

Project Update: November 2009

I have recently returned from a successful trip to Madagascar to find that Global Giving is running a matching funds challenge – but before I get into that, let me tell you about my trip. I had two reasons to visit Madagascar: to increase the number of farmers participating in our project and to hold our first product-training workshop. The most exciting of these, of course, was working with the farmers and training new textile producers.

Our first group of farmers, the “CPALI 5”, all have planted silkworm host plants on their farms. Their sites include a field recovered from invasive ginger, an old cattle pasture, and host plants inter-cropped on mature, mixed species agricultural plots. All of these sites border the Makira Protected Area. Therefore we are extending the buffer around the protected areas and linking conservation to poverty alleviation. Because other, local farmers can now see the successes of the CPALI 5, four more farmers associations in Ambodivoagny have asked to join the CPALI project as well as a new farmer group in the large community south of Ambodivoagny, Marovovonana. By the end of 2009 we will have added 50 farmers to the project, each of who will plant a minimum of 200 trees for a total of 10000 trees. CPALI is finally able to begin to take the project to scale. We predict by the end of 2011, 500 farmers will have joined the program and will plant around 1 million trees. It is especially gratifying to see the success of the CPALI model during this period of political uncertainty in Madagascar.

With our increase in production, we held our first workshop to train artisans to produce our unique, non-spun textile. CPALI has designed a textile that can be made without spinning wheels and looms and is beautiful for a variety of decorative products, especially window shades, curtains, and accessories. While our current textiles are all natural colours, we have also dyed samples with plant dyes to reproduce the colours of Madagascar’s brick-red soils, deep forest browns and greens.

When we are able to scale up our project to include 500 farmers we should be economically self-sustaining. Until that time, however, we need to continue to solicit funds to support the all-Malagasy team who teaches farmers how to raise host plants, raise larvae and produce textiles as well as funds to provide farmers with basic tools they need to get started.



