

**terre des hommes**



**stops child exploitation**

# Stories of Impact

## 2022

### MADAGASCAR





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**stops child exploitation**



## About Terre des Hommes Netherlands

Terre des Hommes Netherlands (TdH NL) is an international non-governmental organisation with a mission to protect children by preventing and stopping child exploitation, and by empowering children to make their voices count. Our vision is that children can flourish in a world free of all forms of exploitation.

Our vision and mission are inspired and guided by international human rights instruments and standards, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Council of Europe's Lanzarote Convention, the International Labour Organisation Conventions and aligned with achievement of the SDGs, in particular Goals 5, 8 and 16.

Terre des Hommes Netherlands fights against the exploitation of children in four regions: Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East. In Africa, Terre des Hommes Netherlands works in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Madagascar. Our work is focused on preventing child exploitation in all its forms. As such we work with communities, government,

private sector, civil society organisations and children themselves, at the centre, to address systemic and structural drivers that expose children to exploitation. We build the capacity of communities and local structures to effectively prevent, detect, report and respond to child exploitation; we purpose to address systemic and structural drivers of child exploitation. We also collaborate with other actors to influence strengthening of the legal and policy environment for better promotion and protection of children rights.

Over the years, Terre des Hommes Netherlands has been able to document various impactful stories of the support we have provided children through the projects and programmes that have positively impacted their lives. A few selected stories are detailed in this storybook.



*We strive to do no harm and act in the best interests of children. To protect their privacy all identifying personal information (including names, locations and images of children) in this storybook have been changed.*

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# Acknowledgement

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# 1 In School, Happy and Living a Better Life

Born and raised in Tatabe, Madagascar, Vony started working in the Mica Mines when she was a toddler. A look at the traces of metals on her hands, told a saddening story of the horrible situation she endured in the Mica Mines. Whereas most children her age would go to school, Vony would work in the mines everyday. Fortunately, she was identified and rescued. With our support, she is now attending school and she is even able to read and write.



## Growing up in the mines

As other children would wake up to prepare for school, Vony would wake up at sunrise, go to the kitchen to make a fire for her mother to make coffee or tea, then proceed to the Mica Mines. It was from these mines that the family sourced an income of 26 Euros per month. They had been in the mica mining business for 20 years, and children had to take part in mining activities to supplement their parents' income. This was in addition to their income of 128 Euros, which they earned from farming rice and cassava.

## Endangered

Vony had worked in the mines since she was a toddler. Considering that there was no school around, she had no option but to follow her parents and siblings to the Mica Mines. Her daily visits to the mines made Vony a victim of child labour. Bearing the heavy and weary mining practice, the 9 year old girl would often fall sick. The traces of metals on her hands, as a result of lacking personal protective equipment, was evidence enough that the Mica Mines was and is a dangerous place for children. “In other villages, I saw children going to school and I wished that I was also going to school instead of working,” Vony sadly narrated her situation.

## Identified and Supported

After what seemed to be the fate for her and her family, all was not lost for Vony. She was identified in January 2022 by our project partner, *ALT*, whom we are working together with to eliminate child labour in Madagascar. With our support, she was enrolled in school on 16th May 2022. She was also provided with copybooks, pens, a slate to write on, chalks and meals. “I am happy to go to school and have lunch everyday,” Vony said happily. “The support given is important to me as it has changed my life for the better,” she added.

## Living a Better Life

Life has changed for Vony. She no longer goes to the mines. Instead, she wakes up at 8:00 am, goes to school until noon, then takes her lunch at the canteen. When she gets home, she helps with light household chores such as washing the dishes and then goes to play—a right that every child must be accorded. Her regular school attendance has enabled her to read and write. Vony’s health has equally improved since she is not engaged at the mines any more. “I wish to become a doctor so that I can treat my family when they are sick,” Vony said, hoping for a better future.



## 2 “School Helps Me to Get to Know Important Things”

Rosia is 10 years old and lives in a small village in Madagascar. She lives with her single mom (39 years) and her two younger siblings. Her father left the family when she was a baby. Rosia now attends the third year in primary school. Before that, she was working in the Mica Mines with her mother. The school that already existed in the village, received support from *Terre des Hommes Netherlands* as of January 2022: with school bags, books, materials and (part of) the teachers' income. The village also receives support from the *Dutch Relief Alliance*: food that is shared among the families and served as lunch in the school canteen.

