



Regional Institute for
Population Studies (Ghana)



École Nationale de Statistique et
d'Économie Appliquée
(Côte d'Ivoire)



Centre National de la Recherche
Scientifique et Technologique
(Burkina Faso)

Call for proposals for a collective book

Challenges and prospects of the COVID-19 pandemic in West Africa: contribution of the humanities and social sciences

The Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic will undoubtedly remain one of the historic global crises that has raised both health and diplomatic issues with questions about both the scientific truths surrounding the disease and its treatments, as well as the effectiveness of national and international organizations managing the pandemic. The apocalyptic pictures of completely deserted western cities, hundreds of thousands of deaths recorded daily, and burials in mass graves, will mark humanity for a long time! A real health crisis that has revealed in many ways the limits of the most modern health systems. While it seemed to be a distant concern for the African continent at the beginning in December 2019, affecting more Asian and European countries, the acceleration of the spread of the virus in late February to early March 2020 in several African countries has made COVID-19 a global concern. Indeed, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared on March 11, 2020 that COVID-19 is a pandemic and invited countries to put in place suitable health care mechanisms to ensure the control of the spread of the disease.

In terms of morbidity and mortality related to COVID-19, the African continent remains relatively less affected, compared to the rest of the world. In mid-May 2020, out of more than 4 million cases of COVID-19 worldwide, around 70,000 were recorded in Africa, which represents 1.8 %. However, there is a need for caution as by June 14, there were 242,000 cases on the continent out of a global estimate of 7.7 million, representing 3.1 %. The number of deaths on the same date (June 14) was 6,000 cases which corresponds to a death rate of 2.5 %, half the world average of 5.5 %. Although the magnitude of the pandemic has been less pronounced on the Africa continent, contrary to the apocalyptic forecasts which had been made, the recent trends of the number of infections calls for caution. In addition, little is known about the evolution of the virus, particularly in terms of possible mutations and new infections. The caution is particularly necessary given the weak health systems on the continent.

With the lack of vaccine against COVID-19, restrictive measures have been recognized to be the solutions by the instance: use of facial masks, physical distancing and hand washing with

soap or hydro-alcoholic solutions. In addition, measures have been taken to restrict individual and collective freedoms in order to limit physical contact: prohibition of large meetings, closure of schools and universities, theaters, churches and mosques, interruption of sports competitions, lockdown and partial lockdown of the population, quarantine of cities and stopping of interurban transport, curfews, etc. The military and security services are called upon to ensure that the population complies with these barrier measures, as well as the restrictions on mobility, in order to limit the spread of the virus. One could understand these restrictive measures to a certain extent in light of the pandemic trends and in a context where little is known about the virus. They have however elicited a lot of complaints, particularly due to their negative effects on the living conditions of the population, especially in African cities where a large majority of the population works in the informal sector, earning their income on a daily basis. The question then arises whether these measures taken, following the path of other continents should not have been adjusted to the African context? Anyway, the immediate consequences of these measures on households' incomes, and particularly for a large part of the urban population, have led to various protests calling for the resumption of economic activities.

Life is gradually resuming on the continent (partial reopening of classes, resumption of several economic activities, etc.), especially in the countries that were most affected, but calls for compliance with barrier measures continue. While there seems to be a certain relaxation of the compliance to the barrier measures, several questions arise: What will be the evolution of the pandemic? What are the consequences of the pandemic and the restrictive measures on household income and consequently their access to basic social services (health, education, etc.)? What are the mid and long-term consequences of the closure of schools on the quality of learning? Are remediation solutions proposed by governments effective enough to curb this potential negative effect on the quality of education? What are the mid and long-term effects of the crisis on health supply and demand? Will health systems on the continent draw the lessons for the future?

If the COVID-19 pandemic has and will have several social, demographic and economic impacts in the short, mid and long term, one could wonder whether this crisis is not an opportunity for the African continent to find its own or local solutions to some of its development issues: indeed, we have seen how the closing of borders has led each country to turn inwards towards national production, as the example of local production of masks, handwashing devices, hydro-alcoholic gels, etc. Is this health crisis an opportunity for Africa to proceed to a structural transformation of its economies to make them less extroverted and dependent on external exchanges? The closure of schools and universities has also revealed, once again, the necessary need to invest in distance learning and training technologies.

