

COVID-19 REALITIES

NANGO newsletter documenting COVID-19 outbreak in Zimbabwe.

COVID-19 Response Ensuring ‘Leave No One Behind Principle’

Public investment of today can save more lives tomorrow

The world is battling and agonising responding to an unprecedented global health crisis that has to a greater extent devastated the human, economic, social, political and infrastructural systems to alarming levels. Initially, COVID-19 presented a health crisis before it quickly pronounced more the social, economic, humanitarian, human capital, political, labour and governance crisis. Thus, what began as a health crisis has contributed towards the deepening of other facets of life through the spiral effects. Most of these aspects were already ailing before the outbreak of COVID-19.

This pandemic has challenged the mighty and the weak, developed and under developed, those afar and the proximate at levels which were never imagined. It has educated us in a painful way that all humanity is vulnerable to health pandemics. Is the impact of COVID-19 homogenous across the globe and which groups of people are most susceptible to the grave impact of the pandemic? Indeed, we note that all countries and all groups are impacted. When those with robust systems, structures, human capital and technologies who also have vast wealth are significantly impacted, one wonders how the less developed countries will be impacted.

Judging from our current statistics, could it be a case that we have managed to suppress the morbidity and mortality rates of the pandemic or are we slowly but surely going through the statistical path of the progression following the normal distribution? If the latter is the case, when we reach the peak, what will

be the nature and extent of our impact. Is there anything that can be done differently to suppress the impact of COVID-19? There are obviously more questions than answers hovering in the minds of many stakeholders today than ever.

How is the pandemic affecting and infecting the disenfranchised groups in the societies for instance children, persons with disabilities, informal sector players, women, rural communities, homeless people, the elderly, indigenes and key populations among others? Our response strategy and plan to respond to COVID-19 demonstrate how the vulnerable communities are excluded which makes them highly susceptible to contracting and spreading the Coronavirus.

Given the unprecedented nature of COVID-19, several Governments, Zimbabwe included, have adopted

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extraordinary and meritorious measures to contain and limit the impact of the disease. Both the novel Coronavirus and the extraordinary measures have to some extent adverse implications on the vulnerable communities. COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated the vulnerability of the least protected in society. Some of the unintended consequences of the measures adopted to contain COVID-19 include serious deprivation of the social, human and economic rights as well as freedoms for the various demographic structures. What COVID-19 has done is to further compound the challenges for those groups that already were in difficult circumstances.

At global and in particular national level, the historic under investment in the health sector has exposed many nations including Zimbabwe. For years, Civil Society Organisations and the general public have lamented the little investment in the health sector as the country consistently fails to meet the Abuja Declaration benchmarks of spending at least 15% of national revenue on health. For the past decade, average allocation to health is approximately 8% and actual expenditure is 5%.

Government expenditure is key in enhancing the capabilities to respond to threats that can have adverse effects on the general citizenry. COVID-19 has justified in a simple but profound way why current and post COVID-19 fiscal priorities should be calibrated. Today's national budget expenditure determines tomorrow's capabilities to meet the future needs and wants, as such, our public investment of today can save more lives tomorrow. Investment in health is smart and sustainable investment. Yes, Government has an obligation to put mechanisms and systems that position it to adequately save lives so that the right to life is promoted, protected and realised in a progressive manner.

As the country ramp up support towards COVID-19 and develop action plans that are crucial in responding to this pandemic, it is critical to ensure that no one is left behind by taking on board the concerns of the already marginalised and vulnerable groups in the society. COVID-19 has, to a greater extent, the potential to derail efforts to achieve Agenda 2063, Sustainable Development Goals and Vision 2030. Thus, to remain or to be precise on track, the Government should employ extraordinary measures during and post COVID-19 period. This global crisis has further justified that domestic resources are the major source of funds that will define the level of achievement of the global, regional and national agendas alluded to above. Therefore, fiscal transparency, enhanced public participation in budgeting and budget oversight are inevitable if the country is to emerge victorious from this calamity.

It is therefore imperative to prioritise measures that guarantee basic economic, human, labour, political and social rights seeing as during the crisis period these rights can potentially be violated since the impact of the crisis on these rights is real. Our public health response should be done in a holistic and inclusive manner to ensure equity in the prioritisation of diverse demographic groups. It is clear that national and local budgets should now more than ever play a pivotal role in investing in our health sector to guarantee universal health coverage.

