



A proposal for

Project Sekoly: provision of school buildings, well and sanitation infrastructure in Mahatalaky, Anosy region, south east Madagascar



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1: Project Summary

Project Title: Project Sekoly: provision of school buildings, well and sanitation infrastructure in Mahatalaky, Anosy region, south east Madagascar

Project Aim: To enable access to formal education for children aged 10-15 years in the rural commune of Mahatalaky in order to enhance the quality of life for children, support gender equality and build community capacity in the Anosy region

Location: Mahatalaky Rural Commune, Anosy region, south east Madagascar

Project Duration: 12 months

Executive Summary:

There is a demonstrable need for resources at all levels of the Malagasy education system. In both urban and rural areas the majority of the population has little or no access to even basic levels of formal education. One of the challenges identified in the government's Madagascar Action Plan 2007-2012 is to create a successful education system by *"increasing school capacity, especially in vulnerable zones, through the development of school infrastructure"* in order to provide at least half a day of schooling for every child every day.

Azafady aims to address the high demand for schools in the rural commune of Mahatalaky through this project, by providing 4 school buildings containing a total of 8 fully furnished classrooms for Mahatalaky CEG. Mahatalaky CEG is the only public middle school in the rural communes of Mahatalaky and laboko which together contain 20 fokontany, or village clusters, and have a population of over 35,000 people. Mahatalaky CEG has no premises of its own and has been operating out of two classrooms in the local primary school to serve some 300 students, while the headmaster has turned over his own house to act as a third classroom for the 50 senior students preparing for their national entrance exam to high school. The primary school is no longer able to operate out of its reduced classrooms and has therefore requested the CEG to vacate their premises, leaving the CEG students without a building. This project seeks to address this urgent situation by providing Mahatalaky CEG with 4 school buildings in response to requests received from the community, the mayor of the commune and the regional education authority CISCO. This project will directly contribute to the education goal set out in the Mahatalaky Commune Development Plan 2010 which aims for 95% of children to attend school.

Azafady is extremely well placed to deliver this project, having supported 15 communities in south east Madagascar with similar school building projects since 2006. Funding will provide 4 school buildings containing a total of 8 fully furnished classrooms, a well for safe drinking water and a school latrine with separate cubicles for girls and boys in line with internationally recognised good practice. Assistance through Azafady's international volunteer scheme and from the beneficiary community in the form of labour will make this project extremely cost effective. It is anticipated that over 8,000 children will benefit from this project in the next decade.

2: Organisational Background

Azafady UK is a British registered charity (1079121), established as a Scottish charity in 1994 and registered in England & Wales in 1999. ONG Azafady is the partner organisation of Azafady UK, established as an independent Malagasy NGO in 1996, and responsible for the implementation and monitoring of all Azafady projects on the ground in Madagascar.

Azafady aims to alleviate poverty for marginalised communities in the Anosy region of south east Madagascar by empowering the poorest people to meet their basic needs, improve their well-being and establish sustainable livelihoods for themselves. Azafady has three programmes – sustainable livelihoods, community health and environmental conservation – each with a variety of projects sensitively built around what are directly expressed to be the most pressing needs of these disadvantaged communities. Azafady has over 10 years of project experience in south east Madagascar and during this time has developed strong working relationships with the local population, maximising their participation in all stages of project development and implementation. Azafady is a recognised regional specialist at capacity building at the community level (empowerment, information, education and training, advocacy) and it is estimated that over 100,000 people have benefited from the projects implemented by Azafady in south east Madagascar over the last decade.

3: Project Rationale

3.1 Background

Madagascar is one of the most impoverished and least developed countries in the world, ranking 145/182 in the 2009 UN Human Development Report. The people of the Anosy region in the south east are among the poorest in the country; over 90% of the population live below the poverty line and as many as 3 in 10 children die before their 5th birthday from easily preventable illnesses. The isolation of the region and lack of government resources means that service delivery is extremely limited, particularly following 40 years of little intervention or investment by the state, with no upkeep of existing – or provision of new – education and sanitation infrastructure.

