

INTERVIEW MADAGASCAR CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT

REDD Madagascar

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Interview with Tiina Vahanen, senior officer at the UN-REDD Programme. UN-REDD is a collaborative partnership between United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, UN Development Programme and UN Environment Programme. The Programme supports countries to develop capacity to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and to implement a future REDD mechanism in a post-2012 climate change regime. Ms. Vahanen, a forester by background who has worked in the UN system for the past nine years, gives MCD's readership a brief introduction to REDD, and tells us about the role of the UN in REDD globally.

Could you briefly describe what REDD is?

REDD is the abbreviation for 'Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation'. Now there also is 'REDD+', which includes a broader scope that includes sustainable forest management, conservation and enhancement of carbon stocks. But what REDD really means is trying to create a value for forests, so that forests are made more valuable standing than cut down. This does not mean to say that all logging is bad; it simply means that deforestation can be addressed if there is a real value for standing forests.

When did the concept of REDD emerge, and why?

The concept emerged during the negotiations of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, initiated by Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica in 2005. Deforestation and forest degradation contribute almost 20% of current greenhouse gas emissions, more than the entire transport sector globally. This initiative was taken to put emphasis on forests and the urgent activities needed to address deforestation and forest degradation, which many economists have said is one of the most cost-effective ways of actually addressing climate change mitigation.

How many REDD pilot projects are there currently around the world?

There are approximately 40 countries participating around the world with the UN-REDD Programme (nine countries) or with the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) in the REDD readiness pilot programmes. Madagascar is part of the FCPF.

Can you speak a little bit more about the role of the UN-REDD Programme and what activities are undertaken in an individual country?

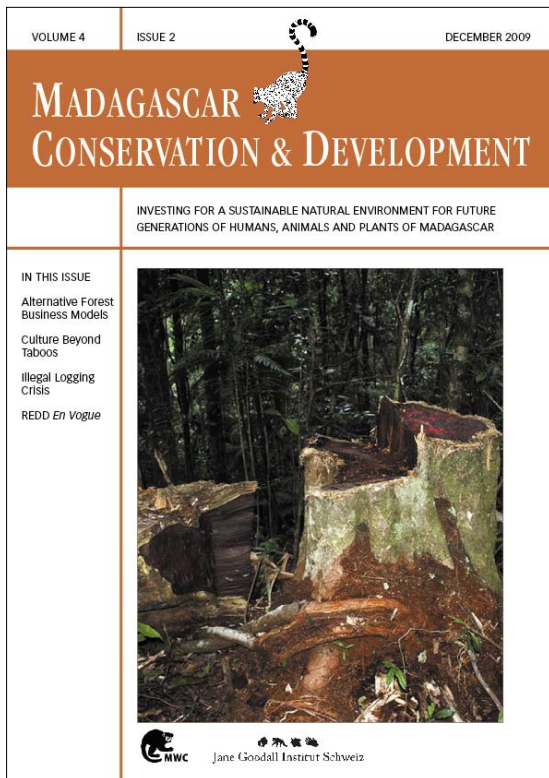
The UN sits with the government, experts and stakeholders and together analyze the country's situation to see what their needs are, and from this draw up a plan to get ready for REDD, to

make sure that they will have enough institutional and technical capacity to benefit from any REDD mechanism. These programmes are nationally owned and government-led, but there is always an emphasis – and with UN-REDD it is a requirement – on stakeholder engagement before the funds, approximately US\$ 4 million per country, are even released to these countries.

The countries' needs vary greatly; some countries put more emphasis on testing benefit-sharing mechanisms, others are interested in improving governance structure or institutional support. But one common thread that every country has requested is a more robust monitoring system – the measurement, reporting and verification systems (MRVs). The latter is crucial, because if you do not have accurate data and good monitoring systems then you cannot expect to benefit financially from any REDD mechanism, because your emissions reductions have to be verifiable. So that is the effort that many countries are undertaking seriously now.

