

ZIMBABWE DEMOCRACY INSTITUTE (ZDI) PUBLIC HEALTH ACCESS MONITORING REPORT

JUNE 2021

MANIPULATIVE AND DECEPTIVE POLITICS ON COVID-19 VACCINES PROCUREMENT



Image Credit: Google

About the Zimbabwe Democracy Institute (ZDI)

The Zimbabwe Democracy Institute (ZDI) is a politically independent and not for profit public policy think-tank based in Zimbabwe. Founded and registered as a trust in terms of the laws of Zimbabwe in November 2012, ZDI serves to generate and disseminate innovative ideas, cutting-edge research and policy analysis to advance democracy, development, good governance and human rights in Zimbabwe. The institute also aims to promote open, informed and evidence-based debate by bringing together pro-democracy experts to platforms for debate. The idea is to offer new ideas to policy makers with the view to entrenching democratic practices in Zimbabwe. The ZDI researches, publishes and conducts national policy debates and conferences in democratization, good governance, public policy, human rights and transitional justice, media and democracy relations, electoral politics and international affairs.

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Introduction

The period under review was characterized by an increase in both Covid-19 infections and deaths globally, regionally and locally. On 31 May 2021, infections in Zimbabwe were more than 38 thousand and deaths stood at close to one thousand six hundred.¹ By 22 June 2021, the country had recorded a total of forty two thousand seven hundred and fourteen infections, signaling a 9.6 % increase in confirmed cases between 31 May 2021 and 22 June 2021. During the same period, Covid-19 deaths increased by 5.9 % from 1 596 (31 May 2021) to 1 691 (22 June 2021).² These figures signal the continued threat of Covid-19 to human existence and therefore calls for government urgency in the procurement of vaccines.

The country's vaccination plan has been hit by vaccine shortages as supported by empirical evidence. For instance, between 31 May 2021 and 22 June 2021, the number of people who were vaccinated increased by a mere 4.5% as compared to 63% between 30 April 2021 and 31 May 2021.³

In response to a surge in infections, the government on 12 June 2021 announced adjustments to the pandemic containment measures which, however face defiance from members of the ruling ZANU PF party. The government continues to play manipulative politics on Covid-19 vaccine acquisition as citizens bear the brunt of doses' shortages across vaccination centres in the country.

Between 31 May 2021 and 7 June 2021, Zimbabwe vaccinated a total of thirteen thousand and eighteen people.⁴ During the same period of time between 7 June 2021 and 14 June 2021 only 4 872 people were vaccinated. This can only be best explained by shortages of vaccines at vaccination centers as confirmed by citizens across Zimbabwe.⁵

Manipulative and deceptive politics on Covid-19 vaccines

Although Zimbabwe, as of April 2020, had a third highest inoculation rate in SADC and 8th highest in Africa as a share of the population⁶, the country's Covid-19 Vaccine Deployment and Roll out Plan continues to be plagued with vaccine

¹As of 31 May 2021, the Ministry of Health and Child Care recorded 38 961 confirmed cases, 1 596 deaths, 36 5944 recoveries and 675 678 people vaccinated.

²Adopted from the Ministry of Health and Child Care daily situation reports of 31 May 2021 and 22 June 2021 on Covid-19 infections.

³Adopted from the Ministry of Health and Child Care daily situation reports of 30 April 2021 and 31 May 2021 on vaccinations.

⁴Derived from Ministry of Health and Child Care daily situation reports.

⁵Recorded from an online discussion with participants from the country's 10 provinces entitled Covid-19 Vaccine Availability and Accessibility in different communities held on 9 June 2021.

⁶This was fact-checked by Zim Fact (2020). Is Zimbabwe's COVID-19 vaccination rate among the highest in Africa?

shortages at vaccination centres across the country.

