



# The Best of Us in the Worst of Times, A Review of Giving During the Corona Virus Pandemic

## COVID-19 and Philanthropic Responses

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# Introduction

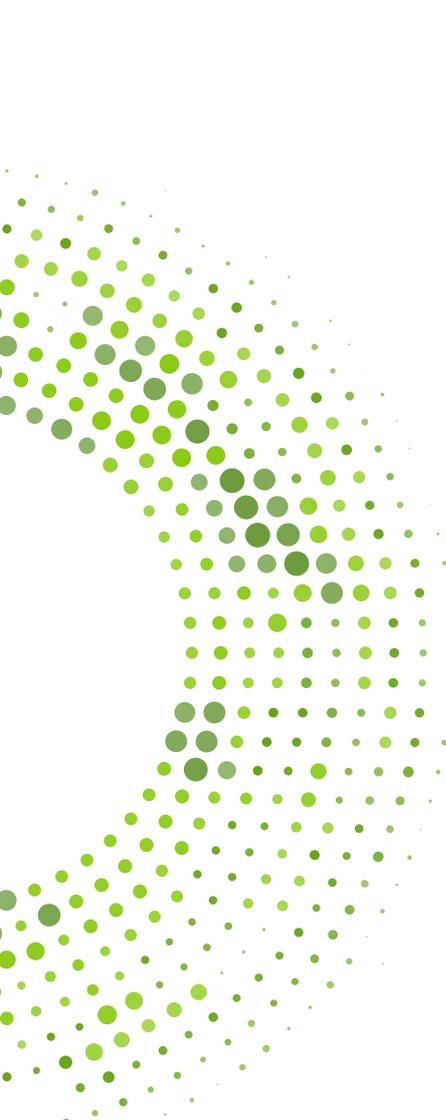
The first COVID-19 death in Zimbabwe on the 23rd of March 2020, dramatically demonstrated the lack of preparedness for the pandemic and how under resourced the public health sector in Zimbabwe was. It also served to demonstrate that government alone could not address the pandemic. This was despite numerous assurances by government that the country was prepared for the pandemic<sup>1</sup>. At the time the country faced a severe shortage of testing equipment, personal protective equipment (PPE), medication and equipment like ventilators which are key in managing patients with COVID-19.

The pandemic has probably brought the worst out of most of our leaders and the best out of the ordinary citizens. We have seen leaders move from one bad decision to the other. COVID-19 related allegations of corruption have already led to the dismissal of the then Minister of Health and Child Care. It is alleged that the Minister was involved in corruption where he instigated the illegal awarding of contracts to Drax International LLC and Drax Consult SAGL without a competitive tender process (Aljazeera.com, 20 June 2020)<sup>2</sup>. The Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) like its counterparts across the continent has not adequately managed to curtail profiteering or stealing by politically connected business elites.

However, it is not all gloomy. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in philanthropy from corporates, Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) and individuals. Although the country has faced major crises in the recent past like Cyclone Eline in 2000, the 2018 cholera outbreak and Cyclone Idai in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic is probably the first time where we have seen a dramatic increase in the number of donations from individuals and grassroots groups towards a disaster. Citizens, within and outside of Zimbabwe have rallied to give towards mitigating the impact and wider effects of COVID-19 on the country. In this report we carry out a detailed analysis of responses to COVID-19. We analyse both the GoZ's responses and also the actions taken by citizens.

1. <https://www.voanews.com/science-health/coronavirus-outbreak/zimbabwe-says-100-percent-prepared-coronavirus>
2. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/06/zimbabwe-health-minister-granted-bail-60m-corruption-case-200620190428039.html>





# Response to COVID-19 in Zimbabwe

## Overview of Giving in Zimbabwe

Since the pandemic broke out there has been a remarkable rise of unprecedented giving. COVID-19 has put on the spotlight the various acts of giving from grassroots levels to large corporate level all over the world. This has also been the case with Zimbabwe; and what is even more remarkable is that this giving has been happening in the midst of a long-term economic crisis. We have already noted elsewhere that Zimbabweans from various sections of society, do give (see Jowah 2020). During the Cholera epidemic in 2015 and with Cyclone Idai in 2019, citizens came alongside government to mobilise resources to help deal with these crises and support those most heavily impacted by these events. It is largely due to actions of citizens' solidarity that the country has not completely collapsed despite economic challenges and the decrease in the provision of social services at local and central government level, which has seen a significant deterioration in the quality of public health provision.

## Government Response to COVID-19

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the GoZ in March announced a ZWL\$600 million cash transfer program targeting 1 million vulnerable households during the COVID-19 lockdown period (Investment Quarterly Magazine, 2020). Additionally, government also announced a COVID-19 economic recovery and stimulus package and set aside funds for:

- Supporting different economic sectors, including agriculture (ZWL\$6 billion), mining (ZWL\$1 billion), tourism (ZWL\$0.5 billion), SMEs (ZWL\$0.5 billion), and arts (ZWL\$0.02 billion)
- Expanding social safety nets and food grants (ZWL\$3.9 billion)
- Setting up a health sector support fund (ZWL\$1 billion); and
- Upscaling investments in social and economic infrastructure in Cyclone Idai affected communities (ZWL\$1.8 billion).

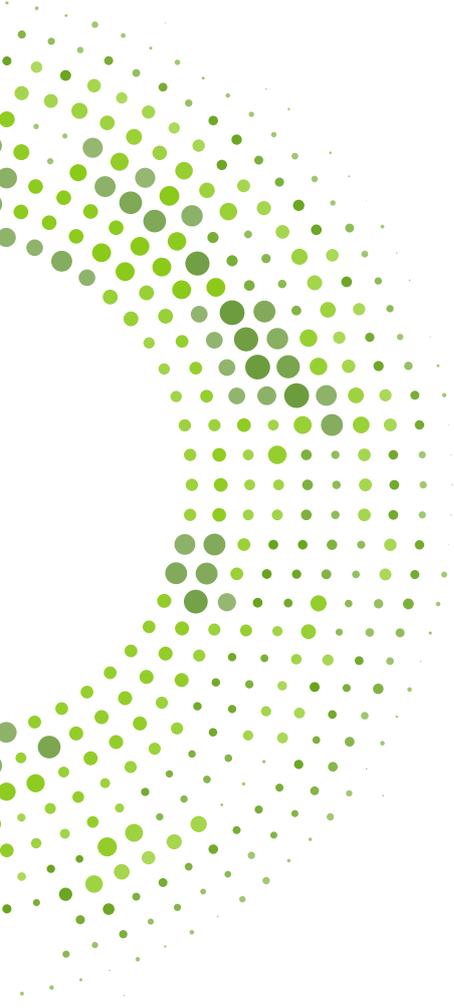
Prior to COVID-19, government had suspended hiring within the health sector. The government has since lifted the ban and created a 20% (4 713) increase in medical personnel. Government also increased salaries for civil servants and in June, it was announced that they would receive US\$75 and pensioners would receive US\$30 per month from June initially till August 2020 as a COVID-19 pandemic cushion. This cushion was extended to December 2020.

