

Year 8 “Rare Rainforests” Decision Making Exercise

Madagascar, an island off of the coast of Africa is one of the world's poorest countries. Madagascar is ranked 149 out of 175 countries for its wealth. Most Malagasy live on less than one dollar per day and nearly half of the country's children under five years of age are malnourished.

Madagascar has large numbers of unique species: of more than 200,000 known species found on Madagascar, about 150,000 exist nowhere else. 70 kinds of lemurs, thousands of tree species and 223 different frogs can only be found in Madagascar. However, it is one of the most threatened ecosystems on the planet. More than 80 percent of the forests are gone- half of them have been chopped down since the late 1950s.

90% of Madagascar's rainforest forests have been cleared and converted to scrub land. Each year a third of the country burns and 1% of its remaining forests are chopped down. Heavy rains cause the soil to be eroded where deforestation has occurred



Figure 2: Eroded hills where rainforest has been chopped down

The largest area of Rainforest in Madagascar is along the North East Coast. Some areas of forest are protected from deforestation with National Park Status but there are still huge areas of forest available for companies who want to make money very quickly.

An area of rainforest 10kmx10km (★) is currently being fought over by three groups of people:

1. **The Lemur Organic Vanilla Company**
2. **The Rosewood Logging Company**
3. **Conservation International Charity**

Each group has a plan to use the area of rainforest in a different way.

On the next three pages of the booklet is information about each option. Read each option carefully. What are the pros and cons of each?

You will represent the government of Madagascar who will need to make a decision over which group will be given the rights to use this area of forest

Name	Republic of Madagascar
Capital	Antananarivo
Population	18.6 million
Life expectancy	Female 61.5 yrs, male 58.3 yrs
Adult literacy rate	Female 65.3%, male 76.5%
GDP	\$7.322 billion
GDP per person	\$257
Main exports	Vanilla, shellfish, coffee
Unemployment	50%

Figure 1: Development data for Madagascar



Figure 3: A map of Madagascar

Option 1: Lemur International- A Fair Trade, Organic Vanilla Farm



“Although Madagascar is incredibly beautiful, it is a very poor country. To keep themselves alive, many families are clearing the rainforest to plant a variety of food crops. But now we (Lemur International) aim to establish a vanilla farm, making it possible for these families to earn a living by growing and processing vanilla, which thrives in tropical forests without the need for cutting them down.”

“We will provide 150 farmers with many community benefits, including health care, vaccines, and educational supplies.”

“We will grow our beans using certified organic methods, protecting soil quality and using no chemical fertilizers or pesticides. Each pod is dried only in natural sunlight.”



Figure 4: A vanilla vine growing up a rainforest tree trunk

Madagascan Vanilla Fact file

- 80% of the world's vanilla comes from Madagascar.
- Vanilla is one of the most sustainable crops grown in rainforest regions.
- 2200 tons are produced each year
- Vanilla is worth \$200 per kg and is the second most expensive spice.
- Most vanilla is exported to USA, France and Germany.
- Cyclones destroy 20-40% of the vanilla crop each year.
- Vanilla farms cause a decline in the lemur population of the area.
- Many women are employed to sort and smell the vanilla pods before they are exported.
- New roads have to be built into the rainforest to collect the vanilla from farms such as Lemur Int.

Figure 6. Vanilla Fact File



Figure 5: Women employed sorting and smelling vanilla pods.

Option 2. The Rosewood Logging Company- Commercial Logging

The Rosewood Logging Company

“Madagascar’s government has recently legalised the export of rosewood logs. We aim to take advantage of this law to cut down this area of forest and export all of the Rosewood logs to China to make expensive furniture”.

“Each rosewood tree is worth \$10,000. We will pay taxes and export fees of over \$1 Million to the Malagasy Government for the trees felled in this area of forest”

“Over 1000 local people will be employed to clear the forest”

“In 2009 we exported 33,000 trees by boat to China”

“The Madagascan government has made \$130,000,000 from rosewood exports in the last few years.”



Figure 7: A felled Rosewood tree



Figure 9: A Luxury rosewood bed for sale in China



Figure 8: The Rosewood Logging Company Base

Option 3. Conservation International- A Scientific Reserve



CONSERVATION
INTERNATIONAL

“We aim to protect this area of land completely; setting up a scientific reserve- a place where scientists from all over the world can come and study the plants, animals and climate of an untouched rainforest. This area is one of the most special on the planet for wildlife!”

“The area of land is home to a group of critically endangered Black Indri lemurs of which there are less than 1000 left on earth!”

“We aim to move all of the local tribes to outside of our area so that there is no risk of anyone cutting down the forest or hunting the lemurs. We will build a school and provide a teacher so children don’t have to work in the forest”

“Every person on Earth deserves a healthy environment and the fundamental benefits that nature provides. But our planet is experiencing an unprecedented drawdown of these resources, and it is only by protecting nature and its gifts – a stable climate, fresh water, healthy oceans and reliable food – that we can ensure a better life for everyone, everywhere.”



Figure 10: Young boys work cutting down trees in the forest

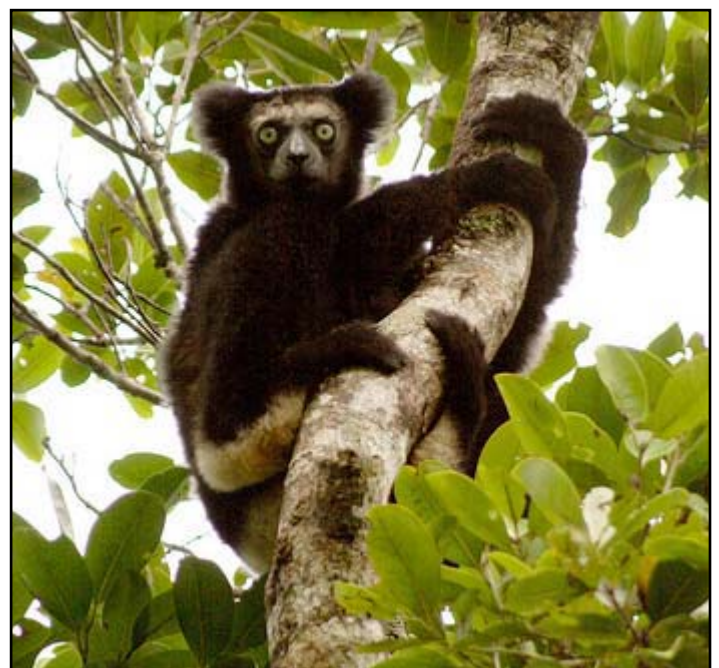


Figure 11: An Endangered Black Indri Lemur