

# Ecotourism in Madagascar: How a Sleeping Beauty is Finally Awakening

Michaela Pawliczek

Hitesh Mehta RIBA ASLA Associate AIA MAAK MAAKLA

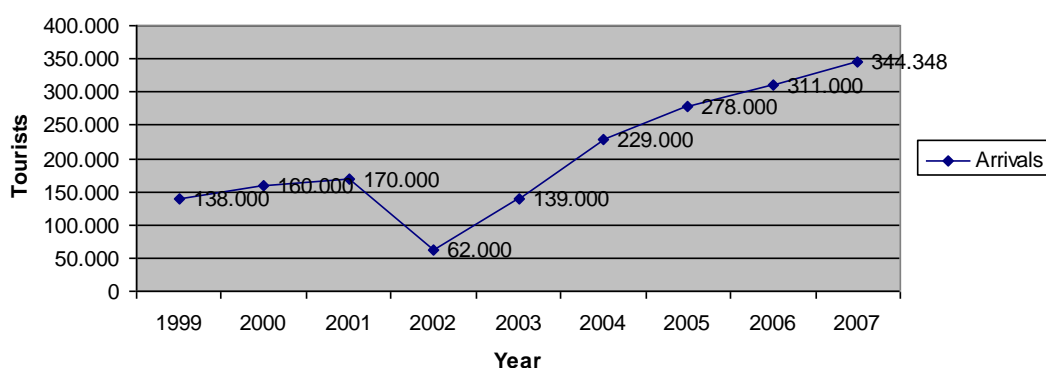
## Introduction

Madagascar is in the Indian Ocean between Mozambique (Africa mainland) and the islands of Mauritius and Reunion. It is the fourth largest island in the world, and is home to 5 per cent of the world's plant and animal species, of which more than 80 per cent are endemic. Most notable are the lemur infraorder of primates, the carnivorous fossa, three endemic bird families and six endemic baobab species (Goodman et al., 2003). However, due to various political, economic, and social factors, Madagascar's tourism and, in particular ecotourism,<sup>1</sup> potential has been 'asleep' for a long time. The story of Madagascar is similar to that of Walt Disney's 'Sleeping Beauty'. Often called 'divine creation', a 'biodiversity hotspot', a 'Garden of Eden', 'The Kingdom of Baobabs' or 'Madagascar - La vie en grand', these slogans are increasingly matching the reality. Madagascar is currently awakening to its potential for tourism, seeing its natural advantages, ecotourism development and has much to offer to tourists. Some of Madagascar's attractions include:

- 4,828km of mostly untouched coastal line (CIA World Factbook, 2008);
- the third largest reef in the world and several world renowned spots for diving;
- a unique population, combining African and Asian influences, integrating
- ancient traditions into modern living;
- a wide variety of options for tourists, including sun and sand tourism, nature
- and cultural tourism and adventure tourism.
- 46 existing protected areas (one of the highest levels in the world for one country) covering 1,700,000ha and hosting six natural heritage sites.<sup>2</sup> In and around these protected areas 85 per cent of flora, 39 per cent of birds, 91 per cent of reptiles, 99 per cent of amphibians and 100 per cent of lemurs are endemic (MAP, 2006, p98ff).

With such a varied diversity of natural and cultural resources, one might think that Madagascar has a very promising base for ecotourism development, especially as the country's political and economic conditions have been stabilized in the recent past. But why has Madagascar then not been better recognized as a destination tourism map? Why has tourism development not increased living standards for the local population in one of the most underdeveloped countries of the world?<sup>3</sup> Why has a country with such outstanding natural and cultural resources, not been able to create a proper ecotourism niche and sustainably manage their resources? These are the questions which this chapter will try to answer by reviewing in detail Madagascar's tourism development history and current ecotourism development.

## Background

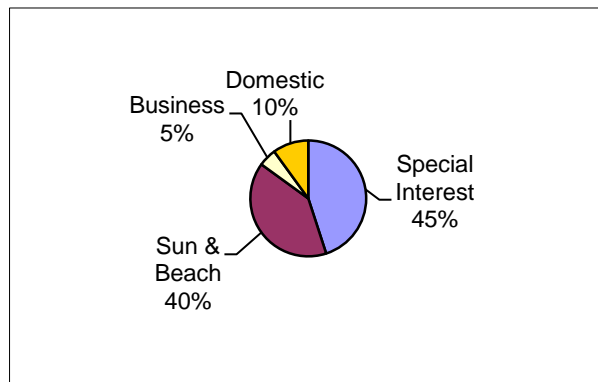


Source: UNWTO 2008

Figure 1 Madagascar tourism arrivals from 1999-2007

Figure 1 above demonstrates that before 2002, there was minimal but steadily increasing tourism development in Madagascar. However, this was abruptly stopped in 2002 due to a political crisis surrounding the presidential election. Tourism development came to a halt (2002-2003).until 2004 when the few existing tourism operators slowly started to regain their businesses. But they did not receive official recognition from the government and they were therefore left alone to rebuild their industry. Finally, in 2005 when tourism became a prominent foreign currency generator for the country, the government recognized it as a vehicle for the development of the country. Tourism was finally seen as an instrument to

tackle poverty and to increase the living standards and the level of education of the local population. To a lesser extent, tourism was also seen as a way to preserve the country's unique biodiversity. During these years, the World Bank discerned a need to find ways in which tourism could be used as a tool to improve the livelihoods of local people, as poverty worsened during and after the political crisis in 2002. It therefore conducted a major Tourism Sector Study (Christie et al, 2003) which focused on sustainable tourism and ecotourism. One of the main recommendations was to create sustainable tourism physical master plans for key areas, as a first stage in a process to improve livelihoods. This study was also the basis of further tourism related efforts by the World Bank (e.g. The Pôle Intégré de Croissance [PIC] Project).



Source: Tourism Masterplan (GATO, 2005, p131).

**Figure 2** Types of tourism projected for Madagascar until 2012

In parallel to this, the Malagasy Government decided to conduct a thorough plan concerning future Malagasy tourism development supported by the German Government. The Malagasy Tourism masterplan (hereafter the masterplan) was officially adopted by the government, tourism stakeholders and donors in April 2005, and is now available and widely cited (Gato, 2005). Unfortunately, this plan has not been implemented and its recommendations have not been followed-up. One reason for the lack of implementation of the plan was a lack of knowledge on how to implement it, as well as the lack of capacity of the former Ministry for Culture and Tourism to convince donors to finance the plan's activities. The masterplan reports a mix of tourism types, as illustrated in Figure 2.

The special interest category includes ecotourism, culture and landscape tourism, sports and adventure tourism, and cruise trips. These types of tourism are seen as having a high growth potential. It was suggested that ecotourism should remain as a niche in order not to endanger the ecologically sensitive areas visited (GATO, 2005, p129ff.). In Madagascar, this does not seem to interfere with the establishment of the critical mass needed to make it a profit-earning industry, especially for the local population.

