



**The Brookings Institution  
Africa Growth Initiative  
Foresight Africa Podcast**

**“Dispatches from Africa’s COP: Malagasy youth on Madagascar’s beauty and the  
climate risks it faces”**

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*Episode Summary:*

Fenitra Jérémiah and Anja Radoharinirina, who both work for SAF/FJKM, an NGO in Madagascar, describe the incredible beauty of their country and the help they are providing to the communities most affected by climate change. Jérémiah and Radoharinirina share their positive impressions of the youth networking opportunities at COP27 and encourage more youth involvement in future climate events.

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**ORDU:** Hi, I'm Aloysius Uche Ordu, director of the Africa Growth Initiative at the Brookings Institution and host of Foresight Africa Podcast. We wrapped up season one of the podcast in August and we will return with season two in early 2023 after the publication of our flagship report titled "Foresight Africa."

Now, though, I'm happy to present a special series on this podcast titled, "Dispatches from Africa's COP." In November, COP27 was held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. One of the key themes of COP27 was the role of youth in addressing the climate change challenge, and Africa's youths rose to the occasion and presented some of the things they are doing on the frontlines of the climate fight.

In this special series, I'm talking to youth climate activists from different African countries who participated in COP27. They will share their valuable insights and their ideas and their proposals for action. These youths are from Ghana, from Kenya, from Madagascar, and from the Seychelles.

You can find season one episodes of this podcast on our website, Brookings dot edu slash Foresight Africa Podcast. Also, you can find the "Foresight Africa" report there as well. And now, here is a dispatch from COP27, Africa's COP.

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**ORDU:** My guests today are Anja and Fenitra from Madagascar. They both participated actively at COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. Anja is the technical director of a civil society organization in her home country, Madagascar. And Fenitra is a development assistant in the same civil society organization, SAF. Madagascar is vulnerable to climate change, especially drought, flooding, and cyclones. So, for the people of Madagascar, they are clearly no strangers to the havoc that climate change is wreaking to livelihoods and communities. Anja and Fenitra, a warm welcome to you both.

**RADOHARINIRINA:** Dear Doctor Ordu, it's it's for us a great pleasure to be here with you today. And we would like to thank you for the invitation. We are glad to be part of this podcast and to share to the world a bit more about our engagement and also a bit more about our country.

**ORDU:** So, let's get started. Do tell us about yourselves and a brief context about Madagascar regarding climate change and global warming. Anja first.

**RADOHARINIRINA:** Thank you for giving me the floor. So my name is Anja Radoharinirina. I know it's a long sentence in our way, but people call me Anja. So, I'm an environmental and forestry specialist, as introduced before. I am the technical director of the national NGO and national civil society, which works primarily on food security and climate change in Madagascar since 1974.

So, over the past ten years, I've worked intensively in the field helping communities and local actor to develop and to implement sustainable income-generating activities and also energy alternative, particularly in the east and southern part Madagascar, which are very vulnerable to climate change.

At national level, also, I'm active in multi-stakeholder and civil society networks as well as the platform for environment and climate change. Also at international level, I am doing also engagement as a member of the YOUNGO, but also a member of the global network of Civil Society for Disaster Resilience, but also Act Africa Youth and also the stakeholder engagement mechanism.

**ORDU:** Thank you very much. And Fenitra?

**JÉRÉMIAH:** Hello everyone, and thank you for the opportunity to make this podcast. My name is Fenitra Jérémiah. I am the fundraising and communication manager of the national NGO here in Madagascar. I am from Madagascar then. And apart from my work, I also am active in the youth associations, in on youth participation and environmental protection. I work towards capacity building of local actors and the community at the local level. And I also work in the field of environment and climate change, especially climate finance, gender equality, climate and disaster risk finance and insurance. Since two years ago, I worked to develop a multi-actor partnership on climate and disaster risk finance and insurance with the participation of real key stakeholders from the private sector, the public sector, the academy, and the civil society to have a better environment for climate finance here in Madagascar.

