

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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The electoral commission releases the final list of candidates ahead of the upcoming 11 December local government elections. Madagascar's capital, Antananarivo is expected to be particularly fiercely contested. The election is also taking place at a time when Antananarivo is experiencing repeated disruption to both power and water provision. Madagascar secures a loan from the African Development Bank (AfDB). Kidnapping remains a serious security concern as illustrated by the recent shootout in the Analamanga Region on 13 October.

Candidates finalised ahead of upcoming local elections

The **Commission electorale nationale independante (CENI)** (independent national electoral commission) published the final list of candidates for Madagascar's upcoming 11 December municipal and commune elections on 8 October.¹ According to CENI, 57,174 candidates will contest the elections across Madagascar's 1,695 municipalities and communes. This is an estimated 6.9% increase in the number of candidates who were registered in the last local government elections in 2019.

The finalisation of the candidate lists will enable individual candidates and political parties to begin preparations ahead of the official campaign period which will commence on 19 November and run until 9 December. Madagascar typically does not permit campaigning the day before an election.

Although the 47,174 candidates belong to dozens of different political parties, the main competition this election will once again be between the ruling **Isika Rehetra Miaraka amin'i Andry Rajoelina (IRD)** coalition and the opposition **Firaisankina Platform** coalition. This competition will be fiercest in Madagascar's largest urban areas where the Firaisankina Platform's support is strongest.

Madagascar's capital, **Antananarivo** is expected to be particularly fiercely contested. This competition is partly fuelled by the political power, influence, and wealth that accompanies control of the country's capital city. The Antananarivo municipal election has already experienced significant intrigue during the ongoing build-up to the December election. Firstly, the incumbent Antananarivo mayor, **Richard Ramanambitana**, unexpectedly resigned on 26 August citing unspecified health reasons.² Ramanambitana then passed away less than two weeks later on 12 September.³

Interior minister **Nirintsoa Rahajavololoniaina** then appointed businesswoman and former municipal councillor **Harilala Ramanantsoa** as interim mayor on 28 August. However, Ramanantsoa was confirmed as the IRD's preferred mayoral candidate when CENI published the final list on 8 October which forced her to vacate the office.⁴ Under Malagasy law, an incumbent office-bearer must resign from their position to run for re-election. A new interim mayor has not been appointed. The fact that Antananarivo will have three different mayors (possibly four depending on the 11 December election) within the space of a few months has caused significant disruption to the city's internal governance. Whoever wins the 11 December mayoral election will need to actively work to bring stability to the city government.

On the other side of the political divide, former president **Marc Ravalomanana's** (2002-2019) candidacy was rejected by both the **l'Organe de vérification et d'enregistrement des candidatures**

¹ Orange, 8 Oct 2024

² RFI, 29 Aug 2024

³ 2424, 12 Sep 2024

⁴ Midi Madagasikara, 12 Oct 2024

(OVEC) (agency for the verification and registration of candidacy) and CENI (see *ARC Briefing Madagascar Sep 2024*). Ravalomanana was reportedly denied permission to contest the election due to an outstanding tax dispute related to his retail businesses. Instead, Ravalomanana's son, **Tojo Ravalomanana**, will contest the election as the Firaisankina Platform's mayoral candidate for Antananarivo.⁵ The fact that Ravalomanana was able to parachute his son in as his replacement, despite Tojo's lack of political experience, underscores the former president's strength within the Firaisankina Platform. Ravalomanana's **Tiako I Madagasikara (TIM)** party is by far the largest party within the opposition coalition.

Notably, this is not the first time Ravalomanana has fielded a family member as a proxy in the Antananarivo municipal election. In 2015, Ravalomanana's wife, **Lalao Ravalomanana** contested and won the Antananarivo municipal election and served as the capital city's mayor from 2015 to 2020.⁶ This underscores Ravalomanana's popularity in Antananarivo and suggests that Tojo has a real chance of beating Ramanantsoa in the upcoming election.

Antananarivo is experiencing power and water disruptions...

