

AKANY AVOKO FARAVOHITRA ANNUAL REPORT October 2019 - September 2020



At Akany Avoko Faravohitra, we take in our care vulnerable underaged girls who have already suffered a great deal; they may have been abused, have had to take on domestic work from a young age or may have behavioural issues. Most girls come from Antananarivo or the South of Madagascar. Akany is where they will build a new start in life, where we help them develop their faith and restore their hope. We provide them with the spiritual and moral support they need so they start believing in themselves, enough to want to change their life. Each time I report on the work we do at Akany, I feel inspired by what we accomplish and I feel so blessed. Each year is a special year for us as we focus on new projects; each year we are very blessed because mostly we achieve our objectives. 2020 is no different but, in addition to our usual operating challenges, we have had to deal with the extra burden of Covid-19; with schools closed for over six months, we have had to develop daily training activities ourselves, and find new ways to continue the girls' learning.

A look back at October 2019 - September 2020

A. The children

i. Numbers:

We have had 115 children in our care – 62 court cases and 53 social cases. Some have since left, after being cleared of any wrong doing by the court or after a solution has been worked with their family. We now have 82 children with ages ranging from new-born babies arrived with their mothers to 21-year old young women. But the majority are teenagers.

ii. School:

31 children go to school (nursery, primary and secondary classes). 6 pupils sat the state exam in their last year of primary school; we are awaiting results. 8 children are due to sit the secondary school exam in October 2020. One girl sat and passed her A-levels (baccalauréat); she was due to start a university degree in Business Administration in March but the start of uni has been delayed because of Covid-19. We sincerely hope all our children pass their exams.

iii. Training programmes:

In February 2020, thanks to a new cooperation with the FPPM (the Council for Protestant Churches in Madagascar) 18 girls enrolled on training programs: 9 attend a cookery and bakery class, 8 hair dressing and 1 dressmaking. They also all learn computer skills, French and religion. They are all



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Agrément selon l'arrêté numéro: 10477/16-MPPSPF du 06/05/2016
« *Aryetoamin'ityfitoeranaity no hanomezakofiadana, hoy Jehovah* » -Hagay 2:9b
“*Handrosoamin'ny ho avytsarakokoa -
S'avancer pour un meilleur avenir – Step up for a better future*”



studying towards a professional certificate and are due to sit the state exam in November 2020 (but this may be delayed because of the pandemic).

iv. Reintegration program:

In October 2019, we prepared a reintegration programme for 3 girls, all over 18. Two were orphans and one had an extremely difficult family background. Their independent life started in February 2020. We supported them in their job search and helped them find accommodation. We prepared them psychologically for this brand-new start. We made a contract with them agreeing that Akany will support them for 2 years, and pay their rent, electricity and food bills. After that, all being well, they will be independent from Akany.

We also completed several home visits before the start of Covid-19 and prepared some family reintegration programmes. The girls affected will however not go home until the end of the school year or the training programmes they have started. We expect this will be soon.

v. Health:

We are delighted to report that since the end of 2019 we have had direct access to a doctor who conducts regular medical checks and provides advice on health and hygiene to the girls. In September 2019 we started a new cooperation with a hospital where we can send pregnant girls for check-ups.

B. The staff

We have 12 full-time members of staff (including 1 nurse and 1 accountant). Staff all received social work and psychology training. In addition to their main duties, they teach the children specific subjects like embroidery, basket-making, dressmaking, cookery or traditional Malagasy dancing.

We had one volunteer from Poland in November 2019, and 9 other volunteers help us on an ad-hoc basis. Currently, we have 5 who give courses in French, English, German, computer skills, general knowledge, handicrafts, and traditional culture and songs.

We organise a team build once a year, which really helps us bond together as a team.

C. Akany in the time of Covid-19

Our 38 school-going children were only able to attend school from October to March and had to continue their learning with us. Homework was collected from school, and we had to pay school fees. However, we have had to call onto private teachers to provide tuitions to 14 children due to sit exams this year.

We created several new activities for the girls to keep them occupied. We included craft making (jute bags, embroidered bags, macramé, etc.) as well as cookery lessons. For more originality, the activities were organised as small contests. We also offered several sports activities and games, similar to those organised by scout groups.

