



Poverty Reduction Forum Trust's Position on Prevailing Socio-Economic Conditions during the National Lockdown

This paper captures PRFT's concerns on the wellbeing of vulnerable and marginalized groups such as the elderly, women, youths, the homeless and people living with disabilities during the 21 days national lockdown. Issues raised in this paper are meant to bring to light challenges faced by poor and marginalized communities which should be addressed in-order for the national lockdown to bear intended and meaningful outcomes through public adherence to national lockdown guidelines. The informal sector and farmers have also been greatly affected by the lockdown by loss of revenue and rotting of fresh produce. COVID-19 has the potential to reverse the gains we had scored regarding efforts to build a more equitable society where no one is left behind.

Surge in Prices of Basic and Essential Goods

PRFT notes with concern the continued increase in prices of basic goods during the 21 days national lockdown and lack of or shortage of basic foods such as mealie-meal and cooking oil. Closure of informal markets and informal grocery shops has placed the monopoly of basic goods supply to large retail and grocery shops who seem to be profiteering by increasing prices amidst the pandemic. The price increase of basic goods during this period is unjustified taking into account the government through the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe has fixed the interbank rate at US\$1: ZWL\$ 25 for the duration of the lockdown period and rates at the black market have plummeted from 1:45 before the lockdown to 1:32. In light of the basic goods prices increases we recommend the following;

1. While we commend the President for making a strong call against profiteering by retail shops, we urge the Government to put in strict mechanisms that guarding against the rampant profiteering that we are currently witnessing during the national local lockdown period;
2. The Government should prioritize subsidizing basic goods and services using funds from the national budget virement from suspended programmes and projects as already mentioned by the Minister of Finance in response to COVID-19;
3. The recently launched Government –UN USD\$715 million Humanitarian Response Plan should be administered in a transparent and accountable manner, ensuring that needy beneficiaries are identified and targeted in a transparent way. CSOs have a role to play by tracking the use of resources and ensure that poor and marginalized households benefit from this response plan.

Inadequate Provision of water and sanitation services

The fight against the corona virus requires good water and sanitation provision for people to practice good hygiene practices as emphasized by health experts. Sadly PRFT notes with concern the inadequate provision of water in and around Harare. Despite the High Court Ruling of 31 March 2020 ordering City of Harare to provide water to all its residents after an urgent chamber application was filed by Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA) , services have not improved on the ground to help communities fight the pandemic. Social

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distancing is not being observed as residents queue and jostle for the precious liquid. The lockdown efforts will be in vain if transmission starts in such environments and the ripple effect will be a socio-economic disaster.

1. There is an urgent need for government and City of Harare to operationalize the court ruling and ensure there is improved water supply through the provision of water bowsers that can supply water street by street in areas that have dry taps and do not have boreholes.

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