

## ActionAid Senegal Policy brief Number 2

Applying the Triple bottom line (People, Planet, Progressive taxation) to ensure sustainable social justice to end poverty

### Human and the environment at the center of economic recovery programs for social justice

#### Introduction

It has been more than 7 months now since the World over encountered the coronas virus pandemic of a rare severity. The number of deaths according to the World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>1</sup> is 37,748,234 cases of infection, 1,081,443, deaths and 28,350,523 recovered cases. Apart from the Spanish virus which killed between 20 to 50 million people<sup>2</sup>, never in the history of humanity that the World had to face such a serious pandemic which shows millions of cases of infection and several death tolls. bordering on hundreds of thousands around the world. The immediate effects of this pandemic in Africa continue to raise concerns, even though it remains the continent with fewer cases of infections so far.

The latest information regarding the impact of COVID-19 on African economies is not good. According to the United Nations Commission for Trade and Development (UNCTAD)<sup>3</sup>,

the growth of the continent's gross domestic product could decline from 3.2 to 1.8% in 2020. At the same time, the current economic situation in Senegal is worrying. Indeed, the pandemic has caused Senegal's growth to drop from a forecast rate of 6.8% to 1.1%<sup>4</sup> or even less in 2020. This decline in growth will undoubtedly cause Senegal the closure of several Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) run by women and young people and many job losses in prospect and a high probability of technical unemployment. The projection from different sectors indicated that the situation will be worst if we continue to do business as usual. It is in this perspective that ActionAid Senegal produces this policy note to reflect on the urgent need to for a paradigm shift and to review priorities in this post COVID-19 period. It is also an invitation to put at the center of the development architecture human and the environmental consideration.

#### The Role of Senegalese government

##### Encouraging results, of course, but which should not hide the realities of the precariousness of our public services and their governance

In Senegal, the efforts of the government, the medical profession, civil society, and social movements in the fight against COVID -19 have been recognized and hailed by the international community. It is clear that these efforts by Senegal in the fight against COVID-19 are not in vain, it would be important in addition to the Economic and Social Resilience (PRES) program amounting to 1000 billion FCFA / 1, \$ 7 billion (USD) equivalent to 7% of GDP - funded by donors, the private sector and the national budget, to ensure that the responses initiated can liberate people from poverty and push them to become real actors of their own change.

To do this, it is important to work to ensure food sovereignty, health sovereignty, economic and political sovereignty. Efforts need to be made in the health sector because Senegal has still not reached the doctor population ratio as recommended by WHO to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) number 3. In addition, we observe strong regional disparities in terms of the geographical distribution of human resources and infrastructures.

1- <https://www.who.int/fr/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---31-august-2020>

2- [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grippe\\_espagnole](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grippe_espagnole)

3- <https://www.financialafrik.com/2020/05/16/covid-19-consequences-sur-les-economies-africaines-et-perspectives-de-solutions/>

4- [https://www.seneweb.com/news/Economie/abdoulaye-daouda-diallo-laquo-la-pandemi\\_n\\_328495.htm](https://www.seneweb.com/news/Economie/abdoulaye-daouda-diallo-laquo-la-pandemi_n_328495.htm)



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## ▶ The role of Civil society organization and ActionAid Senegal

### ▶ ActionAid Senegal contribution to the fight against COVID-19 pandemic

ActionAid Senegal and its partners also participated in the fight against COVID-19 through a humanitarian response and resilience program that directly affected 183 communities, mostly made up of vulnerable households, who benefited from 5,000 hygiene kits, agricultural input kits (seeds, organic fertilizers, technical support, etc.), school kits in the form of educational

Workbooks for students in exam classes, food kits, communication tools on barrier gestures to avoid the spread of Covid-19. All in all, this contribution is estimated at 100 million francs. Currently, awareness campaigns through community radios are still running. Added to this is the production of awareness capsules with young people and ACTIVISTA.