Who will innovate during COVID-19?

Eveline Teme (76), from Ganye Village Gokwe South in the Midlands Province is looking after her 7 grandchildren left to her by the children she's lost. They have all died. She sits with her grandchildren in the morning, in the afternoon shade provided by the single tree outside her home, and she sits with them again in the evening.

When asked about COVID-19 and social distancing, she responds:

"I don't know anything about COVID-19 except that the disease is killing whites [in America]."

Already she has had a visitor from the urban city since Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa announced COVID-19 lockdown, that went into effect on 30 March, to restrict the movement of people to avoid the spread of the Coronavirus.

Sub-Saharan Africa's first case was on 28 February in Nigeria. In just a few short weeks, the public health crisis has affected millions of lives in the region, and certainly in Zimbabwe.

When asked if she knew about COVID-19, she explained:

"No health officers have visited," she says adding, "None have come by to give me information about the disease." She goes on to explain that she has been living her daily life since she does not know the requirements and restrictions of the Coronavirus. What she says she knows is that government has not been giving them anything despite knowing that there was a drought this year. She said she survives on donations from people and through part-time jobs here and there doing work on people's farms—this is her everyday life.

In neighbouring South Africa, drones have been helping spread the word to rural areas in the north.

In Greater Tzaneen Municipality in northern Limpopo Province, rural folks can hear their mayor's voice from the sky informing them about the Coronavirus.

At times, it is during the greatest strife, that a country can innovate and seek new ways to communicate, educate, and ensure access to information to vulnerable groups.

Not everyone will buy a newspaper. Not everyone will have a radio. But everyone can receive information while staying at home during the lockdown. Drones do not have to be a huge national expense. It just needs innovators from the many universities already existing in the country.

Still, Evelyn doubts she will change her life anytime soon. "I enjoy sitting here with my grandchildren around me," she explains.

But who will innovate to keep people like Evelyn in the loop?

Columnist, Pearl Matibe has geographic expertise on U.S. foreign policy, think tank impact, strategy and public policy issues. You may follow her on Twitter: @PearlMatibe



The rich vulnerable society

The Covid-19 and black granite nexus

The story of black granite mining is not only painful to the present generation but tragic to the future generations who will one day wake up on ground zero filled with visible scars of exploitation, corruption and environmental damages despite environmental, social and economic rights clearly outlined in the constitution. There is no better word of describing how desperate communities are in trying to derive meaningful benefits from black granite extraction in Mutoko. The society switched into silent mode, a dead silence of fear, fear of the unknown enemy surveying to do collateral damage, the COVID-19 pandemic is the greatest threat to the entire human race.

Martin Luther King Junior once said our life begins to perish the moment we keep silent on things that matter. Despite the loud noise about black granite trumpeted over the past decades, not even a single granite miner has listened nor has the community been bold enough to say enough is enough.

The advent of COVID-19 in Zimbabwe has been an eye opener to many of my fellow young activists and youths in Mutoko. The way we are clinically ill-equipped to combat this deadly corona knocking on our doors is a classic example of the paradox of plenty theory. In one of the meetings on natural resources a participant asserted that the people of Mutoko are actually cursed to harbour such a valuable natural resource, he compared the people to the biblical Lazarus who was far much better because at least he would survive on small pieces of bread falling from the kings table. It's worse for Mutoko because there aren't any pieces to eat.

It is so disheartening to learn that we are one of the poorest districts in Zimbabwe and in this time of need we have one of the poorly equipped hospitals without an ounce of hope to ever have a single second hand ventilator to save lives. To make matters worse, the deadly pits left open by miners create a perfect

breeding ground for mosquitoes that have led to unprecedented increase in Malaria cases in Mutoko creating an additional portion to COVID-19 misery.

