

**Progress Report to the Better U Foundation**

**Madagascar Program**

**August 2011**



Nouvelle Dinah in her SRI fields near Morondava, May 2011

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## List of Acronyms

ACP	Africa/Caribbean/Pacific Region
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AU	African Union
AVSF	Agronomists and Veterinarians Without Borders
BUF	Better U Foundation
BVPI	<i>Bassins Versants Perimètres Irrigués</i>
CARD	Coalition for African Rice Development
CEDAC	<i>Centre d'Étude et de Développement Agricole Cambodgien</i> (Cambodian agricultural research center)
CI	Conservation International
CNOSC	National Commission for Civil Society Organizations
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSA	Agricultural Service Center
CTA	Centre Technique de Coopération Agricole et Rurale
DRDR	Direction Régionale de Développement Rural (decentralized services of Ministry of Agriculture)
DNH	Do No Harm
ESSA	<i>École Supérieure de Sciences Agronomiques</i> (University of Antananarivo's graduate school in agronomy)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FLM/Fanilo	Development Branch of the Malagasy Lutheran Church
FOFIFA	National Agricultural Research Institute
GCD	<i>Groupe Conseil Développement</i>
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIC	International Contact Group
GSDM	<i>Groupe Semi Direct de Madagascar</i>
GSRI	<i>Groupement SRI de Madagascar</i> (SRI Group of Madagascar)
HAT	High Authority of the Transition
HNI	Human Network International
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
INSTAT	National Institute for Statistics
IRIN	Integrated News and Information Network of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
MAP	Madagascar Action Plan
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MFR	<i>Maisons Familiales Rurales</i> (Rural Family Homes)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSDR	<i>Programme de Soutien de Développement Rural</i> (World Bank rural development program)
QMM	QIT Madagascar Minerals
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SAF-FJKM	Development Branch of the Malagasy Presbyterian Church
SRA	Improved System of Rice Culture
SRI	System of Rice Intensification
SRT	Traditional System of Rice Culture
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WWF	World Wildlife Fund for Nature

## Progress Report to the Better U Foundation

The overarching goal of the Better U Foundation's program in Madagascar has been to promote the dissemination of the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) across the country amongst small, rural farmers in order to enhance families' food security and improve their livelihoods while also contributing to the protection of the environment. This goal is supported by four inter-related, mutually reinforcing strategies: (1) supporting marginalized and vulnerable groups; (2) working with partners that have experience in rural development and conservation efforts (both international and local)<sup>1</sup>; (3) building on existing resources, capacities and infrastructure in order to move forward with SRI activities in a flexible, swift manner, to have a catalytic effect and to maximize the value-added of BUF's investments; and, (4) advancing our understanding of SRI through collaborative learning and exchange. The effectiveness of these four strategies is reinforced in two important ways: (1) promoting dialogue and dissemination about SRI in Madagascar across different players, and (2) fostering linkages and partnerships. In promoting partnerships between and among civil society organizations, the public sector, multi and bi-lateral donors and other development actors, the BUF's program in Madagascar encourages the pooling of resources and the establishment of productive relationships, and attempts to ensure transformational development and the sustainability of its actions.

The Foundation has adopted a two-pronged approach in its work that is consistent with the above-mentioned strategies and tactics: to support direct field activities of partners in order to boost the practice of SRI with rural farmers around the country, and to support the establishment and operations of the Secretariat for the SRI Group of Madagascar (GSRI) to serve as a hub for SRI activities in the country. The BUF attempts to promote synergies, complementarities and collaboration across these different groups.

As described more fully in Appendix A, the political and economic crisis over the past two years has produced an undisputable increase in social distress in Madagascar. Such deterioration has to be expected during an economic slowdown when people are losing jobs and revenues. The freezing of foreign assistance to the country by major donors until the political crisis is resolved and the surge in international prices of food and crude oil have also worsened the situation of many vulnerable households. In this context, the Better U Foundation's support has been critical and much appreciated, and demonstrates that small, strategic investments can have important results.

### Summary

- There have been three rounds of BUF grants since October 2008.<sup>2</sup> A total of 33 grants have been made thus far with 17 different partners. The grants are for one year, and range from \$ 4,500 to \$ 42,000, depending on the type of activities supported as well as the experience and capacities of the partners.
  - Over the 2008-09 year, nine partners worked in ten different regions of the country<sup>3</sup> (some projects were in the same regions, such as the Lions Club and ADRA in Alaotra Mangoro as well as Faniilo/FLM and the MAP Village in the Itasy Region, but their field activities did not overlap). While projects did not necessarily cover entire regions and BUF investments did not reach 100% of the country (rather specific villages or certain districts), we considered that this geographic spread across the country was positive and could serve as examples for other organizations and groups working on SRI. The Board of Directors also approved a grant for the establishment and operations of the SRI Secretariat in November 2008 making a total of ten grants for 2008-09.

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<sup>1</sup> Groups/organizations that have a field presence are often better placed to identify local needs, deliver flexible services, and engage with vulnerable and hard to reach groups.

<sup>2</sup> Background information and a detailed chronology of events regarding the Better U Foundation's work in Madagascar are included in Appendix B.

<sup>3</sup> There are 22 regions in Madagascar. Regions are divided into Districts, Communes and *Fokontany*, the lowest administrative level.

- Fourteen projects were recommended to and approved by the Better U Foundation's Board of Directors for the 2009-10 season, including thirteen projects for direct and indirect SRI activities in the field and one for continued support and strengthening of the SRI Secretariat. Eight of the fourteen projects were with BUF partners that had received grants in 2008-09 and six projects were with new partners. Field activities took place in fifteen out of the twenty two regions. One of BUF's partners, HNI, had more of a national rather than a specific geographic or regional focus given the nature of its activities, i.e. the dissemination of key development messages, including on SRI, through the internet and cell-phone technology. Similarly, the SRI Secretariat supported the coordination of SRI work across the country and collaborated with partners in almost all regions of the island.
- Nine grants have been made for the 2010-11 year, with eight grants to partners working directly in the field and one grant for continuing support of the SRI Secretariat. The BUF-supported SRI work is taking place in twelve regions of the country.
- The objectives of the Secretariat are three-fold: 1) to promote the exchange and sharing of information as well as the coordination of SRI activities at the national level and progressively at decentralized levels; 2) to establish an improved system of communication for SRI in Madagascar through the establishment of a system for the collection of SRI information and the development of a national web-site for SRI; and 3) to network with other groups and actors. Based at the offices of GCD, the SRI Secretariat is increasingly being recognized by practitioners, donors, researchers and journalists alike as the focal point of SRI information in Madagascar. Members of the group originally included the ten organizations that collaborated directly with the BUF over the 2008-09 season, but membership has now grown beyond those which are directly funded by the Foundation to over 200 groups and organizations. A formal association was created in late 2008 grouping these different members and is known as the *Groupement SRI de Madagascar* (GSRI), with the Secretariat handling the day-to-day tasks of its operations. Some of the accomplishments of the GSRI and the Secretariat thus far have included:
  - Promoting the exchange and sharing of information as well as the coordination of SRI activities at the national level through periodic meetings amongst partners, the engagement of the Ministry of Agriculture (a representative has been assigned to the Secretariat and has been attending the meetings along with other Ministry staff), and the creation of regional SRI platforms in collaboration with local partners and the decentralized services of the Ministry of Agriculture (13 regional platforms are in the process of being created to-date).
  - Improving communication for SRI in Madagascar through the establishment of a system for the collection of SRI data. The information is updated on a regular basis and includes SRI practices and approaches, area cultivated, number of farmers, harvests, difficulties and constraints as well as possible solutions, etc. and the creation of a Madagascar SRI web-site ([www.groupementsrimada.org](http://www.groupementsrimada.org)), created with the support of the Rotary Club of Lille, France, that regularly posts SRI news and has links to Cornell University's web-site and other groups.
  - Networking with other SRI groups in Madagascar beyond those funded by BUF and encouraging them to join the SRI Group and the National Secretariat for the coordination and sharing of information (e.g. BVPI/SD Mad, BVPI/Fafiala, University of Antananarivo, FOFIFA, Guanomad, Aga Khan Foundation, AgriSud, etc.).
  - Updating on a regular basis the mapping of SRI actors, collection of dissemination tools, etc. and making SRI information available for partners and farmers (where and how to obtain equipment and tools, inputs such as organic fertilizers, technical sheets and other training materials such as booklets, flash cards, DVDs, etc.).

