

# DEVELOPMENT

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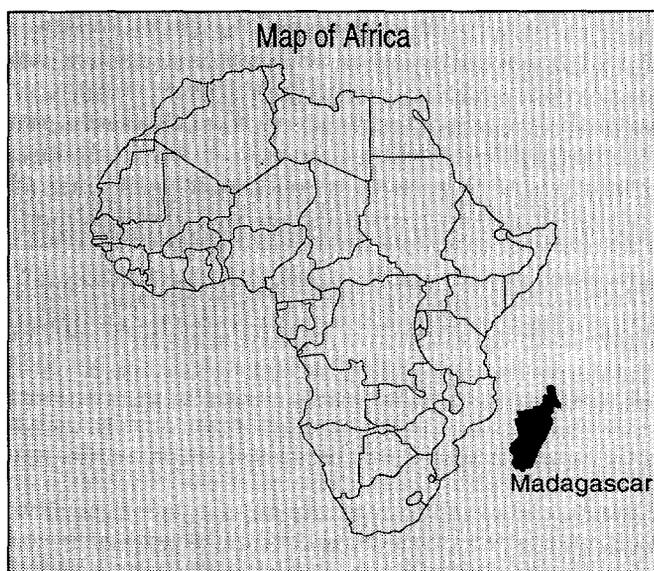
## ELUSIVE SUCCESS

### Institutional Priorities and the Role of Coordination: A Case Study of the Madagascar National Environmental Action Plan\*

by Kirk Talbott

Center for International Development and Environment

Madagascar's experience to date in meeting the stated goals and objectives of its Environmental Action Plan (EAP) is of crucial relevance to other countries. Of the approximately thirty NEAPs initiated in Africa since 1987, it is the largest in terms of funding and people and institutions involved and in many ways the most advanced. This paper focuses primarily on the effectiveness of the National Environment Office (l'Office National de l'Environnement, or ONE), Madagascar's EAP's central coordinating body.<sup>1</sup> The evolution of ONE's role in the Madagascar EAP is itself particularly instructive to those people involved in national-level environmental planning and management initiatives. The problems ONE has encountered and the ways in which it has responded to recurring challenges provide a valuable case study in coordinating and carrying out a NEAP.



This paper identifies and analyzes key factors affecting the capacity and function of ONE, after describing its origins and mandate, the political context of Madagascar's EAP, and recent operational changes implemented to improve the office's effectiveness. It will also draw some conclusions about the more generic aspects of the institutional challenges facing NEAPs across Africa and suggest further actions to be taken by the community of people and institutions engaged in NEAPs.

The means necessary to ensure the success of ONE and similar agencies charged with coordinating national-level environmental strategies and action plans are subjects of great importance around the world today. The office's problems and potential are shared by all analogous central coordinating organizations in "developing" and "developed" countries alike. Achieving the ambitious goals of institutional coordination, effective governance of natural resources, and sustainable development is difficult enough in a well-established nation in the North. In Madagascar -- which, like so many African countries, is struggling through political and economic crises -- solutions to environmental and institutional management problems are especially hard to address.

#### Background: Country Environmental Studies in Africa

Since the late 1970s over 100 developing countries have completed or embarked upon multi-sectoral, national-level environmental studies or plans.<sup>2</sup> These country environmental studies include a wide range of profiles, strategies, and action plans designed to promote sustainable development by identifying and analyzing key environmental conditions and trends. Subsequent attempts have been made to forge solutions

through planning, policymaking, and project implementation.<sup>3</sup>

The success of these various initiatives in improving environmental planning and management is difficult to measure. Some of the studies and reports have been written and then shelved, while, even the most heavily financed, multi-year, environmental strategies and action plans have been fraught with planning and implementation problems.

Since the desertification-control plans and environmental profiles of the 1970s, there has been a flurry of environmental assessment and planning activity in Africa, due largely to the recognition that the ecological problems affecting development across the continent are urgent. Perhaps more than any other continent, Africa has been beset with socioeconomic problems associated with environmental decline. Africa has the world's highest population growth rate (over 3.1% percent annually) without corresponding improvements in agricultural technology, and economic development has been the lowest of any region. According to some economic indicators, several African nations have actually experienced negative economic growth since the 1960s, often the result of a deteriorating natural resource base.<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, important political changes in Africa -- manifested by more than a score of national movements for reform and democracy -- offer an opportunity for new governments to address social, economic, and ecological priorities. However, while potentially promising, the rapid political changes affecting many countries of Africa have already made institutional development and environmental policy reform extremely challenging and often frustrating. Many of the difficulties that have arisen in the environmental planning and management efforts in Africa are directly related to the social unrest and political conflicts that have accompanied reform movements across the continent.<sup>5</sup>

#### **National Environmental Action Plans in Africa: A New Initiative**

In the 1980s several national conservation strategies (NCSs) were initiated in Africa by the World Conservation Union. They have attempted to provide a highly participatory approach by governments and non-governmental organizations in planning and implementing a national strategy for conserving the country's wealth of biological diversity while promoting sustainable development through the maintenance of ecosystem services.<sup>6</sup> In the same period, several tropical forestry action plans (TFAPs) were undertaken in Africa as part of a multi-donor effort to protect the world's threatened tropical forests.<sup>7</sup>

In 1987 the World Bank, in collaboration with a few African governments (Madagascar, Mauritius, Lesotho, and the Seychelles) initiated the first NEAPs. In principle, NEAPs are host country-initiated, and in Madagascar's case, the government did indeed request that the donor community unite their investment and lending programs under a common program. However, there is a legitimate question as to the degree of leverage the World Bank and other powerful donors have applied in persuading African governments to adopt particular NEAP frameworks.<sup>8</sup> The answer to this question will begin to emerge much more clearly when the most advanced NEAPs begin the implementation phase and many other countries officially adopt NEAPs.

NEAPs are broader in scope and more integrated in approach than both IUCN's national conservation strategies and the even more sectorally restricted TFAPs. NEAPs cut across all economic and social sectors to identify the major environmental problems, from wildlife protection to urban pollution controls. Taking into consideration economic and social costs and benefits, NEAP planners then formulate a comprehensive national environmental policy incorporating short-, medium-, and long-term solutions and an investment program.

