

**SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPACTS OF COVID-19 IN TOGO AND PLANNING
FOR JUST RECOVERY**

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INTRODUCTION

The world is facing an unprecedented health crisis. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *the COVID-19 pandemic is the global health crisis of our time and the greatest challenge we have faced since the Second World War*¹. Indeed, it appeared on November 17, 2019 in Hubei province (in central China), and more precisely in the city of Wuhan, and spread around the world like wildfire. The World Health Organization (WHO) first alerted the People's Republic of China and its other Member States and declared a public health emergency of international concern on January 30, 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic² is a pandemic of an emerging infectious disease, called Coronavirus 2019, caused by a virus called Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2)..

In total, about 200 countries and territories are affected by this global health crisis, including African countries, including Togo.

As of July 30, 2020, at 21:14, Togo had registered 927 confirmed cases, with 275 active cases, 634 people healed, and 18 deaths³. This crisis constitutes, for Togo, like other countries in the world, a major challenge. According to some observers, the impact of COVID-19 is likely to be humanly costly, socially paralyzing and economically dangerous, if it is not already so. According to them, this crisis requires a reorientation of development paradigms if the impact of the pandemic on human societies and the environment is to be limited.

But the question is whether we have enough information, from the point of view of the extent of the consequences of the disease, to be able to make appropriate decisions in the face of the urgency of the moment. Without a doubt, the answer to this question is negative. This being the case, it therefore becomes useful and timely to "*document social, economic and environmental considerations and COVID-19 in Togo with a view to planning for an equitable recovery*".

This study has a double interest. On the theoretical level, it allows us to conduct research on a new subject, a disease unknown until very recently, and to propose reflections tending to enrich the current literature on the way in which man tries to overcome the health crises he faces.

In practice, it makes it possible, based on women's and men's experiences and feelings, and in the light of what we observe as impacts on nature, to suggest actions that not only allow the perception of awareness messages to contain the evil, but also that can promote a transformative system change program.

To do so, we will deal, in turn, with the social, economic and environmental impacts of COVID-19 in Togo (part one) and measures for a fair and just recovery (part two).

¹ www.undp.org/content/undp/fr/home/Coronavirus.html, consulted on the 08/08/2020

² Meaning of COVID: "CO" means "Corona"; "VI" means "Virus"; and "D" means "Disease" or "maladie" in French finally 19 refers to the year of its appearance, i.e. the year 2019. ³ <https://covid19.gouv.tg/situation-au-togo/12/>, consulted on the 08/08/2020

**PART ONE : SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND
ENVIRONMENTAL
CONSIDERATIONS AND COVID-19 IN TOGO**

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19), is a disease that humans have only recently become familiar with, so they are poorly prepared for it. Yet this insidious evil has taken hold at the heart of our lives, sowing desolation ; for our ability to resist the consequences of this shock is limited. If, in itself, the disease itself causes various inconveniences, deaths, and burdens the income of patients and the finances of the State for the care, the barrier measures initiated by the government also have an impact on the lives of citizens.

- Among the collective measures taken to limit the spread of the disease linked to COVID-19 in Togo, we can mention :
- The suspension, as of Friday, March 20, 2020, of all air routes from high-risk countries ;
- The cancellation of all international events scheduled to take place in Togo as of March 16, 2020 ;
- The closure of all public and private schools and public and private universities throughout the national territory as of Friday, March 20, 2020 ;
- Suspension of mass cultural and sports activities, religious worship, and prohibition of access to the beach all along the country's coastline ;
- The closure of cities affected by the pandemic ;
- A curfew from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. from April 2, 2020 until further notice in all cities affected by the pandemic ; and ;
- Closure of land borders and prohibition of movement between prefectures.

The impact of COVID-19 as well as the barrier measures taken by the Government to prevent the disease affect the being, the emotions and the assets of citizens and contribute to the degradation of what should contribute to their well-being : the environment. It goes without saying that the impacts of the pandemic will be assessed from a socio-economic and environmental point of view.

This leads us to address, on the one hand, the elements for assessing the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 (I) and, on the other hand, the elements for assessing the environmental impacts of the coronavirus pandemic (II).

I. Elements for assessing the social and economic impacts of COVID-19

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic does not affect all citizens equally. It goes without saying that citizens who, prior to the onset of the disease, had a poor socio-economic situation (the poor) and, to a lesser extent, the middle class, saw their situation rapidly worsen or, at least, deteriorate sharply.

Although social and economic aspects can have points of convergence (an economic fact can have an impact on social experience and vice versa), we will try to distinguish between them in order to highlight each of these two aspects separately.

In order to better appreciate the impact of COVID-19, we believe it is wise, first and foremost, to communicate the initial social, economic and environmental situation. This approach will be adopted in the analysis in the first part of the document.

Thus, we will analyze, on the one hand, the initial social situation and the social impacts of the health crisis (A), and on the other hand, the initial economic situation and the economic consequences (B) of the latter.

A. Initial social situation and social impacts related to COVID-19

It should be noted that in Togo, social protection is enshrined in the constitution of 14 October 1992, particularly in its articles 11, 12, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 50 and 140. This fundamental law stipulates the will of the Togolese people to create a State governed by the rule of law in which fundamental human rights, freedoms, and the dignity of the human person are necessary conditions for the sustainable human development of all citizens.

Despite these good intentions proclaimed in the country's constitution, several aspects of life show that the national social situation was precarious.

1. Initial social situation

It is important, first of all, to present some socio-demographic figures.

In 2017, Togo's population was estimated at 7,265,286 inhabitants, 60.7% of whom live in rural areas. 20.3% of the total population is migrant : 14.5% of migration is internal while 5.8% is international. It should be noted that 70.8% of migrants migrate for job search reasons. Cette proportion est plus élevée chez les femmes (76,8%) que chez les hommes (57,5%). It should be noted that 90.4% of migration of young people aged 15-35 years takes place within the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU³). Nationally, 76.6% of households are headed by men⁴.

The encouraging economic growth recorded by the country in recent years has, unfortunately, not had much influence on the social level. « *For example, Togo ranks 166th out of 187 countries (Human Development Index HDI, 2016). This shows that major efforts are still needed in a number of sectors, particularly in the areas of health, nutrition and education.*⁵ ».

a. At the health level

Prof. Moustafa Mijiyawa, Minister of Health and Public Hygiene, speaking on the national health policy in Togo on June 14, 2019, during a panel discussion at the Togo-EU forum, indicated that: « *two essential problems affect the health system: a major management deficit on the one hand, and a qualitative and quantitative inadequacy of equipment and infrastructure on the other*⁶ ». He also said that "life expectancy at birth is 60 years" in Togo.

It should be noted that the maternal mortality ratio was 401 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2014 (far below the target of 160 per 100,000 births in 2015). The under-five mortality rate decreased from 114 ‰ over the period 1999-2003 to 88 ‰ over the period 2009-2013. As for infant mortality, it was 49 deaths per 1,000 births over the period 2009-2013 compared to 60 over the period 1999-2003⁷. The number of underweight children under 5

³ Created on January 10, 1994, WAEMU brings together eight coastal and Sahelian states in West Africa, linked by the use of a common currency, the FCFA, and benefiting from common cultural traditions. They are : Benin, Burkina, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo. WAEMU covers an area of 3,506,126 km² and has 123.6 million inhabitants. The GDP growth rate, at constant prices, is 6.1% in

⁴ Ministry of development, planning and cooperation (Togo), Integrated regional survey on employment and the informal sector (ERI-ESI) Togo, 2017, p.17.

