

GUIDED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

By Lanto Rabenasolo

Wisdom From the Fields, June 2024

Introduction

A note from David P. Lerseth, *FOMM Executive Director*:

Friends of Madagascar Mission (FOMM) has recently hired staff in Madagascar to help manage the programs and projects that we support. One of the principles of FOMM is that we do not own any of the programs/projects in Madagascar. We support them with prayer, consulting and budgeted financial support. As FOMM has grown since its beginnings 15 years ago, we discovered that it has become more difficult for us in the USA to oversee our investment in the programs/projects. Language and culture differences between Madagascar and the USA have become a problem, so the formation of a three-member staff has become essential.

In January 2024, I traveled to Madagascar to train these new staff members. LANTO Rabenasolo is the Program Director; Mme. LALAO Rasoarizay Norohanta is the Coordinator of FOMM Finances; RABEZAATO Lovamalala Narcisse is the Manager for Legal Services; and Jeannot Luther RAZAFINDRABEFITORY is our official interpreter. Each of these staff then relates directly to a staff member of FOMM/USA.



Lanto, Mme. Lalao, Rabezato, Rev. Lerseth, Razafindrabefitory

The Story of Lanto Rabenasolo

MY PERSONAL STORY

I am Lanto Rabenasolo, a 60-year-old Malagasy Christian. Throughout my professional life, I have experienced many difficulties in my work, but I have faced these difficulties as a servant of the Lord. For me, Christianity is not just a word. Christianity is my LIFE! I believe one is either a Christian or not. The Bible says, *“No servant can serve two masters...You cannot serve God and mammon”* (Luke 16: 13). As a child growing up in a Christian family, I believed that I am to serve Jesus as my Savior. During Sunday school I learned and accepted how Jesus came to live, serve, die and rise again for my salvation. Jesus’ death on the cross became real to me. Why should I turn my head and not believe what Jesus has done for me.



Lanto Rabenasolo

Being a Christian is living in the real world where difficulties and problems are experiences. It is not true that being a Christian is some kind of a luxury life. One must with faith live in the real world, and that may not be a smooth and easy way of living. No, this is not life! I met many obstacles in my family life, in my community life and in my professional life to know that I must be dependent upon my faith in Jesus to confront life’s problems.

MY PROFESSIONAL LIFE

As a young man, I wanted to become a pilot and later a doctor (which was endorsed a lot by my parents), but I did not find success in school to achieve the necessary requirements. I finally graduated with a degree in Economics at the Madagascar University. With this degree accomplished, I began to seek a job in economics. Obviously, this is not easy in a country like Madagascar. I began working at a local bank. I felt this is what my calling in life was to be. I quickly learned it was not my calling!

I felt down and unfulfilled in my work at the bank. But one day, a good friend told me, “You are the perfect match for a position needed by the new director of SALFA (the health department of the Malagasy Lutheran Church). This director was Dr. Stanley Quanbeck, a member of a 3rd generation missionary family serving in Madagascar. Dr. Quanbeck grew up in Madagascar. He knows what it means to be Malagasy, and he identifies with us. He has lived in the rural areas of Madagascar as well as in the cities, and he has a passion for being a medical doctor and witnessing to Jesus Christ.

I met Dr. Quanbeck in 1987. He is a strong leader with a good heart. I began to work with him at SALFA and he was my boss. Today we are still best friends, even though he has retired and moved back to the USA. I cherish the times he has come back to Madagascar to visit, as his influence upon my life has been a major event!



Crowds swarming around Dr. Stanley and Kathie Quanbeck when they returned to visit

The Influence of Dr. Stanley and Kathie Quanbeck

These American missionaries, Dr. Stanley and Kathie Quanbeck, had a great influence upon my life. They mentored me to be a Christianat work! Since 1987, when I began working with Dr. Quanbeck, and until now with the fourth leader, I have worked with SALFA. The organization has grown to have 10 hospitals and more than 50 health facilities in Madagascar. The work is helping provide health care, but it is not only about health; it is also concerned about making healthy communities.

Through Dr. Quanbeck's influence as I worked for SALFA, I began to understand that health care was about incorporating my Malagasy experiences (culture, belief, relationship, organization, and way of life) into what is quality health care. SALFA, which now works in every area of Madagascar, has made my life full and rewarding. I have become very enthusiastic in growing through my work and in serving the Lord.