So the idea is to use these pilot projects to see what works and what doesn't work to focus our future efforts on replicating what has worked in these pilot arrangements. Are these pilot projects influencing the decision making process in Copenhagen?

There are so far few concrete examples of on the ground changes, because both the Programme and REDD are very new, but it's an iterative process, collecting lessons learned and sharing them all the time. At the World Forestry Congress (held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, 18-23 October 2009), Tanzania, Vietnam and Panama were sharing what they have done to improve their national coordination of different REDD and forestry initiatives. Coordination has been a difficult problem in many countries; individual donors, NGOs, and the UN all come in with different initiatives and operate separately. But now steps have been taken by a number of countries to coordinate these efforts, and that's a really valuable step. Countries are building up this expertise, as well as experience with technical details, methodologies, challenges with governance and stakeholder participation, etc. They bring their lessons learned to the climate change negotiations, and I believe this influences the decision-making process. Countries find that REDD is a good example where both developing and developed countries seem to have found commonalities and are actually trying to agree on a REDD mechanism text. It's one of the areas in the climate change negotiations that has advanced faster than any other area.



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Have there been any challenges so far in making these pilot projects move forward? Are there any pilot projects that so far haven't been very successful?

There are a lot of challenges. It boils down to the very limited capacity in some countries. Simply not having enough people or having recently changed their government, or where there is no political stability. For them it has been more difficult to just get people around the table and start planning and implementing. There are individual uncoordinated efforts by the multilateral system and the individual bilateral programmes, including both government and non-government initiatives. They go to countries and impose their own particular view and approach and the country doesn't have the capacity to say, thank you but we know what we need, and we don't need that kind of approach. There are a number of examples of this.

How many African countries are involved in these pilot projects?

Three are involved in UN-REDD: Zambia, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. FCPF has more African countries, maybe a dozen or so.

Assuming that there will be a REDD mechanism coming out of Copenhagen, what can any one tropical country expect from this mechanism, and what is expected of that country?

It will depend on what the mechanism will look like, and this is why all the developing countries are there at the negotiating table in designing the mechanism. Nobody knows what it will boil down to at the last minute, but basically there will be some sort of funding mechanism. There will be an encouragement for some sort of market mechanism, but some developing countries are requiring the establishment of either a new fund or using existing mechanisms, such as current multilateral programs like the UN-REDD, the FCPF, or the Global Environment Facility. Of course, a lot of bilateral funds also exist, including fairly significant ones from Norway, Australia, the UK, Germany and others. It remains to be seen how far the details of the agreement can be agreed to in Copenhagen. But if there is even a basic agreement that yes, REDD will be a mechanism in the post-2012 agreement, and yes there will be funding for REDD activities through whatever the final mechanism will be, then that already is a significant step forward.

How will countries benefit from this? That depends on how much individual countries are serious about this and how much individual actors are serious in taking real action on reducing emissions and reducing deforestation. There has to be commitment from both sides, both the donor side to agree that there will be adequate and sustainable funding, and at the same time a clear commitment from developing countries that this is serious business and we are ready to take these activities and actions seriously. That's certainly not a simple problem to solve because of the underlying causes of deforestation such as poverty and the need for food for families.

Looking at Copenhagen, what do you think the role of an African country, like Madagascar, will be at the negotiations? What will they be bringing to the table?

What many tropical forested African countries are bringing to the table is the political willingness and political capital to offer their forests for public good to the world for reducing emissions. But what individual countries bring to the table depends on their forest situation and their political situation. For some countries

REDD is really the key issue, for others it is not that significant, depending on their deforestation rate, how REDD is part of the overall development agenda, and what significance the forests have within the country.

The following interviews are with five people engaged in different ways with REDD in Madagascar; Jean Roger Rakotoarijaona (ONE), Francois Busson (Green Synergie), Christopher Holmes (WCS), Hantaniaina Rabesandratana (Intercooperation), and Rainer Dolch (Association Mitsinjo).

