ORGANISATION OF TRADE UNIONS OF WEST AFRICA
(OTUWA)

Responding to the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 in West Africa

A Trade Union Perspective

Kingsley Ofei-Nkansah

February 2020

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Kingsley Ofei-Nkansah

Accra, February 2021

Preface

The world has perhaps never experienced a public health disaster since the early 20th century Spanish flu, of such magnitude as the Corona Virus (COVID - 19) Pandemic. The resultant lockdown to curtail the spread of the virus, is most likely the most sweeping since the 2nd World War. The Pandemic has so far infected over one hundred million people globally and claimed the life of over 2 million persons.

Since January 2020, the COVID-19 has caused unprecedented health, economic and social havoc in virtually all countries of the world. Its effect on economics and enterprises in various stages of development has hugely impacted employment, incomes and livelihoods negatively. It has rolled back decades of gains made in development and has compounded existing inequalities globally.

In the last 12 months, responding to the threat to human lives, and livelihood of people has been the main preoccupation of governments around the world, as well as all the stakeholders. A number of policy measures meant to contain the virus, stop the spread of the disease and protect livelihoods has been taken over the period. Similarly measures have also been taken targeted at recovery and rebuilding of economies.

For trade unions like Organisation of Trade Unions of West Africa (OTUWA), articulating the concerns of workers amidst the uncertainties created by the crisis are key obligations. Organisation of Trade Unions of West Africa (OTUWA in line with its mandate is interested in how West African governments are responding to the pandemic. It is prioritizing among others the pursuit of Decent Work Agenda (DWA), promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS), with particular reference to Goal Eight, Concerning decent work and sustainable economic growth and full employment.

In this study, OTUWA has collaborated with the ILO. For the ILO, the specialized UN agency for promoting social justice in the world of work, this pandemic poses great challenges to its constituents and its mandate of setting international labour standards. This explains why it has been in the forefront of providing support to social partners globally (and especially in developing countries) on how to address not just health, but the socio-economic fall out from this COVID-19 Crisis. It has provided various updates in "ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work" which has already seven (7) editions. The ILO Response Framework similarly outlined 4 broad policy thrust on: Stimulus of the economy and labour; support for businesses, jobs and incomes; protection of workers in the workplace; and utilization of social dialogue for solutions, as tools to recover from the pandemic.

This study with support from the Area Office of the ILO, focusing on Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Togo serves as a basis for informed engagement among trade unions, with social partners at regional, sub-regional and national levels. For us, the pandemic presents some opportunities, such as the opportunity to renew solidarity, strengthen social dialogue and social protection in the process of defending core labour standards. These elements are necessary for achievement of the goal of inclusive recovery.

The study has four specific objectives namely:

* Assess the Impact of Covid-19 on enterprises with particular reference to micro, small and medium scale enterprises (MSMEs).

* Assess the implications for employment and livelihood, taking cognisance of the various social categories with particular reference to women, youth, informal economy, rural poor, migrants and people with disabilities.

* Assess the policy responses of governments with the view to highlighting their implications for decent work agenda and decent work related SDGs.

* Come out with recommendations to strengthen the promotion of decent work and SDGs and post Covid-19 recovery.

Our hope is that trade unions and other social partners in the West African region and beyond finds this study useful in their engagement with their national governments and Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) and its institutions in this difficult period of the fight to defeat the corona virus and the equally difficult task of rebuilding the economies very badly hit by measures taken to protect humanity in the course of the outbreak of the virus at the end of 2019.

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Comrade John Odah
Executive Secretary
OTUWA
Abuja, Nigeria

....

David Dorkenoo
Officer-In-Charge
ILO Country Office
Abuja, Nigeria

1: Introduction

1.1: Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has since January 2020 wrecked unprecedented health, economic and social havoc in almost all countries of the world, including even the rich industrialized countries. It is negatively impacting enterprises and economies at various stages of development and, in the process devastating employment, jobs, incomes and livelihoods. It is clearly rolling back on decades of gains in human development and demanding attention in every nook and corner of the globe. Understandably, governments and multilateral institutions have come out with various policy responses, first to contain the virus and stop the spread of the disease and to arrest the disruptions in economic and social life. The pandemic and the various response measures have far-reaching implications for the decent work, sustainable and inclusive development and human rights.

The life-threatening health situation and the widespread disruptions in economic and social life arising from the novel coronavirus (nCoV) infection are unleashing differential impact on regions and countries. In all cases the demand and supply functions of various enterprises are affected, mostly negatively. Some sectors, as well as some social groups are harder hit than by this public health crisis. Women, youth, migrants and other vulnerable groups, disproportionately bear the brunt of the situation thus exacerbating the severe social and livelihood situation.

Prior to the pandemic, economic and social conditions in West Africa were challenging enough with governments, employers, workers, development partners and indeed all stakeholders working together for sustainable and inclusive development. Towards this goal, governments, development partners and all stakeholders have been promoting development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the **formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises**, including through access to financial services.[1] Since the development prospects in West African have become more constrained than ever before. The gravity and inadequacies of social systems and the prevailing precariousness of the burgeoning informal economy have been stretched thin. As to be expected the pandemic is disproportionality affecting women, as well as other vulnerable categories. Clearly, the crisis is not affecting every one equally.

Significantly, this pandemic is happening against the backdrop of a convergence of global economic, technological, climatic, social and demographic challenges which, together, are compelling a rethink of policy responses at all levels. The entire UN system has been reforming to meet the challenges through various institutional reforms which, among others; it is also enhancing partnerships for focused mobilization of resources

1. SDG 8.3

to address the challenges. The ILO's mandate of promoting social justice has been reinforced by the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization[2] (2008), and the ILO Centenary Declaration (2019). Together, they reinforce and underscore the overarching principles of human rights, social inclusion and equality in the quest for decent work and sustainable development which leaves no one behind. The pursuit of these principles and their underlying values entail the mobilisation of partnerships at all levels with ILO constituents playing a central role.

The world in recent decades has made progress towards reducing extreme poverty, but was not on track to reach the goal of ending it by 2030 even before the coronavirus hit. The pandemic could push about 100 million more people into extreme poverty in 2020. And by 2030, up to two-thirds of the world's extreme poor could be living in settings affected by fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV).[3] Even before the pandemic the IMF had projected a contraction in world economic output; this is certainly getting into a worse scenario than anticipated.[4] With the projected contraction of growth, Africa's GDP losses in 2020 could range between $145.5 - $189.7 billion,[5] from the pre-COVID–19 estimated GDP of $2.59 trillion for 2020. Some losses are carried over to 2021, as

2. ILO (2008)
3. World Bank (2020): Annual Report 2020. Supporting Countries in Unprecedented Times https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/annual-report
4. Prior to coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projected that world output would contract by -3 percent, sharply down from earlier growth forecast of 2.5 percent in January 2020 prior to the outbreak of the pandemic. The June 2020 forecast however revised global growth to -4.9 percent in 2020. (IMF, 2020 World Economic Outlook)
5. Baseline vs Worst case scenario

the projected recovery would be partial. For 2021, the projected GDP losses could be from $27.6 billion (baseline) up to $47 billion (worst case) from the potential GDP of $2.76 trillion without the pandemic.[6] This should translate into severe adverse effects on employment, incomes and livelihoods and acutely erode extreme poverty reduction gains made in the world since the 1990s.[7]

The global pandemic is undermining the pursuit of the sustainable development goals, the quest for decent work and climate change mitigation and adaptation. And this is happening a a time when the world is grappling a future of work riddled with uncertainties. Developing countries with severely inadequate health, social and economic systems have a dire reality to deal with; workers are their organisations have been understandably restive.

1.2: Organisation of Trade Unions of West Africa

The Organization of Trade Unions of West Africa (OTUWA), the Confederation of trade unions in West Africa, has been seeking to influence the socio-economic responses, and their fallouts for employment, incomes and livelihoods. This is consistent with the mandate of any trade union. Besides, the centrality of sustainable development goals and decent work

6. Africa Development Bank Group(2020): Africa Economic Outlook. Supplement Amid-COVID-19. See https://www.afdb.org/en/knowledge/publications/african-economic-outlook
7. IMF(2020): World Economic Outlook. https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/06/24/WEOUpdateJune2020

agenda in OTUWA's priorities impel her to assess the implications of developments in the wake of the pandemic. More specifically, OTUWA is positioned to promote regional integration in West Africa while consistently pursuing the DWA and promoting the realisation of the SDGs, with particular reference to Goals eight, two, one, five, ten and thirteen, concerning decent work and sustained economic growth and full employment, hunger and malnutrition, poverty, gender equality, Equality between nations, and climate change. Migration is a central issue, not only because of it is a relevant theme in the targets as well as a critical indicator as underlined by SDG 17.8, but also because it underpins the single most important protocol of the West African Regional integration project, i.e. the Free Movement of People. OTUWA is also readily acknowledged as the single most instrumental vehicle for the promotion of social dialogue in West Africa, and in furtherance of ECOWAS of the people.

Consistent with its strategic priorities, OTUWA is primarily concerned with the far-reaching negative implications of COVID-19 for the decent work agenda (DWA) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With these concerns, OTUWA is accordingly seeking to deepen understanding of the pandemic, its impact and the policy responses in the region, the role of international labour standards, Tripartism and social dialogue in formulating the responses., so as to develop informed positions for a post-COVID recovery. The pandemic as such also presents some opportunities, such as the opportunity to renew solidarity, strengthen social dialogue and protection in the process of defending core standards, that have been won, and take forward coordinated efforts to promote more standards necessary for an inclusive recovery. It is against this background that OTUWA, with the support of the ILO Regional Office, is conducting a study on the impact of COVID-19 and the various policy responses.

1.3: Objectives and Relevance of the Study

In line with its Strategic Plan OTUWA seeks to assess the the socio-economic impact of the pandemic and the responses to them, targeting seven West African countries. This assessment should build on the knowledge base, draw lessons of relevance to affiliates and other ILO constituents so as to enhance their capacity to influence policy responses to COVID-19, strengthen social dialogue and the promotion of the Decent Work priorities, and highlight gaps in the DW-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It should make recommendations for national and regional level interventions and engagements taking into consideration the ILO Global Commission Report on the Future of Work, the ILO Centenary Declaration and the broader United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework.

Specifically, the study assesses the impact of COVID-19 on enterprises with particular reference to micro, small and medium scale enterprises (MSMEs); the implications for employment and livelihood, taking due cognizance of the various social categories with particular reference to women, youth, informal economy, rural poor, migrants, people with disabilities; the policy responses with the view to highlighting their implications for DWA and Decent-work related SDGs; and makes recommendations to strengthen the promotion of the DWA and SDGs and post-COVID recovery.

The research report shall be used for a number of action-oriented purposes including production of target-specific policy briefs for advocacy work; newsletters for affiliates; and the resources for OTUWA education and sensitization for work programming for for enterprise recovery and resilience and in furtherance of the DWA and SDG. The report should form a basis for subsequent OTUWA work in relation to DWA within the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

1.4: Methodology and Approach

The research design deployed by the study was, to some extent, the mixed method approach involving both quantitative and qualitative, with the latter accounting for most. The quantitative aspect related to the socio-impact analysis of available data. The work was mostly qualitative in its approach as it assessed the response measures to the pandemic. The study population is the West African countries affected by COVID-19. The study however adopted a purposive sampling technique to select seven countries based on a number of criteria: countries with which OTUWA has active affiliates; countries with a considerable number of confirmed cases; the

OTUWA policy of selecting more francophone countries than Anglophone countries to reflect the fact that the former account for most countries in the region; and to some extent the size of the economy and the population. On that basis four francophone countries were selected, namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and Togo; and three Anglophone countries selected, namely, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

Data type and collection procedure: The study largely relied on secondary data sources. Some primary data came from interviews of trade union centres and key informants in the selected countries, as well as through participation in webinars dedicated to the Impact of COVID-19 in specific countries in Africa.[8] The secondary data sources include related policy briefs and documents, annual and mid-year reports and websites and database on COVID-19. These data were pooled from WHO, World Bank, ILO, OECD, AFDB, IMF, other National Institutions and individuals' published articles and journals on COVID-19. The data collection procedure was a desk study review, which began by engaging the websites of the global, multilateral and national institutions to extract relevant literature (reports, publications, guides, manuals, etc.) on the impact of COVID-19 and the policy responses. The literature reviewed was used to generate information that was used to undertake the assessments of the policy response measures. Quantitatively, the data obtained from the various global development bodies and health organizations was analysed

4. Three different Webinars organised by FES discuss presentations on the impact of COVID in Ethiopia, Madagascar and Benin; these took place on

using excel. The macroeconomic indices data were extracted for the selected countries of the study. Descriptive analysis was used to give a baseline analysis of the distribution and nature of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on the full length of the economy (micro, small and medium scale enterprises, livelihood and employment, etc.). The objective of examining the policy response to COVID-19 was analysed qualitatively. First, the data generated from the desk review was processed and analysed using content analysis and interpretative thematic analysis. Each theme was examined in terms of the frequency, level of importance, the issues raised, and the implications of the policy, particularly for livelihoods and decent work.

1.5: Organization of the Report

The Report has five main Sections, each with a number of Sub-Sections. Following this Introduction is a Literature Review whose sub-sections include Global Pandemics and Epidemics; Demographic, Economic and Social Realities of West Africa; the Labour Market Situation in West Africa; and Global Response Frameworks. Section three discusses Decent Work and Sustainable Development Goals. Section Four examines the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, s analyses the response measures to assess their implications for livelihoods, decent work and the SDGs. Section five summarizes the conclusions and makes recommendations.

2: Review of Relevant Literature

This Section of the report reviews relevant literature under the following sub-headings: Global Pandemics and their Impact; the Demographic, Economic and Social Realities in West Africa; the Labour Market Situation in West Africa; the Global Response Frameworks covering the United Nations Response Framework to COVID-19 and the ILO Response Framework to COVID-19.

2.1: Global Pandemics and their impact

2.1.1: Pandemics and Epidemics in Perspective

The new corona virus disease was first observed in Wuhan in China in December 2019. As the outbreak grew and spread, it became clear that an epidemic had descended on the Chinese community. Subsequently it spread to other countries making headlines that sent fears and worries to all people in the world. A pandemic had descended on humanity, making the biggest single global public health news. It is important to understand outbreaks, endemics, epidemics and pandemics to be describing infectious diseases of different stages, scales, severity, magnitude and spread in order to appreciate them as public health issues that may or may not have economic and social impact, in order to appreciate its full breadth as a public health.

Public health is concerned with protecting and improving the health of people and their communities. It entails promoting healthy lifestyles, researching disease and injury prevention, and detecting, preventing and responding to infectious diseases. It is therefore concerned with protecting the health of entire populations, be it in a small community, an entire country or more. It seeks to prevent health problems and their recurrence through the implementation of educational p programmes, appropriate policies and relevant research. A large part of public health is promoting healthcare equity, quality and accessibility.[9] Pandemics, epidemics, endemics and disease outbreaks are paramount issues for public health.

