



## REFLECTING ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE IN ZIMBABWE

### BACKGROUND

Sometime in March 2020, Zimbabwe introduced a mechanism to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures impacted on individuals, companies, and civil society organisations. These measures also impacted on the exercise of rights like freedom of movement, freedom of assembly and association, access to information and media freedom among others. This brief unpacks some of the responses by the Zimbabwean government.

### RESPONSES BY THE GOVERNMENT

On 19 March 2020, President Emmerson Mnangagwa through the Statutory Instrument 76 of 2020 on Civil Protection (Declaration of State of Disaster: Rural and Urban Areas of Zimbabwe) declared COVID-19 as a national disaster.

The government established a National COVID-19 Response Taskforce consisting of representatives from different ministries and it was further divided into subcommittees that were tasked:

- with monitoring the pandemic situation and coordinating the response
- with mobilising financial resources locally and internationally to cushion the country from the negative impacts of the pandemic.

On Monday 30 March 2020, the government decreed the first 21 day lock-down through SI

2020-083 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) Order, 2020.

Essential services were allowed to operate during the pandemic and these essential services included:

- hospital and emergency services such as fire brigade and ambulance services
- water and electricity services
- sanitary services
- money transfer and exchange services
- communication and telecommunication services including the media
- state security services

Among other things, the lockdown ran concurrently with:

- the closure of primary and secondary schools, as well as tertiary institutions.
- restriction of non-essential local travel and closure of borders (with exception for returning citizens and commercial traffic)
- prohibition of public gatherings

Section 14 of SI 83 of 2020 criminalises any publication or communication of false news about any public officer, official or enforcement officer involved in the enforcement or implementation of the national lockdown

The regulations have been revised, tightened and relaxed over time and more specifically in January 2021 and also in July 2021, under what has been termed the second and third wave of the COVID 19 pandemic.

