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Dr. Otmar Oehring (Hrsg./editor/éditeur)

Postfach 10 12 48  
D-52012 Aachen  
Tel.: 0049-241-7507-00  
Fax: 0049-241-7507-61-253  
E-mail: menschenrechte@missio.de  
humanrights@missio.de  
droitsdelhomme@missio.de

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**Menschenrechte**  
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**Human Rights**

Hans Maier

**Human Rights and  
Human Dignity in  
Madagascar**  
A Country in Search  
of its Destiny



The Human Rights Office aims to promote awareness of the human rights situation in Africa, Asia and Oceania. In pursuit of this objective we are actively involved in human rights networking and foster exchanges between **missio's** church partners in Africa, Asia and Oceania and church and political decision-makers in the Federal Republic of Germany. This Human Rights series comprises country-by-country studies, thematic studies and the proceedings of specialist conferences.

The review of the human rights situation in Madagascar undertaken in this booklet is not limited to the results set out in the official reports of international organisations. It also covers the less spectacular, systematic daily violations which likewise infringe human dignity and prevent its growth. Hence a look is taken at major social evils that consistently diminish human dignity and constitute a permanent violation of fundamental human rights. The purpose of this study is neither to add to the all too familiar pessimism about Africa in Europe nor to level accusations. The intention is rather to focus greater attention on situations of injustice with a view to enhancing awareness and understanding. This can pave the way for resolute support of respect for human rights and their implementation and so help revive the vision of the 'happy island'. At the same time the study is intended as a contribution to a process of reflection and orientation within the Catholic Church in Madagascar.

**Hans Maier** (b. 1937) worked for 27 years with the Episcopal aid organisation Misereor, initially as a desk officer and later as head of the African Affairs Department. He retired in 2003. As a desk officer he spent over 20 years working with project partners in Madagascar. He has degrees in Ethnology, Philosophy, Theology and Sociology. He currently organises and facilitates courses and seminars on Catholic social ethics in Europe and Africa.

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## Acronyms

<b>AREMA</b>	Avant-garde de la Révolution Malagasy – Vanguard of the Malagasy Revolution, 1975 version
<b>AREMA</b>	Association pour la Renaissance de Madagascar – Association for the Rebirth of Madagascar, 1996 version
<b>FFKM</b>	Fiombanon'ny Fiangonana Kristianina eto Madagasikara (FFKM) – Malagasy Council of Christian Churches
<b>CNOE</b>	Comité National pour l'Observation des Elections – National Committee for Election Observation
<b>HAE</b>	Haute Autorité de l'Etat – High Authority of the State
<b>HAT</b>	Haute Autorité de la Transition – High Transition Authority
<b>HCC</b>	Haute Cour Constitutionnelle – High Constitutional Court
<b>TIM</b>	Tiako I Madagasikara – I Love Madagascar
<b>BIANCO</b>	Bureau Indépendant Anti-corruption – Independent Anti-Corruption Office
<b>INSTAT</b>	Institut National de la Statistique – National Statistics Office
<b>CNAPS</b>	Caisse Nationale de Prévoyance Sociale – National Social Security Fund

## General information on Madagascar

<b>Location</b>	400 km east of Mozambique in the Indian Ocean; world's fourth largest island	
<b>Name of country</b>	Republic of Madagascar	
<b>Form of government</b>	Presidential republic, new constitution in preparation	
<b>Area</b>	587,000 sq km	
<b>Population</b>	20.6 million (2009), 26.8% of whom live in towns. There are 18 ethnic groups, the largest of which are the Merina and Betsileo (highlands), Betsimisaraka (eastern coast) and Sakalava (north-west coast).	
<b>Population density</b>	34 inhabitants per sq km	
<b>Population growth</b>	2.9%. Half the population is under the age of 20.	
<b>Languages</b>	Malagasy, French	
<b>Religions</b>	Just under 50% Christians, over half of whom are Catholics. About 7% Muslims. The rest of the population adhere to traditional, ethnic-based faiths.	
<b>Large cities (2007)</b>	Capital Antananarivo: pop. 1.6 million Tamatave (port city): pop. 206,390 Antsirabe: pop. 182,804 Fianarantsoa: pop. 167,240	
<b>Life expectancy</b>	58.4 years	
<b>Literacy rate</b>	70.7% (official figure)	
<b>Child mortality rate</b>	74/1000	
<b>Economic factors</b>	<i>Agriculture:</i>	Rice, manioc, maize for domestic consumption, vanilla, coffee, cloves for export
	<i>Inshore fishing:</i>	Crabs and tuna for domestic consumption and export
	<i>Mineral resources:</i>	Graphite, chromium, mica, precious and semi-precious stones, oil (new), etc.
	<i>Industry:</i>	<i>Zône Franche</i> companies, mostly textile manufacturers and IT firms, with some 110,000 jobs
<b>Level of development</b>	Madagascar has a GDP of \$920 per inhabitant and is thus one of the poorest countries in the world. In 2009 it was 145th out of 182 countries on the Human Development Index scale	

As at September 2009

## Introduction

‘On Saturday, 7 February 2009 members of the Presidential Guard at the Ambohitsorohitra presidential palace in the capital Antananarivo opened fire, using live ammunition, on unarmed demonstrators protesting against the government. At least 31 demonstrators, including journalist Ando Ratovoniriona, and possibly up to 50 were killed and over 200 injured.’<sup>1</sup> This was the dramatic climax of a struggle for political power waged since December 2008 between the incumbent president Marc Ravalomanana and the then mayor of Antananarivo, Andry Rajoelina, supported by a massive protest movement. In March 2009 the incumbent president resigned from office in view of the army’s support for Andry Rajoelina, who took over as president of an interim government. The months that followed saw a tug-of-war between the various political forces in the country to bring about an internationally accepted composition of the transitional authority and a timetable for action. Thanks to mediation by the UN and the African Union a compromise was found in Addis Ababa on 6 November which was agreed to by all sides and thus opened up the path to elections and political normality.

The transitional government continues to seek cooperation with the various political forces in the country and to achieve international political recognition. Following the temporary failure of the mediation efforts by the UN and the African Union (AU) in Maputo the political crisis currently remains unresolved (October 2009).

The investigation into the massacre, and the statements made by Amnesty International, provoked the following comment from a commanding officer of the Malagasy army: “We don’t need any lectures from Amnesty International. No one has deeper respect for human rights than the Malagasy.”<sup>2</sup>

It is difficult to understand the words of the commanding officer in a country where, according to official statistics, roughly 70 per cent of the population live below the poverty line of one US dollar a day. The women and children begging on the streets and rummaging in the refuse dumps in the capital Antananarivo and the provincial towns give an individual, human dimension to the poverty statistics, as do the poorly clad street dealers trying to earn a few *ariaries* by selling fruit, sunglasses and the like. Their faces reveal little of the dignity that comes from implementation and guarantees of the same rights for all. Throughout the country there has been an increase in the four “*mi*”: *miloka* – readiness to use violence, *mifoka* – drugs, *misotro* – drinking, and *mijanga* – prostitution, “*mi*” being a catchphrase for the street kids and homeless people in the capital that made the headlines in the darkest period of the Ratsiraka regime in the mid-1980s.

The detailed examination of the human rights situation in Madagascar in this booklet is not limited to the violations of human rights covered in the reports of international human rights organisations. There are other, everyday examples of systematic human rights violations which are less spectacular than the human rights abuses that attract more media attention, but they are just as much an affront to human dignity and hinder its development. Hence the focus in what follows will be on an exploration of major social shortcomings that consistently frustrate a life in dignity and thus constitute a permanent violation of fundamental human rights. Structural poverty, the daily struggle for enough to eat, insufficient access to education and health services, a serious lack of job and earning opportunities capable of ensuring a livelihood, a bare minimum of social security, an unreliable legal system and de facto exclusion from political decision-making processes are not only the main contributory factors to a degrading and inhuman life; they also contravene fundamental rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the current Malagasy constitution.

The references made to severe shortcomings in the implementation of human rights in no way diminish the author’s deep-felt respect for the ‘great island’, its people and the fascinating diversity and wealth of their cultures, nor his appreciation of the admirable and sustained commitment of so many Malagasy men and women to a society in which as many as possible, if not all, Malagasy can lead a life in dignity. The purpose of this study is neither to add to the all too familiar pessimism about Africa in Europe nor to level accusations. The intention is rather to focus greater attention on situations of injustice with a view to enhancing awareness and understanding. This can pave the way for resolute support of respect for human rights and their implementation and so help revive the vision of the ‘happy island’.

It is hoped that this study will provide members of the public and organisations interested in Madagascar with insights into the human rights situation in the country. It is also intended to contribute to a process of reflection and orientation within the Catholic Church in Madagascar. The author wishes to make it clear that the ongoing struggle against poverty in all its manifestations should be seen as a contribution to the implementation of human rights and thus to the growth of human dignity and that “integral human development – the development of every person and of the whole person, especially of the poorest and most neglected in the community – is at the very heart of evangelization.”<sup>3</sup>

# 1 Political background or ‘how poverty arises’

The human rights situation in Madagascar as presented in this booklet cannot be understood without reference to the dramatic development of the country since independence.<sup>4</sup>

## 1.1 From independence to the Fourth Republic

Madagascar gained its independence in **1960** and **Philibert Tsiranana**, chairman of the country’s Social Democratic Party, became president. His period in office was marked by the strong French presence in the country. **1972** saw the **first political coup** initiated by the **students’ May revolution**, which the people enthusiastically welcomed. Calls were raised for independence from France as the colonial power and for the ‘Malagasification’ of the country. Tsiranana stood down. After a political interregnum in which the army held power, a military directorate installed Lieutenant Commander **Didier Ratsiraka** as president in June **1975**. In December of that year the **Second Republic** was proclaimed with a new constitution and Didier Ratsiraka was elected president for seven years on a groundswell of hopes for a ‘new Malagasy path to the future’.

Under Ratsiraka and his ‘National Charter of the Malagasy Revolution’ (*Boky Mena* – Red Book) Madagascar became a ‘socialist’ country in which AREMA (*Avant-garde de la Révolution Malagasy* [Vanguard of the Malagasy Revolution]) was the dominant governing party and the Supreme Revolutionary Council the real decision-making body, to which the freedom of the press, amongst other things, fell victim. Large-scale nationalisation, state control of the economy, expensive unprofitable investments in prestige projects, a sharp drop in agricultural and industrial production and galloping inflation led to the collapse of economic and social structures (e.g. in the education and health systems) and to growing impoverishment among the people. Given the all too obvious economic and social fiasco of ‘socialism’, Ratsiraka changed tack in the mid-1980s, switching to a policy of economic liberalism, which entailed acceptance of the International Monetary Fund’s structural adjustment programme that merely served to reinforce poverty in the country. This apart, he kept his quasi dictatorial regime in power by means of fear, propaganda and violence. Nevertheless, the late 1980s witnessed the emergence of a civilian opposition, including the newly formed National Committee for Election Observation (CNOE - *Comité National*

*pour l’Observation des Elections*) under the umbrella of the churches, which were organised in the Malagasy Council of Christian Churches FKKM (*Fiombanan’ny Fiangonana Kristianina eto Madagasikara*) and constituted the only free space respected by Ratsiraka. The regime failed in its attempts to prevent a debate about a reform of the state institutions.

