



"La joie de lire" / "The Joy of Reading" 2007/2008

1. The idea and the objectives of the project

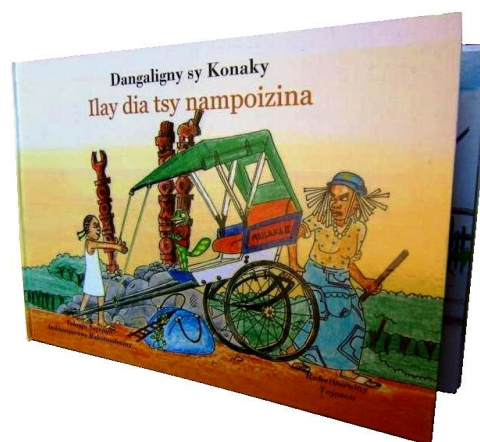
International reading researches¹ focus among other things on the relationship between the number of books in the homes and reading skills of children. Although very few developing countries are involved in these investigations, it is interesting to note that there seems to be a clear correlation between the amount of books in the homes and literacy skills - especially for those who have very few books. In Madagascar there are almost no books for children; therefore, the production of literature for children and youth provides a big advantage just in countries like Madagascar, compared with similar initiatives in countries with a high degree of literacy. In industrialized countries there are being used large resources in this field, even though the material distributed has to fight for children's attention in a completely different way than is the case in Madagascar. Based on these recognitions and on the basis of field studies in Madagascar in 2006, the National Reading Centre (NRC) at the University of Stavanger developed a project document for a children's book project called "La Joie de lire"² – "The Joy of Reading". The principal objective was:

"[To] create literature for children on Malagasy available for a whole generation of children in Madagascar, thereby laying a crucial basis for book knowledge throughout the education system."

The main idea was that there should be developed good books for leisure reading that evoke "joy of reading" and arouse interest in reading at school. All books would be the children's property – a new and exciting approach – and they should be on Malagasy, related to Malagasy life and culture. The books should have new texts written by Malagasy authors, be richly illustrated and keep high quality.

2. Accomplishment and results

The project was funded by the National Reading Centre (NRC) and accomplished in 2007/2008 in understanding with the University of Toliara³ and in collaboration with a young Malagasy team linked to the Green Education Programme (ProVert) (now the edition "Vakoka Vakiteny")⁴. This team organized and coordinated the production, lication and distribution of the three books published within this project.



"Dangaligny sy Konaky. Ilay dia tsy nampoizina" was the first book in the series and was officially launched in January 2008 in Toliara. The book is intended for students in 4th and 5th class with relatively much text and full page images. It tells about the cheeky lizard Dangaligny's involuntary journey through Madagascar, his friendship with the girl Konaky and finally his returning to Toliara. It was entirely designed, prepared and printed⁵ in Madagascar.

The production and release was quality controlled by the NRC in Stavanger, and the edition process was guided by a facilitator linked to the Green Education Programme⁶.

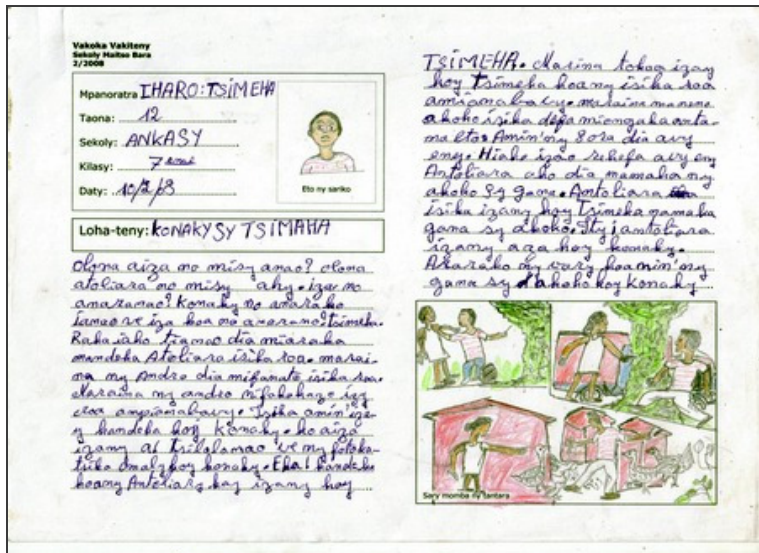
1 See e.g. PIRLS 2001

2 "La joie de lire, première esquisse"; the budget and definitive action plan was developed in cooperation with a Malagasy partner – the team of "Vakoka Vakiteny". The project document is available in French and Norwegian

3 The basis is a collaboration contract between the University of Stavanger and the University of Toliara

4 It is mentioned in the document that "the project is intended associated FLM/NMS' project on green schools". It turned out that this was essential for a successful implementation of the project. cf. also section 3

5 Printed by NewPrint, Antananarivo. The production of high quality books in Madagascar was rather difficult. When it finally succeeded, the project had contributed largely to capacity building for printing and opened the way for more publications meeting the quality required.



student's work: "My history with Dangaligny and Konaky", written and designed by Iharo Tsimeha, 12 years, Ankasy, Region Ihorombe

1st and 2nd class of primary school. It is about a little rat, Rebila, whose greatest desire is to fly like his best friend, the kingfisher Rikibitiky. This book was as well entirely designed and manufactured in Madagascar. Because of the lessons learned from the first book, it was put greater emphasis on the quality of the paper and the binding - with satisfactory results. The book was printed in 3950 copies and will be handed out to children at selected schools in several regions throughout the school year 2008/2009. It is planned that the distribution will be followed up with some research.

