

## Newsletter February 2023

Dear friends,

It is a privilege to update you again about our experiences on Madagascar.

### Busy

In the last newsletter, we've told you about the 'newcomers' on Madagascar. It is beautiful to see that the Lord is still preparing *and* sending people, to do His work "*to the uttermost part of the earth.*" (Acts 1:8)

In December, Jeremy and Felicity Aitkens with their five children arrived from Australia. They spent their first few weeks in the capital. The children took the opportunity and play-dates were at the order of the day. It was a nice (and noisy) affair. During the *nerfgun* battles, I (Jurgen) served as a shelter. While trying to get some translation-work done, a toy gun was placed over my shoulder with someone loudly shouting "*bam, bam, bam.*" Yes, great fun! Meanwhile, the Aitkens have travelled to their new home in the north of Madagascar.

The Desborough family have also arrived. This time, we are not the only people helping them around. The other AIM missionaries in Tana are also available. Our intention is to help the Desboroughs with the *inbound* programme. This is a one-year programme in which new missionaries will learn about the culture and things involved in living on Madagascar.

### Translation work

Before you think translation work has no progress because of noisy kids, here's an update on the subject.

We can't help but say that things are going very well. It is actually going faster than expected. The first booklets of the Gospel of Luke have almost all run out. In other words, the translated Gospel of Luke is due for a second printing.

While the corrective work of the book of Acts continues steadily, we occasionally discover (minor) errors, which we then have to change in the translated Luke gospel as well. These errors are usually variations in writing. One example is the word 'speak.' We have always written this down as '*mizaka.*' But after some extensive research, it turns out that the pronunciation is slightly different, namely '*mijaka.*' It seems fairly simple to change the 'z' into a 'j.' But just a 'search and replace' function won't work. This is because the word '*mijaka*' comes in all sorts of variations (e.g. *mijakaina*, *fijakana*, *fjakany*). And these variations also come in plural, past, present and future tense.

By now we have the first twenty chapters of Acts corrected and basically ready for printing. If you want to check it out, you can do so online at this link: <https://www.jurgenenkatja.nl/#translations>

Jurgen hopes to travel to Maroamboka again to collect the remaining chapters from our translator, Menja.

### Maroamboka

Talking about Maroamboka. Meanwhile, we have been back to our village regularly. The village and our neighbours are dear to us. During the last trip (November), Vanya made a video report. You can watch that via this link:

<https://www.jurgenenkatja.nl/roadtrip-november-2022>

As said we are planning the next trip. It is a bit uncertain when it can be done as the road is impassable at the moment.

The trip will of course involve visiting friends and neighbours, but as mentioned, we also hope to take the remaining chapters of Acts with us back to the capital.

We will also see if we can bring back Sambivelo. Sambivelo came with us to Tana last year to be trained as a health care worker. We are almost six months further, and Tinasoa, his supervisor at the hospital, has indicated that he is ready. We still need to discuss how we will arrange some things. Which medicines can he prescribe, what kind of medical procedures can he perform, and how do we deal with the fact that he is still very young?



The latter is a particular concern. On Madagascar, young people have little say. If an older (45+) person comes and says he or she wants something, the culture dictates that the younger person just has to do as he is told. So here we will have to make firm agreements with the village elders and other important people in our area. Basically, I (Jurgen), with my white colour, 48 years, and grey locks in my beard, also belong to the '*olo lehibe*' (important people). So hopefully, we, the 'important' people, can make good agreements on how to deal with Sambivelo.

### **Ikongo**

When we were new on Madagascar, we looked intensively at different options to serve. During one of the survey trips, we also travelled to Ikongo. We have this survey on video which can be viewed through the following link:

<https://www.jurgenenkatja.nl/naar-de-tanala/>

But why do we mention Ikongo, you may ask? After all, we ended up living in Maroamboka, Sandrohy. Ikongo is even more remote than Maroamboka, and currently only accessible by air or by foot. The people in and around Ikongo also belong to the Antanala. Indeed, the language spoken is recognised as the official Tanala language. Our translation is a bit more mixed, but is very well understood there.

Last November, we had our annual AIM-Madagascar conference. Many Malagasy partners were invited. Among them Jean-Baptiste with two students. Jean-Baptiste lives in Ikongo, and is an active evangelist. These young men were a bit shy because the official Malagasy language does not come easily to them. At one point we discovered where they came from. We greeted them with the traditional Tanala greeting. Big eyes! From then on, the conversations started.

They had heard of us, and they had also heard that we had done quite a bit of translation work. We brought some booklets with us and gave it to them. This was just what they needed! They exclaimed-and they asked when I would come to Ikongo to encourage the local Christians AND to hand out the translation work?

Okay, so that is high on our priority list! However, getting there by car is currently impossible. From the main road, it is another 90 km inland on a dirt road. The road seems to be impassable even for motorbikes. To get at the conference, Jean-Baptiste had set off on foot only to reach the first reasonable road after two days. The journey was to the conference was tough and exhausting... No joke, we are talking here about young men who are used to these kinds of things.

