

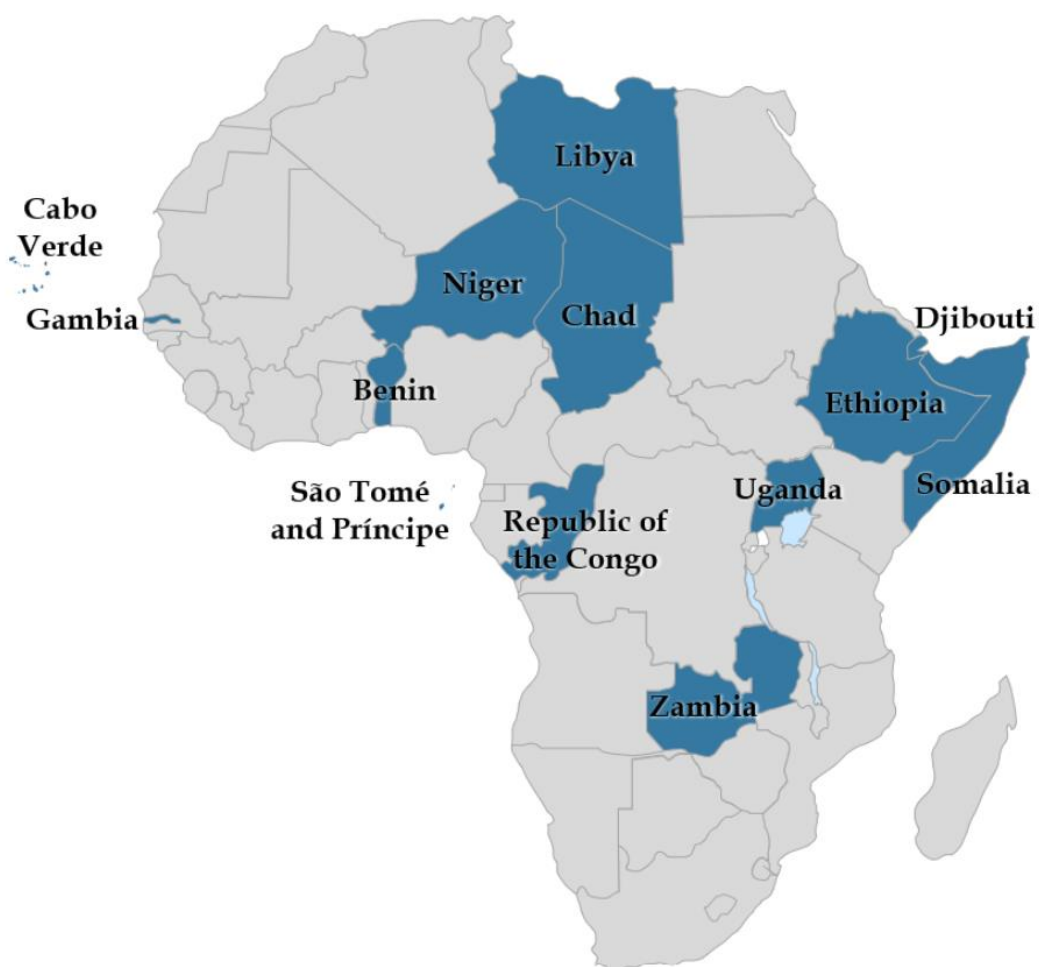
Zimbabwe Election Support Network



Monitoring Government Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

2021 Update # 6

Elections in Africa in 2021



1. INTRODUCTION

This report covers developments that occurred in the months of July and August 2021, as reported by ZESN LTOs. ZESN hopes that the report will complement information available for use in the 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.

On 13 July, President Mnangagwa extended the level 4 lockdown and again on 25 August. In July, Deputy Minister of Health and Child Care, Dr. John Mangwiro, reminded people of the third wave that the country was going through, imploring them to seek early medical assistance when they suspect they have COVID-19 symptoms to avoid loss of lives.

Zimbabwe received 25 000 doses of Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccine donated by Alrosa Zimbabwe on 11 July 2021 and on 25 July, a batch of 1 million doses of Sinovac vaccine was also received.