Ecotourism Development started its upward movement in 2005 with the initiation of the Pôle Intégré de Croissance (PIC) Project as a follow up to the World Bank. The PIC project focuses on infrastructure development, administrative facilitation and lobbying among international investors. The project also tries to deal with different banks to minimize credit costs for tourism investors as expensive finance hinders nationals wishing to invest in or enlarge their businesses. This project considered sustainable tourism development for two 'poles': the island of Nosy Be (EDSA et al, Plan D'aménagement Touristique Durable de Nosy Be, 2005a) in the north-west and the region around 'Taolagnaro' (EDSA et al, Plan D'aménagement Touristique Durable de Taolagnaro, 2005b) in the south.

The Nosy Be and Taolagnaro Sustainable Tourism Development Plans addressed the quadruple bottom line of sustainable development: economic, environmental, social and spiritual sustainability. The main philosophy of these plans were that all types of tourism are important towards the creation of a successful sustainable destination as long as they adhere to environmental and social guidelines and respect the spiritual beliefs of the local people. In particular, the plans identified specific sustainable tourism and ecotourism projects in both locations which would act as a catalyst for sustained growth. These plans, like the GATO masterplan, have unfortunately not been fully implemented mainly due to a restructuring of the PIC in direction of more mass tourism development. However, some of the specific projects that were identified in these plans have been taken to the next stage (Nirina Ratsimbazafy, PIC, email, 30/6/ 2008):

- CNRO: a hotel school project application is under approval process by the Minister in charge of the education
- Tourism Land Reserve of Sakatia: a request for proposals is being revised by the Economic Development Board of Madagascar,
- Evatra Lokaro : a part of the land is going through a new delimitation process

A new national vision to develop tourism with a focus on the environment, 'Madagascar – *naturally*' was publicly announced by the President in February 2006. This was followed by the Madagascar Action Plan (MAP)<sup>4</sup> in November 2006, which sets out the government's political goals until 2012. In the sections on the environment, the MAP outlines two major strategies:

1. Ensure environmental sustainability by adopting strategies for sustainable development and the protection of natural resources.
2. Use resources intelligently and productively: 'We need to minimize the loss and maximize the gain to assure an intelligent and productive use of the nation's resources' (MAP, 2006, p. 11).

To adopt and implement these two main strategies into practice, eight recommendations were identified, including concrete objectives and indicators. Ecotourism has been included in two of the eight MAP recommendations (in the appendix). These recommendations give a better understanding of changes the government foresees until 2012 (MAP, 2006, 93ff.). Some of the important recommendations related to ecotourism are mentioned below:

- Identify and launch new tourist sites and products;
- Promote the destination 'Madagascar' as a superior and unique ecotourism destination;
- Establish a national ecotourism framework and strategy to contribute to the protection and promotion of the environment and to ensure 'eco-eco' harmonization (economic-ecological);
- Establish an ecotourism policy, charter, code that states the vision, the commitment, the values and the approach for the promotion and implementation of ecotourism throughout the country; and
- Establish special zones for ecotourism;

The new national vision presented by the President was followed by further activities at the national, regional and institutional level, including a workshop at the national level entitled 'Assises Nationales sur le Tourisme Durable', in November 2006. Four objectives were given to the participants to discuss and propose actions to improve the situation:

1. Improve the management synergies of the acting partners;
2. Better integration of the sector into the decentralization programme of the government (strengthen the regional tourism departments to deal with investors on their own);
3. Better repartition of revenues, especially at the community level (better integration of the community into tourism development advantages); and
4. Access to finance for projects focusing on sustainable and ecotourism (which is limited today by very high interest rates).

Over three days, around 150 people from the public and private sector as well as donors and NGOs put together a strategy and implementation document to bring to life the MAP's vision. The participants proposed more than 70 concrete actions on how to facilitate and push forward the development of ecotourism and sustainable tourism in Madagascar in the coming years. It became clear that a lot of technical and financial support from the donors would be needed.

Madagascar's National Tourism Board (ONTM) also initiated the platform Ecotod (*ecotourisme et tourisme durable*) in early 2006 following demand from its members, including regional tourism boards, tourism associations, Ministry of Transport and Tourism and the private sector to learn more about ecotourism and sustainable tourism. Ecotod's mission is to provide a platform for exchange on these types of tourism between members and different parties (the members include ONTM, NGOs, donors, private and public sector), facilitating to discussion of specific topics, the exchange of experiences, expert input and information on current trends, to create synergies between the participants, and also to study and initiate defined and concrete projects with practical and replicable results for the tourism sector. The first year of Ecotod, 2006, showed a remarkable list of practical results:

- the establishment of codes of conduct for tourists, local population and the private sector;
- a monthly Ecotourism Newsletter;
- an implementation plan for ecotourism and sustainable tourism development in Madagascar for the next five years using the objectives of the Madagascar Action Plan and linking them to activities undertaken in recent years on national level (such as tourism masterplan, Assises, Ecotod) but also on international level (e.g. Local Agenda 21);
- creating synergies between stakeholders and provoking discussions on several topics (e.g. renewable energy); and
- the development of a Malagasy definition of ecotourism.<sup>5</sup>

With no financial support, this circle of 120 participants, predominantly from the private sector, have demonstrated the interest and will of the Malagasy tourism sector to push forward the necessary actions to develop and broaden this niche industry.

## The current status of ecotourism in Madagascar

The current tourism arrival figures for Madagascar are far lower than they could be, considering the country's enormous tourism potential. This is possibly because the Malagasy authorities never really believed in the potential of tourism and its development in their own country. This might appear surprising, but looking deeper into Malagasy culture, the concept of leisure tourism, including travelling for the purposes of a holiday and staying in a hotel, are locally unknown. Similar to African mainland countries, such as Rwanda, the majority of the local population does not have the financial means to travel and if they travel, they stay with family or friends.

Nevertheless, recent tourism development has shown promising results within a very short period: in four years visitor arrivals have more than doubled with over 300,000 in 2006 and the annual growth rate has been between 15 and 20 per cent per year. Tourism still ranks among the main providers of foreign currency for the Malagasy economy and reached second position in 2006. The average length of time spent in the country is 20 days (Ministry for Culture and Tourism, 2006), which is significant compared to the global average ratio of 12 days (World Tourism Organization, 2006). Europe remains Madagascar's main source market, with the greatest numbers of tourists coming from France and Italy, followed by Switzerland and Germany. In the recent past other countries, such as the US and China, and especially Madagascar's neighbours Reunion, Mauritius and South Africa have discovered the island as a tourism destination (Ministry for Culture and Tourism, 2006). The majority of the tourists are travelling with a tour operator by bus or by car with a local driver.

Current tourism development is concentrated in the North (Nosy Be Island, Diego-Suarez), the north-west (around Morondava), the south road, RN 7, from the capital Antananarivo to the village of Tulear and to the east including Ste. Marie Island.