The answers to all these questions of various natures call for a multidisciplinary approach in which all the disciplines of the social sciences and humanities can contribute. This is the objective of this call for proposals for a collective book on the contribution of the social sciences and humanities to the current debates on the COVID-19 pandemic in West Africa. Based on current statistics in Sub-Saharan Africa, West Africa seems to be the first and most

affected by the pandemic. In addition, the countries have a certain number of common background characteristics (social, demographic, economic and institutional), which should make it easier to pool together and synthesize lessons for decision-making.

The call for proposals is opened to researchers, teachers as well as stakeholders in the decision-making area, the associative organizations and the sphere of regional and international cooperation. Submissions from women are highly encouraged and expected.

Abstracts should be around 2,000 words and could be structured as follows:

- Title
- Theme
- Author (s), discipline / specialty, institution (s) and contacts
- Objective (s)
- Methodology (geographic scope, data source, analysis methods)
- Findings and policy implications

Abstracts should be sent to the following e-mails addresses:

jfkobiane@gmail.com; aaeb212@gmail.com; hkouadio@yahoo.fr; fmolaolorun@gmail.com; roger.zerbo@gmail.com

Some indicative themes:

1. Magnitude and evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic (including explanations regarding the African specificity)
2. Health system responses and their effectiveness
3. Communication around the pandemic: prevention strategies, critical analyses, scientists and politician's narrative in medias
4. Lessons to be learned by health systems to deal with future pandemics
5. Barrier measures against COVID-19: effectiveness and short-term social and economic consequences
6. The social, demographic and economic consequences of the pandemic and the restrictive measures in the mid and long term
7. Education systems in the era of the pandemic: challenges and opportunities
8. Resistance and resilience of the population regarding the pandemic and the restrictive measures
9. The COVID-19 pandemic: an opportunity for a structural transformation of production systems in the sub-region
10. Technological innovations to face the COVID-19 pandemic
11. Role of opinion leaders (political, religious, etc.) in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic

Timeline:

Steps	Deadlines
Launching of the call for proposals	3 August, 2020
Abstract submission	18 September, 2020
Abstract selection and author notification	30 September, 2020
Submission of the first drafts of papers	30 November, 2020
Review of the papers	15 January, 2021
Submission of the second draft of papers	31 January, 2021
Final edition and publication	February, 2021

Abstracts Selection:

An international review board will be set up to review the abstracts, based on an evaluation form. Each abstract will be reviewed by at least three people. Authors whose abstracts have obtained a minimum score of 7 out of 10 will be selected to proceed to the writing of their paper. However, papers will be finally published if they meet the scientific requirements.

Editorial team:

Jean-François Kobiané: Associate Professor of Demography, he has been the director of the Higher Institute of Population Sciences (ISSP) at the Joseph Ki-Zerbo University, Burkina Faso (2012-2018), Vice-president (2008-2011), and President (2012-2015) of the Union for African Population Study (UAPS). He is an elected member of the 2018-2021 Council of the International Union for the Scientific Study of the Population. His research interests include childhood, adolescence, youth transition to adulthood, poverty, inequalities and the evaluation of public policies.

Adriana A. E. Biney: She is a Senior Lecturer in Population Studies at the Regional Institute for Population Studies (RIPS) at the University of Ghana. Her research is centred on women's abortion experiences and pregnancy outcomes, adolescents' sexual self-concept, and young people's sexual behaviour and contraceptive use, especially among the urban and rural poor.

Hugues Kouadio: PhD, statistician and economist, Director of the Training Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics (ENSEA), Côte d'Ivoire, Coordinator of the African Centre of Excellence in Statistical Training, President of AGROST (African Group of Statistical Training), member of the scientific board of the African Statistics newsletter and the Statistical Journal of the International Association of Official Statistics (IAOS). He has coordinated various research in the areas of inequality, sustainability in agricultural economy, transport, employment, women's empowerment, and energy.

Funmilola OlaOlorun: She is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Community Medicine, College of Medicine, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, and an Honorary Consultant Community

Health Physician to the University College Hospital, Ibadan, Nigeria. Her research interests focus on women's health across the life course, especially their reproductive health.

Roger Zerbo: He is an Anthropologist, Associate Researcher and Deputy Director of the Institute of Social Sciences at the National Center for Scientific and Technological Research (Burkina Faso). He is a member of the Interdisciplinary Research Laboratory in Health Sciences (Joseph Ki-Zerbo University); member of the Mixed International Unit (UMI) 3189 on Environment, Health and Societies. His research interests include health care systems and policies. He has led research programs on the representations of diseases; decentralization and governance in the health sector, financing of the health sector, food security, drug addiction, natural resources management and sustainable development.