



Civil Society Organisations' COVID-19 Response Monitoring Findings

1. Introduction and Background

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) need to complement government efforts, play the watchdog and monitoring roles in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and reduce its negative socio-economic impact. CSOs in their different thematic sectors are playing major roles of disseminating information, mobilizing resources and providing technical support to mention a few. The National Association of Non Governmental Organisations (NANGO) is monitoring the response mechanisms of government, development partners, civil society, business and church to the pandemic. Results obtained through monitoring are expected to inform stakeholders on the impact of their initiatives as well as to assist in mapping most vulnerable communities, locations and level of vulnerability.

NANGO and its partners, Zimbabwe Community Health Intervention Research, Zimbabwe Aids Network, Sam Moyo African Institute of Agrarian Studies and Southern African Parliamentary Support Trust, are leading in monitoring the implementation of the National Indicative Program under the 11th European Development Fund agreement between government and the European Union. Under this particular program European Union is supporting the country in three thematic clusters i.e. governance and institution building, health and agriculture based economic development. This paper therefore seeks to establish how the pandemic has affected the implementation of the program and how the support has made it possible for the country to respond comprehensively to the pandemic.

2. Methodology

NANGO has engaged its members across the country to monitor and report on the implementation of measures to control the COVID-19 pandemic. It is noted that different stakeholders such as government, civil society, business and church have come together to curb the spread of the pandemic. The outline below summarizes some of the issues that have been identified as needing urgent attention. In this edition the focus is on access to information, urgent humanitarian needs and how the pandemic has affected marginalized groups in particular women, people with disabilities, children and the elderly. The assessment also looks at how service provision has been affected by the pandemic.

Recognising that several stakeholders are actively working together to control the pandemic, recommendations have been put forward to guide those interested in designing programs and interventions to curb the spread of the pandemic.

Strengthening the voice of NGOs.

For further engagement during this period please don't hesitate to get in touch with NANGO Executive Director Leonard Mandishara on +263774078026, NANGO Board Chairperson, Ronika Mumbire, on +263712724911 or NANGO Board Secretary, Dr Joachem Hatizivi Nyamande, on +263784530915.

3. Issues, observations and recommendations

Observations

Access to information on COVID-19

- Information on COVID-19 is available and accessible electronically and, therefore, is reaching a large number of people.
- Most of the information on COVID-19 is written in English leaving a gap for those who prefer local languages.
- There is poor dissemination of information on COVID-19 in rural areas.
- Most of the information shared so far focuses on prevention of the spread of COVID-19 particularly staying at home and washing of hands. There is scanty information about testing, treatment and recovery.
- Most service providers are sending SMSs in English whereas this service should target people in rural and peri-urban areas who do not have access to social media which is awash with information on COVID-19.
- In areas such as Chiredzi, Mutare, Chipinge and Marondera, Ruwa and Domboshava public address systems are being used to raise awareness on COVID-19.

Humanitarian needs

- The most urgent need for most people is food.
- Most families depend on informal markets for livelihoods and given that markets are closed there is no income to sustain many homes.
- Food distribution has been observed in several districts which include Manicaland, Mashonaland East and Masvingo although there are reports of lack of transparency in the government's food assistance algorithm.
- Vulnerable community members like the elderly, home-based caregivers, people with disabilities and their assistants need personal protective equipment as they are at higher risk of contracting the pandemic.

Women

- Women and girls are facing challenges in accessing sanitary wear whose prices increased during the lockdown.
- It is alleged that an increasing number of women report incidences of gender based violence during the lockdown.
- The burden of unpaid care work has increased for women during the lockdown.

Recommendations

- There should be robust information dissemination in rural areas, this should include simplifying and translating information to local languages.
- Awareness raising should focus on prevention, symptoms, treatment, testing, where to report suspected cases and ultimately influence behaviour change.
- Messaging should be relevant and target specific groups such as women, youth, children, people with disabilities and the elderly.
- SMSs should target rural and peri-urban areas and disseminate relevant information in local languages.
- Public address systems should be used to disseminate accurate information especially in areas where non-compliance is high.