Please introduce yourself briefly, and how you are involved with REDD in Madagascar :

Je me présente : Jean Roger Rakotoarijaona. Je suis économiste et Directeur des informations environnementales pour l'Office National pour l'Environnement (ONE).

Je ne suis pas impliqué dans des projets de démonstration REDD mais plutôt responsable de la mise en œuvre de REDD au niveau national. Dans ce cadre, je préside le Comité Technique National REDD (CT-REDD). Ce comité a pour mission d'appuyer techniquement le Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts dans la préparation, la négociation et la mise en œuvre de REDD à Madagascar. Actuellement, il est en charge de piloter et de superviser la formulation du Readiness Preparation Proposals (R-PP) du REDD de Madagascar. C'est une sorte de feuille de route sur laquelle le pays indique comment il s'y prendra pour se préparer au REDD, c'est-à-dire pour élaborer la stratégie nationale REDD, établir le scénario de référence et mettre en place le système de suivi.

What are the main lessons you learned and where do you see challenges in the implementation of REDD at local / national level in Madagascar ?

REDD est une occasion pour faire face simultanément aux changements climatiques et à la pauvreté rurale, pour appuyer les services environnementaux et conserver la biodiversité.

La nature et les causes de la déforestation font que les activités éligibles dans REDD doivent dépasser les limites du secteur forestier. Dépasser ces limites signifie qu'il faudra sortir du cercle étroit des objectifs de conservation développant et en mettant en œuvre des approches plus structurantes qui traitent du développement et de l'environnement de manière plus intégrée et surtout au niveau national.

Le principal défi à relever consiste à déterminer dans quelle mesure REDD pourrait contribuer au fondement structurel du développement de Madagascar au lieu d'être considéré seulement comme une manne pécuniaire destinée à financer les actions classiques de la conservation. Il s'agit d'identifier les conditions pour que REDD s'accorde avec les problèmes de fonds de la politique environnementale et donc du développement du pays.

What are your expectations / hopes of the COP15 for Madagascar?

Les pays développés et les pays émergents doivent prendre leur responsabilité et la COP15 doit accoucher d'un accord juridiquement contraignant signé par toutes les Parties à la Convention. Des systèmes incitatifs appropriés doivent être mis en place pour faire participer les autres pays. Cet accord comprendra des objectifs ambitieux de réduction des émissions de gaz à effet de serre ainsi que des engagements clairs en termes de financement, de renforcement de capacités et de transfert de

technologie de la part des pays responsables des changements climatiques pour aider les pays en développement à s'adapter.

Les dossiers pour lesquels les négociations sont relativement avancées doivent être bouclés, c'est le cas de REDD. Il n'est plus question d'apporter des complications supplémentaires, il s'agit de régler certains détails et de faciliter les conditions de mise en œuvre plutôt que de revenir en arrière sur les questions du «scope». REDD+ me paraît être l'option la plus satisfaisante.

Les négociateurs malgaches doivent encourager la finalisation de ces dossiers avancés sans pour autant perdre de vue les discussions de l'accord sur le plan global car Madagascar est avant tout un pays victime qui aura à supporter des coûts importants des conséquences des changements climatiques.

Please introduce yourself briefly, and how you are involved with REDD in Madagascar :

My name is François Busson, and after an academic training as agronomist and forester, I have been working in the field of natural resources management and rural development for some fifteen years. More specifically, I worked as technical advisor of different projects related to protected areas management. As such, I have been working for five years on the 'Tsingy de Bemaraha' project, in Madagascar, during the 1990ies. More recently, I have been the technical advisor of the Guinean Ministry of Environment, and that's when I started getting involved in the implementation of international agreements on environment, and in climate change topics.

In Madagascar, I haven't been engaged in a REDD project as such, but since December 2008, I had the opportunity to be working on the REDD approach at the national level, first by supporting the national technical committee (CT-REDD) within a team of the Green Synergie NGO, and today with a team of the ONF International, as contractor for preparing the methodological components of the national REDD approach, through the RPP (Readiness Preparation Proposal) framework.

