

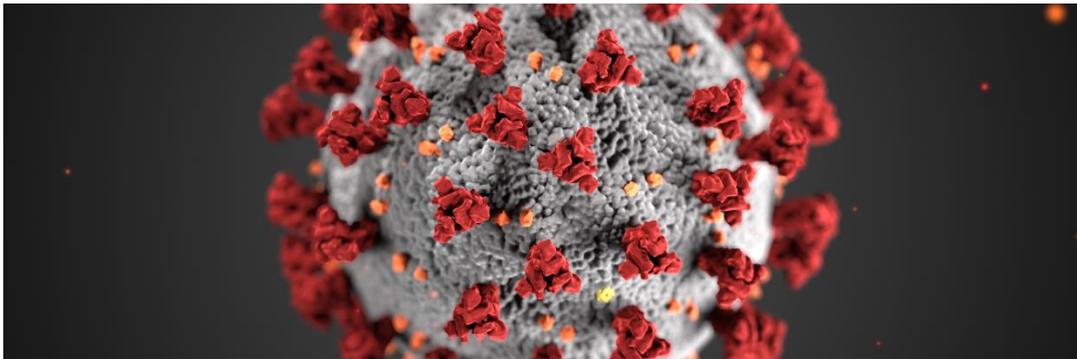
# Zimbabwe Election Support Network



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## Monitoring Government Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Update # 15



### 1. INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has caused phenomenal disruption across the world, and Zimbabwe has not been spared. However, the impact of COVID-19 can be mitigated by coordinated efforts of both state and non-state actors. ZESN seeks to support these efforts by engaging in sustained efforts to raise awareness of the stipulated health guidelines which, if observed stringently, will help flatten the curve. ZESN shares reports from its Long Term Observers (LTOs) so as to inform policy makers and interventions of actors mentioned above.

Besides commenting on the extent to which duty bearers are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the report also comments on how the rights holders are

likewise observing the health regulations stipulated by the Ministry of Health and Child Care, which are in keeping with those established by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to flatten the curve.

### 2. MINISTRY OF HEALTH SUMMARY OF UPDATES

The Ministry of Health and Child Care has been consistently providing daily updates on COVID-19 via its social media accounts and official website. Such updates are vital in informing interventions of both state and non-state actors.

As at 13 August 2020, Zimbabwe had 4 990 confirmed cases, including 1 927 recoveries and 128 deaths since the onset

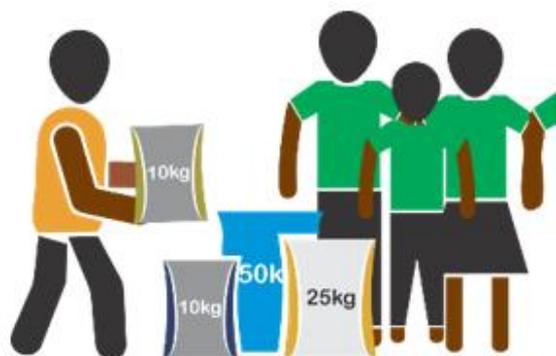
of the outbreak of the virus on 20 March 2020<sup>1</sup>.

### 3. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

During the period 2-8 August 2020, ZESN received the following feedback from its Long Term Observers resident in the 210 National Assembly Constituencies:

#### 3.1 FOOD AID DISTRIBUTION

The majority of reports about food aid distribution have been positive, with beneficiaries being selected based on need and prescribed health regulations being observed when food aid is distributed.



Overall the number of reports of food distribution were few this week. The Department of Social Welfare distributed food in Lupane East Constituency at Mpfu Dam Wall and in Gokwe-Chireya at Makhovula Centre.

#### 3.2 LIVELIHOOD ISSUES

ZESN received numerous reports of running battles between police and vendors in various constituencies this week. Many of the vendors have resorted to selling their wares in their backyards for fear of arrest. However this is disconcerting as it increases face to face interactions between the vendors and customers in environments where health protocols such as wearing of face masks, hand washing, and physical distance are not observed. Such reports were received from Highfield East, Hatfield and Dangamvura-Chikanga Constituencies.

Unlicensed/unauthorised transport operators commonly referred to as (mushikashika) were reportedly taking advantage of the transport challenges that people were facing by offering their services to members of the public. Such reports were received from Motoko North, Zvimba West, Zvimba East, Insiza South and Zvishavane-Runde Constituencies. The reports also indicate that the vehicles were carrying passengers that exceeded the limits stipulated by the vehicles' manufacturers.

