

## Dear friends of **Vakoka Vakiteny**.

In April and May I have had the pleasure to be in Madagascar and do different kinds of work, among others for our Publishing House. It was very encouraging to see the distribution and publicity work that Mrs Hanta is continuously doing.

I also got the chance to meet several people who were interested in publishing their manuscripts through us. Among the most promising options is a duo working on environmental conservation. On the other hand, finding illustrators for some of the already existing texts has been very challenging and the search is continuing.

I would like to use this chance to greet all Vakoka Vakiteny supporters from Mrs Hanta and all teachers, children and parents that I got the chance to meet. They are very thankful for all the support we get from you which enables us to distribute books to the most needy!

Best wishes,

**Mparany Rakotondrainy**

Manager of **Vakoka Vakiteny**



## New books



**Vakoka Vakiteny is now working hard on producing several new manuscripts for printing together with different artists. More on pages 5-8 in the newsletter.**



## Overwhelmingly positive feedback!

When Mparany and Hanta visited the small village of Tanambe, they met 320 students, 6 teachers and 40 parents. Tanambe is on the countryside east of Antsirabe in the highlands of Madagascar.

The school had previously received different Vakoka Vakiteny books, and were ready to give feedback on the use of them. It was especially the use of the environmentbook «Madagascar—a living museum» that we were interested in hearing about.



**Mparany (in the middle of the picture) is talking with the parents of the children going to school in Tanambe. Many of them are illiterate. Still they value the books and are grateful for the oportunites their children get to learn from books, unlike their parents.**

The teachers told that they always use the books, and that they see how the knowledge of the children is growing as well as their reading skills. Also the parents agreed that they appreciate the book a lot since they also learn by reading and looking at the pictures.

«The book is teaching the children very much about animals and plants in Madagascar, and it also shows how easily it can all be destroyed and become extinct.» (Parent)

«The parents are coming to our library too, especially in order to see this book. Some of them cannot read and write, but they appreciate seeing the pictures.» (Teacher)

«This book really helps us to explain about our island to the children, and they ask much more questions after we started using this book. It is as if we can visit all the wonderful places in Madagascar through this book». (Teacher)

The parents, teachers and students expressed their wish to continue the cooperation with Vakoka Vakiteny, and that we should give them more books like



the environment book.

They commented that the writing font in the book is quite small and that it uses some difficult words and therefore would like to have a glossary to help them reading. We in Vakoka Vakiteny are well aware that this book can be challenging to read, even if we made it much more accessible compared to the first translation which was done in 1994.



**Even the smaller children like the Madagascar book because of the many beautiful pictures of the animals. When the teacher explains, children down to grade one can grasp the enormous environmental challenges the island is facing.**

Their suggestions for future book projects is to write about the importance of education, and to publish traditional rhymes and poems.

The visit ended with a girl and a boy telling the stories of Hazobe Farany and Rebila for the smaller children.





## *Need more books about Madagascar*

Mparany and Hanta also visited the school in a small village called Antohobe where they met 400 children and their 5 teachers. The school direction has organised a library for the students and parents where they can borrow books to take home for free. They have a system of registering the books, and every months the children will be asked what they have learned from the reading. This way the teachers can monitor if the children are really reading the books and if they use them at home in the families.

The teachers have seen the writing skills of the children improving through the reading of books, and they also see how their interest in books is increasing. At every break time and after school hours, the children go to visit the library to read. The teachers even told that the children's knowledge of reading and writing other languages such as French and English improves by reading books in Malagasy - a finding that reflects what has been found in scientific research.

The book «Madagascar - a living museum» was received with great interest and thanks. For the older children and teachers, the bilingual text in Malagasy and English is of great help since the school owns no other books in English. There is not even a textbook for English.

Both teachers and students welcome books about Madagascar and appreciate that they can learn about their own island. They therefore ask Vakoka Vakiteny to publish more easily understandable scientific literature about Madagascar.





## *Fano and the trash in the ocean*

Fano means sea turtle in Malagasy, and «Fano sy ireo fako an-dranomasina» (meaning «Fano and the trash in the ocean») is the title of a book written and illustrated by Bethany Rose Dickens from England and translated by Tahiry Rajaonarison. They have both been working with an organisation called Reef Doctor that works with saving the coral reefs off Madagascar's coast.



The book about Fano and all the trash he finds in the ocean is but one of the manuscripts that Tahiry and Beth have produced together, and they are planning even more environmental education books.

Vakoka Vakiteny is currently negotiating with the duo on how to cooperate, and we are confident that we will soon be able to print one or several of their books through Vakoka Vakiteny.



From the left: Tahiry, Beth and Mparany when they met in Antananarivo in April 2018



## *Bonenitra, the Brave prince*

Pascal Rakotonirina, whom we briefly wrote about in Newsletter 2-2017, was born in 1972 and is a poet and story writer for the radio. He started writing for the national Malagasy radio in 1987 until now. He has usually not written down the stories for the children, but he has always liked to tell oral stories to children. Pascal also makes a lot of handicraft like colourful bottles and cars out of cardboard.



