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Newsletter November 2019

Dear friends,

While we are writing this we are about to leave the capital for our home, our village. We have enjoyed seeing friends and going to the english-speaking church. Various groceries have also been done. The past few months have seen many good developments in our village and we are looking forward to getting busy again.

The work in the villages

In August we wrote about the king of **Tsiombivohitra** and his wife. Although they had become believers, this seemed to make little difference in their daily life and that of the villagers. Jurgen has since told the stories to a somewhat larger group, but there was little organisation behind it from the king. We had already asked Stanis, a young pastor who has recently moved into our area,



to take over the responsibility for Tsiombivohitra. Despite Stanis' limited grasp of the dialect he took our request seriously and has started with weekly visits. Together with some believers in his village, he reserves every Thursday to go to Tsiombivohitra to preach the gospel. We have talked with older villagers and it seems Stanis is received well; many villagers are interested in his preaching. We have also heard that the king is thinking seriously about the practical consequences of following Jesus. We are slowly handing over the work in this village - also because of our impending furlough - and trust that Stanis with his group is the right man for this work.



There is also progress in **Beono**. Since buying the motor Jurgen has been visiting this village. Just as in Tsiombivohitra, he primarily has access to the king and a small circle around him. This king, iaban'ni Velotia, hold the authority firmly in his hand. In Beono most people know relative prosperity: All children go to school; the people repair the road when it turns bad; the sick don't go to a witchdoctor but to a real doctor, and the young have respect for the elders. The past months Jurgen has not only been talking with iaban'ni Velotia, but also with his adult children who were home for the summer holidays. The son of the king told Jurgen that he came to Jesus. He got baptised a few months ago in the city where he goes to school. He listened to the stories with full attention. Shortly before our trip to Tana we received a wonderful surprise: iaban'ni Velotia decided to follow Jesus! He had talked it over with his son, who confirmed the truth of the stories.

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From now on the king shall follow Jesus - together with his family.

The following months we hope to tell the Bible stories to a larger assembly and not just the king and the president of the village. We are expecting more results than in Tsiombivohitra, as the king obviously has the authority in the village: What he says, happens.

Translating, and further...

The lion's share of Jurgen's time is invested in translation right now. Jurgen has good hopes of finishing the gospel of Luke before or during our furlough, so it can be used for preaching after our furlough. Menja, our translator, has made Luke speak Tanala; Jurgen reviews the work critically regarding translation choices and theological content, digitalising it in the process. Menja, meanwhile, is finishing the book of Acts as a logical continuation on Luke.

It is a good thing that there are Bible stories and even books available in the Tanala language, but 'selling the goods' isn't as easy as it seems. The people clearly enjoy the stories and praise the clearness of the message, but the pastors we have worked with up till now continue preferring their 'soapbox-method', which constitutes of preaching directly from an already very outdated Bible in the standard Malagasy. This is understandable, since this is what they have learned and they don't speak the dialect very well. Even though both Doris and Stanis know the people only partially understand their message, they nonetheless hold onto what they know *themselves*. What is encouraging, on the other hand, is the fact that Doris' wife Alphossine and her friend from Tanambao have started using the set of stories for their evangelisation, even if only partially in the dialect.

You can download and 'read' the material on our website:

<https://www.jurgenenkatja.nl/en/downloads>

After our furlough we hope to find more ways and openness for using the Tanala-materials. We have spoken with our supervisors and it might be possible to bring a mixed team of Malagasy and foreigners into our area for a programme of training and evangelism, taking 4 months. The Bible stories could be used by this team as one of the various methods of reaching the Tanala. We have asked a Malagasy friend living in Tana to consider leading this team with us. He is proficient at both Malagasy - including a related dialect - and English, and last but not least, he has a good biblical foundation.

Our family

As a family we are doing well. Our new rhythm of going to the capital 3 times a year for groceries and encouragement is working well, although it must be said that most of us are having trouble with the many and long journeys. Our semi-nomadic way of living takes energy and requires flexibility. Then, when you leave Tana after a few weeks, which has an English-speaking church, youth club, organised sports and English-speaking friends - not to mention running water, grocery stores, garages, doctors and pharmacies - you are really leaving something behind.

