

Absenteeism in Social Service Delivery

Preliminary Results – First Round

March 2007

By Nathalie Franckenⁱ

Introduction

Absenteeism in social service delivery is a major problem world-wide (Chaudhury *et al.*, 2006) as well as in Madagascar (World Bank, 2006a). The results in this study are based on primary data collected in the first round of a nation-wide budget tracking survey in the health and education sector of Madagascar at the end of 2006.¹

The stratified sample was set up in such a way to be representative at the national level. Madagascar counts 22 regions and 111 districts and at least one district was visited in each region. Two districts were selected in the six largest regions. Hence, 28 districts were visited in total.² In each district, three communes were randomly selected, giving greater weight to the communes with more schools. Within each commune, three public primary schools were randomly selected.³ In addition, all the public basic health centers of type 2 (CSB2⁴) were visited. If public basic health centers of type 1 (CSB1) were present in the commune, one was visited based on random selection. Table 1 gives an overview of the sample. In total, 252 schools and 113 basic health centers were visited.

Using an international protocol the survey measures absenteeism of personnel in the health and education sector of Madagascar. Doing an unannounced visit twice over the year, it should allow measuring the rate of absenteeism in both sectors. Given that salaries are the most important budget item in the spending of both ministries, the results are expected to give key insights in the effectiveness of public spending (World Bank, 2006b).

This brief discusses the results of the first survey round at the end of 2006. In order to accurately investigate absenteeism, different survey instruments were used. In the education sector, surveys were organized at district/Cisco⁵ and

school level. At school level, the directors of the schools as well as the teachers were interviewed independently. In the health sector, surveys were organized at district/PhaGdis⁶ and health center level. At health center level, the directors of the centers as well as the staff were interviewed independently.

Table 1: Structure of the sample

Province	Nr. of schools	Nr. of CSB
Antananarivo	54	23
Fianarantsoa	63	27
Toamasina	36	19
Mahajanga	45	24
Toliara	36	12
Antsiranana	18	8
Total	252	113

Source: Budget Tracking Survey, 2006

This brief is made available to let stakeholders know of the findings as they become available. It is a preliminary analysis of the first round of data collection. More analysis is forthcoming as the second round of data is on the way.

1. Absenteeism in the education sector

1.1. Results at district level

In 13% of the schools with subsidized FRAM teachers, there appears to be on average one extra FRAM teacher on the payroll at Cisco level

Table 2 illustrates that for almost one-fifth of the schools in Toamasina and Mahajanga there is on average one extra subsidized FRAM teacher⁷ on the payroll of the respective districts compared to the data from the school visits. It mainly concerns one FRAM teacher per school. In some cases there are two such teachers. Further data analysis – and data from the second round – will examine whether this discrepancy is resulting in salary subsidy payments being made even when there is no teacher.

Table 2: % of schools with extra FRAM teachers on the payroll at Cisco level compared to school level data

Antananarivo	14
Fianarantsoa	11
Toamasina	19
Mahajanga	18
Toliara	4
Antsiranana	10
Madagascar	13

Source: Budget Tracking Survey, 2006

¹ The survey was conducted in September/October/November

² The selected districts were obtained through random selection, giving greater (less) weight to districts with more (less) public primary schools and health centers within the district. The education and health sector were given equal weight in the latter selection (World Bank, 2006b).

³ By ranking schools from large to small and ensuring that a school was picked out of each tercile, a representative sample of school sizes was chosen.

⁴ Centre de Santé de Base Type 2

⁵ Circonscription Scolaire i.e. District Education Office

⁶ Pharmacie à Gestion District i.e. District Pharmacy

⁷ We define a subsidized FRAM teacher is a FRAM teacher that is entitled to an allowance from the Government/Cisco.

1.2. Results at school level

a. Fourteen schools were closed at the time of the survey, mainly due to teacher absenteeism.

Six percent of the total sample of public primary schools was closed at the time of the survey. A majority of these schools was closed as the teachers were absent, mainly due to 'other' reasons as e.g. illness, and missions (Table 3).

Table 3: Reasons of closure of schools – Oct/Nov 2006

	Nr.	%
Flood/Cyclone damage	2	14
Lack of teachers	2	14
Teachers left as they are not paid	2	14
Teachers left to collect their salary	1	7
Teachers absent for other reasons	6	44
Conflict/Security reasons	1	7
Total	14	100

Source: Budget Tracking Survey, 2006

b. One-fifth of the total number of teachers was absent at the time of the survey. Though more than half of them were absent because they do not work full-time; they work on a different time schedule.

Overall, 20% of the total number of teachers in the 238 operational schools was absent at the time of the survey i.e. at the end of 2006. Table 4 illustrates that the main reason of absenteeism is the fact that the teachers work part-time or less and were not supposed to teach at the time of the visit.

Fourteen percent of the teachers was absent as they were on mission i.e. mainly to collect their salary. Ten percent of the teachers was ill. A majority of this group (59%) is regularly ill. The absence of the teachers was authorized in 9% of the cases mainly due to maternity leave. On the other hand, 6% of the teachers was absent for unauthorized reasons i.e. often due to funerals of family members. The remaining part was absent because of various reasons.

