

# LASER PULSE

Long-term Assistance and Services for Research (LASER)  
Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine (PULSE)

## Political Economy Analysis of Resilience, Food and Nutrition Security, and Poverty in Madagascar



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## **ABOUT THE PROJECT/DELIVERABLE**

This report presents the final results of the Political Economy Analysis (PEA) completed under the USAID/BHA/TPQ/SPADe Madagascar Resilience Food Security Activity (RFSA) Activity Design project. The research undertaken in this engagement will inform the design of the FY24 Resilience and Food Security Activity in Madagascar, which will serve the needs of rural Malagasy communities affected by chronic nutrition and food insecurity. This project is supported through a buy-in from USAID/BHA/TPQ/SPADe into the Long-term Assistance and Services for Research (LASER) project currently in place between USAID/DDI/ITR/R and a consortium led by Purdue University under cooperative agreement #7200AA18C00009. This research has been executed by Abt Associates under a sub-contract with Purdue University.

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## **ABOUT LASER PULSE**

LASER (Long-term Assistance and Services for Research) PULSE (Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine) is a \$70M program funded through USAID's Innovation, Technology, and Research Hub, that delivers research-driven solutions to field-sourced development challenges in USAID partner countries.

A consortium led by Purdue University, with core partners Catholic Relief Services, Indiana University, Makerere University, and the University of Notre Dame, implements the LASER PULSE program through a growing network of 3,500+ researchers and development practitioners in 86 countries.

LASER PULSE collaborates with USAID missions, bureaus, and independent offices, and other local stakeholders to identify research needs for critical development challenges, and funds and strengthens the capacity of researcher-practitioner teams to co-design solutions that translate into policy and practice.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Poverty and food insecurity in Madagascar

A large proportion of the people of the Southern and Southeastern regions of Madagascar are living in poverty, and more than 2 million are affected by food insecurity. The physical characteristics of the regions are a contributing factor to the situation. The Southern region (defined in this report as Atsimo Andrefana, Anosy, and Androy), which is relatively hot and dry, suffers from recurrent periods of drought with little or no rainfall for up to three years at a time, and red sandstorms that destroy crops. The Southeast (defined in this report as Atsimo Atsinanana), by contrast, is subject to heavy rainfall and is prone to tropical cyclones, bringing strong winds, devastating floods and landslides. In both regions soil fertility is poor, and water for human consumption, agriculture and livestock is scarce: water-tables are often very deep and groundwater in some areas is affected by salinity.

However, these geographical and climatic features are compounded by human factors. Weak governance, characterized by parallel systems of state public administration and traditional or customary authority and the near absence of public services in many places, has exacerbated the effects of drought, famine, extreme poverty, the limited scope for agricultural development and the potential for conflict between and within ethnic groups. This study set out to understand the political economy of food and nutrition insecurity and resilience in these regions. It is concerned with the interests and behaviors of key actors and institutions, with the patterns and causes of conflict and the sociopolitical context in which they are situated, and with how failures of governance, political instability, and conflict impact on the resilience of the local populations.

### About this political economy analysis

This political economy analysis (PEA) was conducted by Abt Associates (Abt) between June and December 2023, to inform the design of an upcoming Resilience Food Security Activity (RFSA) in Madagascar. It is intended to serve as a publicly available resource for both the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), the USAID Madagascar Mission, other USAID bureaus, and potential applicants and implementing partners. As such, it has been structured to provide, as far as possible, both an accessible overview of the issues for busy managers and a more detailed evidence base (especially in the Annexes) upon which program designers and implementers can draw.

The PEA was focused on the twelve districts across four administrative regions of Madagascar which comprise the anticipated target area of the upcoming RFSA. For convenience, the selected districts in Atsimo Andrefana, Androy and Anosy are regarded in the study as constituting the Southern region, while the districts in Atsimo Atsinanana are referred to as the Southeast region.

The study applied qualitative methods, taking a comprehensive literature review as its starting point but drawing primary evidence from a series of focus group discussions with households living in poverty, and key informant interviews with a wide range of actors from all relevant sectors. The study team collected evidence from all parts of the target area, including urban and rural settings, and reached even the most inaccessible communities. While this report seeks to triangulate primary source material with secondary literature wherever possible, it gives priority to reflecting faithfully community perceptions of the political economy context, even when these might conflict with externally driven analysis.

## Key Findings

The key findings are summarized in the following table, together with their location in the report.

Section	Finding
3.1.1	The political economy of the focus regions is rooted in their geography and history. The Southeast is exposed to tropical cyclones and flooding, while the Southern region is prone to drought and sandstorms. Both regions have a legacy of weak governance resulting in decades of structural underinvestment.
3.2.1 <i>et passim</i>	The 12 focus districts are ethnically, socially and culturally complex, varied and diverse.
3.2.1, 3.2.1.3	Influential private sector and ‘third sector’ actors, including business interests, NGOs, United Nations agencies and churches, constitute a third group of stakeholders with whom power is concentrated in the focus regions, alongside traditional authorities and the state; the private sector is influential across all the focus districts, and in the Southern region private sector actors often hold appointed political positions or have a direct interest in development and humanitarian activities.
3.2.1.4	Traditional leaders and state government constitute parallel systems of governance and influence over local communities. Decisions over land tenure, conflict resolution, and cultural and social events are held by customary authorities, whereas education, health, roads, and electricity infrastructure fall under the state government. However, traditional authorities’ influence and roles in the decision-making process vary between districts, and even between communes.
3.2.2.2	Within the state government, decision-making is centralized, and decentralized and deconcentrated levels are not fully operational. The dysfunctional formal administration opens opportunities for nepotism and corruption.
3.2.2.2	There is a latent power struggle between state and traditional authorities in urban areas, but in rural and isolated areas traditional authorities operate in a vacuum, with state representatives and technical officials almost entirely absent and not providing basic social services or local economic opportunities.
3.2.2.2	The quasi-absence of government drives a lack of infrastructure (water, education, roads, and security) in the focus regions and a lack of coordination across actions and projects.
3.2.2.2	Traditional authorities are fragmented but remain influential in conflict resolution and upholding gender norms at the local and communal level.
3.2.2.3	The private sector exacerbates food insecurity and poverty in the focus regions, actively contributing to price volatility and indebtedness of farmers.
3.2.2.3, 4.2.4	There are shared interests between some civil servants and private sector stakeholders. Local communities witness these shared interests as the political elite and those appointed to public office also operate the businesses that profit from providing services to public projects or benefit from providing services to public projects or from the allocation of public funds.
3.3.2	Cycles of violence, food scarcity, conflict, social and economic exclusion, and poverty characterize social and economic aspects of the focus districts.

## Implications

The PEA sheds light on the following general considerations that will be important for successful graduation-based programming in the focus districts:

- Monitor the evolution of political arrangements and conflict resolution at the district level, including of the impact the intervention is having on power dynamics;
- Capitalize on successful actions from past interventions in the districts and promote district level coordination with key actors in food security and resilience;
- Commit to experimenting, learning, and adapting to understand what works and what does not work in the context of Madagascar.
- Take into account that: the risks associated with family farming are high and the economic returns are generally low; and some households are landless, many are land poor, and the vast majority engage in highly diversified livelihood strategies.
- Consider aligning graduation-based assistance with complementary investments that support economic growth and/or systems building.
- Be aware of the development and expansion of social protection programs, such as the Safety Nets and Resilience Program (World Bank 2023a, World Bank n.d.b), at the regional and/or district level. It may be beneficial to align graduation-based RFSA investments with developments related to social protection.

Some specific challenges and their implications for future RFSA programs adopting the graduation approach are summarized in the table below.

Challenges	Implications
1. Traditional authorities are influential in conflict resolution and upholding customary norms, but are highly fragmented in all 12 districts.	Traditional authorities are likely to be key to RFSA programming. Fragmentation may exacerbate conflict between groups and marginalization of the poor, even during the targeting process.
2. Social services provision is weak and highly dependent on national and regional decision-making and resources, allowing political elites to influence the distribution of public resources.	A communal administration performing poorly in service provision will not be influential with the local community, and any reform it proposes is likely to be disowned. In the Southern region elected officials are strongly tied to clans, and clan rivalry can undermine reforms proposed by a sitting mayor.
3. Blurred lines of power and influence between state government and non-state actors, due to the long-term engagement of the latter as service providers.	Without thoughtful and continuous context monitoring, a program may inadvertently do harm to social cohesion and public accountability, and poor coordination with the government and other external actors may have unintended consequences for the program.
4. High risk of cronyism <sup>1</sup> in public service provision between state government representatives and local business owners.	Political elites may influence project activities to benefit their business interests, affecting commodities markets or infrastructure building, for example.

<sup>1</sup> Cronyism refers to the practice of appointing one’s friends or associates to positions of authority based on personal associations rather than objective qualifications

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## Acronyms

<b>BHA</b>	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>DAA</b>	Délégué Administratif d'Arrondissement (District Administrative Delegate)
<b>DRMS</b>	Desk Review and Market Study
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>FID</b>	Fonds d'Intervention pour le Développement (Development Intervention Fund)
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>ONN</b>	Office National de Nutrition (National Nutrition Office)
<b>PEA</b>	Political Economy Analysis
<b>PMT</b>	Proxy means test
<b>PRD</b>	Plan Régional de Développement (Regional Development Plan)
<b>QMM</b>	QIT Madagascar Minerals
<b>RFSA</b>	Resilience Food Security Activity
<b>SLC</b>	Service Local de Concertation (Local Consultation Service)
<b>SSF</b>	Small-Scale Farmers
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>VOI</b>	Vondron'Olona Ifotony (Community-Based Organization)
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WGI</b>	Worldwide Governance Indicator
<b>ZAP</b>	Zone Administrative Pédagogique (Educational Administration Zone)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. It can undermine household resilience and contribute to worsening food insecurity. Addressing these issues involves a wide range of stakeholders from many disciplines like agriculture, economics, health, ecology, governance, and more. These actors all operate within a complex framework that can influence their agendas. Political economy analysis (PEA) highlights the local elements that influence poverty and food security programming, by providing an overview of the institutions and dynamics that shape interactions between relevant actors.

This document summarizes the findings of a PEA conducted by Abt Associates (Abt) between June and December 2023. This analysis was conducted in parallel with a desk review and market study (DRMS) and a secondary data analysis (SDA), and the results are intended to be reviewed in tandem with these accompanying reports. Together, the research presents a rich understanding of the context and outlines some of the most important considerations for food security and resilience project stakeholders in Madagascar.

### 1.1 Assessment purpose and audience

This PEA is intended to inform the design of an upcoming Resilience Food Security Activity (RFSa) in Madagascar and to serve as a publicly available resource both for the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, the USAID Madagascar Mission, and other USAID bureaus, as well as potential applicants and implementing partners. It aims at understanding the political economy dynamics in Madagascar and how they influence patterns of vulnerability and chronic food and nutrition insecurity through the analysis of:

- Interests and behavior of key actors and institutions
- The patterns and causes of conflict and the sociopolitical context in which they are situated
- How governance, political instability, and conflict impact the resilience of local populations

This PEA was focused on specific areas of Madagascar that will compose the anticipated target area of the upcoming RFSa (Figure 1) as follows:

- Ampanihy Ouest district in Atsimo Andrefana region
- Bekily, Beloha, Tsihombe, and Ambovombe districts in Androy region
- Betroka, Amboasary Atsimo, and Taolagnaro districts in Anosy region

Figure 1. Map showing focus district and regions



- Befotaka, Vangaindrano, Vondrozo, and Farafangana districts in Atsimo Atsinanana region.

In Madagascar, the term “region” is a specific administrative unit that composes multiple districts. For example, within the region of Atsimo Atsinanana, there are five districts: Befotaka, Vangaindrano, Farafangana, Midongy Atsimo, and Vondrozo. However, in this particular report, the terms “Southern region” and “Southeast region” are used as shorthand to refer to two groupings of specific districts within the target area. There are notable similarities between districts in each of these groupings, and it is often easier to present findings according to these two main geographic units. For the purposes of this report, the *Southern region* refers to selected districts in Atsimo Andrefana, Androy, and Anosy, and the *Southeast region* refers to selected districts in Atsimo Atsinanana.

## 1.2 Structure of the report

This report is structured as follows:

In the Introduction, Section 1.1 Assessment purpose and audience sets out the purpose and intended audience of the PEA, while Section 1.2 Structure of the report locates the themes of the study in the context of Madagascar, and discusses the socioeconomic characteristics of extreme poverty, the impact of the national political environment and political instability on economic development and food security and resilience, and the economics of food in terms of availability, access, and utilization.

Section 2. METHODOLOGY describes the methodology of the report. Section 2.1 explains the processes of data collection and analysis, and Section 2.2 Limitations and obstacles discusses critical issues of trust and confidentiality and constraints on sharing politically sensitive information in an election year. It also describes the physical and security challenges that affected data collection. Supporting information about data collection methods is given in Annexes A and B.

Section 3. KEY FINDINGS sets out the key findings of the study. Section 3.1 Foundational factors is concerned with the deeply-embedded foundational factors that underlie the political economy of the focus regions and impact on food security and poverty. These are discussed in terms of the regions’ differing geographical, environmental and climate change characteristics, their predominant economic sectors, their extremely complex ethnic composition, and the legacy of colonial administration. Section 3.2 The dynamics of food insecurity in Madagascar addresses the dynamics between institutions and actors at national, regional and district level, and their implications for food security; it analyzes power structures in relation to the roles of traditional authorities, the state, business interests and ‘third sector’ actors. For these purposes it groups the study districts into five clusters which share certain geophysical and socio-cultural characteristics.

Section 3.3 Conflict and food security at the national, regional, and district level examines the role that conflict between ethnic groups or sub-groups or between clans, and uncertain mechanisms for conflict resolution, play in exacerbating food insecurity. Section 3.4 endeavors to tie together the various ways in which national political instability, and failings of governance, public service provision and access to justice at local level, give rise to increasing levels of tension, distrust and conflict. These impact the resilience of local populations and generate both positive and negative coping strategies, the latter including the resort to petty theft, violence, and banditry.

Finally, Section 4. IMPLICATIONS, draws out the implications of the PEA for future RFSA programming, emphasizing the need for such programming – in the absence of significant institutional reform – to recognize and adapt to the prevailing political economy conditions, and to acknowledge that the local social and political environment across the focus regions may not be conducive to improving food security and resilience. This section also identifies four specific political economy challenges in the regions and their implications for programs adopting a graduation approach.

Annex C provides greater detail on the main groups of stakeholders and their roles, capacity, and influence. A map of the distribution of ethnicities across the regions is shown in Annex D, and a detailed analysis of social structures, ethnicities, and the role of traditional authorities in each cluster of districts is provided in Annex E. Annex F provides an in-depth discussion of the foundational factors impacting food security, and an analysis of the *kere* phenomenon of prolonged drought and famine.

### 1.3 Country context

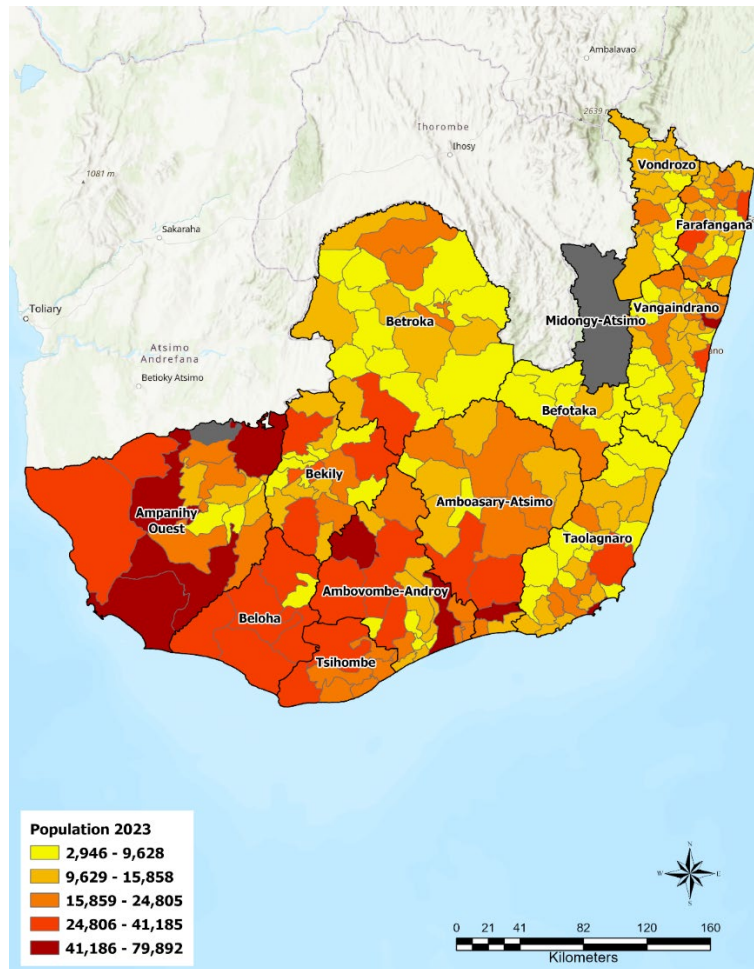
Madagascar’s long-term development has been hampered by, “weak governance and state capture; low investment in physical, human and natural capital; low and declining productivity coupled with stalled structural transformation; and high and rising vulnerability to shocks” (World Bank 2022). Madagascar has the fifth lowest gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in sub-Saharan Africa, ahead of Burundi, Sierra Leone, Malawi, and the Central African Republic (Statista 2023). According to the 2022 Systematic Country Diagnostic Update for Madagascar it is, “one of six countries in the world where real per capita incomes declined” over a 60-year period, and the only one of the six that, “did not face prolonged civil wars or armed conflicts” (World Bank 2022). As of April 2022, an estimated 81 percent of the population lived under the international poverty line, an increase from 68 percent in 2001.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, Madagascar is a biodiversity hotspot with strong economic growth potential thanks to its young population, dense forests, vast fertile lands, tourist landscapes, and mineral reserves of gold, nickel, cobalt, ilmenite, sapphire, mica, and other resources (Uwanyiligira et al. 2023).

1.3.1. Who are the extremely poor?

This report should be read in conjunction with the DRMS and SDA studies, which provide detailed profiles on Madagascar’s extremely poor. Their findings have been summarized below for the purposes of this PEA. The SDA—which relied primarily on 2021 Demographic and Health Survey data and defined poverty as those living in the lowest wealth quintile—found that households living in poverty are more likely to have a household head with no formal education. The SDA also found water, sanitation, and hygiene indicators to be closely correlated with poverty status, with households living in poverty to be less likely to access improved water sources and more likely to practice open defecation when compared with households not living in poverty. These households also tend to have a higher dependency ratio, meaning that there are more either very young or very old members being cared for by the household.

Figure 2. Population Density by Commune  
(Source: Madagascar Census, 2018)



In terms of socioeconomic characteristics, households in the lowest wealth quintile are also less likely to have electricity or a mobile phone, cook using charcoal, or have an additional room for sleeping, and are more likely to have a roof made of thatch or leaves. It is important to recognize that these results are not causal, and there are several important limitations, which are discussed in further depth in the SDA report. According to communities in the Southern and Southeast regions who were interviewed as part of the PEA data collection, households that are considered to live in extreme poverty do not hold any physical assets such as agricultural land or housing, tend to live off daily wage jobs, and experience

<sup>2</sup> The international poverty line is defined as \$1.90 per day (in 2011 purchasing power parity).

hunger during four to six months out of the year. These “lean periods” occur between March to May and September to November, at which time people tend to eat mostly wild foods as a coping strategy.

In case of climate shocks (such as tropical cyclones in the Southeast and multi-year droughts in the Southern region), households living in extreme poverty are more likely to experience longer lean periods, due to their dependency on better-off households to cope as well as the losses and damages to their livelihoods. However, extremely poor households in the Southern and Southeast regions have nuanced characteristics. According to focus group participants, extremely poor households are usually multi-generational families with polygamous marriages living within clans in the Southern region, whereas in the Southeast they are likely to be headed by abandoned mothers caring for both children and older generations and living as a single household. In the Southern region, respondents defined poverty as the inability to honor customary norms such as funerals and marriages. In the Southeastern region, respondents generally defined poverty as a sharp decline in the quantity and quality of food intake during lean periods. In addition, depending on the lens and the level of analysis, geographical disparities reveal pockets of extreme poverty as well as specific poverty typology.

The World Bank’s poverty, gender and inequality assessment highlighted the vulnerability of large families with more than four children and women-led households (World Bank 2014). In the Southern region, around 25 percent of households have more than seven members. In the semi-arid regions, large households are prone to challenges and increased insecurity (Fayad 2023). Women led households (35 percent), are more common in the Southeast. On average, these households live in more severe conditions of poverty and must spend more on food without enough agricultural productivity to be self-sufficient. Additionally, they are more vulnerable to crisis and food insecurity, as women face obstacles in earning reliable income (Fayad 2023).

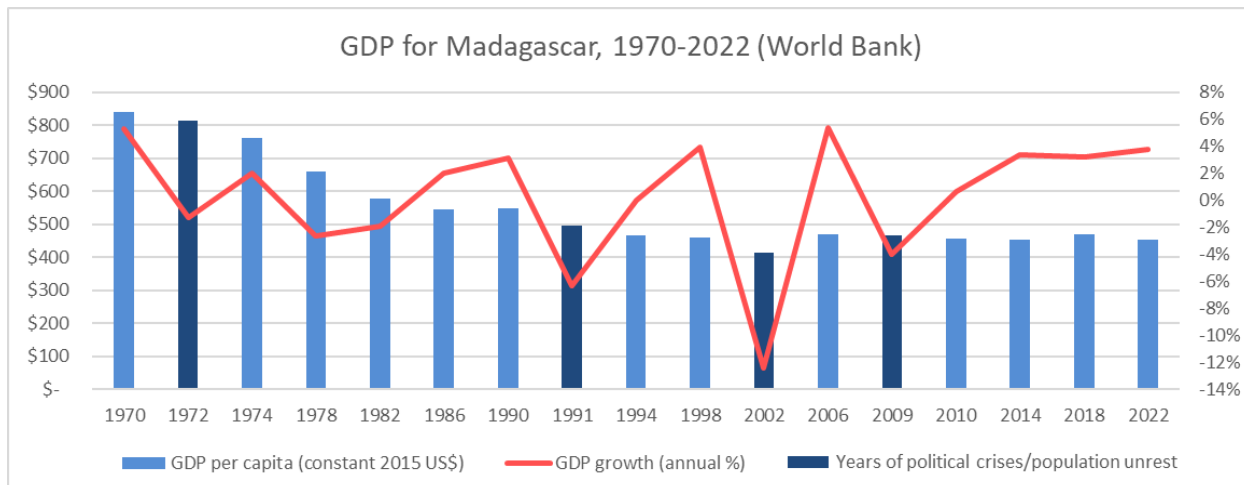
Eighty-three percent of poor households across the Southern and Southeast regions live in rural areas, where the depth of poverty is five times higher than in urban areas. The health status of these households is alarming. For example, the child mortality rate in the Southeast region is the highest in Madagascar, with 88 deaths per 1,000 live births (Madagascar MICS 2018). Education levels are also low—58 percent of the population over the age of 11 in the Southern region have never attended school. Among those who have, the dropout rate for primary schools in the region is around 71 percent (INSTAT 2018).

### 1.3.2. Political environment of food security and resilience

Political instability has had an impact on the country's economic situation. Political crises correspond to periods of population unrest followed by regime change in 1972, 1991, 2002, and 2009 (Figure 3).



Figure 3. GDP per capita and GDP growth for Madagascar, 1970-2022



At each of these points in time, the beginning of economic growth was held back by political crisis (Razafindrakoto et al. 2017; World Bank 2017; Bolt and van Zanden 2020). For example, the GDP growth was estimated at five percent between 1964 and 1971 but was wiped out by the fall of the First Republic after the 1972 unrest. In 2019, the country experienced economic growth estimated at four percent due to increased public and private investment in tourism, textiles, and mining. However, these efforts were hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to an economic recession estimated at four percent in 2020. This is similar to the 2009 crisis (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2022). While the effects of political instability on poverty and unstable economic growth are obvious, these events alone are not enough to explain the precarious status of the population.

### 1.3.3. Economics of food security in the focus regions

Agriculture, livestock, and the fisheries sector remain the primary source of income and food for the country’s population. In 2002 onwards, food insecurity dramatically increased to 8.8 million people, with 2.22 million in the Southern and Southeast regions (Fayad 2023). At the national level, the agriculture sector’s share of GDP has not improved despite large investment over the last four decades, in particular in irrigation infrastructure. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Bank alone have invested more than \$1.4 billion in 28 projects over 44 years (IFAD 2021; World Bank 2023b). Along with external funding, the Ministry of Agriculture budget will be increased to 10 percent of the national budget in 2024 (Mandimbisoa 2023). Despite these investments, agricultural production, in particular rice as main staple food, has not increased, with the country being a net rice importer. The high proportion of the chronically food insecure in the population may relate to poor distribution of wealth due to the interplay of influences between actors, which favors its monopolization by elites. In Garruchet et al.’s theory of green neo-colonialism (2023) the policy of natural resource extraction also favors elites and multinational corporations at the expense of the rural population.

#### Food access

There are significant challenges to food access in many areas included in this study, driven by low employment, low income from production, and seasonal price volatility. At the local level, family



farming is a main component of the typical household's livelihood. It is highly diverse, although rice cultivation is common across most study regions (World Bank 2014; Garruchet et al. 2023). According to interviewees, the on-farm daily wage is about MGA 3,000 to MGA 5,000 (equivalent to \$0.75 to \$1.10), making it difficult to purchase quality food to complement their own production. According to findings from the Desk Review and Market Study (DRMS), the lack of household and community storage means that most farmers sell a high proportion of their harvest immediately for low prices. Later in the year, there is very little product on the market, so food prices become high and difficult for many producer families to access. Likewise, households working off-farm, either around their residence or through migration, reported that their income level is low, resulting in some difficulty in access. For example, a recent Seed Security Assessment found that farmers are cultivating smaller plots of land than they did in the past, meaning that they have less need to hire on-farm laborers (SeedSystems, 2022). These trends have a direct impact on the poorest and landless populations. Local populations working off-farm or temporarily migrating are usually single mothers, landless households, or those owning small plots of land. The behaviors of other actors also reinforce the instability of markets, leading to excessively high food prices in isolated areas, coinciding with periods of income decrease for the rural population (see further details in Section 3.2.2.3 "Private sector, middlemen and collectors reinforce markets' instability). As noted in the DRMS, many individuals in the market system are unaware of official policies and face intimidation from local authorities and law enforcement who demand payments (some official payments, and some "off the books") in order to access markets.

#### *Food availability*

Food availability in the region is limited by poor market infrastructure as well as low production. Poor market infrastructure, in particular poor quality roads and limited storage facilities, contribute to unavailability of food. This is further exacerbated during rainy season, when roads that were operable before become washed out, demand for food is high, and physical markets become absent for communities living in more isolation (especially Befotaka, Midongy Atsimo and Vondrozo districts in the Southeast regions, and Ampanihy Ouest in Southern region). Households with no food stocks or savings are the most affected. Again, they are often single mothers, or landless households who have limited coping strategies available to them (fishing, looting forests, or migrating). While improvement of market infrastructure falls obviously under the duties of the government (state government and communes), their resources are scarce to meet the local population's needs. Many farmers also struggle with low production due to lack of awareness of modern methods, climate hazards, poor quality inputs (especially seeds), lack of access to inputs (such as farm chemicals and fertilizer) (SeedSystems, 2022). With low production, there is less food available in the markets for purchase. Complex customary law regarding land tenure in the Southeast remains an important challenge to increasing agricultural production. With barriers to individual property ownership, these small-scale farmers do not risk investing much in agriculture, and their production suffers as a result.

#### *Food utilization*

Data gathered for this study, as well as the accompanying DRMS, reveal that food utilization has grown worse in recent years. Norms and standards related to diet are quite different for the Southern and Southeast regions. Interviews with traditional leaders and focus group discussions with elderly women revealed that before 2000, the typical diet was quite diversified and the required quantity per individual

was typically met. However, with the decline of food production and volatility of cash crops, diet norms and standards have changed, with less or no meat and milk consumed in the Southern regions, and less beans and rice in the Southeast region. Eating of wild food<sup>3</sup> (labeled “food of the poorest”) occurs more commonly across the focus regions than it used to, in particular between the two periods of annual harvest.

