

DEVELOPMENT WATCH

*Civil Society
National Indicative Program
Monitoring
and
Advocacy*

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PVO Amendment Bill: What You Need To Know



Role of Civil Society in the upcoming 2022 Population and Housing Census.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dear Reader

2021 is a very special year for the National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations family. For starters, it marks the 59th Annual General Meeting. We get an opportunity to evaluate the journey that we have walked. No doubt, it has not been easy especially with the current Covid-19 pandemic grappling the whole nation and the world at large.

Secondly, it is an elective year where our members will get an opportunity to participate in the elections of the leadership of the association both at the regional and national levels.

Thirdly, we are taken aback by some of the principles and clauses approved in the recently gazetted Private Voluntary Organisation (PVO) Amendment Bill, which in our view may result in shrinking of civic space. It is our sincere hope and desire that we will engage different interested stakeholders to lobby and advocate for the creation of a Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) enabling environment especially through the PVO Amendment Bill which is set for public hearings anytime soon.

Lastly, the first issue of the Development Watch Volume 3 that was launched in May was indeed a success, with positive feedback from all spheres including the development partners and private sector. In this regard, we were incited to compile another set of inspiring editorials looking at, also, improving the quality of the newsletter. In that regard, I sincerely like to thank our staff authors or reporters and our esteemed members for continued support as well as our advertising partners. All of you

benefit from the huge platform that NANGO is providing through these newsletter series. Your support has become vehicles for sustainable and inclusive national development.

Again, this newsletter is for you and it should satisfy all your information needs. Therefore, your feedback is required! And do not hesitate to tell us your stories to be published in the next issue coming out on the 3rd of December, 2021.

Enjoy the reading

Editor



Mr Leonard Mandishara
Executive Director
NANGO

Designed By
Chris Katsaura

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021



2021 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the 59th Annual General Meeting of The National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO) is scheduled to be held as follows:

DATE **Tuesday 14 December 2021**

VENUE **Zoom Online**

TIME **0900hours (CAT)**

Kindly Note that: This is an Elective Annual General Meeting.

AGENDA

To receive, consider and adopt the:

1. Welcome Remarks
2. Introductions
3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting
4. Correction of Minutes
5. Matters Arising
6. Chairpersons Report
7. Treasurers Report
8. Dissolution of the Board
9. Elections
10. Address by Incoming Chairperson

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD

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PVO Amendment Bill: What You Need To Know.

By Staff Reporter

Civil society actors fulfil diverse crucial roles including: delivering services to poor and marginalised people; giving them a voice in processes that affect their lives; advocating for change on a wide range of issues; holding governments and non-state actors to account; and promoting inclusive and sustainable development in line with the sectoral, national, regional, continental and global agendas and commitments.

The recent acceleration of the trend of 'closing' or 'shrinking' civic space through repressive laws and extra-legal tactics has been observed globally. The President of Zimbabwe has recently signed and ratified the African Charter on Democracy, which expects all members to adhere to the universal principles of democracy and respect for human rights, as well as to uphold the rule of law as premised upon the supremacy of the Constitution. Ideal, this calls for an enabling environment for CSOs to play a watchdog role in upholding the principles of democracy and human rights. Narrowing the operating space for CSOs through over-regulation as envisaged by the Private Voluntary Organisations Amendment Bill, 2021, goes against best practices as well as the principles set out in various international instruments which Zimbabwe has ratified.

Impact of closing up of civic space

- Local civil society suffers greatly from closing space. Organisations are forced to disband, relocate or change activities; ability to secure funding may be greatly

impacted, whilst intended beneficiaries, usually the marginalised, are left worse off.

- Deteriorated civic space contributes to wider movements of democratic recession, through reduced scrutiny and reporting on policies and on human rights violations and abuses, as well as on attempts to subvert independent institutions.
- Development and humanitarian partners also experience pressures and restrictions in terms of the type of programmes they can fund, lack of respect for international humanitarian law, and limited opportunities for political dialogue. Broadly, development is slowed down and international relations are strained.
- Civic space is an integrated part of the 2030 Agenda. SDG 16 is about promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, access to justice for all and “building effective inclusive and accountable institutions at all levels”. Closing up Civic space derails the 2030 Agenda from this perspective.