As with all other environmental strategies and action plans, recurrent problems have thwarted the African NEAPs. Several recent international meetings and progress reports and publications have identified and discussed common constraints and problems encountered during NEAP formulation and implementation -- among them, the Club of Dublin workshops held in Dublin and Mauritius in 1990 and 1991.<sup>9</sup>

In the last three years, the number of African nations undertaking NEAPs has grown dramatically from four or five to over twenty. Thus, concern about the plans' success is growing within the World Bank, African governments, and the host of other donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved. In 1990 the World Bank division chief responsible for overseeing the NEAP process recognized that the risk that the process will degrade is very real due to the large number of countries involved and the limited experience accumulated to date.<sup>10</sup>

That risk has increased over the past two years as the number of NEAPs initiated in Africa has grown exponentially. The sharing of experiences between NEAP managers and the capacity of international organizations, particularly the World Bank, to provide technical and managerial assistance has been limited. Given the alarming rate at which so much of Africa's resource base is declining, the urgent needs of governments and the enormous pressure exerted by the continent's hundreds of millions of natural resource users, and the lack of many current viable alternatives to

NEAPs, attention needs to be directed at the most fundamental and urgent problems NEAPs are encountering.

### The Institutional and Political Context of Madagascar's NEAP and Its National Environment Office

In 1984 Madagascar became one of the first African countries to develop an NCS. In 1987 the government decided to cooperate with the World Bank to initiate a NEAP. This process was formalized in December 1990 with the passing of the Environmental Charter (Law # 90-003), which created the general legal context for the execution of the country's overall environmental policy and states that the NEAP constitutes the foundation for all national environmental activities. The first of three five-year "environmental programs" of NEAP implementation began soon afterward.

The Madagascar EAP's overarching goals and structures were developed over several years and after many international and regional meetings and studies. An investment program involving in excess of \$85 million has been developed under the aegis of the NEAP, and implementation of pilot programs has recently begun.

In 1987, during the initiation of the Madagascar EAP planning phase, a support unit for the incipient plan was created within the Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP) to act as a coordinating body. This unit officially became the Office National de L'Environnement (ONE) with the ratification of the Environment Charter.

Two other institutions were created along with ONE. The National Association for Environmental Action (ANAE) is a private association established to finance the preparation, appraisal, and implementation of community-level mini-projects for watershed management, reforestation, and other rural development projects. The National Association for the Management of Protected Areas (ANGAP) is financed mostly by donor grants. It is responsible for managing and coordinating conservation efforts in the 50 protected areas identified in the NEAP. Unlike ONE, which is a government agency attached to a government ministry, ANGAP and ANAE enjoy full financial and institutional autonomy from the government. Their respective charters specify that these two autonomous institutions were created expressly to carry out key NEAP implementation components.

Pre-existing institutions are also helping execute the NEAP. These are the Department of Water and Forests (DEF), the National Center for Research on the Environment (DDRA), and the national cartographic agency (FTM), a parastatal that is proving its worth in implementing the NEAP.

Initially, ONE was envisioned by both the lead donor organizations and high-ranking government planners as a small but powerful environmental agency attached to the MEP. A series of donor and government reports predicted that ONE would be a center of excellence, able to attract competent staff and characterized by flexible organization and management. It would have two broad responsibilities: to coordinate and launch the country's first five-year environment program (EP-1); and to spearhead environmental policy development and establish the means for policy implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. To fulfill these responsibilities, ONE would comprise a group of high-level professionals plus support staff, organized in six teams with responsibilities for coordinating environmental policy-making, research, assessment, training, data management, and accounting.

The official decree establishing ONE (Decree No. 90-666) explicitly defined ONE's many responsibilities. (See Table 1.)

**Table 1: Responsibilities of ONE as defined by Decree No. 90-666**

Coordinating	Monitoring	Executing
Propose environmental management policy	Monitor environmental management policy	Execute the operation of the EAP
Coordinate and launch the execution of the EAP	Monitor economic activities to ensure that they are not detrimental to the environment	Execute environmental studies
Promote environmental legislation and define an overall framework for environmental management	Monitor the activities of the agencies created to execute the EAP: bidding documents, procurement and disbursements for executing agencies	Execute environmental awareness activities
Coordinate environmental studies		Execute or ensure the execution of extension publications
Coordinate training and education activities		
Coordinate the activities of agencies created to execute the EAP		
Coordinate research programs		
Coordinate environmental information systems and manage environmental data systems relevant to its mandate		

## Politics and the Environment in Madagascar Today

Recent political events have seriously hindered efforts to develop an effective operational institutional framework for environmental management in Madagascar. A general strike of most public services with periodic massive popular demonstrations lasted for ten months, ending in April 1992. During the strike, public services and official administrative decisions were severely restricted. Under intense popular pressure, the Government finally agreed to allow a "national forum" (similar to the national conferences in francophone Africa) to prepare a draft constitution designed to transform Madagascar from a centrally-planned economy and authoritarian system to a constitutional, multi-party democracy with a market economy.

A recent national referendum to ratify the new constitution and presidential elections have moved the country towards democracy. The Third Republic has been proclaimed and a new transitional government formed. To satisfy the political aspirations of a multitude of divergent political groups, and to maintain stability during the transition, the government has increased the number of ministries significantly.

The past two years have seen continued political instability and maneuvering for power and influence among competing political forces. This trend has hurt efforts to establish an effective and operational institutional framework for environmental management. Decisions have been put off for more than a year. Financial instability and confusion about roles and mandates are continual constraints to ONE officials attempting to implement EP-1, and coordination has been especially difficult.

In spite of all these problems, however, ANGAP and ANAE have fared relatively well during this time of intense political uncertainty and potential crisis. Their political autonomy and continued donor support have allowed them to carry on at a time when many government offices have been virtually inoperative for months at a time. Even ONE has made some progress toward effectiveness and durability. Donor funding has been forthcoming and international interest in Madagascar's environment has continued to grow.

