

Communities Rally for Roads in Madagascar

Challenge

The deteriorating agricultural system in Madagascar caused farmers to turn to drastic means to feed their families. Malagasy farmers began burning hillsides to clear land for crops and cattle. Soils became barren as hillsides eroded and roads turned to mud when it rained. Pitted with deep ruts during the dry season, the roads prevented farmers from bringing their products to market. As a result, tons of coffee rotted in warehouses and rice harvests piled up.



Photo: Sally Cameron

Workers in Madagascar protect roads and bridges from erosion.

“Lower transportation costs mean more money for us and more rice for the price for consumers.”

- Ralaiyao Marcel, teacher, road association officer & rice grower.

Initiative

USAID rehabilitated 460 km of farm-to-market and secondary roads. As part of this program, farmers and community members formed road-user associations in partnership with local authorities, village groups, and private sector agribusinesses.

These associations manage and maintain the rebuilt roads with funding from users, local governments, and private enterprises. USAID specialists are helping farmers obtain tools and improved seeds from farm supply stores, and providing assistance in fighting rice disease using methods that do not harm the environment.

Results

Rehabilitated roads have helped farmers increase their incomes. Transport costs have dropped and traffic has increased. Since it is now easier for collectors to get to farmers, farm gate prices have increased as has overall farm production.

The project estimates that 150,000 farmers along 136 km of completed roads have marketed \$1.2 million more produce than before the rehabilitation. The roads have also opened up access to health and educational services. It is estimated that the \$12 million spent on road rehabilitation will bring at least a 20 percent rate of return.

Working independently and with USAID’s help, farmers are taking steps to control erosion. In the long term, these efforts will help address the country’s food needs while limiting natural resource depletion and threats to the country’s biodiversity.