



MADAGASCAR
VOICES OF
CHANGE

**“
Oral testimony
of the Antanosy
people
”**

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO

ANDREW LEES

(1949 – 1994)

HE FOUGHT FOR NATURE

AND INSPIRED OTHERS

TO PROTECT THEIR ENVIRONMENT

Acknowledgements

Our greatest thanks go to all the villagers who gave their time so generously, and had the courage to share their life stories and experiences. Much credit must also be given to the village interviewers who recorded their testimonies: Rodin Rakotovahiny, Joséphine Andriarimalala, Zanaboatsy, Monja Limbisoa, Félicia Mija, Brinaldine Razafiarivelo, Bruno Mbola, Laha Magnanatsy.

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Introduction

This collection of oral testimonies comes from the Anosy region in southern Madagascar. It is the first published account of the lives of the Antanosy people in their own words and is an important opportunity for local people to speak directly to decision makers about their difficulties in the face of climate change, food insecurity, and rapid development due to mining.

The testimonies are part of Projet HEPA (**H**etahetam-**P**o **A**mbara- *“Proclaim what is in your heart”*), established by Andrew Lees Trust (ALT) in collaboration with Panos London, to enable villagers in coastal communities of the Androy and Anosy regions to share their experiences and knowledge about poverty and the environment, and to give voice to their views.

“***It is a huge challenge for people to draft a letter and send it to the authorities. Most of us are illiterate...***”
 – Constand (male), St Luce

Communications is a vital part of the development process. It is particularly important in fragile environments where the most poor, typically rural producers and women, remain isolated and disenfranchised; where governance mechanisms are weak, and where low literacy skills exacerbate feelings of powerlessness and exclusion.

A recent study undertaken by the UNDP entitled ‘Communications for Empowerment in Madagascar’ (2008) concludes that opportunities for local people to express their views are extremely limited and invariably these do not enter the public domain through national or local media.

Local debate and information sharing is usually confined to village meetings where traditional hierarchies are prevalent, and women in particular are excluded or dismissed as unknowledgeable. Fear and taboos also play a part in restricting the flow of debate, especially where opinions are dissonant with the status quo.

Despite the significant changes brought about in Anosy since 2005 through an international mining project and accompanying investments into the region, no permanent independent forum exists where local people feel confident to speak out about how they are affected by the rapid change, or are able

to seek neutral arbitration and solutions for problems arising.

The aims of this publication are to: open up the debate at all levels; widen the audience of the Antanosy people by employing different media; demonstrate the importance of communications in the rapidly changing development scenario; and promote the enfranchisement of the most vulnerable within local decision making processes.

These testimonies are being published locally, nationally and internationally; they will also be aired in part via radio, e networks, and press coverage. This dissemination process aims to ensure that donors, decision makers, and development actors are informed about the reality for local communities, and gain a greater understanding and awareness of the challenges in the local development context.

It is also our hope that this publication will encourage all those who hold the power, resources and skills, *to listen* and act to alleviate the suffering and improve the lives of the Antanosy people.
– **Yvonne Orengo**, Director, Andrew Lees Trust

The Partners

Project HEPA began when Andrew Lees Trust (ALT) requested the assistance of Panos London to help develop and deepen participatory techniques for its 'Projet Radio' which has been delivering non formal education and information via radio networks to rural communities across southern Madagascar for the last ten years.

Panos London brought its expertise to train eight members of the Anosy community, four men and four women, and ALT local staff from the Androy, to become rural interviewers and collect oral testimonies from within their own communities.

The Approach

The benefits of oral testimony in southern Madagascar are multiple: it works at grass roots level; it ensures that local language and meaning is used and readily understood; women are included in the sharing process; there is an absence of hierarchy which engenders more freedom of speech; the interviewers are known by their communities affording greater trust in the exchange; people get to speak for themselves and not through interpreters or facilitators; and foreigners are not present to influence outcomes.

All the Anosy testimonies were undertaken and recorded by local village interviewers. These interviewers were trained and supported over a week long workshop with field practice. Themes and questions for the community were developed by the participants through a facilitated dialogue. Techniques for ensuring that questions were open, and interviews focused primarily on environment and poverty, were practiced and monitored.

The interviewers were provided with Dictaphones and were remunerated for the hours they spent on the interviewing. They returned to their communities and between them collected 58 testimonies from five coastal fokontany (village communities) in Androy and Anosy over two months. These were peer reviewed by the ALT Malagasy field teams who also took part in the Panos training, and who undertook the first selection process. 41 of the Anosy testimonies were then transcribed and translated. The final selection and edits were made by Panos London with the goal of reflecting the most recurring themes. Each person interviewed is represented in the publication, and all interviewees have agreed to have their story published or broadcast. All the village participants have received copies of their testimonies.

Related Activities

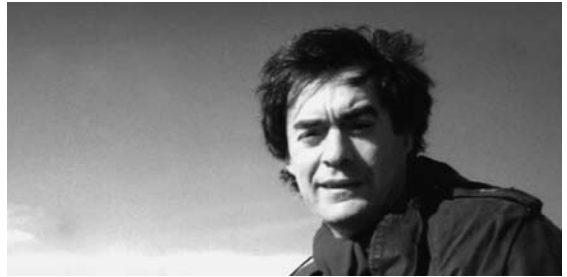
A local cultural association was launched in Anosy in 2009 following the enthusiasm that developed from the initial testimony collection exercise. The participants decided there was a real need to preserve the identity of the Antanosy people given the rapid change and development in their region and the Anosy Cultural Association aims to continue collecting and sharing oral testimonies to record and celebrate their culture. See: <http://www.andrewleestrust.org/aca.htm>

Four testimonies from the Androy participants were published on the worldwide web in August 2008 on the Day for Indigenous People, alongside films that were made by villagers about their environmental and development challenges. The films have been broadcast regionally and at international conferences on climate change. Extracts of the films and the Androy testimonies can be viewed at <http://www.panos.org.uk/survivalstrategies>

The Andrew Lees Trust

The Andrew Lees Trust was set up in 1995 following the sudden accidental death of Andrew Lees in southern Madagascar. The Trust develops and implements social and environmental education projects which aim to empower local communities to improve their self sufficiency and reduce the effects of extreme poverty. The Trust is also committed to building the capacity of Malagasy professionals to undertake the challenges of designing and implementing appropriate development strategies and projects at local and regional level. See: www.andrewleestrust.org

Andrew Lees was the Campaigns Director for the environmental NGO Friends of the Earth. He campaigned on a range of national and international issues including water pollution, illegal waste dumping and freedom of information. In December 1994 he fulfilled a lifelong ambition to visit Madagascar, and



met with village communities in the Anosy region to learn what they had to say about a proposed ilmenite mine that would remove their coastal forests.

On New Years Eve, Andrew went into Petriky forest carrying heavy filming equipment on his back. He planned to get some last images of the unique littoral flora and fauna before he went home, but he collapsed and died, probably from heat stroke. His death created an unprecedented media focus on Madagascar, and the mine. His family and friends launched the Andrew Lees Trust (ALT) in his memory. Since 1995, ALT's work in southern Madagascar has reflected Andrew's passion for the environment and his belief in empowering local communities to find their own solutions for social and environmental challenges.

A traditional Antanosy memorial stone was erected in Petriky forest where Andrew fell, a permanent reminder of his courage and commitment. The villagers in Loharano have made this place one of their sacred sites. For more on Andrew Lees visit www.andrewleestrust.org/andrew.htm

Editorial note

The interviews presented in this book have been cut down by more than half and some re-ordering has taken place. Square brackets indicate 'inserted' text for clarification; round brackets are translations; and dots indicate cuts in the text. The primary aim has been to remain true to the spirit of the interview, while losing questions, repetition, and confusing or overlapping sections.



Context

Madagascar is the world's fourth largest island. It is one of the poorest countries in Africa, ranking 143 out of 177 countries in the 2007/8 United Nations Human Development Index.

Over three-quarters of Madagascar's population are dependant on agriculture for their livelihoods, leaving them particularly vulnerable to environmental shocks. Cyclones regularly hit the north of the country and changing climate and seasonal drought severely affects the south.

In March 2009 Madagascar underwent a political coup which unseated the government of Marc Ravalomanana. Attempts by SADC (Southern African Development Community), the African Union and other international agencies have yet to resolve ongoing discord between the political parties. An 'Haute Autorite de Transition' (HAT) currently manages the country pending the next general election – estimated for October 2010.

The Anosy Region

Home to approximately half a million inhabitants, the **Anosy** region is situated in the south east corner of Madagascar. It is estimated that at least 75% of the rural population live below the poverty line (INSTAT2005) and almost the same number are illiterate and do not have access to clean water.

Located in the rain shadow of the mountains, Anosy is a wet region with varied agricultural practices which encompass rice growing, market gardening, fruit cultivation, as well as staples such as manioc. But rainfall is diminishing with direct impacts on harvest yields and drinking water.

The coastal areas of Anosy are largely populated by fishermen and their families. Lobster and prawns are harvested for local and international markets, and local people also fish in rivers and lakes for domestic consumption.

Biodiversity is varied ranging across littoral, humid, and transition forests to marshlands and wooded bush. Tree loss is rapid in the low lying areas at the base of the mountains where timber is cut for fuel – mostly for charcoal production.

The main city, **Tolagnaro** is commonly known as '**Fort Dauphin**' (from its colonial days as a French fort) and has an airport that regularly serves tourists travelling to nearby Berenty, a lemur sanctuary bordering the Androy region. There is a wide choice of hotels and visitor attractions in the Anosy area and tourism has for some time been an important part of the local economy.

Mining

Since 2005 Ft Dauphin has been the target of financial investment under a World Bank 'growth pole' programme which has placed mining at the core of the regional development strategy. The mine is privately owned by QIT Minerals Madagascar (QMM), a subsidiary of Rio Tinto. Over the next sixty years it will extract and export approximately 750,000 tons of ilmenite to Canada for processing.

Ilmenite is a light mineral which transforms into titanium dioxide, an industrial whitener used in paint, toothpaste etc. It has been found in quantity along the south east coastline of Anosy in the black sands that lie under the littoral forests.

Mining activities now dominate the local economy and are already impacting on the environment as well as on the social fabric of the region. Pollution from quarrying and displacement of village populations has created new challenges and villagers must come to terms with the loss of their lands and traditional ways of life, as well as their changing landscape.

According to local people, the cost of living has trebled in the region since the mine's start up phase (2005) and tourism has declined. The town has seen an influx of foreign workers for port and road construction, huge increases in traffic, and pressures on local utility services (water and electricity). Office space and housing have inevitably become scarce or overpriced, and local jobs are at a premium as workers migrate from other regions in search of employment.

Forest

The mine brings dramatic changes to the lives of rural villagers who live adjacent to, and who depend upon, the local forests situated in the mine's trajectory over the next six decades.

The government, who owns a 20% stake in the mining company, has implemented compulsory purchase of the forested coastline where the mining sites are located. Approximately 6000 hectares of coastal landscape is under QMM project custody for extraction. An estimated 1097 hectares will be designated as conservation zones with restricted access.

Local people regard the forest as sacred as it is home to the spirits of their ancestors. They rely on its products for house building, wild forest foods, and natural medicines, products for weaving, and fuel; also as a safety net in times of hardship.

The newly designated 'conservation zones', set up by QMM and the Forest Service, employ a '*dina*' (community management) system to restrict access to the forest. This means that many villagers – who previously relied on their own traditional management mechanisms – must now pay (or be fined) to enter and take products from the forest. Most are cash strapped market gardeners and fishermen earning less than a dollar per day who now find themselves excluded from this vital resource

Land

Some communities have already been displaced from their lands to allow for construction of a new port, quarry, roads and housing for mine workers. Others have been restricted from access to their traditional fishing sites. A cash compensation process has been applied for those affected by displacement, but there are ongoing disputes about the level of

compensation delivered. Most consider it insufficient to balance the loss of access to farmlands or fishing areas that have supported their families over many generations

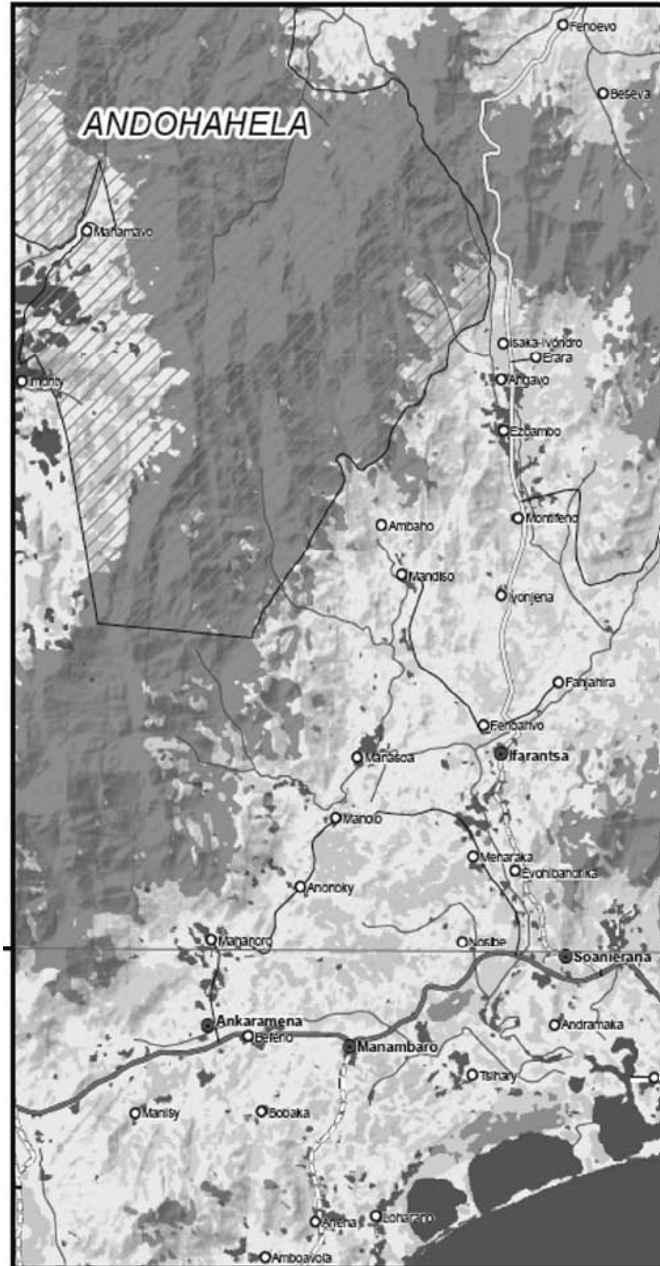
The majority of local people live from the land (86%) as subsistence farmers. They designate ownership of their land by traditional means which are recognised at community level. Legal tenure is difficult and costly and of an estimated 90% of Malagasy farmers who own land, only 8% have formal land titles. Compensation processes inevitably favour those who can establish legal title.

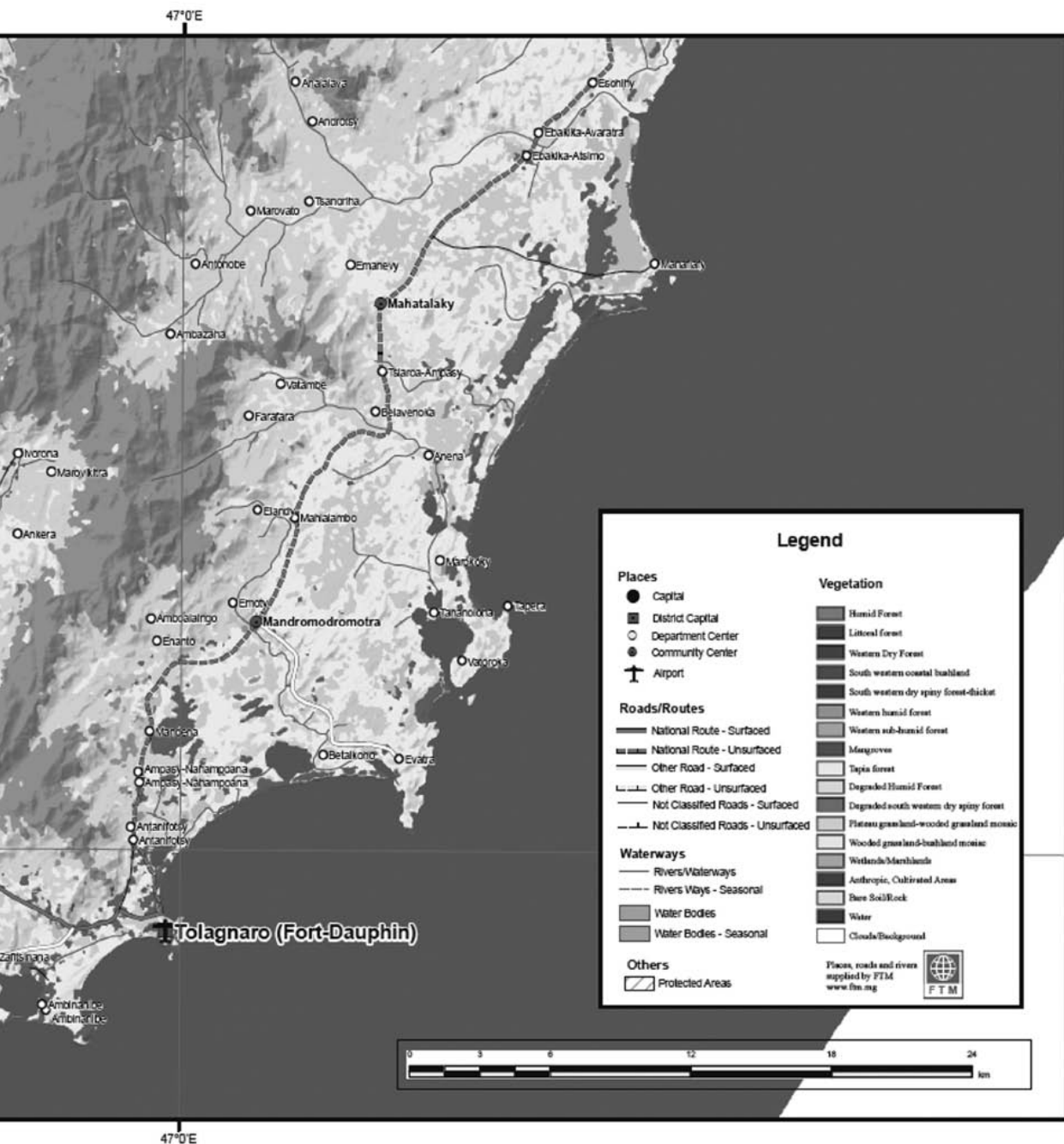
New challenges

In the face of restricted access or loss of forest, water and land, all of which support traditional ways of life, local people must now develop new livelihoods. As climate change impacts on local harvests and food security, and with few economic opportunities and little capital at their disposal, options for villagers are limited

The mining company claims to have already spent 38 million US dollars in the region, of which approximately 17 million has gone to local communities (reported by the 'L'Express' newspaper). But the poorest in the region are struggling to make ends meet and find it difficult to participate in the new economy due to insufficient jobs, skills deficit and illiteracy. For many villagers the investment has not yet manifested in ways they can see directly improves the long term future for their families

Money: Malagasy Ariary (MGA) exchanged at the current rate of 1000 Malagasy Ariary (MGA) = 0.51 dollars (Oanda, 10/09/09).





Background on sites

Note on Information and figures provided

The testimonies were collected in December 2007 and January 2008. Unless otherwise stated, Information and figures in this document were correct as of 14th September 09 but may be subject to rapid change.

The presence of doctors and teachers in local health clinics and schools may vary as local arrangements change. Figures reported on land compensation are being reviewed as a lack of consistency has raised questions amongst villagers and monitoring agencies. Company literature claims that QMM has made payments totalling 4 million dollars to some 492 residents affected by port and quarry construction, but local villagers report compensation rates varying from as little as 100 MGA/square metre to 400 MGA/square metre (approx 21 cents per square metre), depending on the status of the land (fallow, cultivated, number of fruiting trees etc.). No information was available in the region to clarify or further determine the status and reality of land compensation.

Information regarding QMM commitments in the region is taken from the Rio Tinto website, QMM press releases and/ through research at the local community level. No consistent figure could be found regarding the overall forest conservation area in St Luce.

Figures for the number of people displaced by the mining project have been taken from the World

Bank PIC website. Figures provided by local Chef du Fokontany, such as the number of people employed in the village by the mining company, are currently impossible to verify and regarded as estimations only. The same applies to population counts. There has been no census in Anosy in recent years and, together with migration, which has increased due to the presence of the mine, it is impossible to provide accurate numbers.

It should be noted that mining has not yet begun in Petriky and St Luce although QMM has already claimed forest areas into their custody and delineated conservation zones with restricted access. Mining has begun in Mandena, an area of 2,000 hectares north-east of inland, and therefore outside the remit of the HEPA project, which has focused on coastal communities in the Androy and Anosy regions.

Mining-related quarry, port and road construction have meant displacement and loss of land for the populations of Ilaftsignana and Ambinanibe. Though they are not yet directly impacted by mining, they are immediately affected by loss of access to forest/ firewood and to fresh water fishing.

In general, access to clear, transparent information and open communication in the region proves difficult, not least as the context is shifting so rapidly, given the advance of the mining operation and accompanying development activity.

Lastly, the testimonies have all undergone translation into three languages in order to facilitate collection and make them accessible to the widest possible audience. There may be some minor differences between language versions as a result of this translation process.

Ambinanibe

Ambinanibe is a *fokontany* (primary administrative community organisation – a group of hamlets) on the coast, 7 kilometres south of Fort Dauphin. Made up of seven hamlets, it is home to approximately 3,000 people. To the west is an inlet from the sea, which is protected by the coastal landscape and which provides shrimp fishing opportunities to villagers.

To the east is a promontory where QMM have constructed their port. Port and road construction, together with a new quarry, has directly affected the lives of people in Ambinanibe.