So, with that context of climate change in Madagascar—as you know, according to the Oxfam notes, Madagascar is one of the ten most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change. Only this year we had seven meteorological phenomena from January to April. We have also drought in the south, which is intense everywhere. This leads to food insecurity, hunger, migration, livelihood losses, and biodiversity loss. And the most important thing, it can cause damage on ... people, livelihoods. As you know, Madagascar or Madagascar, more than 80% of people are farmers and agricultural systems, mainly only rainfall. So, it's increased the poverty of the population and the dependency on foreign health and the debts. So, this is the context of climate change for Madagascar.

**ORDU:** Thank you very much, Fenitra, for that context, because basically for countries like yours, Madagascar, clearly climate change is real because you feel it on a daily basis and the impact on people's livelihood and poverty, as you rightly articulated. So, thanks for that context. Let me turn to the preparations for COP27. If you can share with us, both of you, how you prepared for the purpose of attending COP27?

**RADOHARINIRINA:** So, thank you for the question. The preparation was for me, it started last year while I was in Glasgow, last year for COP26. So, after the COP26 we had to kind of post-COP action plan, which was formulated in three pillars. The first one was the communication of the COP26. And then also a kind of action plan which the idea is really to turn the orientation of COP into local action. And the third pillar was the preparation of the Malagasy delegation to be on COP27.

So, as for myself, I participated in, you know, the evaluation of our former previous participation at COP26. But also there was a lot of consultation on various stakeholder, which I was part \_\_\_ consultation of youth. And also for my organization, we tried also to set up a kind of concept paper which combines, you know, all our insights from Madagascar \_\_\_ also the points of engagement and rule-sharing among us delegation from my organization. So, that was for myself.

**ORDU:** And, Fenitra, how did you prepare for COP?

**JÉRÉMIAH:** Thank you for the question. To add, doctor, to Anja said, that actually for me it's my first COP. So, I have a lot to prepare mentally and have to familiarize myself with the COP environment, doing researches, and \_\_\_\_\_, and participate in webinars and working groups. I have also the opportunity to be part of the Madagascar delegation and you have to know the country priorities. You also, this year for resources, not only financial resources, you have to look for information about the place and especially the accommodation. But if I have an advice for the young people and people who who want to be part of the of the next COP is to work in a team and try to be part of various groups because it is difficult to cover all the preparation. In other words, you have to work a lot on networking.

**ORDU:** Thank you both for that. What were your expectations and general impressions about COP? Anja?

**RADOHARINIRINA:** So, while looking back to Glasgow first, I think the Glasgow Climate Pact has some important breakthroughs. Such as the most striking perhaps is the commitment to accelerate the efforts towards the facedown of unabated coal power and inefficient fossil fuel subsidies.

But in my opinion, also, somehow the Glasgow pact fails us in in two points. My first point would be that the pact didn't get us on track to keep temperatures below one point five degree. Yes, indeed, it was raised on the table, but no concrete action was really about to be delivered after Glasgow. And then secondly, the pact fails us also to \_\_\_\_\_ on loss and damage. There was quite of not consideration on loss and damage. And the third is the complexity and the urgency of pushing out fossil fuel which was not properly addressed. And the last point where the pact failed for us, for my from my opinion is that there was no specific consideration of youth and gender in the pathways.

So, now at COP27 my expectation I would say come in that regard. The first is that as the COP27 took place in Egypt and Egypt is an African country, so, I told myself, okay, this will be really the COP for Africa in a way that's for sure African country, as well as all countries from the Global South, will benefit from more consideration and and that they will be really in the heart of the matters and concerns in negotiation.

And from the first week, I saw that there is a push up on loss and damage and adaptation finance. So, that is quite good. And also few, two initiatives were also launched this year like the Global Shield and the Santiago Network. And we stay hopeful on that. But we will see together how the negotiation will end up and if the slogan which say that this year we will be together for implementation will be really reflected on the COP27 outcome.

