



# The Humanitarian Bulletin

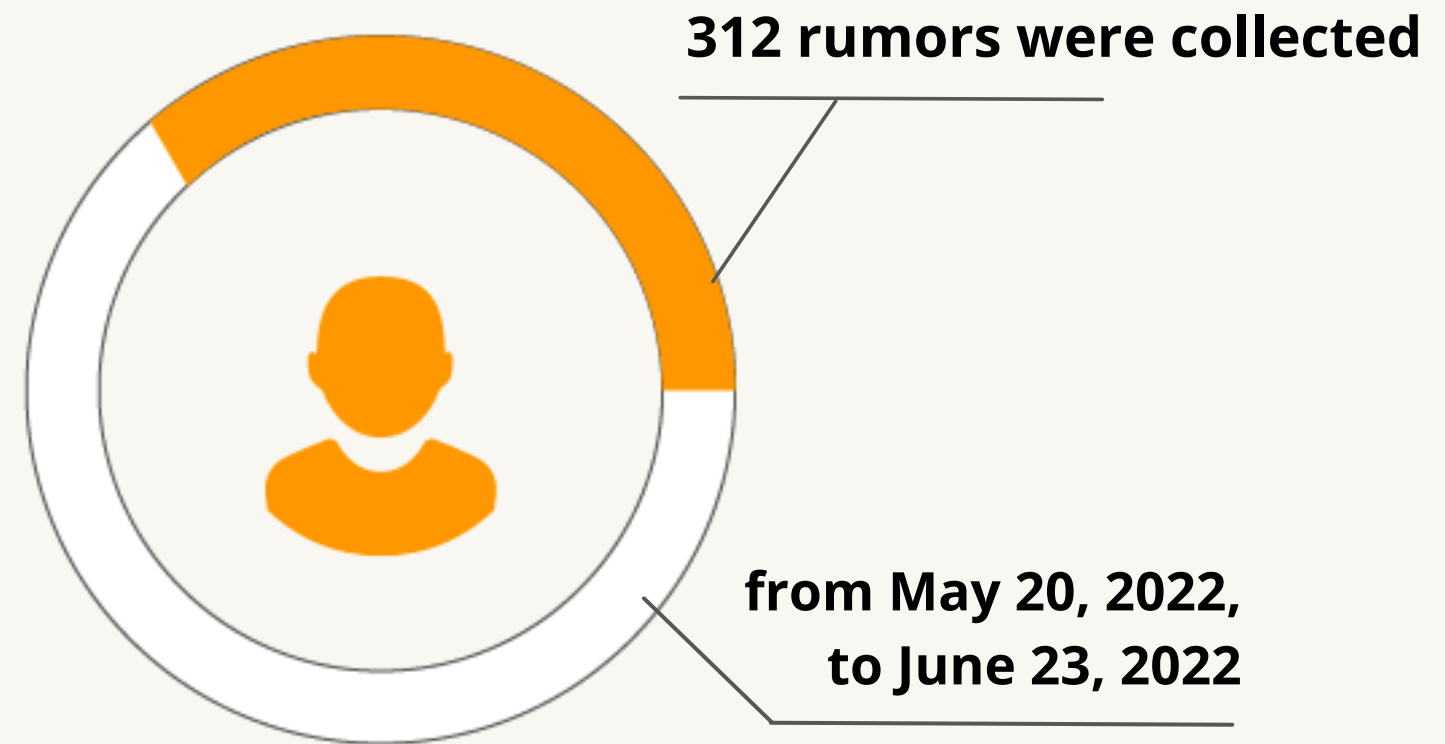
Zimbabwe  
June , 2022  
ISSUE

## About Rooted in Trust

Rooted in Trust 2.0 is a global pandemic information response program funded by the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID-BHA) and implemented by Internews to counter the unprecedented scale and speed of the spread of rumors and misinformation on COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccines.

Rooted in Trust 2.0 in Zimbabwe is working with media, community-based organizations and health and humanitarian actors to build a healthier information ecosystem that is responsive to the needs of migrant communities in Southern Zimbabwe, particularly in the provinces of Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South, Midlands, Masvingo and Bulawayo. Our work focuses on vulnerable groups within these communities, especially on women and youth.

