

Fall 2005

The Role of Malagasy Women in Community Development: Analyzing the Potential for the Creation of a Women's Association for Alternative Livelihoods in Ifaty

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The Role of Malagasy Women in Community Development:
Analyzing the Potential for the Creation of a
Women's Association for Alternative Livelihoods in Ifaty

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SIT: Madagascar Ecology & Conservation Fall 2005

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the following contributors to this project, without whom it would have been impossible:

- *The women of Ifaty*: for your hospitality, honesty, sense of humor, and patience during interviews.
- *Reef Doctor (Rod, Isobel, Andy, Alsitair, Emma, Anika, Lukas, Kat, Christophe, Pepin, & Fernand)* for welcoming me into your community and sharing with me your experiences with and understandings of Ifaty. Bonne continuation!
- *Mme Jackie*, for the time spent in Tana helping me grasp Western v. Malagasy conceptions of gender, and your timely responses to all my crazed emails before during and after the process; and for your earnest wisdom, guidance and confidence in my abilities.
- *Jim, Mamy Sosony & Andreas*- for your support this past semester without your guidance this last month wouldn't have been possible.
- *To my fellow SIT students (in particular my Tuléar comrades and Thanksgiving fiasco support system ☺)* thanks for an amazing journey!
- *Everyone stateside*: thanks for never limiting my ambitions and encouraging me on my way to achieving them.

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Abstract

Integrated Conservation and development projects (ICDPs) have increased in number worldwide as conservation organizations have to come to terms with the importance of involving and addressing the needs of local human populations to order to achieve their conservation goals. Madagascar's unique biodiversity, environmental degradation, and plaguing poverty has made ICDPs crucial in achieving national goals of tripling the area of natural heritage conserved and poverty reduction through socially, economically, and ecologically sustainable development. In order to understand how such sustainable development can be achieved, it is essential to spend time enhancing one's understanding of the local mentality and worldview. On Madagascar's Southwest coast, north of Tuléar, interviews were conducted with forty women in Ifaty, a rural fishing village. The intent of these interviews was to enhance the research's understanding of the way in which these women conceive of their world: family, friends, and community.

A British non-governmental organization (NGO), Reef Doctor, has been working in Ifaty since 2003. A science-based conservation NGO, Reef Doctor staff are monitoring Ifaty's barrier reef to determine the extent of degradation, and to make informed decisions regarding ecosystem management, conservation and potential restoration projects. The decline in fish populations, fish size, and diversity of populations is directly linked to the declining health of the reef; similarly, the decline in fish is directly linked to the health of the community. The livelihood of the Vezo people of Ifaty is dependent on the reef and as the reef continues to decline in productivity, so will the people of Ifaty's culture of subsistence living. ICDPs exist because conservation and development cannot be disconnected; especially in communities like Ifaty where local livelihoods and their development are dependent on an ecosystem that drastically needs conservation measures to ensure present and future productivity.

It is precisely the interdependency of conservation and development that makes these projects so complicated; at what point do you start? The cyclical nature almost demands starting at all points. If we gradually put one mechanism in place at a time, such as an unofficial marine protected area governed under local customary law, implementing an environmental education curriculum in local schools, and encouraging the idea of alternative livelihoods, these efforts that complement one another towards the common objective of reef conservation and community development.

Women are often an underutilized community resource in development programs. It is for this reason that Reef Doctor has taken steps to encourage the women of Ifaty to organize into an association oriented towards income generating activities. Women's associations encourage a sense of ownership, self-sufficiency, and solidarity among members that reinforces members' self-confidence and faith in themselves and collective efforts. The hope is that the creation of a women's association in Ifaty can serve as a sort of catalyst in the community towards alternative livelihood projects. The question remains as to whether projects will be alternative or merely supplemental livelihoods in a society with no traditional savings scheme, a low level of education, and a persistent level of poverty.

Introduction/Background

Madagascar is among the world's fifteen poorest countries. What this means statistically is that 74% of its population exist below the "poverty line", and 92% of those people live in rural areas.¹ Madagascar is also one of the world's biodiversity "hotspots". Of Madagascar's plants 89.2% of 13,000 species are endemic; 92.9% of mammal species, 95.6% of reptiles, and 99.6% of amphibians are also endemic.² The uniqueness of Madagascar's flora and fauna has made it a conservation priority for organizations like Conservation International and the World Wildlife Fund. Conflict arises when organizations strive to preserve the 92.9% rate of endemism for mammals, without addressing the 92% of Madagascar's rural population who live at subsistence levels.

For the longest time, conservationists in Madagascar were blinded by a "protective" mentality; the conservation movement was dominated by biologists whose knee-jerk reaction to the rampant environmental destruction was to restrict access of the human populations in order to preserve what was left of Madagascar's natural heritage. Over the past twenty years, these conservation organizations have experienced a shift in mentality and currently tend to be run by anthropologists.³ The shift from a biological to anthropological focus has resulted in integrated conservation-development projects (ICDPs) throughout Madagascar. It is impossible and impractical to keep local populations "out" of endangered areas. Consequently, organizations have begun to work with local communities on sustainable, community-based resource management. The goal is to provide "local human populations living adjacent to protected areas with sustainable economic alternatives to destructive harvesting and land-use practices"⁴.

The current president, Marc Ravalomanana, has taken strides to prove to the international community Madagascar's commitment to both increasing national protected areas and poverty reduction. Ravalomanana's *Durban Vision* "will increase the size of the [current] protected area network 3-fold in Madagascar over the next several years"⁵. The President's improved *Document pour la Réduction de la Pauvreté (DSRP)* sets forth the goal of cutting the number of people who live below the poverty line in half over the next ten years. "La stratégie à mettre en œuvre est ambitieuse mais réaliste. Le principe de « partenariat public-privé » jouera un rôle prépondérant (The strategy to put DSPR in place is ambitious but realistic. The principle of public-private partnerships plays an important role)"⁶. Public-private partnerships play a key role in ICDPs by providing public expertise

¹ Thomas-Slayter, Barbara and Genese Sodikoff "Sustainable investments: women's contributions to natural resource management projects in Africa" *Development in Practice* 11, no. 1 Routledge, part of the Taylor & Francis Group (2001). 45 – 61

² A biodiversity hotspot holds a remarkably high number of endemic (only found in that location) species. "Diversity and Endemism" <<http://www.biodiversityhotspots.org/xp/Hotspots/madagascar/biodiversity.xml>> (11/29/05)

³ Mark Fenn, WWF. Lecture to SIT students. Libanona Beach, Ft. Dauphin. 21 Sept. 2005

⁴ Claire Kremen, Isaia Raymond & Kate Lance. "An Interdisciplinary Tool for Monitoring Conservation Impacts in Madagascar;" *Conservation Biology* 12, no. 3. (1998) 549.

⁵ "Madagascar Conservation Planning" <<http://www.princeton.edu/~kremen/grants.htm>> (11/29/05)

⁶ "(DSRP) Resume Executif" <http://www.mefb.gov.mg/doc0/dsrp_final/dsrp0.htm> (11/29/05)

and funding in collaboration with public local knowledge and expertise. With these two goals in mind, and the potential for collaboration with Madagascar's NGO community, the government is challenged by a need to raise the socio-economic level of existence for a majority of the population without further compromising the integrity of the natural environment.

Poverty reduction involves the participation of all sectors of society; with a particular emphasis on the inclusion those social groups considered that tend to be marginalized such as women, children, the disabled, and the elderly. Women tend to be marginalized by poverty because it exacerbates cultural obstacles that limit women's access to economic, education; and healthcare. Gender is a "determining factor in the division of labor, rights and responsibilities"⁷. A gendered division of these three aspects of life often leads to what is known as the "feminization of poverty"; where the costs and benefits of development are unequally distributed between genders. Women are also the primary users of natural resources because of their daily responsibilities, and are thus the first victims of a degraded environment. This marginalization worsens by its extension to the "juvenalization of poverty" as a child's wellbeing is intricately linked to his mother's. With this in mind, it appears evident that eliminating gender disparities throughout politics, economics, and social groups would aid in the "développement rapide et durable"⁸ that the President set forth in his Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (DSRP).