According to discussions with women and youth, in cases when food must be rationed, men and schoolchildren are typically given larger quantities than other household members. This decision is reported to be made for survival; the rationale is to allow men to continue to perform physical labor and bring in income, and to provide children with the sustenance they need while growing. According to focus group discussions in the Southeast region, the proportion of households living in poverty has increased so much that they are not able to mutually support one another anymore. There are also limitations to food utilization due to the food processing and storage issues discussed at length in the DRMS, which lead to post-harvest loss.

### *Stability*

Stability of food security is limited by routine seasonal fluctuations as well as frequent natural disasters. Based on information gained from a dozen focus group discussions held in the Southeast region, respondents reported that at least 90% of villagers recurrently experienced a lean period of 4 to 6 months a year. The focus regions encounter natural hazards impacting negatively on food production both in agriculture and livestock (*see Section 3.1 Foundational factors*). The cumulative losses and damages to agriculture and livestock were not recovered due to lack of support to small-scale farms in the aftermath of natural hazards by the state government. Moreover, frequent government changes lead to continuous challenges in maintaining food access and availability at the local level (*see section 3.4.1 Relationship between frequent governmental changes and conflict in target regions and districts*)

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 PEA research process

#### 2.1.1 Data collection process

The research team began with a literature review to determine the current state of available evidence and narrow down the questions that would need to be answered using primary data collection. The review drew from a variety of sources, including gray literature, program documents, evaluations, and academic literature. The literature review has been iterative, with the team continuing to incorporate additional sources, including those recommended by USAID, key informants, and other stakeholders.

With this initial information in hand, the study team developed semi-structured interview guides for key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions. All interviews took place in July and August 2023, resulting in a total of 28 focus group discussions (FGDs) and 73 KIIs (see table below).

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<sup>3</sup> Wild food is different from alternative food such as jackfruit and breadfruit, which are usually cultivated, and usually eaten to cushion the decrease of main staple (rice, cassava, maize, and sweet potatoes) food available intra-household.

*Table 1. Number of KIIs and FGDs undertaken by the study team*

Week	Location/s	Number of KIIs	Number of FGDs
1	National	14	0
2	Anosy – Androy and Atsimo Andrefana <sup>1</sup>	16	07
3	Androy and Anosy	17	07
4	Atsimo Atsinanana	30	14
<b>Totals:</b>		<b>73</b>	<b>28</b>

FGDs focused on RFSA target populations (extremely poor households and the most vulnerable) and were separated by both gender and age group (youth and non-youth, schooled and unschooled). The KIIs were purposely selected according to the type of actor, for example public administration such as elected officials and civil servants, not-for-profit organizations including grassroots associations, international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UN agencies and special organizations, religious leaders, journalists, police officers (including gendarmes), small to medium business owners, chief of clans or lineage, and location (urban and rural; national, regional, district, commune, and fokontany).

The data collection focused entirely on qualitative methods, using semi-structured interview tools to guide the discussion. This allowed for natural conversation and follow-up questions to evolve throughout based on each respondent’s unique perspective. Given the complex ethnic, social, and political dynamics, the research team also applied principles of conflict sensitivity throughout the research process. In terms of sample size, the research team aimed to reach data saturation, or the point at which the data obtained was sufficient to answer the research questions and the amount of new information gained from each additional interview was minimal. Abt trained all data collection team members in research ethics and data security procedures to safeguard participants’ information. The team paid particular attention to confidentiality and anonymity, which was a precondition for many respondents’ agreement to participate in the study, given the sensitive nature of several of the questions.

### 2.1.2 Data analysis

Abt adopted USAID’s Applied PEA Methodology (Menocal et al. 2018) to analyze the data. This entailed four steps: (1) understanding the foundational factors that are deeply embedded; (2) examining the institutions (i.e., the rules of the game) and how these shape incentives; (3) mapping the key actors: the individuals and organizations that behave in certain ways in response to the incentives (i.e., the ‘here and now’); and (4) analyzing the dynamics between the foundational factors, the institutions, and the actors.

The study team used an adapted version of USAID’s Post-Interview Analysis tool (USAID 2023) to support triangulation. The study team triangulated primary source material with secondary literature; however, the report attempts to reflect community perceptions of the political economy context faithfully, even where these might conflict with externally driven analysis. The study team also considered observable data to triangulate both primary and secondary sources where appropriate.

## 2.2 Limitations and obstacles

### 2.2.1 Trust for sharing sensitive information on a year of electoral races

Interethnic conflicts and political bargains in the Southern and Southeast regions were anticipated to be sensitive information that key informants would not be willing to share openly or that would be distorted during data collection, in particular with traditional authorities and local state representatives. To mitigate this issue, the research team kept strict confidentiality and data security protocols and did not conduct audio recordings of any interviews to help respondents feel more comfortable. However, there were some potential respondents—including a high-ranking civil servant working in Ambovombe-Androy, three chiefs of district in Androy and Atsimo Atsinanana regions, and a religious leader in Atsimo Atsinanana region—who declined to be interviewed after being told the objective of the interview. Moreover, some respondents asked not to be cited, despite being assured that all personal data would be anonymized. It is also possible that, even among those who did agree to participate in the interviews, respondents may not have been as forthcoming or detailed in their answers as they might have been during a non-election period.

The study team used a broad network of key informants to maintain the anticipated number and diversity of key informants and participants in FGDs. During the fieldwork, 73 key informants were interviewed, compared with an anticipated 45, while 28 FGDs involving men, women, and youth were held.

### 2.2.2 Access to rural communities

#### **Poor road infrastructure**

Transportation did not pose a challenge during fieldwork, with the exception of Vangaindrano-Befotaka and part of Vondrozo. All-terrain vehicles could not be used to reach Befotaka; instead, the team used motorbikes and monitored the situation ahead of time for potential security issues. Long-distance travel using motorbikes on poor roads was time consuming and tiring, resulting in late interviews on some days. Given the delays, the team was only able to reach one commune in Vondrozo during the planned time frame and could not carry out KIIs and FGDs in the second commune.

#### **Security risks**

During the second week of data collection in the Southern region, a *dahalo* (local bandit) attack occurred in Sarisambo, Bekily, a commune planned for KIIs and FGDs. Three *gendarme* (police) agents were killed in the attack and approximately 56 *zebus* (a species of domestic cattle widespread across Africa and Asia) were stolen. After checking with local contacts, the team decided to avoid Sarisambo and traveled to Antanimora, Ambovombe instead. The team were able to mobilize their local networks to arrange KIIs and FGDs at short notice, focusing on KIIs over FGDs.

## 3. KEY FINDINGS

### 3.1 Foundational factors

This section summarizes the geographical, environmental, economic, historical, and social features that impact food security in Madagascar's Southern and Southeast regions. More detail on the foundational factors, including at the district level, is included in Annex F.

### 3.1.1 Geographical and environmental characteristics

The Southern and Southeast regions have different geographical and environmental characteristics that impact the livelihoods of family farming and the extremely poor households in these regions.

#### Less rainfall, drought, and sandstorms in the Southern region

The Southern region, in particular Androy, receives rainfall of less than 31 inches (800 millimeters) annually and the average annual temperatures along the coast vary between 73.4° and 80.6° Fahrenheit (23° and 27° Celsius) (World Bank 2022). Little or no rainfall may occur for up to three years in a row, resulting in what is called the *Kere* by the local population. The *Kere* is a drought-induced near famine phenomenon in the Southern region.

Interviewees in Ampanihy Ouest and Amboasary Atsimo shared vivid memories (see text box) of episodes of mass migration (1954, 1974, 1987, 2006) from rural to urban areas due to three consecutive years of drought. This migration was then followed by other exoduses to northern regions of the country. During this time savings were depleted, food insecurity increased, and community members faced starvation. The *Kere* also affects urban areas when less product arrives in markets.

While Government documents typically link periodic food insecurity in the region primarily to drought, recent research applying Elinor Ostrom’s social-ecological systems framework has demonstrated that, “the *Kere* is a phenomenon compounded by multiple interacting, debilitating factors including deforestation, drought, pests and diseases, food insecurity, extreme poverty, lawlessness, and political malaise” (Ralaingita et al. 2022). This holistic analysis of the *Kere* is critical in understanding the compounding, interrelated factors that contribute to extreme poverty, and for designing interventions that build systemic resilience.

#### Memories of drought

An interviewee in Ampanihy still remembers in 1987 when starving people from the coastal communes filled the capital city to beg for food. A focus group discussion in Amboasary Atsimo remembers when a drought in 2006 resulted in conditions so desperate that community members stopped sharing food even if they had extra. They nicknamed this year *tsy ahafantarako anao*, meaning, “I don’t know you anymore.”



Interviewees noted that food accessibility and availability issues usually arise during the lean period, during which the reduction of daily calorie intake can amount to the absence of food for some days in the week. The lean period occurs in the months after harvests, typically February to May and September to December. Tested solutions can be effective, such as: reducing local taxation on cash crops (including for transportation), creating storage mechanisms, planting drought-tolerant food and cash crops, and providing additional savings mechanisms.

Apart from erratic and possibly absent rainfall, *tiomena* (literally red wind, or devastating red sandstorms) are the most significant cause of crop failure in the communes of the Androy region close to the south coast. According to participants of focus group discussions, *tiomena* have significantly increased during the last two decades, and their strength may be associated with the acceleration of deforestation. The sandstorms usually gain momentum between May and October but have recently

been occurring throughout the year. They create sand dunes, dry out the soil, damage crops, and further increase land erosion and soil depletion in the region. Crop yields and therefore the volume of produce is reducing significantly. Community members, particularly in the Grand South,<sup>4</sup> noted that high value crops such as beans are now abandoned and replaced by drought tolerant crops with less market value, such as Bambara peas.

### **Heavy rainfall, floods, and erosion in the Southeast region**

Its position in the Indian Ocean Basin makes Madagascar prone to tropical cyclones, bringing strong winds and floods (ACAPS 2022) along the eastern coast. The mountains in Anosy region create a rain shadow effect that significantly reduces rainfall for the Southern region, from East to West, while producing heavy rainfall to the Southeast.

The Southeast region has numerous rivers and streams springing from the rainforest in Befotaka, Midongy Atsimo, and Vondrozo districts. Average annual rainfall in these districts ranges from 62.9 inches to 141 inches (1,600mm to 3,600mm). The coastal districts (Farafangana and Vangaindrano) regularly experience tropical cyclones. Due to its mountainous terrain, much of the land is not suitable for cultivation (Healy 2018). Currently, the pattern of rainfall is changing—more devastating floods are leading to landslides and lost land crops. Floods affect both agricultural production and road networks, reducing the movement of goods, people, and aid. This will ultimately lead to an increase in transportation costs, localized food inflation, and shortages (Fayad 2023). Outside of the rainy season, prolonged drought reduces the capacity of the soil to absorb water, causing erosion and ultimately depleting soil nutrients (ACAPS 2022).

Although routinely hit by increasingly intense tropical cyclones,<sup>5</sup> the Southeast region has limited disaster preparedness capacity. The cycle of natural disasters impacts both agricultural production and livelihoods, leading to higher prices that further increase food insecurity for the entire region. In the aftermath of Cyclone Gretelle in 1997 (a deadly storm that affected more than 500,000 people), approximately 8,000 tons of coffee were destroyed along with rice and cassava (FAO/WFP 1997).

Today, despite apparently different biophysical characteristics, the Southern and Southeast regions are both vulnerable to water scarcity, which adversely affects their rain-fed agriculture and livestock systems (see Figure 4).

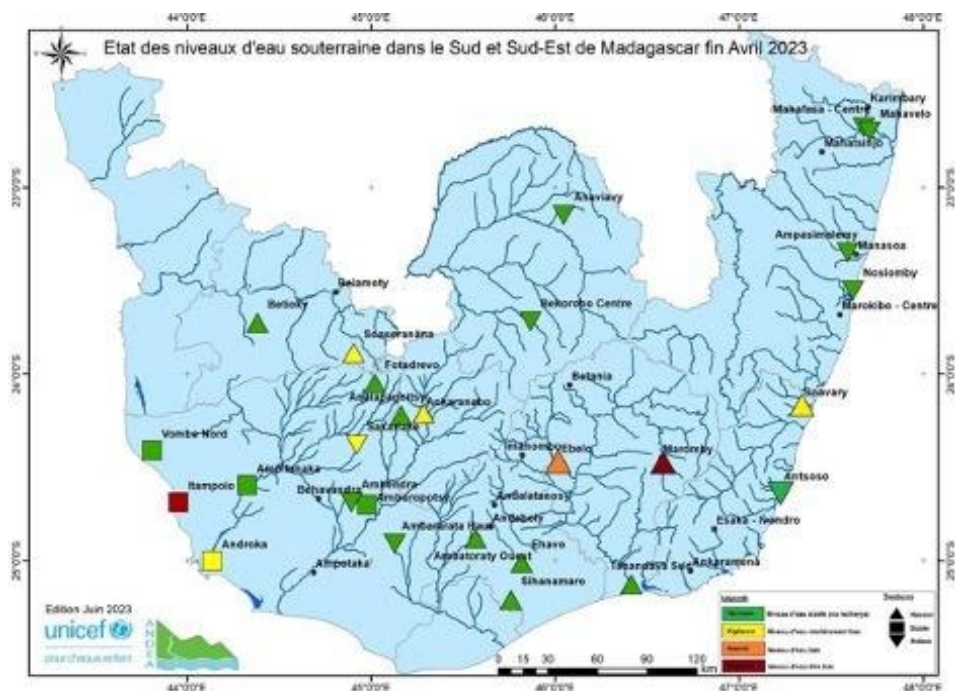
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<sup>4</sup> The Grand South is a colloquial term for the most southern part of Madagascar. It roughly encompasses Ambovombe, Tsihombe, Beloha, and the southern parts of Ampanihy and Amboasary.

<sup>5</sup> Tropical cyclones include Gretelle (1997), Hubert (2010), Bingiza (2011), Chedza (2015), and Batsirai and Emnati (2022).



Figure 4. State of groundwater levels, April 2023



### 3.1.2 Predominant economic sectors for each region

Agriculture and livestock are the primary economic sectors in the four focus regions. Mining and forest exploitation are secondary activities during the inter-season, to complement the income of small-scale farmers.

#### **Agriculture for all 12 focus districts**

Through interviews and focus group discussions, the study team heard that staple foods such as rice, cassava, and sweet potatoes are cultivated across the 12 districts. Maize is less common and is just starting in the Southeast. Beans and Bambara peas are planted at large scale in several communes in both the Southern and Southeast regions but are sold at low prices due to uncompetitive markets. Vegetable cultivation presents good yields in all districts but low prices due to several reasons, including: lack of demand in local weekly markets, poor road infrastructure, and the lack of cold chain infrastructure to maintain the quality of perishable crops for more distant and bigger markets.

Interviewees frequently pointed to few economic opportunities and the generally low level of education as two of the main reasons youths become small-scale farmers by default. Despite agriculture being the main source of food and income for most people, land ownership is a major issue due to the dual system of customary laws and formal rules regarding land tenure and rights. Agricultural lands secured on the basis of customary rules are not recognized and therefore not protected by the state. In Atsimo Atsinanana, households' income typically relies on seasonal activities. These include coffee and clove harvesting and timber and charcoal production in the Southeast, and timber and charcoal production and daily wage jobs in mining companies for the Southern region, fishing for those close to rivers or the sea, and small trade for those living close to city markets. Local food supply chains are dysfunctional,



due in particular to poor soil quality, unstable production, climate variability, poverty, structural vulnerability, challenging transportation, and negative local strategies (Fayad, 2023). Further details on the challenges facing agriculture in the focus regions is provided in Annex F as well as in the complete DRMS report.

### **Livestock**

Livestock has various functions for rural households and in particular those living in poverty. It complements income from agriculture production, provides a savings cushion, and has a social function—livestock are used for funerals, marriage, and other customs—called *havoria* in the Southern region. In these regions, livestock represents a household’s economic rank in its community.

Livestock may surpass agriculture in importance in the Southern region and in Befotaka district in the Southeast region, while it is less important in the remaining districts of the Southeast. In the Southern region, poultry is most common, while some households own sheep, goats, and *zebu* (Fayad 2023). The primary *zebu* market in the Southern region is in Isoanala/Bekily, while a second bigger market is in Jangana/Betroka. As with agriculture, water scarcity is the main reason for livestock decline,<sup>6</sup> before disease and theft. In the Androy region, the households most affected by food insecurity are agro-pastoralists; they may lose dozens of cattle during the dry season combined with the decline of zebu price at the same time. This price decline is due to the increase of zebus being sold for food or migration expenses. The study team heard that agro-pastoralists that remain in the Southern regions experience prolonged food scarcity from July to November. They typically have less stored crops as they rely mostly on cattle as their main source of income.

### **Fisheries**

In the Southern region, fishing is exclusively for the coastal population, which uses rudimentary equipment. The artisanal fisheries sector provides an alternative source of income to the landless rural population and families headed by a woman. Most of the fish caught are sold at the local markets, with a smaller share stored by local middlemen or business owners. According to data from the Plan Régional de Développement (PRD, Regional Development Plan)<sup>7</sup> for the Southeast region, local business owners declared 80 metric tons of lobsters bought from artisan fishers for the 2020 season. No data was available for the Southern region.

In the Southern region, inland populations rarely benefit from maritime activities because they need permission from coastal clans to pass through. In the Southeast region, these divisions are less distinct, and people from inland communities can typically travel freely to the coast to fish, for example from inland Farafangana to coastal Vangaindrano.

### **Seasonal activities: timber, firewood, charcoal production, and mining**

The Southern population has been active in mica mining for decades. Small-scale mining is generally informal, using artisanal techniques and rudimentary tools. According to formal regulations, mica

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<sup>6</sup> According to one communal official in Bekily district, a farmer could lose between 40 and 100 *zebu* during the dry season. Due to water scarcity, farmers bought animal feed for the first time in 2022.

<sup>7</sup> The PRD is the main document used to define economic development programs according to the region’s objectives/visions. Typically, the PRD is designed for 10-15 years.

extraction is generally reserved for men older than 15. Women and girls, however, who make up 55 percent of the workforce, are involved in extracting the ore, and sorting, sifting, and transporting the mica. They carry out these tasks with their young children (Rakotoarindrasata 2022), and child labor is often observed in smaller mining industries. These activities complement income from agriculture or replace it during times of persistent drought. Rural populations living next to rivers benefit from alluvial land crops with better yields and are therefore less likely to work in the formal and informal mining sector.

According to a local business owner in the mining sector, the number of poor households looking for temporary work in the mines decreases each time a safety net program is deployed in the Southern region. Some mining companies are not working at full capacity, and most of the mines use child labor. Recently, productivity has been falling (from 100 containers a year in the past to less than half that now), according to the local mica mining owner. Communities in Amboasary Atsimo and Ambovombe noted that low wages may also deter the local population from seeking work in mines, particularly if food and cash are being provided by humanitarian projects in the Southern region. Large-scale mining is less common in the Southeast region; however, this situation could change rapidly.

Illegal timber, firewood and charcoal production is common in all 12 districts, resulting in rapid deforestation for the last two decades according to local people. Dependence on biomass (wood and charcoal) has created what Hänke et al. call a, “resource consumption/production trap” (2017). Their longitudinal survey found that charcoal making was “a widespread strategy employed by farmers to cope with cash deficits.” Deforestation, caused by unsustainable practices, leads to increased food insecurity, “as the habitat for wild plants, particularly wild yams, is lost, which are frequently collected when farmers face periods of food shortage” (Hänke et al. 2017; Fayad 2023). Demand for charcoal is continuously increasing with urban population growth.

The impact of accelerating deforestation goes beyond water scarcity and erosion; it is changing water flows in the delta of Menagnara Vangaindrano, Manapatra Farafangana, Menarandra Ampanihy, Mandrare Amboasary Atsimo and Menambovo Tsihombe, which affects all the focus regions. According to the Mayor and community members interviewed in Mahatsinjo, Vondrozo in the Southeast region, a rat invasion is becoming a great cause of concern for the cultivation of crops. With deforestation leading to lack of wild food for rats and decreasing numbers of bats (the main predator of rats in the region), rats are increasingly eating cultivated crops.

### 3.1.3 The impact of history and ethnicity on poverty and food insecurity


Poverty and food insecurity in Southern and Southeast Madagascar cannot be understood holistically without an examination of the interplay between history and ethnicity. Patterns of poverty in the Southern and Southeast regions are difficult to generalize and vary by ethnic group and area. The map in Annex D depicts the variety of ethnic groups across the study region and Annex E provides a table of the principal ethnic groups. It is important to analyze poverty in the Southern and Southeast regions through the lens of the clan organizations rather than the individual characteristics of the household or head of household (which has been common practice in the design of resilience and food security projects and programs in Madagascar). A complex mechanism of mutual support between households in a clan makes it difficult to track the exchange of money or in-kind mutual aid within each community.

Ethnic tension in Madagascar traces its roots to pre-colonial times. The caste system that emerged partly along ethnic lines during the Merina Kingdom period (1540–1897) was co-opted by the French colonial administration when it deposed the monarchy in 1896. Slavery was abolished, but the caste system formed the basis of a new administrative system (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2022).

French colonialism left its mark in many other ways. In the Southeast region, literate people were close to foreign colonialists and inherited most of the arable land. They had better access to resources, in particular high-skilled jobs, whereas uneducated people were mostly farmers or performing low-skilled jobs. Uneducated heads of households discouraged their children from going to school to avoid administrative documentation like identity papers and therefore taxation. In the last three decades, while the education system has become a social ladder, new generations from poorer households remain left behind. The presence of colonialists in the Southeast region was mostly seen in the coastal cities and has left lasting traces. However, inland populations like Befotaka and Vondrozo had less contact with French colonialists due to their isolation. The challenges faced by colonialists in the past in attempting to access inland areas through the primary rainforest remain today.

In the Southern region, the presence of French colonialists was confined to strategic districts such as Taolagnaro and Amboasary Atsimo where large scale agriculture is possible. The remaining districts have seen less power exercised by colonialists, which has also led to fewer new technologies and less infrastructure building. An attempt to redistribute wealth across districts of the Grand South was undertaken years before the end of colonization and throughout the first decade of post-colonization, for example mohair carpet-making in Ampanihy, an artisanal oil mill in Isoanala, and other small industrial projects elsewhere. Generally, these have been unsuccessful due to high electricity costs, the collapse of sheep farming, and migration of labor workers due to food scarcity and persistent droughts (Ramanantenasoa and Ravaosolo 2005; Andriantsalama et al. 2005). Economic activities in the Southern region are strongly intertwined with social and cultural activities, which may cause difficulties in penetrating the market economy (Ramanantenasoa and Ravaosolo 2005). In the Southern region, clan-related (or lineage) organizations are strongly maintained and were less impacted by colonial structures than elsewhere in the country. This was evident from the study team's community-level interviews and administrative data on the number of fokontany in communes in the Southern region. For example, the Anjampaly commune in Tsihombe has more than 60 fokontany, compared to the approximate average of 20 elsewhere in Madagascar.

Another legacy of colonialism common across the focus regions is excessive territorial division and latent conflict among ethnic groups. While more pronounced in the Southern region, clan division and rivalry also exist in the Southeast region (see box below).



At a commune in Farafangana district, a safety net program activity was established by a government agency during the first quarter of 2023. Not knowing about the latent conflict and strict territorial division between two sub-clans, the agency applied its usual targeting criteria to identify beneficiary households and select the supervision team. Application of the targeting criteria resulted in appointing a person from one clan to supervise beneficiaries in the rival clan. The supervised community raised concerns about this “unacceptable decision,” whereas the agency insisted on the objectivity of the criteria. The activity was suspended and has not yet been implemented during the PEA data collection timeframe.

Finally, it is worth also noting that the *Kere*, a drought-induced famine, first emerged in the 1930s, after the French colonial administration eradicated *raketa* plants, an edible cactus and important alternative to staple foods during periods of drought both for people and livestock (Ralaingita, et al. 2022).

### 3.2 The dynamics of food insecurity in Madagascar

This section examines the dynamics between institutions and actors and the implications of these dynamics for food insecurity at the national, regional, and district level in Madagascar. The regional stakeholder matrices in Annex C provide greater detail on each group of stakeholders.

#### 3.2.1 Overview of power structures impacting food security issues at the national, regional, and district level

Power is concentrated in three main groups of stakeholders in the Southern and Southeast regions of Madagascar: traditional authorities, the state, and influential private sector and ‘third sector’ actors, including business interests, NGOs, United Nations (UN) agencies, and churches. To make the presentation of the large amount of information available from the PEA field work and secondary sources easier to understand, the study team has grouped the study districts into five “clusters” which share certain geophysical and socio-cultural characteristics (Figure 5 and Figure 6). The clusters, which do not correspond with regional boundaries, are described in detail in Annex E. Understanding the social conditions presented here will be essential to the planning and implementation of any food security interventions in these districts. Key points that are relevant to a more general understanding of the part social norms play in the political economy of the Southern and Southeast regions are set out below.

#### **Cluster 1: Ampanihy, Bekily and Betroka districts**

- This cluster is mainly dominated by Mahafaly and Bara ethnic groups.
- Ampanihy is the stronghold of the Mahafaly royal family with several sub-groups, while Betroka is mainly the fief of the Bara ethnic group.
- Seven main ethnic groups including migrants (Tagnala, Antandroy, Antanosy, Merina, and Betsileo), are distributed widely across Bekily, raising the possibility of more inter-ethnic and cultural mixing than elsewhere in the southern region.

- The Antandroy in Bekily live in communes bordering the Ambovombe, Tsihombe, and Beloha districts, which are drought-prone areas compared to the rest of the districts in this cluster.

**Cluster 2: Tsihombe, Beloha and Ambovombe-Androy districts**

- This cluster is made up of the Antandroy ethnic group.
- The Antandroy have recently recorded 206 lineages. Their clans (fokon-drazana) and groups within them are strictly structured and hierarchical. High-ranking authorities have their own territories, making it difficult for the public administration to intervene in customary decisions.
- The Antandroy have strict community rules which prevent others from mixing with them. They trade with others but mutual aid is only for clan members.
- In Tsihombe, one sub-group (the Sahamena) dominates the political arena. The other two abstain from any participation in public affairs.

**Cluster 3: Taolagnaro and Amboasary Atsimo districts**

- The cluster is made up of Antanosy, with Bara and Antandroy ethnic groups occupying mostly the Amboasary Atsimo district.
- Prominent families of Bara origin have been in power in public administration in Taolagnaro and Amboasary Atsimo for generations, alternating with the Antanosy.
- Antanosy groups are linked with business corporations, though Indian and other company owners now dominate the district and regional economy.

**Cluster 4: Vangaindrano and Befotaka districts**

- This cluster is made up mainly of the Antesaka and Bara ethnic groups in just a few communes of Befotaka.
- In Befotaka district the two groups live together with several minority groups. The Antesaka are dominant, especially in the main town, but the Bara are consulted on important decisions.
- Isolation, with only three of the nine communes accessible by a primitive road, creates a particular power structure in Befotaka district. There, the community relies on local rules more than formal regulations.
- Antesaka has three main sub-groups, namely Rabehava, Zafimananga, and Zafimahavaly, that have relatively clear territorial divisions across the 31 communes of Vangaindrano. Antesaka have recently been migrating to Taolagnaro and have some cooperative arrangements with the Antanosy.

**Cluster 5: Vondrozo and Farafangana districts**

- This cluster is composed of the Antefasy, Zafisoro and Antesaka ethnic groups. All are divided into a very large number of sub-ethnic groups.
- In Vondrozo district, the dominant ethnic group are the Sahafatra, a parent group of the Antesaka. There are also 11 sub-ethnic groups with a few migrants.
- Farafangana district is divided into three ethnically homogeneous groups of communes, each of which is presently demanding to be an autonomous district. This would leave the Antefasy communes with Farafangana as their chef-lieu.