It does not look like that road will be repaired in the foreseeable future. However, we know several organisations that sometimes travel to Ikongo by helicopter. Jurgen has already hinted left and right that, if they have a spare seat, he would like to join them. Even if it is only to encourage the brothers and sisters there. 'Just' travelling by helicopter costs a lot of money-even though as missionaries we get an adjusted (greatly reduced) price.

Encouragements they certainly need! At the time of writing, there is still famine (ever since the severe cyclone in February 2022) in the Ikongo area. The latest news from Jean-Baptiste is that people are selling their children in order to have money for food. It is very sad and no one seems to know exactly what happens to the children and where they go. Aid agencies are working to get food into the area. This is somewhat successful but, besides the impassable road, corruption and theft are a big problem as well.

We pray that the Lord will give us wisdom.

### **The family**

Meanwhile, we are not sitting still in the capital either. The children are doing well! All five of them love to learn, and this clearly shows in their results. Vanya is busy preparing herself for the exams she hopes to take next year (2024) in the Netherlands. Issa is thinking about taking exams for some subjects at the same time. That way he can divide his exams a bit so that not all subjects have to be done at the same time.

We are also in the process of saying goodbye. Our good friends, Rob and Karina Barber, are moving back to Canada with their four children. Rob is working as MAF-Madagascar's chief mechanic, and will soon continue working in Canada as an instructor.





It is an emotional time for all of us. Fortunately, the children are still able to hangout with each other regularly, and we hope to do something together next week. Through this experience we start to understand a little better what it must have been like for our friends in the Netherlands when, seven years ago, we left for Madagascar. Goodbyes are no fun but it helps knowing that, as Christians, we will meet again!

By now, the children are starting to get comfortable with all the opportunities for pastimes in the big city. For instance, Issa recently joined karate classes. He is enjoying it immensely. Before he could join the big group, the karate teacher wanted to give him one-on-one lessons for two months. Twice a week, Issa can therefore expend his energy in the dojo, which is only a ten-minute walk from home.

In the garden, the children, together with Jurgen, have started building a real tree house! This had been the desire for a long time, and now it is really starting to take shape.

What is more, we have bought some more furniture to make it even cosier indoors. We were able to borrow a lot of furniture from MAF, and we brought furniture back from Maroamboka, but that did not include a sofa, for instance. From time to time, Katja also manages to buy beautiful things - pretty paintings, wood-crafts and other local handcrafts. It makes the house really feel like our own place.

### **Thank you!**

We hope that after reading this letter, you, like us, are also looking forward to what the future holds. We can make plans but one thing we know for sure: *"whatever the Lord has planned, will come to pass."* (Proverbs 19:21).

We feel privileged to have so much support in our work. Thank you for your prayers, compassion, support, and encouragements!

Together with you, we want to continue to trust in the Lord!

***For God is good, all the time! And all the time, God is good!***

Many blessings!

Katja & Jurgen  
Vanya, Issa, Abbey, Dani and Simeon Hofmann



# Jurgen & Katja

*Serving God on Madagascar*



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[www.jurgenenkatja.nl/en/](http://www.jurgenenkatja.nl/en/)

## Support us!

### Mandate form (UK donors)

Donors from other countries can contact the following offices:

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Please go to our website for more details about how you can support us.

## Things to pray for:

### We are thankful because:

- 1) we serve a great God;
- 2) we are doing fine as a family;
- 3) the translation of Acts is going very well;
- 4) we see that there is a lot of interest in translation work;
- 5) we are able to explore new ways to spread the Gospel.

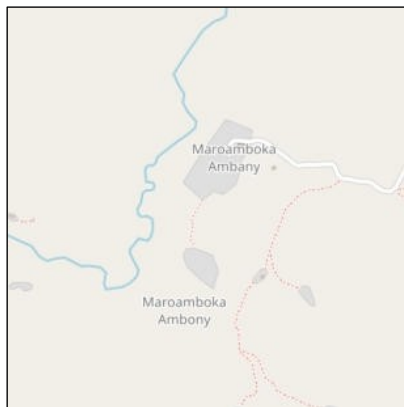
### Pray that/for:

- 6) the people in Ikongo;
- 7) the cooperation with local Christians;
- 8) the Lord will provide a way for us to visit our brothers and sisters in Ikongo;
- 9) finalising Sambivelo's education;
- 10) Many may be blessed through our work.

## Where do we serve?

Location Openstreet Maps:  
Maroamboka, Madagascar-  
**[21.59506/47.87529](https://www.openstreetmap.org/?lat=-18.7529&lon=21.59506)**

Location Google Maps:  
Maroamboka, Madagascar-  
**[21.595055,47.875621](https://www.google.com/maps/place/Maroamboka,+Madagascar/@-18.7529,21.595055,15z)**



## Disclaimer

Thank you so much for your interest in 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.

You have either signed up to receive this newsletter or you have been an important part of our lives and we thought you would like to know about our journey. If at any point you no longer want to receive this newsletter, please unsubscribe:

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