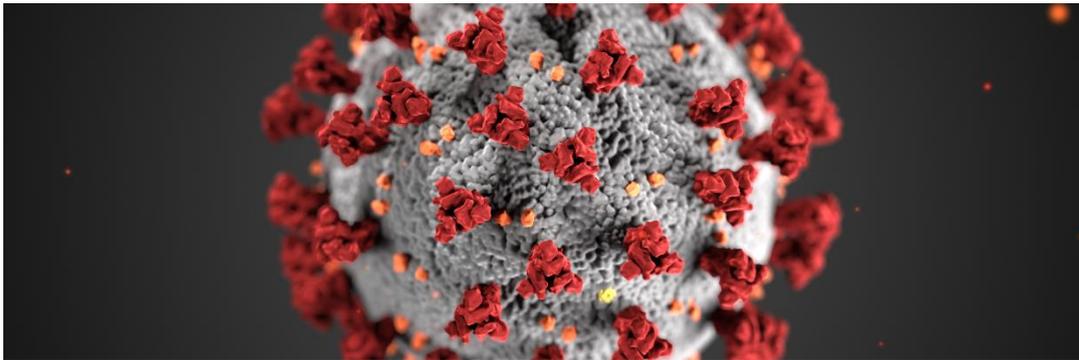


Zimbabwe Election Support Network



Monitoring Government Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Update # 7



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 reviews, 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 to 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 15 June 2020, 34 581 Rapid Diagnostic Test (RDT) and 24 613 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) Diagnostic Tests had been conducted. Zimbabwe had 387 confirmed cases, including 54 recoveries and four deaths

¹ See Statutory Instrument 110 of 2020.

² Reports received between 10-15 June 2020

since the onset of the outbreak of the virus on 20 March 2020³.

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



The demolition of structures that were built without the requisite council approvals has exacerbated the plight of those who operate in the informal sector. Running battles between vendors and municipal police have been reported in Saint Marys in Chitungwiza as vendors continue to sell their wares in places that are not designated for that purpose.

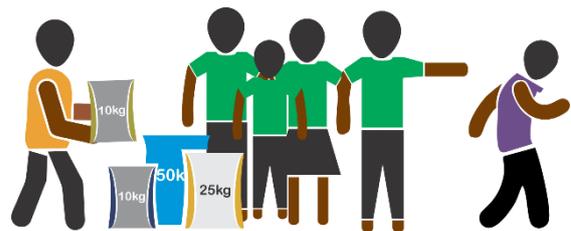
In Mbire reports are that more people who used to work in the informal sector have joined the illegal gold panning activities, which for them is an easy way or earning a living while they wait for the

lifting of lockdown measures to allow them to resume operations in the informal sector.

Unregistered public transporters are reported to be increasing with some operating during the early hours of the day and in the evening to evade police who usually mount roadblocks along major highways. This week such reports came from the Mhondoro-Ngezi and Goromonzi West LTOs.

In light of the difficulties highlighted above, ZESN received a troubling report that in Chegutu West, it is alleged that, ZANU-PF party distributed Government Youth Funds to some of its youthful party members. The money was transferred using mobile money platforms to enable the youths to start income generating projects.

3.2 FOOD AID DISTRIBUTION



In response to the dire need for food aid by a significant number of both rural and urban citizens, government, through the department of Social Welfare is distributing food to those in need. In addition Non-Governmental Organisations, churches and other philanthropists were reported to be

³

<https://twitter.com/MoHCCZim/status/1272595485476388870/photo/1>

distributing food hampers to the most vulnerable citizens in the country, especially the elderly and persons living with disabilities.

The department of social welfare was reported to have distributed food to elderly and other vulnerable groups in Chipinge central at Garahwa, Chinyamukwakwa, Marega primary schools. While in Chivi Central, food distribution was done by the department at Chivi Rural District Hospital and Nyamakwa business centre. World Vision was reported to have distributed food in Mbire's wards 8, 9, 12, and 13. World vision also conducted civic awareness in COVID-19 prevention strategies in the same wards.

3.3 VIOLATION OF PHYSICAL DISTANCING



Reports of violation of this and other health guidelines continue to be received from LTOs resident in the country's 10 provinces especially in instances where people are gathered at funeral wakes, queues at retail outlets selling basic commodities that may be scarce, and boreholes in places where portable water is not readily available.

In Mbizo there was a report of a funeral wake where over 200 mourners

congregated. Very few of the mourners wore masks or observed social distancing at the funeral. In Kwekwe Central there were over 100 people in a queue where subsidised mealie meal was sold.

In Luveve commuters congregating at undesignated pick-up points were also posing a health hazard to other members of the public. The public transport buses provided by the government are not adequate hence the numbers of commuters is exceeding the stipulated 50 people limit set by the government during peak traveling hours.

4. ELECTIONS IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

This week ZESN will be hosting a webinar entitled "Contextualising the Implications of Constitutional Amendment Bill No.2 on Zimbabwe's Electoral Democracy.

ZESN through its network mobilised people throughout the country to participate in the public hearings. Awareness raising efforts included simplifying the proposed amendments and translating them into vernacular languages, preparing a paper outlining ZESN's position on the proposed amendments⁴. A video skit⁵ and several

⁴ <https://www.zesn.org.zw/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/amendment-report.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/Madambosstv/videos>

audio files. As of 17 June 2020, which was the third day after the video skit was uploaded, over 37 000 people had viewed it. In line with their mandate, the Parliament of Zimbabwe's Portfolio Committee on Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs has organised public hearings on Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No 2 Bill from the 15th to the 19th of June 2020 in Chinhoyi, Gokwe, Sanyati, Ngezi – Zimplats, Gweru, Mberengwa, Chivi, Masvingo, Lupane, Gwanda, Plumtree, Bulawayo Mbembesi, Mt Darwin, Marondera, Mutare, Rusape and Harare. Citizens in other areas are encouraged to submit oral and written submissions. The Constitutional Amendment Bill is proposing a raft of changes to the law which have a bearing on the governance of the country. ZESN believes these civic and voter education efforts will enhance people's understanding of the importance of taking part in the public hearings as the proposals have far reaching implications on electoral democracy in Zimbabwe.

- ii. Members of the public are urged to fully comply with the restrictions imposed to manage the effects of COVID-19 and flatten the curve.
- iii. Members of the Public are encouraged to make oral and written submissions to members of Parliament during the public hearings. Active citizen participation is the bedrock of a functional democracy.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Government should provide urgent assistance to the informal sector to enable the sector to reopen their businesses in a manner that safeguards the health of their customers and employees of this sector.