To cushion the vulnerable members of society, the government allocated ZWL\$2.4 billion for COVID-19 cash transfers. The identification of beneficiaries is ongoing, and over 202,077 beneficiaries are receiving allowances of ZWL\$300 per household<sup>3</sup>. As at end November 2020, the Treasury had disbursed ZWL\$98 million through the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare to vulnerable households. The GoZ also announced<sup>4</sup> that it would look to expand the social safety nets and food grants from ZWL\$300 per household to ZWL\$600 per household<sup>5</sup>.

The GoZ also suspended import duty and taxes on goods (including equipment for testing, protection, sterilization, and other medical consumables) and services related to COVID-19 to allow for speedy procurement processes. Further, interests and penalties were waived on corporate taxes and companies were allowed to extend their payments as a measure to facilitate quick procurement of essential goods. Government also relaxed procurement regulations to facilitate speedy procurement of essential goods and services. Government also offered corporate tax credits of up to 50 percent for COVID-19 donations. (IMF, December 2020)



3. [https://www.dpcorp.co.zw/assets/2021\\_budget\\_statement\\_final\\_25-nov\\_0100hrs.pdf](https://www.dpcorp.co.zw/assets/2021_budget_statement_final_25-nov_0100hrs.pdf)
4. <https://news.pindula.co.zw/2020/11/26/covid-19-cash-transfers-to-be-increased-mthuli/>
5. Approximately USD4 to USD8 using the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Auction Rates - [https://www.rbz.co.zw/documents/Foreign\\_Exchange\\_Auction\\_November/AUCTION-RESULTS-PUBLICATION-FORM-24.11.2020.pdf](https://www.rbz.co.zw/documents/Foreign_Exchange_Auction_November/AUCTION-RESULTS-PUBLICATION-FORM-24.11.2020.pdf)



While the lockdown measures in place are meant to slow down the spread of COVID-19 and where possible cushion the corporate sector, but here is the conundrum, the country's economy is largely informal. Limited measures have been put in place to support informal, micro, small and medium sized enterprises (see Chaora, 2020<sup>6</sup>). Livelihoods have been significantly affected (see Murisa, 2021<sup>7</sup>). The majority of citizens have not benefitted from the measures put in place by government.

On 16 May 2020 formal businesses re-opened when the President moved the country from Level 4 to Level 2 lockdown measures. President Mnangagwa stated that informal businesses were to remain closed while the government consulted health specialists on how they could be reopened safely. Further to the Level 2 restrictions, only public gatherings of not more than 50 people were allowed, and inter-city travel remained banned. Businesses such as manufacturers, supermarkets, and banks, could continue but operating between 8am and 4.30pm compared to the six-hour day previously imposed (The Herald, 16 May 2020<sup>8</sup>). On 22 July 2020, the president announced new lockdown measures including a 6pm to 6am curfew amid a spike in infections, and a revision of business operating hours back to 8am to 3pm; however, the curfew was later revised to 8pm to 6am in August; and business operating hours were extended back to 4.30pm.

Informal businesses could re-open subject to the implementation of strict pre-conditions and formal registration protocols such as getting hawkers and vending licenses, paying taxes, and ensuring cleaning of work areas as for reopening. These measures resulted in some businesses cutting down their workforce to curtail losses during the lockdown. It is estimated that 90% of businesses in Zimbabwe are in the informal sector and many of these do not have capacity to sustain their businesses if they are not trading. The closure of these businesses for several weeks since the end of March had a significant impact on the productivity of small enterprises. The closure most also increased the vulnerability of the majority of households in Zimbabwe (see Murisa, 2021).



6. <https://www.sivioinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/SI-Report-Impact-of-COVID-19-Lockdown-on-Micro-Small-Medium-Scale-Enterprises-in-Zimbabwe.pdf>

7. <https://www.sivioinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/The-Fate-of-Livelihoods-Under-COVID-19-and-Neo-Liberal-Restructuring.pdf>



The initial hard lockdown yielded positive results and the cases of infections were gradually reduced. From August 2020, government lifted the ban on inter-city travel and also staggered the re-opening of schools. Domestic flights resumed on the 10th of September 2020. Whilst international flights resumed on the 1st of October 2020. While clear processes were in place for the resumption of formal businesses beyond those considered as essential services; resumption of activities within the informal sector had not been as clear cut.

It is known that the country's capacity for disease surveillance and testing was challenged, given the already existing challenges to the public health sector. The government therefore appealed for a multi-sectorial approach to fight the pandemic and devised measures for recovery via the Humanitarian Response Plan. The aim of the plan was to complement government efforts and focus on saving lives especially amongst the most vulnerable. World Health Organisation (WHO) has also been central in improving the capacity of the country to test and quarantine through expansion of laboratory testing, training of staff and development of algorithms for the movement of returnees (Relief Web, 2020). Private players have also come on board to expand the number of facilities that can offer testing beyond state laboratories.

The government, recognising the severity of the situation within the country and the limits of its capacity developed a domestic and international humanitarian appeal launched on the 2nd of April 2020. The appeal was for US\$2.2 billion to cover the period April 2020 to April 2021. Of this, US\$300 million was meant for responding to COVID-19, US\$37 million for other critical health spending, and US\$34 million for water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). Other critical needs include US\$956 million for addressing food insecurity, and US\$20.8 million for social protection. As of September 2020, humanitarian support disbursements stood at US\$448.4 million. Key donors include the European Union, the United Kingdom, Japan, Sweden, The Global Fund, the African Development Bank, and the World Bank (IMF, 2020).

In addition to the donor funds pledged and received, corporates and individuals based in Zimbabwe as well as in the diaspora heeded government's call for support and provided donations to help support state efforts to respond to COVID-19<sup>9</sup>. These donations were either in the form of cash, PPE, testing kits/equipment, ventilators, or resources to help in the refurbishment of state facilities that were targeted to become COVID-19 treatment facilities.

