

# **DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY IN THE ERA OF THE HEALTH CRISIS**



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# **DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY IN THE ERA OF THE HEALTH CRISIS**

**Collective Book**

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مركز ديهيا لحقوق الإنسان والديموقراطية والتنمية

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## ABOUT THIS COLLECTIVE BOOK

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This book is an attempt to analyze and address a current problem that is the object of our common concern health in relation to development and democracy. Indeed, every human crisis is common, and cannot be an isolated case. Thus, the chapters recommended in this book represent the opinion of their authors and try to put under the microscope the health crisis generated by other more important crises that need to be studied. From there, this collective book comes to answer this need to express and analyze the facts and the economic and sanitary news that trace the paths towards new ways of seeing and deciphering the things and the beings. Therefore, a set of academic researchers of different specialties have participated through their research and reflections to shed light on some points related to this crisis threatened once the political, economic and social crisis.

We hope that this book has been able to bring new ideas capable of leading our way of life or our future. We point out that this book has been elaborated in the contrariety of carrying out scientific research and giving the researchers the opportunity to raise the problems that concern them and that remains the locomotive of their work. We would like to thank all those who participated in this book. We also thank the scientific committee for its professionalism and support.

Correspondingly, we must give you an appointment, for new scientific conceptions. We look forward to meeting you in other subjects or in other collective books, and thank you dear readers for your interest.

*Center's Dihia C4D*

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## À PROPOS DE CET OUVRAGE COLLECTIF

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Cet ouvrage est une tentative de discuter et de traiter un problème actuel qui fait l'objet de notre souci commun la santé en relation avec le développement et la démocratie. En effet, toute crise humaine est commune, et ne peut être un cas isolé. Ainsi, les chapitres proposés dans cet ouvrage représentent l'opinion de leurs auteurs(es) et essaient de mettre sous la loupe la crise sanitaire engendrée par d'autres crises plus importantes qui nécessitent d'être étudiées. De là, cet ouvrage collectif vient pour répondre à cette exigence de s'exprimer et d'analyser les faits et les actualités économiques et sanitaires qui retracent les chemins vers de nouvelles façons de voir et de décrypter les choses et les êtres. Par conséquent, un ensemble de chercheurs(ses) académiques de spécialités différentes ont participé à travers leurs recherches et réflexions à éclairer certains points relatifs à cette crise menacés une fois le politique, la crise économique et la crise sociale.

Nous espérons que cet ouvrage peut apporter de nouvelles idées capables de mener à bien notre mode de vie ou notre devenir. Nous signalons que ce travail collectif a été élaboré dans la contrariété de mener à bien la recherche scientifique et de donner aux chercheurs(ses) l'occasion pour soulever les problèmes qui les préoccupent et qui demeurent la locomotive de leur travail. Nous tenons à remercier tous ceux et celles qui ont participé à cet ouvrage. Nous remercions également le comité scientifique pour son professionnalisme et pour son soutien.

Aussi faut-il vous donnez un rendez-vous, pour de nouvelles œuvres scientifiques. Alors au plaisir de vous rencontrer dans d'autres sujets ou dans d'autres livres collectifs et merci à vous aussi chers lecteurs et chères lectrices pour votre intérêt.

*Centre Dihia C4D*

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## INTRODUCTION

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This book tries to advance a crucial question that addresses the issue of development and democracy in the face of the health crisis.

WE are living in a time of intense mutations and changes where development itself has become a controversial subject. From there, we realized that a collective work soliciting the opinion of researchers from different specialists, can give an analyze on the feasibility of this phenomenon by referring to recent studies carried out in this sense, also by bringing together the ideas and thoughts of scholars in this case, with the aim of grasping and describing the state of things in order to propose recommendations, solutions or results that could shed light on the problematic raised.

The selected chapters of this book try to describe complicated situations experienced by nations during the health crisis, such as lack of food, loss of work, imposed cohabitation, anti-social isolation and how there are still populations in our planet that live in precariousness and oblivion despite the development that the world has experienced at all levels.

The health crisis has revealed the flagrant inequality between people. It has exposed the poor state of poor and marginalized countries, as well as the economic and medical alienation from which the planet suffers. Providing for one's needs or mobilizing one's skills has become a necessity in an era dedicated to economic and military competition and anarchic hierarchy. Indeed, the distancing during the Coronavirus pandemic or the mad race to find an adequate vaccine has shown how fragile the economic and socio-cultural system is, that it is now necessary to prepare projects in parallel, that it is necessary to plan one's future according to the crises likely to change the course of human life. Global warming, the disappearance of species or the threat of fauna and flora or several wars accelerate the health and economic crisis.

We can say that Coronavirus must have given us an important lesson, to put an end to human arrogance and social hierarchy, but inequality, the 'illogical' distribution of salaries and products, corruption, illiteracy, the spread of technology, banality and mediocrity make the development of an equitable or fair democracy a problem.

Faced with these facts, faced with this world turned upside down, we have tried to address these issues, to show that we must invest in the human being, that the latter must be a priority and not a number that responds to the law of supply and demand. It is now necessary to multiply our forces at the global level to ensure a serene future for the generations to come threatened by loss and decline. It is time to act to change things.

This book does not give magic solutions and does not address all the issues, but it attempts to expose our crises by pointing out the damage done and sounding the alarm to take seriously our plight in the face of this new global regime or organization that is being built without our knowledge and that is making things worse instead of better. In short, good reading to all.

*Coordination Committee*

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## ABSTRACTS

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### Chapter 2. Assessment of Food Security of Sri Lankan Tamil Camp Living Refugees In Tamil Nadu

P. Maneesh and Aicha El Alaoui

*Tamil Sri Lankan refugees have been received the assistance of the government and other related agencies in the form of financial assistance as well as basic living facilities in the earlier periods onwards and continue to do so; yet, Sri Lankan Tamil refugees do not get Indian citizenship and they are confined to the camps, which are located in remote areas of Tamil Nadu. Thus, they do not have access to employment and the restrictions in the camp retard their basic human right of movement, although many of the refugees find work outside of the camp and earn decent wages. This study examines the food security of refugee households by analysing the accessibility and availability of food grains.*

**Keywords:** Food Security, Refugee Settlement, Rural Livelihood, Poverty, Host Response.

.....

### Chapter 3. Food Security and Inequalities in the Era of Covid-19: Challenges, Best Practices and the Way Forward: Case of Republic of Benin

Isidore E. Agbokou

*The Covid-19 outbreak revealed how fragile our socio-economic systems were, reinforcing the already existing debate about inequalities in all its forms. Taking Benin Republic in West Africa as a country of interest, this study analyzes what effects Covid-19 may have on inequalities in that country through the prism of food security. Based on its findings, it suggests policy measures to respond to the current crisis and durably reduce inequalities. It appears that stronger and more adapted social protection for all, pro-poor fiscal policy, reinforced digital solutions that can be adapted to sectors including agriculture, revision of legislative frameworks that foster inequality and differentiated poverty reduction policies could be the solutions to help humanity increase its resilience to crisis similar to Covid-19 and critically reduce the existing gaps between people.*

**Keywords:** Inequality, Covid-19, Agriculture, Food, Food Security.

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## Chapter 4. Art and culture in the time of Covid19

Rachid Bekkaj and Natalia Kalinicheva

*The Covid 19 pandemic leaves many points to wonder about, and arouses the interest of scientists as well as intellectuals and artists because it is new and because it has deep consequences on our societies. The purpose of our contribution is to present the sociological point of view on the impact of the Covid19 pandemic which consists in favoring the process of blocking creativity in the cultural and artistic field. Our reflection is about the analysis of the way of degradation of freedom of expression and the future of human rights. It is also in our scientific interest to question ourselves on how to face this situation which threatens the jobs and the existence of intellectuals and artists. From this point of view our approaches lead us to dig three essential points: i) the reality and its theorization; ii) the fight against this situation, and iii) the institutional one by presenting the elements that hinder them.*

**Keywords:** Art, Culture, Covid-19, Freedom of Expression

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## Chapter 5. Addressing the role of women's cooperatives amidst the Covid 19 Pandemic: What do we really know?

Zakaria Aamou and Souad Belhorma

*(...) The objective behind this chapter is to probe the economic resilience of women's cooperative in the regions of Errachidia through evaluating the effects of the pandemic on women's conditions amidst and post-sanitary crisis, gauging whether or not social and solidarity economy (SSE) offers alternative solutions during times of crisis. Semi-structured interviews were deployed to collect the necessary data from five different women's cooperatives in both rural and urban areas of Errachidia with a total of 31 female participants. Findings demonstrated that COVID19 intensified women's vulnerability and ordeal amid and post pandemic. Results also stressed that the pandemic has made the cooperative space and its expenses an excessive burden on women's shoulders.*

**Keywords:** Women's Cooperatives, COVID19, Social and solidarity Economy (SSE), Gender Equality, Rural Women, Morocco.

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## Chapter 6. The African Integration Dynamics under Threat of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Ngangué E. Nsagha

*The desire for regional integration on the African continent took concrete form on March 1963 with the launch of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU); recently (in 2013), it has been encapsulated into the AU-Agenda 2063 for the Africa We Want. This Agenda 2063 is currently being implemented, and its main goal could be summarised as; the transformation of African nations into democratic, peaceful, and innovative powerhouses that will aim to be global players in the next 50 years. In summary, therefore, Agenda 2063 aims to help its member states overcome divisions that impede the flow of goods, services, capital, people, and ideas; especially as these divisions are constraints that might impede their economic viability and sustainable development. Hence, with the advent of the COVID-19 disease in Africa on 14 February 2020, the African integration drive has been impeded, as this caused many AU member states, amidst other constraints, to opt for tighter borders to supposedly shield their citizens from the COVID-19 pandemic. Regrettably, this was directly in contradiction to the aspirations of Agenda 2063 which envisages even closer collaboration among AU member states. Some researchers, nonetheless, had posited that the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic could be leveraged as an opportunity for greater solidarity and cooperation for the continent, in keeping especially with the popular adage, ‘united we stand, divided we fall’. As such, this study, taking a cue from the theory of Neo-Institutionalism, entails throwing more light on the impact caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on some aspects of the African integration drive. The methodology for obtaining data is informed by a review of documentation on the subject matter.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19 Pandemic, Regional Integration, African Integration Dynamics.

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## Chapter 7. The "DIGITAL NATION": Digital in Morocco between divide and inclusion

Sanae Hanine, Brahim Dinar, Omar Elyoussoufi Attou and Ismail El Mir

*Morocco clearly displays its ambition to position itself as one of the most successful countries in the "Middle East and Africa" zone in terms of the digital economy. It aspires to transform itself into a "Digital Nation" to accelerate its projection into modernity thanks to the leverage effect of technology. Nevertheless, the digital divide is still an Achilles' talent for these goals. Indeed, the digital gap is still persistent between those who benefit from the positive externalities of digital gold and those who do not. Even as the digital divide ontology evolves alongside the dizzying speed of development of new technologies, the divide seems even deeper and more salient. Initially, the digital divide was limited to individuals without access to the internet and information and communication technologies, it now referred to efforts to provide meaningful access to emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, the Internet of Things and 5G. In the era of Industry 4.0 several emerging technologies (AI, IoT, 5G, 3D printing, thought-controlled technologies and Quantum Computing, Blockchain, Safe & Smart City, E-gov, Cybersecurity etc) are now the new indicators digital inclusion/ exclusion.*

**Keywords:** Digital divide, Digital inclusion, Digital Economy, Information and Communication Technologies

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## Chapter 8. Development in the face of the health crisis and the democratic crisis: What relationship? Which solution?

Nadia Birouk

*Since the Second World War, the leaders of 50 countries at the international level have taken the decision to establish and protect human rights. These must be common and accessible to all in order to guarantee peace and human dignity. Yet this could not achieve much because hierarchy and inequality, the violation of rights and freedoms still persist. With the advent of Coronavirus, the world has been jostled and battered in the face of an unexpected situation. Severe precautionary measures had to be taken to protect public life and health. Yet riots broke out against the deprivation of rights and freedoms, disruptions caused the pandemic to spread by reaping so many lives. In this communication we will try to approach this question of excessive democracy that is lacking once the State is faced with a danger that threatens safety, the economy, peace or public health.*

**Keywords:** Coronavirus, Democracy, Human Rights, Precautions, Development.

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## Chapter 9. The labour market in Morocco: Characteristics, challenges, and programs

Abir El Fakhouri

*This chapter aims to analyze the process of the evolution of the labor market in Morocco in relation to the transformations that this sector has known in different periods and especially during the pandemic of COVID-19. It questions the characteristics of the labor market, once apprehended, it elaborates some challenges related to the unemployment of the young people, the inadequacy of the requirements of the labor market with the competences acquired during the school and academic cursus, it brings some programs which aim at the appreciation of the policy of employment in Morocco, its focus on the reduction of the rigidities of the labor market and the reinforcement of the employability, its focus on the qualified employment and the young unemployed graduates.*

**Keywords:** Labor Market, Employability, Unemployment, Activity Rate

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## Chapter 1. Migration and asylum as an added value to development during and after the Covid 19 pandemic<sup>1</sup>

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Boubkeur Largou<sup>2</sup>

In March 2020, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, declared that COVID-19 is a test to us all as societies, as we are all learning and adapting as we respond to the virus, and she also wrote that "human dignity and rights need to be front and center in that effort, not an afterthought".

UN Secretary General Guterres called on the countries of the world to respect human rights during their fight against the "new" Coronavirus, warning of the danger of misinformation about the virus, as he stressed on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2020 that "As the world fights the deadly COVID-19 pandemic [...] we are also seeing another epidemic- a dangerous epidemic of misinformation [...]". He added that we must unite against this disease by trusting science and journalists who scrutinize their news, and he also stressed the importance of trusting each other, and that the preservation of human rights must be our compass to get through this crisis.

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<sup>1</sup> The original version is in Arabic, see annex 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ex-president of the Moroccan Organization for Human Rights, Morocco.

Since the category of refugees (women and men) and migrants (women and men) is among the most vulnerable groups, the Office of The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) singled them out with directives to protect them in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2020 which can be summarized as follows:

- Equality of all persons in the territory of the State;
- Take legislative, policy, administrative, practical and communication measures to ensure that migrants (women and men) have access to health facilities and goods and services;
- Make available, in all languages, all information on prevention to migrants (women and men) and to involve them in it;
- Release migrants (women and men) from detention centers and promote alternatives to detention, while ensuring their housing, food and other basic services.

In addition, to issuing a set of promising practices stipulated in the document issued by the OHCHR document published on June 22, 2020 under the following theme: "Racial discrimination in the time of Covid-19", as it emphasized, for example, that states, religious leaders and civil society should strengthen solidarity and messages related to combating discrimination, and combating incitement to hatred through participation and education.

If international consciousness is the humanity's conscience, then some of the practices and observations that have been recorded during this difficult human experience can be summarized in:

➔ *During the confinement imposed by most countries:*

- Discrimination between citizens (men and women) of the same country and foreigners in many countries. Indeed, discrimination has been noted between the elderly and the rest of the population in the treatment of some of them, such as Spain and Italy;
- The acquisition of prevention means and sanitary equipment (masks, etc.) by some countries and the refusal to export them to countries suffering from shortages and the spread of the pandemic;

- High financial transfers from migrants to their countries of origin;
- Recording of reverse migration from European countries to North Africa (many Moroccans entered Morocco illegally, as well as some Syrian families...).

➔ *Post-confinement:*

- The resurgence of irregular migration activities;
- The exacerbation of migrant smuggling activities (women and men) and human trafficking networks;
- The emergence of the need for labor in certain European countries, particularly in agriculture, due to the high mortality rate of their citizens as a result of the pandemic (Italy and Spain, which brought a number of them from Morocco);
- The strong need of some European countries for health and nursing staff (such as France, Great Britain and Germany, where hundreds or even thousands of these workers have been received from North African countries).

If the financial transfers made by migrants to their countries of origin may

- Alleviation of poverty in the face of declining jobs and employment opportunities due to the confinement, suspension of many projects, closure of several industrial and service enterprises and bankruptcy of some of them;
- Increase in foreign exchange reserves used in the supply of medical devices and vaccines... ‘

Demand for women's labor by European countries has contributed to the empowerment of women, despite the harsh conditions in which they work. As for the emigration of skills and senior managers, which will impact not only health and nursing staff, but also prepare them for senior staff in computer science and engineering, as well as university professors...

Hence, we conclude the dialectical relationship between development, migration and asylum, where the frameworks and competencies of the southern countries contribute to the advancement of Western countries in the fields of scientific research and to the maintenance of an excellent level of health and education, besides their contribution in the labor force to the economies of

these countries, which suffer from an acute shortage of active populations in front of the aging of their population pyramids; we note the role of these financial transfers in development through:

- Upgrading local projects;
- Increasing trade;
- Supporting millions of families and raising their standard of living;
- Reducing unemployment;
- contribute directly or indirectly to the modernization of society and the dissemination of a culture of human rights and democratic principles.

This is despite the fact that the migrant of competencies, senior executives and young people is a major loss, on the one hand, and a heinous exploitation by Western countries to the southern countries, which have invested large sums of money to train these groups.

Thus, the role of migration and asylum is evident as an added value for both sides (north and south), despite the clear disparity between the gain of receiving countries and the countries of origin of migration and asylum, and if the countries of the South, especially in North Africa, are experiencing a demographic and democratic transition, as the active population is constantly rising, so that we should not consider this gift a burden on countries, but rather a huge force if it is employed in development, on the one hand, by reducing the factors that repel it towards migration, and, on the other hand, by developing political strategies. For the success of the democratic transition in these countries through:

- Linking development, human rights and democracy with democratic transition;
- Rethinking the failed development policies;
- Taking advantage of the expertise acquired by the people of the region abroad to develop their countries, an indicator we have noted with regard to vaccination, medical devices and others (the case of Morocco);



- Capitalizing of their accumulated capital by facilitating investment conditions in their home countries;
- Creating investment partnerships between western companies and companies of home countries;
- Upgrading the New York Declaration, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 19 September 2016, to a binding agreement on all parties, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, signed in July 2018 in Marrakech, and the Global Compact on Refugees, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 17 December 2018, into agreements binding on all parties, taking into account the observations and recommendations of the civil society;
- Accelerating the implementation of the objectives set out in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, while meeting its requirements, in particular the following objectives relevant to the conditions for development and strengthening them:
  - Facilitating migrants' access to basic services (Goal 15);
  - Enabling migrants and communities to achieve full integration and social cohesion (Goal 16);
  - Eliminating of all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse in order to influence public perceptions of migration (Goal 17);
  - Investing in skill promotion and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competencies (Goal 18);
  - Creating conditions that help migrants and expatriates fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries (Goal 19);
  - Promoting of faster and safer transmission of remittances and facilitate the financial integration of migrants (Goal 20);
  - Corporation in facilitating the return of migrants and allowing their safe and dignified return as well as their sustainable reintegration (goal 21);
  - Establishing of mechanisms for the transfer of social security and earned benefits (goal 22);
  - Strengthening international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration (goal 23).

- the United Nations and the international community should be directed towards reducing everything related to the exacerbation of the phenomena of migration and asylum, mainly:
  - Establishing peace in the world in resolving issues that cause instability and security on the planet;
  - Reducing the factors that lead to global warming by linking climate change with the Global Goals of Sustainable Development, especially as the effects of climate change are clear with regard to migration and forced asylum due to natural disasters from successive years of drought and floods...

## Chapter 2. Assessment of food security of Sri Lankan Tamil camp living refugees in Tamil Nadu

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Maneesh, P. & Aicha El Alaoui

### Introduction

Tamil Refugees from Sri Lanka have been residing in Tamil Nadu since 1983. The government has taken on the obligation of offering food, housing, clothing, medical care, sanitary services, educational opportunities, and financial support. The size of the refugee population, the host country's capacity to provide food, shelter, and other necessities, and the volume and scope of financial help and support from international organizations are all closely correlated with the degree of economic and administrative responsibility. In a way, the struggle for resources that resulted from the need to share resources between locals and migrants has led to the majority of the economic issues brought on by the refugee inflow. Resources in sectors including basic goods and services, well-being, water and sewage systems, buildings, power, transportation, and infrastructure, among others. None of these facilities can be sufficiently expanded to fulfil the requirements and demands of the millions of incoming migrants, given a large enough body of refugees. Besides, refugees have necessarily competed with the local people in the job market. Because they are prepared to sell their labour for far less money. They frequently succeed in driving away numerous

employments from the local population out of desperation. Every member of the family has received financial aid from the government of Tamil Nadu. The family's head receives a monthly cash allowance of 1000 rupees, while all other adults in the family receive 750 rupees. Before the fifth of every month, all children under the age of twelve receive Rs. 400.

Unlike financial aid, government provides necessities at a reduced cost. Twelve kilograms of rice are given to those who are at least eight years old, while six kilograms are given to everyone else. Each immigrant receives two pairs of ready-to-wear clothing for free from the government. Every two years, the government also provides each household with cooking utensils worth \$250. The government pays for the tuition and travel expenses of refugee students. The government offers free electricity, water delivery, and medical treatment. In addition to providing relief aid, widow pensions, and old-age pensions, chief minister Jayalalitha handed each refugee 1000 rupees in 2016 to celebrate the Pongal holiday.

Government of India has adopted a humanitarian approach towards Sri Lankan refugees and facilitates basic amenities since the inception of the arrival of refugees. According to Mr. Subodh Kant, Minister of State for Home Affairs in Parliament on 25th Feb 1991, "1,21,790 Sri Lankan refugees arrived in India up to 31st 1990 and Rs 13.47 crores have been spent on providing relief facilities and accommodation. On 8th July 1992, about the amount given by the Centre to Tamil Nadu and Orissa for providing relief to Sri Lankan refugees, Mr. M.M. Jacob Minister of State for Home Affairs said in Parliament that "An amount of Rs 72.00 crores has been released by the Government of India so far to the state Governments of Tamil Nadu and Orissa for providing relief facilities and accommodation for the Sri Lankan refugees. Government of India informed Parliament over a Parliamentary question on expenditure for Sri Lankan refugees on 16th December 1993 that from July 1983 to Oct 1993 an expenditure of Rs. 89.77 crores were incurred on providing relief facilities and accommodation to Sri Lankan refugees. From July 1983 to Feb 1995, an amount

of Rs. 108.34 crores had been incurred on providing relief facilities and accommodation to Sri Lankan refugees. The Government of Tamil Nadu has doubled the cash dole from 01.08.2006 and it is distributed in one instalment in advance to run their families instead of bi-monthly distribution. The annual approximate expenditure is Rs. 26.00 crores.

Generally speaking, refugees in Tamil Nadu have imposed additional costs on public and social welfare budgets, arresting economic growth, distorting markets, causing environmental degradation and putting political issues on the host country. In other words, refugees also bring economic benefits and development potential – for example, new skills and expanding consumption of food and commodities such as building materials, which stimulate the growth of the host economy. At the same time, the host community may benefit from assistance programs such as infrastructure and welfare services provided by agencies responding to refugees' needs. Overall, it is usually contended that the 'costs' of refugees on their hosts – rising food and commodity prices, the depression of local wage rates, fiscal pressures, increasing environmental degradation – outweigh other micro- and macro-economic benefits.

A significant exception to this analytical gap is a recent, largely micro-economic, study of Sri Lankan Tamil refugee camp which showed that the positive economic impact of the camps for the host community in terms of supply of labor force, income benefits to the host community from the sale of livestock, milk and other products.

## **Methodology**

The study has focused its attention on the economic condition of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees living camps in Tamil Nadu. Keeping the nature of the subject in view, this study needed to be both descriptive and analytical.

The socio-economic condition of the refugees was analysed along with a generation description of camp life. It is emphasized that Sri Lankan Tamil refugees have settled in Tamil Nadu over twenty-five years. They have almost merged with the social order in the host society. There are 108 Sri Lankan Tamil refugee camps in Tamil Nadu which are scattered over 27 districts. The samples have been collected from five districts namely, Madurai, Tiruvallur, Erode, Tiruvannamalai and Vellore. The large numbers of refugee families are settled in these districts.

In Madurai district, a total of 1570 refugee families are living in three camps viz, Anaiyur, Thiruvathavur and Uchapatti. Uchapatti camp is selected. Similarly, 1364 families are located in two camps of Tiruvallur district.

The camps are Pulal Kavankarai and Pethi Kuppam, where Pethi Kuppam camp accommodates several families. Therefore, Pethi Kuppam camp was selected for the study. Erode is the third district where a sum of 1209 refugees' families are accommodated in three camps, namely, Arachallur, Injampalli and Bhavanisagar with 154, 134 and 930 families respectively. The Bhavanisagar camp was highly restricted and the camp was under the surveillance of the police. Therefore, Arachallur and Injampalli camps were for data collection.

Large numbers of refugee camps are located in Tiruvannamalai district but the total number of families in these camps is only 1109, scattered over thirteen camps in the district. Out of thirteen camps, five camps will be selected in accordance with the number of families. These camps are (number of families in bracket) Kasthambadi (274), Thenpallipattu (144), Paiyur RMC (98), Sorakolathur (95) and Osur (90). From the five camps, Kasthambadi is selected for field study.

Finally, Vellore district consists of six camps with 1085 refugee families. Here, one camp was selected, viz, Melmonavur (315) based on dominance in the number of families respectively. The researcher has skipped some big camps in the selected district due to strict restriction even in collecting data from outside the camp.

Respondents were interviewed outside the camps with a well-structured interview schedule. The total sample size was 1000, i.e., 200 from every five districts. Multistage random sampling method was employed for the selection of sample camps and convenience sampling was employed to select the ultimate respondents. The process of sampling includes the selection of (i) districts; (ii) camps, and (iii) households. A well-structured interview schedule was developed, which was pre-tested and then utilized as a means to collect the requisite information on the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees.

The data have been gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Prominent secondary sources include the census data, Govt. of India and Tamil Nadu reports and Information Handbook, Department of Rehabilitation, Government of Tamil Nadu, UNHCR reports, books, magazines, journals, and newspapers. Magazines and newspapers served as good sources of information regarding refugee studies. Articles relating to refugees, in general, and Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in particular published in several journals were referred.

The collected information was entered into SPSS for tabulation and analysis. The data have been collected from 2016 to 17. Statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation and percentage were used to interpret the primary information. To find out the problems in the camps for the selected sample groups, Garrett's rating scale technique was used.

## **Result and Discussion**

Food security is the concern of host government since the influx of refugees to India. The government has provided free food, shelter and healthcare services in order to ensure the minimum level of living in the host. Gradually, the government has built livelihood opportunities and allowed the refugees to seek livelihood in the host. The livelihood sustenance has resulted in food security. This study analyses the livelihood security of Sri Lankan Tamil camp

living refugees by taking into account of accessibility and availability of food grains. The rice is the staple food of the people. Therefore, the availability of rice in adequate quantity has assessed. The conclusion has drawn on the basis of the inferences drawn on availability and accessibility of food grains.

## Distribution of the Respondents by Place of Purchase of Food Grains

The refugees have the provision of free rice and other grains through PDS. Adequate quantity of rice is provided through PDS, but the quality of rice is not as good as the rice in the private shops. Therefore, some refugees purchase food grains from retail and wholesale shops. The Place of purchase of food grains by respondents is shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Distribution of the respondents by duration of stay and place of purchase of food grains**

Place of Purchasing Food Grains			Retail Shop	Wholesale Shop	PDS within the Camp	Total
Duration of Stay in the Camps	8-15	M	0 (0)	0 (0)	38 (59.4)	38 (59.4)
		F	0 (0)	0 (0)	26 (40.6)	26 (40.6)
	Sub-Total		0 (0)	0 (0)	64 (6.6)	64 (6.4)
	15-22	M	19 (67.9)	0 (0)	163 (69.4)	182 (69.2)
		F	9 (32.1)	0 (0)	72 (30.6)	81 (30.8)
	Sub-Total		28 (100)	0 (0)	235 (24.2)	263 (26.3)
	22-29	M	0 (0)	0 (0)	435 (64.7)	435 (64.6)
		F	0 (0)	1 (100)	237 (35.3)	238 (35.4)
	Sub-Total		0 (0)	1 (100)	672(69.2)	673 (67.3)
	Total		28 (2.8)	1 (0.1)	971 (97.1)	1000 (100)

Source: Primary Data.

The overwhelming majority of the respondents in the study are depends upon PDS within the camps for purchasing food grains. There were 2.8 per cent of the respondents purchasing food grains from the retail shop and only one respondent is purchasing food grains from a wholesale shop. It is inferred that the majority of the respondents depend on PDS for food grains in the camps. The majority of the male and female respondents depend on PDS within the camps. Nearly 3 per cent of the male and 2.6 per cent of the female respondents are purchasing food grains from retail shops.



Furthermore, only one female respondent is purchasing food grains from wholesale in the study. The respondents who largely depend on PDS found in all the duration of stay. The only one respondent purchasing grains from a wholesale shop belongs to the duration of stay 15-22 years. In addition, all the respondents who purchase food grains from retail shop belong to the duration of stay 15-22 years. It is thus summarized that the refugees in the camps rely largely on government-supplied food grains through PDS. The poor economic condition of them results in low purchasing power. This paved the way to the larger reliance on the subsidized supply of materials.

### **Distribution of the Respondents by Availability of Adequate Quantity of Rice from PDS within the Camps**

The government has immediately facilitated basic amenities for refugees in the camps during the beginning of influx. Facilities for food were made free of cost by considering the economic condition of refugees. A unit of the public distribution system (PDS) was established in each camp for supplying food grains and other items to refugees. The rice is provided in a fixed quantity based on family member size and extra rice can be purchased with minimal payment. In this perception, the researcher has made an attempt to analyse whether the respondents received an adequate quantity of rice from the PDS and the result is presented in table 2.

**Table 2: Distribution of the respondents by duration of stay and adequate quantity of rice from PDS within the camps**

Adequate Quantity of Rice			Yes	No	Total
Duration of Stay in the Camps	8-15	M	21 (56.8)	17 (63.0)	38 (59.4)
		F	16 (43.2)	10 (37.0)	26 (40.6)
	Sub-Total		37 (5.9)	27 (7.2)	64 (6.4)
	15-22	M	73 (59.3)	109 (77.9)	182 (69.2)
		F	50 (40.7)	31 (22.1)	81 (30.8)
	Sub-Total		123 (19.7)	140 (37.3)	263 (26.3)
	22-29	M	279 (44.6)	156 (75)	435 (64.6)
		F	186 (55.4)	52 (25)	238 (35.4)
	Sub-Total		465 (74.4)	208 (55.5)	673 (67.3)
	Total		625 (62.5)	375 (37.5)	1000 (100)

Source: Primary Data.

The majority of the respondents (62.5 per cent) have received an adequate quantity of rice from the PDS while 37.5 per cent does not receive an adequate quantity of rice from the PDS free of cost. Out of the male respondents in the study, the majority of them (56.9 per cent) have received an adequate quantity of rice from PDS while 43.1 per cent did not receive adequate quantity of rice from PDS. On the other hand, of the total female respondents, 73 per cent have received adequate quantity of rice and 27 per cent did not receive adequate quantity. A large percentage of the female respondents expressed that they have received an adequate quantity of rice from PDS within the camp. Most of the respondents, in all the duration of stay, have viewed that they have received adequate quantity of rice from the PDS. It is to say that the economic backwardness of refugees and their limited connections in the host have largely enforcing them to rely on government assistance, especially in the supply of food grains.

The respondents who do not get adequate quantity of rice may purchase additional rice from the retail shop, wholesale shop, supermarket and the PDS within the camp. It is found from table 3 that 37.5 per cent of respondents do not have an adequate quantity of rice from the PDS. Of this, the majority of the respondents (60.5per cent) purchase additional rice from a retail shop, 13.9 per cent purchase rice from the wholesale shop, 16.3 per cent purchase rice from the supermarket and remaining 7.5 per cent of the respondents purchase rice from PDS within the camps. A large number of male and female respondents purchase additional rice from the retail shop. The least number of male purchase additional rice from PDS within the camp while the least number of female purchase additional rice from wholesale shops.

**Table 3: Distribution of the respondents by duration of stay and place of purchase of additional rice**

Place of Purchase of Additional Rice			Retail Shop	Wholesale Shop	Super Market	PDS within the Camp	Total
Duration of Stay in the Camps	8-15	M	0 (0)	9 (100)	8 (44.4)	0 (0)	17 (63.0)
		F	0 (0)	0 (0)	10 (55.6)	0 (0)	10 (37.0)
	Sub-Total		0 (0)	9 (17.3)	18 (29.5)	0 (0)	27 (7.2)
	15-22	M	80 (77.7)	28 (88.8)	1 (100)	0 (0)	109 (77.9)
		F	23 (22.3)	5 (15.2)	0 (0)	3 (100)	31 (22.1)
	Sub-Total		103 (44.0)	33 (63.5)	1 (1.6)	3 (10.7)	140 (37.3)
	22-29	M	110 (84.0)	10 (100)	27 (64.3)	9 (36.0)	156 (75)
		F	21 (16.0)	0 (0)	15 (35.7)	16 (64.0)	52 (25)
	Sub-Total		131 (56.0)	10 (19.2)	42 (68.9)	25 (89.3)	208 (55.5)
	Total		234 (60.5)	52 (13.9)	61 (16.3)	28 (7.5)	375 (100)

Source: Primary Data.

In the duration of stay 22-29 years, a large number of respondents purchase rice from the retail shop and the lowest number of respondents purchase from a wholesale shop. Moreover, the respondents purchasing additional rice from the PDS within the camps are found higher in this duration of stay. The higher number of respondents between 15 - 22 years is purchasing additional rice from the retail shop and the least numbers of respondents are purchasing rice from the supermarket. The percentage of respondents purchasing additional rice from PDS with the camps has reduced in this duration of stay. So far, the respondents staying in the duration of 8-15 years in the camps are concerned; the majority is purchasing additional rice from the supermarket. Likewise, none of the respondents has purchased rice from a retail shop and PDS within the camp. It is to say that the place of purchasing additional rice is varying in the three durations of stay.

## Conclusion

The accessibility, availability and quality of food are basic human needs. Unfortunately, food abundance in the world is not a prerequisite for everyone to have a satisfactory and adequate diet, especially for those in particular situations such as refugees and migrants, or those marginalized and poor. The main finding of this study is that after a long period as refugees or migrants,

this category of people still depends on government programs to meet their fundamental needs.

We cannot achieve development in all its dimensions (social, economic and environmental) if the system does not provide the same way of belonging to the society. We are different for many reasons (culture, religion, space...), but we must have the same rights, and enjoy the same services. Therefore, the right way to solve the socio-economic problems of refugees and migrants is to establish an inclusive and equitable system, i.e., a socio-economic system capable of integrating each individual regardless of his or her situation, status, gender, color, origin (...).

Our problem is not that our world doesn't have enough food, but because our world is not founded on the social justice. The problem is that our world still based on a non-democratic and unjust systems, while development is a concept that means that no citizen should be left behind us, meaning everyone should find his/her place; he or she should be integrated freely and fairly, and enjoy all his/her rights: economic, social, political and cultural rights.

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## **Chapter 3. Food security and inequalities in the era of Covid-19: challenges, best practices and the way forward: case of Republic of Benin**

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**Isidore E. Agbokou**

### **Introduction**

**T**he French political philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in the middle of the 18th century (1755), reflected on the origins and foundations of inequality between humans. More than two centuries later, human intelligence still lives the harsh reality of inequalities in different aspects of social life. Jean-Jacques Rousseau distinguished in his time, two kinds of inequalities: natural inequality and artificial inequality. The first arises from differences in strength, intelligence, etc. and the second from the conventions which govern companies. It is surprising that Jean-Jacques Rousseau's work, published centuries ago, is still relevant especially these last few years when humanity is subject to two planetary crises, namely Covid-19 aroused in 2020 and the Ukraine – Russia war started in February 2022. This is a combination of health and geo-political crises that have huge consequences in all sectors and for all countries in the world. While this paper focuses on the

Covid-19 consequences on food inequalities, a quick look is also given to how these effects are aggravated by the Ukraine – Russia war.

The SARS Cov-2 coronavirus was first discovered in Wuhan, China. It causes Covid-19, a disease that has quickly spread across the world. Its high level of contamination through human-to-human contact, along with the strengthening of globalization and travel, has accelerated the spread of the virus, forcing states to take restrictive measures on mobility, with entire countries or cities under lockdown. These measures have had a direct impact on economic activities, causing many people to lose their jobs and all sources of income, especially those in already precarious situations.

According to experts, this is the only one of the many social consequences of the crisis that would end up widening the gaps in societies.

In Benin, a cordon sanitaire has been put in place to limit movement between the main urban areas in the South (including Cotonou and Porto-Novo) and the rest of the country, which is predominantly rural. This made trade difficult with rural areas which are in essence the breadbasket of the main agglomerations of Benin.

Faced with this situation and through the prism of food security, analysis of the consequences of Covid-19 on food security in Benin has been carried out by asking what its induced effects on inequalities are. Based on the findings, certain policy measures, that should be taken in order to reduce the inequalities exacerbated by Covid-19 in Benin and at the same time ensure a more just and resilient society where no one is left behind, have been suggested.

