

Heal Zimbabwe

12 May 2020

lockdown update

Introduction

On the 19th of April, Zimbabwe extended its lockdown with 14 days as a way of escalating measures of reducing the spread of COVID-19. The country's extension illustrates the government's commitment towards effectively containing the virus in the country. The current partial lockdown relaxed restrictions on mining companies, agricultural and food producers, among others as a way of ensuring constant supply of revenue to the government and food. The government also rolled out social assistance programs for vulnerable households including the elderly, vendors and People with Disabilities as a way of reinforcing the lockdown extension. The government's Task Force on COVID-19 also intensified its outreach activities to establish district and provincial isolation centres for cases of COVID-19 across the country.

Issues covered in this Update

In this report, Heal Zimbabwe's Early Warning and Early Response Situation Room provides an update on: how communities are responding to the extended lockdown, availability and cost of face masks, the conduct of lockdown enforcement officers, the availability and quality of health care services for COVID-19 and other diseases, and the availability of information on COVID-19 in local communities.

Methodology

A total of 4 000 trained Early Warning and Early Response Committee members and at least 5 000 community members who participate in HZT's outreach activities, CBOs operating in areas where Heal Zimbabwe operates and Heal Zimbabwe's Peace Clubs provides and verify information in this update.

Presentation of Updates

Mashonaland West Province Chinhoyi

People in Chinhoyi are slowly getting back on to their normal daily movements. Most shops in the CBD were open and this is attracting more people into the CBD. Police were ensuring that everyone without a mask is not allowed into banks and supermarkets. The police are also fining anyone caught without a mask in public places. Community members noticed that the supply of subsidized mealie meal in local shops has decreased and people are now forced to buy mealie-meal from the parallel market where they are charged US\$5.00 for a 10kg.

Mashonaland Central Province Mt Darwin

There is a lot of movement of people in Mt Darwin town since the extension of lockdown. Police officers were moving around Ward 12 arresting people who are caught without masks in public places. They were also arresting people found without clearance letters permitting them to move around. Community members from Ward 14 and Ward 15 Chahwanda, Chibara and Karanda business centres were complaining that there is shortage of mealie-meal in their areas. Other basic commodities such as cooking oil are expensively pegged at ZWL\$300.00. Community members have not received any COVID-19 related assistance from the government since the start of the lockdown.

Muzarabani

It was business as usual for community members from Hoya Growth Point. Market places were open throughout the day and people were not observing social distancing. Most shops at the Growth Point were allowing many customers at one time. A lot of local community members are moving around without wearing any face masks. This has been exacerbated by the fact that there are no police officers to monitor the area.

Mashonaland East Province Murehwa

It was business as usual in Ward 27. People were moving around without masks. Shops at Munamba and Mahohwa business centres were open although there was low business. The Ward is experiencing an increase in malaria cases. Most of the patients are being treated at a local clinic. Their major challenge is that of failing to access transport to Murehwa Centre for more advanced malaria treatment services.

Wedza

Yesterday, the 11th of May, approximately 120 vendors in Ward 15 were left without anywhere to display their goods after Wedza Rural District Council demolished their structures. As a result most vendors are now moving around, selling their goods, door to door. The council has started construction of another market at Dzivos shopping centre, despite vendors complaining that few people will come there since it is in the peripheral areas of the growth point. Ministry of Women, Small and Medium Enterprise Development has registered 1000 informal traders across the districts, who are yet to get ZWL\$250.00 to cushion them during the lockdown. However, informal traders are complaining that the promised amount is too little to cover their basic needs. Some community members are exchanging masks as a way of minimizing costs. This is likely to cause a serious outbreak of COVID-19 in the district. Masks are being sold for US\$1.00 for 2 masks. In Ward 6, traditional beer inspired gatherings and illegal gold mining activities continue unabated. This is due to the fact that Wedza Police do not have adequate mechanisms to help enforce the lockdown. Two people died of malaria in Ward 4 and both funerals were attended by hundreds of mourners. Approximately 10 people at the two funerals were wearing masks and there were no efforts, by community members to observe social distance.

Manicaland Province Mutasa

Community members from Ward 21 and Ward 31 continue moving around their wards. In Ward 21, community members were roaming around without masks, whilst in Ward 31, most people were using head wraps and home-made masks. Police officers enforcing the lockdown dispersed illegal

gold miners who had resumed their work in Penhalonga, Ward 21. These two wards have not received any COVID-19 related aid from the government since the beginning of the lockdown.

Buhera

Community members in Buhera South Ward 33 Birchenough Bridge were moving around without masks claiming they only wear masks when they see police officers. ZRP Support Unit usually patrols the shopping centres ensuring that they all close at 1500 hours. There were over 50 people queuing for cash withdrawals from a local Mukuru booth at Birchenough Bridge Shopping centre. Most of these people were not wearing masks and were not observing social distance. Community members highlighted that there was a shortage of sanitary pads in Ward 33. Community members from this ward have not received any COVID-19 related aid from the government since the start of the lockdown.

Chipinge

Community members in Ward 3 and Ward 1 were moving around covering themselves with head wraps and homemade masks. Community members were complaining that sanitary pads were now scarce to find in the two Wards and were also expensive whenever they found them. Community members also highlighted that they have not received any COVID-19 related assistance from the government since the beginning of the lockdown. In Ward 1, police were turning back all community members who were found without masks in public places. Community members highlighted that local taxis were evading police roadblocks between Ward 1 and Chipinge town.

Chimanimani

Community members in Ward 15, Ngangu were moving around wearing head wraps and home-made masks. Police officers were ensuring that community members without masks do not access public places. Community members highlighted that there was an increase of Zimbabwean returnees coming in from Mozambique through undesignated border entry points. Most shops in Ward 15 were open although they had no masks in their stocks. The area has not received any COVID-19 related aid from government since the beginning of the lockdown.

Makoni

Community members from Ward 32 were moving around wearing head wraps and home-made masks. A group of police officers were seen around 09:00 hours turning away everyone who had no masks from local shopping centres. Although many shops in Ward 32 were open, they had no masks in their stocks. Community members from this area highlighted that they had not received any COVID-19 related aid from the government since the start of the lockdown.

Matabeleland North

Lupane

Community members are now resorting to backyard markets and working from home to sustain themselves. Lupane police continue patrolling the shops ensuring that the public adheres to the lockdown regulations passed by the government in fighting the deadly corona virus. Very few people turned up at Lupane Centre, most of them covering their faces to avoid police arrests rather than Covid-19 prevention. The few that turned to the shops were mostly looking for basic commodities. Lupane centre has not received subsidized mealie meal for over a week now and other necessary commodities such as cooking oil and sugar are now in short supply and can only be found on the black market at exorbitant prizes. Community members were shocked with the rumours that returnees who are being kept at Lupane State University Matabeleland North Covid-19 Quarantine Centre do not have adequate toiletries. Community members from Sobendle, Sothani, Bhangala, Madojwa, Lupanda and Mathambo continue to stay in their homes.

