

Dear friends of Vafoka Vakiteny.

The last months have been very hard for Madagascar, and the crisis is not yet over. We are time and again amazed by the resilience people are showing in the face of hardship.



This newsletter does not intend to exclusively show poverty and challenges, but first and foremost to show how people have been able to help each other through some very hard times.

Madagascar has 15,352 cases so far, with less than 100 new infections per day, but it is uncertain, if this information is accurate.

The last months, Vakoka Vakiteny has mainly done corona-related work, but as you will see in this newsletter, as soon as the print house opens again, we are ready with the next manuscripts.

Best wishes,
Mparany Rakotonirina
Manager of **Vafoka Vakiteny**

Update on Bonenitra

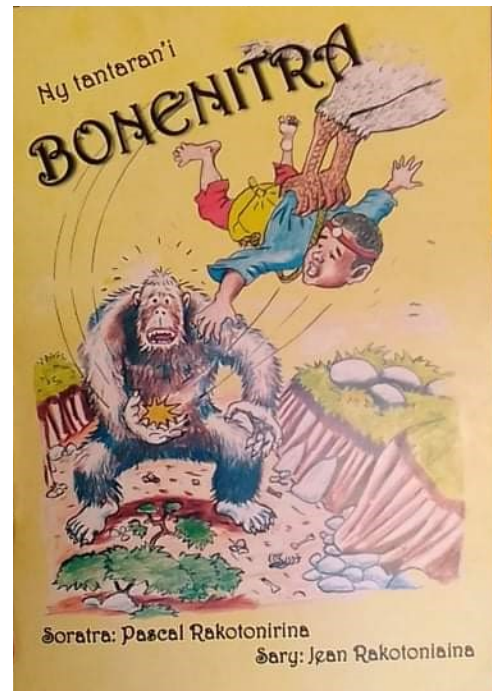
Our brave prince Bonenitra is still on adventure. He is at the printing house, ready to be collected, but Ms Hanta has not been able to travel to the capital to pick him up due to the corona situation.

As soon as the situation gets better, Bonenitra will finally meet eager, young readers!

The author, Pascal Rakotonirina has already started writing a sequel to the book, and we are looking forward to hearing what happens next with Bonenitra.

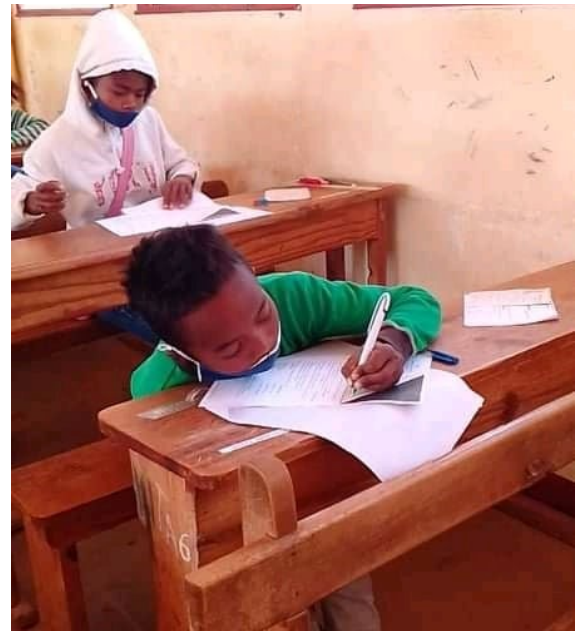
Due to reduced work in the printing house, we have not been able to proceed to the printing of our next book, "Where has all the soil gone?" (see Newsletter COVID-19 special, 5th issue).

However, we have already finished two rounds of corrections of the manuscript, and are eagerly waiting for a cost estimation from the print house.



Exam time in Madagascar

Every year, students in grade 5 need to take the national exam *Certificat d'études primaires élémentaires* (CEPE) in order to proceed to secondary school. This exam is usually at the end of the school year, but this year, it was postponed until September. Furthermore, because of the crisis, not all provinces did the exam at the same time. Unfortunately, the number of children taking the exam was much lower this year compared to the years before. The reasons may be the lack of preparation for the exam, lack of money and fear of corona. This was despite high flexibility by the government, which enabled children from other provinces or cities to take the exam where they were currently located instead of having to travel.



