



Zimbabwe
HUMAN RIGHTS
NGO Forum



**ZIMBABWE
PEACE
PROJECT**



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2021**

**The Politics of Food:
A Contextual Analysis of the
Distribution of Food Aid in
Zimbabwe**

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“*The right to food is an inclusive right and should be understood holistically to encompass other related rights, including the rights to health, housing, social security, water and sanitation, a healthy environment, access to decent work and land, as well as freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, all of which are based on the principle of non-discrimination!*”

¹Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food. The Special Rapporteur conducted an official visit to Zimbabwe from 18 to 28 November 2019, at the invitation of the government. The mission's objective was to assess all aspects of the right to food in Zimbabwe.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CBO	Community Based Organisation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DDC	District Development Coordinator
DDRC	District Drought Response Committee
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
TCAP	Targeted Command Agriculture Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VIDCO	Village Development Committee
WADCO	Ward Development Committee
WDRC	Ward Drought Response Committee
WFP	World Food Programme
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZPP	Zimbabwe Peace Project
ZIMSTAT	Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency
ZimVAC	Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee

ABOUT THE FORUM

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum) is a coalition of 22 human rights organisations working towards the realisation of a society that respects all human rights in Zimbabwe.

Members of the Forum

- Amnesty International-Zimbabwe (AI- Z)
- Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace – Zimbabwe (CCJP- Z)
- Civic Education Network (CIVNET)
- Counselling Services Unit (CSU)
- Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ)
- Justice for Children (JC)
- Legal Resources Foundation (LRF)
- Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)
- Media Monitors (MM)
- Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU)
- Tree of Life (TOL)
- Transparency International-Zimbabwe (TI- Z)
- VERITAS
- Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA)
- Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA)
- Zimbabwe Association for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of the Offender (ZACRO)
- Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR)
- Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust (ZIMCET)
- Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZIMRIGHTS)
- Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR)
- Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP)
- Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA)



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ABOUT THE ZIMBABWE PEACE PROJECT

Zimbabwe Peace Project was established in 2000 by a group of non-governmental and church organisations.

The initial members of ZPP were Catholic commission of Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJPZ) Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), Zimbabwe Council of Churches, Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZIMRIGHTS) Civic Education Network Trust (CIVNET), Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), Zimbabwe Liberators Platform (ZLP), Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust, Counselling Services Unit (CSU) and Nonviolent Action and Strategies for Social Change (NOVASC).

Over the years, the ZPP member partners portfolio has altered as new organisations have come on board while others have ceased to exist, and yet others taken on new and different focus, among other reasons. Current member organisations are Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJPZ), Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZIMRIGHTS), Civic Education Network Trust (CIVNET), Counselling Services Unit (CSU), Women Lawyers of Southern Africa (WLSA), National Association for the Care Of the Handicapped (NASCOH) and Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ).

Since inception ZPP has produced timely national monthly monitoring reports on violence and human rights violations which have been circulated to over 2000 stakeholders. The demand for ZPP reports has grown with the reports being packaged to meet the requirements of the different audiences and users.

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1.0

INTRODUCTION

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum), and the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) commissioned a study on the political economy of food aid distribution and the right to food in Zimbabwe. The aim of the study is to provide a holistic analysis of the factors and dynamics impacting on the right to food in Zimbabwe, particularly focusing on the extent to which partisan distribution of food has impacted on the right to food and related rights such as human dignity and the right to life. The study report provides insight into the following:

1. The broad factors which affect the availability and accessibility of food in general. These include agricultural policies, climate change, agrarian reforms, economic, social and political stability, etc.
2. The political economy of food and food aid in Zimbabwe – i.e. the political, economic and social factors that impact the availability and accessibility of food and food aid.
3. The nature and dynamics of the food aid distribution matrix, the role of various stakeholders in the distribution chain and the resultant impact on the right to food.
4. The institutional and regulatory framework relevant to the realization of the right to food. This includes domestic, regional and international protocols.
5. Detailed and holistic recommendations on reforms and measures to be taken to promote the progressive realization of the right to food in Zimbabwe.

The right to food is all-encompassing as it is central to life, dignity and humanity. Without access to food, citizens are subjected to stress, malnutrition, diseases and they cannot meaningfully participate

in civic processes. The recurring food insecurity crisis in Zimbabwe has placed millions of people in a perennial state of deprivation. Vulnerable families have had to borrow money, spend savings, sell productive assets, withdraw children from school, reduce non-food expenditure, sell land, beg for food, sell the last breeding stock to buy food and sell more livestock than usual. Failure to realise the right to food therefore impoverishes families. The country faces perennial hunger and malnutrition challenges. For millions of people, food is not always available, they lack access to adequate food, and they do not have the capacity to afford a basic balanced diet, even though the government has put in place a raft of food and nutrition policy and institutional frameworks anchored on human rights.