On 18 July, the Minister of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services announced that vaccination was now open to everybody, with frontline personnel still

being prioritized at vaccination centres. She said that due to overwhelming numbers of people in need of vaccination, extra manpower had been requested from security and defence forces. The Minister also said that with Sinopharm and Sinovac now on the COVAX platform, the government would take advantage of the African Union facility to boost local supplies of the vaccines.

In the month of August, Zimbabwe was still going through the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. On 11 August, the Minister of Information, noted that infection prevention and control measures were yielding results but more needed to be done in areas identified as hotspots.

The Minister indicated that Cabinet had resolved that churches could resume sit-in services but only for fully vaccinated congregants and with other measures such as the wearing of face masks, hands sanitization, and maintaining of social distance adhered to.

No limit was placed on the number of congregants who could attend a church service. It was said that those found in

breach of the stipulated measures will be arrested, including leaders of the church.

It was reported that some people seeking to get their second doses were encountering challenges, including unavailability of the second doses and in isolated incidents health workers were advising them to go and get the second jab where they got the first one at a time when there are travel restrictions.¹

On 19 August, Zimbabwe received over 500 000 doses from Sinopharm. On 25 August, the Minister of Information announced that COVID-19 vaccination was now open for 14 to 17 year age groups. The Minister also said that schools that were scheduled to reopen on June 28 for the second term but remained closed due to the current lockdown, would reopen on 30 August for examination classes and 6 September for non-examination classes. Inter-city and intra-city transportation for learners will be allowed during the reopening of schools, subject to monitoring by law enforcement agencies. Restaurants were allowed to reopen for fully vaccinated sit-in patrons

upon production of vaccination cards and strict adherence to COVID-19 protocols.

The Minister noted that while there had been a notable decrease in COVID-19 infections and deaths, more efforts were still required to contain the third wave.

The Minister indicated that the government had hitherto acquired 13 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines, mainly from China, out of the 20 million required in order for the country to achieve herd immunity and during the month of September, Zimbabwe is expected to receive another 2.5 million doses of vaccines under direct purchase, and 943,200 doses under the COVAX program. The Minister said that with the current vaccination statistics, the Cabinet was confident that herd immunity would be achieved by December 2021.

1. MINISTRY OF HEALTH SUMMARY UPDATES

As at 26 August 2021, Zimbabwe had 123 986 confirmed cases, including 110 183 recoveries and 4 356 deaths. To date, a

¹ <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2021/08/churches-open-for-the-vaccinated/>

total of 2 453 529 people have been vaccinated against COVID-19.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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

1. ENFORCEMENT OF LOCKDOWN REGULATIONS

In general, stricter enforcement of COVID-19 regulations was reported in many constituencies around the country in the month of July, following the declaration of level 4 of the lockdown towards the end of June and its extension on 13 and 25 July. Cases of non-compliant people being beaten by law enforcement officers were reported, for example at Mbudzi roundabout in Glen View, in Masvingo South where the offender was allegedly badly beaten while handcuffed, and offenders were arrested and fined in many constituencies. In general, transport was reported to be a challenge, with ZUPCo failing to sufficiently cope with demand.

Reports indicated that there was enforcement of the ban on intercity travel as there was no intercity public transport. However, pirate *kombis* and *mushikashika* taxis continued to operate, including plying

intercity routes. Government reminded the nation in a press release on 16 July that intercity travel was banned under level 4 of the lockdown. Law enforcement officers were also reported to be taking bribes from offenders in some cases, for example from shop operators trading outside stipulated hours in Mwenezi East, from bottle stores and shebeen operators who continued to do business in Magunje, Bikita South, Masvingo West, Kariba, and Muzarabani South, Mutoko East, and Glen View North, and at roadblocks in Nyanga South and Gokwe Nembudziya. Despite the constituency being under a strict localized lockdown, there were soccer matches at Chemhere grounds in Kariba. Sporting activities were also reported in Makoni South, Buhera South, and Wedza South, Masvingo Central, among others. In Chiredzi South, efforts by the police to stop soccer tournaments were reportedly unsuccessful.

2. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE HEALTH SECTOR

Local health facilities continued to offer services. In some constituencies, for example Muzarabani South, the major health facilities were only dealing with

serious and emergency cases and visiting hours were abolished. Shortages of medication were reported in a number of constituencies, for example Kuwadzana East, Glen Norah, Nyanga South, Gutu East, Binga North, and Gokwe Sasame.

