



## National Observatory of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

BP 5268 Mimboman-Yaoundé, Cameroon Tel. 00237 694 46 47 63

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

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

Web sites: [www.ondesc.org](http://www.ondesc.org)

### **State of the implementation of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Cameroon during the COVID-19 crisis**

### **Joint reports for March and April 2020**

*Even in times of crisis, ESC rights must be guaranteed*

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## General summary

This ONDESC monthly report is once again devoted to the ESCR situation and the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on their implementation in Cameroon. Indeed, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) described the COVID-19 outbreak as a global pandemic. In a rapidly changing situation, states are trying, at different levels of commitment and effectiveness, to curb the spread of the disease. While the virus poses a threat to life and health rights, the impact of the crisis on economic, social and cultural rights goes far beyond medical and public health concerns. The government has taken a series of measures, the implementation of which is often accompanied by a series of violations which affect the economic, social and cultural rights of the most vulnerable groups such as the inhabitants of disadvantaged neighborhoods, peasants, the living with disabilities, prisoners, street children, women victims of violence, displaced persons and refugees. The main findings highlight:

- Violations of the right to education, especially of the most vulnerable groups of the population, because the measures taken by the government, including to guarantee distance education for children and young people, do not guarantee equitable access to education for children. all strata of society;
- Violations of the right to health due to the fact that free care for patients with COVID-19 is not effective in all care centers and medical staff do not enjoy protective measures adequate;
- The right to equality between men and women is increasingly questioned due to the increase in gender-based violence since the start of the health crisis linked to COVID-19;
- Violations of the right to adequate housing due to the fact that the Government has taken no action to stop the evictions and expropriations that continue in the cities of Yaoundé and Douala despite the challenges imposed by the new context of crisis;
- Violations of the rights of people living with disabilities due to the fact that the government's response plan does not include enough specific measures for people with disabilities;
- Attacks on the right to work due to the fact that the government's response measures against the health crisis linked to covid-19 are not followed by concrete accompanying measures;
- Violations of the right to drinking water due to the fact that access to drinking water remains problematic in certain working-class neighborhoods and for all the vulnerable groups living in certain refugee camps or in certain isolated rural areas;
- The general governance situation marked by the persistence of corruption, including within the mechanisms put in place to manage the COVID-19 crisis, poses a real threat to the effectiveness of the strategies and plans implemented to respond and protect citizens.

Beyond these observations, this report makes recommendations, the main ones concerning measures to limit the risks of exacerbation of inequalities in access to rights to education, health, food, work, housing and gender equality, by exploring avenues for solutions likely to improve the governance of the response system on the four pillars of the fight against impunity and corruption, the participation in particular of vulnerable groups, transparency and accountability.

## General Introduction

Triggered in China at the end of 2019, coronavirus disease has already affected several million people around the world. As of May 11, 2020, statistics show that this pandemic has already affected more than 4 million people around the world for nearly 1.4 million healings against just over 282 thousand deaths<sup>1</sup>. In Cameroon, there were nearly 2,579 confirmed cases on this same date for 1,465 people healed and 114 deaths. In response to this pandemic, the Government has taken a series of measures to limit its spread among the population. Among these, we can mention the suspension of teaching in primary, secondary and university schools, public as well as private, the closing of bars, restaurants and leisure centers, the closing of land, air and sea borders. Likewise, the Government has prescribed the reduction in the number of places in public transport vehicles in urban and interurban areas, the systematic wearing of face masks and the ban on gatherings of more than 50 people. Beyond these barrier measures of disease prevention,

However, the many measures taken are not yet successful in countering this disease. In the field, not only is the poor treatment of certain patients making the headlines in many media, but also, observers note the ill-treatment of health personnel, some of whom complain about poor working conditions and remuneration. Finally, acts of bad governance leading to the over-invoicing of certain orders were noted.

In addition, the measures taken by the Government to reduce the negative effects of the implementation of the response plan on economic activities often lead to violations of ESC rights, particularly of the most vulnerable categories of population. Residents of urban working-class neighborhoods, informal sector workers, artisans, peasants, displaced persons, refugees, prisoners, street children, people living with disabilities, women and children in general are affected. at different levels.

