

## Maroamboka

### In this letter

**Inona Vaovao?**

**Our Friends**

**Educating the Children**

**Wheels for the Gospel**

**Fun Time**

### Contact

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

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### Newsletter August 2018

From Maroamboka: hello everybody!

While summer is at its peak in Holland it's winter on Madagascar! Believe it or not but there were some weeks in which it was warmer in Holland than here in Maroamboka.

#### Inona Vaovao?

'Is there news?' is the question often that is asked at the end of a Malagasy greeting. The greeting in our area is much longer and know several variations. Still, 'inona vaovao' says something about the culture: people are curious.



This curiosity can go two ways and sometimes it is hard to determine which news is real and which is not. For example, clean drinking water is a constant source of irritation to us. One moment the pipes of the pumps almost burst and then, in a matter of minutes, the pressure drops and we are left for days without water.

Asking around why this is gives interesting answers:

People: "Yes, that is because bad people use all the water of the reservoir to wash their cows."

We: "Really? How many cows do they have?"

People: "Very very many! Sometimes 15!"

Or this one:

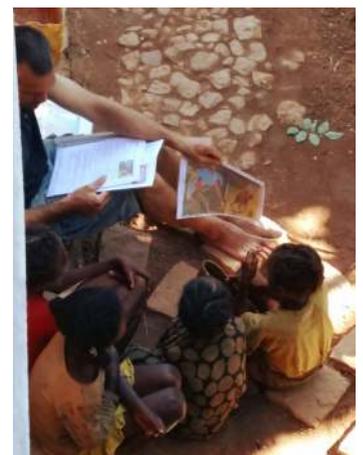
People: "The people in the next village leave their pumps open the whole day."

We: "But that is impossible because their taps are crooked and cannot be turned any more, leaving the pumps with water only flowing slowly."

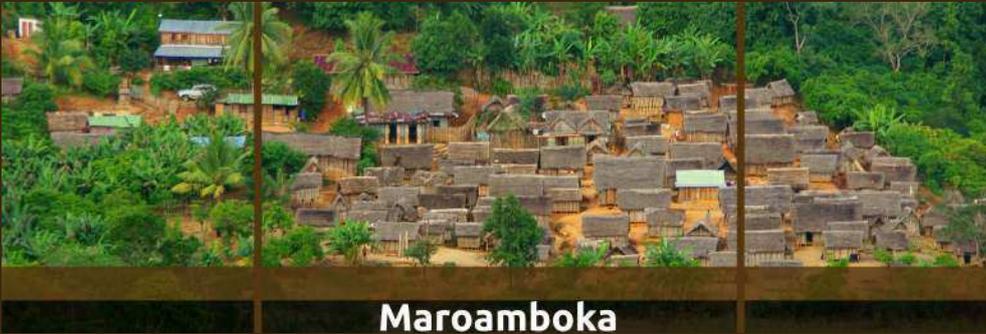
People: "yes, they probably detached the pipes (read between the lines: they probably broke the pipes)."

In the end the problem was a small landslide that caused a connection in the main pipe to break. Well, that news is less exciting, isn't it?

This curiosity can be a bother but is also very handy for our work. The weekly visits to the villages are going very well. When people hear the white foreigner talking in their own language, and not in the official Malagasy or French (both of which are badly understood in our area), they are quick to listen. It is interesting to note people's reaction on Jurgen's question whether they want to hear some Bible stories. At first they often say no... Do they know the stories? No, but they think that reading has to be done in the official Malagasy, and, so we think, it is very scary when others find out that you cannot understand this 'foreign for them' language.



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Normally Jurgen just starts and then the people are amazed! They have never heard stories like this before. For the very first time they actually understand what is being said.

*Inona Vaovao? "Yes! The foreigner from Maroamboka visited us today. He told stories about God and Jesus. He showed pictures and did not talk in a strange language. Mahahy teny Gasy izy (He is good in Malagasy)."*

It is difficult to make appointments. People live from day to day. Lately Jurgen came to a village with no soul in sight. Disappointed? No way, a little down the road he found a gathering of many people. They came from several villages and worked on a NGO project to build a better irrigation system for the rice fields. They were just finished for the day and did not have any plans. There we were in the middle of a big field, under the blazing sun, with more than 40 listeners. After every story the same words: "*manaraka koa!*", next one also!