As if that is not enough, there is an unfinished clinic at Gurure in Nyamuganhu ward that has taken more than 14 years to complete, just a clinic with only two small blocks! The fake generosity displayed by granite miners in Mutoko has created a smoky dummy aimed at keeping us waiting and waiting while we remain a laughing stock of ruthless honey badgers. The mysteries surrounding the average price of each granite block raises more questions than answers, even their documents have gone missing in the 'upper top' offices'. After over three decades of extraction, no-one knows the exact price of granite but what we only know is the \$60 million worth Copenhagen library built with the best quality granite mined at Makochera. Copenhagen library is regarded as the most expensive of all libraries in the world. Perhaps unknown to them, the building material was extracted from a community infested with various social and economic vulnerabilities manifesting from injustice and corruption. If there was promotion and protection of social and economic rights in Mutoko, our local hospital would be one of the well-resourced and best hospitals in Zimbabwe, well equipped to fight the pandemic whilst the society enjoys the best health service delivery.

Despite the hidden value of granite, massive destruction of mountains, damaged roads and thousands of trucks roaring in heavy gears every week clearly tells me that someone is getting rich day by day whilst we bite the dust and wallow in abject poverty. The only solution is us, our only breakthrough lies in the hands of our head of state and glory will only come if devolution channels all proceeds to our Rural District Council. The author, Emmanuel Manyati, is the Director for Better Life Foundation and a member of Activista Zimbabwe.



Shamwari Yemwanasikana launches menstrual care bank

In the wake of the national lockdown implemented by the government to curb the spread of the Coronavirus that has affected the world, Shamwari Yemwanasikana has launched a menstrual care bank campaign aimed at raising funds to buy pads to assist girls in different parts of the country.

A pad bank was initially launched in October last year when Shamwari Yemwanasikana launched its Ladder to Leadership in commemoration of International Day of the Girl Child. Through the bank, many girls in Shamwari Yemwanasikana's district of operations have been assisted.

However, period poverty is still being faced by many girls in the country. With the announcement of the national lockdown by government, prices of basic goods shot including that of sanitary pads leaving many women and girls in both rural and urban areas failing to afford these essentials.

This challenge led Shamwari Yemwanasikana to

start an online campaign seeking donations in the form of pads, soap and sanitisers for girls to use during and after the lockdown. The target is to raise 5000 pads so as to assist many girls especially those in remote and rural areas.

The call to donate is extended to corporates, churches, social groups and individuals. Shamwari Yemwanasikana is grateful to some corporates such as Emergency Taxis in South Africa and various individuals based in the diaspora that have extended a helping hand.

Through such support, pads have been donated to girls in remote areas such as Chilonga, Malipati, Dhavata, Gonarezhou, Chikombedzi, Chihota, Chitungwiza and Murehwa.

Shamwari Yemwanasikana is still appealing to more individuals and institutions to donate in order to reach out to more girls even after the lockdown is lifted.



Support a worthy cause by donating towards betterment of girls and women .

SHAMWARI YEMWANASIKANA



Menstrual poverty is a reality which is affecting girls countrywide. During this lockdown period, we have created a Menstrual Care Bank that will provide sanitary wear, soaps and sanitizers to our girls. Help us raise 5000 pads and other essentials they can use during and after this lockdown period

To donate, you can contact us on the following social media sites:

 **Shamwari Yemwanasikana**

 **@Shamwariyemwana**

You can also contact
Rumbidzai Fusire
on **+263783189422 (Ecocash)**

Banking Details
Stanbic Bank - Minerva Branch
9140000999872

CBZ Bank- Kwame Nkrumah Branch
01123995360012



PAD BANK

DONATE

WWW.SYSZIM.ORG.ZW

Fishing resumes in Kariba

The Kariba Kapenta Fishing Industries have resumed operations after putting in place measures to prevent spread of COVID-19. The measures include:



Inspection of companies



Limit of only two people per rig



Maintenance of social distancing



Restricting buyers from visiting kapenta premises



Designated transport will be used to deliver kapenta to markets



Barring sale of kapenta except by registered packaging companies



Education on importance of washing hands and using sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol



Breach of any of these conditions will lead to suspension or cancellation of permits.

Community Champions Set to Transform the Fight Against COVID-19

Concerned with irksome red tape within some statutory bodies, some residents in Kariba have taken the initiative to help their communities fight the coronavirus and keep it at bay.

In Mahombekombe's Chikwawa section, Mr Mind Linje and a Ms Matiya have taken the lead in championing community causes by availing facilities to dispense hand sanitizers to fellow residents who would ordinarily not afford to set up their own such life-saving facilities.

