



for every child



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# Ending Violence Against Children in Madagascar

## One-year update for UNICEF Next Generation

APRIL 2020

## Situation Overview

Madagascar remains on the lower ranks of many international indices across all social sectors, pointing to the multiple deprivations that children and families face. Persistent socioeconomic disadvantage denies children their rights, weakens a child's protective environment and places them at higher risk of ill health, malnutrition, impaired physical and mental development or school drop-out. Most public services in Madagascar are critically underfunded, depriving millions of people equitable access to quality social services. Children and women suffer disproportionately in Malagasy society and numerous factors, including an insecure economy, climate change and certain harmful practices, negatively affect their well-being.

### VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN MADAGASCAR

In addition to, and sometimes because of, the multiple deprivations that they face, children in Madagascar are extremely vulnerable to various forms of violence, abuse and exploitation in school, at home and in the community. Violence against children can take many different forms: discipline from a parent to control an 'unruly' child sexual violence against an adolescent girl, perpetrated by her boyfriend, neighbor or stepfather; the bullying of one child by a peer; corporal punishment of a student by his or her teacher. Too many children are affected by such violence, yet it is rarely acknowledged, in part because it is so commonplace.



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The 2018 National Study on Violence against Children in Madagascar found that violence is a part of children's daily lives and is often perceived as an appropriate form of discipline by both adults and children. According to this study, communities, families, and children tend to justify or even value physical violence for "educational purposes" and view it as an ordinary part of what happens in families and schools. The study also found that most cases of violence against children in Madagascar, including sexual violence, are dealt with within the family. As a result, reporting rates are low and prosecution of the perpetrators inadequate, as is the prevention of violence, and the provision of care and treatment for survivors.

The following statistics from a National Survey further highlight the prevalence and acceptance of violence in Madagascar:

- 86% of children in Madagascar have experienced some form of violent discipline in the home, with 63% of children having experienced physical punishment and 10% severe physical punishment.
- 62% of mothers or other caregivers are of the view that physical punishment is necessary to properly raise and educate children.
- 24% of girls aged 15-19 have experienced physical violence and 10% sexual violence from a partner.
- More than half of young people have experienced violence in schools.

Violence, poverty, inequality, and social exclusion are inextricably linked, and the difficult living conditions faced by most Malagasy households have an undeniable impact on the level of violence against children. High levels of unemployment, limited economic opportunities, and a lack of services create circumstances that can lead to frustration and unrest, which may lead to violence

Violence hampers learning and is detrimental to children's well-being. It decreases self-esteem, reduces school attendance, lowers grades, leads many children to drop out of school altogether and can result in serious health issues. It also contributes

to a destabilizing cycle of violence where child victims are more likely to be perpetrators later in life. The repercussions are not inconsequential, with ripple effects throughout society as well as future generations.

## UNICEF in Action

Given the multiple drivers of violence and the variations of violence and exploitation that children experience, UNICEF implemented a comprehensive two-year program that aims to address the underlying drivers of abuse, while also strengthening child protection services to better respond to the need of survivors and children at risk. The program includes three key strategies to prevent and respond to violence against children in Madagascar:

- Strengthening child protection systems
- Empowering communities to prevent violence
- Increasing access to support for the survivors of violence

With support from NextGen, the project aimed to directly benefit at least 800 children and 2,000 community members. In addition to directly targeting some of Madagascar's most vulnerable children, the system strengthening component of the program aimed to indirectly benefit more than 1 million children in Madagascar.