As the incumbent candidate as well as the ruling coalition candidate, Ramanantsoa does risk being punished by Antananarivo voters who are frustrated by the poor service delivery in the city. This situation has worsened in recent weeks as the city has been subjected to even more frequent water and electricity outages.

The situation has gotten so dire that **President Andry Rajoelina** (2019-present) called an emergency meeting on 1 October with energy minister **Olivier Jean-Baptiste**; water minister **Lalaina Andrianamelaso**, and **Ron Weiss**, the director-general of Madagascar's state-owned power and water utility **Jirama**,⁷ Rajoelina pressured the three to find urgent solutions to the repeated power outages and water shortages in the capital city.

Antananarivo's water and electricity challenges are being aggravated by falling water levels at the **Andekaleka Dam**.⁸ This dam provides both water and electricity to Antananarivo via the 120-megawatt (MW) hydropower plant. Officials have reported that due to the low water levels at the dam, the power plant is only producing 38MW of electricity, less than a third of its capacity.

The government has previously announced plans to build new water reservoirs and power plants to support Antananarivo. However, these are long-term solutions and are unlikely to be realised for several more years. In an effort to address the immediate situation, the government announced on 12 October that it would deploy 150 water canisters across the city and drill three new boreholes.

Rajoelina's government has sought assistance from the **World Bank** to address these challenges, especially the country's water supply issues. It should be noted that Antananarivo is not the only city in Madagascar experiencing frequent water outages; **Antsiranana, Mahajanga, Antsirabe, Fianarantsoa, Mananjary** and **Manakara** are also facing water security challenges.⁹

Rajoelina and Andrianamelaso met with the World Bank's resident representative **Atou Seck** on 12 October to discuss securing support from the global financial institutions. The World Bank has since committed \$220m in funding to support water initiatives in Madagascar. These include the distribution of water cylinders and tanker trucks as well as the financing of new water treatment plants to increase the amount of potable water. This funding will also support repair and replacement work along the country's water infrastructure, including renovating 78km of water pipes.

However, Antananarivo's challenges are also structural. The city government and Jirama have failed to maintain Antananarivo's power and water infrastructure which has increased the likelihood of

⁵ Midi Madagasikara, 3 Oct 2024

⁶ Agence Ecofin, 4 Aug 2015

⁷ Madagascar Tribune, 2 Oct 2024

⁸ Midi Madagasikara, 3 Oct 2024

⁹ Madagascar Tribune, 12 Oct 2024

breakdowns and leaks which worsen the shortages caused by seasonal issues such as falling dam levels. Madagascar is also vulnerable to the effects of climate change and the country repeatedly experiences periods of drought.

Much of the focus around the disruptions to utility provision is on the impact on the city's citizens but the lack of reliable utility provision is a major obstacle to investment and economic growth in Antananarivo.

Development bank approves grant

The World Bank's pledge to help finance Madagascar's water projects underscored the country's dependence on external financial support to fund both its budget and any developmental projects. In a similar development, the **African Development Bank (AfDB)** announced on 20 September that it had approved a \$67.3m loan to Madagascar to implement the first phase of its economic growth-inducing **Financial Management and Resilience Support Programme for 2024-2025**.¹⁰

This programme aims to create favourable economic conditions including by strengthening financial governance and improving economic resilience. The aims of the programme dovetail with the government's priority reforms outlined in Madagascar's **Politique Générale de l'Etat (PGE) 2024-2028** (general state policy) and **New Energy Policy for 2015-2030**. This includes addressing Madagascar's investment deficit by increasing the budget and releasing additional resources for economic recovery.

Among the specific projects that have been earmarked under this AfDB-funded programme are the roll-out of the **Système d'administration fiscale intégré (SAFI)** (integrated tax system), implement structural reforms at Jirama, and develop a better regulatory framework for promoting investments and the development of public-private partnership (PPP) projects especially in the energy sector.