Unfortunately, in addition to the debilitating political constraints in Madagascar, a number of other internal and external factors have made it difficult, if not impossible, for ONE to fulfill its mandate. Those factors, discussed in the next section, are problems that can and, to some extent, are already being addressed by several institutions supporting the NEAP process.

## Critical Issues and Problems Encountered Affecting ONE's Capacity

One of ONE's many strengths is the excellence of some of its senior staff. But these committed professionals must bear the new and interrelated constraints that adversely affect ONE's credibility with the other NEAP executing agencies and government departments, as well as its ability to carry out such a broad mandate.

### Preliminary Tasks: Defining Its Role

ONE's legislated responsibilities are broad and complex, and the organization could not realistically have been expected immediately to coordinate, monitor, and execute the full variety of tasks it has been assigned. In the face of this enormous mandate, ONE has been forced to redefine its actual role in the NEAP.

Many of ONE's current problems have arisen because the office didn't initially define its role in the NEAP. Very little was done in its first years on environmental legislation or the decrees defining environmental regulations, and it never determined which agency or agencies would be responsible for monitoring and enforcing environmental regulations. These immediate problems arose principally from the organization's lack of capacity and an initially weak management. ONE did not take the necessary steps to put in place the required mechanisms to carry out its legislated functions and to decide a strategy for coordination in particular.

The office's failure in this regard also stems in large part from the nation's uncertain political climate, especially during the last three years. The continued instability has seriously hindered ONE's management systems and effectiveness in coordination and has only recently been addressed.

### Coordinating Donor Technical Assistance

Recent years have witnessed a considerable growth in international interest in promoting conservation in Madagascar. Much of this interest is based on the island-continent's exceptional biological diversity, particularly the species of lemurs and unique plant life remaining in many areas. While the increased international enthusiasm is in many ways welcome, it also presents problems -- namely, those of coordinating technical assistance and supporting host-country institutions.

Under EP-1, there are six bilateral donor agencies, two U.N. agencies, the World Bank, and two international conservation organizations funding various aspects of the NEAP. While ONE's share of this funding is less than 20 percent of the five-year total, it is charged with centralizing information concerning the

financing of the entire NEAP. Each executing agency is fully responsible for its own financing and relations with its own donors, and ONE does not have any direct role in other agencies' financing.

Each donor agency has its own agenda and accounting requirements. In addition, while many of the interested donor agencies are aware of institutional and other problems with the Madagascar EAP, they have only limited awareness of or interest in the work of other donors. In fact, at times, donors compete to provide technical and financial assistance, often resulting in confusion, overlapping agendas, and, occasionally, assistance working at cross purposes.

Fortunately, in the last two years a Multi-Donor Secretariat has been established to help coordinate donor support for the NEAP. The secretariat serves as a focal point for donor activities and projects designed to support the Madagascar EAP. Its responsibilities include working with donors to contribute more effectively to support NEAP investment programs and to strengthen the design, evaluation, and monitoring of projects. A key task of the Secretariat is to keep information flowing between the donors, NGOs, and national agencies involved in NEAP implementation.<sup>11</sup>

Under EP-1, three donors (USAID, UNDP, and the African Development Bank) are providing short- and long-term technical assistance to ONE. A UNDP-financed principal technical advisor arrived in April 1992 for 20 months under rather general terms of reference. To avoid duplication with technical assistance (TA) provided by other donors, a more precise delineation of the task and responsibilities of each TA is already clearly necessary. As even more donor attention is focused on ONE's role and coordinating mandate, the danger is that donor assistance, particularly in terms of long-term advisors, will often work at cross purposes.

Although the Multi-Donor Secretariat (MDS) has made a concerted effort to address this kind of problem, there is a limit to how much can be done given the varying mandates and agendas of the various donor agencies. However, according to Albert Greve, coordinator of the MDS, several donors involved with the Madagascar EAP have recently met again to discuss and try to resolve this issue.<sup>12</sup> USAID, the African Development Bank, and the UNDP all now plan to modify their terms of reference for relevant technical assistance to ensure that the technical assistants working with ONE will have complementary skills and responsibilities.

### **Government Commitment and Institutional Location**

The high-level government commitment evident during the NEAP's early preparation phases appears to

be on the decline, as witnessed by the government's apparent lack of attention to the problems of ONE. The current level of inappropriate, or otherwise deficient decision-making may be, at least in part, a direct result of the political uncertainties that currently dominate thinking and public discussion in Madagascar.

Many government officials were sympathetic to environmental concerns during the formulation process and were supportive of the NEAP preparation. Unfortunately, several of these people have been replaced by new actors who may be less sensitive to, and less knowledgeable about, environmental issues.

This may be the reason for the apparent lack of high-level support of ONE at present and its recently reassigned, and substantially inappropriate, position in the Ministry of State for Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD). While MEP is a multi-sectoral and powerful ministry with considerable say about Madagascar's development agenda, MARD is a sectoral ministry with limited political and financial capital. Arguably, ONE would not have been relocated if government decision-makers accorded it, or environmental issues, more generally, high status. On the other hand, ONE's placement could be construed as a move by sectoral interests to gain the support of ONE (with its promised donor funds), which would suggest that environmental issues are indeed a high priority for the government due to the high donor interest and funding for the environment. In any case, it is evident that because of the importance of power and prestige in government decision-making, ONE's ability to coordinate environmental actions under EP-1 or to formulate and implement policy will be substantially more difficult as an agency of a sectoral ministry. Unfortunately, any redressing of ONE's institutional location and its setting within the government's organizational hierarchy is highly unlikely until after the upcoming legislative elections, tentatively scheduled for May 1993.

### **Organizational Structure**

The official decree that created ONE also created a consultative scientific committee to help ONE in research activities and designated a director general to be proposed by the minister of economy and planning and appointed by presidential decree. The director general is responsible for managing ONE, animating and coordinating its activities, and executing its objectives in conformity with guidelines set by its board of directors (conseil d'administration).