⁵ Ministry of health (Togo), Yearbook of health statistics of Togo, 2016, p15.

⁶ <http://sante.gouv.tg/node/573>, consulted on the 19/08/2020

⁷ United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa, Togo Country Profile, 2017, p.22.

years of age is 16%.⁸ This is not interesting; neither is access to basic social services, which remains limited: in 2017, 29% of the population lives more than 5 kilometers from a health facility and 38.2% has no access to drinking water⁹.

These results could be significantly improved if the weaknesses presented in the table below are addressed.

Table 1: Difficulties in the health sector and their causes ¹⁰

RECORDED DIFFICULTIES	CAUSES
Shortage and low quality of human resources in the health sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited number of caregivers ; - Unequal distribution of human resources among the different health zones ; - Lack of performance evaluation and continuous staff training policy
Low level of use of health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weak attractiveness of public health facilities due to the dilapidated premises and technical platforms of the health care services ; - Low availability of essential inputs (drugs, blood products) ; - Low social protection coverage for the most vulnerable populations
Insufficient mobilization and less optimal use of allocated resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low public funding of the health sector ; - Low effectiveness and efficiency in the allocation and execution of health spending ; - Low predictability, harmonization and effectiveness of external financing
Weaknesses in the strategic steering of the health system and the leadership of the ministry of health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-completion of the institutional and organizational reform of the department ; - Weak regulation of the sector and insufficient development of

⁸ *Idem*, p.43

⁹ UNDP, <https://www.tg.undp.org/content/togo/fr/home/sustainable-development/in-depth.html>, consulted on the 08/08/2020

¹⁰ Autonomous center for study and capacity building for development in Togo, Note analyzing the potential socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 and response measures, 2020, pp.7-8.

	Partnerships, particularly publicprivate partnerships.
Weak development of health research	- Low production and dissemination of strategic information Faible culture de la recherche en santé

b. In terms of nutrition

According to a report produced by FAO in 2010 on the nutritional profiles of countries, (and whose summary¹¹ is available) food consumption in Togo is characterized, above all, by low protein and lipid intake, and among them a small proportion is of animal origin. On the other hand, according to food supply figures, about one-third of the population is undernourished. The food factor therefore seems to be a major factor in the process of malnutrition.

The same study indicates that, in recent times, however, after a period of great economic and political instability in the early 1990s, the situation has improved significantly. However, this does not yet seem to be reflected in the nutritional situation because the standard of living remains poor, with growing urban poverty in particular, while access to drinking water and sanitation remains insufficient.

c. In the field of education

The literacy rate for children aged 15-24 is 79.7%, in 2014, and the net primary school enrollment rate is 93.8% in 2017. The proportion of students starting Grade 1 who complete elementary school is 93.6 in 2017, and the ratio of girls to boys in elementary school is 0.97.

According to a report published in 2017 by the OECD, "*the deprivation of well-being among young people mainly concerns the areas of education and employment. In fact, 39% of young people have a deficit in education and 34.5% in employment*"¹² ».

Thus, the report adds, « *despite the gradual normalization of the political situation and the return of economic growth, Togo continues to face significant challenges both economically and socially. Inclusive growth contributes only modestly to poverty reduction and even generates inequalities within the population. In this respect, the situation of young people is of particular concern, given their demographic weight and the major challenges they face.*»¹³.

This deleterious situation will be further weakened by the health crisis and the preventive measures taken by the Government.

2. Social impacts induced by COVID-19

¹¹ FAO, http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/nutrition/tgo_fr.stm, consulted on the 23/08/2020 .

¹² OECD, Review of youth welfare and policies in Togo, 2017, p.33

¹³ *Idem*, (see back cover).

The coronavirus health crisis has had serious consequences on the lives of Togolese citizens. The impacts are to be identified in several aspects of social life that need to be addressed :

a. Health impact

The pandemic has caused, as of 12 October 2020, at 20 :10, 1949 confirmed cases, 439 cases, active, 1461 people healed, 49 deaths. This crisis, far from being limited to the health aspect, highlights inequalities between men and women. The latter suffers the full force of the devastating effects of the disease. Unfortunately, this is often the case in times of crisis (wars, pandemics, economic crises, etc.), when resources are dwindling and institutional capacities are stretched to the limit.

b. Separation from relatives

The pandemic has often kept relatives away (some have travelled, especially outside the country, and have been suspended for several days or even weeks when roads were reopened to interurban traffic or when borders were reopened to reunite with their loved ones). As a result, some have not been able to have the opportunity to care for loved ones due to delayed medical procedures. Some have lost a loved one to quarantine without being able to say goodbye.

It should be noted that the impact of COVID-19 is not the same for everyone. The people who suffer the worst consequences of the infection are those who suffered discrimination, marginalisation and poverty long before the pandemic. This unequal impact is rooted in a pre-existing reality characterised by structural injustice or serious inequities. These include the elderly, prisoners, migrant workers, refugees, the homeless, victims of domestic violence, people living with disabilities, people with chronic diseases such as high blood pressure and diabetes. This is also the case for women. We propose to visit this particular case.

c. Impacts on women and girls

The effects of the disease on women are multifaceted and apply to several social areas.

It should be noted that as a result of the disease, women face a number of constraints related, among others, to : the reduction of social services, the exposure of women caregivers to COVID-19 and increased stress, the increase in gender-based violence, the onset/resurgence of food crises, the lack of appropriate information, the issue of women's representation in decision-making bodies, and the weight of social norms. *(i) Reduction in social services (access to health care)*

Both in Togo and elsewhere, women and girls feel the consequences of the disease more strongly than men and boys. As Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Director for Africa said, "*We are already seeing that the impact of COVID-19*

on women and girls is profound. Women are disproportionately affected by confinement and this translates into reduced access to health services¹⁴.

Indeed, due to the appearance of COVID-19, fear has taken hold of many people. Except for extremely serious cases ; women are reluctant to go to health centres to receive the care they need. For fear of contracting COVID-19, some women refrained from going to the health professional, despite the need. Yet the WHO stated on its website that "*a recent analysis published in the Global Health Lancet suggests that a reduction in maternal health services of only 9.8-18.5 per cent could result in up to 12,200 additional maternal deaths over six months in low- and middle-income countries¹⁵*".

Women prefer to go to traditional healers, where they think the probability of exposure to coronavirus is low. Others, instead of going to these latter caregivers, resort to selfmedication. As you can well imagine, these options are obviously not without risk to their health.

(ii) Exposure of female caregivers to COVID-19 and increased stress

Female caregivers are important in the management of COVID-19 patients. However, the conditions in which the operations take place add to the stress of the women : At the beginning of the crisis, doctors noted a lack of personal protective equipment. As stated in an article entitled "Faced with COVID-19, health care workers in Africa are worried", on the dw.com website, "*In Togo, for example, three doctors and a nurse contracted the disease after having been in contact with Covid-19 patients¹⁶*".

It should be noted that the government subsequently took steps to facilitate access to protective devices and care materials.

In Togo, as elsewhere, the health workers highlighted the lack of communication, the disruption of daily family and social life, the lack of support, the fear of contaminating a loved one, isolation or social stigmatisation, the high level of stress at work as sources of anxiety, depression and exhaustion among women carers.

