

CRISIS OVERVIEW

The Grand Sud (Grand South) of Madagascar is an arid zone composed of three regions: Androy, Anosy, and Atsimo-Andrefana. Nearly half of the more than three million people living in the Grand Sud are in a food insecurity crisis, which is estimated to have started in July 2020 (IPC accessed 16/01/2022). Madagascar is generally highly exposed to natural hazards, such as cyclones, floods, and drought, because of its location in the southwestern Indian Ocean Basin (IPC 03/01/2022; WWA 01/12/2021).

The impact of the crisis goes beyond food, healthcare, and water needs (IPC 03/01/2022; OCHA 19/08/2021). Early marriage, gender-based violence (GBV), and school dropout rates have increased since the start of the current crisis as people look for ways to cope. Some affected households choose to leave the region and migrate to northern urban districts, but the economic impacts of COVID-19 have also affected these districts, leaving the displaced people still struggling to gain better access to food and livelihood opportunities. The impact of COVID-19 containment measures in the northern urban districts of Madagascar and the needs of migrants remain underreported among the humanitarian sector (OCHA 19/08/2021; KII 12/01/2022).

About this report

Aim: the report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the main drivers of the current food insecurity situation in the Grand Sud and its impact on affected households across humanitarian response sectors. The report also provides an overview of coping mechanisms used by people in need, which have further adverse effects.

Methodology: the report is developed through the daily monitoring of media sources, the secondary data review of key humanitarian analysis documents, and four interviews with experts and key informants working in the humanitarian sector and focusing on the situation in the Grand Sud.

Limitations: the report covers only some of the main drivers of the current food insecurity crisis. It does not investigate factors related to governance and local and international politics.

The Grand Sud regions facing a food insecurity crisis



INDICATORS	ANDROY REGION	ANOSY REGION	ATSIMO-ANDREFANA REGION
Population	966,000	859,000	1,892,000
Area	19,317km ²	25,731km ²	66,236km ²
Food insecure people IPC3+ (December 2021)	642,000	381,000	451,000
Dahalo-related fatalities since 2020	28	63	47

Source: ACAPS using data from City Population accessed 10/03/2022; IPC accessed 10/03/2022; ACLED accessed 10/03/2022

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KEY MESSAGES

- Since 1980, the Grand Sud has been caught in a cycle of drought and natural hazards, crop failures, loss of livelihoods and income, and higher food prices, leading to an increasing trend of the number of people suffering from food insecurity.
- Even though drought is endemic in Madagascar, it is not the only driver of the food insecurity crisis in the Grand Sud. A combination of climatic conditions and disease outbreaks; the economic impact of COVID-19 containment measures; and pre-existing issues, such as poverty, poor infrastructure, a lack of water for irrigation or drinking, and violence from bandits, have contributed to making the region more vulnerable to the impact of droughts.
- The food insecurity crisis has increased households' needs across all humanitarian response sectors, including the need for food, health, nutrition, and WASH services.
- Protection needs have increased. People have been struggling to cope and have resorted to strategies including early marriages and transactional sex, which have increased the number of reported GBV cases. Children's access to education has been disrupted, as many affected households resort to child labour to cope.
- Tropical cyclones and floods had a minor impact in 2020–2021 on the Grand Sud, and the 2021–2022 cyclone season mainly affected northern and eastern Madagascar. Regardless, the likelihood of cyclones or floods deteriorating food insecurity levels in the southern region in 2022 remains high.

