

The

Christian Voice

ON A WEEKEND

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Covid-19 WATCH

6837 cases

5345 recoveries

206 deaths

Medicine shortage hits Beitbridge Hospital

Beitbridge residents have expressed concern over the unavailability of medicines at the local district hospital.

The residents expressed their concern at a meeting organised by the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance held at the Reformed Church of Zimbabwe (RCZ) in the border town.

The social accountability meeting gave residents an opportunity to use the scorecard tools to conduct social audits of health service delivery facilities.

The meeting was attended by the Deputy Mayor of Beitbridge councillor Munyaradzi Chitsunge; representatives from the Ministry of Health and Child Care, church leaders, youths and women from all wards attended.

Those who attended the indaba discussed the availability of medicine; staff attitude towards patients at Beitbridge District Hospital; campaigns and dissemination of information on health issues and response to emergencies as well as environmental cleanliness.

“There is scarce medical supply in Beitbridge given the current situation impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Residents noted that the health delivery system should be improved in Beitbridge as it is the gateway to Africa. The town is punctuated by huge vernacular and human traffic,” said Pastor Busani Moyo, ZCA Beitbridge Hub leader and Local Advocacy Coordinator.

Pastor Moyo said residents submitted that staff attitude towards patients at the hospital has to improve, adding that there is need to foster a culture of giving care not as a duty but with respect to human life and dignity.



“Campaigns and dissemination of information is good but could be better if the Ministry together with council were to partner with the church since religion is the biggest constituency in the city and country as a whole. Awareness raising and information dissemination will be done efficiently and more effectively in such a partnership,” he added.

- Beitbridge Hospital Scorecard:
- 1: Availability of medicine the community gave them 3 out of 10.
 - 2: Staff attitude towards patients 4 out of 10.
 - 3: Campaigns and dissemination of information on health issues 6 out of 10.
 - 4: Response to emergencies 5 out of 10.
 - 5: Environmental cleanliness 8 out of 10.

Masvingo Church leaders capacitated on Human Rights, budgeting processes

Church leaders in Masvingo underwent a two day training on constitutional literacy and budget awareness.

The training which was facilitated by Zimbabwe Christian Alliance is a foundational base for the church leaders to be able to engage their local duty bearers on service delivery for the realisation of their human rights enshrined in Chapter 4 of the Zimbabwean Constitution.

Speaking after the training, Pastors' Fraternal Chairperson Reverend Kuraone Mutimwii said the training has been an eye opener for him.

"As communities we often just complain about errant water supply or refuse collection but never really think through which rights are being violated in the process and what our role is as citizens to ensure that service delivery is provided by duty bearers," said Mutimwii

The church leaders also had an opportunity to engage with law practitioners from the Legal Resource Foundation (LRF) and further got an appreciation of how they are able to receive technical assistance as and where necessary.

Rebean Dirikwe the ZCA Masvingo coordinator indicated that many individuals rights are being violated in the community. In the few instances where they resort to taking up their cases, people are choosing to self represent in court due to the high costs involved. The free assistance from LRF is definitely a welcome initiative that people can utilise.

As part of the training, church leaders were equipped with budget awareness knowledge. The major focus of the training was to help participants to have a better understanding of the local authority budgetary process so that they may make meaningful contributions during

consultations. Also the knowledge would assist them to be able to hold their leaders to account.

One of the female church leaders who attended the training, Mrs Entrance Takaidza said the training has helped the residents of Masvingo to be aware of their Constitutional rights pertaining to service provision obligations of the local authority.

"The training on budget awareness came at an opportune time in that currently Masvingo has ongoing budget consultative meetings. As church leaders we attended the meeting in Eastvale ward 10. We got to know what council plans are, the priority areas and how funds have been utilized. The community has managed to contribute as to how we feel the money must be utilized for the development of our community so that our rights are realised.

Nkayi Rural District Council expands



EDITORIAL STAFF

EDITOR: Rev. Useni Sibanda

PROOFREADER: Runyararo Chilenje

SUB-EDITOR: Nqobizitha Donga

WRITER: Rumbidzai Mbewe

CORRESPONDENTS: Lynnete Dube

: Godswill Muzarabani

: Shadreck Ncube

CONTACT DETAILS

Phone: 0292 231213

E-mail: zcaprog@gmail.com

Facebook: Zimbabwe Christian Alliance

Twitter: @zcalliance1

Website: www.zimbabwechristianalliance.org.zw

The Nkayi RDC which closely works with the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance on a broad spectrum of service delivery issues is growing and expanding its staff capacities.