Figure 5. Map showing the five geographical clusters used in the analysis

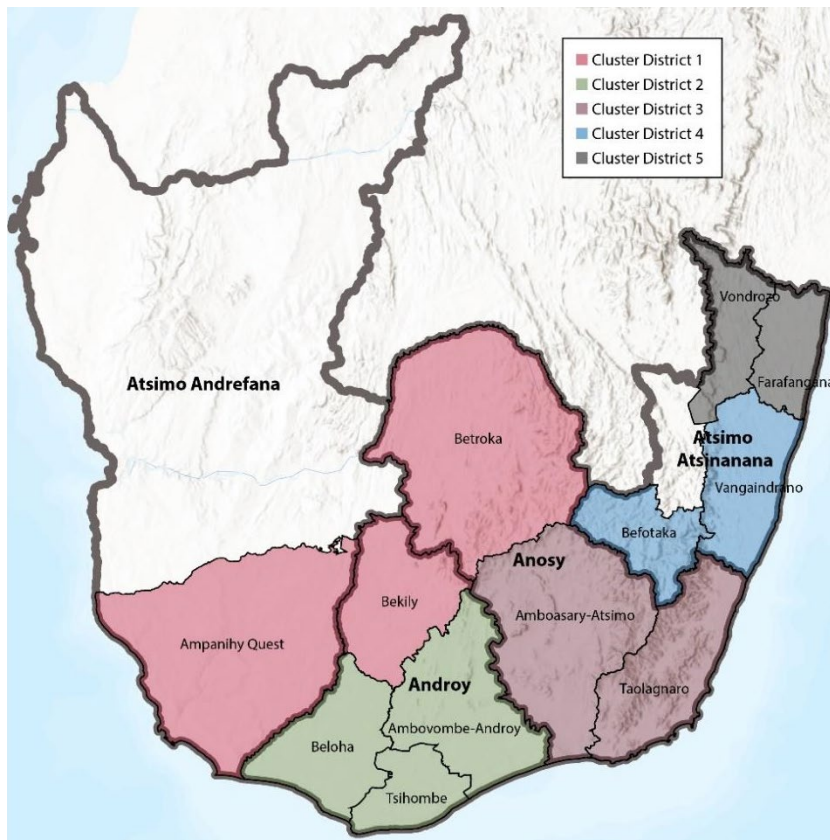


Figure 6. Ethnic groups across five geographical clusters

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5
Mahafaly	●				
Bara	●			●	
Tagnalaña	●				
Antandroy	●	●	●		
Antanosy	●		●		
Merina	●				
Betsileo	●				
Antesaka				●	●
Zafisoro					●
Antefasy					●

3.2.1.1. Traditional authorities and social structures

Understanding the role of traditional authorities in the political economy of the Southern and Southeast regions requires an understanding of the complicated ethnology of these regions. Society is highly



fragmented, with the population divided into a very large number of ethnic groups, sub-groups, clans, and lineages. Relationships between these groups vary, from cooperative arrangements between some to open conflict between others, while social mixing is commonly rejected between clans. The forms of recognized traditional authority also vary greatly from place to place, from highly structured arrangements under a royal family in some places to less structured forms of lineage or clan leadership in others.

Traditional leaders are often stereotyped as uneducated by state officials and political elites, even though they are guardians of history and traditional practices (*vakoka*). Two chiefs of clans interviewed said they hear from educated political elites that, "*rehefa olona tsy mianatra dis tsy tokony henoina*" — translated, "nobody should obey an illiterate person."

In **Cluster 1**, the cohabitation of ethnic groups dates from the colonial era and continues today, although territorial divisions still remain. Interviewees from various ethnic groups (Mahafaly, Tagnalana, Antanosy, and Bara) acknowledge that Antandroy ethnic groups have stricter community rules, making it difficult to integrate their territory and community. It is also difficult to identify the poorest members within an Antandroy clan, due to their strong mutual aid. Instead, social, and cultural events offer insight into levels of wealth within Antandroy clans. A communal official in Bekily suggested that wealth was easier to identify because the savings and investments choices of other ethnic groups have changed. For example, savings are now put into house construction in places like Bekily, Beraketa, and Isoanala. Wealth can also be seen in a household's financial capacity to purchase cattle feed during the dry season. Ownership of livestock (*zebu*, sheep, and goats) remains a good indicator of wealth and the ability to feed a family.

In **Cluster 2**, dominated by the Antandroy ethnic group, traditional leaders (*Hazomanga*) have authority in social and cultural matters for a *fokontany* (village) corresponding to a clan, but do not intervene in the formal political sphere. Usually, a clan chief is the chief of *fokontany* for the Antandroy ethnic group. Antandroy live in multi-generational families of at least three generations, and often practice polygamy. Identifying the poorest members of the clan remains a challenge.

In **Cluster 3**, the domination of the Antanosy ethnic group has gradually been reduced as the Antandroy and Bara move into their territory, driven by better economic opportunities into Taolagnaro, the capital city of Antanosy. This cluster is quite similar to Cluster 1 but with fewer ethnic and sub-groups. Cluster 3 has a greater presence of foreigners, likely due to tourism, mining, and agricultural export products industries. According to a female representative of a local grassroots organization operating in Taolagnaro, the population of Antanosy migrated to the city of Taolagnaro during the installation of QIT Madagascar Minerals (QMM) (a mining company), where opportunities for low-skilled jobs are high. Presently, they live in a precarious situation compared to other ethnic groups.

In **Cluster 4**, particularly for Vangaindrano, divisions among the traditional leadership have resulted in multiple traditional authority figures. There are eight traditional leaders for three clans. Below these leaders, communes are led by a *Mpanjaka*, below whom *Fokontanies* are led by a *Lonaky*. At the communal level, the *Mpanjaka* hold power over land tenure, conflict resolution, and guardianship of cultural norms. They are the main contact for the mayor, and some have recently held positions in communal councils. In Befotaka, the two traditional authorities (Bara and Antesaka) formerly nominated the elected municipal officials, but this has now been overturned. According to two of the highest



ranked traditional leaders from both Antesaka and Bara, this change may have led to the marginalization of the poorest from some government-run safety net programs. They believe the mayor is now free from traditional leaders' power and can act as he wants.

In **Cluster 5**, Farafangana has a track record of power struggles between the Zafisoro and the Antefasy. Traditional leaders draw clear territorial boundaries between the two groups and inter-group marriages are not allowed. This power struggle originated from territory division during colonial times and continues today in regional politics. The Antesaka, understanding this power struggle, hold most of the leadership positions in the capital city of the Southeast region. Vondrozo and the south part of Farafangana (consisting of approximately 11 communes among the 33 of Farafangana) are home to the parent group Antesaka. They have few intra-clan rivalries and do not interfere in the Zafisoro-Antefasy rivalry. For this reason, they have stronger ties with the Antesaka ethnic group, rather than Zafisoro and Antefasy.

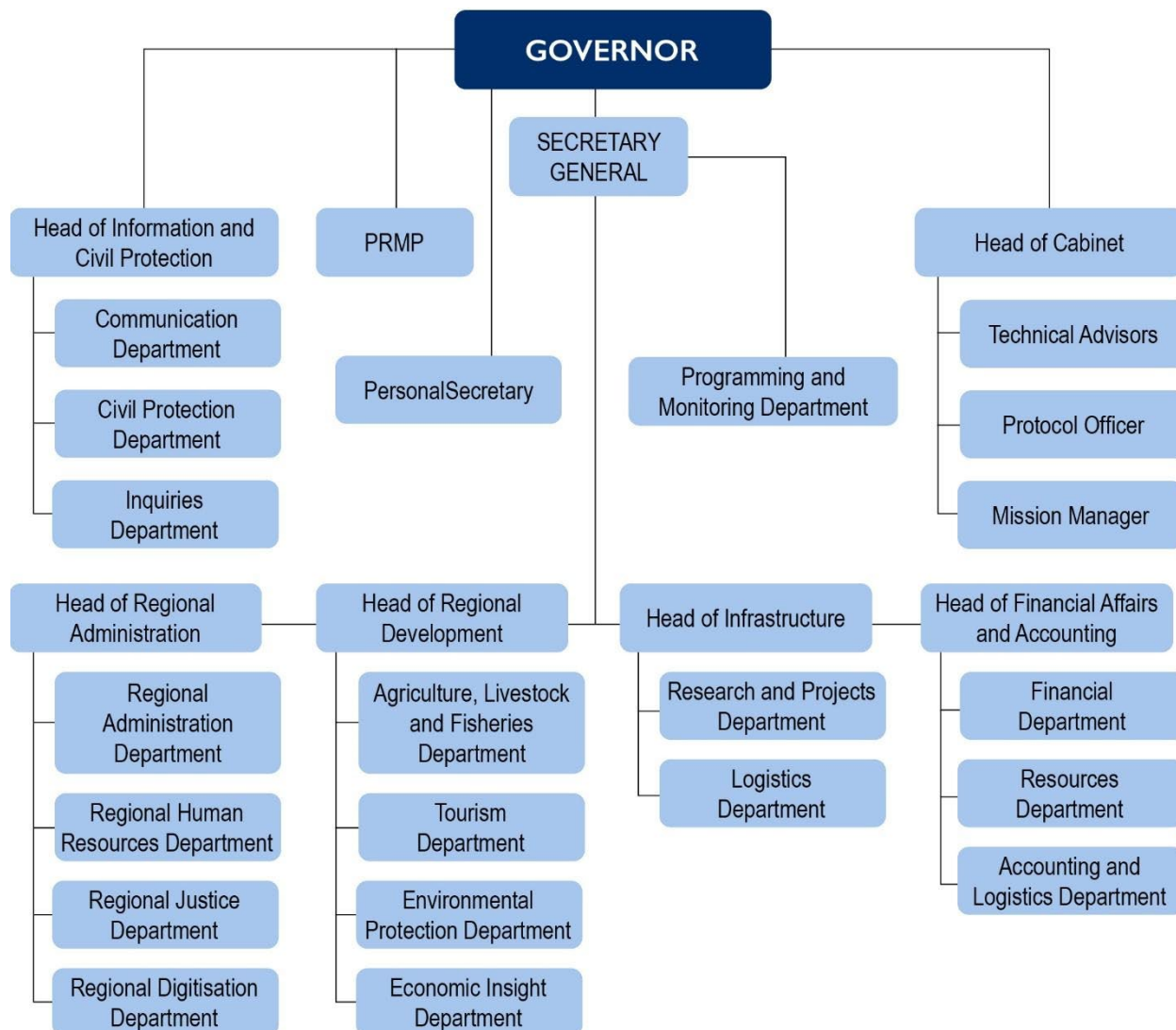
#### *3.2.1.2. The government and public administration*

This section summarizes the relevant public sector stakeholders. It examines the different levels of deconcentration and decentralization, the relationship between elected officials and appointed technicians, and how the public administration is positioned relating to customary authorities.

Madagascar is divided into a system of decentralized territorial collectives. Senators, congresspersons, and mayors are elected within the decentralized system. Senators and congresspersons work at the national level in the upper and lower chambers respectively, while mayors lead communal administration. The chief of the *fokontany* is also elected by the local community. Elected positions typically last four to five years. Since 2019, each region has been administered by an appointed governor. Regions should also have elections; however, the government has not organized any. The regional administration structure is similar to a typical ministry (see organizational chart in Figure 7).

In parallel, all ministers have delegated responsibilities to the regional and district levels through the deconcentrated system of public administration. Several ministers—namely education, homeland and decentralization, and public health—have delegates at the communal level. The communal-level delegate for education is the Chief of the *Zone Administrative Pédagogique* (ZAP, educational administration zone). The delegate for homeland is the *Délégué Administratif d'Arrondissement* (DAA, district administrative delegate), and the delegate for public health is the Chief of *Centre de Santé de Base* (basic health center). It is the DAA, not the mayor, who oversees the work of the chiefs of the *fokontany* (see Figure 8). Instead, the mayor cooperates with the chiefs of *fokontany* in carrying out specific communal activities. All officials in the deconcentrated system are appointed by the Council of Ministers.

Figure 7. Regional Administration Structure

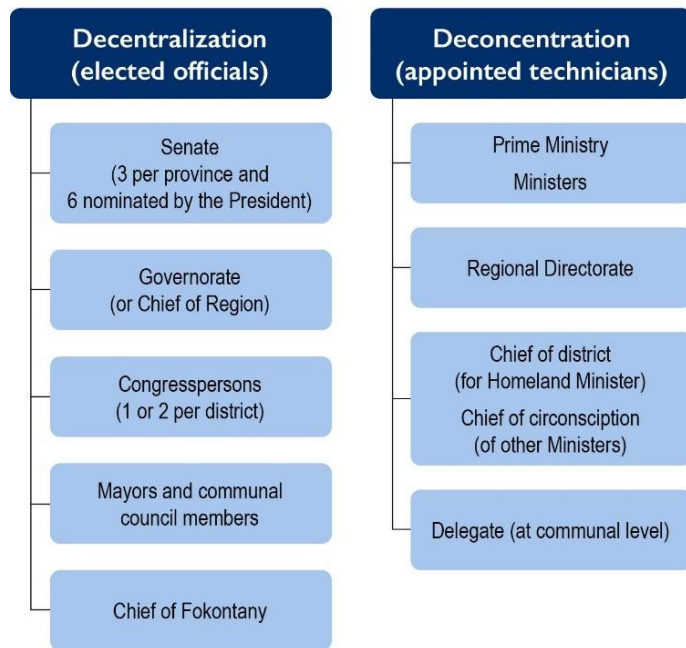


In the current Constitution (from 2009), a province is defined as a territorial collectivity, but these are yet to be installed. The World Bank (2004) stated that, “while some parallelism is normal and necessary in any country with some degree of decentralization, the lack of clear roles and responsibilities has created confusion and tension between ‘competing’ decentralized and deconcentrated levels of government.”

The state government, under the office of the Prime Minister, has two prominent agencies that manage food security and nutrition programming. These are the FID and the Office National de Nutrition (ONN, National Nutrition Office). Each of these divisions is represented at the regional level and is supported through governmental programs funded by the World Bank and domestic funding.

3.2.1.3. Other stakeholders

Figure 8. Organizational structures of decentralization and deconcentration in Madagascar



This group of stakeholders includes the private sector (e.g., local business owners, corporations, middlemen, and collectors), NGOs, associations, and other civil society organizations (CSOs), UN agencies, churches, and religious leaders.

Over the last four decades, UN agencies have delivered humanitarian assistance and performed other development activities in the Southern region. Highly specialized, they used to work in silos but in recent years they have applied the One UN Approach for better coordination. The UN agencies (in particular the UN Development Programme [UNDP], the World Food Programme [WFP], and the UN Children’s Fund [UNICEF]) mobilize funding for humanitarian programs from donors like USAID and the European Union (EU). Other donors, such as the World

Bank, and recently the Korean International Cooperation Agency and the Japan International Cooperation Agency support social safety net programs.

International NGOs, in particular Europeans, also have a long history of working in the Southern region on food security projects and programs. Faith-based organizations like Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) also receive funding from USAID and other donors. They work with local organizations, both secular and religious, to implement activities. Yet key informants the study team spoke with, including civil servants and community members, felt that local implementer organizations are less influential than their international partners who primarily receive the funds.

The private sector is influential across all 12 focus districts, with some firms monopolizing the transport sector and public works activities. Private sector stakeholders often hold appointed political positions or have a direct interest in development and humanitarian activities in the Southern region (e.g., fuel/transport, collection of agriculture products, hospitality). They are often related to “generational money” families or are part of a new generation of elites educated at the university level. Big corporations indirectly influence demand for food and provide seasonal jobs for households living in poverty.

### 3.2.1.3. Interactions between the traditional authorities, public administration, and other influential actors

#### Parallel systems of governance between traditional authorities and public administration

Traditional leaders and state government have separate lines of influence over local communities. Decisions over land tenure, conflict resolution, and cultural and social events are held by customary authorities, whereas key sectors such as education, health, roads, and electricity infrastructure fall under the state government's management. Traditional authorities' influence and roles in the decision-making processes vary between districts, and even between communes. For example, in Antefasy and Zafisoro territories (roughly in Farafangana), no activities take place without permission from traditional leaders, and civil servants within the government systems are typically from (or claim to be from) the lineage of traditional leaders to exert influence.

The parallel system of state and traditional governance is more pronounced in the Southern region due to the co-location of numerous ethnic groups and clans<sup>8</sup> and the weak presence of formal administration at the different levels (namely region, district, commune, and *fokontany*). With the domination of the Antesaka and two other main ethnic groups (Zafisoro and Antefasy) in the Southeast region, this parallel system is easier to understand but no less complicated to address due to the existence of numerous sub-groups.

Misalignment between state and traditional institutions (rules and norms) is both a cause and an effect of parallel governance systems. State rules and norms continue to be influenced by the French political system. This is not only a colonial legacy. Ongoing technical assistance from France to several government ministries has influenced decision-making over policies, regulations and, to some extent, administration of the country. Traditional customs are rarely considered in formal administrative processes. At the same time, customary laws, regulations, and norms remain unchallenged. Traditional leaders hold these rules and customs strongly, as an expression of ethnic and even national identity. They serve as a reminder of the difference between the countries, and a form of resistance against the French colonial empire.

#### Interactions between traditional authorities and public administration

Traditional authorities mostly interact with public administration at the district, commune, and *fokontany* level for conflict resolutions and questions on land use, tenure, and rights. For example, *dina* (community security regulations) have to be reviewed by a district chief prior to enforcement. At the national level, the state government and UN agencies operating in the Southern and Southeast regions recently worked with an umbrella organization of traditional authorities steered by Mahafaly Maroseranana royal, the Fédération des Communautés Royales, Traditionnelles, Coutumières et Culturelles de Madagascar (Federation of Royal, Traditional, Customary, and Cultural Communities of Madagascar), to advance issues of security, vaccination, and youth employment (Razafison, 2023).

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<sup>8</sup> The Antandroy ethnic group have at least 206 lineages across the Androy territory. The same may apply to the Bara, Tanala, Antanosy, and Mahafaly ethnic groups, which live in the eight focus districts in the Southern region.



According to a clan chief and a young person interviewed, in Toliara, the capital city of Atsimo Andrefana where the Tokobetelo clans from Ampanihy are very influential, demands for access to land have been harshly suppressed by the local public administration. Ten years ago, seven individuals, including a clan chief, were arrested and jailed for eight months. While they did not receive local support, traditional leaders from Diego-Suarez in the north asked for their release and the Minister of Justice (the current President of Congress) personally approved the release order. The clan chief interviewed felt that the local public administration is corrupt, saying “they are teams of thugs.” Cohesion among traditional leaders (Antanosy, Antandroy, and Mahafaly) has diminished due to corruption. Some are involved in conflicts over land and the study team also heard stories of cash being given in return for false testimony in court and cases of land grabbing by wealthy citizens from Toliara.

Land tenure is another area where government and traditional authorities interact and often conflict. Land tenure accepted by customary laws cannot be upheld at the government ministry, but the government cannot impose formal land ownership laws on customary-tenured land. In Atsimo Atsinanana, for example, the regional directorate of agriculture was struggling to find 4,942 acres (2,000 hectares) of land to promote private partnership over sheep farming. Traditional authorities refused to lease a parcel of land for this activity and the state government was unable to enforce a law that says that unexploited land belongs to the state. Conflicts like this are seen occasionally in the public sphere, as recalled by interviewees reflecting on a case in Toliara (see box).

Conflicts of interest are common at the regional and district level, where technical and elected officials often divert public funds to close family ties (in the case of Androy region), for personal profit (cases in Farafangana, Vondrozo, and Vangaindrano districts), and to political allies (Befotaka, Ampanihy, Fort-Dauphin, Betroka, Tsihombe, and Amboasary Atsimo districts). It is common for unqualified family members to be appointed to profitable positions in public administration across all 12 districts.

The complex interplay between traditional authorities and publicly appointed officials has shaped the political environment of food security in the Southern and Southeast regions. Traditional authorities—through family ties, business alliances, and other social networks—have been able to place their relatives and acquaintances in public administration positions to influence decisions at both local and national levels. However, alliances and coalitions are frequently tested, and local rivalries tend to reverberate at the regional and national levels. This could be one cause of the state government’s inconsistent anti-poverty and food security programming in the Southern and Southeast regions.

In addition, it is not easy to define where traditional authorities hold influence in political elections. For example, the study team heard that a politician who has not received “benediction” from traditional authorities is unlikely to win. Interestingly, very few elected politicians have succeeded in securing a second consecutive term in the Southeast region. However, when they run again after a break, they are likely to win. Usually, local political elites are likely to win at a first attempt due to a good family record, their attitude towards the majority, or their reputation in the community. In the Southern region, high-ranking families and individuals usually hold elected positions at the communal level.

### 3.2.2 Implications of power structures for patterns of poverty, food security, and nutrition

#### 3.2.2.1. *Influence of traditional authority decisions and practices*

##### **Community customary norms and rules**

Social events such as funerals and circumcisions are usually tied to the economic status of households. Practices, representations, and responses vary between ethnic groups and geographical areas, making comparisons between them difficult (Molet and Decary 1964). Households save money for a lifetime to organize decent funerals, lavish marriages, and circumcisions (see box below). Although other ethnic groups do not have the same beliefs as the Antandroy, funerals remain a large cost-driver, even to the point of debt. A household may sell cattle, land, and other assets to meet social expectations. Attempts to overturn these customs have emerged recently under the influence of church leaders and individual civil servants, but have failed. Traditional authorities have a stronghold in these customs as they define long-lasting principles of organization in each community, such as mutual aid and support, networks, reciprocity, and equality.



For the Antandroy ethnic group, the funeral tradition is the most important. An individual tomb, heavily decorated, costs as much as some people make in a lifetime. Several *zebu* are typically sacrificed during the event, which may last weeks or even months for the wealthy. According to participants in a women's group discussion in Behazomanga, Tsihombe, death is celebrated as a liberation and the beginning of a peaceful life, rather than the end. This belief drives working and saving and is a reason for migrating Antandroy to return to their clan when there is a death announcement in the family. The predominance of funerals in this ethnic group explains how they use their income. In other words, food insecurity is not always associated with poverty for the Antandroy people. Most intentionally choose a frugal lifestyle to save for funerals. This custom dates back to the pre-colonial period. The slight change is that the tomb now holds four to five people instead of one, as participants in an Antandroy youth group discussion in Amboasary Atsimo explained.

For some ethnic groups, customary norms have gender implications, with women's burden being higher than men's (see box below). This is also the case for circumcision and marriage.

In Vangaindrano, the burden of funeral activities was alleviated during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the government imposed a strict lockdown even for social events. Some households bounced back better during that time, perhaps due to financial aid. Once this regulation ended, however, people were scared to raise the idea of a moratorium on funeral activities to traditional leaders for fear of being excluded from community activities and, in some cases, fined. However, in other areas, postponing funeral-related activities during the harvest season is now possible to help families avoid going into debt, with young people convincing their parents, who then do the same with traditional leaders. Overall, the study team found that the role of public administration is key to overriding some entrenched practices. The "give back social mechanism," *Atero ka alao* or *Vara naleven-dolo tsy montso*



*fa hisolo avao*, is appreciated as a form of savings and not easy to erase unless there is a commonly agreed practice to replace it, with no one feeling duped.



In Mahatsinjo, Vondrozo, both women's and men's discussion groups separately noted that the family of the mother of a boy about to be circumcised must purchase t-shirts, *salova* (a sort of wrap skirt), 40 bottles of beer, 40 liters of local rum, \$2.21 (Malagasy Ariary [MGA] 10,000) for each man, 300 *kapoka* of white rice, and one zebu. The remaining expenses fall to the father. Wedding expenses are usually zebu, goats, and cash (called *basimena*). A total of \$11,048.82 (MGA 50 million), equivalent to 40-50 years of annual income could be spent on a marriage. This is a dowry that the woman's family would have to pay back in the event of a separation caused by wrongdoing on the part of the wife. This practice is common in the Southern regions, with slight variation between ethnic groups, according to a Mahafaly and a Bara interviewee. Participants in a youth group discussion recalled a marriage held during the study team's time in Amboasary Atsimo.

### Family related customs

The Antandroy ethnic group openly practices polygamous marriage, even during migration. Polygamy is a way to ensure diversity and offers a higher likelihood of having a strong heir. It is regulated and based on the consent of the first wife. Polygamy may also have other motives: infertility, the desire to choose a wife (rather than have one chosen by parents), protection and the expansion of family wealth and inheritance (usually between sisters to keep family wealth). Polygamous men have higher social status—the more wives a man has, the more likely is it that he will be supported if he runs for political office. A large family carries risks, however, and is more likely to fall into poverty in the aftermath of shocks and stressors. Although polygamy is not as structured as in the Antandroy ethnic group, it is widely practiced in other ethnic groups, resulting in numerous single women heading households with several children.<sup>9</sup> Customary rules do not sanction men abandoning wives and children, in particular in the Southeast compared to the Southern region.

Early marriage is a widespread practice in the Southern region. For example, in the commune of Maroalimainty, Androy region, about 700 boys aged between 13-17 are all married. By the age of 30, they may have as many as 10 children. In many cases, girls and boys involved in these marriages are responsible for feeding their children with little family support, and are often among the poorest households. Reforms to overturn early marriage happen very slowly and will not occur without the engagement of the traditional authorities. In the Southeast region, early sexuality combined with low or inappropriate use of contraceptive methods and a lack of education leads to numerous single mothers.

<sup>9</sup> In the eyes of the community, women in polygamous marriages are considered to be married, whereas for the Government, they are considered to be single.



### Gender norms implying unequal access to social and economic resources

Today, gender norms in the 12 focus districts are not necessarily rooted in moral values held by all community members, but rather in practices that have become entrenched in communities. This occurs even though these norms can drive food insecurity and poverty resulting from gender inequality.

Traditional leaders across the focus regions are mainly elder males, although there are specific settings for women's decision-making for particular groups (Bekily, Beloha, and Ambovombe). In Bekily, women work equally with men and have always been prominent figures in the community, especially among the Antandroy ethnic group. The female leader of one association interviewed was a member of parliament during the political transition period (2010-2013). This is also the case in Beloha where women have a special role in the Antandroy ethnic group, can voice their concerns in the community, and participate in various levels of community decision-making. Women and men decide jointly who is going to migrate to increase income or to cope with shocks. Women mitigate tensions between community members, but they would never be involved in conflict resolution which involves *zebu* theft. They also participate in voting for community/public matters but many report that they are not actively engaged in public affairs, especially elections, which they believe could be better handled by men.

For other ethnic groups, community decisions are mostly made without women, preventing them from accessing useful information and economic opportunities, for example to make key decisions in small trade. Gender inequality is more pronounced in the Southeast region due to the high number of abandoned women with children. There are also more landless women in the Southeast region. Single and abandoned mothers do not have access to land, and they are prevented from working on their agricultural land by their in-laws. In addition, land is a symbol of family territory, which cannot be transferred to another family through marriage alone. It is important to note that female descendants not being allowed to inherit land is a community practice, "fomba fa tsy lalana" ("just a habit, not a law"), according to participants in community group discussions.

The absence of a social and economic role for youth is more obvious in the Southern region. Customary norms divide the family into two social categories: infant/children and parent/adult. This social construct does not include age-related roles (childhood, adolescence, and adulthood) which seem very logical for the public administration system. A large proportion of girls and boys are being married at an early age (around 12-13 years old) in the Southern region. As mentioned by two chiefs of district, they enter the workforce unqualified and become small-scale farmers by default. In the Southeast region, early sexuality leads to pregnancy and abandoned women are more common in rural areas. This is particularly widespread in secondary schools in Befotaka and Vondrozo districts, as noted in youth group discussions. Although some community members say that the reason for the large number of single mothers is early sexuality and inappropriate use of contraceptives, the study team also learned that marriage conventions are changing in the Southeast region (compared to the Southern). The large number of single mothers can be partly attributed to a shift in community attitudes towards male adultery with women who fall pregnant, and men separating from their families and starting new families without ensuring that the previous dependents are provided for. Where these behaviors would have faced harsh criticism from the community in the past, they are increasingly tolerated.

For both regions, married youth and abandoned women experience hunger and poverty equally. Youth living in poverty and experiencing food insecurity are more likely to participate in gangs, banditry,

robbery, and *zebu* theft, and community elders often ignore youth and women. Multi-generational families and families headed by women tend to be the poorest, according to a local representative of a social enterprise in Vangaindrano, confirmed through group discussions.

### *3.2.2.2. Influence of public administration decision and practices*

#### **Dysfunctional public administration and pseudo-decentralization**

Within the state government, power over decision-making is still held at the central level despite the Constitution and decentralization law that state otherwise. The decentralized levels of government (province, region, and commune) and deconcentrated lower levels of the central government's public administration (region, district, and commune) are not fully operational. Appointments of civil servants are still made at the national level. Congresspersons (one or two for each district) often intervene in the local appointment of civil servants, prioritizing relatives, acquaintances, and political ties for the best positions. Unqualified workers usually accept positions in isolated areas, delivering weak public service performance. This dysfunctional formal administration system opens opportunities for nepotism and corruption.