Poor education is recognised by the government as being one of the key challenges to Madagascar's future development in the Madagascar Action Plan 2007-2012. Whilst the government has adopted a detailed strategy paper for poverty reduction (PRSP), Anosy's isolation means that little has changed, and the region's population has one of highest rates of illiteracy (over 80%) in the country. Under the current education system, those who do not pass their end of year exams twice in a row (exceptionally difficult given overcrowding and lack of resources) are expelled from school, leaving them no educational option other than private fee-paying schools, far beyond the capacity of most families. There is therefore a vital need for improvements to the quality of education available in the publicly available schools in the region, enhancing learning conditions to help enable students to reach their potential. The effects of inadequate learning conditions are recognised within the Mahatalaky Commune Development Plan as resulting in poor rates of school attendance and exam success, whilst the long-term effects of a depleted human resource base will be felt well into the future.

To date, Azafady has focused its school building programme on rural villages requiring primary schools, working with several fokontany around the commune centre of Mahatalaky. The commune currently has 20 public primary schools, and is bordered to the north by the commune of Iaboko which itself has 6 public primary schools. However, for each of these 26 primary schools, there is just 1 public middle school, or CEG, to serve as the link between primary and high school, which is located in Mahatalaky. The next nearest middle school is in Fort Dauphin, the urban centre of the Anosy region, itself heavily over capacity and some 35km south of Mahatalaky. Mahatalaky CEG has no premises of its own and is currently operating out of two classrooms in the local public primary school to serve some 300 students. Lack of space is such that the students are taught on a rotating basis, waiting several hours each day for their turn to be taught. Of these, almost 50 are senior students who require a full day of teaching in order to prepare for their national entrance exam to high school. In order to accommodate this the headmaster has had to turn over his own house to act as a third classroom. Furthermore, the primary school is no longer able to operate from its reduced classrooms and has therefore requested the CEG vacate their premises, leaving the CEG students without a school. Of the surrounding primary schools, a further 290 students are currently preparing to take their final primary school exam in order to attend the CEG, greatly increasing the urgency of finding another suitable premises. The community have selected an area of unused land approximately 5 minutes walk from the local public primary school on which to build the new CEG, and have already collected the rocks required for its foundation. The land has been assessed as suitable for the construction of a well and latrines, and both the mayor of the commune and the community have volunteered to replant the eucalyptus trees that will need to be cleared in order to build the school.

3.2 Project History

Over the past decade Azafady has worked closely with local communities in Fort Dauphin and surrounding rural areas in the Anosy region. The NGO uses an integrated, multi-disciplinary intervention strategy drawn from the sustainable livelihoods approach to poverty alleviation, as promoted by the UK Department for International Development.

In 2006 Azafady received a request from the rural community of Hovatraha for assistance in building an extension to their village primary school. Azafady entered into an agreement with the community, bought the materials required for the project and provided technical expertise through the construction team. The community contributed through the provision of locally available materials (with women providing sand and water, and men providing rocks for the foundation). Construction involved Azafady's technical specialists, members of Azafady's international volunteer scheme and the community working together, making the project extremely cost effective and also providing the opportunity for cross-cultural exchange.

Azafady has since been inundated with requests from other villages across the rural commune of Mahatalaky. Azafady entered into discussions with the mayor of Mahatalaky and the regional education

authority CISCO because several communities also lacked teaching staff. The authorities were extremely enthusiastic since one of the challenges of the government's Madagascar Action Plan (MAP) 2007-2012 is to create a successful education system by *"increasing school capacity, especially in vulnerable zones, through the development of school infrastructure, and the training and recruitment of teachers"*. A list was drawn up of priority villages in the commune and it was agreed that for each community Azafady assisted with building a school, CISCO would find and pay a qualified teacher, thus ensuring the sustainable use of the infrastructure.

Another MAP challenge is to increase access to safe water and widespread use of good hygiene practices through increasing the number of communes with the Water, Sanitation and Health for All (WASH) programme. Azafady is head of the WASH committee for the Anosy region and several communities in Mahatalaky have participated in health and sanitation training facilitated by Azafady community health agents. In 2007 Azafady's community health agents, construction team and international volunteers worked with 4 further communities as funds became available in the provision of primary school buildings containing 2 classrooms each, safe drinking water wells, latrines with separate cubicles for girls and boys in line with internationally recognised good practice and (where necessary) a teacher's house. This combination of education and sanitation infrastructure has since been the model for all of Azafady's Project Sekoly interventions.

