

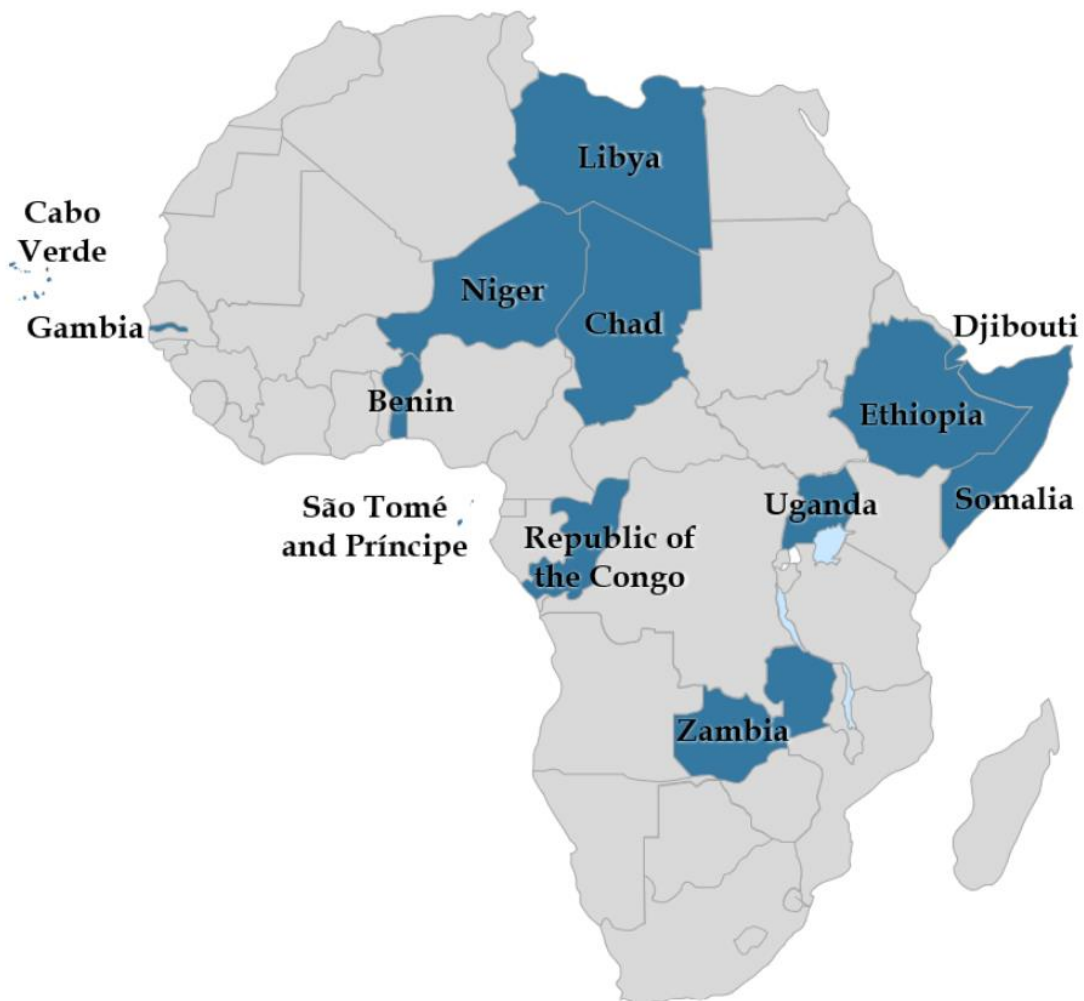
Zimbabwe Election Support Network



Monitoring Government Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

2021 Update # 4

Elections in Africa in 2021



1. INTRODUCTION

During the month of May, a new variant of COVID-19, the Indian Variant B.1.617, was detected in Kwekwe. Subsequent to this, government imposed a two week lockdown covering the entire district: City of Kwekwe, Redcliff town and the surrounding farming areas in Kwekwe Rural District Council¹.