Madagascar is committed to integrating ideas of gender equity into its development strategy. As a signatory to both the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action for the Rights of Women and the 2000 Millennium Declaration and Development Goals, it has committed to specifically targeting the development of programs more inclusive of women. Madagascar has a national policy regarding the integration of "gender" into all national development plans, "Plan d'Action National Genre et Développement" (PANAGED), but the Ministry of Population's resources are, as of yet, insufficient to put it in place. Until the government is capable of implementing and enforcing the policy it creates, the NGO community retains responsibility for addressing gender issues in their respective programs. Malagasy men and women in both rural and urban communities will need to address how gender is manifested in their respective cultures, and if there needs to be a change in mentality before development initiatives can progress.

Although the President's DSRP was approved without changes by the World Bank, and the administration saw an unprecedented 9.6% economic growth rate in 2003⁹, it's extremely difficult to determine who is benefiting from that economic growth. There remains a development gap between Tuléar province and the rest of the country; the south continues to be the poorest part of the country.

⁷ Thomas-Slayter, Barbara and Genese Sodikoff "Sustainable investments: women's contributions to natural resource management projects in Africa" *Development in Practice* 11, no. 1 Routledge, part of the Taylor & Francis Group (2001). 45

⁸ Rapid and sustainable development

⁹ "Madagascar Open to the World" <<http://www.businessweek.com/adsections/2004/pdf/0408madagascar.pdf>> (5/15/05)

There is an inherent rural-urban development divide too; most poignantly regarding access to education and healthcare. Poverty provokes a culture of subsistence living; people must spend any money earned almost immediately to ensure survival. This leaves little room for savings for the future; savings which could provide for food security in times of a poor catch (in a fishing village), or funds to cover medical costs from a sudden illness. People who live at the subsistence level are in perpetual insecurity with regards to health and food. The lack of savings also limits the amount of education people can achieve. Most rural communities only have an *école primaire public* (EPP); any education beyond that requires money for tuition, as well as living expenses because the student often must migrate to urban centers to attend school.

In impoverished communities it is important to remember that men and women can be equally disadvantaged by development. The nature of gender roles is such that because you are responsible for different social and familial tasks, the consequences of fulfilling those roles on your respective social and economic status are different. For example, Vezo women are at a disadvantage with regards to access to education because of certain cultural practices that encourage women to drop out of school during their early teens. Nevertheless, Vezo men are also educationally disadvantaged because they become professional fisherman in their early teens. With regards to education, the drop out rates between genders are essentially equivalent for different reasons, but perhaps united under the demands of subsistence living. This further speaks to the issue of changing mentalities not only with regards to gender, but with regards to what currently sustains their livelihood and what steps can be taken to improve access to basic rights such as clean water, healthcare, and education.

Sustainable, alternative livelihoods are a way for men and women to benefit equally. These initiatives aim to address the cycles of poverty and environmental degradation that negatively impact the entire community. Sustainable alternative livelihoods are often at the core of ICDPs in that they provide a tool to improve the population's well-being while simultaneously working towards environmental conservation objectives. This avoids setting conservation and development in opposition in a choose-one-over-the-other-battle, both are attainable and their goal are mutually reinforcing. Healthier, wealthier, better educated people are more capable of sustainable resource management, at least in theory, and a healthier environment is better suited to meeting the needs of all populations it sustains, flora, fauna and human.

Study Area:

The Village of Ifaty

The village of Ifaty is located 27 km north of Tuléar past the Fiherenana River. According to an interview Reef Doctor conducted with the President of Ifaty, before the coastline was populated it was covered by forest. As time progressed, the amount of fish caught and sold from Ifaty by migrant fisherman increased to such an extent that it attracted people from nearby communities to immigrate and become the first settlers of the village. Today, Ifaty is a small fishing village with an estimated population of 2100 people; although census data (if it exists) is inaccurate and inaccessible.

While most residents restrict their economic activity to the reef, there are daily *taxi brousses*¹⁰ between Tuléar and Ifaty. This sole mode of transport enables those community members, who are wealthy enough, to access resources in Tulear such as the market for buying and selling goods. However, very few Ifaty residents are financially able to take advantage of Tuléar's proximity. Additionally, the inbound *taxi brousse* industry is monopolized by Mme. Vettelie, the wealthiest woman in Ifaty.

Ifaty village has established itself along the beach of the Lagoon or Bay of Ranobe. The beaches are narrower and rockier beach than those south of Tuléar, and the inland terrain is composed of the South's distinctive spiny forest. The spiny forest links to Ifaty through extensive salt flats. Ifaty is famous for its barrier reef that forms the Lagoon of Ranobe. The barrier reef is defined by two large passes (Northern and Southern), or openings in the reef, which enable fisherman to fish on the "exterior" of the reef.

Local Tourism

The barrier reef is one of the primary reasons Ifaty entices tourists. However, its neighbor to the North, Mangily, has significantly more hotels and extensive tourist industry. The reason why tourism developed around Mangily, and not Ifaty, is still unknown. It is also a source of tension between the two villages as Mangily is far more integrated into its tourist industry and reaps far more economic benefits than Ifaty. Ifaty hosts three hotels: Hôtel le Paradisier (€57/night); Nautilus (\$22USD /night); and Lakana Vezo (\$20USD/night)¹¹. However, their guests rarely venture into the village and when they do there is little means to contribute to the local economy. There are not artisan stalls or other "tourist" attractions. For now, ecotourism around the reef, for those drawn to Ifaty for scuba diving and snorkeling, is limited to what is known as the *Rose Garden*. The Rose Garden is named for its predominant species of coral that grows in the shape of large, semi-flattened roses. It is one of the few remaining sites in Ifaty's lagoon with a large percentage of live coral cover.

¹⁰ Taxi brousse: large camion trucks that are the sole mode of transportation between urban centres and their outlying rural (*en brousse*) communities

¹¹ Gemma Pitcher. Madagascar & Comoros. Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd, 2004, pp. 111.

Vezo Culture

Ifaty is one of 1,250 fishing villages along Madagascar's coast. Like a majority of the coastal population, the majority of people in Ifaty are *Vezo*. *Vezo* is not only an ethnic group who happen to specialize in all matters of the sea, but because of this specialization immigrants consider themselves *Vezo* because it also defines their occupation: fisherman. Traditional *Vezo* fishing targets the full range of ocean's exploitable resources: in shallow waters at low tide, off shore on the interior of the reef, the reef itself, and even on the exterior. Most of the traditional fishing boats also have outriggers and a sail, known locally as *lakana fiara*, the additional technology affords a fishing range of ten kilometers or more¹².

Despite the seeming wealth provided by the ocean, the *Vezo* people in general are consistently poor. Ifaty's poverty is manifested in the lack of access to freshwater, lack of sanitary infrastructure, lack of healthcare, and low level of education which is a result, among other things, of an overcrowded and ill-equipped primary school. The persistent poverty has been attributed to the weak productivity associated with traditional fishing techniques; poor management of family incomes; low level of education; an overexploitation of fisheries; an overexploitation of fisherman by middleman who buy at base prices and resell in Tuléar for high profits; and an increased access to liquid funds (readily available from the ocean's "bank"). In relation to farmers or herders whose savings remain in their fields or number of cattle, *Vezo* have access at any moment to more money which discourages savings schemes¹³.

The *Vezo* are also the most "free-spirited" of Madagascar's ethnic group, often attributed to their relationship to the ocean. It is for this reason that the *Vezo* are one of few ethnic groups in the south that refrain from practicing polygamy. While *Vezo* men may avoid the responsibilities of institutionalized polygamy, they do not refrain from enjoying the benefits of an informal polygamist society. This enable married men to sleep with younger, unmarried girls, without their wives getting angry. It is at the *Vezo* wife's discretion how long she allows her husband to *mitsangatsanga*¹⁴ in the village at night. The normalization of what is conceived as prostitution in other societies weaves an interesting social fabric in Ifaty. It also creates an interesting dichotomy between the social roles of unmarried and married women, and a desire to become married so as to be respected by one's peers and society.

