



SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S LEARNING IN MADAGASCAR

Newsletter April-September 2020

Dear friends of Boky Mamiko,

As you all know, COVID-19 is causing an economic crisis worldwide, and Madagascar is no exception. With this newsletter, we would like to tell you more about how Madagascan families are being affected by this crisis, and how Boky Mamiko has adjusted its priorities to take the situation into account and give our support to the extent that we can and within the framework of our goals.

We hope you and your families are doing well during these uncertain and unprecedented times. We would like to thank you deeply for allowing Boky Mamiko to continue its mission of supporting children's learning in Madagascar. Your help – our help – is needed now even more than before!

Warmest Regards,



Rossana Galli

Boky Mamiko Founding member



Felicia Sexsmith
Boky Mamiko Educational Director

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INTRODUCTION: COVID-19 IMPACT IN MADAGASCAR



Vanilla prices demanded by the cultivators (Mpamboly) and offered by the buyers (Mpividi) at the Ambanja vanilla market in May 2020

COVID-19 is causing an **economic crisis in Madagascar**, as almost all families and businesses are affected by lockdown measures.

First, authorities suspended all international flights as of March 20 and there is still no certain date for reopening. **Without tourists, hotels and restaurants closed down**, and many might not reopen again. With them, most employment opportunities in the region got lost. In particular, North-West Madagascar – where Boky Mamiko is active – is a well-known touristic attraction, and the food service and hospitality sector normally generates thousands of jobs.

For families who rely on selling farming and fishing products, markets lockdown and the lack of demand by hotels and restaurants have pushed down prices, so **products get sold at a fraction of the normal price**. Cultivators of export products like vanilla and ylang ylang (a flower used for perfume production) face a similar problem: buyers are confronted with the logistical challenges caused by the scarcity of air and sea freight options, so prices fall. For instance, in the local market of Ambanja vanilla prices have fallen 75% off the previous year. At the same time, the national currency, the Ariary, devaluated against the major currencies, and imported goods – which notably include rice – got more expensive.

In such a situation, **education becomes a luxury that families cannot afford**. School fees are too expensive and children are needed in the fields. At the same time, many local private and community schools rely on families' contributions to pay the teachers' salaries, as government schools are insufficient and overcrowded. Even where there was no financial impact on education, the long period of school closure meant a full semester without learning, given that the lack of electricity and the extreme poverty make online schooling impossible. This difficult situation is going to worsen the already bad education scenario in Madagascar, a country where only 4% of children can read at the end of primary school.

In the case of the Mamiko school, the lockdown had two major impacts. First, the founder and main financier of the nursery and primary school found herself **jobless** since May 1st, as she used to work for an international tourist company with a fixed-term contract. For this reason, Boky Mamiko – who until now supported the Mamiko secondary school only – decided to offer a temporary financial support to the nursery and primary school too. The second major impact of the lockdown on the Mamiko school was on **children's learning**, particularly for the 5th-graders who had their final exam in September. Unfortunately, the discontinuity of classes implied that only 3 out of 28 children passed their exam. This sad success rate was similar in the whole village, where a total of 24 students out of 143 passed the end-of-primary school exam.

In the midst of these hardships, Boky Mamiko is even more actively supporting quality education in North-Western Madagascar, so that students in these rural areas can benefit from trained teachers, relatively small classes, books, and scholarships. However, for Boky Mamiko as for all charities worldwide, the lockdown measures made it very **difficult** – if not impossible – **to organize fundraising events**. Moreover, the economic crisis makes it less likely to receive large donations from companies in Europe and North America. This situation will last for at least a few more months, if not longer. For this reason, Boky Mamiko is launching a crowdfunding campaign on the online platform GivenGain (more details on page 7):

<https://www.givengain.com/cc/boky/>

By making it possible and easy to donate a small amount online, we hope that together we can all help an entire community in Madagascar overcoming these unexpected difficult times.

