



CARING RESPONSE MADAGASCAR FOUNDATION

Partners with the poor in one of the world's poorest countries

Summer 2020

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October 2018—June 2020

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continued on p. 2

In the jaws of COVID, saving lives

by Ariel Miller

Dear Friends, when we mailed you CRMF's 2020 calendar last November, we had no inkling of the terrible events that would unfold in this year: a massive global pandemic, with Toamasina one of Madagascar's worst hot spots. When the first case was confirmed in Madagascar in March, the government ordered a complete shut-down of the country, stopping most travel between cities and initially imposing a daily curfew at noon. With hardly any testing capacity, people had no way to know if they were safe. The vast majority of Malagasy people work in day labor. The economic hardship was immediate and extreme.



During the shutdown, anyone entering or leaving Toamasina undergoes a temperature check and health review.

But now we're able to bring you news of the incredible resourcefulness with which our Malagasy partners are meeting the challenge. Your donations, paired with their courage and dedication, are saving lives every day. Some of our colleagues, including Dr. Andry Ralison of the Association Santé pour Tous (AST), and staff members at Ankirihiry CSB II maternity clinic, have come down with COVID-19, but all, thank God, have survived so far.

The pandemic forced the Peace Corps to bring home all its volunteers, and CRMF to cancel our 2020 medical mission trip. But we have been able to leverage the friendships, trust, and equipment put in place in previous years to help the teams at ONG St. Gabriel and Ankirihiry CSB II as they carry on their vital work. Because of those deepening relationships and the real-time communication reported in this issue, "it won't be a wasted year!" says Dr. Carol Egner, who leads CRMF's annual clinical course for midwives.

Thanks to your donations, CRMF has been able to send funds for ONG St. Gabriel, Ankirihiry CSB II clinic, and the volunteer doctors of AST to buy personal protective equipment. Using Facebook and the wi-fi access and tablets CRMF provided to the Ankirihiry CSB II last fall, our medical team has been communicating in real time with Malagasy colleagues about emerging clinical understanding of the viral illness, and how to reduce the risks.



Lalanirina Mandimbarivelo, a midwife at Ankirihiry CSB II, models personal protective equipment that will help keep healthcare workers safe from Covid-19.

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continued on p. 3

Mme. Nirina's team delivers life-saving supplies and advice

Mme. Jeannette Nirina, leader of ONG St. Gabriel's water, sanitation, and hygiene work, tracked worldwide news about COVID-19 and emerging public health strategies. By the time the first case was confirmed in Madagascar, she was ready to hit the ground running.

With grants and donations raised over the past year by CRMF, Mme. Nirina had already launched the newest Model Healthy Village to provide latrines, handwashing kits, smokeless ovens and hygiene education to the 800 families of Analamalotra. Work in the first four of eight villages was well underway, and in mid-March, news that Rotary International had approved a Global Grant allowed Mme. Nirina to prepare project launch in the other four.

Then the pandemic hit. Virologists confirmed that hand-washing with soap kills the



Above left: Residents of Analamalotra receive clean water for handwashing as part of a Covid-19 prevention program funded by CRMF. Above right: Mme. Jeannette Nirina, Model Healthy Village project manager, teaches Analamalotra villagers about the importance of wearing a mask to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

virus. Thanks to your donations, CRMF's Virginia Wiltse was able to send ONG St. Gabriel funding to provide handwashing kits, soap, masks, disinfectant, cooking oil, and rice to every family in Analamalotra at a time when they were prevented from leaving home and earning wages.

ONG St. Gabriel, CRMF's primary partner, has long been active in Analamalotra. People there know and trust Brother Edwin Joseph and Mme. Nirina. With terror rising over the new menace of this virus, the community was ready to heed and act on the lessons Nirina's team provided on how handwashing could save lives.

