17 APRIL, 2020 VOL. 1

COVID-19 REALITIES

NANGO newsletter documenting COVID-19 outbreak in Zimbabwe.

Cities lockdown

IN THIS ISSUE

NANGO moots coordinating committees

COVID-19 Prevention, symptoms and treatment

Banking service essential during lockdown

Helplines

NANGO moots coordinating committees

The National Association of Non Governmental Organisations (NANGO) is in the process of establishing committees to coordinate disaster response and monitoring mechanisms at regional and national levels.

The committees will comprise of NGOs operating across Zimbabwe in the sectors of health, children, women, youth, disability, human rights, humanitarian, land and agriculture, media arts and culture as well as economic. To start with, NANGO will set up three committees, namely, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, Information Dissemination and Documentation Committee as well as Research, Lobby and Advocacy Committee.

NANGO is cognizant of the specific responses that its members are carrying out at individual levels and appreciates that this work should continue while NANGO also provides the platform to offer solid solidarity and visibility. This action will amplify the voice and enhance coordination of NGOs with the view of strengthening NGO contribution and impact during this perturbing period.

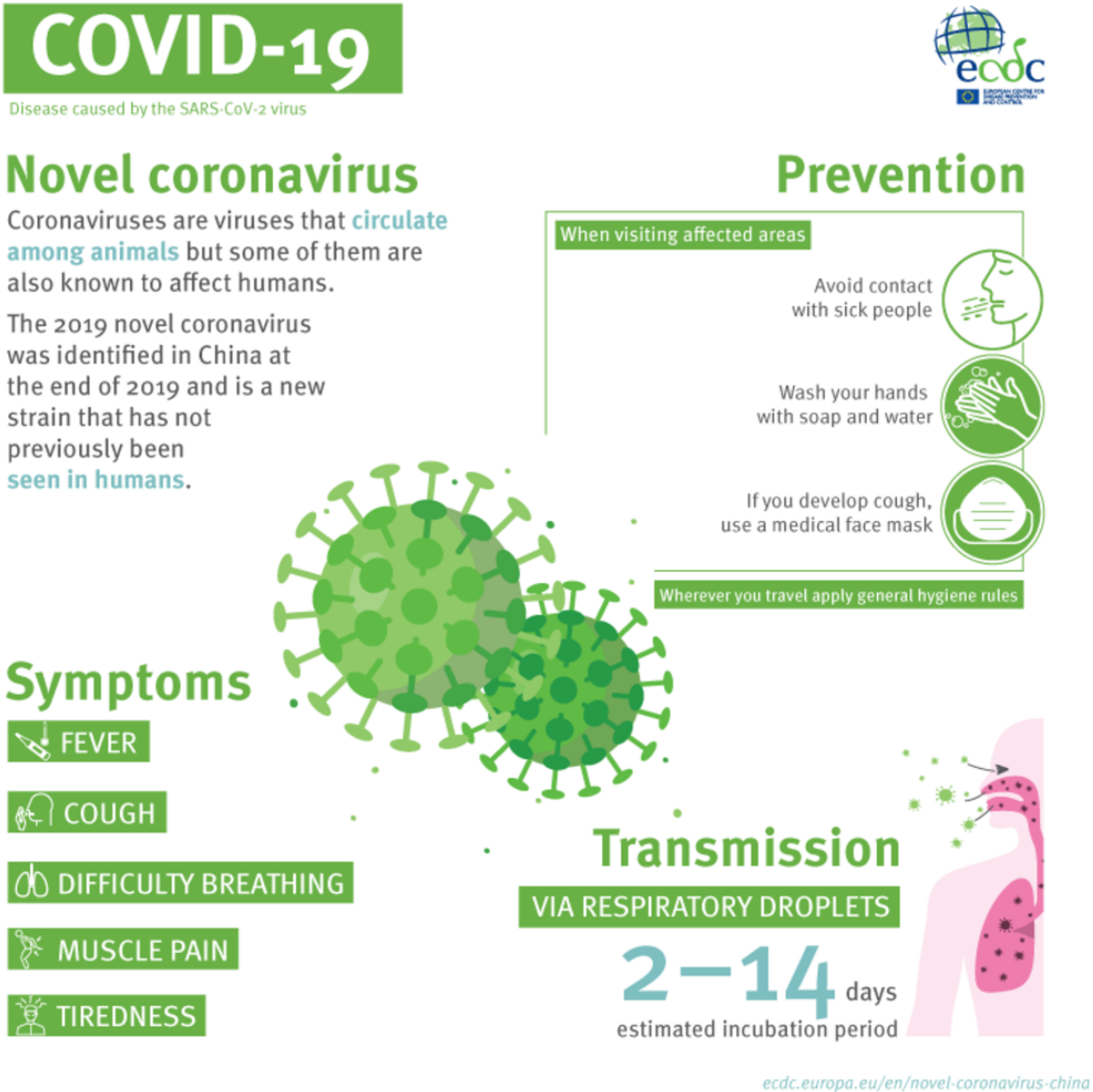
Information gathered by these committees will be documented and will also influence the coordinated response of NGOs to the pandemic. The information will also be shared with the National High Level COVID-19 Coordinators, a platform where different committees meet regularly to give updates in terms of their work and activities to curtail the spread of COVID-19.