More recent government decrees have determined the membership structure of the board of directors. Now its members are divided between the government and the private sector. On the government side, the board includes a representative of several ministries, including public instruction, finance, and planning. The private

sector contingent comprises two bankers, and one representative each from the religious community, the Rotary Club, the Lion's Club, the *Faritanies*, (the *Faritany* is the local government administrative structure) and an environmental NGO.<sup>13</sup>

The ONE board doesn't make policy. Instead, its responsibilities are limited to administrative oversight of ONE including a limited mandate to review budgets. Its authority does not include the appointment of the director general, who is appointed by presidential decree. Its role in overseeing ONE's budgets and other key administrative functions remains complicated and often unclear.

A Steering Committee (Comité d'Orientation et de Suivi) comprising mostly government ministry and NEAP agency representatives has been organized according to agreements reached with the donors and met for the first time in December 1991. The committee will review operations and draw lessons, review proposed annual work plans, and review and adjust annual financing plans. However, with a mandate limited to operational oversight for EP-1, the committee does not fulfill the role of a high-level body with the power to review and approve environmental policy and legislation.

Chart 1 represents ONE's institutional organization as designated by the most recent legal decree.<sup>14</sup>

The operational problems ONE faces are compounded by the fact that its final organizational structure has not been determined, even though two detailed and very useful independent management studies -- one by an IDA-financed Malagasy consulting firm (RINDRA), the other by a UNDP-financed, U.S.-based consultant (Coverdale)-- have been conducted. In addition, an initial organizational structure was proposed in the EP-1 Staff Appraisal Report. Although the management analysis was thorough, none of the studies' recommendations have been fully acted upon.

### Staff Conditions and Terms of Work

Until very recently, ONE's eleven-person team consisted of a director; an aid coordinator; five operational staff responsible for monitoring and evaluation, administration and finance, legislation and environmental policy, research support, and education and training; a librarian; two secretaries; and a scientific observer. In recent months, the aid coordinator has left, and a deputy director, recently dismissed, has not been replaced.

The office's senior staff members' effectiveness, as well as that of the newer untested staff, has been jeopardized in the past by the agency's insecure status. Although established in 1987, staff members until late 1992 had no legal or permanent status, working instead on month-to-month contracts with no set salary

schedule. Not surprisingly, insecurity prevailed and it seemed likely that the few competent and experienced people in the organization would seek employment elsewhere, as one did. This insecurity also made it difficult to recruit new staff. As a result, several important staff positions remained unfilled while key staff were overworked, and most of the workload fell on just three people. Overall, dissatisfaction ran deep -- a very dangerous situation for any new agency.

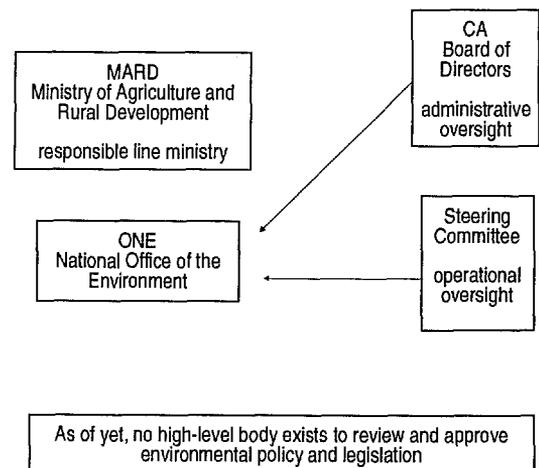
This situation has recently been rectified by a new policy, stemming from ONE's new management structure, that provides all staff members with legal status and full two-year, highly paid contracts.

### Recommendations for Strengthening ONE and Improving the Coordination of Madagascar's NEAP

Clearly ONE's original mandate to coordinate, monitor, and execute major components of the NEAP was exceedingly broad and complex. Even if its organizational structure, administrative and staffing capacities, and institutional location were all substantially improved, it would still be hard to imagine how ONE could accomplish all of the tasks it was first assigned.

Fortunately, a significant reduction of ONE's mandate occurred during the recent annual donors meeting in December 1992.<sup>15</sup> At this meeting, it was decided that ONE will no longer be the overall coordinator of the NEAP, but will limit its coordination role to collecting and centralizing information on the NEAP and to

Chart 1: ONE Organization Outlined by Decree 92-042



preparing the annual steering committee meetings. ONE's specific mandate will be to develop environmental policies, work with the sectoral ministries to ensure integration of environmental concerns, elaborate environmental legislation and the mechanisms needed to enforce that regulation, and review environmental impact assessments.<sup>16</sup>

In many respects, operational responsibilities for the NEAP have already been assigned to executing agencies. In principle, ONE's major responsibility is now limited to overseeing the coordination of these execution activities. A recent critical task for NEAP managers and policymakers (both donor and governmental), therefore, has been to reduce ONE's legislated mandate to manageable tasks. Its coordination role has been more clearly thought out and defined and its executing tasks largely eliminated.

The most important effort in developing institutional capacity to implement Madagascar's EAP will most likely come through the USAID-financed Knowledge and Effective Policies for Environmental Management (KEPEM) program. The KEPEM initiative seeks to fill crucial gaps in the NEAP's policy and legislative framework, as well as meet such operational needs as providing technical assistance to ONE.<sup>17</sup>

Responding to the urgent need for ONE to become operational, the various donors involved in strengthening ONE's operational capacity should work closely with NEAP staff such that technical assistance is complementary and well-coordinated. Scopes of work for each donor-recruited advisor need to be clearly defined and understood, especially to avoid conflict and duplication of effort with those already in place. The Multi-Donor Secretariat can and should continue to play a critical coordinating role here.

Similarly, there is an acute need for careful recruiting and training programs to deal with the staff conditions described above. Since several expatriate consultants will be assigned to ONE under EP-1, the rigorous recruiting of motivated Malagasy staff is also required to reduce the professional tensions between technical advisors and their counterparts. Fortunately, ONE staff (particularly senior-level) have finally been given official permanent status and job security as provided by an appropriate salary schedule and professional benefits.

