

AID TO ORPHANS OF MADAGASCAR

AOM is committed to offering assistance to child centers and other programs in Madagascar that help children and their families in need by providing food, education and job training. Your donations are precious gifts that transform the lives of children who live with so little hope. Our very small organization with its equally small budget is able to succeed because we know each person we are helping and can keep in touch with the results of each project. This year we were able to make significant improvements in these children's lives because of your generous donations.



SHE HAS A DREAM



HE HAS A PLAN



FUTURE MIDWIFE



THANK YOU MR HENRI

THE DREAMS OF OUR CHILDREN

Gazing at these two young women embarking on possibilities, one can feel the world shift to a better place. Their eyes are bright and smiles genuine. These young teens are intent on continuing their education through AOM while working hard to achieve their dreams.

Every student and their family comes to us under some form of duress. It takes time, but together we build strength and courage, as these families can attest.

Seven years ago, Antsa's mother came to us as a recent widow, unable to support herself and her daughter. She enrolled in AOM's course to become trained as a seamstress. Over the years she has become an excellent seamstress, sewing students' school uniforms and masks which supports her family.

Graciella's father's job is to transport goods in the market. He couldn't afford a cart so he used his back and shoulders. Her mother washes clothes for pennies. They could not afford tuition for their bright daughter and asked for our help 4 years ago. AOM is helping them build their income with a loan for a cart and by making school available for their daughter.

Both families see a better future through their daughters education and through opportunities to generate a better wage. Both of these shining stars are following their own path away from poverty.



Graciella carefully chose this setting and outfit to portray her dream of walking down the steps of an airplane as a future airline stewardess. Her determination also drives her to spend extra hours on her homework, in order to stay at the top of her class.



Antsa loves to sing and dance. Her favorite subject is English but she would much rather skip French. Her dream is to become a health worker for her community. She wants to give back because she feels like she and her mother have been given so much opportunity.

Gifts, stresses and strains of remote international project development.

It's been much too long since fellow volunteer Lori and I have set foot in Madagascar for our invigorating exchanges and trouble shooting sessions with our AOM team. A day before our 2019 scheduled departure to Madagascar, France shut their borders. A few days after that Madagascar shut it's borders and is still closed to international travel. Fortunately, we were able to avoid being stranded part way to Madagascar. Instead, we stayed home, hunkered down and began working remotely.

For AOM, the onset of Covid brought on a sense of unity. We were leaping to help those left behind and those who must work. We distributed handmade masks, updates for safety protocols and food to those who had no access to work or food. We were on alert for any and all needs.



In 2021, schools re-opened and business hours were increased. The air of this being an emergency waned within the community. We would hear about flare ups in different regions and kept beating the drum of safety. Sometimes the news was downright frightening. It cost money to get a Covid test; no one had any money. Funerals were passing by more frequently and statistics were seen as under-reported. Several of our grandmothers died suddenly. The head of the AOM Board of directors died. Our very dear Head of Schools, Mr Henri died. Covid and its effects were taking the lives of too many people in our program. Recently, Jacky and his wife had covid and recovered.

Our members live in crowded conditions and their stress levels continue to be high, so these frightening reports have led us to be extra diligent and cautious. Under these conditions, we must be wary and wait for safer conditions before embarking on these next two community projects that improve lives and build a strong sense of community. Vaccines have not yet arrived on the Island Nation of Madagascar.



Project Study was created to help students have a place in their home to study. As soon as pandemic conditions improve, we will hire AOM graduate, and recent Woodworkers Academy graduate, Mandrasy, to assist and train families in making a simple small desk so that students will have a place to do their homework. Fulfilling this request from our students' families will help them create a more stable place to study. Perhaps the skill and confidence of building a small table will help families see possibilities in trying new skills. They will also be able to see how AOM sponsorship and enthusiasm can be combined to accomplish great things. Mandrasy is an inspirational example because he graduated from The Woodworkers Academy as the youngest student with the highest Honors and awards.



Project Dry was created to gather together a group of families that, during the rainy season, live in wet conditions. They were going to be a team that worked as a cooperative, going house to house and building drainage ditches and raising floor levels and patching roofs.



We have opened up the library. Only a limited number of students are allowed inside at a time and an outdoor reading area is provided. Students now have a place to relax and read. They can also ask for help with their homework. AOM staff can once again have a better idea of how our students are doing in school and at home when they spend time at the library.



Out of the Ashes and Into Covid Reality



Rhina and Joel's parents started out together in a very rough and broken way. Their father, Herizo was working off and on in the mines, money was very tight and soon his paychecks went solely to alcohol. Their mother had minimal income and was pregnant with Rhina, she wanted stability. They were facing a breaking point or ultimatum.