So I have rather a general view of the different REDD projects in Madagascar, and my role has been mainly connecting people, and help to integrating the international framework into the national approach.

What are the main lessons you learned and where do you see challenges in the implementation of REDD at local / national level in Madagascar ?

Madagascar has this chance to host already five REDD projects. Three of them (managed by CI and WCS) are located in the eastern part of Madagascar, in the rain forest, and aim at producing carbon credits. They are now finalizing their PDDs. The two others (managed by GTZ / Intercoopération, and WWF / Good Planet) have several different sites, and are more focused on methodology. They mainly try to produce specific approaches and tools (e.g., reference scenario, allometric equations) adapted to the Malagasy context.

It must be underlined that the group of technicians involved in these projects, as well as national administration and technical bodies (as the ONE, Office National de l'Environnement) have been willing to work together and created the CT-REDD (national technical committee for REDD), and helped producing the 'R-PIN' (Readiness Project Idea Note) to allow Madagascar to benefit from World Bank funds to work on a national approach for REDD. Thanks to this joint effort, Madagascar is now preparing its RPP (Readiness Preparation Proposal),

the pathway to build a national strategy for REDD, prepare a national reference scenario, and set up appropriate tools for monitoring and verification.

All that sounds very positive and promising, but things are not that easy; REDD is a kind of tricky thing because at the same time it's a very new approach, and it's potentially a valuable source of income. So, on one hand, it is very important that information and lessons learned could be widely spread, but on the other hand there is some competition amongst operators, and the researchers involved in methodological aspects, e.g., they are not keen to disclose their work before it has been published. The result is that the collaborative approach has its limits, and that some results and data gathered at the projects level are not available to help building the national approach.

Another thing has to be clearly understood: That there is a big difference of targets and means between a project approach, aiming at producing carbon credits for the voluntary market, and a national approach linked to international negotiations of the 'post Kyoto' framework. To be clear, the REDD 'pilot projects' in Madagascar have been implemented more as complementary activities, potentially a new source of income for activities of forest protection and management, on sites where the different operators were already working. In this light, it is then less surprising that no REDD pilot project is today addressing the deforestation in the southwest part of Madagascar, where the highest rate of deforestation has been recorded between 1990 and 2005.

Of course, the REDD approach is very complicated, and it is easier, and probably wiser, to start working on it in a place where you already have a good environmental and social knowledge. But this kind of strategy won't always address the key zones of deforestation at the national level. That's why national approach and strategy are strongly necessary. The challenge is to find new ways and means for fighting deforestation, especially in the most threatened zones.

Consistent monitoring and verification tools at the national level are also essentials, and projects should pay more attention in contributing to them in a coherent way because, when the time of selling carbon credits comes, the credibility (and the price...) of these carbon credits will depend on the robustness of these tools.

But it also must be acknowledged that the national approach is hampered by the situation of the national administration. Civil servants of the forest and environment departments seldom have an in depth knowledge of REDD issues, and better capacity building is required. Even more worrying is the political situation with an unstable government, and great difficulties to make strong and clear decisions.

What is your opinion on the potential role of carbon finance in terms of the overall funding needs for conservation in Madagascar ?

The potential role is great, but the question is whether it will remain a potential or become reality. We are speaking of a market mechanism, and the very challenge for Madagascar is to be a credible country for such an approach, with transparent mechanisms, clear control on the 'permanence of forests', and comparative benefits with other countries. Otherwise, there won't be any carbon credit issued for REDD in Madagascar...or no one to buy them...

There is a tendency among some of the stakeholders to consider REDD as the new 'gold mine', and they think that dollars will

flow just because there are some forests in Madagascar. But they should understand that this mechanism is linked to a result, and has to be assessed by an international validation process. Key issues like benefit sharing amongst the different stakeholders have to be stated in a clear and transparent way in order to be most efficient to halt deforestation.

