

Country Office Annual Report 2019

Madagascar



Update on the context and situation of children

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In 2019, Madagascar's political environment was characterized by transition. The new President, Andry Rajoelina, was inaugurated on 19th January, and a cabinet nominated ten days later. The political transition at lower levels took longer to finalize, which affected UNICEF's programming along with other technical and financial partners. Performance contracts were introduced for departments and ministers, which led to the launch of several quick win initiatives, and some positive effects of reinforced accountability, but also delayed the implementation of some strategies designed by previous government, such as the National Strategy for Education, which was put on hold. The President's political party (IRD) consolidated its influence as the year went on in legislative and municipal elections, and a presidential programme aiming at "Initiative for Madagascar's Emergence" (IEM) was designed throughout 2019, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, but has been not promulgated to date.

Economic growth had reached 5 per cent in 2018 and was expected to continue at that level, but it slightly slowed in 2019 for reasons both directly linked to the deceleration of public spending during the transition year, and because of a slowdown on international markets for extractive industries and vanilla, two of the main exports from Madagascar. Incidentally these are two economic areas where child exploitation is considered prevalent. Renewed interest by authorities and stakeholders on the social impact of these sectors could already improve the situation of children.

Tax recovery in Madagascar is among the lowest in the world, and public or semi-public utilities consume a large proportion of what there is, so social sectors, especially the ones that impact children, are suffering from suboptimal allocations. Absorption capacity remains limited, and only marginal amounts reach decentralized levels. In the medium term, Madagascar's growth potential may continue to be hampered by the lack of infrastructure, insufficient progress in the development of human capital, the low level of competition in key sectors and some governance problems. This situation has major impacts on children since budget analysis – supported by UNICEF – demonstrates a very low level of per capita spending in social sectors. This has caused important financial burden for parents when accessing social services and inability to attract or retain competent workforce, especially in isolated areas – less than 40 per cent of municipalities being accessible all year long.

The status of children in Madagascar will therefore depend on the operationalization of these political, economic and technical transitions, and is still characterized by very poor indicators. Child mortality is on an overall slow downward curve, and chronic malnutrition rates have fallen from 47 per cent in 2012 to 42 per cent in 2018, but there are no major SDG targets that are likely to be met by Madagascar in 2030 on current trajectories. Many indicators demonstrate a clear deterioration, such as immunization (25 per cent vs 36 in 2012 of children fully vaccinated by 1yr old), exclusive breastfeeding (from 86 per cent to 51 per cent), birth registration (83 per cent to 78 per cent). Only 41 per cent of the population have access to a basic water supply. Additionally, only 23 per cent of 7-14-year-old achieved basic competency in reading. For basic competency in mathematics, the figure was 7 per cent nationwide. 77 per cent of the population lives on less than USD \$1.90 per day, making Madagascar the country with the largest share of population in acute poverty in the world.

However, some positive developments are paving the way for improving the situation: a UNICEF-supported large scale 180 km long pipeline was inaugurated in 2019 in the presence of the president, alleviating impact of drought in the marginalized southern part of Madagascar. A new roadmap to Open Defecation Free status has been finalized, to tackle the fact that more than 40 per cent of the population still practices open defecation. An adolescent health strategy was promulgated to support empowerment and family planning. Measures were finally taken against preventive jail for children (67 per cent of all cases). An increased political commitment on nutrition will help mobilize partners. The submission of Madagascar's casework to the Universal Periodic Review also helped highlight the needs and recommendations to improve the situation of children. New approaches such as strengthened social policy, climate change or impact of pollution on children are being explored.

Regarding emergency, Madagascar was spared from the impact of two major cyclones that swept through the eastern and southern Africa region in 2019. The chronic drought in Madagascar's southern regions improved since last year, in part thanks to international support, but the structural causes of the situation largely remain untouched. A large-scale measles epidemic that claimed an estimated 1,080 victims happened in 2019. The response required a massive and rapid immunization campaign reaching more than 7.2 million children, which was a heavy strain on a fragile health system, which is also dealing with regular localised plague outbreaks. With lessons learned from recurrent health emergencies of the recent years, both the African Development Bank and World Bank have committed to a rapid reinforcement of disaster resilience and response capacity in the country.

UNICEF operated with 15 other resident agencies in the context of the UNDAF, which was currently extended for one year and will now finish in 2020. Preparations for the new programme of cooperation began this year and ran in parallel to the Government's development of their own new national development plan.

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Major contributions and drivers of results

UNICEF Madagascar's **Annual Management Plan**, issued in February and revised in July and December, identified six main priorities, aligned with the current UNICEF Strategic Plan's programmatic results, including a priority on efficient management of the country office.