**ORDU:** And you, Fenitra, expectations prior to COP and your general impression at COP?

**JÉRÉMIAH:** Okay. Thank you for the question again. Anja already said a lot of things, but what I want to say is the words for the COP27 was Ambitions to Action. And there were a lot of ambitions, but we are still waiting for the actions, the implementation of these actions. For example, loss and damage was a very popular topic for the COP27. As you know, Madagascar is very impacted by the effects of climate risk and natural disasters. And when people lose their livelihoods, they cannot recover from the impacts of those of those hazards.

So, my expectation were that there were solutions for those vulnerable people, that can concern directly those vulnerable communities. I understand that this is a high level, high level negotiation with the states members, with international organizations, and so on. But I hope that the needs of different vulnerable countries in the name of climate justice will be taken into consideration and also not to forget the integration of gender and other vulnerable groups.

**ORDU:** It's been widely stated as both of you know, that a warming level of 1.5 degrees Celsius is not, and I repeat, not negotiable for small island states like Madagascar. What does this mean to you, Anja?

**RADOHARINIRINA:** Thank you for for that question. It's I think the most interesting question that I got so far. You know, while talking about Madagascar, I was here a little bit surprised by the way that people is not informed about Madagascar. Madagascar is an island, of course, it's the fourth biggest island in the world, but it is an island.

And if I can say two things about Madagascar, the first thing is that it is a beautiful country with beautiful people, but it suffers a lot about global warming. You know, the participation of Madagascar in greenhouse gases emission is only 0.12% of the world's total. But actually now if we look at the climate risk spectrum, Madagascar ticks all of the boxes, you know, from extreme weather events to low onset events, if I just talk about the extreme flooding that we have in the northern part of Madagascar and also the drought that we experienced for five years now in the southern part of Madagascar.

So, what I can say is if now at this level of global warming our island is suffering. But if we really agreed to reduce and, you know, to have this warming level of 1.5, this is not good yet for us. Why? Because the losses and the damages that we have accumulated now will be there for generation. We will pay out for that. So, for us, 3 degree, that is a good, you know, challenge. And that is also, that should be also an achievable goal if really the countries—I mean the countries from the north—works on hand by hand, and also if they accept, you know, to leave some of the economic advantages where they stick on.

**ORDU:** And, Fenitra, the ocean, which you're completely surrounded, the ocean can be the world's greatest ally against climate change. How are NGOs, the youths, and other stakeholders tackling the issue of ocean health in your home country, Madagascar, in order to build resilience?

**JÉRÉMIAH:** Yes, you're right. Because as an island, Madagascar has a its strategy on the oil pollution response and control and has also regulations and frameworks to protect the ocean and its resources. The country is also \_\_\_\_\_. We can say that there are some things that are worth mentioning are led by local actors and NGOs. We have marine protected areas that are developed here in Madagascar. And we also have the locally-managed marine areas in order to integrate the local communities in the management of marine resources and also at the same time raise awareness among the communities to protect themselves, the marine resources.

Madagascar has also a large forest of mangroves. As you know, mangroves is part of so-called low-carbon wells. So, we have a national strategy for the protection of mangroves. And many actors also are invested in this mangrove protection. Actually, we are also promoting the ecosystem-based adaptation approach to protect the the marine ecosystem and

to not forget that we have many local partners and actors that are working together and in network also to ensure the health of the ocean.

**ORDU:** Let's turn now to the COP27 itself. I was most impressed by how actively you both were involved in the debate about setting up an African Youth Council. What are your thoughts about the proposed council? Anja?

**RADOHARINIRINA:** I think this council is a great, great initiative. As we work together, we took the time to identify and analyze the gaps and needs and we came up also with concrete recommendations of actions, you know, from those young people coming along from many African countries. I think that this night was a very, very rich night in terms of ideas.

And for myself, the main five highlights that we should stick on is the first was from your wrap up at the end, the first was to keep it simple because only simple things are effective things. The more it gets complex, then we will be even lost on it and we might even tend to leave people or ideas behind us.