(iii) Alleged human rights violations

In order to implement the necessary measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country, the Government introduced a curfew on 10 May 2020, starting at 21 :00 and ending at 05 :00 in the morning.

In this period, the Collectif des associations contre l'impunité au Togo (CACIT) communicated on 19 cases of alleged human rights violations¹⁷.

¹⁴ <https://www.afro.who.int/fr/news/loms-inquiete-de-limpact-de-covid-19-sur-les-femmes-et-les-filles-enafrique>, WHO concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls in Africa, consulted on the 25/08/2020

¹⁵ *Idem*

¹⁶ DW.COM, <https://www.dw.com/fr/face-au-covid-19-les-personnels-soignants-en-afrique-sont-inquiets/a-52973600>, consulted on the 24/08/2020

¹⁷ <https://www.africardv.com/politic/togo-couvre-feu-19-cas-dallegation-de-violation-de-droits-delhomme/>, published on the 21/05/2020, consulted on the 22/08/2020

It should be noted that a special anti-COVID-19 force has been set up. This force does not admit that the recommendations related to barrier measures are being violated.

(iv) *Gender-based violence*

According to WHO, a recent UN Women study found that reports of violence against women, particularly domestic violence, have increased in several countries as security, health and financial concerns create tensions and pressures compounded by the cramped and restricted living conditions imposed by containment.

Moreover, the authors of the book entitled "West African women facing COVID, 7 realities, 7 solutions", indicate that promiscuity within households, as a consequence of curfew measures and the cessation of economic activities, as well as the drop in income, have created additional tensions within households. The document indicates that this violence is often verbal (insults), physical or sexual (sexual and gender-based abuse, beatings, marital rape). With regard to girls, the authors indicate that they are more exposed to the risks of incest and sexual violence in the home¹⁸.

It should be noted that, during this crisis, many domestic workers in large conurbations have been made redundant. Some of them were kept but were often sent out on (unusual) errands in order to avoid the risk of contamination for their employers.

(v) *Emergence/resurgence of food crisis*

The COVID-19 pandemic is responsible for the emergence or expansion of pockets of famine in several countries around the world. This is also true for Togo. In fact, women are usually the ones who enable families to access food. They are not only the agricultural labour force, but also the ones who prepare the food.

In this time of crisis, women are sacrificing themselves in order to give priority to children and the elderly ; in other words, they are the first to suffer from the reduction in food rations. It should be noted that girls are disadvantaged compared to boys in the distribution of food. The authors of the paper cited above, Oxfam and *al* (2020, p.4), referring to the World Food Programme (WFP), indicate that the number of food-insecure people in West and Central Africa could almost double to 57.6 million by the end of the year, up from 36 million before the start of the pandemic. They add that acute malnutrition among children could increase by 20% compared to estimates at the beginning of the year. One of the reasons for this is that border closures and movement restrictions have had a negative effect on livestock feed. It is not too much to add that, as a result of rising prices, food rations have been reduced to one meal a day, although the quality of the food has declined.

Sharp declines in the services and agriculture sectors indicate that the crisis would severely affect the poorest and most vulnerable, especially women.

¹⁸ Oxfam and *al.*, West African women facing COVID, 7 realities, 7 solutions, 2020, p. 3.

(vi) *Lack of appropriate information on COVID-19*

During this crisis, some women and girls may not have timely access to appropriate information to protect themselves and their loved ones.

Indeed, the channels of official information on COVID-19, its management and its consequences are, mainly, television, the written press and radio. These channels are, however, most often under the control of the father of the family. However, there are of course cases where these information channels are accessible to women. The problem is that some women and girls (especially in rural areas), - and this is true for some men and boys - do not necessarily master the working language in Togo, (French). They can therefore only rely on information shared on the street, in discussions or on social networks, which are, in many ways, unreliable. True information is necessary to resolve this crisis in the best possible way. On the other hand, incorrect information would worsen the effects of the disease.

(vii) *The issue of women's representation in decision-making bodies*

As caregivers or mothers, women are effectively involved in the management of the crisis. With the disease, in fact, women are more solicited, not only at the health centre (for professionals of the same name), but also to make up for the loss of income due to curfew or loss of employment of the spouse, linked to the coronavirus.

Togo has set up a Crisis Committee¹⁹ and a National Coordination²⁰ for the management of the response to COVID-19. At the level of each Prefecture, a Local Committee for the Management of the response to COVID-19 has been set up. Having said that, we can question their level of participation and influence in the functioning of these bodies according to their occupations.

(viii) *Weight of social standards*

Due to social burdens, it is not usual to assign high positions of responsibility to women and girls. Under these conditions, they are victims of job cuts. Indeed, women's positions are most likely to be eliminated in the event of downsizing for reasons of economic crisis (linked to the pandemic).

Among the actors working to strengthen social values are civil society organisations (CSOs) whose actions have been disrupted by the effects of the pandemic. In what terms are the impacts of COVID-19 on CSOs (d) in general ?

d. *Impact on civil society organisations civile*

According to a study to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on African CSOs, conducted by @AfricanNGOs and EPIC-Africa between 29 April and 15 May 2020, the following data

¹⁹ This Committee meets regularly to assess the situation and take the necessary decisions.

²⁰ The entity ensures inter-ministerial coordination of the implementation of government decisions. ²³ @AfricanNGOs and EPIC-Africa, Impact of covid-19 on African civil society organisations challenges, responses and opportunities, 2020, pp.4-5.

emerges, based on the returns of one thousand and fifteen (1,015) CSOs from 44 African countries, including Togo that participated in the survey :

- In terms of financing : 55.69% have already suffered a loss of financing, and 66.46% expect a loss of financing in the next 3-6 months ;
- In the area of preparedness : 84.48% indicated that they were not ready to deal with the disruption caused by COVID-19 in their operations ;
- Regarding sustainability : 77.97% felt that COVID-19 would have a devastating impact on the sustainability of many CSOs ;
- With regard to the cancellation or reduction of operations : 69.34% had to reduce or cancel their operations while 54.94% believe that this situation will continue over the next 3-6 months ;
- In terms of movements : 73.97% indicated that COVID-19 would lead to staff movements and 79.35% recorded a decrease in face-to-face community interactions²¹.

According to the same study, one survey respondent said : *"Our field interventions came to an abrupt halt because of COVID-19, leaving communities without any support for the services on which they depend. We are also anticipating a loss of income from donations and programme funding, so we need to introduce cost-cutting measures in the coming weeks. We were not prepared for these sudden changes in our operating environment."*

Beyond the social repercussions of the pandemic, the economic consequences of the pandemic are just as striking (B).

B. Initial economic situation and economic consequences of COVID-19

Before showing the economic impacts of COVID-19 in Togo (2), it is important to go through the elements of the initial economic situation (1).

1. Initial economic situation

In Togo, the structure of the economy has evolved only slowly. Moreover, there are still limitations with regard to the objectives of structural transformation. Capital accumulation, the main engine of growth, faces financing limits. Several of the tools used to support domestic and external demand generate distortions that limit long-term productivity growth.²²

As indicated in Togo's health statistics yearbook (2016), *the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate from 2013 to 2016 averaged around 5%, a level comparable to that of most sub-Saharan African countries. As the thirteenth poorest country in the world, the gross domestic product per capita in 2016 will amount to US\$586.3*²³. It should be added that *economic growth experienced a*

²¹ @AfricanNGOs and EPIC-Africa, Impact of COVID-19 on african civil society organizations challenges, responses and opportunities, 2020, pp.4-5.