New restrictions mean that fishermen can no longer safely land their boats at Somatraha when weather conditions are bad. Bevava, an alternative landing strip, is too exposed to the waves, and the fishermen refuse to use a site built by QMM next to the port, as they consider it too dangerous. The matter is under review with the new regional administration.

Fishing is the principal livelihood and involves all members of the community, including the women, who are responsible for selling fish caught by the men. Some also create income through weaving and catching shrimp and small fish. Approximately 150 villagers were employed by the QMM mine but have been made redundant now that the port construction phase is complete. A new road that connects the quarry to the town means that villagers can now access bus transport into Fort Dauphin more easily to sell their products.

Areas around Ambinanibe have been appropriated by the mining company for road and port construction, which has reduced access to farmland, the collection of shrubs for fuel and privacy for personal sanitation. Many villagers have lost their land and compensation is reported as 100 MGA/square metre, although some say 400 MGA/square metre. The compensation process and accompanying issues are being reviewed

with new regional government.

QMM opened a primary school this year and in 2007 built a health centre in Lohalovoky hamlet. However this centre awaits a new doctor and only one midwife currently supports the community's health needs. A small number of international and local agencies implement health projects in Ambinanibe, including water and reproductive health initiatives, and QMM supports various social programmes for fishing and literacy.

It appears that the World Bank has promised a number of infrastructure supports to Ambinanibe but these have yet to materialise, as World Bank funding has been halted due to the current political unrest in Madagascar.

The village and beach are visited by tourists and foreign workers, some of whom do not respect the local *fady* (customary taboos) or the environment.

Petriky

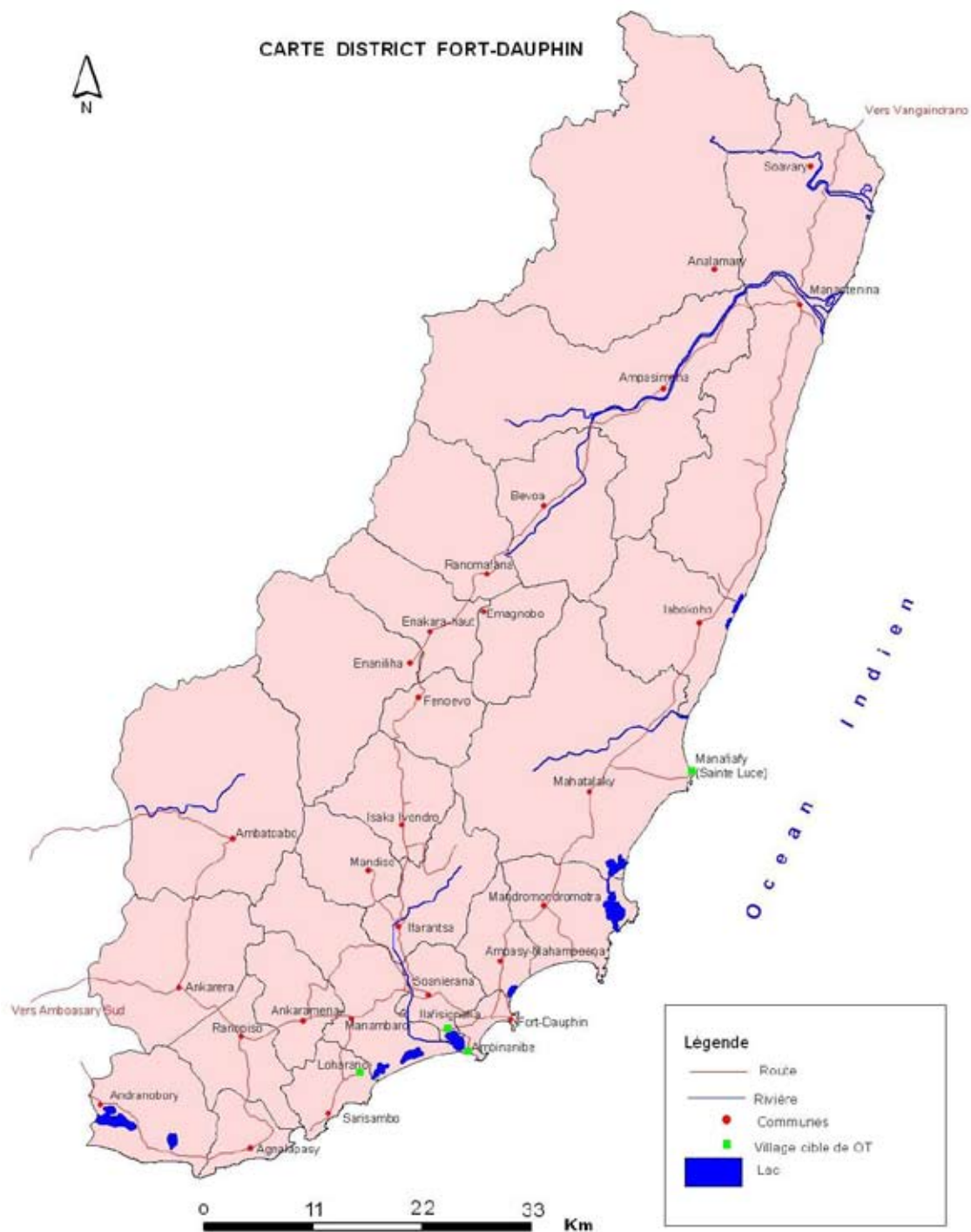
Petriky is an area of littoral forest situated 32 kilometres south of Fort Dauphin, home to approximately 900 people. It includes a fragile water system of three lagoons.

The testimonies were collected in Loharano, a hamlet to the north-west side of Petriky. Here the villagers live mostly from fishing, small agricultural produce and forest products.

The forest is somewhat degraded, especially around Loharano where villagers are growing manioc and tomatoes on its western edge. A large swathe of forest has been cut from east to west to provide road access for QMM vehicles.

The forest is due to be mined for ilmenite and QMM has appropriated 1,320 hectares of land, 120 of which

CARTE DISTRICT FORT-DAUPHIN



have been designated a conservation zone by QMM and the local forest service since 2008. A management transfer to local communities is proposed through FIMPIAMP (Fikambanana Mpiara-mitantana ny Alan'ny Petriky) for managing the forest conservation zone, and COBA (Comité de Base) for managing the forest user zone. In the past local people applied their own traditional forest management system.

Approximately 324 people were employed by QMM to build a road (each paid 2,000 MGA per day) but the work only lasted a few days because so many people participated. Some vegetable cultivation, honey cultivation, tree seedlings and other income-generating projects with local associations have been set up by QMM's social programme.

There is only one well to source drinking water. The nearest health centre is in Sarisambo, one day's walk away, where international agencies have set up reproductive health education projects and intensive food distribution to treat malnourished children. A programme to promote vegetable cultivation has run into difficulty as it involved micro-finance in order to purchase equipment, and people were afraid of getting into debt. A major concern for villagers is the difficulty of getting produce to market due to their remote location and poor access to roads.

A primary school was built by QMM in 1998 in wood, and rebuilt in brick in 2008. It has three government paid teachers and one supply teacher. However, older children must travel to the secondary school in Manambaro for their schooling and stay with relatives. The villagers requested a secondary school for their community but are still awaiting a response.

St Luce

Situated 46 kilometres to the north-east of Fort Dauphin, St Luce is home to approximately 1,400 people living in three hamlets: Ambandriky, Ampanasatomboky and Manafiafy. It is primarily a

lobster fishing village, which sells produce seasonally – at prices set by middlemen – to two locally based French operators, Madapeche and Martin Pecheur.

The forest cover here is part littoral forest and part humid forest, which is owned by the de Heaulme family and used for tourism (private access). The forest area will be mined for ilmenite and 1,900 hectares are in project custody. 274 hectares are protected ('Ala tahiry') and completely off limits. There is a further area run by COBA (Comité de Base) for use by villagers under '*dina*' arrangements, for example, gathering firewood, cutting certain trees and collecting *mahampy* reeds, but the size of this area is unclear.

Clean drinking water is more widely available in St Luce, with three wells built by FID (Fonds Internationale pour le Developpement – a World Bank project) in 2000 (two of which are still working). QMM built one well in 1999 and two hand pumps, one for the primary school in Ambandriky, and one for the health centre in Manafiafy.

The health centre was built by QMM in 2003 with a midwife paid for by the government, but there are problems with supply and the cost of medicines for patients. And in the primary school that QMM built for Ambandriky in 2004, there is just one teacher to 185 pupils. A second teacher has been requested at government level but villagers await a response. Older children have to travel to Mahatalaky, 15 kilometres away, to take their secondary level entrance exams. There is also a primary school in Manafiafy built by FID in 1986.

Some market gardening projects have been set up by local and international agencies, as well as by QMM, but there are difficulties transporting goods to market in Fort Dauphin as road conditions are very poor, especially in the rainy season.

Ilafitsignana

Ilafitsignana is located 6 kilometres to the south-west of Fort Dauphin, near to the QMM quarry that provides stone for port and road construction. The local mountain to the west of Fort Dauphin is the source of the rock and its rapid disappearance is changing the landscape beyond recognition.

Of the 1,500 people living in Ilafitsignana, at least 124 households have been displaced by the quarry and road building (PIC statistics) and many others have lost their lands. These people are known as 'Personnes Affectées par le Projet' (Persons Affected by the Project) or 'PAPs'.

In 2005/6, QMM began a compensation programme to PAPs for loss of land. They were offered a choice of land or money but, as villagers perceived the new land offered to be sandy and not good for cultivation, they opted for money. Reported amounts for compensation to villagers who lost land vary according to whether it was fallow, cultivated or titled, but range from 100 MGA/square metre to 400 MGA/square metre.

The compensation process is currently under review as World Bank guidelines are closer to 2,000 MGA/square metre for untitled cultivated land.

In addition to land compensation, villagers also received new housing. The first house was built by QMM and the model largely accepted, but subsequent building contracts were given to local enterprises, which made houses of lower quality with walls that leak when it rains.

The greatest challenge for the community is the lack of livelihoods. The construction phase of the mine – which gave employment to approximately 36 people in the quarry – is now over. Ten people from Ilafitsignana are currently hired as forest guards in the QMM eucalyptus plantation.

QMM has undertaken to fund a variety of social programmes for PAPs through local agencies to help promote vegetable cultivation and livestock projects, sewing, weaving, artisanal products, nets for fishermen, and other income-generating projects, as well as literacy for children excluded from public primary school.

The nearest health centre is Lohalovoky (in Ambinanibe) although it is currently without a doctor. Drinking water is available through seven hand pumps and five taps but these are frequently broken and awaiting the construction of shelters. Education is available from a public school, built by QMM in 2005, which educates approximately 300 students under five government paid teachers.



Sainte Luce





Fanja

female, 22, St Luce

“ My family has always been involved in making tsihy (mats). When I was a child, I remember my mother making them... I also followed in her footsteps... It's no wonder they could not pay for my schooling because they did not make much money... Later on, the price of a tsihy increased, but not enough to allow the tsihy makers to address their needs and meet their obligations.

I stopped [studying] just after passing my CEPE exam (elementary certificate). From that time on, I have been involved

”

“ in weaving. Usually, one *tsihy* takes three days to a week to make. It sells for 2,000 to 3,000 *ariary*. The amount of cassava that I can buy for that only lasts about four days.

A demanding and painful job

Weaving is a very demanding job but we don't have any choice...

Several steps must be followed. We leave very early in the morning to collect the vines. Every root must be extracted one by one... Then we head home with the vines around 5pm. After that, there is no break, as we have to collect *tanifotsy* (white sand) to soften the vines...

We dig for [the sand] at a depth of about 5 metres, as if we were digging for sapphires. The white sand helps to fade the bright green colour of the *mahampy* (type of reed used for weaving) and at the same time, protects it from decomposition...

It is a risky thing to do, because we have to go down into a sort of a cave to get the sand. It is possible that the roof of the cave will fall down on us. We don't have any machines or tools to extract the sand; we have to go down there ourselves... After this, we walk home for 7 kilometres, each carrying a load of about 20 kilos. Once we get home, we [still] do not get a break. We have to start preparing the *mahampy* straight away, to prevent it from rotting...

We prepare a dough from the *tanifotsy*, just like making dough for bread. We mix the *tanifotsy* with water...[then] we scoop it with our hand and paint the *mahampy*. The *mahampy* becomes white, losing its greenish colour...

It takes four days to dry out... The next step is brushing and pounding to soften the *mahampy*, so it will be easy to manipulate... For three days after this process, we weave the *tsihy*. In all, it takes a week to make one

tsihy... A *tsihy* is made up of two sides. We make each sheet first before attaching them...by thread...

It is a very difficult process. In addition, it is very tiring. I wish I had a machine to help me increase the number of *tsihy* I could make in a shorter time. Making it manually is painful.

Selling the *tsihy*

[The market] is 15 kilometres from here. We leave around 4am and we arrive at Mahatalaky around 9 or 10am. Then after selling our *tsihy* and running some errands, we return to St Luce around 5pm. We have to walk because there is no public transport. In addition, we only get lunch on our return to the village...

Even though the price of *tsihy* went up to 1,200 *ariary*, the current price does not correspond to the increase in the cost of living... [when] 400 *ariary* is the price for 1 *kapoaka* (1 *kapoaka* equals one-third of a kilo) of rice...

I can only get 2 *kapoaka* of rice because the remainder is used to purchase kerosene and coffee. In the past, when a *tsihy* sold for 200 *ariary*, a *kapoaka* of rice only cost 10 *ariary*.

[I sell to 'middlemen', who] are Tandroy women. They... resell the *tsihy* in their region [of Androy]. So far, no companies have expressed an interest in buying our products. I wish foreigners would buy our *tsihy* because that would guarantee that the price would be higher...and our hardships would be lessened... [Our buyers]...drive the price down and they are the ones who make more money...

Uses of *tsihy*

We can make and create many things... This is something we learned from generation to generation and still practise today. We use *tsihy* as a carpet... [or as] wallpaper. The most popular use of it is for baskets, plate mats, and as a trunk where we can store our valuable goods and clothes.

We use *tsihy* in our daily life to replace a mattress. We cannot afford foam mattresses therefore a *tsihy* is sufficient for us... *Tsihy* replaces chairs at home. So you see that *mahampy* has an important place in our life...

The desire for training

If we had lessons or if there was a training programme for us to participate in, *tsihy* makers would improve the quality of their products... It would not take any time for me to gather my friends together if such an opportunity arose. I know they are all interested in such improvement...

Potential buyers are fed up with the styles, colour and quality of our products... People lose interest due to the monotony of what we make... *Tsihy* makers have to make a tremendous effort to convince buyers to purchase our products. In the end, they agree, but at a very low price.

If we cannot improve our products, I fear that the buyers will drive down the current price.

Lack of leadership

We have not tried to establish an association. Life is too expensive and people do not have time to invest in establishing such a group... We would have liked to have an association of women to facilitate and seek benefit for all members. We would also like to have received some equipment and money to allow us to work as an association. Because we don't have a leader, people continue to work on their own.

Even if we had a women's association, we don't know where to go to purchase seeds for farming...

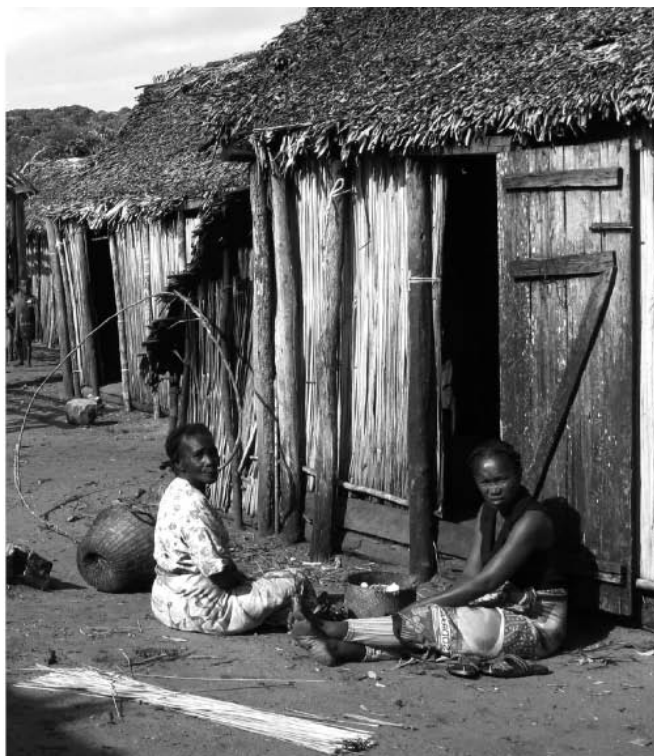
Farming is a secondary activity for me. I have a hard time finding money to purchase green vegetable seeds. Any time I make some money I don't want to spend it on seeds, because I need to buy food for the family...

Besides, I lack the necessary equipment such as a wheelbarrow, sprinkler and fertiliser. I only use chicken waste as fertiliser. As for watering my vegetables, I do it manually. As a result, I cannot plant many...

'Now the forest is a forbidden place'

Things would have been different if I had someone who could help me; I am single. I have to collect sticks from the forest to fence the vegetable garden [and stop] domestic animals grazing or eating the seeds. But collecting sticks has become a problem because the forest belongs to the foreigners (QMM – QIT Madagascar Minerals – subsidiary of Rio Tinto mining for ilmenite).

It is amazing how a forest growing in



“ our region can become the property of foreigners. Right now, local people need authorisation to cut down trees. The worst thing is that we have to pay to get the permit. ..

We did not have to purchase firewood [before]... Men went to collect construction wood and brought back the amount they needed to build a house. Women took advantage of free firewood and made a small business of selling it to other people... In addition, people did not buy medicines. Medicinal plants were available to us from the forest...

I still rely on the forest to supply my needs, especially to collect *mahampy* for my occupation... In [the past], if I could not collect *mahampy*, I could switch to collecting firewood and make a little bit of money...

Now, everything has changed. The forest is a forbidden place... If such restrictions continue we will fall into chronic hardship.

We were asked to plant eucalyptus. So I wonder why QMM doesn't take over this eucalyptus forest? Instead they take over our dense forest, full of resources. Eucalyptus trees are not suitable for construction because a month after a eucalyptus post is planted into the sand, it starts rotting...

People have expressed their views but could not prevent QMM's plan to work in our area. The thing is we do not know what to do, where to go or who to talk to.

Lost benefits of biodiversity

Whenever foreign tourists came here to view animals such as lemurs, they paid some money to the local community, as an entry fee... Our forest contains many biodiversity species that attract a lot of tourists; unfortunately, their visits are prohibited by QMM. QMM does not accept tourists paying fees directly to the local community...

All we want is for the forest to be used to generate income for our community, because the forest grows in our community. Because of our care, that is why the forest is still alive... We love the forest, that is why we have cared for it until now...

To me, it would be better to bury all of us – because taking these resources away from us means killing us. It will be sad to lose the glory of St Luce as a tourist village, located between the littoral forest and beautiful beaches... The biodiversity is unique around here, in the sea and in the forest.

'Going to the health centre is not free'

[QMM] built wells for the local community...and a health centre... Before, pregnant women...had to go to Mahatalaky to deliver their babies. Bringing a woman on a stretcher [on foot] to Mahatalaky was not easy... Now, a pregnant woman can go to the health centre in the village. [So] I am grateful that there is a health centre available to us now...

[But] I run into hardships when my children are ill. I don't have money to buy medicines. Before, I could go to the forest to collect medicinal plants to treat my children. Now, I have to bring them to the health centre. QMM forgets that going to the health centre is not free and that medicines are expensive.

Fishing in decline

In the past, selling lobster was a prosperous activity... People could purchase cows, build houses and raise their children through lobster-catching. A fisherman could catch up to 15 kilos of lobsters per day. Today, it is rare that a fisherman catches a few hundred grams; most of the time it's about 100 grams. I never understand why the volume of their catch has decreased so dramatically...

In addition to this, the price is low. With the decrease in supply, I think keeping the price high should compensate for the loss of income... Unfortunately,

everything works [the buyers'] way and thus fishermen and their families suffer.

The buyers' strategy

The problem is that fishermen do not have buyers who can pay a higher price for the lobster... companies in Fort Dauphin purchase them through their middlemen. People try to bargain with the middlemen to bring up the price of lobster but the middlemen's excuse is the high cost of petrol and car parts... We don't use motorboats, so we have no idea [of the facts] when they use petrol price as a factor influencing the price of lobster.

The strategy of the lobster-buying companies is also to send just one buyer to the village and therefore the law of supply and demand takes effect. Fewer buyers and many suppliers drive the price down...

The middlemen also forget that fishing is not safe. How many times do accidents at sea happen? I think they just don't care...

Local communities are in charge when there is an accident. The government does not have anything to do with it. We have a distant relative as a middleman. When an accident happens, he makes a contribution to lessen the burden of the local communities, for example he donates some rice.

Little hope of "positive change"

I don't want St Luce, which was among the first villages trying to develop, ultimately to become among the last to do so...

Now, all women know nothing but weaving, and all men know nothing but fishing. If the missionary school had continued, people would have gained many skills and our lives would have been different. They taught English and French, as well as cooking and weaving, and much more. If such training had

continued, many of our children would have had the opportunity to improve their lives...

[But] our children are becoming illiterate... The main occupation that our children do after they drop out of school is: girls follow their mothers' footsteps in making *tsihy*; boys fish like their fathers do. Then together, they farm... There are no other jobs...

I can see only misery. What to expect? Nothing! Making *tsihy* and fishing are not the kinds of jobs to bring a positive change... Unless people receive other kinds of training, it is almost impossible to imagine that the lives of future generations will ever improve. I even think they will suffer more... because the resources they need will be gone. ”

Olina

female, 83, St Luce

“ I am Olina, 80 years old... I got married when I was only 16. I had my first child when I was 18, and when I reached 21 I had my second... My marriage did not last... After my divorce, I had to take care of myself. Luckily, life was cheap – 100 *ariary* was enough to live on for a week...