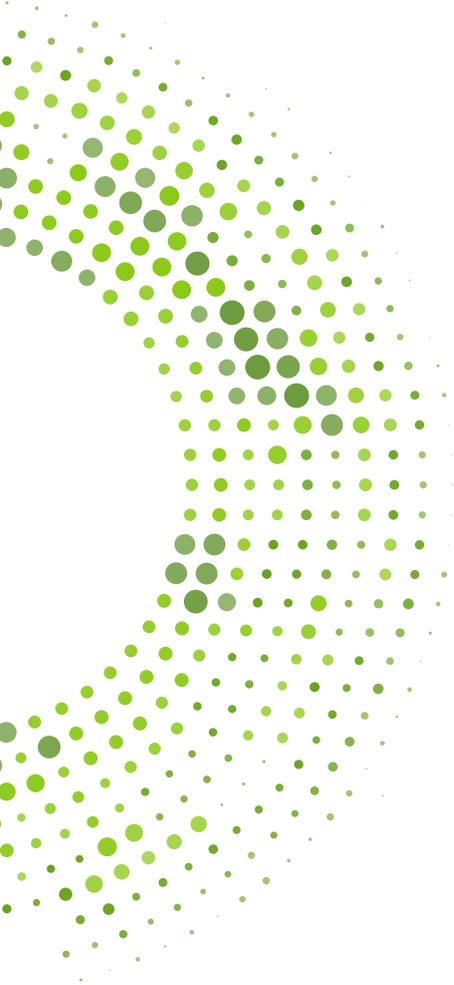
## Giving Towards Government Initiatives (Monetary and Non-monetary Donations)

China was among the first countries to offer support to the country. Chinese

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8. <https://www.herald.co.zw/zim-indefinitely-extends-covid19-lockdown/>

9. See - <https://www.herald.co.zw/delta-croco-motors-chip-in-with-more-donations/>; <https://news.pindula.co.zw/2020/06/01/stanbic-starts-distribution-of-us200-0/>; <https://www.chronicle.co.zw/telecom-giants-transform-mpilo-ward/>; <https://allafrica.com/stories/202006250235.html>



companies operating in the country invested over US\$500,000 for the rehabilitation of Wilkins Infectious Diseases Hospital in Harare, which was identified by the state to be the country’s initial main isolation and treatment centre for COVID-19.

The Zimbabwean government appealed for international and domestic assistance to help in the fight against the Coronavirus pandemic and its effects. To date the government has received responses from international and local organisations and citizens’ initiatives. As of the 4th of January 2021, the GoZ had received pledges of support amounting to US\$639,341,159 from various bi-lateral and multilateral agencies, corporates and citizens to compliment governments efforts to fight the pandemic. A total of US\$473,681,492 of the pledges had been honoured and government had spent US\$267,251,438. (ZIMCODD, 2021<sup>10</sup>). The pledges or donations were mostly in the form of resources, equipment, capacity building to support government preparedness in the fight against the corona virus.

**Table 1: Pledges/donations to the Zimbabwean Government in response to COVID-19**

Pledges	Honoured Pledges	Amount Spent
US\$639,341,159	US\$473,681,492	US\$267,251,438

Source: ZIMCODD COVID-19 Resource Tracker, Issue No.42. 4 February 2021

Some donations came in-kind in the form of food supplies, medical equipment, PPE, hospital equipment as well as the upgrading of hospitals like Wilkins Hospital. According to the Sunday Mail of 3 May 2020, a total of 152 ventilators were donated by 6 organisations. While a total of 70 entities donated hand sanitizers, 64 donated face masks, 59 organisations donated gloves, 29 donated PPE. The greatest number, 220, donated other things like medicines, hospital beds and equipment. A total of 2 279 thermometers were donated by 13 entities while over 84 000 test kits came from 6 entities. According to ZimFact (20 April 2020) at least half of the Zimbabwe’s population was already facing food shortages before the world was hit by the coronavirus crisis. Other initiatives by humanitarian organisations, churches, the government, and the private sector came through to support communities facing food insecurity during the COVID-19.

Furthermore, various non-state actors and individuals rallied to provide resources to support government efforts at a national level. In addition, there were a number of city level and community led initiatives that occurred not only to respond to COVID-19 but to also try and address the impact of COVID-19 on livelihoods.

## Citizen Solidarity Against COVID-19

After the breakout of COVID-19, we observed an increase in the number of non-state initiatives that were soliciting for support to ensure the country’s readiness to respond to the pandemic. In a desktop-based

10. [http://zimcodd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/1612496058103\\_tracker.pdf](http://zimcodd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/1612496058103_tracker.pdf)



survey conducted between March to June 2020, we found 60 citizen-led/ driven initiatives (see Annex 1), 29 businesses and seven (7) universities running initiatives within the country fighting against COVID-19 and its adverse impacts. Some Zimbabweans living in the diaspora set up various GoFundMe initiatives and some online platforms like Zimthrive expanded their platforms to include giving platforms to mobilise resources to fight coronavirus in Zimbabwe. The platform was initially set up in 2018 to discuss how Zimbabweans in the diaspora can contribute by way of investment to redevelop the nation of Zimbabwe (The Herald, 2020). The focus has been on cushioning vulnerable members through provision of food parcels, supporting health care workers through the provision of PPE and equipping and resources COVID-19 treatment facilities. Remarkably citizens did not wait for the government to take the first step in the fight against COVID-19. Some private companies and individuals took centre stage towards mobilizing resources towards the fight.

Initial resource mobilisation efforts focused on securing ventilators, testing kits and PPE equipment. Ventilators which cost from US\$15,000 up to US\$100,000 each have been a struggle for most countries and, in Zimbabwe individuals including businessman and philanthropist Strive Masiyiwa, founder and Chair of Econet Wireless started a campaign to ensure the country secured ventilators (The Herald, April 2020)<sup>11</sup>. Strive has also been involved in an initiative which is focused on lobbying African governments to develop measures that mitigate against the impact of the epidemic. As one of Zimbabwe's most influential people and biggest philanthropists, Masiyiwa, also appealed to the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other multilateral institutions to set up a US\$500 million trust fund to help Zimbabwe and Sudan tackle the novel coronavirus pandemic as the countries were omitted from wider COVID-19 relief funds due to the prevailing sanctions. Masiyiwa donated 45 Intensive Care Unit (ICU) ventilators<sup>12</sup>, 100,000 COVID-19 test kits and helped pay striking doctors and nurses to compel them to return to work.

Zimbabwe also benefitted from the efforts of international philanthropists like Chinese billionaire, co-founder, and former executive chairman of Alibaba Group Mr Jack Ma. On the 25th of March 2020<sup>13</sup>, Zimbabwe received its initial consignment of commodities from the Jack Ma Foundation which had 20,000 laboratory diagnostic test kits, 100,000 medical face masks and 10,000 protective suits and face shields. Another donated consignment from the foundation was announced on the 7th of April 2020. The donation included 500 ventilators, 200,000 suits and face shields, 2 000 thermometers, 1 million swabs and extraction kits and 500,000 gloves (The Chronicle, 2020).

Non-state actors also supported government efforts through the provision of a wide array of services such as the development of COVID-19 trackers and the sensitisation of communities on measures to take to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (e.g., OpenParlyZim); the provision of free educational awareness posters and infographics and free counselling services (e.g., Friendship Bench Zimbabwe) and the provision of meals and food hampers (e.g., Kuchenetana Trust).

