

# Newsletter

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## Society activities

The 2013 calendar of events starts a little later in the year than usual, on the evening of 6<sup>th</sup> March, when there will be a talk by Lev Wood on a coast-to-coast trip across Madagascar, with the next date 26<sup>th</sup> June for the AGM.

The latest Society event was on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October, with three fascinating talks by Glyn Young on Durrell's captive breeding programme, Ailie Tam on HIV/AIDS and Jonathan Paul on landscape evolution as well as music from Olga del Madagascar and a lively atmosphere helped by the large turn-out.

Our website at [www.anglo-malagasysociety.co.uk](http://www.anglo-malagasysociety.co.uk) has a summary of the talks given for those unable to attend, together with much other useful information. This includes directions to the venue for our meetings, which is the Upper Vestry Hall of St George's Church, Bloomsbury, London WC1A 2HR, two minutes' walk from the British Museum.

The next newsletter will be published in March 2013. Please send any material for inclusion as well as any changes in your contact details to the editor Julian Cooke, whose e-mail address is [juliancooke@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:juliancooke@yahoo.co.uk).

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## Bilateral relations

There has at last been some good news on the re-opening of the British Embassy in Antananarivo, which was announced by William Hague in a written ministerial statement on 13<sup>th</sup> October. The new Ambassador, Tim Smart, took up his post that month and the Embassy is due to be fully functional by March 2013. The FCO said that the re-opening would 'provide more effective systematic support to British business, a stronger trade and investment relationship with Madagascar, and full consular assistance to British residents and visitors' as well as allowing it to 'work more effectively with the international community to support

Madagascar's return to a fully recognized constitutional government after free and fair elections'. The move was welcomed by Sir Mervyn Brown and there are more details in the press release at [www.gov.uk/government/news/new-ambassador-to-madagascar-appointed?view=PressR&id=826799382](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-ambassador-to-madagascar-appointed?view=PressR&id=826799382).

## Politics in Madagascar

### Towards elections

The most striking recent development has been the proposal that neither Andry Rajoelina nor Marc Ravalomanana stand in the presidential elections due in May 2013, which have been the main focus in recent months as the country moves to fulfil the conditions of the road-map agreed for a return to constitutional order and international recognition.

On 1<sup>st</sup> October the National Electoral Commission said that it would employ some 23,000 agents for four weeks to establish a new list of voters, which the UN was due to fund to the tune of \$340,000. The Minister of Finance, Hery Rajaonarimampianina, said that it was right that the transitional régime fund in part the elections, although to what extent was not clear beyond its initial commitment to find \$8m; the German ambassador said that the government should not try to exploit the international community's generosity. The Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie said that it felt compelled to offer technical support to help avoid post-electoral conflict, although its summit later in the month was preoccupied with Mali and the Malagasy government was not invited to attend, having been excluded since 2009.

The next day the forty-four members of the Conseil de Réconciliation Malagasy (CRM) were announced, comprising many of the pastors and elders (or Raimendry Mijoro) who had not been able to help find a solution previously and including some who were seen as too politically-involved to be rightly selected. Manandafy Rakotonirina, head of the MFM party and a leader of the Ravalomanana movement, criticised the opaque process in choosing the CRM while the Zafy movement said it would not recognise the council. The government and civil society held talks to discuss the issue which the prime minister, Omer Beriziky, said should be resolved by the CSC, the committee responsible for overseeing the road-map.

The first week of October also saw renewed comment on the possible return from exile in South Africa of Ravalomanana, which his party said was due to be confirmed by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) by the 18<sup>th</sup> of the month in line with an earlier commitment to agree on this within 30-60 days of the Maputo summit in August. Rajoelina dismissed the possibility and on his own return from the UN summit in New York insisted that Madagascar was a sovereign state that did not need to heed countries such as the United States while the road-map was clear on who could be a candidate in the presidential elections, such as himself.

