

## Emergency Governance and Good Governance in the Management of COVID-19 Crisis in Morocco.

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## Résumé

Le présent article vise à explorer les éléments clés du "modèle de gouvernance d'urgence" adopté par le Maroc dans le contexte de la crise COVID-19. D'une part, ce papier propose d'analyser les spécificités de cette crise et d'évaluer les différents atouts et défis du modèle marocain de gouvernance pendant et même après la pandémie et d'autre part, il présente les réponses sanitaires et socio-économiques du gouvernement pour gérer cette pandémie. En outre, cet article analyse dans quelle mesure la gestion marocaine du COVID-19 est conforme aux attentes des principes de bonne gouvernance. De même, cette étude tente de déterminer les différentes leçons tirées de la gestion et de la gouvernance de la crise du COVID-19 et de présenter les différentes perspectives pour la surmonter afin d'en faire une phase de redémarrage de l'économie marocaine et d'autres pays.

Notre article constitue une nouvelle contribution, basée sur une analyse de la période de deux ans allant de début mars 2020 à mi-novembre 2022. Cette recherche est basée sur l'examen d'un large éventail de documents de planification marocains, de sites web de départements et de comités de crise, de blogs et de commentaires d'actualité, de rapports de médias faisant autorité, d'articles professionnels publiés dans des revues académiques, de documents officiels, d'auto-rapports, avec des descriptions de sources jointes, tout en s'appuyant sur une variété de littérature dans les domaines de la gouvernance, des principes de bonne gouvernance, de la gestion publique, de l'administration publique et de la politique marocaine.

Cette étude montre que pendant la crise de Covid-19, le respect strict des politiques nationales, une gouvernance efficace et à plusieurs niveaux, et la solidarité au niveau national ont permis d'obtenir de meilleurs résultats. De même, les résultats montrent que tous les principes discutés dans notre recherche sur la bonne gouvernance sont nécessaires pour la mise en œuvre efficace et efficiente des programmes et des politiques du gouvernement. Néanmoins, ces principes ne sont pas respectés dans le cas du Maroc.

**Mots-clés :** Économie marocaine, pandémie de COVID-19, leçons apprises, défis, modèle de gouvernance, bonne gouvernance.

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**Abstract**

The present article aims to explore the key elements of the “emergency governance model” adopted by Morocco in the context of the Covid-19 crisis. On the one hand, this paper proposes to analyze the specificities of this crisis and to evaluate the various assets and challenges of the Moroccan model of governance during and even after the pandemic and on the other hand, it presents health and socio-economic government responses to manage this pandemic. Additionally, this article analyses how well Moroccan’s management to COVID-19 complies with the expectations of principles of good governance. Likewise, this study tries to determine the different lessons learned from the management and governance of COVID-19 crisis and present the different prospects for overcoming it in order to make it a phase for a new start for Moroccan and others economy.

Our article constitutes an innovative contribution, based on an analysis of the two years period from early March 2020 to mid-November 2022. This research is based on an examination of a wide range of Moroccan planning documents, departmental and crisis committee websites, blogs, and news commentary, authoritative media reports, professional papers published in academic journals, official documents, self-reports, with source descriptions attached, while drawing on a variety of literature from the fields of governance, principles of good governance, public management, public administration and Moroccan politics and policy.

This study finds that during the Covid-19 crisis, strict adherence to national politics, effective and multi-level governance, and solidarity at the national level resulted in better outcomes. Moreover, the findings show that all the principles discussed in our research of good governance are necessary for the effective and efficient implementation of government programs and policies. Nevertheless, these principles are not respected in the Moroccan case.

**Keywords:** Moroccan economy, COVID-19 pandemic, learned lessons, challenges, governance model, good governance.

## 1. Introduction

In late December 2019, Wuhan the capital city of Hubei in China experienced unusual pneumonia cases, which were associated with a wet market for the consumption of wild animals (Xu et al. 2020, Huang et al., 2020, Zhou et al., 2020). (Ferguson et al. 2020) from the Imperial College of London COVID-19 Response Team claim that COVID-19 is the most serious episode since the 1918 Spanish Influenza pandemic. This virus was named as COVID-19 by WHO on January 12 (Sahin et.al, 2019; Johnson et.al, 2020; Chinazzi et. al, 2020; WHO, 2020; Sohrabi et.al, 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) was subsequently alerted on January 30 to this virus and ended up declaring that this new epidemic, which has spread to several regions of the world, constitutes a worldwide Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) (Wu et al. 2020). On February 28 the WHO raised the global risk level of COVID-19 to “very high.” and on March 11, the WHO declared the outbreak of the Covid-19 as a global pandemic (WHO, 2020b) as it had spread to 113 countries, (Di Gennaro, F., et al 2020). COVIDs status declared as a global pandemic due to positive cases spreading outside China that peaked up to 13-fold increase in the infected country. As medical scientists and public officials were starting to learn about the disease and effective strategies for containing it in late 2020 and in the early months of 2021, several new variants were identified. These new variants, which are commonly known by where they were first recognized, including the U.K., South Africa and Brazil variants, began gaining footholds in countries around the world.

This COVID-19 outbreak was neither unpredictable nor unforeseen (Sansonetti 2020) and it poses a great threat to global health and safety (Huang C. et al., 2020). Thus, following the (WHO, 2020), recommendations governments around the world have implemented a drastic policy of legal confinement to control the spread of this pandemic in order to save lives (Wenzel, Stanske, & Lieberman, 2020). This social distancing, restricted mobility, lock down, quarantine management are all significant aspects of the controlling mechanism of this pandemic because there was no medicine or treatment of this disease initially (Dodds et al., Lai et al., 2020).

The adaptation to containment measures by several countries led to a global recession (Gopinath, 2020a, 2020b). In this sense, on April 15, 2020, the International Monetary Fund renamed the crisis “Great Lockdown”, in reference to the Great Depression and the Great Recession. Thus, according to WHO, COVID-19 has politically, economically, socially and administratively affected 216 countries (Nawaz et al., 2020). COVID-19 is therefore truly classified as a "Mega-crisis" (Helsloot et al. 2012). This pandemic has created an economic

crisis with a risk of bankruptcy for several companies and a sharp rise in unemployment (Odendahl F, Penalver A, Szczerbowicz U, 2020).

Although numerous studies have examined crisis management (Comfort 2007; Comfort et al. 2012; Moynihan 2008), COVID-19 appears to present new challenges due to the scale and rapidity of infections. That is, despite the relative infrequency of crises, the COVID-19 pandemic has stressed the need of crisis models of innovation, which appear to be still absent or underdeveloped in the literature (Azoulay and Jones, 2020; Chesbrough, 2020).

This unprecedented crisis caused by the Covid-19 shock is unique, multi-channel and fundamentally different from previous crises. It has forced the governments globally to reimagine the governance innovatively to deal with the new types of challenges posed by this pandemic. Moreover, many economists call it a black swan event because it brought a new phase of reforms and governance.

All countries have faced common but unique challenges in transitioning from routine mode of governance to crisis mode of governance, with varying degrees of success (and failure) in containing the virus and minimizing harm caused to their savings. So, the management of this crisis being of a complex nature, it requires a more in-depth examination of the theoretical and practical mechanisms at work (Coombs, 2010; Bundy et al., 2017; Boubakary, 2020). In Morocco, the first positive case of COVID-19 was recorded in a Moroccan residing in Italy on March 2, 2020. Thus, to combat the COVID-19 outbreak, the State has taken many preventive and proactive measures, such as rapid response by governance, complete lockdown and continuous monitoring of the pandemic spread in the affected areas and multiple sectors.

This research proposes to analyze and explain the governance model of COVID-19 in Morocco and its principles of good governance. For this, we have to go through these different issues mentioned below, which will be the subject and main axes of our article.

- What are the specificities of Covid-19 crisis in Morocco?
- What are the strengths and challenges of COVID-19 that are imposed on the governance model?
- What are the lessons learned from the management and governance of COVID-19 crisis globally and in Morocco?
- What are the different governance measures that have been taken by the Moroccan government during this global pandemic.
- How Morocco could manage and governs the effects of the covid 19 crisis?
- Are the elements and principles of good governance in the Moroccan model of crisis management applied during this crisis?

- Review governance structures and coordination mechanisms through which main political and administrative actors have responded to the COVID-19 crisis

To answer these questions, our approach consists in carrying out our qualitative, explorative and descriptive study based on theoretical and methodological foundations according to the state of the art inspired by large reviews of the literature, alternately at the different levels and the experiences of others countries.

The motivation for our study is that despite the research devoted to understanding the governance of the COVID-19 pandemic in developed countries, this subject in Morocco had remained largely unexplored providing the impetus for this study.

Moreover, our study presents several contributions, firstly, it contributes to the crisis recent literature in the public sector from a perspective of collaborative and multilevel governance with a valid structural model on COVID-19 crisis management in the Moroccan context. Afterwards, our findings may be useful to informed regulators in designing exit strategies from this global crisis. Moreover, this work will have practical implications in terms of helping researchers to develop conceptual models to overcome this problem. The study presented some learned lessons and implications for the practitioners and policymakers in managing future pandemics. Finally, this article has substantial academic and practical contribution in the arena of public administration, governance, health direction and disaster management.

This article is divided into several sections, each of which deals with the most important aspects: after the introduction, the second one presents a review of the existing literature while the third section describes the emergency COVID-19 governance model in Morocco. In the fourth section, the study discusses and explores the COVID-19 challenges and opportunities for Morocco and discuss the main response strategy taken by Moroccan government to deal with the harmful effects of this crisis situation, and the fifth section analyzes the most important lessons learned from this crisis at different levels and analyses development perspectives and present strategic choices that could be used to bring out Morocco from this economic depression and revive the economy in a long term. The sixth section is devoted to the important principles of the good governance in the Moroccan context. Finally, the last section gives a conclusion of this work.

## **2. The background and conceptual framework**

The recent pandemic in the form of COVID-19 has caused devastating social, political and economic effects globally (Dodds et al., 2020). Thus, suitable governance measures are required in this time of challenge and uncertainty to reduce these impacts. Moreover, as a transboundary

and unprecedented crisis, COVID-19 also confronts all governments with a common governance challenge (Ansell et al., 2010).

The meaning of governance has evolved over time, but it refers to managerial actions associated with state civic activities (Keping, 2018). According to (Olowu & Wunsch, 2004), governance is the regulatory mechanisms and the implementation of public actions. In addition, Saito (2008) defines governance as the progression of exercising authority and the significance of various stakeholders' communications to achieve purposes and to solve public issues. For its part, (Fukuyama, 2013) argues that Governance is also measured as the government's guiding authority to pledge and enforce policies. According to (Keping, 2018), Governance is not a tedious direction, but a method grounded on well-organized government and collective solidarity of a political state and its stakeholders. It principally refers to the liaison and arrangements of internal and external stakeholders (Rhodes, 2007) and concentrates on effectively organizing and efficiently using capital, both public and private, to achieve comprehensive goals (Brandtner et al., 2017). Additionally, (Joko Widodo, 2001, p. 243) claims that concept of "governance" involves not only the government and the State, but also the role of various actors outside the government and the State. Likewise, Lee (2003) defines governance as a way of modifying the government's standpoints and managing and acting to resolve public difficulties and uncertainties. For its part, Rhodes (2007) claims governance as the processes of control, coordination and regulation of existing strategies.

Governance is a border term used for government functions at all stages while reacting to citizens' joint or shared problems by fulfilling their needs in the best possible way (Griffin, 2010). According to (Kaufmann, Kraay, & Mastruzzi, 2010), governance is a custom, practice, values, and organizations through which power in a state is executed involving the government selection procedure, replacement of government and accountability, honor and rights for citizens and ability of the state to devise and employ its policies. Moreover, Governance offers an integrated, comprehensive and multidimensional approach for governments to deal with the complex and difficult problems of the modern human world (Hyden, Mease, 2004). Governance involves multiple actors, institutions and dimensions to address issues of the general public and for effective and efficient service delivery to the masses (Hyden, 2001). Stoker and Chhotray (2009) consider governance as the collective decision-making of several actors or institutions where the relationships between actors and institutions are not dictated by the formal control system.

A range of variables or terms can be used to highlight COVID-19 management from the governance perspective, including adaptability, responsiveness, effectiveness, coordination,



transparency, collaboration and participation. Adaptability is a crucial organizational competence that allows governments to iteratively develop strategies for managing situations (Heart et al., 2010). To respond to the COVID-19, governments must be adaptable, particularly regarding hospital facilities, testing and contact tracing, and medical equipment supply (Janssen & van der Voort, 2020). Additionally, coordination is defined as the accomplishment of separate tasks, actions and decisions of an organization on time, in the right direction and of the appropriate degree (Weigand et al., 2003). Strong inter-sectoral coordination in the time of a sudden crisis like COVID-19 allows quick decision-making and action in managing a catastrophe. Also, a collaborative and participatory governing arrangement refers to public agencies engaging citizens and stakeholders in a consensus-oriented and collective decision-making procedure to initiate or execute public policy or manage a state of affairs successfully (Ansell & Gash, 2008). (Moon 2020) announced that the crisis management is most successful when it is able to combine democratic legitimacy with government capacity. This novel coronavirus requires both short- and medium-term policy responses and strategies based on global practices and the learning from the past experiences. It has been found that the centralized governance positively affects reactive strategies while the healthcare infrastructure and learning from past pandemics positively influence proactive and reactive strategies (Sharma, Borah, & Moses, 2021). Fareed Zakaria's recent publication "Ten Lessons for a Post-Pandemic World" has reiterated the fact of improving governance because of the world's changing landscape contextualizing COVID-19 to past, present, and future featuring the political social, technological, and economic consequences in post pandemic world (Zakaria, 2020). For its part, (Gauteng, 2020) has successfully established a new operating model for multi-level emergency governance, which addresses the challenge of coordinating coronavirus response within a highly decentralized governance system.

Among the various concepts of governance, 'good governance' is the most influential concept, referring to the state and the citizens' collaborative management process and a new collaborative outline between the political state and civil society that makes the most of public benefits (Keping, 2018). Then, the idea of good governance has been greatly promoted by the World Bank since the early 1990s. It is therefore argued that the most common definition of governance, which is provided by the World Bank is: "how power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development".

According to (OECD), good governance contributes to strengthening human rights and democracy, promoting economic prosperity and social cohesion, reducing poverty, improving environmental protection and the sustainable use of natural resources and building confidence



in government and public administration. According to the same organization, the rule of law, public sector management, control of corruption, and reduction of military spending within developing countries are important aspects of good governance.

United Nations Development Program (UNDP) defines good governance as being accountable, transparent, responsive, inclusive and equitable, effective, participatory, democratic, and following the rule of law (UNDP, 2014). The use of these principles has been primarily reduced to the assessment of governments and the prevention of corruption, especially in the context of UNDPs. Nevertheless, (Kickbusch and Gleicher, 2012) stress that ‘good governance ... is an amalgam of guiding principles that transcend specific policies, sectors and actors’ (p. 41). As such, good governance is better understood as a dynamic process rather than an end goal or outcome – and is increasingly acknowledged as necessary in addressing the underlying causes of food security because it ensures a generally supportive environment in which human rights are respected, and the provision of food as a public good is guaranteed (Candel, 2014; FAO, 2011). For (Agere, 2000; Graham et al., 2003; Lockwood, 2010), the principles or elements of good governance include various indicators such as legitimacy, voice, performance, direction, transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, fairness, connectivity, resilience, combating corruption, stakeholder participation, and legal and judicial framework.

Existing studies frequently emphasize the importance of government capacity in preventing the spread of COVID-19 (Dunlop, Ongaro, and Baker 2020, Mazzucato and Kattel 2020, Woo 2020). Government capacity has been considered one of the key factors for a high quality of government and good governance (Fukuyama 2013, Im and Choi 2018, Im and Hartley 2017, D’Arcy and Nistotskaya 2018, 2020). In connection to that, good governance practices, mainly comprised of responsiveness, accountability, and transparency, are important to satisfy the citizens at large (Beshi & Kaur, 2020). However, still, there is a dearth of literature regarding the influence of all stated good governance elements in enhancing the citizens' trust in government in a single comprehensive framework generally and in developing nation context specifically. Hence, to fill these gaps and, in the light of the paramount importance of good governance, it is substantial to examine the level of the public's trust in government and the ways it can be restored and improved (Arshad & Khurram, 2020), particularly in the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

Good governance needs to be implemented to attain the maximum level of public trust in the government (Jameel et al., 2019) as it advocates the government's idea to be inclusive and interactive with the public to compete at the national and international level (Speer, 2012). Previous literature shows that it is difficult to agree upon a single perfect model for good

governance fitting into all possible conditions (Jameel, Asif, & Hussain, 2019) as it is a complex structure comprised of multiple features and elements like responsiveness, accountability and transparency (Qudrat-I Elahi, 2009). Sagan et al. (2020) confirmed that resilient systems to pandemic shocks must have strong institutions and good governance driven by adequate and effective leadership that supports population needs. Effective governance has to support preparedness to pandemic threats with constant investments in the health system to reduce mortality, morbidity and stress among the population, and promote socioeconomic. Moreover, multilateral cooperation is needed to contain the pandemic and to mitigate its health, social and economic consequences (Lucchese and Pianta, 2020). Besides, (Sagan et al. 2020) conclude that in Europe, good governance in countries has played a critical role to support a resilient response of the health system in the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

### **3. The covid 19 Emergency Governance Model in Morocco**

Since the late 2019, the world is faced a global public health concern, the COVID-19 pandemic that has had spillover effects on the economy and society. This major pandemic crisis has attracted extensive international attention, (Viezzer & Biondi, 2021). In this sense, different national and local governments took widely differing approaches to dealing with COVID-19 (Ballot Pedia, 2021. Bremmer, 2020; Dzigbede et al., 2020). As anthropologist Veena Das (2020b) notes, that one issue that this (COVID-19) pandemic has brought to the fore is that the experiences of governance vary enormously across different regions of the world. Overall, many countries have shown a capacity to face the serious challenges of the pandemic shock by using preventive and precatative and innovative governance and by acting in a rational manner through a series of health and socio-economic measures.