²² Togolese Republic, National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2022, 2018, p.4.

²³ Ministry of health (and protection Togo), *op.cit.* p.14.

downward trend between 2015 and 2017, dropping from 5.7% in 2015 to 5% in 2016 and then to 4.4% in 2017 as a result of political tensions and strong budgetary contraction.²⁴».

This yearbook recalls that *economic growth has been mainly driven by agricultural production, extractive industries and trade activities. Togo has an important agricultural potential, which represents almost half of the country's GDP, and employs 75% of the active population.* With regard to poverty, more than half of the population remains poor (see table below).

Table 2: Evolution of key socio-economic indicators in the country, 2015-2016²⁵

Indicators	2015	2016	Sources
GDP (USD billion)	4, 17	4,52	IMF, 2016
Gross National Income per capita (USD)	570	602	
Real GDP growth rate	5,40%	5,30%	World Bank
Average annual inflation rate	1,80%	2,10%	
Industrial production growth rates	5,10%	5,4%	
Incidence of poverty ²⁶	55,10%	58,70%	QUIBB, 2015
Human Development Index (HDI)	0,487	0,484	UNDP, 2015, 2016
% of household with access to safe drinking water	61,80%	ND	QUIBB, 2015
% of households using nature as a place of comfort	42,90%	ND	QUIBB, 2015

It should be remembered that many workers operate in the informal sector. They represent 1.4 million people, i.e. 38% of the working population and 88% of workers in the private non-agricultural sector.²⁷ With an often very limited capacity to save, these workers generally need to work every day to earn a living and cover the basic needs of their families.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) notes that despite a reduction in the unemployment rate from 6.5% to 3.4%, underemployment increased from 22 to 24.9% between 2011 and 2015. Men are affected by this phenomenon to the extent of 25.8% compared to 24.1% for women. Spatial analysis shows that the working population in Greater Lomé (29.2%) is more underemployed compared to those in other urban areas (25.3%) and rural areas (22.9%). The main barriers to employment are related to the

²⁴ Ministry of development planning and cooperation (Togo), *op.cit.* p14.

²⁵ Ministry of health and protection (Togo), *op cit*, p.15

²⁶ Poverty is the state of a person lacking material possessions. It is expressed through low consumption, malnutrition, lack of capacity to meet basic needs or to have access to public services.

²⁷ French Development Agency, Novissi: preventing the social impacts of the covid-19 pandemic in Togo <https://www.afd.fr/fr/carte-des-projets/novissi-prevenir-les-impacts-sociaux-de-la-pandemie-de-covid-19au-togo>, consulted on the 25/08/2020

mismatch between young people's skills and labour market needs and the lack of economic opportunities.²⁸

Faced with this more or less fragile economic situation of the country, what could be the economic impact of COVID-19 (2) ?

2. Economic impacts induced by COVID-19

Axis 2 of the National Development Plan (NDP) is dedicated to resilient economic growth. It is very important from the perspective of the sustainable development of the country. In other words: "*If Togo's National Development Plan PND 2018-2022 were a human body, axis 2 would be its backbone*"²⁹

The document shows that between 2006-2015, the average real GDP growth rate exceeded 5%, the incidence of poverty decreased by 6.6 percentage points, employment improved significantly and the human development index improved. Despite this notable progress, significant challenges persist in terms of social and spatial inequalities, the weakness of the national productive system, human resources and governance³⁰.

These challenges have grown in scale, particularly in economic terms, following the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic. Impacts are identified at several levels : Weakness/loss of employment and loss of income (at the individual level); effects on the activities of private sector companies and lower State revenues.

a Fragmentation / loss of jobs, lower individual incomes, and higher unemployment rates

The world has seen job losses that leave any observer stunned. Indeed, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), in a report entitled "*COVID and the world of work*", published on 23 September 2020, estimated that the decline in labour income would be 10.7%, or \$3.5 trillion (2,990 billion), in the first three quarters of 2020, compared to the same period in 2019³¹.

In Togo, according to the survey results of the National Institute of Statistics and Economic and Demographic Studies, job losses are recorded and consequently, drops in income have been noted.

We note that, "*in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the national harmonised consumer price index decreased by 0.8% in August 2020 compared to its July 2020 level. This evolution is driven by the fall recorded for the consumer functions "food and non-alcoholic beverages" by 2.1%, "housing, water, gas, electricity and other fuels" by 0.5%, "communication" by 0.2% and*

²⁸ UNDP, op. cit, <https://www.tg.undp.org/content/togo/fr/home/sustainable-development/indepth.html>, consulted on the 10/08/2020

²⁹ Togolese Republic, <https://autogo.tg/togo-axe-2-du-pnd-lagriculture-comme-socle-dune-croissanceeconomique-resiliente/>, consulted on the 08/09/2020

³⁰ Togolese Republic, op. cit, p.1.

³¹ Le Monde, https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2020/09/23/le-covid-19-entraîne-des-pertesimportantes-d-emploi-et-derevenus_6053316_3234.html#:~:text=Dans%20un%20rapport%20publi%C3%A9%20mercredi,la%20m%C3%AAme%20p%C3%A9riode%20en%202019, consulted on the 25/08/2020.

"transport" by 0.1%. On the other hand, prices rose less for the consumption functions "restaurants and hotels" (+0.1%), "miscellaneous goods and services" (+0.1%), "health" (+0.1%), "recreation and culture" (+0.2%) and "education" (+0.1%).³²».

The loss of income due to the loss of jobs or worsening working conditions has substantially reduced the ability of workers to :

- To be able to provide their households with the required average food ration of 2,500 kcal/day ;
- Purchase appropriate sanitation and cleaning products in accordance with barrier measures ;
- Purchase face masks on a regular basis.

If the situation is untenable for those in employment, the situation is even more difficult for those seeking employment. Indeed, several thousand young people are graduating from universities, technical training centres and apprenticeship centres, and were expecting to join the ranks of workers when this crisis emerged.

As a result, their hopes of finding a job have faded, as few institutions and companies are able to hire at the moment. As a result, the unemployment rate is likely to rise.

The effects of the health crisis have wreaked havoc on private sector companies. (b), as can be seen in the next few lines.

b Declining revenues of private companies

It is legitimate to question how private sector companies are affected by the health crisis. On this subject, reference can be made to the study conducted by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Togo (CCIT).

- Impact of COVID-19 on the turnover of private sector companies

Indeed, the report of this study suggests that nearly 54% of the companies surveyed experienced a decline in turnover between January 2020 and February 2020, although no cases of COVID-19 were detected in the country. This decrease would result from the decline in trade relations between these companies and the countries affected by the pandemic over this period. The branches of trade and agriculture are the most affected by this decline, at 58.3% and 56.3% respectively³³.

This decline continued the following month : between February and March 2020, more than 92% of companies recorded a drop in turnover. The decline in turnover would therefore be all the greater as the crisis continues.³⁴

³² National institute of statistics and economic and demographic studies, harmonised national consumer price index for WAEMU member countries, Togo, p.1, August 2020.

³³ Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Togo (CCIT), Effects of the health crisis linked to COVID-19 on the activities of the Togolese private sector, 2020, p.26.

