



Newsletter April & May 2018

A Day Out

We continuously try and give our children new experiences especially in Malagasy lifestyle and daily routines and recently we took the children to Sajoavato village where there is a famous rural market. It is much larger than our local village market in Antanamitarana which the children visit each Saturday. Sajoavato market specialises in fruit and vegetables and also rice which is cheaper here than in our area. We took the advantage to buy rice, fruit for the season, such sugar can and avocado.



when eating soup in a small gargotte, the staff and children were surprised when the owners recognised our triplets! The family of the triplets are from the surrounding area and their story is well known partly because surviving triplets is quite unusual. They asked our staff about them and their progress and were so pleased that they were doing well. It was quite an emotional moment.

Health lecture



On 'World Health Day', we had our 5th family planning and sexual education lecture. This time we had two Health NGO working at the same time with a focus on youth. Marie Stopes continued with a talk on family planning, sexual education with free private consultations, while PSI Madagascar (Population Services International (PSI) is a global nonprofit organization focused on the encouragement of

healthy behavior and affordability of health products) carried out free HIV tests, 61 people participated in these tests including our staff and children, the nurses from the dispensary, members of a scouts group, and the high school students.

The location of La Maison d'Arnaud, outside the town of Diego Saurez makes it ideal for people from the surrounding rural area to access, we are known by local leaders, schools and youth association and they come with confidence to listen and participate in lectures held in our 'Grande Salle'. These are some of the reasons why PSI Madagascar spoke to us after their talk regarding strengthening our collaboration with the aim of enabling more people access to healthcare.



Rachid is proud to have the opportunity to collaborate with the NGO PSI (which franchises with Top Reseau).

Tanora Garanteen collaboration

The Tanora Garateen is youth project that focused on adolescent reproductive health, and youth leadership program. They were present at the health lecture and also, showed interest in collaborating with us. They would like to focus on teenager sexual education and leadership skills with some of our children. We are looking forward to working together on this collaboration which will give our children very important knowledge and skills for their future outside La Maison d'Arnaud.



Book Club

We have changed the program of our weekly book club and now as well as reading and vocabulary we have added colouring and craft. This is as a result of a recent visit by the Italian Children's mental health doctors who advised us to add arts and crafts to the program so that the children might express themselves using this relaxed activity that they can all enjoy. The doctors explained how important a fun activity

such as drawing and colouring can compliment learning, giving the children confidence and allowing them to understand how they can participate and work as a group while expressing themselves individually.



Our Saturday morning book club is becoming very popular with more local children arrive each week to take part in the activities which are always organised by local volunteers. We have a Malagasy neighbour who is group leader and we often have youths (often those that have attended our lectures) that pop in when they have time. The varying age groups and abilities don't stop the group working as a team with older children often helping younger ones and everyone having the opportunity to learn.

The prison project

We continue to organize sewing courses for female inmates in our local prison, recently we were obliged to find a new teacher while our regular teacher goes on maternity leave. This month we found out that the temporary teacher is also pregnant but she is happy to work until our Fledine has her baby and returns to class, she says she misses coming to prison and enjoys working and teaching the inmates new skills and watching them create articles of clothing after only a few lessons.



Sustainable Project



One of our children checking the food and water.

In April we were on the last steps of preparation for our **chicken project** and at the end of the month a technician arrived from the Farm Shop to do a final inspection before we went to pick up our chicks. He was concerned about hygiene, heating, space and making sure we had the equipment that we need regarding feeding etc. But also he wanted to talk to our two nannies who volunteered to take onboard the task of caring for the chickens.

As our children are getting older, some do not need so much intensive care and there has been much discussion about whether to employ someone to look after the chickens but the nannies were willing to take on different tasks and involve themselves in our sustainable projects. They have been taking part in the relevant training needed to look after our chicks which arrived at the end of April, we quickly realised the one or two of the older boys were also very interested in the project. The boys have been listening in on training and immediately involved themselves when the new chicks arrived. A month on and our birds are doing well the nannies have stepped up to the challenge of chicken care as well as child care, with the children helping when they have some free time...so far so good.