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11. <https://www.herald.co.zw/masiyiwa-leads-campaign-for-zim/>

12. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202006250235.html>

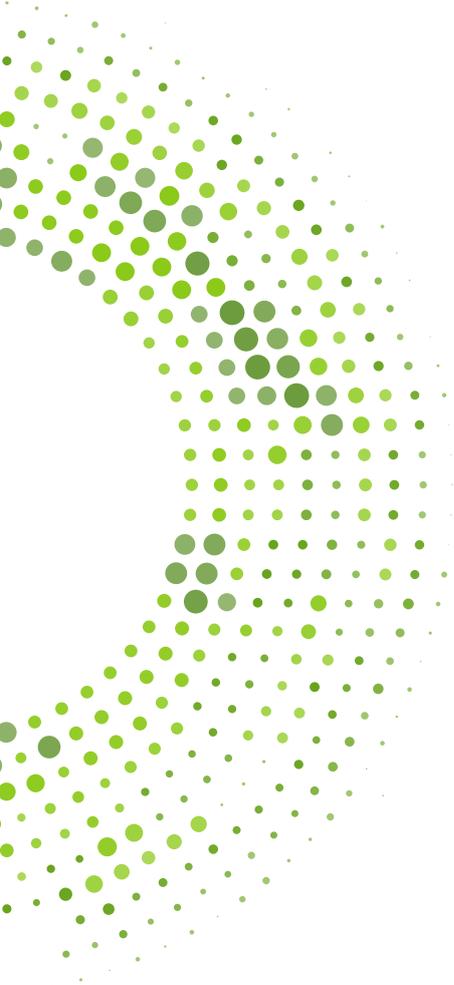
13. <https://www.herald.co.zw/zim-receives-covid-19-medical-kits/>

The next section of the paper looks at two examples of such citizen-led initiatives that we have been working with. Solidarity Trust Zimbabwe which has a national focus and Our Children, Our Hope Foundation which is a community led and driven initiative out of Epworth. The case studies below are examples of two citizen-led initiatives that highlight how individuals from across different income groups mobilise resources and respond to a need in their community brought about by COVID-19.

## The Story of Solidarity Trust Zimbabwe

Solidarity Trust Zimbabwe (SOTZIM) trustee Karen Mutasa in an interview with Ruvheneko Parirenyatwa provided insight on how the SOTZIM initiative began. She had been in New York when COVID-19 started gaining momentum in January 2020. At this point she did not think there was anything to worry about. However, one of her mentees, Zororo Makamba was rushed to Wilkins Hospital after he tested positive for COVID-19, upon his return to Zimbabwe from the United States. She remembers even talking to him over the phone while he was in hospital but in an unfortunate turn of events, he succumbed to the disease. The next day, she got a call from Tendai Murisa, another SOTZIM trustee. Tendai, said to her “listen Mai Mutasa, what if we come together and contribute US\$1000 each, don’t you think we could buy a ventilator?” At this point, the thought on everyone’s minds was that if Wilkins Hospital had a ventilator, maybe Zororo would not have lost his life. While there could have been many other factors, it was that event that triggered the idea behind SOTZIM. “It made me think what we can do, so I made a few phone calls because I didn’t want another Zimbabwean to succumb to simply because we are not ready, and we don’t have the facilities”, Karen narrated. Furthermore, others had been studying the mechanisms of the Solidarity Fund established in South Africa in response to COVID-19.





From the initial idea to buy a ventilator, the idea quickly turned into a much bigger movement with esteemed businesspeople, sport personalities, medical professionals and philanthropists coming together and harnessing their social capital to raise funds and complement government efforts in the fight against COVID-19. It was no secret that the Zimbabwean health system is underfunded and ill equipped. It made sense to direct efforts towards addressing this problem. Moreover, the country and indeed the world was witnessing a major crisis like no other in modern history resulting in so many radical changes worldwide.

SOTZIM was then established by a group of concerned Zimbabweans from various sectors with the aim to contribute effectively to the national COVID-19 response through mobilising, informing, scaling and supporting citizen-led contributions. SOTZIM is headed up by a Board of Trustees led by former banker Nigel Chanakira. The Vice Chairperson on the Trust at the time was Mucha Mkanganwi. The other trustees were Heath Streak, Tendai Murisa, Sonja De Sa, Dianne Coots, Busisa Moyo, Greg Sebborn, Wilson Gwatinga, Karen Mutasa, King Darlington Masenda, and Dr Ingrid Landman<sup>14</sup>.

SOTZIM was founded on principles of solidarity and voluntary participation, it draws on a wide array of capabilities to provide critical complementary actions for the national response. SOTZIM's work is focused on the following objectives:

- Increase awareness on COVID-19 and improve health-seeking behaviours
- Enhance prospects for equitable access to testing and treatment opportunities
- Improve the safety of frontline healthcare professionals
- Build solidarity against COVID-19

The key interventions that SOTZIM proposed to support the efforts of government were:

- Contributing towards renovating and operationalising hospitals in readiness for testing and treating COVID-19 cases
- An online platform to consolidate all the non-state initiatives to COVID-19
- Securing and distributing PPE for frontline healthcare professionals
- Establishing partnerships to provide information and support pre-screening through an adequately resourced Contact Centre
- Assist with the collation, reporting and flow of critical information for planning and communication in the prevention and management of infection

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14. A number of trustees listed above including Nigel Chanakira, Mucha Mkanganwi, Heath Streak, Soja De Sa, and Dianne Coots stepped down from Trust in October 2020

- Actively fundraising to support all the interventions.

Once SOTZIM was formally registered as a trust according to the laws of Zimbabwe, (i) it put in place an interim operations team and appointed an interim Executive Director to manage the day-to-day operations of the trust and (ii) developed a website ([www.sotzim.org](http://www.sotzim.org)). The website was the initial step towards its efforts to create an online platform for giving to support its fundraising efforts, to consolidate all non-state initiatives to COVID-19 as well to collate critical information around COVID-19 for planning and communication in the prevention and management of infection.

SOTZIM also developed its strategy document by April 2020 to clearly articulate its message and vision as it went about the process of actively mobilising resources to support its work. One of its most immediate task was to mobilise resources for the establishment of a dedicated COVID-19 response treatment facility. The trust entered into a joint venture agreement with St Anne's Hospital to establish the St Anne's Hospital COVID-19 Response Centre (SACREC). At that time St Anne's was closed and in a state of disrepair. SOTZIM together with the team at St Anne's raised resources to ensure that the facility can re-open. The hospital was retrofitted with the required equipment to provide at least 100 general ward beds, 40 High Dependency Unit (HDU) beds and 20 Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds. SOTZIM raised approximately US\$450 000 and more than ZWL\$15 million from Zimbabwean corporates and individuals (both locally and in the diaspora) to ensure that the hospital could re-open. The hospital was officially opened to the public in August 2020<sup>15</sup>. In addition to mobilising resources for the refurbishment of the hospital, SOTZIM also mobilised PPE for use by the health personnel employed at the hospital as well money to pay for their salaries.

