

TellZim Reporter

MASVINGO — Zimbabwe's Covid-19 vaccination rollout programme reminds one of a scene from the movie and novel *Animal Farm* where some animals have proven to be more equal than others.

The country has received Covid-19 vaccine donations from China to the tune of about 500 000 doses and have been administered in phases with the first phase catering for the frontline health workers and essential services.

The classification of people in the face of the deadly Covid-19 pandemic has birthed fertile grounds for corruption as the powerful have reportedly taken over the vaccination programme putting their relatives in front of the vaccination queue at the expense of the intended beneficiaries.

Zanu PF Masvingo provincial political commissar Jevias Masosota and Ndaramba High School Physical Education teacher David Masomere's vaccination in the first phase raised eyebrows and a lot of questions since the two do not fall under the essential services and frontline workers bracket.

Murky use of Covid-19 vaccine in Masvingo



David Masomere a Physical Education teacher at Ndaramba High school receiving his first jab last month

is alive and well after receiving his jab then they would have confidence in the vaccine," said Masosota.

Masomere also shared the same view saying he was a community leader who plays a critical role to make sure that people understand the need to get vaccinated so he should lead from the front.

both vaccinated together with Minister of State for Masvingo Provincial Affairs and Devolution Ezra Chadzamira and Zanu PF national political commissar Victor Matemadanda together with Masvingo's police, prisons and military bosses.

Analyst and Great Zimbabwe University (GZU) media lecturer Dr Gift Gwindingwe said the issue can be looked at from two fronts where in the first instances some people are being used as pawns to try and coerce people into vaccination while on the other hand the limited Covid-19 doses create a fertile ground for corruption

"It is two folded really. The government is using some people as pawns to intricately coerce people into accepting vaccination without using the actual force.

"The truth is people are sceptical about the vaccine and what better way to demystify the whole process than using the very same people they interact with on daily basis.

"There are a lot of people who say they would only get vaccinated after they see that the ones who took the jab first have survived so this is what is being done, it's a strategy," said Dr Gwindingwe.

He said the government, on the other hand, has failed to instil public confidence in securing the vaccines arguing that the phased approach creates room for manipulation and corruption.

"The government has failed to secure enough jabs for its people. This is a pandemic that kills a lot of people and no one would want to see their relatives die.

"What then happens is that people will use their influence and connections to jump the queue because no one wants to be caught unvaccinated especially when the virus is said to be mutating and a deadly third wave being recorded in some countries.



Dr Gift Gwindingwe

"The people are panicking and what the government should have done was to procure adequate doses for the target population and make sure that the vaccines are being administered at the lowest levels of the community.

"The challenge should be manpower to administer the doses not the doses themselves. If there is this shortage then survival instinct will automatically kick in," said Dr Gwindingwe.

Another analyst Dr Last Alfandika who is also GZU media lecturer

said corruption has taken over the vaccination programme and people are taking advantage of the low vaccination uptake to pull their relatives and friends to the front of the queue.

"Corruption is not only when you benefit on material things but when you use your position or influence to benefit from services.

"This is what is happening with Covid-19 vaccines. We are now in the second phase of the vaccination rollout programme and there are people who have already benefitted yet they do not fall under the first or second classification.

"The whole system is very porous and the well-connected are just taking advantage of the broken system to have their relatives take the jab.

"They may argue that the vaccination uptake is low but that does not justify corruption," said Dr Alfandika.

He said the vaccination process itself was frustrating and not user friendly hence the reason why people were not getting jabbed.

"The vaccination itself is slow and

that is the biggest reason why we are recording very low numbers. How can you centralise the process to clinics and hospitals?

"That is a bottle neck system to dissuade people from receiving the jab. The vaccine must go to the people and not the other way round.

"How do you justify giving Masvingo province enough doses for only 11 000 people when we have over a million people? Classification of people in the face

of people in the face of the pandemic is a major concern.

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Jevias Masosota

Masosota told TellZim News that he was a leader and an advocate of the vaccination programme hence could not convince people to get jabbed when he had not taken the vaccine.