GOAL: QUALITY EDUCATION
ACTION: BOOKS AND LEARNING MATERIAL

“Boky Mamiko” means “Books, my love!” in Malagasy. Our core mission in fact is giving access to books and learning material to underprivileged schools and children in rural Madagascar. To this aim, we have been working at the **translation in Malagasy and the creation of children’s storybooks**. In particular we worked at the following projects:

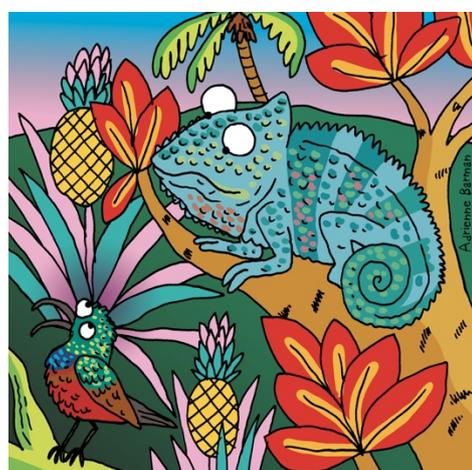
Wayan and the Turtle King : a story about plastics in the oceans and the danger it poses to turtles. Thanks to our honorary member, Ms. Harvel-Randrenjatovo, who translated the story into Malagasy, and to the kind collaboration of the author, Yvette Bezuidenhout, the Malagasy version is now freely accessible on <https://www.africanstorybook.org> and the bilingual French-Malagasy version can be bought online (see <http://www.wayan.blue/where-to-buy-the-book/>). The author also donated us 20 hardcopies of the bilingual version, which will be brought to Madagascar when transports will be restored.

La Légende du Colibri : an iconic children’s book by Pierre Rabhi about self-responsibility and environment protection (<https://www.colibris-lemouvement.org/mouvement/legende-colibri>). We paid a Malagasy teacher to translate the book into Malagasy and created a French-Malagasy version, which will be printed locally for internal use. We plan to contact the author to explore the possibility for publishing the bilingual version in Madagascar.

Le 12 mois de l’année à Madagascar : our own book about “The 12 Months of the Year in Madagascar” (in collaboration with Ms. Fenohasina Vahinalasoavonjy, a Malagasy teacher) will be printed locally for internal use, and hopefully might also be published in Madagascar.

The brilliant **Swiss illustrator Adrienne Barman** (www.adrienne.ch) has kindly created for Boky Mamiko a wonderful image of a typical Madagascan habitat, based on pictures and scientific information we provided her. This will be used both as learning material for our environmental education and for fundraising (printed on gadgets as puzzles, mugs or posters).

In 2020, we were planning to organize a **charity books collection** in partnership with the Lycée Français de Zurich, to gather books to be distributed to a small school in the remote village of Ambatokisindra. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 lockdown and restriction measures have delayed the charity books collection and the possibility to distribute books until now.



An image from our book “*Le 12 mois de l’année à Madagascar*” and a detail of Adrienne Barman’s drawing

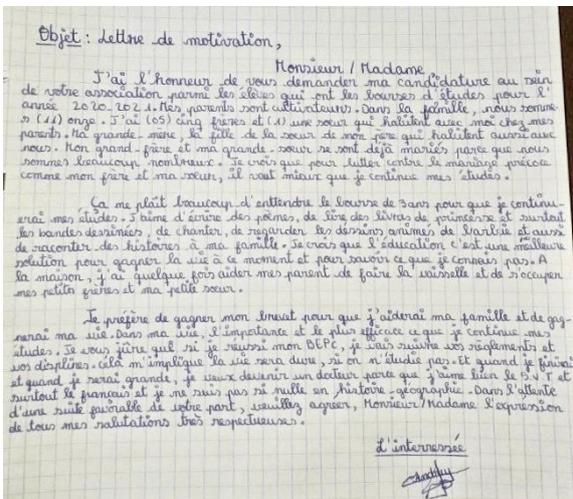
GOAL: QUALITY EDUCATION
ACTION: SCHOLARSHIPS



A major goal of Boky Mamiko is to **increase the supply of qualified teachers in rural Madagascar**, as on average just one every 10 teachers in primary schools attended a teacher education program. To this aim, we are currently paying a **scholarship for two female students to attend a three-years Teacher Education academic program** at the Institut Supérieur Pédagogique d'Antananarivo (I.S.P.A.) in Antananarivo and become qualified teachers. In the academic year 2019-2020, our two bursary students have been

attending their first and second year of university studies respectively. The second semester 2020 was affected by the lockdown and the university closure. Our two bursary students left the capital to join their families in their respective rural villages in March. From there, they followed the online courses organized by the university, despite the connection problems. To facilitate their connection, we paid for their expenses to go regularly to an Internet café in the nearby town. Both bursary students have now returned to Antananarivo for the start of the academic year 2020-2021.

