



AMERICAN

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Preserving Madagascar's Cultural Identity despite Globalization

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FIHAVANANA -
from consensus
to compromise

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Full-Court Press :

The National Basketball Association
Brings its Brand to Madagascar.

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Lambahoany,

The diaspora's
favorite attire?



3 things you may
not know about
the Ariary. (p.18)

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What's AmCham Madagascar ?

The American Chamber of Commerce in Madagascar is a non-profit association of American and local business people. AmCham Mada began its activities in November 2008 and was officially recognized by the government of Madagascar in February 2010.

AmCham's mission is to:

- Enhance commercial ties between the United States and Madagascar
- Uphold the highest standards of commercial practice
- Support the expansion of an English-speaking, Anglophone business community in Madagascar.

Only the formal enterprises can become members of the AmCham. AmCham has been influential in Madagascar and is committing itself to:

- Vigorously defending AGOA privileges for Madagascar-based companies
- Facilitating business deals between AmCham members
- Introducing AmCham members to international sources of technical and financial expertise
- Defending AmCham members interests with local and international authorities.

With this in mind, the Chamber's regular activities are:

- **Thursday Morning Round Tables:** Monthly TMRT gathers all together top business people. The TMRT aims to discuss about

a theme developed by a Guest Speaker: General Director, Minister, Chairmen...

- **Annual Cocktail Dinatoire:** Networking and Fundraising Event designed to kick-off AmCham's activities that gathers all together top business people and representatives of international and diplomatic communities. One Guest of Honor is invited to open the event.
- **English Discussion Group:** The AmCham's EDG consists of 100% english oral practice in a friendly and welcoming learning environment. Anyone with basic conversational English is eligible to attend. There are 2 categories, EDG for adults and EDG for kids.
- **Christmas Get Together:** Networking and Christmas Event for AmCham members to share and warmly enjoy Christmas with soft music.

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Malagasy Cultural Independence and Preservation despite Globalization: it's up to us.

Happy 61st anniversary of recovering Independence to all Malagasy and to our beloved Madagascar! May we live our daily lives according to the lyrics of our National Anthem: <https://www.hymne-national.com/en/national-anthem-madagascar/>. As an historical reservoir, culture is an important factor in shaping identity. Being a Malagasy citizen living in Namibia for over 15 years, happily married to my German-Namibian husband for over 16 years, being the proud mother of our two boys, we agreed to carry on owning and developing our individual cultural identity. Mine is strongly rooted on Malagasy Culture – **Kolontsaina**. It is rich, beautiful, colourful, and reflects the inputs of prominent groups migrating to Madagascar centuries ago, especially from Southeast Asia and East Africa. It also includes some influences from Western Asia and Europe.

When Ludwig and I were married for just over a year, we moved to the lovely town of Swakopmund in Namibia, on April 13th, 2006. We used to reside in Antananarivo, the capital city of Madagascar. This was my second time on Namibian soil, it was the first day of our new life and it promised to be an exhilarating experience. We took over striving businesses and properties his father has built. Ludwig's family is originally from Germany, his mother's grandfather settled in Swakopmund in 1896, making him among the 1st Generation Germans settling here and

making Ludwig the fourth one. Cross-cultural marriages like ours lead to having multicultural children, hence we welcomed the fifth generation: our two sons. In honour to my origins, we named our boys: Lova (Malagasy for **Heritage**), and Fanilo (Malagasy for **Flame Torch**) who is autistic. Our boys have a German father and a Malagasy mother and were born in Namibia. Therefore, they are exposed to three different cultures. We decided to take the best from all three and merged them into one new culture, hence a new identity for them.

Since culture is defined as the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, defined by everything from traditions, language, religion, cuisine, social habits, to music and arts, every new-born inherits a cultural identity which most individuals will keep throughout their life. Cultural identity refers to identification with, or sense of belonging to a particular group based on various cultural categories: **nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, and religion**. It is constructed and maintained through the process of sharing collective knowledge: **traditions, heritage, language, aesthetics, norms, and customs**. As individuals typically affiliate with more than one cultural group, cultural identity is complex and multifaceted. In this globalized world with increasing intercultural encounters, cultural identity is constantly enacted, negotiated, maintained, and challenged

through communicative practices. The chain of positive and negative effects of Globalization is growing further. What is important to realize is that Globalization itself is neither good nor bad, it just depends on how people deal with all the possibilities in the future. Globalization leads to significant changes on major aspects in most countries: Economics, Politics, Culture, Industry, and Technology.

Professor Mark Lilla – Columbia University – answered the questions from Dubai future foundation: *“What will be the impact of globalization on our identity? Will governments be able to foster the same kind of civic duty as they do now?”* His answers were: *“I believe that our problem of identity up to now has really been multicultural problems, having to do with the confrontations of people from different cultures. What is starting to happen now is new identity politics which is a reaction to the monocultural that has followed on globalization in the sense that certainly people of a certain class no longer belong to where they were born. They float around in the world, they speak different languages, they eat different sorts of food and that is going to be our destiny, certainly the destiny of our children who are growing up. I think it is especially important for governments around the world to think about what kind of glue is going to hold them together after the disappearance of some of the very traditional culture-ties that we have always relied on.”*

When I look into my boys' stunning hazel eyes, I see hope, trust, joy, and endless possibilities. Our children are looking up to us for guidance, we owe it to them now more than ever, as we have had a good share of support from our forefathers. Malagasy Ancestors displayed amazing wisdom passed onto us through our **Malagasy language**. The meaning of some Malagasy words is mesmerizing. Through those meanings, they passed onto us the deep connection to our Creator which is the base of our belief system and the paradigm we were given. This realization led me to study Malagasy language and make it the glue to hold me, to empower my family, to enhance connections with my compatriots, hence, to preserve our Malagasy Culture. One of my life's purposes is to restore faith and pride in Malagasy hearts. I believe in us Malagasy; we can unite to make this noble cause ours because we are all connected with the heart and soul. We are a unity thanks to our wonderful culture of "**fiavanana**" (Brotherhood). Therefore, I invite all Malagasy citizens around the world and in Madagascar to unite and do everything in our power to preserve our Malagasy Culture.

Here are few examples of things I make time for, to preserve my cultural identity: I pray in Malagasy, I speak Malagasy to my kids, I speak to my parents nearly daily, I message/call regularly my Malagasy family members and my friends, I read "**Rakibolana**" (Dictionary in Malagasy), I listen to Malagasy music, I read stories about Madagascar and about Malagasy then and now, I recite poems and proverbs. Between 2006 and 2021, we visited Madagascar seven times, my parents came on long holidays five times to Namibia and to South Africa with us three times, I joined few groups and associations thanks to social

media like: "*Autism Madagascar*", "*Association Nofy*", "*Le Groupe des Mamans Gasy de France et d'ailleurs*" (a group of Malagasy Mothers living in France and elsewhere). Since March 2021, I have been an active member of ASSOCIATION NOFY. I volunteer to co-host Facebook live events called "*Femme et Engagée*" (Women and Involved: women empowering other women). Our guests are Malagasy Diaspora mothers sharing their inspiring journey. I discovered Hanta Ramakavelo's Facebook page and her outstanding work on Mentorship and Coaching. Hanta has been offering publicly free mentorship sessions called: "**Teny Malagasy Iainana**" (Live Malagasy Language) via Zoom video conference, every Sunday since June 2020. I attended most sessions since March and since end May 2021, I volunteer to co-host Mentorship LIVE EVENTS with Hanta Ramakavelo every Sunday. As a result, I continue to live my life with gratitude; I start my days infused with more faith, hope, and love. I feel even more energized to teach our boys the foundation of Malagasy Culture and to live according to our Malagasy Anthem. I am constantly in student mode, striving to be authentic, not perfect.

Malagasy language is uniquely beautiful and helps us live a meaningful life, wherever we are. Words are powerful, they communicate images that are clear in our reasoning and imagination. Words also convey our emotions, motivations, and decisions. Words define and formulate our beliefs, values and what makes us unique. We cannot guess or assume what the other person is thinking or feeling; it is necessary to bring out what is inside through words, pictures or agreed signs. This is the case of communication with deaf, mute, or autistic friends. We all have a precious inner garden. Our

being consists of a mind, a heart, and a soul. Words are seeds to be cultivated in this garden. From there, thoughts, interests, desires, projects, convictions, values, principles, characteristics of our personal culture blossom. It is the very source of our life. We are programmed, formatted, moulded by the words that build our lives, self-talks, and words we receive from the outer world. This is what neuro-linguistic programming is all about.

