

Report on the mission of a Rotary Volunteer in Madagascar

Dr Maurice COLLIN, Mission to the island in May-July 2008

Introduction to Madagascar

Madagascar is a wide island, 4 times larger than Illinois. It has a population of 18 million, but it is one of the 10 poorest countries in the world (989 USD per capita : FMI factbook, 2005).

The ancestors of the people of Madagascar migrated by sea from Indonesia around the fifth century. The nature of the topography is a veritable mosaic of landscapes, climates and altitudes.

The mineral resources are nickel and *ilmenite* from which titanium is extracted, representing a future economic hope.

Poverty and inequities are the other characteristics the country shares with some of the poorest countries on earth.

The Rotary Foundation sponsors important and needed projects on the island.

As a Voluntary of the Rotary Foundation, I propose, build up, conduct and supervise various projects which have already changed the life of many.

The projects I undertake are chosen according to 2 major goals :

- **raise the standard of living of the most impoverished, needy,**
- **and meet the needs** and demands of the local population.

Our priorities are:

- **to assure the supply and purification of potable water**
- **to be involved in the struggle against malnutrition**

45 projects have already been completed in Madagascar, most of which I supervised completion and follow-up.

Priority projects

● THE SUPPLY OF POTABLE WATER



3 major projects on water supply where completed during my stay.

1. On May 31, we have inaugurated the supply of potable water to the villages of Father Pedro and to the toilettes of the hospice called **Olom Baovao** (meaning New Man), and to a new building for the elderly.

A project sponsored by french clubs of RC Annonay and RC Voiron, with an extra sponsorship by the french Anber Foundation. Thanks to them all..

2. We have provided the supply of potable water from a well, completed solar panelling for the community centres of the *Salesiennes* Sisters in **Soanindrarin** (to the east of Antsirabe). Sponsorship by RC Paris la Defense, RC Annecy and RC Ivato (Madagascar). With thanks.

3. At **Ampararatabe**, 250 km to the west of Tananarive, we have collected water from some roofs, and installed solar panelling in the schools of the Sisters of *La Salette*. This project was sponsored by RC Chateau-Thierry (France) and RC Ivato (Madagascar). With thanks.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST MALNUTRITION

The rising price of rice is making life more precarious and difficult for the poor.
We are involved in promoting **3 ways to diminish malnutrition**.

 **Intensive cultivation of rice** which has been promoted in Madagascar for decades by Father de Laulanié, a French Jesuit agronomist. This techniques still need much promotion as it is vital to feed the population. Still it is difficult for the Madagascar people to accept this as their ancestors did not do this ...
.... Einstein said: " It is easier to split the atom than to disintegrate a prejudice."

 **The dried leaf extract of *alfalfa*** (EFL for Extraits Foliaires de Luzerne) promises great hope. It is a food supplement which, when added to traditional food, allows the correction of deficiencies in essential amino acids , trace-elements and vitamins.
We began using this food supplement in prisons in the east of Madagascar, and plan to expand it to the other ones that need it to correct malnutrition.
We operate closely with the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Health and of Agriculture and those responsible for the nutrition program. We also operate closely with the customs in order to obtain an exemption of customs duty for this specific food supplement. The decision to exonerate this duty will have to be made by the Council of Ministers.
Currently, the duty is exorbitant and unfair (1,000 Euros a ton for a supplementary food that is given at no cost to the most poor... Poverty as an open market !)

 **A garden to support more families**
Being convinced that there would be no more malnutrition if each family had a garden, I had to meet the regional chiefs to win them in this project. The population has to be backed and sometimes has to be convinced, to cultivate their own vegetables and some day attain sufficiency for their own consumption.

 *Projects in the course of being carried out.*

AN OPERATING THEATRE FOR THE CLINIC OF AVE MARIA IN ANTISARABE

A surgery department his is an urgent need for **Antsirabe**, an economically important town in Madagascar. At the present time, if a woman haemorrhages during the course of labour, she is in the gravest danger. This operating theatre, managed by the Franciscan Sisters will bring a sense of security to the whole town. Thanks to the Rotary Club of Thonon (France).