The committees will also be expected to document best practices and proffer suggestions that the government, through line ministries can implement in a bid to improve disaster response at a national scale. Organisations that are interested in forming part of these committees are urged to communicate through their respective NANGO Regional Coordinators.

Province	Number of confirmed cases
Matabeleland North	1
Bulawayo	10
Harare	9
Mashonaland East	4
Total	24

Cumulative Tests Conducted: 1299

Deaths: 3



Banking service essential during lockdown

The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) has assured NANGO that banking services are an essential service to the banking public and to the nation as a whole that should be made available during the nation's 21 day lockdown.

In a letter from the RBZ dated 14 April 2020, the Governor, Dr. John Mangudya, states that banks have been directed to provide essential services to their customers throughout the lockdown period.

In a press statement that was released by the RBZ, the Governor stated that financial service providers should ensure uninterrupted access to mobile banking and payment services including point of sale, international payments, real time gross settlements, mobile banking, mobile money payments and remittance services.

Electronic and online banking services are some of the safest and most secure forms of transacting especially at a time when the country has confirmed cases of COVID-19.

NANGO had written to the Reserve Bank Governor expressing concern over the continued closure of banks which limits the response efforts of key stakeholders and worsens the living conditions of citizens during the national lockdown.

NANGO wrote to the Governor after some members of the civil society faced challenges in procuring essential goods needed to urgently respond to the pandemic. In its letter, NANGO stated that the humanitarian sector needs to procure in large quantities of commodities needed to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 for health centers, rural and urban communities; pharmacies need to procure medicines that are critical not only in the fight against COVID-19 but also for chronic illnesses that affect a significant population and CSOs in the women's sector need to procure sanitary wear for underprivileged women that depend on NGOs to provide these for free.

NANGO also took into consideration that the working environment of the banking sector needs to be conducive in line with guidelines of the World Health Organisation and Ministry of Health and Child Care in order to curb the spread of Coronavirus.

As such the Association recommended that all banks should reopen for at least four hours a day to serve their clients, all banks should be manned by personnel wearing masks in order to protect themselves from contracting COVID-19, people queue a meter apart, all banks should avail hand sanitiser that has at least 60% alcohol and there should be clear signage at all bank entrances discouraging people showing COVID-19 symptoms from entering banks.

Government should evade human rights violations while combating COVID-19

Over the past few months, nations of the world have been shaken to the core by the COVID-19 pandemic, commonly referred to as the Coronavirus, which started in China in 2019. The virus has spread across the planet claiming at least 131 000 lives globally. The epidemic has been so severe that on 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared it a global pandemic.