The female role in *Vezo* culture, similar to other ethnicities, is one of marriage and maternity. The traditional female role is to be a good wife, have children, and satisfy the sexual needs of your husband.¹⁵ Though women may run the household and execute daily family decisions, it is the men

¹² Cooke, A., J.R.E. Lutjeharms, and P. Vasseur. "Marine and Coastal Ecosystems," in Goodman, Steven M. and Jonathan P. Benstead. *The Natural History of Madagascar*. University of Chicago Press, 2003, pp. 202.

¹³ Jacky, Mme. "La pêche traditionnelle *Vezo* : Surexploitation et problèmes de pauvreté," IHSM, Toliara.

¹⁴ *Mitsangasanga* (Mgy): going for a "joy" or purposeless walk, with the connotation in Ifaty of being in the market for a sexual partner.

¹⁵ Ramahalimihaso, Madeleine. *Femmes Malgache et Développement : Pour une société plus viable*. 232

who make public decisions on behalf of the family, holding the role of “external” head of household. Daily familial obligations include cooking, cleaning, laundry, and getting water from the nearby village. The daily education of younger women from their mother’s is in relation to these tasks. Women often undertake the notorious, global phenomenon known as the “double shift”. In addition to unpaid household labor, women often supplement household incomes by collecting and selling fish, octopus and squid; running small food stalls outside their houses; or other small micro enterprises. All of this is accomplished while their husbands are fishing four to eight hours a day. The “double shift” is exacerbated for single mothers, widows, and divorced women who are forced to be the sole income providers for their households. It is notable though, that in case of divorce, children typically stay with the father which alleviates some burden for the newly economic-independent woman.

Threats to Ifaty’s Reef: The need for alternative, sustainable livelihoods

Ifaty’s reef is a source of livelihood and way of life of the Vezo people, and others who have migrated to Ifaty. The perception of wealth the Bay of Ranobe affords Ifaty is still believed today; despite the acknowledged decline in recent years’ fish catches. “Over generations specific patch reefs within the lagoon and the leeward parts of the barrier reef have become known as good fishing locations and are always visited”¹⁶. As the local human population has grown, pressure on the reef has augmented to the point “that the diversity, structure and population numbers of targeted fish species”¹⁷ is on decline. Most fishermen in Ifaty attribute the decline to an ongoing influx of migrant fisherman and continue to adapt to environmental change instead of taking action to improve population counts for future years.

Degradation of the reef threatens Ifaty’s livelihood. Coral reefs “appear as emergent fringing and barrier reefs, patch reefs, and submerged coral banks and shoals”¹⁸. The 52 km of “true” barrier reef found in Madagascar are all found in the Tuléar region. “Madagascar may therefore have more coral formations than any other country in western Indian Ocean”¹⁹. Taxonomic studies in the 1960s and 1970s completed by the Station Marine of Toliara (now known as the *Institute Haleutique de Science Marine [IHSM]*), “confirmed the remarkable biological diversity of Toliara’s coastal ecosystem”²⁰. Recent studies by Reef Doctor and others on Ifaty’s Reef confirm, however, that drastic environmental changes have changed the reef’s health over the past 30 years. Reef Doctor estimates that there is an average of 4% live coral cover on their monitoring sites in the lagoon; with the exception of the Rose Garden which, as the remaining tourist attraction, has managed to sustain an estimated 58% live coral cover. Divers returning to the area even after fifteen years of absence are

¹⁶ « Impacts to the Bay of Ranobe » <<http://reefdoctor.org/impacts.asp>> (11/29/05)

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Cooke, A., J.R.E. Lutjeharms, and P. Vasseur. “Marine and Coastal Ecosystems,” in Goodman, Steven M. and Jonathan P. Benstead. *The Natural History of Madagascar*. University of Chicago Press, 2003, pp. 185

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid. 186

struck by the stark contrasts in coral cover²¹. Local dive shops are legitimately concerned that if destruction continues as it has been; there will be no Rose Garden in three years.²²

Degradation of the reef ecosystem is a combination of local and regional factors. Sedimentation from inland agriculture and deforestation flows into the reef ecosystem at alarming rates through the mouth of the Fiherenana River. Additionally, the loss of local mangrove ecosystems compounds the rate of soil erosion especially during the rainy season as soil once held in place by mangrove root systems is washed into the ocean. This increase in sediment disrupts feeding, reproduction and settling cycles of the reefs inhabitants, and can only be tolerated to a certain extent after which populations die off.²³

“extensive annual burning of grasslands forest clearance, affecting 80% of Madagascar’s land surface, cause the loss of vast quantities of topsoil, which is swept into rivers draining along both coasts. Sedimentation is perhaps the single greatest aspect of the impact of humans on Madagascar’s marine and coastal ecosystems”²⁴.

Decreased productivity from inland farmlands has also led to the migration of former farmers to Ifaty. This means that inland farmers are compromising the livelihood of Ifaty whose sole source of income is the reef and ocean. These migrants also tend to be unfamiliar with Vezo cultural fishing practices, seasonal fishing bans, and tend to use more destructive fishing techniques.

Traditional Vezo fishing is often equally destructive. The traditional *lakana fiara* is usually anchored by a large limestone rock, and often thrown overboard onto the reef. It is then dragged as the ocean’s pull sends the *lakana* away from its initial position, wreaking havoc on what little coral cover is left. Ifaty woman also participate in what can loosely be translated to “fishing-walking” where women descend to the ocean at low tide to collect decorative shell species, octopus and squid. This author is unfamiliar with the practices associated with fishing walking but it has been explained that the search of octopuses is a “particularly destructive [...] practice of breaking and turning corals in order to expose hiding octopuses or other targets”²⁵ which could also contribute to the deterioration of the reef.

A growing human population also compromises ecosystem health due to the lack of sewage infrastructure. Villages along the Lagoon have no toilets let alone sewage facilities, and those with outhouses refrain from using them for cultural and habitual reasons; consequently the reef suffers from a prolonged input of human effluence. This nutrient overload in addition to the mounting population’s pressure on fish populations has resulted in reductions of herbivorous fish populations and poor flushing of the lagoon water, shifting the symbiotic relationship between algae and corals. The

²¹ Sinclair, Alistair. Reef Doctor Program Coordinator. 21 November, 2005. Reef Doctor House, Ifaty.

²² Philip, owner of the Bamboo Club in Mangily. *Meeting between Reef Doctor and Dive Shop Owners*. 18 November, 2005. Ifaty.

²³ « Impacts to the Bay of Ranobe » <<http://reefdoctor.org/impacts.asp>> (11/29/05)

²⁴ Cooke, A., J.R.E. Lutjeharms, and P. Vasseur. “Marine and Coastal Ecosystems,” in Goodman, Steven M. and Jonathan P. Benstead. *The Natural History of Madagascar*. University of Chicago Press, 2003, pp. 204.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 203

increase in nutrients and resultant algae blooms choke the corals by blocking sunlight. This not only kills the corals but the influx in algae has changed the population distribution of fish species so “now many shallow reef areas within the lagoon are dominated by macro algal species which do not provide the proper habitat and environment for the reef fish”²⁶ who then migrate to other areas.

In 1999, the Malagasy government, recognizing the importance of the marine ecosystems started the Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) Initiative. The initiative was collaboration between Association Nationale pour la Gestion des Aires Protégées, Organisation Nationale de l’Environnement, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the World Conservation Society, and Conservation International. In initiative’s Southwestern ecoregion, the Ifaty’s reefs are an unofficial MPA. Its coral reefs *Massif de Roses* (Rose Garden), and the *Aquarium*, have the status of a local reserve as declared under *dina*, or customary law. This unofficial MPA poses an opportunity for the reef to have a reprieve from over fishing in order to recover and regenerate live, but it is not always respected. The decline in fishing in other areas forces fisherman to take whatever action is necessary to ensure their subsistence livelihood.

Continued damage to Ifaty’s coral reef threatens the local economy by means of the loss of tourism to the reefs, decreased fisheries productivity, and diminished coastal protection during cyclone season.

