



# ANNUAL REPORT

2022





# INTRODUCTION

from SSFA Director & Founder, Charlotte Baker



2022 was a special year for me - after nearly 3 years of COVID-19 travel restrictions, I was finally able to travel to Madagascar, spending 2 months there during summer 2022, working alongside our partners to see what recovery from the pandemic can look like.

My overall impression - backed up by analysis from the World Bank - is that COVID-19 has set back progress in Madagascar on a number of fronts, especially economic and food security. The impact of the pandemic and inflation means that more families than ever were in need of support during 2022 - with many struggling to access basic necessities, including food, clean water and healthcare.

During summer 2022, I spent time with many of the families we support, assessing needs alongside our partners and trying to meet them. We accompanied sick children to the hospital; funded opticians and dental appointments; purchased warm winter blankets for all our supported families, and engaged with the headteachers of the schools our children attend, to plan for the academic year ahead.

We also got our exciting Bike Project off the ground - changing the lives of the first beneficiaries - and started a new partnership with Matahari Global Solutions, a health consultancy firm.

A particular highlight for me was hosting a visit by the British Ambassador to Madagascar, David Ashley, who came to Ambohidratimo for the day to see first-hand the work we are doing to change lives, step by step. He met Ankizy Gasy and Akany Avoko Ambohidratimo staff, as well many of the children and parents we support, and had lunch with students supported by Ankizy Gasy and SSFA, before touring AAA.

On a personal level, I was also pleased to welcome my mum Tracey to Madagascar in 2022, to see first-hand the work we are doing. She has been a trustee of SSFA since the beginning and crucial to the success of our fundraising events - she feels more inspired than ever about our work after meeting the families and seeing it for herself.

Off the back of my time spent in and around Ambohidratimo, we launched a new Community Health Worker programme with Ankizy Gasy, employing a qualified nurse on a trial basis, to triage children and help provide better access to healthcare. We are delighted to see the initial impact this project has already had, in improving access to healthcare for hundreds of children.

As we looked to our 10th Anniversary in 2023, 2022 was also a time of soul-searching for SSFA, as we consider the future sustainability of what we do.

We have some wonderful partners in Madagascar, who know exactly how to deliver access to education and healthcare, with our support. However, the initial child sponsorship model we started with is both resource intensive from the perspective of our partners and also us at SSFA (which is run entirely by volunteers in their spare time).

There is also an emerging school of thought that the sponsorship of individual children - and the window this offers into their personal lives - is not appropriate in a world where we are increasingly focusing on the agency and self-determination of the communities we seek to support. Finally, focusing on individual children can obscure the bigger, community-wide picture.

More details are set out later in this report, where we outline our Strategic Vision for the next 3 years - and we will be communicating further with sponsors on this matter. For those with children in the programme now, nothing will change - and we remain laser-focused on working with our partners to deliver great outcomes.

My final words as we enter our 10th Anniversary year are dedicated to our amazing supporters and partners, who have stood by our side throughout COVID-19, and continue to be fantastically loyal as we help families grapple with a post-COVID world.

Thank you to each and every one of you!

Charlotte Baker

**Operations Director and Founder, Small Steps for Africa**





# 2022 ACHIEVEMENTS

## SSFA had a busy 2022!

- October 2022 saw the start of our **new Community Health Worker project** with Ankizy Gasy
- We proudly supported **5 university students** to follow their dreams and study courses ranging from finance to nursing.
- Across our three partners, we directly **supported nearly 70 children through education**
- We started a **brand-new partnership with Akany Avoko Ambohidratimo** children's centre
- Our **Bike Project** took flight!
- We started a **new collaboration with Matahari Global Solutions** to provide input to their global health reports and highlight issues with health access in Madagascar





# ANKIZY GASY



## PROJECT UPDATE

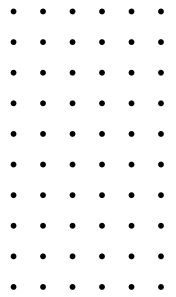
### In 2022, SSFA worked with Ankizy Gasy to:

