

Madagascar's new system of protected areas – Implementing the 'Durban Vision'

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The Government of Madagascar made a bold commitment in September 2003 to conserve the nation's wealth of natural resources and biodiversity by tripling the protected area network from the existing 1.7 million hectares to cover 6 million hectares or 10% of the country's surface area in the coming five years. This commitment made by the President of the Republic of Madagascar at the Vth World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa, became known as the 'Durban Vision'.

Creating the new protected areas has stimulated remarkable collaboration between Government, funding agencies, non-governmental organisations, private sector and individuals at all levels. The 'Durban Vision Group' was created in 2003 as a think-tank and orientation platform grouping government entities and national and international partner organisations working in conservation and biodiversity in Madagascar to support the Ministry and its partners in implementing the Durban commitment. The group was divided into several sub-groups: site prioritization, management and categorization, legal framework, communication, finance. Regional commissions have also been created that provide a platform for local and regional interests, ensuring good communication between national and regional levels, while also guiding and coordinating creation of the protected areas in the field.



Plate 7. Isalo landscape (© Richard Durbin)



Plate 8. Lake Bedo (© Alice Smith)

A more flexible approach to protected area management has been adopted, with the aim of maximizing direct and indirect uses of natural resources while also safeguarding biodiversity. It was decided that most of the new protected areas will not be managed by ANGAP, the existing protected area management agency, but could be managed by the Directorate General of Waters and Forests (DGEF) or its regional offices (DIREEF or CIREEF), by non-governmental organisations, by community organisations, by private sector organisations, or by a combination of these through collaborative management agreements. According to the management objectives defined for the site, the protected areas can be classified in any of the six International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) protected area categories:

- Category 1 - extensive wilderness or ecosystem areas that are strictly protected,
- Category 2 – ecosystem areas that also provide recreation, such as national parks,
- Category 3 - areas that conserve specific features, such as natural monuments,
- Category 4 - managed areas that maintain species and habitats,

- Category 5 - protected landscapes with harmonious interaction between people and nature
- Category 6 - substantially natural areas managed for sustainable use of natural resources.

All Madagascar's protected areas will belong to a single national system of protected areas (Système d'Aires Protégées de Madagascar or SAPM), including existing ANGAP-managed and new protected areas. The three fundamental objectives of the SAPM are:

- To conserve the entirety of Madagascar's unique biodiversity (ecosystems, species, genetic variability);
- To conserve Madagascar's cultural heritage;
- To maintain ecological services and promote sustainable use of natural resources to contribute to the reduction of poverty and sustainable development.

