



IMPACT OF COVID-19.

Qualitative Study towards
Kinshasa middle-class.



- *The planet is undergoing a historic upheaval. In 2019, a virus appeared in Wuhan city, according to a researcher. A few days or even weeks later, the disease spread. It has been underestimated by other countries but, three months later China was able to control the disease; it has become the great global pandemic as it has crossed China's borders.*
- *The DRC has so far more than 7,000 cases and nearly 180 deaths. Messages about protection measures are disseminated everywhere.*
- *Target now wants to understand how people live in the face of all this; what are the attitudes, beliefs, new practices and behaviours in the face of the pandemic at the macroeconomic level.*
- *All this justifies the need for a qualitative study that is already coming up on a digital platform, contrary to face-to-face exchanges that are currently outlawed by ESOMAR and local health authorities.*
- *This document presents the results of study conducted during this month of June 2020. The research recommendations are intended for the Presidency Task Force, Ministry of Health, Technical Secretariat of Multi-Sector Response Committee against Covid-19 in DRC, but also to any individual and legal person wishing to contribute to the fight against Covid-19 pandemic in DRC. Companies targeting the middle class will also be able to identify business opportunities.*

Strategic Objectives: to achieve our social responsibility as a member of Global Compact DRC; contribute to the fight against Covid-19 pandemic as a research agency that listens to current events, dedicated to providing information on behavioural impacts of some major events.

Research Objectives.

- *Understanding what people know in a summary way about Covid-19*
- *Understanding new attitudes and behaviours*
- *Understanding the current daily life*
- *Analysing the perception of lockdown in the current context*
- *The impact of Covid 19 on personal projects*
- *Etc.*

A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON TWO DIGITAL PLAFORMS: WHATSAPP AND MICROSOFT TEAM.

- A group with middle-class women (10 women) recruited through TARGET SARL's Online Panel.
- Aged 25 to 40 married with children.
- They are constantly connected to WhatsApp which served as a contact and to give instructions to access the meeting online via Microsoft Team
- The group lasted two hours and after the group, they sent via WhatsApp some photos and videos of their daily lives (disinfectant products they have, their routines and practices for 5 days).

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RESULTS



All negative statements.



World-renowned dangerous disease...

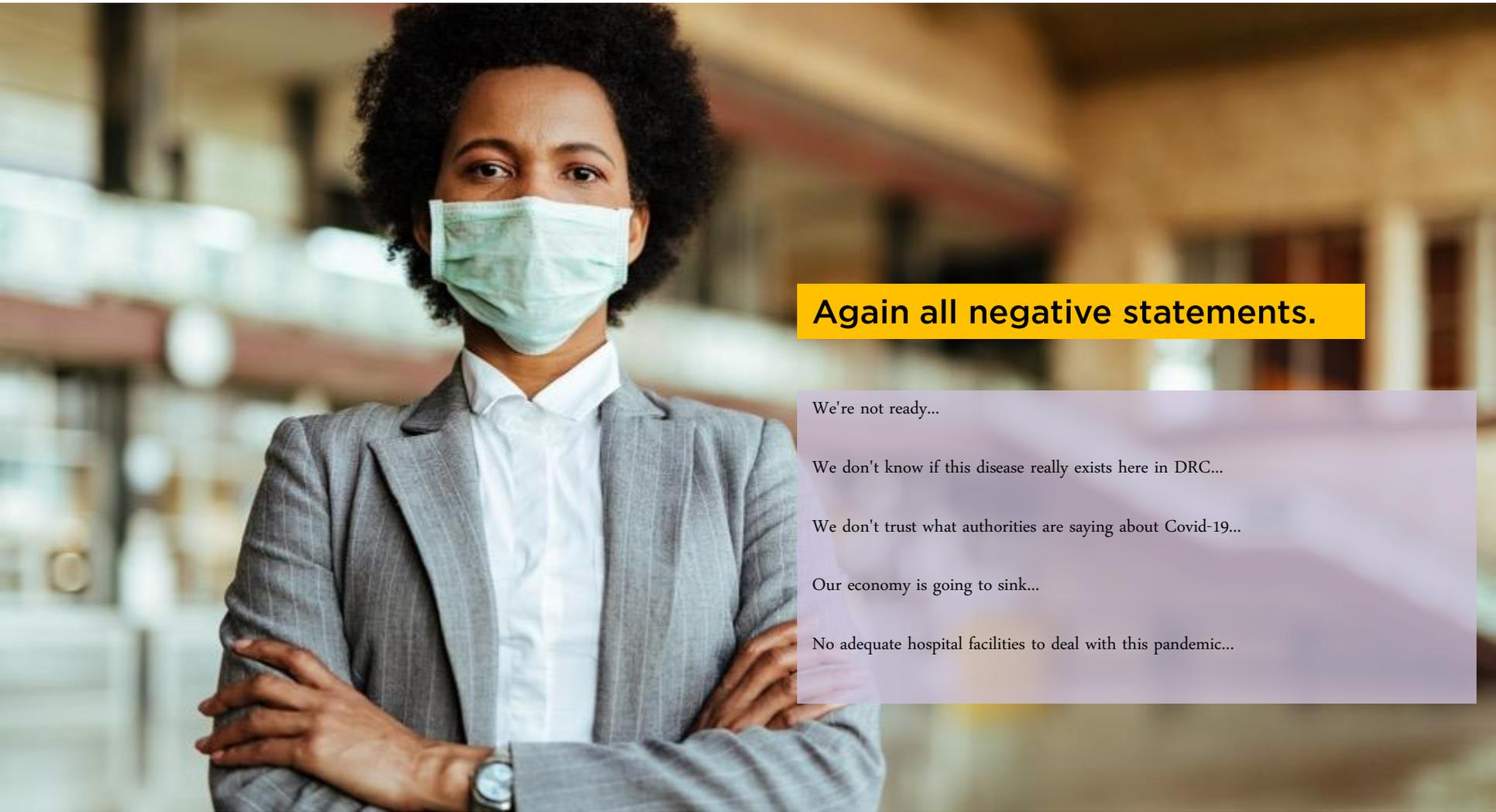
A disease that kills and spares no one...

