

Progress report HONKO Mangrove Conservation & Education Project in SW Madagascar

Alternative livelihood program

1. Aquaculture program

We have organised a first training workshop for 10 local fishermen to construct and maintain an aquaculture pond within the wetland zone close to the village. This is an important first step towards more durable mangrove management as it will reduce the dependency on catching juvenile fish with beach seine nets in the mangrove channels.

At first a 11m² pond was constructed under supervision of a specialist from the highlands. The 10 fishermen also got some theoretical education regarding different fish species and their life cycle, feeding systems and maintaining the ponds. The first demonstration pond was constructed close to the village to assure proper control. Each of the 10 participants caught 10 juvenile local tilapia within the wetland and so in total 100 tilapia were stocked in the pond. After 3 months we will analyse growth and survival of the fish. We are also looking in starting to raise carps, as they generate a higher body weight and thus higher income and nutritional value to the local communities.



2. Crafts & vannerie program

Construction was started involving all local people to build a artisanal shop along the main road to act as a tourist attraction to the area. Every year more than 15.000 tourists pass by this road on their way to the beach resorts further along the road. So far we get 300 people per

year visiting the mangroves, so we hope to get more visitors stopping at the shop and realising the beauty of the area.

This shop is being build with all sustainable harvested material, such as bamboo, plantation wood, local reeds and mud. The shop will be on the ground floor and on the first floor the artisans can work on their crafts when it is too windy outside, and material for the different alternative livelihood programs will be stored here.

After the first successful year of our vannerie program more women expressed their interest in learning new techniques to get an extra livelihood. So new workshops have been organised to teach 10 new community members these techniques. At the same time new techniques and models are being tried out with the more experienced artisans.



3. Apiculture program

After a first trial harvest the potential was clear: the small harvest was immediately sold out to visitors. As this honey is the first true mangrove honey on the local market, we expect great results from this program. But further training is needed in extracting and handling techniques of the cultivated honey as well as improve the presentation techniques of this local product. A market will be searched for with the hotels and shops in the region. We also acquired and set up 5 extra beehives in the village of Ambondrolava to improve production and also provide extra revenue for the local motivated community members participating with this program.

At the same time we are promoting the plantation of fruit trees and other local flowering trees to help the existing bee colonies to sustain periods when the mangroves possess less nectar due to seasonal variety. Not only will this help honey production, it also falls under the commitment of improving CO₂ sinks.



The first harvest of the beehives proofed to be very successful: out of three strong hives the trained villagers collected for the first time 20 liters of their own cultivated honey. During this collection training was provided concerning hygiene and marketing of the honey. It was also the first time for the villagers to work with a honey extractor, so additional training was given. Two types

of honey have been harvested: mangroves and mixture of agricultural fields/littoral forest/mangrove forests. The first two groups of visitors immediately confirmed the potential of honestly collected wild honey and bought several jars.

Mangrove reforestation program

So far in 2011-2012 season a total of 50.000 mangrove propagules have been collected and planted directly out with the participation of community members of the five villages surrounding the mangroves. During plantation efforts the advantage of multispecies planting looking at historical records have been stressed above the creation of mono-plantations.



At the beginning of 2012 the season started to collect the mature grains of *Avicennia marina*, the white mangroves which are grown in mangrove nurseries and planted out after six months in the more harsh sites as they are pioneer species able to cope with difficult conditions. Two big mangrove nurseries have been established working together with two different communities for a total of 2500 mangrove seedlings.