## COVID-19 data overview

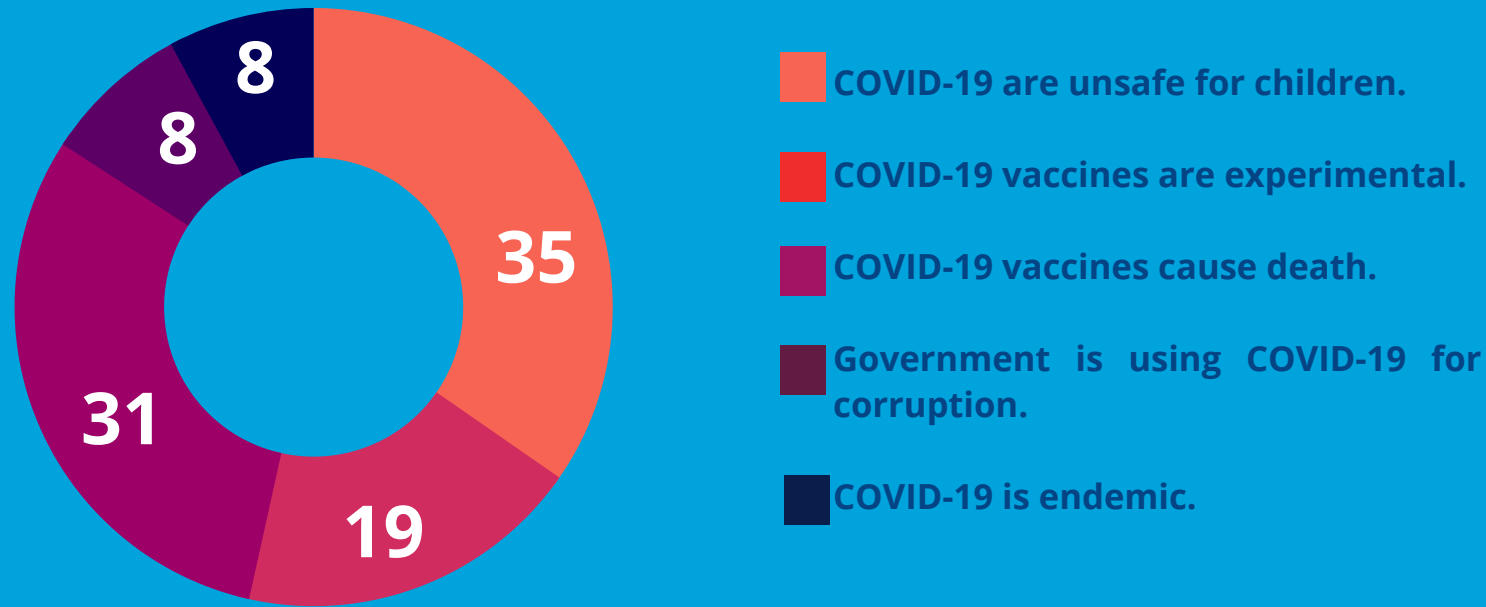


**R**umors in this bulletin were collected by Internews in Zimbabwe, for a period of one month from **May 20, 2022, to June 23, 2022**. Overall, Internews identified a total of 312 rumors from various posts and comments on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and in communities. Rumor selection criteria is based on a risk assessment matrix that accounts for the frequency of discussion or social media engagements and its potential impact in the community.