The manuscript of the third book, Takoboka ", to students in 6th and 7th class with more text and fewer pictures is just finished (January 2009). The book will be printed in ca. 3,000 copies in spring 2009 and immediately be distributed to students at selected schools.

When book number 3 has come out and is distributed to the children, the project is completed in a successful way. For a total of 200 000 Norwegian crowns⁸ it has been possible to develop 3 different titles of satisfactory quality, printed in almost 10 000 copies. This can be considered as a basis for a "children library" with good books in Malagasy. Additionally, a lot of experience and knowledge that is useful for the continuation of the work could be earned. The process of local capacity building has begun that can be seen as an important contribution to cultural, social and economic⁹ development

3. Experience from the project

3.1 Investigations and evaluations

6 The Programme Officer for the Green Education Programme was acting as facilitator and cooperated closely with the team at the "Green Schools Bara" that coordinated the production and publication of books. This fruitful cooperation was an important learning process that led to the mutual development of expertise and experience.(cf. section 3)

7 For more information about the interviews with students cf. note 12;

8 Labor is cheap in Madagascar, and the project had a very slim management that could build on existing structures. Over 85% of the money was used for paper and printing costs.

9 If the building of a professional private publishing system succeeds, this will have positive effects on economic development (entrepreneurship).

It was printed in 3,000 copies and first distributed to students in the 4th and 5th class to "Green Schools Bara", to primary schools in To-liara region and to selected schools in Antsirabe region. The distribution was accompanied by teacher's trainings, surveys and interviews with teachers and students about the reception, the use and the effect of the book⁷.

The second title in this series "Rebila – te-handina ve ianao", was released in August 2008 and is intended for reading beginners in





The project "La joie de lire" underwent several studies and evaluations:

- Spring 2008: Two field surveys at selected schools about the reception and the use of the book "Dangaligny and Konaky"¹⁰;
- Spring 2008: Interviews with students at Green Schools Bara on "Dangaligny sy Konaky"; among other things there was asked about reading customs and books in the homes¹¹;
- Spring 2008: Evaluation meeting at the Norwegian Embassy in Antananarivo with representatives from MEN, NORAD, UNICEF, the Norwegian Embassy and ProVert¹²
- Autumn 2008: Summary of the project's results and future strategies by the project group at the NRC at the University of Stavanger

3.2 Results from the field surveys

Field surveys as well as verbal feedback from teachers, students, parents and officials within the educational system show largely compatible results:

- ➔ The high quality of the books is appreciated; it is regarded as very positive and an enrichment that there are new children's books in Malagasy;
- ➔ The somewhat "cheeky" tone enjoys the children; the books are popular and children have great pleasure to read them; both text and images stimulate the children's imagination;
- ➔ The children are proud of the books, they feel a clear ownership and take good care of them;
- ➔ Almost none of the children has ever owned a book before, few children have read other than schoolbooks distributed in the classroom. To own a book and read in spare time is a new experience;
- ➔ There are some language problems in rural areas in Bara where children have insufficient knowledge of the official Malagasy language; however, investigations show that the story is well understood and the children are interested in reading books with longer texts;
- ➔ Some of the teachers have problems with both the genre and the goal of books that are neither unique "edifying" nor typical school books; the terms "children's literature" and "joy of reading" is obviously unknown; some of the teachers are mainly interested in certain vocabulary and spelling questions;
- ➔ The books led to lively discussions about the language of instruction in primary school; it is obvious that this is a subject that really engages the teachers;
- ➔ The creative tasks reveal large differences between the schools; children from town schools have - as expected - better writing and drawing skills; however, not even children in the big cities own books nor do they have some major reading experience;
- ➔ There are surprisingly large differences between individual schools; at some schools, students in 4th grade are barely able to read and write simple sentences, while other schools - including some in very remote areas - are characterized by an unexpected high level.

Field surveys confirm that the main objective of the project was reached: There were produced and distributed children's books that evoke "joy of reading". They can be the basis of modern literature for children in Malagasy and contribute to an enhancement of a democratic literacy culture in mother tongue.¹³

10 Survey of teachers and students at 11 Lutheran elementary schools, accomplished by Andriamparany Rakoton-drainy (Green Schools Bara) and Klaus-Christian Küspert (Green Education Programme); survey at selected primary schools in the school district Toliara I and II, accomplished by Mrs. Odette Haingolalao, University of Toliara.

11 Cf. "Dangaligny sy Konaky" - Interviews with pupils at selected primary schools in Madagascar, Klaus-Christian Küspert, www.smbara.org.