The intransigence of the regime ultimately led to repeated massive demonstrations involving hundreds of thousands of protestors in 1991. A general strike was called in July of that year and the opposition *Forces Vives* (Vital Forces) resolved to set up a parallel government. **10 August proved a fateful day for the Ratsiraka regime**. The president ordered the opening of fire on the 500,000 demonstrators who were marching to the presidential palace and over 100 people lost their lives. In October the opposition forces agreed on a transition government, the High Authority of the State (HAE - *Haute Autorité de l’Etat*). Led by **Albert Zafy**, it ushered in the **Third Republic** in the space of 18 months. This was the **second coup**.

In August **1992**, a new constitution was passed by referendum and came into force. It foresaw a parliamentary democracy and a limitation of presidential power. The **Third Republic** was born. In **February 1993** Professor **Albert Zafy** was elected the country’s **new president** on a wave of hope and enthusiasm. Having ‘inherited’ an impoverished and ruined country, he faced the daunting task of introducing a new political and civil culture and alleviating the rampant poverty. Popular hopes were dashed. The government bickered over lucrative offices, key reform projects were delayed and the president travelled around. Living conditions for the population continued to deteriorate. Zafy was intent on securing a greater degree of presidential power, which he obtained by means of a **constitutional referendum** held in **September 1995**. His newly appointed prime minister was **removed from office by a parliamentary vote of no confidence**. Zafy then suffered the same fate himself. His notorious lack of leadership and inability to make decisions, coupled with his regular periods of absence, led to his dismissal on 26 July 1996. This marked the end of the incompetent government of the Vital Forces and the **return of Didier Ratsiraka**, who triumphed in the unusually fair presidential elections in **December 1996** with a 50.7% share of the votes (just under 50% abstentions) and subsequently proclaimed a ‘Humanist and Ecological Republic’.

Hardly had Ratsiraka – ‘at heart a despot’ – returned to power than his Party for the Rebirth of Madagascar, AREMA (now Association for the Rebirth of Madagascar), began occupying all the key positions of power in the country. As in the past, the public media were turned into government propaganda vehicles and the public administration was re-politicised. A **1998 referendum** (30% abstentions, 51% yes votes) reinforced the power of the president while reducing that of the

parliament, which was tantamount to the abolition of parliamentary democracy. The president now had free rein to occupy all the relevant political positions through tighter control of the media and the renewed use of the infamous political police. At the same time the president and his family shamelessly lined their own pockets while the people became poorer.

**Marc Ravalomanana**, a successful businessman and mayor of Antananarivo, was the challenger in the **presidential elections of 16 December 2001**. He stood for economic success and a fresh start. Moreover, he was vice-president of the Reformed Church. Ravalomanana won a majority of the votes in the first ballot and thus defeated Ratsiraka, but he failed to obtain the absolute majority required. Without waiting for the final result, Ravalomanana proclaimed himself the winner of the elections and organised a **mass demonstration for 22 December**, which was to be celebrated as a 'Christmas victory festival'. The **third coup** was thus initiated. Filled with religious fervour, hundreds of thousands took enthusiastically to the streets daily to hail their prospective saviour, including the day the High Constitutional Court (HCC), which was in the hands of Ratsiraka's followers, announced the official election result (Ravalomanana 46.21%, Ratsiraka 40.9%) and the consequent need for a final ballot. The new battle cry of the masses in response was "Once is enough!" Following the announcement of a new official election result with 52.15% of the votes for **Ravalomanana** and 35.67% for Ratsiraka, the challenger proclaimed himself **president on 22 February 2002**, was sworn in and subsequently set up his own government to rival the incumbent Ratsiraka government. New appointees were made to the constitutional court, which confirmed the new official version of the election outcome. The African Union, the USA and France condemned this procedure. Ratsiraka proclaimed a **national state of emergency**. On 18 April Ratsiraka and Ravalomanana signed an agreement in **Dakar** paving the way for the appointment of a 'government of reconciliation', which was never formed. **Ravalomanana was officially installed as president on 6 May** in the presence of diplomatic representatives and with the blessing of the churches.

Ratsiraka played the **provincial independence** card and used armed force to block access to Tamatave, the largest port on the eastern coast. His vassals resisted the new government in a number of provinces. The **threat of a civil war** was averted when France recognised the new government and Ratsiraka fled to France in July. In the December parliamentary elections Ravalomanana's party TIM (*Tiako I Madagasikara* – I Love Madagascar) won 132 out of 160 seats. In the **2006 presidential election Ravalomanana** won a large majority in the first ballot and was **confirmed as president**. Ravalomanana, an advocate of a free market economy, re-privatised nationalised companies and opened the country's doors to

international investors. He enjoyed the trust of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the EU and the major industrialised nations. The first years of his government saw the execution of a large number of infrastructure projects, such as road construction, urban redevelopment and port extensions, and support for the social sector through the building of new schools and health centres, etc. Economic growth climbed to 4.6% in 2005 and as high as 7.1% in 2008. At the same time, Ravalomanana openly extended his own business empire throughout the country. No priority was attached to combating poverty. The president became increasingly less inclined to tolerate protest and dissent and jailed hundreds of his political opponents. Clearly regarding himself as invulnerable, he held a referendum in 2007 that was designed to extend his presidential powers.

However, the deterioration in the living conditions of the majority of Malagasy gave rise to growing disappointment and dissatisfaction. Some 80 per cent of voters abstained in the **parliamentary elections of September 2007**. The purchase of a new presidential jet for US\$60 million, the leasing of 1.3 million hectares of arable land to Daewoo and the closing down in December 2008 of the commercial television channel VIVA run by Andry Rajoelina, the young mayor of the capital, proved the last straw.

In **January 2009, Andry Rajoelina** called for a **general strike** against what he termed the "Ravalomanana dictatorship". Once again hundreds of thousands took to the streets, this time in favour of Andry Rajoelina and against Ravalomanana. In many towns Ravalomanana's supporters plundered and destroyed department stores and warehouses, leaving a large number of dead and injured. The **fourth coup** had begun. Rajoelina demanded the ousting of the president, who responded by dismissing him from his office as mayor of Antananarivo. Like Ratsiraka a little under 10 years earlier, Ravalomanana **ordered his Presidential Guard to open fire on unarmed demonstrators on 7 February**. The army sided with Rajoelina, forced the defence minister to stand down and gave the government an ultimatum to end the crisis. **On 17 March Ravalomanana abdicated, handed over government to Rajoelina** and fled to South Africa. Andry Rajoelina formed a transitional government, the High Transition Authority (*Haute Autorité de la Transition* - HTA), whose assumption of power was rejected by the international community as a *coup d'état*. Ravalomanana's supporters held large protest meetings throughout the country and formed political opposition movements (*Mouvances*), as did supporters of former presidents Ratsiraka and Zafy. The United Nations and the African Union sent mediators to the parties in the conflict, but to no avail. In preparation for elections and a new constitution the transitional government carried out public surveys in all the regions, which were to be brought together in a national assembly.

In the meantime, the **African Union's team of mediators** resumed its activities and invited Rajoelina and former presidents Ratsiraka, Zafy and Ravalomanana, along with representatives of their respective movements, to take part in **mediation talks in Maputo**. The initial discussions in early August led to an agreement on how the transition authority was to act in the period up to the elections. The second round of talks in late August, which dealt with appointments to the transition authority, foundered on the selfish interests of the negotiating parties. **Andry Rajoelina** then single-handedly formed a **new government of 'National Unity'**, to which representatives of the other movements and independent individuals were appointed. Not surprisingly, this decision met with fierce resistance on the part of the other *Mouvances*. The International Contact Group (GIC – *Groupe International de Contact*) attempted to bring about a new agreement between the parties to the conflict. A meeting between a high-ranking 50-strong international delegation and the four *Mouvances* was held in Antananarivo's Carlton Hotel on 6 October. Miraculously, agreement was reached on appointments to the key positions in the **transitional government** under President Rajoelina. The signing of the Carlton Agreement and the appointments to other positions in the transitional government by the 'chairs' of the four *Mouvances* had to take place outside Madagascar, since the Maputo Agreement stipulated that Ravalomanana was not allowed to enter Madagascar for the foreseeable future. After a political tug-of-war over the venue for negotiations the GIC and the four *Mouvances* settled on Addis Ababa. Following heated arguments between the three former presidents and Andry Rajoelina, the pending failure of the negotiations and a one-day extension, **a compromise was reached on 6 November** as well as an agreement on the composition of the transitional government. Andry Rajoelina would remain president, albeit as part of a three-man presidential council comprising one representative from each of the *Mouvances* plus Ravalomanana and Zafy. The months ahead will tell whether this compromise is politically viable or not. Essentially, however, the path is now free for a nationally and internationally recognised transition leading to free elections and political normality. It is high time, too, given that the majority of the Malagasy population is suffering more and more from the disastrous economic and social consequences of the ongoing crisis.<sup>5</sup> Poverty and destitution are increasing day by day.

## 1.2 The role of the Church – beacon or plaything?

Like the Christian churches as a whole, whose members make up half the Malagasy population, the Catholic Church in Madagascar is an important factor in society. Its significance is much greater than its percentage share of the population (around 27 per cent). The social importance of the Church is apparent at two levels. Firstly, it is very active in the educational sector, as is evidenced by its literacy programmes, extensive network of primary and secondary schools, vocational training courses and higher education work (Catholic Institute). The country's only School for Social Services is in Church hands. Secondly, the Church plays a part in the health service and in rural and urban development programmes. In view of the increasing impoverishment among the country's inhabitants, the Church – and, in particular, its many religious orders in the country – has become involved to an ever greater extent in emergency relief work for marginalised groups in society, such as street children. As shown in a survey conducted by the School for Social Services in the late 1980s, emergency relief is very much the focus of the support provided by the Church, which does little to promote more far-reaching social change.

Further evidence of the Church's social commitment comes in the form of the regular statements on social issues made by the Bishops' Conference.<sup>6</sup> In an Episcopal document entitled *Church and Society* (1972) it set out its position on development for the people that still sets standards even today. After initially toying with Ratsiraka's Malagasy socialism and compromising itself with the rulers, the Church has since kept its distance from the regimes in power. The Bishops' statement *Power in the Service of Society* (1984) voiced the Church's rejection of any form of dictatorship. Until press censorship was abolished in 1989, the Church weekly *Lakroa* was the only newspaper in the country that dared to voice open criticism of the regime and provide space in its columns for censored articles. **It should be pointed out here that the Ratsiraka regime largely respected the Church as a place where opinions could be freely expressed.** On the one hand, the Pope's visit in April 1989 reinforced the Church and its function as a protected environment for the forces of change and helped bring about the end of press censorship. On the other hand, it signalled support for the Ratsiraka regime and slowed down the momentum for open criticism of the system.

In 1990, during the quest for a new constitution, the Church issued an Episcopal statement entitled *Building a Civilization of Love*, which dealt with the issue of non-violent resistance to injustice and the authority of the state. This was the limit of the Church's involvement in political issues, however. In 1991, the Malagasy Council of Christian Churches (FFKM) shared in the drawing



up of a new constitution with special rights for churches. This constituted an active involvement in everyday political affairs that went beyond accompanying support for the process of social and political change, as a result of which the Catholic Church distanced itself from the FFKM. After the massacre in front of the presidential palace it was not the FFKM but the Cardinal of Antananarivo who called on Ratsiraka to stand down. Church office holders and members actively supported the movement protesting against the Ratsiraka regime and welcomed Professor Albert Zafy's presidency.