When CRMF's Ariel Miller anxiously wrote to ask how the team could teach hygiene without putting themselves in danger, Mme. Nirina replied, "We're doing everything we can to protect ourselves before contacting the public. Our teaching and distribution of supplies was done house by house [rather than in large neighborhood gatherings]. We put up posters and used a truck with a megaphone. I love my work, and I am glad to be able to carry out my small contribution on behalf of my people," she added staunchly. Nirina herself fell sick with dengue fever: "Yes, I was sick for two days, but now I'm really in top form!" she wrote to Ariel in early June.

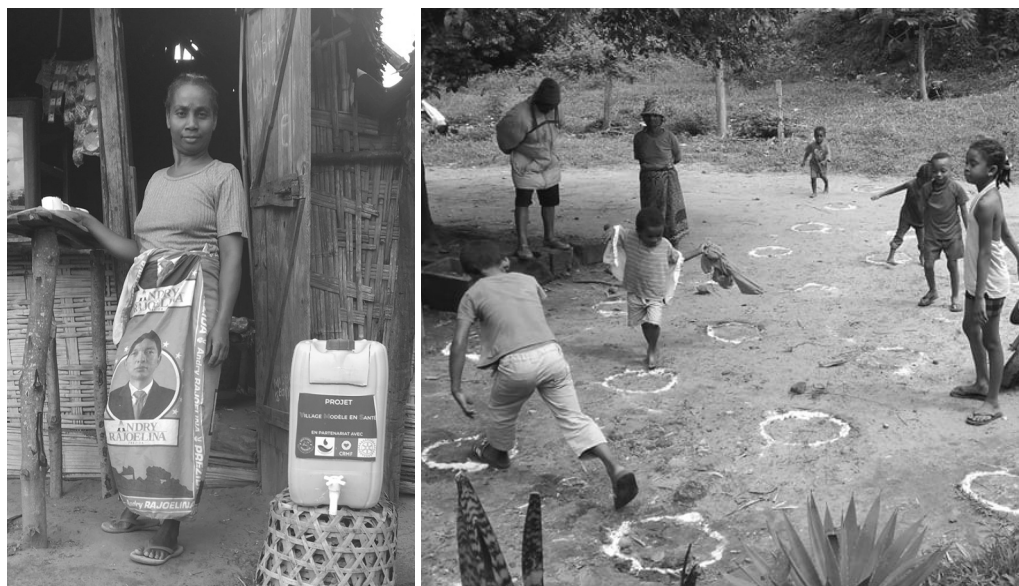
The Model Healthy Village project is an ideal public health response to COVID-19. In addition to teaching people without running water why they should wash their hands, and supplying handwashing kits for every house, the project is providing smokeless ovens to each family. This innovation led to a huge drop in lung disease in

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 † deceased

continued on p. 4

the previous Model Healthy Village, Antetezambaro, because it vents the smoke from wood-burning cookstoves above the house. Underlying lung disease makes COVID-19 more likely to cause severe illness and death.

CRMF also funded a hygiene instruction and supplies project for participants in ONG St. Gabriel's literacy centers. Some of the CRMF money was used to hire literacy students to make masks, providing another local benefit. "We'd rather purchase locally-manufactured goods than enrich a foreign multinational," says CRMF Medical Outreach Coordinator Darwin James.



Above left, a resident of Analamalotra sets up a handwashing station with soap and water outside her small shop. Above right, village children learn about social distancing using appropriately spaced circles.

Thank you, CRMF donors, for enabling CRMF to send the funds in support of this life-saving work!

Monthly video conferences reveal big progress in OB

Last September, Peace Corps volunteers helped CRMF set up wi-fi internet service at An-kirihiry CSB II and coached the staff to use computer tablets for video calls. Since then, obstetricians Dr. Dave Dhanraj and Dr. Carol Egner have been using this connection for monthly consultations with medical director Dr. Alberte Razafitany and her midwife team leaders. CRMF's Medical Outreach Coordinator Darwin James has been serving as interpreter since the start of the pandemic.