In Morocco, the management of the Covid 19 health crisis is accompanied by transformation and innovation in governance. Indeed, the government has implemented many policies and preventive measures to improve its governance system, the situation and the state of the COVID-19 outbreak in the country. This section focuses on multi-level governance study and coordination of emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, it examines innovations in emergency governance that have been tested during this health crisis. Innovation in the response to the COVID-19 crisis has been particularly common in the following areas of emergency governance: leadership and authority, cooperation and collaboration between key actors, Moroccan diplomacy, citizen participation and digital transformation.

#### **3.1. The very important role of Authority and leadership**

The COVID-19 pandemic poses an unprecedented leadership challenge to governments around the world, the kind of challenge that has historically been limited to situations of war or severe

natural disasters. In the face of this borderless and unexpected crisis, citizens are looking to their governments for leadership, advice and information. While the differing political ideologies of socialism, communism and capitalism in the post-World War II era have led to differing views on the roles of government, in times of crisis it is clear that the government has the role and responsibility to protect citizens from harm.

Covid-19 has shed light on the limits of ultra-liberalism and individualism. The State will have the strategic mission of redressing the excesses which are measured in terms of deterioration of the environment (ecological dimension), the accentuation of inequalities (social dimension) and, now, the appearance of epidemics (health dimension). (Xavier Ragot, 2020) French economist, has, moreover, written that “the essence of the State is the survival of individuals” like in wartime. In fact, unlike the 2008-2009 financial crisis, the coronavirus will force the return of big government. After the collapse of Lehman Brothers, many observers believed that crisis-born mistrust in the market would lead to greater faith in the government. This concept was nothing new: in 1929, following the onset of the Great Depression, people demanded strong government intervention to offset the failings of the market. In the 1970s, it was the other way around: people were disappointed with government intervention, so they started to believe in the market again. Moreover, the paradox of 2008-2009 is that mistrust in the market did not lead to demand for greater government intervention. Now, people rely on the government to organize a collective defense against the pandemic and to save a sinking economy.

COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the presence of strong leadership and authority at the frontline of emergency measures, thus conveying confidence to citizens, actors and other levels of government. In this sense, the government and health ministry strongly emphasized on the central governance and leadership to fight against COVID-19.

Since March 2, the date of the announcement of the first Covid case in Morocco, the country has implemented a well-thought-out strategy to manage, and above all anticipate, the effects of the crisis. A management which gave priority to the preservation of the health of citizens, but which did not omit the economic aspect by trying, initially, to rescue and help households and businesses to cope with the shock and, secondly, to focus on implementing a strategy to revive the Moroccan economy. In this sense, all actors have turned to the state. Thus, neoliberal-inspired economic thought hostile to state interventionism has been eclipsed by the gravity of the threat. From then on, the management of the crisis in Morocco “obeyed the logic of the centralization of decisions”. In general, we have witnessed a rehabilitation of the role of the State as the only public power endowed with the means likely to absorb and cushion the misdeeds of the crisis (Bassou, Boucetta and Chegraoui, 2020).

Then, under royal instructions, an Economic Watch Committee was created on March 11, 2020 at the level of the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Composed of the country's major economic and social bodies, the mission of this Committee is to monitor the repercussions of the Covid-19 epidemic, to manage the "Special Fund" and to identify the economic, social and tax measures to be taken to mitigate its impact. This committee has taken several decisions which consist in particular of the granting of aid to vulnerable households and support actions for businesses.

The Moroccan Ministry of Economy and Finance set up on March 16 a Special Fund for the management of the Covid-19 pandemic. This Fund is supplied by donations from public and private entities as well as voluntary contributions from the public sector, private companies and individuals with tax-free donations. The budget allocation of the Fund was initially set at 10 billion dirhams from the General State Budget, but thanks to the involvement of all public and private institutions and donations from legal and natural persons, this allocation was able to reach almost 37 billion dirhams as of April 20, 2020. As part of the national solidarity drive for the management of the Covid-19 pandemic in Morocco, the large Moroccan subsidiaries of French groups and French-owned companies established in Morocco, have also contributed to the collective effort. Many of them, particularly in the banking, insurance, agro-food, industrial and energy sectors, have, in this context, supplemented the Special Fund for the management of the Pandemic "Covid-19", for a total amount, at this stage, around 500 M MAD. For its part, the European Union immediately reallocated EUR 150 million to the Special Fund and redirected EUR 300 million of resources, already allocated to Morocco, towards the response to the pandemic. The purpose of the fund's endowment is, on the one hand, to increase the capacities of the health system and take charge of the health emergencies (upgrading the medical device through the purchase of drugs, medical and hospital equipment), and strengthening the operating resources of the Ministry of Health. The Special Fund serves to support the national economy, through a range of measures proposed by the government and by the CVE, in particular in terms of support for sectors affected by the health crisis, such as tourism. The fund is also involved in preserving jobs and mitigating the social repercussions of this crisis through transfers targeted (in particular unemployment benefits and subsistence aid for the informal sector).

### **3.2. Coordination and integration between units of government**

The pandemic has highlighted the critical role of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, capable of addressing complex and pressing governance challenges. Added to these are local authorities and communities working in partnership with civil society

and the private sector in the response to the crisis and in the contextualized and continuous implementation of the SDGs.

To properly manage the covid-19 epidemic, crisis management councils have been created at national, regional and local levels and a national crisis response structure has been set up under the coordination of the Ministry of the Interior. In this sense, effective emergency measures of coordination and integration between the different levels of government (regional, state, municipal, etc.) and the different departments (health, housing, social security, etc.) have been put in place. The State has mobilized, in a harmonized and coordinated framework the ministerial departments concerned and the health professionals, but also the actors of socio-economic life to allow better control of the epidemic. An interdepartmental Monitoring Committee steered the action plan under its various components. The Ministry of Health deployed a series of actions to raise its level of vigilance in monitoring the epidemiological situation in real time, then it adjusted its mode of operation by setting up a Technical and Scientific Advisory Committee one of whose missions is the definition of a protocol for the care of patients with COVID-19, and by adapting the organization of the healthcare system. Then the State strategy for the management of the Covid 19 crisis suggests a distribution of tasks between different services for the maintenance of public order, in its health, tranquility and security components. It revolves around three actions.

First of all, primacy is naturally given to the health dimension. The administration participates in the detection, care and fight against the spread of the virus in order to stem the evil or the source of fear and to allow a return to normal life. In fact, the State has mobilized the human, technical and logistical resources of the FAR in the service of the health system, public order and national security. In this context, the Royal Armed Forces (FAR) implemented a proactive and progressive action plan from the start of the spread of the pandemic on a global scale. The contribution of the FAR started immediately after the declaration of the state of health emergency on March 19, 2020, in support of national action. In this context, the army makes its infrastructure and medical equipment available to the health system in order to deal with the risk of saturation of patient care services and provides its expertise in the field in the management of natural disasters. In this sense, Multidisciplinary medical teams have been seconded to civilian health structures and authorities. Military medical infrastructure and equipment, in particular three field hospitals with a capacity of 200 beds each, including at least 20 for resuscitation, supplemented by five isolation sites with a capacity of around 2,000 beds have been made available civilian health. A relay was also provided to the security forces through the deployment of units that participate in the law enforcement mission. Indeed, to

minimize the scope of the chain of contamination of the epidemic, "Coronavirus Command Posts" were set up to ensure monitoring and coordination with the health services, the identification and localization of the epidemic. This initiative was reinforced by a border lock, a ban on gatherings, the closure of schools, then drastic measures encouraging voluntary and then compulsory confinement.

Then, the second action aims for the peace of mind of citizens by regulating everyone's actions in order to avoid excesses and the climate of panic that would be caused by a lack of discipline and good citizenship. Thus, the army by adopting a pedagogical approach encouraging compliance with legal provisions supports other state bodies in their mission to maintain public order and raise awareness among citizens through the Allô Yakada platform. This mission is also part of the modernization of the defense policy, strengthening the support actions carried out for the benefit of civil society. The State has also taken care to ensure regular monitoring of the supply of markets through the availability of all basic necessities, food, hygiene or energy. It also oversaw food price and quality control operations and dealt with all types of fraud and monopolization. Moreover, it has been ensured that during the covid -19, services of general interest continue to be fully guaranteed. This helped build public confidence in the state's ability to manage this crisis. However, it should also be noted that municipalities, provinces and regions have very quickly developed measures to facilitate access to their services for citizens, while trying to guarantee their protection. This was the case for administrative services which, when the conditions were met, were digitized, but also for basic or emergency health services, which were maintained despite the pressure on the health system. It should also be noted that this pandemic has made it possible to explore new avenues to ensure the continuity of education, through e-learning and the public media. In this process, collaboration with telephone operators to generalize access to education has been crucial for the dissemination of courses.

Finally, the last dimension of this approach concerns public security. For this, the National Security, the soldiers of the Royal Gendarmerie where applicable, the FAR ensure that criminal phenomena do not take advantage of the vulnerability of confined citizens to harm their physical persons or their property (fight against crime under all these aspects, and the spread of fake news creating a climate of insecurity). In addition, these services have been strengthened in other areas that have required special attention, in particular with regard to the care of victims of gender-based violence and other vulnerable groups; surveillance of establishments open to the public where theft with violence or intimidation could be committed, as well as the prevention and investigation of cybercrime.



### **3.3. Diplomacy at the service of the health crisis management**

Faced with the spread of the virus and in view of the adjustments made by the governments whose countries are severely affected, Morocco adopted a preventive approach from the start of the pandemic to limit the number of victims as much as possible. Thus, two days after the registration of the first case, the decision was taken to close the borders. In the process, Morocco called for a High-Level Conference under the aegis of the WHO on “diplomacy, health security and emergency preparedness”. This initiative was co-sponsored by Rwanda and the World Bank. Furthermore, within the framework of its cooperation with the said Organization, Morocco had insisted on including from 2014 in its 2017-2021 cooperation strategy, a section dedicated precisely to upgrading its capacities in terms of epidemiological surveillance and preparedness and response to public health emergencies. This upgrade made it possible to better prepare Morocco for the shock of Covid 19.

To prepare for any eventuality, Morocco took steps in February to benefit from the experience of countries that have been able to successfully manage the virus and to identify potential suppliers of equipment and medicines. Thus, after having secured a sufficient stock of Chloroquine, Morocco took steps with China, South Korea and Turkey to secure the delivery to the Kingdom of the equipment essential to face at the first stage of the development of the pandemic, pending the establishment of the infrastructure necessary for its manufacture on the spot. This exercise in international cooperation on both bilateral and multilateral bases responds to the wishes of the UN system and in particular of the WHO to promote a collective and united response from the international community to this scourge (Belghiti A, 2020).

The crisis has also encouraged humanitarian care and the deployment of medical diplomacy in several countries. Morocco and on royal instructions have provided medical aid to 15 African countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Comoros, Congo, Eswatini, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, Mauritania, Niger, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, Tanzania, Chad and Zambia) by sending 8 million masks, 900,000 visors, 600,000 caps, 60,000 gowns, 30,000 liters of hydro-alcoholic gel, 75,000 boxes of chloroquine and 15,000 boxes of azithromycin. This protective and medical aid equipment is manufactured in Morocco by Moroccan companies and complies with WHO standards.

On the human level, Morocco has endeavored to facilitate the repatriation of foreign nationals who are on its territory when the decision is taken concerning the closure of Moroccan borders and to support and assist those Moroccans who have not been able to return in time in the country. With regard to the first category, facilities have been granted to diplomatic representations accredited in Rabat to facilitate the repatriation of their nationals. As a result,



80,000 people were able to leave Morocco on board 500 flights scheduled in coordination with the countries concerned. In addition, all foreigners whose residence permit or visa has expired have had their stay automatically extended, pending the lifting of the state of emergency. For their part, the Moroccan Embassies and Consulates have set up crisis units to monitor the situation of Moroccans abroad and encourage them to comply with the measures adopted by the local authorities.

On the operational level, the government repatriated, from January 27, 2020, of the 167 Moroccans who were in Wuhan, the coverage by the same representations of the needs for housing, catering, the purchase of medicines and hospitalization of the 18,500 Moroccans passing through or students who have benefited from an exchange between universities, taking charge of the funerals of victims of the virus and making available to the Moroccan community toll-free numbers for listening, orientation and assistance in case of need and coordination with Associations of Moroccans active in the countries of residence to determine the needs of Moroccans who find themselves stranded abroad. Finally, diplomatic action also is taking place through multilateral cooperation with the WHO and bilateral dialogue with other countries.

### **3.4. Legal frameworks and constitutional provisions**

The urgency to act in the face of the pandemic has not obscured the State's concern for legality. The action of the authorities in matters of public order sometimes requires the use of firmness expressed either by sanctions or by the use of coercion and legitimate force against recalcitrant. Thus, to better establish its action to maintain public order and legally protect the agents responsible for it, the State has promulgated two decrees relating to the state of health emergency; Decree-Law No. 2-20-292 of March 23, 2020 enacting specific provisions for the state of health emergency and the measures of its declaration and the Decree No. 2-20-293 of March 24, 2020 declaring the state of health emergency throughout the national territory to deal with the spread of the covid 19 pandemic.

Thus, a series of preventive measures have been adopted by the public administration in accordance with the Circular of the Minister of Economy, Finance and Administrative Reform No. 1/2020 of March 16, 2020. Moreover, Special fund for the management of the Covid-19 epidemic was created by decree n° 2-20-269 of March 16, 2020.

Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, others some pieces of legislation have been adopted; the laws adopted (CNSS - n° 25.20) have made it possible to support Moroccan families on the one hand and Moroccan companies on the other; the Dahir n° 1.21.97 (July 14, 2021) taken for application of law n° 30.21 amending and supplementing law n° 98.15 establishing a basic compulsory health insurance scheme for self-employed workers; the Dahir n° 1.21.80 (July 14,

2021) taken for application of law n°31.21 amending and supplementing law n°99.15 establishing a pension scheme for self-employed workers and the Order n° 2671.20 of October 23, 2020 taken in application of decree n° 2.20.664 of September 17, 2020, relating to Covid measures dedicated to the tourism sector. For the government, an amending finance law could prove necessary in this difficult context, its aim of reducing the repercussions of the Covid-19 crisis and promoting the resumption of the country's growth in all areas (article 77 of the Constitution). In the same sense, the State has promulgated some others laws as; the Law 26.20 which allows the government to remove the ceiling on external borrowing in order to mitigate the negative impacts of the crisis and the Law 27.20 allowing companies to remain compliant with the rules and laws that govern them.

### **3.5. Citizen participation and inclusion of populations**

Civil society is an important actor of governance which contributes in ensuring transparency and accountability in the society which leads towards good governance (Roy, 2008). Moreover, involvement and engagement of the civil society and the outreach to citizens has promoted trust building and social cohesion which is one of the important aspects of governance (Paquet, 1999). According to (Helalo 2015; Thornhill 2012), the principle of public participation originates from the phenomenon of democracy that implies the inclusion of citizen participation in governance processes.

Morocco's governance model is based on active citizen participation. In the fact, during the covid-19 crisis, the state used innovative public participation techniques to involve citizens in the design of emergency and recovery measures, and to ensure that these measures are inclusive and respond well to the needs of all people layers of society. Otherwise, the voluntary acceptance by citizens of restrictions on civil liberties and restrictions on movement translates into their adherence to the various citizen initiatives launched by the government.

The involvement of economic and social actors has been diverse in its forms and means. In this sense, corporate citizens (public and private) have set up hospital services and consultation centers. Relays are also provided by civil society, in particular hotel and catering units which have volunteered to provide accommodation and catering services to convalescent patients or to healthcare personnel mobilized on the front line in the face of the pandemic. For its part, university researchers participated in the development of mathematical models to predict the spread of Covid-19 in Morocco. In addition, it is important to mention that on the social level, the government, together with civil society, have decided to redouble their efforts, in particular for the benefit of people in more critical situations, such as the elderly, children, the disabled

and people with chronic illnesses and people living on the streets to protect them from the spread of the coronavirus.

The elderly represent the social category most sensitive to the Corona virus, especially when it comes to residents of nursing homes. In this period of pandemic, the "Assalama" operation dedicated to supporting the elderly and disabled people, has made available to these people the "Assalama Kit" for hygiene and prevention against the virus within the social welfare institutions.

Other initiatives aimed at mitigating the social effects of the crisis have been taken, including; the strengthening of local services by supporting associative projects aimed at coping with the social repercussions during a period of health confinement; the establishment of monitoring mechanisms for the protection of children against violence; improvement of psychological support for children in social welfare establishments; setting up, for the benefit of the families of people with autism, of orientation and communication units from the Rafiq program; Creation of an educational center to ensure the continuity of the activities of the centers involved in the education of disabled children.

The civil society in concert with the mental health and psychology professionals have set up several remote platforms in order to provide psychological support and counseling services for citizens who develop severe symptoms of distress, depression or acute panic disorder as a result of the new confinement conditions. Nevertheless, priority has been given to frontline healthcare workers, confirmed patients, patients suspected of infection and family members in quarantine<sup>1</sup>. In addition, in order to meet more specific needs and provide psychological assistance to the most vulnerable categories, some institutions have launched specific support groups, such as; The PSY-DGAPR-COVID19 launched by the General Delegation of Prison and Reintegration Administration (DGAPR), whose mission is to provide support to prisoners and prison staff. The emergency office initiated by the Errazi Mental Health Hospital has been dedicated to people with previous mental health disorders. Indeed, other groups simultaneously offered psychological support in all regions of the Kingdom, in university premises but also through psychological support services provided by the hospital. Sheikh Khalifa in Casablanca. Moreover, the Moroccan Association of the Handicapped offered a dedicated national platform for the identification and support of people with disabilities in these times of crisis, as well as a financial aid system.