The second one is that this initiative should not be a duplication of the previous one, and it can be unique only by trying to create a synergy between existing council. We all know that at regional level, there is already many initiatives which are going on like like, you know, PACJA—Madagascar is an active member of PACJA, for example, the UNIFY, the Youth for Climate, the YOUNGO, and so on. So, I think as long as this council tries to create that synergy, then it is a good initiative.

My third and fourth would be that we should think local and we should act local. If that council does not stick to create or to have really impacts at the grassroots, then we will not be very good at advocacy and also at results and output creation.

And the last thing for myself is that I would have three wishes for that African Youth Council. The first is that this Council should, you know, contribute a lot on African youth and African led organization empowerment. The second is that this Council should help youth and youth led organization also to gain the trust that they deserve. I am talking about trust. Why? Because as young people as and also as a manager and leader of a local organization, I know that we are sometimes set aside. There is no trust that donor put on us really to implement initiatives that we want to do. They always ask us to work under an international NGO or bigger international organization. Why? Because they tend to think that we do not have the skills and we do not have the competence really to implement those actions. So, I think and I hope that this Council will really address that.

The last expectation for from me on that Council is that this should really help African actors, you know, to have those evidences and data on table so that they—our organization and networks and advocate also—they can be able, you know, to have concrete and also impactful advocacy as those advocacy will be really supported by evidence and solid data.

**ORDU:** Fenitra, your thoughts on the Council?

**JÉRÉMIAH:** I will add two things for on this question. One is that for African countries and in Madagascar, more than 65 of percent of the population are young people and they are 25. So, there's young people have to have their voices heard at the international level also.

The network of young people in Africa is a very great initiative. The first thing I hope, I expect for this Council is that there is a system, a mechanism that can allow youth from vulnerable group at the local level to participate actively in the Council because it will be at the regional level, African level. So, it can be a long way to go to the grassroots level. So, I hope that there will be a mechanism so that the voices of the vulnerable groups, especially youth, at grassroots level, can be taken into account.

The second thing is, I hope that the structuration of the Council won't damage the spirit of youth because young people are spontaneous, they have this dynamism. So, I hope that when the Council will be operational, this dynamism and the spirit of young people won't be lost.

**ORDU:** And then when you look back now on the two weeks at COP, Anja, what would you consider to be your personal achievements during this period?

**RADOHARINIRINA:** Personal achievement. Okay, compared to last year, last year at Glasgow, it was my, my, my first COP then in Glasgow and, and I think this year at COP27 I felt more confident, and I could also participate to to high side events. Like on the on Tuesday I was at high level youth side event at the European Union Pavilion, and we were with the EVP Frans Timmermans. So, it was quite a good time for us to to do advocacy. That is one thing.

I was also part of a few relevant emerging initiative, like like the African Youth Council but also a pre-COP program of youth in Madagascar.

This year or so I can say that humbly, I can be proud of my networking job as I met very interesting people like you, for example, Dr. Ordu. I met also Omnia El Omrani, who is the first ever in our youth envoy at COP27 President. I also met Bernard Kato, who is a young activist from Tuvalu, which taught me a lot about the daily climate struggle of the Pacific island people.

**ORDU:** Fenitra, over to you. Your personal achievements during the two weeks at COP?

**JÉRÉMIAH:** First, as it was my first COP, I learned a lot. I could see how negotiations work and how the \_\_\_\_\_ participated in a lot of side events. When I have to talk before a lot of people talking about my country and talking about the works on climate change in my country. So, I have the opportunity to increase the visibility of Madagascar. It's the same as Anja says, there's a lot of people who doesn't know Madagascar, they only know the animation about Madagascar, but not the reality of Madagascar, as it is a very vulnerable country \_\_\_\_\_ for biodiversity. So, one of my achievements was to increase the visibility of Madagascar for participation to those side events.

Another thing is also I have the opportunity to talk openly with government actors from Madagascar, from the the the United Nations, and the networking also with other organizations, other youths, and other activists. And the thing is, one of the best achievements here from the COP was also to be able to fight to fight for Madagascar in every ways that are possible.

