

# Let Us Learn Madagascar

## Empowering Girls Through Education

Reporting Period: February 2021-February 2022



Let Us Learn is designed to empower the most vulnerable girls in Madagascar through equitable access to quality learning opportunities. The program targets children who are transitioning from primary to lower secondary school and supports them to complete lower secondary school. The goals of the program are to expand access to learning opportunities and improve quality learning outcomes.

In Madagascar, overlapping humanitarian disasters have upended life for children and their families across the country. Over the past two years, three emergencies hit Madagascar: flooding in the north, prolonged drought in the south and disease outbreaks, including COVID-19, in all 22 regions. The situation has been especially concerning in the southern region of Madagascar as this area is highly vulnerable to extreme weather events, including those exacerbated by climate change. These crises, which will have immediate, long-term and intergenerational effects, have affected the education sector and threaten to reverse hard-won gains for children.

A rapid multisectoral assessment conducted in October 2020 reported that more than 75 percent of school children either dropped out or had difficulty going to school because of drought. As a result of food insecurity, child labor has also increased as children help parents search for food or income. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC,

December 2021) report estimated that more than 1.6 million people in the South have suffered from high levels of acute food insecurity from January to April 2021 in the regions of Androy, Atsimo Andrefana and Anosy.

This situation has intensified the learning crisis in Androy and Atsimo Andrefana. Children in these regions are at risk of missing school due to various factors including inadequate school infrastructure, lack of water, sanitation facilities and learning equipment, and parent's lack of financial resources, which have been aggravated by drought and the COVID-19 pandemic. These crises have worsened pre-existing education disparities by reducing the opportunities for many of the country's most vulnerable children – those living in poor or rural areas, girls and children with disabilities. Learning losses threaten to extend beyond this generation and erase decades of progress.

Teachers, also impacted by the crisis, are absent or teach only for part of the day due to a variety of reasons. This situation

also impacts catch-up classes that aim to offer an accelerated learning opportunity to out-of-school children so they can be re-enrolled in public primary and lower secondary schools.

According to the first available evidence for Madagascar, 52.8% of households in the poorest quintile did not undertake any educational activity during the lockdown, compared to only 15% of households in the richest quintile.

Around the world, girls have experienced increased exposure to violence, and it is estimated that more than 10 million girls may never return to school. In Madagascar, UNICEF's emergency response has involved remote learning strategies to ensure the continuity of learning and back-to-school efforts designed to bring girls back to the classroom.

Through Let Us Learn, UNICEF works with communities, governments and partners to remove barriers to girls' education and promote gender equality in education in the country's most challenging regions.

# Challenges

- COVID-19 and associated restrictions, such as school closures and travel limitations delayed the implementation of activities such as school principal and teacher training, children's clubs and the implementation of their action plans.
- The school year started a month late.
- Some child protection activities were impacted by a high rate of turnover in school principals, four of whom were let go just after their training on child rights.
- The pandemic and drought in southern Madagascar impacted inter-regional transportation and UNICEF's ability to gather, and access to schools is limited or impossible.

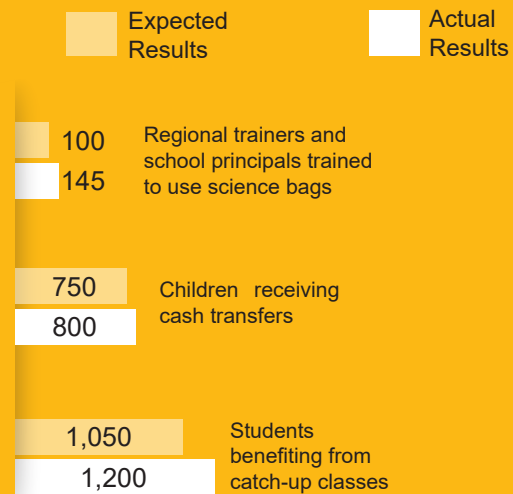


for every child

# Results

- Construction of **two classrooms** was completed in Mitsinjo Betanimena Lower Secondary School. Two gender-segregated toilet blocks and a sports field were also built.
- 1,200 out-of-school children (**684 girls**) were reached with catch-up classes, which provide an accelerated learning experience that seeks to academically prepare students who have dropped out of school so that they can re-enroll in the grade level at which they test at the end of the class period.
- 800 children (**472 girls**) received conditional cash transfers.
- **18 beneficiaries** of the cash transfer program participated in capacity-building workshops for community mobilization and led more than 100 community members in awareness-raising activities on essential family practices.
- 14 new children's clubs were created and the development, implementation and monitoring of their action plans for raising awareness in their communities were supported. This included training on child rights and child protection for 14 teachers and 112 students (**55 girls**). The safe space and psychosocial support provided to children through children's clubs is particularly relevant in the current context of drought, food insecurity and COVID-19.
- Developed a strategy and operational plan to strengthen the child protection system at school and community levels for the Morombe school district, including through technical and financial support for a workshop bringing together representatives of child protection actors. Integrated care and support was provided to **23 girls** who experienced sexual violence.
- Awareness was raised among students in 76 lower secondary schools about the COVID-19 pandemic. Activities reached **25,304 students** and 569 parents.
- **23 regional trainers** and **122 lower-secondary school principals** participated in a workshop to build their capacity to train science teachers.
- **742 science teachers** received pedagogical training covering physics, chemistry, mathematics and natural sciences.
- Regional technical field officers conducted eight monitoring and technical support missions in addition to their daily work of strengthening the capacity of regional education directorates to plan, carry out and monitor educational activities.

## Exceeding Expectations



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Malagasy students in the Androy region attend catch-up classes supported by UNICEF and Zonta International.