

## AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

### Madagascar Monthly Briefing January 2022

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#### Madagascar Summary 16 January 2022

*Presidential candidates start positioning themselves ahead of the December 2023 election. Former president Marc Ravalomanana (2002-2009) is the most active of the assumed contenders thus far staging two events and receiving the public backing of the Rodoben'ny Mpanohitra ho an'ny Demokrasia eto Madagasikara (RMDM) opposition coalition. The Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI) (independent national electoral commission) continues to register voters ahead of its 31 January deadline but is worryingly behind on schedule. Aivo Handriatiana Andrianarivelo, an executive director at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), is appointed as the new governor of the Banky Foiben'i Madagasikara (BFM) (central bank) following the resignation of his predecessor Henri Rabarijohn. Andrianarivelo's appointment indicates policy stability, and the priority Madagascar places on its relationship with the IMF. The United Nations (UN) warns of the continued food insecurity crisis in southern Madagascar noting that over 2 million people in the country's southern and south-eastern regions are facing high levels of food insecurity.*

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#### Presidential candidates position themselves ahead of December election

Several likely candidates have begun staging events shoring up their political support and reaching out to voters as the de facto 2023 presidential election campaign cycle begins.<sup>1</sup> President **Andry Rajoelina** (2019-present), former president **Marc Ravalomanana** (2002-2009), former president **Hery Rajaonarimampianina** (2014–2018), a current member of parliament (MP) **Siteny Randrianasoloniaiko**, and former ambassador **Auguste Paraina** are among the candidates. These events come even though the official campaign period is only set to begin in September.

Ravalomanana has arguably been the most active of these and began the year with a prayer event at the **Faravohitra Church** in **Antananarivo** on 2 January.<sup>2</sup> Ravalomanana criticised the failure of the current government to address **Madagascar's** developmental and social security measures during the event. The event was also attended by senior members of Ravalomanana's **Tiako i Madagasikara (TIM)** party in a subtle confirmation that the party remains unified behind Ravalomanana going into the election period.

Ravalomanana's ambitions to be returned to the Malagasy presidency received a further boost on 9 January when the **Rodoben'ny Mpanohitra ho an'ny Demokrasia eto Madagasikara (RMDM)** coalition confirmed its support for Ravalomanana.<sup>3</sup> This positions Ravalomanana to be the key challenger to President Andry Rajoelina during the December election.

The public backing for Ravalomanana appears to have surprised Rajaonarimampianina as yet **Vaovao Ho An'I Madagasikara (HVM)** party is the second largest member of the RMDM behind the TIM.<sup>4</sup> Neither Rajaonarimampianina nor the HVM has publicly backed Ravalomanana as yet but on 11 January, HVM announced that Rajaonarimampianina – who has been living abroad – would soon return to Madagascar and called on HVM members to be ready to attend a welcome rally.<sup>5</sup> This has raised speculation that Rajaonarimampianina is intending to contest the December election.

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<sup>1</sup> L'Express, 14 Jan 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Midi Madagasikara, 3 Jan 2023

<sup>3</sup> L'Express, 11 Jan 2023

<sup>4</sup> L'Express, 11 Jan 2023

<sup>5</sup> Midi Madagasikara, 13 Jan 2023

The possibility that both Ravalomanana and Rajaonarimampianina will run for president could split the opposition vote and weaken the challenge to Rajoelina. The two men will be under pressure to reach a consensus and form an alliance before the final candidate registration deadline later this year. This will most likely require Ravalomanana to grant Rajaonarimampianina major concessions as Ravalomanana himself almost certainly will not agree to step aside and support Rajaonarimampianina under any circumstances. Ravalomanana has been desperate to regain the presidency ever since he was deposed in the 2009 putsch which resulted in Rajoelina taking the presidency for his first term. Ravalomanana is now 73 years old, and 2023 will likely be his last presidential run.

This eagerness also explains the energy with which Ravalomanana has begun the year. He is hoping that by being the first out of the gate and campaigning aggressively he can ensure victory in December. Illustrative of this was his visit to **Toliara (Atsimo-Andrefana)** where Ravalomanana was ostensibly in the city to attend the TIM's Atsimo-Andrefana regional leadership conference; however, in reality, he used the visit as an opportunity to rally supporters and campaign in the town.<sup>6</sup> Toliara was won by Rajoelina in 2018 but the public support shown for Ravalomanana on 12 January indicates that TIM is correct in its assessment that the city could be converted to backing Ravalomanana.

Ravalomanana is one of Madagascar's wealthiest men having accrued his fortune through his multiple business endeavours, notably the dairy conglomerate **TIKO** and the **MAGRO** chain of wholesalers. He is expected to spend a significant sum of his own money in the coming year in his final effort to be once again elected as president.

