

Major actions to combat covid-19 in Burkina Faso: closure of the large Pouytenga market in April 2020, process and lessons.

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Summary

Introduction: The large Pouytenga market is a renowned sub-regional shopping complex made up of 7 small markets. By virtue of its size and the size of the users who frequent it, it is ranked 3rd among the markets in Burkina Faso. As part of the fight against COVID19 and to restrict the physical contact of populations, it was decided to close it in April 2020. The objective of this study was to document the process that led to this closure and to learn the lessons.

Materials and methods: This was a cross-sectional descriptive study. Data collection consisted of observing the facts, reviewing documents and collecting opinions. Mainly used content analysis.

Results: The closure of the Pouytenga market lasted 14 days, from April 8 to 21, 2020. This is the result of a long inclusive and participatory process that integrated multiple consultations, decision-making and communication activities. involving local elected officials, the prefecture, health workers, local security forces, customary and religious authorities, trade

unions, civil society and users. Although this action constitutes a major restriction on the freedoms of users and the revenues of traders, it has been relatively well respected. However, this market was reopened abruptly, without prior consultation and without taking accompanying measures adapted to the context of COVID 19.

Conclusion:

The closure of the large Pouytenga market is one of the major physical distancing actions taken to fight COVID19 in 2020 in the Pouytenga health district. This study made it possible to describe the process which led to this result and to draw lessons from it.

Keywords: COVID19, physical distancing, Pouytenga market

INTRODUCTION

Since December 2019, the whole world has been facing a new coronavirus responsible for an acute respiratory infectious disease called Covid-19 (Coronavirus Disease discovered in 2019). This virus is at the origin of one of the

biggest health crises of recent decades. Starting from Wuhan (Hubei province) in China in December 2019, it spread very quickly around the world and causes many deaths. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a public health emergency of international concern posing a high risk to countries with vulnerable health systems [1]. As of April 23, 2020, worldwide, since the start of the epidemic, the coronavirus has infected more than 2.6 million people and killed 185,434. The United States remains the most affected country with 844,000 cases and 46,850 deaths, or 1,738 additional deaths in 24 hours over the same period [2].

Less impacting than the rest of the world, Africa is worried about a virus that could wreak havoc in the face of sometimes deficient health systems and local difficulties in terms of screening and diagnosis [3]. In the heart of West Africa, Burkina Faso was not spared by this pandemic. The first two (2) cases were confirmed on March 09, 2020 and initially confined to Ouagadougou. This situation quickly evolved to reach, on April 23, 2020, 629 confirmed cases disseminated in nine (9) regions out of the 13 in the country with 41 deaths [4]. This situation has led to a state of health emergency and the taking of strong measures to restrict freedom to control the spread of the epidemic nationwide: establishment of a curfew, closure of borders, quarantine of affected towns, schools and markets closed [5–9]. In application of these government measures, the commune of Pouytenga, a well-known urban and commercial town located in the province of Kourittenga, in the Center-East region

of Burkina Faso, decided to close its large market [6]. This action was intended to respect physical distancing measures and to control the movements of traders and populations in order to contribute to an effective response against the coronavirus epidemic. Our study aimed to document the process that led to the closure of the large Pouytenga market, one of the major actions in the fight against coronavirus disease, in order to contribute to decision-making in response to difficult situations. 'health emergency. Materials and methods Study framework The present study was carried out in the Center East region and more particularly in the Pouytenga health district. In 2020, the Center-East region had 704,810 inhabitants [10]. As for the Pouytenga district, its population was estimated at 229,212 inhabitants, of which approximately 52.6% were women [11]. About 81% of this population lived in urban areas with an average density of 7185 inhabitants per km² [12]. Commercial activity in the region is highly developed. There are 11 large markets built in the region. The Pouytenga market has an international influence that attracts populations from other regions of Burkina Faso and neighboring countries such as Togo, Niger, Benin and Ghana. It mainly sells livestock, manufactured products, agricultural products and crafts [13,14]. Type of study This was a cross-sectional descriptive study. She used the qualitative approach in order to describe the process used by the actors of the local health system of the Pouytenga health district to lead to the closure of the Pouytenga market as part of the application of physical distancing measures in link with the fight against COVID-19. Study period The study period spanned from April to

July 2020. Scope of the study The study population consisted of the population living in the Pouytenga health district (229,212 inhabitants). Sampling An exhaustive sampling of all the documentation relating to the process leading to the closure of the large market was used as well as a collection of comments / opinions from Internet users on this closure.