Additionally, SOTZIM has been working closely with (I Am for Bulawayo Fighting COVID-19 (IAM4BYO Fighting COVID-19), a trust set up by citizens largely based in Bulawayo to help improve that city's readiness in dealing with COVID-19 cases. IAM4BYO Fighting COVID-19 has since inception been involved in efforts to ensure that Ekusileni Hospital is rehabilitated and open to the public as a treatment facility for COVID-19.

Furthermore, the SOTZIM website, [www.sotzim.org](http://www.sotzim.org) was a source of information and platform for the collection of donations from citizens and businesses to support the fight against COVID-19. For a period of three months SOTZIM took over the running of government toll-free line, 2019. At that time, the line was manned by trained health professionals would provide an initial and comprehensive first line of diagnosis to citizens as part of efforts to avoid overwhelming public health centres.

"Crisis creates opportunity". King Darlington Masenda echoed these words during one of SOTZIM's interviews. He narrated how it dawned to him that Zimbabwe was at risk after witnessing what was happening to countries like Italy where health systems have been crippled by the pandemic. Certainly, before the COVID-19 pandemic, the crisis in the Zimbabwean health system

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15. <https://thezimbabwedaily.com/news/505025-just-in-hospital-opens-to-fight-covid-19.html>



was well publicised, but it took a global pandemic for Zimbabweans to start thinking of creative ways to manage the spread of COVID-19. Confronted with the current reality, it was evident that there was need for a more holistic approach to address the problem. The trustees have also been exemplary with donations from their own pockets. On the website's giving dashboard, one can even note small amounts of donations from children and this speaks to the extent of the trustees' influence. It takes a certain level of trust from donors to give money towards a cause. The economic environment in Zimbabwe is already hostile which makes it very difficult for businesses to part with money. However, with the level of mistrust in the government, organisations that provide some sort of transparency for philanthropic causes almost always get overwhelming support from businesses and individuals. In the wake of COVID-19 and the work that has been done by SOTZIM, the private sector has been key in creating opportunities for fundraising and complement government efforts which are quite slow due to a lot of red tape. In a short space of time, SOTZIM has received donations from corporates such as CBZ Holdings, Mimosa, Nedbank, Stanbic and CIMAS. Delta Philanthropies also provided significant resources to ensure that SOTZIM could establish a secretariat responsible for running the daily affairs of the Trust. These donations have gone a long way in the refurbishment of hospitals, provision of PPE and maintaining health workers manning the toll-free line.

Throughout these processes SOTZIM also sought to establish a working relationship with the government through the Ministry of Health through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

## Our Children, Our Hope Foundation - Epworth Feeding Kitchen

The COVID-19 pandemic is not only affecting global economies, but also poses a threat to livelihoods of already vulnerable groups in the global South due to decreased incomes and the limited access to food and in particular nutritious food. As already noted, the Zimbabwean economy is highly informal. The lockdown crippled an already stretched informal



economy. Many people in Zimbabwe found it difficult to fend for their families as informal trading was restricted. Cases that came to the spotlight were that of Chitungwiza and Epworth, where feeding kitchens were initiated.

Epworth, south east of Harare, has a population of approximately 200 000 residents. It is one of the impoverished settlements with many depending on informal trading. Caroline Bushu, a single mother who runs a flea market stand in Harare together with her friend Sandra saw children passing their house everyday with empty containers and plastic bags that came back filled with leftover food from a dumping area. The food was not for the pets but for them to eat as their parents could hardly provide for their daily meals. These children, between the ages of 5 and 14, made trips twice every day to the bins. The ladies' hearts were touched and decided to at least start cooking porridge for the children every day from the little they already had. The numbers grew from tens to hundreds to a thousand of children being fed from what started as just porridge to two meals a day. The initiative got the support of local and internationally based Zimbabweans and organisations and donations started sprouting in to feed the children. Through support from SIVIO Institute the foundation received a grant



from a local philanthropic organisation – Victory-Adullam Foundation to cover the purchase of food stuffs and equipment (e.g., pots, plates, dishes, dishwashing liquid) to prepare and serve meals.

The initiative faced a lot of opposition from the local authorities. At some point Caroline and Sandra were asked to cease their operations<sup>16</sup>. In the letter, the Epworth local board cited, among other things, that the operation was not registered with the Council in accordance with the Urban Council Act 29:15, it contradicted the Urban Planning By-Laws and that they were not licenced to operate. They further said the actions are also in contravention of the Public Health Act Chapter 15:17 of Zimbabwe and not, as required by law, registered as a Private Voluntary Organization (PVC) with the Department of Social Welfare. Zimbabwean journalist and filmmaker, Hopewell Chin'ono criticised the government over the move saying authorities should have just regularised the kitchen for the sake of the children.

With help from SIVIO Institute and Victory-Adullam Foundation, the initiative was registered as a charity organisation “Our Children Our Hope Organisation” with Caroline Bushu and Sandra Chikwama as the founders. Victory-Adullam foundation, run by a Zimbabwean couple, contributed resources to cover two meals per day for 1,000 children for three months. Other organisations like Restoration of Human Rights (ROHR) Zimbabwe, Scotland branch of the UK Chapter also helped with mobilization of resources. Their representatives arrived at the kitchen’s opening time, 0730hrs and witnessed the long winding queues of children and at times, accompanying adults, waiting to be fed till 0900hrs. They also witnessed the health and safety system in place – managed by the community. This involved marshalling, social distancing, wearing of masks and washing of hands among other things. All the ladies that cook and serve the meals are volunteers and give their time, skills and knowledge towards this initiative.

In September 2020, the initiative expanded their work to preparing and providing food packs to elderly members within their community<sup>17</sup>. The work of the foundation continued throughout the year despite the gradual re-opening of the economy and the number of beneficiaries within the community continued to grow. The number of meals and food packs they can provide is heavily dependent on the resources/donations that they can mobilise - however without a regular and consistent supply of donations, the initiative, and many other community feeding schemes like it face the threat of being unable to continue.

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16. <https://news.pindula.co.zw/2020/05/29/government-has-shut-down-the-kids-breakfast-kitchen-in-epworth/>

17. <https://twitter.com/AndEpworth/status/1305501604955787264>

# Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has once again revealed the willingness and propensity of Zimbabweans, to give and work together to mobilize resources. The case studies discussed above demonstrate the extent to which ordinary citizens foster networks of solidarity despite the economic crisis or challenges. The giving under discussion extends beyond just monetary resources, to the giving of skills, knowledge, physical assets and time, which highlights how philanthropy/giving must be broadened beyond the shift of money from the rich to the poor. The list we have provided is not exhaustive and based primarily on desktop research of what we could find online and groups we were directly engaged with. We believe that there has been much more that has happened on the ground but without structures or mechanisms to track and record the giving that is happening, such activities will often be under-reported and under-appreciated.