New Projects

In coordination with a local team of correspondents, I am working on 6 major new projects :

1. **A nursery of trees for Father Pedro.** The aim is to give trees that are most favourable to reforestation.

Deforestation is an ecological catastrophe for Madagascar.

The country has gone from 80% forestation to 8%... and the forests continue to be reduced by 600 metres annually.

2. **The sanitization of the town of Mananjary** (on the south-east coast of the island).

The goal is to establish some sanitary buildings of 4 toilets and 4 showers.

We are preparing 2 Matching Grants there :

- one with the Rotary Clubs of Mortagne (France) and Tsimbaroa (Madagascar), and with a french Association called "Water Without Frontiers" (ESF), for a total of 15,000 Euros.
- the other project (30,000 Euros) has been arranged with the Rotary Clubs of Grenoble (France) and Tsimbaroa (Madagascar), again with the french Association ESF.

3. **Major works on the way at Tsiroanomandidy** (250 km to the west of Tananarive) :

we are bringing potable water, pumps and solar panelling for the community centres, a school and a training centre for young farmers ... Total cost of the project is 50,000 Euros.

The Trinitarians brothers are my local correspondents for the whole projects there. As an introduction, the Trinitarians look after prisons in 90 countries.

This enterprising project was arranged thanks to the french Rotary Clubs of Grenoble-Belledonne and Chateau-Thierry, RC Ivato (Madagascar) and Association ESF.

4. **Taking water to the 3,500 inhabitants in the village of Ankerana Avaratra.** It is situated 20 km to the west of Tsiroanomandidy. This project will be completed under the supervision of the Trinitarians. Costing USD 30,000.

Sponsorship by the Rotary Clubs of Maubeuge (France) and Ivato (local). Thanks again.

5. **Gathering impoverished youth for training, educating and teaching them manual work** under the strict requirements of the Don Bosco school.

"Work is prayer" said Don Bosco, founder of this type of schools all over the world.

Thanks to the sponsorship and commitment of RC Roubaix-Est (France).

My action as a Volunteer for the Foundation, and my motivations

As a doctor I know how to take care of needy populations and people when I cross them in their daily life, and I am happy to organize projects that meet their fundamental needs with a total certainty to be useful and helpful to those we really need.

"**Health and Development**" is the moto for my intervention in humanitarian projects.

As a Volunteer of the Foundation I can undertake trips to Madagascar for organization and supervision (tasks which are really needed to be effective and keep control) ; I can build major projects and organize several Rotary Clubs worldwide working together on a same project.

During my trips I also feel the need to find an immediate solution to the most urgent needs, which actually can be financed directly by private donations for this purpose.

Example of urgent interventions I undertook and financed during my last trip :

 Improving the living conditions of prisoners at the **Antsirabe** prison which where dreadful. A complete disinfection had to be done to get rid of skin parasites, a food supplementation with alfalfa extract was needed to complete the daily diet of cassava (*manioc*) in the prison (700 kCal a day).

 Giving a hand to the emergency doctors of the **Befelatana** hospital, to carry out a campaign for the prevention of vascular brain accidents which are very frequent in Madagascar.

 In the last project, I have organized with local correspondents, and financed by private donations, the plantation of 1,000 fruit trees at the psychiatric hospital of **Antananarivo**. Instead of giving money, this action involved the scouts of Antananarivo in planting the trees as a group project, with participation of 90 mentally impaired patients.

 ***With local people, responding to collective needs, in the long term...***

I think that the people of both Madagascar and all of Africa must live a better life at home. It is an act of solidarity and it is our agreed interest.

If it is true that "irrationality is not bad, it is good": we are happy to ease a little of the misery around us.

I hope to go a very long way with the Rotary Foundation, with projects that make us proud to be Rotarians.

Special thanks

These projects are accomplished thanks to our Rotary friends whose motto is "To Serve " and to associations like "Eaux Sans Frontières" (Water-Help), to Andre and Bernadette Leclercq - honoured Rotarians - and their Anber Foudation, to Dr Nouraly Rotarian in Antananarivo, honoured "Service Above Self", and to our Rotarian friends of Madagascar : Olivier, Claude and Abdullah, Anil, Claudine, Thierry and Patrick, Roland-Denis, Christian and Christophe.

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