Faced with this situation, the CSOs gathered within the Platform of civil society organizations for economic, social and cultural rights (PF DESC CAM) decided to mobilize. Through the National ESCR Observatory, they decided to collect and analyze data on the management of the crisis in Cameroon, focusing on the impact on ESCR. This Report thus reports on the facts observed and the recommendations formulated to improve the promotion, protection and implementation of ESCR in the context of a health crisis.

### I. Right to education and COVID-19

#### a. Findings:

**Violation of the right to education, in particular of children from the most disadvantaged households in urban areas, villages and other refugee camps due to the fact that the measures taken in response to COVID-19 to ensure the continuity of the supervision of school children. " do not include facilities to facilitate their inclusion and access.**

#### b. Illustrations:

The measures implemented by the Government to ensure the continuity of the educational mission through the use of distance education solutions and the mass media of radio and television accentuate the inequalities between learners. Among these we can point out that:

- Solutions for distance education via ICT and mass media do not include children from poor households who are disconnected and do not have access to electrical energy. According to the World Bank<sup>2</sup>, only 61.1% of the Cameroonian population have access to electricity, including 21% of the rural population.
- Children from poor households will be less prepared for exams and competitions if an assistance solution has not provided them; moreover, access to information and communication technologies has a blow that disadvantaged families will not be able to bear.

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:COVID-19\\_pandemic\\_data](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:COVID-19_pandemic_data) accessed May 11, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> <https://donnees.banquemondiale.org/indicateur/EG.ELC.ACCTS.ZS?locations=CM>

- The procedures for resuming lessons indicated by the government, namely 24 students per class room, will be difficult to apply in view of the quality of infrastructure in schools; especially in public schools which receive mainly children from the most vulnerable households.
- It should also be noted the reluctance of many executives of the teaching staff in relation to the production of content suitable for distance learning.

#### c. Questions

- What measures have the government taken to ensure that teaching staff are equipped to use digital technologies to produce and deliver relevant educational content at a distance?
- Do the innovative solutions put forward to ensure continuity of teaching via television and national radio guarantee equality and equity of access to vulnerable groups, in particular in a context strongly marked by disparities concerning access electric power?
- With regard to the measures announced by the public authorities for the resumption of teaching which only concerns examination classes, when are the intermediate classes whose teaching programs have not been exhausted?
- In the collective response sent by the Cameroonian education system, what are the support measures taken in favor of contract teachers, substitute teachers and education support staff whose breach of contracts or the non payment of salaries still risk again have consequences for the education of the most vulnerable households?

#### d. Recommendations.

#### **To the Government:**

- Provide adequate support and professional training to teachers to facilitate the production of content suitable for the use of distance learning platforms;
- Take measures to limit the risks of exacerbation of inequalities in access to education by exploring the path of the diversification of the modes of school assistance provided to students and by targeting in priority the students of resident public schools disadvantaged neighborhoods and landlocked villages;
- Guarantee the completion of educational content and programs for the benefit of students in intermediate classes and indicate how the assessment and decision regarding access to the upper class will be carried out;
- Guarantee equality between candidates for the various end-of-year exams, by providing assistance in preparation for children from vulnerable categories who have not been taken into account by the remote assistance channels implemented by the ministries in charge of education;
- Take measures in agreement with private education providers to preserve the employment and salaries of all teaching and educational support staff.

#### **In Municipalities and Cities:**

- Organize to define with the administrations in charge of educational questions, the conditions for the gradual reopening of schools. These conditions must relate to the disinfection of premises and equipment, the strict application of barrier and distance gestures in classrooms, epidemiological surveillance at the entrances to schools and educational establishments;
- Provide school assistance to children from vulnerable households who do not have access to distance education and training services proposed by the government.

#### **To civil society organizations:**

- Continue to advocate for access to education as a fundamental right even in times of crisis;

- Develop and offer municipalities and the government extra-curricular training and support tools adapted to the constraints and specificities of vulnerable groups;
- Provide school assistance and the preparation of the official 2020 exams to children from vulnerable households most affected by the crisis and the measure concerning the discontinuation of classes in educational establishments.

