

# Sustainable Land Management in Madagascar (SuLaMa)

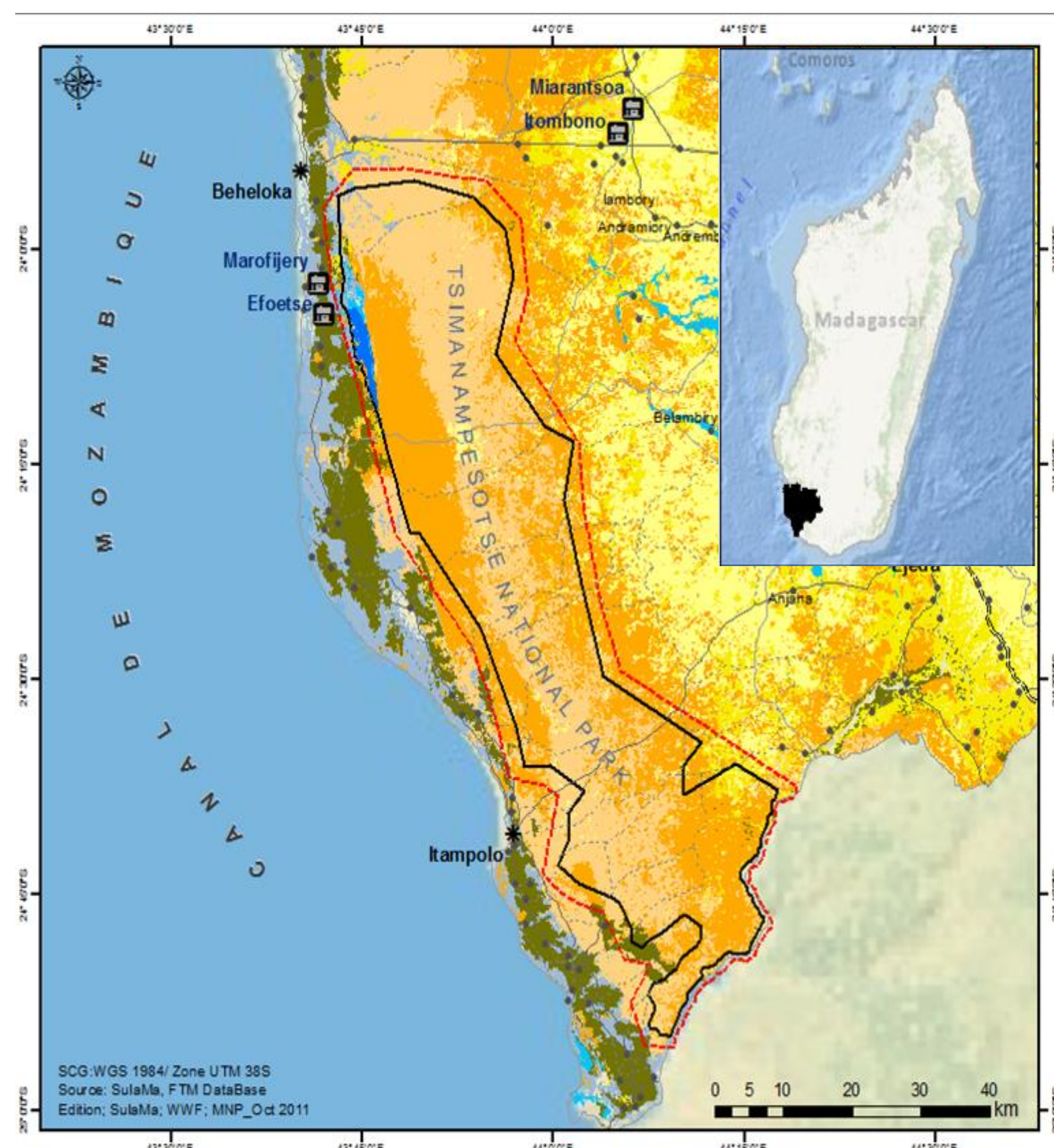
## Taboos in natural resource management

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### Project Background

The SuLaMa project investigates land use practices and their relation to ecosystem services and functions. The objective of SuLaMa is to develop sustainable land use strategies and - techniques as well as to formulate alternative income sources for the local population on the Mahafaly Plateau in south-western Madagascar. The people living near to the Tsimanampetsotse National Parc (see Map 1) practice subsistence economy and are highly dependent on climate conditions and natural resources.



Map 1: Tsimanampetsotse National Parc

**Working Package Socio-culture and Governance** (University of Greifswald and University of Tuléar) analysis (a) decision making processes, (b) social relationships, (c) the perception of natural resources and ecosystem services by local people with a special focus on rituals and healing, and (d) ways for knowledge transfer between local people (and science).

### Research methods :

**Semi-structured interviews:** divine-healers, possessed people, farmers, fishers, pastoralists, state traditional authorities and **participative observation:** funerals, rituals, divination, healing, daily activities, meetings

The use of natural resources by the ethnic group Tanalana is closely linked to the world of ancestors and natural spirits. The taboos concerning social life and the use of natural resources are predicted on (a) the existence of natural spirits (see column 1), (b) are inherited by ancestors (see column 2 ), or (c) established by divine-healers (see column 3). The transgression of these taboos disturbs the social and spiritual balance with direct consequences like social exclusion, illness or bad yields. To avoid these negative impacts the Tanalana demand permission before using natural resources which are owned (or inhabited) by spirits and god and they perform compensation and purification rituals to regain goodwill of the inhuman-beings



Picture 1: Tamarind



Picture 2: Radiated tortoise



Picture 3: Cattle pen



Picture 4: Devine healer

People conduct worship- and demand- rituals at sacred places which are inhabited by natural spirits or ancestors and by this prevent trees being cut for firewood or carbon production.

Special events in the past experienced by ancestors cause prohibitions of eating some animals (for ex. turtle) or using certain tree species for construction (livestock pens, houses, coffins), carbon production and fire wood.

The diviner-healer determine the taboos of using or eating certain objects for certain days or forever by exercising divination with seeds.

### Some limiting aspects for using taboos for protection:

- Some taboos concern only one clan or ethnic group
- Natural spirits can change their places
- Drought and economic pressure tempt the people to transgress taboos