Reducing school dropout in Madagascar

In Madagascar, hundreds of thousands of children drop out of school every year, while only 4,000 students pass their final secondary-school exams. The European Institute for Cooperation and Development (IECD), and the Malagasy non-profit organisation PROMES are battling to lower school drop-out rates among youngsters in rural communities. By establishing academic support centres (called "incubators"), they offer individual guidance to students, enabling them to fulfil their potential both personally and intellectually. We are specifically supporting three centres in the Fianarantsoa region which will take a total of 720 pupils over three years.

**DURATION:** 2017-2019

**FOCUS AREA:** Access to Basic Services

**COUNTRY:** Madagascar

**PARTNER:** IECD

**CONTEXT**

Education levels in Madagascar are among the lowest in the world, with children receiving an average of around four years of schooling. The statistics are damning: just 4,000 students pass their final secondary-school exams every year and the system is struggling to improve this figure; only 10% of the population attends secondary school, and the number drops to 3% for higher education (Source: World Bank 2009).

Education levels are not only low but also inconsistent. In rural communities, just 19% of educated children continue on to secondary school (compared to 37% in urban areas), and only 1% of them obtain their baccalaureate.

Factors affecting school drop-out rates include poverty, a shortage of teachers and their lack of training, living a long distance from school, or else a lack of motivation from either the child or their parents. Many parents are already overwhelmed by the challenges of coping from day
to day, and perceive few benefits in educating their children, often preferring to send them out to work instead.

**ACTION**

Since 2006, the IECD and the Malagasy non-profit organisation PROMES have been allowing youngsters in the Fianarantsoa region to access six educational centres or “incubators” linked to 12 secondary schools in rural communities. Through academic support, extracurricular activities, boarding school options and individual guidance, these centres provide pupils with an opportunity to improve their learning skills and to fulfil their potential both personally and intellectually.

This programme is specifically designed to support three “incubators” – in Alakmisy-Itenina, Isorana and Alakmisy-Ambohimanan – and aims to assist 720 pupils over three years, 540 of whom will be boarders. Students in the centres benefit from individual academic guidance which includes:

- 10 hours a week of lessons in key academic subjects (French, Malagasy, experimental science and maths);
- 2 hours a day of supervised study;
- Extracurricular activities are offered to boost pupils’ personal development, and a school meals system is set up for the period between harvests when rice supplies are depleted.

Once “incubator” students have obtained their lower-secondary certificate, they attend a one-year foundation course in preparation for their entrance to one of the six best lycées (upper-secondary schools) in Fianarantsoa. Pupils also receive personal support during their three years in upper-secondary school, and then throughout higher education.

In parallel, training is given to lower-secondary school teachers at partner establishments, and parent associations are created to involve mothers and fathers in the education and academic support of their children.

**EXPECTED RESULTS**

- 720 pupils from disadvantaged rural communities have been guided throughout their secondary-school education up until their final exams.
- 90% of the 720 pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds will have excelled in their lower-secondary school exams (BEPC), learnt to work independently and gained the requisite competence in languages, science and literature.
- 45 lower-secondary teachers in partner schools will have improved the quality of their teaching for the benefit of 9,000 pupils across their establishments.

**LONG-TERM STRATEGY**

This programme's integrated approach, including boarding school options, extracurricular activities for personal development as well as teachers and parents involvement in the educational project - aims to create a flourishing educational environment for all young people. The “incubators” will be sustainable in the long-term through the training of teams and by bolstering the centres’ financial independence.