Another major political affair related to the supposed accidental death of Nadine Ramaroson, the Minister for Population, when her uncle Alain, a prime mover in Rajoelina's rise to power, implicated both the head of the Gendarmerie Richard Ravalomanana and the vice-prime minister Hajo Andrianainarivelo in her demise. The latter rejected the claim as a political

manoeuvre, given that he might be standing for president in place of Rajoelina. Perhaps predictably, the next day armed forces arrived to search Ramaroson's house while his personal bodyguard of nine gendarmes was removed. He pressed on with his call for parliamentary commissions of enquiry into the affair as well as into rosewood trafficking.

On 5<sup>th</sup> October, at the time of his 76<sup>th</sup> birthday, Didier Ratsiraka said that he would again return to Madagascar after a brief end to his exile in November 2011 and that he had mortgaged his Paris house to fund this more permanent stay.

At a ceremony on 6<sup>th</sup> October to mark the start of production at the Ambatovy nickel and cobalt mine, Rajoelina announced a number of social projects that would be funded by the \$100m paid by the Chinese company WISCO and the \$25m paid for the operating permit at Ambatovy. Members of the the opposition criticised what it saw as an unfair pre-election campaign as Rajoelina toured the country with a team of ministers while the civil society organisation KMF/CNOE called on the electoral commission to sanction them. The EU ambassador, Leonidas Tezapsidis, was reported in November to have also expressed concerns.

The members of the Cour Electorale Spéciale, which would announce the results of the elections next year, were in turn announced on 13<sup>th</sup> October; the eight magistrates were elected by their peers and led by Jean-Michel Rajaonarivony. On 19<sup>th</sup> October Rajoelina promulgated the decree that would establish a special commission within the Supreme Court that would pronounce on the proposed amnesty under the road-map, although Ravalomanana was not expected to petition it.

Leonardo Simao, the head of the SADC delegation on Madagascar, said during a visit to assess the possible risks posed by the return of Ravalomanana that it was not yet desirable but also indicated that it would not be possible for Rajoelina to stand for election if he prevented his rival's return. The heads of the army and police said that the decision was a political one which they would respect. Simao's visit had been postponed for a few days in part due to the debate over institutions such as the CRM, and he also raised the possibility of a postponement in the election timetable saying that stability and peace were more important.

There were simultaneous visits by a military delegation of the SADC and by the new Secretary-General of the India Ocean Commission, Jean-Claude de l'Estrac, who proposed a term of two years for the new president after which Rajoelina and Ravalomanana would be able to stand. The two SADC delegations left with little to show, save for the rather unsurprising comment that the Malagasy people were divided over the return of Ravalomanana and a reminder that their government owed the SADC \$6.3m in dues for the last four years.

On 18<sup>th</sup> October Rajoelina questioned whether the reported \$71m cost of the election was necessary and also whether the international community would fulfil its promises, saying that it had only provided \$239,000 against the \$3m that the state had funded. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> the United Nations did revise the projected cost to \$66m, towards which nearly €16m had been committed by Switzerland, Norway and the EU, which also said that it was minded to provide further funds for health and education to allow the government to re-allocate resources to the elections. The amended Programme du Cycle Electoral à Madagascar was signed on 25<sup>th</sup>

October, when Fatma Samoura of the UN called on friends of Madagascar to help provide the \$40m of funds still needed. Indian Ocean countries did offer help in November although the World Bank said it would contribute.

Ravalomanana formally announced his candidature for the elections on 29<sup>th</sup> October, before the SADC had pronounced on his possible return, while Rajoelina's party again asserted that he could not stand given the criminal conviction against him. Rajoelina later indicated to a European parliamentary team led by the French MP Philippe Boulland, which had arrived the same day, that he was ready not to stand if Ravalomanana did the same, while there was a suggestion that other contentious candidates might be asked to step aside – Omer Beriziky said later in the month he did not expect any of the four presidents nor himself to stand, which he said was a widely-held view that many dared not express. However, on 5<sup>th</sup> November Ravalomanana insisted that he had the right to stand and said later that his doing so would stem from a political decision by the SADC, even if he would not be resident for the six months required under the constitution to qualify for the proposed date in 2013. The alternative candidates from his party included Pierrot Botozaza, deputy prime minister, and Mamy Rakotoarivelo, the president of the Congress.