³⁴ *Idem*, p.27

One of the most affected sectors is the accommodation sector due to the closure of borders and curfews. The number of tourists had decreased significantly. According to the figures, more than 55% of the companies operating in the accommodation and catering sector lost more than 75% of their turnover.³⁵

- *Impacts of covid-19 on private sector employment*

As with company turnover, the impact of the disease has moved into the field of company employment.

It emerges from the study of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Togo that so far, nearly 62% of Togolese private sector companies have kept all of their employees despite the difficulties related to COVID-19. This observation can be explained by the constraints in terms of redundancies, the companies' sense of confidence in a rapid recovery of activities in the near future, the choice to avoid turnover costs and those linked to possible new recruitments. On the other hand, more than 37% of companies have reduced their number of employees, with a peak in the industry, mining and construction branch (47%). The measure prohibiting the gathering of more than 15 people has forced several companies in this sector to reduce their staff or simply to suspend work in progress as a precautionary measure.

Overall, the problems to which the pandemic has exposed Togolese private sector companies are, among others: a drop in sales, supply difficulties, the problem of access to finance, a drop in production and difficulties in transporting goods..³⁶.

Beyond individuals and private sector companies, the effects of the pandemic have been strongly felt at the level of State revenues (c).

c Decrease in state revenues

The overall objective of the National Development Plan (PND) 2018-2022 is to "*structurally transform the economy for strong, sustainable, resilient, inclusive growth that creates decent jobs and leads to improved social welfare* ³⁷». This objective should contribute to a clear vision : "*make Togo a middle-income nation that is economically, socially and democratically solid and stable, supportive and open to the world*". Togo intended, in fact, to establish a logistics hub of excellence and a first-rate business centre in the sub-region (strategic axis 1) ; develop poles of agricultural processing, manufacturing and extractive industries (2) ; and consolidate social development and strengthen inclusion mechanisms (strategic axis 3).

However, with the advent of the pandemic, whole areas of economic development have been put to the test. How can the general objective defined be achieved when an economy based, among other things, on air transport can no longer be operational because air borders have been closed for several months ? The seaport has seen its revenues drop due to the drastic reduction in transactions.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p.30

³⁶ Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Togo, *op.cit*, p.32

³⁷ Togolese Republic, *op. cit*, p. xii

The activities of private companies have declined or ceased. In order to limit the spread of the virus, the government declared a state of health emergency on 1 April 2020 for a period of three months, with a ban on gatherings and movements, the establishment of a curfew of 7pm and 6am and the sealing off of the most affected areas, including Greater Lomé (the Togolese capital and suburbs).

Even though these measures have had beneficial effects in limiting the transmission of Covid-19, they have deprived the state of huge sources of revenue (taxes and royalties), thus leading to a significant deterioration in the budget deficit.

Conversely, State expenditure increased during the same period. Indeed, the Togolese government set up a programme supported by the French Development Agency (AFD) on 8 April 2020 and for the duration of the state of health emergency, called Novissi, which means "mutual aid" in Ewe, one of the local languages. This social assistance programme paid into the electronic wallets of its beneficiaries aims to assist the most vulnerable people and ensure a post-crisis economic recovery.

In concrete terms, with the help of their telephones, citizens have registered for the programme and, if eligible, receive 12,250 FCFA per month (or 35% of the minimum wage) for women and 10,500 FCFA per month (or 30% of the minimum wage) for men.

From a strictly health point of view, the State has allocated resources to enable a hospital centre to receive and care for people affected by COVID-19. Thus, as reported on the WHO Africa website, the Government has carried out renovation work on the Centre Hospitalier Régional Lomé Commune (CHR Lomé Commune).

Indeed, at the Council of Ministers on 21 March 2020, the Government took the decision to dedicate this Regional Hospital to the treatment of infectious diseases, including COVID-19. The renovation work was entirely financed by the Togolese Government. In order to adapt the CHR to the requirements of caring for patients with COVID-19, extensive renovations have been undertaken in a gradual manner with good identification of the different zones and the safety circuit.

Thus, the entire south wing of the RHC with a capacity of 75 beds has been completely renovated and equipped, including resuscitation equipment, according to WHO standards. Tents and containers have also been installed and fitted out to increase the carrying capacity. The test of the equipment is underway in order to transfer patients there by Wednesday 22 April 2020 at the latest and to continue the renovation and equipment of the second wing³⁸. A few weeks later, the work was completed.

³⁸ WHO, Togo, <https://www.afro.who.int/fr/news/togo-riposte-au-covid-19-le-chr-lome-communerenove-pour-assurer-une-prise-en-charge-de> , published on 17/04/2020, consulted on the 12/08/2020.



Extension of the infrastructure with tents and containers Reanimation room
Photo source: WHO Togo

In addition to these measures, on 1 April 2020, the Government took measures aimed at making water and electricity free of charge for a period of 3 months for social groups, and reducing the connection fees for water from 75 to 25,000 CFA francs. In addition, specific measures to support agricultural production and ensure food self-sufficiency have been taken, as well as those in support of consumption, production, safeguarding employment, financial relief with regard to the procedures for obtaining land titles, or the tax situation of companies.

All of these state actions, and others, have had an impact on the country's economy.

In an article published on Togo First's website, entitled *The Economic Impacts of COVID19 for Togo and its WAEMU neighbours (Study)*, it is stated that in Togo, Minister Sani Yaya, the finance boss, recently conceded that : "*Activity has slowed down, and the economic growth rate will certainly be impacted. He confirmed a slowdown "in the order of half for the moment"*". While the country was expecting around 5.3% growth for 2020, currently this forecast "*would be around 2.1 to 2.5%*", according to the minister. Enough to curb the upward trend in the country's economy, which began in 2017.³⁹

Having assessed the socio-economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic, it is appropriate to turn to nature to understand the environmental consequences of the disease (II).

II. Elements for assessing the environmental impact of the coronavirus pandemic

Before measuring the impact of the health crisis on the environment (2), it is first important to summarise, in a few lines, the baseline environmental situation (1).

A. Initial environmental situation

Rather than covering all aspects of the environmental field, we will limit our description to just a few elements that will allow us to later appreciate the impact that COVID-19 has

³⁹ Togo First, Undertaking in Togo, entitled *The Economic Impacts of Covid-19 for Togo and its WAEMU Neighbours (Study)*, <https://www.togofirst.com/fr/gouvernance-economique/0804-5302-les-impactseconomiques-du-covid-19-pour-le-togo-et-ses-voisins-de-luemoa-etude>, published on Wednesday, 08/04/2020 , at 15:55, consulted on the 12/08/2020

caused to the environment. These elements are related to forest cover, climate, pollution, etc.

1. *Forest cover*

Togo's forest ecosystems fall into three main categories : natural forest formations, forest and agro-forestry plantations, and protected areas and community forests.

According to the national forest inventory carried out by Togo from 2015 to 2016, the country has a forest cover of 24.24% of the territory. The results give a low woody potential of 54.42 m³ /ha and a low presence of large diameter stands. Using the same methodology for forest mapping, the forest cover for the period 1976-1984 was estimated at 25.30%. These results indicate a loss of forest area of 4.2% in 30 years⁴⁰.



