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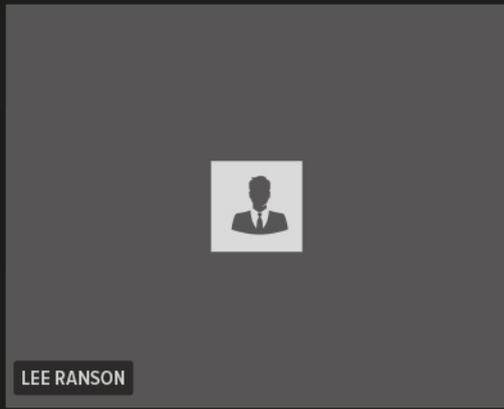
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The Leadership Issue

MAY 2020

MANAGING REMOTELY

Leadership in the first weeks of the pandemic



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RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN FRENCH-SPEAKING SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Armed with an existing knowledge of how to contain diseases, many African nations have acted quickly to stop the spread of Covid-19

The African continent was hit by the Covid-19 pandemic later than most of the world. As the pandemic progresses across the continent, several Sub-Saharan French-speaking African countries have started enforcing strict prevention measures at a very early stage.

The World Health Organization Director-General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, warned on 18 March that “Africa has to prepare for the worse” and African countries have been stepping up to the plate. Governments and leaders have been taking action, implementing measures and adapting them every day, as the pandemic spreads.

These measures are similar to those adopted in other continents. But what is striking is how quickly these measures were implemented, at a time when very few cases were identified (and sometimes even without any identified cases).

The preparation for dealing with highly contagious diseases such as ebola, cholera, etc. is arguably an explanation for such a swift reaction. In fact, the social habits, organisation and infrastructures that were implemented during these outbreaks can now be recycled and put back into operation better to respond to the Covid-19 crisis.

The following measures have been progressively implemented in each country, albeit in a non-coordinated fashion:

- State of emergency. Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire, Congo-Brazzaville and the DRC all declared a state of emergency or a state of health emergency to deal with the crisis.
- Border control. Cameroon, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Congo-Brazzaville, the DRC, Gabon and Senegal have closed their land, sea and air borders except for cargo carriers.
- Quarantine. Senegal and Gabon ordered a systematic quarantine for any persons having travelled to/from risk countries. Gabon, Côte d’Ivoire and the DRC have implemented confinement measures for any person testing positive for the virus or having been in contact with persons who have tested positive.
- Travelling bans. The DRC and Côte d’Ivoire have banned travel to and from infected regions (such as Kinshasa and Abidjan) while Gabon, Chad and Congo-Brazzaville have limited all non-essential travel in the country.
- Restrictions on public transportation. The DRC, Chad, Cameroon, Gabon and Senegal have imposed limitations on public transportation, which include restricting the number of authorised passengers.

- Limitations on public gatherings. Due to the high contamination risk of Covid-19, states have implemented measures relating to public spaces in order to avoid the spread of the pandemic. For example, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Congo-Brazzaville, the DRC, Gabon and Senegal have imposed a limitation on public gatherings and closed down all schools and universities as well as bars and restaurants. Gabon, Chad and Congo-Brazzaville have also closed down all places of worship.
- Curfew. Senegal, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon and Côte d’Ivoire have implemented curfews throughout the national territory. Congo-Brazzaville has further ordered the home confinement of the entire population, except for those supplying essential goods and services.
- Requisitioning. Cameroon and Congo-Brazzaville have requisitioned health facilities to treat Covid-19 patients, and Côte d’Ivoire and the DRC have declared the free treatment of all positive cases and diagnosis of the virus.
- Covid-19 funds. To better arm themselves for the war on the pandemic, Senegal, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville and Côte d’Ivoire have set up specific Covid-19 funds endowed with public funds.
- Prevention. The population is reminded of the World Health Organization hygiene measures. Some countries, such as Chad and Côte d’Ivoire, have set up a toll-free number for any information relating to the disease.
- Sanctions. Chad and Senegal have implemented measures to combat any undue price increases. While the DRC has set up specific fines for the breach of the implemented measures, Gabon has reminded that persons breaching such measures could be charged with a crime of endangerment.

There is no knowing how vast and grave the consequences of this pandemic will be in these countries, but it is certain that the existing net has helped contain the crisis from an early stage. But will these measures be enough to contain the pandemic, when there is a lack of medical facilities, when people must leave their homes every day to work and buy food and when urban closeness does not allow for social distancing?



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