



Madagascar, South-East region – TSIRY - Education

“Now, I am able to read and write. It’s so nice to feel valued and to be considered as a full citizen!” Since 2010, 5509 adults - mainly women - and 2180 children have taken part in the literacy program run by the AIC volunteers in the south-east of Madagascar.

This project aims at the development of the human person in all his or her dimensions. It also aims to promote a change of attitude in society in general, notably through an awareness of the importance of working in collaboration and in networks to enable the development of all.



Context

The south-east region of Madagascar comprises several small isolated communities suffering from droughts and frequent cyclones due to climate change. The region’s economy is mainly based on artisanal activities and agriculture.

Women and girls are undervalued, have little access to education and few opportunities to speak out. Early marriages are common. Women often have to raise their children and support their families alone. The insufficient school infrastructure does not foster children’s enrolment in school and these children often start work at an early age.

Project Theme and Activities

TSIRY (which means ‘seeds’ in Malagasy) is a large literacy project set up in 2010 by a group of AIC volunteers to support children who are out-of-school and illiterate adults, mostly women, in south-eastern Madagascar.

Activities:

- Literacy classes for adults, mostly women
- Creation of income-generating activities through the granting of a small amount of capital to the adults at the end of their training (vegetable gardens, rice cultivation, fishing, raising poultry, etc.). The group of learners creates a small cooperative and the profits are shared equally among all.
- School catch-up classes so that children can be reintegrated into state schools, allowing them to take the primary school leaving examination (CEPE)
- A school canteen for children, which motivates them and improves their health and academic performance. The mothers take turns to cook and every child brings wood for the kitchen.
- Recruitment of teachers from the local communities
- Spiritual accompaniment

Key Figures

- 5509 adults and 2180 children have already taken part in the literacy program
- 11 literacy sites for adults – 7 sites for children
- €66 is given to the adults to set up an income generating activity
- €66/month covers the canteen costs for about 30-35 children



Partnerships

- Town hall and regional governors
- Ministry of National Education
- Caritas Farafangana
- Village and diocesan committees
- Asmae for teaching materials

Impact and Prospects

- The local population was immediately delighted to collaborate. Everyone wanted to participate by getting involved according to their means and skills. The whole community in the various sites thus took part in some way.
- The beneficiaries, who were timid and afraid, feel more worthy and proud once they can read and write. They are more fulfilled, more independent and more confident.
- With the capital provided at the end of the programme, the group of learners creates a small cooperative and the profits are then distributed equally among all.
- Many people want to learn to read and write, especially when they see the change in the lives of the project's beneficiaries. Thus, year after year, the programme continues to run to meet the ever-increasing demand, especially in remote villages. The location of the sites can change from year to year to better meet the needs at local level.
- As the 18 project monitors are recruited from the local communities, they are close to the beneficiaries. They know and share the local culture and have their trust. This makes it easier for the beneficiaries and the project leaders to communicate with each other, which greatly contributes to the success of the project.
- In recent years, a new component has been introduced to meet the demand of young people who have completed their basic education and expressed the wish to pursue professional and/or technical studies.
- Some of the young people involved in the project sometimes become monitors to accompany new groups of young people or adults. They bring extraordinary energy and enthusiasm to the project. They help to bring about change.
- Through spiritual accompaniment, the beneficiaries become aware of their dignity as children of God who are loved by Him, as well as of the different talents they have received from Him. As soon as the adult beneficiaries have learned to read, they are spiritually enriched by the reading of the Gospel, which they have been introduced to by the missionary fathers. This helps to strengthen their faith. They are also able to participate more actively in the liturgy by taking part in the readings during the services.
- In 2014, the Ministry of Education awarded a certificate of recognition and commendation to this project. The volunteers hope that the state will one day take over the project.