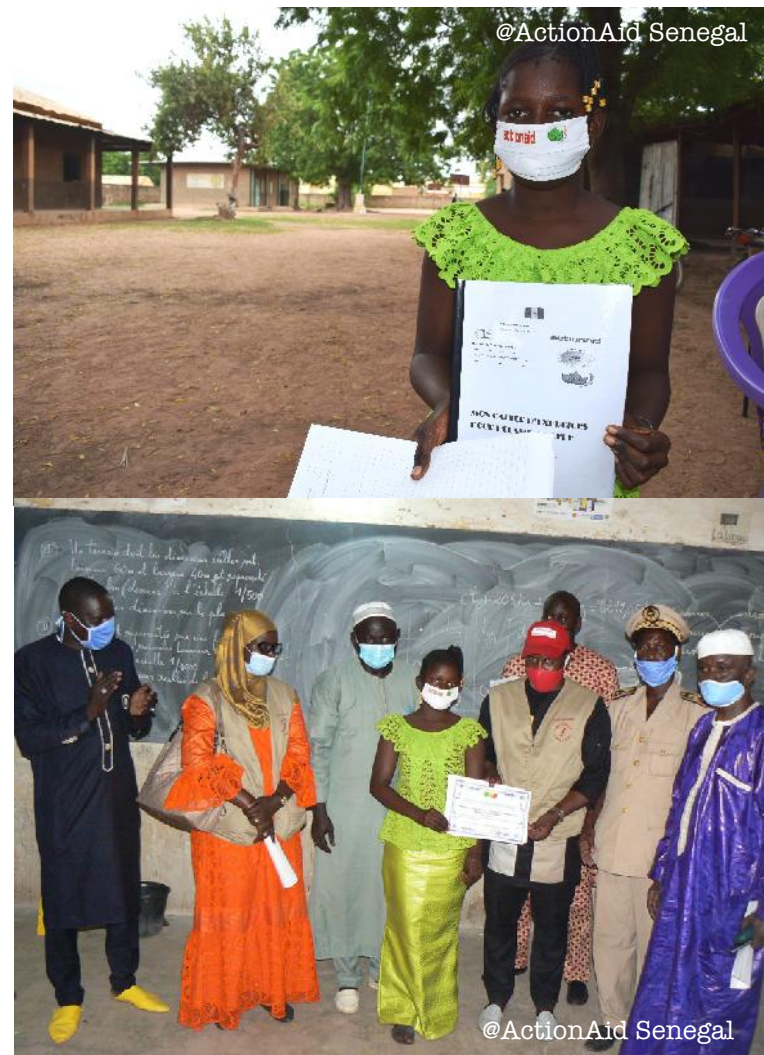
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The COVID-19 pandemic has affected most of the sectors in Senegal. The implication of the pandemic on the education sector has resulted in the closure of schools and restrictions in some of the business as well as mobility. Teachers and children were obliged to find some alternatives which have enabled them to pursue their study during the lockdown. This is because most of the parents were afraid to know when the schools will reopen and when the examination will happen. One of the students we meet in Koussanar LRP, Fatou spoke about her journey and the importance she attaches to her education with these words: "I was born in 2007, I still live with my grandmother and my uncle. I have a good education so that I can succeed in life. Now I am in 5th grade. The COVID-19 has greatly affected the smooth running of our classes at school. With the classes closure our schedule has been greatly reduced. I was very happy to learn that the State of Senegal had decided to save this school year by resuming classes before the exams. Luckily for us too, ActionAid Senegal and its partner came to the rescue of the Senegalese government by producing booklets. I personally benefited from Language and Communication, booklets, Mathematics and Education for Science and Social Life (ESVS) booklets. I am very grateful, and happy to see the good work that ActionAid Senegal in collaboration with the teacher's unions and its local partner are doing in our communities.

We can see the positive results we gained this year because the number of girls who passed their exams has increased compared to last year. This kind of support will encourage me to continue my education and to fulfil my dream to become a doctor".



## Senegalese Civil society active role during the pandemic

Civil society in Senegal<sup>5</sup> has played a pivotal role to combat COVID-19 pandemic at different levels. Even if the lockdown has restricted some of their mobility and works in the ground, CSO in Senegal have been very active in connecting directly with their local partners to reach vulnerable communities for hygiene's kits (WASH), food, distributions, cash transfer among others. In addition, CSO have been involved in the COVID-19 local and national management committee. This has enabled them to contribute to the reflection and information sharing. Some online mobilization, webinar discussions on different issues like,

African debt cancellation and governance, combatting violence against during the pandemic, agriculture financing, shrinking civic spaces, migrations have been organized and shared in different social media. As a result of CSO contribution highly appreciated by the government and the populations the number of COVID-19 infections cases has decreased significantly. In Senegal, the youth movement Y'en a Marre, Activist and Global platform Senegal, etc. has switched gears from advocating for transparent and democratic governance to disseminating songs that promote social distancing.