The long term impacts of the destruction to the reefs [in the Indian Ocean region] will cost the fisheries \$1,361 million, tourism and recreation \$3,477 million, Coastal protection \$2,152 million and other services \$1,200 million over the next 20 years. (Estimates based on valuation per sq km of reef with a 10% discount rate over the 20 years. Costanza et al.1997).²⁷

It is for this reason that Reef Doctor, a British NGO, has started to work in Ifaty. Established in 2000 as a not-for-profit, it was after three years of logistics that the NGO was able to set up a permanent base of operations in Madagascar. Originally created with the goal of reef restoration, it has evolved to encompass a three-pronged mission of conservation, education, and research. Ongoing scientific monitoring of reef “health” serves to inform conservation and management decisions. The overall objective is to promote sustainable patterns of interaction between the local population and the reef towards effective and self-sustaining community based management.

In a conservation-development initiative, Reef Doctor made the decision explore the potential for alternative livelihood projects upon the realization that asking people to fish less through the creation of an MPA, requires providing an alternative source of income. The conviction is that the sooner you include women in development initiatives, the quicker it progresses because women run the households and thus indirectly the community. The creation of a women’s association in Ifaty to

²⁶ “Impacts to the Bay of Ranobe” <<http://reefdoctor.org/impacts.asp>> (11/29/05)

²⁷ “Coral Reefs - A Review” <<http://www.reefdoctor.org/reefs.asp>> (11/29/05)

establish and run an alternative livelihood project is hoped, in conjunction with the MPA, to slowly start decreasing the pressure on the reef as the only source of income for Ifaty families.

In July 2005, Reef Doctor carried out a Demographic and Alternative Income Survey (DAIS). The report is still a “working paper” but its data serves as a useful complement and comparison for this report. As part of Reef Doctor’s regional survey program, DAIS was designed to: collect demographic information on the female population of Ifaty, measure unemployment rate, measure control over their own earnings, and evaluate perception on alternative income generating activities. Three alternative livelihood projects were presented to all participants of the DIAS survey: algae cultivation, *Jatropha* hedge, and making handicrafts. The goal was to gauge their relative interest and experience levels. The general conclusion from the DIAS survey was that the 125 women of Ifaty who were interviewed were generally interested in alternative income generating activities; open to the formation of a women’s association; had achieved a certain level of education; had control over their family’s budget; and didn’t feel that their husbands would have a problem with them working outside the house. The question remains then, how do you help these women organize into the creation of an association that they want to exist and towards a project, to be determined, that will help supplement their income?

The goal of this study is to approach an answer to that question. The intent is to further explore the “mentality” of the female population in Ifaty, to better understand how to help them organize. A questionnaire guided interview addresses their: roles within the family unit, perceptions of work and how it is distributed within the family, level of education, needs and wants for the future, interest in alternative livelihood opportunities, solicit ideas for alternative livelihoods, and to determine the interest in and willingness to create a women’s association designed to manage an alternative livelihood project. An additional component of this project involves a resource assessment of women’s associations and NGOs in Tuléar. The goal of this component is to determine if and how connections can be made between Reef Doctor and other organizations working in similar areas to facilitate the creation of an association in Ifaty and to provide the necessary education and new skills training. Hopefully, the creation of women’s association and a successful alternative livelihood project will contribute to the sustainable development of Ifaty and to the reef’s conservation for continued and future use.

Methodology:

The four weeks designated for the completion of the project were divided between Tulear and Ifaty. The first week was spent in Tulear contacting local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and relevant government offices. The second and third weeks were spent in Ifaty working with Reef Doctor Staff and conducting interviews with women in the village. The final week was spent in Tulear, reaffirming contacts and resources uncovered before and developing a relationship with a new NGO that became relevant while in Ifaty.

Week 1: Tulear resource assessment and fieldwork preparation

This first week consisted of an exploration on foot throughout Tulear to locate local NGOs and government offices. Time was also spent doing background reading from secondary sources gathered from local professors or NGO offices such as project documents and reports, and cultural readings on the Vezo people. Additionally, there were two meetings with a Reef Doctor Science officer, Christophe, and with the project translator, Ony, both of whom had worked on Reef Doctor's recent DIAS study, in order to ensure that efforts were not being duplicated with this project.

The self-guided walking tour consisted of walking into any NGOs office visible from the street that appeared relevant from their brief sign description; and conducting semi-structured interviews with project coordinators and organization directors. The goal was to determine what projects were in operation, what trainings, if any, they offered to rural communities, and what knowledge or experience they had relevant to this particular project. The interview template was general enough to guide itself through key topics but was such that questions could be then tailored to the organization itself as the interviewer gained a better understanding of their particular community role. Contacts gained from one ONG or individual led to the discovery of others which contributed to the goal of this week: assessing what resources exist in Tulear that could be made accessible to the women in Ifaty.

Weeks 2 and 3: Fieldwork

Women were chosen at random, but because of Ony's past experience on the DIAS survey, we tried to interview women who had not yet participated in a Reef Doctor survey. This was partly to include new women in a similar study, but also to avoid asking women similar questions two times for fear that women would feel too much talking and not enough "doing" was occurring.

On average, five interviews were conducted each day, reaching a total of 40 after two weeks. Each woman was first asked if she wanted to participate and given the right to stop at any point for any reason. Interviews lasted between 30-45 minutes, were conducted in Malagasy, and translated into French during the interview to enable the researcher to ask supplementary questions for clarification or to pursue certain responses further. Being present for interviews also enabled the researcher to make observations based on body language and interactions with family members or neighbours. At the end of each of the first two days of interviews, the researcher and translator sat down and made the

questionnaire more efficient in terms of responses looked for and combining or eliminating questions to take less time.

The community was also been divided into 5 clusters for the DIAS study to facilitate a geographic distribution of participants and a similar structure was put in place for this study; although slightly modified there were 6-8 participants in each cluster. The only exception is cluster 2, which was made based on its lower population, and lack of willingness to participate without receiving a *cadeaux* (gift) beforehand. At the end of each interview, participants were given the option of signing a paragraph of “informed consent” which released the use of their data and name in the report. Two focus groups were scheduled for the end of the third week and women were invited based on clusters; however, no one appeared for the first focus group. We decided to invite women from all clusters again to attend the second group meeting.

Week 4: Follow Up and Analysis

The fourth week was spent reaffirming contacts made in Tuléar the first week. Also, an additional NGO, *Maison de Paysans*²⁸, whose contact was made while in the field, and was pursued in their Tuléar office to learn more about how they can work with the women in Ifaty and what their role is.

To analyze open ended questions, data was reorganized into quantitative answers by grouping similar responses together. Charts were then made to compare levels of education, level of enforcement of education in their children, perceptions and realities of work, work done outside of house, interest in the creation of association, ideas for in livelihoods projects, and interest in alternative trainings and education.

The compilation of quantitative and qualitative data was supplemented by more in-depth notes taken by the researcher during interviews to create general perceptions of the “mentality” of the women interviewed, and how to better help them organize themselves towards a common goal. With regards to potential synergies and collaboration between Reef Doctor and Tuléar NGOs, a brief description of each NGO is provided with suggested venues for working together and any potential problems or obstacles perceived by the author.

²⁸ See Appendix 2 for further explanation regarding *Maison de Paysans*

Results

Tuléar Resource Assessment

- **Appendix 1 :** Map of Tuléar with NGO, company, and government offices added to facilitate future contact between Reef Doctor and the respective organizations
- **Appendix 2:** Brief description of each NGO including target population, main projects, resources that could be of use or made accessible to Ifaty women's group, summary of communication between researcher and NGO. Potential projects/collaborations are included at the end of each description
- **Appendix 3: *Tuléar Contacts***- Contact list for each office I spoke with to facilitate future contact between Reef Doctor and the respective organizations.