**ORDU:** Let's turn now to the issue of gender. Do you see any links between climate justice and gender equality? Anja?

**RADOHARINIRINA:** Yeah. Two things. When we talk about climate justice, there are two things that are popping out in my mind. I can say there is no climate justice without gender equality. You know why? Because the world is full of diversity. The world is full of normal and not normal. Things we can see like this. So, the gender equality should really be part, if we cannot say one of the pillars of climate justice. This is one thing. The second thing is that there is no climate justice without human rights, too. We are talking a lot about human rights. We are talking a lot about children and youths. Right. And I think this really matter, as Fenitra has worked a lot on on climate justice and gender equality. I think she would have more input as myself on that question.

**ORDU:** Fenitra, any thoughts?

**JÉRÉMIAH:** If we take an example in the south of Madagascar, people are affected by drought, and a large portion of the households in the south of Madagascar are headed by single women with more than five children in charge. So, when the the child arrives, there is an increasing vulnerability of this household. So, say those people are all affected, those groups are more affected more than others because they are already vulnerable physically, financially, and sometimes they are also marginalized. We need special consideration for these groups. For example, in Madagascar in some traditional society and the rural areas, women and girls have less access to resources like water, land, and income.

So, there is a link, a link between climate justice and gender equality, because we have to look to look at those vulnerable groups and especially woman and girls, so that the actions on climate change won't increase vulnerability. But it is possible if the actions and climate finance doesn't take into consideration the needs of women and girls it can increase their vulnerability more and more.

**ORDU:** Absolutely. And I like the notion that no climate justice without gender equality, I think that is very much on point. And on financing, there was so much talk, as you both recall, about climate finance and during COP27. I just wanted to get your thoughts—is demanding access to climate finance enough for a small island state like Madagascar? Anja?

**RADOHARINIRINA:** Yeah, that's a great question. You know, when talking about climate finance, we can say that billions of dollars is is on the cloud, is in the cloud—if we say it like this—for for, 5 to 5 years to a decade now. But if we, for example, look at the Green Climate Fund, which is the biggest funding mechanism up to now in terms of climate adaptation and mitigation, Madagascar has few projects funded by the Green Climate finance, but also the adaptation funds. Why? Because even if we keep, you know, demanding access to climate finance and so on, but if the country doesn't really have the capacity, you know, to take a bit or even bite of this this funding, then it we will be remaining as the same situation.

So, I think a part, or maybe in addition, of asking and demanding access to more climate finance and asking finance for loss and damage and all relevant thematic, I think we should ask to have a fair mechanism, you know, to ensure that first, each country access to the climate finance and each country, especially vulnerable country like Madagascar, is really figures on the board of of countries that benefited from that climate finance in a fair way. This is one thing.



But also, if we have the finance on hand and if it is available, we will be asked about accountability, we will be asked about transparency of action. And if I look at Madagascar case, we are far from that—there is no accountability on the funding that we got from outside and there is no transparency that we provide to the people. Access to information is very limited here, and if we look at access to information about finance and how they use it and how the government is accountable, this is quite impossible.

So, if at international level, there is a mechanism to ensure first that there is a fair access to local finance, and there is also a mechanism which ensures that accountability and transparency is there, I think that that would be really perfect.

And last at national level, I think the matter of consideration of all stakeholders' engagement in those climate finance should also be at the heart of this topic of climate finance.

**ORDU:** I couldn't agree with you more. It's demanding access to more money is obviously important, especially for, in fact, for all countries, but more so for small island economies like yours. But as you rightly put it, country ownership, country commitment to using these funds in a very accountable and transparent way to execute on the issues agreed on—I think those are really, really important. Very much so.

What impressed or surprised you most at COP? What would you have liked to see more of during the two weeks there?

**RADOHARINIRINA:** So, I was really surprised, you know, at this COP27, because if I was, let's say, asked ten times about where am I from, and I answer, of course, Madagascar, and eight people out of those ten is like saying saying, where is it? Is it in Africa or in Asia? So, I told myself, okay, we are not visible, we are not we are not in the mouth of people. Yeah, that that's funny, you know.

