



WCS Madagascar

A Wildlife Conservation Society Program



Transplantation of Nurseries_Anjanaharibe West Site, February 2025. © WCS Madagascar/Derlin

Annual Report

Forest of Sounds, a Community Restoration Initiative in the Makira Natural Park

Project Period: 10 years (July 2022 – June 2032)

Reporting period: July 2024 – June 2025

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INTRODUCTION

The Makira Natural Park (Key Biodiversity Area No. MDG-163) in Northeast Madagascar makes up one of the largest remaining intact humid rainforests in Madagascar.

Given its geographic position, the Makira Natural Park plays an important role in the connectivity of the Protected Areas of this north-eastern part of the island. Indeed, the forest area of Makira is bordered by the Special Reserve of Anjanaharibe-Sud on the Northwest, the Marojejy National Park on the North, the Masoala National Park on the East, and the group of three Protected Areas (National Park of Mananara-Nord, the Special Reserve of Marontandrano, and the Special Reserve of Ambatovaky) on the South and is connected to them.

The continuity of Makira Natural Park is maintained by fragile corridors. Restoring these small, sensitive corridors in the Makira Forest is crucial to the integrity of the Makira Forest and the surrounding parks and reserves. This community-based restoration initiative in Makira Natural Park focuses on restoring one of the entrances to Makira Natural Park, widely affected by deforestation and land use and has two main objectives. First is to restore a forest of around 60 hectares, planting a minimum of 50,000 trees, reconnecting an essential forest area in the buffer zone and protected area of Makira. The reforestation will use native tree species whose seeds will have been collected in the park. The second objective will establish a framework through community conservation tools such as conservation agreements, which consolidate the region's environmental, social, and economic objectives.

This report illustrates the activities carried out from July 2024 to June 2025.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

Outcome 1. Restoration

Activity 1.1. Developing the Forest of Sounds, a community restoration initiative

1.1.1 Tree nursery set up, planting and maintenance

In July 2024, the restoration team led a mission in Andravindralandana, Anjanaharibe Ouest, to plant seedlings for silviculture. With the direct support of 11 community members, they potted 9,473 seeds in preparation for the site's restoration. They led another mission in February 2025 to collect more seedlings, prepare the layons (long straight forest paths), and transplant the saplings that had reached sufficient maturity. A total of 21,142 meters of layons were prepared for transplanting 10,571 seedlings. Among these transplanted plants, 208 plants died, resulting in a mortality rate of 1.96%. Thus, 98% of the transplanted plants grew well. Those that were ready were then transferred from the nurseries to the ground, covering 12.4 hectares of restored area.

Seedling production

Nursery production was based mainly on seeds collected around the area which were collected throughout the year. These collected seeds were potted in plastic bags and kept in seedbeds until they reached the ideal size for transplanting. The plastic bags are filled with mixed soil, lightly pressed down, which allows the roots of the young plants to develop properly. A little space is left at the top for water to accumulate slightly during rain or watering.

Silvicultural Maintenance

Silvicultural maintenance involves weeding the restored plots and replacing dead plants. This maintenance is necessary to prevent the growth of seedlings being hindered by weeds. 6,584 meters were maintained, and 208 dead seedlings were replaced.



Sylvicultural maintenance in Anjanaharibe Ouest, July 2024 © WCS Madagascar/ Laizafy



Filling of plastic pots in Anjanaharibe Ouest, July 2024 © WCS Madagascar/ Derlin

1.1.2 Nursery Field supplies

No update this year. WCS acquired equipment and supplies for the nursery workers during the first year of the project, including batteries to power the GPS units, plastic watering cans, plastic buckets and plastic pots.

Activity 1.2. Providing field equipment to project team members

No update this year. To support the restoration team, equipment was purchased at the start of the project, including 30 spades, 30 machetes, 6 rakes, 2 wheelbarrows, kitchen utensils (pot, spoon, bowl, plate, etc.) and medicine to treat daily illnesses.

Activity 1.3. Evaluation of the functionality of the restoration sites

1.3.1 Field equipment for camera – trapping

No update this year.

Outcome 2. Community conservation tools

Activity 2.1. Development of Conservation Agreements as a framework for ecological restoration

To implement this activity, WCS is finalizing a memorandum of understanding with Mitantana Ara-Drariny (MiRARI), which will lay the foundation for collaboration on the establishment of community management agreements. MiRARI is a local organization that builds the capacity of managers and local communities for more resilient and equitable conservation.

As part of our approach to strengthening synergies between conservation and local development, WCS, through its community engagement program, developed a conservation agreement template in the first half of 2025 to frame the reciprocal commitments between the organization and households living around the Makira Wildlife Reserve.

Conservation agreements aim to explicitly link access to socioeconomic benefits to conservation-friendly behaviors and practices. Conditionality is at the root of this mechanism; support from WCS is only granted if the household complies with its commitments to protect natural resources.

