

November 2007 from Antananarivo / Madagascar

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Dear Friends!

Isn't it unbelievable, how fast time runs? We have been here for almost 1 year and 11 months.

Gerd: After a long time of preparing and waiting we shipped off our damaged helicopter by the end of July. Remember it got damaged by hail when I was out in the bush in April. Now we are praying that it will arrive soon, safely, well repaired and nicely painted back here in Madagascar. In between we had a lot of changes on our base: The Canadian Family went home for good, our boss came back from 6 months furlough with baby Naomi and 2 new families joined us: the Swiss one who served in Kenya and the French one who is new on the mission field. After getting them settled our life should calm down and the work is divided by four. I am the chief mechanic here on our base, which brings lots of new responsibilities and new things to learn. But I will also continue to fly. A couple weeks ago when I was in the bush people told me about a girl that was severely sick and needed treatment in a hospital. Trying to find the parents to offer a flight instead of walking for days i learned that they left by an ox cart. Everybody knew that this girl wouldn't survive a transport in the sun for 2 days, but the parents were so desperate. So I took the helicopter and flew along the little way and could find them. Grateful daddy accompanied his daughter and after a couple minutes we arrived in the hospital. Some weeks later I met the recovered girl and her family in the village again. What a joy! The family gave me a chicken - that's their way to say Thank you! Our helicopter is a great tool to save lives and thereby open hearts for the gospel!

Tanja: News from Sakamadio

In October we celebrated the inauguration of the dispensary together with VIP Guest: The German Ambassador, Malagasy TV, and a General from the Presidency... Even though we started month later with the building project due to our damaged helicopter, the building was finished in time. A South African friend, almost 70 years old, went for 2 months in the bush. He is a builder and didn't mind eating rice 3 times a day and having no toilet, no shower but plenty of flees in his bed and not speaking the language, being isolated...?! Can you imagine? It is hard for us, to be honest... He took 3 builders from here and people in the villages helped a lot. Anyway, he did a perfect job. It is probably the nicest building in the bush in all Madagascar, divided in 3 rooms: one for the treatment, one storage room and one for a nurse (we pray to find one to stay there, or even a doctor...). And we have 2 toilets and a shower there. It is such a blessing for the people out there and also for us, since we have much better circumstances to work with than before. We just got a donation for building a well there, to provide clean and healthy water. When we look back how this work begun we are touched: People had to die that the village will be blessed! Just lately we received a donation so that we can build a well next year. This will be a huge step in bringing constant improvement, since people re-infect every day due to the dirty water they drink and us for cooking. They just have no other chance. But the well will be a very useful and life changing instrument.



A day after the celebration we had a team of 3 dentists with one helper in the bush. They treated all tooth-sick people and said later, that they have worked in many countries, but had never seen teeth, bad like those in the village ☹. SO it was really good that we had the donation of almost 500 toothbrushes from the US to distribute one to each person. Best part of the day where the teach sessions: the dentist showed and explained how to brush teeth and then they had to demonstrate that they had understood. We had fun. But serious, we hope to improve the health situation by programs like this and pray that it will open hearts. SO far we have 4 home groups running and whenever we are their, our pastor teaches the leaders so that they learn and grow and have news to share.

Gerd: All the materials for the building in Sakamadio and 12 drums of fuel for the chopper which we needed to fly all loads in was packed on a truck. This truck should go as close as possible to the village, that the flight time would be as short as possible. It was an adventure from the first minute: we prepared all materials, 17600 pounds, and the truck didn't show up. After 8 hours of waiting we asked for another truck and could find one quite quickly. Instead of leaving at 10 am we left at 7 pm, but didn't get very far: at 9 pm I could stop the truck driver just before the wheel came off. I was in the car behind to accompany the material and saw sparks on one wheel. Driving on a road that goes from one curve to the next, you can imagine what had happened. In the morning of the 3rd day of driving, we started the last stage of our journey. 2 or 3 hours, we were told would it take us to get to Fitampito, the village 18 nautical miles from Sakamadio. On the way we had to partially unload the truck and use the wood for the dispensary to fix bridges, since the bridges were made for 11000 pounds max and we had almost 40000. And still, when the truck was crossing, we prayed, and sometimes we had to pray hard and closed our eyes... Exhausted but safely we arrived after 13 hours. Just a little bit more then predicted ☺. From here you can only walk to Sakamadio, which takes 2 days or fly for 10 minutes. Almost all material was packed in nets and the helicopter took it as sling load and flew it in. All spectators, and in Madagascar you have plenty of them, could trust their eyes seeing the helicopter with his big sac underneath. IN the village people were amazed and thankful. I wanted to let you have an idea of what else we as pilots do here; it is much more than flying. Lots of work needs to be done, to make the helicopter flying...

Josia Fanilo: Do you still recognize him? Often we look at him and are amazed how he caught up, how healthy he is now. People meeting him only now, cannot imagine what he looked like some months ago. It is one of the huge miracles we have seen this year. He is walking, talking, and happy as a child can be. He says many words in German and Malagasy, lately he said YES when asked in English. He understands English and French and we as parents would wish, that we could pick up languages just like him... We are really blessed and happy that he is with us. Our adoption papers are somewhere in ministries, court and we trust and pray that soon a judge will make the judgment! Even getting papers into the ministries was a challenge. People give you appointments but when you come, they are on vacation, in a meeting, just not at work... We learned to live with it, most of the times and just take a deep breath...



Your Missionaries,

Gerd, Tanja & Josia Fanilo

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