

A Monthly Donor Report for

COVID-19 EMERGENCY FOOD RESPONSE

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



April 2021

Summary

Context

Southern Madagascar is currently experiencing extreme food shortages and rising prices under the combined pressures of the economic impact of COVID-19 and seasonal drought. Between July and November 2020, the number of people affected increased by 86%, with over 1.5 million people in the region unable to find enough food to eat today¹. At least 135,476 children under five are predicted to suffer from acute malnutrition in nine districts in the Grand Sud, with 27,137 predicted to be severely malnourished². Children bear the brunt of this burden, as children with acute malnutrition are four times more likely to die than healthy children³. Wasting, or recent and severe weight loss, among children has nearly doubled, from 9.2% in December 2020 to 16.5% in April 2021⁴. This has been reflected in SEEDs base of operations, Fort Dauphin, where statistics show 4.8% (2,889) of children aged 6 to 59 months are now acutely malnourished, up from 3.9% in September 2020. In the district of Ambovombe, Madagascar, global acute malnutrition has risen to above 27%, putting the lives of many children at risk⁵.

COVID-19 Emergency Food Response as a Solution

SEED Madagascar (SEED) is responding to this crisis through the implementation of a food distribution programme initially 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 malnutrition. Children diagnosed with SAM who have further health complications are provided transportation to a hospital in Fort Dauphin where they can access emergency treatment. Families of all children suffering from malnutrition receive 15 days' worth of unprepared food (rice, beans, and oil) per month while children are undergoing treatment. This is a crisis that needs to be urgently and widely addressed and SEED has the capacity and community connections to help.



(right) Unprepared food is weighed in preparation for distribution to the families of children suffering from MAM and SAM in a healthcare facility in Soanierana on 19th April.

¹ UN News. "Humanitarian Crisis Looms in Madagascar amid Drought and Pandemic." *UN News*, 12 Jan. 2021, news.un.org/en/story/2021/01/1081892. Accessed 26 Feb. 2021.

² UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *Madagascar - Grand Sud Flash Appeal (January - May 2021)*. OCHA, 18 Jan. 2021.

³ UN News. 2021. *Madagascar edges toward famine, UN food agency appeals for assistance*. [online] Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/04/1090922>. Accessed 5 May 2021.

⁴ ReliefWeb. 2021. *Madagascar - Madagascar – Food and nutrition crisis (DG ECHO, WFP, UNICEF) (ECHO Daily Flash of 3 May 2021) - Madagascar*. [online] Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/madagascar/madagascar-madagascar-food-and-nutrition-crisis-dg-echo-wfp-unicef-echo-daily>. Accessed 5 May 2021.

⁵ Ibid.

Activity Detail

Activity Update

Shipments of unprepared food have been transported to each of the seven rural health clinics over the course of this month, with the first round of distribution of unprepared food complete. In total, 29,040 kg of rice, 19,320 cups of beans, and 2,929 liters of oil have been distributed to 653 families of children suffering from SAM and MAM across 41 villages, enough food to support each family for 15 days. The first round of distribution of RUTF to 515 children suffering from MAM took place this month at all seven rural healthcare centers, with an outreach impacting 41 surrounding villages. Families of children receiving RUTF also received information on nutrition, equipping them with guidance on the usage and benefits of RUTF for children with malnutrition. Due to the high number of children suffering from MAM in the Soanierana district (306 children), distribution at the rural health clinic has been planned in line with COVID-19 protocol and was conducted over a four day period. The second round of RUTF distribution, scheduled for this month, was delayed by one week as a result of COVID-19 restrictions temporarily shutting down RUTF production in Madagascar's capital, Antananarivo, causing delays in the transportation of two shipments. Restrictions have now been lifted, and the first shipment of 26,100 sachets of RUTF has been delivered, with the second shipment of 25,000 sachets scheduled to arrive next week. The second round of distribution is on track to be completed in all seven rural health clinics by next week.



Mothers and their children receive rice, beans, and oil to last for 15 days in Soanierana (left) and Mandromondromotra (right).