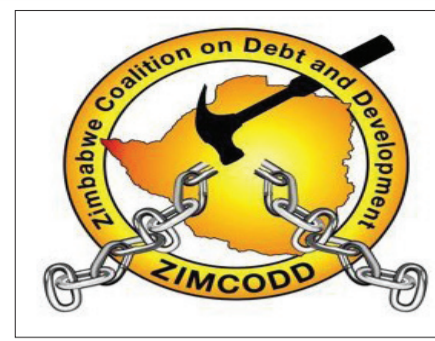
"How can we tell people to get vaccinated when we have not taken the vaccine ourselves? We have to lead by example and that is what we have done.

"People have seen that Masosota

"I took the jab to make sure that people see it was safe. There is no politics at all. If you see I have been doing Covid-19 and vaccines awareness programmes in town and people would ask the obvious question as to whether I was vaccinated or not.

"I cannot be going around talking about a jab which I have not taken," said Masomere.

Masomere and Masosota were



Covid-19 and impact on female entrepreneurs

...worst of lockdown may be over, but challenges remain



Moses Ziyambi

There are many resettlement schemes around Masvingo that came into being courtesy of the willing buyer-willing seller programme as well as the succeeding fast track Land Reform Programme of the early 2000s. These include Chidzikwe, Chipinda, Mayo, Mazare and Summertown that are all under Masvingo Rural District Council. The Zimbabwe Farmers Union (ZFU) Masvingo region says many agro-based entrepreneurs in these areas are women who grow vegetables for sale in Masvingo city especially at Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle Market.

More prominently known as 'Chitima Market', a colloquial name derived from its closeness to a railway line, the Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle Market is the biggest informal market in the city.

It was established in 2005 as part of the Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle rebuilding exercise which followed the controversial urban clean-up campaign known as Operation Murambatsvina.

The shanty market comprises a vegetable section which is dominated by women, and a clothing section which has both male and female traders. Under normal circumstances, the market is a hive of activity, with farmers and traders selling all kinds of vegetables and such grains as sorghum, millet, beans and wheat. Before the lockdown, around 450 informal traders did business at the vegetable section of the market per day.

Many of those entrepreneurs were female fresh produce farmers from the resettlement schemes while others residents of the city who got their stock in bulk from the farmers every morning.

When the first phase of the

lockdown came into effect at the end of March last year, the market was shut down and all the farmers and traders lost their surest source of reliable income.

Council went on to raze down the whole vegetable section of the market which was made up of wooden and plastic vending stalls. The local authority has, however, so far not managed to adequately replace those makeshift structures with proper ones as was promised. "The lockdown has been the hardest challenged we have faced since we got resettled. Not even the droughts of 2002 and 2008 led to as much losses as we suffered this time around because some farmers here have some small irrigation systems that draw water from Mazare River," said Ruvarashe Chuma of Mazare, who normally sells of her produce at Chitima Market.

A mother of three who is married to a polygamous man, Chuma said

she suffered serious losses as her tomatoes and cabbages, which were grown on a one-hectare piece of land, could not be delivered to the market.

"I had many tomato and cabbage seedlings which I had hoped to plant and harvest in winter when the tomato market is usually undersupplied hence most rewarding. Unfortunately, I did not make much from my efforts as I failed to get the tomatoes to town. I looked for new markets in rural areas where I sold at giveaway prices. Some of the produce actually went to waste," said Chuma.

Her story was shared by Dorcus Muzire of Summertown who said the lockdown was the most difficult setback she had encountered in recent years.

Since 2012, Muzire had been a regular of Chitima Market where she traded either sugar beans from her piece of land or millet

(mhunga) bought in bulk from farmers in Mwenezi district for resale in Masvingo city.

"I am sitting with over 300kg of millet and a similar amount of beans which I could not sell in time due to the lockdown. I am a member of a women's club in which we take turns giving each other money per month to enable members to buy inputs and tradable produce but we could not continue during the lockdown. There are eight of us in the club and I owe my colleagues money," said Muzire, a mother of four.

She said although the lockdown had now been significantly relaxed, recovering from its devastation would be an uphill task and would take a very long time.

Chitima Vegetable Vendors Association chairperson Tamisai Katini said close to 300 women who are members of her grouping were in dire straits.

