



**Tutuma -Zimbabwe
Index(T-ZAI)**

Accountability

Lockdown rules ambiguity breeding corruption: An investigative inquiry

About T-ZAI

Tutuma Zimbabwe is a Zimbabwe registered Trust implementing a Zimbabwe Accountability Index (ZAI) project aimed at enhancing transparency and accountability in local and public institutions. This has the net effect of improving the country's good governance, citizen participation in matters of governance and active citizenship. It is a bottom up (ground-up) approach to accountability and transparency, holding solution holders to account and reducing public corruption. Fundamentally, the ZAI innovation envisions a corrupt free society, economic delivery, good governance and active citizen influence on day to day governance. ZAI tracks a myriad of institutions among them; local government institutions, the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC), public owned companies, the Parliament of Zimbabwe and the Judiciary. Several indicators are utilized including; budget to use tracking, legislative agenda implementation, public entities performance measurement and corruption case tracking.

Summary of Findings

1. Lockdown rules and regulations are unclear and unknown to both enforcers and the public, thereby breeding ambiguity and corruption;
2. Lockdown rules are not being applied uniformly, are selective and lack enforceability in some instances;
3. Corruption is on the rise as law enforcers uncouthly demand payment for citizens to access essential services, maize meal is diverted for corrupt gain and essential service passes are abused; and
4. There are more checkpoints into the city center and limited enforcement in local residential areas.

Introduction

In this latest piece, Tutuma Zimbabwe focuses on key institutions and activities by local and

national authorities during the national lockdown induced by the global pandemic CORONA VIRUS (COVID-19). The national lockdown has had a devastating effect on the economy and more on the “informal market” that has, hitherto, ensured the greater population of Zimbabwe’s survival. For such survival by individuals a lot of uncouth activities and underhand dealings have been pursued to ensure some level of survival and livelihood guaranteeing. Tutuma narrowed its focus on Municipal Police and the Zimbabwe Republic Police versus a number of actors whom these two institutions have come into contact with. The findings bring more questions than answers. Fundamentally, the investigative inquiry concludes that; where rules are clear and logical, they are enforceable transparently!

Tracking methodology

Tutuma deployed two teams of investigators in Mash East (Goromonzi North and Mhondoro-Mubaira) and Harare provinces (Harare south, Budiro and Harare central). The teams tracked compliance and enforcement with lockdown measures by municipal police and the ZRP. The methods used were largely participatory and observatory as security was of major concern. The findings thereof, are more inquisitive than conclusive.

Lack of transparency breeds lawlessness and corruption - Tuck-shops and informal shops

The investigation revealed that municipal police enforced the closure of non essential entities in Harare South. However, in doing so, the authorities used force and illegal procedure leading to confiscation of goods and arrest of tuck-shop owners in Harare South. A case scenario was recorded on 15 April 2020, between 10:00-11:05 hours when the Harare Municipal Police, pictured below, visited Lochnivar suburb in Harare with the intention of closing all tuck- shops in the area. The team recorded the municipal police confiscating a box of potato chips from one tuck-shop and a tray of bakers-inn bread together with Pepsi soft drinks. The two owners were taken away and later on released upon the intervention of the local area councilor. This is despite the fact that local tuck-shops are saving communities with essential goods at a convenience in tandem with lockdown measures. Tutuma contends that this was not the perfect time to question their legality as they are playing an essential complementary service.

What happens to the grocery items that the enforcers took from the tuck-shops?



Image: Municipal Police captured in Lochnivar in Harare (tutuma investigators)

Are some shops more essential than others?

Tutuma Zimbabwe also followed events at the New Mbudzi Complex where some shops are operating normally while at Major Shops in Ushewekunze some six (6) kilometers away all the shops are closed throughout the day with the patrolling ZRP and ZNA enforcing traders to close. At Juru growth point in Goromonzi, all grocery shops and butcheries are operating normally opening at 10.am and closing at 3pm. The investigating team noted that the Delta depot agent, Real-time, was operating normally with liquor traders hoarding their usual supplies. However, the police at Juru growth point have successfully enforced closure of all bars. Where, therefore, is the beer hoarded from Real-time being retailed? Does this reflect there are different rules at play and who is changing the rules for what and whose benefit? What is the cost of survival for each of these small and informal businesses?

Tutuma notes that a lot of food items are confiscated without a trace and raising suspicion that some authorities enforcing the lockdown rules are individually benefitting from items such as rice, sugar, washing powder, cooking oil, soap, body lotions among others. In a case that was highlighted by traders along Barrington Road a police truck that patrols between 15:00-17:00 hours confiscated groceries from traders who had to run for their life. It is these scenarios that Tutuma strongly believes are enough fodder for bribes, corruption among other ills.

Informal traders / Money changers

During the first 21 days of the national lockdown, Tutuma Zimbabwe tracked money traders around Mbudzi Traffic Circle. This area houses a big shopping complex and is a pickup point for travelers who use Harare-Masvingo-Beitbridge and South Africa bound haulage trucks, buses and private vehicles. To money traders this provides a hub of business and in contrast to the policing authorities this is a hub of illegal activities. Money traders could be seen playing hide and seek with the police and later on some form of a relationship developed between the traders and the police. Tutuma posits here that the COVID-19 Lockdown increases the “opportunity for corruption” at the said site as both parties looked for economic survival and benefit more than anything else and to that end a “catch and release on greasing basis” ensued. The bigger question is, post-lockdown what happens to these types of relationships?



Image 2, a vendor relaxing after selling wares at Mbudzi, Harare South (Tutuma investigators)

Roadblocks and Checkpoints- “green light to proceed”

The rules applying at checkpoints are ambiguous and open to abuse. Classification as essential is not clearly spelt out. A case in point is when a farmer from Murehwa had his travelling letter signed by ZRP and was denied passage and turned back as the officer demanded that a farmer should have a letter from the relevant ministry. The farmer had successfully passed through two roadblocks before reaching Glen-lorne checkpoint. Furthermore, there is preference for farmers with ready products for the market yet less when a farmer is going to buy chemicals or seed. Where should farmers get their essential service letters, how do they get there without initial police clearance?

At five different checkpoints (Juru, Marirangwe, Harare South, Glenlorne, and Enterprise roundabout), Tutuma teams gathered that the police would allow “some” without passes/formal letters that they are on essential service. Another case in point is, at about 20:40 hours on 20 of April 2020 when one of the officers who was referred to as “shefu” at corner Marirangwe-Mubaira turn off Beatrice road initiated that the traveler pays something so that they can be let go. The Shefu said “handisi mufundisi anokumbirwa nemuromo (I am not a pastor who accepts a verbal request), makato sticker without making a plan?”. At this point and many other incidents, you could see a lot of travelers being given preference if they pay something. On paying a bribe of around USD5 and above some travelers without requisite documents are allowed passage into restricted zones.

Conclusions

Tutuma notes an increase in uncertainty as the country implements lockdown extension. Citizens are anxious and hungry, uncertain and angry, but more so, unsafe and not exercising social distancing in urban and semi-urban settings. Tutuma urges clarity of rules, certainty of enforcement and equality of all. Lockdown is a means to end, but must achieve such without any man-made inconveniences and injustices.



Contacts

Email: tutumazimbabwe@gmail.com

Website: www.tutumazw.org

Facebook: @Tutumazw

Twitter: @TutumaZW