Why the PVO Act is being Amended?

- To comply with Financial Action Taskforce (FATF) Recommendation (recommendation 8-to ensure NGOs are not misused by terrorist organisations to finance, conceal or divert funds intended for terrorist purposes) (s2 and s22 PVO Amendment Bill)
- To streamline administrative procedures for PVO regulation and registration (new s2(3) s13) PVO Amendment Bill)
- To restrict PVOs from political lobbying (s10 PVO Amendment Bill)

S2(3) High risk PVOs

The Minister may require an organisation, he considers high risk, to register as a PVO and prescribe special measures to mitigate such risks. This is to ensure the country complies with Recommendation 8 of the FATF recommendations.

- There is an inherent possibility of abuse of this provision as Minister has wide discretion to define high risk and the Minister does not have to conduct risk assessment before designating an organisation as high risk; mitigation prescriptions could be tailored to specifically target 'problematic' organisations.

S2(4) Double Registration and the ability of Trusts to fundraise.

The Registrar will have new powers to require institutions not exempted in s2 (1) who are collecting contributions from the public and outside the country for purposes outlined in paras s2(1)a-g in the definition of PVO, to desist from collecting such contributions pending registration as a PVO. This provision places upon these organisations a mandatory duty to register as a PVO; failure to do so amounting to an offence punishable by a fine or imprisonment. This provision attempts to ensure that regulation of CSOs is streamlined and guided by one piece of legislation as a majority of CSOs will be forced to register as PVOs. The provision fails to appreciate that organisations have been opting not to register as PVOs thus far due to long and cumbersome procedural requirements. Trusts registered with the Registrar General will be required to register twice; with the Registrar General and under the PVOs Act. There is a risk of having to report to two competing regulatory bodies. This is likely going to create a fertile ground for complex, multiplicity in compliance and tight regulation of CSOs especially those currently registered as a Trust. As best practice, newly adopted laws should not require previously registered organisations to re-register

The ability of an organisation to seek resources whether locally and internationally is integral to freedom of association. The Amendments will prohibit trusts from fundraising from the public and outside the country without a reason. Inherent delays in procuring registration as a PVO will slow down or hinder the work of CSOs at a crucial time such as the upcoming elections; some organisations will be

denied registration due to being labelled high risk and/or failing to meet the special measures required to mitigate risks. The option to choose the type of entity to operate as is taken away.

S9: A fee for registration of a PVO

There will now be a fee for registration or re-registration of a PVO. This could become a burden for organisations which have to constantly re-register at the instance of a material change as provided for by s13A of the Amendment Bill.

S10: Restriction from Political Lobbying

Any PVO that supports/opposes or contributes funds to a political party or candidate (contrary to Political Parties (Finance) Act is guilty of an offence punishable by imprisonment of up to 1yr and/or a fine.

The language is so broad that it is difficult to predict the prohibited behaviours and it has implications on freedom of association. The provision indirectly reduces political pluralism and restrict the monitoring of governance and/or political issues; it takes away the right to choose the type of work an organisation chooses to focus on and narrows operating space for organisations in the governance sector (this is contrary to s58 of the Constitution which provides for freedom of association).

S13A: Re-registration at the instance of a material change

Re-registration is required if there is any material change in the original application submitted for the registration of a PVO;

Any material change such as a *change in ownership or control of the PVO* calls on the PVO secretary to apply with the Registrar for amendment of particulars of Registration *within a month* from the date when the material change occurred. Although this ensures that the Registrar has up to date information on registered PVOs. The provision could be cumbersome for both CSOs and Registrar. CSOs will spend more time trying to get/remain registered;

prior to confirmation of re-registration, their work, such as resource mobilisation is halted or negatively impacted. The large number of applications that may be received by the Registrar as a result of 'material changes' may result in backlogs and create an environment rife for corruption. The provision provides the registrar with opportunity to delay or take away the legal status of organisations that work on controversial issues hampering PVOs' work and ability to mobilise resources

On the other hand, changes within organisations may be hampered or avoided to avoid the need to re-register, though some may be necessary or in the best interests of the organisation e.g. changing management or constitutions of organisations to adapt to constantly changing working environments.

