Forest and biodiversity protection, Madagascar

This rainforest protection project on the island of Madagascar aims to safeguard the Makira forest from heavy illegal logging, thus mitigating global warming and enhancing biodiversity, using carbon finance.

Location

Located in north-eastern Madagascar, the still-intact Makira forests lie within the Antongil Bay area and represent one of the largest expanses of humid forest in the region.
A staggering one percent of the Earth's biodiversity is to be found in this territory encompassing the forest of Makira and the nearby Masoala National Park.

Project

The forest is currently under heavy threat from a variety of human activities, which would result in the deforestation of 20% of the area in the "business-as-usual" scenario. Among these activities are slash and burn agriculture by small-scale farmers, the burning of forest land for cattle grazing, and the illegal commercial exploitation of the forest's hardwood species.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the Makira Forest conservation project was set up to strictly safeguard one of the largest remaining contiguous tracts of low and mid-altitude rainforest in Madagascar. In addition to being extremely important for biodiversity conservation, the Makira Project will ensure the continued existence of a forested connection between the Masoala National Park with other protected areas to the north such as the Anjanaharibe-Sud Reserve and the Marojejy National Park.

Using REDD, international carbon finance is funding long-term conservation, improving community land stewardship and governance, and supporting sustainable livelihood practices leading to improved household welfare. The project is empowering local communities to manage their natural resources sustainably in the protection zone surrounding the protected area. It is addressing food security and subsistence needs by working with local people to implement better production practices.

Of equal importance, any benefits ensuing from the protected area, in particular carbon-derived revenue, are equitably and transparently shared with the communities of the protection zone.

Project achievements

Socio-economic impact:

- The greater project zone contains a rural population of about 50,000 individuals, largely engaging in subsistence agriculture, and who were once among the main agents of deforestation. These communities are the main beneficiaries of the Makira Project and will receive 50% of the revenue from the sale of carbon credits.
- Specific interventions have been identified including improvements in infrastructure to support alternative, non-destructive means of income. Among them are the establishment of hydro-agricultural dams, the promotion of permaculture and the development of a microfinance programme.
- Education and health services are also being set up for the local population, as well as community management structures to enable sustainable development.
- Several jobs for locals have been generated, e.g. as field agents and sector managers.
- Most importantly, the Makira Project strives to empower local communities and strengthen their institutions through improved land tenure security and resource rights, greater decision-making opportunities over forest resources, and participation in park management.

Environmental impact:

- The Makira Park is home to 20 of Madagascar's 97 identified lemur species – the greatest diversity of lemurs in any single protected area. These include the Silky Sifaka (one of the 25 most threatened primates in the world) and the Indri (one of the largest living lemur species).
- The forests of Makira also support critically important populations of Madagascar's unique cat-like carnivore, the fosa, alongside hundreds of bird species.
- The area also serves as a critical forest corridor, allowing wild-life to travel between adjoining protected areas and outlying forest blocks.
- The Makira forest serves as a zone of watershed protection and catchment, vital to the agricultural-based economy, providing clean water to the region's people.
- The project activity protects the watersheds of some of the country's most vital river systems.
- To safeguard against impermanence (e.g. through cyclones, etc.), the project will set aside 20% of all carbon credits generated, as a risk buffer.

Checklist Project 301 268

✓ Additionality and permanence:	according to the rules of the VCS and CCBS (Gold level)
✓ 3rd party validated:	by Rainforest Alliance
✓ Transparency:	provided by Markit Environmental Registry
✓ Annual CO_2 reduction:	1,300,000 tCO_2e
✓ Social and environmental benefits:	as documented in our database
✓ Marketing material:	high resolution pictures available