

**ZIMBABWE**

**MINISTRY OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**ADDRESS ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF THE**

 **EDUCATION SECTOR COVID-19 RESPONSE PLAN**

***AND***

**THE MASHONALAND CENTRAL CHAPTER OF THE COVID-19**

 **SCHOOLS RESPONSE PLAN**

***BY***

**THE MINISTER OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY**

 **EDUCATION**

**HON. AMBASSADOR N. C. G. MATHEMA, MP**

**ST ALBERT’S HIGH SCHOOL, MASHONALAND CENTRAL**

**06 MAY, 2020**

**Launch of the Education Sector Covid-19 Response Plan**

**and**

**The Mashonaland Central Chapter of the Covid-19 Schools Response Plan** by **Hon Ambassador N. C. G. Mathema**

**Salutation**

* The Director of Ceremonies, Mr Cosmas Chiringa, the PDC
* The Head of St Albert’s High School
* Chief Chiweshe
* The Minister of State for Mashonaland Central Province, Hon. Monica Mavhunga
* Our Members of Parliament, Hon Felistas Nhamburo; Hon Siza and Hon Soda
* The Permanent Secretary, Mrs Tumisang Thabela
* Provincial Education Director, Mrs Naome Chikosha and your Provincial Team
* The Chief Director, Peter Muzawazi and the Team from H/O
* The Chairperson Provincial Taskforce on COVID 19
* The Public Service Provincial Coordinator, Mr Madhumbu
* The Provincial Medical Director, Dr Cremance Tshuma
* The Representative of the Education Cluster, Dr Shumba and your Cluster colleagues
* The Representative of the RA, Fr Macbean Bamusi
* District Schools Inspector Muzarabani
* Other District Schools Inspectors from Mashonaland Central
* District Development Coordinators and other Gvt Officials
* School Inspectors
* NAPH and NASH Chairpersons
* Teachers Union representatives
* School Heads
* Teachers
* Learners
* Our critical workforce
* Parents
* Members of the Media
* Ladies and gentlemen

It is another great honour for me today to stand shoulder to shoulder with our wonderful people of Mashonaland Central as we seek to push back the menacing COVID-19 pandemic. We must be determined and resolute in our efforts to banish the virus from our motherland, and indeed from the face of the earth. Given that Primary and Secondary Education has a total of 4.6 million pupils, 136 000 teachers and 9 625 schools that are accessed on a daily basis by thousands of community and other members of society, it is imperative that the Sector leads from the front. I am, therefore, making an impassioned plea and a clarion call to every one of us in the Education Sector to play our part without equivocation in order to keep away the coronavirus hazard from our communities. I want to take this opportunity to emphasize what you all know: Prevention is better than cure. To put the issue into perspective, I will share with you statistics on the coronavirus pandemic that are sobering. While coronavirus statistics remain moving targets, as someone is dying somewhere in the world every few seconds, the information that I have for the past 24 hours is shattering. The world has experienced **3 651 010** coronavirus infections and **256 239** deaths. In the past 24 hours, the United States, for example, has recorded a total of **1 202 000** infections and **71 000** deaths; the United Kingdom **29 500** deaths; Italy **29 300** deaths and Russia has been recording **10 000** infections every day for the past 3 days in a row. These are devastating figures behind which are many grieving families. Our thoughts go out to all those who have lost their loved ones here in Zimbabwe and in the whole world.

Our Education Sector response efforts must of necessity be robust and they stand guided by His Excellency, President E. D. Mnangagwa, and the National Inter-Ministerial Task Force. For Primary and Secondary Education these includes response efforts at Provincial, District and School levels. Today, here at St Albert’s High School in Mashonaland Central, we are launching the **Education Sector COVID-19 Response Plan** as well as the Mashonaland Central Chapter of the **COVID-19 Schools Response Plan**.

The Education Sector Response Plan recognizes Zimbabwe’s commitment to fulfilling the right to inclusive, quality and safe education for all. It is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic puts this promise into jeopardy and exacerbates other vulnerabilities. While the infection level and deaths are still relatively small, the warning from the statistics above is loud and clear. No stone must be left unturned in our efforts to fight the virus through preventive strategies. The Strategy we are launching is designed to ensure that there is continued access to quality learning opportunities during and after COVID-19. Plans have been put in place to best prepare and support teachers and learners for a safe, secure and seamless transition back to quality teaching and learning in schools. It is important to open back better. Basically the Education Sector COVID-19 Response Plan has four strategic areas, namely:

1. Alternative Learning Approaches
2. Opening Back Better
3. Teacher Capacitation and
4. School Feeding.

It is my hope that this Plan, which was developed by the Education Sector, will rally the efforts of all.

A key pillar of the Education Sector Response Plan is the Schools Response Plan. After the launch Wednesday last week at Chikangwe High School in Mashonaland West, we are all exited that Mashonaland Central is taking the lead in responding to the coronavirus challenge. (They say in Shona, zvikomo zvinopana mhute meaning ‘big brains share wisdom’). I want to express my deep appreciation to the Provincial Education Director, Mrs Naome Chikosha. I want to pay tribute too to the effective leadership of Hon Monica Mavhunga, the Minister of State for Mashonaland Central, which has enabled our schools to rise to the occasion. As stated earlier, the challenge of how to open school safe requires an all-hands-on-deck approach. Providing masks for 4.6 million pupils for the necessary period is a daunting task under any circumstances. But I am glad that Mashonaland Central is ensuring that schools play their part in the fight against this pandemic. Given the clear advantage of numbers, if each school makes its contribution, I have no doubt that we can overcome some of the challenges. I note with great satisfaction that at this Provincial launch, all the 8 districts of Mashonaland Central are exhibiting the masks and sanitizers that they are making to fight the pandemic. You must work closely with the Ministry of Health and Child Care, who will guide on the quality of materials to use. Our Textile Technology and Design, Science and Metal Technology and Design Departments in schools must up the ante. Let’s utilize this sad moment to find opportunities to make our schools self-sustaining in some areas where possible. Let us explore ways to boost our production levels and where partnerships can be struck, let this be done. It is my vision to see schools running sustainable projects all year round, with full time managers who will be paid from the projects. Utilizing skills to solve community challenges is the way to go in the 21st century. Let me call on the private sector once more to partner our schools. There are advantages for both parties. Imagine if we were to enable each school to produce just one mask for each child; that would translate to 4.6 million masks!

As I conclude, it is important for me to speak to all our Provinces as well as Heads of Schools. We cannot afford to remain in a business-as-usual mode. We must switch and transform into a business-unusual mode. No Provincial Education Director or Head of School must be an on-looker. We have to be engaged all of us, and that way we can transform our schools and our communities.

As I complete my speech, allow me to congratulate all the schools here in Mashonaland Central and in the entire country that have started on the production of protective equipment against the coronavirus.

With these remarks, I declare the **Education Sector Covid-19 Response Plan** and the **Mashonaland Central Chapter of the Covid-19 Schools Response Plan** officially launched.

Thank you.

Siyabonga

Twalumba

Tatenda