Words have the power to shape us, it is up to us to select them according to what we wish to harvest. What fills us radiates and flows out of us. It is indeed from the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. What we cultivate becomes our characters; our skills and our abilities are forged by what we share. When we show care and favour to our inner garden, it is guaranteed that we will adopt the same attitude for our country and for our planet Earth, this precious big garden which allows us to live together. Considering the actual position occupied by Madagascar because of poverty, it is obvious that poverty of mind is the source of it all. We have not respected the true priorities by nurturing our inner garden first. "*It always seems impossible until it's done.*" – Nelson Mandela. We can change; the key is in our hands, let us change our lives and we will improve our country's history.



By Velo Mirana Zafintsiano – Haller

Born in Antananarivo on July 4th, 1977.
Malagasy Diaspora based in Namibia.
Bachelor's degree in Management,
Marketing and Communication
Antique shop Owner - Entrepreneur
– Investor
Certified Tutor for her own son Fanilo,
living with Autism
Home-schooling our two boys (13 & 12)
since January 2020.
Researcher in Autism Spectrum
Disorder, Personal Development,
Malagasy Culture, Public speaking,
Sociology

Paul Rabary: FIHAVANANA - from consensus to compromise.

Paul Rabary, sociologist and former Minister of National Education, throws some light on how the FIHAVANANA is lived within the 21st-century Malagasy society.

How could we picture a traditional community governed by Fihavanana values in the ancient times?

As a first step, let us define what FIHAVANANA is. It is a deliberate and conscious act of making "HAVANA". "Havana" is assumed to be someone's kin, or any other person related in some way with them, be it through blood or through marriage. Therefore, Fihavanana is the willingness to accept and to live together in a community where that community takes precedence over the individual. That image sends us back to a proverb: "Velona Iray Trano, Maty Iray Fasana" – which loosely translated means "Alive in the same home, dead in the same tomb". Then, being excluded from the family vault would be the ultimate curse. That is why Malagasy people live with a constant concern for respect of the rules or "Dina", the traditions or "Fomba", and the customary prohibitions or "Fady". Besides, an individual should ensure not to offend the community before every single act. That is called "Miala tsiny" or asking for forgiveness.

Fihavanana is then an endless search for harmony and consensus with the community, with the ancestors who are



Paul Rabary, sociologist and former Minister of National Education
Photo credit: Serge Cohen

believed to intercede with the Creator or "Zanahary", as well as with the cosmic order governing the unfolding of human lives. This explains how important it is to consult a "Mpanandro" who assesses if an individual or collective project is timely or not.

Was Fihavanana demonstrated in different ways in different regions of Madagascar?

Fihavanana is a common concept to the whole Malagasy society regardless of the regions they live in. According to Madagascar's settlement history,

Malagasy people come from many waves of African, south-eastern Asian, and Arabian immigrations. Fihavanana is therefore one of the keys to understanding the Malagasy culture based on the respect of others and above all on obedience to the community.

What does the 2020's version of Fihavanana look like?

Modernity, acculturation and poverty have weakened the Fihavanana to say the least. Today, the individual overrides the community. Fihavanana has become a very bandied out term and has been deflected from its intended meaning. Today's Fihavanana is reduced to practices during family events such as births, circumcisions, baptisms, weddings, burials, etc.

Fihavanana that was once a way to reach out to others finds itself curled up in family or friends. Fihavanana has transitioned from its purpose of "living together" to a mere tool at the service of kins, a mere tool to favor family members, parents, and acquaintances in administrative, professional and/or political actions.

The "consensus" in the original Fihavanana has turned into a "compromise" in its contemporary form. Poverty, culture of mediocrity, intellectual laziness, and unbridled individualism are some of the factors that explain this sectarian drift of Fihavanana.

Can Fihavanana sometimes be considered as a deterrent to freedom or a handicap to development?

Fihavanana is rooted in the Malagasy culture and identity. Thus, it cannot be judged either as a brake or a development for anyone. Moreover, we need to define what freedom and development we are talking about and looking for. Culture evolves, but fundamentals must remain. Otherwise, it loses its value, its points of reference and its identity. Unfortunately, that is what happens today, hence a certain disintegration of morals and, by extension, that of society.

What form of Fihavanana do we need today to restore some social cohesion?

It is not for me to define or enact what should or should not be Fihavanana in the current context. This is neither my pretension nor my role as a sociologist. However, there are misunderstandings of what the Fihavanana was, is, and will be. That is what can be discussed. We cannot achieve social cohesion without putting the will to live together back at the heart of society and without providing meaning to a community of shared values and common immutable good.

What role do our leaders play in the process of restoring social cohesion?

Much remains to be done in this regard. But we must restore simple things that we have forgotten: Respect, Discipline and Goodwill.

 Interview by **Kenny Raharison**

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Lova Ralitera Mitchell: Being Malagasy American.

Born and raised in Antananarivo, Madagascar, I came to the United States in December 2004 as an international student.

I had spent the last six months of my stay in Madagascar going to a cybercafé. There, I read and watched videos about American culture and followed the U.S. news. I have always loved English since I was a little girl but never attended an English program. Because of my high proficiency in English and good knowledge of the American culture, I was able to immerse and adjust to life in the U.S. by participating in aspects of the American culture, while still holding onto my Malagasy cultural values.

My first night in the U.S. was beautiful. Seated in the back, I was so fascinated by everything I saw: nice cars, bright roads, U.S. flags flying everywhere...We drove by the Key Bridge and I was so mesmerized by the beautiful Christmas lights and decorations in Georgetown. It was a beautiful sight of America that I will never forget. I was badly jetlagged but as soon as I felt better, I told my sister to teach me about the U.S. money and public transportation and she did. It didn't take me long to find my ways around Maryland, DC and Virginia.

I have encountered many culture shocks but I'm sharing three. **Americans love space and privacy.** When I got on a metro for the first time, I grinned ear to ear and was ready to chit-chat. Most of them, however, avoided eye contact and looked like they did not want to talk. A few days later, I got myself an iPod and listened to music.

On our second date, my then boyfriend, husband now, took me to a baseball game between the NATS vs. Chicago Cubs. I couldn't follow the game because I was more distracted by people cracking peanut, gnashing on sunflower seeds and talking to themselves.

I also remember my first job as a nanny for an American family. **They treated me like family.** They made sure that there was Malagasy food in their house. They took such a great care of me, and I feel so blessed to have

known them. Today, we still are very close. The little boy I once babysat for is now a young man. He is starting college at Columbia University.

The biggest gap between the two cultures I think is **the use of time and family.** Malagasy people tend to dedicate most of the time with relatives. Americans on the other hand, tend to overwork and have little time to themselves.

I am still learning as an immigrant, but I can say, having a high proficiency in English and a good understanding about American culture gave me access to things and information that others could not easily access. I was able to navigate, solve problems easily and contribute to both societies. I can immerse into American culture without losing my culture or identity. As a matter of fact, I balance and blend in my traditional culture with American culture, that's why I identify myself as Malagasy American. I am American, but I also still feel very Malagasy. I'm a Malagasy daughter, sister, and friend. I speak Malagasy, eat Malagasy food, I listen to Malagasy music. I teach English to Malagasy students for free on the Facebook platform: Malagasy American. I engage students to be active participants in their own learning. I hold group discussions in English about topics that matter: inclusion & diversity, women's rights, civic engagement, personal empowerment...I am amazed at how good Malagasy people are at English.

At the same time, I'm a wife to an American man, mom to three beautiful Malagasy American children. I'm a legal secretary at a large international law firm that focuses on corporate and securities, complex litigation, finance and real estate, and financial services and asset management. in DC. I'm a classroom mom at my kids' school and hold regular play dates and sleepovers at our house. I sing English songs, but I also sing "*kalon'ny fahiny*" songs. I belong to both worlds and for that I am very grateful. I'm proud to be Malagasy American.



By **Lova Ralitera Mitchell**

LET'S ENTER TOGETHER IN A UNIVERSE OF POSSIBILITIES

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How is Madagascar seen by American people?

These American people spent some time in different regions of Madagascar. They tell us about their best moments in the country.



Roy Cox, former Peace Corps Volunteer in Madagascar

"I had the pleasure to live alongside Malagasy people for three years and was impressed by the culture of generosity in Madagascar. In both cities and rural places, people are generous with their time, happy to talk, teach a skill, or invite you along on an errand or to a party.

Malagasy people, even those with little to spare eagerly invite you to share their food and often their home. To "**mandray vahiny**" or give hospitality to a guest, is among the most important Malagasy values.

What I experienced as a visitor, I saw take shape between Malagasy people as a strong drive to build community, an enthusiastic social engagement, and a love of debate and conversation. This is exemplified by the formation of **fikambanana** (a society or organization) ubiquitous in every part of Madagascar for mutual

professional, civic, or educational benefit of members. No matter how busy or tired, Malagasy people come together and share."



