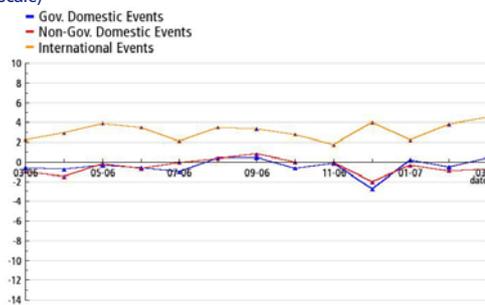


## MADAGASCAR | Trends in Conflict and Cooperation

### POLITICAL

Neither government nor non-government actions have undermined Madagascar’s relative political quietude. While there was a parallel drop in cooperation compared to conflict in December 2006, this was directly tied to the presidential elections on 3 December 2006 (see graph). By January 2007 there was a return to normalcy. International events similarly rebounded as countries congratulated President Marc Ravalomanana on winning. President

Domestic Government Events, Domestic Non-Government Events, and International Events (average weighted by IDEA scale)



Source: FAST event data

Ravalomanana used his new mandate to continue broadening Madagascar’s ties, and donors saw the way clear to make new commitments. The elections, held under both domestic and international observation, handed President Ravalomanana a relatively easy victory with little organized protest against the process. The branches of government – legislature, executive, and judiciary – took turns congratulating each other on their successes in 2006 and the president immediately turned to new business. This was followed by efforts to neutralize all the potential sources of instability, such as the outlawing of Pety Rakotonirina (the former mayor of Fianarantsoa) and ensuring the trial of hostile factions of the army. The president secured new commitments of support from the Catholic Church. He supported investigations of Roland Ratsiraka (presidential candidate and mayor of Toamasina), the former minister of sports, and other leaders. On 4 February 2007, General “Fidy” Andrianafidisoa was sentenced to 4 years in prison for his weak coup attempt in the lead-up to the polls. The opposition tried to regroup.

The once radical CNE met in January to discuss its challenge to the voter rolls while opposition candidate Jean Lahiniriko attempted to consolidate the members of the opposition together into one party. AREMA, the party of former president Didier Ratsiraka, unsuccessfully tried to reconcile its pro-Ratsiraka and pro-Rajaonarivelo wings. On 6 February the umbrella 3FN organization met to seek a new strategy. The CRN in turn broke its relations with the 3FN. The most important change came the day after President Ravalomanana’s 20 January investiture, when he replaced Prime Minister Jacques Sylla with former Military Cabinet Director General Charles Rabemananjara. Most controversial during the first quarter of 2007 was the president’s announcement that there would be a constitutional referendum on 4 April. Long criticized both at home and abroad for instituting a decentralization plan based on 22 “regions” rather than the autonomous provinces outlined in the 1998 constitutional change, President Ravalomanana sought to rectify the problem of parallel systems of governance. However, constitutional changes were far more comprehensive – adding English (to French and Malagasy) as a national language and allowing the president to make laws without the legislature if he declares a state of emergency. The most criticized part of these changes is associated with the reinforcement of presidential prerogatives. Constitutionally, the most sweeping was the enshrining of power in the fokolonona via the fokontany (the most local level of governance) in a hierarchical structure attached to the appointed region leadership. The president sees the fokontany as the key mechanism for implementing the new Madagascar Action Plan. The strongest criticism was that the referendum was held in such haste. Even the Catholic Church, which has sought reconciliation with a president who holds lay leadership in the Protestant FJKM, criticized the rapid timing as a proper information campaign was impossible especially in some regions which were hit by successive cyclones. The question on the referendum did not fully reflect the scope of change, asking only “Do you accept the constitution revision project for the rapid and sustainable development of each region in order to raise the Malagasy level of life?” A brief of the constitutional amendments was made available to the public via the newspapers, but the changes themselves were only distributed to leaders. The referendum passed 73.29 percent to 26.71 percent, with a low (for Madagascar) 42 percent turnout rate, yet still higher than during the adaptation of the current constitution.

