

# On our honour, we promised...

Final Report on Scouts Canada's International  
Development Project, Madagascar 2012



It starts with Scouts.

Tout commence  
avec les Scouts.

**“The size of your dreams must  
always exceed your current  
capacity to achieve them. If your  
dreams do not scare you, they are  
not big enough.”**

-Ellen John Sirleaf,  
Nobel Peace Laureate



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Creighton Avery, Youth  
Contingent Leader

In my initial address to the Madagascar 2012 team, I wrote: “I can’t promise that we’ll see lemurs, or that you’ll always like what you eat, but I can guarantee that this project will be life-changing.” In the end, we did see lemurs, and we didn’t always like the food. As for life-changing, I think it was more than that.

I can confidently say that Madagascar 2012 was the most challenging thing I’ve ever done. It was extremely difficult, but because it was so difficult, I believe it was also so much more meaningful. Everything we had was put into our project. Our blood, sweat, and tears (thankfully, more sweat than blood) built it. So to stand there at the end of it all and look at it was very emotional.

There was never a time I asked myself, “Was it enough? Could we have done more?” simply because it took everything we had within us. And while we struggled, it only reminded me more of the people around us, as they struggle every day of their life just to make sure they have food on their plate each night.

Looking back, I can proudly say that Scouts Canada has some of the most remarkable people I have ever had the honour to work with. Tired, sick, and worn down, everyone had personal challenges, but everyone pushed through them and delivered an outstanding result.

There are things that just cannot be measured. These were the relationships we built with each other and with those in Madagascar. It is in the lessons and experiences we gained. And it is in the spirit of hope we gave to those in Madagascar; hope that change is here, and hope that they will not be forgotten.

L. Creighton Avery  
Youth Contingent Leader  
Madagascar 2012

# THE PROJECT

***“It is the belief of the people of Ambato Boeni that their future mayor is now learning at their new school”***  
-Fr Alfredo Ramanadraibe

Over 10 days, three structures slowly rose from a dusty field, which before that time had been completely void of anything but a foot path cutting a course to the Betsi Boka River. They were literally built from scratch, from the very materials that surround them: wood, soil, sand, gravel and water.

Early the first morning after arriving in Ambato Boeni, the project leadership team visited the construction site to find that work was already behind schedule by about two weeks. The goal, at the time, was to build a dormitory, a washroom facility, a shaded eating area and a wall surrounding the campus area. The wall was quickly removed from the equation because of the amount of time that it would take to build it. In addition, ground had not yet been broken on the dormitory foundation and brick production for the washroom and dormitory was behind schedule as well. There was a lot of work to do.

The first task was to get the foundation completed for the dormitory. With limited tools, but an abundance of determination, the Contingent was able to complete this in three days. While this was going on, there was a constant stream of bricks being built by hand, and dried in the sun. The shaded eating area, made of spars and palm leaves, was nearing completion – which was good. It was incredibly hot, and seemed to get hotter every day.

Materials were being sourced from everywhere. Sand came from an island in the middle of the river, requiring a dug-out canoe to go back and forth through the day and night, bringing sand needed for mortar and bricks. Soil was moved, one bag at a time, from a nearby hill. Water was raised from the well<sup>1</sup> that Scouts Canada sponsored in 2009. Cement was carried down, one 55kg bag at a time from the village centre up the hill (over 100 bags were needed

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<sup>1</sup> Prior to 2009, the leading cause of death among children in Ambato Boeni was using and drinking contaminated water from the Betsi Boka River. Since the two wells were dug, sponsored by Scouts Canada – Tri-Shores Council in 2009, *not a single child has died from water-borne illness.*



Iain Tait, Project Advisor



**“On this project, I saw firsthand how difficult it can be to change a situation, how essential it is to have meaningful support from the community and how challenging it can be to navigate a different cultural and political system. The biggest impact though, may be a sense among the community that someone cared about them, came to help, and that their situation can improve – a sense of hope.”**

**- Dawn, Central Escarpment Council**



for construction)! These three structures really did come from Ambato Boeni!

By day four, the frame for the dormitory was starting to go up. The dormitory was finally starting to take shape. Because it was being built with corrugated steel siding, all the bricks that were being made were now focused on the washroom facility, which included toilet stalls and showers.



