

PROJECT UPDATE (Interim Report – April 2026)

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Project Title: Conservation Monitoring of the Aye-aye at Ihofa Forest, Andasibe, Madagascar

Grant Term: October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026

Reporting Period: April 2026

I. PROJECT OVERVIEW

Ihofa Forest forms part of the eastern rainforest corridor of Madagascar and represents an important habitat for the Aye-aye (*Daubentonia madagascariensis*). Located near Andasibe-Mantadia National Park, the forest hosts a rich diversity of endemic species but faces increasing threats from logging and agricultural expansion. As such, it is a critical yet vulnerable site for Aye-aye conservation.

Supported by the Rufford Foundation, this project aims to conserve the endangered Aye-aye through a combination of ecological research and community-based education. The project involves tracking radio-collared individuals to collect behavioral and spatial data, estimating population distribution using occupancy modeling, and identifying key habitats.

In parallel, culturally appropriate education campaigns are being implemented to address negative perceptions and local myths surrounding the species, promote coexistence, and strengthen local conservation capacity. Expected outputs include scientific publications, conservation action plans, educational materials, and training programs, all contributing to long-term biodiversity conservation and sustainable habitat management in the region.

II. UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES

1. Preparatory Work and Equipment Setup

Between September and November 2025, preparatory activities were carried out to ensure effective project implementation. This phase included administrative setup, logistical planning, and procurement of essential field equipment such as GPS units, cameras, headlamps, and other tools required for ecological monitoring.



2. Community Outreach and Environmental Education

From November 2025 to February 2026, environmental education and awareness activities were conducted in local schools and five villages surrounding Ihofa Forest, particularly in Mahatsara (PK7, PK8, PK9, and Sarindreniny), reaching a total of 320 participants.

Activities included:

- Educational discussions with community members
- Awareness sessions in schools
- Interactive engagement on the ecological role of lemurs
- Training sessions for local conservationists and community members

These efforts helped strengthen relationships with local communities and encouraged active participation in conservation initiatives.



3. Field Survey Preparation and Transect Installation

During the same period, the research team established 20 survey transects across the study area, covering approximately 2.5 km². These transects will support occupancy surveys and facilitate detection of Aye-aye presence within the forest.



4. Ecological Data Collection

Training sessions were provided to local conservationists and community members to enhance capacity in biodiversity monitoring and forest stewardship.

Field searches for Aye-ayes have been initiated. In March 2026, the team successfully captured one young female individual in Ihofa Forest. Initial data collection on behavior and ecology has begun. This work includes focal animal sampling and GPS tracking to analyze habitat use, movement patterns, and behavior.



III. NEXT STEPS

The next phase of the project will focus on:

- Continued behavioral and ecological data collection
- Expansion of monitoring efforts across the study area
- Implementation of patrol activities during April and May to support forest protection and reduce threats

IV. SUMMARY

The project is progressing as planned, with successful completion of preparatory work, strong community engagement, and the initiation of ecological data collection, including the first capture of an Aye-aye individual. The next phase will focus on intensifying data collection and strengthening conservation actions on the ground.