



A Completion Report for:

PROJECT MAHAMPHY: WEAVERS' WORKSHOP REPAIR AND IMPROVEMENT

Improving the sustainability of *mahampy* reed weaving as a
women's livelihood

November 2025

Summary

Context

Measuring health, education, and standard of living, the Human Development Index positions Madagascar low at 177 out of 193 countries, reflecting significant structural and socioeconomic challenges that continue to affect the country today.¹ With *80% of the population living on less than \$2.15 a day, livelihood opportunities are extremely limited, particularly for women* who are restricted from accessing more lucrative livelihoods such as lobster fishing, which are traditionally male dominated. These limitations stem from deeply entrenched cultural expectations and domestic responsibilities and are further amplified in rural communities. In the under-resourced and drought prone Anosy region, in the southeast of Madagascar, *weaving remains 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, as well as the existence of a variety of threatened species and ecosystem services provided by the wetlands.

Project Mahampy

SEED Madagascar (SEED) supports the Mahampy Weavers' Cooperative, a group of 64 women in the rural community of Sainte Luce who rely on *mahampy* reed weaving for a livelihood, to increase the income generated from *mahampy* products. For the past six years, SEED has supported the Cooperative to increase sales at the Mahampy Weavers' Workshop, strengthen the financial resilience of the Mahampy Weavers' Cooperative members, and improve reedbed management for livelihood security. In 2020, SEED constructed the concrete Weavers' Workshop, adding a covered addition to the building later in 2023. To support sustainable access to *mahampy* reeds, 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, leads to the quickest regrowth of reeds. The programme helped build understanding of how best to manage reedbeds while involving the community directly in conservation efforts. Insights from this work will contribute to developing a locally led strategy to protect wetlands and secure long-term livelihoods.



Weavers making baskets in the Workshop (left), mahampy products being sold in the Workshop (right).

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. 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. The Weavers' Workshop, which acts as the storefront and main point of sale for the Cooperative, was severely damaged in the storm. The metal roof sheeting was torn apart by the high winds, which then allowed heavy rain into the Workshop, destroying most of the products inside. These products represent thousands of hours of work, as well as significant financial investment from the weavers who have to buy the *mahampy* in order to weave their creations. The concrete floor with roof covering the attachment at the back of the Workshop, which was constructed to give the weavers more space to work, also had its roof destroyed. The Workshop's basic solar panel system, which provides electric lighting, sustained some damage and additionally required repairs. The damages resulting from the storm caused the Workshop to close, halting any sales and leaving Cooperative members without a space to work or generate income.



The Workshop flooded after the storm (left), the front (top right) and back (bottom right) of the Workshop's exterior.

Activity Detail

Repairing Damaged Infrastructure

The repair and the construction work to improve the building of the Mahampy Weavers' Workshop progressed smoothly throughout the project and all construction activities are now complete.

SEED's construction design was updated in 2022 to incorporate cyclone resistant features which includes concrete encasement around the roof's edge, reinforced wooden beams along the ceiling, and strategically layered roofing sheets. In keeping with this design, SEED's construction team fully replaced the Workshop's metal roof in July to protect against further damage in case of future extreme weather events. These measures have enhanced the

Workshop's structural strength and stability, significantly improving its resilience to the increasingly unpredictable adverse weather events driven by climate change.



Construction and repair activities ongoing at the Mahampy workshop building (left) and the building complete with a rainwater harvesting system (right).

The Workshop's solar energy system was repaired, which involved replacing the battery and reinstalling the solar panel system onto the repaired roof with new support in place. The Workshop now remains well-lit for the Weavers to conduct their work and for customers to clearly see the products.

The loss of income due to the damaged products that were displayed in the Workshop has been calculated, with SEED opting for a combined approach in its response. This approach used partial product reimbursements, dissemination of weaving materials, and procurement of communal equipment for production to ameliorate the consequences of this significant financial impact and compensate the Weavers. In order to have the most significant impact, the reimbursement of funds across the Weavers' Cooperative is scheduled to coincide with the lean season.



The Workshop's outdoor weaving area fully constructed and repaired, including reinforced concrete pillars (left). The Workshop repaired and ready to showcase new mahampy products (right).

Improving Workshop Conditions

Aside from repairing the extensive damage, SEED also improved the overall conditions of the Workshop in order to offer a more comfortable environment for the weavers as well as a more enticing and welcoming space for potential customers.

The outdoor weaving area, which previously consisted of only a roof and concrete flooring, now includes partial concrete walls of approximately 1.5 metres in height, which are attached to the new cyclone-resistant roof with reinforced concrete pillars. Such pillars provide better support and stability throughout the structure, protecting the weavers and their *mahampy* from extreme wind and rain.

In September, a 2,000-litre rainwater harvesting system was installed in order to collect rainwater from the new roof, providing access to clean water for cooking, drinking, and handwashing. Previously, the Weavers had to leave the Workshop to collect water, taking time away from their work and impacting their availability for making

sales and attracting clients to the shop. Oftentimes, the women got their drinking water from the wetlands behind the Workshop, which are open to contaminants and pose a great risk for diarrheal illnesses.

Two woodburning fuel-efficient cookstoves, cooking pots and utensils, as well as plates and cutlery were also provided, in order to address the lack of cooking facilities on the site. The provision of these materials enables the Weavers to spend more time at the Workshop, weaving and managing sales, without having to travel the distance home to prepare lunch.



A Cooperative member weaving mahampy in the Workshop.

Conclusion

The emergency fund for Project Mahampy: Weavers' Workshop Repairs and Improvement, not only rehabilitated the Workshop following the destruction of severe Tropical Storm Jude but also enhanced the Workshop's overall conditions. The implementation of cyclone-resistant measures has improved the structural strength and stability of the Workshop, increasing its ability to withstand future severe weather systems, which are becoming increasingly frequent throughout the region due to the effects of climate change. The reparation of the solar electricity system, as well as the provision of clean water access and proper cookware and cooking materials, has created a more functional space that better suits the weavers' needs and empowers them to better manage their work schedule, thereby positively impacting the Weavers' livelihoods.

This project has ultimately provided a safer and more comfortable atmosphere for the 64 women who make up the Mahampy Weavers' Cooperative. In addition, this repair will improve the experience of the customers who visit the Workshop, sustaining the Cooperative's operations through their purchases.

Financial Report

Project expenditure against target has been consistently monitored throughout the project. The completion of Project Mahampy: Weavers' Workshop Repair and Improvement, adhered to the budget, with 97.9% (£4,876.69) of the requested amount (£4,982.00) spent.

Import costs and the price of certain materials, such as various types of lumber, metal roof sheeting, and paint, have fluctuated throughout the duration of the project to date. To mitigate this, construction materials were purchased in bulk and used across multiple lines, resulting in some overspent and some underspent lines, with overall construction material spending only slightly over budget, at 110.8%. Costs associated with transporting materials were lower than expected as less deliveries were required than anticipated, resulting in material transport costs being only 46.8% spent. Finally, the damage to the solar energy system was more serious than originally understood and the battery needed a full replacement as opposed to a repair. As a result, the £74.07 budgeted was not enough to meet the full cost of £253.22 that was required to return the system to its full function. Despite these factors, the project finished slightly under budget, at 97.9% spent.



A mural was also recently painted on the Workshop, showcasing the various stages of turning mahampy reeds into woven products (top). SEED staff members and partners from Hertfordshire Zoo visiting the repaired and improved Mahampy Weavers' Workshop (bottom).

References

¹ UNDP, (2025). *Human Development Report 2024-25*. Available at: [Human Development Report 2025 | Human Development Reports](#)