Although equally challenged, the Southern and Southeastern regions face different issues. The **Southern region** remains highly dependent on appointed technical staff (part of the deconcentrated system), and customary laws fill the gap for much decision-making.

- The chief of the district (state government territorial representative, appointed by the center) remains the most influential actor compared to mayors and local civil servants.
- Congresspersons at the district level are openly invading communal decision-making spaces.
- Appointed local technical advisers lack the space to influence decisions by politicians and are disconnected from the poorest populations.

The **Southeast region** presents noticeable signs of transition but varies from one district to another:

- Elected officials at the commune level are increasingly influential over local communities.
- Appointed technicians in public administration, in particular in the education and health sectors, are able to influence political decision-making, but they remain less influential with traditional authorities.
- Appointed technicians' connection to political elites is obvious, as is their disconnection from people living in poverty.


The quasi-absence of public administration at the local level results from inaction, the resignation of civil servants for personal or security reasons, and demotivation (low salary and the lack of equipment, control and supervision, clear plans, and social services and family support infrastructure for those who have children). Civil servants in the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Water and Ministry of Environment are demotivated due to pressure from political elites, lack of career opportunities, harsh working conditions, and low salaries. All of these reasons lead to poor delivery of public services. But it is also noted by traditional leaders in Befotaka that civil servants are also often unqualified for the job and

prefer to pay rent to their supervisors.<sup>10</sup> This is believed to be a longstanding practice in the Southern and Southeast regions, where officials are supposed to be local, according to regional civil servants and local business owners interviewed. As one grassroots organization representative said, the state government, filled with senior officials motivated by easy money or recruited with dubious qualifications, has little influence, and has lost the trust of the communities over time. Prominent politicians from the regions are known for their unstable politics and erratic loyalty.

In addition, local business owners and retired civil servants interviewed noted that competition between local political elites is observed through government programs such as the Support for Resilient Livelihoods in the South of Madagascar Project (MIONJO), the Inclusive Agriculture Transformation Program (DEFIS), and Afafi-Sud. The quasi-absence of state government at the local level favors the dominance of a few elites in both politics and the private sector, as well as some religious authorities.

While decentralization laws have never been openly challenged by the state government, public financial management remains highly centralized. Local governing bodies receive "small" subsidies, and all local public investments (e.g., schools, primary health centers, roads, housing) are still managed either by the national government (Ministry of Finance and Budget, which is becoming powerful) or by international actors. This has led to numerous cases of poor construction, slow programming, and disbursement due to excessive bureaucratic controls, an increase in corruption, and an increase in nepotism within a few privileged departments (Finance and Budget and Agriculture). Politicians (especially members of parliament and their assistants) influence most decisions around local public services, especially for aid activities and infrastructure projects (education, health, and agriculture), as noted by some mayors that were interviewed.

The quasi-absence of government also drives a lack of infrastructure (water, education, roads, and security) in these regions and a lack of coordination across actions and projects. For example, the study team heard from two sources that due to the inconsistent food policy of the state government, the ONN has been deprived of \$4,419,528 (MGA 20 billion) and operates with less than \$883,905 (MGA 4 billion) each year. Some food security programs are also short-term and lack coordination and contextualization, according to community and civil servants. One example is a government-run program that did not take into account the community's illiteracy and provided inappropriate assistance (i.e., a written awareness campaign), and mobile money for unconditional cash transfers when most of the target groups don't know how to use a phone and have been cheated by the implementing agencies' staff. This has resulted in a chaotic situation that has done more harm than good.



In the Anosy region, an implementing organization was forced to build primary schools 400 meters apart because an influential congressman threatened the civil servant responsible, the head of the *fokontany*, and the implementing organization with having to leave if they did not comply. Similarly, some officials are instructed to divert aid to specific places (e.g., their home village or electoral base).

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<sup>10</sup> Rent in this sense arises when more senior officials treat public appointments as if they were their own private resources, and are willing to accept payment from post-holders for the occupation of those posts whether or not they are actually performing their nominal duties.

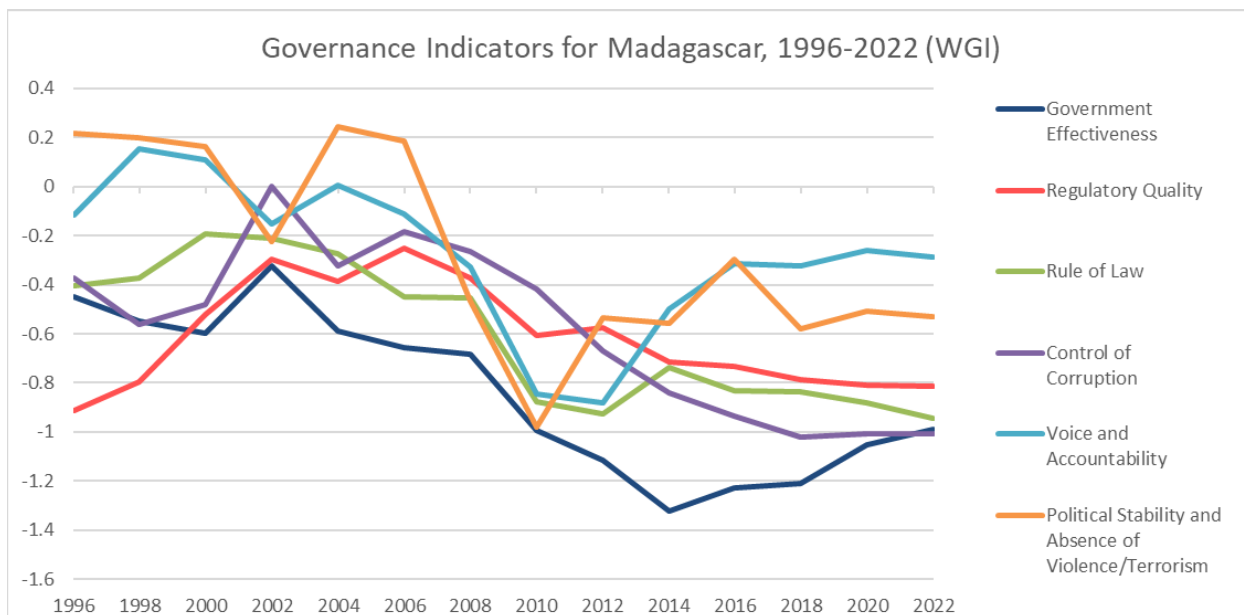
In Ampanihy Ouest, the state government does not intervene to stop the wrongdoings of implementing agencies, although community members have raised concerns about conflicts of interest. Local staff favor their relatives in aid distribution, or sell aid resources at the local markets, and are not held accountable for their decisions and actions. In Taolagnaro, most development actors rarely design a context-specific agricultural project, and the state government does not pilot or promote research that responds to the context of the Southern region (like drought-tolerant crops), as noted by high-ranked civil servants in Anosy region. Livestock development is overlooked, even though local communities rely heavily on it for many aspects of their social and economic life, and the private sector exploits these public administration weaknesses to earn maximum profits through uncontrolled food prices.

As high-ranked civil servants in Anosy region recalled, the state government is openly misled by local officials who are unqualified and bribe senior officials and local politicians to secure their jobs. This is the case, for example, of the *titre vert* (green title) in Agnalafary (Amboasary Atsimo district), where local officials are supposed to design and coordinate the distribution of improved farmland to the poor. Officials planted young plants before the president's visit but no one lives there, leading to degraded land despite the amount of financial investment put in.

### Failure of the Homeland Security and Justice Departments, leading to the rise of insecurity

Across Madagascar, weak governance is accompanied by instability, poor rule of law, and corruption. The World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) show governance weakening since 1996, despite some progress at the turn of the millennium.

Figure 9. Governance indicators for Madagascar, 1996-2022

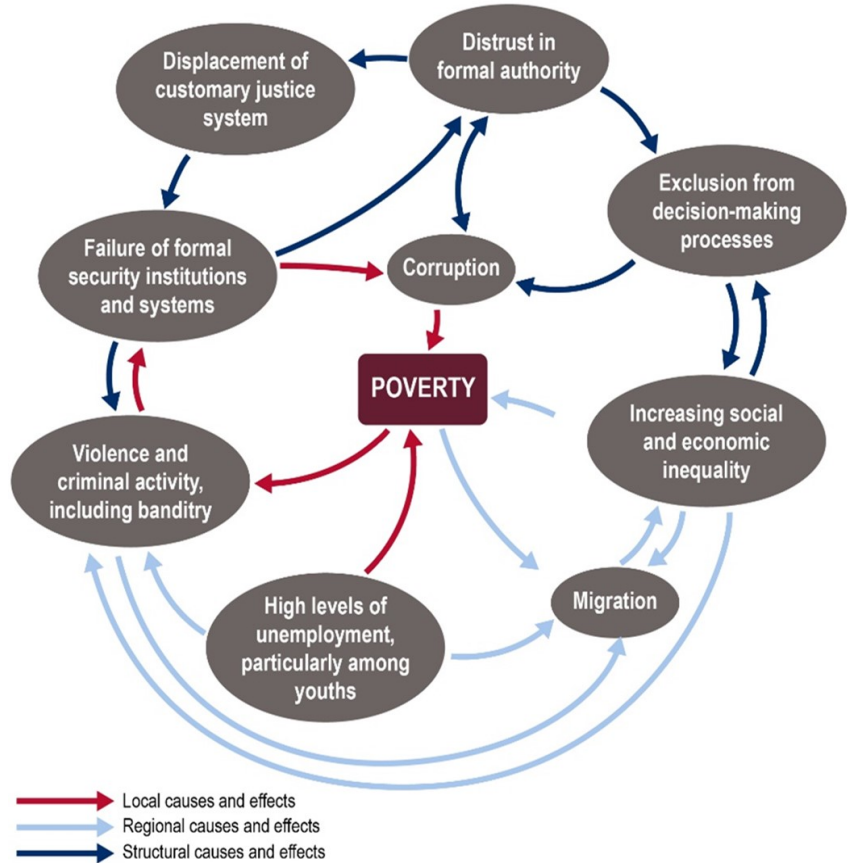


The poorest households are often located in areas where theft is common. In Madagascar, the state has sole authority over the armed forces (military, police, gendarmerie). External influences and highly politicized leaders have weakened security. This may contribute to violence, and in the Southern and

Southeast regions the situation is exacerbated by isolation and a lack of infrastructure (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2022).

In the Southeast region, the increase of insecurity is mainly due to the disappearance of the *dina* (community/customary security law) after the government intervened, believing that traditional punishments were disproportionate to the crimes committed. The situation is aggravated by a corrupt justice system. In Vangaindrano, people are reluctant to report thieves for fear of possible retaliation (including murder) or rejection by the community. Insecurity is linked to *dahalo* (*zebu* theft) in Befotaka, Midongy Atsimo, and Vondrozo due to their proximity to the National Park (making it difficult to track *zebu*) and the Betroka district (home to the Bara ethnic group and one of the largest *zebu* markets in the Southern region, before Ihosy and Ambalavao). In 2013, fear of *dahalo* led to massive sales of *zebu*. In Farafangana, widespread and unpunished petty theft is the cause of the collapse of agriculture and livestock, and impoverishment. This insecurity is associated with youth unemployment, drug and alcohol addiction, and impunity, as criminals bribe gendarmerie agents. There are two types of corruption:

Figure 10. Local, regional, and structural causes and effects impacting poverty in the Southern and Southeast regions of Madagascar



- *Paidamoso*: corruption between the gendarmerie, customary judges, and a sort of whistleblower who is usually a somewhat educated individual in the community. The whistleblower informs the gendarme, who arrests the presumed guilty party and informs the customary judge as a third party. The presumed guilty party will pay the gendarme agent, who later pays their part to the whistleblower and the customary judge.
- *Gofo*: a guilty person bribing a gendarme to be freed.

Poverty is aggravating the intensity of theft of immature crops. Men presently sleep in their land crops to guard them. On 23-24 August 2023, an organized *zebu* theft occurred for the first time in the chef-lieu Ankarana, where there is a gendarmerie office. In Befotaka, there is a category of young people known locally as *salasalambalady*: *sady tsy zatra angady no tsy zatra stylo*, which means, "they are neither good at office jobs nor farming." These youth are engaged in banditry and then join *dahalo* groups. In Vondrozo, the gendarmerie is *herim-pamoretana*, which means, "power to make coercion." The rich

dictate who is right or wrong in front of the gendarmerie, and generally are not punished. Most cases are decided by the gendarmerie and do not go to court. The situation has worsened in frequency and intensity in the last two years (due to youth/male unemployment and inequality). Compared to other districts, Beloha is considered the most secure district in the Androy region.

The PEA revealed clear links between poverty, insecurity, weak governance, and social exclusion in the Southern and Southeast regions. The cyclic nature of poverty impacts vulnerable households through interconnecting causes at the local, regional, and structural levels (Figure 10).

**Abuse of authority for self-interest and for election purposes, leading to the distrust of the population**

As a consequence of these parallel streams of governance, a latent power struggle between state and traditional authorities is observed in all focus regions, with slight variations across different settings.

In **urban and peri-urban areas**, tensions and open political conflicts lead to:

- Inappropriate use of limited resources, such as deriving resources from central government for family (ethnic groups and clans) and political ties (communes and *fokontany* with voters supporting sitting politicians).
- Cycles of conflict to access resources like land crops, pasture, water for agriculture, and livestock. In the Southern region and the isolated districts of Atsimo Atsinanana (Befotaka and Vondrozo), cycles of violent conflict are much more common.
- Within local communities, social capital is gradually eroding. Local communities are providing less mutual aid in the Atsimo Atsinanana region, but it remains in clans in the Southern region. In many places, traditional authorities make agreements regarding alternative governance. The pace of this change is accelerating in the Atsimo Atsinanana region.

In **rural and isolated areas**, local communities do not experience the same latent power struggle. Instead, traditional authorities operate in a vacuum due to the quasi-absence of state representatives and technical officials to offer basic social services and local economic opportunities.

While the basic structures of government exist, centralization and fiscal challenges weaken a state that cannot meet the needs of each region (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2022). In Befotaka, the remnant of rainforest that was officially transferred to Vondron’Olona Ifotony (VOI, community-based organization) is currently divided between the family of the chief of the *fokontany* and the executive committee of VOI. This is a violation of the management transfer rules and an obvious sign that corruption is creeping into youth organizations like VOI. In Farafangana, the study team heard that congresspersons who are either wealthy themselves or part of a wealthy network gather information about development and humanitarian projects and manipulate them for their own interests. Rich people used to hide from public and political space, but now they do not even bother to do so. This is particularly common in all districts of the Atsimo Atsinanana region and has long been associated with Chinese and Karana (South Asian) descendants. As a result, the poorest are left out of the decision-making process and have not benefited from project activities and aid.

In the Southern region (Ampanihy and Taolagnaro districts), politicians are using insecure and angry people to extort money from big companies like QMM, while those same insecure people are personally in need. This increases the tension in an already challenging situation. In complex situations like these



where there are many national and international actors, local authorities (congresspersons and their allied mayors and civil servants) can easily misuse or even confiscate aid for their own interests.

Elections in Madagascar typically result in one-party rule, and authoritarian practices persist, contributing to a lack of legitimacy and transparency in the electoral process. In 2009, these tensions escalated into a coup and a five-year political crisis that ended in 2013 with the introduction of organized elections (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2022). Elections are not without their problems, however. Some parties and candidates have manipulated elections by running disguised campaigns and using suspicious funding (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2022). Tensions are higher at the regional and district levels. For example, there have been calls from political leaders in Bekily (traditional authorities and some local political figures) to distance themselves from the Androy region and create a new region (in Bekily, Betroka, and Ampanihy). In Ambovombe, political leaders and appointed civil servants are exacerbating the already unbalanced distribution of public infrastructure (and possibly wealth) among Androy's constituencies. Political leaders and their families are involved in conflicts of interest in public projects, bribery, and rent-seeking<sup>11</sup> from the private sector and civil servants.

### *3.2.2.3. Influence of other actors*

#### **NGOs and UN agencies**

Local community members noted that implementing agencies are accused of disinformation related to *Kere* propaganda in order to capture humanitarian funding over time. Both the local private sector and humanitarian agencies navigate around these fears (*Kere*, conflicts, tensions) to increase—or rather maintain—aid in the focus regions. The misinformation stems from the lack of good results to report. Even within implementing agencies, staff raise concerns about the general assertion of success in public discourse while continuing to demand aid. In Ampanihy, for example, aid is becoming a permanent activity and project developments are rare for years.

Donor staff noted that the allocation and management of aid is flawed and a large part of the budget is used for back-office activities, with only a small part for operations. The situation is similar for government-run projects that leverage excessive consultancies rather than training internal staff to deliver better public service. Communication specialists noted that some UN agencies influence local authorities, openly underestimate state and local government representatives, go to the field directly without informing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and communicate generalized and non-contextualized issues regarding the Southern region. At the same time, some cases of insecurity are shown in the media, especially through social media platforms.

The proliferation of projects in the Southern region has led to a chaotic situation where external actors are not accountable and do not follow procedures. Projects are not adapted to local realities, and sustainability is challenging to achieve.

In the Southeast region, NGOs have been accused of implementing inappropriate projects. In Farafangana and Vondrozo districts, for example, smallholders face persistent drought. Project operators, however, insist that, in order to produce more vegetables, constant irrigation and irrigated rice varieties are needed, rather than proposing drought-tolerant varieties. Because NGOs are unaware

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<sup>11</sup> I.e., seeking illicit payments due to their control of public resources and wealth-generating opportunities.

of and unable to identify the poorest households' conditions, they must rely on local authorities, leading to the problem of targeting. Local authorities favor their relatives and acquaintances to receive aid, and traditional authorities are complicit with the local government, leaving out the most vulnerable. Elected communal authorities have also demonstrated shortcomings in the distribution of *vary tsinjo* (the government's safety net program). The commune decides who receives aid on its own, using the criteria set by the state government without involving traditional authorities, who are still influential and respected. Involving traditional authorities can help alleviate issues with entrenched corruption and malpractice among elected officials at the commune level.

### **Private sector, middlemen and collectors reinforce the market's instability**

The private sector in the focus regions is actively contributing to price volatility, low level of competitiveness, and farmers' indebtedness.

Market structure: Typically, local populations trade agricultural, livestock and fisheries products to communal markets through a few collectors and middlemen who, in turn, sell to or work for wholesalers based in the capital city of the district and region. These wholesalers are usually trading costly household goods and manufactured products essential for local populations such as clothing, oil, sugar, salt, wheat, petrol and imported rice. Local populations with low income living in isolated areas are buying manufactured goods at a higher price than in a city where households tend to have much higher incomes. The few middlemen and collectors present in the focus regions impose low farmgate prices. These actors state that these low prices can be attributed to logistical challenges such as poor road conditions and time consuming collection processes related to small production volume and the lack of collective storage. These factors result in the reduction of small-scale farmers' purchasing power.

Behavior of market actors: Private sector actors, including middlemen and collectors, are usually related to "generational money" families or the new college-educated generation. They may have business connections with local and national political elites or be members of the political elites themselves. In the Southern region, they have the strongest interest in capturing aid and other development projects flowing there to boost their commerce (including fuel, transport, hotels, and restaurants). With these profitable commercial activities, they are able to make up for the logistical burden of collecting agricultural products. They also monopolize the public works of road rehabilitation and other public infrastructure buildings (schools, primary care centers, water and sanitation, commune, and gendarmerie bureaus), which are rarely done correctly (e.g., primitive roads from Vangaindrano to Befotaka).

In the meantime, state government control regarding commerce and trade is either weak or complicit in maintaining the farmgate price at the lowest level, according to a "contrôleur of commerce" (trade controller) in Anosy region. This is the case of "*Baie Rose spice*," where three main companies (buyers and their middlemen) control the three main routes to keep the farm price at the lowest level. Interviews and focus group discussions consistently reported that the relationship between local businesses (large and medium) and the state is often blurred. In Toliara, Taolagnaro and Ambovombe cities, wholesalers store food until an artificial food shortage occurs and prices rise as a consequence. They start a gradual destocking process at the highest price, resulting in a loss of purchasing power for the poorest households. Representatives of the Ministry of Commerce are involved in the scheme, locally and perhaps at a higher level, as reported by traditional authorities, public officials and

individuals interviewed. These unfair commercial practices lead to the perpetuation of food insecurity in the Southern region, the increase of insecurity, the gradual collapse of the local economy, and the increase and frequency of violence in large cities.

Private sector actors are opportunistic, and some companies are not sustainable. These companies do not try to challenge the state government to enforce laws, but rather follow the tide and quickly change their activities as new opportunities arise. They are also disorganized, isolated and numerous within different market niches.

*Resulting indebtedness of small-scale farmers:* In general, middlemen set prices at the most profitable level, but farmers choose to sell most of their food crops (rice, maize, cassava and sweet potatoes) upfront rather than keep some for their own consumption in order to buy other much-needed household goods. This trend was also confirmed through data collected for the DRMS. A public official interviewed reported that this practice of selling farm products rather than storing them is at least partially caused by local populations' reliance on and expectation of humanitarian aid. To the local populations, the inflated price of other household goods and the decrease in volume produced are the main motive to sell a large share of their food crops. Commerce in cash crops such as dry beans, peanuts, and other peas (for the Southern region) and cloves and coffee (for the Southeast region) is similarly set. As a result, farmers' incomes are falling year by year, obliging them to go into debt with local traders to purchase household goods, pay health and school fees, and even to meet their social or customary duties (especially funerals, circumcision, birth). Unable to repay their loans, small-scale farmers have to definitely sell their land crops, thus decreasing their assets and going into debt they will never be able to pay off. Living on a daily wage on and off-farm, and then migrating is a typical process for small-scale farmers living in poverty, in particular for the Southeast region.

It is also worth noting that farmers in the focus regions are not organized enough to counter the buyers' behavior, causing their income to fall sharply, and requiring them to face longer periods of financial scarcity. They become angry at any "personalization" of the local administration and sometimes become aggressive towards the public administration, as in the case mentioned by the "contrôleur de commerce" for "baie rose spice." The situation is similar with vanilla beans (in Taolagnano and Vangaindrano districts). So-called "development project operators" are working with companies that are maximizing their profits under the guise of subsidies and support for small-scale farming. There is a perception in communities that NGOs and the local private sector do not work together to lift them out of poverty. Their purposes are different, too: NGOs spend money, whereas private companies make money. NGOs also often have many procedures that rarely match the agriculture season and may have a patronizing attitude towards the community and small-scale farmers which is very frustrating, as reported by women and youth group discussions. NGOs operating in project development are perceived as humanitarian assistance and unable to help solving small-scale farmers' indebtedness issues.

### **Churches and faith-based organizations**

Churches and faith-based organizations in focus districts are generally well perceived by communities with a few exceptions with some mayors, in particular in the Southeast region. They help to improve living conditions, particularly Catholic and Lutheran churches. They fill the gap in the provision of basic social services (education, health, food) in many communities, and may act as a mediator in local conflicts that the state representative and traditional authorities are unwilling to address directly. They

are also influential in behavior changes, and there are examples of where the churches have incorporated the populations' traditional practices in their own practices. Churches intervene in development projects as well, building irrigation infrastructure to irrigate vast land crops for example. Where state government and traditional authorities fail, churches fill the vacuum and may take the lead.

Sectarianism is on the rise in the Southern and Southeast regions, despite being strongholds of the Catholic and Lutheran churches, indicating that poverty is increasing in those areas. Sectarianism exploits the poor spiritually, intellectually, and materially (Mushipu Mbombo 2017).

The role of Christian churches seems to be key in changing social norms, in particular the discourse around polygamy. The exception is in Vondrozo where churches have smaller congregations (mostly made up of elderly men) and are therefore less influential.

### **Local associations and non-profit organizations**

There is a perception among community members that local associations are used by local officials of the state government (Ministry of Population, Region, Municipality) to cover their absence and failure to address social and economic issues. Local associations are not strong enough to voice their concerns and lack the means (especially in terms of communication and volunteers) to influence action in the Southern region. Local associations are also underestimated and underpaid by international NGOs, UN agencies, and some wealthy individuals to carry out within the local community. They are seen as vectors of aid and activities rather than decision-makers. No local associations actively participate in the Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster and the Nutrition Cluster in the focus regions, except those based in the capital.

In Southern and Southeast regions, farmers' cooperatives are dependent on project operators to start up, connect with buyers, and even to influence politics over food security and nutrition programs. They are not numerous and often do not last. Farmers in cooperatives struggle to maintain the interest of collective actions among their members due to most members' high risk of slipping into poverty. This makes them more focused on their individual well-being rather than collective actions.

## **3.3 Conflict and food security at the national, regional, and district level**

### **3.3.1 Description and trends of conflicts**

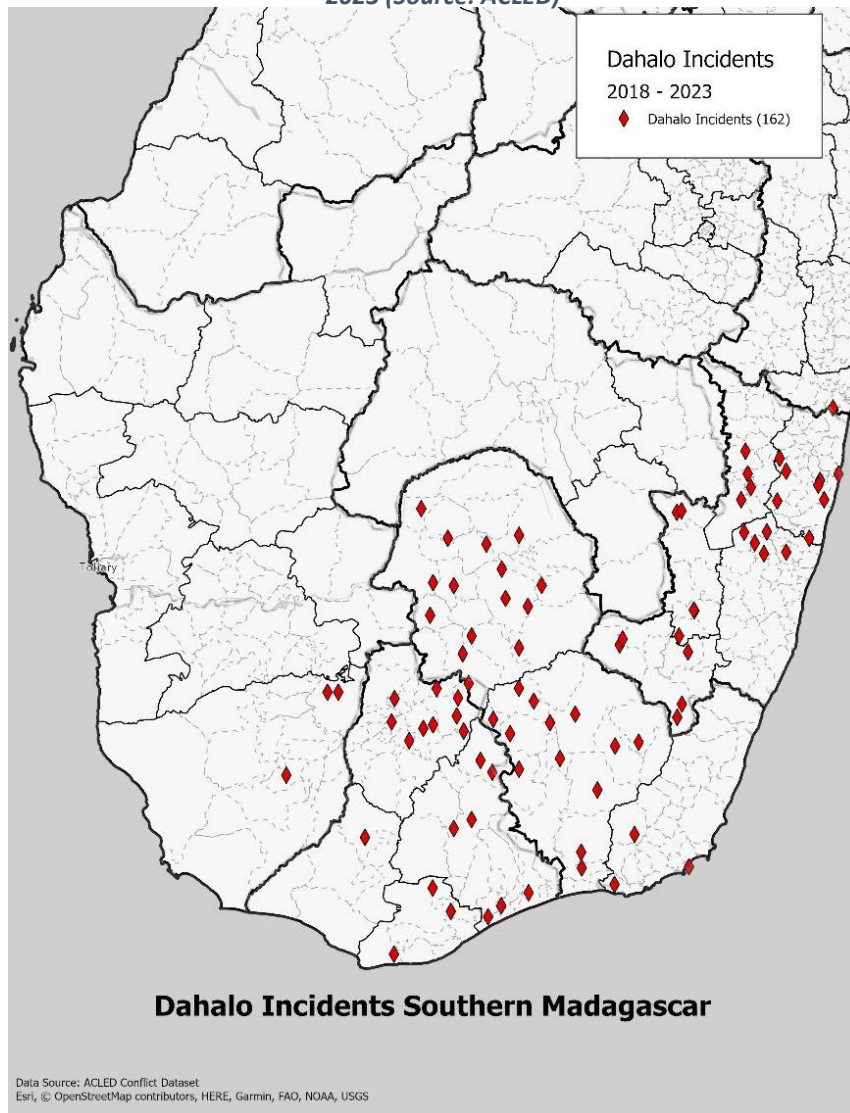
Conflict across the 12 focus districts typically occurs between ethnic groups or sub-groups, or between clans. Social conflicts between ethnic groups and sub-groups are more common in the Southeast region, between the Antefasy ethnic group versus Zafisoro ethnic group, and Antevolo versus Zarafañiliha, which are both sub-groups of the Antesaka. In the Southern region, conflict is typically between clans. Land crop disputes and *zebu* theft (see Figure 11) are key drivers of social conflicts, which are usually resolved with customary laws in the Southern region, while resolution by the formal government is gradually occurring in the Southeast.

