

The Christian Voice

Monday, 1 June, 2020

**QUARANTINE CENTRES
STRUGGLING TO TEST
RETURNEES**

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**CHAOS CAUSES
TRAUMA AT
ISOLATION CENTRES**

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**Covid-19
WATCH**

178
cases

29
recoveries

4
deaths



Beitbridge to be more child friendly

Beitbridge border town has one of the most populated townships in the country. Being the busiest border town in the country poses serious risks to children that live in Beitbridge.

Covid-19 lockdown has exacerbated the situation as most of the children are at home and are forced to play outside because of the small houses which are overcrowded. However, this has resulted potential danger of children being run over by vehicles, most of them being the huge haulage trucks which are either coming from South Africa or going into that country.

The Zimbabwe Christian Alliance, Local

Advocacy Champions (LACs) in Beitbridge recently lobbied their councillor on the installation of speed humps in their area. Women who are part of the LACS said there was need for the local authorities to construct speed humps along the stretch from the car park to Mbedzi shops in Ward 6.

“Trucks that are coming from South Africa or going across into South Africa pose great danger to our children. The local authorities should construct humps then it will help control those speeding cars,” she said.

Councillor Agnes Tore said the town council will help in identifying the positioning of the humps. He further said that all potential

dangerous spots for the children will have humps constructed.”

“I will help in the mobilization of manpower and a request will be made to the council for them to provide signs posts. Two signposts are already available from the council so we will have to look for more signposts,” he said.

Another issue is danger posed to the children by spewing sewage and contaminated water.

The LACs also engaged Ward 3 Councillor Taka Mahachi on the issues of rehabilitating boreholes in Ward 3 and 6. There are currently six boreholes in the area with only two being fully functional.

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Beitbridge to be more child friendly

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“We appreciate the interest that the church through the Local Advocacy Teams is showing in community developmental issues. Currently the council is going through a financial strain and it will be difficult to address all the issues. As we speak right now, some of the things have been put on hold as we focus on the Covid-19 pandemic,” said Cllr Mahachi.

In Ward 6, residents are forced to buy water

as there is no running water at their home as the available boreholes are not able to service everyone in that area. It is reported that water is sold at a cost of R100 for 1000 litres whilst a 20liter bucket costs R2.

A site visit was done at one of the boreholes at Welton Durawall which uses solar to pump water. It was noted that the borehole had three batteries short and residents have to wait until the panels are charged for them to pump water during the day.

Quarantine Centres struggling to test returnees

Quarantine Centres throughout the country are facing challenges of food shortages and ability to test the returnees in order not to detain them for longer periods than necessary.

Returnees in most quarantine centres have gone for more than 21 days without being tested for Covid-19 virus. The challenge for the quarantine centres has been the non availability of the testing kits. This has been compounded by severe shortage of food and blankets which has driven some of the returnees to escape from the quarantine centres.

Commenting on this issue, to the Mashonaland West provincial Covid-19 taskforce recent meeting, Minister Hon Mary Mliswa pointed out that shortage of testing kits has made some of the returnees to go for more than 21 days without testing and thus creating anxieties and stress.

“The quarantine centres are receiving more returnees on a daily basis increasing on the number that we already have. Our borders have a lot of pressure with more people coming back home. The test kits are not enough which then makes them stay at the quarantine centre more than the required days,” she said.

She said the long wait at the quarantine centres is one of the reasons that pushes people to run away from the centres before getting their results or being tested. “Returnees are now taking matters into their own hands, leaving quarantine centres to their homes without being tested or receiving results. Breaching of Covid-19 regulations is a serious offence. Be on the alert and inform the police if there are people you know who have run away from quarantine so that they are retested,” she

said.

According to media reports, in Matabeleland North most quarantine centres are faced with critical food shortages and blankets due to the increase of returnees. Lupane State University, Mosi Oa Tunya High School and Mabhikwa High School have recorded over 50 percent occupancy resulting in the straining of providing food and blankets.

The Provincial Social welfare officer Mnon Chipenzi said Mabhikwa High School was the most affected as they hardly receive bread for breakfast. He said they have resorted to giving the returnees rice or fat cooks for breakfast.

