

# Madagascar

## Country Focus Report

2025



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# A) An Introduction to the Enabling Environment

What we understand by an Enabling Environment is the combination of laws, rules and social attitudes that support and promote the work of civil society. Within such an environment, civil society can engage in political and public life without fear of reprisals, openly express its views, and actively participate in shaping its context. This includes a supportive legal and regulatory framework for civil society, ensuring access to information and resources that are sustainable and flexible to pursue their goals unhindered, in safe physical and digital spaces. In an enabling environment, the state demonstrates openness and responsiveness in governance, promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusive decision-making. Positive values, norms, attitudes, and practices towards civil society from state and non-state actors further underscore the supportive environment.

To capture the state of the Enabling Environment, we use the following six principles:

## SIX ENABLING PRINCIPLES

-  **Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms**
-  **Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework**
-  **Accessible and Sustainable Resources**
-  **Open and Responsive State**
-  **Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society**
-  **Access to a Secure Digital Environment**

In this Country Focus Report, each enabling principle is assessed with a quantitative score and complemented by an analysis and recommendations written by our Network Members. Rather than offering a singular index to rank countries, the report aims to measure the enabling environment for civil society across the 6 principles, discerning dimensions of strength and those requiring attention.

The findings presented in this report are grounded in the insights and diverse perspectives of civil society actors who came together in a dedicated panel with representatives from civil society to discuss and evaluate the state of the Enabling Environment. Their collective input enriches the report with a grounded, participatory assessment. This primary input is further supported by secondary sources of information, which provide additional context and strengthen the analysis.

## Brief Overview of the Country Context

At the end of September 2025, Madagascar entered a period of political turmoil that led to a political transition. The events began with [the arrest](#) of three city councillors on 19 September 2025, in front of the Senate building in Anosikely, following their protests against recurring power outages and water cuts. Young people subsequently joined the protests by taking to the streets of the capital on September 2025, and the movement then spread to other provinces. The claims initially focused on water shortages, power cuts, and the rising cost of living, before expanding to include calls for better governance and the fight against corruption. The protests brought together thousands of young people, while many citizens joined them across the country. They intensified after the security forces, particularly the gendarmerie, responded with [violent](#) repression. The forces of law and order violently suppressed the protesters on site, by using weapons as well. Part of the Army denounced the violence, sided with the protesters, and announced that it had seized power. The President of the Republic then [made his escape](#).

On 14 October 2025, the [Constitutional High Court](#) declared the positions of President of the Republic and President of the Senate vacant, then appointed Colonel Michaël Randrianirina as Head of State. On 17 October 2025, he was [invested](#) as President of the Reformation of the Republic of Madagascar, marking the beginning of a transition led by the Army.

The President of the Reformation [appointed](#) the Prime Minister on 20 October 2025. On 28 October 2025, he [established](#) the new government, composed of 29 ministers, with the creation of a ministry in charge of the Reformation.

The current political transition has raised concerns about democratic accountability and respect of the rule of law. Civil society organisations have expressed [concerns](#) about the military takeover, given the lack of clear guarantees regarding the duration and terms of the transition.

It is interesting to note that, despite popular attachment to democratic ideals, 53% of citizens declared in 2024 that they preferred [democracy](#) to any other system. This contradiction between democratic aspirations and weak governance illustrates the hybrid nature of Malagasy democracy: elections exist, but institutions struggle to guarantee transparency, the Rule of law, and good governance.

Madagascar faces persistent socioeconomic vulnerabilities that directly influence the work of civil society. According to the [World Bank](#), poverty levels remain among the highest in the world, and low levels of public investment in basic services exacerbate inequalities between urban and rural areas. [Communities](#) affected by mining projects, environmental degradation, or land conflicts rely heavily on civil society organisations (CSOs) as intermediaries to voice their concerns. This situation creates additional responsibilities for organisations, whose resources are already limited. One example is the Research and Support Center for Development Alternatives – Indian Ocean ([RSCDA-IO](#)), an organisation committed to promoting sustainable development alternatives focused on the realization of human rights, which filed an international complaint against a mining company in January 2025. This approach follows concerns raised by the local population regarding the perceived impacts of the mining project, which threaten their health, resources, and environment. Furthermore, funding opportunities remain scarce and unpredictable, particularly for small community groups and youth-led initiatives. In this regard, the second [civil society forum](#), held in July 2025, provided a space for discussion and exchange on these issues.

Despite these constraints, civil society has demonstrated a strong capacity for adaptation and innovation. Networks of organisations are increasingly collaborating to monitor public governance, support whistleblowers, provide legal assistance, and strengthen community participation in decision-making processes, as in the case of Nosy Sakatia in April 2025, developed by the [MALINA](#) network of journalists. The emergence of new youth movements, forms of digital activism such as the [iParticipate Ndao i-Kozy platform](#) launched in July 2025 by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Madagascar, and sectoral coalitions illustrates a dynamic civic landscape capable of mobilizing citizens and creating pressure for reform. To ensure sustainability to these efforts, targeted support will be needed to strengthen organisational resilience, consolidate mechanisms for protecting human rights defenders, and expand opportunities for constructive engagement with public institutions.

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# B) Assessment of the Enabling Environment

## PRINCIPLE SCORE

### 1. Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms

Score: <sup>1</sup>



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The [CIVICUS Monitor](#) officially classifies civic space in Madagascar as “hindered,” a designation that highlights an environment where constitutional guarantees of freedom are systematically undermined by practical realities. This persistent gap between the formal legal framework and the effective exercise of fundamental freedoms is the result of chronic institutional fragility and political instability. These dynamics have often led to the criminalization of criticism and dissent. Civil society organisations (CSOs), human rights defenders, and journalists find themselves in a hostile environment, where intimidation and administrative pressure are commonplace.

#### 1.1 | Freedom of association

Freedom of association is guaranteed by Articles 10 and 14 of the [Constitution](#) of the Republic of Madagascar and regulated by legislation on the creation of CSOs, such as [Ordinance No. 60-133](#) of 3 October 1960 on associations, and [Law No. 96-030](#) of 14 August 1997 on non-governmental organisations (NGOs). However, complex registration procedures, burdensome administrative requirements and, in some cases, political pressure, severely hamper the effective exercise of this right.

In general, the legal framework allows for the creation of associations as long as their purpose does not contravene the law. For organisations working to defend the rights of LGBTQIA+

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<sup>1</sup>This is a rebased score derived from the [CIVICUS Monitor rating](#) published in December 2025.

individuals, Malagasy law does not provide for any specific prohibitions. In practice, however, these associations encounter numerous obstacles that limit their activities. Organisations such as the NGO Madagascar solidarity network ([ORMS LGBT](#)- Réseau Madagascar Solidarité) and [Queer Place](#) exist and carry out awareness-raising and support activities, but their public visibility and ability to organise activities are limited due to social stigma, local pressures, and the potential arbitrariness of administrative criteria ([rejection](#)), particularly with regard to “public morality.” Thus, although their registration is legally possible, the right of these CSOs to operate freely remains fragile and highly dependent on the social and political context.

In addition, the administration often slows down the registration or renewal procedures for associations and can sometimes arbitrarily refuse them, threatening their very existence, particularly when the organisation works in areas considered strategic or sensitive by the ruling power, such as the fight against corruption or the control of extractive industries. These administrative constraints have the effect of exhausting the limited resources of CSOs, compromising their independence, and effectively paralyzing their activities.

## 1.2 | Freedom of peaceful assembly

The right to peaceful assembly in Madagascar is also guaranteed by Article 10 of the [Constitution](#). However, outdated provisions, opaque administrative barriers, and disproportionate use of force severely restrict its exercise. [Ordinance No. 60-082](#) of 13 August 1960, on public meetings and demonstrations on public roads is the main law governing assemblies, and its text is often considered [obsolete](#), [outdated](#), and incompatible with international standards. The law maintains a system of prior authorization by the territorially competent representative of the State. Although it has sometimes reiterated the need for a simple declaration, the authorities (police prefect in Antananarivo or district chief in the regions) apply the procedure as a genuine discretionary authorization system. This power is frequently used to suppress any critical mobilization or event perceived as politically sensitive by the executive branch, citing the “risk of disturbing public order” as justification.