S13A (3)(b) Registrar can order reversal of material change

The section gives the Registrar the power to order reversal of the material change that prompted the application for re-registration allowing the Registrar to blatantly interfere in the operations of the PVOs.

S21: Suspension of Executive Committee

Proposed amendments seek to give the Minister power to appoint interim trustees pending an application to the High Court to appoint/confirm the provisional trustees.

The criteria set out in s21 (1) is too wide and gives the Minister too much discretionary power to define what amounts to mismanagement. Moreover, the Minister should not interfere with the management of PVOs but allow for natural succession prompted by the actions of the remaining board members of the PVO.

S22: Risk assessment of PVOs and other institutions (as defined in S2 PVO Act) to be conducted every 5 years

Financial Intelligence Unit and Minister to conduct risk assessment of all PVOs and other institutions every 5 years.

A designated institution that fails to register as a PVO following a risk assessment, shall be guilty of an offence; and if a designated PVO fails to implement the special mitigatory measures, the registrar may revoke the organisation's

licence or order removal of the director of the PVO. The Amendment Bill provides that the special measures are to be prescribed in an *organisation specific manner*; they may therefore be biased and result in failure of some CSOs to register or operate altogether. Categorising is a preferable option to remove the appearance of targeted systemic attacks on specific organisations.

S22(6) (d) (e) and s28 (e)(4) –the Minister may make regulations for disclosures of sources of funding from outside Zimbabwe in the application or audit report- ad hoc access to financial documents by registrar or any other competent authority, may be prescribed.

This may be considered indirect intimidation as it appears directly linked to ability to register and has been previously used to push the narrative that organisations with outside funding are foreign agents.

Over regulation may result in development partners failing to find operating space for local CSOs and exiting, leaving the CSOs unable to mobilise resources, limiting development partners' contribution to national development, and leaving the nation at higher risk of relegating its people into deep poverty. There will be less accountability as the watchdog position of CSOs is crippled, and there will be further erosion of democratic processes

S28 (2) (b) raises fine for failure to comply with access to financial records requirements to a staggering level 14 from level 4

The amendment provisions seek to frustrate the operations of CSOs by drowning them in administrative procedures that may very likely be unattainable, and to overall narrow the operating space for CSOs through over-regulation. It is also imperative for the legislature to remember that failure of CSOs to operate ultimately affects the most vulnerable and marginalised amongst the citizenry who are benefitting from the various projects and interventions implemented by CSOs at all levels.

It is therefore in the hands of local civil society organisations to take a bold stand against restrictive legislation for the good benefit of the society as a whole.

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Role of Civil Society in the upcoming 2022 Population and Housing Census.

By Staff Reporter

The Zimbabwe 2022 Population and Housing Census programme will be the fifth exercise to be undertaken by the Government of Zimbabwe since independence in 1980. Census is a major concern to both the Government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as it is a key enabler in decision-making processes for future planning. This also helps in the formulation of development policies and programmes for economic and social development of the communities and country at large.

The Zimbabwe Statistics Agency (ZIM-STAT) with support from the Government will deliver its mandate according to the Census and Statistics Act [Chapter 10:29] clause 2 which requires a decennial census to be taken after every ten years. The census has to be done in accordance to the country's National Statistics Systems (NSS). The upcoming census is of great importance since for almost decade, authorities were estimating the country's housing and population statistics for the purposes of planning and social service delivery. The last census, conducted in 2012, had a total number of 13+ million people.

