

## AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

### Madagascar Monthly Briefing September 2020

#### Madagascar Summary 22 September 2020

*Prime minister Christian Ntsay announces that Madagascar is “on the right track” in controlling the Covid-19 pandemic, and management of the crisis will now return to the ministry of public health from the Brigade d’Intervention Spéciale (BIS) made up of doctors and the military. Ntsay continues to fight for a new bill that will reduce the number of senators, but the senate rejects the bill as unconstitutional. United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) spokesperson Rupert Colville says the OHCHR is “very concerned” about an incident in which 22 inmates from the Farafangana jail in south-east Madagascar were shot and killed when trying to escape. President Andry Rajoelina (2019-present) notes that malnutrition continues to be a serious problem in the country and that United States-based Mérieux Foundation and France-based NUTRISET have expressed interest in setting up a factory to produce food supplements and integrate nutrition into basic health centres. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) says Madagascar may be self-sufficient in rice by the end of 2020 thanks to the development in partnership with China of a high-yield type of rice.*

#### Covid-19 management transferred to public health ministry

Prime minister **Christian Ntsay** announced in a televised speech to the nation on 20 September that **Madagascar** is on the right track in controlling the **Covid-19** pandemic and that management of the crisis will now be returned to the public health ministry from the **Brigade d’Intervention Spéciale (BIS)** (special intervention brigade) composed of the military and doctors.<sup>1</sup> The Covid-19 treatment centres run by the military will come to an end, and all equipment will be transferred to health centres and hospitals.<sup>2</sup> As of 21 September, Madagascar had tested 74,547 people in its population of about 27.8 million people for Covid-19, and recorded 16,053 confirmed cases, 14,646 recoveries, and 223 deaths.<sup>3</sup> Limited testing may mean that positive cases are substantially higher (see *ARC Briefing Madagascar July 2020*). Ntsay warned that despite the decrease in cases, Madagascar remains vigilant in the fight against Covid-19 to avoid a second wave.<sup>4</sup>

The **World Bank** announced on 3 September that it will now provide \$75m to support recovery efforts and close the financial gap caused by Covid-19 to mitigate the further impact of the pandemic on the economy.<sup>5</sup> World Bank country manager for Madagascar, **Marie-Chantal Uwanyiligira**, said the economic impact of Covid-19 can deepen fragility and reverse progress in poverty reduction:

*“This operation will help the government save lives, protect the livelihoods of the most vulnerable populations and preserve jobs, while implementing policy reforms and strengthening institutions in order to lay the foundation for a stronger social and economic recovery.”<sup>6</sup>*

The World Bank’s support complements assistance from the **Agence Française de Développement (AFD)** (French development agency), the **International Monetary Fund’s (IMF)** Rapid Credit

<sup>1</sup> Madagascar Tribune, 21 Sep 2020

<sup>2</sup> Madagascar Tribune, 21 Sep 2020

<sup>3</sup> Madagascar Tribune, 21 Sep 2020

<sup>4</sup> Madagascar Tribune, 21 Sep 2020

<sup>5</sup> World Bank, 3 Sep 2020

<sup>6</sup> World Bank, 3 Sep 2020

Facility (\$337.9m)<sup>7</sup> and the **African Development Bank (AfDB)** (approximately \$42m)<sup>8</sup>, bringing the total to \$476m, which represents 3.1% of Madagascar's GDP.<sup>9</sup>

### Prime minister pushes for bill to limit senators' numbers

Prime minister Christian Ntsay, addressing the nation on 20 September, said he would attempt for a third time to adopt **Bill N 001-2020** of 26 February, intended to reduce the number of senators.<sup>10</sup> The senate has twice rejected the bill. Further delay in passing the bill may affect the organisation of senatorial elections scheduled for 11 December. Ntsay said that if the **National Assembly** and the **Senate** continue to disagree, "*it is the final decision of the National Assembly that counts*".<sup>11</sup>

The Senate has complained that the bill is unconstitutional and that the elections will be illegal because of a failure to create an electoral college composed of mayors, municipal and communal councillors, as well as provincial heads and councillors, as stated in Article 80 of the constitution.<sup>12</sup> Ntsay counters that the adoption of the bill is in fact constitutional.

Organisation of the senatorial elections is the responsibility of Madagascar's **Commission Électorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI)** (independent national electoral commission), which has a new vice-president, **Narcisse Andrianaly Benaivo**, who was officially installed on 21 September.<sup>13</sup> The position fell vacant in March when former CENI vice-president **Thierry Rakotonarivo** resigned over revelations that he was aware of identical numbers of more than a million national identity cards during the 2019 municipal elections (see *ARC Briefing Madagascar March 2020*).<sup>14</sup> CENI now has to tackle the constitutional issues involved in the senatorial elections, as well as the revision of the current electoral list to make sure the elections are seen as fair and just.