These conservation agreements will be signed at the beneficiary household level in order to facilitate compliance monitoring, recognize the specific efforts of each family, and adjust support fairly according to the results observed. Clear indicators will be used to verify each household's commitment and enable adaptive management of the program.

The conservation agreements will be annexed to the community management agreement; a framework document signed between the delegated manager of the protected area and all the local communities. The

community management agreement, required by the Protected Areas Code, is a legal instrument with collective scope, setting out the responsibilities of each party in terms of natural resource management and governance. Although it has a stronger legal basis, the conservation agreement complements the community management agreement by translating community commitments into concrete and sustained actions at the household level. The MiRARI (Mitantana Ara-Drariny) partnership will support this process by educating communities on the concept of community management agreement and promoting dialogue between them and us.

Activity 2.2. Conservation incentives based on community development needs

The community needs assessment was conducted during the previous reporting period. The identified support initiatives will be implemented after the conservation agreements are put in place.

Activity 2.3. Environmental commitments associated with conservation agreements

Environmental commitments will be established following the implementation of the conservation agreement. These commitments will mainly include a ban on logging, hunting, burning, and trespassing. Additionally, they will include participation in community conservation activities, as well as control and monitoring effort. Monitoring of infractions and law enforcement will be conducted via patrols with WCS ecoguards once the necessary framework is in place.

Outcome 3. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Activity 3.1. Project coordination and oversight

In March 2025, the WCS forest restoration technical assistant conducted a plant growth monitoring mission to the restoration area. A high plant mortality rate was observed, estimated at around 30%. This phenomenon is mainly attributed to the rise in temperatures at the end of 2024 and the beginning of this year. The dead plants will be replaced during future silvicultural maintenance activities.

This restoration monitoring mission was combined with a visit from the COMBO+ team, a project implemented by WCS and Biotope Madagascar as part of a case study on best practices for implementing participatory restoration projects. The mitigation and conservation hierarchy. The restoration of the FOS project in Antsahabe was selected as a case study. Three WCS science team members accompanied the COMBO+ team for this immersion into the forest corridor to exchange experience on restoration techniques, the ecological impact, and community engagement.

Activity 3.2. Awareness and learning

No update this year. This activity will be carried out when the team is ready to share the results of the project.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Component/Activity		Indicators	Period achievements	Cumulative project completion
1.1. Developing the Forest of Sounds, a community restoration initiative	1.1.1 Tree nursery set up, planting and maintenance	60 Ha planting and maintained	9,473 seeds collected and seedlings produced. 21,142 meters of layon prepared. 10,571 saplings transplanted. 12.4 Ha restored, i.e. 20.6% of target.	110,091 seeds collected and seedlings produced. 43,352 meters of layon prepared. 21,676 saplings transplanted. 24.27 Ha restored.
	1.1.2 Nursery field supplies	1 set of field supplies purchased at the beginning of year	Field supplies were purchased during the first year of the project	2 tents, 1 backpack, batteries, plastic watering cans, plastic buckets and plastic pots.
1.2. Providing field equipment to project team members	1.2.1 Field equipment for tree nursery teams	1 lot of field equipment for tree nursery purchased at the beginning	Field equipment was purchased during the first year of the project	4 lamps, 30 spades, 30 machetes, 6 rakes, 2 wheelbarrows, kitchen utensils (pot, spoon, bowl, plate, etc.) and medicines
1.3. Evaluation of the functionality of the restoration sites	1.3.1 Field equipment for camera-trapping	1 lot of field equipment for camera-trapping purchased	No update	
2.1. Development of Conservation Agreements as a framework for ecological restoration		1 conservation agreements established in each village around the project	A draft of the conservation agreements for households has been developed. A memorandum of understanding with MiRARI is being finalized to support the establishment of community management agreements.	One community meeting was held.
2.2. Conservation incentives based on community development needs		1 PV of development needs meeting for each village developed	Completed in year 2 (2023-24) of the project.	A household survey was carried out in 4 villages.
2.3. Environmental commitments associated with conservation agreements		1 environmental commitment signed	No update	
3.1. Project coordination and oversight		4 supervision missions conducted	1 supervision mission carried out	1 supervision mission
3.2. Awareness and learning		4 awareness and learning sessions organized	No update	

CONCLUSION

In the third year of the project, over 98% of the nursery plants were successfully transplanted, leading to 12.4 hectares, or 20.6% of this project's restored area goal. With 7 years left of this project, we are well on our way to achieving the overall restored area target.

- The next year of this project will include the continuation and advancement of the following activities: Implementation of the conservation agreements;
- Continuation of restoration activities, including transplantation and maintenance missions;
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the restoration sites by the end of the year;
- Execution of awareness-raising activities.