



ALT PROJECT HEPA was launched in collaboration with Panos London in 2007 with the aim of increasing the voice of local populations, and to improve awareness about the knowledge and experience of the indigenous people in southern Madagascar.

HEPA is an abbreviation of Hetahetam-Po Ambara signifying "**Proclaim what is in your heart**".

Funded by IFAD, with additional grant from Artsventure, the project worked with rural communities in Anosy and Androy. The project has been so successful that IFAD requested additional testimonies for its **Rural Poverty Report 2010** <http://www.ifad.org/rpr2011/index.htm>

The project trained village interviewers to record local life stories from the community using aural and audio-visual techniques. In these testimonies, local people openly express their about lives and local development challenges – in particular about poverty and the environment. The testimonies have been published online, in a book and in a series of five short films.

ORAL TESTIMONY AND PARTICIPATORY VIDEO

Communities in the southern littoral zones of Anosy and Androy, Southern Madagascar, were identified to participate in Projet Hepa, being subsistence farmers, women, local producers and fishermen who live below the poverty line and who depend on their local environment for their daily needs of food, fuel, livelihood and medicines. Some face annual drought and food shortages, others displacement from their lands and traditional livelihoods.

Panos London brought its expertise to train villagers from the Anosy and Androy regions to become rural interviewers, collect oral testimonies and film life stories from within their communities.



THE APPROACH



The testimonies were recorded by local village interviewers. The interviewers were trained and supported in workshops and field practice. Themes and questions for the community were developed by the participants through a facilitated dialogue. Techniques for ensuring that questions were open, and interviews focused primarily on environment and poverty, were practiced and monitored.

Village interviewers collected 58 testimonies from five coastal fokontany (village communities) in Androy and Anosy over two months. A selection of twelve testimonies was edited for publication by Panos London with the aim of highlighting the most recurrent themes.



A participatory video workshop was held in Bema, Androy. Villagers were trained to use video equipment and adopt interview techniques. They worked collectively to identify key themes, record and edit the final content of five films. Four of the films were edited with sub titles to publish on the worldwide web.

COMMUNICATIONS FOR EMPOWERMENT

"it is a huge challenge for people to draft a letter and send it to the authorities. Most of us are illiterate..." - Const and (m), St Luce

Communications is a vital part of the development process. It is particularly important in fragile environments where the most poor, typically rural producers and women, remain isolated and disenfranchised; where governance mechanisms are weak, and where low literacy skills exacerbate feelings of powerlessness and exclusion.



A recent study undertaken by the UNDP entitled 'Communications for Empowerment in Madagascar' (2008) concludes that opportunities for local people to express their views are extremely limited and invariably these do not enter the public domain through national or local media.

Local debate and information sharing is usually confined to village meetings where traditional hierarchies are prevalent, and women in particular are excluded or dismissed as unknowledgeable. Fear and taboos also play a part in restricting the flow of debate, especially where opinions are dissonant with the status quo.

ANOSY TESTIMONIES - VOICES OF CHANGE/ PUSHED TO THE EDGE



In November 2007 villagers were trained by Panos to collect oral testimonies from amongst their communities. These testimonies were then transcribed, translated and a selection of them was edited for publication. 'Voices of Change' is the first published account of the lives of the Antanosy people in their own words.

Villagers were revisited in 2009 and 2010 and reported that many of the issues they had talked about in the testimonies were still current and unresolved.

The project has offered a unique opportunity for local people to speak directly to decision makers about their difficulties in the face of climate change, food insecurity, and rapid development due to mining. Villagers express their feelings of powerlessness as they lose their lands and access to their forests which are a vital part of their survival strategy.

The book 'voices of Change' can be downloaded for free at the Andrew Lees Trust website or excerpts can be viewed in the online publication of Anosy testimonies at the Panos London Website at: <http://www.panos.org/pushedtotheedge>

ANDROY - PARTICIPATORY VIDEO

In March of 2008 a participative video training was carried out with a community in the Faux Cap area do Androy. Five films were made by villagers who had never seen or picked up a video camera before.

A specialist from Living Lens (UK) trained and worked with the team and the community participants over ten days in the remote village of BEMA. Decisions about content were taken together and villagers experienced filming, production and editing techniques.



This work represents ground breaking communications activity in the south of Madagascar where there are few opportunities for local people to express themselves publicly or have their stories heard by a wider audience. It is the villagers' first direct interaction with audio and visual media and has proved to be an exciting experience for remote communities who are marginalised and not usually visible to the outside world. See <http://www.panos.org.uk/survivalstrategies>.

PUBLISHING AND DISSEMINATION

Project HEPA has aimed to close the gap between the villager and decision makers. The testimonies have been broadly disseminated to local, regional, national and international audiences, including to web networks with over 20,000 e-recipients. Most importantly they have been presented to local decision makers and development actors to help them better understand the reality of daily challenges for local communities – as they see and experience them.

BOOK LAUNCH



In October 2009 ALT launched 'Voix du Changement' at the Town Hall in Ft Dauphin in the presence of the Chef du Region, and approximately 100 members of the Anosy community including local Mayors, Chef de Fokontany, teachers, students, Elders and local association representatives. Copies of the book were distributed, and there was some discussion about the project and the role of communications in local development. The audience also watched a video, 'Radio pour la Brousse', about ALT's Project Radio.

The book has since been presented in international forums such as the conference on 'Forest Voices' at the University of East Anglia, Norwich in June 2010, at Bath University, March 2011.

FILM SHOWINGS

Panos produced a Malagasy version of the community films from Androy on DVD for two regional screenings: The Rebeke festival in Tshiombe Androy, and a screening and debate with regional decision-makers in Ambovombe Androy. The DVD has been distributed throughout the region and at national level, and the films have been broadcast on Malagasy regional television.



Panos also produced short versions of four of the HEPA PV films with English sub-titles. These are on the Panos website and have been widely promoted to international audiences. They have been screened at two international conferences: the climate change conference in Poland in December 2008, and the Indigenous People's Climate Change conference in Alaska. Two of the films made by the local beneficiaries of Project HEPA were screened at the **Copenhagen Climate Change film festival 2009** to help the debate about climate change adaptation and highlight issues experienced by developing countries.

ADDITIONAL HEPA ACTIVITY - SEED GRANTS FOR THE COMMUNITIES

The project afforded seed grants to communities that participated in testimony collection in Anosy and Androy.

In Anosy, this grant was used to launch a local cultural association: Talia Ho Talily g'n Anosy Faharaza, (Sharing Anosy Traditions) with the aim of continuing to collect and share indigenous experiences, knowledge and viewpoints of the Anosy people and to record and celebrate their culture.



'The Antanosy people, proud of their cultural heritage, are determined to pass down their ancestors' traditional knowledge which makes the Antanosy, the Antanosy'.



The association was presented to the Region on the 22nd May 2009 and held its first cultural event on the 24th May with Antanosy music, dancers, and storytelling. They also produced and distributed their [first newsletter](#) which explains Anosy marriage customs; it also sets out information about the association, its aims and aspirations.

Talia Ho Talily g'n Anosy Faharaza, is a Malagasy NGO, independently constituted. ALT is its founding sponsor and would like to see broad support and funding reach this important social project. Please see the Newsletter for contact names of the Association or contact ALT if you would like to help in any way.

In Androy the HEPA participants chose to work one of the development challenges they face and which they had talked about in their films – the encroachment of coastal dunes on their agricultural lands and villages.

With help from a local expert, and using techniques applied in other ALT projects for land stabilisation, the community planted up dunes using filao saplings (casuarinas) and succulents; they also learnt some new agricultural techniques.