Since I was divorced at such a young age, I had another relationship and another child. I was a single mother trying to provide for my children, including their education, so my life was a struggle...

People...asked me to sew dresses so that they could sell them in the market... Only a month after giving birth, I went back to my job, and even my baby got used to the sound of my sewing machine and fell asleep on my lap while I sewed... I lacked sleep because I had to work day and night.

”

“I did everything I could to make money”

Such a rhythm of work had an impact on my health. I felt ill... [The doctor] asked what my occupation was. I said I was a tailor... I [also] baked cakes and made bread. He prohibited me from continuing with both my activities. I replied: “What would we eat if I stopped sewing, and making bread?”...

He suggested that if I had to sew, I needed to find someone to push the *manivelle* (sewing machine pedal) and my job was just to adjust the clothes to make them right... I respected his advice. [But] after four to five years, I felt completely cured, so I could not resist sewing once again on my own.

I grew older but my work intensified. I did everything I could to make money... I dried fish and brought and sold them in remote villages. I also sold fresh fish in Mahatalaky to make quick money and purchase food for my children...[and] pencils, pens and copybooks, or anything that they needed for school.

“I am grateful my parents sent me to school”

I myself went to school and that is where I learned to design, cut, assemble and sew clothes. I also learned how to make bread, bake different types of cakes, and I am able to cook all sorts of meals. For example if visitors or tourists come here, I am asked to cook for them...

If I had not gone to school, I would not be able to make a living. I am grateful to my parents for sending me to school because if they had not had the idea, I cannot imagine how my life would be. I learned French, cooking and sewing...

My children attended all the primary grades, until they received their first certificate [of elementary education]. Then they stopped because I did not have enough money to pay for their education beyond

that. In the past, this CEPE certificate was enough to get around, but now it means nothing... My children ended up working on our farmland and fishing.

Forced to give up tailoring

Even though I am still capable of working, I had to stop due to the mechanical failure of my sewing machine... I could not buy another. The price went up as well, so everything worked together against me... If I had a machine and a pair of glasses, I could still do it...

What I am doing now to make a living is part-time work, weeding some farmland and collecting firewood. These are not the kinds of jobs that generate enough income to live; but since I am still alive and I need to eat, I am forced to do them.

“The entire family had plenty of fish”

In the past, Manafiafy was famous for fishing, especially lobsters... Now, the climate keeps changing and this has an impact on the fish catch around here. Tuna, sardine and many other fish used to be abundant but there has been a decline in their production.

In the past, during the hot season, the village smelt of fish because there were tons of them... The entire family had plenty of fish and everyone was satisfied.

Price fixing and other strategies

What amazes people around here is that fishermen are not the ones who determine the price of their catch... We don't know if the *vazaha* (foreigners) do not want our lobsters, or what is really happening. People want to find out the truth. It is hard to believe that foreigners would not want our lobsters, because from time to time they visit Manafiafy and the first thing they ask is: “Are there lobster, and how much does a kilo cost?” So we fix a price and they pay.

But amazingly, when the buyers (middlemen) purchase lobsters in the

“village, the price [they offer] is different and fishermen cannot fix their own price... Consequently, fishermen are forced to sell their catch, unwillingly... at a cheaper price – because lobsters do not last long so it is better to turn them into some money than to get nothing...

The fishermen’s catch ranges from 100 grams to 2 kilos per person. Currently, the middlemen impose minimum measurements on the lobster they want to purchase. I think this measure is used to reduce the money that fishermen can generate... The middlemen scrutinise the lobsters and confiscate the smaller ones...instead of giving them back to the fishermen. If they don’t want to purchase them, they should return the smaller lobsters to the sea so that they can get bigger.

Middlemen advance money so that people can purchase lobster traps, large baskets and food. Because people are so poor, they are tempted by the offer because otherwise their children will go hungry. People divide the money destined for fishing equipment and allocate some of it to food.

As a result, people end up with fewer fish traps and the middlemen get angry with the fishermen, because the money was spent on something else. Of course they can get angry! They already have money and livelihood choices.

“Fishermen have no choice”

People fish using wooden boats, without any engine; and the best wood for this is *vitagno* (large hardwood tree); it is very light and does not sink until it is swallowed by huge waves. Even if it is swallowed by the sea a few times, a boat made out of *vitagno* will float to the top again.

However, [now] we are forbidden to take trees from the forest. Eucalyptus trees are available but these are not suitable for making boats to be used at sea.

They are heavy; only good for fishing on rivers...

Fishermen have no choice but to accept their fate, both pricewise and by risking death on the sea... Many die while fishing... There have been no measures taken to protect the lives of fishermen. No one cares about them.



Issues of government: “it is so disappointing”

If the person in power is good, then some changes happen, but if the person in power is not so good, then nothing happens and people have a long list of complaints...

It is not necessarily the government that is responsible for our situation but mostly the people who are put in charge of the government's mission. For example, the government provided money to fund projects, but the projects are not finished. Announcements have been made but nothing happens. It is so disappointing...

When there is distribution of food aid or other sorts of help in the village, people have a hard time finding the right person to be in charge. The reason for this is that nepotism takes place. Instead of helping the genuinely poor, food aid goes out to the family members of the person who is distributing it.

The government should look closely at the needs of fishermen and farmers – because there are people who live off occupations other than fishing. Food prices are exorbitant, clothes are so expensive. I don't care much about clothes because no one has died from not being able to buy cloth, but food is critical for survival. Finding food to nourish a family is a very hard thing to do now.

Poor diets and scarce supplies

Today [if I had young children]...I am sure I would not be able to satisfy their needs because life is expensive. With my income, I may be able to purchase just 10 *kapoaka* (3.3 kilos) of rice. People are satisfied if their children eat rice porridge.

Supplying rice to the family is a big challenge for people around here. It is the main staple for children. It is true that there is cassava, sweet potato, taro and *bemako* (edible root, similar to taro), but children usually have a hard time digesting them. Even adults prefer rice but since it is expensive, and there is not enough rice, people are forced to consume other staples.

Children under three do not understand the difficulties that their parents face; every time they are

hungry, they cry until they get food... People consume cassava but they do not enjoy it; they lose weight.

“Our health has improved”

Nowadays, people have extensive knowledge and they know how to manage their health. So people use drops to purify the water in the wells and to kill any bacteria that may harm their health...

In addition, the local community designated a few people to manage the cistern. It is forbidden to do laundry around the cistern, because the dirty water may run off into it... I think the use of a cistern has benefited us because our children are healthier now...

Our health has improved since there is a hospital here... Before, people would put their sick relative on a stretcher and walk to the hospital in Mahatalaky. Sometimes, the sick person died along the way. It is the same for pregnant women... Sometimes they delivered the babies before they reached the hospital because they had to walk for 15 kilometres.

Now, people go to see the midwife in the village. She asks questions and gives check-ups. She tries to find out the cause of illnesses before she prescribes medicines... But if people need to purchase medicine, they lack money. And in some cases, when they can get medicine, people sell it again to make money.

Family planning welcomed

This village has a lot of children, but thanks to the government, who initiated family planning, the population growth has slowed down a bit. Life is getting more and more expensive and with many children to raise, it is very difficult...parents are not able to sustain the lives [of many children] and supply all their needs: food, school, health and clothing. The mothers are busy caring for them and thus lack time to work.



“ Luckily, people in the village received the idea [of family planning] so well, and now a mother waits until her child is six before conceiving another. I am really satisfied with what the government did.

“Only someone who has money can be heard”

[QMM] (QIT Madagascar Minerals – subsidiary of Rio Tinto mining for ilmenite) owns everything, the land, the forest, everything belongs to them. Even our ancestral land belongs to them. Amazing!.. I guess [the mayor] has not sent any reports or complaints to higher authorities, and that is why QMM keeps doing what it wants to do.

If someone, or a woman like me, tries to complain and talk to the mayor, he may say, “What does a woman know about this problem?” I may be treated like someone who has too much to say; women and children know nothing about problems and should not get involved. Even if a man complains, the mayor will not necessarily listen... Only someone who is richer, or has money, can be heard in the village.





Constand

male, 31, St Luce

“ Life in the past and today should not be compared... In the past people had plenty of food and money to purchase other things...such as clothes and cattle. The price of goods was cheap and children could go to school... My parents had seven children and they were able to supply their needs... [Today] people struggle to make money and...prefer to spend it on food than new clothes...

Now that I have my own family, it is getting more and more difficult to get a good catch and make a living. The amount of fish I catch these days is far less than my father used to get...

My parents did not have to use a lot of fishing nets or traps to make a good catch... [Today] fishermen try to increase their productivity; so they use different tools and invest more time in fishing. Even so, their catch [is small].”

“A population explosion”

I have also noticed that many people get involved in fishing now. This is due to the high cost of living and the fact that fishing can generate quick money, provided you can make a catch...

[Also] there has been a...population explosion around here. I have never seen the village so full of children! The problem is that these children...do not attend school for a variety of reasons, and so they begin fishing at a young age...

Today a lot of people follow family planning to reduce the number of their children, but still it does not help much... many parents [still] cannot meet their children's needs such as clothes and school fees...

So the number of fishermen has increased but the resources – fish, lobster and shrimp – have decreased.

Poverty increases risks

Fishermen...still use wooden boats, and...they are not able to fish in deeper seas where resources might be abundant... [They need] bigger boats or motorboats... to face the strong waves and currents out there...

The other reason fishermen need strong boats is that they need to be able to fish on windy days. Around here, when the wind blows from the south – we call it *haranalaotsy* – all fishermen stay on land because it is dangerous to fish in those conditions. Fishermen believe that if they have motorboats they could fish without risking accidents...

The boats [we use] are just wood from tree trunks, carved out in the middle to allow a few people to sit. When this type of boat sinks there is no way of retrieving it. In addition, fishermen do not have life jackets. This is not surprising because fishermen already struggle to make a living...[and] life jackets cost a fortune.

Not only [is there no] insurance, but also these middlemen and their foreign bosses do not dare to come here and present condolences when a fisherman has an accident and dies. According to Malagasy tradition, people slaughter a cow, but unfortunately no middlemen or their bosses [ever] donate a cow...

Fishermen just work it out themselves, thanking God when they return home without an accident.

At the mercy of middlemen

I have heard that lobster and fish prices in Fort Dauphin market are very good. So why are people proposed such low prices here? [Fishermen] are at the mercy of middlemen...[who] dictate the price. It is amazing how middlemen control everything around here... Fishermen should be allowed to set the price of their catch, just like other sellers, for example, Indian shop owners or even farmers...

I believe that the fact that fishermen do not have many buyers for their lobsters makes them vulnerable to the price controls of middlemen... [which] is devastating to our income... I have talked to other fishermen and we share the same thought: the middlemen have used these tactics to maintain an artificially low price for lobster...

Fishermen sort of work for middlemen... The middlemen propose purchasing boats for them, but the condition is that the fishermen must sell their catch to the middleman who purchases the boat... So fishermen cannot fix the price of their catch because they are tied by this vague contract.

Savings are the only way out

As far as a union or an association of fishermen is concerned, well, there is one – but it is not strong enough to claim the fishermen's rights and oppose what middlemen are doing. There is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) which tries to help

fishermen acquire new boats...[but it] cannot help each of the 400 fishermen around here...

The only thing that might help each of us to become free from the control of middlemen [and buy a boat] is to create savings from the sale of lobster... It will take time but I think it is possible, despite the fact that a boat costs a fortune these days – 400,000 *ariary*...

Once I can save enough, I plan to get a new boat and work on my own so that I can fix the price of my catch... My only concern...is that my catch has not been good for the last eight months [since the opening of the lobster season on May 1st].

In the past, each fisherman did buy their own boat [and] could fix the price of their catch... [If] a fisherman did not have enough money to purchase a boat, he could work out a deal with someone who could help him... Then later on, when he had saved enough money, he would pay back his debt. This was possible because people valued friendship a lot and some people had extra money. Fishermen [also] traded their cattle for boats.

The benefits of soccer

Fishermen have strong arms [from rowing] but have skinny thighs and legs. So I think they need to play soccer to build stronger legs and stretch a little after sitting all day long fishing. Currently, young people in the village are able to form three teams but we get discouraged because we lack soccer shoes, balls and jerseys...

Every time we play against a team from outside we are impressed by their equipment, and sometimes we hurt ourselves playing with our bare feet against a team that wears soccer shoes... The only time young people in the village can expect to receive donations [for such things] is during election campaigns, once every five years, when candidates donate things to attract voters...

We have three village elders who devote their free time to coaching us. They don't have money but because they too love the sport, they make a sacrifice to help us. Whenever we travel outside the village to play matches, they come along with us.

We have a youth association that promotes sport. Each time the local team has to travel to play a match, every single person in the village donates money to help cover their expenses. The community shows strong solidarity whenever the players solicit their financial help... [This] is mainly for food because many players do not have jobs or [any other] source of income. As far as bus fares are concerned, players usually walk to matches.

Traditional midwives are “more experienced”

[In the past some women] went to the hospital in Mahatalaky. They walked all the way – about 15 kilometres. Others remained in the village and relied on the *reni-jaza* (traditional midwife)... These *reni-jaza* did not use any equipment besides a razor blade to cut the umbilical cord and a piece of thread...

[My mother] was a *reni-jaza*. They could tell if the position of a baby would be a risk during delivery. If they estimated that the baby's position was not normal, they could massage the pregnant woman so she would not have any complications while giving birth. In addition, the *reni-jaza* could identify the medicinal plants to boil for women who had given birth.

I [would] prefer to rely on the *reni-jaza's* services if they had all the necessary equipment and medicine. I am not saying I don't need the services of a [professional] midwife, she does a great job here – especially when someone gets sick and she helps by prescribing medicine – but I think a *reni-jaza* is more experienced...



“ The problem with the [professional] midwife is she might take some vacation time because she is a civil servant – but a *reni-jaza* will stay in the village; she is not going to go anywhere else. So I think it is a good idea to help *reni-jaza* so that they can improve their work.

The forest becomes “a protected area”

Because the population has expanded quickly, people are facing a scarcity of cropland. So most of us have decided to clear forest... People then discovered that forested land is more fertile than coastal land, so they continue to clear forests.

Lately, QMM (QIT Madagascar Minerals – subsidiary of Rio Tinto mining for ilmenite) came to the village... They said that they needed the forest to be protected... QMM collected signatures from each individual in the village to get approval for the transfer of forest management to them...

The local community, along with the local NGO, registered their opposition to QMM's plan to manage the forest. But this could not prevent QMM from appropriating the forest around St Luce... [They said] deforestation threatened St Luce Forest so it was time to take action...

People in St Luce believed...they would still have access to the forest... So they did not oppose the plan vehemently enough.

“So many resources” taken away

Unfortunately,[our] hardships have been accentuated, because QMM does not allow access to the forest any more... It has taken away so many of the resources that people need to sustain their lives...

Because people are poor, they need the forest... Instead of building houses of bricks, people use forest resources... Second, forested land is fertile and provides good yields of cassava, sweet potatoes and

rice. Therefore many farmers clear forest in order to expand their cropland. Third, the forest provides many good things such as medicinal plants...

The only thing that people are still allowed to do is collect firewood, but QMM's forest guards must supervise anyone who wants to do that...

Since QMM has restricted access to the forest, they have instructed people in the village to plant eucalyptus trees... The problem with eucalyptus is that it is not suitable for house construction. Once posts made out of eucalyptus are sunk into the sand, they last no more than three months because the sand here is not compatible with eucalyptus; there is too much salinity.

Another loss of income

In the past, the local community managed the forest directly; they collected fees from tourists visiting the forest and its biodiversity. The number of tourists has increased every year, and now many foreign students come to conduct scientific research. Such visits improve people's income.

Those benefits have [now] disappeared... Now QMM staff have tagged most of the animals living in the forest. Soon QMM will claim that all those tagged animals are theirs...

I came to the conclusion that only the government can work out a deal to claim back the local community's rights... It is a huge challenge for people to draft a letter and send it to the respective authorities. Most of us are illiterate... The only opportunity for the people of St Luce to express their complaints is through interviews like this.





Ilafitsignana

Bruno

male, 43, Ilafitsignana

“ I went to school a bit late, aged five or six. I think school helped me to think clearly. I spent my childhood studying, with the hope of success. I reached Grade 9... Then my parents...could no longer pay for my education, so I had to drop out.

I returned home to my parents' village where I worked to help them. I farmed during the day and I went fishing at night... When I grew up, I had to start working and taking care of myself. However, I continued to help my parents...

After a few years, I built a house while I tried to save money to gain my total independence... I moved out of my parents' house. I started to pay for my clothes and everything I needed, including food and medical expenses. Then, when I was about 20, I told my father of my intention to marry. I told him I was ready to take care of myself.

I got married... We raised our children, and our lives were good. [My wife] helped me working on the farm and I continued fishing at night...we were eager to work hard to improve our lives.

”



“It was getting hotter and hotter”

But later...I noticed that the weather had changed from our usual predictions, and the rainy seasons were starting very late... Not only was rice production affected, but also sweet potatoes and cassava. It was getting hotter and hotter, which made planting cassava challenging... When I harvested it, I discovered that the roots had become smaller, compared to my previous harvest.

In terms of rice, I used to collect three to four large baskets and now I can harvest only one small basket. The change is so obvious that it makes me ask the question, “What is happening to the climate?” ... [It has] had an impact on our life, because our production decreases and thus our household income is affected...

I think the reason for such a decrease is [also] lack of rainfall. Only rice fields located in the low-lying plains or near the source of a mountain stream still receive some water... Fields and farmland in upland areas... are deprived of water and therefore it is impossible to plant rice there...

We used to have lots of rain in the past. Now we barely receive enough to irrigate our farmland. I am worried about this change: I predict that there will be food shortages and that poverty will worsen.

“Without the river and ocean, we would be dead”

Our lives depend on the rivers in Ilaftitsignana. Since agricultural production is not enough to sustain us, we turn to the rivers to find resources to sell, to make a little bit of money to survive... But fish stocks have decreased drastically as well. Still, we strive to fish as an alternative to agriculture. Without fish, we might be begging in the street.

Before...we could catch lots of fish and fill a large

basket...but unfortunately their price was too low. Now the price has increased but conversely it is hard to fill a basket. If you are lucky, you may find 15 fish in a day...

Still, we are encouraged enough by the rising price to continue... I guess that without the river and ocean’s resources, we would be dead by now.

“Our river does not appreciate visitors”

Maybe the decrease [in fish] is also linked to the rules of this river being violated...because of the influx of visitors to our village. I believe that our river does not appreciate visitors, because it is forbidden for a visitor to cross the river or to go in it wearing red clothing.

In addition, it is forbidden to clean slaughtered meat – beef, and especially pork – in the river. It is strictly forbidden to wash dishes...but visitors here on a picnic do not respect these *fady* (customary taboos). I do think that climate change has something to do with the decrease in our fish production, but I strongly believe that it is the violation of the rules as well...

The decline...has also been partly caused by the electricity brought by QMM (QIT Madagascar Minerals – subsidiary of Rio Tinto mining for ilmenite) to the village, which has resulted in lights shining on the river, which scares the fish since they prefer dark areas. I am really sad about the impact of QMM’s work...because the fish that used to like living in the river are afraid of the lights and have swum away...out to the ocean via the delta. It is now difficult to find fish in our river.

“It is not surprising our cows die”

I hear that QMM will restrict access to the river... I don’t know what will happen to us...if such a restriction is put in place. Fishing with nets will be prohibited. What will be left for us to do?

What is happening is that QMM and the local communities use the same river...



“ QMM uses the river to pump water for its construction work and farmers use the river to feed their livestock and to catch fish...

You can see how the dust from their construction work is covering our environment. There is dust everywhere; the grass and the river are all covered by it. Unfortunately our livestock graze these grasses... [and] drink from the polluted river. Therefore it is not surprising when our cows die one after the other... Here in Ilafitsignana, in total, there used to be 200 cows but now I think there are about 60 left...

We want to have insurance for our livestock, because the impact of QMM's construction work [is what] causes them to die... Worse yet, we are charged fees if we need to vaccinate them or get treatment for sick animals...

Since there is no other source of water here besides the river, we are forced to drink it. This has caused illnesses among the villagers as well.

“The children go hungry”

In the case of fruit trees, the fruit is contaminated or polluted by the dust, and sometimes we eat fruit that is not clean, which causes children and adults to get sick...

Also our fruit trees no longer grow well as they did... Perhaps it's due to too much sun and lack of rain, or perhaps to the dust and polluted air where we currently live. This season we are unable to produce fruit such as oranges and mangoes... We could not make any money since there was no fruit to sell...

[Because of] the lack of food in our village...we are forced to go to Fort Dauphin to buy it... We take our fish catch to sell there... Sometimes we only get home late with the food that is supposed to be lunch for the family; sometimes we are stuck in Fort Dauphin, because we could not sell our products quickly...so

during the day our children, who remain in the village, go hungry. They just sit under the shady trees, waiting for their parents to bring them food.

“We have to go elsewhere and find jobs”

[QMM] took the lands in Fanja and Papango [because they are too close to the quarry]. They did not buy them. They said that these lands would remain for us, but I am surprised to see the extent to which their land keeps moving towards our areas. We went to talk to them about it, and they said that they would come back in the near future to work on this issue. So far they have not come.

We are sad because we have not received any money in return for that land [near the quarry] being acquired by QMM but [only money for lost crops]... QMM also had us moved to a more crowded location... Besides the population has increased...

We have to go elsewhere and find part-time jobs to help our families... The places where I can find part-time work are limited: I cannot find a job in Fort Dauphin or any other city because I do not know how to read and write. So I will try to find work in one of the neighbouring villages... Wherever I find a job I'll go, because I have no alternative...

This does pose a problem...because we will be separated. My family will be sad, and they need me every day, since I am head of the family, the one who manages their lives on a daily basis. Also, I...will miss my family.

However, what can I do? I have to leave if it is necessary. But the consequence is that I cannot take direct care of my family. As head of the family, I should stay in the village.