Measures imposed include a curfew from 7pm to 6am; cutting business hours to 8am to 5pm; banning visits at boarding schools and ensuring that all day schools observe strict COVID-19 school protocols; closing all bars, drinking places, beerhalls and bottle stores; banning all gatherings such as weddings, church services and all other public and private groupings; having all funerals supervised by health personnel and numbers at funerals not exceeding 30 people.

1.1 MINISTRY OF HEALTH SUMMARY UPDATES

The Ministry of Health and Child Care continues to provide updates on COVID-19

¹ <https://www.herald.co.zw/kwekwe-put-under-lockdown-to-minimise-spread-of-indian-variant/>

via the Ministry's social media platforms and official website. Such updates continue to be vital in informing interventions of both state and non-state actors.

As at 03 June 2021, Zimbabwe had 39 092 confirmed cases, including 36 680 recoveries and 1 604 deaths. To date, a total of 684 164 people have been vaccinated against COVID-19².

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

During the period covered by the report, ZESN LTOs reported the following:

2.1 ENFORCEMENT OF LOCKDOWN REGULATIONS

In general, LTOs reported that uniformed forces have relaxed the enforcement of lockdown restrictions. Exceptions include St Mary's, Luveve, Makokoba, Mufakose, and Kwekwe Central (where a two-week lockdown was imposed following the detection of a new variant of COVID-19 in the constituency).

Where enforcement of lockdown restrictions was reported, uniformed

²

<https://twitter.com/MoHCCZim/status/1400562979570081795>

forces were mainly targeting public places such as the Central Business Districts in urban constituencies and shopping centers mostly known as Growth Points in rural constituencies. In most cases, they were manning roadblocks, targeting those providing public transport services without being registered with the Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO), and enforcing the night curfew.

There was heavy police presence in Makokoba, following indications that members of Mthwakazi Republic wanted to stage demonstrations against the banning of private players from offering public transport services without being registered with ZUPCO.

Reports from some constituencies, such as Lupane West, St Mary's and Chimanimani West revealed that uniformed forces were receiving bribes from offenders, especially public transporters who were not registered with ZUPCO.

It was reported that in Amaveni, Kwekwe Central Constituency, a Police Officer sustained injuries after he was run over by a Kombi having fallen from the front of the moving Kombi where he was clinging. The

Police Officer had allegedly asked for a bribe of USD5 which the kombi driver refused to pay, and tried to drive away from the road block.

Consistent with observations in the last reporting period, there was general relaxation in adherence to COVID-19 regulations in both rural and urban constituencies.

Commendable efforts were nevertheless being made by local health officers who were moving around vaccinating teachers in schools, for example in Magunje Constituency.

2.2 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE HEALTH SECTOR

LTO reports show that, in general, local health facilities were offering services. In Nketa, there were even outreach programmes that were aimed at decongesting clinics using mobile clinic to reach those in need of medical services.

However, as reported in the past months, the shortage of essential medicines still persisted in some constituencies. These include Emakhandeni –Enthumbane, Chitungwiza North, Chitungwiza South, Epworth, Glen View South, Kambuzuma,

Kuwadzana East, Makoni North, Makoni South, Chimanimani East, and Chikomba Central among others.

In some constituencies, for example, Mufakose and Kadoma, health facilities were operating with inadequate personnel as staff was said to be attending workshops.



In general, pregnant women continued to receive antenatal and postnatal treatment at clinics in their constituencies as before. Improved quality of antenatal and postnatal services received by women was particularly reported.

However, there were challenges in some constituencies. For example, there was a shortage of midwives, medication and essential equipment such as Blood Pressure Monitors at Glen View Polyclinic.

Limited services were reported in Highfield East where pregnant women could only book and visit the clinic when due for delivery as well as for paediatric services.