The Bishops' Conference regularly issued statements on social and political issues during Albert Zafy's term in office, which proved disappointing, as well as Ratsiraka's second presidency. In 2001/2002, Church office holders, above all the new Cardinal/Archbishop of Antananarivo, and members of the Church vigorously supported the anti-Ratsiraka protest movement organised by Ravalomanana, himself an active Church member, on whom many hopes were pinned. They also endorsed his illegal assumption of office, which received the blessing of the Catholic Church. The personal and political closeness between the cardinal and Marc Ravalomanana was a crucial factor in the Church leadership's initially uncritical approach towards the president, which he rewarded in the form of generous financial assistance.

The Church increasingly came to recognise that, while the Ravalomanana government was making commendable efforts to develop the country, poverty was still growing. Moreover, it could not overlook the government's dictatorial traits, demonstrated in the systematic oppression of oppositional forces. **As a result the Church adopted a critical stance towards the government, which was made easier by the appointment of a new archbishop.** The expulsion of Father Sylvain Urfer was one of the government responses to the cooling of relations between the Church and the government. Since 2007 the Bishops' Conference had made critical statements on developments in the country and encouraged believers and the population at large to shoulder their responsibility in bringing about a change for the better. The bishops' objection to the timetabling of the 2007 referendum and their Pastoral Letter for Lent in 2008 urged popular resistance to the process of social and political disintegration. The Church was undoubtedly a key factor in the political changes that led to the resignation of the president in March 2009. Following Andry Rajoelina's assumption of power and the failure of the mediation talks between the political adversaries that had been facilitated by the archbishop of Antananarivo, the Bishops' Conference published a courageous, forward-looking *Declaration to the Nation* in late March 2009 dealing, amongst other things, with the conditions needed for peaceful and democratic political development.

On the other hand, the publications issued by Church institutions such as *Foi et Justice* (Faith and Justice) consistently promote awareness of civil rights in the country and provide information. They include the text of the constitution and fundamental reflections on development geared to the needs of the people. Within the ambit of the Church there are other civil society groups and lay initiatives, such as the Organisation for the Observation of Public Life (SeFaFi – *Sehatra Fanaraha-Maso ny Fiainam-Pirenena*), which uses its very principled but realistic publications to give a sense of direction to and influence the political and social development of public life. One example is the booklet entitled *Who owns the state?* It is no accident either that the new Church Institute for Social Services plays the role of host and organiser in the formation of 'civil society'. The organisations linked in 'civil society', acting together with the army, offered to mediate between the transitional government and the opposition movements.<sup>7</sup>

The Malagasy Church is part of society and likewise suffers from its characteristic maladies, such as corruption, false compromises and lethargy. Nevertheless, it has come to serve as a beacon for a society, which has increasingly lost its sense of direction in the turmoil that has accompanied post-colonial developments in Madagascar to date, and will continue to play that role in the future.

## 2. Human rights and human dignity in present-day Madagascar

The following description of the human rights situation in present-day Madagascar is designed to provide a representative overview of the problems established by international human rights organisations.

### 2.1 Internationally recorded human rights abuses

The first part of this chapter is based primarily on the 2008 Human Rights Report: Madagascar of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour in the USA<sup>8</sup>, supplemented by information contained in the 2007 Report of the UN Human Rights Committee.<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have not presented any annual reports on Madagascar. Amnesty International carried out a selective investigation in the wake of the massacre outside the presidential palace on 7 February. The national human rights committee set up in Madagascar in 1996 has never functioned properly. This first part also comprises findings and information compiled by the author during a recent trip to Madagascar.<sup>14</sup>

The second part contains a description of social problems such as poverty and hunger, the lack of access to education and health services, unemployment and the absence of social security as instances of human rights that have either been withheld or violated. The statistical data in this part are mostly taken from the 2007 Interim Report on the Implementation of the UN Millennium Goals<sup>10</sup> presented by the Malagasy Ministry of the Interior, the document *Madagascar aujourd'hui, un pays ouvert sur l'avenir*<sup>11</sup> [Madagascar Today – A country open to the future], the World Development Report 2007/2008<sup>12</sup> and the Human Development Report 2007-2009.<sup>13</sup> The commentaries and observations on the individual sectors largely stem from conversations I had in August/September 2009 with the officials responsible for Church welfare programmes in Antananarivo, Ambositra, Antsiranana and Tamatave.<sup>14</sup>

The Malagasy Ministry of the Interior's Interim Report on the Millennium Goals contains some useful advice on a realistic assessment of the statistical data for Madagascar: 'Statistical data are neither coherent, nor comprehensive nor adequate. There are no common standardised procedures for the collection, processing and analysis of the data or for the specification of the indicators... There is no culture of data registration or its application for planning purposes.'<sup>10</sup>

#### 2.1.1 Inviolability of human life

This human right is regularly violated in Madagascar, especially in the judiciary.

**Arbitrary murder and unlawful murder:** Throughout the country, police and gendarmes resort to unlawful and deadly violence in the pursuit and arrest of suspects. The security forces are not prosecuted for such killings. This was confirmed in the wake of the massacre by the Presidential Guard on 7 February 2009.

**Torture** and other inhuman or degrading forms of treatment and punishment: There is evidence that prisoners are mistreated and raped in Malagasy prisons.

**Arbitrary arrest and detention.** Throughout the country people are arrested on the basis of unfounded suspicions and suspects are detained without conviction for long periods.

Long-term **remand imprisonment** without just cause: According to the Ministry of Justice, around 50 per cent of prisoners are remand prisoners who have not been legally convicted – according to Church providers of prison pastoral care the figures are much higher. The main reason for this is the inefficient, understaffed and corrupt legal system. Many prisoners spend more time in prison than specified in the sentence passed on them – or they die before being released.

**Prison conditions:** Prison conditions are harsh and life-threatening. One of the reasons for this is the serious overcrowding of the prisons. According to official statistics there are 16,555 inmates in the 82 prisons, although their capacity is only a third of that figure. Two-thirds of the prisoners are chronically undernourished; some die of starvation. The Ministry of Justice put the number of inmates who died of starvation in 2008 at 48. According to Church providers of prison pastoral care, the figure is much higher. Malnutrition, appalling hygienic conditions in the latrines and the inadequate water supply make the prisoners susceptible to illnesses and epidemics. Virtually no medical care is provided. Church representatives and other non-governmental organisations have reported frequent incidents of rape and prostitution for food. Prisoners can be forced to perform hard labour.

However, the government does allow independent investigations and reports on prison conditions by, for example, the Red Cross, non-governmental organisations and prison pastoral carers. The people in all the regions I visited confirmed

that there is no fair administration of justice. In violation of the constitution and the law, the executive at all levels exerts influence on the administration of justice, thus encouraging corruption. The legally enshrined right to appropriate legal representation is virtually unknown and unaffordable for poor defendants. The legal system has a built-in class bias: “If you’re poor, you go to jail”. The rich, meanwhile, often get off scot-free.

**Political prisoners:** There are no reliable figures because of their potentially explosive impact, but it is known that several well-known political opponents were arrested under the Ravalomanana government, most of whom were ‘granted an amnesty’ by the transition government. In the meantime there are new political prisoners.

### 2.1.2 Civil liberties

**Freedom of speech and freedom of the press:** The constitution and the law guarantee freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Nationwide there is a variety of comparatively free media, including 13 private newspapers, 258 radio stations and 39 television stations, but only the president’s private television and radio stations are able to broadcast throughout the country. The government has repeatedly attempted to gag critical opinions. The suspension of radio stations and bans on broadcasts critical of the government are further examples of government attempts to intimidate the media. The closing down in December 2008 of the private television station VIVA owned by the then mayor of the capital, Andry Rajoelina, triggered the protest movement that led to the president’s resignation.

**Freedom of assembly:** Guaranteed by the constitution and the law, this right has also been widely respected. However, events organized by the opposition in Antananarivo, Fianarantsoa and Tamatave in 2008 were banned on flimsy grounds. Wherever they took place nonetheless, the organizers were arrested. The regime discarded this human right when demonstrators were shot and killed on 7 February 2009.

**Religious freedom:** This is also generally guaranteed. The constitutional referendum of April 2007 abolished the explicit separation of state and church whilst upholding legal protection for religions. The aforementioned expulsion of Jesuit father Sylvain Urfer was undoubtedly meant as a warning to the Catholic Church, which had distanced itself from the government following the appointment of the new Archbishop of Antananarivo.

### 2.1.3 Political rights

**Free elections and political participation:** The 2007 Senate elections, the local elections and the parliamentary elections (turnout only 46%) all resulted in an absolute majority for the governing party. Criticisms of the preparation and organisation of the elections made by local and external observers had no legal or political repercussions. The real problem in all elections is of a structural nature. There is no transparent electoral law that reflects the composition of the population and no independent electoral commission.

**Corruption and transparency in governance:** The international World Bank indicators measuring good governance confirm that corruption and indemnity from punishment in the Ravalomanana government presented a serious problem from the very outset. In order to counteract these reproaches the government set up an Anti-Money Laundering Agency and an Independent Anti-Corruption Office (*Bureau Indépendant Anti-corruption* – BIANCO). BIANCO’s independence is relative, however. Its director is appointed by the president and BIANCO is supervised by the Committee for the Maintenance of Integrity, which is answerable to the president. Despite its dependency on the president, BIANCO has performed valuable work in the fight against corruption. It has set up public complaints boxes in 111 districts and in 2008 it received over 9,500 complaints, 1,095 of which were accepted. They were followed up in public investigations, and arrests were subsequently made. Non-governmental organisations and the media point out, however, that the battle against corruption is waged for the most part at the lower levels.

### 2.1.4 The situation of women

Under the present legislation women enjoy **equality before the law**. They have equal rights in choosing where their family will live as well as the right to half of the joint possessions in the event of the marriage being terminated. Widows with children are entitled to half of the estate when their husbands die. In rural areas with strong traditions, in particular, but also in urban areas these legally guaranteed rights largely remain unimplemented. Hence the UN Human Rights Committee states: ‘The Committee is concerned about traditions that stand in the way of equal opportunities for women.’<sup>9</sup> There is no government body to guarantee women’s rights.

The **social discrimination** of women is less apparent in urban areas. Women occupy positions of responsibility in private and state-run companies and have a growing, albeit still very modest share of positions with political responsibility. However, they consistently earn less than men for the same work. Rural patterns of thought and behaviour determined by local traditions, which apply to over 70 per cent of the population, largely accord women a traditional role subordinate to men. The law penalises rape, but this does not apply to intra-marital rape. Anyone who rapes children or pregnant women is sent to a labour camp. The vice squad and youth aid officers say that 10 to 12 cases of rape are reported every day. There were 217 reports of rape in Antananarivo in 2008. Although punishable by law, domestic violence against women is a major problem. The National Institute for Public Health estimates that in 2007 around 55 per cent of all women were victims of domestic violence. A study carried out by the Ministry of Health and two non-governmental organisations shows that of 400 female respondents in Antananarivo 45 per cent experienced psychological violence and 35 per cent physical violence. Prostitution, which is on the increase as the result of sex tourism in tourist areas, is not a criminal offence. In 2007, however, legislation on the sexual exploitation of children, sex tourism involving children, child pornography and human trafficking was tightened. Sexual harassment is unlawful, but is a widespread practice, particularly in companies in the *Zône Franche* (production zones offering tax relief for international companies), where the share of women subjected to harassment is put at 50 per cent of the female workforce.

### 2.1.5 The situation of children

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health devote a great deal of attention to the situation of children. Lack of the requisite finance means that effective child protection and promotion is still a poor cousin of state welfare. Reliable statistics are hard to come by, but the following can serve as examples.

Madagascar has no uniform **system for the registration of births**, and children without a birth certificate are not accepted into state schools, nor are they entitled to health care. On the basis of a survey carried out in 2003/2004 the National Statistics Office (Institut National de la Statistique - INSTAT) puts the number of non-registered children at 25 per cent of all children under the age of five.