## **1. Puzzle and main trends in inequalities before and after Covid-19**

The Covid-19 pandemic is a major event in the history of mankind, as it affected the entire world and changed the lives of individuals and entire nations. It is alleged that measures taken to reduce the rate of spread of the disease could worsen the situation of inequality that already plagues our societies. In the next section, we take a look at what the state of inequalities



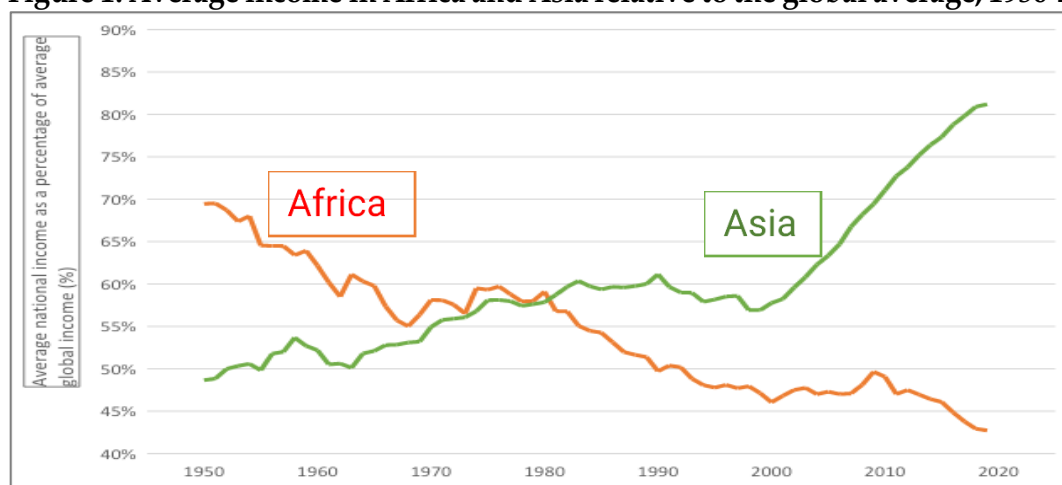
between and within countries was before the pandemic and what it seems to have become today.

### *1.1. Before the Covid-19 crisis*

The World Inequality Report 2018 showed, using a methodology that takes into account the income streams of tax havens, that globally the monthly income per adult in 2016 is € 1,340 (\$ 1,740) at purchasing power parity (PPP) and € 990 (\$ 1,090) at market exchange rate (MER). National income was about three times higher in North America in PPP (€ 4,220 or \$ 5,490 per adult per month) than the world average and it was twice as high in the European Union in PPP than the world average (€ 2,630 or \$ 3,420 per adult per month). Despite a reduction in inequalities between countries, inequalities in average national income were still high between countries. Developing and emerging countries have not all grown at the same pace as China. The average monthly income per adult in India (€ 580) is only 0.4 times the world average measured in PPP, while sub-Saharan Africa is now only 0.3 times the world average (€ 430) today. Average North Americans earned almost ten times more than average Sub-Saharan Africans.

In a 2017 study, it appeared that huge inequalities persist between countries, but in some cases they have worsened. Some low and middle-income regions were already worse off than they were forty years ago. Between 1980 and 2016, income per adult in Africa grew more slowly (18%) than the average income per adult in the world (54%). This growth trend, marked by a combination of political and economic crises and wars, is not limited to the poorest region of the world. In South America, too, incomes have increased by only 12% since 1980. As a result, average incomes in these regions have fallen from the world average, from 65% to only 40% of the world average in 1950, compared to 140% to less than 100% in Latin America (WID. world, 2020).

**Figure 1: Average income in Africa and Asia relative to the global average, 1950-2019**



Source: WID world (2020)

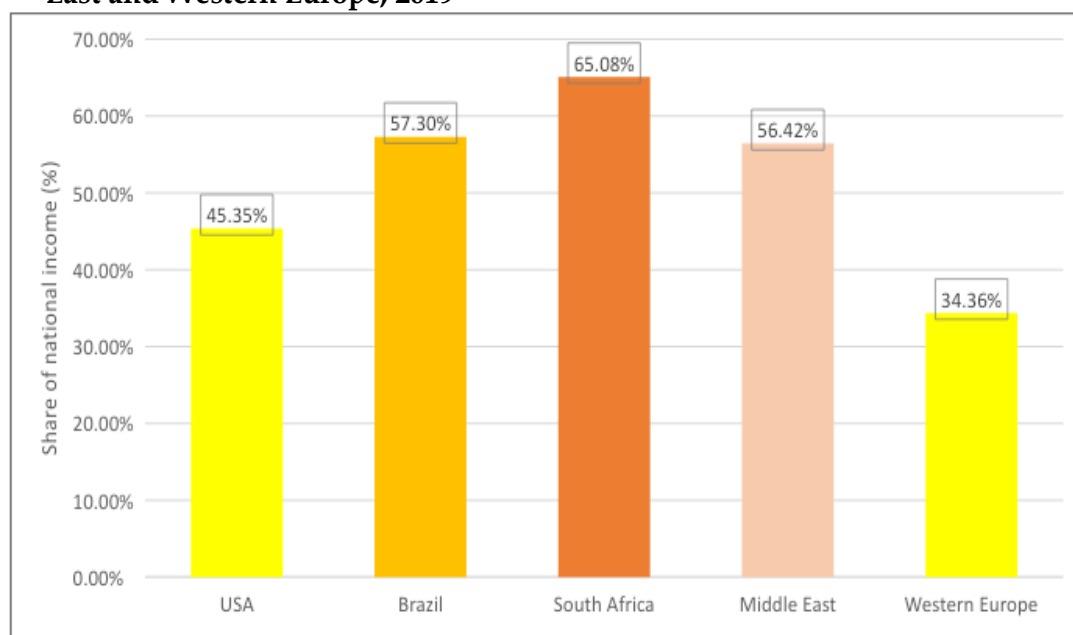
In terms of income distribution within countries, income inequality has increased in most major economies over the past three decades, reaching levels not seen since the pre-war period.

In advanced economies, income inequality followed a downward trend for most of the post-war period until around 1980. Since then, and especially since 1990, it has increased in most advanced economies. All nine advanced economies that are members of the G-20, made up of the major developed and developing countries, have seen the Gini coefficient (the most commonly used statistical measure of inequality) of disposable income increase significantly between the mid-1980s and 2013 (Dervis and Qureshi, 2016).

Northern European countries had one of the lowest levels of income inequality in the world in the early 1980s. Growth was more uneven in these countries after 1980 than before, but income concentration at the top of the distribution remains limited. The top 1% earns less than 10% of total income in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. In Denmark and the Netherlands, the increase in the top percentile share has been small, from around 5% to 6% since the 1980s. Overall, many European countries have been able to generate relatively high average income growth rates and contain rising income inequalities (WID world, 2020).

In contrast, emerging countries such as Brazil, South Africa and countries in the Middle East have experienced extreme inequality regimes (**Figure 2**). Historically, income inequality has been high. In Brazil, wage inequalities have declined over the past two decades, especially due to the increase in the minimum wage, and there are large and often rented cash transfer systems to the poor. Along with the enormous regional inequalities, the legacy of racial inequality still plays an important role: Brazil was the last major country to abolish slavery, in 1887, at a time when slavery made up a very large part of the population, up to around 30% of the population in some areas in certain regions.

**Figure 2: Top 10% national income share in USA, Brazil, South Africa, the Middle East and Western Europe, 2019**



Source: WID. world (2020).

## ***1.2. Inequalities in Africa, before Covid-19***

In African countries, one of the biggest problems in assessing inequalities is the availability of data. In the absence of administrative data, most analyzes are based on survey estimates. In Côte d'Ivoire, estimates show that the income share of the richest 1% represents around 17% of the country's total income, in contrast to the 12% previously estimated by surveys (WID. world, 2020).

According to a World Bank estimate, Africa is the second most inequitable region in the world. In 2010, six of the ten most unequal countries in the world were in sub-Saharan Africa, especially southern Africa. The highest poverty rates can be observed among young women and youth living in rural areas. Young Africans constitute the majority of the poor. On average, 72% of the young population in Africa lives on less than \$2 per day. The incidence of poverty among youth in Nigeria, Ethiopia, Uganda, Zambia and Burundi is over 80% (ADI 2008/2009, World Bank). Income inequalities translate into inequalities in access to basic services and opportunities for the weakest to escape the poverty trap. The gap between rich and poor in education and health remains stark in most African countries. Poor children are more likely to be malnourished, less likely to seek health care, and less likely to complete five years of primary school. Children under 5 from the poorest quintile are 2.1 times more likely to be underweight and 1.6 times less likely to be vaccinated against measles than their richer counterparts (AfDB, 2011).

In Africa, the number of underweight children increased from 24 million in 1990 to 30 million in 2010. Stunted growth leads to poor brain development and hence stunted children are more likely to learn poorly and perform less well in school (ADI 2008/2009, World Bank).

About a third of the world's poor live in Africa. More recently, data shows that inequality may indeed be a bigger challenge in Africa than in other regions of the developing world. High levels of poverty and inequality persist in Africa, despite being one of the fastest growing regions of the past decade. In particular, six of the ten fastest growing economies in the world between 2001 and 2010 were in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (The Economist & IMF, 2011). Specifically, the most dynamic economies in Africa during this decade (2001-2010) were Angola, followed by Nigeria, Ethiopia, Chad, Mozambique, Rwanda and Equatorial Guinea (UNDP, 2017).

### *1.3. Inequalities after the Covid-19 crisis*

The figures presented in the previous section show that inequalities have always been present in the world and are not expected to be resolved anytime soon. The Covid-19 crisis, which began in 2019, has not improved the situation, it will likely worsen inequalities between and within countries (FAO, 2020).

Higher-income countries with sufficient financial resources and stronger public health systems have failed under the impact of Covid-19, but are managing to cope with the pandemic.

Low-income countries, with considerably fewer financial resources and poor provision of public health, sanitation and other public services (especially in rural areas) and poorer health status, will have much more struggling to cope with the health, social and economic consequences of the pandemic. The increase in inequalities from Covid-19 will have long-term consequences. If Covid-19 leads to an increase in each country's GINI of 2 percent, a plausible figure, then the impact of Covid-19 on the number of poor is expected to increase by an additional 35 to 65 percent (Loayza, 2020).

Inequalities reduce the impact of economic growth on poverty reduction (Olinto et al., 2014; UNDESA, 2020), which means that a possible economic recovery may have less impact on the poor, leaving them potentially poorer and facing greater inequality than before. In high-income and low-income countries, pervasive inequality in access to income, assets and public services will condition the direct and indirect impacts of Covid-19. Inequalities will amplify the impact on urban and rural individuals and households who are poorer and more vulnerable, leading to even greater inequality. The unequal impact in high-income countries during the Covid-19 epidemic has been widely reported in the mainstream press. The constraints on access to health services and public health information faced by the rural poor will intensify. This is because people with health problems are more likely to be infected with the virus, and the poor have poorer health outcomes and diets that undermine

the body's immunities to the disease. The income shock will affect the food security and nutrition of the poorest. As food prices rise and incomes fall, poor households fall back on staple consumption and reduce their consumption of meat, dairy products, and fruits and vegetables (Rozelle et al., 2020). The rural poor generally face multiple market failures and have little or no access to formal insurance, credit and risk management mechanisms. The poor tend to have difficulty accessing cash, which is exacerbated by the loss of opportunities for casual wage labor and the closure of informal markets. The repercussions of physical distancing combined with the covariate nature – which everyone is familiar with – of the crisis is likely to overwhelm and / or reduce the access of the rural poor to traditional community networks and institutions of social reciprocity, which have historically provided a safety net in times of crisis. Studies after previous pandemics show that infectious diseases can influence economic development by creating a "disease-induced poverty trap" characterized by a combination of the causal effects of health on poverty and poverty on health (Bonds et al., 2009).

## **2. Effects of Covid-19 on Food Security in Benin**

The Republic of Benin is a small country in West Africa of approximately 12 million inhabitants on 114,763 km<sup>2</sup> and sharing borders with Nigeria. It belongs to the category of least developed countries (LDCs) with a predominantly agricultural economy with the processing industries of agricultural products, focused on the two export products, cotton and cashew nuts, and on trade. The primary sector represents 28.1% of the GDP, the manufacturing sector is 14.6% including 6% for the agro-food industries and 4.4% for the construction industry, the service sector represents 48.8% of the GDP including 13% for trade and 9% for transport (INSAE, 2019).

There is a close link between agricultural production and food security in Benin, with the agricultural sector being the country's primary food supplier (crops, animals and fishing). Therefore, the state of agricultural production

before and after the Covid-19 has been analyzed to see if and to what extent the shock of the health crisis would have an impact on the food production in the country, in order to have an idea of the risks that could affect food safety in Benin due to Covid-19.

Once this analysis has been carried out, the link between food insecurity and the increase in inequalities in Benin has been shown. Doing so, the effect of Covid-19 on inequalities through the prism of food security has been clarified.

## ***2.1 Agricultural production in Benin before Covid-19***

Benin agriculture is characterized by small traditional farms. On average, 27.3% of farms have less than one hectare (2.5 acres) and 15.2% have five or more hectares. Only 5% of farms in the south and 20% in northern Benin have more than five (5) hectares. Its contribution to GDP fluctuated around 27.8% on average over the period 2015-2019 (INSAE, 2019). This figure is 28% in 2019, down slightly (- 0.5) compared to 2018 in a context marked by the closure of the borders with Nigeria.

The agricultural production system is largely weather dependent and characterized by small-holdings and low use of improved inputs. The main food crops are maize, sorghum, rice, cassava, groundnuts and yams. The main cash crops are cashew, shea, pineapple and cotton. Cotton is Benin's main export crop, accounting for 70% of export earnings (WDI, 2017).

Globally, food production increased by 4.9% between 2018 and 2019. **Table 1** shows the comparative situation of food production between 2018 and 2019. In 2019, cereal production reached 2.18 billion kg against the production of 2.11 billion in 2018, an increase of 3.2% between the two agricultural seasons. Maize and rice contributed the most to this result with growth rates of 2% and 8% respectively. The production of other crops in the cereal group (sorghum, fonio, millet, etc.) has remained practically stable. It should be noted that legumes and food crops, known as high nutritional value crops, have performed remarkably

well. Pulses saw an increase rate of 16.1% thanks to the cultivation of soybeans, whose production increased by 44.2%, while vegetable crops saw a production decrease of 1.5% mainly due to the poor performance observed in onion and pepper production for which there were decreases of 3.8% and 15%, respectively.

**Table 1: Evolution of food crop production between 2018 and 2019**

Crop group	Agricultural campaign 2018-2019		Agricultural campaign 2019-2020		Production increase (%)
	Surface (in hectares)	Production (in tons)	Surface (in hectares)	Production (in tons)	
Cereals	1,462,937	2,109,384	1,758,748	2,177,787	3.2
Roots and tubers	583 653	7,742,026	564,993	7,955,450	2.8
Legumes	489,920	502,564	540,151	583,668	16.1
Vegetable crops	107,756	716,917	97,488	706,346	-1.5

Source: Directorate of Agricultural Statistics (DAS), Benin, 2020

The increase in production observed here is mainly due to the increase in the area of cultivated land, as productivity has not really improved. Instead, it fell 14.12% in cereal production.

The upward trend in food production is also observed for fishery products. The national fishery production increased from 82,074.90 tons in 2018 to 97,536.87 tons in 2019, an increase of 18.8%. A similar development was observed for meat production, which increased from 74,162 tons in 2018 to 76,161 tons in 2019 (DAS, 2020).

## ***2.2 The main factors contributing to agricultural production in Benin***

The general positive evolution of agricultural production in Benin can be explained by various factors:

Land: On average, 20% of arable land in Benin is sown each year for agricultural production. This factor is important for food production as it directly contributes to the natural process of crop growth. The performance of food production as analyzed above was largely explained by the variation (increase or decrease) in the area sown. During the last two agricultural



seasons, the area sown for food crops increased from 2.64 million hectares in 2018 to 3.0 million hectares in 2019, i.e., a growth rate of 12.0%.

Seeds: Agricultural production still depends on uncertified seeds (especially for rice and soybeans). Indeed, the coverage rates for certified seeds are 69% for maize, 13% for rice and 2% for soybeans during the 2019-2020 crop year (Ministry of Agriculture - MAEP, 2020). This can be explained in part by the weak commercial links between producers and seed companies after the withdrawal of the State which is in fact the consequence of the weak capacity of producer organizations to play their role in the service of their members. The rate of access to improved seeds and plants (all crops combined) is 25%.

Fertilizers: Usually fertilizers are used on farms, but the rate of use is low. On average, 30.0% of the sown land was smoked with chemical fertilizers (MAEP, 2014). In addition, the greatest amount of fertilizer used during the 2019-2020 crop year (94% went to cotton which is not a food crop). Food crops only benefited from 6% of the total established. The rate of access of farms to chemical fertilizers is 62% and for organic fertilizers 5.43% (MAEP, 2020).

Water: Although the country has a potential of 322,000 ha of land suitable for irrigated agriculture, only 23,000 ha (about 7.1% of the potential) are currently equipped for irrigation, of which 75% are effectively irrigated for agricultural land and only 9.5% of irrigable potential, or 12.6% of irrigated areas, was cultivated. Therefore, most of agricultural production is subject to the level of rainfall. Regarding this aspect, 2019 was a good year since the recorded annual average was 1220 mm for 71 days against 1112 mm for 61 days in 2018, i.e., a positive deviation of 107 mm and 10 days compared to 2018. Year 2019 was particularly rainy with good distribution in time.

Labor: family labor is the most used at the farm level but remains insufficient for the various tasks related to agricultural activities. As a result, producers rely on organized groups of agricultural service providers and on the recruitment of labor for various cultivation operations (Benin Institute of Agricultural Research - INRAB, 2016). It should be noted that this workforce is

not always available. The greatest shortages are most often observed during the months of January to April, June and November. Thus, any exogenous shock occurring during these periods has effects on agricultural labor and therefore on agricultural production.

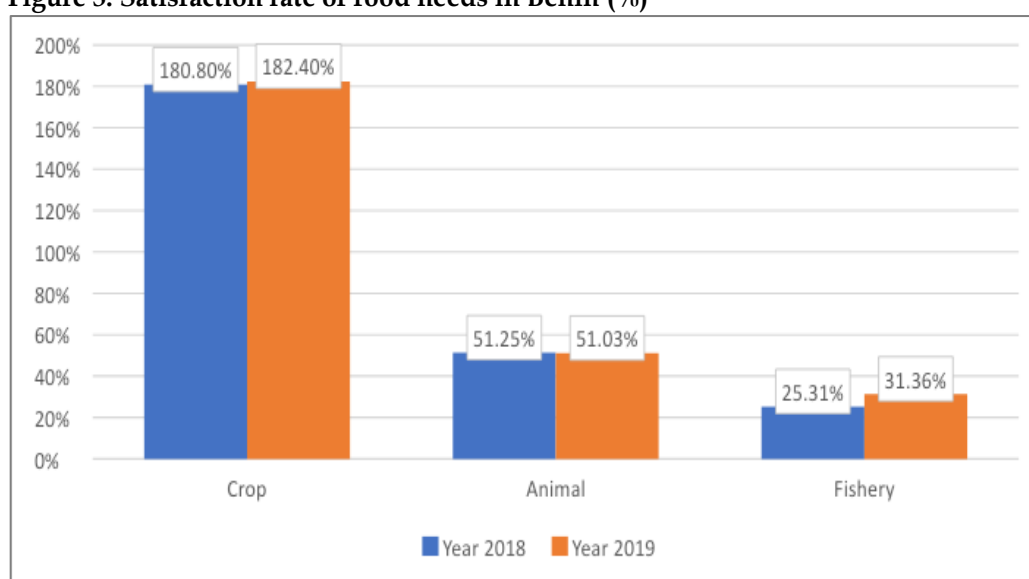
Pesticides: The volumes of pesticides used for the 2019-2020 campaign are estimated at 4,864,789 liters, including 2,859,267 liters of herbicide and 2,005,522 liters for other pesticides (insecticides, acaricides, etc.). The cotton sector represents 99.6% of these pesticides put in place. The rate of access to chemical pesticides (insecticides, acaricides, nematicides, etc.) is 39% (MAEP, 2020).

Agricultural advice: Agricultural advice is one of those public policies whose effectiveness could lead to major structural changes in the agricultural sector. Indeed, it is through agricultural advice that producers are informed of research results, express their research needs and are trained in the use of these new technologies developed by research. It is also through agricultural advice that good practices for responsible and sustainable agriculture are known to producers.

### ***2.3 Food security in Benin before Covid-19***

By comparing the levels of agricultural production in 2019 as presented above with the national demand for food products, it appears that the food needs in plant products are covered by national production with a surplus of 82.4% in 2019 (**Figure 3**). This indicator has seen a positive evolution between 2018 and 2019. On the other hand, the food needs in animal and fishery products are in deficit with significant differences: 49.0% for products of animal origin and 68.6% for fishery products. An exogenous shock in the livestock and fisheries sub-sectors could worsen this deficit.

**Figure 3: Satisfaction rate of food needs in Benin (%)**



Source: Directorate Planning and Prevision (DPP), MAEP

According to a study carried out by the National Institute of Statistics (INSAE) in 2017, approximately 9.6% of the population is food unsecured, i.e., 1.09 million people including 0.7% severely food unsecured, i.e., 80,000 people (AGVSAN, 2017). Compared to 2013, overall food insecurity decreased by 1.4 points, from 11% to 9.6% in 2017. Overall, 47.5% of the population of Benin is food secured and 42, 9% live on the edge of food security conditions.

In general, the nutritional status of children is improving, but WHO standards are still exceeded. In fact, over 30% of children aged 6-59 months suffer from chronic malnutrition. This reflects a serious nutritional situation according to the thresholds established by the WHO. More specifically, the proportion of children under 5 suffering from stunting or chronic malnutrition increased from 43% in 2006 to 37% and 34% respectively in 2009 and 2014, then to 32% (EDS, 2018). Among these children, 11% suffer from severe forms of chronic malnutrition. The prevalence of wasting or acute malnutrition follows the same trend, going from 8% in 2006 to 5% in 2018 with a proportion of 1% of severe wasting (EDS, 2018). However, there is relative stability between 2009 and 2018 in acute malnutrition.

### **3. Effects of Covid-19 on factors of production and food production in Benin**

To assess the effects of Covid-19 on household food security, an analysis has been conducted at the national level on a sample of 193 households, selected in 5 municipalities from different agro-ecological areas of the country: Avrankou, Bohicon, Bopa, Ouaké and Savalou. Their demographic characteristics are also representative of the entire population, with for instance the surveyed household representatives made up of 51.3% women and 48.7% men.

They are mainly from rural communities with their main occupations being farmers or crop producers (57%) and crop transformers or traders (43%).

They were asked about their knowledge of the pandemic and its effects on their productivity and global production. Their responses are reported here according to the various factors of production identified previously.

#### ***3.1 Effects on cultivable land***

The area sown has not decreased among small producers who mainly use family labor. However, some decreases and delays in soil preparation and plowing have been noticed among large producers (10 ha and more). This is mainly the result of the scarcity of labor. Lockdown measures in neighboring countries have prevented migrants from coming to work on the large farms that welcome them each agricultural season; thus, limiting the workforce to family labor. 55.5% of the interviewed farmers said to have been affected by this type of shock, leading to nearly 46% of planting reduction in some places.

In addition, agricultural households living in border areas faced an unprecedented land problem due to the closure of land borders by some countries like Togo. It is in fact the non-accessibility of these households to their agricultural land which is on the Togolese territory. The neighbourhood and the cultural mix of the inhabitants of these two countries had made possible

this production system in which the cultivated plots are located on the other side of the legal border. But, due to COVID-19, Beninese farm households could not cross the border because of border closure by Togo. Some Togolese farming households would take this opportunity to seize the land of their Beninese colleagues. The problem was raised in one of the localities of the municipality of Ouaké and contributes not only to the reduction of the areas sown, but also to the non-enjoyment of certain land rights.

### ***3.2 Effects on seeds***

Certified seed was available in accordance with the planning of the crop year. However, they have not been sold due to COVID-19 and measures taken by the government to slow the spread of the virus. Locally produced corn, rice and soybeans are the most affected. Travel restriction measures and the psychosis created by the awareness slogan "stay at home" prevented producers from obtaining seed. Some seed companies have been forced to convert their stocks into consumer products. This resulted in very significant loss of turnover due to the selling prices. By transforming seeds into consumer products, prices dropped from 350 FCFA to 160 FCFA per kg, or at best 205 FCFA for maize, i.e., a loss ranging from 41 to 54% per kg. Rice and soybean seeds have suffered similar shocks (INSAE, 2020), even though in 2022 prices have increased because of the war between Russia and Ukraine.

Around 54% of households surveyed had difficulty accessing certified seeds due to the pandemic and government measures.

### ***3.3 Effects on fertilizers***

Fertilizers have suffered a shock of remarkable magnitude. Their use on crops has been delayed; which lowered the already low utilization rate on corn farms. Indeed, producers know that the delay in applying fertilizers to corn

fields has consequences for the natural growth process; for example, the ears of corn are larger than usual before they ripen, and the stalks of corn can no longer stand upright. To avoid production losses due to this phenomenon induced by the delay in applying fertilizers, producers have avoided applying them.

Due to COVID-19 and government actions, 72.9% of farm households believe there has been a reduction in access to chemical fertilizers. About 81% think this reduction is important or very important.

Moreover, this already difficult situation has been aggravated by the war started by Russia in Ukraine, in February 2022. Russia and Belarus are among the first producers and exporters of potassium fertilizers in the world<sup>3</sup>. Since the beginning of the war, these two countries are under sanctions from Western countries, reducing their exports. Therefore, the availability of fertilizers is drastically reduced on the international market making prices climb. And knowing the dependency of least develop countries like Benin regarding imported fertilizers, the consequence of such a situation is the further reduction of Benin producers' access to this essential input.

### *3.4 Effects on water for agriculture*

Delays in the hydro-agricultural arrangement have been noted due to COVID-19 in rice growing areas. Unlike previous agricultural seasons, most of the irrigation schemes were ordered on the correct dates and should be received before the rainy season. But, because of the cordon sanitaire and the closure of borders, the execution companies could not function properly, causing a delay that cannot be recovered due to the rainy season which has started and which has prevented any intervention at the grassroot level. As a result, the area sown to rice and the volume of water mobilized for rice production could decrease.

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<sup>3</sup><https://farmdocdaily.illinois.edu/2022/03/war-in-ukraine-and-its-effect-on-fertilizer-exports-to-brazil-and-the-us.html>

### ***3.5 Effects on workforce***

The shortage of hired farm labor has worsened due to COVID-19 and barrier measures. Large farms, especially those of 10 ha and more, are the main consumers of this type of labor which, most of the time, comes from neighboring countries such as Togo, Niger, Nigeria and sometimes Mali. Due to the measures taken in these countries, the movements of these seasonal workers in Benin have been made impossible. This exacerbates the current situation of labor shortage. About 43.6% of farm households acknowledged that there is or will be a reduction in the farm labor force.

### ***3.6 Effects on the availability of financial resources***

Distortions in the functioning of decentralized financing mechanisms (FSDs) were noted due to compliance with measures taken by the government. The producers did not have the necessary support to prepare loan applications from the FSDs. Likewise, the motivation of FSDs to finance agricultural activities, already low, was further affected due to the high risk caused by the disease. The consequence is that the producers did not have the financial means to carry out their activities.

From the 18 producers who acknowledged having contracted loans once in our survey sample, 12 (67%) said Covid-19 has reduced their access to funding.

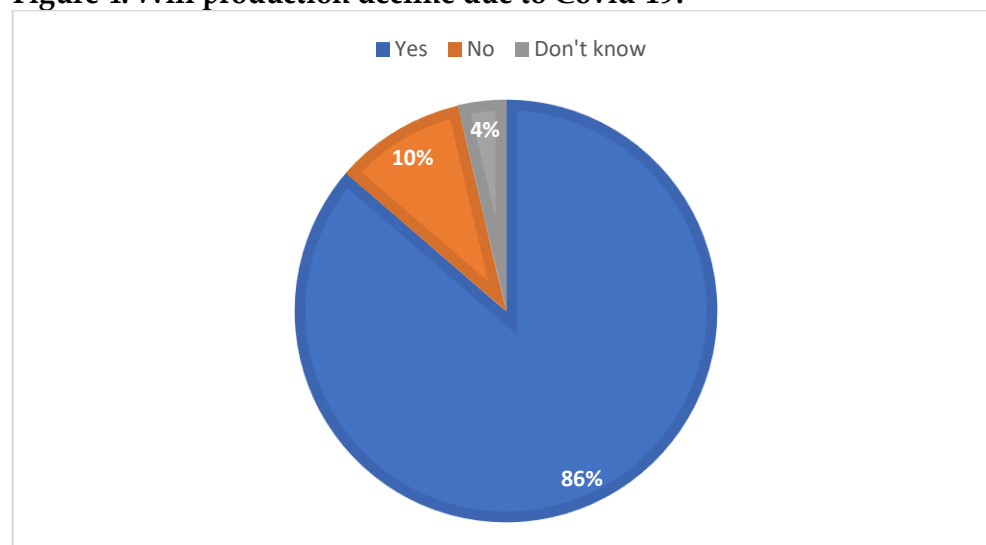
### ***3.7 Effects on pesticides***

The use of herbicides would certainly have increased to fill in the void created by the lack of manpower in soil preparation. However, farm households felt that there was also a reduction in access to these herbicides. About 40% of farm households surveyed said so.

### 3.8 Effects on food production

The combination of all these factors effects is expected to dramatically reduce overall production from 2020 to 2022 and even subsequent years. The risk of declining factor productivity is high. With a constant seeded area, production could drop due to the use of uncertified seed. Many corn farmers who used certified seeds have been forced by the pandemic to take their own harvest to plant the fields. The decrease will be exacerbated because the areas sown would have been reduced by about 40%. According to farm households, food production will decline. About 86% of households had the perception that Covid-19 will reduce food production in their community and in the country. The level of risk appears to be high or very significant. In fact, most of the reduction risks on the factors of production studied are perceived as important or very important.

**Figure 4: Will production decline due to Covid-19?**



Source: Survey data by the author



## 4. Consequences of Covid-19 on food security

To analyze food security in Benin, we use the FAO approach (FAO, 2008) which is based on four pillars. This approach consists of analyzing how the pandemic affected food availability, food accessibility, food use and stability regarding the first three pillars.

### 4.1 *Food availability*

In many countries, the COVID-19 pandemic has not yet significantly affected food availability (Devereux et al., 2020). Government measures to counter the spread of the pandemic have spared the agricultural sector to ensure the continuity of food production. However, some countries have taken precautionary measures to limit food exports, thus avoiding possible stockouts.

Benin was no exception to this general observation even though no export restriction measures have been taken. However, availability could be threatened in the medium to long term. In fact, the rate of use of modern inputs, such as certified seeds, appears to be low for the 2020-2021 crop year, due to COVID-19. Maize farmers, for example, did not go looking for seeds because of the psychosis created by the disease and the slogan “Stay at home”. At the same time, some key informants did not observe a noticeable decline in maize plantings, especially in the central region of the country. This means that the sowing was done with uncertified seed and therefore the yields will drop as well as food production. In addition, the seasonal workforce has become scarce due to COVID-19 for three fundamental reasons: the closure of borders by neighboring countries, the restriction of movement due to the cordon sanitaire and psychosis linked to the disease. In general, due to the scarcity of domestic labor, some producers use the labor of foreign and / or Beninese migrants (who come from other localities).

As a result, their capacity for soil preparation and plowing is reduced to the use of family labor; which could reduce the area sown. Thus, food availability would be threatened in the medium and long term.

#### ***4.2 Food accessibility***

Accessibility is already threatened by COVID-19. Like many countries, Benin has taken measures to limit travel. This is the case of the cordon sanitaire which has limited subnational movements. This had immediate consequences on physical access to food products of agricultural origin despite the free movement of goods. For example, in the Mono department, one of the largest processors of paddy rice into white rice and parboiled rice could no longer send rice to Cotonou because of the mode of transport used. In fact, its customers in Cotonou, one of the largest consumer markets, prefer packaging in 5 kg bags; which facilitates their transport because it does not necessarily require goods transport vehicles. But it was found that all passenger transport vehicles used to transport the 5 kg bags of rice to Cotonou were systematically returned, even if they had no passengers on board. The consequence is that consumers of rice supplied by this processor no longer have physical access to their preferred product. In addition, the availability of this product in the consumer market is reduced.

Affordability is also threatened, not because of the rise in prices, but rather because of the fall in income, which over 95% comes from agricultural activities in the broad sense (INRAB, 2017). Indeed, travel restrictions and the psychosis of the pandemic have led to a decline in sales of agricultural products. This is the case of certified seeds of corn and rice that the producers did not go to buy. Seed companies were forced to sell their product on the food consumption market; resulting in a shortfall in terms of income, ranging from 28 to 43%. The situation is similar for producers of cereals intended for consumption as well as for poultry farmers. The price of broilers has gone from 2,500 FCFA per kg

to 1,500 FCFA, or even 1,200 FCFA per kg (INSAE, 2020). Thus, most food producers have lost a good part of their income; which decreases their purchasing power and could therefore modify their eating habits.

### ***4.3 Food use***

The use of food is appreciated through eating habits. Most key informants interviewed believe that the time since the COVID-19 outbreak is relatively short for appreciating changes in eating habits. However, if the loss of income continues due to COVID-19, there is a risk that households will change their eating habits by adjusting their demands to their purchasing power.

In Benin, about 85% of farm households are grain producers and sell a significant portion of their production to buy, among other things, other food products of which they are not producers. Implicitly, these households are at risk of loss of income due to the liquidation caused by COVID-19 and, therefore, may change their eating habits in the medium to long term. Thus, products with high nutritional value such as market garden products, meat and eggs, already rare in the daily diet, will be more absent.

### ***4.4 Stability***

Stability is compromised with regard to the first three pillars of food security. In terms of availability, it is the transport restrictions that are more of the problem. For example, the parboiled and white rice produced in Grand-Popo for the Cotonou market, packaged in 5 kg bags, could no longer be transported by ordinary taxis which transport passengers and goods. From this point of view, the supply of this market is disrupted. Thus, creating an instability of access to the food product, an instability of the availability of products for consumers and an instability of eating habits. Those who are used to Grand-Popo rice can no longer access it from the Cotonou market at the same

frequency. At best, market delivery times will lengthen due to disruptions in transportation. The data and analyzes presented show that COVID-19 has negative impacts on food security in Benin. This leads to the question of the consequences of such a deterioration in food security on social equality in the country.

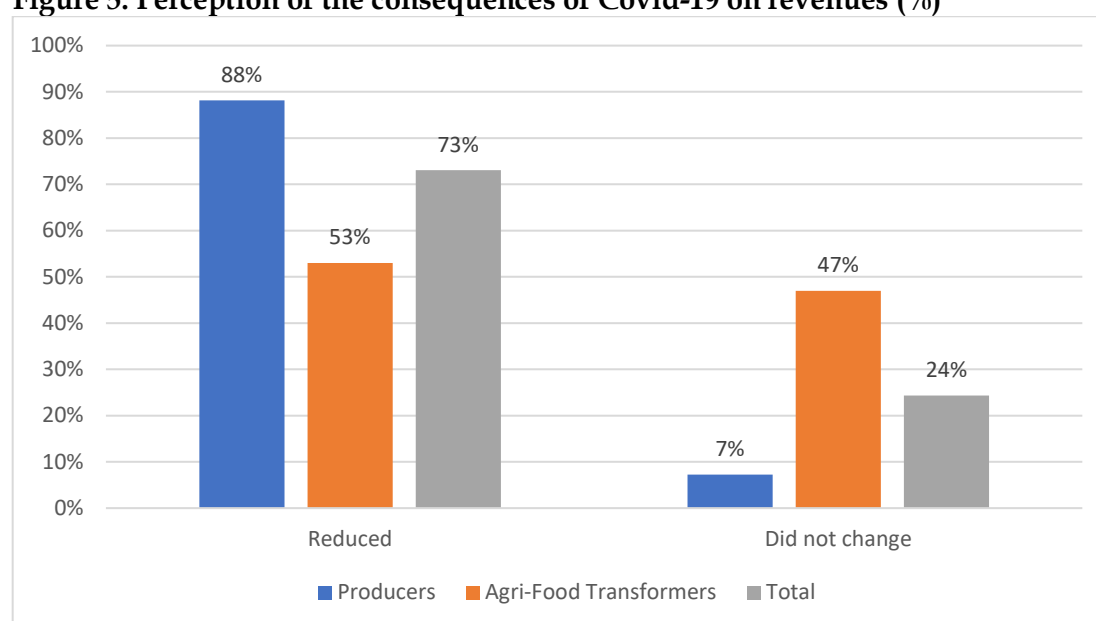
## **5. Effects of COVID-19 on inequalities through food security**

The first group of people to be affected by food scarcity are the poor. They are the ones who suffer most from food insecurity mainly for economic reasons. Now that the effects of Covid-19 are making food even more scarce than it was normally, they are seeing their situation worsening. As noted in the previous section, food prices are rising sharply due to reduced production and then making it harder for the poor to access food. Such a situation is a factor of greater gap between the rich and the poor.

The war in Ukraine has worsened the situation, generating all the conditions to create a generalized inflation of all products including food, especially wheat which is an essential element for basic alimentation. The war's effects on fertilizers also aggravate the risk of food scarcity or at least the reduction of its access for the poorest because of the increase in price.

**Figure 5** presents the opinions of farmers and agri-food transformers on the effects of Covid-19 on their revenues. 88% and 53% of farmers and agri-food transformers, respectively, recognize that their revenues decreased since the beginning of the pandemic. Knowing the precarious living conditions of these groups of people in an underdeveloped country like Benin, especially farmers, a decrease in their revenues is a bad signal for equality and equity in the country. It appears that with the Covid-19 crisis, aggravated by the current war in Ukraine, the poor get poorer.

**Figure 5: Perception of the consequences of Covid-19 on revenues (%)**



Source: Survey data by the author

Policies to tackle the food shortage and reduce inequalities during the Covid-19 period and beyond the actions planned by the government of Benin to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on the agricultural sector are in line with the recommendations resulting from the consultation of the ministers of agriculture of ECOWAS and the African Union.

These recommendations aim to: *(i)* guarantee the continuity of the production chain of agricultural and agrifood products; *(ii)* ensure a regular supply of national (primary, secondary, border) and regional markets and *(iii)* preserve the livelihoods of the most vulnerable agricultural households.

The following results are expected from the implementation of this mitigation plan:

- The supply of actors in the value chain with production factors (inputs, other supplies, various maintenance services, etc.) is guaranteed and regularly provided;
- The transport and transfer of basic food products and agricultural consumer goods are facilitated and streamlined both within the country and between countries for all value chain actors;

- The food and nutritional security of vulnerable agricultural households is strengthened and improved in the face of COVID-19; a monitoring and evaluation system for COVID-19 mitigation interventions is in place and operational.

