

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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Without the support of the following donors and partners, we could not implement the activities to support local population. We would like to express our most heartfelt appreciation for your generous donation and support.



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

A. FOREWARD

This document summarizes the results of all activities undertaken by the Mikajy Natiora Association between January and December 2024 in the Andilambologno Forest and the village of Mahitsihazo. The activities focused on various aspects, including reducing pressures on the forest, updating lemur population data, improving the living and health conditions of the local community, and raising awareness within the local community about biodiversity protection, particularly the conservation of lemur species and their forest habitat.

B. STUDY SITE

The Andilambologno forest is located in the northwestern part of Madagascar, east of the Sahamalaza-Iles Radama National Park, within the Sofia Region, in the commune of Maromandia. Mahitsihazo is the nearest village. The vegetation consists of degraded semi-deciduous forest and subhumid forest, dominated by *Dalbergia* sp. and *Bridelia pervilleana*. The forest is rich in biodiversity. Several lemur species, including the critically endangered blue-eyed black lemur (*Eulemur flavifrons*), the endangered northern giant mouse lemur (*Mirza zaza*), and the vulnerable western lesser bamboo lemur (*Haplemur occidentalis*), all of which are restricted to the northern and northwestern parts of Madagascar, are found in the Andilambologno forest. The forest is also home to various species of reptiles, amphibians, small mammals, and birds. The endangered frog, *Cophyla berara*, recently discovered and restricted to the forest of the Sahamalaza-Iles Radama National Park, is also present in the Andilambologno forest.

C. RESULTS

1. Reduction of forest pressures

In order to control forest pressures, four (4) local rangers conduct regular forest patrols. They work on a rotational schedule for 15 days per month. Over the reporting period, the local rangers carried out 90 forest patrols. Although the forest of Andilambologno is not protected, the local communities are aware that forest exploitation is forbidden. No human activity, such as logging, was encountered within the forest during the

project period. However, at the beginning of December, a fire was discovered near the northern part of the forest border. According to the rangers, some local villagers burned an area for slash-and-burn agriculture (tavy), and the fire spread beyond the intended area. Fortunately, with the help of the local communities, the fire was quickly extinguished and did not reach the forest.



Photo 1 Rangers

It is important to note that forest fires were very intense throughout Madagascar from October to December. Therefore, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development enforced strict measures, declaring that anyone responsible for a fire, whether accidentally or intentionally, would be imprisoned.

2. Lemur population monitoring

The local rangers are continuing regular lemur surveys. During these surveys, the following information was collected: vernacular name of the species, date of observation, activity of the animal, number of individuals encountered, number of males and females, and height of the substrate. Three transects, varying between 1.5 km and 2 km, were followed. The nine (9) groups of blue-eyed black lemurs recorded

last year were still observed. Three groups of western lesser bamboo lemurs (*Hapalemur occidentalis*) were also recorded.



Photo 2 Lemur survey



Photo 3 Western lesser bamboo lemur

3. Madagascar sacred ibis survey & evaluation of threats

With funding from Stiftung Artenschutz, we implemented a project on the Madagascar sacred ibis in 2023, with a few activities, including questionnaire surveys in the villages near Loza Bay and awareness-raising, conducted in 2024. In total, 35 individuals of the Madagascar sacred ibis were counted across five sites during the project period, with a mean group size of seven. It is noted that this project was conducted outside a protected area. In our previous survey, conducted in 2014, we recorded 99 individuals of the Madagascar sacred ibis within a protected area. Based on these results, we can conclude that the population of the Madagascar sacred ibis is higher in protected areas than in unprotected areas. During the ecological survey, the team reported that it took time to locate the target species, as the bird was observed only during feeding times. A total of 88 members of the local communities (65 men and 23 women) were interviewed about threats to the bird. Their ages ranged from 22 to 60 years old.



Photo 4 Interviewing local fisher



Photo 5 Observation of sacred ibis

Through the analysis of the questionnaires, 90% of local community members reported having seen the bird in the mangroves, while only 10% had observed it near the seaside. About 90% responded that they neither hunted nor consumed the bird. Five percent (5%) stated that they had previously hunted and eaten the bird but had since stopped after becoming aware that the species is protected. Two percent (2%) of the people interviewed mentioned that they still hunt the bird and collect its eggs using traps. One person reported having sold the bird for 5000 Ar (about 1 Euro) in 2015 but stated that they have since stopped. Those who admitted to hunting the bird explained that they did so for food, breeding, and selling purposes. Only 3% of respondents mentioned that it is fady (taboo) to eat the bird. Some fishermen reported that since the arrival of Chinese operators for crab and fish collection in the area, the population of the Madagascar sacred ibis had declined. The species has been observed at several sites near the Bay of Loza, Bevoay, Antsatrana, Andavaravina, Antsoha, and Ankeriky but is no longer present in these locations. Despite the reduction in pressures, the population of the Madagascar sacred ibis has continued to decline. Local communities confirmed that the bird's population has decreased and reported that the bird flies away when humans approach.