The mediation efforts of the SADC continued and continued to be criticised by some for taking both too long and a too international view. Bernard Membe, the foreign minister of Tanzania which again headed the SADC's security troika, visited Paris a number of times and met his French counterpart, Laurent Fabius, on 24<sup>th</sup> October. Joaquim Chissano, the former Mozambican foreign minister, had initially secret meetings with Rajoelina in Mauritius and Ravalomanana in South Africa, although Ratsiraka and Albert Zafy were said to have declined a possible meeting in Maputo.

By November ten candidates had already put their names forward, in spite of the need for a 50m ariary (£17,000) deposit. Amidst further criticism of the pre-campaigning, the government relaunched its 'vary mora' programme of subsidised rice starting with 152 'fokontany' in the capital and due to extend to the fourteen provinces deemed most in need of the 16,000 tons provided. Rajoelina's TGV party was also expected to benefit from a decision by the Minister of Sport to ban the use of all sports facilities for political rallies.

After a meeting with the prime minister on 7<sup>th</sup> November, the EU ambassador Tezapsidis said that the EU retained concerns over the lack of co-ordination in the régime and the fact that the road-map had not yet been applied in full. In particular he called for the application of Article 20 on the return of political exiles and said that the current electoral calendar should be maintained, with an end to the pre-campaigning that was going on. The US chargé d'affaires also re-iterated the view of the Obama administration after his re-election that the US would not support the Malagasy government until democracy was restored, including an end to the prosecution of the press and the opposition.

On 8<sup>th</sup> November the government annulled the first list of members of the CRM given the number of irregularities and proposed a wider source of possible members, including doctors. The three civil society organisations involved countered by proposing a committee to evaluate the issues, to which the council of ministers agreed.

The move back to a position at the Quai d'Orsay by the French ambassador Jean Christophe Belliard, who was replaced by the first counsellor, prompted some debate over the relations between the Malagasy régime and France since Francois Hollande became president, although it continued its aid policy with a grant of 20m ariary for healthcare and projects in the capital.

The bishops of the Catholic church, at the end of a conference held from 6<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> November, criticised the continued delay in resolving the crisis and said that the country should not be held hostage to the interests of the two main protagonists. Their comments were endorsed by the magistrates' union. After an enclave later in the month, the FFKM or Association of Christian Churches said that it would once again try to mediate in the political crisis, which lent weight to efforts to find an intra-Malagasy solution such as that favoured also by Raymond Ranjeva.

On 29<sup>th</sup> November the countries contributing to the cost of the election signed a financial accord, which still left a shortfall of some \$15m; the SADC asked its members to help. The EU decided on 3<sup>rd</sup> December to maintain its sanctions against Madagascar until there was a full return to constitutional order. Ravalomanana was invited to Tanzania on 5<sup>th</sup> December to meet the SADC and while Rajoelina did not attend talks, the SADC said he had been invited.

After an extraordinary session on 8-9<sup>th</sup> December in Dar es Salaam, the SADC said that Rajoelina and Ravalomanana should be persuaded not to stand for president to help resolve the crisis. It also called for Ravalomanana to be allowed to return from exile unconditionally and for the Malagasy government to repeal legislation that prevented citizens from participating in the elections, the dates of which it said should be maintained as 8<sup>th</sup> May for presidential elections and 25<sup>th</sup> July for parliamentary ones. Ravalomanana was reported on 12<sup>th</sup> December to have accepted not to stand, while Rajoelina has made an official visit to Tanzania.

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### Press freedom

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In October two Malagasy journalists and a technician of Free FM, an opposition radio station that had been closed down after a contentious broadcast, left the South African embassy in Antananarivo where they had taken refuge a month earlier. On 14<sup>th</sup> November the two were handed down in absentia a three-month suspended sentence.