The previous three decades have seen a shift in how weak governance contributes to crime and community-level conflict, including within *zebu* value chains. Until the end of the Second Republic (1992-93), social conflicts specific to customary organizations were resolved without state government interventions. Conflicts of interest (that became public knowledge or were brought to light by whistleblowers) were resolved internally with the state government's local representatives. From 1997

onwards, interactions between traditional leaders and the state government sphere occurred more often, as elected officials, politicians, and civil servants occupied the private sector, in particular *zebu* value chains.

For example, an interview with a community and grassroots association suggested that local political elites use people’s anger towards state government and the private sector to: 1) confirm their position, being seen as mitigators of tensions and conflicts while they in fact started the conflict; and 2) extort money from big corporations to calm down mobs when they were actually fueling it. Political elites in the Anosy region are from generational wealthy families and can afford to live elsewhere if the situation becomes untenable.

**Figure 11. Dahalo incidents in Southern and Southeast Madagascar, 2018-2023 (Source: ACLED)**



Other sources of conflicts are water supply and access in drought-prone areas. Local business owners who sell water are involved in destroying free water pumps in Ambovombe. There is also conflict over prioritizing social development activities with the case of the construction of an outdoor basketball playground in Befotaka. A local youth group called FTBBS said it was not their highest priority but the mayor insisted and built it anyways. Youth usually follow traditional authorities’ decisions over political elites’ decisions. They feel that traditional authorities are usually trustworthy despite some flaws, according to young people in Mahatsinjo-Vondrozo, Ankarana Miray Hina–Farafangana, and Ampanihy. They usually clearly name which

traditional authorities are worth engaging in decision-making and conflict resolutions. I



### 3.3.2 Relationship between conflict and food insecurity

Cycles of violence, food scarcity, conflict, and poverty characterize the social and economic lives of people in the 12 focus districts. Clans involved in social conflict are at a high risk of being deprived of their land crops, access to resources such as pasture, water streams, and parts of forests to exploit if the conflict is not resolved. To avoid violent clashes, some of them abandon their land and migrate further north for work or negotiate with other clans to settle nearby.

Unresolved social conflicts usually result in loss of the means of production and the risk of food scarcity for clan members in the Southern region. In the Southeastern region, social conflict leads to social exclusion—*voakabary* meaning “sanctioned by customary court,” and *hazofotsy* meaning, “no community members should not have contact with the banned household anymore.” This can potentially result in lost income and a longer lean period. Male heads of family usually migrate and rarely come back or send remittances to their families.

## 3.4 Tying it together: the impact of governance, political instability, and conflict on local populations’ resilience

### 3.4.1 Relationship between frequent governmental changes and conflict in target regions and districts

From independence (1960) until the end of the Second Republic regime (1993), the country recorded one institutional change (1972). After that, governmental changes became frequent and the focus regions presented two different fault lines. In the Southern region, 1997 marked the end of an era where local political elites befriended the opposition, who came back to power after being fiercely ousted in 1991-92. In the Southeast region, 2001 was the turning point when local business owners moved into the political sphere and exacerbated conflicts of interest in the management of public affairs.

Changes at the local level could not follow the frequency of governmental changes at the national and regional level. Before a new structure was fully capacitated and operational at local level, another decree set up a newer one at the national level. Coordination of local actions by the state government representatives has become mostly nonexistent—it depends on the personal engagement of civil servants (if it happens at all). Moreover, unqualified civil servants are either voluntarily moving to isolated locations because there is less monitoring and control, performing routine administrative jobs in urban areas, or bribing the recruiting department for rent-seeking jobs such as police, gendarme, or army.

At the local level, public service provision is either delayed or poorly executed, in particular for road and public office/center construction, which the poorest rely on to access basic social services, such as health care, education, safe drinking water and sanitation. As public administration officials noted, this is partly due to conflicts of interest with local business owners and civil servants regarding public procurement. This often leads to increased internal tension among civil servants.

The rising tensions at the local level from these complex and connected causes affect local people deeply. The poorest usually rely on local customary laws for fear of bureaucracy and distrust in public administration. Some customary authorities, however, have been corrupted due to their recent



relationship with political elites that are perceived to be corrupt. Bypass practices like bribery are common, and passive bribery of gendarmerie agents to avoid going to court happens frequently (cases in Farafangana, Vondrozo, and Vangaindrano). There are two main reasons for this, including latent conflicts between clans and sub-groups that go back decades (for example, the Antefasy and Zafisoro in the Farafangana district). People also lack the means or understanding of how to ask for help and access resources, for example getting information regarding laws and regulations. This points to weak demand-side accountability.

In parallel, faster changes in government are an open invitation for political newcomers to try their luck—most of them young. With many political elites at the local level, political bargains are intense, and coalitions do not last, which accelerates the frequency of changes at the upper level. Because of this, international organizations (in particular UN agencies) tend to replace the state as decision-makers. They have the capacity to work with local communities and are more influential during project implementation but create a vacuum when the project ends. Once they have withdrawn, damaging repercussions usually occur such as localized inflation, community tensions, and economic and social exclusion.

### 3.4.2 Response from local populations in target regions and districts, including coping mechanisms/strategies

In general, conflicts and unequal access to justice result in social fracture, expressed by the predominance of self-interest and fading collective action in social and economic settings. As a donor representative noted, “small-scale farming cooperatives in the Southern region are an empty shell. They never last, it is desperately true.” Even in the Southeast region, a government-run project representative noted that, “small-scale cooperatives are established quickly like its demise.” Local communities manage their risk with short-term activities provided by external actors.

Local populations deploy both positive and negative coping mechanisms with uncertainty (e.g., conflicts, frequent changes, and distrust in public administration). For young people and adults, positive coping mechanisms include:

- Increasing daily wage jobs for men around where they live.
- Marine fishing for men.
- Small trading, handcrafting, (continental) fishing, developing short cycle livestock such as chicken, ducks, and geese for women.
- Migrating and sending remittances to family while working in different sectors (e.g., transport, mining, small trade, and commerce) for men in the Southeast, and for women and men in the Southern region.

According to women’s group discussions in the Southern region (Beloha, Tsihombe, Bekily and Ambovombe Androy), migrants can send weekly an amount of \$2.21-\$6.63 (MGA 10,000 to 30,000) to their families while away. They also save to rebuild their cattle, pay debts, and even purchase land. Migrants in the Southern region can be both men and women—it is a family decision for polygamous marriages in particular. They are typically away between 4-24 months and may stay for a year or more before migrating again. According to one chief of Tokobetelo in Toliara, a family of migrants from Ampanihy also send agriculture products to their host family in Toliara when production is good. Cases

of migrants not returning are more common recently and often involve young people. But the majority return home for funerals and other important cultural and social events.

In the Southeast region, particularly Vangaindrano, men (as the heads of households) have been migrating since the colonial era. A wave of migration occurred in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Gretell (1997) as people sought work elsewhere to compensate for heavy losses and damages to agriculture and livestock. Participants in group discussions frequently noted that men who have migrated rarely send money or goods to their family. In some cases, it is known that they have started a new family elsewhere, and left their wife to compete with their in-laws for land crops. This was given as one of the reasons for numerous single mothers in Vangaindrano.

Men in Vondrozo and Farafangana, particularly young men, have started migrating in recent years. They typically depart in April and return between July and December. The first wave of youth migration was observed in 2010, driven by persistent drought and insecurity in these two districts.

Negative coping mechanisms include:

- Looting spiny forests (in the Southern region) and the rainforest (in the Southeast) to produce firewood, charcoal, and eventually timber. This eventually leads to accelerated variability of temperatures and patterns of rain and reduced yield and production of rainfed agriculture and livestock.
- Temporarily abandoning land crops to work daily wage jobs.
- Increased debt. This is compounded by declining assets and a reduction of the household's production caused by selling land, livestock, and household goods. It is also related to wealthy households buying land from people living in poverty, which exacerbates social and economic inequality and contributes to multidimensional poverty.
- Abandoning families, which drives the social exclusion of the mothers and children abandoned. This has several follow-on effects, including:
  - Households living in poverty with increased burden on the older generation to care for abandoned mothers and their children (e.g., single grandmother).
  - Youth (especially those raised by abandoned mothers) are at high risk of joining gangs and engaging in banditry, which perpetuates the cycle of insecurity, corruption, and migration (see Figure 10).
  - Marrying young girls and boys either to reduce family size and food needs or to gain new assets, such as networks, family ties through in-laws, livestock, and cash.
- Eating wild foods, which can lead to fatalities if people do not know how to prepare and cook the food, according to interviewees.
- Petty theft.
- Interrupting or fully stopping children's education.

Social fracture, positive and negative coping mechanisms, continuous instability, and the decline of agriculture and livestock production driven by climate change combined with a lack of de-escalation processes for inter-clan conflict can drive:

- Sustained clan-based conflicts/divisions that can easily escalate into violence (case of Befotaka and Farafangana).

- Aggravation of clan-based conflicts by politics (case of Tsihombe).
- Deserted localities by business owners (cases of Ampanihy and Betroka), resulting in a less dynamic and competitive local market, very low farmgate prices, a reduction of small-scale farmers' income, and a longer lean period.

## 4. IMPLICATIONS

This section summarizes practical implications for RFSA programs in the focus regions, drawn from the findings of this PEA. This section highlights risks and opportunities according to the prevailing social and political contexts.

### 4.1 Overarching implications

Food security and resilience in the focus regions are strongly affected by political economy, as well as by the behavior of markets for commodities produced and exchanged by populations living in poverty. On the one hand, the PEA shows that the local social and political environment may not be conducive to improving food security and resilience due to the highly heterogeneous nature of social structures and ethnic groups across the focus regions that may result in violence and insecurity. In addition, the conflicting agendas of key stakeholders involved in the political economy of food may amplify this uncertainty. On the other hand, institutional and public structures greatly need reform; a reform that RFSA programming cannot realistically encompass to tackle underlying causes. Yet one must recognize and adapt to these political economy conditions to be successful.

The PEA sheds light on six general considerations for future RFSA programming:

1. Be aware of the highly heterogeneous nature of social structures and ethnic groups across the focus regions. Some of these conditions may result in latent conflicts, violence, and insecurity.
2. Consider whether elements of graduation-based programming such as coaching and economic training, can be effectively carried out with or through local actors (customary authorities, private sector, government, or non-government) and, in so doing, positively influence the development of local systems and institutions.
3. Be aware of the development and expansion of social protection programs, such as the Safety Nets and Resilience Program (World Bank 2023a, World Bank n.d.b), at the regional and/or district level. It may be beneficial to align graduation-based RFSA investments with existing social protection programs or as these programs are rolled out in the focus regions.
4. During program implementation, it would be worthwhile to consider monitoring the evolution of political arrangements and conflict resolution at the district and local levels. This would include close monitoring of the impact the RFSA intervention is having on local power dynamics.
5. Intervention effectiveness and efficiency could be increased by capitalizing on the successful actions from past interventions in the 12 focus districts and promote coordination, at the district level, with key actors in food security and resilience sectors.
6. It will be important to ensure that programs commit to experimenting, learning, and adapting to understand what works and what does not work in the context. This is necessary when working in any complex system with a limited budget and timeline but is particularly relevant in Madagascar where USAID is yet to test the graduation approach.

The PEA also highlighted the importance of contextual awareness and engagement with local stakeholders during the participant targeting process and program implementation, as the context may evolve rapidly.

While the PEA examined the impact of foundational factors on vulnerable populations, it also recognizes that there are forces outside the control of USAID and its partners that are important to keep in mind. For example, recurring and worsening climate shocks, such as persistent drought across the 12 districts and intense tropical storms in the Southeast from January to April, may impact poverty, food insecurity and the resilience of participating households. This observation underlines the importance of strengthening participants' capabilities to adapt their livelihood strategies in ways that will mitigate their exposure to hazards and enhance their ability to cope with shocks.

## 4.2 Key challenges and implications

The PEA brought to light four key political economy challenges that are likely to impact future RFSA programs adopting a graduation approach in Southern and Southeast Madagascar:

1. Traditional authorities are highly fragmented for all 12 districts, resulting in difficulty in reaching consensus or compromises when they are involved in joint decision-making with local state representatives at commune and district level. This fragmentation may exacerbate both the marginalization of people living in poverty and conflicts among clans and sub-groups, even during the targeting process.
2. Communes in the 12 focus districts have very weak provision of social services, in particular for civil registry, education, safe drinking water and primary health care, due to a lack of capacity and/or limited financial resources. Nevertheless, communal officials could have great influence over any decisions made locally.
3. Imbalances in the presence of external actors (including implementing partners) and state government representatives at the local level should be carefully considered to avoid replacing and potentially de-legitimizing public administration when implementing program activities.
4. It is of paramount importance to be cautious of cronyism between local business owners and local state government representatives during implementation. This may raise tensions between political elites that may have adverse impacts on the program.

This section examines each of these challenges in turn, including their implications for USAID and its future implementing partners, as well as potential risks and opportunities.

### 4.2.1. Fragmented traditional authorities but influential in conflict resolution and upholding gender norms at local and communal level

Traditional authorities in the focus regions are influential regarding customary norms and rules, and in particular gender norms and the status of youth in the community, land tenure and conflict resolution. While this is the case across the focus region, customary laws, and norms, particularly those related to gender, are localized, and vary based on the specific context.

#### 4.2.1.1. Implications for USAID and implementing partners

Although some of these traditional rules are misaligned with the formal rules, traditional authorities are likely to be key in any future RFSA programming, in particular regarding gender-sensitive actions and the

accurate targeting of community members who are living in extreme poverty or marginalized. Community systems and power dynamics differ between the Southern and Southeast regions. Approaches and methods to involve traditional authorities in decision making around the graduation approach should be tailored to reflect these differences.

#### *4.2.1.3. Risks and opportunities*

##### **Risks:**

- Capture of the Service Local de Concertation (SLC) platform by local power-holders: In some cases in the Southeast region, attempts to use the SLC to involve traditional authorities in joint decision making at the communal/village level in activities that go beyond their usual domains have resulted in silencing of women and youth on topics that matter the most to them, such as land access for abandoned mothers and the involvement of youth in farming activities.
- Traditional authorities introducing bias into targeting: To manage bias, the implementing partner could combine the input of traditional leaders with a more objective targeting strategy, such as geographic and/or proxy means test (PMT) targeting.
- Family structures and targeting: Partners should pay attention to the multi-generational families and clan-based organization in the Southern regions and be open to adjusting the criteria for targeting to this specific setting rather than focusing simply on more standard definitions of the household unit.

**Opportunity:** Implementers could identify and work through existing community consultation mechanisms to engage communes in the planning and implementation of RFSa interventions.

#### *4.2.2. Weak social services provision for communities and high dependence on national and regional decision-making and resources*

The dependency of communes on national resources implies that political elites at the national level have greater room to influence the redistribution of public resources, which is likely to widen the inequality gap between rich and poor in isolated rural areas. Moreover, while it is outside the scope of the graduation approach to strengthen government accountability, it could offer avenues to strengthen demand-side accountability for improved services.

##### *4.2.2.1. Implications for USAID and implementing partners*

If a communal administration performs poorly in providing social services, its influence, and any reform it proposes will likely be disowned by the local community. This will have implications for how USAID and its implementing partners work with communal administrations. Particular attention should be paid to the Southern regions, where communal elected officials are strongly tied to clans, and rivalry between clans has the potential to undermine any reforms proposed by a sitting mayor.

##### *4.2.2.3. Risks and opportunities*

##### **Risks:**

- **Elected officials at the communal level could influence targeting in favor of clan members:** As with the engagement with traditional authorities, this could be mitigated by combining the

input of elected officials with objective methodologies, such as PMT. It could also be balanced by engaging other community members, including through the SLC mechanism.

- **Asset transfers of land with crops, if considered by USAID, could pose a challenge** in the Southern regions (compared to the Southeast) as land belongs to clans and is less likely to be owned by individuals. Alignment of formal land rights with customary land tenure is a distant objective that could not be achieved within the regular time frame of RFSA programming.
- **Low levels of capacity of communal officials:** The number and qualifications of communal executive staff may be the main constraint in pushing communes to take the lead in actions that are formally assigned to them.

**Opportunity:** Referrals to primary care centers became more regular in the Southern regions (even though the rate is still low according to the Regional Directorate of Public Health in Androy). They are almost nonexistent in the Southeast region unless a food security and nutrition project operator has intervened in a commune. These initiatives have had positive impacts on child health<sup>12</sup> if the elected communal officials encourage and monitor attendance at primary care centers (Centre de Santé de Base).

#### 4.2.3. Blurred line of power and influence between state government and non-governmental actors

The long-term engagement of non-state service providers, such as UN agencies and other externally funded implementing partners, has impacted the power dynamics of poverty and food security in the Southern and Southeast regions. As external partners have more resources at their disposal, cash-strapped government officials at the communal and regional levels often allow external partners' programmatic plans and objectives to supersede or replace government priorities and objectives to access much-needed funding. Poor donor coordination can compound inefficiencies in the system in various ways, for example, in the additional administrative burden on government officials who are required to meet with different donors/implementing partners on the same issues.

##### 4.2.3.1. Implications for USAID and implementing partners

Without thoughtful and continuous context monitoring, such as PEA and conflict analysis, USAID and its implementing partners may inadvertently do harm to social cohesion and public accountability. Moreover, poor coordination with the government and between other external actors (e.g., donor-funded programs) could also have unintended consequences for the proposed RFSA program, as there might be other interventions that impact the intended causality of the program or, at worse, undermine the graduation approach by creating incongruous incentives.

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<sup>12</sup> According to data from the above-mentioned regional directorate, fewer than 10% of children and mothers being referred come back to the primary care center.



#### 4.2.3.3. Risks and opportunities

**Risks:**

- The rigid financial and management procedures of NGOs often limit adaptation in isolated environments, like the focus regions. Flexibility on the part of donors and NGO central management and context monitoring will be essential given the level of uncertainty.
- Activities can face challenges due to staff turnover or lack of contextual knowledge. There are several reasons for this, including that many of the national and international NGOs operating in the region recruit Malagasy staff from different parts of the country, meaning they do not have an in-depth understanding of local customs and norms. In some cases, implementers are unable to fund local staff positions after a program ends, so new staff are hired at the outside of each program, leading to a loss of institutional knowledge.

**Opportunity:** The Southern region (and to some extent the Southeast region) is said to be a development program “graveyard;” however, this implies there is a rich body of evidence about what works and what does not. The graduation approach that USAID is proposing is an opportunity to identify and capitalize on promising pockets of success.

#### 4.2.4. High risk of cronyism between state government representatives and local business owners in public services provisions

The stakeholder mapping and interviews brought to light how conflicts of interest and cronyism between government and private sector stakeholders shape formal and informal institutions across the Southern and Southeast regions – for example, political elites having close ties with local business owners (including through clan ties), or business owners actively engaging in the local political sphere.

##### 4.2.4.1. Implications for USAID and implementing partners

Political elites may influence project activities (for example, business creation, linkages, in-kind transfers, etc.) to benefit their business interests. IN addition to project activities, commodities markets (such as rice, maize, beans, etc.), may be affected by this challenge. The DRMS study examines the implications of this challenge and proposes practical options to address it. This PEA study offers additional insights for consideration.

##### 4.2.4.3. Risks

**Risks:**

- The PEA Team recognizes that broader governance reforms are outside the scope of the proposed RFSA program, so there is a risk that by being overly ambitious program implementers may lose focus on the core outcomes they are aiming to achieve, or that resources will be thinly spread across different activities. However, linkages to systems that impact poverty and food security and consideration of the limitations of these systems are necessary for sustained programmatic impacts.
- While whistleblower regulations exist in Madagascar, potential whistleblowers still fear that the judicial system would not protect them if they were denounced for wrongdoing by political elites. This stems from a distrust in the formal system, as described in section 3.2.2.2 above.

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## ANNEXES

### Annex A: List of interviews and focus group discussions

Date	Place	KII/FDG	Organization
07/28/23	Antananarivo	KII	Fonds d'Intervention pour le Développement – Direction Générale
		KII	Ministère de l'Agriculture – projet MIONJO
07/31/23	Antananarivo	KII (online)	Save the Children International – Anosy region
		KII	UNICEF
08/01/23	Antananarivo	KII	Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale (native of Ampanihy)
08/02/23	Antananarivo	KII (2)	CRS
		KII (2)	Televisionina Malagasy
08/03/23	Antananarivo	KII	Farmer leader – Commune Mandiso – Taolagnaro – projet AFAFI-SUD
		KII	Member of Cooperative – Commune Mandiso – Taolagnaro – projet AFAFI-SUD
		KII (online)	European Union
08/04/23	Antananarivo	KII (online)	ONG Welthungerhilfe (WHH)
08/06/23	Taolagnaro	KII	Ministry of Trade and Commerce – Anosy Region
		KII	Owner of mica mining and spices buyer companies
08/07/23	Taolagnaro	KII	AFAFI-SUD project – representative of state-government
		KII	Office National de Nutrition
		KII	Plateforme Régionale de la Société Civile à Anosy
		KII	Fonds d'Intervention pour le Développement – Direction Inter-régionale Anosy et Androy
		KII	Région Anosy (native of Amboasary Atsimo)
08/08/23	Ambovombe	FDG	Women group – Commune of Maroalimainty
		FDG	Men group – Commune of Maroalimainty
		KII	Youth – commune of Maroalimainty
		KII	Direction régionale de l'Agriculture - Androy
08/09/23	Tsihombe	KII	District of Tsihombe – Adjoint au chef de district
		KII	CRS
		FDG	Women group – Commune of Behazomanga
	Beloha	FDG	Men group – Commune of Behazomanga
		FDG	Women group – Commune of Beloha
		FDG	Men group – Commune of Beloha
08/10/23	Beloha	KII	CRS
		KII	District of Beloha – Adjoint au Chef de District
	Ampanihy	KII	Food and Agriculture Organizations of United Nations (FAO)
		KII	Circonscription Scolaire – Ampanihy
08/11/23	Ampanihy	KII	Office National de Nutrition
		KII	Grassroots Association – Youth empowerment
08/12/23	Toliara	KII	Resident of Toliara – Masikoro ethnic group
		FDG	Men group – Migrants from Tsihombe
		KII	Chief of clan – Tokobetelo – of Ampanihy
08/13/23	Toliara	FDG	Youth migrants – Masikoro and Antandroy ethnic groups
08/14/23	Toliara	KII	Chief of clan – Tokobetelo – of Ampanihy
		KII	Direction régionale de l'Agriculture Atsimo Andrefana
08/15/23	Bekily	KII	Commune urbaine de Bekily – Adjoint au Maire

Date	Place	KII/FDG	Organization
		KII	Association Intercooperation Madagascar
		FDG	Traditional authorities – Bekily
		FDG	Local association (mixed group and of various ethnic group)
		FDG	Women group – Antandroy ethnic group
08/16/23	Antanimora	KII	Commune of Antanimora Sud (council)
		KII	Member of women association based in Antanimora Sud
		FDG	Local association in Antanimora Sud
		KII	Commune of Antanimora Sud (mayor)
08/17/23	Ambovombe	KII	Business owner – transformation of agricultural products
		KII	ONG CTAS
		KII	Direction Régionale de la Santé Publique Androy
	Amboasary Atsimo	KII	Office National de Nutrition
08/18/23	Amboasary Atsimo	FDG	ONG SAF/FJKM
08/19/23	Manantenina	KII	Sahanala (Social enterprise)
08/21/23	Vangaindrano	KII	Televisionina Malagasy
		KII	Lutheran Church
		KII	Red Cross Vangaindrano
		KII	District of Vangaindrano (chief of)
		KII	Service of Tax
08/22/23	Vangaindrano	KII	Women leading an association and teacher
		KII	Plateforme Association des femmes - Vangaindrano
		KII	Commune of Tsianofana – elected official
		KII	Traditional leader – commune of Tsianofana
		FDG	Commune of Tsianofana – mixed group
	Befotaka	KII	Commune of Befotaka – elected official
		KII	Traditional leader – Bara ethnic group
		KII	Traditional leader – Antesaka ethnic group (highest ranking)
		KII	Traditional leader – Antesaka ethnic group (2nd)
		KII	District of Befotaka – (chief of)
		KII	Office National of Nutrition – (Responsible Technique)
		FDG	Youth (girl) – member of local association
		FDG	Youth (boy) – member of local association
		08/23/23	Vangaindrano
FDG	Youth (boy) group – Commune of Agnilobe		
KII	Circonscription scolaire (CISCO) of Agnilobe		
KII	Local merchant and middlewomen in Agnilobe		
08/24/23	Farafangana	KII	Plateforme de la Société Civile HINA in Farafangana
		KII	Elected official – commune of Anosy Tsararafa
		FDG	Women – handcrafters – Antefasy ethnic group
	Vondrozo	KII	Elected official – commune of Mahatsinjo
		FDG	Women group – commune of Mahatsinjo
		FDG	Men group (traditional leaders) – commune of Mahatsinjo
		FDG	Youth group (girl) – commune of Mahatsinjo
08/25/23	Farafangana	FDG	Youth group (boy) – commune of Mahatsinjo
		KII	Traditional leader of Antefasy ethnic group
		KII	Retired in Gendarmerie (public security service)



Date	Place	KII/FDG	Organization
		KII	Local business owner (woman)
		KII	Elected official – (Mayor) Commune of Ankarana Miray Hina
		FDG	Youth (male - representing 9 fokontany) – Commune of Ankarana Miray Hina
		FDG	Men (2 of 9 fokontany and 2 traditional leaders) – Commune of Ankarana Miray Hina
		FDG	Youth (female - representing 9 fokontany) – Commune of Ankarana Miray Hina
		FDG	Women (representing 9 fokontany) – Commune of Ankarana Miray Hina

## Annex B: Interview guides for KIIs and FGDs

### Key Informants Interview Guide

#### **Introduction to this Guide**

This tool is intended to provide guidance for facilitators conducting semi-structured interviews with key informants for the Political Economy Analysis (PEA). The indicative questions below are intended to guide the conversation, but the interviewer should not feel constrained by them. Estelle Antilahy, PEA Study Lead, and Antsa Andriamisaina, PEA Research Assistant, will select and adapt questions depending on the respondent's role and level of responsibility. The questions are structured according to the USAID PEA Framework, which the PEA Study Lead has adopted for this study. In this guide, interviewers should note only the individual's unique ID number, and not any identifying information like name, title, organization, phone number, or email. This information for each ID will be kept separately in a secure Excel document.

**Interviewees:** Key Informant categories include a) host governments institutions representatives, b) USAID staff and implementing partners in the focus regions/districts, b) relevant donors for food security and their implementing partners, c) local authority or traditional leaders, d) civil society organizations, in particular women and youth grassroots associations representatives, e) private sector actors. This guide is intended to be used across all categories of interviewees, with adaptations depending on the individual.

At this stage, approximately 45 people are expected to respond to interviews. About half of them are based in Antananarivo but oversee the programs in the focus regions.

**Language:** Interviews will be conducted in either Malagasy dialects, French, or English, depending on the interviewee's preference.

**Expected duration of interview:** 1h-1h30mn

**Note:** Often, we find people share information about conflict, corruption, and illicit/illegal practices throughout the interview when explaining the power dynamics. In some instances, it may not be appropriate to ask direct questions about these topics. As the interviewer, use your judgment to probe into these topics using other indicative questions, if needed (e.g., question 2b).

#### **Informed Consent Statement**

My name is [name]. Thank you so much for making the time to speak with us today. I am working with a research team from a company called Abt Associates. We are conducting a Political Economy Analysis which focuses on how USAID can support interventions that make resource use more efficient for food security and resilience in Madagascar. We are also exploring the connection between food security and resilience and governance (both local and national) regarding chronic nutrition and food insecurity. This research is funded by a group of researchers led by Purdue University, which is based in the United States.

We would like to speak with you today about your experience with food security in Madagascar, to better understand how change really happens in terms of food security and resilience in this area of

Madagascar. We are interested in learning about key actors, their interactions, and how this has changed the food system and policy environment over time. The information you provide will help us develop practical recommendations on how USAID can address food security and improve resilience in these regions.

As part of the research, we are interviewing about 40 to 50 key informants knowledgeable about institutional factors shaping the past and current state of food security and resilience in Madagascar, particularly of the most vulnerable populations. When we write our report, we will not connect your name or institution/organization with anything that you say today. Instead, we will combine your feedback with feedback from others, and write about the key themes that are common across all the interviews. The information you provide will be confidential, so you should feel free to speak openly.

