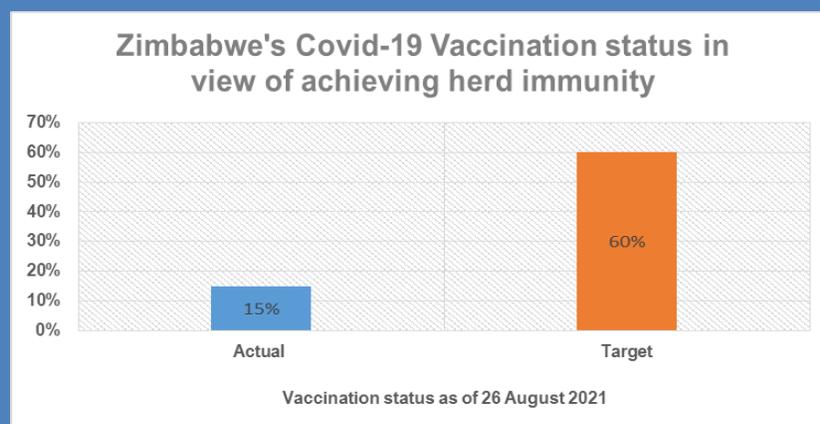


ZIMBABWE DEMOCRACY INSTITUTE (ZDI) ACCESS TO PUBLIC HEALTH

MONTHLY MONITORING REPORT

AUGUST 2021

ABUSE OF COVID-19 FUNDS: A CASE OF A PANDEMIC IN A PANDEMIC



Source: ZDI 2021, Dataset from Ministry of Health and Child Care Covid-19 daily Situation Reports, 26/08/2021

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 month of August 2021 saw the Auditor General's latest special audit report on the financial management and utilization of public resources in combating the Covid-19 exposing gross embezzlement of funds. This proves to be a step backwards in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. As Zimbabwe continues to take delivery of additional Covid-19 vaccines, the number of fully vaccinated people as of 22 August 2021 constituted 35.2% of people who can be fully vaccinated from the available vaccines while 64.8% of the people who can utilise the available vaccines are yet to be fully vaccinated.

In terms of reaching targeted herd immunity, that is, fully vaccinating 10 million people (60% of the population), Zimbabwe has only reached 15% of the target as of 26 August 2021 (6 months after vaccination started). The achievement of herd immunity takes into account a number of factors in addition to availability of vaccines such as the availability of a well-motivated, well-remunerated and adequate healthcare staff, a well-coordinated logistical arrangement for the delivery of vaccines and other medical consumables across all vaccination centres in the country among others.

The period under review was characterized by the continued spread of Covid-19 infections and deaths globally, regionally and locally. On 31 July

2021, Covid-19 infections in Zimbabwe stood at 108 860 and deaths were 3 532.¹ From this date to 26 August 2021, Zimbabwe sustained a 13.8% increase in infection as it stood at 123 986 infections².

Abuse of Covid-19 funds: A case of a pandemic within a pandemic

As Zimbabwe still finds itself in the middle of a fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, cases of abuse, misuse and embezzlement of funds meant to finance the containment of the coronavirus continue to take centre stage.

The recent Auditor General's special report on the financial management and utilization of public resources in combating the Covid-19 in the country by ministries, government departments and agencies uncovered the abuse and misappropriation of over \$890 million which was meant to fight Covid-19 in the country.³ This abuse of Covid-19 containment funds is a despicable infringement of the right to health and

¹As of 31 July 2021, the Ministry of Health and Child Care recorded 108 860 confirmed cases of Covid-19, 3 532 deaths, 75 856 recoveries and 1 645 599 vaccinations. More details are accessible here: <https://twitter.com/MoHCCZim/status/1421609527284224011>

²As of 26 August 2021, the Ministry of Health and Child Care recorded a total of confirmed cases of 123 986 Covid-19. For more details, see: <https://twitter.com/MoHCCZim/status/1431042955477913601>

³ As reported by the NewsDay newspaper edition of 5 August 2020, the Auditor-General (AG) Mildred Chiri unearthed gross irregularities and deliberate manipulation of figures to facilitate theft of donations meant for COVID-19 relief allowances and projects that saw undeserving government officials and individuals benefiting. The article is accessible at: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2021/08/ag-unearts-gross-covid-19-funds-abuse/>

the right to life of the whole nation. It is gross misconduct that should be condemned with all possible gravity. There is need for concerted activism and citizen agency to put the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission and the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission to task. In view of the prevailing precarious conditions in Zimbabwe's public health sector stemming from inadequate funding, staff shortages, poor infrastructure and obsolete equipment⁴, the USD961 million⁵ wind fall from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to Zimbabwe, particular attention ought to be directed towards revamping the health sector.