Prognosis

Zimbabwe to Buy One Million Covid-19 Vaccines Each Month

By Ray Ndirou

April 6, 2021, 2:28 PM GMT+2



Figure 1: Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube's promise that never came to fruition

The end of April 2021 and May 2021 was never characterized by the acquisition and delivery of Covid-19 vaccines as promised by Minister Mthuli Ncube at the beginning of the month of April 2021.⁷ This shortage of vaccines can be referenced to testimonies below ascertained during the ZDI online dialogue on 9 June 2021 under the topic: **Availability and accessibility of Covid-19 vaccines in communities: The current state of affairs in Zimbabwe.**

“I am in HARARE and for now the vaccine is out of order for more than two weeks now. I mean under HARARE city Health clinics” -
Harare

“Hi good people. I’m in Gokwe and the vaccine is only available to

people in town. Those in the country side cannot access them” – **Gokwe**

“In Kariba in Mashonaland West province those who got their first jab are getting the second one but they are out of stock now for first takers. More are coming for jabs but to no avail. As for centres there are many” – **Kariba**

“Most of the people from my area in Shangani are due for their second jabs. However, the vaccines are not available at vaccination centres” –
Shangani

“Hi. I am in Bulawayo. In high density areas like Nkulumane 12 there is Maqhawe clinic but people are not being vaccinated there. The next nearby clinic is Nkulumane clinic and people are not being vaccinated on a daily basis because services are not provided daily and sometimes you find that the second dose has been finished so you will have to go to another vaccination centre and the

Available at: <https://zimfact.org/is-zimbabwes-covid-19-vaccination-rate-among-the-highest-in-africa/>

⁷This is detailed in a story by Bloomberg titled Zimbabwe to Buy One Million Covid-19 Vaccines Each Month. Available:

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-04-06/zimbabwe-to-buy-one-million-covid-19-vaccines-each-month>

best place to go is in the CBD” – **Bulawayo**

“I took my second dose in April and it was a smooth process in Bulawayo Central” – **Bulawayo**

“Around here in Bikita, only civil servants got the jab. I have not heard of any other groups having been vaccinated” – **Bikita, Masvingo**

“Sorry. I could not take part in yesterday’s discussion. I am in Guruve, Mashonaland Central. Teachers around my district got the first jab of Covid-19 vaccine at their stations and were promised second jabs which never came, the reason being the vaccine was not available” – **Guruve**

“Today at Njube clinic there is no second dose” – **Bulawayo**

On 8 June 2021, *The Herald* newspaper carried a story headlined **Zim records \$9.8bn budget surplus**⁸ but it is not clear how is the surplus utilized in the midst of shortage of Covid-19 vaccines at vaccination centres across the country as shown above. Thus, it becomes imperative that calls for transparency and accountability in the

management of public funds be made loud, particularly in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic.



Figure 2: A story in The Herald newspaper saying Zimbabwe records \$9.8bn budget surplus

As first-hand evidence-based reports about shortages of Covid-19 vaccines continue to surface, the Ministry of Health and Child Care on 4 June 2021 tweeted that:

The Ministry of Health has mobilised vaccines for those in Harare Province in need of Sinovac second doses. Those who are due for that second dose can access it at Parirenyatwa, Sally Mugabe and Chitungwiza Central Hospitals.

That was a typical case of opacity in the mobilization process of Covid-19 vaccines by the government against a background of importance of transparency, accountability and citizen oversight in buttressing confidence and trust between citizens and the government.

The shortage of vaccines in Zimbabwe comes at a time when the African continent in the first 2 weeks of June 2021 faced an increase of 52% in

⁸For more details, read the story “Zim records \$9.8bn budget surplus” available at: <https://www.herald.co.zw/zim-records-98bn-budget-surplus/>

infections and 32% in deaths amid less than 1% of the continent's population being vaccinated.⁹

Empty vaccine promises

During a post-Cabinet briefing on 8 June 2021, Information Minister Monica Mutsvangwa said Zimbabwe was going to receive a batch of 500 000 doses of Covid-19 vaccines by 15 June 2021. However, by 15 June 2021 there was no delivery of these vaccines and no explanation was given by the government.



Figure 3: This promise was made on 8 June 2021 but as of 21 June 2021 there was no delivery of the vaccines

⁹This is highlighted in a video by the Director-General of the World Health Organization. Available at: https://twitter.com/PHILA_ZW/status/1406138804507918339

¹⁰During a post-Cabinet briefing on 22 June 2021, Minister of Information Monica Mutsvangwa said the country was

On top of yet to be fulfilled promise of 500 000 doses, the government on 22 June 2021 during a post-Cabinet briefing made another promise that plans were underway to procure two million doses of Sinovac vaccines from China. It is said the vaccines are expected in the country by end of June 2021.¹⁰



