

## **Zambia and COVID-19**

A few weeks ago, most people were living a normal life: waking up, going to work, going for a walk and spending time out and about with those close to them. Coronavirus has changed everything. At the beginning of March 2020, the World Health Organization labeled COVID-19 as a pandemic. Zambia hasn't been spared from this and we are having our fair share of the pandemic

As of **1<sup>st</sup> April 2020**, Zambia had 39 confirmed cases of COVID-19 cases with one death. Most of these cases were imported into the country mainly by a group of people that travelled to Pakistan for some religious function. Another two confirmed cases were of a couple that went to France with their family for a holiday. Lately also the trend has changed as we are witnessing local transmission of the disease through contact with people who have been to high risk COVID 19 countries. The disease is spreading very fast causing panic among people and government. Lusaka the capital city of Zambia is the epicenter of the disease with the Copperbelt province recording 2 of the 39 cases. So far only two provinces in Zambia out of the ten provinces has confirmed or recorded COVID-19 cases.

### **Measures taken by Government to combat COVID-19 in Zambia**

- Please take note that the Government of Zambia instituted mandatory 14-day self-quarantine and monitoring for persons entering Zambia from any country with confirmed COVID-19 cases. This includes those entering Zambia at land borders en route to Lusaka to board Ethiopian Airlines flights. Those who have entered Zambia and have not satisfied the 14-day quarantine requirement will not be permitted to continue from a border area to Lusaka to board a flight leaving from Kenneth Kaunda International Airport.
- As of March 18, Zambia has confirmed cases of COVID-19 within its borders.
- On March 14, the government announced increased screening, response, and preventative measures, instituted mandatory 14-day self-quarantine and monitoring for persons entering Zambia from any country with confirmed COVID-19 cases, and announced it would require mandatory isolation for any suspected or confirmed cases.
- On March 17, the Minister of Health announced that all public schools would close on March 20, and that the government would implement heightened travel restrictions in response to the COVID-19 threat.
- On March 25, President Lungu announced that effective midnight, March 26 airports in Ndola, Livingstone, and Mfuwe will suspend international flights until further notice to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Kenneth Kaunda International Airport in the capital Lusaka will remain open until further notice. President Lungu announced additional measures and restrictions during a March 25 press conference which included the following;

- Ban of public gatherings such as no religious gatherings, closure of all bars, banning of street vending, sending public service workers on paid leave and only leaving essential workers to report for work every day. Others are working from home via internet or are working on rotational basis.
- Government is discouraging non-essential foreign travel by Zambians
- Government is further advising Zambians from other parts of the country to avoid visiting Lusaka the epicenter of the COVID-19 in the country.
- The government is increasing training for clinicians and health workers at select hospitals, in addition to enhanced public information campaigns.
- With technical support from U.S. Centers for Disease Control, the first testing capabilities in Zambia were established in Lusaka on February 11, and another Lusaka-based lab opened on February 12 with Japanese government support, a third one was opened last week on Ndola on the Copperbelt at the Tropical diseases research Centre.

### **Entry and Exit Requirements:**

- As of 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020, Zambia is not denying entry to any foreign nationals, regardless of nationality or place of origin.
- Zambia has implemented limited screening upon arrival at the international airport in Lusaka. The screening includes using no-touch thermometers (“thermo-scanners”) to check body temperature and asking travelers to complete a travel health questionnaire.

### **Quarantine Information:**

- Travelers from any country with confirmed COVID-19 cases entering Zambia are subject to mandatory 14-day self-quarantine. These persons will be allowed to enter and self-quarantine and Zambian officials will call by phone daily to check for symptoms that indicate COVID-19. Such persons should limit the number of people they interact with while still in the incubation period for COVID-19 (i.e., 14 days). This means not going to work or school, not traveling or shopping, and curtailing public activities. If encountering other people, remain more than one meter apart.
- Persons with symptoms of COVID-19 are required to report to Zambian health officials.
- Persons with suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 will be subject to mandatory isolation in a government health facility by health officials.

## **Civil Society perspectives on COVID-19 in Zambia**

Zambia governance foundation carried out a short survey to gather perspectives from local Zambian civil society organisations on Covid-19’s impact on civil society. The survey was launched on Friday 27 March 2020 and the following are the outcomes of the survey;

- The survey received 187 responses. While the survey is in no way claiming to be scientific, the results are loud and clear: 99% of all civil society respondents (or 185 out of 187) already feel the effects of Covid-19 in one way or another.
- Based on the survey, 81% of CSOs say that there is anxiety and a

feeling of uncertainty amongst staff and that they have had to slow down activities. In the same vein, 63% of CSOs report that they are no longer able to continue working with and / or supporting other CSOs, communities and / or citizens.

- For 71% of CSOs, only some of their activities have come to a standstill, while there has been a complete stop on all activities for 18% of the CSOs that took part in the survey.
- The survey also highlighted some anxieties existing among CSOs, with 67% of them stating the uncertainty over funders' response to implementation delays as one of their worries, and 18% facing an additional challenge of donors having started decreasing or withdrawing anticipated funding.

It is noteworthy that the majority of respondents (90%) communicate effects of the crisis on their work to the communities, citizens or other CSOs they work with. Other actions taken to address looming operational and financial challenges are the engagement of funders to discuss potential measures to overcome the crisis (mentioned by 67%), implementing cost containment measures (mentioned by 38%) and seeking additional financial support from funders (mentioned by 33%). Only a minority of 5% of CSOs is not taking any such measures. Some few CSOs (3%) report considering awareness raising activities around Covid-19 and the support of vulnerable communities.

The majority of CSOs (71%) that responded feel they are unable to assess Covid-19's impact on this year's funding at this point. However, almost a quarter of all respondents (24%) expect a decrease of funding. This is contrasted by a paltry 3% expecting an increase of funding, while another minority 4% of respondents do not expect any impact on their funding.

With a majority of civil society respondents reporting that they are no longer able to work with or support their constituencies and the uncertainty over financing necessary to carry on with supporting citizens and communities in the forthcoming period, there is no doubt that these are extremely worrying trends. It appears almost certain that Covid-19 will have far more reaching consequences for the operations of CSOs going forward, and the sooner CSOs start anticipating some of those consequences, the more prepared they will be to deal with them.

### **Our Message to the Zambian Government**

- As a coalition we note with sadness government's inertia to consider people first during this pandemic. Government is much more concerned about the current economic situation as opposed to the devastating effects that COVID-19 has on the people of Zambia. This is evident from the fact that there are no food

surpluses that are planned to cushion the impact of the pandemic on the poor and most vulnerable in the country. The majority of the Zambians work in the informal sector and they are the ones that have been hit hard by the pandemic. They live on hand to mouth and most of them have been moved from their trading places to help reduce the spread of the disease but the big question is how are they going to survive?

- As GCAP Zambia, we are calling on the Zambian government to consider coming up with incentives for the poor and the vulnerable to help them pull through during this difficult moment.
- We would also like to recommend the private sector and other well-wishers who have come on board to supplement governments efforts through donations to the ministry of health. We are calling on all private sector and other cooperating partners to emulate those that have come on board and join the fight against COVID-19 in Zambia.
- Lastly we are calling on civil society to heed the call from the minister of information and broadcasting to enhance information dissemination on COVID-19.

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