A pandemic is a disease outbreak that spreads to several countries and affects a large number of people at the same time. Pandemics are most often caused by viruses, which can easily spread from person to person.[10] It is not to be confused with an epidemic which is a disease that affects a large number of people within a community, population or a given region, Thus before the corona travelled out of Wuhan it was an epidemic. Again it is important to appreciate that there are endemics which are diseases that are constantly present in a specific community or location. Typically, malaria is endemic to some parts of Africa.[11] The novel human coronavirus disease COVID-19 has become the fifth documented pandemic since the 1918 flu pandemic. COVID-19 was first reported in Wuhan, China, in

9. https://www.cdcfoundation.org/what-public-health [October 2020]
10. https://www.ready.gov/pandemic
11. https://intermountainhealthcare.org/blogs/topics/live-well/2020/04/whats-the-difference-between-a-pandemic-an-epidemic-endemic-and-an-outbreak/

December 2019 and later spread worldwide.[12] The other infectious outbreaks that are considered as pandemics the world has experienced are Ebola, Influenza A (H1N1), SARS, MERS, Zika virus. Each of these has serious implications for public health because of the responsibility to contain and prevent the spread of the virus and disease.

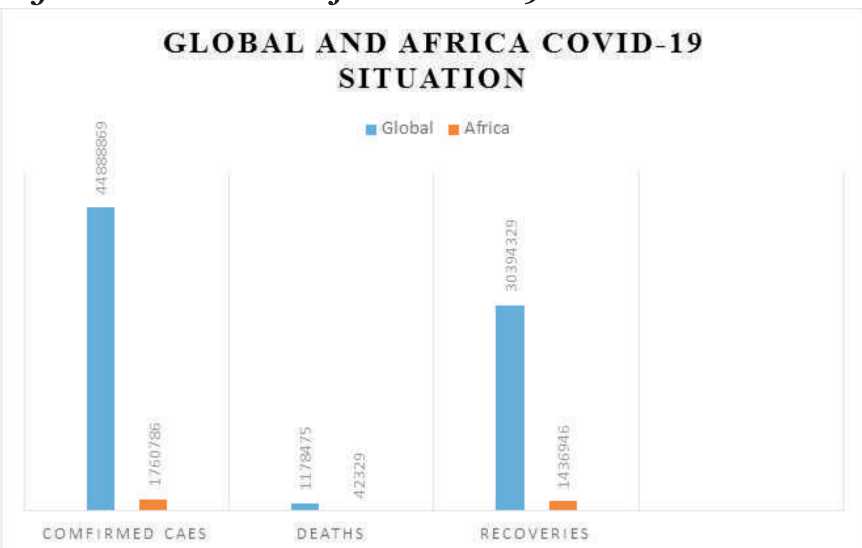
According to the World Health Organization (WHO) COVID-19 situation dashboard, as of 30 October 2020 reported over 44.88 million confirmed cases, 1.17 million deaths and over 30.39 million recoveries globally. (See figure 1.1). In Africa, the report from the WHO Africa Region COVID-19 dashboard revealed over 1.76 million confirmed cases, 42,329 deaths and over 1.43 million recoveries as at 30th October, 2020. The proportion of WHO Africa region to global was 2.5%.[13]

As at ending of October 2020, the Africa region had recorded 32 000 new cases and 800 new deaths. This accounts for around one percent of new global cases and two percent of new global deaths (Table 1). South Africa, Kenya, and Ethiopia continue to report the highest numbers of new cases. Ethiopia, as well as other countries in the Horn of Africa, are facing a triple threat of floods from unusually heavy rains, desert locust crop destruction and the impacts of COVID-19-all threatening food security. With 4 594 new cases recorded end of October 2020, Kenya was reportedly the second highest numbers of new cases in the Region. The Region shows a mixed pattern

12. WHO (2020): See https://www.who.int/news/item/27-04-2020-who-timeline---covid-19
13. WHO Africa Region (2020): See https://who.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.-html#/0c9b3a8b68d0437a8cf28581e9c063a9

with countries at different epidemic stages and experiencing different outcomes. Despite this, COVID-19 continues to contribute an added burden to public health, strained already stretched health systems and poor infrastructure and caused unpatrolled socio-economic pressures. For example, oxygen is one of the most essential items/medicines for saving patients with COVID-19, as well as many other conditions. One of the main barriers to medical oxygen is the high transport costs of the cylinders to the health facilities. In Kenya, a private sector company has positioned oxygen plants near clusters of health facilities and uses a milk delivery system to deliver oxygen to more than 140 clinics.

Figure 2-1: Global and Africa COVID-19 Situation



Source: *WHO Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard (As at 30 October 2020)*

Furthermore, data from the WHO Africa region on some selected West Africa Countries[14] considered for the study revealed that Nigeria recorded the highest number of cases (62521), followed by Ghana (48055), Cote D'Ivoire (20628), Benin (2643), Burkina Faso (2477), Sierra Leone(2362) and Togo (2296). West Africa, in the months of September and October 2020 recorded decline in active cases, compared to the early stages of the outbreak in March, with courtiers recoding less than 1000 cases. This situation has informed most governments in the West Africa Region to ease out the restrictions imposed on the countries and resumed, to some extent, regular business life.

The WHO in line with its mandate has been consistent in coming out with guidelines for containing the virus. These have been the primary source of the health-related responses that countries have been adopting at the national and even regional levels. Central elements of the WHO prescriptions for pandemic preparedness and prevention include hand washing with soap, social distancing and face masking. Each government is also expected to track, trace, test and treat infected persons on a regular basis. Above all, massive public educational about the protocols and necessary life style changes have been necessary in all societies. In some cases there have been full and partial lock downs, closure of educational institutions, and even curfews to enforce precautionary measures. Governments and various

14. The West African countries under consideration in this study are Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Togo, Benin, Cote D'Ivoire and Burkina Faso

stakeholders have contributed to mobilizing resources in support of the production and provisioning of materials and equipment needed for the COVID-19 protocols.

The limitations of resource constrained communities have been exposed in the circumstances as some have limited access to water and soap and therefore do not easily get into the habit of frequent hand washing. Meanwhile the communication strategy does not address the fact that some are so resource constrained that some critical messages for prevention could be lost on them.[15]

2.1.2: Pandemics and Economic and Social Impacts

Pandemics also have serious implications for social and economic life of people in different parts of the world, all at the same time. This global character of the effect of pandemic becomes even more pronounced as a result of globalization and the development of supply chains as dominant features in the economic lives of countries. The pandemic as such is more than a health crisis; it is a socio-economic crisis, a humanitarian crisis, a security crisis, and a human rights crisis. It has affected individuals, families, communities and societies, countries and continents. It has had an impact on every generation, including on those not yet born.[16] Their impacts have been massive and

15. The WHO points out that it is important to figure out alternatives to water. For example, the water drained after cooking rice, sea or river water, laundry and dish water, water from boiled vegetables. People who do not have access to drinking water may have limited access to soap. Recommended alternatives include ash, sand, coffee ground, cocoanut husk, salt, some leaves and barks.
16. UN(2020): See https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/UN-framework-for-the-immediate-socio-economic-response-to-COVID-19.pdf

global in terms of economic disruption, strain on local and global public health resources and, above all, human health. Also, the science and knowledge around infectious hazards are constantly evolving, demanding better response to health emergencies.

According to ILO COVID-19 Monitor (Sept 2020) globally the job losses is equivalent to 495 million, being about 14 percent of the total work force. This is the result of workplace closures; Some workplaces are closing down while others are doing shorter working hours; some workers remain in employment but are not working or working fully; some too have simply been laid off. The variations in circumstances affecting the labour market differ from region to region. The picture is largely similar in labour markets of similar characteristics.

As to be expected some sectors are harder hit by the pandemic. Tourism and hospitality services which employ more females are harder hit, wreaking more job losses. Again, the most dangerously exposed are health care workers and here too the majority (70 percent) are females. The predominance of informal employment in hard hit sectors of low and middle income countries also means the exposure of many workers, mostly women, who are working without social protection and safety. Social protection coverage in Africa, for example, is as low as 18 percent. The pandemic is disproportionately affecting women and threatening to erode gender equality gains made over the last few decades.

Governments and multilateral institutions have risen up to the dismal socio-economic challenges arising from the pandemic. As part of the global response, the Bank Group has announced the deployment of up to $160 billion over the next 15 months through June 2021 to support countries' responses to COVID-19; this is being done, among others through support for sustainable private sector solutions that promote restructuring and recovery. The purpose of disbursing the $160 Billion to more than 100 countries was to protect the poor and vulnerable people, support businesses, and bolster economic recovery; up to $50 billion of this monies comes to Africa.[17] Response measures at the country level have included stimulus packages targeting business, tax moratoriums, wage subsidies, loans and guarantees for workers, social support packages, etc. The realities with regard to demographics, economics, social and labour market features in West Africa constitute a contextual framework within which to assess the response measures.

2.2: Demographic, Economic and Social Realities of West Africa

2.2.1: Demographic Features

West Africa is a region of 16 sovereign countries fifteen being members of ECOWAS.[18] It is characterised by a youthful, urbanizing population. The region currently has a population of about 401.86 million with 49.63 percent (199.58 million)

17. World Bank (2020). https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/annual-report/covid-response
18. Mauritania is the only country in West Africa presently out of the ECOWAS family.

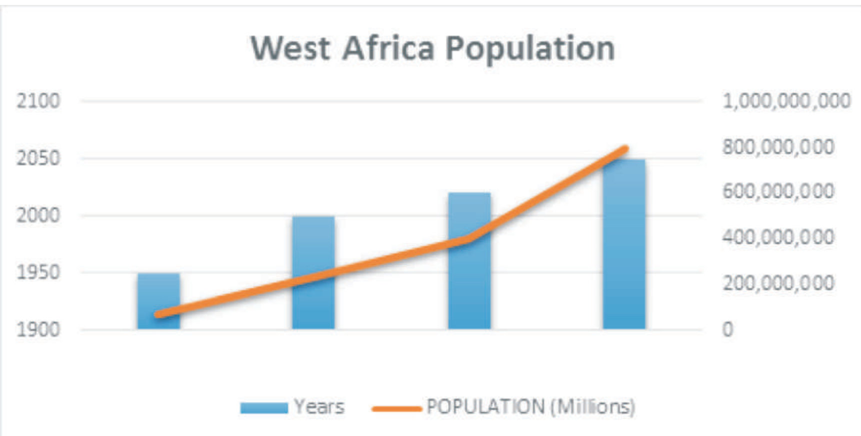
being women and men 50.37 percent (202,280 million). The population of West Africa is almost one third of Africa's population (1.34 billion). Nigeria's population of 206.14 million makes her the most populous in the region and the least being Guinea Bissau, with 1.96 million people. For the remaining countries considered for the study, Ghana has a population of (31.07million), Cote d'Ivoire (26.37 million), Burkina Faso (20.90 million), Benin(12.12 million), Sierra Leone (7.97 million) and Togo (8.27 million).

The population density of West Africa is 66.27 per square kilometer which is higher than Africa as whole (44.24 per square kilometer). In West Africa, Nigeria has the highest population density of 226.34 per square kilometer while Mauritania has the least with 5 per square kilometer.

West Africa, like other African regions, has been fast urbanizing. The urban population is currently 52.37 percent. Currently numbering about 191.82 million, the urban population has been growing at the rate of 4.04 percent between 2015-2020 which is a shade higher than the urbanizing trend of 3.58 percent in Africa as a whole. The most urbanized country is the Gambia with 56.9 percentage living in the urban areas, while the least is Niger with only 16.5 percent.

The population of West Africa continues to grow at the high rate of 2.66 percent, slightly higher than the 2.49 percent rate for Africa as a whole, and much higher the European and global rate of 0.06 and 1.05 percent respectively. This high growth rate in West Africa underpins the youthfulness of the region's population, a feature that can potentially be harnessed for employment and economic growth. The share of youth population (15 to 34 years) is projected to rise from 34 percent of total population in 2020 to 35 percent in 2050. Also, by 2050, it is estimated that Nigeria, Niger and Ghana will have the largest proportion of working age populations, a major source of potential migrants. The West Africa region will need to create decent jobs to forestall irregular and unsafe migration and insecurity crisis mainly affecting the youth.[19] To harness the much touted demographic dividends, Africa will have to ensure relevant education, skills development, decent jobs and employment and empowerment.

Figure 2-2: West Africa Population Estimates



Source: *Source: United Nations (2019): Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division*

19. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). World Population Prospects 2019, https://population.un.org/wpp/

Migration has become an issue of significant concern in Africa in recent years, and several policy frameworks and legal instruments have been developed to deal with it more effectively. It is also essential to understand trends in the population size of Africa, which is strongly influenced by international migration. Assessing policy responses to COVID-19 necessarily has to take into consideration migrant population as well. The United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs estimated that in 2019 about 7.4 million migrants moved around West Africa, representing 1.9 percent of the total population.

Table 2-1: West Africa Youth Population Estimates

Years	% of Population by Age		
	<15 years	15-34 years	35+ years
1950	42	33	25
2000	44	33	22
2020	43	34	23
2050	35	35	30

Source: *United Nations (2019): Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division*[20]

This is the largest total migrant stock in Africa, and it moves internally, intra-regionally, continentally and internationally. West Africa also concentrates the highest number of intra-

20. UNDESA:https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/-populationfacts/docs/MigrationStock2019_PopFacts_2019-04.pdf

regional migrants and, to a lesser extent, migrants moving towards Northern Africa and Europe. The estimate also revealed that 46.9% of the migrants in West Africa were female and 53.1 % male. For Africa as a whole, it was estimated that 26.5 million migrants, representing two percent of the total population, moved around the continents.[21] For the selected countries, Cote d'Ivoire was estimated as at 2019 to have the highest number of migrant (2.5 million), followed by Nigeria (1.3 million), Burkina Faso (718,300), Ghana (466,800), Benin (390,100), Togo (279,100) and Sierra Leone (54,300).[22]

The importance of migration to development has been adequately captured in the SDGs of 2015 and The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2017). These seek to foster international cooperation in the management of international migration and ensure that they are not left out of the development prospects.[23] Various studies highlight remittances as one of the major developmental impacts of migration. In one such study in Nigeria the role of remittances in promoting financial inclusion is highlighted. The migratory tendencies within West Africa is important for any discussion on the pandemic.