An interesting ceremony was conducted as the centre roof beam was put in place for each of the two buildings. For the washroom facility, one of the Malagasy stone masons climbed up to the very top and christened the building with a bottle of locally made alcohol, declaring a blessing on the building, those who are building it, and all those who will use it. When it came time to bless the dormitory, it was the Scouts Canada's turn, giving the same blessing as had been done for the washroom facility (although this time in English). It was a day for celebration, although work was only half way completed.



There were of course a great number of hurdles and challenges to overcome. The main challenge was in sourcing materials. Because Ambato Boeni is fairly removed geographically from the nearest city of Mahajanga (it was a five hour drive), plans had to be made days in advance to order materials. They had to be delivered just in time to ensure their security at the work site. As plans change and sometimes fell behind schedule, there was a constant need to scramble to figure out back up plans for back up plans. This is the nature of international development, and working in Madagascar proved to be a great training in flexibility.



The work, to say the least, was exhausting for everyone, Canadians and Malagasy alike. The heat sometimes proved to be too much to work through the entire afternoon, so everyone would take two hours for lunch, through the hottest part of the day,





Inukshuk in front of the school commemorating the project partnership

before returning to work as it started to cool.

Despite the sometimes overpowering heat, the project was completed. It was necessary to tack on an additional day of work, on the Saturday of Canada Night, to ensure that everything was finished for the dedication ceremony the next day. Against all odds (so it seemed), the project was completed.

The next day, the site and the buildings were dedicated to the future of Ambato Boeni, something which had admittedly not been

considered very often within the village. When so much of your effort is put into trying to think of how to survive and provide for your family from day to day, it's hard to think any further ahead than the next meal.

Since the project was completed, so many more changes have taken place. The local public school had been closed, and turned into a private school, which made it much more difficult for youth in the village to attend. For this reason, the dormitory was converted into a three classroom school house, serving grades 4-6. The shaded eating area is now being used as a hostel for families visiting their children who are studying at the school.

Most importantly of all though is the impact this project has had on the people of Ambato Boeni. Where once they were understandably pre-occupied with their day to day affairs, this project has helped to show that there is much more that is possible when everyone comes together. This is a lesson that we can certainly all take from Madagascar 2012. We can labour alone for our entire lives, ensuring there is food on the table each night, but when we work together, we can literally move mountains to create a positive change for generations. This project started with Scouts, but it is far from finished yet.





**“As a participant on this project, I am proud to realize how much this international experience has affected me personally. On the trip, I had the opportunity to work side by side with Scouts from Madagascar, working under the same Scouting promise and working towards the same goal of completing the project. We were able to do this successfully, no matter our culture or language differences. This was the moment I understood the true meaning of the Brotherhood of Scouting.”**

**- Linda, Fraser Valley Council**





## THE PROGRAM

International travel gives an opportunity to grow as an individual, travel within Scouting doubly so. The program components of Madagascar 2012 allowed participants and leaders to learn more about the Malagasy culture, gain training in international development and construction, and have experiences and create memories that they will take with them for the rest of their lives. The goal for the program within Madagascar 2012 was to go past simply looking at Madagascar, but rather to see it and experience it.

The Contingent first came together at Tamaracouta Scout Reserve in Quebec Council. Here, they broke the ice with team building activities (many of them were meeting for the first time), and gained a better understanding of social justice, poverty and hunger, as well as the Millennium Development Goals and their role in achieving them. At the same time, the group was able to learn the practical skills and knowledge necessary to have a productive and meaningful trip to Madagascar, including, construction, a safety and security orientation, and tips for long distance travel. There was even a Malagasy cooking class!

Upon arrival in Antananarivo, Madagascar, the group was immediately immersed in a strange and exciting culture. The sights, sounds, smells, everything was different. While in Antananarivo, they were able to sample Malagasy food for the first time at the Spiritan House where they were staying the night. In the morning, they visited the Antananarivo Lemur Park, where so many species of lemur jumped, climbed and occasionally danced. For many participants and leaders, this was the first time not only seeing lemurs, but also the mighty baobab tree, one of the symbols of Madagascar.

Flying to Mahajanga after the brief visit to Antananarivo, the group was greeted by a large group of Scouts and a marching band! There was singing and dancing in the parking lot of the airport until it was too dark to continue. This was the support from Scouting and the community that the group found all through the project.



Over the next two weeks, the group had the opportunity to participate in many cultural activities, including sharing of coffee, religious holidays, the incredibly exciting Market Day in Ambato Boeni, and sharing our culture during Canada Night and Scout campfires.

