

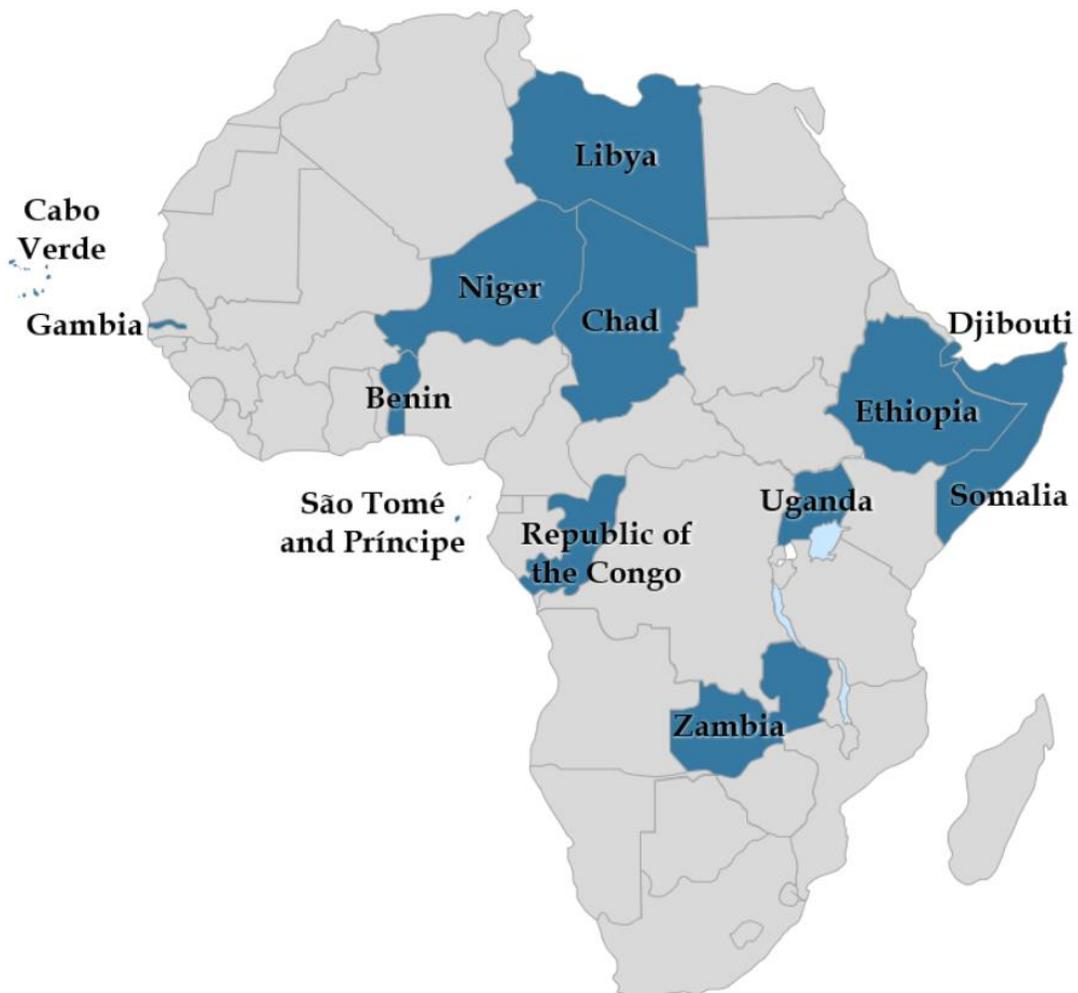
Zimbabwe Election Support Network



Monitoring Government Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

2021 Update # 5

Elections in Africa in 2021



1. INTRODUCTION

Non-State actors have been complementing government efforts in flattening the COVID-19 curve. ZESN hopes that this report which covers developments that occurred in the month of June 2021, as reported by ZESN LTOs will complement the range of information available for use in development and reinforcing of strategies aimed at safeguarding the health of citizens who are trying to forge ahead with life in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the reporting period, amid the threat posed by the increase in COVID-19 cases, the whole country was put under lockdown on 12 June while particular places were put under localized lockdowns with stricter measures. The Vice President and Minister of Health and Child Care, Dr. Constantine Chiwenga declared the national lockdown noting that complacency had resulted in a recent spike in COVID-19 cases. He said that the country had recorded 596 new cases and 26 deaths within the previous week, compared to the same period in May last year where there were 132 cases and six deaths.

