Creating two new protected areas for Madagascar's largest wetlands

BirdLife International
with
Asity Madagascar
Part 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BirdLife International, working with its Malagasy affiliate NGO, Asity Madagascar, is leading efforts to create two large Protected Areas in Madagascar’s wetlands. The two Protected Areas are known as the Mahavavy-Kinkony Complex in north-western Madagascar and the Mangoky-Ihotry Complex in south-western Madagascar. Each site includes a large river delta with estuary and mangrove areas, freshwater marshes and rivers, lakes and sandy and rocky coast. The sites also contain dry land ecosystems including deciduous forest, grasslands and caves; both also have a substantial human population. They are two of the 84 sites classified as important for bird conservation in Madagascar as part of the Project Zones d’Importance pour la Conservation des Oiseaux à Madagascar (ZICOMA). Due to strong dependence of local communities on both the sites for natural resources and overexploitation of local species, the fragile biodiversity on both sites has become increasingly threatened. In order to tackle these issues, the project entitled, Creating two new protected areas for Madagascar’s largest wetlands was developed. The project’s main objective is to create two large protected areas to conserve these threatened wetlands.

The involvement of Aage V Jensen Charity Foundation to date

The Aage V Jensen Charity Foundation has been providing its invaluable support to this project through this single grant for €495,305 since 2007. Financial support from the Foundation has so far facilitated: the acquisition of temporary protection status for both sites along with the completion of a number of steps bringing both areas closer to permanent protection and the strengthening of Asity Madagascar as a key national NGO.

Key activities and achievements in the last year

Key achievements in the last 12 months include:

- At Mahavavy-Kinkony, most of the necessary preparations have been made and legal documents for permanent protection finalised. Mahavavy-Kinkony’s five-year Business Plan has been developed. Physical delineation of the site as a Protected Area has been completed and awaits approval from the Ministry of Territorial Planning. Implementation of the management plan is underway, with new activities including restoration of mangroves and aquatic plants. Income-generation projects involving livestock rearing and beekeeping along with infrastructure development for tourism have also been implemented.

- At Mangoky-Ihotry, the zoning plan has been locally approved and the management plan is currently being elaborated. A high priority for the year was to ensure the inclusion of Lake Ihotry in the zonation plan; the status of this site, of exceptional conservation and socio-economic importance, had not been fully resolved in the temporary protection process. Special consultations on Lake Ihotry were therefore conducted and the lake now features in the zoning plan, which will be presented for obtaining permanent protection status for the area. Asity Madagascar has undertaken substantial conservation work to protect the lake, and integrating the lake into the Protected Area is an excellent opportunity to continue this vital work.

- For both sites, a document requesting delegated management of the sites from the Ministry to Asity Madagascar has been submitted and Asity Madagascar is waiting for a response from the Ministry.

- Asity Madagascar, since becoming the BirdLife affiliate for Madagascar in 2008, has continued to benefit from BirdLife capacity-building on conservation programme management, and, in recognition of progress made in its strength, effectiveness and sustainability, has recently applied for approval to upgrade to BirdLife Partner Designate. This is a key step towards becoming a full BirdLife Partner, which would
place Asity Madagascar on a level with the most well-established national conservation organisations in the world.

**Key conservation achievements and impact of the project in its lifetime**

**I. SPECIES** Both sites support remarkable concentrations of threatened species, even by Madagascar's standards, including many at the highest levels of threat and with very little protection; the project has helped to conserve all these. Bird species include the Critically Endangered Madagascar Fish-eagle *Haliaeetus vociferoides*, Endangered Sakalava Rail *Amaurornis olivieri*, Madagascar Heron *Ardea humbloti*, Madagascar Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis bernieri* and Madagascar Teal *Anas bernieri*, and several Vulnerable species. Monitoring showed that all these species maintained numbers at one if not both sites; in some cases, the largest ever counts were recorded, such as over 200 Madagascar Teal at Mahavavy-Kinkony and similar numbers of Vulnerable Madagascar Plovers *Charadrius thoracicu* at Mangoky-Ihotry. Other species benefiting include critically endangered endemic cichlid fish (*Paretroplus* and *Paratilapia* species; at least one possibly new to science) and the Madagascar Big-headed Turtle *Erymnochelys madagascariensis*.