"We are suffering. Our regular income stream was blocked all of a sudden and our members, who are mostly women, face severe financial difficulties. Some have since relocated back to their rural homes. Others are trading from home but it's never the same," said Katini.

She criticised council for failing to replace all the destroyed market stalls in time, and for allocating the few available spaces in the upgraded part of the vegetable side of the market 'in a non-transparent manner'.

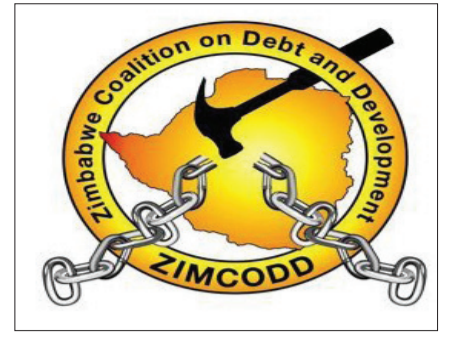
"They razed the whole market but what was built anew is not enough. Some traders who had always known this place as their only workplace were excluded while new traders were allowed in. We feel preference should have been given to those who worked here before the lockdown," said Katini.

Masvingo Urban Ward 1 Councillor Selina Maridza, whose ward incorporates the oldest and poorest part of town, said she was working with many desperate women of her ward to help them find new ways of doing business.

"Many residents in this ward



COVID-19 FOCUS



Covid-19 and impact on female entrepreneurs

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called Chitima their work place for over 10 years but they are now at home where they live in worse poverty than before. We are working to encourage them to trade from home and to form WhatsApp groups to market their merchandise. I often tell them that as women, they should form groups and support each other rather than needlessly compete against one another," said Maridza.

earnings, but had also increased cases of domestic violence.

"Many women in my ward used to come to the city to trade but the lockdown stopped all that. As a result, many women became more dependent on government and donor food aid programmes. With less means to spend their time productively and almost always at home, they have become victims of abuse at home," said Makomeke who herself has donated foodstuffs and money

Development in Zimbabwe (CGCZ) operations manager Chida Mudadi, said it was a sad reality that the lockdown had had a net effect of women's earnings and ultimately their safety at home.

"There is a correlation between income levels and vulnerability of women and we noticed that the lockdown made women more vulnerable as it froze their earning capacity and rendered them more dependent on men. As a result, cases of domestic violence increased during the lockdown," said Mudadi whose organization works for women's economic empowerment, climate adaptation and supporting livelihoods in such rural and peri-urban areas as Bikita and Mashava.

In Mhene village Masvingo Rural Ward 12, CGCDZ also supports dozens of women who run a lucrative horticulture project which was not fully spared by the impact of the lockdown.

Women Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ) Masvingo Chapter coordinator Belinda Mwale said the lockdown did disrupt

women's lives. She however praised the resilience that some women had demonstrated in the face of immense adversity.

"Many women resorted to roadside vending in the night to evade a crackdown by the police but this exposed them to greater dangers of abuse. Perishables also contributed to the losses suffered by female fruit and vegetable vendors and farmers.

"It is pleasing, however, that a whole new home industry has emerged in high density suburbs where some innovative women are now producing and selling their goods," said Mwale.

With the lockdown having been substantially relaxed at the beginning of this month, business is slowly returning to the popular shanty market.

However, the coronavirus pandemic means conditions of trade will never be the same and it remains to be seen whether or not female entrepreneurs will be able to fully-recover from the devastation.



Aleta Makomeke

Her counterpart in Masvingo Rural Ward 5, Aleta Makomeke said the lockdown had not only had a negative impact on women's

to some of the most vulnerable of women and families in her ward.

Centre for Gender and Community



Mwale leading proceedings at a event

Murky use of Covid-19 vaccine in Masvingo

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of this deadly pandemic is in every sense wrong," said Dr Alfandika.

Dr Alfandika said he was willing to get vaccinated but he can only do so when the system gets decentralised.

You cannot ask me to go to the hospital to get vaccinated when there are other pressing things to attend to. You do not require sophisticated machines to get vaccinated so I should be able to get the service right on

Sengayi told TellZim News that he was worried about the way the vaccination programme was being conducted saying those without connections would just have to wait and hope that the pandemic does not get to them first before the vaccine.

