

## Reunion HONCO Tulear April 2008

Our work started with a general meeting between all communities adjacent and/or working in the mangrove areas around Tulear. 24 people from 10 different communities attended the meeting. Also members of NGO ASE (Association pour la Sauvegardement de l'Environnement) and NGO SAGE were present and helped with translation and communication problems.

We presented HONCO and discussed future plans of work and action. We also got an overall view of problems encountered in the different communities regarding effective management of the forests and their resources. Unfortunately no one from WWF and Eaux et Forêts attended the meeting, which should have been very helpful. Somebody from the Malagasy NGO SAGE gave us an overview of the local laws and what was happening in name of jurisdiction to enforce those local laws or dinas.



Director Benjamin De Ridder presenting HONCO.

At the end of the meeting it was clear that since 2002 many local management committees (or VOI's) had been set up under the name of GELOSE (locally transferred management plan). Unfortunately a lack of knowledge, capacity or support from different agencies (Eaux et Forêts, WWF, SAGE,...) has led to a degradation of these committees. Even worse it has created an adverse affect: a feeling of mistrust and unbelief towards new ideas or projects was created because of not fulfilled promises.

HONCO was welcomed by the community of Ambondrolava to support them in restoring one of the largest mangrove areas within the area and to establish and develop future development plans from their village. Also it was decided to set up a mangrove resource center in Manombo-Sud and to support mangrove-related activities of ASE in the south of Tulear.



Mayor of commune of Manombo summarising group work and discussions.

## Research



Mme Myria has continued her baseline research in the mangrove forests south of Tulear. She finished baseline transects in Ankilibe, Namakile and Sarodrano. Now there rest the mangroves of Tulear itself and the forests up north around Manombo. After the first replanting day, she also will continually monitor the development of the planted propagules. She will also follow up the cleared areas within the forest to record natural regeneration.

Mme Myria checking on propagules in natural stand of forest.

Another student, Mme Narindra, has commenced her research towards a license degree at the IH.SM. She will be looking at the economical activities (focused on fisheries) within the mangrove areas. A comparative study is set up between three different mangrove areas : Ambondrolava, Sarodrano and Manombo.



## Restoration

HONCO visited the community of Ambondrolava to support them during a clearing and planting day in their mangrove forest in honour of International Arbor Day. Three members of HONCO (Benjamin, Carola and Myria), combined with 16 people of Ambondrolava were incorporated during this organized activity of HONCO.



Three quadrants (25x25m) with similar site conditions were chosen to facilitate a comparative study of regeneration. Two out of three quadrants were cleared of debris and one quadrant was actively replanted by our team. A total of 676 propagules of *Ceriops tagal* and 25 *Avicennia marina* seedlings were planted with a spacing of 1x1m. All propagules were taken from nearby adult trees and quality control was undertaken.

Signs were created and posted to mark the replanted areas and start an awareness campaign among the visiting fishermen and collectors. Unfortunately one of the signs (3 placed) has already been stolen.

President of Ambondrolava painting a sign to be planted at reforested plots

A second planting day has been organized at the end of June. With the help of the five committee members of Ambondrolava and under supervision of Mme Myria and the Director of HONCO, 200 propagules of *Rhizophora mucronata* and *Bruguiera gymnorhiza* were planted. These propagules came from a mangrove forest 15km more south as mature propagules could already be harvested there. Mme Myria transported the propagules with the taxi-brousse while keeping them moist and out of the sun. The area here was also ‘cleaned’ before planting.



## Construction of HONCO house in Ambondrolava

Construction works have begun for a HONCO house (read vondro – reed hut) in the village of Ambondrolava. This house will serve as sleeping place for visiting students and as a residence for project officer of HONCO while on site.

This facilitates contact and work with the targeted communities and aid in more efficient research within the mangrove forests around the community. It will also help start up the environmental education classes and alternative livelihoods workshops in the future.



Creation of HONCO house in Ambondrolava.

## Start-up of eco-guide classes

At the beginning of July, we started to organize a formation amongst some community members to become eco-guides. Four men from two villages were chosen and asked to participate. A minimum knowledge of French was necessary to attend the classes. A formal manual is been formatted and created, but meanwhile two classes a week are given. This project aims to shift the behavior of the concerned people towards environment conservation (or durable utilization) rather than degradation. The eco-guides can become the campaigners for the mangroves and spread around the benefits of a healthy mangrove ecosystem. It also hopes to create alternative livelihoods which won't destroy or degrade nature.

## **Celebration of the International Day of Mangroves**

HONCO is planning to celebrate this important day by inviting all directors of NGO's and associations working around environment within the area and plant together with the local villagers a new forest. The importance of mangroves will be explained on the day and a celebration meal will be held in Ambondrolava accompanied by local music. For this occasion and for further environmental actions, an awareness costume is being put together by a friend artist! More will follow next newsletter.



## **Establishment of local managing committees**

First community discussions were started to bring new life to the discontinued local management of the natural resources. An official demand for the evaluation and the renewal (+ change) of the local management contract has been put forward by HONCO to the Regional Direction of Eaux et Forêts.

Also communication about the propriety of these resources has been started and guided by HONCO between previous conflicting body (Regional Direction of Prison) and the communities. We all hope to rewrite a local management contract including all concerned communities and beneficiaries. HONCO will actively guide and follow the local management committees when they are established and running. HONCO will provide and cooperate with other NGO's to provide extra training.