

THE LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN AFRICA



ESSI GERALDO – GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND
PANELIST, TOGO

2020 was a year in which the world order completely changed because of COVID-19.

Women are an essential supporting pillar in moments of crisis and the socio-economic development of nations because they have always been the first to be affected by crises in the history of the world. Each woman has the characteristics of a leader - often the ability to lead and manage a family with or without the help of a spouse.

The 4th March, in TOGO, was marked by the first official declared case of COVID-19. This notable event created a major change in Togolese society where women found themselves more prominent than ever by their confinement and post-confinement. The economic crisis due to lockdown, led to hunger and health problems, and women showed commendable large-scale impact initiatives, for example, the collaboration of seamstresses to manufacture less expensive artisanal masks, and free training for the artisanal manufacture

of hydro-alcoholic gels that allowed for distribution throughout the territory. Following the surge in gel prices, the Be U Till Full association through its co-promoter ATCHOZOU Essoyomèwè Veronique has produced hydroalcoholic gels (Be U Till Full) according to WHO standards at 2, 72 dollars that is three times cheaper than the price in pharmacies.

Other young female leaders have drawn international aid through their relationships to support vulnerable communities such as the Global Resilience Fund for girls and young women.

Faced with famine and the cessation of activities, women went out with their masks to seek daily bread. Among these people, Essi F. Geraldo, a young female leader, developed a project called OPERATION ONE HOUSE ONE PLANT which was very successful. The vision of the project was to provide each household with consumption plants in order to improve comfort and help reduce travel.

This project covered all five economic regions and was divided into three stages; the first was online training for planting at home; the second, the practice of the planting itself; the third, the creation of a photo mosaic of all the participants. Only this final action guaranteed a training certificate and pushed all those who registered to respect their commitment. Through the plants, at least 700 households benefited from these provisions as food support. This simple project achieved the 10 SDGs.

Digital has played a big role in the fight against the pandemic. Rebecca Taboukouna, a young web developer and graphic designer, co-founder of a Startup in E-Health and passionate about new technologies, recognised the need for making digital available and accessible. A new tele-medicine app was developed for health advice, for making appointments with doctors, for referral to specialist doctors, assistance to those more vulnerable, and discussions with doctors by messages, calls, or audio. She also added articles, advice and guidance through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even young girls contributed to this fight. Ulrich Dogbéda Saba, was one of the winners of the 'My 24h of Containment Contest' organised by

Plan International, TOGO to involve young people in the health situation, installed a hand washing device in her neighbourhood.

Many other people are still acting in the shadows to face this pandemic. Many of them hidden within associations and institutions not wanting to show themselves off.

In TOGO, it's women's leadership that is reversing the deadly trend of this pandemic.

- <https://www.facebook.com/320911161761192/videos/2640981666171532>
- https://www.linkedin.com/posts/farida-geraldo-9b5a38a9_rapport-final-de-operation-one-house-one-activity-6689527709116235776-QlHk
- <https://www.facebook.com/PlanInternationalTogo/posts/3741396079269031/> ■

Born in 1991, Essi Geraldo is a young Togolese entrepreneur, eco-architect and urban planner of sustainable cities. Alumni of several prestigious American programs, she is one of the 10 champions "Women Impact for Change 2020- WI4C" and of the 20 Inspirational African Diaspora Professional Women in Europe 2021.