By doing the analysis from the perspective of reducing inequalities, it must be said that the whole plan, by helping to limit the harmful effects of Covid-19 on food security, will certainly reduce the risks of worsening inequalities in terms of nutrition and access to food. Specifically, the third outcome targeting vulnerable farm households is a clear sign that the government is aware of the high risks these groups of people in the face of the economic effects of the pandemic.

It is commendable that this plan is more detailed by explaining how these vulnerable households will be identified and what support package will be given to them to strengthen their food and nutrition security during and after the crisis.

Also, particular emphasis must be placed on the various factors identified and contributing to food production in Benin. These factors should be strengthened, especially with regard to access to funding, certified seeds, pesticides and other agricultural inputs. Efforts have been made regarding access to land although much remains to be done to reform the sector and ensure equal access to secured land for all.

In view of these efforts in terms of equal access to land, land management in Benin is organized by Law No. 2013-01 of August 14, 2013 relating to the land code of the Republic of Benin, as amended and supplemented by the laws 2017-15 of August 10, 2017 and 2020-08 of April 23, 2020 on the modernization of justice. This law expressly prescribes the reduction of inequalities linked to the access of disadvantaged groups, in particular women, to land by providing in its article 6, last indent, that “The State and local communities, guarantors of general interest, must ensure that the gender approach is respected in terms of access to land”. In addition, article 14 of the Land and State Code prohibits, in

its first paragraph, any exclusion with regard to the acquisition of land by nationals in these terms: “Any natural or legal person of Beninese nationality can acquire a building or land in the Republic of Benin.”

To implement all these measures, a National Agency for Domains and Lands (ANDF) was created in 2019. This agency has carried out a profound reform of land and property management compatible with the requirements of effective management of COVID -19. This is the digitization of the procedure for obtaining land titles via the creation of the “e.notaire” platform in 2020. According to the CEO of the ANDF, notaries or candidates will no longer have to travel to the ANDF to carry out the transaction formalities. They can now do it online from their desks without having to travel. In short, this is a reform which limits contacts between ANDF and users, and therefore contributes to compliance with barrier.

## **Conclusion and political arrangements**

This study shows the harmful effects of Covid-19 on the reduction of inequalities by the worsening of food shortage and food insecurity in Benin. It has been demonstrated that food production is highly dependent on a number of factors such as land, water, fertilizers and labor. Covid-19 and the lockdown or cordon sanitaire measures taken to reduce its spread have reduced access or disrupted the use of these factors. The consequence of such a situation is the reduction of the overall food production in the country, which means less food availability and therefore more risk of food insecurity. The situation has even worsened after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war, started on February 24, 2022, especially regarding the availability of fertilizers and wheat which are an essential element for basic foods.

By analyzing the four pillars of food security as defined by the FAO (FAO, 2008), it has been observed that Covid-19 will also affect the availability, accessibility and use of food through different mechanisms. For example, the

use of uncertified seeds has been noticed which means less productivity and reduced food availability as the area of sown land has been reduced, the limitation of movements from rural areas to urban centers due to the cordon sanitaire, which means reduced access to food or increased prices, and a change in eating habits because of the loss of income due to the pandemic. In addition, the stability of each of these first three aspects is compromised due to the high volatility and uncertainty created by the crisis and its unpredictable development.

According to results from the survey conducted as part of this study, farmers recognize that Covid-19 has bad effects for them on food availability, accessibility and use as well as stability.

By increasing food insecurity and reducing the poor's revenues, Covid-19 is also increasing the gap between vulnerable groups and other layers of society; the former being those who suffer the most from food insecurity mainly for economic reasons. Therefore, their situation is worsened by Covid-19 as less production or less supply means higher prices, which will make it even more difficult for the poor to access food.

As access to food and food security is a basic human right, the government of Benin takes actions to preserve this right. It has implemented measures to: *(i)* guarantee the continuity of the production chain of agricultural and agrifood products; *(ii)* ensure a regular supply of national (primary, secondary, border) and regional markets and *(iii)* preserve the livelihoods of the most vulnerable agricultural households.

These measures target different cultures and include, among others:

- Establishment of tax incentives for processing (tax exemption, revision of tax payment deadlines);
- Establishment of a marketing fund for the benefit of agricultural processing units;
- Mobilization of resources to fund a rice emergency program;
- Installation / repair of storage facilities;



- Capacity building of stakeholders on storage and conservation techniques;
- Subsidy in specific inputs for market gardening and other food crops.

It should be emphasized that to ensure better food security for all and in a sustainable manner, the factors of food production must also be strengthened. Therefore, the government is expected to keep momentum in improving access to land, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and other agricultural inputs. Access to financing must also be improved by strengthening the National Agricultural Development Fund (FNDA), but also by boosting the network of local financial companies (SFD) for a better presence in rural areas. By doing so, the government shows responsiveness in providing enabling conditions to rural people to pursue their development activities whatever the sanitary crisis. This is also an economic empowerment that reinforces the economic resilience in rural areas and contributes to avoid all social severe disruption that starvation can generate. Any social disruption may jeopardize social peace and induce a setback of democracy.

In addition to these measures, and in order to act to reduce inequalities, more pro-poor strategies should be implemented. In the context of Covid-19, it should be considered to provide:

- Immediate support for the most vulnerable;
- A transition towards an inclusive economic recovery process;
- Stronger and better adapted social protection for all;
- Enhanced digital solutions that can be adapted to different sectors, including agriculture, while ensuring that the digital divide between social groups and rural-urban areas is bridged;
- Adapted actions targeting gender equality and indigenous peoples.

In a more general approach and in order to make human societies more resilient to future crises such as the current pandemic, different strategies should be combined by policy makers to combat and reduce inequalities (Bonilla, 2016). These strategies include:

- Pro-poor fiscal policy;
- Better targeting of social programs;
- Participatory decision making;
- Review of legislative frameworks that promote inequalities;
- Promotional action;
- Fight against regional inequalities within the same country or between countries;
- Differentiated policies for poverty reduction;
- Monitoring and evaluation of the program.

As Covid-19 reveals the pervasive gaps that already exist in the current human societies, it is an urgent call to all stakeholders to join forces and work smartly to accelerate poverty reduction and ensure better redistribution of wealth. This will help create equitable access to opportunities for all, in order to improve the resilience of populations and leave no one behind in the process of sustainable development.

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## Chapter 4. Art and culture in the time of Covid19

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### Introduction

Thinking about the future of art and culture in times of Covid19 is not a reaction of intellectualism but a necessity on the sociological side as well as on the level of human rights. We must think about it today and always since attempts at long-term forecasts in any field of human activity are the goal of scientific reflection. Sociologists in the field of art and culture have devoted their scientific lives to this subject in order to make people understand the importance of maintaining traditions and the connection of times and peoples.

Currently, the objective is not only to try to build forecasts of the demands of societies that want to preserve their branch of civilizational development, but also to make active attempts to form these demands.

It is generally useful for humanity to try to think about it and even more so to think about the future, otherwise it may not be the case. It is very relevant to think about it, given the sociological and political reasons. The real situation of culture and art is becoming more and more deplorable. Much was happening as if it was an objective to hinder widespread education and the strengthening of cultural traditions. According to the observed experience of societies before

the period of Covid19, culture and art in particular allowed individuals and communities to connect with the past and the future for months at most.

The cultural and the artistic as we teach them in our universities are essential elements for the development of humanity, even a field of material and immaterial enrichment. It is from this announcement that questions develop, and in the course of our present reflection we have been able to formulate those that will guide our approach. Questions in scientific research are the key to the answer According to Gaston Bachelard, “all knowledge is an answer to a question. If there has been no preliminary question, there can be no scientific knowledge. Nothing is self-evident, nothing is given, everything is built [1]”.

In other words, the starting point lies in the following questions:

*On what basis can we see the future of art and culture in the conditions in which societies find themselves today? Is it about the fact that we need freer and more creative societies that the question of human rights arises? Or that inclusion and diversity can be developed from freedom? Or because all manifestations of culture tend to make us better people and therefore increase the well-being of humanity? Can we think of the virtual space as an alternative in the state of crisis in order to avoid the systematic absenteeism of art and culture? what is the role of the state in such a situation?*

It is to these questions that we will try to answer, knowing that the subject is much broader. In addition, it is a question of analyzing the data that surrounds us far from any subjectivity and while remaining vigilant. Thoughts on this are somewhat approximate, but this does not interfere with keeping a sense of vigilance and precision in speech, writing a scientific text does not tolerate fuss.

Vigilance at the very least is a good sign, it proves that we are not totally in subjectivity, in order to avoid putting ourselves between the teeth of a "lion" which is called scientific incredibility. This should lead to an attitude of epistemological vigilance, because vigilance in the context in which we are speaking is legitimate vigilance which comes from concern and from the

scientific analysis of the situation. According to Bachelard, "the scientific spirit forbids us to have an opinion on questions that we do not understand, on questions that we do not know how to formulate clearly [2]".

## **1. Art and culture are social facts**

Promoting oneself and advancing creativity is a social fact. Arts and cultures do not live far from social life. If once we return to the sociological past and its relationship with this field, we discover that the interest of sociology for art is not new. Chamboredon and Menger mention, in the introduction to an issue of the *Revue française de sociologie*, that Marx, Durkheim and Weber had made art an important object of sociological study [3].

With Durkheim, he already edited a regular section on "aesthetic sociology" in *L'Année Sociologique*, which was later fed by these collaborators, in particular Marcel Mauss. The latter announced the scientific interest in this field from a sociological point of view by following the path of his master. According to Mauss, art has not only a social nature, but also social effects. It is the product of collective fantasy on which we agree and whose sentimental effects are relatively the same for everyone at a given time, in a given society [4].

And because the sociology of art is one branch among others of sociology in general which has made art and aesthetics an object of reflection and study and with the succession of questions which have resulted of the evolution of the artistic field, it is necessary to dissipate the incompatibility between sociology and art, the idea that sociology appeals to reason and whereas the other appeals to emotion. For a long time, "it was considered that emotion could be an obstacle to the construction of knowledge. However, it is possible to reconcile the two, allowing the scientific and artistic fields to mutually enrich each other [5].

But when it comes to approaching the reality of art and culture in times of crisis, we are faced with two types of thought that we really have to think about, that which is based on a rational mind and that which is produced by emotion, the first can be a contest and a refusal of the end and the other is based on a submission to the end whatever the end.

That said, in our approach we are not a follower of the conspiracy theory, even if this theory is very present today. According to the dictionary, a conspiracy theory designates the set of actions carried out by others against others, in secret, with the aim of harming or obtaining something [6]. Donald Trump, the ex-president of the United States, for example, has a conspiracy theory that Joe Biden cheated to win the election. Another example is that of those who believe that the Covid-19 virus was spread on purpose by the most powerful to control but this time and otherwise according to a new process the rest of humanity [7].

This is why thought in such a situation must not be lost. It is therefore a situation of permanent struggle in a world that refuses to disappear, that is to say, it must be seen as a truly urgent problem.

## **2. The crisis of culture and art**

The art began to have problems even before 2020. It is clarified that it is academic and traditional art of all genres. The main problem is the total destruction of the entire building constructed by the centuries-old civilization of mankind. The public is deprived of the possibility of seeing and hearing the works of artists. The latter themselves are deprived of the possibility of creating, of earning money. Agencies, theaters and concert halls are on the verge of ruin.

If the trend of restrictions that operate specifically in theaters, museums, libraries continue, then very soon the motivation to maintain the required standard will decrease. There is an erasure of the habit of many generations to

strive, even if not to be in the center of the cultural circle, at least to appear involved - it creates a social cultural environment. The result of such a decline in interest may be a return to the caveman era. In an essay Paul Valéry asserted: "we other civilizations now know that we are mortal. We feel that a civilization has the same fragility as a life" [8]. When in the first place were questions of survival, and nothing more.

We always remain convinced that there is nothing higher than human dignity, and "if you have exchanged freedom in exchange for security, then you will have no freedom or security".

It is possible that these tendencies have not yet gained strength in our societies but particularly in the last 3 or 4 years our artists and men of culture already had the feeling as if someone very evil was promoting destructive projects that affect the erosion of the foundations of the human psyche, the destruction of the individual and society.

### **3. Art culture and human rights**

In fact, what is being promoted at the broadest level and to the broadest masses is essentially dangerous propaganda of the priority of animal needs. And isn't it true that the lowest behaviors represent the lowest instincts. According to Jean Jacques Rousseau, animals are characterized by the lowest instincts, whereas in humans we find thought and language [12].

And if we add the current constraint that exists in the enormous gap between the "producers" of art and culture and the "consumers", that is to say the public in its total diversity, even from the same culture and in the same way, doesn't the situation seem more and more catastrophic?

Anthropology teaches us that a person stands out from the animal world because there is a desire to at least decorate his life, and the hobby that has arisen must be filled with something. Art and culture in general are synonymous with freedom, it should be noted that in times of great crisis,

society clings to it, as a safeguard of their rights, which explains the dynamic interaction between man and art and culture. It is in this sense that we can discuss their relationship with human rights.

The presence or absence of human rights - this concerns both civil rights and the rights to freedom of conscience, personal integrity, equal opportunities for different groups in society, and this is always reflected in the works of art. Art always captures reality, one could even say documents the current world order. There is reason to be concerned that artists are being silenced by various strategies. The arts and culture challenge consciences and open up other horizons, which constantly raises the question of freedom and why artists and intellectuals find it difficult to express themselves.

In fact, the right to freedom cannot be summed up in the act of voting, even more so in the field of art, artists refuse that art be an issue of identity politics [13]. Artistic and creativity which do not always carry the same forms or the same messages, and which are hampered in multiple ways and globally.

A very difficult aspect is the expression and display in works of art of these same rights and freedoms, as well as the search for compromise with the dominant cultures and religious traditions in different regions. These days it is mainly about women's rights, more specifically, the restrictions, and often even the denial of their freedom of creative expression, as well as the problem of the silence of the cultural manifestations of the so-called small nations.

We cannot deny the impact of the works of talented creators on the minds and moods of people and communities. The problem is that such an impact is not always positive and does not always aim at the harmonious development of society. But attempts to ban such displays of creativity are a violation of the rights to self-expression in art. The problem of the relationship between free creativity and the constraints imposed by public morality is still topical.

The subjectivity of the work provokes the question of the reception of the public. This is a problem that opens the voice to the reflections of sociologists and researchers as well as artists. A serious debate can only exist around a

substantive subject. It is certain that research in such a field is a responsibility, that is to say to always have this critical mind, to question perceptions, to question received ideas and to multiply questions and approaches. A great challenge to take the initiative and open a voice for the understanding of artistic works in the most adequate, most informed way, especially in a very rich and complex field. It is a challenge, because the decoding of artistic messages requires a kind of knowledge and intellectual self-defense in the face of all that is art, in order to be able to understand a work well, while knowing how to take a step back and be objective in the scientific sense of the term [14].

Art is like science, in crisis there is a time for reflection. This is where philosophy takes place, because only philosophy has this capacity to receive all questions. According to Karl Jaspers: "To do philosophy is to be on the move. The questions in philosophy are more important than the answers, and each answer becomes a new question" [15]. Never at the time of the crisis will we be able to find the answer to our questions, since it is after that that the answers will come. The composers of music, for example, do not compose immediately, but it is always afterwards so that their work is based on their thoughtful artistic work. But art and culture are not only poetry and musical composition, but also cinema, theater, painting, and much more.

Everything that the various arts do - theatre, cinema, painting, music, literature, etc., has an indirect influence on how people view themselves and the environment. And we can and should make predictions of such an impact in order to achieve an educational effect on society, which makes one think about their importance in human life. The existence of art and culture is an integral part of the development of civilization.

#### **4. Art culture and distancing**

Social distancing involves maintaining a distance or space between people to prevent the spread of disease. Social distancing involves limiting close contact between individuals and groups within the community. This is a voluntary practice to prevent the spread of COVID-19 [16].

When distancing has become a fact, the question posed by scientists, especially sociologists, is the following: How long will cultural and human values remain human? However, human poverty manifests itself when there is danger, and great danger when dignity is attacked when passion is lost when freedom is imprisoned [17]. With Covid19 human beings all over the world and in the moment such phenomenon has never existed in their history.

It is in this very sense that the question arises about ideological gazes in the fields of art. Recently, two opposing trends have emerged - on the one hand, we are looking for eclecticism, we want to generalize the experience and find something that unites different trends and styles, and on the other hand, art is again trying to turn to the national culture traditions, and in this direction, there is a chance to find new life by returning to the roots.

Art has an experimental field to understand the process of social control, it is in art and culture that we find the opportunity to bring people together, because each time the collective reaction can be different, often uncontrollable and unpredictable. This is an obstacle for structures that aim for total control over society as a whole and over each individual separately. In the distancing the great States of the world, followed by all the other countries thereafter, took the path of the atomization of society, the separation of individuals and the separation of peoples. The goal is submission and control which knows a metaphor as R. Boudant said [18].

This may be another fake, and just another bait for scary story fans. Even if it somehow goes beyond the nightmares made in the movies with all the surreal ingredients they contain. But nevertheless, we sometimes see how the most



unthinkable nightmarish fantasies come true. While in reality artists make us dream of a better world for humanity, others impose nightmares on us, a real paradox that of the passage from dream to nightmare.

## **5. Are there any opportunities?**

At the level of situational responses there is no exact recipe according to which it is possible to preserve the familiar traits of this sphere of life. Given the complex condition in which the community of artists lives, it seems that it is more likely to speak about the problems and opportunities of existence in change, and through the processes of transformation that depend on it, and to continue to continually transform and quickly the world of culture and art in the form in which we can still see them.

If we try to grasp the problem a little broader, then the questions will be different. Namely, do we want to see in the future those areas of civilization that we conventionally call culture and art in the present form, or is there a demand for something completely different from what is already known to us and familiar? And in what direction do we imagine the development of art and culture? Should we try to preserve the already existing tradition or understand that this branch is a dead end, and that we simply have to find new forms of existence of this superstructure in society, so that society does not cease to be civilized?

These questions do not carry any negation, it is often in the search for answers that we find their meaning. Considering the role of arts and culture in human life, one cannot ignore the human need for music for example. It has always been a means of identifying with others and through which one expresses taste and intelligence, it has not become less today.

Moreover, in modern economic activity, the arts acquire a socio-cultural character in each society, Claude Roy identifies art as following "The notion of art, whether it is black art, Cretan art or impressionist art, remains imprecise,

ineffable and irritating at the same time. Art is what keeps the dead idol alive as an idol. Art is what in an object continues to serve when it no longer serves any purpose [19]. The role of arts and culture in people's lives continues to be confirmed as a very important area in a state of peace as well as in a situation of war and crisis, even if in the latter two cases human thought wake up to look for other voices for the survival of the human species.

## **6. Art and culture in virtual space**

As for the translation of art into the virtual space, opinions differ on this subject. For conservative extremes on this issue all art necessarily requires the personal presence of the author - the creator, and the viewer, the listener. Otherwise, the whole long process from the moment of creating an object, to the moment of evaluating and enjoying the result turns to dust. Art does not exist out of time, and without the presence of human. The impression of a masterpiece is made up of many components. It is not only a result, but also a process, and it combines the energy of the creator and the energy of the viewer

For artists, it is important, as performers, to always feel the momentary live reaction of the audience in the room. It is in interaction and experimentation that new artistic proposals are formulated and other styles appear in the history of humanity [20]. During the concert or the exhibition or the performance, there is always an invisible exchange of emotions, of energy between the artists and the public. And suddenly, a unique atmosphere is born, unique and different each time. And not only the level of performance depends on it, but also the degree of pleasure that everyone present will receive. Pianist Hiroko Ishibashi said, "On the stage we are in direct communication with the audience. We know if the audience is following that we are playing, or if they are bored. You can feel it like the temperature of air, to the skin [21].

According to specialists, especially professionals in the music profession, for example recording in the studio for later distribution, does not fill all the art, namely that the latter is a different genre, there are other motivations. This idea is shared by many people, at least in our viewing circles, and many representatives of different types of art speak vehemently about this threat.

According to this current, experience has shown that not all types of art can exist and develop online. Prolonged inaction is destructive. In fact, it leads to the death of culture, and if you look even further, it leads to the extinction of civilization.

The second current starts from two principles, the first that a semblance of art and creativity is better than nothing at all. But this, as they say, is a modified product for the poor.

The second is human nature to adapt to different circumstances, and we all try to find an acceptable option for ourselves as best we can. And since art is the result of human creativity, then, of course, art, everything, like the shoots of plants, opens up new paths of development.

By way of example, and to give credibility to them, the representatives of this current start from what is currently happening in societies, in particular industrial societies. In the conditions of the barbaric attitude of the state towards culture, towards people engaged in creativity and living thanks to its results, alternatives appear. A fairly large number of artists in the circle create, organize other places of creativity, of course, if there are opportunities. In fact, these are places that are not associated with official structures, and therefore are not subject to restrictions. This alternative is a step back to the penultimate century. Creativity is gradually moving towards a small format where concerts take place like the music salons of the 18-19th centuries. So-called "apartment events" resumed - performances, shows, concerts, exhibitions in private apartments. Private galleries, private clubs, etc.

## 7. Is it wrestling?

According to professionals in the cultural and artistic fields, it is in the period of Covid19 to defend our human dignity, otherwise the future will not be. For others humanity will simply have no future, at least as far as societies are now. As human individuals endowed with innate rights there will be no rights and the concept of "human personality" will be banished. Only one biological species will remain, experimental and mute animals. It is also about the death of civilization [22]. And now we still can, more and more every day.

Faced with such a reality to survive the struggle is more and more necessary. In this sense I borrow Fyodor Dostoyevsky's phrase from his major work "Crime and Punishment" even if it is not quite an exact match "Am I a trembling creature or do I have the right?" [23]. The period of Covid19 leaves much to think about and that everyone can ask themselves and try to give themselves a truthful answer.

Isn't this a strategy of the minority when many are tired and resigned, not to give up? That is to say, everyone who sees this problem and talks about it, has not lost the sense of the importance of values, and the fact that they were talking about the possibility of a decline of civilization does not prevent with all their strength from resisting this.

Considering the importance of resistance provokes the idea of seeking other opportunities for the realization of these very values, human values, while knowing that conscience and reason do not generally always awaken in all the people. Many people prefer not to think about anything at all when our future may turn out to be much more unexpected than we can imagine in our imagination. Intended perhaps if we remain within the perspective of the conspiracy, in any case it is not so strange already with Serge Carfantan, we find a whole thesis on collective conditioning, a way in which we eliminate the idea of revolt in human beings, according to him: It is enough to create a collective conditioning so powerful that the very idea of revolt will no longer

even come to the mind of men (...). The ideal would be to format the individuals from birth by limiting their innate biological abilities. Then, we would continue the conditioning by drastically reducing education, to bring it back to a form of professional integration. An uneducated individual has only a limited horizon of thought and the more his thought is limited to mediocre concerns, the less he can revolt. We must ensure that access to knowledge becomes increasingly difficult and elitist. May the gap widen between the people and science, may information intended for the general public be anesthetized of any content of a subversive nature [24].

## 8. The role of the state?

The world has changed irrevocably, whether we like it or not, and the concepts of what we call and consider the state have changed, all the structuring functions have changed.

In “Economy and Society”, Max Weber defines the State as “a political enterprise of an institutional character when and as long as its administrative direction successfully claims, in the application of its regulations, the monopoly of legitimate physical constraint on a territory given” [25]. It is often in this sense that the question of sovereignty is evoked. Sovereignty is the exclusive right to exercise political authority over a given geographical area. It is a very complex concept that can be analyzed from both a sociological and a legal angle [26].

Whereas in the context in which we find ourselves, we find two options which are revealed in the discourse of the artistic and cultural circles which define the role of the State:

*a) that of the pessimists:* for them two elements must be taken into account, the first as for the will of the State to atomize society, this leads the analysis to what Popper said [27]. Since in Popper's ideas we discover what constituted the fundamental basis of the theoretical justification of the processes of destruction of traditional structures and various social groups that take place

in society in our time - previously united on the basis of race, religion, nationality. The second element concerns the lack of the will of the state, what we now call in the world the state does not need to maintain the traditional cultural environment in society, and therefore does not involve financial costs for it. After all, everyone knows that art and the sphere of culture have always existed and developed throughout the centuries only at the cost of subsidies, public or private, and philanthropic, art cannot self-finance.

*b) That of the optimists:* they are conservatives who would like and hope for the restoration of the positions and the role of the State in society and to take back in hand the affairs of culture and art. In order to mark its passage in contemporary history, it is essential that the State thinks of a policy of restoring the destroyed cultural and artistic environment. This is regular funding from the State budget, dissemination of the strengthening of free wide and affordable education, generous subsidies to creative unions and propaganda in the state-level media - "learning is light, ignorance is darkness", "worked in a steel mill - going to a symphony concert in the evening" and along the same lines.

In fact, to found the existence of culture and art in society, it is not only necessary to have creators, but it is much more important to create a sufficiently large environment of consumers of these cultural products. Victor Hugo, a committed French intellectual and great figure of the 19th century, is known for his quote on art: "Art for art's sake can be beautiful, but art for progress is even more beautiful" [28]. To do this, it is extremely important to strive to increase the percentage of people who are educated or even simply literate. It is very, very difficult to achieve this without a State policy to expand educational programs, as well as propaganda at the state level.

The State as an institution does not always really assess the degree of influence of art on the mood of society. Certain types of art cannot normally exist without subsidized support.

The general trends across the world are a return to national components, but only to show the diversity and equal coexistence of different cultures in the global space.

We end this chapter by saying that since the world has changed and will no longer be the same, in this case the existence of art in society is for the members of this society an indicator of a certain stability, and for much a distraction from life's unsolvable problems. And public attempts at long-term forecasts of the development of culture and art in a situation of critical tension in the world are a kind of anchor for the conscious part of humanity.

## **Conclusion**

In practice, we have tried to limit the scope of this contribution to the relationship between Covid19 and arts and culture in societies, and the impact of the health crisis on cultural and artistic practices. By this impact, more and more pushed, real reactions have taken place on the part of States as well as individuals who threaten art and culture even if they remain controllable. This situation leads to changes in behavior vis-à-vis cultural and artistic life, which empties human life of its meaning.

When the process of creation is disturbed, culture and the arts put themselves in danger as well as the civilizations that have been built over the centuries. Arts and culture are barriers against the death of civilizations, it is a permanent struggle for freedom of expression and the right to dream of a better world. The arts and cultures give societies the necessary structures to absorb and retain the beautiful and the ideal when they can, thus avoiding the death of consciences that take away the human foundations that we need for our subsistence.

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## **Chapter 5. Addressing the role of women's cooperatives amidst the Covid 19 pandemic: what do we really know?**

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**Aamou Zakaria & Belhorma Souad**

### **Introduction**

**T**he COVID19 pandemic has had unrestricted effects on global economies, remapping the world's social and economic borders. Indeed, the sanitary crisis has had a significant impact on the economy in its different sectors, particularly the lockdown, which forced many businessmen/businesswomen, entrepreneurs, workers, and different shareholders to find solutions for the flow of their products or services. Women, as society's most vulnerable members, found themselves in an unprecedented situation that hampered their efforts to alleviate poverty and ensure financial security.

Cooperatives provide a viable economic space for women to secure their socioeconomic independence by engaging in a variety of revenue-generating activities. Women band together in various types of cooperatives to protect themselves from poverty and social marginalization. Nonetheless, the COVID19 pandemic has had a significant impact on these cooperatives and the women who rely on them for a living. Certainly, the spread of the COVID19 pandemic has had a tumultuous impact on these cooperatives, exacerbating the women's ordeal.

According to the Moroccan cooperative development office's (ODC) most recent statistics (2019), there are more than 1814 cooperatives in the Daraa Tafilalt region, with a total of 49418 adherents. There are over 533 cooperatives in Errachidia's rural and urban areas, with 15782 male and female adherents. Given the region's high poverty rates, such data shows that a large number of families increasingly depend on cooperatives as a means of alleviating poverty and providing an alternative to the scarcity of both formal and informal sectors of employment.

The present chapter aims to investigate the socio-economic impacts of COVID19 on women's cooperatives in southeast Morocco. This study seeks to examine the serious social and economic effects of COVID-19 on women who work or rely on cooperatives as a major source of income in rural Morocco, specifically the Errachidia region in the country's southeast. This particular area is characterized by a harsh geographical environment with a significant scarcity of economic activities, especially for women who belong to certain social backgrounds and/or who are illiterate and cannot have access to the formal sector of work. As a result, social and solidarity economy (SSE) provides alternative financial solutions that may offer a source of living for this vulnerable population, and sometimes secure their financial independence. For this reason, this chapter also seeks to explore the extent to which social and solidarity economy can be a key factor in poverty reduction amid critical junctures.

This research adopted a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. Semi-structured interviews were deployed to gather the necessary data from five women's cooperatives in both rural and urban areas of Errachidia. The total number of female participants was ( $N=31$ ). The interviews were guided by an interview guide; however, participants were given the chance to talk and elaborate on their responses as this technique was revealing in terms of narratives and experiences that women had during the spread of COVID19. Interviews lasted approximately between 20 to 30 minutes. The

researchers adhered to note-taking techniques as women were not comfortable with recording their stories, particularly because most rural regions of Errachidia are culturally and religiously conservative. Women's answers were then transcribed and coded to generate main themes applying content analysis strategies to come up with relevant answers to the following research questions: **1.** what are the various socio-economic effects of COVID 19 on women working in cooperatives? **2.** How did cooperatives, as social economic spaces, meet the needs of their members during and after the lockdown? **3.** To what extent did women's cooperatives change their business strategies?

The following sections organize this chapter: the first provides a theoretical background of the salient elements that this study aims to unravel by reviewing existing literature on social and solidarity economy principles, the dynamics of women's cooperatives as feminine spaces striving for economic and social existence, and the effects of COVID19 on women cooperatives. The following section represents methodological procedures and discusses fieldwork findings in order to enclose the research problems and provide answers to this research's major questions.

## **1. Literature review**

This section provides insights about women cooperatives as feminine spaces that embrace the social and solidarity economy philosophy. First, the concept of social and solidarity economy is demystified as an economic alternative coined to meet the needs of large numbers of underprivileged social classes. Following that, debates about the Moroccan State's adoption of a social and solidarity economy, as well as the State's plans for its implementation on various social, economic, cultural, and environmental levels, are brought to the forefront. Finally, this section offers comprehensive discussions about the struggle of women's cooperatives and the various barriers that Moroccan

women faced within these spaces prior to the spread of COVID19, as well as how the pandemic has exacerbated women's ordeal.

*Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE): towards a consolidation of economic cooperation*

Women provide an important source of human capital. Through actively contributing within their households, they significantly contribute to economic prosperity while also fostering and enhancing social advancement. Notwithstanding, the vast majority of women are socially and economically excluded from the development paradigm, resulting in ongoing marginalization, discrimination, and, as a result, a continuous deterioration of their status. In this vein, the principles of social and solidarity economy (SSE) appear to offer these women an important opportunity to improve their life quality and social status, thereby reducing women's vulnerability and increasing emancipation, particularly in rural and marginalized areas where large numbers of women are socially and economically excluded.

Social and solidarity economy is an umbrella concept that refers to a collection of economic forms whose primary goal is social and environmental prosperity, involving the collaboration of individuals to achieve the common good in a cooperative manner. In fact, SSE can encompass a wide range of economic systems, from traditional cooperatives, NGOs, and volunteer organizations to modern social enterprises and entrepreneurship, informal economy employee associations, and a plethora of collaborative economies<sup>4</sup>. All that ties these types of SSE is a relentless pursuit of alternative income-generating activities aimed at boosting the economic existence and independence of socially vulnerable groups.

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Utting, et al., eds., *Social and Solidarity Economy Beyond the Fringe* (London: zed books, 2015), pp. 01-02.

The main pillar of SSE's philosophy is thus a transcendence of financial profit as a capitalist creed, to a more humane and cooperative economic forms that would benefit large segments of society. As a result, SSE strives to create a democratic and inclusive decision-making process in which all workers and participants share a collective responsibility for generating and distributing income<sup>5</sup>. The core of SSE is thus joint social action for an economic end, with the goal of alleviating existing social disparities caused by a turbulent economic reality in which the primary goal is economic profit at the expense of human capital prosperity.

Modern employment standards come with rigid criteria and requirements that many people, especially women, lack. As a result, they resort to various forms of informal employment, which come with low pay and terrible working conditions. SSE serves as a shield against fierce exploitation forms that victimize these employees, though women are sometimes subjugated and exploited within these cooperative spaces<sup>6</sup>, offering them a cooperative atmosphere that secures their basic needs through a variety of income-generating activities from which they benefit. Henceforth, SSE contributes to poverty alleviation via securing collaborative work platforms for both men and women who are socially and economically marginalized.

In Morocco, the State has inaugurated a number of plans and laws with the objective of embedding social and economic solidarity principles, especially the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH in French) that his Majesty King Mohamed VI introduced on May 18, 2005 and also the Green Morocco Plan (GMP) initiated in 2008. Such plans came to fill the huge gap that is found in job opportunities as a result of excessive unemployment rates amongst Moroccan youth, university graduates, and women<sup>7</sup>. Apparently, women have

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<sup>5</sup> Neamtan, Nancy. "The social and solidarity economy: Towards an 'Alternative' Globalisation." *The Carold Institute for the Advancement of Citizenship in Social Change* (2002), pp. 02-03

<sup>6</sup> Montanari, Bernadette, and Sylvia I. Bergh. "A gendered analysis of the income generating activities under the green Morocco Plan: who profits?" *Human Ecology* 47.3 (2019), pp. 409-417.

<sup>7</sup> El Mekkaoui, Najat, Yeganeh Forouheshfar, and Sara Loukili. "The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) in Morocco." *EMNES Working Paper*, 50 (2021), p. 02.

benefited in various ways from these initiatives, particularly those living in excluded or rural areas, especially because such initiatives hold a sustainable development model that combines social, economic, and environmental standpoints. In their study of the role of INDH in promoting Women Cooperatives in Morocco, Ibourk and Amaghous (2014) found that the INDH has not only amplified the expansion of women's cooperatives, but it has also substantially reduced the rates of cooperatives' unproductivity<sup>8</sup>. Social and solidarity economy plans and initiatives, henceforth, might serve as a catalyst to consolidate cooperation and economic sustainability within cooperative spaces.

The ministry of tourism, handicrafts, social and solidarity economy of Morocco recently launched the 2018-2028 SSE strategy as a program to improve and expand participation in various forms of social and solidarity economy. The ministry has set a variety of goals to be achieved in the following areas:

- *Economy*: Increasing and demonstrating the social and solidarity economy's participation in GDP (Growth domestic product), and its contribution to the creation of wealth and employment;
- *Society*: Improving the quality of life and social standing of workers in this domain, particularly by ensuring social coverage;
- *Institutional law*: Ensure the institutional and territorial cohesion of the social and solidarity economy sector, as well as the convergence of public policies devoted to the sector's development;
- *Environment*: Participation in good resource management and conservation;
- *Culture*: Reviving, consolidating, and institutionalizing social solidarity culture and values.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibourk, Aomar, and Amaghous Jabrane. "The role of NIHD1 in promoting women cooperatives in Morocco: A micro econometric analysis." *Journal of Economics and Business Research* 20.2 (2014): pp. 96-114.

<sup>9</sup> The Moroccan ministry of tourism, handicraft, social and solidarity economy, retrieved on (April 4<sup>th</sup> 2022), from <http://mtataes.gov.ma/>.



Such an ambitious vision to increase the presence and quality of social and solidarity economy in the Moroccan context has made it possible to have different types of cooperatives with different economic orientations dispersed in all the twelve Moroccan regions<sup>10</sup>. Women's cooperatives constitute a large segment of these cooperatives with a total percentage of 14%<sup>11</sup>. These feminine entities offer viable economic alternatives from which Moroccan rural and/or urban women draw endless economic benefits especially a fair trade where an economic gender equality is guaranteed<sup>12</sup>.

The Moroccan government's efforts to supplement SSE principles by endorsing various strategies and plans in this domain serve as a means to create and support new collaborative business opportunities from which a large number of socially marginalized entities, especially women, can profit. Nonetheless, in order to consolidate social and economic collaboration in a constantly changing Morocco, it is necessary to consider the national and international economic fluctuations and crises that occur, as well as possible ways to protect these vulnerable groups from conceivable social, economic, and sanitary crises. Indeed, the COVID19 experience has shown how fragile world economies are, let alone small cooperative economies that constitute no more than 2% of Morocco's GDP<sup>13</sup>. These female entities have undergone real struggles that the following section is going to discuss in details.

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<sup>10</sup> El Mekkaoui, Najat, Yeganeh Forouheshfar, and Loukili Sara. "The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) in Morocco." *EMNES Working Paper*, 50 (2021).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p4.

<sup>12</sup> Benbihi, Lahcen, and Abdelhaq Lahfidi. "Commerce équitable et résilience des coopératives : Le cas d'une coopérative féminine d'argane dans le contexte de Covid-19." *Alternatives Managériales Economiques* 3.4 (2021): pp. 538-557.

<sup>13</sup> El Mekkaoui, Najat, Yeganeh Forouheshfar, and Loukili Sara. "The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) in Morocco." *EMNES Working Paper*, 50 (2021).

### *Women's cooperatives in rural Morocco: feminine spaces struggling for economic and social existence*

Moroccan women are attempting to assert their existence by congregating within various types of cooperatives as a means of generating an income that may reduce the severe effects of poverty, particularly in rural areas. Nonetheless, rural women in Morocco are poorly integrated into society, owing to illiteracy and a lack of income-generating activities in rural areas<sup>14</sup>. Worse, a large number of these women who are members of several cooperatives are exploited through low pay, or sometimes no pay, and they are unable to actively participate in any decision-making either in periodic or annual assemblies.<sup>15</sup> A dichotomy thus exists within women's cooperatives between educated and illiterate women, young and old generations, and also between female and male members of these cooperatives. Gender and identity dynamics are therefore prevailing factors that hinder economic growth and independence for women, especially old illiterate ones.