The Councillor for Ward 6, under which Chikwawa section falls, Mr Rhodrect Mugwanhira,

commended their efforts. Mr Mugwanhira, spurred on by the move, urged other community players to do what they can in the valiant fight against COVID-19.

Not long after this initiative, there was an outcry from tenants of the Municipality of Kariba who use communal toilets. They needed these toilets disinfected as a matter of urgency, considering the high volume of human traffic. One tenant told the public forum that their landlord had been advised to address this challenge but to no avail. Councillor Mugwanhira collaborated this claim of inaction, conceding that "ndakazivisa kanzuru kubudikidza

nedeartment rehealth and housing, asi kusvika parinhasi ndichakamirira kuuya kwavo sekureva kwavo".

Fearing for an outbreak of other diseases that could then add more potency to the Coronavirus, Mugwanhira quickly mobilized chemicals using his own resources and formed committees which are disinfecting the public toilets both inside and outside. He aims at doing this three times a week, resources permitting. Hopefully he will get municipal support to accelerate this programme.

Another citizen and emerging farmer Kudakwashe Mandishona, has offered his farm tractor at no cost to help with boom spraying public markets which attract multitudes of customers to Kariba. Mr Mandishona was responding to concern raised regarding overcrowding and lack of social distancing at public places such as markets. This poses the danger of spreading COVID-19 fast.

Like Mugwanhira before him, Mandishona did not wait for statutory bodies to act. His question to fellow panellists on a discursive social media group was "what are we doing as well as a community to help the cause?" Sadly, his offer of a free tractor has not been taken up, with him forlornly advising days later that noone was willing to take up the offer as he cannot afford the necessary disinfectants but can avail his tractor.

This demonstration of a positive attitude to fight the Coronavirus by community champions within the Kariba community is encouraging. They are implementing the change they desire to see in their community. It is hoped that more people will be forthcoming with similar and other initiatives to bring relief to the community.

The author, Laiton Kandawire, is a correspondent with Patsaka-Nyaminyami Community Radio.



The youth in action

Staying at home without the correct information of the novel Coronavirus is not sufficient enough to curb it. The Manica Youth Assembly (MAYA) has been raising awareness on COVID-19 in Ward 16 Chikanga. The residents of Ward 16 are willing to benefit from this initiative and have been coming out of their houses wearing masks and protective clothing to listen to the message. The residents are also observing the recommended social distancing and avoid gathering. In a community campaign held by MAYA recently, the Program Officer Mr Tendai Nyamadzi encouraged the Chikanga residents to embrace the 4S initiative which stands for #StayHome, #StaySafe, #Sanitize and practice #Social distancing and also challenged like-minded organisations to take a stand and play a pivotal role in the fight against COVID-19.

Heart to God, Service to man

It is in times of crisis when humanity should be preserved and faith with deeds should be observed from all humankind. To fulfil this statement, a local organization called Ruvheneko Rwenyenyedzi Trust (RRT) has been doing tremendous work in responding to the global pandemic of the COVID-19 which has affected many countries including Zimbabwe.

RRT has been working in Mutare, Rusape and Nyanga Districts to combat the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the inception of the national lockdown the trust has been providing food hampers, sanitizers and spiritual support to vulnerable families in the three districts mentioned above. So far, they have reached over 10 families whom they have supported with groceries and other basic commodities necessary during this lockdown.

The livelihoods campaign is mainly focused on vulnerable women and child-headed families.

The trust has also extended the COVID-19 social safety net project to prisons. RRT Founder and Director, Andby Makururu has visited and donated at the Mutare Remand and Mutare Farm Prisons accompanied by the NANGO Eastern Region Coordinator and Diamond FM crew. As a way to mitigate the pandemic and control its spread in the prisons, RRT has been donating face masks, hand sanitizers and gloves, sanitary pads, toiletries, groceries and other materials to the two local prisons.

Speaking at the donations hand-over, the RRT leader said that “As an organization we shall keep on praying for the divine protection of the inmates and we intend to support the ex-inmates with ideas and start-up capital so that we create a crime-free Zimbabwe”.

Recently, RRT also bailed out 3 women and 1 man with the intention of reducing overcrowding at the prison and as a measure of enhancing social distancing among inmates, as well as reintegrating families with their loved ones during this era of COVID-19.

