



Newsletter March 2018

Women's Day, March 8th, is a very important celebration in Madagascar and all around the world. It is a day when women are recognized for their achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political. La Maison d'Arnaud was invited to take part in an important village parade where women in the community are celebrated and their



work recognised and we were very proud to have our 19 female members of staff take part. During the official ceremony, we were surprised when the Mayor spoke about us in her speech mentioning our work with the children and also our health



program for women and youth, based on sexual education, family planning and health and hygiene. Rachid, Director of La Maison d'Arnaud, was so very proud when he was asked to come up and accept a certificate from the Mayor and local authorities acknowledging our work.

March saw us continue our community work, we collaborated with 3 different established Centre's in Diego Suarez.



Free consultations are offered after each talk.

Marie Stopes Clinic continues to use La Maison d'Arnaud as a Centre to teach sexual education and family planning to local families and youth. The local community has shown confidence in these meetings and the number of people attending the lectures have grown. There are always local doctors or nurses present to give advice and consultations often leading to giving out condoms and applying contraceptive implants and giving personal

advice on family planning so that healthy couples can become planned parents.

PSI (Population Services International) which is a global nonprofit organization focuses on the encouragement of healthy behavior and inexpensive health products. They work in over 50 countries on topics including malaria, family planning, HIV, pneumonia and sanitation and they have an office in Antsiranana our nearest town. This month was their first official visit to La Maison d'



Arnaud, we took advantage of the popularity of previous lectures given at La Maison d'Arnaud and invited a group from PSI, 'Top Reseau', to work with us and raise awareness regarding HIV. Attending the lecture held this month in our 'Grande Salle' were village members, students from a local high school, scouts group (older boys), other youth associations and staff from a local pharmacy. HIV tests were given for free and after care was discussed.

We are very happy to promote sexual health and family planning in our area where poverty often leads to illness and infant mortality. We are sometimes surprised at

questions that are asked, showing a lack of basic knowledge, validating the importance of these talks that give necessary information to improve health and sometimes save lives and so we are particularly happy to see a growing interest especially from the local youths.



Dr. Enrico and Dr. Antonia discussing our children with staff.

The Samaritan Health Clinic also worked closely with us in March. They are a nearby polyclinic (private) that supplements the local healthcare system in Antsiranana. The clinic is run by an Italian, Dr. Luigi, who has taken a special interest in our work and has welcomed us from the moment we arrived, offering us free advice and consultations for our children. He often visits La Maison d'Arnaud and has seen our children

grow, we feel very honored to have him as a friend and colleague. Dr. Luigi hosted two visiting doctors both experts on mental health, Dr Papa Enrico (child neuropsychology) and Dr Antonia Ranaldi. When they learned of our home they immediately wanted to visit us and, over the course of the month, all of our children had free consultations. Our staff benefited from their very important advice about the children's care. Mental health care is very much neglected in Madagascar and there are no experts on children's mental health in our region so these two visitors were very precious indeed and we learnt many important things about all of our children. I will give just one example, have a little 4-year-old girl that suffers from 'fetal alcohol syndrome' and last year the school advised us to put her in a school for children with severe 'intellectual disabilities', after much discussion we decided to school her at home for a year before making any decisions. The little girl had a consultation with the two visiting doctors and we were



told that she was intelligent and with the correct care and stimulation she will improve and can be reintroduced into the normal school system...this is exactly the news we wanted to hear and with their report we will be registering her for St. Joseph's at the beginning of the next scholastic year.

These doctors are hoping to create a Project in town specifically for mental health in children, they may return next year to setup such a project.



Bad weather has affected maintenance and our sustainable projects.

In January Madagascar was hit by cyclone Ava which hit the east part of the island, claiming a total of 36 lives, with 20,000 people displaced by flooding. In the North of Madagascar, we felt

Ava's rain and strong winds and although some properties were damaged it was nothing compared to the east coast and luckily La Maison d'Arnaud came out unscathed. In March Madagascar was hit by another two cyclones, Enawo and Dumazile, the one that most affected our area was cyclone Dumazile, Diego Suarez received 201 mm of rain in 48 hours. Rain and high winds damaged many small dwellings and damaged roads. We are very lucky not to have had much damage but once the ground dried out we needed to start work on a



new catch basin, we built a new one last year for the kitchen side of the house and we are now working on the other side where the showers are located.



For these reasons we are behind with our work on our sustainable projects, both the garden and the chicken farm. But we have now started to build the short walls to create terraces which will stop soil from being washed away from our sloping garden. The recent cyclones have shown how important this work is and we are determined to have the terraces ready and crops grown before the next cyclone season.

Our staff and children are all safe and well, the cyclone has only affected the twins, who were placed in our home last November, with the recommendation of the local (and only) pediatrician in our region, as they were unable to return home to their family as scheduled. They came to take part in our refeeding program that supplements the hospital program which offers children suffering from malnutrition a 10-day refeeding program, funded by one of large international NGO's, but these children often need more time to recover. The twins are nearly two years old, they are strong and well and are both at last walking. They were due to go home this month to 'Nosy Be' a small island approximately 220 Km away but the roads have been washed away and nobody yet knows when they will be repaired. We are of course in touch with the mother, she understands the situation and the twins will remain with us until the situation changes.

Without your support we would not be able to carry out all these activities. Thank you! x x x

