



International
Labour
Organization

**+ SAFETY
HEALTH
FOR ALL**

► Strengthening the labour inspectorate in Madagascar

**VISION
ZERO
FUND**

► Summary

Country: Madagascar

Project name: Improving health and safety at work in Madagascar's value chains - Vision Zero Fund (VZF)

About the project

The project aimed to reduce fatalities, occupational accidents, and diseases across Madagascar's value chains. Its core focus was to promote a culture of prevention, enhance company policies and practices, and strengthen the regulatory and institutional framework for occupational safety and health (OSH). This initiative was part of a broader strategy that initially supported the agricultural sector – specifically the lychee supply chain – before expanding to the textile and construction sectors.

The project was implemented under the ILO's [Safety and Health for All Flagship Programme](#) in Madagascar with joint funding from the German Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS), the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and the French Ministry of Labour and Employment.

Introduction

The ILO supported the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Civil Service, and Social Legislation in developing and implementing three strategic plans aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of labour inspection activities and the enforcement of labour legislation in the field of occupational safety and health in Madagascar. This initiative addressed key challenges faced by the labour inspectorate, particularly regarding its roles and responsibilities, while also providing crucial support to labour inspectors in fulfilling their duties. The approach was coordinated and integrated, engaging key OSH stakeholders at both national and local levels.

The ILO supported the development and implementation of these three strategic plans, complemented by technical training, from December 2020 to December 2023. The plans focused on: 1) improving occupational safety and health (OSH) and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic; 2) formalizing informal jobs within formal enterprises; and 3) developing a comprehensive Multisectoral Strategic Plan in 2023 to improve OSH, formalize informal jobs, address COVID-19 and HIV-AIDS, and to combat child labour in Madagascar. The

strategic plans specifically targeted the textile, construction and public works, and trade sectors.

Summary of results

The three planning processes have strengthened and harmonized the labour inspectorate's compliance policy, enhanced the allocation of material, financial, and human resources, and built the capacity of labour inspectors and labour controllers to master key themes.

The implementation of the strategic plans has led to improved working conditions for inspectors in Madagascar, including enhanced safety during field visits, supported by the project's logistical assistance during the pandemic, notably through the provision of office supplies and personal protection kits. Additionally, the strategic plans have heightened stakeholders' awareness of labour regulations, contributing to more effective labour inspections.

Finally, in response to constituent requests and recognizing that the Labour Inspectorate cannot focus solely on one sector or comprehensively address all OSH challenges, the project extended its activities to the informal sector, thereby broadening the Labour Inspectorate's scope.

► Description

Context

The strengthening of the labour inspection system comes at a critical time, as the labour inspectorate has struggled to ensure compliance with labour laws and regulations on working conditions, health, and workplace safety. Despite ongoing efforts, the labour inspectorate in Madagascar continues to face significant challenges that limit its effectiveness in upholding workers' rights and promoting safe and fair working conditions.

The shifts in priorities and policies brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, including prolonged periods of confinement, significantly weakened the Labour Inspection Office's capacity to intervene. At the same time, the rise in labour law violations within formal enterprises—also linked to the health crisis—highlighted the urgent need for a more comprehensive and proactive approach.

According to a 2023 ILO study on Madagascar's national OSH profile¹, these challenges are further exacerbated by structural deficits.

Labour inspectors face a significant workload due to the high number of companies requiring inspection and the limited financial, material, and human resources available. As a result, the quality and frequency of inspections remained well below standards, with inspectors in the capital conducting an average of only five visits per year.

Additionally, some inspectors have not received specialized training in OSH standards, and the quality of existing training programs is inadequate. These gaps are further compounded by the lack of clear regulations and the ineffectiveness of punitive sanctions, making it difficult to identify and resolve violations. In cases of non-compliance, inspectors can take corrective measures, provide guidance to employers, issue warnings and formal notices, and draft infringement reports. However, their ability to initiate and follow through with legal proceedings remains limited.