- The government should provide social safety nets to vulnerable community members who have been adversely affected by the COVID-19.
- Distribution of personal protective equipment should also be expanded to vulnerable community members like people with disabilities, those providing home based care for the sick and the elderly

- Sanitary ware should be accessible and affordable.
- Community based protection systems should be accessible so that cases of abuse and violence can be reported urgently.
- The burden of unpaid care work that has been worsened by the pandemic should be recognised, reduced and responsibilities should be redistributed

Observations

Children

- Most recreational facilities are hotspots of the spread of COVID-19 and have been rendered unsafe yet some children have been left to play in these facilities and other squalid makeshift playgrounds.
- Children under the age of five years could suffer malnutrition due to increased poverty levels. Children need nourishing food, books, safe and clean forms of entertainment.
- Access to health services like immunization and nutrition supplements has been hampered by travel restrictions.

People with underlying health conditions

- People with underlying health conditions are more susceptible to infection and therefore need masks, gloves and delivery of food and medication in order to protect themselves and others.
- People on chemotherapy, those taking anti-retrovirals and diabetics need access to health centers in order to adhere to their treatment. There are reports that some people's health has deteriorated after defaulting due to limited movement.
- Pharmacies are opening for limited time and this limits patients' to access medicines

Elderly community members

- Elderly community members need food, gloves and masks. and medication since they are at high risk of contract COVID-19. The need support in the form of as such they need support through food deliveries, protective gear in the event they go out

People with disabilities

- There is limited access to disability friendly, accurate and contextualised information on COVID-19.
- Not all people with disabilities can observe social distancing as they need assistance.
- Not all people with disabilities can wash their hands or access sources of water.

Recommendations

- The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should avail accessible and affordable online learning platforms.
- There should be increased educative and informative radio programmes targeting children and creating a conducive learning environment with the home.
- There should be accessible and effective community based protection systems so that children can report abuse urgently.

- There should be regular supply of medication as well as subsidies for essential medicines needed by people with chronic illnesses.
- Outreaches could be done to bring health services especially drug supply closer to the people.

- The government should prioritise convenient provision of health services and food.

- There is need for robust research on how the pandemic affects people with disabilities.
- There should be provision of personal protective equipment for people with disabilities and their assistants.
- People with disabilities should be provided with effective sanitisers to disinfect their assistive devices and frequently used objects.

Observations

Human rights abuses

- Freedom of movement has been curtailed even for people who want to buy basic commodities or medication.
- There are recorded incidences where law enforcement agencies have refused for people with valid reasons to travel

Access to food and other basic commodities

- Subsidized mealie-meal is not being distributed equitably hence the constant reports of shortages in retail shops.
- Tuck-shops in residential areas are unjustifiably inflating prices of basic goods.
- World Vision and the Department of Social Welfare have been reported to be distributing food to vulnerable communities in Mudzi, Mwenezi and other rural districts. The number of food insecure households has increased since the national lockdown.

Water, sanitation and hygiene

- In some areas there has been refuse collection and uninterrupted provision of water by city councils, however, there are areas like Senga-Nehosho, Mutapa and Mambo in Gweru urban, Mabvuku and Chitungwiza in Harare that have not had access to council tap water.
- Some residential areas that do not have access to tap water have received water delivered using bowsers.
- Residents fetching water from boreholes especially in urban and peri-urban areas have not been observing social distancing and this exposes them to Coronavirus.

Access to health services

- Free movement has been granted to those accessing health services during the lockdown, however, unavailability of public transport has led to delays for some emergency cases.
- Some health care service providers have been reported to refuse to attend to patients in fear of contracting the pandemic.
- In some health care centers service provision has deteriorated as staff are demoralised.

Recommendations

- Law enforcement agencies should also respect the rule of law, and be brought to book when they violate human rights or their code of conduct.

- There is need to expand the scope of food distribution in rural and urban areas by incorporating those families which have become vulnerable due to the pandemic.
- The government should desist from imposing price controls as this may be one of the factors contributing to food shortages and sprouting of parallel markets.

- There is need for consistent provision of clean, safe and potable water as well as refuse collection.
- There is need to distribute soap to under privileged households.
- For improved water, sanitation and hygiene citizens should be provided with safe, clean and potable water.

