



April 2019

Missionary Childhood in

# Madagascar



The Republic of Madagascar is an island country in the Indian Ocean located off the coast of south east Africa. It is the fourth largest island in the world covering an area that is slightly smaller than Texas and its population is roughly the same as Texas'. The capital city is Antananarivo.

Malagasy, French, and English.

About half the people in the country still follow indigenous, meaning native, religions. Approximately 41% are Christian with Protestants slightly outnumbering Roman Catholics. About 7% of Malagasy are Muslim.

Education is free and compulsory in Madagascar from age six to thirteen. Educational standards, however are quite low, forcing many students to repeat grades or dropout altogether without knowing the basics. Only about six in ten Malagasy are proficient in reading and writing. This also causes a dramatic void in the country's skilled workforce. For example, there are only about 3,100 doctors and 5,600 nurses in all of Madagascar to care for their twenty-two million people.

Access to clean water is also a huge problem. The national government has assigned one company as the water provider for the whole country—they reach less than 10% of the total population, especially those living in rural and remote parts of the island.



Island life means playing in the water, even though it is not always clean and safe to do so.

People who live in Madagascar are called Malagasy (both singular and plural). There are three official languages in the country:

## MCA in Madagascar

Because of this lack of regular access to running water and sanitation facilities, many children become ill and have no way to reach any kind of medical care. They depend on help from missionaries like Sister Rose Rasoavololona, of the Daughters of Wisdom.

Sister Rose has run a Catholic school in the city of Vatomandry on the east coast of



Madagascar for the past twelve years. She has seen countless children fall ill as a result of the lack of clean water. Some of her students even died from serious water borne diseases. The dirty surroundings were a constant breeding ground for disease. Thankfully, Sister Rose has been able to build six water pumps and eight toilets at the school while providing essential hygiene and sanitation training for children and their families.

“Before we had the water pumps, the area around the school was very dirty and stinky, especially during the hot summer months. The children, including their clothes and their workbooks, were also dirty as they could not wash their hands after using the bathroom and playing outside. Many students were falling sick all the time. Now I have seen great changes in the children. Being able to wash themselves and keep clean has increased their self confidence and eagerness to learn.”

Sister Rose not only needs help to provide water for the children of Madagascar, but also the ‘Living Water’



gained through spiritual activities. Having dedicated her own life to spreading the Gospel, Sister knows the joy, hope, and love that her strong faith in Jesus Christ brings to her life. She wants to share it with others, especially the children. She needs Catholic religious education materials for the children, such as bibles, classroom posters, and catechism materials so that she can help to form the young ones in Christ’s name.

At last report, members of the Missionary Childhood Association from around the world sacrificed so that \$494,000.00 could be sent to help the children of Madagascar. Schools, clinics, feeding programs, and day care centers received assistance. Many, like Sister Rose’s school, now provide clean water to their students.

Malagasy children donated \$9,366.17 of their own funds so that other children of the world can receive the loving care of missionaries like Sister Rose, too.