Students taking CEPE examination

There were some exam centres that did not get the required supplies from the government prior to the exam. Vakoka Vakiteny, therefore, visited several schools before the exam took place to distribute face masks and pens for the students, so that they were able to sit their exam. The students need to bring their own materials, but many parents in the countryside were not able to buy this, due to the severe economic hardship they are going through. Both these items that were distributed had the logo of Vakoka Vakiteny on it. At the same time, we also distributed materials to the students who will sit the national exam for grade 9, *Brevet d'études du premier cycle du second degré* (BEPC). Every place Ms Hanta went to distribute materials, she also had a teaching session for the students about the use of face masks, the proper way to clean them and the importance of hand washing and social distancing.



Ms Hanta distributes materials at a school in a vulnerable neighbourhood in Antsirabe

The exam centre in Ambohimambola, east of Antsirabe, which is among the biggest in the area, also received hand washing stations to enable faster entering into the classroom where they would sit the exam. Here, more than 600 face masks and pens were distributed.



The examination centre in Ambohimambola had more than 600 students sitting for exams in the beginning of September

In Manandona, south of Antsirabe, 50 handwashing stations, 400 face masks, and more than 200 books (Mihisa, Sedram-piainana, Fano and Madagascar – A Living Museum). These items were for 25 schools. The leader of the zonal administration for education (ZAP) in Manandona had seen news about Vakoka Vakiteny on national TV and had also seen the status update of the Antsirabe district education department on Facebook, where they had written about the work of Vakoka Vakiteny. He called Ms Hanta immediately and asked for books. They were also extremely happy when they heard that Vakoka Vakiteny would be able to assist them, not only with books, but with some crucial materials for the exam time.

When Ms Hanta arrived in Manandona, she was met by parent representatives, teachers, students and the mayor of Manandona himself, who extended his thanks to Vakoka Vakiteny and all our supporters. Some of the parents had heard about



This young lady will take the BEPC examination later this month

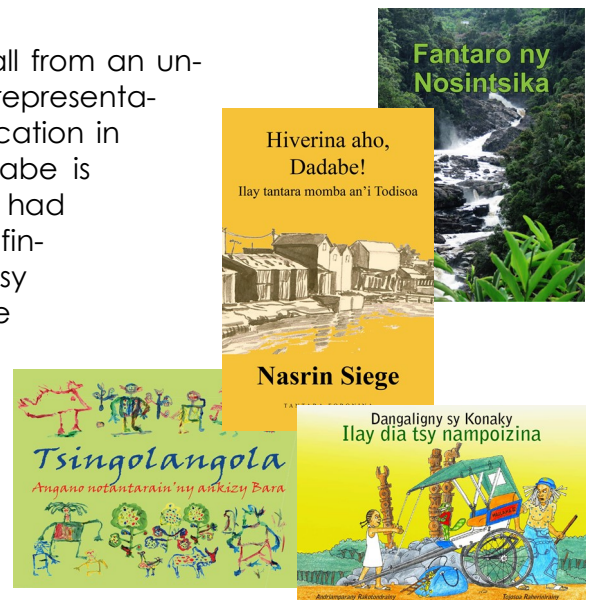
Vakoka Vakiteny before, and had for a long time had the wish to receive books for their children. News about the funny stories and the good quality of the books had arrived in Manandona long before Ms Hanta got there in the end of August. None of the parents had been able to travel to Antsirabe (23 km) in order to buy books, and they also don't have the financial means to buy books for their children. When they saw the books Ms Hanta brought with her, they were overwhelmed.