This situation is worsened by other critical shortcomings, including low worker awareness, insufficient OSH expertise among managers, inadequate preventive measures in workplaces, and weak coordination among stakeholders responsible for promoting OSH.

Description

The ILO's support focused on strengthening the capacity of key stakeholders, enabling them to define and implement the selected improvements. These efforts were carried out in a coordinated manner, guided by a structured approach within the framework of the Vision Zero Fund and the Flagship programme Safety and Health for All in Madagascar.

Phase 1: Creation of a Core Group of Labour Inspectors (Task-force)

The ILO's support for initiatives to strengthen Madagascar's labour inspection system led to the establishment of a core group of Referent Labour Inspectors in 2018, forming a dedicated Task Force inspired by a successful model in Haiti. Comprising 12 lead labour inspectors, this Task-Force was created to serve as a central body of expertise and to redefine

the labour inspectorate's mission, particularly in overseeing occupational safety and health (OSH).

One of its key objectives was to shift the inspectorate's focus from predominantly reactive measures—such as addressing wage and working hours related disputes—to a more balanced approach that includes proactive OSH monitoring. Historically, the inspectorate had been heavily engaged in conciliating individual labour disputes, often at the expense of broader workplace safety concerns.

Additionally, the Task Force aimed to facilitate the mobilization of essential resources, such as vehicles and equipment, to enhance the inspectorate's operational capacity and strengthen its ability to monitor OSH compliance effectively. The inspectors were selected based on their expertise, commitment to the labour inspectorate's mission, and willingness to participate in training and share their knowledge. Notably, one of the 12 trained inspectors was later appointed Minister of Labour.

To ensure the Task Force became fully operational, the selected inspectors underwent a structured four-stage process to enhance their OSH skills:

- 1. General training** on OSH monitoring in national companies.
- 2. Technical exchanges** with the French Labour Inspectorate, focusing on best practices for inspections.
- 3. Specialized training** on OSH in the construction and public works sector, conducted by an inspector from La Réunion and an ILO technical expert.
- 4. Training** on OSH promotion and workplace management of **COVID-19**.

Following these stages, the Task Force took on the responsibility of training all labour inspectors (LI) and labour controllers (LC), further strengthening OSH oversight across the country.

This photo was taken during the visit of a construction site during the last labour inspection's training session in Antananarivo in September 2022



Phase 2: Training for labour inspectors by the Task-force

The training of labour inspectors followed a peer-to-peer approach, where Task Force members, initially trained by the project team and an OSH specialist, later trained their colleagues starting in 2019.