Since ONE's own staff needs considerable training, they have very limited capacity to carry out environmental training activities nation-wide. Therefore, these responsibilities should be removed from ONE's mandate. In fact, at the most recent annual donors' meeting (December 1992), it was decided that ONE would no longer be the executing agency for environmental education and training.<sup>18</sup> Instead, a privately managed environmental training center financed by the French government will build upon an already existing center for training NEAP staff in

telediction and geography.<sup>19</sup> This center can provide environmental training for forestry, agricultural extension, and community development workers, health agents, teachers, and others who have had little training in this area and therefore little expertise in including environmental considerations in their work.<sup>20</sup>

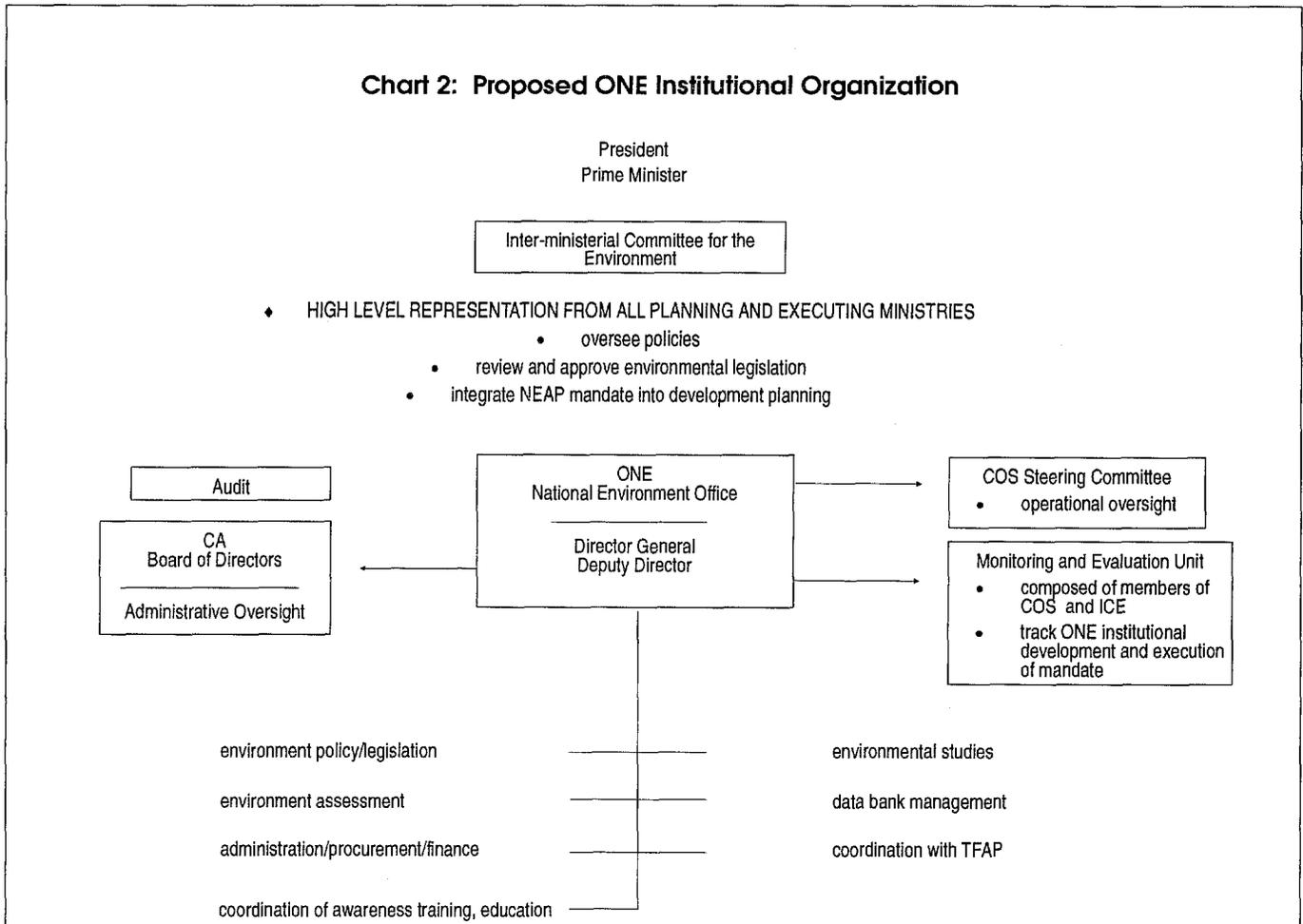
### Restoring ONE's Credibility

All appropriate agents in the Madagascar NEAP should pressure the highest levels of government to change ONE's position in the administrative structure. This may not be possible before a new government is fully in place, but the issue should meanwhile remain a high-priority topic of discussion. Sound arguments justify placing ONE under a new organizational structure that would allow it to more effectively carry out its broad mandate.

The institutional location for ONE could be resolved in a politically non-threatening way by placing it directly under the Office of the President and establishing an inter-ministerial committee to support ONE's role and mandate. By reporting directly to the president (or prime minister -- depending on the direction of Madagascar's political reform movement), ONE would have considerably greater credibility and capacity to carry out its mandate than under one particular ministry. Similarly, the establishment of a high-level interministerial environment committee, an agency called for but not yet created or defined in Madagascar's Environmental Charter (the precursor to the NEAP), would provide a mechanism for inter-ministerial familiarity and support for ONE's function. This would promote multi-sector involvement of the NEAP and encourage relevant ministries to play a participatory and interactive role in supporting ONE (See Chart 2.)<sup>21</sup>

Although the Inter-ministerial Committee is depicted in Chart 2 as "above" ONE, it would not have authority over ONE; that would reside in the office of the President. The proposed committee would support ONE, providing the high-level representation and policy review functions ONE now lacks. The committee's primary function would be to help ONE approve and oversee sectoral and national environmental policies and to ensure that environmental concerns are integrated into Madagascar's socioeconomic development planning. It would also provide an organizational mechanism for connecting ONE to the other important ministries charged with planning and implementing the country's development agenda. The Board of Directors and the Steering Committee would remain responsible for administrative and operational oversight, respectively. Under this arrangement, ONE could establish the high-level political visibility and credibility it needs to play its role effectively.