- Maintaining contact with the decentralized services of the Ministry of Agriculture (DRDR) and getting their involvement in the collection and sharing of information as well as supporting their efforts to establish the regional SRI platforms.
- Participating in national dialogues on Madagascar rice policy sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture, such as at the sessions in late June 2011 to update the National Rice Development Strategy.
- Organizing the first national SRI workshop in Madagascar in November 2010, with the support of several donors (not just BUF).
- Organizing a booth at the annual 'FIER Mada' rural development fair in Antananarivo on behalf of the GSRI for the past three years, with the involvement and contributions of the members; the event attracts thousands of visitors (this year 40,000 people expected over 5 days); participating at regional agricultural and rural development fairs, such as in Sofia and Amoron'i Mania, to promote SRI and explain the goals of the GSRI.
- Preparing and getting a booklet published by the European Union-funded CTA (*Centre Technique de Coopération Agricole et Rurale*) that will be produced in several different languages (English, French, Portuguese, Swahili) and distributed in 89 countries of the Africa/Caribbean/Pacific (ACP) region; also developing a poster, validated by the Ministry and for distribution around the country, for illiterate farmers to be able to understand SRI principles and practices.
- Strengthening technicians' skills and understanding of SRI through periodic refresher training sessions, so as to enhance partner organizations' capacities and to develop a 'pool of technicians' for the country and elsewhere.
- Obtaining assets from the MCC offices when the program closed down in August 2009 due to the political crisis (vehicles, office equipment, furniture, etc.) to support the Secretariat's work.

### Important Progress

SRI promotion efforts in Madagascar have been both horizontal and vertical (for dissemination purposes with farmers but also for networking, alliance building and policy development with other NGOs, INGOs, donors and the government) in alignment with the strategies and key tactics outlined above. The BUF and its partners are documenting results (outputs, outcomes and impacts) in both dimensions. Some of the important progress is noted here at three levels: at the field level (farmers/households), at the institutional level (partners, organizations and programs), and at the policy, advocacy and awareness-raising level. A table summarizing key accomplishments is included in Appendix C.

#### *At the field level (farmers/households):*

- With the first round of BUF funding over the 2008-09 season, 5,214 farmers plus 3 teachers and 119 students benefited directly or indirectly from BUF-supported SRI activities (training, extension services, distribution of materials and small equipment, exposure sessions, etc.). Over the 2009-10 season, 4,232 farmers benefited directly or indirectly from BUF-supported SRI activities. Figures for 2010-11 have not been fully compiled (some projects are not over yet), and will be submitted in a summary table for all three years.
- During recent field trips of the BUF Resident Advisors, farmers, in general, demonstrated a good understanding of SRI principles. They were able to explain the different steps and clearly knew the differences between traditional rice planting (SRT), SRA (*système de riziculture amélioré* or improved rice

culture) and SRI. This reflects that the training they received from partner organizations was fairly solid. Farmers who were successfully able to adopt SRI noted that the method has helped to increase their yields and has contributed to improving their quality of life, either by shortening the 'lean season' because they have larger stocks that last longer or by increasing their household income if they sell some surplus rice.

For example, in CRS' evaluation of their work in the Vakinankaratra Region over the 2009-10 season, in which they interviewed a sample of 120 households out of 600 beneficiary families, the average yields were 3.28 T/hectare, as compared to 2.87 T/hectare prior to the project and as compared to 2 T/hectare for the regional average. The same study showed that families' food stocks lasted on average 54 more days longer as a result of their increased harvests (7.2 months, or 215 days, before the project, to 9 months, or 269 days after the project), reducing their vulnerability during the 'lean season'. Moreover, this shortening of the 'lean season' allowed 88.6% of the families interviewed to spend more resources (time, labor, inputs) for the off season cultivation (potatoes, beans, cassava) which also contributed to improving household food security whether through increased income or improved nutrition. 43.9% of respondents declared an increase in revenue, since they were able to sell a portion of their rice harvests. For these households, the average gain in revenue through the sale of rice was 220,000 Ariary (approximately \$ 110 US), a significant amount when one figures that many of Madagascar's poor live on less than \$ 1.00 US per day.

- Experience has demonstrated that farmers need a few years of support and follow-up, after the initial training and exposure to SRI, in order to ensure their uptake and adoption. It is often after 3-4 seasons that farmers feel confident and are able to master the methods. Similarly, during recent field visits, it was also observed that more and more farmers are switching from SRT to SRA. The trend seems to be that they will practice SRA for a few years (in lines, but not in grids; 15-30 day old plants vs. 8-10 day old seedlings) and then gradually make the shift to SRI. Several farmers confirmed that it was the material and technical support that they had received from BUF partners which allowed them to move more easily and quickly towards SRI, and made it more likely that they would be able to continue practicing SRI and not 'disadopt'. In a recent CRS article, for example, a woman noted that the mechanical weeder that she received reduced considerably the amount of time she had to devote to weeding: "If my 15-acre rice field is weeded by hand," she said, "it requires four women working over 2 days to get the job done." But the metal weeder provided by CRS and Caritas Antsirabe through funding from the Better U Foundation drastically cuts that time. "With the weeder, it requires only 2 people to get the job done in 1 day's time," she pointed out.
- During a recent field trip to visit BUF partners, farmers were asked why they had not been practicing SRI until just 2-3 years ago (before BUF support to the partner began). What was surprising in their responses was how many people indicated that they had been interested in SRI and had heard of it before (such as on the radio) but that they had lacked information as to how to practice SRI, how to identify trainers, how to get access to technical advice, and so on. The Better U's approach of working with partners that have a presence in the field in various regions of the country, of supporting partners' awareness-raising events (such as the projection of films, SRI Days) and of networking with groups such as the Agricultural Service Centers (CSA) has helped address this problem of lack of information.
- Some farmers have actually already had training in SRI a few years ago, before support from the BUF began. When asked why they had not been able to practice SRI afterwards (and what was the difference between the training then and now), they noted that previous trainings were one-off events, i.e. SRI trainers would train and then leave, with little or no follow-up. They pointed out that the current SRI support (from BUF partners such as SAF-FJKM) is different in that the technicians are local, can follow up after the training, can answer questions and can offer advice. Farmers said that their proximity 'gave them confidence and courage'. The Secretariat's work in promoting a 'pool of technicians' and in strengthening their capacities has been helpful in this regard (eg. several partners sent their staff to the workshop that the Secretariat organized in Antsirabe in March 2010) and should be further encouraged for additional rounds of refresher training with other technicians.

- The ‘group model’ for training and dissemination, with one leader who is trained in SRI who then trains three or four other farmers in a cascade manner (such as with FLM/Fanilo, CARE and WWF), seems to be effective. Based on discussions we had with farmers, these informal groups also create solidarity and encourage self-help and problem-solving amongst members. Partners who adopt this approach, however, need to make sure that those core ‘pilot farmers’ or ‘ambassador farmers’ have strong skills and have mastered SRI well enough so as to be able to guide other farmers, offer advice, answer questions, etc. They should attempt to document the notion of a ‘ripple effect’ through a cascade approach closely because it has important potential as an efficient and effective means of dissemination.
- The approach of *Maisons Familiales Rurales* (MFR) – working with youth in order to professionalize and upgrade their skills as the future generation of farmers in Madagascar – also seems to be effective since, in their view, youth tend to be more open to new ideas and methods. MFR has twelve centers across the country and welcomes approximately 40 young people (roughly ages 13 – 20 years old) at each center. The youth have dropped out of regular schools – perhaps their parents cannot afford to pay the fees or they did not get good grades – and end up working on family farms. The purpose of the MFR centers is to ‘recuperate’ these young people, to strengthen basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic, and to introduce them to new agricultural techniques/methods, including SRI, so that they do not simply continue the same practices as their parents and older generations. They work on an alternating system with two weeks in residence at the Center and two weeks back at home, over the course of two or three years, depending on how much remedial training they need. For the youth to be admitted to the program, parents must agree to allocate a certain portion of their land to their child so that s/he can practice what they have learned at the Center. The Resident Advisors met several families involved in this program who confirmed that it was because their child was exposed to SRI at the MFR center and then practiced it at home, that they saw the positive results and decided to adopt SRI themselves more widely and more regularly on a larger area of their fields.
- Farmers that we spoke with who were practicing SRI said that their work had generated a lot of interest amongst other family members and neighbors. Several mentioned that people thought they were ‘crazy’ when they saw them transplanting such little, fragile plants, but then were intrigued and became very interested when they observed how many tillers were growing. For those people, they needed ‘proof’ that SRI worked before they would try it themselves. As noted above, this idea of a ripple effect (*tâche d’huile* in French), with farmers learning from and imitating other successful SRI practitioners, is significant and needs to be further documented (the BUF partner Interaide has examined this a little bit), because it can obviously be an important means of dissemination.
- The GSRI has been continuing the pilot ‘SRI school’ initiative through which teachers and students in primary schools are introduced to basic concepts and principles of SRI. School lesson plans that the SRI Secretariat is developing and fine-tuning incorporate notions of SRI in subjects such as arithmetic, history, Malagasy culture, natural sciences, geometry, etc. Students are also encouraged to reflect on rice cultivation, to observe nearby SRI demonstration plots or school rice fields, and to compare results/observations with traditional rice fields. The idea is to expose children to SRI since they represent the future farmers of Madagascar, and they can share the ideas with their parents and family members at home. This initiative has generated a lot of interest with several other members of the SRI Group of Madagascar (e.g., SAF-FJKM, CARE, Peace Corps, WWF) and with other NGOs and groups in Madagascar as well. Initiatives are underway with twenty one schools in both rural and semi-urban areas (Antsahabe/Ambohimanandray, Morondava, Sambava/Antahala, Analamanga) and more are in the pipeline. Discussions are also taking place with UNICEF and the Ministry of Education for scaling up this work and incorporating it more formally into the primary school curriculum, once the pilot and learning phase is complete.