12 Cf. "Meeting about La joie de Lire" with historical overview, evaluation results and recommendations; the report from the meeting 23.5.2008 was sent to the Ministry of Education (MEN).

13 The Malagasy Ministry of Education (MEN) has shown great interest in this project, and it has been regular contact between the project coordinator and representatives of the MEN. This led to the request from the MEN about the



"Dangaligny" is presented for Princess Märtha Louise under her Madagascar-visit in May 2008

portant for many people in Madagascar. The Education Ministry wants a greater involvement of international experts in the discussion about Malagasy language policy and reading and writing skills, and experience from this and similar projects can help to base the discussion and decisions on a more documented and scientific basis.

The accomplishment of this project has already given a considerable expertise and increase in competence and capacity, and it was identified fable points that one will have to work with in case of a continuation of the work. The Malagasy coordination team has the main credit for the achievement of the objectives of the project. In case of a continuation, however, it is necessary to concentrate more on the structures and capabilities for the publication and distribution of a large number of children's books, and on adequate expertise and funds to undertake necessary preparations and follow-ups. The transfer of the coordination team to an edition specialized in the release of children's books and modern school books, "Vakoka Vakiteny", which cooperates closely with the Education Ministry and which has sufficient capacity and knowledge, is the consequence of these experiences. This edition will be a stable partner for the future.

The following areas are to be taken specifically into account by a continuation of the project:

- ➔ Finding qualified writers and illustrators;
- ➔ Creation of forums for contacts, inspiration and development of writing and drawing talents;
- ➔ Building of competence necessary to develop a sketch to a manuscript ready for impression;
- ➔ Development of best practices for comprehensive quality assurance;
- ➔ Strengthening printing expertise with respect to paper quality, binding, layout, etc.;
- ➔ Capacity enhancement of print houses for enabling them to produce a large number of books of good quality;
- ➔ Establishing professional practices for publication and registration of books (©, ISBN, etc.);
- ➔ Finding good and safe ways for the distribution of books;
- ➔ Strengthening teacher's capacity with regard to teaching of literature and reading and writing skills;
- ➔ Development of forums for reading, creative writing and promotion of Malagasy language;
- ➔ Cooperation with the government and free organizations on the strengthening of reading, writing and mother tongue teaching, and general information and documentation on language policy and the reform of the Malagasy education system.

printing of up to 200 000 copies of "Dangaligny sy Konaky" and "Rebila" to be distributed to governmental schools across the island

¹⁴ Important contacts could be established to publishers, bookstores and to Unicef that keeps on with the development of picture books to preschool children - a project that was launched by Princess Märtha Louise; opportunities for cooperation and synergy between the two projects were discussed.



3.4 Conclusions and recommendations

The evaluations show clear results: The production and distribution of good literature for Malagasy children and young people is an important task and fills a need. The work should, therefore, not only be continued but also extended. The document prepared by the National Reading Centre at the University of Stavanger is a good basis for further work.

The team that accomplished the project in Madagascar did an excellent job and achieved good results - despite the fact that the organizational structure was not clear enough in the beginning. Therefore, structural, organizational and resource issues should be taken specifically into account in the future. The search for and support of talented authors and illustrators as well as technical procedures like the assembly of text and photos, the follow-up of printing and binding, text correction and quality control take time and require much expertise. The distribution of the books in accordance with the objectives of the project must be ensured. This requires good organization and enough resources. Sustainability and synergy can be achieved by local capacity building and an organization that is oriented towards the private business sector¹⁵. Profitability may be an important incentive for the continuation and further development of activities and thus for the work's sustainability.

Capacity needs to be strengthened, and it is important that this capacity is developed in Madagascar. At the same time, external supervision and cooperation with partners who have special expertise in development and publication of books, reading and writing and teacher's training, and who can contribute to the language debate and the reform of the education system, is important. Here, a close collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the NRC will be crucial.



The childrens have got their first book of their own!
Green School Anksy, District of Ivohibe, March 2008

The Malagasy Ministry of Education has a genuine interest in good books in Malagasy - both schoolbooks and additional literature - and wants to strengthen private editions. Good books developed by the publishers, will be integrated in the governmental school book programme. Publishers, however, have only in a small degree the capital and capacity necessary for the devel-

opment of new materials. "Vakoka Vakiteny" is, because of this experience with "La joie de lire" in an unique position, but also here the continuation of the work will depend on external assistance, i.e. particularly financial support.

Lessons learned from "La joie de lire" have to be included as an important element in the continuation of the work. The trail is stepped up, and capacity and competence building process has already come very far. "La joie de lire" has become a well known name and it is linked both to the authorities and to NGOs¹⁶. By building on what has already been achieved, a further development and expansion of the project will bear rich fruit.

¹⁵ The practical work with the production and publication of books will be the task of the newly established edition Vakoka Vakiteny; this is an important contribution to the strengthening of a professional publishing system.

¹⁶ It is particularly positive that the Ministry of Education in Madagascar shows a special interest for this work. A close cooperation with the Ministry and the best possible integration in the governmental plans and priority areas is therefore crucial. The government will, however, not have the means to support the development of books undertaken by private enterprises.