There are numerous impediments to women's professional advancement within cooperatives. In their study of women's cooperatives in the Chichaoua region, Tribak and Rguig found out that illiteracy is the most common challenge that women cooperatives face in this region. According to them, illiteracy is the root of all other obstacles because it limits women's opportunities for professional development in cooperative management and product marketing. Furthermore, illiteracy exacerbates gender inequality, pushes women out of decision-making positions, and makes them more vulnerable in times of crisis<sup>16</sup>. The educational challenge is the real struggle for women who choose SSE as a way to alleviate poverty and find economic resources that will ensure their independence. Not only does illiteracy impede women's economic growth, but it also increases their reliance on other

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<sup>14</sup> Montanari, Bernadette, and Sylvia I. Bergh. "A gendered analysis of the income generating activities under the green Morocco Plan: who profits?" *Human Ecology* 47.3 (2019): 409-417.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Tribak Wafae, and Rguig Sara. "Women's Rural Cooperatives in Morocco: Challenges and Collapses.", *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Gender Studies*, 02 (2021), p. 98.

cooperative members to perform critical tasks. In this regard, these women are at the heart of the product development process. They obtain and sometimes harvest raw materials, go through the product fabrication process, but their job is done once the product is completed. Managing sales and product marketing are two tasks that are beyond the capabilities of illiterate women, tumbling their income, and undermining their status within the cooperative space<sup>17</sup>.

Rural women's cooperative affiliates are, in fact, doubly marginalized. On the one hand, they are excluded from any state development paradigm that seeks to improve inclusive progress through national or even international initiatives. These women, on the other hand, are socially excluded in their communities and workplaces. This double discrimination exacerbates women's distress and undermines their chances of social and economic advancement. In this regard, Tribak and Rguig write:

*Rural women are not allowed to ask for loans, financial aids, or challenging investments. They are conceived as unable to create businesses and manage enterprises. More importantly, rural women receive meager attention by policy-makers to invest in projects and programs that support women's empowerment and emancipation {...} when development projects finance a given business in remote areas, they do not follow up with it. Most of the projects lack strategic plans to track the advancement of the business. Equally, such projects achieve the best results when women's requirements and concerns are on the top of their list.<sup>18</sup>*

The dilemma for rural women is that policymakers' agendas exasperate the urban-rural dichotomy. Countless projects and initiatives are centered on development hotspots, particularly in metropolitan cities, while the periphery is overlooked. Legislators also have a tendency to overlook follow-ups to projects they rarely launch in rural areas. By doing so, they aggravate rural

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<sup>17</sup> Perry, Wendy, et al. "Argan oil and the question of empowerment in rural Morocco." *The Journal of North African Studies* 24.5 (2019): 830-859.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

women's misery and discrimination. To improve the eligibility and productivity of SSE visions in Morocco, genuine and concerted efforts must be made to implement inclusive programs that benefit rural women and provide them with ongoing assistance and supervision for their cooperatives and personal projects. By so doing, rural women will be economically bolstered and the ossified rural-urban dichotomy will drastically be reduced.

*The COVID19 crisis and the new socio-economic map: re-orienting to survive*

The Covid19 spread has had ravaging effects on global economies. This humanitarian calamity has had everlasting effects that will stick around for years to come. Women, who are an economically and socially fragile constituent of society, were intensely affected by this health crisis. High rates of domestic violence, divorce, and oppression took place during the lockdown, demonstrating that amid crises women tend to be victimized in different ways<sup>19</sup>. Poverty rates also proliferated amongst men and women as a result of the high percentages of workers who found themselves jobless after businesses' shutdown.

In Morocco, as elsewhere, both large and small businesses faced unrelenting challenges as a result of the COVID19 pandemic. The various stakeholders were impacted and forced to either suspend or re-orient their businesses in order to promote the flow of their commodities. Maintaining the same rate of productivity and revenue in the midst of a turbulent economic environment imposed by the pandemic appeared to be an impossible task. However, some businesses were fortunate due to the nature of the services they provide, while others were forced to 'pivot' or re-orient their businesses. Tatiana et al. write in this regard: COVID19 led to abrupt rises in demand for certain classes of hospital equipment and supplies, personal protection equipment, household staples and digital services, while simultaneously

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<sup>19</sup> Ennaji, Mouha "Women and Gender Relations during the Pandemic in Morocco." *Gender and Women's Studies* 4.1 (2021): p.3.

causing a dramatic drop in demand for services such as non-emergency healthcare, bars, restaurants, entertainment or travel and accommodation services. Because of this unprecedented pandemic, assumptions forming the basis of current business models were rapidly overturned, as all aspects of current operating certainty disappeared. This change in circumstances paved the way for new assumptions and business projections, and called for a thorough rethinking and radical pivoting of established business models<sup>20</sup>.

COVID19 has indeed traumatized some types of businesses, but it has also created dire demand for other services and specific commodities, re-mapping the overall economic paradigm. However, not all types of businesses had remodeled their production lines because it was not a feasible alternative for some businesses, particularly because it entailed a high level of risk-taking. Henceforth, to endure times of crisis, flexibility and risk-taking are to be endorsed from enterprises' part, either through searching for new business channels and marketing techniques, or through altering the nature of offered services.

Women's cooperatives are deemed to be small and medium-sized social enterprises (SMEs) that adhere to social and solidarity economy principles. They prioritize social solidarity and cooperation over private or individual accumulation of capital. This collective ownership and managing of cooperative spaces make it hard for members to take the decision of shifting or pivoting productive lines during times of crises, especially since vast numbers of women suffer from product promotion. In their research about challenges and barriers to female entrepreneurship in the region of *Daraa-Tafilalt*; Belhorma and Aourarh (07, 08) found that the major hurdle to female cooperative members and female entrepreneurs' development was linked to marketing skills and training<sup>21</sup>. By actual fact, the scarcity of marketing training

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<sup>20</sup> Manolova, Tatiana S., et al. "Pivoting to stay the course: How women entrepreneurs take advantage of opportunities created by the COVID-19 pandemic." *International Small Business Journal* 38.6 (2020): 481-491. pp.3-4.

<sup>21</sup> Souad Belhorma and Hajar Aourarh, "Challenges and Barriers to Women's Entrepreneurship Experience from Morocco", *International Journal of Business & Economic Strategy*, 7 (2018), p. 8.

and official business support are factors that explain why different small businesses remain in a stagnant economic situation as it lacks the necessary marketing mechanisms that fit a quickly evolving and developing market.

This research comes to fill an important gap in the literature regarding the multiple hardships that faced Moroccan women working in cooperatives during covid19 spread. The pandemic has had severe social and economic impacts on several individuals working in big, medium, and small businesses. Women's cooperatives were no exception, as they faced panoply of perturbations that inhibited their functioning during the sanitary crisis and thus negatively impacted their adherents. Addressing the role of cooperatives in the shaping of Moroccan women's livelihoods in the midst of the COVID19 crisis is what this research tries to contribute to as academic strives to gauge the efficiency of social and solidarity economy principles in times of crisis. This will be methodologically achieved through an attempt to answer the following research questions: 1. what are the various socio-economic effects of COVID 19 on women working in cooperatives? 2. How did cooperatives, as social economic spaces, meet the needs of their members during and after the lockdown? 3. To what extent did women's cooperatives change their business strategies?

## **2. Methodology**

Attempting to gain a thorough understanding of the pandemic's effects on cooperatives as representative of social and solidarity economy necessitates a solid methodological paradigm that allows for a genuine demystification of the research problem. A qualitative research design was used in this study to gain a thorough understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data from female participants. This sample was chosen through purposive and non-probability sampling of five main cooperatives, with a total of 31 participants from

Errachidia's urban and rural provinces. This study included two major types of women cooperatives: bread and bakery products in addition to traditional *Haik*<sup>22</sup> and embroidered products. After setting appointments with cooperative managers, the researchers visited these cooperatives in person between April and May 2022 and had 20 to 30 minutes interviews with women working in these cooperatives.

Interview guides were translated from English into Arabic to facilitate communication with women who were given the opportunity to speak and narrate their experiences with COVID19 even if they deviated from the main asked questions as this technique provided numerous emerging stories and experiences that were worth telling. Free consent was asked from women to sit for interviews, and the researchers promised that anonymity and research ethics will be respected as declared in the interview guide. Subsequently, the interviews were analyzed through content analysis techniques especially transcription, thematic coding, and analysis.

### 3. Results

This section summarizes the main findings of the fieldwork. Attempting to shed light on the experiences of women cooperatives during the sanitary crisis revealed a set of findings and answers to the main research problem. The research questions revolved around the various socioeconomic impacts of COVID 19 on women working in cooperatives, as well as how women's cooperatives responded to the pandemic in terms of business management and marketing strategies.

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<sup>22</sup> *Haik* refers to a traditional/religious garment that women wear in different North African countries particularly Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. It covers the whole body and sometimes even the face. Women used to wear it when entering the public sphere (streets) which once was dominated by men.

- *Cooperatives' profile*

The table below illustrates some of the main characteristics of the research sample. The table demonstrates the whereabouts of the contacted women's cooperatives, the number of female participants, and it also displays that the majority of cooperative managers were females. The table also summarizes the different products that these cooperatives yield.

**Table 1: List of cooperatives, locations, participants, and products**

Cooperatives	Location	Number of participants	Manager	Products
C1	Errachidia (city)	6	Female	Bread, cookies, couscous.
C2	Mdaghra (village)	7	Female	Traditional texture ( <i>Haik</i> ).
C3	Titaf (village)	5	Female	Carpets, texture, embroider.
C4	Meski (village)	6	Female	Ceramics, weaving, ( <i>Haik</i> ).
C5	Meski (village)	7	Female	Traditional bread, cookies, aromatized couscous.
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>5</b>	

- *Women's profile*

- **Geographical settings**

**Figure1: Women's location**

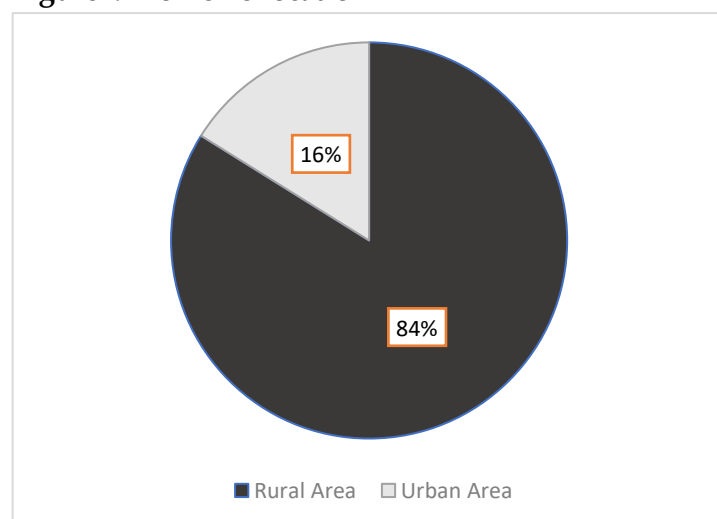


Figure 1 demonstrates that 84% of the contacted women work in cooperatives in the rural regions of Errachidia. In fact, the scarcity of economic activities and the geographical and cultural aspects of villages are factors that



push women to create these women-owned and run business spaces to shield them against poverty and social marginalization, unlike in the urban space, where women find a number of formal and informal work opportunities from which they can gain revenues that cater for their needs. In fact, the economic instability and scarcity of income-generating activities in rural areas make cooperative work, as a representative of social and solidarity economy, the perfect answer for women's economic expectations.

### ➤ Women's tasks within Cooperatives

**Table 2: Women's positions within cooperatives**

HEAD	MANAGER	ACCOUNTANT	MEMBER	TOTAL
5	5	3	18	31

It is apparent from table 2 that women perform a variety of tasks within cooperatives. The research sample of this study was made up of 100% female members. These adherents had multiple tasks to perform, however the majority of female members had both administrative as well as productive tasks. In fact, four (4) presidents/ heads out of five (5) performed both administrative communication and participated in the construction of merchandise by actively preparing the raw materials and contributing to the assembly of final products.

Women distribute tasks depending on their prior knowledge and intellectual capacities. Thus, illiterate women were at the bottom of the cooperative paradigm as they only performed arduous tasks related to preparing the raw materials and preparing the final products. Educated women, on the other hand, perform leadership communication roles and all the administrative and management work which gives them an ascendancy within the cooperatives unlike illiterate women. This finding has already been confirmed by previous studies, particularly Berriane (2011), Damamme (2014) and Pery *et al* (2018)<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Montanari, Bernadette, and Sylvia I. Bergh. "A gendered analysis of the income generating activities under the green Morocco Plan: who profits?" *Human Ecology* 47.3 (2019): 409-417.

### ➤ Social security or coverage

**Figure 2: Women who receive social security benefits (RAMED)<sup>24</sup>**

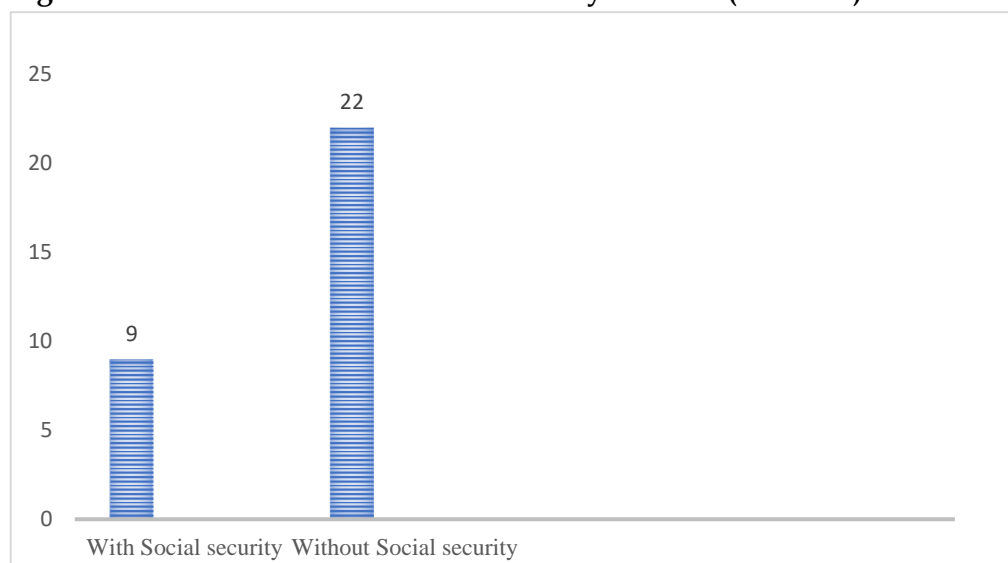


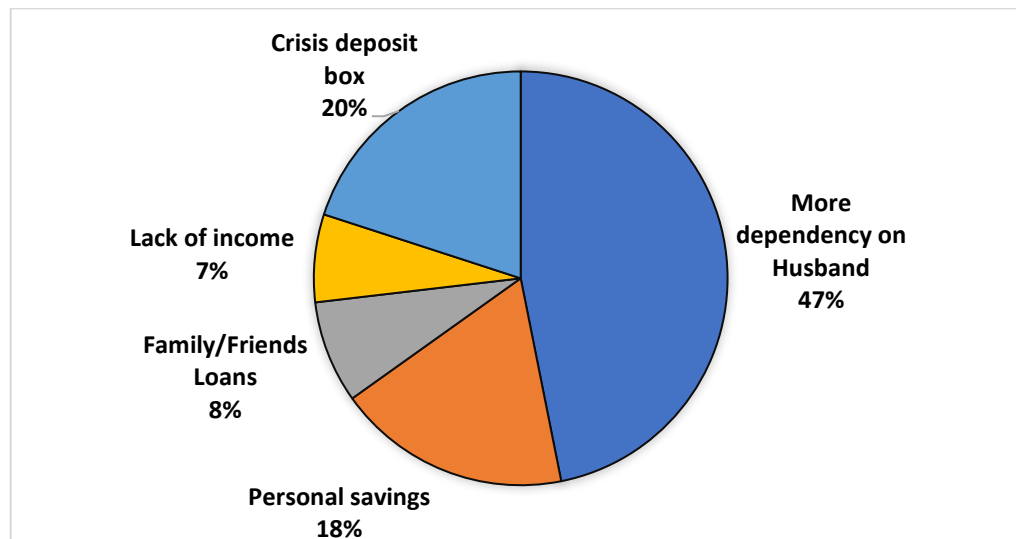
Figure 2 demonstrates that the majority of women, particularly those living in rural areas, do not benefit from any type of social coverage. Women without social security, particularly RAMED, did not benefit from State grant-in-aid aimed at people affected by COVID 19 spread. Nonetheless, women who benefited from this assistance expressed their dissatisfaction, claiming that the endowment was insufficient to meet their needs. As they have stated, they used to receive more income prior to the spread of COVID 19, but when the crisis hit, their income decreased and the state donation was insufficient. This fact demonstrates how social and solidarity economies provide these women with some economic autonomy. The majority of women reported that the money they earned prior the pandemic has served them well to the extent that they made savings for future expenses. Nevertheless, as the pandemic stroke, and with the decrease in terms of the cooperatives' economic activities, women found themselves in an unprecedented situation that has turned their lives upside down.

<sup>24</sup> RAMED refers to a type of medical assistant/social security that the Moroccan state devote to poor and fragile social classes to provide them with free medical assistance in governmental hospitals. During the quarantine and the spread of COVID19, the Moroccan state allocated grant-in-aids to citizens with the RAMED social security.

- *COVID19 impacts on women working in cooperatives*

- **Sources of income during COVID19 Spread**

**Figure 3: Women's main sources of income during the crisis**



As illustrated in Figure 3, the crisis has increased women's reliance on their husbands and entourage. Women, in fact, felt double pressure. The first was related to cooperatives' meager income during the crisis, which had depleted their usual monthly or weekly income. The second pressure is the outcome of the first. Women's contributions to the household alleviated some of the burdens that husbands had to bear alone. When women's contributions ceased, problems began to emerge and quarrels between spouses were inevitable. Indeed, 20% of women had an anticipatory vision. These women created what they referred to as “crisis deposit box”<sup>25</sup> which constituted the main economic alternative during COVID 19 spread. 18% of women relied on their personal savings to provide for their families and sometimes for the cooperatives. 7% of women faced serious challenges with a total absence of income.

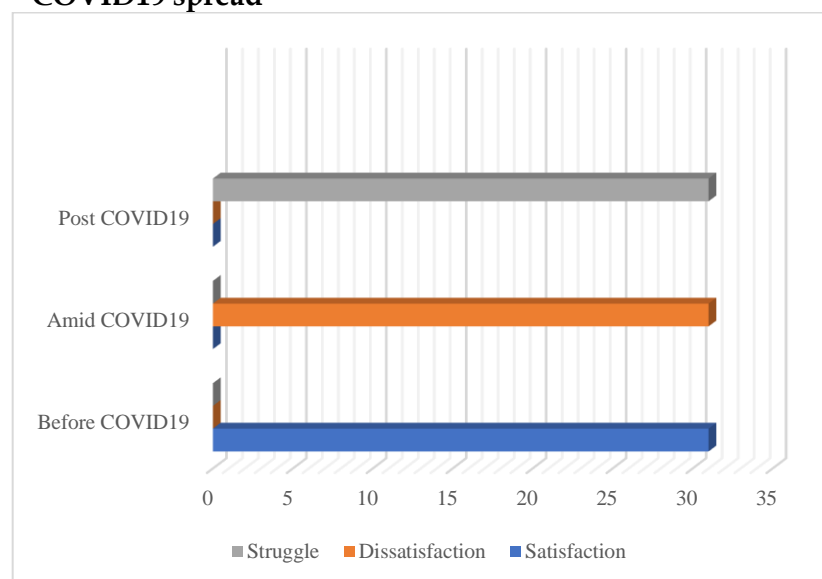
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<sup>25</sup> One of the five cooperative heads stated that since the creation of their cooperative, women suggested the creation of a crisis deposit box in which women contribute on a monthly basis. This monetary box is used when the cooperative or members face any kind of difficulty or an emerging situation.

Women's experiences with the sanitary crisis revealed a slew of shared experiences that all intersected. COVID 19 has indeed magnified women's suffering and dependency. Women were economically productive prior to the pandemic by actively contributing to their households, providing for their families, and saving money for future expenses. However, as the virus spread, work ceased and income diminished, increasing women's dependency and marginalization. The next part will represent and discuss women's attitudes towards their economic situation prior, amid and post the COVID 19 spread.

➤ **Women's perspectives on their financial situations pre, amid and post the COVID19 spread**

**Figure 4: women's attitudes vis-à-vis their economic situation before, amid, and post COVID19 spread**



Actually, prior to the pandemic, all interviewees expressed a degree of satisfaction with their income. They have all agreed that cooperatives benefit their households by providing "quasi-stable" income. Their economic situation was somehow stable as they could provide for their families and share the expenses and burdens with their husbands. Certainly, social and solidarity economy provided these women a margin of economic stability through which they feel safe and have a value within their family circle.

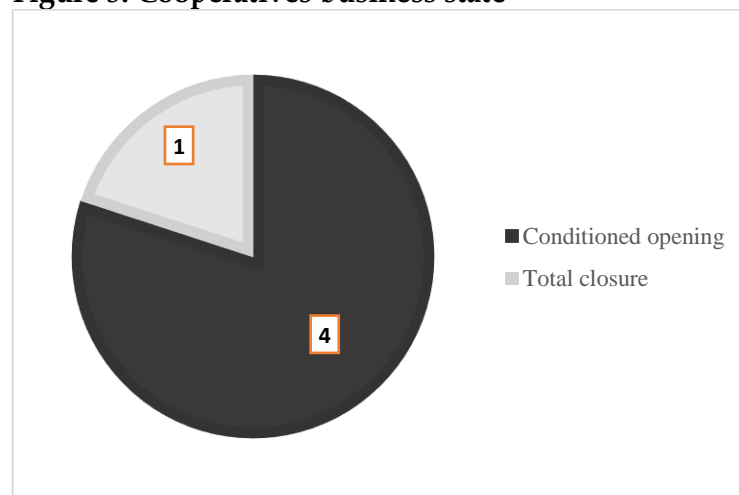
Nonetheless, the majority of women have expressed complete dissatisfaction with their economic circumstances in the midst of the crisis, particularly because cooperative revenue has decreased, affecting women's wages. Women stated that it was extremely difficult for them to cope with the COVID 19 confinement and all of its severe economic burdens, particularly since income ceased while expenses remained constant.

Women's responses to the post COVID19 situation have all approved that cooperatives are still struggling, mainly because national and international economies have not fully recovered from the severe crisis's aftermaths. Women also reported that the fluctuations of national and international economies are affecting their cooperative entities, especially with inflation and the rise of prices, which hurt their purchasing power. *"Things are no more the same"*, reported one of the heads of the cooperatives. Within a turbulent economic environment, women are attempting to reposition themselves and find ways to revitalize their cooperatives. To do so, cooperatives had to respond to the pandemic spread either by stopping their activities or by finding alternative ways to sell their products. The next section will highlight cooperatives' answer to the crisis.

- **Cooperatives response to the crisis**

- **Total closure or conditioned opening!**

**Figure 5: Cooperatives business state**

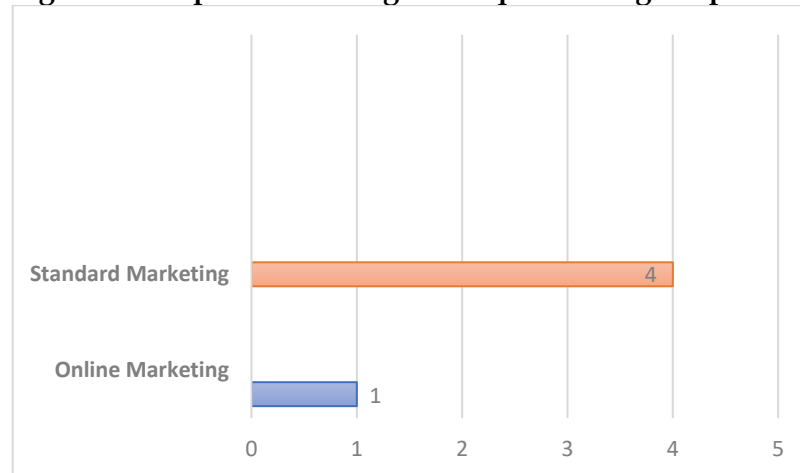


As revealed in figure 5, four cooperatives involved in this study did not totally stop their business activities. Yet, their functioning was restricted by a variety of conditions, such as social distancing, limited work hours, and continuous sterilization. The normal business settings were not met during these circumstances, which has caused productivity diminution and affected income value. Nevertheless, one cooperative stopped totally due to the pandemic and could not cope with the overall emerging situation. Women in this association found themselves facing an unprecedented crisis that intensified their ordeal. Cooperatives that produced daily necessities such as traditional bread and cookies continued to operate, but they reported that product demand was lower than before COVID 19.

➤ **Shifting marketing techniques**

Because of the pandemic, women's cooperatives were forced to change their marketing strategies and find new modern and online-based ways to sell their products. The majority of cooperatives in this study, however, did not change their marketing tactics and did not have the resources nor the training to engage in online marketing. However, one cooperative worked hard to find new ways to sell their products on the Facebook Marketplace, WhatsApp, and other traditional online platforms. Changing business models and marketing styles through virtually mediated platforms, on the other hand, was not an option for the majority of women's cooperatives, particularly those in rural areas, for several reasons. First, the majority of women lack the necessary skills and materials for online marketing. Second, because computer-mediated business requires additional fees, such as Wi-Fi and advertising fees, which women cannot afford, particularly in a pandemic branded environment.

**Figure 6: Adopted marketing techniques during the pandemic**



#### **4. Discussion**

Prior research regarding women's cooperatives (Faysse et al (2012), Aomar and Amaghous (2014), Montanari and Bergh (2018; 2019), has all emphasized the critical role that women's cooperatives play in improving and boosting women's conditions, particularly in rural areas. However, with emerging social, economic, and sanitary crises, women who work in cooperatives have encountered a number of potential barriers to their advancement. With the spread of COVID19, women working in cooperatives faced unprecedented challenges that turned their lives upside down. While reviewing the literature, many discussions were held about the importance of social and solidarity economies in promoting women's livelihoods. However, little is known about the situation of cooperatives in the midst of crises, particularly with the distressing spread of COVID 19 in Morocco generally, and in the Errachidia regions particularly.

#### ***COVID19 socio-economic impacts on women working in cooperatives***

The initial goal of this research was to assess the various socioeconomic effects of the pandemic on women working in cooperatives. One intriguing finding was an increase in reliance on husbands. Many women reported being

unable to provide for their families as cooperative income ceased or decreased. According to Saida, a member of one of the cooperatives:

*I used to provide for the household and help my husband with house expenses, especially rent, electricity, and water bills, but once the cooperative income ceased due to the pandemic; problems and quarrels started to arise.*

Indeed, it is worth noting that dependency implies discrimination. The majority of women reported that their socioeconomic situation had deteriorated significantly during the pandemic in terms of income, psychological stability, and overall socioeconomic condition. A significant number of participants agreed that the pandemic had exacerbated their situation in a variety of ways. Initially, because most cooperatives are located in rural areas where economic activities are scarce, women in the rural parts of Errachidia resorted to informal work activities, particularly paid housework. Indeed, interviewees claimed that informal work entailed laborious exploitation with low pay. Nonetheless, women were forced to accept such working conditions because cooperatives, which were their primary source of income, provided no viable alternatives. In this vein, Naima, a woman who lost her husband during the pandemic, said:

*I lost my husband because of the virus. My whole life has changed since that moment. He left me with hungry mouths to feed. The cooperative alone couldn't cater for our needs. It was a real challenge for me. I was desperate.*

It is also worth mentioning that women used their personal savings or sought loans from friends and family to deal with the sudden economic disruptions caused by the COVID 19 spread. Loans have become a heavy burden for women working in cooperatives, especially since they relied heavily on a single source of income generated by cooperatives. What was particularly intriguing was that one of the five contacted cooperatives had a 'crisis deposit box.' Actually, women in this cooperative used to contribute to this deposit box on a monthly basis through voluntary savings. When the pandemic struck and



income was depleted, women in this cooperative resorted to previous savings to provide for their families and the cooperative's expenses. In this regard, Fatima who is the manager of this cooperative, reports:

*As an act of solidarity, women working in our cooperative had the idea of creating a deposit box in which women contribute voluntarily on a monthly basis. This box was of great help to us during the confinement particularly, and the pandemic generally, as we resorted to it when the cooperative income ceased, it was a real saver.*

The numerous costs associated with cooperatives also exacerbated women's torment during the pandemic. Women were required to pay rent, electricity, water bills, raw materials, and a variety of other expenses. Female members, according to multiple interviewees, had no income and were indebted to their relatives and families, but they also had an abundance of economic responsibilities towards the cooperatives. As a result, the cooperative space became an additional burden for women who were trying to save a collapsing business that had long catered to their needs. Aziza, head of a Haik and weaving cooperative, reports in this regard:

*We had an oral business contract with a particular hotel to provide a given number of traditional carpets. We deployed all of our resources and energy to finish on time because it was a great opportunity for us to earn some real money. However, as the pandemic hit and influenced the tourism sector in our region, the hotel manager called us and cancelled the deal. We were left with carpets, and a lot of loans.*

When asked to compare their socioeconomic situations before, during, and after the spread of COVID19, all interviewees ended up giving similar answers. Women were able to generate 'quasi-stable' income prior to the pandemic, which reduced their economic dependency, alleviated poverty and exclusion, and provided them with a sense of stability. Regrettably, women's experiences during and after the pandemic revealed an increase in vulnerability and marginalization. Women testified that COVID19 had and continues to have

demoralizing impacts on their economic well-being, and that they are still attempting to recover from its drastic consequences.

Overall, the pandemic has magnified the plight of women working in cooperatives. Their experiences appeared to be similar; nevertheless, women in rural areas were hit hard by the pandemic as they lived and worked in a space distinct by characteristics of rurality and marginalization. Access to urban areas necessitated additional transportation costs as well as severe exploitation in informal work. The absence of any real state support to cooperatives during the crisis ossified the chasm between rural and urban women. Notwithstanding this, the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic was disproportionately felt by women living in the periphery rather than the center. Rural cooperatives are working hard to reclaim their previous working conditions because it is the only way to revitalize and boost a long-lost women's socioeconomic stability.

### *Cooperatives' response to the pandemic*

Cooperatives responded differently to the pandemic, and this was due to the nature of the products that they provide. The majority of cooperatives did not totally stop their services. In fact, cooperatives that vended daily necessary substances such as bread, couscous, cookies, etc. continued to offer their services even within a stifling atmosphere that reduced their working hours and reduced the number of women who could access the cooperative space under rigid conditions. However, cooperatives that produced *Haik*, embroider, carpets, and other weaving products continued their work because if they did not, raw materials, especially wool, would have rotted. One of the managers of a *Haik* cooperative reported the following:

*Stopping our activities was not a rational choice. Our products are made up of wool which is a substance that rots easily, we had huge amounts of wool, so we were obliged to work even amidst the pandemic as if we didn't, we would have lost an important raw material to worms.*

Despite the fact that Haik cooperatives did not earn any money or sell any products during the pandemic, they were forced to work due to the nature of the used raw materials. Cooperative labor did not benefit women financially, but they needed to continue working to safeguard raw materials.

Another significant finding regarding cooperative responses to the pandemic was that cooperative members were unable to shift or alter their marketing techniques due to women's illiteracy and a lack of digital marketing training. Indeed, cooperatives rely heavily on traditional marketing and face-to-face trade. When the pandemic spread, cooperatives, particularly those selling Haik, embroidered, and embellished products, were unable to sell their products on online platforms. Cooperative leaders testified that the state provided no official trainings and that even if the ministry had decided to train women, it would have been difficult given that the majority of women were illiterate. Some cooperatives relied on traditional social media platforms such as the Facebook Marketplace and WhatsApp, but they admitted that their online business ventures were unsuccessful. In this vein, Leila who is a member of a Haik cooperative argued:

*We have no trainings on how to sell our products on the internet, women here don't even know how to use mobile phones let alone use the internet. Some of us tried to use social media to sell and advertise our products but to no avail.*

When asked who their main customers were, women working in traditional craft cooperatives said it was both national and international tourists. Nonetheless, despite the opening of air borders between Morocco and the rest of the world, the number of tourists has decreased, negatively impacting cooperative income. This decline in tourism has had negative bearings on the economic situation of women's cooperatives, particularly those situated in touristic sites. Other COVID19 restraints on women's cooperatives included a decrease in product demand from hotels and other institutional customers.

Overall, cooperatives reacted to the pandemic in a variety of ways in order to adapt to the new social and economic circumstances imposed by COVID19. Women's stories revealed complexities about their experiences during the sanitary crisis. They have suffered greatly as a result of the lockdown and are still attempting to regain their previous status. All cooperative members attested to the critical role that cooperatives play in the making of their livelihoods, demonstrating that social and solidarity economy plays a vital role in enhancing the lives of too many disadvantaged segments of Moroccan society.

## **Conclusion**

This study looked into women's cooperatives as a representative of the social and solidarity economy to see what experiences women affiliated with cooperatives in Errachidia had during and after COVID19 spread. Results have demonstrated that despite all the deployed efforts by the Moroccan state and the Ministry of Tourism, Handicraft, Social, and Solidarity Economy, women cooperatives are still facing an array of hurdles. First, the rural/urban dichotomy is still intensifying women's plight in rural areas. Serious procedures must be taken to connect rural areas with urban ones through providing decent infrastructures and investments that target rural residents especially women. Second, women's cooperatives are still lagging behind when it comes to marketing techniques especially online business and e-commerce. Although the majority of women adherents to cooperatives are illiterate, the ministry needs to target each literate member within cooperatives and offer them trainings and workshops on how they can sell their products using online platforms. By so doing, women will have multiple ways to sell their products when pandemics spread, or simply as a way to vary their business techniques. Additionally, the study showed that women depend heavily on cooperatives as a main source of income. Therefore, these spaces must offer real alternatives

to women during times of crisis and discomfort. Women's cooperatives need to find ways to cater for members' needs during hard times through creating emergency deposit boxes or other money saving procedures that can be used whenever emerging situations befall.

Indeed, the Moroccan government must now strengthen the various forms of the social and solidarity economy through backup plans and economic legislation that go beyond the simple act of social coverage to more socially and economically protective plans that can cater to these workers' needs when cooperatives face certain crises. Holistic approaches and plans must be decreed to fight social and economic marginalization that Moroccan women face especially in rural areas where aspects of rurality ossify the chasm between rural and urban women. By so doing, rural women's rights to decent inclusion in the Moroccan job market will be guaranteed, and rural cooperatives will have backup plans to which they can resort in times of crisis. Genuine and sincere calls for democratization, human rights, and development must now take into account times when predicaments strike and vulnerable social classes, particularly women, are threatened by the lack of economic activities. Inclusive plans of action must be developed to revitalize and support economic projects that serve the needs of a large number of Moroccan families in both the formal and informal sectors. These plans must also transcend the mere acts of theorizing for change to more concrete and achievable goals that link the rural with the urban and alleviate the existing disparities between these two spaces.

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## Annex

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

**Title of research project:**

**Addressing the role of Women's cooperatives amidst COVID 19 pandemic:  
what do we really know?**

**RESEARCH INVESTIGATORS:**

**AAMOU zakaria, PhD Student**

**Polydisciplinary Faculty of Errachidia- Moulay Ismail University**

**Belhorma Souad, Associate Professor**

**Polydisciplinary Faculty of Errachidia- Moulay Ismail University**

Cooperative name: .....

Participant: .....

Objective: The objective of this interview is to get insights into the economic/social situation of women working in cooperatives in the area of Errachidia amid and post COVID19 spread. It is part of research on Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) and its role in times of crisis.

Free Consent: The interview will take approximately 20 minutes. We do not anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, however, you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time. All of your answers will be used in an anonymous manner. No names, titles, or any kind of information that would reveal your identity will be revealed. We really appreciate your participation in this research project.

### Guiding Questions

#### Women's profile

How long have you been working in this cooperative?

.....

What is your role in the cooperative?

.....

What task(s) you perform in the cooperative?

.....

How is the cooperative improving your life?

.....

How does the money you earn contribute to the household?

.....

Do you have any other source(s) of income apart from the cooperative?

.....

Are you benefiting from any type of social protection/coverage?

What about medical insurance/coverage RAMED?

COVID19 effect on women working in Cooperatives:

How would you describe your social/economic situation during the lockdown?

\*Do you think that COVID19 intensified your economic ordeal and social marginalization?

How would you describe your economic/social situation before, amid, and post COVID19?

Cooperatives response to the crisis:

Did the cooperative stop totally?

If yes, did you find ways to generate income during the pandemic?

Did you manage to sell your commodities/products during the pandemic?

After two years of COVID19's devastating economic and social effects, can we say that you have recovered or do you believe that you are still struggling?

How did you recover from the severe impacts of COVID19?

Do you think that cooperatives offer real solutions to meet your economic demands especially in times of crisis?



## Chapter 6. The African integration dynamics under threat of the Covid-19 pandemic

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Ngangué E. Nsagha

### Introduction

Progress of the African integration dynamics has been an ongoing aspiration for the continent since the early 1960s. This aspiration has been laid-out in key regional strategic vision documents, notably in the likes of the African Union Agenda 2063 - The Africa We Want. In Africa, just like everywhere else, integration is popularly viewed as a tool for bringing together communities, promoting economic growth and sustainable development, and improving the living standards of the people in general (Karingi, 2016). Having this in mind, it would easily be deduced that there should no longer be any need for a debate on the imperative for the acceleration of the regional integration dynamics on the continent, which, unfortunately, is not the case. Many socio-politics and economic history sources demonstrate that regional integration is a necessity for political stability and sustainable socioeconomic development (Karingi, 2016). It is, in this context, that the African Union Heads of State and Government have continued, to a certain degree, to pursue these regional integration dynamics as an overarching continental development strategy; further concretized on 1th January 2021 by the launch of the Single Market initiative of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement at its headquarter in Accra-Ghana.

