



End of Phase Report for

COVID-19 EMERGENCY FOOD RESPONSE: ROUND I

To Implement the Distribution of Food to the Most
Food-Insecure Communities of Anosy

July 2021

Summary

Context

There are over **1.14 million people suffering from high acute food insecurity in Madagascar, of whom 14,000 are in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5)**.¹ The southern regions in particular are currently facing a rapidly worsening food security emergency. Extreme food shortages and rising prices as a result of drought and disease are being compounded by the economic impact of COVID-19.² It is estimated that crop production this year is 50-70% below the five year average.³ An additional 2.3 million Malagasy people are at risk of poverty, potentially erasing all progress against extreme poverty from the past decade.⁴ **Between January and April 2021, over 30,000 children in southern Madagascar were diagnosed with severe acute malnutrition, which is more than double the number admitted for the same period in 2020.**⁵ This situation is only worsening and it is estimated that across Madagascar over 500,000 children under five will be suffering from acute malnutrition by April 2022.⁶ Children are most at risk, as those with acute malnutrition are four times more likely to die than healthy children.⁷ The district of Amboasary experiences the highest prevalence of acute malnutrition in the Anosy region, with 14% of the population suffering between April to May 2021.⁸ **As the situation worsens, an urgent response to this growing crisis is needed.**

COVID-19 Emergency Food Response as a Solution

SEED Madagascar (SEED) is responding to this crisis through the implementation of a food distribution programme targeting seven rural health clinics covering 41 villages in the southern region of the country where no other NGOs are currently supporting emergency food distribution. As part of the Anosy committee in response to emergency food insecurity, Centre de Coordination Opérationnelle KERE (*famine*), and in collaboration with the Medicine inspector and local community health centres, the programme targets children under five suffering from moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) and severe acute malnutrition (SAM). In collaboration with local community health centres (CSBs), children diagnosed with MAM and SAM receive ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF), which is a home-based treatment for children aged six months to five years suffering from acute malnutrition. Families of children suffering from malnutrition receive a parcel of unprepared food each month, including 16 kilograms of rice, 10 cups of beans, and 1.75 litres of fortified oil, while children are undergoing treatment. To support children with SAM who have additional complications, such as respiratory infections, oedema, or dehydration, SEED covers the transportation costs to the nearest hospital for emergency care. Nutrition education is also delivered to families of children with SAM or MAM to support sustainable behaviour change, whilst healthcare providers are trained to monitor and support their recovery. **This is a crisis that needs to be urgently and widely addressed and SEED has the capacity to help.**



A mother feeding RUTF supplied by SEED to her malnourished daughter

Activity Detail

Round I: Project Reflection

With the Round II of SEED's Emergency Food Distribution project in development, SEED reflects on the successes and challenges of the first round of the emergency food distribution project, from its preparations in February to its completion in July 2021.

Key successes of this project phase include the delivery and distribution of RUTF and unprepared food, the delivery of targeted nutrition sessions to all families engaged in the project, and the recovery rate of children suffering from MAM and SAM targeted in SEED distribution sites. **Over the course of 60 days, SEED distributed 47,942 sachets of ready to use therapeutic food (RUTF) to 515 children suffering from MAM, leading to the successful recovery of 504 children.** Alongside distributions of RUTF, SEED successfully **distributed 36,006 kilograms of rice, 24,301 cups of beans and 3,588 litres of oil to the families of all 653 children** suffering from MAM and SAM. SEED also delivered **2,336 nutritional education sessions** to these families. As shown in *Table 1*, these combined efforts resulted in a **recovery rate of 97.86% in children with MAM and 99.28% in children with SAM.**

Table 1: Number of children who recovered from Malnutrition (Round I)

| Malnutrition status | Treated | Recovered | Recovery (%) |
|---------------------|---------|------------------|--------------|
| SAM | 138 | 137 ¹ | 99.28% |
| MAM | 515 | 504 | 97.86% |
| SAM + complications | 3 | 3 | 100% |

¹10 children that recovered from SAM need continued treatment as MAM cases in Round II of the project.

Whilst response to the crisis was conducted quickly and the situation was monitored closely, the rapid rate at which food insecurity in the region deteriorated was not anticipated. Project findings reveal that the number of children with malnutrition is drastically higher than predicted based on the initial needs assessment conducted by SEED in December 2020. This is a result of improved screening efforts, increased COVID-19 cases, rising migration to target villages, and surging food prices. In April 2021, SEED identified an additional 63 cases of SAM, bringing the total number from 75 to 138, marking an 84% increase across all SEED distribution sites. Accounting for these additional numbers would lead to an accelerated spending of the budget, with insufficient funding to support all 653 malnourished children and their families. As a result, the difficult decision was made to reduce portions of unprepared food by half so that the project could continue operating for the full 60-day cycle. Despite this, the project still had a positive impact, with an overall recovery rate of 98%.