Even grassroots groups have risen in response to the COVID-19 pandemic some offering a space where residents can offer and ask for help from others in the community (Maurrasse, 2020). Giving in Zimbabwe is not a new phenomenon. Our survey in 2019 across Zimbabwe<sup>18</sup> showed that generally Zimbabweans are most likely to support each other whether it is in a time of disaster or not. The survey investigated the giving patterns of respondents.

Cyclone Idai in 2019, highlighted how Zimbabwean citizens were able to quickly and efficiently mobilize resources to support communities in the eastern part of the country hardest hit by the natural disaster. Resources were mobilised through churches (e.g. Miracle Missions at Highlands Presbyterian Church), through businesses (e.g. via cash donations raised through Econet's mobile money platform- Ecocash), and individuals who mobilised to provide support on the ground and directly to victims of the disaster, as well as individuals in the diaspora like Freeman Chari who started the Zimbabwe Cyclone Relief GoFundMe<sup>19</sup>. The giving by citizens and other non-state actors happened amidst the broader economic crisis and lack of social service delivery.

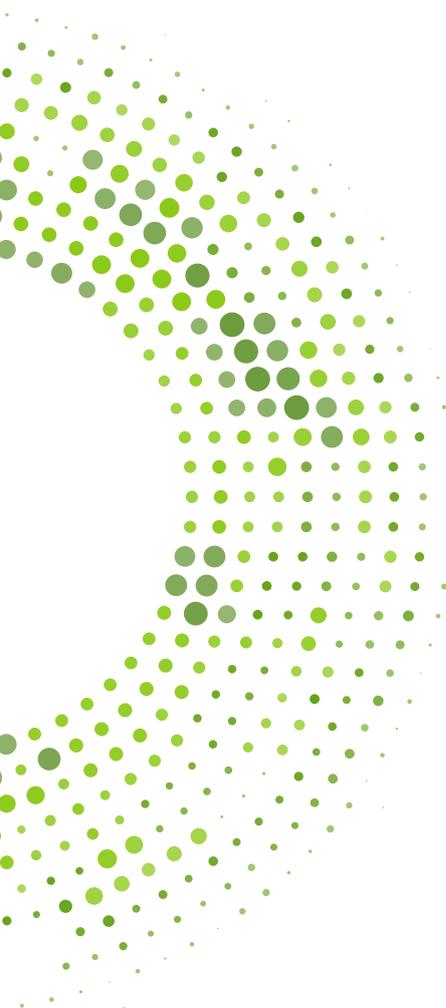
However, while Cyclone Idai happened over a definitive period, was limited to a certain geographical area and was over within a few days, the situation with the COVID-19 pandemic is somewhat different. There is no clear/ definitive timeframe as to how long this pandemic will last. The initial hard lockdown measures saw a decrease in the rates of infections and deaths. In the initial wave of infections, the number of people requiring hospitalisation and having to be put on a ventilator was very limited. There was a sense around the country, amongst citizens and by the state that the worst was over as far as COVID-19 is concerned. However, as the country opened up for business and travel, the number of infections has gone up and as we write this paper Zimbabwe is in the midst of a devastating second wave. For instance, as of 13 September 2020 the country had 7526 confirmed cases,

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18. [https://www.sivoinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Perception-on-Giving\\_Findings-from-a-survey-on-giving-in-Zimbabwe.pdf](https://www.sivoinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Perception-on-Giving_Findings-from-a-survey-on-giving-in-Zimbabwe.pdf)

19. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2019/04/11/amid-criticism-government-response-cyclone-idai-zimbabweans-pitch-and-self-help>

20. <https://twitter.com/StateOTNationZW/status/1305354109013368834/photo/1>



224 deaths, 5678 recoveries, with a recovery rate of 75% (MoHCC, 2020<sup>20</sup>). By the 12th of January 2021 the country had recorded 23,239 confirmed cases, 551 deaths, and 13 396 recoveries. In the space of four months the number of cases had grown three-fold and the number of deaths recorded more than doubled.

Zimbabwe is not out of the woods yet with COVID-19, as evidenced by the government announcing another lockdown for 30 days from the 5th of January 2021. Social media has been awash with stories of the limited public facilities and resources available to citizens requiring hospitalisation and ventilators. The Secretary for Information in Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting indicated on social media that the country was being 'overwhelmed' by the virus<sup>21</sup>. There is still some work for citizens and government. There are vast possibilities of find ways of collaboration amongst citizens to ameliorate the effects of COVID-19 on livelihoods and health outcomes.

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# Annex 1: List of Citizen-Led Initiatives in the Fight Against COVID-19

Name of Initiative	Website/Social Media Handle	Activities/Focus Areas
Solidarity Trust Zimbabwe	<a href="http://www.sotzim.org">www.sotzim.org</a>	1. Rehabilitation of Hospitals to make them COVID-19 Ready. So far working on St Anne's Hospital. 2. Establishment of Toll-Free Call Centre Manned by Doctors and Nurses, 3. Purchase of PPE
Our Children Our Hope Foundation	<a href="https://twitter.com/AndEpworth">https://twitter.com/AndEpworth</a>	Provision of two meals per day for vulnerable families in Epworth.
I Am for Bulawayo Fighting COVID-19	<a href="https://twitter.com/iam4byo">https://twitter.com/iam4byo</a>	Rehabilitation of Ekusileni Hospital and securing equipment and goods such as beds, defibrillators, ventilators, dialysis machines, PCR test kits, solar installations
Gweru COVID-19 Initiative		An intermediary facilitator and distributor of resources in cash and kind within Gweru, to plug-in all the gaps.
Mutare COVID-19 Initiative		An intermediary facilitator and distributor of resources in cash and kind within Mutare, to plug-in all the gaps.
Zimbabwe National Covid Action Trust (Zincat)	<a href="https://www.zincat.org">https://www.zincat.org</a>	Donation of Ventilators worth \$30,000 to Wilkins Hospital
Kufema Zimbabwe	<a href="https://kufemazimbabwe.org/">https://kufemazimbabwe.org/</a>	Open-source project to build and distribute ventilators and associated components to help Zimbabweans in need during this COVID-19 crisis.
Open Parly Zimbabwe	<a href="https://covidzw.info/index.html">https://covidzw.info/index.html</a>	COVID Tracker
Citizens' Initiative - Go-Fund Me (COVID Zimbabwe)	<a href="https://www.gofundme.com/f/covid-zimbabwe">https://www.gofundme.com/f/covid-zimbabwe</a>	Zimbabwe Covid-19 Citizens Healthcare Support Fund
United Programme for Athletes and Artistes in Zimbabwe initiative	<a href="https://twitter.com/upazimbabwe/">https://twitter.com/upazimbabwe/</a>	Creating unity and awareness for all athletes and artists and availing relief funds for artists and athletes in Zimbabwe
Eat Out Movement	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/eatoutmovement">https://www.facebook.com/eatoutmovement</a>	Providing meals for the vulnerable and homeless.

