



National Observatory of Economic, Social and cultural Rights

POBOX 5268 Yaoundé, Mimboman , Sapeur, Tel 69 446 4763 , Call Center 8506

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/descameroun.descameroun>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CamerounDesc>

Website: www.ondesc.org

Civil Society call for inclusive and better management of the COVID-19 crisis

Preamble

Since January 2020, the whole world has been shaken by the coronavirus pandemic " COVID - 19 ". 180 countries are today affected with more than 50,000 deaths and nearly a million people infected. Officially, the pandemic is declared in Cameroon March 5, 2020, and on the evening of 10 April 2020, official statistics show 820 cases confirmed positive, with 12 deaths and 98 recoveries. The Central (Yaoundé) and Littoral (Douala) Regions remain the main epicenters of this pandemic which is beginning to spread with cases tested positive in the West and Southwest regions.

Government measures

In response to the health crisis, the Government developed and made public a response strategy which entered into force on March 18, 2020. In 13 measures, the government's actions plan against COVID-19 focuses on : i) the temporary closure of land and air borders; ii) suspension of the issuance of entry visas to Cameroon ; iii) the closure of schools and training establishments; iv) the ban on gatherings of more than fifty (50) people; v) postponement of school and university competitions; vi) the closure of drinking places, restaurants and places of leisure from 6 p.m . ; vii) the establishment of a system for regulating consumer flows in markets and shopping centers; viii) the possibility of limiting urban and interurban travel; ix) the limitation of the number of places in buses, taxis and motorbikes; x) requisitioning of private health facilities, hotels and other accommodation, vehicles and equipment necessary for the implementation of the COVID-19 pandemic response plan; xi) limiting the number of participants in meetings in public administration to ten (10); xii) suspension of missions abroad and finally; xiii) strict observance of the hygiene measures recommended by WHO, namely : washing your hands regularly with soap, avoiding close contact such as shaking hands or kissing, covering your mouth to sneeze.

Impacts of the crisis on vulnerable groups

While welcoming the relevance of this response plan, the National Observatory of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of Cameroon (NO-ESCR) considers that the impact of certain measures on the vulnerability, in particular of inhabitants of disadvantaged urban districts, peasants and informal sector workers has not been sufficiently analysed and considered. For example, the containment if adopted without accompanying measure, may impact directly survival activities of these two population groups. Going out by obligation to find food, without observing the distancing measures and barriers gestures published by WHO can expose to the risk of contagion and spread of the virus. Beyond the peasants and precarious city residents, women, youth, children of the street, the displaced, the refugees, and in a certain extent the prisoners and indigenous peoples are part of the vulnerable groups most impacted by these measures. Indeed, the implementation of " barriers gestures " and distancing measures are impractical in the state under the conditions of insecurity, overcrowding, unsanitary conditions and poor

access to drinking water. Furthermore, some specialists in Gender-Based Violence predict that partial or total confinement would increase the time spent in the household as well as the risk of tension in couples confronted with domestic violence.

Limiting the impact of the crisis on vulnerable groups

According to many observers, massive support for government measures is the cornerstone of the success of the " response plan ". This membership largely depends on solidarity measures which help households and vulnerable groups to overcome the additional shocks induced by the crisis and crisis management measures. This is why the ESCR Observatory takes note and welcomes the creation of a special national solidarity fund for the fight against COVID-19. Nevertheless, in a context of low human, infrastructural, technological, material resources, require to address the crisis of COVID-19, the sum of one billion CFA francs allocated by the Head of State at the start of this fund is very low. Pending the positive effects of the call for generosity launched to supplement the Fund, this sum deserves to be revised upwards to come closer to the ambition imposed by danger.