"It is quite unfortunate that some animals are more equal than others. Those without connections like ourselves and millions others would just have to wait until the chosen ones get their share.

"It was only a matter of time before the whole programme was hijacked by the rich and powerful elite. In the end, it is us the poor who will suffer," said Sengayi.

The deputy minister of Finance Clemence Chidzwa recently told a Zanu PF Masvingo Provincial Coordinating Committee (PCC)

meeting that the government has enough money to secure doses to attain head immunity.

To attain head immunity, the government intends to vaccinate about 10 million people in the country.

Masvingo Provincial Medical Director (PMD) Dr Amadeous Shamhu recently told a Zanu PF PCC meeting that they have so far managed to vaccinate a total of 3 600 frontline health workers out of a total of 6 000 in the province during the first phase.

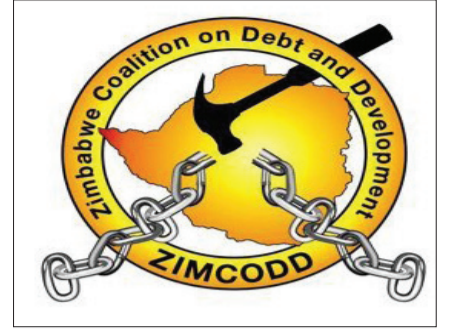
Statistics regarding the total number of people who have received the jab in Masvingo province have remained shrouded in mystery with sources saying the low uptake rate has triggered the secrecy.



Dr Last Alfandika

"I am prepared to take my jab but the problem is that it is not easily accessible.

my door step," said Dr Alfandika. A 27-year-old Rujeko resident Cainos



Why vaccine hesitancy is rife in Masvingo

By Tatenda Chitagu

The Sinopharm and Sinovac BioTech COVID 19 vaccines have joined the long list of products from China that are treated with disdain by Zimbabweans.

Dubbed Zhing Zhongs, most products from the East Asian giant, touted as the country's 'all-weather friend', are shunned for being substandard and not durable.

Even though Health Minister Constantine Chiwenga, who is also the vice president, was the first one to get the Chinese COVID 19 jab, his public gesture has not been emulated by frontline workers in Masvingo.

Chiwenga's principal, President Emmerson Mnangagwa, who only got vaccinated weeks later when a second batch that included another Chinese Sinovac Biotech vaccine arrived, at one time said those not inoculated will not board public transport.

"Nobody is forced to be vaccinated...but it will come a time when those who are not will not board ZUPCO buses," he said.

Chiwenga also reiterated the president's point this week in an interview with broadcaster Ruvheneko Parirenyatwa, saying the COVID 19 vaccination card could be soon used as a passport to public utilities if people continue shunning the vaccination program.

But the message from the country's top citizens, it seems, is falling on deaf ears in the province.

Out of the initial 22 000 doses supplied to Masvingo province on 19 February, only 3 600 front liners were inoculated as of last week, according to statistics availed by the provincial COVID 19



Dr Ammadious Shamhu

taskforce.

Masvingo provincial medical director, Dr Ammadious Shamhu said there are around 6 600 health workers in the province, excluding other frontline government workers who are targeted for the initial inoculation program. This means not all frontline health workers have been inoculated as the figure of those who got the jabs includes other frontliners like journalists and others at high exposure to the pandemic.

Some of the few frontliners that got inoculated said they did so 'out of fear'. This follows the taking over of the mass roll-out program by the army medical personnel, as well as threats from government.

Investigations by this publication reveal that among other reasons, suspicion and stigma are the top causes of the low uptake of the vaccines, with many developing a wait and see attitude.

"We do not know if there are side effects or not, or whether the

vaccines are effective. You know everything Chinese is not trusted in Zimbabwe," one nurse said in an interview, off the record due to retribution fears.

"Better the devil we now know (COVID 19), than the vaccine we do not. After all, COVID 19 has chances of recovery. What if you get lifelong side-effects from a vaccine you do not understand," another frontliner from the security services confided to this publication.

Worsening the mistrust were remarks by former Masvingo provincial medical director, Robert Mudyiradima, now Chief Director responsible for Policy, Planning and Monitoring & Evaluation in the Ministry of Health and Child Care in Zimbabwe, who admitted that no tests were done on the Sinopharm vaccines in the country to establish its efficacy.