**II. SITES** Both these wetlands are among the highest priority sites for bird and biodiversity conservation in Madagascar. In 2007, Mahavavy-Kinkony had temporary protection, but was a long way from safety; Mangoky-Ihotry was unprotected. Under a national policy initiative to increase protected areas, many sites elsewhere in Madagascar are being proposed by other organisations for protection, but few have progressed so smoothly as these two wetlands, despite their comparatively large size and complexity. Both sites are now protected temporarily and on their way to being given permanent protection status. For Mahavavy-Kinkony, the dossier to request permanent protection has been submitted to Government. With agreement of all parties concerned, implementation of the management plan is underway. For Mangoky-Ihotry, the process of upgrading from temporary to permanent protection is well advanced: the zoning plan for the site has been validated and the management plan will be complete in 2012.

**III. HABITAT** Wetlands have for too long been neglected in conservation efforts in Madagascar, despite the on average very much higher degree of threat affecting them, compared to forests. A major achievement of this project has been to enable the creation of two leading wetland habitat conservation sites and provide a pioneering model for replication for the protection of other sites (not only wetland) in the country by Asity Madagascar, and other conservation organisations.

**III. PEOPLE** BirdLife International and Asity Madagascar are committed to working for wildlife conservation with people, and for people. The project’s main achievements to date have involved gaining strong local community support and involvement in the project, and capacity-building for Asity Madagascar. The local communities at the two sites are involved in the management of the two new Protected Areas through a management structure based on ‘platforms’ (umbrella bodies of local stakeholders). Community support has been strengthened by awareness-raising and information campaigns organised by members of each platform. This strategy has been extremely effective in engaging local people in conservation. Match funding totalling around €484,000 has been successfully raised to support the protection and conservation of the two sites: approximately equal to the funding from the Aage V Jensen Charity Foundation.
Next steps

In the short term, the main objectives are the acquisition of permanent protection status for both sites, and the physical delineation of the boundaries in collaboration with the Government’s ‘Topographic Service’ and the local community. In the longer term, putting management on a sustainable footing is the priority, and further development of the co-management approach is the key: the project will continue conservation management of critical areas while developing and implementing sustainable development initiatives, including the identification of sustainable funding sources along with the establishment of key benefits and development opportunities for local communities. These activities, involving collaboration between local communities and other local authorities, will demonstrate how protection and management of natural resources can improve livelihoods and provide benefits to local people.

Lake Kinkony, the second largest lake in Madagascar, and home to the Endangered Sakalava Rail (cover photo), endemic fish and many other rare species.
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Part 2. ANNUAL PROJECT REPORT

Project progress during the final year (from 1st October 2010 to 30th September 2011)

Output 1. Ensure Mangoky Wetlands receive temporary Protected Area designation

This output was fully achieved in December 2008, and no further reporting is needed.

Output 2. Establish IBA Caretakers—Government-community partnerships—as formal institutions with management authority over both sites

The local institutional management structure for both the protected areas is now in place, following the creation of multi-stakeholder local management bodies (platforms) Marambitsy Miahy ny Zavaboahary (MMZ, for Mahavavy-Kinkony) and Mangoky-Ihotry Arovana (MIaro). The main needs identified for achieving this output were capacity-building and technical support for platform members in order for them to perform their roles as co-managers of the sites.

Raising public awareness: An important step for the project was the creation of an Information and Education Centre in Manja district of Mangoky-Ihotry. Asity Madagascar staff were in constant contact with the Information and Education Centre established in Mahavavy-Kinkony (managed by the District schooling authority) to ensure continuation of the important education activities organised by the centre. Various international ‘environment days’ were also celebrated at both sites with the involvement of MMZ and MIaro. These ‘environment days’ days were also used to promote Asity Madagascar at a national level. Collaboration with the local radio station has continued and newsletters are being produced regularly.

Capacity-building for MMZ and MIaro: MMZ’s General Assembly took place in November 2010, during which its work plan was put together with technical support from Asity Madagascar. Capacity-building on protected area management and project proposal development was also provided for MMZ Board Members. MIaro’s General Assembly was held in August 2011 and an annual work plan was also put together. In November 2011 grants were obtained for both sites from Conservation International for the implementation of the annual work plans.

Natural resource management by local community associations: A total of 10 management transfer contracts have been drawn up for the project sites, 8 in Mahavavy-Kinkony and 2 in Mangoky-Ihotry. For community associations in Mangoky-Ihotry, capacity-building in relation to the implementation of the contracts for natural resources management transfer was provided by the Regional Directorate of Forests. In Mahavavy-Kinkony, a group of local, prospective natural resource managers exchanged lessons and experiences with a neighbouring organisation that is already managing its natural resources. This knowledge exchange convinced them of the value of the approach and led them to accept the management transfer commitment in Mahavavy-Kinkony.