Ifaty Questionnaire Data: Collected November 14-18 & 21-24, 2005

- **Appendix 4: Map of Madagascar and Tuléar Coastline**
- **Appendix 5: Map of Ifaty with general location of participants marked and clusters outlined.**
- **Appendix 6: Questionnaire**, post-revisions as translated to Ifaty women
 - In the following explanations and appendices, any numerical markings before a question or in any table and chart refer to a question on the questionnaire.
- **Appendix 7: List of participants and demographics questionnaire data** a few statistics are highlighted below to present a general idea of the population studied.
 - Average age of participant: 30 years old
 - 75% of participants are Vezo
 - 45% of participants were born in Ifaty
 - 75% of participants are married
 - 32.5% of participants immigrated from Tuléar
 - 27.5% of total immigration was to follow their husband
- **Appendix 8: Education Data Table**- table of responses analyzed in Appendix 9
- **Appendix 9: Education Data Analysis**
 - The first chart, "*Average Level of Education Achieved by 40 Interviewees*": reflects three general trends of education. Reasons for discontinuing education will be explored during the discussion.
 - 1) Women remain illiterate or drop out of school after class 11 where the average age of students is between 7 or 8 years old. Out of 40 women, 5 were illiterate and 6 dropped out after 2 years of school, representing 27.5% of the surveyed population.
 - 2) Women discontinue education after class 7 where the average age is 11 or 12 depending on when you entered school, and how long it takes you to progress from one class to the next. Class 7 is also the end of EPP, which is currently the only school in Ifaty. To continue education, students must attend schools in nearby communities such as Mangily and Tsionve, or to Tuléar. Schools in Mangily and Tsionve only offer one additional class level. Secondary school is also often private which adds to the living expenses of moving or transportation costs of commuting.
 - 3) If women do not discontinue education at the very beginning or just after EPP, they are likely to continue through secondary school to Class 3, just before taking the Baccalaureate. It is interesting to note the current jobs and socio-economic positions of the 4 of the 7 women who continued through Class 3 or beyond, the jobs tend to reflect the education achieved and, with the exception of one women, these women appear to be among the wealthier members of Ifaty society based on size and construction materials of the house, furnishings, appliances, and physical appearance (cleanliness, clothing) of their families:
 - The second chart, "*Enforcement of Children's Education*" compares the number of school-age (6-17) children living in the household to the number of school-age children who actually attend school. (Gaps in the data are those households without children).

- The table, “*Factors Affecting Enforcement of Children’s Education*”, serves to explain factors that influence the data of certain households. For example, in Ifaty it is atypical to be studying at the age of 16 or 17, so for that reason households with older children who no longer attend school are listed, while households who have 8 or 9 year olds no longer studying are not. However there is also no data as to at what age that particular individual discontinued their education, so they could have dropped out at 8 years old. Additionally, although EPP starts at 6 years old, some enter sooner or later than that. I have made note of those households as well, giving them the benefit of the doubt with regards to how much they encourage their students to attend school.
- **Appendix 10: Perceptions of Work**
 - *14. What does “work” mean for you?* The women were asked their personal definitions of work to determine what extent they view their daily activities as “work”. Often women’s housework is undervalued and non-existent in formal economic terms because there is no exchange of money, only an exertion of labour. The women themselves perceive this daily work as an obligation and feel that they have little choice in the whether or not to complete the necessary chores of cooking, cleaning, and child raising .
 - *15. Is housework divided? 15.1 If so between who?* A majority of women bare the brunt of all household obligations; this is seen as their responsibility while their husband or partner is a fisherman. Of the 15 women who do share responsibilities with others almost half share the responsibilities with their children and only one divides the tasks with her husband.
 - *18. Who works the most in your family?* About half (22/40) of the women responded to this question that their husband’s work the most. This is their perception of how work is distributed, although there is no way for them to gauge quantity or quality of their husband’s work while he is out fishing; all they know is that he is physically exhausted when he returns from work, and they are obliged to “lighten his load” by furnishing meals and having the home cleaned.
 - *19. Do you want this (in) equilibrium to change?* Those who felt disequilibrium of work in their household, whether they were the ones who worked most or their husbands, expressed a desire for the distribution to change. A common response was an interest in working more to help their husband’s make more money but a lack of knowledge as to what other work they could do to change the balance.
- **Appendix 11: Realities of Work- Comparing how men and women spend their time during the day.**
 - The intent of these questions (13 & 14) in the questionnaire was to get a sense for how each gender spends their time, the type of activities, length of time etc. to see if there are any gender disparities. If gender disparities exist, those that negatively affected women could be addressed in order to allow women more time towards income generating activities.
 - For the purposes of this report, “leisure” activities refers to any time spent resting, *mipetrapetraka* (sitting around), taking a *sieste* (noon time naps), talking with neighbours, watching videos, and *mitsangatsanga* (purposeless walking, although for Ifaty men there is a connotation of intent to find a sexual partner). There is also a connotation of choice in that instead of being obligated to work, you are free to spend your time as you choose.
 - “Productive” hours refers to time is spent on tasks such as cooking, eating, cleaning, fishing, and other occupations. “Productive hours” calculated in Appendix 11 is calculated by subtracting the number of hours spent in leisure activities, from the amount of time the person is awake, referred to as the “length of day”.
 - Women’s average hours were calculated twice to adequately reflect the extent to which often women’s leisure and productive hours are indistinguishable, whereas men’s are clearly delineated. Women often multitask, combining socializing with neighbours with cooking or cleaning or alternating between resting and cooking. Cooking tends to take up the whole morning and afternoon, and she remains around attending the various parts of the meal.

For this reason, “adjusted” calculations were made to reflect the difference between considering cooking time as a “leisure” activity because of the other activities that happen simultaneously, of if cooking time is considered “productive” activity because even though she is able to socialize, she is still obliged to stay at home and lacks a choice in her activity.

Men's Avg. Length of "work" day:	14,90
Men's Avg. "Productive" Hours per day:	10,18
Men's Avg. Hours of "rest/leisure" per day:	5,03
Women's Avg. Length of "work" day:	14,35
Women's Avg. "Productive" Hours per day:	9,519
Women's Avg. Hours of "rest/leisure" per day:	4,65
Adjusted Avg. "Productive" Hours per day:	10,69
Adjusted Avg. Hours of "rest/leisure" per day:	3,35

Appendix 11: Averages of time spent in “leisure” vs. “productive” activities between genders.

• **Appendix 12: Employment Beyond Daily Household Activities**

- The first chart, “*Percentage of Women That Work Outside of the House*” is based on their perceptions of the question: do you work outside the house? There may be additional women who sell their husband’s fish, but do not consider it as external to daily obligations and are thus not included in the population of women responsible for generating supplemental family income.
- The second chart, “*Distribution of Work Among the 33 Employed Outside the House*” explains what supplemental income activities the women interviewed are involved in.
 - The majority of women *do* work outside of the house but are either self-employed in the sales of fish they collected and food stalls; or essentially employed by the family by selling their husband’s fish on the beach.
 - Only 4 women are “salaried” based on their positions with local NGOs, hotels, or the local school; 2 others are “employed” by their neighbours to do laundry.
- The third chart, “*Composition of ‘Micro-enterprise’*” is an expansion of the “micro-enterprise” sector from the second chart, extracted to convey what types of micro-enterprises are already in existence that these women have experience with. While only 7 women are involved in “micro-enterprises”, the majority of micro-enterprises revolve around food sales which points to open economic niches a women’s association could exploit in the future.

• **Appendix 13: Existing and Future Associations**

- 45. *Distribution of Existing Memberships in Local Associations*: Around half of the women do not belong to an association; those who do are members of religious groups ranging from women’s and youth groups to chorales. Often, these groups have no real activities undertaken except for certain holidays, and congregation member death or sickness. If revenue generating projects are taken on by the association, it is to generate income for the church and usually starts by the donation of certain capital, such as a goat, by a congregation member.
- 46. *For Alternative Livelihood Projects, is it better to work as group or individually?* A majority of women prefer to work as a group because it facilitates a greater exchange of ideas, has a social atmosphere, and because it is believed that more can be accomplished with more people working towards a common goal. One of the reasons for preferring to work as an individual is that income is divided; another feared that too many personalities in a group setting breeds conflict.
- 48. *Do you want to create a women's association in Ifaty oriented towards alternative livelihoods?* Women were overwhelmingly interested in creating this association, (38:1) plus one who was either not asked the question or refrained from responding. Probable reasons for this interest will be examined in the discussion section.
- 53. *Are you interested in being a founding member of an association? If so, in what capacity?* Most women were also interested in officer and leadership positions within the association, motives for this interest will also be explored during the discussion section.