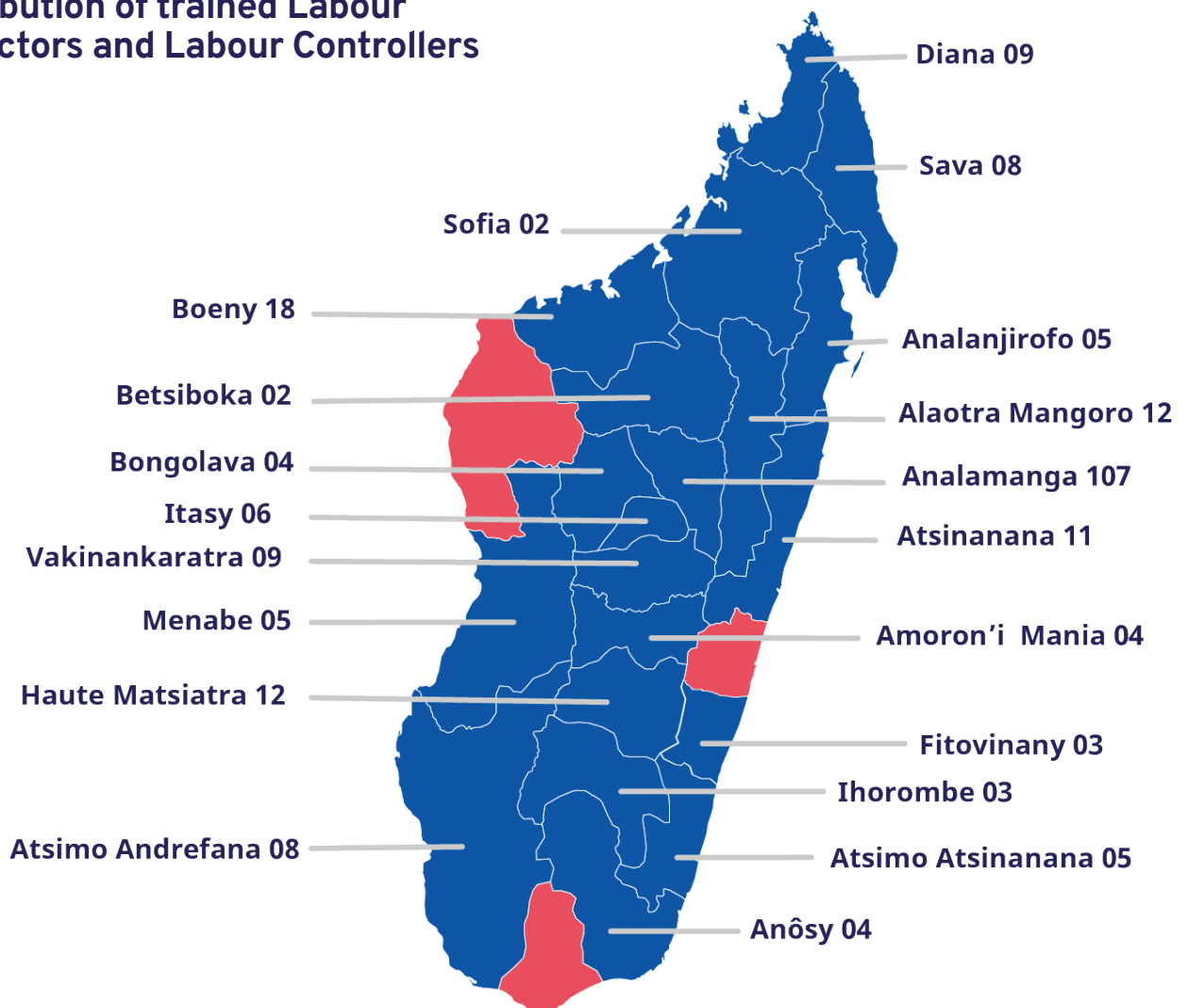
Thanks to this initiative, 245 labour inspectors and controllers—representing 61% of the inspectorate's workforce—received training on general inspection of occupational safety and health (OSH) in 2019. The program combined theoretical instruction with hands-on field training,

allowing inspectors to deepen their understanding of OSH through site visits. These visits enabled them to identify workplace risks and provide targeted recommendations to improve working conditions and promote safer practices.

In the second phase, 234 officers—58% of the total inspectorate's workforce—received specialized training in OSH monitoring for the construction sector in 2022.

As a result of ILO-supported interventions, labour inspection services across all regions of Madagascar now have inspectors and controllers equipped with OSH expertise.

Distribution of trained Labour Inspectors and Labour Controllers



Regions with a Labour Inspection Service

Regions without a Labour Inspection Service

Phase 3: Development and implementation of three strategic compliance plans

Following the training of inspectors, three labour inspection strategic plans for compliance were developed, guided by several key milestones:

Stage 1: Defining the Framework for Developing and Implementing the Labour Inspectorate's Strategic Plans

The initial phase focused on establishing the practical framework for designing and executing the strategic plans for compliance in Madagascar. This process included:

- ▶ Selection of strategic intervention sectors and identification of priority regions.
- ▶ Assessment of sector-specific challenges and determination of key intervention targets.
- ▶ Analysis of influencing factors, both positive and negative, that could impact implementation.
- ▶ Stakeholder identification, prioritization, and mapping to ensure effective coordination.
- ▶ Definition of necessary compliance actions, including preparatory measures and communication strategies.