Dina: A *Dina* is a local law that is usually developed and implemented by local people and authorities themselves, which means it is a strong tool to set regulations that are valued at the local level. In Mahavavy-Kinkony, a *Dina* on fisheries management, including use of sustainable fishing methods, zoning of the lake, and use of appropriate fishing nets was developed and implemented in Lake Katondra. In Mangoky-Ihotry, during the workshop on resource management for Lake Ihotry, local fishermen put together an agreement on a lake management strategy. A *Dina* was elaborated to formalise the agreement.
**Direct Payments in Mangoky-Ihotry:** A 'Direct Payments' scheme has been developed at this site, ensuring direct economic benefits for local communities participating in conservation. This is an innovative method Asity Madagascar is using to link conservation with community benefits, through participatory monitoring with prizes awarded for success. Communities are responsible for conserving biodiversity and natural resources in their area, and are rewarded when this is successful. An awareness-raising campaign to promote participation in the scheme was launched in 2010 and training provided to assist communities to select and monitor key indicators of ecosystem health. The results of the monitoring will then be presented at community festivals and independently validated by Asity Madagascar or other expert staff. Prizes are awarded in the form of funding for development projects chosen by the communities (such as support for local schools or developing infrastructure). Larger prizes are awarded where the greatest conservation benefits are measured. Eight village associations are already implementing the scheme.

**Community development:** Small income-generation projects have also been developed to mitigate overexploitation of natural resources. The objectives of these projects are to monitor threats, conserve or restore wetland habitat and develop new or improved income sources.

In Mahavavy-Kinkony, a Sustainable Development Officer has been recruited and a sustainable development strategy developed. The sustainable development strategy has identified five main areas to focus activities: fishing, use of Rafia palms for textiles and construction, tourism, and rice and honey production. Livestock rearing and beekeeping activities along with infrastructure development for tourism are already being implemented on the site, supported by relevant capacity-building for each project. A sustainable development strategy was also developed for Mangoky-Ihotry; it has been validated at the local level, and is now ready to be implemented in 2012.

At both sites, Conservation International supported the launch of a number of community income-generation projects through the Node program, in which small grants for conservation-compatible community development are provided to local associations through a locally based NGO (the node), in this case Asity Madagascar. All pilot projects were launched in February 2011 including livestock rearing and fish farming. These projects now serve as a model for replication by non-members of the association.

**Output 3. Develop full management plans for both sites, and ensure their designation as permanent Protected Areas (Mahavavy by 2009, Mangoky by 2010)**

A preliminary management plan was developed for both sites prior to the initiation of the project in order for the sites to obtain temporary protection. This needs to be expanded to a full management and zonation plan, as one of the requirements for permanent protection.

For Mahavavy-Kinkony, the zoning and management plans have been completed and validated at the local level and all activities so far have been based on the five year management plan for the site. The Social and Environmental Safeguards Plan has been established following consultation with local communities and validated at local level. Furthermore, four wardens have been recruited to monitor the critically important biodiversity sites (such as waterbird colonies and fish spawning areas) which are off limits to the management transfer contracts.

For Mangoky-Ihotry, a workshop was held to increase the understanding of resource exploitation in Lake Ihotry, followed by awareness-raising activities and consultations in 16 village clusters called *Fokontany* – the smallest administrative unit with elected leaders – around the main Lake and smaller ones nearby. These consultations led to an agreement, established as a local law (*Dina*) for the development of a management plan which would minimise the risk of overexploitation of the lake’s resources. The zoning plan for the whole
Mangoky-Ihotry site has been completed and locally validated. The Social and Environmental Safeguards Plan and management plan remain under development and will be completed in 2012.

For both sites, a procedures manual was put together during a workshop in collaboration with local communities. These manuals set out the responsibilities (Terms of Reference) and mode of operation for all levels of the management structure in a clear and transparent way, and so are an essential complement to the contracts and plans that guide the conservation management of the sites.

Output 4. Grow and develop a national bird conservation NGO, Asity Madagascar, supported by BirdLife.

**Governance, membership and capacity** An ordinary General Assembly was held in February 2011 to endorse the annual work plan for 2011. During the General Assembly, 8 new members joined with expertise in ecotourism and communication. Members continue to get involved and contribute to the activities of Asity Madagascar in various other ways, such as:

- monitoring of environmental impacts of the Ambatovy Project, a mining programme in the forested hills close to Moramanga, east of Antananarivo;
- monitoring of priority sites in Mangoky-Ihotry;
- monitoring of priority sites in Mahavavy-Kinkony.

