



Epidemic Preparedness in Senegal: Making the Case for Increased Public Health Budgets



Senegal has improved its ability to prevent, find and stop disease outbreaks. With support from the Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHAI), Senegalese civil society advocates successfully made the case for domestic investments in epidemic preparedness and a funding proposal developed in collaboration with government leaders.

Sustained advocacy is needed to translate temporary expressions of political will into long-term investments to prevent, find and stop disease outbreaks.

The Challenge

Infectious disease outbreaks may prompt investments in emergency response. However, sustained advocacy is needed to translate such temporary expressions of political will into long-term investments to prevent, find and stop disease outbreaks.

Senegal is a case in point. Following the devastating Ebola outbreak in 2014, the government established the Health Emergency Operation Center (COUS), which is tasked with preventing, detecting and responding to health emergencies. Despite its critical mission, the agency received less than US\$100,000 in annual government funding in 2018 and 2019. International partners provided additional support but without long-term sustainability.



Senegal's Health Emergency Operation Center in Dakar.

GHAI's Response

In late 2018, GHAI began work in Senegal to raise awareness and political will for increased and sustained domestic investments in epidemic preparedness. GHAI assembled and trained a team of civil society advocates that successfully:

- Engaged an effective coalition of civil society advocates to sensitize political decision-makers across the legislative and executive branches of government about the urgent need for sustained domestic investment to address epidemic preparedness gaps.
- Heightened public and political awareness of funding needs through media advocacy that promoted federal investments in epidemic preparedness.
- Helped decision-makers build a case for investing in sustainable epidemic preparedness through a feasibility study and funding proposal, which were incorporated in the Ministry of Health's 2021-2023 work plan.

Building a Coalition of Advocates

GHAI worked with ONG 3D, a civil society group focused on improving the country's public health, development and human rights, to form the Société Civile pour la Prévention des Épidémies et la Gestion des Catastrophes (COSPEC), a network of civil society organizations dedicated to improving epidemic preparedness and response.

With support from GHAI, ONG 3D organized educational workshops for COSPEC members on epidemic preparedness and led regular meetings to coordinate advocacy efforts. COSPEC helped its members plan and execute educational and media activities, such as a 2020 campaign conducted by ONG 3D and others to empower community and religious leaders to address COVID-19 and the need for sustained epidemic preparedness funding. COSPEC members worked closely with COUS, expanding the government's ability to advocate for additional funding.

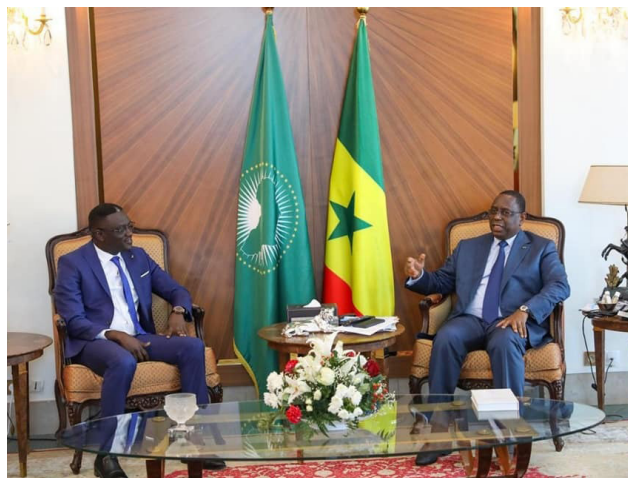


GHAI consultant Oumar Ndao presents PAPCCUSS at a budget framework seminar organized by Senegal's Ministry of Health and Social Action.

Engaging Political Leaders

ONG 3D and other civil society advocates sensitized political decision-makers across the legislative and executive branches of government about the urgent need for sustained domestic investments to address epidemic preparedness gaps. They organized calls, meetings and workshops with health, finance and budget leaders including parliamentarians and representatives from the Directorate General of Health, the Directorate of Research, Planning and Statistics and the Ministry of Finance. This engagement helped to build a common understanding of the challenges posed by infectious disease outbreaks on the health and wellbeing of Senegal people and their economy.