Collection of data

Collection techniques and tools

Two collection techniques were used:

- a documentary review of the reports of the meetings of the epidemic management committee, audio recordings of radio broadcasts and radio press releases;
- observation of the facts;
- and a systematic collection of the opinions of Internet users on social networks.

A previously designed collection grid made it possible to carry out this collection prospectively.

Variables

The variables relating to the facts, activities and socio-professional profile of the various stakeholders who participated in the process of closing the Pouytenga market, their opinions and suggestions were described.

Data analysis

The data analysis was done manually and primarily using the content analysis method to describe the facts and draw lessons.

Ethical considerations

The main ethical issue of this study lies in obtaining the consent of Internet users who have made comments on social networks and in maintaining their anonymity. Rigorous measures have been taken to respect this issue. The data was collected and processed in strict compliance with these ethical principles.

Description of stakeholders and Internet users

In total, 72 actors made up of 26 administrative and political authorities (the mayor, the general secretary of the town hall, the prefect, the chief doctor of the district, 24 municipal councilors,), four (4) religious authorities (Muslim, Catholic, Protestant), a customary authority, two security agents (gendarmerie, police), four civil society agents (local associations), two members of trade unions, 27 traders, two (2) women's associations, two players from the two local radio stations took part in the process of closing the market. Among these actors only 2.8% were female.

One thousand three hundred and fifty one (1,351) people reacted to the publication of the market closing. Among them, 83 people including six (6) women made a comment in connection with the closure. Most Internet users resided in the Center (38.6%) and Center East (8.4%) region of Burkina Faso. The rest of the Internet users resided in seven (7) countries other than Burkina Faso. These included Cote d'Ivoire (4 internet users), Mali (1 internet user), Benin (1 internet user), Cameroon (1 internet user), Senegal (1 internet user), Canada (1 internet user) and from Japan (1 internet user).

Activities implemented in connection with the closure of the large market

Six (6) main activities have been implemented. These are: the meeting of the municipal epidemic management committee; radio broadcasts on local radio stations; radio press releases; an information meeting on the closure of the market and the outputs of audits and awareness of compliance with government measures to fight COVID-19.

Activity 1: Meeting of the municipal epidemic management committee

This meeting was held on March 26, 2020, 17 days after the registration of the 1st case of COVID-19 in Burkina Faso. Before it was held, the chief medical officer of the Pouytenga health district approached the local authorities of the commune of Pouytenga to inform them about the disease situation and to plead for their involvement in the control actions. This process took place from March 15 to 20, 2020. In addition, on March 25, 2020, the large market in Ouagadougou, the country's capital, was closed for the application of physical distancing measures. Chaired by the mayor of the municipality, the meeting of the committee was attended by 43 people including 40 men and three (03) women, all from various socio-professional layers. Following the discussions, the following commitments were made by the committee:

- reactivation of the municipal hygiene committee;
- carrying out inspection visits to restaurants and bars;
- the establishment of a weekly communication and awareness program with the support of the two radio stations in the city of Pouytenga;

- the distribution of two press releases from the mayor reminding them of compliance with government measures (ban on public transport and closure of restaurants / bars).

Activity 2: Broadcasting of radio programs

Following the commitments made during the meeting of the municipal epidemic management committee, the mayor of the municipality of Pouytenga established a timetable for broadcasting programs on the municipality's radio to inform the population about the disease and its means of protection. and measures taken at government and communal level to control the disease. The actors responsible for recording and broadcasting these broadcasts were made up of health personnel, the mayor of the municipality, municipal councilors, religious leaders, trade unions, civil society, defense and security forces. and radio hosts. Each program was co-hosted by four (4) people from these socio-professional layers. It was broadcast in a synchronized manner on the two local radios of the municipality.