Photo 6 Distribution of posters

4. Improvement of living conditions of the local community

We continue the alternative livelihoods project to decrease dependence on natural resources. Existing livelihood activities, such as fast-growing crops and poultry farming were expanded to reach more households. Over the year we distributed 250 kg of maize seeds and 100 kg of rice seeds with short growth cycles, enabling harvests within three months. Additionally, we provided 72 chickens and 30 ducks to enhance local food security. The distribution of seeds, chickens, and ducks was facilitated by the village chief. In total, 320 households, including single-parent families, benefited from this initiative.



Photo 7 Distribution of seeds



Photo 8 Distribution of chicken and ducks

5. Improvement of health conditions of the local community

When local communities have access to healthcare and nutrition, they have the physical strength and energy to participate in conservation activities. We implemented health services in the village of Mahitsihazo through medical consultations. A collaboration was established with the CSB I (Centre de Santé de Base or Basic Health Center I) in Maromandia. We initially planned to carry out monthly consultations but had to adjust to every two months as the doctor and his team were unable to visit Mahitsihazo village regularly due to their duties. The local communities were informed a day in advance to ensure preparedness. Each session lasted one day, starting at 8:30 AM and ending around 3:00 PM. Mikajy Natiara managed the procurement of medicines, which were distributed free of charge. The organization also covered the doctors' travel expenses and allowances.



Photo 9 Medical consultation

Three (3) medical consultations were conducted during the first semester. On average, 110 patients were treated at each consultation. Common ailments included malaria, sexually transmitted infections, fatigue, abdominal pain, and high blood pressure. No complicated cases requiring hospitalization were encountered.



Photo 10 Malaria test

6. Increase of the local community awareness about the protection of endemic species and its forest habitat

Over the year, four (4) awareness raising events were carried out: Earth Day, International Chameleon Day, Mangrove Day and National Lemur Day.

a. Earth day

We organized a clean-up in Mahitsihazo village during Earth Day celebrations. In total, 80 people participated in the event.



Photo 11 Cleaning the school yard by students

b. International Chameleon Day

International Chameleon Day is celebrated on May 9th every year, the NGO Willdlife Madagascar invited NGOs working in Madagascar to celebrate this event. It was the first time the country celebrated the International Chameleon Day in 2024. On May 7th, an awareness raising was held in Mahitsihazo village in collaboration with the secondary school (CEG) and the local community.



Photo 12 Drawing contest



Photo 13 Radio programme

Activities included: searching for Malagasy name of the chameleon; drawing & coloring competition; poem and proverb contest and fun Games. A total of 98 students participated to this awareness event. On May, 9th we organized a radio quiz about chameleons on Soafy FM 103 MHz in Antsohihy. In total, 54 people participated by calling and 10 of them won prizes.



Photo 14 Winners to the radio game

c. Mangrove Day

The celebration of Mangrove Day took place on July 25th in Ambavan'ny Andranolava, Commune of Ambodimandresy, District of Antsohihy, and lasted for two days. On the first day, a reforestation activity was conducted, during which approximately 200 mangrove saplings and 76,000 seeds were planted over an area of 9.2 hectares. A total of 100 people, including representatives from conservation NGOs, participated in the mangrove reforestation. Mikajy Natiora Association was also present.

On the second day, speeches by local authorities highlighted the importance of mangroves, followed by a cultural event showcasing the dihin'ny basy. Exhibition stands and roll-ups were presented by NGOs working in the Sofia Region, including

Madagascar National Parks, Madagasikara Voakajy, Anjajavy Hotel, GERP, and Mikajy Natiora.



Photo 15 Mangrove seed read to plant

d. National Lemur Day celebration

The National Lemur Day celebration organized by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development took place in Antsohihy in November 2024 and lasted two days. Approximately 30 organizations focused on environmental protection attended the National Lemur Day. We actively participated in this event.

We were requested by the DREED Sofia (Regional Directorate of Environment and Sustainable Development) to organize a radio program, which included a lemur quiz and sharing lemur-related information on Soa Fy FM 103 MHz one week before the celebration.



Photo 16 Carnival



Photo 17 The participants

Our other activities included a stand exhibition, an environmental quiz, and a presentation about our achievements in lemur conservation during the conference debate. We produced 200 T-shirts, 100 sarongs and 350 calendars with conservation messages (Lemur: a national treasure, source of global pride) and logos of partners. We honored the authorities present at the event by offering them T shirts and sarongs. We also showed appreciation to the participants in the radio quiz and environmental quiz by distributing T shirts, 100 stickers and calendars among them. Moreover, we extended our support to the community in Mahitsihazo by providing them with t-shirts and sarongs.