In Chimanimani East, an organisation called Serving in Mission donated 250 face masks, 50litres of liquid hand soap, two thermometers, and three buckets to Chimanimani Hospital.

In Gokwe-Chireya, Farm Community Trust, a non-governmental organisation, donated buckets and soap to schools. In Marondera East, The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) trained community educators on the prevention of COVID-19.

2.3 ACCESSIBILITY OF CLEAN WATER

In Lupane East, an organisation called Sizimele, in conjunction with the District Development Fund (DDF), rehabilitated boreholes and in some cases, installed solar driven submersible pumps.

There was improved access to clean water following the drilling of a borehole by the MP for the Muzarabani South in Ward 10 where he resides. In Mwenezi East, there was improved access to clean water owing to the rehabilitation of broken down

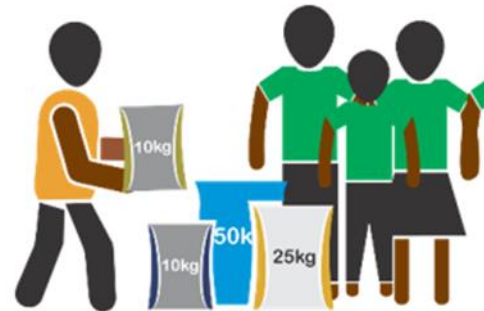
boreholes by Master Makope, a candidate in ZANU-PF primary elections. Makope won the ZANU PF primary elections that were held on 8 May 2021. The national assembly vacancy in Mwenezi East was occasioned by the death of incumbent MP, Joosbi Omar in 2020.

In Chiredzi West, Christian Care alleviated water challenges by installing solar pumps in wards 5, 6, and 7.

In Glen View North, there was no water from the Municipality, leaving people to rely on boreholes and wells. Water supply was erratic in Makokoba, Epworth Emakhandeni-Entumbane, Harare East, Harare Central and St Mary's and in some cases resulting in challenges in accessing clean water or resulting in some people relying on unsafe sources. Challenges of accessibility of clean water were also reported in other constituencies, including Buhera West and urbanised parts of Makoni South and Marondera East, as well as rural parts of Marondera East constituency where ZINWA had not provided water for weeks. In Mufakose, water supply was reported to be erratic and when supplied, the water was not clean.

In Ward 2 of Umguza, a Scientist who was brought from NUST University to site areas for drilling boreholes did not find any.

FOOD AID DISTRIBUTION



There was a noticeable decline in food aid interventions (particularly from the Social Welfare Department) in the month of May, compared to previous reporting periods. This is largely attributable to the time of the year, as people have harvested their crops, with harvests relatively higher as a result of better rains received in the last season.

Constituencies where LTOs reported food aid distribution by the Social Welfare Department include Mbire, Muzvezve, Gutu West, Bulilima East, and Masvingo West. Beneficiaries received varying amounts of maize, mealie meal, beans, cooking oil among other things.

In Chipinge Central and Bulilima East, Plan International gave beneficiaries grocery vouchers worth USD 12 per person. In Kariba, World Vision gave beneficiaries vouchers to purchase food items such as mealie-meal, cooking oil, sugar, salt and flour. In Mbire, Save the Children assisted beneficiaries with money to buy food items. In Masvingo West, a non-governmental organisation, Aqua, distributed 25 kgs of maize, 2 kgs of beans, and 1 litre of cooking oil to each of the selected beneficiaries. Red Cross distributed food items that include cooking oil, mealie meal, rice and salt in Musikavanhu.

In Pumula, the Pumula Youth Leadership Forum gave the elderly citizens mealie meal, rice, cooking oil, sugar, beans, salt and soap. Zimplats distributed food aid to the elderly with each beneficiary getting 25 kgs of mealie meal and 2 kgs of beans in Muzvezve. In Zvimba West constituency, the Islamic Church distributed food hampers to its members and some non-members while in Nketa, the Oneness church gave its elderly members food items including mealie meal, salt, sugar, and flour.