Parc Fazao : photo VivAfrik.com



Pressure on forests for wood energy :
Photo Les Amis de la Terre-Togo

2. *Climate*

Togo, located between 6 and 11°N and 0 and 1°40 E, has a surface area of 56,600 km². Bordered to the west by Ghana, to the east by Benin, to the south by the Atlantic Ocean and to the north by Burkina Faso, it is characterised by a Sudanian tropical regime in the north with a uni-modal regime with an average of 850 mm to 1400 mm rainfall/year and the Guinean tropical regime in the south with a bimodal regime of 1000 mm to 1600 mm rainfall/year. The average temperature is 28°C in the northern zones, 27°C in the coastal zone and varies between 24°C and 26°C in the other zones. The average relative humidity is also high in southern areas (73% to 90%), but low in northern areas (53% to 67%). The average wind speed is 1.93 m/s and the average duration of sun exposure is 6 hours 37 minutes per day. The average evapotranspiration is 1,540 mm/year. Over the last 45 years, there has been a decrease in rainfall and the number of rainy days, as well as an increase in temperature.

In addition, the ratio of Potential Rainfall to Potential Evapotranspiration, which is the aridity index, is also declining, reflecting the tendency for the climate to dry up⁴¹.

Togo is suffering the consequences of coastal erosion at a rapid rate, with speeds varying between 5 and 15 m/year.

⁴⁰ Ministry of environment, sustainable development and nature protection (of Togo), Reference Level for Forests in Togo, p.1.

⁴¹ Togolese Republic, Third national communication on climate change, 2015, p. xiv.

This follows the construction of the Akosombo dam (1965), in Ghana, the construction of the Autonomous Port of Lomé (in 1968) and the importance of human intervention in the coastal zone. This is causing serious problems for existing developments and development projects in the coastal zone.



Manifestations of coastal erosion in Togo

Source Africa top success

source : Togolese Republic

3. *Pollutions*

There are several sources of pollution in Togo. We will deal with some of them.

Phosphate mining waste causes marine pollution. The environmental impact of the discharge into the sea of mining waste from the treatment of phosphates from HahotokéKpogamé has been studied. The results of chemical analyses show high concentrations of the elements Cd (2-44 mg/kg), Cr (1 15-753 mg/kg), Cu (22-184 mg/kg), Ni (19-281 mg/kg), V (38-329 mg/kg), Sr (179-643 mg/kg), Pb (22-176 nig/kg), Zn (60-632 mg/kg) and Zr (18-8928 mg/kg) in the < 63 um fraction of coastal marine sediments⁴². Phosphate mining contaminates drinking water, infests the air. Many riverside populations have stained teeth (coffee or dirty yellow). This affects organisms and reduces life expectancy.

Cement plants are also a source of air pollution. They are also sources of greenhouse gas emissions. The same applies to vehicle traffic. The vehicle fleet is growing ; the combustion of fuel in engines, especially used engines, is a source of danger. Some people use poor quality fuel, which affects their health.

Plastic pollution is a poignant reality in Togo. To curb the phenomenon, a presidential decree, dated 5 January 2011, was issued prohibiting the production, importation, distribution and marketing of non-biodegradable plastic bags and packaging in Togo⁴³. Unfortunately, these bags continue to be used by citizens on a daily basis.

⁴² GNANDI K. Phosphate mining waste, a source of marine pollution in Togo, p.2.

⁴³ Decree No. 2011-003/PR laying down procedures for the management of plastic bags and packaging in Togo, 2011



Wild dump in Lomé source : Togo First

Faced with the scale of the Phenomenon, GADDI-Togo proceeds With the clean-up.

Rivers and streams are often polluted by domestic waste. Yet many people, especially in rural areas, continue to feed from these sources, which cause many diseases. According to the questionnaire survey on basic indicators of well-being in Togo (QUIBB 2011 survey), 47.2% of households dispose of their rubbish in the wild, 21.2% in unauthorised dumps and between 4.5% and 18.2% in authorised dumps thanks to the door-to-door collection method, particularly in Lomé (75.4%).

This reference situation being presented, we can look at the consequences of the pandemic on the environment.

B. Environmental impacts induced by COVID-19

Several forms of environmental degradation have been recorded since the pandemic surfaced. These include : land grabbing and the opening of illegal sand quarries, pollution from nose plugs, increased greenhouse gas emissions from internet use. It should also be noted that with the emergence of the pandemic, the ecological issue has been relegated to the background.

1 Land grabbing and the opening of illegal sand quarries

Due to the health crisis, financial resources are dwindling, precariousness is becoming more widespread, and people are finding it difficult to survive. This situation is becoming a godsend for economic operators who buy agricultural land at low prices from people who are suffering under the weight of poverty.

In the prefecture of Vo companies have acquired, at a derisory price, hectares of land to open sand quarries, in contradiction with environmental, agricultural and physical security policies (because of the pits caused by the quarries). For 60 years, the prefecture has been suffering from the repercussions of phosphate mining : displacement of populations, loss of land, pollution of rivers, diseases, social conflicts.

Today, local biodiversity continues to be eroded. Researchers are finding a link between diseases, forests and their destruction. On 7 December 2016, in the journal *Science Advances*, a study confirms this thesis and explains the underlying mechanisms.

The destruction of biodiversity in the Vo is a source of aggravating the fragility of populations in the face of COVID-19.



Old quarry not backfilled



New sand quarry

Sand quarries in the prefecture of Vo, photo NGO ATBEP

2 Pollution from nose pads

One of the barrier measures against COVID-19 is the wearing of a mask (nose mask). The systematic wearing of masks for all health workers in all health centres in the country has been de rigueur since 20 April 2020. It became the same for everyone on 9 June 2020. It is advisable to replace your bib with a new one that is clean and dry, when the one you are wearing becomes wet or dirty. It is advisable to change the mask at least once a day. Since Togo made the systematic wearing of masks in public spaces compulsory and recommended regular hand washing, no specific strategy for managing these masks and washing water has been proposed by either the ministry in charge of the environment or the ministry in charge of health. These mufflers, after use, are thrown away by some people. This leads to damage to the sewerage system : insalubrity, pestilence, putrefaction.

All these negative effects on the environment have repercussions on humans and their health (this waste can carry pathogenic risks). If they are flushed down gutters or toilets, they end up in treatment systems and can clog pipes or damage certain equipment. Another nuisance is visual pollution. It is not uncommon to see used masks on pavements, dumps, street corners, schoolyards. This creates a visual nuisance. This poses the problem of waste management caused by disposable masks. On the subject, the WHO writes that: "*the uncontrolled disposal of masks can lead to an increase in the volume of waste in public places, presenting a risk of contamination of street cleaners and risks to the environment...*"⁴⁴ ». Masks protect us from COVID-19 ; we should protect the environment too !

Taking the example of France, in order to preserve the environment, limit the spread of COVID-19 and protect collection agents, the Ministry of Ecology is conducting a campaign

⁴⁴ WHO, Guidance on mask wearing in the context of COVID-19 : Interim guidance, 2020, p.10.

to raise awareness among users. In the said campaign, the Ministry indicates or even recommends a three-step approach to avoid pollution and contamination.

Surgical masks, gloves, used handkerchiefs and other wipes should be disposed of in a dedicated, strong bin bag with a closure system. Once the bag is filled, it must be carefully closed and kept for 24 hours before being thrown away in the household waste bin, and under no circumstances in the recyclable waste bin.⁴⁵



Mask abandoned in the street, photo Darius

It is known that some of these masks are made from nylon, polypropylene, polyester, etc. The complete natural decomposition of the waste from these products will take several decades or even hundreds of years.

3 Increase in greenhouse gas emissions from internet use

Among the measures taken by the government to limit the spread of the virus, some have resulted in a reduction in activities that are sources of greenhouse gas emissions.