Fiona Fitzgerald, tourist

"After graduating from university, I spent three months working, traveling, eating and exploring the beautiful country of Madagascar. My time in Madagascar was particularly unique for an American because I was staying with family who lives in the country. This resulted in me immediately being immersed into the culture and life of the Malagasy.

What stands out to me the most about Madagascar is its people. Madagascar is full of the most kind, welcoming and happy individuals in the world. I don't speak Malagasy, nor do I speak French, yet I made lifelong friends despite the language barrier. While in Fort Dauphin, my surf instructor spent all day trying to teach me how to catch a wave (which was a sad sight). And after I finally called a quits, he invited me out to town without a thought. I spent the night drinking **THB**, munching on **brochettes** and attempting to learn Malagasy. I still recall; "**Iza ny**

anaranao?" and "**Ny anarako dia Fiona.**" The people of Madagascar welcome you into their country with open arms, welcome you into their home as if you are family and are proud to share their beautiful culture. Madagascar will always hold a special place in my heart thanks to the people I met, and I thank everyone along the way for that."



Tim Fallon, backpacker

"Madagascar was the adventure of a lifetime. In 10 short weeks, I learned some Malagasy, some French, learned to surf, had my first lychee, saw lemurs and chameleons and crocodiles and gigantic snakes. Most importantly, I learned about Malagasy culture and their beautiful people. In the 2 years after I graduated from university, I managed to backpack around the world and see a fair amount of interesting cultures. I am ever thankful for these two years and all of the places in between, but I am proud to label my time in Madagascar as the best times of my life. An entire country welcomed me with open arms and taught me everything they could about being Malagasy. I

was most impressed by the pride of the people and the land that they occupy. **Brochettes, langouste, THB, and oysters** filled my stomach and my heart while Ambatovy, Tana, Mahajanga, and Fort-Dauphin filled my eyes. One of my favorite memories from my time in Mada was witnessing a victory from the football (soccer in America!) team and celebrating with all of Tana. **ALEFA BAREA!**"

Payton Hansen & Austin Bergera – Vazaha Miteny Gasy

Payton: "Before arriving in Madagascar, I didn't have any courses learning about the culture, and didn't know a single Malagasy person. So, my initial arrival (I first lived in Ambositra) was quite a shock! Being the first country in Africa I ever



visited, I had the impression that all of Madagascar (and even Africa) was just like Ambositra: few paved roads, a lot of farming land, very few stores and amenities etc. After later spending time in Antananarivo and Mahajanga, I, of course, learned that this was not true. The diversity of each Malagasy city, combined with the charm of its people is what I first fell in love with. Malagasy people are very welcoming, and

very smiley; this really helps for new visitors to feel at home quickly. They were also VERY encouraging while I was learning to speak Malagasy. Even when I was just learning, they would often comment "**Ary mahay miteny gasy be ianao an!**" This really boosted my confidence and helped me learn quickly. After getting comfortable with the language, I fell even deeper in love with people's straight-forwardness and desire to connect. I share this desire to connect with people as well, chatting with people in the streets, making jokes with street vendors and talking with everyone I meet. These are some of my favorite things about Madagascar."

 Collected by **Kenny Raharison**



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U.S. – Africa: advancing long-standing partnerships.

President Biden's commitment to building long-term partnership with African nations.

Back to the celebration of Africa Day on May 25, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs **Akunna Cook** recalled how committed the U.S. administration is to "advancing America's long-standing partnerships with African nations." She added, "The United States stands ready to be a partner to you in solidarity, support, and mutual respect."

It was an opportunity for Cook to review what has been done so far. The U.S. has invested **more than \$100 billion dollars** in Africa's public health through different programs over the past 20 years. The U.S. government contributes a total of **\$4 billion** to help African nations defeat the COVID-19 pandemic under the COVAX initiative through 2022.

The U.S. is also partnering with the African Union Commission to build the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)** to promote trade at the continental level. Since 2019, the **Prosper Africa** initiative has supported 500 deals across 44 countries by connecting buyers,

suppliers and investors in the U.S. and in Africa. Deals are estimated at **\$47 billion**.

"Trade, not aid for Africa".

Published on Washington Times, **Rep. Karen Bass**, California Democrat and chairwoman of the House of Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Africa, global health and global human rights, stressed: "We will need to be aligned—like a lot of other countries around the world that view the continent of Africa as a partner—as an investment partner, a business partner, and not view the continent of Africa as a place where we need to deliver charity." Rep. Bass' statement got the full support of **Ms. Okonjo-Iweala**, DG of World Trade Organization. The foundation of America's engagement with Africa would be the advancement of free-market policies that facilitate trade, not aid. As the AGOA is set to expire in 2025, new projects at the continental level are awaited through the Prosper Africa initiative.

The 13th Corporate Council on Africa (CCA) to be held on July 27-29.

The 13th CCA will see the participation of over **1,000** U.S. and African government and private sector decision-makers. The virtual summit will be held virtually from **July 27 to July 29** and will spotlight the next phase of growth in the U.S. – Africa economic partnership, with particular focus on key topics including health security, trade, energy, agribusiness, digital transformation, manufacturing, finance, and more.

 Edited by **Kenny Raharison**
Sources: ShareAmerica / AGOA.info



AMCHAM ACTIVITY ENGLISH DISCUSSION GROUPS FOR COMPANIES



Companies interested in having AmCham's English Discussion Groups (EDG) held at their offices are invited to contact AmCham.

As a reminder, AmCham's EDGs help individuals improve their English skills and consists of 100% practice in a friendly and welcoming learning environment

Class description:

- The size of each class is limited to 10 participants to give them the best possible opportunity to learn quickly and accurately.
- Sessions are led by fluent English speakers backed with extensive experience in teaching the English language.
- Various topics, depending on the participants' interests, are discussed during each session.

Interested parties are invited to contact AmCham for further information about the conditions and the fees.

No registration deadline.

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Doing business in a country with strong cultural identity can be challenging for multinational companies.

Understanding cultural differences and integrating them into strategic business operations should be taken very seriously. Cultural mistakes have been the cause of many business failures around the world.

A few examples of business failures

Back in 1992, **Walt Disney** planned to replicate the success of **Disneyland** in the U.S. and in Japan in Europe by launching a pilot project in Paris, France. The giant entertainment company attempted to explain its struggle as the impact of the recession in Europe in the early 1990's. In reality, first, the French government and intellectuals have developed a certain contempt for Americanism after the World War II. A series of other issues explain that failure. Alcohol ban in the park sounded absurd to French people who are used to enjoying wine at lunch time. French people were not used to takeaways and their staffs have not been trained enough to understand the eating habits and the daily habits of French people in general. Later, to address the situation, a French citizen has been appointed as director and the new team adjusted the company's human resources management and policies. Up until today, Disneyland in Paris is one of the most appreciated attractions in Europe.

Another example of cultural mistake would be that of the American famous coffee chain **Starbucks** in **Tel Aviv**. In 2002, an Israeli company opened a first Starbucks coffee shop and planned to open 20 more within one year. That never happened. A well-developed coffee culture is rooted in the Israeli society. They enjoy gathering and enjoying either a cappuccino or an espresso, needless of a long list of options in the Starbucks menu considered too complicated. The market being too small for Starbucks, the franchise has failed to come back to Israel until recently. All hope is not gone. Even though no coffee shop has been opened, a pop-up store distributing free samples to customers operated last April and May. A story to be continued!

Let us stay in **Israel**. The giant **KFC** made a tremendous mistake when they ignored how Israelis – the majority of whom are Jews – follow religiously **kosher** laws. Besides, in a



Starbucks once failed in Israel and Australia for cultural reasons. Picture by StockSnap on Pixabay

country where chicken is considered a staple food for most households, a customer needed a viable reason enough to visit and buy at KFC. As of 2021, KFC is present in five locations in Israel after a series of "come-and-go" since the 1980's.

More giant American multinational corporations have failed due to cross-cultural mistakes. Starbucks failed in Australia; so did Walmart in Germany. That is why cultural awareness must be taken seriously when embarking on an international effort. A preliminary in-depth assessment of the uniqueness of national cultures should be carried out, covering aspects like environment, legislation, local values and traditions, the population's lifestyle and daily habits, just to name a few.

2020's shoppers would not buy a product only because it is affordable and beautifully designed. They buy it based on the story the product is telling, a story they can relate to or a story in line with their values and convictions. Multinational companies should never underestimate cultural considerations, especially when targeting markets with strong cultural identities.

 By **Kenny Raharison**

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Full-Court Press: The National Basketball Association Brings its Brand to Madagascar.