### Rosia's Day: Many Different Activities

Rosia says: “I get up at 6 am, and then first wash my face. Then we eat some breakfast: cactus, fruit or maize. After that, I help my mother do the dishes, light the fire, and cook. Then, before I go to school, I play football a bit with my friends and all kinds of ball games”. Rosia goes to school from 12.30 pm to 16.00 pm. She says she really likes school, and likes every subject she learns. “I want to learn more and be smarter: school helps me to get to know important things”. Lunch is served during lunchtime around 1 pm, and as there are too many children to



fit in the canteen, the group is divided into two smaller groups. “We eat rice, meat, maize, greens, cassava leaves and sweet potatoes, I like it.”

## The Work in the Mica Mine

Rosia used to work in the mine since she was 8 years old. She supported her mother, who has to take care of three children on her own. “I did not like to work in the mine. I was often very tired. And I did not learn anything in the mines. I would always choose to go to school, so I am very happy now”. Rosia received items namely a school bag, books and pens. And the daily lunch. She is glad her mother now doesn't have to pay for that.



## Future Dreams

Rosia knows what she wants to be later: a midwife or a nurse. “I want to help people and especially my mother if she ever gets ill and needs treatment”. Furthermore, she says about the future that she hopes that the food distribution will continue...and that she can be going to school as she loves it.



### 3 “I love to study, play games and sing in school” Vicky’s story

Vicky, 10 years old, lives with her parents and 6 siblings in Benato, Madagascar. Her family has been working in the Mica Mines for more than 15 years. She started working in the mines when she was only 7 years old to support her family. Three years later, we rescued her from a life of misery. She is not working in the mines anymore. She is now back in school and determined to finish her studies.



#### Survival through mica mining

Vicky and her family live in a small house with a small bedroom, where they all sleep together on the floor, and a kitchen where they cook food, if they can afford to buy any. They fetch water from the public well. The children do not have much space to play within the compound.

Vicky’s family has been working in Mica Mines for more than 15 years. Her father and mother worked there to support the family. Back then, they would earn approximately 44 to 132 Euros a day from extracting mica in a new quarry and selling it, which was enough to cater for their basic needs and buy extra essentials such as clothes and sheep. Sadly, there hasn’t been a new quarry for years. They now only make 0.88 to 1.77 euros a day if they’re lucky enough and this would be used to buy food (rice or cassava with greens) for dinner only. Life was very difficult for the family and they had no choice but to ask the children to help in the mines so that they could earn extra money to cater for their growing needs.

## **No choice but to work in mica mines**

Vicky has been going to the mines since she was 1 year old. When she was 7 years old, her parents asked her if she could help them, that is when she first touched mica. She did not know what it is or what it is used for. All she wanted to do was help her family. On a normal day, she would filter mica and fetch water for parents with other children. She never got injured or sick in the mines. Sadly, with her new routine, her school attendance became irregular as she had to wake up at 6:00 am to go to the mines.

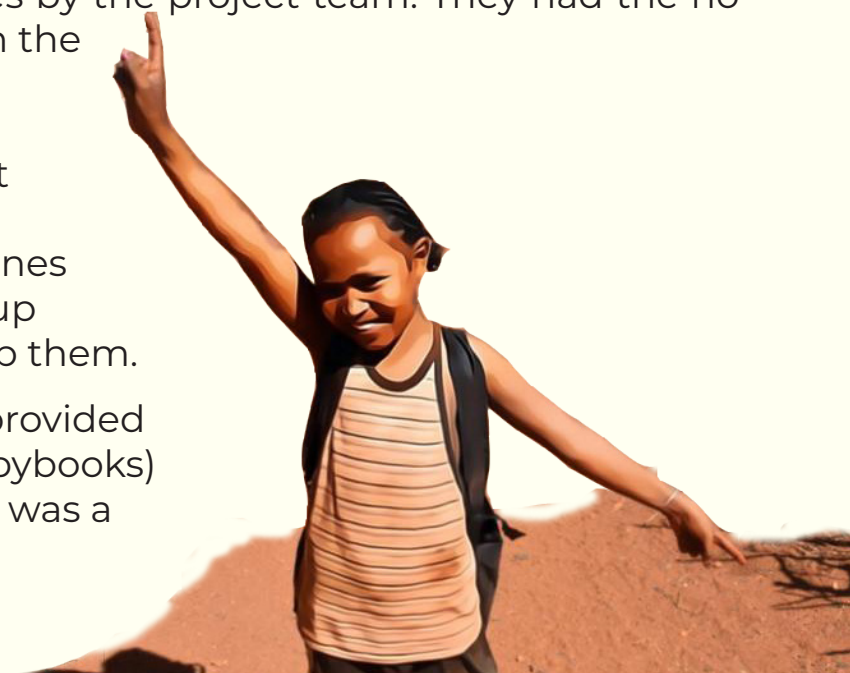
“We got nothing to eat so we had to follow our parents to the mines to get more mica to sell. Reason why I couldn’t attend school regularly, although I wanted to study, my parents couldn’t even buy copybooks.” Vicky narrates. Amidst her misery, Vicky was still determined to pursue her education and work hard to help her family get out of poverty and live a better life.