Losing access to forest resources

In the past, there was thick forest, but since QMM has taken over its management, it is as if the forest has

diminished... This has made it difficult for us to survive, since our lives depend so directly on forest products... Our children are going to have difficulty finding construction wood and they lack money to buy it elsewhere...

Another problem is the restriction on collecting firewood, despite this being the primary means by which we cook our meals. [Now] people are obliged to go to Fort Dauphin to buy charcoal...

If I have a visitor in my house, our custom is to give them something to eat... Now I do not have a supply of firewood, I cannot rapidly prepare a meal... I am obliged to go off to look for it... [My visitor] might leave without having eaten, which in my culture brings shame on me.

Benefits from new road

People are satisfied that QMM has built the road... [They] can travel easily, and bring their agricultural produce, their fish products and their heavy merchandise to Fort Dauphin.

The road saves them from having to carry their products on their shoulders and walk to town. Also, vehicles can now drive into our village to collect merchandise and people can buy our products, which benefits the local population.

Cost of living changes customs

Concerning marriage customs...in the past...there was the *sazozaza* (when a young girl is committed to marry her cousin). At this stage, even though the little girl still lives with her parents, if she needs anything [such as medicine], it is the future groom who pays...

After some time, the groom speaks to her parents saying that he thinks that the girl is mature enough for marriage... If the parents determine that their daughter is not yet ready, they tell him...he should continue to wait... After some time, he will...approach the parents of

the girl once again, asking for their daughter's hand.

When the request is accepted, they proceed to the marriage ceremony. The groom's parents bring 2 to 3 litres of *toaka gasy* (locally brewed rum) plus other drinks, as well as a cow for the bride's parents... The bride's family prepares a meal for everybody. This was enough for a marriage ceremony in the past.

Now, however, it is totally different. It is no longer the parents who decide who will be the spouse; their children decide who they will marry... Because of the high cost of living...we now celebrate the marriage outdoors rather than indoors. The reason is to have the highest possible number of guests so that the couple can acquire the maximum number of gifts.

There is one person next to the couple who publicly counts the gifts and estimates their value. Sometimes, for example, a couple collects 10 to 20 pots, 50 plates, 30 spoons and even a cow. The representative of each family [also] counts the money and...announces it publicly... The entire family cheers with joy about the gifts.

The goal of this is to encourage the couple to start their new life together with a minimum of financial difficulties. In the past it was only the couple's parents who paid.

“My children will face a challenging life”

Parents [always] look for a way to help their children to live a better life than they did, so the entire population of the village, knowing how hard life is, participates in each marriage ceremony... They think it is a time to help each other out.

But I think my children will face a challenging life because...there is no more vacant land on which to build a house or farm. If my children are not able to find a job outside our village, they will face a tougher time [trying] to survive.





Say Louise

female, 38,
Ilafitsignana

“ When my father was still alive and I was a child, I remember very well that life was good... My family used to live in Fort Dauphin, because my father had a job...with the port management company... We had the opportunity to go to school there until he retired, when my family returned to the village here in Ilafitsignana... My father sent us to the school here, which was very different from the private Catholic school in Fort Dauphin. ”

“ My father farmed his ancestral land here. Farming was prosperous in the past because land was abundant and fertile, water for irrigation was abundant... Since [my father] was very hardworking, he farmed a vast forested area where he planted cassava and rice. He grew tons of crops – even our family could not consume them all!...

My father was a skilful [fisherman]. Any time he fished, his family was excited because we knew he would bring home a lot of fish. He made a special fishing net for my brother and me... There were many fish species out there and my brother and I selected the ones we liked and let the others go...

The main species were *sâro*, *fiambazaha* and *mazy* (types of freshwater fish). We did not need to sell fish...they were for our own consumption... My dad... could buy clothes for us when he received his monthly pension.

Making money while at school

Later on...my father sent me to Ankaramena to study, to junior high school... One of my grandparents used to give me a free bag of rice...and I then sold the rice to make money. Because life was so cheap people could give something away for nothing...

I still remember that I made 10 *ariary*... This price is ridiculous if we think about how expensive rice is today... Besides selling the rice, every weekend I collected the roots of the rosy periwinkle. I dried them out and sold them to collectors [for pharmaceutical use].

A time of abundance

I dropped out of school at Grade 8. My family decided then that it was time for me to get married. In the past, parents sent their children to marry at a very young age...

After a few years my marriage did not work so well, so we decided to get divorced. I returned to live with my parents. While I was there, someone else asked me to marry him.

My second husband worked for the SIFOR (sisal) company...from 6am until 2pm. As soon as he got home, he worked on his farmland. He was hardworking and both of us were successful in cultivating rice and sweet potatoes... Our life was really good...

Our cassava plantation was successful as well. We used to plant [the cassava] around the area where QMM (QIT Madagascar Minerals – subsidiary of Rio Tinto mining for ilmenite) now dynamites rocks... There was enough rain in the past. One tuber of cassava was as big as a person's thigh. Rice crops were abundant due to the availability of irrigation. We did not have to use fertiliser to produce rice.

“My hardships started”

Then, when my father passed away, our life changed... No one was there to help us [to farm]... After his burial, most of the crops were gone...used for funeral expenses.

I got pregnant. Unfortunately, my husband and I had an argument. According to tradition, it was the parents' responsibility to take care of their daughter when she gave birth, not her husband's... [My mother] worked hard to supply food for us... My husband did not take care of me at all... So all this had an impact on my life and my hardships started there.

There was a food crisis at that time and I remember people digging for *via* roots (a type of plant) for food. They had to treat the roots to make them edible and not poisonous... Luckily, that food shortage was short-lived, not like today when there is a constant lack of food.





“Our life depended on fishing”

Later on...my husband left me and I married another man... He and I worked together to make our life successful. We made fish traps [from grass and sticks]... Collecting these was not challenging then because there was an abundance of resources and there were no restrictions...

We sank our traps in the river... Early in the morning we would check up on our catch. If we were lucky, we went to Fort Dauphin to sell it. The money...was used to buy food. Our life depended very much on fishing. We tried to farm but the land where we lived was not fertile...

Sometimes the traps were not successful; as a result the family could go hungry... People then adopted a strategy: if they made a catch on a given day, they... [saved some of the] money to use on the days when they caught nothing.

“Men are hard to satisfy”

Then, I got pregnant with my second child with my third husband. Amazingly, I had an argument with him... He decided to abandon me and went back to his ex-wife...

I started to wonder how people would look at and judge me; because they would think...that I didn't know how to handle my married life. But I myself was astonished that every time I got pregnant, my husband abandoned me. I thought I did well as [one half of] a married couple, but men are hard to satisfy...

I returned to my parents' home with my children... I was now a single mother; my former husbands never cared about us.

Success with a small business

I knew I had to make it on my own... I thought about selling fruit in Fort Dauphin, but first I had to collect these fruits and I was broke. Finally, I talked to my relatives in the village, because they have fruit

plantations. Luckily they were very supportive of me. I told them I would reimburse them as soon as I made profits...

Then I wanted to have my own funds so that I could own the capital and the interest from my sale. Again, I talked to my family about my idea to borrow money... I proposed to share the profits...with the person from whom I borrowed money. I started to collect a lot of goods to be sold in the market in the city... My small business went well and I was happy with the way it turned out.

With my savings, I decided to buy a boat to help me transport my goods to markets. In the meantime, I got pregnant again, but this did not stop me from paddling my boat, and collecting and selling my goods in every market in the villages around here.

Overfishing

People in Ilafitsignana are now deprived of their farmland... As a result, there are many more people living off fishing, and resources are no longer enough... *Ambatsy* and *sâro* are almost non-existent. *fiambazaha* are still around but not as many...*angora lo* and *varavarà* were so easy to catch in the past but are almost non-existent now... *tofoky* are also hard to find...

Fish [were caught close] to shore in the past...now people have to search for them in deep locations – it's as if they have run away...

Children will not know what kinds of fish species made their river famous. I notice, though, that *mena hariva* is becoming more available... And *tsikiliboky* and shrimp are the ones that people can still catch, but the volume of these catches is declining too.

Traditions disappear with natural resources

Traditionally, people used honey when they circumcised their children; the [species of] rice had

to be *vary hôsy* (considered the ancestral species) and had to be cooked using *vandagnira* (a fuelwood). But unfortunately, these old customs are no longer practised... How can people plant *vary hôsy* when there is no water to irrigate their rice paddies?

People cannot find the necessary resources any more... How will people be able to find honey when access to the forest is restricted, and [the forest itself] is disappearing?...

COLAS (a French construction company) tears down our mountain where the forest grows... That is where they quarry the rocks to supply their construction works... It is amazing to see how they flatten the mountain. Our children will deny the very existence of this mountain some day...

Now, people just ask a doctor to circumcise their children without a big ceremony. Not only do the resources needed for such a ceremony no longer exist, but [people] also lack the money to provide food and drinks [for their guests].

“What we have left is unproductive land”

Our land, especially the land that was fertile, was appropriated by QMM. For example, my family had a rice paddy that had a continuous water supply. It never



dried out, even during a severe drought. Unfortunately it was taken from us.

The same thing happened with our cassava farmland. That land was fertile and my family could always plant on it despite a lack of rain because it was located in a cool area of forested land. What we have left, ironically, is the most unproductive land – sandy with few nutrients...

People are supposed to plant rice three times a year but due to the lack of rain and climate change... people have not been able to plant rice for almost a year now. It is frightening to think what will happen.

Water pollution

We also have an issue regarding our drinking water... First, because of the drought the supply has diminished. Second, it is contaminated because every time the dynamite explodes, the gas and dust infiltrate it... Our drinking water [comes] from a well and it is not covered...

Only people who lost their homes because of the construction work were given water standpipes in the places where they were moved. Even these people complain about the insufficient supply, due to intense drought. They say as well that the water standpipe is not well managed, because a lot of people use it... Sometimes the tap is broken only a few months after it is installed.

Air pollution

Dynamite explodes twice a day, at 12pm and 5pm. I am concerned for the quality of the air we breathe and I fear for our health...

My children always cough a lot... They get sick very often. My baby is only six weeks old but is already coughing... Even adults in our village feel weak and sick all the time... We have not faced a health crisis like this before...



“ People don't have the money to pay for medical treatment. The nearest hospital is in Fort Dauphin and that is far away. I hope that a hospital will be built in our village... I also think that people should not wait until they get sick before they go to see a doctor. People in my village need a prevention programme, for example protected drinking water...

The government and QMM must be held accountable to make sure that at least people's health is taken care of.

Positive and negative change

There are positive changes such as improvements in the houses... Roads have been repaired and widened. Travel is not our main concern any more. There is even a project to build a new road to Ankarefo which will improve our village and create a flow of people and goods.

But in terms of the distribution of money in return for our land, maybe some people in my village would say it was positive, but I would not say so... When my family received the money, since the land was our ancestral land, every family member had to share it...

Our land was also undervalued because the government said that we did not have crops on it when they took it. They claimed that our land was not productive and thus was not worth much. However our land was vast and fertile... We harvested a lot of crops such as rice, sweet potatoes and cassava, and these crops fed the family throughout the year.

There was inequality in the distribution of money as well... People who had fruit trees on their land received a lot more money.

How can I say I have benefited by receiving the money, money that did not even last years, but only months?... With that money, I had to buy food, pay for my children's medical expenses, meet daily needs such as salt, oil, firewood – and now that firewood is not available any

more, I had to buy charcoal from Fort Dauphin.

“Too many people doing the same activities”

When I received my share [of the compensation], I had a plan to make good use of it...to open a small shop, care for my children and use the rest for food... But there were too many people doing the same activities, thus the sales were bad. In the end, I had to consume my own goods by the end of the day because no one bought them; I could not make a profit...my capital did not grow but instead diminished.

People who received money from QMM in return for their land, and those who did not receive money because their land was not included in the area appropriated by QMM – in the end all are experiencing hardship... With the first group, the money was spent quickly. With the second group, their land was unproductive due to the lack of rain... Now everyone relies on fishing.

“If our children are illiterate their future will be dark”

If I have enough money, I hope my children will succeed in their education so that they can secure their livelihoods.

But if I cannot find money to send them to school, I will feel bad because it is as if I am putting my children's future in jeopardy... Maybe we will strive to make sure that at least two of my children will succeed, to secure our family's future.

If our children are illiterate, certainly their future will be dark, because they will not be able to find jobs and they don't have anything else left because our ancestral land has been appropriated by QMM. The future generation will have...fewer opportunities in their lives.





Sirily

male, 42, Ilafitsignana

“ My name is Sirily. I have six children: four sons and two daughters...

When we were younger, life was good and cheap... Farming was successful because there was enough rain. Crops were abundant and some were left to rot because people could not consume them all. Now, farm production is poor due to the lack of rain and people go hungry...

My father sent us to a Catholic school, here in Ilafitsignana... Later on, our school was transferred to Ambinanibe...

I took the certificate of elementary education twice and failed. Finally, I told my father that I wanted to stop because I was late to start working. My father wanted me to continue my studies...
In the end, my father accepted my plan. ”



Building up resources

I was hired by an elder in the village to raise his cattle. I told him I wanted my salary to be a cow per year... After a year, another person hired me. I worked there for two years... [then] I got another job... After my fourth year, I had collected four cows for my father...

I then started to farm. I had to slash the forest to clear some land... People kept asking me what I would do with my crop, because I had planted many cassavas... I brought them to Ambinanibe to sell... I suggested to my father that I purchase a cow with the money and [together] we purchased a *temboay* (young cow) for 4,000 *ariary*.

Marriage and responsibility

When I was around 18, I was interested in *ringa* (a local game)... I was still young so I just did whatever I wanted...and so my father decided to find a wife for me. I told my father that I was still too young.

He did not agree. What could I do? People in the past respected what their parents said, so...I married, but because I was still young, 20 years old, I was only married for a week then I left to do military service.

My wife remained in the village with my parents. During my military service, I was punished very often because...I went missing many times, sleeping outside the compound. My father took pity on me and decided to get me out of there after eight months... When I returned home, I had to face my responsibility to look after my wife.

We did not have a child until after a year of living together. I farmed and fished to generate income to support my family. My fish catch from the river was abundant...

I believed I was strong enough to fish at sea as well. So I asked some of my relatives in Ambinanibe,

because they already had experience of sea fishing, if they would accept me as a team-mate...They welcomed me warmly and we all started fishing sardines together.

I noticed that the income I made from sea fishing and selling sardines was higher than from fishing on the river. [Then] my cousin suggested that we explore lobster catching as well. After catching lobster for only three days, I could purchase a cow... I continued catching lobster and fishing at sea for another year.

Rewards bring danger

One day, we had an accident...and nearly drowned... I did not work for some time until I had recovered. Then I went back to catching lobster: I was diving... [Once] I was so tired, I slipped and fell down hard on the rocks. I lost all my catch and my tools.

I decided to check out the place where I used to fish, on the river. I saw a lot of people doing very well there. So I said to myself, "Maybe I should go back to where I was safe, because fishing at sea is very dangerous." That is how I came back to Ilafitsignana...

Say fotsy (species of fish found at the river mouth) were the fish we caught... Women had a hard time lifting their baskets because they were always full... Now many people know how to catch them, so their number has decreased a lot. In addition...the size and type of fishing nets [have changed], which impacts on sustainability.

Working together

Then we had a son; with two children I had to increase my income... I fished and I continued to farm. A new species of fish called *mazy* came to shore. People were excited about catching them.

I gave money to my wife to purchase *mazy* so that we could sell them. I decided to add our [other] fish to the catch and sell them in Fort Dauphin, for greater

profit. I told my wife that it was important that she and I worked together...to improve the quality of our lives...

I would go to Fort Dauphin early in the morning to sell our fish. I was tired, but I strove to make it a success. As a result, we had money but we were short of sleep... I could not keep up with my farming activities so my wife and I had to hire some people to work our land... and we had to ask our relatives for help with planting rice.

Then...we started catching shrimp...and we all had success.

Father's death brings hardship

The working pace I imposed on my life...took a toll on my body... Sometimes I had to stop working for two weeks to treat myself and recover.

My hardships intensified when my parents were older and my father passed away. Throughout the time I was working, my parents raised my children. I left my children with them, and my wife and I worked. But now my father is not with me any more, and my life has changed.

I had to conduct a ritual for the funeral of my father... I had to slaughter several cows...in order to respect our traditions... Everything we had built up was gone with him. What we did avoid was negative comments from our neighbours, who could have criticised what we did for the funeral of our parent.

Overcoming setbacks

We had to work hard before my family got back on track... I fished using nets. It went well until I was diagnosed with a cyst... Finally, my wife decided to take me to the hospital [for] surgery and I remained at home to recover for six months.

Luckily, I had taught my wife how to collect fish and to do other fishing activities... If we had relied on my activities alone, we would have suffered a lot, since I was incapable of working. Then we had our third child. I still felt too weak to fish, so I told my wife to continue with her work.

During that time, we heard that QMM (QIT Madagascar Minerals – subsidiary of Rio Tinto mining for ilmenite) had talked to our village chief, saying that they needed employees... I said to myself, "Maybe that would be an opportunity for me...since I cannot fish any more." Unfortunately, the position...only lasted three months...

After fishing [again] for the first time in a long while, I was reassured that my surgery did not give me any worries... I told my wife that our lives would be back on track... Shrimp [were still] abundant but fish production had started to decrease [and] not everyone who fished was successful.

"Now I work for a foreigner"

Now our land has been taken from us, given by the government to QMM. [At first]... fishing seemed to be rewarding enough because the majority of fishermen got hired by QMM, so there were fewer people to fish and that was how I could manage to make quite a good catch...

Later, QMM started to build the port. They dynamited the mountain nearby and COLAS (a French construction company) started the road building. These activities have had an impact on our lives...

Now I work for a foreigner... If we [do not have a job] our family suffers, because there is no money to bring home at the end of the month... Fishing activities give people more flexible time to work around their house [whereas] I must work every day, otherwise I won't receive a full salary...but the problem with fishing is that the catch is



“ unpredictable, and depends a great deal on sea conditions...and so we have a hard time nourishing the family.

“People have to be pushed to the limit to risk anything”

Money now is allocated for food alone and is not enough to cover other needs. People do not even have enough money to purchase all the food they need...

[In the past] the money generated from fishing and farming was saved, and was not used to purchase food or medicine... And if anyone was sick, we would collect medicinal plants to treat them. This is no longer possible because these plants were appropriated along with the forest...

Now everything costs money... It is very challenging to find money to pay for the doctor and the treatment... People cannot borrow money from their relatives or neighbours any more because they don't have land or crops to use as collateral...

In the end, people wait till the last second, until the patient is dying, before they decide to bring [them to] a doctor... People have to be pushed to the limit to do or risk anything, because of the lack of money. In the end the treatment costs more, because the illness takes time to heal instead of being treated at the beginning.

“Our land lost its sanctity”

Rivers have an important role in our lives. For us in Ilafitsignana, people have the Vatovondrona river, where they perform their ancestral traditions... People also have a special place, called Mahalatsa, where they conduct ritual ceremonies [or seek] help... For example, someone who had a sick child went there to pray...

People made a pact that any time their prayers came true, they would come back and donate money to the *togny* (a traditional stele, where people pay respect to their ancestors). People would donate hundreds of thousands [of *ariary*] to show their gratitude, or sometimes bring sheep and slaughter them. But recently, the stele was destroyed, by unknown people; as a consequence, our prayer place lost its value. I think that is why foreigners could enter our area, because our land lost its sanctity.

Profound consequences

People did receive money from QMM in return for their land but the money was not enough for everyone. My grandparents have many children, and the land that was taken belonged to our ancestors, not to a single person, so anyone descended from that ancestor had to receive some of the money. Since we are Malagasy we have to respect the notion of having a large family...

People's hardship would have been less if the money offered by QMM was accompanied by other means [of making a living] such as pieces of land, where people could farm to back up the money from QMM. Unfortunately, the money has been the only resource people have to hand, so I am afraid it is now almost used up.

What makes our situation worse is the lack of rain... I don't think the presence of these foreigners is related to the lack of rain. I think it's God's decision whether the rain comes or not. But I think in the end the consequences of land appropriation by foreigners affect people's lives more deeply than they could ever imagine...

The source of our drinking water, a well, passed down from generation to generation, was affected by the dust from dynamite explosions... [People] complained...to QMM. Then QMM built a water standpipe in each village... But even kids just playing



with these standpipes can break them...and no one can fix them...

For the benefit of our future generations, QMM also built a small school in the village.

Relocation brings new tensions

Some tensions occurred when people from different places were forced to live together in one location. Before, only related family members lived together in one hamlet, but now these people have to live together and get used to one another's presence as neighbours.

Raising livestock is very challenging as well because there is not enough space... A lot of people purchased cattle after they received their money...many cows die because they go hungry... Ironically, grass grows within the land appropriated by QMM yet it is prohibited for local people to let their livestock graze there.

