

## Turning the page of the Covid-19 related crisis

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**10 cool things**  
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# What's AmCham Madagascar ?

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

AmCham's mission is to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# Turning the page of the Covid-19 related crisis



**Marc Gérard,**  
IMF Resident Representative  
for Madagascar

■

**The current crisis should provide the impetus to put the country on track towards achieving the level of social and economic development that Malagasy people deserve."**

The past year has been challenging for Madagascar. Instead of an expected 5 percent growth in 2020, the gross domestic product (GDP) experienced a contraction of more than 4 percent following the external shock caused by the Covid-19 pandemic on tourism and trade flows, compounded by the impact of confinement measures on domestic activity. The economy is forecast to pick up in 2021 to reach a growth rate of about 3.2 percent, which would gradually increase in the outer years. Yet the social consequences of the pandemic have been severe in the absence of social safety nets, with income losses estimated to have pushed almost 1.4 million people into poverty (living with less than US\$ 1.90 per day), bringing the poor to represent more than 77 percent of the population. In the South, protracted adverse climatic conditions have put about 1.35 million people at high food insecurity risk.

In this context, decisive policy action is urgently warranted to alleviate the hardships of the population and sustain a still fragile economic recovery, including through fully mobilizing the 4.5 percent of GDP emergency financial assistance disbursed by donors last year – more than half of which from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

On the social front, budget transfers to the health and education sectors have not been entirely executed and represent 0.7 percent of GDP, below levels observed in other low-income countries. An encompassing strategy awaits implementation to tackle the humanitarian crisis in the South. On the economic side, the central bank relaxed financing conditions in a timely manner to support the private sector and the flexible exchange rate regime played its role as a 'shock absorber' to protect external competitiveness, but widespread unemployment remains a challenge. In part due to logistical disruptions, public investment execution has fallen short of expectations, including to upgrade vital road infrastructure. Overall, increased spending in human and physical capital is critically warranted to boost potential growth and achieve progress towards development objectives.



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In this context, the three-year reform program recently agreed upon between the government of the Republic of Madagascar and the country team of the IMF, still to be endorsed by its Board of Directors, represents an opportunity to address pressing social needs and strengthen the economy.

To this end, a first policy priority of the authorities consists in enlarging the fiscal space for much-needed spending in the health and education sectors, and for public investment. In turn, this objective requires to significantly increase domestic revenue, which currently stands below African standards at less than 9 percent of GDP, through reducing informality in the economy and fighting against fraud on customs duties and domestic taxes. Given scarce budget resources, some restructuring of loss-making state-owned enterprises such as JIRAMA or pricing reforms in oligopolistic markets such as in the fuel distribution sector also need to be undertaken to limit non-productive budget transfers.

A second governmental priority included in the program consists in improving governance to harness support for reforms from the public. This involves enhancing transparency on the use of public funds, building on some recent progress made to account for Covid-19 related spending, to reassure donors and strengthen social cohesion. It also requires stepping up the fight against corruption by effectively implementing the existing anti-corruption legal framework, as well as safeguarding the financial means and independence of the anti-corruption agencies. Lastly, some improvement in the business climate focused on ensuring that all businesses operate on a level playing field has been identified as the sine qua non condition to attract new

domestic and foreign private investment, a key to raise medium-term growth.

Lastly, the central bank is committed to continue improving the transmission channels of monetary policy, strengthening financial supervision, and fostering financial inclusion, hence access to credit, in a country where almost half of the population remains disconnected from financial services.

This policy agenda is ambitious and far-reaching, but the government has expressed its determination to implement it. Madagascar can also rely on significant strengths to overcome current challenges, starting with a hard-working and resilient population, sophisticated and globally connected elites, plentiful natural resources, and stunningly beautiful heritage sites. Thus, the current crisis should provide the impetus to put the country on track towards achieving the level of social and economic development that Malagasy people deserve.



**Marc Gérard,**  
IMF Resident Representative for Madagascar





## Fano Andriamahefazafy: “We should improve the targeting of the driving forces of economic growth.”

**K**ey economic sectors such as tourism and mining have been hardly hit by the economic impact of the sanitary crisis in Madagascar and worldwide. According to economist researcher Fano Andriamahefazafy, the country's economic recovery will largely depend on the sanitary parameter. Today, Madagascar is still in a state of flux.

### **Notable lack of visibility over the economic recovery**

The current economic crisis is the outcome of the sharp drop in domestic and international demands. Lockdowns, travel bans and restrictions everywhere in the world carried very severe consequences on our economy, especially on the tourism and hospitality sector, and the economic downturn at the national and international levels had significant impact on Madagascar's largest contributors to the GDP, including mining and services. However, the impact has been somehow counteracted by resilient sectors such as the agriculture sector. In the same way, households who can rely on supplementary economic activities are more resilient than those who do not. The crisis later touched the social and political spheres. In Fano Andriamahefazafy's opinion, the biggest issue that economic actors are facing today is a cruel lack of visibility, as only short-term approach has been adopted so far.

### **Economic recovery based on public contracts.**

The budgetary policy adopted by the government was intended to support the private sector through public contracts. However, it is debatable if the initiative does really support local economy, or if it promotes imports instead. For example, building materials used for roads and school constructions are generally imported.

Even though the government implemented an emergency plan and granted loans to salaried employees through CNaPS, Fano Andriamahefazafy explains that the available budget resources are limited.

In terms of monetary policy, the Central Bank of Madagascar was bound to adopt a prudent one. Madagascar has an outward-looking economy, a decrease of the policy rate would in fact boost external demand and generate inflation. Thanks to a prudent monetary policy, the Central Bank managed to contain inflation amid the pandemic.

### **The recovery will depend on the health situation.**

According to economist Fano Andriamahefazafy, Madagascar is now on track to start its economic recovery. However, it will depend mainly on how the sanitary situation evolves. Potential future lockdowns would be disabling for our economy. Madagascar can envisage a positive GDP growth of five percent like in 2019.

### **An appropriate economic policy to address the crisis.**

Fano Andriamahefazafy prescribes an economic policy which targets better the driving forces of economic growth. This means, the government should prioritize sectors like agriculture, agribusiness and food industry, services, mining, and tourism.

However, the beneficiaries of those measures must adhere to a performance contract. The contractual approach proved to have been efficient in Asian countries. The private sector should commit, for example, to not laying off staffs, or to creating new jobs and recruiting new employees. With a contractual approach, supported by a proper design brief, private companies should meet a performance requirement. Otherwise, the effect of the economic policy will be weakened.

 By **Kenny Raharison**



A top-down view of a meeting table. Several people are seated around the table, their hands and arms visible. On the table are various items: a laptop, a notebook with colorful sticky notes, a pen, a bottle of sauce, a small container of fries, a large bowl of fried chicken, a water bottle, and a KFC burger in its box. A red circular sticker with the text "it's finger lickin' good" is on the table. The background features three vertical red bars.

# Friendly MEETING with us







# Ivosoa Randria: It is the right time to rethink the way of doing things in the tourism and hospitality sector.

## In early 2021, where is the tourism sector now?

It is no secret that the sector relies mainly on international tourism. As soon as travel was banned in March 2020, the whole sector started suffering. Hospitality venues closed their doors. We have seen workers being laid off; others took a substantial pay cut. No concrete financial support has been provided by the government to touristic operators. The promotion of local tourism will not fully offset the income losses caused by the borders closure. Today, with "Miatrika COVID" led by the Confederation of Tourism of Madagascar, we focus on providing various trainings to tourism employees and indemnifying them as a compensation to the pay cut.

## On a more positive note, what opportunities has COVID-19 open the door to?

Let us see the glass as half full. A lot of people have gone partially unemployed but with hindsight, this is an opportunity for each one of us to grow as a person, to redefine our goals, to make good use of our time and question ourselves. It is the right time to set priorities and act accordingly.

It is the right time for tourism and hospitality professionals to rethink their way of doing of business, to bring new ideas and test proposals to improve their services and to get better prepared for the tourists' arrivals. For example, a restaurant can think of a better way of providing faster service or managing food inventories. National parks can consider virtual visits or produce documentaries showcasing our biodiversity.

In terms of recruitment, some people will remain in the tourism and hospitality sector while others will branch out in a new direction. It is the right time to develop new skills by taking online courses and doing trainings, and to get more flexible in terms of mobility. In Madagascar, 30 percent of job vacancies remain unfilled because recruiters struggle to find the right talents. It is the right time to reflect on what we want to achieve and make thoughtful decisions based on the opportunities available in Madagascar.

Despite the closures of restaurants and hotels, tourism and hospitality schools must make every effort to provide practical internship opportunities or propose concrete projects to their students.

I keep saying: **"let us place the human at the heart of our actions"**. Each one of us must make efforts at our level. In the absence of vaccination, let us keep respecting social distancing and maintain environments as safe as possible to reassure local and international tourists. We need to be conscious that everyone struggles in this fight, and it is the right time to show that we are humans, that we are supportive to each other, that we are selfless. By humans, I mean "me, you, our families and friends, colleagues, neighbours, everyone." We should not wait for the government or funders to help. Ask yourself: "What can I do today?"

