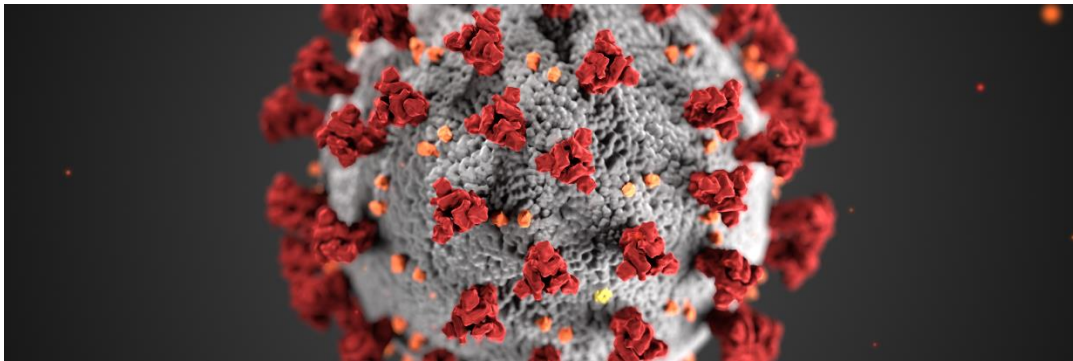


Zimbabwe Election Support Network



Monitoring Government Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Update # 16



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.

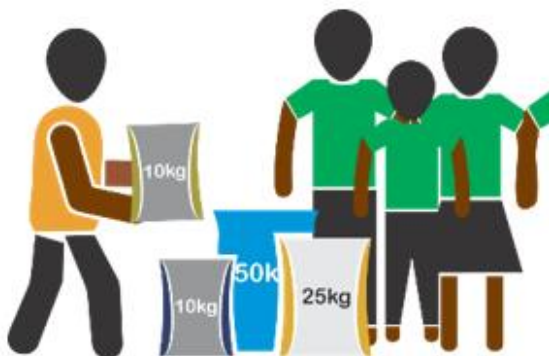
As at 18 August 2020, Zimbabwe had 5 378 confirmed cases, including 4 105 recoveries and 141 deaths.¹

3. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

During the period 13-19 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 in the past few weeks. This week, the Department of Social Welfare distributed food hampers in Gutu South Constituency.

3.2 ENFORCEMENT OF LOCKDOWN

As the uniformed forces continue to enforce adherence to stipulated health protocols and provisions of the lockdown order, 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, Chitungwiza South, Chipinge Central, Dangamvura-Chikanga, Mudzi West, Mudzi South, Chivi Central and Zaka North Constituencies.

Most of the reports from LTOs indicate that uniformed forces were enforcing both the lockdown order and stipulated health provisions professionally. There were some exceptions though, for instance, this week the LTOs from Magunje and Muzvezve Constituencies reported that some of the police officers were receiving bribes to allow people without exception letters to pass through roadblocks.

Reports were received from several constituencies about civilians not strictly observing the curfew. Such reports were received from LTO resident in Chitungwiza North, Kuwadzana, Chegutu West, Mhangura, Zaka North and Mwenezi East Constituencies.

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<https://twitter.com/MoHCCZim/status/1295834286428491779/photo/1>

3.3 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE HEALTH SECTOR



It appears that people resident in different constituencies are becoming less vigilant with regard to observing the health protocols stipulated by the World Health Organisation as well as those stipulated by the Ministry of Health and Child Care. The need for all citizens to act responsibly and to observe stipulated health protocols cannot be over-emphasised. Currently ZESN continues to receive reports that vary greatly on the extent to which citizens as well as businesses are observing stipulated health protocols.

In Bulawayo South Constituency there were reports that some of the shops and supermarkets were not checking temperature and sanitising the hands of the customers at the entrance as required at law.

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 funeral wakes. This week such reports were received from Mpopoma-Pelandaba, Chitungwiza North, Chitungwiza South, Glen View North, Mudzi South, Chipinge East, Guruve South, Goromonzi South, Marondera East, Murewa North, Murewa West, Masvingo North, Mwenezi East, and Nkayi South Constituencies.



Picture 1: Part of mourners at a funeral wake in Mudzi South Constituency where Physical Distancing was not maintained and face masks were not worn.

Shortage of portable water in several constituencies make it harder to practice frequent handwashing. Such reports were received from some of the Constituencies in Harare and Bulawayo Metropolitan provinces. This has put tremendous pressure on boreholes forcing residents to congregate in large numbers which in turn makes it harder to maintain the required physical distance.

Some shops were operating well beyond the stipulated trading hours. These reported were received from LTOs resident in Buhera North and Makoni North Constituencies. While in Chipinge Central there was a report that some shops were now collecting customers contact details at the entrance of their shops.

Many bottle stores continue to operate by selling alcoholic beverages behind closed doors to members of the public. Such reports were received from Mazowe North, Muzarabani South, Zvimba East, Bikita South, Masvingo South, Lupane West, and Vungu Constituencies.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to present a significant burden on the country's health infrastructure. For instance, this week, the Kuwadzana East LTO reported that there was a significant increase in volume of residents seeking medical attention at Kuwadzana 4 Council Clinic in Kuwadzana Constituency. Some of the people were coming from as far as Dzivarasekwa, Granary, Whitecliff, and Mufakose Constituencies.

Efforts of Government and other non-state actors to raise awareness of covid-19 prevention are appreciated. This week a report of such efforts was received from Masvingo Central observer who reported that the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) held an awareness raising workshop in ward 31 of Masvingo Central Constituency.



Picture 2: Part of the residents of Ward 31 in Masvingo Central who attended the CCJP COVID-19 awareness meeting.

The Tsholotsho Pentecostal Assembly donated 5 litres of hand sanitiser and 35 masks to Tsholotsho Urban Clinic, for use by health workers at the clinic.

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 processes 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.

On 18 August 2020, ZESN conducted a virtual public meeting where the Impact of Boundary Delimitation on Democracy in Zimbabwe was discussed. In the coming week ZESN will hold a virtual town hall meeting entitled “Citizen Engagement Amid Covid 19: Delimitation in Zimbabwe”.

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.