Table 4: Reasons of absenteeism during the school year 2005-2006 (as stated by the director of the school)

	Nr.	%
Teacher is on an official mission	25	14
Teacher is transferred	1	1
Illness of teacher	17	10
Teacher works part-time or less i.e. on different time schedule	100	57
Authorized absence of teacher	15	9
Unauthorized absence of teacher	11	6
Teacher is too late	2	1
Teacher is suspended	2	1
Don't know	2	1
Total	175	100

Source: Budget Tracking Survey, 2006

The median time a teacher was absent (for other reasons than part-time work) at the time of the survey was two days. Overall, they are expected to be absent for another day.

c. In 24% of the schools, one-third of the teacher staff was absent due to other reasons than part-time work.

Table 5 illustrates that in 24% of the schools on average 35% of the teacher personnel was absent at the time of our visit. Part-time teachers who were not supposed to work at the time of the survey were not counted as absent. This was only done after a detailed comparison of the time schedules of those teachers and the times of the surveys. Hence, the main reasons for absenteeism were official missions – mainly to obtain salary – and illness. There are strong regional differences with the province of Mahajanga suffering most from teacher absenteeism as 40% of the public primary schools reported this problem.

Table 5: Teacher absenteeism for the school year 2005-2006

Province	% of schools with absenteeism	% of teachers absent to total teacher staff in schools with absenteeism	
		Mean	Median
Antananarivo	28	35	33
Fianarantsoa	10	30	23
Toamasina	33	36	23
Mahajanga	40	35	33
Toliara	17	37	42
Antsiranana	11	27	27
Madagascar	24	35	33

Source: Budget Tracking Survey, 2006

d. Teacher absenteeism is mainly solved through replacement.

Table 6 illustrates how teacher absenteeism is managed. In 62% of the cases the absence of a teacher is solved through replacement of that teacher. Though, in 27% of the cases the students were sent back home.

Table 6: Solutions to teacher absenteeism; 2005-2006

	Nr.	%
Students are sent back home	20	27
Replacement of teacher	46	62
Students wait for teacher	8	11
Total	74	100

Source: Budget Tracking Survey, 2006

e. One of the main reasons of absenteeism is the time needed for teachers to collect their salary. On average, teachers are absent for one up to three days per month for this reason.

Teacher absenteeism due to salary pick up is a major problem in Madagascar (Minten *et al.*, 2005). Table 7 shows the number of days per month a teacher is absent to collect his/her salary in the dry and rainy season respectively. The third column depicts the maximum time teachers needed to collect their salary during the previous school year. On average, teachers are absent for 1 up to 3 days per month to obtain their salary. It is especially a major problem in the province of Toliara. The most extreme case we found in this province was where teachers were absent for 18

days in one month during last school year only to pick up their salary.⁸

Table 7: Teacher absenteeism due to collection of salary for the school year 2005-2006

Province	Time to collect salary (in number of days per month)					
	Dry season		Rainy season		Maximum	
	Mean	Med.	Mean	Med.	Mean	Med.
Antananarivo	0.8	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.3	1.0
Fianarantsoa	1.5	1.5	2.0	1.5	3.4	3.0
Toamasina	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.9	0.0
Mahajanga	2.4	1.5	3.2	2.0	5.0	4.0
Toliara	2.3	1.8	3.3	2.0	7.0	5.0
Antsiranana	1.2	1.0	1.7	1.0	1.6	1.0
Madagascar	1.2	1.0	1.6	1.0	2.7	1.0

Source: Budget Tracking Survey, 2006

2. Absenteeism in the health sector

a. Nine basic health centers (i.e. 8% of our complete sample) were closed at the time of the survey. Absenteeism was a major reason.

b. Almost one-fifth of the total number of health staff was absent at the time of the survey, mainly due to official missions.

Overall, 19% of the total health staff in the 104 operational basic health centers was absent at the time of the survey. This group mainly consisted of midwives (25%), CSB directors (22%), dispensers (16%) and nurses (13%).

Table 8 shows that 41% of the absent staff was on an official mission. The latter group mainly went to collect their salary (13% of the total) or attended a training or meeting. A quarter of the absent personnel was on authorized leave of which half of them was on holidays. Another 22% was ill. Overall, only 41% of the absent employees was replaced.

Table 8: Reasons of absenteeism in CSB – Oct/Nov 2006

	Nr.	%
Official mission	28	41
Other official position unrelated to work at the CSB (elections etc.)	1	1 ^a
Illness	15	22
Part-time work i.e. on other time schedule	1	1 ^a
Authorized absence	17	25
Unauthorized absence	2	3
Too late	2	3
Suspended	1	1 ^a
Don't know	1	1 ^a
Total	68	100

Source: Budget Tracking Survey, 2006; ^aOne and a half percent rounded down to one percent.

The median time of absence of the personnel was two days and they were expected to be absent for another two more days. The mean time of absenteeism was 14 days as there were some extreme cases as e.g. the director of the CSB2 in the commune of Manambolosy in the province of Toamasina was already ill for 5 months without being replaced.

c. In general there was a high rate of absenteeism as in one-third of the health centers, on average 43% of the personnel was absent during our visit.