Following its admission to the BirdLife Partnership as Affiliate for Madagascar, Asity Madagascar applied to be upgraded to Partner Designate, which is the level below full Partner. This requires an all-round assessment of Asity Madagascar’s governance, capacity and overall effectiveness and standing as a conservation NGO. After a self-evaluation, Asity Madagascar hosted an evaluation visit from the BirdLife African Partnership secretariat and the director of one of the African Partner NGOs (from Burundi). This has resulted in the recommendation to approve Asity Madagascar’s upgrade, although this must be ratified by the African Council, then finally Global council, of the BirdLife International Partnership.

Asity Madagascar staff and members have continued to benefit from a number of capacity-building programmes on conservation programme management in Madagascar and Africa.

**Fundraising** In 2011, funding secured included:

- Support from the Foundation for Protected Areas and Biodiversity of Madagascar, who have funded conservation at Mahavavy-Kinkony since 2010 (for implementation of the sustainable development strategy) and Mangoky-Ihotry since 2011 (for development of a similar strategy) with a total of US$ 140,000. The Foundation remains keen to continue to fund the project in 2012, and a negotiation of US$ 145,000 is currently taking place.
- For Mangoky-Ihotry, the MacArthur Foundation co-funded the project with the Aage V Jensen Charity Foundation from 2008 to 2010 with a total of US$ 200,000. The MacArthur Foundation has committed to further supporting the project with a further US$ 250,000 for 2011-2013.
- A three year grant was secured by Asity Madagascar from MAVA Foundation to support the Tsitongambarika forest project, the third main action site of Asity Madagascar.
- A grant proposal was submitted to Foundation Tany Meva, another Malagasy Foundation, seeking support for the Mangoky-Ihotry project site; the response is awaited.
Have there been any conservation benefits that have resulted from the project that were not anticipated?

A number of important unanticipated conservation benefits have resulted from this project.

- Within and around the wetland complexes, important discoveries have been made during biodiversity surveys. For example, in 2010, an area of dry forest originally not included in the Mangoky-Ihotry protected area was found to be of significant conservation importance and was consequently included in the zoning and management plans for the complex.
- The projects developed by Asity Madagascar on these two sites have provided a successful model for replication for the recently developed Tsitongambarika forest conservation project in SE Madagascar, helping to conserve over 60,000 hectares of forest.
- Forest restoration activities took place in two parts of Mangoky-Ihotry: 4000 plants of 14 species of forest trees were planted over 2 hectares by the local communities, in an area degraded by shifting cultivation.
- Based on its success in community-based wetland conservation, Asity Madagascar was invited to become involved in the Madagascar Pochard conservation project near Bealanana in northern Madagascar; this is possibly the rarest bird in the world, rediscovered in 2008. This programme continues at the time of writing, with Asity Madagascar an active participant.

Were any problems encountered that mean that changes were required to the project?

The main problem faced by Asity Madagascar during the development and implementation of the project was the national governmental crisis in Madagascar following the coup d’état in February 2009 (and continuing into 2012). Although the coup had no direct impacts on the project, its implementation slowed down as the governmental process of protected area development came to a halt. It also became occasionally unsafe to work in and around the project sites, while the breakdown in Government functioning and funding meant that exploitation of natural resources was no longer enforced by Government.

Working conditions have at times been very difficult, but Asity Madagascar has continued to deliver its programmes with no lasting disruption, aside from slowing down the rate of implementation of certain activities. This ability to continue through adversity reveals the strength of Asity Madagascar as a national NGO. Asity Madagascar continued its important work with the local communities on the ground and once the government was reactivated in 2010, it was ready to continue moving forward with project implementation. The total budget was not affected, but the programme was extended by one year to compensate for delays, and it has not yet been possible to submit the request for permanent protection of Mangoky-Ihotry; however, this remains a viable objective that will be achievable with time.
Part 3. PROJECT COMPLETION OVERVIEW

Originally the project lifetime was set to be three years, beginning in October 2007 and ending in September 2010. This was extended by a year, so this report covers achievements from October 2007 until September 2011.

Project achievements

Project goal: To conserve the biodiversity of the wetlands of Madagascar through the establishment of large, new Protected Areas managed jointly by Government and local communities.