Starting from the school year 2020-2021, Boky Mamiko will offer also **scholarships for students to attend the last three years of secondary school (grade 10 to 12) and obtain the high school diploma (Baccalaureate)**. So far, we have received 8 applications from 9th grade students of the Docenda school – a school run by [Association Docenda](#), a French NGO active in the region – and from the Mamiko school. These students will undertake their middle school final exam (the BEPC) at the end of September. Although we initially wanted to offer only two high-school scholarships, we are considering offering a higher number of scholarships, given that the COVID-related economic crisis makes it even more difficult for families to afford education. Once the results of the BEPC exam will be available, we will make our final decision and proceed with the students' enrollment at the **private high school SE.VE.MA.** in the district capital Ambanja.



“Sir, Madam
 I have the honor of offering my candidature to your association for a scholarship for the school year 2020-21. **My parents are farmers. In my family, we are eleven. I have five brothers and one sister who live with me and my parents. My grandmother and cousin also live with us. My older brother and my older sister are already married, because we are a very large family. I believe that to combat early marriages like my brother's and my sister's, it would be better that I continue my studies...**
 ...I promise that if I will pass my BEPC, I am going to follow your rules and discipline. This means life will be hard if I will not study. When I will finish my studies and grow up, I would like to become a doctor...”

One of the motivation letters we received from the Docenda 9th-grade students

GOAL: QUALITY EDUCATION
ACTION: TEACHERS' TRAINING

In December 2019, Boky Mamiko organized and funded a two-weeks **pedagogy teachers' training** held by a professor of the Institute Supérieur Pédagogique d'Antananarivo (I.S.P.A.) for all teachers of the Mamiko school (from kindergarten to secondary school).

The teachers' training in pedagogy was supposed to be completed in 2020 over another **16 days** of training. The same professor of I.S.P.A., Professor Rex, who had been highly appreciated by all the teachers, was supposed to come back to Djangoa from Antananarivo in July. Unfortunately, public transports across different regions are still forbidden in Madagascar due to the Coronavirus pandemic regulations. The completion of the teachers' training program has therefore been postponed.

GOAL: EMPLOYMENT CREATION
ACTION: FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

As explained in the introduction, the economic crisis brought about by the COVID-19 lockdown measures affected directly the Mamiko nursery and primary school. Since its foundation 10 years ago, the school has been financed through the fees paid by the students' families combined with the school founder's personal income. Unfortunately, the pandemic has negatively affected both financing sources, as many families have financial difficulties and the school founder found herself jobless since May, 1st.

For this reason, Boky Mamiko – who until now paid the salaries of the teachers of the Mamiko secondary school only – decided to offer temporary financial support to pay the **salaries of the two teachers of the nursery school and the five teachers of the primary school**. To this aim, we are launching a crowdfunding campaign to raise the 5000 Swiss Francs needed to pay the salaries of the seven teachers for the school year 2020-21. **Please help us sharing this link <https://www.givengain.com/cc/boky/> to as many of your friends as possible, and ask them to make a small donation.** Together we can keep the Mamiko nursery and primary school open and running for its over 200 students!

We would like to thank deeply Ian Oggenfuss – film student at the Zurich University of the Arts – and his colleagues Richard Dumovich, Manuel Ledergerber and Lauro Jenni, for creating the most amazing video for the crowdfunding campaign!



Click on this link <https://youtu.be/x6Konic94HI> to watch this beautiful video about Djangoa and Boky Mamiko!

