

The
Christian Voice
ON A WEEKEND

Sunday, 12 July, 2020

COVID-19 ▶ **985** | **328** | **18**
WATCH cases recoveries deaths

Fuel shortage cripples Public transport



Stranded commuters in Bulawayo

Acute fuel shortage has left commuters in Bulawayo stranded for the past two days as Zupco buses and kombis failed to get the precious liquid.

Long winding queues of commuters trying to get into town were witnessed at most of the pick up points in high density. Some had to walk to work.

One of the commuters identified as Nkosana Jamela said the country was in a bad state and the government needed to act on this as citizens were suffering.

The fuel shortage is also crippling essential services like the ambulances and prison trucks.

"Zimbabwe is in a sorry state. Just now I saw

ambulances and prison trucks queuing for diesel at Engen Renkin. Commuters are stranded because the buses are also queuing for the same diesel which is not available," he said.

Nyarai Mazivananga who works at a local supermarket in the city said he had been waiting for transport since 7am but with no luck. He said this was a very risky situation as people must not queue for long hours whilst it is very cold.

"I start work at 9am and it's almost 10am. This kind of weather does not want people to stand for long hours in open spaces. We could be spreading the virus to each other," he said.

A motorist who was queuing for fuel also mentioned that they are now sleeping at fuel queues. He said garages selling in forex now also

have queues because they are the only option.

"If you are not sleeping at a fuel queue to access the one sold in local currency your next best option is to buy at forex garages or at black market. It is not all of us who will afford the forex fuel because we are paid in local currency. We are faced with a serious situation, I wonder if the government does not see that its people are suffering," he said.

The crippling fuel shortage comes at a time when the country is recording a spike in Covid-19 infections.

At most of the bus ranks, commuters are usually crowded, and social distancing is not observed.



EDITORIAL STAFF



EDITOR:
Rev. Useni Sibanda



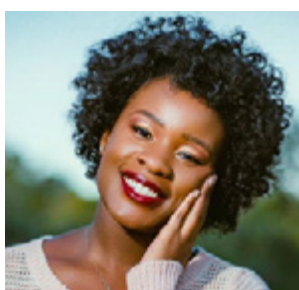
PROOFREADER:
Runyararo Chilenje



SUB-EDITOR:
Nqobizitha Donga



WRITER:
Rumbidzai Mbewe



CORRESPONDENT:
Lynnete Dube



CORRESPONDENT:
Godswill Muzarabani



CORRESPONDENT:
Shadreck Ncube

CONTACT DETAILS

Phone: 0292 231213

E-mail: zcaprog@gmail.com

Facebook: Zimbabwe Christian Alliance

Twitter: @zcalliance1

Website: www.zimbabwechristianalliance.org.zw

Spike in Covid-19 cases raises concerns

The sudden spike in Covid-19 cases in Zimbabwe has raised concerns on the causes and calls for urgent action

The causes of the rise in infections met with mixed feelings amongst citizens with a cross section putting the blame on public negligence while others accused the Government of being ill prepared to deal with the pandemic.

As of this weekend the Ministry of Health reports that 56 new cases have been recorded.

The current official figures from the Ministry of Health state that 982 people have tested positive with 320 recoveries and 18 deaths.

A snap survey carried out by the Christian Voice yielded mixed feelings with some residents blaming the Government for inability to equip health facilities with some accusing the citizens for complacency on the rise of cases.

"It is business as usual in Maphisa, people are becoming reluctant to put on masks. Most shops do sanitize but no testing of temperature is being done. As much as we do not have adequate health facilities to fight this pandemic I strongly advocate that people observe all the World Health Organisation (WHO) health guidelines", wrote ZCA Matopo representative Pastor Mlindeli Mpofu.

"Residents are just ignoring the face masks. This complacency by residents is now a breeding ground for the virus", said Pastor Sinqobile Mkhweli from Redcliffe.

"In Tsholotsho people religiously put on their masks as Police officers move around looking for people who do not wear masks. This is a welcome move as it reduces the number of Covid-19 cases. For us the fear is that *Omalayitsha* from South Africa that might import the virus into the area, however this measure by the Police is welcome as it averts that", said Pastor Zikhali from Tsholotsho.

In Chegutu, Pastor Brian Magwenzi said there was heavy police and army presence along the highway. He said some of the people that he mingled with alleged that there could be a possible total lockdown in the country

beginning tomorrow.

"The usual pick up point for passengers to Harare has been cleared all you can see is green army uniform. Most of the people whom I interacted with felt that there is likely to be total lockdown soon and people are desperate to reach their destinations," he said.

Most people fear that once the statistics cross the 1000 positive cases the virus will become unstoppable.

"We're just praying that we don't reach more than 1000 cases because if we get to those levels, it will be a total disaster in the country because our health system is at its lowest and we will be destroyed", tweeted one Happi Zengeni.

"Recent strikes by doctors and nurses at major referral hospitals like Mpilo and Parirenyatwa is a testament that the government has erred in the fight against the pandemic. Misplaced priorities like erecting the Mbuya Nehanda statue is proof that the government is clueless in this fight", tweeted Ropafadzo.