## II. Dright to health and COVID-19

### a. Findings

**LThe free care of patients with COVID-19 is not effective in all care centers. Medical personnel do not have adequate protective measures. Barrier gestures and social distancing are not respected, in general and more specifically by the most vulnerable populations.**

In addition, the risks associated with COVID-19 are much greater for people with disabilities and government responses must include targeted measures to protect them. Emergency intervention and health and social protection measures must be accessible to all and must not be discriminatory against people with disabilities

### b. Illustrations:

Despite several reminders to order, the Government is experiencing difficulties in enforcing the free treatment of patients with COVID-19 in health facilities. These difficulties are overwhelmingly linked to the limits of the current health system, the lack of preparation and the quality of governance in our health facilities. The main facts which accredit this thesis are among others:

- Cases of COVID-19 patient fraud, which are recorded in several health facilities and reported by the media;
- The lack of oxygen cylinders and respirators in some hospitals limits assistance to patients in respiratory distress and puts the cost of treatment in perspective;
- The inadequacy of the protection kits dedicated to nursing staff exposes them to an increased risk of contamination;
- The return of the bodies of those who died immediately from COVID-19 to families by the health facilities for burial, which increases the risk of contamination at the community level<sup>3</sup>The same applies to the exhumation of certain bodies by families from places dedicated for this purpose by the authorities to transport them to unknown places with a view to their burial; thus making the risk of contamination very high;
- The ambient misery which pushes some to recycle the masks and to resell them;
- The wearing of masks is not really systematic because of poverty and scarcity;
- Too few municipalities and cities are involved in the development of municipal cemeteries;
- Health workers are not adequately protected and are subject to physical violence and attack by patients or their families;
- Disabled people complain that distancing measures do not take their disability into account;
- Small people do not have easy access to hand washing points, which are often placed in places inaccessible to them;
- Awareness materials are not accessible to blind and visually impaired people.

### c. Questions

- What specific measures have the government taken to support and protect health care workers from any form of stigma or discrimination?

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fz61VVf8a-l&t=214s>

- What are the measures taken by public authorities to guarantee the implementation of social distancing measures in markets, transport buses, inside places of leisure, bars and other restaurants?
- What are the specific measures taken by the government to facilitate and adapt the application of barrier measures and social distancing to the requirements of people living with disabilities?

#### d. Recommendations

##### **To the Government:**

- Increase the awareness and assistance program for the application of barrier measures as well as social distancing in disadvantaged neighborhoods, markets, refugee camps, bus stations, prisons, orphanages, landlocked villages;
- Mobilize resources to systematize screening tests and strengthen epidemiological control of the epidemic throughout the national territory;
- Reinforce the control of gratuitousness and apply disciplinary sanctions against the persons in charge of care centers taken in by breaking billing or extortion funds on patients;
- Establish a system of listening, psychological assistance and support for healthcare personnel and take measures to combat the stigma and discrimination of which they are increasingly the victims.
- Ensure that people with disabilities are not deprived of support in institutions, health facilities, psychiatric facilities and other places that have become epicenters of the pandemic, and take steps to protect people in need. found in such institutions.
- Provide additional financial assistance and social protection for people with disabilities and their families, as many depend on services that are now discontinued and often lack the resources to meet their basic needs.
- Take measures so that awareness-raising documents are accessible to all, including people living with disabilities;
- Recruit trained and non-employed care staff to assign them to health facilities and approved care centers set up;
- Carry out tests according to the required standards of the drugs offered by private research centers and certain personalities of civil society, then in the event of positive results, take measures to make them available and accessible to all patients.

##### **To municipalities and cities:**

- Simplify procedures and communicate transparently on the conditions for applying free access to municipal cemeteries, particularly with regard to the burial of victims of COVID-19;
- Take measures so that the social action service of the municipality can provide support to people living with disabilities in the various support centers.

##### **To civil society organizations:**

- Intensify advocacy for the right to health and provide assistance in terms of legal, administrative, judicial and social support to victims.
- Mobilize specialist volunteers to translate awareness messages into Braille for the blind or into sign language for the deaf and hard of hearing.



### III. Gender equality and COVID-19

#### a. Findings:

**Increased gender-based violence increasingly exposing the most vulnerable households and population groups, in part due to certain measures and restrictions imposed to protect against COVID-19.**

#### b. Illustrations:

- In application of social distancing measures, sex workers (TS), bar workers, sellers of broken fish and bayam-selams are increasingly victims of acts of violence perpetrated by the police. .
- Specifically concerning sex workers, some are arrested and kept in custody under conditions that expose them more to Covid-19 infection (at least 30 TS in a cell).
- At the household level, especially in spontaneous neighborhoods and villages, cases of gender-based violence are increasingly reported. Vulnerable women like the displaced from the English-speaking crisis are among the most exposed.