In Nketa, health workers were conducting outreach visits aimed at vaccination against typhoid and administering vitamin A.

In Mwenezi East, Environmental Health Technicians were moving around educating people on how to support COVID-19 patients as caregivers. In Nkayi South, the National AIDS Council was conducting COVID-19 awareness campaigns and the Member of Parliament (MP) for the Constituency was moving around encouraging people to get vaccinated against COVID-19. The MP for Vungu urged people not to attend funerals after five people believed to have attended a funeral of a person who is suspected to have succumbed to COVID-19 all died. In Bulawayo South, the MP donated a 500 ml sanitizer and 50 masks to each household. In Mtoko North, the MP moved around, encouraging people to get vaccinated. In Norton, Oxfam donated soap, 143 bars per

ward, to widows and the elderly. In Masvingo West, Care International was conducting COVID-19 awareness campaigns through roadblocks.

The Deputy Minister for Health, Dr Mangwiro visited Kariba and he advised that first jabs be administered using the dosages that were reserved for second jabs as more vaccines were coming.

At Braeside clinic, those intending to get the second jab of the Sinovac vaccine could not get it at the clinic but at main hospitals such as Parirenyatwa and Harare hospitals.

In Glen View North, COVID-19 tests were being conducted only once a week as the vaccination centre was overwhelmed and under-resourced. The person responsible for conducting the tests was also covering other places such as Mufakose and Budiriro. The COVID-19 rapid response team was also failing to adequately fumigate affected homes as they were relying on one vehicle.

The demand for vaccination was also not being sufficiently met in a number of Constituencies such as Wedza North; Goromonzi West, Redcliff, Kuwadzana East, Chipinge Central, Kadoma, Shamva

North, Bulawayo Central, Masvingo North, and Chitungwiza North.



Women continued to receive antenatal and postnatal services locally in many constituencies. However, in Glen View North, there was no water at the local poly clinic and expecting mothers were being referred to Budiro poly clinic. In Kuwadzana East, the ceiling of the maternity section collapsed and expecting mothers were being referred to Dzivarasekwa, Kambuzuma, and Warren Park.

3. ACCESSIBILITY OF CLEAN WATER

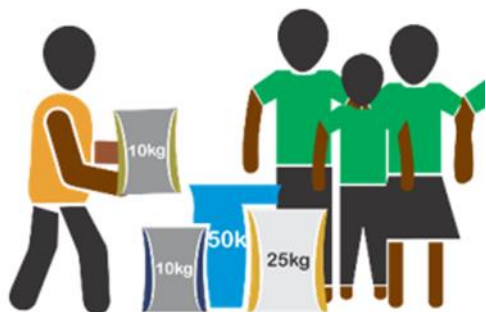
Improved access to water was reported in constituencies that include Chirumhanzu where the Zimbabwe Council of Churches drilled boreholes and in Mberengwa West,

UNICEF installed jojo water tanks at some schools. However, reports of shortages of clean water were received from a number of constituencies, including Umguza, Glen Norah, Mufakose, Kadoma, Gokwe Sasame, Nkayi South, and areas outside growth points in Chiredzi South. In Beitbridge East, there was a crisis after ZINWA discontinued water supply to compel users to pay rates, leaving people to rely on unsafe sources. It took the intervention of the MP for the Constituency for water supply to be resumed.

4. FOOD AID DISTRIBUTION

With the harvest of the 2020/21 season, there was a reduction in food aid distribution interventions. In Chimanimani West, beneficiaries of Social Welfare aid received 50 kgs of maize each and in wards 28, 29, and 30 of Buhera South they received 10 kgs of mealie meal each. Social Welfare Department money transfers of RTGS 1200 in Mutare South and RTGS 4000

in Chivi Central were reported.



The Zimbabwe Council of Churches donated food aid benefitting 300 families in Chirumhanzu South. The Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations distributed food hampers to its members in Chiredzi West with each containing 2 kgs of flour, 2 litres of cooking oil, 1 kg of sugar beans, and 500 g of salt. Oxfam distributed food aid to widows, orphans, and the elderly in Gutu East. GOAL gave beneficiaries grocery vouchers worth USD 12 per person in Mufakose and Marondera Urban. In Kwekwe Central, beneficiaries of World Food Programme aid received USD 70 each. In Kariba the WFP gave groceries to beneficiaries.