As the masterplan has been neglected in the past, the country is unfortunately still lacking an overall understanding of what is needed for tourism development and hindering aspects are the same as ten years ago: insufficient links between the necessary institutions and the private sector; poor accessibility due to limited direct flights from abroad; inconvenient and unreliable infrastructure including road networks, railroad systems and public transport; a lack of tourist facilities such as accommodation and existing products and services do not meet international tourism standards (Gato, 2005). Services are often carried out in the country's own style of 'mora' (meaning 'slowly, do not stress!'). The private sector works hard to act more professionally but this is difficult due to a lack of quality training institutions (Spenceley and Rozga, 2007).



Source: World Bank (2003).

**Figure 2.2** Map of Madagascar showing protected areas and major towns

From a marketing perspective, Madagascar still lacks an international destination image. Although it is, unfortunately, still an undiscovered location, one could say that it is also one of the best hidden secrets of international tourism today. The push for development, especially ecotourism development, and lobbying for international investors mainly comes from the

private sector and donor institutions. Ecotourism is practised on only a small scale in the country, in several National Parks and special reserves, and on tours lasting for a day or two. Many parks and reserves are situated along the well-known tourism roads, for example the National Parks of Montagne d'Ambre, Ankarana, Andasibe-Mantadia, Tsingy de Bemaraha (a World Heritage Site), Ranomafana, Andringitra and Isalo and to some extent Ste. Marie Island and Baie d'Antongil. The training for tourist guides is normally handled by ANGAP (Association Nationale pour la Gestion des Aires Protégées), the national park institution. A three-month training course is given (to be paid by the guide), combined with field work in one of the National Parks. Nevertheless, this is still only a basic level of training and the majority of guides are practising 'learning by doing' or are undertaking self-study courses (e.g. languages). The Chamber of Commerce has established, beginning of 2007, a new one-year dual training course for local guides (50 per cent theory, 50 per cent practice) following a highly appreciated pattern from Germany. If this new course is successfully received by students and the private sector, it will be further implemented by Chambers of Commerce in the provinces.

A specific approach for ecotourism development has been initiated from the International Finance Corporation (IFC) together with the concerned Ministries, the National Park Authority (ANGAP) and USAID's MIARO programme in the middle of 2007. They have put in place a task force for the development of a concession policy for Madagascar's protected areas, namely within the national parks, similar to those existing in South Africa, Tanzania, etc. It is the first time that the Malagasy Government has decided to provide the private sector with concessions to establish their business inside the National Parks. This is a big step for Madagascar showing once again its desire for ecotourism development, and the government is working with the IFC and Conservation Corporation Africa (CCAfrica), as an experienced and successful private sector ecotourism player. This step will give Madagascar the potential to promote itself among the globally known ecotourism destinations such as South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, Botswana, Costa Rica, Belize, Brazil and Australia.

In addition to this programme, the national and international private sector is looking forward to setting up or extending their business activities to ecotourism, because it is profitable in Madagascar seeing that most of the tourists (55% in 2007, Ministry of Environment, Water, Forest and Tourism, 2007) come for nature experiences. But due to the lack of awareness and training, the majority of the Malagasy tourism private sector is not able to follow or practise even the basic principles of ecotourism: conservation of nature, benefiting local communities and providing a rich interpretive experience for tourists. Only a very limited number of ecotourism operators (tour operators, agencies and lodges) have made an attempt to specialize in this niche and provide authentic ecotourism tours or projects which satisfy the international criteria for ecotourism:

- *Boogie Pilgrim*, a notable ecotourism operator, has been working for several years with the NGO Fanamby to create a community tourism site in an area of forest near the capital.
- Somacram, another tour operator, is training people in six villages around Antananarivo to develop a tourism product.
- Tsara Guest House has set up an association in Fianarantsoa to support cultural heritage, as well as supporting a number of local NGOs.
- The hotels Princesse Bora Lodge & Spa and Bungalows de Vohilava have established a partnership with the international whale protection association, Megaptera, giving tourists the opportunity to take part in scientific whale observation.

The following paragraphs present two of the above projects in more detail:

### **Tour operator 'Boogie Pilgrim' and NGO 'Fanamby'**

*Boogie Pilgrim* has been active in ecotourism activities around Madagascar for nearly ten years (e.g. Mananara Lodge, Anjozorobe, Ecolodge 'Bushhouse', Canal de Pangalanes, 'Tsara Camp', Andringitra) and works together with the NGO *Fanamby*.

*Fanamby*, *Boogie Pilgrim* and 13 local communities came together in their desire to establish an ecotourism project in Anjozorobe, 90km north-east of Madagascar's capital Antananarivo. The forest corridor there (125,000ha including primary forest) has the highest biodiversity level in this region with 11 species of lemurs, 82 species of bird and 423 species of plants. Comprising local communities land and *Boogie Pilgrim's* managers' privately-owned territory 'Domaine de Croix Vallon', the 'SOA Camp' was established in 2002 and extended to the 'Mananara Lodge' in 2007. This ecotourism project tries to conserve the biodiversity around the lodge by providing the local population with sources of income and tries to stop the ongoing deforestation and burning of the forest by creating employment through the lodge's activities (guiding, tourism services, kitchen), establishing educational activities (a training programme for guides, green classes for local schools, tree planting activities) and supporting mini-projects of local Inhabitants (agricultural projects, pisciculture, honey production). Tourists' money is spent to support this project. *Boogie Pilgrim's* partner, *Fanamby*, ensures holistic integration (vertical: administration-organism-community and horizontal: intercommunal relations) and further economic promotion for the

local people by extending the ecotourism project into other surrounding regions. *Fanamby* emphasizes a scientific approach and has created a biodiversity information system for all stakeholders concerned, including the international donor community. For this project, *Boogie Pilgrim* was awarded with the 'Sustainable Tourism Award for Tour Operators' of 'Deutsche Reiseveranstalter-Verbund' (German Association of Tour and Travel Agents) in 2005.

### **Princesse Bora Lodge & Spa, Bungalows de Vohilava and Megaptera, Ste. Marie Island**

Each year, between July and September, Ste. Marie Island, situated in the East of Madagascar, provides an important refuge for the humpback whales that come to give birth. The hotels, *Princesse Bora Lodge & Spa* and *Bungalows de Vohilava*, have established a partnership with the international whale protection association, *Megaptera*, giving tourists the opportunity to take part in scientific whale observation. *Megaptera's* scientific station is installed at *Princesse Bora Lodge* and tourists leave by boat to see the whales, accompanied by scientists and volunteers.

In addition to learning about marine ecology, tourists are integrated into the research activities. They can be involved in locating whales, taking pictures, listening to males with a hydrophone or recording the position of a group of whales. The data collected (sounds, behaviour and descriptions) are added to existing data. These trips, paid for by tourists, help to finance additional scientific expeditions. A part of the revenue from these trips is given to *Megaptera* as a voluntary donation. In addition to the scientific work undertaken at sea, both hotels hold conferences and present films on behavioural and ecological topics concerning sea mammals (their characteristics, ways of life, threats to their preservation, as well as potential solutions and efforts being made for their protection).