Madagascar's judiciary may also have a role to play if the National Assembly and the Senate cannot agree on whether the new bill is constitutional. **Germany**-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) **Transparency International**, in its 2019 **Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)**, gave Madagascar a low score for its "*perceived lack of judicial independence*".<sup>15</sup> CPI assesses several indicators to measure "*perceived levels of public sector corruption*" in its annual rankings. In its 2019 CPI it lowered Madagascar's ranking to 158 out of 180 countries, with a score of 24/100, below the **sub-Saharan African** average of 32 (see *ARC Briefing Madagascar February 2020*).<sup>16</sup>

### UN expresses concern over jailbreak shootings

**United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)** spokesman **Rupert Colville**, speaking at a news briefing in **Geneva (Switzerland)** on 28 August, stated that the UN office is "*very concerned*" about an incident in which 22 inmates from the **Farafangana** jail in south-east Madagascar were shot and killed when trying to escape.<sup>17</sup> The prison breakout took place on 23 August. While 88 of 380 inmates managed to escape, 22 were killed, eight injured, 25 remain on the run, and the rest were recaptured.<sup>18</sup>

The jailbreak shootings have focussed attention on Madagascar's prison system. **United Kingdom**-based human rights organisation **Amnesty International** notes that Madagascar's prisons hold more pre-trial prisoners than convicted criminals.<sup>19</sup> In an interview with **Inter Press Service** on 28 August,

<sup>7</sup> IMF, 30 Jul 2020

<sup>8</sup> AfDB, 23 Jul 2020

<sup>9</sup> World Bank, 3 Sep 2020

<sup>10</sup> Madagascar Tribune, 21 Sep 2020

<sup>11</sup> Madagascar Tribune, 21 Sep 2020

<sup>12</sup> Madagascar Tribune, 21 Sep 2020

<sup>13</sup> Madagascar Tribune, 21 Sep 2020

<sup>14</sup> RFI, 13 Mar 2020

<sup>15</sup> Transparency International's 2019 CPI Report

<sup>16</sup> Transparency International, 2019 CPI Report

<sup>17</sup> Al Jazeera, 28 Aug 2020

<sup>18</sup> Al Jazeera, 28 Aug 2020

<sup>19</sup> Inter Press Service, 28 Aug 2020

Amnesty International Madagascar programme advisor **Tamara Leger** reported that people in detention waiting for trial often wait “for years, with little or no information on their cases”.<sup>20</sup> According to Leger, the “unjustified, excessive and prolonged arbitrary pre-trial detention” leads to several human rights abuses including a lack of presumption of innocence.<sup>21</sup> Prison breakouts are not uncommon in Madagascar, and Amnesty International emphasises that these are frequently to protest the “squalid” living conditions in the prisons and the unfair detention system.<sup>22</sup>

Colville pointed out that the OHCHR has previously contacted **Antananarivo** authorities to express concern about prison conditions such as overcrowding, poor food and lack of access to health care.<sup>23</sup> According to Colville:

*“We will continue to work with Malagasy authorities to ensure that they conduct thorough, prompt, independent and impartial investigations into the circumstances of the killings and injuries during the prison escape, including allegations of excessive use of force violations by state security forces.”<sup>24</sup>*

### Fight against malnutrition continues

President **Andry Rajoelina** (2019-present) highlighted in an official letter to the republic on 9 September that malnutrition continues to be a serious problem in Madagascar.<sup>25</sup> Nearly one in two children suffer from malnutrition, which can lead to stunted growth and sometimes death. Switzerland-based NGO **CARE International** noted in its annual “*Suffering in Silence*” report, released on 28 January, that Madagascar has the world’s fourth-highest rate of chronic malnutrition, with more than 916,000 Malagasy in immediate need of food assistance (see *ARC Briefing Madagascar February 2020*).<sup>26</sup>

Rajoelina claims the long-term solution to solving malnutrition in Madagascar is to manufacture food supplements. Rajoelina said the **United States (US)**-based **Mérieux Foundation** has expressed interest in contributing a large-scale social project to set up a factory to produce supplements in the south of the country.<sup>27</sup> The Mérieux Foundation signed a partnership agreement with the ministry of education and technical and vocational training in January to distribute health education kits throughout the country’s schools.<sup>28</sup> Rajoelina also stated that France-based **NUTRISET** will support the Malagasy government in integrating nutrition into basic health centres. Rajoelina pointed out that although the Malagasy government has to approve and support the project, it requires no financial participation from the Malagasy state.<sup>29</sup>

Both the Malagasy leadership and the international community seem to recognise the urgency with which malnutrition needs to be tackled. The **UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)** highlighted on 11 September the positive results of its south-south cooperation project between **China** and Madagascar to introduce a type of rice with greater yield.<sup>30</sup> Madagascar aims to be rice self-sufficient by the end of 2020, which will make a significant difference in a country where many families eat rice three times a day. The Covid-19 pandemic has illustrated the need for national food self-sufficiency and shorter supply lines, as well as the importance of improving nutrition for healthier immune systems.