A total of 8 radio programs were broadcast from March 29 to April 29, 2020 with the participation of 39 people. At the first broadcast held on March 29 in the presence of the mayor of the commune, the chief doctor, the representative of the parish priest and the general secretary of the Sunni movement, the mayor of the commune of Pouytenga mentioned the possibility of the closure of the Pouytenga market in these terms "you know that the large market in Ouagadougou is closed, the evolution of the disease can lead us to also close that of Pouytenga".

Activity 3: Radio press releases

Lemaire of the municipality of Pouytenga has prepared and broadcast five (5) radio press releases. The content of these releases focused on the symptoms of COVID-19, compliance with preventive measures including hand hygiene, mandatory masks and physical distancing of at least one meter. All these announcements were broadcast in the three (3) main languages of the locality: Moore, Fulfuldé and French on the two local radio stations of the municipality.

One of the mayor's five press releases, precisely that of April 4, 2020, informed the population of the closure of the following markets as part of the implementation of the response plan against the Covid-19 pandemic decided by His Excellency the President of Faso. These are: the central market, the wibrundaaga, the cattle market, the grain market, the pognandaaga, the cycle market, the fruit and vegetable market, the kalwartenga market and the sakorgo marhé. This press release was issued 5 times a day from April 4 to 7, 2020. In addition to these statements, town criers recruited by the town hall traveled the markets to sensitize and inform traders of the effective date of the closure of the said markets.

Activity 4: Information meeting on the closing of the market

In view of the evolution of the pandemic in Burkina Faso and following an interview between the chief doctor and the mayor of the commune of Pouytenga, it was decided to organize an information meeting for the various stakeholders on the closure of the market. . This meeting was held on April 04, 2020 in the town hall meeting room. She saw the participation of 50 people. Traders represented 54% of

the participants in this decisive meeting on the closing of the market.

During this meeting the following decisions were taken:

- the closure of the large market from April 08 to April 20, 2020;
- the continuation of radio broadcasts on COVID-19;
- dissemination of press releases on the two local radio stations and
- exits from checks on compliance with COVID 19 prevention measures in restaurants, maquis and other public places.

Activity 5: Outings to raise awareness and verify compliance with government measures to fight COVID-19

Outings to verify compliance with the physical distancing measures taken by the Burkinabè government and to sensitize populations and traders were initiated after the information meeting. Their purpose was to verify the application of the commitments made during the meeting of the municipal committee and in application of decree n ° 2020-021 / PM / CAB of 23 March 2020 on temporary restrictions of freedoms under the special measures of reduction in the spread of Covid-19. These outings were carried out from March 30 to April 7, 2020 by the head of the town hall hygiene services, the health promotion manager of the Pouytenga health district and municipal police officers. The verification concerned compliance with preventive measures in gathering places (markets, bars, restaurants, places of worship, shops, etc.). The application of the following measures had been verified: the wearing of a mask, the installation of hand-

washing devices with soap or hydro-alcoholic solution for users, environmental hygiene, the ban on eating in restaurants and the lack of gathering of people.

Activities 6: Wednesday April 8, 2020, closing day of the Pouytenga market

Pursuant to the decision of April 4, 2020 of the mayor of Pouytenga, the large Pouytenga market was effectively closed on April 8, 2020. A team made up of the first officials of the municipality accompanied by the officials of the market unions visited the premises. to see the effectiveness of the closure and the merchants' support for this decision. According to information gathered from this municipal team, while the shops located inside the market were indeed closed, those located around the market remained open. These external shops had remained open, although the mayor's press release stated: "No shop or facility located inside or around the large market can be opened during this period".

Also, to enforce the mayor's decision, security guards were posted at the market to force traders to close their shops and stay at home. A permanent watch team made up of elements of the municipal police, the national police and the gendarmerie have been deployed on the scene since the day before the closure and maintained every day.

From the data collected, the urban population of Pouytenga was generally in favor of this closure. However, the reopening of this market took place abruptly, without prior consultation and without taking accompanying measures adapted to the context of COVID 19.