It is in this drive that, in 1991 African Heads of State and Government signed the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (AEC), which lays down the guiding principles, and the goals, as well as a region-wide framework for the integration agenda of the continent. Other initiatives worth mentioning include the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963; the launch in 2000 of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD); and the adoption of the African Union Constitutive Act in 2001 (Bach, 2016). To this, we can equally add, the AU decision in 2006 on the rationalization of the RECs, which placed a moratorium on the recognition of new RECs<sup>26</sup>. This was with the hope of addressing the challenges arising from multiple memberships in the RECs by strengthening their coordination and harmonization processes, to accelerate the dynamics of the African integration drive (Karingi, 2016).

Despite the progress achieved by some AU member states and RECs, several countries are still faced with difficulties in implementing the regional integration agenda in general (Bach, 2016). Thus, the weak productive capabilities, lack of technological sophistication, insufficient and inadequate infrastructures, as well as, weak institutional capacities will still need to be addressed urgently. For this, a continued political commitment by the African leadership is key if the continent is to capitalize on its regional integration achievements (Vanheukelom and Byiers, 2016). It is thus in this light that the Minimum Integration Programme (MIP) comes in handy, as an important initiative that is composed of a set of activities, projects, and programs that the RECs have elected to accelerate and bring to completion the regional and continental integration processes<sup>27</sup>. The MIP key priority areas included: trade and market integration, free movement of persons, and infrastructural development; all being core areas of the African integration dynamics that were

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<sup>26</sup> See Decision on the moratorium on the Recognition of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) Doc. EX.CL/278 (IX), at <https://archives.au.int/bitstream/handle/123456789/938/Assembly%20AU%20Dec%20112%20%28VII%29%20E.PDF?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>, consulted on 11-06-2022.

<sup>27</sup> See <https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/32825-file-minimumintegrationprogrammeeng.pdf>, consulted on 11-06-2022.

greatly impacted following the devastating outbreak of the highly contagious Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on the African continent. The advent of the COVID-19 Pandemic, instead of causing greater cooperation towards the realization of the African integration dynamics, unfortunately, has exposed the isolationist tendencies of some AU member states; hence, the urgent need for a reliable integrated health system for sustainable solutions in the event of any future epidemics or pandemics of such magnitude on the continent.

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is caused by the *severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2)*. This virus was first reported from Wuhan city in China in December 2019, in less than three months had spread throughout the globe and was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020 (Ahmad, 2020). On 14 February 2020, COVID-19 was detected in Africa for the first time, when the Minister of Health and Population of Egypt, Dr. Hala Zayed, confirmed the first case in Egypt<sup>28</sup>. In her statement, Dr. Hala Zayed declared that the confirmed case was a male patient, aged 33 years old, of foreign origin and was held in an isolation center in Egypt, while all those who had come in contact with him were also under surveillance (Nkengasong, 2020).

This study's quest, therefore, endeavors to shed light on how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the solidarity or protectionist tendencies of African states, and their ambitions for continental integration goals, especially as the pandemic greatly tested nation-states' resolve toward the goals of Agenda 2063 for an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa. The study is informed by the New Institutional Economics (Neo-Institutionalism) theory of Douglas C. North<sup>29</sup>, as it holds the claim that institutions are constraints devised by people and imposed on their socio-politico-economic behavior,

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<sup>28</sup> See <https://africacdc.org/news-item/africa-identifies-first-case-of-coronavirus-disease-statement-by-the-director-of-africa-cdc>, consulted on 08-07-2022.

<sup>29</sup> According to Professor North's article, titled "Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance" which he wrote in 1990, he argues that 'institutions are constraints devised by people and imposed on their political, economic, and social behaviour; they include habits and customs as well as formal constraints such as laws.

analyzing the type of institutions put in place could be the opener to understanding the current state of the African integration dynamics before and after the COVID-19 Pandemic. As such, the study begins by apprehending the COVID-19 response strategies and the double-standard response from the international health system towards the African COVID-19 plights. Then further delving into the hindrances hampering the African integration drive towards a united front against the COVID-19 scares; and finally, expounding on an integrated health system framework for Africa. The collection of data for this analysis was mostly acquired from secondary data sources through peruse of documents on the subject matter.

### *The African COVID-19 Response Strategies on the Fringes of the Solidarity of the International Health System*

Over the last two decades, Africa has recorded a 4.6% growth rate on average, despite an unfavorable international economic and financial environment (Apollos, 2021). The current COVID-19 pandemic plunged the continent into its first recession in 25 years<sup>30</sup>. Faced with the disruption of global and regional supply chains due to government containment, restriction measures put in place to combat COVID-19, and the structural weaknesses inherent in African economies characterized by underdeveloped, fragmented small markets, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has once again exposed and exacerbated the vulnerability of African economies (Apollos, 2021). In the perspective of achieving the Agenda 2063 annual growth target of 7%, there is a growing consensus among the AU member states about the role African integration dynamics can play in fostering inclusive growth and structural transformation, notwithstanding the impact felt from the COVID-19 pandemic and the double-standard solidarity treatment witnessed from the international

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<sup>30</sup> See <https://www.tradeeconomics.com/iecpublication/an-african-perspective-on-growth-rate/> consulted on 08-07-2022.

health response system. For an appreciation of the role of the African integration dynamics in fostering inclusive growth and structural transformation, a consideration of, - the African response strategies in the fight against COVID-19, and - the magnitude of the inequalities induced by the COVID-19.

### *The Response Strategies to COVID-19 in Africa*

Unlike the 2002-2003 outbreak of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) epidemic, in which Africa was not directly impacted, COVID-19 has caused widespread illness and death in Africa. Departing from 2003, the volume, velocity, and variety of travel between the rest of the world and Africa had increased dramatically, which essentially was responsible for the initial and continuous introductions of infected persons from areas with COVID-19 transmission (Africa-CDC, 2020a). Africa's baseline vulnerability was also high, due to its relatively fragile health systems, concurrent epidemics of vaccine-preventable, and other infectious diseases, inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene infrastructure, population mobility, and susceptibility to social and political unrest during times of crisis (Africa-CDC, 2020a). One of the major factors that are taught to have mitigated deaths in Africa is its demography; more than 50 percent of the population is under 20 years of age, a group that has been relatively spared from illness and death outside of the continent; especially in Asia, the continent where the COVID-19 virus was first declared.

When the pandemic was initially declared, many African countries responded in ways similar to high-income countries; by closing-down major parts of their economy<sup>31</sup>. Unfortunately, these lockdowns severely impacted the continental integration dynamics by decreasing incomes and employment

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<sup>31</sup> See <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-stringency-index>, which captures countries' response to the pandemic including school and work closures, travel bans, and partial or full lockdowns.

and causing an increase in extreme poverty (Daniel Gerszon MAHLER et al., 2021). The highly contagious morbidity rate of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for African governments to strengthen social protection systems and fulfill people's rights to social security and an adequate standard of living. According to Mausi Segun, Africa Director at Human Right Watch:

*The COVID-19 crisis has wreaked havoc on the livelihoods of millions of households across Africa, leaving families hungry and desperate for help (...) African governments should urgently invest in the social protection systems needed to ensure that Africans can endure the pandemic's devastating economic impact with dignity*<sup>32</sup>.

According to the AfDB (2021), some African governments introduced measures like cash transfers and food assistance in response to the rising poverty and hunger occasioned by the pandemic, but this was not sustainable, for most households received no support. By June 2021, the World Bank forecasted that the Covid-19 crisis will push an additional 29 million Africans into extreme poverty by the end of 2021 (Daniel Gerszon MAHLER et al., 2021). Although the case-fatality for the diseases, in the beginning, remained low, a high percentage of the African population feared could be infected in the coming year, resulting in a large number of deaths, particularly in people with advanced age and/or underlying illnesses. From the rendition of the Africa Joint Continental Strategy for the COVID-19 outbreak<sup>33</sup>, the primary strategy for handling the outbreak was to limit transmission and minimize harm. Given that transmission throughout the continent was inevitable, delaying and diminishing the peak of outbreaks could help health systems better manage the surge of patients, and enable communities better adapt to the disruption of social, cultural, and economic activities. The tactics suggested to achieve this included -rapid diagnosis and isolation of infected persons- quarantine of

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<sup>32</sup> See Africa: Covid-19 Aid Falling Short at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/12/africa-covid-19-aid-falling-short> consulted on 11-06-2022.

<sup>33</sup> See <https://africacdc.org/download/africa-joint-continental-strategy-for-covid-19-outbreak/> consulted on 11-06-2022

people who had close contact with an infected person, and - social distancing within the general population (Africa-CDC, 2020a).

Still, following analysis from Africa-CDC (2020a), tactics to achieve the foregoing primary strategy included rapid diagnosis and isolation of infected persons, quarantine of people who had close contact with an infected person, and social distancing within the general population. Rigorous infection prevention and control practices were needed in healthcare facilities and other high-risk congregate settings, including schools and prisons. Limiting transmission and mitigating harm from COVID-19 required an all-of-government approach. Social unrest could result from healthcare facilities having insufficient capacity, stock-outs of essential food, medications, or other supplies, and resistance to social distancing policies that limit work, school, cultural events, and/or religious practice. Despite the World Health Organisation's (WHO) guidance to keep borders open to people and commodities, travel and trade restrictions became widespread in mid-January 2020 (Africa-CDC, 2020a). Unfortunately, these isolationist tendencies played on the continental integration dynamics in general, as they had devastating impacts on health, economies, and social stability in many African countries that depended solely on trade with neighbors and other non-African countries.

Furthermore, from a study by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNDO, 2020), of the twenty-three (23) countries sampled on the African continent, a vast majority (20) responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by implementing policy measures; only three (3) of these countries claimed that they have yet to take some kind of policy responses<sup>34</sup>. Similarly in this vane and as stated above, African countries adopted the same set of policy measures most commonly adopted by countries around the world, which could be grouped into four categories: **(1)** Measures to keep businesses working during the COVID-19 containment efforts: these measures included the introduction

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<sup>34</sup> See <https://www.unido.org/api/opentext/documents/download/19367489/unido-file-19367489> consulted on 18-06-2022.



of actions to ensure liquidity for businesses to tackle immediate cash-flow challenges and to support business continuity<sup>35</sup>; (2) measures to maintain employment during the COVID-19 containment efforts: these measures have been aimed at supporting job retention<sup>36</sup>; (3) measures to adapt businesses during the COVID-19 containment efforts: efforts to incentivize firms to shift to other means of doing business have been undertaken, for example, by improving their web presence, advertising via social media, enhancing customer service functions via phone and online, and engaging in e-commerce<sup>37</sup>, and (4) measures to reorient businesses after COVID-19 containment efforts: governments have also implemented measures that prepare businesses for the new post-COVID-19 economic conditions and realities<sup>38</sup> (Hartwich, F. and Isaksson, A., 2020).

Notwithstanding all these common measures, when COVID-19 first emerged, each nation's response looked a bit different. Africa notably appeared to be the stand-out during this state of emergency, surely following the early warnings from the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa-

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<sup>35</sup> This might include subsidizing publicly provided inputs, temporary debt relief, and compensation through special credit lines and guarantees, deferral of financial obligations, and, where possible, revisiting the conditions for firms to file for bankruptcy. Partial closures to accommodate fluctuations in demand may also be an option. Governments can defer the payment of taxes, duties, and other government fees.

<sup>36</sup> For instance, public health care systems have covered the wages of workers and employees who have to quarantine. Furthermore, temporary regulations have been introduced to prevent large-scale layoffs and alternative work arrangements, including short-term leave, telecommuting, and cost-sharing through partial salary adjustments.

<sup>37</sup> Policies have supported companies in the provision of higher workplace safety standards and better protection for workers. Moreover, governments have supported the private sector by increasing the procurement capacity of the healthcare system, its service delivery, and its ability to conduct research. To this end, funds have been established that provide grants and loans to businesses that produce the goods and services necessary to curb COVID-19 and to support the development of COVID-19-related (virtual) industrial clusters.

<sup>38</sup> Industrial development may follow a path of increased risk aversion to protect the foundations of domestic industries and be inclined to promote the production of essential goods (including food products, health care products, telecommunications technology, and inputs for local manufacturing). Medium-term policies have included the promotion of initiatives to secure the supply of such products given possible disruptions in global value chains. Firms will need to invest in new business processes and technological innovation. Governments can support these efforts by monitoring market conditions and developing indicators, allowing firms to quickly identify emerging market needs and changes in consumer behaviour. Governments could also provide public funding schemes to facilitate investment in internalizing production and establishing new supplier networks.



CDC)'s first Director, Dr. Nkengasong, in his call for vigilance, as he stated that: "Once this thing gets out of control, it will be very, very hard for our health systems to handle" (Pilling, 2020). While more affluent countries struggled to keep the disease under control, African nations were able to systematically mitigate the dire health crisis (Mission-to-Heal, 2020). According to data compiled by John Hopkins University, the continent, which has a population of more than one billion, by October 2020 had only about 1.5 million cases. That is, during this period, Africa recorded about 37,000 deaths, figures that are far lower when compared with roughly 580,000 in the Americas, 230,000 in Europe, and 205,000 in Asia<sup>39</sup>, with reported cases continuing to decline. Following a continental study by the Partnership for Evidence-based Response to COVID-19 (PERC)<sup>40</sup>, "The case-fatality ratio (CFR) for Covid-19 in Africa is lower than the global CFR, suggesting the outcomes have been less severe among African populations." So, what were some of the reasons responsible for this Africa's relatively low fatality rate?

To begin with, as the first case on the continent was confirmed in Egypt, with fears that the new virus could quickly overwhelm largely fragile health systems on the continent, most African governments took drastic measures to try and slow the spread of the virus. Public health measures like avoiding handshakes, frequent hand-washing, social distancing, and wearing face masks, were swiftly introduced. For the Global Development Commons (2020)<sup>41</sup>, a country like Lesotho, acted even before a single case was reported, by declaring an emergency, closing-down schools on 18 March 2020, before later moving into a three-week lockdown. It is only when this lockdown was lifted in early May 2020 that Lesotho had its first confirmed cases. Also, according to a PERC report, "With strict public health and social measures

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<sup>39</sup> John Hopkins University & Medicine, Coronavirus Resource Center. See <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>, consulted on 21-06-2022.

<sup>40</sup> Partnership for Evidence-Based Response to COVID-19 (PERC) is a public-private partnership that supports evidence-based measures to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on African Union Member States. See <https://preventepidemics.org/covid19/perc/> consulted on 21-06-2022.

<sup>41</sup> See <https://gdc.unicef.org/resource/coronavirus-africa-five-reasons-why-covid-19-has-been-less-deadly-elsewhere>, consulted on 05-07-2022.

implemented, African Union member states were able to contain the virus between March and May” (Soy, 2020). Still from this PERC survey, conducted in 18 countries, public support for safety measures was high; more than 85% of respondents said they wore masks in the previous week<sup>42</sup>.

The implementation of the restrictions came at a huge cost, and livelihoods were lost on a large scale; but as more and more countries resulted to re-open their economies, the number of cases became much higher than when they ordered the shutdowns. According to the (PERC-Report, 2021) report, public opinion about re-opening the economy was mixed as 06 in 10 respondents said economies needed to re-open, and believed that the risk of getting COVID-19 was minimal if social distancing rules were followed<sup>43</sup>.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, the age of the population in most African countries is also likely to have played a determining role in containing the spread of COVID-19. Globally, most of those who died were aged over 80, while Africa is home to the world's youngest population with a median age of 19 years<sup>44</sup>. In Africa, “the pandemic has largely been in younger age groups (...) about 91% of COVID-19 infection in sub-Saharan Africa are among people below 60 years and over 80% are asymptomatic” said the World Health Organization (Boakye-Agyemang, 2020). Apart from these pluses, Africa also boasts of favorable climate, confirmed by a study conducted by researchers from the University of Maryland in the US, who found a correlation between temperature, humidity, and latitude, and the spread of COVID-19. On this, the lead researcher, Mohammad Sajadi had this to say:

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<sup>42</sup> See <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2022-01/PERC-Finding-the-Balance-Part-III-12-May-2021.pdf> , consulted on 21-06-2022.

<sup>43</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>44</sup> Mo Ibrahim Foundation, (2020). Africa’s Youth: Action Needed Now to Support the Continent’s Greatest Asset. See <https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/sites/default/files/2020-08/international-youth-day-research-brief.pdf>, consulted on 21-06-2022.

*We looked at the early spread [of the virus] in 50 cities around the world. The virus had an easier time spreading in lower temperatures and humidity (...) Not that it doesn't spread in other conditions - it just spreads better when temperature and humidity drop (Carroll, 2020).*

Moreover, since Africa had been exposed to a series of health crises in the past, its community health systems were on high and constant alert, especially from the Ebola and Polio immunization campaigns that were ongoing in some countries of the continent. Notwithstanding this preparedness, the COVID-19 pandemic showed some marked inequalities in the double-standard response strategies by the international health system, and equally among the different countries as they fought to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on their population.

### ***The Magnitude of the Inequalities Induced by the COVID-19 Pandemic in Africa.***

To begin with, COVID-19 has not been an equal opportunity virus: it targets vulnerable people in poor health, and those whose daily lives constantly expose them to greater contact with others. This means, it goes disproportionately after the poor, who mostly are in poor countries. Around the world, there are marked differences in how the pandemic has been managed, both in terms of how successful countries have been in maintaining the health of their citizens and the economy, and in the magnitude of the inequalities on display. Many reasons can account for these differences, which are: the pre-existing state of health care and health inequalities; a country's preparedness and the resiliency of its economy; the quality of public response, including reliance on science and expertise; citizens' trust in government guidance; and how citizens balanced their individual "freedoms" to do as they please with their respect for others, recognizing that their actions generated externalities (Stiglitz, 2020).

Away from this *raison 'd'être'* in the preparedness and management of the COVID-19 crisis by countries, the COVID-19 pandemic has further reinforced the sad reality of the detrimental effects of Africa being over-reliant on western and international stakeholders to solve its health challenges, especially in using western solutions to Africa's health problems (Mutapi, 2021). This has made the continent suffer heavily from the global COVID-19 supply chain crisis. Competitive procurement by governments with deeper pockets hiked prices of vaccines while national export controls on essential commodities and raw materials had access to the international markets blocked<sup>45</sup>, thus hampering the response capabilities of the poorer countries, many of which unfortunately are found on the African continent.

This further exposed a much larger systemic problem, especially revealing that African countries relied heavily on western funding, products, and approaches within their health system strategies. This includes preventative and diagnostic measures developed for western societies and cultures as well as interventions developed and optimized in the west. The consideration of the international criteria for the autoimmune disease Lupus (Mutapi, 2021), is a good example illustrating this. Here, Mutapi (2021) showed that the *international criteria* for the disease Lupus were set using predominantly white patient samples and did not capture the uniqueness of the disease in black Africans.

Still, on another lane, common-sense warrants that for African countries to be reliant on donor funding would entail that the funder ultimately will have to determine their health goals and priorities. This is one of the reasons why many programs in Africa focused on a single disease therapy, such as HIV or Malaria. Though this approach could be credited by that it allows for easy impact evaluation and accountability, it nevertheless leads to health workers and other medical (health) service personnel to be accustomed to the management of only some chosen particular diseases.

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<sup>45</sup> See the interview by Strive Masiyiwa.

In a bit to remedy the aforementioned inequalities, a significant amount of research has been conducted on herbal medicines to identify active ingredients and mechanisms of action. But again, most have not yet undergone international standard clinical trials, hence, they are treated with suspicion and shoddiness by the international health management scheme.

Assuredly, this is a gap that needs to be filled, as these clinical trials will aptly serve the purpose if they are conducted from within Africa and on African patients, and not from without as is most often the case. Notwithstanding, the African Union should further insist for these drug and vaccine trials carried out in Africa to meet international standards, to avoid repeating historical ethical concerns on their correctness.

The WHO initiative in disseminating training and technical know-how on how to produce vaccines from the global mRNA technology transfer hub in South Africa could adhere to these criteria. This should be motivated by the consideration that the genetic, co-morbidity and cultural disease risk factors in Africans differ from those elsewhere on the globe. For illustration, some Africans are more likely to carry concurrent infectious diseases such as parasitic worms and malaria, possibly in conjunction with an illness like HIV as an underlying condition (Ahmad, 2020). Another common scenario is that many women, in the rural parts of the continent, still prefer to deliver their babies with the help of traditional birth attendants. Moreover, countries must create a permissive environment to support research and innovation, which could include intellectual property and medicines controls policies, as well as the presence of competitive markets.

## *Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the African Integration Dynamics, amid Solidarity and Isolationism*

As mentioned thereof, the COVID-19 pandemic led to the postponement of the launch of the Single Market initiative of the AfCFTA Agreement from 01 July 2019 to 01 January 2021. In general, it further worsened progress on the following five dimensions of regional economic integration: *(i)* free movement of people; *(ii)* macroeconomic integration; *(iii)* trade integration; *(iv)* productive integration, and *(v)* infrastructure integration (AfDB, 2021a). Inherent in these dimensions are a series of hindrances that have played on the efficient and collective COVID-19 response strategy on the continent. Hence, to better apprehend the challenges occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic to the African integration dynamics, a few of the foregoing dimensions will be considered under the following causes: *(i)* the fortification and resurgence of national borders; *(ii)* the lack of funding and inadequate infrastructural development; and *(iii)* the overall impact of the COVID-19 crisis and its exposure of the fragile nature of the African integration dynamics, dangling between solidarity and isolationist tendencies.

### *The Fortification and Resurgence of National Borders*

The endgame of any integration objective will be unattainable, except there exists the free movement of people and other factors of production. To render this plausible, and make integration and cooperation successful in Africa, the AU had institutionalized and promulgated the Kigali Protocol, otherwise known as the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment. Unfortunately, since its institution from January 2018 to date, only 32 signatories and 04 ratifications have been registered so far, and at least 15 ratifications are still awaited for the protocol to finally come into

force. The survival of this Protocol received an even harder blow with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially as it forced many African states to close their borders. Even though the movement of some goods continued, albeit slowly. The closing or resurgence of state borders posed a mammoth challenge for people transiting countries, as well as, it exerted dire consequences on migrant workers and small/medium-sized businesses (Steinwehr, 2020).

Furthermore, following the signing of the AfCFTA initiative in Kigali-Rwanda on 21 March 2018, the notion of open borders and that of a common African passport should equally have become a reality; regrettably, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic caused 43 of the 54 states in Africa to close their borders as a result (Africa-CDC, 2020a). The consequences for the continent, especially the long-term effects on its continental integration dynamics, could hardly be estimated.

On this, the African Union had warned that border closures for people and goods could have a “(...) devastating effect on the health, economy and social stability of many African states” (Karim, 2022), that highly rely on cooperation with their neighbors. The restricted transportation of goods is only one of the negative outcomes of border closures. Especially as “Africa is heavily dependent on the mobility of its workforce, as mobility is part of everyday life for most Africans”, explains Robert Kappel, Professor Emeritus of the Institute for African Studies at the University of Leipzig. He goes further to highlight how challenging the process of integration will become, especially “(...) right now, that workforce is stuck in place”<sup>46</sup>. Integration is what enables citizens to go somewhere else for a while, work, earn income and send it to their families; acquire and bring back skills, and create networks across borders.

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<sup>46</sup> See <https://www.wifa.uni-leipzig.de/en/sept-competence-center/newsdetail/artikel/learn-more-about-africas-employment-challenges-with-prof-dr-robert-kappel-professor-emeritus-from-leipzig-university-and-university-of-hamburg>, consulted on 04-07-2022.

Steinwehr holds that according to *The Economist*, the longer mobility is restricted, the more African states will suffer from reduced economic growth (Steinwehr, 2020); as this will directly impact the required funding needed to fund local developmental projects capable of assisting the population build resilience against the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### ***The Furthering of the Lack of Funding and Infrastructural Development Inadequacy***

Faced with the dire impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, a research study undertaken by (UNDO, 2020), in which African policy deciders were asked about the most critical issues that they were facing in the performance of their work; apparently, the biggest challenge that emerged by far was the lack of budgetary resources<sup>47</sup>.

A situation that does not come as a surprise, especially as funding has always posed a major challenge for most, if not all, state budgets in Africa; regardless of whether the country was hardly impacted by COVID-19 or not. In better-off countries out of the continent, most governments spent about 10% of their GDP on mitigation measures, while the corresponding figures in emerging economies and the least underdeveloped nations are 03% and 01% of GDP, respectively (Hartwich, F. and Isaksson, A., 2020).

Even though crisis management is not new to Africa, clearly the COVID-19 pandemic was different and deeper than the previous crisis, and as such most African governments lacked the means to adequately respond to it. This was further exacerbated by another potentially serious challenge which is the absence of adequate infrastructural facilities.

No dynamic regional integration can happen without adequate infrastructure. In our highly technological world, strong economic links in trade, finance, production, and social development depend on well-designed,

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<sup>47</sup> See [unido-file-19367489](#), consulted on 18-06-2022.



well-connected infrastructure. The issue of infrastructural development on the African continent is its unequal characteristic and is considered one of the main hindrances to the integration dynamics on the continent.

According to the African Regional Integration Index (2022)<sup>48</sup>, on measuring the level of infrastructural development, Africa scores only 0.220 out of 1. Many of its countries score near zero and the infrastructural development of a staggering 31 countries makes them be considered as poorly integrated. Only 11 African countries have infrastructure that is moderately well integrated into their region (ARII, 2022). South Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia, Chad, and Niger have the least integrated infrastructure on the continent: all score near zero on the ARII index. Somalia, South Sudan, Niger, and Chad also have the least developed infrastructure as measured by the AfDB's Infrastructure Development Index<sup>49</sup>.

As an illustration, Eritrea's weakness lies in its poor flight connections within the continent (AfDB, 2018a). Furthermore, on this initiative aimed at opening Africa's skies, only 28 African countries signed the Single African Air Transport Market (ARII, 2022). As such, following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and in a bid to contain the spread and the multifaceted impacts of the pandemic, African governments gave priority to their spending commitment mainly focusing on vaccinating their population and building resilience, accordingly increasing their recurrent expenditures (Huaxia, 2022). This, therefore, implied that the increase in African countries' COVID-19-related expenditure had to further impact the annual gap in infrastructure investment in the short to medium term.

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<sup>48</sup> See [Infrastructural integration - Africa Regional Integration Index \(integrate-africa.org\)](https://integrate-africa.org/), consulted on 26-06-2022.

<sup>49</sup> The Africa Infrastructure Development Index (AIDI) provides consolidated and comparative information on the status and progress of infrastructure development in African countries. The index is designed to serve as a tool for analysts, policy-makers, and investors alike.

## *The Overall Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Hitherto Fragile African Integration Dynamics*

Overall, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the fragile nature of the cooperative cohesion underlying the African integration ambition. In short, COVID-19 has had a profound impact on the continent's integration efforts. Moono Mupotola, Director of Regional Development and Regional Integration at the African Development Bank (AfDB), warned against this absence of cooperation in the fight against COVID-19 in the following remark:

*The collective response to this pandemic will determine how quickly the content will return to its hitherto laid down integration plans. A failure of this will expose the risk of reversing the regional integration gains achieved over the years (Mupotola, 2020).*

Furthermore, and in line with the preceding remarks, the COVID-19 crisis equally presents an opportunity for Africa to hasten its integration agenda, especially owing to the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Many regional member countries' economies are under severe strain, and economic activity, in general, has been disrupted with key sectors bearing the brunt of the pandemic (Mupotola, 2020).

The tourism-related industries such as travel, conferencing, hospitality, and entertainment services have been severely affected. For most industries and other parts of the economy, the recovery path simply seems arduous. Of the five regional integration dimensions<sup>50</sup> that the Africa Regional Integration Index (ARII) uses to measure how well each country and region in Africa is integrated with its neighbours (ARII, 2022), the continent in general is performing poorly on productive and infrastructural integration (AfDB, 2021b). These two dimensions are very important for the remaining three

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<sup>50</sup> The Africa Regional Integration Index (ARII) uses sixteen indicators, grouped into five dimensions to measure the state of regional integration for the continent as a whole. These five regional integration dimensions include; trade integration, production integration, macroeconomics integration, infrastructural integration, and the free movement of people. See [Dimensions - Africa Regional Integration Index \(integrate-africa.org\)](https://integrate-africa.org/), consulted on 04-07-2022.

dimensions (that is, trade, macroeconomics, and movement of people) to function properly. To improve productive integration, it is recommended the prioritization of the development of regional value chains, and technological advancement, among others. Tackling non-tariff barriers and increased investment in research and development are key if the continent is to be competitive. There is equally a need to close the infrastructure financing gap on the continent to improve connectivity. There is room for improvement in the other dimensions too, and countries are encouraged to take advantage of the AfCFTA initiative to help boost intra-African trade. On the other hand, macroeconomic convergence is key to facilitating the convertibility of currencies and increasing investments on the continent. Also, to enable African countries with skills shortages to tap into the continent's excess talent pool, there is a need to reform immigration policies without compromising national security (Mupotola, 2020).

As countries rebuild their economies following the pandemic, it became evident that the beginning of trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on 01 January 2021, amid the COVID-19 pandemic and its disruptive impact on the movement of persons and economies, had thrown this into sharper focus (AfDB, 2021b). According to the UNU-CRIS policy brief, the implementation of AfCFTA should be accelerated rather than delayed to negate the current crisis and boost intra-African trade. As such, a paradigm shift is needed to change the trade patterns of African countries within themselves and with the rest of the world, as it turns the current COVID-19 pandemic into an opportunity. The policy brief goes further to emphasize that local innovative knowledge and technologies should be leveraged to address the continent's current vulnerabilities caused by COVID-19, and demand heightened African integration, through solidarity rather than isolation (Iroulo, 2020).

## *Calls for Expounding on an Integrated Health Response Framework for the Success of the African Regional Integration Dynamics*

The theme of African Integration Day 2021 was "The Role of Continental Integration in Accelerating African Economic Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic" (Pilling, 2020). The overall objective of the commemoration of this day is to deliberate on how to use integration as a tool for the continent's economic recovery to build back better together following the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>51</sup>.

The continent already has frameworks for health innovations and most countries have medicines control authorities, which will now need to be synchronized at the continental level through the Africa Medicines Agency<sup>52</sup> to facilitate sharing of best practices and transparency among practitioners from the AU member states. The Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa<sup>53</sup> provides a vehicle for local pharmaceutical production, while the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement<sup>54</sup> aims to make African industries more competitive on the global stage. The implementation of these initiatives as such needs to be accelerated. It is clear that as long as African countries don't produce the required health personnel, products, and kits that Africa's health system needs, they will constantly be at the back of the global queue for resources produced out of Africa.

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<sup>51</sup> See [African Integration Day 2021 : "The Role of Continental Integration in Accelerating African Economic Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic." | Union africaine \(au.int\)](#), consulted on 11-06-2022.

<sup>52</sup> See [Collaboration, convergence, and regulatory reliance | IFPMA](#), consulted on 04-07-2022.

<sup>53</sup> The Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa (PMPA) was developed in the framework of the NEPAD (now AUDA-NEPAD) and adopted in 2007. The PMPA is designed to catalyze local pharmaceutical production which in turn should contribute to improved public health outcomes through ensuring access, quality, availability, and affordability of the much-needed essential products on the one hand and economic benefits through sustainability, competitiveness, and self-reliance of the pharmaceutical industry on the other. See [The Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa | AUDA-NEPAD](#), consulted on 04-07-2022.

<sup>54</sup> The AfCFTA is one of the flagship projects of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. It is a high-ambition trade agreement, with a comprehensive scope that includes critical areas of Africa's economy, such as digital trade and investment protection, amongst other areas. By eliminating barriers to trade in Africa, the objective of the AfCFTA is to significantly boost intra-Africa trade, particularly trade in value-added production and trade across all sectors of Africa's economy. See <https://au-afcfta.org/>, consulted on 04-07-2022.

## *Using African Means to Support African Health Initiatives and Solutions*

In her article, titled; “African solutions to African problems in the fight against COVID-19”<sup>55</sup>, Quarraisha Abdool Karim writes:

*Africa has the intellectual capital to develop new technologies and interventions to tackle global health challenges, but better funding and collaboration are essential... COVID-19 has also showcased that no epidemic takes place in isolation. Through collaboration, we can build on the foundations of our knowledge to bring forward innovative ways to address health challenges that benefit all of humanity (Karim, 2022).*

From this understanding, it is understood that Africa undoubtedly has the scientific leadership and intellectual capital to develop new technologies and interventions. This is something that Africa has proven time and time again, especially when there has been a problem and local research has been confirmed to be the best path toward finding solutions. In the course of its outbreak, COVID-19 continued to draw much from the lessons acquired during the decades of work that have been poured into the continental HIV/Aids response strategy; but this is not enough! Especially as the Aids pandemic has shown that scientists, policy-makers, and civil societies cannot work in a vacuum. There must be a unity of purpose that galvanizes the steadfast support of global leaders in governments and funding agencies across the world (Karim, 2022).

In this drive thereof, and as an incidental incentive to spur an endogenous African solution, on 4 May 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) announced that it welcomes innovations around the world including the repurposing of drugs, traditional medicines, and the development of new

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<sup>55</sup> See <https://african.business/2022/06/agribusiness-manufacturing/african-solutions-to-african-problems-in-the-fight-against-covid-19/>, consulted on 11-06-2022.

therapies in the search for potential treatments to the COVID-19 disease. To this, a statement by the world health body read in part:

WHO recognizes that traditional, complementary, and alternative medicine has many benefits and Africa has a long history of traditional medicine and practitioners that play an important role in providing care to populations. Medicinal plants such as ‘*Artemisia annua*’ are being considered as possible treatments for COVID-19 and should be tested for efficacy and adverse side effects. Africans deserve to use medicines tested to the same standards as people in the rest of the world. Even if therapies are derived from traditional practice, establishing their efficacy and safety through rigorous clinical trials is critical. WHO is working with research institutions to select traditional medicine products, which can be investigated for clinical efficacy and safety for COVID-19 treatment. In addition, the Organisation will continue to support countries as they explore the role of traditional health practitioners in the prevention, control, and early detection of the virus as well as case referral to health facilities<sup>56</sup> (Muanya, 2020).

### *Innovating on the Regional, Sub-regional and National solutions for diseases control on the continent*

In the lines below, the innovations will be considered at the regional, sub-regional and national levels respectively. These will include the Africa Centre for Diseases Control and Prevention (Africa-CDC) and the African Medicines Agency (AMA) at the African regional level, and the local health response strategies and initiatives put in place by national governments in their quest in providing sustainable solutions to the mayhem usually occasioned by pandemics and other epidemics on the continent.

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<sup>56</sup> World Health Organisation “Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine”, see [https://www.who.int/health-topics/traditional-complementary-and-integrative-medicine#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/traditional-complementary-and-integrative-medicine#tab=tab_1), consulted on 13-06-2022.

To begin with, the African continent has a specialized technical institution emanating from the African Union, established to support the public health initiatives of member states and strengthen the capacity of their public health institutions to detect, prevent, control, and respond quickly and effectively to disease threats (Adepoju, 2022); better known by the acronym of Africa-CDC.

The Africa Centres for Diseases Control and Prevention (Africa-CDC) strengthens the capacity and capability of Africa's public health institutions as well as partnerships to detect and respond quickly and effectively to disease threats and outbreaks, based on data-driven interventions and programs<sup>57</sup>. In this regard, the African Union in 2019 decided to elevate the Africa-CDC to the status of an autonomous public health agency for the continent - rather than operating, as it did afore, simply as a technical arm of the AU (Adepoju, 2022). This could be better appreciated in the words of its director, Dr. John Nkengasong on the second day of the 35<sup>th</sup> AU Summit that took place in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa in 2019;

Africa-CDC will now be an autonomous health agency for the continent. Until now, Africa-CDC was a specialized technical institution. It will now be elevated into a full public health agency for the continent, which will be more or less autonomous<sup>58</sup>.

Therefore, according to its director, the elevation of the Africa-CDC - which will now report directly to the Heads of State and Governments of AU member states - signals the growing member states' commitment to strengthening the continent's response to current and future disease outbreaks. This development is a result of the continent leaders' desires to provide policy guidelines guidance and their renewed perception of disease as a security threat for the continent, especially as witnessed in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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<sup>57</sup> See <https://africacdc.org/>, consulted on 11-06-2022.

<sup>58</sup> See <https://africacdc.org/about-us/our-values/>, consulted on 04-07-2022.

Accordingly, at this 35<sup>th</sup> AU Summit, the continent's leaders, unanimously pledged their support for the full-fledged establishment of the African Medicines Agency (AMA), among other continental disease pre-emptive control measures.

As such, the decision at this 35<sup>th</sup> AU Summit was key in the adoption of the treaty establishing the African Medicines Agency (AMA), geared towards enhancing regulatory oversight and facilitating access to safe and affordable medicines across the continent. AMA has the unique opportunity to become one of the most efficient and modern regulatory systems in the world. This opportunity can rapidly transform into reality, by using the experience gained from a decade of harmonization activities on the continent, learnings gained during the pandemic, and the swift implementation of modern and innovative solutions (IFPMA, 2022).

The African Medicines Agency (AMA) treaty, which is now being backed by 30 African countries as previously reported by Health Policy Watch<sup>59</sup>, has invariably received various calls from leaders and stakeholders for the agency to fully commence its operations soon. A strong call was issued by the President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, calling on his African peers to sign up as soon as possible for this AMA initiative, because once operational, it will be critical in keeping people on the continent safer from disease threats, and enabling better access to newer and safer medicines (IFPMA, 2022).

As mentioned above, twenty-two (22) countries have so far ratified the treaty, while eight (08) more have signed it, for a total of thirty (30) countries in formal support. Other countries, including the economic and population powerhouses of South Africa, Ethiopia, and Nigeria have yet to sign or ratify the treaty instrument. Review of proposals for a host country for the new AMA institution is set to be ongoing, with the first AMA Conference of State Parties (CoSP) that had been slated for May 2022 - during which an assessment report

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<sup>59</sup> See <https://healthpolicy-watch.news/ama-resources/>, consulted on 04-07-2022.



was deemed to be presented for discussion on recommendations for a venue and next steps to establish the AMA (IFPMA, 2022).