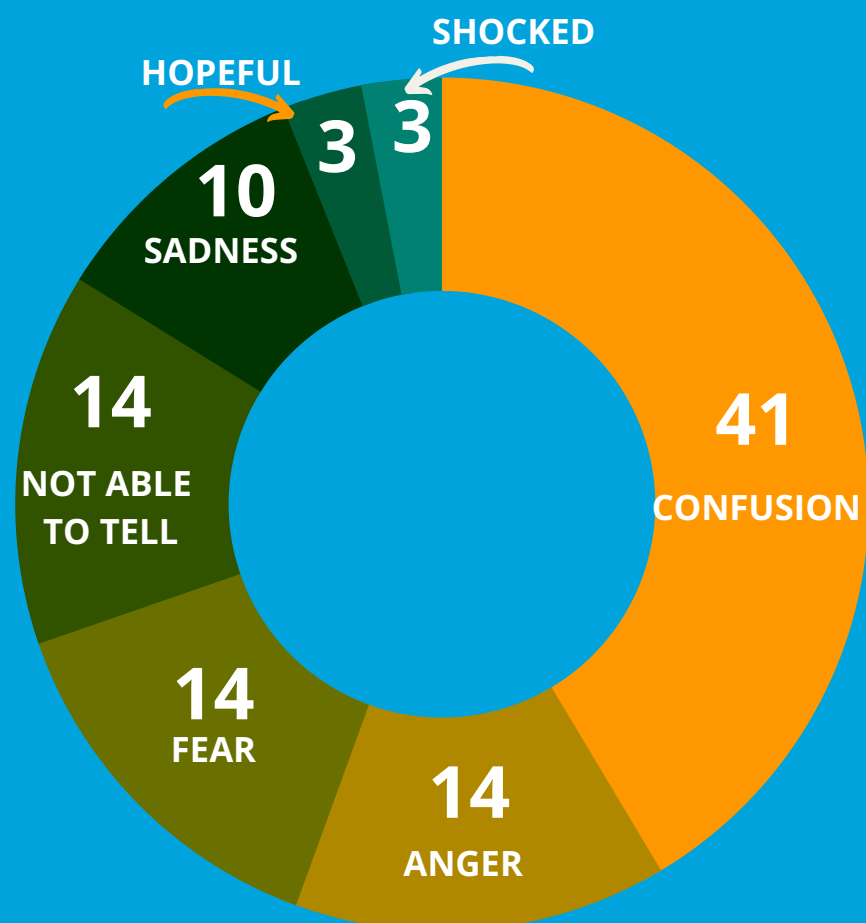
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# Rumor data overview

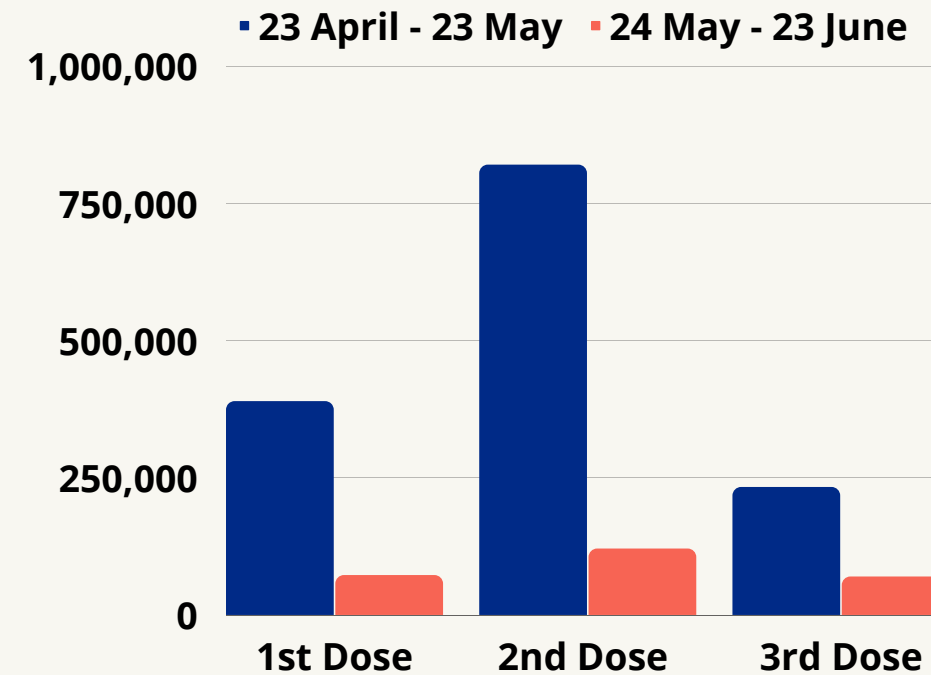


Internews in Zimbabwe collected 276 rumors on-line and 36 offline in the communities of Masvingo, Matabeleland South, Matabeleland North, Bulawayo, and Midlands. The most trending rumors include that COVID-19 vaccines are unsafe for children (35%), COVID-19 vaccines cause death (31%), COVID-19 vaccines are experimental (19%), COVID-19 is endemic (8%), and that government is using COVID-19 for corruption (8%).



41% of collected rumors showed sentiment of confusion, 14% indicated anger or frustration, 14% showed fear, 10% were sad, 3% demonstrated excitement and 3% were shocked.

## MONTH-ON-MONTH VACCINATION COMPARISON



Zimbabwe recorded a 447% decrease in the overall vaccination uptake in the month ending June 23, 2022, down from 1,442,136 doses administered last month across all the three vaccination doses.

