

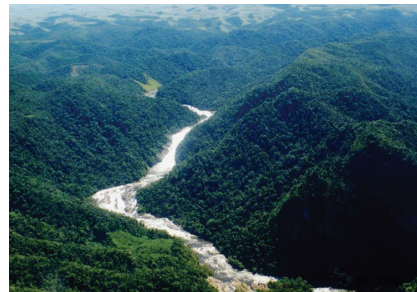


USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



PARADISE LOST?

LESSONS FROM 25 YEARS OF ENVIRONMENT
PROGRAMS IN MADAGASCAR



The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) was one of the major supporters of environmental conservation programs in Madagascar for a quarter-century. Recent political changes put this investment at risk. What can policymakers and field practitioners learn from this experience about the fragility of development success?

USAID commissioned International Resources Group (IRG) to produce a retrospective of its Madagascar programs and their evolution over the years. Long-time practitioner Karen Freudenberger interviewed dozens of individuals and reviewed scores of documents in telling this tale. The result is a comprehensive overview of USAID environmental interventions in Madagascar, and highlights important lessons for all who are interested in conservation and sustainability.

A RETROSPECTIVE ON 25 YEARS

The United States Agency for International Development first opened a bilateral mission in Madagascar in 1984. By 1990, USAID was collaborating with the Malagasy government and other donors to support the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP). Three phases of environment programming followed, much of it linked to the conservation of biodiversity. Due to the continuing political turmoil that started in March 2009, the third phase of this program was terminated ahead of schedule.

This hiatus has provided an opportunity to look back, analyze, and evaluate the successes and shortcomings of the USAID environment program, and learn lessons that may apply for any future Madagascar program or for those in other countries. This retrospective – written by one of the hundreds of dedicated individuals who have worked in Madagascar over the years – synthesizes what is widely seen as one of the most innovative and insight-generating conservation programs in the world.

	Overall NEAP focus	USAID focus	Projects	U.S. funding
1984-1990	Research, negotiations, drafting of 1st NEAP	Establish USAID mission; PL-480 micro-projects; initiate protected areas support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debt for Nature PVO-NGO NRMS 	
EP I 1991-1996	Start up, develop institutions and financing mechanisms, pilot project activities	Making protected areas work (policy, procedures, and local interventions through ICDP projects)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SAVEM KEPEM APPROPOP CAP 	~ \$50m
EP II 1997-2002	Implement approaches refined in EP I Integrate NEAP into national development plan	Eco-regional approach (5 zones); reinforce policy measures and tools to implement them Health and infrastructure sectors gain importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LDI MIRAY PAGE EHP II & JSI FCER & RECAP 	~ \$41m + \$9m (post-cyclone)
EP III 2003-2009	Mainstream the “environmental reflex”	Continue eco-regional strategy in 3 eco-regions Greater emphasis on partnerships, leveraging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MIARO ERI MISONGA JARIALA SantéNet BAMEX Menabe VARI 	~ \$33m

HIGHLIGHTS OF ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM IMPACT

In the years preceding the NEAP, Madagascar was being deforested at a rate of about 400,000 hectares (ha) annually. After two decades of environmental interventions by numerous international donors, the rate has decreased to about 100,000 ha per year. While this is an impressive improvement, it is still a matter of grave concern to environmentalists for whom “a hectare of forest loss in Madagascar has a greater negative impact on global biodiversity than a hectare of forest lost virtually anywhere else on earth.” (<http://www.fs.fed.us/global/globe/africa/madagascar.htm>)

Providing a quarter of a century of leadership to the environment movement in Madagascar, USAID’s environment program was visionary and sustained. The program notably worked at the policy and the grassroots levels. This retrospective explores what was accomplished by the various projects, drawing attention to the development of environmentally-friendly

policies and regulatory frameworks, as well as the creation and training of national environmental institutions (including a park service). It looks, too, at the successes and limits of projects that have worked at the environmental front lines, trying to reduce pressures from slash-and-burn agriculture on threatened forest resources.

As impressive as the results have sometimes been, the overall conclusions are sobering. The success of USAID’s program has been severely constrained by the overall failure of the Malagasy economy (and especially the rural economy) to improve. Economic stagnation is in large part due to persistently poor governance that has proven resistant to significant reform. Decades of “not-good-enough” governance have handicapped environmental programs at both the policy and local levels, while periodic political crises roll back decades of painstaking progress.

INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD

Lessons learned during 25 years of environmental programming in Madagascar include the following:

- Tangible benefits must accrue to a critical mass of citizenry before behavior changes take hold. Programs cannot be based on an implicit assumption that local people can be persuaded to share the international community's concern for biodiversity. Instead, there must be a hard-headed assessment of where the convergence and divergence of interests lie. To the extent that international and local interests are largely divergent (as this retrospective posits for Madagascar), the international community needs to identify and proffer effective and long-term compensation for environmental protection through markets or philanthropic means.
- It is difficult to obtain lasting results without a real commitment from national leadership. This must be distinguished from "expedient commitment" as needed to obtain donor support. If such a commitment does not exist, programs must be designed in such a way that they do not depend on benign or supportive governance for their success.
- Lasting progress on the environment is not possible without commensurate improvements in the local economy. Environment programs cannot do it all, and biodiversity interventions cannot be successful in the long term if isolated from agriculture, economic growth, governance, and social interventions in health and education.

WHAT NEXT?

In 2009, the United States suspended funding of its Madagascar environment program following a coup d'état. This provided the occasion for the U.S. and its partners to review their programs, as this retrospective has done, and to consider possible responses to calls for reengagement.

Madagascar's importance as a hotspot of biodiversity has not diminished; yet, the challenges entailed in saving that biodiversity for posterity have increased significantly. In 1990, at the outset

of the NEAP, Madagascar had 11 million ha of forest and 11 million people. Today it has about 9 million ha of forest and 20 million people.

The situation today is particularly alarming as political turmoil has led to the invasion of forests for farming and timber harvesting, the crash of the tourism industry, and a noted decrease in oversight of extractive industries such as mining.

The situation presents at least three possible scenarios when and if USAID is able to re-engage in Madagascar with environmental programming. These can be summarized as:

1. **Never Mind.** A threshold has been crossed that places the recovery of the unique biodiversity in a high-risk, low-return category. Focus on other parts of the world's natural heritage.
2. **Stay the Course.** Important lessons were learned in the evolution of programs to date and these set a solid base for continued interventions that will, eventually, turn the tide. The sooner these programs recommence, the less ground will be lost.
3. **Go for it.** Madagascar's biological heritage is of such global significance that it warrants a massive international commitment of resources. USAID can play a key leadership role in mobilizing this international response.



LEARN MORE

The retrospective described in this briefing document is available in hard copy format from:

International Resources Group
1211 Connecticut Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036 USA
+1.202.289.0100 / info@irglt.com

USAID Bureau for Africa
AFR/SD/EGEA 4.06.104
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20523 USA

Electronic copies are available at the following links:

http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADS555.pdf

<http://www.tinyurl.com/abcg-madagascar>

<http://www.rmportal.net/library/paradise-lost-madagascar>

<http://www.ABCG.org>

The views expressed in this briefing, and the document described, are those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