- Launch a new Community Health Worker project, supporting 150 children to access advice from a qualified nurse by the end of 2022 and providing health education to the wider community
- Support more than 50 children to attend school and university, include one Masters student
- Support the wages of one social worker, thanks to a kind supporter who used to be a social worker herself.
- Purchase essential items for more than 20 families, including mattresses, warm winter blankets, beds, study materials, clothes and mobile phones.
- Support 3 families with their housing needs - supporting one family to complete the building of a new house, another to extend their home and build a new kitchen, and another to move to more suitable accommodation
- Support 3 families with nutrition needs in the school holidays, via our social protection fund
- Support the library at Les Lauriers School with a donation of essential textbooks





# CASE STUDY



## SSFA Bike Project

For Malagasy living in rural communities, access to a bike can be life-changing - turning hours of walking into shorter, safer and easier journeys.

This has certainly been the case for Faniry and her family - the beneficiaries of the first bike to be loaned as part of our new Bike Project.

Prior to receiving a bike, university student Faniry was having to walk from her village for an hour each way to the main road, where she catches 2 buses to university. This long journey by foot is tiring and dangerous, often done in the dark.

Faniry's mother was also walking Faniry's 5 year old sister Rova to school every day - an hour's walk each way - with a small baby on her back. This was tiring for little Rova and exhausting for Faniry's mother, who was also losing out on productive time in the fields.

Since receiving a bike, the family's life has changed. Now Faniry's brother cycles Faniry to the main road to catch her bus, before taking little Rova to school, and collects them later on, working during the day in between. This saves time for everyone, gives Faniry and Rova more energy for their studies and keeps them safer.

In 2023, SSFA hopes to expand the programme and purchase 2-3 more bikes to loan to families living in rural communities.





# AKANY AVOKO FARAVOHITRA



## PROJECT UPDATE

**In 2022, SSFA worked with AAF to:**

- Facilitate sponsorship of 12 girls, including 2 university students
- Support independent living for two girls, in accommodation close to AAF
- Support the wages of 3 social workers at the centre
- Supported rebuilding following a landslide at the centre with a special appeal
- Fund extra treats for all girls at the centre, including chocolate, a pizza party, Easter and Christmas meals

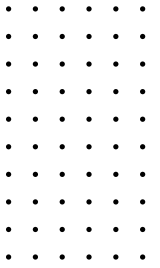
July 2022 saw AAF undergo a change of management and a significant change of direction in terms of its day-to-day functioning, as well as policies regarding the girls it accepts from the family courts.

This change in leadership means that SSFA will be undertaking a strategic review of its partnership with AAF in early 2023, with a view to deciding on future collaboration by the end of 2023.





# CASE STUDY



## Moving on from AAF

Mamisoa had a difficult childhood and arrived at Akany Avoko Faravohitra in its early days having undertaken very little in the way of formal education.

She was supported by SSFA for 5 years at AAF, where she completed a hairdressing and beauty diploma, as well as acquiring basic reading and writing skills.

In 2022 she opened her own hairdressing business, sharing a salon with another hairdresser. She is now working successfully using the skills she learned at AAF, supporting her two young children, along with her husband who works in security.



## Learning to live independently

In 2022, two young women supported by SSFA at AAF, Diavolana and Tantely, were supported to move out of the centre and live independently in nearby accommodation.

Diavolana is studying finance at university, while Tantely was completing a diploma in hairdressing. The two girls shared a room in an apartment complex with a shared kitchen and bathroom.

This enabled them to learn vital independent living skills, while still being able to access support from staff at AAF.



# AKANY AVOKO AMBOHIDATRIMO



## PROJECT UPDATE

In July 2022, former AAF Director Hanta Randriamalala took over at the helm of Akany Avoko Ambohidratrimo, a children's centre linked to AAF, but managed separately.

