



A final report for

**Project Sekoly: provision of school buildings for Lanirano CEG,
Anosy region, south east Madagascar**



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1. Background

Madagascar is one of the most impoverished and least developed countries in the world, ranking 135/169 on the UNDP's 2010 Human Development Index. Within the Anosy region in the south east, aspects of chronic poverty are seen at their most extreme – over 90% of the population live below the poverty line, illiteracy rates reach 80% and as many as 3 in 10 children die before their 5th birthday from easily preventable illnesses. While the government has adopted a detailed strategy paper for poverty reduction, Anosy's isolation means that little has changed, and state-provided education services do not reach grassroots communities.

Fort Dauphin is the urban centre of the Anosy region. In Fort Dauphin the motivation to develop is evident however in reality access to education and health services and employment opportunities are severely limited, with an almost complete lack of infrastructure resulting in the urban community effectively being cut off from trade routes and development opportunities. Problems of lack of access to vital livelihood resources have further been exacerbated by the effects of 2009's ongoing political crisis that saw public services spending cut, with particular impact on children and education (UNICEF, 2010). In addition, the population of this small town has exploded in recent years as impoverished people migrate from rural areas in search of some form of employment. The need to increase access to education and improve the quality of the learning environment within schools in Fort Dauphin is therefore vital in encouraging students to complete their education, and in counteracting the current situation of a diminishing human resource sector; the long term economic and social damage of which is likely to be felt well into the future.

While there is a public (non-fee paying) primary school within each of the 11 fokontanies (or quarters) of Fort Dauphin, there are currently just 2 public (non-fee paying) middle schools, or CEGs, to serve the entire population of the commune – some 61,000 people. These are located within the fokontanies of Amparihy and Tanambao, two areas historically chosen for settlement by rural migrants. As such, these fokontanies are particularly overcrowded, and with a waiting list of over 650 children at Tanambao CEG, lack of capacity is increasingly required to be met by Lanirano CEG (Amparihy fokontany).



Lanirano CEG had 3 separate school buildings containing 6 potential classrooms but ongoing lack of state investment resulted in all but one of these buildings being unsafe for use, leaving just 3 operational classrooms for 470 students. Children were taught on a rotational basis, spending many hours a day waiting for one of the classrooms to become available for them to be taught in. The classrooms that are usable have leaking roofs and inadequate furniture, meaning children are required to stand, or sit on the wet floors in order to learn.

Azafady has been able to assist with the provision of 3 fully furnished classrooms to significantly enhance Lanirano CEG's capacity to respond to increasing demand for education within the commune. The construction of these classrooms, as well as being of benefit to the 470 current students and the wider community of over 54,000 people, is contributing towards the government's regional objectives in the field of education, further enabling them to respond to both national and international development goals.



2. Completed Activities

Preparation:

- o Meeting with CISCO and Mayor of Fort Dauphin
- o Meeting with chef de fokontany and school principal
- o Establish project timeframe, define stakeholder roles and responsibilities
- o Source materials

Implementation:

- o Transport materials to project site
- o Construction of 3 classrooms

Follow-up:

- o Official inauguration and hand-over to the community
- o Monitoring and evaluation

2.1 Preparation

Preparations for the project began in September 2010. The 3-classroom school building was designed by Azafady's construction technicians and follows the traditional local design of buildings in the region - a timber frame made of eucalyptus, plank walls, a stone and concrete foundation and corrugated iron roof.

Community participation is integral to all Azafady projects. Azafady's community agents engaged senior members of the fokontany in determining a work plan and the community's contributions for construction of each infrastructure. Provision of locally available materials – rock and sand – by the community meant the budget was kept to a minimum and helped give the community a sense of ownership. The project was led by seven members of Azafady's construction team and the coordinator of Azafady's award-winning 'Pioneer' volunteer programme that sources committed individuals from around the world who contribute to projects on the ground in Madagascar through the provision of human labour and financial resources.

The majority of tasks were completed by a team of 14 Malagasy staff and a total of 22 international volunteers from countries including the USA, Britain, Germany, Australia and Iran. The volunteers arrived in Fort Dauphin on the 5th October where they underwent a week-long induction course to fully prepare them for the tasks ahead. This included training in Malagasy building techniques, tool handling, and onsite health and safety, as well as daily language lessons enabling volunteers to converse at a basic level with members of the community in the local dialect.



The project team began preparatory work on the 7th October and moved onsite for construction on the 11th. This project was not only of importance due to the great need of the community for a school, but also because, as is common in the communities that Azafady works with, the opportunity to work with members of Azafady's international volunteer scheme and participate in a cross cultural exchange is valued by and greatly benefits both parties. It was great for morale for the whole team, upon arrival, to be enthusiastically welcomed and to see that the community obligations had been fulfilled: a store room had been made available for use, water was provided free of charge, and piles of rock and sand were already onsite. The rest of the day was spent setting up the camp that would be home to the team for the next weeks.

2.2 Implementation

Project activities were completed over a 4 month period during which time an impressive building was constructed using just locally available materials and tools. Construction elements of the project included:

School building:

- Clearing a 18m x 8m area of turf and levelling the land on the site where the school was to stand
- Chiselling pegs onto the top of 68 timber posts and chiselling corresponding holes into timber crossbeams so as to make the traditional joints for the building frame
- More chiselling of pegs and holes, this time angled, for the 4 main and 3 suspended roof apexes and support beams
- Chiselling for window and door joints
- Digging of foundations (40cm wide x 40cm deep) around the 4 sides of the building and digging of 80cm deep holes for each of the 68 posts
- Assembling the frame, at first jigsaw-fashion on the ground, before finally erecting it one side at a time on site





- Filling the foundation with rocks and cementing between them using a mixture of sand and cement before covering the whole foundation in a cement/sand finish
- Constructing the walls out of tongue-and-groove planks
- Filling the floor with closely spaced rocks and cementing between them, before covering the floor in a cement/sand layer and finally a cement skim
- Constructing the window and door frames and fitting in place
- Constructing doors and window shutters from tongue-and-groove planks and fitting to the frames
- Fitting of corrugated iron roof

- Painting of walls, doors, windows and trimmings
- Construction of veranda for shade across the front of the building
- Construction of 60 benches, teachers' desks and 3 blackboards

2.3 Follow Up

Project activities were completed in January 2011, providing educational infrastructure that will be a vital resource for this community for decades to come. A celebration was held with the community, Azafady, the international volunteers, representatives from the regional education authority CISCO, and the chef de fokontany. The school was handed over to the community in time for the start of the new school term, with the community expressing their gratitude for the role Azafady played in bringing this project to their community.



2.4 Future Activities

Azafady has a permanent base in Lanirano, and ongoing monitoring of Lanirano CEG will take place in association with future project activities local to the school.



While Azafady had originally planned to refurbish a further 2 classrooms at Lanirano CEG, after several consultations and health and safety inspections it has been decided that the existing frame is unsafe for refurbishment, and that Azafady will seek funds to build 2 new classrooms in its place. Once this activity is completed the CEG will have been provided with 5 new safe classroom; this will be the biggest educational provision Azafady will have made to date and represents a vast contribution towards the progress of schooling for children in Fort Dauphin.