Part of the press statement by the Reserve Bank of

⁴ The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Zimbabwe highlights that the health sector in Zimbabwe still recovers from years of significant challenges such as inadequate financing, shortages of qualified staff, poor infrastructure and obsolete equipment amongst a host of others. The article is accessible here: <https://www.unicef.org/zimbabwe/health>

⁵ Zimbabwe on 24 August 2021 got an injection of USD961 million as part of its allocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe confirmed receipt of the allocation here: <https://twitter.com/ReserveBankZIM/status/1430082421215612954>

Zimbabwe confirming receipt of USD691 million from the IMF.
Source: Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Twitter timeline

Covid-19 Vaccines Delivery: Variations and gaps in official communication

Subsequent to the outbreak of Covid-19 in Zimbabwe, the management of the pandemic has always been characterized by contradictions in official communication as highlighted in our April 2021 access to public health monitoring report accessible here: <https://kubatana.net/2021/05/11/contradictions-in-covid-19-information-dissemination-zdi-public-health-access-monitoring-report-april-2021/>.

On 22 August 2021 when Deputy Minister of Health and Child Care toured Central Vaccine Stores to get an update of COVID-19 vaccine stock status, the ministry indicated that Zimbabwe as of 21 August 2021 had received a total of 8 285 000 doses⁶. Forward to 25 August 2021 during a post-cabinet briefing meeting, Information Minister Monica Mutsvangwa announced that Zimbabwe had already acquired 13 million vaccines⁷. The vaccines delivered between 22 August 2021 and 25 August 2021 do not increase delivery from 8.2 million doses to 13 million doses. 22 August 2021 saw the delivery of additional 1.5 million Sinopharm doses followed

⁶ This is documented on the Ministry of Health and Child Care Twitter timeline and is accessible here: <https://twitter.com/MoHCCZim/status/1429410103015395333>

⁷ This is documented on the Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services Twitter timeline and is accessible here: <https://twitter.com/InfoMinZW/status/1430551039904821249>

by a delivery of further 1 million Sinovac doses.⁸ It therefore means between 22 and 25 August 2021 Zimbabwe received additional 2.5 million doses and the figure, if added to 8.2 million as of 22 August 2021, does not add up to 13 million doses announced by the cabinet on 25 August 2021. The communication discrepancy between the Ministry on 22 August 2021 and the cabinet on 25 August 2021 speaks volume about the incoherencies in Covid-19 management in Zimbabwe.



On 22 August 2021 the Ministry of Health and Child Care highlighted that Zimbabwe had taken delivery of a total of 8.2 million doses. Source: Ministry of Health and Child Care Twitter timeline



On 25 August 2021 the post-Cabinet briefing meeting revealed that Zimbabwe had to date taken delivery of a total of 8.2 million doses. Source: Ministry of Health and Child Care Twitter timeline

Achieving Covid-19 Vaccination Herd Immunity by Year End: Progress thus far

In the context of Covid-19 just like any other pandemic, achieving herd immunity is a major milestone towards curtailing further spread of the virus.⁹ With Zimbabwe aiming to achieve herd immunity by the end of 2021, the country's Covid-19 vaccination programme's initial and supplementary budget suggest otherwise. The first budget of US\$100 million has been nearly

⁸The vaccine deliveries were monitored by the Public Health Information Lab (PHILA) and more details can be accessed here: https://twitter.com/PHILA_ZW/status/1430193665264214016

⁹This is further explained by the World Health Organisation (WHO). 2020. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Herd immunity, lockdowns and COVID-19. Available at: https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/herd-immunity-lockdowns-and-covid-19?gclid=Cj0KCCQjwfp2lBhDkARIsAGVo0D36dAPtAtVSynnSJuYIDA0MZCA41dPQ8l--S6ptQUGw51zXuENcBEaAjbEALw_wcB#

exhausted after 11.8 million doses were procured by the government.¹⁰

The type of the procured doses are such that one person receives two jabs that are administered at an interval that varies between two and four weeks. It then follows that US\$100 million was exhausted on buying doses that cater for 5.8 million people. There has been a scramble for vaccines which has resulted in creation of advance booking for the vaccine to vaccinate and a limited number is vaccinated per day across vaccination centres. Only 1.460 million people had received their second doses and were thus considered fully vaccinated by 22 August 2021¹¹¹²

¹⁰Presenting the 2021 Mid-term Budget and Economic Review to the Parliament of Zimbabwe on 27 July 2021, Minister of Finance and Economic Development Mthuli Ncube highlighted that Treasury was only left with US\$6,8million after importing 11,8 million doses and 7,2 million syringes.