Millions of children like Vicky are subjected to a life in the mines in order to support their families, extracting and sorting mica everyday. They are constantly exposed to dust, which poses a health risk to them. They also lack the appropriate tools to go into the narrow shafts, working for long hours everyday. Young girls are often vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Growing up in the mines instead of growing up in school, affects their promising futures.

## **Sensitisation and changed perception**

Luckily, in February 2022, when the *FAMAHA* project was set up in the area, Vicky’s life changed for the better. Her parents were sensitised on the dangers and effects of children working in the mines by the project team. They had the notion that the more mica they mine with the help of their children, the more money they would earn. Fortunately, after the sensitisation sessions, they realised that mica mining is indeed harmful to their children’s health and working in the mines would not help their children to grow up and develop well, but school would help them.

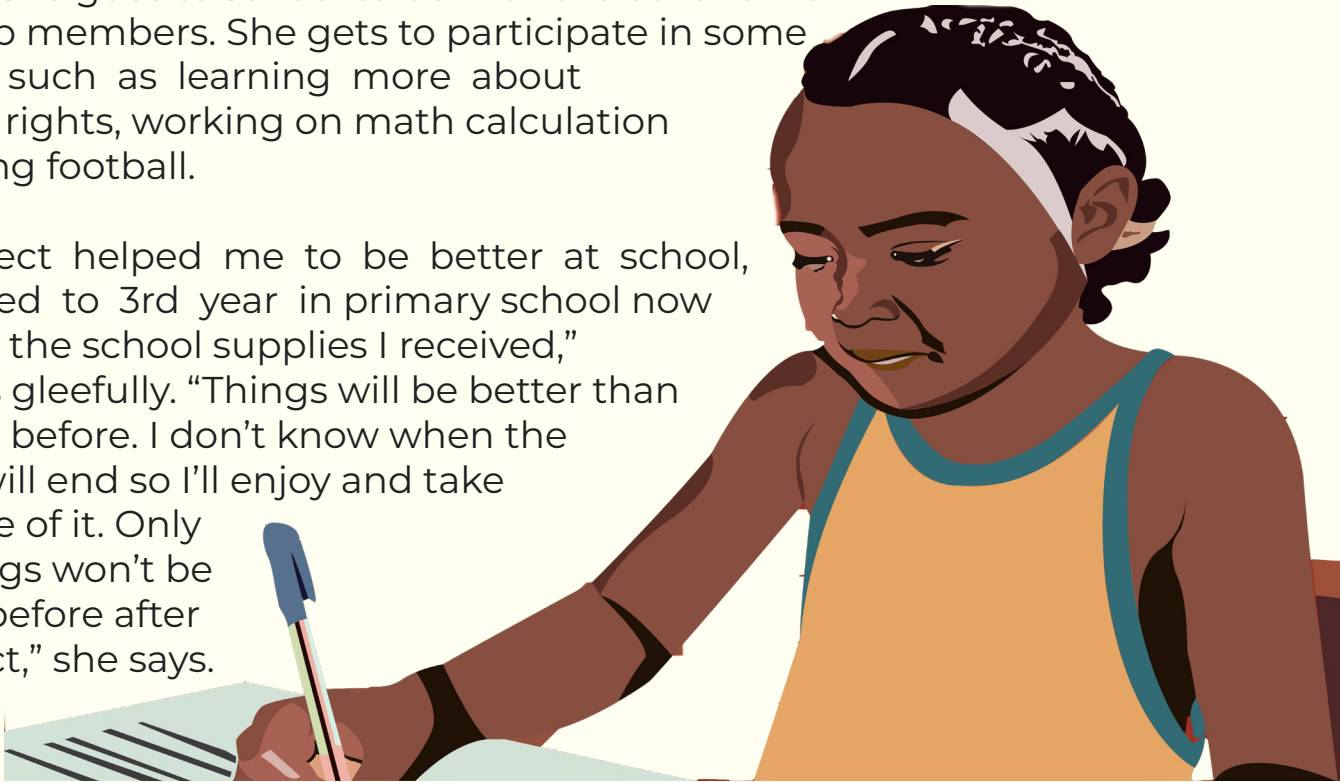
Knowing that their children would be provided with school supplies (backpack and copybooks) along with lunch at the school canteen was a huge relief for them.