Different elements of the project were implemented in 5 of the UNICEF child protection program target regions: Analamanga, Atsinanana, Atsimo Andrefana, Boeny and Diana. The bulk of the support went to the region of Atsinanana. During the current reporting period, activities focused mostly on care and support for child victims of violence and exploitation and achieved results in the three areas: 1) Strengthening child protection systems 2) Empowering communities to prevent and 3) Increasing Access to Support for survivors of violence

### STRENGTHENING CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS

Addressing violence against children depends on: laws, policies and standards; services to prevent and respond to violence; human and fiscal resources and management; communication and advocacy; collaboration and coordination; and evidence and data for decision-making. When these actors and components work together attuned to the cultural, social and political environment, they create a functioning and holistic child protection system that is better able to protect all children from all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse across all contexts. UNICEF worked to ensure the regional child protection system is strengthened focusing on national child protection policies and legal frameworks and improving child protection mechanisms



Child protection network coordination meeting Vatomandry district, Atsinanana region  
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**UNICEF supported coordination meetings of child protection networks at the district level in the region of Atsinanana, with 93 members participating all together (37 men, 56 women).** The “Chef de District”, the district level head of the public administration, chairs these meetings, in which all key child protection actors participate, including the Police, Gendarmerie, para-social workers, children's judges, the health, education, youth and communication ministries, and civil society organizations. These meetings serve to improve coordination between different entities and to improve management of specific cases.

A challenge faced by most child protection networks in Madagascar is ensuring active participation in their activities by the courts (children's judges and prosecutors). During the reporting period, the child protection networks of Toamasina (also known as Tamatave) and Vatomandry districts conducted advocacy for greater engagement of the courts in the work of the



networks. In Tamatave this resulted in the designation of 4 prosecutors for children. In Vatomandry the children's judge is increasingly engaged in all the activities of the child protection network.

Coordination among the different entities working in and with the one stop "Vonjy" centers for child victims of sexual violence were also supported – these include para-social workers, social workers, doctors, the child protection services of the police, the Gendarmerie, the children's judge and the prosecutor for children, as well as representatives of the regional directorates of Population and Health. Improved coordination among these entities leads to better case management and better outcomes for children. The Vonjy Centre in Nosy Be developed a communication plan to more efficiently publicize the services of the center.

Data is also an important aspect of systems strengthening and can aid in assessing who is the most vulnerable and what support they may require. UNICEF also supported various implementing partners to collect quality disaggregated data and share with the central level government.

## **EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO PREVENT OF VIOLENCE**

A key component of this program is the prevention of violence against children in communities and homes. To reduce violence, parents, caregivers, and community members must be educated and encouraged to adopt positive discipline methods. Children and adolescents should also be provided with the skills to cope and manage risks and challenges without the use of violence, while being given the tools to seek appropriate support when violence does occur.

**Planning is underway to use Next Generation Funds to support life skills sessions for adolescents.** Child protection communication plans have been developed with other funds in the regions of Analamanga and Atsinanana, and for the one stop Vonjy center in Nosy Be. These plans will be implemented with Next Generation Funds in the following reporting period. In addition, communication tools and resources will be developed at national level to guide communication activities at local level. Prevention activities will be implemented to reach a targeted 400 children and 2,000 community members.

In relation to the 200 children targeted to receive vocational training or school reinsertion, 16 child victims have been reintegrated into schools, and the remainder will be reached during the coming period.

## **INCREASING ACCESS TO SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE**



The CDEF center which provides emergency shelter to child victims of violence and exploitation, Boeny region  
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Ensuring that the survivors of violence are linked to quality services where they can access help and support and report violent incidences is a crucial component of this program. UNICEF has partnered with the Government of Madagascar on several key interventions that respond to urgent protection needs and promote healing, recovery and re-integration. **In total 571 child victims of abuse and exploitation (316 girls and 227 boys) in four regions, Atsinanana, Atsimo Andrefana, Boeny, and Diana, received care and support through child protection networks, thanks to Next Generation Funding.**

In the Atsinanana region, 419 child victims (217 girls and 255 boys) received psycho-social care and support, medical care, legal support and/or family reintegration. The child protection system has been strengthened so that even in remote

communities, children receive a minimum package of services and coordinated case management among sectors (social, police, justice, medical). Para-social workers keep track of children within their families. In the Boeny region, 75 child victims of abuse and exploitation (52 girls and 23 boys) received psycho-social support during the reporting period, and 64 of them received medical and legal support. 67 were followed up on a regular basis by para social workers. 39 of these children (25 girls and 14 boys) were placed by the children's judge in the emergency shelter run by the NGO "Collectif pour les Droits des Enfants et Families" (CDEF), which also received support from the Next Generation Funds in order to be able to properly care for these children. Among the 75 children, were three victims of domestic work, who were reunited with their families.

