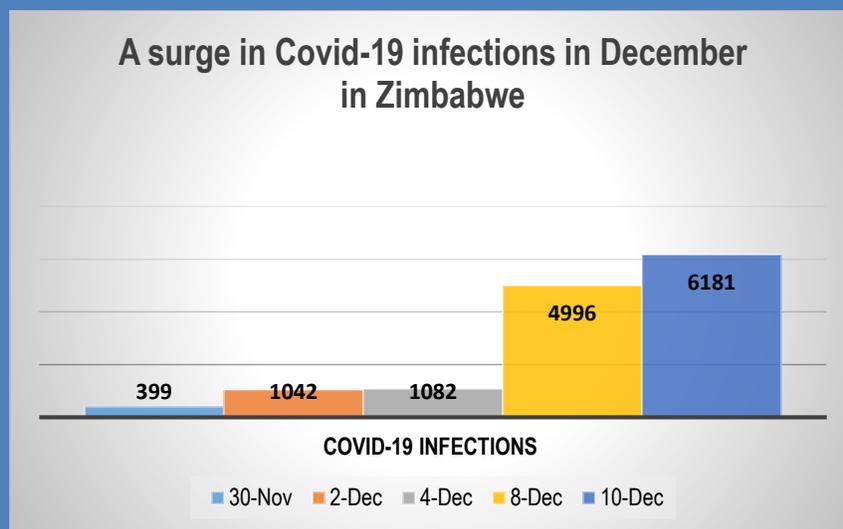


ZIMBABWE DEMOCRACY INSTITUTE (ZDI) ACCESS TO PUBLIC HEALTH MONITORING REPORT

DECEMBER 2021

SPIKING COVID-19 INFECTIONS: A CALL FOR GOVERNMENT TO LEAD BY EXAMPLE IN ADHERING TO PREVENTATIVE MEASURES



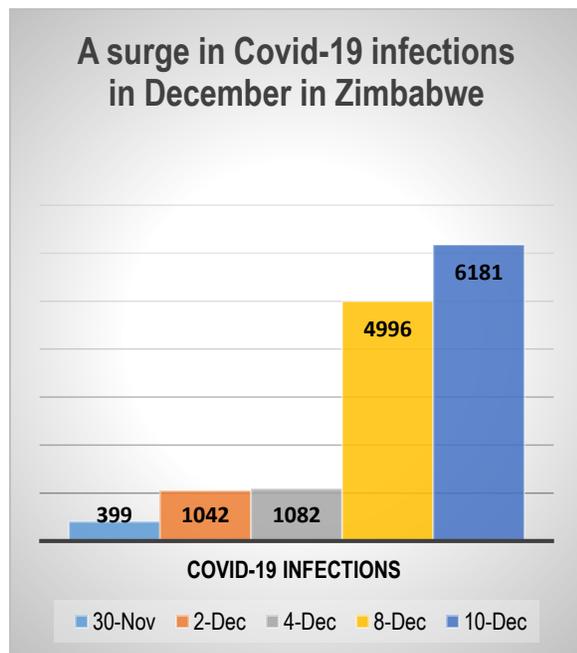
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The Zimbabwe Democracy Institute (ZDI) is a politically independent and not for profit public policy think-tank based in Zimbabwe. Founded and registered as a trust in terms of the laws of Zimbabwe in November 2012, ZDI serves to generate and disseminate 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 consideration was characterised by the emergence of a new Covid-19 variant by the name omicron. The variant has ignited new Covid-19 infections across the globe. In Zimbabwe, the Minister of Health and Child Care Constantino Chiwenga on 2 December 2021 announced Covid-19 omicron variant has been identified in the country.¹ This new variant was reported to the World Health Organisation (WHO) on 24 November 2021.²



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

In response to a spike in new infections driven by the omicron variant, the government of Zimbabwe maintained the country on level 2

lockdown which, among other measures, includes limiting public gatherings to not more than hundred (100) people with observance of public health measures of wearing masks, sanitizing, social distancing and temperature checks. However, these measures appear to be a case of “do as I say and not as I do” as the ruling ZANU-PF party led government continue to violate the guidelines as highlighted below:



On 13 December 2021, President Mnangagwa commissioned Kudzanai Bus terminus in Gweru and the event had more than 100 ZANU-PF supporters (more than the required under level 2 lockdown measures). As shown in this picture, there was no observance of social distance.

The above case of violation of Covid-19 measures by the ruling party ZANU-PF led government was also apparently clear on 11 December 2021 at a memorial service for the late national hero and former ZPCS Commissioner General Paradzayi Zimondi in Uzumba. President Mnangagwa was the guest of honour and more than 100 ZANU-PF party supporters graced the event in clear violation of level 2 lockdown measures.

¹ The Herald edition of 3 December 2021.

² This was reported by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



Sights from Uzumba on 11 December 2021 where President Mnangagwa and ZANU-PF supporters were attending the memorial service for the late Paradzayi Zimondi

In view of the above, the fight against Covid-19 rests upon strict adherence of the pandemic rules and regulations by both the government and citizens. Gatherings by the ZANU-PF party during the period under review threatens the success of fighting Covid-19 and new emerging pandemic variants.

Conclusion

The continued emergence of new variants associated with the Covid-19 pandemic requires that government takes a leading role in religiously observing the laid down preventative measures as espoused in level 2 lockdown. This goes a long way in limiting the spread of the deadly virus of Covid-19.

Recommendations

Government of Zimbabwe

- ✓ Playing a leading role in observing Covid-19 level 2 lockdown measures and desist from the culture of “do as I say and not as I do.”

- ✓ Formulating and implementing reasonable Covid-19 quarantine measures for returning citizens.

Civil Society

- ✓ Improving its advocacy role on the need to ensure access to health care services across rural areas in Zimbabwe.
- ✓ Report on Covid-19 vaccination progress in relation to the set herd immunity target.

Media

- ✓ Continuing to report on the country’s state of public healthcare accessibility and availability in the rural areas.