

Socioeconomic Monitoring Initiative for Velondriake Community Managed Protected Area, Madagascar

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INTRODUCTION

The marine conservation NGO Blue Ventures has been working with local communities in the region of Andavadoaka, southwest Madagascar, since 2003. Its aim is to protect the biological diversity, sustainability and productivity of the region's coral reefs and related habitats, while improving the quality of life of the local coastal communities that depends almost entirely on local marine and coastal resources for subsistence and income. Following the results of a pilot marine no take zone launched three years ago adjacent to the remote fishing village of Andavadoaka, Blue Ventures and partner organisations, the University of Toliara's Institut Halieutique et des Sciences Marines (IHSM) and WCS-Madagascar, are currently working with 23 neighbouring villages towards the development of a network of community-run marine, coastal and terrestrial protected areas in the Andavadoaka region.

The network, named the Velondriake Community Managed Protected Area (VCMPPA), spans over 700-square kilometres, incorporating coral reefs, lagoons, mangroves, beaches, sea grass beds and baobab forest, and is managed by a series of regional committees and subcommittees comprised of representatives of all villages within the protected area. The VCMPPA is an wholly locally-managed and locally-driven initiative, with access to and resource use rights within the protected area governed by local community laws

known as *Dina*. A number of special use zones have been designated within the VCMPPA envelope, including temporary and permanent marine and terrestrial no take zones (NTZs).

Supplementing the benefits of the protected areas, project leaders are working with local communities to develop and launch sustainable livelihoods – including eco-tourism and mariculture businesses – that are aimed at providing future financial alternatives to overexploitation of natural resources. Specially managed zones for pilot ecotourism and mariculture developments are contained within the VCMPPA.

Between May and June 2006 Blue Ventures conducted a preliminary socioeconomic assessment in Andavadoaka and two neighbouring villages in the region, Ampasilava and Lamboara, by implementing the SocMon WIO guidelines, with generous technical and financial support from CORDIO East Africa. The following objectives were identified for this study:

- To understand socioeconomic changes, and its drivers, within the communities;
- To identify and monitor the distribution of benefits of conservation activities in the community and MPA network;
- To understand communities' perceptions and attitudes of management initiatives already put in place and the impacts of these measures on the communities;
- To evaluate the socioeconomic impact of

Obura, D.O., Tamelander, J., & Linden, O. (Eds) (2008). Ten years after bleaching - facing the consequences of climate change in the Indian Ocean. CORDIO Status Report 2008. Coastal Oceans Research and Development in the Indian Ocean/Sida-SAREC. Mombasa. <http://www.cordioea.org>



Plate 1. A Key informant interview in progress- Velonriake.

introduced management activities;

- To disseminate the monitoring results to increase awareness in government and policy circles of the socioeconomic aspects of artisan fishers, and their vulnerability;
- To train local staff and VCMPPA committee members to continue the socioeconomic monitoring.

The socioeconomic assessment provided an overview of the area including the stakeholders, demographics, infrastructure, business development and community profiles, identifying threats and problems facing traditional coastal livelihoods in the region. Marine activities affecting coastal and marine resources were also monitored to establish a reference against which future changes in use patterns could be observed, in particular those resulting from environmental management and conservation activities. The socioeconomic assessment also included data collection on awareness of rules and regulations, as well as community attitudes and perceptions on marine resource conditions and marine management initiatives. The SocMon study, the first of its kind in Madagascar, was initiated using a combination of research methods including questionnaires, key informants (Plate 1) and focus group interviews based on the SocMon WIO guidelines. Prior to monitoring on-site training was conducted, covering field data collection, interview techniques, database use, data analysis and dissemination. This study was completed



Plate 2. Drawing up boundaries for the Velondriake community managed protected area.

just after initiation of pilot marine no take zone trials, adjacent to the three survey villages, which led to the establishment of the broader VCMPPA a short time afterwards (Plate 2).

Following expansion of regional environmental management and conservation efforts to include 23 villages within the VCMPPA initiative, the first round of SocMon sites was expanded to include a broader representative sample of the varying ethnicities and marine and coastal resource users affected by the VCMPPA. Logistical constraints prevented surveying in all 23 communities (Fig. 1), however all villages within the VCMPPA were visited to introduce the objectives of the SocMon work prior to commencing data collection. Ten villages (Ambalorao, Ampasimara, Andrananombala, Ankindranoke, Ankintanbagna, Antsatsamoroy, Befandefa, Bevato, Nosy Ve and Tampolove) were selected to represent varying levels of a number of criteria including: population size, fishery or agricultural activities, infrastructure, ethnicity, presence of an administrative centre, and geographical location, in order to produce a balanced sample from all the villages. The expanded SocMon survey was undertaken between May and August 2007.