Unfortunately, the situation continues to worsen in the South. In the beginning of April, increasing numbers of children suffering from SAM were reported in the target sites where SEED is operating. The decision was made to implement a secondary screening process for children suffering from SAM which took place in the second week of April. An additional 63 cases of children suffering from SAM were recorded, bringing the total number of cases from 75 to 138, marking an 84% increase. SEED immediately included these additional children and their families in the project and food was distributed to them during the last week of April. This increase correlates with data provided by the Ministry of Health, which recorded an increase of 238% of SAM admissions in two of the most affected districts (Amboasary and Ambovombe) compared to February 2020.⁶ As cases of COVID-19 continue to escalate throughout the country, it is expected that this will lead to heightened food insecurity in the South.

⁶ World Food Programme. "WFP Madagascar Country Brief, March 2021." WFP Madagascar, 26 Apr. 2021.

Planned Work

Whilst the shipment of RUTF was delayed, the second shipment of 25,000 sachets is scheduled to arrive next week, all of which will be distributed to the rural health clinic in Sionierana over a four-day distribution period. Although unpredicted due to COVID-19, increased efforts will be made to mitigate delays in distribution moving forward. Purchasing of RUTF and unprepared food will be scheduled in advance to ensure distribution stays on schedule, distributing RUTF every 15 days and unprepared food every 30 days. The collection of monitoring and evaluation data is underway, and will continue to take place throughout the duration of the project. Data regarding distributions will be collected every 15 days, whilst nutritional data, collected from beneficiaries at baseline, will be collected at endline after the 60-day treatment cycle, enabling SEED and the Ministry of Health to evaluate the impact of the project.



A mother prepares and feeds her child suffering from MAM with the RUTF provided by SEED from a community healthcare facility in Tsagnoria commune.

With the situation across Southern Madagascar deteriorating, SEED is facing pressure from the Ministry of Health to expand its food distribution into sites categorised as ‘emergency’ by the Ministry of Health and the United Nations World Food Program. However, given the increase in the number of children suffering from malnutrition highlighted through project monitoring, any expansion is not immediately feasible. **Whilst SEED continues to fundraise, if current numbers do not decrease, SEED will not have the funding necessary to support children and families for the envisaged two further rounds of emergency food relief in these seven rural health clinics.** Upon completion of the first 60-day treatment cycle at the end of May, SEED will reassess the situation to determine the impact on child malnutrition at these first seven sites and make decisions on where to focus its next round of support and distribution. Increased efforts are being made to fundraise given the urgent need of children and families in the south and an ongoing appeal is being marketed through social media:

<https://madagascar.enthuse.com/cf/food-distribution-anosy>.

A Story from the Field

“Thanks to the intervention of SEED Madagascar, my son has benefited from the health coverage provided for children with SAM.” -Annick, Mother of a child diagnosed with SAM



Annick stands with nine month old Nicolas in her arms and three year old Dénia at her side in front of her house in the village of Tanamasy in the Manambaro Commune.

The village of Tanamasy is one of the 41 villages supported by SEED’s food distribution project, through its local healthcare facility in Manambaro. Many of the households in Tanamasy suffer from inadequate nutritional intake caused by insufficient food production and low income. The impact of COVID-19 and food insecurity in the region has made lives increasingly difficult for members of this community, taking the greatest toll on children, where malnutrition is rising rapidly.