*At the institutional level (partners, organizations and programs):*

- As noted above, members of the *Groupement SRI* originally included the ten organizations that collaborated with the BUF over the 2008-09 season, but membership has now grown beyond those which are directly funded by the Foundation to over 200 groups and organizations. This represents an important breakthrough for SRI in Madagascar. Not only does it reflect a growing interest in and respect for SRI as an agro-ecological method, but it also shows the ‘democratization’ of SRI promotion in that its dissemination is no longer controlled by a few groups and information is more readily available (it is the view of many people here, that a couple of these groups wanted to retain control of SRI dissemination in Madagascar because they saw it as a lucrative business and an important source of funding!).
- Two important events for SRI promotion in Madagascar warrant special mention: 1) the organization of a two-day workshop for SRI trainers that took place in April 2010 in Antsirabe (three hours south of Antananarivo) in order to exchange experiences, promote the sharing of best practices, review training and adult learning techniques, discuss dissemination and uptake challenges, etc. with a view toward developing a qualified ‘pool of technicians’ that could be a resource for local and international NGOs, associations, farmers’ groups, etc., that would have a common vision and understanding of SRI as a methodology, and that could be deployed internationally, upon request, to other countries that seek to learn about SRI, such as Burundi or Senegal. 2) the National SRI Workshop that took place in November 2010. This three-day event brought together 177 participants from around the country, representing local and international NGOs, farmer associations, national and regional offices of the Ministry of Agriculture, research bodies, the private sector and donor agencies. Key topics that were covered include SRI and environment/climate change/health; SRI and food security; SRI and action-research; and Integration of SRI in national policies, programs and projects. In addition to the Better U Foundation, sixteen other groups contributed, in cash or in kind, to the sponsoring of the workshop. An important outcome of the workshop is the fact that SRI has now been included in the National Strategy for Rice Development as of June 2011. A full report of the workshop is available (in French) upon request.
- Also as noted above, several other groups contributed to the planning and organization of the National SRI Workshop last November. Several members of the GSRI, including BUF partners, served on the planning committee with the Secretariat in the weeks prior to the workshop, and paid for some of their field staff to attend. The BUF contributed 14.85% of the budget of the workshop and the rest was contributed by sixteen other donors and partners, such as JICA, IFAD programs, a World Bank rural development program and the Aga Khan Foundation (total workshop budget was approximately \$ 34,000 US). This, too, reflects an increased interest in SRI, an acknowledgement of its role in promoting food security and protecting the environment, and a growing commitment to its dissemination.
- Several donors have indicated their interest in possibly co-financing some SRI activities, such as for a communications campaign, support for the regional platforms, a training of trainers, and an update of the ‘capitalization exercise’ (lessons learned, best practices, data base), etc. These groups include IFAD, the Aga Khan Foundation, Agronomists and Veterinarians Without Borders (AVSF), the World Bank-funded *Programme de Soutien de Développement Rural (PSDR)*, JICA, etc. This spark in interest and the momentum that is gaining amongst donors and other players is due in part to the National Workshop last November (quality of presentations, rich discussions, sharing of results and experiences) as well as the inclusion of SRI in the national rice strategy.
- An important development over the past two years has been the emergence of regional SRI platforms. There are now thirteen regional SRI platforms across the country. These platforms bring together different groups (associations, NGOs, government offices, rural development programs, private sector) at the regional level that are interested in promoting SRI. These platforms are a spin-off of the national *Groupement SRI* but it should be noted that it was the local actors themselves that identified the need to have a forum at a decentralized level, relevant for their context, for the sharing and exchange of SRI practices, and that it was



not a top-down initiative. The regional platforms are at different stages of development, with some having been created a year ago and others more recently, just after the national workshop in November 2010. Such was the case with the regional platform in Betsiboka, for example. The representative of the Agricultural Service Center (CSA) was inspired and motivated by the other regional platforms that had presented their work at the national workshop. Upon his return to Maevatanana, the regional capital, he mobilized support from the GSRI Secretariat and convoked other players to launch a regional platform. The regional platform in Haute Matsiatra is further along in its development and the Regional Director for Rural Development, Mr. Jeri Rafaliarison, is quite dynamic and supportive of the platform's efforts. Some of the groups are in the process of forming formal associations so that they can be a recognized entity and can be eligible for donor funding. While we laud such efforts, we also encouraged them to try to move forward even without a formal structure or external support, as there are many initiatives they can undertake jointly at little or no cost, such as negotiating better rates for equipment, materials and transport costs if they buy in bulk, using their collective voice to lobby with local authorities and the Ministry of Agriculture for a more favorable SRI environment (eg. improved water control, better seed quality), organizing SRI days in their communities, broadcasting SRI messages on the local radio stations, etc.

*At the policy, advocacy and awareness-raising level:*

- For the past 2 ½ years, the Secretariat has been gathering information on SRI in Madagascar through data collected from its members and the regional platforms. The information-gathering process is based on the use of two different tools:
  - An information sheet (data collection sheet) sent by email to members and partners twice a year, in May and December, i.e. at the end of each of the main agricultural seasons for rice; the information on each campaign for members who return the forms is included in the system.
  - Field observations by the Secretariat team during the different missions in the regions; the data is collected directly and checked in the field.

In 2008-09, there were 66,000 farmers identified as SRI practitioners over an area of 10,800 hectares. This information was provided by 32 organizations working in 15 regions. For 2009-10, these figures increased considerably, with 159,000 SRI farmers over 106,000 hectares. Information was provided by 62 organizations in 20 regions. (Figures for 2010-11 are not yet available) The increase is partly due to more farmers beginning to adopt SRI but also to more groups reporting their data, more regions becoming involved through their regional platforms, improved collaboration with the decentralized services of the Ministry of Agriculture and more trips to the field by the Secretariat team.

BUF Partners are asked to submit mid-term and final reports for the grants that they receive, in which they describe progress against objectives, results achieved, plus problems encountered and solutions. They are keeping records of their work (number of farmers, surface area cultivated, yields, inputs), but have been encouraged to track farmers' practices and results, as well as the household impacts (increased revenue, improved nutrition, larger buffer stocks for the 'lean season'), more closely and more carefully. The documentation of these efforts and the data collection can feed into the Secretariat's information system, can provide evidence of the effectiveness of their various approaches, and can inform future programming and decision-making for their own organizations, for donors and for national policy. For example, WWF is interested in promoting SRI as an alternative to *tavy* (slash and burn farming) and to prevent encroachment on forest areas. Farmers we met in Ivohibe acknowledged that with the small plots of land they have and with low rice yields they get using traditional methods of rice cultivation, they would likely be tempted to cut down forests for extra land or forest income, so they said that SRI is helpful in their community's conservation efforts. It is perhaps too early to see the direct links between WWF's SRI work and reduction in pressure on forests, but WWF is trying to track this important point.

Thus, the data collected still does not provide a complete picture of the SRI situation in Madagascar because groups submit their information on a voluntary basis (and the Secretariat does not have the human or financial resources to go out to each region to collect and verify such data) and independent farmers who are not formally part of a 'program' or 'project' may not be captured. Nonetheless, it is still a good source of information; improving the data collection process remains an ongoing task for the Secretariat and was identified as a priority action at the National SRI Workshop last November.

- The *Groupement SRI* (GSRI), through its Secretariat and its members, was successful in lobbying to get SRI incorporated into the National Strategy for Rice Development for the first time in June 2011; the Ministry of Agriculture used the statistics of GSRI in its official document because they are considered more recent and reliable (the last agricultural census dates back to 2004-05 and was published at the end of 2007); a specific project dedicated to SRI promotion has been included in the Ministry's proposal to the Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD), to be considered at an upcoming meeting in Uganda in November 2011. The Secretariat actively participated in the preparation of this project proposal.
- The *Groupement SRI* has been invited to serve on three important working groups linked with agro-ecology and environment : 1) a climate change working group for getting approvals for SRI and the offsets for greenhouse gas emissions in order to be eligible for carbon credit financing; 2) a working group on Conservation Agriculture, along with *Groupement Sémi Direct Sous Couvert Végétal* (GSDM), WWF, the FAO, etc.; and 3) a regional platform for the Indian Ocean on agro-ecology and climate change, with funding from IFAD.
- The Ministry of Environment has decided to include SRI as a 'success story' of an agro-ecological approach that contributes to environmental protection efforts, at a side event at the upcoming conference in Durban (November 2011) as a follow up to the Cancun Conference on climate change and the environment. The *Groupement SRI* is helping the Ministry to prepare the appropriate materials (hand-outs, posters, presentation).
- The Special Rapporteur for the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter, in the preliminary conclusions from his trip to Madagascar in July, mentioned SRI as an important agro-ecological method for enhancing food security and made specific note of the important collaborative work between the Ministry of Agriculture and the GSRI in getting SRI included in the national policy (see Appendix D).
- The Secretariat has been coordinating two important action-research initiatives with GSRI members: the first, to evaluate the increase in yields with SRI using different types of organic fertilizer, and the second, to explore SRI's role in possibly shortening the duration of the rice cycle. The partnership includes the Ministry of Agriculture, NGOs and associations, the University of Antananarivo's Department of Agronomic Sciences (ESSA), the national agricultural research institute (FOFIFA), and organic fertilizer suppliers (Guanomad, STOI Agri, Tananamadio and Zina Bio). The first initiative consists of organizing experimental plots in different regions of the country where partners are working following a common protocol established by FOFIFA for comparison purposes. The organic fertilizer groups provided a free supply of fertilizer as a contribution to this effort. The aim is to compare rice yields using traditional rice cultivation methods vs. SRI with regular compost vs. SRI with regular compost enhanced with different organic fertilizers. Preliminary findings from the second initiative show how SRI can shorten the rice cycle by 20-30 days as compared to traditional rice growing methods. There are some very important and interesting implications of that finding – farmers may be able to have multiple crops if they time the plantings right, they can sell their crops a little earlier and therefore get income sooner, the 'lean season' is shorter for them, and by harvesting a bit earlier, there is less risk of them losing their rice to flooding, cyclones, etc.