Thus, CSOs and civic groups face a selective and perilous environment. The authorities tolerate gatherings if they concern purely social causes or awareness campaigns, but the right to protest depends on the nature of the demands. For example, movements denouncing corruption or land conflicts linked to the exploitation of natural resources are subject to almost systematic surveillance and prohibition. Since 2010, several CSOs have supported the community in southern Madagascar in their opposition to the [Base Toliar](#) mine, denouncing its socio-environmental impacts and warning of the risks associated with mining. Similarly, in June and October 2023, the authorities banned peaceful demonstrations organised in Sainte-Luce, in southeastern Madagascar, against the Qit Madagascar Minerals ([QMM](#)) mining project. These demonstrations denounced land exploitation and water pollution. The authorities carried out arrests and intimidation. These examples illustrate the repression of protests related to corruption and [natural resources](#) in Madagascar.

The protests in September 2025, led by the [Generation Z](#) collective against frequent water and electricity cuts, are another example. Forces of Law and order brutally dispersed these peaceful gatherings with tear gas, rubber bullets, and [the arrest](#) of several protesters. [The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner](#) for Human Rights in Madagascar has documented the illegal and excessive use of force against protesters, reporting serious injuries and the use of tear gas in residential areas, which contravenes the principles of necessity and proportionality governing the use of force.

This disproportionate use of force is often accompanied by a tendency to criminalize social protests. Leaders of social movements and trade unions are frequently subjected to judicial investigations and arbitrary detention (SLAPP, abusive lawsuits aimed at intimidating public actors), even for non-violent acts. For example, the [leader](#) of the teachers' union was briefly arrested in February 2025 after organising a demonstration to demand teachers' rights. In the absence of swift and effective legal remedies against abusive bans or police violence, these strict police control and the risk of criminal prosecution create widespread self-censorship that undermines the ability of citizens and organisations to challenge state failures and demand genuine accountability, which risks stifling civic engagement as the next election cycles approach.

### 1.3 | Freedom of expression

Freedom of expression in Madagascar has [improved](#) considerably in recent years, rising from 100th place in 2024 to 113th place out of 180 countries in the 2025 World Press Freedom Index, with a current score of 50.80. This deterioration is particularly marked in the social indicator, which measures the working environment for [journalists](#).

Freedom of the press is guaranteed by Article 10 and regulated by [Law 2016-029](#) of 24 August, 2016 amended by [Law 2020-006](#) of 1 September 2020. However, journalists are frequently [targeted](#), as was the case in [February](#) 2025. At least four journalists were also [injured](#) by gunfire during the Generation Z protest in September 2025. Investigative journalism, which is essential for exposing corruption, survives mainly on digital platforms, but even these spaces are subject to [harassment](#) and [disinformation](#).

Structural economic and political constraints also threaten the editorial independence of the media. Many media outlets are dependent on economic or political interests close to those in power. In August 2025, two journalists were threatened with criminal [prosecution](#) for endangering public safety following a report on the Ambohimalaza case, in which dozens of people died. The Reporters Without Borders country [profile](#) explicitly mentions that media ownership concentration, low salaries, lack of advertising revenue, and the widespread practice of "*telaka*" (small payments or envelopes for events) make journalists vulnerable to corruption and encourage self-censorship, as criticizing an advertiser or owner could result in a loss of income or employment.

In addition, legal pressure continues to weigh on the profession. Press freedom organisations have [denounced](#) [Law 2016-029](#) of 24 August 2016, on the media communication code as "[liberticidal](#)." This law allows the authorities to use the criminal code to prosecute journalists, even for "press offenses." This means that critical reports or investigations (on corruption, the environment, etc.) could be reclassified as criminal offenses, exposing journalists to prison sentences or heavy fines, or even the risk of media outlets being shut down.

Physical and legal insecurity severely limits the community engagement of activists. The authorities particularly target human rights and environmental [defenders](#) who denounce illegal rosewood trafficking, illegal exploitation of resources, or land conflicts. These frontline actors, who often work in rural areas without adequate protection from the State, are regularly subjected to intimidation, threats, and even physical attacks or murder, as several incidents in 2024 sadly revealed. The Antalaha court [sentenced](#) a human rights defender to three years

and two months in prison, including 20 months suspended. Similarly, on 27 August 2024, security forces [arrested](#) a civil society activist for opposing the mining project in the south.

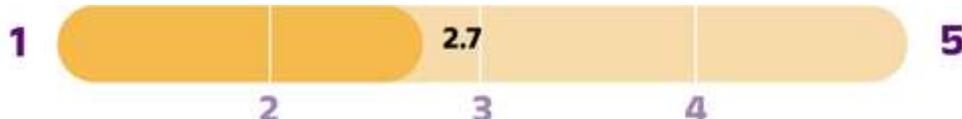
The use of fabricated [charges](#), such as “rebellion” or “contempt of a public official,” serves as a pretext to harass and silence these activists (men and women), perpetuating a climate of impunity that seriously impedes the exercise of freedom of association. The case of the human rights defender, president of an association for human rights and youth empowerment in the northern region, who was convicted in Antalaha on 29 April 2024, illustrates the use of such charges.

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## PRINCIPLE SCORE

### 2. Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework

Score:



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Although Madagascar's legal framework formally guarantees freedom of association, CSOs face arbitrary administrative delays, informal pressure, and extra-legal authorization requirements that compromise their autonomy and hinder their registration, particularly for those working on sensitive issues. In the absence of legal safeguards for human rights defenders and due to the very broad grounds for dissolution, organisations remain vulnerable to reprisals, leading many to operate in legal uncertainty and adopt strategic self-censorship.

#### 2.1| Registration

The Madagascan legal framework guarantees freedom of association in Articles 10 and 14 of the [Constitution](#). The conditions for exercising this right are defined by various legislative texts. [Ordinance 60-133](#) of 3 October 1960, which establishes the general regime for associations, provides that any association may be formed without prior authorization. However, in order to acquire legal personality, the founders must file a declaration with the provincial office in which the association will have its registered office.

Law [96-030](#) of 14 August 1997, on NGOs also requires a declaration to be filed with the departmental or regional office where the NGO has its headquarters. This declaration is followed by an application for approval from the same authority in order to acquire legal personality.

Although Malagasy legislation provides for a relatively accessible registration procedure for CSOs, in practice there are significant administrative delays. This gap between the legal framework and its implementation particularly affects associations operating outside Antananarivo, where administrative resources are more limited and control less stringent. The absence of a strict legal deadline for issuing receipts allows authorities to prolong the procedure indefinitely without formal justification. This administrative uncertainty compromises CSOs' ability to operate legally and access funding and undermines their credibility with their partners and communities.

CSOs working on sensitive issues such as corruption, governance, human rights, land, etc. are often subjected to unfair treatment during the registration process. Stakeholders report that these organisations are subject to more rigorous scrutiny, or even tacit refusals or administrative obstacles, without any clear legal basis. This political instrumentalization of the administration undermines the principle of equality before the law and calls into question the neutrality of the State. It sets a dangerous precedent whereby only "non-disruptive" CSOs can operate freely, limiting the plurality of voices and the dynamism of the civic space.

CSOs currently have no quick and effective administrative or judicial recourse when they encounter registration difficulties. The Malagasy judicial system is perceived as insufficiently independent and offers no guarantee of protection against abuse. This shortcoming creates a climate of deadlock and discourages associations from challenging unfair decisions.