Again, a few days later, an empty village. But, near the road sat a shepherd fixing his clothes. The cows were grazing and were doing fine. When the shepherd heard about Christ's birth and that God send His angels to the shepherds to be the first to see the Saviour, he started to laugh and did not stop for a long time. The highest God choose simple shepherds to be the first to see the mighty Saviour... People like me!?

*Inona vaovao?* Oh yes! And what news it is... Wonderful news!

### Our Friends



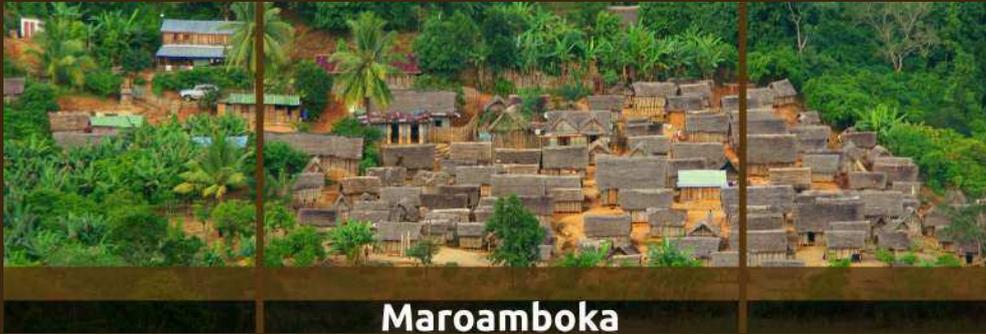
In our last newsletter we wrote that Menja got his reputation hurt in our village. Menja moved to a different village, Sandrohy. Luckily it did not hurt our relationship with him. Although Menja cannot come along to the villages with Jurgen (he already concluded that himself), he can still help with translation work.

We did create a new story on baptism and what it is according to the Bible. We also asked Menja to start a translation of the Gospel of Luke. Last month we had contact with an organisation which primary focus it is to translate the Bible or parts of it in different Malagasy dialects. They said that for now they are not planning to do translation work on the Tanala language. The Antanala are separated in three main groups, each with different words and sayings. This makes it very hard to make a translation in one single Tanala language. Since we are only focussing on one area, we are not concerned with this problem and just continue with translations in the particular language spoken in our area.

Our good friend Maman'i Prisca moved back to her husband. They were in the middle of a divorce but we are happy to say that they solved their issues.

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We joked about it and said that her husband probably realised that he now had to do a lot of work himself. Also, it is winter thus very cold during the nights. Not really the humour from here but they both laughed wholeheartedly and agreed.

**Educating the Children**

Last we wrote about the children in the village not going to school because Menja wasn't allowed to teach. Since then not much has changed because no the teachers on Madagascar are on strike since May and it is August now(!?). However, it seems that parents are now giving their children something to do. We see them working in the rice fields, hauling water and they help collecting wood and bamboo. They no longer hang around our house.



Not having noisy children around the house helps greatly in teaching our own. Our children's friends still have a hard time understanding why our kids need to learn the whole day. It is lovely to see that their efforts bears fruit. The children get good scores on tests and they develop nicely. There is a broad interest which helps them to learn new things all the time. Naturally there are these days... You know, those days that nothing seems to work, those days you'd rather go out into the forest to find snakes, or when you rather swim in the river... Oh well, you know the feeling, right? :)

Katja is very actively looking forward to see which learning path to take with Vanya and Issa. Especially Vanya, who is almost 14, needs to plan a good route towards her future education. We are blessed these days with many good options for home-schooled children and children who live in the middle of nowhere.

**Wheels for the Gospel**

We asked your special attention for our car.

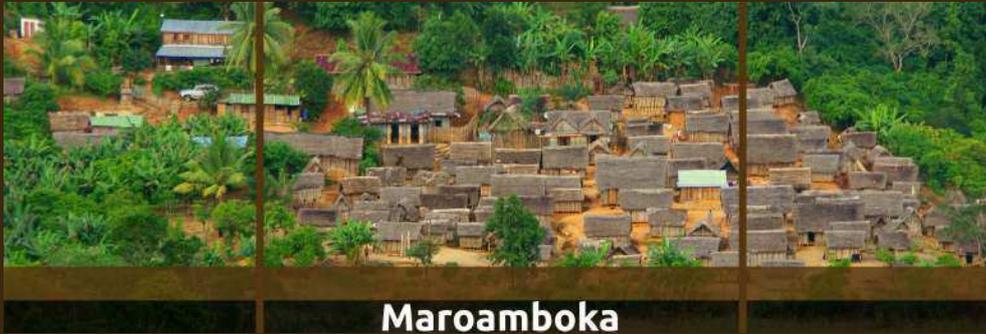
We have been blessed with generous gifts. Several modifications already have been done. Among these a repaired protection shield underneath the fuel-tank, two iron rock catchers on either side of the car and a strong light-bar on the roof so we can see all the holes and stones even when it is dark.



