



Panel 3: Issues of access to housing, health and education in urban areas: the persistence of pockets of vulnerability

Moderator: AMANDA Fletty

"The reason we requested for the vote by people, was to meet their needs. And at the onset of our mandate, a participatory meeting with all the populations was held to draw an inventory of the current situation. At the end of the meeting, an actual assessment of the state of infrastructures and priority needs were made per village. Finally, three priorities were identified: drinking water supply, health and equipment," said the 1^{er} panelist, Mr. Siam Bamba, Chairperson of the Bagoué regional council in Côte d'Ivoire.

The approach required by the regional council to solve such issues is as follows: a workshop was held with the mutual development associations, diagnostic sheets were drawn up including the existing infrastructure and needs, the results were presented to the village chiefs for confirmation, the results were consolidated and a three-year departmental action matrix was drawn up.

He said the Bagoué region had been in crisis for more than 10 years, a crisis caused by the 2002 rebellion, resulting in a severe lack of infrastructure. To remedy this, investment is planned for the period 2022 to 2024 in essential sectors such as education, health and water. In education, 15 projects have been planned with a budget of 15,647,605,000 CFA francs, i.e. 36% of the three-year budget. In the health sector, 1,032,298,000 CFA francs, i.e. 22.54% of the three-year budget, have been earmarked. For the economic infrastructure sector, including water, 492,092,000 CFA francs, i.e. 10.75% of the three-year budget. These sectors alone absorb 70% of the three-year budget.

Despite the remarkable results achieved in education, health and water, pockets of vulnerability exist. While investments have been made in education and health, much remains to be done to fill the water gap, estimated at 194 human-powered boreholes, 21 improved village water pumps and 20 HU. This requires an investment of more than 11 billion CFA francs. All these pockets of vulnerability reduction will only make sense if the issue of empowerment of youth and women in urban and rural areas is addressed. The other actions to be undertaken can be summed up as opening up villages by opening and reshaping

roads, improving access to electricity in remote areas, and resolving problems of access to the civil registry.

In conclusion, Mr. Bamba said that the health, education and water sectors are indispensable to the development of any population, and that additional efforts are therefore necessary. The development of Bagoué will only be complete if all the above-mentioned dimensions are taken into account.

For the second^e panelist, Dr. AKE Paul Blanchard, argues that the concepts of housing, health and education are intertwined and are therefore related issues.

Regarding housing, the speaker said that some people focus on the economic dimension of housing, yet it is necessary to think of other paradigms. For this panelist, the State has made a lot of effort in social housing and universal health coverage. Despite all these actions, pockets of vulnerability still exist. The populations have an ideological conception, a segregationist thought. For them, living in a commune like Cocody requires a certain social class. The other aspect of access to housing is that of furnished residences, and Ivorian law seems to remain silent on their existence, even though these residences compete with large hotels.

As for the third panelist, Mr. Baba NDIAYE, said that the housing issue is differently appreciated in Côte d'Ivoire and Mali. But in Senegal, it is accentuated by the rural exodus, especially in the dry season. During this period, people tend to migrate to the cities and then build makeshift dwellings in high-risk areas, thus exposing themselves to the risk of flooding. For him, there are three solutions to remedy these problems: urban restoration (very costly), urban renovation (less costly and less complicated), urban development (prevention, construction of facilities).

Furthermore, he advocates democratizing the management of these facilities. That is to say, take important initiatives to fight against mosquitoes. Develop important resolutions of management committees in each locality to facilitate the care of the most vulnerable.

At the level of education, he noted a shortage of schools, a problem of access to schools, unfenced schools and temporary schools. To solve these problems, in partnership with the Chamber of Trade of Kaolack, a program called "*school for everyone*" was initiated. This programme has made it possible to secure several schools. Several young people have been trained under this project to help improve access to schools by building walls and secure fences for schools. Other initiatives in favour of the democratization of the school have been undertaken, notably digital books to facilitate access to documentation for all pupils. This has made it possible to address the issue of equity, equality and inclusion at the level of those sections of the population with limited means.