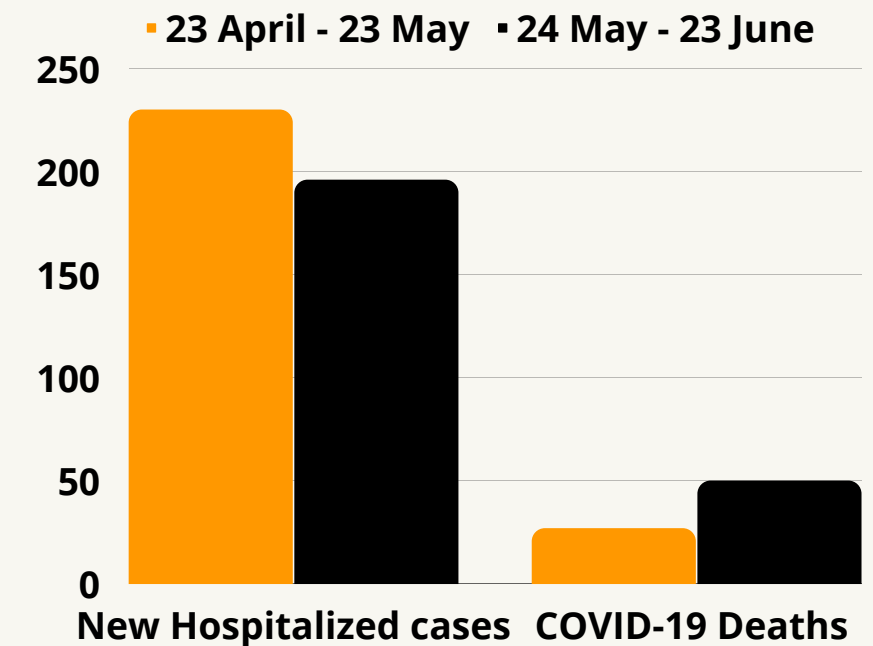
The significant drop is due to the end of the 2nd vaccination blitz that was targeting children aged 12-15 years. 1st vaccination dose uptake dropped from 389,159 to 72,617, 2nd vaccination dose reduced from 820,335 to 120,997 while the 3rd vaccination dose dropped from 232,642 to 69,912.

Statistics in this document are from Ministry of Health & Child Care (MoHCC)

COVID-19 related hospitalised cases decreased from 230 in May to 196 in June, a decrease of 17%, while 50 COVID-19 related deaths were noted in June compared to 27 deaths in May.

COVID-19 new cases increased in the month ending June 23, 2022, with 4,317 new cases accounting for 24% increase from 3,482 new cases recorded last month. Active cases stand at 1,650 cases down from 2,238 active cases reported last month. The Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC) stopped reporting on infection cases recorded in schools on May 11, 2022.

## NEW COVID-19 CASES MONTH-ON-MONTH



Visualization by RiT :  
Data from RiT Humanitarian Dashboard

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## Rumor Trend



We must learn to live with this covid. Hachadi kunzwa zvenyu zvemaLokodhauni (Shona:Facebook )

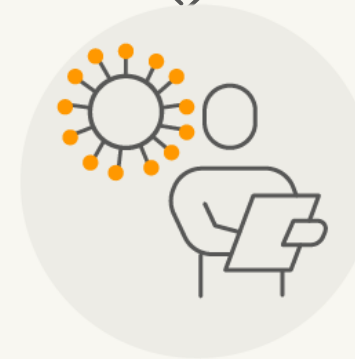
Translation: We must learn to live with this COVID. We do not want to hear about your lockdowns.



**THEME:**  
**COVID-19 has become endemic**

## Fact check

A lockdown happens in different emergencies, and may disrupt normal life, it can be defined as an emergency protocol implemented by authorities to prevent people from leaving or entering a given area. On Monday, March 14, 2020, Zimbabwe implemented its first lockdown to manage the spread of COVID-19, and restriction measures entailed people staying at home except when buying essentials, closure of schools and businesses, a ban on intercity travel, with only those offering essential services allowed to operate. Lockdown measures have been implemented in Zimbabwe from time to time, when COVID-19 cases have increased and have posed a threat to livelihoods of many who rely on the informal sector to fend for themselves. To date the government has announced the lifting of the midnight to dawn curfew, which was one of the lockdown measures that had remained.