## Your projections in the short term?

Madagascar cannot count on international tourism any time soon. We need to rely on local tourism and adjust our offers by proposing various travel packs and by extending the touristic season. However, this does not mean bargaining excessive low tariffs. We must act with ethics.

A reopening of our borders will undeniably affect airlines, exports, and imports in a positive way. However, with potential new variants of the virus, international tourists are more likely to stay cautious. The recovery of the sector will be done gradually; and hopefully, we will return to more normal levels in 2022.



Interview by **Kenny Raharison**

### About Ivosoa Randria :

Ivosoa is the Founder and Manager of CTHR Madagascar

*"I am convinced that each of us can act on our side to move Madagascar forward. For my part, I offer my skills to help people find decent jobs and use my expertise to help professionals or project leaders in Tourism and Hospitality sector improve their performance."*

*"Be the change you want to see in the world." – Mahatma Gandhi.*





# The delay on the implementation of the COVID-19 vaccines: its impact on the health and wellbeing of the Malagasy Population.

Since March 2020, COVID-19 has taken its toll on the Malagasy population in terms of morbidity and mortality. From the economic standpoint, lockdown measures shut down businesses, unemployment has skyrocketed, and poverty is rampant. Despite the weakness of the Malagasy health system and the lack of resources available at the beginning of the pandemic, the majority of the Malagasy health workers heroically honoured their oath to take care of the health of the population no matter the risk. Some of them have even lost their lives for the greater good.

Currently, the COVID-19 vaccines are being rolled out in most developed countries and some developing countries in Africa and the Indian Ocean. Moreover, a global initiative called COVAX led by the World Health Organization makes the COVID-19 vaccines available for health workers in a developing country such as Madagascar. However, there is a delay on the implementation of the vaccination in Madagascar compared to other African countries because of reluctance with regard to the safety of the COVID-19 vaccines, despite international evidence that proved how safe and efficient the vaccine is, with millions of people already getting the jab.

## What would be the impact of the delay of the vaccine roll-out on the wellbeing of the Malagasy population and health workers in a near future?

First, to eradicate a disease in a specific area, vaccinating the entire population remains the best-known strategy. This will help to cut the chain of transmission and to prevent new infections. Without vaccine, there is higher risk that the disease will persist for more years and take its toll on the population. Vaccine roll-out is particularly relevant when it comes to eradicating an epidemic and highly contagious disease. The more people benefit from the vaccination the higher the odd to eradicate the disease will be.

Secondly, vaccines are meant to protect people, especially vulnerable ones, against the severe form of the disease. Hence, if inefficiently unprotected, vulnerable people are at big risk to develop a severe form of the disease. That is why most developed countries rush to roll-out the vaccine to prevent waves of severe cases that can rapidly overwhelm their health system.

Thirdly, health workers are in the frontline to fight against COVID-19. They deserve to be well protected not only with Personal Protective Equipment, but also by allowing them to get vaccinated, the best protection to date. This could save lives of essential workforce in a situation of pandemic.

Finally, we feel the appalling economic impact of the pandemic. To prevent a global economic crash that will be fatal to a developing country such as Madagascar, every worker should resume their normal professional activities without putting their lives at risk every day. Vaccines remain the most efficient, the safest and the most sustainable protection for them.

To sum up, the delay on the implementation of the COVID-19 vaccine might impact negatively on the health and the wellbeing of the Malagasy population in the near future, and its impact on the Malagasy economy will be felt in the long run. Madagascar needs to act quickly to make COVID-19 vaccines available for those who need it as there is a fierce competition to supply every country.



### Sambatra RABEJAONA

Sambatra RABEJAONA is a Medical Doctor who holds a Master of Public Health from the University of Salford in Manchester. He has a strong professional background about Occupational Health, Public Health, and Epidemiology. He was a 2017-2018 Chevening scholar.





# Uncommon facts about exchange rates

**D**oes a strong currency mean strong economy? There is no perfect answer, but I would reply with "yes and no".

Some countries with strong currencies have a strong economy, but it is not always the case. Let us look at some data about exchange rates around the world.

Since more and more countries use floating exchange rates, most figures hereafter will change at any time.

■ One USD is worth 0.72 British pounds, however is it good evidence that the British economy is bigger than the US one? Probably not. Another example is, one USD is currently worth 0.30 Kuwaiti Dinar. Most economists would agree that Kuwaiti economy is not stronger than the US despite the high GDP per capita in Kuwait.

Let us keep going.

■ One South African Rand has the same value as one Lesotho Loti (Maloti in plural) and the same value as one Eswatini (former Swaziland) Lilangeni (Emalangeni in plural), but who would think that those two small countries have the same economic strength as South Africa? They may become the Switzerland of Africa someday, but not now.

While I was working in South Africa for twenty months and in Botswana for four months, I had the opportunity to use the Rand and the Pula – which is the currency in Botswana. The Pula is

a little stronger than the Rand: one rand is worth around 0.73 Pula or 73 Thebe – one Pula is divided into 100 Thebe. Most of us probably know that South Africa is among the top 3 economies of Africa and the only member of G20 in our continent.

Let me continue with some unbelievable facts about exchange rates in Asia and South America.

■ One USD is the equivalent of 42,105 Iranian riyals. Yes, it is more than forty-two thousand Riyals, but we complain when we exchange one USD for about 3,800 Ariary. Is our economy bigger than the Iranian's?

■ Here is another one – 1 USD is worth around 23,100 Vietnamese Dong. Remember that the Vietnamese economy is much stronger than ours – a GDP of 245 billion USD in 2018, however their money seems to be much weaker.

■ Last but not least, one USD is worth 1,872,262 Venezuelan Bolivar, and this is so despite Venezuela's proven crude oil reserves of 302 billion barrels, according to data from OPEC website.

If you are interested in knowing the top 10 weakest currencies in the world, just do a quick research on Google or Bing and you will be surprised to find out that our Ariary is not as weak as most people think.

■ Another surprise! We can buy one Japanese yen with just 36 ariary, in other words one Japanese coin has the same value as our coin or

coins. But here is the issue – the cheapest product in Japan costs about 100 yen. A couple of years ago, one of my friends gave me a few Japanese coins but I cannot even buy the cheapest Japanese candy pack with them.

■ Some people believe that gold reserves help keep a currency strong, however Uzbekistan who is in the top 15 countries having largest gold reserves in the world (332.5 metric tons), is among the 10 countries with weakest currencies. One USD is now worth about 10,500 Uzbek Sum. Additionally, Germany, France and Italy are in the top 5 countries with largest gold reserves by data from Statista, however one Euro is worth around 0.36 Kuwaiti Dinar.

Because of all these strange facts about exchange rates, 1 Ariary that seems worthless in our country, has the same value as 2.49 Laotian Kip, 2.79 Uzbek Sum, 3.77 Indonesian Rupiah, 6.05 Vietnamese Dong, 11.17 Iranian Riyals and 481.7 Venezuelan Bolivar. Our currency is stronger than the ones in those countries even if their economies are stronger than ours.

I chose not to talk about currency manipulation in this article because I believe there are not yet strict currency rules for all members of the World Trade Organization.

Now, you can see why the answer to my first question is "yes and no".

## Haingo Heriniaina Rajaonarison

has been the General Manager of Rajaonarison International since June 2009. His company provides translation, language training and QHSE inspection and audit to local and international organizations. He also teaches legal and business English at ESCM Business School. He has studied at LDS Business College and BYU Idaho.



# The strong and deep-rooted safety culture at QMM has paid off !

QMM has won the Rio Tinto 2020 Chief Executive Safety Awards for best overall asset. This prestigious and well-deserved award from Jakob Stausholm, Rio Tinto Chief Executive, recognizes the site's top safety performance.

In the very difficult and often distracting context of the year 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic, QMM demonstrated great safety leadership through hard work, dedication and resilience.

There are many other things to recognize for 2020 that led to this success:

- Leading safety maturity model
- Zero recordable injuries throughout the year
- Significant safety performance improvements over many years.
- Strong partnership with communities throughout COVID-19.





## Hery Rason: COVID-19, an opportunity to strengthen the management of public finances.

### Large amounts to combat COVID19 and mitigate its socio-economic impacts.

According to the IMF, approximately USD 9 trillion has been mobilized in the form of direct budgetary expenditures and global support mechanisms. Funding for response plans generally accounts for a significant share of GDP. It represents 1.5 percent of the GDP for Madagascar. Health-related expenditures are only the 4<sup>th</sup> largest component of the PMDU budget (Multi-sectoral Emergency Plan).

### Delay in setting up and operationalizing the COVID-19 response fund.

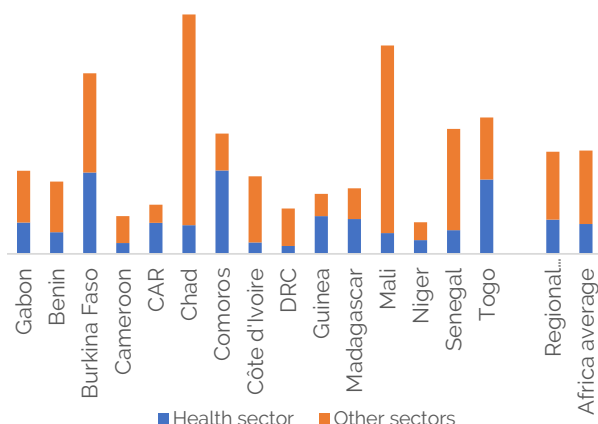
Following the civil society and donors' recommendations, a COVID-19 response fund was adopted in July 2020<sup>1</sup>. This fund refers to the resources dedicated to financing urgent actions in the fight against the pandemic. The operationalization of the fund depended on the establishment of the steering committee, which was only

operational eight months after the fund was passed by the Government Council. In the meantime, the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) published financial reports on the use of COVID-19 funds in December 2020<sup>2</sup>.