Inconsistencies between legislation and its application have created a climate of legal uncertainty for actors wishing to organise. New associations cannot know with certainty whether their application will be accepted or delayed, nor according to what criteria. This situation hinders the structuring of civil society, particularly in rural or isolated areas. It also leads to a form of self-censorship, with some CSOs preferring to avoid risky topics in order to obtain legal status. In the absence of a transparent and predictable framework, the associative environment remains fragile and vulnerable to interference.

## 2.2| Operating environment

The Malagasy legal framework guarantees CSOs' freedom to organise and freely define their governance, objectives, and activities, without direct intervention from the State. Furthermore, neither Ordinance No. [60-133](#) of 3 October 1960 on associations, nor Law No. [96-030](#) on the NGO regime require prior government approval for the drafting of statutes, the composition of internal bodies, or the definition of missions.

However, despite these legal guarantees, this autonomy is subject to administrative procedures for registration and legal recognition. In order to acquire legal personality, which is essential for opening a bank account, signing agreements, or receiving funding, associations must file their statutes with the prefectural services or the Department of Homeland Security. This process, which is supposed to be purely declarative, often becomes a mechanism of control in practice. The authorities may delay the issuance of the receipt, request additional documents, or tacitly refuse recognition when the association's objectives are deemed sensitive.

Furthermore, experience in the field shows that several CSOs report being forced to seek prior authorization for the implementation of projects or public activities, even when this is not required by law. This phenomenon particularly affects initiatives related to budget monitoring, local governance, land management, the fight against corruption, and the defence of human rights. In some cases, informal pressure is exerted by local authorities, such as “preventive” invitations to avoid certain topics, refusal of access to public spaces, requests for targeted audits, or “mandatory” partnership agreements with government departments. These practices, combined with a centralized administrative culture and a lack of regulatory clarity, effectively limit the real autonomy of CSOs.

Local authorities can [refuse](#) to authorize an event without having to provide specific justification or set up a rapid appeal mechanism. For example, the Antananarivo prefecture refused to grant authorization to three councillors from the urban commune of Antananarivo for a demonstration against planned water and electricity cuts in Ambohijatovo on 25 September 2025. There was also the case of [the arrest](#) of a leader opposed to the Base Toliara mining project in the southwestern region, after the prefecture refused to authorize a meeting planned in the center of Toliara (Ankilafaly district), thereby banning the event in August 2025.

### **2.3| Protection against interference**

Ordinance No. [60-133](#) of 3 October 1960 on associations provides, in Articles 4 and 7, that administrative authorities may dissolve or suspend an organisation on grounds such as “violation of the statutes” or “disturbance of public order.” However, these provisions remain vague and subject to [interpretation](#), as they do not specify objective evaluation criteria or the adversarial procedure to be followed before any decision to dissolve an organisation.

Similarly, in its 2024 [report](#), Amnesty International also emphasizes that the rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly are still severely restricted, with the application of Ordinance No. [60-082](#) of 13 August 1960, on gatherings contributing to this limitation.

In practice, there is no specific mechanism to guarantee the impartiality of administrative decisions. CSOs do not have the right to seek swift and effective administrative or judicial review to challenge a dissolution deemed abusive. Ordinance 60-133 does not provide for any adversarial or emergency appeal procedure, leaving the administration with considerable discretion. When an appeal is lodged, the procedures are lengthy, complex, and costly, often beyond the means of small and medium-sized associations. In addition, appealing to the Council of State is often difficult for regional CSOs.

According to one panellist, compliance with the legal framework is not enough to protect the association from pressure related to the sensitivity of its actions; the constant risk of dissolution leads to self-censorship.

In addition, local political actors, government representatives, and even economic partners may exert indirect pressure (threats, withdrawal of authorizations, increased surveillance, administrative blockages) to influence the positions or priorities of CSOs. In this regard, the [report](#) of the national human rights survey in Madagascar reveals that among 878 CSOs surveyed, 82.5% of administrators reported having been the victim of verbal or written threats, while 31.6% said they had been subjected to surveillance. For example, in 2024, in southern Madagascar, anti-poaching patrol officers supported by the Turtle Survival Alliance ([TSA](#)) received threats following the confiscation of turtles intended for trafficking. One team member requested to use a pseudonym for fear of reprisals. In addition, in June 2024, the lifeless body of a community forest defender, vice president of a local forest protection association, was found in the forest with multiple stab wounds after disappearing during a patrol. These interferences are not subject to any legal sanctions, as there is no clear mechanism for complaints or appeals.

In this context, several CSOs report practicing a form of strategic self-censorship, avoiding certain topics, rephrasing their messages, or limiting their media visibility in order to reduce the risk of reprisals. This situation creates a climate of mistrust and vulnerability that prevents civil society from fully exercising its critical and independent role.

One panellist pointed out that the association's budget monitoring activities at the municipal level regularly give rise to "courtesy visits" from local authorities. The latter systematically remind the association of its obligation to inform the prefecture before any activity, even though there is no legal requirement to do so. Faced with these practices, the organisation has gradually adapted its language and analysis in order to avoid any tension with the authorities. This is not a formal ban, but rather indirect and constant pressure on its activities.

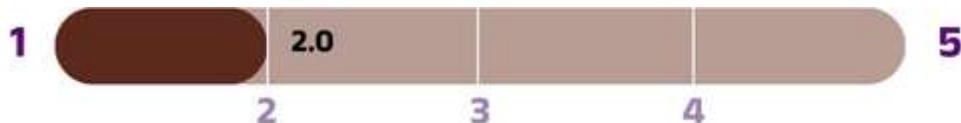
There is no law protecting whistleblowers and human rights defenders in Madagascar despite several attempts, even though human rights defenders face increased risks. There is no specific legislation to protect them from threats, reprisals, or arbitrary arrests. This legal gap is part of a broader context in which institutional safeguards for the protection of CSOs remain fragile and incomplete.

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## PRINCIPLE SCORE

### 3. Accessible and Sustainable Resources

Score:



Madagascar's low score on accessible and sustainable resources reflects a structurally fragile environment for civil society, characterized by a lack of public funding and heavy dependence on external donors. This dependence limits the capacity of CSOs to implement locally rooted strategies, widens inequalities between urban and rural actors, and contributes to organisational fatigue and instability. As a result, many CSOs end up implementing externally dictated programs rather than responding to local needs, which reinforces their institutional vulnerability.

#### 3.1| Accessibility of resources

The main challenges facing CSOs in Madagascar in terms of funding are numerous and structural. The first concerns the total absence of public funding for CSOs. The Malagasy government currently has no budgetary provisions to support these actors, whether in the finance law, sectoral programs, or regional and municipal development plans. The lack of public funding deprives CSOs of a solid institutional base, prevents the establishment of balanced partnerships with the State, and creates a lasting asymmetry where only the priorities of donors dictate actions on the ground. In the absence of public funding, CSOs are almost entirely dependent on foreign funding.

When it comes to accessing foreign funding, a major challenge lies in the disparities between rural and urban CSOs. Rural CSOs, although often in direct contact with marginalised communities, have difficulty accessing information due to a lack of connectivity or institutional intermediaries, and have limited administrative capacities, particularly in terms of qualified staff or knowledge of project submission standards. In addition, they are largely excluded from national training, support, and networking mechanisms, which remain highly centralized in Antananarivo. This reality creates a two-speed system where well-connected urban NGOs have better access to funding and opportunities, while local actors, despite being at the heart of social needs, remain marginalised.

The lack of recognition of informal CSOs also poses a significant challenge. Unregistered collectives, which are very active in rural areas, such as farmers' groups, women's associations, and youth collectives, form a dynamic fabric of community solidarity and resilience. Despite their impact, these groups do not have access to funding, are not eligible for training or calls for projects, and are absent from official consultation forums. This situation reflects a strictly administrative view of the role of civil society, which excludes spontaneous forms of community organisation and contributes to widening social and territorial divides.