**Chart 2: Proposed ONE Institutional Organization**



### Conclusions

Recurring issues of concern and systemic difficulties have arisen in virtually all NEAPs. Some of these problems are exogenous to the NEAP process and thus no fault of anyone associated with carrying out the plans. Military and security crises, political coups, government inertia, and ethnic strife, for example, have presented enormous obstacles in the path of normal government activities, undermining the viability of several NEAPs.

Other problems are directly related to fundamental institutional, structural, and management weaknesses that reflect the compelling need for improved coordination, training, and administration of the NEAPs. There are many varied yet constantly recurring issues and problems encountered in the design and implementation of all large-scale development and environment projects, action plans, and strategies. These issues relate to institutional and personnel constraints, information flows, public participation, political commitment, and other key factors in environmental management.

Even those NEAPs that are praised as successful "pioneers" -- such as those of Rwanda, Madagascar, Ghana and Lesotho -- have encountered problems, in some cases serious ones, in meeting their most basic objectives and goals. As they conclude the planning stages of their respective NEAP processes, many of these countries are experiencing grave difficulty in successfully implementing their completed plans, a difficulty often related to the political-economic climate.

Other NEAPs that are far less advanced, such as those in Guinea, the Congo, and Togo, are experiencing their own acute difficulties in achieving institutional coordination and political commitment, even during the early planning stages. These major problems are due primarily to the political situations in those countries and many others, which are unstable and often nearly out of control.

Nonetheless, some NEAPs -- especially Ghana and Madagascar -- have continued to show a surprising resilience in the face of these exogenous and internal constraints. As a comprehensive framework for integrating environmental concerns within national development-planning frameworks, NEAPs continue to

offer much promise. They are arguably the most viable institutional, national-level approach to dealing with the environmental dilemmas facing African nations today.<sup>22</sup>

The NEAP concept and its applied institutional framework provide a mechanism for coordinating both donor activities and government policies and actions relating to natural resource management. In theory, at least, NEAPs provide a central place for making investments, devising laws and policies, and developing project and program activities that concern the environment.

Several NEAPs, for example those in Burkina Faso, Madagascar, and Rwanda, have managed to subsume other, more sectoral environmental initiatives such as the Tropical Forestry Action Plans (TFAPs) under the NEAP framework.

The Madagascar EAP, and the experience of ONE in particular, offer valuable lessons about establishing a national-level EAP. The past and present challenges facing ONE offer a case study of a NEAP coordinating body. Future interventions and policy reforms relating to ONE's mandate and capacities will continue to provide NEAP practitioners with valuable insight into the most vital aspects of NEAP processes.<sup>23</sup>

### Lessons Learned

Action Plan coordinating institutions are at the center of the NEAP challenge under way in a score of African countries. The coordinating organization must have a defined mandate, and a prominent and secure position within government, and effective internal management if the much larger, operational structures of the NEAP are to last and succeed. As this case study has shown, ONE's original primary role in the Madagascar EAP was to coordinate the various components of EP-1. Failure to fulfill this role seriously diminished ONE's credibility among the various participants in EP-1. As a result, some of its designated collaborators began to question its purpose. Fortunately, recent interventions have attempted to redefine ONE's coordination role more realistically which augurs well for the organization's long-term success.

Madagascar's EAP experience demonstrates that the coordinating institution must be in a visible and influential position in the overall government structure, preferably directly reporting to the President or Prime Minister. The strategic placement of the coordinating body within the government is critically important in establishing credibility among the various ministries and consequently among the Action Plan executing agencies. Donors should thus encourage governments to place the coordinating institution in the most appropriate and effective position. For example, in Madagascar a supportive inter-ministerial environmental committee, in part, could promote this

goal. Also, and more important, the coordinating bodies for NEAPs and similar planning initiatives should be placed under the direct authority of the prime minister's or president's office. At the very least, they should be attached to one of the two or three key multi-sectoral ministries that set the country's development agenda.

The necessity of allowing NEAP coordinating bodies to function at a high level was pointed out by Senior World Bank consultant Lee Talbot at a recent NEAP workshop held in Mauritius in June 1991.

Setting overall environmental policies must be done at the highest level of governments, above the level of sectoral ministries. Likewise, implementing those policies requires coordination among sectoral ministries. As a general rule, one ministry cannot coordinate co-equal ministries, and consequently the needed coordination must come from a level well above that of the line ministries.<sup>24</sup>

Difficulties are almost sure to arise when the organizational structure of coordinating bodies is flawed. One of the most basic institutional challenges for NEAPs is thus devising a practical organizational structure that facilitates the effective execution of responsibilities. In most country cases, the analyses and information needed to delineate an appropriate structure clearly exist. However, a variety of factors such as the country's political situation, the institutional location of the agency charged with coordination, and professional insecurity among the organization's staff, leadership, and directors often work against such action in African NEAPs.

Chart 2 points to another generic lesson made clear by the experience to date in Madagascar. The coordinating body needs an organizational structure that clearly and effectively defines the mandates and tasks of both a Board of Directors and Steering Committee and provides for a high-level Interministerial Committee to review and approve environmental policy and legislation. This structural approach is relevant for all coordinating bodies of environmental action plans or strategies.

Another lesson from Madagascar's NEAP record that is germane for all NEAPs is that monitoring and evaluation systems are a priority for ensuring that tasks and products of the various institutions are carefully tracked. A system of monitoring and evaluation can boost the operational effectiveness of the coordinating unit and the NEAP's overall chances for successful implementation.<sup>25</sup>

The Government of Madagascar, as well as the World Bank, USAID, and the UNDP, in particular, have committed to this process and will need to share responsibility for a coordinated and effective monitoring system to be put in place.