“We are in need of more breakfast and dinner provisions for all centres especially at Mabhikwa High School. We have had to end up giving them cookies or rice in the morning and we hope such challenges will be addressed soon,” he said.

Mr Chipenzi also mentioned that the delay in conducting and releasing Covid-19 test results has prompted the returnees to be impatient and unstable. He said it’s causing trauma and stress for the returnees who are already anxious.

A Bulawayo resident who preferred anonymity who had gone to visit his son who is on quarantine at United College of Education (UCE) said his son has been on quarantine for more than 21 days and has not been tested yet.

“I went to visit my son and he was complaining that they have not been tested yet and they were not getting enough food so I had to go and give him food there. I am very worried that this virus is likely to spread more at the quarantine centres because people are staying for long without testing,” he said.

He said if this continued then people are not Covid-19 positive will end up testing positive due to the mingling they are doing without knowing their status.



Chaos causes trauma at isolation centres

The government, World Health Organisation and numerous other stakeholders are hailing Covid-19 isolation centres as a vital tool to contain the coronavirus pandemic, but it is not all rosy inside the camps, as testimony by one of the inmates reveals.

Last week, the cumulative tally for positive Covid-19 cases made an unprecedented jump from 56 to 160.

Government said almost all the cases were recorded among quarantined returnees from South Africa, Mozambique and Botswana.

Agnes Parwada (25) from Zaka in Masvingo province is among those cases, having recently decided to return home from Botswana where she had gone to look for employment. She realised that jobs were hard to get because of the lockdown in that country.

She has been part of a 400-plus group of returnees housed at the Masvingo Teachers' College and last Tuesday was announced as one of the 12 inmates that had tested positive, a development that has left her confused and emotionally drained.

Parwada, who The Standard tracked down on Friday and yesterday said she was not feeling sick, but was facing trauma due to the manner in which her case was handled, the stigma and rejection she and others that were said to have tested positive are subjected to, and the

uncertainty that is already haunting her.

"I am in pain. Not because I am sick, but because I feel rejected. We have been handled painfully from the day we tested positive," Parwada said.

"It has been a traumatic experience and the faint-hearted would consider suicide as the only option."

Parwada got the news that she tested positive for coronavirus by mere word of mouth, and she as well as the others were never shown their results.

But, prior to the shocking announcement of the results, she and those that had been tested freely mixed and mingled with the scores that were never tested, hardly observing social distancing or wearing masks.

"When we arrived on May 8, tests were conducted on us," she said.

"They took our blood for testing, but we never got the results.

"Others were not tested and we [the tested and untested] continued to live as a community, sharing items like plates, cups and spoons."

A week after, she and another selected group were re-tested.

On May 26, officials from the Health ministry came to the college in the company of two doctors and ordered everyone back into their hostels.

That was when Parwada and 11 others — seven women and five men — were informed they had

tested positive. Again, they were not shown the results, Parwada testified.

"We were just told we were positive, but not shown the results," she said, wondering which of the two tests had produced the positive results.

"This was the turning point.

"The doctors and the other health officials were rude to us when we wanted to ask questions, only insisting that we should simply know that we are positive.

"I vividly remember one of the doctors saying to us: 'You have coronavirus, you are dangerous to others.

"That statement was like a needle pricking our hearts. I remember very well that one of the men wanted to commit suicide.

"After the announcement of the results, no one in the hostels wanted to get close to us.

"We did not go to the canteen that day because we were being shunned. We started feeling rejected and lonely," said Parwada.

The following day — Wednesday — was worse for Parwada and she ended up feeling like a criminal, she said.

"A team of police officers accompanied by soldiers came and took eight of us comprising five adults and three kids to Rujeko Clinic [in Masvingo]," she said.

The children belonged to one of the seven women, who had been pronounced positive.

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Chaos causes trauma at isolation centres

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“We were made to spend two hours outside the clinic in the cold weather.

“Just after 11pm, we were ushered into a room with seven beds and that has been our new home since then,” said Parwada.

They were not given any food on that day.

Under unclear circumstances, she said, all the men and two women who had been pronounced positive together with her were left behind at the college, where they remained.