ONG 3D Executive Director Moundiaïe Cisse made the case directly to President Macky Sall during an in-person meeting on March 26, 2020. At the meeting, President Sall expressed his commitment to increasing the budget for COUS and other entities involved in tracking, preventing and preparing for disease outbreaks and other emergencies.



ONG 3D Executive Director Moundiyaye Cisse and President Macky Sall on March 26, 2020.

Generating Media Buzz

With GHAI's support, ONG 3D empowered journalists to report on disease outbreaks and the importance of investing in epidemic preparedness, and generated compelling media coverage throughout the campaign on the life-saving work of COUS and others involved in strengthening health security.

ONG 3D produced a series of video reports to make the case for investing in epidemic preparedness and response. The reports, which were featured on the popular television program "Focus," proved to be an effective way to engage political decision-makers in conversations about preparedness, and provided a platform for them to declare their support for additional funding. The reports featured statements from the Ministry of Health's Director of Medical Prevention and the chairs of the National Assembly's powerful Health and Finance committees, among others. The "Focus" broadcasts reached approximately 5 million viewers.

Making the Case for Investing in Epidemic Preparedness

In the second half of 2019, GHAI conducted a feasibility study to make the case for investing in epidemic preparedness and response, titled "Projet d'Appui à la Prise en Charge des Crises et Urgences Sanitaires au Sénégal (PAPCCUSS)." It called for US\$10.5 million (5.87 billion CFA) to support health emergency and crisis management in Senegal over five years.

The study was developed in a multi-stakeholder process with leaders from the Ministry of Health, as well as its Directorate of Prevention, COUS and the Bureau of Civil Defense. The process helped to generate a common understanding of the devastating impact of disease outbreaks on Senegal's economy, health system and society, and generated consensus among government leaders on the importance of investing in epidemic preparedness and response.

GHAI and ONG 3D shepherded PAPCCUSS through the government approval process in the first quarter of 2020, providing requested information and support to health, finance and budget leaders, including the Director General of the Budget.



ONG 3D hosts a journalism workshop on epidemic preparedness.



Case Study

Result

Senegal increased funding for its Health Emergency Operation Center (COUS) and other government entities involved in finding, responding and preventing disease outbreaks, and included the investment case for preparedness (PAPCCUSS) in the Ministry of Health's Public Investment Program for 2021-2023 – another indication of growing political will to invest in epidemic preparedness and response.

Lessons Learned

- Sustained advocacy for epidemic preparedness is essential to ensure long-term investments are made beyond immediate crises.
- Leadership by local civil society is critical to developing effective coalitions and successful advocacy campaigns.
- Civil society advocates can maximize their potential when they are provided with financial and technical support.
- Advocates should engage high-level political decision-makers—such as ministers of health, budget and finance—as early as possible in a campaign.
- Political decision-makers are more likely to support funding proposals backed by evidence, such as the feasibility study used to advocate for funding in Senegal.
- Sustained media coverage, such as the “Focus” broadcasts, can help to frame epidemic preparedness as a national priority.
- Journalism trainings and webinars are effective tools to catalyze media coverage and generate support for epidemic preparedness funding.

LESSONS LEARNED

Advocacy is needed to sustain public health investments past immediate crises



Local civil society and political leadership is critical

Civil society advocates can benefit from financial and technical support



Funding proposals should be backed by evidence-based investment cases

Media coverage can help frame epidemic preparedness as a national priority



Global Health Advocacy Incubator

1400 I St. NW, Suite 1200,
Washington, DC 20005 USA

info@advocacyincubator.org

advocacyincubator.org
[@IncubatorGHAI](https://twitter.com/IncubatorGHAI)

The Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHAI) supports civil society organizations who advocate for public health policies that reduce death and disease.