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<sup>1</sup> We cite among these pioneering initiatives: The Mental Health Emergency Unit launched by the Moroccan Association of Psychiatry in coordination with the National Order of Physicians; The psychological support platform for Covid-19, launched by the Faculty of Education of Mohammed V University in Rabat; The solidarity initiative launched by the Moroccan Society of Clinical Psychologists, the Alliance of Psychologists of Casablanca and the Moroccan Association of Psychologists.

In addition to these specialized initiatives, civil society organizations have mobilized their capacities to provide support to the elderly, the homeless, minors, the self-employed, etc, to combat domestic violence against women and children, to accompany students who have shown difficulties in taking their courses remotely, and provide social protection to vulnerable categories of people with a primary, secondary or tertiary level of education. These groups of volunteers are multiple, and among them we find the PsyPhone initiative (a group of socio-psychology professionals), or the initiative launched by the Es-Salam Foundation for Social Development.

The pandemic has had serious consequences for refugees and internally displaced populations, with particular effects on women. To remedy these dysfunctions, NGOs, including Oxfam, have been committed from the start, in coordination with local authorities, to help the most vulnerable: poor people, migrants, homeless, women especially victims of violence. In the same way, the government has taken a series of emergency measures to support women with economic difficulties, victims of violence, women with disabilities and elderly women by developing an awareness campaign.

### **3.6. An Effective Digital Governance Regime**

The coronavirus pandemic, which has hit the whole world hard, has provided an opportunity to renew the global development model and accelerate technological innovation and digitalization, namely e-government, e-administration, teleworking, e-health, e-learning, teleconsultations, e-commerce, etc. (Er-Rays, Lemqeddem, & Ezzahiri, 2022). Thus, the appearance of this Covid-19 pandemic has gave a new phase to the reform of public administration by directing it towards digitalization (Er Rays et al., 2022). Digital transformation currently stands as an important component for the good governance of public institutions; therefore, it is characterized by its potential for effectiveness and efficiency in the transformation of information, cost reduction, communication faster, etc.

During the covid-19 crisis, the authorities' recourse to the digital governance infrastructure is necessary to ensure the flow of information; implement some of the measures taken by the CVE; facilitate and improve the effectiveness of government regulation and finally ensure the continuity of public services and national education. In this context, the Moroccan government has used an arsenal of public communication commensurate with emergency measures, such as campaigns on television, radio or social networks to raise awareness among citizens of hygiene rules and preventive measures aimed at reducing the spread of COVID-19. These crisis communication strategies are furthermore intended to help the state improve the effectiveness of available solutions, including containment and monitoring of the COVID-19 situation.

Generally, the audiovisual media have indeed played a very favorable and supportive role in controlling the transmission of the coronavirus. In this context, these national media have acted as a powerful weapon in educating the public and reducing despair, depression and anxiety during the COVID-19 outbreak. The audiovisual media ensured the follow-up of the health situation in the country and presented in a sober way the daily assessment of the management of the pandemic according to the parameters of the WHO. In the same framework, they have invited many doctors and health experts to guide the population on COVID-19-related diseases on a daily basis. Moreover, they have hosted numerous talk shows and informative programs in which they have discussed and corrected misinformation regarding the COVID-19 outbreak. They have also launched 24/7 COVID-19 hotline numbers to provide assistance and report COVID19 cases in case of emergency. They have also produced information kits in national and foreign languages. Additionally, through this means of communication, the public and private health professionals, through the launch of a digital community platform and the creation of a new communication dynamic have allowed to citizen real-time access to news and medical education.

The media sector has been able to show responsibility and ethics throughout the period of crisis. Thus, a movement has taken place within the profession, with the creation of a new professional body (National Association of Media and Publishers), which proposes to respond better to new societal and professional challenges than the Moroccan Federation of Newspaper Publishers. On June 26, the Minister of Culture, in charge of the media sector, made a statement to parliament, officially announcing massive financial aid to the media sector, in both its horizontal and vertical dimensions.

It should first be noted that social networks have played a big role in the global and continuous awareness campaign of citizens and their mobilization for the respect of the decreed measures, as well as to influence behavior and decisions towards the best and to avoid possible errors<sup>2</sup>. In this sense, the social or electronic media broadcasted the repeated promotion of social campaigns in video messages (30 s to 1 min), such as frequently washing hands with soap and using hand sanitizer, wearing a facemask, maintaining social distancing, and stay home stay safe. The government has also set up websites gathering all the information on the situation of

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<sup>2</sup> Social media is one of the rapidly advancing digital channels with 2.62 billion monthly active users worldwide in 2018 (Jackson et al., 2018; Statista, 2018). The number is grown to 4.3 billion in 2021 as per the global social media research summary 2021 based on its numerous unique features and fortes, including communication, openness, engagement and involvement (Tang, Miller, Zhou, & Warkentin, 2021; Warren, Sulaiman, & Jaafar, 2014). In fact, social media is progressively gaining notoriety and grabbing the interest of administrations of developed countries that already started to exploit social media's collective dominance (Mossberger, Wu, & Crawford, 2013). Conversely, in developing countries, social media use at the governmental level is still at an informational stage (Ali, Jan, & Iqbal, 2013) as they mostly use the platforms of social media for news updates or important announcements. In contrast, the public uses social media more frequently and regularly.

COVID-19 in the country. These sites provide citizens with answers to the most frequently asked questions, fight against misinformation and give advice to guarantee people's health and help fight the spread of the pandemic.

Moreover, many governments have adopted measures to guarantee the continuity of public services. Provisions on online tools and telework have been made to facilitate the continuity of the functioning of the public administration. According to (Gudi & Tiwari, 2020), some companies have adopted a tag team method where groups of employees take turns going to the office. Thinking optimistically, tracking such metrics would actually make both employers and employees aware of the pros and cons of flexible work environments (Lucchese & Pianta, 2020).

The dematerialization of education and public administration services was at the heart of national measures. Thus, in many areas, access to public administration has shifted to telephone and/or digital communication. For that, in Moroccan schools and universities, digital replacements for teaching and learning have been taken and implemented. Indeed, digital services have come to the aid of students who are going through the crucial phase of their schooling. There has been a paradigm shift in the shift to online courses through webinars and interactive learning. Thus, each academician and each institute try to reinvent its strategy and evolve with emerging trends. Digital platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Duo facilitate this change and connect every student. Moreover, to guarantee pedagogical continuity and the success of distance learning, the "Telmide TICE" electronic portal served as a link between the educational establishments, the teacher and the student at home

Additionally, three telecommunications operators in Morocco decided to offer access, temporarily and free of charge, to all sites and platforms of "distance education and training", set up by the Ministry of Education national level, vocational training, higher education and scientific research. In addition, for families who do not have a computer and do not have access to the Internet, the courses could be followed through television channels. According to the latest assessment, 10 million people (pupils, students and young people in vocational training) have been able to benefit from distance education, which has forced its way into the national education system to validly complement conventional education.

One of the lessons of this health crisis is that the digitization of some ministerial departments has made it possible to guarantee the continuity of services essential to the lives of citizens by using teleworking and limiting the physical exchange of documents and administrative letters. The great lockdown has highlighted the essential role of digitalization in keeping the economy running. In addition, the State has widely mobilized several technologies such as remote offices,



videoconferencing and new social platforms which have given impetus to teleworking. Within the administration, government employees have ample opportunity to work from home. Telephone and video conferences have been set up as possibilities for meetings within the administration. In the same sense, during this crisis, most private sectors have changed their work routine from office to home and have asked their employees to work from home using modern technologies such as video conferencing, VPN systems and cloud.

In this sense, the Moroccan government has produced practical manuals on telework, which offer general advice and techniques to facilitate its use. Despite these efforts, teleworking has been difficult to deploy in public administration, due to a lack of adequate skills of civil servants, a sufficient level of digitization of services and procedures often based on paper documents. Morocco has also created a series of new online issuance services with the aim of reducing the exchange of paper documents, thus limiting the risk of transmission of COVID-19 by paper. In this way, on March 22, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, called to suspend the paper press until further notice.

The Digital Development Agency supported these measures by developing digital platforms that comply with the standards and good technical practices in this area. The "digital order office portal", facilitating the electronic management of incoming and outgoing mail flows, the "electronic mail counter" with the automation of the mail processing process within a given administration, the "signature electronic" allowing a complete dematerialization of document flows, are some examples notably the WITIQA portal to withdraw the birth certificate and the E-medical consultation through the website for vaccination against Covid-19. In fact, several ministries, local authorities and public establishments and companies have adopted remote working. It will be necessary to seize this opportunity to institutionalize this system, by giving it a legal basis. In addition, the Digital Development Agency has launched several digital initiatives to promote and facilitate remote work within Moroccan administrations. The Federation of Information Technologies, Telecommunications and Offshoring (APEBI), supported by The Startup Factory, launched a call for projects platform "Hack Covid, Moroccan Tech community against Covid-19" with the aim of find innovative solutions to fight the virus. In this context, 17 projects were selected.

Specifically, during COVID-19, digital governance helped improve disease detection through integrated databases of people's health records and travel history, through more accurate contact tracing, and through active surveillance tracking for people under quarantine.

Indeed, the interbank electronic payment center has put all the means at the service of merchants and citizens to align itself with the recommendation of health organizations which consists in



favoring payments in contactless mode, whether via the bank card or telephone and online payment. On March 26, an electronic portal launched monthly lump sum allowances (CNSS National Social Security Fund) and the CNSS launched a new version of its electronic portal "covid19.cnss.ma". In addition, an e-portal has been created by the General Confederation of Businesses of Morocco (CGEM): <http://coronavirus.cgem.ma>, which consists of a bilingual platform including useful information on support measures for businesses and their modalities for Implementation. In the same way, Morocco has implemented a transfer program using mobile phones for the benefit of informal workers. Moreover, the Renault Morocco Group, as a major player in the national automotive sector, Seina, noted that the brand has a virtual showroom, i.e. a secure digital platform, allowing customers and prospects to discover a vehicle, ask for demonstrations and above all to book online.

#### **4. Government responses to manage the covid 19 crisis**

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis is unprecedented, exogenous and unpredictable. It is changing all the global balances and rightly places the State at the center of social and economic issues. Chakraborty and Maity (2020) argued that the loss of lives because of disaster and pandemic causes definite irreplaceable damage to human society. But apart from the loss of human lives, the COVID-19 pandemic has severely destabilized the global economy. That is why Government and private groups were forced to take prompt action in response to the resulting health and economic crises (Hakavirta and Denuwara, 2020).

According to (Boin, Ekengren, and Rhinard 2020), "a main challenge is to match the pace of the crisis development with a requisite level of political attention". Another challenge ahead is to follow up on the control strategy in a way that both protects the economy and avoids a new outbreak of the pandemic. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged researchers and policy makers to identify public safety measures for preventing the collapse of healthcare systems and reducing deaths. Indeed, in response to these challenges, some countries have tried a 'soft passive' approach based on herd immunity, and some countries have used a 'hard forceful' approach such as strict social distancing, lockdowns, testing, tracking, treatment and quarantining to manage the spread of COVID-19 (Moon, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic and the response measures it implies (social distancing, confinement) are not without consequences on economic activity, because they lead to reduction in production, lower tax revenue as well as increased spending (Weder M., 2020; Boone L. et al., 2020; McKibbin W. and Fernando R., 2020; Arezki R. and Nguyen H., 2020; Baldwin R. and Tomiura E., 2020; Beck T., 2020; Cecchetti G. and Schoenholtz L., 2020; Mann C., 2020; Meninno R. and Wolff G., 2020 ; Voth J., 2020; Cochrane J., 2020; Wren-Lewis S., 2020;

Wyplosz C., 2020; Baker S. et al., 2020; Tobias A. and Aditya N., 2020; Albule scu C., 2020a, 2020b and 2020c; IMF, 2020b). Indeed, measures to stem the spread of the virus have hit SMEs and entrepreneurs very hard (OECD, 2020).

The global spread of the disease plunged financial markets into turmoil since the end of March, with stock markets plummeting and extreme price volatility not seen since the great financial crisis of 2007-2008. In this sense, (Zhang, Hu, & Ji, 2020) have indicated that stock markets around the world have experienced a significant decline in their values (Zhang, Hu, & Ji, 2020). Thus, to limit the negative socio-economic effects of the Covid-19 crisis, some researchers (Tobias A. and Aditya N., 2020; Wren-Lews S., 2020; Cochrane JH, 2020; Cecchetti GS and Schoenholtz LK, 2020; Beck T., 2020; Weder MB, 2020; Boone L. et al., 2020; Voth J., 2020) proposed response measures, including: containment and social distancing ; budget support for employees and economic agents in difficulty to repay their loans or finance their activities ; the easing of monetary policy, the acquisition of various assets and the provision of liquidity to the financial system to cope with financial constraints and support credit to the economy; the use of loan restructuring by banks for households and businesses in difficulty to repay their loans; clear and honest communication from the authorities around the pandemic; the coordination of economic policies and the free movement of goods and capital in regional economic communities; international collaboration of national regulators; financial support from the international community to the most affected countries and debt restructuring for heavily indebted countries; etc.

According to McKibbin W. (2020), in view of its multisectoral effects, the health shock of Covid-19 requires the mobilization of monetary (to support demand), budgetary (to support production and vulnerable households) and health policies. Likewise, with high amounts of government debt and historically low interest levels existing in most developed countries, Bianchi et al. (2020) recommends a coordinated monetary and fiscal policy to address the COVID-19 economic fallout.

In Morocco, crisis management has become a priority for all actors and at different levels. Thus, to contain the virus, the government decided to follow the WHO guidelines to its particular situation and to adopt the same measures as those taken by developed countries. Thereby, the country's response to COVID-19 is characterized by the application of preventive actions, rapid leadership response, strict and smart containment scenarios, adequate provision of medical services and public health emergency response, as well than an economic and multisectoral approach.

The University of Oxford has designed the tool (The OxCGRT) to track and compare policy responses to the pandemic across the world. This tool collects publicly available information on 19 indicators, 8 of which (C1-C8) record information on containment and closure policies, such as school closures and movement restrictions. 4 indicators (E1-E4) capture information on income support to citizens or provision of foreign aid and the last 7 (H1-H7) record information on health system policies such as HIV screening regime. COVID-19, emergency healthcare investments and, more recently, vaccination policies. The data on the 19 indicators have been aggregated into a set of 3 main axes: the containment and health measures adopted by the public authorities, the economic support and the rigor of the citizens. Applied to the situation in Morocco, this approach makes it possible to assess the effort made to manage the pandemic crisis while recalling the degree of spread. Then, the analysis of these 3 main axes of the Oxford OxCGRT system shows that Morocco has made a considerable effort in terms of vigilance, socio-economic responses and established health measures. These assessments translate into an average score for Morocco (April 1 to December 21, 2020) for the various “Oxford” indices based on 100: Containment and health index: 67.5; Economic support index: 67.8; Strictness index 73.6. Morocco's strategy in the fight against the pandemic has been established around three axes: health, economy and social.

#### **4.1. Health Measures in response to the COVID-19 crisis**

The effectiveness of the governance mechanisms of the various healthcare systems around the world seems to have become the major challenge in dealing with the Covid -19 pandemic. Thus, in the wake of this global health crisis, stringent public health measures have been implemented to curtail the spread of COVID-19 (Adhikari et al., 2020). For (Eggers et al., 2020), the government needs to strengthen the public health infrastructure and monitor health data, including new cases, hospital facilities and treatment responses and go on to support future vaccination efforts. Given the nature of the disease which is highly contagious, the ways to contain the spread include policy actions such as imposition of social distancing and self-isolation at home (Fong et al. 2020). This has caused the preventive closure of schools, universities, factories and businesses, casting a veil over the entire world in a way unprecedented for decades (Jordà et al. 2020; Taleb and Cirillo, 2020). In general, governments can take two distinctive strategies according to Ferguson et al. (2020): mitigation and suppression. The former aims at lowering maximum healthcare demand by reducing contagion rates through non-pharmaceutical interventions, while the latter approach adopts very restrictive measures to push down the prevalence of new cases to zero. Most researchers argue that only a mix of suppressive measures such as mandatory home isolation and lockdown

policies can be successful in mitigating the spread of the virus. These interventions may need to be maintained over several years (Kissler et al., 2020) and complemented with school and business closures (Ebrahim and Memish, 2020; Ferguson et al., 2020; Hellewell et al., 2020). Yet, even though lockdown policies have been crucial in slowing down infection rates during the early phases of the disease (Stoecklin et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2020; Xiao and Torok, 2020; Zu et al., 2020), the ‘Swedish solution’ of voluntary physical distancing has gained increased support in balancing the burden on health systems and the economy in the medium run (Krueger et al., 2020).

Governments and other organizations have successfully promoted universal safety measures such as washing hands, covering nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing, use of disinfectants and face masks, avoiding finger contact with mouth, nose and eyes, and social distancing techniques to a remarkable extent (Gudi, & Tiwari, 2020). Practicing these good hygiene measures in hospitals, schools and other public places could significantly reduce the spread and thus eliminate new cases of infected people (Gudi, and Tiwari, 2020). Additionally, schools and colleges around the world have shifted from in-class courses to online courses or through the virtual media to comply with social distancing recommendations to prevent the spread of this pandemic (Gudi, & Tiwari, 2020).