As regards **children's right to primary education**, the constitution states that primary education is free of charge and compulsory for all children up to the age of 14. Official government statistics talk of an effective school enrolment rate of between 80 and 96 per cent. As will be explained in greater detail later on (Access to basic education, p. 25), these figures are eyewash.

**Child abuse** is a serious problem nationwide. In 2007, therefore, the government agreed on an action plan to combat violence against children, child labour, sexual exploitation and trafficking in children. Together with UNICEF the Ministry of Health runs a nationwide network to fight child abuse and exploitation.

**Child marriages** occur throughout the country, especially in rural regions. Some 33 per cent of girls between the ages of 13 and 19 are married in accordance with traditional custom. In April 2007 the legal minimum age for marriage between boys and girls without parental permission was raised to 18.

**Child prostitution** is one of the most frequent forms of child labour. UNICEF has established that between 30 and 50 per cent of the prostitutes in the port town of Tamatave and on the island of Nosy are under 18.

The **disowning of children** is illegal but is often practised because of poverty and a lack of family support. No reliable statistics are available. There is a tradition in the south-west of the island according to which twins are regarded as a curse on the family. For that reason one or both twins are abandoned. In the wake of a detailed study of this practice in Mananzary an education programme has been launched for the local population. Outcast children are mostly looked after in Church welfare programmes.

**Human trafficking** has been legally prohibited since 2007, but it is still practised in the case of children and young women, mostly from rural areas. Children and girls are sold for prostitution (sex tourism), forced labour (including as domestic servants) and street trading. A law passed in 2007 banning human trafficking remains largely unimplemented.

### 2.1.6 The situation of the handicapped

There is a legal ban on **discrimination of the handicapped**. Their rights are laid down and state committees have the task of ensuring they are implemented. Theory is one thing, practice another. In 2005, Handicap International established that only in exceptional cases do handicapped people have access to health

services, basic education, employment and services provided specifically for the handicapped. The president may have signed the International Convention for the Rights of Disabled People in 2007, but that has done nothing to improve the situation.

### 2.1.7 Labour law

Employees in the public service and the private sector have the **right of association**, i.e. they can set up or join trade unions without prior approval from the employer. Discrimination of trade unionists is prohibited by law. However, fear of reprisals from employers and possible job losses hinder trade union membership. According to the Ministry for Public Service and Labour, 14 per cent of the employees in companies located in the *Zônes Franches* and 10 per cent of the workforce as a whole are organised in trade unions. Companies in the *Zônes Franches* now have their own guidelines deviating from local labour law for labour contracts, the duration of agreements, night work for women and overtime. People I talked to said that local trade unions and company doctors are often given money by employers to ensure they act in the interests of the factory owners.

**Child labour** is forbidden by law and 15 is the legal **minimum age** for a working contract involving occupational training. However, the study carried out by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on child labour in Madagascar in 2007 established that roughly 28 per cent of children and adolescents between the ages of 5 and 17 – 1.8 million all told – work full or part time, with 438,000 children doing dangerous work. In rural areas children mostly work in agriculture, fishing and animal husbandry. In urban areas they work in domestic households, goods and passenger transport (rickshaws), street trading, prostitution, quarries and bars and as beggars. The Committee for Human Rights adds: ‘Child labour, especially that performed by girls, in households must often be classified as slave labour.’<sup>9</sup> Children are also used in the production of marine salt, deep-sea diving and the shrimp industry. Since the ministry responsible for labour inspection is chronically understaffed, effective control is out of the question. Efforts such as the Malagasy Football Association’s ‘red card campaign’ to stop child labour are encouraging.

The Ministry for Public Service and Labour is also responsible for ensuring enforcement of **acceptable working conditions** and **minimum wages** laid down in labour law. In 2008, the statutory minimum monthly wage was 70,025 *ariaries* (currently about €27) for employees outside of agriculture and 71,000 *ariaries*

(currently about €28) for people employed in agriculture. Assuming basic education and health care were free, an average family (with 4.5 children) would need a minimum living wage of 300,000 *ariaries*. Even the minimum wage is not always paid – and that in itself is not sufficient to ensure that a family has enough to eat. However, poorly paid jobs are accepted in the light of massive unemployment and rampant poverty.

## 2.2 Basic human needs and human rights

In addition to supplying statistical data this section is designed to give the people I talked to in Madagascar a chance to report on their personal experiences, analyse the causes of the present situation and present their ideas on how the country’s problems might be solved. Their remarks cannot be considered valid for the country as a whole. However, while they were made in four very different environments, there is a strong degree of correspondence between them. This reinforces their reliability with respect to the overall situation in the country and underlines the representative nature of my contacts as regards the Church’s social and development work. Their statements on the individual sectors do not follow any preset pattern. They are rather the spontaneous expression of specific experiences and personal considerations.

All the statements and commentaries contained in this chapter are made in an awareness of, and with reference to, the fundamental rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood (Article 1). Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status’ (Article 2).<sup>15</sup>

### 2.2.1 Cost of living and subsistence income

‘Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services...’ (Article 25).<sup>16</sup>

#### Facts and figures<sup>10</sup>

“Poverty is a major problem in Madagascar.” In 2005, just under 14 million people or 67.5 per cent of the Malagasy population lived below the poverty line of one dollar a day – and that figure has undoubtedly increased in the mean-

time. Poverty is predominantly a rural phenomenon (73.5% - 80%), but urban poverty is also on the increase and affecting more and more women. There are marked regional differences. On the eastern coast and in the south of the island the poverty rate is 80 per cent. Only eight of the 22 regions in the country are below the average poverty rate.

#### **Observations and commentaries<sup>14</sup>**

The people I talked to in Madagascar described the indicators and faces of poverty they encounter every day by saying that poverty turns people into beggars. Poor people are badly clothed, dirty (lack of hygiene), undernourished, ill, rummage through garbage, live in dwellings unfit for human habitation without light and water, and survive by prostitution. Poverty means a constant struggle for survival. There is no time for anything else. Poverty leads to despair and encourages people to seek consolation in alcohol, drugs (in Antsiranana Khatt) and crime. The external physical attributes of poverty are accompanied by psychological and mental patterns of behaviour: aggression, loss of values, loss of self-esteem, lethargy, envy and resentment, loss of all sense of solidarity and a resulting brutal egotism. There is a “destruction of dignity” all along the line. However, poverty also produces the strength and the requisite strategies to survive. When imported cooking oil and flour went down in price in the capital, for instance, the number of stands for deep-fried pasta increased rapidly.

#### **Reasons for, and ways out of, poverty<sup>14</sup>**

In the eyes of the people I talked to, the reasons for the massive poverty in the country are predominantly of a structural nature. They include the high level of unemployment and a minimum wage below the poverty line for those who have a job. Other reasons are the chronic shortage of educational facilities (the women involved in the *Toko Vato* support programme are all illiterate), the low producer prices for agricultural produce, and the frightening lack of security. Not a day passes without armed robberies. The ‘crisis’ merely reinforces the grinding poverty. Restaurants and other tourist facilities in Antsiranana are being forced to lay off staff because of the lack of tourists. In and around Tana 100,000 employees in the *Zône Franche* are ‘technically redundant’ – without unemployment benefit and with the prospect of losing their jobs. Fortunately there have been no major tornados this year, but there is a drought in the south of the country. These are two additional, frequently recurring reasons for poverty.

Local solidarity, literacy and health education programmes, support for self-help initiatives, including for young people and in rural and urban areas, counselling on how to increase agricultural production, legal advice and survival

aid for prisoners are the customary measures adopted by the Church to combat poverty. But they are very limited in the context of finding a long-term ‘way out of poverty’. It is clear that the Church must become more ‘political’ in its fight against poverty, particularly in the contribution it can make to building up and expanding civil society, which can ultimately demand that the battle against poverty be waged at the local and national level. For example, with respect to the government’s planned increase in the share of the budget for social concerns: health, education, the legal system and social security.

#### **2.2.2 Food situation, malnutrition**

‘Everyone has the right to ... food.’ (Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)<sup>15</sup>

#### **Facts and figures<sup>10</sup>**

“Food insecurity and malnutrition are unbearable burdens for Madagascar and are a major risk factor for disease.”

42 per cent of children below the age of five are underweight and the numbers continue to climb. Half of child mortality is attributable to malnutrition.

In 65 per cent of households people do not know what they are supposed to live on, either because they do not have enough food to eat or they lack the money to buy basic foods. The greatest threat is to children in poor families, particularly in the countryside, pregnant and nursing women with an unbalanced diet and, in general, people living in regions where droughts and tornados are a regular occurrence: on the eastern coast, in the south-east and the south.

Jean Ziegler, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food from 2000 to 2008, says of the right to food: “Children who do not get enough of the right food from birth up to the age of five will suffer the consequences for the rest of their lives. Adults suffering temporarily from undernourishment can resume a normal life with the help of special forms of treatment administered under medical supervision. That is out of the question for children below the age of five. Without the right food their brain cells suffer irreparable damage.”<sup>16</sup>

#### **Observations and commentaries<sup>14</sup>**

An adequate and balanced diet is unaffordable for many people, as a result of which they experience both quantitative and qualitative malnutrition. “We eat enough in terms of the amount (full stomach) but not as regards the quality.” Rice is still affordable, but that does not apply to vegetables, meat and fish, which

are important for a balanced diet. There is a lack of awareness about balanced nutrition. Malnutrition means that schoolchildren lack the ability to concentrate. Among the children undergoing basic education in the Vozama programme there are between five and ten fatalities per year because of undernourishment and the diseases it causes.

#### **Reasons for the poor nutritional situation<sup>14</sup>**

Unemployment and poverty mean there is a lack of purchasing power. Farming methods are often traditional and yields are low. Foodstuffs are poorly 'managed'; vital supplies are sold off, resulting in periods of hunger before the next harvest. There is a rural exodus, especially among young men. Farmers are poorly equipped and lack money. There is slash burning and a decline in soil fertility. While the population increases, the amount of land under cultivation remains the same and the yields get smaller. There is no policy to sustain rural development and fight corrupt members of the administration. Cultural rites prevent a balanced diet. The cultivation of beans in the Manankara region is taboo, for example.

#### **Ways out of the food misery<sup>14</sup>**

Creation of jobs and income in towns. Food programmes for small children and school pupils. Targeted rural development programmes with an ecologically compatible increase in production, e.g. boosting the rice harvest by means of the SRI system (*Système de Riziculture Intensive*). Promotion of local products and import controls for foodstuffs. Marketing must be better organised. Nutritional education in schools and in mother-child programmes. Food taboos must be broken down.

### **2.2.3 Access to basic education**

'Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory.' (Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)<sup>15</sup>

#### **Facts and figures<sup>10</sup>**

According to the Ministry of the Interior, the school enrolment rate of 71 per cent in 1997 increased to 96 per cent in 2006 with no differences between boys and girls. However, there are marked regional differences, particularly in rural areas. Moreover, there is a very high dropout rate in primary schools. Depending on the region, only 30 per cent of children – and 47 per cent at the most – complete primary education. In overall terms, not even one in two children finishes primary school. There is also a high repetition rate, which is caused, amongst other things, by the large class sizes (60 to 80 pupils) and the frequent lack of

teaching staff. According to the Ministry, there has been an improvement in the national literacy rate, which is now over 70 per cent.

