



IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSES TO COVID 19 ON CSOs IN ZIMBABWE

BACKGROUND

Like several other sectors in Zimbabwe including business and public service, civil society organisations are greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. They are also affected by the mechanisms that the government in Zimbabwe has put in place to contain the spread of the virus.

CHALLENGES FOR CSOs

To begin with, civil society organisations were not recognised as essential services, which seriously compromised the sector's ability to run its programmes, respond to the crisis and serve the target beneficiaries. Although some civil society organisations targeted essential service sectors like media and health, the interpretation of essential services in terms of the regulations did not apply to them. Further, due to the restrictions in public gatherings, CSO programmes that needed physical meetings were also affected. Some civil society organisations worked with groups in rural and marginalised communities and due to the restrictions in movement, engaging or assisting such groups was not possible at the time.

Further, although some activities could be implemented virtually for instance consultations, engagements, report launches or trainings, challenges relating to internet access and affordability affected the use of such alternative tools and platforms.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CSOs

The government's responses to COVID-19 also provided opportunities for CSOs in Zimbabwe to collaborate with the government. This was done in several ways including the following:

- CSOs assisted in the monitoring and documentation of COVID-19 statistics
- CSOs were also critical in disseminating COVID-19 information and ensuring this information had a wider reach.
- Due to the abundance of information and the prevalence in misinformation, CSOs played a critical role in information verification and fact checking trainings
- CSOs also ensured that government responses were gender sensitive and also catered for the specific requirements of people with disabilities.