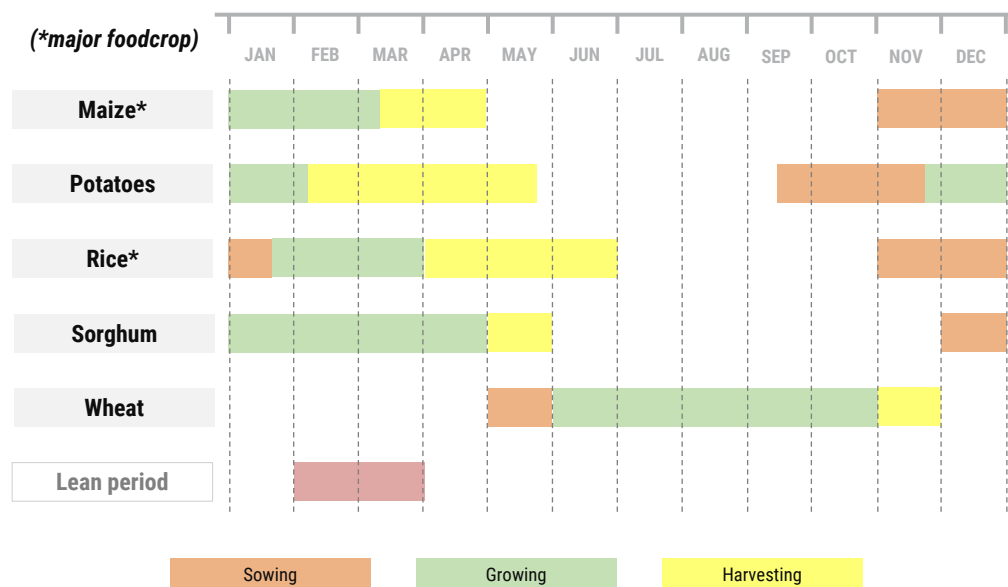
DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS



Drought

Drought is a chronic issue in the Grand Sud, which is currently recording its worst drought season in 40 years as driven by climate change and below-average rainfall (UN News 21/10/2021; WWA 01/12/2021; NASA accessed 07/03/2022). Between 1980–2010, Madagascar recorded five periods of severe drought, increasing people's vulnerability to the impacts of upcoming droughts (AF 23/06/2021). In September 2015, El Niño triggered a prolonged and severe drought over 2015–2017. This drought affected more than 1.1 million people in the Grand Sud (Rakotoarison et al. 26/11/2018). Maize and cassava production declined, and their prices increased, meaning that households living under the poverty line could not afford food as needed. In response, people adopted coping strategies such as selling seeds, livestock, and agricultural tools (FAO 27/10/2016; Time 27/10/2016). Below-average rainfall triggered another period of prolonged drought that started in 2019 and continued into January 2022. As at the beginning of 2022, the drought affected over 1.6 million people in the Grand Sud, and they suffered from high levels of food insecurity (WFP accessed 03/01/2022; IPC 03/01/2022).

Crop calendar



Source: FAO 28/09/2021

Water scarcity and rain-fed agriculture

The lack of water should be viewed as a driver instead of an outcome of the food insecurity crisis in the Grand Sud (KII 12/01/2022). The majority of the population in the region depends on rain-fed agriculture to provide food for their families with little to no profit. Farmers face significant crop failures in periods of drought or below-average rainfall (WaterAid 28/10/2021; WWA 01/12/2021). Below-average rainfall since the 1980s has significantly reduced harvest and yields and contributed to the loss of jobs and farmers' inability to participate in agricultural activities. Lower production has in turn increased food prices (Amnesty 27/10/2021; KII 17/01/2022).

Water scarcity has resulted in a 300% increase in the cost of water by the end of 2021 compared to the same period in 2018 and 2019, making access to water for drinking or irrigation more difficult for households and worsening levels of food insecurity (Telegraph 04/12/2021). During below-average rain seasons and with the absence of irrigation infrastructure to provide a replacement, households become less resilient to the impact of drought (Amnesty 27/10/2021).

Pre-existing poverty

Poverty is among the key drivers of the food insecurity crisis in Madagascar and has largely affected people's ability to cope with the impact of prolonged drought. In 2021, more than 90% of the population in the Grand Sud lived under the poverty line, compared to 77% for the rest of the country (WWA 01/12/2021; Amnesty 27/10/2021; WB 10/12/2020). Since March 2020, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on livelihoods and incomes has increased the number of people living in poverty in Madagascar by 2.3 million people, a reversal of the pre-pandemic situation when the economy was growing and poverty rates were decreasing (UNICEF 07/12/2021; WWA 01/12/2021).