During lockdown, we set ourselves three goals: **“Pray, Stay Safe and Be Happy”**.

- ✓ **“Pray”**: we provide a Christian education to the children and we pray that God will protect us.
- ✓ **“Stay Safe”**: we stay vigilant and diligently follow the instructions provided by the State, i.e. good hygiene (frequent hand washing), a nutritious and balanced diet, a medical check at the first appearance of Covid symptoms. We closed our Home visitors except for people who came to bring aid and food. Finally, we distributed vitamin C to everyone and applied some very effective traditional Malagasy remedies (evoka, or steam inhalation).



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- ✓ **"Be happy"**: we try to keep the girls as happy as possible by letting them keep the art they have created during the craft activities for example or by rewarding them regularly. It is well known that happiness boosts the immune system!

We have adapted our work schedule: educators worked alternate weeks and movements was limited to emergency cases and bare necessities. It hasn't always been easy but we have managed thanks to everyone's efforts and amazing dedication. We have rewarded them whenever we could with rice, fruit, honey and milk to take home.

D. Funded projects

i. Funding from UWI (Union of Welsh Independents):

This year has been very special for us because we received a special 3-year donation from UWI. We allocated this year's funding to the following projects:

- ✓ Staff wages: we have covered the wages for 1 of the 4 full-time staff as well as 10 months of 1 part-time staff teaching singing and traditional culture and 1 part-time IT teacher.
- ✓ The purchase of staple items (towels, sanitary pads, etc.), materials for key activities (embroidery, sewing, etc.) and school supplies for vocational training programmes away from Akany; the settlement of school fees
- ✓ Some house improvements including a new outdoor toilet block, a biogas system, a new toilet and shower for the staff (partly funded only)
- ✓ The purchase of a new 4x4 vehicle used for home visits and reintegration visits, and every day trips to the doctor's, the hospital, the maternity ward or going to court
- ✓ The repair and maintenance of our old car and motorbike (those are still useful)
- ✓ The opening of our new cafe that helps us generate more income

We started 3 projects which we could not finish because of Covid-19 but that we are planning to complete as soon as we can. These are the restoration of the first-floor balcony at Manonga, the home visit programme and the reintegration follow up visit programme.

ii. Funding from Balcombe Trust:

This is the second year that the Balcombe Trust funds our work. We have used the donation for the following projects:

- ✓ The biogas system: we have chosen it for environmental reasons as it allows us to use less charcoal and wood for cooking. We will use the compost and fertiliser the system produces to grow vegetables and fruit at Manonga.
- ✓ The new toilet block and staff shower and toilet (combined with the donation of UWI)
- ✓ The making of sanitary pads for the girls first, then as a means to generate income

We started 2 projects which we could not finish because of Covid-19 but that we are planning to complete as soon as we can. These are improvements to the plumbing system including a bigger water tank, 15 days of a new dressmaking teacher and time for them to source quality fabric that will allow us to develop a little enterprise making reusable sanitary towels.



iii. Funding from Money for Madagascar (MfM):

MfM has been supporting and funding Akany since 2015. We are very thankful for their on-going support. Most of our donors have come via MfM and MfM is always there for us when we are in need. The funding we receive from MfM help us cover three of our key operating costs:

- ✓ Food: this is an important part of our running costs, and the main expense every month
- ✓ Health care: our highest expense after food
- ✓ Staff wages: MfM funds 3 members of staff

iv. MfM Covid-19 Fund:

The money kindly donated by MfM when the pandemic struck in Madagascar was used to improve the girls' diet; by improving the nutritional quality of the food we serve to the girls (more fresh fruit, more protein) we aim to boost their immune system so they are better prepared to fight the virus. We also allocated some of the money to the purchase of alcoholic hand gel, soap, cleaning agents, face masks as well as Vitamin C. We also supported four local MfM partners in their Covid efforts.

v. Girl Sponsorship Programme:

Our programme aims to fund school fees or vocational training programmes for sponsored girls. Sometimes we are able to use the funds for emergency repairs or for urgent projects that can help us generate additional income for our Home so we can become more independent.

vi. Other funding or projects:

We have received some small donations from other NGOs and individual donors; this has helped with school fees and specific projects they wished to fund (e.g. we have repaired our laundry area, built a brick base for the water tank).

vii. Donations in kind:

Donations in kind have mostly come from our national supporters as posting parcels from abroad is a risky affair in Madagascar; it takes a very long time (often months) for them to get delivered and sometimes are tampered with. National donations include food mostly (rice) and clothes.





