

In This Letter

A Quick Visit

Thieves, Security, and...

Expansion

Ambohitsara

The Gospel of Luke

Water Pumps

Holiday

Things to Pray for

Contact

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Newsletter May 2019

Dear Family and Friends,

A lot has happened since our last newsletter, and we've got a lot to tell. A helicopter landed right next to the village; the area is plagued by vanilla thieves; and there are big plans for the church where Jurgen helps. Let's start with the first point.

A Quick Visit

You know these things go in life, you sat down at the table to enjoy lunch together with the family and then you hear a helicopter approaching. This time the sound becomes louder and louder. All the children are peering outside. Then, all of a sudden, "Dad! Mum! He is going to land at the river!"



All villagers walk, run and stumble through the field to the area with the 'parked' helicopter. We couldn't stay behind of course.

Coming closer, we see a familiar face, Jean-Christophe, the pilot who picked up Jurgen last year and brought him to the hospital. Jean-Christophe was accompanied by three passengers.

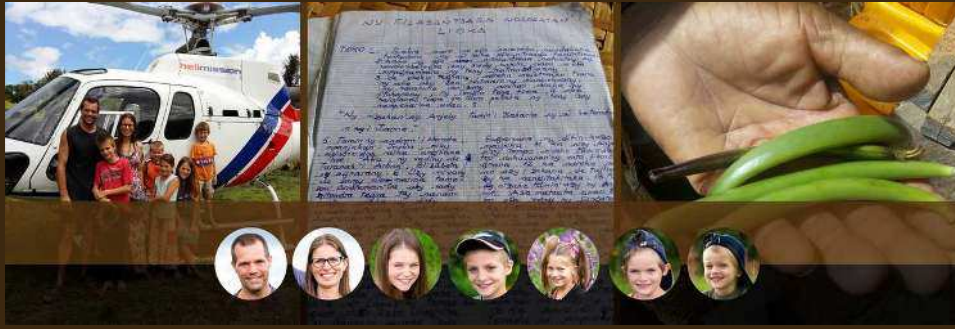
One of the passengers, Leoni, works for the Seed Company. An organization related to Wycliffe. The Seed Company would like to start translation work for the Tanala area. Not an easy task because the Tanala can be divided into three districts, each with its own expressions and words. Leoni and the other passengers were visiting these different areas by helicopter. Because it is known that we have already done a lot of translation work, they asked the pilot to 'briefly' land at Maroamboka for a visit.

And really! You've got to believe us. We really invited them over for a cup of coffee or tea. But no, they had just landed to say hello and confirm the contact. Twenty minutes later they took off again and went on their way to their final destination. In the short conversation we agreed that, when the translation project starts, we will make our materials available for them to use. We are looking forward having even more material available in the Tanala dialect. It's such a blessing that we can help each other in this way.

Thieves, Security, and Old Wives' Tales

Oh well, we try very hard to live like the people here... Be that as it may, a visit from a helicopter confirms the people in their already presupposed ideas, namely that we 'have' to be very important after all. In addition, we are sometimes seen with a camera or camcorder. That, of course, means that we also have security cameras in and around the house, just like in the Hollywood films. Because of these ideas we will, so people say, not be bothered by thieves or burglars.

Continue on page 2



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- Expansion**
- Ambohitsara**
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Vanille plant



The vanilla harvest is coming soon. Vanilla is precious and thieves are lurking. At the same time, people are being plagued by other thefts. Chickens disappear and vegetables are harvested prematurely... But not by the owner. We've also heard about burglaries taking place when people are gone.

Incredibly annoying, but as said, we are not immediately bothered by it, because we suppose to have small and special (James Bond like) cameras. In addition, everyone 'knows' that we are good friends with the police.

The latter tale derived from the fact that we ones told some neighbours that when we are stopped by the police we normally have a nice chat with them... And again, everybody 'knows' that you only do that with the police (on Madagascar) when it is your friend.

Interesting how these 'old wives' tales' start. Most of the time it is something you would like to avoid but in this case we do not mind. These talks do not harm our work, but they do ensure that we don't receive unwanted guests, at least for the time being.