Sports can divide. Boston Red Sox versus the New York Yankees, the New Zealand All Blacks versus the South Africa Springboks, or Manchester United versus Liverpool – all passionate sports rivalries with the capacity to turn friend into foe at the mere mention of the “wrong” team. **But sports can also unite.** At the U.S. Department of State, we harness the near universal passion for sports as a way to transcend differences in language, culture, and socioeconomic status and bring people together.

Through our **Sports Envoys** program, we call upon a cadre of U.S. professional and collegiate athletes and coaches to travel around the world to lead programs developed in partnership with U.S. embassies and consulates. We send non-elite athletes and coaches to the United States for two-week exchanges through our **Sports Visitors** program. And we use sports to help underserved youth around the world develop leadership skills and achieve academic success through our International Sports Programming Initiative.

We recognize the power of sports on an international stage. We are pleased to see that the National Basketball Association (NBA) does as well.

The NBA is a professional basketball league established in the United States in 1949 after the merger of

the National Basketball League and the American Basketball Association. At the time of the NBA’s founding, all of its players came from within the United States. Now, more than a quarter of its players come from outside the United States.

As the number of international players has increased, so have the NBA’s efforts to reach beyond the United States. Through its social responsibility program, NBA Cares, the league operates a basketball development and community outreach program called **Basketball without Borders** and brings U.S. competition to international audiences through NBA Global

Games. More recently, the NBA has launched two programs right here in Madagascar: **Jr. NBA** and the **Basketball Africa League (BAL)**.

Jr. NBA is the league’s youth program, which seeks to “develop a lifelong passion for the game in boys and girls... while instilling core values including teamwork, respect, and sportsmanship.” (Source: <https://jr.nba.com/jr-nba-faq/>). The Jr. NBA boasts more than a dozen international programs in sub-Saharan Africa, including one right here in Madagascar.

In November 2019, NBA officials, alongside U.S. Ambassador Michael Pelletier and Malagasy Minister of Sport and Youth Tinoka Raharoarilala,



U.S. Ambassador Michael Pelletier joins the Minister of Sports and Youth and Jr. NBA officials for the inauguration of Jr. NBA Madagascar in November 2019.

launched Jr. NBA Madagascar in collaboration with the Malagasy Basketball Federation. Jr. NBA Madagascar brought together **30 boys' teams and 20 girls' teams** from public and private high schools alike for four months of basketball training and competition. Players ranged in age from **13 – 16 years-old**. The global COVID-19 pandemic unfortunately cut the competition short, but the plan is to continue the program for at least another three years.

Led by **Tsimbina Andrianaivo**, an alumnus of U.S. universities Waldorf College and Hamline University, Jr. NBA Madagascar also made an important decision to not only focus on sports education, but to also integrate the innovative More Than Basketball curriculum, which includes English language, life skills, and leadership training into Jr. NBA Madagascar's program.

This May, the NBA also partnered with the International Basketball Federation to debut BAL, the NBA's first collaborative effort to operate a professional basketball league outside of North America. Madagascar's own **Gendarmerie Nationale Basket Club** (GNBC) was one of only 12 teams from across the African continent to qualify to compete in the inaugural BAL championship tournament by winning its region in the Road to BAL qualifying rounds. Formed in 2012, GNBC was the youngest of all the teams competing in the BAL championship. Ultimately, Egypt's Zamalek took the crown as BAL's first-ever champions, while GNBC ended the tournament fourth in its group. The Road to BAL 2022 has



The Jr. NBA program brought together 30 boys' teams and 20 girls' teams from schools across the capital region including (at left) a game between CEG Andoharanofotsy and Mary Mpanampy and (at right) @Miora Reazhel for Sekolintsika Analamahintsy.

already begun, and a Malagasy team has again earned a spot. The **ASCUT** (Association Sportive de la Commune Urbaine de Toamasina) basketball club qualified to represent Madagascar in the second Road to BAL qualifying tournament by winning national and regional competitions. The Road to BAL will culminate next year in the 2022 BAL final championship tournament of twelve teams. **Good luck ASCUT!**

Linkages between the Madagascar and the NBA could strengthen even further on July 29 when Malagasy player **Sitraka Raharimanantoanina** participates alongside 353 other players from all over the world in the 2021 NBA draft, potentially leading to him joining the roster of an NBA team.

All of these initiatives should give Malagasy sports fans pride in the

fact that the NBA sees Madagascar's basketball potential and is investing its resources here in Malagasy basketball and Malagasy youth. They also point to exciting possibilities for leveraging sport's unifying power to build stronger bonds of friendship, teamwork, and mutual understanding between the United States and Madagascar.

 By **Tsimbina Andrianaivo**
National Coordinator, Jr. NBA and
Ryan Bradeen, Public Affairs Officer,
U.S. Embassy in Madagascar and
Comoros.



Ariary in the time of Covid-19: Two or three things you may not know about the Ariary and why it does matter at all.

1- Volatility

When we analyze the exchange rate of the Ariary, we are used to discussing the long story of a non-stop depreciation that produces many devastating consequences on Malagasy lives and households.

This long-run trend of depreciation is only one side of the story. There is another side of the story that depicts a short-run path of MGA/USD and MGA/EUR with high variability, and which is rarely evoked: **volatility**¹.

As we can notice from **figure 1**, the Ariary exchange rate displayed many instabilities for both MGA/USD and MGA/EUR couples in 2020².

Yet the volatility exhibited by the MGA/EUR is stronger and more numerous than the volatility showed by the MGA/USD pair (16 MGA/EUR spikes vs 12 MGA/USD spikes). Positive volatility is weaker than what is remarked

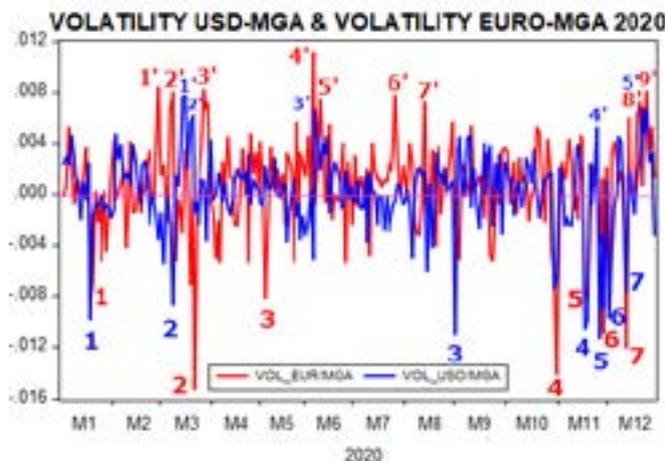


Figure 1

1. Volatility is defined as a tendency to change quickly and unpredictably and also the dispersion of the return of a given financial asset.

in negative volatility. The extreme value for both exchange rates is more likely to be on the negative side.

Finally, volatility clustering characteristics are observed: substantial changes in prices tend to cluster together and their degree shows some persistence for both MGA/USD and MGA/EUR.

January negative spikes, March cluster, June intense points, and July-August peaks show the strongest burst of volatility with November-December clustering for both exchange rates. And this is valid for positive and negative turbulence alike.

2- Liquidity

Another characteristic of the Ariary rarely discussed is the **liquidity** factor. Obviously, the couple MGA/USD is more liquid as it had a bigger exchanged volume (USD 4.76B) than the MGA/EUR (EUR 2.86B) and had more traded transactions (9,642 operations) than MGA/EUR (7,326 operations).

For the MGA/USD pair, an amount of USD 19.3M was traded on a daily average in 2020 with a maximum of USD 30M and a minimum of USD 10.4M, which gives a range of USD 19.6M. It also has a standard deviation of USD 3.61M which reveals high variability in the traded volume of MGA/USD. In terms of numbers of transactions, 39 transactions were recorded on a daily average for the US dollar, with a range of 30 and 5,26 std.dev.

Compared to that, MGA/EUR had EUR 11.6M average volume exchanged per day with EUR 13.2M of range and std.dev of EUR 2.46M. Regarding the number of transactions, we recorded an average of 30 operations, a range of 20 transactions and a std.dev of 3.98.

2. Data comes from the public database of the Central Bank of Madagascar and was processed with Eviews12.

	Volume EUR	Volume USD	Number EUR	Number USD
TOTAL	2,867,079,897	4,769,399,200	7,326	9,642
MEAN	11,607,611	19,309,309	30	39
MAX	18,487,000	30,077,000	41	56
MIN	5,298,000	10,442,000	21	26
STD.DEV	2,468,414	3,610,875	3.98	5.26

For instance, **USD is used in 68% of all international trade** operations undertaken by Madagascar. That indicates its status as the main exchange currency and demonstrates its importance to our analysis. As such, it is not surprising that the volume of USD traded in the market is bigger than the volume of EUR exchanged.