Rajoelina seems to be taking a slower approach to his re-election campaign and is intending to use the office of the presidency to do much of the heavy lifting for him. He used his New Year's address to claim success for the country's **Covid-19** response and tout his national development plan, **Plan Emergence de Madagascar (PEM)**, once again.<sup>7</sup> Rajoelina's use of this address to reiterate that developing the state takes time once again underscores his intent to campaign on the PEM and to pin his re-election on an argument of stability and continuity.

However, Rajoelina has started shoring up his **Isika Rehetrea Miaraka Amin'i Andry Rajoelina (IRD)** (we are all with Andry Rajoelina) coalition. This alliance consists of several smaller political parties led by Rajoelina's **Tanora MalaGasy Vonona (TGV)** party. Securing and reaffirming the support of the IRD will be essential to Rajoelina's re-election. The need to solidify this coalition became evident after the **Malagasy Miara-Miainga (MMM)** party announced in November that it would no longer back the IRD.

Rajoelina has also had to work to quell dissent within the IRD after a large contingent of the ruling coalition pushed in December to remove Prime Minister **Christian Ntsay** from office and called for a vote of no confidence in national assembly speaker **Christine Razanamahaso** – a close Rajoelina ally (see *ARC Briefing Madagascar Dec 2022*). Rajoelina appears to have pacified this group and Ntsay and Razanamahaso both remain in office; however, the incidents indicate that Rajoelina could potentially face a more demanding caucus and political coalition in 2023 creating additional challenges for the president.

### ... as official preparations continue

The **Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI)** (independent national electoral commission) is currently registering voters across Madagascar ahead of the 31 January deadline to conclude the voters' roll and electoral preparations are underway.<sup>8</sup> However, as of 14 January, CENI has registered less than 9 million voters, leaving an estimated 4.5 million voters to be identified and

<sup>6</sup> Madagascar Tribune, 13 Jan 2023

<sup>7</sup> RFI, 1 Jan 2023

<sup>8</sup> 2424, 14 Jan 2023

registered within the next two weeks.<sup>9</sup> CENI was criticised by both Rajoelina's and Ravalomanana's campaigns ahead of the 2018 election. Ravalomanana further accused CENI of poor performance and even maladministration following his defeat in the 2018 election. The former president has continued his criticism of the agency, and, during his New Year's address, he called for additional international observers claiming that CENI was unreliable.<sup>10</sup> Issues around the voters' roll were central to Ravalomanana's 2018 critics and challenge to the final results.

It is worrying that CENI is behind schedule and could raise future concerns as the electoral authority has become deeply politicised in recent years. If CENI fails to meet its voter registration targets, it will open itself up to allegations of maladministration and manipulation of the voters' roll which could form the basis of any future challenge to the election results by whoever is the losing candidate.

### New central bank governor appointed

The council of ministers announced on 4 January that it appointed **Aivo Handriatiana Andrianarivelo**, an executive director at the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** as the new governor of the **Banky Foiben'i Madagasikara (BFM)** (central bank).<sup>11</sup> This follows Andrianarivelo's predecessor, **Henri Rabarijohn**, resigning in mid-December due to reasons related to his health. It should be noted that Rabarijohn's amicable exit from the BFM suggests that the transition period should be uneventful and lead to no major changes in monetary policy.

Andrianarivelo, through his prior role as an executive director at the IMF, will indicate to Madagascar's economic partners that the country remains committed to its ongoing reform agenda. Andrianarivelo brings with him a wealth of experience in finance, banking, and development – before joining the IMF, he was the administrator-general of Madagascar's portage and privatisation fund, prior to which he worked for the **Catholic Relief Services (CRS)** nongovernmental organisation (NGO).<sup>12</sup> Andrianarivelo's working relationship with the IMF will be integral to his work as Madagascar is heavily dependent on credit financing from the IMF and the **World Bank**.

Andrianarivelo assumes his new role as Madagascar is facing several overlapping monetary policy challenges including rising inflation rates, the persistent depreciation of the ariary, and continued challenges in maintaining sufficient foreign exchange reserves. These issues are not only economically urgent but are also politically sensitive and will likely lead to Andrianarivelo facing pressure and criticism from presidential candidates throughout the year

### United Nations warns of food insecurity crisis

The **United Nations (UN)** released a statement on 5 January warning that more than 2 million people are facing high levels of food insecurity in southern and south-eastern Madagascar.<sup>13</sup> This comprises 1.97 million people who are in a 'crisis phase' which is referred to as Phase 3 under the Integrated Food Security Classification (IPC) while an estimated 252,000 are in emergency (IPC Phase 4) conditions. Nowhere in Madagascar is considered to be in IPC Phase 5 conditions, also referred to as a 'disaster situation', which is typically assigned when an area is experiencing famine conditions.