Because of extreme poverty, households in the Grand Sud have limited capacities to adapt to crises, such as repeated or sustained drought. Most people are pastoralists with small-scale livestock and cattle. They economically depend on subsistence farming, growing crops like cassava, maize, and sweet potatoes to survive and expecting little to no profit. They also work in small businesses related to fisheries and tourism (Amnesty 27/10/2021; WWA 01/12/2021).

International organisations in the region have programmes often directed at short-term emergency response. Existing development projects sometimes lack sustainability, and there is a lack of government-led development projects to allow for the long-term support of organisations (KII 24/01/2022; The Economist 02/09/2021; Mongabay 07/07/2021).

In 2019, an estimated 75% of Madagascar's 25.6 million people lived in extreme poverty under the poverty line of USD 1.90 per day. This number surpassed the 41% average for the Southern African region, making Madagascar one of the poorest countries in the world and among the least resilient to shocks (WB accessed 04/01/2022; ORF 24/11/2022). It was estimated to reach 77.4% in 2020 with an additional 1.38 million people (WB 16/12/2020).

Sandstorms (red wind)

Sandstorms (known locally as tiomena or red wind) have occurred in Madagascar in the past, but since 2019, drought, deforestation, and the semi-arid nature of the Grand Sud have strengthened their impact and intensity. The winds have created dunes, piled sand on farmlands, dried soils, and damaged crops, affecting the planting and harvest seasons in 2020–2021 (Mongabay 29/01/2021). Sandstorms have also contributed to the increasing depletion of soil and land erosion, making agriculture-based livelihoods challenging for farmers (FAO 11/05/2021).

Sandstorms usually affect the region between mid-May to mid-October. Since the start of the recent drought in 2019, sandstorms have become common all year long. They have caused disruptions to businesses, education, and administrative work in the cities (WWF 08/01/2021; Mongabay 29/01/2021).

Bandit violence (the *dahalo*)

Insecurity related to the criminality of bandits in the Grand Sud restricts people's movement and affects livelihoods, amplifying food insecurity (IPC 09/07/2021; KII 17/01/2022). Armed bandits known as the *dahalo* are present in southern and western regions of the country, and they continue to target more districts. In the past, state forces have failed to provide security for residents against the *dahalo*'s armed activities (Crisis24 accessed 09/01/2022). The *dahalo* steal villagers' livestock, take cattle owners as hostage, kill victims, and set villages on fire (ISS Today 08/05/2018; African Arguments 18/01/2022). These activities also took place in 2021, with the *dahalo* engaging in killings, abductions, and the looting of livestock, money, and property. They raided hundreds of livestock (cows, oxen, zebu, and goats) that year (ACLEL accessed 09/01/2022; IOM 10/01/2022). The practice of looting livestock has cultural roots in the ritual of boys becoming men upon stealing their first zebu given its symbolism of wealth (Evaneos 03/04/2018).

Crop pests and livestock diseases

Malagasy migratory locust: as at the end of June 2021, the Malagasy migratory locust infestation had affected more than 84,000 hectares (nearly 1% of landmass) in the Grand Sud, damaging off-season crops planted in March 2021 (OCHA 26/08/2021 and 10/09/2021). In the November 2021 to March 2022 agricultural season, crop damage resulting from a Malagasy migratory locust outbreak is projected to affect 400,000 hectares (nearly 4% of landmass) and about one million people in the Grand Sud. Food, livelihood support, and healthcare needs are expected to increase (FAO 25/10/2021).

Fall Armyworm: between January–June 2021, a Fall Armyworm outbreak contributed to the loss of 60% of crops in the Grand Sud and the poor production conditions of maize crops (OCHA 26/08/2021 and 10/09/2021; FAO 06/05/2021). The infestation came after rainfall combined with warm temperature created ideal conditions for Fall Armyworm eggs to hatch (VOA 22/06/2021).

Rift Valley Fever: in the first quarter of 2021, a Rift Valley Fever outbreak affected pastoralist livelihoods. It contributed to the deterioration of the physical condition and productivity rate of livestock, reducing live animal market prices and the income of livestock owners (FAO 06/05/2021).