Dr Robert Mudyiradima

Mudyiradima made the admission when the country received its first batch of the 200 000 Sinopharm vaccines on 15 February at the Robert Mugabe international airport, some of which were donated to Zimbabwe.

"When we immunise, we will take the evidence that it works or not, it has not been tested yet so we cant say it works or not to the new South African variant," Mudyiradima said in remarks that unsettled government.

Health and Child Care deputy minister John Mangwi, in a firefighting measure, told Senate a week later that the Sinopharm vaccine from China does not need further clinical trials as they were already done internationally to check its effectiveness.

"Before it is administered on people, we have what we call the World Health Organisation which writes to confirm that yes, this vaccine does work, and for example, to see how it works, it can be administered on a sample of five or ten healthy young men. What we have now in the country is a vaccine that has been dealt with already," Mangwi said.

This did not help matters either.

"When there are conflicting signals from the top, it shows some discord, We are afraid we will be used a guinea pigs, especially when the vaccine was donated. Free things may be expensive in the long run," another Masvingo frontliner said.

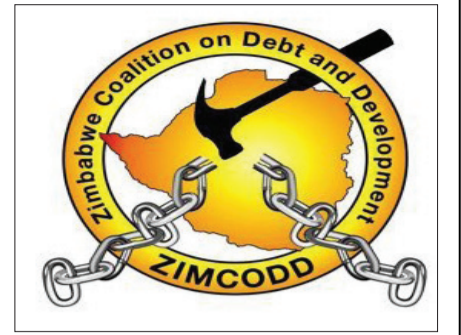
Itai Rusike, Executive Director, Community Working Group on Health (CWGH) said the vaccine hesitancy is due to a



Dr John Mangwi



COVID-19 FOCUS



Itai Rusike, Executive Director CWGH

number of factors which include scepticism on government itself, mistrust of Chinese goods as well as social media misinformation.

“Scepticism of government, the Sinopharm vaccine and the general mistrust of Chinese goods and products has laid fertile ground for the vaccine hesitancy, anti-science opportunism and fear mongering that the country is currently experiencing in its Covid-19 national vaccination roll-out programme resulting in the general poor uptake of the Sinopharm vaccine.

“Social media, including Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp, has been targeted both by those spreading disinformation, with organised campaigns building on previously existing fault lines in our society. Both social and traditional media operate on a business model that rewards alarmist "click bait". We need to limit the spread of harmful health misinformation and disinformation in Zimbabwe through strengthening citizens' resilience to mis/disinformation. Empowering media partners to professionally share lifesaving information and debunk disinformation on Health,” Rusike said.

Rusike said there is need to de-politicise the COVID 19 pandemic and increase awareness for improved vaccines uptake.

“Politicians have used both Covid-19 and the emergence of vaccines against the disease to score points and raise their profile. We need Covid-19 vaccine Champions representing

various constituent groups such as Politicians, Religious Leaders, Youth's Organizations, Civil Society, Health Professionals, Persons with Disabilities etcetera to assist in convincing their members followers and supporters to embrace vaccination willingness if the country is to achieve the required herd immunity of vaccinating at least 60 percent of the population. Public trust and confidence will now have to be rebuilt in the vaccine itself and requires an urgent widespread communication strategy and plan,” he said.

Citizens Health Watch trustee Fungisai Dube said

government needs to engage and consult more with the people than try to coerce them

“It goes back to raising awareness among the ordinary citizens. So for me it's lack of information. The campaign on the vaccine should be taken seriously and to the communities. It is not a matter of imposing it on people. Engage citizens, dialogue with them so that there is buy in this regard. Imposing a vaccine on a period of speculation make it really difficult for people to accept the vaccine,” she said.

Called for a comment on why there is so much vaccine hesitancy in Masvingo, Mangwiro said the vaccination program is getting a by-in in other provinces and people in Masvingo need more awareness.

“In Harare and Victoria Falls, vaccination centers are overwhelmed. We need to make people aware, and that is also your duty as journalists. Otherwise people will die and you start blaming the government again. Let us be serious as Zimbabweans,” he said.