In 2008, after several years of raising awareness and training the local population around the two hotels, the project plans to expand and provide village men with boats to offer trips to tourists and establish their own micro businesses. Village women will be trained in making humpback whale handicraft and they will learn how to establish their own small handicraft stalls.

### **Ecolodge Greenwashing**

The misuse of the term 'ecotourism' unfortunately minimizes the reputation and the activities of proper ecotourism businesses such as those cited above and undermines their competitive advantage. Lodges calling themselves 'ecolodges'<sup>6</sup> are mushrooming in Madagascar as a lot of traditional lodge owners use the term for promotional activities without a proper understanding of the value of the term. This form of marketing is called 'greenwashing', whereby lodges are claiming to be something they are not. At the present time, there are no regulations and norms on what can be classified as an 'ecolodge' on administrative level. With this in mind, *The International Ecotourism Society (TIES)* developed an Ecolodge criteria system in 2002 for determining whether an 'ecolodge' is truly an ecolodge (Mehta et al, 2002). For an accommodation facility to be called an ecolodge, it needs to satisfy five of the following criteria (Mehta et al, 2002), three of which must embody the three main principles of ecotourism mentioned earlier in this paper:

1. help in the conservation of the surrounding flora and fauna;
2. have minimal impact on the natural surroundings during construction;
3. fit into its specific physical and cultural contexts through careful attention to form, landscaping and colour, as well as the use of vernacular architecture;
4. use alternative, sustainable means of water acquisition and reduce water consumption;
5. provide for the careful handling and disposal of solid waste and sewage;
6. meet its energy needs through passive design and renewable energy sources;
7. use traditional building technology and materials wherever possible and combine these with their modern counterparts for greater sustainability;
8. endeavour to work together with the local community;
9. offer interpretive programmes to educate both its employees and tourists about the surrounding natural and cultural environments; and
10. contribute to sustainable local development through education programmes and research

There is flexibility within this criteria system. For example, an ecolodge does not need to satisfy the use of local building materials if there are none available. If this criteria system is implemented and enforced in Madagascar, then 'greenwashing' can be reduced, as has been evidenced in some areas of Australia and Kenya.

With only a few true ecotourism operators in existence and with the incredible biodiversity, it is quite clear that Madagascar's ecotourism potential is far from being exploited and that its value to the country's overall economic development has not still been recognized.

It seems that the necessary points for tourism development, especially for ecotourism development, need to be reinforced or adapted to ensure more successful sustainable tourism development in the future. Looking at Madagascar's main

competitors cited in the masterplan (GATO, 2005) – Costa Rica, Australia, Brazil, Belize, South Africa, Ecuador, and Mozambique and Kenya – and how they manage and direct their tourism development, a number of elements can be identified facts that seem to serve as a basis for their successful approach:

- harmonization of stakeholders' efforts with the creation of synergies between them on a national, regional and local level;
- clear and practical administrative structure;
- proper vision and policy for ecotourism development through a realistic development plan, with achievable objectives and concrete activities in a set timeframe; supported by a legal framework that works correctly;
- development of the countries' unique selling points (USP) with the help of specific products and services, especially at the regional level and increased national and regional promotion and marketing efforts;
- sufficient education and training systems of a high quality;
- well-established guiding, tour operator and accommodation certification programmes, such as the Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAP3), International Ecotourism Standard (Green Globe), Eco-rating Scheme (Kenya) and the Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) (Mehta, 2007);
- government that facilitates the tourism development approach for the country by providing and supporting the necessary investment climate and conditions;
- private sector that wants to produce a profit, but follows a sustainable way as supported by the government and donor institutions; and
- integration of and benefit for the local population from tourism development.

It is clear that one competitor alone is not able to provide all these elements in common but together they provide a framework for long-term ecotourism development.

### **Challenges to address**

There are still several hindrances which need to be eliminated or facilitated to finally realize the government's vision as described in the MAP. Some have been already mentioned and will be explained in more detail now. In addition, there are a number of views and suggestions which are currently under discussion by stakeholders that can offer a wider picture to the reader.

### **Coordination of activities with stakeholders at national, regional and local levels**

Increasing efforts from the Malagasy public and private sector and, in recent years, from donor organizations and NGOs have been very intense, especially for ecotourism development. Unfortunately, there is no one body to streamline the different activities of the stakeholders into one common programme, as has been done in some other countries. For a destination that publicly announces that it wants to become one of the main ecotourism destinations worldwide, this is not an encouraging base. Therefore, it is increasingly important that one institution takes the lead in coordinating and streamlining the various efforts of the different stakeholders into one programme. Normally this would be the role of the acting Ministry of Tourism but this has not been the case: neither the former 'Ministry of Culture and Tourism', nor its successor the 'Ministry of Transport and Tourism' have taken up this task. The disorganization of ecotourism development was deepened by the lack of links between the different Ministries responsible for tourism in the past and the Ministry for Environment, Water and Forest. In addition, the links to tourism administration in the provinces are still difficult and hindered by energy supply, technical problems (e.g. internet access) as well as cultural disagreements between the capital and the coast. Therefore, people from the provinces often feel excluded from the development process, which creates frustration and tension.

At the time of writing, it seems that the merger of the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Environment, Water and Forest since November 2007, has created the role of a leading institution for ecotourism development for the first time. The necessary decisions are being made more quickly and information is being channelled more effectively to the regional offices for implementation.

Concerning the public-private relationship, the private sector was accustomed to not expecting help from the Ministry when it needed to solve tourism development problems. Business owners grew accustomed to solving those problems that should have been regulated by the responsible institutions at the national and regional level (e.g. ensuring tourists' security, preservation of the environment, establishing training programmes, promoting the country outside). There exists an urgent need for the administration to take over these roles and responsibilities so that the private sector can focus on moving forward with their businesses.

Concerning donors' roles, it was not unusual in the past for two donors to develop the same plan and therefore spend double the amount of money to achieve the same goal. This resulted from a lack of communication. Fortunately, donors have started to communicate and work more intensively together on ecotourism development (e.g. the MIARO programme bringing together USAID, Conservation International and World Conservation Society, IFC's concession programme linked to World

Conservation Society, Conservation International and Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW)). Regarding ecotourism activities from private sector and local populations and the NGO and donor community, there is still a lack of know-how in securing donor and NGO finance which results in a lot of frustration for all parties wanting to implement ecotourism projects. More technical assistance is needed to meet donors' advanced reporting requirements).

### **Creation of a clear administrative structure**

As a former colony, Madagascar's administrative structure is based on the French system. This has resulted in a top-down rather than bottom-up decision-making process. Ongoing decentralization is being pushed by the President by redistributing manpower: lowering staff numbers in the capital and adding employees in the provinces. Decentralization will strengthen provincial tourism entities and give them greater institutional responsibility.