A mother receiving unprepared food to support her family while her daughter undergoes treatment for MAM

Lessons and Opportunities

SEED has identified project strengths and challenges during Round I of the project and has revised and improved project delivery for the next round of distribution, scheduled to commence in August 2021. Round II aims to: alleviate immediate nutritional and medical needs of children with acute malnutrition; increase capacity of healthcare providers to diagnose, treat, and support children with acute malnutrition and their families; and deliver education sessions to increase the capacity of families to promote the nutrition of their children. Round II will prioritise those most vulnerable to food insecurity, monitor the situation in and surrounding the areas where the project operates, and will expand the project based on available funding.

SEED will continue to follow a community driven approach to Emergency Food Distribution. Unprepared food and RUTF is scheduled to be distributed across the same seven community health centres that were targeted in Round I of the project. One of the sites, Soanierana, reported 147 new cases of MAM in the second quarter of 2021, and as such SEED will prioritise this healthcare centre in the second round of distributions. Prevalence of malnutrition across the seven distribution sites will be monitored closely; if the cases of malnutrition in the seven sites are consistent with the data collected by the Ministry of Health, and funding allows, SEED aims to expand into one additional site in Round II.

To enhance resource management, the monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) conducted will be reduced in Round II. The SEED team will measure the height, weight, and MUAC for all malnourished children at baseline and endline to assess project impact and recovery rates. To monitor effectiveness of RUTF, measurements will be taken every 15 days alongside RUTF distribution for all children with MAM.

Story from the Field

Annick and Nicolas' Story

If you read SEED's report from April, you might remember Annick. She is the mother of one-year-old Nicolas, and the wife of Denis, a local charcoal maker. Together they live in Tanamasy, a small village in the commune of Manambaro. Due to dwindling resources, Denis' occupation as a charcoal maker proved to be unsustainable for their family, so they turned to farming instead. However, due to the severe drought, their family's livelihood and their nutritional intake remain at risk, and unfortunately, Nicolas become severely malnourished.



Annick stands with her one-year-old son Nicolas and three-year-old daughter Dénia in front of her home (left). Community Health Agent Masy Florine measures Nicolas' mid-to-upper arm circumference to assess his recovery (right).

When Nicolas was screened in February 2021, SEED-trained community health agents reported his severe condition, presenting with signs of extreme exhaustion. Preliminary screenings assessing Nicolas' condition recorded his MUAC at 114mm and his weight at 5.6kg; both measurements are fatally low for a 12-month-old child. Upon his assessment for malnutrition, Nicolas was identified as suffering from SAM with complications, including vitamin A deficiency, which is life threatening. The decision was made to transfer Nicolas to Fort Dauphin hospital for immediate treatment, with all transportation costs covered by SEED.

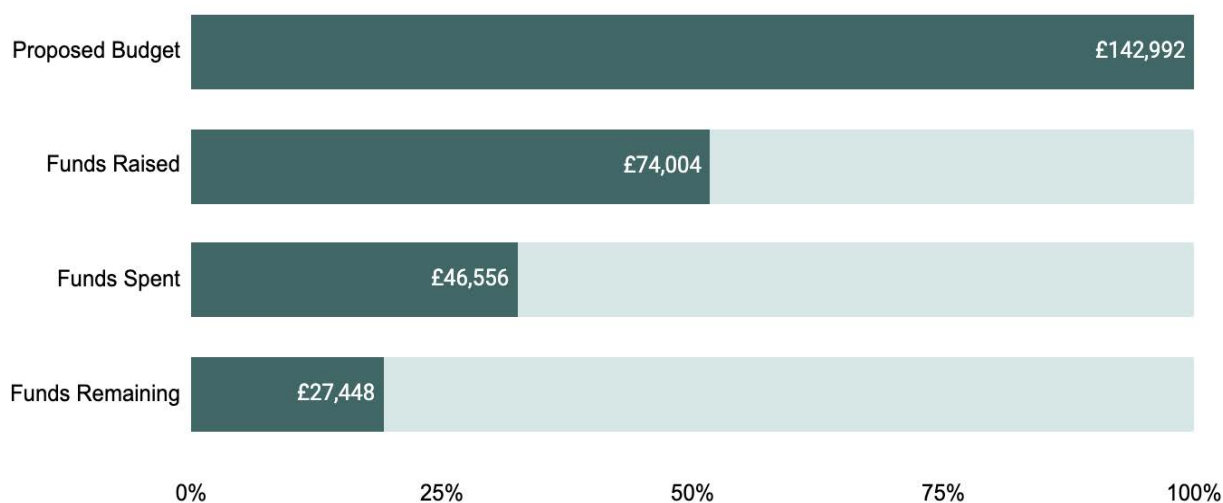
Unfortunately, COVID-19 presented additional challenges for Nicolas and his family. Due to Nicolas' weakened condition, it was determined that the potential of being exposed to COVID-19 in Fort Dauphin hospital presented too high a risk. As a result, his treatment had to be managed locally. The local community health agent in Tanamasy, Masy Florine, took control of the situation. Masy Florine visited Nicolas at home every three days to monitor his RUTF consumption, weight, MUAC, and general health. Annick took Nicolas to their local community health centre once a week, when staff recorded and monitored his progress.

