



The impact of Covid-19 pandemic on elderly people and persons with disabilities in Guinea

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Context

Located in West Africa, Guinea has nearly 12 million inhabitants, about 60% of whom live in multidimensional poverty and only less than 6% of the population has social security coverage. According to the World Bank, household well-being could decline between 7% and 10% compared to the pre-crisis situation. Based on the comprehensive analysis of food and nutrition security outcomes, over 21% of households or approximately 2.5 million people are food insecure in Guinea.



Context

The Harmonized Framework analysis of March 2020 has already identified 113,641 people in phase 3 of food insecurity and in need of immediate assistance.

Moreover, COVID-19 is occurring in Guinea in a context where access to water, sanitation and hygiene remains precarious. There are additional health risks, especially for dependent people like the elderly people and persons with disabilities.

The Guinean government declared on March 12, 2020 a state of health emergency throughout the territory due to the COVID-19 pandemic after the country had just emerged from the Ebola epidemic in 2017.



Context

COVID-19 cases have increased rapidly since then. Today, Guinea has 13,532 cases, including 80 deaths and 12,905 recoveries.

Since March 2020, the government, in consultation with the United Nations Country Team, has taken several measures to contain and prevent the spread of the virus, including declaring health emergency; the closure of all schools from March to June; the closure of borders, hotels, places of recreation, places of worship; reducing the number of hours of trading on markets ... etc.



The Impact of Covid-19 on elderly people

These various measures taken by the Government have had a considerable impact on households in the informal sector.

The elderly people, because of the old age, are highly at risk of COVID-19. Officially numbering 603,706 people in Guinea, health professionals clearly affirm that the elderly are likely to develop acute complications in the event of contamination by COVID-19, because of their weak immune capacities. With little access to awareness messages as well as prevention and hygiene kits, the elderly people are a priority in the fight against COVID-19.



The Impact of Covid-19 on elderly people

As the elderly people are more fragile and dependents from households, they are the most affected by the impact of the Covid-19 crisis.

Currently in Guinea, many households barely earn a meal a day because of the increase in market prices and the scarcity of income due to the loss of jobs and the reduction of economic activities in the informal sector which covers 80% of the population. This situation seriously affects, from a nutritional and health point of view, the elderly people from these households.



The Impact of Covid-19 on persons with disabilities

As for persons with disabilities, they are much more affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. They are largely absent from social mobilization campaigns. Their physical status determines their social being. Living in all regions of the country, presently representing not less than 4% of the global population, persons with disabilities, in particular the sensory (hearing and visual) and the mentally handicapped, have little access to communication channels. They are found in categories at risk ignoring prevention measures and deprived of protection and hygiene kits.



The Impact on persons with disabilities

Often living in areas defying any observance of barrier gestures, disabled beggar populations run the risk of community contamination. This category of the population, in particular children with disabilities, could be more exposed to the risk of violence or be affected by the illness or death of those who support them.

From the point of view of access to care, according to the results of a study carried out in 2018, the factors preventing persons with disabilities from receiving care in accordance with their needs are two: factors related to socioeconomic characteristics and cultural issues



The Impact on persons with disabilities

and obstacles related to service offerings, i.e. difficulties encountered by a disabled person when deciding to access health care. These health risks are directly linked to the socio-economic living conditions of persons with disabilities, most of whom are unproductive and / or have lower production capacities. Apart from a few who have managed to enter public administration or the private sector, many of them live on family support or collective alms near mosques or some public roads. A few of them work in crafts (sewing, plastic arts, mechanics, tapestry, etc.), and petty trade. Their physical state does not allow them to support hard work, that is why many of them are beggars.



Some Social Protection actions in favour of elderly people and persons with disabilities

Building on the previous experience of the Ebola virus epidemic that occurred in Guinea from 2014 to 2017, the Guinean Government, through the Ministry of Social Action and Vulnerable Persons, with the technical and financial support of the United Nations country team, have established a plan of immediate interventions. The objectives of these joint interventions are to support affected vulnerable communities (i.e. households living in national poverty (8000GNF / day = 0.84\$) and the populations particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 (the elderly and



Some Social Protection actions in of elderly people and persons with disabilities

persons with disabilities) in a situation of food insecurity and without adequate access to health care. From last August to the present day, these interventions have consisted of the distribution of health kits, foodstuffs to 113,641 people in Conakry, Boké and Kankan regions.

The implementation of these activities has seen the effective participation of persons with disabilities. They benefited from capacity building through the provision of equipment for the preparation of health kits (soaps and masks).



The Impact of Covid-19 on elderly people

The Minister of Social Action and Vulnerable persons giving health kits





The Impact on persons with disabilities

Foodstuffs distribution day to persons with disabilities





Conclusion

Analysis of the negative consequences of Covid-19 leads to the conclusion that they have drastically reduced the capacity of the Government to make a significant contribution in the fight to reduce poverty. There is therefore an urgent need to review the existing social protection mechanisms and instruments which only cover 6% of the population.

It is imminent to think about the possibility of universalizing social protection, which is a right for every citizen.



THANK YOU