Distribution of COVID-related materials and books for 25 schools in Manandona

Vakoka Vakiteny needed at graduation

On 25 August, Ms Hanta got a phone call from an unknown number. It appeared to be the representative of the regional ministry for communication in Vakinankaratra (the region where Antsirabe is situated). The reason was that the region had held a graduation of students who had finished their course in *kabary* (the Malagasy traditional way of holding speeches). The region asked Vakoka Vakiteny to attend and talk about the importance of mother tongue, national heritage and literature. Although Ms Hanta fell ill the day of the celebration, Vakoka Vakiteny was still able to attend, represented by Ms Hanta's oldest daughter, Jenny (23).



Stories about hardship and about hope

We have interviewed several teachers and students at Mahazoarivo school in Antsirabe about the situation they and their families are in today. Here, one teacher, one principal and one student share their stories

Hanitriniaina Julie Floria, teacher

Many students have not been able to attend school because of the corona crisis, and I'm afraid that the level will drop significantly next school year. The students also don't have access to technology such as phones and computers, so that they cannot study remotely.

Our lives have become very hard. Many people have lost their jobs and children often don't have enough to eat. Our area here in Mahazoarivo is very poor, and the people have to sell materials such as plates and furniture to get money to buy food. The students have to help the parents to earn money, such as fetching water, selling peanuts, etc.

What did you do during the time the school was closed?

I did some self-study at home and I started selling eggs every afternoon. We didn't get our salary, so I had to find a way to earn some money for my family. I buy the eggs for 350 ariary and sell them for 400 ariary. My profit is 50 ariary per egg [this equals 1 Euro-cent, which means that she has to sell 100 eggs to earn 1 Euro].

In my free time, I also taught the students who live in my neighbourhood at home. We did activities such as art and music together.

The corona crisis is very difficult for us all – for teachers, students and parents!



Illustration photo from the school where Hanitriniaina works. The students on the picture show the pens they got from Vakoka Vakiteny.

Rajaozandry Tsiriniaina, principal

Since many people have little money, petty crime has risen in our area. The students have to help their parents by selling and the teachers had to find other sources of income, such as sewing. There are many people who sell, but few who buy.

I myself, taught the children who came to my home. I also encouraged other teachers to teach the children in their neighbourhood, although this was not a directive from the government.

I also did an effort to find sponsors for teachers who are salaried by the parent association. The teachers salaried by the government had a better situation, although their income also dropped. The parents, however, were not able to pay any salaries to the teacher starting from the beginning of the corona crisis.

We are still in a very difficult situation here in Mahazoarivo. Especially the parents struggle, and many may not be able to pay the inscription fees for the next school year [governmental schools are free, but students have to pay inscription fees once a year]. I don't know what is going to happen with our community in the months to come.

I would like to thank Vakoka Vakiteny for not forgetting about us, and for all the support you are giving. It is wonderful to have such good partners. Whenever we get back to normal, my dream is to open a small school library, so that the children get better access to the books.



Ms Rajaozandry encourages teachers to teach the children in their neighbourhood



Distribution at Mahazoarivo school

Minosoa, student

I am taking the CEPE exam today. But since I couldn't go to school the last months, I am very nervous about it. I have revised the lessons I had written down in my notebook over and over again – that was all I could do as a preparation.

Every morning I helped my mother with house chores. It was hard for our family because my father could not go to work. In the afternoon, I studied. Luckily, my mother could go to wash clothes in other people's houses every Wednesday and Saturday. I can't remember the last time I could eat until I was full.

Thank you, Vakoka Vakiteny, for the face mask and the books. I am reading the books I have again and again at home, together with my siblings. For the exam, I was so happy that I got a pen, and especially thank you for giving me a small chocolate! That was a wonderful surprise for me and I feel better about the exam now!



Minosoa on the day of her exam

About **Vakoka Vakiteny**



Mparany
Rakotondrainy
Manager/ Editor



Sophie Küspert-
Rakotondrainy
Public Relations/
Editor



Hanta
Rakotondrainy
Book distribution/
Trainings

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

Address:
Edition Vakoka Vakiteny
Publishing Company
B.P. 453
Toliara 601
MADAGASCAR
+261 0331230344 /
0349069769
vakoka.vakiteny@gmail.com
www.vakiteny.org