What are your expectations / hopes of the COP15 for Madagascar?

Even before Madagascar, my hopes are for the planet. Copenhagen won't be a real breakthrough if the two major players, namely the United States and China don't accept major efforts in reducing their GhG production. If they do, we can hope a real 'chain reaction' of commitments of different countries, and the 'post Kyoto' agreement will be more efficient in struggling against climate change. Within such an agreement, strengthening the importance of forest conservation will obviously benefit to Madagascar. I also hope that this conference will have an important impact in Madagascar, and that national politicians will be more committed in forest protection and sustainable management.

Please introduce yourself briefly, and how you are involved with REDD in Madagascar :

My name is Dr. Christopher Holmes. I am the technical director as well as deputy country program director for the Wildlife Conservation Society Madagascar Program. I have been working with the WCS in Madagascar since 2004. I began my work with WCS Madagascar as the technical director for the Makira Forest Protected Area project, located in the northeast of Madagascar. The Makira project was initiated in 2001. In 2004 a forest carbon feasibility study was carried out to estimate the quantity of carbon emissions avoidance that could be attributed to avoided deforestation through the establishment of the Makira Forest Project and protected area. The initial estimate from this feasibility study indicate that 2.5 million tons of carbon equaling 9.5 million tons of CO₂ equivalent in emissions avoidance are attributable to the Makira Forest Project over a 30-year period. In 2005 Makira was granted temporary status as a protected area. Currently WCS is in the process of developing Makira's Project Design Document (PDD) for Voluntary Carbon Standard (VCS) and Climate, Community and Biodiversity (CCB) certification. Makira is an Avoided Deforestation REDD project.

What are the main lessons you learned and where do you see challenges in the implementation of REDD at local/national level in Madagascar ?

As mentioned, the Makira Forest Project was piloted in 2001: This was well before the development of REDD and the standards to which REDD projects are to be held. The lessons learned for the establishment of Makira as a REDD project are similarly related to those learned from establishing a protected area: It is critically important to engage at the local level and have buy in from the communities bordering the protected area in order to ensure success. Because the success of Makira, as a REDD project, will be measured based on ability to reduce deforestation that is driven by subsistence-based land use practices progress will only come through direct intervention with local communities. Local communities have to have the willingness as well as capacity and opportunity to shift land use practices to those that are sustainable and reduce impact on forests. It is a significant challenge, and one that

requires long-term investment and presence, for WCS to engage with the local communities to the degree needed to ensure this shift in resource stewardship.

Challenges related to scaling from a local to national level relate to baseline scenario assessment, monitoring and verification, and carbon revenue management. The idea / appropriateness of such a 'nested' approach to REDD is still debated internationally. In many ways Madagascar is rather advanced: The 15-year evaluation of forest cover and forest loss is an important step toward developing a national baseline, however the modalities of monitoring and particularly mechanisms of revenue management are still in development.

What is your opinion on the potential role of carbon finance in terms of the overall funding needs for conservation in Madagascar ?

I think it is very important not to portray carbon finance as the 'golden egg' in terms of conservation funding in Madagascar. There are numerous issues including additionality, permanence and leakage that need to be well addressed in order to justify forest carbon as a finance mechanism: Forest carbon cannot be applied across the board as a viable solution for conservation financing in Madagascar. That said, carbon finance can contribute to the overall funding needs of conservation in Madagascar, perhaps most appropriately at the site level. Again, the modalities of a national REDD strategy are still being developed.

What are your expectations / hopes of the COP15 for Madagascar ?