Sometimes it was the normal occurrences that ended up being the most interesting experience. Market Day is every Thursday in Ambato Boeni, where the entire village centre is transformed into a bustling market with every good imaginable. The village really comes alive. There was a sensory overload trying to take in everything that was going on in every direction as goods came in from other communities, and even across the river in large dug-out canoes.

One of the highlights was an overnight at Ankaranfantsika National Park. The group was able to go on a nature hike to a vast canyon, seeing the rock formation called “tsingy”. It was amazing how vast and varied the Malagasy landscape can be, from lush forests to arid grasslands, and coastal cities to dusty, rural communities.

Canada Night and the Scout Campfires were an opportunity to share cultures with food, songs, skits and sometimes just a smile. While it is important to learn more about the Malagasy culture, it was also important for the people of Ambato Boeni to know more about this group of Canadians who travelled half way around the world to work with them.

With the project successfully completed, the trip ended with a return to Mahajanga for some relaxing touring along the coast of the Mozambique Channel, including a visit to the Great Baobab. While originally the site of the slave trade, it now serves as a symbol of hope and inspiration to those who visit it.

Upon return to Antananarivo, there was time to learn a little bit more about the brick making industry in the city, to visit a trade school for orphaned teenagers, and an enormous arts and crafts market.

The program helped everyone better understand the culture, history, environment and society of Madagascar. It is these memories, photos and stories that will last a lifetime.

## ITINERARY

5-8 Aug: Pre-camp at Tamaracouta

8 Aug: Depart from Montreal

9 Aug: Layover in Paris, continue to Antananarivo for overnight stay

10 Aug: Visit Lemur Park in Antananarivo, then fly to Mahajanga

11-12 August: Cultural education, touring Mahajanga, learning about language, food and customs of Madagascar

12 August: Depart for Ambato Boeni, settle into accommodations, meet with local Scouts

13-14 August: Construction project begins

15 August: Assumption of Mary holiday, working in afternoon.

16-17 August: Construction

18-19 August: Visit to Ankarafantsika National Park

20-22 August: Construction

23 August: Market Day, working in afternoon.

24-25 August: Construction and project completion

25 August: Canada Night

26 August: Dedication Ceremony

27-29 August: Return to Mahajanga for debriefing and wind down activities

29 August: Return to Antananarivo

30 August: Visit to local trade school for orphaned youth, visit large arts and crafts market, depart for Canada.

31 August: Arrive back in Canada, safe and sound



## FROM FAR AND WIDE

One of the objectives of a project like this is to educate others about another part of the world, and what life is like there. At the same time, Madagascar 2012 aimed to show the opportunities that Scouts Canada can provide to young people across the country.

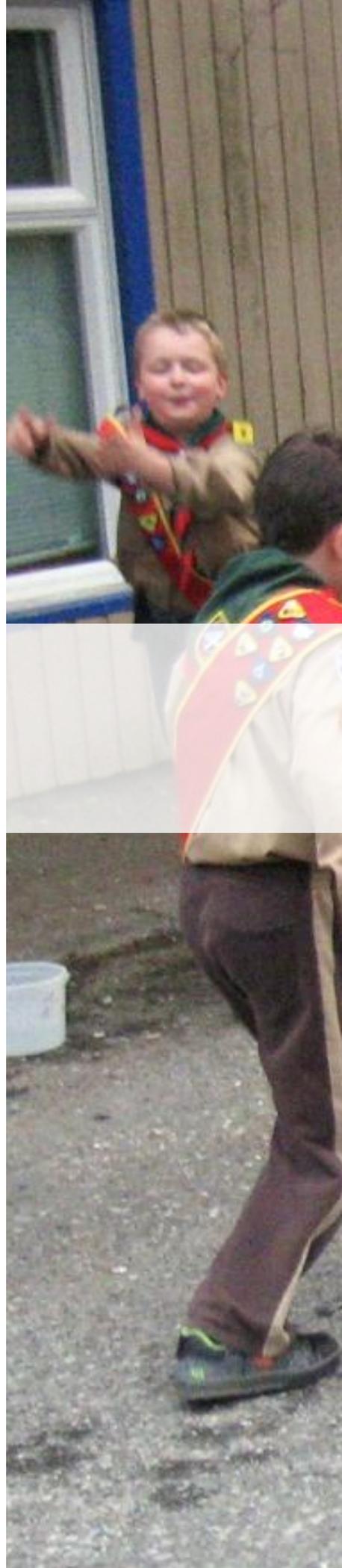
This was accomplished in many ways, like the Buy A Brick Campaign, Madagascar 2012 Program Jumpstarts, selling project t-shirts and crests and through presentations and workshops.

