



In this letter

The work in the villages
Translating, and further...
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Furlough
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Newsletter February 2020

Dear friends,

Almost!

We are almost going back to the Netherlands. No, not definitely but to have a furlough. We are looking forward to seeing our families and friends again. But we are ready yet.

Preparations

Before we travel to the Netherlands, we still have to make a lot of preparations. Not only for the trip itself but also in and around the house. Four months (five including all travel times and stopover in the capital of Madagascar) is a long time to leave your house on Madagascar empty.

This time nobody will sleep in our house during our furlough. Our neighbours will take care of the animals and, if necessary, keep things clean. "Clean", means keeping all the vegetation around the house low. This is important because it keeps the house visible and therefore less attractive for burglars or chicken thieves.



Chicken thieves in particular find a true paradise in and around our village. The chickens regularly disappear and then reappear on the market, 44 km away. Jurgen has recently built a new hen house. Hopefully that will give our hens and two geese a somewhat safer night's sleep during our absence.



While Jurgen takes care of all the fencing, pruning and deepening the ditches around the house, Katja is busy sorting out school and household goods. She started packing the bags well in advance. We don't need much clothing here anyway :) She is also busy with school supplies.

We do not need some of the school books in the coming years. We will store them in the Netherlands (storage here is asking for the typical tropical problems such as rats, insects, and moisture).

Iaban'i Velotia

In our last newsletter (November 2019) we wrote about the father of Velotia (Iaban'i Velotia), the king of Beono. He had come to the conclusion that he needed to be saved and that salvation could only be found in Jesus. He decided to follow Jesus from now on.

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A happy surprise! A big step for someone like him. Iaban'i Velotia is the king of Beono and in that capacity he is expected to teach the fomban'drazana (the ways of the ancestors). Of course there are beautiful elements in this way of life: Respect for your parents; respect for the elderly; helping others in problems etc. But many of the teachings have to do with ancestor worship. It is a frightening world-view. But more about that later in this letter.

Iaban'i Velotia must now look for new ways to teach his villagers. Jurgen still goes to Beono every Thursday and discusses the lessons from the Bible and what the applications are to everyday (Malagasy) life.

Especially for this newsletter we have interviewed Iaban'i Velotia. Watch and listen ... No worries, we've added subtitles:

<https://youtu.be/HuvmaKfoM34>



Translation work

The translation work is also going well. Marketing has proven to be difficult. As we wrote in the previous letter, many pastors are reluctant when it comes to other "techniques". They have learned that the bible they have in the official language is the bible to use. The idea that the Lord can also speak through dialect is strange.

Yet, not everyone thinks like that though. Especially the "normal" Christians see the value of it. Hearing the Bible stories in their native tongue, Tanala, makes them enthusiastic: "I finally understand what is being said!" As strange as it sounds to us, many people simply do not understand the official national language. Perhaps it is easier to understand if we compare it to the King James translation. Imagine that you have hardly ever come into contact with the official English language, you did not learn it because you did not go to school. You go to a church and there the preaching is done out of the King James translation with its beautiful, but old, language. Just think about this example for a while and you'll probably understand the problem.

Another development that offers possibilities is the [Jesus film](#). The film has already been translated in various Malagasy dialects but not yet in Tanala. Jurgen is in contact with the Jesus film organisation. As it turns out, the organization has long had the desire to also release the film in Tanala. They are very enthusiastic about the fact that the translation of the gospel of Luke (the film is based on this gospel) has already begun. We are very enthusiastic about these developments, although still very premature.

You can download and see our materials on our website:

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

Witch doctor

Witch doctors?? Do they exist? Oh yes! Our village is a stronghold when it comes to witch doctors. We do have eight, two of them are very important. These two, ombiasy lehibe (great witch doctor), are so well known for their ability that we have people from the capital (590 km) coming down to our village to make use of their services.

One of them, Iaban'i Rôl, has already heard one of the Bible stories when Jurgen told them in another village. He ones asked Jurgen when he would tell them in Maroamboka. At that time Iaban'i Rôl just had just a new house in the making in Maroamboka. It was agreed that, Jurgen would come to the new house and tell the stories.



Picture: Iaban'i Rôl & Jurgen

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The house is ready! Jurgen has started, and iaban'i Rôl, together with his sister and wife, listen carefully. It is an interesting appointment that has not gone unnoticed in the village. Jurgen was asked whether he wasn't afraid of iaban'i Rôl or to tell the Gospel in his house. Someone said aloud: "*Tena evangeliste ianao!*" (You are a real evangelist!)