In fact, any hopes or aspirations of the COP15 are significant beyond Madagascar. The REDD debate is extremely complex with countries jockeying to have their national interests met: Should there be a consideration of degradation – the second 'D' in REDD; should there be consideration of forest conservation efforts REDD+ – this related to those countries that have historically low deforestation rates such as in many central African countries; should there be consideration for sustainable forest management REDD++ – this relates to reduced impact logging; should there be consideration for enhancing forest carbon stocks REDD+++ – this relates to reforestation efforts. The debate of these issues by governments is driven by where the country sits on the scale of forest cover relative to past and predicted future deforestation rates. Madagascar sits in the low forest cover / high deforestation area of consideration, however, any consensus on REDD will have to take into consideration the interest of those countries that have historically low deforestation rates (e.g., Congo Basin) as well as those that are beginning to reforest (e.g., India and China). Despite the fact that COP15 is just around the corner there is little clarity on these issues.

Please introduce yourself briefly, and how are you involved with REDD in Madagascar?

Je me présente, Hantaniaina Rabesandratana. Je suis la chargée de programme junior en changements climatiques pour Intercooperation depuis 2008. Je suis parmi les personnes en charge d'un projet de recherche-action sur la REDD à Madagascar, appelé REDD Foreca. C'est un projet qui vise à appuyer le Gouvernement de Madagascar dans l'établissement du mécanisme REDD. Pour cela :

- Il lui fournit les éléments nécessaires pour qu'il puisse identifier les forêts à engager pour la REDD à Mada-

agascar à partir d'expériences locales et en considérant les exigences et décisions internationales.

- Il élabore un ensemble d'outils méthodologiques applicables dans les pays en développement permettant de faire une estimation quantitative du carbone forestier, de faire le suivi, de rapporter et de vérifier ce carbone, d'analyser les facteurs et les agents de la déforestation et de la dégradation (DD), d'établir les incitations positives contre la DD et de ressortir le cadre de gouvernance dans lequel s'inscrit le projet REDD FORECA en termes de gouvernance des ressources forestières et gouvernance des incitations.
- Étant membre du comité technique national REDD il nourrit les réflexions nationales pour le développement de la stratégie REDD à Madagascar.

En tant que chargée de programme junior en changement climatique, je participe au projet REDD FORECA en tant que personne ressource locale d'INTERCOOPERATION dans le développement de l'outil incitation et appuie à la coordination du projet en général.

What are the main lessons you learned and where do you see challenges in the implementation of REDD at local / national level in Madagascar?

Cette première année d'expérience au sein du projet m'a permis d'apprendre que dans un mécanisme comme la REDD, où les incertitudes dominent les acquis, il est nécessaire de suivre de près l'évolution des résultats des négociations internationales avant de pouvoir communiquer avec les communautés locales même si l'approche participative est recommandée dans la mise en œuvre des activités.

Les discussions avec des acteurs à tous les niveaux, depuis le niveau local (Communautés), régional (Services déconcentrés et collectivités décentralisées) et national (membres du comité technique national REDD) montrent que des défis sont à relever à tous ces niveaux par rapport aux exigences internationales sur la mise en œuvre de REDD ; il s'agit des besoins en renforcement de capacité (identification des cibles et des besoins pour que l'activité soit efficiente), de l'appui à la réalisation des objectifs des politiques et stratégies sectorielles qui garantissent la meilleure condition de mise en œuvre de la REDD (foncier, anti-corruption, gouvernance, démographie) et la mise en place d'un système de suivi. Plus particulièrement, dans la définition du système d'incitation où les Communautés riveraines des forêts sont les plus impliquées, un des défis à relever est de faire en sorte que la rationalité de ces types d'acteurs soit comprise et tenue en compte par les décideurs nationaux et surtout internationaux (par exemple, la préférence pour le court terme, l'importance de la dimension sociale plus qu'économique).

What is your opinion on the potential role of carbon finance in terms of the overall funding needs for conservation in Madagascar?