These elements, except for the sixth which is internal, align with Government's existing priorities and the UNDAF outcomes (i. economic growth, ii. governance, iii. Social services), UNICEF's Strategic Plan, and Eastern and Southern Africa Region's regional priorities. The main results and their drivers are summarized as below:

1. Every child survives and thrives

Under-five and neonatal mortality rates have decreased in Madagascar since the last household survey in 2012, but not enough to meet international SDG targets. Stark disparities remain in access to and quality of health care for the most vulnerable populations. UNICEF aims at strengthening the health system while reinforcing capacity at local levels where healthcare is often hard to reach. UNICEF supported the Government's development of key plans, policies and strategies to build this system. This included the health sector development plan, the national community health policy and the investment case for reproductive, maternal neonatal, under-five and adolescent health and nutrition.

UNICEF also engaged in major operational initiatives, such as the immunization of 7.2 million children to stop the 2019 measles epidemic, or the Maternal and Child Health week that reached 3.5 million children. The installation of 504 solar fridges contributed to strengthening the sustainability of the immunization programme. UNICEF supported the implementation of the "**Every New-Born Action Plan (ENAP)**" for the benefit of 256,080 pregnant women in targeted regions. Despite that there are only 40 per cent of mothers giving birth in a health centre (higher than national average of 21 per cent). Community-level interventions are thus a priority to increase this rate. Additionally, 3,652 community workers were trained to detect killer diseases, with 53,000 cases treated. An SMS monitoring system piloted by UNICEF enabled decision makers to be alerted about outbreaks more quickly.

A growing issue on ENAP is about Adolescent pregnancy rate with 36 per cent of girls giving birth before the age of 18 at national level, (60 per cent in Southern regions). Forty (40) per cent of girls (aged 15-19) do not want to use any contraceptive methods. Sixty-four (64) per cent of women giving birth in this age group delivered at home and almost half of them were assisted by a traditional birth attendant.

In partnership with the Government of Madagascar (GoM), several UN, bilateral partners and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), UNICEF supported the strengthening of the policy framework by contributing to the formulation of the National Policy for Adolescent Health, which aims at promoting behaviour change and enhancing services adapted to adolescents and youth. Moreover, 44 youth-friendly health centres in Anosy region were supported to provide medical check-ups, counselling and awareness raising, including on pregnancies and deliveries (through neonatal resuscitations and midwifery kits, treatments, HIV tests for pregnant women). More than 38,000 teenagers -both in and out of school- received health check-ups through these centres, which offered prenatal consultations to 5,213 pregnant adolescents and HIV testing to 5,858 adolescents (including pregnant girls)

UNICEF pursued its commitment in changing social norms and family practices that are detrimental to girls and women, and affecting children well-being: a composite set of interventions was carried out reaching a broad audience and fostering transformative attitudes within the household and in communities on exclusive breastfeeding, child marriage, food diversification, schooling, hand-washing, and vaccination. Messages were spread through 18 television channels, 25 radio stations. CSOs, athletes, singers, the network of women journalists, religious and traditional leaders, signed a pledge to support six Essential Family Practices in their circle of influence. Members of 215 radio stations have trained and broadcast messages on key behaviours through their programs.

For nutrition, stunting in under-five year old children declined from 47 per cent to 42 per cent between 2012 and 2018 while acute malnutrition declined from 8 per cent to 6 per cent- both remaining unacceptably high. UNICEF delivered a multi-pronged approach, through campaigns, community level interventions, pilot schemes aimed at tackling poor nutrition outcomes head on, and national-level advocacy and is supporting a large-scale capacitating programme (PARN) in partnership with the World Bank. As part of routine activities, more than 4 million children aged 6 to 59 months received vitamin A supplementation and about 3.7 million children aged 12-59 months were de-wormed. UNICEF provided leadership on Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) network and achieved breakthrough results in iodization of salt, which was approved by national decree. Over 30,000 severely acute malnourished children were treated with UNICEF's support.

Two innovative approaches from 2019 worth mentioning: new urban strategy allowed UNICEF to identify 15,000 unvaccinated children; UNICEF-convened forum on the uses and benefits of cactus as a supplementary income in the

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drought-affected south.

UNICEF worked in partnership with several UN agencies (WHO, UNOCHA, UNAIDS, UNFPA), bilateral partners (USAID, World Bank, GAVI, Global Fund) and civil society (local NGO COMARESS). Cluster coordination meetings and bilateral consultations around the joint UNDAF work plans for health and nutrition helped maximise UNICEF's comparative advantage and value added.