¹¹The Ministry of Health and Child Care Zimbabwe Covid-19 Situation Report for 22 August 2021 reported that 91 881 people received their 2nd dose bringing cumulative for 2nd dose to 1 460 162.

¹²A person is said to be fully vaccinated when they receive both doses in the case of Sinopharm and or Sinovac vaccines that consists of two doses administered at an interval of between two and four weeks. The World Health Organisation highlights that "it is recommended that all vaccinated individuals receive two doses". The article can be accessed at: https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/the-sinovac-covid-19-vaccine-what-you-need-to-know?gclid=CjwKCAjw64eJBhAGEiwABr9o2PiAuTdQGHS897v4wN_H_HP5BFpi8UK4SxsT1RXoW6mEMR7GoxSOxoCPz0QAvD_BwE

237. To date, US\$93.2 million has been spent towards procurement of 11.8 million doses vaccines and 7.2 million syringes. This has facilitated delivery of 5.5 million doses and 5.2 million syringes as follows:

- Sinovac 6.2 million doses: Procurement;
- Sinopharm 5 million doses: Procurement;
- Sinopharm 500 000 doses: Donation from China;
- Covaxine 35 000 doses: Donation from India;
- Sputnik V 50 000 doses: Donation from Russia;
- China Pharmaceutical Foreign Trade Corporation: 1.2 million syringes;
- Sinopharm: 3 million syringes; and
- Sinovac: 1 million syringes.

Part of Mthuli Ncube's 2021 Mid-term budget and economic review presented to the Parliament on 29 July 2021 with a breakdown of Covid-19 vaccine spending

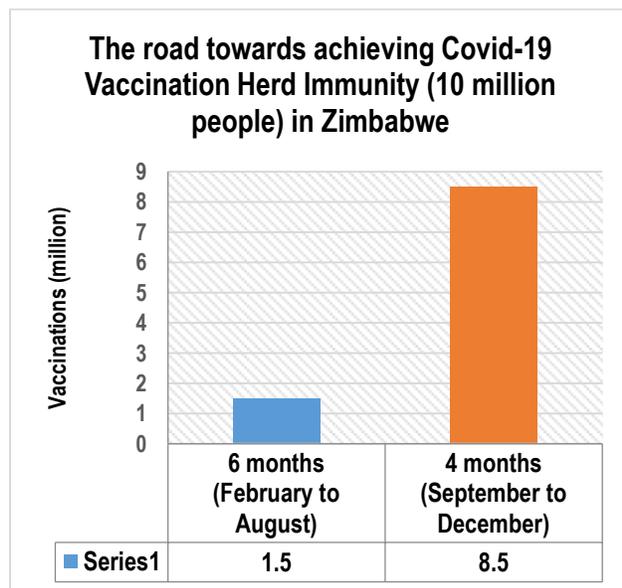
In terms of the official figures on 29 July 2021 when the mid-term budget review statement was presented to parliament, US\$93.2m¹³ was expended on doses consumed by 5%¹⁴ of the herd immunity target (10 million)¹⁵ by 26 August 2021. This 15% fully vaccinated entail that one-third of the herd immunity target was achieved over a period of 5 months (February 2021 to August 2021). There are only four months left to vaccinate two-thirds of the herd immunity target.