"Having these face-to-face calls with them has been tremendous," said Carol, filled with joy after she finished the call in June. Before the wi-fi, a whole year would go by between her clinical classes for the midwives. There was always a big attrition over the ensuing months in the midwives' using the recommended checklists and procedures. Now, thanks to the tablets, the midwives can show the American doctors the condition of equipment and demonstrate anything they have a question about. "They are so involved and



Above, Ankirihiry CSB II staff videoconference with Dr. Dave Dhanraj.

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Continued on p. 5

engaged in this!” says Carol. “They are keeping excellent statistics” on every aspect of labor and delivery, including episiotomies, newborn resuscitations, and transfers to the hospital. Dr. Dave Dhanraj helps them use these data points to guide continual improvement in care.

“In past years, when I asked them what they wanted to learn next, they hadn’t been sure,” Carol adds. “Now, they are ready with questions. Today they were talking about hypertension and what to do about it. After we go over the month’s statistics, there’s time for them to tell us about difficult cases.”

The growing confidence and skill are bringing real results. “Deliveries for the year will probably reach 2,100 at Ankirihiry CSB II, double what they were a couple of years ago with no additional staff,” says Carol. That probably reflects patient-to-patient referrals, because women in the community are hearing good things about the quality of care. “Who knew that two tablets and wi-fi could make such a difference?” Carol asks gleefully. “It’s fantastic that we can see and talk to each other.”

Connecting Malagasy providers to best-available knowledge

Like the U.S., Madagascar has been deluged with broadcasts and conflicting

information about COVID-19. In late March, the Toamasina doctors told CRMF’s doctors that the community’s terror over this pandemic was even greater than during the plague epidemic of 2017. They asked the questions we have all been wrestling with: how to reduce the risk of transmission? Do any of the touted treatments work? In addition to the worldwide hype about hydroxychloroquine, the President of Madagascar himself proclaimed that his nation had discovered a remedy, Covid-Organics, formulated from a traditional herbal malaria treatment called Artemisia. President Rajoelina ordered that bottles of this untested mixture be distributed to every Malagasy schoolchild, and he started peddling it to other African nations. Covid-Organics is now undergoing scientific testing.



Dr. Hux Miller teleconferences with doctors in Toamasina to answer their questions about Covid-19.

CRMF Medical Outreach Coordinator Darwin James scheduled video calls on *WhatsApp* between CRMF’s infectious disease specialist Dr. Huxley Miller, Dr. Andry of AST and Dr. Alberte of Ankirihiry CSB II. Darwin also organized a Facebook call between Huxley and medical student Aina Rakotovao, who was working at an emergency room in the capital, ground zero of the country’s first severe outbreak.

Darwin then set up a Facebook page through which he and CRMF’s volunteer doctors post breaking news from the most reputable clinical research, and do their best to answer questions from our Malagasy colleagues.

Your donations enabled CRMF to send funds so that AST, Ankirihiry CSB II, and ONG St. Gabriel could buy masks, shields, soap, and disinfectant. The team at Ankirihiry CSB II “could not have been more appreciative!” says Dr. Carol Egner. As of

Barbara Schnitzer
Allison Schwandner*
John and Susan Tew
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Meg Wiltse*

**These donors have participated in
CRMF's 2019 Medical Mission trip at
their own expense.*

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Donna Byrum Grubb

continued on p. 6

late June, "the outbreak has not been as bad as feared," she adds. Ankirihiry CSB II is still providing prenatal, nutrition, and vaccination clinics, though fewer per week than normal. They must close down each day by 2 p.m. so patients and staff can get home before the current daily curfew of 3 p.m.

Ride for the Lemurs!

CRMF invites you to join our Clean Water Lemurs team for the 2020 Virtual Tour de Gem bike ride in Dayton. Both riders and donors will be vital to the team's success. Our brilliant friends in the Dayton Rotary Club have recreated this event to minimize risk and maximize fun. Instead of all the riders starting together on a single morning, you will have two weeks between August 21 and September 6 to do a ride of any length you like, either alone or with a small group of family or friends.

Dayton and surrounding communities have a network of beautiful bike trails and historic sites: these are the Gems. The Tour de Gem will be announcing a set of delightful challenges for which you will have the chance to win prizes such as gift cards.