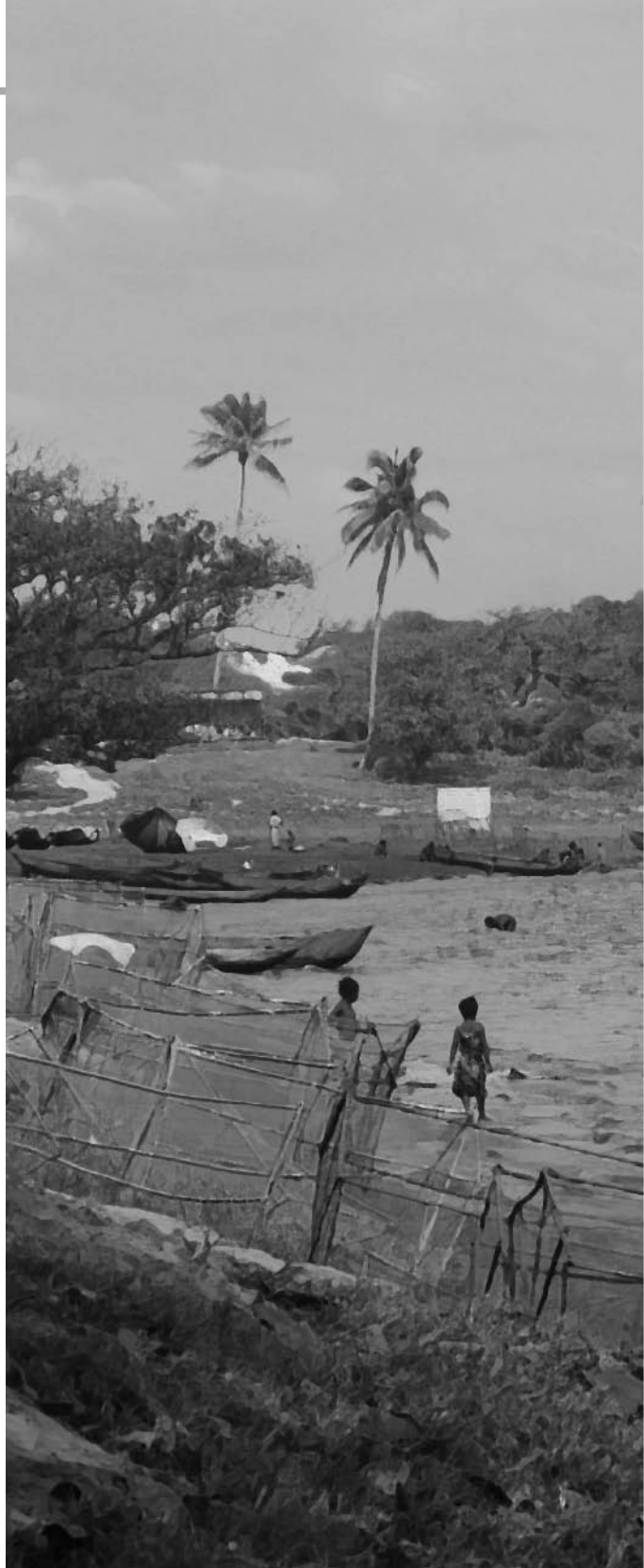
“Our children seem not to have a bright future”

My children will suffer more, because [at least] I received a bit of money from QMM but they will face tougher times. People in Ilafitsignana are the poorest of the poor. So our future generation will need some assistance. I think they will need some farmland. Even if parents nowadays send their children to school, they lack enough money to pay for their education all the way to the higher grades...

Some people still have money from QMM's payment and some others were hired to work for QMM. However, if QMM stops hiring some day, then our hardships will be exposed... Our children seem not to have a bright future.



Ambinanibe



Jean-Claude

male, 39, Ambinanibe

“ Before, I could say that my life was good. Agriculture and fishing were my occupations... I used to farm my land three times a year and harvested lots of crops; however, this is not possible any more because the government took our land. Thus, people are deprived of their land to farm, resulting in food insecurity... In addition...Somatraha, an important source of fish for us villagers, was prohibited for fishing...

Even though I received money in return for my land, I thought it was not enough. The money was spent building a house and buying some items that I needed for my daily life. Worse still, the money did not last [any time]... Even if we got work for foreign companies, this would not be a sustainable activity that would help us forever. You could get fired any time, if your manager wanted.

“I lost the real value of my land”

The way my land was measured was not fair, because they only estimated my land surface instead of actually measuring it... The estimation was based on counting the number of steps along its width and length. Why didn't they use a proper ruler? For me, I want transparency... I lost the real value of my land...

I complained on five different occasions. But so far there has been no answer. First, they...promised that they would give money in an amount that was appropriate to the return on my land; but many people were not satisfied with the money they received. In addition, some of my land was not registered under my name when they made their estimate. I was disappointed by this. Instead they showed me on television; they filmed me on my farmland. Now, I think that that film was just used as publicity for them, instead of benefiting me.

”





We inherited land from our ancestors... So this land should belong to our next generation but given the current situation, I don't think my children and grandchildren will enjoy it.

Food security at risk

[In the past] in addition to my sweet potatoes, I harvested my corn crop. These crops could last six to seven months. I harvested corn three times a year. I am totally convinced that the money I received in return for my farmland was too little. I think they took advantage of my illiteracy...

I am not trying to block QMM's (QIT Madagascar Minerals – subsidiary of Rio Tinto mining for ilmenite) projects but the food security of my children is the most important thing to me. I am ready to go to [the law] to protect my land... but I am a bit afraid to execute my plan due to a lack of knowledge. I accepted the exchange [of money for land] because I didn't know exactly what was going on.

Loss of fishing areas

Somatraha is a big loss to us... Somatraha had a lot of resources. We used to catch 20 sharks with our fishing nets. Even people who just visited Somatraha for a short time could get about 1 kilo of lobster. As for us, we caught 3 to 4 kilos per day. I think that these resources should have been inherited by our children and our next generation...

Before the foreigners (QMM) came here, Somatraha was our main source of income. During the winter, from May to August, we fished in Somatraha for three to four months, then we switched back to fishing in Bevava... This switching was based on the wind direction, which affected sea conditions. Somatraha and Bevava were like rice and corn and cassava. If we eat cassava today then we eat corn the next day, and rice the day after...

We had about a 30 metre-wide shore. But since QMM took over these places [to construct the port], there is hardly anywhere to moor our boats – because the seas have risen due to QMM's work. Our boats moored in Bevava suffered from the impact of waves, showing cracks that jeopardise their future performance. There used to be about 400 boats in Bevava, but now there are only 20...

Our efforts are unproductive – even if we buy new boats – because the winds that blow from the south and the east are really strong, which makes the waves even stronger and further breaks up our boats... The shore has become flooded due to a rise in sea level, which makes leaving boats there impossible. As a result, people must lift their boats from the shore up to higher ground.

“Our government underestimates us”

Somatraha is not only our traditional fishing area but also our farmland. According to a meeting at the mayor's office in Fort Dauphin, which was broadcast on TV, they said they would build a smaller harbour for us fishermen to use in Somatraha, when they started restricting access to Somatraha. Now, this is not the case – because we are not allowed any access at all.

I had a hard time believing that they would build this harbour for us, because they had already restricted us from collecting firewood in Somatraha... Besides, they expanded their appropriation of land towards our remaining farmland, getting closer to our ancestors' tombs...

Currently, they are proceeding with the laying of the boundary markers. I asked [them about these] when I saw them measuring the land around here. Their response was that they were measuring the road, not the land. But in fact they marked the boundary [of the land]. I think our government underestimates us villagers.

“We are not livestock”

I will be struggling if I don't have access to Somatraha. That is my source of income. In our village no one went to school. Even if there are people with education, they may not be able to find jobs. Nowadays, even people who have a degree cannot find jobs, let alone those who are illiterate... We are not like livestock to be restricted to a stable; we are human beings who have a right to live normally... We'll lose our resources if the government restricts Bevava too. Where to go?

You never know what the government and the foreigners are planning... At the beginning they started building a road; afterwards they built another road that led to Somatraha. We thought they came here for some agricultural activities, but we were wrong. Once we signed the letter, our farmland became their property.

“Most of the money was used to pay back our debts”

The first thing I did was to build a house because I knew that the compensation money would not last long... So at least I have a house for my family. I also built another house, 6 metres long, from the money I received...

I can see a tangible benefit from my money... But I also had to pay back my loans with a high interest rate. So that is why I only built a house 6 metres long. My income from fishing was about 10,000 to 30,000 *ariary* every time I fished in the sea. So if I compare this income with the money I received in return for giving up my land, I think I lost out in a big way... Most of the money was used to pay back our debts...

My income decreased enormously [with the loss of fishing grounds]. Therefore, I had to take out loans to avoid famine for my family. I had no choice... Now that these fishing activities are restricted and we don't have land to farm, we are exposed to loan sharks.

Empty promises

I would have liked to see [my children] receive some education. I am illiterate so I don't want to see them in the same situation as I am...but if I want my children to study, I must send them to Fort Dauphin. This is impossible for me because I don't have money to send them to study there. If the government want to help us, they could build a school in our village...

I would very much like the government to take action to help us... We, the local community, have already given up on the empty promises of each election time. Candidates promised to rehabilitate our roads... What they did was that they started the road and then for some reason they could not finish it. Instead they filled the open hole with sand, making conditions worse...

We were given a promise that they would bring electricity to our area, along with street lights, but so far it is an empty promise. This is one among the promises given by candidates [standing] for election.

“The bus service enlightens our lives”

I am really happy [about the bus service]. If I have heavy bags to carry and I have money, I can take the bus. For example, today my wife sent her bags full of cassava by bus. She walked because she did not have enough money to ride herself. But this helped us enormously because instead of walking with heavy loads, we could send her bags by bus.

We always take the bus whenever we have enough money. I think the existence of the bus service enlightens our lives in Ambinanibe because I feel like we lived in a dark zone surrounding a lampost. There are remote villages such as Sarisambo and Analapatsy that have hospitals available to their residents; so I think it is time for Ambinanibe to have this bus service – to show that we too are trying to improve our lives.



Sambo

male, 46, Ambinanibe

“ My life used to be good, just like everyone else's in the village. I lived off fishing activities...

Fishing has been a tradition from generation to generation in the village. In addition to fishing, people farmed. Among the many crops that grew were sweet potatoes, pumpkins, beans and maize. People were successful when they farmed, but fishing was the principal source of income for many...

The principal place for fishing is Somatraha... Any time the sea conditions in Bevava were bad, fishermen went to Somatraha. The problem in Bevava is that sea conditions are unpredictable. They change constantly: within half an hour the conditions could change from good to bad, or vice versa... ”



“ Even though fishermen work hard to get a good catch, they cannot match what they were able to do in Somatraha. Fishermen can only make 5,000 *ariary* from a day's fishing; rarely can they make up to 20,000 *ariary*. It seems to be a lot of money but fishermen cannot fish every day in Bevava, thus they are unable to guarantee continuity of income.

Boats damaged or swept away

I wish you could see people working in Somatraha all day long so that you could attest that indeed Somatraha was the place for fishermen.

Since fishermen lost their access to Somatraha, they had no choice but to use Bevava as a dock... Many boats have been damaged by strong waves and some of them even got swept away. Among hundreds of boats in Bevava, about 20 boats are left now. This situation is really devastating for fishermen and their families.

Now, not only are people not allowed to fish in Somatraha, but they are also not allowed to farm and collect firewood over there... [With the loss of this access] poverty will be accentuated and a lot of people will starve to death.

Underpayment for land

I know what others think when they hear that people in Ambinanibe received money from QMM (QIT Madagascar Minerals – subsidiary of Rio Tinto mining for ilmenite). They think that people in Ambinanibe are now rich. Let me give you an example of how it is exactly... People did not receive what they expected.

My father left us, my three siblings and me, a small piece of land... After QMM's payment to us of 500,000 *ariary*, we had to split the money into five portions, because we had to give 100,000 *ariary* to our mother. So each of us then received 100,000 *ariary*...

I did not want to create tensions among us, so as soon as I received the money I had to inform my siblings how much money my father's land was valued at. It is sad to receive only 500,000 *ariary* for 3.5 hectares of land, especially when that land was registered in my father's name.

I think lack of knowledge is a disadvantage, because my siblings and I could not argue to demonstrate the real value of my father's land. So right now, we are sad about what happened.

“Euphoria was short-lived”

Anyway, everybody in the village did improve their houses; that is why the look of the village is different now. I should say that the village has a shine to it. During the construction stage, you could see people's happy faces. They were all willing to improve their lives. Right now, almost everyone lives in a corrugated tin house...

However, this euphoria was short-lived because after building houses people were back to reality: what to eat tomorrow? It is funny to think that one lives in a nice house, but starves to death. Sometimes I see people in their improved homes, yawning all the time because they are undernourished.

Newspaper slurs the community

I am glad to have this opportunity to express my ideas and concerns, as well as the problems in my life. I must let them out of my head so that I won't have a headache. If I keep all of my concerns in my stomach, I may risk having a beer belly [*laughs*]. I am not a beer drinker so I must let them out. I think it is good to express ideas instead of keeping them inside...

People in the village were sad when they learned that a newspaper published news regarding the way people in Ambinanibe spent the money received from QMM... It said that people spent their money on beer. No, this was wrong.

“ People spent their money on something that could help them ease their hardships... In addition [to building houses], many people legalised their marriage and some others registered the birth of their children...

Furthermore, people also had to renew their boats because they had almost none left. In my case, I wanted to purchase two new boats. I had already built a house and another house for one of my children, I purchased clothes for my children, food and household furniture...

I wish people who say bad things about us could see the struggle we face and the work we must do to maintain our lives. Now, I feel like a child left behind by his mother, alone in a forest.

“No one thinks about migrating”

The problem is that people in the village have fewer opportunities...when it comes to generating income... I think lack of knowledge among people in the village has contributed to the hardships that people are having. Women in the village are not able to go out of town and trade. They just rely on their husbands to catch some fish so that they can sell them in the market.

Children in the village start their lives by going out to fish at a very young age. This has been a problem: they don't want to return to school after a weekend of fishing because they were making a bit of money. I think the fact that people are not used to migrating and finding opportunities outside the village poses a problem now...

I am not able to go to Ilakaka (a sapphire-mining town on the road to Tulear). I get lost when I go outside this village because I was not brought up to go anywhere except the village. Fishing around here has been my life...

No one thinks about migrating, despite the hardships that we all endure here. This is the village where our ancestors used to live and we intend to remain here for better or worse... I guess it also has to do with our livelihood practices... No one is ready to leave behind the opportunity to access the sea.

“The doctor does not live in the village”

I think the problem [of disease] comes from the lack of toilets and the fact that people use open space to satisfy their needs. Flies bring microbes everywhere...

QMM helped with the construction [of a health centre]... People were happy but they would have been happier if QMM had built the health centre right here in Ambinanibe... And the doctor does not live in the village. He lives in Fort Dauphin, so at the end of the day he goes home... People are worried sick that they have to wait until the next day to be able to see the doctor in the event of an emergency at night. Even then, the doctor does not arrive in time.

So I think it is better if Ambinanibe has a health centre with a doctor willing to live here... I also think that a doctor who works here should be nice – sociable and likable. Because sometimes doctors are not nice to villagers.

“The road will bring development”

The road used to be sandy, and then some foreigners fixed it... In the past, whenever it rained, it was difficult for vehicles to come here, so drivers avoided the village... People would have liked to have a road that has the same condition as QMM's road, but well...

People here know that they cannot fix the road because they lack equipment, so they are thankful... to the foreigners who helped the villagers... It is better to have it improved than nothing at all. I think people are very happy because the road will help to bring development to the village.

Obstacles to education

The school was not built right here in the village so no one could monitor the work of any teacher. In addition, after they received money from QMM, many parents sent their children to study at better schools such as the Marillac school, run by... nuns, or the private schools in Fort Dauphin. Such migration left the school in the village with fewer students.

Furthermore...the teacher was not committed. I don't think he was serious enough to teach children from this area... So, due to the lack of maintenance, it is no wonder the school has started to break down. I wish the school was built in Ambinanibe so that the local community could monitor progress...

The local community plans to talk to the head of the education service in Fort Dauphin (CISCO) to request an additional teacher. But what people really want help with is a shuttle bus to bring children from the village to the school in Fort Dauphin or to the school in Marillac.

I know a lot of women who wake up around 4am to prepare breakfast for their children and then walk them to school. This is hard on them and time-consuming... Some parents have decided to rent houses in Fort Dauphin so that their children can stay there in the week.

Sacrificial rites

There are many reasons why people conduct a sacrifice ceremony. For example, when rules governing fishing activities are violated, or when a man has had sex with a woman who is close to his family, such as a cousin, or when somebody wants blessings from his or her ancestors.

People also conduct a sacrifice ceremony when they have a relative whose life is in danger due to illness. The common thing among these ceremonies is that a cow must be slaughtered and some of the cow's blood is used during the ritual.

People also conduct a sacrifice ceremony when they judge that their fish production has decreased. Fishermen know the period when each fish species is in abundance. If that does not happen, fishermen assume that rules governing their fishing areas have been violated... I think that some locations around here are a refuge for evil spirits so whenever these spirits feel threatened they do whatever they can so that marine resources will not be available to fishermen.

Fishermen need a *mpisorona* (elder of the village and preacher) to conduct the ceremony for them. The goal is to restore the value of the ocean or any locations that have been violated, so that people can once again catch many resources from the ocean, such as fish and lobster.

“Life goes on”

Since fishing in Somatrahia is not possible any more, I spend most of my time wandering along the seashore. Sometimes, when I need money urgently, I am forced to collect coconut fruit and sell them...

The land in Ambinanibe is not suitable for many crops. Lychees and mangoes do not grow here so people have no choice but to plant coconuts. However, the sale of coconuts helps people to make some money if their fish catch is bad. There are *lamoty*, *vontaky* and *nato* fruit trees growing in the area as well, but these are just for local consumption...

My coconut sale helps to bring food to my household. My children enjoy preparing the meal and whether it is a plain cassava or rice, everybody in my family is happy to share some meals together, that is very important. This is what I do while waiting for sea conditions in Bevava to improve. With God's help, I will go fishing tomorrow and bring some catch for the family and for sale; then life goes on.



Rosette

female, 54, Ambinanibe

“ I am a single parent. I have few family members and my children help me in my life. I have six children: four sons and two daughters...

We are all illiterate here. So what we do is fishing and we sell our catch in Fort Dauphin; we purchase food for our family in return, such as cassava and sweet potatoes. We don't have any sources of income except fishing in the ocean, for example in Bevava... [though] we don't make most of our catch there. Unlike Somatraha – that is where we get large catches of lobster, fish, *deda* (a type of shellfish) and shellfish. Our lives depend on these resources...

The inconvenience of Bevava is that when the wind blows from the south like today, in the *tsiok'atsimo* (windy season), our children [who fish] remain on shore because the sea conditions are really bad. Elderly parents like me rely greatly on our children to supply food because we are too old to fish.

”



“We have no way out now”
 Somatraha was to fishermen what rice paddies are to farmers, and it sustained their lives... Losing access to Somatraha was a terrible thing. We have no way out now. In addition...we can't make good catches using the [type of] net imposed on us because [the holes are too big]. Furthermore, fish stocks have decreased tremendously...

We used to dock our boats in Ankitsikitsiky; but since they built a road from Ifafitsignana, where the QMM (QIT Madagascar Minerals – subsidiary of Rio Tinto mining for ilmenite) quarry is, to Somatraha, where they are now building a seaport, we cannot dock there any more... Our boats were always secure when moored there... [but now] people are forced to dock their boats in Bevava. As a result, about 400 boats were damaged due to the violent waves there.

Even if they took Somatraha, they should let people continue to farm the remaining land around there that these foreigners did not use for their house construction... But QMM has security guards that prevent people from accessing these lands, including the forested area that falls within QMM's delineation... Now people in Ambinanibe are afraid to walk in the forest to collect fruit and firewood.

“We were not offered jobs”
 These foreigners (QMM)...should have at least given fishermen access to Ankitsikitsiky. Instead, they paved over with tar some places that we needed to access the farmland and fishing area; and their road construction continues up to today...

It would have been different if people in our village were offered jobs to work on the port construction in Somatraha, in return for our fishing rights; instead, they hired people from Andramaka, Tsihary, Toliara and Antananarivo, distant villages and cities. People in Ambinanibe lost their farmland, but were not offered jobs...

People in Ambinanibe are willing to work; they are hardworking... Our children now wander around without jobs...two of mine are unemployed.

The story of change
 At the beginning, a man working for QMM came here to talk to our village chief...he requested access to [land] where they could build a road, and to a location in Somatraha where they are now building the port.

He explained that the people who would receive the benefits of his requests were none other than our children. Knowing that, people agreed. They were indeed excited that his request would bring development to our village and...[that] our children would now have an opportunity to study and get jobs...

This man continued to make frequent visits to our village. Suddenly, he announced that his supervisors planned to build houses and would offer [building] jobs to our children. People started to wonder and reminded him that he originally came here to ask for road access and a place to build a port and now that request had shifted to housing construction in Ehoala – where our farmland is.

Then he responded that they would not appropriate the land in Ehoala for free. People would get paid with some money, he said, enough to make them happy.

Negotiations and regrets
 Some of us were sceptical and did not want to trade their farmland for money... some were convinced that once foreigners were involved in taking our land, there was no way to oppose them, so it was better to accept their offer [of money]...

I didn't accept the idea of them taking Ehoala from us. I asked my fellow farmers where they would collect their vegetables if their farmland was gone?

“ Despite opposition from some of us, their plan to appropriate our land moved forward. People were asked to sign agreements. Soon after this they came to measure the lands. Amazingly, they measured our land using their own paces, [step by step], which I think was inappropriate given the size of our land...

Finally, the estimation was done. They announced on television in Tana and Toliara and Fort Dauphin that the payment was about 40,000,000 *ariary*. So when we heard it, people said, OK, 40,000,000 *ariary* – but it was not in the hand yet, but still on TV... [We] received much less than what had been announced...

Some of the people were happy with the money, and some others immediately regretted it, realising that the amount they had received would not last long enough to feed their grandchildren in the way their farmland would have done.

“We didn’t know that it would end like this”

When the estimation of our land was finished, people from our village complained a lot about the results. People went to see the Prefet de Région and the mayor in Fort Dauphin, and QMM. They changed the price of our land to 100 *ariary* per square metre. Their excuse was that for fallow land, the price was a lot cheaper. But I know that Ehoala didn’t have fallow land because people farmed extensively there... I think it was a way to reduce the value of our land...

For me, a single parent, I did not get enough in return for my land. I inherited much land from my parents... yet with five pieces of land, I could not even build a house with the payment I received for them... I think it should have been valued higher... because the crop that I produced in the past was worth more than the money I was paid.

We didn’t know that it would end like this... Even after what happened, if they had offered jobs to our children, it would have been different. Someone like me, I could clean windows and sweep floors, just to have a source of income.