These foundational steps ensured that the strategic plans were tailored to address critical compliance issues while fostering a structured and coordinated approach to labour inspection in Madagascar.

A comprehensive assessment of the situations enabled the identification of priority sectors, the definition of intervention areas, and the development of effective implementation methods for the strategic plans. Each plan was specifically designed to address the unique needs of its respective sector and target regions, ensuring that future actions are tailored accordingly. This proactive approach not only tackles sector-specific challenges but also maintains alignment with the overarching objectives of the strategic plans.

Stage 2: Capacity-Building for Responsible Teams

The teams responsible for planning and implementation received continuous technical support from the Task Force and the ILO. Collaborating with experts from Social Dialogue, Labour Relations and Governance of Work (LABGOV) and Occupational Safety and Health and Work Environment (OSHE) Branches, as well as the Working Conditions, Wages, Collective Bargaining, Industrial Relations, and Social Dialogue Branch (INWORK), they developed essential tools for standard-setting, including control (monitoring) sheets. This support ensured that the teams were equipped with the knowledge and resources needed to effectively carry out their roles.



Photos taken in Majunga (a city in the North West of Madagascar) during the first phase of the SCP in February 2023.

These tools enable labour inspectors to assess OSH practices and working conditions during site visits, provide recommendations, and track their implementation in follow-up visits. They have enhanced the supervision and monitoring of companies by offering several key benefits:

- ▶ The control and monitoring checklists help document compliance with regulations.
- ▶ The census form simplifies the analysis of the economic landscape and the identification of at-risk companies.
- ▶ The diagnostic sheet offers a comprehensive evaluation of workplace practices.

The training provided on these tools has engaged key stakeholders, empowering them to effectively adopt and implement these resources in their inspections.

Stage 3: Developing and Implementing the Control Policy in Target Companies

The Labour Inspectorate's monitoring policy is based on three types of visits: the initial inspection visit, the follow-up or counter-visit, and routine visits. To ensure the effective implementation of this policy, several key steps are essential:

- ▶ **Facilitating smooth transitions between teams:** When there are changes in inspection teams, it is crucial that new teams familiarize themselves with and adopt the inspection checklists created by their predecessors. This continuity allows for effective follow-up on recommendations and ensures that inspection visits contribute to improving companies' compliance with regulations and labour standards, including occupational safety and health (OSH) and working conditions.
- ▶ **Optimizing the organization and planning of interventions:** Teams must plan their interventions efficiently to expedite the preparation and transmission of recommendations, ideally within a day of the visit. Involving all teams in completing the control sheets is vital to maximize the collection of relevant data and minimize the loss of information during transitions between teams.

▶ Impact

Positive Shift in the Perception of the Labour Inspectorate's Role

The understanding of the labour inspectorate's role has evolved, shifting from a primarily coercive perspective to a more collaborative approach. This transformation has deepened the understanding of laws and regulations, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and legitimacy of the inspectorate. Actions taken as part of the strategic plans have accelerated the process of assisting companies in complying with national standards, although challenges persist, particularly in the textile sector.

Testimonies from companies visited reflect this shift in perception: inspectors and controllers are now viewed not only as enforcers of standards but also as trusted advisers. This advisory role allows employers to access valuable information on health and safety at work, fostering legal compliance while simultaneously improving working conditions and productivity. Additionally, there has been a noticeable improvement in the working climate and greater collaboration between the Labour Inspectorate and social partners, including both employers and workers.

