

A Deforestation Dilemma: An Integrated Approach to Conservation and Development in Madagascar

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Abstract : Madagascar is one of the regions of the world with the highest biodiversity, with more than 600 new species discovered in just the last decade. In parallel with its record-breaking biodiversity, Madagascar is also the tenth poorest country in the world. The resultant socio-economic pressures are leading to a highly threatened environment. In particular, deforestation is at the core of biodiversity and ecosystem loss, primarily from slash and burn agriculture and illegal rosewood tree harvesting. Effective policy response is imperative for improved conservation in Madagascar. However, these changes cannot come from the current, unstable government institutions. After a violent and politically turbulent coup in 2009, any effort to defend Madagascar's biodiversity has been eclipsed by the high corruption of government bodies. This paper presents three policy options designed for a private donor to invest in conservation in Madagascar. The first proposed policy consists of payments for ecosystem services model, which involves paying local Malagasy women to reforest nearby territories. The second option is a micro-irrigation system proposal involving relocating local Malagasy out of the threatened forest region. The final proposition is captive breeding funding for the Madagascar Fauna and Flora Group, which could then lead to new reintroductions in the threatened northeastern rainforests. In the end, all three options present feasible, impactful options for a conservation-minded major donor. Ideally, the policy change would involve a combination of all three options, as each provides necessary development and conservation re-structuring goals. Option one, payments for ecosystem services, would be the preferred choice if there were only enough funding for one project. The payments for ecosystem services project both support local populations and promotes sustainable development while reforesting the threatened Marojeje National Park. Regardless of the chosen policy solution, any support from a donor will make a huge impact if it supports both sustainable development and biodiversity conservation.

Keywords : captive breeding, conservation policy, lemur conservation, Madagascar conservation, payments for ecosystem services

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