Photo 18 Our stand



Photo 19 Radio game winners



Photo 20 Talk by our executive Director

7. Inauguration of the Research/Education Center

Through funding from Conservation Allies, Tropikariet Zoo, and individual donors, we constructed a Research and Education Center in the village of Mahitsihazo. The center has three rooms: a meeting room (4m x 5m), two bedrooms (each 2.5m x 4m), and a kitchen. Construction began in June 2023 and was officially inaugurated by local authorities in December 2024. Local stakeholders, including village elders, the king of Maromandia, teacher, and school staff, attended the inauguration of the new building. During the official speeches, local stakeholders thanked the Mikajy Natiara Association for supporting the community, particularly for improving living and health conditions. A friendly meal was offered to the guests after the inauguration.



Photo 21 Inauguration of the center

The bi-monthly medical consultation was also held during the event. Over 150 persons attended the medical consultation.



Photo 22 Medical consultation



Photo 23 People waiting for the medical consultation

During the Christmas celebration, each class showcased their talents through games, poems, and dances for the attendees. After their performances, we distributed several boxes of biscuits and candies to the children, Approximately 81 children benefited from this Christmas celebration, and they were all very happy.



Photo 24 Klds showing dance



Photo 25 Christmas for kids



Photo 26 Distrubion of calendars



Photo 27 The traditional leaders

8. Any Other Business

a. Lemur Field Guide Launch

On January 6th, 2024, the 5th Lemur Field Guide was officially launched at the Carlton Hotel in Antananarivo. This is the latest edition of the guide, and the president of Mikajy Natiora Association is among its authors.



Photo 28 Some of the lemur guide's authors

b. Ecotourism

In July 2024, Mikajy Natiora Association welcomed four tourists/eco-volunteers for the first time from Wildly Adventures Travel. They stayed at the camp for five days, during which they learned about the association's projects and met the project beneficiaries. During their forest visit with our team, they encountered several species, including lemurs, birds, and snakes. They also participated in mangrove restoration and spotted the Madagascar sacred ibis during the visit. The visit went well, and the guests enjoyed their journey in the Andilambologno forest



Photo 29 Pirogue trip



Photo 30 Mangrove study

c. 3rd African Primatologica Society Congress 2023

Two members of Mikajy Natiora Association received a travel grant from Re:Wild to attend the 3rd APS (African Primatological Society) Congress, held at the University of North West, Potchefstroom, South Africa, in September 2024. Fourteen Malagasy delegates attended the congress. During the event, one member of Mikajy Natiora Association was invited to present the achievements of lemur conservation over 30

years of the Malagasy Primate Working Group (GERP). The second member served as a session chair during several talks. Notably, this member was also part of the congress's scientific organizing committee and contributed to reviewing the congress abstracts. The conference highlighted that collaborative efforts among primatologists from various regions, including Madagascar, can enhance the effectiveness of conservation strategies for African primates.



Photo 31 Malagasy delegates

d. Research volunteer

In November, two research volunteers from overseas conducted vegetation and lemur surveys in forest fragments around Mahitsihazo village, as well as a questionnaire survey on the agroforestry needs of villages outside protected areas. This fieldwork lasted one month.



Photo 32 Meeting with villagers to present the 2 volunteers

e. Massive cleaning in Antsohihy

Mikajy Natiora participated in a large-scale cleanup event organized in Antsohihy on December 21, 2024. The general cleaning initiative was spearheaded by the Sofia region to address the challenges posed by the summer heat and to encourage residents to refrain from disposing of waste in drainage channels. The cleanup lasted for one hour and involved the participation of numerous organizations and departments.



Photo 33 Cleaning



Photo 34 Our team

f. Holidays Gift

To express gratitude to the team for their hard work throughout the year, a gift basket was presented to them for the holiday season.



Photo 35 Present for the team

D. CONCLUSION

So far, we can conclude that we have built trust with the local community. The local community has become aware of the need to protect endemic biodiversity and has actively participated in the conservation activities we organized. Human activity within the forest has decreased, but we continue to conduct regular forest patrols to control anthropogenic pressures. Lemur surveys will also continue to assess whether the lemur population size is stabilizing, increasing, or decreasing.

Through the implementation of alternative livelihood activities, the living conditions of the local community in Mahitsihazo village have improved. The bi-monthly medical consultations have proven very helpful, as they allow the local community to monitor their health status.

The new research and education center is now functional and can host researchers, students, and tourists. However, we need additional funding to equip it with tables, chairs, benches, beds, and solar panels