The U.K. prime minister at one point suggested that the country might need to wait until 60 percent of the people had been infected and obtained so-called herd immunity (Costello 2020). Many countries initially positioned themselves somewhere between two approaches but changed their positions as the situation worsened. For example, many European countries such as Italy and France shifted from a soft and passive approach toward a hard and aggressive approach. The USA, which had more than 1 million cases at the end of April 2020, has imposed stay-at-home orders with varying degrees of severity. Some countries (e.g., Australia, Brunei, New Zealand and Vietnam) declared a public health emergency, announced mandatory directions, rapidly constructed emergency services and initiated collaborative approaches (Trevisan et al., 2020; Wong et al., 2020). Among the countries that have decided to opt for the zero Covid strategy, there are Iceland, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Japan. The continued eradication of the virus and its success at least until spring 2021, justifies the “Zero Covid” label. Miquel Oliu-Barton developed that there are five of the 37 OECD countries that have followed this approach. But there are also countries that are not in the OECD, like Vietnam or China, which have successfully opted for this strategy. He noted also that the countries that followed Covid zero had 25 times fewer deaths and economically, they achieved ten points of GDP less.

Concerning the health supply, Morocco remains today in an unfavorable position compared to the world average, both in terms of human resources and that of health infrastructures (WHO)<sup>3</sup>. Thus, the new map published by the Ministry of Health in 2022 shows that the health system still suffers from a crucial lack of health professionals. That said, the medical profession in the public will number 13,682 in 2022 (in 2020 it was 12,454). In the private sector, there are a total of 14,199 doctors (in 2020 the number was 13,622). Thus, Morocco has a total of 27,881 doctors in the public and private sectors. For a population of 37 million inhabitants, the ratio is 7.5 doctors per 10,000 inhabitants. Morocco is still very far from the standard of the World Health Organization (WHO) set at 15.3 doctors per 10,000 inhabitants.

In terms of health, the intervention aims to control the progression of the disease for better absorption of flows by the health system, with limited and unevenly distributed resources on the national territory. Thus, the main measures undertaken are the preparation and reorganization of the necessary hospital capacities and the improvement of the conditions of reception of patients in various cities in terms of beds and equipment in intensive care, the early detection system, resuscitation facilities. In addition, test kits have been ordered by the government to launch a drug testing campaign. The territorial coverage of tests and analyzes has been extended to the University Hospital Centers (CHU) of the various regional cities and military hospitals. Medical and paramedical equipment, including masks and hygiene products, have been provided to the entire population and at an affordable price. Additionally, the State has resorted to bold sovereign decisions, such as the use of chloroquine to treat the victims, despite opposition from the World Health Organization and several countries such as France. The purchase of medical and hospital equipment was financed by part of the resources of the "Special fund for the management of the "Covid 19" pandemic. On January 28, 2021, Morocco launched its national vaccination campaign. This campaign intends to vaccinate free of charge all Moroccan citizens and residents. This was followed by the adoption of the 3rd dose of the vaccine, in accordance with the recommendations of the National Scientific Commission and specialized world bodies, the aim being to achieve collective immunity for citizens.

Fruit of a Public-Private partnership with the support of the company "Recipharm" in this case, Morocco has launched an industrial unit for the local manufacture of vaccines capable of deal with the risks of the appearance of new viral variants. This project will make vaccine self-sufficiency possible for Morocco and, moreover, will make it a leading biotechnology platform on the scale of the African continent and the world in the field of the "fill & finish" industry. In

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<sup>3</sup> This situation is the result of decades of underfunding of the public health sector (below 6% of the general state budget since independence, while the WHO recommends a minimum rate of 9%).

addition, logistical support was provided by the "Mask Manufacturing Unit" (UFM) under the Royal Gendarmerie. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, this industrial unit has been running at full speed, producing between February and May 2020, approximately 14 million FFP2 masks and 3 million surgical masks. In addition, a health technology startup from the MAScIR research and development center can produce 1 million RT-PCR tests per month, and a public-private partnership between the Ministry of Industry and various private sector actors made possible the local production of an intensive care unit bed, much less expensive than those imported from abroad.

Morocco was among the first countries to declare a state of health emergency and impose containment at an advanced stage in the spread of the pandemic. This rapid decision is explained by the fact that Morocco has drawn lessons from the experiences of its neighboring countries and has taken into account its limited capacities in terms of infrastructure (only 670 hospital beds at the time of the declaration of the 1st case). Thus, the government proceeded on Friday March 13 (with only 8 proven cases and one death) to the closure of its sea and land borders, cancellation of all international flight's lines, and restriction of interurban travel. The first instructions dictated by the Moroccan government banned any gathering of more than 50 people, ordering the closure of all (training facilities, all hairdressers, gyms, and hotels, Hammams, restaurants and cafes); the suspension of sports, artistic, cultural and religious events as well as hearings in the various courts of the country; the disinfection of market facilities and the strict enforcement of social distancing and good personal hygiene. However, grocery stores, pharmacies, and shopping malls were allowed to stay open. A little later, it was decided to close the mosques until further notice. Monday March 16, with 29 cases of contagion, Morocco closed schools, universities and all training centers. The country has also adopted an appropriate management of public transport means and an operation to disinfect and sterilize them and various administrative spaces and premises. This dynamic culminated with the adoption on March 20 of a state of health emergency in the form of strict confinement.

On Monday April 6, the government imposed the wearing of a mask for any authorized exit from the home. On April 18 the state decides to extend the confinement until May 20. Being a developing country, Morocco could not bear a complete lockdown for a long time, so, the government decided to change it into a smart lockdown and since Thursday June 11 Morocco has implemented the first phase of its plan to relax containment measures. But not all regions of the country are subject to the same treatment. The kingdom is now divided into two distinct areas. If the majority of Moroccans can return to an almost normal life, 39% of the population remains confined until further notice.



In mid-June, containment relief measures and travel authorizations are taken and applied according to the evolution of the pandemic in the cities and regions grouped into zones defined according to the health situation. On June 13, a joint press release from the Ministries of Health and the Interior announced the grouping of active cases of Covid-19, which would be around 700, within two military health structures installed in the towns of Benslimane and Benguerir. The military team was joined by civilian medical personnel (paediatricians, resuscitators, nurse anesthetists, laboratory technicians, radiology, etc.). These reception structures have been put in place to support the measures to ease the deconfinement planned for the end of June. From June 24, a second stage of deconfinement allows in particular the opening of restaurants, large shopping and leisure centers and the circulation of interurban public transport. On July 15, the partial reopening of the borders allows the return of Moroccans and foreigners residing in Morocco who are outside the national borders. In doing so, from the second half of July, the significant increase in infections led to the ban on travel from most major cities (Tangier, Tetouan, Fez, Meknes, Casablanca, Marrakech, etc.), to confinement of certain neighborhoods and the opening of a new field hospital in Fez.

This situation has considered "untenable" by many inhabitants of large cities, where the restrictions have all been maintained. In October 25, 2021, Morocco has introduced the obligation of the vaccination pass and in November 10, 2021, the curfew was lifted and the restrictive measures were eased. The Council of Government has decided to extend the duration of effect of the state of health emergency throughout the national territory until December 30, 2022, to continue to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the measures taken by the public authorities in order to combat the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The State, which does not rule out exporting medical devices and is accelerating the rate of production of artificial respirators, was also able to rebuild Morocco's only ethanol production plant in no less than a week, in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior. This plant allows it to be self-sufficient in ethanol, an essential product for the manufacture of disinfectant products. On January 27, 2022, Morocco laid the foundation stone in Benslimane (Casablanca region) of a vaccine manufacturing plant, the largest on the African continent.

#### **4.2.The Economic response**

After a deep recession in 2020 caused by the fallout from the health crisis, the global economy experienced a strong "catch-up" rebound in 2021. However, the year 2022 is expected to see a decline in the pace of economic growth amid rising inflation, policy normalization, conflict in Ukraine, repeated lockdowns in China, and monetary tightening in developed countries and



disruptions supply chains. All of these factors are hurting global growth, which is expected to slow sharply from 5.8% in 2021 to 3.0% in 2022.

In regards to the aggregate macroeconomy, Gourinchas (2020) states that without substantial, timely, and stimulative macroeconomic intervention, the output lost from the economic downturn will be greatly amplified, especially as economic agents try to protect themselves from COVID-19 by reducing consumption spending, investment spending, and engaging in lower credit transactions. Ibanda KP (2020) notes that, for poor countries or those with weak health systems, the response or management of the pandemic will require financial means to control travelers at borders, treat infected cases and limit the spread of the disease. Similarly, the IMF (2020d) argues that taking decisive action to limit losses (human, economic) and protect the most vulnerable societies is possible to emerge from the crisis.

At the national level, this crisis would have resulted in a severe and unprecedented shock on economic activity in 2020, accentuating the effect of two successive years of drought and thus leading to an economic recession, the hardest in more than twenty years. As for, 2021, Moroccan economy experienced a strong recovery with a real GDP growth rate of 7.9 percent. This rebound was supported by an exceptional agricultural season, solid manufacturing and agri-food exports, and the recovery of domestic demand, driven, in part, by a successful vaccination campaign, favorable macroeconomic policies and unprecedented levels of transfers from Moroccans residing abroad (MRE). However, Morocco is once again feeling the impact of a series of negative shocks, the beginning of the agricultural campaign has been exceptionally dry, and a poor cereal harvest for 2022. This situation coincides with a slowdown in the world economy and an increase in international commodity prices which have strongly increased intensified after the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. In this very unfavorable context, the economy decelerated sharply in 2022. To minimize the impacts of the crisis on the national economy and facilitate recovery, Morocco has taken a series of exceptional, anticipatory and courageous measures.

#### **- Responses for Businesses**

For businesses, several measures have been adopted to ensure continuity of production and safeguard jobs such notably the suspension of the payment of social charges to the National Social Security Fund (CNSS) from March 1 to June 2020. Additionally, the Monitoring Committee has taken a set of measures in favor of companies affected by this pandemic, in particular VSEs, SMEs and the liberal professions. It granted deferrals of the repayment of bank loans (310,000 requests) and leasing loans (9,000 loans), granted loan guarantees for the benefit of companies whose cash flow has deteriorated. Other measures have contributed to easing the

financial constraints of companies as postponement of the filing of tax declarations, suspension of tax audits, tax exemption, relaxation of late payment penalties on public contracts, interest-free loans for the benefit of auto-entrepreneurs. The Monitoring Committee has also implemented several measures to facilitate the financing of the economy by the banking system and meet the liquidity needs of companies. Banks have been also invited to suspend the provisioning of loans which will be subject to a moratorium and to use liquidity cushions after a relaxation of prudential ratios.

In addition, the Economic Watch Committee has decided on March 27 to set up with the Central Guarantee Fund, a new mechanism called "Damane Oxygene" in favor of companies in cash flow difficulty because of the crisis. This product is intended mainly for very small, small and medium-sized enterprises whose turnover does not exceed 200 million DH, making it possible to cover up to 95% of the amount of the loan granted. This gives banks the ability to quickly set up exceptional overdrafts to finance the working capital needs of target companies. These credits make it possible to cover up to 3 months of current expenses related to the operation (in particular salaries, rents, necessary purchases, etc.) of up to 20 million DH. For companies that do not have short-term financing lines, this exceptional overdraft can reach 5 million DH. As this is an exceptional crisis, it has been decided that medium-sized companies, whose turnover is between 200 and 500 million DH, can also benefit from this facility. In order to enable banks to speed up the processing of business financing requests, the Central Guarantee Fund has delegated credit institutions to pledge its guarantee for any loan whose amount is less than 2 million DH. The benefit of "Damane Oxygen" was subsequently extended to also affect companies operating in the real estate sector whose cash flow deteriorated due to the decline in their activity. Subsequently and during the post-corona period, "Damane Oxygen" is reviewed and made more flexible, with an improvement in the conditions of access to financing for the restart, in favor of Very Small Enterprises (TPE), Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Intermediate Size Enterprises (ETI). As for companies with a turnover of more than 500 million dirhams, it has been planned to provide them with an appropriate mechanism for financing recovery.

Two new guarantee mechanisms have been put in place by the (CCG): "Relance TPE" and "Damane Relance". This system, in the form of credits repayable over a period of 7 years, will make it possible to relaunch the activity of companies through the guarantee of credits intended to finance their working capital needs, with a 2-year grace period. As its name suggests, the "Relance TPE" product is deployed for the benefit of very small businesses (TPE), including traders, craftsmen, cooperatives and liberal professions. It should be noted that this line of

financing makes it possible to guarantee, up to 95%, the loans of companies achieving a turnover not exceeding 10 million DH. Without securities required, this product is capped at 10% of turnover with a minimum of 10,000 DH. As for the "Damane Relance" product, it is designed for small, medium and large companies with a turnover of more than 10 million DH. The amount of guaranteed credit is set at 1.5 months of turnover for companies in the industrial sector, and 1 month of turnover for companies in other sectors. The guarantee percentage of this new mechanism varies from 80% to 90%. It should be noted that guaranteed credits must be intended, at least 50% of their amount, for the payment of suppliers, thus favoring inter-company financing. Finally, it should be noted that each company can only benefit from the "Relance TPE" or "Damane Relance" exceptional guarantee mechanisms once.

The CVE has decided to put in place a measure that specifically affects self-employed entrepreneurs affected by the Covid-19 crisis. This measure consists in allowing these self-entrepreneurs to benefit from a zero-interest credit that can reach a sum of 15,000 dirhams. This credit, available from 27 April 2020, is repayable over a period of up to 3 years with a grace period of one year. The related interests will be fully covered by the insurance sector.

State intervention in favor of companies reached more than 271,000 credits with financing of around 45.6 billion dirhams (MMDH). This financing is spread over normal activity with 58,584 credits of 33.6 billion dirhams and the "covid-19" mechanisms (213 credits of nearly 12 billion dirhams), noting that the "financing fund" activities dedicated to collaborative financing have reached a volume of 59.7 billion dirhams for the first nine months of 2021. In fact, since the launch of this program in February 2020 and until the end of September 2021, more than 24,000 companies have been financed with a volume exceeding 5.8 billion dirhams, capable of creating more than 67,000 jobs. Par ailleurs, a rappelé l'adoption, en 2020, d'une loi pour acter la transformation de la CCG en société anonyme afin de l'adapter avec sa nouvelle réalité et ce, en prenant en considération les meilleures pratiques dans le domaine de la garantie à l'échelle mondiale.

As for the implementation of the national financial inclusion strategy, its aim is to make financial inclusion a real factor of economic and social development, in particular for companies that have a roadmap aimed at facilitating access to financing for VSEs and start-ups, by accelerating the development of financing mechanisms and creating new ones, in addition to developing the means necessary to limit the risks of credits. In this regard, the government has proceeded to raise the ceiling of micro-credits from 50,000 to 150,000 dirhams in order to assist MSEs to obtain financing, noting that the revision of the legal and regulatory framework relating to micro-financing will continue to diversify the offers to include micro-savings and

micro-insurance. On the administrative level, the CVE has deemed it wise to provide for flexibility measures aimed at avoiding penalties for companies holding public contracts for delays in execution that are not attributable to them.

Moreover, the General Treasury has recorded the postponement of tax deadlines for companies whose turnover is less than 20 million dirhams, from March 31 to June 30, 2020. This postponement concerns the declarations of the tax result as well as the supplements of corporation tax due for the 2019 financial year and the first installment due for the current financial year. Companies that do not meet the turnover criterion can contact the Ministry of Finance for a case-by-case processing of their requests. In addition, tax audits and the execution of notices to third party holders have been suspended until June 30, 2020. This deadline has been extended until September 30, 2020 for companies with cash flow difficulties and which cannot honor their commitment to the tax authorities.

**- Measures taken in several sectors**

Some of the ad hoc emergency measures adopted by the authorities to mitigate the impacts of recent shocks on specific sectors also generate additional public expenditure. In fact, the State, the National Social Security Fund (CNSS) and the CGEM formally signed on March 23 the agreement for the support of sectors vulnerable to shocks induced by the pandemic. In the first level, the National Confederation of Tourism has drawn up a sectoral stimulus plan called the “Tourism Act” requiring an estimated budget of 1.7 billion dirhams by the end of 2020, to maintain the production tool and safeguard the jobs (CNT, 2020). Indeed, this tourism sector received MAD 2 billion from the budget to deal with the consequences of the border closures which were decreed following the Omicron variant of COVID-19 at the end of 2021. Moreover, 1 billion dirhams have been allocated to help transport companies to cope with rising fuel prices. For its part, the agricultural sector has been allocated 10 billion dirhams to cope with the drought.

Concerning other sectors, the Ministry of the Economy and Finance has put in place, on a provisional and exceptional basis, derogatory support measures for public establishments and enterprises (EEP), facilitating payments and the commitment of investment expenditure and operation, as well as the conclusion and execution of contracts.

For the financial sector, the Moroccan Capital Market Authority (AMMC) has decided, in March 17, 2020 to tighten the maximum variation thresholds applicable to listed financial instruments and to reorganize the listing, processing and settlement times for transactions on financial instruments, in consultation with market players in order to stop the deterioration of stock market values. As such, the maximum variation, upward and downward, of the price of a

financial instrument during a single session may not exceed 4% of the reference price for equity securities whose quotation is in continuous mode. This threshold was limited to 2% of the reference prices for equity securities whose quotation is in fixing mode and debt securities.

The slowdown in the economy has led some companies in the export sector to stop production. Indeed, the Customs Administration issued two circulars on the quantitative restriction on the export of surgical masks, antiseptic preparations and protective masks. In terms of imports and taking into account the tensions on foreign currency reserves in connection with the drop in MRE transfers and tourist receipts, the Director General of Customs has sent a request to the Association of AIVAM vehicle importers in order to reduce to the strict minimum the imports by negotiating with suppliers to postpone them and that in order to reduce the negative impact of the crisis on the country's balance of payments. In the same sense, the customs administration also called on importers to limit their activity to what is strictly necessary.

