AFRICAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACADEMY (ALGA) OF THE UNITED CITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF AFRICA, THE LOCAL AFRICA HRM NETWORK AND THE LOCAL AFRICA HR OBSERVATORY

AFRICAN LOCAL MANAGER VOICE
Special Issue dedicated to Covid-19 Pandemic
N°4, December 2020

Theme:
“Managing the Human Resources of Local Government in Africa in Time of Covid-19 Pandemic and beyond: between Lockdown, Continuity of Local Public Services, Isolation and Work-From-Home”

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTION
Deadline for submission of the contributions:
15 November 2020

(www.uclga.org & www.uclgafrica-alga.org)
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«Together for an Effective Local Africa»
INTRODUCTION

The African Local Manager Voice is a biannual publication produced by the African Local Government Academy (ALGA), the Local Africa HR Network and the Local Africa HR Observatory of UCLG Africa, within the framework of the valorization, the motivation and the development of Human Resources of Local Government in Africa.

This new platform offered to Territorial Managers is intended to be a space for exchange, communication, sharing, debate and networking, making it possible to give visibility to Territorial and Local Managers, to rise and hear their voices and opinions, to exchange successful experiences and good practices. It is also a window where they can present and enhance their missions, their professions, their challenges, their innovations and their creativity. Finally, it is an opportunity for them to discuss the different issues related to Human Resources Management at the local level.

The Bulletin initially issued in English and French, will starting from this issue, take into account the cultural diversity that characterizes our Continent.

The first issue was on “The main functions of Human Resources Management at the level of African Territorial Administrations: Sharing experiences!”. The objective in the choice of this theme was to highlight the main HR functions and the way they are managed at the level of the African Territorial Administrations.

The second issue allowed to exchange and deepen the reflection on "Creating an enabler environment for the Development of Human Resources of Local Governments in Africa: sharing good practices". It was published electronically, in January 2020, thanks to contributions from Territorial Managers from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Ghana as well as from their "friends" (Expert from Belgium, Professors and Lecturers from South Africa and student from Senegal).

The third issue focused on the theme "Moving from Diversity to Inclusion: Where we are at Local Level in Africa?" was disseminated, including electronically, in July 2020 during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic health crisis. This edition was marked by contributions from South Africa, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Morocco, Senegal and Togo (See ALGA's Website: www.uclgafrica-alga.org).
To date the Bulletin received 30 contributions from Africa and outside Africa. We take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude and our sincere thanks for the trust, commitment and contributions of the authors.

I- THEME OF THE 4th ISSUE OF THE AFRICAN LOCAL MANAGER VOICE

With the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, a global epidemic, we are facing a serious global health crisis unprecedented in the 75-year history of the United Nations and in peacetime. It is a crisis that is killing people, disrupting their lives and habits, spreading human suffering and, above all, challenging the entire world order. It is a true multidimensional crisis, with serious challenges for human beings, social, economic and ecological development, and above all it attacks societies at the grassroots level\textsuperscript{1}. It is not only creating instability and threats for individuals, groups, communities and societies as a whole, but also inducing global disruption, affecting all facets of governance, society and business.

Faced with the multidimensional challenges that the world, at all levels of governance, is facing\textsuperscript{2}, beyond the state of health emergency and the exceptional measures adopted and imposed to stem the spread of the epidemic, the commitment and mobilization of the public health sector (infrastructure, equipment, services, medical and paramedical staff, pharmacies, etc.), the question arises as to how other public services, and in particular local public services, are responding to this crisis and trying to adapt to this new complex and constraining context?

Local Public Services means civil servants, managers, employees and local agents. In spite of all the challenges that Local Authorities are facing, on a daily basis, in spite of the lack of means, in spite of the challenges specific to the organization, management and HRM at the local level, local elected officials, civil servants, agents and employees have been and still are "at the Frontline", have been and still are "on the Bridge" to face the Pandemic\textsuperscript{3}, in close collaboration, concertation and cooperation with the Representatives of the State and the others stakeholders.

\textsuperscript{2} See the diverse measures taken at the global level, in https://maroc-diplomatique.net/les-principales-mesures-prises-dans-le-monde-pour-lutter-contre-la-propagation-de-covid-19-3/
\textsuperscript{3} See UCLG-Africa Portal on the commitment of Local and Regional Authorities during the Covid-19 Pandemic: www.uclga.org
These entities have helped to create an enabling and facilitating environment for the implementation of measures dictated by the state of health emergency; they have assisted and supported the health sector in all its components; they have prepared for and assumed the lockdown of infrastructures, equipments, services and businesses; they have also ensured the continuity of local public services deemed essential for the populations and for coping with the pandemic.