Additionally, each of the five Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of Africa has an Africa-CDC Regional Collaborating Center (RCC) that is tasked with implementing continent-wide public health strategies in member states with due consideration of the different capacities, systems, and priorities in those regions. In the words of the Africa-CDC Director, speaking about the COVID-19 disease during the launch of the Africa Task Force for the Novel Coronavirus (AFTCOR), said: “This disease is a serious threat to the social dynamics, economic growth, and security of Africa (...) If we do not detect and contain disease outbreaks early, we cannot achieve our developmental goals (...)”.

The Africa Task Force for Coronavirus (AFTCOR), therefore, will build upon the existing regional structure of Africa to support member states. Working with and through the RCCs, AFTCOR will support pan-African cooperation and African leadership in sharing information and best practices, building technical capacity, making high-quality policy decisions, and coordinating detection and control at borders (Africa-CDC, 2020b).

AFTCOR and the RCCs will provide technical guidance and policy recommendations, support the deployment of African subject-matter experts for on-site technical assistance, particularly for complex or large outbreaks, and convene stakeholders to align strategies and tactics and exchange information about best practices. AFTCOR consists of five working groups: - surveillance, including screening at points of entry; - infection prevention and control in healthcare facilities; - clinical management of persons with severe COVID-19 infection; - laboratory diagnosis and subtyping; and - risk communication and community engagement. Each of the working groups will be led by a representative of a member state and Africa-CDC, and membership in the groups will include representatives of member states, WHO, and other subject matter experts and partners (Africa-CDC, 2020b).

On the national level, to begin with, on 12 November 2020, some entrepreneurs based in Cameroon, met in Douala to share the lessons learned from the Covid-19 Pandemic, and to reflect on how African solutions can converge, to provide solutions in the event another similar situation can ensue in the future. “We have a wonderful lever for the development of Africa. This lever is African culture. We must realize that we can use it to develop our leadership on the international scene”; remarked Carole Mbessa Elongo, the co-founder and CEO of Business Facilities Corporation SA, which initiated the meeting (Linge, 2020). Her remark was pertinent, especially since the African pharmacopeia, following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as, other pandemics and major health crises, has always provided therapeutic solutions that reflect the African way of handling crises of such magnitude.

Unfortunately, most of these solutions came highly questioned and discarded by the western established international health system, even though these solutions had nevertheless recorded many successes locally. Some of these African therapeutic solutions that came to the limelight following the COVID-19 pandemic were: - the herbal drink Covid Organics (CVO) from Madagascar, which in just a short span of timeframe, gained continental notoriety and was endorsed by many African countries, notwithstanding some controversies. Notably on the list of countries that had requested a batch of the herbal drink from Madagascar were Senegal and Nigeria. Senegal wholly approved the Madagascan tonic<sup>60</sup>, meanwhile, in Nigeria, there was a polemic as President Muhammadu Buhari had ordered the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 to deploy the Madagascar herbal drug for the treatment of patients with COVID-19, after rejecting similar herbal drugs brought forward by its scientists<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> See <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/senegal-approves-madagascar-s-anti-covid-19-drug/1833942>, consulted on 04-07-2022.

<sup>61</sup> See <https://guardian.ng/saturday-magazine/covid-19-madagascar-solution-stirs-claims-of-local-organic-cure/>, consulted on 04-07-2022.

In Cameroon, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Douala, where Archbishop Samuel Kleda was constantly flooded with patients who sought to find a cure for COVID-19. The popularity of the archbishop's alleged cure prompted authorities to try to make the treatment more widely available<sup>62</sup>. But faced with the unwavering refusal for recognition of these African traditional initiatives as therapeutic solutions for the treatment of COVID-19 in Africa WHO, on the side-line, an initiative was instituted in which some selected countries will receive training and technical know-how on how to produce vaccines from the global mRNA technology transfer hub located in Cape Town, South Africa.

As such, On February 2022 during the European Union - African Union summit in Brussels, WHO Director-General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus announced the first six countries chosen to receive the tools needed to produce messenger RNA vaccines in Africa: Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Tunisia (Jerving, 2022), who applied, were selected as recipients. According to the WHO Director-General, these countries will receive training and technical know-how on how to produce this type of vaccine from the global mRNA technology transfer hub in Cape Town, South Africa (WHO, 2022).

The global mRNA technology transfer hub was established in 2021 to support manufacturers in low- and middle-income countries to produce their vaccines, ensuring that they have all the necessary operating procedures and know-how to manufacture mRNA vaccines at scale and according to international standards. Training of the first recipients (the spokes) began in

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<sup>62</sup> See <https://www.voanews.com/a/covid-19-pandemic-hundreds-rush-popular-clerics-herbal-covid-cure-cameroon/6188607.html>, consulted on 04-07-2022.

March 2022; and the initiative is supported by WHO, the Medicines Patent Pool<sup>63</sup> and the ACT-Accelerator/COVAX<sup>64</sup> (WHO, 2022).

In line with these innovations and already having concrete realizations on the ground is an initiative from the Kingdom of Morocco, where King Mohammed VI presided over the inauguration of a manufacturing plant for anti-COVID vaccines on 27 January 2022 in Benslimane, in the region of Casablanca, the economic capital of the Cherifian Kingdom. This vaccine production plant is slated to start production this July 2022 and is envisaged as a means to ensure the kingdom's vaccine self-sufficiency (Africanews, 2022). Named SENSYO Pharmatech, this plant will be dedicated to the manufacture and syringing of vaccines (anti-COVID and other vaccines) and will have three industrial lines whose combined production capacity will reach 116 million units in 2024.

Before then, Morocco had already started the production of more than three million doses of the Chinese SINOPHARM vaccine each month (Africanews, 2022). The monthly production was estimated to reach five million doses starting February 2022 and more than 20 million by the end of the year. With its 36 million inhabitants, the Cherifian kingdom is counting on its vaccination campaign to curb the pandemic: more than 23 million people have received a second dose of vaccine<sup>65</sup>. Meanwhile according to Al-Fanar Media (Mazzouzi, 2021), neighboring Algeria had equally launched local production of the COVID-19 vaccine in late September 2021, under a license from China's

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<sup>63</sup> The Medicines Patent Pool (MPP) is a United Nations-backed public health organization working to increase access to, and facilitate the development of, life-saving medicines for low- and middle-income countries. Through its innovative business model, MPP partners with civil society, governments, international organizations, industry, patient groups, and other stakeholders, to prioritize and license needed medicines and pool intellectual property to encourage generic manufacture and the development of new formulations. See <https://medicinespatentpool.org/>, consulted on 08-07-2022.

<sup>64</sup> The Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, is a ground-breaking global collaboration to accelerate development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines; it was launched at the end of April 2020. See <https://www.who.int/initiatives/act-accelerator/about>, consulted on 08-07-2022.

<sup>64</sup> See Ministry of Health of the Kingdom of Morocco at <https://www.sante.gov.ma/Pages/Accueil.aspx>, consulted on 01-07-2022.

<sup>65</sup> See Ministry of Health of the Kingdom of Morocco at <https://www.sante.gov.ma/Pages/Accueil.aspx>, consulted on 01-07-2022

SINOVAC Laboratories, which is approved by the World Health Organization (Mazzouzi, 2021). This is undertaken by the state-owned company SAIDAL, which turned out 20,000 doses of the vaccine, called CoronaVac, in the first week of production.

## **Conclusion**

This study titled: ‘The African Integration Dynamics under Threat of the Covid-19 Pandemic’ was aimed at shedding light on how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the solidarity and/or protectionist tendencies of African states, and their ambitions towards the continental integration goals; especially as the pandemic greatly tested nation-states resolve towards the goals of Agenda 2063 for an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa. To achieve this, the study was structured into three main parts: that is; - the African COVID-19 response strategies on the fringes of the solidarity of the international health system, - the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the African Integration dynamics amid solidarity and isolationism, and - calls on expounding on an integrated health response framework for the success of the African integration dynamics.

The New Institutional Economics (Neo-Institutionalism) theory of Douglas C. North guided the understanding of the study, as it facilitated the comprehension of the role of institutions as constraints devised by people and imposed on their socio-politico-economic behavior. The successful implementation of the African integration dynamics, before, now, and after the COVID-19 pandemic, is therefore directly reliant on the reliability of the type of institutions put in place for the purpose. To this effect, therefore, institutions have always been at the helm of the African integration drive since the early 1960s, particularly the institution of its first regional integration body, the OAU.

In 1991, the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (AEC), other initiatives like the launch of NEPAD in 2000, and the adoption of the AU Constitutive Act in 2001 brought about a new impetus to the continental integration ambitions. It is this increase in the number and diversity of these integration institutions that prompted this study to call for an upgrade of the continental integrated health response mechanisms to easily meet up with any future threat to the African health condition.

The COVID-19 pandemic which started in Wuhan city in China on December 2019, entered the African continent through Egypt on 14 February 2021. The apocalyptic predictions about the devastation that the COVID-19 virus would cause in Africa did not come to fruition, as statistics showed that as of October 2020, Africa had recorded about 37,000 deaths, meanwhile, same records showed roughly 580,000 in the Americas, 230,000 in Europe, and 205,000 in Asia. Africa's resilience to the pandemic has been attributed mainly to the youthfulness of its population, and due to its history of constant exposure to recurrent epidemics, like Ebola and many other epidemics.

Notwithstanding, this study found that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the continent's regional integration dynamics as it prompted most African states, already suffering from insufficient budgetary facilities, to erect fortifications against the free flow of the factors of production, essential to the success of the regional integration dynamics on the continent. More so, the timing for the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis equally coincided with the launch of the AfCFTA initiative, recognized as the harbinger for the economic emancipation of Africa; especially as the pandemic caused its official launch to be postponed for close to two years (from July 2019 to January 2021).

Owing to these challenges, this study suggests that African nations will need to innovate their existing integration institutions to meet up with future challenges in the guise of the COVID-19 pandemic that might expose cracks in the integration dynamics as it has hitherto done. For this to be effective, the quasi-totality of the major integration initiatives that have been half-realized or

stashed away in drawers will need to be dusted, reformulated, and their implementations fast-tracked to meet up with the socio-economic aspirations of the African peoples. Speeding up the implementation of home-grown solutions, or other country-specific initiatives, particularly the production of vaccines and other major initiatives for the fight against future pandemics.

In this regard, specific examples to mention are the initiatives currently being undertaken in countries like Morocco, Algeria, and South Africa; will need to be replicated in other sub-regions and countries as well. It is important for each sub-region, or better still, each country to put in place a country-specific solution to cater to the health of its citizens and join forces in the exchange of innovative solutions to stamp out any future threat to life on the planet. In this same vein, the capacities of the African CDC, and its regional and country-specific relay mechanisms will need to be harmonized and fine-tuned, to enable more coordinated and appropriate response strategies in the threat of any future major disaster capable of disrupting or slowing down the integration dynamics of the African continent.

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## Chapter 7. The "digital nation": Digital in Morocco between divide and inclusion

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### Introduction

The global health crisis caused by the COVID 19 pandemic has confirmed an increasing dependence on digital technology. This same pandemic has also confirmed a reality of inequalities relating to digital equity within and between countries. In an era of cognitive capitalism, the development of digital technologies is an essential lever for growth and the creation of value. Underdevelopment in this area is a source of exclusion known as the “digital divide” (Montagnier et al, 2002). This digital divide in terms of access-use-benefits can be internal to a country, as it can be operated between countries. In both cases, the digital divide is multidimensional and complex. It transcends the simple question of access to ICTs but combines technological and socio-economic factors. The "Hard" factors related to equipment, infrastructure is intertwined with the "Soft" factors relating to investments, financial means, social capital, education-training, content, vision, regulation, etc.

ICTs have become investment attractors, job providers and public service simplifiers. They also strengthen transparency and citizen participation. To this end, it is imperative that their positive externalities benefit all components of society. Digital exclusion leads to a series of deteriorations relating to life opportunities in the field of education, training, integration into the labor market, health and civic participation. Digital capital, erected into a form of capital in its own right, is consubstantially linked to the question of the digital divide. To this end, digital inclusion must be a priority for Morocco, which is working to establish a fairer and more equitable "Digital Nation". In light of the above, we pose the following question: *To what extent is the digital divide in Morocco an obstacle to achieving the objective of the "Digital Nation"?*

To answer this question, our research follows an analytical documentary approach by exploring the state of play of ICT development in Morocco. We will proceed in the first step to the definition of our key concept "digital divide" by demonstrating its stakes. We will then proceed to analyze the determinants of the digital divide in Morocco to conclude our research on the formulation of certain recommendations.

## **The digital divide as a concept**

The digital divide, as a concept, appeared in the 1990s with the advent of the Internet and its Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). The OECD (2001) defined it as "the gap between individuals, households, firms and geographical areas at different socio-economic levels with respect to both their opportunities to access information technologies communication (ICT) and their use of the internet for a wide variety of activities".

According to Ragnedda, 2017, the expressions "digital divide" or "digital inequalities" refer to the phenomenon by which social groups find themselves disadvantaged, and by the very fact of being marginalized in relation to others in terms of resources, and skills necessary for the use of digital media

considered necessary today for their social integration. It refers to distortions in access to these technologies and digital services as well as to the resulting digital capital, within a given territory. These are commonly observed inequalities in the spatial distribution of the means and tools made available to populations to enable them to access technological services and resources (Eisenman, 2018).

Robinson et al., (2015) argue that digital inequalities reinforce pre-existing inequalities of gender, ethnocultural background, socioeconomic class, access to health care, voter turnout, employability and social capital. Ragnedda (2019) confirmed his work by asserting that the variables identified as the origin of the digital divide are of specific socio-demographic order, such as employment status, income, level of education, geographical location, Ethnic origin, age, gender and family structure, have influenced access to ICTs, creating a digital divide or divide between citizens (national digital divide) or country (global digital divide). According to the analysis of the work of these researchers, it turns out that the digital divide unfolds in a vicious circle since social inequalities create the digital divide and the latter exacerbates them. Mallard (2019) in affirming the new Darwinism operated by digital, mentioned that it has become a new factor of social selection by accentuating the inequality of access to digital benefits between social groups. Many analyzes have focused on the fact that the digital divide cannot be reduced to a simple technological or connectivity problem. According to Ragnedda (2019), the digital divide should be seen as a social problem rather than a technological one. Robinson et al., (2015) have pointed out that the digital capital of individuals impacts a wide range of outcomes ranging from academic performance to labor market integration, entrepreneurship and access to health services.

Van Dijk (2005) specified the conditions of access to digital capital which are the availability of material, cultural, social and mental resources, and personal factors such as gender, intelligence, abilities, ethnicity, age, health and abilities. Wilson (2006) also highlighted the complexity of the "access" variable,

emphasizing eight factors related to Internet access: physical, financial, cognitive access, production, design, content, institutional and political access.

Ragnedda (2017) classifies the digital divide into three levels:

- The first level relates to the issue of Internet access;
- The second level includes digital capital;
- The third level is linked to the capacities of individuals to transform the digital advantages, resulting from a satisfactory use of ICT, into social advantages which could improve the life chances of individuals.

It is therefore erroneous to think that a relatively widespread and well-distributed use of ICTs between social strata will automatically translate into progress in equal opportunities between citizens.

## **The challenges of the digital divide**

Digital Darwinism operates a new cleavage between the social fringes. The unequal distribution of digital capital amplifies existing forms of social injustice and creates new forms of socio-economic exclusion and social division. Digital inclusion is no longer a “good to have”, it is a human right since it involves a rich variety of perspectives on the issue of social change; a fair, equitable and human-potential future. Several public or private services (education, health, administrative documents, jobs, etc.) are now only served online. The question of digital inclusion cannot therefore be reduced to a single question of connectivity. It is imperatively part of the terms of the social contract and the collective definition of what constitutes social well-being. From this perspective, ICT should not generate more inequality and create new classes of winners and losers (Brynjolfsson and McAfee, 2014). Ragnedda (2020) points out that the advent of technologies can become an obstacle to social mobility by concentrating resources and wealth in a few hands thus giving rise to the digital oligarchy, further penalizing the digital underclass. The “Electronic Agora”

concept has contributed to the emergence of new forms of sociality. Benkler (2006) argues that collective processes related to digital engagement provided not only empowerment opportunities, but also democratic opportunities.

## **Digital transformation in Morocco: An Overview**

The efforts made by Morocco in the field of digital transformation underline the importance given to this project and the growing awareness of this major challenge for the future of the country. This interest is manifested by the implementation of a certain number of plans such as "Maroc Numeric 2013", the "Maroc Digital 2020" plan and the institutionalization of a Digital Development Agency (ADD) in 2019 and the National Commission for the Control of Personal Data Protection (CNDP). However, the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE) considered, in its opinion entitled "Towards a responsible and inclusive digital transformation", that: "The various initiatives launched to date remain manifestly insufficient to ensure the prerequisites of a successful digital transformation and reduce a patent digital divide that the Covid-19 crisis has only exacerbated."

It should be noted that the Morocco Digital 2020 plan aimed to dematerialize 50% of administrative procedures, to connect 20% of Moroccan SMEs, to guarantee access to the Internet through free Wi-Fi in public spaces, implement digital literacy programs and train more than 39,007 ICT professionals. Morocco has also proceeded with the construction of a number of technological parks and industrial zones. Nevertheless, it is clear that the digital culture is still not well incorporated into the ethos, the social habitus and the economy of Moroccans. According to the "Digital Evolution Index", Morocco is one of the "Break Out countries", that is to say, it is among the nations with a still weak digital evolution, but which are progressing rapidly and can quickly claim the status of "Digital Nation". The statistics listed below demonstrate this.



**Tableau 1. Indices on the advancement of the knowledge economy in Morocco**

Indicator	Ranking Percentage Ranking	Year	Information source
Mobile Connectivity Index	84 <sup>th</sup>	2019	the Global Association of Mobile Operators (GSMA)
Global connectivity index	61 <sup>st</sup>	2019	Huawei
Inclusive Internet index	59 <sup>th</sup>	2020	The Economist Intelligence Unit
Internet Penetration (% Population)	64.3 %	2020	www.internetworldstats.com
Network Readiness Index	87 <sup>th</sup>	2019	World Economic Forum
Internet growth	23,639 %	2020	www.internetworldstats.com
Facebook subscriptions	18,330,000	2020	www.internetworldstats.com
Broadband penetration rate	17.5% for fixed broadband 41% for mobile broadband	2015	the world bank.
The percentage of households equipped with a computer or tablet	60,6%	2019	Statista Research Department. <sup>66</sup>
The online services index	78 <sup>th</sup>	2018	the world bank
E-Government development index	106 <sup>th</sup>	2020	European Institute of Business Administration
The Global Innovation Index (GII)	75 <sup>th</sup>	2020	European Institute of Business Administration
Business development around innovation	107 <sup>th</sup>	2020	European Institute of Business Administration
Collaboration between companies and universities	117 <sup>th</sup>	2020	European Institute of Business Administration
The exploitation of knowledge	110 <sup>th</sup>	2020	European Institute of Business Administration
the number of invention patents of Moroccan origin per 1 million inhabitants	5,8%	2018	I'OMPIC ; OMPI
Exports of high-tech goods in exports of manufactured goods	13%	2019	World Bank
Robotic density (the number of industrial robots per 10,000 employees)	54 <sup>th</sup>	2017	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
The Cyber Security Index	93 <sup>th</sup>	2017	International Telecommunication Union
R&D expenditure (% of GDP)	0,7%	2018	UNESCO
Number of R&D researchers (for R&D expenditure (% of GDP) 1 million inhabitants)	1800	2018	UNESCO
Scientific and technical journal articles published (per 1 million inhabitants)	144, 48	1994-2018	World Bank
Global Talent Competitiveness Index	100 <sup>th</sup>	2018	The Business School for the World, The ADECCO Group, TATA Communications)

Source: Our data collection

<sup>66</sup> <https://fr.statista.com/statistiques/911978/menages-equipe-ordinateur-tablette-maroc>



The process of implementing digital transformation in Morocco suffers from several general weaknesses and shortcomings, including:

1. Implementation of previous digital transformation policies in several areas (Administration, health, education, industry, etc.);
2. Geographical coverage and quality of service for high-speed and very high-speed Internet;
3. Status of population access to computer equipment (smartphone, tablet, computer);
4. Legislative and regulatory framework;
5. Weakness of local operators in the ICT domains;
6. Weak national cultural and educational production;
7. Absence of a national R&D strategy in the ICT fields in particular, emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, the Internet of Things, Quantum Computing, 5G, etc.

## **The digital sectors impacted by the digital divide in Morocco**

### **➤ *Education - Training***

Without access to the Internet or the possession of a telephone or computer, pupils and students are unable to acquire the technological skills necessary to understand and integrate into the current economic dynamics. A knowledge gap regarding technology has been observed during the COVID 19 pandemic. Indeed, many learners have found themselves deprived of continuing classes or accessing digital resources for the aforementioned reason. This undermines the principles of equal opportunity from the outset. It is clear that the possession of a smartphone, a computer and an internet line remain out of reach for some pupils and students. This involves the introduction and expansion of lessons relating to new mines of value creation such as Industry 4.0, AI by preparing a new future with strategic directives for teachers, university staff and students of higher education.

Today, upgrading the capacities of educational personnel in terms of ICTs in education remains a pressing need. The Covid 19 pandemic has shown that many teachers have difficulty adapting to distance learning or new teaching technologies. This has an ipso facto impact on the quality of the lessons provided.

➤ *Scientific Research*

Digital technology profoundly transforms the processes and methods of teaching and research in all disciplines, it:

- Is used by researchers to advance their research in an effective, efficient and creative manner;
- Transformed research methods and practices;
- Promotes the emergence of new solutions, new systems and processes for processing, securing storage and access to research data;
- Enables the emergence of new areas of research;
- Has generated concerns related to the transformation of existing methodological frameworks, the emergence of new objects and modes of knowledge, techniques for collecting and analyzing data, etc;
- Has greatly transformed the modes and forms of dissemination of research.

➤ *Health and telemedicine indicators of social justice*

ICTs are seen as a promising way to solve the challenges of delivering care, improving health outcomes and redressing territorial inequalities. This reality has been reinforced by the COVID-19 pandemic. These e-health and telemedicine technologies are used to improve access to preventive health, allow patients to self-monitor and manage their medical conditions and control costs (Hale, 2014). The digital divide can be considered because the potential of e-health is likely to reduce or widen social disparities (Hale, 2013).

In Morocco, telemedicine is still in its infancy. Two implementing decrees (No. 2-18-378 and No. 2.20.675), published in July 2018 in the Official Bulletin, have been approved to supplement Law 131-13 (February 2015) on the procedures for practicing telemedicine. This decree defines the types of acts in telemedicine, namely teleconsultation, tele-expertise, tele-surveillance and tele-assistance, and sets the conditions for carrying it out. Nevertheless, an upgrade of health professionals is still necessary to develop telemedicine in Morocco. As such, the potential for exclusion of the digitally disadvantaged, those same groups who are most affected by poor health, is very likely for this emerging practice. Much preliminary research demonstrates the importance of first-level digital inequalities in the use of e-health.

➤ *Digital and the business climate*

The business biotope has become a crucial issue for the economic competitiveness of nations. In this context, the business climate has gradually evolved in recent years despite the turbulence of the national and international environment and the economic and of the COVID19 pandemic. We cite in particular the example of the tax administration, in pursuit of its strategy of generalizing the use of electronic procedures, and with a view to facilitating and simplifying tax procedures for taxpayers. Indeed, the DGI has launched several online certificates for the benefit of taxpayers, namely:

- The certificate of turnover;
- The certificate of tax regularity;
- The withholding tax certificate;
- The certificate of exemption from housing tax and municipal services tax (TH/TSC) intended for property developers;
- The certificate of exemption from the Special Annual Tax on vehicles (TSAV) with electric and hybrid motors (electric and thermal).

## **Digital accessibility through the prism of social relations**

ICTs are unlikely to be transformative in the absence of broader and deeper institutional and societal changes. Solutions in terms of public policies, technological designs, finances and management should allow all Moroccans to be included in the digital economy. To operate a "Leap frog" and to fully integrate into the digital age in order to achieve its objective of "Digital Nation", Morocco needs skills and knowledge. The transition to a knowledge-based economy requires adopting a holistic approach, as well as effective measures (reform, investment and coordination) in each of these four policy areas.

As for the ESEC-Morocco, it wishes to adopt a clear vision of a digital transformation which will allow, on the one hand, universal access to high-speed and very high-speed Internet, of satisfactory quality, for the entire population and, on the other apart from the digitization of all administrative procedures.

According to UNCTAD, several institutional issues must be taken into account such as the establishment of an intellectual property regime favorable to innovations and a competition policy, the strengthening of the education system as well as the research and innovation system, the creation of public "knowledge" structures, the development of information and communication infrastructure, the creation of an environment that produces confidence in the use of ICTs and the proper functioning of financial markets. To this end, below are some urgent recommendations capable of advancing the digital project in Morocco.

## Recommendations

### ➤ *Facilitate access to equipment*

The Education-Training sector is the main sector for establishing digital culture in the country. To this end, equipping all learners and teachers with computers and allowing them to access the Internet free of charge or at a reasonable service cost is a *sine qua non* condition for achieving digital inclusion.

Social justice begins with giving all students the same equality in education to have the same chances for a better future. According to the report of the Court of Auditors (2019), the Nafida, Injaz and GENIE programs have demonstrated their limits in covering the demand for the entire educational community. The development of community access centers, particularly in rural and low-income urban areas, can be considered to overcome the shortcomings of individual connectivity. The provision of computers for disadvantaged families, as is the case in France via the “Ordi 2.0” experiment or the Home Access Project in the United Kingdom also seems to be an interesting avenue.

### ➤ *Improving financial accessibility*

In order to fight against the digital divide in the countries of the South, a Global Digital Solidarity Fund was inaugurated in 2005. The fruits of this fund can be used to develop a network of public digital spaces (EPN) and local community access centers which should enable low-income households to access the Internet free of charge and benefit from digital training. The same fund can be used to finance training to upgrade human capital.

In Morocco, a similar mechanism has been put in place to reduce the digital divide, it is the Universal Service whose financing is provided by the fund (FSUT) created for this purpose by the law of 2005 finances. The FSUT is funded by contributions from telecommunications operators amounting to 2% of their turnover. This mechanism is managed by the Universal Telecommunications

Service Management Committee (CGSUT), which is chaired by the Head of Government. The main programs that have been funded by the FSUT are:<sup>67</sup>

- **PACTE**: Generalized access program for telecommunications;
- **GENIE**: Generalization of information and communication technologies in education;
- **Nafida**: Facilitate access for the teaching family to ICT, use these tools in the education system, and access multimedia content;
- **Injaz**: Contribute to the acquisition of the means to access ICTs for students in public higher education, as part of their training;
- **CAC** Establishment of Community Access Centers, facilitating young people's access to ICTs, particularly at the level of youth centers under the Ministry of Youth and Sports
- **E-sup** : Generalization of ICT in higher education, through the equipping of universities for the acquisition of solutions for the integration of ICT;
- **Net-U** : Promote and extend access to ICTs, in particular access to the Internet, within university establishments and residences.

Indeed, despite the allocation of financial resources by the FSUT, several programs are significantly behind schedule in relation to the objectives set, particularly those relating to the generalization of ICT in education and community access centres. Other programs, like E-sup still did not start.

Thus, the improvement of financial accessibility is mainly conditioned by the adoption of a clear vision and a concerted roadmap between the various stakeholders and the revision of the mode of governance and monitoring of FSUT programs.

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<sup>67</sup>[http://www.courdescomptes.ma/upload/\\_ftp/documents/Fonds%20du%20service%20universel%20des%20telecommunications.pdf](http://www.courdescomptes.ma/upload/_ftp/documents/Fonds%20du%20service%20universel%20des%20telecommunications.pdf)

➤ *Promote digital culture and invest in the development of human capital*

Improving education and learning are at the heart of measures to reduce digital inequalities. Eradicating illiteracy (according to the HCP 32% in 2019), is a priority step in building the ambitious “Digital Nation” project to which Morocco aspires. Education is one of the areas where the integration of ICT is most likely to bring real added value. In addition to the pedagogical contributions of digital tools, this integration makes it possible to keep the school in line with changes in society. Concerning human capital, efforts are to be made concerning the upgrading of the skills of the educational body concerning the manipulation and exploitation of ICTs. The training and sponsorship of data scientists must be a priority in educational policy (through exchange programs, scholarships, etc.).

Training must also reach the working population because the waves of Industry 4.0 will reconfigure the job map. According to The Institute For The Future, 85% of jobs in 2030 do not yet exist today. The education-training system as we know it today can be described as obsolete with regard to the question of preparing for the jobs of tomorrow. To this end, an overhaul of the curricula and branches of vocational training should be reviewed. Early training in these technologies from preschool onwards helps to better prepare the digital society of tomorrow. The population of job seekers must be included in training in digital technologies and must be integrated into personalized job search support.

Shouldn't the diploma, which is in essence itself an instrument of socialization, be supplemented by possibilities of obtaining more targeted skills accreditations offered in particular to drop-outs and graduates who are long-term unemployed in specialized institutions?

A SeniorWeb project must be developed to help seniors fight against isolation, strengthen their autonomy and improve their quality of life.

Beyond traditional education systems, governments and civil society actors have a crucial role to play in promoting lifelong learning, ensuring that all, especially those who are at risk of exclusion, have the opportunity to develop ICT skills and understanding.

➤ *Promoting digital culture and investing in the development of human capital*

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➤ *Encourage Research & Development*

To accelerate the trend, the role of research is indeed essential in this field, innovation and AI particularly in priority areas of engineering and next-generation manufacturing, health and biomedical sciences, services and the digital economy, and finally, urban and sustainable solutions.

*Invest in digital infrastructure*

Improving digital infrastructure will be vital for rolling 5G networks and the use of emerging technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), blockchains and robotics. Investing in globally competitive infrastructure to support the transition to a digital economy and create a ripple effect for Moroccan businesses. The Mazar cabinet insisted on the fact that the development of ICT for Moroccan companies requires the establishment of a National Broadband plan taking into account spatial and geoeconomic disparities. The same firm recommended the construction of Datacenters, the establishment of a public and private ecosystem promoting the establishment and fluidity of E-Gov, e-Commerce, Cloud Education, Industry 4.0, Internet of Things, e-Health and all kinds of services to citizens based on digital.

➤ *Reform digital regulatory frameworks*

Good overall governance and an enabling business environment form the basis of knowledge-based strategies. It is necessary to continue improving the business climate in order to stimulate business creation and attract foreign investment. Restrictive labor regulations and an inefficient government bureaucracy are factors that obstruct the entrepreneurial climate. It is also vital to eliminate the disparities between economic agents, by simplifying administrative procedures, by reducing the barriers of protected markets, and by increasing competition from banks for the granting of credit to businesses.

The acceleration of the establishment of a harmonized national regulatory framework covering all the legal and technical aspects intrinsic to the development of ICT operations, electronic exchanges and transactions and the protection of individual freedoms and the fight against cyber- crime will be a lever for the development of digital culture.

## **Conclusion**

The “Digital Nation” project in Morocco seems to be tripping over several pitfalls. Several conditions must be met to achieve this objective, in particular the democratization of digital technology for all so that everyone can take ownership of them and get involved in the digital transformation which must be established as a national cause. Technology does not by itself resolve social and economic gaps within societies and can exacerbate them. The massive growth in the use of ICTs in India, for example, has had no positive impact on improving the living conditions of the population.

Digital technologies offer an opportunity to reduce social disparities, fight against social exclusion, strengthen social and civil rights and promote equity. However, to achieve these goals, it is necessary to promote digital equity and connect the digital underclass. Technologies can become an obstacle to social mobility and by concentrating resources and wealth in a few hands, the digital

revolution gives rise to the digital oligarchy, further penalizing the digital underclass. Indeed, as has been stipulated (Eubanks, 2011), a new approach needs to be taken to create a broadly inclusive and empowering "technology for the people", popular technology, which involves shifting the focus from teaching technical skills to promoting a citizenship critical technology, creating resources for learning and promoting social movement.

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## **Chapter 8. Development in the face of the health crisis and the democratic crisis: What relationship? Which solution?**

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**Nadia Birouk**

### **Le développement face à la crise sanitaire et à la crise démocratique : Quelle relation ? Quelle solution ?**

#### **Introduction**

**D**epuis 1948 les dirigeants de 50 pays ont compris qu'il faut préserver la vie et instaurer un système mondial qui installe et protège les droits humains, afin de garantir une égalité entre les populations et un développement durable. Cela n'était pas une annonce d'une loi, mais d'un modèle que chaque individu et que chaque peuple doit conserver afin de survivre. Ainsi, la déclaration universelle des droits de l'Homme était l'espoir pour un véritable changement dans le but de créer des démocraties authentiques<sup>68</sup>. Pourtant, les leçons tirées de Coronavirus ont démontré que la démocratie change selon la situation sanitaire, selon les intérêts politiques et économiques. En effet, la démocratie reste un moyen d'atteler et de maîtriser les choses dans le but de protéger ou de préserver un intérêt général. Priver les gens de leurs libertés, de leurs droits, de leur mobilité devient une chose

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<sup>68</sup> Mohammed SEKTAOUI, *Les Droits de l'Homme 1- Principes et critères*, Ed. Annajah Aljadida, coll. SadaTadamone, Casablanca, 2003, p. 5.

ordinaire une fois l'État, la santé publique, l'intérêt ou la sécurité générale sont menacés.

La pandémie de Coronavirus a poussé les États membres du conseil de l'Europe à prendre des mesures sévères pour protéger le droit à la vie et à la santé publique<sup>69</sup>. Nous pouvons dire que la crise sanitaire et la crise démocratique sont liées que l'une implique l'autre. *Quelle relation entreprennent-elles ? Quel est leur impact sur le développement ? Quelles sont les solutions ?*

## Les limites de la démocratie

La démocratie est créée pour légitimer les choses afin d'appliquer la loi de la majorité et non de la raison ou de la logique. Appliquer une démocratie ne veut nullement dire protéger le droit au développement et à l'épanouissement souhaitées, puisque ce qui peut être considéré comme un droit dans un pays peut être un crime dans un autre. Cela veut dire, que la démocratie change selon la vision culturelle et traditionnelle d'une communauté.

Généralement les individus les plus sages se plient à l'égard des gens plus irrationnels, car ils constituent la majorité démocratique et non la voie ou le chemin à suivre. Ainsi, ce qui peut nuire aux enfants et aux femmes dans certains pays avancés semble légitime dans d'autres endroits où l'ignorance et la loi tribale dominent toujours. À vrai dire, entre le mythe et la réalité nous avons plusieurs enjeux démocratiques plus ou moins erronés ou approximatifs. Nous pouvons dire que la nécessité de justifier un choix ou de protéger un intérêt, ont poussé les gens à inventer la démocratie, pour faire croire au peuple qu'il est capable de mener et de gérer son sort, mais ce n'est pas le cas :

*La nécessité d'inventer ou de se référer à des instruments pour opérationnaliser l'analyse objective de la performance démocratique devient de plus en plus évidente. Galvaudé dans sa valeur sémantique et*

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<sup>69</sup> [L'APCE et la covid-19 | Préserver la santé démocratique en temps de crise sanitaire \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/fr/treaties/lapce-et-la-covid-19/-/assetmgr/document/44222)

*symbolique, il est nécessaire d'identifier la substance ontologique (substrat) du régime démocratique performant en vue de se prémunir des manipulations tous azimuts, surtout dans les pays en transition démocratique. Même dans les systèmes démocratiques suffisamment implantés, les chercheurs(ses) se trouvent interpellés par la nécessité de se doter d'outils permettant de mesurer la progression (ou la régression) des normes et des pratiques démocratiques. La capacité d'évaluer objectivement les faits et les phénomènes politiques est la condition essentielle d'existence de la science politique<sup>70</sup>.*

Cela veut dire que la démocratie même dans des situations normales ne peut vraiment protéger un citoyen dans la mesure où elle est toujours un outil politique et un instrument pour gérer les intérêts gouvernementaux, économiques ou autres en vue d'assurer la continuité d'un pouvoir ou d'un régime. Même dans les démocraties les plus avancées, il est nécessaire de surveiller les dérives et de mesurer les normes, voire les pratiques démocratiques ; ce qui prouve que la démocratie a des limites et qu'elle ne peut relater que l'image de la société avec toutes ses contraintes, ses composantes, sa mentalité et ses anomalies, que rares sont les démocraties qui font exception. Par conséquent, quand une pandémie menace un État tout est revisité, pour garantir la bonne gestion sanitaire surtout lorsqu'un confinement devient une nécessité comme c'était le cas avec coronavirus. Mais imposer de nouvelles lois et de nouveaux comportements pour assurer une protection collective d'un bien ou d'une population n'est pas toujours apprécié par les citoyens. Changer les habitudes et les priorités poussent souvent les gens à se révolter et à se plaindre. Pourtant, l'État ne peut que prévenir toutes les précautions indispensables pour se protéger contre un fléau en essayant dans la mesure du possible de ne pas priver les citoyens de leurs droits élémentaires. Comment les gouvernements ont réagi dans le cas de coronavirus et quelle était la réaction des citoyens ?

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<sup>70</sup> John Miller BEAUVOIR, *Démocraties mythes et limites*, Éd. BOUQUINBC, Canada, 2017, p.53.