1. Every child learns

Education indicators in Madagascar remain worrying. Less than 1 per cent of all Madagascar's primary school teachers have the skills required to teach. This is reflected in low learning rates, with only 23 per cent of children having basic competency in reading, and 7 per cent in maths.

UNICEF focuses first on system strengthening. The political transition led to a review of the priorities discussed in the national Education Sector Plan (PSE in French), especially the new recommended school-year calendar. This slowed the pace for new reforms and strategic changes. UNICEF however managed to maintain a critical role in mobilising partners, and reinforcing its approach towards reinforced access, quality and systems. A specific focus was given on reinforcement of data availability, with Madagascar being one of the leaders in "data must speak" initiative. Pilot initiatives to adapt the system to the most vulnerable, for example children living with disabilities or children transitioning from primary to secondary level are being put to scale.

Regarding access, which remains an issue especially at secondary level (41 per cent gross enrolment rate for lower secondary), UNICEF supported the education system with environmental-friendly, cyclone proof classroom construction with latrines that benefited over 5,400 girls and boys from preschool to lower secondary. Beyond infrastructure, 47,042 learners (23,719 boys and 23,323 girls) were brought back to education through catch-up classes. In collaboration with Social Policy section, a cash transfer programme helped 12,123 vulnerable households to minimise economic shocks and maintain their children in schools. Improved monitoring mechanisms will be required to check the long-term reintegration of children in schools. UNICEF gave large scale support to the production and distribution of inputs that contribute to quality education. Close to 17,000 schools received new teaching and learning materials. More than 9,000 preschools benefited from 30,500 learning tools for 355,000 learners (53 per cent of whom are girls). These included the preschool curriculum and teaching guidelines for 15,000 educators, and the training guidebook for 350 trainers. Furthermore, 200,000 educational posters on 10 learning areas were distributed to more than 10,000 schools, benefitting 1.6 million learners (of whom 50 per cent are girls).

Nevertheless, access without quality is not optimal and UNICEF supported MENETP in training 2,266 teachers, trainers and pedagogical supervisors. More than 2,300 pre-school educators (71 per cent women) have benefited from basic pedagogical training, including the management of reading books. Peace education was promoted in 13 institutions in the South by 260 trained members of peace clubs. Support was offered to put in place a distance modality of training pre- and in-service staff: 3,200 supervisors and trainers for lower secondary schools, school directors and primary and lower secondary teachers received improved supervision skills

1. Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

MICS data confirmed that violence within families is pervasive, with 86 per cent of children having experienced violent discipline at home. In Madagascar, forty (40) per cent of women aged 20-24 were married before the age of 18, and 47 per cent of children aged 5-17 work; they are engaged either in economic activities, or in domestic work for more hours per week than is considered appropriate for their age and healthy development. At 78 per cent, the birth registration rate is relatively high, but worsened from 83 per cent in 2012. Regional disparities are huge. Therefore, UNICEF aims at both structuring the sector for long term sustainable and equitable results but also support immediate response for the most at risk

Priorities for 2019 were therefore the development of a national child protection policy as well as increased allocation of national resources. A second priority was an assessment of the social welfare workforce, with a view to its institutionalization within the civil service. Neither process was completed as was expected in 2019 but significant progress was made, particularly in convening a range of ministries and civil society partners around these two shared goals. The Ministry of Interior established a department dedicated to CRVS for the first time.

These political progresses are translated to the field via an array of 142 child protection networks (CPN) in ten regions, which contribute to raise awareness and reinforce demand for service: 4,824 child victims were identified and received psychosocial, medical and legal support services. The varying availability and quality of these services remains a challenge, however. As part of efforts to strengthen capacity, a decree on foster care was developed and finalized with support from

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UNICEF. The national toll-free child helpline, as an alternative to CPN to alert on cases and work on on-line protection, also supports awareness and alert mechanisms. 456 victims of child labour were identified through a joint project between UNICEF, ILO and the Ministry of Labour.

To reduce the vulnerability of children at risk, identified by local child protection networks, UNICEF has empowered adolescents, especially girls: 3,602 adolescents participated in life skills sessions and 6,703 adolescents were active in 134 children's clubs in lower secondary schools in six regions. 1,666 child victims of exploitation (851 girls) received care and support in UNICEF's nine focus regions, surpassing the annual target of 1,500.