File photo

In order to bolster the protection and safety of humankind, governments across the globe have been instituting robust measures such as restriction of movement, mandatory testing as well as putting the affected under isolation.

Zimbabwe has been no exception as the government imposed a 21-day lockdown that started on Monday 30 March. This was institutionalised by the gazeting of Statutory Instrument 77 of 2020, which was gazetted by the Ministry of Health and Child Care on Monday 2 March. Statutory Instrument 77, also cited as the Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) Regulations 2020, seeks to aid the prevention, containment and treatment of Coronavirus by giving government broad powers to ban gatherings, undertake compulsory testing, quarantine individuals who would have tested positive and to arrest anyone who breaches these measures.

Section 8 (1) (l) of SI77 empowers government, through the Minister of Health to "authorise in any local authority the evacuation, closing, alteration or, if deemed necessary, the demolition or destruction of any premises the occupation or use of which is considered likely to favour the spread or render more difficult the eradication of such disease (COVID-19), and to define the circumstances under which compensation may be paid in respect of any premises so demolished or destroyed and the manner of fixing such compensation".

Thus in terms of this provision, any building, including houses, can be demolished by the state if the Minister of Health and Child Care deems it to be impeding efforts to curb the spread of Coronavirus. This section is a stark reminder to Operation Restore Order/Murambatsvina of 2005, which was meant, "to restore sanity in the Housing Sector" but ended up condemning at least 570 000 people to homelessness, loss of livelihoods and several other severe vulnerabilities which most have not recovered from fifteen years down the line.

Most of these people currently live in informal urban and peri-urban settlements within and around Harare such as Epworth, Hopely as well as Bellapasie, Rest and Retreat Farms. These settlements are overpopulated and do not have refuse collection, water and sewer reticulation facilities. Residents rely on shallow wells and pit latrine toilets, most of which are within five-metre proximities.

Now, these are the conditions that aided the spread of the cholera pandemic that killed thousands of people in 2008 and 2018. They are equally conducive for the spread of the current Coronavirus epidemic. This thus renders these settlements liable for demolition under Section 8 (1) (l) of SI77.

Instead of contemplating demolition of houses ,the government should opt for alternative measures that are more humane. I prescribe four such measures that government, at both central and local government levels, can easily implement with the resources they already have.

Firstly, as I have already posited earlier, government should adopt a pro-poor approach in the formulation of policies and strategies to contain the Coronavirus. This should start by amending or even removing Section 8 (1) (l) from SI77 of 2020, in order to eliminate the option of demolition of premises such as houses which may be deemed to be spreading the Coronavirus or inhibiting efforts to stop it.

Secondly, government should facilitate uninterrupted access to clean portable water to all urbanites, especially in high-density suburbs and informal settlements to enable undertaking of hygienic practises such as hand washing. This measure should include suspending water cuts and rationing, and investing more in water treatment chemicals and bowsers for water delivery to those communities without piped facilities.

Thirdly, government should increase frequency and reach of refuse collection services to cover even the informal settlements that currently rely on illegal dumpsites within their communities. This should also include disinfecting the cleared illegal dumpsites in order to exterminate the germs that may spread the Coronavirus.

Last, but not least, awareness raising on the Coronavirus should be intensified through timely and consistent dissemination of accurate, truthful and scientific information pertaining to the toll of the pandemic, and how to combat it. Such information should be disseminated in all 16 official languages of Zimbabwe, and should reach all corners of the country. This is because an informed citizen is better equipped to protect themselves and to assist government efforts to curb the epidemic.

Even though these services are already within the mandate of government to provide with or without the corona epidemic, our clarion call on government is premised in the belief that there are better alternatives to combat the spread of the Coronavirus than the house demolitions being prescribed under Section 8 (1) (l) from SI 77 of 2020.

Francis Mukora is a certified public policy analyst, journalist, human rights campaigner and social justice activist. He currently works as the Research and Advocacy Coordinator for Community Alliance for Human Settlements in Zimbabwe (CAHSZ) an organisation that advocates for safe and secure access to land, housing and socio-economic rights for internally displaced communities around Zimbabweans.