COVID-19 containment measures

The Malagasy Government introduced movement restrictions in 2020–2021 to help contain COVID-19. These measures contributed to food inflation, which reached an estimated 8% in 2021 (WFP 30/12/2021). The disruption of markets and supply chains because of the

restrictions and currency depreciation significantly increased the price of basic food items, such as rice and oil. This increase left households who had depleted their reserves unable to buy food (FAO 25/10/2021). Movement restrictions also limited people's ability to migrate from the Grand Sud to northern urban centres to seek better employment opportunities (IPC 29/04/2020). The need for the Government to focus on controlling the spread of the virus has at times come at the expense of food, water, health, and education needs in the region (KII 17/01/2022).

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a sudden and deep recession in Madagascar, with a 4% drop in real gross domestic product reversing nearly a decade of income per capita gains (WFP 30/12/2021; WB 16/12/2020). COVID-19 containment measures have severely hit the export, manufacturing, mining, tourism, service, and financial sectors. The budget deficit increased by 6% in 2020, up from 1.4% in 2019, because of decreased tax collections and increased government spending. This increase reduced the Government's ability to address weather shocks and increased food and health needs (AFDB accessed 04/01/2022).

COVID-19 movement restrictions were extensive in 2020–2021, and the Government declared a state of health emergency in March–October 2020 and April–September 2021 (Crisis24 19/10/2020 and 06/09/2021). Madagascar entered 2022 with a third wave of COVID-19 infections that started in mid-December 2021, with only 2.7% of the population fully vaccinated (WHO accessed 16/01/2022; Our World in Data accessed 23/01/2022). Despite this third surge, the Government did not declare another state of health emergency, which means COVID-19 containment measures are unlikely to influence food security in 2022.

Poor infrastructure

The development of infrastructure in the Grand Sud has been stalled for decades (KII 24/01/2022). During the rainy season (November–April), dirt roads become muddy and impassable, and access to markets becomes extremely challenging, increasing food prices (WWA 01/12/2021; OCHA 19/08/2021). Poor infrastructure, such as an almost nonexistent and poorly maintained drainage system, contributes to a higher risk of flooding, which has become common after rainfall (Crisis24 accessed 09/01/2022; CRS KII 18/01/2022).

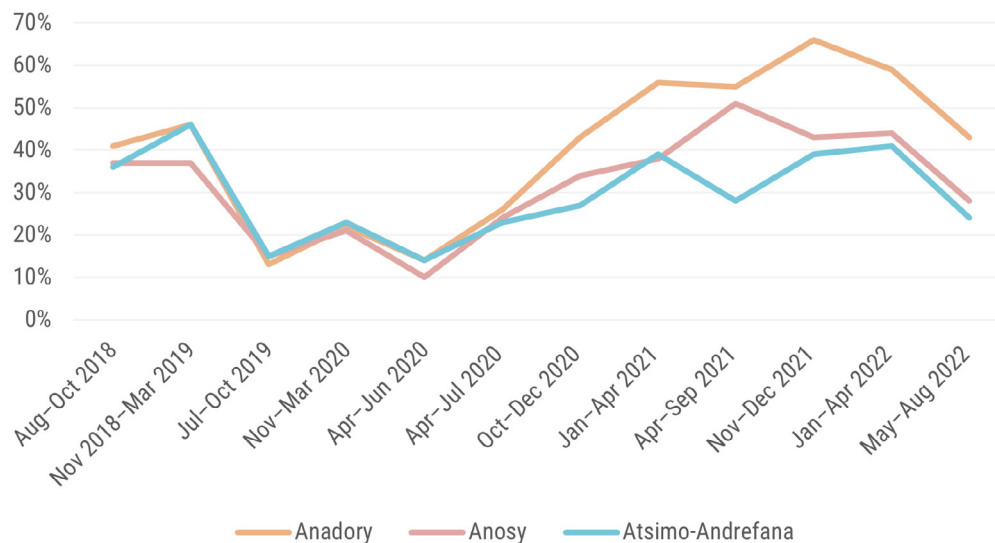
Only 40% of villages in the Grand Sud are accessible all year long. Nine districts (Amboasary Atsimo, Ambovombe, Ampanihy, Bekily, Beloha, Betioky, Betroka, Tsihombe, and some parts of Taolagnaro) are hard to physically access, especially during the rainy season (KII 12/01/2022; OCHA 19/08/2021). Other communities are isolated all year long, cut off from the rest of the country, and have limited access to water, electricity, and markets to sell their products (FAO 26/04/2019).