Expansion

In August 2018, a young couple, Doris and Alphossin, started a small church in Tanambova. A few months before their arrival Jurgen had already started teaching the bible stories.

Jurgen now attends the weekly meetings and gives lessons based on Bible stories. Now, there are plans to construct a new bigger building for the gatherings and activities. A positive development as many lessons, given by Jurgen, entail (among other things) that Christians must work together. This cooperation is now expressed in the construction of a church. Some gave rice (which can be sold), others gave money and yet another one will help with the construction. The building will become a central place where studies, worship services and other gatherings can be organised.



Doris & Alphossin

The lessons also teach people that we are all responsible for spreading the gospel. The pastor is not a super person who can perform all tasks at the same time. Christians must ensure that others can be exempt from their daily routine to go and share the Gospel in other places. The new believers are still somewhat reluctant regarding evangelism.

Continue on page 3



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 - Expansion
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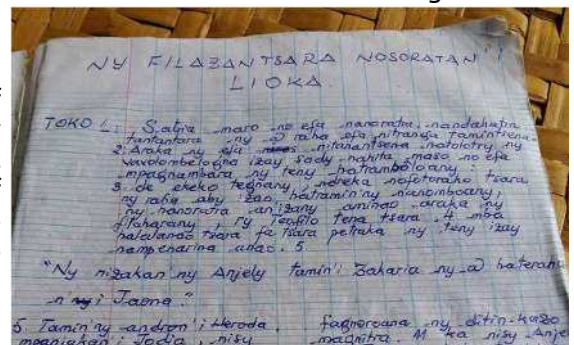
The traditional view on Madagascar is that evangelism is the work of pastors, missionaries, and evangelists. People who are specifically trained for this work. The Lord Jesus taught us something else, everyone has received this assignment. Jurgen and Doris agreed that they will ask a few young men to go along with Doris to learn the ropes.

Ambohitsara

In February, we've told you about Ambohitsara. The village where the door seemed to be closing. Unhindered by Malagasy feelings, in which people are terribly afraid of conflicts, Jurgen still travelled through the village every Sunday. What seems! The sons of the king (also witch-doctor and the same man who indicated that there is no time to listen in his village) are still very interested in the Bible stories. While the king stayed in his house, the young men received Jurgen with a cup of coffee and a nice chair to sit on. In turn, they each lit a cigarette and took advantage of the moment to relax and learn something new.

The Gospel of Dr. Luke

Menja has finished the Gospel of Luke gospel! Everything is written by hand and Jurgen still has to enter it into the computer. That is a lot of work but at the same time it gives the opportunity to discover errors and to correct any faulty translations. It is difficult to determine which words can best be used. Some words such as synagogue or temple are unknown to the rural people. Prayer house or large church could be options but do not cover the full meaning. In such cases, Jurgen writes a footnote with an explanation about the word.

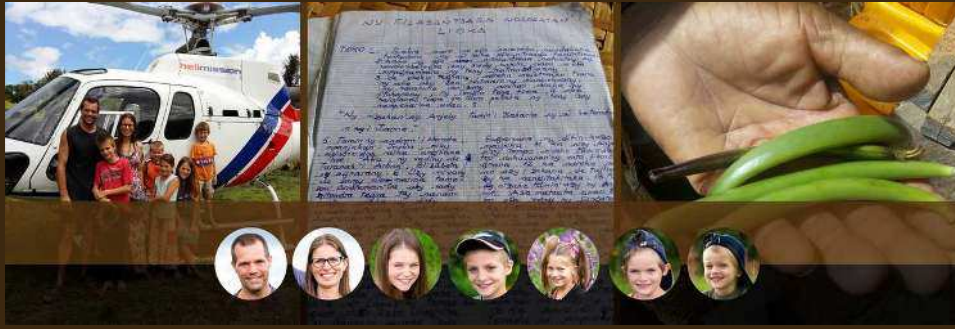


Menja is doing so well that we immediately asked him to continue with the second book of Luke, 'Acts'. He has already finished 17 chapters. His work came to a stop. Not because he's fed up with it, no! Surely not... He's become the father of a daughter! Miora is her name. Menja and his wife Bricia are floating way up in the clouds, and rightly so!