For the full article visit www.nangozim.org

Masvingo journalists petition Police Commissioner General over threats

Source: newzimbabwe.com

Journalists Golden Maunganidze and Passmore Kuzipa, who are respectively director and editor of Masvingo Provincial Weekly publication, TellZim News, have petitioned Zimbabwe Police Commissioner General, Godwin Matanga to intervene over the threats by Assistant Commissioner Taoneyi Nyazema to both their newspaper and themselves.

The duo, writing through lawyer Derick Charamba petitioned the Commissioner General to reign in his subordinate as they are now living in fear after being threatened with unspecified action on 11 April 2020 at the Masvingo Central Police station in the presence of the police Provincial Spokesperson, Chief Inspector Charity Mazula.

"On Saturday the 11th of April 2020, our clients were summoned by the Officer Commanding Masvingo Province for a discussion pursuant to an opinion column named Mapombi Adonha which was published in the TellZim edition of 10 April 2020. The respondent was not happy with the contents of that article.

We are reliably informed that the respondent threatened the two journalists with unspecified action and the duo are now living in constant fear. He took their details and dismissed them after having showered them with fear of highest magnitude," reads the letter.

He took their details and dismissed them after having showered them with fear of highest magnitude," reads the letter.

Maunganidze and Kuzipa, through the assistance of their lawyer made efforts to seek audience with the Assistant Commissioner in vain on 11 April around 1700hrs, as Nyazema rejected to meet them, electing instead to meet them on 13 April. The lawyer was surprised when they went to the offices today, only to be turned away. It was at that moment that the journalists instructed their lawyer, engaged through MISA Zimbabwe, to petition the Commissioner General to intervene.

"Kindly receive our complaint that our clients are living in constant fear and we have no option but inform your esteemed office that whatever omen and infringement that may befall them after such vivid threats can reasonably be explicable to the Respondent. We implore your office to intervene," said Charamba.

As we have previously stated, the police and the Zimbabwe Media Commission should urgently investigate these cases involving the assault and harassment of journalists and bring the culprits to book, otherwise these media freedom violations will continue with impunity thereby placing the lives of journalists at great risk.

Equally worrisome is the fact that these violations are being instigated by the law enforcement arm of the government. We further call for the government to uphold the constitution which provides for media freedom through section 61.

- MISA

Doing things differently

Humanitarian organisations are encouraging beneficiaries to queue one meter apart. City councils are sanitising public spaces and COVID-19 hotspots while also setting up isolation and tesing centers.

Need help during the lockdown?
Here are suggestions of who you can contact

COVID-19 related information: Toll Free 2019

To know your human rights: Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights
24 hour National Hotline +263 772 257 247
Matabeleland/ Midlands +263 773 855 635
Manicaland/ Masvingo +263 773 855 718

To report gender based violence: 24 hour toll free lines
Musasa Project - 08080074
Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association - 08080131
Adult Rape Clinic - 0775 672 770

To get legal advice: 24 hour toll free legal service helplines
Legal Resources Foundation - 08080402
Women and Law in Southern Africa - 0777 366 952
Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association - 08080131
Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights - 0772 257 247

For psycho social support: 24 hour toll free line for children in distress and COVID-19 information
Childline Zimbabwe - 116

This newsletter was published with support from

UNDP actionaid European Union

NANGO National Association Of Non-Governmental Organisations

Publisher: National Association of Non Governmental Organisations (NANGO)

Head Office: Number 2 McGowan Road, Milton Park, Harare, Zimbabwe.

Email:info.nangozim@gmail.com, director.nango@gmail.com

Website: www.nangozim.org

©NANGO

Disclaimer: The contents of articles from independent writers do not necessarily reflect the position and resolve of NANGO. NANGO provides platforms that promote national dialogue on topical and contemporary issues that affect Zimbabwe citizens in one way or another.