Head of Non-Profit Community Working Group on Health in Zimbabwe, Itai Rusike, says measures like lockdowns put in place to control COVID-19 are necessary to save lives. These were necessary particularly at the beginning of the pandemic when experts did not know how the virus was transmitted and thus were unable to provide proper guidance while cases increased. Currently, government has indicated that COVID-19 cases are decreasing and as of week, ending June 24, 2022, there were no admissions in the ICU, showing that COVID-19 pandemic remains under control, as it has been for some months. ?

According to an economic analysis conducted by the World Bank, Zimbabweans living in extreme poverty increased to 7.9 million in 2020 due to the negative impact of COVID-19. The study further reveals that COVID-19 escalated extreme poverty overall to almost 50% of the country's population in 2020. In Zimbabwe 3.7 million people are involved in informal activities, contributing 40% to 50% of the country's economic growth.

# Recommendations

**Partners involved in different** livelihood programming with women, men, youths, and migrants can engage structures such as the Bulawayo Vendors and Traders Association (BVTA) and Vendors Initiative Social & Economic Transformation (VISET) to reemphasize and strengthen COVID-19 prevention protocols as people engage in their day-to-day operations; such as social distancing, mask wearing, hand sanitising and vaccination, so that infection control is kept minimal to avoid lockdowns.

| Organisation    | Name  | Contact Number |
|-----------------|-------|----------------|
| Michael Ndiweni | BVTA  | 0713635908     |
| Rumbidzai Dube  | VISET | 0773859648     |

**Humanitarian actors working** communities living along the border, can engage migrants at designated and undesignated crossing points, to provide alerts when COVID-19 cases escalate in neighbouring countries, and through pre-recorded messages played in cross border buses to encourage them to make informed movement and COVID-19 vaccination decisions as they work.

Organisations working with women, men, and youths involved in the informal sector can engage them through dialogues with health experts to explain why lockdowns are effected when COVID-19 cases increase, with high numbers of hospitalisations, and ICU admissions and how restrictions are lifted as the health context changes.

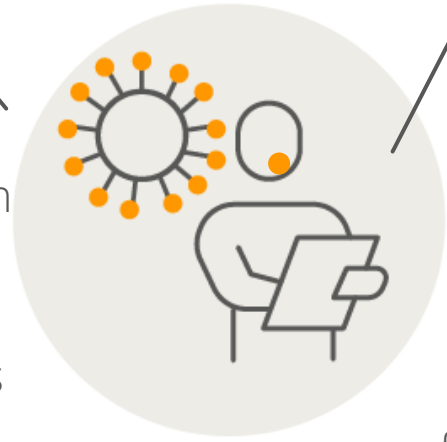
## What's behind the rumor?

- The rumor is a reaction to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services announcement that two weeks after schools opened for the second term, they were hit by a fresh scare of COVID-19, causing anxiety that this may be a result of the fifth wave experienced in South Africa at the time.
- The rumor also emanates from the fact that, since the onset of COVID-19 in 2020, lockdowns implemented by government from time to time when cases increase have negatively impacted people's lives, especially livelihoods for those in the informal sector.
- On June 21, 2022, government announced the lifting of the midnight to dawn curfew implemented as part of COVID-19 restriction measures, increasing the business operating hours for traders. However, other COVID-19 restrictions such as social distancing, wearing of masks, handwashing, and sanitizing, as well as vaccination remain in place.



## Why does it matter?

The rumor reflects people's fears on lockdowns which have adversely affected their livelihoods as some lost sources of income due to unprecedented lockdown restrictions. The Zimbabwean government has struggled to develop adequate and appropriate social protection measures for vulnerable groups in the country. This rumor is therefore important, as it reflects that people have experienced the negative impact of lockdowns on their income and are unwilling to be in the same predicament again.



COVID-19 new cases increased in Bulawayo, Matabeleland South and Matabeleland North in the month ending June 20, 2022, with an average of 33 new cases per day reported across the 3 provinces. New cases in the 3 provinces accounted for 47% of the total new cases in the country in the month ending June 20, 2022.