2.4 ELECTIONS IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

ZEC resumed some electoral processes that include voter registration and some boundary delimitation related field work on 1 April 2021.

In Zvimba West, ZEC was reported to have conducted a survey on the perceptions of people about ZEC and about the upcoming delimitation process. In line with Zimbabwe's laws, delimitation of electoral boundaries follows a census exercise. Teams conducting census-related work were reported to have visited Makoni South and Silobela constituencies.

In Lupane East, Zimstats teams were preparing for the census which was said to be scheduled for August 2021. The District Statistics Officer indicated that they had engaged the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to share the concern that by the scheduled date for the census, schools would have been opened, yet the census exercise relies on teachers as enumerators.

LTO reports show that voter registration rates were very low. Examples of such constituencies are St Mary's, Chimanimani

West, Chipinge Central, Chipinge South, Buhera South, Makoni North, Nyanga South, Nyanga North, Masvingo³, Bindura North, Mbire, Goromonzi South, and Marondera East, and Mutoko East, Mutoko South, Wedza South, and Kadoma among others.

In Chiredzi West, of the few people who were registering to vote, most were from Ward 16 of Chiredzi North where ZANU-PF held a primary election to select a candidate to represent the party in the anticipated National Assembly by-election.

The ZEC office in Lupane East indicated plans to partner with civil society in encouraging people to register to vote. In St Mary's, there were some posters in the constituency with messages encouraging people to register to vote. In Chiredzi West, some people were circulating messages on voter registration and the importance of voting on various social media platforms.

ZEC is yet to lift the hold on the conduct of by-elections that continue to be suspended on account of “the danger still posed by

the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to uphold some health provisions of Statutory Instrument 10 of 2021 which is still in force.”⁴

ZESN is worried by the continued suspension of by-elections which leaves citizens in Constituencies where elected leaders such as MPs and Councilors were recalled or died without representation. The vacant national assembly constituencies have a combined voter population of over 750000. Further, the continued suspension of by-elections may result in some voters losing interest in elections, should they feel like their vote does not matter.

2.5 POLITICAL ACTIVITIES DURING LOCKDOWN

During the reporting period, political parties were involved in a number of activities, with some seemingly in preparation for elections.

ZANU-PF held its primary election for the Mwenezi East National Assembly seat which was won by Master Makope.

³ <https://news.pindula.co.zw/2021/06/01/only-six-people-register-to-vote-in-may-zec/>
<https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-local-byo-204646.html>

⁴ <https://twitter.com/ZECzim/status/1374263464454189056/photo/1>

In Glen View North, ZANU-PF and the MDC Alliance were conducting door-to-door visits as a way of campaigning for the anticipated National Assembly by-election. Teams of ZANU-PF members were campaigning in all wards in both Lupane East and West.

In Buhera South, ZANU-PF was campaigning on social media, for example by circulating WhatsApp stickers with the message, *'It's not too late to join ZANU-PF'*.

ZANU-PF and the MDC Alliance held meetings in Glen View North while the two parties and ZAPU were also reported to have held meetings in Tsholotsho North.

In Gokwe Kana, ZANU-PF supporters were ferried by Lorries to attend a party meeting in Gokwe Central. In Chiredzi West, ZANU-PF held an inter-District meeting at Chitsanga Hall in Ward 3 on 12 May 2021.

In Chipinge Central, ZANU-PF was preparing for the restructuring of its local structures. Party members were moving from door to door noting down names and ID numbers of people, encouraging them to attend ZANU-PF meetings. In some cases, they were saying that the details were being recorded for purposes of

government aid that is going to be provided.

Similarly, processes relating to the constituting of ZANU-PF cells were reported in Seke, Uzumba, Wedza North, Mhondoro-Ngezi, Chitungwiza North, Makoni South, Chinhoyi and Umguza.

