

# **Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Urban Women in The Informal Sector: A Case of Gweru Urban**

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## **Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had far reaching adverse impact across the socio-economic livelihoods and subsequently, the wellbeing of the majority of the population in Zimbabwe. The informal sector which is largely dominated by females was negatively impacted due to the tightening of lock downs and travel restrictions as the government responds to the pandemic. The impact led to fragility and conflict where social cohesion was undermined and institutional capacity limited. This paper focuses on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable urban women. The study took a qualitative approach and was also based on a systematic review of secondary data sources like reports from national and international organizations, journal articles and policy reports. The study finds out that due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent regulations imposed by the government restricting interprovincial travelling, women entrepreneurs who relied on informal trading were adversely impacted by the measures. The study also observed that the lockdown measures which were imposed to minimize the contagion of the COVID-19 virus ironically granted greater freedoms to women abusers who were stuck with their victims at home. The respondents testified that with the inception of the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown measures, there was an increase in domestic violence cases for most women in communities studied. The study also observed that the pandemic worsened the socio-economic vulnerability for women who lost their livelihoods due to the pandemic. Thus, the study submits that the pandemic did not only cause an increase in gender-based violence for women, but it also disconnected most women from their respective support networks. The study therefore recommends local authorities to have safety nets in place for the vulnerable women especially those who survive on informal trading so as to sustain their livelihoods whenever there are outbreaks of pandemics of such a magnitude as the COVID-19 pandemic. It is further recommended that, the government must establish a fund to assist especially the female entrepreneurs in the informal sector to recover from loses incurred due to COVID-19 induced lock downs.