

Project number: 13

Project applicant: Centre Valbio

Project Name: Increasing support for biodiversity conservation around Ranomafana National Park

Funds provisionally allocated: €20,000

Summary

This project is based in the peripheral zone surrounding Ranomafana National Park in the eastern rainforest of Madagascar. The National Park's peripheral zone suffers from attrition through slash and burn agriculture, and forests become degraded and/or impoverished through extraction of resources such as bamboo, pandanus, wood, etc. This project aims to build on previous experience in environmental education around Ranomafana to expand successful conservation strategies, to develop audio-visual tools and products adapted to meet the needs of a largely illiterate adolescent and young adult population, and to develop the capacity of existing facilities to meet the environmental education challenges posed by a poor and poorly educated rural population with limited access to information. Although much can be done through environmental education in schools, not all children go to school. For example currently only 55% children attend seven years of schooling, with only 15% completing secondary school. This means that there are a large number of children and adolescents who are lost from the education system. Young people with little education, low chances of employment and time on their hands, tend to be a risk for both the social and physical environments, as well as being at risk themselves. In Ranomafana, despite being a tourist location because of the National Park, and a place which has seen many kinds of intervention over the years, the practise of using catapults is common and endemic birds are often targeted. It is not unusual to see both small birds such as sunbirds, as well as large ones such as raptors, being shot at with catapults. The main users of catapults are young and adolescent boys and young adults. Thus, we aim to develop a bird conservation campaign to reduce this behaviour and increase the awareness of the importance of birds.

We propose to carry out the following activities: To develop six Conservation Clubs in rural villages both west (Betsileo culture) and east (Tanala culture) of the National Park. These Conservation Clubs will target both school attendants and those who have left school (or who never went) to develop training in environmentally sound activities to convert youngsters into advocates for the environment. We propose to organise an information-exchange and training workshop for Conservation Club (total 15) Leaders to develop their capacity to manage and develop the clubs. We are also planning a bird conservation campaign, to reduce the pressure on local endemic birds from boys with catapults. These will receive rainforest classes, and various forms of support for teachers and pupils. Each school will also develop a tree nursery to be able to take part in the reforestation programme and to learn about ways to grow endemic trees and fruit trees. We seek funds to employ an additional conservation education assistant and reforestation agent to work with the six new schools. In order to maximise the number of local people who can benefit from environmental education, a new set of tools is needed as existing ones (information sheets, booklets) are mostly aimed at literate audiences. Thus we are seeking support for production of audio-visual materials and a generator to be able to take films and presentations to rural areas without electricity. In addition to Centre ValBio, there are two other environmental education sites in Ranomafana village – easily accessible for the local population. We propose that the Museum and Kainja Maitso are developed by producing new panels and regular temporary exhibits and by hiring an animateur to interpret and explain the education initiatives and to train the existing staff. This should convert these sites into learning centres with a high proportion of repeat visits as people return to see new displays and gather new information. Through these approaches this project aims to target previously neglected groups (illiterate and poorly-educated adolescents and young adults), and reduce negative impacts on the national park and its peripheral zone by converting them and other local people from environmental destructors to environmental advocates.