5- <https://www.who.int/fr/news-room/detail/24-08-2020-172-countries-and-multiple-candidate-vaccines-engaged-in-covid-19-vaccine-global-access-facility>

## Our concern to be address by the government

### Austerity and victimization are not a solution

Indeed, it has been noted that since the announcement of a decline in growth rates, most African states have reopened their air and land borders to avoid economic crisis. according to some institutions, the economic recession in post COVID-19 would be fatal for the survival of African economics and populations. Therefore ActionAid Senegal, like many other civil society organizations, supports the declaration of the heads of state calling for the debt cancellation to face the pandemic and the recovery of the economy. This revival of the economy must be accompanied by a paradigm shift. This paradigm shift should consist of considering the people rights and voices in all the decisions making process. This is also linked to the promotion of transparency, accountability, and citizen participation to achieve good governance. This change will be made with a strong national private sector (national champions), the social partners engaged and largely financed by domestic fund and against austerity. In this case, it would be important to avoid as much as possible

the recommendations of the IMF and the World Bank<sup>6</sup>, strongly affected by COVID-19. which often advise our countries to be good riders of international institutions and industrialized countries. During the COVID-19 some cases of police brutality have been reported. The cases has increased during this economic crisis (post COVID-19), targeting mainly, informal sectors, journalists, activists and human rights defenders, whose only fault has been to demand their business to be open as well as to respect their rights, promote transparency in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic funds. ActionAid Senegal calls on the government to seriously restructure the Senegalese economy going forward to make it more efficient while putting people and the environment at the center of decisions, policies and programs. In the same vein, it was also found that this pandemic, though serious, did not discourage young people to migrate, on the contrary every day hundreds of young Senegalese use canoes of fortune to try adventure in Europe which, is also

### Do not shy away, let us celebrate African countries for COVID-19 good management

Despite the earlier predictions of worst-case scenario most of the African countries have well manage the covid-19 pandemic. These great efforts need to be recognized and use as an example for other continents. So let us celebrate that and continue to be vigilant, because, even if the latest results recorded by African countries are encouraging if we compare it to the current trends in Europe, America and Asia, which are experiencing a second wave of infection thus causing concerns for the doctors who are struggling to cope with this new wave of coronavirus infection. At the same time, this achievement can be fragile if there is no solidarity within

African countries in this context where no vaccine has been discovered yet. So, if no vaccine has been recognized and approved by the WHO is discovered against this coronavirus pandemic even though here and there voices are being raised to announce the possible availability of a vaccine in 2021, why Africa is not working on African solutions. This strong competition from states and between scientist to be the first to discover and market a vaccine against COVID-19 took the disappointment on the sensitization of the populations for the respect of barrier gestures and the behavior change essential to overcome the pandemic.

6- <https://www.imf.org/fr/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/04/14/weo-april-2020>

## Policy Recommendations

After analyzing the situation and especially in this period when states are talking about reviving the economy, the COVID-19 pandemic is the occasion for a new start, for a new social pact between the government, populations, national private sectors, civil society, unions and development partners in order to build a better future for all.

To do this, the priority must be people and the environment at the center of any vision, plan, program, projects.

Thus, ActionAid Senegal makes the following recommendations:

### 1 Ensure substantial funding for education to fight against early marriages, and violence against women and girls

The education sector has been hit hard by the negative impacts of covid19. The alternatives in the way of continuing education and learning for students in exam classes and those in intermediate classes, namely: school on TV, on the radio, although welcomed by the actors as an innovation has also shown their limits especially above all for children in rural areas and for those in disabilities.

In addition, the closure of schools during this COVID-19 period will undoubtedly contribute to increase the school dropout rate. This consequence will affect girls even more, who in the long run will be exposed to early marriages, domestic violence, and domestic care. The government of Senegal must rely on internal resources by taking bold steps in progressive tax reform and moving away from a largely regressive system, targeting more the poor.