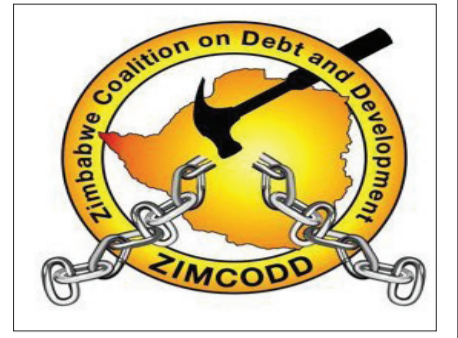
Assistant Commissioner Mawerewere

Mangwiro said his Ministry officials will come to Masvingo to assess the situation and engage the frontliners on the need for vaccination.

As of Friday, the country had recorded 36,778 cases, with 34,555 having recovered while 1,518 died.



Minister of State for Masvingo Provincial Affairs and Devolution Ezra Chadzamira



MASVINGO JABS 3 600 HEALTH WORKERS OUT OF 6 000

...as administration of second doses begin

Veesley Mhepo

Masvingo Provincial Medical Director (PMD) Dr Amadeus Shamhu has said the province has recorded a 60 percent Covid-19 vaccination rate of its health work force of 6 000 where 3 600 received the Chinese SinoPharm jab in the first round phase of the vaccine roll out programme.

Presenting the province's Covid-19 situation and vaccine uptake before the Zanu PF Masvingo Provincial Coordinating Committee (PCC) meeting last Saturday, Dr Shamhu said the situation has been encouraging but bemoaned misinformation as the biggest impediment to the success of the programme.

"We received about 22 000 doses of the SinoPharm vaccine which was enough to vaccinate 11 000

frontline workers in the first phase.

I must report that we have about 6 000 frontline health workers in the province and we have so far managed to vaccinate about 3 600 of them.

"That makes up for about 60 percent of the population. We started the vaccination in the province on February 22 and we have started the rolling out of the second dose.

"As you know the SinoPharm vaccine is administered in two doses with the first and second separated with 28 days," said Dr Shamhu.

He called on Zanu PF officials to lead from the front to spread accurate information that the SinoPharm Covid-19 vaccine was safe and dispel misinformation.

Dr Shamhu said the Covid-19 cases in the province were dropping and so was the number of new



Assistant Commissioner Musvipa receiving the Covid-19 jab last month

infections.

"Our active cases are on the decline and we are recording relatively low positive cases. We last recorded a Covid-19 related

death on February 13, 2021 and I would say that is a success story for the province.

"We have a total cumulative infection rate of 2 367 cases and

66 deaths. As at March 19, the province had 19 active cases and they are significantly dropping," said Dr Shamhu.

Covid-19 mis/disinformation: Misa educates communities on digital literacy

TellZim Reporter

BIKITA— The Media Institute for Southern Africa (Misa-Zimbabwe) in partnership with Tell Zimbabwe (TellZim) have embarked on extensive sensitization training programmes on which communities would be taught digital literacy skills and how to be safe online in the face of misinformation and disinformation during the Covid-19 pandemic.

At a workshop attended by primarily youth and women in Bikita on Saturday (March 27), Misa Zimbabwe advocacy officer Malvern Mkudu said communities must be taught on digital security and how they can protect themselves from misinformation and disinformation in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mkudu said media literacy in communities was lacking and people were being victimized by

misinformation and disinformation online.

"We live in a digital world where information is now available on the go. This advancement in technology has brought with it some negatives as people are being abused and victimized online.

"It is very important that we educate our people and equip them with requisite skills on how they can be safe online. We are training our citizens and community leaders on how to use information and communication technologies safely," said Mkudu.

He said a lot of people have fallen victim to fake news which has had an undermining effect in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

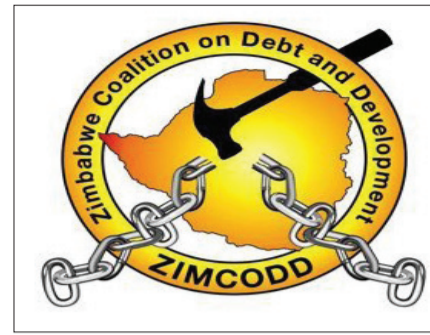
"Combating misinformation and disinformation during Covid-19 is very important. Fake news through social media is undermining the fight against Covid-19 and it's important for citizens to have skills to recognise fake news," said Mkudu.