The study report is organised as follows: the first section discusses the food insecurity situation in the country. The second section unpacks the domestic, regional and international frameworks on the right to food. The third section unpacks the food aid distribution matrix. The fourth section discusses the conflation of food aid, politics and elections and how this impacts the right to food. The final section is the conclusion and recommendations.



2.0

STATUS OF FOOD INSECURITY IN ZIMBABWE

The World Food Program (WFP) projects that the number of Zimbabweans facing food insecurity could reach 8.6 million by the end of 2020 and this is estimated to be 60% of the total population.² Maize production in Zimbabwe will likely drop by 57% due to poor rainfall and worsening economic challenges. The country is projected to produce 1.060 million tons of maize in 2020 compared to 2.443 million tons last year, the highest decrease (57%) in maize production among the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Member States in 2020.³ The decline in maize production in Zimbabwe stands in stark contrast to the rest of the Southern Africa region where the 2020 maize harvest is expected to increase by at least 8% from last year.

The Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare estimates that 2.2 million people in urban areas are food insecure, and this indicates that hunger and food insecurity is spreading to urban areas as well.⁴ On the other hand, malnutrition predominantly affects pregnant women and children. A recent UNICEF report shows that at least one in every three children under five years of age and at least 93% of children between six months and two years do not have a balanced diet.⁵ The dire food insecurity situation in the country is as a result of a wide range of factors, which include, recurring climatic shocks, economic challenges, worsening poverty and policy failures.

The severe macro-economic situation in the country, which has evolved into a protracted crisis, has fueled food insecurity. As at October 2020?? food inflation stands at 950% pushing basic food commodities beyond the reach of millions of people as prices of staple foods continue to increase to very high levels. A hyperinflationary economic

environment erodes personal income and savings, making it difficult for many households to meet their basic needs. Food price increases have worsened food insecurity during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic which has affected income streams for the poor such as daily wages, remittances and informal small business activities. A significant proportion of households who participated in the 2020 ZimVAC assessment reported that their access to food had been affected by sharp increases in cereal prices (68.3%) and the ongoing cash shortages (15.2%). The food insecurity situation is exacerbated by widespread poverty, chronic malnutrition and macro-economic shocks. The ZIMSTAT Poverty Consumption and Expenditure Survey (2017) revealed that the number of extremely poor people rose from 4.5 million in 2017 to 6 million during April-May 2019, but the number of poor people measured by the lower-bound poverty line rose from 8.0 million to 8.9 million during the same period.⁶

Climatic shocks and extreme weather have also contributed to food insecurity. The country has experienced successive droughts over the past decade, with record-high temperatures drying up water sources and affecting agricultural activities, to the extent that livestock such as cattle die due to poor pasture conditions and a lack of water availability. There was poor maize crop production in the 2018/19 and 2019/20 seasons as most parts of the country received less than 75% of their long-term mean rainfall, which was below par.⁷ The projected maize harvest for the 2019/20 season was estimated at 850 000 tonnes, against an annual consumption of between 1,8 and 2,0 million tonnes.⁸ This means that there was a maize deficit which forced the government to import maize and other cereals in spite of severe foreign currency shortages. Most farmers continue to rely on rain-fed



agriculture, therefore, reducing their capacity to contribute significantly to food production. Dilapidated, and in some areas, non-existent irrigation facilities have increased farmers' vulnerability to droughts. Cyclone Idai induced floods and landslides left a trail of destruction in the eastern and south-eastern parts of the country. In early 2019, agricultural infrastructure, roads, schools, hospitals/clinics, crops, livestock, houses and agricultural fields were destroyed. Thousands of people were displaced and left without food.

Agricultural policy interventions by government have failed to improve the food security situation in the country over the past decade. Over the past four years, government has implemented a seemingly aggressive Special Maize Import Substitution Programme to enhance domestic production and reduce food imports, which is commonly referred to as the Targeted Command Agriculture Programme (TCAP) – or just 'command agriculture'.

A Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee report revealed that the government had spent at least USD 2.9 billion on the project between 2017 and 2018, but much of the money could not be properly accounted for, even though it was a publicly funded programme. Corruption at the highest levels continues to undermine governments agricultural policy interventions and in turn, this undermines the capacity of the government to reduce insecurity by stimulating and supporting sustainable agriculture and food production.

²⁴"WFP urgently seeks international support to prevent millions of Zimbabweans plunging deeper into hunger," World Food Programme, 20 July 2020, <https://www.wfp.org/news/wfp-urgently-seeks-international-support-prevent-millions-zimbabweans-plunging-deeper-hunger>

²⁵"Synthesis report on the state of food and nutrition security and vulnerability in Southern Africa", Southern Africa Development Committee (SADC) - Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (RVAA) Programme

²⁶"Zimbabwe: 2019 - 2020 Humanitarian Appeal Revision (February 2019 - April 2020)," UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 7 August 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/zimbabwe/zimbabwe-2019-2020-humanitarian-appeal-revision-february-2019-april-2020>

²⁷"Malnutrition cases rise as drought, economic deterioration hits Zimbabwe," UNICEF Zimbabwe, 27 January 2020, <https://www.unicef.org/zimbabwe/stories/malnutrition-cases-rise-drought-economic-deterioration-hits-zimbabwe>

²⁸"Zimbabwe has 9 million poor people – report," New Zimbabwe, 27 November 2020, <https://www.newzimbabwe.com/zim-has-9-million-poor-people-report/>

²⁹<http://fnc.org.zw/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ZimVAC-2020-Food-and-Nutrition-Security-Update-Report.pdf>

³⁰<https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2020/09/04/zimbabwe-hopes-to-increase-maize-yield/>

3.0

LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK ON THE RIGHT TO FOOD

The 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe serves as the foundational basis of the legal architecture which obligates the State to guarantee or facilitate the availability of food for all. The anchor provision on the right to food is section 77 (b) of the Constitution, which obligates the Zimbabwean government to ensure the provision of “sufficient food” for all citizens within the limits of resources available to the State. The Constitution also deals with several aspects of the right to food, this includes the obligation upon the government to ensure adequate food production, the establishment of sufficient food reserves and public information dissemination regarding nutrition. Basic nutrition in respect of children, is also provided for in section 19(2) (b) of the Constitution. Section 239 of the Constitution further provides for rationalisation of land ownership to ensure food availability whilst section 81(1) obliges the State to ensure that children have access to adequate nutrition.

There are other ancillary provisions in the Constitution which strengthen the claim to the right to food. These include, section 31(c) of the Constitution, which obliges the State to respect fundamental human rights and freedoms, which include the right to food. Section 11 of the Constitution provides that:

“The State must take all practical measures to protect rights provided in the Declaration of Rights”

The State is also obliged to pay attention to the needs of the elderly. Section 21 (2) of the Constitution obliges the State to ensure food access to the elderly in the following terms:

‘The State and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must

endeavour, within the limits of the resources available to them to provide facilities, food and social care for elderly persons who are in need.”

Section 50 (5) (d) of the Constitution provides that there be maintenance of human dignity for incarcerated individuals and that they be provided with adequate food.

Provisions in the Constitution are complemented by Acts of Parliament and Statutory Instruments, which operationalize the State's obligation to provide for and guarantee the right to food. Relevant legislation in this regard includes:

*Food and Food Standards Act
Public Health Act
Dairy Act
Grain Marketing Board Act
Agricultural Marketing Authority Act
Fertiliser and Farm Feeds Act
National Biotechnology Act
Parts of Trade Measures Act*

Regional and international legal framework

The right to food is a human right recognized by international human rights law. Section 326 of the Constitution states as follows:

“1. Customary international law is part of Zimbabwean law, the courts in their interpretation should consider it part of the law unless it is inconsistent with the Constitution. 2. When interpreting legislation, every court and tribunal must adopt any reasonable interpretation of the legislation that is consistent with customary international law applicable in Zimbabwe, in preference to an alternative interpretation inconsistent with that law.”