Reporters Sans Frontières in November criticised the régime for the pressure it put on opposition stations (some ninety of which are said to have been closed since 2009) and also for the arrest of the journalists from three papers (*Midi*, *La Nation* and *Gazetico*) following a complaint by Mamy Ravatomanga, a businessman who had been alleged to have an involvement in rosewood trafficking. Patrick Zakariasy, who had made the claims, was also arrested.

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### Surveys

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Madagascar slipped further to 35<sup>th</sup> place out of 53 countries in the latest Ibrahim index of good governance in Africa. It also fell five places to 137<sup>th</sup> out of 183 countries in the latest survey of Doing Business.

### Growth and finance

The World Bank has estimated that the political crisis has cost Madagascar over \$5bn since 2009, an amount equivalent to its earlier exterior debt and four times the value of the government budget in 2008. The figure is calculated on the assumption that the economy would have grown otherwise at 5%, although the impact of the global slow-down has been significant especially in the eurozone which accounts for 80% of tourists to the country and 50% of its exports. The Bank forecast improved GDP growth GDP of 2.7% in 2013 or 1.5% excluding the mining sector, once again below the rate of population growth of some 3%, and estimated that if there was a solution to the crisis that 4.3% might be achievable in 2014. The Ambatovy project is expected to contribute over 1% of this growth while the resumption of aid is also likely to support the economy.

The government's budget for 2013, which was predicated on a similar forecast in growth of 2.8%, was criticised by the opposition for its reduced allocation of funds to ministries under their control.

The government was reported to have found a buyer for Air Force One II, the presidential Boeing 737 bought by Ravalomanana for \$60m. The price offered by the Sands casino company was put at \$25m.

One indication of the tight financial position in the country came when Air Liquide, which supplies oxygen to thirty hospitals, was reported in October to be closing its operations as the Ministry of Health had not paid its debts.

The state of the country has not been helped by continued unrest at universities and a number of strikes, such as a renewed one by paramedics in October, while the teacher's union Sempama boycotted the return to school.

There has been a renewal of aid. At the end of November the World bank agreed to release \$167m of emergency funding in spite of opposition from the US, although it did say that this was not yet a normalisation of relations. \$102m of the funds will help improve national roads, schools and health centres, including repairing cyclone damage, with the remainder will fund teachers and health at schools.

A report from the African Development Bank on a project to rehabilitate the Lower Mangoky Irrigation Area which it had financed described an increase in the area cultivated for rice from 1,200 to 5,000 ha as well as an increase in the average rice yield from 2.5 tons/ha to 6 tons/ha.

Airtel Madagascar, which has 2.5m customers, has launched a 3.75G platform intended to improve internet access.

A delegation of Dubai businessmen, led by Thaksin Shinawatra, the former Thai prime minister, left abruptly in November amid reports of demands from the presidency to fund certain projects and to not meet various ministers.

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## Insecurity

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The increase in cattle-rustling and attacks by groups of 'dahalo' continues to be a problem and has provoked debate both on the effectiveness and the impartiality of the armed forces. Banditry has increased with the greater insecurity since the coup in 2009 and is more in the hands of professional criminal gangs, possibly in collusion with the armed forces who also struggle to patrol the country. Villagers have resorted to a form of self-defence or 'andrimasom-pokonolona'. There were a series of incidents in October, including reports of villagers burnt alive and heavy assaults by the armed forces.

The attacks in the Anosy region, which caused a number of deaths in June, are said to be the work of a gang 400-strong and headed by a former military commander under Didier Ratsiraka. A further 300 military personnel were sent to the south on 5<sup>th</sup> October by the new commander of the Gendarmerie, and the insecurity has added to concerns over food and health in the region.

The military launched an offensive operation called Tandroka (Horns) in an effort to deal with the issue. In the first days of the operation forty dahalo were killed taking the total since the start of the year to 141 as well as 23 members of the armed forces and 20 villagers, although other reports indicated much higher numbers. Over twenty villages were burnt and several thousand of villagers displaced in what were criticised as indiscriminate actions. Monja Roindefo, the former prime minister, talked of a massacre in the south when he called for the president and prime minister to resign while Ravalomanana called for an end to summary executions and referred to genocide. Professor Ranjeva also commented at a meeting to review the position that exceptional circumstances did not justify losing the rule of law. The military defended their actions, saying they had been legal and legitimate, while accepting that there had been some problems, with one lieutenant-colonel charged with racketeering. The head of the Gendarmerie, Richard Ravalomanana, blamed his name-sake for having a role in allowing the trade in zebu to flourish through his business.