IMPACT ON HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

Food

Households face food access and availability challenges as a result of low production, a lack of income sources, and severe market disruptions. Between April–September 2021, 14,000 people in Atsimo-Andrefana region experienced Catastrophe/Famine (IPC Phase 5) food insecurity. As at December 2021, more than 1.47 million people (approximately 49% of the analysed population) in Androy, Anosy, and Atsimo-Andrefana regions were food insecure and required food assistance. The large-scale humanitarian response has helped slightly improve this situation. Between January–April 2022, 47% of the population (1.42 million) in the three regions is projected to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and Emergency (IPC Phase 4) food insecurity levels, with none facing catastrophic situations (IPC 09/07/2021 and 03/01/2022; IPC accessed 04/01/2022; OCHA 19/08/2021). Despite the apparent improvement, the lean seasons in 2022–2023 will likely begin earlier and be more severe than in previous years (KII 21/01/2022; FEWS NET 02/02/2022).

Percentage of people facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food insecurity levels and above



Source: IPC accessed 10/03/2022

Nutrition

Through June 2022, the nutrition situation in the Grand Sud will likely worsen. 500,000 children are projected to be at risk of malnutrition and in need of nutrition services between January–March, including 70,000 severely malnourished children. Drivers for the increase include the early start of the lean season because of prolonged drought, the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, an increase in the prices of basic items (including food), poor agricultural seasons, and limited access to water and health services (UNICEF 30/11/2021 and 25/11/2021).

In November 2021, for children 6–59 months of age, the moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) rate decreased and the severe acute malnutrition (SAM) rate slightly increased compared to rates in November 2020. In 2021, MAM prevalence was 6.1%, and SAM was 1.5%. In 2020, the MAM rate was 5.6%, and SAM was 2% (UNICEF 30/11/2021 and 25/11/2021; ECHO 03/05/2021).

Health

Needs for health services increased as acute food shortages and malnutrition compromised disease resilience. Poor road conditions and a lack of security affect people's access to health facilities (OCHA 19/08/2021). After children, elderly people have the highest needs for health services as there are no targeted programmes for them. The situation especially affects elderly people who do not have children or relatives to support them nearby (KII 24/01/2022).

In October 2021, drought and water shortages led to an increase in cases of bloody diarrhoea – a waterborne disease – in Anosy region. The disease is considered a main contributor to child deaths (OCHA 11/11/2021; KII 12/01/2022). Other diseases that affect households in the Grand Sud include malaria, polio, plague, measles, and COVID-19 (KII 12/01/2022; CDC 19/03/2020; WHO 01/10/2021 and 17/01/2019).

People living in remote areas without roads or communication infrastructure struggle to reach health centres, which are around 10km away from most communities and not equipped with needed tools or medical staff. Insecurity and increased dahalo criminality also hindered access to health services in 2021, especially in Amboasary Atsimo and Taolagnaro districts in Anosy region (KII 12/01/2022; USAID accessed 15/01/2022; OCHA 02/12/2021).

WASH

Drought continuously depletes water levels, increasing water extraction and water trucking difficulties (UNICEF 06/01/2022). Households in the south consider water their biggest priority. They need clean water to drink and cook. Obtaining water is very challenging, as people need to walk long distances or dig deep boreholes to get to a water source. Some boreholes also provide salty water instead of clean drinking water (CRS KII 18/01/2022; KII 24/01/2022). In 2021, water shortages, aside from water prices increasing by 10–15 times the average, drove families to depend on unsafe water for drinking and cooking, exposing them to water-related disease outbreaks (OCHA 27/08/2021).

Protection

The food security and drought crisis in the Grand Sud is leading to the use of coping mechanisms with harmful effects on women and children in particular (OCHA 19/08/2021). GBV is commonly reported in the region, and there are not enough services to accommodate victims of GBV or child abuse (CRS KII 18/01/2022).

