

Madagascar: Dry Deciduous

Treesisters has been funding the reforestation of coastal forests (primarily dry deciduous forest) near the city of Mahajanga in western Madagascar since October 2017. The project is led by Eden Reforestation Projects, one of our valued reforestation partners. The restoration site is located on a cape, on the western end of the Bombetoka Bay, opposite of the city of Mahajanga (which is located at the other end of the bay). The site is approximately 25 square kilometers; hence approximately the same size as Frankfurt Airport in Germany. The regrowing forest will form the northwestern end of the greater Mahajanga Green Belt, with the southeast end meets the Ankarafantsika National Park (2 hours by car from Mahajanga).

This is a new project. The first planted seedlings in 2017 were provide from a tree nursery in Mahajanga. The TreeSisters funded nursery was constructed in 2018, with the seedlings from the new on-site nursery to be planted beginning January 2019.



Why are we planting there?

For TreeSisters, the project represents an opportunity to expand one of the world's richest and most distinctive tropical dry forests, to the benefit of critically endangered plants and animals. It is also a great opportunity to test forest-based economic development at a large scale. Through the 'employ to plant' methodology, villagers start noticing changes at all levels, including the ecological benefits, such as improved fisheries. This immense relief is perfect ground for communities transition to different relationships with the forest and trees. It is crucial in a country where reforestation is a matter of survival, as Madagascar is one of the poorest countries in the world.

What are the expected socio-economic outcomes?

Historical political choices, increasing population, and poverty, have contributed to the clearance of significant portions of western Madagascar's dry deciduous forests.

The project begins with providing the poorest of the poor with a consistent income, and a sense of accomplishment. It subsequently benefits their families as confirmed by sociological interviews conducted with hundreds of villagers. Over 1,000 "Eden children" are now receiving an education for the first time. Prior to employment, the parents could not afford the tuition fees.

The dignity of employment helps families escape the circle of poverty, which often include debt relief and indentured servanthood.

What are the goals?

The project aims to restore approximately 2,500 hectares of (primarily) dry-deciduous forests but also a fringe of mangroves along the shore, resulting in the planting of approximately 6,250,000 trees. Over time, the two vegetative systems will become a continuous ecosystem, and ultimately connect to the other projects part of the envisioned green belt. In this regards, Eden Reforestation Projects has been restoring endangered mangrove estuarine systems along the western coast since 2007, with TreeSisters sponsoring sites within the Kalamboro Estuary since 2015.

The project's sustainability is the responsibility of the local people and the local Government. Adjacent communities are given the opportunity to restore adjacent forests and experience similar positive outcomes. A wildlife rescue center will help curb illegal hunting of endangered bushmeat. Moreover, Eden's Nature Center provides an education center as a public library and arboretum for University students. Further, with the Centers close proximity to Mahajanga, the TreeSisters' funded project sets the premises for ecotourism development, which will welcome local and international visitors to witness forest restoration and wildlife reintroduction.





The ultimate goal is to transition the land into a protected area as part of the greater Mahajanga Green Belt Project.

People

Eden Reforestation Projects works locally through a community-based association, which supports several villages getting organized and engaged to operate nurseries, plant trees, clear off weeds, make compost, site's maintenance, etc.

The project plants pioneer species, such as Albizia mainaea which is native to Madagascar, as well as species with larger distributions such Albizia saman, which can shade large areas.

It is a true reforestation project that primarily replants pioneer dry deciduous species native to Madagascar. Pioneer species enable the fastest path to restoring the land. After the pioneer species restore the canopy, natural regeneration then "kicks in" and a more diverse and mature forest emerges.

The villagers are providing all of the reforestation work. While the land is government controlled, there is a commitment to co-management with local communities.

TreeSisters Partnership since October 2017

Trees



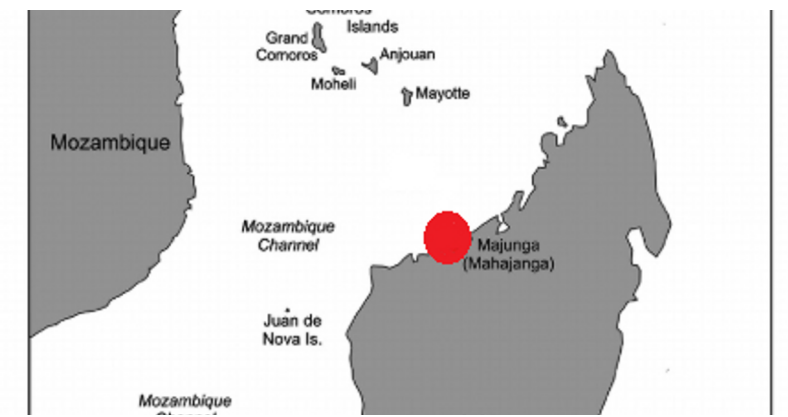
The project focuses on planting endemic trees, such as Dalbergia chlorocarpa, with high rates of seeds production and high potential of natural regeneration.

The regrowing forest will form the northwestern end of the greater Mahajanga Green Belt, with the southeast end meets the Ankarafantsika National Park (2 hours by car from Mahajanga).

Location: On a cape, on the western end of the Bombetoka Bay, opposite of the city of Mahajanga

Land size: Approximately 25 square kilometers

Place



Animals



A group of university professors and students, part of one of a 'The search for lost species' expedition, found a chameleon species, thought to be extinct, on the TreeSisters' funded forest restoration site on Spring 2018.

The project is dedicated to restoring and preserving habitat for wildlife, both for plants and animals. The project also enables the reintroduction of critically endangered wild animals (in addition to rare plants).

Madagascar ~ Dry Deciduous



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Expected Outcomes

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It is important to note that female empowerment is a primary objective for Eden Reforestation Projects in Madagascar. The organization helped to finance the Sarobidy Women's Center. Sarobidy means "precious" in Malagasy. The Center provides prenatal, birthing and postnatal care in Mahajanga.



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Project Approach



Villagers, farmers, fisherfolks, and particularly women, are employed to grow, plant and guard dry deciduous tree species. To Eden Reforestation Projects, one key element to successful reforestation in western Madagascar is that: "you have to benefit the local population. People who are suffering the impact of deforestation are living in extreme poverty because of the connection between the land and the local community." They call their approach the 'Employ to Plant' methodology. Reforestation helps with poverty relief and people build a relationship with trees so they value forests and become stewards.

Women

The TreeSisters project employs at a minimum 60% female villagers, therefore greatly directly benefiting the women and their families.

For more details about this project and others please go to www.treesisters.org

All photos courtesy Eden Reforestation Projects