### **3.2| Effectiveness**

In Madagascar, donors generally impose strict conditions linked to their strategic priorities and results frameworks. These conditions relate in particular to intervention themes, performance indicators, procurement procedures, and financial management methods. This situation often creates a form of dependency on donors for CSOs, which must adapt their programs to respond to calls for proposals and predefined priorities, such as governance, the environment, gender, etc., even when these priorities do not fully reflect the needs expressed by local communities. For example, CSOs have long insisted on electoral law [reform](#), while donors have mainly provided support to ensure the smooth running of the electoral process. Several stakeholders have pointed out that this influence of donors limits the strategic autonomy of CSOs and hinders the development of independent local initiatives, particularly for small community organisations that do not have their own funds.

Furthermore, the flexibility of donors in Madagascar remains variable, but generally limited. Some partners, notably UN agencies and a few bilateral donors, are willing to adapt their procedures to local contexts or crises. For example, in December 2023, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) launched the Today & Tomorrow [initiative](#), a funding mechanism that demonstrates a certain degree of adaptation to the needs of the population and enables a rapid response to natural disasters.

However, most funders maintain high administrative and financial requirements, which are often difficult for small rural or emerging CSOs to meet. These requirements include complex reporting procedures, the use of digital tools that are not accessible to all, and rigid implementation deadlines. This situation disadvantages local actors, reinforces inequalities in access to funding, and favours large urban CSOs, which are better equipped to meet the imposed standards.

In all cases, the relationship between donors and CSOs remains largely hierarchical, with donors retaining a dominant role in defining priorities and monitoring projects. Nevertheless, positive experiences show a growing openness to collaboration and recognition of local expertise. For example, some CSOs have reported that they have already had the opportunity to propose activities tailored to the Malagasy context, and these have been accepted without modification by donors. This demonstrates a more partnership-based approach, based on trust and consistency between local proposals and the objectives of technical and financial partners.

### **3.3| Sustainability**

In Madagascar, the lack of sustainable public funding mechanisms poses a major challenge for CSOs, depriving them of a stable resource base and forcing them to rely almost exclusively on international aid. Experts interpret the Malagasy government's lack of budgetary commitment as political disinterest, or even deliberate exclusion of civil society.

Despite this context, some CSOs manage to raise funds through various means. They benefit in particular from donations from individuals, local businesses, and international organisations. However, the lack of visibility of the association, the absence of tax incentives, and transparency in the monitoring of funds sometimes limit the scale of these contributions. Many CSOs also rely on volunteer work and community engagement to carry out their activities. While this approach reduces costs, it does not constitute a source of sustainable financial autonomy. Some associations also develop income-generating activities, such as services or products related to their mission, such as training, technical services, etc., but these initiatives remain marginal and often insufficient to ensure total financial independence. Membership fees are another source of internal funding, covering not only part of the operating costs, but also providing ad hoc support for specific projects.

Despite all these efforts, dependence on external funding remains very high, particularly for CSOs working on sensitive issues such as anti-corruption or human rights. This dependence limits their real autonomy, as donors can influence priorities or impose their conditions. Difficulties in mobilizing sustainable resources lead to instability within teams, characterized by staff shortages, excessive workloads, resignations, demotivation, and an inability to retain key skills. The lack of resources also prevents CSOs from investing in internal capacity building or robust management systems. Many Malagasy CSOs reported spending more time seeking funding than implementing their missions, thereby compromising the sustainability and quality of their impact.

Furthermore, the almost exclusive dependence on foreign funding compromises the strategic autonomy of CSOs. As the testimonies highlight, many organisations “live to the rhythm of calls for projects.” This situation prevents any medium- and long-term planning, encourages fragmented actions that are often reactive and lack programmatic coherence, and weakens institutional capacities. Indeed, resources are concentrated on one-off projects without supporting the structural needs of organisations such as fixed salaries, headquarters maintenance, and equipment. For example, 15 NGOs had to [close](#) their offices in the South due to the decline in international humanitarian aid.

This dependence also leads to a form of reverse instrumentalization, in which CSOs become the executors of strategies designed by external actors, sometimes disconnected from local realities.

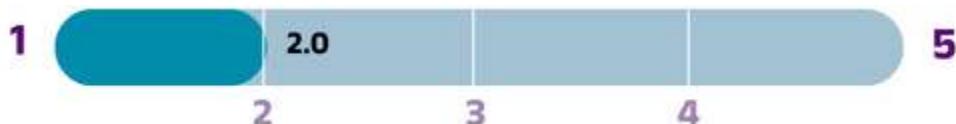
Finally, mechanisms aimed at diversifying CSO resources remain ineffective. Even when some CSOs attempt to launch income-generating activities, they encounter a rigid tax framework that treats these initiatives as traditional businesses. This approach discourages innovation and hinders financial autonomy, which is essential to the effectiveness and sustainability of CSOs in Madagascar.

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## PRINCIPLE SCORE

### 4. Open and Responsive State

Score:



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Transparency, participation, and accountability remain obstacles for CSOs in Madagascar. CSOs struggle to access meaningful public information, consultations are largely superficial, and their contributions rarely influence decisions, with dialogue depending more on individual goodwill than formal mechanisms. Combined with the lack of accountability structures and the limited technical capacity of many CSOs, particularly in rural areas, civil society has minimal space to influence decision-making.

#### 4.1| Transparency

Article 11 of the Malagasy [Constitution](#) recognizes the right of every individual to information. However, the political will necessary to strengthen access to information is lacking. A [bill](#) on access to public information was submitted to the National Assembly 18 years ago, in 2007. Despite [repeated calls](#) from civil society on the importance of this law, the text was only revised and [adopted](#) by the Council of Ministers on December 3, 2025, and is now awaiting consideration by the National Assembly. Certain laws, such as the Media and Communication Code, [Law No. 2016-029](#) of 14 July 2016, and the Code of Ethics for the Administration and Good Conduct of State Officials, [Decree No. 2003-1158](#) of 17 December 2003, theoretically recognize the right of all citizens and organisations to access information held by public institutions. However, there is no comprehensive and systematic legal framework guaranteeing this right.

Practically speaking, access to information remains extremely [limited](#) and often frustrating for civil society actors. Several stakeholders have reported difficulties in obtaining basic data on public projects, such as mapping of CSOs representing small-scale fishers on the island, the number of CSOs existing in Madagascar, budgets, or current policies. Even official requests to the administration may go unanswered or take a particularly long time to process. For example, during a study conducted in 2023, Transparency International – Initiative Madagascar (TI-MG) was denied access to data on the number of inmates in Malagasy prisons. It was impossible to obtain this information, and other organisations working in the field also confirmed that access to these data is strictly restricted. This situation reveals a weak administrative culture in terms of accountability and transparency, as well as a lack of clear mechanisms for proactively disseminating information.

Public institutions do not seem to consider communicating their decisions a [priority](#), which creates a sense of opacity and exclusion among citizens and CSOs. In June 2025, an article published by [All Africa](#) highlighted that laws were being passed without public consultation and often remained secret until the moment of voting.

Furthermore, institutional digital media are insufficient to enable genuine access to information. Published data is often outdated, incomplete, difficult to use, or only available in French in formats such as scanned PDFs without a search engine. This situation makes information almost inaccessible to a large part of the population, particularly in rural areas. The lack of local institutional relays, such as regional information offices, exacerbates this territorial inequality. According to experts, in city centers, CSOs can sometimes access certain information through their networks and relationships, while in rural areas, they often work “in the dark,” without institutional contact points or adequate digital infrastructure.

Thus, while the law recognizes a theoretical right of access to information, its effective implementation is very limited. Institutions do not systematically publish complete information on their decisions, such as draft laws, policies, budgets, and audit reports, and when these documents are available, they are in formats that are difficult to access and are not distributed equitably throughout the country. This situation creates a divide in terms of access to information, favouring urban areas and better-connected CSOs, while excluding a large part of the rural population from civic participation and oversight of public actions.

