



Covid- 19 Status Update 8

Period: Tuesday 09 June 2020- Monday 15 June 2020

1. Introduction – The Harare Residents' Trust continues to monitor the situation in Harare suburbs during the lockdown. On Friday 12 June 2020, the president declared that level two is continuing. Informal businesses have been encouraged to register before they start to operate. Churches can now resume services but limited to 50 (fifty) people per gathering. ZUPCO buses continue to operate and private transport operators remain side-lined. As the HRT keeps track of events taking place during the lockdown, key areas of monitoring include water delivery, citizens' awareness of the coronavirus, responsiveness of council officials on citizens' reports, lockdown enforcement by City and State security officials (human rights approach), refuse collections, compliance with lockdown regulations on people's movement. This situational update highlights the situation on water, health, people's movement and awareness of Covid-19, food security, the transport situation, availability of fuel around Harare and some other updates.

2. Situation Update

2.1. Water – Several suburbs in the Harare Metropolitan Province spent the whole week without tap water. These include Budiriro 1 and 2, Mabvuku, and Chitungwiza Unit K and L. Some received tap water for a few days and for short periods. In Glen View 3, residents received tap water once for the whole of last week, and it was after 10 pm. By 6am the following day tap water had ran out. In Sunningdale, tap water was received during the weekend on Saturday and Sunday. In Kuwadzana they had water from Tuesday to Friday. Tap water started trickling out again this week on Monday 15 June. New Tafara residents had tap water on Monday 15 June as well. In Crowborough, tap water was available until on Friday 12 June. In Rugare, residents received water during the weekend. They had to rely on community water points during the week. Borrowdale residents received tap water on Wednesday and Thursday after spending months with dry taps. Water cuts are resulting in residents' reliance on community water points where they have to queue for long hours. Social distancing is not taking place at these boreholes and most of the water points have ran out of sanitisers.

2.2. Health – Last week, atients in Glen View were not receiving treatment at the local clinic. They were being referred to hospitals such as Harare and Parirenyatwa. In ward 12 Mbare, there was no medication but staff was assisting patients in every way they could. There was a case in Epworth whereby a maternal patient at Dombo clinic was told to pay a US\$12.00 ambulance fee despite the fact that she had used her own vehicle to get there. The nurses

insisted that without paying the fee, she would not be attended to. Left with no option, she paid the money and then they attended to her.

2.3. Movement and awareness of Covid-19 – Although there is need for continuous education and sensitisation, awareness has improved among residents as was highlighted in the previous report. Most residents are now aware of the way the virus spreads and the methods of prevention. However, they feel that their hands are tied when it comes to practicing the preventative measures. In as much as they would want to stay home and practice social distancing, they are not able to do so because of factors beyond their control. Citizens are still highlighting that they need to work for their families and they cannot afford to stay home. During the past week informal markets in Mbare were operating resulting in the large movement of people from various suburbs to the markets. People with exemption letters were able to move across suburbs and could access the CBD without problems. However, the situation changed drastically on Monday 15 June. The police officers and soldiers manning roadblocks blocked thousands of people from entering central Harare. Long queues of vehicles stretching for kilometres were witnessed at roadblocks from suburbs such as Mabvuku, Chitungwiza, Warren Park, Glen View among others. The movement restrictions coincided with the national prayer and officers at some roadblocks were telling people to go back home and pray. Some would just order commuters to go back home without giving any reason. Buses, trucks and private cars were held up and only uniformed forces and nurses were allowed to proceed. On Tuesday morning, troops were deployed in Epworth and they were ordering every pedestrian and motorist to vacate the streets and stay home. It is still not clear why this was happening. Residents are concerned with the inconsistencies surrounding lockdown enforcement in the capital.

2.4. Food security – Prices are still rising and most households especially in the high density suburbs are now food insecure. Most shops in suburbs are pegging their prices in USD. 10 kg mealie meal is going for an average of US\$4.50. Those selling in ZWL\$ are selling 10kg mealie-meal ranging from ZWL\$ 400-ZWL\$ 500.00. A 10kg pack of mealie meal now consumes almost a quarter of a civil servant's salary. An inverse relationship between prices and civil servants' salaries now exists after an announcement on Monday morning that salaries are being slashed. 2L Cooking oil and 2kg sugar have now gone above ZWL\$ in some shops. Last week, suburbs did not receive government subsidised mealie-meal meaning that everyone had to fork out ZWL\$400.00+ for 10kg mealie-meal. Communities did not receive the promised food aid as well. Residents in Sunningdale indicated that they have not received any government food aid since they submitted their names during the early phases of the lockdown.

2.5. Transport – The transport situation is worsening in the Harare Metropolitan Province. Regardless of that fact, the president maintained the ban on private transport operator ions. People are overcrowding at bus termini and ranks across the city. ZUPCO buses are proving to be inadequate and they are getting overwhelmed by the demand available. Commuters are lining up along streets waiting to hitchhike private vehicles. Streets such as Julius Nyerere, Robert Mugabe Way, Leopold Takawira and Second Street are usually full of hitchhikers around sunset. Commuters push and shove each other when trying to gain entrance into private vehicles. Inside the vehicles strangers get packed, making social distancing impossible. This is defeating the whole idea and purpose of the lockdown. Hitchhiking also risks both the commuters and the car owners. Past experiences in Harare have shown that robberies are committed by hitchhikers and by the drivers as well. People are risking their lives because they do not have options. Mushika-shika is slowly coming back because of commuters' overreliance on private vehicles.

2.6. Other updates – The fuel situation in Harare keeps on worsening. Some fuel stations are still withholding their fuel because the pump price is still low. Human rights violations were reported in Kuwadzana on 13 June where 7 (seven) men were assaulted by police officers at a local bar. After receiving a tip off, the police officers went on to assault the revellers severely and indiscriminately. Residents from various communities raised concern on the issue of rising property rates. Some are citing lack of transparency, complaining that they are receiving bills from the Harare City Council, with huge amounts that they do not owe. The HRT is also concerned with the ongoing consultative meetings on the Amendment Bill No.2, which are taking place during the lockdown period. The Portfolio Committee on Justice, Legal and Parliamentary affairs scheduled dates for public hearings on the constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No. 2 Bill from 15 to 19 June. In light of Covid-19 lockdown guidelines, public gatherings are not allowed and movement for the general public is heavily restricted. The HRT feels that there was no need for the government to hurry to amend the constitution when we are faced with the Covid-19 pandemic and also when the next elections are to be held in 2023.

3. Conclusion – The water situation in Harare threatens to derail efforts put on preventing the spreading of Covid-19. Most suburbs spent much of last week without tap water, resulting in people crowding at community water points. Residents are also concerned with inconsistent lockdown enforcement which is inconveniencing them. Price increases are worsening food insecurity in Harare. This is posing a threat to social stability of our nation. As was pointed out by Robert Merton (1938) in his Strain theory, when people are prevented from achieving culturally

approved goals through institutional means, they experience strain or frustration that can lead to deviance. If food security does not improve, we might experience an increase in crime and deviance because people will try to feed their families through any means possible. The transport situation has not improved and it is anticipated that it will worsen this week after the government allowed informal businesses to register and operate.

4. Next Update – Tuesday, 23 June 2020.

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