¹³ On 29 July 2021, Minister of Finance Mthuli in his presentation of Mid-term Budget review on the performance of the 2021 national budget highlighted that Covid-19 vaccine procurement has used US\$93.2 million. The 2021 Mid-term budget and economic review statement can be accessed at: http://www.zimtreasury.gov.zw/index.php?option=com_phocadownload&view=category&download=410:2021-mid-term-budget-and-economic-review-slides&id=53:mid-term-reviews&Itemid=787

¹⁴ As of 29 July 2021, Zimbabwe had fully vaccinated 730 378 people and it constituted 9% of Zimbabwe's total population of 15.1 million as per Worldometer statistics (<https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/zimbabwe-population/>)

¹⁵ On 26 August 2021 the Ministry of Health and Child Care said Zimbabwe has so far acquired 13 million doses out of the 20 million required in order to achieve the initial target of 10 million vaccinated people. More details are accessible here: <https://twitter.com/MoHCCZim/status/1430776780529537025>

This report argues that vaccinating the two-thirds of the herd immunity target in four months when one-third was done in five months by the same system proves to be a high mountain to climb.



Source: ZDI 2021, Dataset: Ministry of Health and Child Care Covid-19 Daily Situation Reports

As presented above, it took the government of Zimbabwe 6 months (February 2021 to August 2021) to fully vaccinate 1.5 million people.¹⁶ With 4 months left to get to December 2021, it is highly unlikely that 8.5 million people will be fully vaccinated to reach a herd immunity target population of 10 million¹⁷ people. If 1.5 million people were fully vaccinated in 6 months, what

¹⁶ As of 26 August 2021 Zimbabwe had fully vaccinated 1 561 368 people according to the Ministry of Health and Child Care Zimbabwe Covid-19 Situation Report 26/08/2021. Available at: <https://twitter.com/MoHCCZim/status/1431042955477913601>

¹⁷ Addressing the media during a post-cabinet briefing meeting on 25 August 2021, Information Minister said the initial target is to vaccinate 10 million people to achieve herd immunity. More details are reported here: <https://www.herald.co.zw/schools-reopen-next-week/>

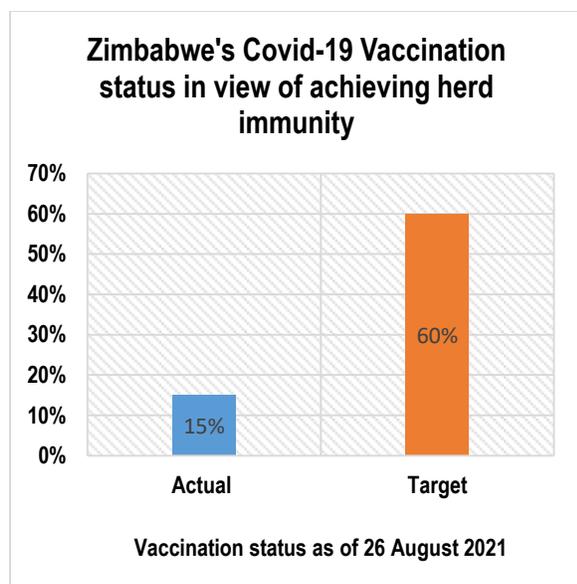
about in 4 months? That is the question which authorities must find an answer to.

Taking into account the arrival of 1 million vaccines into Zimbabwe from China on 24 August 2021, the country has now taken delivery of 9.2 million¹⁸ doses from the East Asian country. In a context where people are waking up as early as 3am to queue up for vaccines, the full vaccination of 1.5 million¹⁹ people against a background of 9.2 million doses received from China alone raises a lot of questions. Looking at the number of fully vaccinated people as of 24 August 2021²⁰ and a total delivery of vaccines taken by Zimbabwe from China alone (9.2 million doses), there should be no cases where people can be turned away from vaccination centres.

¹⁸ The Chinese Embassy in Zimbabwe on 24 August 2021 highlighted that China, to date, has provided Zimbabwe with 9.2 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines. The statement can be viewed here: <https://twitter.com/ChineseZimbabwe/status/1430259645407449093>

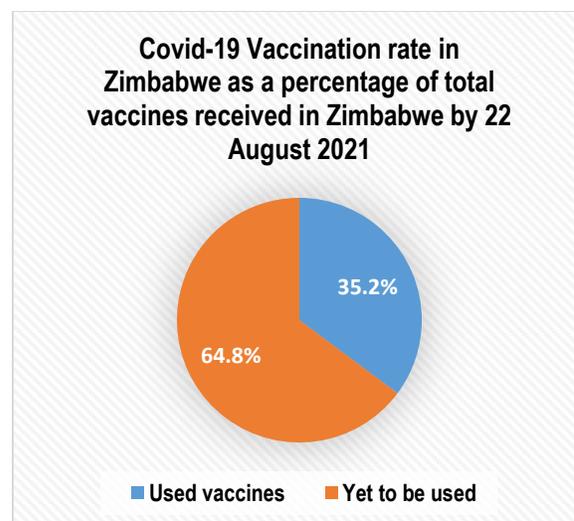
¹⁹ As of 24 August 2021, the Ministry of Health and Child Care had recorded 1 506 445 people to have fully vaccinated. The record is accessible here: <https://twitter.com/MoHCCZim/status/1430315114343936001>

