

A photograph of a woman in a rural setting, carrying a large white sack on her head. She is looking to the right. Other people are visible in the background, some wearing headwraps. The background shows dry, hilly terrain.

ZIMBABWE PEACE PROJECT

**HUMAN RIGHTS
IMPLICATIONS OF
FORCED GRAIN
CONTRIBUTIONS
IN ZIMBABWE**

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ABOUT ZPP

The Zimbabwe Peace Project, ZPP, is a peace-promoting organisation that uses human rights lenses in peacebuilding, having established that the deprivation and abuse of human rights pose the greatest threat to peace in Zimbabwe.

The organisation was established in 2000 as a project of civil society and faith-based groups in response to the violence and human rights violations that characterised the political landscape of the time. These organisations were the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZIMRIGHTS), Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), Civic Education Network Trust (CIVNET), Counselling Services Unit (CSU), Zimbabwe Liberators Platform (ZLP) and Non-Violent Action and

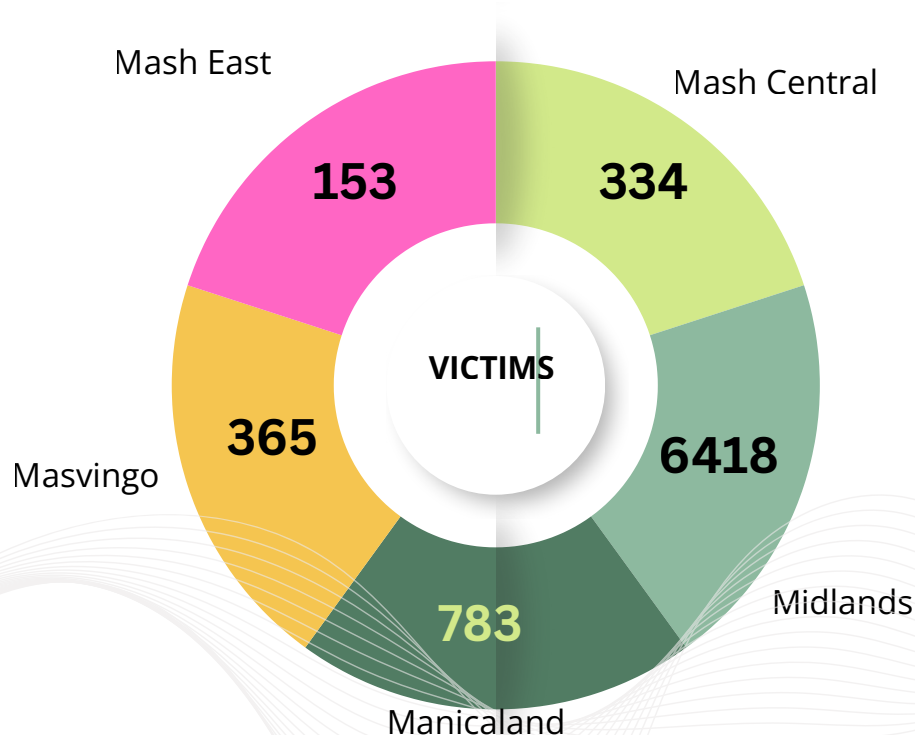
Strategies for Social Change (NOVASC). Over the years, the ZPP network of members has evolved as the network welcomed new member organisations while others have developed new thematic interests or have ceased to exist. Current member organisations are the Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace (CCJPZ), Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZIMRIGHTS), Counselling Services Unit (CSU), Women and Law Southern Africa (WLSA), National Association for the Care of the Handicapped (NASCOH) and the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ).

INTRODUCTION

In the period between July and September 2025, the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) recorded a troubling escalation of forced grain contributions imposed on small-scale and subsistence farmers, particularly in rural areas. Farmers were coerced, often through threats, intimidation, and pressure from traditional leaders, councillors, and ruling party officials into delivering grain to the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) and associated schemes.

This development followed a government and GMB's notice of June 2025 announcing the opening of 1,804 ward based mobile grain collection centres, framed as a decentralisation measure to reduce transport costs. Hidden within this move, however, was a compulsory demand for 'all beneficiaries of the presidential inputs scheme' who were ordered to surrender 10kg of grain each to create a so-called Strategic Grain Reserve.

Although presented as a food security initiative, ZPP's monitoring revealed that the policy's implementation has been marred by abuse of authority and rights violations. Evidence from Manicaland (783 people affected, 451 women and 332 men), Masvingo (365 affected people, 204 women and 161 men), Mashonaland East (153 people affected, 80 women and 73 men), Mashonaland Central (334 people affected, 179 women and 155 men), and Midlands (641 people affected, 345 women and 296 men) provinces shows that instead of empowering communities, the programme has been weaponised to control and intimidate them. This report details these violations, examines their gender and disability implications, exposes the politicisation of food aid, and highlights how community platforms are increasingly being used to perpetuate abuses. It concludes with recommendations and a call for stronger application of human rights frameworks to protect citizens from such coercive practices.



ABUSE OF OFFICE

Reports from across Zimbabwe indicate widespread abuse of office and violations of human rights by local leaders and Agritex officers in the collection of maize on behalf of the Grain Marketing Board (GMB). Instead of following the official requirement of 10kg per household, councillors, traditional leaders, Agritex officers, and ZANU PF party chairs are intimidating and coercing communities, threatening exclusion from presidential and social welfare schemes for non-compliance, a practice that undermines the right to administrative justice under Section 68 of the Constitution and contravenes Section 281, which requires traditional leaders to remain impartial and act in accordance with the law.