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC

In 2006 President Ravalomanana introduced the Madagascar Action Plan (MAP) with a vision that “Madagascar will become a prosperous nation. We will have a high growth economy and will successfully compete in the global market place.” Paralleling the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals, the MAP makes eight commitments: responsible government, connected infrastructure, educational transformation, rural development and green revolution, health, family planning and the fight against HIV/AIDS, high growth economy, to cherish the

environment, and national solidarity. In January 2007, with his new investiture, President Ravalomanana began an awareness raising campaign about the MAP within Madagascar, as well as a fundraising campaign outside the country. The intentions are to augment the quality of life for the population through globalization and market engagement. Economic growth in recent years has been positive, yet not significant when compared to population growth. The 5.3 percent expansion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2004 gave way to 4.6 percent in 2005 and 4.7 percent in 2006. A March 2007 visit by the International Monetary Fund supported the MAP and concluded that "Economic growth was better than expected in 2006, helped by the start up of construction for a large mining project and good performance in the telecommunication, banking, and insurance sectors." It sees the MAP as integral to such successes. In February 2007 the MAP was released by the IMF as a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. Yet critics argue that the mining and extractive industries, and the intricate market ties of the MAP, mask gains that are more limited both in scale and scope.

The most damaging social and economic events in Madagascar in the first quarter of 2007 were cyclones. Cyclone Bondo claimed lives in both (western) Mahajanga and (eastern) Antalaha on 26 December 2006. Cyclone Clovis hit near Manakara (southeast) in January. Cyclone Gamede then hit south-eastern Madagascar on 26 February. On 15 March Cyclone Indlala hit Sambava, Antalaha and Maroantsetra (northeast), killing as many as 80 people. The barrages have displaced an estimated 100,000 people while devastating the agricultural sector including Madagascar's critical vanilla production. The World Food Program noted marked food insecurity in the north at the same time as approximately 600,000 people were facing severe drought and associated famine in the south of the country. The cyclones generated floods that compromised the rice harvest for the 2007 campaign, wrecking the government's hope for self-sufficiency starting this year. The local price of rice has rising so high that many regions are threatened by food insecurity. The MAP does not directly address such natural disasters, but the hope is that economic growth through diversified market engagement can mitigate the impacts.

## INTERNATIONAL

President Ravalomanana has enjoyed consistent international support since his initial investiture in 2002. His re-election has strengthened his international standing. In reaction to the cyclones some countries, such as Norway, France and the European Union, sent aid. In February the government launched an appeal for USD 242 million in cyclone and drought aid. The UN, for its part, launched a USD 9.6 million Flash Appeal for Madagascar. Other international activity during the first quarter of 2007 included a promise by the French government to help fund the MAP, a commitment on 18 January by the European Union to fund the MAP with 462 million Euros, and a commitment by the World Bank, in the first week of April, to fund the MAP at a rate of USD 140 million from 2007-2011 (the period of its new Country Assistance Strategy). Consistent with President Ravalomanana and the MAP's strategy, there have also been significant foreign initiatives in Madagascar. Most notable is QIT Madagascar, 80 percent owned by London-based Rio Tinto, which has been working with the World Bank to form the southern "Integrated Growth Pole" in Madagascar.

## OUTLOOK

In contrast to the last presidential election, the fast return to moderate exchanges bodes well for the country's ability to deal with political shocks. In the short to medium term President Ravalomanana has definitive control of the Madagascar ship. This shows that the president, his hallmark Madagascar Action Plan, and his policy direction on major platforms such as anti-corruption and energy reform, have been accepted by the population. There are, however, two reasons for guarding optimism. First, the increasing rate of power consolidation in the presidency, personally and institutionally, requires careful observation. The tenor of criticism of this consolidation has also increased. Secondly, regional stratification in support for President Ravalomanana in the 2006 elections (see Madagascar Update 2006/2) was even more pronounced in the referendum of 4 April. More alarmingly, the voter turnout rate showed alarming levels of abstentionism reflecting a combination of confusion and lack of support for the constitutional changes within critical parts of the population. President Ravalomanana has a lot of work to do in order to reverse his current direction and bring in the provinces. Otherwise he will have to try to govern an increasingly divided country. In the short to medium term enough of the population appears to be affording him the opportunity to lead more inclusively. Long term prospects, it seems, will largely be tied to not only the depth but breadth of success President Ravalomanana achieves with MAP and how he wields his virtually uncontested power.

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**FAST International** is the early warning program of swisspeace, covering 25 countries/regions in Africa, Asia and Europe. Based in Bern, Switzerland, the program is funded and utilized by an international consortium of development agencies, including the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

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