This interview will take between one and one and a half hours. Your participation in the research is your choice. You are free to say no to the entire interview or say no to specific questions that you do not want to answer. You can end the interview at any time for any reason. If you choose not to participate, there will be no impact on your ability to participate in any future programs. If you choose to participate, you will not receive any direct benefits like money or an invitation to future programs. However, you will help inform the design of future programs that might help others.

Do you have any questions about the interview or research?

Do you agree to participate?

Yes [Thank them and ask about note taking]

No [Thank them for their time]

Are you comfortable with me taking notes during the interview? The notes are only to help me make sure I capture all your responses. Only researchers from our team will have access to these notes. We will not share the notes with USAID or anyone else. All notes will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

Yes [Thank them and proceed to the interview questions]

No [Say it is no problem and proceed to the interview questions]

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact [me/Estelle Antilahy], Study lead, Political Economy Analysis, at Herimpitiaestelle@gmail.com or +261 (0) 3205 801 64. You may also contact Sarah Carson, Abt's team lead for this study at Sarah\_Carson@abtassoc.com or +[local number].

**Indicative questions****1. Start broadly with the “foundational factors”:**

- a. In your view what are the historical causes of extreme poverty and food insecurity in the southern regions? (e.g., Geographical, and climatic reasons? Economic reasons? Political reasons?)
- b. How have the local socio-political and power structures (gender norms, values, district and/or regional identities, networks change overtime, etc.) affected the issues of food access, availability and utilization and resilience? How and why do these become entrenched over time?
- c. How do these factors (power structures and conflicts) differ between different regions/districts in the area (or this area vs. other areas in the South and Southeast)? How do these factors influence patterns of poverty and food insecurity?
- d. In your opinion, do local conflicts and power structures contribute to food insecurity and poverty? Please explain
- e. Inversely, does food insecurity and poverty contribute to local conflicts and change in power structure? Please explain.
- f. In your opinion, how do these patterns differ between different regions/districts in the area (or this area vs. other areas in the South and Southeast)?
- g. To what extent is the national government operationally present in local (commune), district and region? What is the role of the national government in maintaining public order and other public services?
- h. Are property rights secure? Are contracts enforceable? Has the willingness and ability of the national government to perform these functions changed?

**2. Examine the “rules of the game”:**

- a. Are there behaviors around food security, nutrition, and disaster risk management that are based on (for example) party politics or political competition, illicit activity or corruption, social exclusion? (Other probes: patronage relations, rent-seeking, nepotism, political arrangements, etc.)
- b. Are the laws and regulations on paper enforced in a consistent manner across the board, or are there implementation gaps? If the latter, what institutional factors help explain those gaps?
- c. Which authority figures or organizations within and outside the state and/or public administration do citizens trust more/less? What does this imply for the kind of legitimacy different authorities and organizations have across the population?
- d. Do formal or informal rules promote the interests of particular groups such as local authorities, NGOs/CSOs, and others? How and why? To what effect?
- e. How do these factors (behaviors around food security, laws and regulations, trust in authority, formal and informal rules, etc.) differ between different regions/districts in the area (or this area vs. other areas in the South and Southeast)?

**3. Dig into the “here and now”:**

- a. Who are the most influential key actors (in policing, funding...) of food security and resilience in the regions/districts? How do they maintain their power? What effects do their actions have locally? Why? *(Please be specific – not just organizations but names and positions too, if the respondent is comfortable sharing. The most influential people might not always be the formal decision-makers. This is a good time to remind the respondent of their anonymity.)*
- b. How do these actors select/choose the intervention area and/or the direct beneficiaries? How are they interacting with each other? (Probe into topics such as alliances, coordination mechanisms, coalitions, contested space, etc.)
- c. Who is/are excluded/included in the decision-making process?
- d. What are the incentives that may drive changes in food security?
- e. How do these current trends (key actors, patterns of inclusion and exclusion, incentive structures, etc.) differ between different regions/districts in the area (or this area vs. other areas in the South and Southeast)?

**4. Wrap with the respondent’s perception of the “dynamics” – where are the opportunities for positive change?**

- a. Where do you think there are opportunities for positive change in food access, availability, and utilization for the most vulnerable? What entry points are likely to open up in the future?
- b. Where could pro-reform actors and coalitions face potential blockages? What risks are they likely to face?
- c. What is the potential for collective action among stakeholders? Are there groups (private sector, CBOs, NGOs, religious, etc.) that are organized and empowered and able/willing to demand and/or make change around food security and resilience?
- d. What kind of influence might different international factors and actors (such as USAID) have to contribute towards or undermine food security sector and programming in the focus regions/districts? Why?
- e. How do you think the upcoming elections will impact the current political context? What could they mean for external actors? How will they impact food security systems in your region?
- f. How do these opportunities for change differ between different regions/districts in the area (or this area vs. other areas in the South and Southeast)?

Thank you again for your time today. Before we close, do you have any questions for me?

Close the interview by reiterating thanks to the respondent and if he/she would like to add a few comments that may be useful for the PEA study.

## Focus Group Discussion Guide

### **Introduction to this Guide**

This tool is intended to provide guidance for facilitators while conducting focus group discussions (FGDs) for the Political Economy Analysis (PEA).

Expected participants are the most vulnerable communities in the focus regions/districts. Interviewers should not collect any personally identifiable information from these participants. This analysis will incorporate four types of FGDs: male adults, female adults, and male youth (ages 18 or older) and female youth. Estelle H. Antilahy, the PEA study lead, will facilitate discussions with groups of women, whereas Antsa Andriamisaina, the PEA Research Assistant, will facilitate discussions with men. Antsa will be accompanied by a male local guide to respect the local cultural norms and facilitate more open discussions with the all-male focus groups. All-youth (ages 18+) FGDs will be arranged between the two facilitators alternatively.

For active participation during the session, the group will be limited to a maximum of 10 persons. A refreshment (or an equivalent depending on the local practice) will be provided to participants after the session.

The indicative questions below are intended to guide the conversation with the participants, but the interviewer should not feel constrained by them. They are structured according to the USAID PEA Framework, which the PEA Study Lead has adopted for this study.

**Language:** Discussion will be conducted in local dialects (Bara, Mahaly, Tandroy, Tanosy, and eventually Antesaka and Antefasy/Zafisoro)

**Expected duration of interview:** 1h-1h30mn

**Note:** Often, we find people share information about conflict, corruption, and illicit/illegal practices throughout the interview when explaining the power dynamics. In some instances, it may not be appropriate to ask direct questions about these topics. As the interviewer, use your judgment to probe into these topics using other indicative questions, if needed (e.g., question 2b).

### **Informed Consent Statement**

My name is [name]. Thank you so much for making the time to speak with us today. I am working with a research team from a company called Abt Associates. We are here today to conduct an assessment related to food security and resilience in Madagascar. This research is funded by a group of researchers led by Purdue University, which is based in the United States.

We would like to speak with you today about your experience with food security in Madagascar. We are interested in learning how food security in your village has changed over time and how different actors have influenced the food systems in your area. The information you provide will help us develop practical recommendations on how USAID can address food security and improve resilience in these regions.

As part of the research, we are interviewing several groups like yours, as well as key informants who are experts in these topics. Since we are having this discussion in a group, please be respectful of the privacy



of your fellow group members and do not repeat anything you hear said today. When we write our report, we will not connect your name or personal information with anything that you say today. Instead, we will combine your feedback with feedback from others, and write about the key themes that are common across all of the interviews. The information you provide will be confidential, so you should feel free to speak openly.

This interview will take between one and one and a half hours. Your participation in the research is your choice. You are free to say no to the entire interview or say no to specific questions that you do not want to answer. You can end the interview at any time for any reason. If you choose not to participate, there will be no impact on your ability to participate in any future programs. If you choose to participate, you will not receive any direct benefits like money or an invitation to future programs. However, you will help inform the design of future programs that might help others like you.

Do you have any questions about the interview or research?

Do you agree to participate?

Yes [Thank them and ask about note taking]

No [Thank them for their time]

Are you comfortable with me taking notes during the interview? The notes are only to help me make sure I capture all your responses. Only researchers from our team will have access to these notes. We will not share the notes with USAID or anyone else. All notes will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

Yes [Thank them and proceed to the interview questions]

No [Say it is no problem and proceed to the interview questions]

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact [me/Estelle Antilahy], Study lead, Political Economy Analysis, at Herimpitiaestelle@gmail.com or +261 (0) 3205 801 64. You may also contact Sarah Carson, Abt's team lead for this study at Sarah\_Carson@abtassoc.com or +[local number].

**Indicative questions****1. Start broadly with the “foundational factors”:**

- a. Do people in your village typically receive food aid, cash transfers, and other livelihood support during the lean period for the past several years?
- b. Historically, how have the villagers become food aid dependent and/or chronically food insecure? Why? (e.g., Geographical reasons? Economic reasons? Political reasons?)
- c. Who are in recent years the poorest and the most food insecure groups in the communities? Why?
- d. How has the community/territorial organization shaped the access to and availability of food locally? What can explain the situation of the poorest and the marginalized in your village? (Probe into topics such as social order, enforceability of contracts, and property rights)
- e. Who are the most influential in the community over food production and access to resources? Why? (e.g., ethnicity/clans, gender norms, culture, alliances, etc.)

**2. Examine the “rules of game”:**

- a. Are there behaviors around food production or income generation that are based in party politics or political competition, patronage relations, illicit activity or corruption, rent-seeking, nepotism, or social exclusion?
- b. What authority figures or organizations within and outside the territory do citizens trust more/less? [Probe into topic of local authority, religious leaders, individuals, etc.]
- c. How do customs impede income growth or asset procurement?
- d. What does this imply for the kind of legitimacy that different authorities and organizations have across the population?
- e. What does this imply in terms of food access and income generation?
- f. Do formal or informal rules promote the interests of particular groups? How and why? To what effect?

**3. Dig into the “here and now”**

- a. According to you, who are the most food insecure people in your area? Why are these categories of populations chronically food insecure? (Probe into recent shocks and stressors and then ask in particular the elders about long-term stressors and shocks)
- b. How does exposure to risk and food scarcity influence poor people’s behavior? How do they cope with lack of food or sudden shocks? [Probe into household coping strategies. These may include numerous strategies designed to reduce exposure to risks (e.g., livelihood diversification) and/or enable HHs to recover from shocks (e.g., building social capital, the clan, community, or other social networks).
- c. Who has the power over food production or income generation in the village (or commune) and more broadly from district and regional elites? Why? [Probe into the gender norms, values, land tenure and rights, ...]
- d. How do land tenure and access to land vary across ethnic groups and clans?

- e. Are there any conflicts over access to resources that are related to food production or income generation? What are the conflicts about? What are the triggers? Who are the instigators and the mitigators?
  - f. In your opinion, is the conflict resolution process typically fair? Why or why not?
  - g. What are the drivers of herd movement changes in recent years? What are the consequences of these changes in food production and income generation?
  - h. In case of conflicts, what role do youth play? How are they/you being approached and/or motivated to join banditry?
  - i. Are there any social barriers that prevent populations from fleeing from conflicts or violence?
  - j. Apart from conflicts and violence, what are the drivers of migration? Is migration seasonal or permanent?
  - k. [For those who are not migrating]: Why don't you migrate?
- 4. Wrap with the respondent's perception of the "dynamics" – where are the opportunities for positive change?**
- a. Where do you think there are opportunities to improve food security? What entry points are likely to open up in the future? Which actors will support these efforts?
  - b. Are there groups (private sector, CBOs, NGOs, religious, etc.) that are organized and empowered and able/willing to demand and/or make change around food security and resilience? Please be specific.
  - c. What is the potential for collective action among local stakeholders? Who are the key players who facilitate stability and social cohesion in the community? What are the factors that can promote/inhibit stability and social cohesion among community members?
  - d. Where are there likely to be challenges or risks to programs/initiatives aimed at improving food security? Which actors might block efforts?
  - e. Do you think the upcoming national and local election process will impede citizens' ability to accumulate assets, plan, and invest in the future? What about the potential results of this election?

Thank you again for your time today. Before we close, do you have any questions for me?

Close the interview by reiterating thanks to the respondents and if they would like to add any other comments that may be useful for the PEA study.

Annex C: Stakeholder Mapping

The following stakeholder maps are organized into two regions (South and Southeast). In columns two and three, we note the level of influence of the stakeholder as well as their interest (H=high, M=medium, L=low).

Southern Stakeholder Map (Androy, Anosy, Atsimo Andrefana)

Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
Governorate – Region (all 3)	M	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Have latent conflict with the prefecture regarding leadership of technicians appointed by the ministers.</li> <li>● No updated development plan for all 3 regions; development actions are implemented according to the Governor's choice and orientation.</li> <li>● Choice of project locality oriented either to ethnic group connections or to political ties</li> <li>● Appointed technicians are demotivated by low salary, lack of equipment, lack of control and monitoring, and provide an average of 4 work hours a day.</li> <li>● Appointed technicians are said to be unqualified for their job and prefer to pay rent to supervisors. This is assumed to be a long-term practice associated with clan-based organization.</li> <li>● No coordination of local projects; perhaps due to lack of resources, but suspicion of deliberately undermining coordination to divert aid to personal interest.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Could be potentially against the targeting criteria suggested by programming, if not favoring ruling clans and political allies</li> <li>● Regional administration is in the state of “they do not govern; they do not impose authority.”</li> <li>● Risk of manipulating information regarding the state of food insecurity so clan benefits from consumption support and other financial services for targeted beneficiaries.</li> <li>● Motivated to keep all the aid flows and development projects within the region to do “the region’s work” as much as possible</li> <li>● <b>Challenge:</b> The proliferation of projects in the Southern regions has led to a (voluntary) lack of coordination between actors and their projects. Some actors are not accountable and do not follow procedures.</li> </ul>
Prefecture and District (all 8 districts)	H	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Administers the zebu trade; being capacitated significantly by the national state government recently</li> <li>● Undertakes communal administration due to mayors’ unresolved clan-based conflicts; not often native.</li> <li>● Acts “militaristically” and tends to show muscles on occasion to maintain peace.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Unforeseen change of chief of district may occur regularly; driven by clashes between chiefs of districts and congresspersons generated by zebu stealing resolution issues.</li> <li>● A non-native chief of a district could be an ally to enforce rule of law; otherwise, implementing partners should be cautious of risk of conflicts.</li> <li>● <b>Challenge:</b> District civil servants are also fewer compared to all the project operators assembled in</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District administration has less power over the decisions of other project implementing actors.</li> <li>Delegates at communal level are motivated by easy money, have less influence and trust of communities over time.</li> </ul>	<p>the Great South; creating an imbalance of power over local decision-making processes.</p>
Congresspersons	H	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very influential in every local public department: (1) all aid activities, (2) infrastructure works (education, health, and agriculture), and (3) appointment of civil servants</li> <li>Do not hesitate to use their political influence to remove an appointed official for their sole interest</li> <li>Congresspersons have directly administered government grants to communes; becoming executives for social issues (education, safe drinking water, safety net program, and communal roads).</li> <li>A high record of nepotism during the execution of public works (with the public grants managed by congresspersons); complaints never make their way on to the anti-corruption public agencies (BIANCO or PAC) due to their influence at the national level too.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They could directly or indirectly influence the list of project participants for right or wrong reasons.</li> <li>Open clashes with the mayors from opposition parties are regular; making it potentially difficult to work in communes that have conflict with them; potentially undermining a program procedure and ultimately its objectives.</li> <li>Could be a trigger for conflicts (at any moment) between locals, private sector, and implementing agencies. This case happened in Ampanihy (Chinese company in mining and fishing), Amboasary Atsimo (sisal and mining) and Taolagnaro (BOVIMA and mining) and need close monitoring during program implementation.</li> </ul>
Agriculture – Livestock – Regional directorate	L	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficulty operating may be due to the lack of a regional development plan. Technically supervised by the Governorate but continues to be overseen by the Ministry of Agriculture in Antananarivo.</li> <li>Executive staff participate in meetings or workshops organized by project implementing actors but not in monitoring or training in the field. Mid-senior staff are however participating more often in public programs and could do extra work.</li> <li>Have qualified personnel but insufficient at regional level, and even reduced to one or two persons at the district; no permanent staff at the communal level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potentially pro-reform if a significant change in their capacitation is made under any programming.</li> <li>But could be against if donors continue to continuously increase the capacity of implementing actors which are seen to be their competitors.</li> <li>Civil servants are dependent on some implementing partners’ resources to carry out their regular tasks. They cannot afford to monitor all short-term projects. It could be a challenge to get their true opinion to address implementation issues if it is against the implementing actors’ practice.</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff are demotivated due to political elites' pressure, lack of career opportunity, and harsh work conditions.</li> </ul>	
Fisheries and Blue economy – Regional directorate	L	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The current head of the Ministry is native to Androy region, although fisheries and the blue economy service are the least developed there compared to Atsimo Andrefana and Anosy regions.</li> <li>This ministry is favored above departments, receives continuous capacitation and interest (at the national level and even in the Indian Ocean cooperation).</li> <li>It has important funding from WB through the SWIOFIHS2 project (Atsimo Andrefana and Atsimo Atsinanana).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potentially pro-reform in widening income generating activities for poor and landless households in the Southern regions through fisheries activities.</li> </ul>
Commerce and Trade - Regional directorate	L	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Among the ministries that have few regional staff to control communal and district commerce and trade activities.</li> <li>They have little or no means to do so and depend on temporary support, even from private sector interests they should control.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potentially against building storage capacity for SSFs, if that could lessen their personal profit, and their “good relationship” with local business owners.</li> <li>Potentially in conflict with local political elites over financial profit from local business owners; may undermine efforts in empowering SSFs or micro-enterprises.</li> </ul>
Public Health - Regional Directorate	M	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The current head of this directorate is a native Antandroy, respected and influential among youth and educated people, as is his deputy.</li> <li>Stunting and wasting care of infants under age 5 is one of the Department of Public Health's regular tasks. The department has significant capacity to undertake its activities in the southern regions with the direct support of OMS and UNICEF.</li> <li>Health ministry is also perceived as a competitor in the nutrition domain by ONN recently, capturing funds from UNICEF and other major donors that usually worked with ONN in the past.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>He could be a great supporter of reform regarding customs and norms around health and food behaviors.</li> <li>Attention needs to be paid when working with rising influential actors like the Regional Director of Public Health, perceived as/assumed to be a newcomer in politics by longstanding and influential local political elites, which may trigger tensions with political elites.</li> <li><b>Opportunity:</b> Favoritism in civil servants' recruitment/appointment is less present in public health departments. Better understanding of the</li> </ul>



Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
				food and nutrition challenges would follow if implementing actors cooperate with them.
Office National of Nutrition (regional and district level)	L	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● One of the strongest units within the Prime Ministry but weakened in the last 3 years: less autonomy in budget; has no influence anymore.</li> <li>● National budget spending for ONN is about 1.4% of annual expenditure; used to work annually with 20 billion Ar and is now left with 4 billion Ar; apparently because of “unprofessional usage” of funding.</li> <li>● A Conseil National de Nutrition has been enacted but has added little value to field operations, for instance.</li> <li>● Institutional and technical capacity of regional offices (ORN) is diminishing more quickly; 60% of ONN field operations are currently supported by UNICEF and WFP.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Potentially pro-reform if more financial autonomy is given to local representation at regional and district level – at least at the district level, and with less dependency on external funding.</li> <li>● Unless a change is made in leadership, the office is on its way to definite collapse. Paradoxically, ONN has not experienced interference in its work compared to other similar bureaus. The Bureau of Prime Minister itself lost interest in maintaining it alive; to monitor closely after the election (from 2024 onwards).</li> </ul>
Fonds d'Intervention pour le Développement - Direction Interrégionale	H	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The strongest unit within the Prime Ministry - receives most funding directly from the WB. Board members and executives at all levels are mostly qualified and stable.</li> <li>● Through FID, the state government can address some root causes of poverty (overturning early marriage in Antandroy ethnic group - case of Betsimeda fokontany, Commune of Maroalimainty).</li> <li>● Few humanitarian and development actors know it is a state agency tied to the Bureau of the Prime Minister.</li> <li>● Seen as a top performing implementing agency which differs from the “state government image of mediocrity.” FID managers were also free enough to criticize some governmental actions. It has been rarely challenged, unlike ONN. However, trust of the population in FID does not translate to trust of the state government on the ground.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Potentially the strongest ally (pro-reform) for food security programming and investment in social infrastructure (education, health, and water). However (or for that reason) most implementing organizations in the Southern regions see it as their primary competitor</li> <li>● <b>Opportunity:</b> FID is currently testing a register of HHS (ultra-poor, poor, middle-income, rich/wealthy) at two communes in the Grand South, to use it as a tool for planning and decision-making for aid and development activities.</li> <li>● <b>Challenge:</b> Traditional authorities, local communities and other implementing agencies do not see FID as a governmental agency but as a WB project, although it has implemented governmental programs in the Southern regions for about 30 years.</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
Mayors - communes	L	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● They are elected officials, but have kinship and/or other forms of connection with traditional ruling families. Elected communal officials have less influence and are limited from taking initiatives in the absence of the prior approval of traditional authorities.</li> <li>● Ethnicity of the mayor and elected municipal/commune councils in rural communes depends on which group is dominant there.</li> <li>● Very low technical and administrative capacities - could benefit from enhancement of capacities. Few mayors know about formal public administration; they administer the commune in a similar way to clan organizations and apply customary rules within it.</li> <li>● Elected officials align themselves with the party in power to facilitate negotiations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “Wait and see” attitudes for most of time, due to prominence of chiefs of district over legal and formal decision-making; some mayors are accused of abuse of power while implementing projects.</li> <li>● Mayors and other local authorities fear to exercise their authority over members of their community because of kinship, social norms (they might not be the eldest in or members of the ruling family) and political interests (anticipation of the next election). They rely on the authority of the district chief for any local initiatives (tax, organizational change, etc.).</li> <li>● Implementing organizations need to pay attention to mayors’ implication in zebu theft, which is very likely in the majority of rural areas.</li> </ul>
Traditional authorities	M	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Have strong influence over local communities; relatively strong influence over representatives of state government; relationship is personal unlike that between civil servants and elected authorities; all rooted in clan and lineage.</li> <li>● Could influence decisions at a higher level through appointed public officials and civil servants.</li> <li>● Their influence is still strong over the cattle value chain, and therefore public security issues.</li> <li>● Could sideline any clans that are involved in conflicts with them if they hold elected or formal administration jobs; there is less room or alternative to co-operating, and usually congressperson is escalating the tension.</li> <li>● In some places, traditional leaders have authority in social and traditional matters (“Afaka mandidy ny vahoaka ny hazomanga”); but they do not intervene in the “formal” political realm.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bribery invades the traditional authorities’ boundaries through elected and technical officials appointed for conflict resolution, in particular for zebu stealing.</li> <li>● Rising actors in the cattle market could potentially be against allying with the traditional leaders in future programming.</li> <li>● Followers of traditional authorities ascribe weak influence to local government, outside the boundary of the social and cultural realm.</li> <li>● The connection between public administration and traditional authorities also has some peculiarities. Amboasary Atsimo (and to some extent Fort-Dauphin) present a clear divide between the two, and likewise between rural and urban. Project actors are entrusted in this circle to “survive.”</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditional leaders are stereotyped as uneducated by educated political elites; fragmented - there is no cohesion at communal, district level, at the best at communal level; some of them are involved in conflicts over land (in the courts).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most actors are not aware of the traditional administrative system, ignore its existence or challenge it.</li> </ul>
Local communities – women	L	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Few single mothers, probably due to stricter traditional marriage convention and/or authorized polygamy (within the dominant Antandroy ethnic group)</li> <li>Women do not have a clear role, can voice their concerns but their ideas are rarely implemented, if this is not aligned with the traditional leaders</li> <li>For Antandroy ethnic group: women have always been prominent figures in their community, are highly skilled in trade and commerce, savings, and a strong sense of common goods (or social capital?) and hold a mediation role during conflict resolution inside the community; could easily enter the formal political realm if they belong to the ruling clans.</li> <li>Antandroy clans still maintain hierarchy within the community, and the first wife (in case of polygamous marriage – still common) hold some decisions for the rest of the wives; children are raised in common.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opponents, if reform would potentially destroy the clan organizations</li> <li>Allies, if reform addresses food production and job creation</li> <li>Polygamy is not asserted as a source of tension within a given clan or community.</li> <li><b>Opportunity:</b> Guardians of cultural and social values, women could potentially influence youth empowerment.</li> <li><b>Challenge:</b> Migration of women in the Antandroy ethnic group should be monitored for successful programming, because they (at least our respondents) have been migrating very recently and planned to do so in the near future, as part of their coping mechanism.</li> </ul>
Local communities – youth	L	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth are not clearly defined as workers per se. Until they get into marriage, they are children and will be under their parents' duties.</li> <li>Youth usually rely on dynamic local markets to generate income; leading to youth migration.</li> <li>Some youth claim being beaten, sexually abused, and morally harassed. Violence is combined with other stereotypes (uneducated, being female, disability), during migration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potentially pro-reform (allies). Projects are seen by youth groups as leverage to gain social and economic status. Correct targeting of youth will benefit them and potentially the whole community they belong to.</li> <li>Politicians could instrumentalize youth (migrants) for every election to win votes. If a youth group becomes renowned, the incorporation of politicians is likely to happen sooner.</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
Local communities – men	M	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The customary norm is solely based on patriarchy, the eldest men for the ruling clan decide for the local community.</li> <li>• Great sources of remittances during migration.</li> <li>• Important role in local economy and in community dynamism: commerce and trade in livestock and grain, labor workforce, connection with migrants and allies in other regions, negotiation with neighboring clans’ leaders if needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inter-clan conflicts should be correctly identified and monitored, because they are always led by men, and may become a challenge for conflict resolution at the local level.</li> </ul>
UN - Rome-based agencies (FAO, WFP, and IFAD)	M	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FAO and WFP are “competing” to capture funds.</li> <li>• Repeatedly claim that their development projects are pilot/experimental; for example, the “convergence project” starting in 2022 is still pilot.</li> <li>• Have recently approached traditional leaders to undergo various activities (vaccination, education, youth empowerment, etc.); traditional leaders take this as an “opportunity to survive” or imprint their power over decision making, usually in relation to state government duties.</li> <li>• Influential in many ways – good and bad.</li> <li>• Concerns have been raised about their communication regarding the food insecurity status of the Grand South without prior discussion with the government, and escalating tensions among local politicians.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At district level, the nutrition (and SAMS) cluster exists but is not fully operational; still working in silos. Only 5 key actors (in food security and nutrition) are known; many secondary actors – implementing partners – aren’t. A code of silencing these secondary actors is observed in any discussion. A close monitoring of these implementing local subcontractors is important for successful programming in Southern regions.</li> <li>• Coalition among UN agencies and international and national NGOs implementing food security projects (DEFIS, ASOS, FAO, ACF, PAM) lacks transparency and favors rural areas against the “urban” on which food insecurity in rural areas also has an adverse impact.</li> <li>• The lack of means and clear strategy from the state government contribute to its own replacement by fully-equipped organizations like UN agencies.</li> </ul>
UN – Geneva-Based agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, IOM, IOT)	M	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These are organized around the ONE approach and have developed in the Southern regions (targeting very few municipalities)</li> <li>• A UN agency is also felt to be surfing on the “politically hot” albino kidnapping problem to capture funds.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pro-reform and still want to be prominent actors; they are highly interested in broader food security programs.</li> <li>• Attention should be paid to these UN agencies promising a lot of reform in governance, at regional level, but not delivering.</li> </ul>
International NGO (faith-based)	M	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CRS is the strongest, aligning their actions with the Catholic church (CC). CC has the population’s</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faith-based organizations in the Southern region are pro-reform; they can build strong coalitions</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
organizations – CRS/ADRA/SIF)			<p>sympathy because it incorporates the population’s rituals into its own.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The international NGOs are dominating the media scene (at both national and local level) and the government lets them do so.</li> <li>• Regional political elites are critical of them accumulating aid and development funding; handling an annual fund greater than of the Ministry of Population, for example; seen as creating an imbalance of power at the local level.</li> </ul>	<p>among themselves that last over time (regional and national level); and are capable of influencing behavioral change in the long run.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International and national NGOs have no control or authority over the clan leaders. If a conflict arises, they have to call on the commune or district as mediators to resolve the problem. Despite this, they are usually leaning to sideline the traditional leaders to have more influence over the local community; they are approaching and embracing customary events as “folklore” according to traditional leaders.</li> </ul>
International NGO (secular organizations)	L	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NGOs have materials, equipment, human resources but they are unstable; have less experienced staff for new projects; are not aware of the regulations regarding communes, only work with communal executive staff and avoid contact with the mayors.</li> <li>• European NGOs benefit from EU international cooperation regulations and have also been present there for a long time. Success is yet to be proven.</li> <li>• Could also have coordination issues within a district territory; it has happened that two implementing actors present the same results in the same locality to their respective donors (case of Bekily).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could be allies for reform in food security programming; they have “dormant” experience that could be valued – in particular with their Malagasy counterparts.</li> <li>• Have also agendas with the private sector (local and international) that may not necessarily benefit the SSFs; need attention and close monitoring.</li> <li>• High turnover inside these NGOs is one of the main constraints in working with them; their reputation is by name, but cooperating with them at a local level is quite similar to cooperating with a new implementing partner, except for their stricter financial procedures.</li> </ul>
Grassroots organizations	L	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Invisible" although they are implementers of projects, executing the painful work with the local community, and are underpaid; rather seen as a means to channel aid rather than key players in food security; regular employers of jobless youth.</li> <li>• Grassroot organizations are instrumentalized by the state government local officials (Ministry of Population, region, municipality) to cover their absence and failure to address the issues.</li> <li>• No local associations are actively participating in the “food security and livelihoods cluster” and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some grassroot organizations leaders are involved in politics, in particular, youth leaders. They profit in building political careers; potentially against reform if it undermines their political interest.</li> <li>• If the grassroots association leaders have an interest in policy and politics, they could also be pro-reform; needs close monitoring.</li> <li>• Grassroots associations led by women and youths could be an entry point for convincing traditional authorities about reform, training of trainers, coaching and mentoring of local communities and</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
Donors: EU, USAID, IFAD, AFDB, WB  (* ) this analysis is similar to the Southeast region	H	?	<p>“nutrition cluster” except those headquartered in the capital city.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The EU is much more "locally" involved compared to other donors and has regular meetings at the regional and communal level as part of their approach; more vocal too about the project outcomes.</li> <li>Working through NGOs is interpreted as a lack of trust between donors and state governments; several respondents are critical of this approach and the fact that the state government does not also carry out its duties.</li> </ul>	<p>targeted groups; have advantages for being embedded in the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordination among donors has begun (according to a few respondents), but in the end donors continue as usual (working in silos) to move forward on their own agenda; this is worsening during a political crisis.</li> <li>The state government (at ministry level), always perceived as weak, is also playing around with those various agendas to keep their “own usual donors isolated within their ministry.</li> </ul>
Big corporates in mining and sisal industries	H	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Big corporations, local businesses and state and local government ties are usually blurred even in “normal” socio-economic conditions; the local private sector wants to maximize their profit while state control is loose.</li> <li>Foreign corporations are more connected to the national or regional (at best) state government and donors, hold strong power or influence through lobbying. Their presence could trigger local inflation, conflict over land, rise of charcoal demand leading to rapid deforestation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could benefit from a food security program leading to long term security and safety across the regions; extremely poor HHs are employed as their permanent workers during lean periods and see them as “savior.”</li> <li>Potentially against consumption support during lean periods; support (silently) the anti-aid discourse, but for different reasons (refusal of beneficiaries to work for low wage mining). Tensions and clashes between communities and big corporations, triggered by local politicians, may occur from time to time; needs close monitoring.</li> </ul>
Small to medium local business owners: transportation, middlemen	H	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local business actors are contributing to rendering the market uncompetitive to maximize their profit; seize on the weaknesses of communal administration to win some profits – gaining an advantageous position from the price volatility.</li> <li>Either hold appointed political functions or have a direct interest in public actions: (fuel, transport, collection of agriculture products, hotels, restaurants, etc.); usually related to “generational money” families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor SSFs/HHs have difficulty in organizing and influencing prices.</li> <li>Consumption support during harvest time and financial access with 0% interest could incentivize poor HHs to adopt reform (storage, collective action to influence farmgate prices).</li> <li>Not perceived as key players to dynamize the local economy or the means to leverage/lift small and medium businesses to higher level.</li> <li>Rivalries and conflicts of interest between politicians and the private sector at communal level</li> </ul>



Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small-scale business owners are also disorganized, isolated, and numerous in various market niches.</li> </ul>	contribute to tension; may aggravate the poverty level.