Table 9 illustrates that in 34% of the health centers on average 43% of the staff was absent at the time of the survey. As aforementioned, the main reasons for absenteeism are official missions – mainly to obtain salary –, holidays and illness. There are strong regional differences with the province of Antsiranana suffering most from absenteeism in the health sector as half of their health centers had to operate with approximately half of their staff.

Table 9: Absenteeism of staff in basic health centers (CSB)

Province	% of CSB with absenteeism	% of persons absent to total staff in CBS with absenteeism	
		Mean	Median
Antananarivo	27	35	37
Fianarantsoa	30	33	33
Toamasina	44	47	33
Mahajanga	29	45	50
Toliara	40	50	53
Antsiranana	50	54	50
Madagascar	34	43	40

Source: Budget Tracking Survey, 2006

d. On average, health personnel is absent for one up to two days per month to pick up their salary.

Table 10 shows absenteeism in the health sector due to salary pick up in the dry and rainy season in number of days per month. The third column depicts the maximum time needed to collect the salary during the previous year. The results are very similar to the results in the education sector as discussed above. On average, health personnel is absent for one up to two days per month to obtain their salary. It is especially a major problem in the provinces of Toliara and Mahajanga.

Table 10: Health staff absenteeism due to salary pick up

Province	Time to collect salary (in number of days per month)					
	Dry season		Rainy season		Maximum	
	Mean	Med.	Mean	Med.	Mean	Med.
Antananarivo	0.8	1.0	0.8	1.0	1.0	1.0
Fianarantsoa	1.1	1.0	1.7	1.0	2.5	1.0
Toamasina	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.8	0.0
Mahajanga	2.0	2.0	2.2	1.0	3.5	3.0
Toliara	2.4	1.0	3.8	1.0	4.9	3.0
Antsiranana	1.7	1.0	1.4	1.0	2.6	2.0
Madagascar	1.1	1.0	1.5	1.0	2.1	1.0

Source: Budget Tracking Survey, 2006

⁸ This reflects the bad state of infrastructure in the remote commune of Bereketa (Sakaraha, Toliara).

3. Index cards and incentives system

1. The use of proper index cards for teachers and health staff stating their presence (or authorized absence) should be promoted. Moreover, accurate records on this matter should be kept at the respective decentralized levels.

Only a little more than half (57%) of the teachers were in the possession of an index card that stated their presence at the time of the survey. In the health sector the number was even much lower as only 35% of the staff was the owner of such a card. Overall, in 33% of the schools and 42% of the health centers such index system did not exist.

Moreover, in case of authorized absence, our enumerators could only verify the documents in one-third of the cases. In almost half of the cases there were no such documents and in another 20% the documents existed but could not be verified. The results were very similar for the health and education sector and seem to suggest that index cards on presence – as well as authorized absence – of staff should be introduced by the Government. These cards should then be distributed to staff working in the health and education sectors and accurate records could be kept at school as well as CSB level. The documents should also be made publicly accessible at all times.

2. The establishment of a proper incentives system in the education sector should be encouraged. Nowadays, teachers who perform well are barely rewarded and incompetent teachers are hardly punished.

Table 11: Incentives system for teachers (as stated by the director of the public primary school) - % of answers

	Civil servant teacher	FRAM teacher
<i>Rewards for competent teachers</i>		
No reward	92	86
Promotion	1	1
School/community give reward	3	4
Gifts	4	8
Salary increase	0	1
Total	100	100
<i>Punishments for incompetent teachers</i>		
No penalty	78	75
Suspension	0	5
Advice to increase discipline	4	3
Transfer to a lower position	2	0
Report to Cisco or ZAP leader	14	12
Decrease in salary	0	1
Higher assessment frequency	1	3
Lower teaching load	1	1
Total	100	100

Source: Budget Tracking Survey, 2006

Low teacher motivation and its detrimental effect on student achievement are central problems in many education systems in Africa (Michaelowa, 2002). It seems as Madagascar could also suffer from this problem. Table 11 illustrates that there are hardly any incentives for teachers to perform

well. In a high 92% and 86% of the schools competent civil servant and FRAM teachers respectively were not rewarded during the previous school year. Besides, incompetent teachers were barely punished. These preliminary findings suggest that the Government of Madagascar should invest in the set-up of proper incentives schemes for school staff, in particular for the civil servant teachers paid by the Government. However, more profound research – with data from the second round – is called for to confirm this.

Finally, while this first descriptive analysis allows us to have a quick overview of absenteeism in social service delivery, more profound research is needed to accurately evaluate absenteeism. We believe that the second round of the survey will provide us with more valuable information and insights on this matter.

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ⁱ The author would like to thank Mr. Paternostro, and Mr. Filmer for valuable comments and feedback and Ms. Bidani, Mr. Randrianiana, and Mr. Rasolofonirina for their continuous support. She would also like to thank the Government of Japan for financing this work through a PHRD grant. Contact: Nathalie.Francken@econ.kuleuven.be