21. https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/39323-doc-web254_18410_english_2nd_edition_of_the_africa_labor_migration_statistics.pdf
22. https://population.un.org/wpp/
23. The Global Compact (2017)
24. Joseph Boniface Ajefu & Joseph O. Ogebe (2019): Migrant remittances and financial inclusion among households in Nigeria, Oxford Development Studies download on May 28, 2020

2.2.2: Economic and Social Realities in West Africa

The economic outlook of West Africa has been promising, until COVID-19 made its infamous debut. Six West African countries were listed among the ten most promising economies in Africa, as regards real GDP growth: Côte d'Ivoire ranked 3rd, Senegal 5th, Burkina Faso 6th, Ghana 8th, Benin 9th and Guinea 10th. The West African economy is projected to grow by 3.6% in 2019, slightly below the continental average of 4%. West Africa's regional performance needs to be analyzed in the context of Nigeria, which accounts for nearly 70% of West Africa's regional GDP and is currently pulling down West Africa's average. While Nigeria's economy is still recovering from significant declines in oil revenues, its performance has been strengthened by the growing importance of the service sector. Countries that are not resource-rich, and are being supported by higher agricultural production, consumer demand and public investment, are growing the fastest. Despite the sharp decline in cocoa prices, Côte d'Ivoire remains among the fastest growing economies. Ghana is the third fastest growing African economy, following Libya and Ethiopia. Despite this positive growth outlook, there are many risks and considerable uncertainty related to global trade tensions, the normalization of interest rates in advanced economies, and global commodity prices. African economies also need to address the structural challenges created by persistent fiscal deficits and debt vulnerability.[25]

25. Sahel and West Africa Club (2020). See http://www.west-africa-brief.org/content/en/west-africa's-growth-prospects-remain-strong

Domestic demand is also underpinning GDP growth in West Africa, where the rate of economic expansion is expected to remain steady at 3.5 per cent in 2019 and 3.6 per cent in 2020. Robust growth in the member countries of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)[26] is offset by sluggish economic activity in Nigeria. Growth in Nigeria is estimated to have picked up to 2.1 per cent in 2019 as oil production trended upwards and private sector sentiment improved. In 2020, growth was projected to rise slightly to 2.3 per cent, but in per capita terms the economy would continue to contract in the absence of major structural reforms. Furthermore, the medium-term outlook is limited by severe infrastructure deficiencies and a weak macroeconomic policy environment, including multiple exchange rates, high inflation and low non-oil revenues. The outlook in Ghana remained positive amid vigorous private consumption and buoyant government expenditure. GDP growth was projected to slow in 2020 but to proceed at a healthy pace of 6.0 per cent. In Ivory Coast, GDP growth was projected to decelerate slightly after the expansion of 7.4 per cent in 2019 owing to lower external demand and the negative impact of volatile commodity prices on industrial production, but growth was expected to remain robust at 7.1 per cent in 2020. Growth was also projected at about 6 per cent or more in Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal.[27]

26. The eight WAEMU members include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote D'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo.

27. United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs: World Economic Situation Prospect. See https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/world-economic-situation-and-prospects-2020/

The economy of West Africa has consistently been the third fastest growing region in Africa, lagging behind East Africa and North Africa, although it has seen growth accelerate in more countries than in other regions, over the past two years. The economy of West Africa grew by 3.6 percent in 2019 and was projected to grow by 4 percent in 2020. The main driver of growth was the services sector in West Africa; excepting a few countries, it accounts for more than half of GDP in the region. The service sector continues to dominate in terms of contribution to average real GDP growth rate in West Africa and, in 2019, its contribution to the economy hit the 50.86 percent mark. Agriculture and manufacturing have either been declining or remained relatively stagnant; in 2019, Agriculture and Manufacturing contributed 15.35 and 11.33 respectively.

At the country level also, the services sector contributed higher to real GDP growth in 2019 in all the seven selected countries in the study. The largest contribution of the service sector was 53.88% percent in Cote d'Ivoire followed by Nigeria with 49.73 percent, Benin with 48.03 percent, Ghana with 44.14 percent and Burkina Faso with 43.96 percent. Togo and Sierra Leone recorded the least percentage of Service sector contribution at 28.62 and 32.78 percent respectively. Addition to the above economic realities, the average GDP per capita in West Africa was estimated at $3919 in 2019. Among the seven selected countries, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria have the highest GDP per capita income, recording $5455, $5637 and $5348 respectively. This stands to reflect the economic growth of these countries.[28] Togo and Sierra Leone likewise recorded the lowest GDP per capita.

West Africa has had an impressive economic growth in the past two decades. It however has the greatest number of countries with its population living in absolute poverty[29], compared to other regions on the continent. According to the World Bank report in 2018, more than 40.2 percent of the West Africa population live below $1.90 a day.[30] This means that their income cannot cater for the most basic sustenance - food, shelter and clothing.

The poverty count ratio in the individual countries in the study adequately reflects the sordid regional reality. Togo has the highest proportion of its population living below $1.90 per day, that is 51 percent. This is followed by Benin (49.6 percent), Burkina Faso(43.8percent), Sierra Leone (43.0percent) and then Nigeria (39.1percent). Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire had the least poverty count ration of 13.0 percent and 29.8 percent respectively.[31]

In terms of Hunger and Malnutrition, almost one fifth of the West Africa Population suffered from food insecurity[32] and hunger in 2018. The World Bank reported that about 20.17% of the West Africa population suffered from hunger and food

28. World Bank (2020) World Development Indicators. See https://data.worldbank.org
29. OXFARM International (2020): See https://www.oxfam.org/en/west-africa-extreme-inequality-numbers
30. Absolute poverty here refers to a situation where individuals live below the threshold poverty line of $1.90 a day as revised by World Bank in 2015. The poverty count ratio according to World Bank is the proportion of the population living below the poverty line of $1.90 a day (2011 PPP).
31. World Bank (2020). https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD?locations=ZG&view=chart
32. Food Insecurity is defined by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) as “a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food”

insecurity, comparing favorably with that Africa's 27.4 percent figure.[33] According to WFP (2018) food insecurity and hunger are caused by many intertwined factors, with the principal causes being poverty, conflict, climate and weather, lack of investment in agriculture, and unstable markets.[34] The World Bank Development indicator data revealed that 17.52 percent of the West Africa population are undernourished, a figure slightly lower than the 19.1 percent for Africa as a whole.

Regarding access to drinking water and sanitation in West Africa, 60.94 percent of the population have access to basic drinking water. In the seven countries for the study, excepting Burkina Faso (48%), the remaining six countries had more than 50 percent of their population accessing basic drinking water. There are however significant locational differences: whereas 84.14 percent of the urban population have access to drinking water, only 45.69 percent of the rural population do. Regarding sanitation which is also a key factor for healthy population, less only 30.89 percent of the population are using basic sanitation services. Among the urban population 27 percent of the population have basic sanitation services whiles only 7.8 percent of the rural population enjoy same.

This marked inequality in access to water and sanitation is also a reflection of other inequalities. The distribution of resources among the population is very key in determining development that improves the quality of life for all. The World Bank

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33. Food and Agriculture Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development, UNICEF, World Food Programme, & WHO. (2017). The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2017: Building resilience for peace and food security. Retrieved from http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7695e.pdf

34. World Hunger. https://www.worldhunger.org/hunger-and-nutrition-facts/

Development indicators revealed there exist considerable inequality in the West Africa region. It is often measured as a ratio of the incomes of the top quintile to the bottom quintile or via the Gini coefficient[35] to better reflect the wealth distribution within a country.[36] In West Africa, there is growing disparities between emerging economies such as Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria and less rapidly transforming rural economies. The high Gini coefficients of the selected seven countries for the study mirrors the realities of inequality in West Africa. Except Sierra Leone (0.34) and Burkina Faso (0.35) that showed some equality, the reaming countries (Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Benin and Cote d'Ivoire) had an average Gini coefficients greater than 4 which reflects incidence of inequality. The high rate of inequality in some parts of West Africa could may be a reflection of the spatial differentials between the northern and southern parts of the country. For instance, the northern part of Ghana is much less developed than its rapidly urbanizing coastal areas. In Nigeria, the socio-economic level of the conflict-affected north-eastern states can hardly be compared with the wealth of the urban megacities in the south, home to many of the continent's billionaires. As indicated, inequalities are significant between rural and urban communities. They are also present between women and men reflecting deep seated patriarchy and the unequal access to education, training, employment and productive resources.

35. The Gini coefficient is a measure of the distribution of income across a population. The coefficient ranges from 0 (or 0%) to 1 (or 100%), with 0 representing perfect equality and 1 representing perfect inequality.

36. Sahel and West Africa club Secretariat & OECD (2020): Increasing Inequality in the Sahel and West Africa http://www.oecd.org/swac/maps

The quality human resources of the West Africa are dependent on the quality of education its populace has received. The World Bank Development data revealed that the literacy rate for adults 15 years and above is 65.46 percent, a little above the trend for Africa (65 percent). Ghana (79 percent), Togo (64 percent) and Nigeria (62 percent) had more than half of their adult population literate. Sierra Leone (43 percent), Benin (42 percent) and Burkina Faso (41percent) and had less than half of their adult population literate. With regard to health care, the situation in the whole of West Africa is abysmal, even though there has been some improvement within the framework of the millennium development agenda. For example, Nigeria's health care is improving it is saddled with various difficulties. Key among them are limited infrastructure, low doctor-population ratio (1:2000 inhabitants). The country spends only 3.7% of GDP on health care, a figure way below the global average but at par with her neighbours. Ghana, for example, spends about 3-5 percent of GDP on health care. This as noted in the OTUWA study on health, is way below the 2002 African Union decision calling on member states to commit 10 percent to health care. In all the countries poor infrastructure is severe constraint which also means more pronounced deprivation in rural areas.

2.3: Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in West Africa

MSMEs account for the majority of businesses worldwide and are important contributors to job creation and global economic development. They represent about 90% of businesses and more than 50% of employment worldwide. Globally, formal MSMEs contribute up to 40% of national income (GDP) in emerging economies.[37] In Africa, MSMEs are a vital engine in the economy, since they drive growth, create employment - especially among youth - and spearhead innovation. They provide a customer base to larger companies across the supply chain; and supply vital goods and services to companies and households. In all West African countries, they make substantial contributions to the growth of the productive sector, employment creation, income distribution and the closer integration of women and people in the rural areas. Many of Africa's MSMEs have the potential to become tomorrow's large corporations that the continent needs to continue on its path to growth and prosperity.[38] MSMEs provide 70% of all jobs in Africa: By one categorization of MSMEs, the Micro enterprises have employees 1-5 persons; the Small enterprises are employing 6-29 employees each; and the Medium Scale enterprises employ 30-99 persons.[39]

Notwithstanding their importance in the economies they are extremely constrained among others by lack of financial support, poor management, corruption, lack of training and experience, poor infrastructure, and insufficient profits. Access to finance is a critical building block for economic

37. World Bank (2020):Small and Medium Enterprises Finance. see https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/smefinance
38. Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) (2020):"Economic Impact of COVID-19 on MSMEs in Africa and Policy Option for Mitigation". See https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/covid-19/regional/4049-economic-impact-of-covid-19-on-msmes-in-africa-and-policy-options-for-mitigation-comesa-special-report-august-2020/file.html
39. GSS, Sept 2015

empowerment, economic growth, poverty reduction, social inclusion and sustainable development. MSMEs in particular are extremely challenged as limited access to finance tends to hamper their growth.[40] The tall list of constraints already make MSMEs extremely vulnerable to the crises of COVID-19 outbreak especially in developing countries.[41] The various response measures have contributed to weakening consumer demands for a wide range of enterprises, thus creating huge revenue losses and serious liquidity challenges for MSMEs. Consequently, they are unable to pay their employees, utilities, suppliers, carrying along with them long overdue loan servicing obligations. The threat to the very survival of MSMEs has meant the loss of employment, jobs, incomes and livelihoods of teeming millions of people who depend on the informal sector. These are usually vulnerable workers who usually do not have severe employment let alone social protection coverage of any kind and are typically the haven of women, migrants and other vulnerable in the society. National economies are shrinking as a result of revenue losses, skyrocketing government expenditures on health and the burdensome demand of averting the complete collapse of enterprises.

All West African countries recognise the manifold contributions that MSMEs are making to employment, GDP and development in general.[42] Below is a categorization of

40. Joshua Abor, Nicholas Biekpe (2006), Small Business Financing Initiatives in Ghana, Problems and Perspectives in Management / Volume 4, Issue 3 ILO (2018). Global Estimates xv. Geneva: ILO
41. New African (2020). The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on small businesses and global value chains See https://newafricanmagazine.com/23675/
42. Contribution of MSMEs to the development – some figures ..

MSMEs in Ghana; it underscores their actual and potential contribution to employment. It also highlights the fact that 80 and 18.5 percent are respectively micro and small enterprises, and therefore mostly informal.

Table 2-2: A Categorisation of Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises

MEMEs Categories	No. of Employees per Entity	No. of Entities in Ghana	Percentage
Micro	1-5	509,033.00	80
Small	6-29	117,329.00	18.5
Medium	30-99	9,333.00	1.5
Total		635,695.00	100

Source: *Ghana Statistical Service, 2015.*

2.4: Labour Market Situation in West Africa

The labour market in West Africa is characterized by declining labor force participation; unemployment and underemployment are prevalent features in a situation of high informality of employment. The labor force participation rate for the population of 15 years and above has consistently declined since the beginning of the millennium from 64.2 percent in 2000 to 58.5 percent in 2019 and is expected to further decline to 58.2 percent in 2022. By implication, inactivity in the region has been increasing from 36 percent to 41.5 percent and over the same period, the size of the labor force in West Africa expanded consistently from 84.5 million in 2000 to 130 million in 2019 in absolute terms. This represents a 53.6 percent increase over two decades. Togo has the highest proportion of active population at 79 percent against 46 percent in Senegal, the lowest in the region.

Informal employment is highly pervasive in West Africa, like other regions of Africa, wage employment constituting less than one-fifth of total employment. North and Southern Africa had the highest rates of wage employment at 63 percent and 83 percent, respectively while in Central and East Africa it represented 21 percent of total employment. In contrast, West Africa had the highest rate of self-employment at 64 percent against 63 percent in Central Africa, 51 percent in East Africa and less than 28 percent in North and Southern Africa.

This growing informal economy is associated with the ease with which operators enter activities; lack of access to credit; increasing financial risks, income insecurity, low safety and health standards[43] in an environment devoid of social protection and safety nets. Also significant is the growth in non-standard forms of employment (NSE) in the formal economy. These NSE may take the form of temporary employment, part-time work; temporary agency work; disguised employment relationships and dependent self-employment. Other forms include telework and other remote forms of employment occurring without any fixed location. This trend has dire implications for freedom of association and collective bargaining, the social protection, maternity rights, working hours with rest periods and other rights. Being fueled by the emergence of new technologies and means of

43. 2016 Common Country Assessment.

production, these informalisation trends are raising critical questions about employment and labour relations in a future of work[44] riddled with uncertainties. Growing informalisation of employment therefore underpin the growing employment vulnerabilities.

Some global projections point to a gloomy impact of COVID 19 in West Africa. The ILO estimates that as many as 25 million people could lose their jobs across the globe with loss of workers' income of as much as USD 3.4 trillion. The ILO puts the global unemployment at 190 million at the moment. According to the most recent estimates, vulnerable employment rate was at 76.6 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa, with non-agriculture employment in the informal economy representing 66 percent of total employment.[45] The Mckinsey survey predicts that the covid-19 pandemic could affect a third of the 440 million formal and informal jobs in Africa. Out of this figure, 140 million people in Africa are employed in formal sector while 300 million people is informal employment.[46] The labour market situation in West Africa is similar to that of Africa as a whole and already experiencing the shocks, disruptions and job losses arising in the wake of the pandemic. The prevailing vulnerabilities in the labour market and the society as a whole may be a pointer to ingredients necessary for a recovery strategy that builds in resilience.