In summer 2022, SSFA started a new partnership with AAA, aimed initially at providing stability for SSFA-supported children who moved from AAF to AAA with Mme Hanta.

### **In 2022, SSFA worked with AAA to:**

- Support 6 young women through direct sponsorship
- Support the wages of one social worker
- Donate a number of educational items, including a laptop, books and clothes.

It is envisaged that the scope of the SSFA/AAA collaboration will expand in 2023, subject to ongoing monitoring of programmes and budget considerations.





# 2022 PRIORITIES - HOW WE DID

## **PRIORITY 1: Grow SSFA's supporter base, with a particular focus on regular, monthly giving.**

*We have doubled the number of supporters who make a regular, monthly unrestricted donation, increasing our financial flexibility and ability to support new projects. We have also increased the number of supporters of specific programmes, especially our new Bike Project.*

## **PRIORITY 2: Ahead of SSFA's 10 year anniversary in 2023, draw up a 3 year investment plan, with a focus on programmes that enhance the employability of the young people we support, and facilitate access to healthcare**

*Trustees have drafted a three-year plan, outlining how SSFA will invest money and develop programmes between 2023-2026. See later in this report for full details regarding the transition away from a child sponsorship-focused model, and recent project developments in healthcare access. Further scoping will take place in 2023 ref: the feasibility of employability-linked projects.*

## **PRIORITY 3: Recruit two new trustees, with a particular focus on financial and fundraising skills, and continue the internship programme launched in 2021.**

*In Q3 2022, we welcomed a new trustee, who is a qualified accountant and took on the role of treasurer. In 2023, we will continue to aim to recruit a further trustee with fundraising experience. We were unfortunately unsuccessful in recruiting a new intern in 2022/23.*





# 2023 PRIORITIES

## **PRIORITY 1: Start the transition towards a programme-oriented work mode, and away from a child sponsorship model, as per the three-year plan**

*As set out in our three-year strategic plan, as children graduate from the sponsorship programme, we will not offer sponsors new children, but instead ask if they would be willing to switch their contribution to our dedicated thematic funds: health, education, social protection and the Bike Project. As new donors look to support our work, we point them towards contributing to these funds.*

## **PRIORITY 2: Continue to build on our healthcare programmes, including the community health worker pilot, by considering funding routes for extending/expanding the project**

*In 2023, SSFA will conduct a mid and full-year analysis of the community health worker pilot, to assess impact and the feasibility of the extending the project. If it is deemed worth extending, SSFA will seek a funding partner to help support the project on a sustainable basis.*

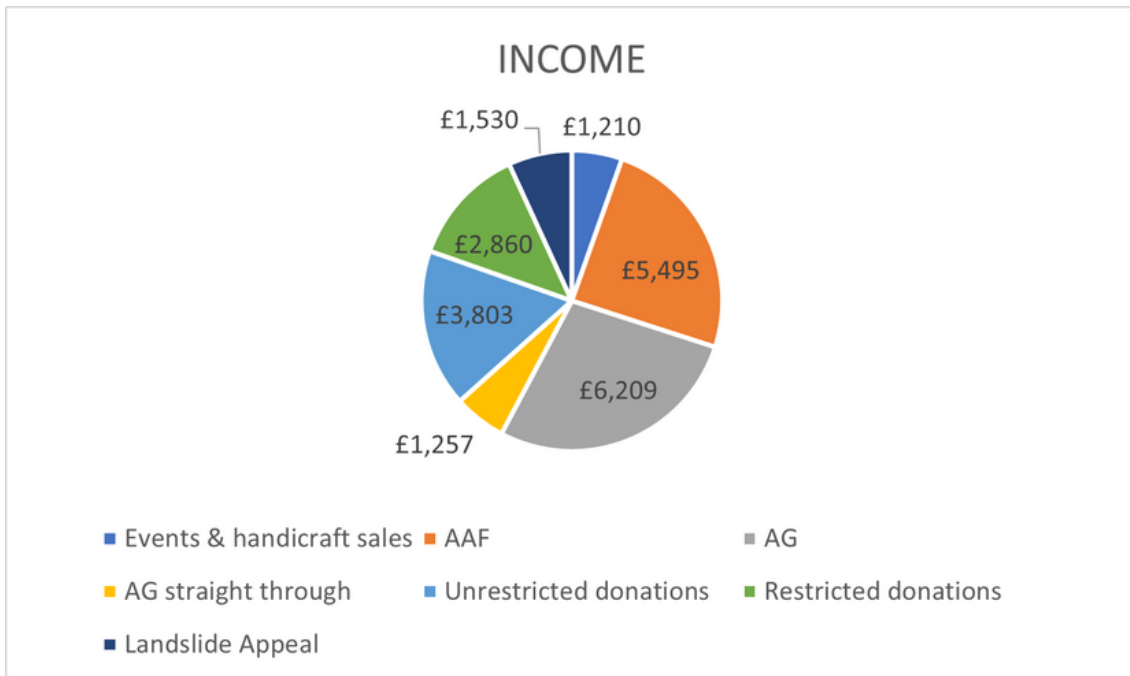
## **PRIORITY 3: Increase communications and donor/partner engagement activities, particularly around SSFA's 10th Anniversary**