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes, in the context of an adequate standard of living, that: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, ...” (art. 25). The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which is part of the International Bill of Human Rights, recognizes the right to adequate food as an essential part of the right to an adequate standard of living (art. 11 (1)). It also explicitly recognizes “the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger” (art. 11 (2)). The right to food is also recognized in regional instruments, such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003). The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has interpreted the right to food as being implicitly protected under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981) through the right to life, the right to health, and the right to economic, social and cultural development. The right to food is also recognized in other international conventions that protect specific groups, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979),¹⁰ the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)¹¹ and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

The Constitution of Zimbabwe obliges the courts to take these provisions into account when interpreting the law. Zimbabwe Civic Society Organisations can leverage regional and international instruments when holding the government to account through public interest litigation. There is hope for remedy or redress through the courts when the quest to assert rights is

amplified through regional and international instruments. The Zimbabwean Constitutional Court has already made recognition of the obligation to consider International Law.⁹

Domestic, regional and international legal instruments that uphold the 'right to food' are therefore critical to ensuring that the State invests in ensuring that the right to food is progressively realized in the country.

Policy and institutional frameworks to implement the 'right to food'

The country has several food and nutrition policies to implement the right to food which are anchored on human rights standards. These include the National Nutrition Strategy, the Transitional Stabilisation Programme, the Zimbabwe Agriculture Investment Plan, the Comprehensive Agricultural Policy Framework, the National Policy on Drought Management and the Food Deficit Mitigation Programme, amongst others. These policies are superintended by a wide range of government ministries and agencies which include, amongst others, the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Climate and Rural Resettlement, whose mandate includes promoting food production and self-sufficiency, agricultural land and water resources management, and agricultural research and technical support to farming communities; the Ministry of Health and Child Care, whose mandate includes ensuring nutrition amongst children and other population groups; the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, whose mandate includes providing social protection and welfare support to the most vulnerable groups; and the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing, which amongst other things coordinates government's rural developmental policies at a local level. This includes coordinating food and nutrition interventions by government and non-governmental development agencies at the local level.

The Food and Nutrition Council is the lead agency under the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC), tasked by Government with the responsibility of coordination, analysis and promotion of a cohesive national response by

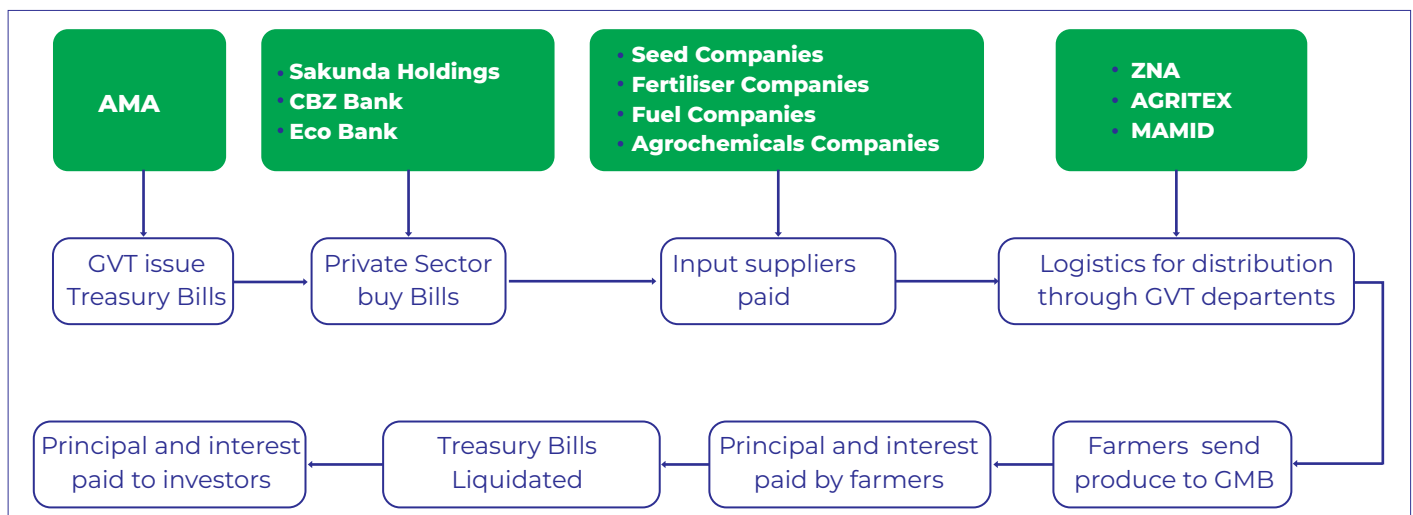
multiple sectors and stakeholders to food and nutrition insecurity in Zimbabwe.¹⁰

The Government of Zimbabwe has greatly expanded direct fiscal agricultural support over the past decade, from less than 1% in 2013 to 4.2 % of GDP in 2018. The noted increases have, however, failed to mitigate hunger and food insecurity in the country.¹¹The governments' primary agricultural policy is the Special Maize Import Substitution Programme, commonly referred to as the Targeted Command Agriculture Programme (TCAP) – or just 'command agriculture', which has been implemented over the past four years. The TCAP is meant to enhance domestic agricultural production, thus achieving food security through self-sufficiency whilst concurrently reducing food imports and redirecting demand for foreign currency to other critical sectors of the economy.