The Madagascar experience has shown the overriding importance of establishing the institutional and

operational capacity of the coordinating body to meet its mandate. Two recent USAID-funded reviews of literature on external issues affecting implementation of large-scale environmental projects cited institutional capacity as the most critical factor in project success in fifteen out of sixteen USAID project documents on natural resource management.<sup>26</sup>

While several multilateral and bilateral donors and international NGOs are actively contributing to the NEAP process in Africa, the success of each individual plan in meeting its goals and objectives ultimately rests in the hands of the respective governments and the citizens they employ. Effective recruitment and training of staff and an administrative system that encourages staff development and security, are both key elements of future success. As is the case with ONE's counterpart organizations in several other fledgling NEAPs in Africa, its largely unqualified staff and poor management have until recently effectively prevented the agency from becoming a fully functional body.

The donor community also has a strong obligation to coordinate and manage their NEAP support activities. The Multi-Donor Secretariat (MDS) has proven highly successful in meeting its responsibilities, though the secretariat is limited in its own capacities. Experience in Madagascar clearly shows that the MDS, as a concept and institution, should be expanded to all countries undertaking large-scale NEAP-like activities. The implication is that the MDS itself needs a larger staff to achieve these increased objectives.<sup>27</sup>

In the months and years ahead, the issues that have been identified in this and other studies of the Madagascar NEAP must receive the constant attention and support of all those involved in the national environmental planning processes. Given the political and institutional restructuring under way in many African countries, the fact that many NEAP's are approaching the implementation phase, and the momentum in donor support gained in recent years, the community of those involved in NEAPs has reached a critical juncture. As with institutional development and environmental management efforts in any region, this work will require great patience, flexibility, and creativity.

No country, including those in North America or Europe, has achieved a totally effective national environmental strategy. Nor has any nation, North or South, created a fully operational environmental coordinating body that does not face serious and recurring coordination and implementation problems. This paper and the related efforts that precede it and will follow it should, therefore, be viewed as a part of a long-term, collaborative process in which all those involved -- Africans and others -- learn together and from each other. While the problems encountered by ONE are serious indeed, the extraordinary dedication and competence of many of those charged with the NEAP and the goodwill and long-term commitment of many donor and other organization representatives bodes well for the future.

### \*Background

This analysis is largely based on information collected and analyzed in Madagascar by a small World Resources Institute team in April 1992. It builds on several years of experience working closely with NEAP teams in Madagascar as well as Rwanda, Guinea, Uganda, and Ghana.

Much has changed in Madagascar during the intervening year. Since the end of 1992, for example, Madagascar has entered a new democratic era with the election of a new president and a significantly restructured government. The NEAP has also evolved substantially, with major changes to the mandate and structure of the National Environment Office (ONE), the focus of this study. Therefore, some of the report's findings and conclusions are in ways outdated.

Regardless, the institutional issues addressed remain germane to the NEAP process across Africa and to national-level environmental planning in general. The evolving problems and opportunities in the Madagascar EAP provide fertile ground for insight into the arduous task of integrating environmental priorities in economic and development planning.

*Kirk Talbott is the manager of a program on Resource Management Strategies at WRI's Center for International Development and Environment. Before joining WRI over five years ago, he practiced law after completing a law degree and masters in international relations from Georgetown University. He has travelled and worked extensively in Africa and Asia for thirteen years and has been involved in NEAPs since they began in Africa in 1987.*

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## ENDNOTES

1. This paper's conclusions are based in part on the findings of a recent USAID-supported field trip to Madagascar in May 1992 by a team from the World Resources Institute. See Furst, Green, and Talbot, "Back-to-Office Report," May 1992.
2. Over 250 major environmental studies were published between 1987 and 1992. See Daniel Tunstall and Mieke van der Wansem, eds., 1993 *Directory of Country Environmental Studies: An Annotated Bibliography of Environmental and Natural Resource Profiles and Assessments*. Washington, D.C.: World Resources Institute, 1992.
3. See Walter Arensberg, *Good Practices*, DAC, 1991. The recent United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro sparked even greater interest in and demand for national environmental strategic planning with its call for all countries to produce sustainable development plans.
4. See Lloyd Timberlake, *Africa in Crisis: The Causes, the Cures of Environmental Bankruptcy*. London: International Institute for Environment and Development, 1985; Cynthia Cook and Mikael Grut, *Agroforestry in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Farmer's Perspective*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank, Technical Paper No. 112, 1989; and World Resources Institute, *World Resources 1992-93*. Washington, D.C.: World Resources Institute, 1992.
5. Examples of countries in which recent political problems have directly interfered with respective NEAP efforts include Rwanda, Togo, Cameroon, and Lesotho, as well as Madagascar.
6. A 1986 Report from an IUCN conference in Ottawa on the World Conservation Strategy identified several problems with the NCSs in terms of meeting many of their biodiversity conservation related objectives. See, Robert Prescott-Allen "The World Conservation Strategy: A Second Look," in P. Jacobs and D.A. Monroe, eds., *Conservation with Equity: Strategies for Sustainable Development*, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN, 1987.
7. The FAO-led TFAPs have been widely characterized as essentially flawed in their execution, if not their conception. Several recent international meetings, as well as articles and reports, have called for the TFAP process to be revamped. See, e.g., Robert Winterbottom, *Taking Stock: The Tropical Forestry Action Plan after 5 Years*, Washington, D.C.: World Resources Institute, 1990; Marcus Colchester and Larry Lohman, *The Tropical Forestry Action Plan: What Progress?*, Penang, Malaysia and Dorset, England: World Rainforest Movement and *The Ecologist*, 1990; and FAO, *Tropical Forestry Action Plan: Report of the Independent Review*. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: FAO, 1990. Among the greatest flaws identified are the lack of effective institutional and donor coordination and the fact that too many have been initiated too quickly.
8. This is especially true given the requirements that have emerged out of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) for developing sustainable development strategies. Similarly, the IDA-10 replenishment requirements for the World Bank have added further pressure on developing countries to carry out an approved NEAP strategy within a compressed timeframe.
9. See, e.g., Club of Dublin, *National Environmental Action Plans in Africa: Proceedings of the Dublin Workshop*, Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1990; Club of Dublin, *Issues Facing National Environmental Action Plans in Africa: Proceedings of the Workshop in Mauritius, June 17-19, 1991*, Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1991; Francois Falloux, Lee Talbot, and Leif Christoffersen, *National Environmental Action Plans: First Lessons and Future Directions*, World Bank, Washington, 1990; and, Francois Falloux and Lee Talbot, *Crisis and Opportunity: Environment and Development in Africa*, Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose and A.C.C.T., 1992. Many of the problems that have already been identified and analyzed in these reports revolve around the difficulties related to overlapping mandates, unclear lines of authority, and unrealistic goals for both planning and implementation phases of the key NEAP institutional bodies.
10. Leif Christoffersen, "Introduction to the Workshop", from *National Environmental Action Plans in Africa: Proceedings of the Dublin Workshop, 1991*, p. 7.
11. At present the Multi-Donor Secretariat (MDS) has a staff of one. It is housed at the World Bank offices in Washington, D.C., and is supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development in collaboration with the World Bank.
12. Personal communication with Albert Greve, Coordinator of the Multi-Donor Secretariat, January 13, 1993.
13. Local government structures have proven resilient and enduring in Madagascar's recent politically turbulent history. Allowing for representation at the *Faritany* level in the Board provides an opportunity for local participation in the setting of ONE's priorities for research as well as NEAP implementation in the field. It remains to be decided how effective this participatory mechanism will be as the NEAP implementation unfolds.
14. ONE has been changed to include the newly-created Environmental Commission. The Environmental Commission is positioned between the Ministry of State for Agriculture and Rural Development and ONE. The ONE now reports to the commission.
15. Every year since 1990, a three day meeting of donor, NGO, government, and technical agency representatives has been held in December to address critical issues and set the direction for the next year of the NEAP.
16. Personal communication with Albert Greve, Coordinator of the Multi-Donor Secretariat, January 13, 1993.
17. KEPEM will use innovative non-project assistance (NPA) to attach conditionalities to encourage the adoption of legislation concerning environmental impact assessment requirements and the devolution of authority over natural resources to local communities. It also addresses the need for reform of resource prices, particularly for wood, and encourages simplification and clarification of NGO codes of official association. Although KEPEM has recently been approved and signed, it will be many months before the KEPEM team will be on the ground in Madagascar.