## Lessons Learned

- Key to the process here in Madagascar has been that it has been very participatory and open, with several groups involved, and that it has been guided by an overall strategy but not following a rigid road map. Things have evolved over time, new partners have joined the initiative, and BUF has been very flexible and has been able to change course, when appropriate, and to take advantage of new opportunities.
- The BUF is not an operational agency in that it does not have a large team of agronomists, technical advisors and field staff on the ground carrying out activities. In Madagascar, for example, we rely on a pair of Resident Advisors who help coordinate our efforts but we also collaborate with a number of partners at different levels such as local and international NGOs, the private sector, the Ministry of Agriculture, an agricultural research institute and Malagasy universities.
- BUF partners have been selected because of their commitment to sustainable development, their solid experience working with farmers in rural areas, their potential for scaling up activities, and their strong administrative and financial capacities. While our projects do not necessarily cover entire regions and BUF investments do not reach 100% of the country (rather specific villages or certain districts), this geographic spread across the country has had a positive impact and now serves as a catalytic stimulus for other organizations and groups working on SRI.
- BUF-supported activities are often either integrated into ongoing, larger programs, or are a continuation of existing activities. Examples include CARE and the Tambiroa Project in southern Madagascar funded by the European Union, CRS' Global Food Crisis Project funded by the agency's core monies, ADRA's Tantsaha Project supported by USAID Title II program, and Interaide's ongoing rural development activities in the east. This has the advantage of building on existing resources, capacities and infrastructure to move forward with SRI activities swiftly and of maximizing the value-added of BUF's investments.
- Some of the local partners that the BUF supports (e.g. Fanilo/FLM, Fekritama, SAF-FJKM, MFR) have well-established networks across the country and have strong potential for further dissemination and scaling-up of SRI activities in Madagascar.
- Several partners – such as CRS, CARE, CI and WWF Madagascar – are expected to have a strong impact in Madagascar because of their solid experience in rural development. They also have the potential for a wider reach across other countries in Africa, given their international recognition and reputation as well as their presence in many other countries on the continent. These are important strategic alliances that BUF is attempting to cultivate at this time.
- Environmental groups such as CI, WWF and WCS are also important members of the GSRI and have become allies in the promotion of SRI because of the method's positive environmental impacts. SRI uses less water, encourages the use of compost and organic fertilizers, and helps reduce pressure on forest areas when farmers no longer have to resort to *tavy* (slash and burn farming) if their harvests increase and livelihoods improve. These groups, as well as the GSRI Secretariat and others (such as Good Planet and AgriSud), are also interested in SRI and climate change and are exploring the potential of SRI in the reduction of greenhouse gases and seeking ways for obtaining carbon credit financing to support the promotion and dissemination of SRI.
- A variety of dissemination approaches have been adopted, most notably “farmer-to-farmer” sharing of experiences and suggestions, direct training at training centers, a cascade approach (training of trainers or farmer leaders who then train and coach others), technical extension services for follow-up support, model farmers and demonstration fields, as well as field observations and classroom lessons for primary school children.

- We have witnessed real movement and progress on SRI in Madagascar measured in terms of the numbers of farmers adopting the method, the land area cultivated and the growing yields per hectare, as well as the number of groups joining the GSRI. Collaborative learning and sharing amongst partners at different levels, encouraged through the Secretariat, has contributed to this dynamic growth. We have been inspired by the SRI ‘learning alliance’ that was promoted in India.
- A lot of information came out during discussions with farmers and it seemed that technicians were not always aware of important issues that farmers confronted (such as seed varieties, the quality or appropriateness of certain types of weeders, etc.). Technicians should develop the habit of truly listening to farmers; communication needs to be in both directions and not just a one-way conveying of information (trainer to farmer) or an extractive process. Technicians and project managers should be encouraged to have discussions and exchanges with beneficiaries more frequently so as to capture important information, to learn about their needs and experiences, to get their feedback and to help develop, when necessary, appropriate solutions.
- Another important lesson for members of the GSRI is to be aware of key aspects of the broader rice chain, beyond promoting increased production through SRI, such as micro-credit, the construction/repair of dams and irrigations systems, seed production and management, community granaries and rice storage, marketing, and the organization of local farmers’ associations. If, for example, farmers cannot sell the surplus rice that they grow or if they cannot store their stocks properly, they might not be motivated to adopt SRI. These are important parts of the overall rice chain that the GSRI and the BUF seek to follow and understand.
- From the outset, an important strategy for the GSRI and the BUF has been to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, at different levels, in order to build a network and to nurture a ‘social infrastructure’ for the effective promotion of SRI. For example, in addition to networking with groups working directly in the field, the GSRI’s Secretariat has been involved in ongoing dialogues with the Ministry of Agriculture and other donors (European Union, JICA, USAID, etc.) to help ensure that SRI is systematically woven into Madagascar’s national rice strategy and policy, and that it continues to be embraced at higher levels. As noted above, the GSRI now works with faculty at the University of Antananarivo to encourage collaborative research on various SRI-related topics (such as with Professor Bruno Andrianaivo and his students) and to include SRI in their teaching programs.
- During field visits and in partners’ reports, water control is cited as an important issue and remains a barrier for wide-scale adoption of SRI. Access to micro-credit (to address cash flow issues for covering up front expenses), diminishing seed quality and the need for improved varieties have also been raised often. As noted above, the regional platforms are potentially well-positioned to lobby and negotiate with the Ministry of Agriculture and with donors on these issues, such as to develop and fund programs for the rehabilitation/construction of water systems, dams and irrigation canals.
- With regards to the promotion of SRI in Madagascar, we recognize that each sector can and should play a role and should capitalize on its strengths, skills and comparative advantage. The interactions and exchanges that the Secretariat encourages are key to such collaboration. The private sector, such as small equipment providers and organic fertilizer suppliers, is motivated and has the mechanisms in place to get their goods and materials out to rural areas. Government authorities are important for setting agricultural policy, maintaining standards and providing an environment that is conducive to the adoption of SRI. Members of civil society – such as local NGOs, church groups, the media – have an important role to play as well in the dissemination and spread of SRI. Indeed, as noted in the Special Rapporteur’s preliminary conclusions from his July 2011 visit to Madagascar (Appendix D), ‘capacity building of the GSRI could lead to the establishment of a national alliance that would create a multiplier effect in terms of economic development in rural areas by creating non-farmer jobs, such as for the production of weeders or guano.’

## Conclusions

Despite some challenges and constraints that have been noted in this and previous reports, there has been significant progress on SRI in Madagascar over the past couple years, thanks in large part to the support of the Better U Foundation since it established a presence in the country in 2007 and began funding partners' work on SRI three years ago. This progress is seen in the active engagement of a wide range of organizations involved in the SRI Group of Madagascar, the fact that SRI is more often on 'the radar screen' of different groups working in rural development and environmental protection, the increasing number of farmers practicing the method, the amount of land area that is being dedicated to SRI cultivation, and the growing yields per hectare. Collaborative learning and sharing among partners at different levels have contributed to this dynamic growth. Indeed, this progress was acknowledged in the recent report of the University of Wageningen which noted that SRI has seemed to have spread in two 'waves' in Madagascar: the first through the work of Father De Laulanié and the *Association Tefy Saina* in the 80s and 90s, and the second stimulated by the involvement of the Better U Foundation and the enrolment of former President Marc Ravalomanana in the mid-2000s.<sup>4</sup>

This is a critical stage for SRI promotion in Madagascar. In order to strengthen and consolidate the positive results gained thus far and to render SRI activities sustainable over the long run, it is important that SRI promotion in Madagascar have continued support for several more years, from some combination of sources, including the Better U, if possible. If the current initiative is dropped, there is a risk of losing a substantial portion of the progress that has been made. Particularly in the current context, where much bilateral and multilateral assistance has been frozen or cut back substantially because of the political situation (Appendix A), continued funding will be essential to ensure the sustainability of activities that have been launched, to reinforce farmers' skills and confidence, and to expand partners' reach to include new regions and beneficiaries. Moreover, continued support for the SRI Secretariat is also recommended in order to strengthen and consolidate the initial results and to render it sustainable in a few years. Partners have expressed their appreciation for the information-sharing and coordination role that the Secretariat has played thus far. Future tasks could also include maintaining a roster of national expertise regarding SRI (trainers, technical experts, equipment providers) and sharing such a roster with different groups and associations in Madagascar and beyond, especially in other African countries; gathering information about SRI from around the world and disseminating it among the groups practicing SRI in Madagascar and putting groups practicing SRI in Madagascar in touch with those other practitioners; identifying other innovative ways to share SRI information in Madagascar through local radio programs and rice-growing contests; pursuing the important work on SRI and climate change; and continuing to engage other relevant ministries to the discussion on SRI such as the ministries of environment, commerce and education.