Morocco has launched an economic recovery plan of 120 billion dirhams through the creation of a "Strategic Investment Fund" whose mission is to support production, support and financing activities for major development projects and public-private investment in a variety of areas. The implementation of the economic recovery plan will also be accompanied by "a profound reform of the public sector" through the creation of a National Agency whose mission will consist in ensuring the strategic management of State holdings and monitoring the performance of public institutions.

The Mohammed VI Fund for Investment is a central instrument of post-Covid recovery, the fund will be oriented towards investment and endowed with an envelope of 15 billion dhs from the state budget. The priority areas on which the "recovery investments" will focus include industrial restructuring; emerging and high-value sectors; revival of SMEs; infrastructure; agriculture; and tourism.

#### - **Monetary policy**

Aware of the significant impact of the health crisis on the various sectors of activity, Bank Al-Maghrib acted in concert with the budgetary authorities but also private sector players to provide a response to the economic shock. Indeed, the Central Bank has taken more appropriate prudential measures to support credit institutions in the coverage of liquidity and provisions. For this, provision has also planned to triple the refinancing capacities of banks through open market and foreign exchange swap operations, expansion of the list of eligible collateral for these operations, extension of maturities refinancing operations as well as the expansion of programs dedicated to very small enterprises for their operating loans.

To cope with deteriorating bank liquidity, the central bank proceeded to put in place a various instrument, mainly long-term repurchase agreements and 7-day advances. Bank Al-Maghrib (BAM) has also set up a new bank refinancing mechanism, including the possibility of using all the refinancing instruments available in dirham and foreign currency.

Hence, in order to support economic activity and promote recovery, Bank Al Maghrib opted in March to lower the key rate by 25 basis points to 2% then in June to 1.5%. The reduction in the key rate aims to increase the level of bank liquidity and allow households and businesses to finance themselves under the best conditions. Besides, BAM, carried out operations of injections of liquidity, the abolition of the obligatory reserve of the commercial banks. Also, the fall of the weighted average overnight interbank rate (TIMPJJ), has also stabilized at this level of 1.50% since June 2020 to ensure adequate financing of the economy. On September 2022, Bank Al-Maghrib (BAM) increased its key rate by 50 basis points, it is now 2%. This decision comes in order to mitigate a strong inflationary context in Morocco. At the end of August, the national inflation rate, measured by the consumer price index, reached 8% especially after the start of the war in Ukraine, The Central Bank has also revised its inflation forecasts for 2022 upwards, from 5.3% to 6.3%. However, compared to other economies (advanced and emerging and developing), inflation in Morocco remains relatively low, which may reflect the mitigating effect of energy and food subsidies.

Additionally, the Central Bank of Morocco suspended loan repayments for SMEs and the self-employed, and called on banking establishments not to pay dividends in 2019, in order to preserve the funds necessary to coping with the financial impact of the crisis. In addition, interest-free loans were granted to the self-employed, together with sovereign guarantees given to corporate loans.

#### **- Measures related to public finances**

Faced with such a crisis, the State, through the Ministry of Finance, is working to preserve the fundamentals of the economy and consolidate the public budget. To this end, a reflection has been launched on the management of public finances after Covid-19. In this context, for 2020, the authorities let the automatic stabilizers operate on the revenue side and used private contributions to the anti-COVID-19 fund to finance the increase in discretionary spending. Fiscal neutral, these measures had a strong redistributive effect and contributed an estimated 0.6% to growth.

On the tax front, companies whose turnover for the year 2019 is less than DH 20 million can, if they wish, benefit from a postponement of the filing of tax returns until 30 June 2020. Tax audits and ATDs will be suspended until June 30, 2020. In the same sense, the CVE decided to



exempt from income tax any additional allowance paid to employees (affiliated to the CNSS) by their employers, up to 50% of the average net monthly salary. As for individuals, it is necessary to postpone the deadlines for income tax returns for those who wish to do so, from the end of April to 30 June 2020.

As a result of the forecast drop in tax and customs revenues and in order to adapt its public finance forecasts to the imperatives of the pandemic context, the State has revised downwards, for the 2020 budget year, the credits opened and authorized. under the finance law in force. This measure has also been extended to the budgets of public establishments and enterprises and of local authorities.

In order to limit the impact of the external shock on the Moroccan economy and to preserve foreign exchange reserves as well as the balance of payments, a set of measures have been taken by the authorities including the use of external financing. For this, on April 7, 2020, the parliament's finance committee voted to exceed the external debt threshold set in article 43 of the 2020 finance law by 31 billion dirhams. In addition, on April 8, Morocco proceeded to use the Line of Precaution and Liquidity (LPL) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for an amount of \$ 3 billion, repayable over a period of 5 years, with a period of 3-year grace. At the end of August, the European Investment Bank allocated an emergency fund of EUR 100 million to support the Moroccan government's response plan; this is the first tranche of a EUR 200 million financing mechanism. This recourse to external financing is also in line with this global approach aimed at protecting the economy against the external shock that primarily affects the sectors exposed on the international market and tourism and at preserving external balances by offsetting part of the decline in FDIs and current remittances. The country has also drawn on a line of credit contracted with the WB for an amount of \$ 275 million, to finance development policies and natural disasters management. The European Investment Bank (EIB) has also released 440 million euros in favor of Moroccan banks. These funds should make it possible to support businesses and finance working capital needs.

Moreover, the Ministry of Finance and Bank Al Maghrib also announced the transition to the second phase of flexibility of the exchange rate regime by widening the fluctuation bands within an interval of +/-5%. The flexibility of the exchange rate makes it possible to strengthen the economy's capacity to absorb external shocks, support its competitiveness and thus help improve its growth.

#### **4.3.The treatment of social emergency**

To reduce the social impacts due to Covid 19, the State of Morocco has decided to take a multitude of measures for the benefit of businesses and employees as well as the liberal



professions and the informal sector which are facing difficulties caused by the pandemic. Moreover, according to (the HCP report, 2020), the major repercussions of the pandemic have prompted Morocco to take "urgent measures to combat the exacerbation of precariousness in order to stem the increase in poverty and social inequalities". Indeed, with the economy going down, providing adequate means of livelihood will be a key challenge facing the government in a country which is on 123<sup>rd</sup> position out.

For this, the State has deployed all of its arsenal in order to properly identify the people concerned and target its aid for the sake of the effectiveness of the remedy administered. A single social register is being set up to better target poor, vulnerable, precarious people or people with specific needs. It was decided to divide them into three categories: employees in the formal sector registered with social security; employed, unemployed or self-employed workers registered by the State under a Medical Assistance scheme and unregistered informal workers. To this end, approximately 800,000 employees affiliated with the National Social Security Fund (CNSS) in cessation of activity received a lump sum compensation of 1,000 DH for the month of March and 2,000 DH for the month of April and May in addition the benefit allowance relating to compulsory health insurance and family allowances from the Special Fund for the management of the coronavirus pandemic during the period from March 15 to June 30, 2020. Another direct aid measure was decided in favor of people working in the unstructured or informal sector and to the self-employed without social security coverage. Indeed, the beneficiaries were divided into two categories; households with the RAMED card, and households without no such health coverage. In this phase, 2.3 million people benefiting from the Basic Medical Insurance Plan (RAMED) are also affected after having made their declarations by SMS to a special number and received transfers of up to 800 dirhams for 1 to 2 people, 1,000 dirhams for households with 4 people and 1,200 dirhams for households beyond of 4 people. In addition, more than 2 million heads of households not affiliated to the RAMED register operating in the informal sector also received transfers equivalent to the amounts of aid to households affiliated to the RAMED register. Given the lack of information on the income of this category, the authorities have planned a data collection system in order to properly target transfers.

For non ramedists, a website was created for this purpose and the declaration began on April 10. In addition, the Professional Group of Banks of Morocco (GPBM) had indicated that from March 30, a postponement of the maturities of depreciable credits (real estate loans, consumer ...) and leasing would be granted on request, until June 30, 2020 for the benefit of households directly impacted by Covid-19. This measure is supported by the Covid-19 Special Fund.

At the social level, the employees can benefit from the postponement of the repayment of bank loans (consumer credit and buyer's credit) until a later date. Concerning individuals in general, the CVE proceeded at its seventh meeting held on 8 May 2020 to allow individuals whose incomes have dropped due to the state of health emergency to benefit from the postponement of housing and consumer credit repayments for the period between March and June 2020. It has been decided that the State and the banking sector will cover the entirety of the interest payments generated by this deferral. This measure is valid for people with monthly credit payments of up to DH 3,000 for housing loans and DH 1,500 for consumer loans, including those contracted with finance companies. It should be noted that about 400,000 people should benefit from the postponement of credit payments. Finally, the State has launched, from January 2021 and over the next five years, the process of generalizing social coverage for the benefit of all Moroccans - compulsory health insurance (AMO), family allowances, retirement and compensation for loss of employment.

## **5. Lessons learned, perspectives and recommendations**

Overall, the coronavirus pandemic has taught us several lessons. For the Moroccan case, the main lesson learned from this outbreak is that, despite a lack of preparedness in some aspects, the government managed to control the pandemic rather quickly and effectively by adopting a suppression strategy, followed by a control strategy, based on a collaborative and pragmatic decision.

### **5.1. Build real sovereign and welfare state and reinforce the public policies**

(Stiglitz, 2020) explained, “when faced with a crisis such as an epidemic or a hurricane, we look to the government, because we know that such events require collective action”. In fact, the welfare state, with its national varieties, remains at the heart of the “social model”. According to (Lucchese and Pianta, 2020) “Health, education, universities, pensions, social assistance and other key activities are provided and financed mainly by public action”.

In this way, it is necessary to rethink the public policies and to stress the importance of the roles of the State, which must increase its economic potential and achieve its development, with regard to the education, health and social sectors, social security, and create investments in infrastructure that affect the vast majority of citizens. Besides, the Special Commission on the Development Model must also take into account the new parameters resulting from the pandemic, by giving new impetus to the health sector, to employment and income-generating activities (SMEs, SMIs, VSEs and start-ups and auto -entrepreneurship), national education, the integration of the informal sector, and the reduction of social and territorial inequalities.

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### - Health Strategies

Public health systems play a fundamental role in the response to the coronavirus pandemic. For (Lucchese and Pianta, 2020), these systems are based on a vision of health as a global public good and a fundamental right which must be guaranteed by the State and which cannot be produced as a commodity and sold on the market to individual consumers. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) states that "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including nutrition, clothing, housing and medical care and social services".

According to the WHO, national health indicators hide deep geographical and socio-economic inequalities. Indeed, the crisis has revealed public health dysfunctions, in particular the difficulty of access to care, the shortage of qualified human resources, the high cost of drugs and the inequitable territorial distribution in terms of infrastructure, expenditure and personnel health. This crisis further demonstrates the importance of research/development in the field of health, science, and the obligation to work together (of all agencies and institutions such as the governmental and non-governmental sector) to find solutions, especially in the prevention of viral diseases. Likewise, the WHO revealed some priorities to be considered, including the need to invest heavily in the development of the health infrastructure sector compared to other areas such as the military and armament across the strengthening, training, equipping hospitals and scientific research.

In addition, it is urgent to encourage the sovereignty of national production of medical goods and strengthen the pharmaceutical industry; strengthen the health workforce and increase their remuneration; guarantee quality human capital and ensure diversified and territorially balanced coverage. The health crisis has also revealed in the case of Morocco, the importance of telemedicine in improving access to basic health care. It should be noted that it is important to create national and regional health monitoring units capable of guiding Morocco towards the continuous improvement of its health system and helping to deal with diseases that may arise at any time in particular the National Public Health Agency (ANSP).

The idea of ANSP is strongly supported by the European Community (EU) and by the International Association of National Institutes of Public Health (IANPHI). It fits perfectly with the priorities and key strategic directions that have been identified to address the challenges and address the gaps identified during the assessment of essential public health functions in Morocco, with the support of WHO. The ANSP is proposed as a Coherence Agent in the control of disease, surveillance information and the response to health crises which requires agility in coordination. The ANSP will be able to ensure the creation of intelligent and efficient shared

platforms (data and scientific and technical skills) within the framework of a cooperation group led by the Ministry of Health and then by the gradual establishment of a public establishment. Hence, it is important to strengthen multisectoral collaboration and public-private partnership in order to improve the functioning of the system for monitoring and strengthening Morocco's autonomy in the manufacture of drugs, medical devices and vaccines. This partnership concerns providers and private industry as well as civil society and the media, it is a good lever to improve the resilience dividend of the health sector (Belghiti Alaoui, A 2020). Finally, the State should review, within the framework of the amending finance law, the budget allocated to the health sector, then those of education and scientific research according to a medium-term strategic vision.

**- At the level of education**

The analysis of the management of the pandemic crisis has shown that this crisis has revealed the need to reform the education sector by accelerating the fight against illiteracy and at the same time by promoting scientific research through the establishment of partnership agreements with professionals and by directing education towards more professional training that meets the company's need to find qualified labor and the need for apprentices to find training leading to employment, in particular training in key areas such as renewable energies, artificial intelligence, digitalization, etc. Besides, the education system's offer must be consistent with the revealed and latent comparative advantages as well as with the challenges of globalization. Then, if Morocco should learn a lesson from this pandemic, it is to abundantly encourage scientific research, innovation and the knowledge economy as essential drivers of the national economy. A problem of pedagogical continuity arose when the educational establishments were closed, as a result face-to-face lessons were stopped and replaced by distance lessons. Thus, with the lack of the necessary means for this mode of teaching, e-learning has only deepened social inequalities. Therefore, it is particularly imperative for the national economy to invest massively in education system and ensure their accessibility to different social segments<sup>4</sup>.

**- Digitization is a sine qua non for development**

(Daniel Cohen, 2020) announces the emergence of a new dominant capitalism, that of digital. The health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has given rise to considerable lessons relating to the digital transition of the Kingdom. Thus, this crisis constitutes for the country a real opportunity to accelerate and sustain the digital transformation of its economy, society and

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<sup>4</sup> Invest in scientific research knowing that expenditure on research and development (R&D) constitutes 0.8% of Morocco's GDP in 2017, revealing that this rate remains very low compared to that of OECD countries (Organization cooperation and economic development) with a BIP of (2.3%).

its administration within the framework of the establishment of open-government (digital economy, artificial intelligence, machine learning, nanotechnologies, robotization, etc.).

The information and communication technologies has become a necessity. Thus, Morocco must accelerate its efforts related to the digitization of all the digitization of the means of information and communication since this has proven to be a pivot for development.

The pandemic has made us aware of the importance of e-commerce, as a vector for the growth of commercial transactions both in the domestic market and to boost the exports. As a result, it is important to integrate the digital lever into the center of business strategies because it allows them to quickly launch their projects and sustainably accelerate their growth. Moreover, the government should support the national financial inclusion strategy and in particular take advantage of the opportunities emanating from artificial intelligence and open data, by becoming a producer of digital content and not just a consumer.

Indeed, accelerating technological innovation of the digital administration strategy to guarantee better citizens' access to public services (education and training, support household, various public services) is an important measure in this axis (El Hiri A, 2020). Following this health crisis, teleworking has emerged as a tool showing more flexibility in the world of work and it is recommended to perpetuate this experience for the benefit of companies, employees and society in general. Moreover, the creation of new digital interfaces and platforms contributes to the reduction of corruption.

The regulation of telework is set to develop in the digital age. This is a regulation that must be based on the principle of equality and non-discrimination in employment, as well as that of the protection and strengthening of the fight against the potential risks engendered by telecommuting. From a legal point of view, this regulation is required in the public and private sector to include provisions for the protection of teleworkers, the establishment of a precise contractual relationship framework encompassing rights and obligations, the protection of digital data, the regulation of work accidents and occupational diseases.

The current crisis has shown the important role that digital and digital platforms can play in market access and business continuity. However, the digital divide between governorates, between different fringes of society, between MTPEs and medium and large companies, poses the problem of inequalities in access to technology. In this context, reducing the digital divide and improving the coverage of regions with fixed broadband internet are priorities. Likewise, the State should enact laws that support the work of e-government, such as e-commerce and e-signature.

## **5.2.At the social level**

On the social level, the progressive disengagement of the State due to the weak budgetary financing has marginalized a set of sectors, such as the sectors of education, housing, health and especially in the rural world. This crisis has demonstrated the need to implement a coordinated and harmonious social policy, based on the principles of solidarity, sustainable social cohesion and sound economic management. In this context, Morocco can draw lessons from the implementation in 1983-84 of structural adjustment programs (SAP), whose negative impact on the social sectors required an effort of more than 30 years to try to reduce the inequalities generated.

Moreover, given the significant financial cost that the health crisis has generated and which has been borne by the Special COVID Solidarity Fund, strengthening social protection therefore seems to be an appropriate and viable response to the negative impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations operating in the different segments of the Moroccan economy. In the same sense, the public authorities must pay particular attention to the development of multidimensional poverty and to planning an inclusive response. In this way, the State must generalize social programs and establish a management body for the various programs so that the target aid really goes to eligible people through the acceleration of the establishment of the single social register to ensure the continuity of the social life in a crisis situation. In fact, the identification of people in situations of multidimensional vulnerability is a key element of the response to the crisis. Morocco already has, through the RAMED system, a first important database for identifying the people most vulnerable to the effects of the crisis. This made it possible to identify 15.1 million people (i.e. people with a RAMED card, valid or not) presenting a risk of increased vulnerability.