Political parties, media houses, trade unions, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and religious movements are entities that represent the community especially in

decision-making processes. CSOs are pivotal on the census exercise as they can partner with Zim-Stats in coming up with ideas that can be useful to enhance the successfulness and integrity of the census programme. CSOs and other non-state actors have community groups and structures which may be used to raise awareness of the census process as well as mobilising households and individuals to take part in these important processes. Against this realisation, CSOs will be useful to in the upcoming 2022 Population and Housing Census especially pre-census, during census and post-census. It is also imperative that CSOs can independently observe the process for the credibility purposes including support on logistical processes to be undertaken during the entire census exercise. This will enable the CSOs to provide real time advises and recommendations which can further strengthen the process. This will also facilitate a transparent enumeration and publishing of data that is accurate and reliable for planning purposes. Availability of data will enhance tracking, monitoring and evaluation of the progress made to achieve the National Development Strategy I and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) amongst other national, regional, continental and global commitments. Zimbabwe has commenced the process of aligning and integrating NDSI with the SDGs and none of the prerequisite requirements to facilitate the process is availability of disaggregated data. The census process will therefore gather data and information which can facilitate the alignment and integration process.

CSOs can be involved in pre-test surveys and pilot census as they are a critical part of the census planning process. The pilot survey provides the opportunity to test all aspects of the census programme in advance prior the main census activities, thus ensuring the smooth operation and success of the census. The census process gather much needed data which CSOs need in formulating project designs for instance: socio-economic and demographic characteristics of household members including persons with disabilities, school attendance and level of education attained by all household members from age three (3) years and above, Labour force characteristics for those aged 12 years and above, Fertility questions for women age 12-49 years, Living conditions, Deaths in the household in the past 12 months, Total number of people in the household by sex.

Civil society with its wide spread partners like the Community Based Organisations, which work directly with the community members including in hard-to-reach areas can be involved in conscientisation and information

dissemination of the upcoming housing and population census. They can also use various media platforms such as local press, radios, televisions and bulk messages which publishes and produces various reports on the census activities updates. These efforts can also be supported by information pamphlets and posters which reduces individual door to door education on census information.

After the population and housing census is completed, the Civil Society Organisations will analyse the data and a growing population with an increasing number of households will inevitably exert pressure on land, housing, schooling and health services, food security, greenhouse emissions and energy needs. The CSOs will advocate the government to enact skills development and labour force retention strategies. Policy makers will need to address the socio-economic needs of the youth, children, women and elderly, as well as the health sector imperatives, to meet the targets set in the NDSI blueprint.

Drug Abuse shuttered her dreams!

The motionless and profusely pity-evoking figure was Tadiwa – a 14-year-old girl lying precariously on the scruffy island separating the dual carriageway of the ever-busy Mutare Central Business District (CBD).

Tadiwa wallowed in this pitiful state following her excessive consumption of crystal meth, a drug commonly known as “gukamakafala” – the most trending intoxicant in the underworld of drug abuse. Devoid of consciousness, Tadiwa perched there; sun-burnt and wind-blown for numerous hours.



The little girl's hope of being a medical doctor was shuttered, creativity splintered and dreams dashed following her involuntary drop-out from school due school fees challenge owing to household poverty. Notwithstanding the hostile and deprivation at home, Tadiwa plunged into street life; and she was made to believe (through peer pressure) that drugs could be the opium of escapism from her problems. Tadiwa lost all self-belief that

she could rise to be someone in life due to her underlying burden of poverty.

In an interview Tadiwa acknowledged that “I take old energy saver bulbs and remove the top part, leaving the “u-shaped” glass part of the bulb. I drop in a piece of crystal meth and then heat the glass over a candle flame. The granule turns into a vapour that I inhale which makes me high and I don't sleep for 2 to 3 days.”

While crystal meth keeps Tadiwa high for 2 to 3 days, it can also inadvertently intoxicate and sedate her; thus, lying half-dead on the street pavements for similar consecutive days. The sedating power of this heinous drug has caused the little girl not only to lose her mind, but also to indulge into sexual and criminal activities.

Tadiwa had been abusing other drugs such as cannabis (known as *mhanje* in vernacular Shona language) and cough mixtures like Broncleer popularly known as 'bronco', a bronchodilator (cough medicine that contains codeine and alcohol). However, crystal meth and cannabis were the cheapest and most accessible to the little girl.

“I first used crystal meth before I dropped out of school, during the Covid-19 induced lockdown period. The idleness of waking up each day and finding nothing to do plunged me into drug abuse. That was in June 2020; and since then, I became a regular user, my dream to become a doctor slowly vanishing from my reach” Tadiwa confessed.

