



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## Success Story // Isaia Raymond

# Marine Protected Area Professional



"I have a rejuvenated sense of purpose now that I know I am not alone

— Isaia Raymond, MPA Manager, Madagascar



A view of Sahamalaza National Park, a marine protected area in Madagascar. Isaia Raymond, park director, called on the skills and leadership abilities that were affirmed when attending a Western Indian Ocean Certification of Marine Protected Area Professionals (WIO-COMPAS) certification to manage threats to the park's resources during a national government crisis.

## Stepping Up to Lead in a Time of Crisis

**H**ow does a marine protected area (MPA) play a vital role in bringing a community together during a national political crisis? Along the rural northeastern coast of Madagascar, MPA manager Isaia Raymond had to go beyond his normal duties—calling on the competences he developed during a first-in-the-world certification for MPA professionals—to contain a growing disregard for park guidelines and environmental protections and to forge a path forward for all.

In early 2009 the president of the Republic of Madagascar, Ravalomanana Marc, went into exile. A

transition government was established to rewrite the constitution. During this time of uncertainty, the two major political parties disagreed on what parts of the government and laws still existed. The local government near Sahamalaza National Park—Maromandia City—was aligned with the exiled president's party. Prince Arana IV, known as Ampanjakabe (or Big King), was the chief of local traditional power and led his party against the local government. The prince's party held weekly public meetings in each locality to declare the weaknesses of local government and demanded the resignation of all local government employees.

THE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF RHODE ISLAND  
GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF OCEANOGRAPHY



COASTAL RESOURCES CENTER



GLENN RICCI  
COASTAL MANAGER  
GRICCI@CRC.URI.EDU  
1+ (401) 874-6419  
WWW.CRC.URI.EDU

# Confidence, Sense of Purpose Help Contain Crisis

At one of these meetings, the prince declared falsely that the new transition government didn't include an Environment Department. Therefore, everyone was allowed to exploit resources in Sahamalaza National Park without permits or regulations. This was a crisis for Isaia, Sahamalaza National Park Director, who soon faced 300 fishermen from two neighboring districts using illegal gear. When confronted by Isaia's rangers, the fisherman physically threatened the rangers. After the fishermen cut down precious mangrove trees along the mainland, they proceeded out towards the park jewel—Nosy Be Island.

Isaia had a choice to make—either instruct his rangers to forcefully uphold existing park laws, which likely would have led to armed conflict and physical harm or take a political process of engagement with leaders of all stakeholder groups. Such challenges, without the political crisis, often confront protected area managers. Fortunately for Isaia, he had just been certified through WIO-COMPAS as a Level 2: Site Management MPA PRO—a title given to a professional with proven on-the-ground skills for managing MPAs. WIO-COMPAS is an innovative program started in the WIO region that sets the standard for professional competence and was developed in recent years by the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) and the Coastal Resources Center (CRC) at the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography. It is a component of the Sustainable Coastal Communities and Ecosystems (SUCCESS) program, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

After being assessed by leaders in MPA management for the WIO region and sharing solutions to common challenges with peers, he returned to work invigorated. “I have a rejuvenated sense of purpose now that I know I am not alone in the region dealing with such problems,” he said. He had greater confidence in his skills through confirmation and professional guidance from other leaders. This translated into a call to leadership for his park system, his community and his country.

Isaia engaged the regional level authorities and leaders from both political parties. After a week of long nights and consultations with people far beyond the borders of the national park, Isaia was able to bring the Chief of Sofia Region to his park to solve the problem and bring



reconciliation to the two parties. Isaia used his new skills in stakeholder engagement to invite the appropriate representatives, such as local government staff, local traditional authorities, older association members, technical services representatives, NGOs, fishermen, farmers, representatives of local communities and park staff. The meeting included a visit to the park to sensitize everyone to the issues and potential solutions. Fortunately, the meeting led to agreements on the way forward resulting in fewer fishermen in the park boundaries than before.

In addition, the prince changed his attitude and now assists Isaia on sensitization activities with the local communities, including during World Environment Day in June when the prince spoke of the need to protect and support the valuable environment around Sahamalaza National Park. Isaia's lesson from this experience is simple but challenging to implement. “You must involve all stakeholders, from the local community to higher levels of government and authority in park management to achieve success,” he said. And Certification provided the validation of his existing knowledge and a sense of duty to his profession.