Enhancing standard practices through strategic inspection assessment

The introduction of the three strategic plans provided the Directorate General for Labour (DGT), the Labour Inspectorate headquarters, and key OSH stakeholders with a valuable opportunity to implement a robust monitoring and evaluation process for the inspectorate's activities across the eight pilot regions. This approach encouraged inspectors to critically assess their compliance and enforcement practices, fostering a culture of continuous improvement. It also enabled the verification of recommendations' implementation and allowed for the evaluation of how effectively companies followed up on them. However, there remains a need for further improvement in how the impact of the Labour Inspectorate's activities is documented and assessed.

Improved identification of decent work deficits during inspection visits

The three strategic plans have enhanced the effectiveness and efficiency of labour inspectors and controllers by enabling a more targeted identification of priorities and stakeholders to mobilize. They have also facilitated a more precise alignment with the compliance requirements specific to each sector, optimizing both interventions and outcomes. Through advanced planning, priority sectors and areas were clearly defined, ensuring that actions addressed the unique needs of each sector. This approach was further strengthened by the active involvement of key stakeholders from the strategic planning phase, streamlining coordination and collaboration.

Improved geographical coverage

The technical, material, and financial support provided by the ILO has progressively expanded the geographical reach of labour inspection activities. As a result, the implementation of the three strategic plans has facilitated several interventions as shown in the map below.

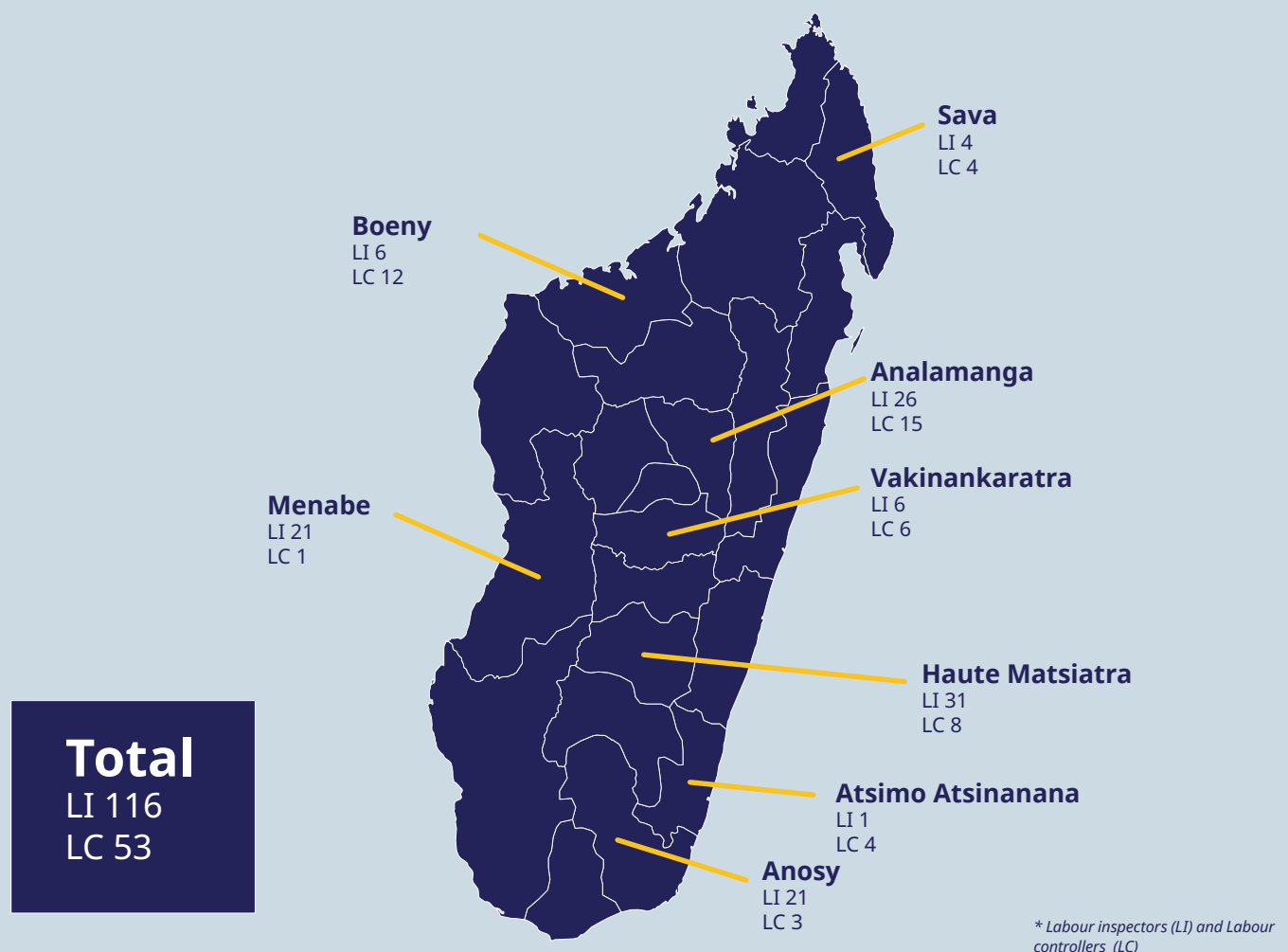
Expanding the mandate to include the informal sector and other fundamental rights