Figure 2 shows that during the first month of the year, despite some important peaks – which are also the strongest for 2020, the liquidity of MGA/USD was always below its mean (USD 19.3M). Yet from May to August, it was mostly beyond the mean. It intermittently continues till October. Since then, it moved substantially below its mean in November and December. The same remarks can be drawn for the MGA/EURO at a less significant scale, which from April to October was consistently beyond its mean, denoting

high liquid markets, and mostly below the mean from January to March and from October to December.

3 Spread

Figure 3 describes the bid-ask spread³ of the MGA/USD and MGA/EUR pair for 2020. As we can notice, the bid-ask spread for MGA/USD and MGA/EUR become relatively unstable during the last month of the year 2020, regardless of big illiquidity spikes for the MGA/EUR pair in June and two liquidity spikes in February and October for the MGA/USD couple.

The existing theory predicts that liquidity crashes are associated with extreme price disruptions. During a liquidity crisis, financial market experiences wild price swings which represent elevated level of volatility – and this is confirmed with the Malagasy forex exchange.

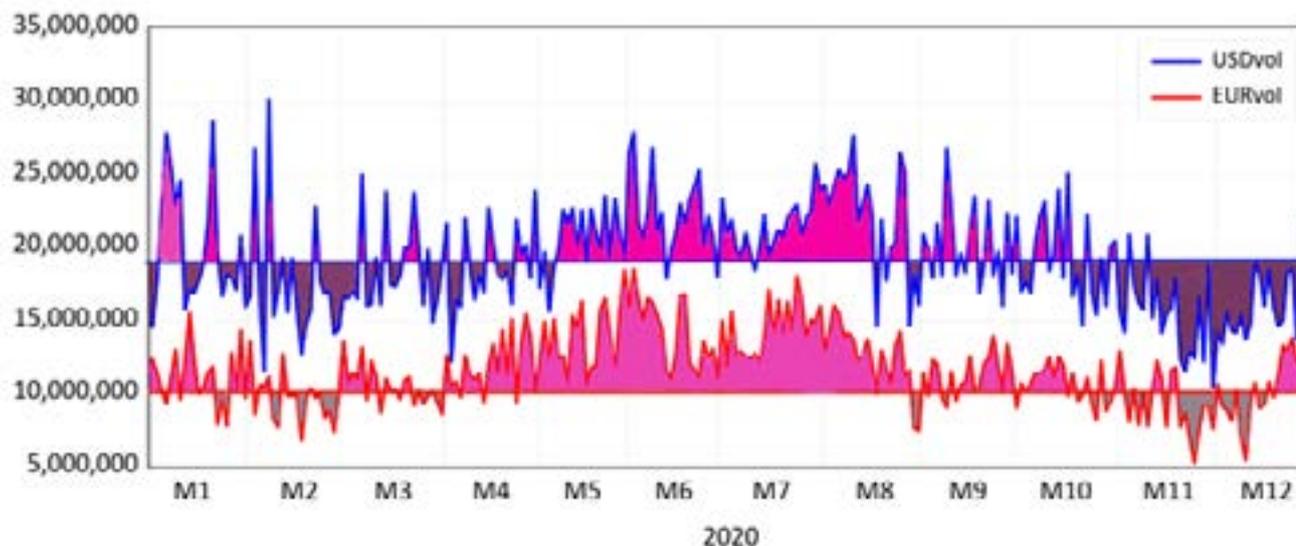


Figure 2

3. The bid-ask spread is the difference between the highest price the seller will offer (the bid price) and the lowest price the buyer will pay (the ask price), it is the de facto measure of liquidity as

when there is a significant amount of liquidity in a given market, spread will be tighter.

We can conclude that 2020 was a stressful period in the forex market with high turbulence for the exchange rate of the Ariary against the Euro and the USD as it leads to excessive level of volatility and to illiquidity spikes.

We assume our result is directly valuable for policymakers, market regulators, investors and market participants. It can support policymakers and regulators to design better policies on the forex market and target their intervention more efficiently. It will offer investors a better insight on how the Ariary behaves and will help them adapt their trading strategy. For scholars, it will expand a new area of research not well examined till today as, to our best knowledge, this is the first analysis in the field of volatility and liquidity of the Ariary exchange, and the impact of supply and demand shock induced by the Covid-19 outbreak.

 By **Dimbiniaina Rakotojoelimaria**,
Financial Economist and Corporate Banker
Master of Science in Finance, Durham University
Chevening Scholar 2015-2016

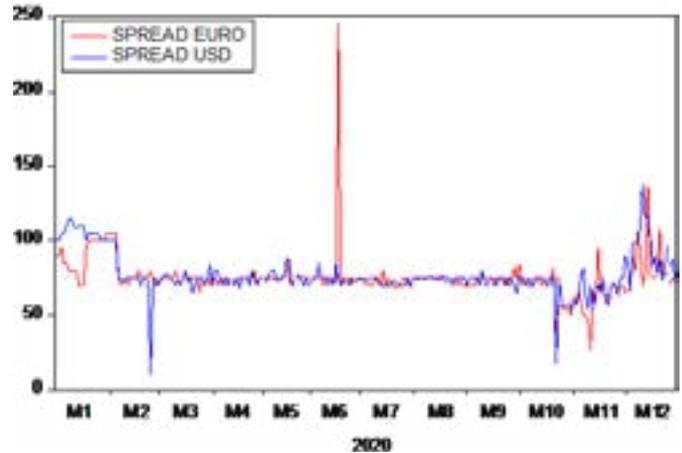


Figure 3

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LOVASOA 4C: at the heart of the history of Antsirabe

Vakinankaratra is a region in the South-east part of Madagascar, on the National Road 7, about 172 km from Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar. The gate of this region is the town of Antsirabe. Famous for its potatoes, rickshaws and cheap vegetables, the town is one of the most visited places by tourists in Madagascar. But what is the history behind such fame?

Antsirabe – its past...

The early history of Antsirabe can be traced back **in the 1860's** when **Thorkid G. Rosaas**, a Norwegian missionary came and settled in the town. Aware of the richness of Antsirabe, he and a well-known figure in the Malagasy Lutheran Church, **Pastor Rajaona** decided to work together for the common good. With some help from the inmates at that time, they managed to plant the trees alongside the Avenue, considered as an urbanization plan of the town.

They also built the most ancient facilities in Antsirabe in 1888: the village for lepers and Andranomadio hospital. Thanks to these initiatives, the hospital is still running now for health access services.

In 1870, Pastor Rosaas was the one behind the breakthrough about the use of thermal spring in Antsirabe as a benefit and not a taboo. At the same time, he established the first Malagasy Lutheran Church (FLM) in Antsirabe.

As a whole, Pastor Thorkid G. Rosaas is the most important figure in the foundation of the town of Antsirabe.

LOVASOA 4C as promoter of culture and history

However, Pastor Rosaas looked further into the future generation and established the Norwegian school of Antsirabe, which became **LOVASOA Cross-Cultural Competence Centre** in 2011 (LOVASOA 4C). The organization highlights not only the different aspects of Norwegian-Malagasy cooperation but also the history of the town of Antsirabe as above-mentioned. The cultural center, where the museum is hosted, presents Norwegian and Malagasy Culture and History and works towards the promotion of various cultural products through its activities including the Malagasy Lutheran Church archives, a library, cultural events and workshops and a sound recording studio.

As such, the LOVASOA 4C museum is equipped with several unique objects collected from several mission stations such as one of the **first Malagasy bible** published in 1835 by the **London Missionary Society** and the first rickshaw ever in Antsirabe. The uniqueness of its collections allows visitors to experience and learn interesting historical facts about the history of the town of Antsirabe, the Malagasy Lutheran church and the works of the Norwegian missionaries which are strongly linked to the development of Madagascar and its population. The library and the archives are backup support for a better understanding of the history.

The LOVASOA museum is accessible to the public, both residents and foreigners.

So, if you are ever in the area, feel free to stop by and enjoy a hint of the history of one of the most glamorous town in Madagascar. **LOVASOA 4C Antsirabe warmly welcomes you.**

 By **RAVELOJAONA Idealy Misandratra Avo Fenohaja**
English teacher
LOVASOA 4C Antsirabe

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Lambahoany: The diaspora's favorite attire?

In this focus on "Lambahoany", we meet **Samira Mihaja MOUMINI**, founder of 3 Ladies Pirates, and learn more about the brand.

Lambahoany: Samira explains.