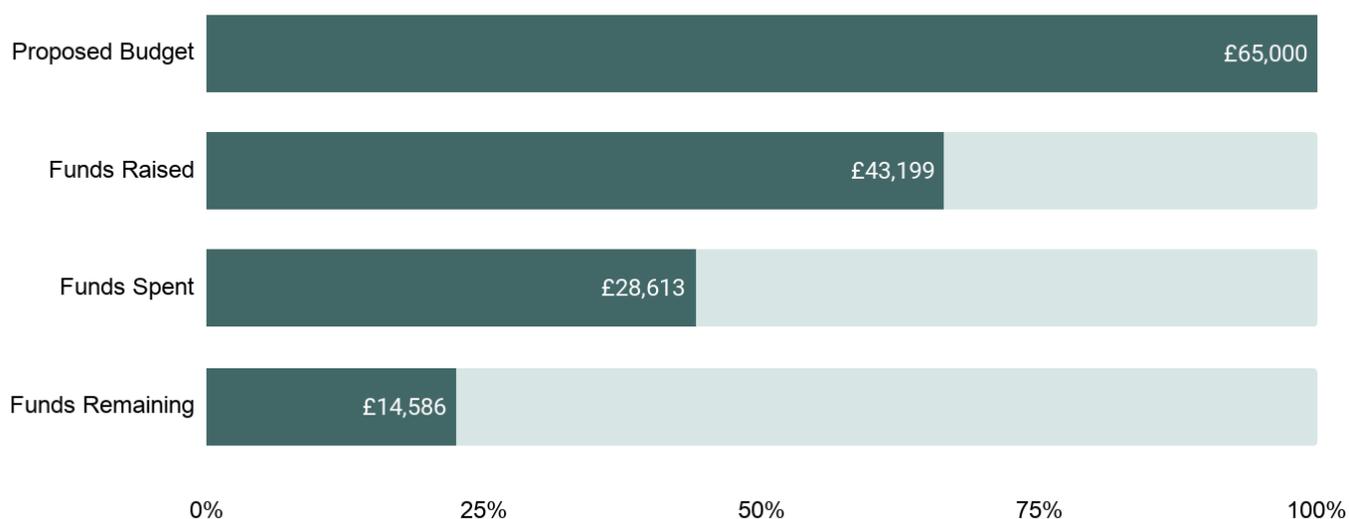
At 22 years old, Annick is the mother of nine month old Nicolas and a three year old Dénia. Annick’s husband is often absent from home, leaving her to care for their two children alone. Her son Nicolas has been diagnosed with SAM and her family suffers from extreme poverty, making it very difficult to treat his condition.

Antonio, another child in the village, is a three-year-old child diagnosed with SAM. He has been the victim of chronic malnutrition and stunted growth, which were the results of nutritional deficits occurring in the first 1,000 days of his life. Like many children suffering from malnutrition, Antonio’s malnourishment has affected his physical and cognitive development, which is irreversible. For Antonio, this translates to poor school performance and reduced intellectual productivity.

Both Nicolas and Antonio were taken to Manambaro healthcare facility after being diagnosed with SAM by a SEED trained community health agent. As soon as they were diagnosed with SAM, they received immediate treatment at the community healthcare facility. Since this took place, Annick has received specific consultation for her child, with both of these children being closely monitored by SEED and their families receiving packages of unprepared food and targeted nutrition education. Annick expressed her gratitude to SEED for the consideration of poor families like hers and for the protection of vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Financial Report

We have raised £43,200 to date, which is approximately 67% of our proposed budget of £65,000. So far, we have spent £28,613, leaving SEED with only £14,586 remaining for project funds. **As about two-thirds (66%) of funds raised for this project have already been spent, and the number of children with malnutrition is rapidly rising, increased efforts are being made to fundraise for this urgent and escalating issue.** As the number of children with malnutrition is drastically higher than predicted based on the needs assessment conducted by SEED in December 2020- due to improved screening efforts, increased COVID-19 cases, rising migration to target villages, and surging food prices- **SEED needs to raise at least £10,000 to complete the first distribution cycle with all 653 families across 41 villages.**



Further Reading

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

1. Levels and trends in child malnutrition: UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Group Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates, Key findings of the 2021 edition <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/levels-and-trends-child-malnutrition-unicefwhoworld-bank-group-joint-child-2>
2. Relief Web's summary for the situation Madagascar for April 2021 <https://reliefweb.int/report/madagascar/madagascar-madagascar-food-and-nutrition-crisis-dg-echo-wfp-unicef-echo-daily>
3. Assessment Capacities Project provides an analysis of the current situation in Madagascar updated in April 2021 <https://www.acaps.org/country/madagascar/crisis/drought>
4. Madagascar edges toward famine, UN food agency appeals for assistance <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/04/1090922>
5. MSF responds to a nutritional crisis in southern Madagascar <https://reliefweb.int/report/madagascar/msf-responds-nutritional-crisis-southern-madagascar>
6. ECHO Factsheet – Madagascar <https://reliefweb.int/report/madagascar/echo-factsheet-madagascar-last-updated-31032021>