- **Appendix 14: Activities for a Future Association**

- *47. What ideas do you have for alternative livelihood projects that you believe the women of Ifaty would be interested in and capable of?* Women responded with varying answers to this question, usually with projects they were already familiar with such as selling something or working in the home of a *vazaha* or nearby hotel. Two project ideas, algae cultivation and handicrafts, were presented by the researcher in order to gain a sense of the interest level of these women. These projects were presented as alternatives in the DIAS study and were brought up again for continuity between studies.
- *49. If training and education sessions were offered by trainers invited from Tuléar would you attend? 49.1 If yes, when are you available?* The only respondents who were disinterested in attending trainings and education sessions were those who felt they were too busy or too old to attend, but they were still positive about their existence. Most of the women also said they were ready at any moment to attend the training and appeared eager to learn new skills they could apply to their life.
- *51. What are other trainings that you are in need of?* Many women (28/40) expressed an interest in adult literacy classes, even though most did not finish their education for various reasons, they realized at some point in their adult life the importance of basic skills like reading, writing, and basic math. Women were even more interested (33/40) in basic health services including education, the existence of a doctor or midwife in Ifaty (the closest is in Mangily), a hospital (the closest is in Tuléar), and a pharmacy or increased access to medicine. A lot of women expressed their concerns at their inability to cure their children's illnesses, even seemingly simple problems like runny noses, coughs, and diarrhoea; essentially there is a lack of basic health and sanitation knowledge and the women are aware that something can be done. Women were also eager to learn new skills, in particular sewing and algae cultivation as they saw these as the most feasible projects that a women's association could take on to generate income.

- **Appendix 15: Focus Group Minutes**

- In order to bring women with similar interests and goals together, I invited women to two focus groups. Clusters 1-3 on Wednesday, November 23 and Clusters 3-5 on Thursday, November 24. Unfortunately, no one attended Wednesday's focus group. We made another round of invitations Wednesday night which resulted in 15 people (including women who we had not interviewed) showing up on Thursday. The focus group minutes reflect the evolution of their discussion towards proposing a project, picking a project, and problem solving how to make it a reality.

Discussion:

- *The Role of Education*
- *The Perceptions and Realities of Work*
- *Nature of Employment Beyond Daily Household Activities*
- *Existing and Future Associations and Activities for a Future Association*
 - o *Sewing and Embroidery Considerations*
 - o *Algae Cultivation Considerations*
 - o *Considerations for the Creation of an Association Feminine d'Ifaty*

Role of Education:

Lack of education is a problem for both men and women. Younger males in the community often follow their fathers into the ocean at 8 or 9 years old and become professional fisherman by 14- a career that whose educational requirements are knowledge passed on from his father. Younger women are equally disadvantaged as their mothers leave the families a few hours every day to do “fishing walking” (collect fish as the tides recede) or sell their husband’s catch, leaving childcare often in the hands of the oldest daughter. In bigger families, continuing education is not always encouraged for oldest daughters as it takes time away from caring for younger siblings, taking on household responsibilities, and contributing money to the family income.

As parents, women in their late 20s and 30s, start to prioritize the education of their children. In particular, women who went through secondary school in Tuléar are more likely to continue that specific family tradition. Women who have already had one or two children by their early twenties, and remain unmarried, tend to think less towards the education of their children; though this could be a factor of the age of their children, often less than 3 years old, still far from the age at which you enter school. The fact that so many women want to adult literacy classes reflects a realization at a certain age that education is actually more important than they once thought. Even though a lot of younger women in their teens drop out voluntarily because they lose interest in school, a lot of women were never really given a choice; it was a factor of circumstances in their life at the time. One such is example is the 14 year old daughter of Susan who was forced to leave school in Tuléar to return home and help her mother. The eldest daughter, 20, was sick with an infant child and could no longer help her mother with daily chores; consequently the 14 year old was forced to return home because she was the least advanced in her education, explained Susan. Susan didn’t want to compromise the achievements of her children already in 4th and 3rd years so this was the only option.²⁹

There is also a relationship between level of education and the type of work done outside of the house, as seen by the previous examples of four women. Women who have dropped out of school during of after EPP tend to either do nothing, sell the fish of their husbands (if they have one) or “fishing-walking” which entails collecting and selling octopi on the beach. Whereas women who have attained a secondary school education tend to run *epiceries*, *gargottes*, or have other micro-enterprises reselling goods brought in from Tuléar. Women with higher education are also more likely to work in

²⁹ Susan. Interview 24 November, 2005. Ifaty

local hotels as a “femme de chambre” (cleaning women) which tends to bring in more money than other jobs accessible to women in the community. Four examples of women with higher levels of education in relation to their jobs are presented below:

- *Fanja (Bac)* - local school teacher in Ifaty; however she became a teacher only after the factory she was working in shut down. As many people have observed in Madagascar, even with a diploma and high level of education, you are not guaranteed to find a higher paying or higher skilled job.
- *Florine (terminale)* –In addition to helping raise numerous children from her husband’s previous marriages, she is the President and one of the founding members of *Association Ezaka*, which was created to raise AIDS awareness and is funded through *Projet Soutien pour le Développement de Sud (PSDR)*. She is also the regional treasurer for *Maison de Paysans*, an NGO that creates access for rural associations to World Bank/PSDR funding. She is also an accomplished seamstress and runs a small micro-enterprise with her daughter selling embroidered and sewn shirts etc. to local hotels. It is also noteworthy that any children who are old enough, study in Tuléar.
- *Florentine (3rd)* - Only stopped school, in order to work, once her father became sick and mother was the sole income provider for the family. Although she is only 18 she work for a local NGO, *Project SIDA*, as a community activist encouraging people to take anonymous HIV tests. Time not spent working for Project SIDA is spent working in her sister’s Epicerie.
- *Hortense (3rd)* – Her parents pushed her to continue through class 3 and although her current job, cleaning women in Nautilus, does not require this level of education, it is possible that she was able to get the job because of it. Working for a hotel also augments the family income which is reflected in the house, furnishings, and clothing.

Education is an integral part of community development. Education often leads to a feeling of empowerment and self-confidence in one’s capacity to make decisions and have choices; empowerment and self-confidence are key tools in breaking the cycle of poverty. “We are starting to see, that it is women, women than men who introduce change, create new economic activity, and are the root of the profound movement affecting rural societies. Modernization of village life results from both the work and ideas of women”³⁰ It is women in Ifaty, who ensure the education of their children, and consequently the village’s future ability to adapt and evolve to a changing environment.

Perceptions and realities of work:

While the general perception of women is that that there is disequilibrium between the amount and difficulty of her husband’s work (more) in relationship to her own (less). It is thought provoking to note that in one interview, the woman’s initial response was that her husband worked the most. Interestingly her brother-in-law who was present for some of the questioning stepped in and described to her everything that she does in her life; after this realization she changed her mind and said she worked the most. This interaction conveys the perception of both genders that the other works the hardest. However, the general sketches of daily life provided during their interviews reflect a more equal reality. Women and men have similar “work days” often waking and going to sleep at the same time. The average number of “productive” hours is also roughly equivalent, 10.18 for men and 9.51 or 10.69 (adjusted) for women depending on whether you consider cooking/socializing a “productive” or

³⁰ Fieloux, Michèle. “Femmes, terre et boeufs” in *Élevage et Société* (1987) ed. Michèle Fieloux and Jacques Lombard. p. 162

“leisure” activity. On average however, men have more time devote to leisure activities 5.03 hours/day compared to 4.65 or 3.35 (adjusted) hours/day women.

