

Dear friends of Vafoha Vakiteny.

In this Newsletter we will present some of the work we have done since last Newsletter, and also how Vakoka Vakiteny currently is affected by the outbreak of the Corona virus.



The situation caused by the pandemic is very challenging for Madagascar. The health system is in poor condition, and the government has therefore put in place quite severe measures of curfew, forced closure of all but essential services and strict controls to prevent the spread of the virus. This includes all educational institutions. Ms Hanta is therefore momentarily laid off from her work as a kindergarten teacher. She cannot visit schools, and the print houses and the book shops are closed.

However, as you will see in this Newsletter, Vakoka Vakiteny is still present among the people, and we have several ideas on how to respond to this global crisis with tangible, local interventions.

Best wishes,

Mparany Rakotondrainy

Manager of **Vafoha Vakiteny**

COVID-19

The Malagasy government is doing much information work and consistently implementing measures with the aim of preventing a health disaster on the island. Radio and TV are sending news with information on how people can protect themselves and their families, and the military is walking around in all settlements shouting out instructions. Leaflets and brochures are being distributed. Even in February, before the first case was reported in Madagascar, teachers got training in health and sanitation which they could pass on to the students and their parents before the schools closed down early March. This way, most households on the island have been well informed prior to the outbreak. The number of corona cases in Madagascar are now 106.

The corona outbreak represents a huge challenge for the island. Many people have no savings, and



President Andry Rajoelina in a campaign handing out face masks and other equipment.

Source: Andry Rajoelina's Facebook Page

any lockdown and restriction in the economy is going to impact on their abilities to earn enough money to buy food for themselves and their family. Daily labourers or people with a small, private business are the most vulnerable, but also employees who now fear losing their jobs. We hope that the tremendous effort of the government will pay off and prevent any large scale outbreak, causing lost lives and lost livelihoods.



People fighting for their livelihoods amidst the pandemic.

Illustration photo by Yahoo News

Vakoka Vakiteny and the coronavirus

Vakoka Vakiteny is still continuing the work, but not entirely like before. Ms Hanta has set up a temporary library in her home. Adults and children can come and borrow books. They usually come by foot because public transport has been stopped. Getting access to books is particularly important now when schools are closed and the students have few or no possibilities to get learning materials. We are also encouraging teachers with whom we cooperate closely, to open their school libraries in a responsible way, allowing children and adults to borrow books to the extent that the government permits such initiatives.

Vakoka Vakiteny is planning two responses related to the pandemic. Firstly, we will put a free electronic version of the book *Madagascar – a Living Museum* on our web page. This has been



Ms Hanta

planned for a long time, and now it is more important than ever to provide electronic materials. More and more people in towns and cities have a phone on which they would be able to download the book. Through this, we hope that more people will get inspiration and knowledge from our environment book. The Association will send out news with the link to the book when putting it on the webpage has been finalised. We would encourage all who download it to donate to Vakoka Vakiteny to make up for those who cannot afford a donation.

The second project that Vakoka Vakiteny will implement in Antsirabe and on the countryside where we have contacts, is to put up hand washing stations. In cooperation with the sub-district (fokontany), we will put up barrels with water and soap where we encourage people to wash their hands when they go to the market or when they come back. These barrels will also contain the logo of Vakoka Vakiteny and a message that encourages people to read while they are in lockdown. The communities will take responsibility for refilling the tanks whenever they are empty.

A simple, home-made, but complete hand-washing station (including soap, the print of a message and transportation) is estimated to cost around 15 Euro.



We have been inspired by the water tanks along the roadside in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where Sophie and Mparany currently live. Setting up such tanks is quite easy and may be a simple, yet effective way to prevent the spread of the disease.

We would like to encourage you to donate to the Association in Germany for this project in the face of the global crisis in which we find ourselves. Please mark your transfer with "COVID-19" and drop the chairperson of the association an email stating your donation (klaus.christian.kuspert@gmail.com). This way we will be able to know quickly how many hand-washing stations we can put up at any time.

We would also like to appeal to everyone to donate whatever you can to international organisations which work in underprivileged areas of the world, where this crisis is likely to have a devastating impact. We can only fight this pandemic if all countries and all people stand together in solidarity.

Bank details:

Förderverein Madagaskar Schul- und Kinderbücher e.V.

Sparkasse Schopfheim-Zell

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Book Distributions

Before the outbreak of coronavirus, Vakoka Vakiteny was active in distributing books. The events presented here are some highlights of the last 6 months.

Ms Hanta was in December for the first time at SOS Children's Village in Antsirabe Mahazoarivo. The SOS Children's Village has around 50 children from vulnerable backgrounds, whom the parents bring in the morning and take home again in the evening. SOS Children's Village provides free food and education to them.

Ms Hanta distributed the books *Tsingolangola*, *Takoboka*, *Dadanaivo Tefy*, *Sedram-Piainana* and *Fano*. She also taught children and adults about how to use books at school and how to take care of books. She encouraged the students to write their own stories and send them to her. This is something she always does at schools, and it is amazing to see how many talented young artists and authors there are if the children get the chance.