In November a researcher from Amnesty International held discussions with a number of ministers on the issue and called initially for an inquiry into the issue. The government did announce an international review in which the UN said it would be involved.

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## Food insecurity

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A report by the FAO in October indicated that the number of the population that was under-fed had risen from 3m in 1990-2 to 7m in 2010-12, or some 35% of the still fast-growing population.

Madagascar is one of many developing countries still facing enormous challenges, according to the 2012 Global Hunger Index Report which focuses particularly on the issue of how to ensure sustainable food security under conditions of water, land, and energy stress. The report is at [www.ifpri.org/publication/2012-global-hunger-index](http://www.ifpri.org/publication/2012-global-hunger-index).

In November the UN World Food Programme called for a budget of \$6.1m to deal with the likely impact of the next cyclone season. This would be in addition to its budget of \$15m for the next six months to provide food assistance to some 914,000 vulnerable people in the country.

The continued threat from locusts led to a call in November by the Minister of Agriculture, Roland Ravatomanga, for \$10m of aid to fund the efforts to control them.

In a related field, a study of Pica, the craving for and consumption of non-food substances based on research in sixteen villages in the Makira Protected Area in 2009 found a higher prevalence than in similar reports, including among men and not noticeably during pregnancy. The Madagascan Diabetes Association has estimated that 5-6% of the Malagasy population suffers from the disease with half of them unaware of the fact. While western diets in urban areas has contributed to the prevalence, so too has the consumption of fatty meat and cane rum.

The potential for Madagascar's agrifuel industry is again under consideration. A report in October said 56 significant projects covering a total of 1,472,000ha and with a value of \$2.6 million were carried out in 2011. Tozzi Green, an Italian-owned operation, was reported in November to be planning to extend its project of 2,000ha at Ihorombe to 100,000ha by 2019 but is facing opposition from a local collective anxious about protecting the land.

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## Education and children

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The disarray in the university sector was a factor in the decision by the Ministry of Education in October not to approve any new private institutions, although it was not ready to close some of the eighty out of a hundred that had failed to win accreditation.

A report indicated that 1,333 children had disappeared or been abandoned between September 2011 and October 2012. A report by AFP in early December said that 20,000 children aged 12 to 17 worked in the vanilla industry, or about one-third of the workforce.

The figures for early marriage released on UNICEF's International Day for Girls indicated that over a third of girls aged 15-19 were married while one in two aged 18 had already given birth.

A further report showed that only 70% of children had been vaccinated against a target of 95%.

## Tourism

The runway at Nosy Be's airport is being extended to allow Air Madagascar's new Airbus A340 to land there. The airline still faces restrictions on its flying into the EU.

## Minerals

Madagascar Oil said in November that if it went ahead with producing heavy oil in 2014 as intended then within four years the run rate would be 150,000 barrels a day. The project, on which \$50m is being spent in the proving stage, would cost \$1.5bn. The Alliance Voahary Gasy criticised the environmental and social impact that the company was already making. There is a BBC news story on the issue at [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-20075866](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-20075866).

Sherritt reported in late October that its third quarter production at Ambatovy had been over 2,300 tons of nickel and some 160 tons of cobalt. The company said it was pleased with the quality of ore and more confident of a build-up to full production. Sherritt made its initial shipment of 40 metric tons of nickel in the first week of November.

The French Friends of the Earth has produced a 28-page report on Madagascar as the next mining frontier, which is on our website.

Tantalus Rare Earths has raised €4.7m via a convertible bond placing to help finance its project in north-west Madagascar.