*In 2023, SSFA will look to increase its communications activities, by sending a frequent newsletter to donors, and hosting several events over the course of 2023, to thank supporters for their contributions, as we celebrate 10 years of SSFA. This will include one event in the UK, and one in Madagascar.*





# FINANCES



**TOTAL = £22,364**

## COMMENTARY

Income in 2022 increased by over £3000 from 2021, driven mainly by a substantial increase in both restricted and unrestricted donations, and a modest increase in event and handicraft income, thanks to the improving COVID-19 situation.

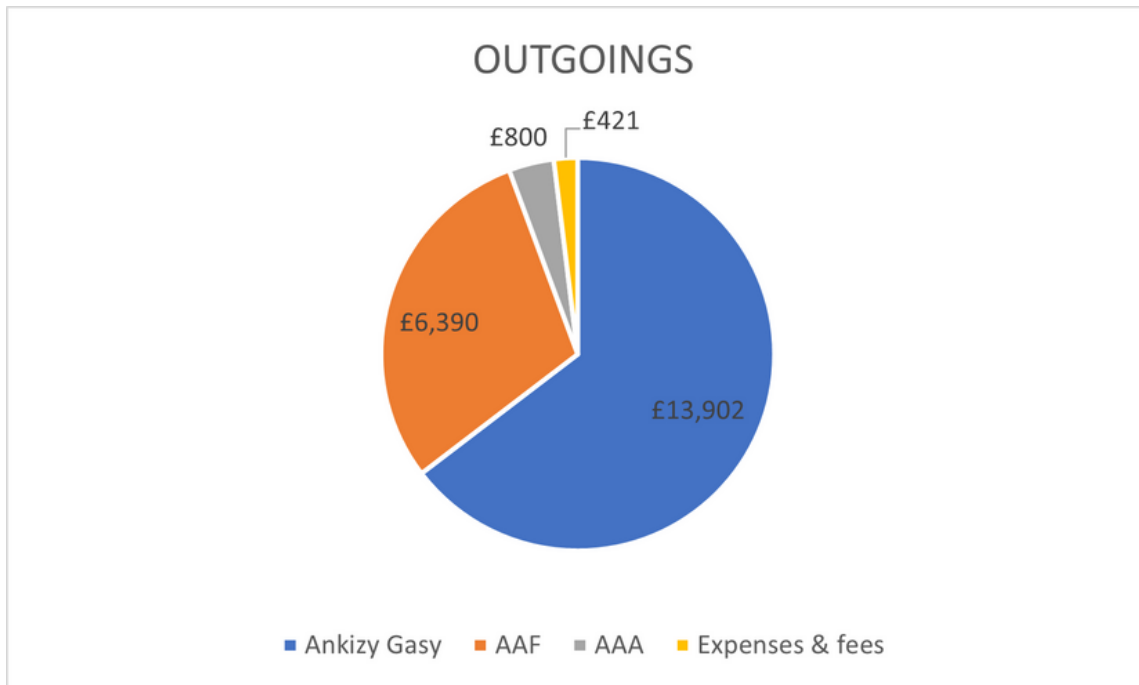
The increase in unrestricted donations is attributable to our campaign to increase this type of giving from our supporters, and has enabled a degree of operational flexibility when it comes to investing in new projects.

