



seed **madagascar**

sustainable environment, education & development

A final report for

**Project Sekoly: provision of school building and sanitation
infrastructure for the commune of Mahatalaky, Anosy Region,
Madagascar**



March 2012

SEED MADAGASCAR

SUITE 7, 1A BEETHOVEN STREET, LONDON, W10 4LG, ENGLAND

VILLA RABEMANDA, AMBINANIKELY, TOLAGNARO, MADAGASCAR

+ 44 (0) 20 8960 6629 • FAX: + 44 (0) 20 8962 0126

COMPANY NUMBER 3796669 + REGISTERED CHSAARITY NUMBER 1079121

REGISTERED OFFICE: SUITE 7, 1A BEETHOVEN ST., W10 4LG, ENGLAND

EMAIL: PROJECTS@SEEDMADAGASCAR.ORG

WWW.MADAGASCAR.CO.UK

1. Background

Madagascar is a least developed country, 151 /187 in the 2011 UN Human Development Index. The majority of the population lives in isolated rural communities, dependent on traditional livelihoods of farming and fishing. Isolation of communities and lack of state capacity mean that service delivery is extremely poor, and government educational services do not reach remote communities.

Within the Anosy Region in the south east, aspects of chronic poverty are seen at their most extreme – over 90% of the population lives below the poverty line, illiteracy rates reach 80% and as many as 4 in 10 children die before their 5th birthday from easily preventable illnesses (Ministry of Health, 2011). The region is one of the least developed following decades of almost no intervention or investment by the state or other service providers, with no upkeep of existing (or provision of new) education infrastructure, and whilst the government has adopted a detailed strategy paper for poverty reduction (PRSP), Anosy's isolation means that little has changed. Communities typically lack even the most basic services, with the extreme lack of infrastructure in the region resulting in them being effectively cut off from trade routes and development opportunities. Problems of lack of access to vital livelihoods resources have further been exacerbated by the effects of ongoing political problems which have seen public service spending cut by 40% and public services investment and maintenance spending cut by 67% (World Bank, 2010), with particular impact on children and education (UNICEF, 2010).



The rural commune of Mahatalaky is made up of 16 fokontanys, each of which is made up of several outlying hamlets. The commune is vast and communities are isolated from each other. Several fokontanys have no access by road and are separated from the commune hub of Mahatalaky by bridgeless rivers inhabited by crocodiles. Many fokontanys have no formal educational services and children are forced to walk up to 20km per day to attend the schools (often badly in need of repair) in other communities, if there is room for them. It is no surprise that illiteracy rates in this area are among the highest nationally. Yet schools in the area are heavily over capacity such is the desire among children to learn.

Up till 2011 SEED Madagascar (SEED) had focused its school building programme on villages requiring a primary school, working with several of the fokontanys around the commune centre of Mahatalaky. The commune currently has 20 public primary schools, and is bordered to the north by the commune of labokoho which itself has 6 primary schools. However, for each of these 26 primary schools, there has been just one middle school, or CEG, to serve as the link between primary and high school, located in the centre of Mahatalaky Rural Commune. The next nearest middle school has been in the region's urban centre Fort Dauphin, some 35km south of Mahatalaky, itself heavily over capacity, and inaccessible to the majority of the population. Mahatalaky CEG has had no premises of its own and before this intervention was operating out of two classrooms in the local primary school to serve some 300 students. Lack

of space was such that the students were taught on a rotating basis, waiting several hours each day for their turn to be taught. Of these, almost 50 were senior students who require a full day's teaching in order to prepare for their national entrance exam to high school. In order to accommodate the CEG students the primary school headmaster had turned over his house to act as a third classroom. No longer able to operate from reduced classrooms, the primary school had requested the CEG vacate their premises, and the CEG students were left without a school. Among the surrounding primary schools, a further 290 students were preparing to take their final primary school exam in order to attend the CEG, greatly increasing the urgency of finding other suitable premises.

SEED has been able to assist the community in provision of one fully furnished two-classroom school building, which will make up part of a middle school complex of 8 classrooms, a latrine and safe drinking water well. This report details activities undertaken as a result of this grant between October 2011 and March 2012.