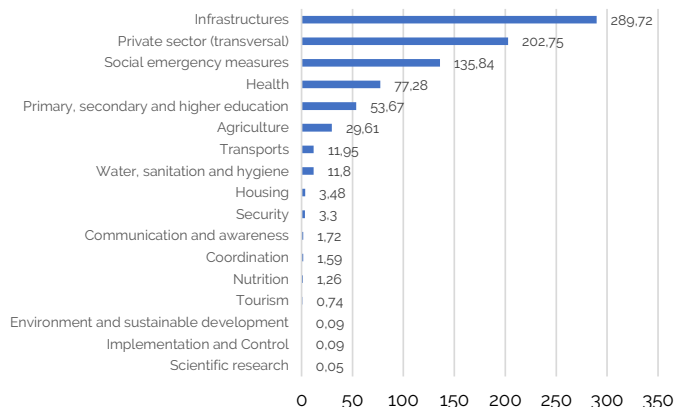
### Risks of corruption in times of health emergency

Articles 38 and 39 of the CMP<sup>3</sup> come into force: it is possible to award public contracts over the counter or in restricted tender in times of health emergency. The MEF's COVID-19 reporting recorded 124 public contracts which amounted 11 billion Ariary. Corruption scandals have been noted: the famous "candy" story within the Ministry of National Education and suspected favoritism in the allocation of materials and equipment. The Malina network recently broke the omerta on the juicy mask markets<sup>4</sup>. South Africa went through a series of scandals involving 600 corporate cases relating to contracts for the supply of equipment, social assistance and food distribution as well.

Budgetary expenditures (% GDP)



PMDU budget



1. Decree No.2020-725 creating the COVID19 response fund.

2. <http://www.mef.gov.mg/reportingcovid>

3. Public Procurement Code

4. <https://malina.mg/fr/article/omerta-sur-le-juteux-marche-des-masques-anti-covid->



## Measures to mitigate corruption risks

To mitigate these risks of corruption, it is interesting to take the following measures:

### *In the long term:*

- The revision of Law 91-011 of 18 July 1991 on exceptional situations;
- Mapping the risks of corruption specific to the health sector;
- Strengthening citizen participation;
- Implementing a law on the protection of journalists and whistleblowers and an Access to Information Act;
- Strengthening judicial control in emergencies (Supreme Constitutional Court (HCC), Court of Auditors and Administrative Tribunals) and interventions by anti-corruption institutions (BIANCO, SAMIFIN, PAC);
- Improving the synchronization of SIGFP and SIGMP (computerized system of public finance/contract management);

### *In the short term:*

- Identifying or pre-marking all expenses related to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic;

- Excluding non-COVID-19-related expenses;
- Strengthening the organizational framework for data consolidation between ARMP or Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (SIGMP), MEF and sector ministries;
- Better actors' involvement following the example of the CSI (Committee for the protection of integrity) and the State Inspectorate General;
- Continued transparency efforts through the publication of monthly financial reports on the use of COVID-19 funds.



**Hery RASON**, Executive Director of Ivory NGO, Advocacy Manager, STEF Project

Hery RASON is the Executive Director of the NGO Ivory, a social enterprise working to promote honest and effective governance (GIJE). Hery is currently working as part of the STEF project (Monitoring the Transparency and Effectivity of the COVID19 Funds) and representing civil society on the PMDU steering committee. He is particularly interested in respecting financial transparency in times of health emergency.







# How to face the post-Covid crisis: 4 tips you need to implement for your business.

New situations require new skills and new strategies. You, as a professional or business owner, need to be able to unlearn and learn within a short period of time. Either way, the tips I share here are all applicable and hopefully be impactful to your life.

**Tip 1: Sign up to some mini online courses from only seasoned experts with proven track record.** Not all courses are valuable. There are platforms offering peer-reviewed assessment from previous participants at an affordable cost with the most up-to-date tactics and strategies for business and personal development. To access these, you can buy debit cards at local telco outlets without even a legit bank account.

The qualities of courses available online can be way more useful than what regular brick-and-mortar schools offer for a semester (Trust me).

**Tip 2: Hire young interns.** It will save you a huge amount of money. Students want to learn new skills. They aspire to be coached. As an entrepreneur, I use these readily available dynamic local youth. There are so many activities that you teach and then delegate to these young folks. It allows you to focus on money-producing activities like building sales funnel, producing videos.

**Tip 3: Diversify your products or services.** You can mitigate risk by having a variety of income sources. It is now proven that depending on a single offering can be dangerous.

To do so, learn to build your business value ladder. It means you “**ascend**” with other and more valuable services or products to your existing clients. Here is a leading series of question to help you:

- Can you add complementary products or services? Do these new products/services help your customers speed up and automate your offer? If so, then they can be offered at a much higher price.
- Do you have suppliers who offer complementary services? If so, then approach them.

- Do you have in your networks people who have list of customers and with which you can partner to sell your products? If they can endorse you, it will cut years of market search.

- Change the environment when selling high-ticket products/services. Shift into in-person meeting after you introduce your products online.

**Tip 4: Re-evaluate your sales funnel.** Otherwise, build one if you do not have any.

To help you, **first put in place your email list of former buyers, followers, or fans.** You have to capture and nurture them through structured email sequences. List is a huge asset for any business. Learn how to convert through email and not just through social media. According to researchers, email has the highest ROI.

**Second, create actionable lead magnet through quizzes, videos.** There are tons of free contents you can learn from to acquire the skills you need most to pre-frame your dream buyers. Lead magnet is one of them. Also sell through video/Facebook live. It allows you to connect with your audience and to demonstrate your expertise.

**Third, improve your copywriting skills.** To stand out from the competition, write compelling storytelling. Storytelling is the most effective way to capture attention. Either through your posting on social media, your sales copy, your lead magnet, or your email you need to build up that skill.

The 4 tips shared above have been instrumental to many entrepreneurs and professionals. Much of the concept or principles may be new to some of you but believe me they are critical to your professional or business continuity. Test and apply these tips. You will see that you will be able to navigate the ongoing uncertain covid or post-covid crisis with the right and disciplined foundations.



By **Rija Rajemisa**

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# Faranah Feel Good: Challenge and change for Women entrepreneurs

**F**aranah Feel Good: Challenge and change for Women entrepreneurs

Challenging times are here and not ready to go. Today we are going through economic, social, and personal challenges as well as unprecedented upheavals in our lives and those of our loved ones.

## What can be done concretely in these situations over which we have no control?

Haruki Murakami, a famous Japanese writer says: *"Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional."*

We have no power over what happens to us, but we have total power over the way we deal with it, total power over what we tell ourselves about this challenge, and how we feel every day.

Let us take the example of Lana, a female entrepreneur hardly hit by the crisis. She runs a hotel in Nosy-Be, and her clientele made of 100% foreign tourists. Since the closure of Madagascar's borders, she had no customers, yet she must pay her fixed costs.

She has two options:

- To decide to believe that the crisis will lead her business to bankruptcy, that her life is a total mess, that the situation will affect



### Faranah Goulamaly

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her family life and on his mindset. She can keep complaining and telling herself that what is happening is unfair because without the crisis, she would have done very well. She can keep thinking that she is falling down as a victim of the crisis which is bringing down many other national and global economic operators as well.

- Or to decide to believe that NOTHING is standing in her way

but that everything is ON her way, that every situation makes us grow, that life is always at our service and that opportunities lie behind every challenge.

She can try to bypass the obstacles and find another path, to get up and bounce back.

## Which of these two beliefs will serve more Lana to build the life she dreamed of?

She has the full responsibility to regain her power and increase her energy in the face of any situation. And it starts with taking care of her thoughts. She is the only one who can decide whether she will stick to a thought or let it go. Only her has the power to make it a belief or not.

This is crucial. Depending on her beliefs, she will feel emotions that will compel her to take actions (or else she will not do anything at all), and it goes without saying that her results will be the direct consequence of her actions.

We are all challenged by the situation related to the COVID-19 in our lives, each at different levels.

Professionally some people are unable to continue their activity. They are waiting for the bad times to pass or to get better. But do we know certainly when this crisis will



---

end? What do we know about the consequences and scope of this crisis over the years or decades to come?

### Should we wait?

No way! Your life is now, and every minute is precious.

To act on the growth of a company, it is essential to act on the personal growth of its leader. I sincerely believe that when one person works frustration-free, allows him/herself to shine, staying him/herself, then he/she lives a fulfilling life filled with more confidence, more freedom, more meaning, more wealth, and more abundance at all levels. In these special times, I invite business leaders to renew and re-invent themselves, to rethink their activities and maybe even their career. I invite them to set a plan B.

