



On Saturday 04 December 2021, at the Novotel located in Alarobia Antananarivo, a *"Day of reflection of the network of African Women Leaders in Madagascar"* was held, under the theme *"The economic revival of Malagasy women in the context of Covid-19 and Kéré "*

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Below is the transcription of the full speech delivered in French, by Mrs. Mialy R. Razakandisa, First Lady of Madagascar and Founding President of the Fitia Association.

Ladies Ministers,

Mr. Resident Representative of the United Nations,

Madam Ambassador of the African Union,

Mr. UNFPA Representative,

Madam Representative of UNIDO,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends.

I am particularly honored to be invited to this Day of Reflection, the objective of which is to identify ways to help women recover from the economic consequences of Covid-19 and the impact of Kéré.

These two scourges have particularly affected women who are more isolated, more isolated. This Day has its place perfectly during these 16 days of activism against Gender-Based Violence. It is essential to highlight the importance of women in the development process, and even in sustainable development.

Investing in the empowerment of women is a sure path out of poverty and for inclusive economic growth. Every woman aspires to the development of her family. Its empowerment is therefore the key to a more peaceful society.

Thus, I address myself to you women wives, mothers, sisters and daughters: you are essential for the development of our Continent, starting with your home, your neighborhood, your city, your country. Despite the hardship of Covid-19 and climate change, you have held on. Many of you have even shown the resilience to start a business.

I want to salute your courage and tenacity.

For those who find it difficult to get up, structures are now present in the four corners of the island, to support them towards autonomy. Whether you aspire to harness your manual talents or improve your knowledge in other areas, we take action to help you.

In March 2021, the Fitia Association visited the six provincial capitals of Madagascar, in order to support structures by setting up income-generating activities for women.

In Tamatave, we are developing a mutualized fruit processing unit to produce juices, syrup, dried fruit, fruit paste and even fruit powder. This initiative enables 280 women to be entrepreneurs, to gain autonomy and to enter the formal sector.

In Fianarantsoa, ☐☐ it is the beekeeping sector that we have supported in the "Soa Tantely" Cooperative comprising 60 people, and the Association of Peasant Women of the Sahambavy tea plantation made up of 200 women.

In Tulear, moringa plants were planted on one hectare and we created a moringa processing unit from drying through grinding to bagging.

In the western part of the island, in Majunga, at the request of the Association of Fishermen's Women, we built the city's first landing stage, which allows fish to be preserved and processed. The women received vocational training.

Further north, in Diego. To support women artisans, we have planted raffia and bamboo together, which are the raw materials in their industry. This support was beneficial to them for better management of their production schedule.

In the capital, here in Antananarivo, to deal with the lack of professional structures in the crafts, such as pottery, embroidery and silk weaving, a shared workshop has been created. Professional equipment has been made available to women artisans, to enable them to create their creations.

Today in our country too many women continue to suffer from illiteracy. And, consequently, unemployment. They often face multiple forms of discrimination, as if they had made the mistake of just being women.

That is why Education is one of the pillars in the actions we take. In southern Madagascar, some schools have closed because of the Kéré. The revitalization of school canteens has encouraged the return of schoolchildren, which has also increased in number. So nearly 2.5 million hot meals have been served to students to date.

This action is bearing fruit. Every day more and more children join school. A beacon of hope for a generation and, in particular, a generation of educated girls and women and actors of their future.

Also in this region, we opened in October 2021, in partnership with the Mérieux Foundation, the NUTRISUD factory. Employing mostly women, the factory produces 8 million nutritional pods per year for canteens in the region. NUTRISUD sources raw materials, such as peanuts, from local women farmers.

In the districts of Amboasary Sud, Bekily and Ampanihy, it is the women in rural areas that we support. We donated agricultural equipment, tillers and cassava seeds to them over 30 hectares. In Ambovombe, we are emphasizing industrialization as a factor of empowerment, by setting up a unit to process cassava into gari (Note: cassava meal or flour).

Contributing to the integration of women into society also involves giving them the tools to achieve it. And this, through Training. Thus, at the Care Center for Victims of Gender-Based Violence, in Mahamasina (Antananarivo), the Fitia Association, in collaboration with various ministries and the UNFPA, has set up integrated training since September (2021).

Ladies and gentlemen,

Much has been done in recent years. I take this opportunity to extend my thanks and encouragement to all the different public, private organizations; to each of you, here present, who have rallied to this cause.

To conclude, I appeal to Women Leaders, Institutions, Organizations, Companies, Associations but also to everyone: LET'S SUPPORT, ENCOURAGE AND TRAIN WOMEN. **Because an autonomous woman is a fulfilled woman**

. It is the assurance of a happy home, a stable community and, ultimately, a developed nation.

Thank you for your attention.

Mialy Razakandisa Rajoelina

First Lady of Madagascar

Founding President of the Fitia Association

Transcription: Jeannot Ramambazafy