Women: there are reports of women resorting to transactional sex to provide food despite the risk of unintended pregnancies. Access to sexual and reproductive healthcare is also challenging, largely because people cannot afford transportation costs to access adequate services. Early marriage rates also continue to be high in the Grand Sud. The rates of women ages 20–49 that get married before 18 (the legal marriage age in Madagascar) are 45% in Anosy, 55% in Androy, and 58% in Atsimo-Andrefana, all higher than the national rate of 37% (UNFPA 16/09/2021 and 15/11/2021; OCHA 19/08/2021). Cultural or social reasons, such as men preferring to be present and overseeing all topics discussed, sometimes pose challenges for aid workers to have private conversations with women or young girls, making it difficult to identify protection needs (KII 17/01/2022).

Children: child labour cases are increasing because of consecutive droughts. Children are considered adults and expected to participate in informal income-generating activities, including begging, mining, farming, and getting water. 49–62% of children were involved in child labour in 2021 (OCHA 02/12/2021 and 19/08/2021; CRS KII 18/01/2022).

Livelihoods

More than 90% of people facing acute food insecurity in the Grand Sud live on agriculture, livestock, and fishing. With households having depleted their assets, the Grand Sud faces a risk of a total collapse of livelihoods (FAO and WFP 11/05/2021; Farmer's Weekly 11/01/2022). Drought, below-average rainfall, and a lack of irrigation water are some factors that have affected livelihoods. Sandstorms, locust and Fall Armyworm infestations, and a Rift Valley

Fever outbreak have specifically affected agricultural and livestock activities. In the three most populated districts (Amboasary Atsimo, Ambovombe, and Ampanihy), severe drought led to up to 60% of crop losses in May–June 2021 (OCHA 19/08/2021). A lack of water and pasture have also resulted in the death of some livestock and poor body conditions for others (Farmer's Weekly 11/01/2022). COVID-19 restriction measures, such as the temporary closure of non-essential businesses, have resulted in job losses, affecting households' livelihoods and purchasing power (The Kingston Whig Standard 09/08/2021; FAO 11/05/2021). The low harvest in 2021 resulted in low crop sales for farmers and low demand for overall labour (Farmer's Weekly 11/01/2022).

Ethnic groups in some areas like Androy region believe that agricultural activities are not masculine, but livestock cultivation is. This belief could explain why most men prefer working in livestock and fisheries. Owning zebu, a cattle species, also used to be significantly symbolic in southern Madagascar and was seen as a sign of wealth. Currently, it is not preferable as it may attract the dahalo (KII 17/01/2022; Evaneos 03/04/2018).

Education

The food insecurity crisis is affecting children's access to education. Dropout rates for the 2018–2019 school year were nearly 38% for primary school and 34% for secondary school. The rates are expected to have increased in 2020–2021 because of the deteriorating food security situation and closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, but recent data is not available (OCHA 19/08/2021 and 02/12/2021; UNICEF 07/12/2021). A low percentage of children complete any type of education, and few show knowledge of math and French. Classrooms are very crowded with students. The quality of education is poor. Some teachers also tend to miss classes when they are preoccupied with providing food for their own families (KII 12/01/2022; ADSUM accessed 19/02/2022).

Households living below the poverty line tend to involve their children in child labour, interrupting their school enrollment (OCHA 19/08/2021). Other households migrate from the Grand Sud to northern Madagascar in search of better sources of income, also temporarily affecting their children's education (ECHO 30/06/2021; OCHA 02/12/2021). Given lockdown measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, enrolling in online education has been challenging for children in rural areas where internet services are unavailable (KII 17/01/2022; KII 12/01/2022).

Shelter

In search of better livelihood opportunities and sources of income, people migrate from the Grand Sud to northern Madagascar and require emergency (and sometimes temporary) shelter assistance. The drought displaced nearly 3,000 people in the cities and transit points from December 2020 to March 2021 (OCHA 19/08/2021). Domestic COVID-19 containment measures between 2020–2021 limited internal migration movement and decreased shelter needs (IPC 29/04/2020). Upon the lifting of these measures, with poor household production remaining largely below average and increasing shelter needs, migration increased again between April–September 2021 (FEWS NET 30/09/2021).