Opinions of Internet users

Place of residence of Internet users

Following the news of the closure of the large Pouytenga market on Facebook, 83 people provided comments. They came from 8 regions of Burkina Faso according to the following distribution: 25 from the Center region, 17 from the Center East region, three (3) from the Haut-Bassins, two (2) from the Center West, one (1) from the Plateau Central, one (1) from the North Center, one (1) from the Cascades and one (1) from the North region. In addition, 7 Internet users came from 7 countries, including four (4) from the Ivory Coast and one (1) respectively from Mali, Benin, Cameroon, Senegal, Canada and Japan.

Opinions about the severity of the disease

Sixty percent of internet users (60%) believed coronavirus disease to be a serious illness while 33.3% believed the illness had a much more political than serious connotation. One (1) internet user reported that COVID-19 does not exist.

Opinions about market closure

A total of 1,351 people reacted on the Facebook page following the post. Ninety-seven point eight percent (97.8%) of internet users liked the post. As for their opinion on the closure of the large market, about 30% were in favor and 28% had considered this closure inappropriate. In this regard, a male student, living in Ouagadougou and a national of Pouytenga said in these terms "this closure is a bad idea, since you have not recorded any confirmed case. It was enough to sensitize the population to take the necessary measures to fight against this pandemic. Thank you that God protects us ". This idea was supported by A. K who considered that "the matter is political".

Among those who approved the market shutdown, A. M said, "Nothing is political. You know the people of Pouytenga. Laws are none of their business. The market should in my opinion be closed before today. The traders in Pouytenga are more mobile than anyone else in Burkina. Even the curfew there, they do not respect ". As for A. A. O, "prevention is better than cure and those who do not have time to prevent a disease will have time to treat themselves and with their money". S D to add: "we do not regret, that the almighty brings back health and stability".

One (1) main suggestion was collected from Internet users. This concerns the application of measures accompanying the decision to close the market such as financial support and tax relief.

Discussion

This study was carried out to document the response measures against COVID-19 undertaken in the commune of Pouytenga, in particular that relating to the closure of its large market. It also responds to a need to capitalize on the process that led to the closure of this market, one of the biggest physical distancing measures that the Pouytenga health district has experienced in the fight against COVID19. To meet this objective, we used a literature review and the collection of opinions from Internet users on Facebook.

Given the size of the Pouytenga market, as soon as the first cases of COVID 19 appeared in Burkina Faso, the risk of importing the disease into Pouytenga was considered very high due to the large population movements. Added to this is a risk of rapid spread within the municipality due to the high density of the urban

population on average of 7185 inhabitants / km² [12] and the individual and collective behavioral factors linked to non-compliance with key measures. . This predisposition had led to psychosis within the population. This psychosis was exacerbated when two (2) cases of COVID 19 were recorded on March 26, 2020 in Zorgho, a Burkinabè city which borders with Pouytenga [15]. This psychosis is all the more justified given that according to a study carried out by SwastiVardhanMishra the pandemic to COVID-19 to an urban character [14]. The United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) 2020 published in its report that African urbanization is a huge risk factor for the spread of COVID-19 [16].

By decree No. 2020-0239 / PRES of March 30, 2020, the President of Faso declared a state of health alert throughout the national territory in response to the Covid-19 epidemic, the first confirmed cases of which were notified on March 9, 2020 in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso [9]. This presidential decree was issued six (6) days after the establishment of the curfew from 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. throughout the country national [17]. At the national level, the national committee for the crisis management of the COVID-19 pandemic (CNGCP-COVID-19) was created, placed under the authority of the Prime Minister [7]. Following these decrees, others decrees of the head of government, ministerial and interministerial orders have been issued to control the spread of the disease throughout the country [8,18]. Thus, decree No. 2020-271 / PM / MDNAC / MADTDC / MSECUCU / MS / MUSR of April 15, 2020 instituted the temporary restriction of freedoms under special

measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 [8,8]. This decree was supported by that N ° 2020-0323 / PM / MDNAC / MADTDC / MSECUC / MS / MUSR of April 30, 2020 [18]. This decree devotes among other things to its first article the prohibition of any grouping because of the risk of the spread of COVID-19 and specifies in its article 2, the prohibition of regrouping in restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments and other places of snack bars that remain closed during the period.

