

EDUCATION FOR TOLIARA

Growing Minds, Growing Faith

Two years ago, our Vestry approved the idea of linking with the Parish of Amboasary, in Toliara, Madagascar. As a way of deepening the two parishes' relationships, we would like to offer you the opportunity of sponsoring the education of a child in our link Parish. This may be particularly interesting to families as your children could learn about life and schooling in a very different country and setting.

Educating children helps to break the cycle of poverty and improve their job options. It also means that more of the Christians are able to read the Bible. The Churches are growing so quickly out there that it is important to have literate lay leaders.

Literacy

Roughly one in three adults is illiterate in Madagascar with literacy rates varying significantly between rural and urban areas. About 40% of the population is under 14 years old. For ages 15 to 24, the youth literacy rate for young men is 80%; but only 72% for young women.

Adult literacy is defined as the ability to read and write, with understanding, a short simple statement about everyday life. Approximately 40% of all adult women are illiterate. In some areas, the Diocese has started classes to teach the older women to read and write.



School System

Like here there are government schools and private schools. It is a three-tier system:

Primary school is a five year program for children ages 5 to 11 (or older if they don't pass the annual exams). Lessons are taught in Malagasy and French. Children must pass the National Exam called CEPE in order to enter Secondary School.

Secondary school has two parts:

Junior level is a four-year program for students ages 12 to 15. Students must pass a National Exam called BEPC and receive a certificate to proceed to the next level of education.

Senior level is a three-year program for students ages 16 to 18. Classes are taught in French.

Upon completion of secondary school, students must pass the National Exam to receive the baccalaureate and qualify to go on to a university.

School days are long! The children leave their homes around 6 am to get to school. Usually, they walk together for what may be several miles, or ride a bicycle if they have one. A typical school schedule is Monday through Friday with Wednesday afternoon off. Classes are held from 6:30 am to 12 noon and 2 pm to 5 or 6 pm. When they get home, the children have chores and homework to do before going to bed.

When they arrive in school, the first thing they do is copy their lessons for the day into their copy book. The teacher has already been at school to put the day's materials on the board. This is for all ages. In most schools in Madagascar, there are no text books – for any school level. All teaching is by lecture, copying and memorization.

Sadly, many children have to drop out of school because the family does not have the money for school fees or supplies, or they have to help with daily life, such as carrying water, helping raise animals or growing food.

So classes at each level contain children and youth of widely varying ages. For example, in secondary school it is common to find young people between 15 and 22 years old completing their junior level or secondary level.

Most private schools are Christian. At them the children are taught truth, morality and Christian ways of thinking about life, and traditional superstitions are questioned.



Toliara Child Program

To encourage clergy and other staff to come work for the Diocese of Toliara, Bishop Todd McGregor offered benefits such as healthcare for their families and education for K through 12 children. This education assistance was so successful that many supporters asked "What about other children? Can we support them too?"

The Diocese contacted not-for-profit organizations involved in sponsoring education in various countries, but none of them would start a program in Madagascar. So, the Diocese started its own pilot program called *Toliara Child*. The program has been growing successfully, and now aims to cover orphans in the parishes, the children of the very poorest families, as well as those of paid and volunteer leaders in the Diocese.

We will sponsor children in our Link Parish, though future growth in the Diocese may mean the Parish subdivides again. All the villages where we plan to sponsor children are within about 20 miles of Amboasary town, so it would still be possible to meet these children when we go on a Parish visit.



Structure of Toliara Child

The coordinator for the *Toliara Child* program is Mme. Holy (Norosoa Raholiniaina) who is the wife of Bishop Samitiana. On a monthly basis she initiates telephone contact with the parents of each child in the program. She monitors the records sent by the schools to ensure that the children are attending and will only pay the next month's fees if the school has received payment for the current month and the child has been attending.

One of Holy's significant roles is facilitating the connection between a child and his or her sponsor. As many families are located in rural areas, regular communication is difficult. Holy and her assistants endeavor to visit all children each year. As part of the program, you will receive a photo of the child you are sponsoring, get news of their progress in school and once or twice a year get a letter by email – translated from Malagasy!

Costs of Toliara Child Sponsorship

\$25 per month per child covers all the costs of school enrollment & tuition fees; school supplies, and uniforms; and a Days for Girls' kit for girls of the relevant age.

Pilot Program 2022-23: School Uniforms and Supplies

Government schools are mostly free, but parents have to buy uniforms and school supplies. The increased costs of living due to the severe famine mean many children are not going to school because there is no money to spare for schooling.



St James the Less has been invited to create a Pilot Program for 2022-23 to enable children to attend a government primary school in our Link Parish.

The school is a three-room wood and corrugated metal structure, with 300 pupils, and 9 teachers. There are no benches even, and the children sit on the ground while learning.

\$30 will provide the supplies and uniform to enable one child to go to school for the year. This pilot program is ideal for anyone wanting to make a one-off donation to help children with their education without developing a personal relationship with a family in Toliara.

How and when to get involved

We are aiming to get the sponsorships and pilot program in place now, so that families will know their children can go to school at the start of the Malagasy school year in September.

For more information, or to sponsor a child in either program, please send an email to Sue Babbs (suebabbs385@gmail.com), with **Education for Toliara** in the subject line. Sue will also endeavor to help people partner with someone else to cover costs of sponsoring a child. All donations can be made through St James the Less (by cash, check or online).

Please invite your friends, relatives, neighbors and work colleagues, to join us in providing Education for Toliara!



*Start children off on the way they should go,
and even when they are old they will not turn from it.*

Proverbs 22:6