

AFRICA AGAINST COVID-19: CAN NATIONAL SOLIDARITY COMPLEMENT HEALTH SYSTEM WEAKNESSES? THE MOROCCAN EXPERIENCE.

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To the Editor,

Although developed countries Health systems were the example to follow for Low and Middle-Income ones (LMIC), CoVID-19 -the Public Health Emergency of International Concern [1,2] as declared by WHO- unveiled the vulnerability of these systems and showed their unpreparedness to face fierce health crises [1]. It revealed the missing parts in their health system's organization. The complexity side of health systems is yet to explore for a better understanding.

During this pandemic, African health systems, already fragile, are expecting the worst [3]. The Covid-19 challenge highlighted the need for strong and well-prepared systems. Like other African countries, Morocco is no exception with a health system experiencing many difficulties in achieving the objective of health for all [4, 5]. Morocco has 159 public hospitals, with 22 686 beds capacity and 359 private ones with 10 346 beds. The number of Covid-19 related deaths only reached 183 cases on May 8th, 2020 comparing to 26070 deaths in Spain and 25987 deaths in France the same day.

This was mainly due to a strong national solidarity that was carried out through many initiatives. By learning from other countries' experiences, especially the Chinese one, Morocco adopted a rapid but progressive strategy accompanied by increasing public awareness and solidarity. After closing schools and restricting meetings and activities with more than 50 persons, the government moved to strict quarantine, and curfew with an emergency state law voted on March 24, 2020. Later, the government locked down, isolated cities and called for a national mobilization to control virus spread, but guaranteed a permanent availability of food and necessary products, measures that were fully accepted by Moroccans. To support the COVID-19 plan, the private sector proposed to provide their contribution as well as the military health sector that joined the front lines to strengthen the health system abilities. The crisis developed a national convergence bridging the health system gaps and engaged a collaborative dynamic towards unique objectives. Financially, a solidarity fund was created that reached more than 3 billion dollars raised in only

one week from private and public actors and individual donations. Using this money, Morocco increased its capacity of intensive care units (ICU) from 1600 to 3000 ICU beds to deal with acute cases. Morocco made radical decisions in order to overcome its healthcare system weaknesses based on strong national mobilization and solidarity with high-level leadership. Although the future is still unpredicted, this structured preparedness plan may probably help increase the chances to reduce the pandemic impact.

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

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