

# COVID-19 REALITIES



NANGO newsletter documenting COVID-19 outbreak in Zimbabwe.

# AFRICA

# DAY

## with a

# DIFFERENCE

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## Africa Day Solidarity Concert for the Covid-19 Response Fund



and political challenge. On the 25th May 2020 African populations should celebrate its many achievements as a continent as well as reflect on the many challenges still impacting negatively on the development and integration of the continent and seek possible ways to resolve and minimize such.

The African Union adopted its blueprint strategy, the African Union Agenda 2063: the Africa we want, in January 2015. The AU Agenda 2063 outlines seven aspirations of which aspiration five is about the development of the arts and

25th May 2020 marks the 57th Anniversary of the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). On this day 57 years ago the continental organization was established by its founding fathers in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia with the aim of encouraging political and economic integration among Member States, and to eradicate colonialism and neo-colonialism from the African continent.

With the majority of the African states gaining independence in the 1950 – early 1970's, the organization transformed into the African Union (AU) with the main purpose of accelerating the process of integration in the continent to enable it play its rightful role in the global economy while addressing multifaceted social, economic, cultural

and culture sector including its cultural and creative industries sector to enable its contribution to the development of the economy of the continent.

However we are celebrating Africa day this year in an untypical environment as Africa and the entire world are grappling the Coronavirus, COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic had a sudden and substantial negative impact in all sectors including the arts, culture and heritage sectors. The global health crisis and the uncertainty resulting from it profoundly affects organizations operations as well as cultural workers both employed and independent across the continent.

The African Union has developed Continental

interventions to fight COVID-19 which include:

- ✿ Implementation of the Common African Continental Strategy on COVID-19. Framework to fight COVID-19 and to strengthen health systems and mobilization of resources
- ✿ Establishment of the Technical Committee with participation of experts from all AU Member States; Socio-economic impact of the lockdown to African Economies to find holistic strategies to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19.
- ✿ Establishment of the Continental Solidarity Fund - COVID-19 Response Fund.
- ✿ Appointment by the Chairperson of the Union of four envoys to play a leadership role in spearheading the mobilization of resources for the Anti COVID19 Fund.
- ✿ Capacity Building, training and pool procurement of services and equipment are coordinated by Africa Centre for Disease Control (CDC).
- ✿ Establishment of the African Youth Front on Coronavirus as an African Union framework to engage young people to contribute youth-led solutions and co-lead Africa's response to the pandemic.

It is in this context that the African Union Commission (AUC) and the All Africa Music Awards (AFRIMA) are organizing this online concert to advocate for contributions to the Africa COVID-19 Response Fund. The powerful role of African artists through their music and art in curbing the pandemic as well as in advocating for contributions by well-wishers to assist the Africa CDC operations cannot be overemphasized.

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*The theme of the Africa Day celebration is*

## **‘Silencing the guns in the context of COVID-19’**

**Objectives of the celebration of Africa Day are:**

- To **inspire action** with key AU messages on the prevention, protection and response measures to contain Coronavirus on the continent;
- To **use the power of music** and the crucial role of African artists in advocating for the curb of COVID-19 on the continent;
- To **engage African youth**, especially young musicians, to join forces and work hand in hand with the AUC in curbing the COVID-19 pandemic;
- To **galvanize solidarity** from well-wishers on the continent and beyond to provide financial and in kind contributions to the Africa COVID-19 Response Fund;
- To **establish a greater synergy** between African artists and the work that African Union is doing in response to COVID-19 pandemic led by the Africa Centre for Disease Control (CDC);

## 3-year-old dies of hunger

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit hard on the general populace amplifying social ills across the Zimbabwe. On a sad turnout of events, the community of Mkoba 11 in Gweru were left in shock after a 3-year-old boy reportedly succumbed to hunger on 19 May 2020.

In a telephone interview, grandmother to the young boy, Nyarai Mafotchwa (46) confirmed the incident which she said has left the family shaken and confused.

“I was responsible for taking care of my grandchild, under my watch he started suffering from a running stomach three days before he passed away and I thought the illness might have been caused by a new set of teeth coming out,” she said.

“This running stomach went on for at least 2-3 days and since the clinic advises to treat such cases at

home using home remedies such as salt and sugar solution along with drinking plenty of liquids, I never thought it was serious until I found my grandchild not breathing as he lay on the bed,” she added.