The COVID-19 crisis has caused a health shock directly impacting the labor market. It is therefore necessary to protect vulnerable segments of the labor market, such as the self-employed, agricultural workers and day laborers, unprotected workers and people in atypical forms of employment, urban and rural. Likewise, the issue of formalizing the informal sector, which remains a sector which contributes to a large extent to the creation of added value and employment must be addressed as a priority. The international experiences of countries in Latin America or Eastern Europe, for example, are inspiring in this regard. Additionally, the government must provide monthly social assistance to vulnerable people without income. The financing of this initiative requires thought; it is a question of rationalizing government spending. Moreover, redefine the scope of the compensation fund to benefit only needy citizens (exclude companies, for example for gas, sugar, etc.) turns out to be an important answer in this sense.



Reinforce immediately human rights-based action in response to COVID-19 is an urgent priority (Article 161). In this perspective, the best response to a possible economic and social catastrophe caused by the crisis (COVID-19) is to put financial resources at the service of human rights.

The crisis risks aggravating gender inequalities. Indeed, women are more exposed to the risks of the crisis and also have specific health and medical protection needs that are not always met. It is therefore important to include women in decision-making and the design of support programs, to promote gender equality in budgetary, depreciation and recovery measures. A rapid cash transfer is also necessary for women working in the informal sector. SMEs, start-ups or cooperatives led by women need support through capacity building and market access<sup>5</sup>. Indeed, it is essential to carry out specific reflection on other innovative tools to ensure the protection of women and girls are protected. against domestic violence. In fact, in Morocco, the prevalence rate of domestic violence is 52%, or 6.1 million women before the crisis and the world is now observing an upward trend.

An inclusive response must also address the particular needs of migrants and refugees. Globally, IOM and UNHCR emphasize the need to include migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in national responses to the pandemic, prioritizing the coordination of direct assistance interventions with a systemic approach, supporting national and local authorities. In Morocco, the population registered in the UNHCR database is, as of May 31, 2020, 11,149 people, including 3,843 asylum seekers and 7,306 refugees in need of protection. The inclusion of these populations in national responses is essential to support their resilience in the face of this crisis, also with a view to leaving no one behind in accordance with the achievement of the SDGs.

### **5.3. Develop robust economic policies**

In order to reduce the negative impact of this crisis on the national economy, we are developing certain post-crisis scenarios in terms of economic policies to enrich the long-term strategic reflection on the various avenues for reviving the Moroccan economy and the factors needed to build its resilience. So, it becomes imperative for Morocco to get involved in the establishment of an inclusive and equitable economy and society economic model, capable of guarding against any other crisis.

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<sup>5</sup> In Morocco, the participation of women in economic life is among the lowest in the world (22% in 2018 vs 48% worldwide, including 10% in entrepreneurship) with a decline over the past 20 years (29% in 2000).

- **Morocco should review its international positioning and diversifies its commercial partners**

Morocco is highly dependent on foreign countries both to meet its needs and to ensure the survival of several economic sectors (tourism, offshoring, textiles, automobiles, transfers from MREs, etc.).

The limits of national exports and the massive flows of imports aggravate the trade and payment balance deficits, as well as the debt ratio. The Moroccan government should promote, develop and strengthen local industry by reviewing its industrial policies so as to ensure a minimum of autonomy and self-sufficiency, to make the economic fabric more homogeneous, less dependent for strategic products, even less dependent on foreign demand and therefore avoid risk of disrupting supply chains.

According to (Jabry. K 2020)<sup>6</sup>, the government should encourage and support by all means the national company and the "made in Morocco" in order to strengthen the economic independence. It is therefore recommended to encourage national investors by making administrative procedures more flexible and by offering several advantages both in tax, legal and financial terms. In addition, Morocco must think more about its economic independence and must have among its strategic objectives, the creation of competitive industries capable of both meeting the needs of the internal market and penetrating external markets. In other way, it is important to support the impetus of a new economy by consolidating the sectors in which Morocco enjoys real assets such as agro-industry, textiles, logistics, renewable energies, aeronautics, automotive, electronics and technology.

The way out of the crisis must focus on domestic demand. Thus, in order to promote this demand, it is a question of orienting consumption towards local products and promoting national production. So, the State should proceed with an "exceptional" reduction in taxes on the income of the middle class and the extension of cash transfer mechanisms to households with the weak incomes, or unemployed. In short, the state must mobilize all means to help maintain productive activities and employment.

Otherwise, the COVID-19 crisis has revealed certain opportunities that Morocco must take advantage of in order to strengthen its position and role as a reliable industrial partner. In this sense, the State must take advantage of its geographical location, and the opportunities offered by the relocation carried out by a good number of multinational companies and improve the

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<sup>6</sup> The industrial import substitution strategy will be able to meet the needs of the Moroccan consumer according to national production without relying on imports. The manufacture of a prototype of a 100% Moroccan artificial respirator, protective masks, so many inventions and innovations of Moroccan skills which prove the possibility of substitution of foreign products.

business climate for a better territorial attractiveness to foreign investors. It is now time to move on to the industrial acceleration phase already underway, combining sectoral plans with global geoeconomics dynamics. Morocco could thus position itself in new niches and better integrate into global value chains, like projects already operational such as the ambitious PSA project set up in Kenitra or that of Renault Nissan in Tangier.

The low level of diversification of partners in international trade has proven to be one of the reasons for Morocco's economic fragility. For example, textiles, a strategic sector within national industrial activity, has been strongly impacted by the repercussions of the economic crisis which has affected its main partners (in particular Spain and France, which absorb nearly 60% of the country's exports. sector). Moreover, if the economy is to learn any lesson from this crisis, it is to think about expanding its supply chain networks associated with exports and imports. Based on this, it is wise to initiate a strategic reflection notably the consolidation of relations with the historical partner, in this case the European Union. In this same sense, the national economy must think about improving its trade network at the continental level by strengthening its cooperation within the African Continental Free Trade Area (ZLECAF) and a strengthening of multifaceted economic relations with Africa (investment, export, exchange of expertise, training of executives, etc.). Likewise, Morocco must adopt a policy of productive regionalization in the European and African zone. Thus, the state must support companies to invest in global businesses and to work in collaboration with Europe and Africa, with the aim of reducing costs, guaranteeing quality, controlling the logistics chain and taking advantage of natural resources.

#### **- Morocco's new development model after covid-19**

The development model adopted by Morocco for three decades (that is to say since the Structural Adjustment Plan) has recently shown its limits. In this context, an analysis of the different theories that were the foundations of the old model must be implemented, in order to put forward theories that are sound and above all effective for the new development model. Among the theories that have shown their efficiency at this level, "the theory of institutionalism" which aims at the intervention of different institutions to upgrade the development model. It is a crucial moment to build a united, just, equitable, and resilient society. It is also an opportunity to think well about development and to define the bases of an inclusive economic growth model where human capital plays a central role.

Morocco's next development model must have a projection towards the future, like the developed countries in Europe, China, India. Thus, the government must find adequate solutions to the various problems which remain as obstacles to development, in particular

unemployment, tax evasion, protection and social injustice. Additionally, it is deemed necessary that the new model meet expectations; review agricultural policy, improve the health system, adjust the education system, intensify R&D in sectors with high added value, encourage local and foreign investment and give new impetus to income-generating activities, jobs and income (SMEs, SMIs, VSEs and start-ups and self-entrepreneurship). Thus, the new model of development must think more about its economic independence, to be up to date with new information and communication technologies and to accelerate its efforts related to the digitization of all sectors.

The revision of the development model should opt for new public policies that provide the necessary corrections to the various forms of social, gender and territorial disparities, in particular by accelerating the establishment of the unified social register. The new model must also make room for the green economy as a necessity and as an opportunity and allow food security. Moreover, Morocco is still far from fully integrating the knowledge economy, which creates added value and wealth. The big challenge has been for two decades the inability of the Moroccan economy to achieve more than an average annual growth of less than 4% despite the considerable effort in terms of public and private investment, in addition to FDI.

#### **- Rethink the model of tourism**

The crisis has succeeded in revealing the flaws of a sector considered vital for the Moroccan economy but which is handicapped by multiple structural constraints which hamper its development (governance problems, under-capitalization of companies, weight of taxation, predominance of the informal sector, etc.). The post-Covid period must be an opportunity to rethink the current model of tourism to make it a locomotive for the country's development. For this, efforts must be made to ensure better governance of the industry, improve its competitiveness, accelerate its digital transformation and increase its resilience in the face of future crises.

The UNWTO (2020) considered that the Development of domestic and outbound tourism, representing 1/3 of domestic tourism consumption, i.e. 41.8 billion dirhams (HCP, 2018) is the ultimate way to restart the sector. This requires a reengineering of domestic tourism offers by compensating for the shortcomings of the already tested “Biladi” programs and the relaunching of frozen or unfinished “Medinti” projects. At this level, and among the measures to be implemented, can be mentioned those recommended by the CGEM: the reduction of VAT from 20% to 10% (CGEM, 2020: 17) and the return to the regionalization of holidays (CGEM, 2020: 31-34). Also, a review of operators' investment plans is needed, with a focus on sustainable tourism and the development of clusters in the various tourist regions (OECD, 2018). Indeed,

safeguarding tourism employment, in particular labor not declared to the CNSS (83% of employees in the sector), or those who work there informally (Alami, 2020), by encouraging employers to make the necessary declarations, and the integration of those who work in the informal or unorganized sector under the status of self-employed or social entrepreneur is an important measure to relaunch this sector.

#### **5.4.Public intervention for businesses**

The difficulty of businesses has become a public matter, since the disappearance of businesses can cause economic and social repercussions, which would not leave the state indifferent. In the face of the health crisis, the state has redoubled its efforts by taking important measures in favor of companies in difficulty. As a result, there was the creation of an ad-hoc structure 'Damane Oxygene' which proposed to the government the appropriate measures to support businesses in this difficult period. It is important to mention in this context that the State intervention in favor of companies in difficulty is a very timid practice. It is dictated by the protection of strategic enterprises for the national economy, such as the RAM which has benefited from state aid on several occasions.

The State can intervene directly by providing tax assistance to companies in difficulty. In fact, taxation constitutes a means of intervention which takes the form of tax exemptions, reduction of transfer rights for the takeover of a company in difficulty and the granting of payment terms. The book V of the commercial code offers several instruments for preventing and dealing with business failures. But it is clear that this legislation has not been adapted to the health crisis, which risks being at the origin of several bankruptcies. As for the role of State intervention in favor of companies in difficulty, it is not regulated by any legal text but several measures have been taken by the public authorities in favor of confined companies. It is therefore necessary to study successively the need to adapt Book V of the Commercial Code to the health crisis and the institutionalization of public intervention in favor of companies in difficulty.

Faced with this deep health and economic crisis, the Moroccan law of obligations and contracts is called upon to modernize, in order to ensure more predictability, security and fairness.

The magnitude of the COVID-19 crisis has revealed the failure of economic intelligence systems within Moroccan companies. Thus, the implementation of economic intelligence makes it possible, on the one hand, to assess the impact of the crisis, by monitoring the evolution of the situation, the risks, the economic and social consequences of the state of health emergency and mandatory confinement. On the other hand, it makes it possible to apprehend the future of company by developing a response strategy capable of ensuring the conditions for

an organized recovery, implementing the appropriate measures and providing the necessary means.

CSR is a concept in which companies integrate social, environmental and economic concerns in their activities and in their interactions with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis. CSR is now an integral part of the discourse on sustainable development. It is also of undeniable economic interest, as it remains an asset for the sustainability of the company and its profitability. CSR is also important in that it is a vector of attraction for foreign investors and a key factor for Moroccan companies wishing to operate abroad. Future CSR approaches will have to take into account a new framework with more regulation and less legitimacy. Today, for CSR to fully play its role in ending COVID-19, it must begin to really take hold in operating and organizational methods. This depends on a combination of organizational, legal and contextual objectives. To do this, it would first be necessary for the organizations to respect the legislation in force and the collective agreements concluded between the social partners. In Morocco, there is no law that obliges organizations to put in place a CSR strategy. However, many states such as France, India and China have developed a body of regulations that frame CSR by encouraging organizations to be more responsible.

### **5.5. For a new governance of public finances**

The situation of public finances in Morocco is decisive in promoting recovery from the social and economic impacts of the Covid-19 crisis. However, public debt was already at a historically high level in 2019, the crisis has further aggravated the debt situation, which would imply the adoption of an approach for a new governance of public finances likely to mitigate the adverse effects on the national economy. This requires the mobilization of monetary (to support demand) and budgetary policies (to support production and vulnerable households).

#### **- At the level of fiscal policy**

In the event of an extreme crisis, fiscal policy is the best response tool against the effects of Covid-19. Indeed, a revision post-crisis fiscal policy instruments, will not only strengthen economic activity through the mobilization of public expenditure and the reduction of fiscal pressure, but also through a governed management of domestic and exterior loans. In this context, the State must firstly make a change in the priorities of operating and investment expenditure, direct a larger share to the vital sectors, mainly the health and the education sectors, reduce all discretionary superfluous expenditure and rationalize the use of public funds. Then, it necessary that Morocco encourage public-private partnership (PPP), in order to minimize indebtedness and attract foreign investment.



Moreover, carrying out tax reform likely to boost revenues in order to reduce the deficit, through proportional taxation of capital and income and create a tax on inheritance and wealth is another important measure in this way.

In addition, a fair tax system must ensure a fair distribution of the tax burden and therefore support purchasing power in a balanced way in order to support the poorest social classes. The current tax system is still marred by shortcomings, particularly in terms of the distribution of the tax burden. Indeed, the weight of taxation does not weigh in a balanced way, neither on citizens nor on economic agents (CESE, 2019). In this sense, it is recommended to review the income tax brackets put in place for better adaptation to the current context of the population in order to ensure a real balance and equality before the tax and rethink tax policy for individuals (active and retired) by making taxes more progressive.

According to (Jabry. K, 2020), the government must revise the labor code in terms of defending the worker, partial unemployment and the reactivation of the "CNJA" plan for the recruitment of 500,000 employees in the private sector (exemption from charges relating to this type of job). For its part, (Seddiki. S, 2020) argued that eradicating the rentier economy in all its forms is a key factor to reinforce the fiscal system.

Added to this is the organization of the informal sector and the fight against tax evasion. The objective is to make tax policy a lever making the formal economic environment an attractive environment that encourages the informal sector to join the framework of the organized economy. In this sense, it is necessary to diversify the methods of intervention and control of the tax administration, in particular through the strengthening of the use of the right of findings to be exercised on the most important taxpayers. These will constitute the starting point for identifying as many actors as possible constituting the informal ecosystems to which they belong (L. Benazzou, R. Zoubair, 2020).

The tax breaches and evasions contribute to widening socio-economic disparities in general between sections of the population and in particular between those who cheat and those who pay their taxes. (E. Marcus, 2014). To this end, it is imperative to put in place tax policy instruments to deal with fraud and tax evasion. In this sense, it is necessary to go beyond the means of control a posteriori towards a proactive logic.

**- At the level of monetary policy**

As for monetary policy, decision-makers must act directly on the country's money supply, by providing the necessary liquidity to deal with the covid-19 health crisis notably;

- Reinforce the role of monetary policy to support economic activity by providing the banking sector with necessary and sufficient liquidity.
- Expand the role of Bank Al Maghrib to become a vector of economic development and social in addition to its role as regulator and controller of inflation.
- Reduce the key rate in order to encourage investment and refinance the economy.
- Encourage credit facilities for the most vulnerable economic sectors to the shocks of the health crisis and carry out the postponement of credit maturities.
- Make the transition to a flexible and competitive exchange rate of the dirham to absorb current shocks.
- Manage the available exchange reserves in a rational and prudent manner and favor exports to the detriment of imports to balance the balance of payments.
- Encourage banks to reserve a fund specially dedicated to supporting and feeding the cash flow of companies in difficulty.

Moreover, the authorities should ensure an optimal coordination between fiscal policy and monetary policy within the framework of a countercyclical policy that stimulate economic activity and alleviate the economic, social and psychological difficulties that the Covid pandemic has caused.

### **5.6.The social and solidarity economy**

The social and solidarity economy is also a response in favor of the creation of wealth at the territorial level and the inclusion of vulnerable populations. For that, the Moroccan government should adopt the social and solidarity economy (SSE) as a pillar for relaunching Morocco's economy, starting first with the strengthening of SSE actors, in particular associations, cooperatives, economic interest groups (GIE) and mutuals. This strategy has already been adopted by the State through the involvement of the associative fabric in its various programs, notably the National Initiative for Human Development, nevertheless, these structures remain weak on the managerial side and in terms of project management. For this, it is strongly recommended to organize training sessions for the benefit of said actors and to carry out a close follow-up of the projects and actions carried out in this context, with a view to improving the quality of the latter, increasing income and promote employment.

In the same sense, the government must anchor the spirit of entrepreneurship in young people, by developing their creativity, their technical capacities as well as their soft skills, and by encouraging them to start their own projects. This has already been implemented notably through the third program of the National Initiative for Human Development "Youth Economic

Inclusion" and the Entrepreneurship Support Fund "Intilaka". However, the state is called upon to relax the financing conditions and procedures relating to these programs and to reduce the timeframes for financing and implementing projects. In addition, the State, will work in the transition from the informal economy to the formal economy by encouraging the self-employed to carry out their activities in the formality by reducing the costs of this transition and providing them with more social benefits. The use of technology in this sense is also necessary. In the same way, the State should develop highly job-creating activities such as those relating to the social and solidarity economy, works of public interest to fight unemployment (Seddiki. A, 2020)<sup>7</sup>. Likewise, the government must put excess tax revenue at the service of social solidarity even institutionalize a tax to contribute to social solidarity.

Indeed, the behavioral and experimental economics, which has allowed us to make great progress in understanding the inefficiency of economic systems in the face of the risk of financial crisis, or environmental risks, should be able to be mobilized to understand how the Moroccan economy can respond effectively to the risk of a COVID-19 type health crisis.