Meanwhile according to a local state publication, the Government will soon review Covid-19 lock down measures in the wake of the recent spike of infections.

Speaking at the Ordinary Session of Politburo meeting at the party headquarters in Harare today, President Mnangagwa said the recent rapid spike of infections requires another review of the Covid-19 lockdown measures.

"Although there is a visible spike in the number of positive cases, largely due to returnees, we shall continue to strengthen our preventive measures as well as our testing and contact tracing capacity.

"I urge the party to continue to be in the forefront of raising the awareness levels in our communities of the dangers of this pandemic. The recent rapid spike of infections requires that we make another review of the lockdown of the Covid-19 lockdown measures" said President Mnangagwa.

He said the strategies adopted to curb the spread of the pandemic have to date yielded positive results.

Quarantine centres shortage hits Byo



Tertiary institutions like United College of Education will no longer be used as quarantine centres as they prepare for new semesters

Bulawayo has been hit by a shortage of quarantine centres as tertiary institutions are being withdrawn as facilities to prepare for the opening of colleges.

As tertiary institutions begin preparations for the beginning of new semesters returnees at United College of Education (UCE) and Bulawayo Polytechnic, Covid-19 task teams are searching for new quarantine centres.

In an interview with The Christian Voice, Pastor Kevin Mpofu, tasked by churches to work with Covid-19 task teams, said Bulawayo was facing a big challenge on quarantine centres as they no longer have room to accommodate new and old returnees.

“UCE and Bulawayo Polytechnic are some of the quarantine centres that were being used but since schools are opening, the returnees have to be moved to facilitate the disinfection of the two tertiary institutions,” he said.

Pastor Mpofu said they were currently looking at various possible facilities as a matter of urgency.

All the facilities will need to be equipped with water and solution facilities repaired.

Zimbabwe Christian Alliance in partnership with church leaders in various provinces and with Turning Matabeleland Green (for Bulawayo) is working on assisting selected quarantine and isolation centres to be equipped. Also churches have offered their facilities as quarantine and isolation centres.

Recently, some of the returnees who came in the Bulawayo had to sleep in the bus as accommodation issues were still being sorted out by authorities.

“Some of the returnees both women and men slept in the bus at Isinga and on the next day, the driver left them at the veranda. What happened was very dangerous, what if they decided to run away without being tested. It could have been a huge disaster,” he said.

Meanwhile according to media reports, the police are also worried about the conditions at the quarantine centres in the city. Superintendent Batsirai Mungwa who is responsible for Police operations in Matabeleland South province said there was need to set up proper security systems at quarantine centres as returnees take advantage of the gaps in those centres and escape.

“There is a huge challenge when it comes to quarantine centres in the province as some don’t have proper security systems such as locks on the doors and perimeter fences. For example, Pangani Training Centre in Filabusi does not have a perimeter fence which means that those under quarantine can have contact with the community,” he said.

So far it is reported that more than 225 people countrywide have escaped from the quarantine centres with only 29 having been arrested.

Alarm as more returnees escape from isolation centres

Fourteen returnees from South Africa who tested positive from Covid-19 escaped Beitbridge quarantine and isolation centres.

The police have arrested four of the returnees and put them back into quarantine and they are still pursuing the rest of the escapees as they risk infecting other people in the community. The escapees are said to have sneaked out of the National Social Security Authority Hotel after they received their results.

According to the Chairperson of the Beitbridge Covid-19 Task Force, Mrs Sikhangaziwe Mafu-Moyo, those who escaped from the quarantine centre are Mercy Ndou (32) of Chaswingo, Beitbridge, Tumelo Nyathi (24), from Chief Staudze area in Beitbridge, Patience Mudau (26) of Chaswingo, Beitbridge, Innocent Sibanda (20) of Chipise, Beitbridge, Venson Siwela (33) of Magwegwe in Bulawayo, Brenda Magayisa (31) of Dulivhadzimu, Beitbridge and David Mubvumbi (23) of Gokwe.

The other escapees were identified as Tapiwa Moyo (29) of Mberengwa, Godfrey Moyo (26) of Beitbridge Town, Wiseman Ngwenya (31) of Beitbridge Town, Morgen Moyo (23) of Madaulo, Beitbridge, Alex Mbedzi (35) of Chipise, Beitbridge, Thatho Mazibeli (20) of Masera, Beitbridge and Calvin Bete (25) of Chivhu.

In Gwanda, eight people escaped from Eskhoveeni quarantine centre on Friday. The eight have not tested positive but are contacts of people who tested positive who were supposed to extend their stay at the quarantine centres. These include Melusi Moyo (25), Amante Ncube (21), Montle Ncube (3), Bridget Dungwa (22), Chipo Chakamanga (32), Moud Madondo (29) and Hazel Marimpo (23).

According to the National police spokesman Assistant Commissioner Paul Nyathi so far 225 people have escaped from quarantine centres across the country and 29 have been arrested.

Government to avail masks for school children

In preparation for the opening of schools, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education has availed more than \$350 million relief funds towards acquiring approximately four million face masks and other materials to be used in preventing the spread of Covid-19.