Even though the work days and productive hours are similar, women lack a choice in their leisure activities. Leisure activities for women involve socializing with neighbours or sleeping, often constantly surrounded by young children demanding her attention. A woman’s leisure time is spent in the same place that she works all day, while men spend their leisure hours walking around the village in search of younger women to sleep with, rum in bars, or watching videos at the various Cine-Videos. Men’s leisure time is spent outside of the house usually *mitsangatsanga*-ing in the village usually on a mission to see his *sipasipa*, or girlfriend, but locally translated to a younger, unmarried women in society who he sleeps with.³¹ In that regard, the “leisure” time of younger Ifaty women could even be considered “productive” as her relationships with men usually involve a monetary exchange.

Without diminishing the physical intensity of a fisherman’s work, fishing has been explained some professors as a game for Vezo and that is evident when you view school children spending their recreation hours in the ocean, playing with miniature lakanas, and catching fish. It is a hard yet enjoyable way of life, complemented by the pleasures of rum and sex that most women in the village do not participate in. With this in mind, it seems fair for the women to start encouraging their husband’s to take on more household responsibilities and come to the realization as one interviewee did that it’s possible she already works just as hard as her husband; this speaks to a change in mentality necessary for the evolution of family life and income.

Employment Beyond Daily Household Activities

“Work” outside of one’s home is defined as anything beyond daily “housework” activities such as cooking or cleaning, which generates revenue for the family. Of the 40 women interviewed, 33 are working a “double shift” of household obligations and supplemental income schemes while men remain on their fishing boats. Most women however, are still essentially “employed” by the family in that they collect and sell their own fish; sell their husband’s catch on a regular basis; or prepare and run their own food stalls. While women try to diversify incomes through starting small food stalls or doing neighbor’s laundry, it is never enough and they are badly in need of creative, alternative solutions. Perceptions of work, basis of livelihood, and male and female mentalities will need to change simultaneously in order change the income structure of Ifaty’s families.

Existing and Future Associations and Activities for a Future Association

Even though very few women have experience with group efforts or associations, the majority of women would prefer to do alternative livelihood projects in a group setting. The interest in working

³¹ A form of prostitution by some cultural standards, the practice of *mitsangatsanga* to find a *sipasipa* is completely normalized in Ifaty. Men of all ages and generally younger women *mitsangatsanga* in the evening in hopes of a sexual partner for money. It is often married men who sleep with the younger women; and he is generally completely open about it with their spouses. None of the wives we spoke to were angry about the existence of “Vezo polygamy”; in fact, they knew where her husband’s *sipasipa* lived. If the situation got too out of hand (he spent more hours with the girlfriend than the wife) the wife could confront the two, even physically beat the girlfriend, and demand her husband give her a zebu or monetary equivalent (or sewing machine if you so desire) if he wanted to stay married. One young Vezo male proclaimed joyously during one of our interviews that men have *sipasipas* until they die.

in group also implies an interest in the creation of an association through which work can be done with other women towards common goals. This belief in the ability of a group to achieve common objectives is extremely important for the success of the association. Often the few women who would prefer to work *individually* become interested in creating and joining an association after questions about training and learning new skills have been posed, reflecting a belief that becoming a member provides access to resources they would not otherwise have access to.

Regardless of interest in creating an association for alternative livelihood projects, women want and will attend trainings if offered. All the women, even though most quit school at some point to get married, are interested in learning new skills that hold the potential to increase their family's revenue and thus improve health, nutrition, and living conditions. When asked when, in terms of time of day, the women would be available to attend trainings, an overwhelming number of women responded "je suis libre à tout moment" (I'm free at any given moment). This enthusiasm reflects the need and desire to find alternatives to supplement family incomes and eagerness to learn new skills. This interest in new sources of revenue is particularly crucial in light of the acknowledgement by their husband's that daily catches are diminishing over time. While foresight is lacking in terms of taking action now towards solutions that would ensure a sustainable fish population for the future, women are conscious that new sources of income are necessary now and probably even more so in the future.

Most women when asked for their ideas of how they can make more money respond by saying they would like to be a *femme de chambre* for *vazahas* or in a hotel. Many also reply with handicrafts such as sewing or embroidery, perhaps because they know women who already sew or embroider and sell their wares or maybe because it's an idea familiar enough that they feel it's something they could do in their own lives. When presented with the idea of algae cultivation women have different reactions. Some have heard of its success in other villages, and the ability to make a lot of money quickly with not too much work put into it. Other women are less enthusiastic and are at a loss of what materials they would need to start the project, how to do it, would like their husbands help, and shoes to protect their feet. These women tend to lean towards having a group that gets trained on and then produces handicrafts.

There are several women within the 40 who we surveyed in the village who know how to sew and embroider. Most of these women learned from a women's association in Tuléar or from the Sisters of Tombosko, a private school in Tuléar that offered sewing classes. Once the knowledge is gained in a family, it is passed on from older to younger sister or from mother to daughter. Women already able to sew said they would be willing to teach others how; and teach them how to teach others which would greatly contribute to the diffusion of knowledge. Women often have time during meal preparation to sit around and talk to neighbours, time they would be willing to spend sewing (which they could still continue to do with their neighbours).

Sewing and Embroidery Considerations:

Lack of capital for materials: Women lack financial resources to pay for the next day's food, let alone being able to buy fabric, needles, thread etc. required for starting a small sewing enterprise. Women in Ifaty also have no access to loans that could provide this capital. The micro-credit institution in Tuléar, *Vola Mahaso*, which has established antenna offices in other villages in the region not only does not exist in Ifaty yet but after an interview with the director it was clarified that a) new ventures are too risky, and their funding tends to be limited to already established micro-enterprises such as a small *epicerie* and serves to enhance their capacity and size of business, and b) a local economic infrastructure needs to be in place before *Vola Mahaso* is willing to start an antenna office. The current economic system is haphazard and lacking in stability especially given the fact that the local economy hinges on the weather and size of catch that day.

Lack of market: Most of the tourist shops in Mangily are full of artefacts imported from other areas of the region. One mother and daughter in Ifaty already embroiders shirts that she sells to local hotels, if we suddenly had 20 women sewing shirts measures would have to be taken so as not to flood the market.

Quality control: Time taken to mastery sewing and embroidery before being able to sell your wares to local hotels. Of the few shops I talked to in Tuléar, quality control is a concern they have experienced in the past with local artisans. If the association can create "serious artists" then perhaps the artists would be able to sell embroidered goods to stores in Tuléar.

Liaison with hotels and Tuléar market: Women need an advocate able to act as a middleman between their association and buyers in Tuléar or local hotels. Possibly the president of their association could take that on as one of her responsibilities but the role of liaison also involves a cost of in transportation. It would be better if a local market could be found or established especially in conjunction with ameliorated ecotourism in Ifaty based on the successful conservation of the Rose Garden.

Algae Cultivation Considerations:

While Vezo women are "maîtresses de la mer" and everything involving the ocean is familiar, there is a lack of local knowledge associated with algae cultivation. What women know of algae cultivation tends to be idealized notions of making lots of money, quickly; while according to reports from BIOMAD, the only known buyer in the region, most of their projects have failed either to their fault or to the reaction of the community's they work with. Reef Doctor has also been unable to establish clear communication from BIOMAD as to their willingness to set up a cultivation program in Ifaty, willingness to buy algae produced if a program were started, and ability and willingness to provide training to Reef Doctor staff or Ifaty community members themselves. Problems in the past have arisen from lack of community infrastructure, loss of interest in community participants, failures in BIOMAD's infrastructure in terms of communication with and payment to member communities. When asked if they would provide training to Ifaty, the question of who will fund the project arises.

Considerations for the Creation of an Association Feminine d'Ifaty

Level of education is one of the largest obstacles the women of Ifaty will have to overcome in the process of creating an association. In particular for those women who seek to have leadership positions within the organization, it is difficult to perform responsibilities associated with that position such as meeting note taking, project design, or treasury needs without the ability to read, write or perform basic math operations. This problem has been reiterated in literature, by Reef Doctor Staff, and by NGOs as one of the leading obstacles to progress within rural communities. Lack of understanding regarding the operation and purposes of an association, membership rights and

responsibilities, and how to create and implement a project are all new skills that will need to be presented to the women.

