

Madagascar

BEING PREPARED AND ACTING FAST:

A series of case studies on UNICEF's role in the delivery of effective social protection responses to COVID-19

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Madagascar:

Leveraging the national social protection system to enable a rapid humanitarian response

UNICEF, together with the World Bank, the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Union, the Red Cross and key non-governmental organizations, supported the government's strategy to channel a rapid response through existing social protection programmes and expand coverage to children and families most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The immediate response focused on ten cities, with particular attention to urban communities where income was severely affected by confinement measures. The emergency cash transfer (100,000 Ariary or US\$26 per payment) reached over 368,000 families by the end of 2020, with some cash plus interventions facilitating access to basic services in the poorest households focusing on water and sanitation and prevention of gender-based violence.



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More than two thirds of children in Madagascar live in multidimensional poverty – without access to education, health, housing, nutrition, sanitation or safe water. Their already-dire situation has been compounded by socio-economic impacts of the pandemic.

With support from UNICEF and partners, the government established “Tosika Fameno” – an unconditional cash transfer allowance providing 100,000 Ariary (US\$26) for households identified as vulnerable and economically impacted by COVID-19.

“Tosika Fameno allowed us to pay two months’ rent,” says 49-year-old Emelie, who is paraplegic. “And we could also buy food for my grandson.”

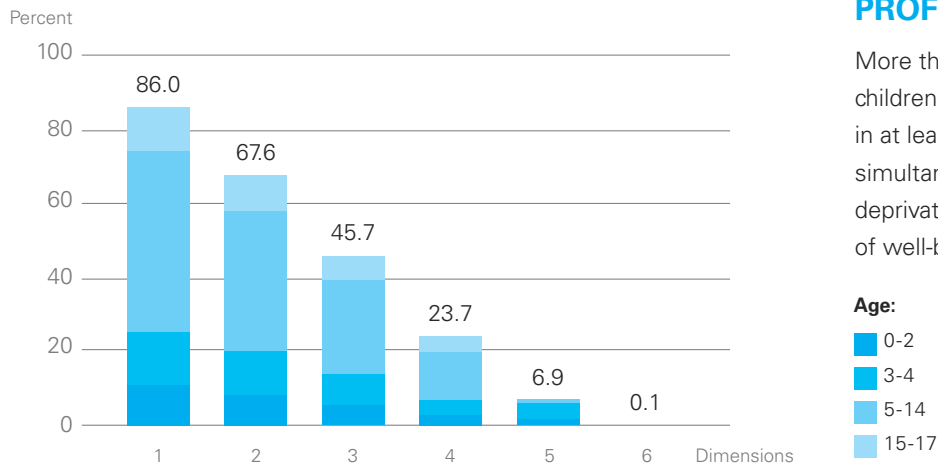
Source: <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/protecting-families-economic-impact-COVID-19>

Context

There are nearly 14 million children living in Madagascar, of whom 9.4 million were living in multidimensional poverty in 2018 according to the latest Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS-6), and 11.6 million (82.9 per cent) were living below the monetary poverty line (Silva-Leander, 2020; UNICEF, 2021). Madagascar's investment rate in social protection is one of the lowest in the world, with the government spending 0.7 per cent of GDP on social protection in 2014 (roughly US\$3 per capita). The National Social Safety Net (NSSN) programme only covers about five per cent of extremely poor families and three per cent of children. It reaches 7 out of 22 regions, with

conditions related to school enrolment and attendance. The National Social Protection Strategy 2019-2023 was approved with the commitment to expand coverage in the country to reach half a million poor families. However, the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, intensified by the current food security crisis in the southern part of Madagascar, is likely to push an additional 475,000 to 2.3 million Malagasy people below the monetary poverty line. This could jeopardize progress made over the past decade in the fight against extreme poverty in Madagascar, with the extreme poverty rate (<US\$1.90 per day) reaching 78 per cent in 2021 (the same rate as in 2009).

Figure 1: Children suffering from deprivation in at least 0-6 dimensions of well-being, by age group



PROFILE OF POOR CHILDREN

More than two thirds (67.6%) of Malagasy children suffer from material deprivation in at least two dimensions of well-being simultaneously and 23.7% suffer from deprivation in four or more dimensions of well-being.

Age:

- 0-2
- 3-4
- 5-14
- 15-17

UNICEF's Response and Results

A swift and effective response: The social protection response, known as "Tosika Fameno" (or Filling the Gap) initially reached 189,000 households in three major cities – Antananarivo, Toamasina and Fianarantsoa – and progressively expanded to ten cities, reaching more than 368,000 vulnerable households (8,500 directly supported by UNICEF) whose income was severely affected by confinement measures, and who were at high risk of food insecurity. The first payment was made only four weeks after the beginning of the lockdown in urban areas. Fonds d'Intervention pour le Développement (FID) – the national agency for social protection – and WFP, with support from UNICEF, collaborated to develop a new registration

process (registration of almost 200,000 households was completed in about 12 days), in addition to developing a post-monitoring system to receive recipient feedback. Payments were distributed through mobile payments and the postal system.

Aligning the national and humanitarian response: In response to COVID-19, and with financial support from the World Bank, the President requested the national agency, FID, to expand the social protection programme in urban areas. In parallel, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, the European Union (through NGOs Action Against Hunger, CARE, SOS Village d'Enfants and HI) and the Red Cross (through the International Federation of Red Cross) mobilized additional humanitarian funds to further expand the

implementation of the cash response. As technical co-lead of the Cash Working Group (CWG), UNICEF supported the development of a rapid and unified response to the pandemic, working in close partnership with the World Bank, WFP and the government. Moreover, UNICEF drafted a strategy to integrate and to help define the national plan with the emergency responses adopted by the CWG, including the harmonized parameters of the interventions (amount of transfer, length, targeting criteria, monitoring and evaluation system and a common communication strategy). Regular meetings of the CWG ensured continuous dialogue and coordination for each step of the programme design and implementation and ensured that new partners were aligned with the national strategy in the months that followed. Emphasis was placed on improving the inclusiveness of the national social protection programme and integrating social protection into other services provided to the population.