Progress contributing to the overall project goal included the following:

- Mangoky-Ihotry was given temporary protection and the zoning plan has been validated at the local level. The management plan is currently being prepared but conservation activities continue based on the decree for temporary protection, and on local consensus over immediate needs.
- Mahavavy-Kinkony was given temporary protection and implementation of the zoning and management plans began in 2010.
- Project activities have had significant positive impacts on the biodiversity of the wetlands, shown particularly by monitoring of the birds.
  - At Mahavavy-Kinkony, populations of the Endangered Sakalava Rail *Amaurornis olivieri* and Madagascar Heron *Ardea humboldti* have remained stable and the Critically Endangered Madagascar Fish-eagle *Haliaeetus vociferoides* has increased from 2 pairs in 2006 to 4 pairs in 2010. Peak counts of the Endangered Madagascar Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis bernieri* increased from 42 in 2005 to 211 in 2010. Numbers of the Endangered Madagascar Teal *Anas bernieri* fluctuated between 40 and 200, as is typical for this species; no trend is clear, but the population undoubtedly remains important.
  - At Mangoky-Ihotry, the most southerly pair of Madagascar Fish-eagles remains on the site, and a world-record count of the Vulnerable Madagascar Plover *Charadrius thoracicus* of 281 individuals was made in 2009, and 31 Madagascar Teal were recorded in 2010, where only 10 birds had been seen up to 2005. However, maximum counts of Madagascar Heron decreased from 49 in 2005 to 26 in 2009; if this is a genuine decline (which is not certain) no explanation is possible.
- For both sites, a management structure has been established. This structure is governed by an umbrella organisation or ‘platform’ consisting of representatives from all local project stakeholders (see Output 2 for detail). Contracts for transfer of natural resource management rights and responsibilities from government to local communities have been established, and the capacity of these local communities has been strengthened accordingly. The local groups implementing the conservation activities also contribute to monitoring threats to the project sites including illegal activities, which they report to local officials or Asity Madagascar as necessary.
- At both sites income-generation pilot projects have been implemented in order to provide sustainable income sources as alternatives to activities that damage biodiversity.
A sustainable development strategy for each site was developed to ensure that conservation activities are planned and implemented in a way that ensures improved quality of life and benefits for the local communities living in and around the Protected Areas.

Information and Education Centres were established at both sites, managed by the district schooling authorities, with technical support and training from Asity Madagascar.

Output 1. Ensure Mangoky Wetlands receive temporary Protected Area designation

Temporary protection of the Mangoky Wetland Complex was confirmed and published as an interministerial decree in December 2008, following the submission of the dossier by Asity Madagascar. The decree was signed by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Tourism; Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries; Ministry of Land Tenure Reform, Domains and Land Management; and Ministry of Energy and Mines. The area concerned covered 213,660 ha, including part of all of 10 Communes in two Regions (South-West and Menabe). Therefore, both sites are now temporarily protected; other activities have brought them close to permanent protection status.

Output 2. Establish IBA Caretakers — Government-community partnerships — as formal institutions with management authority over both sites
The conservation of both protected areas is now ensured by a co-management agreement between the government and the local communities. To facilitate this process, two ‘platform’ organisations for local stakeholder groups were formed: Marambitsy Mihany Zavaboahary (MMZ) for Mahavavy-Kinkony and Mangoky-Ihotry Arovana (MIAro) for Mangoky-Ihotry. These are the IBA Caretakers, and consist of a General Assembly with all the representatives of stakeholders from the Protected Areas including local Government.

**Capacity-building for MMZ and MIAro:** Each year, the main support given to MMZ and MIAro includes the organisation of the General Assembly meeting and the elaboration of their Annual Work Plans. The platforms have received capacity-building and technical support from Asity Madagascar which has enabled them to convert their ideas and initiatives into well designed projects, and to acquire funding for these projects. This increase in capacity has also prepared the management bodies for future financial autonomy and sustainability.

Work with MMZ and MIAro in the Protected Areas has concentrated on:

- educating the community about the new protected areas and introducing the MMZ and MIAro board members;
- informing the community about the governance and the management of the new protected areas, the transfer of management rights to renewable natural resources and local management rules or laws (*Dina*);
- raising community awareness on their roles and responsibilities in natural resource management;
- collecting data with communities on socio-economic and development needs in the wetlands; this is done systematically by commune, *fokontany* (village cluster, see above) and sectors of the protected area (based on geography and natural resources).

