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MADAGASCAR

SUCCESS STORY

Telecenter Keeps Village Connected

Residents can readily stay in communication with rest of the world



Photo: PACT Madagascar

Instead of needing to travel several hours for a phone, Pastor Haingo Ramarokoto can now stay in touch with family and friends at a USAID-funded information center in her village, Ranomafana.

Civil society, government and local businesses collaborate through a USAID program to bring communication access to people living in remote, rural areas.

Telling Our Story
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Haingo Ramarokoto is the pastor of a Protestant church in Ranomafana, a small tourist village about an hour-and-a-half drive from the next largest town, Fianarantsoa. Like countless other residents, she would make the long 80 kilometer (about 50 mile) trek to Fianarantsoa once a week in order to speak with her family and friends by phone.

To address these communication challenges and to foster local development, USAID installed a community information center (or telecenter) in Ranomafana, through a program aimed at expanding communication access to rural, isolated areas.

A telecenter aims to be a computer, telecommunication and communication facility open to all residents of communities in remote, rural regions. Among the services provided include Internet access, telephones, word processing and desktop publishing applications, and computer literacy training.

Before the telecenter was established, communicating with the world outside of Ranomafana was difficult. The village had no cell phone or Internet services, and the only available fixed line was a pay phone for the entire community. One had to spend a full day traveling to and from Fianarantsoa, which meant losing a day of work as well as having to pay transportation fees.

With the new telecenter, Haingo easily keeps in touch with her family and friends throughout Madagascar, and feels closer to her family abroad. Instead of spending the day in Fianarantsoa, she now can walk down the street to chat with her family by phone for a few minutes, which she does at least once daily. It is also easier now for her to work with her colleagues nationwide and fulfill her duties as the pastor with the largest Protestant denomination in Madagascar.

Haingo said, "The presence of an information center is very helpful for me and useful for the local community as they have the opportunity to increase their knowledge, find a job, communicate and interact with professionals in various business fields, and save time and money for additional activities."