Dr. Stanley and Kathie Quanbeck with hospital personnel



Staff at one of SALFA's hospitals

A Working Relationship with Rev. David Lerseth



Lanto consulting with Pastor Lerseth

Since 1987, I have met with most of the missionary and mission groups who collaborated with Dr. Quanbeck in establishing SALFA in the Malagasy Lutheran Church. In 2007, I met with one of these mission representatives, Pastor David Lerseth, who was the Executive Director for Global Mission Support (missionaries and other global projects) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). He came to Madagascar to work with me and SALFA to develop a project that would provide for a constant supply of medications for SALFA's health care facilities through an international organization called IDA. We believed this program would strengthen and help develop the Christian medical work of the church in Madagascar.

Through this working relationship, Pastor Lerseth and I again have converged in working together to strengthen the Christian witness in Madagascar. Our Lord Jesus keeps our paths crossing to fill His will. Today, more than ever, strengthening the two organizations, FOMM and SALFA, is crucial for the continuation of the expansion of the Kingdom of God in Madagascar. Recently, with my skills and knowledge that have been sharpened by Dr. Stanley and Kathie Quanbeck, I became the Director for Research and Strategic Planning at SALFA and FOMM's Program Director in Madagascar.



A dinner meeting with representatives from Madagascar Water, who will be drilling deep wells for FOMM



A delicious Malagasy meal with FOMM's Madagascar staff at the end of a busy workday

With God's Guidance

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

— John 14:26

What have I learned through all of this? The Holy Spirit, which Jesus has delivered to me, has guided and has taught me. Each step in my professional life has been guided by the Holy Spirit and it has clearly appeared to me why I became an economist... a Christian economist! SALFA at the beginning has been the field where He sent me to serve and to learn. It is where I became filled with His Holy Spirit. Today, this huge work in Madagascar comes in completion with another domain, FOMM, where the Holy Spirit asks me to perform.



Lanto by SALFA poster



My oldest son, Dr. Toavina, my wife and myself at the baptism of our oldest grandson, Noah

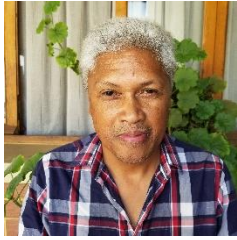
The story is not finished! Today I am feeling very good because with Christ's presence in my life, my oldest son is following in my path. He is now entering his professional life as a surgeon... a Christian surgeon! In fact, he is the one to become a medical doctor and NOT ME! I pray to the Lord for him and his life, as God has called and prepared another servant to serve.

Thank you, Dr, Stanley and Kathie Quanbeck and SALFA,
and thank you Pastor Lerseth and FOMM! Thank you, LORD!

A Servant in Christ!
Lanto Rabenasolo

Postscript

Friends of Madagascar Mission is very pleased to have Lanto working with us. With his excellent ability to do research and strategic planning, he has valuable insights into what FOMM seeks to do through the "indigenous eyes" of a Malagasy person who understands the language and the culture of Madagascar. We believe that the mission and ministry of FOMM needs to have his input into what we are doing and will be doing in the future. Thank you, Lanto, for joining with us as the FOMM Program Director in Madagascar! — Rev. David Lerseth



Lanto Rabenasolo, FOMM Program Director in Madagascar, has 38 years experience with church-related organizations, strategic and organizational work, and in Christian leadership. He is a deacon in the Ambatovinaky Lutheran Church. A multi-disciplinary manager with background in Economics and Micro-management from the University of Antananarivo Madagascar, he served 22 years with SALFA.

Contact Lanto at: andrianlanto4@gmail.com

Links:

FOMM: <https://madagascarmission.org/>

Madagascar: <https://www.madagascarmission.org/facts-and-figures>

SALFA: <https://www.ghm.org/madagascar>

Malagasy Lutheran Church:

<https://www.oikoumene.org/member-churches/malagasy-lutheran-church-flm>

Quanbeck: <https://www.cgmmag.com/meetmissionaries/changing-role-of-missionaries/>

Malagasy: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Malagasy-peoples>

Global Mission: <https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Global-Mission>

ELCA: <https://www.elca.org/>

IDA: <https://ida.worldbank.org/en/home>