These include the suspension of all air links from high-risk countries ; the closure of all public and public schools and public and private universities throughout the country ; and the closure of cities affected by the pandemic. During these moments, teleworking is promoted. As schools are closed, young people have used the Internet a lot for research and entertainment. Professionals in different fields conducted online conferences through webinars. However, the considerable increase in the use of the Internet corresponds to the carbon dioxide emissions, as the Internet uses a lot of energy and servers. It should be noted that the Government has launched a digital platform⁴⁶, in the context of travel, which allows travellers entering and leaving Togo to carry out online the immigration and health procedures necessary for safe travel. The platform enables the fees for the Covid-19 test to be paid with various secure digital payment methods (Carte Bleue : Visa and Mastercard ; mobile money : T-Money and Flooz). A mobile contact tracing application has been developed by the Government. Named TOGO SAFE, the application already available in the App Store and soon in the Play Store and in the App Gallery, uses the Bluetooth

⁴⁵ DANSOU Kokou Mivoïn, La gestion des masques COVID-19 mask management, p.13, 2020.

⁴⁶ <https://numerique.gouv.tg/ouverture-des-frontieres-aeriennes-voyage-gouv-tg-lance-pour-digitaliser-lagection-des-voyageurs-a-laeroport-de-lome/>, consulted on the 27/08/2020

function of its user's phone to alert him/her when he/she has been in contact with a person who has tested positive for Coronavirus. It has therefore launched a digital, zero-interest credit programme⁴⁷ through which the state, in partnership with banks and mobile phone operators Togocom and Moov Togo, grants a loan to small farmers for the purchase of inputs (seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, inoculum) and the rental of agricultural equipment.

Another digital response to COVID-19 is a cash transfer programme⁴⁸ delivered via mobile money.

Through this mechanism, replacement income has been made available to more than 560,000 Togolese, actors in the informal sector who have lost or are at risk of losing their income as a result of measures taken by the Government (curfews, closure of certain towns, prohibition of certain activities, etc.) to combat the spread of the coronavirus.

The forecast of CO₂ emissions in the coming months could increase drastically if the pace of digital use continues to increase because of the pandemic.

4 Ecological issue relegated to the background

Since its appearance, not a day goes by without a mention of COVID-19-related illness. The issue is widely discussed. It is on the menu of the media, not only to raise awareness, but also to report on the evolution of the pandemic on a daily basis and to inform about the prospects of the vaccine. However, other subjects, including those relating to the environment, are almost overshadowed by the news. Thus, the coronavirus issue has taken precedence over a longer-term issue such as global warming. Managing the pandemic has become the Government's priority. While this is logical, it is nonetheless true that it reduces the attention that should be paid to global warming, rightly considered as a climate emergency.

Moreover, the international conferences that should be held within the framework of the Conferences of the Parties (the decision-making body responsible for monitoring the implementation of an international treaty) on multilateral environmental agreements could not be held. Some meetings on environmental issues have been held online, if not postponed altogether. However, an online meeting does not allow corridor negotiations between participants, nor does it provide an opportunity for NGOs and associations to advocate and lobby negotiators for environmental justice. The coronavirus-related health crisis is one of the most serious that humanity has ever experienced, and its socio-economic and environmental implications are numerous. Bold measures must be taken to curb them. These measures must involve both external and national entities. What are the approaches towards a fair and equitable recovery ? This is the question we will try to answer in this second part of the reflection.

⁴⁷ <https://numerique.gouv.tg/lancement-de-yolim-un-programme-de-credit-digital-a-taux-zero-au-profitdes-agriculteurs-togolais/>, consulted in the 27/08/2020

⁴⁸ <https://numerique.gouv.tg/riposte-covid-19-novissi-le-togo-et-la-france-ensemble-pour-soutenir-lesecteur-de-linformel/>, consulted in the 27/08/2020

**PART TWO : MEASURES FOR A JUST AND FAIR
RECOVERY**

Will social life resume and improve ? How can we avoid sacrificing health care on the altar of economics ? How can we organise the resumption of activities without compromising our environment ? These are all essential questions that require radical but relevant answers. We must assume that today's society has shown its limits. We need to change the present development paradigms. We need a strong strategic line that can be read by all, which requires popular support.

To this end, our proposals for a fair and equitable recovery will be inspired by the principles for a just recovery⁴⁹, developed by the Friends of the Earth Federation International⁵⁰ .

This must involve transformations at the social (I), economic (II) and environmental (III) levels.

I. Social measures for a fair and just recovery

The social measures suggested to us by the consequences of this health crisis must be based, fundamentally, on the following key idea :

Promote the realization of rights by the sovereign people

The development activities initiated by the government are supposed to contribute to the well-being of the population. To this end, daily efforts must be made to strengthen popular participation and the appropriation of the dynamics of co-construction of the national edifice. This democratic construction must be at the service of the rights and needs of the population in order to improve the quality of life. We know that more than half of the Togolese population was living in poverty before the health crisis, and that the situation deteriorated sharply with it. It is important to encourage popular support for recovery and reconstruction.

The state must ensure that multinational corporations do not advance their interests at the expense of human rights at a time when the government's priority is to manage the pandemic. People's rights must be protected in all circumstances.

Limits must be placed on the power of companies that tend to challenge the right to a healthy environment.⁵¹ Respect for the right of communities to free, prior and informed consent on projects affecting them is crucial.

⁴⁹ Friends of the Earth International, <https://www.foei.org/fr/actualites/reprise-juste-crise-covid-19>, consulted on the 15/08/2020. Friends of the Earth International believes that there is an urgent need for a "just recovery", based on environmental, social, gender and economic justice, to address the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis in a comprehensive manner. Indeed, Friends of the Earth International believes that the COVID-19 crisis is the result of an economic system that puts profits ahead of the environment and people's rights. The interconnected and systemic socio-ecological crises we are currently experiencing - climate, food, water, economic, biodiversity, and health care - and this global coronavirus pandemic share the same root causes : a capitalist, patriarchal and racist system designed for capital accumulation and corporate-led neo-liberal globalisation.

⁵⁰ It is the world's largest global network of grassroots environmental organisations with 73 national member groups and some 5,000 local activist groups on all continents.

⁵¹ Togolese Republic Constitution of the Fourth Republic, adopted by referendum on 27 September 1992 promulgated on 14 October 1992, revised by law n°2002-029 of 31 December 2002. Article 41 : "*Everyone has the right to a healthy environment. The State shall ensure the protection of the environment*".

As UN Secretary-General António Guterres said in a Briefing Note: the impact of COVID19 on South-East Asia, on 30 July 2020, the recovery of South-East Asia will be based on four priorities, and in our opinion, these proposals should be suitable for Togo :

- a. *Tackling inequalities* in income, health care and social protection and thus providing stimulus packages...
- b. *Reducing the digital divide*, so that no person and no community is left behind in an increasingly connected world.
- c. *Greening the economy*, creating jobs for the future and de-carbonising the economy, which is still too dependent on coal and other outdated industries.
- d. *Defending human rights*, protecting civic space and promoting transparency, all of which are integral to an effective response.

These measures must promote gender equality and combat the rise in gender-based violence, and involve women in all aspects of recovery plans. "This will help mitigate the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women, one of the best ways to ensure sustainable, early and inclusive recovery for all.⁵²...».