In Pumula, ZANU-PF women's league was conducting door to door visits, registering those who were willing to join the party. ZANU-PF was doing the same in Kadoma where people's names and ID numbers were recorded in the process.

In Mufakose Constituency, the local ZANU-PF commissariat department informed its members that there would be a head count of all members of its structures ahead of the 2023 elections.

The MDC Alliance was also reported to be constituting its local structures in Njube-Lobengula Constituency.

In Dangamvura-Chikanga Constituency, the ZANU-PF candidate for the anticipated National Assembly by-election was sponsoring sports for youths as a way of mobilising voters in the by-election.

In Chitungwiza North MP, Honourable Godfrey Sithole was supporting the rehabilitation of some of the roads in the Constituency and self-help projects such as poultry projects.

The MP for the Mhondoro-Ngezi Constituency, Honourable Mukhuhlane, donated stationery to Musena Primary School in ward 4 and Turf Primary School in ward 11.

In Makokoba Constituency, the MP, Honourable James Sithole, convened Constituency Development Fund (CDF) consultative meetings at several places, namely Burombo Flats, Makokoba, Mzilikazi, Nguboyenja, Thorngrove, and Barbourfields suburbs. Residents Associations were among the stakeholders who attended.

In Glen View North Constituency, the ZANU-PF National Assembly candidate was promising to rehabilitate roads and was getting help from the Department of Works at City of Harare that was providing him with gravel.

3. HIGHLIGHTS OF ZESN ACTIVITIES

During the reporting period, ZESN implemented a number of activities.

On 11 May 2021, ZESN convened a Virtual Cluster Meeting for the Advocacy for Electoral Reform Cluster. The objective was to discuss emerging electoral reform issues (including responses to the Constitutional Amendment Bill Number 2 and the proposed Patriotic Bill). On 12 May 2021, the Electoral Support Network of Southern Africa (ESN-SA), in collaboration with the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) hosted a virtual public meeting via the ZOOM platform on the topic “The COVID-19 Pandemic: An Opportunity or Challenge for CSOs Democratic Support?”

On 14 May ZESN, held a capacity building workshop for Community Based Organisations, Faith Based Organisations and Social Emerging Groups based in Mangwe and Bulilima districts in Matebeleland South Province. The workshop also developed strategies for mobilising citizens particularly the youth, women and people with disabilities in the province and neighbouring countries such as Botswana and South Africa to register to vote.

On 18 May, ZESN conducted a virtual message development workshop for the Civic and Voter Education (CVE) cluster on digitising CVE. The workshop produced a collection of messages and hashtags that will be used by members of the CVE cluster and other strategic partners to mobilise citizens to register to vote and participate in key electoral processes using digital platforms.

ZESN also produced and widely shared a voter registration explainer video the boundary delimitation exercise and branded facemasks.

ZESN produced newspaper articles on electoral issues that were published in online and print media. Further, copies of its Ballot Newsletter were distributed at Mbare bus terminus.

ZESN participated in an electoral reforms workshop aimed at ensuring an improved environment by 2023 that was convened by the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs from 30 May to 1 June 2021 in Nyanga and allowed members of the Political Actors Dialogue (POLAD) to review the recommendations contained in the ZESN Draft Comprehensive Electoral

Amendment Bill. The POLAD members identified clauses in the Bill which they concurred with and those which they were opposed to. POLAD also provided feedback in the clauses which CSOs may consider revising so that they are articulated better and further strengthened.

ZESN held its fourth Virtual Public Meeting in 2021 entitled “Judicial Independence; Implications for Electoral Democracy in Zimbabwe.”

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. The ZEC should engage the Government with options that demonstrate how by-elections can be conducted safely during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ii. Members of the public are encouraged to remain vigilant and observe stipulated health protocols as COVID cases continue to be recorded in some provinces.
- iii. City councils around the country are urged to ensure that safe drinking water is provided to citizens on a consistent basis.