It is not about taking over a business model that is no longer appropriate to a reality or the near future. There are new business development models.

I call on Women entrepreneurs to change their paradigm. I admit that it is not always easy, and it comes at a price. It requires willpower, courage, effort and invites us to question what we considered to be our truths.

### But how much does it cost to wait? Have you thought about the cost of inaction?

This is a very useful question to trigger the courage and resilience.

When they have the desire to take charge of their business and their life again, what I can do is share with women entrepreneurs some business and mindset strategies to build a growing business despite the

crisis. A company that will eventually be automated and will generate money without them having to devote all their time to it. For them to create a system that allows them to find the perfect balance between their ambitious careers and everything that matters in their lives. With a wide range of renowned and specialized coaches, we strive for women entrepreneurs to achieve their professional and personal goals through the **ATHENA training**.

This requires **serious introspection**. It requires to discover one's **genius zone**, whether it is apparent, buried or repressed.

When Women allow themselves to reveal their genius zone, they do not give it up, then we accompany them by giving them totally innovative tools to not only get out of the crisis situation, but also build a business that is at their service (and not the other way around!), a business that makes sense and generates impact on a larger scale, a business that lives up to their ambitions and talent, a business that suits them and that they will find pleasant to lead with all their heart.

I have heard bankruptcies, significant loss of income, depression, I have even heard domestic violence related to toughest tensions.

In fact, the answer does not necessarily lie in reading or analyzing the existing situation but in each of the interlocutors I have. The answer is in each of the women entrepreneurs we accompany through ATHENA business and mindset training because I lead them to ask themselves questions that are relevant to the challenges that lie ahead. These questions are

sometimes difficult and challenging, but they aim to open the field of possibilities, to allow them to discover what their Light is to them and to teach them to put this Light Power at the service of their lives.

### How?

Through

1. proven business strategies, but unknown of classic companies, and
2. a 360-degree framework for each client to acquire an unstoppable mindset. (Yes, mindset makes 80% of our success!)

But there is an old saying: that is the parallelism between the actions and the result.

I clearly tell my clients: *"With no magic wand, you can continue to complain and hope that life returns to normal, so I can do nothing for you despite all my willingness to train you. Or you can decide to be in charge of changing the game, and I would be honored to serve you and accompany you to your success in your professional project and in each area of your life."*

*Strategies keep changing and I am happy to share them with you but there is no miracle, not yesterday, today, or tomorrow. No action, no result: that principle is timeless and will never change. Take new actions to get new results and no longer act on who you were in the past, act and make decisions based on who you aspire to be, embody the You of the Future today, now!"*

 By Faranah Goulamaly



# Ambassador Michael Pelletier: “Madagascar needs new investment to kickstart its economy.”

Can Madagascar turn the page to a more prosperous future? The country's recent democratic transitions are cause for optimism that Madagascar can finally write a new chapter in its economic development. President Rajoelina's ambitious development plan, the “Plan Emergence de Madagascar” (PEM), outlines infrastructure development, private sector-led growth, the environment, and education as the key pillars of growth and prosperity.

Economic recovery will hinge on two key factors – the rate and amount of new investment (public and private, as well as domestic and foreign) and improvements in the business climate (both perception and reality) to attract this new investment. In the short-term, as world economies emerge from the COVID-related slump, there will be heightened competition for foreign investment from all quarters. Investors and lenders will assess the business and political risk factors at play. In Madagascar's case, these factors will include the government's willingness to invest in critical sectors, movement on stalled high-profile projects like Sahofika and Volobe, and whether there is a rules-based, transparent investment and regulatory environment that offers investors a level playing field to compete for contracts and respect for the rule of law and sanctity of contracts when disputes arise.



**Ambassador Michael Pelletier**  
U.S. Ambassador to Madagascar

Given the intense scramble for scarce funds and other resources internationally, public investment will likely have to lead the way, in particular investment in the priorities outlined by the government in the PEM and the Multi-Sectoral Plan. In fact, many of these public investment projects such as roads, bridges, water and power infrastructure and capacity, and environmental preservation, are foundational to future growth and attracting new private sector investment. The short-term success or failure to implement these ambitious projects will likely be the turning point for Madagascar's economy.

The momentum they will create – i.e., evidence that economic plans are actually being executed, that major projects are under way, that there is swiftness and certainty in

decision-making – is key. It will drive how the commercial world assesses Madagascar's business climate and will inform their calculations of the risk of doing business in Madagascar. The PEM's impressive growth estimates are predicated on success in raising investment from 21.8 percent of GDP in 2021 to 30.9 percent by 2023, and 36.4 percent by 2040, while halving its indebtedness from 35.4 percent in 2021 to 17.8 percent in 2040. Are such increases in investment doable? Certainly so, but only if the world is able to look at Madagascar and see a place where future investors are comfortable with the mid- to long-term risk profile and the returns they will receive on their investments.

## Increasing U.S. – Madagascar bilateral trade and investment

Few U.S. companies have established a beachhead in Madagascar despite its extraordinary resource-rich environment. Opportunities abound across sectors and U.S. companies could be natural partners for Malagasy entities. Madagascar should offer interested investors and businesses a clear pathway for entry, a well-delineated legal and regulatory framework, tender processes that meet international standards, and demonstrate a commitment to honoring prior agreements.

**Trade:** The United States became Madagascar's single biggest export



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market in 2018. Madagascar produces the bulk of the world's vanilla and exported close to 50 percent of the crop to the United States last year. Exports under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) such as textiles, spices, essential oils, and artisanal products are also crucial to Madagascar's export earnings. The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) and AGOA offer reduced duty or duty-free access to the U.S. market for over 7000 products. Since Malagasy exporters only utilize a small fraction of those options, the U.S. Embassy is supporting the government in identifying how Madagascar can take better advantage of these trade preferences.

**Mining:** The mining sector presents both opportunity and cause for caution. Madagascar is blessed with great mineral wealth, but there are currently no large American mining companies operating in Madagascar. The near ten-year pause in issuing new mining licenses and the inability to reach agreement on changes to the mining code has dampened interest among those considering entry into Madagascar. A mining code that reflects stakeholders' equities and provides predictability and transparency will create an environment that is more attractive to U.S. companies.

**Textiles:** Madagascar's textile sector is well-known for the quality of its workmanship and high-end finishing. Over 30 percent of Malagasy textile exports go to the United States. We believe Madagascar offers further potential for expansion for U.S. apparel companies which have found success by establishing local factories, partnering with local businesses, and identifying new suppliers to offset production cutbacks elsewhere.

Improved transportation and power infrastructure and realizing plans for an economic zone for textile manufacturers near the main commercial port of Toamasina would be powerful incentives to attract American apparel companies.

**Energy:** The government has highlighted the need for increasing power generation capacity and distribution through green energy solutions. Making this vision a reality would be a game-changer. U.S. green energy companies, component makers, and vendors of standalone solutions have significant competitive advantages. U.S. private equity firm Denham Capital is a major investor in the \$1 billion Sahofika hydroelectric project, which is expected to provide power to eight million new consumers. USAID, Power Africa, and the Southern Africa Energy Program have provided consultancy services to build technical capacity. As part of the U.S. government's effort to improve access to electricity in Madagascar, USAID/Power Africa recently awarded three local companies a combined \$1.2 million in grants to develop mini-grids to bring electricity to more than 5,200 rural homes and businesses. Such projects have only just scratched the surface of what is possible if we bring U.S. technology and ingenuity to address one of the most basic requirements for economic development – access to reliable electricity.

**Tourism:** Madagascar is increasingly a must-see destination for western tourists. Keeping in mind the need to preserve the country's fragile ecosystem and biodiversity, ecotourism options to visit Madagascar's national parks and beach resorts offer opportunities for U.S. investment. Though the tourism

sector has been devastated by restrictions on international travel, we anticipate there will be pent-up demand for travel to less-traveled places like Madagascar after the pandemic. If Madagascar can address its infrastructure challenges and arrange for better external/internal air linkages in the interim, the tourism sector will not only revive quickly, but also bring investor interest with it.

## **U.S. A partner-in-waiting**

Madagascar has faced many existential challenges since independence, but the country is nothing if not resilient. Time and again, the U.S. government has demonstrated our commitment to work with the Government of Madagascar and the Malagasy people like *mpirahalahy mianala*. We announced recently that the U.S. government will remain Madagascar's foremost development partner, investing more than \$490 million in development assistance over the next five years to help the Malagasy people and to drive Madagascar's journey to self-reliance. Not only is the United States the single largest donor to Madagascar in the health and sanitation sector, but we are also the single most important market for Malagasy goods. There is room for improvement – for example, we should and must improve the range and quantity of U.S. exports to Madagascar. Deeper commercial engagement should attract U.S. investors who bring capital, expertise, and experience to developing new innovative solutions to long-standing problems. If the investment climate improves and if Madagascar can show it is truly open for business, our two countries can be partners in kickstarting the Malagasy economy. **Mpirahalahy mianala isika; ianao tokiko, izaho tokinao.**





# What is going on at AmCham?

## AmCham's first Thursday Morning Round Table of 2021



The first TMRT of 2021 took place at Le Centell Antanimena on February 18, a way for AmCham members to meet again around the Chamber's monthly breakfast for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic.