The growth in restricted donations was mainly driven by individual sponsors giving money to help SSFA and partners purchase items for families during director Charlotte's visit in 2022, including warm winter blankets, furniture and more (see Ankizy Gasy report for further details).

We also held a special landslide appeal to help AAF secure the property after this catastrophic event left large areas of the centre vulnerable to further collapse.

Sponsorship income held steady in 2022, as SSFA started its transition over to a different funding model, as per the three year strategic plan.

# FINANCES (CTD.)



**TOTAL = £21, 513**

## COMMENTARY

In line with increased income in 2022, outgoings also increased overall.

SSFA significantly increased its funding for programmes at Ankizy Gasy, launching two new programmes - the community health worker project and the Bike Project (see Ankizy Gasy section for further detail). Sponsorship fees for children in programmes at all three partners increased in line with inflation, also driving up outgoings.

The increase is also attributable to increased numbers of supported young people attending university, where the fees are significantly higher than those for school.

The increase in expenses was mainly from increased numbers attending the annual SSFA Quiz Night post-COVID and the cost of hosting the SSFA website.

SSFA started supporting a new partner - Akany Avoko Ambohidratimo - in 2022, reflected in the £800 contribution to our new programme there.

At end 2022, there was a balance of £3,954.20.

*Full accounts are available on request.*



# STRATEGIC VISION: 2023-2026

## BACKGROUND

Since mid-2022, trustees have actively been considering the future of Small Steps for Africa, as the organisation celebrates 10 years of operations in 2023.

SSFA was set up in 2013 to support access to healthcare and education, initially in Madagascar. Working together with local partners, the bulk of our work has focused on a child sponsorship model, whereby we facilitate the sponsorship of individual children by individual sponsors in the UK.

## TRANSITIONING AWAY FROM CHILD SPONSORSHIP

The child sponsorship model has clear advantages for both sponsors and children. Sponsors feel invested in the lives of the children they support, and enjoy tracking their progress, feeling they have made a real impact on someone's life. Similarly, many children enjoy the feeling of having a sponsor, who cares about them, sends them cards and gifts, and supports their education and other needs.

However, the child sponsorship model is very resource-intensive to maintain, both for SSFA and our partners in Madagascar. Staff spend a lot of time gathering updates on individual children, logging them and then passing them on to SSFA. Similarly, SSFA trustees and volunteers - who all do work for SSFA in their spare time - spend a lot of time passing on updates to sponsors. This focus on communicating in a detailed way with sponsors is taking staff from our partners in Madagascar away from their day jobs, and time they could be spending serving the pressing needs of the community. It is also rendering the maintenance of SSFA as a 'kitchen table' charity where funds go directly to good causes less feasible, due to the sheer workload associated with sponsorship updates. Focusing on individual children also takes time and resources that could be spent better applied in a more holistic and strategic manner, to help larger groups of children i.e. through after-school homework clubs or training programmes.

At the same time, there is an emerging school of thought in the sector about the ethics of child sponsorship models. While SSFA and partners have always been rigorous in obtaining consent from parents about sharing information on their children, taking photos etc, the focus in the development sector is increasingly on the agency and empowerment of the communities in which we work. This is an absolutely crucial principle of our work.

We have therefore decided to gradually transition away from a child sponsorship model.