2. Completed Activities

Preparation:

- Meeting with Regional WASH committee
- Meeting with CISCO and Mayor of Mahatalaky
- Meeting with chef de village
- Meeting with community: establish PHAST (Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation) process, project timeframe, define stakeholder roles and responsibilities
- Site selection with community
- Source materials
- Establish Pioneer [volunteer] campsite

Implementation:

- Complete PHAST process
- Transport materials to project site
- Transport overseas volunteers to project site
- Construction of school building
- Construction of school furniture
- Landscaping
- Health education sessions within the school

Follow-up and Future Activities:

- Official inauguration and hand-over to the community
- Monitoring and evaluation

2.1 Preparation

Preparations for the project began in October 2011. The two classroom brick school building (the fourth of four buildings that make up the new Mahatalaky CEG) was designed by SEED's Head of Construction, supported by a specialist in masonry, with the main structure consisting of bricks and clay covered with a concrete finish.



Community participation is integral to all SEED projects and SEED's community agents engaged with the community, CISCO (regional education authority), the Mayor of Mahatalaky and the chef de village (village leader) in order to determine a work plan and define the community's contributions for the construction of each structure. Provision of locally available materials by communities across the commune of Mahatalaky,

including clay from Mahatalaky, rock from Tsagnoria and sand from Emagnevy, made it possible for the budget to be kept to a minimum and helped to give the communities served by the school a sense of ownership of the project. Community members were also responsible for selecting and clearing the site of the school (an area of land 20m x 40m about 5 minutes walk from Mahatalaky's primary school), digging the shaft for the well, transporting materials around the site and providing labour during the construction process – as a ceremonial gesture, a leading member of the community was invited to open the construction phase of the project by making the first dig into the earth to create the foundations. Other materials required for construction were sourced from elsewhere in the commune of Mahatalaky and nearby commune of Fort Dauphin, including the gravel, cement, clay bricks, wire, tin for the roof, wood for the frame, and posts and planks for the scaffolding.

The project was led by five permanent members of SEED's construction team and the coordinator of SEED's award-winning international 'Pioneer' volunteer programme that sources committed individuals from around the world to contribute expertise and manual labour to projects on the ground in Madagascar. The majority of tasks were completed by a team of 13 Malagasy staff and a total of 19 international volunteers from countries



including the USA, Britain, Germany, Australia and Canada. The first group of volunteers arrived in Fort Dauphin on 7th October where they underwent a week-long induction course to fully prepare them for the tasks ahead. This included training in Malagasy building techniques, tool handling and on-site health and safety, as well as daily language lessons enabling volunteers to converse at a basic level with members of the community in the local dialect, and an orientation in local cultural values and traditions.

The project team began preparatory work on the site on 6th October and the volunteers moved on site for construction on the 13th. As is common in the communities that SEED



works with, the opportunity for members of the community and SEED's international volunteers to work together and participate in cross cultural exchanges is greatly valued by and beneficial to both parties. It was great for morale for the whole team, upon arrival, to be enthusiastically welcomed by the community and the Mayor of Mahatalaky and to see that the community contributions had been fulfilled: a store room had been made available for use and water was provided free of charge. The rest of the day was spent setting up

the camp that would be home to the team for the following months.

2.2 Implementation

Project activities were completed over a 5 month period during which time an impressive building was constructed using just materials and tools available locally in the communes of Fort Dauphin and Mahatalaky. Construction elements of the project included:

School building:

- Clearing a 20m x 40m area of land and levelling off of the site through adding layers of rocks
- Marking out and digging the foundations of the school building (50cm x 75cm) around the 4 sides of the building
- Filling the foundations, in consultation with the masonry specialist, with concrete (produced through mixing gravel, sand and cement on site), wire frames and rocks, and insertion of 10 vertical wire rods at the corners and along the sides of the building, before covering the whole foundation in a cement and sand finish
- Constructing the walls through the placement of reinforcing wire and concrete pillars at 3-metre intervals, and the laying of bricks with cement and clay in between them, to a height of 3 metres
- Filling the floor with closely spaced rocks and cementing between them, before covering the floor in a cement and sand layer and finally a cement skin
- Constructing and fitting the window and door frames, boring the ventilation holes above windows and doors
- Constructing and fitting doors and window shutters from tongue-and-groove planks, and securing with locks
- Constructing wooden roof apex and suspension beams and fitting of tin roof and 15cm anti-cyclone concrete roof layer
- Painting of walls, doors, windows and trimmings
- Construction of veranda for shade across the front of the building and ledges over windows across the back of the building



- Construction of raised teaching platform, concrete blackboards, teachers' desks and 40 benches
- Painting 3 educational murals, which included a world map with geography-related questions, a map of Madagascar that details the various natural habitats across the island, and a flow diagram detailing human impacts on the natural environment.



