



Phil & Vala Long

Taking Life to the forgotten people of Madagascar

Mad 4 Life Ministries

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10

www.Mad4Life.org

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Dear Pastors and Prayer Partners,

Salama from "The Big Red Island" of Madagascar! Last August when I wrote to you, I said something about going through all of our "lasts" and looking forward to all of our "firsts." Well, this is our first prayer letter from Madagascar. Let me start this first letter with a question. How many people do you know who have been to Madagascar? I asked this question a lot when we were raising support to come to Madagascar. After the last few months, I feel like I have a new understanding of why more people don't come to Madagascar, especially as missionaries. This is not an easy place to gain access to. Sure, you can come in as a tourist, but we have found out these last 3 months that coming to live and minister is not easy! We began the Visa process in March after buying our plane tickets for May 28th. We were told by the Madagascar embassy that it would only take 5 days to get your Visas, so we thought we had plenty of time. We had to buy plane tickets because they will not give you a Visa unless you have tickets already purchased. We thought everything was going fine until the beginning of May when we still had not received our Visas, so we did what anyone would do and called to make sure everything was okay. What we found out was that they had changed the Visa process a long time ago and the person in charge of issuing them would not do it the new way so she had been replaced, and instead of 5 days, it was going to take five or six weeks! Well, to make an extremely long story short, it was much more expensive for us to change our tickets and stay in France for another month or to return to the US so we stuck with the original plan of Vala going to the US to get our container ready, secure some diabetic supplies for Deacon, and then meeting Gabe, Deacon and me in Madagascar.

So the boys and I came to Madagascar on May 28th and, while they finished their schoolwork, I went to work finding a house to rent, buying appliances (*thank you to those who contributed!*), getting a resident's card, opening a bank account, setting up phone & internet, and learning how & where to shop. Now, back in the US, these things should really only take a day or two, but here in our new home of Madagascar, if you get one thing done in a day, you are doing well. If you get two or three things done, you are really hitting the ball out of the park. For example, in the US, or even in France, shopping for groceries took one, maybe two hours, but in Madagascar, it's almost an all day thing, and most of it seems to be spent sitting in traffic; I will say, it's been an adventure!

After three weeks apart, Vala arrived a few days ago with the paperwork we need to finish up the process of getting our long-term Visas. Only after our Visas are approved can our container with our household belongings ship. Please pray that everything goes smoothly now. The main obstacle we face concerning our long-term Visas is the fact that this is an election year in Madagascar so the government is in turmoil and many of the government offices we need are on strike. I'm not sure, but I think this is a pretty typical life for an African missionary. What I do know is I am thankful for having so many people back in the States praying for us in our big transition. So thank you for all you do and know we are also praying for you.

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Praises & Prayer Requests

- (Praise) Arrived safely in Madagascar
- (Praise) We have a house rented!
- (Prayer) Approval of our long-stay Visas
- (Prayer) Our container can ship soon
- Susan Long (Phil's mum) - healing