44. http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/future-of-work/trends/WCMS_545675/lang--en/index.htm
45. (ILO, 2020). Covid-19: Pandemic in the World of Work. ILO Online News, March 27, 2020. www.ilo.org
46. Oni-Egboma, Adaobi (2020). Covid-19 and the informal economy. Business Day Online News, Apr 24, 2020. See https://businessday.ng/news/article/covid-19-and-the-informal-economy/

2.5: The Global Response Framework

The global character of the pandemic and the associated socio-economic crises demand global responses that reflect high level multilateral cooperation and global solidarity. It is from this standpoint that the study examines the UN and the ILO response frameworks. The former a broad framework for addressing the health as well as the social and economic challenges while the latter addresses the social justice implications arising from the COVID in the world of work.

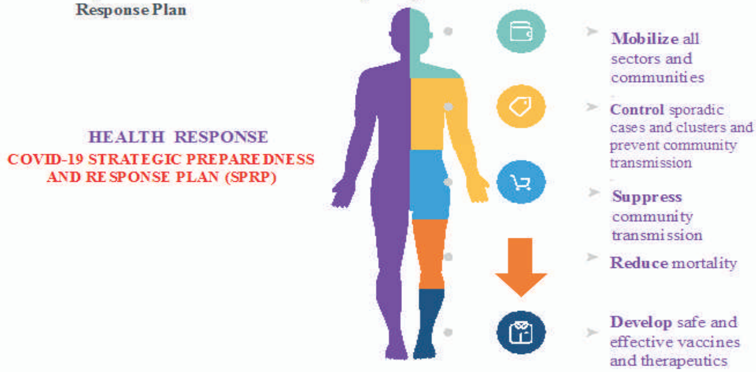
2.5.1: United Nations Response Framework

Recognizing the many dimensions and far-reaching impacts of the crisis, the UN has pursued a three-point response focusing on health, on safeguarding lives and livelihoods, and on addressing underlying vulnerabilities with a view to emerging from the pandemic to a more resilient, equitable, inclusive and sustainable world. The frame is illustrated below.

THE HEALTH RESPONSE: COVID-19 STRATEGIC PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLAN (SPRP)

First, the large-scale, coordinated and comprehensive health response has been guided by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan, emphasizing health as the archetypal global public good and calling for whole-of-society responses, solidarity with developing countries and special attention to people at greatest risk. Controlling the pandemic is the main prerequisite for global recovery. There is a pressing need for COVID-19 vaccine, diagnostics and treatment that are affordable, safe, effective, easily administered and universally accessible; and there is also a pressing need to lessons and prepare more effectively for the next pandemic and other global challenges of similar magnitude.[47]

Figure 2.1. Health. COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan



Source: United Nations (2020): United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19

SAFE GUARDING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS: GLOBAL HUMANTARIAN RESPONSE PLANS (GHRP)

Second, a wide-ranging effort has been undertaken to safeguard lives and livelihoods and address the devastating humanitarian, human rights and social and economic dimensions of the crisis. These efforts are focusing on providing immediate humanitarian assistance, expanding services to the most vulnerable, keeping households afloat, businesses solvent, supply chains functioning, institutions strong, public services delivering and human rights at the forefront. With strong emphasis on supporting the most affected and least resilient, the United Nations has pushed for a

47. United Nations (2020): United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19. See https://www.un.org/other/afics/sites/www.un.org.other.afics/files/sg-pdf-20200916-un_comprehensive_response_to_covid-19_sep_2020_002_0.pdf

comprehensive stimulus package amounting to at least 10% of global GDP. Developing countries are also receiving various forms of support including across-the-board debt standstill, debt restructuring and greater support through the International Financial Institutions. At the national level, UN Country Teams have supported the development of national response plans, with dedicated measures put in place to address the needs and rights of women, older people, children, low-wage earners, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. The UN has also provided a wide range of concrete support, including food; medicine; water and sanitation; hygiene kits; shelter; support with remote learning; psychosocial support; cash assistance; and extra protections (such as toll-free hotlines) for those at physical risk, including of domestic violence.[48]

Figure 2.2. SAFE GUARDING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS. GLOBAL HUMANTARIAN RESPONSE PLANS (GHRP)

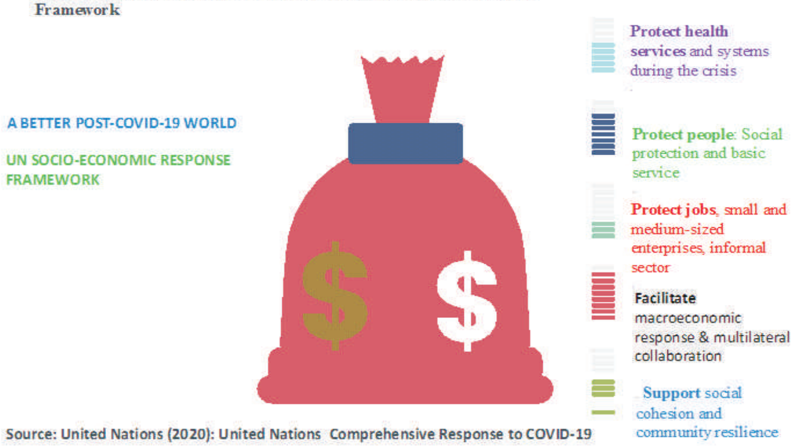
Source: United Nations (2020): United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19

48. United Nations (2020): United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19. See https://www.un.org/other/afics/sites/www.un.org.other.afics/files/sg-pdf-20200916-un_comprehensive_response_to_covid-19_sep_2020_002_0.pdf

Third, the UN system is providing support to countries to ensure a recovery process towards a faster and better recovery. A better recovery is one that ushers the world into a post-COVID that addresses underlying vulnerabilities and leads to more equal, inclusive, resilient and sustainable economies and societies, as well as an inter- national system that can protect and deliver on critical global public goods. Recovery is an opportunity also to address the climate crisis, inequalities and gaping/yawning gaps in social protection systems.

The global community has sterling opportunity to surmount unsustainability and transition to renewable energy, green jobs, sustainable food systems, social inclusion, gender equality, and stronger social safety nets, universal health coverage, and better preparedness for health emergencies and risks. Lessons are clearly in favour of more resilient health systems and long-term preparedness. Solidarity and international cooperation must be pursued not only in addressing the recovery but also to safe the

Figure 2.3 A Better Post-covid-19 World: UN Socio-Economic Response Framework



Source: United Nations (2020): United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19 planet and effectively address the challenges of the 21st century.[49] A more consistent and strategic pursuit of SDGs is the immediate goal of the global partnerships.

2.5.2: The ILO Response Framework

To underscore the importance the ILO placed on its role in helping the Social Partners to fight the scourge of Covid-19, it began Publishing an 'ILO Monitor:Covid-19 and the World of Work' from March 2020. The first edition was on 'Covid-19 and the World of Work: Impact and Policy Responses'. The Publication provided ILO preliminary assessment on the impact of the virus on the World of Work and the range of policy options the ILO was proposing to mitigate these impacts to facilitate a strong and fast recovery.

The 2nd edition of the ILO monitor came out on 7th April 2020.In it, the ILO updated the estimates and analyses provided in the median edition. The four key policy frame work to fight Covid-19, based on International Labour Standards, (which we will focus on later in this section) was similarly articulated in the 2nd edition of the ILO monitor.

This edition also highlighted the plight of workers in the informal economy, where it estimated that "around 2 billion people (world wide) work informally", most of them in emerging and developing countries. The publication said the Covid-19 was already affecting tens of millions of workers in the Informal Sector. In India, Nigeria and Brazil, it held that the number of workers in the

49. United Nations (2020): United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19. See https://www.un.org/other/afics/sites/www.un.org.other.afics/files/sg-pdf-20200916-un_comprehensive_response_to_covid-19_sep_2020_002_0.pdf

informal economy affected by the lockdown and other containment measures were huge. It gave India as an example with almost 90% of people working in the informal economy, where about 400 million workers in the sector were at risk of falling deeper into poverty during the crisis (ILO Monitor: Covid-19 and the World of Work. Second edition, P.6)

The 3rd edition of the ILO Monitor released on 29th April 2020, estimated that “as job losses escalates, nearly half of global workforce (was) at risk of losing livelihoods”. The monitor further stated that “around 68 percent of the world's total workforce, including 81 percent of employers and 66 percent of own-account workers, are currently living in countries with recommended or required workplace closures” (ILO Monitor: Covid-19 and the World of Work: third edition,P.2)

The 4th edition of the monitor was released on 27th May 2020, and it focused on youth employment,under employment, young workers, social protection nd occupational Safety and Health for vulnerable groups. It stated that more than one in six young people are out of work globally due to Covid-19. Adding that “Young People constitute major victims of social and economic consequences of the pandemic, and there is a risk that they will be scarred throughout their working lives – leading to the emergence of a “lockdown generation”. (ILO Monitor: Covid-19 and the World of Work Fourth Edition. P2)

The 5th Edition of the ILO Monitor Covid-19 and the World of Work came out on 30th June, 2020. This edition highlighted that Labour market disruptions in the first half of 2020 were much larger than previously estimated; It projected outlook for the 2nd half of the year 2020,saying that 'Labour market recovery in the second half of 2020 will be uncertain and incomplete'(P.1)

The Sixth Edition of ILO Monitor was released on 23rd September 2020. It covered latest Labour Market developments such as workplace closures, working hour losses (again higher than previously estimated), labour income loses and policy impacts and gaps.

The edition revealed that "stringent workplace closures have been relaxed in many countries,(however) the current measures continue to have a widespread impact" (P.2).

The seventh edition of the ILO Monitor: Covid-19 and the World of Work, was released, on 25th January, 2021. This edition focused on the latest Labour Market Development. It outlined different aspects of the input on Covid-19 in the world of work.

As we enter 2021, the world is still facing huge crisis in jobs and incomes and heightened state of uncertainties. The January 2021 edition of the ILO Monitor stated that looking ahead, "Policy responses will need to combine the roll-out of vaccination, public heath measures, and supporting measures for the economy and the labour market". That policy makers should endeavor to "support a recovery that is robust and broad-base, focusing on employment, income, workers' rights and social dialogue: a human-center recovery". (ILO Monitor: Covid-19 and the World of Work Seven Edition, P.3)

The ILO has structured its key policy messages for response to the crisis around four pillars. Like any solid foundation, each pillar complements the others in sharing the weight of the enormous load faced by countries. International labour standards provide a tried-and-trusted blueprint for policy responses designed to facilitate a recovery that is sustainable and equitable. These standards make up the pedestal on which the four pillars rest.

International labour standards can serve as a “decent work compass” in the response to the COVID-19 crisis. First, upholding key provisions of these standards (particularly those dealing with safety and health, working arrangements, protection of specific categories of workers, non-discrimination, social security and employment protection) ensures that workers, employers and governments can maintain decent work while adjusting to the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic. Secondly, a wide range of ILO standards – covering such areas as employment, social protection, wage protection, the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises, and workplace cooperation – contain specific guidance on policy measures that can be used to underpin a human centered approach to management of the crisis and to recovery efforts. The guidance provided by these standards is applicable to the specific situation of certain categories of workers (e.g. nursing personnel, domestic workers, migrant workers, seafarers and fishers) who, as has become clear, are extremely vulnerable to the effects of the crisis.

Adherence to international labour standards contributes, moreover, to a culture of social dialogue and workplace cooperation that is key to shaping the recovery and preventing a deterioration in employment and labour conditions during and after the crisis. The ILO's four-pillar policy framework, based on international labour standards, for tackling the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis.[50]

50. ILO (2020): Why International Labour Standards matter in a public health crisis

Figure 2.4: ILO COVID-19 Response Framework

Source: *International Labour Organization*

The ILO response framework which falls within the framework of the UN framework, is inspired by the 2008 Declaration and the Centenary Declaration and the exigencies of the current pandemic in the world of work.

2.5.3: Trade Unions Response To COVID-19

Trade Unions around the world took active part in responding to the emergency that the outbreak of COVID-19 Pandemic brought about globally. They participated through tripartite Social Dialogue between the trade unions and employers organisations, and through bipartite social dialogue between Trade Unions and Employers and their organisations. Bilateral interactions also took place between governments and trade unions.

A recent publication of the ILO entitled: "A global Trend Analysis on the Role of Trade Unions in Times of COVID-19", showed that out of 133 countries surveyed, social dialogue was actively used in 108 countries, representing 81 percent, in response to the Pandemic, to achieve consensus on targeted measures, to protect workers and enterprise. Giving a global overview, the ILO Publication revealed that at least one form of social dialogue, either tripartite, bipartite or both was used in 100 percent of the Arab Countrie; in Asian Countries, this was 88%, and 84 percent in Countries of Europe and Central Asia. African Countries had 77 percent while the Americas followed closely at 76 percent (A global Trend Analysis on the Role of Trade Unions in Times of COVID-19, February, 2021, ILO: P.iv.)

On tripartite dialogue, it was also shown that tripartite dialogue between the 3 social partners held in 79 of the 133 Countries surveyed, representing 59 percent. Bipartite dialogue between (employers and trade unions) was reported in 82 out of 133 Countries, representing 62 percent. And bilateral interface between government and trade unions took place in 46 of 133 Countries, representing 34 percent (ibid. P.v.)

Targeted campaigns, training programmes, actions of trade unions for their members and workers in general include among others, setting up of emergency funds, awareness-raising campaigns, training programmes, distribution of food parcels, and PPEs, and in some instances the recognition of COVID-19 as an employment injury.

In the seven Countries in the sub-region, which is the focus of this study, trade unions played active part in both tripartite and bipartite consultations and social dialogue with governments and employers. Tripartite consultations held in Ghana, Nigeria, Benin, Sierra Leone and Togo to cite some examples. In Nigeria and Sierra Leone, trade unions and employers organisations drew up memorandum of understanding which they presented to government of these Countries.

In Nigeria, organised Labour represented by the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) engaged the employers organisation-the Nigeria Employers Consultative Association (NECA) in a bipartite social dialogue and came out with an 8 point Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on common issues between workers and employers in dealing with COVID-19. This memorandum was signed on 15th June, 2020.

Among the issues the parties agreed to share mutual approaches were the following:

(a) The parties agreed to work together for shared understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on the health of employees and Companies. And in doing so, identify joint actions and initiatives to limit the deterioration of economic activities and create conditions for a viable post COVID-19 rebound of business and avoid the disaster of job loses.

(b) The parties agreed to work together to engage and prevail on Government to provide necessary economic stimulus packages to businesses particularly, businesses in the most hit industries especially the Aviation, Hospitality, Tourism, Manufacturing, Transportation sectors of the economy, etc.

(c) The parties agreed to jointly work with the government and stakeholders on the issues thrown up by the emerging new World of Work and Business in the fight against the COVID-19 Pandemic and its impact on Business.