It is therefore recommended that the BUF attempt to seek further international support in order to continue on the path of progress and to maintain the positive momentum that the Foundation has already most generously contributed to and helped to generate. Appendix C highlights key accomplishments thus far and recommendations for future action.

Some quotes from colleagues at partner organizations, sister agencies and donors expressing their appreciation of the work of the Better U Foundation in Madagascar over the past few years:

- 'In just a short amount of time, the Better U Foundation has become a key player in promoting SRI in Madagascar.'
- 'I appreciate working with the Better U Foundation because it is pragmatic, flexible and results-oriented. It is also not heavy administratively.'
- 'Thanks to the support of the BUF, there is a real movement in SRI in Madagascar. There has been real progress over the past year.'

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<sup>4</sup> See "The Evolution of the System of Rice Intensification as a Socio-technical Phenomenon: A Report to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation", April 2011, Wageningen University and Research Centre, Technology and Agrarian Development Group Development Economics Group, p. 165.

- ‘The BUF support has been very valuable. It would be a shame if BUF had to halt its funding this year.’

Some quotes from farmers:

- ‘The Better U Foundation, our partner, made it possible to promote and popularize SRI in our area. Technicians came on the spot to enable us, farmer leaders, to benefit from various training and practical sessions. They equipped us with materials such as weeders, pulverizers, as well as insecticides. The assistance and the financial support of the Better U Foundation were essential and allowed the promotion and the development of this method in our region.’
- ‘I am married, I have children to feed. Our rice production will no longer be enough to provide for the needs of my family. I am therefore in the position of having to use this method [SRI] on my entire rice field in order to increase the yield and thus to have a marketable surplus and a sufficient quantity for our own consumption. SRI makes it possible to produce rice in sufficient quantities to meet all the needs of my family and to have a marketable surplus as well as a supply of seeds for the next season. Presently, I can buy zebus and organic fertilizer. The results are satisfactory. I plant 3 times per year. Having zebus is important for us. Zebus are the equivalent of a bank account.’
- ‘I am a rural farmer and I chose to use the SRI method for various reasons. I had always used the traditional method for rice growing, a method which was passed on from generation to generation and which is well rooted in our village. However, our rice production has never increased. We have always lived under precarious conditions.’
- ‘The use of this new method has improved our living conditions. We can now ensure the education of our children. I can send my 2 children to study in town. Thanks to the use of SRI, it is possible for us to pay the children’s school fees and to cover their monthly expenditures.’

## Appendix A

### Overview of Country Situation<sup>5</sup>

#### *Political context*

Madagascar has been undergoing a political crisis since early 2009. The turmoil was generated by a change of power led by Andry Rajoelina (at that time the mayor of the capital city Antananarivo) against President Marc Ravalomanana, who was forced into exile in March 2009 because of pressure from street demonstrations and support of the Army. Andry Rajoelina took the title of President of the High Authority of the Transition (HAT). The international community has not recognized the new regime because of the unconstitutional access to power.

Crisis mediation efforts by the African Union (AU), SADC (Southern African Development Community), the United Nations (UN) and the *Groupe International de Contact* (GIC) intended to broker an agreement on the establishment of an inclusive transitional government and a timetable for elections have not succeeded thus far. A power-sharing deal was signed in August 2009 in Maputo, Mozambique between Mr. Rajoelina and three main political leaders – former Presidents Ravalomanana, Ratsiraka and Zafy, heads of the *trois mouvances*. However, despite protracted negotiations, the parties failed to agree on key cabinet posts for the transitional government which led Mr. Rajoelina to announce in December 2009 that he was unilaterally dismissing the Maputo and Addis Ababa agreements. This led the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on March 17, 2010, to apply individual sanctions to 109 members of the HAT and related institutions, including travel bans and the freezing of assets.

Over the past several months, the HAT has pursued attempts to establish a ‘roadmap’ (*feuille de route*) for managing the transition and preparing for the upcoming presidential and legislative elections. A coalition of civil society groupings (CNOSC) also launched an initiative to try to find a Malagasy solution to the political crisis and received the support of SADC. The participation of the three ex-presidents has not yet been secured, but the process has moved forward (not without controversy) with the organization of a National Conference in September 2010 and a national referendum to vote for a new constitution in November 2010. Negotiations have been ongoing and there have been several versions of the roadmap put forward, at times supported by a number of Malagasy political parties and at times disputed by other groups. There have been recent meetings in Namibia and South Africa (Sandton) to advance the negotiations and SADC continues to consult with different groups to finalize the roadmap. It is too early to say whether these recent initiatives will succeed and whether the new transition government will be seen as sufficiently neutral and inclusive to receive the support of the international community, but Dr. Leonard Simao, the SADC delegate negotiating on behalf of Joachim Chissano, recently indicated in late June that the roadmap would be launched as of late July, but at the time this report is being written (early August) there has still been no solution.

#### *Socio-economic situation*

Madagascar is sometimes called the ‘eighth continent’ because of the diversity of its flora and fauna, much of which is unique to the island. Madagascar is also an attractive destination for tourists. Unfortunately, the strength of these attributes has not been matched in terms of economic performance. After being one of the better-performing African economies in the 1960s, Madagascar lost ground due to several decades of economic mismanagement. From the 1970s until the mid-1990s, growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) averaged only 0.5% while the population grew at about 2.8% per year. Per capita income declined from US \$ 473 in 1970 to US \$ 410 in 2008 placing Madagascar among the world’s poorest countries. According to the 2005 household survey, more than two-thirds of the population (68.7%) lives below the poverty line and the poverty rate in rural

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<sup>5</sup> Several sources were consulted for the preparation of this section of the report, including World Bank documents such as its recent report entitled ‘Aid Effectiveness During Political Instability: A Look at the Social Sectors’, various IRIN and International Crisis Group reports, UNICEF statements and the web-sites of USAID, CARE and Catholic Relief Services.  
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areas is significantly higher than in urban areas. The 2009 Human Development Index ranked Madagascar 145 out of 182 countries.

Between 2002 and 2008, Madagascar embarked on an ambitious transformation path that brought improvements in social, economic and governance indicators. The economy grew at an average of 5% per year, and poverty declined to 69% from its peak of 80% in 2002 but the macro-economic situation remained fragile. Governance continued to be weak and social indicators were still low, and prospects were slim that Madagascar would be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Magnifying these challenges were significant and persistent deficits in human capital that continued to place enormous demands on the government and the economy – first to educate people, then to generate jobs for them. Madagascar also faced the challenges of preserving its unique environment and biodiversity which is of global significance.

Since the beginning of 2009, the political crisis has led to a decline in economic growth, exacerbated by the negative impact of the global financial turmoil on export-oriented activities. The local economy has been in recession since the second quarter of 2009. GDP contracted by almost 5% in 2009, with a marked decline in export-oriented sectors (especially tourism) and a drastic cut in construction because of lower public investment.

The political crisis has had a negative impact on the economy, but with variations across sectors. Most export-oriented activities, as well as those linked to public sector funding (such as construction), have been in disarray, as reflected by the fall in exports (down by 50% between 2008 and 2010). Concurrently, the primary sector has been resilient with an exceptional rice harvest in 2009 (up by 40% from 2008 levels) and the mining sector production jumped significantly thanks to the QMM project that started its production in mid-2009. Since the beginning of the political crisis, the government has followed prudent fiscal and monetary policies. This cautious behavior has led to drastic cuts in public expenditures (other than wages), with almost no capital spending in 2009 and during the first semester of 2010. New external financing from the recent Chinese investment in the mining sector (around US \$ 100 million in budget support) has been allocated to the Presidency to finance a series of new investment projects (i.e. hospitals).