A distress call made by a concerned neighbour after the death of the boy to Reverend Zhou, Midlands Regional Officer for Gender, Justice and Women Empowerment at Zimbabwe Council of Churches resulted in the grandmother opening up about the devastating situation they live in.

“The grandmother indicated that she is in dire need of assistance although she could not spell it out clearly that she is suffering immensely from hunger. After probing how they live, she managed to point out that they are in need of immediate food aid,” reported Rev Zhou after her visit to the family of the deceased.

“They have no water since council cut them off due to failure to pay their bills and the same goes for electricity. Firewood is their only alternative source of energy which they use to cook but they cannot afford it. They also do not have food to cook for the family,” she added.

The young boy was buried two days ago and community health workers in Mkoba 11 have since approached the social welfare officer in their ward to assist the family.

Reverend Zhou is pleading with the government, civil society organisations and churches to assist the increasing number of vulnerable groups with food aid and other necessities.

*The author, Nozipho Rutsate, is currently doing her internship at NANGO Midlands Region and studying for a Masters Degree in Media and Journalism Studies at NUST.*



"A Compassionate Youthful Generation United and Resilient for Love..."

## Consultations on the re-opening of schools should be inclusive and collective

COVID-19 has presented opportunities and challenges for different categories of individuals and institutions. I have heard that in every situation there is a nugget of gold. In this case, the nugget of gold seems to be elusive for persons with intellectual disabilities as they are hidden in plain sight. I have been motivated to write this article in the light of collaborative efforts which are said to be underway regarding the reopening of schools.

Ideas and ideal situations have been floated on when schools can reopen, meetings have been held by government officials and bodies representing teachers. Submissions have come from different angles regarding when schools should reopen; the expenditure of efforts regarding the issue of reopening schools has been involving and still remains involved. Surprisingly, no considerations have been made for special schools. This article seeks to share notes with the readership regarding the plight of a constituency of persons with intellectual disabilities who come as an “add on” in terms of programming by those who are running with opportunities during the COVID-19 induced lockdown.

Persons with intellectual disabilities, by definition are those persons whose intellectual functioning is limited due to brain damage. Their intellectual challenges rarely exist independent of other conditions. For example, a person with an intellectual disability may also have sensory and or physical impairments which may further compound his or her functional capacities. Technically, a situation whereby one disability co-occurs with another disability is called comorbidity. Rarely does intellectual disability come

with social competence.

A person with an intellectual disability largely lacks social skills. However, persons with intellectual disabilities are not a homogeneous group. The condition exists in a continuum, that is it may be either mild, moderate, severe or profound. Given the above continuum of the condition, it may imply that this category of persons with intellectual disabilities has varying needs. In terms of placement in educational settings, those persons with intellectual disabilities, depending on the severity of the disability may find themselves either in a resource unit or in a special class, both arrangements are found in a regular school. Those with severe or profound intellectual disabilities may be placed in special schools. In Zimbabwe learners with profound intellectual disabilities are largely found in ZIMCARE Trust schools which are dotted across the country.



This category of learners in special schools is not on the table for discussion regarding measures that can be taken to ensure that they are safe from the pandemic, neither are the so-called consultative meetings including them in discussions regarding the reopening of schools. The discussion on schools reopening cannot remain omnibus and silent on specific measures for this category of learners. These learners, like it has been mentioned elsewhere in this article, also have secondary disabilities which may constitute underlying conditions. These underlying conditions create a fertile ground for the contraction of COVID-19.

The consultations should be collective and inclusive by engaging heads of special schools in order to understand the additional needs of these learners. The following proposed phases of reopening of schools by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is silent on special schools;

- Phase 1: Exam classes
- Phase 2: Classes to take the exams in 2021
- Phase 3: Grades 3, 4 and 5 as well as Form 1 and 2
- Phase 4: Grades 1 and 2
- Phase 5: All ECD classes

These proposed piece-meal stages of reopening schools as a result of COVID-19, are indeed not cognizant of special schools. By deduction, this shows that the whole Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and other stakeholders with whom the ministry has had an opportunity to engage do not take the education of learners with intellectual disabilities with the seriousness that it deserves. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (2006) article 7, the best interests of children with disabilities have to be considered when decisions that affect them are being made. Zimbabwe is a signatory State to the above charter, and she is therefore under obligation to respect, promote, protect and fulfil the rights of learners with intellectual challenges. It cannot be left for responsible authorities of special schools to come up with their own protective measures as they

are already under-resourced due to the demands of COVID-19.