The increase in cases follows observations by local medical experts that the surge of COVID-19 cases in South Africa and the onset of winter in Zimbabwe would lead to Zimbabwe entering the fifth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

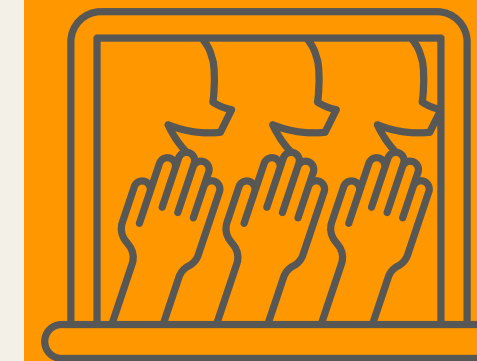
**On May 20, 2022 alone, the highest number of new cases were recorded in one day across the 3 provinces with a combined total of 178 new cases. Bulawayo recorded 61 cases, Matabeleland North 60 cases while Matabeleland South recorded 57 new cases. However, though there has been an increase in cases recorded, hospitalisations and deaths nationwide remained at zero as of June 20, 2022.**

## Rumor Trend

Bulawayo and Matabeleland South are worrying. Not very bad but heading there. Tougher measures needed in the two provinces. (Twitter)



**THEME: COVID-19  
Prevention**



### What's behind the rumor

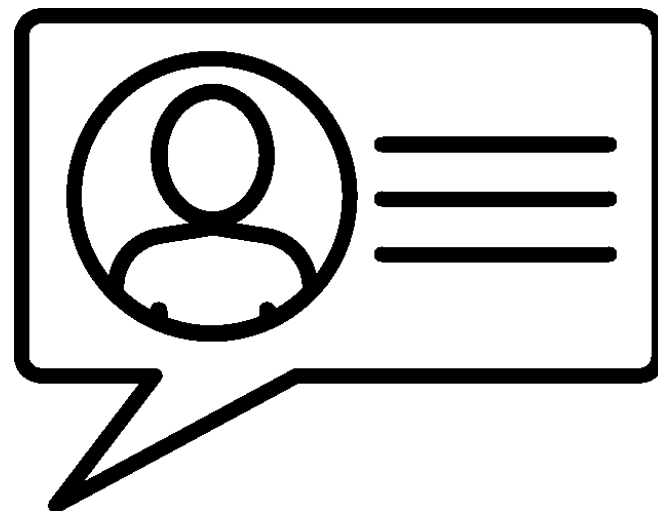
The rumor is in response to the MoHCC statistics shared daily on their website with special focus on May 20, 2022. From the daily Situation Reports (Sitreps) Bulawayo and Matabeleland South had recorded the highest cases of COVID-19 compared to other provinces.

Bulawayo had 417 active cases, with Matabeleland South having 420, compared to Matabeleland North with 210, Midlands 106 and Masvingo with 83 active cases. The rumor therefore points to the importance of tightening COVID-19 prevention protocols before the situation escalates in Bulawayo and Matabeleland South.

This concern comes at a time when the health system of the country is not operating at optimum level fraught with poor infrastructure, lack of access to drugs and currently health personnel are on strike as a result of poor remuneration and unfavourable working conditions.

## Recommendations

- **Humanitarian and health organisations** working in Bulawayo and Matebeleland South, should consider engaging migrants, women and youths through panel expert talks and share information about possible emerging variants, develop a COVID-19 strategy review which prioritizes a targeted approach to infection control for hotspots, to contain the COVID-19 cases.
- **Humanitarian actors working in the provinces** of Bulawayo and Matabeleland South can engage migrants, women, youth, and men through existing planned interactions that they have with communities and re-emphasize MoHCC prevention protocols such as mask wearing, social distancing, hand sanitization and full vaccination, including booster shots.
- **Partners working in communities can engage** local radio initiatives such as Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations (ZACRAS) to facilitate social listening and feedback collection in local languages such as Tonga, Venda, Nambya, Ndebele, Kalanga, Shona as part of their routine activities, to inform community structures and surveillance systems with a community led approach.



## Why does it matter?



**This rumor is important, as it brings attention to rising** COVID-19 cases in Bulawayo and Matabeleland South which highlights the need for stakeholders in the health and Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) sector to be proactive and take measures to mitigate the rise in cases before the situation spirals out of control. The areas of concern noted, are also important as they have migrants who use designated and undesignated crossing points and may easily spread infection if they do not have access to correct and accurate information on COVID-19 prevention measures such as being fully vaccinated and having a valid PCR test.

**The rise in cases in these provinces** may be because of high traffic from these communities to South Africa and proximity to legal and illegal crossing points accessed by migrants and cross border traders into the neighboring country which recently experienced the 5th wave of COVID-19 from April to May 2022. School children in these provinces usually cross into South Africa during school holidays to visit family and return as schools open, therefore, when schools opened in May, this quite likely contributed to the rise in infection rates in Zimbabwe.