The support was overwhelming. Groups from across the country were participating in fundraising campaigns like the Buy A Brick campaign. This offered everyone the opportunity to take an active role in changing the world by pledging \$5 for every brick that went into the construction of the school and washroom facility. Groups were doing fundraising campaigns entirely on their own. The support was inspiring!

In education, sections were able to get the Madagascar 2012 Program Jumpstarts, which included a month of program ideas about Madagascar's culture, history and natural environment. This program also showed youth how they can have a role in making a positive change right in their own communities, and around the world. Through fun and games, Beaver Scouts, Cub Scouts and Scouts were able to learn more about the world outside their meeting hall, and just how exciting it can be.

The project participants and leadership did not sit idly by either. They were active in promoting the project through presentations, running programs and fundraising efforts, and even putting together a promotional video called "On our honour, we promised". This video helped to raise awareness of not only this project, but the need for change, and Scouts Canada's impressive capacity to achieve it.

With the support of 100 000 members of Scouts Canada from across Canada, Madagascar 2012 was able to move mountains, not only in Ambato Boeni, but right here in Canada, too.





**“I’m proud to have been a part of a project and team like Madagascar 2012. Not only have I been able to help others in some of the bleakest parts of the world, but I have also been able to learn from the immense differences in culture. I’ll never forget the resilience, optimism, and determination many of the locals showed even through their day to day hardships. Madagascar 2012 and other projects like it have truly shown me the opportunity I have to make a difference in the world.”**

**- Steven, Tri-Shores Council**



### **Facts and Figures**

**\$9,285 in received for the Buy A Brick Campaign  
625 Madagascar 2012 Crests sold across Canada  
194 Madagsacar 2012 T-shirts sold across Canada**



**“On behalf of the Cub Scouts and Leaders of 1<sup>st</sup> Haney, we would like to thank you for the Madagascar presentation. The evening tied in nicely with the activities we’ve been doing with the Cub Scouts: stories around the campfire, ater races, and learning about developing countries. The video presentation re-affirmed the Cubs’ understanding of why they are participating in the Buy A Brick fundraiser for Madagascar 2012”**

**- Jason Buck (Chil)**



## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

One of the greatest challenges in international development is trying to budget and monitor expenses and revenue for a project which, by its very nature, must remain flexible to the ever-changing environment of a rural, developing community on the other side of the planet. This is never an easy task, but certainly an important one.

For Madagascar 2012, revenue came from three sources: participant fees (which covered all individual expenses such as food, travel, accommodations and program), donations, which helped to offset participant fees, and funding from the Canadian Scout Brotherhood Fund. The Canadian Scout Brotherhood Fund was created following WWII to help rebuild Scouting in Europe, and exists today as a way to fund materials for the international development efforts of Scouts Canada.

The greatest expense for Madagascar 2012 was certainly transportation. Flying 22 people half way around the world is never cheap. However, through proper planning and a preview trip conducted in 2008, the project leadership team was able to offer a well-rounded program that helped balance the budget of the program, keeping in line with the cost of previous international development efforts in more accessible parts of the world.

The tables to the right will show where money came from and how it was spent over the course of the eight month financial lifespan of the project. Ultimately, the project was left with a small surplus (the surplus came from contingency funds set aside in case of an emergency or unexpected cost in Madagascar), which will be used towards future projects in Madagascar, enabling everyone involved to continue supporting the people of Ambato Boeni well into the future.

# MADAGASCAR 2012 FINANCIAL REPORT

## REVENUE

Participant/Leader personal payments	\$69 172.30
MAD Apparel Sales	\$2 780.00
Donations	\$10 666.91
Online Donations	\$10 194.10
Canadian Scout Brotherhood Fund Contribution	\$25 000.00
Group Donations	\$396.00
Scout Shop Sales	\$1 120.00
Bank Interest	\$0.69
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$119 330.00</b>

## EXPENSES

Airfare	\$69 700.59
Travel Insurance	\$923.00
*Food and water in Madagascar	\$2 900.00
*Accommodations in Madagascar	\$2 937.50
Ground transportation in Madagascar	\$2 300.00
Ground transportation in Canada	\$430.00
Transfer fees (sending money to Madagascar)	\$717.03
Contingent Items (clothing, crests, etc)	\$5 254.49
*Program in Madagascar	\$3 725.00