A disease that continues to kill...

Deadly virus...

It is a pandemic, a virus that affects the whole world and causes enormous damage, blocks the global economy...

It is a disease from China that is easily transmitted with a high risk of mortality...



Again all negative statements.

- We're not ready...
- We don't know if this disease really exists here in DRC...
- We don't trust what authorities are saying about Covid-19...
- Our economy is going to sink...
- No adequate hospital facilities to deal with this pandemic...

Rumours are the sources of “Said”, “Beliefs” and “Non-beliefs”. People in residential or semi-residential areas (Gombe, Ngaliema, Limete) appear to be more aware of the pandemic than those living in non-residential areas (Kasa-Vubu, Kalamu,...)

1

The “Said”

A pathology that is not well controlled without exact treatment.

Interviewees know that there is currently no safe and reliable treatment for this disease.

Moreover, they mention its opacity; a disease whose true origin and symptoms are not clearly defined.

Besides, no clarity could also be explained by the excess of ambiguous rumours about it.

Par ailleurs non clarté s'expliquerait aussi par l'excès de rumeurs ambiguës sur celle –ci.

“A virus whose treatment has not been found”

“A disease that is not clear”.

2

The “Beliefs”

The existence of the disease is clear; daily statistics on deaths in the country, on the continent and around the world justify this belief.

“People believe in corona because people die and have seen the video of healed people testifying.”

3

The “Non-beliefs”

Nevertheless, some cases of rejection of the existence of this pandemic. The government's strategy would not be clear and concise to establish a belief in people's minds. This could be explained by:

- The ambiguity of government communications.
- Government actions still not well understood
- Inflation not assimilated

“Others, on the other hand, do not believe because there is no clear information about this pandemic at the government level and especially with speculation about the purchase of dead bodies by the response team. The management of this disease is not at all clear.”



Lockdown : A mixed word in the current context; partial lockdown would be the appropriate expression.

- Strong opinions; Kinshasa city has not really been lockdown; the same is true for Gombe municipality,
- According to some interviewees, the mere fact of entering and leaving Gombe municipality even with the authorizations removes the “**lockdown label**”; contamination will still be possible if people can access and exit it.
- According to men interviewed, Kinshasa partial lockdown allows to control the pandemic progression but the huge negative financial impacts on small traders carrying out their activities Gombe municipality, but also for businesses and SMEs.
- Interviewees acknowledge that real lockdown in the sense of the term is impossible because it requires enormous financial resources from the government.