## Southeast (Atsimo Atsinanana)

Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
Governorate – Region	M	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional administration has a recent development plan; used by the Governor to influence decisions regarding economic development. He has managed to attract several companies working in spices and tourism industries and connect with SSFs; recently able to orient government funding decisions to the Southeast Region.</li> <li>The region benefits also from the recent boom in the international cloves market and he made it clear that he also seeks tax return from this boom to the Governorate finances; the same with the lobster market.</li> <li>Less influential towards traditional authorities; he was not able to enforce the tracing of zebus (from 2020 until now) and this [absence of] decision exacerbated zebu thefts in communes previously reputed safe.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Belonging to the dominant ethnic groups (Antesaka) across the region, the governor has a strong hold over local civil servants but is not in a good relationship with the prefecture, who is usually from the Antefasy or Zafisoro ethnic groups. The Governor is far from being appreciated by most Congresspersons because he's seen as a potential front-runner for a seat in Congress in the upcoming election in Vangaindrano district, and is assumed to be pro-reform in food security programming.</li> <li>Future programming could not count on the Governor with respect to conflict resolution involving clans and zebu theft; should monitor the change of this regional administration after the election.</li> </ul>
Prefecture and District (all 4 districts)	H	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All four chiefs of district are influential with customary judges regarding security issues; are respected [even feared] by chiefs of fokontany and gendarmerie.</li> <li>The chief of the district always becomes preeminent at election time, like now.</li> <li>They could benefit from capacitation regarding DRM and DRR management along with the commune and fokontany. It was done during last year but since</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current chiefs of the district are against corruption and other illegal practices by the gendarmes (extortion, involvement in zebu theft). Communities noted that half of the gendarmes lean towards the rule of law and the other half could be potentially against reforms in local security.</li> <li>Mayors may act as chief of district and raise tensions in local community; tensions help them to keep the divisions among local communities, based most of the time on ethnic identity, and ease either their re-</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
			<p>they usually occupy the function for 3-4 years max., those reinforcements never last.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In Befotaka, HHs feared that the current District Chief would soon retire and that no one like him would accept living there and serving as a public servant.</li> <li>● About 6 mayors have been imprisoned in the last 3 years for being involved in zebu theft and kidnapping, through the tenacity of the chiefs of district.</li> </ul>	<p>election or the continuous abuse of their function for personal profit (like evading local tax, grabbing lands, monopolizing key local economic sectors like coffee, vanilla, rice, beans, cloves).</p>
Congress-person	M	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Historically, Congresspersons from Atsimo Atsinanana region were prominent figures at the national level (fact: the eldest senator appointed by the President Andry Rajoelina is Antefasy, native to Farafangana). This situation dramatically changed during this mandate and most of them are low profile at the national level, but still very influential among the traditional leaders.</li> <li>● Congresspersons were always “strong men or women.” They always breach the line separating the communal executive and legislative realms.</li> <li>● Political elites from Farafangana are dependent on political elites from Vangaindrano to survive due to internal conflict (uneasy cohabitation between Antefasy and Zafisoro).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Congresspersons and mayors in opposite parties clash during all mandates. It can become very personal and fuel conflicts and tension even at the local level with their partisans; orienting aid to communes with their allies.</li> <li>● A large proportion of aid from the state government is misappropriated by the Congresspersons themselves, their relatives and political allies; the same with other projects.</li> <li>● Project operators – lacking knowledge of local dynamics – rely on an “outspoken” Congressperson who in fact has hidden personal interests</li> </ul>
Agriculture- Livestock- Regional Directorate	L	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● For the last 3 years, the regional directorate of agriculture and livestock has been undermined: No stable head of office - only an interim. Although important agricultural development projects (funded by EU, IFAD, USAID, BMZ) are currently implemented there, the directorate is not able to own the process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Centralized decision-making raised tensions among local politicians’ elites and executive staff working at the program's local office. Several projects and development programs in the Atsimo Atsinanana region face similar criticisms and contribute to open claims of racism.</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
			<p>or accompany local technicians at commune level or even monitor the activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The previous Director is not native to Atsimo Atsinanana. For that reason, some critical decisions (especially for IFAD) were made in the national coordination (within the Ministry of Agriculture).</li> <li>• The directorate struggles with the livestock sector too, even though they are trying to prioritize beekeeping, which is quite renowned abroad.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small business owners and farmers' cooperatives are very active in the beekeeping sector (along with coffee and cloves) but the weakness of the regional directorate prevents its growth. The sector and small business owners are relying on short-term project for markets (B2B or B2C events)</li> </ul>
Fisheries and Blue Economy – Regional directorate	M	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent but growing fast compared to Agriculture and Livestock: the nomination of the regional directorate was made quickly; the sector receives lots of attention from local decision-makers.</li> <li>• Fisheries (terrestrial and marine) benefit from the support of this department and the SWIOFISH2 project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The blue economy department could be an opportunity for the development of poor HHS' livelihoods; capitalizing on SWIOFISH2 project undertaken in the Atsimo Atsinanana region, in particular in the district of Vangaindrano. Support to SSFs to improve fish farming could be part of livelihoods development.</li> </ul>
Commerce and Trade – Regional directorate	L	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very close to the Governor: their motivation is to increase local taxes from lobster and cloves, which were almost nonexistent three years ago, and to "take their part along the way".</li> <li>• Most of them have personal connections with small to medium business owners.</li> <li>• Interested in increasing the production but less eager to improve traceability of products (to export)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The public services are an obstacle to business investment.</li> <li>• One-way relationship between state and operators: abuse of power and lack of impartiality by the state in the labor inspectorate (only for large companies) and in the CNAPS have been reported. This situation limits access to the private sector and encourages corruption.</li> </ul>
Public Health – Regional Directorate	M	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With ONN weaknesses (and these are more pronounced in Atsimo Atsinanana than elsewhere), the regional public health service is used to working alone, but has less track record at local levels (Befotaka Atsimo has one physician for 54,000 individuals).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Misappropriation of public medical supplies (affordable and sometimes free for the ultra-poor) has been publicly denounced or criticized several times without any follow-up, in particular in rural and isolated areas.</li> <li>• The head of the public health regional service is native to the Antesaka ethnic group, so are most of</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No specific work on nutrition is done there. They could benefit from enhancement of local capacities regarding nutrition and improved food intake.</li> </ul>	<p>the personnel; may have potential conflict with the Governor for not supporting his nomination at an early stage.</p>
Office National of Nutrition (regional and district level)	L	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Their office is almost non-operational in Atsimo Atsinanana. They survive with food security and ongoing projects implemented by UN agencies or international NGOs.</li> <li>International NGOs build their nutrition signature activities on SEECALINE - an innovative approach by ONN 35 years ago. This is now called CAEM in Atsimo Atsinanana with the AFAFI-SUD (EU-funded project).</li> <li>ONN is less influential at the regional and communal level: its actions (or its approach?) are not convincing and do not last.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>International NGOs are prime competitors of ONN at local level and have contributed to its collapse. The sharp increase in the stunting and wasting rate in Atsimo Atsinanana was - at some point – the source of questioning of the utility of funds poured into nutrition, without improvement at all and (worse) its exacerbation. ONN had also failed in its communication by accusing the traditional leaders in Atsimo Atsinanana and politicians of harming women and children, and causing a high rate of stunting and wasting. This kind of communication does harm rather than sensitizing authorities.</li> </ul>
Fonds d'Intervention pour le Développement - Direction Interrégionale	H	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FID's Atsimo Atsinanana region activities are overseen by the office in Manakara (Fitovinany region). Few communes benefit from its safety net program.</li> <li>FID has encountered some drawbacks in its project implementation in Atsimo Atsinanana due to inaccurate data and incomplete knowledge of the social context especially regarding land tenure and the proportion of single mothers, and ongoing social conflicts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FID is not in good standing with Atsimo Atsinanana authorities (governor, senator, civil society organizations) due to its insistence on keeping its supervising office in Manakara (another region - that has no close ties with Atsimo Atsinanana).</li> </ul>
Mayors – Communes	L	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less than half of elected mayors are from the ruling party; the mayor of each capital city of the five districts isn't. Congresspersons from the ruling party tried to override the election results by fraud. One succeeded (Vangaindrano).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some mayors (to be checked after the upcoming election) are against the enhancement of executive staff capacities, to make sure that he/she will never be challenged about all the decisions made. Appointed civil servants are also against enhancing</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Each district has an informal association of mayors, but it has little influence over the decision-making process; each mayor depends on their individual connections to advance their own development strategy, if any.</li> <li>● The majority of mayors are small business owners in the transportation sector, middlemen in coffee-cloves-rice-beans value chains, or restaurant and hotel owners; interested in food security project implementation only if they could directly profit from that.</li> <li>● But mostly interested in humanitarian aid which implies less control during chaotic moments, allowing easy misappropriation. Rarely do implementing actors hold mayors accountable for wrongdoings.</li> <li>● The influence of mayors varies by district and number of sub-ethnic groups, and the counter-influence of traditional leaders.</li> <li>● Communal administration has carried out only marginal administrative business for a long time.</li> </ul>	<p>communal capacities, so as to remain unchallenged for providing less public service to communes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Project operators ignore the role and attributions of communes, and act as if they are “the communal administration” and decide on any activities, often threatening to stop funding if the mayor raises concerns.</li> <li>● Cases of absent mayors are also common. As a result, local communities prefer to trust and rely on traditional authority which is quite a stable institution.</li> <li>● Sometimes, a mayor could become a prominent public authority or influential at the district or regional level.</li> <li>● Flaws during the distribution of the government-run safety net program may have been caused by the lack of traditional leaders’ inclusion in the targeting, according to many respondents.</li> </ul>
Traditional Authorities	M	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Are the first point of contact for the local community, elsewhere in the region. All social and traditional conflicts are dealt with (murder, theft, land disputes, etc.).</li> <li>● Have lost influence over decisions regarding most agricultural development projects for at least two decades; yet agricultural projects failing to understand the sole role of traditional leaders over land tenure are sure to fail too.</li> <li>● According to a respondent in Befotaka, traditional leaders were (1975-1997) influential in any key</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Open conflicts between so-called uneducated traditional leaders and educated politicians: Politicians have deliberately de-structured the customary system to gain power. This has been reported throughout interviews in all 4 districts of Atsimo Atsinanana. Traditional leaders go as far as saying that politicians are manipulating their peers, especially the less educated, to override the customary system from inside, and want it to disappear for good. Politicians interviewed</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
			<p>decisions and even appointed as civil servants if they were graduates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In Farafangana, traditional authorities are being informed but do not participate in the decision-making process, or any consultation process at all. But some mayors have nominated traditional leaders (proposed by both sides of sub-groups) to advise them and work officially in the commune.</li> <li>● In Vondrozo, traditional leaders are usually the most influential at the communal level (maybe because they are quite isolated). Individuals not native to dominant groups could succeed in communal elections, with their election eased by internal clan-based conflicts. Traditional leaders are still capable of orienting community decisions thus far, if they anticipate positive impacts, and are capable of acting in political decisions beyond a mere sentiment of belonging and acquaintance.</li> </ul>	<p>confirmed that the customary system is useless and should be sidelined.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The contested spaces between public administration and traditional leaders were around the application of Dina (community security law). Public administration sees the Dina as disproportionate to the infraction committed and decides to override it without replacing it. No contest has been made by traditional leaders, which results in local insecurity; exacerbated corruption in the judicial system becomes a vicious circle of poverty-insecurity. Community regulations of marriage are overridden too, which results in uncontrolled freedom and demographic growth, gender inequality and poverty.</li> <li>● Local (region and district level) state government executive staff are openly against the customary regulation of land but have no power to change it.</li> <li>● For a new project, it is key to implicate first the traditional leaders, rather than civil servants who are mostly perceived to be corrupt.</li> </ul>
Local Communities – Women	L	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clear division and tensions between women’s groups: half single mothers and half married (mostly through customary laws). Married women are influential - using their husbands as the vehicle of their interest in community decision-making.</li> <li>● Fisheries and small livestock actions have been proved to benefit landless women in recent programming, rather than small-scale vegetable gardening. The same with trade and commerce when markets are fairly competitive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Married women are actively engaged in discriminating against single mothers for two main reasons: i) keeping the land crops for her husband (if his male siblings are migrating or deceased or separated from their wife), ii) keeping the heritage from her husband to her male descendants (when she is getting older).</li> <li>● On top of this issue is discrimination by ethnic identity, which is perpetuated by some women elected officials and women married to elected</li> </ul>



Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
				officials who hold leadership positions in grassroots organizations.
Local Communities – Youth	L	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● They could benefit from opportunities for employment in the agriculture extension service, or improvement of technology in agriculture. Some of them even have support from their parents and traditional leaders, and are sure to maintain their competencies within the local communities and develop the local economy.</li> <li>● In Vondrozo, youth (even if their fellow SSFs lend land crops) do not have access to seeds distributed by development actors. Parents hold any asset until death and their children do not have access to it.</li> <li>● Youth are asking for training to understand laws and regulations - feeling abused by gendarmerie agents and influential educated people.</li> <li>● Youth feel “manipulated” by politicians approached prior or during election time, “employed for free” – and engage in banditry to survive. Being partisans, they are engaged in political tensions between elected officials. However, they are never consulted in any decision-making.</li> <li>● Traditional leaders and communal administration manage to regulate youth activities (<i>dinam-pamokarana</i> or <i>dinam-pambolena</i>). This implies the possibility of lending land crops across the 10 communes within the dominant two ethnic groups in Farafangana district.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Young people don't know the content of the laws on insecurity and, according to youths, the gendarmerie agents refrain from promoting the law. This situation also benefits some state government delegates who terrorize young people to force them to obey. Gendarmerie is “herim-pamoretana” meaning literally “to make populations accept any things.” The rich (literally “who have cash”) dictate who is wrong or right before the gendarmerie. “A guilty rich person is not imprisoned; an innocent poor person may be sanctioned.” Most cases are decided at the gendarmerie and do not go up to court.</li> <li>● In Farafangana, the two/three main ethnic groups should be the entry point – with the inclusion of youth in decision-making processes to avoid discrimination within their community from now on.</li> <li>● According to respondents, youths should be introducing some points for discussion (reasons for yes or no) in making decisions and are less likely to be corrupted.</li> </ul>
Local Communities – Men	M	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● For now, male headed HHs usually capture benefits from development projects. Those are the ones who have connections with traditional leaders, prominent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Men - on migration - are usually against all changes in local communities and always try to influence the decisions made locally, in the name of cultural and</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
			<p>elected officials, and civil servants, so have influence over local decision-making.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● They could also benefit from any programming in food security, especially for input supply and training.</li> </ul>	<p>customary laws. Most of them are not remitting, which explains the vulnerability of many women-led households and single mothers; they are against any changes regarding marital union and women’s access to land to keep the status quo which is on their side.</p>
UN – Rome-based agencies (FAO, WFP, and IFAD)	M	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● FAO has sporadically implemented projects in Farafangana and Vangaindrano but its actions are unknown by many.</li> <li>● WFP intervenes through local associations (ACCADEMIS) to provide aid (either in-kind or unconditional cash transfer) to a few communes.</li> <li>● IFAD funded-projects are implemented by a public department (agriculture, livestock, and fisheries for example) through short-term contracts and/or consultancy contracts.</li> <li>● They have strong entry at the national level, but not at the communal level. For that, they usually rely on local associations or government organs (in the case of IFAD) as implementers, but still ignore the possibility that the actions potentially conflict with the customary settings (land use, targeting, etc.); have proved to be capable of navigating in the gray zone most of the time (challenging the government, other implementing actors, and the traditional authorities).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Competition among ministries (agriculture, fisheries, land management, etc.) has been used to capture funding for these agencies.</li> <li>● Civil servants started to voice their concerns about potential manipulation and excessive [or repetitive] experimentation with doubtful results, similar to Southern regions.</li> <li>● WFP has a targeting problem; embroiled in some communal nepotism that leads to conflict. HHs have to be made responsible (and take ownership of their fate – participating in decisions and not being infantilized on the pretext of vulnerability). Cases of nepotism and extortion of WFP financial and food aid, by mayors and their aides, have been reported. The beneficiaries are wealthy creditors (within the community) who threaten to withhold advances if they are not on the list.</li> </ul>
UN – Geneva Based agencies (UNICEF)	H	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Long term presence (at least 15 years) in water and education sectors in Atsimo Atsinanana, with technical assistance within the regional directorate of water</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No potential conflicts so far. Their actions rarely overlap with other implementing agencies. But if it is the case, they have a local technical assistant who can deal directly with other actors, thus fixing the issue quite smoothly.</li> </ul>

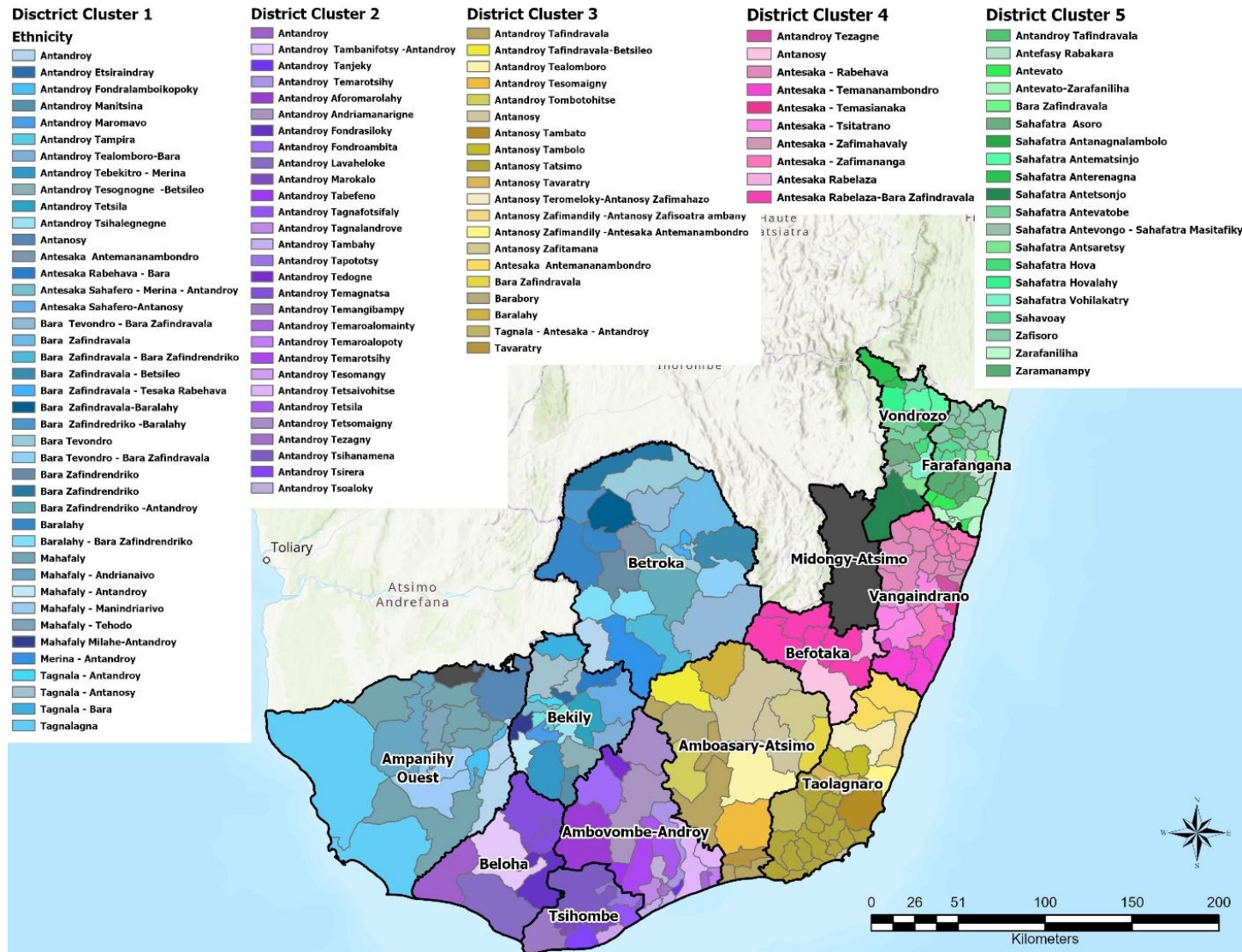
Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continuous and strong relationship with the education department at all levels (national. regional. district and commune); Investing in infrastructure, sectoral good governance, teacher training.</li> <li>● Ability to work with commune and local communities - a certain degree of adaptation and research.</li> </ul>	
International NGO (faith-based organizations – CRS/ADRA)	M	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CRS is backed by Catholic Church actions (which gain recognition as the public service continues to not deliver). Befotaka and Midongy Atsimo (the two most isolated districts) are the strong supporters of Catholic church actions.</li> <li>● Farafangana and Vangaindrano were the fiefs of the Lutheran Church, but they have started to approach the Catholic Church through the ecumenical movement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The two have had recent financial interventions (sporadic in the past) in Atsimo Atsinanana. They have benefited from USAID funding over the past and currently.</li> <li>● ADRA is openly criticized by several public entities, except for the humanitarian aid section.</li> </ul>
International NGO (secular organizations – WHH/ INTERAIDE/GESCOD/GIZ) and their implementing and Grassroots Organizations	L	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "Accused" of implementing their own agendas; executive staff are on a short-term contract and have little knowledge of social and political contexts. NGOs are not aware of the regulations regarding communes - they work with the communal technical staff and mostly avoid regular contact with the mayors and traditional leaders.</li> <li>● International NGOs usually leave to low-ranked staff the contact with traditional leaders and elected officials at the commune level.</li> <li>● Traditional leaders have voiced their concerns regarding this lack of contact between them and the decision-makers within NGOs (both national and international).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Their intervention in the Southeast is either recent or sporadic. Particular to the two French organizations (InterAide and GESCOD) is their intention to stay longer (case of Manakara InterAide dating back to 1994) and having direct agreements with territorial collectivities (case of GESCOD in Boeny region). This is likely to happen in the Atsimo Atsinanana region too.</li> <li>● WHH and GIZ (all German) are working according to THE funds available, even though WHH seek to stay longer.</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Influence	Interest	Primary Role, Capacity, and Influence	Opportunities and Challenges
Small to medium local business owners: transportation, middlemen	H	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involved in politics (elected officials, allies, acquaintances, relatives) - their influence goes beyond the local and regional level. Most of them have points of entry at the national level too.</li> <li>Due to its isolation, the Befotaka economy is under the control of a few businessmen; involved in commerce of household goods, coffee, beans and peanuts, and transportation. They are of Chinese descent. They have influenced politics and gone on to Congressional election races. Furthermore, they monopolize the public works of the primitive road rehabilitation (136 km from Vangaindrano to Befotaka). They have developed political networks at national, provincial, and regional level. The recent significant decline of the local economy may have contributed to their relocation to Farafangana.</li> <li>In Vondrozo, there are a few business owners - lots of middlemen – who are dictating market laws.</li> <li>They fail to dynamize the local economy (strangled by a few business owners who are only collecting export products and are not capable of creating new/additional jobs or investing in different economic sectors); the collapse of export crops due to reduced interest and lost influence in Farafangana.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farmers' cooperatives or associations try to balance their power with local business owners – with the support of NGOs - but have not achieved much. SSFs do not want to openly oppose them because they are their main and only creditors, and once the NGOs are gone, they will have to continue trading with them.</li> <li>Addressing security issues will affect the local politicians directly involved or owning small businesses. Recent security operations imposed by the state government resulted in the imprisonment of mayors, a situation kept on hold due to lobbying actions from other mayors.</li> </ul>

(\* Notes for donors are similar to Southern regions.

## Annex D: Ethnicities in the focus regions

Figure 12. Ethnicity by commune (Source: PEA Data Collection)



## Annex E: Social structures and traditional authorities in Southern and Southeast Madagascar

This section provides additional information about the social structures and traditional authorities within districts in Southern and Southeast Madagascar. To support the analysis, the districts being studied are grouped into four clusters which share certain geophysical and socio-cultural characteristics, summarized in the table below.