Finally, UNICEF works on prevention and demand creation, with 25 new signatories to the tourism code of conduct mobilised. Discussions began with the Ministries of Mines, of Labour and of Population on addressing the exploitation of children in artisanal mining, including mica mining. While work is being continued to finalize the guides for local implementation of the national child marriage strategy, a national C4D strategy for child marriage was developed and activities were implemented in three regions.

1. Every child lives in a safe and clean environment

Data on water, hygiene and sanitation from the 2018 MICS show slow progress and unacceptably low levels of access: 57 per cent of the population consume surface water or uses unimproved water systems; 40 per cent practice open defecation and 74 per cent do not safely manage children's faeces. UNICEF aims at responding by providing quality water and sanitation to the most vulnerable areas, in development and humanitarian settings, but the needs are enormous.

UNICEF played a leading role in sector coordination. A major result achieved in 2019 was the finalisation of the Open Defecation Free Roadmap, approved by the Council of Ministers in the first weeks of 2020.

In the field, with UNICEF and partners' support, in 2019, more than 670,000 people including 335,000 children living in rural areas abandoned open defecation, and 654,000 people gained access to basic sanitation. Almost 90,000 people gained first-time access to safe water through UNICEF's development programme. In a major achievement for children, the Government, supported by UNICEF, inaugurated a 180 km-pipeline powered by solar energy in the South to provide sustainable access to water for 35,000 people affected by chronic drought. More than 130,000 school children (including 63,000 girls) drink water and wash their hands with soap every day.

UNICEF's WASH Programme includes the challenges of Climate Change. In 2019, UNICEF mapped ground and underground water availability and aquifer recharge in drought prone areas with geospatial technologies to improve sustainable access to water services and increase the resilience of the most vulnerable. This approach brings together emergency and development interventions. Emergency Interventions even took place in the capital city, Antananarivo, which suffered from an unprecedented drought and was provided with water tanker support.

1. Every child has an equitable chance in life

Madagascar is one of the 10 countries with the most extreme poverty and it has steadily grown poorer over the past 50 years. According to the latest national Household Expenditure Survey data, 77.63 percent of the population lives on less than USD \$1.90 a day. Close to 86 percent of the people living in poverty are in rural areas where poverty is nearly twice higher than in urban areas.

UNICEF made a key contribution in 2019 to the understanding of child poverty in Madagascar through the completion of the 2018 MICS, in coordination with the National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) and the Ministry of Economy and Finance. The MICS is the first nationally representative household survey since 2012, and therefore fills an important data gap in Madagascar.

In partnership with a pair of civil society economic think-tanks, UNICEF continued to influence and to support the mobilisation, allocation and use of domestic financial resources to achieve greater results for children. Although the national budget is increasing, the percentage of the budget allocated to social services remains relatively low – closer to 25 percent of the budget. UNICEF supported Budget Briefs for Education, Health and WASH and this marked out the need for more efficient and effective planning, budgeting and evaluation of the public expenditures in the social sectors.

In 2019, along with its key partners, the World Bank and WFP, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Population, Social Protection and Empowerment of Women in the implementation of the National Social Protection Policy and validation of the first National Social Protection Strategy (2019-2023) and action plan. About 417,076 children (of whom 206,756 are girls) benefited from the national social protection programmes in Madagascar, of which 28,453 are through UNICEF financing. One point four (1.4) per cent of beneficiaries are children living with disabilities. The coverage of national social safety nets

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programmes is not enough yet to cover the needs of the population, and a review is planned for 2020 to further strengthen the social protection system to make it more inclusive and child-sensitive.

1. Cross-sectoral

In addition to these results, cross-sectoral programming also led to important results:

UNICEF's Communication for Development (C4D) is a major tool given the prevalence of traditional practices and beliefs. In 2019, the emphasis was on life-saving messages on health, nutrition, sanitation and hygiene, reaching 634,475 people for plague, 336,000 people for cyclones and drought, and 2,900,000 people for measles. In collaboration with key technical ministries as well as NGOs, religious leaders and the media, the C4D section worked to encourage the promotion of six essential family practices (Exclusive breastfeeding, combating child marriage, food diversification, schooling, hand-washing and vaccination). Adolescents and young people as agents of change have been encouraged. As a cross-cutting section, C4D support to sectoral programmes has made it possible to develop and implement sectoral communication strategies and plans, such as the water use plan around the pipeline or the polio campaign.

Effective management indicators: The Office maintained a satisfactory management performance: 98 per cent of reports sent on time; accelerated recruitment particularly of international staff (62 days average time in 2019 vs 73 in 2018); gender and geographical diversity maintained, improved programmatic monitoring; successful fundraising; Optimization and efficient management of resources made available to the UNICEF Madagascar country office led to a 36 per cent reduction of travel and logistics related costs; better financial accountability from and towards partners, and reinforced monitoring. An audit took place in May and June, highlighting the need to increase efforts to monitor partners' financial liquidations, improve field visits reports quality and strengthen supply end-user monitoring.