It was mentioned in the previous section that between 2005 and 2007 the Ministry of Tourism was attached to three different Ministries, while the minister in charge was exchanged four times: 2005 - December 2006: Ministry of Culture and Tourism; December 2006 – November 2007: Ministry of Transport and Tourism; November 2007 to current date: Ministry of Environment, Water and Forest and Tourism. The merge between the ministries of tourism and environment had been long awaited by tourism businesses and donor institutions focusing on ecotourism. The move manifests government statements for ecotourism development in Madagascar. Furthermore, a new department, dedicated to ecotourism development and services, will be launched within this new ministry responsible for ecotourism development and activities. The former poor communication and administrative complexity will be hopefully minimized with this merge of these two ministries.

### **Implementation of an ecotourism development plan that is supported by a legal framework**

The masterplan analysed the major obstacles for tourism and ecotourism development in Madagascar. It indicated that one big problem is that a certain vision and definition of 'ecotourism' has not been agreed upon in Madagascar. Ecotourism is often confused with nature tourism and the local population has not been sensitized to understand the difference. 'Ecotod' has proposed a definition to the ministry which has been used in the Malagasy tourism law (Code du Tourisme), currently under revision. The revision of this law by the actual Ministry and supported by IFC can be seen as one enormous step forward as relevant changes and facilitation were agreed, including those for investment procedures. In addition, ecotourism issues have been integrated into a law for the first time.

Hotel and lodge classification are also under revision. The current indicators are outdated, and the classification indicators cannot be checked due to financial constraints. Ministry officials cannot travel to the hotels and lodges to revise their status. As a result, hotel and lodge managers have the ability to list their accommodation in whichever category they like, but not necessarily in the category that matches reality. This is why much accommodation is wrongly classified or not classified at all. It is hoped that the new classification system follows established international criteria and environmental and social issues will be integrated, covering the whole of Madagascar's hotel and lodge business.

Between, 2006 and 2007, the President was supported by an 'ecotourism advisor' as a result of the movie 'Madagascar'. In exchange for using the name 'Madagascar', DreamWorks Corporation made a donation to Conservation International and the advisory position was created. Thanks to the advisor's work, ecotourism issues have been largely integrated into the MAP (commitment 7).

The announcement of the MAP as government strategy has resulted in several regional workshops on how to tackle its demands up to 2012. The environmental strategy plan has been reviewed and has been brought in line with this new overall governmental strategy. The Office National for Environment (ONE) has implemented a green label (Label vert). The indicators used have been largely copied from Australia's National Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAP) and are therefore difficult to adopt to Malagasy reality (e.g. the recycling of waste is currently very unusual in Madagascar). This might be the reason why the ONE label is currently not well known or adopted by the hotel industry. Nevertheless, it is a good step towards sensitizing hotel operators and to increasing the competitive environment at the same time. One of the propositions of the Assises Nationales and Ecotod was to implement a so-called 'sustainability label', including not only environmental but also socio-cultural, economic, quality and service aspects, based on the new hotel classification. Seen at the international level, Madagascar would be one of the first countries to group these important aspects for sustainable tourism development into one label.

Ecotod has revised the MAP for ecotourism issues and presented a 'MAP/Ecotod Report' to the Minister. This report presents practical implementation guidelines underlined by a development strategy, action plan, best practice examples, indicators, budget allocation and a time frame. It considered the already existing plans (e.g. the masterplan) and efforts (e.g. Assises Nationale sur le Tourisme Durable, Ecotod's proper programme), and used the Local Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism



Industry as a base for its own framework and as a link to international development efforts for sustainable tourism (Pawliczek, 2006b).

Together with the main Malagasy tourism associations, Ecotod's members have developed the first 'Malagasy Sustainable Tourism Codes of Conduct' for the different stakeholders in tourism. The material for the codes, namely for hotels and restaurants, tour and transport operators, visitors as well as the local population, were based on the experiences and data derived from the earlier development of an ecotourism definition for Madagascar. To keep this definition short, there has been an agreement to explain several aspects further using these codes. The codes are structured using the three aspects of sustainability (environment, socio cultural and economic) and give practical advice that can be easily followed.

### **Development of the country's USPs and improvement of marketing efforts**

Madagascar has not been promoted aggressively enough by the National Tourism Board (ONTM) in recent years due to financial and institutional constraints. Efficient destination marketing and promotional activities including trade fairs, tour operator familiarization, and press trips are necessary to increase the awareness of potential tourists, tour operators and travel agents. Another problem is that ONTM has had difficulty in finding an all-inclusive slogan for Madagascar. There have been serious discussions about the branding and image of Madagascar. Should there be a single focus on ecotourism or not? Should sun and beach be offered with ecotourism? Cultural aspects and adventure travel to push forward? The country offers a wide variety of holidays for tourists and it was thought that focusing only on ecotourism would not represent the uniqueness of Madagascar and its tourism potential.

In addition, it seemed to be a wise decision of the ONTM to wait to use ecotourism for marketing purposes until ecotourism is properly implemented. Instead the new promotional material (brochures, a sales manual, website) were developed in line with the presidential vision 'Madagascar – *naturally*', for activities focusing on the environment. For a marketing campaign in France in 2006/2007 financed by the donor community, the overall slogan, 'Madagascar – La vie en grand' was chosen. Unfortunately, this slogan is very much 'French' in the sense that it is difficult to translate its sense into other languages.

The ONTM has also raised the 'vignette touristique', a tax to be paid by the tourist and the financial base for the ONTM to finance its promotional activities. This decision will hopefully result in increased promotional activities at the international and regional level in the future. Established as recently as 2005, its first three years have seen some promising beginnings for the ONTM. This institution now needs to focus on greater professionalism and higher quality efforts and less of the internal conflicts that hindering it from doing its work properly.

### **Increasing the availability of education and training for the local population**

Training and education in ecotourism matters are unfortunately still non-existent at the time of writing which is surprising for a country wanting to become a leader in ecotourism. Sadly, not only for ecotourism but for tourism in general, Madagascar lacks a proper system for education and training. As a result, Madagascar has many unqualified people working in the tourism industry which is preventing it from reaching international standards and demonstrating a more professional approach.

Some training courses do exist (e.g. the national hotel school INTH – Institut National de Tourisme et d'Hôtellerie), the University of Antananarivo and a dual training course from the Chamber of Commerce) but they lack professionalism and international scope (Spenceley et al., 2007). Qualified trainers lack international experience, too, as well as specialization in ecotourism. The major problem is that has been no decentralization of ecotourism education and training to the different Malagasy districts as currently most of the activities and schools are located in the capital. For many students the costs to cover education and living in the capital or abroad are too high. A starting point would be the establishment of tourism institutions in each of the country's districts and a proper programme to train instructors.

For tourism guides, the training is normally handled by the national park authority ANGAP (Association Nationale pour la Gestion des Aires Protégées). A three-month training course is given to paying students, combined with field work in one of the National Parks. Nevertheless, this is basic training and the majority of guides are learning on the job or undertaking self-study courses in languages. At the beginning of 2007 the Chamber of Commerce established a one-year dual training course for local guides (50 per cent theory, 50 per cent practice) following a highly respected education pattern in Germany. If this new course is successfully received by the students and the private sector, it will be further implemented in Chambers of Commerce in the provinces.

