At national level, in 2018 wasting affected 6 percent of 6–59 month-old children, which is considered a ‘medium’ prevalence. Three out of 21 regions had a ‘high’ prevalence – Vatovavy Fitovinany (13 percent), Menabe (11 percent), and Betsiboka (11 percent). With a ‘very high’ level of children stunted (42 percent), chronic malnutrition is a major public health and development concern in Madagascar, in particular in Vakinankaratra (60 percent) Amoron’i Mania (55 percent) Haute Matsiatra (54 percent), and Bolongolava (52 percent) (MICS, November 2018).

In the first quarter of 2019, nutrition surveillance in eight southern districts of Madagascar showed a proxy GAM prevalence of 13.3 percent. The GAM prevalence was ‘very high’ in 22 out of 146 communes (UNICEF and WFP, February 2019).

Around 188,550 children were estimated to suffer from acute malnutrition from August 2019–February 2020, with 35,393 severe cases. The district of Bekily was classified in Critical (IPC AMN Phase 4) (IPC, August 2019).

Child-feeding practices in 2018 were far from optimal with half (51 percent) of children under 6 months exclusively breastfed, only 21 percent of children aged 6–23 months consuming a minimum acceptable diet and 25 percent meeting the minimum dietary diversity required for their growth and development (MICS 2018).

Low use of at least basic drinking water services (40 percent) was also a major concern (UNICEF and WHO, 2017). Due to low vaccination rates and poor sanitation and hygiene, Madagascar is regularly hit by epidemics.

The country faced an unprecedented measles outbreak in 2018–2019, with more than 204,000 registered cases and over 900 measles-related deaths. While the measles epidemic was mostly under control by the end of the year, there is a high possibility that a new epidemic could begin at any time, especially during the rainy season (UNICEF, December 2019).