The issue of civil status was also at the heart of the actions. Because often the pupils are confronted with problems of civil status. Today, all the civil status

registers have been secured and digitized to facilitate access to the students' documents.

In conclusion, Mr. BABA revealed that despite the efforts made by the authorities to solve the problem of access to housing in urban areas, much remains to be done. How to improve the impact of the efforts made by the governments through the participation of the citizens and the civil society? This is the main question.

For Dr ASSUE Aimé, the last panellist of this theme, speaking of poverty in Côte d'Ivoire, makes one think of social, economic or financial indicators. If you spend less than 350 F/day, you are considered as an extremely poor individual. In addition to these indicators, there is access to education, health care, decent housing and leisure activities.

Regarding education, he said that the Ivorian government devotes nearly 40% of its budget to this sector, devoted to the payment of salaries and the operation of the ministry and its branches. But what hinders the proper functioning of the school are the additional costs called COGES fees that the government has decided to remove during this school year 2021-2022. The system of probationary baccalaureate constituted in some way brakes for many students. To respond to this obstacle, the State has tried to put in place systems to facilitate access to education for all, to quality education: massification which poses problems in the assignment, access to education for all, the establishment of online courses in universities because of the COVID.

As far as health is concerned, since the Bamako conference in 1997, the health system has been privatised. But following the post-electoral crisis, there was what was called free health care. But the cost of this project having become exorbitant for the State, it switched to targeted free health care to maintain this project. But there again, there were difficulties because some medicines are in short supply.

On the question of housing, the Ivorian urban planning system is segregationist and exclusionist. The system tends to exclude the weakest. It is to remedy this discrimination that the Ivorian State has decided to build 60,000 social housing units. But this project is struggling to take off because of the costs which are exorbitant for the poorest populations.

After the intervention of the panelists, the moderator opened the discussion session. Four (4) people took part in the session. At this stage several contributions and sharing of experiences were made by the speakers.

A contribution from Mrs. DJIBRIL Cécile, Director of Social and Public Health Services of the Port-Bouet City Hall. She took the floor to share the experience of her commune in terms of health management. She affirmed that

three (3) mechanisms have been put in place to facilitate the access of populations to health:

- 08 municipal health centres, of which 03 are urban and 05 are in rural villages;
- Every year, subsidies are voted and allocated to these health centres to organise fairground activities (100 million);
- To make targeted consultations (consultation of cataracts, surgeries);
- A grant dedicated to social affairs (40 million).

Following Ms. Djibril, Mr. Kouya, Secretary General of the movement for the defence of teachers' rights in Côte d'Ivoire (private sector union), spoke about the problem of access to housing in Côte d'Ivoire. To conclude his speech, the speaker raised the following question: Is it possible to have in Côte d'Ivoire a city dedicated to the teacher?

For Mr. Kouti, Real Estate Director at the Banque de l'Habitat, the housing problem is not new in Côte d'Ivoire. It existed well before the advent of the Covid crisis but it was accentuated during this pandemic. This is why the government initiated the social housing programme. He advocated that public authorities must therefore act to facilitate the acquisition of housing by the population, by adopting the rental belly initiated in the 80s. He also said that the State relies on the Housing Bank for real estate programs to help buyers obtain social housing.

According to Mr. Mamadou SANOGO, 5th^{ème} deputy mayor of the commune of Cocody, in Côte d'Ivoire, housing precedes development, but it is the opposite that should happen. Many neighborhoods are created without development and this creates flooding in rainy periods. In 2012, at the level of the commune of Cocody, 1 m² of developed land cost 17,000 CFA francs, which is an obstacle to access to land for construction. He noted the persistence of segregation because social housing does not exist for the moment in Côte d'Ivoire because access to land is still a concern for the State.

The last speaker, Mr. DJIBA Karamoko, said that social housing will only be possible with a strong involvement of the State in the production chain. It will be necessary to privilege the production mode in height.

In conclusion, it emerged from this panel that the public authorities must therefore act to facilitate the acquisition of housing by the populations, by adopting the belly rent initiated in the 1980s. Also, a strong involvement of the State in the housing production chain is necessary.