

National Geographic: Global Action Atlas & Zahana



Newsletter May 2010

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Zahana now has a facebook page. We are not sure it is worth the effort and time, but only time will tell. We tried a few times, and despite our best efforts there is still more than one version around (try to delete an account). [Here is the latest URL](#)



Aloha Friends of Zahana,

We switched to VerticalResponse for our newsletter, because this service is free for small non-profits. Some of you might already get our Global Giving project updates, so we wanted to keep the content brief.

National Geographic & Zahana

The latest exciting news: Zahana was invited to participate in National Geographic (yes, the iconic yellow magazine) [Global Action Atlas](#). The Global Action Atlas is a way for National Geographic readers to learn and get more involved with projects. With the reach of National Geographic, this is tremendous opportunity for Zahana.

Please visit the [Global Action Atlas](#) though our website. National Geographic tracks the click-throughs from our website and recognizes your effort by giving Zahana projects prominent placement.

This was made possible thanks to [Global Giving](#). In April we had a chance to visit [Global Giving](#) in Washington DC and give a presentation about our work to the staff. Currently all Global Giving projects are listed on National Geographic [Global Action Atlas](#) as well.

Our work continues

Despite the current volatile and complicated political situation in Madagascar, Zahana is working in both villages. Our work is needed more than ever. This

email report from May 19, 2010 illustrates the impact of the current economic crisis:

"The villagers got a good rice harvest this year, but what is sad is the price they can get for it. During our last site visit the farmers complained about the price they could get for their harvest. This year they can only get 360 Ariary per kg (less than 20 US cents per kg, or 10 cents per US pound), while it was over 600 per kg in 2009. To give you an idea what that means for them: to buy 1kg of sugar, 250 grams of salt and one small piece of soap they have to sell 10 kg of rice. This is beyond unfair, to grow that rice took almost half year, it is a way to kill the farmers and they will consider giving up the planting rice all together.

To counteract this trend we decided on a small rice business project with the women's group. They bought 2 metric tons at 400 Ariary per kilo with the help of a generous donor. This time it is a business venture, not for our communal seeds bank. The plan is: the women's group will sell the rice at a later date when the price will have gone up to 600 Ariary so they benefit from the price increase and can share the cash profit."

[More about Micocredit](#)

Official school inauguration in Fiarenana

March 4, 2010

Fiarenana celebrated the official school inauguration (although school already started informally in December after the teacher completed his training.)



Like most Malagasy official celebrations, there were speeches by community representatives and Zahana, performances by the students and food. Congregating around the flagpole in front of their school, the students sang and recited poems as part of the festivities.

[More \(photos too\) on our website](#)

Eating the seed fund

Zahana's seed fund introduced 100 kg of small potatoes as seed stock in Fiarenana in late 2009. The goal was to sell the crop in the market to generate cash income for the farmers. The potato harvest was very successful with over two tons harvested. The only major problem was, admitted the villagers with great embarrassment to Zahana in March 2010, that instead of selling the potatoes in the market, they ate them.

This example illustrates what 'success' means for Zahana. From a more traditional microcredit point of view, the project did not generate additional cash income for the farmers as intended and failed. From Zahana's perspective it was a huge success, because people did not only increase the community seed fund enriching it with a new crop, but also had vitamin C rich food to eat in the "époque dure" or the "hard times" period before the rice harvest where people normally go hungry for many weeks.

[More about Micocredit](#)

Thank you. As soon as we are sure the Vertical Response works for us we will send more updates this way. Please share this newsletter with your friends and family.

Ihanta, Jeannette and Markus

Contact Information: Project Zahana • PO Box 62223 • Honolulu HI 96839

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