

Strengthening the co-management of Nosy Hara Marine Park by increasing the participation of local communities in decision making and restoration of mangroves

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Mode of presentation: Oral

Submission theme: Critical habitat

Background: Mangroves on the west and north-east coast of Madagascar are currently a national conservation priority. Despite the great ecological and economic services provided by mangroves, the threats, both anthropogenic and climatic, that weigh on this habitat and its biodiversity are increasing and becoming more tangible. Between 2000 and 2010, it is estimated that nearly 5,700 ha of mangroves have disappeared from the Diana region. Nosy Hara National Park includes critical habitats such as coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass beds and islets and supports numerous livelihoods in artisanal fisheries. Thus this is an area of high biological, economic and cultural interest. The entire Protected Area at Nosy Hara is 125,471 ha, of which mangroves comprise 3,499 ha. The main threats observed on mangrove are selective cutting of mangroves by local people, silting, increased salinity following drought and lack of supervision and control.

Methods: Local communities were trained in propagule collection, planting and monitoring techniques and in the management and monitoring of mangrove forests in their locality. Scientific research also was conducted to evaluate the status of the mangrove forests that will lead to the development of a 3-year restoration plan for the target communities. Information gathered during this work included: biodiversity surveys, socio-economic evaluations, mapping of mangroves and proposed restoration sites.

Results: Sixty-four local community representatives participated in the training programme. One hundred 'Junior ecoguards' were also trained on the importance of mangroves and their conservation through the development of an environmental education manual, as part of a teacher training project throughout schools in the Diana region. An area of 19.4 ha of mangroves has been restored over two years with the cooperation of local communities and Madagascar National Parks. Furthermore, IEC materials (posters, postcard and manual) have been developed to raise awareness. To ensure the sustainability and continuity of restoration activities, in collaboration with national government, a restoration plan was developed and validated by the local communities and Madagascar National Parks in October 2018. By the end of the year 2021, it is expected that 20 ha will be reforested and 10 ha restored.

Conclusion: The involvement of communities were key to the success of this work, including site identification, delimitation of restoration sites, planning and management of their own

resources. This project has provided them with improved knowledge of their mangrove areas, and technical capacities to conduct future restoration.