“When Kinshasa people go to Gombe and come back in the evening; they can still bring us back the disease. That's why I'm saying there really wasn't any lockdown.”



The practices adopted are generally based on financial means but also on prevention messages conveyed.

The most common practices: they are regular because they are less expensive and less restrictive.

- Regular hand washing with water and soap (usually liquid soap for hand); this is done at home and outside. All large and medium-sized commercial spaces have a hand wash where every visitor/customer must wash their hands.
- Wearing mask in public which has become an obligation: the cloth mask (African loincloth/surgical mask) is the most used because it is cheaper and accessible.
- Medical masks are less so, they are available but expensive.
- Greetings are no longer made; if so, to touch elbows as a gesture of this.
- The use of hydroalcoholic gels; middle- and upper-class households generally have them. This is also used from time to time.

Less common practices: relatively restrictive and costly

- Le bain après retour à la maison (quelques personnes)
- Bathing after returning home (a few people)
- Cleaning feet before accessing the house. A device is placed in front of the house main entrance; a hollow tray containing a disinfectant solution and an absorbent foot towels.
- Wearing gloves.

Almost non-existing practices in homes: they are little mentioned in awareness communications.

- Temperature reading: respondents only benefit when they enter supermarkets.
- The disinfecting of products purchased from outside.



*“At home I put a foot cleaning device in front of my door where each person dips the bottom of the shoe in a solution with bleach drops, then wipes before entering” **Man***

*“People wash their hands regularly, wear masks in public areas” **Women /Men***

*“Liquid buckets and soaps are placed at the entrance to wash hands for visitors and people who are at home, wearing obligatory masks for visitors even during conversation”
Woman*

*“Any member of the household who goes out, has to wash his hands and change clothes before touching children and other things in the house, must dust the shoes and leave out for a while” **Woman***

*“We also use disinfectant and hydro-alcoholic solution” **Women/Men***

*“When I go out and go to a rather populous place, I take my bath directly on my return before touching anything” **Woman***





The financial situation is worrying if we have to consider social realities. Refocusing on vital spending is common practice.

- **The decline or even disappearance of income:** traders operating in the informal sector are affected because sales are no longer effective. Those operating especially in Gombe Township to which they no longer access because of the lockdown are greatly affected, the risk of disappearance of their trade fund is great.
- **The increase of dependents:** people with jobs now have more people to take care of because the social system requires to provide for a little help to those who need it.
- **The “Stand by” of projects:** the construction of a house or acquiring a land, purchase of a car, taking a leave of absence and travel are all postponed. The great uncertainty about the end of this pandemic justifies the current decisions.
- **Covering monthly expenses becomes a real challenge:** paying bills of water, electricity, pay TV, rent and domestic staff has become almost impossible for some people.
- **The sharp depreciation of national currency:** this leads to higher commodity prices for end-consumers who have not necessarily seen their incomes in local currency increase.



*“We live here in a community and I assure you that those who are currently working have more people to help because relatives and siblings who were doing small business are no longer doing well and we who have stable jobs, we have to help them” **Man***

*“The situation is getting worse, very difficult to support yourself and provide for your own needs, everything is blocked, people are not paid, difficult to pay rent and various bills” **Woman***

*“We remember that the Head of State said in one of his communications that water and electricity should not be paid, but I assure you, there are people in some municipalities who receive bills when already activities are not running. How are they going to pay for it?” **Woman***

*“The speed with which the local currency depreciates compare to US dollar is worrying us” **Man***

*“Mining production has fallen sharply and this will also impact taxes and therefore national economy; the risk of recession is likely” **Man***