## **6. Moroccan Good Governance in the context of Covid-19 crisis**

Good governance and the mobilization of an active civil society constitute the "strong link" of Morocco to meet the challenge of the fight against the spread of the pandemic linked to the new coronavirus, underlines the Euro-Mediterranean Observatory of the public space and democracy.

Furthermore, it is important to mention that, in Morocco, public services are organized on the basis of equal access for citizens, equitable coverage of the national territory and continuity of services. They are subject to standards of quality, transparency, accountability and responsibility, and are governed by the democratic principles and values enshrined in the Constitution (Article 154). Their agents exercise their functions according to the principles of respect for the law, neutrality, transparency, probity, and general interest (Article 155). Likewise, public services listen to their users and follow up on their observations, proposals and grievances. They account for the management of public funds in accordance with the legislation in force and are subject, in this respect, to the obligations of control and evaluation (Article 156). In addition, according to (Article 157), a charter of public services sets all the rules of good governance relating to the functioning of public administrations, regions and other local authorities and public bodies. Moreover, the authorities in charge of good governance are

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<sup>7</sup> Seddiki, A (2020). L'après covid-19, 7 clés pour la relance.

independent. They enjoy the support of state bodies. The law may, if necessary, create other bodies for regulation and good governance (Article 159).

Long before the appearance of the Covid-19 crisis, Morocco, through the Constitution of 2011, laid the groundwork for a mobilized and active civil society to support the steps taken by State institutions and put in place a system of good governance. Thus, Morocco has set up several institutions that are interested in the management of civil society affairs, including the Institution of the Mediator, the Competition Council, the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication, the national authority for probity, prevention and the fight against corruption and the regional human rights councils. The new Moroccan constitution of 2011 pays unprecedented tribute to the principle of good governance and related issues: access to information, transparency, probity, anti-corruption, accountability ethics and social participation.

The anchoring of the principles of good governance is at the heart of the concerns of the New Development Model, affirmed the President of the Special Commission on the Development Model (CSMD). In this context, the report drawn up by the CSMD attaches particular importance to the principles of good governance and the fight against corruption. Then, we use some fundamental principles of good governance to assess the quality of governance processes during the pandemic Covid 19 in particular the rule of law, public participation, transparency, accountability, decentralization, effectiveness and efficiency and the corruption.

#### **- Transparency**

Transparency refers to distributing information through appropriate channels to citizens (Keping, 2018). It is termed as the clarity and accessibility of information provided by the government while keeping the public's interest into consideration (Mimicopoulos, Kyj, Sormani, Bertucci, & Qian, 2007). Transparent governments aim to create confidence among the public regarding the governments' decision-making process (Porumbescu, 2015), leading to a higher level of citizens' trust in governments (Yang and Northcott, 2019).

Disclosure of all the factors and figures related to important matters is called transparency (Farwell et al., 2019). It relates to providing information about major decision processes, functioning and performance (Sridhar, Gadgil, & Dhingra, 2020). Also, open access to information from governmental entities reflects transparency and creates a notion that the government is acting legally, leading to increased public trust (Nedal & Alcoriza, 2018).

In recent years, many international laws concerning press and media freedom have emphasized access to information by the people from governing authorities (Moreno-Albarracín, Licerán-Gutierrez, Ortega-Rodríguez, Labella, & Rodríguez, 2020). Many governments are applying

various digital means to become more transparent (Matheus, Janssen, & Janowski, 2021). Certain countries have enforced NPM (new public management) style, which advocates proactive transparency for gaining public trust (Song & Lee, 2016). Moreover, transparency is considered as a fundamental solution to the issues linked with democratic government; being transparent in decision-making and displaying information to the public governments win citizens' trust (Grimmelikhuijsen, Piotrowski, & Van Ryzin, 2020). Therefore, to create administrative transparency, several efforts are made at the government level that further enhance citizens' trust in government (Attiya & Welch, 2004; da Cruz, Tavares, Marques, Jorge, & De Sousa, 2016; Grimmelikhuijsen, 2012; Porumbescu, 2015). In connection to that, scholars stated that social media is a great platform that government can utilize to be fair and transparent in democratic matters to further build trust among the citizens (Bertot, Jaeger, & Grimes, 2010; Mergel, 2013). Likewise, (Lee, Lee-Geiller, and Lee, 2020) stated that one of the hallmarks of government services is their transparent nature and openness using various official websites to communicate with citizens. (Porumbescu, 2017) examined the two channels of providing information by the government, i.e. e-government websites and social media and their association with citizens trust level on government and found positive results.

In Morocco, the 2011 Constitution make a provision that the public decisions and processes must be transparent. Thus, one of the most common ways in which transparency is ensured in public institutions is through the use of technology including social media.

During the covid 19 crisis, the Moroccan government has been transparent with the information sharing regarding the cases with its people as well as WHO. The government even created a website dedicated to COVID-19 to reveal the daily data of cases, guidelines, FAQs etc. In the same sense, the information on decisions, the implementation of policies and the results are made public in such a way as to allow the population to follow and contribute effectively to the action of the local community. Nevertheless, we can highlight a lack of transparency which is fueling the anxiety of millions of Moroccans respecting the confinement instructions and who are beginning to become seriously impatient in the absence of visibility on the end of the state of emergency and the return to a life normal.

The lack of transparency has also characterized this entire past period with regard to the management of the Covid-19 Special Fund. It is important to mention that the information relating to the operations processed within the framework of the Covid 19 fund is very limited, which calls into question Morocco's desire to observe the guidelines of an open budget (open budget index) allowing the active contribution of citizens to the implementation of public policies. For example, the pledges made by several persons, legal and natural, were the subject

of extensive media coverage, to the point that for a time, the public debate on the details of these declarations of intentions had become more important than that prompted by the pandemic itself.

The Special Appropriation Accounts are one of the 5 categories of special treasury accounts allowed by article 27 of the organic law of finance laws (LOF). General Treasury of the Kingdom (TGR) has only shared in its last monthly bulletins general information relating to the situation of the SAA in question. The citizens targeted by this media campaign are still not aware. The decree creating the special fund for the management of the Covid-19 pandemic clarified its status as a special allocation account. Indeed, in accordance with the principles of good governance, the legislator has the right to control the various expenditures of the general budget.

Similarly, we can highlight a lack of visibility regarding the economic cost of the pandemic. In fact, according to the Minister of Finance, during the session of April 27, 2020, oral questions in the House of Representatives devoted to the financial and economic measures taken to deal with the Covid-19 crisis, the total resources of the Special Fund reached 32 billion dirhams as of April 24 and the expenses of the Fund amounted to 6.2 billion dirhams, of which 2 billion were allocated to the Ministry of Health for the acquisition of medical equipment and devices. Even regarding the 6.2 billion dirhams spent as of April 24, no one knows how or where they were allocated. And then, from April 24 to date, no information on the funds collected, those spent and which sectors or social categories have benefited. In addition, at the start of the state of health emergency, and a few days after the creation of the Covid-19 Special Fund, the General Treasury of the Kingdom announced on March 23, 2020, the provision to citizens, economic operators and other partners, an online service to make their donations to the Special Fund. At the end of March, a publication of the TGR escapes control and reveals the real amounts of donations injected into the Fund, some of which are not identical to the promises made by their donors. Later that day, the post was deleted. Since then, no detailed information on the funds collected, the donors, the amounts of the donations, the amounts of the expenses, the allocations of the expenses, the beneficiaries have not been revealed.

Mortgaging future generations, over-indebtedness is much more dangerous than an economic recession. The representatives of the nation adopted the bill 26.20 approving the decree-law relating to the exceeding of the ceiling of external loans. This text authorizes the government to exceed the external financing ceiling of 31 billion Dh set by finance law 70-19 for the 2020 budget year, in order to meet its foreign currency needs, in particular by resorting to borrowing on the international market. Thus, after 1 billion euros borrowed from the European stock



exchange at the rate of 1.5% over a period of 12 years, and after having collected the LPL from the IMF of 3 billion dollars and the 275 million dollars from WB, the government proceeded with a new international exit four months after the first and a month and a half after the establishment of the state of health emergency. Indeed, we underline, a lack of information on the justification of this new loan, its designation on the accounts of BAM and the way in which it is spent.

Concerning the mechanism intended to improve access to budgetary information, Transparency Morocco noted that the open budget index could not be assessed because "of the non-publication, within the deadlines, of the preliminary report of the budget and that of the end of the financial year. By posting a score of 43/100 for this indicator, Morocco is content to "deliver the minimum information"<sup>8</sup>.

#### **- Responsiveness**

Responsiveness refers to the willingness and ability of government officials to listen to public opinion and make decisions accordingly (Bratton, 2012). For (Keping, 2018), responsiveness means that public organizations must respond to the pandemic sensibly, without delay or negligence and be accountable to their citizens.

The government entities' responsiveness is critical because failure to comply with people's demands or issues on time can lead to uncertainty and lack of trust, which have further consequences such as riots and rebellions (Miller, 2015). Especially in today's era of electronic and social media, government attention and responsiveness to meet their demands and expectations become crucial; therefore, government entities need to be responsible in their decision making to gain the trust of the masses (Qiaoan & Teets, 2020). At the same time, the perceived government response to COVID-19 is defined as the government's rapid response to the pandemic situation to put in place welfare laws, regulations and decision-making in the best interest of the public (Conway III, Woodard and Zubrod, 2020). Similarly, Lee and Porumbescu (2019) demonstrated the important role played by responsive governance in forming public trust in government while using e-government channels by disseminating valuable information to the public in a timely manner. In Morocco, during the Covid-19, the objectives, rules, structures and procedures are adapted to the legitimate expectations and needs of citizens. In fact, public services are provided and requests and complaints are responded to within a reasonable time.

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<sup>8</sup> Since its creation, Transparency Morocco has included its action in the fight against corruption within the framework of the democratic movement which works for good governance, the development of citizenship, the promotion of the rule of law and the establishment of a national system of integrity.

Nevertheless, responsiveness and efficiency were limited during the period of covid 19. In fact, during the period of approval of the 2020 Finance Bill, parliamentarians suggested increasing the budget allocated to the Ministries of Health and Education with a view to improving the quality of social services, which benefit especially the most disadvantaged classes. Unfortunately, to discourage any attempt to formulate and adopt these proposals, the Minister of Economy and Finance alluded to constitutional article 77 allowing the Executive to oppose any legislative amendment likely to aggravate the public charges. It is also important to emphasize that the monthly public aid enabled 5.1 million households to resist during the confinement. However, many citizens find it difficult to benefit from this aid. Indeed, according to a survey carried out by the High Commission for Planning on the impact of the pandemic, 59% of households in which a member has lost their job and who are registered to benefit from the Covid19 fund, have not received anything until April 23, the closing date of this investigation. During the month of May, Moroccans organized demonstrations in several cities to challenge their exclusion from this aid, despite their precarious economic situation. In fact, it raises questions about the effectiveness of targeting in the management of this fund.

- **Responsibility and accountability**

Accountability is conceptualized as the extent to which government is answerable for its decisions and actions to the public (Shafritz, Russell, & Borick, 2015). It is through public accountability that deviations and anomalies are likely to be identified and corrected accordingly (Thornhill 2012). Moreover, accountability deals with how the government uses resources, takes important policy decisions and communicates the same with citizens (Wang et al., 2018). (Moeti ed. 2014) refers to accountability as an obligation to answer to a higher authority with regard to its authorization and resource allocation. However, it is misconstruing to limit accountability to financial accountability (Van der Nest, Thornhill & De Jager 2008). For its part, (Yang and Northcott, 2019) explained the government's accountability as a substantial source of building trust. Moreover, (Wang, Medaglia, and Zheng, 2018) stated that citizens rely more on governments that fairly communicate financial and non-financial matters with the general public.

With regard to responsibility and accountability and rendering of accounts, Morocco has been part, over the last decade, of a process of modernizing its legal arsenal and strengthening its institutional framework, through the creation of various institutions but whose functions and mechanisms of action remain to be completed, in particular, those relating to judicial bodies and control, coordination, monitoring and evaluation bodies. Thus, there is a lack of complementarity and consistency in the efforts of the various control bodies, insofar as the

inspection and financial control bodies operate in isolation from the other control bodies, which limits the effectiveness of their efforts in the fight against corruption.

Parliament's function in public finance is essential to strengthen good governance in the implementation of public policies. In accordance with article 77 of the constitution which stipulates that "Parliament and the Government ensure the preservation of the balance of the finances of the State", Parliament will henceforth play an eminent role in the management of public affairs. Thus, the LOF introduces a set of measures aimed at considerably strengthening this role, both in terms of improving the quality of the budget debate, control of public expenditure, monitoring of the execution of the budget, and the evaluation of public policies.

It should also be noted that the approach advocated by Transparency highlights the contribution of citizens to shaping the annual budget. The mark obtained, in this context, is only 6/100, while that attributed to Parliament, relating to its positive influence during the examination of the finance laws, did not exceed 40/100. Also mentioned in this annual report are the requirements for the protection of public funds, with the need to provide a mechanism involving citizens and associations. The monitoring and evaluation of public policies must, for their part, adapt to international standards, in particular to strengthen the role of the Court of Auditors and parliamentary public finance committees. Transparency insists, in this register, that "the Court of Auditors be entirely autonomous from the Executive, in order to allow the audits carried out to produce the expected effects"<sup>9</sup>.

#### - **Rule of law**

Rule of law is an important element of governance in that it emphasizes the protection of the individual and group rights in an unbiased manner. It encourages the establishment or existence of an independent judiciary, which guarantees equity, fairness and justice in a society.

On March 20, 2020, Morocco adopted a "state of health emergency" to combat the spread of viruses. This means restricted gatherings and travel for the national interest as well as an extension of the powers of the Executive. Thus, during the period of confinement, the restrictive measures adopted by the public authorities obviously restrict a certain number of human rights of Moroccans. The most obvious is the right to freedom of movement, and therefore the enjoyment of many other fundamental rights. Indeed, we see closed schools and universities, restricted transport systems, overwhelmed hospitals, access to places of worship suspended,

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<sup>9</sup> Transparency Maroc (TM), an association recognized as being of public utility by decree n° 2.09.391 of June 11, 2009, was created on January 6, 1996 by a group of citizens to deal with an alarming situation of corruption and lack of transparency, ethics and good governance. It is a non-governmental organization which adheres to the principles contained in the charter of Transparency International, an international organization which has set itself the objective of fighting against corruption throughout the world.

etc. Additionally, the rights to access to health care (not only for Covid-19), to work, to education, to food for the most vulnerable, to leisure, etc. are all affected.

The decision to close mosques sparked some demonstrations of discontent which were little followed, but which resulted in arrests. Moreover, on Monday April 6, the government imposed the wearing of a mask for any authorized exit from the home, a decision applicable from the following day and those who do not wear them face heavy penalties, up to three months in prison.

During the first month of confinement, more than 72,000 people were arrested for violating health emergency measures. Any violation of the provisions of the state of health emergency is punishable by one to three months in prison and a fine ranging from 300 to 1,300 dirhams without prejudice the heaviest criminal penalty, according to article 4 of the decree-law. That said, the creation of this criminal offense relating to the violation of the state of health emergency has particularly affected the situation of certain groups of people, in particular foreigners and drug users who may have been confronted with situations deemed to be offense when they were unable to comply with certain anti-Covid measures due to their personal situation, and required reinforced protection, or even specific medical and health support.

Respect for civil liberties is hardly compatible with the health management of the crisis and the containment because mass surveillance tools are likely to be misused for the purposes of power, or even totalitarian surveillance.

The tracing of infected individuals is one of the global approaches, combining testing, tracing and isolation, recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO), as announced by its Director General on April 13, 2020, in under the criteria offered to countries considering lifting the restrictions. In this regard, the Kingdom plans to launch a digital contamination tracing application, the application will thus have 3 objectives, namely to facilitate the tracing of Covid-19 cases, target screening tests and prepare for deconfinement. Then, the National Commission for the Control of Personal Data Protection (CNDP) published a press release on April 16, reacting to the Moroccan government's desire to set up an application for tracing Covid-19 contamination, recalling the concern of citizens with regard to their privacy, and the risks of a "surveillance state" and a possible violation of human rights. The CNDP therefore recommends that the use of the application be voluntary and not on the basis of an obligation. In the end, the commission decided to authorize the new application, "Wiqaytna" on May 10, 2020 stressing that a "detailed report" will be made public.

One of the other decisions taken seems hardly related to the pandemic which currently threatens the kingdom. Bill 22-20 aims to further control the use of social networks and broadcast

networks. This project, of which several clauses have leaked on the internet, raises questions both in substance and in form. On the merits first of all, the project would prohibit the use of social networks for a call for a boycott. Fines of up to 4,500 euros and prison sentences of six months to three years await offenders. The project also plans to prohibit the dissemination of false information that could cast doubt on the quality or safety of a product. If this measure has the claimed objective of combating "fake news", it has the consequence of limiting freedom of expression in a worrying way. On the form then, the text has not been published on the website of the General Secretariat of the Government for debate. Indeed, the National Council for Human Rights and the National Commission for the Control of Personal Data Protection, whose mandate it is, were not involved either. Several civil society associations have publicly expressed concern about the hidden objectives that such a forced passage could conceal. The public denunciation of this bill and the massive mobilization against it led to discussions within the government parties. The ministers of justice and human rights have since suspended the project, announcing that it would be debated after the end of the state of health emergency.

#### **- Decentralization**

One of the most important components of good governance is decentralization of decision-making powers and authority, a contingency that includes the powers to appoint, promote, demote, discipline and transfer officials (Ncholo, 2000). There have been emerging perspectives that address decentralization as a process of transferring powers, resources, and functions to the lower echelons of government (Miraftab, F., 2008; Rodríguez, A., Ezcurra, R., 2009; Cheema, G. and Rondinelli, A., 2007; Merilee, S., 2007), which ultimately promotes the process of good governance (Utomo, 2011).