#### **Observations and commentaries<sup>10, 14</sup>**

Notwithstanding the commendable efforts of the Ravalomanana government, e.g. through the building of schools, the official abolition of school fees and the initial provision of school equipment, the official government claim that there is a 96 per cent school enrolment rate is difficult to accept. In the light of statements made by the people I talked to and of recent regional surveys, the real nationwide school enrolment rate is likely to be between 50 and 70 per cent. In poor neighbourhoods in the capital the school enrolment rate is 25 per cent and in rural regions around 30 per cent. It can be assumed, therefore, that currently an average of no more than 65 per cent of Malagasy children can exercise their right to basic education. Thus for at least one-third of them a dignified human development is questionable.

There is a lack of school buildings and teachers: "If there is a school, there are no teachers and if there are teachers, there is no school." Poverty is widespread both in towns and the countryside. School fees, which are still charged despite the government ruling, together with the distance of schools from the residential neighbourhoods often make school attendance impossible. Children cannot be enrolled if they do not have a birth certificate. Schools, especially in the countryside, only function temporarily. There are no teachers half the time because they have to travel to the centres to pick up their salary. Undernourishment means that children's ability to learn is impaired. In state schools there is virtually no supervision. The educational level of the pupils is dropping steadily.

#### **Reasons for the sorry state of education<sup>14</sup>**

Child labour is one of the main reasons for non-enrolment or dropping out of school both in the countryside and among the poor sections of the urban population. The attitude is that child labour is better than starvation. There is a general educational backwardness because of the break-up of many families. School education does not communicate any values; families are not integrated. After every change of government there is a new school policy, which undermines any consistency. In addition, there is a wide-ranging lack of qualifications and motivation amongst teachers, which results in poor quality teaching.

Teacher training facilities (*Ecole Normale*) have been scrapped. Non-enrolment at school has to do with people's experience that school education for young people is "of no value"; it gives them neither a job nor food to eat. Parents without an education do not send their children to school either.

### Ways out of the dilemma<sup>10, 14</sup>

Increase in the education budget. The allocation of 4 per cent of GDP for the education system reveals the low political status of education. There must be a comprehensive campaign to raise parents' awareness. Instead of every new government launching a new education policy, appropriate training must be given to teachers. There should be decentralisation of teacher training and pay; more schools are needed.

Private/church-run schools need to get together to form a pressure group (civil society) if they are to have genuine influence on state school policy. This is prevented by institutional self-interest, however.

### 2.2.4 Access to health care

'Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including ... medical care' (Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)<sup>15</sup>

### Facts and figures<sup>8, 9, 10</sup>

The average **life expectancy** at birth in Madagascar is 57 years for men and 61 years for women.<sup>13</sup> 48 per cent of the population have access to **health services** in urban areas but only 35 per cent in the countryside. Only four in ten people in the country as a whole have access to **clean water**. Here again there is a marked difference between towns (77 per cent) and the countryside (35 per cent). According to figures released by the Ministry of Water, a total of 12 million people in the country do not have access to clean water and 14 million have no toilets.

Regional differences in **medical care** vary from the extreme, albeit atypical, rate of one doctor for 128,000 people in the Boina region to one for every 8,900 people in Tana. The average rate elsewhere is one doctor for 25,000 people. Although the commendable extension of the free preventive vaccination programme has helped to reduce **child mortality**, Malagasy children are still exposed to high risks. At present, around 30 out of 1,000 children die during or after birth and 94 out of 1,000 in the first five years of life. The reasons for this are poverty, inadequate access to good-quality health services (only 51 per cent of deliveries take place under their supervision/care) and poor parenting.

**Childbirth mortality** is high. Every day at least eight Malagasy women die during delivery (469 for every 100,000 live births). **HIV/Aids** is a considerable problem in Madagascar. Although 'only' 0.5 per cent of the population is affected to date (the rate is 1.36 per cent among risk groups such as prostitutes), it is very likely to increase as a result of the widespread incidence of sexually transmitted

diseases and the general sexual risk behaviour. The frequency of **malaria** would appear to be on the decline as a result of educational programmes (e.g. the greater use of mosquito nets). **Tuberculosis** remains a big problem and the upward trend continues (97 per 1,000), whereas **leprosy** is steadily disappearing.

The health budget currently amounts to 1.5 per cent of GDP and 5.7 per cent of the total budget.

The conclusion is that the fundamental right to health care cannot be guaranteed for a large share of the Malagasy population.

### Observations and commentaries<sup>14</sup>

In rural areas, in particular, health services are neither accessible nor affordable for very many people. The poor receive inferior treatment. There is a lack of staff, equipment and essential drugs especially in the countryside, but also in urban health care facilities. In rural districts there is often also a lack of clean water and electricity. There is a general distrust of the health services among the population at large. The former rampant corruption – everybody had to pay for everything – has declined, but it still exists. The use of traditional methods of healing, both good methods and those used by charlatans, is widespread. There is a general lack of health education, as a result of which the traditional mentality and patterns of behaviour constitute a major obstacle to sustainable health improvement.

### Reasons for the precarious health situation<sup>14</sup>

General poverty. No comprehensive availability of health services, especially in rural areas. Poor management of the services; frequent staff absence. Salaries continue to be paid despite absence from work. Lack of health education. "Health is not the number one priority for people in Madagascar." Both the national and local health budgets are too low. The operating budget in the state hospital in Antsiranana, for example, does not allow any urgent repairs to be carried out or necessary equipment to be renewed. Everything is decided centrally by the ministry; there is no individual responsibility at hospital or regional level.

### Ways to better health care<sup>14</sup>

There is a national health policy. Pregnant women are treated free of charge. The same applies to certain forms of surgery. At the local level there are health insurance funds called *Mutuelles* (the monthly contribution in Anosibe/Tana is 10,000 *ariaries* or € 2) and equalisation funds for poor people. To reduce corruption in hospitals the administration of medicines and the ambulance service is handled by external, independent associations (Antsiranana Hospital).



Installation of new infrastructure including provision of staff. Appropriate payment and supervision of employees at all levels, inter alia by raising the health budget. More deontology in the training of medical personnel. No health service without a health promotion programme/health education programme, especially for women and children. Health training in schools and literacy programmes. Improvement of traditional methods of treatment. Extension and funding of local health insurance companies.

### 2.2.5 Access to work and social security

‘Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment... Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity...’ (Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

‘Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security...’ (Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)<sup>16</sup>

#### Facts and figures<sup>10</sup>

The **labour market** is structured very unequally: 80 per cent of employees work in agriculture, 12.5 per cent in the formal private and public production and service sectors, and 7.5 per cent in the informal employment sector. According to the report on the Millennium Goals, the national unemployment rate was just 2.9 per cent (2006), above all among young adults in urban areas. 45 per cent of the workforce in the agricultural sector is underemployed. For employees in the private sector and the public service (20 per cent all told) the **National Social Security Fund**. CNAPS (*Caisse Nationale de Prévoyance Sociale*) is also the family insurance fund (maternity benefit, financing of childbirth, child benefit), the industrial accident and occupational disease fund, and the pension fund. According to its own figures, CNAPS insures 504,000 employees and 24,000 employers, pays child benefit for 195,000 children to 90,000 parents and pays pensions to 53,000 pensioners.

#### Observations and commentaries<sup>14</sup>

As is the case with the statistics on the school enrolment rate, the official statistical data on labour are also difficult to follow. According to the latest survey in one of the poor neighbourhoods in the capital, a maximum of 15 per cent of people of working age there have a regular and **formal job**, about 10 per cent

are tradesmen and farmers, and the rest survive by means of informal activities, such as street trading. The official **employment statistics** for this neighbourhood put the unemployment rate at 5.05 per cent, whilst classifying just under 70 per cent as ‘traders’, i.e. employees, even though the vast majority of these people sell something on an informal basis in order to survive. 70 per cent of people ‘in gainful employment’ throughout the country – and as many as 90 per cent of people in the capital – are active in the informal sector. Moreover, 88 per cent of ‘employees’ in rural areas receive no wages. In the light of all this, **unemployment statistics** suggesting a national jobless rate of 2.2 per cent are more than questionable.

The CNAPS figures for **those with social insurance** confirm what I was told, i.e. that only a tiny minority of the population has access to social protection in the event of illness, old age and other situations of social need. In fact, even the few people who do have social insurance have difficulty in getting security benefits. Four years after retiring, a former civil servant had to fight to get his meagre **pension**. As the daily *Madagascar Midi* reports, many pensioners die before ever getting to enjoy their pensions.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, there is also verifiable corruption in the management of CNAPS.<sup>18</sup>

**Work** is a luxury article and even those who have a job cannot be sure of keeping it. Retail or street trading is not a genuine form of employment that generates an income. The informal labour market provides earnings on which people can survive but not live. One example is provided by the women who crush stones for use in concrete in the sweltering heat in Antsiranana. Those who do such work are physically and mentally exhausted by the age of 45. One woman I talked to in Tana said: “We Malagasy do not live, we survive.” Domestic servants are mostly exploited and have no social insurance. Migration from the countryside swells the army of the unemployed in the towns. The political crisis threatens up to 100,000 jobs in the *Zône Franche*. In Antsiranana the lack of tourists means a loss of jobs and income. The minimum wage is not enough to live on. There is an uneven distribution of jobs throughout the country: companies in the *Zône Franche* are mostly located around the capital, while the regions are neglected. Social security only exists on paper (the law) and is practised to a very limited extent. Many employees are not registered and poorly paid to boot. They work, nonetheless, to get what little they earn.

### **Reasons for unemployment and social insecurity<sup>14</sup>**

There is no consistent employment policy. Labour legislation is in place, but it is too feeble and inefficient and rarely implemented, if at all. Poor training does not make people fit for work. There is a lack of professionalism in rural areas, too. Those who receive support from their relatives in Europe do not make any effort to work. Lethargy goes hand in hand with drug consumption. There is little entrepreneurial spirit. People expect the government to provide them with everything. The high level of taxation and overheads (e.g. for electricity) makes it hard to set up small businesses. Many employers offer no social security. There is no effective control of social insurance. Labour inspectors are corrupt and can be bought off.

### **Paths to work and social security<sup>14</sup>**

The government's declared policy of ensuring 'high levels of employment' in public investment programmes needs to be systematically implemented. New fields of work need to be opened up, e.g. tourism in Antsiranana. Labour legislation must be improved, employers and employees informed about labour legislation, and the trade union movement strengthened.

Initial 'social security' could be achieved by means of jobs and income that make it possible to live. Politicians face the challenge of setting up a comprehensive social security network in both the towns and the countryside. Until that happens, local solidarity campaigns need to be organised. Local health insurance companies must be supported. CNAPS must be effectively decentralised and corruption within its ranks exposed. The guilty must be punished and effective controls set up – a case for BIANCO.

## **3. Background to the human rights situation in Madagascar**

Politicians of every hue and in every government in Madagascar to date have praised the country's tremendous human and economic potential. They are right. There is potential, indeed.

### **3.1 Man-made poverty in a rich country**

The country has arable land resources in very different climates, a great variety of production potential, and fishing resources. This not only makes it possible to feed the population in an adequate and appropriate manner, but also to create markets and exports that generate income. However, this is conditional upon future governments establishing clear-cut priorities in their development policy. In doing so, they must give precedence to protection of the country's natural resources and comprehensive rural development and make sure that the requisite measures can be put into practice. The demonstrable lack of political will to develop and implement a realistic, cross-sectoral and sustainable economic and social development plan is one of the main reasons why it is currently impossible for so many Malagasy to lead a life in dignity. The same applies by analogy to the use of the rich mineral resources such as chromium, graphite, mica, precious and semi-precious stones, and now oil, too.