The recent introduction of English as the third official language, after Malagasy and French, by the Malagasy government is an attempt to open the country up to the international community. The government is also starting green education in primary schools to raise awareness of environmental issues among children and their families.

## **Government support of the investment climate and conditions for tourism development**

Although there has been increasing public demand to improve the investment climate, there has been little active support from the government. Activities has been driven by donor institutions who have tried to facilitate and guarantee investments for the country (e.g. USAID with BAMEX, Agence Française de Développement (AFD), World Bank/IFC). Although the current government has been trying to accelerate tourism development, it is still hampered by a difficult investment climate and investment conditions. Investors are hindered from providing money because of a lack of basic requirements including: land ownership and land issues, investment procedures, the necessary documents being in place, contact people, land speculation in attractive tourism areas, the slow implementation of government decisions, a low level of coordination between the private and public sector and inside governmental bodies, and interest rates which are far too high for national investors to get involved in this business. Special incentives or tax reductions for tourism development and for the construction of proper ecolodges, the recuperation of products and materials and minimizing the use of natural resources, using renewable energies or the implementation of ecotourism products following international standards are not given and it seems that they will not be given until 2009 prior to the demands of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and its country strategy.

It is no surprise that in the latest Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report (Blanke and Chiesa, 2008) Madagascar was placed 118 out of the 130 countries that were studied. The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report (TTCI) aims to measure *the factors and policies that make it attractive to develop the T&T sector in different countries*. The TTCI is composed of a number of 14 'pillars' of travel and tourism competitiveness. These are:

1. Policy rules and regulations;
2. Environmental sustainability;
3. Safety and security;
4. Health and hygiene;
5. Prioritization of travel and tourism;
6. Air transport infrastructure;
7. Ground transport infrastructure;
8. Tourism infrastructure;
9. ICT infrastructure;
10. Price competitiveness in the travel and tourism industry;
11. Human resources;
12. Affinity for travel and tourism;
13. Natural resources;
14. Cultural resources.

These facts and statistics have a negative impact on potential investors at the national and international levels to finance new projects to boost the Malagasy economy and it lowers their confidence in the country's financial practices. It should not be hidden that in the past international investors for Madagascar were sometimes unlucky and news of their lack of success has spread around the globe, giving Madagascar a less than favourable reputation with investors.

The country is one of the least developed countries in the world and it does not have not large amounts to invest in tourism development, therefore it finds itself in the same position as other African countries: it is under pressure to show its credibility to investors as it needs their money to develop the country and move forward. One of the activities showing the country's willingness to give more support to investors today is the creation of the Economic Development Board of Madagascar (EDBM) for investors in 2007 (linked directly to the Presidency), designed to speed up necessary processes for investors (e.g. visa requirements). One current example of this is the improvement of Madagascar's investment climate following the revision of existing laws and procedures (e.g. the above-mentioned tourism law with its investment procedures).

## **Integration of the local population in tourism development**

In general, the Malagasy population shows a positive attitude and willingness to participate in tourism development (e.g. intense participation in the development of tourism masterplans). Seen from a tourism perspective, the Malagasy culture is unique: initially coming from Malaysia, today it is a mixture of Asian, African, Arabian and European influences. The Malagasy highland tribes (Merina) were colonized by the French who introduced a communist system. Subtle tensions between the Malagasy people from the highland region and those from the Coastal region has complicated the development of the country. Malagasy culture is characterized by its great pacifism and is driven by the idea of 'fihavanana', or harmony, which makes it necessary for all stakeholders to discuss and agree on each decision. Decisions take time and much energy with this system. The Malagasy communication style follows the 'fihavanana'-approach which means that overly direct or loud discussions are avoided (Dahl, 1999)

	<b>2005</b>	<b>2012</b>
Revenue generated by the tourist sector (millions US\$)	184	577
Number of direct jobs created within the sector of tourism	21,167	40,100
Number of tourists visiting Madagascar	150,000	500,000

Source : MAP, 2006.

**Table 1:** MAP's tourism development indicators

A greater awareness of tavy culture<sup>8</sup> and the integration of the local population into tourism development is desperately needed. Currently only a small proportion of the Malagasy people profit from tourism development and this tends to be those who are already wealthy. The majority of the population have seen no advantages from tourism development. Instead of destroying their natural resource base in the medium term, it should be used for sustainable exploitation such as ecotourism development.

In order to integrate the Malagasy people in tourism development, it is important to be aware of the traditional belief systems, which have been augmented by imported organized religions. A firm belief in the existence of close ties between the living and the dead constitutes the most basic of all traditional beliefs and the foundation for Malagasy religious and social values.

Everyday life in rural Madagascar is regulated by numerous *fady* (taboos) which vary from one region to another. *Fady* can forbid foods (pork, lemur, turtle, etc.), wearing clothes of a particular colour, and bathing in a river or a lake. There are also some sacred places or sites on the Island that are *fady* because people believe that some spirits of the ancestors are living there and they offer sacrifices such as zebu and red chicken. Whether as investors, developers, consultants or tourists, it is important to respect these prohibitions so as not to offend local people, even if the foundation of the belief is sometimes debatable. Visitors should inform themselves about local *fady* before travelling to a new place.

## Summary and outlook

As a unique biodiversity hotspot and cultural destination, Madagascar has great resources to offer the crowded tourism market. The illustrated indicators defined by the MAP show that developing ecotourism as a niche market, has enormous potential.

If only half of these indicators are achieved until 2012, Madagascar's ecotourism development will have made a great step forward. What has not been indicated in the MAP, are the necessary actions to meet these indicators.

This chapter has tried to explain in detail the state of tourism and ecotourism development in Madagascar. Based on this, the three questions asked in the beginning will be answered in the following providing a summary of the main issues;

### Why has Madagascar not been better recognized as a destination on the international tourism map?

For a long time, tourism was not even seen as a proper industry sector and efforts for tourism development came from the private sector and donor institutions (especially for ecotourism development). This situation changed in 2005, when tourism became the leading foreign currency provider of the country and the government finally accepted tourism as an industry, appreciating its importance to the Malagasy economy and its ability to increase local living standards. Since this time, tourism development has been pushed continually forward, at the present time having its own chapter in the government's strategy programme, the MAP. As the MAP is a vision, it does not give concrete or practical indications on how its indicators could be reached. Activities which could help to achieve these indicators are:

- a proper vision and policy for ecotourism development through a realistic development plan with achievable objectives and concrete activities in a set timeframe; supported by a practised legal framework that works correctly;
- an update and implementation of the Malagasy tourism masterplan (adopted already in 2005), focusing in particular on ecotourism development;
- widespread awareness raising of the main principles of ecotourism;
- an update of the tourism law to the current reality of the tourism sector to facilitate investment processes by making them more financially attractive;
- urgent revision of hotel classifications to international standards, taking account of environmental and social issues and ensuring consistent implementation around the country;

- the official adaptation of the 'Malagasy Sustainable Tourism Codes of Conduct' from the Ministry.

