

3. Banjul, The Gambia

Banjul COVID-19 Sensitization Team Initiative

Challenges

The Gambia registered its first case of COVID-19 on 17 March 2020. The Government of the country immediately put in place restrictions that included the closure of schools, places of worship and borders and limited hours of operation of markets. Despite early efforts, however, the Gambia was severely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the death rate was high during May and June 2020. As the pandemic took a big toll on public health and the economy, business and trade spiraled downward, prompting the closure of all businesses. Moreover, with most of the inhabitants earning less than the minimum wage, there was an urgent need for a quick, effective response to the crisis to help people to make ends meet.

Towards a Solution

In response to those pandemic-related challenges, the Banjul COVID-19 Sensitization Team initiative was created to inform, protect, and guide the inhabitants of Banjul in line with the standard safety measures from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health. Following WHO guidelines and those of the Ministry of Health, the city of Banjul conducted door-to-door and poster sensitization to effectively boost its outreach in all corners of the city. The Sensitization Team initiative also featured the “Know your COVID-19 status” campaign developed and run by the Lord Mayor of Banjul and geared towards addressing the rapid transmission of COVID-19 that stemmed from limited (or lack of) testing. The Sensitization Team initiative led to a pilot project, the Banjul Relief initiative,

which aimed at providing food items to all households in Banjul during the pandemic. That project complemented the efforts in poverty reduction, which came under particular strain as a result of the collapse of businesses and earning avenues.



Source: Banjul City Council, Banjul Youth Committee & Banjul Red Cross Branch

The Sensitization Team initiative was a great success since people who knew their current COVID-19 status and those who tested positive followed protocols either in isolation centres or at home where they could receive the necessary medical attention. The Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital was the main referral hospital in Banjul and the lead stakeholder in the Sensitization Team initiative. It helped to provide frontline workers (doctors and nurses) with protective equipment and the inhabitants of Banjul with COVID-19 tests free of charge. Indeed, the testing process proved to be very successful thanks mainly to the important work done by the Banjul COVID-19 Sensitization Team.



Source: Banjul City Council, Banjul Youth Committee & Banjul Red Cross Branch

The practices were innovative for many reasons. For example, the Sensitization Team initiative has enabled the inhabitants to be aware of the precautionary measures from WHO and the

Ministry of Health. It has also helped to make the city be more conscious of the need to make good use of modern technology for communication and access to medical services and labs. Moreover, the Sensitization Team initiative has helped to improve the health system by creating a more robust, responsive strategy. It has further caused the inhabitants to be more informed and better prepared for future pandemic outbreaks. The Banjul inhabitants are also more innovative with regards to economic development strategies through the adoption of new ideas and strategies adaptable to the pandemic. As part of the Sensitization Team initiative, the food relief initiative was executed to cover all compounds and households in Banjul. Its purpose was to facilitate a fair and inclusive distribution of the essential food items that were secured from donors and other relevant stakeholders.

Project title	Banjul COVID-19 Sensitization Team Initiative
Spatial scale of the initiative	City-wide
Population involved	34,000
Cities/Provinces/Countries/Territories/ Regions involved	Banjul, the Gambia
Sustainable Development Goal target(s)	2, 3
Supported/Funded by	Banjul City Council
Implementing entities	Banjul City Council, Banjul Youth Committee and Banjul Red Cross Branch
Project status	Completed
Project period	March–June 2020
URL of the practice	http://banjulcitycouncil.blogspot.com/