Three one stop centers for child victims of sexual violence (also known as “Vonjy” centers) were supported with Next Generation funds – in the capital Antananarivo, in Nosy Be in the Diana region and in Tamatave in the Atsinanana region. A total of 446 children who experienced sexual violence (435 girls and 11 boys) received psycho-social and medical care as well as the services of the child protection services of the police, all under one roof, for free. Medical care includes tests and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, ante-natal care and childbirth in the case of pregnancy and hospitalization when required. It also includes the provisions of legal medical certificates, which serves as proof of rape in the courts. Psycho-social support includes individual and family counselling and follow up at home of victims by para after they received services at the center. The police prepare the files for submission to prosecutors for children, and arrest perpetrators.



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15-year-old Pauline (not her real name) is receiving support at the shelter run by the UNICEF partner NGO Bel Avenir in Toliara. Being from Befotaka in the north of Madagascar she was sent to Toliara (approximately 1,000 miles away) by her father after online interaction with a man who promised to marry her. Her situation turned into a nightmare after she was abandoned in Toliara after being raped by the supposed suitor. Thanks to the funding from Next Generation, however, she was escorted home by two para-social workers and continues to benefit from psycho-social support now that she is home with her mother and friends. The police continue to investigate to try to find and prosecute the perpetrator.

*"I missed my family, my friends and my life at home."*

*-Pauline, Survivor of sexual violence*

## The Impact of Your Support

- In relation to the 200 children targeted to receive vocational training or school reinsertion, **16 child victims have been reintegrated into schools**, and the remainder will be reached during the second year of implementation.
- Coordination meetings of child protection networks at district level were supported in all districts in the region of Atsinanana, with **93 members participating all together (37 men, 56 women)**.
- **571 child victims of abuse and exploitation** (316 girls and 227 boys) in four regions, Atsinanana, Atsimo Andrefana, Boeny, and Diana, **received care and support through child protection networks**,
- In the Atsinanana region, **419 child victims (217 girls and 255 boys) received psycho-social care and support, medical care, legal support and/or family reintegration.**
- In the Diana region, **67 child victims of violence (39 girls and 28 boys) received medical, psycho-social care and support through child protection networks.**
- **Three one stop centers** for child victims of sexual violence (“Vonjy” centers) were supported in the capital Antananarivo, in Nosy Be in the Diana region and in Tamatave in the Atsinanana region.
- As a result of support to Vonjy centers, 446 children who experienced sexual violence (435 girls and 11 boys) received psycho-social and medical care as well as the services of the child protection services of the police, all under one roof, for free.

### Cumulative expenditure (April 2019 - March 2020)

FUNDS RECEIVED	CUMULATIVE EXPENDITURE	UNSPENT BALANCE
\$ 285,807.44	\$ 115,600.01	\$ 170,207.43

# The Way Forward

Eradication of violence against children affects their short-term wellbeing as well as their future. It is also a key component of sustainable development. Since the declaration of the first case of COVID19 in Madagascar in March 2020, activities requiring groups of people, for example life skills session or community dialogues, or travel have been put on hold and will most likely impact on future program implementation, depending on the scale and duration of the epidemic in Madagascar. This evolving situation is likely to impact UNICEF's ability to deliver regular programming. UNICEF Madagascar will adapt our programs as best we can to the operating context and remains unwaveringly committed to providing support and protection to Malagasy children.

**On behalf of children in Madagascar, thank you for your support!**



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