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<https://twitter.com/MoHCCZim/status/1293653488111620098/photo/1>

### 3.3 ENFORCEMENT OF LOCKDOWN



As the uniformed forces continue to enforce adherence to stipulated health protocols and provisions of lockdown orders, there were reports of arrests of citizens moving in public spaces without wearing face masks, turning back of those who were traveling without exemption letters. Such reports, this week were received from LTOs who reside in Luveve, Marondera East, Murewa North, Magunje, Chiredzi West, Masvingo Central, and Hwange Central Constituencies.

The amount of force employed during enforcement of lockdown order continue to vary, in some instances, it has been reported that, members of public who defy lockdown are assaulted, for instance those breaking the curfew, by continuing to move around after 18:00hrs or those congregating at bus terminus. Such reports were received from Luveve, Kuwadzana East, and Chiredzi West Constituencies.

Some encouraging reports were received this week from Njube-

Lobengula Constituency where the police was engaged in awareness raising campaign on how members of the public could support efforts to flatten the curve. The Police used public address systems to get the messages across to residents. Similar awareness raising campaign was reportedly conducted this week by an elected local leader, Gokwe-Kana Ward 16 Councillor, Cllr Chigaba who also donated some face masks and used that opportunity to educate residents in the ward of the health protocols they needed to observe during this COVID-19 era.



Picture 1: some of the residents of ward 16 who gathered to receive the face masks from the Ward 16 Councillor in Gokwe-Kana.

This week the Beit-Bridge West LTO reported increased border patrols by uniformed forces in order to arrest those using undesignated boarder entry and exist points. Such actions by the military are critical in efforts to flatten the curve as most of the 'boarder jumpers' are evading the mandatory isolation period of 21 days which is a must for all returning residents and travellers coming into the country.

### 3.4 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE HEALTH SECTOR



There is a general surge in the reports that were made by LTOs with regards to incidents of suspected COVID -19 cases in their respective Constituencies. The need for all citizens to act responsibly and to observe stipulated health protocols cannot be over-emphasised.

Reports of members of the public not maintaining the required physical distance, not wearing masks or washing/sanitising their hands continue to be received. Such behaviour by members of the public is usually exhibited at banking queues, bus terminus, boreholes and this week such reports were received from reports from: Chitungwiza South, Glen View North, Chitungwiza South, Harare East, Hatfield, Highfield West, Chimanimani West, Chikomba Central, Goromonzi South, Marondera Central, Murewa West, Chakari, Bikita South, Mberengwa East, and Mbizo Constituencies.



Picture 2: Part of people queuing to get into one of the local banks in Chiredzi West Constituency.

Many of the shops that were located in suburbs are reportedly not taking temperatures of customers before they enter into their shops, neither are they providing hand sanitising nor strictly enforcing the no face mask-no entry policy. Tuck-shops were reportedly operating beyond 15:00hrs. These reports were made by LTOs in Glen View South, Harare East, Zengeza East, Rushinga, Mhangura, Mhondoro-Ngezi and Chirumhanzu Constituencies.

Many bottle stores continue to operate by selling alcoholic beverages behind closed doors to members of the public. In Goromonzi West, Makoni North, Muzarabani North, Chegutu East, Kariba, Muzveve, Bikita South, Mwenezi East, Mwenezi West, Lupane West, Hatfield, Bulilima East, and Umzingwane Constituency.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to present a significant burden on the country's health infrastructure. Frontline workers in the country's health system, who remain an integral part of managing COVID-19, have not been spared. This week, ZESN received reports of disruption of operations of some local clinics. For instance Makoni West

Constituency's Tsanzaguru Clinic was reported to have temporarily closed after a staff member from the clinic tested positive for COVID-19. A similar report was made by the LTO from Insiza North Constituency a member of staff at Filabusi hospital reportedly tested positive for COVID-19. Some workers at Gokwe Hospital were reported to have also tested positive for COVID-19 this week. In addition several reports of employees of banks, supermarkets and other public spaces who tested positive to COVID-19 were received in several Constituencies.

#### 4. ELECTIONS IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

COVID-19 poses tremendous technical, political and social risks to elections. Concerted efforts need to be made by all electoral stakeholders to ensure electoral process uphold the principles of inclusivity, transparency and accountability.

ZESN continues to keep the debate on electoral reforms alive, by among other things hosting webinars to review proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Electoral Bill drafted by the Network.

#### 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Members of the public need to strictly observe the stipulated health regulations in order to help flatten the curve and provide the already

stretched health systems a chance to cope with the high numbers of people seeking medical assistance for COVID-19 and other ailments.

- ii. Members of the public should cooperate with law enforcement officers who have the mandate to enforce the lockdown and the curfew.
- iii. Members of the security sector should enforce the lockdown order in a manner that is humane and respects citizens' dignity.
- iv. Members of the public are urged to minimise unnecessary movement, within and outside their residential areas.