Referring to these provisions, the municipality of Pouytenga by decree N ° 2020-018 / C.PTG / M / SG, decided to close the large market in application of the barrier measures [6]. This measure of physical distancing is described by some authors as one of the most effective measures to prevent and control diseases [15,19,20]. It is in this sense that at the same time, schools were closed nationally [21].

This decision-making at the communal level was participatory with a series of activities.

Indeed, the meeting of the municipal epidemic management committee brought together all social layers, namely religious leaders, municipal councilors, health workers, associations, market unions and the local press.

The councilors were in the majority because they represented the villages and sectors of the commune. Moreover, these municipal councilors are important political actors who are very representative of their community. We noted at this meeting, a presence of 40 people who reflected strict compliance with the number limitation measures in gathering places. [8] It was following the

information meeting on the disease and government measures that s 'is held, the information meeting on the closing of the large market on Saturday April 04, 2020. During this meeting, the majority of participants were traders (54%), followed by counselors (22%) and customary and religious leaders (8%). The wide representativeness of traders could be explained by the fact that the measures directly impacted their activities [3,14,22,23]. This fear has been supported by some Internet users. The involvement of customary and religious authorities was in line with their important role in decision-making in Burkina Faso. Although women are the most numerous in Burkina Faso (around 52%), their representativeness was very low during the various consultation frameworks on covid-19. This situation would explain the weak decision-making power of women in traditional and even modern societies in Burkina Faso [24].

The decision to close the large market was recorded during this information meeting by the stakeholders. Observations on the ground showed respect for this measure in the market centers which were guarded by security agents. This closure was consecutive to that of the Ouagadougou market. According to some Internet users, this closure was welcome and would have occurred even late. L S., a 30-year-old internet user living in Ouagadougou, expressed in these terms "since there? or the measures taken by the head of state were not applicable throughout the territory ". This idea is shared by B.D. 31, who considers the decision to close "wise". For many internet users, the shutdown was not timely. Indeed, Mr. O., a female Internet user, aged 39, argued

that the measure is unnecessary, especially since the town had not recorded any cases and in a context of a contaminated city quarantined. As such, J. M. B "must avoid ruining the local economy by emotional measures, the virus is contaminated by physical contact, the sources of contagion are in quarantine; the virus does not jump in the air. In an unreached region, you have to stick to "barrier" measures. These opinions are made in a context where some believed that the disease has a political connotation sometimes with a denial of the existence of disease. As an illustration for IB, which reacted following the closure, expressed in these terms "this pandemic has become political, why because the information on covid-19 is false, not even on covid-19 in Burkina ...". These various negative considerations on the disease were reflected in the field by poor application of barrier measures in general and physical distancing measures such as the market closure measure in particular [19,23,25].

It should be noted that some Internet users have suggested accompanying measures to traders to reduce the economic consequences of this closure.

Despite the communication activities carried out by the city council and health workers, the opinions of the population towards the market closure were generally not favorable. Unlike traders in Ouagadougou's central market who led protest demonstrations, those in Pouytenga passively observed the closure. However, thanks to the reopening of the large market in Ouagadougou, the pressures of traders in the Pouytenga market became increasingly strong, forcing the municipal council to make the

decision to reopen the market on April 21, 2020. Despite, the persistence of the epidemic, the Pouytenga market was reopened without prior consultation with stakeholders. Likewise, no disease prevention and control measures such as the provision of hand washing devices and soap, temperature control, market disinfection have been implemented within the market. .

Conclusion

The fight against the coronavirus disease in the town of Pouytenga required the closure of the large market, one of the major physical distancing actions taken to fight COVID19 in 2020 in the Pouytenga health district. The support of traders for this measure allowed the measure to be effective despite an unfavorable public opinion. This study has shown that the participatory and inclusive process involving all stakeholders was a key element of this membership. All the actions taken have helped the municipality to remain free from Covid-19 since the start of the epidemic.

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