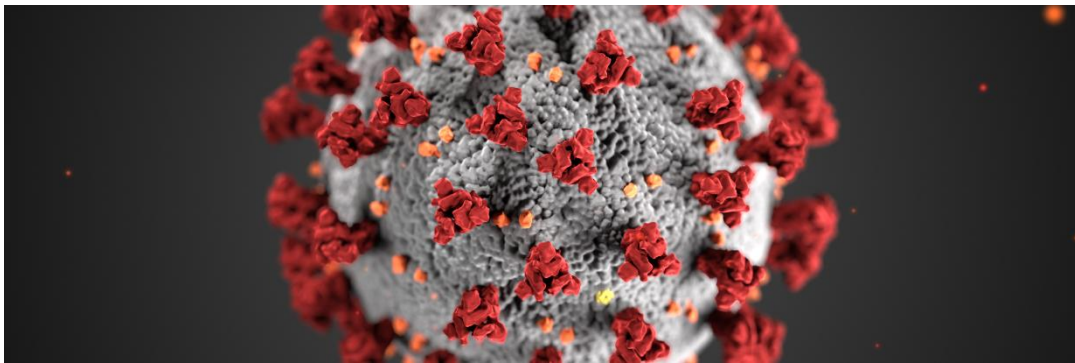


Zimbabwe Election Support Network



Monitoring Government Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

Update #2



1. INTRODUCTION

As part of ongoing efforts to manage the effects of Covid-19 and flatten the curve in Zimbabwe, a series of Statutory Instruments have been gazetted.

On the 2nd of May 2020 the Zimbabwean government gazetted Statutory Instrument 99 of 2020 which introduced Level 2 phased relaxation of the National Lockdown, effective until the 17th of May 2020. SI 99 of 2020 amends the principal SI 83 of 2020, which had extended the lockdown in Zimbabwe until the 3rd of May 2020.

Only Businesses classified under the broad terms “industry and commerce” were allowed to open under strict guidelines.

In pursuit of sustained accountability and transparency regarding responses against COVID-19 by both State and Non-State Actors, ZESN presents a summary of the reports that it received this week from its Long Term Observers.

2. MINISTRY OF HEALTH SUMMARY OF UPDATES

The Ministry of Health and Child Care has been providing daily updates on COVID-19 via the Ministry’s social media accounts and the Ministry’s official website.

As of 10 May 2020, 11 664 rapid screening and 9 872 Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) PCR Diagnostic Tests have been done to date.

To date Zimbabwe has 37 Confirmed Cases, including 9 recoveries and four deaths.

The table below shows the distribution of the cases as of 12 May 2020.

Province	No. of Confirmed Cases
1. Matabeleland North	1
2. Bulawayo	12
3. Harare	15
4. Mashonaland East	5
5. Mashonaland West	4
Total	37

Source¹: Ministry of Health and Child Care

3. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This update is informed by reports from ZESN’s Long Term Observers resident in the 210 National Assembly Constituencies. A summary of the issues raised by the observer reports are highlighted below:

3.1 LIVELIHOOD ISSUES

A recent study by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has shown that Zimbabwe has the second largest informal sector in the world. As much as

60% of the Zimbabwean economy is informal.²



Business ventures classified as informal, are still barred from re-opening. Thus the financial situation of those dependent on such businesses continues to worsen.

In an apparent act of defiance, citizens have begun to openly engage in vending and other types of informal business.

3.2 PUBLIC OUTREACH ON PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Concerted efforts by the Government, Non-Governmental Organisations, Faith Based Organisations, and Private Sector to raise awareness of some the preventative measures that should be taken to help stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus, have been insufficient.

Gaps remain in these efforts, including the unavailability of publicity materials that are accessible to persons with disabilities. The Deaf community successfully sued government and the

¹

<https://twitter.com/MoHCCZim/status/1259679483868700672/photo/1>

² <https://www.herald.co.zw/zim-has-worlds-second-largest-informal-economy-imf/>

Zimbabwe Broadcasting Cooperation (ZBC) for failure to provide COVID-19 information in simplified formats for persons with disabilities.³

3.3 VIOLATION OF PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Under level 2 lockdown the number of individuals who are allowed to publicly gather for specified purposes has been increased from 2 individuals to 50 individuals. Nevertheless, at any gathering, every person must exercise social distancing rules. It is also mandatory that every individual wear a mask while in public.

Reports from observers indicate that citizens venturing to places near urban centres and shops are the ones mostly wearing masks.



In view of the shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), observer reports indicate an appreciation by members of the public that the masks do not need to be of the standard specified in the Public Health Regulations of

³ <https://deafzimbabwetrust.org/the-deaf-bulletin-2020-issue-3/>

2020⁴. Thus citizens have been making home-made masks using materials at their disposal.

3.4 ENFORCEMENT OF LOCKDOWN

Overall it appears that the Army and Police presence countrywide has relaxed, somewhat. Even the number of roadblocks appear to have reduced.



However there was an exception to this trend, in Bulawayo, there were reports of three police officers who brutally attacked two women who they accused of defying the lockdown. The incident was brought to the attention of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC)⁵ and investigations are underway.

4 ELECTIONS IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

The Impact of the COVID-outbreak has had a significant impact on democracy, particularly elections.

⁴ Regulation published in Statutory Instrument 92 of 2020

⁵ <https://www.chronicle.co.zw/police-brutality-women-battered-for-lockdown-defiance/>

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) suspended by-elections for an indefinite period of time. However, ZEC recently indicated its intention to hold by-elections for the four vacancies that arose in Parliament after the lockdown is lifted.

imposed to manage the effects of COVID-19 and flatten the curve.

ZESN will engage the Commission to discuss the measures the Commission plans to institute in order to safeguard the health of its officials, voters and members of the general public when they conduct these by-elections.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. There is need for CSOs to coordinate with Government in their efforts to provide PPE and basic goods to the most vulnerable citizens.
- ii. Specialised human rights training for members of the uniformed forces is required to equip them with information on how to balance discharging their duties and safeguarding basic human rights.
- iii. There is need for the Government to provide updates on how it has distributed the food aid mobilised using public funds or donated by well-wishers.
- iv. Any reports of unprofessionalism by the security institutions charged with the mandate to enforce the lockdown should be investigated and outcome of such investigations made public.
- v. Members of the public are urged to fully comply with the restrictions