Cash Plus and inclusive social protection

programming: Since 2016, UNICEF has helped strengthen the national social protection programme through both technical assistance and support for the expansion of cash transfers that promote primary and secondary education in areas covered by the national social protection programme. In collaboration with WFP, ILO and UNFPA, UNICEF continued to support the Government of Madagascar in strengthening its national social protection system and making it more sensitive to the needs of vulnerable households, especially women and girls and people living with disabilities. The impact of the cash transfers was also further enhanced by links to complementary elements such as positive messaging and communication focused on preventing violence against women, WASH cluster action, and communication on positive behaviour practices such as social distancing and wearing masks.

Coordination for sustainable financing and recovery:

UNICEF contributed to the coordination of the US\$15 million leveraged for the social protection response to COVID-19 through the CWG, ensuring funds were aligned to the national social protection strategy. Advocacy efforts to increase the fiscal space for social protection are currently underway, and UNICEF successfully advocated for including the expansion of social protection as one of the indicative measures supported by the Rapid Credit

Facility tranches made available by the IMF in April and August 2020. UNICEF also continued to work with other development partners, notably the World Bank and the EU, to improve the budget transparency of the Open Budget Survey (OBS) results, and advocated for the government to take concrete reform measures. The World Bank recently provided an additional US\$150 million grant to continue expanding the coverage of the national social protection programme.

Partnerships

Since 2016, UNICEF in collaboration with the World Bank have supported the government to strengthen the national social protection system that proved effective in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to the pandemic, UNICEF and the World Bank supported the National Institute of Statistics to carry out a rapid survey on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19. Plans are underway to carry out an evaluation of the efficiency of social spending (Public Expenditure and Institutional Review) with the World Bank and the Ministry of Economy and Finance covering health, education and social protection. In addition, in cooperation with the World Bank, the European Union and the French Development Agency (AFD), UNICEF recently concluded a Public Expenditure Tracking Survey for the education section. UNICEF also led a coordination effort across agencies through the CWG involving WFP, UNDP and the European Union, the Red Cross and NGOs, to support the government's strategy to ensure a rapid and unified response.

Lessons Learned

Rapid mobilization to respond to the pandemic was possible due to existing structures and systems:

UNICEF was able to effectively support the government to coordinate an efficient response bringing together the UN country team's efforts and the CWG. Using the national social protection system to support the swift and effective expansion of cash transfers was key and provided an opportunity for UNICEF to take a lead role in providing critical coordination support to the government.

Taking advantage of the response and expansion of coverage to promote inclusion and adequacy in urban areas:

Prior to the pandemic, the national agency for social protection (FID) implemented the national social protection programme, which only reached a few rural regions and did not include urban or peri-urban areas. The pandemic response in 2020 needed to cover several urban areas where families were severely impacted. UNICEF was able to provide critical technical support to support the government to formulate common tools for the registration, targeting and monitoring of the cash transfers. The response created an opportunity to strengthen the government's efforts to expand coverage, but also improved the adequacy and inclusivity of the system.

Way Forward

Scaling up shock-responsive social protection systems and preparedness to climate-related shocks, including droughts:

In Madagascar, collaboration between humanitarian and social protection programmes was already in place to respond to other type of crises, particularly droughts. Some humanitarian actors have been using the national social protection system to respond to humanitarian needs since 2018. A national manual to coordinate the response of humanitarian and social protection actors was developed in 2019, focused on drought response. This manual will now be revised and adapted to encompass other types of crises (including epidemics and cyclones), based on the experience of the COVID-19 response.

Increasing the inclusiveness of the national social protection programme through a Universal Child Benefit with a focus on the most vulnerable children, particularly children with disabilities:

UNICEF supported the government to conduct a programmatic review, in preparation for a programme that will be jointly conducted by ILO, WFP and UNFPA. The review provides recommendations on design modifications to improve the inclusivity of the programme. The review focuses

on coverage gaps, levels of benefits and linkages with additional social services and recommends scaling up the NSSN to a universal child benefit. This joint programme on integrated social protection (the Joint SDG Fund) includes a combination of cash transfers and gender-based violence support, agricultural insurance and livelihood promotion activities. The ultimate objective of the programme is twofold: i) to promote the social and economic inclusion of households living in extreme poverty in Madagascar, particularly persons with disabilities, by providing them with complementary social protection interventions aimed at supporting consumption, managing socio-economic risks and promoting human and productive investments and; and ii) to reinforce the national social protection institutional framework by supporting the government in developing an efficient model that could be scaled up nationally. This initiative provides an opportunity for UNICEF and partners, through a series of evidence-based analyses and discussions, to support the government to adopt and implement a Universal Child Benefit.

Investing in gender-responsive social protection:

The "Tosika Fameno" programme was designed rapidly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic: registration of beneficiaries was completed two weeks after the declaration of the state of health emergency and, within one month, beneficiaries started to receive the first payment. The programme is a large-scale social protection recovery programme financed by the World Bank in some of Madagascar's main cities and will become a more permanent long-term urban safety net programme as part of the new financing from the World Bank. As the government moves to the recovery phase, it is committed to ensuring that the programme design is adapted and implemented in a gender-responsive manner. An online survey (small sample size) revealed that half of the female respondents had faced gender-based violence during the pandemic. UK Aid is supporting the government by conducting a gender review, providing recommendations which draw on global lessons on gender-responsive social protection in order to influence the design and implementation of the national safety net programme.

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