This TMRT featured Mr. Eddy Kapuku, managing director of Airtel Madagascar, as guest speaker. He provided an overview of the impact of the pandemic on businesses and shared experience about how "to build business resilience during the pandemic".

## The American website was launched in October 2020.

The AmCham launched the digital version of The American magazine last October. The website offers daily articles covering various topics such as business, economy, education, Malagasy and American cultures, Malagasy and American touristic spots, social issues, and youth initiatives. As a collaborative platform,

leaders and experts are invited to share ideas dealing with the above topics. The project has been funded by the U.S. Embassy in Madagascar.

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 By Kenny Raharison

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## Upcoming trade shows in the United States

Here is the list of in-person trade shows expected to take place in the United States during the summer and fall 2021.

## Upcoming trade shows in the United States

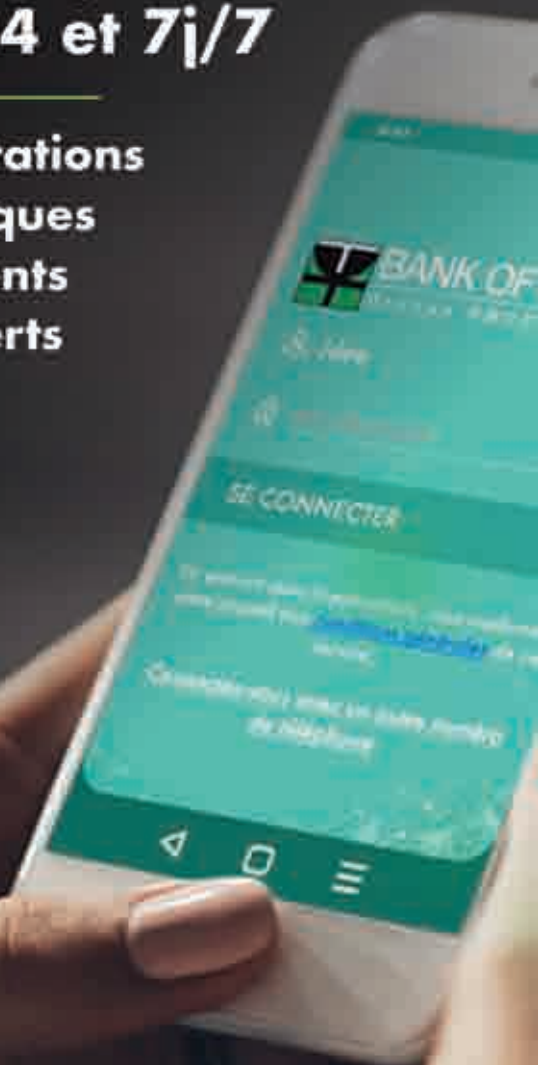
Trade show	Show dates	Venue	Targeted products
Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) Annual Meeting and Food Expo	July 18-21, 2021	Chicago, Illinois, USA	Food and beverages, food of the future
New York Now	August 8-11, 2021	Jacob Javits Center, New York City, New York, USA	Contemporary design: decorative accessories, home, wellness, luxury, stationery, handmade, and gift products
MAGIC Marketplace	August 9-11, 2021	Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA	Women's and men's apparel, footwear, and accessories, including handmade accessories.
COTERIE	September 19-21, 2021	Jacob Javits Center, New York City, New York, USA	Women's apparel, accessories, and footwear



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# International trade data:

## Madagascar's exports and imports (2016-2020)

Madagascar's exported value reached a peak in 2018 with more than three billion dollars. The same year, the United States was the first destination of Malagasy products, representing 20.8 percent of all exports. Both exports and imports saw declines in value for the last two years. Overall, Madagascar's trade balance remains

negative. Recorded deficit is estimated at 1,28 billion dollars in 2020.

The world aggregation represents the sum of reporting and non-reporting countries.

 Edited by **Kenny Raharison**

**Table 1: Values and destinations of exported products**

Importers	Exported value in 2016	Exported value in 2017	Exported value in 2018	Exported value in 2019	Exported value in 2020
<b>World</b>	<b>2,166,904</b>	<b>2,808,106</b>	<b>3,000,696</b>	<b>2,564,400</b>	<b>1,938,583</b>
France	522,194	633,584	614,030	525,724	447,419
United States of America	283,072	527,454	624,259	513,514	432,544
Germany	189,145	203,550	214,535	142,860	159,476
China	143,909	176,220	150,340	167,226	117,224
Netherlands	99,008	140,511	151,926	115,269	84,636

**Table 2: Values and origins of imported products**

Exporters	Imported value in 2016	Imported value in 2017	Imported value in 2018	Imported value in 2019	Imported value in 2020
<b>World</b>	<b>2,867,580</b>	<b>3,657,145</b>	<b>3,929,416</b>	<b>3,896,887</b>	<b>3,218,447</b>
China	628,795	754,473	828,035	874,580	817,331
India	191,105	272,106	253,306	314,866	275,332
France	204,636	247,558	271,590	261,716	231,442
United Arab Emirates	163,779	278,822	439,651	381,684	214,243
South Africa	144,746	190,936	222,914	175,039	133,862

**Unit:** USD dollar thousands

**Sources:** International Trade Centre (ITC) trade map (ITC calculations based on Direction Générale des Douanes de Madagascar statistics since January 2015)



**Table 3: Top 5 products exported by Madagascar**

Product label	Exported value in 2016	Exported value in 2017	Exported value in 2018	Exported value in 2019	Exported value in 2020
<b>All products</b>	<b>2,166,904</b>	<b>2,808,106</b>	<b>3,000,696</b>	<b>2,564,400</b>	<b>1,938,583</b>
Coffee, tea, maté and spices*	570,474	929,768	1,020,269	663,419	592,734
Articles of apparel and clothing accessories, not knitted or crocheted	239,502	291,177	268,023	268,338	205,942
Articles of apparel and clothing accessories, knitted or crocheted	222,040	232,990	220,194	217,251	183,927
Nickel and articles thereof	399,619	362,906	429,145	451,110	149,460
Ores, slag and ash	58,279	112,023	87,498	130,098	122,660

**Table 4: Top 5 products imported by Madagascar**

Product label	Imported value in 2016	Imported value in 2017	Imported value in 2018	Imported value in 2019	Imported value in 2020
<b>All products</b>	<b>2,867,580</b>	<b>3,657,145</b>	<b>3,929,416</b>	<b>3,896,887</b>	<b>3,218,447</b>
Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral ...	439,421	537,956	683,866	685,349	406,135
Machinery, mechanical appliances, nuclear reactors, boilers; parts there of	227,421	323,211	316,256	289,942	258,231
Cereals	93,807	252,575	244,341	164,293	204,735
Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories there of	180,140	289,340	245,229	281,525	188,210
Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers, television ...	140,758	190,207	211,145	180,897	160,210

**Table 5: Top 3 products exported by Madagascar to the United States**

Product label	Value in 2018	Value in 2019	Value in 2020
<b>All products</b>	<b>624,259</b>	<b>513,514</b>	<b>432,544</b>
Coffee, tea, maté and spices*	342,496	239,401	237,332
Articles of apparel and clothing accessories, not knitted or crocheted	95,710	110,531	80,129
Articles of apparel and clothing accessories, knitted or crocheted	46,467	55,612	46,243

(\*) Vanilla, cinnamon and cloves are included in this category of products.

Unit: USD dollar thousands

Sources: International Trade Centre (ITC) trade map (ITC calculations based on Direction Générale des Douanes de Madagascar statistics since January 2015)





## Soccer governance in Madagascar, a new breath awaited.

The world of soccer fascinates. Beyond the game that is played on a pitch are placed people, board members who direct the destiny of this global sport.

The Barea fairy tale in 2019 which illuminated the 25 million Malagasy people, and which continued to put the entire population on their feet, without wanting to take away the merit of the players and coaches, was also set up behind the scenes. It is undeniably the result of good governance, a vision and plans put in place a decade or more before.

Ahmad – President of the Malagasy Federation of Football (FMF) from 2003 to 2017, then member of the Executive Committee of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) from 2013 to 2017, and finally President of this continental body from 2017 to 2021 and Vice-President of FIFA during this same period – always wanted to put Madagascar and its football at the highest level possible. In his mission, members of the FMF Executive Committee who are as competent as they are influential in their respective fields accompanied him.

During the last 8 year, while Ahmad was sitting in the Board of CAF, Madagascar has experienced historic results: African beach soccer champion in 2015, first participation in a FIFA competition (Beach soccer World Cup) in Portugal in 2015, first participation in an AFCON in 2019, then ascension to the quarterfinals of the competition. Referees are booming and women's soccer is valued, to name just a few points. The facts speak for themselves. These performances were anything but a coincidence.

