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Home for me is the African island paradise of Madagascar, located in the Indian Ocean off the southeast coast of Africa. I was born and raised on Madagascar and one of my favorite childhood memories was spending time with my four siblings and my parents, playing soccer and sharing stories together. Both of my parents were teachers. Our daily routine included waking up early every morning, having morning devotions, and getting ready to arrive at school by 7 a.m. The after-school routine involved playing together as a family until dinner was ready. My parents believed it was important for their children to grow the food they ate; thus, each child was given a plot to farm. What we didn't eat we sold at the market.

Chores in our home were mandatory. I enjoyed cooking. I would trade with my siblings to cook instead of doing other chores. In retrospect, there were no gender-specific chores, and to this day I regularly enjoy preparing delicious Malagasy dishes.

From the age of 8, my parents allowed me to work as a literature evangelist. Because of this practice, my parents never had to pay for my education and I have never incurred any educational debt, despite earning two bachelor's degrees, a master's degree and a PhD.

My life goal is to alleviate poverty in Madagascar. To this end, from 1999 to 2007 I raised funds to construct over 300 classrooms and school buildings and numerous churches throughout rural and urban Madagascar. Between 2003 and 2011 I also helped to establish the first ophthalmological clinic and education center in the country. In 2003 I started Actions for Madagascar, a group of dedicated students and young professionals with a goal of creating positive and sustainable changes in Madagascar by empowering youth and women, advocacy and community development. My team designs and implements activities that assist less

fortunate families, women and young people with starting small businesses in both rural and urban areas.

Currently, I am raising funds to allow 30 orphans to complete their primary and high school education and obtain vocational training or pursue higher education. Actions for Madagascar provides resources to help students in their efforts to access higher education locally or abroad. We also facilitate capacity building programs such as grant writing, fund raising and project management to allow young people to improve their quality of life and their community.

In my role as program director of the Community & International Development Program at Andrews University, I lead a study tour to Madagascar each year. Malagasy students are able to interact with students from Andrews University through youth forums and other cultural activities where they can exchange their knowledge and experiences. Andrews University students are able to make practical application of the theories of international development and learn from the Malagasy culture. The Malagasy students are able to challenge and shape the thinking of our students. The lives of both groups are enriched because of this interaction.