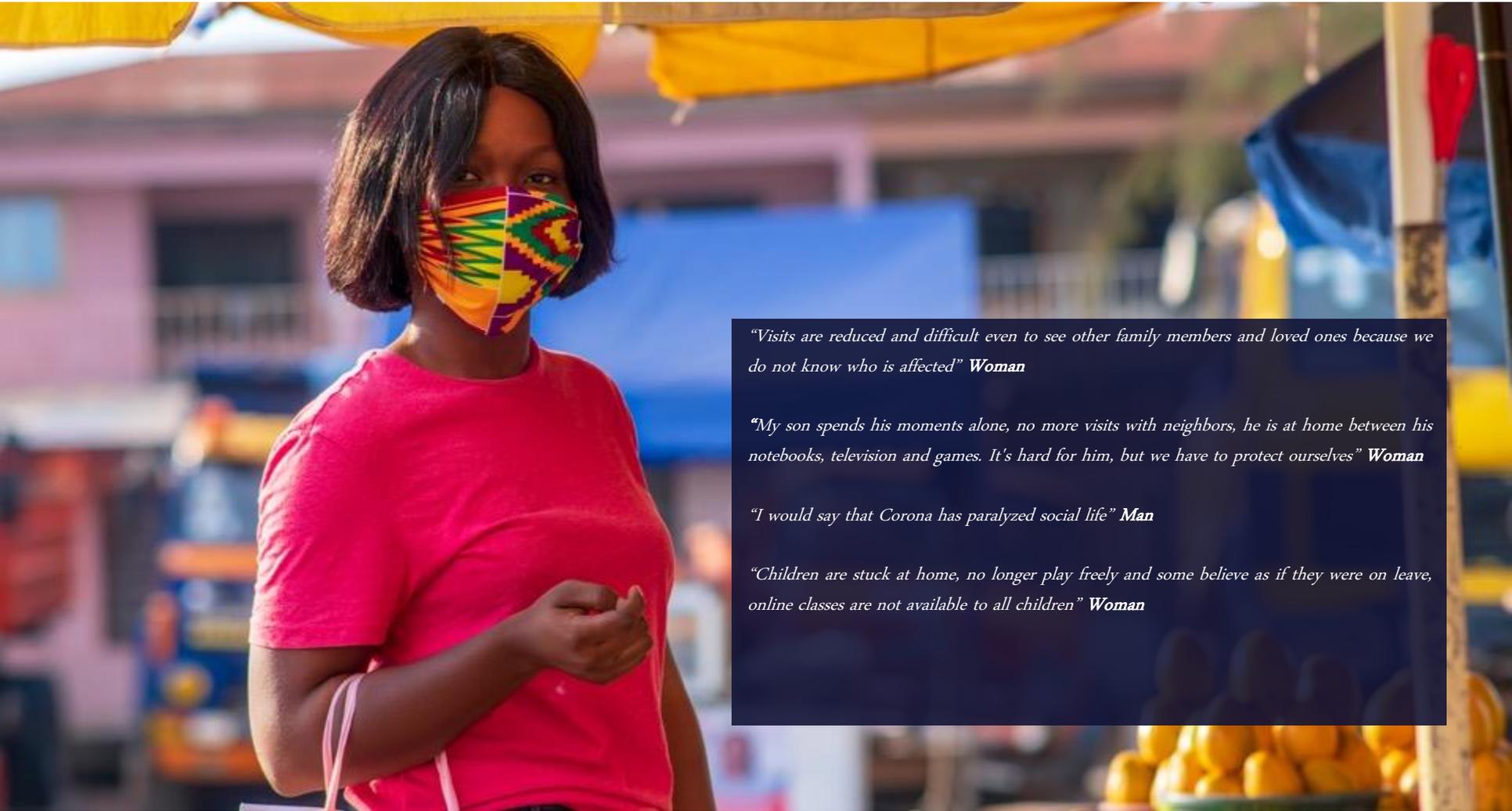
*“The hardware stores, clothing shops have serious problems because in the current context, we buy only what is essential” **Man***

*“We eat essentials without trying to have fun as before” **Woman***



A paralyzed social life; westernization of family unit.

- **Almost autarchic life:** visits to families are very limited; they are only made when the need is great and only with people whose affinity is great.
- **The disappearance of out-of-home entertainment:** terrace bars and restaurants are closed; no way to share a glass of drink with a friend, just to have fun.
- **Little socialization:** living at home is advocated against will; in buildings, no more visits between neighbours,
- **A new world for children:** watching TV is their main entertainment. Their days are divided between small moments of study, watching television and creating games between brothers and sisters.
- **Religious life is different:** We are obliged to pray at home while going to church was not only to pray but also a time to go out with the family to meet brothers and sisters of the same church, to pray and sing. The inability to go to church is a huge lack of social entertainment.