The garden is also being transformed, it has changed from a large play area to an efficient space for small farming, while keeping an area for the children, an outside space big enough to give them a sense of freedom and a safe playing area. In May the steps we created are finished and extra soil is being delivered to fill and level the soil. We have many plants and fruit trees in the garden but now we can plan to plant more fruit and vegetables. We have a gardener that has been with us for several years, he has taken part in training by agricultural Peace Corps volunteers and has advice from the agricultural shop. We are all very keen to make this project work and so he will have some help from the rest of the staff.





The Twins just before leaving for Nosey Be.

We have been caring for **Twins** for the last 6 months, they have taken part in our refeeding program and are now fit and strong enough to return home, they lived with their small family on an island off the north west coast called Nosey Be. They were well enough to return home last month but the severely damaged roads meant that they could not make the journey. This month our social worker and a small team from the office of Family and Population are in Nosey Be with twins right now and I know that the mother is very happy. The children were so sick when they first arrived at La Maison d'Arnaud, the mother thought that there was something physically wrong with them and she told me that she did not believe the smaller one would ever walk! Can you imagine her delight when she saw her girls running and playing together happily?

While Mme. Fara is in Nosey Be she will have meetings regarding two other children on the island that are in desperate need of care and we are waiting to hear the outcome of these meetings. So Mme. Fara maybe returning with two infants, you will find out in next months news.

While taking some of our children to the ophthalmologist for check-ups we met '**Marina**'! Marina was another child in our care that was severely malnourished and is is very close to our hearts. When she first arrived at La Maison d'Arnaud she fought very hard to stay alive and the staff were on 24hr watch, for several weeks they watched Marina creep slowly out of danger and she stayed with us for more than 2 years before a responsible family member came forward to offer her a home. Staff met her as she was returning home from school with her cousins, she was happy to see us and we thought her pride shone through her quite, strong personality... 'Look at me now!' she seemed to say.



Little Marina standing on the right.

June is 'Children's Awareness month' and local authorities working in the Diana region have been holding **three day meetings and workshops** for staff, NGO's and all those that work with children and in children centres in North Madagascar. La Maison d'Arnaud took part in these workshops, we were represented by Rachid our executive director and Mme. Fara our social



Rachid at the meeting with Mme.Fara on the right talking into the mic.

worker who is well known by all, as she has been working locally with children in need for 25 years. The objectives of the workshops were to strengthen the capacity of the centres working in child protection, and incite the Homes/Centers to follow the norms and standards in centers that care for children deprived of parental care. Also to find out what difficulties are encountered by those working with children and encourage

exchange and collaboration between all entities. After the workshops, we had a

visit from the office of Family and Population (social services) which included their Director, we were proud of the many positive comments that we received, they told us that they were satisfied and happy with our work, the organisation and its facilities. This is important because we work very closely with them, there is a legal partnership between us and our children are placed in our home via their office in Diego Suarez.



Visit from the office of 'Family and Population'. The Director has baby Kaylan in his arms.

Also in May we were invited to participate in a meeting of professionals brought together to discuss and move towards abolishing children's weddings in Northern region of Madagascar. A law was passed in 2007 setting the marriageable age at 18 for boys and girls alike. However, child marriage is still common, especially in rural areas where traditional marriage ceremonies are common.

We are preparing for '**Children's Awareness month**', last year we were very involved and worked with our local sports club to organise a football tournament, and our own staff ran computer courses and some fun and games. Our links with local NGO's, government bodies, also with health and hygiene lectures held at La Maison d' Arnaud and our work in child protection has put Antanamitarana on the map regarding child welfare in our area. We are delighted to hear that the organizers of this year's celebrations have decided that next month's official ceremony in the Diana Region for 'Children's Awareness Month' will be held in our village, Antanamitarana. We feel that our presence in the area and work with children has been instrumental in this decision and we will do our best to raise awareness of children's needs and all those working to support them. Among the list of activities there will once again be a football tournament, and also a singing competition, training on personal health and hygiene for adolescents/teens and training on children's rights, and many fun activities through our book club etc. We will let you know how of all these activities go in our next months Newsletter.



We are very grateful for everyone that supports us in so many different ways, allowing us to improve the lives of so many children. Thank you.