Speaking to the Christian Voice, the Council's treasurer Mr. Lawrence Mudimba said that the released posts are part of the local Authority affirmative thrust to increase efficiency.

"The advertised posts are largely meant to ease the mantra of doing business in Nkayi in light of the demand of services. The posts advertised here we hope will ease some of the backlogs at the Council. As you are aware we have gone for quite some time without a substantive Engineer which has stalled some of the work that we needed to do in the District," said Mudimba.

Meanwhile in another development, the rural Council has come up with an interactive and informative website that is meant to relay developments in the District. For a rural based precinct, the move is highly commendable as it enables information to be relayed to the residents and potential tourists and investors.

'The district is divided into two constituencies, Nkayi North and Nkayi South.

The organisation is run by democratically elected councillors and professional council staff. Nkayi District has an advantageous road network with its offices located 158km to the north of Bulawayo, 96km to the west of Kwekwe and about 300km south-west of Harare. The Fighting Road links the district to the provincial capital Lupane, which is situated adjacent to Bulawayo - Victoria Falls highway, is some of the information that is posted on the RDC website.

The website further states some of the tourism activities that are abundant in the area.

'Nkayi RDC has a mesmerizing Mbazhe Bird Sanctuary; an ecotourism site with a wide range of bird species and aquatic life. The leafy savannah forests during summer make a breath-taking scenery for those who appreciate nature. The Gwampa Valley forest broods diversified wildlife which seasonally migrates to and from Hwange National Park.'

A further exploration of the website shows a plethora of programs that the Council has undertaken. So far they state to have done more than 1952 projects to date with about 569 issues, service delivery issues fixed.

Teachers criticise govt over 'premature' reopening of schools

Teachers associations have criticised the latest decision by the government to reopen schools, noting that a majority of learners are not ready to sit for examinations.

Schools in Zimbabwe were forced to close in March in a bid to prevent the spread of Coronavirus (Covid-19).

After announcing that schools would reopen in July, the government deferred the resumption of classes after a spike in Covid-19 cases.

Although some learners have been conducting online lessons, some have struggled, owing to exorbitant data prices, lack of compatible gadgets and unavailability of connectivity especially in rural areas.

The government on Monday, announced that schools will open for 14 September 2020 for Cambridge Examinations classes and 28 September 2020 for Zimsec Examination classes.

The Cabinet further announced that the Zimsec examinations will start on 1 December, 2020.

Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ) president, Takavafira Zhou, told CITE in an interview that the government did not consult them in their latest decision.

Zhou noted there are several subjects which require learners to undertake practical lessons for them to be able to sit their final examinations but the government did not consider this.

"This latest announcement by the government is political expediency, which lacks professional advice. There are practical projects which learners missed for the better part of the year and without these it would be impossible for some examinations to be undertaken. We would have preferred if the government had engaged teachers' associations for professional advice," he said.

"It also lacks clarity. There is nothing on what will happen to non-examination classes, there is no closing date for the term. There is likely to be resistance from teachers. As a teachers' union we would have recommended that we push the academic year of 2020 into 2021 while we prepare learners. At least if the year could be divided into two terms, we use the first part for preparation



Takavafira Zhou

then the second part for examinations. Such issues need professional and strategic planning."

Zhou noted that there are specific conditions which the government should meet and these include the health and safety of both teachers and learners.

"There has to be mandatory testing of all school staff and learners who will be returning to schools. There is also a need to review salaries of teachers to match October 2018 salaries where they were earning US\$520-US\$550 and this money has to be granted before schools reopen," Zhou said.

Amalgamated Rural Teachers Association Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ) spokesperson Nation Mudzitiwa reiterated that both health safety and review of the remuneration of teachers should be assured before schools open. Mudzitiwa said as a union they are not against the opening of schools but are against their premature opening.

"The government's position to open schools on the 14th of September for Cambridge examination classes and 28th of September for Zimsec classes before teachers' grievances are

fully addressed is inconsiderate," he said.

