# SEED Madagascar: Adaptation and development in response to COVID-19

## Date of update: 31st July, 2020

## Introduction

As in the rest of the world, COVID-19 has posed significant challenges to SEED over the past four months. March and April saw the evacuation of the vast majority of International staff and in April, May and July working hours in Madagascar were severely restricted with the offices unable to open or working half days for weeks at a time. This resulted in the continual adaptation of protocols to cope with the developing situation and in May risk assessments were introduced for all bush based work as a result of travel restrictions, bans on gatherings and a need to keep both staff and communities safe from the possibility of COVID 19 transmission. With COVID 19 cases much higher in Antananarivo, our staff in the capital mixed of working from home and shorter days at the office to avoid the rush hour and the additional risks posed by overcrowded public transport systems, until the office closed completely in July.

Our work in country has faced additional challenges with a slow reduction in the capacity of the International staff with many people having to find part time, or full time work, to supplement basic stipends only ever meant for living in Madagascar. With staff now spread over 6 countries and with up to a 17-hour time zone difference, teams are working flexibly to ensure meetings and essential discussion still takes place.

In terms of funding, SEED has also seen donors postponing both current and future funding rounds leaving SEED with gaps in funding for projects now due to start, and having to plan for further gaps later in the year as traditional summer and autumn funding rounds are delayed.

**Adaptations to existing projects**

Since March, SEED has planned its response to COVID 19 by framing this in terms of a continuum of an initial preparation stage before COVID 19 impacted on Madagascar, moving into a mid-term response stage and finally into a post COVID 19 recovery stage. We knew that none of these stages would be easy to define in terms of community needs or timings, but that by continually talking with staff, communities, local authorities and donors, we would be able to move through this continuum and plan services that best met people’s immediate needs.

SEED began this process in late March through its social media output and an initial redirection of its Facebook strategy to concentrate on the development and distribution of high quality, clear COVID 19 prevention messages. Recently our communications has changed again with a focus on providing information on the current situation in country, and what SEED are doing to support communities.

Our current projects immediately adapted with staff providing COVID 19 information sessions and masks before meetings. Most notably SEEDs Rural CLTS work funded through UNICEF gave messages on handwashing to 13,063 people and taught 7,183 people how to build a simple household handwashing station. However this approach has been taken throughout our work with Co-ordinators and Community agents in the Environment and Sustainable Livelihoods Department giving briefings to almost 1,000 people over the past two months.

SEED will continue to adapt its work in the wake of COVID 19, but as we have moved into the response stage we have continued to grow our support to communities through the fundraising, development and implementation of a range of specific COVID 19 projects. Over the next year SEED will continue to adapt and seek opportunities to support communities within this increasingly difficult environment.

## COVID-19 Preparation and Response Projects

1. **Rowan Trust - Completed**

Timeframe: 3 months: 1st April – 30th June 2020

This grant was rapidly implemented in the very early days of COVID 19. Over 5600 masks were made and distributed. Radio messages in national and Anosy dialects on handwashing, social distancing, avoiding touching your face, coughing, and COVID-19 symptoms were developed and broadcast 160 times. 175 posters in accessible graphics and local language, covering preventative measures, were distributed to churches, schools, water points, and other key community hubs. SEED also ran a Malagasy-language social media campaign, publishing clear and concise public health messages, for example on preventative measures, COVID-19 symptoms and correct mask usage. SEED also provided a total of 33 handwashing stations to the rural communities of Sainte Luce and Mahatalaky, and in Fort Dauphin.

1. **SEED Mask appeal - Active**

Timeframe: Ongoing from 1st May 2020

This grant focusses on mask making and distribution and continued work begun through the Rowan grant and includes funding obtained through the ‘Masks for Madagascar’ Appeal, NEST, and Steve Moffitt donations. This income stream funded masks made by Stitch Ste Luce and distributed in the village of Ste Luce, as well as schools, clinics and Government workers in the 9 village clusters and in support of SEEDs rural work.

SEEDs new mask exchange which went live on 22nd June has already sold 791masks with a profit to SEEDs COVID work of £4,444

1. **Clark Mitchel funding for maternal and child health activities - Active**

Timeframe: Ongoing from 1st June

This funding is focussed on the health clinics in Fort Dauphin and the provision of household visits in the community to pregnant women and new mothers. In the clinics, handwashing stations, soap and masks have been provided, and information about COVID-19 in relation to maternal health will be disseminated at vaccination and antenatal visits as well as in each individual households. So far, over 600 women have been supported at these sessions by three COVID 19 trained Community Agents.

1. **British Embassy health strengthening grant**

Timeframe: August 2020 – March 2021

This funding will support nine health care facilities in Fort Dauphin and five of the surrounding communes who refer to the hospitals and clinics in the town. This grant will focus on training Community Agents to support health care staff with giving COVID messages, managing the waiting areas and developing and training cleaning protocols. It will also provide masks, cleaning products and distribute radio messages to increase community confidence to access health care clinics. It will focus on maternal and child health, taking over from the clinic work initially covered by Clark Mitchel funding.

1. **UNICEF Emergency Grant**

Timeframe: July – October 2020

In addition to the ongoing Rural WASH project, SEED has signed a separate partnership agreement with UNICEF for a 3-month emergency project to scale-up current COVID-19 prevention measures in 14 of Anosy’s most vulnerable communes. The project will focus on strengthening the capacity of healthcare workers and government agents to raise awareness about preventing transmission of the virus, as well as enabling CSBs to have the correct policies and resources in place to ensure patient safety. The funding will also be used to establish handwashing points at busy local areas such as community marketplaces, and to support disinfection activities at train and bus stations. SEED will also carry out research activities in the target communities and will undertake healthcare system assessments in 14 CSBs to gain a better understanding of how COVID-19 is affecting people across the Anosy region.

1. **World Food Programme – Application submitted for future partnership**

Compounded by poor seasonal rainfall, the economic effects of the coronavirus pandemic are predicted to have a significant impact on food security in Anosy. The World Food Programme has made a call for partners in the south of Madagascar, to which SEED submitted an application in early July 2020. Such a partnership would work towards achieving the three outcomes of the WFP’s Country Strategic Plan: distribution of supplies to immediately save lives during severe food shortage; building capacity and reinforcing livelihoods to protect communities against future food supply and malnutrition issues; building long-term resilience through working with government partners on an integrated approach to establishing food security.

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| **Total numbers** |
| Masks distributed | Posters | Radio broadcasts | Handwashing stations supplied | People attending Information sessions |
| 8448 | 360 | 252 | 33 | 14,323 |