- Personal protective equipment is necessary and should be provided urgently to both health workers and patients on a daily basis.
- All health workers should be trained on COVID-19 prevention in order to enhance their confidence when providing services.
- Government should expedite the process of renovating isolation and treatment centres such as Thorngrove Infectious Diseases in Bulawayo and Five Mile Hospital in Hwange

Observations

Access to education

- Accordingly, the second academic term should be starting during the first week of May but the government has not introduced measures to ensure access to quality and structured education for primary and secondary pupils.
- Most children do not have access to the internet for them to take online classes or webinars.
- There is a radio show every Tuesday that caters for Grade 4 to 6 pupils from 10am on Star FM.

Income generation

- The cost of living has gone up significantly owing to price hikes during the lockdown.
- It is reported that cases of theft have increased due to lack of income and closure of the informal sector operations.
- Measures that have been put in place to contain the spread of the virus have greatly affected the informal sector which is mainly characterised by citizens who survive on hand to mouth.

Recommendations

- There should be more educative and informative radio programmes and e-learning facilities for children to catch up on their studies from home.

- There should be depoliticisation of humanitarian aid distribution so that deserving people benefit from government supported programmes and ultimately crime rates will reduce.
- Farmers especially those producing perishable goods should be authorised to sell their produce in open, safe and secure spaces in order to minimize their losses and ensure that their families are not thrown into poverty.
- Decentralisation of vegetable markets should be prioritized in urban areas.

COVID-19

STAY AT HOME, STAY SAFE & PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCE

Let's stay at home, practice social distancing so as to ensure safety of our healthcare workers and flatten the curve. The government is urged to urgently provide healthcare workers with personal protective equipment and decentralise testing for Coronavirus.

4. Conclusion

NANGO appreciates effort by government, development partners, church and civil society in responding to the pandemic. However, more still needs to be done in combating the spread of the pandemic as the number of new infections continues to increase. There is need for a more coordinated approach where all relevant stakeholders such as civil society, business, labour sector are involved in the development and implementation of the COVID-19 response plan. Citizens should adhere to the measures that have been put in place to curb the spread of Coronavirus. Social distancing and respiratory hygiene are still highly encouraged.

5. NANGO COVID-19 Monitoring and Evaluation Committee Members

Special mention goes to the following organisations that are actively monitoring the government's response to COVID-19 pandemic and have contributed valuable information:

NANGO Eastern Region

Community Crime Monitoring Unity
Freedom of Disabled Persons Zimbabwe
Manicaland Youth Assembly
Mhakwe Heritage Foundation
Transparency International Zimbabwe
Women Centred Development Trust
Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe
Youth Development Initiative Trust
Zimbabwe Association for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of Offender
Zimbabwe Political Victims foundation Trust

NANGO Southern Region

Boys to Men Forum Foundation
Building Zimbabwe Trust
Community Working Group On Health
Divine Foundation Trust
Green Institute Trust
Masvingo Residents and Rate Payers Alliance
Real Agenda for Youth Transformation
Sesithule Vamanani Caring Association
Tasvika Housing Cooperative
Youth Empowerment Service Organisation

NANGO Northern Region

Advocates 4 Earth
Africa Foundation for Development and Tolerance
Citizen Participation Trust
Kunzwana Women's Association
Mhuriimwe Aids Challenging Team
Zimbabwe Community Health Intervention and Research

NANGO Midlands Region

Friend in Need
Jointed Hands Welfare Organisation
Women in Communities
Young Men's Christian Association
Young Women's Christian Association
Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe
Zimbabwe Women's Bureau

NANGO Western Region

Christian Legal Society
Community Youth Development Trust
Emthonjeni Women's Forum
Orphans and Vulnerable Children Oasis and Verification Center
Voice of the Voiceless Multiple Therapy
Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (Bulawayo and Hwange Chapters)
Zimbabwe Association for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of Offender

Strengthening the voice of NGOs.

For further engagement during this period please don't hesitate to get in touch with NANGO Executive Director Leonard Mandishara on +263774078026, NANGO Board Chairperson, Ronika Mumbire, on +263712724911 or NANGO Board Secretary ,Dr Joachem Hatizivi Nyamande, on +263784530915.