved total sales of 6,046,200 MGA (£1,024.95), higher than the sales in Project Year One, but a slight decrease in total sales compared to Project Year 2 due to the impacts of Tropical Storm Jude. The mode of product sales again, remained at 15,000 MGA (£2.54), with the average sale price showing further increase, rising to 21,440MGA (£3.63), an 88% increase in average sale price from Year 1 to Year 3.

The market analysis was carried out to gain renewed insights into the dynamics of making and selling *mahampy* products, including costs, rules, and barriers to markets. The activity aimed to understand not just the activities of Mahampy weavers in the cooperative, but also other market actors like resellers and producers from other markets. A key barrier to accessing new markets was that people often decided to stay in the market closest to their location. Reasons for this included satisfying immediate financial needs, familiarity and accessibility of markets, and limited production volumes that make distant sales uneconomical.

These factors are closely linked to barriers in scaling up both production and sales. Producers would like to create more products, but other constraints such as household responsibilities, additional jobs, pain from weaving, and the cost of materials, limit output. Selling more products is also constrained by the demand, as producers cannot afford to purchase additional stock. Reinvesting earnings is also not often feasible, as income from sales is typically spent on immediate household needs. Some weavers, particularly in Mahatalaky, reported that they do not sell in more distant, potentially more profitable markets because they do not have enough products to make the journey worthwhile.

The endline assessment sought to identify both strengths and areas for improvement within the Mahampy Cooperative. Members expressed overall satisfaction with the current organisational structure and reported that, in most cases, people are completing their roles. Weavers did suggest that collective decision-making in cooperative wide meetings (rather than in sub-groups) would further strengthen the organisation. While the assessment showed encouraging levels of mutual support and confidence in core weaving skills, it also revealed uncertainty around individual's understanding of their role. A total of 44.5% of weavers rated themselves as having a strong understanding of their role, with 48.5% needing some work, and 7% who did not understand. In addition, the individual surveys highlighted skills that members mentioned they needed to improve in their role, including numeracy skills (66%), commission management (64%), understanding prices and the market value of their work (64%), leadership and self-governance (34%), and time management (27%).

Next Steps

Building on the data collected and key insights gained, the key areas of focus for Mahampy Phase III is outlined below.

Enhanced Internal Governance

The endline assessment demonstrated positive attitudes toward the cooperative but also highlighted areas for improvement. To ensure the long-term sustainability of the project's achievements and secure continued income for weavers beyond the project's completion, Phase III will prioritise the strengthening of internal governance. In order to ensure that the cooperative are the architects of their path towards independence, activities will include a cooperative-lead revision of the Cooperative's constitution and roles and responsibilities, which has remained largely unchanged since the project's inception. The revision will be accompanied by rigorous roles training including the necessary skills for each job. Based on the process decided in the revised constitution, Phase III will also facilitate the next round of democratic elections. A critical step in building transparent, accountable, and resilient leadership structures.

Improved Business Knowledge

The Market Analysis provided some fruitful insights into market dynamics and helped establish key issues hampering productivity and limiting market access. The Business Training was scheduled to be complete in the final year of Phase III, but a comprehensive market analysis was prioritised in terms of timing and resources to ensure a robust, relevant course was devised. Now, Phase III will strengthen the Cooperative's capacity to access and navigate markets through the Business Training curriculum based on comprehensive information collected and analysed over the latter stage of Mahampy Phase II. By enhancing business practices to better engage with local and regional buyers, Phase III aims to expand economic opportunities for members and consolidate the Cooperative's position within the marketplace.

Strengthened Cooperative Finances

Lessons learned from the Alternative Loan Scheme, as well as reduced weaver engagement and diminishing investment in the education saving scheme highlights the need for a revised, sustainable saving scheme and loaning strategy. Project Phase III will facilitate the creation of an Introductory Savings Group, strengthening the Cooperative's control over financial management. This will build on the success of the Education Savings Scheme which spanned Phase II. This new initiative will support the transition to independent savings groups, empowered by the skills learned in the financial literacy training course. SEED acted as an intermediary by collecting and tracking savings in the Education Savings Scheme, shifting this responsibility to members will be the initial step towards transitioning ownership to the cooperative. Over time, this scheme will enable the group to provide loans and generate income at the group level, laying the foundation for long-term financial independence.



The department training stock team

Conclusion

During the three years of Project Mahampy: Phase II, significant progress has been achieved across all key outcomes. Roles and responsibilities have been taught, the literacy training curriculum has been completed, the financial literacy training programme has been implemented, improvements in product quality, price, and sales are evident, the education savings scheme has been continued across the three years, and the project has gained key insights into how to improve outcomes. Solid success and key learnings from challenges faced leaves the cooperative in a strong position going into the next phase. Understanding the shortcomings of Cooperative structure, the challenges of loan and saving schemes, and the complexities of the market have informed robust foundations in the design of Mahampy Phase III.

With the cooperative Workshop in a better position to withstand future shocks, improvement in sales across all indicators, and the weavers excited for a revision of the constitution, the project is well-placed to embark on the transition to full autonomy. Key indicators of independence are being devised to monitor the cooperative's capacity to operate, offering targeted support where necessary. The next phase will focus on key areas for improvement identified by the weavers in the endline assessment, ensuring that the cooperative is equipped to sustain the benefits of the project long after the partnership with SEED has ended.

Financial Report

Overall, 88% of the total budget for Year 3 has been spent, with underspend primarily in activities. As stated, the latter half of this phase was utilised for data collection to ensure that the business training (£595.74) and other activities have robust, data-backed foundations. Informed by new insights about the market and local practices, this activity will be implemented in the next phase. The cross visit (£1,381.70) has been delayed due to difficulties finding another organisation that matched the Mahampy cooperative in history and status, sphere of livelihood, and future goals. Meetings are currently taking place with key actors in Fort Dauphin to try and identify an

appropriate match. If found, this activity will take place in Phase III. Furthermore, due to the decision to not take the reedbed management strategy forward, funds allocated to stakeholder meetings (£241.270) were not utilised. There is also contingency funding like the solar panel maintenance (£106.38) which has not been required to be used as the project was awarded external funds (£5,000) to support the weavers, rebuild the workshop, and repair the solar infrastructure.

Transportation and subsistence were also slightly underspent (14% of money allocated unused), as this line is based on predictions of need and is not always utilised. The total money allocated for car hire and fuel is under review going into the next phase.

The total underspend of £2,594.06 (12% of budget) will be transferred into the next phase to fund activities to foster strengthened autonomy and market access within the cooperative. Further information can be shared upon request.

Project Mahampy, Phase II: Year 3 Expenditure			
Item	Detail	Y3 Total Budget	Y3 Total Spent
Human Resources	Project staff, associated staff costs	£ 10,006.96	£ 10,747.39
Activities	Mahampy Workshop, Mahampy Cooperative, routes to market, community engagement, and education, reedbed monitoring and analysis	£ 5,316.66	£ 2,344.79
Travel & Subsistence	Project team field travel & subsistence, regional travel	£ 2,742.89	£ 2,363.06
Communications	Mobile, internet, printing & translation	£ 605.21	£ 622.44
Running Cost Contribution	Organisational management, compliance & running cost contribution (15% of total)	£ 3,659.36	£ 3,659.35
TOTAL		£ 22,331.09	£ 19,737.03

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