Dr. Raoul Arizaka Rabekoto, former Vice-President of the FMF and currently at the head of the latter, was also part of the Soccer Board in Madagascar, which has propelled local football to a high level, in particular through the generous but crucial involvement of the CNaPS, which he led at the time. Nathalie Rabe, a former Minister and the first female Director at CAF, or the former members of the Madagascar government Cyrille Reboza and Neypatraiky

Rakotomamonjy, were also part of this visionary and highly experienced team. There was a strong team behind Ahmad since almost ten years and who have contributed their expertise on how to apply a coherent governance strategy that is appropriate to the reality of the country. Rewarded, we have said it, by tangible results and performances.

However, today, all of this seems to be behind us. No Malagasy national will be sit on the Board of CAF for the first time in eight years. Besides, among the superb team behind Ahmad especially during his last two terms at the head of the FMF, only two remain active in the world of football: Dr Raoul Rabekoto, and Aurélien Andriamalazaony, CAF Security Officer and Advisor of the local national soccer league called "Orange Pro League".

The end of an era is approaching if it is not already recorded. But, who will succeed with all the pressure that this generates?

Currently, young people in Madagascar are gradually starting to get involved in management or even sports governance. Sports entities are beginning to "rejuvenate", including the federation, the clubs, and the Orange Pro League whose executive team is exceptionally young. In clubs in particular, administration and even coaching are entrusted to young people. Even the national coach also hired young assistants. Youth contribution tends to be valued earlier than it used to be in Madagascar.

Auspicious. Because governance and management require a diversity of skills and profiles, innovative ideas allied to the respective experiences of the people, but above all the passion and a certain consistency, which should constantly animate and energize the sector.

We will of course understand that the idea is not to brutally hit the elders. The goal is to perfect and optimize the transition time. We hear a very promising new wave that had the opportunity and the chance to be impregnated into the world of soccer very early on in order



to ensure some room for progress. This new promotion will emerge, and we hope that they will be as successful as the Ahmad, Raoul Arizaka Rabekoto, Nathalie Rabe, Patricia Rajeriarison, Doda Andriamiasaso, Theodore Rakotoarimino, and many more.

The present belongs to these young people. The future will judge them.

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

## Tip Corner

### You do not need to unplug to recharge.


We all need to take breaks to recharge. And while it is good to take screen-free respites, such as going for a walk or exercising, sometimes you just cannot step away from your device (or you just do not want to). The good news is that tech-based breaks can give you some of the same benefits as the offscreen variety, especially if you are able to include some combination of physical movement, social interaction, and brain stimulation. Here are some suggestions for ways to take a break without unplugging:

Try an on-screen workout class.

- Listen to an audiobook or podcast while finishing a chore or read an article or book on your phone.
- Call or FaceTime a friend, or even spend some time texting someone you have not chatted with in a while.
- Play a game. Research suggests that casual video gaming during a work break can reduce perceptions of stress. So yes, you can refresh and sharpen your brain with a little midday Words with Friends.

This tip is adapted from "Taking a Break Doesn't Always Mean Unplugging," by Alexandra Samuel

Source: **Harvard Business Review**



**"STAY FOCUSED AND DARE TO FACE STRUGGLES! THAT IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS."**

*Currently, as a Restaurant Manager, I am one of the youngest Entrepreneurs in Madagascar. Once I finished my studies, I immediately entered in the professional world. One of the assets that have shaped me to be who I am today is the spirit of challenge. I always enjoy to set goals and reach them no matter what to face.*

**Mickael RANDRIANASOLO**  
Manager  
Lotus Restaurant

*Surrounding myself with people who have positive vibes and a good energy has made my way to entrepreneurship as well. The most important result is that I love what I do and I am satisfied with what I have done so far. Certainly, the same goes for all who seek to assert themselves and find their place.*

**"You must fail to become stronger, if you are afraid to fail, you are on the right track, and success is not far."**



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# Nanie Ratsifandrihamanana: “Health crises: nature speaks to us!”

Many institutions attempted to link the current health crisis to environmental degradation. What are the links between pandemics and the environment?

This is what the book by Sonia Shah, a renowned science journalist, *entitled Pandemic\**, explains through evidence. The author goes back to history, those of medical science and human societies, to explain how past epidemics appeared and how human activities on the environment played a decisive role, although often poorly recognized.

To start, over the past 50 years, more than three hundred infectious diseases have emerged or re-emerged in places where they had not existed before. Years before the first cases of COVID-19 in Wuhan, 90% of epidemiologists predicted the inevitability of a new pandemic, caused by a known virus or a brand new one such as the current coronavirus.

Then we all carry a lot of microbes in us, so do all the other species. When these microbes remain in the body in which they evolved, they do not cause disease. Thus, neither Ebola nor coronavirus make bats sick. By contrast, they cause diseases in our bodies because they are new to us – they exploit a new habitat. The exchange of pathogens goes both ways – from animals to men and vice versa. According to Shah, our environmental policies have built shorter roads between us



and wild animals. By cutting down forests to build our cities, factories, or mines, we have destroyed the habitat of other species, sometimes even caused their extinction. Species that survive human action must be content with the remaining fragments of natural habitat or invade that of humans.

The first case of Ebola in 2014 was that of a two-year-old child in West Africa, who was playing near a tree where bats lived. These bats normally lived in the forest, but by escaping fire and saw, they came to perch in the trees near human dwellings...

The author also took the example of West Nile virus, a virus that comes from migratory birds in Africa. Ornithologists had known for centuries that these birds landed seasonally in North America, but the first case of fever did not appear there until 1999. For a long time, the species of domestic birds that met these migratory birds were diverse enough, including healthy populations of green woodpeckers and rattles, which are poor carriers of the virus. With urbanization, the diversity of birds has decreased, green woodpeckers and rattles have become increasingly rare and have been gradually replaced by crows and robins, which are generalist species capable to live in any type of degraded environment, and which are good carriers of the virus. That's how a mosquito could have bitten an infected bird and then a human being, and thousands of people are sick every year in North America...

The case of Lyme disease, an infectious disease that is transmitted by ticks, is another clear evidence. This disease first appeared centuries ago. The author links the spread of the disease in the United States to the creation of suburbs and the resulting forest retreat over the past fifty years. This forest retreat disrupted the balance of species composition, and possums and chipmunks that inhabited the forest were replaced by mice and deer. It turns out that a normal mouse destroys 50 ticks a week against a possum that destroys hundreds and hundreds a



week simply by grooming. Ticks had to find a new habitat and the disease spread across the United States...

According to experts, the current coronavirus came from bats and contaminated humans through an intermediate host that has not yet been identified but is suspected to have been found in the Wuhan live animal market...

To all this, we can add the impacts of climate change that, by disrupting the seasons and ranges of species, causing human migrations, may promote the emergence of new diseases or their reappearance in new and unprepared places. All this is made easier by the expansion of the global air network, the promiscuity of cities, the lack of sanitation in some cities, and so on.

Today our top and common priority is to defeat COVID-19, and I acknowledge the efforts made by the State, communities, the private sector, the civil society, citizens. Now we must get ready for the post-COVID-19. We need to understand that pandemics, like climate disasters, are linked to our huge ecological footprint on the planet. We have made extensive use of our natural resources and COVID-19 shows us today what the price is. For the future, we must renew our link with nature, respect the needs of other species, stop all illegal trade in species, preserve and restore natural ecosystems, preserve biodiversity. By protecting nature, we protect ourselves.



By **Nanie Ratsifandrihamanana**,  
Country Director, WWF Madagascar  
(\*) SHAH, Sonia. Pandemic: Tracking  
Contagions from Cholera to Ebola  
and Beyond. Ed. S. Crichton. 2016.  
288 p.



Copyright: WWF Madagascar



Kirindy Mite dense dry forest. Copyright: Cyrille Cornu.





# Adrienne Irma Crispin: What Covid-19 taught me.

Most people hate the year 2020. I would not discuss on their reasons. I would not judge them, but this is a fact. Of course, many people lost their businesses, many people died, many people lost their jobs.

I am grateful that it was not the case for me. 2020 was even my favourite year so far.

People would say: *"because you got married this year"*. Sure, that is one of the reasons, but the most important reason is that this was the year when I could be really proactive face to the situation.

2020 was a new beginning for me. The three previous years were tough. In 2017, I had to close my company AIR Connector because I lost more than 60 million Ariary. I was sexually harassed; I was betrayed by my collaborators and I committed suicide (long story!). In 2018 and 2019, I still learnt to re-live, and it was hard to get out of my comfort zone. During the last quarter of 2019, I spent a lot of money going on holidays on my own and with my family. This was what I chose to do to be happy.

When I came back to Tana, I started a work plan. I started to work hard. Buying a car was part of the plan and I did it. The car was for rent. It was a collaboration with my dear brother, and we could make money together.

I kept on praying that Covid-19 would not reach Madagascar, and I believed it could not.

I will always remember the 20th of March 2020 when President Andry Rajoelina announced the first cases in Madagascar. I was overwhelmed with worry and fear.

Here are the lessons I learnt:

## 1. Sometimes you do not need to find motivation, but it will find you.

I used to drive a small Atos. The car I bought was a Kangoo. I never wanted to drive it on my own but with my brother or with my boyfriend (who later became my husband). But once I heard we would be locked down, and when nobody

was available, I took the car, drove to Anosibe and bought everything I needed for at least one month.