## PROJECT

*Cement, sand, gravel	\$9 800.00
*Windows and doors	\$1 240.00
*Steel for roof and walls	\$8 700.00
*Plumbing	\$1 935.00
*Wood for framing	\$475.00
*Tools for site	\$1 400.00
*Nails, bolts, etc	\$578.00
*Funds contributed for food garden	\$872.00
Pre-camp at TSR	\$2 284.95
Postage	\$44.49
Bank Fees	\$1.40
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$116 218.45</b>

## Madagascar Fund

**\$3 111.55**

\*Note: some expenses are approximate due to exchange rates

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Project Recommendations

- 1) Working in Madagascar is completely different from anywhere else in the world. It took a number of days before the project leadership team was able to learn how to ask questions to get the required information. Patience and diplomacy are key, and flexibility must become standard. There are hidden costs in everything. There are never too many questions to ask.
- 2) Future projects going to Madagascar should find a community contact first before looking for Scouting contacts. Locating Scouting in the community may prove to be easier than starting at the national level. Madagascar has a very complicated National Scout Federation composed of several Scout Associations which may or may not operate in all parts of the country.
- 3) Do not over-estimate the value of a cup of coffee. Over the course of construction, many of the skilled Malagasy workers became frustrated because there were many different understandings of work. The Contingent would have been well served to have sat down early on with the Malagasy who would be working with the Contingent and discuss the site management plan and how to best work together. By forming that bond early on, it not only creates a better working environment, but it will provide better security for tools and materials (which were sometimes sold in the evenings).

## Program Recommendation

- 1) For future projects that have a contingent composed of participants and leaders from across the country, a pre-camp is essential. This gives everyone an opportunity to form bonds, get to know personalities and gives the leadership team an opportunity to see strengths and weaknesses. However, adding two or three days to the beginning of the trip to Madagascar may have proven to be a better way to orientate the contingent to Malagasy life, culture, society and political system. It is recommended to all future projects that pre-camps be held primarily in the country where the project will take place.

## Communications Recommendations

- 1) Internet is exceedingly scarce in rural Madagascar, and when it is available, the cost prohibits extended use. The project communication plan outlined a strategy for regular internet access, however not all costs had been made apparent. It is best to stress at the beginning that maintaining a blog, or writing home regularly by email will not be possible in rural Madagascar.

- 2) Similarly, to allow more opportunity for communication between participants and their family, participants should be able to choose to bring a cell phone with them, being made fully aware that using it for texting or emails could become expensive. This allows each participant to decide what level of communication they desire, and balance this with their own budget.

## **Logistics Recommendation**

- 1) For Madagascar 2012, the project leadership made use of the Delta Group Desk for booking flights to Madagascar. This was a lifesaver. It saved money and effort by working directly with the airline. This also made it possible to place a deposit on airfare to secure tickets before having to purchase the tickets in full. It is recommended that all future projects go through this same process where possible. In addition, any projects going to Madagascar are recommended to contact Delta Airlines directly to investigate direct flights from Europe to Madagascar through partner airlines.

## **Risk Management Recommendation**

- 1) Travel insurance must be better researched before purchasing, particularly if it is being purchased for the entire group. Madagascar 2012 used the International Volunteer Card, which did not prove to be sufficient coverage. Many participants felt additional coverage was necessary, and so purchased another plan as well.

## **Contingent Recommendations**

- 1) What participants and leaders can expect from a project should be clearly laid out in initial information about future projects. There were some instances where Contingent members were surprised by the living conditions, access to communications, and the overall impact of the project. By better explaining exactly what to expect, in very clear terms, youth and adults will be better prepared for living and working in a developing area.
- 2) Leadership within the Contingent was sometimes confusing. With Patrol Leaders, Assistant Patrol Leaders, a Court of Honour, Patrol Advisors and a Project Leadership Team, it was not always apparent who was most responsible. Simple leadership structures may work better in the future. By encouraging youth to take on roles that would traditionally be held by adults, it is easier to take into account youth opinions and perspectives when making decisions. The Court of Honour and Patrol system could then be discarded as it created more layers of leadership than were necessary for such a small group in such close quarters. Group discussions over meals or in the evening may be much better way to gain input and opinions from everyone.



## PARTICIPANTS

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Steven Avery, Ilderton, ON  
Carey Benson, Sherwood Park, AB  
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And many, many more!

# MADAGASCAR 2012

Ambato Boeni • Scouts Canada



It starts with Scouts.

Tout commence  
avec les Scouts.