Madagascar est parmi les pays qui se sont engagés depuis longtemps dans la conservation de la biodiversité et dans la lutte contre la déforestation et la dégradation des forêts, bien avant REDD ; enrayer la dégradation des forêts constitue même une orientation de la politique forestière qui remonte déjà à 22 ans. À ma connaissance, le taux de déforestation persiste encore même si certains chiffres montrent une tendance à la baisse, plusieurs espèces de faune et de flore ainsi que des

habitats sont encore qualifiés de menacés. À mon avis, le mécanisme REDD va renforcer cet engagement du pays dans la conservation et apporte en même temps un financement en plus. Je considère que le rôle innovant et additionnel de ce financement carbone dans la conservation est de contribuer à trouver la solution à deux obstacles au moins auxquels la conservation ne peut apporter que peu de contribution : (i) la faiblesse de l'État surtout en matière de contrôle et de suivi et (ii) le manque de retombées des actions sur les Communautés. Pour moi, ces deux solutions sont transversales à la mise en œuvre ou à l'application des conventions internationales relatives à l'environnement et aux ressources naturelles ; le financement pour les activités propres à la conservation devrait faire l'objet de financement découlant surtout de la Convention sur la Diversité Biologique. Néanmoins, le financement carbone est une opportunité qui se présente pour la conservation car il permettra de conserver l'habitat de la plus grande diversité biologique qu'est la forêt tropicale. Je reste convaincue que si on veut mieux conserver, il faut mieux développer ; et ce financement pour le développement conduisant implicitement à la conservation est le rôle potentiel du financement carbone.

What are your expectations / hopes of the COP15 for Madagascar?

Je pense que ce qui est important pour Madagascar pour avoir une chance de pouvoir mettre en œuvre ce mécanisme REDD est que les négociations internationales conduisent à la reconnaissance de l'approche subnationale pour conduire le projet REDD. Les discussions devraient aussi porter sur les incitations qui doivent être assez conséquentes pour garantir les réductions réelles.

En effet, pour les pays comme Madagascar, où les Communautés sont fortement dépendantes des terres et des ressources forestières et où la capacité pour une bonne gestion de ces ressources n'est pas disponible, les stratégies locales deviennent aussi importantes que la stratégie nationale pour la lutte contre la déforestation. Une décision sur l'allocation de fonds pour la mise en œuvre et le suivi d'un système d'incitation pendant une période « test » suivant une approche subnationale est mon souhait par rapport à cette COP 15.

Please introduce yourself briefly, and how you are involved with REDD in Madagascar :

My name is Rainer Dolch. I am a German expatriate having been living and working in Madagascar for over 15 years. I am coordinator of the Association Mitsinjo, a Malagasy environmental NGO that evolved out of a community project. Mitsinjo manages more than 10,000 ha of rainforest habitat in the Andasibe region, including the SF Analamazaotra and the Torotorofotsy Ramsar site.

Our organization is one of the driving forces in implementing one of the most ambitious projects in Madagascar that links the reduction of carbon emissions with biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods. It is located in the new protected area of Ankeniheny-Zahamena. The project has two components, including a REDD component of 425,000 ha and a reforestation component of 3,020 ha. The latter is usually referred to as TAMS (*Tetik'asa Mampody Savoka*), meaning 'the project to bring back the forest'. The names of the overall project almost change at a faster rate than our planet's climate, and I apologize if I have lost track. If the World Bank is to be believed, it is now called the "Ankeniheny-Zahamena-Mantadia Biodiversity Conservation Corridor and Restoration Project" and the extent

of the name definitely reflects the degree of difficulty to implement the project, which is mainly due to its complexity and number of stakeholders involved.

What are the main lessons you learned and where do you see challenges in the implementation of REDD at local / national level in Madagascar?

