

By Joline Faujour

Sombintsombim-piainana Malagasy (Fragments of Our Malagasy Lives) is the title of a book that has just been published. The book was written by eight teenagers who have grown up in poverty. Each of them wrote a short story inspired by their own experiences. Even though the young teenagers had their own responsibilities at home and to their families, they still made time to write. It took them two years to finish.

The young authors are: Céline, Naina, Brigitte, Naval, Hanta, Lucie, Ruffin, and also Ravaka who was interviewed for a previous article you may have read. Another teenager, Prisca, illustrated the entire book. Some of them had never written before; one had already written 25 pages alone before this project started. All of them are members of ATD Fourth World (ATD Quart Monde), a non-profit organization working against poverty and for dignity and self-expression.

Nasrin Siege is a professional author who heard the ideas of these young people and wanted to help them publish their own book about their own lives in society. Lucas Rodwell is a member of the Fourth World Volunteer Corps who introduced Nasrin to the young people and helped them all follow through with the project.

The courage the young people had in themselves to continue working on their stories despite challenges in their lives surprised Nasrin and Lucas. "I also loved the way they were so confident in their stories. They were very open in discussing things with each other and how they'd help each other with their stories," said Nasrin. Nasrin loved watching their seriousness for writing these stories. She and Lucas liked talking to them about their experiences in their stories and are both happy that they have all succeeded to have their book published.

One girl had written a lot and then lost all of her papers. Unfortunately, she had to write everything again, so they decided to make regular copies of pages so it wouldn't happen again.

Another hard part of the writing was continual translating. The young people were writing in Malagasy, but for Nasrin to help them edit their work, it had to be translated into German. Discussions about the project often took place in Malagasy and English with Lucas translating between the young people and Nasrin. But the final book is being published only in Malagasy and German. Nasrin and ATD would like to translate it into French and English someday, but for the moment it would be too expensive. "We would never be able to translate some of their expressions into another language though," Nasrin commented.

Although Nasrin has written many books of her own, she loved even more this experience of helping teenagers write and publish a book, knowing that it's a chance they would never have had on their own.

Several other people helped with the translations and with editing and they are thanked in the book, which is being published by the Editions Lutheriennes.

The launching of the book was celebrated at two events:

- One was in the young people's neighborhood to encourage other people to get to know Antohomadinika IIIG Hangar and its Joseph Wresinski Library/Fanovozantsoa (behind the Ramandraibe yard). That was on Saturday, June 2, at 3 pm.
 - The second book launch was hosted by the Cercle Germano Malgache, in Analakely, on Wednesday, June 6th, 3:00 pm.