*“Visits are reduced and difficult even to see other family members and loved ones because we do not know who is affected” **Woman***

*“My son spends his moments alone, no more visits with neighbors, he is at home between his notebooks, television and games. It’s hard for him, but we have to protect ourselves” **Woman***

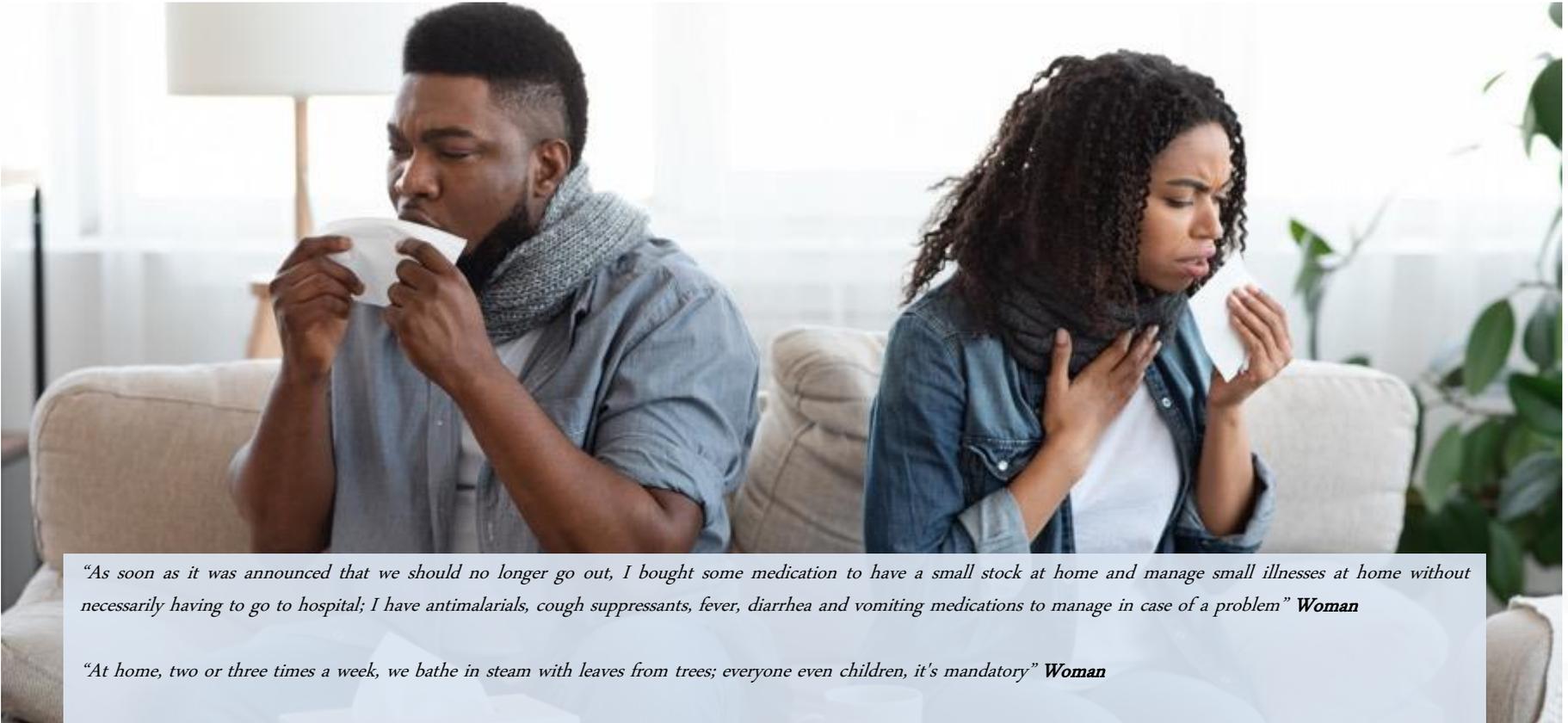
*“I would say that Corona has paralyzed social life” **Man***

*“Children are stuck at home, no longer play freely and some believe as if they were on leave, online classes are not available to all children” **Woman***



Popularization of preventive practices against all pathologies including Covid-19.

- **A more complete pharmacy box:** the purchase of first-hand products requires is common (anti analgesic, anti-malaria, painkillers, medications for diarrhoea and vomiting, etc.); some households do not hesitate to protect themselves regularly. Fear of going to the hospital in case of illness is the main motivation for purchasing preventive pharmaceutical products.
- Some people **focused more on natural solutions** to treat common sickness, but also to protect themselves against Covid-19.
 - Use of fruit tree leaves (mango, papaya, etc.) for steam bath in the evening: all family members must practice it, including children.
 - Steam bath of the menthol solution.
 - Regular consumption of hot drinks; lemon tea.
- **Visits to hospital facilities are limited:** the fear of being contaminated supports this behaviour.