So, from that moment on, I told myself, okay, every time and everywhere I am doing a presentation, or I am doing an intervention, then I will take three minutes to talk about Madagascar, to talk about where is Madagascar, and to talk about general things about Madagascar. Because even, you know what, African summit or African meeting, they even tend to forget to put the Madagascar in the map of the African continent. So, this is heartbreaking for me.

So, next next year, I will definitely have, you know, small brochures or small fliers about Madagascar, and I will definitely be involved in sharing it everywhere, like an advocacy about the visibility of our country. And I am sure that this is not only Madagascar. Some of the small islands of the Pacific, maybe or some people from from, you know, from very remote and vulnerable area which are which are suffering about climate change. But they are not visible at the international scene.

**ORDU:** It might interest you to know that back home in Nigeria and boarding school, we used to have this song that goes like Africa without Madagascar is incomplete. So, I guess many of those you interacted at COP27 did not learn that song. Right? Shall we switch over to Fenitra? What surprised you most during the two weeks at COP?

**JÉRÉMIAH:** Some of the things that surprised me the most were the commitments of many young people like me and even younger than me here at the COP, and the many activists that

were not afraid to raise the voice of people from communities around the world who were here speaking to governments and taking the lead to actions. Their commitments were amazing. It was for me like a cause to raise my need to act, to be active in this fight against climate, against climate change, and to fight for the vulnerable communities.

**ORDU:** So, Anja, do you have any particular recommendations for better participation or engagement of youths next time around?

**RADOHARINIRINA:** The first maybe message before recommendation to all youth around the world is that this world is moving very fast, and this world is ours. And this world is the world that we will give to our children and do not wait for anybody else to do things. You have to do it.

So, my first recommendation would be there is a lot of opportunities to be engaged at local, national, and international level, but we have to start somewhere. And the best way to start is to do it at home and to do it at the neighborhood. This can be, for example, you know, trying to reduce the footprints or trying to have local and civic engagement on boards or advocates from little to big things. This is one thing.

But the second thing that it is very important to, you know, to to join a movement, to join networks, because it is like opening a window to your country or opening a window to see what is happening in the world.

**ORDU:** And Fenitra, any thoughts?

**JÉRÉMIAH:** Some recommendations for better participation of youth: We can also set up a mechanism that can enable youth even from vulnerable people or communities to participate. I don't know if we can set up a special program like a cohort of young negotiators to give youth entry points to participate in the COP. Because we are young people and we want to be youthful. So, we have to support the youth to participate in the COP or in other climate actions.

**ORDU:** Finally, what would you consider as just one, one main take away from your time at COP?

**RADOHARINIRINA:** From my main takeaway is more personal. You know, we got the engagement from our Minister of Environment and also the United Nations representant. They promised us to help us to have a more capable youth Malagasy delegation at COP28. Indeed, it's a takeaway because it represents a hope for us and also a new energy flow in the mindset to be go back home. But of course, this will be a job also because we will have to set up this program and we will have to implement it. But anyway, we got new friends and also we get new engagement.

**ORDU:** And Fenitra? Takeaway, main one?

**JÉRÉMIAH:** The main takeaway will be to add up to what Anja said, the network, the network of young people that we can bring back home to to like a big networking of local organizations. We've ... there's other organizations from other countries to have a better and efficient fight against the against climate change. So, this is the main takeaway for me, this network of young people that we can bring back home.

**ORDU:** On that note, you're absolutely right, both of you, because I was very impressed, very impressed with the number of youths exchanging WhatsApp groups to keep in touch and keep focus on what's happening at the local level. Anja and Fenitra, I really, really would like to thank you both for the opportunity to join me today. Enjoy your day.

**RADOHARINIRINA:** Thank you. Thank you, and enjoy your day, too.

**JÉRÉMIAH:** Thank you, doctor. And it was a great experience. Enjoy your day.

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**ORDU:** I'm Aloysius Uche Ordu, and this has been Foresight Africa. To learn more about what you heard today, you can find this episode online at Brookings dot edu slash Foresight Africa podcast.

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