In Chipinge South Ward 21, village secretaries have been demanding either 2 gallons or 10kg of maize per household and forcing payments of 20 South African Rands for the Agricultural Show, while in Mt Darwin West Ward 16 households were compelled to provide 20kg of maize each under instructions from councillor Edmore Mushuhwa. Similarly, in Mutoko South Ward 5, all individuals who benefitted from the presidential input scheme were forced to provide 10kg of maize, even when from the same household, and in Mutasa Central Ward 13, traditional leaders were directed by ZANU PF party chairs to force every household to contribute 10kg of grain or risk being labelled opposition supporters.

Communities in Marondera West, Chiwundura in Midlands Province, and other areas report inflated demands of between 20kg and 30kg of maize despite widespread poor harvests, exacerbating hunger and violating the right to food. Financial exploitation compounds the abuse, with households required to pay \$1 for grain transportation in many districts, while in Chiwundura Constituency each household must pay \$3 in addition to 10kg of maize, with no transparency on the use of funds.

These practices reflect a broader pattern of intimidation, politicisation of food aid, and misuse of authority that violate citizens' rights to food, dignity, political freedom, and equal access to social protection, and they highlight the urgent need for accountability, protection of community members from abuse, and enforcement of constitutional safeguards against partisan misuse of traditional authority.



INTIMIDATION AND HARASSMENT

Intimidation and harassment remain among the most frequently recorded human rights violations in the process of grain collection, with the ruling party, and traditional leaders consistently identified as top perpetrators. The current trend of forced grain contributions highlights the same patterns of abuse.

Local party structures and village heads are at the forefront of coercing communities to surrender maize, using threats and harassment as tools of control. During community meetings, villagers are told that failure to contribute grain will result in exclusion from agricultural inputs or government aid, a practice that amounts to the partisan distribution of food aid and undermines the right to equality and non-discrimination.

In Gokwe Sesame, community members were informed that the list of grain contributors would be used as the same list for input allocations in the next season, effectively forcing compliance through fear of exclusion.

In Headlands, villagers were subjected to arbitrary deadlines, with 22 August 2025 set as the final date to deliver grain to their village heads, creating undue pressure potentially worsening food insecurity among families who recorded low yield. The intimidation extends beyond physical spaces into digital platforms, where WhatsApp groups managed by local leaders were used to reinforce the threats that non-contributors would be excluded from future programs and food aid, thereby institutionalising coercion and discrimination. In areas like Chivhu Nharira, those without grain were compelled to pay USD \$2 to their village heads, who will then remit the money to the councilors, with no transparency on how the money would be used, amounting to extortion and a violation of the right to dignity and property.

These practices directly contravene Section 56 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, which guarantees every person the right not to be unfairly discriminated against on the basis of social or economic status, political affiliation, or opinion, among other grounds. The weaponisation of food and agricultural aid for political purposes not only perpetuates structural inequality but also entrenches fear and dependency, thereby eroding communities' ability to freely exercise their political and socio-economic rights.



POLITICIZATION OF FOOD SECURITY

ZANU PF is using the exclusion of citizens during food aid distributions as a tool to advance their ideologies, exacerbated by the recent poor harvests. This practice has significant implications for the food security of villagers, many of whom rely on agriculture for their livelihood.

Since January 2025, ZPP has documented 79 cases of this nature, affecting 5122 people (2939 women and 2183 men, with 185 PWDs). On 18 August 2025, at Stanmore A Village in Ward 32, Masvingo North Constituency, a community meeting was held where Nyasha Chigutsa, the ZANU PF Cell Chairman, and Philmon Taderera, the Cell Secretary, addressed local residents regarding collection of 10kg of grain. During the gathering, the two party officials announced that all beneficiaries of the presidential agricultural input program are now expected to "repay" the government's support by contributing a 10kg bag of maize or small grains to the Grain Marketing Board (GMB). This contribution, they stated, would be collected under the Zunde raMambo initiative which is a communal reserve meant to support vulnerable members of society. The officials reportedly warned that failure to comply with this directive would result in residents being excluded from future government assistance, including food aid programs. The farmers end up giving the maize so as not to miss out on Presidential inputs, which they rely on for farming.



VULNERABLE GROUPS

The Grain Marketing Board (GMB) initiative has disproportionately impacted vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities (PWDs), women, the elderly, and child-headed households. Women, who often carry the greatest burden of unpaid care work, are being forced to contribute maize that they had reserved for their families, potentially undermining their right to food, adequate nutrition, and household security. In Nyanga South Constituency, Ward 15, a group of PWDs successfully cultivated maize earlier this year, only to face pressure from their village head and the Ward 15 coordinator, Kadirira, representing the Ministry of Women Affairs, to contribute their harvest to the GMB program. Residents and farmers have raised concerns over the lack of clear communication or explanation about the objectives and requirements of the program. Reports also indicate that intimidation and coercion are being used to enforce compliance, particularly through the involvement of ZANU PF party leaders, including Sekai Maposa and Ward 15 Councillor Charles Kavhenga, raising serious questions about the protection of vulnerable groups and their constitutional rights to equality, dignity, and freedom from coercion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ZPP recommends that the Chiefs Council implement accountability measures for traditional leaders to prevent the abuse of vulnerable groups within the community.

ZPP recommends the proper dissemination of information through formal, non-partisan channels such as radio stations and posters, ensuring that citizens in rural areas do not miss important information regarding various processes.

ZPP recommends that such processes involve the Zimbabwe Republic Police to monitor proceedings and reduce the misuse of funds and abuse of office.

ZPP recommends that GMB and Social Welfare closely monitor the process of grain collection so that villagers are not overcharged by village authorities and community leaders.