Also the instrument-panel in the dashboard will be repaired. Manual labour is cheap on Madagascar, but the car parts sometimes cost up to thrice the usual price in Europe. So far we spend about Eur 2.000 a year on maintenance.

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A diff-lock was on our list as well. Jurgen already ordered one but this did not go as planned. The person who said he would mount the diff-lock told us that he could not do it because of a lack of time. Moreover, he told us that the initial price would be higher. At first we were given a price of about EUR 2.500. However, it turned out that this was still without VAT. It would mean a price that is as high as one third of our car's value.

As you might understand we put the whole idea on a hold. Time to rethink matters. We can, for example, buy a good motorbike for that money. With a motor we can always get in and out of the area. A motorbike would also save much time visiting the villages. Now the furthest village is about 7km. With a motorbike Jurgen would be able to visit several villages per day (several kings already asked when Jurgen would come to their village as well). A motorbike has a better fuel economy and it is cheaper in maintenance; it will not break as easily as a car; the parts are cheaper and repairs are easier to do yourself.

Anyway, it is a shift in our plan but we asked several people what their thoughts were. The all said that they can see the benefits. As long as we are home in Maroamboka we can't really orientate so that will have to wait till our next visit to Antananarivo.

Still, we would like to ask our friends who specifically gave money for a diff-lock whether they are all right with this idea.

### Fun Time



Since the end of July we have entered a fun period. It started with Simeon's third birthday on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July. Three years so three candles on his cake! With four older siblings he was not forgotten and they spoiled him with candy and other presents and surprises.

The 14<sup>th</sup> of August we celebrated our 21<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In the afternoon we have played games together with the children and in the evening we had a lovely dinner with roasted duck. The coming month we still have three birthdays: Abbey (23/8), Jurgen (28/08, and Vanya (01/09).

Despite all the challenges we face we feel privileged to live here. We truly love the people around us and in turn they show their affection regularly by giving little gifts like bananas and little fish... Hmmm, yummy!!

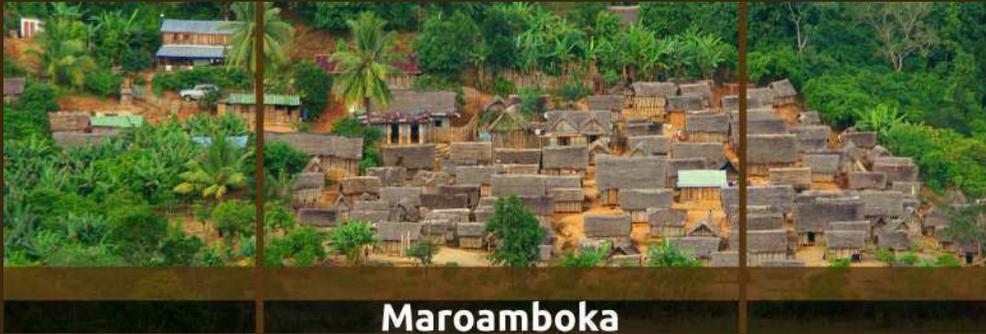


That's it for now.

Should you like to follow our adventures in between newsletters we invite you to visit us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/jurgenenkatja>

Until next time: God bless and goodbye!  
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with Vanya, Issa, Abbey, Dani and Simeon





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### Things to pray for:

#### We are thankful because:

- 1) of the translation work done by Menja;
- 2) Maman'i Prisca and her husband are together again;
- 3) the stories have been well received;
- 4) our children are doing fine with their schoolwork;
- 5) we are happy together;
- 6) the people in the village are happy with us.

#### Pray for/that:

- 1) the hearers of the gospel;
- 2) the preparation of the stories by Jurgen;
- 3) our health: sometimes we are plagued by (skin)infections;
- 4) The route we are going to follow with Issa and Vanya;
- 5) Menja will stay enthusiastic about his work as translator;
- 6) Savety, sometimes we hear stories about robbers in the area. It is hard to find the truth about these stories... 'Inona vaovao?'

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