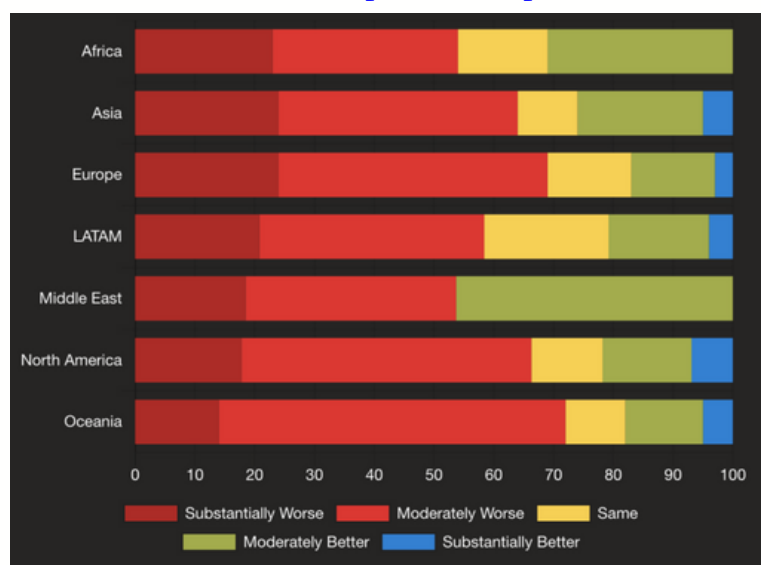
There is a need for the government through different ministries like Ministries of Health and Child Care, Primary and Secondary Education, Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare and Finance and Economic Development to engage organisations of and for people with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, heads of special schools and other members of the private sector for the sole purpose of addressing the special or additional needs of learners with disabilities. The disability sector brings together different professionals and disciplines, wide and cross-cutting consultations are therefore a sine qua non.

I hope this article will open the eyes of those people within the corridors of power and help them to see beyond their noses in so far as the protection and promotion of rights of learners with intellectual disabilities are concerned in this critical time of COVID-19.

*The author, Aribino Nicholas is the Country Director ZIMCARE Trust.*






### The following chart reflects broad regional impressions of the short-term impacts of the pandemic.






*Executive perceptions of the short-term impacts of COVID-19 on organisations and institutions. Source: HolonIQ*

## Coronavirus COVID-19 Vocabulary Quiz




1. People who show no signs of a given disease are

-  asymptomatic
-  unsymptomatic
-  unsympathetic




5. After showing symptoms he was told to \_\_\_\_\_ for 14 days.

-  quarantine
-  self-isolate
-  stay in home

7. A person with symptoms of a disease \_\_\_\_\_ that disease.




-  has
-  may have
-  cannot have

2. Which is a virus?




-  COVID-19
-  influenza
-  Coronavirus






8. Which is a disease?

-  COVID-19
-  SARS-CoV-2
-  Coronavirus


3. SARS-CoV-2 can \_\_\_\_\_ humans.

-  defect
-  effect
-  infect




6. Which is most widespread?

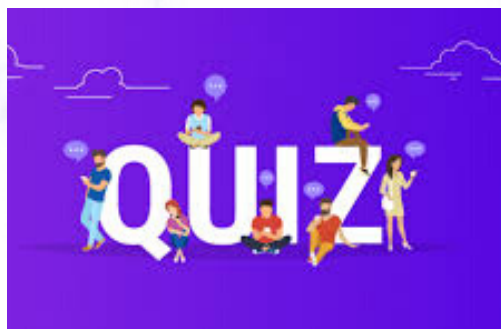
-  An outbreak
-  An epidemic
-  A pandemic

9. A disease that can be transmitted to humans from animals is




-  hypnotic
-  stenotic
-  zoonotic

4. The word quarantine comes from

-  the number 40
-  the term guarantee
-  the fraction quarter



10. He was happy to learn that his mother tested \_\_\_\_\_ for this Coronavirus.

-  negative
-  positive
-  successfully



## COVID-19 Realities of children living and working on the streets

Every day at 9am you hear chattering at Simukai Child Protection Programme as ten to twenty boys and girls come to the safe shelter to take a bath, do laundry, eat breakfast and lunch, receive medical support, psychosocial support and spiritual awareness.

