

ANDREW LEES TRUST

Anglo Malagasy Society Emergency Relief Funds

Project Report December 2011

Market Gardens for Flooded Communes of West Ambovombe District (Androy, Southern Madagascar)

Following unseasonal flooding and hailstones in the south during August 2011, ALT responded to a request from Steve Lellelid (ALT's Consultant in Androy) to find funds to purchase seed for market gardens in the worst hit areas. The weather seriously damaged crops and flooded fields leaving many families without food and the risk that farmers might migrate.

The Trust applied to the Anglo Malagasy Society for relief funds of £200 to purchase seed for small market gardens to be established and grow emergency supplies of food. Funds were sent directly to Steve Lellelid to manage the grant and deliver the activities in the field.



The gardens have been established around large lakes left by the record storms of mid-February and mid-August, covering hundreds of hectares each. The beneficiaries are people who had lost their fields to flooding, whose fields are still under water, also to single heads of families—women without a spouse. Most of the gardeners are women.

Training

As soon as confirmation of the funds had been received, candidates from the two affected communes (Sihanamaro and Marovato Befeno) were invited for recruitment to the project.

Three local men were trained near Tsihombe in all aspects of establishing the garden beds, size, surface depth to remove for later replacement, the sub depth to mix with dry manure, how to sow the various types of seed, and how to transplant, mulching with local grass, watering and insect control.



Two of the trainers, Vonjike and Mahavitse were trained by Manantiry, the Director of the ex Peace Corps' market garden at Andranosinike, Tsiombe, on 19 September. These two trainers in turn trained the third, Soanirree, at the Marovato-Befeno commune centre. Training began on the beneficiary sites on 25 September and was done using simple demonstration techniques with participants taking notes. Trainer 1 (Mahavitse) then worked through the



commune of Marovato-Befeno while trainer 2 (Soanirree) visited Sihanamaro - both did training in all affected fokontany: 48 in Sihanamaro and 26 in Marovato-Befeno.

Trainer 3 (Vonjike) followed the trainings in both communes, taking pictures and running back and forth on bike to Tsihombe to get seed as it was available. At the start of the project only 3 fokontany for each of the two communes had been proposed. Subsequently, due to the excitement about the project, all of the fokontany were visited and received seed.

Seed Distribution and Follow Up

Approximately 130 GBP has been spent on the purchase of local seed (about 11,000 equivalent of 3oz packets).

The seed made available were mostly a leafy green called *Petsay* and a spicy green called *Kimalao*, there were also some tomato, beets, and zucchinis but insufficient to extend to all participants. Carrots are in demand but there is no ready source of the seed, though a supply may be opening up via a gardener from the mouth of the Manambovo river.

Despite the distances between fokontany, all were visited on foot. For instance the two Belindo fokontany are 16 km northeast, Anakafy Tbao is 14km east, and Manja 8km south of the center and Havo is 29km north (two days journey one way).

Each fokontany was visited three times; the second visit was in late October to monitor progress and to help with any problems. Insect problems were noted in some of the fokontany and additional training was given with to address pest control. The third visit was from 21 November to collect data and evaluate results.



Results

The project was well received and far more people were engaged than anticipated: 2200 local people are reported to have participated in the project across the two communes; nearly 5 times the 450 expected in the proposed 6 fokontany.

The final number of participants may be greater because 6 of the 48 fokontany of Sihanamaro are still in progress, as are 13 of the 26 fokontany of Marovato Befeno (half of the commune). All of these villages have received visits and seed but are not included in this report. If these unreported sites are estimated based on the average of those already monitored/ reported there are conservatively 300 more gardeners whose names are not yet on hand.



As predicted, women participants outnumber men by an average of two to one, 67% women in Sihanamaro and 71% in Marovato Befeno. Men will increase their participation as they see the marketability of the vegetable produce as reported below: - .

*Tovontiry (20 yrs old) working on one of the gardens of Silimosa marketed his produce from this project in Ambovombe, borrowing a sarete (ox cart) to transport it; he was able to purchase a 3 year calf with the proceeds. He has now paired that with his only other calf to pull an ox-cart.**

Most of the fokontany had never done gardening before, but with stories like that of Tovontiry being broadcast around many more will want to participate in the future. Many beneficiaries have already sold their produce at market in Ambondro where Ambovombe sales-people purchase it for the main market. Additionally, seed is now available in the Commune for all latecomers.

Though there were only a few varieties of seeds available through the project, the villagers received good basic training which has proved profitable. As well as providing produce to sell in the local market (for money to buy other necessities such as cooking oil and staples) the project has raised the nutrition levels in the communes where there is no current field produce (due to the flooding): the villagers now have greens to add to their daily meal.

Challenges and Delays

Some of the market gardens have been developed in established cactus enclosures, but the vast majority have been newly fenced in by thorny branches to protect against foraging animals.

** livestock are the most important capital asset for an Antandroy man*

In the Sihanamaro fokontanies: Mantsake I, part of Andramanera, and Tsareke-Marovotry all had problems with insect pests, but these are now under control using the remedy they have been trained to apply, made from dry manure. Morafeno gardens also had bugs but villagers simply removed them by hand, as the lake is providing water very nearby. The commune of Marovato Befeno also reported insect problems in some fokontany, but villagers were then taught pest control during their second training visit.

Some of the local seed germinated poorly. It appears the seed had been harvested too early in order to transport it to the south for the project. More seed from Antananarivo has yet to arrive and will be distributed later. Thanks to the project there is now an abundance of seed (of those varieties distributed) in the area. There remains a real need for more species/varieties of garden vegetables to plant.



Enclosure prepared with fencing

Final Note:



Lists of participants from each fokontany in Sihanamaro are available via the local consultant, Steve Lellelid, who has expanded the project from an original design developed by Max Cadji of Peace Corps, and delivered the activities in the field. Similarly information is available for Marovato Befeno, but data from this commune is still being updated.

On behalf of the Antandroy people, Mr Lellelid and the Andrew Lees Trust extend gratitude to the Anglo Malagasy Society for supporting this project.