Fortunately for all, with the birth of Rhina came a commitment to turn their lives around. Her father quit his drinking and abusive behavior. Their mother trained at AOM as a seamstress. After several years of working long hours and saving money, they finally were able to buy a sewing machine instead of renting one. This has helped increase their income.



Their father, Herizo Albert works as a laborer and apprentice carpenter on construction jobs. Unfortunately, with Covid, people were struggling to just feed themselves and were not able to continue with building projects. Herizo took on the role of house husband. He has developed great sympathy for mothers, who must juggle many things at once just to get a timely meal on the table, go to work, all while making sure the children get to school: prepared and on time. Rasoamalala, their mother, at the nearby factory, working long and varied hours. She works for low pay, but is happy the family has the little income that she earns.

Sweet Rhina is in charge of transporting water for the family, saving them pennies a day. Joel is in charge of raising ducks and is better known as the family joker. On weekends and whenever possible, the sewing machine comes out and the parents patch scraps of used material together to make children's shorts and plastic table cloths for a merchant. They work very hard to increase their income.

When our director went to interview Rhina he discovered that she has a strong goal. One day, while she watching a movie, she was struck by the importance of a midwife's job and became determined to become one. She is keeping this goal in her heart and it's with great conviction. When Jacky tried to make her falter by talking about the difficulties that midwives have to face every day, she showed him the fiercest resistance that someone her age can have. She is very determined about this. She appreciates being able to go to school and says she only has this chance because of the support we give her.

Joel loves the idea of being a driver, be it taxi or bus or anything motorized. He is young and filled with humor. At this point he lives to have fun but continues to pitch in for the well-being of his family.

The entire family has been strongly committed to Joel and Rhina's education and counts on them to follow through with their plans, knowing AOM's help will make their education possible.



Grounded in a Good Way

A few years ago, the rage of a drunken father woke up the entire neighborhood. Our AOM student, Henintsoa, only 13 years old at that time, had to leave his home and family in order to stay alive. He ran to his grandmother's home, several villages away. After AOM director Jacky tracked him down, they made a plan. To supply his dive into adulthood, AOM gave him a shovel, hoe, machete, other hand tools for farming and seeds. We also keep in contact and offer emotional and financial support when needed. His grandmother gives him shelter, food and loving care. His uncle taught him how to care for and propagate nursery stock. These last 2 years of calm have been transformative for Henintsoa. Just last month, when his father asked that he come home, Henintsoa declined, saying that the peasants life suits him very well.

His grandmother is guiding him with her eyes on the future. She wanted him to be able to take care of himself when she was "gone for good". (The AOM community experienced the death of 3 grandmothers recently) Eventually she asked him to move into a small room attached to her shed. This helps him understand what it is like to take care of himself. They continue to share meals and stories together.

At the end of this year they are planning to build a one room mud/clay house together which will give him important skills and independence. Henintsoa has grown strong by knowing he is able to take care of himself and plan for a better future. He looks forward to building a home, developing his own nursery business and having a family when he is ready. The country life suits him very well. He has purpose, strength and a plan with family and AOM by his side.

AOM works with students and families to find ways to overcome poverty and lack of options. Most of our students are thrilled to be able to continue their education as far as their grades and ambition takes them. A few students graduate from primary school and decide continuing education is not for them. We take this decision seriously and work with the entire family to come up with alternative solutions. Mandrasy became a very talented and passionate woodworker. Heninstoa is enthusiastic about supporting himself and growing plants. Your donations give this great gift for a better life. Thank you.



On January 28th Mr Henri, our AOM school principal and director of education and helper of families in need, died. He leaves a huge hole. He was such a gentle person, beloved by so many.

Many of our long term volunteers took Malagasy lessons from him when he worked at the Norwegian Center down the road. Our director of 18 years, Maholy, called him uncle and appreciated his kindness and experience. Our current Project Director, Jacky, considered him a wise and thoughtful partner in all things AOM. Parents, students, and all who came in contact with him appreciated his calm and caring concern. Mr Henri was always the most civilized and thoughtful communicator and an exemplary person.

AOM is paying the college tuition for his daughter so that she can graduate. Her degree will help her find better paying jobs, so she will be able to help her mother financially. The family does not have life insurance or a pension. Relatives must step in to help out.

These are especially sad times for our director Jacky because they were such a strong team. As Jacky says, he was like a brother and a father to him.

We miss him deeply and are thankful for his gifts..