Azafady recently received a request for the provision of school buildings and sanitation infrastructure for Mahatalaky CEG. This intervention will be of direct benefit to the children currently attending the CEG, with the new school buildings enhancing the quality of their learning environment, thus improving their higher educational prospects. The project will also benefit future generations of students in the rural commune of Mahatalaky by increasing the capacity of the CEG to cater for the hundreds of children who pass their final primary school exams and seek to start their middle school education every year. The construction of a well will provide the local community with a vital source of safe drinking water. Sanitation education and the construction of a latrine will reduce the incidence of easily preventable diseases, and the latrine will have separate cubicles for girls and boys as this is proven to increase the attendance of girls in formal education (UNICEF, 2007).

4: Project Approach

4.1 Cost summary

Azafady's construction team will build the school on a rock and concrete foundation, and as a result of decreasing stocks of sustainably sourced timber and subsequent rising prices, bricks and clay will be used for the main building, covered with a concrete finish to ensure both soundness of structure and cost effectiveness. The 4 school buildings will have 2 classrooms which will be 5m x 6m each. The buildings will be simple, strong and easy to maintain, and will utilise materials available locally either cheaply or freely, keeping costs to a minimum. Azafady is able to further reduce costs since the labour required will be provided through Azafady's international volunteer scheme, and donations in kind made by the beneficiary community.

Funding will be used for health and sanitation education, in addition to the purchase of equipment and materials necessary to implement the project. Health and sanitation education is considered vital in order for any sanitation infrastructure to be sustainable. Azafady utilises the PHAST (Participatory Hygiene And Sanitation Transformation) methodology which ensures the inclusion of all community members and subsequent project ownership. This methodology trains community members in the common routes of disease transmission and modes of prevention, focusing on themes like hand washing, protection of water sources and use of latrines. A community WASH committee will be established and will be responsible for ongoing community training and monitoring of the sanitation infrastructure. Within this project, WASH training will be provided to school children and their parents, with responsibility taken for infrastructure maintenance by the Parents Teachers Association. The community health agent will also undertake household visits for community members unable to attend the school-based sessions (for example mothers with young children), with women's education recognised as a key determinant of children's health.



4.2 Project process



The full project, comprising the construction of 4 school buildings, a safe drinking water well and a latrine, is expected to take 12 months.

Preparation:

- Meeting with CISCO and mayor of Mahatalaky
- Meeting with the community to establish PHAST process and project timeframe, define stakeholder roles and responsibilities
- Site selection with community
- Source materials
- Establish volunteer campsite

Implementation:

- Complete PHAST process
- Transport materials to project site
- Transport international volunteers to project site
- Construction of school building
- Construction of school furniture
- Construction of closed well with fitted hand pump
- Construction of 2 cubicle pit latrine
- Landscaping

Follow-up:

- Official inauguration and hand-over to the community
- Monitoring and evaluation

4.3 Project stakeholders

Azafady: Azafady will source the technical staff to manage this project; they will be responsible for the construction details. The project coordinator will be responsible for liaising with and motivating the community. The coordinator of Azafady's international volunteer scheme will be responsible for the volunteers' input to the project and will liaise with the project coordinator.

International volunteers: Azafady's quarterly international 'Pioneer' volunteer scheme means that at any one time there are between 12-20 committed individuals working with Azafady's field agents, supporting various community development projects on the ground. The 'Pioneer' volunteers will assist with project implementation. They will receive full instruction, including technical and health and safety training, for 1 week prior to the construction phase of the project. They will be led by the scheme coordinator.

Community participation: This project has been developed in response to a direct request from the community for assistance. Their participation is essential in all stages of the project:

- Allocation of land for the site of the school
- Men contribute in kind to the construction through the provision of locally available materials (rock and gravel) and labour
- Women contribute in kind to the construction through the provision of locally available materials (sand and water)
- Students and the parent teacher association are responsible for cleaning and maintaining the school

Officials: The mayor of Mahatalaky, regional WASH committee and regional education authority CISCO have been involved in negotiations. They will participate in the official opening ceremony, which follows traditional Malagasy culture, in the hand-over of the building to the community.