### 2 Create a more resilient society through the promotion of agroecology and sustainable management of the environment and natural resources in Senegal

Climate change is a serious threat for the creation of resilient society and country it can manifested (flood, droughts, sea advance, bush fires, temperature increase, etc.) has shown the urgency of reviewing the State's strategy in terms of economic development, dependence on fossil fuels and agro-business. The state must further promote family farming, strengthen sustainable agriculture and resilience to climate change. The fight against floods in Senegal must promote human dignity and be based on an integrated plan / program to consider all contours including land use planning, restructuring of non-aedificandi areas<sup>7</sup>. The state of Senegal should therefore, in addition to civil protection agents, integrate humanitarian organizations, civil society specializing in humanitarian issues, endowed with the means for better care of the victims.

We call government and people to build a sustainable, just society that is resilient in times of crises such as COVID-19 and climate change, the government must make additional efforts to finance agriculture and the agroecology transition. This funding must be a priority in this context of COVID-19 to guarantee the country food sovereignty and thus respect the Malabo commitments but also the Sustainable Development Goal 13. The government of Senegal must make the processing of quality agricultural, livestock and fishery products a real priority during the post COVID-19 period to achieved SDG 2. The processing of local products must be a priority to boost the primary and secondary sector to reduce food imports and strengthen intra-African trade.

7- [http://www.jo.gouv.sn/spip.php?article7177&var\\_recherche=urbanisme](http://www.jo.gouv.sn/spip.php?article7177&var_recherche=urbanisme)

### 3 Improve the quality of gender-sensitive public services for all and everywhere for more social justice and respect for human rights

Despite the efforts of the Senegalese government in the management of the pandemic, there is an urgent need to increase health, education, social protection sectors spending and work for health sovereignty in Senegal. Because this Covid-19 pandemic shows the fragility of the current health system and the difficulties of the most vulnerable peoples to access it. Increase the funding and availability of gender-sensitive public services to help the most vulnerable segments, especially women and girls. In addition, we urge the Senegalese government to speed up the recruitment of 500 doctors and 1,000 nurses to fill the existing gap and make great progress in line with WHO recommendations.

By taking a combination actions on taxation, debt and austerity, the government of Senegal could transform the quality of all public services and begin shaping a sustainable economy that takes care of the triple bottom line principle: people, planet and domestic funding; It is also urgent to invite African scientists to invest more in vaccine research and avoid undermining African COVID-19 solution like what happened with Madagascar. This leads us to question the degree of solidarity of Africans once a peer comes to discover a vaccine against COVID-19. Therefore, ActionAid Senegal encourages African countries not to privilege only economic recovery. It's important to combine it with building good health systems that would guarantee health, food sovereignty.

### 4 Call for debt cancellation to free development and strengthen intra-African cooperation

The government of Senegal and civil society should continue to demand debt cancellation. Because this debt cancellation would free up additional funds to invest in the quality of public health services, education, social protection, agriculture, etc. The Senegalese government must reject the harmful conditions attached to IMF/World Bank loans.

The IMF's and other privates' loans constraints on the public sector wage bill are blocking the recruitment and decent remuneration of nurses, orderlies, teachers, and other essential front-line personnel, who have enabled Senegal to bring the pandemic under control.

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## 5 Make transparency and good governance a priority to fulfil people rights

Senegal adopted in 2012 the code of transparency in the management of public finances (law n° 2012-22 of December 27, 2012), which is a good thing to promote accountability and allow citizens to have reliable information on the management of public resources. To do this, the government of Senegal should commit themselves to making COVID-19 spending and future borrowing transparent and understandable to citizens, so they know how their taxes are being used to improve their living conditions. This is the time for Senegal to insist on its right to spend the income it generates to provide a comprehensive and sustainable response to Covid-19 and invest in achieving the SDGs, rather than paying old and illegitimate debts services that will only delay the country's economic take-off. The government should be uncompromisingly vigilant in the fight against corruption and tax evasion, which are scourges for the mobilization of domestic resources.

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## 6 Humanize migration to restore the rights of migrants and their families

The government of Senegal must strengthen the rights of migrants and returnees, as migration in Senegal plays an important role in the economy and social. About 75% of migrants' transfers<sup>8</sup> are intended for the basic needs of the populations (daily expenditure, food, rent, education, transport, investment, etc.).

According to United Nations agencies, the COVID-19 crisis has had a strong impact, a 30% drop in migrant remittances was recorded in June 2020, because the main countries that host these migrants and their families (Italy, France, Spain) were strongly affected by the pandemic due to a relatively long lockdown, which exposed migrants to unemployment.

8- <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/rba/docs/COVID-19-CO-Response/UNDP-rba-COVID-assessment-Senegal.pdf>

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