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Our plans and new projects for October 2020 – September 2021

- A. Closing open projects:** All the projects planned for this year but not yet finished (UWI, Balcombe Trust) will be included in the new plan from October 2020 - we plan to complete by December 2020.
- B. Home improvements:**
- ✓ **Indoor toilets** would be a big improvement for the girls at night
 - ✓ **Additional shower rooms** to accommodate our growing number of girls
 - ✓ **A separate toilet block for visitors** and the administration staff for health reasons
 - ✓ **Kitchen relocation** and enlargement: its current location adjacent to the refectory means the smoke from the fire gets into the refectory and is a health hazard for children and staff alike
 - ✓ **Hallway and refectory improvement:** the hallway needs a new tiled floor to replace the old wooden floor, the refectory needs new tiles
 - ✓ **The main yard needs** levelling to make room for a bigger play area for the children
 - ✓ **The grounds need landscaping** so we can grow more vegetables making the most of the compost and fertiliser produced by the biogas system
 - ✓ **2 new classrooms** need to be built since we have had to convert one of the existing classrooms into a dormitory to sleep more girls
 - ✓ **Holiday** by the seaside: we would like to reward the girls and staff for their patience and exemplary behaviour during lockdown with a well-deserved short break.
- C. Running costs:**
- ✓ Increased allocation for food, healthcare, materials for children's activities, school fees, school supplies and training programs as the number of girls has gone up
 - ✓ Increased allocation for staff wages to recognise the staff who has been with us for over two years, and recognise extra efforts especially during Covid-19.
- D. Generating income:**
- ✓ Our small cafe at Akany "Fanamby" is already doing well because of its great location in town. With more supplies, we could generate more income. We would also like to send the staff for additional professional training.
 - ✓ Manonga: we would like to improve and decorate the volunteer accommodation on the second floor so we can host paying volunteers or groups. We need to complete the security guard's accommodation, and need some new tiling on the ground floor.
 - ✓ We would like to build a small hair salon near the cafe at Akany; its perfect location is ideal for business and it would also provide work for girls with a hairdressing qualification who are ready to leave Akany.





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Success stories

This year I would like to tell you about two girls who are well worthy of a mention:

L, 17, spent 11 months at Akany. Following her court hearing she was sent home to her family but decided to carry on with her hairdressing training. She continues to visit Akany after her course each day and is doing well. Her focus on her future and her continued work to develop her skills even after going home not only inspires others but also makes us feel very proud. We need girls like L to become role models for other girls.

M, 16, arrived at Akany after being wrongly accused of stealing money when working as a housemaid. She had left primary school after finishing year 2. At Akany, she was keen to write and read, so attended a specialised training programme for teenagers who have left school early. After her hearing, she was free to leave Akany but asked to stay on so she could complete her schooling and sit the state exam. Despite her Mum asking her to go home, she was determined to carry on with her studies. She sat the exam on 2 Sep and we are awaiting her results. After two years she would like to stay on at Akany and learn hairdressing. M's will and determination are inspirational: by herself she has opted for a path that will bring her a better future.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Money for Madagascar for believing in me and believing in Akany Avoko Faravohitra since the start of our journey. I am filled with joy and happiness to see how much we have accomplished in the last 12 months despite the challenging times of Covid-19. This would not have been possible without the continued support of MfM and all its supporters. Thank you for such a motivational collaboration. I am inspired working with you. I feel that together we can accomplish so much. On behalf of all the children at Akany, past, present and future, I would like to express our gratitude. You make a difference to their life at Akany and their life after Akany, whether they rejoin their family or choose an independent life. With your support, they step up for a better future.

September 2020

**RAZAFINDRASOA Ivelohanta,
Director**