Unsustainable fishing driven by poverty

Unlike the past, when we collected shrimp and lots of fish, our river doesn’t produce enough resources to help us. Now we barely catch enough for our own consumption. Use of large fishing nets hurt our catch... A large fishing net not only catches big fish, but also the smaller fish that should be allowed to grow and reproduce – as opposed to the past, when people used nets only three fingers’ size...

People also use nets with a tighter weave now, similar to a mosquito net, to catch as many fish as possible. This type of net catches fish along with their eggs.

People also destroy the habitat by taking algae out of the river. People need it to wrap their fish to assure freshness of their catch... Someone like me who does not have a net, I can only use fish traps to supply my family with food.

I feel sad about it, but you know, it is hard to tell someone to stop using a net because that is the only way he can supply food for his family... These people who use large nets fish [day and night]...

Maybe these fishermen will listen to government officials, but if only the people in our village try to stop them, they will never listen. That is understandable because that is their job: to feed their family. If the government offers them a job, it could be an alternative.

Further threats to fish stocks

I am glad that people in my area (the lower part of the village) do not use these kinds of nets and that people recognise the bad consequences of using

them... In the past, we only trapped fish and we could satisfy the needs of our family, such as food and clothing. But now, since the use of mosquito nets...as an interior layer of a fishing net, our production has suffered a drastic decline...

The doctor is amazed at how people use mosquito nets to catch fish. Even if he insists on explaining that the nets are only for domestic use, to protect against mosquito bites, people don't really listen to him. They continue to use them to catch smaller fish...

In addition to the use of large fishing nets, the sea and river levels have risen, which makes fishing very challenging and this may impact on the existence of fish. So I tell you, currently Ambinanibe faces a critical time.

"The river was sacred"

In the past, my ancestors, my father's grandfather, named Remandria, and later Marofotsy, gave their blessings to our river and the sea around our village... My ancestors were the first to come here. They started clearing forested land and then people arrived after them, because they discovered that there were abundant resources nearby. The village expanded little by little.

Ever since I can remember, it was forbidden to dispose of rubbish in the river... It is taboo to clean meat and wash pots in the river...even someone who has eaten pork must clean himself before touching the river. I don't understand why people violate these rules. I think people just do not want to listen.



“ Whenever they slaughter a cow, the water they’ve used mixed with cow’s blood flows into the river, although they have been warned not to do that... These people are newcomers, people who are working around here. Local residents warned them about this, but I guess they think we tell them a lie.

[All this] threatens the availability of food in our village. The river doesn’t produce the expected catch, as it did in the past, because the traditional rules governing our river are being violated, let alone because of the use of large fishing nets.

From what I know, the river was sacred and anyone, whether a resident or a visitor, who violated traditional rules could suffer the consequences of the angry river. People did not raise pigs... [because] when it is hot, pigs want to cool off – so it would be difficult to keep them out of the water...

But now people do keep them and they wander around and they go in the river, which is taboo. People try to keep them fenced in, but the situation got worse when butchers came here to buy pigs and cows... and slaughtered the animals near the river.

Funeral obligations

If the family has a cow, they slaughter it [for a funeral]. If a family doesn’t have one, they must do whatever it takes to afford one.

People in rural areas feel ashamed if they do not have a cow to kill during a funeral of a family member. People try to avoid the label that “the funeral was like a burial of a snake” – a burial without the sacrifice of a cow or chickens. The slaughtered cow is used to feed the people presenting their condolences.

“People still rely on family ties”

In the past people only used mats to decorate their floor. Now people purchase plastic rugs from Indian-owned stores in Fort Dauphin. It is such a change. In addition, people now have CD and video players. These things did not exist in our village before... People have furniture to sit on as opposed to just mats. Some of us own houses with a second floor and some others made their house with metal sheets.

Such changes took place because people received money in return for giving up their land... People threw away their old mats because they were impressed by their neighbour’s house...

But people still rely on family ties and friendships. If I have a friend who visits me in my village, I must introduce that person to my family and people in my village so that whenever my friend runs into one of my family members or my fellow villagers, my friend can rely on them if he needs help.

Petriky



Zanaboatsy

male, 58, Petriky

“ I am a farmer and I have seven children: four sons and three daughters... Despite the fact that my daughters are married, [two] still live with me, along with their children, because my daughters...contracted a disease that renders both of them disabled. My first daughter has three children and my second daughter has two... I am the only one who takes care of them all...”



“ I want to voice my feelings because with my own responsibilities, and the impact caused by the *bain-tany* (literally ‘wound of the earth’, Tanosy rural expression meaning a time of hardship and deprivation) – I am talking about QMM (QIT Madagascar Minerals – subsidiary of Rio Tinto mining for ilmenite) when I say *bain-tany* – I have no opportunity to succeed in life and provide a better future for my family.

All my belongings are sold in order to take care of my family, and I still cannot provide enough for them to eat. In addition, I have to pay for my children’s education both in Manambaro and in Fort Dauphin. If only the rains would come, I would be able to farm and harvest to feed my family.

[QMM] took advantage of our situation, of us being too weak to oppose them. In addition, we are mostly uneducated people; therefore we had to accept – against our will – what they [proposed].

In life and death, the forest provides

We used to live off the forest in Petriky whenever there was not enough rain for farming... The forest was our source of life... In terms of food, we used to collect lots of fruits from there and it helped us during difficult times... We collected construction wood to build houses.

In addition, if our children or even adults were sick, we went to search for remedies in the forest... We consumed the fruits of *vahipiky* (a species of vine) and we used the vine itself to make baskets and fish traps. We used *tombok’akoa* (another vine species) as well... We sold the baskets and the money was used to buy food for the family.

The forest grew along the rivers... After searching for forest resources, we would fish... There were two sources of water: the Eloha and the Andragasy rivers... We sold our catch...

If we needed to bury someone, we cut down a special tree from the forest to make the coffin... There are four villages that have a close relationship: Mokala, Loharano, Agnala Mahasoia and Karinoro. Whenever there is a death in one of these, the four villages gather together near the Eloha river, to decide on what to do...and divide the tasks assigned to each village, before they enter Petriky Forest in search of the special tree...

They also assign four people, one from each village, to slaughter and divide the meat that is needed to feed the villagers that day. After this, people enter the forest to search for the wood. In the meantime, the meat is barbecued... After [sharing the meal], people go home to make the coffin and prepare for the funeral. This is an old tradition but of course things have changed now... Nowadays people build tombs with cement and stones, since access to the forest has been prohibited.

The extent of loss

Given that these tremendous resources at our disposal have been taken away from us, it is not surprising if I call QMM the *bain-tany*. Why do I call them *bain-tany*? Because the drought, known to be so bad at killing plants on earth, is as bad as QMM... Actually, QMM can kill not only things on land but also living species in the river...

With the forest disappearing, there is an impact on the fish because their natural environment is destroyed. There will not be as many trees to provide shade on the river... Since there is electricity in Ilaftsignana now, which casts light over the river, fish will move to the ocean, because they do not want to live in a lit-up river...

Even if they let us have access to Petriky Forest to fish, the impact of their work will chase the fish away – because of the noise generated by their machines.

“ A critical safety net

There are three young people in our village working for QMM. [They] were recruited to plant fruit trees, supposedly to replace the trees damaged [by QMM activities]... I do not believe that trees can still grow in Ifafitsignana...

I feel bad about these people because sometimes they are laid off and then they have to pay QMM recruiters 20,000 *ariary* in order to be recruited again, for the same job! It amazes me that an employee has to pay in order to get his job back, instead of getting paid for what he could accomplish...

They (QMM together with the local forest service) have started putting in place forest service agents to guard the forest and to delineate a zone that would host the remaining species of animals. The rest of the forest, outside the delineated zone, will be exploited by QMM. They don't care even if they delineate taboo lands or rice fields to be part of their zone.

This is why we were trying to protect our resources. The forest sustained our lives, like parents caring for their children. When there was a *hainandro* (drought) we went and sought shelter under "our parents' wings". [Thus] instead of selling our livestock to get money, we go to see our "parents" and collect the fruits of the forest. We could fish in the rivers and sell our catch instead of selling our cows.

Medicines from the forest

We need the forest because that is our source of medicine. Most forest plants are useful to our bodies. Diseases in the past were not the same as the ones that currently exist, because people travelling from abroad may have brought diseases to our village – and the diseases may have mixed up, rendering treatment difficult.

In the past, a disease could be treated easily using someone's knowledge of medicinal plants. [For

example, they] used *vahironto* (a species of vine) to treat a cough. We gave a massage to the chest of a sick person using honey, which we collected from the forest. Alongside this, the sick person drank a *tisane* (tea) of *vahironto*. These are examples of why the forest is important to us, and why we are sad that QMM restricts our access to these resources...

We will suffer for sure. Since we don't have a hospital we will face a difficult situation. Manambaro and Fort Dauphin are too far to go to buy medicines... Doctors are only available in Manambaro and Sarisambo, far from our village. Even if we bring a sick person on a stretcher to a hospital, the people who carry the sick person [face difficulties] due to the bad conditions of the road...

The local communities around here gathered together to repair the road but since we do not have enough equipment to execute the work, we were not successful. QMM helped us with it. People had good intentions to work together but due to the problems encountered by many people in sustaining their families, they did not commit further to take regular care of the road... [They] don't have time for it. Instead, people need to spend time searching for food for their families.

Drought "happens every day"

Before QMM came to our region my life was good and prosperous. Even if there was a *hainandro* (drought) in the past we still had rains when the season came. These seasons are not valid any more; drought happens every day. It has been worse since QMM arrived here...

In the past, our ancestors knew when the rain would come or if *hainandro* would happen... We used to be able to predict...where the rain would come from, from the ocean or from elsewhere. People could tell if the rain would come during any given period. People made decisions [to farm their lands] based on their knowledge of the rainfall periods... They could even

skip a season of cultivation and wait for the next one if they judged that to be best for them. This is not the case any more.

A few benefits

Since QMM has built the road from Manambaro to Ambovo, our cassava and sweet potato plantations have survived...[and] we don't have to make an effort to guard our crops, because the wild pigs have run away! They are afraid of the sound of the machines used by QMM.

In addition, QMM build a cistern for us where we are supposed to get clean drinking water. But our children do not respect the cleanness of the water; they throw rocks and garbage in the cistern. I think QMM should have covered it, in order to filter out anything that may pollute the water. But even if our drinking water is polluted, at least we have a source of water, thanks to QMM.

Some of us understand the need to protect our drinking water but many others do not realise the importance of it, not yet. People were using their buckets with leftover food in them, and scooped water out from the cistern. The leftovers remained in the water and polluted it. QMM said that they had already given us full power to manage the cistern so it was our responsibility.

“The teacher thinks we are unimportant!”

QMM built a school in our village. The school was successful in the past, but now, because of the teacher in our village, children are not willing to study with him because he is interested too much in politics instead of teaching. Furthermore, he doesn't respect the parents, because he thinks that we are unimportant and dirty people... He is also severe on the children, especially when a child doesn't get a haircut. For example, he said to one child: “Did your father and mother die, and so could not give you a haircut?”...

In the past, as far as I know there used to be a monitoring service...every month, an inspector followed up on the teachers' performance. Now since CISCO/ZAP (department of Ministry of Education) manages the system, there is no inspection. Teachers can do whatever they want. Whenever there is an election for a mayor or a deputy, our teacher and his wife are always candidates. They do not teach, but spend their time on politics and campaigning...

Our hope now is to expand our school so that CEG (secondary level) [can be taught]... Due to our limited resources, we are obliged to tell our children to stop studying. We cannot divide the limited resources we have to support the family in the village and also finance a child's stay in Fort Dauphin [to continue their studies].

Hope for the future

I harvested my crops and I bought cows with the income I generated. I invested all of my money in these cows. So if something happened to them, I lose all my money. In other words I drown. But I hung on to my cows and actually they saved my life when I faced financial problems.

I sold one of them to pay for my children's education, their tuition and books, and the remaining money I used to open a small business, a store selling small items for the villagers' daily needs. Currently, my small business looks promising... I could build a house made of tin sheets with the profits from my business.



Soarohy

female, 50, Petriky

“ My thoughts are about finding ways to make a living. I farm and I raise livestock but my activities are not successful...

I asked myself: how can I sustain my life if my farming activities do not yield as expected? I tried all sorts of possible methods but still I was not successful. I shared ideas about planting sweet potatoes, cassava and peanuts with other farmers, but that did not change the poor results I was having.

I am worried now about my life and my children's lives. How will I be able to raise my children?

”



“ Challenges and worries

Nowadays, men have a hard time making their activities a success, let alone myself as a woman... In the past, people did not have to worry about finding ways to sustain the lives of their families. Now it is the primary thought that each individual has.

In the past cassava and sweet potato crops were abundant. It was the same for rice crops. I remember people harvesting rice paddies and their production was very high... These days, most rice seedlings do not grow...

I also had another occupation in the past. I wove mats at night, since I farmed during the day. My life was so successful because of my work and my husband. It was easier for me to do my work because I was still married and got help from my husband.

Fish are now a luxury

In addition to farming and weaving, I also fished. My catch was good. My family could not consume all my catch in one day and we had to dry the fish so that we could save them for the next few days. Since my catch was good, I decided to sell some of it in Manambaro... our fish sales helped me to purchase clothes...

Now, when I make a catch, about 2 to 3 *kapoaka* (3 *kapoaka* equals 1 kilo) I don't want to cook them... I walk to the market in Manambaro to sell them... Then with the money I make, I purchase a *kapoaka* of rice or cassava. Obviously, I don't make much and therefore I am not able to provide enough food to nourish my children.

How many times have I caught fish and...had to deprive [my children] of such a luxury because I preferred to sell the fish in order to buy staple food? Also, just 10 fish would not be sufficient for us, unlike staple foods.

“These days it is as if nothing works”

In the past, when I was younger, I helped my parents with the household activities as well as with farming activities... Children enjoyed those moments with their parents.

I pounded rice paddy and sold it in the market to make money. A *kapoaka* (one-third of a kilo) of rice cost 10 *ariary* when sold at Manambaro market. This price, if compared to today's, sounds ridiculously low, but it was a lot of money at the time. Children ate to their satisfaction in the past.

The rice harvest was a special moment, and it took days. Each person filled up their granary. My children do not believe me...that a measure of rice only cost 10 *ariary* and that rice was abundant in the past. Paddy fields that once yielded 20 *hazo* (40 large baskets) of rice, now yield just one large basket... Peanuts are [another] main crop that once grew well around here – but these days it is as if nothing works...

What can we do? It will be hard for us to sit and wait for donations. As human beings, we must strive to do the best we can to find food, grow crops and make money... Most of the time when I am at home, I am worried sick thinking about what the future will be for my children.

I have nostalgia for the past...when people had plenty of food and were very successful in their activities... Even *voapiky* fruit is not available any more. It is amazing that such a fruit, which served people in the past, exists no longer.

Dependence on the forest

Voapiky is a wild fruit...found mostly in Petriky Forest. The fruits are for eating and the vines are for weaving baskets and lobster traps...[and] household items such as baskets, spoons, plates and pots. During the right season, people collected the *voapiky* fruits to supplement their other





food, such as rice, cassava and sweet potatoes...

People in my village depend on Petriky Forest. That is where people get the food or materials that they need for their daily lives. Men, and even some women like me who do not have a husband to rely on, search for vines...

I used the vines that I collected to make fish and lobster traps or baskets and I sold them in Manambaro. Before returning home, I had to purchase food with the money I made...if I came home with empty hands, my children risked going to bed hungry. During the dry season, everyone relied on the forest to supplement or complement the food available in their households.

“The river that sustains our life”

The Eloha is south of Petriky Forest... [it] is the river that sustains our life in the village... Along its banks... *vendra* (type of tall grass) grew well... Usually women collected these *vendra* and they wove them into baskets and mats. That is the activity that most women did as their contribution to the household income. Unfortunately these *vendra* are almost extinct now because of wildfire...

I notice that children have a hard time understanding that resources were available in the past, easy to find, and that life was cheaper, easier and enjoyable. Currently, people have to walk to Fort Dauphin to collect *vendra*, but I am too busy...as I spend all day trying to find food for my children. I have to focus on farming to supply my family's needs.

From time to time, I do purchase some vines for weaving (*mahampy*) in the market. The *tsihy* (mats) and baskets I make are for sale... and the money supplements my crop production to support my family. I stopped buying clothes and other items because providing food is more important right now...

The best moments in life have passed for me. From now on it is a struggle... Thoughts are always turning around in my head about ways to provide food for my children.

“People have changed from farming to fishing”

Because farming depends a lot on rain, crop production is not as reliable as fishing. In addition... one has to wait at least six months before harvesting crops, as opposed to fishing, where one can bring fish home [that day] if successful.

I have concentrated my efforts in selling *patsa* (small shrimp) at Manambaro market. Sometimes I brought 10 *kapoaka* (3.3 kilos) of *patsa* to sell and made 1,000 *ariary*... Lately, the supply of *patsa* has decreased and I am only able to bring a maximum of 5 *kapoaka* to the market. I do not sell at Fort Dauphin market because it is farther than Manambaro. Since I don't have the money to pay for a bush taxi to go to Fort Dauphin, I prefer to walk to Manambaro...

The price of fish has increased but the volume of production has decreased, and along with this, the cost of living has increased... People have changed from farming to fishing...[and] there are restrictions on collecting vines. Therefore, people are reinforcing their fishing activities, which has an impact on its sustainability.

Men fish using nets and women use large flexible baskets. Most of the catch is destined for the market... people prefer to sell it in order to generate money and purchase staple foods.

“I wish I had a radio to ease my worries”

I love listening to the radio [but] I cannot afford to purchase one. I wish I had a radio to ease my worries... [and] so that I could listen to the news. I dream that after working on my farm I would come home and listen to it.

If I had money I would purchase what my heart tells me... It is obvious that those with money can satisfy their desires... The picture I had was that after my working day, I would come home tired and relax in my bed, listening to the radio... But since I am a single mother, I set aside my desire...



Educational opportunities

What makes me happy now is that my children are able to go to school in the village, just like any other children... People in the village made many requests in the past before the government finally agreed to establish a school in the village. It was built of *raty* (forest products). Local communities participated in the construction first, then the government decided to help.

Two years later...QMM (QIT Madagascar Minerals – subsidiary of Rio Tinto mining for ilmenite) came to our village and...they rehabilitated the school and changed it to brick. Everyone contributed...the community provided labour and local resources... I told [my children] that my goal was to see them succeed since I did not have the opportunity to finish school... My three elder siblings had the opportunity, but I was responsible for helping my mother take care of my younger siblings...

Recently, there began a programme for illiterate people in the village. I decided to participate. I loved studying and I really enjoyed it; unfortunately I had to stop because I have bad sight... I needed glasses but I did not have a pair. Most elderly people who signed up dropped out due to poor vision.

When I was [studying], I was elected president of the adult students. This showed the interest I had in studying.

“My dream”

There are many students [at the village school], about 100. These children are motivated. Every year, some of them pass an exam that lets them study in higher grades in Manambaro.

Right now, one of my children studies in Manambaro, where he is preparing to take the BEPC (secondary level exam). I pray to God that he will succeed. I can't imagine how happy I will be when he passes his exam. He has made two attempts. I gave him the courage to continue because most of my children have stopped studying...

I am hopeful that my children will succeed. My dream is that they will be able to find jobs according to their qualifications. If my children get jobs, I am sure they will have a better life and can take care of me.

“Every single plant needs water”

My complaint is the lack of rain, because it delays the planting of rice. The serious problem people face right now is that the season for planting *tsipala* rice (a species of rice, very popular in the south of Madagascar) has passed. This will accentuate food insecurity because the next cropping season will be affected... People are supposed to plant rice by January but due to the lack of rain, people were not even able to grow the seedlings... ”

“ After the *tsipala* season, people plant various things such as cassava, sweet potatoes and tomatoes... If farmers cannot keep up with irrigation, then their tomatoes will not grow properly. [But] irrigating tomatoes on a large plot of land is difficult to do, so most people depend on rain.

In addition to the tomatoes, people have also been given some green vegetable seeds to plant. But still, every single plant needs water. People make an effort to irrigate their garden vegetables and they have planted up to 40 plots.

The government service agent came to us and distributed these seeds... We are asked to form a farmers' group. Five people in each group received a donation of seeds. One of the five persons represents the group and also receives farming equipment to facilitate our tasks. Then there is someone who is in charge of managing all the equipment. The government agent monitors our progress.

“Losing the edge against hardship”

Due to the difficulties encountered by each family, more and more children are separated from their parents, especially their mothers; [they] are left behind at the village while their mothers spend their days collecting fish and other resources.

I am losing the edge against hardship. I wish the government would offer me a job so that I can fulfill my duty to raise my children. Not just men can work for the government – women also can. That way, women can become independent as well.

I think the reason many people are candidates for various government positions is that they need jobs to sustain the lives of their families... That is the primary thing that I need right now, because I can still work and I am ready to do any job to provide food for my children.





Kazy

female, 58, Petriky

“ I am enduring hardship due to drought. Although I do all I can to satisfy my needs, it is not enough... I plant rice, cassava and sweet potato, tomato and all sorts of beans, but there are no results because it is too dry... There was a lack of rain in the past, but at the moment, it is worse. It rained a year ago... Since then, there has been no rain and there have been consequences for our crop production... ”



We tried to plant rice but it didn't grow – except in the rice paddies that have a little bit of irrigation... All the other land that is waiting for the rains was not able to produce anything. Most of the rice paddies could not be planted because they were too dry. Instead, we let the cattle into the fields to graze the little bit of rice that grew but then dried up.

“The rains are not coming”

We also planted cassava and laboured on the earth, but it was too dry and the cassava didn't grow. It was the same for our maize... eventually we let our cattle graze these fields since the plants did not mature. If the rain does not come, we will start again at zero and replant our fields...

I don't know why the rains are not coming. I am not God, who can predict such things... In the past, there was rain and everybody had a lot of food. At the moment, every year we have seasonal food shortages...