(d) The parties shall consult among themselves before taking any measures to prevent loss of jobs in the private sector.

(e) The parties agreed to maintain this collaboration post COVID-19 to address issues of joint concern to the promotion of enterprise competitiveness, decent job creation and protection and the economic prosperity of our nation. (NLC/TUC/NECA memorandum of understanding (MOU) on COVID-19, 15th June, 2020, Abuja).

The Sierra Leone Labour Congress (SLLC) earlier in April, 2020 , entered into a bipartite Memorandum of Understanding with its employers counterpart, the Sierra Leone Employers Federation (SLEF). The SLLC and SLET agreement was jointly signed by late Jennings Wright, then President of SLLC and Mr. Kobi Walter, Chairman, of the Employers Federation. They pledged to work together and draw the attention of government to the urgent measures that needed to be taken to save the Country's Businesses and workers jobs from the crisis which the COVID-19 Pandemic has brought to Sierra Leone economy and Society.

Among the recommendations contained in the MOU, they called on the government to set up a national-level committee comprising private sector representatives along with other key stakeholders such as trade unions, academics, scientists and social security to deal with the economic and social fallout of the covid-19 Pandemics" (Memorandum of Understanding between SLLC and SLEF on COVID_19, April 2020, Freetown,P2).

On Measures to support the health sector, the Agreement made a number of recommendations to government including provision of Personal Protection Equipments for frontline health workers as well as adequate incentives for them. The agreement similarly called for the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the Sierra Leone Employers Federation to develop and circulate a guide to employers on how to manage their workplaces during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Agreement further called on called on Government to provide supplementary funding to State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) severely hit by the COVID-19 such as the Airport Authority, and the Sierra Leone Post, to enable them meet their operational cost, such as workers salaries

The Trades Union Congress of Ghana (TUC) on its part in May 2020,did a study on the 'Impact of COVID-19 on Enterprises,Employment and Livelihoods in Ghana :Some Proposed Mitigating Measures', and submitted it to the Government of Ghana as a Report of Preliminary Assessment. The Study outlined the ,economic impact of COVID-19 and impact on employment and livelihoods,and made a number of recommendations to mitigate the effect of the pandemic.It also addressed the issue of financing the economic recovery programmes.

The Report itemized the measures that government had taken to mitigate the impact of economic pandemic,which includes the following:Free water for Businesses and Households for 3 months -from April to June 2020; Subsidized electricity for Businesses and Households,also for 3 months,from April to June 2020;Incentive package for frontline health workers,such as tax waivers on incomes of all healthcare workers and payment of additional allowances,equivalent of 50% of basic pay of frontline healthcare workers;Coronavirus Alleviation Programme (CAP) to 'cushion the economic and social difficulties on Ghanaian businesses and people.'The CAP came with an initial amount of 1 billion Ghanaian Cédis;Free distribution of food to over 400,000 Ghanaians in vulnerable communities,and the provision of 600 million Ghanaian Cédis to support SMEs (see p.16 of study).

After outlining the above measures already taken by the government,the Report recommended 7 additional measures namely:

Proposed stimulus package for formal sector businesses and workers;preventing job losses through work sharing,lessons from Germany;introduction of workers compensation insurance scheme;Support for informal economy enterprises and workers;protecting livelihoods; and provision of social grant to the needy.

The next sugment of the Report dealt with financing the economic recovery programmes,where it made a number of recommendations.The above formed the basis of the trade unions interactions with the government at the highest level and other stakeholders in the Ghanaian society in the efforts to build consensus around measures to contain the crisis brought by the Pandemic in the health and social economic sectors.

The other countries involved in this Study had engaged their respective governments to varying degrees to promote the involvement of workers voice in the measures put in place to address the crisis brought by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

3: Decent Work, Sustainable Development and COVID-19

The far reaching impact of the pandemic in the world of work is reason why workers, their their organisations and ILO constituents are concerned about decent work in particular. This is because decent work is the most direct operationalization of the quest for social justice. Besides, decent work, apart from being an indispensable tool in the world of work it occupies a central place in current international development framework, Agenda 2030. This Section discusses the overarching importance of decent work as the most important tool for monitoring social justice. It takes a quick overview of the relevance to development by discussing its place in the SDGs and, in the process, highlight how COVID-19 could be undermining their achievement and hence their implication for policy responses.

3.1: Decent Work Agenda

Decent work is the defining set of standards that are considered basic for the promotion of the fundamental rights and minimum standards of decency in the world of work. Its four strategic pillars - International labour standards and fundamental principles and rights at work; Employment creation; Social protection and (iv) Social dialogue and Tripartism – serve as the lens for assessing progress in work, and in all times, promoted with the central quest for equality and non-discrimination.[51]

To give it more practical relevance a measurement framework has been developed over the years. This framework first identifies ten substantive elements which cut across the four pillars. These substantive elements are employment opportunities; adequate earnings and productive work; decent working time; combining work, family and personal life; work that should be abolished; stability and security of work; equal opportunity and treatment in employment; safe work environment; social security; and social dialogue, employers' and workers' representation. Flowing from these a number of decent work statistical and legal framework indicators are used to measure DW in a manner that allows comparison over time and between different jurisdictions.[52] So, for example, the DWA invariably seeks to track progress in respect of "adequate earnings and employment" by using official statistics capturing employment-to-population ratio, unemployment rate,

51. ILO (2008)

52. ILO (2013): Decent work indicators: guidelines for producers and users of statistical and legal framework indicators: ILO manual: second version, International Labour Office. Geneva: ILO, 2013

Informal employment rate. Besides these statistical indicators the legal framework indicators would in this case measure Government commitment to full employment and the availability of unemployment insurance. The relevance of the DWA in assessing the COVID-19 impact and response measures lies in the fact that it provides indicators that enable impact measurement and provides same for Agenda 2030. (See **Box 1**)

The world is seeking to create conditions of minimum decency which allow working people to earn adequate and earnings through secure and stable productive work, ensuring that they do not work too much and they have time for family life as well. Such work should be performed in safe and healthy conditions and provide for eventualities of illness, infirmity, old age, maternity etc. through social security. All these minimum standards of decency are expected to be promoted and secured through social dialogue that provides for bipartite and tripartite dialogue. Measuring these call for deploying not only statistical indicators (See Box...) but also legal framework indicators (LFI).[53] The latter include legislations, policies and institutions which provide additional means of tracking decent work progress. For example, in addition to the various statistical indicators the relevant LFI include legislation on working hours, annual leave, minimum wage, OSH, etc. which

53. ILO (2013): Decent work indicators: guidelines for producers and users of statistical and legal framework indicators: ILO manual: second version, International Labour Office. Geneva: ILO, 2013

indicate commitment in the given jurisdiction. In addition to legislation, institutions ensuring compliance are also indicative of progress.

The framing of the indicators recognizes the fact that the laws and policies are progress but not enough; as there is need to ensure enforcement and hence an interest in the percentage of the working population who are actually covered by the law. For example, maternity leave is a right by law but it is a fact that workers in the informal economy do not enjoy the right to maternity leave. In addition to statistical and legal framework indicators, the measurement framework for DW provides a number of contextual indicators which should be captured in a discussion of the economic and social context for decent work and in a discussion of the COVID-19 impact. And indeed, elements of these contextual indicators are captured in Section two above under the discussions on economic and social realities in West Africa.

Social protection is one of the four pillars of the DWA; it refers to the set of policies and programs aimed at preventing or protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion throughout their life cycles, with a particular emphasis towards vulnerable groups (Interagency Social Protection Assessments). ILO member states are obliged to nationally define and implement sets of basic social security guarantees that should ensure that all in need have access to essential health care and to basic income security, which together secure effective access to necessary goods and services. (ILO Recommendation 202 concerning Social Projection Floors for all, 2012). The generally low coverage of social protection largely excludes persons in the informal economy. This has meant a much smaller proportion of women enjoying social protection because women are poorly represented in formal employment. The informal sector employment that contains a larger proportion of females has virtually no social protection coverage in the course of a working life and beyond.

The application of international labour standards could be better than it is. Even though countries in West Africa have ratified some important conventions there are significant gaps in ratification as well as domestication and implementation of ratified conventions. A close examination of countries under study show that countries have ratified 28–51 ILO Conventions. (Annex ... Provides the full list of ratifications). International Labour standards and the fundamental principles and rights at work constitute one of the four pillars of the DWA and it is a recognition of the importance of these instruments in instituting national level legislations for minimum protection of workers. Critical among them are the Equality and Non-Discrimination conventions; equality and non-discrimination are cross cutting issues that should guide as assessment of DWA and for that matter COVID-19 impact.

Box 1: Main Statistical Decent Work Indicators

1 – Employment-to-population ratio

2 – Unemployment rate

3 – Youth not in education and not in employment

4 – Informal employment

5 – Working poverty rate

6 – Low pay rate (below 2/3 of average hourly earnings)

7 – Excessive hours (more than 48 hours per week)

8 – Incidence of children in child labour

9 – Precarious employment rate

10 – Occupational segregation by sex

11 – Female share of employment in ISCO-08 sub-major groups 11,12 and 13

12 – Occupational injury rate, fatal

13 – Share of population above a specified age benefiting from a pension

14 – Public social security expenditure (% of GDP)

15 – Union density rate

16 – Enterprises belonging to employer organization [rate]

17 – Collective bargaining coverage rate

18 – Indicator for Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (Freedom of

3.2: Decent Work in the Sustainable Development Goals

The ambitious SDGs with clearly adopted targets provides a broader development framework that the DWA sits in. Inter-related and mutually reinforcing, each of the 17 goals contributes to the realisation of the other goals. For example, the goal of ending poverty is linked to the goal two which is seeking to end hunger and malnutrition as well as all other goals even though the specific linkage may be substantive, facilitating or enabling. It is significant that Goal eight provides for decent work and economic growth, with targets and indicators that overlap with the measuring frame of the DWA.

Even a discussion of the targets alone, not to mention the indicators, underscores the critical importance of DW to the realisation of the SDGs. In seeking to sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances, as provided for in SDG 8.1, the 2030 agenda is actually articulating one of the contextual indicators that are relevant in the measuring framework for DWA. In assessing the impact of the pandemic the gravity of the situation becomes clearer as fiscal measures turn out to be woefully inadequate, as noted in the ILO COVID-19 monitor (6th Edition). Sustained economic growth is necessary condition for the realisation of the critical target of **full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and ensure** and equal pay for work of equal value.[54] In this connection the principle of inclusiveness as well as non-discrimination are being invoked. Inclusiveness means leaving no one behind, noting in particular women, PLWD, migrants, and other vulnerable elements in the society. It is significant that facilitating orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies as provided for

54. SDG 8.

in SDG 10.7 is one of the means by which humanity seeks to reduce inequality within and among countries.

Box 2: Targets for Goal #8: Decent work and economic growth

8.1. Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances

8.2- Achieve **higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation**, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors

8.3- Promote **development-oriented policies** that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the **formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises**, including through access to financial services

8.4- Improve progressively, through 2030, **global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation**, in accordance with the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead

8.5- By 2030, achieve **full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities**, and equal pay for work of equal value

8.6- By 2020, substantially **reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training**

8.7- Take immediate and effective measures to **eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking** and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and **by 2025 end child labour in all its forms**

8.8- **Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers**, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment

8.9- By 2030, devise and implement **policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs** and promotes local culture and products

8.10- Strengthen the **capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking**, insurance and financial services for all

8.a- Increase **Aid for Trade support for developing countries**, in particular least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries

8.b- By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization

4: Findings and Analysis

This section of the report assesses the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on enterprises, with particular reference to MSMEs; the implications for employment and livelihood, taking due cognizance of the various social categories with particular reference to women, youth, informal economy, rural poor, migrants, people with disabilities; and the policy responses with the view to highlighting their implications for DWA and Decent-work related SDGs;

4.1: The Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 in West Africa

4.1.1: The Macro Economic Impact of COVID-19 in West Africa

With the outbreak of COVID-19, most of the economies in the West Africa Region experienced either a direct or indirect consequences of the pandemic. In order to have an appreciable understanding of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on the household units (livelihoods and employment, income, small and medium scale enterprises), it is very paramount to have a broader perspective about the impact of the outbreak on the macroeconomic drivers. These drivers translate into the wellbeing of the individual household units.

The real GDP growth in West Africa slowed down in 2016 and started picking up again in 2019 when it recorded an average estimated growth of 3.6 percent; this was 0.2 percent point higher than the preceding year.[55] This abysmal economic performance was due to Nigeria's economic recession, recalling that Nigeria accounts for over 65 percent of GDP in West Africa. The emerging optimism after 2019 has however been dashed with the onset of the COVID-19, stretching the fragile social and economic systems and infrastructure. Prior to COVID-19 the projected growth for 2020 and 2021 were 3.8 and 4.0 percent respectively. Now however, the impact of the outbreak of COVID-19 has burdened the region's real GDP growth to decline between -2.0 percent (under a conservative baseline scenario, assuming the COVID-19 pandemic dissipates within the third quarter of 2020) and -4.3 percent should the pandemic linger on for the rest of the year (AFDB, 2020).

It is important to note that the decline in real GDP growth of West Africa mirrors the decline in growth of the individual countries in the region. The projection growth for **Benin**'s real GDP growth was projected to record a 6.7 and 6.6 percent for 2020 and 2021 respectively; but with the onset of the pandemic and the associated economic downturn, the real GDP is now projected to grow between 1.2 - 3.3 percent in 2020 and 4.1 - 4.5 percent in 2021. This imminent decline in the real GDP growth is a result of the decline in Benin's cotton export by 57%, reduction in foreign direct investment particularly from China,

55. REF – the report and link please

which represented 36% of Benin's net direct investment flows in 2018. Furthermore, there have been difficulties accessing international financial markets due to the general reluctance of investors. Also, the travel and tourism sector, which represents 6% of GDP and 5% of jobs in Benin, declined drastically (AFDB, 2020).

In **Burkina Faso**, before the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, growth prospects were favorable. The growth expected was 6.2% in 2019, despite the deterioration of the security situation. Following the pandemic and the decline in foreign trade, the associated contraction of foreign direct investment and the slowdown in tourism and related activities, the real GDP is expected to slow from 5.7% in 2019 to 1.6% in 2020 if the pandemic subsides by July (baseline); and to 0.7% if it continues through December (worst case). Again, the growth in 2021 is projected to decline from 5.3 to 4.5 percent, all things being equal, regarding the pandemic (AFDB, 2020).

Ivory Coast's economic prospects were highly favorable before the pandemic, with an average annual growth of 6.9 percent up to 2019. The projected growth for 2020 was 7.2 percent but with the COVID-19 the growth projection is anything between 1.5 and 3.0 percent depending on how far the pandemic travels into the year (i.e., be it the base scenario[56] or the worst case scenario[57]). Thus, a 4.2 - 5.7 percent loss in growth is expected for 2020, due to the expected downturn in

56. Base Scenario is when COVID-19 subsides by July 2020
57. Worse Scenario is when COVID-19 Persist to December 2020

the agriculture, transportation, tourism, manufacturing, construction, and trade.