Water pumps

Yes, the materials are here... No, the plumber did not come yet. The plan is very nice. We bought the materials, the president would take care of the plumber. The pumps would be repaired and pump managers would be appointed. People will have to pay a small amount per month and everyone has clean water and is happy and healthy. Nice plan right? Well, we are still waiting, but we do not expect it to happen somewhere soon. In the meantime we have our own water carrier, Velomy. We give him the same salary as the people in the capital get, 200 Ariary per jerry-can. That is not much, but he carries 8 jerry-cans within an hour, which makes a salary of 1600 Ariary (± 0.44 Euro) while the daily wage for an adult man here is around 4000 Ariary (± 1.10 Euro).

Continue on page 4



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Holiday

The children and their teacher (Katja) worked hard and all of us were ready for a holiday. Just after Easter we travelled to Ranomafana. A nice tourist town just four hours from Maroamboka. We were really looking forward. We always stay in the same hotel. Not a tourist hotel because they are expensive! No, just two nice rooms with soft and clean beds. The owner and staff know us well and are always enthusiastic to see us, and that is mutual. The language in and around Ranomafana is Malagasy-Tanala. Although the Tanala is slightly different from the Tanala in our area, it is always nice to meet the local people. The people talk with us like we are one of them as we almost speak the same dialect.

Katja, together with our four oldest, went on a kayak trip on the Namorona river, where according to the helpers crocodiles live. Exciting! In addition, we enjoyed the other things that we have come to see as luxury: warm showers, swimming pool, soft beds and so on. In the morning we ate in a small local restaurant where we were spoiled with warm sweet buns and crêpes. For lunch, we ate traditional buns, which you can buy everywhere at the side of the road and at diner time we sat down in one of the many restaurants where they also serve Western dishes.

After a holiday it always hard to get back to the daily routine, but school and all the other activities are in full swing again.

Finally, we close this letter with a reference to the previously announced video about our life in Maroamboka. Have fun watching!
https://youtu.be/N_nQzoq7ZLw



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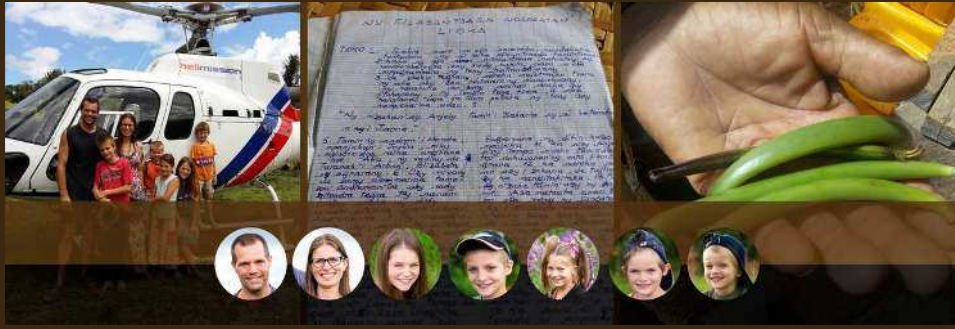
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We regularly post our big and small experiences here.

Until next time!

Lots of love from the Hofmann family

Continue on page 5



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Things to Pray for:

We are thankful because:

- 1) we are encouraged by the visit;
- 2) the partnering with Dories and Alphossin goes well;
- 3) Menja finished the Gospel of Luke;
- 4) we had a lovely holiday.

Pray for/that:

- 5) the king of Ambohitsara will open up again for Jesus;
- 6) the corrections and ongoing work concerning the Gospel of Luke;
- 7) we will manage to establish a good system for the water pumps in our village;
- 8) the thefts and burglaries will stop and that the perpetrators may repent;
- 9) The victims. They are very disappointed because it is known that most thieves come from their midst.