The final group of Pioneer volunteers left Mahatalaky at the end of February; as a gesture of their appreciation, the community held a party for the departing volunteers in lieu of the official opening ceremony for the school that will be held later this year. The celebrations began with a formal tour of the new school complex attended by the Mayor of Mahatalaky, chef de quartier, the police and school teachers. This was followed by a speech from the Mayor of Mahatalaky, who expressed great pleasure in collaborating with SEED and praised the hard work of the Pioneer volunteers over the past 15 months, along with speeches from the Pioneer Co-ordinator, the chef de quartier and the village elders. Music and dancing then commenced with local dance groups taking the stage, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all.



2.3 Follow Up and Future Activities

The final construction phase of Mahatalaky Middle School was completed in March 2011, providing a two building classroom that will be a hugely beneficial resource for communities across Mahatalaky and labokocho communes for decades to come. The whole 8 classroom complex, complete with latrine and well has now been finished. The focus is now on replanting the eucalyptus trees that were cleared from the school site and landscaping the area around the school, which will be undertaken by the community of Mahatalaky. In mid-April a celebration will be held with community members, students and teachers, SEED, representatives from CISCO and DREN (Direction Régionale de l'Education Nationale), the Mayor of Mahatalaky and the chef de quartier, during which the school will be officially handed over to the community.



At this stage, SEED's community health agents will provide health and sanitation education to both students and parents in separate school-based focus groups to ensure the correct and sustainable use of the school's water and sanitation infrastructures, as well as undertaking household visits to those unable to attend these sessions. The focus groups will draw on SEED's experience in the PHAST (Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation) methodology, providing training around the topics of hand washing, protection of water sources and latrine use, in line with the national WASH

(Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All) strategy. As executive secretary for the regional WASH committee, SEED has facilitated the capacity building of the Mahatalaky Commune WASH committee, supporting them to co-develop and lead the World Water Day festivities within Fort Dauphin and Mahatalaky Commune in March 2011 and 2012 respectively. The involvement of the Commune WASH committee will help to maintain local motivation and ensure the sustainable use of the water and sanitation infrastructures provided by this project. A link to photos of the 2012 World Water Day celebrations can be found on SEED's Facebook page here –

<http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150619157488603.394019.18672113602&type=1>

While the new Mahatalaky CEG will have teachers that can commence work upon its opening, SEED has been interviewing teachers in response to concerns that many schools in the region are receiving limited government funding, which is resulting in a lack of teachers, training, funding and resources. In collaboration with the regional educational authority CISCO, SEED will be working to lobby towards increased recruitment of government funded teachers, assessment and development of in-service teacher training and a long-term strategy for resource allocation for schools in the region.

2.4 Conclusion

The government of Madagascar has identified the need to develop educational infrastructure in their detailed strategy paper for poverty reduction (PRSP), that aims to build and equip new classrooms in rural areas at a rate of 2,300 classrooms per year. Despite this, Anosy's isolation means that little has changed, and the region's population still has one of the highest rates of illiteracy (80%) in the country. These issues are compounded by the prevailing political impasse in the country, which has resulted in the government slashing annual investment in education by 82% between 2008 and 2011 (UNICEF, 2011). This has resulted in limited resource allocation, including educational infrastructure and school books, a reduction in government funded teachers and training, and limited or no investment in annual

Annex: Mahatalaky CEG Construction - A Volunteer's Blog.

Written by Olivia Driver – Pioneer Volunteer January - March 2012



This, for me, was the hardest but the most rewarding part of the 10 week Pioneer scheme. It has been extraordinary to be part of a year long school building project that will eventually provide vital education for the Mahatalaky Commune. It also provided a huge motive to complete the school and open it to the community during my scheme.

The construction team were brilliant when we were learning new skills such as cement mixing, rendering and rock weaving. It was great to have the opportunity to build on the limited knowledge of construction work that I had. The team was highly enthusiastic and the working atmosphere was as fun as it was productive.

On arrival to the construction site two of the four buildings were almost finished, the third needed some more work and the fourth was only a skeleton. The rain only stopped work a couple of times throughout our time, we were very lucky to have such good weather. After approximately five weeks of work, three of the

buildings were completed and the fourth needed just a little more work that the construction team would complete without us – not bad going. Unfortunately there was a delay in getting some of the materials to the site but we ploughed on and managed to achieve everything we'd hoped to. In late February there was a celebration of SEED's efforts and the end of the charity's project in Mahatalaky. The community showed their appreciation with speeches from the Mayor, the local schoolteacher and the chef de quartier followed by very enthusiastic cultural dancing!

This was the day that I truly felt what we had achieved and that what we had given to the community was invaluable. I know that the school will be extremely beneficial for now and in years to come.