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The children are getting older, which brings along other challenges: we have tried giving them a bit more room by making a crawl space for Vanya (15) and Issa (13). It is situated directly below the barely isolated aluminium sheet roof, so we'll have to see how they manage up there the upcoming (hot) rainy season.

Simeon (4) is still sleeping in the same bedroom as his parents, but we are hoping to realise a bunk bed for him, Abbey (11) and Dani (8) sometime soon. This way, all the children have their own place to sleep on the upstairs floor.

The education is going just fine: Vanya has started the second half of secondary school, which means a few new subjects, including accounting and psychology. Issa is 6 months into the first year of

secondary school and has made the transition well. The thick books were rather intimidating, but we are confident. Abbey is finishing primary school this year and has already voluntarily started various secondary school subjects, such as German. Dani is happy that he still has lots of time to play. On the other hand, he would like to learn to read English - then he can read cool books like *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, just as his brother and sisters ;-)! Obviously Simeon cannot stay behind, in his own time he is working through a workbook about opposites (under - above, broad - narrow, much - little, etc.). We are having fun being busy.

At the same time we are still growing in the community of our village. We have good relationships with our direct neighbours, but we are also increasingly participating in the village life and politics: For example, Jurgen is invited to partake in village gathering and if people are grieving for a deceased in the village house - which sadly happens often - Katja regularly brings some rice in the mornings and evenings. We keep on being intensely engaged with the reparation of the poms. Apparently they are supposed to be flowing richly when we return home at the end of this week (don't laugh!). Our neighbours regularly know where to find us for gifts or credit when they need to go to the doctor; we are working on the roads and speak out against the exploitation by the (witch)doctors, de illegal sale of strong liquor and the laziness when it comes to the maintenance of the roads and building the village school (de children of Maroamboka have not gone to school for one and a half years already). We love our neighbours and our village very much. We would love to see Jesus' light shining there more!

Furlough

The tickets for our furlough to the Netherlands have been bought: on February the 29th we make the big crossing and on 5 July we will fly back. We have already made many plans for our time in the Netherlands: Not only are we looking forward to traditionally Dutch food, we would also like to go to the theatre and museum. Of course, we will enjoy seeing our dear friends and favourite places. We are so very happy that, after hard work, our friends found us a suitable house for the duration of our stay. It is very close to our home town near the beach! Thanks to Stichting Hand (the Hand Foundation) we also have a car for the whole period. This organisation, based in the province of South Holland, helps missionaries in all sorts of practical ways.



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Our car on Madagascar also has a place to stay during our furlough: The garage of our friend Peter (organisation Hoveraid). The bodywork under the car has become bad and there are many rusty places all over the car. De front bumper is only minimally attached and the fuel tank needs to be repaired again. Our car is old (1999) and riding on Malagasy road is bad for cars, no matter the make. Even de state of the main national roads is bad with many potholes. There will be need of lots of welding. Eventually the car will be repainted to provide a necessary layer of protection. We asked Peter (the garage owner) whether our car is worth all those reparations and his answer was an unambiguous 'yes!'. Mainly the fact that our car is mechanical and that therefore many problems can be solved along the road without special reading equipment is precious in our situation. The wages are not the largest cost, but the parts are more expensive than in Europe. We don't have any quotation yet, but we expect we will have to spend more than 1,000 Euros. Hence we ask again you again to consider donating to our car fund. Some have already given! Thank you very much!

You can give directly:

'AIM International' te Wageningen

IBAN: NL91 RABO 01 55 6 57 712

Please mention: Project Missionwork Madagaskar – Car

For more information:

<https://www.jurgenekatja.nl/en/geven/>

The funds for the car can also be used for the motorbike. However, besides new tires we do not foresee any big expenses here.

This was it for now. Thank you for your prayers and support.

Greetings from the Hofmann family!

You can follow us on

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/jurgenekatja>.

Or our blog: <https://www.jurgenekatja.nl/category/blog/>.

Things to pray for:

We are thankful because:

- 1) that the king of Beono and his family have started believing;
- 2) for the good relationships in our village and area;
- 3) that our children are motivated to learn and are doing their best.

Pray for/that

- 1) practical arrangements for our furlough;
- 2) money for car reparations;
- 3) realisation of pastors Doris and Stanis of the importance of preaching in dialect;
- 4) a good completion of our second term on Madagascar for us as a family, but also for the people we work with and around.