The COVID-19 wave and impact threatens the trajectory of growth in the Togolese economy also. Compared with initial forecasts, Togo is likely to record a loss in growth of 4.6 – 6.8 percentage points in 2020; real GDP in 2020 could grow by just 0.9% or and contract by 1.3 percent, in the worst case scenario (AFDB, 2020).

In Ghana, the economy showed a steady growth in real GDP in 2018 and 2019. The real GDP grew by 6.1 percent in 2019 and was projected to grow by 5.8 and 4.8 percent 2020 and 2021 respectively. However, in the midst of the COVID-19, the economic growth of the economy has been undermined. The real GDP growth is now projected to be 1.2-2.1 percent in 2020 and 4.8 - 5.6 percent in 2021 (AFDB, 2020).

Nigeria, the largest economy in the region prior to COVID-19 grew by 2.3 percent in 2019 and was projected to grow by 2.9 and 3.9 percent in 2020 and 2021 respectively. Again, in the economic devastation arising from COVID-19, the real GDP growth is projected to decline by 4.4 – 7.7 percent[58] in 2020 and 2021 respectively. (AFDB, 2020).

In Sierra Leone, economic growth has fluctuated since the country experienced Ebola shocks in 2014. Real GDP growth, estimated at 5.1percent in 2019, is now projected to fall sharply to 4.7 percent in 2020. In the midst of the COVID-19

58. (4.4 in the base scenario of COVID-19 and 7.7 percent in the worse scenario in 2020.)

pandemic, growth in 2020 was forecasted to decline to 1.7% in the worst- case scenario assuming prolonged duration of the pandemic until the end of 2020. This could be as a result of the decline in commodity prices and depressed trade, FDI inflows, and tourism revenue following travel restrictions. However, growth was projected to surge up between 2.0 to 3.9 percent range given that the virus is well managed and contained.

The import of the findings shows that the seven targeted countries conform to the gloomy global projections resulting from the pandemic. It was commonly observed that, all the countries under study were projected to experience a decline in their real GDP growth. Majority of the countries for this study experienced an interruption in the global supply chains since goods and services could not freely move about. Also, the inflows of revenues through FDI flows was again stalled and, according to some key informants, capital flights occurred in most of the countries there by affecting the revenue base of the economies. Again, remittances from migrants had been increasing in all the countries in the last decade but that too stalled sharply as a result of the pandemic.

It is however important to note that, the impact of the pandemic on the real GDP growth of these countries vary in their specificities because of the prevailing economic situation before COVID-19. Nigeria, for example, was the hardest hit, experiencing a sharp decline in projected growth. This is because the services sector which contributes 49.77% to real GDP has greatly been affected by the pandemic especially tourism and hospitality industry and management services.

This was largely attributed to the closure of borders and restrictions of human movement for service delivery that could generate revenues and improve livelihood. Again Nigeria's heavy dependence on oil revenue has made her very vulnerable with the drastic fall in the global price of crude oil. On the other hand, Sierra Leone has been the least hit country because the services sector which suffered more than any other does not contribute much to its real GDP compared to Nigeria.

4.1.2: Impact of COVID-19 and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises in West Africa

COVID-19 has influenced global economic activities and trends, with far-reaching impact on MSMEs. As noted in Section Two above, MSMEs play a very significant role in the economic life of all countries and more so in West Africa. The dependence of West African countries on imports from China has deepened the woes of enterprises during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, the incidence of partial lockdown coupled with ban on international travels (including intra-regional travels) has greatly affected import and export of goods and services. Though there is no available data the measuring the composite impact on COVID-19 on MSMEs in West Africa, the individual country cases serve as a proxy in assessing the impact of the outbreak on MSMEs.

In Togo, a world bank report observed that small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) have been particularly hard hit. According to the report, 41% of enterprises in the agricultural and agribusiness sector experienced a 75% to 100% decline in their sales; similar down turn were reported by 33% of enterprises in the tourism sector, 36% in the manufacturing sector, and 35% in the transport and logistics sector.[59]

In Ghana, the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the World Bank conducted which came out with stunning revelations. The study reveals that 35.7 percent of business establishments and 24.3 percent of household firms reported being closed during the partial lockdown; some 16.1 percent continue to be closed after the easing of the lockdown. On supply shocks, more than half of firms (51.4 percent) report difficulties in sourcing inputs. The most affected sectors were tourism and hospitality management and food vendors (58.9 percent) and wholesale and retail trade sectors (53.7 percent). Furthermore, the survey revealed that close to 131,000 businesses had challenges accessing finance and expressed uncertainty in business environment during the partial lockdown. According to the findings the average decrease in sales, was estimated at $19.86 million dollars (GHC115.2 million Ghana Cedis), with firms in the trade and manufacturing sectors largely affected. More than half of these firms had difficulties sourcing inputs because of non-availability or increase in costs, leading to challenges in covering revenue shortfalls.[60]

59. World Bank (2020). Economic for Togo: "The Coronavirus is Exerting Pressure on the Economy". see https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/togo/publication/economic-update-for-togo-the-coronavirus-is-exerting-pressure-on-the-economy

60. World Bank, UNDP & GSS: "Business Tracker Survey" . see https://ghana.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/UNDP_Ghana_COVID-19_Business%20Tracker%20Results_%20Brief%20Report.pdf

In Nigeria, the FATE Foundation undertook a study of the impact of COVID-19 on MSMEs and business in general, targeting all the 36 States. The report revealed that 94.3 percent were negatively impacted upon in a number of ways: 72.1% in terms of cash flow; 67.7 percent in relation to sales and 59.2 percent in terms of revenue. Despite the negative impacts of the pandemic, 47.1% of respondents were positive that their businesses would survive the pandemic, 22.8% were unsure and while 30% indicated that their businesses will not survive the pandemic.[61]

In Sierra Leone, SMEs have been facing serious challenges including low access to information, poor infrastructure, limited access to finance, and weak capacity to scale up businesses. It is also recalled that while the services sector account for more than 50 percent of GDP growth in most countries Sierra Leone's services sector accounts for only ... percent, as discussed in Section 2 above. It has been observed that these constraints disproportionately impact women entrepreneurs.[62]

The pandemic and its associated health protocols exacerbated the challenges facing MSMEs in the countries under study. This is because the restrictions on human movement, observance of social distancing, closure of educational institutions, the loss of jobs and reductions in salaries in all the countries have depressed incomes and thereby plummeted effective demand

61. FATE Foundation. See https://www.fatefoundation.org/impact-of-covid-19-on-nigerian-msmes/
62. World Bank (2020): https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/07/30/sierra-leone-40-million-to-support-sme-investments-and-economic-diversification

for goods and services. The low disposable incomes has resulted in reduced demand for products and services from these MSMEs. There have also been the supply shocks arising from the challenges associated with sourcing inputs, raw materials which are imported, making them more expensive when they are available. In the circumstances operations have sometimes scaled down and increased the per unit cost thus affecting sales, revenue and cash flows. At the same time the observance of health protocols has increased the expenditure of MSMEs with regard to provision of sanitizer, face mask to workers, transportation of workers to and fro the production point. Also, the closure of educational institutions meant shrinking demand for food and other regular or standard supplies for educational institutions.

Some positive impact has been recorded for MSMEs in all the countries. This is mainly in the area of production of materials for the containment of the COVID-19 disease such as face masks, sanitisers, soaps, etc. Digital financial services have also increased as more people resort to contactless and seamless electronic financial services. Related to this is the deepening of financial inclusion arising from increased use of mobile banks and other financial technology (finTech).

The importance of MSMEs in the West African region notwithstanding there has been no strategic policy intervention within and between countries to harness their potential and make them more robust and resilient. Intra-regional development of supply chains could generate higher productivity and competitiveness of West African MSMEs and make them more resilient, as observed by a key informant. The predominance of women in the micro and small scale enterprises is social motivation for such strategic intervention as it contributes to inclusiveness and resilience in sustainable enterprise development.

4.2: Impact of COVID-19 on Livelihood and Employment

Livelihood and employment is about jobs and activities that generate income and sources of food supply. A livelihood for that comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. The government policy of lockdown and social distancing which restricted movement across the country placed millions of jobs in most countries at risk of being lost as around 80% of all small-and-medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (AU, 2020). According to the ILO COVID-19 Monitor (6th Edition, Sept 2020) the percentage of working hours lost for West Africa during the first three quarters of the year are 2.1, 13.9 and 9.9. The equivalent number of full time jobs lost for the three quarters are 2, 15 and 11 million respectively.

In West Africa COVID-19 pandemic threatens to exacerbate the growing rates of hunger and malnutrition. This is partly because COVID-19 has emerged at the peak of the lean season when hunger and malnutrition are most severe. Prior to the pandemic, according to WFP, 21 million people in the region were estimated to struggle to meet their food needs from June to August but currently about 57.5 million people could be driven into acute food insecurity by December, 2020. Many of the newly food insecure people in the region are the urban poor who lost their employment, with little ability to save money or store food and have to depend on markets for food,. Border closures and the suspension of markets across the region have led to reduced regional trade and consequent price increases of staple food and basic goods.[63]

The analysis of the country specifics revealed that in Ivory Coast, more than two-thirds of households, or 71.7 per cent, reported lower income, while 85 percent of informal workers cited lost work and income. Some 1.3 million jobs or about one third of all informal jobs have already been lost as a result of the pandemic and lockdown measures to contain it, nearly quadrupling the number of "extremely poor" households. The most vulnerable people have been hit hardest. Some 1.37 million households, or 45.2 per cent, that had been just above the poverty line have now fallen below it, while the poorest Ivoirians have seen incomes plunge by 30 percent. The report anticipated that the crisis will affect the ability to meet commitments such as paying off debts, obtaining food regularly, and financing school fees. In Togo, a World Bank report observed that there was a decline in production and sales in a host of sectors, particularly in those where telework is not possible, such as manufacturing, retail trade, construction, and tourism. A woman running a dress-making enterprise with

63. World Food Programme (2020): COVID-19 Level 3 Emergency. External Situation Report#10, 03 July 2020. See https://reliefweb.int/s

five employees gives a picturesque narrative "*when cash flow becomes a critical challenge the owner of the micro enterprise employing five persons has to take very hard decisions. Which bills should she pay? Rent, electricity, water, social security, income tax in respect of employees, servicing loans, paying suppliers, waste collection, etc are all competing for settlement in a situation of unprecedented cash flow constraints. How do I proceed? The grants and subsidies from government are very welcome but I am not able to use that to maintain the workers because I need survival money for the household.*" Roughly 62% of jobs are affected — 49% in the service sector and 13% in the industrial sector. The number of employees at retail sale and leisure locations has declined by 30% and the number of persons going to their workplaces, by 12% relative to pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels.[64]

In Ghana about 770,000 workers (25.7 percent of the total workforce), had their wages reduced and about 42,000 employees were laid off during the country's COVID-19 partial lockdown. Additionally, 35.9 percent of business establishments reduced the hours worked for 23.2 percent of the total workforce (an estimated 695,209 workers). The Business Tracker Survey reported that there is a likelihood for a continued drop in sales and employment, but also that things could improve. In the most pessimistic scenario, firms anticipate a decline in demand of 23.5 percent and a decline in employment of 15 percent over the next 6 months, compared to

64. World Bank (2020).Economic Update on Togo: The Coronavirus is exerting pressure on the Economy. see https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/togo/publication/economic-update-for-togo-the-coronavirus-is-exerting-pressure-on-the-economy

the same time period last year. Also, on household income, the survey reported that more than three-quarters (77.4 percent) of households reported that their income has reduced since March 16, 2020 and 3.1 percent reported an increase in income.

Similarly, in Sierra Leone, the measures including lockdown, movement restrictions and market closure has resulted in a general economic slowdown and income losses. Also, the supply chain of food and other imported commodities has been undermined and increased food prices. In March 2020, the majority of households were spending over most of their income on food, and since then income losses and a decline in remittances have further hampered access to food. In addition, the effects of the containment measures have affected the flow of farm produce to markets.[65] Also, as at June 2020, the emergency food security monitoring system (E-FSMS) results show that the food insecure population in the country had reached 63 percent from 53.3 percent in August 2019. 10% of the population are now reported to be severely food insecure. As at July 2020, approximately 5.1 million people (63%) in Sierra Leone are food insecure.[66] This proportion of people is 15% more compared to approximately 3.9 million food insecure people (48%) reported in January 2020.[67]

COVID-19 has severely affected the employment and livelihood of people in West Africa. The hardest hit are the women and youth. The youth form the majority of the working population,

65. WFP
66. FAO, E-FSMS and WFP report and SSL (2020)
67. UNDP(2020).COVID-19 Assessment of Sierra Leone

and are seeking out subsistence from the informal economy. Since about 33 percent of the labour force in West Africa are within the active labour force, then majority of the youth have suffered jobs and livelihood losses and are being reduced to dependents in the absence of any social protection scheme. Again, the service sector especially hospitality, hotel and tourism-related enterprises have been hardest hit by the impact of the pandemic. Women who are largely employed in this sector have had to forfeit their jobs due to increase in the cost of maintaining the day to day activities vis-à-vis low sales. Also, food vending business which are mostly managed by women had suffered from diminished patronage; lock downs, restricted movements, lower effective demand combine to depress the demand for their service. Migrants numbering about 7.8 million in West Africa have also been seriously affected, depending though on their specific engagements. Many however are working in the informal economic activities without safety and social protection and therefore vulnerable in a COVID-19 induced crisis. In some countries like Ghana some migrants are known to be working as domestic services workers, sometimes as live-in employees, but mostly without any safety protection and regulations. Many dispensed with the services of domestic workers for fear of contracting the virus from them. The overall assessment of livelihoods seriously points to the fact that the COVID-19 is seriously exacerbating existing inequalities, hence the need to factor this into response and recovery measures.

4.3: Assessment of Policy Response Measures

The policy response to the pandemic has been swift as Governments and Multilateral Institutions have responded with a mix of fiscal, monetary and social policies mainly to cut down on economic losses, while containing the virus and preventing the spread. Some countries have seized the opportunity within the crisis to move faster on necessary reforms or investments that will be crucial for long-term development. For instance, in Ghana, the wake of COVID-19 coinciding with the successful implementation of Mobile Money Payment Interoperability which allows the transfer of funds from mobile money accounts to bank accounts and vice versa, as well as from mobile or bank accounts to biometric payment card accounts (ezwich), it "means that anyone with a mobile account has a bank account. They can make payments out of it and receive interest on their balances without making a physical contact. If this trend is well harnessed in West Africa, not only will it limit physical contacts that serve as a medium to transmit the virus but also increase financial inclusion of the people.[68] Again, hitherto, all sanitizers were imported but now Ghana may be on its way to becoming self-sufficient in sanitizer production.