A Lambahoany is simply put a traditional Malagasy fabric panel, looking a bit like Tanzanian and Comorian "kanga". However, unlike "kanga", a lambahoany displays less repetitive pattern and conveys a message or a Malagasy proverb. The image of a typical Malagasy life scene is printed on the bright-coloured panel made of cotton and processed by COTONA.



Samira Mihaja MOUMINI
(Copyright: Daniel Rabemazava)

Wearing a lambahoany is the Malagasy way of dressing up for fancy and family events: weddings, family visits, or funerals. It is a unisex attire. We can choose to tie it at the waist or around the chest. We can veil it to protect ourselves from the burning sun of the coasts, and that is why it is made of comfortable fabric like cotton.

The lambahoany is not worn only in Madagascar; our diaspora loves it a lot. A way for them to reconnect with the Malagasy culture!

Nevertheless, beyond its traditional purpose, women wear a lambahoany as a pareo on the beach. We can use a panel to cover our car seats or our sofa pillows, or simply as a wall deco.

3 Ladies Pirates: the pioneer of lambahoany- based high-end fashion.

Samira, "Chief Captain" of 3 Ladies Pirates recalls how the adventure started in 2013 in Antsirana with two friends from JCI (Junior Chamber International). Their first business move was the resale of free zones products. Later they started copying fashion designs found on the internet, until they realized it was a non-viable and non-sustainable idea. 3 Ladies Pirates was born in 2015. It is the first fashion brand of **high-end ready-to-wear** using lambahoany in its items tailored for men and women: shirts, skirts, jackets, dresses, kimonos, or bombers.

Today Samira works with three independent and motivated



Powersuit Kamala, BASIA collection
(Copyright: Daniel Rabemazava)

seamstresses who have their own sewing studios. Before Covid-19, 3 Ladies Pirates dealt with an average of 15 orders a month.

3 Ladies Pirates is a fully digital fashion brand which sells its items **only on social media**: Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Later, customers will be able to buy items directly from their website.

A brand tailored for the international market.

At the very beginning, Samira and her colleagues thought of using only cotton, "soga", or even wax. Even though 3 Ladies Pirates uses some "landy" from time to time, they

already envisioned their brand would go international, hence lambahoany sounded more appropriate. Lambahoany items would look more wonderful and best represent Madagascar in online stores in Africa, Europe, Asia, and America.

3 Ladies Ladies sells local, but its prices are not that “local-friendly”. Most of their customers are senior executives, expatriates and tourists who want to take a piece of Madagascar with them. 3 Ladies Pirates’ slogan **“Bring out the Malagasy that lies in you”** suggests whoever wants to wear their products can, regardless of their nationality. Since the Covid outbreak, the company has received huge orders from the diaspora in Europe and Africa.

Ethical brand

3 Ladies Pirates is an ethical brand and does not hold stocks. Items are made on demand via social media and are delivered within three weeks, depending on the customer’s location. At the local level, the brand works with MBike bicycle delivery service. To better serve international customers and to speed up deliveries, 3 Ladies Pirates uses the postal system for local deliveries outside Antananarivo and abroad and has started using DHL International’s services since June for international deliveries. This is to give customers options in terms of delivery time and costs.

Besides, Samira offers collections as well from time to time, such as BASIA (or “star”), a women-only collection launched earlier this year.

Today, the ethical side of 3 Ladies Pirates’ activity makes it stand out from other new players who have followed the wave. The brand’s



Lambahoany worn by Malagasy women, tied at the waist
(Copyright: Henintsoa Rafalia)

focus is on packaging (ban of plastic bag, paper or cardboard packaging only), on less polluting delivery, on the quality of the fabric used (made in Madagascar by COTONA). It is important to recall that 3 Ladies Pirates is a high-end ready-to-wear brand, not a high fashion company though.

It is important to note that when Samira launched the BASIA collection, she worked with three female models: Warda, Laurence and Dina who do not necessarily have the morphology of a typical slim, young, and tall model with a flat belly.

“Women should feel comfortable regardless of how their morphology is. Women are highly valued by our brand.” – Samira Mihaja MOUMINI

The right attire for the right event

Samira gives an example of a couple preparing for the big day. She would draw and propose a model appropriately designed for the probable weather on the event date and the body part the client would like to highlight.

Nevertheless, recently, 3 Ladies Pirates has significantly reduced the volume of lambahoany used for an item in order to offer something not-too-much formal that someone could wear everyday.

3 Ladies Pirates’ next move

Today, 3 Ladies Pirates is working on having its items on sale in African online stores and envisions to list the brand among the must-have brands in Africa.

This year’s focus is on communication and networking. Some collaboration with Maro Madagascar is also ongoing. Fashion addicts will have to stay patient for one or two more years to see another collection come out. *“Creating a new collection takes a lot of time and research”*, Samira explains.



By **Kenny Raharison**

Interview of **Samira Mihaja MOUMINI**
Founder and Chief Captain
of 3 Ladies Pirates
Tony Elumelu Foundation Hub Lead
in Madagascar since 2020
Social media manager

Twitter, Instagram, Facebook:

3 Ladies Pirates



Mirado Rakotoharimalala: “Soccer facilities: for the benefit of the local community”

Since late 2019, the Malagasy government has decided to invest vigorously in the creation or rehabilitation of sports infrastructure across the island. Soccer in particular is well off with about 30 stadiums concerned. The President of the Republic inaugurated three stadiums in only one month: Ihosy, Mahitsy and Ambohidratrimo. While a segment of the population questions the usefulness of such investments, we will try to understand the impacts of these projects at the society level.

Sport is an integral part of society. In Madagascar, soccer has taken a prominent place since the national team "Barea" qualified for its first Africa Cup of Nations in Egypt in 2019 and brilliantly made it to the quarter-finals. The Barea brought together the Malagasy for a competition, and even beyond. The state might have acknowledged how important soccer and sport in general were for the society. However, retaining the performances of 2019 and then qualifying again for major international competitions go through the development of sports disciplines. For soccer in particular, all aspects must be taken into consideration, supported, and improved: technical, administrative, legal, personnel, communication, succession, sports, and of course, infrastructures and facilities.

The rehabilitation or the creation of sports facilities is therefore important. The lack of sports infrastructures was sorely felt. Currently, apart from the Barikadimy Toamasina Stadium and the Kianja Barea in Mahamasina in Antananarivo, Madagascar has, in May 2021, only two stadiums approved by the "Confédération Africaine de Football" (CAF). The CNaPS Vontovorona stadium has also had the opportunity to host official international matches in recent years just like that of Rabemananjara in Mahajanga, but these two stadiums need to be improved before they can host official international meetings again.

If at present, it is assumed that the stadiums recently inaugurated in Madagascar do not yet meet the minimum

requirements set by football international bodies, the creation or rehabilitation of these facilities are beneficial to local football. Mahitsy, Ambohidratrimo, Ihosy and the future infrastructures to be put in place are available to young local players who will be able to express their talents on a good pitch. National competitions can also be held on these grounds, it would be then possible to cover the greatest number of cities and to find amazing players in every corner of the island. If during the 2020-2021 edition of the Orange Pro League national football championship, 13 clubs from 9 regions shared 5 pitches in Madagascar, 8 clubs come from the capital Antananarivo. This demonstrates the importance of the availability of new stadiums which would also raise the level of football outside the big cities. Players, coaches, clubs, but also fans will enjoy these facilities.

Finally, business-wise, a micro-ecosystem can also be established around the creation of these stadiums. Note the economic opportunities for return on investment: rental, ticketing, advertisements, etc. All this can create new markets, business opportunities and jobs in the cities where these stadiums are located.

To conclude, the creation or rehabilitation of new stadiums, although they can only be used for local football at this stage, is acclaimed by the football community in Madagascar and is hoped to develop the discipline in the country. Now, it is necessary to support these infrastructure projects with a good and coherent policy: succession, the expansion of competitions, the detection of players likely to join the Barea, and the related business. This would be a big step toward the development of soccer and would help us defend the national colors with pride. Time to unite once again, sing together the national anthem, be surfed in euphoria and forget for a moment the gruelling daily routine that we live in Madagascar!



By **Mirado Rakotoharimalala**,
Secretary-General, Orange Pro League Madagascar

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WWF's position on the UN's Decade for Ecosystem Restoration

The United Nations Decade for Ecosystem Restoration is underway!

The United Nations Decade is a call by the United Nations to all countries of the world to unite and act for the Earth's ecosystems. For it is only in a healthy ecosystem that we can thrive as a human species.

The purpose of this call is to create political momentum and global initiatives for ecosystem restoration. Ecosystem restoration is in the interest of both nature and people.

For the decade 2021-2030, we give ourselves another chance to stop the loss of nature and rebuild a healthy environment that benefits humans. How do we do this?

