THE BEST LAID PLANS OF MICE AND MEN...

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Category: Madagascar

Recently, I've posted a couple of articles on the issue of planning in Christian mission (here and here). Today brings us a concrete example of why any plans have to be held lightly. Sue was due to fly to Madagascar next month for her next translation workshop. For the last couple of months, the country has been in a state of upheaval as two factions have fought for power. In fact things got so bad that they even made it onto the British domestic media! Today, we learned that the elected president has stepped down:

> ***Madagascar's President Marc Ravalomanana has said he is standing down and handing power to the military.***
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> *But military leaders were reported to favour a direct transfer to 34-year-old opposition leader Andry Rajoelina.*
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> *Mr Rajoelina has installed himself in the president's offices, seized on Monday by pro-opposition troops.*

> *A BBC correspondent in Madagascar says it seems clear Mr Ravalomanana is stepping down, but there is confusion over how it will be done.*

> *It is unclear whether the generals chosen by Mr Ravalomanana to head a new military directorate are willing or able to take over, the BBC's Jonah Fisher says.There were unconfirmed reports that those generals had been arrested. (read more)*

As you can imagine, this is not a good time to try and organise a workshop, with lots of people travelling across the country and a number coming in from abroad. So, having planned for this for months, organised our diaries and such like, we find at the last minute that Sue won't be going to Madagascar. I must admit that it's nice to think that Sue will be home for that period, but I know how much she enjoys and is stimulated by her translation work and I realise that this is a huge disappointment to her.

However, it would be wrong to focus on the effect that the upheaval in Madagascar will have on the Arthur family. There are 20 million Malagasy people, most of whom are living in extreme poverty. The events of the last few months have badly affected tourism which is one of the main sources of income and the fact that the country seems unable to maintain a stable government will do nothing to promote investment. Yes, these events upset our plans, but we can't begin to calculate the effect they will have on the lives of millions of Malagasay people. It is a huge temptation to dwell on the effect that hardship and disturbance has on the lives and plans of missionaries, but as we have noted before, it is the local people who suffer far more.

One great blessing in all of the events in Madagascar is that the transition to a new government has

been achieved without a lot of bloodshed - let's pray that it carries on in that way.