As part of the government's plan to open schools in staggered stages, Grade seven, Form four and Form six students will be resuming classes on 28 July 2020.

In an interview with the Sunday News, the deputy Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Edgar Moyo said the government will purchase masks from schools who are already producing, and these will be distributed to the individual school.

"Some circles have claimed that we are imploring schools to produce their own face masks which is far from the truth. All we are saying is that these schools produce the face masks then we purchase from them, so the schools can get money to fund their individual projects," said the Deputy Minister.

The Minister said the ministry was in the process of training teachers on Covid-19 awareness according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines around the country. Minister Moyo said officials on the ground were also procuring sanitisers, disinfectants and face masks.

However, Teachers Unions in the country have insisted on the government to put more measures as the Covid-19 cases in the country are still increasing. The Chief Executive Officer of Zimbabwe Teachers Association (ZIMTA), Dr Sifiso Ndlovu noted their worry on the provision of a safe operational environment for both pupils and teachers.

"At the moment we feel there has been the skipping of key checkpoints, which is rather dangerous because we will be just opening schools just for the sake of opening. What we now need the ministry to do is assure the nation by suggesting and telling us the measures that are now in place which are better off than what is occurring with the June Zimsec examinations," said Dr Ndlovu.

According to the guidelines set up by the

Government for schools to open, authorities must ensure the availability of face masks, sanitisers, infrared thermometers, liquid soaps, disinfectants, gloves, hand washing stations within the school premises, hand washing buckets for every class, gowns for school health coordinators, holding bays for unwell persons and information education communication materials.

They should also appoint trained school health coordinators before re-opening, conduct Covid-19 awareness programmes for everyone in the school about prevention, schedule regular cleaning of the school environment daily, including toilets, with water and soap.

Toilets for both staff and learners should be cleaned and disinfected three times a day and every classroom should have a bin for waste disposal and such waste should be disposed of by burning or burying daily while classes should not accommodate more than 35 pupils.

Source: Sunday News

Cities and Towns Updates

BULAWAYO: Many people started going to Church today for the first time since the lockdown. However, most of the churches are not able to fulfil the regulations mainly the temperature testing using the infra-red thermometers.

Churches will not be able to buy the thermometers as their churches are still small and accessing foreign currency is a challenge. Some churches using school premises conducted their services at the educational institutions despite the government ban.

CHEGUTU: There is heavy presence of army personnel along the highway and the pick up points for passengers to Harare. Most of the people waiting for transport felt that it's likely that another shut down will be effected.

HURUNGWE: Mainstream churches are observing the regulations, with temperature checks, mask wearing and hand sanitizing. Chakanyuka foundation was giving 500g porridge per child under the age of 15 years in some churches today in ward 10 and 11. Prices have been skyrocketing every day. No confirmed case of Covid-19 in the area.

HWANGE: Some churches have not resumed services, especially those who are using schools and others are still struggling to meet the requirements. Zuva has fuel sold at ZWL\$76 a litre and they were giving 10 litres per car. Most parents in Hwange

district feel schools are not ready to open and they fear for their children, most of them are saying they will not send their children to school considering that the cases of Covid - 19 positive are increasing every day.

MATOBO: Five Covid-19 positive cases have been recorded at Matobo research quarantine centre. These people have been moved to Matobo rural clinic (isolation center). There is a shortage of PPEs, mealie-meal and other food items for those at the isolation as well as quarantine centre.

TSHOLOTSHO: It was business as usual as people were buying vegetables from those coming from Nyamandlovu. The issue of commodities being sold in forex is becoming a thorn in the flesh as people are no longer getting the rand as borders continue to close. Nurses are on strike only the emergency unit is being used to attend only those who are seriously ill.

Most of the areas in Tsholotsho to Bulawayo and Figtree are in the dark as it has been discovered that thieves stole cables. Butcheries are finding it difficult to keep meat. The hospital is now giving people a day to collect the bodies of their beloved ones. Most churches have resumed church services though some do not have what is needed. Churches such as white garments say they never stopped meeting.

BEITBRIDGE: Long queues for trucks has

surfaced, this has been caused by South African border which was temporarily closed. This was after a SARS official was found positive of Covid-19 and the entire facility had to be disinfected.

Fumigation has been done, to try to prevent spreading of the Covid-19 pandemic within the border premises. Meanwhile, in SA cases continue to increase and rumours are that Zimbabweans now smuggle bodies of victims of Covid-19 to bury them in Zimbabwe. This exposes communities where the funeral will be done.

KWEKWE: Residents in Redcliff for the first time joined in contributing money to assist John Cycle (Tyre repair shop owner in Torwood) and Belinda Mususa's (citizen journalist at Radio Kwelaz) family who died in car accident. In total the amount raised so far is ZWL\$5 165 00 ecocash. This money will be shared between the families of the deceased.

GWERU: Some churches are still using government schools regardless of government directive to stop churches and those who want to hire those premises. One of the pastors who uses a government primary school said they have already paid their rent money in US dollars.

In turn the school has already paid their workers, who had not received their salaries since the beginning of the lockdown. Most hotels and restaurants are now open. Transport remains for commuters travelling to the city.