"As ARTUZ we are engaging stakeholders such as parents through the School Development Association/Committees to give us their view on this inconsiderate decision taken by the government. We are also engaging the health sector at provincial and district levels to assess the state and preparedness of hospitals in case of the outburst of Covid-19 in schools."

Mudzitiwa said recommendations by the health sector will determine whether we can encourage our members to report for work.

"Safety of learners and teachers from Covid-19 must be fully guaranteed in schools. The government must first test all learners and teachers, provide PPEs, fumigate all learning facilities that were used as quarantine centres," he said.

Mudzitiwa lamented that the cost of living is beyond the reach of every teacher as basic commodities are priced in United States Dollars at a time when teachers are paid in the local currency.

Source — Cite

Gweru water woes to continue

Perennial water woes in Gweru are set to continue as major dams supplying the city are running dry. This follows widespread pleas by residents for the city authorities to address the water situation in the city that has seen most suburbs only getting water once a week.

Gweru is one of the cities in Zimbabwe facing perennial poor service delivery. The city has been long hit by water crisis, inconsistent refuse collection, corrupt activities and grumbling residents and workers. Some suburbs in Gweru have gone for more than 6 months with irregular water supply that only comes once a week.

ZCA hub in Gweru engaged the Councillors and the Deputy Mayor who admitted that the water challenges are likely to continue.

According to the Deputy Mayor the approved dams capable of providing water to the city have greatly depleted.

“It is sad that Amapongobwe is at 35 percent, and Gwenhoru almost 15 percent as the previous rain season failed to fill the dams to a full capacity. The situation is also likely to continue in the foreseeable future as the population of the city continues to balloon,” said the Deputy Mayor.

Some of the issues that were deliberated on include the pumps at Gwenoro Dam that were not fully functioning hence affecting water services; irregular refuse collection; street lighting in Gweru specific to the traffic lights that have not been working for the past three years



Gweru community engagement meeting

and computerized billing system.

The participants urged the local authority to expedite the computerisation drive of the billing system.

“The city should adapt to modern trends of computerised services as this might improve service delivery. Some of the potential revenue is lost as the Council billing system is still analogue,” lamented Juliet Mucharozwa

The ZCA social accountability workshop also

afforded residents the chance to evaluate the work that the Council is doing in service delivery. On water provision the city was given 4 points out of 10. For sewer reticulation the city was given 3 out of 10 points.

On servicing of stands the Council was given 5 out of 10 points. However on public relations the Council got 7 out of 10 points as they have an active social media presence and systematic supply of information to the ratepayers.

Devolution transforms Beitbridge

Beitbridge district in Matabeleland South province has recorded remarkable transformation after the local authority decided to allocate part of the \$5,6 million Devolution funds for the provision of more schools and clinics.

In terms of schools, Beitbridge Rural District Council chief executive, Mr Peter Moyo said they had managed to establish a new primary school at Novhe, some 150km west of the town and repaired several others that were extensively damaged by climate change-related disasters.

“We have completed the construction of two classroom blocks and a teachers’ house and an ablution block at Novhe Primary School (Ward 10), which is located some 18km north-west of Zezani Growth point and 12km north of Dendele,” said Mr Moyo.

“The project has been on cards for a long

time and we decided to use devolution funds to fill that gap. In essence, we are glad that with enough devolution funds from the Government, we will be able to improve on issues of service delivery as a local authority.”

Mr Moyo said Novhe Primary School would enrol learners from Early Childhood Development (ECD) up to Grade Three once the necessary registration processes are complete.

He said the school would start as a satellite for either Vhuttulula or Dendele depending on which of the two schools will provide more pupils.

Mr Moyo said they carried out repairs at Shashe primary and secondary schools in Beitbridge West (Ward 8) whose rooftops were blown off by strong winds last rainy season.

On clinics, Mr Moyo said they had managed to construct Tshabili and Dumba clinics in Beitbridge East Constituency and also rehabilitated Shashe Clinic in Beitbridge West.

He said they were looking forward to the opening Tshabili Clinic in Ward 2 soon following its inspection by the Ministry of Health and Child Care.

“The clinic will relieve pressure on communities where people were travelling for more than 20 km to access the nearest facilities. We have also put in piped water at Tshabili Primary school and installed another four storage tanks to supply communities with potable water.”