Some of the people who attended the workshop in Bikita



COVID-19 FOCUS



Loosened lockdown: Residents' organisations pressure Zec for by-elections



TellZim Reporter

A total of 21 residents' associations and organisations coalescing under the banner Coalition of Residents' Associations has called on the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (Zec) to conduct by-elections for both national assembly and local authority vacancies. After a number of legislators were recalled by their political parties chiefly the MDC-T, Zec is expected to hold a total of 25 national assembly and 79 local authority by-elections. In a statement, the Coalition of Resident's Associations said the country's representative democracy was now in intensive care because the electorate was being denied their right to choose their representatives. "As a coalition of residents' associations, we believe that ZEC is now in a better position to conduct by-elections in hundreds of wards where the councillors were recalled by the Movement for Democratic Change- Tsvangirai in terms of Section 278 (1) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. "Legislative authority derives from the people and is exercised in terms of the Constitution (Section 117) by the legislature.

All citizens should have equal voice and representation in Parliament. "A weakened Parliament cannot fully exercise its role of holding agencies of state and government to account in accordance with Section 119 of the Constitution. Local authorities function more effectively and efficiently if they have the full representation of their elected councillors for each ward. "Several vacancies have arisen in most local authorities following the recalls of councillors. This means that the electorate is being excluded from giving their input through council committees, full councils in direct conflict with the provisions of the Constitution which provide for inclusive development planning," reads the statement. The residents' organization say that the continuous delay in conducting by-elections has been retrogressive at both parliamentary and local authority levels as service delivery has taken a huge blow. "Zimbabwe's representative democracy is inadequate without the full complement of elected councillors to lead in the oversight of council's workers, represent the electorate and make laws on behalf of the ratepayers.

"The continued delay in holding by elections in our local authorities has not only crippled service delivery but it has also severely undermined deliberative democracy with no meaningful debates taking place in council chambers. Our representative democracy is now in intensive

care because the electorate is being denied their right to choose their elected representatives. "In view of these shortcomings, it is necessary and prudent that ZEC does everything in its power to uphold their constitutional mandate and facilitate the holding of by-elections in under the permissible COVID-19 regulations as approved by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Ministry of Health and Child Care. "Democracy entails the full participation of the legislature as one of the key pillars of the state. The other pillars being the judiciary and the executive. Therefore, with low representation of the electorate in parliament, even the Constituency Development Fund, which is administered by Members of Parliament will not be utilised. The electorate in the disadvantaged constituencies deserve a fair share of the national resources," reads the statement. Political parties have been warned against wantonly recalling of elected members with the residents' organisations saying there are a lot of factors which should be considered before elected officials are recalled from office. "As for the recalls themselves

we urge political parties to be mindful of section 3(2)(f) of the Constitution which states that: "respect for the people of Zimbabwe from whom the authority to govern is derived" in their zeal to implement the controversial sections 129 and 278 (1) that recalls councillors and MPs. The political party ticket is just but one of many reasons for which citizens elect local representatives. "Citizen participation in the affairs of their local authorities is what deepens and strengthens our local government sector as the lowest tier of government in Zimbabwe. The residents as voters participate in the electoral process through the selection of their Councillors and their MPs who will play the role of policy and lawmaking, representative and oversight over council workers when elected into office. "From a human rights perspective, citizens anchor all democratic processes, and any government institution derives its mandate from the involvement of the citizens. Therefore, it is urgent that by-elections are held in all affected local authorities where there are vacancies," reads the statement.

