



APRIL 2020

# PROJECT UPDATE

## Let Us Learn Madagascar: Empowering Girls Through Education



for every child

Zonta International has supported the Let Us Learn Madagascar program since 2016. From 2018 to 2020, Zonta committed an additional US\$1 million to UNICEF USA for the project. The following report covers the period from September 2019 through March 2020.

### OVERVIEW

Let Us Learn is an integrated education program that is creating opportunities for vulnerable and excluded children, particularly girls, in Madagascar. The interventions included in this project are designed to help girls realize their right to an education in a secure and protective environment. The program is being implemented in two target regions—Androy and Atsimo Andrefana—to support girls' transition from primary to lower secondary school and ultimately reduce poverty.

### GOAL

- Address education and gender inequity in Madagascar through approaches targeted toward adolescent girls.

### RESULTS

- Construction projects were completed at Marolinta secondary school, including the construction of two classrooms, two latrine blocks and a sports field.
- 22 school directors and four teachers were trained on child rights and child protection, bringing the total number of teachers trained to 102. In addition, a code of conduct on violence prevention and response was developed for the district.
- 33 children clubs were established to improve community understanding of child rights and protection, with 1,226 children (613 girls) participating.
- 150 children (104 girls) who experienced violence received care and support services.

- 1,156 children (more than 600 girls) in 825 households were enrolled in the conditional cash transfer program for 2019-2020.
- 1,037 out-of-school children (more than 550 girls) benefited from catch-up classes before the start of the school year.
- 963 out-of-school children who completed the catch-up classes reintegrated in public school.
- 45,000 students (23,400 girls) and 2,471 teachers (963 women) in all public lower secondary schools received bilingual Malagasy-French dictionaries, the first bilingual dictionaries developed specifically for primary and lower secondary school children.

## CHALLENGES

- Addressing the gender dynamics that affect outcomes in education and protection through a comprehensive approach.
- The frequent turnover within the MENETP (Ministry of National Education and Technical and Vocational Education) challenges partners' capacity to maintain high-level financial management, as trained staff leave. Regional level ministry offices across sectors in Androy were blocked from receiving funds during the reporting period.
- Due to ongoing debates over the status of reforms in the education sector plan, the start of the 2019-2020 school year was abruptly advanced to September from a planned November start date. This change reduced the time available for conducting catch-up classes from the standard two-month period to a three-week period, and it could potentially affect retention and learning.
- The limited national budget allocated to education and other social sectors has resulted in delays in cash transfer activities. Only one payment has been made since September 2019, rather than the three payments that were planned.



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## RESPONDING TO COVID-19

As of 29 April, 2020, 128 confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been recorded in Madagascar, where girls from the poorest and most marginalized communities will likely feel the spill-over effects of the crisis the most.

At this time, schools and non-essential services have been shut down to prevent the spread of COVID-19. UNICEF has temporarily suspended certain Let Us Learn program activities, including school construction, teacher training, child protection activities in schools and cash transfer payments. These activities will resume as soon as control measures have been lifted and it safe to do so.

During this moment of global upheaval, UNICEF is looking to lessons from past crises to address the specific challenges faced by girls and to protect the progress that has been made in girls' education.

To support the continuity of education for children in Madagascar who have been affected by school closures due to COVID-19, a portion of Zonta's funding is being redirected.

The money will be used as follows:

- US\$100,000 for printing and distributing learning materials to approximately 45,000 children for independent learning while schools remain closed.
- US\$130,212 for a "Back-to-school" campaign targeting all 60,000 primary and lower secondary schools in the country, including catch-up classes for more than 12,200 lower secondary students unable to return to school after they reopen.

These program activities will help UNICEF preserve the gains that have been made for girls through the past several years of the Let Us Learn program. In contexts like Madagascar, where digital learning solutions are less accessible, reading and writing materials can be used to reach the most vulnerable.