5. ELECTIONS IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

The Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs indicated that by-elections remain suspended and would only be held after the country achieves

herd immunity in terms of vaccination against COVID-19.

MDC Alliance MP for Dzivarasekwa, Edwin Mushoriwa, argued that the failure to conduct by-elections in a country with at least 20% of the people not represented was putting the democratic ethos of the country in jeopardy. He added that the stopping of by-elections was questionable as other gatherings were going on, citing church gatherings of some apostolic sects.

On 23 July, ZEC announced a temporary closure of its offices across the country from 26 July to 8 August 2021 as “a mitigatory measure to contain the further spread of the virus among internal and external stakeholders”.

After the reopening of ZEC offices, voter registration was reported to be low across the country with the centralization of registration being cited as a major challenge. In many constituencies, the ZEC Provincial and District offices are far away from the people and in many constituencies there are no ZEC offices.

6. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES DURING LOCKDOWN

ZANU-PF meetings were reported to have been held in Gokwe Nembudziya and

Lupane West constituencies, among others. The party's members were reported to be moving around in a local party structure restructuring exercise in Magunje. In Mberengwa East, there were gatherings of ZANU-PF District Coordination Committee members in wards 6 and 8. ZANU-PF was also reportedly holding meetings in some wards in Marondera East.

In Kadoma Central, ZANU-PF continued with door to door visits noting down details such as names, ID numbers and dates of birth. ZANU-PF door to door campaigns were also reported in Gokwe Central.

Expelled former ZANU-PF member and deputy minister Energy Mutodi was reportedly holding meetings aimed at soliciting support in the National Assembly election for the constituency.

ZANU-PF aspiring candidates conducted door to door campaigns and distributed rice for example around Gokwe Central Constituency and in Dangamvura. In Mberengwa West, an aspiring ZANU-PF candidate identified as Bridget Bhebhe was campaigning, including by supporting

soccer tournaments. The aspiring ZANU-PF candidate for 2023 National Assembly elections, identified as Givemore Mutodi, was moving around the constituency making donations, for example donating cement to Njaravani Primary and Mazungunye Government High Schools. In Mberengwa East Constituency, an aspiring ZANU-PF candidate distributed face masks in Wards 5, 6 and 8. Aspiring ZANU-PF candidates for the National Assembly were also reportedly campaigning, donating food hampers and offering assistance at funerals, for example buying coffins, in Masvingo West. One of the aspiring candidates paid examination fees for some disadvantaged students.

In Mhondoro-Ngezi, the MP funded baking projects.

In Chivi Central, there was a clash between the leadership of the MDC Alliance and the MDC-T with the former accusing the latter for engaging in door to door campaigns visiting MDC Alliance members.

3. HIGHLIGHTS OF ZESN ACTIVITIES

ZESN continued to post content on its social media platforms, especially in relation to encouraging people to register

to vote. ZESN also produced its e-newsletter for the month of July and produced animated videos on voter registration in Shona and Ndebele languages. Voter registration nuggets were also produced for dissemination on social media. Fliers were produced for dissemination in rural parts of the country from where requests for information were received.

ZESN also continued with radio programmes on electoral reforms focusing on youth participation in elections and the importance of enfranchising the imprisoned. A public meeting was held on the impact of election management systems on the integrity of elections. Following its deployment of a team to observe elections in Zambia, ZESN produced a newspaper article² on lessons for Zimbabwe from the elections and held a public meeting on the same topic.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Members of the public are encouraged to remain vigilant and observe stipulated health protocols.

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<https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2021/08/27/zambian-lessons-for-zim-elections-stakeholders/>

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

- iii. Eligible voters are encouraged to register at the available registration centres, while those who are already registered are encouraged to check their registration details using the virtual platforms that ZEC provided, including a website:

<https://bvrinspection.zec.org.zw/>.

- iv. ZEC should further decentralize voter registration from provincial and district centres where registration is currently confined so that as many people as possible amongst those eligible to register can easily do so at centres that are closer to them.

- v. Given the extended suspension of by-elections on account of COVID-19, the government could consider a targeted vaccination programme in constituencies and wards where elected representatives were recalled or died so as to pave way for

the holding of by-elections to ensure adequate representation of the citizenry.