In order to supplement qualitative observations and quantitative data with information regarding the feasibility of women working together, a focus group was scheduled and study participants and some of their neighbours were invited to attend. In *Appendix 15: Focus Group Minutes* you can see the progression of their meeting and the importance of having one member (Mme Florine) already knowledgeable regarding associations, and processes for finding funding and training, who can act as a guiding force. This internal guiding force is important, even though it was a third party that organized and facilitated the meeting, the ideas and solutions came from within the women themselves. The end result of the focus group was 13 women eager to start the association and get their project underway, though this was probably in large part due to the possibility of getting funding from PSDR through working with Mme Florine and le *Maison de Paysans*³². The women scheduled a tentative election meeting for the following Saturday which was attended by Maison de Paysans, and who will continue to oversee the association's progress.

Another consideration in the creation of an association based on those women who were at the focus group is the group's composition. Levels of education and skills are varied as are age, and socio-economic class within the village. It is difficult to know each women's rationale for attending the meeting; it is possible they were anticipating something would be handed out as the meeting was being organized by a *vazaha*. The fact that they were interested enough to take time out of their schedules to attend the meeting could however be a good sign in their interest level and potential commitment to seeing the association through the creation process. Motivation will be a key factor in the willingness of women to retain their membership through the planning process while no activity is being done and thus no money is earned. It is difficult for the women to think a month from now in terms of what their needs will be, so it is a challenge to convey the need for patience as the structure is put in place to create access to funding for the women, especially when that funding could arrive two years from now.

³² See *Appendix 2* for full explanation of PSDR and role of *Maison de Paysans*.

Limitations

Three primary limitations in this study were experienced, the length of study, size of population sample, and language. An understanding of local mentalities is not realistically achieved in two weeks. A lot of ex-patriots struggle with questions of mentality after living in Madagascar for years. The length of study also limited the number of participants in Ifaty, and the number of NGOs and potential partners able to be identified in Tuléar. It is probable that with more participants, data regarding education level and work performed outside the house could shift to reflect higher or lower average education achieved and the percentage of women that supplement family incomes with alternative sources of revenue. It is also difficult to determine, without having lived in Ifaty and become familiar with the socio-economic hierarchy, to know the extent to which the study population is representative of the population in general. More participants could increase the extent to which findings are representative. Translations between French and Malagasy during interviews was time increased the length of interviews, which compromise the ability to explore certain responses further with additional questions. There is also an element of each response lost as it is converted from Malagasy to French and eventually to English for the purposes of this report. Often the translator would summarize key points of a response but exclude details determined unimportant, but which could have actually contributed to the researcher's understanding of her worldview. In conversations at the end of the day, I would pose questions regarding certain pieces of the interview I felt I was missing and my translator would explain several other points made by the participant of interest to me. While translating on site enabled me to explore some questions further, it also limited my understanding of others.

Conclusion:

The question of “mentality” is central to a discussion of the years of Madagascar’s persistent poverty and the inability of decades of foreign “development” aid to break the majority of the country’s population out of the poverty cycle. The word “mentality” has risen in practically every conversation and interview conducted for this report. One of Tuléar’s leading women’s advocates, Mme Eléonore, emphasized the role of “mentalities” in the country’s unremitting underdevelopment, and highlighted societies who remain inseparable from their tradition as those most afflicted by the underdevelopment phenomenon. One of the ways she sees to escape this phenomenon is to encourage and incite people to “*sortir de la tradition* (leave tradition behind”); an undertaking not easily accomplished without compromising cultural identities. Societies’ connection to tradition does not differentiate between rural and urban communities. Mme. Eléonore was encouraged to run for mayor in Tuléar’s next election, but refused because of existing mentalities: “*une poule ne chante pa comme le coq* (the hen does not crow like the cock)”.

Similar mentalities prevail throughout the country, but particularly in the south where people continue to live “*vraiment lié* (truly tied)” to their traditions³³; Tuléar province is also the least developed and poorest in Madagascar. Mentalities regarding gender disparities are not a factor of men oppressing women, or women not claiming their right to certain social spaces, but rather it is a factor of cultural gender roles and inherent differences between men and women’s work. “*Il faut que les homes aident les femmes de sortir de leur joug* (men must help women escape their yolk)”³⁴. It is not men who put them in the “yolk” or particular gender role, but men are equally responsible helping them escape by changing societal gender roles. Consequently, it is necessary to remove the gendered distinction from perceptions of work and view men and women as capable and equally responsible for all aspect of familial and social life. This speaks top the responsibility of *both* men and women in changing mentalities and behavior within their households and communities.

The question and problem of “mentality” is evident in Ifaty and acknowledged by study participants. One woman viewed the creation of a woman’s association as a positive step towards the evolution of her community: “we need to evolve, we never do, we are stagnant”³⁵. As Mme Eléonore articulated, people are content with simple solutions and become habituated to and expect external aid “because we are poor”. A perception exists that because one group has less (education, health, money etc.) than another group, it becomes the first group’s responsibility to provide for the latter. There is also a sense entrapment by poverty in that it prevents the ability to think beyond tomorrow. The first thoughts among participants were: how will I make money to buy food to feed my family. When asked about thoughts for one month from now or a year from now, most participants laughed at the thought of planning that far in advance and the question was reformulated to imply if you had money, what

³³ Mme. Eléonore NERINE, *Presidente de Movement Féminine de Tuléar*, professor of Anthropology at University of Tuléar. Interview 9 November, 2005. Tuléar.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Hortense, Interview 18 November, 2005. Ifaty

would you buy? These thought trains do not end well to thinking about conservation goals and anything else beyond day to day survival. “Poverty and the need to fulfill daily needs are major constraints for women in terms of finding time or resources to invest in conservation and environmental practices. [...] Constraints and limits that influence their relationship with the environment may cause them to compromise long-term sustainability for short-term needs”³⁶. With this in mind it is possible to see how community associations can help “communities” evolve and “develop” towards security and sustainability by shifting attention to long-term organizational planning. Women become autonomous over their organization, decide what projects to take on; and plan the steps that will get them towards the realization of that project in the future. This is without a doubt aided by the work of NGOs and other outside influences that are able to enter and expand the women’s “*monde limité* (limited world)”³⁷.

Changing mentalities are integral to the ability to transition to alternative livelihoods. Alternative livelihoods projects are increasingly used as a development tools in conjunction with community associations and community-based natural resource management. Projects hope to be a sustainable livelihood option for those communities living in degraded environments and whose occupations often contribute to that degradation. Sustainable, alternative livelihoods are a way for men and women to benefit equally from development initiatives; initiatives who aim to address the cycles of poverty and environmental degradation that negatively impact the entire community. Sustainable alternative livelihoods are often at the core of ICDPs like Reef Doctor’s in that they provide a tool to mobilize the community to improve its well-being while indirectly working towards conservation objectives changing the basis of local livelihoods. Theoretically, this enables conservation and development to be mutually reinforcing. However, *Vezo are Vezo* because their livelihood is the ocean; who will they be when they are no longer able to exploit the reef? Even if the women’s association is able to self-organize and start alternative income generating projects, one can hope that women will shift time spent “fishing walking” on the reef towards their new activity, but there is no guarantee that women will not continue to do both have a larger family income in total. The majority of reef exploitation, on the reef itself, is carried out by the *fishermen*, thus steps need to be taken to develop alternative livelihoods that involve both genders such as algae cultivation, seaweed farming, or even sea cucumber farming. Without the inclusion of both genders in alternative livelihoods, the community will remain inert with regards to changing mentalities and behaviours towards a more sustainable existence.

³⁶ Flora Flinton “‘Engendering Eden’ Vol II : Women, Gender and ICDPS in Africa : Lessons Learnt and Experiences Shared”. *International Institute for Environment and Development Wildlife and Development Series*. June 2003 (1)

³⁷ Mme. Eléonore NERINE, *Presidente de Movement Féminine de Tuléar, Professor of Anthropology at University of Tuléar*. Interview 9 November, 2005. Tuléar.

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