

## The story of Madame Kalo, from Anketrakabe: from khat to red pepper plants

Anketrakabe is a small town in northern Madagascar. It is here that Tolotra, Graine de Vie's area manager, has been patiently working for several years to raise awareness about reforestation, with the support of My Lovely Planet. It is also here that Madame Kalo lives, a courageous woman who was once convinced that planting trees was pointless.

At first, like many in her community, she thought that 'reforestation doesn't make money'. Her daily life revolved around growing khat, a psychotropic plant that is widespread in the region. Every day, she harvested the leaves and sold them at the market in Diego Suarez. It was a well-known, profitable, immediate activity — much more tangible to her than planting a tree and waiting years to see the fruits of her labour.

But one day at the market, something changed. Among the stalls, she spotted bags of red pepper, a rare spice highly sought after by tourists. Its high price caught her attention. Intrigued, she remembered one of our awareness-raising sessions: Tolotra had talked about trees with high economic value, capable of providing a sustainable income while protecting the land.



Curious, she decided to visit our nursery. A few weeks later, she left with a handful of young red pepper plants. 'Just to try,' she said, without really believing it would work.

A year later, she was completely surprised. Her pepper plants had grown well, and the first seeds were already appearing. This success overwhelmed her. She realised that another future was possible — a more stable future, one that was more respectful of nature and more beneficial for her family.

Today, Ms Kalo has begun gradually replacing her khat fields with red pepper plants. She no longer wants to produce solely for the daily market, but to plant for tomorrow. Her goal is clear: to provide her children with a healthy environment, create a sustainable forest, and earn a stable income from high value-added trees.

With our support, she now plans to replant every year. We have advised her to diversify her plantations to create mixed reforestation that is more resilient and sustainable.

For us in the field, stories like this are a huge source of motivation. Change does not happen overnight. It requires patience, education and concrete examples. But thanks to people like Mrs Kalo, we see every day that attitudes are changing, that hope is growing, and that reforestation can become a real path to the future.

Thank you to My Lovely Planet for its support. Thanks to you, real change is happening, one tree at a time.