## 4.2| Participation

The preamble to the Malagasy [Constitution](#) states that “fokonolona”, organised into “fokontany”, provides a framework for the empowerment, exchange, and participatory consultation of citizens. Furthermore, Article 152 establishes “fokonolona”, organised into “fokontany”, as the basis for local development and provides for the participation of the “fokontany” president in the development of municipal development programs. In addition, [Law No. 2015-003](#) of 19 February 2015, relating to the Malagasy Environmental Charter, imposes public consultation requirements for any project likely to have environmental or social impacts.

In practice, however, violations of this principle have been observed, which was deplored by civil society during the [revision](#) of the Large Mining Investment Law (LGIM – *Loi sur les Grands Investissements Miniers*), where public participation was largely insufficient. The same is true of the adoption of the [anti-corruption hubs](#) law.

In theory, Madagascar's legal framework recognizes the importance of citizen participation in the legislative process. However, in practice, this participation remains largely limited, with citizens and CSOs rarely being effectively involved in the various stages of lawmaking. Several initiatives led by CSOs have nevertheless made it possible to draft legislative proposals, notably the law on access to public information and the bill on the protection of whistleblowers initiated in 2018. However, these initiatives frequently encounter institutional obstacles, particularly at the level of ministries, which delay or even prevent their adoption.

Participatory budgeting is also a mechanism that allows for direct engagement and oversight of public decisions at the local level. However, according to the [Open Budget Survey 2023](#), Madagascar scores very low (9/100) in terms of participation and opportunities to engage effectively in the budget process. Formal consultations with civil society often have no significant impact: even when they are organised, they are perceived as mere administrative formalities, with no real commitment on the part of the authorities to take the opinions expressed into account. Many CSOs report that their contributions are ignored, with no feedback or justification, fuelling a widespread perception of symbolic participation that discourages their future involvement.

The absence of institutionalized dialogue mechanisms is another major challenge. Dialogue between the state and civil society remains ad hoc, dependent on specific projects or particular initiatives. There is no legal or institutional framework defining clear procedures: who to invite, how to select representatives, what to do with the recommendations received, how to follow up on them, etc. This lack of structure makes consultations ineffective and unsustainable.

Furthermore, the exclusion of community actors and informal CSOs limits the representativeness of the discussions. Participation is dominated by large NGOs or CSOs based in the capital, which have greater resources and networks, while small local associations, often unregistered, are excluded from participatory processes, despite their in-depth knowledge of the field and the realities of communities. When exchanges do take place, they largely depend on the individual willingness of certain officials or on initiatives supported by donors. This lack of institutional anchoring deprives CSOs of stable and reliable interlocutors, making dialogue intermittent, unpredictable, and unproductive, which generates a climate of frustration and structural imbalance between the parties. Finally, this situation is exacerbated by the occasional instrumentalization of civil society discourse for political legitimacy or international visibility. CSOs may be invited to events or consultations to give the impression of participation, without any real willingness to integrate their proposals into public policy, thus reinforcing the idea of a purely formal partnership lacking in substance.

Many CSOs lack the human and technical resources needed to analyse policy documents (legislation, budgets, impact assessments, etc.) or to formulate well-constructed alternative proposals. This handicap is compounded by a lack of access to preparatory documents, which are often not disseminated or difficult to access. This weakens their ability to participate in an informed manner in reforms and reduces their influence in negotiations. CSOs in rural or informal areas are particularly affected due to a lack of capacity building, internet connectivity, or external support. They are therefore often excluded from discussions, creating a gap between actors on the ground and decision-making bodies within the administration and reinforcing the divide between public actors and civil society.

#### **4.3| Accountability**

CSOs participating in consultations have no visibility on what happens to their contributions. There is no formal system for finding out whether the opinions expressed have been accepted, modified, or rejected, and for what reasons. However, this lack of public reporting on decisions reinforces this lack of accountability and creates a sense of exclusion and frustration among CSOs, who often feel that their participation efforts have no concrete impact on public policy. This weakens mutual trust between the State and civil society and reduces the quality of democratic dialogue in Madagascar.

In practice, when a ministry or public institution does not adopt the proposals made by CSOs, no official explanation is given as to the reasons for this rejection. Reports on public consultations, when they exist, are generally not published or shared with participants. Furthermore, the means available to civil society actors to hold the government accountable remain very limited. Accountability mechanisms such as public hearings, citizen evaluation reports, or multi-stakeholder dialogues are rare, sporadic, and non-binding. In the absence of a clear legal framework on the right to information and citizen participation, CSOs have few tools to demand justification or monitor the implementation of their recommendations.

The effective implementation of parliamentary oversight of government action remains weak, particularly with regard to detailed monitoring of the implementation of laws and budgetary commitments. For example, the question-and-answer mechanism, which is a mechanism for overseeing government action, was suspended for approximately three years between June 2022 and June 2025. The session was only resumed in June 2025. The last session of the year was held in December 2025, one month after the appointment of the new government.

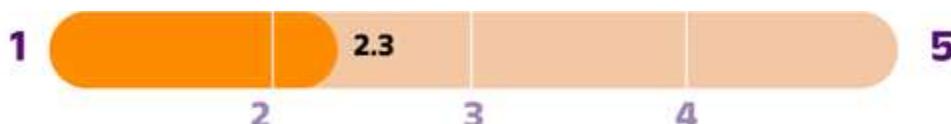
. This gap reinforces administrative opacity and prevents the State from being truly accountable. In the absence of an independent body, civil society actors have no reference point for monitoring progress or holding decision-makers accountable. This institutional absence limits the transparency of public decisions and hinders any efforts to continuously improve the situation or hold decision-makers accountable.

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## PRINCIPLE SCORE

# 5. Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society

Score:



The civic space in Madagascar is characterized by limited dialogue, conditional recognition of CSOs, and unequal inclusivity. While authorities accept CSOs when they focus on non-sensitive social issues, they are wary when these organisations address issues of transparency, land rights, or corruption, a dynamic reinforced by politicized media coverage and low public awareness of civic engagement. As a result and given the risks faced by critical actors and persistent barriers for marginalised groups, participation remains possible but limited, fragmented, and heavily dependent on the tolerance of the authorities.

### 5.1| Public discourse and constructive dialogue on civil society

Public discourse on CSOs remains ambivalent and often marked by conditional recognition. Although certain authorities or certain strategic documents such as the "[Stratégie nationale de lutte contre la corruption 2025-2030](#)" officially recognize the role of CSOs, this recognition largely depends on the position adopted by the latter. When CSOs focus on actions considered apolitical, such as education or health, they sometimes benefit from a certain visibility and tolerated dialogue with the authorities. However, as soon as they address more sensitive areas such as budget transparency, they encounter resistance, even hostility. The general climate remains marked by distrust of CSOs perceived as critical, "disruptive" or "politicized". The [BTI 2024 report](#) on Madagascar indicates that civil society is often seen as a "politics waiting room" or as an ally of the opposition. This distrust is fuelled by certain political leaders who interpret any form of citizen engagement as a questioning of their legitimacy

In July 2025, during an [interview](#) on Real TV, a Member of Parliament questioned the credibility of civil society, arguing that its members seek to engage in politics, gain benefits and hide behind the label "civil society" to legitimize their actions.

This reality reflects a conception of power that is still defensive and compartmentalized, reluctant to accept civil society as a true democratic counterweight. Furthermore, consultation structures between the administration and civil society are practically non-existent or extremely fragile.

The absence of dedicated public policies (national strategy, legal status, recognition of public service missions) weakens its institutional legitimacy and its integration into national priorities. This structural exclusion reduces long-term financing prospects and hinders the emergence of an ecosystem conducive to the sustainability of organisations.

Media coverage significantly influences citizens' perceptions of CSOs in Madagascar, but it remains very uneven and influenced by political and economic interests. Many media outlets avoid sensitive topics or only cover them when they are paid to do so, which reduces the visibility of citizen initiatives and accentuates inequalities between CSOs with significant resources and those with more modest means. Although collaboration between journalists and CSOs can build public trust, the lack of formal partnerships, the weak culture of civic journalism and the economic fragility of the sector limit their overall impact and perpetuate a climate of mistrust.