Mr Moyo said Dumba clinic in Ward 15 will open its doors to the public before the end of this year. He said they were working on constructing more clinics and schools in areas where there are gaps.

Mr Moyo said their focus was on minimising the distances that people walk to access basic facilities in line with globally acceptable standards. At the moment there are 17 clinics, 16 secondary and 70 primary schools in Beitbridge district. **Source—Chronicle**

Cities and Towns Updates

PLUMTREE: The town has been largely quiet. There is no electricity, as there are reports of a fault in Bulawayo between Old Gwanda Road and criterion. As a result of the electrical fault there has been no water in the town since all water generators rely on electricity. Fuel was delivered at Sakunda filling station on Sunday afternoon.

CHEGUTU: On Sunday, there was no water throughout the town. Electricity supply is rampant. Petrol is only available at Puma garage, whilst diesel is only available at Total and Puma garages.

TSHOLOTSHO: Ministry of Health and Child Care (MOHCC) has been holding a series of workshops targeting chiefs, village heads, councillors and other key stakeholders in the District on the coronavirus. Covid-19 cases continue to rise daily in the community. The last workshop is set for Wednesday with the local youths.

BULAWAYO: It is now business as usual in the city with most shops back in business. There is a significant decrease in roadblocks across the city. The public transport system continues to be overwhelmed by the volumes of people. People continue to queue for long periods to get transport into town or back home.

BEITBRIDGE: There was a heavy police and support unit presence in the town. They drove throughout the town, with loud sirens, amid rumours about demonstrations which were to be carried out on 31 August. There were no reports of harassment or human rights violations on civilians. The convoy included water cannon, police trucks, among other equipment. Churches continue to convene without any disturbances. Businesses are opening and closing within the stipulated times. Informal business trading also is going on well in the border town.

CHINHOYI: Salvation Army Gadzema is running a soup kitchen and feeding vulnerable children from the community. There was an unusual heavy presence of police details in town. Only USD Fuel is available at Exor and budget filling stations. Water is running consistently though in some areas water is only available for a few hours in the early hours of the morning. Zupco still has its issues with capacity, social distancing and is quite overwhelmed.

Lockdown lowers national blood coffers

The national blood coffers are running low due to the Covid-19 imposed lockdown and curfew restrictions.

According to the National Blood Service Zimbabwe (NBSZ), the primary blood donors are school going children, who contribute about 70% of the total blood reserves. However, schools have been closed for the last five months and this has caused the blood stocks to dwindle quite significantly, without any significant inflows.

Addressing a virtual workshop, NBSZ spokesperson Esther Massundah bemoaned the development, noting that the festive season is close and often has a high demand for blood due to road accidents.

“School children form about 70% of our total blood donors. However, since the lockdown began and the subsequent closure of schools, it has meant that we cannot access the pupils to collect blood,” she said.

The national lockdown has inhibited movements of any prospective blood donors to collection points. This has further exacerbated the problem. Nevertheless, the NBSZ had since devised ways to tackle the challenge by having mobile teams going into communities to urge more people to donate blood.

“We are now making efforts to go into communities so that we meet with donors and collect blood. This is meant to bridge the gap where people are unable to move around due to the Covid-19 regulations. One of our strategies has been to raise awareness to people on the importance of donating blood.

We are hoping that this approach will encourage more people

to assist,” she added.

Unoziba Tenga, a student at Great Zimbabwe University welcomed the move by the NBSZ to go into the communities as the lockdown requires one to have an exemption letter to move around.

“I am keen on making a difference in my community by donating blood, but I do not want to be caught on the wrong side of the law. The move to come to us in our communities will make it so much easier for me and my friends to donate blood,” she said.

According to an assessment conducted by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education on the preparedness to reopen schools under the current Covid-19 context, the Government is set to announce this week when schools will open. This could have a major bearing on the national blood bank reserves.

Speaking to a local church leader on the matter, Pastor Fortune Mathe from Church of Christ noted that we all have a responsibility to save lives and could need blood. It is therefore important to actively contribute towards the cause, and church leaders can use the pulpit to raise awareness.

“The church must play a role in saving lives. As Church leaders we can use the pulpit to encourage people to donate blood. No-one is immune, and at some point, it could be you or a close family member in need of blood,” he said.