## 2. We can be part of the solution.

On the 21st of March, Harinjaka Ratozamanana, the great leader, contacted me to be part of his initiative **"Hackoragnavirus"**, a Hackathon that gathered many people from all over the world aiming at bringing solutions to fight against the virus. That was a great fulfilling experience!

## 3. We do not have to physically meet to be able to do great things together.

COVID-19 taught us the importance of online jobs. It is possible to do simultaneous interpretation while wearing pajamas. Just make sure the camera is not on!

## 4. When your current offer does not satisfy the demand, create another offer, or create the demand.

AIR Communication, our company, a woman-owned company provides translation and interpretation services. Unfortunately, we had limited demands due to the crisis. Yet we needed to pay our bills. While using my Facebook account and pages, I suggested other services like online English teaching, article writing and virtual assistance. I was always busy. And those have become part of our services now.

I met my boyfriend in February 2020. He is a student completing a Masters' degree in Nuclear Safety and a musician. During lockdown, none of us could make enough money. We decided to re-sell Ravintsara Essential Oil. As we wanted to look professional, we create the page **"Ma Santé"** (meaning "My Health"). We made lots of sales per day; and we understood we had great online selling skills. Ma Santé is still operational now with other pages, but all under our new company AIR Connector.

Oh, I forgot, and we got married in October 2020. To end, I love 2020. Each problem is a business opportunity!



**Adrienne Irma Crispin,**  
Interpreter, Entrepreneur, Founder and CEO of  
AIR Communication



# 10 cool things about the pandemic

The pandemic may have hard to bear for those who lost loved ones or for businesses which went bankrupt. However, we are starting to be a little sick and tired of counting deaths, new cases, and people in intensive care. Let us look at ten cool things we got out of COVID-19!

1. **Comeback of drive-in movie theaters and birth of drive-in concerts.** Drive-in movie theaters reappeared again in the United States, and the same concept is replicated in the music industry. Enjoy movies and live music away from crowds.
2. **More time for cooking.** New amateur chefs and bakers came out during lockdowns. Many restaurants even share their recipes on the internet.
3. **Restaurants' creativity.** To make sure that the "six feet apart" rule is respected, restaurants used creative items such as dapper mannequin guests or big teddy bears to be your table companions. Sometimes, clients are asked to wear funny noodle hats while sitting outdoor.
4. **Puzzles and board games became cool again.** Screens kept us away from more in-person interaction. Lockdowns showed us that gathering around real and interactive activities with families and friends can be as entertaining as connecting online.
5. **Sport and fitness.** Along with the "stay at home" message comes that of keeping fit and staying healthy. Cook, eat, but then burn calories! Gyms might be

closed but new YouTube fitness channels and fitness influencers become our personal coaches at home.

6. **Reconnection with nature.** Just walking pets in the nearby parks is enough to help people forget a little bit the burden of being confined, to breathe fresh air, to enjoy the sun, and to burn a few calories.
7. **The rise of TikTok.** To cure boredom during quarantine, it is only necessary to go to TikTok and learn short choreographies, dance, and why not make money out of it. The number of TikTok users has exploded in a record time.
8. **Lockdown music.** Surprisingly, 2020 was rich in new music. While the biggest superstars had to cancel all their tour dates, many of them were more creative than ever during the lockdown, including Taylor Swift who released two studio albums during the last semester of 2020.

But the coolest things are our awareness that:

9. **Teachers are priceless.** Homeschooling is not as easy and enjoyable as it seems; that is why a lot of parents advocate for school reopening as a priority in the way out of lockdowns.
10. **Life is beautiful and we do not want to die.** When a 103-year-old grannie survived from COVID-19 infection, and oldest people rush to get vaccinated, this reminds us of the value of living. There is no point in dying now!

Talking about great things that happened – and keep happening – amid the pandemic is, by no means, meant to minimize the hard times the world is facing right now. However, there is nothing wrong with seeking sweetness in bitterness as Malagasy ancestors used to say, "Ao anaty mangidy no ahitana ny mamy". There is nothing wrong with drawing lessons from this unprecedented experience!



Edited by **Kenny Raharison**

Source: **USA Today**





# Digital in Madagascar and post-Covid: many opportunities are open to the riskers

Unavoidable. For a company, turning digital today is unavoidable. Even if Madagascar is still in a full process of digitalization today, that process has been accelerated with the Covid-19 crisis and the lockdown. It has been noticed that the number of people using the internet worldwide has grown to 4.54 billion, an increase of 7 percent (298 million new users) compared to January 2019. These statistics have been published by Hootsuite and We are social in the frame of the Global digital overview. About Madagascar, we do not have clear statistics about the increase of the use of internet and social networks, but guess what, we noticed that the users have increased a lot since March 2020, at the beginning of the lockdown in the Big Island. In fact, even if the Covid-19 crisis had a lot of negative impacts, it brought a lot of unexplored opportunities, and still does. A call to all riskers!

## An opportunity for any online businesses

It is difficult to see the end of this dark tunnel related to Covid-19 right now, whether in the world or in Madagascar. However, we can clearly see that the pandemic presents a lot of opportunities in the digital field.

For my part, as a digital entrepreneur, I found that the lockdown was a great opportunity to launch any online businesses, mostly on social networks like Facebook, which is the most used social network



**Tiasoa Samantha,**  
CEO & Founder at Book News  
Madagascar,

in Madagascar, with more than 2 million people active on it until now, according to the Facebook statistics.

Online trainings and courses, online shops, and many businesses as delivery services, online restaurants, books shops, decoration stores, etc, were all born in March 2020, during the lockdown, and still generate a lot of revenues since then.

## Explosion of digital marketing on social networks

One of the most successful businesses in Madagascar was digital marketing, which has shown up a lot of great potential and unexplored ways for selling. For example, the users of the Facebook ads saw a growth of 75%, according to the Book News Madagascar statistics, a digital agency and information blog. The influence marketing has

also met a growth, with the birth of many Malagasy influencers such as Chef Rija, Damima, the couple Izahay roa kely. This trend still goes on for now and gets bigger everyday. On one hand, the followers of Malagasy influencers do not stop increasing. On the other hand, companies are starting to get familiar to the field. It is because influencers are way more affordable than medias but have better impact.

Apart from that, we cannot talk about the digital explosion of the social network TikTok around the world, with a penetration rate of 19,8% in 2020, against 10,8% in 2019, according to the eMarketer. The institution predicts a rate of 26% in 2024. There are no clear statistics for Madagascar. Although, we can say that Malagasy young people are enjoying TikTok, as it is a way to have fun with a lot of functionalities: dancing, singing, acting, and to promote the Malagasy culture: quizzes, challenges, games... Malagasy influencers and companies also adopted that strategy. Some of them already use the TikTok for Business.



Written by **Tiasoa Samantha**  
CEO & Founder at Book News  
Madagascar,  
Blogger and Freelance journalist.  
My motto:  
*"Don't stop 'til you get enough"*



# Daniela Loberline Ratiarisoa: “I see companies that offer the same products as mine as partners, not competitors.”

## Daniela, an entrepreneur.

After my graduation in 2014, I moved to Antananarivo to settle and start a new life, to live on my own and to pursue my goal: becoming a computer engineer. Instead, I was surprised by the high price of fish and seafood in the market whereas fishers' communities live in poor socioeconomic conditions such as livelihood insecurity and extreme poverty. I quickly understood that there is an obvious and large distance between direct providers and customers; and middlemen had huge influence on price negotiation. This situation influenced my career path. I created a social enterprise called “VIAVY FISH SHOP” whose mission is to improve the conditions of small-scale fishers in my home village. VIAVY FISH SHOP is an online platform that connects fishermen and buyers and promotes fair trade.

VIAVY FISH SHOP products: fresh fish, frozen fish, dry and salty fish, and seafood (in May).

## Daniela on business resilience.

My company struggled a lot last year during the government lockdown. We lost most of our customers which were mainly restaurants and snacks, as they remained closed. There were times when I had demands of less than 100 kg. However, I could not deliver the goods as I had to fill the refrigerated truck with at least 500 kg



**Daniela Loberline Ratiarisoa**, social entrepreneur, climate activist, youth inclusion advocate and feminist

before they agree to transport the fish from Mahajanga to Antananarivo.

Indeed, me and my teams tried to cope with this pandemic, and search for new strategies. We have now launched new products: frozen fish. We build up enough stock for one month and we partner with other fish shops so that we could fill the refrigerated truck together with our orders, in case there is other government lockdowns in the future.

## Daniela on youth entrepreneurship

I teach entrepreneurship. I think young Malagasy people are getting more and more interested in entrepreneurship today. I am convinced that all Malagasy people have the entrepreneurial mindset, but we need to shake them awake.

## Daniela on her YALI Mandela Washington Fellowship experience

I have been selected for the 2019 Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders and was placed at the University of Iowa. The fellowship changed the way I do business. The most important lesson would be: rather than seeing other companies that sell the same or similar products as mine as competitors, I consider them as partners and collaborators.

## About Daniela

Daniela Loberline Ratiarisoa, social entrepreneur, climate activist, youth inclusion advocate and feminist. She is passionate about building resilient communities and strengthening inclusive economy. She has been involved in improving livelihoods of fishermen's families in using entrepreneurial skills and social capabilities focusing on women capacity building to reduce poverty, give access to education for girls and promote blue economy as well as circular economy. She has 5 years experiences in Business Management and Entrepreneurship.