The worst affected regions are **Anosy, Androy, Atsimo-Andrefana, Fitovinany** and **Vatovavy**. However, the two districts most severely impacted by food insecurity are **Ikongo (Fitovinany)** and **Bekily (Androy)**. In both districts, more than 15% of the population is living in IPC Phase 4 conditions.

Food insecurity is a persistent problem in southern Madagascar. The region is frequently impacted by adverse weather events ranging from prolonged droughts to tropical storms and flooding which

<sup>9</sup> Midi Madagasikara, 14 Jan 2023

<sup>10</sup> Midi Madagasikara, 3 Jan 2023

<sup>11</sup> Madagascar Tribune, 5 Jan 2023

<sup>12</sup> LinkedIn, 14 Jan 2023

<sup>13</sup> UN, 5 Jan 2023

destroy the crops of the area's subsistence farmers. This area is also considered to be particularly vulnerable to the worsening effects of climate change.

Madagascar does not have sufficient state resources to adequately address the food crisis in its southern and south-eastern regions. As such, communities in these areas are heavily dependent on foreign aid. The UN's **World Food Programme (WFP)** alone supports 130,000 of the area's most vulnerable people.<sup>14</sup>

The area is currently at its most vulnerable as the next anticipated food harvest is in February, but current food supplies are running low. Furthermore, Madagascar is amid its tropical storm season, and should a major storm make landfall in southern Madagascar it could cause widespread damage and destruction to crops and rapidly exacerbate the food security crisis. This kind of event occurred in 2022 when Tropical Storm **Batsirai** made landfall in southern Madagascar severely impacting the Vatovavy and Fitovinany regions.

Food insecurity is also driving internal displacement in Madagascar as people flee food-insecure zones to the country's cities and more northerly regions. This is placing an unsustainable strain on resources and infrastructure in these areas. Mayor of Toliara, **Vita Dede Sidison** raised concerns over the continued influx of people fleeing drought and food insecurity from the rural areas of Atsimo-Andrefana region into the city.<sup>15</sup> This has caused a sharp increase in the number of homeless and informal dwellers as well as placed pressure on the city's sanitation and law enforcement.

This internal displacement will also increase social tensions in the destination areas as competition for resources and jobs intensifies, which has previously led to increased intercommunal conflict and crime in Madagascar's cities. However, as long as the food insecurity crisis continues this internal displacement will persist.

## Planner

December 2023 (**Madagascar**) Presidential elections (TBA);  
2024 (**Madagascar**) National Assembly elections (TBA);

## Chronology

12 Jan 2023 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *RFI*. Truck drivers threaten to strike over conditions of the roads that connect **Tamatave**, the largest port in the country, to the capital **Antananarivo**, noting that three trucks have overturned in recent weeks;

9 Jan 2023 **Vatomandry (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Tribune*. The government reforestation campaign in the district of **Vatomandry (Ilaka East)** is set to begin on the 19 January;

5 Jan 2023 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Afrik21*. **African Development Bank (AfDB)** approves \$19.2m in funding to support resilience against climate shocks in Madagascar;

6 Jan 2023 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Linfo*. Council of ministers announces an investigation into the misappropriation of funds which occurred between 2014 and 2019;

30 Dec 2022 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Reuters*. President **Andry Rajoelina** announces the intention of government to seek investment from **Morocco** into the local fertiliser industry;

29 Dec 2022 **Itaosy (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Tribune*. Three soldiers drown after jumping into the **Ikopa** river in **Itaosy** district (**Analamanga**) to escape a pursuing vigilante mob. The reasons why the mob were pursuing the soldiers remain unclear;

<sup>14</sup> UN, 5 Jan 2023

<sup>15</sup> L'Express, 10 Jan 2023

22 Dec 2022 **Ambohidratrimo (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Tribune*. At least five people die from bubonic plague in **Ambohidratrimo** district (**Analamanga**);

21 Dec 2022 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. **World Bank** grants a \$250m line of credit to Madagascar to increase social security in the country;

19 Dec 2022 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Tribune*. **The European Investment Bank (EIB)** provides €73.6m (\$79.43m ) in funding towards the rehabilitation of the RN13 and RN 6 roadways;

16 Dec 2022 **Bealanana (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. At least one person is killed in communal clashes over a land dispute in the **Ambatosia** commune of **Bealanana** district (**Sofia**);

16 Dec 2022 **Fort-Dauphin (Madagascar)** *2424*. **QIT Madagascar Minerals (QMM)**, owned by **Australia**-headquartered **Rio Tinto**, resumes operations after reaching an agreement with protesting community members;

15 Dec 2022 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Midi Madagasikara*. **European Union** announces \$886,000 in support for civil society organisations and electoral watchdogs.

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