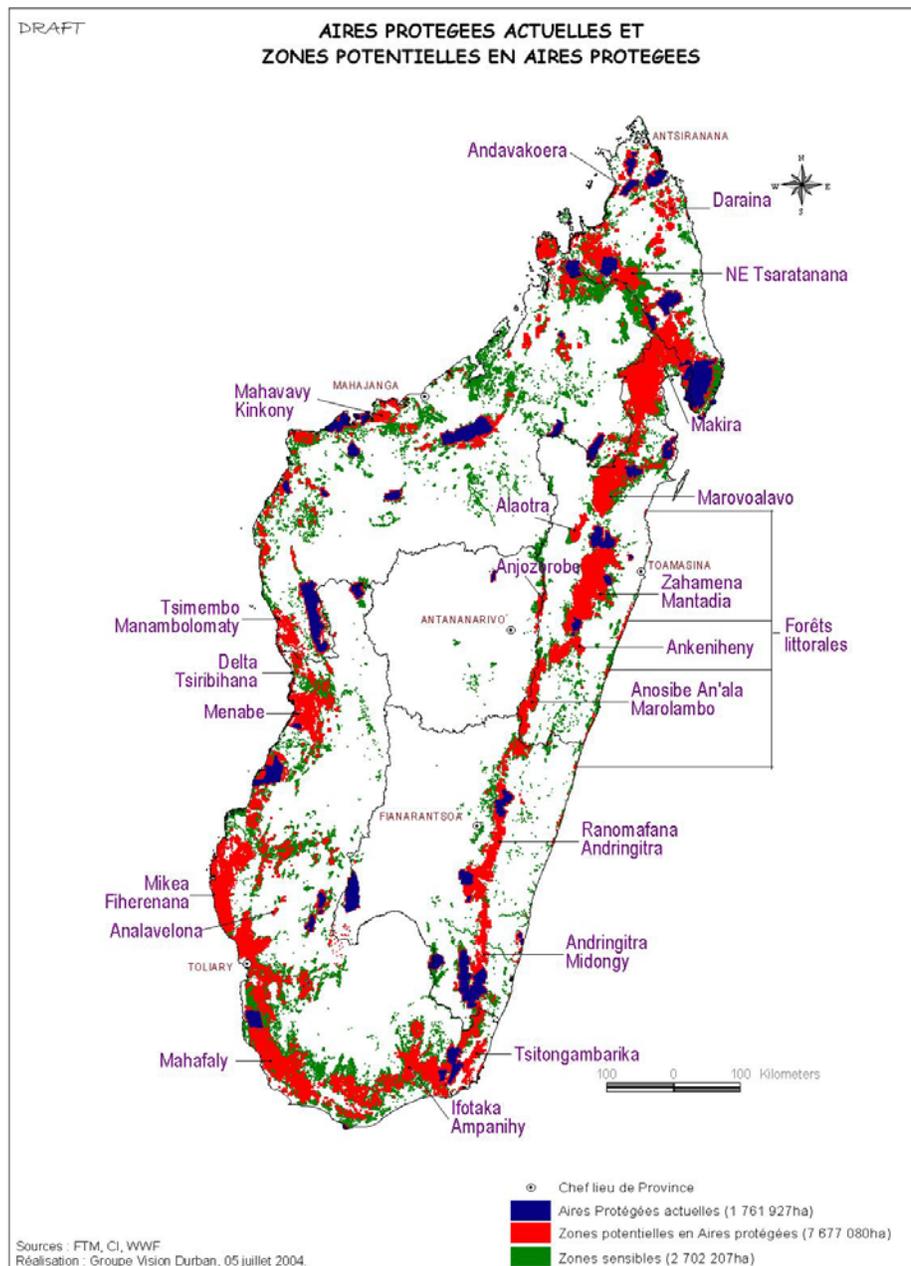


Fig. 3 Map showing existing protected areas and potential sites for new protected areas, July 2004

In addition to contributing to these national objectives, each protected area should conform to the IUCN definition of a protected area: *"An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means"*.

The prioritization of sites has followed an iterative process. Results of earlier prioritization exercises were overlaid to provide a preliminary map of potential sites: CI-GEF 1995, Birdlife's Important Bird Areas 1999, APAPC-MBG Priority Sites for Plants 2004 etc. Subsequent and on-going analysis has mapped polygons of endangered and endemic species to model distribution of sites to ensure maximum biodiversity coverage. A further exercise has been to take the new concept of protected areas and the maps of high biodiversity value to the regions to verify that they corresponded with regional and local interests and preoccupations. In general, the SAPM approach has been received positively and a new set of priority sites have been identified according to local interests, particularly ensuring that areas of cultural importance in addition to biodiversity value were included. In the meantime, different organisations proceeded with negotiations over definition of management objectives and delimitation for specific sites around the country.

A new decree (Décret d'Application No 848-05) for the existing protected area law (Code des Aires Protégées or COAP) was approved by the Council of Ministers on 12 December. This enabled the creation of four new categories of protected areas (Natural Park, Natural Monument, Protected Harmonious Landscape and Natural Resource Reserve corresponding with IUCN categories II, III, V and VI respectively), to add to the three existing categories (Strict Nature Reserve, National Park and Special Reserve corresponding with IUCN categories I, II and IV respectively). The decree also stipulated that the Ministry could delegate organisations other than ANGAP for protected area management, enabled co-management and simplified the process for creation of protected areas.

With a legal framework in place, the new protected areas are now being created. The Minister of Environment, Waters and Forests signed a set of protected orders (arrêté de protection temporaire) in December 2005 giving legal protection to 5 new protected areas: Loky-Manambato (near Daraina) of 70, 837 ha, Iles Radama/Sahamalaza of 130,000 ha, Makira of 371,217 ha, Ankeniheny-Zahamena forest corridor of 425,000 ha and the Anjozorobe-Angavo forest corridor of 52,200 ha. This meant that the Government's objective of creating 1 million hectares of new protected areas in 2005 had been achieved.

These protection orders grant provisional legal protection as well as defining the management objectives and the organisation delegated to manage the protected area. The dossiers have to be supported by evidence of consultation at the Commune level and general support at local and regional levels for the creation. The protection orders stipulate that further negotiation must be undertaken to agree on the exact limits, which must then be verified by the appropriate government departments, and a management plan must be developed and approved within the following year to justify final creation of the protected area.

The President of Madagascar declared in January 2006 that a further 1 million hectares of protected areas should be created before Independence Day celebrations on June 26 2006, which has stimulated increased efforts to prepare the dossiers for other new protected areas. In the meantime further work is in progress to finalize a manual on creation, management, negotiation and communication for SAPM and also to improve understanding of governance types and quality with respect to protected area management particularly promoting participation by local communities.