### **3.2 Downward political spiral**

The environmentally compatible exploitation of this rich potential and an economic use that would benefit the public budget rather than local and international private pockets, as has been the case hitherto, could serve as the other important pillar of a healthy, long-term local economy that would permit a more balanced development on the 'great island'.<sup>19</sup> However, that would require a fundamentally different policy to that pursued by the governments to date. The political drama in several acts that has been played out with elements of repetition since the country gained its independence has three key components.

#### **3.2.1 First reason: The political class**

The first component is the country's 'political class.' The two meetings in Maputo in August 2009 provided an ideal stage for the representatives of this class, incorporating all the various political movements or *Mouvances*. The African

Union's group of mediators invited not only the four main rivals, Didier Ratsiraka, Albert Zafy, Marc Ravalomanana and Andry Rajoelina, the first three of whom alone constitute a representative kaleidoscope of the 'political class' and have remained faithful to their reputation: 'These politicians are quite capable of making up with one another, provided nobody lays a hand on their new piece of the cake – unless they are left with the original piece or given an even larger one, that is.'<sup>20</sup>

Also invited were their followers, accurately described in *Midi Madagasikara* as follows: 'The composition of the various *Mouvances* in Maputo reveals a speciality of the Malagasy political class – its unlimited ability to swim with the tide.' They are, as it were, professional turncoats, 'many of whom are repeat offenders who switched their allegiance from Ratsiraka to Zafy in 1991, from Zafy to Ravalomanana in 1996 and from Zafy and Ratsiraka to Ravalomanana in 2002.'<sup>21</sup> The newspaper names 10 representatives of this category as typical of many others. How can serious political change take place in such circumstances?

And what about the population, the 'people' who are regularly mistreated by the politicians? 'They remain a permanent alibi ... In reality they provide the preferred playground for the politicians, on which they play and prepare for their power struggles.'<sup>21</sup> Reporting on a television debate involving members of all four *Mouvances* on 12 August 2009, the daily newspaper *La Vérité* chose as the headline for its article 'A Kafkaesque spectacle' and went on to write: 'The general impression is that of disgust with the politicians... People with a well-known, more than disreputable past curry favour for themselves as vice-presidential or ministerial hopefuls... The politicians, who constantly lecture the public about the need for a change of attitude, have not the slightest intention of changing their own mentality, which is characterised by greed for money, power, honorary positions and advantage.'<sup>22</sup>

It is no surprise that the country is experiencing a steady downward spiral with a 'political class' of this calibre. It is beyond the scope of this booklet to analyse which social groups were behind the various governments and profited from each and every one of them. The questions remain: Why is the 'political class' as it is, and where were, or are, the positive political forces who could have prevented the journey to disaster or who could put things back on the rails in the future?

### 3.2.2 Second reason: The lack of political awareness

Politicians have been able to do what they have done because in the social development of Madagascar so far 'the people' have barely developed any political awareness. Politicians have more or less deliberately kept 'the people' in politi-

cal immaturity, as a result of which they are ultimately only an 'instrument in the perverse games of the politicians, who unscrupulously manipulate them to ensure they remain infantile and feeble-minded.'<sup>20</sup> This has been possible because the steadily growing poverty since the late 1970s, the concomitant breakdown of traditional forms of solidarity, very individualistic strategies for survival and the feeling of having been forgotten by the politicians have undermined political thinking and mobilisation. The former Archbishop and Cardinal of Antananarivo, Victor Razafimahatratra, put it this way: "The problems we have at the moment are probably not so much the result of the political structures as of personal and collective responses to power, money and responsibility... The people have the feeling that they have been ditched and have lost all sense of moral direction... It is not possible to believe what is said any more, everyone is paralysed by fear, and envy and jealousy prevent local leaders from developing a clear profile..."<sup>23</sup> In addition, there is the distasteful example of the 'political class', which does not encourage involvement in politics.

A further obstacle to the development of a political awareness is the mentality of the Malagasy, which is still characterised by traditional thought and behaviour patterns. This includes the concept of authority within the family, in local social structures and ultimately at the national level, which is known as '*raya-man-dreny*' ('father and mother'). Such authority requires obedience; it cannot be called into question and a great deal, if not everything, is expected from it. Ever since the ominous '*Malagasification*' of politics, traditional Malagasy 'virtues', such as more or less uncritical respect for authority, have been systematically propagated. The 'civil service' in this context is primarily synonymous with a position of power from the highest down to the local level. This neither encourages an appreciation of the need for politics to be communicated and explained in a comprehensible manner, incorporating the active involvement of the population, nor does it promote the development of a self-confident, critical attitude to those in power. This ties in with the experience (a) that Church and other NGO education and development programmes in Madagascar have long used traditional teaching methods involving little student participation and (b) that there has only been a gradual appreciation of the fact that "You can't develop people, because people can only develop themselves" (Julius Nyerere). Long-term human development can therefore only be achieved through the active participation of those affected.

The systematic ideologisation and politicisation of another core element of Malagasy thinking and feeling called *fihavanana* – the expression of customary family and group solidarity, the traditional social network of all those who belong to the same group – is another factor holding up the development of a political culture. Irrespective of any propagandistic use of this term to invoke the 'unity of

the Malagasy nation' – including in the Church – it comprises another element that obstructs a culture of criticism and conflict that is essential for the development of political awareness. Within the extended family and the group to which you belong *fihavanana* does not allow any problems concerning a member of the group to be openly addressed. This makes it impossible to resolve problems or conflicts. It should be pointed out, however, that traditional society had other mechanisms it could draw on for conflict resolution. For the 'political class' the unashamed exploitation of this emotionally important but now meaningless term is just one more way of undermining critical thinking and the development of a peaceful culture of conflict.

The cautious and still completely inadequate development of a self-assured civil society, the counterpart and complement of political power that has its roots in solidarity, is attributable, amongst other things, to the lack of political awareness in the population as well as among the majority of those responsible for Church and other social and development programmes.

### 3.2.3 Third reason: The cultural trap

The reference to the Malagasy 'mentality', the inherited or acquired mental and emotional pattern that every individual has, leads straight to the third main cause for the problematical developments in Madagascar: the cultural factors that hinder progress.<sup>24</sup> Church social ethics says: 'Culture rightly demands respect and enjoys a certain inviolability within the limits of the common good, as long, of course, as it preserves the rights of the individual and the community, whether particular or universal.'<sup>25</sup> That applies to the Malagasy cultures, as it does to all cultures. Culture, as the expression of an identity derived from one's own roots which creates a healthy sense of self-esteem, is the inherent right of every individual. For Madagascar this means that an end must be put to the fateful 'myth of a single Malagasy culture'. Even the Malagasy language varies starkly among the different ethnic groups, although it is certainly a unifying factor for them all. The myth of a *single* Malagasy culture is ultimately the expression of a hidden form of racism, which means the de facto predominance of one particular culture brought about by non-recognition of cultural diversity. The aforementioned political monopolisation and ideologisation of key cultural terms and values removes these values from their authentic environment, thereby turning them into completely empty clichés, which nonetheless enjoy emotional and idealistic acceptance by many Malagasy and thus continue to be turned to good political effect, including in the Church.

Since 1972, in particular, the political and ideological monopolisation of core values has gone hand in hand with a certain insular absolutisation of Malagasy culture. This has resulted in a cultural integralism, which focuses on the self-sufficiency of Malagasy culture and rejects any ideas from outside, thereby denying non-Malagasy the chance to understand the Malagasy: "You can't understand, because you're not Malagasy." On a number of occasions I have been through the painful experience myself of hearing people categorically dismiss important development policy considerations and practical inspiration from outside, e.g. from other African countries, as unnecessary, their argument being "We've got all that in our culture already." This explains the background to the statement by the army commander about human rights that I quoted in the introduction: "We don't need any lectures from Amnesty International. No one has deeper respect for human rights than the Malagasy." In recent years, however, I have encountered an increasing open-mindedness towards ideas and experiences from Africa and Europe among the Malagasy people I have talked to and those in charge of development programmes.

Every culture has to develop and Malagasy cultures are no exception. Articulated from the Christian point of view, the first Africa Synod says: 'Every culture needs to be transformed by Gospel values in the light of the Paschal Mystery' and 'It is by looking at the Mystery of the Incarnation and of the Redemption that the values and counter-values of cultures are to be discerned.'<sup>27</sup> The constant reference the Malagasy I talked to made to the local 'mentality' as an obstacle to development and the implementation of human rights, and the customs they referred to, such as the disowning of twins and the generally accepted discrimination of women, should be sufficient reason to distinguish cultural values from counter-values, to recognize the limitations of indigenous culture and to open up to an invigorating exchange with other cultures and experiences. For, as Father Christian Alexandre, a professor of philosophy, puts it: "The Malagasy is not an island."<sup>24</sup>

Ultimately, however, the issue at stake is a rediscovery of the authentic social values of the Malagasy cultures, such as *fihavanana*, relieving them of their ideological distortion and giving them a new and extended importance and vitality in the light of evangelical values and an all-encompassing solidarity. Sylvain Urfer has supplied a Malagasy proverb which vividly explains the inter-generational concept of *fihavanana* or group solidarity: "People are like a banana tree. The fresh leaves, which are rolled up like a spiral, are the banana tree; the fruits which point heavenwards are the banana tree; the dry bark that peels off from the tree is the banana tree; the bunch of bananas that hangs from the tree is the banana tree."<sup>26</sup>

## 4. Whither Madagascar? – Future prospects

There is, however, a Madagascar that lives and has preserved its dignity despite all the poverty. While the earlier description of Madagascar as a ‘happy island’ is no longer appropriate, it is – for all its problems – not an ‘island of the damned’. A great deal has changed for the positive since my last stay in Madagascar two years ago. Roads have been built. There are now asphalted roads from Antsirana in the north of the island to Tulear in the extreme south-west. New shops and department stores, smart hotels, restaurants and snack bars have been built. Mobile phones are to be seen everywhere and prepaid cards for them can be bought on every street corner. Flights to and from Europe are mostly full with Malagasy travellers and the astonishing number of large off-road vehicles on the streets is a sign of relative prosperity among a small middle and upper class and an indication of economic strength.

In recent years, new schools and health centres have been built all over the country and vaccination programmes carried out for children in municipalities, although these vary from region to region. Many private and public services are running smoothly even during the ‘crisis’, thus illustrating the vitality of the social and economic infrastructure. As the local newspaper articles I have cited confirm, there is extensive freedom of expression and of the media, which has paved the way for critical observation of political, economic and social developments. Malagasy civil society, still a very delicate plant, is alive and evolving. The regular communiqués issued by SeFaFi, the Organisation for the Observation of Public Life, are evidence of political maturity and the will to contribute to positive changes in the country and society.

An important part of life in Madagascar is the adaptability of the Malagasy and their astonishing determination to stay alive, which – despite the crises, corruption and cronyism of those in power – enables the majority of the population to survive with a certain dignity at least and to preserve their zest for life. This has to do with the resilience that comes from a healthy life and community culture, which flourishes despite social upheavals.

Last but not least, the Malagasy have also managed to withstand the recurrent political turmoil and radical changes without a massive resort to violence, although there is no guarantee that this will continue to be the case in the future. It is important to be aware of these positive and hopeful aspects of life in Madagascar to avoid clichés about the country and its people.

The road ahead for Madagascar is far from easy. It needs to overcome its political crisis as quickly as possible and return to the normal situation of a government and public administration that enjoys the support of the majority of the population. This is the only way strategies for a new and sustainable development can be devised and implemented, and the course set for the difficult road out of poverty. The international community, which is playing a dubious role in the current radical changes, will then hopefully be prepared to engage in fair cooperation again. The invitation extended to Andry Rajoelina to participate in the UN assembly, followed by a ban on him speaking there, was not a propitious example.