4.3.1: Health related Responses

Health systems are being overwhelmed by the COVID-19 outbreak. When health systems collapse, deaths from COVID-

68. The Presidency Republic of Ghana. http://www.presidency.gov.gh/index.php

19 itself can quickly be exceeded by deaths from preventable or treatable conditions. The mobilization of support to maintain essential health services and systems is necessary not only to deal with the pandemic but also to stop an upsurge of non-communicable diseases and associated deaths. All countries have therefore been actively managing health workforce, supplies and data to support essential clinical and outreach services.

In the wake of the outbreak, the governments of the Republic of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and Togo outlined certain protocols and adopted the World Health Organization's prescribed standards. In an attempt to contain COVID-19, in early February, governments of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and Togo increased their Health expenditure; that is the proportion of the national income spent on health issues. In Benin, the health spending was increased by US$ 100 million (XOF 60 billion, equivalent to 0.7% of GDP). In Burkina Faso, in terms of health policy response, the government allocated $28.81 million (XOF15 Billion) to finance the research on infectious diseases and the production of medicines. In Cote d'Ivoire's emergency response plan, $172 million (XOF 96 billion, 0.3% of GDP) was announced to be available for strengthening the health sector and support businesses. In Togo, the estimated costs of a total multi-phase health plan were USD187 million (XOF 110 billion, 3.3% of GDP), of which USD34 million (XOF 20.8 billion, 0.6% of GDP) for the immediate Covid-19 response and the remainder for the strengthening of the health system. Furthermore, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and Togo installed a temperature scanner, hand washing apparatus, and an isolation room in the country's international airport.[69] The Government also announced its plans to include incentives for healthcare workers (including a risk allowance, life insurance and compensation for living expenses when in-field) as part of the health response under development; and plans for additional health workers in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and Togo. This action is to ensure that the virus is kept under control and minimizes its impact on the economy. Notwithstanding these all key informants maintain that the health sector is still woefully under resourced. This has been confirmed by the OTUWA study on COVID-19 impact in the health sector.

Elsewhere in Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, major investment in healthcare infrastructure was announced. In Ghana, government announced the construction or upgrade of 100 district and regional hospitals; US$100 million to support preparedness and response plan from the government to fund expansion of infrastructure, purchase of materials and equipment, and public education; earmarking of additional funds for test kits, pharmaceuticals, equipment and hospital beds. In Nigeria, the Health Response Plan was formulated in collaboration with development partners, including the World Bank via a USD 7.5 million health system support operation approved in early April. Furthermore, the Federal Government released $180million (10 billion Naira) to Lagos State , and $90

69. OECD (2020): http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/en/#country-tracker

million (5 billion Naira) in special intervention funds to NCDC to equip, expand and provide personnel to its facilities and laboratories across the country. Furthermore, all NCDC staff and experts who are away on training or international assignments are to return immediately. The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) conducted an evacuation mission to bring back Nigerian specialists located in Central Africa. In Sierra Leone, there was development of Covid-19 Emergency and Preparedness Plan which focuses primarily on strengthening surveillance at the 3 official points of entry, improving case management and conducting effective campaigns at the national, subnational and community levels. The world bank made available USD 7.5 million to support the prevention, detection and response to the threat posed by the virus, and will was also finance the provision of medical supplies, laboratory diagnostic equipment, including test kits in the designated health facilities; activation of the emergency contact number.[70]

The woeful inadequacies of the health service systems in the West African countries became more apperent than ever before. Health centres and facilities remained woeful inadequate, PPE were short supply, testing equipment for COVID-19 have remained scanty and conditions of frontline staff reportedly proved to be depressed. The decent work deficits were more than apparent according to a recent study of the health sector workers undertaken by OTUWA.[71]

70. OECD: https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/country-policy-tracker/
71.

A critical concern in these challenging times is the upsurge of gender-based violence. Men who were previously out to work most of the day are now frustrated home-bound jobless men. In their frustration some have resorted to all kinds of physical and psychological violence at home. A woman in her forties poured out her sorrow: "*My husband usually gets easily provoked anytime he is not able to provide money for the food that the household would eat. Woe betide me if I give him the slightest cause to be more provoked. He will beat me until I forget my own name. Since this strange disease descended on us my husband cannot go out to sell the clothing that he had been selling to make something small for our daily food; sometimes he goes to try his luck but he ends up spending a whole day hawking in the centre of the city without selling enough to cover his transport cost in and out.*" Asked about the domestic violence law she expresses his disgust to the effect that even in less frustrating times the law works only to some extent.

Some sexual abuse have been reported in some countries. One narrative tells the story. "*My husband's younger brother in his thirties does not go to work anymore. He has become extremely irritable. He seems to let out the steam on my nineteen year-old younger sister, who is also quite frustrated because she does not know the future of her education. I am afraid to say it but who knows if pregnancy is not going stop her from going to school when schools reopen.*" The pandemic has clearly aggravated gender-based violence.

In conclusion, the West African countries endeavoured to establish a robust health system by committing a proportion of its GDP to the health services for emergency preparedness and responsiveness. The fragility and weaknesses of the health systems in West Africa, like other African countries have been resounding. The weak health care facilities, the number of health personnel (doctors, midwives, nurses, etc.), the poverty of working conditions, especially occupational safety and health conditions have been exposed. And it is becoming very glaring that the attention being given to the pandemic is depriving other diseases especially non-communicable diseases of the needed attention. The decent work deficits for the frontline workers especially health workers, who are mostly women, are striking. The non-compliance with 2002 AU decision that members commit ten percent of annual budget to health sector has been exposed. The targets set for SDG three, concerning health, are far from being realized. It leads to the fundamentality of the right to health as contained in the ESCR as fundamental. In this connection, Governments have an obligation as right holders to ensure the progressive realisation of the right to health care.

The situation of women in all fronts confirm the exacerbation of existing inequalities and iniquities including gender-based violence. The weaknesses of the legislative environment shows up in the non-enforcement.

4.3.2: Economic and Social Responses

As West African countries have managed to keep the COVID-19 virus under control with relatively low number of cases, the pandemic continues to take a toll on economic activities. To this effect, the regional bodies and the various governments in the region have taken some steps to mitigate the impact of the virus in the lives of their people and the economy at large. At the regional level, the West-Africa Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) temporarily suspended the WAEMU growth and stability Pact setting including the 3 percent GDP fiscal deficit rule.[72] The regional central bank BCEAO for WAEMU has also taken steps to better satisfy banks' demand for liquidity and mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on economic activity. Other measures the BCEAO initiated include the revision of the collateral framework (terms and conditions for loan acquisition) to make more flexible repayment terms; and introduction of measures to promote the use of electronic payments.

The government has adopted several containment measures, including social distancing, a nationwide curfew, closure of schools and universities, cancellation of major public events, closure of terrestrial borders, suspension of commercial flights, quarantine of the affected cities and the mandatory nationwide use of masks Also, the authorities, besides setting up an emergency fund to fight the virus, have initiated some measures aligning with the same goal.

72. The growth and stability Pact was to ensure that member states do not spend beyond certain limit or ceiling. This was to enable member states enjoy close-to-balance or in surplus" position, and also ensure that they enjoy the stability their currencies. The suspension of the growth and stability pact will now give member states the leverage to spend more money beyond the fiscal ceiling of the 3% of GDP in order to cope with the fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic.

73. The BCEAO adopted a full allotment strategy at a fixed rate of 2.5 percent (the minimum monetary policy rate) thereby allowing banks to improve their liquidity requirements . The liquidity base (amount of money available to the bank) was necessarily adjusted as reduced transactions with the banks - such as savings, loan acquisition, investment in financial instruments like T-bills etc. Hence, the 2.5 percent monetary policy rate was to allow banks to be able lend from the Central bank in order to maintain a sound financial base and be in business.

74. IMF (2020). https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/Policy-Responses-to-COVID-19#B

4.4: Implications Of The Responses

On fiscal policies, Benin developed a plan to prepare for and respond to the COVID-19 epidemic at a cost of $672 million (4.2% of GDP) aimed at strengthening its capacity to halt the spread of the epidemic. The government supported the most vulnerable social strata and businesses that were severely affected (hotels, restaurants, transport, and leisure). Since the outbreak has affected most businesses which has led to loss of jobs, incomes and livelihoods, the government of Benin has taken a step to reduce 50% of the tax on motor vehicles, 25% of the cost of licenses for passenger transport companies, and 50% of the daily space charges for traders in major markets in order to minimize the economic impact on those who lost their jobs and livelihoods. Also for businesses, the government of Benin postponed the payment of taxes, duties, and social security contributions for companies in the most affected sectors. This action was to help these affected sectors to continue operations without necessarily closing down. It is also reducing customs duties on basic food products for a total of $8.2 million (CFAF 4.6 billion). This was to ensure that there was no shortage of food which could lead to food insecurity.[75]
On monetary policy, the central bank, BCEAO reduced the monetary policy rate by 150 bps from 16.5% to 15%, effective March 19. This action was necessary because banks were not performing well due to the impact of the pandemic on businesses and livelihoods. Also those who borrowed from the

75. Ibid: Africa Development Bank Group (2020) West Africa Economic Outlook: Coping with the COVID-19 Pandemic. See https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/west-africa-economic-outlook-2020-coping-covid-19-pandemic

banks are not able to pay their loans. so the reduction in the policy rate to 15 percent could leverage the banks to have enough liquidity (money) to continue business. On social response, the government provided direct cash transfers to vulnerable citizens ahead of the three days lockdown. The beneficiaries each received the sum of 250.000 cash. The targeted groups include: persons living with disabilities, amputees, orphans in orphanages, and children with autism cared for in institutions.

In Burkina Faso, the government has developed a response plan and an economic recovery plan including measures of a health, economic, and social nature. The overall cost of these measures is estimated at $710 million (CFAF 394 billion, or 4.45% of GDP. The government has taken fiscal steps to wave off taxes on VAT and also on imports duties to micro-enterprises involved in producing and selling items needed in the fight against against COVID–19. Other support measures established a solidarity fund for the benefit of those working in the informal sector to receive credit to continue their business, acquire agricultural inputs and fodder to support food and pastoral production, and set up a framework to support affected companies. The central bank, BCEAO monetary policy was also observed in Burkina Faso. That was reduction of the monetary policy rate by 150 bps from 16.5%to 15% in order to keep banks in business.[76] In addition, the government enrolled on some social interventions, including food and direct cash

76. All the French speaking countries shares the same monetary policy by BCEAO

assistance to needy households and local small businesses; subsidizing water and electricity bills; outright cancelation of bills for the most vulnerable social groups. There are also plans to provide 12 million washable protective masks for students and teachers.[77]

In Ivory Coast, the government adopted the, monetary policy, fiscal measures to provide private sector support measures targeting businesses as well as social measures to take care of the vulnerable.[78] On the fiscal measures, the government cancelled the late penalties to be paid by holders of public contracts, from 06 April to 06 July 2020, in order to help companies to safeguard their production tools and secure the jobs for their workers. The government of Ivory Coast d'Ivoire supported and expanded cash transfers, provided relief to hard-hit sectors and firms, and supported public entities in the transport and port sectors to ensure continuity in supply chains. To ensure that there are raw-materials available for production of goods and services and avoid any shortage and price instability, government created a number of supportive special funds.[79] The postponement of the tax obligations will reduce the financial burden of these businesses because already they are faced with losses due to decrease in profits that

77. IMF(2020). Policy Response Tracker. See https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/Policy-Responses-to-COVID-19#B

78. Ibid: OECD(2020). Corona Virus Country Profile. See https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/country-policy-tracker/

79. In this regard, the government created four special Funds to be spent over 2 years and these include the National Solidarity Fund of $306 million (CFAF 170 billion, 0.5 % of GDP), the Support Fund for the informal sector of $180 million (100 billion CFAF, 0.3 % of GDP), the Support Fund for the small and medium enterprises of $270 million (CFAF 150 billion, 0.4 % of GDP) . The fund will also provide financial support to the agriculture sector by $541 million (300 billion CFAF 0.8 % of GDP). The government also supported the MSMEs to maintain economic activity by postponing tax payment deadlines for retailers and businesses in the sectors most affected by the health crisis

was due to demand constraints triggered by the restrictions and loss of livelihood translating to low income (purchasing power). The social measures implemented by the government include actions such as the state's temporary payment of electricity bills (April to July 2020) and water bills (May to August 2020) for the most disadvantaged, and the establishment of a solidarity fund for the most vulnerable groups.[80]

In Togo, on the road map of fiscal measure, the government established National and Economic Solidarity Fund of $721 million (XOF 400 billion (11.8% of GDP) to be financed by the government, international partners, and private citizens. This fund was established to provide relief services to business and support identified vulnerable groups. The government reduced the VAT rate from 18% to 10% for the hotel and catering sectors, to help reduce cost of production and maintain a certain level of production to keep businesses afloat. On the monetary policy Togo maintained the measures outlined by BCEAO. On the social measures, the government embarked on cash transfer scheme for the most vulnerable and provided free water and electricity for a period of three months.[81]

Drawing down the curtains, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and Togo have the same monetary policy approach as prescribed by BCEAO. Also, the social approaches were not

80. Ibid: Africa Development Bank Group (2020) West Africa Economic Outlook: Coping with the COVID-19 Pandemic. See https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/west-africa-economic-outlook-2020-coping-covid-19-pandemic

81. Ibid: Africa Development Bank Group (2020) West Africa Economic Outlook: Coping with the COVID-19 Pandemic. See https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/west-africa-economic-outlook-2020-coping-covid-19-pandemic

different as governments of each of the countries targeted the vulnerable through cash transfer initiative and also absorbing the utility bills for a period of three months. The weaknesses of the social systems in general and social protection in particular were apparent as there were no data base of the indigents, migrants and other vulnerable in the society prior to the pandemic. Weaknesses of physical location addressees did not facilitate targeting of them for assistance. It is significant though that there were some differences among the francophone countries under study with regard to fiscal policies. This is due to differences in economic and demographic structures.