Forests do not become automatically protected just because they are subjected to REDD. Even in already 'protected' areas such as Ankeniheny-Zahamena, forest destruction continues. Owing to the political crisis, pillaging of protected areas has now even increased, as we all know, not only in terms of illegal logging. The debate about the rosewood mafia certainly draws a lot more public attention than other issues, but we have to state that slash-and-burn, artisan mining and bushmeat hunting all dramatically increased within protected areas after the regime change. The classic protected areas' issues therefore have to be addressed first: Is protected area status only written on paper? Who is properly surveying protected areas? Why are infractions not prosecuted? How can it be that there are people that do not even know that they are living in a new protected area? What structural measures does the Government take to fight rural poverty? How do we ensure proper community benefits and involvement in the management of natural resources?

Community benefits were obviously not the most imminent concern of the Government in the wake of the political crisis. Difficulties of funding this year's project phase caused a discontinuity of our activities and therefore some grievous setbacks. As a result, project participants were deprived of their benefits and subsequently had to return to engage in environmentally destructive activities to earn their living. If politicians finally agreed upon what is needed for the development and progress of this country, we would certainly see equal development and progress in innovative projects linking climate and biodiversity issues.

When it comes to carbon sequestration projects, REDD or other, there are other challenges as well. The more complex such a project gets, the more difficult it becomes to properly coordinate logistics and administration amongst multiple stakeholders. Projects with a high degree of complexity also often tend to be very hierarchical and top-down rather than bottom-up. Therefore, I see a high risk of neglecting the needs of local communities and community based initiatives that are vital for project success.

So, how do we make sure that REDD benefits local communities? REDD must be a strong incentive for farmers to indeed protect the forest. If they see no direct benefit, the forest will be converted to farmland. We also need money for building capacities and monitoring activities that are needed for adequate management. There is of course the idea of creating a Trust Fund with REDD money that should assure the financing of it all. How can we guarantee that this money is properly managed? So far, however, the development of a national strategy for REDD in Madagascar is only in its beginnings.

It has to be clear that REDD is not just about carbon. It is about biodiversity conservation and improvement of rural livelihoods. From my experience, project managers tend to view REDD rather one-dimensionally, although a variety of aspects have to be taken into account. In my opinion, the strongest incentives for the local population to participate in REDD activities are direct payments and security of land tenure. Project managers would be well advised to address these issues first.

Finally, ecosystem services, carbon sequestration, and REDD have to have larger publicity. In order to get this topic into the mainstream, I would appreciate seeing more knowledgeable journalists reporting about these issues and relevant projects in Madagascar.

What is your opinion on the potential role of carbon finance in terms of the overall funding needs for conservation in Madagascar?

Carbon finance, as one sub-aspect of payments for ecosystem services, certainly could contribute a lot to overall funding needs for conservation in Madagascar. It all depends on how well or not these funds are managed and to what extent they really benefit local communities. In that sense, we must not forget that REDD is vulnerable to abuse, especially in countries that are not on top of Transparency International's anti-corruption list.

I would definitely appreciate to have at least part of that money as direct payments for local people who assure that these ecosystems and their services are indeed protected. Payments for REDD still raise basic questions as 'who owns the forest?' I am afraid that these have not been adequately addressed yet.

What are your expectations / hopes of the COP15 for Madagascar?

At COP14 in Poznan, Madagascar was already identified as one of the key areas for 'combined climate and wildlife protection'. It is therefore disappointing that Madagascar is not among the recently named tropical countries to directly benefit from UN-financed REDD projects.

I would like to see this change and hope that an agreement on a comprehensive plan for the conservation of the planet's tropical forests will be reached at COP15 in Copenhagen. This would mean that the international community increases their assistance to these countries. In turn, the countries where tropical forests occur should be fully conscious of their special responsibility of preserving these forests. Carbon emissions from deforestation should be taken into account in the future. REDD should be integrated into a post-Kyoto agreement.

It also appears rather odd to me, when companies abroad pay for REDD projects in Madagascar, whereas companies that produce immense carbon dioxide emissions within the country do have no obligations to reduce their emissions whatsoever. This is current practice in mining projects that are responsible for both large deforestation and usage of enormous quantities of fossil fuels in Madagascar. They should be held accountable for their emissions, irrespective of the country in which they occur.