If the Pandemic has imposed its own requirements to allow the coming back to the offices and reopening of the public services (social distance, wearing of masks, disinfection of the premises...), it has above all demonstrated that the work-from-home has become the new norm to be taken into consideration and deal with. Indeed, thousands, if not millions of employees, civil servants, staff and agents were forced to work from home. They were pushed suddenly into this new adventure with weak or no preparation at all; with weak or no means at all too!

It was thus considered that work-from-home (WFH) protects the health of citizens and allows business continuity for administrations.

**What is WFH (or teleworking) about?**

WFH refers to an organization of work that consists for the teleworker:
- performing, on a regular and voluntary basis, work which could have been done on the employer's premises, outside those premises,
- using information and communication technologies (desktop and laptop computers, Internet, mobile phones, tablet computers, fax machines, etc.).


However, some administrations are ahead of this modalities of work because they have been adopting telework and the culture it entails for decades. They have put in place the institutional, regulatory, organizational and managerial environment that this mode of working requires. However, for many others, especially in Africa, and especially at the local government level, they are at the stage of "discovering" the requirements, opportunities, risks and means that this way of working entails.

WFH implies a new culture and new mindsets, and also requires good preparation, good management, good organization, rigor and discipline.

The Covid-19 Pandemic gave rise to a myriad of changes in all sectors, including the Human Resources Management sector. This applies to recruitment, personnel management, time management, career management, training and skills development, motivation, disciplinary measures, financing of training, the digital divide, the balance between work and family responsibilities, especially for women, and so on….
In short... a new era is dawning for HRM in the Covid-19 Pandemic era and beyond.

This 4th issue of “The African Local Manager Voice” will be a special issue dedicated to the following general theme:

"Managing the Human Resources of Local Government in Africa in Time of Covid-19 Pandemic and beyond: between Lockdown, Continuity of Local Public Services, Isolation and Work-From-Home"

The choice of this theme is not accidental. The Covid-19 crisis has radically changed forecasts, public policies, action plans, strategies and perspectives at all levels of governance:

- **On the international level:** the Covid-19 Pandemic has claimed more than 655,000 lives in 188 countries and regions of the world, since its outbreak in China in December 2019. For the UN Secretary General, Mr Antonio Guterres⁴: “We have been brought to our knees by a microscopic virus. The pandemic has demonstrated the fragility of our world. We face the deepest global recession since World War II”. The impact of the pandemic on global order, balance, peace and stability is also beginning to be felt.

- **At the African level:** A time preserved by the coronavirus pandemic, the African continent is now affected by the spread of Covid-19. As Dr Matshidiso Moeti, Regional Director of the World Health Organization (WHO) for Africa⁵, pointed out on 12 June 2020, while it took 98 days to reach the 100,000 case mark on the African continent, only 18 were needed to cross the 200,000 case mark.

To date, the number of coronavirus-positive people in Africa is now close to 860,000 cases, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention⁶ said on Tuesday, July 28, 2020. According to the daily bulletin, 859,237 cases of Covid-19 have been registered in 54 African countries, with 18,160 deaths and 506,534 recoveries.

- **At the level of African Local Governments:** Since the spread of the Coronavirus, human resources management has experienced a real "tsunami” and has been confronted with a multitude of challenges:

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⁴ At the opening of the 73rd World Health Assembly on Monday 18 May, 2020 in Geneva, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres: "the divergent strategies adopted to combat the Covid 19 pandemic: https://news.un.org/fr/story/2020/05/1069022

⁵ See https://www.afro.who.int/fr/news/afrique-enregistre-plus-de-200-000-cas-de-covid-19

⁶ Latest updates on the COVID-19 crisis from Africa CDC: https://africacdc.org/covid-19/
How can we work to facilitate, support and accompany the implementation of measures dictated by the state of health emergency?

How can we meet the demands, expectations and needs of populations, citizens and users?

How can we cope with the lockdown of infrastructures, equipment, offices and services?

How can we ensure the continuity of public services deemed essential for the population, for citizens, for users?

How to reconcile the principles, rules and procedures of the public service, requiring the physical presence in the workplace and the requirements and constraints of the work-from-home (telework)?

In a report published by McLEAN & Company\(^7\), an HRM research and consulting firm, on the assessment of the current situation of telework during the isolation, «COVID-19 pushed organizations that were previously resistant into an immediate work-from-home experiment. Speed was the priority, so support (e.g. tools, training, and logistics) and integration into organizational and HR programs required for a successful program are lacking. The work-from-home (WFH) actions taken at the start of the pandemic were not meant to be long-term, but as time passes both employees and employers recognize there is a need for a more permanent solution.»