“I don’t know why they were left behind.

“On Thursday, we only got our first meal at 1pm comprising cold tea and cold sadza.

“We never got anything [on Wednesday] and we went to bed on empty stomachs. We had another meal at 1pm the following day,” she said.

Some residents who stay close to the clinic pitied them and “gave us four drinks and four packets of maputi” on Thursday.

On Friday, Parwada said, health officials brought them bread and drinks at lunch time.

“One of the doctors, [whose name is] Makurira, found the children crying due to hunger and pitied us.

“Later, he bought us a 2kg packet of chicken, cabbage and salt,” she said.

But they had no utensils, so residents provided them with pots and plates.

Word of their plight must have spread among the locals and beyond quickly because, on Friday, a relative of one of them came and took her and the children from the clinic without the

authorities noticing.

They came as Parwada and her colleagues were preparing supper.

The authorities are stigmatising them, she said.

“Imagine, today [Saturday] one woman came and wanted to get in to assist.

“We heard her being told by a female police officer: ‘Unozadzwa corona [They will infect you with coronavirus]. She was turned away,” she added.

“We have two pregnant women among us.

“One is three months’ pregnant and the other one is eight months’ pregnant and has a three-year-old baby. Imagine them also going for a whole day without food,” she said.

“None of us here is sick or showing any signs of being sick. I only had a headache caused by the things they pushed into my nose while taking swabs,” Parwada said.

They are doubting the results that they were finally given because of the anomalies on the forms.

“In fact, I doubt if any of us here is positive.

“The result slips they later showed us had information different from the ones we supplied them with.

“In one of the cases, the only correct information on the slip is that she is female. “The rest is wrong.

“On mine, the name is fine, but the date and year of birth are wrong. I am sure these are not our results,” she said.

Some of the people whom she is sharing a ward

with at Rujeko Clinic returned from South Africa where they had gone to buy goods for resale in Masvingo, but were affected by that country’s lockdown so they had no choice, but to return and face quarantine.

“Some of them have left their children under the care of relatives with little food.

“We have been in isolation for 20 days now and we were told we would be quarantined for 21 more days.

“The others will not be able to see their children and don’t even know how they are surviving,” she said.

Agnes Mahomva, the chief national Covid-19 response coordinator, said the Health ministry was responsible for the management of the isolation centres while the Social Welfare ministry took care of the returnees’ needs.

Mahomva said she would need more details on the Masvingo case, referring questions to the acting permanent secretary in the Health ministry, Gibson Mhlanga, who was not picking calls.

Simon Masanga, the permanent secretary in the ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, expressed disbelief over Parwada’s story.

“I cannot comment, but I doubt if anything like that can ever happen,” Masanga said.

He referred questions to the social welfare provincial head for Masvingo Stansilus Sanyangore, who refused to comment saying he needed clearance first.

Source: The Standard Zimbabwe

Cities and Towns Update

BEITBRIDGE: In Ward 6, residents are forced to buy water as there is no running water at their home as the available boreholes are not able to service everyone in that area. It is reported that water is sold at a cost of R100 for 1000 litres whilst a 20liter bucket costs R2.

A site visit was done at one of the boreholes at Welton Durawall which uses solar to pump water. It was noted that the borehole had three batteries short and residents have to wait until the panels are charged for them to pump water during the day.

There are very long queues for trucks at the border posts stretching up to Bulawayo-Masvingo turn off. The queues are increasing on a daily basis as more trucks are coming into the country.

KWEKWE: Redcliff Medical centre is still under renovations in preparation of becoming an isolation centre. So far, the local authorities have drilled a borehole at the centre. One of the inmates that had escaped at Mkoba Teachers college was arrested at Rutendo and has been taken to Gweru by the police.

TSHOLOTSHO: It is business as usual. Prices of basic commodities are still going up, a kg of beef was being sold at ZWL\$150 or R40.

HURUNGWE: Farmers are continuing with work at their field and irrigation scheme farmers in Chiwore and Kemureza are ferrying their produce using private kombis and they operate at night. People are adhering to the wearing of masks at public spaces and there are some children who are attending extra lessons without face masks.