COPING STRATEGIES DRIVING NEW HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

Between 60–70% of households in the Grand Sud employ emergency livelihood coping strategies, such as selling houses or land, practising illegal or risky activities, migrating to urban centres, and begging. In Ambovombe and Tsihombe districts in Androy region and Amboasary Atsimo and Taolagnaro districts in Anosy region, more than 10% of households have already exhausted their emergency coping strategies (IPC 09/07/2021 and 03/01/2022; FEWS NET 31/07/2021; KII 12/01/2022).

Households below the poverty line also resort to selling productive assets and reducing the quantity, frequency, and quality of meals, with some communities resorting to consuming almost exclusively wild food, such as red cactus leaves, yams, roots, wild fruits, and cassava (KII 24/01/2022; CRS KII 18/01/2022; FAO 25/10/2021). Early marriages and prostitution are also among the negative coping strategies reported in the region (CRS KII 18/01/2022).

People in the Grand Sud have become dependent on aid from international organisations, which is another negative coping strategy (KII 12/01/2022; KII 24/01/2022). Providing unconditional assistance to all people in need has increased humanitarian aid dependency, but international organisation programmes are usually short-term emergency responses to the crisis. They are not development programmes that aim to create resilience to future shocks for the Malagasy people (KII 24/01/2022; Mongabay 07/07/2021).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, households could migrate to urban centres while waiting for the situation in the south to improve. COVID-19 restriction measures limited this migration movement, which only resumed in April 2021. By then, people in cities were no longer welcoming to migrants from the Grand Sud. Households in northern Madagascar also dealt with the COVID-19 impacts on livelihoods and economy, and receiving migrants from the southern districts would exhaust their own resources. In general, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased discrimination, stigmatisation, and xenophobia against migrants (KII 17/01/2022; IOM 21/07/2021).

The low demand for petty trade and service in urban areas and agricultural labour in rural areas has also limited livelihood opportunities for migrants (FEWS NET 30/09/2021). As a result, migrants adopt emergency coping strategies in the regions they settle in. One such strategy is illegal forest exploitation, which contributes to increasing deforestation rates and is another reason northern households refuse migrants (FEWS NET 30/09/2021; CRS KII 18/01/2022).

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS CONSTRAINTS

Remote areas and poor infrastructure

Poor road conditions hinder humanitarian response to the food insecurity crisis in southern Madagascar. Roads linking districts and municipalities to remote areas are unpaved. During the rainy season between November–April, these roads become muddy and delay the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Some communities living in Tolagnaro and Amboasary Atsimo districts in Anosy region are the hardest to reach, as they are not connected by roads and can only be reached by foot or canoe (OCHA 19/08/2021 and 18/01/2021; IPC 09/07/2021; FEWS NET 30/09/2021). Other remote villages can only be reached after many hours of travel, sometimes under 40° C weather conditions (KII 17/01/2022). Only 42% of villages are accessible all year long (KII 12/01/2022). Transportation is expensive, and vendors are limited. Trucks also break down often because of bad road conditions, resulting in delays in aid delivery (CRS KII 18/01/2022).

Insecurity caused by bandits

Frequent cattle raids and theft by the dahalo restrict people's access to humanitarian services. The districts most affected by insecurity in 2021 were Amboasary Atsimo and Betroka in Anosy region and Ambovombe in Androy region (OCHA 19/08/2021). Some humanitarian organisations set no-go zones because of banditry violence (KII 12/01/2022). There have been incidents reported in relation to the activity of bandits, including an ambush of humanitarian staff by armed dahalo members on 7 December 2021 in Amboasary Atsimo. They killed one aid worker, injured another, and stole the group's belongings (OCHA 19/08/2021; Crisis24 13/12/2021). Generally, the dahalo do not target humanitarian workers or their assets because their main goal is to steal livestock (KII 17/01/2022).

Visas for international staff

COVID-19 restrictive measures on international flights delay the renewal and issuance of visas for international humanitarian workers (OCHA 19/08/2021; CRS KII 18/01/2022).