Seven kidnappers killed in shootout

Although Madagascar's perennial power and water disruptions remain one of the country's foremost operational concerns, kidnapping and banditry also remain a serious threat in rural Madagascar. Illustrative of this, Malagasy security forces killed seven suspected kidnappers during a shootout in the country's **Analamanga Region** on 13 October.¹¹

This shootout occurred during an operation aimed at rescuing at least three hostages who had been seized on 17 September. One of the hostages was killed during the firefight but security forces arrested six other suspects. The kidnappers were believed to belong to a local bandit gang (known locally as dahalo) many of which have turned to kidnapping as an additional source of revenue in recent months.

Dahalo have long been the most serious security concern in rural Madagascar. These bandit gangs tend to be well-armed and can include several dozen members. Historically, dahalo have focussed on cattle rustling and raiding rural farmsteads for vanilla and valuables. However, in recent years these groups have become increasingly emboldened and frequently hijack vehicles travelling along the country's rural roads.

The shift towards kidnapping is a major security concern as it does change the dynamics of the security environment in Madagascar. The apparent success enjoyed by dahalo gangs in Analamanga could potentially incentivise dahalo in other regions to pivot towards kidnapping operations as well.

Although these gangs have currently targeted locals, there is a real possibility that they could begin targeting foreign nationals given the perception that such nationals are wealthier and would command a higher ransom. This will particularly be an operational concern for those in the mining and agricultural sectors in Madagascar that are located in isolated rural areas.

¹⁰ AfDB, 23 Sep 2024

¹¹ L'Express, 14 Oct 2024

Planner

11 Dec 2024 **Madagascar** local government elections;

Chronology

12 Oct 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Tribune*. The education ministry announces that it will expand the **World Food Programme (WFP)**-backed school feeding scheme from 160,000 students to 240,000 students by 2025;

11 Oct 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Africa Intelligence*. Private companies operating in the Antananarivo free zone call on President **Andry Rajoelina** to reimburse more than \$43.7m in unpaid VAT refunds;

11 Oct 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. A fire destroys an estimated 31 houses are destroyed in **Ambatomainty** district (**Melaky Region**), highlighting the lack of adequate emergency response services in rural Madagascar;

10 Oct 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Orange*. The **Mauritian** government donates \$25,000 to support the ongoing recovery operations related to the effects of the March 2024 tropical storm, **Gamane**;

7 Oct 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *The Africa Report*. Economy and finance minister **Rindra Hasimbelo Rabarinirinarison** says Madagascar is preparing for its first blue bond in the next two years;

4 Oct 2024 **Paris (France)** *L'Express*. President **Andry Rajoelina** attends the **19th Francophonie Summit**;

4 Oct 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Tribune*. Prime minister **Christian Ntsay** chairs a meeting of Madagascar's senior security officials to develop a new national security action plan;

2 Oct 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Reuters*. Japan's **Sumitomo Corp** announces that it shut down the pipeline supplying ore from its **Ambatovy** nickel and cobalt mine located in the **Atsinanana** and **Alaotra Mangoro** regions to its processing plant for repairs;

1 Oct 2024 **Flic-en-Flac (Mauritius)** *L'Express*. Former trade minister **Edgard Razafindravahy** is appointed as the secretary-general of the **Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)**;

30 Sep 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. Energy minister **Jean-Baptiste Olivier** announces plans to develop an additional 350MW of solar power generation capacity in the country;

30 Sep 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. A team from the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** arrives in Antananarivo to conduct a review of Madagascar's **Extended Credit Facility (ECF)** arrangement;

27 Sep 2024 **New York (United States)** *L'Express*. Prime minister **Christian Ntsay** addresses the **United Nations (UN) General Assembly** in New York;

21 Sep 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Midi Madagasikara*. Supporters of former president **Marc Ravalomanana** stage a rally to protest his exclusion from the Antananarivo mayoral election;

19 Sep 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. The shareholder meeting of the **African Development Bank (AfDB) Africa50** takes place in Antananarivo;

17 Sep 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Orange*. The **United Kingdom's (UK)** new ambassador to Madagascar, **Martin Lynch**, presents his credentials to foreign affairs minister **Rafaravavitafika Rasata**;

13 Sep 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar) Orange. Roland Kobia**, the new **European Union (EU)** ambassador to Madagascar, presents his credentials to foreign affairs minister **Rafaravavitafika Rasata**.

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