



The mayor of Seytenga sets the example on COVID-19 prevention (April 2020)
Photo: TerresEauVie

SEYTENGA AT THE HELM OF COVID-19 RESPONSE AND PREVENTION

TerresEauVie Burkina Faso

TerresEauVie and the Seytenga Commune are on the move to tackle the pandemic through behavior change

The first case of COVID-19 in Burkina Faso was detected on March 9 in the capital city of Ouagadougou. In response, the government rapidly developed and activated the COVID-19 Response Plan. In line with its commune support approach and adaptive management, the [TerresEauVie Activity](#), under USAID's Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE II) project and implemented by Winrock International, responded to the call by guiding its communes of intervention in a process to respond and prevent COVID-19. This was done in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and its Regional Directorates, and with a complementary perspective with RISE II partners. Seytenga Commune's planned and concerted action is one of many examples of these efforts in the Sahel.

Seytenga puts a stop to COVID-19 with its commune-led plan

Amadou Tamboura, Mayor of Seytenga, recalled his response when COVID-19 hit. "I quickly issued a municipal order to close the markets and ban demonstrations that could potentially mobilize large numbers of people," Tamboura said. "I also asked people to respect the measures taken by the government. But what more can we do with our resources? It was at this point that TerresEauVie proposed that we draw up a communal response and prevention plan to respond to COVID-19." The commune seized this opportunity and drafted its action plan by involving all key actors at the communal level, including health services, aligning with national guidelines. A communal response committee also meets every month to plan major activities for the following months.

As part of this plan, TerresEauVie supported the commune in conducting an awareness-raising campaign via Dori Municipal Radio, distributing 200 posters for the Ministry of Health, and sharing information on the commune's WhatsApp group. On the radio, Mayor Tamboura encouraged residents to take the virus seriously and follow prevention measures. "After the first broadcasts of the message on the radio, many people called me to tell me that the message was successfully



The Citizen Working Group chooses tippy taps to halt COVID-19 (April 2020).
Photo: TerresEauVie

transmitted,” Tamboura said. People understood that COVID-19 is a danger and that all measures must be taken to avoid it because, if the mayor talks about it on the radio, it means that it is serious. The mayor’s office has also echoed the message by [posting on his Facebook account](#). Originally scheduled to air five times, the message was broadcast daily for two months by Dori Municipal Radio. “This is our

contribution to the prevention effort,” said Sy Hamboye, the radio’s program director.

The radio campaign also included frequent broadcasts produced by the Ministry of Health and three micro-programs. These radio spots addressed hygiene and social distancing at water points in the context of COVID-19. They were created on the basis of the recommendations of the WASH humanitarian cluster. Finally, Ahmadou Maiga, Seytenga’s nurse, answered questions from listeners during an open airing on the radio. “Some people thanked me by phone and in person at the Health Center for the clarity of the explanations,” Maiga said. “I also noticed that people now wash their hands when they arrive at the Health Center. This response and prevention plan is fair and its implementation has proven to be relevant for the commune.”

“We have identified COVID-19 as a major risk in our contingency plan”

After more than two months of implementation, no cases of COVID-19 have been identified in Seytenga. “I am proud of our plan and our committee because everyone has really played their part, which has led to a better understanding of the disease and to compliance with prevention measures,” Mayor Tamboura said. People decided to stop shaking hands, to wash their hands regularly, and to avoid large gatherings. This is visible

throughout the commune. The Citizen Working Group conducted door-to-door awareness-raising in collaboration with the Community Based Health Workers. Town criers have been involved to reinforce these efforts to inform people. The awareness-raising activities were understood and well-conducted and as a result, more than 200 tippy taps have been built in villages (see image). A tippy tap is a simple handwashing device made of inexpensive materials adapted to rural populations. Feedback from the local communities indicated that the posters have been effective and informative for those who cannot read.

“We have shared our plan with commune partners, including RISE II Activities, Sahel Development Partnership, technical services, and other development and humanitarian projects,” Mayor Tamboura said. “Several partners have contacted us for in-kind donations and for funding “. These resources were provided to facilitate travel for awareness-raising agents and for purchasing goods for COVID-19 prevention. Among these partners are the development NGOs TARTIT Association and GRET (Development NGOs), and USAID’s Resilience and Economic Growth in Sahel – Enhanced Resilience (REGIS-ER) initiative, which supported the commune with more than 4.5 million West African Francs (CFA), the equivalent of \$8,100.

“At the moment I can say that almost 70 percent of the plan has been implemented,” Mayor Tamboura said. The development and implementation of this plan has enabled the commune to control the risk of contracting COVID-19 through concerted actions, while strengthening the link with technical and financial partners due to proactive efforts. This has given the commune confidence in its ability to organize itself, react, and prevent health risks. Mayor Tamboura concluded: “During the training of the members of the Departmental Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation in June, the actors of our commune jointly identified COVID-19 as a major risk that will be part of our multi-hazard contingency plan that we are developing with the support of TerresEauVie and the National Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation’s Permanent Secretariat.”

“Today, day and night, we are telling the people of the Seytenga commune that to prevent COVID-19 from reaching the Sahel [...] we have to multiply hygiene and sanitation measures to be clean, notably by following the advice of our health workers, as well as by respecting the measures taken by the government and by the Municipal Council.

I also call on other communes to stand up and join hands without waiting for projects to rid Burkina Faso and Africa of the COVID-19 disease.”