Picture above: Some of the children at SOS Children's Village, Antsirabe

Picture on the bottom left: *Fano* was a hit among many of the students

Picture on the bottom right: Ms Hanta introduces Vakoka Vaiteny for children and staff





These beautiful girls have been dressed up in their uniforms used for big celebrations. The coming of Vakoka Vakiteny was such a big event for SOS Children's Village.

Two Schools in Marginalised Neighbourhoods

Around New Year, Ms Hanta went to two different schools who have never worked with Vakoka Vakiteny before.

The first school is owned and run by Mr Jacky as a charity for poor children. Therefore, Mr Jacky also works as a translator, as he does not generate income from the school. He has helped Vakoka Vakiteny with proofreading of several books before, so we were happy to come and distribute books at his school. Ms Hanta told about loving to read and also the importance of taking care of the environment. This school ranges from preschool up to grade 5.





Mr Jacky, the principal and owner of the school, is dedicating his life to affordable education for children in Madagascar



Ms Hanta always takes much time to explain about books for the students, and happily stays on to chat with anyone who is particularly interested.

Even after the event of book distribution is over, children and staff often stay in contact with her. It is not uncommon that children come to her or send her their stories and pictures, on which she happily provides feedback.

On the picture she explains that the book is telling the story of a girl who suddenly cannot be a child anymore, but has to take responsibility for her family as they end up on the streets in Antananarivo.



In good weather, the children love to sit outside in the grass. Now they can even take books with them out to enjoy some good stories.

The second new school to cooperate with Vakoka Vakiteny is called **Lycée Horizon**. It goes from preschool up to grade 12. This school has been constructed outside of the town of Antsirabe, where children have problems getting access to education. It makes it possible for families in this area to get affordable education close to their homes.



The school already has a library, but with very few books. Some friends of the owner of the school, Ms Noro, had heard about Vakoka Vakiteny and encouraged Ms Noro to take contact with Ms Hanta.

We were happy to support this great initiative of building a school in a vulnerable area, and look forward to cooperate further with the school.



Books along the RN 7

Ms Hanta was in Toliara in March and took a huge stock of books with her. She distributed books to schools in Toliara, and on the way back to the highlands, she stopped at several schools. The **Route Nationale 7** goes through many smaller villages and towns of which some are severely neglected by the government. Children and teachers alike were extremely grateful for the support from Vakoka Vakiteny.



One of the schools was close to the town Sakaraha between Ihosy and Toliara, in a settlement called Andranomihomaky. When Ms Hanta came, it was break time. She asked the children if they liked books. When they learned that she was there to give books to the school, they were thrilled. Ms Hanta taught them that they always have to wash their hands before handling books. Although the children promised her that they would always do so, they told her that water is very expensive in Andranomihomaky. You have to buy water in a bucket, so everyone is extremely careful with the use of water.

The school in Andranomihomaky is of very low standard.

Furthermore, the area is extremely dry, as can be seen from the ground.

This poses a big challenge for the people living here.



Another school was in Ivato close to Ambositra in the highland. This is a bigger governmental secondary school which doesn't have enough equipment for all the children.

The children asked for more books and wanted to know how to keep in contact with Vakoka Vakiteny. They couldn't wait to get home to read the books. We would be happy to stay in contact with this school, where the students themselves are eager to take their education in their own hands.



Mihisa has been Reprinted



This time, the teachers are in for a treat: *Mihisa* is all about making it easier to find fun games to do, which do not require much equipment and still develop body and mind

In February, the new edition of the teacher's guide with games called *Mihisa* came from the printing house. The teachers had been waiting eagerly for this book to come, since both Volume 1 and 2 had been distributed until the very last copy.

The first school to get it was **Les Mesanges Bleues**. This school has previously cooperated with Vakoka Vakiteny. On 27th February, the teachers took the students on a trip to the outskirts of the town to look at rivers, valleys and forests instead of learning about nature from inside the

classroom. On their way home, they passed the house of Ms Hanta, so she used this opportunity to give the teachers some copies of *Mihisa* and encouraged them to continue their creative teaching.

Bonenitra on hold

The new book, *Bonenitra* was already at the print house in autumn. All corrections had been made, the negotiations finished, and the advance payment done when the printing machine broke down. We waited for several months, and when the machine finally was fixed, the government forced the print house to close because of COVID-19. We will resume the printing as soon as the restrictions are lifted.



About *Vakoka Vakiteny*



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Vakoka Vakiteny has since 2008

- ... published 15 titles
- ... distributed 28,500 books
- ... encouraged thousands of children to read
- ... introduced reading in hundreds of schools
- ... strengthened the Malagasy language
- ... promoted Malagasy authors and artists
- ... participated in many cultural events
- ... supported the Malagasy natural environment through books and campaigns

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