



WWF

FACTSHEET

SEPTEMBER

2015

WWF MDCO priority landscapes

Mahafaly Plateau Land and Seascape

Home to the largest remaining expanse of unique spiny forest and the world's third largest coral reef



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AT A GLANCE

- **Size:** 1,825,537 ha
- **Population:** 371,000
- **Ecosystems:** spiny forest, gallery forest, coastal wetlands, lakes, mangrove forest, barrier and fringing reefs, lagoons, small islands, sea grass bed, abyssal slopes, a network of underwater karst caves
- **Landscape features:** world's 3rd largest coral reef; Tsimanampetsotse and Amoron'i Onilahy National Parks; Marine parks and Locally Managed Marine Areas; Lake Tsimanampetsotse – a RAMSAR site; Madagascar's oldest baobab, highest percentage of endemic plant species in the country
- **Key species:** giant-striped mongoose, blind freshwater fish, critically endangered radiated and spider tortoises, endangered Madagascar plover, Verreaux's Sifaka

Locally critical, nationally unique and globally precious

The spiny forest ecoregion is critical for all life on this remote region. It contains the highest percentage of endemic plant species in the country, with 48 per cent of the genera and 95 per cent of the species occurring nowhere else on earth. The landscape is the last natural shelter for the critically endangered Radiated and Spider tortoises.

The coastal and marine ecosystem is alive with an estimated 6,000 reef-associated species, including 752 fish species and 340 coral species.

The limestone karst Mahafaly Plateau, spans from north to south across much of the landscape and has a labyrinth of underground water ways and Lake Tsimanampetsotse, both inscribed under the RAMSAR convention.

Some of the main threats facing this landscape are a population growing at a rate of 3.3% per year, deforestation, uncontrolled and destructive fishing practices, difficult climate conditions and trafficking of species.

Vision and Goals

Vision: *By 2020, replicable models of landscape management contribute to the conservation of natural capital and the wellbeing of the Malagasy people, while contributing to the equitable governance of natural resources in the plateau.*

Goal 1: By 2025, the decline in radiated tortoises is reduced to 5%, the forest cover within key conservation areas is maintained versus 2013 levels, the health of the reef system within Nosy Ve Androka Marine park is maintained at 2015 levels.

Goal 2: By 2020, 2,000 households have access to clean water, local

economic returns from fishing are improved, the number of tourists visiting Tsimanampetsotse National Park increase by 25% compared to 2013 levels.

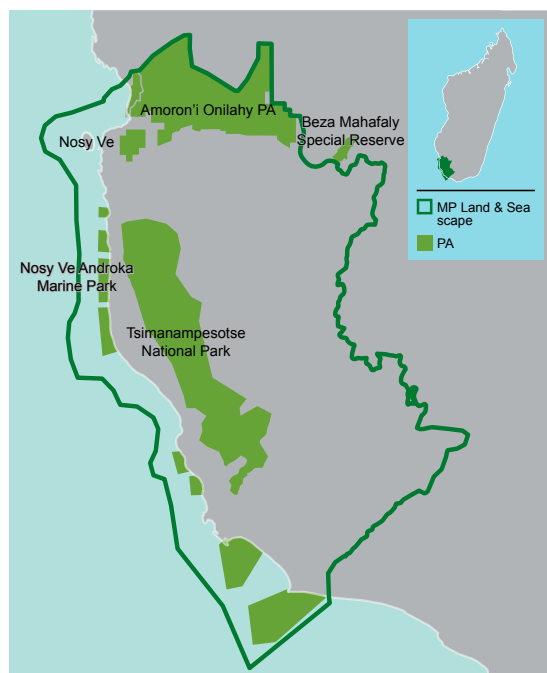
Goal 3: By 2020, policy and trade practices improve social and environmental sustainability in the following key economic sectors: traditional fisheries, fuelwood, mining and oil.

Goal 4: By 2020, regional development plan and land use planning are strongly supported by public and private investments and are applied at the landscape level.

Key Results

WWF has been in the Mahafaly region since 2001. Here are a few key achievements:

- A ten-fold increase in the protected areas network (from 43,000 ha to 454,025 ha)
- Loss of forest coverage has been stabilized in the two largest protected areas
- Since 2012 the tortoise population in Tsimanampesotse National Park has increased
- Regional sustainable energy plans have been developed including progress towards regulation of the fuelwood supply chain
- WWF has helped increase the surface covered by community based natural resources management with the development of a greenbelt around the official national parks.
- Quality of life has been improved through efficient stoves and access to clean drinking water



Main Activities and Partners

To achieve our vision in the landscape we are working to create a green economy model supported by ecosystem goods and services. To do that we must develop four key areas:

- (1) Securing protected areas and community-based managed areas in the landscape;
- (2) strengthened natural resource management to improve local community benefits;
- (3) create regional development plans and land use planning that is strongly supported by public and private investments;
- (4) support good practices within the private sector and investments and initiatives within key sectors (extractive industries, cash crop production, energy, fisheries and tourism) that are committed to sustainable development.

Successes are dependent on collaboration and partnerships. The latter include government agencies, decentralized authorities, civil society including NGOs, research centres and

international organizations, financial partners, private sectors.



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CURRENT PROJECTS

- Sustainable land management research to assess and analyze current land use practices in order to develop a sustainable land use management plan.
- Supporting CBOs to ensure effective protected area management and introduce ecotourism in the Amoron'i Onilahy PA.
- Developing new livelihood options (ie. seaweed plantations) and integrating public health (clean water, hygiene and health) initiatives into conservation programmes.

People

The economic livelihoods and cultural heritage of the people of this region are closely connected to the biodiversity and natural resources of the landscape. This region is the poorest in terms of socio-economic development. People have very limited or no access to health services, water and energy. They highly rely on natural resources for daily subsistence.

Inland, the pastoral Mahafaly people depend directly on the spiny forest and its many ecosystem services – for water, fuelwood, building materials, medicinal plants, and forage for their livestock, to shelter for their spiritual ancestors. The coastal Vezo people communities practice a traditional lifestyle and have depended on the coral reefs over many generations. Local villages have traditionally relied on catching octopus and fishing on near-shore coral reefs as their sole source of income.

Spotlight Story

WWF works in southwest Madagascar on a number of conservation projects to protect marine, coral and coastal environments. Our most important partners are the villagers that live in these habitats. But the local people face many challenges due to the hostile environment. One of the biggest problems is the lack of access to clean, safe drinking water. The dry, climate of the Plateau contains incredible beauty, but sadly, not much potable water.

In 2012 WWF built the first of three desalination units in coastal villages, using wind and solar energy to produce sustainable, fresh, clean drinking water. The local communities donated the land and took an active part in construction.

With all three stations operational, about 7,000 people in the area have access to safe drinking water.



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Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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