Simukai observed that Tadiwa had also ventured into selling cannabis and other drugs smuggled in margarine containers and inside corn snacks popularly known as *zapnax* packets in order to disguise and hide their anti-social activities from police. Tadiwa peddles drugs for her own sustenance as she has no qualifications to seek a formal job since she dropped out of school.

Needless to say, Tadiwa's consumption of these and other

drugs plunged her into catastrophic consequences. Among them were pre-marital sex, dropping out from school, psychotic problems, bullying and violence.

Crystal meth affected her brain's normal functioning as she is now slower and suffers from slurred speech. Her attention span to focus and follow through on a task that requires concentration, learning and remembering, has also been impinged on. In the bigger picture, the effects of drugs on Tadiwa will affect the country's economy at large in the cost to rehabilitate people addicted to drugs at taxpayers' cost.

The Director of Simukai Child Protection Programme, Mrs Francisca Barbra Matsanga lamented that; “Studies have also shown that youths who indulge in substance engage in high-risk activities and often self-destructive behaviours that make them hooked to drugs and sadly usually end up in suicide. A good number of such youth end up living and working on the streets.”

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2013) Report estimated that there are 28 million drug users in Africa with 37 000 people dying annually from diseases related to consumption of drugs. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Survey (2021) observed that Zimbabwe's youths constitute 67, 7 percent of the population. Thus, drugs are ruining the larger part of the country's population.

Tadiwa confides that “...some local youths have been impacted negatively by songs that chant and glorify drugs, violence, sex and other anti-social. In particular, some Zimdancehall songs glorify the use of marijuana, bronco and histalix...’. These and other songs have influenced teenage brains into contentment with drug substance.

It is against this backdrop that Simukai is making concerted efforts to end drug abuse by youths on the streets of Manicaland Province. Simukai in collaboration with law enforcement agents like the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) is conducting awareness campaigns targeting youths living and working on the streets.

Awareness campaigns against drug and substance abuse focuses on the negative effects as a way of vividly exposing such pitfalls whilst seeking to instil ethical values in young boys and girls to preserve tomorrow's generation from the brink of imminent destruction. Simukai has also held drive-through road shows to raise awareness against drug and substance abuse, especially before and during COVID-19 era. Drive-through Road Shows avoided huge gatherings in conforming to the COVID-19 restrictions whilst at the same time reaching out to multitudes of people as the Public Address (PA) System speakers broadcasted these messages.

Simukai invited Tadiwa to its Drop-in-Centre for counselling sessions in order to warn her against the devastating effects of substance abuse and to give her hope for a bright future. These sessions helped Tadiwa focus on constructive thoughts through gainfully occupying her mind with various livelihood skills and life skill activities like facilities for bathing, washing her clothes, counsellors to lend a listening ear to her problems.

In pursuance of the adage that says, "an idle mind is the devil's workshop", Simukai established a Rehabilitation Centre in Mutare City as well as in Chipinge Town with an aim to rehabilitate children living and working on the streets to refrain from drugs and alcohol. Simukai also empowers Tadiwa with Income Generating Activities (IGAs) and Vocational Skills Training to counter street life and promote economic self-reliance. She was also empowered to rear indigenous poultry like guinea fowl, free range chickens as well as buying and selling clothes.

Zimbabwe has two pieces of legislation regulating drug use

which are the Dangerous Drugs Act (Chapter 15:02) and the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform Act) (Chapter 9:23). Currently, the courts are grappling with enforcement of dealing with and use of a potent drug crystal meth whose classification as a dangerous drug is still hazy in an effort to discourage its inevitable spread.

Simukai is complementing government efforts as well as working with rural and urban communities in raising enviable youth who are exemplary and responsible citizens of tomorrow. Simukai recommends that government builds more centres to rehabilitate drug-addicts. Currently there is only one centre in Harare called Borrowdale Halfway House.

