



**CAMEROON ACADEMY OF
YOUNG SCIENTISTS
CAYS**

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**STATEMENT
of the Cameroon Academy of
Young Scientists on COVID-19
Pandemic**

April 2020

INTRODUCTION

From an isolated outbreak in China in December 2019, the COVID-19 infection is now spreading around the world and has become a pandemic. To contribute in addressing this pandemic, the Cameroon Academy of Young Scientists (CAYS) offers herewith this statement, recommendations for responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency. CAYS is an arm of the Cameroon Academy of Sciences (CAS) composed of 40 young scientists from different Universities and Research Institutes in Cameroon. CAYS has as mandate to give voice to young researchers, to promote research as a career choice for youths and a tool for national development. CAYS commends and supports measures taken by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the government of the Republic of Cameroon. CAYS recognizes the efforts and risks taken by medical personnel in Cameroon to provide health care services to COVID-19 patients and the Cameroonian public. CAYS also acknowledges statements put forth by the Cameroon Academy of Sciences (CAS) and the Global Young Academy (GYA). This statement raises some additional points for consideration in optimizing the COVID-19 response using scientific research, local resources and the socio-economic and cultural realities of Cameroon.

Cameroon is currently the epicenter of Covid-19 in Central Africa and as of April 19, 2020, there were 1017 total cases, including 42 deaths and 305 recoveries. Currently, experts are working hard for the harmonization of an effective treatment protocol. Identification, isolation and testing of contacts of confirmed infected people is used to limit the spread of COVID-19. The measures edicted by the Cameroon Government include closing down of Cameroon's borders, closing of schools and Universities, social distancing, encouraging people to stay at home and only go out when necessary and finally, obligatory wearing of masks in public places. These measures challenge people's day to day activities, wellbeing, socio-political, and cultural interactions and most of all impact the national economy of Cameroon. Thus, the COVID-19 lockdown measures may lead to increased physical, physiological and psychological problems. Before the advent of COVID-19, African economies were already fragile and needed a boost. This pandemic could be fatal for these economies, with the disruption of the economic growth forecasts and implementation of public policies.

The quarantine and treatment of infected persons are very costly to the Cameroonian Government. In the present context, the main preventive measures to limit the spread of Coronavirus are those edicted by the Cameroon Government. Unfortunately, in resource-limited and poverty-stricken communities, compliance to these safety measures may be compromised. High implication decisions/measures are always difficult to take, since they affect even the most unsuspected aspects of life as it is the case during this pandemic.

Recommendations to Government / Policy Makers

Total confinement for a period appears to be the ideal solution to stop the spread of COVID-19; however, this has to take into account our demography, housing arrangements and our socio economic and cultural situation. Thus, we propose that the government should reinforce the following measures:

1. Consider strategies to support all sectors of society with compensation or partial exemption on certain aspects such as taxes on smallholder basic needs, and provide food aid to the most vulnerable segments of the population.
2. Strengthen the country's capacity to detect, prevent and respond early and aggressively to epidemics by a significant increase in domestic investments in areas like research, health systems, health workforce capacity, emergency preparedness and response.
3. Perform quality control measures on Covid-19 screening tests to ensure their reliability and efficacy.
4. Reinforce the research budget of public institutions and support private institutions to propel research towards the development of scientific and technological capacity of Cameroon.
5. Develop a strategic monitoring plan to prevent future pandemics.
6. Increase mass training strategies of peer educators and volunteers to strengthen the health workforce.
7. Regulate, guide and direct the local production and supply of necessities for protection and hygiene such as face masks, hydro-alcoholic gels and solutions, detergents, etc.
8. Involve youth leaders in the fight against COVID-19.
9. Raise awareness by encouraging individual discipline and compliance as an indispensable aspect in this fight.
10. Integrate health sciences and natural/man-made disaster awareness/management plan in national curricula.

Recommendations to Communities/ Populations

Community engagement and their empowerment as key players in the national response against COVID-19 and future epidemics is central to flattening the curve and curbing the burden. Therefore, CAYS recommends communities and the population of Cameroon to:

1. Be ambassadors to fight the pandemic individually and as a community by ensuring the strict application of recommendations put forward by the WHO and Government of the Republic of Cameroon.
2. Avoid all stigmatisation, desist from spreading of fatalistic messages, fake news, fear, false remedies and when necessary, consult reliable official sources of the World Health Organization and the Cameroon Ministry of Public Health.
3. Ensure strict adherence to recommendations on how to properly wear, handle and dispose facial masks so as not to propagate the spread of COVID-19.

Recommendations to Researchers

The scientific community is highly mobilized and has already generated a large amount of knowledge, from the clinical picture of this infectious disease, the risk factors associated, the incidence as well as conditions under which it is spreading. That notwithstanding, the following recommendations still need to be put forth:

1. Engage relentlessly in the development of drugs and/or vaccines to fight against COVID-19. Drug/vaccine discovery usually takes much time. However, expedited clinical trials can benefit from the use of already tested compound from traditional medicine and pharmacopoeia.
2. Understand the different mechanisms of recovery as these would provide key insights to the overall comprehension of COVID-19.
3. Be holistic in investigating perceptions and responses of populations to enhance a better understanding the preparedness and acceptance of recommended measures. This is helpful for policy makers to break barriers to good practices and fight against misconceptions, rumours and stereotypes.
4. Model/simulate the trend and propagation of the pandemic, considering the local context of Cameroon and propose solutions to the Government.

Recommendations to Academies and Related Bodies

There is a clear need for policy to meet scientific evidence to inform effective contextual interventions. Academies should:

1. Provide up-to-date information to policy makers and governments on COVID-19 in all spheres of life.
2. Institute advisory committees available to support research and advise all stakeholders on scientific evidence.
3. Propose a strategic plan of action for the management of future pandemics taking into account the social, economic, political and cultural contexts of the nation.

CONCLUSION

COVID-19 can be defeated, and the first curb observed in China is encouraging and serve as a great source of hope. All the recommendations made by CAYS in this statement support the need for individual discipline and total compliance with barrier measures, as well as a holistic approach to research and policy. In its quest for the wellbeing of humanity, CAYS is committed, through this statement and actions in the field, to contribute to the stamping out of COVID-19 from Cameroon. The entire world is drastically lacking time in the context of the rapidly evolving pandemic, and the limited time we have should be used for action.

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