Unfortunately, on 30 March 2020 when the first phase of the lockdown was announced life as it was changed for children living and working on the streets. The experience would be befitting an essay titled the day I will never forget. The announcement of the twenty-one day lockdown by President Emmerson Mnangagwa meant a great change in street life. Sources of the children's food, money, counselling services, bathing places, clean clothes and medical assistance, only to mention but a few, were temporarily closed and movement was restricted. For varying reasons, going back home was not an option for most of the children living and working in the streets.

Abusive parents and guardians, hunger, lack of access to school, exposure to immorality are among the factors pushing children to the street not denying the fact that juvenile delinquency also has a significant influence. Three of the children were born into the streets and know no other home. Reportedly, there are young girls that have been taken in by men during this COVID-19 lockdown period. Young boys, on the other hand, were left with nowhere to go and sheltered themselves in old unoccupied town structures and emerge at night to scavenge in supermarket bins.

Going home was a non-starter for some as one child said, "Our families will not accept us, they will most likely suspect that we might be infected with COVID-19. This is despite the fact that with or



*They turned to theft for survival.*

without COVID-19 they never want us back home due to the street culture we acquired which is unfamiliar like."

Moving around the quiet streets of Mutare due to the lockdown which forced most businesses to close down and people to stay in their homes, a lot of things could be observed.

For the children, stealing maize, pumpkins, sugar cane and yams from people's fields has become the order of the day as their usual sources of food supply have dried up. The people that they worked for on a minimum wage of a meal per day had closed down their businesses as well. Life on the street has become very unbearable. Street life has drastically changed and the boys are often intoxicated to cope with the stressful environment. The boys have reported that some of them are getting very sick as a result of eating dirty food and ingesting drugs on empty stomachs. There are also reports that sodomy has become high among the boys between the ages of 10 and 14 years. The reasons are unclear.

It is a requirement for Simukai Child Protection Programme staff members to do day and night street visits to identify children that would have joined the streets so that they could quickly rehabilitate them and reunite them with their



families while it is still early. Street visits were carried out from day one of the lockdown both during the day and in the evenings to find out if they were going back home and how they were surviving. Initially, conducting the street visits had its own challenges because some law enforcers hampered staff members from accessing the streets.

With each passing day since the announcement of the national lockdown the children looked more hopeless. Simukai Child Protection Programme mobilized food from well-wishers and gave the boys but mainly one meal was provided. The children were neither practicing social distancing nor regularly washing their hands. They were also picking up disposed face masks from bins and reusing them.

There are reports that the government through the Department of Social Welfare Mutare District wanted to evacuate children from the streets in a bid to safe guard them and work in the best interest of the child. Simukai Child Protection Programme offered its Rehabilitation Centre where 15 boys are housed. They were each given mattresses, blankets, toiletries and food. There is a security guard during the day and another at night as well as a matron to ensure security of the children and to assist the children. A nurse came and conducted medical checkups on the children before the rehabilitation process to test the boys for COVID-19 symptoms.

So far during their stay at the rehabilitation centre one child was treated from malaria, another for a tooth ache and four had severe stomach aches immediately after being housed. Government Assisted Medical Treatment Orders (AMTOs) offered treatment to the boys. A local registered nurse volunteered to do medical check-ups on a weekly basis.

A pool table and a television set were secured as part of the children's entertainment. Children have been

receiving tailor-made activities to help them undo the street culture so that they can be reunited with their families. One on one sessions were done with every child so that they could provide their personal details and the reasons why they left homes for the streets. Five children were reunified through the Department of Social Welfare. None of the children has returned back to the streets but continuous follow-up is being done. Among sessions done with the children, communication skills were also imparted on them and now that they were in an enclosure they appreciate each other's differences so as to prevent conflict.

Great appreciation goes to individuals, families and churches that have donated clothes, food and other services to the children so that they can be well taken care of during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, the organization is calling for more partners to come on board and assist in giving protection and ensuring the life, survival and development of these children.

*Every child deserves a safe place and a family.*



*The boys are now guaranteed of at least one meal a day.*

# Doing things differently



*In the wake of COVID-19, a lot has had to change in the lives of a group of young boys.*

*While staying at the rehabilitation center the boys who live and work in the streets of Mutare have learnt the importance of washing hands frequently under running water and practicing respiratory hygiene.*



*At Simukai Child Protection Programme the boys are gaining skills that will help them live harmoniously with other community members.*



*The boys now bath daily, wash their clothes, attend daily classes, receive counselling and eat nourishing food while surrounded by youth friendly service providers.*



# 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  
Shamwari Yemwanasikana Hotline 0772 607 384

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

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