The road out of poverty will not be the ‘rapid development’ propagated when the Ravalomanana government came to power. Too many things are in a sorry state after so many years of mismanagement for that to happen. It is to be hoped that those who are new in positions of political responsibility will progress down the road ahead together with the public and with all the truly vital forces the country has at its call. If the Church is to become part of these vital forces, it too must be prepared to question its customary modes of thought and action and to tread new paths with its ‘people’ so that it can better serve its purpose of being ‘light’ and ‘leaven’ in Malagasy society. Three areas of activity, which are close to the hearts of many of the Malagasy I talked to, will now be considered, as they are important factors on the ‘way forward’.

### 4.1 Developing a culture of participation

Given that the maltreated ‘people’ has long been ‘the politicians’ preferred playground, on which they play and prepare for their power struggles<sup>20</sup>, it is high time it was given back its role as ‘sovereign’. A first step in this direction would be the staging of free and fair parliamentary elections and elections for a new president. In the opinion of the participants I talked to, the regional conferences on the future of the country held by the transition government in all the regions were, for all their organisational inadequacies, an important step towards genuine public participation.

Civil society organisations, such as SeFaFi, the Organisation for the Observation of Public Life, have made constructive proposals on how future elections can be made fair and transparent.<sup>28</sup> They include a revision of the electoral law and the updating of the electoral register to include all those now entitled to vote. Crucial to fair elections will be the setting up of an independent national electoral commission that can guarantee an accurate evaluation of the election results. The bishops took up the civil society proposals in their Declaration to the Nation of

24 March 2009. 'The Church is not presenting a government agenda, nor is it taking sides with any person or party ... Nevertheless, we would like to make a number of important suggestions for improvement. Amongst other things, the Constitutional Court must be reinstalled. There must be safeguards for freedom of speech and assembly and for access to the media. The elections must be free and transparent. The funding of political parties and election campaigns must be disclosed. There must be clarification of the legal status of the political parties. The administration of public resources and goods must be transparent... These provisions must be guaranteed in the Constitution and must not be constantly called into question.'<sup>29</sup> It is to be hoped that these civil society voices will be heard by those who exercise political responsibility.

In talking here of civil society, I am aware that it is still in its infancy throughout Madagascar and consists essentially of a mere handful of organisations which take a critical view of politics and society or, as NGOs, regard themselves as part of civil society. It is astonishing and pleasing to see this civil society contributing in such a resolute and courageous manner to the development of politics in the country. Their aforementioned proposal of acting in unison with the army as a mediator to seek and find a balance between the rival political forces could be a way of ending the dangerous power struggle. A nationally organised and active civil society, i.e. a platform of pressure groups, professional associations, trade unions, non-governmental organisations and churches, which is recognised as an equal partner by government institutions and can represent the interests of the population, is virtually non-existent. However, a civil society is needed to bring about representative popular participation in social developments and the implementation of policies that meet public needs.

While this poses a challenge for the groups listed above, it is also a challenge for the Church, which cannot afford merely to observe and support the development of the community or locally isolated groups and have elections observed by *Justitia et Pax*. Church organisations and institutions must see themselves as a point of departure and moving force of civil society and network internally and with other social groups to usher in an effective civil society. This should happen with the blessing of the official Church, which can thus credibly demonstrate that it is not concerned about its own power as an institution but about justice, peace and human dignity for all. The first Africa Synod puts it as follows: 'An authentic democracy, which respects pluralism, [is] one of the principal routes along which the Church travels together with the people.'<sup>30</sup> These ideas were not familiar to representatives of Church social programmes, organizations and associations I met and talked to.

## 4.2 Education as a prerequisite of political awareness

Education is the heart of personal and social development. That is a general truth, but it applies all the more when a society finds itself in the throes of a radical change from a traditional model of society with its inherent thought and behaviour patterns to a new, different understanding of life and society. Whether they appreciate it or not, this is the daily experience of most Malagasy, which presents a challenge for the provision of comprehensive and appropriate basic and further education for all. Education geared to local needs, above all in primary education, could make it easier for all Malagasy to grow into the new Madagascar with all the demands made of a modern society and so pave the way for a society which gives equal opportunities to as many people as possible.

This is first and foremost the **task of the government**. People in Madagascar told me what needs to be done in basic education. Education and training must be given a higher status in the budget. The curricula must be revised to lay the ground for genuine 'Malagasification', i.e. the adaptation of content and teaching methods to life as the Malagasy experience it. Teachers need to be instructed not just in matters of content but also (again) in the theory and methodology of education. It is also important to install adequate infrastructure with the appropriate equipment, provide free access to basic education, bring in parents and ensure effective supervision of the school system. Crucially, the new government must undertake serious and realistic planning so that these and all the other challenges to a comprehensive education system can be tackled and resolved in the medium and longer term.

Given its substantial contribution to education at all levels, the **Church** has a very important role to play in this process. In the hope that there will be a government programme for the renewal of education it is important that the Church play an active part in it and contribute its experience and knowledge of existing problems. The criterion for the credibility of Church education work is the academic and teaching quality of its institutions and general accessibility to them. As regards the impact of Church education work on society, however, it is crucial that, in addition to academic and teaching quality, Church institutions should communicate Christian values in line with ecclesiastical social ethics, social competence and balanced individual development as the 'added value' Church education work can contribute. That also places demands on the educational practice of the Church.

Apart from its considerable involvement in the formal education sector, there is an educational component in virtually all the Church's many social and development programmes. Content and methods are always explained, be it in

programmes for rural and urban development, support programmes for women or vocational promotion programmes. The question arises here as to whether knowledge is communicated solely through ‘chalk and talk’ (*vulgarisation*) or whether those responsible for the programmes accompany their students on a journey of discovery to the basic human values and techniques that are being taught (*animation*). Only the latter approach can effect lasting change. The same applies to the catechism and preaching, which are also intended to educate people and instil in them a belief that can change the world.

As a specific Church contribution to the development and promotion of social competence, all its educational work should be inspired by **ecclesiastical social ethics**. The Church’s social teachings contain timeless statements on, and guidelines for, the respect of human dignity, the building of a community rooted in solidarity and the preservation of creation. They can thus give a consistent human and social dimension to the Church’s own educational work. However, this would mean that ecclesiastical social ethics, as called for in many social encyclicals and in the synod paper of the first Africa Synod, would need to form an integral and significant part of all educational programmes for Church personnel, including the training of priests.

### 4.3 Reconciliation between the ethnic groups and with history

If a common understanding of history is an essential foundation stone for a sense of common national identity, then the Malagasy nation has no such stone. The subjugation – partly by force, partly by contractual agreement – of the majority of the Malagasy peoples to the rule of the highland Merina kingdom in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century is officially described as the birth of a single Malagasy nation. However, the ethnic groups ‘united’ in this way see things differently.

A priest and author from the eastern Malagasy ethnic group of the Betsimisaraka calls this founding phase of the nation ‘its first colonisation’.<sup>31</sup> In other words, the Malagasy nation does not have the uniting foundation stone of a common understanding of history. Hence the common house of the nation lacks an important stabilising element. The Malagasy could probably have coped with this situation if political, cultural (education) and economic privileges had not been consistently granted to the highland region around the capital, Antananarivo, the former heartland of the Merina people, from the time of the Merina kingdom, through the French colonial period, including when missionary work was carried out, right up to the present day. Everybody in Madagascar knows that a certain ‘middle class’ in the capital has largely pulled the political and economic strings in all the regimes to date and forms the influential part of the aforementioned

‘political class’, which in the meantime has been strengthened by people from the coastal areas (*côtiers*), however.

The current concentration of companies in the *Zône Franche* around Antananarivo is an indication of this unequal treatment of the regions. Despite the fact that three out of the five presidents to date were originally *côtiers*, the permanent political, social and economic neglect of the coastal regions and the *côtiers* adds a new dimension of discrimination – both felt and experienced – to the ‘different understanding of history’, which is a causal factor for conflict. This neglect harbours a dangerous clash potential, which reached its provisional climax after Ravalomanana seized power, when a number of provinces issued a declaration of independence and were sealed off by army units loyal to Ratsiraka. The political decentralisation measures carried out were too half-hearted to defuse this conflict potential.

If Madagascar is to develop peacefully in the future, it will first of all require open recognition of the cultural differences and tensions that have arisen for historical reasons and in the wake of social and political developments. Once this recognition has been achieved, steps must be taken to bring about reconciliation. The planned publication by *Foi et Justice* of history books written by authors from different ethnic backgrounds that take account of people’s different experiences is undoubtedly an important step towards reconciliation, particularly since these books have been produced for school teaching purposes. Many more such initiatives are needed in all areas of school education to bring home to children and young people both the richness and the limitations of their local cultures. But there also needs to be effective political and economic decentralisation that really deserves the name. It should give the regions the freedom to decide and act so that they can introduce and support a form of regional development that is appropriate to the needs and circumstances of the population and will enable the region’s interests to be effectively represented vis-à-vis the central government. This would enable Madagascar to move towards a national settlement and thus achieve national reconciliation. The Church should see in this a key element of its pastoral mission. It is to be hoped that the second Africa Synod devoted to the issues of reconciliation, justice and peace will provide the right stimulus for the Church’s work for peace and reconciliation. Madagascar is a rewarding field for its activities.

## 5. Signs and pillars of hope

I should like to conclude my examination of the reality and causes of human rights violations in Madagascar and my look at the 'road ahead' by referring to a number of useful ecclesiastical and Church-related education and development programmes that provide practical and promising experience. I have already referred to the research and publishing activities of *Foi et Justice*, which will soon be publishing the new history books, and to the social and political work of SeFaFi.

What follows is a presentation of three additional initiatives and programmes which, each in its own way, contribute to the education and organisation of the people concerned and thus to overcoming resignation and passivity in a socially and politically difficult environment.

**The first initiative** is a response to the disastrously low school enrolment rate in the rural surroundings of the small town of Ambositra in central Madagascar. For over 10 years now a programme called *Vozama* (Save the Malagasy Children) has brought rural communities together in a literacy programme for children who have not enrolled at school so that they can gain access to formal primary education. A total of 9,800 children are currently being prepared in 690 village literacy units for entrance to primary school. An essential element of the programme is the active involvement of the parents, which is required from the very beginning. They have to provide the room for the programme, share in the financing of the personnel and participate in a regular further training programme on locally relevant issues such as agriculture and health. If these conditions cannot be fulfilled, the programme does not take place. Other important elements are the 'teaching staff' for the programme, mostly young women, who are recruited in the respective villages and are trained by *Vozama* for the programme, which is supported and supervised by *Vozama* inspectors. The dialogue with the parents generates additional activities, such as help in obtaining birth certificates for to date 6,000 children, who thus have access to school and health services. In the meantime reforestation programmes are being carried out in the villages. Wherever possible, all the activities take place in close agreement and collaboration with the local authorities. The school enrolment rate has increased considerably in the villages where the programme has been conducted. Understandably, the programme depends on external funding. But that does not nullify its model character in achieving an astonishing mobilisation of the local population. They not only do what they can to ensure that the children gain access to primary edu-

cation; they are also prepared to 'go to school' themselves to get regular further training. Hopefully, future governments will recognise grass-roots initiatives of this kind and reduce their dependence on outside funding by increasing domestic financing for such programmes.