Figure 4: Latest government promise of the procurement of two million doses of Sinovac vaccines from China expected to be delivered in the country by end of June 2021

Enforcement of the revised Covid-19 prevention measures: Immunity and Impunity

The Minister of Health Constantino Chiwenga on 12 June 2021 announced new lockdown measures in which all gatherings were banned except for funerals to be attended by 30 people only. This was followed by a statement from the

expecting a delivery of two million doses of Sinovac vaccines from China procured by the government. For more details, see this tweet: <https://twitter.com/ZBCNewsonline/status/1407363566550892545>

Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) on 14 June 2021 highlighting that the police force was going to enforce the revised Covid-19 lockdown measures without fear or favour.

However, the ZBC-TV news at 2000hrs on 14 June 2021 carried a huge a ZANU PF party campaign rally in Masvingo which was addressed by Minister July Moyo and some war veterans telling their supporters the 2023 campaign has started. Under these circumstances, it appears like ZANU PF party members are immune to the coronavirus that if they breach measures they are not arrested.

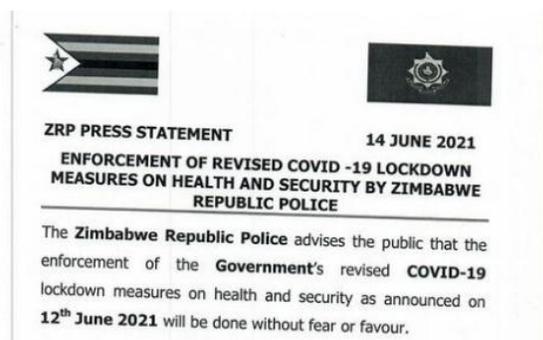


Figure 5: Part of the ZRP Press Statement on the enforcement of the revised Covid-19 lockdown measures announced by the Minister of Health Constantino Chiwenga



NewZimbabwe.com @NewZimbabweCom · Jun 21

20 priests, 10 sisters, 20 members of the choir, 30 St Mary's parishioners, the band, security members, Doves employees, relatives to the late priest & several government officials who were not even practising social distancing.

[newzimbabwe.com/mnangagwa-give...](https://www.newzimbabwe.com/mnangagwa-give...) by @thandiegarus



Mnangagwa Gives Chiwenga Covid-19 Rules Middle Finger - NewZimb...
Spread This NewsBy Thandiwe Garusa PRESIDENT Emmerson
Mnangagwa Monday all but gave Vice President Constantino ...
[newzimbabwe.com](https://www.newzimbabwe.com)

Figure 6: Despite a new decree of a maximum of 30 mourners at a funeral, NewZimbabwe.com reported that the burial of the late Father Ribeiro was attended by hundreds of people.¹¹

Conclusion

In the context of a spike in Covid-19 infections and deaths in the country, the government appears to be moving with a very low speed in the procurement of more additional vaccines. With the few vaccines available, their accessibility by the marginalized communities is a challenge as the situation on the ground suggests the centralization of the vaccine deployment and roll out plan.

Recommendations

Cognizant of the significance of having a robust healthcare delivery system, the ZDI in line with its

¹¹For more details, read the story by NewZimbabwe.com available at: <https://www.newzimbabwe.com/mnangagwa-gives-chiwenga-covid-19-rules-middle-finger/>

aim to advance democracy, development, good governance and human rights in Zimbabwe recommends the following;

Government of Zimbabwe

- ✓ Immediately make use of the declared 'budget surplus of \$9.8bn' to procure adequate Covid-19 vaccines that meet the demand emanating from a situation of a spike in the pandemic's infections this winter season.
- ✓ Ensure rule of law and uniformity in the enforcement of the revised Covid-19 containment measures announced on 12 June 2021.

Civil Society

- ✓ Initiate and lead advocacy charge on Covid-19 vaccine availability and accessibility in different geographical locations in Zimbabwe and pushing the government to fulfil its human rights obligations
- ✓ Provision of necessary guidance on the protection and promotion of human rights particularly access to health-care services, monitoring and tracking compliance.

- ✓ Demanding more transparency and accountability in the procurement and distribution of Covid-19 vaccines in a bid to build a fairer, more just and more rights-respecting pandemic fight.

Media

- ✓ Report the status-quo of Covid-19 vaccine availability and accessibility in Zimbabwe's marginalized communities.