This needs to be indicated and followed-up by a clear and practical administrative structure, which can be achieved by:

- integrating management thinking into administration as well as providing more training and motivation for ministerial staff;
- redistributing manpower (decentralization) and strengthening the provincial tourism entities;
- implementing a new department especially for ecotourism development inside the new Ministry;
- minimizing administrative complexity and improving communication channels;

Of especial importance is supporting and strengthening the Ministry of Environment, Water and Forest and Tourism for its new requirements and tasks by all stakeholders. It is vital that this institution takes the lead in ecotourism development and that it coordinates and streamlines the various efforts of the public-private-donor sector into one programme, following one action plan to bring the MAP's vision into effect (harmonization efforts on national, regional and local level). The necessary activities should be implemented as soon as possible and well communicated to the administrative institutions at the regional level. The latter should be better trained and forced finally to take over their roles and responsibilities to the extent that the private sector can concentrate and push their businesses forward.

As financial means for destination marketing and promotion are very limited, and the competition on the international tourism market is high, Madagascar does not get the attention it should, considering the variety of activities and the nearly pristine destination it offers. This is mainly due to a lack of proper branding and image creation for Madagascar as a tourism destination and the virtually non-existent marketing and promotional activities. As the tourism tax, the financial resource of the tourism board, is followed up more closely now by the Malagasy Tourism Board, it will provide more income, resulting in improved and more professional efforts on the international, regional and local levels (e.g. trade fairs). The country's USPs must now be developed, especially at the regional level, along with enhanced promotion of the regions by their Regional Tourism Boards.

### **Why has tourism development not increased living standards for the local population in one of the most underdeveloped countries of the world?**

In addition to the points already mentioned, there has not been enough government effort yet to improve the investment climate and conditions for investors to make tourism a lead sector and convince international investors to set up business in Madagascar. One can see that with the push coming from the MAP launch, the activities of the government will start to bring results, but it is not yet enough to draw investors away from other countries where there are better conditions and greater investment security. This situation could be improved by:

- giving special incentives for tourism development (as, e.g., reduced taxes for the construction of proper ecolodges, recuperation of products/materials minimizing the use of natural resources (e.g. renewable energies) or the implementation of ecotourism products following international standards);
- speeding up the necessary processes for interested investors to encourage them to convince other investors to come to Madagascar;
- supporting the ongoing concession process for the establishment of high class ecolodges of international quality in some of the National Parks; facilitating interest in building similar structures around the parks, with special focus on supporting local SME development;
- further lobbying of three to four-star brands from around the world that specialize in classical sun and beach tourism as well as smaller specialized operators (e.g. diving, kite surf, hiking & trekking, climbing, etc.);
- government statements followed up by actions pushing ecotourism development forward;
- private sector support of the recent launch of concrete measures taken by the government to increase the Malagasy investment climate (as, e.g., the creation of the EDBM for investors in 2007) to ensure that more of them will follow.

Until today, the local population has unfortunately not been integrated as much as it should be in tourism activities. There is little channelling of the income and benefits from tourism development directly to them due to missing regulations and planning. The private tourism sector is characterized mainly by foreign hotel owners (French, in Nosy Be Italians, few Malagasy citizens) with international brands still missing. In terms of the employment structure, it remains the same: management positions in hotels as well as in tour operator businesses are filled by foreign people. This is due to a lack of indigenous high quality education in this sector. Increased training and education systems complying with international standards as well as management and training programmes for the local population are of the utmost importance if the local population are to keep up to date with and profit from this new development. As most of the very few existing tourism schools and university courses are based in the capital, people from the regions have often no chance to attend as travel and living costs would be too high for them. For a lot of families, the cost of their children's education is already hard to finance.

The solution may be in more decentralization of tourism education to the provinces, preferably in each of the regions. This should avoid the local population being displaced by foreigners and tourism development being destroyed by jealousy – which ultimately might result in poor treatment for tourists. What has not been valued yet is the ability of Malagasy people to learn languages very quickly. The native language is composed of a mixture of languages which makes it easy for the locals to pick up other languages. In addition, donors' financial support programmes need to be accessed more easily and supported by technical assistance as interested people can often not follow or satisfy the difficult procedures or reporting requirements. Better awareness raising and start-up measures (e.g. infrastructure development, micro-credits especially for tourism) are often helpful to show to the locals that tourism developments can have positive results.

### **Why has a country with such outstanding natural/cultural resources, not been able to create a proper ecotourism niche and sustainably manage their resources?**

The situation for this niche sector of tourism and its value chain is still somewhat unstable; one could also say that, with few exceptions, Madagascar is not yet an authentic ecotourism destination but has incredible potential to be one in the future. The 'Sleeping Beauty' has been recently awakened by the government's MAP and major activities as, for example, by the PIC project for tourism development and the IFC's concession programme for National Parks. The stated willingness of the government to develop this niche has been indicated by several actions taken in the recent past and the signs for future development are promising. Viewing the outstandingly rich but fragile biodiversity of this country, the focus on high class ecotourism seems to be a promising idea for preserving this uniqueness. To make the wish come true to be the premier ecotourism destination in the Indian Ocean and being able to compete with well-known countries already specializing in this area, Madagascar might want to redirect itself using the following five steps:

1. To establish a proper conservation mechanism to preserve its natural resources, which are very much under pressure: by the countries ongoing deforestation<sup>7</sup> through the local populations' tavy culture and their current poor agricultural practices as well as the actual desire of the government to grow stronger in the mining and oil industries. Instead of appreciating and exploiting the country sustainably by installing a proper ecotourism niche, this given base must be continuously defended today. One way to protect these important biodiverse areas might be to meet with local community religious and spiritual leaders and agree to place *fadys* on pristine areas for both locals and foreigners. This practice of protecting areas through religious and spiritual beliefs is being used successfully in several places in the world.
2. To have a proper vision for what ecotourism stands for in Madagascar (the majority of the people still confuse it with nature tourism).
3. To develop and manage ecotourism development correctly (establish the necessary policy, implementation strategy and activity by the implementation of a new department for sustainable and ecotourism inside the Ministry of Tourism).
4. To follow this up by managing it in a very professional way, supported by appropriate instruments and mechanisms and the integration of the local population (e.g. by awareness raising measures to preserve their environment and let them personally participate by improved training and education measures that conform to international standards (e.g. for guides), creating jobs or their own businesses or finding ways to channel the benefits through to them).
5. To speak and lobby about its ongoing development and efforts to the world; especially to investors known for their responsible ecotourism activities thereby attracting them to come to Madagascar as well as the well-known international organizations for ecotourism.