#### a. Questions

- What is the mechanism put in place by the government to prevent and ensure the protection of victims of gender-based violence as part of the implementation of the response plan against COVID-19?

#### b. Recommendations

##### **To the Government:**

- Establish a listening and assistance mechanism for households victims of gender-based violence;

##### **To municipalities and cities:**

- Popularize the mechanism for the prevention and management of gender-based violence put in place by the government among the households concerned.

##### **To civil society organizations:**

- Document cases of gender-based violence with a view to possible support for the victims;
- Sensitize women on acts of gender-based violence and support them in claiming rights;
- Interpellate the public authorities and advocate to bring justice to the attention of cases of gender-based violence.

### IV. Right to housing and COVID-19

#### a. Finding

**No measures were taken to limit evictions or expropriations during the crisis period. The penalization of non-payment of the lease reinforces this risk by extending it not only to housing, but also to the property of vulnerable households in the slums.**

#### b. Illustrations:

The containment measures plunge many tenant households in uncertainty and probably in greater misery. Deprived of income and / or seeing their daily expenses increase due to confinement and reduced service, they are unable to pay part or all of their rents;

- Many tenants who are vulnerable and impoverished as a result of certain measures to manage COVID-19 are threatened with eviction for failure to pay the lease;

- Expropriation notices are sent by the public authorities to the inhabitants of certain disadvantaged neighborhoods,
- These eviction or expropriation notices do not provide for any rights management, support or resettlement measures for victims. We cite the cases of Yaoundé, district NKOLMESSENG where crosses of St André are affixed on the houses, on a space of 4000m<sup>2</sup> with more than 500 homes, on the initiative of the Town Hall, under the pretext of building the market as well as the quotes from the fiftieth anniversary. In Douala, the inhabitants of the MAKEPE MISSOKE neighborhood face a similar situation. Taking advantage of the limits imposed on public freedoms, the local authorities ordered the occupants to vacate the premises without any regard for the procedures and laws in force.
- The potential victims of these acts of eviction are neither consulted nor associated with the processes leading to the decision of expropriation or eviction;
- The rights of potential victims to organize and file remedies are limited by the security measures imposed by the COVID-19 response plan.

#### a) Questions

- What are the measures taken by the government to ensure the protection of priority tenants of the most vulnerable groups, limit the evictions, expropriations and acts of land grabbing that weigh on the slums during this period of COVID-19 crisis ?
- What measures have the government taken to rehouse the victims of these new foreclosure operations, as well as the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people crammed into the shelters?

#### b) Recommendations

#### **To the government:**

- Take an act to suspend during the COVID-19 crisis period, all threats of eviction activated at the initiative of certain local authorities, whether or not attributable to the non-payment of rent, to expropriation for reasons of utility public or simply the will to despoil the occupants of their properties;
- Make the necessary changes to the tenant-lessor law to sanction the decriminalization of default in accordance with the recommendations of the United Nations ESCR Committee addressed to the Government of Cameroon after the periodic review in April 2019;
- Take measures to suspend all expropriation and land grabbing operations undertaken by the authorities throughout the national territory on the grounds of occupying green areas or prohibited for construction;
- Decentralize to the level of the Communes the operations of identification of street children as well as of all the people exposed to the said operations of evictions, grabbing and eviction with a view to their resettlement and / or reintegration in developed areas or reception centers / homes.

#### **To municipalities and cities:**

- Provide support for the identification and integration of victims of eviction, hoarding and eviction as well as street children in the developed areas, centers or reception structures available;
- Stop expropriation or eviction operations targeting residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods and take measures to contribute to the security of their occupation.

#### **To civil society organizations:**

- Intensify advocacy for the right to housing and provide legal, administrative, judicial and social assistance to victims.

## V. Right to work and COVID-19

### a. Findings:

**The relief or support measures taken by the Government, following the response plan against the health crisis of COVID-19 are a step forward, but remain insufficient in terms of expectations.**

COVID-19 has profound implications for the job market. Beyond the urgent question of the health of workers and their families, the resulting economic shocks have repercussions in general on the world of work and in particular the informal sector. The government has taken 19 measures to mitigate the domino effect of the crisis. However, economic players consider these measures insufficient in view of the impact of the crisis.