 Interview by **Kenny Raharison**



# Andy Razafindrazaka, Young Jazz Drummer and Bandleader

**A**ndy Razafindrazaka is a 14-year-old very talented drummer who made his mark on the jazz scene in Madagascar from an early age. Despite his reserved character, which contrasts with his impressive stage energy and playing, the young musician tells us about his career with outstanding maturity and lucidity. With more than 15,000 followers on his Facebook page, his decisive encounters with jazz greats such as Mike Moreno, Darryl Hall, Stephy Haik, Bunny Brunel, Olivier Hutman and Jeanot Rabeson, and his many stage appearances, Andy Razafindrazaka is one of the worthy representatives of young Malagasy jazzmen.

## Why jazz?

I think I was influenced by my father, Désiré Razafindrazaka, who plays bass and hosts jazz events. I feel comfortable with jazz and I love it! But I also play light, rock, and Malagasy music.

## Your musical influences?

In jazz, I listen to a little bit of everything, especially pianists Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock. I love jazz but I am also keen on funk and rap.

## How did you start with jazz?

I started at the age of seven. I learned the basics by watching YouTube videos. Then I took drum lessons with Sitraka Ranaivosoa, Josia Rakotondravohitra, Lova Ramanampilaza. I also did music trainings with Ferenc Nemeth, Yves Ouezan, and Frank Raholison.

## Your first public performance?

It was in 2015 when I was only 8 years old. As soon as I knew how to play



**Andy Razafindrazaka** performing during the TEDx Youth Antananarivo event

different jazz rhythms, my father took me to cabarets in Antananarivo for jam sessions with musicians such as guitarist Datita Rabeson and pianist Samy Andriamanoro. I was both nervous and happy to play! Then I played during the Jazz Tohatohabato festival and the Madajazzcar Festival afterhours with foreign musicians like Andy Narell, Bunny Brunel, Baptiste Herbin. When I was 9, I was doing my first concert as Andy Razafindrazaka.

## Your favorite drummers?

Tony Williams, Jack DeJohnette, Dave Weckl, Steve Gadd, Damien Schmitt, and Malagasy drummers Bolo Rakoto David, Titan Randriamasindrazana, and Josia Rakotondravohitra.

## Your appreciation of the Malagasy jazz scene?

Jazz is not the first music Malagasy people would listen to, but things are changing. More people attend jazz concerts; more musicians, including youngest ones, play jazz.

## Andy Razafindrazaka's band members?

Our band is composed of Mahefa Ramiandrisoa, my pianist from the beginning, Ranto Ranoarimanana on bass, Tantely Rasoloarimanana on guitar, Andry Michael Randriantseva on saxophone, and myself on drums.

## Your latest events and the upcoming ones?

In December, I participated in the TEDx Youth Antananarivo event and "Jazz à l'Université". Lately, there was the Tribute to Chick Corea at the Alliance Française de Tana and a concert – with my younger brother on trumpet – in tribute to Luis Ramaroson, a pianist who died earlier this year. Now, my band is planning stage projects and video shoots for my YouTube channel and my Facebook page "Andy Razafindrazaka – Musician".

## Andy's time management?

I must balance it out! Honestly, music is above all a passion and my family supports me. But I put studies first because it is important! For leisure, I love video games and I am a football fan.

## Your wildest dream?

Travel all over the world, meet Herbie Hancock and rapper Nekfeu! I also dream of playing one day with Joey Alexander, an Indonesian pianist, and Justin Lee Schultz, a multi-instrumentalist from South Africa, two amazing musicians living in the USA who are around my age.

 Interview by **Kenny Raharison**



# “Akanin'ny Nofy”: a magic place where you can breathe blissful moment!

**A**kanin'ny Nofy literally means “Dream Nest”. The evocative name of this delightful place is enough to satisfy visitors' imagination. Nature lovers will certainly find there wonders they have truly sought for. Visiting Akanin'ny Nofy is a must during your trip in *Toamasina*, the east coast of Madagascar. *Akanin'ny Nofy* is a paradise that exhibits the beauty and the wealth of the Malagasy nature. You will be able to observe and appreciate the endemic fauna of the island.

## But how to get there?

Akanin'ny Nofy is a magnificent site bordering the **Ampahibe lake**—which is separated from the **Indian Ocean** by some dunes — and belongs to the numerous lakes of the **Pangalanes** channels. You can cross the channel to visit *Akanin'ny Nofy*, as the most pleasant way to go there remains by **boat**, either it is a simple outboard or a pleasure boat. The site is *an hour and a half of navigation* away from *Toamasina*. If you travel from Antananarivo, a stopover in **Manambato** is needed.

Once arrived at the border of *Akanin'ny Nofy*, it is impossible not to fall immediately in love with this paradisiacal place. Visitors can stay there for a night or two in the local hotels or bungalows. Local shelters are built with traditional materials but will offer visitors incomparable comfort. Thanks to the rehabilitation of the railway line between Antananarivo and the east coast, you can take a train to get to this magical site. To reach the reserve of *Akanin'ny Nofy*, it is necessary to go down the station of **Andranokoditra** which represents



an advantage of being next to many spectacular lodging structures.

This natural spot covers an area of **50 hectares** showcasing the total beauty of the Malagasy fauna and flora. It is home to various species of endemic lemurs, including the famous *Maki*— which is an emblem of the island, the *Aye-Aye*, the *Sifaka* and the *Indri Indri* — the biggest lemur of the world.

## What does make Akanin'ny Nofy unique?

If the visitors desire to approach closely the lemurs, the visit of the “**Palmarium**” reserve is highly recommended, as it is the most touristic attraction of the site. The reserve of “*Palmarium*” owes its name to the **100 000 palm trees** covering **30 hectares** of the area.

There you can also find the endemic and rare species such as the *Dypsis*, the *Orania* and the *Lemurophoenix*. As *Akanin'ny Nofy* still breathes a rich wildlife with its lush vegetation, you may get lost throughout the forest. But do not worry! Many guides are happy to escort you during your discovery and to bring you more information on each species, whether it is lemurs, palms, orchids, carnivorous plants, or others.

*Akanin'ny Nofy* is a hidden treasure where your body can rest and a peaceful heaven where your spirit can recover.



Edited by **langotiana Rakotovao**

Sources: Madagascar Treasure Island Toamasina, Tamatave501





## F. Scott Fitzgerald: the American writer from the Jazz Age

**F**rancis Scott Key Fitzgerald is an American short-story writer and novelist born on September 24, 1896 in St Paul, Minnesota. He was first known for being **the king of the Jazz Age** and for having **coined and popularized the term in the 1920s**. The Jazz Age came up with the "**Gilded Age**", a term first used in the late 19th century by Marc Twain – also an outstanding author known for his best-selling novels "The adventures of Tom Sawyer" and "The Adventures of Huckleberry Fin". The Gilded Age refers to the tumultuous years between the Civil War and the turn of the twentieth century; namely, the culmination of **Industrial revolution**, when America shifted from an agricultural to an industrial society. Both Twain and Fitzgerald knew how to take advantage of this evolving period, also known as the "**Roaring twenties**", to leave their legacy in US history and American literature.

Apart from being famous for influencing the jazz music, Scott Fitzgerald also gained in popularity thanks to his most successful novel "The Great Gatsby", widely considered "the great American novel". Published in 1925, the book is his third novel that became a classic of American fiction and has been inserted in some high school curriculum and University programs in the US.

### The "Great Gatsby" as a depiction of the American dream

The novel tells the dramatic story of Jay Gatsby, a self-made millionaire who fell in love with a wealthy young woman named Daisy Buchanan, whom he loved since his youth and never stopped loving and pursuing. The main protagonist of the novel is Nick Carraway, a Yale University student who moved to New York to undertake a career in bonds market. Throughout the story, with

the rise of the jazz era and the industrial revolution, New York became the city of extravagance and wealth where people sought hope and success and pursued the "**American dream**". Indeed, it was spurred by Gatsby who was the real embodiment of the American dream, as he was born poor and rose from rags to riches.

The novel has been categorized among the most notable American classics and the most accessible fiction books, leading many educators to teach it in the classroom. It was mostly selected for eleventh grade American Literature classrooms because of its literary elements and devices which include the plot, setting, themes, symbolism, and figurative language; as well as Fitzgerald's vivid and striking literary style.

Some of F. Scott Fitzgerald's other literary works include "*The side of Paradise*" which is his first novel, "*The Rich boy*", "*The Far Side of Paradise*", "*The Ice Palace*" and "*The last tycoon*", the last novel he wrote but did not complete before he died on December 21, 1940.

Here are two things people may not know about Fitzgerald: he had already joined the US army after having dropped out of Princeton University and he also worked as a Hollywood screenwriter.



Edited by **Volahanta Raharimanana**

Photo credit: Carl van Vechten — Van Vechten Collection at Library of Congress (4 June 1937).

Source : HISTORY/ Britannica/ sites.google.com (Emilia Prosser, "*The Great Gatsby in the Classroom: Not Just Because it is a Classic*")





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