The TCAP involves a number of actors including the state which is represented by various organs, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Rural Development, the Zimbabwe Defence Forces and a Cabinet Committee on Food Security and Nutrition. Other key players are the state-controlled GMB, Sakunda Holdings, which is a private-owned petroleum firm, and other private seed, fertilizer and agrochemicals companies, etc.¹²

The TCAP was premised on providing loan guarantees to farmers for the purchase of inputs i.e. seeds, fertilizers, chemicals, diesel, irrigation equipment, farm machinery and equipment, payment of electricity and water charges etc. The farmers were required to commit stipulated portions of their harvest towards repayment of the loan and they could retain the surplus. The TCAP has had very low returns in terms of increasing maize production and reducing food insecurity, despite the high financial cost of running the programme and the burden it places on the fiscus. Default rates on the TCAP loans have also been estimated at above 35% and this is very high and undermines the original intention of the programme being self-sustaining over the years.

Figure 1. Implementation Model of the TCAP Source: Chemura et al 2019



There are other government measures aimed at addressing hunger and food insecurity and these include:

- The Presidential Inputs Scheme Program introduced to secure household food security by providing smallholder farmers with maize seed and fertilizer;
- Removing import duty on maize, wheat and cooking oil, among other basic commodities, to ensure affordability of essential foodstuffs and to mitigate the effects of the drought experienced in the 2018-2019 season;
- Food subsidies;
- Lifting of ban on private grain sales;
- Allowing importation of genetically modified organism (GMO) maize;
- Launching humanitarian (drought) appeals to mobilize aid from development agencies to support the acquisition of food aid to be distributed to vulnerable groups;

Most of the agricultural policy interventions have not been successful in ensuring that there is food security. This is due to several factors that have been discussed in the previous section. Chief amongst them, are weak policy implementation, climatic shocks and natural hazards, economic challenges and extreme poverty.

⁹<https://africanlii.org/node/1751>

¹⁰<http://fnc.org.zw/>

¹¹International Monetary Fund, Zimbabwe: Staff-Monitored Program, 2019

¹²Chemura, A, Mazwi, F, Mudimu, G (2019) *Political Economy of Command Agriculture in Zimbabwe: A State-led Contract Farming Model*, Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy Volume:8 issue:1-2, page(s): 232-257

4.0

THE FOOD AID DISTRIBUTION MATRIX IN ZIMBABWE

The distribution of food aid involves a wide range of State and non-state actors. It also includes institutions at village, ward, district and provincial levels, whose direction is derived at a national level. The actors and institutions involved have a common agenda of providing food assistance to people and communities facing food insecurity and hunger. They also pursue their individual socio-economic and political interests, which at times, can undermine the right to food for the most vulnerable groups in society. It is therefore important to have a clear understanding of who is involved in the distribution of food aid, their role, and the level of their power and influence in relation to who receives food aid and who does not. These questions are key to understanding the socio-economic and political dynamics of food aid distribution.

The process of establishing the populations and areas in need of food assistance is technical in nature and is informed by assessments which are carried out on an annual basis. The Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement conducts annual crop and livestock assessments to ascertain the estimated production and availability of food within the respective season. This is followed by a 'rural livelihood assessment' exercise carried out by the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) to ascertain the percentage of the population facing hunger and food insecurity in order to identify the areas (hotspots) in need of food aid. The outcomes of these two exercises are then used by both government and development agencies to establish the number of people and the areas in need of food aid during a particular season. Thus, food assistance programmes become appropriately targeted at the most vulnerable populations across the country.

There are 'drought relief' structures that implement food assistance programmes at various levels. The actors/structures from provincial level downwards are detailed in the table below. The Cabinet is the main structure at national level, followed by a sub-committee of Cabinet Ministers, which also has a 'Working Party of Officials' comprised of Permanent Secretaries of the respective Ministries. The national level structure provides policy direction on food security interventions including the distribution of food aid relief.