Through systemic change. Environmental protection goes beyond planting trees or creating protected areas. It must include sustainable livelihoods, reproductive rights, strong health and education systems, anti-corruption initiatives and more. For WWF's **Tiana Ramahaleo**, *"these issues need to be explored, shared and addressed if we are to make this decade of restoration a success."* Moreover, the current circumstances can facilitate these changes: a political will to re-green the island, the value of Madagascar's natural capital which is being evaluated, the emancipation of various civil societies...



Tiana Ramahaleo, Conservation Director, WWF Madagascar

WWF's commitment to ensuring that humans can live in harmony with nature joins this call for the protection and restoration of vital ecosystems globally and in Madagascar. WWF has 60 years of experience in protecting and restoring nature. We are committed to working with the Malagasy people to provide scientific and technical support for the successful restoration of Madagascar's degraded biodiversity. The forest landscape restoration is certainly the process that legitimizes WWF's contribution to the United Nations Decade for Ecosystem Restoration. A recent WWF report on forest landscape restoration around the world shows that restoration has multiple social, economic and environmental benefits. It must be implemented in close collaboration with communities to be sustainable. Forest landscape restoration is a planned process that aims to restore ecological functionality and improve human well-being in degraded forest landscapes.

As a reminder, World Environment Day 2021 was celebrated on June 5, under an appropriate theme **"Ecosystem Restoration"**.

Leader's pledge for nature: let's take action!

Last May, **84 heads of state** signed the Leader's pledge for nature, launched in September 2020.

The signatory countries of the pledge for nature must take action and translate their commitment into a series of actions. The real will to reverse the loss of biodiversity must be visible before the next UN assembly with the Conferences of the Parties on Biodiversity and Climate this year. Indeed, the signatories must ensure "an ambitious and transformative global framework for biodiversity beyond 2020" at the 2021 COP15 on biological biodiversity in China.

Ultimately, these actions and commitments for nature that are being developed around the world are beneficial for all of humanity. For Madagascar, the Government has already demonstrated a real willingness to promote sustainable development, particularly through the green and blue economy. Moreover, on June 8th, we celebrated the **World Oceans Day** under the theme



"the ocean: life and livelihood". *"Madagascar, being an island, has 5,600 km of coastline and more than 1,140,000 km² of ocean, home to various marine resources that are sources of food and employment and therefore income for many people in the country, especially fishing communities. Also, the emergence of a sustainable blue economy depends on it because if exploited sustainably, these resources can support the dynamism of the fishing industry and other important industries using the oceans. Therefore, it seems important to me to seek more integrated management of the oceans for their key role in building sustainable development and to seek to preserve*

this natural ecosystem which is currently threatened with waste and various pollution from human activities. Let us seize this day of the oceans to act together in their favor" said the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Lucien Ranarivelo.

A multi-stakeholder campaign to encourage action and ambition

Other non-state actors are joining the heads of state as partners in the Leader's Pledge for Nature. Their goal is to build ambition within government, business and society, and to put nature and biodiversity loss issues in the spotlight before these key events. This joint race reinforces an advocacy that links climate, nature and people.

Moreover, we are in a situation of global emergency. Human activities are destabilizing our climate and destroying the natural systems on which we depend faster than they can be replenished. This new race to the bottom is an opportunity to take ambitious, integrated and transformative actions and decisions on our environmental challenges to create an equitable, nature-friendly and carbon-neutral world for all. Madagascar's signing of the leader's pledge for nature is more relevant and necessary than ever.



Articles and photos provided by **WWF Madagascar**

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY OPEN TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR

WWF Madagascar is pleased to announce the opening of new funding opportunities through the **Dutch Fund for Climate and Development (DFCD)**.

The Dutch Fund for Climate and Development (DFCD) enables private sector investment in projects aimed at climate adaptation and mitigation in developing countries. A total funding of **160 million euros** is made available by the Dutch government to increase the resilience of communities and ecosystems most vulnerable to climate change.

The DFCD is managed by a pioneering consortium of **Climate Fund Managers (CFM)**, **World Wide Fund for Nature Netherlands (WWF-NL)** and **SNV Netherlands Development Organisation**, led by the Dutch Entrepreneurial Development Bank, **FMO**.

The DFCD forms an important additional instrument for the Dutch government's efforts in contributing to the **Paris Agreement** and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

Applications must be submitted online only, in English: **<https://airtable.com/shrounyuLgkaRZl3A>**

For further information, feel free to reach out to the WWF's Private Sector Engagement team.

Contact:

Mr Santatra Razafindratsimba, Private Sector Engagement Officer | WWF Madagascar

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Tsanta Randriamihajaso, a multi-instrumentalist young man and 2018 One Beat alumna.

Tsanta Randriamihajaso is a 23-year-old instrument virtuoso. At his very young age, he already works as a professional musician and plays diverse instruments including Valiha, flute, guitar, trumpet, organ, drums, piano, cello, sax, and accordion. At the same time, he is a composer, a producer, an arranger, a performer, and a band leader. He has already performed with different great artists and musicians like Fanja Andriamanantena, Fanaiky, Joel Rabesolo, Nicolas Vatomanga, TGC, GMMC and Meva gospel. Music – jazz in particular – has no secret to this very talented young man. He always joined the lineup for Madajazzcar festival and has toured with jazz stars. In 2018, he was selected for a cultural exchange program called “One beat”.

AMCHAM: When did your career as a professional musician start?

TSANTA: Son of musicians, I started music at a very young age. My professional career took off when I was only 11. I first played within family music band named “Sodiala”,



Tsanta Randriamihajaso with his “Marovany”

led by my father. We performed traditional Malagasy and world music. Sodiala means “Solofo Dimbin’ny Ala” – or “heir”. Later at 15y.o., I seized the opportunity to fly on my own. Since then, I have embraced a wide variety of music and made it my career.

AMCHAM: Tell us briefly about “One Beat” program.

TSANTA: One Beat is one of the opportunities that were offered to me. It is a cultural exchange program provided by the U.S. Department of State and produced by “Found Sound Nation” and “Bang on a Can”. Each year since 2012, these music organizations select 25 outstanding musicians around the world. For the first time, Madagascar was chosen for the seventh edition. We were initially more than 1,000 participants and I thank God I was among the 25 selected.

AMCHAM: Tell us about your experience as One Beat participant.

TSANTA: Flying to the US was a brand new experience to me and was my first time. It was a dream come true. This six-week program along the east coast of the US made me realize how important diversity is. Everything was new to my eyes and my ears. It was a pleasant atmosphere and a delightful moment! The reason why we were there was to share our music experience and to exchange with others regardless of where they come from, since we all came from different countries.

AMCHAM: How does it feel to represent Madagascar at the international level?

TSANTA: I would say that it was uplifting and thriving. Representing my country for an international program like One Beat was a source of great pride. At the same time, it feels like the more I attended the program and connect with participants, the bigger my commitment and efforts became. My goal for One Beat was to finally bring to light Madagascar and its music. Malagasy musical instruments deserve to be known. I came with a typically Malagasy instrument called “Marovany” and it was highly appreciated.

 Interview by **Volahanta Raharimanana**

Tsiory Panöel Razafindrasata: A young and qualified Malagasy kitesurf instructor

Back to the **Malibu Wave Contest 2019**. The contest – which is one of the biggest kitesurfing contests in the world – took place on **Ganh-Vietnam beaches** in January 2019. During that event, **Tsiory Panoël Razafindrasata** achieved an honorable performance, making it to the semi-finals.

How did it all start?

It all started in 2013 when I was on vacation in Diego. When I visited the “*Baie de Sakalava*” and first played kitesurf, I immediately told myself, “I will go deeper into this sport.” From there, I started getting to know more about kitesurfing at a Kitesurf school in Diego. At the same time, I started initiating my friends to this sport even though I was not qualified yet. In 2017, I decided to pursue a world kitesurfing instructor training in Mauritius. That allowed me to travel to many countries, such as Vietnam, Hong Kong, Malaysia and to other kitesurfing spots.

Why kitesurfing?

My passion for kitesurfing has always been strong, but I have also realized that it promotes both myself and my country, as it attracts a lot of tourists. In fact, Madagascar has one of the best kitesurfing spots in the world, the *Baie de Sakalava*.

Has kitesurfing changed your life?

Yes, it has. My dream has always been to travel and to experience many other cultures and traditions. I fulfilled what I desired by kitesurfing then. I have also started to develop myself by growing my network around the world. Being associated with good management and leadership skills, kitesurfing is a rewarding career.

What makes kitesurfing so special?