**Raising public awareness:** Information and Education Centres were established to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity and sustainable natural resource management, and the opportunities for communities to manage and protect their resources. These centres also organise education activities for local children and schools. One centre was initially established for each project site, but as Mangoky-Ihotry extends over two regions (Atsimo Andrefana and Menabe), between which transport links are very poor, a second was established there. These centres are run by the District schooling authorities, with technical support from Asity Madagascar. The main facilities and activities held at the centre include cinema, libraries, games, competitions and birdwatching. These activities are offered to schools from the local communities.

For Mahavavy-Kinkony, all seven schools in Mitsinjo district benefit from the centre. For Mangoky-Ihotry, school children are grouped into clubs and each of the 12 schools is represented by a club. Outreach activities have also been carried out in other villages within both project sites and have also been undertaken in larger towns outside the project area, such as Mahajanga, Toliara and Morondava, presenting information about each of the Protected Areas and their importance.

Awareness-raising for the project has also benefited from a presence in the local media. For Mangoky-Ihotry, collaboration with a private radio station has continued and 23 information programmes have been broadcast since June 2010 to promote Mangoky-Ihotry as a new protected area. The programmes were presented by stakeholder groups, including MIAro, local government technical services (mainly forests and fisheries) and Asity Madagascar.

A community newsletter *Ndeha isika* is being produced, with the 26th issue recently published. Five hundred copies of each issue were distributed to partners and stakeholders:
administrative, technical and traditional authorities, local associations and community groups. These newsletters are also distributed to stakeholders in Asity Madagascar’s other main site programme, at Tsitongambarika Forest. Asity Madagascar also continues to participate in the international ‘environment days’, during which the Protected Areas are promoted as much as possible.

**Natural resource management by local community associations:** The management of natural resources in both project sites is governed by two main processes: management transfer contracts for the different sectors (management units) for each site, and the establishment of Dina. The contracts are between the Ministry of Environment and Forests and a community association wishing to take over management responsibility for natural resources from Government, which lacks the capacity to do so. So far, ten management transfer contracts have been signed (8 in Mahavavy-Kinkony and 2 in Mangoky-Ihotry). Technical support is provided to assist the community association in implementing their contract and associated terms of reference. All associations were trained in:

- development of Terms of Reference for implementation, to ensure successful participation of all stakeholders;
- conflict management to improve community relationships. Occasionally disagreements arise between authorities and the communities, or among community group members, usually caused by misunderstandings of their responsibilities;
- development of sustainable funding systems or income-generation projects.

**Direct Payments in Mangoky-Ihotry Complex:** The Direct Payment Scheme is a system to incentivise the contribution of the local community towards conserving natural resources. It involves generating constructive competition regarding participation levels of community members in the monitoring and protection of biodiversity and providing funding for development projects to those community members who are involved. The awareness campaign for participation in the scheme was launched in 2010. Three associations have already confirmed their willingness to participate and four others are currently interested. These associations will be evaluated on the implementation of their Annual Action Plan which includes activities such as monitoring species and threats at the project sites. Part 2 (Annual report) gives more detail.

**Community development:** At each site a sustainable development strategy was developed, identifying appropriate activities and needs for capacity-building and technical support. Main activity sectors for each site were identified and guided as appropriate.

Income-generation micro-projects have been launched with technical support from Asity Madagascar. These projects have two types of objectives: ecological (monitoring ecological pressures and conserving or restoring wetland habitat) and economic (new or improved income sources). In Mahavavy-Kinkony projects include beekeeping (two communities), market gardening (three communities), short life-cycle livestock rearing (two communities) and infrastructure development for tourism sites. All projects received support from a specialised trainer. Furthermore, three communities were provided with a motorised fibreglass canoe which they use to undertake regular monitoring and to fish offshore. Beneficiaries total 681 households from 19 associations. Support and training related to each project was provided to each beneficiary.

In Mangoky-Ihotry, funding was received from Conservation International to launch community income-generation projects. Before the end of 2010, 9 contracts had been prepared with assistance from Asity Madagascar. In February 2011 all pilot projects were in place. Funding from the Jensen Foundation has supported Asity Madagascar in the monitoring of these projects. 186 households in 9 associations benefit. Activities include salt production and small-scale fish farming, with fishing equipment and boats provided. A sustainable development strategy has been developed and validated at the local level, ready
Output 3. Develop full management plans for both sites, and ensure their designation as permanent Protected Areas

Public consultations: Local communities have been consulted regarding the elaboration of the zoning and management plans for the sites. Public consultations, led by regional Asity Madagascar teams and platform members, were undertaken in all local villages within the project sites. All ideas and local initiatives discussed during the consultations have been used as a basis for the development of management and zoning activities for both project sites. Prior to the consultations, awareness-raising and information sessions were held with the communities regarding the importance of establishment of the Protected Areas and the different stages involved in the process.