Name of Initiative	Website/Social Media Handle	Activities/Focus Areas
Ubert Angel Foundation	<a href="https://www.uebertangel.org/uaf">https://www.uebertangel.org/uaf</a>	Providing meals for the vulnerable.
Miracle Missions Trust	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/MiracleMissionsTrust/">https://www.facebook.com/MiracleMissionsTrust/</a>	Coordinating with business to provide food and support to vulnerable people and people operating on the front line for COVID-19
PPE for Zimbabwe Doctors and Nurses fighting Covid19	<a href="https://www.gofundme.com/f/ppe-for-zimbabwe-doctorsampnurses-fighting-covid19">https://www.gofundme.com/f/ppe-for-zimbabwe-doctorsampnurses-fighting-covid19</a>	provision of personal protective equipment like gloves, gowns, face masks, face shields, hand sanitizers, etc
Covid-19 Zimbabwe - ZimThrive	<a href="https://zimthrive.com/covid-19-zimbabwe-donate-now/">https://zimthrive.com/covid-19-zimbabwe-donate-now/</a>	resources to achieve the following: -to support the running of call centres and online platforms to effectively communicate with the Zimbabwean community. This will help to minimise and manage the myths and misconceptions and to provide support. -buying of personal protective equipment (PPE) for our dedicated health professionals who are going above and beyond their call of duty to save our lives. -secure more test kits to allow community/home testing and the availability of dedicated ambulances that will ferry people suspected of having Coronavirus. Allowing people suspected of having Coronavirus to use public transport is dangerous as it will allow many people to get infected.
Thorngrove Hospital For #CQVID-19 Testing	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/ate/631935147353561/2830145770402595/">https://www.facebook.com/ate/631935147353561/2830145770402595/</a>	Testing kits to make Thorngrove Hospital a Covid-19 testing facility
Zimbabwe COVID-19 Support Hub	<a href="https://zimcovid19.com/">https://zimcovid19.com/</a>	A one-stop hub for reliable local and international COVID-19 news, updates, information and initiatives
#FrontlineZW - A Covid 19 Citizens Initiative	<a href="http://www.african-elections.co.uk/lets-keep-the-frontline-safe/">http://www.african-elections.co.uk/lets-keep-the-frontline-safe/</a>	Mobilising resources towards procuring of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), sundries, anything to keep the Frontline Safe

Name of Initiative	Website/Social Media Handle	Activities/Focus Areas
Fight COVID-19 Zimbabwe	<a href="http://www.fightcovid19.co.zw">www.fightcovid19.co.zw</a>	To provide an impartial platform with awareness on how to Prevent the spread of Covid-19 Corona Virus, how to manage symptoms, get assistance and ultimately save lives; compiling a list of volunteers to assist across the different initiatives
VicFalls Covid19 TaskForce	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/pg/Victoria-Falls-Community-Health-Info-102963958010893/about/?ref=page_internal">https://www.facebook.com/pg/Victoria-Falls-Community-Health-Info-102963958010893/about/?ref=page_internal</a>  <a href="https://twitter.com/VicfallsT/media">https://twitter.com/VicfallsT/media</a>	Falls Famine Appeal; purchase of equipment and PPE
Covid19 Updates Zimbabwe	<a href="https://twitter.com/Covid19Zimbabwe">https://twitter.com/Covid19Zimbabwe</a>	A private voluntary initiative to provide updates on Covid19 in Zimbabwe.
Community Water Alliance	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/Community-Water-Alliance-136851186433747/">https://www.facebook.com/Community-Water-Alliance-136851186433747/</a>	#CreatingCOVIDSafePublicWaterPoints campaign  The Alliance works with committees, mainly composed of women, who organise access to water around solar powered boreholes, using donated gloves and masks to protect themselves while managing the communal taps and distribution of sanitizers in Glen View, Budiro and Mbare
Zimbabwe Pensioner Support Fund	<a href="https://www.zpsf.co.za">https://www.zpsf.co.za</a>	This is a initiative supplies food to more than 1300 pensioners in Zimbabwe; provision of COVID-19 PPE kits
ONEChurch	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/hararehelps/photos/a.246568112912139/546296326272648/?type=3&amp;theater">https://www.facebook.com/hararehelps/photos/a.246568112912139/546296326272648/?type=3&amp;theater</a>	Collecting donations for #Covid19 relief to the most vulnerable Specifically - soap, water, sanitizer, jik, vitamin C, zinc tablets, toilet rolls, tinned food, thermometers, water tablets, paracetamol.
Lynde Francis Trust	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/lyndefrancis/">https://www.facebook.com/lyndefrancis/</a>	Collection of food stuffs, money to support 360 vulnerable children and adults in Mbare and 120 in Chitungwiza Targeted amounts of food and resources - <a href="https://www.facebook.com/lyndefrancis/photos/a.835749603163233/3774730429265121/?type=3&amp;theater">https://www.facebook.com/lyndefrancis/photos/a.835749603163233/3774730429265121/?type=3&amp;theater</a>

Name of Initiative	Website/Social Media Handle	Activities/Focus Areas
Amalgamated Rural Teachers' Association of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ)	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/ruraltrunioninzimbabwe/">https://www.facebook.com/ruraltrunioninzimbabwe/</a>	Developed an online school. The online school comprises a school administrator, logistics officer, curriculum manager and Heads of departments, among other management positions with classes available for the 3 examination classes (Grade 7; Form 4 and Upper 6). To date the online school has reached 920 Grade 7s, 2,460 O level students and 900 A level students
Friends of Rutope Clinic	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/212994439766842/permalink/240618567004429/">https://www.facebook.com/groups/212994439766842/permalink/240618567004429/</a>	Donated PPE for nurses
Feed the City	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/TangotabFTCbyo/?ref=gs&amp;_tn_=%2CdK-R-R&amp;eid=ARAILy3h3Oa9n6oPPYI_84XpgK6UMPoUTL4fTsk69XZPgvFwzmXqmrp2WJrQOzNhmrEU1swCzBfMOLSJ&amp;fref=gs&amp;dti=212994439766842&amp;hc_location=group">https://www.facebook.com/TangotabFTCbyo/?ref=gs&amp;_tn_=%2CdK-R-R&amp;eid=ARAILy3h3Oa9n6oPPYI_84XpgK6UMPoUTL4fTsk69XZPgvFwzmXqmrp2WJrQOzNhmrEU1swCzBfMOLSJ&amp;fref=gs&amp;dti=212994439766842&amp;hc_location=group</a>	An initiative to crowdfund for 750 food packs of food for families around Bulawayo.
Hand in Hand Zimbabwe	<a href="https://twitter.com/HiHZim">https://twitter.com/HiHZim</a> <a href="https://www.handinhand.co.zw/">https://www.handinhand.co.zw/</a>	Distribution of food hampers, awareness material, PPE and disinfectants to front line staff and other essential service providers in the seven districts they operate in.
Switch On Zimbabwe	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/SwitchOnZim/">https://www.facebook.com/SwitchOnZim/</a>	Switch on Zimbabwe was a concert organised by Clicknpay to raise money through music for the Covid-19 national response
The Zim Diaspora	<a href="https://www.gofundme.com/f/zim-diaspora-response-fundraising-covid-19">https://www.gofundme.com/f/zim-diaspora-response-fundraising-covid-19</a>	This initiative has been formed by Zimbabwean Diasporans based in the UK who have come together with Tengai Online for a collective response to a national emergency in Zimbabwe caused by Covid -19 outbreak. Funds raised will be for the procurement of PPE, Awareness campaigns and provision of support for frontline health workers.
Kuchengetana Trust/ Lockdown Relief Kitchen Chitungwiza	<a href="https://twitter.com/Semalho">https://twitter.com/Semalho</a>	Samantha is feeding vulnerable people in Chitungwiza two meals a day since the beginning of the lockdown.
Roots Covid-19 Response Fund	<a href="https://twitter.com/BeatriceSavadye">https://twitter.com/BeatriceSavadye</a>	Mobilising for food packs and health packs to support vulnerable families. ZWL \$5 million to protect frontline health workers.