**The second programme** is in Anosibe, a poor neighbourhood in the lower part of the capital Antananarivo. It shows that even in such a difficult urban setting it is possible for community self-help to be organised and implemented, in this case by ADA, the *Association pour le Développement d'Anosibe* (Association for the Development of Anosibe), in the parish of St. Jérôme in Anosibe. Set up in conjunction with local self-help schemes, such as the founding and administration of a micro-credit scheme to finance small family-run businesses, ADA became the local think-tank and supervisory body for schemes to improve living conditions in the neighbourhood. ADA went through its baptism of fire as a civic action group in 2001/2002 during the planning stage of a large supermarket in Anosibe to serve the whole of the capital. Together with other organisations ADA organised active resident and trader participation and assisted the municipal authorities with their preparations. After a change of mayor in 2002, this exemplary public participation was abruptly stopped without comment.<sup>32</sup> ADA survived its acid test, however, and is continuing undeterred with its support for local self-help schemes. It is no accident that in ADA's parish a locally supported school fund has been set up for needy families to help them send their children to school. Madagascar truly has tremendous human potential that can be tapped in giving shape to grass-roots democracy.

**The third example** I should like to mention is the work of the diocesan coordination office for Church social and development work (*CDD Coordination Diocésaine pour le Développement* [Diocesan Coordination for Development]) in the northern archbishopric of Antsiranana. The CDD does not carry out any development programmes of its own with the population. Its task is to coordinate the urban and rural social and development programmes run by the archbishopric and Church associations, the social work of the diocesan Caritas and pastoral care for prisoners. This entails encouraging the various players and organisations involved in ecclesiastical social work to coordinate their activities and to work together, organising this coordination and cooperation and promoting it by means of the requisite initial and further training schemes. It also means working together with various organisations to develop and communicate a common model of Church social work. Ultimately it involves putting an end to both the go-it-alone attitude that exists in many dioceses and the splitting of Church social activists



as well as developing synergies between organisations and programmes. This can give Church social activities greater inner coherence, make them more effective and thus enhance their credibility.

During my stay in Antsiranana I experienced for myself what coordination can signify and achieve. The CDD had invited responsible officials in the diocesan social programmes and associations, such as Caritas, Justice and Peace, representatives of the youth labour organisation COJ and the labour movement IRAY AINA, pastoral carers in prisons (*Aumônerie Catholique des Prisons*), a hospital doctor, the woman responsible for the management of medicines, and representatives of Catholic schools to engage in an exchange of ideas and opinions on the current social and political situation in Madagascar. The advance distribution (by the CDD) and filling out of a questionnaire (by the participants) meant that the discussion was well prepared and it was possible to provide an impressive survey of life as it is at the moment in this part of Madagascar. The discussion also made it clear that there is a wish for closer cooperation, which could pave the way for the growth of civil society out of the Church groups.

Another important component of the work of the CDD is to ensure the quality of the programmes, organisations and associations by means of regular initial and continuing training for the programme staff in key areas, such as participatory methods of communication, programme and personnel management, monitoring and evaluation. Along with the work carried out in the development programmes, this coordination and training work for Church social players is both necessary and important for the impact and political status of Church social work in Malagasy society. It would also be good if such coordination in matters of content and strategy were to take place between the dioceses and at the national level.

This series of positive examples of effective social activities carried out by the Church could be extended. However, the three I have focused on give cause for encouragement, because they show that the Church can play a very practical role in shaping and developing Malagasy society. There is a need for more unity in the activities conducted as well as in the efforts made to put Church social activities on a common footing. At the same time these activities must be regularly adapted to changes in society. If that turns out to be the case, the Church in Madagascar will be able to make a substantial contribution to the 'way out of poverty' and, moreover, to the building of a society based on human dignity and human rights.

## Notes

- 1 From the Amnesty International Public Statement 'Madagascar: Investigate killings by security forces', AI Index: AFR 35/001/2009, 13 February 2009
- 2 Daily newspaper *L'Express* of 25 June 2009
- 3 Paragraph 68 of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* issued by the 1<sup>st</sup> African Synod in 1994
- 4 In outlining the political developments since independence as well as in the sections on the role of the Church, the background to the human rights situation, and the prospects for the future I drew much inspiration from Father Sylvain Urfer's two social analytical anthologies, *Le Doux et L'Amer* [The Bitter and the Sweet] (2003) and *L'Espoir et le Doute* [Hope and Doubt] (2006), both of which were published in *Foi et Justice* [Faith and Justice].
- 5 *Madagascar Express*, 15 September 2009: '13.5% inflation and just 2% economic growth in 2009'
- 6 *Foi et Justice* [Faith and Justice], an organisation run by the Jesuits, has compiled and published socially relevant Church statements in the four volumes of *Eglise et Société à Madagascar* [Church and Society in Madagascar].
- 7 Daily newspaper *La Vérité* of 19 September 2009: 'Way out of the crisis – exit for the international mediators?'
- 8 2008 Human Rights Report: Madagascar of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, 25 February 2009
- 9 United Nations, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Human Rights Committee, session held from 12 to 30 March 2007 in New York, Consideration of reports submitted by States parties, Madagascar
- 10 *Rapport National de suivi des OMD-2007*, Vision 2015 Madagascar, produced and published by the Malagasy Ministry of the Interior and the UN Coordinator in Madagascar. Most of the statistics date from 2005.
- 11 *Madagascar aujourd'hui, un pays ouvert sur l'avenir*, Edition Cerica Sarl, 2005
- 12 World Development Report 2009: Reshaping Economic Geography, published 6 November 2008
- 13 Human Development Report 2008, Fighting Climate Change, published for the United Nations Development Programme UNDP, November 2007
- 14 During a fact-finding mission to Madagascar from 23 August to 8 September 2009 I talked individually and in groups to a total of 84 people from Church welfare and development programmes, lay movements and members of religious orders in Antananarivo, Ambositra, Antsiranana and Tamatave about the situation in Madagascar. The findings and information I gathered from these conversations have been taken into consideration throughout the report, but they feature prominently in the section on 'Human rights violations in the field of basic human needs'.
- 15 United Nations Organisation, Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of the General Assembly of 10 December 1948
- 16 Régis Debray and Jean Ziegler '*Il s'agit de ne pas se rendre*' (It is not a question of surrender), Paris, Arléa, 1984
- 17 *Midi Madagasikara*, 2 July 2009
- 18 *La Vérité*, 20 August 2009: '*CNAPS une affaire louche*' (CNAPS – a disreputable affair)
- 19 A collection of articles entitled "*A qui appartient l'état?*" (Who owns the state?), published in 2008 by the civil society organisation SeFaFi (Observation of Public Life), addresses the question of land use (*Comment gérer nos terres?* [How should we manage the land?]) and the use of the mineral resources (*Des ressources minières au profit de quels intérêts?* [Mineral resources for whose benefit?]) and '*Pour une nouvelle politique minière à Madagascar*' [For a new mining policy in Madagascar]. The collection of articles also deals with the issue of free and fair elections.

- 20 *La Vérité*, 20 August 2009: 'Explications en béton' (Explanations in concrete)
- 21 *Midi Madagasikara*, 5 August 2009: 'Classe politique malgache' (Malagasy political class)
- 22 *La Vérité*, 13 August 2009: "Aperçu kafkaïen"
- 23 Quoted in Sylvain Urfer *L'Espoir et le Doute*, p. 98
- 24 In his two anthologies referred to above in endnote 4 Father Sylvain Urfer deals in great detail with the cultural components of developments - or rather with abortive developments - in Madagascar. I shall limit myself here to a number of core statements on the matter. In the two texts *Violences malgaches* (Malagasy Violence) and *Le Malgache ne'est pas une île* (Madagascar is not an Island), both of which were also published by *Foi et Justice* (Faith and Justice), Christian Alexandre deals extensively with Malagasy culture. In conclusion I would also draw attention to the two articles *Anthropologie malgache et perception des droits humains* (Malagasy Anthropology and the Perception of Human Rights) by Sylvain Urfer and *Christianisme et construction de l'identité malgache* (Christianity and the Construction of Malagasy Identity) by Faranirina V. Rajonah in the anthology *Christianisme et droits de l'homme à Madagascar* (Christianity and Human Rights in Madagascar), edited by Giulio Cipollone and published by Karthala in 2008.
- 25 Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 59
- 26 *Ecclesia in Africa*, 61
- 27 Quoted by Sylvain Urfer in the article *Anthropologie malgache et perception des droits humains* (Malagasy Anthropology and the Perception of Human Rights) in *Christianisme et droits de l'homme à Madagascar* (Christianity and Human Rights in Madagascar)
- 28 SeFaFi provided basic guidance on political development in various communiqués it issued in 2009: 19 June 2009: *Réussir la transition* (Making transition a success); 16 June 2009: *Retour à la Sagesse Politique* (Return to political wisdom); 18 July 2009: *Garder le cap* (Staying on course). As early as February 2006 SeFaFi issued a fundamental text on preparations for the presidential elections: *Bien préparer les élections présidentielles* (Good preparations for the presidential elections).
- 29 *Déclaration des Evêques à la Nation* (Bishops' Declaration to the Nation), 24 March 2009
- 30 *Ecclesia in Africa*, 112
- 31 Pascal Lahady: *Le culte betsimisaraka et son système symbolique* (The Betsimisaraka cult and its symbolic system), éd. Ambozontany, 1978
- 32 Sylvain Urfer has described this development in detail in the third part of his anthology *Le Doux et L'Amer* [The Bitter and the Sweet] under the heading *Les enjeux de la démocratie locale* (Problems with local democracy).

- 1 **Human Rights. Religious Freedom in the People's Republic of China**  
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in English (2002) – Order No. 600 211  
in French (2002) – Order No. 600 221
- 2 **Human Rights in the DR Congo: 1997 until the present day. The predicament of the Churches**  
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- 3 **Human Rights in Indonesia. Violence and Religious Freedom**  
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in French (2002) – Order No. 600 223
- 4 **Human Rights in East Timor – The Difficult Road to Statehood**  
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- 5 **Human Rights in Turkey – Secularism = Religious Freedom?**  
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in French (2002) – Order No. 600 225
- 6 **Persecuted Christians? Documentation of an International Conference Berlin 14/15 September 2001**  
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in French (2002) – Order No. 600 226
- 7 **Female Genital Mutilation – Evaluation of a Survey Conducted among Staff Members of Catholic Church Institutions in Africa**  
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- 8 **Female Genital Mutilation A Report on the Present Situation in Sudan**  
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- 9 **Human Rights in Vietnam. Religious Freedom**  
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in French (2002) – Order No. 600 238
- 12 **Human Rights in South Korea.**  
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in French (2005) – Order No. 600 241
- 13 **Human Rights in Sudan.**  
in German (2003) – Order No. 600 242  
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- 14 **Human Rights in Nigeria.**  
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- 15 **Human Rights in Rwanda.**  
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in French (2003) – Order No. 600 250
- 16 **Human Rights in Myanmar/Burma. The Church under military dictatorship**  
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in French (2004) – Order No. 600 253
- 17 **Religious Freedom in the Kingdom of Cambodia.**  
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- 18 **Human Rights in Laos**  
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- 19 **Human Rights in Egypt**  
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in French (2004) – Order No. 600 262
- 20 **Human Rights – Turkey on the Road to Europe – Religious Freedom?**  
in German (2004) – Order No. 600 264  
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- 21 **Opportunities for Christian-Islamic co-operation in upholding human rights and establishing civil societies. Conference in closed session 11/3/2002 – 14/3/2002, Berlin – Volume 1**  
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- 23 **Human rights in Liberia: A dream of freedom – the efforts of the Catholic Church for justice and peace**  
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