The word “kitesurfing” itself suggests that the used equipment has two main parts. First, the kite— which serves as a sail— is blown by the wind so that users can float smoothly on the water with a side-on wind bringing them to a three-meter wave on the reef. The second tool is the board which consists of a foot step. All kinds of



Tsiory Panöel Razafindrasata playing with the waves.

board are suitable for kitesurfing. Kitesurfing contributes to the development of the whole tourism sector in Diego Suarez – hospitality, transportation, and even fishing.

How would you rate kitesurf in Madagascar?

It is true that Madagascar is still a developing country, but in terms of kitesurfing, it ranks as one of the richest and 100-percent qualified spots for kiteboarding in the world. The entire world acknowledges the natural beauty of Madagascar and its long winding seasons— which really favors kitesurfing.

How is the next championship coming along?

Back in 2019, we already participated in the Malibu Kite Wave Contest, and we have already reached the preliminary round. In 2020, we participated again in the fourth edition of this competition, and we performed even better. We are looking forward to seeing Madagascar being represented once again at the 2024 Olympic Games in France.

 Interview by **langotiana Rakotovao**

Why does country music remain so popular in the United States?

According to a 2020-report by MusicWatch, country music is the third most popular musical genre in the U.S. Amid the pandemic, country music was the “*genre of music that is not hurting right now*” – Bloomberg wrote last year. Country singers know how to build audience loyalty despite the growing musical trend toward hip-hop and pop domination.

Let us go back to the roots!

In 1927, Victoria Records, one of the first players in the recording industry, went looking for “hillbilly” musicians in *Bristol, Tennessee*. Two local acts – **The Carter Family** from Virginia and Jimmie Rodgers from North Carolina – signed the recording contracts. The Carter Family played old-time mountain music and Jimmie Rodgers sang ballads using a vocal technique called “yodelling”. In 1928, Rodgers’s recording “**Blue Yodel**” was a huge musical and commercial coup, with a million copies sold. The two acts paved the way to other country artists. Contrary to what a lot of American people still believe until today, Nashville was not the birthplace of country music. According to a resolution passed by the U.S. Congress in 1998, **Bristol, Tennessee** was.

At the beginning, hillbilly performers used fiddle, guitar, banjo, and sometimes Appalachian dulcimer, harmonica, and mandolin. Later in the 30s and 40s, traditional country music became influenced by other genres: blues and gospel. Until today, many music professionals claim that country music has African-American roots as well. A point to note is, country music had always been labelled “hillbilly” music until 1949 when it was officially given its current name.

In a context of war and crisis, country music conveyed messages about poverty, orphaned children, and loneliness. Today, the lyrics are among the reasons why American people are attached to country music.

Country music is still on track in the 2020s. Here is why.

Unlike pop singers who are sometimes unable to sing fully live, most country singers are very talented performers and vocalists. They work with knowledgeable



Country music, the look, guitar and whiskey.

musicians who perfectly master the instruments that they play. Lyrics tell meaningful stories and display various emotions. It is very common to relate to what a well-written country song is carrying as a message. Country singers do not merely sing in an explosive show, they “share” a story, sometimes in a very intimate way. Songwriters tell a story in a very simple way and do not ask the audience to decode what hidden message is behind a song.

In the early 2020s, country music has seen an impressive revival. Many music executives explain that country music is comforting during these weird days. Others explain that country music goes hand in hand with drinking – since alcohol sales have soared as well during the Covid pandemic. Another explanation would be country fans are starting to stream more country songs rather than buy physical disks.

Today that life in the U.S. is gradually getting back to a certain normalcy, the **Grand Ole Opry** in Nashville, the heart of country music – which started broadcasting since 1925 – has reopened its door to the public. The weekly concert has officially resumed. Masks off, no more social distancing.

 Edited by **Kenny Raharison**

Sources: MusicWatch – Bloomberg – Britannica – Chicago Tribune

“Afindrafindrao”: the Malagasy version of the English quadrille dance?

Modern Malagasy culture can be described as a blend of various cultures. If we look back at Madagascar’s settlement history, from the “Vazimba” era – told as the first inhabitants of the island who are of mixed Indonesian and African origins – to its current population, Madagascar’s cultural identity has evolved over the centuries.

In the Malagasy culture, dance and music have always played an important role in expressing emotions and thoughts. With no music and dance, traditional ceremonies and festivities would be bland. During wedding ceremonies and other traditional such as the “famadihana” or exhumation and circumcision, dance and music bring Malagasy people together.

Traditional Malagasy music and dance rooted in the royal era. In the late 16th century, the “Valiha” appeared as the first and most popular Malagasy instrument. Later came the piano and the guitar. At the same time, traditional dances such as the “Afindrafindrao” emerged too.

The derivative of the trendy European quadrille dance of the 19th-century

While the *Afindrafindrao* historically originated in the central highlands, it is a famous dance across all the regions of Madagascar. It is said to come from the traditional Betsimisaraka dance called “basesa”, performed on valiha with guitar accompaniment. Other historians reported that the *Afindrafindrao*



Photo credit: Fenosoa

was performed by the kings of Imerina. **King Radama II** who had an outstanding talent for playing musical instruments was told to have initiated the *Afindrafindrao*. Later it would have been officially established in the Merina court under the reign of **Queen Ranaivalona III**. Since then, the *Afindrafindrao* has become a custom dance for all Malagasy people and has served as the inescapable opening dance to family and social festivities.

How to dance the Afindrafindrao?

Following a line formation in which men and women are placed alternatively, the *Afindrafindrao* reminds us of the “*English quadrille dance*” in the 19th century which

became popular among the noble class – kings and queens – in the capital.

The quadrille is a fashionable dance featuring four or five couples in a square setting, well-known as contredanses. It is a two-person dance showcasing predefined and repetitive dance steps. The *Afindrafindrao* has quite similar dance figures to contredanses and is generally executed by mixed couples of men and women. At any rate, dancing the *Afindrafindrao* is quite easy to learn, even for foreigners.

In the 21st century, musicians have attempted to bring a touch of modernity to the song. So did contemporary dancers by adding new steps to the traditional choreography. However, the traditional and authentic version of the *Afindrafindrao* remains deeply rooted in the Malagasy culture. Nothing better than the original!

 Edited by **Volahanta Raharimanana**
Sources: “*Gitara Gasy: Guitar Music of Madagascar*”, Philip Lewis, 2017 / “*Dance Africa: Groupe Bakomanga*”, Fredara Mareva Hadley, Ph.D., 2014 / Britannica

Where The Star-Spangled Banner came from

The Star-Spangled Banner is the national anthem of the United States of America. This well-known song has a long and interesting history, dating back over two hundred years, in **September 1814**. The new United States of America, just over twenty years old, was once again at war with Great Britain in a war known simply as the *War of 1812*.

The war had been going on for over a year and a half when a young American lawyer named Francis Scott Key was sent to a British ship, the HMS *Minden*, to negotiate the release of some American prisoners.

Who is Francis Scott Key?

Francis Scott Key was born on August 1, 1779 at Terra Rubra, his family's estate in Frederick County (now Carroll County), Maryland. He became a prominent lawyer in Maryland and Washington, D.C., and was later appointed United States Attorney for the District of Columbia.

The negotiations went on for a long time, and since Key had learned that the British were planning an attack on Baltimore, Maryland, they would not let him leave before the battle. On **September 13, 1814**, the British attacked Fort McHenry while Francis Scott Key anxiously watched from a ship a few miles away.

The battle was so fierce that Key feared the British would win. As the sun set, the sky turned red, giving one last glimpse of the American flag as the battle continued in darkness. The battle raged throughout the rainy night, but as soon as the *red glare of the rockets and the bombs bursting in the air* stopped, Francis Scott Key was unable to see which flag was flying over the fort. It was not until morning, when the first light of dawn revealed the aftermath, that he could see that the American flag was still flying, signifying that they were **not defeated**.

Key was so inspired that the next day he wrote a poem on the back of a letter he had in his pocket. On



Singing the national anthem before a football match.
Picture by Keith Johnston on Pixabay.

September 16, he was released in Baltimore, where he finished his poem. It was originally titled "***Defense of Fort M'Henry***" and was printed in newspapers from Georgia to New Hampshire. The poem was set to music and several versions became popular, but it was not until **1889** that the song was first adopted for official use by the Navy.

In **1916**, President Woodrow Wilson ordered the Star-Spangled Banner to be played at military ceremonies, and President Herbert Hoover signed the legislation that officially adopted it as the national anthem on **March 4, 1931**. Although the song has *four verses*, most Americans today know only the first verse of the Star-Spangled Banner, which is sung everywhere from baseball games to fireworks displays to Fourth of July celebrations.



Edited by **langotiana Rakotovao**

Sources: History, American Battlefields Trust, Britannica, The Kennedy Center, Library of Congress, Washington Post

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