The monitoring team consisted of multilingual staff of both local Malagasy and international research staff. Modifications were made to the questionnaire and focus group interviews to account for the nature of the newly implemented

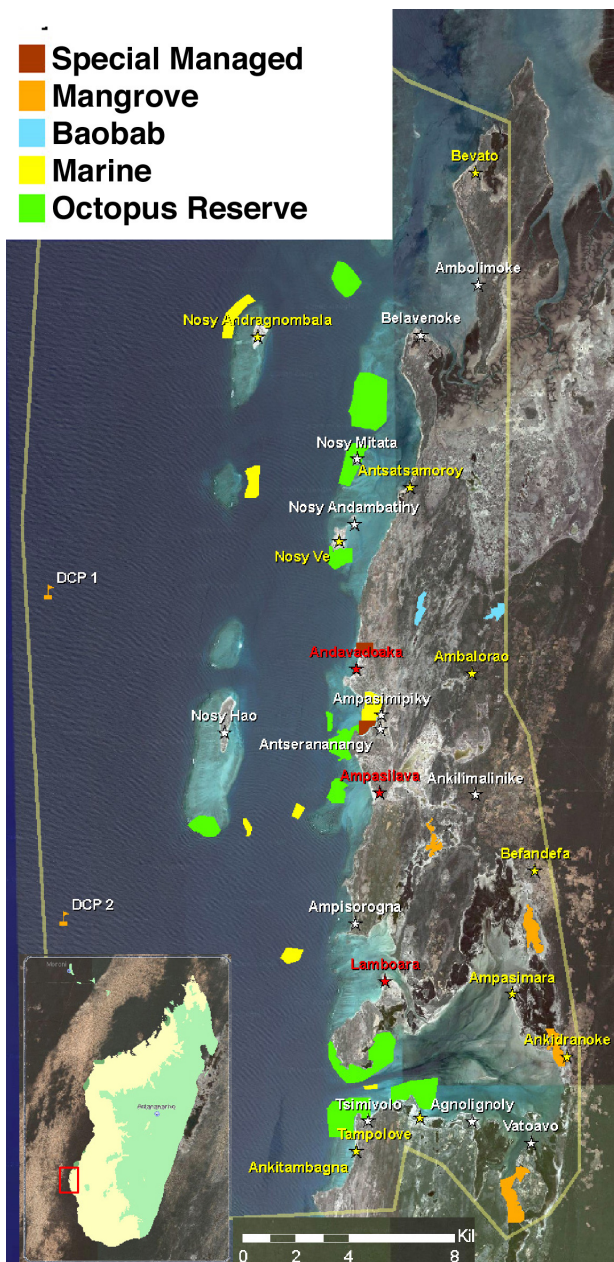


Figure 1. Map of Velondriake network of marine and coastal protected areas and villages. Villages in red participated in the first SocMon survey (2006), and in yellow added for the second SocMon survey (2007). Difference classes of protected areas are shown: special managed, mangrove, baobab forest, marine and octopus reserve.

VCMPA, in order to investigate local communities' understanding of and support for its establishment. As with the first round of surveying, a combination of data collection techniques was found to be most effective, with household surveys being reinforced through focus group and key informant interviews.

Dissemination of Results

A summary of the first round of monitoring was presented to the Velondriake management committee, regional sub-committees, and three villages surveyed prior to the commencement of the second expanded study. Upon completion, the final reports of both rounds of surveying will be distributed to local and regional government and VCMCA management committees, with the intention of providing communities, VCMCA managers and partners with information to better understand key socioeconomic and environmental issues in the region, as well as highlight priority areas for improved management of marine and coastal resources.

At a national level the implementation of socio-economic monitoring is critical to increase government understanding of the problems facing the resource-dependent Vezo people of the southwest coastal region. Few marine protected areas are currently in place in Madagascar, and the establishment of a regional community-run marine and coastal conservation initiative such as the VCMCA is unprecedented.

Feedback

To make the SocMon guidelines applicable to Madagascar, the team translated the field forms into French and again into Vezo language. It is necessary to adapt the guidelines for site specific needs such as translating into Malagasy to assist in explaining the objectives of the project among local communities. This would also be useful to assist in the expansion of the Malagasy SocMon programme to other regions within Madagascar, and to facilitate the training of new site teams.