The Trust is also conducting gender based violence tracking and mapping, psycho-social support to identified victims, providing referral pathways that lead to legal recourse for victims of gender related violence and counselling to victims online and through phone calls (0776889239) and home visits as follow ups where there is a need. The trust has also developed a COVID-19 social intervention model and is canvassing for support to start the programme which might directly benefit over

400 000 women and 300 000 children and indirectly benefit 2 million people in the apostolic community which is their key target since they are trying by all means to empower women while engaging government and development partners to assist us with funding.

RRT is a non-profit organisation under Johane the 5th of Africa Church which has numerous branches in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, South Africa, Denmark and the United Kingdom. The organisation was founded and launched in September 2019, by Madzibaba Andby popularly known in the Apostolic Sect as the ‘Commander’ for the purposes of creating an environment consciously tailored for the protection and development of children, women and families in the Apostolic churches and the community at large. The trust recently joined the National Association of NGOs in the Eastern Region where its headquarters are found.



An inmate expresses appreciation after receiving toiletries and food from Ruvheneko Rwenyenyedzi Trust during the lockdown.

Guest Feature

Our candles are burning on both ends

The initial twenty-one days of lockdown appeared to be a logical step to stop the spread of COVID-19. For young people, women, and girls the effects of the lockdown have made survival both precarious and unbearable. Precarious because so much fear grips the people and livelihoods have been disrupted. The streets from which we eke a living are out-of-bounds and our customers are in their homes. As such, we cannot vend our wares or food and we have no immediate feasible alternatives.

With little or no savings, the consequent commodity price hikes which were triggered by the lockdown have condemned us to a bleak future. For those whose businesses rely on the internet to advertise, communicate with suppliers and customers, the soaring cost of internet bundles means we cannot thrive.

Given the fact that most of us young people are breadwinners, we are at our wits end over how to put food on the table during the lockdown. Moreover, in the patriarchal society that we live in, the responsibility to shoulder care work in the home only becomes heavier during crises like this one. Lesser food is available because of artificial shortages and the dry spell caused by closure of borders.

The threat of violence targeted at women and girls, in all its forms, is higher and indeed a number of incidents have been reported in the media over the past month. Water shortages in most parts of the country only serve to expose women and girls to sexual violence as they venture out to find water for domestic use.

The futility of the recommended social distancing measures is made evident by the cramped nature of our dwellings, the high population densities of our neighborhoods and the queues we must endure to get the few necessities we can buy from local shops and tuck-shops.

Beyond Statutory Instruments and press statements, it would be a welcome relief if government provided financial relief and policy packages (for example tax cuts and restructuring of loans) to address the plight of especially Small and Medium Enterprises. If there is anything we should learn from the current crisis, let it be the urgency of providing gender responsive public services.

The burden of unpaid care work does not impact women and girls alone; it has a negative effect on overall economic productivity of the population because women lose time on responsibilities that a functional social service system would address.

Zimbabwe has an opportunity to turn her fortunes around by investing in her young people through the provision of public services. The future is young and urgent attention must be paid to these issues in order for them not to recur.

Future Karichi is a young entrepreneur, fashion designer, gender equality advocate, human rights activist and a member of the youth movement Activista Zimbabwe.

act:Vista



Doing things differently



CSOs in Mutare are conducting awareness raising, promoting urgent reporting of domestic abuse and donating food and toiletries vulnerable community members and inmates.



Black Granite mined in Mutoko built part of the \$82 million Royal Danish Library in Copenhagen, Denmark .



Need help during the lockdown? Here are suggestions of who you can contact

COVID-19 related information: Toll Free 2019

To know your human rights: Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights
24 hour National Hotline +263 772 257 247
Matabeleland/ Midlands +263 773 855 635
Manicaland/ Masvingo +263 773 855 718

To report gender based violence: 24 hour toll free lines
Musasa Project - 08080074
Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association - 08080131
Adult Rape Clinic - 0775 672 770
Shamwari Yemwanasikana Hotline 0772 607 384

To get legal advice: 24 hour toll free legal service helplines
Legal Resources Foundation - 08080402
Women and Law in Southern Africa - 0777 366 952
Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association - 08080131
Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights - 0772 257 247

For psycho social support: 24 hour toll free line for children in distress and COVID-19
information
Childline Zimbabwe - 116

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