Annick followed all of the guidance provided SEED, Masy Florine, and the healthcare workers at the health centre. After two months of treatment, Nicolas' arm circumference reached 125mm, his height 87cm, and weight 6.7kg, representing a full recovery from malnutrition. Nicolas has returned to his community and is able to play with his family and friends once again.

Financial Report

Upon receiving malnutrition screening data from the Ministry of Health, SEED re-evaluated its budget for Round II of the project. To date, SEED has raised £74,004, 52% of the total budget.

With the number of children suffering from malnutrition rapidly rising, data from the Ministry of Health estimates there are an additional 395 cases of malnutrition across the 41 villages SEED targeted in Round I. SEED is seeking an additional £68,998 to continue providing lifesaving support for children and families across the 41 target villages and will expand to one additional community health centre if funding allows. The additional site chosen will be one deemed 'in a state of emergency' by the Ministry of Health, reaching an estimated additional 400 malnourished children. The project team is consistently monitoring the prevalence of malnutrition in SEED's current target sites, as well as the surrounding communes in the region, and aims to support as many children and families as funding allows.



Further Reading

If you would like to learn more about the challenges that Madagascar is currently facing, please see below for further reading.

1. UNICEF Madagascar Grand Sud Situation Update No. 1 (Reporting Period: 1 to 30 June 2021). <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF%20Madagascar%20Grand%20Sud%20Situation%20Update%20No.%201%20%28drought%29%2001%20-%2030%20June%202021.pdf>
2. Madagascar [Grand South]: Food Security and Nutrition Snapshot | July 2021 https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IPC_Madagascar_FoodSecurity_NutritionSnapshot_2021July_English.pdf
3. Madagascar Key Message Update: Poor production continues to drive high prices across the south, July 2021. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Madagascar%20-%20Key%20Message%20Update_%20Fri%2C%202021-07-30.pdf
4. Famine Early Warning Systems Network, Madagascar Food Security Alert, June 2021. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Madagascar%20Food%20Security%20Alert%20-%20June%2010%2C%202021.pdf>
5. United Nations World Food Programme, The Invisible Crisis: WFP Chief appeals for the world not to look away as families starve in Madagascar, June 2021. <https://www.wfp.org/news/invisible-crisis-wfp-chief-appeals-world-not-look-away-families-starve-madagascar>

References

- ¹ FAO. (2021, May). *Southern Madagascar | Response overview (May 2021)*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/CB4718EN>. Accessed 23 June 2021; IPC (2021, May). *Acute food insecurity analysis on the current situation afflicting the south*. http://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Madagascar_Acute_Food_Insecurity_2021AprDec_Report_English.pdf. Accessed 23 June 2021.
- ² ReliefWeb. (2021, 11 May). *Southern Madagascar | Response overview (May 2021)*. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/madagascar/southern-madagascar-response-overview-may-2021>. Accessed 26 May 2021.
- ³ FEWS NET. (2021, June). *Madagascar Food Security Alert*. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Madagascar%20Food%20Security%20Alert%20-%20June%2010%2C%202021.pdf> Accessed 23 June 2021.
- ⁴ UNICEF. (2021, April). *The potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children in Madagascar*. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/madagascar/media/5546/file/Briefing%20Note%20on%20COVID-19%20and%20children%20in%20Madagascar.pdf> Accessed 26 May 2021.
- ⁵ UNICEF (2021, June). *UNICEF Madagascar Grand Sud Situation Update No. 1 (Reporting Period: 1 to 30 June 2021)*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/madagascar/unicef-madagascar-grand-sud-situation-update-no-1-reporting-period-1-30-june-2021> Accessed 3 Aug 2021.
- ⁶ IPC (2021, 9 July). *Madagascar [Grand South]: Food Security and Nutrition Snapshot | July 2021*. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/madagascar/madagascar-grand-south-food-security-and-nutrition-snapshot-july-2021> Accessed 3 August 2021.
- ⁷ UN News. (2021, 29 April). *Madagascar edges toward famine, UN food agency appeals for assistance*. Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/04/1090922>. Accessed 5 May 2021.
- ⁸ UNICEF (2021, June). *UNICEF Madagascar Grand Sud Situation Update No. 1 (Reporting Period: 1 to 30 June 2021)*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/madagascar/unicef-madagascar-grand-sud-situation-update-no-1-reporting-period-1-30-june-2021> Accessed 3 Aug 2021.