



World Health Day Statement 7 April 2020

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum), the Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR) and the Community Working Group on Health (CWGH) join the world in commemorating World Health Day. The commemorations come at a critical time as the world battles the COVID-19 pandemic which to date has resulted in 62 784 deaths and 1 133 758 confirmed cases worldwide according to the World Health Organization's *Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) Situation Report – 76* of the 5th of April 2020. The Forum, ZADHR and CWGH applaud the tireless and selfless contributions of doctors, nurses and other health workers, globally, who are doing their best to save lives not only during the pandemic but throughout their entire service. We stand in solidarity with all the COVID-19 affected communities and diligent health workers on the frontline in this time.

The *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) provides for the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Health workers remain at the apex in the attainment of this critical right that safeguards the right to life for all. Despite this critical role, in Zimbabwe, health workers are poorly remunerated with salaries unable to match the great value they bring to the protection of the right to life. We continue to lament the poor working conditions of health workers, particularly those on the frontline in the response to COVID-19 who are at great risk. Frontline health workers continue to work without adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and other necessary tools of trade.

The Forum, ZADHR and CWGH, therefore, urge the Government to ensure that health workers are afforded decent remuneration and risk allowances to boost their moral and attendant health outcomes. The Forum reminds the Government that every employee is entitled to just, equitable and satisfactory conditions of work as provided in section 65(4) of the *Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No.20) Act, 2013*. This right avails to all health workers too.

The Forum, ZADHR and CWGH, therefore, call on the Government to do the following;

- Remunerate health workers reasonably in a manner that affords them human dignity.
- Provide adequate protective clothing for all health workers handling COVID-19 cases.
- Manage the demand for health workers raised by the epidemic.
- Provide health care workers access to quick testing, diagnosis and management of infection, including through self- isolation and quarantine.
- Put in place sick leave measures that cover health care workers pay if in isolation or ill.
- Provide masks and sanitizers for home use to all the health care workers

The Forum, ZADHR and CWGH pay tribute to all health workers for their sacrifices. Without them, there is no essential service!

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