If drug and substance abuse is left unchecked, it shatters lives, hinders creativity or destroys hope and dreams of the young generation as youth drop out of school due to drug addiction, engage in both petty and serious crime like pickpocketing to even house break-ins to sustain their addictive habits bullying and other forms of violence. Youths live unfulfilled dreams as their lives go to waste down the drain as they would have failed to complete their education or have the blemish of criminal records for prospective employers to take them on board. Youths hooked on drugs also live a life of being shunned and stereotyped by their family members as well as the bigger society. It even becomes worse especially after serving time in jail and upon their release nobody trusts them anymore or wants to associate tainted by a history of crime or deviancy.



A timid youth transforms into a confident entrepreneur



Alex's Income Generating Activity (grading tomatoes for selling)

Shuttered, timid and hopeless Alex Chimundo – a 20-year-old boy, born and bred in a marginalised rural family in Dzobo Village (Mutare District) – has transformed into a confident farmer after receiving economic empowerment from Simukai Child Protection Programme.

He had a passion to venture into horticulture but lacked the technical knowledge and capital to embark on effective market gardening; hence Simukai imparted the necessary agro-skills and resources and set the ball rolling for Alex to realise his dream.

According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), 60-70 percent of the country's population depend on agriculture-related affairs for employment and accounts for 40 percent of export earnings and makes up 17 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Hence Alex knew that agriculture is a lucrative source of livelihood.

He was initially trained on how to start a new business, how to expand an already existing business, how to market a business (offering good customer care) and financial

management. This remarkable knowledge enabled him to present a sound business proposal before Simukai.

Alex was then given a small grant to start Income Generating Activities (IGAs) and vocational start-up kits that enabled him to establish a 100x100 square metre garden in Dzobo Village. This massive support elevated him to the level of top farmers in the area.

Alex in a jovial mood said; "With the help of Simukai, I ventured into market gardening in 2020 in Dzobo area in Munyarari under Mutare District. I grow a variety of vegetables which include tomatoes, carrots and peas. I supply my produce to the largest vegetable market in the City of Mutare once a week".

"However, anticipated or unexpected disasters and emergencies (such as the advent of Covid-19) made it difficult for me to access the markets in Mutare City due to movement restrictions instituted to contain the spread of this pandemic.

So, as an alternative I then targeted the local market in Dzobo. This current approach helped me to detect adverse financial trends early and initiating appropriate remedial action where possible.” Alex added.

Alex benefited immensely from economic strengthening initiatives facilitated by Simukai which saw 660 youths receiving start-up capital funds to engage in IGAs as a means to achieve economic self-reliance in February 2020 in Manicaland Province.

Alex's agro-business enabled him to develop his rural homestead and transformed the welfare of his siblings. He built a neatly furnished 3-roomed house, sent his two siblings to a local high school and more significantly; he is able to purchase sufficient food for the whole family.

Alex goes on to say, “I also invested in a manual foot pump to irrigate my land holding under horticultural crops to scale up my production. Since then, life has dramatically changed because I managed to construct a 3-roomed house from the yields of my business.”

In 2020 Alex managed to buy sheep and goats to diversify his projects and to him these were a lot easier to rear because they required little supplementary feeding and are well accustomed to the dry conditions of Munyarari and surrounding areas – 22 miles from Mutare City centre.

Alex's business has grown in leaps and bounds as 2021 marked his commencement in the hatching and breeding of domesticated guinea fowls and indigenous chickens. Many people in the rural setting buy the guinea fowls as a delicacy while they also prefer indigenous chickens for meat than broilers as the former is free range and organically produced than the latter. The villagers prefer the natural taste of free-range reared fowl.

He has done so well in his projects and his zeal and passion can make him a very good change agent in his community

and inspire other youths. The timid youth who joined ZOE Empowers Programme, under Simukai in 2020 has emerged a confident entrepreneur among youths in Munyarari.

Alex went further to say, “I escaped the jaws of poverty (such as lack of food and shelter, absence of social services, lack of access to primary health care and unemployment) by utilising my talent and God-given strength. Innumerable thanks go to Simukai for being that catalyst to uplift me from my pit of poverty and despair.”

Simukai is tirelessly working to uplift the lives of vulnerable households particularly those that include elderly caregivers, child-headed families and youth living with people who are bedridden whose income is far below the poverty datum line.

