

TOLIARA SEASCAPE, SOUTHWEST MADAGASCAR



INTRODUCTION

The Toliara seascape forms part of one of the biggest reef complexes in the world, extending over 450 kilometers between Androaka and Morombe in the southwest of Madagascar. Over 6,000 different species have been identified, including at least thirteen species of sharks, four species of marine turtles, and eleven species of cetaceans. It is also one of very few places in the world inhabited by the Coelacanth – a 400-million-year-old species of fish.

The Vezo people who live on the southwest coast practice a traditional lifestyle that is almost entirely dependent on fishing on nearshore coral reefs. Human pressure on this seascape is constantly increasing. High population growth in the area – which results in over-exploitation of reef fish and other marine species, is coupled with weak natural resources governance, and poor law enforcement. In addition, traditional Vezo fishers hunt protected species including endangered marine turtles and coastal dolphins for local consumption and sale. WCS’s research has also shown that the reefs of the southwest of Madagascar are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change including coral bleaching and increasingly intense cyclone activity.

WCS’S ACTIVITIES

WCS’s objective in the Toliara seascape is to improve small-scale fisheries management, promote conservation measures that are essential for the survival of the reef complex, and ensure sustainable livelihoods for the village communities that live in the zone.

WCS has been present in the zone since 2004 and commenced its activities in the Andavadoka area working with partners to lay the groundwork for the Velondriake marine protected area and trialing the first seasonal octopus closures in the region.

Since 2008 WCS has been working with local partners to create a new community-managed marine protected area (MPA) called Soariake (meaning “Beautiful Sea”) that includes 12 short-term octopus marine reserves that are formalized through local traditional law (*Dina*), and managed by local communities.

BENEFICIARIES AND CONSERVATION TARGETS

- 7,200 inhabitants around Soariake MPA
- Coral reefs, Indo-pacific bottlenose and humpback dolphins, sea turtles, sharks

MAIN DONORS

- The John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
- The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust
- Projet Pôle Intégré de Croissance et Corridors (PIC2) funded by the World Bank
- Madagascar National Parks (MNP)
- Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW)

PROJECT PARTNERS

Indian Ocean Trepang (IOT) – Ocean Farmers (OF) – Comité de Gestion de Poulpe (CGP) – Compagnie de Pêche Frigorifique de Toliara (COPEFRITO) – Institut Halieutiques et des Sciences Marines (IHSM) – Direction Régionale des Ressources Halieutiques et de la Pêche (DRRHP) – Centre de Surveillance de la Pêche (CSP) – UNDP GEF Small Grants Program (GEF SGP)

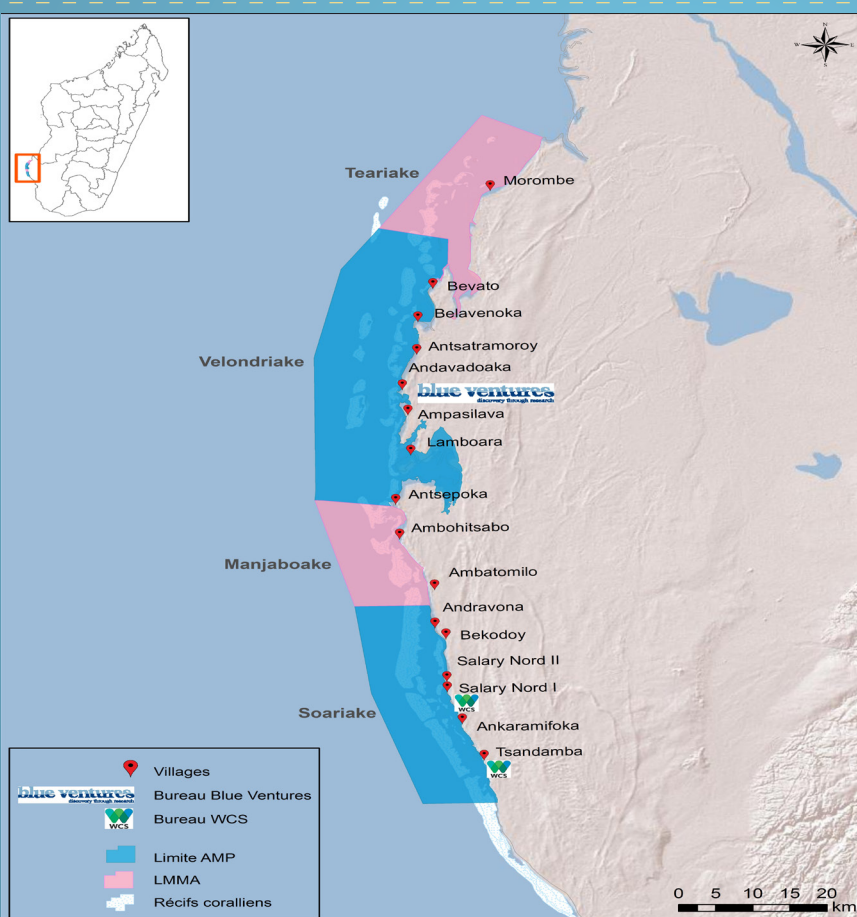
Soariake MPA, which spans a total area of 38,293 hectares - including productive fringing and offshore patch reefs - is located 85 km in the north of Toliara, and was granted permanent protection area status by the Government of Madagascar in 2015. In the villages bordering the MPA where WCS works, progress has been made to gain trust and empower local communities, build their capacities, promote behavioral change, and develop sustainable community-based governance frameworks. Community partners are supported to manage and protect the MPA, participate in community control and surveillance committees, and are engaged in monitoring of fish catch trends in the MPA. WCS also works closely with communities and private sector partners to develop sustainable value chains based around sea cucumber and seaweed farming that increase household incomes and reduce pressure on fish stocks. As a direct response to the threat on coastal dolphins, since 2007 WCS has been working with local partners to establish the community-based Anakao Association for the Protection of Whales and Dolphins (known locally as the FMTF), and has supported this association in the development of local traditional laws related to cetacean conservation, and the creation of an education and awareness raising program in the local villages. The results of our interventions include improved fisheries management and poverty reduction. Our actions have created a strong foundation for long-term success and form the basis upon which the future sustainability of the MPA and the entire seascape will be assured.

Milestones:

- **2007:** The first community-run Velondriake MPA received the prestigious UNDP Equator Prize
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- **2008:** Commencement of the creation of the Soariake MPA in partnership with WWF and local partners
- **2012:** Soariake became a Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA), 18 short-term closures octopus marine reserves - 12 in Soariake/Manombo and 6 in Saint Augustin - were established
- **2015:** Soariake MPA received permanent protection status from the Government of Madagascar and funds from GEF-Small Grants Program
- **2017:** 1,634 fishers from Soariake MPA received professional fishers cards and SMART tool rolled out in MPA

Method and tools applied in the site:

- 1- Law enforcement monitoring using SMART conservation software
- 2- Research into coral bleaching and reef health
- 3- Awareness-raising and environmental education
- 4- Capacity building of community MPA managers and young conservation scientists
- 5- Networking and partnerships with private sector



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