# STRATEGIC VISION: 2023-2026 (CTD.)

For now, nothing will change for children already enlisted in our programmes - they will continue to be sponsored via our partners for as long as they have sponsors and wish to pursue their education.

However, as children 'graduate' from the programme, we will seek to transition our generous donors to other methods of supporting the great work we are doing at SSFA, via our new dedicated funds.

## OUR NEW FUNDS

We recognise that our loyal supporters want to feel their money is making a tangible difference to specific parts of our work in Madagascar, and that we want to be targeting our work towards several key priorities.

With this in mind, we are setting up four 'funds', which will each focus on a core priority for SSFA. Supporters can make a general contribution to our work, or they can choose to put their money towards a particular fund. They will then know that their donation is making a difference towards a particular aspect of our work, but in a more holistic, strategic way.

The four funds are:

- **Healthcare fund:** supporting the cost of doctors/hospital appointments for the young people in the community of Ambohidratimo, covering the cost of medicines, emergency operations and other medical supplies.
- **Education fund:** supporting young people with school registration fees, extra classes, extra school materials, vocational training, summer language programmes and more.
- **Social protection fund:** supports families with emergency food parcels and rent support, helps families in precarious situations to move to more stable accommodation, and provides grants to help adults start small businesses.
- **The Bike Project:** helps teenagers and young adults access education, work and healthcare, via the loan of a bike.

## HOW THESE FUNDS WILL BE DEPLOYED

We will work with our partners to programme funds raised in our new structure. Already we plan to:

- Set up a homework club, to help children who risk repeating a school year or failing their public exams access extra educational support
- Expand the Bike Project to cover more young people, with a focus on university students
- Work with our children's centre partners to cover the cost of vocational training courses for groups of vulnerable young people.



# SSFA'S MISSION

## OUR AIMS

Small Steps for Africa was founded in 2013 with the aim of supporting communities in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the first decade of our work focusing in Madagascar, particularly in communities in and around the capital Antananarivo, who struggle to access education and healthcare.

We work with partners to:

- Advance education in order to enable young people to gain skills that lead to employment opportunities.
- Promote health for the public benefit of those in Madagascar.

## HOW WE WORK

We work together with three local NGOs based in Madagascar - Ankizy Gasy, Akany Avoko Ambohidratimo and Akany Avoko Faravohitra - to implement programmes to support education and health promotion in the Faravohitra district of Antananarivo, and the commune of Ambohidratimo, around 20km from the centre of Antananarivo.

Our partner organisations are run and staffed by experienced, skilled professionals who understand the local context and needs of the population, and work hard to co-create appropriate programmes with SSFA.

SSFA trustees visit Madagascar at least every 18 months to see progress for themselves, and have regular virtual meetings with partners to discuss progress, as well as more formal reporting mechanisms, including inspection of accounts and annual reports, as well as progress updates on individual projects.

## HOW WE RAISE FUNDS

We raise funds in the UK from direct monthly donations, support for individual children via our child sponsorship programmes, and fundraising events such as quiz nights. We are fortunate to have a very loyal supporter base of dedicated individuals and businesses, who have given tremendous support to our work over the years.

Our treasurer is a qualified accountant and compiles the SSFA accounts for external inspection, in full compliance with Charity Commission regulations. Accounts are always available for inspection on request.

# TRUSTEE DETAILS & OFFICIAL INFORMATION

**This report was prepared by SSFA trustees.**

The trustees who prepared and approved this report are:

- Prue Baker (Chair of Trustees)
- Charlotte Baker (Operations Director)
- Adam Brunt (Treasurer)
- Rory Dilworth (Secretary)
- Helen Pye
- Tracey Baker

## **Volunteers**

During 2022, SSFA was grateful for the volunteering support of Emily Kinder, who assisted with a variety of tasks, including social media, the website, donor updates and programme administration.

### **Registered address**

1 Ravenscourt Road  
Lymington  
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**Charity Commission Registration Number: 1181553**