The implementation of these three strategic plans has expanded the mandate of labour inspection to better address the evolving needs of the world of work and promote sustainable, integrated solutions.

This expansion now includes fundamental rights issues and incorporates the unique challenges of the informal sector, enhancing the impact and relevance of interventions. This comprehensive approach has positively affected companies in the informal sector, providing support to navigate health crises and improve the health and safety of their workers. As part of the overall strategic plan, between January and October 2023, labour inspectors visited 524 companies,

including 69 in the textile sector, 251 in construction and public works, and 142 in trade. These companies employed 67,517 workers, of whom 34,830 (51%) were women and 32,546 were men. Among these workers, 89 were young workers aged 15 to 18, and 52 were child workers (Ref Figure below). Notably, the textile sector accounted for 66.29% of total employment in the surveyed companies.

Geographical coverage of the latest global SCPLI 2023 (map)



Source: Global SCP/LI 2023 assessed in February 2024 Coordination Office
Technical Studies and Programming Department Directorate-General for Labour

Thematic coverage of the three Strategic Compliance Plans

From December
2020 and
August 2021



Intermediate strategic plan focusing on occupational safety and health and the response to Covid-19 in the workplace



Analamanga
Vakinankaratra
Atsimo Andrefana



113 (of which 12 were informal units)



63 900 of which
41 369 were female

Source: Global SCP/LI 2023 assessed in February 2024 Coordination Office
Technical Studies and Programming Department Directorate-General for Labour

From September
and December 2021



Intermediate strategic plan focused on the formalization of informal jobs in formal enterprises



Analamanga
Alaotra-Mangoro
Anôsy
Atsinanana
Vakinankaratra



325 companies



47 604 workers

From January
to October
2023



Comprehensive strategic plan focused on improving OSH, formalizing informal jobs, responding to Covid-19 and HIV-AIDS, and combating child labour.



Analamanga
Vakinankaratra
Haute Matsiatra,
Menabe
Atsimo Atsinanana
Boeny
Anosy
SAVA



524 entreprises, of which
142 Commerce; 69 Textile,
251 BTP, 23 Mica, 5 Sisal and
34 Vanilla.



67 517 of which
34 830 women

32 546 men

89 young workers (15-18 yrs)

52 child workers

An important lesson learned from this experience is the importance of training and capacity building for intervention teams, particularly labor inspectors, to better understand inspection tools such as the control and monitoring sheets.

Data analysis revealed difficulties in synthesizing information, highlighting the need for additional efforts to ensure the rigorous use of these tools, which may impact the compliance rate achieved.

► Our Development Partners



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Occupational Safety and Health and
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