Different authors have implied the direct relationships between decentralization and good governance in many ways as decentralization aims to promote good governance by enabling citizen participation, enhancing public accountability and transparency, promoting rule of law and equality, and enhancing effective and efficient service delivery (Utomo, 2011). (Harikumar, S. L. 2013), has also indicated decentralization as a mechanism or tool for good governance to be addressed through which public goods and services can be distributed effectively and efficiently. (Saito, 2008) and (Oyugi, 2000) have also argued that there is a causal relationship between decentralization and good governance.

Article 136 specifies that "regional and territorial organization is based on the principles of free administration, cooperation and solidarity. It ensures the participation of the populations concerned in the management of their affairs and promotes their contribution to integrated and

sustainable human development. The Ministry of the Interior has multiple relays constituting a network of the territory at all levels.

During the Covid -19 crisis, the regions have mobilized in several areas to deal with this crisis through support for businesses and cooperatives via the "intilaka" program, the consolidation of the social and solidarity economy, support for the tourist industry. To complete the overall reform of the regional investment centers, the ministry worked, in coordination with the ministerial departments concerned with the implementation of the administrative decentralization provisions, to adopt the necessary procedures for delegating the powers of the central power at the regional level, particularly with regard to the initial list of authorizations and decisions necessary for the implementation of the investment projects included in the administrative decentralization plans. Moreover, with regard to the new investment charter, the Department of the Ministry of the Interior has contributed to the various stages of drafting the framework law which serves as the investment charter and its implementing texts, as well as to the adoption of accompanying measures to improve the business climate and enhance the attractiveness of national and foreign investments.

The crisis has highlighted the unique frontline role of local authorities, the level of government closest to citizens. Thus, based on the principles of subsidiarity, cooperation and solidarity, local authorities supported by decentralized services could have organized themselves to deal with the pandemic at the territorial level. Nevertheless, in Morocco, the role of municipalities, provinces and prefectures, and regions was little mentioned and elected officials, for their part, showed apathy in the management of the crisis.

It should also be noted that in the face of the pandemic, municipalities had to react urgently to deliver basic services, take care of people in vulnerable situations and reduce the impact of the crisis on the economic level. The communities, mobilize the solidarity effort, raise awareness about COVID-19 and ensure that the population respects containment measures. Many municipalities have had to assume these responsibilities without having the necessary means, due to unforeseen needs and lower local tax revenues resulting from tax relief and other measures, especially at the start of the crisis in the first months of 2020. Overall, however, central governments have often gone out of their way to provide considerable additional support to local and regional authorities and public services. Besides, the action of the decentralized administration has remained timid, with the exception of the services of the Ministries of the Interior and of Health. In fact, local authorities are mired in problems related to the entanglement of powers and insufficient human and financial capacities. Also, they did not succeed in carrying out their missions ostensibly and promptly.



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### - **Public Communication**

Communication plays a key role in all the dimensions of good governance (Grzeszczak, 2015), (Joerges, 2002). The right to information includes a right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas from the public authorities (Bhat, 2015). As governmental power increases during national public health emergencies, effective government communication becomes increasingly essential to combat pandemics and stabilize society (Huang, 2020).

Communication in an emergency situation is an essential component of the risk management strategy, in addition to their identification. It has been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as "the real-time exchange of information, advice and opinions between experts, community leaders, political decision-makers and populations in risk". The purpose of crisis communication is to increase the capacity of managers, in making informed decisions, for the proper management of emergencies through protection and prevention activities. Its importance has been reported by the International Health Regulations (IHR), in the preparation and response to epidemics, based on three fundamental principles: information, mobilization and reassurance of the general public.

In Morocco, communication and consultation as "citizen culture" aims to empower citizens to be part of the solution to the problems. This approach focuses on sharing information and data in a transparent and accessible way, while prioritizing listening and learning from citizens. For that, the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication is an institution responsible for ensuring respect for the pluralist expression of currents of opinion and thought and the right to information, in the audiovisual field and this, in respect for fundamental civilizational values and the laws of the Kingdom.

Morocco's entry into the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2018 was also an opportunity to strengthen the place of communication as an essential component in the implementation of the principles of transparency, integrity, accountability. and citizen participation. This is evidenced by the commitments relating to this area in the first National Action Plan for Open Government in Morocco developed by the former Ministry of Administrative Reform and the Civil Service for 2018-2020, of which several are implemented at regional and local levels. The second National Action Plan 2021-2022 is currently being co-created (Ministry of Economy, Finance and Administrative Reform, 2020). As part of the consultation carried out in October 2020 for the co-creation of this new plan, 10 areas of intervention were opened to proposals, including one on access to information and one on participatory democracy (Kingdom of Morocco, 2021). Likewise, OECD has supported Morocco in the development of a public communication guide that offers practical tools to reinforce the principles of open government

and consolidate citizens' trust in the administration. Finalized in July 2020, this guide was distributed in February 2021 within the Moroccan public administration.

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the crucial role that communication plays in supporting individuals and stakeholders to comply with the measures put in place by public authorities to fight the pandemic. Public communicators have also had a key role in the fight against disinformation and the collective response to it to support state action (OECD, 2020). Then, transparent communication helped define the nature of COVID-19 early on in Morocco, decreasing public panic and increasing trust in the government and citizens' compliance level. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the public authorities of Morocco adopted response plans by fairly regularly producing two types of information media: a daily press release (intended for the general public) and an epidemiological bulletin (oriented much more towards health professionals). These were disseminated by the ministries in charge of health, their services in charge of epidemiological surveillance and their committees to fight against COVID-19, on their websites, and their accounts on social networks. These two materials provided factual data on the epidemiological situation and measures to prevent and control the pandemic. They were communicated during press briefings, with representatives of television channel agencies, radio stations, paper and electronic newspapers, and civil society associations.

The appearance and growth of the means of communication have made possible new forms of interaction between government, media and citizens, in particular by allowing a wider diversity of voices and actors to express themselves and engage publicly. These technological advances have also led to an effect of immediacy of information. The speed with which it spreads also creates fertile ground for the emergence of false information or rumors, thus making communication more difficult, particularly in times of crisis or uncertainty (OECD, 2020). Likewise, with more people using technology and big data available online will lead to cyber frauds and cyber-crimes. Also, the infodemic caused by this will have no gatekeepers as in the physical world, where fake news and media can easily circulate.

The failure of the government to manage effective public communication results in the public losing the ability to understand problems accurately and reliably, especially to help them respond to the plague appropriately. Accurate information can be a basis for people to act and respond to crisis situations better. Conversely, misinformation can keep people away from the right solution in responding to outbreaks, and can even worsen the situation. Misunderstandings about the pattern of virus spread, for example, can actually cause people to take part in spreading the virus. Even the incomplete information on the funeral procedures for victims of COVID-19, for example, actually gave birth to excessive and inappropriate community

reaction. The ambiguity of public information messages conveyed by the government will cause the community to fail to understand the crisis problem properly.

During the Covid-19 crisis, fake news found fertile ground for its proliferation: the mystery surrounding the virus, the gray areas as to its origin and the ambiguity of official communications. These factors have contributed to sowing a climate of doubt and panic on an international scale to such an extent that the World Health Organization (WHO) has named the phenomenon "infodemic". Indeed, according to a study compiled by the British journal Royal Society Open Science, a considerable part of the world's population believes in false information and conspiracy theories about Covid-19, which increases mistrust in vaccination. The study thus demonstrated that many believe that there is a clear link between believing in conspiracy theories and mistrust of a future vaccine.

In the midst of a pandemic, Morocco has not escaped several disinformation campaigns that manifest themselves via digital technologies in different forms: written texts, photo and/or video montages and audio recordings, etc. Thus, social networks, the YouTube video platform and the instant messaging application WhatsApp have been used to spread certain false information which, for the most part, has a direct link with the life and concerns of the population.

Faced with the prevailing sense of panic due to the coronavirus, fake news is spreading at great speed on social networks. Consuming alcohol, consuming narcotics, shaving your beard, drinking water every 15 minutes, ingesting bleach... All this false information about the origin or the means of protecting yourself from the virus, are shared widely on Facebook and Twitter. Moreover, among the rumors circulating about the Covid-19 coronavirus the infection of the Moroccan ambassador in China by the Corona virus, the publication of video clips containing false and rigged data on the recording of alleged infections in different regions of Morocco, and the "fabrication" of official data concerning state institutions. Everything is there to promote misinformation and rumors. This "Communicational mediocrity" risks undermining the efforts made by Morocco since the outbreak of the pandemic.

Far from being limited to Morocco, the anti-vaccine movement is an international phenomenon. It is worn by these people who warn against the safety of this vaccine which, according to them, would kill more people than Covid-19 and which would have the sole objective of "controlling the world's population" since it is, according to them, of "a laboratory product". In particular, anti-vaccines warn against the side effects of injections. They deplore a lack of information and question the declared objectives of the vaccination policy.

Faced with the incessant news that invades social networks, the Moroccan legislator has intervened through a whole legal arsenal aimed at fighting against the dissemination of false news via the Internet. In fact, Moroccan law as in French law, the dissemination of false news (fake news) is a criminal offense provided for in article 72 of law 88-13 relating to the press and publishing which provides that "Is punished by fine of 20,000 to 200,000 dirhams anyone who has published, disseminated or transmitted, in bad faith, false news, allegations, inaccurate facts, fabricated or falsified documents attributed to third parties, when their acts have disturbed public order or aroused fright among the population, regardless of the means used,...». While reaffirming the guarantee of freedom of expression, the new law will apply to people with bad intentions, because no one is supposed to ignore the law. In this sense, twenty people were arrested by law enforcement throughout the kingdom. The defendants, for the most part, are unaware of the seriousness of their acts.

**- The perception of corruption in Morocco has deteriorated**

Corruption is a scourge that hinders the development of States, it constitutes an obstacle to economic and social development. Otherwise, the phenomenon of corruption is considered as one of the manifestations of bad governance, it has been confirmed through surveys and field investigations as a matter of concern because, on the one hand, it affects the all sectors of public management, and on the other hand, it is particularly reinforced by the manifestations of unilateral decisions and the abuse of power. Regarding the causes of this phenomenon, several researchers summarize them in the monopoly of discretionary power in the absence of accountability, integrity and transparency. As for the various international indicators on human development, the business climate, the competitiveness and governance, the researchers identified, in the case of Morocco, a number of obstacles including weak accountability, lack of protection for whistleblowers, ineffective laws, poor access of citizens to information, the lack of effectiveness of the force of law as well as the slowness and complexity of the procedures

In Morocco, several anti-corruption measures have been deployed and notable progress has been made. To this end, Morocco officially launched the national anti-corruption strategy in 2016, which revolves around five main pillars, namely governance, prevention, repression, communication and training. Among others various measures launched by the Kingdom in the fight against corruption, we can cite the adoption of Law No. 54.19 on the charter of public services and Law 55.19 relating to the simplification of procedures and administrative formalities, within the framework of the implementation of the constitutional provisions relating to good governance.

As every year, Transparency's assessment focused on four fundamental indicators: the corruption perception index, the defense component, press freedom and budget transparency. It should be noted that the criteria used to establish this annual ranking, in which Morocco appears, were developed by thirteen international bodies. In this context, the latter have placed particular emphasis on the impact of the reforms already undertaken. For the year 2021, the main observations concern "the absence of a will to fight against the phenomenon", and the fact that "Morocco would not be able to extricate itself from the "higher" level of corruption, according to the NGO. Morocco is down one place compared to 2020 and ranks 87th out of 180 nations. According to Transparency International Morocco, Morocco's score of 39/100 reflects the "endemic" nature of corruption in the country.

Thus, in this context, the President of the National Authority for Probity, Prevention and the Fight against Corruption (INPPLC) (2022), indicated that Covid-19 was not just a simple health crisis or economy, but also a crisis of corruption, which gave way to slippages that exploited the urgency and immediacy of the mechanisms and programs to fight the pandemic. Additionally, the President of the INPPLC underlined that international organizations as well as the competent national institutions consider that the elements of transparency and good governance are not incompatible with the provision of flexible capacities able both to keep pace and to reinforce the urgent actions against potential corruption. Moreover, the decline in the Corruption Perceptions Index is attributed according to the authors of the report to the inability to keep pace with the exceptional measures taken by the government to deal with the pandemic with accompanying measures to ensure transparency and control, particularly in the award of public contracts and the awarding of subsidies and compensation.

**- Effectiveness and efficiency**

Effectiveness is defined as the political authority and management competence with a coherent organizational structure, systematically planned managerial actions, vigorous public instruction and exercise of organizational authority (Keping, 2018). In addition, (Mafunisa 2004) refers to effectiveness in the context of government as the achievement of set goals and objectives, while efficiency refers to such achievement with the use of the most limited resources possible.

Effectiveness and efficiency are achieved when results are in line with set objectives and available resources are used optimally. It is important to note that, Performance management systems help to measure and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of services. In addition, Audits are carried out at regular intervals in order to evaluate and improve the services. There is paramount if limited state resources are to be spent sustainably. It is in fact a provision of the

article of the 2011 Constitution which states that whenever the resources of the government are used, the principle of effectiveness and efficiency must be applied.

Implementation of government policies including lockdown regulations could not be implemented effectively and efficiently especially during the final phase of lockdown. It should be noted that all spheres of government as well as public institutions have failed to adequately apply the principles of good governance in the management of the Covid -19 pandemic. The adherence to these principles is essential to ensure that the rule of law is upheld, relevant stakeholders are involved, decision-making is decentralized, delegates with resources and authority are accountable, the corruption is limited, institutional responsiveness is carried out and policy implementation is undertaken effectively and efficiently.



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## 7. Conclusion

Morocco's management of the Covid 19 crisis has revealed undeniable assets of the State and society in terms of their ability to meet such challenges. It also identified the shortcomings and dysfunctions that taint governance in Morocco at all the aforementioned levels. In this sense, effective management of the COVID-19 pandemic and future pandemics requires a precise and specific governance framework directly engaging stakeholders in collective decision-making processes, transparent communications and managerial approaches to deal with them to disaster. Indeed, we also notice that not all governance principles are implemented in the way that governance theory advocates. To this end, for all spheres of government to adequately manage COVID-19 and all other future pandemics, all principles of good governance must be implemented.

Many government institutions are lacking in the implementation of the provisions of the principles of governance in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic in Morocco. Indeed, like many government challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic requires a multiplicity of actors to participate in the search for a lasting solution. Governance theory also posits that government cannot be the sole interpreter of the socio-economic challenges of government. In fact, affected communities, trade unions, opposition political parties, academics and practitioners should be involved from the development of regulations to the general management of pandemics. The integration and cooperation of all actors are key to success in achieving good governance in the country.

Additionally, strengthening leadership in times of crisis is a lesson to be learned from this health crisis. Thus, the fight against COVID-19 and all types of crises in the country requires strong leadership. Effective leadership results in good governance, which provides basic necessities to its citizens, such as a system of efficient and functional health, education, electricity, water supply, good road safety, etc. Likewise, it is time to put people back at the heart of the strategies, programs or actions implemented by the State or companies. In this case, Morocco as a whole has become aware of the importance of the human factor in any initiative or program of the State especially during the COVID-19 crisis.

Synergy and transparent communication between government and civil society enhance the legitimacy of governance and the cooperation of citizens. In this context, public communication must be consistent and unequivocal in presenting the seriousness of the situation and must also ensure greater transparency in the management of public policies with free access to

information and the publication of all data relating to the management of Covid-19 and futures pandemic.

Additionally, the government must strengthen democratic governance, the rule of law, the application of the principle of accountability and transparency, based on a social contract aimed at guaranteeing the legitimacy, inclusiveness and effectiveness of public policies, as well as the participation of local populations and civil society. In this context, in order to strengthen local power and decentralized and democratic governance in Morocco, the government must promote sustainable development as one of the pillars of good governance as an imperative for the success of administrative reforms at the level of the political system, and in other side open the way for popular participation, civil society and the private sector in activating accountability within local institutions for public performance.

The State must ensure a territorial upgrade of the country by giving the advanced regionalization project the importance it deserves. Thus, a sectoral approach is needed, taking into consideration the local and regional particularities of Morocco. In this way, the State should carry out "catch-up" public investments in poor regions in terms of physical infrastructure and social infrastructure and develop local community projects. (Seddiki, A 2020). Then, to increase the power of local authorities, decentralization must be accompanied by a transfer from the State to decentralized structures, budget envelopes that allow them to fully exercise the functions and prerogatives assigned to them by law. This crisis has highlighted the need to accelerate public administration reform to create a more professional, effective, efficient, uncorrupted, transparent and user-centric public sector which will allow to restore the population's confidence in public institutions.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates that the current approach to global health governance has failed and that global management and national governance are not cooperating in this area. In this context, this global threat will require international coordination and a global response, particularly in the area of research and development in medical sciences. In general, from now on the health security strategy can be considered as a new approach to good governance.

The global health crisis has shown that globalization is real and that any significant event in one country has an impact on others. It is therefore necessary to reshape the system of global governance and adapt to the new phase of globalization by carefully examining the changes brought about by the Covid-19 crisis and other global challenges. On this basis, all countries should be called upon to reaffirm and adhere to the rules-based and principle-based system of global governance, with the United Nations at its center. In the near future, WHO and WTO should have priority over other international organizations.

Multilateralism as a principle of global governance has been greatly weakened by Covid-19, and has changed the way of life and production in the world. Within this framework, multilateralism must be strengthened to improve global governance and globalization. Moreover, according to (Lucchese and Pianta, 2020), multilateral cooperation is necessary to contain the pandemic and mitigate its health, social and economic consequences. Instead of each country taking national measures, it would be preferable to have more consultation at the regional and international level, in coordination with the G20, the IMF and the World Bank.

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