Strategic planning for better results for children: Working towards a new Country Programme to be in 2021, UNICEF undertook a country programme evaluation, launched the new joint United Nation planning and Country programme preparation processes, including a new Situation Analysis considering MICS 2018 data. As of December 2019, the development of the new programme was well advanced in anticipation of a submission for approval to the September-2020 Executive Board.

Reinforced focus on crosscutting issues: An international gender advisor joined the office in July and immediately contributed to strengthen CO gender approaches as well as developing urgent training and strategy on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. In addition, joint approaches for adolescents (Let us Learn), Climate and environment (Building Community Resilience to climate change and innovative positioning on pollution), urban approaches, disability approaches and Early childhood Development (ECD) were reinforced.

Reinforced support to staff: An all staff retreat aiming at reinforcing emotional intelligence, especially for supervisors, was held, opportunities for development (stretch, south-south exchanges, nomination to internal external trainings (such as Master Management Class) or opportunities (such as Female Talent Initiative) were encouraged, regular Joint Consultative Committee meetings and support to staff association initiatives took place. More systematic consultation of field-based staff enabled better understanding of local challenges and corrective actions.

Culture of change and prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation: With the support of a new Senior Gender Specialist, and jointly with other UN agencies and NGOs, four training sessions were organized in 2019 reaching more than 100 staffs and partners, including in the field. Mandatory on-line training was put in place and a refresher-training on the zero-tolerance approach was shared in all-staff meetings. An all staff retreat on emotional intelligence and coaching of supervisors reinforced awareness on harassment and abuse of power. Written commitment from NGO partners to subscribe to UNICEF's standards in terms of PSEA were required. Efforts will be pursued in 2020 with the implementation of the corporate requirements for implementing partners and the strengthening of community-based complaints mechanisms.

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Lessons Learned and Innovations

Lessons learned:

While the smooth transition of the Government was well recognized by the international community, the time required for the new administration to become operational affected programme implementation. UNICEF's actions to mitigate these delays included expanding our partner base to work more with NGOs and local government and strengthening clusters coordination.

The 2019 Audit findings and recommendations related to monitoring of Cash Transfer to partners, and supply management provided strong evidence that Governance and system strengthening for financial risk management continues to be a challenge in Madagascar. The political transition has provided a good opportunity to advocate with the government to adopt more disciplined approach, with positive results. However, this requires significant investments in training, monitoring and control, including frequent recourse to third party monitoring. The costs of doing business need to be built more clearly into future programmes.

Madagascar mobile phone coverage is limited with a penetration rate estimated at 40 per cent. Internet connectivity is even more limited with an estimated 15 per cent penetration rate. While most medium to small cities are now covered by services, access to electricity is also estimated to be less than 25 per cent. Therefore, Madagascar is rapidly reaching the limits of technology-based solutions for data, communication, education or management. This can strongly impact end user monitoring or systems using Rapid Pro or other mobile platforms.

Innovations:

- Mobilisation and advocacy on pollution as a silent killer. Estimates suggest that pollution kills more than malaria and TB in Madagascar. UNICEF partnered with NGO Pure Earth to mobilise Government, donors and civil society partners on the issue of pollution. After an initial workshop, the Ministry of Health organized a follow up symposium on air quality and a follow up meeting to develop concrete response plans is planned in 2020
- WASH Satellite mapping and early warning systems. With support from the European Union, UNICEF launched a remote detection of water sources in the south of Madagascar, which has been completed in 2019 by two key tools: a Groundwater Early warning system using piezometers to alert on water table depletion, and a "normalized difference vegetation index" which uses vegetation growth as a proxy for drought impact assessment. These are compiled into a monthly report and shared with cluster stakeholders.
- Use of Cactus to promote resilience and accelerate social and sustainable economic development in drought affected regions. UNICEF promoted the utilisation of cactus in the south to increase income and nutritional intake. More than 150 stakeholders including government officials, donors and more importantly private sector participated in the event which aimed at transforming a burden (limited agricultural assets in the south) into a development opportunity thanks to a sharing of successful international experiences and local best practices.

UNICEF Madagascar shall pursue its dual policy of first supporting large scale, low-cost high-impact interventions and then continue exploring new and more efficient and sustainable ways to accelerate the operationalization of children rights in Madagascar in 2020.