18. Personal communication with Albert Greve, Coordinator of the Multi-Donor Secretariat, January 13, 1993.

19. The national cartographic agency, FTM, where the NEAP training center is to be located, will be closely involved with this set of activities.

20. The proposed approach for a training center is similar to the one used in the creation of ANGAP and ANAE. In both of these cases, the NEAP components are being executed by private associations with boards of directors representing both the public and private sectors. As private agencies, ANGAP and ANAE have an added flexibility and autonomy in financial and staff management. Although they face their own sets of constraints, both organizations have already achieved an impressive measure of success in beginning to implement aspects of the NEAP.

21. See, Furst, Green, and Talbott, "Back to the Office Report", May 1992.

22. Many assessments and studies have been undertaken which document some of the early successes as well as problems in the first NEAPs. For example, see Ralimanga, "Le Processus Plan d'Action Environnemental, Madagascar", and Furst, "Main Lessons Learned in the Rwanda EAP", both from the Dublin proceedings, December, 1990.

23. The WRI Center has conducted a study of the "State of the Art" of Country Environmental Studies that poses a number of salient questions about the successful functioning of a particular environmental action plan or strategy. These basic questions include:

- What environmental policies have been adopted as a result of the NEAP and how are they being implemented?
- What governmental institutions have been created to formulate policy, plans, and investment programs for the environment and how do they relate to other sectoral agencies within the government?
- Do multi-sectoral co-ordination mechanisms exist to integrate environment into overall development planning and how well do they function?
- What institutions have been created to collect data on environmental conditions and monitor trends?
- Is environmental assessment a functioning activity of government? Has the NEAP strengthened this functional requirement in its own development planning?

- What mechanisms exist for private sector and NGO participation in policy-making?

These questions were developed to examine and assess NEAPs and other national-level planning exercises. They also provide an analytic framework for beginning to assess the success of the coordinating institutions at the center of the action plans and strategies. The WRI Center, in collaboration with other NGOs as well as interested donors such as USAID and the World Bank, will be applying this framework to future NEAP assessment activities.

24. See Lee Talbot, "Institutions for Environment: Institutional Framework for National Environmental Action Plans" in Club of Dublin, *Issues Facing National Environmental Action Plans in Africa: Proceedings of the Workshop in Mauritius, June 17-19, 1991*, p.24.

25. An issues paper presented at Mauritius on "Ensuring Accountability" called for NEAP managers to devise specific methodological tools and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track NEAP preparation and development. Unfortunately, little has been done on these recommendations to initiate systematic monitoring and evaluation activities to track the progress and identify constraints within the individual and collective NEAP processes. (See Talbott and Furst, 1991, p. 3)

*Monitoring* aims to provide project managers with feedback on the nature and extent of progress achieved in implementing project components, compared with what has been planned. *Evaluation* seeks to explain and if possible measure the level of efficiency of the program implementation in relation to costs and accrued benefits and thereby reassess the relevance of both objectives and approaches.

26. See, D. Brinkerhoff, J. Gage, and J. Yeager, *Implementing Natural Resources Management Policy in Africa: A Document and Literature Review*, Washington: U.S. Agency for International Development, Bureau for Africa, Implementing Policy Change Project, April 1992; and Zimmerman, R., *Analysis of Institutional Structure and Reform: Impact on NRM Projects*, Washington, D.C.: USAID, Dec. 1991). Experience in NEAP planning exercises in a number of African countries confirm Brinkerhoff's and Zimmerman's findings.

27. The MDS mandate has been recently expanded to include a few other NEAPs. In order to continue to perform successfully in its growing role, attention should be given to the staffing constraints of the MDS.