The economic situation nonetheless remains extremely fragile. First, economic recovery will continue to be linked to the resolution of the political crisis and the government's recognition by the international community. A large fraction of official aid, which represents almost half of the budget and 75% of the investments, remains on hold, leading to a decline in the delivery of social services and, as explained above, to significant cuts in the public investment program. Second, a series of policy decisions in strategic sectors (such as in telecommunications and petroleum) have sent mixed signals to operators and new investors, raising concerns about the government's commitment to reforms and exacerbating the risks of collusion between dominant firms and decision-makers. Third, Madagascar remains vulnerable to external shocks, including changes in food and oil prices on international markets and climatic conditions (cyclones and drought in the South). Indeed, in December 2010 the World Food Programme announced that 720,000 people in eight southern districts – Betsioky, Ampanihy, Beloha, Bekily, Tsihombe, Ambovombe, Taolanaro and Amboasary – were food insecure after a second consecutive year of drought.

According to a recent IRIN report, the latest five-year household survey (*Enquête Périodique Auprès des Ménages*) conducted by Madagascar's National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) showed higher poverty levels, especially in rural areas, where about 80% of the 20 million population live. Using a \$ 230 individual annual income benchmark as the poverty line, INSTAT reported that nationwide poverty increased from 68.7% in 2005 to 76.5% in 2010, while rural poverty rose from 73.5% to 82.2%. A rising income disparity between urban and rural populations was highlighted.

“When you think that the years before the crisis were growth years, this shows poverty has increased by nine percent in just two years, which is directly attributable to the domestic political crisis and compounded by the global economic crisis,” the head of a leading international institution in Madagascar was quoted in the same



IRIN report.

The burden of paying for education in Madagascar has shifted to the poor after donor funding was frozen in the wake of the March 2009 coup. About 70% of the education sector had been funded by donor countries, but since Andry Rajoelina seized power from former President Marc Ravalomanana with the backing of the military, state financial support to the education sector has become erratic.

According to 2008 estimates by the Ministry of Education, the average Malagasy has less than five years of education and only 60% of students complete primary school, which is considered low by regional standards. The government's failure to pay cash transfers during the 2009-10 school year has led to the end of free primary school education, with public schools demanding higher registration fees to compensate for the loss of income. Registration fees are used to pay running costs and help pay the salaries of 'community teachers', who have no formal training but account for about two-thirds of the country's roughly 70,000 primary school teachers.

Although there is no formal data available, spot checks by UNICEF at schools in October 2010 indicated that enrolments were experiencing a downward trend. Céline Guillaud, coordinator of Graines de Bitume (a local NGO that works with street children and at-risk youth in Antananarivo), was quoted in the recent IRIN report: "What we are noticing on weekly visits to the poorest neighbourhoods is that the number of families that are no longer in a position to pay enrolment costs for their children in public primary schools is increasing." The NGO provides day care services, assists in the enrolment of primary school children, and helps with school equipment, meals and medical expenses. Although Graines de Bitume usually focuses on families living on the streets, the Coordinator notes that non-single parented families, living in proper houses, where both parents work but can no longer meet the expenses linked to schooling for their children, are now seeking their help.

#### *Donor landscape*

Madagascar, one of the world's poorest countries, has lost about US \$ 400 million in donor support since the 17 March 2009 coup in which Andry Rajoelina, with the support of the military, deposed President Marc Ravalomanana. A World Bank report, 'Aid Effectiveness During Political Instability: A Look at the Social Sectors', published on the second anniversary of the island's illegal transfer of power, said donor money traditionally contributed about half the government's budget, and around 70% of public spending, making it "by far, the main source of funding in social sectors", but this had fallen by about \$200 million a year.

The political crisis, now in its third year, remains unresolved, preventing donors from reviewing their decision to freeze all aid apart from emergency funding. The AU and SADC also cannot reinstate trade benefits and lift sanctions. However, the freezing of donor funding has been counter-balanced by increased humanitarian assistance for education, health and social protection, rising to \$ 260 million in 2010 from a pre-crisis amount of \$ 180 million. Infrastructure, productive activities and institutional support had experienced the steepest decline in funding, the World Bank report notes.

"In the absence of donor confidence there is less financing available to fund programs for health and agriculture and economic development. In all sectors there are fewer resources to support the poorest people in Madagascar and in this absence there are clear trends of important indicators worsening," the Country Director of CARE International (a BUF partner), John Uniack Davis, was recently quoted as saying in the IRIN report. "There are crises of structural food insecurity, particularly in the arid south, that will not be resolved until there is significant long-term donor investment... rather than short-term crisis solutions, and clearly this long-term kind of investment doesn't look to be forthcoming in the current climate of [political] uncertainty," he continued.

"Since the crisis, Madagascar, a highly donor-dependent country, has experienced a dramatic decrease in development assistance and national budget allocated to crucial services for children," UNICEF Representative Bruno Maes told IRIN. "These financial shortfalls, along with political uncertainty, have threatened the

continuity and quality of basic social services.”

## Appendix B

### General Background & Detailed Chronology of Events for BUF Madagascar

#### General Background

- The Better U Foundation (BUF) initiated its activities in Madagascar in July 2007. Plans were originally to organize an SRI ‘Summit’ for ministers of agriculture from African countries in order to make the method more widely known across the continent. Following a visit to Madagascar in August 2008 by members of the Foundation’s Board of Directors, program activities were re-oriented to support direct field work of partners and to boost SRI with farmers in Madagascar, with the idea being that the Madagascar could become a model/showcase to inspire other countries in Africa to adopt and promote SRI. A ‘MAP Village’ workshop took place in October 2008, with SRI as a pillar activity. This was an important turning point for SRI in Madagascar because many partners and groups took part in the workshop and the Ministry of Agriculture and the MAP team (Madagascar Action Plan, Madagascar’s version of a Poverty Reduction and Strategy Paper or PRSP) gave their support and backing. In addition to providing support to partners’ field activities, the BUF also supported the establishment and operations of a Secretariat for the SRI Group of Madagascar (GSRI). The Secretariat serves as a hub for SRI activities in Madagascar. The objectives of are three-fold: 1) to promote the exchange and sharing of information as well as the coordination of SRI activities at the national level and progressively at decentralized levels; 2) to establish an improved system of communication for SRI in Madagascar through the establishment of a database for the collection of SRI information and the development of a national web-site for SRI; and 3) to network with other groups working in SRI and complementary sectors: local and international NGOs, the University of Antananarivo’s department of agronomic sciences and the national agricultural research institute (FOFIFA), donors, the private sector, etc.
- Two other important events for SRI promotion in Madagascar that warrant special mention include: 1) the organization of a 2-day workshop for SRI trainers that took place in April 2010 in Antsirabe (3 hours south of Antananarivo) in order to exchange experiences, promote the sharing of best practices, review training and adult learning techniques, discuss dissemination and uptake challenges, etc. with a view toward developing a qualified ‘pool of technicians’ that could be a resource for local and international NGOs, associations, farmers’ groups, etc., that would have a common vision and understanding of SRI as a methodology, and that could be deployed internationally, upon request, to other countries that seek to learn about SRI, such as Burundi or Senegal. 2) the National SRI Workshop that took place in November 2010. This two-day event brought together 177 participants from around the country, representing local and international NGOs, farmer associations, national and regional offices of the Ministry of Agriculture, research bodies, the private sector and donor agencies. Key topics that were covered include SRI and environment/climate change/health; SRI and food security; SRI and action-research; and Integration of SRI in national policies, programs and projects. In addition to the Better U Foundation, 16 other groups contributed, in cash or in kind, to the sponsoring of the workshop. An important outcome of the workshop is the fact that SRI has now been included in the National Strategy for Rice Development as of June 2011.

#### Detailed Chronology of Events, 2007 – 2011

- When our work with the BUF originally started in July 2007, we brought together a group of organizations/individuals interested in SRI to help with the planning of the SRI Summit. This group included Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), USAID, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the Ministry of Agriculture, Association Tefy Saina, the US Embassy, the MAP office, etc. The Summit planning committee was very engaged and gave a lot of their time and ideas. We were fortunate to have a committed group, made up of individuals who were very interested in SRI and wanted to promote it further.

