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## Press Statement 04/20

### Promoting support for diverse communities

The National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO) acknowledges the position that was taken by the Government of Zimbabwe of instituting a 21-day lockdown with effect from Monday 30 March 2020, in a bid to enhance its response measures against the spread of COVID-19. NANGO understand that Zimbabwe like many other countries, is traversing in uncharted ways, where the fundamental human right to health is under serious threat. This therefore dictates that there is need for amalgamation of efforts of all stakeholders if the country is to come up with a robust, inclusive and efficacious COVID-19 response strategy.

There are a plethora of measures that have been taken by the Government since the advent of the novel virus in Zimbabwe. On the night of 27 March, the Government announced that the country will be in full lockdown from 30 March 2020 for 21 days. Furthermore, the modalities that characterise the lockdown were highlighted and include availing of essential services for health professionals and for communities to continue accessing essential goods and services that will ensure that the people will not starve.

We are cognisant that the times are precarious, but as NANGO we strongly feel that the Government should have considered some level of virtual consultations with non-state actors in coming up with the package of measures towards the lockdown. This would have ensured that critical aspects for the vulnerable groups like homeless people, children in the streets, orphaned and children in vulnerable circumstances, persons with disabilities, women headed households in vulnerable circumstances, persons living with certain health conditions, elderly people among other disenfranchised groups' peculiar needs are catered for.

The lockdown is one of the most convenient strategies to decisively constrain and eradicate COVID-19 in our space. However, this move should have been put in place in a wholesome way, not just being proclaimed with no accompanying fundamental considerations on how the welfare of the diverse communities will be promoted and or maintained. The declaration currently is void of practical concerns of the vulnerable and disenfranchised groups in the society which are left to ponder between the effect of hunger and access to medication and, the detrimental consequences of contracting COVID-19.

Concerned that citizens' further reluctance to cooperate has grave consequences to both the end and spread of COVID-19 and cognisant of the plight of citizens in this uncharted path, NANGO therefore recommends the following:

1. The government should put in place immediate, special and effective initiatives that prioritise most vulnerable populations and proclaim social safety nets that will cushion the most vulnerable during the necessary lockdown.
2. The government should address in a decisive way the grievances of health professionals considering the contagious nature of Coronavirus as well as provision of clean, safe and portable water in all residential areas to ensure that residents practice good hygiene.
3. The government should put in place initiatives that will radically strengthen public health systems and ensure free and quick assistance in order to guarantee universal access to health services related to COVID-19 taking into account the rural, farming and mining communities.

4. Civil society organisation, especially those in the health and humanitarian sector, should continue coordinating their efforts, responding to the needs of various vulnerable groups and promoting dissemination of accurate and non-alarming information in a sustainable way.
5. Stakeholders with an interest in the development of Zimbabwe should strengthen capacities to overcome the health crisis and stand together, today and tomorrow, to build a robust, safe and sustainable health system that can respond effectively to emergencies.

NANGO is the officially recognised coordinating body of NGOs operating in Zimbabwe. It is a non-party political, non-profit making and non-denominational official coordinating body of NGOs in Zimbabwe. It is mandated by its membership to coordinate the activities of NGOs, represent the NGO sector and strengthen the voice of NGOs in Zimbabwe.

*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 Nyamande on +263784530915*