

Community Working Group on Health



Press Statement

15 April 2020

No to Disruption of Essential Health Service Provision during the COVID-19 Lockdown

The Community Working Group on Health (CWGH) would like to applaud the government of Zimbabwe for enforcing a lockdown as part of precautionary measures to curb the spread of the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).

CWGH is however concerned by the total disregard by those enforcing the lockdown of people's right to essential services such as health, food and water. It has come to our attention that many people, some with chronic conditions, are failing to access their medications or missing critical appointments with their doctors, because they cannot pass through the many police checkpoints mounted around the country without the required exemption letters.

We firmly believe that the lockdown should not prevent people from accessing health services, water and food. People with chronic conditions, those on antiretroviral (ARVs) drugs, out-patient mental patients and other emergency health conditions must be allowed to access the services they need as their lives depend on accessing such medications. The security forces must not be rigid during the exercise of their national duty.

CWGH fears that the strict measures adopted during the lockdown by security forces could lead to a lot of people defaulting on medications as they are prevented from accessing health institutions or get clearance past police checkpoints. It should be highlighted that denying patients, especially those with chronic conditions, passage to health institutions -- as is happening now -- is tantamount to condemning them to death as that compromises their immune system that may result in serious illness and even death.

The CWGH notes that human rights must be maintained in confronting COVID-19, 'without exception'. The government of Zimbabwe as the duty bearer must take additional social protection measures to protect and support those disproportionately affected by the crisis, including the vulnerable groups above, health workers and women who bear a heavy care burden and live with a heightened risk of gender-based violence.

For further information, please contact;

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