Pascal has always struggled to live off his artistic skills. Often the radio has paid him very little or not at all, and selling art is not a lucrative business in Madagascar. One day one of his children brought home a Vakoka Vakiteny book, and he was thrilled to read the story aloud for his five children. When he found out that Mrs. Hanta lived close to him, he was happy to meet with her. Mrs. Hanta very soon recognised his talent and motivation. This is not a man who looks for the best paid job, but who wants to do what he loves and what makes other people happy - tell stories.

Now, instead of only telling the stories orally, Pascal has started writing them down, and Vakoka Vakiteny is happy to use one or several of them for our future books. The first one is called «Bonenitra» and is a fairytale.

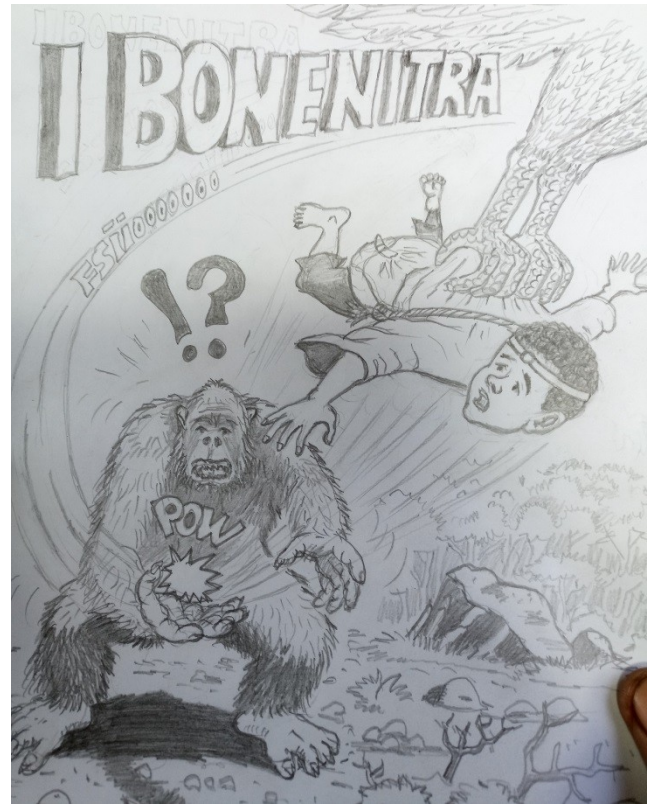
**Pascal writes all his stories by hand in small notebooks. Here he sits outside Hantas house and adds the last words to the story before he gives it to her to type it into the computer.**





Bonenitra is a prince whose father the King is sick. Everyone in the kingdom was looking for someone who could save the King, since they knew that one single hair from the monster called Voloina would heal the King. No-one dared to go, but Bonenitra wanted to go even if he was only 6 years old. The adults didn't allow him, but he managed to run away and experienced an incredible adventure....

The illustrations for Bonenitra are being done by Rakotoniaina Jean (Rakoto) who is a street artist, born in 1961. When he was 5 years old he started to make pictures, and painted on the walls in the house since he had no paper. For this behaviour he was always beaten by the adults. When he started school he didn't stop making pictures. Since his parents didn't have money for him to buy snack at school, he painted pictures for the other children in return



**The first draft of a painting for the story about Bonenitra. Vakoka Vakiteny has now given Rakoto some coloured pencils, and he will make colourful pictures for the whole book.**



for them sharing their meals with him.

The teachers and his parents continued to beat him for the painting, and the teachers used to search for the drawings and tear them into pieces since it was not considered any worthwhile task to paint. His parents burned some of the notebooks where he had been painting, saying that he was a stupid child, wasting his time on useless activities.

Still he didn't stop making pictures, and he taught himself to paint. He dropped out of school in grade 7 and started working for a person who made advertisements. In this work he could use his drawing skills, and he realised that his future would be in the world of pictures. He worked for newspapers making caricatures and cartoons and had other small jobs. The work of an artist is difficult in Madagascar, and nowadays he makes street art in Antsirabe. He has also tried the same in Antananarivo and other cities in Madagascar.

He lives alone in his small house in Antsirabe. There is no space for him to work there, so all his pictures are made on the streets of Antsirabe, outside, regardless of the weather. Often the people passing by like his pictures, but few have enough money to pay the real costs of a picture, and his income is therefore very low.

Vakoka Vakiteny is excited to work together with these men who have shown that they don't want to give up their dream, even if life has been very hard. They will now get the chance to spread their talents to thousands of children!



Rakoto in his «street studio» in the centre of Antsirabe. It's getting cold now, but he will still paint outside during the whole winter.

## About *Vakoka Vakiteny*



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Manager/ Editor



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Rakotondrainy  
Public Relations/  
Editor



Hanta  
Rakotondrainy  
Book distribution/  
Trainings

***Vakoka Vakiteny*** has since 2008

- ... published 14 titles
- ... distributed 26,000 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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