- Early on, we realized that for the Summit to be successful, we needed to get a better handle on what SRI work was taking place in Madagascar (groups were working in a scattered, isolated manner and information was lacking) and, to the extent possible in the months prior to the expected Summit in early 2009, to try to promote SRI even further. Otherwise, invited guests to the Summit would naturally ask themselves, ‘why a Summit on SRI in Madagascar when it is not even really systematically practiced by farmers or embraced at higher levels?’. To help with this, the BUF and the planning committee commissioned a study by *Groupe Conseil Développement* (GCD), a local consulting group that had already been working on SRI for a few years (eg. contracts with MCC), in order to undertake a mapping exercise or inventory of SRI in Madagascar – who was doing what where, and with what practices and training materials, etc. GCD’s work took place under the direction and guidance of the planning committee.
- In the same spirit of preparing for the SRI Summit and trying to showcase work on SRI in Madagascar (as an example for other African nations), a core working group met on several occasions during the first semester of 2008 to brainstorm about moving forward with a ‘national SRI campaign’. This group included Glenn Lines (MCC), Josh Poole (ADRA), Philibert Rakotoson, Secretary General of the Ministry of Agriculture and Mamy Andriantsoa, Director General of Agriculture from the same ministry, and a few others. It was generally agreed that there needed to be a ‘motor’ or ‘hub’ for SRI activities for the purposes of gathering information and data, sharing across groups, trying to develop a communication strategy, etc. At the time, people recognized that this hub should operate outside the Ministry of Agriculture but would need to work in collaboration with the Ministry and other actors. They again looked to GCD to play this role.
- This idea of a hub percolated for a little while, and the Ministry even presented it to the group of donors involved in rural development (nothing really came of it, though!).
- Plans for Jim Carrey’s visit started in the early summer of 2008 and he, along with John Jolliffe and members of the BUF Board of Directors, came to Madagascar in late August/early September 2008. During their visit, we had the opportunity to visit SRI fields in Amparafaravola (near Ambatondrazaka), meet with members of the Summit planning committee and have an audience with President Marc Ravalomanana. By the end of their stay, it had become apparent that, at this stage, it would be better to ‘invest’ in SRI promotion in Madagascar (training, provision of materials and inputs, etc.) with a view towards trying to make Madagascar a showcase for other countries rather than organizing a separate (and expensive) one-off Summit event that may have limited impact. Plus, with the African Summit expected to take place in June/July 2009 on the theme of food security, President Ravalomanana had given his support for including a ‘satellite’ event on SRI during the African Union Summit.<sup>6</sup> The MAP Team’s participation was reinforced and discussions for a 4-day ‘MAP Village’ workshop in October 2008, with SRI as a pillar activity, began.
- As noted above, the idea of a coordinating body (later dubbed a ‘Secretariat’) started to emerge after several months of consultations amongst members of the SRI Summit planning committee, even before the August 2008 visit of the BUF delegation. There was consensus and agreement amongst the different groups (Ministry of Agriculture, MCC, ADRA, US Embassy, Catholic Relief Services, etc.) for the need for such a coordinating body or ‘hub’ (outside and independent of the Ministry but in collaboration with them) that would take on the tasks of promoting SRI, sharing information, collecting data, encouraging exchanges, carrying out a communication plan and conducting action-research in an effort to launch and help support a national SRI campaign prior to the AU Summit and in order for SRI to ‘take off’ in Madagascar because groups to that point had been operating in an isolated, scattered manner. The idea was concretized during and after the October 2008 MAP Village Workshop where SRI was included as a pillar agricultural activity. Norman Uphoff shared the experiences of the Oxfam-supported secretariat in Cambodia with CEDAC which helped give shape to our ideas for a Madagascar National Secretariat. This upfront support for a

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<sup>6</sup> Of course, this African Union Summit did not take place in Madagascar as planned due to the political crisis and the coup in March 2009; the High Authority of the Transition (HAT) that took over was not (and still has not been) recognized by the international community, including the AU. Progress Report to the BUF, August 2011, V.4

coordination body/secretariat was very important because it ensured 'buy-in' from key players that would be involved in SRI promotion in Madagascar.

## Appendix C

### Summary of Key Accomplishments and Areas for Future Action

SRI promotion efforts have been both horizontal and vertical (for dissemination purposes with farmers but also for networking, alliance building and policy development with other NGOs, INGOs, donors and the government) in alignment with the strategies and key tactics outlined above. The BUF and its partners are documenting results (outputs, outcomes and impacts) in both dimensions. Some of the important progress is noted here at three levels: at the field level (farmers/households), at the institutional level (partners, organizations and programs), and at the policy, advocacy and awareness-raising level.

Level	Key Accomplishments	Areas for Future Action
Field Level (farmers/households)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 5000 rural farmers benefited directly or indirectly from BUF-supported SRI activities in the first year of grant-making (2008-9), and more than 4000 benefited directly or indirectly in the second year of grant-making (2009-10). 3<sup>rd</sup> year figures are still being collected.</li> <li>• Farmers noted that SRI has helped to increase their yields and has contributed to improving their quality of life, either by shortening the ‘lean season’ because they have larger stocks that last longer or by increasing their household income if they sell some surplus rice.</li> <li>• Material and technical support that farmers have received from BUF partners has allowed them to move more easily and quickly towards SRI, and made it more likely that they would be able to continue practicing SRI and not ‘disadopt’.</li> <li>• The Better U’s approach of working with partners that have a presence in the field in various regions of the country, of supporting partners’ awareness-raising events (such as the projection of films, SRI Days) and of networking with groups such as the Agricultural Service Centers (CSA) has helped address the problem of lack of information about SRI.</li> <li>• A variety of dissemination approaches have been adopted, most notably “farmer-to-farmer” sharing of experiences and suggestions, direct training at training centers, a cascade approach (training of trainers or farmer leaders who then train and coach others), technical extension services for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing support to partners in order to ensure the sustainability of activities that have been launched, to reinforce farmers’ skills and confidence, and to expand partners’ reach to include new regions and beneficiaries.</li> <li>• Continuing the series of refresher trainings with SRI technicians so as to further develop the ‘pool of technicians’ as a resource for the country and continent.</li> <li>• Identifying potential financial partners/complementary funding that would alleviate some of the constraints farmers face and that would facilitate their uptake and adoption of SRI. Several embassies in Antananarivo, for example, have small grants programs that could help support the construction of small irrigation systems or dams for better water control, the establishment of community granaries for improved storage of crops, road improvements for better access to markets, etc. Food-for-Work and HIMO (High Intensity Labour) initiatives funded by different donors could also be explored.</li> <li>• Further documenting successes and lessons learned, especially with regards to the farmer-to-farmer and cascade approaches, on the economic benefits of SRI, and on SRI as an alternative to ‘slash and burn’ techniques and as an effective method for diminishing the encroachment on forests and protected areas.</li> <li>• Pursuing the SRI school initiative and working with partners such as UNICEF, local teacher training colleges and the Ministry of Education to scale up these activities and to make them sustainable.</li> <li>• Carrying out a ‘listening exercise’ with farmers and technicians at the field level (as well as with NGOs and other programs at the institutional level) to capture their experiences and impressions of the effectiveness and impact of development programs that promote SRI in Madagascar.<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> The Listening Project, based out of CDA Collaborative Learning Projects in Cambridge, MA ([www.cdainc.com](http://www.cdainc.com)), seeks the reflections of experienced and thoughtful people who occupy a range of positions within recipient societies to assess the impact of aid efforts by international actors. Those who work across borders in humanitarian aid, development assistance, peace-building efforts, environmental conservation, and human rights work can learn a great deal by listening to the analyses and suggestions of local people as they reflect on the immediate effects and long-term impacts of such efforts. Progress Report to the BUF, August 2011, V.4

	<p>follow-up support, model farmers and demonstration fields, as well as field observations and classroom lessons for primary school children. The ‘group model’ for training and dissemination, with one leader who is trained in SRI who then trains three or four other farmers in a cascade manner (such as with FLM/Fanilo and WWF), seems to be effective. The approach of <i>Maisons Familiales Rurales</i> (MFR) – working with youth in order to professionalize and upgrade their skills as the future generation of farmers in Madagascar – also seems to be effective since, in their view, youth tend to be more open to new ideas and methods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The GSRI has been continuing the pilot ‘SRI school’ initiative through which teachers and students in primary schools are introduced to basic concepts and principles of SRI. Initiatives are underway with 21 schools in both rural and semi-urban areas (Antsahabe/Ambohimanandray, Morondava, Sambava/Antahala, Analamanga) and more are in the pipeline.</li> </ul>	
<p>Institutional Level (partners, organizations and programs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the <i>Groupement SRI</i> originally included the 10 organizations that collaborated with the BUF over the 2008-09 season but membership has now grown beyond those which are directly funded by the Foundation to over 200 groups and organizations.</li> <li>• The Secretariat organized a 2-day workshop for SRI trainers in April 2010 in order to exchange experiences, promote the sharing of best practices, review training and adult learning techniques, discuss dissemination and uptake challenges, etc. with a view toward developing a qualified ‘pool of technicians’ that could be a resource for local and international NGOs, associations, farmers’ groups, etc., that would have a common vision and understanding of SRI as a methodology, and that could be deployed internationally, upon request, to other countries that seek to learn about SRI, such as Burundi or Senegal.</li> <li>• The National SRI Workshop that took</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing partners’ capacity to monitor progress and measure impact at the field level. The documentation of their efforts and the data collection can feed into the Secretariat’s information system, can provide evidence of the effectiveness of their various approaches, and can inform future programming and decision-making for their own organizations, for donors and for national policy.</li> <li>• Providing technical assistance to partner organizations to help them develop practices and tools that facilitate ongoing planning, self-assessment and learning. In the same spirit, given the current context, strengthening partners’ capacities to be more ‘conflict sensitive’ by exposing them to the Do No Harm (DNH) approach for considering the impact of development and humanitarian assistance programs on the context where they work in order to avoid unintended negative impacts and to maximize positive ones.<sup>8</sup></li> <li>• Continuing the collaboration with partners involved in conservation and environment efforts (WWF, WCS, CI) with a view towards contributing to environmental protection and to</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> See also the web-site of CDA Collaborative Learning Projects for more information about the DNH Project ([www.cdainc.com](http://www.cdainc.com)). Progress Report to the BUF, August 2011, V.4