*“As soon as it was announced that we should no longer go out, I bought some medication to have a small stock at home and manage small illnesses at home without necessarily having to go to hospital; I have antimalarials, cough suppressants, fever, diarrhea and vomiting medications to manage in case of a problem” **Woman***

*“At home, two or three times a week, we bathe in steam with leaves from trees; everyone even children, it's mandatory” **Woman***

*“We are steam bathing with Confo (liquid menthol), it helps us, and every day we drink tea, in short hot drinks” **Man***



Towards a refocus on essential and important things.

Hygiene: An essential hygiene practice that was neglected but regained its value thanks to covid-19. People have become aware and have become more responsible on cleaning their environment.

“And of itself, this disease has taught us to be cleaner more than before, hand washing at all times” Man

Social: visits with no real purpose were common; sometimes annoying for the person receiving; today only necessary visits with close relatives are allowed. Visits will now be reduced and well-managed.

Financial: purchases are more purposeful and the notion of savings are obvious in the face of Covid-19.

“This pandemic has taught us financial education, spending will be better managed,

We used to spend without thinking, but now we only buy what is necessary and we also understood that we have to save to manage unexpected situations”

Technology: the use of internet and more mobile financial solutions. All this is for the purpose of doing several important things without necessarily having to move. For internet, its entertainment aspect has increased because of idleness.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

DIFFERENCE OF OPINIONS MEN VS. WOMEN

Opinions of men and women are broadly similar to the only difference that in terms of lessons, men have made more suggestions about the future after Covid-19 with the internet:

- The internet needs to be widely popularized to enable schools and families to teach/follow online classes.
- The Internet needs to be more integrated into aspects of society as well as in business world to make life easier in the event of a similar pandemic.
- The government's involvement needs to be more important in the extension of internet services.

FINDINGS

Middle-class people are generally aware of the pandemic and take precautions both in public and at home (hand washing, wearing masks, hydro-alcoholic gels,...); however, they are in touch with people living in non-residential areas who do not seem to believe it (for them, the pandemic is not true). Hence some confusion in people's minds (Believe? Don't believe in the Covid-19?)

SUGGESTIONS

- Send communication teams to populated areas (Victory, Gambela, Matadi Kibala, etc.) to observe people's attitudes and behaviours.
- To detect and recruit in these environments a strong team of people who can raise awareness and deploy them in order to convey more convincing messages about the reality of the pandemic and great need for compliance with barrier measures.
- Set up indicators related to compliance with barrier measures by township, publish results in order to encourage municipal authorities on the application of measures of their respective municipalities.

FINDINGS

Life has become economically complicated for interviewees; they are ready to adapt and adopt new economic solutions, they are running out of ideas.

SUGGESTIONS

- Create a platform of solutions and economic tricks on a daily basis in the face of Covid-19.
- Invite some people to share their experiences with others; the most relevant solutions can be made in 5-minute capsules that will be shared on social networks and instant messaging.
- Solutions can include cheaper and convenient food menus, shopping organization, cheaper family entertainment, small business opportunities, economical shopping locations, etc.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS

Life is gloomy; the joy and pleasant ambiance has almost disappeared; all of this can have negative psychological impacts over time.

SUGGESTIONS

- Look for coaches who will share ideas and thoughts about happiness with small things.
- Work with churchmen (priests, pastors...) to integrate these aspects into online Masses/church services in order to psychologically support people in the face of this psychologically and morally difficult period.

FINDINGS

Uncertainty about the next day develops a certain refocusing among respondents on essential things in terms of dating, purchase of product and internet use.

SUGGESTIONS

- Offer entertainment at home or in fairly closed places (private circles) for people who are reluctant to find themselves in crowded public places with people whose health they do not have control.
- Conduct further studies to better understand new hierarchy of needs and new post-Covid-19 purchasing process in order to offer more tailored products and services in the context of financial crisis. Online shopping and home delivery will increasingly have to be offered.
- Develop more attractive savings products for people who do not want to hoard their money at home or keep it in bank with unattractive fees and rates.



Thank you!

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