Furthermore, public dialogue between CSOs and the government in Madagascar remains weak and fragmented. Although there are some consultation platforms between government, CSOs and the media, these spaces often remain formal, non-inclusive and non-permanent. On 4 October 2025, the former President, a few weeks before his fall, organised a [meeting](#) with representatives of civil society with the aim of ensuring an inclusive, peaceful and constructive national dialogue. During this exchange, CSOs called for the establishment of direct communication mechanisms with the presidency. This follows civil society's [call](#) in June 2025 for more open and inclusive dialogue, highlighting that some ministries were more open to exchanges, while others remained closed to dialogue. However, this initiative could not materialize due to the change in the regime.

The capacity of CSOs to contribute effectively to a balanced national dialogue depends on their equitable access to media spaces, authentic recognition of their role by the authorities and the strengthening of a culture of debate based on listening, transparency and respect.

## **5.2| Perception of Civil Society and civic engagement**

The general public's perception of civil society is largely influenced by a lack of understanding of its real role and its democratic legitimacy. The media (both public and private) give little visibility to the structural actions of CSOs outside of specific events such as donation ceremonies or official ceremonies. According to the experts involved in this research, this selective media coverage fuels a reductive image of civil society, which is perceived as a simple humanitarian or technical relay, without the capacity for influence or social transformation.

The majority of Malagasy citizens believe that they have little power to influence political decisions and actively participate in political processes. [Afrobarometer 2024](#) indicates that

only a small proportion of citizens believe that their MPs (14%) and local councillors (25%) "often" or "always" do their best to listen to what people have to say. This could be explained by the fact that formal public consultations are rare and, when they take place, feedback on citizens' contributions is practically non-existent, giving the impression that their opinions are neither taken into account nor valued. Participation in community initiatives or civic and political organisations therefore remains limited, particularly in rural areas where access to information, infrastructure and institutional channels is mediocre. In urban areas, the better informed and more connected population can participate more easily, but their involvement remains sporadic and often depends on the visibility or funding of local CSOs. Fear of reprisals, distrust of institutions and the absence of a tradition of citizen participation reinforce this lack of commitment. The arrest of an activist in August 2024, reported by Civicus Monitor, for disturbing public order while participating in a demonstration against the reopening of the Base Toliara project, is an example of intimidation of citizen engagement.

Despite this, some young people and certain urban CSOs use social networks and community initiatives to denounce injustices or mobilize the population, but these actions remain insufficient to establish a general culture of citizen participation at the national level.

Civic education remains largely insufficient, non-inclusive and difficult to access, both in the formal school system and in community programs. Furthermore, as much remains to be done to strengthen national campaigns to promote civic engagement or the work of associations, and civic education does not occupy a very important place in the school system, it is difficult to foster a positive civic culture. Lack of knowledge of the role of CSOs, as well as the absence of a structured educational discourse on the subject, weaken their place in the collective imagination. This hinders the generational renewal of community engagement and perpetuates a marginal or instrumental perception of civil society.

School education on citizenship, political rights and civic responsibilities is approached superficially, rarely accompanied by practical exercises or in-depth discussions on the importance of civic engagement, and sometimes does not correspond to the reality of the country. Community or associative programs, which could complement this training, are fragmented, underfunded and concentrated mainly in urban areas, leaving a large part of the rural population, almost 70%, often peasant and illiterate, without the possibility of learning civic (INSTAT Madagascar).

This lack of comprehensive and structured civic education limits the understanding of the rights and duties of citizens and hinders the development of a generation overflowing with curiosity. As a result, generational renewal of civic engagement remains a distant prospect and civil society continues to be seen as marginal or instrumental, rather than a central actor in development and governance. By way of illustration, in November 2023, a ministerial circular n° 2023-862/MEN/SG, published on 7 December 2023, requested the elimination of sex education activities initiated by CSOs, deemed outside their field of skill. However, these awareness activities are essential: they allow young people to better understand their responsibilities and provide additional support for departmental awareness initiatives.

### 5.3| Civic equality and inclusion

Civic inclusion remains fragile and conditional. In Madagascar, Law n° 97-044 of December 19, 1997 is the main legislative text guaranteeing equal rights and the inclusion of people with disabilities as full citizens. A significant commitment was recently demonstrated to strengthen

this participation, through a [consultation](#) organised on 27 August 2025 in Antananarivo, with a view to finalizing the National Policy for the Inclusion and Empowerment of People with Disabilities (*Politique Nationale pour l'inclusion et l'Autonomisation des Personnes Handicapées PNAPH 2025-2034*). This policy aims to reduce discrimination, guarantee equitable access to social services and strengthen the economic integration and political participation of people with disabilities.

As part of this approach, in December 2025, on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the United Nations system in Madagascar organised a multi-stakeholder [dialogue](#). This event provided a platform to discuss the inclusion and empowerment of people with disabilities at the national level in terms of rights, accessibility and participation.

Despite these advances, people with disabilities, and particularly women, continue to experience double discrimination based on their gender and disability. The Association of Disabled Women of Madagascar (*Association des Femmes Handicapées de Madagascar AFHM*) has [highlighted](#) this issue and calls for the specific needs of disabled women, as well as disabled people in general, to be taken into account in public programs, development initiatives, infrastructure design, employment and policy processes. This illustrates the persistent challenges that Madagascar still faces.

Madagascar does not yet fully recognize the LGBTQIA+ community. During the [Universal Periodic Review](#) in July 2025, the country rejected several recommendations aimed at combating discrimination and violence against LGBTQI people. These communities often continue to face negative social attitudes and stigma, and there is no comprehensive legal protection against discrimination against them.

Furthermore, the dynamic of inclusion suffers from a lack of mechanisms to promote the active participation of historically marginalised groups, such as young people, women, people with disabilities and isolated rural communities. These groups face significant social and economic barriers that limit their access to information, decision-making spaces and civic initiatives. For example, rural populations and those with extremely low purchasing power often have limited access to education, the Internet or the media, reducing their ability to participate in public consultations or follow policies and national budgets. In some remote areas of the south of the country, residents may even ignore the time, who is their President or what are their fundamental rights. Similarly, women and some ethnic minorities may be excluded from decision-making processes due to social norms, such as the predominance of patriarchy or stereotypes assigning women the role of staying at home and caring for children, as well as other discriminatory practices. People with disabilities frequently face physical or organisational barriers in public spaces and dialogue platforms, limiting their participation. Social tolerance and respect for diversity remain low in certain regions, particularly among majority or dominant populations, which reinforces marginalisation. Differences related to gender, ethnicity, language, religion or sexual orientation are sometimes seen as factors of less legitimacy or secondary participation. This lack of recognition and appreciation of diversity limits meaningful inclusion and prevents the creation of an environment where all voices are heard and respected.

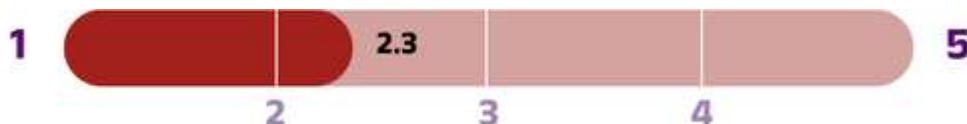
The legal and institutional environment does not provide sufficient levers to guarantee equal access to civic space. The result is an unequally represented civil society, where minority or critical voices have difficulty finding their place.

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## PRINCIPLE SCORE

# 6. Access to a Secure Digital Environment

Score:



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In Madagascar, digital rights, IT security and digital accessibility remain major challenges that limit the ability of CSOs to express themselves freely, work safely and participate fully in public life. The digital environment is marked by a climate of self-censorship fuelled by the risk of prosecution under the Cybercrime Act, which is often used against activists or journalists for defamation or endangering State security, which prompts many CSOs to avoid sensitive subjects.