The solution, according to the same firm, is to Sustain WFH opportunities for employees by creating a planned, integrated, and supported program that maximizes the benefits of flexibility while supporting both organizational and employee needs. Using an in-depth analysis of work duties, processes, and operational outcomes, along with the development of clearly defined program parameters, transition the current short-term emergency WFH arrangement into a successful and unbiased long-term WFH program.

McLean & Company has developed a four-step approach to implement a sustainable WFH program:

1. Assess the current state of WFH;
2. Identify and select WFH options;
3. Define WFH program parameters;
4. Prepare to implement and sustain the WFH program.

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\(^7\) See the McLean & Company report on their website: [https://hr.mcleanco.com/research/ss/sustain-work-from-home-in-the-new-normal](https://hr.mcleanco.com/research/ss/sustain-work-from-home-in-the-new-normal)
II- EXPECTED CONTRIBUTIONS

The contributions to this Special Issue should therefore focus on the reality experienced by civil servants, executives, agents and employees of African Territorial Communities during the Covid-19 Pandemic and how they envisage the future of their careers, in other words, ALGA of UCLG-Africa invites you to make contributions by providing answers to any of the following questions:

- What is your perception of this crisis?
- How did you experience the Covid-19 crisis, either in your offices or in isolation at home?
- What difficulties did you encounter during the confinement?
- How did you manage to continue to manage the services under your responsibility, competence and profession?
- Did the Local Government where you work fit out or rearrange the work premises and offices to prevent the spread of the virus?
- Are there any administrative monitoring units dedicated to evaluate the impact on the functioning of activities and services to citizens?
- What tools have been put in place to promote teamwork and collaboration?
- What is your perception of the issues and challenges related to telework or work-from-home?
- Is there a tradition, practice, good experiences of telework in your country?
- Is there an institutional and regulatory environment in your country that promotes home-based work and telework?
- Have measures, infrastructures, equipment been envisaged to enable you to move towards telework?
- Are there any good practices that have been developed in your country, in your local institution or community, in your services, that you would like to share with the readers of this Bulletin?
- Are there awareness raising, training and capacity building programs to train civil servants in the use of IT tools and technologies necessary for telework?
- How do you assess your local government's experience in managing the Covid-19 pandemic crisis?
- How do you evaluate the experience of your local government in Human Resources management during the crisis?
- How did you experience teleworking during the period of containment?
- How did you manage to reconcile your problems of organization of time and work space or of boundaries between professional and personal life? This question targets, in particular, women;
- Do you have any publications, research, books on HRM during the Covid-19 Pandemic to feed the Library of the Observatory of Local HR in Africa?

III- WHO CAN CONTRIBUTE?

The Bulletin is mainly open to contributions from African Territorial and Local Managers, whatever their field of activity or professional background. However, in a spirit of openness to the African Local Governments and Benchmarking, any other contribution having an added value, in terms of information sharing, successful experiences and good practices, will be welcomed. This Bulletin considers these contributions as being those of "friends of the African Territorial Managers" who can be officials of Central Administrations, Devolution Services, University Professors, experts, resource persons, and representatives of the Private Sector or the Civil Society.

IV- SOME PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Your contribution must comply with the following substantive and formal requirements:
- Your contribution must have a title;
- Clearly define the issue you will develop and analyze;
- Presentation of the measure(s) initiated, the reforms adopted and implemented to adapt the environment of local authorities and Human Resources during the pandemic crisis and beyond?
- If you are presenting innovations, please specify what the innovation consists of and how it differs from the previous situation?
- If you are sharing good practices, you should present the objectives, content, target audiences, budget allocated, expected impact ... ;
- The contribution should consist of a maximum of four (4) pages, i.e. 1,500 words, up to a maximum of 2,000 words ;
- Font type: Times New Roman, and Font Size 12;
- All quotations must be placed between brackets, including the source, i.e. the author of the quotation or the document from which it is extracted, the exact title of the document, the date of publication, the place of publication;
- Attach please your picture and a very short biography (100 words maximum), mentioning the name of your Territorial Community/Institution, as well as your contacts (mobile phone, Tel, Fax, Email, Portal or Website of the Territorial Community/Institution to which you belong).

**Deadline for submission of contributions:** **November 15, 2020.**

Contributions should be sent to:
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**PS:** These contacts are all reachable through WhatsApp

Do not hesitate to contact us and visit UCLG-Africa Portal: [www.uclga.org](http://www.uclga.org) and ALGA Website: [www.uclgafrica-alga.org](http://www.uclgafrica-alga.org)