	<p>place in November 2010 brought together 177 participants from around the country, representing local and international NGOs, farmer associations, national and regional offices of the Ministry of Agriculture, research bodies, the private sector and donor agencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An important development over the past 2 years has been the emergence of regional SRI platforms. There are now 13 regional SRI platforms across the country. These platforms bring together different groups (associations, NGOs, government offices, rural development programs, private sector) at the regional level that are interested in promoting SRI and adapting the method for their local context.</li> <li>• The <i>Groupement SRI</i> is serving on 3 important working groups linked with agro-ecology and environment : 1) a climate change working group for getting approvals for SRI and the offsets for greenhouse gas emissions in order to be eligible for carbon credit financing; 2) a working group on Conservation Agriculture, along with <i>Groupement Sémi Direct Sous Couvert Végétal</i> (GSDM), WWF, the FAO, etc.; and 3) a regional platform for the Indian Ocean on agro-ecology and climate change, with funding from IFAD.</li> </ul>	<p>responding to climate change effects through SRI, and particularly getting approvals for carbon credit financing of SRI initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing further support to the GSRI Secretariat for an additional year. This would allow the team to continue their coordination and exchange efforts both nationally and internationally, to move forward with the establishment and consolidation of the regional SRI platforms around the country, to do additional rounds of workshops for the pool of SRI technicians, to foster data collection and information gathering, to launch a communications campaign, and to pursue the ‘SRI school’ initiative through which teachers and students in primary schools are introduced to basic concepts and principles of SRI.</li> <li>• Cultivating the strategic alliances with partners that the Foundation is collaborating with, such as CARE, CRS, CI, WWF and WCS because of their solid experience in rural development in Madagascar and because of their potential for a wider reach across other countries in Africa, given their international recognition and reputation as well as their presence in many other countries on the continent.</li> <li>• Continuing to share learning among groups as well as across sectors and across different regions.</li> <li>• Linking to other donors in order to scale up successful activities.</li> <li>• Carrying out a ‘listening exercise’ with NGOs and other programs and groups (as well as with farmers and technicians at the field level) to capture their experiences and impressions of the effectiveness and impact of development programs that promote SRI in Madagascar.</li> </ul>
<p>Policy, Advocacy and Awareness-raising Level</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With support from the BUF, the Secretariat established an information-gathering and data collection system for SRI. In 2008-09, there were 66,000 farmers identified as SRI practitioners over an area of 10,800 hectares, with information provided by 32 organizations working in 15 regions. For 2009-10, 159,000 SRI farmers were identified, practicing over 106,000 hectares. Information was provided by 62 organizations in 20 regions. (Figures for 2010-11 are not yet available).</li> <li>• SRI was officially included in the national strategy for rice development as of June 2011. The Ministry of Agriculture used the statistics of GSRI in its official document because they are considered more recent and reliable (the last agricultural census dates back to 2004-05 and was published at the end of 2007).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing and implementing a communications strategy for SRI dissemination at the national and decentralized levels (television and radio spots, posters, newspaper articles, success stories, stakeholder engagement, etc.) in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and other partners.</li> <li>• Strengthening the information collection system of the GSRI Secretariat.</li> <li>• Publishing a high quality document with case studies from Madagascar (such as the recent publication of Africare, WWF and Oxfam), with partners like CARE, AVSF, CRS, WWF, etc.</li> <li>• Bringing the BUF’s Madagascar work to the attention of other groups and donors, both inside Madagascar and outside. Different SRI players in Madagascar (partners, farmers, BUF representatives, researchers, etc.) could benefit from participating at different international fora on rural development, food security and agro-ecological approaches (conferences, workshops, etc.) in order to promote SRI to a wider audience and to share the experiences and successes from</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The potential of SRI as an agro-ecological approach and the role of the GSRI were acknowledged and recognized by the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food during his mission to Madagascar in July 2011.</li> </ul>	<p>Madagascar.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following up on the possibility of organizing a debate/panel discussion on agro-ecological approaches, including SRI, with the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter, in New York during the fall semester of 2011.</li> <li>Seeking additional opportunities for exchanging and sharing learning in other countries in Africa and where BUF is working (eg. Haiti and Mali).</li> </ul>
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## Appendix D

### Preliminary Conclusions and Press Release of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food July 2011 Mission to Madagascar

#### Preliminary Conclusions (Excerpts translated from the original in French)

##### *Building on agro-ecology, agriculture of tomorrow*

Madagascar has an impressive range of agro-ecological approaches with an underappreciated potential with regards to erosion control and the diversification of farmers' economic activities. According to information received by the Special Rapporteur, a national strategy that would build on these practices could make the "Big Island" self-sufficient in rice within three years.

The System of Rice Intensification (SRI), for example, can double or triple yields in the majority of local situations, and can quadruple yields when the six principles are applied. It also allows an 80% savings on seed (making it possible for small farmers to purchase improved seeds) and a 30% reduction in water consumption. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the fact that the Ministry of Agriculture has developed a National Rice Development Strategy, prepared in consultation with the *Groupement SRI* – a network of 210 member organizations involving 156,000 farmers and 13 regional platforms – and that includes for the first time SRI as part of a national strategy.

This system [SRI] can be practiced on 20 – 28% of Madagascar's rice fields, yet only 105,000 hectares are being utilized for SRI, a third of its potential. Capacity building of the *Groupement SRI* could lead to the establishment of a national alliance that would create a multiplier effect in terms of economic development in rural areas by creating non-farmer jobs, such as for the production of weeders or guano.

#### Press Release : Madagascar's hungry population is taken hostage

[22 July 2011] ANTANANARIVO – In Madagascar, one in two inhabitants is food insecure. This proportion rises to 68% in the South of the country. The international sanctions imposed on the island and governmental inaction are aggravating the situation. "All food security indicators are in the red", stated Olivier De Schutter at a press conference closing his official mission to Madagascar.

"The result is that Madagascar today has one of the highest levels of child malnutrition in the world, with levels comparable to those of Afghanistan or Yemen," he concluded.

Following the coup d'état that led to the formation of the High Transitional Authority on 17 March 2009 and the failure of various mediation efforts since then, Madagascar is being subjected to economic sanctions. "The decision to suspend Madagascar from the African Growth and Opportunities Act by the United States has cost at least 50,000 jobs in the textile sector, which had accounted for half of Madagascar's exports," noted the Special Rapporteur. The European Union also has halted programmes that were ready to be signed before the political crisis, suspending all development aid channelled through the Government. "The total loss in expected aid is estimated to be about 600 million euros. Although humanitarian aid by donors channelled through NGOs has significantly increased, the nature of this assistance does not allow for a sustainable reduction of poverty levels."

The Special Rapporteur recalls that "circumventing the State means depriving it of its institutional capacity in the long term and mortgaging opportunities for development in the medium term. We are in the process of adding Madagascar to the list of fragile States."

“It's high time now to reconsider the sanctions regime. With regard to the High Transitional Authority, it must not use these sanctions as a pretext for inaction to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe for its population.”

According to the Special Rapporteur, this double political deadlock has unfortunately affected two promising dynamics launched prior to the crisis: the development of high performance ecological agriculture and land reform aimed at securing access to land for the population.

“Madagascar has a unique potential for ecological agriculture,” he said. “We know that the system of intensive rice cultivation, a pure Malagasy invention, allows to double, triple or even quadruple yields. A national strategy to support this type of ecological production could make the large island self-sufficient in rice in three years, whereas it is currently importing annually 100,000 to 150,000 tons of rice. But for this to happen, the authorities must decide to act.”

“Similarly, the process of securing land titles also appears to have stalled,” continued the UN Special Rapporteur. Recalling the attempt by Daewoo Logistics to take possession of 1.3 million hectares in 2008, the Special Rapporteur noted, “Before the political crisis, investors eager to acquire the best lands of the island had entered a race against the process of titling of land plots of rural households. Today, investors are scarce, chilled by the political conflict, and the land certification process has slowed down. Started in 2006, the initiative still covers only 416 municipalities out of a total 1,550 due to a lack of resources. What used to be a race is now moving forward in slow motion.”

Closing his intervention, Olivier De Schutter expressed doubts about the fairness of certain fishing agreements: “fishing agreements that Madagascar has entered into with the European Union or with Asian companies are reminiscent of the treaties that colonial empires signed with their colonies in the 19th century,” said the UN expert.

“Legally or not, the seas are looted while fishing could be an engine of development for the island. The fact that industrial fleets come to fish without quotas, in the context of depleting marine resources, should be impermissible in the 21st century,” said the expert. “I call on the donors and international organizations to help Madagascar strengthen its surveillance capacity of its coasts and its negotiating capacity in order to develop a sustainable exploitation of the seas, to the benefit of its population. One cannot possibly monitor 1 million square kilometres with half a dozen ships.”