



**ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (ZHRC) STATEMENT ON THE
CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC: 18 MARCH 2019**

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) welcomes the decision by the Government of Zimbabwe as announced by His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Cde E.D Mnangagwa who declared the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as a State of National Disaster. ZHRC notes the security measures put in place by the Government, as well as mobilization of resources to scale up the state of preparedness of the nation in fighting the pandemic. It is commendable that the Government has started to continuously update the nation on the status of the COVID-19 situation in the country.

The Commission is however, concerned by the decision to leave schools open for the next two weeks, whilst waiting for extraordinary situations to unfold. Children are amongst the most vulnerable members of society, especially at primary school levels including Early Childhood Development (ECD) classes. ZHRC is of the view that such pupils may not have the capacity to practise the required hygiene whilst at school. Furthermore, students in secondary and tertiary institutions, may be prone to infection by the virus, considering the high volumes of students concentrated in one place and coming from different backgrounds.

ZHRC is also concerned with the unavailability of continuous supply of safe, clean and potable water, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas, to enable citizens to continuously wash their hands and maintain general hygiene, as a recommended precautionary measure to avoid contracting the Covid-19 virus. It should be noted that section 77 of the Constitution guarantees every person the right to safe, clean and potable water. The Commission therefore, calls upon the Government to scale

up its efforts in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic by implementing extraordinary measures to ensure citizens in rural and urban areas have access to clean water.

ZHRC also remains concerned with the status of the public transport situation in the country, whereby commuters travel in crowded circumstances, especially in the subsidized mode of transport. ZHRC views such crowding as potential risk in the spread of the virus.

ZHRC proffers the following recommendations to citizens and the Government of Zimbabwe;

1. Citizens and other stakeholders should take heed of the precautionary and preventative measures as stipulated by the Ministry of Health and Child Care.
2. The Government should reconsider the decision not to close schools and tertiary institutions leaving room for catering for emergency situations such as taking of unavoidable examinations.
3. It is critically important at this stage to observe the internationally recommended protective measures such as social distancing until the pandemic threat disappears.
4. The Government should put in place measures to curb over-crowding in public transport, as well as improve general cleanliness of public spaces.
5. The Government should put in place concrete measures to ensure the availability of safe, clean and potable water in both rural and urban areas.
6. The Government should partner with various stakeholders and employ multi-media strategies to ensure accurate information dissemination on the Covid-19 cascades down to rural areas and other marginalized sectors of our communities.

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