

APRIL 2017

PROJECT UPDATE

Let Us Learn Madagascar: An Integrated Program for Adolescent Girls



Zonta International has committed US\$1 million to the U.S. Fund for UNICEF from 2016 to 2018 to support the Let Us Learn initiative to address barriers to girls' education in Madagascar.

GOALS

- Create opportunities for vulnerable and excluded girls to realize their rights to an education in a secure and protective environment.
- The program is focused on three pillars:
 - Reaching out-of-school children
 - Expanding girls' education
 - Improving quality outcomes for learners

Photo: UNICEF/US130302/Ravelonjaka

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Improve learning outcomes and student retention by providing training to 1,042 post-primary teachers.
- Provide catch-up classes to 600 female students in two regions.
- Provide cash transfers to 1,000 households for a two-year period.
- Ensure that students have access to safe drinking water and sanitation by rehabilitating and constructing four classrooms with appropriate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and latrine facilities.
- Reduce violence in schools and communities by providing interventions that address harmful gender norms and attitudes at the individual, community, family and school levels.
- Facilitate access to quality medical and psychosocial support through a coordinated response with Child Protection Networks.
- Safeguard adolescent girls from child marriage and minimize all forms of violence against girls within the school environment and community through communication and advocacy efforts that mobilize all community members—including men and boys—to take action.

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Institutional Strengthening - The bottlenecks that prevent girls from enrolling into post-primary education are removed and concrete measures are identified to ensure girls receive a quality education.

- An analysis report of the education sector in Madagascar was completed in 2016 to inform the next five-year Education Sector Plan, which will advance key educational reforms and help get Madagascar back on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. UNICEF provided technical support through the analytic process.
- A first draft of the Education Sector Plan was shared in January 2017, which considers merging the primary and lower secondary cycles into a basic education cycle of nine years (including abolishing the national examination at the end of the primary cycle). This would improve access and retention for all children throughout the proposed basic education cycle.
- The Education Sector Plan should be finalized and validated by mid-2017. UNICEF's support for this action is essential in ensuring that all programs are integrated into the long-term vision for the country, including those actions supported by Zonta International.
- Technical committees have been established and consultations were organized in October 2016 at national and regional levels on key orientations for the next Essential Family Practices (EFP), which should be finalized this year. EFPs include nutrition, education, water sanitation and hygiene, health and child protection.



Photo: UNICEF/180813

Access - By the end of the program, more girls will have access to post-primary education, through the development of additional learning spaces and the dispositions necessary to facilitate access for the most vulnerable children, particularly disadvantaged girls from rural communities.

Construction

- UNICEF launched a bidding process in November 2016 for the construction of two classrooms in the Anosy region. The process is ongoing as the UNICEF expert team did not deem the bids to be technically strong enough.



Photo: UNICEF/US130308/Ravelonjaka

Communication for Development

- Capacity-strengthening activities took place with 45 local supervisors of Youth Peer Educators and community volunteer coordinators to improve interpersonal communication and encourage adolescent girls and parents to prioritize school enrollment and retention. Participants were also provided with information on communicating the risks related to early child marriage, gender-based violence and other protection issues.
- Design of communication materials for community mobilization and media was initiated. These materials will be used to encourage behavioral change among parents and adolescents, reduce violence against girls and permit young mothers to return to school.

Social Protection

- 600 households, caring for 1,800 children (out of the 1,000 households targeted with Zonta International funds) have received their first installment of the cash transfer (around US\$9 per month). The transfers, which are directly given to mothers, are especially empowering for women and girls. As more income is available in the household, women are empowered to make decisions and girls are more likely to attend school.
- Living in the most drought-affected areas of Madagascar, these households also received a one-time emergency transfer of approximately US\$56 to serve as a recovery livelihood grant.

Catch-up Classes

- The catch-up initiative, which targets girls who have dropped out of lower secondary school, is currently being piloted in three other regions. This pilot phase will help inform the design and implementation of this initiative in preparation for the next academic year (2017-18) in Anosy and Androy.





Photo: UNICEF/2017/Rindra

Child Protection

Given the very limited capacities of child protection actors in Anosy and Androy, UNICEF—together with the Ministry of Population, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Interior—has focused on improving regional protection capacities to prevent and respond to protection issues. The following activities have taken place over the

reporting period to strengthen protection systems:

- 139 social workers and Child Protection Network members were trained on issues such as the organization and management of child protection data collection, case management and referral mechanisms. The objective is to increase local capacities to prevent and respond to violence including in schools.
- The seven Child Protection Networks operating in each district were supported with information, education and communication material on child

protection. Comprised of representatives from medical, legal and social sectors, the Child Protection Network is the main coordination group in charge of preventing and responding to violence against girls. As such, girls who have been identified as victims of violence in schools would be referred through the school referral mechanism to one of the Child Protection Network members.

- 97 recreational kits have been ordered to benefit 26,600 pupils, representing 100 percent of lower secondary schools in Androy and Anosy. The kits, which promote play, teamwork and socialization, are intended to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of students and encourage them to stay in school.

Quality – By the end of the program, the capacity of the system to offer a better quality of teaching and learning will be improved through the revision of the school program, teacher training, pedagogical support and the creation of teaching and learning materials.

- 420 pedagogical materials packs have been ordered for all four grades in each of the 97 lower secondary schools in Androy and Anosy.

CHALLENGES

- The southern regions of Madagascar are currently facing a chronic drought exacerbated by the El Niño phenomenon and thus the worsening levels of poverty are negatively affecting the education system since families are unable to send and keep their children in school.
 - A reported 52 percent of households in eight districts in southern Madagascar are severely food insecure as a result of several consecutive years of drought. Since December 2016, food prices have increased, particularly in the south. More than 35,000 children under 5 are expected to be affected by Severe Acute Malnutrition and more than 935,000 people remain without access to safe water (including 439,690 children).
- There have been some delays in the implementation of catch-up classes and teacher training. Furthermore, the drought monopolized supply and logistics capacities. Thus, procurement orders started but their finalization and shipment are still ongoing and are further hampered by Madagascar's isolation and weak local supply market.
- The production cost of the pedagogical kits has proved to be more expensive than initially estimated as a result of the bidding process. In order to ensure that all lower secondary schools in Androy and Anosy regions can benefit from the pedagogical and learning kits, other activities pertaining to the quality education component of this contribution (teacher training, pedagogical support, etc.) will be funded either by savings made on other activity lines on this grant or supported by other funds.

- The main challenge for the cash transfer intervention is related to the remote location of areas in which beneficiaries live. Rural roads are poor and mobile networks, through which the payments are made, are not covering all remote areas. Therefore, the local implementation partner, FID (Development Intervention Fund), has contracted local NGOs to ensure payment in these locations.

- Child protection actors (police, justice, social services) remain very weak with a limited geographical coverage. In the two regions there is only one staff from the Ministry of Population in each district and a very limited number of child protection focused Civil Society Organizations. Child protection is currently deploying a regional technical assistant, who will help strengthen or set up child protection network members in each district in order to enhance the capacities to respond to child protection concerns.



Photo: UNICEF/UNI180139/Mata

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