## Wildlife and conservation

### Forests

There have been reports of continued illegal exportation of rosewood logs, while a number were seized in different ports. Operators have pressed for exports to be legalised again ahead of China, the main importer to date, stopping shipments in 2013 in line with an accord with the WWF. A researcher, Hery Randriamalala, has produced a further report based on press clippings, cargo manifests, and eye-witness accounts which indicated that traders were covertly reducing stockpiles which are ferried by small boats to mother ships anchored out of sight off beaches in the north-east of Madagascar. Another tactic was to falsify cargo manifests, such as an incident in April when containers full of rosewood were labelled as ilmenite mined by a Chinese mining company. In November the prime minister lamented the lack of a detailed inquiry into the matter due to political pressure. Augustin Sarovy, described as a militant ecologist, was threatened after he took part in the report by Alexander von Bismarck on rosewood trafficking, and forced to take refuge in Europe.

A bush fire that swept through the Allée des Baobabs at the end of November damaged eleven hectares of the 320 in the protected zone and nine outside. Although half of the baobab trees planted in the zone were affected, none were destroyed according to the local NGO Fanamby.

The latest journal from Madagascar Conservation and Development, published in November, has a focus on forests and communities. Its guest editors were Barry Ferguson and Eva Keller, and it can be found at [www.journalmcd.com](http://www.journalmcd.com).

### Species

The latest Red List of Threatened Species from the International Union for Conservation of Nature highlighted the precarious position of Madagascar's palm species: 83% of the 192 species native to the island are in danger, which has implications for their continued use for building materials and food. One species, *Ravenea delicatula*, is critically endangered and known only from one site, which is threatened by rice cultivation and mining for rubies.

Six lemurs were also included on the list of the twenty-five most endangered primates with habitat loss and illegal hunting on the increase. The rarest lemur, the Northern Sportive Lemur (*Lepilemur septentrionalis*), is now down to 19 known examples. Three species of lemurs were

new to the list in the red-ruffed, Madame Berthe Mouse and indri, although the Greater Baboo Lemur and the Black and White Ruffed Lemur came off.

## Programmes

The BBC Four website has made available early films by Sir David Attenborough including his four from 1961 on the Zoo Quest to Madagascar. The programmes are at [www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/collections/p00zw1jd/david-attenborough-the-early-years](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/collections/p00zw1jd/david-attenborough-the-early-years).

Rhett Butler has loaded a number of images from his latest trip to Madagascar on his website at [www.wildmadagascar.org](http://www.wildmadagascar.org).

## Charities and NGOs

Money for Madagascar has a smart new website, bilingual (with Welsh) and full of information including its unmissable alternative gifts for the Christmas season; these include lunch for street kids, Lettuce Learn to promote school gardens, solar panels and speech therapy. The site is at [www.moneyformadagascar.org/english](http://www.moneyformadagascar.org/english).

The Andrew Lees Trust has launched an appeal to fund a radio communications project, details of which are on its website at [www.andrewleestrust.org](http://www.andrewleestrust.org).

Blue Ventures has won an award for Best Volunteering Organisation at the British Youth Travel Awards. Its latest newsletter on research, no.39, includes an article on mangroves in Madagascar and is available at [www.blueventures.org](http://www.blueventures.org).

## Books

Alison Jolly's series of six lemur adventures has been published, with stories on Ako the Aye-Aye and Tik-Tik the Ring-tailed Lemur among others. Illustrated by Deborah Ross, they are available through the Pomegranate Press via their website at [www.pomegranate-press.co.uk](http://www.pomegranate-press.co.uk). The ISBN is 978-0-9766009-6-1. The Ako Project was initiated by the Lemur Conservation Foundation and provides a variety of materials to teach science, literature, and languages as well as promote the protection of the species.

Other editions that have become available recently are an illustrated guide to baobabs by Andry Petignat of the Antsokay Arboretum and Louise Jasper, published by Carambole and a photo journal by Tim Stewart of the BirdLife trip to Madagascar in 2011 (available at [www.blurb.co.uk/bookstore/detail/3566125](http://www.blurb.co.uk/bookstore/detail/3566125)).