## Back in school

Vicky was finally able to go back to school and she was extremely happy. She now wakes up at 6 am, eats breakfast (rice mostly) and helps her mother to do house chores first since she only has classes in the afternoon. At 11 am, she goes to the school canteen for lunch and doesn't return home since she has to study at 12:30. She studies Malagasy, French, history and maths. During the break she plays elastic games, and uses rocks to tell stories. Then she goes back home at 5 pm where she helps her mother with babysitting as her mother has to prepare and cook for dinner if there is any food available. Every Saturday, she goes to school to be with the other child rights club members. She gets to participate in some activities, such as learning more about children's rights, working on math calculation and playing football.

"The project helped me to be better at school, I graduated to 3rd year in primary school now and enjoy the school supplies I received," Vicky says gleefully. "Things will be better than they were before. I don't know when the support will end so I'll enjoy and take advantage of it. Only hope things won't be as it was before after the project," she says.



## Improved family life

The project team follows up on her six days in a week checking her school attendance. After 3 years of being a victim of child labour, and after 9 years of going to the mines, Vicky is now attending school regularly. Her family's life has improved. Her parents are now selling items that people need in their daily lives earning approximately 15 euros per month. Through the project support, they are now breeding chicken and will sell them later once they multiply. Additionally, Vicky's father now buys and sells sheep. He is no longer worried about buying school supplies for his daughter anymore since the project provided her with a backpack, copybooks and pens.

Vicky loves to be at school studying, playing games like football and elastic games with her friends, and singing. She hopes to buy a big stoned house when she succeeds in life." I want to be a nurse or mid-wife so I can support my family in future." she concludes.

## 4 Tinahy (12) Works Hard but Starts the Day without Breakfast



Twelve-year-old Tinahy walks proudly with a flashlight on his head. “That’s not my lamp, it’s my brother’s,” he says. In his hand he holds a piece of mica: a raw material that makes products shiny. For example smartphones. In the Netherlands, many boys of his age already have one in their pocket - not Tinahy. That won’t change if he has to continue working in the Mica Mine. There he earns about 25 euro cents a day: just enough for dinner, but not for breakfast.

### Up early every day

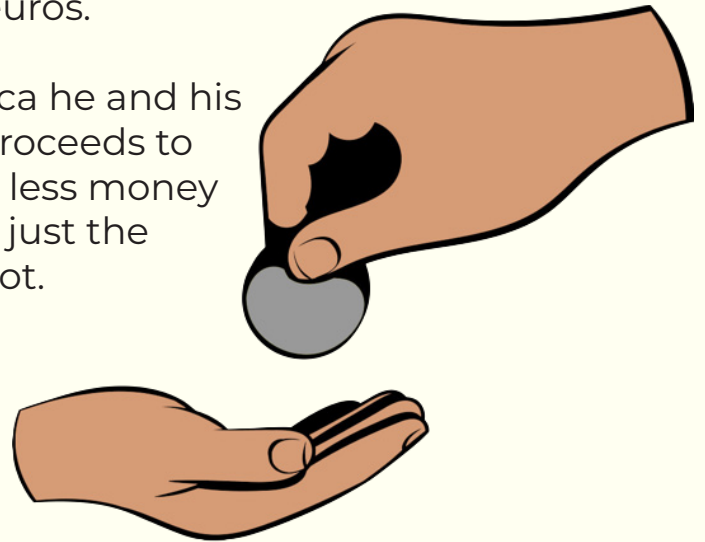
In Madagascar, almost half of all children between the ages of 5 and 17 work. About 10,000 children work in Mica Mines. They help their parents, because otherwise the family would not earn enough to survive. Fathers and teenage boys dig mines and collect the stones. The mothers, girls and young children stay upstairs to chip and clean the mica. It is one of the worst forms of child labour: hard, unhealthy and dangerous work.