It is obvious that today, Madagascar stands at a cross-road between:

- un-strategic tourism development with exploitation of the natural resources and pursuing unsustainable and rapid results to boost the country's overall development; OR
- a harmonised mix of different types of tourism (of which ecotourism is an important one) to develop the economy of the country by integrating the local population and improving their living standards, targeting a responsible and long-term vision in which the natural resources will be exploited in a sustainable way.

Malagasy tourism development seems to be heading in the second direction and the ongoing activities of the current government are supported by their first positive results. If the country continues like this and develops ecotourism to boost the Malagasy economy and increase the living standard of the local population, it will hopefully help to improve the country's development. Although donors' help is still needed to provide financial and technical assistance, it seems that Madagascar has finally started to address the MAP and its vision.

We wish Madagascar, the Sleeping Beauty in the Indian Ocean, recently kissed awake, success in becoming the leading ecotourism destination in the Indian Ocean and for the President's slogan to become true and respected worldwide:

Madagascar – *Naturally!*

## Notes:

1. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as 'responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.'
2. The Malagasy President has emphasized his willingness to increase protected areas to 6,000,000ha as well as to increase the surface of marine protected areas to 10 per cent of national territory (Durban Vision, 2003).
3. According to the Madagascar National Institute of Statistics, 68.7 per cent of the island's inhabitants live below the poverty threshold (INSTAT, 2005).
4. 'To accelerate and better coordinate the development process and to make a quantum leap, we have created the Madagascar Action Plan, the MAP. The MAP is a bold, five-year plan which establishes direction and priorities for the nation from 2007 to 2012. It states the commitments, strategies and actions that will ignite rapid growth, lead to the reduction of poverty, and ensure that the country develops in response to the challenges of globalization and in accordance with the national vision "Madagascar – Naturally" and the UN Millennium Development Goals' (Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar).
5. Ecotod's ecotourism definition reads 'Un tourisme responsable et durable basé sur la conservation du patrimoine naturel et socio-culturel de Madagascar.' [A responsible and sustainable tourism which is based on the preservation of the natural and sociocultural heritage of Madagascar] (ECOTOD, 2006).
6. 'An ecolodge is a 5–75 room low-impact, nature-based, financially sustainable accommodation facility that helps protect sensitive neighbouring areas; involves and benefits local communities; offers tourists an interpretative and interactive participatory experience; provides a spiritual communion with nature and culture and is planned, designed, constructed and operated in an environmentally and socially sensitive manner' (Mehta, 2007).
7. With the average rate of clearance of 111,000ha of forest (1.5 per cent) per year between 1950 and 1985, in this time one half of Madagascar's forests disappeared (*Science*, 1990).
8. Tavy culture is the practice of burning down tropical forest for rice planting and other agricultural purposes.

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## Appendix:

### Recommendation 6.8: Intensively promote and develop the tourism sector

#### Objectives

Madagascar will be a privileged destination for all categories of tourism, with a primary focus given to ecotourism. International hotel chains will be encouraged to invest in Madagascar to solve the problem linked to the lack of infrastructure and suitable accommodation. Local domestic operators will be encouraged to develop further the breadth and standard of their facilities and programmes. Madagascar will be amongst the leading countries in sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian Ocean in the promotion of a high-quality ecotourism experience.

#### Strategies

1. Attract high quality investors by the provision of incentives, access to land, and general support.
2. Promote the destination 'Madagascar' as a superior and unique ecotourism destination.
3. Support management development and professionalism of the tourist sector.
4. Improve the range of tourism products and services.

#### Projects and priority actions

- Identify and launch new tourist sites and products.
- Set up a tourist database.
- Broaden the network of tourism agencies.
- Develop e-tourism (online purchase, electronic payment terminal, credit cards, etc.).
- Identify priority tourist sites which are favourable to investment; speed up and facilitate the procedures for the setting up and exploitation of investment projects (EDBM).
- Rationalize the management of hotel assets with public participation.
- Support training activities in the tourism sector.

### Recommendation 7: Cherish the Environment (selection)

Madagascar will be a world leader in the development and implementation of environmental best practice. After many decades of exploitation and neglect, we have begun to turn the tide. We will become a 'green island' again. Our commitment is to care for, cherish and protect our extraordinary environment. The world looks to us to manage our biodiversity wisely and responsibly and we will. Local communities will be active participants in environmental conservation under the guidance of bold national policies. Given the Government's vision 'Madagascar - Naturally' - we will develop industries around the environment such as ecotourism, agri-business, sustainable farming practices, and industries based on organic and natural products. These industries and activities will minimize biodiversity damage and maximize benefits for the nation and the people.

### Challenge 1: Increase the protected areas for the conservation of land, lake, marine and costal biodiversity

*Objective:* Madagascar will become a green nation which contributes not only at its national health but also at the global one.

#### Strategies

1. Establish a national eco-tourism framework and strategy to contribute to the protection and promotion of the environment and to ensure 'eco-eco' harmonization (economic-ecological)

#### Projects and priority actions

1. Inform and raise awareness with all stakeholders.
2. Carry out Surveys / Inventories.
3. Conduct national, regional and communal consultations.
4. Provide for the ecological monitoring and the implementation of measures for the conservation of land and watery ecosystems.

## **Challenge 2: Reduce the natural resource degradation process**

*Objectives:* Madagascar commits to keep its 9 m hectare forest and wetland area for the conservation of its natural richness and the sustainable use of its forest, lake, marine and coastal resources.

### *Strategies*

- Promote the development and use of alternative energy resources such as biofuels that include palm oil, jatropha, soy and sugar cane.
- Promote reforestation and restore degraded habitats.
- Promote private sector financing to assist in environmental management.

### *Projects and priority actions*

- Support the use of improved charcoal making techniques.

## **Challenge 3: Develop the environmental reflex at all levels**

*Objectives:* We will mainstream the environment into all sectoral plans and develop a strong and effective environmental reflex.

### *Strategies*

1. Explore ways that the government (national, regional and local) with the help of the private sector can assist in environmental protection and ensure that the highest global standards are met.
2. Strengthen the framework for preventing environmental damage (including pollution) caused by businesses, miners, farmers, fishermen and tourism.
3. Contribute to the protection of sensitive zones through comprehensive environmental assessment.
4. Internalize the environmental stake into sectoral, regional and communal policies.
5. Implement the Education Policy Relative to the Environment (Politique de l'Éducation Relative à l'Environnement (PERE)).

### *Projects and priority actions*

- Assure the ratification and implementation of the international conventions as for example the Kyoto Protocol.
- Develop the Code of the Environment.
- Reduce pollution in industrial zones located in urban, rural and port areas.
- Develop the value chains in potential business sectors to ensure that biodiversity is linked to the economy.
- Establish an Ecotourism policy, charter, code that states the vision, the commitment, the values and the approach for the promotion and implementation of ecotourism throughout the country.
- Establish special zones for ecotourism.
- Promote and create investment standards to maintain quality
- Develop, coordinate, share and promote important environmental information.
- Promote the compatibility of investment with the environment.
- Promote strategic environmental assessment (EAS) in the sectors of tourism,