In Ghana,[82] in terms of monetary policy measures, the government has cut the policy rate by 150 basis points to 14.5 percent on March 18. The policy rate is the rate that the central banks lend money to the commercial banks. It is important to note that in the wake of COVID-19 when businesses and livelihoods were affected, banks were faced with low turnout since business were no longer coming to make deposits and there was higher loans repayment default. Hence the need for the central bank to reduce the policy rate so that the banks can borrow from the central banks in order to continue business. Also, the government has lowered the primary reserve requirement from 10 to 8 percent. The reserve requirement is the amount of money the bank is expected to keep with the bank. However, the advent of the virus has affected most of the

82. OECD (2020).Corona Virus Country Profile. See https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/country-policy-tracker/

banks since businesses were closing and making losses. Hence, the step to lower the rate of the reserve requirement is to help the banks have some strong liquidity to continue running.[83]

On the Fiscal measures, the government of Ghana has committed a total of $218 million (GHc. 11.2 billion) to deal with the pandemic and its social and economic consequences. The bulk of these funds (GHc 10.6 billion) are being used under the Coronavirus Alleviation Programme to support selected industries (e.g., pharmaceutical sector supplying COVID-19 drugs and equipment), support SMEs, build or upgrade 100 district and regional hospitals, and address availability of test kits, pharmaceuticals, equipment, and bed spaces. The Social measures relate to payment exemptions of water and electricity bills for April, May, and June, food sales at subsidized prices, direct cash transfers. This action was aimed at absorbing some of the burden of those who lost their livelihoods and businesses. Also, a special life insurance cover and income tax relief and other pay incentives for frontline health professionals dealing with the pandemic. This is to motivate them considering the high risk associated with handling COVID-19 patients. Also, the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection distributed free food and hygiene kits to vulnerable households. Some prisoners on remand were granted presidential amnesty. This is to ensure decongestion of the prison in the event of an outbreak in the prison.[84]

83. IMF (2020). Policy Response Tracker. See https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/Policy-Responses-to-COVID-19#G
84. Ibid: IMF (2020). Policy Response Tracker. See https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/Policy-Responses-to-COVID-19#G

In Nigeria, a number of fiscal and monetary policy stimulus measures were launched to mitigate the shock of the pandemic to the economy and households. In response to the crisis, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) cut monetary policy rate by 100 basis points in September while expanding liquidity available for nonbank financial institutions, leading to significant lowering of market yield of government securities. This is to ensure that the local banks can be able to borrow money to continue their businesses and even support MSMEs to continue operations. Also, the government injected liquidity of $9.4 billion (N3.6 trillion, 2.4 percent of GDP) into the banking system, including $280million (N100 billion) to support the health sector $5.2 billion (N2 trillion) to the manufacturing sector. The government of Nigeria has also coordinated a private sector special intervention initiative targeting $333 million (N120 billion to fight COVID-19.[85]

For fiscal Policies, the Federal Government of Nigeria adopted a revised budget for 2020 in response to the COVID-19 shock. A $1.3 billion (N500 billion, 0.3 percent of GDP) COVID-19 intervention fund is included in the revised budget to channel resources to additional health-related current and capital spending (tests, supplies and facilities) in order to contain the spread of the virus and treat appropriately those who are infected. The import duty waivers for pharmaceutical firms were introduced so that they can have a continuous supply of raw material for production activities and save the livelihoods

85. IMF (2020). Policy Response Tracker. See https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/Policy-Responses-to-COVID-19#N

of the workers. Electricity tariff was reduced to absorb the burden on those who lost their jobs and livelihood. Also, the government launched a including $19.63 million (N7.5 billion) for the public works programs to support the incomes of the vulnerable including a registration of 3.6 million households to cushion the effect of the lockdown.[86]

In Sierra Leone, the government launched the COVID–19 Quick Action Economic Response Program on 25 March to build and maintain an adequate stock of essential commodities at stable prices, provide support to hardest-hit businesses to enable them to continue operations, avert layoffs of employees, reduce non-performing loans, provide safety nets to vulnerable groups, support labor-intensive public works, and provide assistance for local production and processing of staple food items.

The program's financing needs range from $231.4 million to $379.5 million with financing gaps of $161.3 million. The IMF has provided $21.1 million and the World Bank $7.5 million in emergency support under an extended credit facility, and the African Development Bank is preparing emergency budget support. The government should enhance COVID-19 containment measures, bail out small businesses to save jobs, and cushion livelihoods through expanded but properly targeted social protection program given the limited fiscal space.[87] In spite of all of these, the severity of the fiscal

86. Ibid: IMF (2020). Policy Response Tracker. See https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/Policy-Responses-to-COVID-19#N
87. Ibid: Africa Development Bank Group (2020) West Africa Economic Outlook: Coping with the COVID-19 Pandemic. See https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/west-africa-economic-outlook-2020-coping-covid-19-pandemic

constraints have continued to prevail and overwhelm economies of the sub-region. Clearly the level of unity and solidarity being expressed at various levels cannot address fiscal needs,

4.5: Implications for Decent Work Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals

Analysis of data available speak to most of the statistical indicators of DWA. COVID-19 has negatively impacted on the employment to population ratio, the unemployment rate, the number of youth not in education and not in employment, the depth of employment informality, and the number of working poor in absolute and relative terms. The prevailing circumstances have a tendency to increasing child labour and heightening the precariousness of employment; it has also affected the application of existing protective legislative frameworks. So for example, payment for redundancy has been suspended in relation to some of the laid off workers even though it is legally covered in the labour acts as well as the operational collective agreement. Some DWA indicators are more pronounced than others in some sectors. For example, OSH is more pronounced in the health sector largely because of the weakness of the OSH system in health sector, the specific pressures on front liners and the systemic discrimination characterizing the sector which has more females and reflects gender based occupational segregation. Again, a closer look at the vulnerable in all the countries indicated that the vulnerable elements like migrants are traditionally without social protection coverage and left to their own fate in times of a pandemic, thus highlighting the critical importance of social protection floors for all.

The threat to prosperity in many parts of the world is indicative of the challenge of realizing prosperity of people without compromising on the fortunes of future generations, without leaving anybody behind. The huge financial needs envisaged for the pursuit of the SDGs are now even more pronounced as a result of the COVID-19. With the on-set of COVID-19 many developing countries have resorted to external financial assistance thus threatening another round of heightening debt servicing. This has raised issue regarding SDG 16.4 concerning the need to enhance domestic resource mobilisation through curbing the illicit financial flows which are bleeding Africa. Curbing IFF calls for coordination of efforts at the regional level, among other consideration; there is the need to harmonise their incentive schemes for investments, in order not to resort to begging thy neighbour policies and fuel the race to the bottom. As observed by some key informants, the pandemic and the severe fiscal constraints are drawing attention to sources of fiscal drains.

A key focus of the SDG process is to promote greater disaggregation in data to better serve certain vulnerable groups and ensure no one is left behind. Targets are measured by indicators with disaggregated data, covering for example women, men, PLWD, etc. It is significant that Target 17.18 calls specifically for data to be disaggregated by migratory status. Doing this is an opportunity to gain better data on different dimensions of migrants' situations to understand better their living conditions, and to understand how migration impacts on health, income, education and other areas. Greater disaggregation is also necessary in order to integrate migration as a cross-cutting theme across other development sectors.

The pandemic has added on to the range of global challenges that confront the world today, including the climate change. The responses are necessarily global even as each region and country takes account of it specificities. The world of work provides the critical mortar for ensuring that social justice in the world of work sits firmly in the progressive realisation of the over 160 targets set by humanity for humanity and the planet.

5: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1: Conclusions

a. COVID-19 global pandemic has revealed more forcedly the weaknesses of the macro economic environment, the fiscal and monetary policies of West African countries. The economic and social systems are inherently weak and very vulnerable to external shocks. Related to this is the growing indebtedness as the countries overstretch themselves fiscally, revenue sources slumped; cost of response measures and capital flights and IFFs continued more than ever before.

b. The importance of MSMEs while being even more obvious in the prevailing is clearly not acknowledged with dynamic policies that seek to build and grow them into resilient entities; Widespread collapse, complete and partial dislocation of economic activities and MSMEs in particular; and point to the importance of these enterprises and the central contribution to employment, livelihoods and economic growth in the West African sub-region;

c. The prevalence of hunger, vulnerabilities and precariousness in the sprawling informal economies of both urban and rural areas of West Africa have been further exposed and exacerbated by the pandemic. The decent work deficits are deeper than ever determined. The realities of indecencies are conditions undermining health profile of the population and underscoring the weaknesses that pandemics and epidemics thrive on.

d. The pervasiveness of the decent work deficits in the countries of West Africa; they are also weaknesses of social protection and systems, as well as the precariousness and DW in general.

e. The health care system and limitations of public health have been further exposed, reminding societies of the centrality of health for harnessing human capital and harnessing the demographic dividends. It underscores the centrality of SDG 3 concerning health for all, and the fact that governments and societies have an obligation to honour the fundamental right to health.

f. The gravity of growing inequalities have been heighted even more by the global shock, drawing attention to the fact that inequalities indeed get more pronounced and aggravated in the wake of any epidemic, pandemic, disaster or shock; that these unwelcome externalities hit hardest the vulnerable in society especially women, PLWDs, migrants and others making a living in precarious circumstances .

g. The inter-connectedness and the fundamentality of the right to economic social and cultural rights, the commitments to sustainable development that leaves no one behind and the decent work agenda have been underscored by a pandemic which challenges humanity to take forward people centered development agenda.

5.2: Recommendations

a. Governments of West Africa should conscientiously **transform and restructure their economies** and restructure them away from primary commodity exporting countries which are exposed to the viscidities of global trade and other external shocks; there is in this connection the need to build cooperation and partnership within the sub-region and advance the regional integration project as a basis for strategic industrialization; reclaim fiscal spaces by reversing the tendency towards a new round of debt build up; enhance domestic resource mobilisation in order to reduce the cycle of indebtedness and in this connection step up the fight against illicit financial flows and capital flights from West African countries through national legislative and institutional strengthening and regional cooperation and coordination with the ECOWAS offering leadership in harmonizing the incentive schemes for attracting FDI and portfolio investments.

b. **Consciously and strategically promote MSMEs** through robust policies that consistently address their challenges and nurture them to grow into resilient economic entities with growth potentials; develop strategic regional linkages that take advantage of raw materials and intermediary inputs from within West Africa; in promoting MSMEs take due cognizance of their contribution to employment and gender equality.

c. **Formalizing the informal economy** must be raised to the highest priority level. That would be a process that should be strategically linked up well with the process of revamping MSMEs; reducing decent work deficits, especially with regard to social protection, and the pursuit of social protection floors; and getting the SDGs back on course.

d. The ECOWAS Council of Minister of Labour and Employment adopted the recommendations of Labour experts and the Assembly of Social Dialogue Forum (SDF) on the Decent Work Regional Progrmme (DWRP) spanning 2019-2022,in Abuja Nigeria on 19th July 2019.This new DWRP was to serve as an impetus to job creation, social security coverage, social dialogue, improve working conditions and promotion of gender mainstreaming in Labour and employment matters for all West Africans. The outbreak of the Covid-19 Pandemic at the end of 2019 and its unprecedented devastating effects on the health and socio-economic development of all countries has certainly thrown over-board all the calculations for addressing the decent work deficit at the West African level. There is therefore an urgent need to initiate a review of the DWRP in the light of the existing Covid-19 realities, and post Covid.

e. Governments and ILO constituents should revamp **decent work country programmes in all countries in West Africa**, in the light of Covid-19 realities, ensure they have in-built elements for addressing vulnerabilities and building resilience of productive sectors for quality and inclusive employment; this should take into consideration the nurturing peoples' capacities to benefit from the opportunities of a changing world of work, building institutions of work to ensure adequate protection of all workers and sustained, Inclusive and sustainable economic growth; strengthen the role of international labour standards and the FPRW; in particular strengthen the promotion of OSH, with particular reference to ILO Convention 161. OTUWA (and its affiliates) should learn and share from country experiences about the content and implementation of DWCPs.

f. Undertake campaigns for the development and **implementation of migration policies, especially labour migration policies** in all West African countries, with the view to facilitating the ECOWAS protocol on the free movement of people, extend coverage of decent work for all and ensure sustainable development that does not leave migrants behind; these should serve to further implementation of protocol on free movement of people.

g. Embark on a campaign for the development and advancement of a robust **health care system with a strong public health component**. In this connection get governments to honour their obligations to the health of all (citizens and non-citizens alike) within the framework of the AU Declaration of 2002, SDGs and ESCRs.

h. Address **inequalities especially gender-based**, in all initiatives for economic recovery and ensure that measures are anchored in institutional frameworks that protect the rights and interests of women, as well as PLWDs, migrants, refugees, etc.

(i) There is an urgent need for all the tripartite social partners within the countries of ECOWAS to prioritize the ratification and implementation of ILO Convention 190 and Recommendation 206 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work. This issue has become more than ever before being thrusted into limelight as globally Gender Base Violence has gone up during this time of Covid-19. As a respondent puts it succinctly in her response: "as communities are forced by lockdowns and restrictions to stay at home, women and girls face heightened risk of domestic violence, child abuse and other forms of sexual and gender based violence'.

j. Finally, drive home a need for renewed sense of urgency by highlighting the historical devastation and unprecedented suffering and their implications of climate challenges, human securities, human rights and mobilise societies to rethink their approach to all the above recommendations. The inter-connectedness and the fundamentality of the right to economic social and cultural rights, the commitments to sustainable development that leaves no one behind and the decent work agenda have been underscored by a pandemic which challenges humanity to take forward people centered development agenda.

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ANNEX ONE: Ratified Conventions in West Africa

BENIN
32 Conventions
Fundamental Conventions: **8 of 8**
Governance Conventions (Priority): **2 of 4**
Technical Conventions: **22 of 178**
Out of 32 Conventions ratified by Benin, of which 27 are in force, 3 Conventions have been denounced; 2 instruments abrogated; none have been ratified in the past 12 months.

BURKINA FASO
44 Conventions
Fundamental Conventions: **8 of 8**
Governance Conventions (Priority): **4 of 4**
Technical Conventions: **32 of 178**
Out of 44 Conventions ratified by Burkina Faso, of which 38 are in force, 4 Conventions have been denounced; 2 instruments abrogated; none have been ratified in the past 12 months.

TOGO
28 Conventions
Fundamental Conventions: **8 of 8**
Governance Conventions (Priority): **4 of 4**
Technical Conventions: **16 of 178**
Out of 28 Conventions ratified by Togo, of which 24 are in force, 2 Conventions have been denounced; 2 instruments abrogated; none have been ratified in the past 12 months.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE
41 Conventions and 2 Protocols
Fundamental Conventions: **8 of 8**
Governance Conventions (Priority): **3 of 4**
Technical Conventions: **30 of 178**
Out of 41 Conventions and 2 Protocol ratified by Côte d'Ivoire, of which 36 are in force, 2 Conventions have been denounced; 2instruments abrogated; 3 have been ratified in the past 12 months.

SIERRA LEONE
35 Conventions
Fundamental Conventions: **8 of 8**
Governance Conventions (Priority): **2 of 4**
Technical Conventions: **25 of 178**
Out of 35 Conventions ratified by Sierra Leone, of which 26 are in force, 4 Conventions have been denounced; 5 instruments abrogated; none have been ratified in the past 12 months.

NIGERIA
40 Conventions
Fundamental Conventions: **8 of 8**
Governance Conventions (Priority): **2 of 4**
Technical Conventions: **30 of 178**
Out of 40 Conventions ratified by Nigeria, of which 26 are in force, 9 Conventions have been denounced; 5 instruments abrogated; none have been ratified in the past 12 months.

GHANA
51 Conventions
Fundamental Conventions: **8 of 8**
Governance Conventions (Priority): **2 of 4**
Technical Conventions: **41 of 178**
Out of 51 Conventions ratified by Ghana, of which 37 are in force, 10 Conventions have been denounced; 4 instruments abrogated; none have been ratified in the past 12 months.

SENEGAL
39 Conventions
Fundamental Conventions: **8 of 8**
Governance Conventions (Priority): **3 of 4**
Technical Conventions: **28 of 178**
Out of 39 Conventions ratified by Senegal, of which 34 are in force, 3 Conventions have been denounced; 2 instruments abrogated; none have been ratified in the past 12 months."