Tinahy also has to get up early every day to work. He walks with his family to the mine, where they stay until about three o’clock. His brother is 18 years old and goes down with a flashlight. Tinahy is still too young for that. “I don’t go deep underground because I do the triage,” he says. This means sifting the mica chunks to remove the soil and other waste.

## Unfair pay

Tinahy leaves home without breakfast. During the day he complains of stomach ache and hunger. He only eats in the evening and then mainly rice. Despite that, he manages to process about 5 kilos of mica every day, earning 1000 Ariary. This amounts to about 0.25 euros.

Tinahy's father is not happy. Of all the mica he and his family bring up, he must pay half of the proceeds to the owner of the mine shaft. That means less money to buy food. And for his children perhaps just the difference between having breakfast or not.



## No school

Tinahy has never been to school. The chance that this will happen (without help) is small. After all, Madagascar is one of the top 5 countries with the most uneducated children. When asked what he wants to be when he grows up, he replies: 'Doctor.' When we ask him if he would rather be a photographer, pointing to the man with the camera around his neck, he says, 'No, because I wouldn't know how such a thing works.'

*Terre des Hommes Netherlands* stands up for children like Tinahy. We make sure they can go to school. We are also working on fairer remuneration for the mica, so that families have more income without their children having to work.

## 5 Tsihoeza (16) Works in a Mine and Sleeps in a Pit

Tsihoeza does not go to school because she has to work. Every day she goes deep underground into the mine to dig for mica. She doesn't know what it is or what it is used for. She only knows that she earns a few cents per kilo: money that her family desperately needs to live on. Tsihoeza is not afraid of falling or being crushed by a stone. She does go to bed every night with fear. "Often I am afraid at night, when I sleep outside the mine."



### No breakfast

Tsihoeza is 16 years old and lives in Madagascar. She lives with her little brother (11 years old) and her parents. Her little brother goes to school, but Tsihoeza can no longer do so. She has to help her father, because the family has no money. During the rainy season they live in the village and both her parents work the land. Now it is the dry season and father and daughter go into the mine every day in search of the raw material mica.

When the sun rises, they get up and walk from the village to the mine. There,

Tsihoeza goes down without a helmet or protection and only with a flashlight. “I go deep into the mine to find mica,” she says. “I take the mica pieces to the others who process them. When I’m tired, I take a rest.”

The work in the mine is hard. Tsihoeza doesn’t like it either. Still, she has to do her part every day, even on an empty stomach. “Often we don’t eat breakfast because there’s just nothing to eat.”

### *Afraid of the dark*

When there is a lot of work to do or the buyer comes by to buy the mica, Tsihoeza and her father sleep at the mine at night. “We don’t have a tent, like some other families. I sleep outside, with my best friend, while my father sleeps somewhere else, nearby.”

Tsihoeza is often afraid at night. “I get frightened everyday just before dark because of animals. There are also people who kidnap children, and we do not know what happens to those children” Her father (43 years old) confirms what his daughter says: “These stories are not only told here but also in the villages. People who take children away: we don’t know what they do with them. ”

### *Future dreams*

Tsihoeza is not afraid of getting hurt while working at the mine, because accidents “actually never happen,” she says. Only recently an adult man was injured by a stone falling on his head, but he has recovered. “That’s why I want to become a doctor. I want to give people injections and make them better”.


Tsihoeza doesn’t know what mica is used for. But she does know the work of doctors and nurses. “I hope I can go back to school so I can learn. And that I can help my mother in the fields. And when I have some free time, I can skip rope together with my female friends.”

*Terre des Hommes Netherlands* is working hard to support children like Tsihoeza to get out of the mica mines and go to school to get good education so that they can live better fulfilling lives.



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