### b. Illustrations:

- Motorbikes, taxis and transporters in general complain of police harassment linked to the difficulties in enforcing the measure of mandatory wearing of masks by passengers;
- Bars and night shops complain about the decline in activity and racketeering due to their difficulty in enforcing distancing;
- The closing of borders has a major impact on the movement of goods and people. This situation particularly affects businesses in the tourism sector, street restaurants, etc. ;
- Some companies have been forced to impose a drop in wages on agents in order to avoid resorting to dismissals;
- Many companies have put their staff on technical leave or partial unemployment;
- Most of the housekeepers lost their jobs because of the containment measures imposed by the management of COVID-19;
- Craftsmen and agricultural workers complain about the increased cost of transport and its impact on the competitiveness of their products.

### c. Question:

- What are the procedures laid down to guarantee the application of the measures taken, secure jobs and limit the impact of the crisis, in particular on employment and activities in the informal sector?

### d. Recommendations

#### **To the Government:**

- Produce an inclusive economic recovery plan that integrates the proposals of all economic actors;
- To enact procedures for applying the measures taken to secure jobs and safeguard economic rights, particularly for workers in the informal sector whose activities are affected by the health crisis;
- Intensify the activities of labor-based programs by widening their targets to the urban areas most affected by COVID-19 as well as to the communities sheltering the displaced and refugees.

#### **To municipalities and cities**

- Take measures to participate in the job security plan and facilitate compliance with distancing measures on markets and bus stations;
- Ensure the identification and referral of workers, particularly informal workers, who need assistance from the public authorities and recommend them to public social protection programs.

### **To civil society organizations:**

- Advocate for the respect, promotion and protection of the economic, social and cultural rights of workers despite the crisis and more specifically to the preservation of jobs.

## VI. Right to food, access to drinking water, sanitation and COVID-19

### a. Findings:

**Access to drinking water and food remains a problem in lower-income neighborhoods and certain isolated villages.**

### b. Illustrations:

Washing your hands with soap and clean water is the main barrier against COVID-19. However, the majority of working-class neighborhoods and isolated villages do not have access to safe water supply. Responding to the needs of vulnerable populations, including those with difficulty accessing water, is essential to the success of efforts to combat COVID-19. Otherwise :

- The households most affected by the crisis who have lost their jobs or who see their incomes fall due to the decline in economic activity find it difficult to feed themselves;
- The prices of basic necessities such as flour, corn, beans, rice, etc. are experiencing an increase in the markets;
- Internally displaced people, refugees and residents of disadvantaged urban areas and students are the most affected by this situation with cases of malnutrition or famine more and more reported;
- The hand washing points set up in public spaces are not often used or supplied with water and soap.

### c. Question

What are the specific measures aimed at guaranteeing access to drinking water and a balanced diet for vulnerable communities living in disadvantaged neighborhoods and landlocked villages, especially during the COVID-19 crisis period?

### d. Recommendations

#### **To the Government:**

- Develop and implement a food support and drinking water distribution plan for the most vulnerable households;
- This plan can be implemented in coordination with the municipalities and the social protection programs currently being implemented.

#### **To municipalities and cities:**

- Take measures to regularly supply the hand washing points set up in health centers, workplaces and other public spaces;
- Provide tanker trucks for the distribution of drinking water in areas that do not have access to the public water distribution network or that are subject to a cut in the supply of drinking water.

#### **To civil society organizations:**

- Increase awareness of barrier gestures, in particular hand washing, and mobilize to help supply the hand washing stations installed by the municipalities;

- Continue advocacy for the distribution of food aid, drinking water, the extension of social protection measures as well as social safety net programs to the maximum of vulnerable households and people.

