

COVID 19: Call from Global Water Partnership West Africa (GWP-WA) for the fight against the pandemic

(Ouagadougou, 9 April 2020) - The World is going through a serious health crisis linked to the spread of Covid 19. The pandemic is affecting almost all African countries, including the 15 West African States.

Covid-19 could seriously affect the nations and populations of West Africa in their daily lives and economic activities given the fragility of health systems, informal economy and precarious urban systems.

The daily information provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the measures enacted to reduce or even stop the spread of the new coronavirus are essential and must be followed by all.

In the absence to date of effective treatment and a vaccine, barrier gestures remain the only effective means against the spread of Covid-19, including regular hand washing with soap and water.

Access to safe drinking water, as a "fundamental right, essential for the full enjoyment of the right to life and all human rights", has never been more relevant. It is a central element of the hygienic measures advocated to combat Covid-19. Unfortunately, this right is still not guaranteed for nearly half of the 430 million people living in West African States.

In these difficult times that our countries and communities are going through, Global Water Partnership West Africa (GWP-WA) expresses its solidarity with all populations and its support for all local, national and international initiatives aimed at limiting the spread of Covid-19 and its effects in West Africa.

- GWP-WA commends the individual and collective efforts made in West African States by Governments and Civil Society in the deployment of measures to manage this pandemic, including lockdown and care to patients, awareness campaigns for the respect of barrier gestures, temporary shutdown of schools and universities, regulation of international border crossings and limitation of public gatherings.
- GWP-WA welcomes the release by West African governments of significant financial resources to fund the fight against the pandemic, particularly to alleviate the burden of lockdown measures on the most vulnerable groups.
- GWP-WA welcomes the announced commitment of partners to support African states in the fight against the pandemic.

The United Nations have recommended to allocate at least 10% of the global Gross Domestic Product to fight against the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 and called for a \$2.5 trillion rescue package to boost the resilience of developing countries to further hardship. For weak economies such as those of our States, this represents a major effort in terms of budgetary trade-offs and will undoubtedly affect investments in several development sectors.

The West African region has the particularity that its response capacities in terms of both financial and human resources are already stretched by the strengthening of security measures as well as the burden of investment in the fight against terrorism and poverty alleviation.



GWP-WA hopes that the choices that will be made for both emergency and post-Covid-19 interventions will better integrate water among the priorities.

With the Covid-19 pandemic, there is an even greater need for West African countries to review and strengthen their response capacities for all current and future risks and disasters, including those related to water as well as climate variability and climate change.

In this dynamic, there is an urgent need to mobilize investments aimed at ensuring water security in West Africa in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goal 6.

GWP-WA recommends that:

- West African States increase investment in water security, access to safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation and integrated and sustainable management of water resources, in order to strengthen the resilience of the economies and populations of our countries to major internal and external shocks;
- central and local governments and all decision-makers seize the management context of Covid-19 to strengthen measures in the field of hygiene and basic sanitation and make it a priority on their agenda;
- all West African countries take advantage of the mobilization and action capacities of youth and women in the strategies and actions to fight the Covid-19 pandemic;
- communities and individuals in West Africa adopt from now as habits the hygiene practices acquired in the fight against Covid-19, such as hand washing with water and soap.

GWP-WA hopes that development partners will intensify their support to the development efforts of West African countries and communities in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector.

In line with its mission and the Global Water Partnership Strategy 2020-2025, GWP-WA through its Regional Executive Secretariat based in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, the Country Water Partnerships (CWPs) and its entire network of partners are mobilized to support States, governments and all stakeholders in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector in the fight against Covid-19 and more particularly to ensure water security in West Africa.



**The Chairman of GWP-WA
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