Name of Initiative	Website/Social Media Handle	Activities/Focus Areas
Sponsor Covid-19 Testing for Zimbabwe	<a href="https://gogetfunding.com/sponsor-a-covid-19-test-for-zimbabwe/">https://gogetfunding.com/sponsor-a-covid-19-test-for-zimbabwe/</a>	The funds will be used to purchase COVID-19 testing kits which will be distributed to all the provincial hospitals in Zimbabwe
PPE for Zimbabwe Doctors and Nurses fighting Covid19	<a href="https://www.gofundme.com/f/ppe-for-zimbabwe-doctorsampnurses-fighting-covid19?utm_source=twitter&amp;utm_medium=social&amp;utm_campaign=p_cp+share-sheet">https://www.gofundme.com/f/ppe-for-zimbabwe-doctorsampnurses-fighting-covid19?utm_source=twitter&amp;utm_medium=social&amp;utm_campaign=p_cp+share-sheet</a>	Purchase of PPE for frontline doctors and nurses
Help Zimbabwean families during COVID-19 lockdown	<a href="https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-zimbabwean-families-during-covid19-lockdown">https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-zimbabwean-families-during-covid19-lockdown</a>	Supporting fellow citizens who cannot afford to stockpile essential food during the Quarantine or Isolation period.
#100hampersforTitji	<a href="https://twitter.com/Yvonne_Maphosa/status/1260610538410778630">https://twitter.com/Yvonne_Maphosa/status/1260610538410778630</a>	Purchase of 100 food hampers for vulnerable families in 6 Plumtree wards.
Zim Health Covid-19 appeal	<a href="http://zimhealth.org/zimhealth-covid19-appeal/">http://zimhealth.org/zimhealth-covid19-appeal/</a>	Supporting frontline health workers with PPE, oxygen concentrators and masks, and cleaning supplies (sanitizer and soap). Facilities identified: Chinhoyi Town Council, Kadoma Town Council, Karanda Mission Hospital, Kwekwe Town Council, Rusape Town Council and Mberengwa Rural District Council.
Muduvuri Rehabilitation and Empowerment Foundation	<a href="https://dailynews.co.zw/businessman-donates-to-people-with-disabilities/">https://dailynews.co.zw/businessman-donates-to-people-with-disabilities/</a>	Donated basic commodities to 300 vulnerable members of the community.
King Lobengula Royal Family Trust	<a href="https://twitter.com/zenzele/status/1260535302717952000">https://twitter.com/zenzele/status/1260535302717952000</a>	Donated 96 Blankets to Ekusileni
Meal Drive/Home Run	<a href="https://twitter.com/DriveMeal">https://twitter.com/DriveMeal</a>	Donated food and clothes for a Chitungiza children's home. Donated food hampers for the vulnerable in Msasa and Hatfield. Part of the proceeds from their Home Run business purchases food hampers for vulnerable families.
COVID19 Treatment Equipment Support Zimbabwe	<a href="https://www.gofundme.com/f/covid19-hospital-zimbabwe2">https://www.gofundme.com/f/covid19-hospital-zimbabwe2</a>	Rehabilitation of an existing PRIVATE medical facility or building that could work as a COVID-19 Medical Treatment Centre in Zimbabwe.

Name of Initiative	Website/Social Media Handle	Activities/Focus Areas
Support for Zimbabwe Coordinated COVID-19 Response, SOTZIM Fundraiser	<a href="https://www.backabuddy.co.za/champion/project/ZimCovidSupport">https://www.backabuddy.co.za/champion/project/ZimCovidSupport</a>	Raising funds for SOTZIM's Covid-19 response
Coronavirus Covid-19 Bubi Hospital Appeal Zimbabwe	<a href="https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/coronavirus-covid-19-bubi-hospital-appeal-zimbabwe/">https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/coronavirus-covid-19-bubi-hospital-appeal-zimbabwe/</a>	Raising funds for Bubi District Hospital to help them meet the COVID-19 demands about to be put on their system. They need help to provide essential equipment to save lives and protect front line workers.
105 Hampers for Plumtree	<a href="https://twitter.com/Yvonne_Maphosa/status/1267907840393519104">https://twitter.com/Yvonne_Maphosa/status/1267907840393519104</a>	Crowdfunded for 105 food hampers for Plumtree urban (35) and Plumtree rural (70). Each hamper contains 50kg mealie meal, 2l cooking oil, 500g Tanganda, 4kg flour, 1kg soap, 2kg salt, 2kg sugar, sugar beans, cabbage and chunks.
Bulawayo Arts culture and Heritage Endowment Fund (BACHEF)		BACHEF will donate food parcels to senior artists in the industry, the Cool Crooners, iLuba Lemvelo and Thandanani Women's Ensemble.
Asakhané Live Community	<a href="http://kubatana.net/2020/05/28/ubh-and-mpilo-hospital-receive-more-donations-to-fight-covid-19/">http://kubatana.net/2020/05/28/ubh-and-mpilo-hospital-receive-more-donations-to-fight-covid-19/</a>	Donated 5 000 masks, 10 000 gloves, 200 face shield and five sneeze shields, sanitiser 70 litres, and a thermometer to Mpilo Hospital
Pindira Trust	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/Pindira-Trust-105452731193287">https://www.facebook.com/Pindira-Trust-105452731193287</a>  <a href="https://twitter.com/PindiraT">https://twitter.com/PindiraT</a>	The trust has so far supported vulnerable Adults (Elderly & Widows) in rural Seke and 75 food insecure families in Mazowe with essential groceries



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