Covid-19 threat as Masvingo Trs' College goes for a week without water

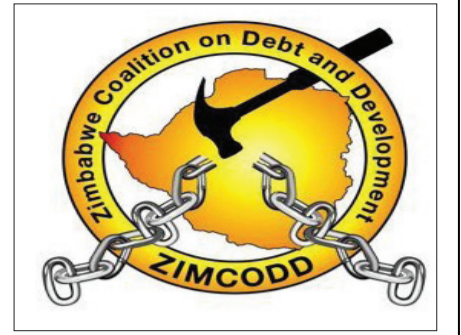


Terrence Ndwora

For the past 5 days, Masvingo Teachers' College has been operating without running tap water as a result of a burst council water pipe in Morningside which supplies water to the institution. Masvingo Teachers' College Principal Benson Mtambudzi confirmed that the institution has been experiencing some water supply challenges and hasn't been receiving water since last week. "Yes, the institution has been

operating without running tap water but council has promised to fix the problem which resulted from a burst pipe," said Mtambudzi. The water woes started last week on Thursday, March 25, when the whole city was left desperate for tap water following a major breakdown at the Bushmead water works treatment plant. Mtambudzi said that they had registered their complaint with the local authority which promised them that they should expect running tap water yesterday (March 30) but has failed to fulfill

their promise. "Council promised us that they would fix the problem and that we should expect running tap water yesterday but unfortunately didn't manage to deliver to their promise," said Mtambudzi. Currently, Masvingo Teachers' College is depending on borehole water but one of their borehole reservoir has since broken down leaving their water supply system strained. Effort to get a comment from acting Town Clerk, Eng Edward Mukaratirwa were fruitless as he said he was out of the office but referred all questions to the Public Relations officer, Ashley Jinjika. "I'm aware of the situation but I cannot comment because I'm out of office but you can contact Jinjika," said Mukaratirwa. Contacted for comment, Jinjika said she couldn't give an official comment claiming that she was not aware of the situation and would only comment after getting the report.



HWPL reaffirms commitment to achieving world peace despite Covid-19 pandemic



Chairman Man Hee Lee

Staff Reporter

On March 14, over 1,200 people in 132 countries from all sectors of the society participated in the webinar to celebrate the 5th Annual Commemoration of the Declaration of

Peace and Cessation of War (DPCW). Heavenly Culture, World Peace Restoration and Light (HWPL) held the webinar as a platform to share the organization's direction and case studies of different sectors cooperating across the world as peace messengers held the webinar. Guests included the government, women leaders, youth groups, religious

leaders, press, and members of civic society.

The DPCW reaffirms the peace-based principles contained in various international law documents, such as the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It includes principles of peace building such as the prohibition of the use of force, development of friendly

relations, and peaceful dispute settlement. It also emphasizes international cooperation based on interfaith dialogue and civic participation to create a culture of peace.

Since the DPCW's proclamation on March 14th, 2016, the DPCW-based peace building model went on to receive government recognition and support for inter-religious dialogue, peace education, youth and women's peace activities.

HWPL's founder, Chairman Man Hee Lee shared that the desire to achieve peace was not dampened by the COVID-19 pandemic. "The work to submit the DPCW is underway. However, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the entire global community, which led to a brief stop in the process but our focus, and collective determination for building a world of peace stays strong. I am confident no one could reject such a cause."

As a member of the International Law Peace Committee (ILPC) that drafted the DPCW, Professor Ciaran Burke explained the background of how the DPCW was founded on "the conviction that judicial and other dispute resolution measure can replace the role of war with the rule of law."

He also stressed the kernel of the DPCW "is the envisioned effect of the DPCW is cumulative to scale up the moral and political responsibility of world leaders by crystallizing the legal obligations of their government thereby bridging the gap between law and politics."

In 2019, the International Peace Youth Group (IPYG), an affiliate of HWPL, began the Peace Letter Campaign as an effort to compel national leaders to advocate for the adoption of the DPCW by the UN General Assembly in the form of a binding resolution.

Speaking on behalf of the youth advocates, Mr. Reuben Sapetulu, Deputy Secretary Agent for the United Nations Youth Association of Zambia (YUNA Zambia), said, "I participated in the delivery of 3,000 peace letters to the minister of justice in Zambia for the DPCW proposal. My commitment is simply because I agree that the DPCW is an effective way to bring a cessation of war and world peace." Up to date, IPYG have sent around 200,000 letters to the heads of state from all UN member states through the Peace Letter Campaign.

HWPL is a peace NGO in Special Consultative Status with the UN ECOSOC and associated with UN DGC. To cease all wars and create a peaceful world as a legacy for future generations, HWPL has been carrying out three main peace initiatives - international law for peace, interfaith dialogue meeting, and peace education.