GOAL: EMPLOYMENT CREATION
ACTION: TEACHERS GRADE 6-9, LIBRARIAN AND COOK

Schools in Madagascar have been closed since March, 20th due to the pandemic. At the end of April, the Government announced that only the exam grades (the last year of primary, secondary and high school) would have resumed classes. In the case of the Mamiko school this meant that only the **5-th graders came back to school**, given that the Mamiko secondary school has no students in final grade yet. For the secondary school students, the teachers prepared some written exercise sheets, which were photocopied and distributed to the students to work at home. Two teachers of the secondary school did not turn up anymore after April.

On the bright side, the **Mamiko library reopened at the end of April** and offered the possibility to all children to read and borrow books throughout the lockdown. The library closed in July for the school vacations and reopened at the end of August.

Boky Mamiko agreed with the school management to regularly pay the salaries of the librarian and secondary school teachers who remained available during the school closure, but to reduce by 50% the salaries during the school holidays (July and August). Since the cook works to prepare the morning meal for the students only during the rainy season (January-March), her employment engagement with Boky Mamiko could take place normally and was not affected by the lockdown.



The Boky Mamiko library keeps its doors open to children of all ages!

GOAL: ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION
ACTION: ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Boky Mamiko supports the **study of environmental education at the Mamiko secondary school**, by paying the salary of the environmental education teacher and providing him with specific training and teaching materials.

The environmental education course successfully took place during the first term of 2020, including some exciting mangrove replanting excursions with the students. Sadly, the school closure put the environmental education course to a halt since March, 20th. We are looking forward to resuming the program in the new school year starting in November.



Learning about deforestation and soil erosion in the environmental education course

GOAL: ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION
ACTION: ENERGY EFFICIENT COOKING STOVES

We also had planned to buy another **25 energy efficient cooking stoves** produced in Madagascar by the **Swiss NGO ADES** (Association pour le Développement de l'Energie Solaire Suisse – Madagascar, <http://www.adesolaire.org>) and sell them to the parents of the Mamiko students offering a **discount of a monthly school fee (5'000 Ariary) on the stove's price**.

These stoves **reduce by up to 65% the consumption of charcoal**, allowing families to significantly reduce their spending on charcoal, which is one of their main expenditures. At the same time, by curbing the demand for charcoal, the energy efficient stoves contribute to reducing the **deforestation of mangroves**, which are the main source for charcoal production.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 crisis has put this plan to a halt too. On one side, the closures of internal borders across regions has impeded the delivery of the stoves, and on the other side the financial difficulties faced by most families would not allow them to buy the stove, even at a discounted price. At the same time, it is an explicit request of the Swiss NGO ADES not to distribute the stoves for free. Alternative ideas are currently being evaluated.

GOAL: HEALTH AND NUTRITION
ACTION: MORNING MEALS TO STUDENTS

As in 2019, during the “hard months” of the rainy season (**January to March**) in 2020 Boky Mamiko funded a **daily nutritious morning meal for 216 students of the Mamiko kindergarten and primary school**. Our support covers the cost of the ingredients and the cook’s work.

We plan to continue offering the morning meal to the students of the Mamiko students the next rainy season, in January-March 2021.



School meals are highly appreciated by children in the “hard months” of the rainy season

GOAL: HEALTH AND NUTRITION
ACTION: SCHOOL ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER

As explained in the 2020 Budget Report, Boky Mamiko has been working towards the **construction of a water well** for the Mamiko school in Djangoa since 2019.

In 2019 we commissioned GeoConsult, a Malagasy water engineering company, to conduct a preliminary hydro-geophysical study to assess the presence of freshwater in the surroundings of the school, given the proximity to the ocean coast. We then commissioned the same engineering company a technical project for the construction of a 5-meters deep water well with a hand pump and received an offer for the construction works by a local construction company, JWT.

The construction works were supposed to start in September 2020, due to the time needed after the end of the rain season to begin the digging. However, the logistical difficulties due to the COVID-19 lockdown measures, together with the current uncertainty regarding the financial sustainability of the Mamiko nursery and primary school, put the construction of the water well to a halt. The project will be resumed when these uncertainties will be solved.