Among other measures, all public gatherings were banned, except funerals, whose numbers were limited to 30 people. Industry and commerce were ordered to operate on 50% staff. Operating hours for retail shops were set at 8.00 am to 3.30 pm. Stricter enforcement of the wearing of face masks in public places, social and physical distancing, as well as frequent washing and sanitizing of hands, were called for. Beer halls and nightclubs were ordered to remain closed with hotels, lodges, bars, and restaurants allowed to open only to residents until 10.00 pm.

The localized Kwekwe lockdown was extended by two weeks. Further, more places, namely, Kariba, Makonde, and Hurungwe were put under localised lockdowns. In such areas, a 6.00 p.m to 6.00 a.m curfew was imposed, while access to and from the areas under localized lockdowns was banned, except for essential services. Public transport was ordered to carry half their carrying capacity to enable physical distancing and every public transport vehicle to be disinfected after every trip.

On 23 June, more localized lockdowns were approved by Cabinet in the following areas: Karoi, Makonde, Chinhoyi, Mhangura, Chidamwoyo, Magunje, and Chirundu (Mashonaland West Province); Nkulumane, Emakhandeni, and Northern Suburbs (Bulawayo Metropolitan Province); Mount Darwin in Mashonaland Central Province; and Chiredzi in Masvingo Province.

Vaccination against COVID-19 continued. In the same month, the country received 25,000 Sputnik V doses from Russia. In addition, 500 000 Sinopharm shots bought from China were received within the month of June.

1.1 MINISTRY OF HEALTH SUMMARY UPDATES

As at 30 June 2021, Zimbabwe had 49 864 confirmed cases, including 39 121 recoveries and 1 789 deaths. To date, a total of 777 161 people have been vaccinated against COVID-19.¹

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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

2.1 ENFORCEMENT OF LOCKDOWN REGULATIONS

LTO reports indicated that, in general, there was no strict enforcement of COVID-19 restrictions, particularly in the first two weeks of June, except in constituencies that were under localized lockdowns.

There were reports of uniformed forces taking bribes from those who were breaching COVID-19 regulations in some constituencies. Examples include Buhera South; Mufakose; Bindura North; Harare East; and Mutoko South constituencies.

In some constituencies, non-adherence to COVID-19 regulations was reported, including defying curfew orders and the secret operation of shebeens, beerhalls, bars, and bottle stores. Examples of such constituencies include Kadoma Central; Bikita South; Bulilima East; Vungu; Buhera South; and Mwenezi East.

The police arrested informal traders and ZANU-PF youths who invaded Sakubva

¹

<https://twitter.com/MoHCCZim/status/1410331136073547784>

vegetables market and grabbed tables in defiance of the City Councils' order to stop trading due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.2 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE HEALTH SECTOR

Local health facilities were generally reported to have continued offering services as before. However, unavailability of medication were reported in some constituencies, for example Binga North; Chakari; Glen Norah; Insiza South; Highfield East; Highfield West; Dangamvura-Chikanga; and Mhangura.



Women were reported to be receiving antenatal and postnatal treatment at local health facilities as before. In Nketa Mganwini, an unidentified donor helped by paying bills for antenatal and postnatal services rendered to women.

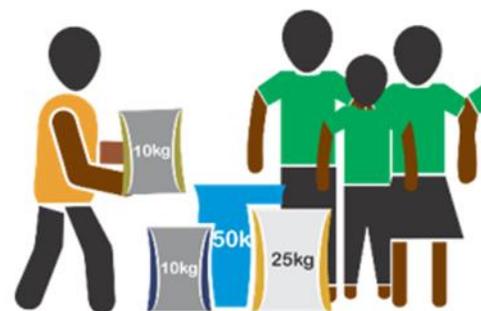
2.3 ACCESSIBILITY OF CLEAN WATER

Access to clean water was a challenge in some constituencies. These include the urban parts of Makoni South Constituency; Ward 12 of Mudzi South; Chakari; areas outside growth points in Chiredzi South; Hurungwe North; villages 2 and 3 of Umguza; Chitungwiza South; and Chitungwiza North.

Kadoma Residents Association threatened to take the City Council to court over the charging of rates for water that it was not providing. Norton Residents Association complained about exorbitant water charges to the Council.

2.4 FOOD AID DISTRIBUTION

Food aid distribution by the Social Welfare Department was reported in a few constituencies, including Makoni South and Chimanimani West.



In Kwekwe, the World Food Program, through Plan International, gave beneficiaries some money in the form of cash. In Hwange Central, beneficiaries got grocery vouchers from WFP. Oxfam gave beneficiaries grocery vouchers worth USD 12 per person in Gutu East. In Mwenezi East and West, the Red Cross Society distributed grocery hampers with items or commodities worth USD 60 per hamper.

2.5 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.

LTO reports showed that while ZEC Provincial and District Offices were open, in general, only a few people were turning up to register to vote.