Perhaps we need to have a sacrifice. Now people no longer perform them; their thoughts are focused on their survival instead. The location for the ceremony was on the river bank... *Volamaka* (May) was the time when the sacrifices were done. It was also the time when we put the umbilical cords of newborns in the river... After the sacrifice, our ancestors would bathe themselves in the ocean. Then the rain would fall.

Harvest traditions

In the past, when there was a harvest, we would give the first part of it to the *mpitan-kazomanga* (village elder)...it is only then that other members of the family can consume the harvest.

However, the person has died on whose land the *hazomanga* (sacred tree, site of village meetings) grows, and [at the moment] the younger generation just brings the first part of the harvest and leaves it next to the *hazomanga*.

Medicinal plants

In the past our ancestors and our parents harvested medicinal plants in Petriky Forest. People collected plants and boiled them and gave them to the sick person, and then they would be healed. For example, in my case, what helped me to grow up were medicinal plants...

The younger generation no longer uses medicinal plants because they use foreigners' medicine... We have all abandoned the practice of our ancestors to use, boil and prepare medicinal plants... It is due to the foreigners, who have influenced our society. People are starting to forget, little by little, the traditions of their ancestors.

There is also a perception that Western medicine is more effective and works more rapidly than medicinal plants. For example, if somebody drinks the liquid of a medicinal plant, it takes two to three days for the person to heal...

[We had] *fanota*, *tingo-tingo*, *fanola*, *soazanahary* (medicinal plant species). Our ancestors used all of these and they were given to children as an infusion. *Fanota* was used in cases where evil spirits possessed somebody. *Tingo-tingo* was used for coughs... Also *tingo-tingo* is given to women who have given birth.

Fanola leaves are used in cases where people have *marasme* (slight temperature). People take a bath in hot water with the leaves. Also, the leaves can be placed directly on the muscles that hurt. *Soazanahary* is boiled and consumed when people think somebody has cast a spell on them.

The need to protect forest resources

[We can still use these plants] because the forest still belongs to the people of Loharano village. When there is drought, we go there to collect vines. Children make handicrafts from them and sell them to visitors to make a little bit of money...

At the moment, it is the collection of vines that is helping each family to survive... However, the amount of vine available has greatly decreased, because it has been widely exploited to generate income... People also consume the fruits of this vine...and collect wood with which to build houses...

Not only do people collect wood for building, but also to make charcoal, especially in Tsihala and Ampefinala. People from these villages access our forest as well, despite the fact that people of Loharano and Tambovo villages are the real owners. The forest is surrounded by many villages, so people access it from different sides.

We have elected a few people to enforce the *dina* (traditional forest management system) but the [regulations] are not operational yet. A driver from QMM and the forest service officials have started to

explain to people the goals of the *dina* and how it will be put in place. Mainly they said that collecting construction wood and making charcoal would be prohibited.

They have not [yet] prohibited us here, in our village. They have only started with people from different villages. But the regulations are not in place because they don't yet have security guards to protect the forest.

“It will be catastrophic”

QMM is going to prevent us from having access to all of these [forest] resources... This decision is going to change a lot of things in our lives.

The shade from the trees that grow along the riverside acts as a shelter for fish. If the forest is cut down, this will have an impact on fish



“ habitat... There will be no more fish. The river will diminish... Also, the medicinal plants will perish. The vines will be destroyed. The construction wood will disappear...

It will really be catastrophic... The reason QMM is here is to exploit this forest. Once they finish the construction of the new seaport at Somatraha, after five years, they will come here... We are really going to suffer if we lose this forest because it is our life, and the river is also our life.

However, we do not dare oppose the foreigners (QMM). Instead, we accept them with fear... Each time they find something that they like, they can easily acquire it, and they will move us to a different location.

Taking crops to market

We are obliged to purchase food [nowadays] because we are not able to produce any. The only other activity that we can do is fishing... [But now] there are not a lot of fish.

People take [their crops] on foot to Fort Dauphin – sweet potatoes, tomatoes and beans. If they have a lot of produce...they bring it little by little, going back and forth, and they also recruit people who are strong to help them to carry the merchandise on their shoulders. However, these people have to be paid, and given food to eat...

If somebody sells everything in the market, then he returns the same day... It also happens that it can take three days to sell everything.

People go to Manambaro since it is closer... However, the inconvenience of selling our goods there is that we are not able to sell them all. It is for this reason that we [prefer to] bring our merchandise to Fort Dauphin since we are able to sell it more quickly there.

“The medical team comes to our village”

Stomach-ache, fever, headache – these are [the ailments] people have very often. Luckily, all of the children in the village and at the school are vaccinated... When it is the day to vaccinate all of these children, the medical team comes to our village to do them. This is different from the past when our children had to go to see the doctor [elsewhere] to receive their vaccinations...

We need to have a hospital in our village... If there is a pregnant woman [about to give birth] or somebody who falls ill, we have to...carry them on a stretcher...three hours to Sarisambo or four hours to Manambaro...

In the past, there was only one road that came to the village, but then QMM built a new road... [Still], this road is so bad that only four-wheel drives can come here. Whenever QMM notice that the condition of the road...is bad, they speak with the village chief to organise the maintenance. Sometimes, QMM distributes food such as meat and rice to villagers, who help with the maintenance...[but] I don't think our road will ever be [properly] rehabilitated.

“Schools in almost every village”

[Our children] go to a school built by QMM five years ago. There are Grades 1 to 5. After passing their first official exam in Manambaro, they continue to study in the Manambaro Junior High School. As for the ones who fail, they come back to the village and repeat for another year. Now, our school has two government teachers. In the past we only had a substitute teacher.

[Before], they studied in Sarisambo. They walked for three hours to get there. Even myself, I studied in Sarisambo. We brought lunch with us and stayed there until the school day was over...at 5pm. Then we walked home again. And this is what we did every day. But now, children are lucky because there are schools in almost every village. Now the schools are

close to the homes of children, so they are not too tired to walk there...

In the past, children helped their parents a lot. For example, they would help them search for firewood, or carry their bags of produce if they were heavy. However, children do not do that any more. Young people do not even help their parents to work the land...

If we want to give youth our advice, they always have something to say in return. Our children just listen to themselves. It is very rare to find a child who still respects the advice of his parents.

Money will not last

This land is the land of our *tanindrazana* (ancestors) and QMM (QIT Madagascar Minerals – subsidiary of Rio Tinto mining for ilmenite) are also going to take our harvests... Even if they give us money for our land, it will not be enough to last us for the rest of our lives, because we still have small children to raise, who also need to survive – and the land will no longer belong to them.

It is for this reason that I said that they are going to kill us by taking our land. This has not yet happened in our village but it has happened in Ambinanibe and Ifafitsignana.



Themes

This section includes passages from other Antanosy testimonies that were collected during Project HEPA. The narrators express real difficulties in meeting their daily needs for food and income. The natural environment of Anosy, its land, forests, sea and rivers are a vital part of their survival strategy. But these resources are increasingly restricted, and under threat, since the arrival of a large scale mining project (QMM), with serious impacts on livelihoods and food security for rural families.

There is rapid regional development accompanying the mining operation which brings new infrastructure, but also many foreigners who do not respect local taboos,

so changes are perceived as mixed blessings. Villagers appreciate improvements to their health and education services, but they do not believe they compensate for loss of their lands, and they speak of how their own lack of literacy has left them vulnerable in recent negotiations for compensation.

They communities already face challenges from climate change and a growing population, but the presence of the mining operation has created additional pressures in a fragile environment. The changes and restrictions to traditional occupations in farming and fishing undermine customary self-sufficiency and are resulting in significant levels of hardship.

“ Forests

The forest sustained our lives, like parents caring for their children. When there was a *hainandro* (drought) we went and sought shelter under “our parents’ wings.”

Zanaboatsy, male, Petriky

“Petriky was my ancestor’s resources. They raised their children from the forest. The practice in the past was that people only cut down a big tree once in two or three years. People were aware of the importance of the forest. They wanted to make sure that it recovered...before they cut down other trees. The felled tree was destined for boat construction. And the swamps and Petriky forest supplied other needs of the villagers. People cut *golette* (branches) from Petriky to fence their houses... It was our medicine [chest]. Now, I cannot heal my family because I do not have access to it any more.”

Tsilefa, male, 83 years, Petriky

“[QMM] do not understand that firewood is our only source of energy... The consequence of their decision [to cut off forest access] is food insecurity, because our main dishes – cassava and sweet potatoes – need firewood to be cooked. We don’t even have the coal stoves to switch from firewood to charcoal.”

Alter, male, 65 years, St Luce

They selected a few people to be forest guards. People must pay fees if they want to walk in... People will not be able to make baskets and mats because we don't have access to forest resources and we don't have money to pay the [access] fee... They should let people use the forest because it sustains our life. But this is just a wish we have. We farmers cannot convince foreigners to change their ideas.

Manintsy, female, 40 years, Petriky

Farmers prefer to plant their crops on forested land because not only does it have better soil, but it also has moisture that allows crops to grow well... [In the past] it was necessary to have a permit [but it] allowed one to exploit the forest for a year. Now, applying for a permit [is different]... So with the decrease in fishing production, and the new policy of the forest management, where will people find land to plant their crops?

Flemmond, female, 48 years, St Luce

Now people are not allowed to farm in the forest because the foreigners prohibit it. As a result...they are forced to farm on sandy soil. Therefore the crop yields are declining, despite tremendous efforts by people to farm this soil. Our activities do not generate money for us because there are problems everywhere...

Josephine, female, 56 years, St Luce

“ Rivers and the sea

I guess that without the river and ocean's resources, we would be dead by now.

Bruno, male, 43 years, Ilafitsignana

In the past, fish nibbled at our feet, [because] there were lots of them. We could catch them easily and fill up our big basket in a short time...Now, you have a hard time finding fish. We just wander around searching for other ways to sustain our lives.

Lambo, male, 72 years, Petriky

The ocean serves as a workplace for people in Ambinanibe. If the sea conditions are good, people are able to provide food to nourish their family; if the sea conditions are bad, people remain on land and their family goes hungry. The rivers and the sea sustain the lives of people here in Ambinanibe.

Damy, male, 29 years, Ambinanibe

In the past, a catch by a fisherman was enough to fill a large basket and for me to generate a good amount of money. But since these foreigners have disturbed the rivers and the ocean around here, even the catch of 20 boats could not fill a large basket. My children will suffer even more when it comes to their turn to work, because these foreigners will keep affecting fishing activities.

Marie Louise, female, 62 years, Ilafitsignana

Fishing was just like collecting sweet potato leaves – too easy – and in a short time period we could fill a huge basket... The children were excited whenever I went to the river because a good catch was guaranteed. During dinner they chose what they liked to eat, because there were many species of fish.

Marie Louise, female, 62 years, Ilafitsignana

In the past...people concentrated on farming. Their land was fertile and they harvested good crops. As a result, they did not rely on fishing to sustain their lives. They only went fishing for their daily consumption and not for sale... Fishermen would throw their nets into the river just twice, and the catch was enough ...

Tsitafandry, male, 75 years, Ifaftsignana

Since the construction of the port, sea conditions have been unpredictable, and bad, most of the time; fishermen cannot go fishing everyday... their boats are not suitable for strong waves. They are most in danger when docking their boats in [the new location of] Bevava, because the strong waves coming ashore can break up the boats. I myself got my two boats broken apart there, and up to 300 boats have now been damaged, if not swept out to sea, by the strong waves...

Ilay, male, Ambinanibe

In the past, the lobster-trapping period started on May 1 and ended on December 31, because they said that an 'off period' was needed to protect lobster from becoming extinct. The lobster season may be closed but our stomachs here in the village don't know how to shut down...

In the past, even if some people didn't go fishing, they sometimes received fish from those who did. Now, if you don't go fishing, it is better to collect green vegetables and not to expect to eat any fish.

Lala, female, 40 years, St Luce

In the past, many fishermen owned boats...We also used to build our own boats but now there are restrictions on use of the forest [products] and the cost of living is high, it has become difficult to build a boat... [Middlemen have] trapped us in a deal. They know that fishermen do not have money to buy a boat at 200,000 *ariary* so they took advantage of the situation... The condition was that fishermen could still use the boat [supplied by the middlemen] and fix the price for their lobsters ... But the agreement was not respected because the buyers drove down the price...

Alter, male, 65 years, St Luce

Long time ago, we used to catch shrimp and fish just from the shoreline. Since the volume of fishing nets have increased, not only were big fish caught but also those that should lay their eggs... This posed a problem because the river lost its [ability] to maintain its capacity...

Limbisoa, male, 22 years, Ambinanibe

Many visitors who come to the village do not respect the customary rules. As a result, the number of fish and of fish species have decreased.... People from outside the village violate the rules by cleaning slaughtered cows in or near the rivers. They also wear gold jewelry when they swim in the river. In addition, some people wear red cloth while crossing the river; others fish using a worm as bait. There are also some people who consume pork and goat meat and then wash themselves in the river. In addition, the exploding of dynamite nearby has exacerbated the deterioration of the environment. Such violations have an impact on the existence of the river fish.

Brinaldine, female, 42 years, Ifaftsignana

Catching shrimp [and] selling charcoal and snacks in the village: these were my activities in the past...The money I generated was used to open a small shop, which in turn helped me to make some profit. So catching shrimp opened a door for me. I was able to purchase soap, clothes, and useful household items. But since people have started using large fishing nets, it has had an impact on the sustainability of the shrimp industry, because they remove a lot of shrimps and other resources together...

Felicia, female, 19 years, Ambinanibe

“ Land and compensation

We inherited land from our ancestors... So this land should belong to our next generation.

Jean-Claude, male, Ambinanibe

[QMM's] ancestors were not Malagasy so I don't see why they are the ones who make a decision about the land around here....What I want is for the government to establish a plan to protect our rights to own land, so that our land can be inherited by our children and not taken by force by other people, against our will. How come people can lose land that they have worked on and inherited from their grandparents?

Flemmond, female, 48 years, St Luce

We received the money in return for our land by installments. This [payment] method did not help us in our plan to buy fishing and farming equipment... every time we received an installment, we also had to buy food, so it was hard not to use the money when it was available... I think we could still have bought some equipment [but] only if the payment was in full.

Mbola, male, 67 years, Ambinanibe

A government official told us to accept any amount of money we would be offered because if we would not accept their offer we would lose both the land and the money...I think [QMM] fooled us... The [compensation] money could be spent in a day or few days but our land is a valuable resource that stays with us throughout the years... The future generation will suffer because they will not inherit our land, only our house will remain for them...The land should belong to them so that they can in their turn continue to cultivate and transfer these lands to their own grandchildren.

Marie Louise, female, 62 years, Ilafitsignana

Another reason they were angry was about the estimating of the area of land that people owned... The staff sent by QMM shrank the size of the land they measured when they registered the information on their notes. As a result, people in Ilafitsignana ended up getting less money than the actual value of their land. However, a few of QMM's staff took pity and...registered the exact size of land.... So a few people from this village received money worth the actual value of their land.

Paulette, female, 37 years, Ilafitsignana

People did not know how to do anything beyond what they learned from their parents, such as planting cassava and sweet potatoes. Our lives are now miserable because our lands have been taken from us... Now, people in Ilafitsignana are suffering because they have lost their opportunity for food production...

Reviry, male, 40 years, Anosy 4, Ilafitsignana

People keep increasing in numbers so people must build new houses. But there is no more vacant land to build on. In the past people didn't build that many houses, but the younger generation has built many houses. Soon, I suspect, people will be forced to buy farmland where they can build houses, because our village is saturated. People will have to trade farmland for housing, whether they like it or not.

Manintsy, female, 40 years, Petriky

When the estimation of our land was finished, people from our village complained a lot about the results. People went to see the Prefet de Région and the mayor in Fort Dauphin, and QMM. They changed the price of our land to 100 *ariary* per square metre. Their excuse was that for fallow land, the price was a lot cheaper. But I know that Ehoala didn't have fallow land because people farmed extensively there... I think it was a way to reduce the value of our land...

Rosette, female, Ambinanibe

“ Health

I am concerned for the quality of the air we breathe and I fear for our health...

My children always cough a lot... Even adults in our village feel weak and sick all the time... We have not faced a health crisis like this before...

Say Louise, female, Ilafitsignana

People don't have the money to pay for medical treatment. The nearest hospital is in Fort Dauphin and that is far away. I hope that a hospital will be built in our village... I also think that people should not wait until they get sick before they go to see a doctor. People in my village need a prevention programme, for example protected drinking water...

Say Louise, female, Ilafitsignana

Medicinal plants to heal babies' diseases and a plant called 'healing 150 diseases' are either becoming extinct or are located in the restricted areas [of the forest]... It is the same for a medicinal plant needed for a woman who has just delivered a baby. She should drink it as a tea. These plants are not accessible anymore...

Limbisoa, male, 22 years, Ambinanibe

Drinking water is becoming scarce. Luckily, a foreigner decided to help... He built a water faucet to supply clean water. Despite such efforts and good intentions, many people have complained that the drinking water is polluted by the dust created by the dynamite explosions. They said that many people got sick after drinking the water.

Brinaldine, female, 42 years, Ilafitsignana

People are now not able to use [medicinal] plants to heal illnesses. Children are vulnerable because parents cannot give them the proper medical treatment to keep them healthy and in good shape... Going to a hospital requires money, for example the cost of drugs, the transportation, food expenses, doctors' fees...

Brinaldine, female, 42 years, Ilafitsignana

If people have money, yes, they go [to the hospital] but if not, they remain in the village and wait for a miracle. I wish the hospital was here so that people could pay on credit whenever they get sick. I assume that it would be possible to

make such arrangements with doctors here rather than with the doctors in Fort Dauphin. My daughter-in-law [died] because we had to take her to the hospital in the city. The problem was that we did not have the money for her to get emergency treatment. These days, doctors or medical personnel do not want to treat patients without being paid first...

Tsitafandry, male, 75 years, Ilaftsignana

We think that QMM built the health centre in order to divert our attention from the fact that they took our forest. I think our request to the government [for a health centre] was sent to QMM and then QMM built the health centre... It is a huge benefit... What happened in the past was that illnesses that could have been treated instead killed people, because of the lack of a health centre. Pregnant women can now visit a midwife, even at night.

Alter, male, 65 years, St Luce

I want to thank the government for establishing a family planning programme because without this, people would have too many children and live in stricken poverty. With the decrease in fishing production, I don't know how each family would have lived. When I had my first child, in 1985, the cost of living was still manageable... Now, I have seven children and it is a struggle to feed them. Thankfully, my wife adopted family planning and for the last five years we have not had a pregnancy.

Flemmond, female, 48 years, St Luce

[For a time] I gave birth every year... my body could not resist this frequency and as a consequence, I aged quickly and became weak. Our children are now just starting to grow up, so this has given me relief lately from raising kids. In addition, the government has introduced family planning so I decided to follow the programme... Because I was so weak, my husband was almost ready to leave me.

Lala, female, 40 years, St Luce

“ Farming and food security

Thoughts are always turning around in my head about ways to provide food for my children.

Soarohy, female, Petriky

[Rice] was the main reason why I established here. Rice cultivation is important to my survival. It is a livelihood practice from my ancestors... [but now] I have problems every day because we are hungry. I cultivated rice but it did not grow like in the past, because there is too much sun and less water for irrigation now.

Tsilefa, male, 83 years, Petriky

In the past, I farmed one piece of land and could harvest a good amount. However, I had to increase the size of the land but I still cannot harvest sufficient crops for my family, because they did not survive the excessive heat. In addition, seeds are now for sale, unlike the past where one could get them for free from a relative or friend. It will cost me more than 2,000 *ariary* before I can have enough seed to farm my land. So, given this situation, I cannot rely on farming as a source of food for my children or income..

Mija, female, 28 years, St Luce

In the past, when people slashed forest land to farm, people yielded lots of crops... But since we have to use the same piece of land continually, due to the restrictions [on the forest], our crops have diminished... Thus, people are facing hardships... We harvested cassava, rice, pineapples, bananas – anything could grow on the forested land... because the soil was fertile. Now, we are forced to farm on sandy soil [and] our crop production has been mediocre.

Josephine, female, 56 years, St Luce

My family did not consume cassava or sweet potatoes [in the past] because they had plenty of rice to eat... Crops rotted in the fields without being harvested, because production was so abundant...

Brinaldine, female, 42 years, Ilafitsignana

[Women] go to their farmland hungry and thus tire easily. Usually, they don't eat in the morning. They give leftovers from the previous night to their children for breakfast. They make the sacrifice of not eating, since the food is not enough for everyone... The 80 *kapaoka* of peanuts that we planted have all dried up. Also, [the beans and] maize did not grow either. The only benefit from these crops was that our cattle grazed on the leaves... All of this is due to the sun and lack of rain. Thus, we suffer... we suffer a lot.

Tema Pauline, female, 30 years, Petriky

We farmed in forested areas and by the edge of the forest as well. Access to these lands was open. During the season when it is prohibited by the government to catch lobster, we cultivated cassava, sweet potatoes and corn. Now, this practice has run into a problem, because land has become scarce... [Also] the land has lost its productivity. The problem was that we did not have money to buy fertiliser.

Rakoto, male, 30 years, St Luce

“ Environmental change

Even if there was a *hainandro* (drought) in the past we still had rains when the season came. These seasons are not valid any more; drought happens every day. It has been worse since QMM arrived here...

Zanaboatsy, male, Petriky

The climate changed and became bad [and] our fields did not produce like before. Thus we became more involved in small-scale trade and commerce to raise money to purchase food. Each time there was some rain, everybody seized the time to farm their fields, since rain is becoming more and more scarce. When we are able to farm our fields, we are able to have a little bit of food...

Tema Pauline, female, 30 years, Petriky

In the past, whenever it rained, people were sure that they would have a good harvest. Strangely, such assumptions can no longer be relied upon since QMM's arrival. Now, all people witness is bright sunshine all day long, no sign of a cloud that could allow people to hope for rain. The lack of rain has... has exposed my family's vulnerability to food shortages... [And] it not only affects farming, but also the growth of medicinal plants.