## VII. Governance of the government response plan

### a. Findings:

**The implementation of the government response plan faces constraints inherent in the ambient level of governance in the country, marked by difficulties such as corruption, the lack of transparency of public action and the weak capacity for accountability. to populations.**

### b. Illustrations

- Cases of corruption have been recorded around the reception and / or management of deceased bodies in the follow-up health facilities of COVID-19;
- The participation of civil society in the consultation and in the response system implemented is low;
- The challenges relating to transparency in the management of the funds and human resources mobilized in the context of the fight against the pandemic are the basis of a staff strike, on the grounds of unpaid wages;
- There are also questions about the efficiency of the procurement processes for the acquisition of medical equipment for the fight against the scourge and the criteria for distributing the various donations;
- The communication strategy implemented is not very transparent on the statistics and does not facilitate the dissemination of simple information to the public. The imbroglio on the number of deaths of COVID-19 in Cameroon does not give credibility to official sources. The recovery of the awareness campaign for propaganda and cult of personalities does not facilitate the appropriation of the messages essential for behavior change;
- Crisis management opens the door to numerous obstacles to individual and public freedoms; in particular with abuses which are perceptible through certain prefectural decisions prohibiting acts of voluntary citizen involvement in awareness programs for example.

### c. Questions

What measures has the government taken to ensure the transparent management of the funds mobilized and what mechanism has it put in place to facilitate participation and report to citizens?

### d. Recommendations

#### **To the Government:**

- Investigate reported cases of corruption and take sanctions against those responsible;
- Increase the salaries of healthcare staff and take measures to improve their working conditions;
- Reinforce the participation of civil society in monitoring the response plan, raising awareness and implementing measures to alleviate the economic impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable groups;
- Set up an open and interactive information platform on the crisis.

#### **In Municipalities and Cities:**

- Facilitate a local consultation between all the actors mobilized for the response to the crisis and in this context, make a participative diagnosis of its impact and propose a local plan of concerted response.

#### **To civil society organizations:**

- Systematize citizen control of the actions provided for by the government response plan and continue producing follow-up reports.

## VIII. Review of the implementation of the recommendations of the civil society appeal on the management of COVID-19

### Recommendations addressed to the Government

- a) **Mobilize and commit all the resources necessary to combat the threat, in particular by revising the budget forecasts by adopting an amending finance law devoting most of the 2020 resources to the response to the COVID-19 crisis**

This recommendation has not yet been implemented. The budgetary correction linked to the last adopted finance law remains awaited. However, the resources necessary to manage the crisis have been mobilized mainly from traditional development partners.

- b) **Develop and execute a plan to manage the impacts of crisis management measures on the economy in general, households in particular and in particular on the most vulnerable people**

This recommendation has been implemented. However, the Government has rather proposed economic and social measures in place of a plan with a costed budget for managing the impacts of the measures on the economy and households.

- c) **Intensify the fight against the rise in the prices of essential foodstuffs on stalls and market places;**

This recommendation has been implemented. The national brigade of controls and repression of the Cameroonian Ministry of Commerce has taken steps to stabilize the prices of everyday consumer products. Subsequently, a toll-free number was made available to citizens to denounce isolated acts of price increases.

- d) **Guarantee access to drinking water and soap for all, in particular by having tank trucks to facilitate the distribution of water and by distributing pieces of soap, gels or hydroalcoholic solution in areas disconnected from the water distribution network;**

This recommendation is partly implemented in certain localities of the country. Access to drinking water remains problematic in disconnected areas, neighborhoods and isolated villages. However, the distribution of gels and hydroalcoholic solutions is effective through the contributions of the State, the municipalities and especially many civil society organizations supported by development partners.

- e) **Set up a dedicated mechanism for managing gender-based violence. Specialized Civil Society Organizations and the Citizen Call Center say they are ready to contribute under the conditions to be defined by mutual agreement with the Government;**

ASSOAL has requested in writing the Ministry of Health to make its call center available. The answer is not yet provided

- f) **Involve Decentralized local authorities and CSOs in the overall plan to fight this pandemic**

Initiatives taken by centralized local authorities are visible following the decisions taken by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization asking the municipalities to relay the actions of the global response plan. Civil society organizations are taking part in raising public awareness of the appropriation of barrier gestures. However, their participation in the response plan is subject to several obstacles, including those limiting their mobilization in certain departments.

### Recommendations addressed to the Communes

- g) **Establish and lead the Local Committees for Monitoring the Crisis Management Measures of COVID 19 responsible not only for relaying government action, but also for raising awareness and coordinating participation in the Response Plan;**

This recommendation is not implemented. Actions under implementation in the municipalities do not necessarily fit into a local response strategy led by the municipalities.