The Wells Foundation created a free website for Tour de Gem this year so that there will be no more website administration fee. That means CRMF will receive 100% of the donations you raise! Last year, our Clean Water Lemurs raised more than \$7,000 to provide smokeless ovens in the newest Model Healthy Village! You can sign up as a rider or donor at <https://www.ms-stride.org/tourdegem> choosing the Clean Water Lemurs team.

Register for free as a fundraising-only team member, or pay a registration fee to receive the official ride t-shirt. That costs \$35 for adults, \$15 for riders 12-18, and \$0 for riders under 12. Email Lemur Captains Huxley and Ariel Miller at arielmillerwriter@gmail.com to find out more.

Life-saving generosity

Major grants and more than \$100,000 in individual donations over the past two years are equipping CRMF, ONG St. Gabriel, and our medical partners in Toamasina to provide a boost to thousands of Malagasy families who are striving to build a better future. We cannot find the words to express our gratitude! These generous gifts are powering adult literacy classes and advances in community health, from labor and delivery to access to clean water and sanitation.

ONG St. Gabriel won its second Rotary Global Grant in March, thanks to the outstanding work Mme. Jeannette Nirina and her team did in documenting community need and support, the success of the previous Rotary-funded Model



At right: Three members of the 2019 Clean Water Lemurs bike-riding team were Pat Burnside, Luke Markham and Brian O'Connell.

In honor of David W. Wiltse, M.D.

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**In Thanksgiving for the Work of
Ariel and Huxley Miller and all
Steve and Cynthia Carlton-Ford**

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If we inadvertently missed your name, we
are so sorry. Please let us know at
crmf@fuse.net.

Healthy Village, and meticulous grant writing as a team effort of ONG St. Gabriel staff and Rotarians Ariel Miller and Barbara Dickerson of Cincinnati and Isidore Ludovic of Toamasina. Grants from the International Foundation and the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio accompany individual donations to complete the project budget of \$170,000.

The Rotary grant was announced in mid-March, just days before the COVID-19 lockdown. Even though the project as a whole has had to be paused, individual donations to CRMF enabled ONG St. Gabriel to equip all the Model Healthy Village households and many literacy participants to reduce their risk by proper hand-washing.

As President of the Cincinnati Academy of Medicine, Dr. Carol Egner was able to recommend that CRMF receive a Kohler Fund grant to support our programs.

Donations this summer will be especially vital to enable the resumption of literacy and computer education when it's safe, and to provide essential equipment and supplies for the Mothers and Babies program at Ankirihiy CSB II maternity clinic. Thank you for your continued support!

YOU CAN HELP! Here's how:

"Friend" Caring Response Madagascar on Facebook, where we're posting news, pictures and videos.

We welcome online donations to CRMF through
Network for Good
www.networkforgood.org/donate/

or **Just Giving:**
www.justgiving.com/fundraising/us/justgive

List CRMF as a beneficiary through the **Amazon Smile** program when you buy online from Amazon at smile.amazon.com

Share our story with people you know. We're making a difference in thousands of lives. Visit our website: www.caringresponse.org

Questions? Contact us at crmf@fuse.net



Above: Mme Jeannette Nirina, Model Healthy Village project manager, leads by example. She and her daughter Armaelle wear their masks as a precaution against the spread of Covid-19.

CARING RESPONSE MADAGASCAR FOUNDATION

MISSION

Caring Response Madagascar Foundation is a public charity. Its mission is to respond to the needs of the poor of Madagascar, particularly in Toamasina/Tamatave.

PURPOSES

Caring Response Madagascar Foundation supports programs that enable the poor to change their own lives. Our core projects emphasize education and literacy. Through these core programs, CRMF strives to impact not only the educational environment, but also the crucial areas of sanitation and hygiene, healthcare, and economic self-development. To those ends, CRMF's purposes are to support programs that provide educational opportunities for the unschooled or inadequately schooled poor; to support programs that lead to healthier communities; and to support programs that lead to economic self-sufficiency for the poor.

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