Brinaldine, female, 42 years, Ilafitsignana

A long time ago, when there was lightning, it meant it was time for us to work. We prepared for heavy rain... But now we do not understand why it becomes hotter and hotter every year. In the past, when we only planted a little parcel of a rice field, we could harvest enough to feed our family. Now, even if you try to plant a field as big as a hectare, you only harvest a basket of rice. We are stunned at how Petriky cannot provide the same resources as it once did. Maybe it is because it has become foreigners' land and Petriky does not like that status, [maybe] that is why there is a drought. Maybe God turns the land upside down, resulting in drought, which cause us famine... That is why we are sad – because the drought affects us. We are clueless to understand the cause of climate change. All I can say is that we are just witnessing the change...

Lambo, male, 72 years, Petriky

The situation is now that the farmland has gone, the drinking water is polluted, some parts of a mountain nearby have been stripped, and so the rain has held off, and the cattle lack clean drinking water. Cows die, one after another. Green grass is also dying due to lack of rain.

Brinaldine, female, 42 years, Ilafitsignana

Bevava used to be a pristine place for fishing. Our fishing activities were rewarding, but lately the sea conditions in Bevava have been bad, almost constantly. The sea level has risen and threatened many ancestral tombs located near the shore... I don't know why such a phenomenon is happening but the sea level continues to rise and our livelihoods are threatened.

Felicia, female, 19 years, Ambinanibe

The major difficulty people encounter here is the lack of water. It is a challenge to find a source of water and even if people dig a well, it takes time for that well to produce water. I guess because excessive heat dries up the water source. Life is almost impossible. Children in the village now end up going to school without taking a shower, or even cleaning their hands and feet. People eat without washing their hands. People wear dirty clothes. It shows how poor we are. Well, we already live in misery, so what can I say?

Marinette, female, 40 years, St Luce

The explosions used to be one per week, but now they set off explosions three times a day. The mountain that was once tall and massive is almost gone. It is going to seem like a myth when we tell future generations that there was a tall mountain nearby. It is also prohibited as well to access the areas to show our next generation [what it was like]; we just watch from a certain distance.

Marie Louise, female, 62 years, Ilafitsignana

Why are cattle today dying in large numbers?.. People are not sure if they get diseases or if they die due to the effects of the dynamite explosions done by COLAS (French construction company). Whenever the dynamite explodes, a cloud of dust spreads all over the surrounding environment. Later, dust covers the grass that the cows graze. So people came to the conclusion that contaminated grass killed their cattle... Something is wrong... Even honey bees fled the forest. Currently, there is a shortage of honey in the village. Probably the honey bees fled because of gas spreading all over their environment.

Miha, male, Ilafitsignana

“ Economic conditions

Now everything costs money... People cannot borrow money from their relatives or neighbours any more because they don't have land or crops to use as collateral...

Sirily, male, 42, Ilaftsignana

[In the past] with the little money you had, you could actually live normally, without stress and fear for the future. As a fisherman, I could sustain my family from the catch I made...But now, it is getting more and more difficult to make a living...

Mbola, male, 67 years, Ambinanibe

The money [we received for our land] was like rain in that it came quickly and disappeared quickly...

Ilay, male, Ambinanibe

We all just wait for my husband's pay cheque. Despite the fact that it is a small amount of money, we try to make all sorts of calculations to cover everything the family needs. We purchase some rice. We decided to skip breakfast because we cannot afford it.

Tema Germaine, female, 42 years, Ilaftsignana

I think money is like water. It does not stay with you, as opposed to crops that you can use every day... I used the money to buy food because I did not have land to cultivate any more. I used it to cover my daily needs such as kerosene, salt, soap and some other items that are useful... The money was used up in the way that crickets consume their food: everything that comes into their mouth is consumed.

Marie Louise, female, 62 years, Ilaftsignana

In the past a lot of farmers from out of town came here because they were interested in purchasing fish from the village. Life was very good. People just exchanged crops for fish. But [now] with the decline in production, farmers are not willing to exchange crops for fish [and] prefer to use cash. As a result, the supply of crops [from out of town] has diminished and many people in St Luce have a hard time finding staple foods. Even if fishermen sell their fish, the amount of money they receive is not sufficient to purchase enough staple foods.

Tselegna, female, St Luce

The large number of people being recruited by QMM from outside our area has contributed to the increasing cost of living, because these people have a higher purchasing power due to their high salaries. QMM does not want to pay us local people a high salary, so what can we do? We cannot compete with these newcomers. and so local people remain powerless and poor.

Tema Germaine, female, 42 years, Ilaftsignana

The main issue is that the foreigners who took the land around here should have offered jobs to many people in the village, not to just a few. As a result, a lot of active people remain in the village, unemployed, and thus poverty and famine are gaining ground.

82 Tema Germaine, female, 42 years, Ilaftsignana

Any time that I need to organise something, for example a *sandratsy* (ceremony to honour the spirit that possesses someone) or a *savatsy* (circumcision ceremony), I use one of my cows to help me cover the expenses. Nobody will be able to help me in an emergency, so having cows can help to avoid such problems or meet those economic needs.

Damy, male, 29 years, Ambinanibe

You see that I am already old, and I cannot find a job to allow me make some money. My children are still young and I am having a hard time raising them. My land has been taken away from me. I am not like other people who...got hired by foreigners. These people can make money to support their families. I am old and I did not get a job so I am powerless in what to do to raise my family. This is what saddens me...

Tsitafandry, male, 75 years, Ilaftsignana

Sometimes, I feel like life has defeated me. I did not have such hardships in the past. I cannot even purchase soap, sugar and salt, which are basic things for a household... It is as if it was a dream that I used to drink coffee and eat bread. These are luxury goods that we rarely consume now. It shows now how poor I am... QMM fooled people and now QMM is the landowner. QMM used the government as a tool to appropriate our land. I think their tactic worked perfectly because they knew people were afraid of the government, so they hit us where we did not expect it.

Paulette, female, 37 years, Ilaftsignana

Some of my children still go to school so they cannot work to assist me... If I still had some cattle, I would sell them so that I could purchase food for my children and ease my hardships. I feel hopeless right now because I do not have farm land any more...I don't know how to weave, or sew. I wish I knew how to make something else to make money.

Tsitafandry, male, 75 years, Ilaftsignana

“ Livelihoods

We have to go elsewhere and find part-time jobs to help our families... The places where I can find part-time work are limited: I cannot find a job in Fort Dauphin or any other city because I do not know how to read and write. So I will try to find work in one of the neighbouring villages... Wherever I find a job I'll go, because I have no alternative...

Bruno, male, 43, Ilaftsignana

Because I am a single mother, I must work hard to supply the basic needs of my children. In addition to weaving mats, I sell shrimp by the can... The money I generate from these two activities is not enough, so I have to increase the pace of my work to make a little bit more... The sale of [forest] sticks could have helped [but] I must pay a fee before I can get a permit to collect them. Where can I find money for that, when I struggle to find money to purchase food? Everything seems to be conspiring to strangle my life.

Mija, female, 28 years, St Luce

My hardships became worse when my husband passed away. I now have to do the work he was supposed to do [as well as] the work of women. I am stretched all the way to complete exhaustion. I collect firewood, weave mats, cook meals for the family, take care of them, go to the market, find food, so on and so forth. I now raise seven children.

Seasonal food shortages are familiar to us, but I cannot watch my children not eating, so I decided to borrow money. I know I have nothing to pay it back, but hunger forces me to do this. My children share the clothes that they have when they have to leave the house... I strive to send them to school. Unfortunately, they come home early because they are hungry and cannot concentrate on their studies...

Marinette, female, 40 years, St Luce

I don't see many alternatives other than moving away... The government does not allow people to work properly and make money and they do not help us, so I think migrating is the only solution left for me.

Benagnomby, male, St Luce

People [from the village] adopted a new policy that fishing activities in Bevava have to involve couples. Since I am not married, I cannot fish on my own and no one wants to sell their catch to a single parent like me. The catch made by each fisherman is sold by their wives in outdoor markets. So even if I go to Bevava to collect fish, fishermen won't sell their catch to me.

Felicia, female, 19 years, Ambinanibe

I even decided to adopt family planning so that I won't be pregnant for some time, because our budget does not allow us to have another child. If I was pregnant, I would not be able to go fishing and lift a fishing net. So it is better to remain active to make money.

Paulette, female, 37 years, Ilafitsignana

I have many grandchildren, and a full house. So I must take care of their food and clothing needs, which is difficult [because] I have nothing to rely on to make money. Making mats and baskets, and fishing does not sustain life anymore. Right now we live in poverty... My husband works hard but his effort is in vain because we have too many grandchildren to support... We also tried to farm but it seems not to work properly because the weather is too dry for anything to grow...

Josephine, female, 56 years, St Luce

I accepted what [compensation] was offered [but] it was against our will to give up our land. Because even though we were fisherman, we would use our farmland to alternate with our fishing activities whenever the sea was in bad condition. Our sweet potatoes, beans and corn crops helped us to survive and generated income whenever the catch was low.

Mbola, male, 67 years, Ambinanibe

Women lack jobs... The collection of *mahampy* (reed) is still [an option]. However, they got burned down by unknown person. As a result, women in the village have no raw materials to make mats... We don't know what else to do. Even if *mahampy* is not available anymore, women could have turned to fishing activities but fishing is subject to restrictions as well... I think women in the village need assistance, especially to allow women to fish again. Fishing is the main activity in the village, so it should not be subject to restrictions

Tselegna, female, St Luce

I have heard that people working for foreigners are divided [in their opinions]. Some of them are full of praise, saying that if they had not been offered jobs by foreigners, they would be suffering from hunger by now. Some others, however, complain that working for foreigners is not easy and that they would prefer to return to fishing. They also complain that their wages have been cut, for unknown reasons. Everyone has their own idea and vision. I don't know if working for foreigners is a solution to their problems. Right now, many people working for foreigners want to quit their jobs, due to the unexpected conditions.

Miha, male, Ilafitsignana

“ Cultural and social change

Now, people just ask a doctor to circumcise their children without a big ceremony. Not only do the resources needed for such ceremony no longer exist, but [people] also lack the money to provide food and drinks [for their guests].

Say Louise, female, Ilafitsignana

Due to the lack of rain and the forest destruction, people in the village have a hard time finding the necessary materials...such as *vandagnira* (a tree species)...to make a circumcision ceremony fit the old tradition... What people do now is take their child and have someone circumcise him, without any ritual. The tradition of circumcision has also changed due to the high cost of living. People often choose to organise a low key ceremony in order to minimize their expenses... they do not invite many people anymore...The more hardships that people have, the less tradition is being followed.

Brinaldine, female, 42 years, Ilafitsignana

People are preparing a sacrifice ceremony at the harbour. My grandfather is responsible for the ceremony. He is the one who gives the blessings and restores the value of the harbour so that resources will be available in great numbers once again. After a cow is slaughtered, my grandfather will pour its blood into the sea, then the blood will be swept away by waves and as soon as it disappears from view, my grandfather will say a prayer. After that, people will distribute the meat among the people from three villages...

Mija, female, 28 years, St Luce

As the wife of a fisherman, I am not allowed to comb my hair while he is at sea. I am not allowed to take a shower nor wash my genital area. I am not allowed to look at a mirror, to sweep the floor, or do laundry. All I can do is just sit and pray for him until he returns because fishing on the ocean is very dangerous. Nor am I allowed to have an argument with anyone. If I don't respect these taboos, my husband may have an accident while at sea...

Flogone, female, Ambinanibe

As far as rivers are concerned, it was forbidden to fish with a bucket, as well as to wash dishes in the river, or to wear red cloth while crossing them. But I think these taboos are being violated these days because people think that development has taken place so there's no need to still follow the old traditions. Visitors – people who were not from the village – were forbidden to swim in the rivers but this taboo has been broken for a long time now. In the past, it was also taboo to wear gold jewelry when crossing rivers.

Miha, male, Ilafitsignana

Another effect of losing income is that people cannot maintain their traditions. For example, during marriage, circumcision and funeral ceremonies, people should perform a specific ritual but [now] they eliminate many steps [of the ceremonies]. ...people have reshaped their traditions according to their new economic situation.

Benagnomby, male, St Luce

“ Communications & power relations

I came to the conclusion that only the government can work out a deal to claim back the local community's rights... It is a huge challenge for people to draft a letter and send it to the respective authorities. Most of us are illiterate... The only opportunity for the people of St Luce to express their complaints is through interviews like this.

Constand, male, St Luce

I think QMM only cares about their own interests. They did not think about the real impact of their projects on the lives of people around here. I am sure that people will be reluctant to attend a meeting any time one is going to be held with villagers. Since people felt betrayed, they no longer trust anything QMM says or wants to implement. People are sad about the whole situation but they feel powerless, so they keep their sadness to themselves... If QMM could have shown us the people in this village, that they care about us, people would not oppose so much of what QMM wanted to have around here.

Ilay, male, Ambinanibe

If someone, or a woman like me, tries to complain and talk to the mayor, he may say, “What does a woman know about this problem?” I may be treated like someone who has too much to say; women and children know nothing about problems and should not get involved. Even if a man complains, the mayor will not necessarily listen... Only someone who is richer, or has money, can be heard in the village.

Olina, female, St Luce

I want the government officials to come here and look at what happened; how people still suffer after getting paid [compensation]. In addition, I want the government officials to look into the exact amount of money villagers should have received. In my judgment, QMM took advantage of local people and paid them less money than they should have.

Marie Louise, female, Ifaitsignana

My land was included [in the appropriation by QMM]... Now I cannot farm and I cannot do anything to sustain my life. If they had asked my permission, I would not have accepted their plan, but since they were powerful they came here and announced that they needed my land. I could not oppose them. They have such an authority that it influences everything... ynamite the mountain close to our village. They used this tactic... and now we are landless.

Reviry, male, 40 years, Ifaitsignana

A government official told us to accept any amount of money offered because if we would not accept the offer we would lose both the land and the money. We were in an undesirable situation because nobody in our village of Ambinanibe was well educated enough to explain the deal to us.

Mbola, male, 67 years, Ambinanibe

We put our lives in God's hand because he is the one who can let us live or die. Besides, we cannot argue with or fight against foreigners... We remain powerless. We cannot find any alternative [livelihoods]. Our rice fields, ancestral tombs and agriculture lands were taken over... We tried to oppose this but were not successful. We did not approve of the action, but they insisted....

Lambo, male, 72 years, Petriky

QMM announced that they only needed one place. But then, to people's surprise, QMM appropriated most of our land... [In addition] the Malagasy government spread news that QMM would take our land anyway, so people became fearful and accepted the deal... If it was only QMM taking the land, I am sure people would do anything in their power to fight against these foreigners, even to the death. But people thought that the government is the owner of all the land, so once the government got involved people lost confidence. People said that the government should have protected them; instead it was helping QMM...

Paulette, female, 37 years, Ilafitsignana

The government should be aware of the lack of education around here because when we signed the [QMM] agreement, no one could sign except by putting down our fingerprints. It was a shame. People could take advantages of us being illiterate.

Mbola, male, 67 years, Ambinanibe

Although people have different opinions, the village chief continues to find ways to convince and bring people together so that we can create an association to protect our rights and benefits.

Alter, male, 65 years, St Luce

I complained on five different occasions. But so far there is no answer. First, they...promised that they would give money in an amount that was appropriate to the return on my land; but many people were not satisfied with the money they received. In addition, some of my land was not registered under my name when they made their estimate. I was disappointed by this. Instead they showed me on television; they filmed me on my farmland. Now, I think that that film was just used as publicity for them, instead of benefiting me.

Jean-Claude, male, 39, Ambinanibe

We know that QMM is not all bad... People are worried because they know that QMM has money and can purchase all the land they want. If that takes place, we all lose, big time... I believe that if QMM and the people from St Luce could agree to work together, everyone will benefit and the collaboration may lead to real development in our village.

Flemmond, female, 48 years, St Luce

I don't want St Luce, which was among the first villages trying to develop, ultimately to become among the last to do so... Now, all women know nothing but weaving, and all men know nothing but fishing. If the missionary school had continued, people would have gained many skills and our lives would have been different...

Fanja, female, St Luce

We used to drink water from a well. This was the practice of our ancestors. They did not use medicine to clean the water but after one or two months, they scooped out the mud in order to let the water become clean again... people did not become sick when they drank it. Now we use a cistern. But the government did not provide medicine to clean the water. Now the water is polluted because kids nowadays who do not listen to their parents do laundry next to the cistern and the used water goes back in the cistern. It causes diseases. What we have done though is to set up a *dina* (traditional agreement) to protect the cistern from pollution. We prohibit people from doing laundry or washing dishes there.

Alter, male, 65 years, St Luce

There are positive changes [such as] improvements in the houses... Roads have been repaired and widened. Travel is not our main concern any more.

Say Louise, female, Ilaftsignana

Even if QMM took our land and restricted our fishing activities, people received some benefits from them as well, such as the rehabilitation of our road.... [This] brought many tourists to our village. QMM also contributed to improving the villagers' houses. In the past, people built their houses with forest products such as *raty* (woven mats), but now many people own houses with roofs of corrugated iron.

Felicia, female, 19 years, Ambinanibe

What makes me happy is that there are now three or four faucets available in the village. In the past there used to be just one tap and our children and wives suffered a lot, because there was a long line to fetch water and sometimes they only got home after midnight. Now...they can just get water any time they want and not have to wait.

Damy, male, 29 years, Ambinanibe

I am sure that if QMM decides some day to build a school here, it will be like what happened after they asked for permission to build a road giving them access to the port. QMM is not going to give that school for free... Maybe I am too pessimistic, but I don't trust what QMM has been doing. QMM should first have built a school for this village before they thought about constructing the port... I know these things that QMM has done are good and that people need them...but QMM use these things as manoeuvres, to claim something.

Ilay, male, Ambinanibe

The issue that I have with the water faucets is that they need attention and care but knowing sometimes how clumsy some people are in the village...I fear that the effort allocated to putting up these faucets are worthless... Since QMM has said that they do not provide technical or management assistance...in a few months people will go back to drinking water from wells because the faucets will be broken.

Ilay, male, Ambinanibe

People in Ilaftsignana were fortunate to have an NGO that helped many people to read and write. [It] also helped by opening a nursery school. So people in Ilaftsignana now have a school and the children are happy... Now children from the village can go to school without pressure, they do not have to feel ashamed because they put on used and torn clothes, unlike in Fort Dauphin...

Brinaldine, female, 42 years, Ilaftsignana

Since QMM came here, they instructed people door to door in how to take care of our lives. They helped us in getting clean drinking water, preparing healthy meals, and advising us how to keep our yards and houses clean. As a result, our lives have improved and there are no more illnesses.

Julienne, female, 46 years, Ambinanibe

The road has been bad for a while. I have not seen any action taken to fix it. Its condition discourages people from coming here and selling their goods. Even when people want to go to the market in Fort Dauphin to buy food, they do not want to make the trip because of the bad road. Also, sometimes fish spoil en route to Fort Dauphin, because it takes a while to get there. So people do not attempt to sell their fish in Fort Dauphin to make more money and are forced to sell their catch in the village at a low price. ...we are living in quick sand...sinking to our death.

Marinette, female, 40 years, St Luce

If there are people who think that QMM has contributed to the development of this area, maybe they have done so elsewhere – but not in Ilaftsignana... Now they are building a port, so soon they will be able to export black sand or whatever they want... I should point out though that the port is being built on our land, and QMM will receive the benefit from it. How about us?

Paulette, female, 37 years, Ilaftsignana

I can tell you now that all the children in the village go to school. The only problem we face is that the teacher is not committed. Maybe he thinks that people in the village are ignorant and he can do whatever he wants... It is not QMM's fault anymore. The teacher, as a public servant, already has the assurance that he will receive his salary, whether he works or not. Unlike teachers in private schools, his paycheck does not depend on how much time he actually works. I think the teacher takes advantage of being appointed to work in a rural area where no one has the authority to monitor his work.

Benagnomby, male, St Luce

Luckily, QMM constructed a school in this village, with two teachers and grades 1 to 4. But one of the teachers is drunk and the children cannot concentrate on their studies...they are afraid of being beaten by him.... The second teacher, a woman, was always getting sick, and decided to leave.... So despite the sacrifice that parents make for their children to purchase school supplies, their children do not study. But we can't do anything because teaching is something that is beyond our control. I think that this academic year will be lost.

Lala, female, 40 years, St Luce

“ The future

If our children are illiterate, certainly their future will be dark, because they will not be able to find jobs and they don't have anything else left because our ancestral land has been appropriated

Say Louise, female, Ilaftsignana

Now I am getting old and I don't want to see my children endure the hardships that I have gone through. I am worried for the future of my children because I fear people will kill one another in order to gain control over ever fewer resources. I am worried about how my children will get married someday, and how they will find food. I keep worrying about my children but I cannot help them

Benagnomby, male, St Luce

Foreigners did not have any problem at all destroying the forest. They also removed a large mountain. It is going to be difficult for people to tell future generations that there was once a mountain covered by forest around here: a place where people collected firewood, let their cattle graze, and hunted wild animals. Some parts of the mountain now have become houses and a road.

Miha, male, Ilaftitsignana

The future generation will be the big loser because their parents at least used the money from QMM, but they will not have anything to inherit...

Ilay, male, Ambinanibe

How many times have these kids returned home from school because their teacher was absent? Facing such a situation, parents choose to remain silent. In one month, children here in Ilaftitsignana studied only one day. These children end up passing on to the next grade without having the needed knowledge to advance to a higher grade. [The teacher] decided to pass the children because he feels embarrassed when no student has a passing grade. When it comes to taking the official exam after grade 5, not a single student passed it because these children do not have the proper knowledge...

Marie Louise, female, Ilaftitsignana

VOICES OF CHANGE

Oral testimony of the Antanosy people



Andrew Lees Trust is a UK registered charity working in southern Madagascar to deliver social and environmental education projects which empower local communities to improve their self sufficiency and reduce the effects of extreme poverty www.andrewleestrust.org



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