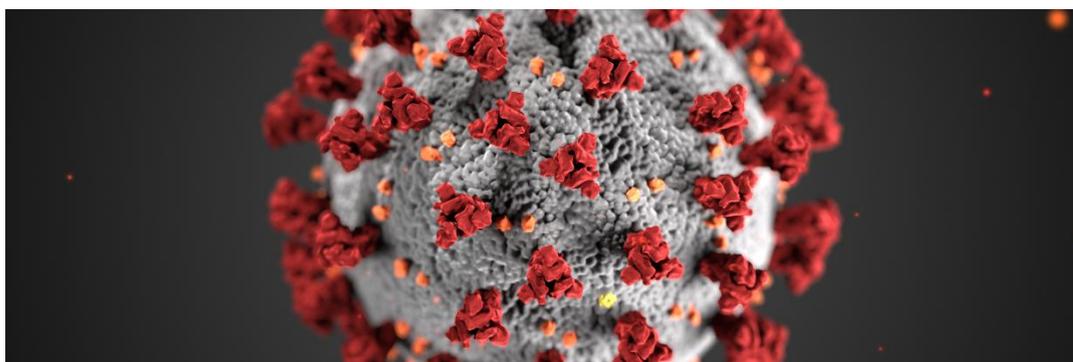


Zimbabwe Election Support Network



Monitoring Government Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

Update #3



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 (SI) have been gazetted.

The latest SI¹ extends the national lockdown for an indefinite period, subject to fortnightly review, while providing for a limited relaxation of the lockdown further to the one specified in Statutory Instrument 94 of 2020.

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 Observers².

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 17 May 2020, 15 455 Rapid Diagnostic Test (RDT) and 12 564 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) Diagnostic Tests had been done.

Zimbabwe had 46 confirmed cases, including 18 recoveries and four deaths.

¹ See Statutory Instrument 110 of 2020.

² Reports received between 11-18 May 2020

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

Businesses classified under the broad term “industry and commerce” were allowed to open under strict guidelines and their operating times have been extended by an additional two hours (0800 hours to 1630 hours).

The informal sectors and businesses operating therein remain closed, while the government consults health specialists on how to reopen them safely.



The wellbeing of families whose livelihood is sustained by the informal sector remain dire. There is therefore urgent need for Government through the Department of Social Services to provide support to the most vulnerable citizens.

According to the World Food Programme, before the advent of the COVID pandemic, most Zimbabweans were already struggling to put food on the table with the number of food insecure people standing at 7.7 million, which is more than half the population³.

3.2 ENFORCEMENT OF LOCKDOWN AND WEARING OF MASKS

Reports countrywide indicated that citizens were largely complying with the requirements to wear face masks in public, especially those venturing to shopping centres.

The police has also been systematically enforcing the lockdown and arresting those who were not complying with the order to wear face masks in public. Such reports were received from Guruve North, and Marondera Central.

4 ELECTIONS IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

Regular elections are fundamental to the proper functioning of a modern representative democracy. Whenever elections are held, the electorate gets an opportunity to renew the mandate of public representatives whose performance they are happy with.

³ <https://www.wfp.org/news/urgent-international-support-needed-prevent-millions-desperate-zimbabweans-plunging-deeper>

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) suspended by-elections for an indefinite period of time partly because the nature of electoral processes requires, for the most part, face to face interaction thus pose a risk to both the voters, members of the public and polling officials, and other electoral stakeholders.

While the suspension of electoral activities is not unique to Zimbabwe, it has had adverse effect on programming of both the Commission and stakeholders who interface with the electoral process.

In an effort to minimise the effects of the COVID-19 on ZESN programming, the Network is re-channelling its efforts to activities that can be held on virtual platforms to revive engagement with a wide range of stakeholders on legislative, electoral and political reforms required to further strengthen the integrity of elections in Zimbabwe.

ZESN continues to invest on interaction with members of the public via its social media platforms, community radio programmes and webinars.

Coronavirus does not affect all groups equally. Global data shows that women hold a disproportionate share of occupations requiring face-to-face interactions, like in retail or personal care, making them less likely to work from home and prone to becoming unemployed⁴.

Reports from ZESN LTOs also indicated a reduction in women's access to health care facilities. This reduction in female patients seeking antenatal care, was partly because of the first phase of the lockdown which severely restricted the movement of citizens. However the numbers of pregnant women and nursing mothers coming for their routine check-up are steadily increasing. Such reports were received from Constituencies such as Chikomba Central, Gwanda North, Zvishavane and Chirumanzi South, where it was reported that Maternity wards of Clinics were admitting women who wanted to give birth, but not attending to those in need of antenatal care.

3.2 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN

⁴ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/psd/covid-hurting-women-economically-governments-have-tools-offset-pain>



Before the lockdown, Maternity Clinics used to admit patients awaiting delivery, now they only admit those already experiencing labour pains, such reports were received from Bulilima West, Mberengwa North, and Zaka Central Constituencies⁵.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Government should mobilise and provide support citizens who are becoming more vulnerable because of the loss of income caused by the lockdown.
- ii. There is need for CSOs, Private Enterprises, and Faith Based Organisations to coordinate with Government in their efforts to provide Personal Protective Equipment and basic goods to the most vulnerable citizens.
- iii. Members of the public are urged to fully comply with the restrictions imposed to manage the effects of COVID-19 and flatten the curve.

⁵ Due to patient-client confidentiality concerns, the reports from the observers are based on secondary data sources.