Initiatives to encourage

The Observatory welcomes the initiatives taken by decentralized local authorities, the private sector and civil society to contribute to the implementation of the government's response strategy. We can cite the case of awareness campaigns on “ barrier gestures ” (hand washing with soap, use of hydroalcoholic gel, social distancing) carried out by humanitarian NGOs, the Red Cross, Catholic Relief Services and several NGOs members of the Cameroon ESCR Platform, of the Cameroonian Participatory Budgeting Alliance (CPBA) and the National Network of Inhabitants of Cameroon (NNIC) like Positive Generation , League for Human Rights (LDL), the Book Lovers Association (ASSOAL), ZENU NETWORK, ALVF, MOJE, Youth World Dynamics (DMJ), etc. We can also cite the supply and equipment of public places of handwashing kits and hydroalcoholic kits, the acquisition and distribution of surgical protective masks produced on the initiative of many municipalities in Yaoundé, Douala, Bafoussam, Dschang and many other all over the country. Finally, lest mention manufacturing and distribution of protective masks, kits handwash, alcoholic gel by numerous Common Initiatives Groups, the support to health facilities for monitoring local epidemiology, etc.

For a tri-articulated management of the crisis

With this civic commitment, NO-ESCR calls for the establishment and strengthening consultation mechanisms multi actors at central and across Local decentralises Authorities dedicated to the management and the monitoring of the entire operations management of this threat. The Observatory expresses sympathy to the families of victims of COVID-19 and address its support to all public, private, social and particular medical professionals who give themselves as martyrs to help Cameroon overcome this pandemic.

Recommendations and proposals

Finally, we great the international community for its support in the handling of the pandemic in Cameroon, the NO-ESCR, urges:

1) The government to:

- ✓ Mobilize and commit all the resources necessary to combat the threat, in particular by revising the budget forecasts by adopting an amending finance law devoting most of the 2020 resources to the response to the COVID-19 crisis ;
- ✓ Elaborate and implement a management plan impact s crisis management measures on the economy in general, households in particular, and in particular on the most vulnerable;
- ✓ Increase the fight against the rising prices of basic commodities on the stall 's and marketplaces;
- ✓ Guarantee access to drinking water and soap at all in particular by arranging tanker trucks to facilitate the distribution of the water and making the distribution of pieces of soap, of gels or s hydroalcoholic solution in areas disconnected from the water supply and distribution network;

- ✓ Set up a dedicated mechanism for managing gender-based violence. Specialized Civil Society Organizations and the Citizen Call Center say they are ready to contribute under the conditions to be defined by mutual agreement with the Government;
- ✓ Involve the Decentralized Territorial Communities and CSOs in the global system for combating this pandemic;
- ✓ Elaborate and publicize the plan and method that will supervise the students, evaluate and avoid the risk of a lost year;
- ✓ Mobilize volunteers and community workers to ensure local awareness in areas that are difficult to access.

2) The Municipalities to:

- ✓ Establish and lead the Local Committees for Monitoring s measures the Crisis Management COVID-19 loaded s not only to relay the government's actions, but also to amplify a sensitization and c coordinating activities participation in the Response Plan;
- ✓ Elaborate and implement plans marking places of attend and signalling handwashing points in markets, bus stations, entrances displaced and refugee camps, neighbourhoods and services to public to encourage and facilitate compliance with distancing and hygiene measures;
- ✓ Organize a drinking water distribution service to the most vulnerable households and in displaced and refugee camps;
- ✓ Equip neighbourhoods, markets, spaces and public places with hand washing kits;
- ✓ Support initiatives for the production and distribution of artisanal protective masks.

3) The civil society organizations to:

- ✓ Intensify citizen awareness and education actions on hygiene rules and barrier actions;
- ✓ Strengthen actions active solidarity in favour of the groups most vulnerable people in society;
- ✓ Implement coaching strategies for young people and students, favouring the use of communication and distance learning tools;
- ✓ Relaying the numbers of the call and crisis management center set up by the government, monitoring and documenting its response system for callers;
- ✓ Observe and document and then report to the authorities all acts of ESCR violation related to the crisis and the implementation of crisis management measures.

4) The Citizens to :

- ✓ Respect the hygiene and social distancing measures defined by the WHO and the Government of Cameroon;
- ✓ Follow all the action against the ' epidemic issued by the Government;
- ✓ Stay confined and if you have to go out, protect yourself by using masks and protective gangs so as not to facilitate the spread of the disease.

In conclusion

The Observatory thus appeals to the civic spirit of each citizen and authorities in order to guarantee everyone the enjoyment of their social, economic and cultural rights. Even in times of crisis, **access to ESC rights must be guaranteed.**

Done in Yaoundé, on April 06, 2020

The Permanent Secretary of ONDESC

Célestin Eyrad FOU DA ATEBA