The Guardian Newspaper of 21 March 2020 reported that, “The number of Zimbabwean people living in extreme poverty has reached 7.9 million as the Covid-19 Pandemic has delivered another economic shock to the country. With Covid-19 induced lockdown, the households were not spared from shrinking income.”

To date, Simukai has assisted over 3000 households including Alex. Simukai recruits the households in working groups of between 25–30 households through a meticulous beneficiary selection process.

The selected beneficiaries are assisted with technical, financial and market advisory services for a period of 3 years when they are graduated from the Programme and a new cycle of beneficiaries are selected. Graduated beneficiaries act as role models to youth still in the programme. Economic self-sufficiency is the goal of the economic empowerment programme driven to make youth help themselves rather than be objects of pity or be downtrodden and labelled in their communities, but be leading lights and community champions of economic independence.

The lived realities of women in the wake of Covid-19



The advent of the Covid-19 pandemic has not only shaken the status quo of lives in Zimbabwe, but has also deprived women from accessing quality and comprehensive health care at the same time increased their burden of unpaid care work.

Women are the centre of every household as they are responsible for looking after the family and ensuring that the children are well kept and fed. However, despite the enormous role they have, Covid-19 presented challenges to them which includes taking care of family members who were affected by the pandemic, sourcing money and food using unconventional ways due to the lockdown restrictions.

Speaking to Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe Gweru Chapter's Coordinator, Gracia Mashingaidze highlighted those available resources for health care services were channelled towards Covid-19 response at the expense of other essential healthcare needs that were equally important such as Sexual Reproductive Health Care Services and Maternal and Child Health Care services.

“Evidence has shown that when epidemics emerge, resources for health care delivery are diverted from the routine health care services which further reduces the already limited access of Sexual Reproductive Health services, as well as the Maternal and Child Health Care services,” she explained.

Mashingaidze explained that outbreaks and epidemics affect both women and men differently, however women are normally disproportionately affected.

“Disease outbreaks increase the duties that women and girls do as they are expected to care for the elderly and sick family members,” she added.

Chengeto Jingini, a social worker said that women and girls were denied healthcare due to the lockdown restrictions.

“A lot of women could not access Sexual Reproductive Healthcare services and products which resulted in a significant rise in the cases of Gender Based Violence, unwanted pregnancies, child marriages and unsafe backyard abortions which further exposed women and girls to

other risks such as HIV/AIDS infections, she explained.

Jingini pointed out that women who are HIV positive could not travel to hospitals where they were supposed to collect their monthly supply of Antiretroviral drugs, which consequently compromised their adherence and retention to treatment thus has a bearing on their viral load suppression,

“Covid-19 affected the global supply chain due to travel bans which delayed the supply of essential medicines and drugs from overseas,” she added.

An article written by Jeffrey Moyo titled, “A question of life and death”, reveals that there is an increase of still births in Zimbabwe due to lack of care from nurses at hospitals.

“The country was shaken last year July when seven babies were stillborn in a single night in Harare Central hospital,” he revealed.

UNICEF in October 2020 also revealed that due to the

pandemic, one stillbirth occurs every 16 seconds estimating that the reduction in healthcare would cause an additional 200, 000 more still births in low- and middle-income countries.

Recommendations

Jingini highlighted that local clinics should be adequately capacitated in terms of funding and human resources to ensure that they have capacity to attend to all the people in their communities regardless of the gravity of their ailments.

“There is need to train community health workers so that they are able to assist the health workers that are there. The government should also plan ahead of time for these kinds of epidemics to avoid unnecessary loss of life due to unpreparedness,” she added.

The national budget fell short of the 15% Abuja Declaration benchmark which stipulates that at least 15% of the total national budget should be channelled towards health with 13 percent allocated towards health in the 2021 national budget.



Disclaimer: The writers in this publication were trained by NANGO with support from the European Union to monitor the National Indicative Program.

The contents of articles from independent writers do not necessarily reflect the position and resolve of NANGO, European Union and United Nations Development Programme. This newsletter also promotes stories written by NANGO members and the broader civil society.

NANGO is supported to provide platforms that promote national dialogue on topical and contemporary issues that affect Zimbabwean

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