This is what the typical rural Malagasy world-view does to people, it frightens them. And not without reason. Regardless of what many people in the West may think or want to believe, these witch doctors are very skilled. These people make things happen that are not so easily explained. The witch doctors are in close contact with the spiritual world. They stand between the living and the dead and mediate. Don't disappoint the spirits! Don't make them angry and don't be disobedient! You bring sacrifices to the

ancestors. In return, the ancestors give all kinds of assignments and taboos so that you can live a "happy" life. We come across people who are not allowed to eat corn or drink coffee. These are the less serious taboos. Without going into detail, we can safely say that far-reaching taboos are sometimes imposed. It cramps, it frightens and **it stands in the way of progress.**

How beautiful it is to know that you go freely to the Father in heaven, that you are free because of the sacrifice His Son the Lord Jesus Christ brought. Fear? No, "*because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*" (1 Joh. 4:4).

Progress

Progress cannot be taken for granted. It is therefore nice to see developments in Tanambao. This is the village where Jurgen started the Bible stories in 2018. Not long after, Doris and his wife Alphossin came to live in the village. This couple founded a church and held the meetings in an old school building. Soon the church started to grow and the desire arose to build its own building. Everyone contributed. One gave rice, the other wood, another made time available and in a short time the church building was a reality. The people from the area spoke about it with amazement. They were not used to this! So quick and so unanimous. No talking about wages, no empty promises. Doris and Alphossin have succeeded together with their church members in demonstrating what the possibilities are if you are free from all kinds of hindrance. It is a beautiful testimony!

Politics

Let's talk politics. There is a new mayor in our area. Tina is his name. We know him well and have good contact with him. Tina has been appointed mayor before. Most people remembered that. That was the time when all the water pumps were working properly, the school buildings were filled with children and the road ... Yes, the road to Sandrohy was so good that they even had visitors who drove the road in a small passenger car. These are also his plans this time. Tina has our support and we are curious what his appointment will bring to the area.

In the meantime we notice that people are willing to cooperate. The new school building in our village, which has been under construction since September 2019, is starting to take shape. The idea is that it will be finished by the end of February. We truly hope so because the children in our village have not been going to school since 2018.



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The pumps in our village will soon flow again. At least, that is what has been said. At the beginning of January this was discussed in a village meeting. Various pumps are skewed because the soil underneath has been washed away. Jurgen made it clear that if nothing happens, the pumps will fall over automatically ... Then you have nothing! One pump has now been reinforced with a foundation of boulders. It is a good start.

Car

Finally, we would like to make another call regarding the car. The bodywork under the car has become bad and there are many rust spots around it. A lot of welding has to be done and eventually the car needs to be repainted for the necessary protection. Fortunately, labour is not the biggest cost item here, but the parts are more expensive than in Europe. We do not yet have a quote, but we expect that we will have to incur more than 1000 Euros in costs. That is why we ask again, if you can miss something extra, to consider our car fund. We also would like to say thanks to those who have already given to us!



You can give directly:

'AIM International', Wageningen

IBAN: NL91 RABO 01 55 6 57 712

Please mention: Project Mission-work Madagascar – Car

For more information:

<https://www.jurgenenkatja.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!

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Through our blog: <https://www.jurgenenkatja.nl/en/category/blog/>.

Jurgen & Katja

God dienen op Madagaskar



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Things to pray for:

We are thankful because:

- 1)that the king of Beono and his family
have come to believe in Jesus;
- 2)that we can come on leave;
- 3)that our work bears fruit.

Pray that

- 4)practical matters concerning our
leave and the necessary rest;
- 5)money for car repairs;
- 6)that the king of Beono and his family
have come to believe in Jesus;
- 7)awareness among pastors of the
importance of preaching in the dialect;
- 8)the further processing of the Bible
books Luke & Acts may progress;
- 9)further developments concerning
possible collaboration with the Jesus
film organization.

Where do we live?

Location Openstreet Maps:
Maroamboka, Madagaskar-
21.59506/47.87529

Location Google Maps:
Maroamboka, Madagaskar-
21.595055,47.875621

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our ministry to the Antanala people on
Madagascar. We greatly appreciate the
love and support of the wonderful
people that God has put around us.
This ministry is much larger than our
family and we cannot do it alone.

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