## Coronavirus : un état d'urgence

La majorité des pays ont traité le cas de coronavirus comme un état d'urgence : « Par "état d'urgence", on entend l'octroi – temporaire – de pouvoirs exceptionnels à l'exécutif, assorti de règles exceptionnelles, en vue de traiter et de surmonter une situation extraordinaire qui représente une menace fondamentale pour le pays.<sup>71</sup> » Cela veut dire que la situation présente, sollicite l'application d'autres règlements et qu'il faut prendre d'autres mesures pour protéger la vie des citoyens, menacés par un virus non encore identifiable. Il s'agit donc d'une situation exceptionnelle que l'État doit surmonter pour assurer le retour à une situation normale<sup>72</sup>. Néanmoins les mesures prises doivent être temporaires et essentielles. Dans le cas de coronavirus, les choses semblent non déterminées, les mesures prises étaient hasardées surtout au début de la pandémie et les informations qui circulaient, étaient souvent erronées. La panique a paralysé les gens qui succombaient à leur sort sans avoir réellement une vision claire sur ce qui arrivait. Ainsi, « *La notion de régime d'urgence repose sur l'idée que dans certaines situations d'urgence politique, militaire ou économique, le système de limites mis en place par le régime constitutionnel doit céder la place à un renforcement des pouvoirs de l'exécutif. Cependant, même sous état d'urgence, le principe fondamental de l'État de droit doit prévaloir.*<sup>73</sup> »

Par conséquent, non seulement les pays touchés de la pandémie devaient réagir, mais le monde entier qui s'est trouvé face à une situation nouvelle où il fallait fermer les frontières, bloquer les touristes et les étudiants en privant les gens au niveau planétaire de voyager ou de se déplacer. Pas seulement cela, il fallait en même temps trouver un vaccin convenable pour assurer un retour à la vie normale et surtout pour éviter une crise économique mondiale. Ainsi, la crise sanitaire peut tout bouleverser en engendrant d'autres crises démocratiques, économiques, sociales...

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<sup>71</sup> Venice Commission: Council of Europe (coe.int), p.3.

<sup>72</sup> *Op.cit.*, p.3.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.



## L'impact de la crise sanitaire

La crise sanitaire a un grand impact sur la vie sociale, elle a aussi un grand impact sur les préoccupations et les activités quotidiennes de tous les jours. Lors du confinement instauré par les États pour protéger la vie publique, plusieurs personnes ont perdu leur travail, certaines avaient du mal à s'enfermer ou à travailler à distance, l'économie a chuté, des ménages se sont effondrés et des violences et des divorces ont été enregistrés à cause de cette mesure prise pour cerner le virus :

*« Les répercussions de la Covid-19 sur le quotidien des Marocains ne sont pas uniquement d'ordre économique, elles sont aussi d'ordre sociales. En effet, la pandémie a provoqué une vague de divorces sans précédent, mais, surtout un recul historique du nombre des nouveaux mariages. C'est ce que soutient en tout cas, l'Association nationale des jeunes adouls. <sup>74</sup>»*

Cela a démontré que la santé morale et économique d'une population est une priorité à conserver dans tous les cas, qu'il ne faut point attendre une pandémie pour le faire. Dans les pays sous-développés, coronavirus a dévoilé la fragilité du système sanitaire, économique et éducatif.

Les citoyens ont pris conscience de l'importance de l'éducation, de la santé publique, aussi l'importance de garder leurs distances pour préserver leur vie. Les comportements ont changé et malgré cette privation du droit de se déplacer, les gens ont appris qu'il y a des choses à revoir et à revisiter pour protéger les générations à venir.

Toutefois, appliquer des mesures logiques pour protéger et préserver la vie publique n'était pas facile devant la dominance de l'ignorance quand certains pensent que la mort et la vie sont un don divin et que le fait d'obéir aux précautions prises est une folie ! Là encore, nous pouvons dire que la crise sanitaire a pointé du doigt une autre crise plus importante c'est la crise éducative. En effet devant la prédominance de l'ignorance et de la superstition

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<sup>74</sup> <https://lematin.ma/express/2022/covid-19-mariages-baisse-divorces-hausse/370066.html>

inutile d'appliquer ou de prendre des mesures préventives ; car pour le faire il faut affronter la foule mécontente et déterminée à faire ce qui lui semble bon. Comment parvenir à convaincre les gens de se protéger et comment parvenir à garantir le droit à la vie pour les femmes et les filles violentées durant le confinement ? Comment le Maroc a réagi face à ces contraintes ?

## **Le cas du Maroc**

Le Maroc a opté pour le confinement dans le but de limiter la pandémie de coronavirus, il a également participé aux tests cliniques relatifs aux vaccins susceptibles de mettre fin à ce virus. Il s'est trouvé contraint de maintenir les citoyens chez eux en les dépouillant de leurs libertés. Pour ce faire, Le Maroc a choisi le traçage numérique afin de limiter les contaminations :

*La Commission nationale de contrôle de la protection des données à caractère personnel (CNDP) a publié un communiqué le 16 avril, réagissant à la volonté du gouvernement marocain de mettre en place une application de traçage des contaminations du Covid-19, rappelant l'inquiétude des citoyens quant à leur vie privée, et les risques d'un « Etat de surveillance » et une éventuelle atteinte aux droits humains. La CNDP recommande donc que l'usage de l'application soit volontaire et non sur la base d'une obligation<sup>75</sup>.*

Pour affronter la pandémie Le Maroc a entrepris un plan d'action qui correspond à ses capacités et à son potentiel humain qualifié. Au niveau sanitaire, il a essayé de maîtriser la propagation de la maladie surtout que les moyens et les lits disponibles sont limités. Il a dû recourir à des hôpitaux mobiles pour pallier le vide. Au niveau économique Le Maroc a encouragé le travail à distance dans la mesure du possible, il a également opté pour l'aide des familles et les secteurs touchés par la pandémie dont le travail est sous forme de petites entreprises dont la clientèle est interactive tels les cafés, les

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<sup>75</sup> <https://www.lavieeco.com/economie/etat-de-droit-et-democratie-en-temps-du-coronavirus/>

restaurants, les hôtels, etc. La suspension de ces entreprises a eu un impact négatif sur le personnel actif qui s'est trouvé licencié ou sans travail et dont les aides étaient insuffisantes. Le Maroc a tenté de préserver l'ordre social, surtout que le taux du chômage est élevé :

*« L'intervention vise alors à minimiser cet impact à travers des aides sociales ciblées. Dans cet effort, l'identification des bénéficiaires est un enjeu de taille, compte tenu du manque de données autour de ces populations.<sup>76</sup> »*

Le droit à l'information et au respect de la vie privée sont menacés devant les rumeurs et les mesures autoritaires prises dans ces conditions. En effet, la presse traditionnelle et électronique, les réseaux sociaux se précipitent pour diffuser des fausses informations qui sèment la panique et la peur. L'État se trouve dans l'obligation d'intervenir pour mettre fin à cette anarchie et recourt à l'utilisation des chaînes publiques nationales et aux sites ministériels pour diffuser toute information utile sur la pandémie et ses dérives. Assurer le développement, garder l'équilibre économique, affronter le chômage, le manque d'éducation et maintenir un degré minimal de sécurité sociale est toujours un défi même dans les situations normales.

Le Maroc a essayé quand même à l'Ère de la pandémie de soutenir ceux qui ont perdu leurs emplois. Il a mobilisé ses ressources humaines sanitaires et militaires pour sauver les malades et maintenir l'ordre tout en respectant le confinement. La crise sanitaire a ouvert les yeux sur la nécessité de développer un système médical plus solide. Elle a démonté les lacunes dans l'enseignement qui n'était pas prête à affronter de telle situation. Le Maroc a compris qu'il ne fallait point attendre coronavirus pour agir, que c'est le moment de refaire ses calculs et de revisiter ses priorités.

Pour pallier le vide, il fallait activer les plateformes universitaires aussi pauvres et vides pour commencer un travail numérique hasardé qui compte sur l'apprentissage à distance, non pris en considération et non préparé, pour

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<sup>76</sup> [https://www.policycenter.ma/sites/default/files/2021-01/PP-20-07\\_LastrategieduMarocFaceAuCovid19.pdf](https://www.policycenter.ma/sites/default/files/2021-01/PP-20-07_LastrategieduMarocFaceAuCovid19.pdf)

résoudre ce genre de problèmes. Les enseignants avaient du mal à utiliser une technologie toujours nouvelle pour eux. Mal formés et mal informés, chacun devait selon ses moyens personnels assurer ses cours à distance. Sans oublier les problèmes de se connecter ou de gérer un effectif aussi important. En plus de cela, les parents avaient du mal à suivre leurs enfants et ils commençaient à réclamer le retour à l'enseignement en présentiel malgré le confinement imposé. Cela a poussé l'État à diffuser des programmes télévisés et à enregistrer des cours instantanés pour tous les niveaux surtout le niveau scolaire. Ce qui prouve qu'il n'avait aucun plan d'urgence et que l'enseignement à distance est une nouveauté inattendue, alors qu'il devait être une évidence dans une situation semblable.

À vrai dire, la crise sanitaire a dévoilé la déficience du développement et de la démocratie adaptés, elle a révélé les défauts d'un système qui ne prend pas en considération les mutations intenses dues à mondialisation, à la pauvreté, aux changements climatiques et sanitaires. De là, il fallait penser à un développement qui prend en considération le potentiel humain qualifié et formé, les ressources naturelles disponibles, les crises économiques, socioculturelles, sanitaires et surtout la qualité de l'enseignement ou l'éducation fournie. Quelles sont les solutions ?

### **Quelles sont les solutions ?**

Le développement est une feuille de route politique et socio-économique qui doit tenir en compte toutes les imprévus et les difficultés. Coronavirus a été l'occasion pour mettre le doigt sur un ensemble de défauts et d'erreurs auxquelles il faut remédier. Au niveau de l'éducation il s'est avéré qu'en parallèle avec l'enseignement en présentiel, il faut maintenir l'enseignement à distance, mais pour ce faire, il faut activer les plateformes, généraliser la gratuité de l'internet pour les étudiants et les enseignants, construire une banque de données numériques et encourager les chaînes éducatives. Il faut

aussi rémunérer les professeurs qui travaillent à distance ou opter pour un enseignement hybride qui prend en compte les mutations et les imprévus et non attendre une pandémie pour se rendre compte de l'utilité de rénover le système éducatif. Pas seulement cela, il faut libérer l'éducation et la société de la stagnation et de la conformité. Il faut apprendre aux enfants à se distinguer et à créer leur propre itinéraire au sein d'une communauté, qu'il ne faut point obéir et reproduire les mêmes situations et les mêmes problèmes, mais qu'il faut encourager la différence, la motivation et l'apprentissage utile. Éduquer les citoyens est une obligation pour améliorer une société :

*« Il n'y a ni opposition ni rupture entre la personne et la société, entre l'individuel et le collectif, mais plutôt continuité et interpénétration.<sup>77</sup> »*

Selon le rapport du conseil économique, social et environnemental, le développement nécessite l'amélioration des services publics accessibles afin d'augmenter le pouvoir d'achat. Les citoyens dépensent énormément pour la scolarisation de leurs enfants, pour leurs soins sanitaires, pour leurs déplacements, pour leur logement ce qui rend la vie si coûteuse au Maroc :

*« L'absence de services publics accessibles de qualité fait du Maroc un pays où le coût de la vie est cher dans la mesure où la charge supportée par les citoyens en matière de dépenses de scolarisation dans les établissements privés, de santé, de transport, de logement et d'autres services demeure élevée.<sup>78</sup> »*

Selon le conseil toujours, il faut de vraies réformes pour rénover l'école marocaine agonisante et pour rendre la santé publique à la hauteur des attentes. La détérioration du niveau de la vie des marocains, due aux crises sociales issues des retards ou de la non-exécution des projets citoyens ont entravé le développement. En effet, les réformes effectuées jusqu'à présent n'ont pas parvenu à changer la situation des établissements publics, ni à combler le manque du personnel au sein de l'enseignement et de la santé. Le taux de la

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<sup>77</sup> Guy Rocher, *Introduction à la sociologie I L'Action sociale*, Éd. HMH, coll. Points, 1968, p.57.

<sup>78</sup> [https://www.cese.ma/media/2020/10/CESE-Nouv\\_Model\\_de\\_Devt-f-3.pdf](https://www.cese.ma/media/2020/10/CESE-Nouv_Model_de_Devt-f-3.pdf)

perdition scolaire est toujours élevé. Le service sanitaire est insuffisant et trop cher. Les femmes souffrent toujours à cause de la répartition territoriale inégale des services publics, à cause de la société et des lois toujours masculines<sup>79</sup>. Au niveau social, il faut sensibiliser la population au respect des libertés individuelles. Dans ce sens, L'État doit favoriser et appliquer l'approche genre dans les stratégies et les mises en œuvre pour lutter contre une pandémie ou un fléau économique ou militaire. Il doit protéger les femmes et les enfants qui subissent une violence de leurs proches et qui augmente durant des situations exceptionnelles<sup>80</sup>. Dans ce cas, il faut sensibiliser également, les parents afin de changer leurs attitudes à l'égard de leurs enfants et la manière de les éduquer loin de l'héritage masculin tribal et ses anomalies.

L'État doit prévenir des fonds de soutiens éducatif et économiques permanents pour les familles ayant des handicapés ou des difficultés ou qui habitent dans les lieux les plus arides. Il doit créer d'autres grandes villes afin de répartir les richesses et les services publics d'une manière plus équitable. La restauration et la réouverture des hôpitaux, des cinémas, des centres culturels et des écoles doit être une priorité. L'encouragement des associations à but non lucratif est une chose importante et obligatoire.

En effet, pour un développement qui n'a pas de bienfaits sur la population et sur sa mentalité n'est pas un développement. Le Maroc a pris conscience de ce constat, il a compris qu'il doit opter pour un nouveau modèle de développement. Son objectif est la libération des énergies la restauration de la confiance pour accélérer le progrès et pour accorder la prospérité pour tous. Dans ce cas, il faut s'engager dans un travail planifié, qui prend toutes les contraintes en considération, un travail persévérant et perpétuel, visant l'intérêt général et le bien de tous : « La mise en œuvre effective du modèle de développement requiert le renforcement des fonctions de pilotage stratégique, de suivi et de conduite de changement. Le processus de changement est partout

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<sup>79</sup> [https://www.cese.ma/media/2020/10/CESE-Nouv\\_Model\\_de\\_Devt-f-3.pdf](https://www.cese.ma/media/2020/10/CESE-Nouv_Model_de_Devt-f-3.pdf)

<sup>80</sup> [16809e33c7 \(coe.int\)](#)

difficile ; il suppose d'abord et avant tout du leadership et un engagement fort mais aussi de la continuité, de la persévérance, de la prise de risque et une gestion permanente des résistances.<sup>81</sup> » Par conséquent, le citoyen doit retrouver confiance dans les politiques et dans ses représentants, une chose qui semble encore peu crédible, car le peuple a perdu confiance dans ses institutions.

## Conclusion

Le Maroc doit encore relever plusieurs défis pour assurer un développement pour toutes et pour tous. Tout d'abord, il doit surveiller les projets du développement et veiller à leur réalisation en joignant la responsabilité à l'imputabilité. Dans ce sens, il faut de vraies réformes relatives à tout le système juridique. Ensuite, Le Maroc doit rénover sa manière d'approcher l'action sociale, en encourageant la différence et l'excellence. Par conséquent, il doit revenir sur la privatisation des secteurs ayant une relation directe avec les services publics sensibles afin d'atténuer leur coût. La formation des personnes qualifiées dans l'enseignement et dans la santé est nécessaire, il faut aussi consacrer un budget indispensable pour pallier le vide et le manque dans ces secteurs aussi importants pour L'État.

Finalement, il ne faut point oublier que la pandémie de coronavirus a démontré qu'un citoyen ignorant et malade nuit à l'économie et à l'ordre social, il menace également la sécurité et la sûreté publique comme il détruit l'économie et ne peut participer activement au développement de son pays.

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<sup>81</sup> [https://www.csmd.ma/documents/Rapport\\_General.pdf](https://www.csmd.ma/documents/Rapport_General.pdf)

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## **Chapter 9. The labour market in Morocco: Characteristics, challenges, and programs**

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**Abir El Fakhouri**

### **Le marché de l'emploi au Maroc : Caractéristiques, Défis, et Programmes**

#### **Introduction**

**L**e marché de l'emploi, en pleine mutation, reflète les transitions économiques, sociales et politiques du Maroc d'aujourd'hui. Économiquement, le choix stratégique d'une politique libérale et les impératifs de la mondialisation mettent le secteur privé au centre de la dynamique de la création d'emplois. Il est vital que cette dernière intègre des emplois à forte valeur ajoutée, car il en va de la compétitivité de l'économie marocaine au niveau international. Le secteur privé est appelé à prendre le leadership de la création d'emplois dans un environnement de plus en plus concurrentiel, globalisé et structuré autour du paradigme de la société du savoir, ce qui réduit la compétitivité des filières traditionnelles, fondées sur les bas salaires<sup>82</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup> Rapport de L'ETF, les politiques de l'emploi et les programmes actifs du marché du travail au Maroc, P : 4.

Sur le plan social, la demande d'emplois décents est en plein essor. La croissance démographique, l'urbanisation, le meilleur accès aux services sociaux de base (éducation, santé) se conjuguent pour faire évoluer les paramètres structurels de participation au marché de l'emploi (comme l'incorporation des femmes, l'âge de sortie ou le salariat) et accroître la demande d'emplois décents.

Dans le domaine politique, plusieurs facteurs d'ordre interne (comme le progrès de la scolarisation ou la liberté d'expression) et externe (tels que les mouvements de contestation dans le monde arabe ou les benchmarks internationaux) ont créé une dynamique d'élargissement des libertés individuelles et collectives. L'alternance politique et la rénovation en cours du système de gouvernance illustrent celle-ci et témoignent d'une forte attente de justice sociale et de meilleure qualité de vie. Ce qui passe nécessairement par l'accès à des emplois non seulement productifs, mais décents.

Relever le défi de l'emploi implique de multiplier les efforts de tous les intervenants sur le marché du travail dans le cadre d'une vision stratégique intégrée centrée sur l'accès à des emplois productifs et décents, pierre angulaire du projet de développement humain durable ambitionné et revendiqué par le pays.

Nous allons aborder tout d'abord dans ce chapitre les principales caractéristiques du marché du travail au Maroc, allant de la période 2015 jusqu'à 2020, ensuite nous allons présenter les principaux défis de ce dernier, et nous finissons par l'élaboration de quelques programmes pour lutter contre le chômage.

## **Les caractéristiques du marché du travail au Maroc**

Il est important d'analyser le secteur de l'emploi, car le progrès accompli par chaque pays, est le résultat d'une économie prospère créatrice de richesse et surtout d'opportunités d'emploi, en conséquence, la dynamique et la prospérité

d'une économie, doivent se répercuter sur sa capacité à générer une revenue décente pour la quasi-totalité de la population et assurer une distribution équitable de la richesse. D'où l'intérêt d'approcher l'emploi, comme forme de distribution de la richesse<sup>83</sup>.

➤ *La situation de l'emploi en 2015*

Le taux d'emploi au Maroc est faible, témoignant d'une sous-utilisation du facteur travail. Cet indicateur est le reflet d'une faible participation au marché du travail et des difficultés rencontrées pour intégrer ce marché. La sous-utilisation du facteur travail se traduit par une production et des revenus moindres. L'emploi est un excellent indicateur pour mettre en avant la forte dualité du marché du travail marocain.

Au niveau national, le taux d'emploi est de l'ordre de 42,8% en 2015. Cette proportion cache des disparités selon les différentes catégories de la population. Ainsi, le taux d'emploi en zone urbaine (environ 35%) est plus faible que dans les zones rurales (55%). Le taux d'emploi des femmes (22,2%) est plus faible que celui des hommes (64,8%). L'emploi demeure peu qualifié, 61,3% des actifs occupés étaient sans diplôme en 2015. L'accès à l'éducation favorise un accès plus facile à l'emploi. Le taux d'emploi tend à être supérieur pour les diplômés du supérieur que pour les personnes sans niveau d'éducation ou diplômés du secondaire<sup>84</sup>.

Quant à la création d'emploi a favorisé les citadins et les adultes âgés. Avec une création annuelle moyenne de 129 mille postes d'emploi, le volume d'emplois au Maroc est passé de 8,845 à 10,646 millions de postes entre les années 2000 et 2014. Sur les 1,801 million d'emplois créés au niveau national, 1,283 million l'ont été en milieu urbain (71% du total des emplois créés) contre 518 mille (29%) en milieu rural.

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<sup>83</sup> Ministère de l'aménagement du territoire national de l'urbanisme, de l'habitat et de la politique de la ville, Rapport de l'état des lieux de l'aménagement du territoire, rapport de synthèse, 2015-2017, P : 62 (rapport non publié).

<sup>84</sup> HCP, Rapports détaillés sur l'activité, l'emploi et le chômage (2000, 2005, 2010 et 2015).

Ce sont les actifs de sexe masculin qui ont le plus bénéficié de ces nouvelles créations avec 94 mille emplois annuellement (73%) contre 35 mille pour les femmes (27%). Les bénéficiaires de ces nouvelles créations sont surtout les adultes âgés de 40 à 59 ans avec 100 mille emplois annuellement et ceux âgés de 30 à 39 ans (50 mille). Les jeunes de 15 à 29 ans, quant à eux, ont perdu annuellement 25 mille emplois, une perte due principalement aux efforts d'élargissement de la scolarisation et au prolongement de la durée de scolarité<sup>85</sup>.

De plus, si l'on considère que 8,4% des actifs occupés relèvent d'un emploi public, le niveau d'informalité dans la sphère privée atteint près de 86% du total des emplois. Dans ce cadre, ce sont les petites entreprises de moins de 10 employés qui ont contribué le plus à la création d'emploi dans le secteur privé, elles sont à l'origine de 64,5% des emplois créés depuis 2000. Le même constat est fait dans le secteur privé non agricole où cette proportion a atteint 64,4%.

Par ailleurs, les actifs occupés dotés d'un niveau d'éducation supérieur sont surreprésentés dans le secteur public. Ainsi, 42% des personnes ayant un niveau scolaire supérieur travaillent dans le secteur public, contre 1,2% des personnes sans niveau scolaire ou 4,2% de ceux dotés d'un niveau fondamental. Le secteur public apparaît donc particulièrement attrayant pour les personnes les mieux éduquées, démontrant une appétence pour la stabilité de l'emploi et la formalité. Par ailleurs, si le secteur public est attrayant, il l'est d'autant plus que le secteur privé, pas assez moderne et dont la valeur ajoutée reste faible, ne parvient pas à créer l'offre suffisante pour absorber les diplômés du supérieur. Néanmoins, la part des personnes évoluant dans le secteur public a diminué. Ainsi, les créations d'emplois, entre 2005 et 2015, ont été plus dynamiques dans le secteur privé (+11,2%) que dans le public (+8,2%)<sup>86</sup>.

Cette précarité sur le marché du travail marocain est également visible à l'échelle du statut dans l'emploi<sup>87</sup>. En 2015, près de 22% des actifs occupés

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<sup>85</sup> HCP, Évolution de la situation du marché du travail entre 2000 et 2014, 2015.

<sup>86</sup> HCP, Évolution de la situation du marché du travail, Op. Cit.

<sup>87</sup> HCP, Principaux enseignements sur la qualité de l'emploi, 2016.

marocains (40,8% en milieu rural) étaient des aides familiales ou apprentis, non rémunérées, quasi exclusivement au sein du secteur agricole, et 27,4% des indépendants. La part d'aides familiales est particulièrement élevée chez les femmes. Ainsi près de 49% des femmes occupées étaient des aides familiales en 2015. Néanmoins, la part des aides familiales a diminué depuis 2000 (29,6%) et la part des salariés progresse, que ce soit en pourcentage du total, passant de 37,7% en 2000 à 46,3% en 2015, qu'en termes d'effectifs. Toutefois, le taux de salariat reste faible. Au Chili par exemple le salariat concerne 74,6% des travailleurs, et 68,8% au Brésil. La Colombie (47,4%), possède un taux de salariat comparable à celui du Maroc<sup>88</sup>. Par ailleurs, la précarité existe entre les salariés : près de deux salariés sur trois (62,9%) ne bénéficient pas de contrat de travail et cette proportion atteint 89,4% dans le secteur des BTP.

Seuls 1,6% des actifs occupés salariés au niveau national, 2,1% en milieu urbain et moins de 1% en milieu rural, ont déclaré avoir bénéficié d'une formation prise en charge par leur employeur au cours des 12 mois précédant le jour de l'enquête.

La répartition sectorielle des emplois au Maroc est relativement stable sur le long terme<sup>89</sup>. Si la part de l'agriculture recule progressivement, le rythme de transformation est lent et toujours près de 40% des emplois sont agricoles. L'industrie (y compris l'artisanat) reste marginale en termes d'emplois, et ne parvient pas à insuffler une réelle dynamique au marché du travail dans son ensemble. La tertiarisation du Maroc s'est opérée à partir d'un niveau de développement de l'industrie faible, ce qui limite la portée du processus. Bien que le secteur des services, qui concentre également environ 40% des emplois (67% du total des emplois créés), semble en expansion, la majorité des emplois se concentrent dans les services traditionnels de faible qualification (commerce de détail, de gros, transport, etc.). Les 87 mille nouveaux emplois créés annuellement au niveau de ce secteur résultent principalement de la création

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<sup>88</sup> OCDE, Taux d'emploi non salarié.

<sup>89</sup> HCP, Évolution de la situation du marché du travail, Op. Cit.

de 24 mille postes par la branche du "commerce de détail et réparation d'articles domestiques", de 13 mille par celle des "services personnels", de 11 mille par les "transports terrestres" et de 9 mille par les "hôtels et restaurants".

➤ *L'évolution du marché de travail durant la période 2017-2018*

Dans ce cadre, les données de l'HCP, sur le taux d'activité, révèlent que les secteurs de services et l'agriculture, sont les principaux employeurs au niveau national, en dépit de sa saisonnalité, l'agriculture assure 38.8% des emplois, alors que le tertiaire offre 40.1% des emplois et enfin le secteur industriel et celui des constructions, qui assurent 21.1% des emplois. Ce taux d'activité, baisse entre 2001 et 2017, passant de 51.4% à 46.7% ; alors que l'écart entre l'urbain et le rural se réduit en 2017, avec 42.4% et 54.1%.

Par contre, la participation de la femme à l'activité économique, reste faible, puisqu'elle ne dépasse pas 22.4% contre 71.6% pour les hommes, en plus<sup>90</sup> :

- L'analyse de la structure d'emploi en 2017, révèle que 49% sont des salariés, contre 38.8% en 1999, et que les aides familiales et apprentis de métiers, représentent 16.8% en 2017, contre 32.9% en 1999, et qui est le résultat de l'effet de la formation professionnelle. De même, les professions libérales, occupent 34.1% des employés en 2015 contre 24,4% en 1999, exprimant des changements radicaux dans la société marquée par une tendance à l'entrepreneuriat<sup>91</sup>.
- Le chômage connaît un recul significatif, en passant de 12.3% en 2001 à 10.2% en 2017, surtout au niveau des régions à vocation agricole, compte tenu de la bonne année agricole 2017. Toutefois le chômage frappe essentiellement les jeunes entre 15 et 24 ans, avec 26.5% et les diplômés universitaires avec 14.7% et 8.8% pour les hommes<sup>92</sup>.
- Le chômage des diplômés pose avec acuité et insistance la problématique de l'enseignement et de la formation, de par son

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<sup>90</sup> Les données de HCP, en 2017 concernant le marché de l'emploi.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

inadéquation avec les exigences du marché de l'emploi. Il soulève aussi la problématique du secteur privé, quant à l'adoption de la technologie moderne, qui nécessite des cadres et des techniciens qualifiés en la matière. Ces problématiques devraient être résolues, afin de limiter leur émigration à l'étranger. Car, l'impact du développement économique et particulièrement dans le domaine industriel, en matière d'emploi tarde à se manifester concrètement<sup>93</sup>.

Globalement, le Maroc a enregistré une croissance continue de 3.23% Durant la période 2015-2017, mais en régression par rapport à celle enregistrée entre 2001-2014, qui a été +4.4% en raison de la sécheresse qui a sévit en 2016, ainsi ce taux de croissance a été de 4.5% en 2015, 1.1% en 2016 et 4.1% en 2017. Ce taux de croissance moyen, pour un pays émergent, paraît cependant faible, par comparaison avec des pays similaires.

Certes, le lancement des stratégies sectorielles, a permis de soutenir cette croissance nationale à ce niveau, grâce à l'amélioration de la productivité des facteurs et moyens de production et à l'ouverture du système de production nationale sur des activités et métiers nouveaux et rémunérateurs.

En outre, cette croissance économique a été améliorée par l'investissement et l'amélioration du niveau de vie des ménages. Toutefois, cette tendance positive de la croissance, ne se traduit pas positivement sur le niveau de l'emploi, compte tenu de sa faible capacité à créer l'emploi.

En effet, on constate la diminution de l'emploi de 32.000 emplois entre 2000 et 2007 à 16.000 emplois entre 2017 et 2018. Comme on constate la persistance de l'influence de l'agriculture sur l'économie nationale<sup>94</sup>.

#### ➤ *L'emploi au Maroc au cours de la période de Covid-19*

La situation de l'emploi a été aggravée en 2020, dans le contexte de la pandémie de COVID 19 et de la sécheresse, car selon le bulletin d'information du

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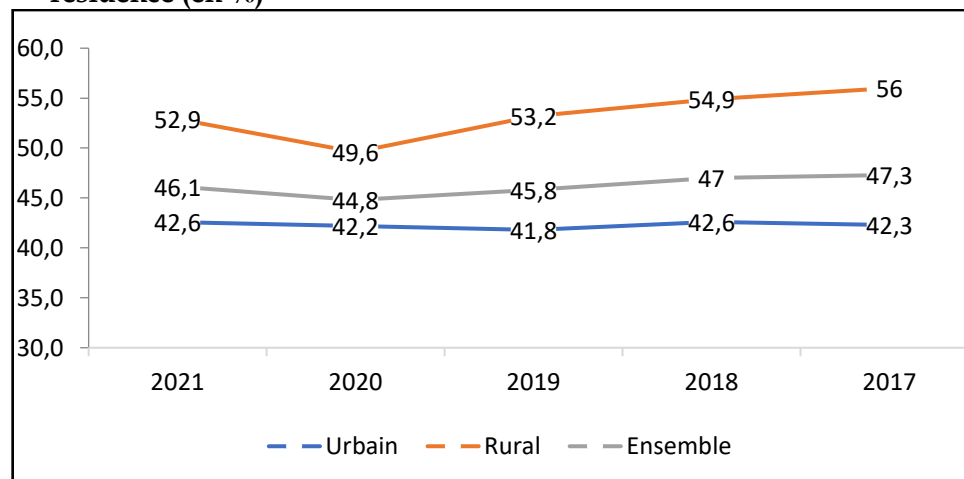
<sup>93</sup> Les données de HCP, en 2017 concernant le marché de l'emploi.

<sup>94</sup> Rapport de l'état des lieux de l'Aménagement du territoire, Op.Cit, P : 63.

HCP, sur la situation de l'emploi, l'économie nationale a perdu 432 000 emplois, à l'échelle nationale, contre la création de 165.000 emplois en 2019. Cette perte d'emploi a concerné aussi bien le rural (295.000 emplois) que l'urbain (137.000 emplois) comme elle a concerné tous les secteurs d'activité. Ainsi le secteur des services a perdu 107.000 emplois, l'agriculture et le forêt 273.000 emplois, l'industrie, dont l'artisanat 37.000 emplois, les travaux publics 9000 emplois<sup>95</sup>.

Quant au deuxième trimestre de 2021, la situation du marché du travail a été marquée par la hausse des taux d'activité. La population en âge d'activité (15 ans ou plus) s'est accrue de 1,4%, par rapport au deuxième trimestre de 2020. Avec une hausse de la population active de 4%, le taux d'activité a ainsi augmenté de 44,8% à 46,1% entre les deux périodes. Il a augmenté de 42,2% à 42,6% en milieu urbain et de 49,6% à 52,9% en milieu rural. Avec cette augmentation le taux d'activité a atteint un niveau similaire à celui enregistré avant la pandémie (45,8% en deuxième trimestre de 2019).

**Figure 1. Evolution du taux d'activité aux deuxième trimestres 2021 par milieu de résidence (en %)**



Source : HCP, Maroc, 2021

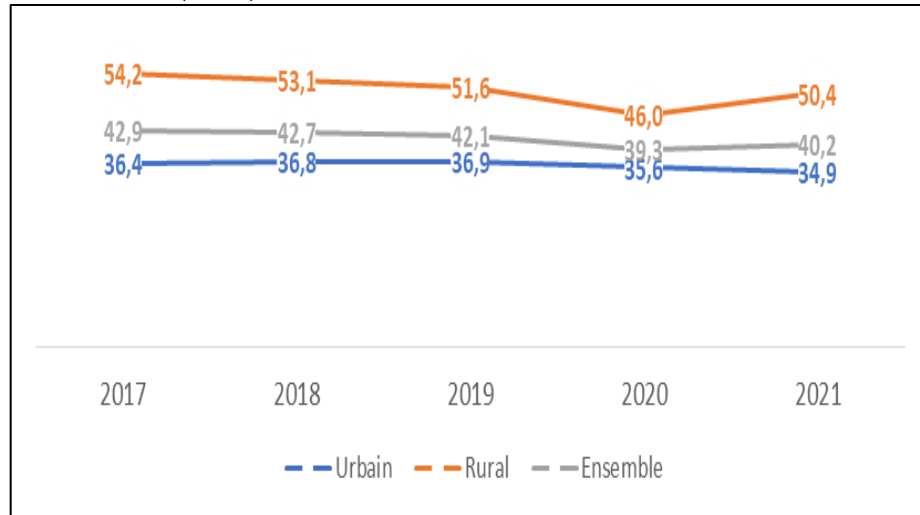
Le taux d'emploi a connu, de son côté, une hausse de 39,3% à 40,2%, au niveau national (+0,9 point). Il a augmenté de 46,0% à 50,4% en milieu rural, et a reculé de 35,6% à 34,9% en milieu urbain, et il a augmenté de 61,8% à 62,2% parmi les hommes (+0,4 point) et de 17,5% à 18,9% parmi les femmes (+1,4point). Toutefois,

<sup>95</sup> HCP, les statistiques de l'emploi en 2019 et 2020.



le taux d'emploi demeure inférieur au niveau enregistré avant la pandémie (42,1% en deuxième trimestre de 2019)<sup>96</sup>.

**Figure 2. Evolution du taux d'emploi aux deuxièmes trimestres de 2021 par milieu de résidence (en %)**



Source : HCP, Maroc, 2021

En ce qui concerne le volume de l'emploi a augmenté de 405.000 postes, résultant d'une création de 414.000 postes en milieu rural et d'une perte de 9.000 en milieu urbain, contre une perte 589.000 au deuxième trimestre de 2020 ; et l'emploi rémunéré a enregistré une création de 215.000 postes au niveau national, résultant d'une création de 218.000 en milieu rural et d'une perte de 3.000 postes en milieu urbain. L'emploi non rémunéré a connu, de son côté, une création de 190.000 postes, conséquence d'une création 195.000 en zones rurales et d'une perte de 6.000 emplois en zones urbaines<sup>97</sup>.

Parmi les 10.892.000 actifs occupés estimés au deuxième trimestre de 2021, le secteur des "Services" emploie 45,2%, suivi de l'"agriculture, forêt et pêche" avec 33,1%, de "l'industrie y compris l'artisanat" avec 11,1% (dont 44% sont des activités artisanales) et des "BTP" 10,5%.

<sup>96</sup> Note d'information du haut-commissariat au plan relative a la situation du marché du travail au deuxième trimestre de 2021.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, P: 3.

Près de 7 actifs occupés ruraux sur 10 (70,7%) exercent dans le secteur de l'agriculture, forêts et pêche, et près de deux tiers des actifs occupés citadins (66,6%) travaillent dans le secteur des services<sup>98</sup>.

Entre le deuxième trimestre de 2020 et la même période de 2021, le secteur de l'"agriculture forêt et pêche", a vu son volume d'emploi augmenter de 318.000 postes, contre une perte 477.000 l'année précédente et une perte annuelle moyenne de 90.000 postes entre les deuxièmes trimestres des trois années précédant la pandémie<sup>99</sup>.

Le secteur de l'"industrie y compris l'artisanat" a perdu 53.000 postes d'emploi, contre une perte de 69.000 l'année dernière et contre une création annuelle moyenne de 32.000 postes entre les deuxièmes trimestres des trois années pré pandémie<sup>100</sup>.

De son côté, le secteur des "services" a créé 40.000 postes d'emploi, contre une perte de 30.000 au cours de la même période de l'année dernière et une création annuelle moyenne de 149.000 postes entre les deuxièmes trimestres des trois années pré pandémie<sup>101</sup>.

Enfin, le secteur des BTP a créé 108.000 postes d'emploi, contre une perte 9.000 postes au cours de la même période de l'année dernière et une perte annuelle moyenne de 27.000 postes entre les deuxièmes trimestres des trois années précédant la pandémie<sup>102</sup>.

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<sup>98</sup> Note d'information du haut-commissariat au plan relative à la situation du marché du travail au deuxième trimestre de 2021, Op. Cit, P: 3.

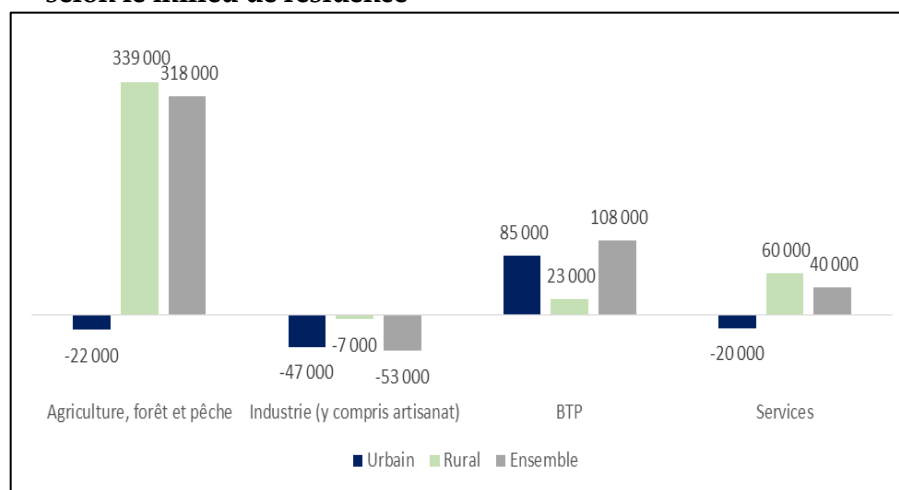
<sup>99</sup> Ibid, P: 3.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, P: 3.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, P: 3.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, P: 4.