In Mahavavy-Kinkony, 38 village clusters (fokontany) were consulted; in Mangoky-Ihotry, the total was 52 clusters. In 2010, a public consultation and information session was held exclusively for the Lake Hotry area and surrounding communities because of the high levels of overfishing in the lake.

For both sites, the platform members, with technical support from Asity Madagascar have been extremely committed throughout all the events held and these consultations have strengthened support for the project from the local population.

Plan development: Development of management plans requires both extensive and intensive consultation over large areas, a highly time-consuming process in such remote areas with minimal infrastructure. The first stage is agreeing the area and zones; this is followed by management planning per se, assessment of social and environmental risks, and business planning. This process has been completed in Mahavavy-Kinkony, but is still underway in Mangoky-Ihotry, where progress was more affected by security problems since 2009 (see Part 2).

The management plan for Mahavavy-Kinkony is in its second year of implementation. All plans and assessments have been compiled into a dossier submitted to Government requesting permanent protection. This document, or its components, is available from BirdLife. For Mangoky-Ihotry, local laws (Dina) for the development of a management plan
have been agreed, and the process begun with a zoning plan, which has been locally validated. This will be the basis for the management plan, which will be completed in 2012.

**Output 4. Grow and develop a national bird conservation NGO, Asity Madagascar, supported by BirdLife.**

**Strengthening of Asity Madagascar as a national NGO:** Asity Madagascar has become a well-established national NGO with expertise and capacity in the establishment of new protected areas. The organisation is also consulted frequently as a national authority regarding information on birds in Madagascar, on wetland conservation and on effective partnership with local communities. Asity Madagascar was able to continue implementation of its conservation activities during the national governmental crisis; not all programmes could do this.

A number of donors have visited Asity Madagascar’s project sites, including teams from the World Bank, the Madagascar Biodiversity and Protected Areas Foundation, and the German International Collaboration Agency (GIZ); all three visits resulted in either new funding or positive evaluations of the use of funding already granted. Asity Madagascar has also developed partnerships with the private sector, working in collaboration with two large mining companies: Sherritt and Rio Tinto.

**Strategic development planning:** The strategic development plan for Asity Madagascar has been updated with further detail and clarity. One of the main focuses of this document is the identification of ways to develop financial autonomy and sustainability for the organisation. An internal financial and administrative procedures manual has been developed. The use of a new accounting software system has been implemented and annual financial audits now take place.

**Governance and Membership:** One of the most significant impacts of the project was the reform of Asity Madagascar’s governance and merger with the BirdLife International Madagascar Programme. Up to 2008, BirdLife was represented by its country programme, and Asity (sic – not then Asity Madagascar) was a very small national NGO with ambitions to become the BirdLife International Partner in Madagascar. After a period of collaboration between the two, Asity reviewed its structure and governance system in its 2008 Annual General Meeting, introducing crucial changes to separate board, staff and membership, and mandating it to incorporate the BirdLife Madagascar Programme and all its projects. Asity was thereby enlarged, strengthened technically, and given a more acceptable governance system, and marked this change and the increased international profile related to expected admission to the BirdLife network by adopting the new name Asity Madagascar. In May 2008, Asity Madagascar was duly appointed BirdLife International affiliate in Madagascar; the BirdLife country programme closed and nearly all staff and assets were transferred to Asity Madagascar and programmes continued seamlessly.

The organisation has a total of 85 members. A membership officer has been recruited and a membership plan has been elaborated as part of the overall strategic development plan. Asity’s Madagascar’s membership support base is one of its key strengths, and a very rare attribute in Malagasy organisations. Members include a wide range of supporters with expert knowledge and are able to lead public birdwatching events. Discussions are also underway with a shopping centre in Antananarivo to use the lake on its land as a birdwatching site; bird inventories were carried out and formalisation of a partnership is underway. Members also continue to get involved and contribute to the activities of Asity Madagascar in various other ways, such as:

- monitoring of environmental impacts of the Ambatovy Project, a mining programme in the forested hills close to Moramanga, east of Antananarivo;
- monitoring of priority sites in both wetland sites;
celebration of various international ‘environment days’.