In Bulilima East, ZEC mobile teams moved around in Wards, registering people.

In Nketa, some aspiring candidates were ferrying people to Windsor Park in Famona to register to vote.

In Mutoko South, there were some posters with messages encouraging people to register to vote. There was an increase in the circulation of Voter Education messages on WhatsApp in Bindura North, with the link for voters to check their registration status circulated together with messages encouraging people to register to vote.

2.6 POLITICAL ACTIVITIES DURING LOCKDOWN

In many constituencies, ZANU-PF was reported to be actively recruiting members for, and constituting, its cells (a cell being the vanguard of the party at the level of the village and the community²). Such constituencies include Hurungwe West; Guruve North; Magunje; Sanyati; Mhondoro-Ngezi; Hurungwe Central; Gokwe Chireya; Mutare South; Chiredzi West; Zaka West; and Guruve North.

In some cases, recruitment by ZANU-PF was done through door to door visits. In Glen View North, such door to door visits were conducted with those who would join the party being promised something in return. Those who are eligible to vote or

² <https://www.chronicle.co.zw/what-is-zanu-pf/>

have voted in previous elections were particularly targeted. Promises of food aid and farming inputs to those who would join cells were also reportedly made in Mhondoro-Ngezi.

In Kadoma, ZANU-PF requested households to complete forms which recorded the names, dates of birth, and National Identity numbers of those eligible to vote and those who will be eligible to vote in 2023.

In Masvingo Urban, both ZANU-PF and the MDC Alliance were reported to be engaged in restructuring exercises at the local level.

Political parties were also reported to be holding meetings. ZANU-PF meetings were reported in a number of constituencies, including Nketa; Chipinge Central; Binga North; Mudzi South; and Mutare North while MDC Alliance meetings were reported in Binga North.

The MP for Beit Bridge East donated Information and Technology equipment to St Joseph Primary School. The incumbent MP for Mwenezi West handed over an irrigation project to beneficiaries in Ward 14 on 18 June 2021. In Wedza South, the incumbent MP was sponsoring sports

activities. In Uzumba, aspiring ZANU-PF candidates were supporting self-help projects and giving people groceries. In Mberengwa East.

In Norton, the MDC Alliance conducted clean up campaigns during which people were encouraged to register to vote. The MDC Alliance conducted voter education in Ward 12 of Njube-Lobengula.

The Parliamentary Portfolio Committees on Women Affairs and Labour and Social Services were in Nkayi South for public hearings on the Bill on sexual harassment at the workplace.

In some constituencies, for example in Mubaira; Zvishavane-Runde; and Mutare South, there were activities relating to the call made by government for those who witnessed the war of liberation struggle and played roles as *chimbwidos* and *mujibhas* to register so that they could get some benefits for it.

3. HIGHLIGHTS OF ZESN ACTIVITIES

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

The Electoral Education and Capacity Building Department continued to

encourage citizens to register to vote by means of community and national radio programmes, video skits and the production of Information Education and Communication materials such as fliers translated into local languages.

The Department also continued with CSOs and Community Based Organisations' capacity building and collaborations with them in mobilizing Citizens to register to vote. In this regard, a CVE cluster workshop for Matebeleland region was held on 2 June.

Under the Advocacy for Electoral Reform Department, a virtual public webinar on the topic "Judicial Independence; Implications for Electoral Democracy in Zimbabwe". The panellists were Professor Lovemore Madhuku, a constitutional law expert and one of the Political Actors Dialogue (POLAD) principals; Portia Kurima, a development practitioner and elections expert; Dr. Maxwell Shumba, president of the Zimbabwe People First Party; and Dr. Alex Magaisa, a lawyer and constitutional expert.

ZESN presented highlights of the CSOs Draft Comprehensive Electoral

Amendment Bill that is currently before Parliament at a Post Legislative Analysis Workshop that was convened by the Parliamentary Legal Committee in Kariba. ZESN also made a presentation on the Bill at a gender workshop hosted by the Zimbabwe Gender Commission and the POLAD in Kariba from 5-6 June 2021.

ZESN also took part in radio programmes on the following topics: A Discussion on the Local Government Quota System for Women; Judicial Independence and its Impact on Electoral Processes; and The Importance of Voter Registration in Electoral Democracy.

ZESN endeavours to sustain voter education efforts using methodologies that do not require people to meet physically.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Members of the public are encouraged to remain vigilant and observe stipulated health protocols.
- ii. The ZEC should provide mobile voter registration centres at venues at sub-district level

which are more accessible to members of the public.

- iii. City councils around the country are urged to ensure that safe drinking water is provided to citizens on a consistent basis.