²⁰ The Ministry of Health and Child Care Covid-19 daily Situation Report on 24 August 2021 revealed that 23 397 people received their 2nd dose bringing cumulative for 2nd dose to 1 506 445



Source: ZDI 2021, Dataset from Ministry of Health and Child Care Covid-19 daily Situation Reports

As of 22 August 2021 Zimbabwe had taken delivery of a total of 8.2 million doses²¹ capable of fully vaccinating 4.1 million people.²² The number of people fully vaccinated as a percentage of total vaccines received in the country by 22 August 2021 is way below average as shown below:



Source: ZDI 2021, Dataset: Ministry of Health and Child Care Covid-19 Daily Situation Reports

As shown above, the number of fully vaccinated people as of 22 August 2021 constitute 35.2% of people who can get the two required doses from the available vaccines delivered to Zimbabwe as of the same date. In other words, 64.8% of the people who can utilise the available vaccines are yet to be fully vaccinated.

The situation obtaining on the ground across vaccination centres in Zimbabwe reveals that reaching herd immunity hinges upon a combination of a number of factors and not just the availability of vaccines. The logistical challenges being witnessed in the delivery of Covid-19 vaccines across vaccination centres is a clear testament that mass vaccination can only be dreamt of in Zimbabwe. This situation is also coupled with Zimbabwe's health delivery system which is understaffed, underfinanced and shaky (Maulani *et al.*, 2020: 2). Thus, Zimbabwe's

²¹ The Ministry of Health and Child Care on 22 August 2021 reported that Deputy Minister Dr John Mangwiro had toured Central Vaccine Stores to get an update of COVID-19 vaccine stock status and highlighted the Government had to date received a total of 8, 285, 000 doses. More details are viewed here: <https://twitter.com/MoHCCZim/status/1429410103015395333>

²² Zimbabwe has so far used Covid-19 vaccines that require one to be vaccinated twice to be considered fully vaccinated. Therefore 8 285 000 doses cater for 4 142 500 full vaccinations.

healthcare delivery system is not sound enough to ensure mass vaccination as staff shortages, among other challenges, are hindering the process.

Access to healthcare services in Zimbabwe: Ordinary men and women continue to face marginalisation

The constitution of Zimbabwe stipulates that the right to access to basic healthcare is everyone's entitlement²³ regardless of societal classes. However, in Zimbabwe quality healthcare services continue to be the preserve of the elite ruling class as the general public bears the brunt of the ever-dilapidating public health infrastructure. The government's commitment of ZWL\$269.5 million for the construction of a VVIP hospital at Manyame Airbase in Harare is yet another evidence of the continued neglect of public healthcare services by the government in favour of the elite. Referral public health centres in the county such as Sally Mugabe Central Hospital are in a sorry state as a result of abuse of resources intended for their refurbishment.²⁴

The construction of a VVIP hospital at Manyame Airbase in Harare comes at a time when public health institutions, at the present moment, require urgent attention for the benefit of everyone and not just the ruling elite. This abandonment of public health institutions by the ruling class contradicts the universally accepted idea of equitable and universal health coverage in the country.



Covid-19 Vaccination: If Churches can open to fully vaccinated people, why not schools?

As the country's Covid-19 vaccination process continues to take place, the government is doing all it can to encourage vaccine uptake notwithstanding a short supply of doses. In doing so, a number of measures are being put in place to encourage the majority to get jabbed with a view of achieving herd immunity by the end of

²³ The constitution of Zimbabwe under section 76 provides that every citizen and permanent resident of Zimbabwe has the right to have access to basic health-care services, including reproductive health-care services.