**BirdLife International Partnership** Following Asity Madagascar’s admission to the BirdLife International partnership in 2008, in late 2011 an evaluation was submitted to BirdLife International for Asity Madagascar to become Partner Designate for Madagascar; this is expected to be ratified by BirdLife’s global council in 2012.

**Staff capacity-building:** Some examples of staff training for Asity Madagascar include:
- Capacity-building related to employment law to improve the organisation’s institutional capacity
- Capacity-building on leadership and organisational development
- Training in environmental education and communication at Mahavavy-Kinkony
- GIS modelling training
- Training on techniques for facilitation and negotiation for public consultations
- Technical support for the elaboration of management and zonation plans for protected areas
- Fundraising training
- Training in project monitoring and evaluation
- Attendance of Birdlife international partnership meeting and World Conference in 2008

**Fundraising:** Throughout the four years of the project, Asity Madagascar has proven itself very capable of successfully raising funds from diverse sources (not only for wetland work), including:
- National NGOs and Foundations: Conservation International Madagascar, Foundation for Protected Areas and Biodiversity of Madagascar
- Foreign Foundations: MacArthur Foundation, Coutts, Arcadia Foundation, Wetland Trust, Waterloo Foundation, Mava Foundation
- Private Sector: Rio Tinto, Sherritt (mining companies)
- Government agencies: Germany: Gesellschaft für Internazionale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) – Programme Germano-Malgache pour l’Environnement (PGME); France: Fonds Français pour l’Environnement Mondial (FFEM); UK: Darwin Initiative
MAPS: locations of the two sites, limits of the protected areas, and vegetation or habitats. Broadly, purple is mangrove, green is forest and blue is freshwater.

Quotes from key staff and other institutions involved in the project.
From Asity Madagascar:

“Support given by the Aage V Jensen Charity Foundation has been invaluable for the development of this important conservation programme by Asity Madagascar. The Foundation has hugely contributed to the conservation of Madagascar’s unique natural heritage and species diversity, and consequently to the well-being of the local communities. Asity Madagascar would thus like to once again thank the Foundation for its generous support towards this programme.”

Vony Raminoarisoa National Coordinator, Asity Madagascar

From a local community leader:

“At the beginning, I was not convinced. This programme seemed very ambitious in the creation of a protected area at Mahavavy-Kinkony according to my experience with ANGAP [the state protected areas authority, which managed other areas he had come across], but seeing how Asity works by involving locals in all decisions, I am sure that it will be a success so I give my support to you”

Barito, the head (Ranitsy, or Prime Minister) representing the "queen" in the region of the Mahavavy-Kinkony. Alongside the statutory leadership (‘normal’ Government), there is a traditional system of Government, led by a queen, called Ampanjaka, which carries great authority. Engaging the Ampanjaka is difficult, especially for international organisations.

From BirdLife International:

“This project has made a lasting difference. It has shown how wetland conservation, neglected for too long, can be achieved over large areas in remote and inaccessible parts of Madagascar, achieving consensus among local communities on the value of protected areas for their development. Equally importantly for the long term, it has fostered the ownership and leadership of conservation by Malagasy civil society, working with but not driven by international organisations; unfortunately this remains all too rare, but is the best hope for the conservation of Madagascar’s biodiversity and environment.”

Roger Safford, Senior Programme Manager at BirdLife International (involved in conservation in Madagascar since 1988)

Captions for Gallery (see annex 7)

Part of the largest flock of Madagascar Plover Charadrius thoracicus (Vulnerable) ever recorded, in the Mangoky Delta in 2010 (Bruno Raveloson)

A fish catch at Lake Kinkony (Paolo Volponi) – this remains a staple source of protein; when fisheries are well managed, they provide a sustainable yield from non-threatened species

Forest near Boeny bay (Paolo Volponi): both complexes contain dry forest and mangroves as well as rivers, lakes and marshes wetlands

Traditional boat (Marc Rabenandrasana): local communities in both areas fish in inshore waters using canoes with sails and single outriggers.
ANNEXES

Supplementary materials

Annex 1: Latest newsletter of Asity Madagascar - *Ndeha Isika*, in Malagasy

Annex 2: Newsletters of Conservation International Madagascar, in French: articles on Asity

Annex 3: Education materials and various posters

Annex 4: Article in World Birdwatch on the development of Asity Madagascar

Annex 5: Press cuttings

Annex 6: Paper on Sakalava rail

Annex 7: Gallery