<sup>20</sup> Inter Press Service, 28 Aug 2020

<sup>21</sup> Inter Press Service, 28 Aug 2020

<sup>22</sup> Inter Press Service, 28 Aug 2020

<sup>23</sup> Al Jazeera, 28 Aug 2020

<sup>24</sup> Al Jazeera, 28 Aug 2020

<sup>25</sup> The Presidency, 9 Sep 2020

<sup>26</sup> CARE International, 28 Jan 2020

<sup>27</sup> The Presidency, 9 Sep 2020

<sup>28</sup> The Mérieux Foundation, 9 Jan 2020

<sup>29</sup> The Presidency, 9 Sep 2020

<sup>30</sup> FAO, 11 Sep 2020

## Planner

28-30 Sep 2020 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** L'AviaDev Africa 2020 (Aeronautical Conference of Africa)<sup>31</sup>

11 Dec 2020 **(Madagascar)** Scheduled senatorial elections;

2023 **(Madagascar)** Potential presidential elections.

## Chronology

21 Sep 2020 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Tribune*. Prime minister **Christian Ntsay** announces that management of the **Covid-19** crisis will be returned to the public health ministry from the **Brigade d'Intervention Spéciale (BIS)** (special intervention brigade) composed of the military and doctors;

21 Sep 2020 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Tribune*. Prime minister **Christian Ntsay** states he will for the third time attempt to adopt the bill that reduces the number of senators in the government institution;

15 Sep 2020 **(Africa)** *IMF*. **International Monetary Fund** managing director **Kristalina Georgieva** and **Africa** department director **Abebe Aemro Selassie** say **sub-Saharan Africa** will need hundreds of billions of dollars and reforms that bring change for a resilient recovery from the damage wrought by the **coronavirus** pandemic;

9 Sep 2020 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *The Presidency*. In an official letter to the public, President **Andry Rajoelina** highlights how malnutrition continues to be a serious problem in the country;

7 Sep 2020 **(Africa)** *Bloomberg*. **United Kingdom**-based private-equity firm **Actis** investor development group head says the company is looking at **African** energy projects to add to the \$1 billion it has already invested in the sector on the continent.

3 Sep 2020 **Washington (United States)** *World Bank*. The **World Bank** will provide \$75m to the **Malagasy** government to support recovery efforts and close the financial gap caused by **Covid-19** and mitigate the further impact of the pandemic on the economy;

28 Aug 2020 **Geneva (Switzerland)** *Al Jazeera*. The **United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)** states it is "very concerned" about an incident in which 22 inmates from the **Farafangana** jail in south-east **Madagascar** were shot and killed when trying to escape;

24 Aug 2020 **Farafangana (Madagascar)** *Al Jazeera*. 20 inmates killed when trying to flee the **Farafangana** prison in southern Madagascar;

<sup>31</sup> The conference was postponed from its original dates (6 -8 May)

### About Africa Risk Consulting:

**Africa Risk Consulting (ARC)** is a pan-African consulting company that provides timely, relevant information and advice that enables its clients to take informed investment decisions and to safeguard their reputations.

**ARC's** core consulting services include integrity due diligence and corporate investigations, political advisory and country assessments, opportunity monitoring and reputation risk management. Most relevant to private equity firms is ARC's integrity due diligence and corporate investigations capability. Specifically, ARC offers pre-deal integrity checks to highlight red flags before negotiations start; full detailed multi-jurisdictional reputation due diligence; and supplier and senior hire vetting and repeat due diligence for compliance programmes. ARC is unique in that it offers a 10-day delivery for a routine integrity due diligence. ARC also offers a suite of corporate investigations services from immediate investigation, evidence gathering, e-discovery, forensic accounting and whistleblower support on one end to crisis media management and regular monitoring on the other.

[www.africariskconsulting.com](http://www.africariskconsulting.com)

### About ARC Briefing:

**ARC Briefing** is ARC's essential business information service.

Companies at any stage in their Africa expansion, whether building or communicating an Africa strategy, investing directly, expanding current operations, financing other investors, doing the legal leg-work or researching the Africa growth trend, need ARC Briefing.

**ARC Briefing** is an information service keeping you:

- Up to date with Country Chronologies of business-critical events
- In the know via Country Briefings on political, economic, business and operating trends. Written in-country, ARC experts analyse and comment
- Ahead with Country Planner which details future elections, budgets, regulatory changes etc.

[www.africariskconsulting.com](http://www.africariskconsulting.com)

### Getting in touch

Please contact us by email [info@africariskconsulting.com](mailto:info@africariskconsulting.com) or call + 44 (0) 20 7078 4080

Follow us on Twitter: [@ARCBriefing](https://twitter.com/ARCBriefing)