**Figure 3. Variation de l'emploi entre le deuxième trimestre de 2020 et celui de 2021 selon le milieu de résidence**



Source : HCP, Maroc, 2021

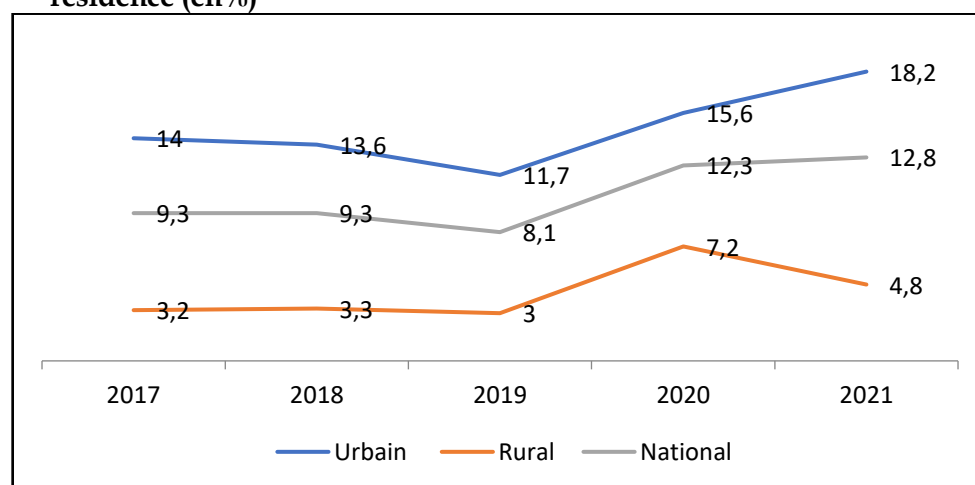
Passant maintenant au nombre de chômeurs qui a augmenté de 128.000 personnes entre le deuxième trimestre de l'année 2020 et celui de 2021, passant de 1.477.000 chômeurs à 1.605.000, ce qui correspond à une augmentation de 9%. Cette hausse, résultant d'une réduction de 100.000 chômeurs en milieu rural et d'une augmentation de 228.000 en milieu urbain<sup>103</sup>.

Le taux de chômage a maintenu sa tendance à la hausse enregistrée au cours de la même période de l'année précédente. Il s'est accru de 0,5 point entre les deuxièmes trimestres de 2020 et de 2021, passant de 12,3% à 12,8% au niveau national, il a enregistré une forte hausse en milieu urbain, passant de 15,6 à 18,2%, et une baisse en milieu rural de 7,2% à 4,8%<sup>104</sup>.

<sup>103</sup> Note d'information du haut-commissariat au plan relative à la situation du marché du travail au deuxième trimestre de 2021, Op. Cit, P : 5.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, P: 5.

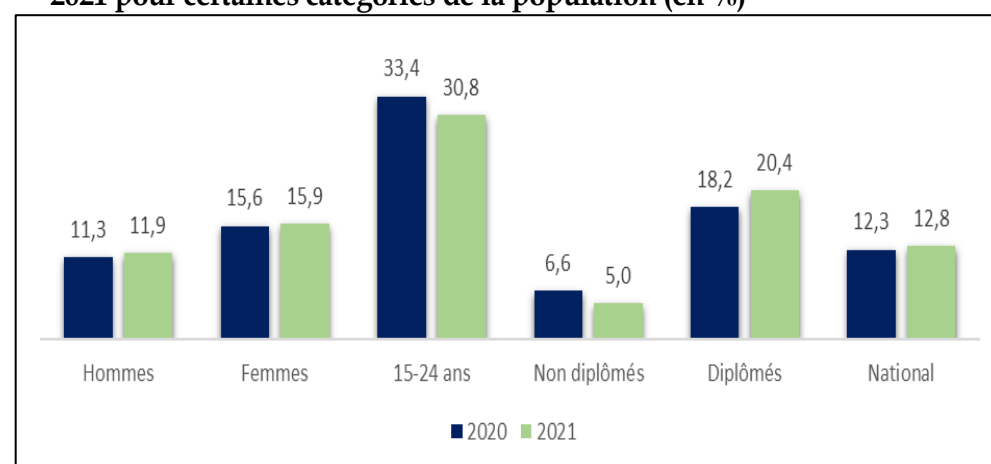
**Figure 4. Evolution du taux de chômage aux deuxièmes trimestres par milieu de résidence (en%)**



Source : HCP, Maroc, 2021

Ce taux a enregistré une hausse modérée parmi les hommes, de 11,3% à 11,9%, et les femmes, de 15,6% à 15,9%. Il a connu une baisse de 2,6 points parmi les jeunes âgés de 15 à 24 ans.

**Figure 5. Evolution du taux de chômage entre les deuxièmes trimestres de 2020 et de 2021 pour certaines catégories de la population (en %)**



Source : HCP, Maroc, 2021

S'agissant des diplômés, le taux de chômage a enregistré une hausse de 2,2 points, passant de 18,2% à 20,4% entre les deuxièmes trimestres de 2020 et de 2021. Ce sont les diplômés de niveau supérieur qui ont enregistré la hausse la plus importante de 3 points, avec un taux passant de 22,3% à 25,3%, Le taux de

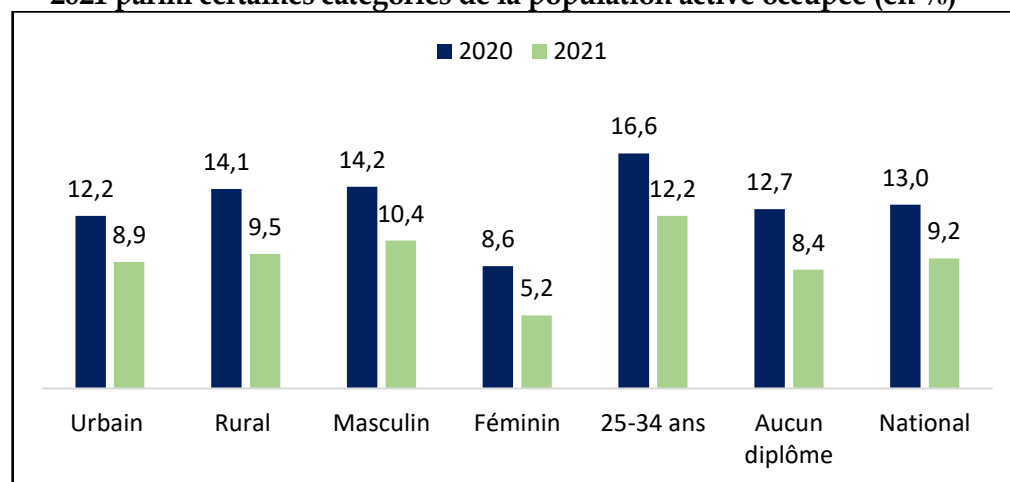
chômage des diplômés de niveau moyen, de son côté, augmenté de 1,8 points pour atteindre 17,6%<sup>105</sup>.

Le volume des actifs occupés en situation de sous-emploi a baissé de 360.000 au niveau national, entre le deuxième trimestre de 2020 et la même période de 2021, passant de 1.359.000 à 999.000 personnes, de 753.000 à 551.000 personnes dans les villes et de 606.000 à 448.000 à la campagne. Le taux de sous-emploi est ainsi passé de 13% à 9,2% au niveau national, de 12,2% à 8,9% en milieu urbain et de 14,1% à 9,5% en milieu rural<sup>106</sup>.

La population active occupée en situation de sous-emploi lié à l'insuffisance du revenu ou à l'inadéquation entre la formation et l'emploi exercé est passée de 402.000 à 529.000 personnes au niveau national. Le taux correspondant est passé de 3,8% à 4,9%<sup>107</sup>.

Les catégories de la population qui ont connu les plus grandes baisses du taux de sous-emploi sont les personnes âgées de 25 à 34 ans (-4,4 points), les personnes n'ayant aucun diplôme (-4,3 points) et les hommes (-3,8 points)<sup>108</sup> (Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Evolution du taux de sous-emploi entre les deuxièmes trimestres de 2020 et 2021 parmi certaines catégories de la population active occupée (en %)**



Source : HCP, Maroc, 2021

<sup>105</sup> Note d'information du haut-commissariat au plan relative à la situation du marché du travail au deuxième trimestre de 2021, Op. Cit ,P : 6.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, P: 6.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, P: 6.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, P: 7.

## Les défis du marché de l'emploi au Maroc

Les principales contraintes opérant sur le marché du travail au Maroc, et par conséquent les défis que la politique aura à affronter pour réduire substantiellement le chômage peuvent être résumés comme suit <sup>109</sup>: le rythme de croissance de l'économie marocaine, quoique relativement soutenu, demeure globalement insuffisant pour créer suffisamment d'emploi et résorber le flux des chômeurs, dont la majorité est constituée de jeunes primo-demandeurs d'emploi. Dans ce cadre, la part des personnes en âge d'activité s'est accrue de 60,7% en 2004 à 62,4% en 2014. Selon les projections du HCP, cette part devrait atteindre son maximum en 2029 (63,1%), induisant de plus en plus de pression démographique sur le marché du travail dans les dix prochaines années.

Il est à noter qu'entre 2010 et 2018, la croissance de la population en âge actif a été plus forte que celle de la population active. Pendant que la population d'âge actif augmentait de 12,4%, la population active n'a crû que de 4,4%. Conséquence de l'aggravation de l'inactivité des femmes et des jeunes et de la hausse des taux de la scolarisation, le taux d'activité est descendu sous la barre de 50%, il se situe à hauteur de 46% en 2018 au niveau national (42% dans les villes et 53% dans les campagnes)<sup>110</sup>.

Bien qu'elles constituent la moitié de la population en âge actif, les femmes ne représentent qu'environ le quart de la population active (24,1%). Le taux d'activité des femmes en 2018 se situe à 21,8% contre 71% pour les hommes, soit un niveau plus faible qu'en 2010. Le fossé urbain-rural reste également large : dans les zones urbaines, environ 18,1% des femmes entrent sur le marché du travail contre 67,3% des hommes, alors qu'en milieu rural le taux est respectivement de 28,6% et 77,5%.

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<sup>109</sup> Ministère du Travail et de l'Insertion Professionnelle, Publication de l'Observatoire National du Marché du Travail, les nouvelles formes et les formes atypiques d'emploi au MAROC, Contexte, enjeux et perspectives de développement, 2020, P : 19.

<sup>110</sup> Op. Cit, P : 20.

Outre la sous-utilisation des compétences des femmes instruites et la perte potentielle en termes de revenu et de croissance économique, ces faibles taux d'activité ont des conséquences supplémentaires pour les femmes et leurs familles, notamment le manque d'autonomie financière, la dégradation du statut social, la réduction des revenus et du bien-être des familles et l'accroissement de la pauvreté<sup>111</sup>.

Selon l'âge, le taux d'activité s'établit à 60 % pour les 25-34 ans, contre 60,8 % pour les 35-44 ans. Il est seulement de 42,2 % pour les personnes âgées de 45 ans et plus. Quant aux jeunes de 15-24 ans, il est connu que ces derniers ne participent pas de manière accrue à la vie active. En effet, seulement un jeune sur quatre est actif au niveau national en 2018. Si entre 2010 et 2018, les taux d'activité ont reculé pour toutes les classes d'âges, la plus forte baisse a été enregistrée chez les 15-24 ans (de 36,2 % à 26,8 %).

Cependant, si l'inactivité des jeunes s'explique en partie par la poursuite des études, le taux des NEETS, qui mesure la part des jeunes qui ne sont ni en emploi, ni en éducation, ni en formation, dans la population des jeunes, vise à attirer l'attention sur la proportion de jeunes qui sont inactifs pour des raisons autres que l'éducation. En 2017, près de 29,3 % des jeunes âgés de 15-24 ans, font partie des NEETs. Les différences sont encore plus marquées entre sexes. En effet, le taux des NEETs est plus élevé chez les jeunes femmes (46 %) que chez les jeunes hommes (13 %).

D'un autre côté, au cours des dernières années, le taux de chômage s'est stabilisé autour de 9 % au niveau national, avec des disparités persistantes entre les villes et les campagnes. Le taux de chômage est plus élevé dans les zones urbaines qu'en milieu rural. A noter que le chômage en zones rurales semble être particulièrement masqué par le phénomène du sous-emploi, puisque ce dernier touche, en 2017, 10,8 % de la population active occupée en zones rurales et 8,9 % en zones urbaines (il est de 9,8 % au niveau national).

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<sup>111</sup> Ministère du Travail et de l'Insertion Professionnelle, Publication de l'Observatoire National du Marché du Travail, les nouvelles formes et les formes atypiques d'emploi au MAROC, Contexte, enjeux et perspectives de développement, 2020, Op. Cit, P : 20.

Les disparités du chômage par genre se manifestent dans l'écart significatif entre les taux de chômage chez les hommes et chez les femmes. Cet écart s'est accru de 5,3 points de pourcentage en huit ans. Celui des femmes est supérieur de près de 6 points de pourcentage à celui des hommes, en 2018. Cette disparité est plus accentuée en zones urbaines (13 points de pourcentage pour un taux de chômage de 23,9 % pour les femmes contre 10,9% pour les hommes). En zones rurales, l'écart est moins important, mais en défaveur des hommes (-1,3 point de pourcentage).

Le taux de chômage des diplômés affiche des niveaux plus élevés par rapport à celui des non diplômés. En 2018, 16,7% des diplômés étaient en chômage contre 3,3% chez les non diplômés. Autre fait marquant du chômage est la forte vulnérabilité des jeunes primo demandeurs d'emploi (54,7% en 2016) et des chômeurs de longue durée (67,2%). La part de l'emploi du secteur tertiaire dans l'économie marocaine concerne plus de quatre personnes sur dix. Elle est de 43,1% en 2018, alors que cette part n'était que de 38% en 2010<sup>112</sup>.

A l'inverse, l'agriculture a vu ses effectifs baisser malgré une croissance soutenue de la valeur ajoutée créée, traduisant ainsi, des gains de productivité suite à la modernisation du secteur, en particulier. Sa part dans l'emploi total est de 34,4% en 2018, contre 40% en 2010. Le secteur secondaire, y compris le BTP, regroupe 22,5 % de l'emploi total.

Près de la moitié (49% en 2017) des actifs occupés sont des salariés, majoritairement des hommes (51,2%), 29,8% sont des indépendants et 16,3% des aides familiaux. Cette dernière catégorie représente 40,5% chez les femmes contre 9% chez les hommes. Cette structure a montré un relatif changement par rapport à 2014, où on observe une certaine amélioration de la part du salariat et des indépendantes associées à une régression significative des aides familiales.

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<sup>112</sup> Ministère du Travail et de l'Insertion Professionnelle, OP. Cit, P : 22



## Les programmes mises en œuvre dans le domaine de l'emploi au Maroc

Enfin, plusieurs programmes ont été mises en œuvre afin d'améliorer la situation de l'emploi au Maroc et pour permettre aux chercheurs d'emplois de correspondre leurs compétences aux attentes du marché du travail (Tableau 1).

**Tableau N° 1 : Programmes futures du secteur de l'emploi**

Programmes	Visions
Taehil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- C'est un programme qui a pour objectif d'acquérir les compétences nécessaires permettant d'occuper un poste d'emploi identifié et, par conséquent, développer son employabilité et de réaliser des recrutements pour lesquels il a des difficultés à trouver les candidats ayant les compétences requises.</li><li>- Le nombre de chercheurs d'emploi est passé de 5.231 en 2019 à 5.238 chercheurs d'emploi en 2020</li></ul>
Mokawalati	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Un programme qui permet aux aux porteurs de projets de création d'entreprise, d'assurer la pérennité progressive du tissu économique régional à travers un dispositif de suivi des entreprises créées au cours de la période critique de démarrage.</li><li>- Le nombre de porteurs de projet est passé de 2.313 en 2019 à 3.561 porteurs de projet en 2020</li></ul>

Source : Budget citoyen 2020 et ETF « les politiques de l'emploi et les programmes actifs du marché du travail au Maroc »

Afin de dynamiser la création d'emplois, l'année 2021 sera caractérisée par :

- La poursuite du programme « soutenir l'insertion économique des jeunes dans la Région de Marrakech-Safi » prévu dans le cadre du partenariat stratégique 2019-2024 entre le Maroc et la Banque Mondiale.
- La mise en œuvre d'un programme similaire au niveau des Régions de Rabat-Salé-Kenitra, Tanger-Tétouan-AL Hoceima et Sous Massa dans le cadre de la coopération avec l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD).
- L'élaboration des études d'évaluation des politiques et programmes d'emploi et du marché du travail, dans le cadre du projet « Education et formation pour l'employabilité ».

Le Plan National de Promotion de l'Emploi (PNPE) 2018-2021 : qui vise la création de 1,2 million d'emplois à l'horizon 2021.

Parmi les mesures apportées par le PNPE qui sont les suivantes<sup>113</sup> :

- L'instauration d'un lien entre le niveau des incitations et le nombre des emplois dans la charte d'investissement ;
- L'appui au développement du secteur associatif compte tenu de son potentiel dans la création d'emplois ;
- L'encouragement du développement des programmes ciblés relatifs aux services d'utilité sociale et d'intérêt général ;
- La mise en œuvre des mesures procédurales permettant la soumission des coopératives aux marchés publics ;
- La mise en place des mécanismes d'appui à l'entreprise en situation difficile dans le but de limiter les pertes d'emploi ;
- L'appui à la création d'opportunités d'emploi en répondant aux besoins en services d'utilité sociale et d'intérêt public (services de proximité) ;
- La mise en place d'un comité de veille sur le marché de l'emploi chargé du suivi des créations et des pertes d'emploi et de l'évaluation de l'impact sur l'emploi des stratégies et plans sectoriels ;
- L'encouragement de la création d'entreprises à travers le développement d'un dispositif des programmes d'appui à l'auto-emploi et le développement de l'esprit de l'entrepreneuriat dans tous les niveaux de l'enseignement.

Par ailleurs, et pour faire face à la problématique de l'emploi notamment des jeunes et des personnes vulnérables, le PNPE a retenu un ensemble de mesures visant à améliorer le dispositif actuel des Programmes Actifs d'Emploi (PAE) et à mettre en place d'autres mesures en faveur des catégories spécifiques tels que les jeunes du milieu rural, les migrants et les ex-détenus.

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<sup>113</sup> Rapport de l'examen national volontaire de la mise en œuvre des objectifs du développement durable, 2020 P : 100.

Ainsi, en plus du renforcement et d'élargissement du champ d'action de l'ANAPEC et l'évaluation régulière des PAE actuels, le PNPE plaide pour l'élaboration de nouveaux programmes visant l'amélioration de l'employabilité et le soutien à l'emploi salarié, le développement des performances des agences privées de l'emploi, le renforcement de la proximité via des agences et espaces d'emploi, l'acquisition d'unités mobiles et le développement de services à distance. Pour ce qui est des catégories de la population active jugées vulnérables, il y'a lieu de mentionner des mesures qui visent, entre autres, à :

- ✓ Promouvoir l'emploi salarié selon une approche de ciblage des emplois / métiers pratiqués par les personnes en situation d'handicap selon la nature du handicap ;
- ✓ Promouvoir l'auto emploi dans le cadre de partenariat avec l'Entraide Nationale, l'Agence de Développement Social (ADS), l'INDH, le Fonds de Cohésion Sociale ;
- ✓ L'inclusion économique des jeunes à travers la création à partir de 2019, dans le cadre de la 3ème phase de l'INDH, des plateformes au niveau des provinces dédiées à l'écoute, à l'orientation et à l'accompagnement des jeunes entrepreneurs et porteurs de projets, et aussi, pour l'insertion des jeunes sur le marché du travail et le renforcement de leurs chances par l'adaptation de leurs qualifications et le développement de leurs compétences techniques.

Concernant l'insertion des jeunes sur le marché du travail et en particulier les NEETs, et plus précisément la promotion de l'emploi et de l'auto-emploi, le PNPE a retenu des actions en faveur des NEETs à travers la création de nouveaux emplois formels en faveur de cette catégorie des jeunes, le développement des soft-skills, l'enseignement des langues et l'accompagnement direct de ces jeunes par des actions de formation et de sensibilisation, par des encadrants sociaux formés à cette fin. Également, le Programme d'action du Haut-Commissariat aux Anciens Résistants et Anciens

Membres de l'Armée de Libération vise la promotion de l'emploi à travers des actions axées sur le développement des activités productives, l'entrepreneuriat, la croissance des petites et moyennes entreprises et la création des coopératives notamment à travers l'incitation des descendants d'ARAMAL à l'auto-emploi, à l'action entrepreneuriale et à l'octroi d'aides financières pour la création des petites et moyennes entreprises.

Dans le cadre de l'auto-emploi, le nombre des petites et moyennes entreprises créées s'élève à 322 en 2019 contre 83 en 2016 alors que le nombre de coopératives créées est de 27 en 2019 contre 14 en 2016.

D'autres programmes et mesures sont destinés aux jeunes marocains, on cite quelques-unes :

- ✓ Renforcer le système d'insertion professionnelle des jeunes à travers de nouvelles approches d'orientation et d'accompagnement et des liens plus solides avec le monde du travail. Le système d'orientation académique au sein des établissements scolaires et d'insertion professionnelle de l'ANAPEC doit être rénové pour mieux aider les jeunes à choisir dans la diversité des parcours et des opportunités de formation et d'emploi et être mis en relation avec de futurs employeurs. Il est notamment proposé de renforcer le lien entre les employeurs, d'une part, et les institutions d'enseignement et de formation, d'autre part, à travers la mise en place de contrats d'apprentissage, et le développement d'offres de stage et d'alternance en entreprise, avec la mise en place d'un cadre légal adéquat pour les stages. Il sera également important de saisir les opportunités d'emploi et d'entrepreneuriat des jeunes dans le numérique à travers une offre de formation innovante et adaptée aux besoins du secteur privé<sup>114</sup>.

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<sup>114</sup> Rapport sur le nouveau modèle de développement, libérer les énergies et restaurer la confiance pour accélérer la marche vers le progrès et la prospérité pour tous, 2021, P : 122.

- ✓ Mettre en place un programme national intégré de la Jeunesse, géré dans les territoires par des entités professionnelles sous contrat de performance. Ce programme couvrira l'ensemble des besoins identifiés chez les jeunes : culture et arts, sport et loisirs, inclusion socio-économique, participation citoyenne, et assistance sociale. Il pourra se déployer dans des espaces socioculturels et sportifs destinés aux jeunes, disponibles en proximité, en capitalisant sur les infrastructures existantes, et en veillant à leur accessibilité. Sa mise en œuvre passera par une approche innovante qui s'appuie sur : une structure garante de la stratégie de déploiement de la politique publique de la jeunesse, du financement et des partenariats ; et sur des agences professionnelles de mise en œuvre en charge de l'implémentation des programmes en retour au sommaire partenariat avec des prestataires privés ou associatifs, expérimentés et ancrés dans les territoires.
- ✓ Mettre en place un service civique national pour renforcer la participation citoyenne et l'esprit de civisme des jeunes et consolider leurs compétences et leur employabilité. Il est proposé de mettre en place un service civique sous forme de volontariat rémunéré symboliquement pour l'accomplissement de missions d'intérêt général, notamment auprès d'acteurs de la société civile (associations et programmes de solidarité sociale, programmes de développement communautaire, programmes environnementaux de type reforestation, etc.).

Selon le rapport de la banque mondiale, parmi les perspectives du plan stratégique 2017-2021<sup>115</sup> est l'amélioration des conditions de vie par l'emploi pour les jeunes, les femmes et en zone rurale. L'intervention de la Banque mettra premièrement l'accent sur la promotion de l'employabilité,

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<sup>115</sup> Rapport de la banque africaine de développement, documents de stratégies de pays :2017-2021, P :45

l'entrepreneuriat, et le passage de la formation à l'emploi. Elle s'attachera à appuyer le Maroc à lever les contraintes identifiées dans le diagnostic de croissance et portant sur le capital humain en général et sur l'éducation en particulier. Cet appui passera par le financement d'appuis budgétaires aux réformes selon une approche programmatique.

Au sein de ces appuis budgétaires, la Banque appuiera les politiques permettant d'améliorer: les compétences des jeunes pour faciliter leur insertion professionnelle ; l'efficacité des mécanismes de régulation de l'offre de formation selon les besoins de l'économie ; la transition de la formation vers l'emploi pour réduire le taux de chômage qui augmente avec le niveau de qualification ; la mobilité des jeunes travailleurs tout en les protégeant ; l'accès des jeunes filles à l'éducation en particulier en zone rurale. Pour renforcer ce dernier point et afin de promouvoir l'intégration économique de la femme, la Banque appuiera l'entrepreneuriat féminin à travers la création de Fonds qui viendrait compléter les efforts déployés dans ce sens sous l'ancienne stratégie 2012-2016 (Garantie ILYAKI, PADESFI III). Des assistances techniques seront considérées pour soutenir les actions de la Banque dans la promotion de l'employabilité et du passage de la formation professionnelle à l'emploi.

## **Conclusion**

Le marché du travail a évolué et s'est transformé et les difficultés rencontrées face à l'emploi ont changé de nature. D'un marché de travail où le secteur public contribuait fortement à l'absorption d'une grande partie de l'offre de travail, on est passé à un marché où ce rôle s'est considérablement réduit tout en rendant l'accès à l'emploi encore plus difficile en raison de la faiblesse du rythme de croissance, de la jeunesse du système productif privé marocain et surtout de son orientation vers l'exportation avec un effet sur la nature des emplois créés, peu qualifiés et mal rémunérés, nous avons pu montrer que le système statistique marocain souffrait d'un ensemble de

difficultés d'ordre méthodologique et conceptuel qui constituaient une entrave de taille à l'amélioration du système d'information. En effet, sous l'angle de la relation formation-emploi et de la connaissance du fonctionnement du marché du travail qui lui est associée, ces difficultés revêtent un caractère crucial car ce champ de recherche, dans sa complexité, nécessite l'utilisation d'une information aux contenus définis avec précision et à la portée explicative adaptée aux problèmes abordés.

Le Maroc cherche donc également à tirer profit d'un « dividende démographique » substantiel qui persistera jusqu'en 2040. L'augmentation de la population en âge de travailler peut-être une force puissante pour la croissance économique, l'inclusion sociale et le développement. Cependant, elle exige en même temps de créer des emplois plus nombreux et de meilleure qualité pour absorber la main-d'œuvre croissante. Alors que le Maroc cherche à adopter un modèle de croissance axé sur l'emploi, il est important de reconnaître que la croissance économique elle-même ne se traduit pas automatiquement par une hausse de l'emploi. Le pays aura aussi besoin d'une transformation structurelle qui favorisera la création d'emplois productifs.

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## ANNEXE

### خلال وما بعد جائحة فيروس كوفيد 19 : الأستاذ الهجرة واللجوء كقيمة مضافة للتنمية بوبكر لركو

أعلنت المفوضية السامية لحقوق الإنسان، ميشيل باشليت، خلال شهر مارس 2020، بأن "كوفيد 19 امتحان لنا جميعا كمجتمعات، ونحن نتعلم ونتكيف مع كل تفاعلات الجائحة"، وبأن "فقداننا لحقوق الإنسان، يجب أن تبقى في قلب هذا المجهود ولا تصبح في المرتبة الثانية".  
وطالب الأمين العام للأمم المتحدة غوتيريس دول العالم باحترام حقوق الإنسان خلال مكافحتها لفيروس كورونا "المستجد"، محذرا من خطورة المعلومات المضللة بشأن الفيروس، حيث أكد بتاريخ 14 أبريل 2020 على أنه:

"بينما يحارب العالم جائحة كورونا نشهد أيضا جائحة أخرى، وهي المعلومات المضللة حول الفيروس، ويجب الاتحاد ضد هذا المرض عبر الوثوق بالعلم وبالصحفيين الذين يدققون في قصصهم الإخبارية، كما شدد على أهمية الثقة ببعضنا بعضا، وعلى أن الحفاظ على حقوق الإنسان يجب أن تكون بوصلتنا في الإبحار في هذه الأزمة".

وبما أن فئة اللاجئين والمهاجرين من الفئات الأكثر هشاشة فإن المفوضية السامية لحقوق الإنسان خصتها بتوجيهات لحمايتها في مواجهة جائحة فيروس كوفيد 19، بتاريخ 7 أبريل 2020، نلخصها فيما يلي:

- المساواة بين جميع الأشخاص في إقليم الدولة؛
- اتخاذ تدابير تشريعية وسياسية وإدارية وعملية وتواصلية لضمان وصول المهاجرين والمهاجرين الى مرافق الرعاية الصحية وحصولهم على السلع والخدمات؛
- إتاحة جميع المعلومات المتعلقة بالوقاية وبجميع اللغات للمهاجرين والمهاجرين مع إشراكهم في ذلك؛
- الإفراج عن المهاجرين والمهاجرين من مراكز الاحتجاز ووضع بدائل لذلك مع التكفل بسكنهم وغذائهم وغيرهما من الخدمات الأساسية.

إلى جانب إصدار مجموعة من الممارسات الواعدة التي نصت عليها وثيقة المفوضية السامية لحقوق الإنسان التي أصدرتها بتاريخ 22 يونيو 2020 في إطار المواضيع محور الاهتمام {التمييز العنصري في زمن كوفيد} حيث أكدت مثلاً على أنه على الدول والقادة الدينيين والمجتمع المدني تعزيز التضامن والرسائل المتعلقة بمكافحة التمييزية ومكافحة التحريض على الكراهية من خلال المشاركة والتعليم.

إذا كان الوعي الأممي ضميراً للإنسانية فإن بعض الممارسات والملاحظات التي تم تسجيلها خلال هذه التجربة الإنسانية الصعبة يمكن إجمالها في:

#### ✓ خلال الحجر الصحي الذي فرض من طرف اغلب الدول:

- التمييز بين مواطنات ومواطني البلد الواحد وبين الأجانب في كثير من الدول بل لوحظ تمييز بين كبار السن وباقي الساكنة في التمتع بالعلاج في بعضها كإسبانيا وإيطاليا؛
- الاستحواذ على وسائل الوقاية والتجهيزات الصحية (الكمامات وغيرها) من طرف بعض الدول ورفض تصديرها إلى الدول التي تعاني من الخصاص وتفشي الجائحة؛
- ارتفاع تحويلات المهاجرين والمهاجرين إلى بلدانهم الأصلية؛
- تسجيل هجرة عكسية من الدول الأوروبية إلى شمال إفريقيا (قام العديد من المغاربة بدخول المغرب بطرق غير قانونية وكذا بعض الأسر السورية...).

#### ✓ ما بعد الحجر الصحي:

- رجوع أنشطة الهجرة غير النظامية بقوة؛
- استفحال أنشطة تهريب المهاجرين وشبكات الاتجار بالبشر؛
- ظهور حاجة بعض الدول الأوروبية لليد العاملة خاصة الفلاحية أمام ارتفاع وفيات مواطنيها نتيجة الجائحة (إيطاليا وإسبانيا اللتين استقدمتا عددا منها من المغرب)؛
- ارتفاع حاجة بعض الدول الأوروبية للأطر الصحية والتمريضية (كفرنسا وبريطانيا وألمانيا، حيث تم استقبال مئات بل آلاف من هذه الأطر من بلدان شمال إفريقيا).

وإذا كانت التحويلات التي قام بها المهاجرون والمهاجرات لبلدانهم الأصلية قد:

- خففت من حدة الفقر أمام انخفاض مناصب وفرص الشغل بسبب الحجر الصحي وتوقف الكثير من المشاريع وإغلاق العديد من المقاولات الصناعية والخدماتية وإفلاس بعضها؛
- ارتفاع احتياطات العملات الأجنبية التي استخدمت في عملية التزود بالأجهزة الطبية واللقاحات...

فإن الطلب على اليد العاملة النسوية من طرف الدول الأوروبية قد ساهمت في تمكين المرأة، رغم قساوة الظروف التي تشتغل فيها، أما هجرة الكفاءات والأطر العليا التي ستطال ليس الأطر الصحية والتمريضية فحسب بل تعدتها للأطر العليا في ميادين المعلومات والهندسة وكذا الأساتذة الجامعيين...

ومن هنا نستنتج العلاقة الجدلية بين التنمية والهجرة واللجوء، حيث يساهم أطر وكفاءات الضفة الجنوبية في رقي الدول الغربية في ميادين البحث العلمي والحفاظ على مستوى صحي وتعليمي ممتازين الى جانب مساهمة اليد العاملة في اقتصاديات هذه الدول التي تعاني من نقص حاد في الساكنة النشيطة أمام شيخوخة أهرامها السكانية؛ في حين تستفيد دول الجنوب المصدرة لهذه الكفاءات واليد العاملة من التحويلات المالية التي يقوم بها هؤلاء بحيث الى جانب ما سبق تسجيله أعلاه نلاحظ دور هذه التحويلات في التنمية من خلال:

- الرفع من مستوى المشاريع المحلية؛
  - الرفع من المبادلات التجارية؛
  - دعمها لملايين الأسر والرفع من مستواها المعيشي؛
  - التخفيض من نسب البطالة؛
  - المساهمة المباشرة أو غير مباشرة في تحديث المجتمع ونشر ثقافة حقوق الانسان ومبادئ الديمقراطية.
- وذلك رغم اعتبار تصدير الكفاءات والأطر العليا والشباب خسارة كبرى من جهة واستغلالا بشعا من طرف الدول الغربية لدول الجنوب الذي وظف أموالا طائلة لتكوين هذه الفئات.

وهكذا يتضح دور الهجرة واللجوء كقيمة مضافة للطرفين رغم التباين البين بين استفادة الدول المستقبلية والدول المصدرة للهجرة واللجوء، وإذا كانت دول الجنوب وخاصة في شمال افريقيا تعيش انتقلا ديمغرافيا وديمقراطيا حيث أن الساكنة النشيطة في ارتفاع مستمر بحيث لا يجب ان نعتبر هذه الهبة عالة على الدول بل هي قوة هائلة إذا ما تم توظيفها في التنمية وذلك بالتقليص من العوامل الطاردة لها نحو الهجرة، من جهة؛ من جهة أخرى بوضع استراتيجيات سياسية لإنجاح الانتقال الديمقراطي في هذه الدول وذلك من خلال:

- الربط بين التنمية وحقوق الإنسان والديمقراطية من جهة والانتقال الديمقراطي من جهة أخرى؛
- إعادة النظر في السياسات التنموية التي أخفق جلها؛
- الاستفادة من الخبرات التي اكتسبها أبناء المنطقة في المهجر لتطوير بلدانهم وهذا مؤشرا لاحتنا بخصوص التلقيح والأجهزة الطبية وغيرهما (حالة المغرب)؛
- الاستفادة من الرساميل التي راكمها هؤلاء بتيسير شروط الاستثمار في بلدانهم الأصلية؛
- خلق شراكات استثمارية بين مقاولاتهم المتواجدة في الغرب والمقاولات في الأوطان الأصلية؛
- الرقي بإعلان نيويورك، الذي أقرته الجمعية العامة للأمم المتحدة في 19 سبتمبر 2016، الى اتفاقية ملزمة لجميع الأطراف والاتفاق العالمي من أجل الهجرة الآمنة والمنظمة والنظامية، الموقع عليه في يوليوز 2018 بمراكش، والميثاق العالمي بشأن

اللاجئين، الذي أقرته الجمعية العامة للأمم المتحدة في 17 دجنبر 2018، الى اتفاقيات ملزمة لجميع الأطراف بمراعاة ملاحظات وتوصيات المجتمع المدني العالمي؛

■ التسريع بإعمال الأهداف التي نص عليها الاتفاق العالمي من أجل الهجرة الآمنة والمنظمة والنظامية مع إحقاق مقتضياته وخاصة الأهداف التالية ذات الصلة بشروط التنمية وتقويتها:

- تيسير حصول المهاجرين على الخدمات الأساسية (الهدف 15)؛  
- تمكين المهاجرين والمجتمعات من تحقيق الاندماج والتماسك الاجتماعي الكاملين (الهدف 16)؛

- القضاء على جميع أشكال التمييز وتعزيز الخطاب العام المستند الأدلة من أجل التأثير على تصورات العامة عن الهجرة (الهدف 17)؛  
- الاستثمار في تنمية المهارات وتيسير الاعتراف المتبادل بالمهارات والمؤهلات والكفاءات (الهدف 18)؛

- خلق ظروف تساعد المهاجرين والمغتربين على المساهمة الكاملة في التنمية المستدامة في جميع البلدان (الهدف 19)؛  
- تشجيع إرسال التحويلات المالية بوسائل أسرع وأكثر أماناً وتيسير الاندماج المالي للمهاجرين (الهدف 20)؛

- التعاون على تيسير عودة المهاجرين والسماح بإعادة دخولهم بصورة آمنة تصون كرامتهم وكذلك إعادة إدماجهم إدماجاً مستداماً (الهدف 21)؛  
- إنشاء آليات من أجل تحويل استحقاقات الضمان الاجتماعي والاستحقاقات المكتسبة (الهدف 22)؛

- تعزيز التعاون الدولي والشراكات العالمية تحقيقاً للهجرة الآمنة والمنظمة والنظامية (الهدف 23).

■ أن تتوجه الأمم المتحدة والمجتمع الدولي نحو الحد من كل ما له علاقة باستفحال ظاهرتي الهجرة واللجوء وأساساً:

- إقرار السلم والسلام في العالم بالحسم في حل القضايا المسببة لعدم الاستقرار والأمن في الكرة الأرضية؛

- الحد من العوامل التي تؤدي الى الاحتباس الحراري وذلك بالربط بين التغيرات المناخية والأهداف العالمية للتنمية المستدامة، خاصة وأن انعكاسات التغيرات المناخية جلية بخصوص الهجرة واللجوء القسري بسبب الكوارث الطبيعية من توالي سنوات الجفاف والفيضانات ...

Ammas dihya n ezrfan ufgan, tadimuqratyt d tanukra  
مركز ديهيا لحقوق الإنسان والديموقراطية والتنمية  
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