*Table 2. District clusters used in analysis*

Cluster	Districts in Cluster	Region	Predominate Ethnic Groups
1	Ampanihy, Bekily, Betroka	Southern (Atsimo Andrefana, Anosy and Androy region)	Mahafaly and Bara. Other ethnic groups include Tagnalaña, Antandroy, Antanosy, Merina, and Betsileo.
2	Tsihombe, Beloha, and Ambovombe-Androy	Southern (Androy region)	Antandroy
3	Taolagnaro and Amboasary Atsimo	Southern (Anosy region)	Antanosy and Antandroy
4	Vangaindrano and Befotaka	Southeast (Atsimo Atsinanana region)	Antesaka and Bara
5	Vondrozo and Farafangana	Southeast (Atsimo Atsinanana region)	Antefasy, Zafisoro and parent group of Antesaka

### Cluster 1: Ampanihy, Bekily and Betroka districts

This cluster spreads across the three Southern regions, namely Atsimo Andrefana, Anosy and Androy regions. It is mainly dominated by Mahafaly and Bara ethnic groups, with relatively dominant Antandroy, Antanosy and Tagnala ethnic groups.

**Ampanihy** is the stronghold of the Mahafaly royal family, and the Maroseranana dynasty are the most influential people in this district. The land of the Mahafaly lies between the Menarandra and Onilahy rivers, to the north of Androy, and they later migrated to Toliara. The sub-group Tagnalaña belong to Mahafaly migrants, who come from the coastal plain most affected by the drought, and more specifically to three clans, the Tokobetelo, who have formed very close and supportive bonds (Fauroux & Koto, 1993). The three clans that constitute the Tokobetelo are:

- Andriambeloza (Temilahehe)
- Andriamaharavo (Temotongoha)
- Andriamanetsakarivo (Tevondronina)

The Tokobetelo and the royal descendants in Ampanihy have made some arrangements to work together to influence political decisions to benefit either Ampanihy or Toliara.

**Betroka** is mainly the fief of the Bara ethnic group and has strong ties with the Mahafaly and Antanosy ethnic groups.



**Bekily** benefits from a good distribution of ethnic groups. Each group has its own preferred sector of activity. Historically, Bekily was first settled by the Tanala Zafimarozaka, an ethnic group from the East Corridor Primary Forest. They were pushed further west by the French colonialists. The second wave included Betsileo and Merina, who came to trade household goods and zebus with the locals. The third wave of migrants is the Mahafaly, Antandroy, Antanosy and Bara. Nowadays, the descendants of these seven main ethnic groups inhabit the whole territory of Bekily district, with more probability of inter-ethnic (and cultural) mixing than in other places of Androy region. There are four blocks, including:

- the Bara ethnic group, which shares a border with Betroka district
- the Antanosy ethnic group near Fotadrevo (in Ampanihy district) and Beroroha district
- the center and its immediate periphery, which is cosmopolitan
- the largest area dominated by the Antandroy ethnic groups, which shares a border with Ambovombe, Tsihombe and Beloha districts

The Antandroy in Bekily are migrants from Amboasary, Ambovombe, Tsihombe and Beloha. They still live among themselves – a family is multi-generational (at least three generations). This clan is a direct descendant of the famous Monja Jaona, a renowned rebel leader who led the political party "MONIMA Ka Miviombio". The woman leader is his great-granddaughter. She has learnt a lot from him, and she and her people are still fierce fighters. At a young age, she took part in the uprising in Antananarivo led by her great-grandfather, who came from the Grand South. The population in Bekily has also historical ties with the region of Diana which provided them with peaceful exile during colonial times; there is still a direct public transport link between Diego-Suarez and Bekitro (a rural commune that belongs to Bekily district and located in the Antandroy ethnic groups territory).

## **Cluster 2: Tsihombe, Beloha and Ambovombe-Androy districts**

This cluster is in the Androy region. The Antandroy are the predominant ethnic group.

The Antandroy ethnic group has recently recorded 206 lineages, 104 of which originate from Antanimora Atsimo and dominate the **Ambovombe-Androy** district, while 24 are officially in **Tsihombe**. The rest are distributed between **Beloha, Amboasary Atsimo** and **Bekily**. This information is essential to understanding the chain of command and power structure (and therefore the influences on local decision-making). Social norms are difficult to assess for the Antandroy ethnic groups. A group (clan or fokon-drazana) is strictly structured and hierarchical. Groups within them are also hierarchical. High-ranking authorities have their own territories, which makes it very difficult for the public administration to intervene in public affairs. Each district (Ambovombe-Androy, Tsihombe, Beloha) has its own dominant clans, its own rules, and regulations, and has developed different relationships with the state government over time.

The Antandroy ethnic groups have stricter community rules than others which prevent others from mixing with them, although they do trade and other business with everyone. Many observers and interviewees have signaled their hope for inter-ethnicity, however the circle of Antandroy ethnic groups appears to be impermeable. They are perceived as distinct and other ethnic groups find their social norms and internal regulations difficult to accept (rules are imposed individually rather than agreed as common practice between two ethnic groups). Clan divisions persist even in migration. Mutual aid is only for clan members, and they ignore outsiders. There are three main communes where migrants



from different ethnic groups from central Madagascar live: Beloha (the district capital) is home to Betsileo migrants, Tranoroa is home to Merina migrants and Marolinta is home to Mahafaly migrants. The rest of the territory is occupied by Antandroy.

In **Ambovombe-Androy**, traditional leaders called Hazomaga have authority in social and traditional matters, but they do not intervene in the "formal" political sphere. A fokontany corresponds to a clan, and all fokontany belong to the three dominant lineages:

- Andriamanarina (the most influential in terms of tradition and customs)
- Tedogne
- Tagnalave

In **Tsihombe**, the Sahamena sub-group dominates the political arena and the other two sub-groups (a peculiar and remarkable fact for Tsihombe) abstain from any participation in public actions.

### **Cluster 3: Taolagnaro and Amboasary Atsimo districts**

This cluster is in the Anosy region. Two main ethnic groups are dominating: Antandroy and Antanosy.

**Amboasary Atsimo** is still dominated to the south by Antandroy, to the north by Bara and the rest of the territory by the minority of Antanosy. A few renowned families from Amboasary Atsimo have held positions of formal power in public administration for at least four generations in Taolagnaro, the capital city of Anosy region, and combined with "karana" (South Asian origin) and "vazaha" (white) business corporations such as Deholme (owner of Berenty reserve and sisal industries). Today, companies in the spice and mining industries owned by foreign nationals constitute the economic and social landscape of the Amboasary Atsimo district and in extenso the Anosy region.

**Taolagnaro** is home to Antanosy but, as mentioned above, they live in rural communes and the capital-city is cosmopolitan with Malagasy of foreign origin (Indian, Chinese, European) and other ethnic groups working in big corporations and public administration.

### **Cluster 4: Vangaindrano and Befotaka districts**

This cluster is in the Atsimo Atsinanana region. It is mainly composed of the Antesaka ethnic group in Vangaindrano and by the Antesaka and Bara ethnic groups in Befotaka.

**Befotaka** is the western district neighboring the Isandra (of Betroka and Fianarantsoa districts). Of the nine communes that make up the district, only three are accessible by primitive road, namely Befotaka, Antaninarenina and Beharena. Two main ethnic groups live together in the district: the Bara and the Antesaka. The Bara preceded the Antesaka and an agreement was made with the elders for peaceful coexistence. In fact, the Bara Zafindravala are the first ethnic group to settle in Befotaka. They have several sub-ethnic groups. The Antesaka Rabelaza (Rajanga, who is still alive, is the highest ranking of this ethnic group) came and made a deal with the first settlers who went further west. After the Chief of District (state representative), Ranjanga is the most influential person in the district and is highly respected throughout the district. Ethnic groups apart from the Bara and Antesaka are the Antemanamboro (from Manambondro - Vangaindrano), Antanosy (from Amboasary Atsimo), Betsileo (working on the opening of road from Vangaindrano to Befotaka), and Merina (involved in trade in the Befotaka capital city).

Nowadays, and for the last three decades, Antesaka is the dominant ethnic group in the capital city of Befotaka district. However, the Bara ethnic group is consulted for important decisions. Previously, these two traditional authorities nominated and decided on the elected officials (mayor and municipal council) in the chef-lieu of Befotaka and most communes in rural areas. This rule has now been overturned and it is up to the elected officials to consult the traditional leaders or not. Their excessive isolation from the rest of the district creates a particular power structure and authority. The local community relies more on its own rules than on formal regulations.

In **Vangaindrano**, there are eight kings for three clans, due to divisions within each traditional leadership role:

- Zafimananga: The ruling leader lives in Avaradrano (north of the Menagnara River). He has delegated the power of administration to a person who lives in the town of Vangaindrano
- Rabehava: There is a cold war between the brothers. The ruling leader (illiterate) delegated his power to his educated younger brother who became very well known to the public, but he abused his power and was disowned by the community
- Zafimahavaly: the descendant of the ruling traditional leader has delegated power to his brother, who is not recognized by the other brother

The next demarcation corresponds to the communes, each of which is headed by a leader called a Mpanjaka. Each fokontany is then headed by a lonaky. Each lonaky has equal influence and weight over his territory/community. Their influence is limited to their territory, but they look for ways to extend their influence outside.

#### **Cluster 5: Vondrozo and Farafangana districts**

This cluster is in the Atsimo Atsinanana region. It is mainly composed of the Antefasy, Zafisoro ethnic group in Farafangana and several sub-groups of Antesaka ethnic group in Vondrozo and the southern part of Farafangana, close to the border of Vangaindrano.

In **Vondrozo**, the dominant ethnic group is the Sahafatra, a parent ethnic group of the Antesaka. The sub-ethnic groups are divided as follows:

- In the north, there are the Terenaña and the Asoro and Tanala sub-ethnic groups
- In the east, the Vihilakatra and Marinarivo sub-ethnic groups predominate
- In the west, there is the Asoro sub-ethnic group
- In the south, the Antesonjo and Atsaretsy sub-ethnic group predominate
- The capital, Vondrozo, is dominated by the Tevongo (the most influential), Tevatobe and Masitafika. They share the same identity through the taboo of the hedgehog. Another taboo is that children should not be fed from another woman's breast. Most of the population in this commune is still from the Antesaka sub-groups. There are a few migrants from Mahafaly and Antemoro. The sub-group is called Vihilakatra and has several sub-clans and lineages, but they share an identity through the taboo of the hedgehog

In **Farafangana**, the Antevato and Zarafañiliha are dominant in the southern part of the district. They are a subgroup of the Antesaka, the ethnic group that dominates the entire district of Vangaindrano,

Midongy Atsimo and Befotaka. They have long been in a power struggle to establish their authority over the local community. The Antevato are newcomers and they are poorer – they work for the firstcomers. Currently they have a fragile balance of power. The division is clearly defined by the territorial boundary in Ankarana, the chef-lieu. Traditional leaders guarantee this clear and inviolable boundary. Even inter-group marriages are not allowed. But the Antevato are more dynamic than the Zarafañiliha, who are now in decline. The center of the Farafangana district is a mixed zone of Betsileo and Merina migrants. They turn to the public administration to resolve conflicts. The Antefasy ethnic groups are concentrated in the five municipalities around the district center. The Zafisoro are concentrated in the 11 communes in the north. The Rabakara are concentrated in the extreme south of the district. The Sahavoay are concentrated in the four communes in the west of the district. The Zarimanaby, Zarafaniria and Antevato are concentrated in the southern part of the district.

In fact, Farafangana is divided into a few homogeneous communes, which demand autonomy. They are:

- 10 communes: Etrotroka, Tovoña, Iabohazo, Ambalavato Antevato, Ihorombe, Ankarana, Mahabo, Efatsy, Antseranambe, Fenoarivo are asking for a district, of which Ankarana will be the chef-lieu. They are more likely than not to be successful. The three main sub-ethnic groups are Zaramañampy, Zarafañiliha and Antevato
- Zafisoro communities: Evato (probably the chef-lieu), Beretra, Mahafasa, Ambalavato, Ambohigogo, Maheriraty, Ambalatany, Ambohimandroso
- Antefasy communes: the remaining communes for which Farafangana will remain the chef-lieu

## Annex F: Description of foundational factors impacting food security in Madagascar

### *Agriculture*

There are two main challenges around agriculture in the focus regions: erratic rainfall and inadequacy of hydro-agricultural infrastructure; and socio-economic factors related to education, and poor agricultural practices and customs.

#### **Erratic rainfall and inadequacy of hydro-agricultural infrastructure**

The fundamental factors of food insecurity are soil quality and lack of water for agriculture and livestock. The limited availability of arable land limits production capacity. Much of the land in the Southern region is limestone, and the amount of arable land is gradually decreasing. The soil becomes less permeable due to excessive drought, leading to erosion and nutrient depletion, and increasing households' vulnerability to climate change. In 2021, communities reported a 53% reduction in arable land (IMF, 2022). For the areas that can still be cultivated, low and unpredictable rainfall affects agricultural prospects and production (WFP, 2022). If there is enough rain, households can produce enough to be self-sufficient, but periods without rain force them to seek additional sources of income to buy food or resort to adaptation measures to survive (IOM, 2022). Water scarcity is increasing and access to water is necessary not just for survival but for livelihoods in the Southern region. Rivers are drying up for parts of the year, and people must access underground water sources. The heavy reliance on agriculture affects the groundwater quality and since 2002 only 30 percent of water points have been available (Healy 2017). The situation and the response vary from one district to another.

In Vondrozo, for example, the land is fertile. This is proven by the fact that coffee, ginger, rice and baie rose are cultivated in the district without the use of fertilizers. Vanilla grows in the remaining forest in the commune or in the zoloke (a kind of agroforest near the villages). Fellow farmers are willing to lend land crops for short periods, but due to lack of equipment it is difficult to expand land crops and will demand substantial labor. Being hungry most of the time is the main constraint to engaging in manual labor. This is also the case in Ambovombe, where agriculture is still a decent source of income for small-scale farmers, even with erratic rainfall, because there is a large area of fertile land. Households store seeds in anticipation of seedling failure due to lack of rainfall. They do not have to spend too much on safe drinking water (100 Ariary for 20 liters compared to 2,000 Ariary for 20 liters in some places). If poverty is measured by the lean period encountered by households, it is still associated with erratic rainfall in the Grand South. Households eat less diverse food during that time, and the poorest eat wild food.

The staple food of the Antandroy ethnic group is either cassava or maize, which is usually cooked with milk, meat, and peas and/or beans, salted and sweetened. Rice is very rarely eaten by the majority because it requires a different way of cooking. Those who do not receive remittances from migrant relatives are qualified as the poorest. Poverty is difficult to characterize according to the standards applied to others, because Antandroy households encountering a severe lean period may still have cattle. In Bekily, nicknamed the "food basket" of Androy region, some communities are at risk of food insecurity due to lack of water. Bekily's Menarana river needs a dam to irrigate a large area of land crops, which is repeatedly promised by political leaders. Wells for safe drinking water are numerous but filled with sand. They provide enough water for human beings but not for agriculture and livestock. The

most vulnerable areas are in the south, near Ambovombe Androy, and in the west, near Beroroha and Ampanihy, such as the communes of Bevitika, Beteza, Etsikolaka and Bekitro. However, Beraketa and surrounding areas have irrigation infrastructure and are better off. In general, rain-fed agriculture is by nature seasonal and small-scale farmers organize their activities according to the season and adapted crops. Much more erratic rainfall leads to very low yields and reduction of the number and type of food and cash crops. Small-scale farmers prefer drought-tolerant crops and abandon water-demanding crops such as rice and beans, which in consequence have a higher price.

In the Atsimo Andrefana region, even though there are large areas that could potentially be cultivated, erratic rainfall has significantly reduced crop yields over the past decade. "Seasons are not delineated sharply anymore": people observe either a prolonged dry season or a short and torrential rainfall during the rainy season. Farmers are the most affected who rely on slash-and-burn food crop cultivation, small irrigated rice fields, small agroforests of banana trees, litchi and mango trees, and coffee trees. Traditional food preservation (drying) is not sufficient when the drought lasts more than two years. The same goes for Taolagnaro in the Anosy region, where malnutrition is caused by reduced yields due to erratic rainfall and the lack of income-generating activities for the rural population, who are landless or exploit small plots of land. Local people have developed typical coping strategies such as water storage. In Ambovombe district, some communes were producing beans and lentils but abandoned these high-value crops and produced more drought-tolerant crops such as cassava, sweet potatoes, and peas ("pois de terre"). With failing crops, the price of drinking water is increasing too. A typical family living in this area must have a minimum of 7,000 Ariary a day for three main items: firewood, water, and two bowls of rice. These areas need better water management, which has been sought for decades without success. The hydro-agricultural network in the south is inadequate and in need of rehabilitation. This poor access to water sources and irrigation equipment means that farmers rely almost exclusively on short rainy seasons, which limits the yield of cultivated land (Fayad, 2023). An irrigation system will make it possible to increase agricultural production and improve income and food availability for the local population. Hydraulic infrastructures (even small ones) have proved to be a solution in the past. As an example, Ampanihy has a small dam built for safe drinking water, cattle, and crop irrigation. Since the dam was broken and not repaired, water is becoming more precious and pricier for households. Repair has been proposed to project actors in Ampanihy but none of them are in favor of undertaking the work.

Additionally, pests and infestations are further limiting agricultural production, particularly of maize, sweet potato, rice, and cassava (IMF 2022). This is the case in Vondrozo district where the decrease of food crop production is related to rats (most likely linked to deforestation – there are no bats anymore to eat the rats), theft, persistent drought, strong wind (even outside of the tropical cyclone season) and lack of mitigation or adaptation practices (drought-tolerant crops). In this district, the local population needs to carry out a weekly rat-disinfestation.

### **Socio-economic factors related to education, poor agricultural practices, and customs**

In the Southern and Southeast regions, the level of deprivation is positively correlated with the strong prevalence of large households (Fayad, 2023). This is also a factor in food insecurity and modifies the modeling of poor households. In Befotaka district, for example, the poorest in the community are large households with more than 20 people. Family size is increasing, but crop yields are not following suit. As

a logical consequence, living standards have gradually declined. Having many children is a recent practice that began in the early 1980s, when a woman began to have more than 10 or 12 children. Their parents had an average of 5 or 6 children. In Vangaindrano, poverty has been evident since 1995, due to a decrease in arable land per household due to the fertility rate (more than 10 children), an increase in female-headed households (because of male migration), and women's lack of access to land. For the other areas, such as Vondrozo, demographic growth is no longer a challenge, since a sharp decline in the female fertility rate is observed, but the main problem is the low quality of education, which creates a non-rational mentality and behavior. In Vangaindrano, low productivity is linked to resistance to modern techniques: although farmers are eager to attend agricultural training courses, they are reluctant to apply them because they consider the costs (time, labor) to be too high. Unsustainable farming practices lead to soil degradation and erosion and reduce crop yields. During harvest periods (rice in June, coffee in July-August, cloves in September-October-November), households prioritize spending on off-farm investments and social events rather than food storage. The low productivity of food crops (rice and cassava) forces the local population to import these foods from Fianarantsoa, which increases their price during the lean season.

Taboos and other customs strongly influence household behavior in adopting agricultural innovations or other innovative practices. Lack of financial education and pressure from community customs are also reasons for food insecurity. In Ambovombe, customary norms are based on taboos or 'fady' - prohibitions related to agricultural practices are the most common. As an example of beliefs and customary norms impacting food security, in the Mandrare valley in Amboasary Atsimo, Ambovombe, Tsihombe and Beloha people do not dry sweet potatoes. It is a practical taboo related to the land rather than a spiritual taboo pertaining to the ethnic group. According to their ancestors, drying sweet potatoes prevents rain from falling and dried sweet potatoes usually develop moisture and spores. This is why the Antandroy sell their entire produce (even when the harvest is good) at a very low price, because it is perishable. In Ampanihy, beliefs are rooted in the environment and then translated into collectively accepted practices (or norms). Most of the time these beliefs are related to the natural elements that influence agriculture, livestock, and human health. There are places where it is forbidden to plant and eat ground beans (pois de terre) or to introduce goat's milk. Beliefs in the Grand South and linked to the Antandroy ethnic group are mostly related to water. For example, some rivers are taboo for the planting of a specific crop: land crops become salinated, or water flow decreases and disappears.

#### *Drought and sandstorms*

People have specific names for the kere period in Androy, as they name tropical storms (Table 3).

Table 3. Cycle of kere in the Androy region (includes predictions for future years)

Precipitation/ Name	Recurrence (years)	First recorded	1986	1991	2002	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
47 mm for 15 months	6	1902-1903												
650 mm, drought, and cochineal	25	1928												
391 mm	3	1931												
293 mm – Kere Mozatse	12	1943												
160 mm for 20 months – Kere Marotaolana	5	1948-1949												
118 mm for 17 months – Kere Betsimeda	10	1959-1960												
26 mm for 11 months – Kere Zara mofo	10	1970												
Kere Santira vy	10	1980-1982												
Kere Tsy mitolike	3	1985-1986												
90 mm en 19 months – Kere S.O.S ou Hesoheso	5	1991-1992												
Kere	11	2003												
Kere Arikatoke	4	2006												
499,4 mm for 28 days	8	2014												

Data source: Mahatante et al. (2015)

The Southern region has experienced a prolonged period of droughts since 2019, with the worst one in the last 40 years occurring in 2022 (Fayad, 2023). Several kere cycles, such as *Santira vy*, coincided that year. These droughts reduced agricultural production and left more than 1.6 million people food insecure (ACAPS 2022). The timing and symptoms of this phenomenon vary from district to district and cannot be generalized across the region.

In Ambovombe district, according to local people the last kere episodes were in 1986 (which seems to coincide with *Tsy mitolike* and *Hesoheso*), 1991 (which seems to coincide with *Mozatse* and *Tsy mitolike*) and 2002 (which seems to coincide with *Santira vy* and *Hesoheso*). During these periods, crop and livestock failures are at their worst, and the local population is at the edge of survival, with all coping mechanisms exhausted. After the 2002 kere, many households were unable to recover and fell into the spiral of prolonged lean periods and chronic malnutrition that is wrongly called kere by some. *Tiomena* – the wind from the ocean bringing ochre-colored sand – regularly covers all land crops and destroys seeds. Cash and food crop production fail every year. As a direct consequence, income diminishes, food is scarce, and every household enters into coping practices (reducing food diversity and quantity per day, shifting income-earning into small commerce, migrating, fishing, hunting as far as possible, etc.). While women can adjust quickly by engaging in commerce or doing other domestic work in Ambovombe



and Fort-Dauphin, men, who are used to being the main income provider, are desperate and feel useless in the community and their own family.

In Beloha district, the effects of drought vary according to household location, on the coast or inland, or near rivers or other surface water. Scarcity of water is the fundamental cause of crop failure that leads to food shortages. Farmers have for long expressed a need for water infrastructure to improve their living conditions. The land area is vast, but water is lacking to stabilize crop production and improve livestock, in particular water for herding cattle. In one village, the local water source is 3km from the village during the rainy season, 10km away (where it can be purchased for 1,000 Ariary per 20 liters) during the dry season, and more than that during prolonged drought. Children are responsible for fetching water. When drought is prolonged, there are no alternatives as the area is landlocked: young people and men (heads of family) migrate to Toliara or Taolagnaro, for low-skilled jobs. Otherwise, they remain in the village and eat alternative foods, such as red prickly pear (*Opuntia stricta var stricta*), which is a sign of food insecure households.

In Tsihombe district, droughts resulting from a reduction in rainfall are perceived as normal. Kere was experienced during the colonial era (which deconstructed the social and environmental ecosystem) and has worsened since, becoming more frequent and intense, and settling into a chronic and extended annual lean period. According to the population, the mounting intensity of *Tiomena* (sandstorms) is the most important cause of crop failure. The impact of these storms is detrimental to agriculture and livelihoods (ACAPS 2022). During this period, prickly pear (that adapts to the drought condition and does not fail although winds get stronger) remains the most common alternative food. When the people foresee that the food shortage will worsen, they save enough to migrate.

Antandroy ethnic groups live in the driest part of the territory and have less access to water irrigation than the rest, while the territory bounded by Bara ethnic groups is much more prone to banditry and violence related to *dahalo* (organized zebu theft). Although there are no sandstorms in the other districts, drought is a problem for them too, but needs to be analyzed in the local context. In Vondrozo, there have already been five months in a row without rainfall, and ultra-poor people are eating kadado (coeur de palmier) which is a sign of pre-famine. In Ampanihy, prolonged drought and lack of economic opportunities are the main causes of kere, which mainly affects smallholder farmers. The timing is not the same for all communes, but it could have a boomerang effect on the whole district. In Taolagnaro, the concept of kere is confused and used indiscriminately: it is generally associated with food shortages between the harvest seasons of January-February and August-October. It affects only a few areas (pockets), not the entire district, which is highly productive. The most likely kere situation in Taolagnaro occurred in 2016, when El Niño exacerbated the previous year's drought. Deaths due to famine were also recorded in other districts such as Ambovombe, Amboasary, Tsihombe, Ampanihy and Beloha. Similar cases had already occurred and were known to the local population, but the news spread more quickly and was amplified by the many media outlets that reported it.

### *Cyclone, flood, and erosion*

In Vangaindrano district, the local population pointed to an increase in the number of poor households, particularly farmers, in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Gretelle in 1997. Strong winds and devastating floods caused severe losses of food stocks and a serious problem with the road network due to poor infrastructure, aggravated by mud and blocked by fallen trees (UN DHA, 1997), and led to one of the

most significant migrations. In fact, regular migration is driven by the lack of economic opportunities for smallholders, but there are also mass migrations following climate shocks such as tropical cyclones or locust invasions, as well as pressures resulting from the impossibility of logging in protected forest areas or the scarcity of natural resources (timber, marine and inland fisheries) and the collapse of high-value crops such as cloves and coffee in the past.

In Farafangana district, farmers are mainly poor and face lean seasons from August to November and in April after the cyclone season. Tropical cyclone Gretelle in 1997 negatively affected agricultural production, but most households were able to recover. Food shortages were further exacerbated by tropical cyclones Batsirai and Emnati in 2002. The district has not experienced levels of climatic hazards similar to these in the last five or six decades.

In Vondrozo district, the agricultural sector collapsed after tropical cyclone Gretelle (1997). Most small-scale farmers have not recovered, and there has been no safety net program to restart agriculture (labor, seeds, transport).

In Befotaka district, the price of rice rose as high as 7,500 Ariary per kilo – the standard price is 2,800 Ariary per kilo – in the aftermath of the cyclone. This happened because merchants closed their doors for a few weeks after the local population received food as part of the emergency response. When they reopened, they inflated all prices. The very poor road conditions are the main driver of poverty in Befotaka, and the source of power imbalance.

#### *Poverty and food insecurity in each region*

Poverty is associated with food insecurity in the Southeast region. Compared to the Southern region – where food habits are very frugal, but some people may have assets and wealth – in the Southeast region food-insecure households have none and live on a daily wage. The situation is worse in the northern part of Taolagnaro district (the commune bordering Vangaindrano and those communes that have invested heavily in spice value chains such as baie rose) and the entire Atsimo Atsinanana region (Vangaindrano, Farafangana, Befotaka, Vondrozo and Midongy Atsimo districts). Poor socio-economic characteristics depend on the source of income or employment, which is worse in rural areas. In rural areas, poor households earn a low daily wage, around 3,000 Ariary per day in Vondrozo, which is not enough for a family. These people are poorly dressed and are not seen much in public. They cannot pay for health care in primary health centers, so they use decoctions. This also affects their eating habits, including the number of meals per day, the type of staple food, the number of days per week or per month without a meal, and the months with food shortages. Typically, food shortages occur in the months of February-May and September-November. When rich households eat their fill three times a day and have extra food to sell, poor households hunt for wild foods such as jackfruit, breadfruit, rengirotro, veho veho, coeur de palmier, hazolo, ringilitra, viha, hofiky, and so on. Some of these are poisonous and require careful preparation. In Bekily, poor households have cassava, sweet potatoes, and maize, but lack meat and milk.

In urban areas, poor households are characterized by their clothing: with no shoes and torn clothes, they beg in one way or another in the street or back street. Poverty is not related to specific ethnic groups or clans. Poor households should be identified ahead of any programming with a set of socio-economic variables rather than recording them from declaration (which is presently the case). They can

also be recognized by their crumbling houses, built with local materials, and poorly equipped, while wealthier households have stronger and nicely built houses. This is imposed by social norms – they have to show their wealth to be recognized.

In fact, the precariousness of households is the result of unsustainable strategies and an unsustainable economic environment, which affect the efficiency of their activities. An average household resorts to many activities to generate income, and agriculture, livestock, and trade account for the largest share of disposable income (Fayad, 2023).