### 6.1| Digital rights and freedoms

The combination of real digital threats and legal risks creates a particularly anxiety-provoking environment for CSOs in Madagascar. This situation mainly manifests itself in intimidating legal proceedings. The authorities frequently initiate proceedings under [Law n° 2014-006](#) of 17 July 2014 relating to the fight against cybercrime, citing accusations such as "defamation" or "endangering State security" in connection with the online publication of critical content.

Forces of Law and judicial authorities have prosecuted numerous activists (men and women) and journalists on the basis of this law, sometimes for the simple publication of critical articles. The specialised unit for the fight against cybercrime also recorded a sharp increase in offenses linked to [cybercrime](#) between 2020 and 2025. Several cases illustrate the pressure exerted on citizens and journalists for their publications

In December 2023, a [journalist](#) from a local radio station in Manakara was summoned for investigation for sharing content deemed defamatory. In January 2025, [another journalist](#) was accused of spreading false information on Facebook and endangering national security

As soon as the law on cybercrime was adopted, CSOs warned of the [risks](#) that its application could pose for freedom of expression. Reporters Without Borders also corroborated these [concerns](#). Amnesty International also [denounced](#) vague provisions of the law, such as those relating to defamation or State security, which can be used to intimidate journalists and citizens.

Furthermore, the legal proceedings surrounding these cases often lack transparency and fairness, which reinforces their intimidating nature. The systematic use of systematic pre-trial detention, often [unjustified](#), reinforces the intimidating nature of the prosecution of the persons targeted

Faced with these threats, many CSOs practice self-censorship by limiting their expression in the digital space and avoiding sensitive topics that could provoke retaliation. This climate of fear reduces the plurality of voices and weakens democratic debate, transforming a digital space conducive to citizen participation into a risky and vulnerable environment for civil society.

In Madagascar, internet and social media outages are relatively rare. No general cuts were documented during the September 2025 protest. Major interruptions remain exceptional and do not systematically hinder the functioning of CSOs.

However, there are other less visible forms of restriction: for example, certain pages or content may be automatically flagged by the platforms themselves, such as Facebook, when they are identified as unwanted or contrary to the rules of use. In practice, CSOs rarely encounter explicit content deletions. They may publish and share information online, but the visibility of certain content may be automatically restricted by [the platforms'](#) algorithms, without direct government intervention. [Studies](#) and [reports](#) from organisations specialising in digital rights, as well as feedback from local CSOs, indicate that the visibility of sensitive content, particularly that related to the fight against corruption, can be reduced by systems of moderation. These practices have the effect of limiting the reach of advocacy messages, without always offering transparent appeal mechanisms.

In this context, if general access to the Internet and social networks is stable, CSOs must remain attentive to technical or algorithmic limitations that may affect the reach of their messages, in particular during awareness or citizen mobilization campaigns

On a legal and regulatory level, Madagascar does not yet have a specific normative framework guaranteeing Internet freedom and the protection of online content. The Constitution enshrines freedom of expression in all its forms, but the absence of legislation on the online space limits the guarantees of the protection of content and actors. Several texts nevertheless address certain aspects of the digital environment in a partial manner without completely covering all the issues.

[Law n° 94-036](#) of 18 September 1995, on literary and artistic property, protects creations and intellectual works, including in digital forms and recognizes copyright against unauthorized production and use of works online. [Law n° 2014-006](#) of 17 July 2014 relating to the fight against cybercrime, aims to punish offenses committed through information technologies. [Law n° 2014-038](#) of 9 January 2015 relating to the protection of personal data regulates the collection, storage and use of data by imposing lawful and fair processing of personal data. [Law n° 2016-029](#) of 24 August 2016 relating to media communication governs traditional media and online communications, as well as press offenses. Finally, [decree n° 2023-1541](#) of 6 December 2023 specifies the skills, organisation and functioning of the Malagasy Commission for Information and Liberties (*Commission Malgache de l'Information et des Libertés - CMIL*), responsible for monitoring and sanctioning abuses linked to the processing of data of a personal nature.

## **6.2| Digital security and privacy**

The issue of digital security is particularly worrying for Malagasy CSOs. Several specific cases reported by speakers refer to targeted attacks: phishing, database intrusions, spyware and disinformation campaigns orchestrated against CSOs. In 2024, an organisation active in the field of budgetary control was hacked after publishing a critical report. These attacks not only compromised data privacy but also created a lasting climate of insecurity within the organisation.

Civil society actors in Madagascar, particularly those working on sensitive issues, are facing a worrying and alarming increase in cyberattacks and targeted surveillance. Digital attacks such as phishing, hacking, spyware such as wiretapping, online surveillance and disinformation campaigns create a context of permanent insecurity, exacerbated by the absence of a clear legal framework to protect communications and data. CSOs' technical capabilities remain weak, with limited budgets preventing them from acquiring software or implementing cybersecurity practices, while the State offers no structured support or training. Various forms of intrusive surveillance have been reported, ranging from illegal interception of telephone communications and emails to infiltration of computer systems, compromising the digital security of these actors. Many activists (men and women), journalists and members of OSC report that their telephone conversations or exchanges on instant messaging applications were illegally intercepted. These wiretaps are often carried out without a judicial warrant or independent control guaranteeing respect for fundamental rights. For example, a journalist was the victim of surveillance carried out outside any legal framework. Technical [reports](#) revealed that the phone of the director of the *Gazette de la Grande Île* had been targeted by Predator spyware, intended to monitor him due to his critical role

At the same time, these attacks compromise the sensitive data of organisations, lead to information leaks, disrupt work tools and can lead to the permanent loss of data essential to the activities of CSOs. The use of Predator spyware constitutes an additional vector of digital surveillance and intimidation. This software, often hidden in seemingly harmless links or files, allows infiltration of civic defenders' personal and professional devices.

Once installed, it allows real-time monitoring of their activities, movements, messages and calls, making any secret or protected action almost impossible. This intrusive surveillance is likely to be used to anticipate and hinder CSO initiatives, particularly those that challenge sensitive political or economic interests. Finally, these technical attacks are often accompanied by coordinated online smear and disinformation campaigns aimed at discrediting, intimidating or socially isolating activists and organisations. The dissemination of false information, insults and threats fuels a climate of fear and distrust, weakening the cohesion of civil society and limiting its capacity for mobilization and public expression.

According to [Global Cybersecurity Index](#) (GCI) 2024, Madagascar is still in a fragile phase of digital transition. With a score of 31.70 out of 100, the country is ranked in level 4 ("evolving"). Protective measures remain insufficient to secure users.

One of the challenges in cybersecurity is the weakness of technical capabilities in this area. Malagasy CSOs, particularly smaller ones or those located in rural areas, are seriously lacking specialised skills and resources to secure their communications. Staff are rarely trained in cybersecurity best practices and financial resources do not allow for the purchase of appropriate software, the implementation of security audits or the use of external technical assistance. In the absence of institutional support or public assistance programs, these organisations remain vulnerable to attacks, sometimes forcing them to voluntarily restrict their digital activities. This situation limits innovation in their actions, deprives them of essential tools for citizen mobilization and reinforces their isolation, particularly in a context of increasing digitalization.

Furthermore, the lack of institutional support to strengthen the cybersecurity of CSOs exacerbates their vulnerability. The [ratification](#) of the Malabo [Convention](#), the African Union Convention on Cybercrime, in June 2024, is a positive sign, but its implementation is still in its early stages. The diffusion of standards such as [the ISO/IEC 27002:2022 standards](#) has not yet reached grassroots associations. This lack of protection prevents many CSOs from fully engaging in monitoring, advocacy or reporting activities on digital channels, for fear of reprisals or exposure of their members.