- h) Develop and implement plans for marking waiting places and signaling handwashing points in markets, bus stations, at the entrances of IDP / refugee camps, working-class neighborhoods and in front of public services to encourage and facilitate compliance with distancing and hygiene measures;**

The implementation of this recommendation is still very marginal.

- i) Organize a drinking water distribution service for the most vulnerable households and in the displaced / refugee camps;**

This recommendation is implemented in a marginal way and many households still find it difficult to access this resource.

- j) Equip neighborhoods, markets, spaces and public places with hand washing kits;**

Most markets and public spaces are equipped with hand washing kits. On the other hand, it is difficult to find this system in the districts. Furthermore, the kits installed are not always used because of the quality of awareness-raising, the low level of citizen participation and the challenges inherent in the supply of water and soap.

- k) Support initiatives for the production and distribution of artisanal protective masks.**

The municipalities contribute to the distribution of facial masks by relaying the various contributions from the State, civil society organizations and the private sector. However, municipal initiatives aimed at distributing labels to the vulnerable are still rare.

#### Recommendation addressed to civil society organizations:

- l) Intensify citizen awareness and education actions on hygiene rules and barrier actions**

Civil society organizations participate in citizen awareness and education actions that are visible in the field. These actions target for the moment some districts and villages. Actions in prisons, orphanages and reception centers are limited. Likewise, citizen initiatives anticipating the resumption of lessons, the school supervision of vulnerable children or the preparation for exams for pupils who do not have access to alternative distance education measures are rare.

- m) Strengthen active solidarity actions for the benefit of the most vulnerable groups in society;**

Several civil society organizations have a support plan for the vulnerable, which is being implemented gradually. However, these plans are not sufficiently articulated and capitalized on in the results of the government's response strategy.

- n) Implement coaching strategies for young people and students, prioritizing the use of communication and distance learning tools**

What distance education actions via national radio and television have been recorded. The results of this action are not yet noticeable.

- o) Relay the numbers of the call center and crisis management set up by the government, track and document its caller response system**

Several civil society organizations have relayed these call center contact numbers through their social networks and WhatsApp groups.

- p) Observe and document and then report to the authorities all acts of ESCR violations related to the crisis and the implementation of crisis management measures.**

This report is one of the actions taken by civil society.

#### General conclusion

At the end of the preparation of this bimonthly ONDESC report on economic, social and cultural rights in the context of the COVID-19 health crisis in Cameroon, it appears that their implementation gives rise to numerous violations. With regard to the right to education, it can be seen that the measures taken do not guarantee equitable access to education for all strata of society. Regarding the right to health, free care for patients with COVID-19 is not effective in all care centers and medical staff who complain of not having received wages for two (2) does



not enjoy adequate protective measures. Speaking of gender equality, there has been a resurgence of gender-based violence since the start of the COVID-19 health crisis. Sex workers<sup>4</sup> and the cleaning ladies are subjected to physical and moral violence. Regarding the right to housing, it should be noted with regret that no measures have been taken to reduce evictions for default of payment of the lease during this period of health crisis.

Likewise, the government's response plan does not include enough measures specific to minorities and in particular people with disabilities. By way of illustration, since awareness materials are not translated into Braille for the blind, small people complain that they cannot easily access the hand washing points, which are often placed in places that are inaccessible to them. . With regard to the right to work, the government's response measures against the health crisis linked to covid-19 are not followed by concrete accompanying measures. Furthermore, access to drinking water remains problematic in lower-income neighborhoods.

All in all, in the light of this analytical report on the state of ESCR in this period of response to the disease at Covid-19, many efforts must be combined between the various actors in public life (public actors, private actors , traditional and religious authorities, CSOs) with a view to maintaining the promotion, protection and preservation of ESCR. In this regard, recommendations have been made. ONDESC hopes that the recipients of this Report will not remain insensitive to them and that measures will be taken to act against COVID-19 by improving the enjoyment of ESCR in Cameroon.

*Even in times of crisis, access to ESC rights must be guaranteed<sup>5</sup>.*

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<sup>4</sup> <http://timesnews2.info/cameroun-travailleuses-de-sexe-et-coronavirus-entre-corps-et-ame> accessed May 03, 2020

<sup>5</sup> Civil society call for better management of the Covid-19 crisis of 06 April 2020



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