These social provisions alone will not be sufficient to foster long-term development in the face of COVID-19, hence the need to promote economic measures for a fair and equitable recovery (II).

II. Economic measures for a fair and equitable recovery

For our part, a fair and equitable economic recovery will have to be based on :

The abandonment of neo-liberalism and austerity in favour of policies and measures based on economic justice, taking into account ecological limits.

Indeed, the pandemic has aggravated the structural social (gender inequalities, social inequalities, etc.) and environmental (climate crisis, pollution of all kinds, erosion of biodiversity, etc.) crises that already exist and opens our eyes to the inadequacies of the current economic model.

In fact, there can be no better choice than to change a system that does not work (such as neo-liberalism) for the vast majority, and to return to the state its fundamental role as guarantor of the realisation of people's rights.

The State will therefore need to adopt bold economic policies to respond to the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath. The debate on the role of the state as guarantor of the common good, of care for life, must be reaffirmed and exalted.

The State must bring public services and key economic sectors under its control in the interest of local communities. This will ensure that public services (including health, access to water and sanitation, transport, energy, education and health care services) are accessible to all people on an equitable and universal basis.

Privatisation takes advantage of workers' savings ; the state must, on the contrary, create decent jobs that guarantee non-exploitative conditions for all workers, and to guarantee an

⁵² WHO, <https://news.un.org/fr/story/2020/07/1074151>, published on the 30/07/2020, consulted on the 28/08/2020

income that allows the working classes to bear the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic.

The state must ensure that public funding contributes to climate justice, land rights, food sovereignty, agroecology, collective management of biodiversity and community forest management. The financing of stimulus programmes and public spending requires far-reaching reforms, establishing fair tax systems in which the bulk of taxes are paid by wealthy individuals and enterprises, not by workers.

In this, we need to learn lessons from the financial crisis of 2008, during which inequalities widened and large corporations continued to make profits and gain power while the middle and working classes suffered the consequences.

Funding should promote a redistribution of wealth and the empowerment of women, children, the elderly, the sick and people with special needs.

Companies that receive public funding or benefit from tax exemptions must not pay dividends to their shareholders until this funding has been repaid and they have committed to a gradual withdrawal from their (environmental) polluting activities. The Government must put an end to the harmful trade and investment negotiations that seek to further entrench the economic and political power of the multinationals at the expense of the South, and to reduce the policy space of the state, which is sorely needed to resolve the crisis.

In addition, it must carry out evaluations of existing agreements and their repercussions, and initiate cancellation procedures when it is proven that these agreements harm the environment and people's rights.

A new economic system focused on regional and local contexts and based on fair trade relations will have to be promoted. It is important to dismantle Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanisms that allow companies to sue states for measures or policies designed to protect people before, during and after COVID-19.

In order to ensure justice for people and binding rules for multinationals, the government must commit to a legally binding international human rights instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises.

Such an instrument must put an end to impunity for multinationals and ensure justice for those affected by human rights violations. The government must also commit itself to putting in place ambitious binding legislation at the national level on transnational corporations and human rights.

In addition to these social and economic measures, proposals that take into account environmental concerns will be addressed (III).

III. Environmental measures for a fair and equitable recovery

Socio-economic activities have a direct or indirect impact on nature. A crisis such as that of COVID-19, for its part, has shown how fragile the environment is and how it can be damaged by human behaviour when confronted with existential problems.

In order to recover from the pandemic, a few thoughts with a strong environmental sensitivity deserve to be carried out. It is a question of thinking about *a transformative systemic change in favour of climate, food and biodiversity, among others*.

It is necessary to restore the link between our societies and nature and ecological systems. A fair and healthy recovery requires a response to the crisis of loss of biodiversity, forests and other ecosystems around the world. Further destruction must be avoided, as it is deforestation and pressure on ecosystems that are at the root of the pandemic.

To this end, the collective rights of local populations must be recognised, applied and respected in order to maintain their ancestral practices of collective management of territories. Community forest management must be supported by the State.

There is scientific evidence that forests under the control of indigenous peoples and local communities have a better degree of conservation and a higher rate of biodiversity than forests preserved by conventional protection mechanisms (such as national parks).

Moreover, this type of practice guarantees better food and sanitary conditions for these peoples. A just recovery calls for policies that replace the food system based on polluting industrial agriculture with food sovereignty, supporting peasant and family farming and agro-ecological production. These policies should include price support mechanisms, public procurement programmes and supply and demand control measures. The right to food and food sovereignty must take precedence over trade agreements.

The use of chemical pesticides in agriculture, which have a variety of adverse health effects, such as weakened immune systems, and threaten ecosystems, must be phased out. A fair recovery implies an economy anchored in a society in which energy, transport, communications, housing, water and sanitation, education, health, care and social security are recognized as rights and are accessible to all through public services, financed by a fair tax system.

We will have to move away from an economy dependent on fossil fuels. This means transforming a polluting, business-based energy system into a 100% renewable energy system in state and community hands that guarantees access to energy for all at affordable cost.

This means investing in renewable energy, adapted to local and national contexts, climatefriendly, affordable and low-impact.

A just recovery must contribute to a just transition to energy sovereignty, in which people's rights are at the centre, especially the rights of workers, women, peasant communities and fisherfolk.

CONCLUSION

The current infectious disease is a major challenge for Togo. It has repercussions that are costly in human terms, socially paralysing and economically dangerous.

Socially, there are health impacts, including loss of life, separation from family members, impacts on women and girls, and on civil society organisations.

At the economic level, Togo has experienced the fragility/loss of employment, a drop in individual incomes, an increase in the unemployment rate, a drop in the income of private companies, as well as a drop in state revenues.

In terms of the environment, the impacts identified range from land grabbing and the opening of illegal sand quarries, to pollution from hide-and-seekers, to the increase in greenhouse gas emissions linked to the use of the internet and the relegation of the ecological issue to the background.

In order to reduce the adversity of the pandemic on human society and the environment, there is a need to reorient the country's development paradigms.

The axes of this strategic reshaping suggest actions that not only reiterate the awareness messages about the pandemic, but also promote a plan for transformative change (recovery) from a triple social, economic and environmental perspective.

Thus, in the social sphere, the full exercise of the rights of the sovereign people should be promoted. This implies the promotion of gender equality, the inclusive participation of all social strata, and the fight against the rise in violence. It will also involve strengthening the appropriation of the dynamics of co-construction of the national edifice. This democratic construction must be at the service of the needs of the population in order to improve their quality of life. In order to do this, the vigilance of the State to ensure that multinationals do not allow their interests to prosper to the detriment of human rights at a time when the Government is trying to contain the pandemic must be in order.

As far as the economic sector is concerned, the focus will be on abandoning neo-liberalism and austerity in favour of policies and measures based on economic justice, taking into account ecological limits. More concretely, the recovery plan will have to reaffirm and exalt the role of the State as the guarantor of the common good and the support of a decent life for citizens. Economic policy must guarantee taxpayers' access to public services (including health, access to water and sanitation, transport, energy, education and care services) for the entire population, in an equitable and universal manner.

As far as environmental issues are concerned, the pillars of action must be based on a transformative systemic change in favour of climate, food, biodiversity, among others. Thus, strengthening the link between society and ecological systems becomes an imperative.

The other need is to find a coherent link between the three areas in which solution approaches have just been suggested. There should be no dividing lines between these areas of interest, but rather a bridge, a gateway to achieving sustainable development objectives as quickly as possible, or even better.

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