### **6.3| Digital accessibility**

The connectivity rate in Madagascar is very low, with marked geographical disparities. At the start of 2025, according to [Data Reportal](#), Madagascar had around 6.60 million Internet users, representing a penetration rate of 20.4% of the total population. This very low rate considerably limits the capabilities of online mobilization, distance learning and digital civic participation. The digital divide is even more pronounced between urban areas, which are relatively well equipped, and rural areas, where infrastructure is practically non-existent. Many community CSOs report that they are unable to organise online activities or access strategic information due to the lack of a stable network.

Internet Service Providers (ISPs) continue to charge high prices compared to the average purchasing power in Madagascar. The average cost is about \$1.12 per gigabyte, or about Ar 5,100. At the beginning of December 2025, following negotiations between the State and operators, a reduction in this rate was [announced](#). The goal is to reduce it to \$0.54, or around Ar 2,500 per gigabyte.

For many small associations, the costs of monthly subscriptions, equipment purchases and regular mobile data top-ups are difficult to bear. Several participants highlighted that in some regions, regular access to the Internet is considered a "luxury" reserved for international NGOs or large organisations. This financial barrier effectively excludes many civil society actors, notably young people, rural women and members of community organisations. The unstable quality of the connection hinders the use of digital tools: even in connected areas, the quality of service remains problematic. Average connection speeds declined between 2023 and 2024, making video conferencing, distance learning, document uploading and collaborative platform management difficult. This technical instability discourages CSOs from engaging in structural digital initiatives and significantly limits their ability to collaborate with national and international partners, participate in online forums or complete training via virtual modules. Average connection speeds declined between 2023 and 2024, making video conferencing, distance learning, document uploading and collaborative platform management difficult. This technical instability discourages CSOs from engaging in structural digital initiatives and significantly limits their ability to collaborate with national and international partners, participate in online forums or complete training via virtual modules. To date, there is no ambitious national strategy aimed at reducing the digital divide for CSOs or citizens.

Public Wi-Fi zones are rare (or even non-existent in certain regions of Madagascar), there are no specific subsidies for Internet access for local associations and very few digital training programs are available in Malagasy. In the absence of proactive policies, inequalities are widening and initiatives rely almost exclusively on donors or private actors, which reinforces the dependence of CSOs on external partners. Added to this is low technical capacity in cybersecurity, CSOs in Madagascar face a significant lack of resources and technical skills needed to deal with growing digital threats.

AI is a double-edged sword that can save time and improve productivity but can also generate errors or inaccurate information. It should therefore be used with extreme caution. It is currently used in a limited and basic way, mainly for quick tasks or to facilitate the design of communication tools. The majority of actors in civil society and the general population remain poorly equipped and poorly trained to use it effectively and responsibly.

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# C) Recommendations

The conclusions of this report show that Malagasy civil society, despite its dynamism, still operates in an environment that is too restrictive and unequal. Current laws and practices hinder citizen initiatives, marginalise rural and community structures and make the vast majority of CSOs dependent on external funding. For civil society to fully play its role as a development partner, it is urgent to move from words to concrete actions.

## **1. Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Economy and Finance**

- Create a single national register of CSOs, linked to local authorities, in order to avoid duplication, loss of files and local "dusty notebooks".
- Set a maximum legal deadline (for example 30 days) for the issuance or renewal of an NGO receipt, with tacit acceptance in the absence of a response from the administration.
- Establish a simplified and accessible mechanism allowing community and traditional organisations (religious organisations, cultural associations, youth groups in rural areas) to obtain official legal personality
- Integrate CSOs into local development committees (*Comité Local de Développement - CLD*), regional anti-corruption units or municipal councils as permanent observers.
- Encourage the implementation of the adopted law on the protection of human rights defenders and whistleblowers

## **2. Judicial authority and Forces of law and order**

- Ensure fair and impartial application of the law, ensuring that provisions such as defamation and public order are not used for political purposes.
- Ensure that legal proceedings are not used for purposes of intimidation or arbitrary repression.

### **3. Ministry of Communication and Culture**

- Create a Malagasy Observatory of Digital Freedoms, made up of academics, journalists, CSOs and telecommunications operators.
- Increase and/or integrate community Internet access points in libraries, public schools and disadvantaged areas.
- Adapt the digital strategy to the linguistic divide by including a digital component in Malagasy and regional dialects.
- Encourage the implementation of the adopted law on access to public information

### **4. Ministry of Public Security**

Develop national guidelines governing Forces of law and order interventions in rural areas (markets, “fokontany”, mining sites), in order to guarantee appropriate, proportionate and non-violent practices, consistent with local realities, constitutional protections of freedom peaceful assembly and international human rights standards.

- Establish an independent mechanism for handling complaints against police abuse, accessible in the regions.
- Train Forces of law and order officers in the management of community conflicts, particularly in areas of insecurity (in the presence of “dahalo”).

### **5. Parliament**

- Adopt legal provisions governing the suspension of Internet services by economic operators, which can only take place on the basis of a reasoned judicial decision.

### **6. Civil Society Organisations**

- Strengthen internal governance and transparency through continuing training, the exchange of good practices and the pooling of resources.
- Develop collective and coordinated advocacy to defend the rights of association, expression and access to resources.
- Promote and document local initiatives, advocating for their recognition and funding.
- Diversify partnerships with local authorities, the private sector and the media in order to increase their visibility, legitimacy and autonomy.
- Create a national database of local good practices (education, health, environment).
- Strengthen the link between CSOs, municipalities and “fokontany” (and not just between CSOs and central government).
- Establish a national mechanism for citizen monitoring of legal reforms.
- Systematically monitor draft laws, budgets and public policies.
- Strengthen internal cybersecurity and data protection.
- Develop non-partisan communication strategies adapted to rural areas.

## 7. Donors and technical partners

- Fund local civic innovation laboratories (e.g. use of “kabary”, traditional forum theater).
- Support the creation of regional shared service centers for small CSOs (shared accountant, shared legal advisor, digital tools).
- Fund programs on transparency in mining, land and environmental projects, key sectors in Madagascar, and support initiatives on the establishment of protection mechanisms and legal assistance centers for human rights defenders.
- Support the documentation of digital violations (harassment, surveillance, cyberattacks and strengthening the internal capacities of CSOs for better protection against cyber threats).
- Support CSOs involved in constitutional reform (legal analysis, advocacy, civic education).
- Finance thematic coalitions (digital rights, local democracy, fight against corruption).

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## D) Research Process

Each principle encompasses various dimensions which are assessed and aggregated to provide quantitative scores per principle. These scores reflect the degree to which the environment within the country enables or disables the work of civil society. Scores are on a five-category scale defined as: fully disabling (1), disabling (2), partially enabling (3), enabling (4), and fully enabling (5). To complement the scores, this report provides a narrative analysis of the enabling or disabling environment for civil society, identifying strengths and weaknesses as well as offering recommendations. The process of drafting the analysis is led by Network Members; the consortium provides quality control and editorial oversight before publication.

For Principle 1 - which evaluates respect for and protection of freedom of association and peaceful assembly - the score integrates data from the [CIVICUS Monitor](#). However, for Principles 2–6, the availability of yearly updated external quantitative indicators for the 86 countries part of the EUSEE programme are either limited or non-existent. To address this, Network Members convene a panel of representatives of civil society and experts once a year. This panel uses a set of guiding questions to assess the status of each principle and its dimensions within the country. The panel for this report was convened in June 2025. The discussions are supported by secondary sources, such as [V-Dem](#), the [Bertelsmann Stiftung Governance Index](#), the [RTI Rating from the Centre for Law and Democracy](#), and other trusted resources. These sources provide benchmarks for measuring similar dimensions and are complemented by primary data collection and other secondary sources of information available for the country. Guided by these deliberations, the panel assigns scores for each dimension, which the Network Members submit to the Consortium, accompanied by detailed justifications that reflect the country's specific context. To determine a single score per principle, the scores assigned to each dimension are aggregated using a weighted average, reflecting the relative importance of each dimension within the principle. This approach balances diverse perspectives while maintaining a structured and objective evaluation framework.

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