OUTLOOK

Sandstorms (red wind)

Sandstorms will likely continue affecting the Grand Sud because of the semi-arid nature of the land, deforestation, poor vegetation coverage, dry soil, and hot temperatures (Mongabay 29/01/2021). Specifically, the Grand Sud has lost almost 90% of its vegetation cover (KII 24/01/2022), increasing the impact and frequency of sandstorms. If sandstorms affect the harvest season, the expected improvement in food security levels will likely be affected. Sandstorms aggravate an already dire situation by further threatening agriculture and infrastructure – reducing cultivable land, blanket farmland, crops, and forests with sand (CRS KII 18/01/2022; Mongabay 07/07/2021; Earth Observatory accessed 15/01/2022).

Fall Armyworm

A wave of Fall Armyworm infestation is likely as predictions expect higher than average rain through March 2022. Rainfall and floods help pests grow, and an infestation wave will likely damage crops and aggravate food insecurity levels in the Grand Sud (CRS KII 18/01/2022). If a Fall Armyworm infestation affects the harvest season starting in August 2022, the expected improvement on food security levels will likely be affected.

Floods and cyclones

During the rainy season (November–March), cyclones often affect Madagascar, frequently the eastern coast or northern areas of the country (KII 17/01/2022). Tropical cyclones rarely affect the Grand Sud, but heavy rainfall and floods as rivers overflow result in displacement, affecting harvest and crop production (WWA 01/12/2021). In general, floods and drought occurring one after another in the same area reduce the soil's ability to absorb rain. After a while, planting in soil with low absorbency becomes challenging, and the chances of floods following heavy rainfall increase (Huang et al. 20/10/2021). The impact of the 2020–2021 cyclone season was minimal compared to the 2019–2020 season. The latter affected rice production and notably damaged some infrastructure relevant for agriculture, including dams, roads, and channels in the west, decreasing overall maize production in the Grand Sud (FEWS NET 05/03/2021 and 30/06/2020).

In 2022, despite the impact of the cyclone season in the southern and eastern regions of Madagascar, heavy rainfall did not directly affect the Grand Sud. An exception is Tropical Cyclone Emnati, which made landfall on 23 February and brought relatively important rain to the zone (OCHA 24/02/2022). A spike in food prices in succeeding months, following the expected loss of harvest after floods damaged crops, will likely affect the Grand Sud (UN NEWS 04/02/2022; WFP 04/02/2022 and 25/02/2022). As at 19 February, Tropical Storm Ana and Cyclone Batsirai had damaged main roads linking northern Madagascar and the capital city to the Grand Sud, hindering the delivery of aid to drought-affected households (NYT 08/02/2022).

Social instability

Social instability across Madagascar will likely deteriorate the food insecurity crisis in the Grand Sud as the access of humanitarian organisations is disrupted. Migration to urban areas in search of better livelihood opportunities will be challenging, and insecurity will likely disrupt agricultural activities. The Government's management of the COVID-19 crisis and imposition of measures that reversed the start of an economic growth process triggered protests in March–April 2021 in Antananarivo city, with people demanding the relaxation of restrictions (Crisis24 accessed 09/01/2022; Al Arabiya 06/03/2021). Levels of poverty and desperation among people are high not only in the Grand Sud but across the country (KII 24/01/2022). The socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 restrictions and discontent with the Government are likely to catalyse grievances and lead to large-scale protests and social instability across the country (Crisis24 accessed 09/01/2022; Daily Maverick 06/08/2021). In July 2021, the Government announced that it foiled an assassination attempt on the president and arrested 21 suspects (Al Jazeera 22/07/2021; Reuters 02/08/2021). Presidential elections are also scheduled to take place in 2023, and some political and social instability will likely take place depending on the outcome of the elections (KII 17/01/2022; KII 21/01/2022).

INFORMATION GAPS

There is limited information on the following:

- number of hectares of agricultural land affected by floods and heavy rainfall in 2021
- primary and secondary school dropout rates in the 2020–2021 school year and recent poverty rates
- the number of people who need livelihood assistance
- the needs and number of people displaced since March 2021 by the migration movement from southern to northern Madagascar
- the type of illegal or risky activities that affected households adopt as emergency coping strategies in the Grand Sud.

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