²⁴The Standard newspaper edition of 22 August gave an account of the bad state of affairs at Sally Mugabe Central Hospital as corruption and ill-treatment of patients takes centre stage at the public health facility. The article is accessible at: <https://www.thestandard.co.zw/2021/08/22/corruption-illtreatment-of-patients-inside-the-rot-at-sally-mugabe-central-hospital/>

2021.²⁵ However, more emphasis seem to be put on mandatory vaccination for religious gatherings while teachers and vaccination eligible learners are not being commanded to vaccinate before opening schools.

On 11 August 2021 after a cabinet meeting, the Minister of Information Monica Mutsvangwa announced that churches were going to be opened to fully vaccinated congregants. This implied congregants who have received two doses of the Covid-19 vaccine are now allowed to participate in church services but in full adherence of all Ministry of Health and WHO protocols and those found in breach are going to be arrested.²⁶ This move by the government to allow for re-opening of churches can be given reference to the relationship that exists between the ZANU-PF party and the church particularly white garment churches popularly known as *Vapositori*. With the 2023 elections fast approaching, this decision can be one aimed at pleasing the church (*Vapositori*) given the existence of a marriage of convenience between ZANU-PF party and *Vapositori*. In return, the ZANU-PF led government expects votes from the church and help in manipulating people to lobby

²⁵This was said by Health minister Constantino Chiwenga on 22 April at the Midlands provincial COVID-19 vaccination rollout launch at Kwekwe General Hospital where President Emmerson Mnangagwa received his second dose of the Sinovac vaccine.

²⁶This was said during a post-cabinet briefing meeting by Monica Mutsvangwa in her address to the media

support for the party as posited by Musoni (2019: 7).



Information Ministry Permanent Secretary Nick Mangwana tweeting about the opening of churches to fully vaccinated congregants Source: Nick Mangwana Twitter timeline

The government appears determined to push for more Covid-19 vaccinations leaning on the church as evidenced by another vaccination programme aimed at reinforcing the August 11 directive of churches and Covid-19 vaccines. The government has now come up with a programme to assist churches with Covid-19 vaccination.²⁷ Whilst this is positive in view of working towards herd immunity, the opening of schools ought to get similar support from the government.

²⁷ As reported by the Herald newspaper edition of 23 August 2023, churches willing to have their members vaccinated as groups can approach the Ministry of Health and Child Care and get vaccination help. The article is accessible at: <https://www.herald.co.zw/churches-offered-group-vaccinations/>



A Daily News story about Former Minister of Education David Coltart advocating for the extension of Covid-19 vaccination to schools.

Conclusion

The period under review was marred with abuse of the pandemic funds as empirically uncovered by the Auditor General's special report. There was also incoherent Covid-19 information dissemination communicated from different official sources that ought to be credible and reliable. Government's commitment to construct a special healthcare facility meant to serve the elite only brings to question on the authorities' political will to deliver Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 of ensuring good health and well-being for everyone.

Recommendations

Conscious of the indispensable role played by a well-oiled public healthcare delivery system in positively influencing sustainable development, the ZDI in line with its aim to advance democracy, development, good governance and human rights in Zimbabwe recommends the following;

Government of Zimbabwe

- ✓ Expenditure of the USD\$961 million allocation from the IMF should address challenges bedeviling the country's Covid-19 vaccine deployment and roll out plan. The ZDI envisages that in the event that Zimbabwe takes delivery of vaccines required for achieving herd immunity, the target will not be met due to logistical challenges in delivering vaccines to designated centres, staff shortages at vaccination centres among others.
- ✓ Putting in place a coordinated communication strategy that is devoid of inconsistencies between what is communicated by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Information. This is will avoid confusion among the audience.
- ✓ Ensure that every healthcare development initiative is inclusive and benefits everyone regardless of political orientation and socio-economic class.
- ✓ Ensuring a safe environment for re-opening of schools through extending the Covid-19 vaccination programme to all learning centres with adequate staff and other necessary resources.

Civil Society

- ✓ Intensifying its watchdog role over the use of Covid-19 resources amid a very likelihood of the continued abuse of these resources.
- ✓ Escalating its advocacy role regarding the need to modernize the country's public health system cognizant of the recent USD\$961 million allocated to Zimbabwe by the IMF under the Bretton Woods institution's USD\$650 billion Special Drawing Rights (SDR) allocation to affiliate member countries.

Media

- ✓ Researching and reporting about factors, besides vaccines availability, affecting the achievement of Covid-19 vaccination herd immunity target of 60% by December 2021.
- ✓ Investing in investigative journalism to report on undercover activities done in the fight against Covid-19.