At the provincial level, there is the Provincial Drought Relief Committee (PDRC) chaired by the Provincial Administrator and comprised of provincial heads of line ministries and government agencies involved in food security and social welfare and protection, as well as provincial representatives of traditional leaders and some representatives of development agencies. The Department of Social Development (commonly referred to as Social Welfare) serves as the secretariat of the PDRC. At the district level, there is a District Drought Relief Committee (DDRC) chaired by the District Administrator and comprised of district heads of line ministries and government agencies involved in food security and social welfare and protection. The committee is also made up of traditional leaders and representatives of development agencies working within the respective district. The Department of Social Development also serves as the Secretariat of the DDRC.

At ward level, there is a Ward Drought Relief Committee (WDRC) chaired by the Councillor and comprised of traditional leaders (mostly headmen and village heads, and sometimes chiefs) and select representatives of development agencies operating in the respective ward. This is followed by a Drought

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The selection of food aid beneficiaries (hereinafter referred to as 'beneficiary selection') is primarily done by villagers in consultation with social welfare officers, village heads and representatives of development agencies operating in the respective area. The villages assemble at a village development committee meeting chaired by the village head to set a criterion for selecting beneficiaries of food aid. The vulnerability criteria used usually includes factors such as labour constraints within a household, presence of an adult head of family (targeting child-headed households), the capability of the head of household (considering terminal illness), income and asset ownership, etc. The villagers then use the vulnerability criteria to identify, rank and compile a list of households (that is, beneficiary list/register) deserving food relief aid based on the set criterion. The beneficiary list is drawn in ranking order with the first name on the list being the most deserving household. The village beneficiary list is submitted to the Ward Drought Relief Committee where they are verified and aggregated into a ward beneficiary list, which is forwarded, through the Department of Social Welfare, to the District Drought Relief Committee. The ward beneficiary lists are verified by the DDRC and they are aggregated into a beneficiary list for the respective district that is submitted to the Provincial Drought Relief Committee. Food aid requirements are then submitted by the PDRC to the national structures as well as to development agencies so that the aid is delivered to ward 16 distribution points.

It is important to note that there are several sources of food aid in Zimbabwe, these sources determine the channel of distribution of food aid and they are prone to political interference in varying degrees. For government sponsored aid, the food supplies are usually collected from the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) depots and delivered to the various ward distribution points. Distributions are carried out by the Department of Social Development (previously known as Social Welfare). Donor funded food aid is usually distributed by a wide range of development agencies with the involvement of other stakeholders such as social welfare officers, traditional leaders, councillors, etc. Chinese sourced food aid, which is a non-traditional source, is either distributed through the Department of Social Development if the donation was made directly to the government or through ruling party structures if the donation was made directly to ZANU-PF.

The dynamics, complexities, and alleged politicisation, of food aid distribution are discussed and explained in greater detail in the next section.

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The dynamics, complexities, and alleged politicisation, of food aid distribution are discussed and explained in greater detail in the next section.

Table: Key actors/institutions in the food aid distribution matrix¹³

Actor/Institution	Role and function(s)
Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) – comprised of Government and Development Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leads technical assessment and updating of the food, nutrition and livelihoods situation in Zimbabwe. The ZimVAC report identifies hunger and food insecurity hotspots and guides decision making by both government and development agencies.
Department of Social Development (under the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead government agency on social welfare, development and protection. Undertakes poverty assessments to establish depth and distribution of national poverty. Administers drought relief assistance (specifically distributes government-funded food aid) Acts as the secretariat of the Provincial Drought Relief Committee (PDRC) and the District Drought Relief Committee (DDRC)
Provincial Administrator (under the Ministry of Local Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plays a gatekeeping role at the provincial level – gives permission to food relief actors (i.e. INGOs and Local NGOs and CBOs) to proceed with their work within the Province; signs a Memorandum of Understanding with the development agencies working in multiple districts in the province Chairs the Provincial Drought Relief Committee (PDRC)
District Drought Relief Committee (DDRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The DDRC ranks livelihood vulnerability and food insecurity levels for all the wards in the district The DDRC is supposed to allocate drought relief aid to each Ward Drought Relief Committee (WDRC) based on the levels of vulnerability and the extent of drought and famine in each respective ward Chiefs and headmen are members of the DDRC
District Administrator (under the Ministry of Local Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairs the District Drought Relief Committee (DDRC) The DA's office coordinates food distribution across the district – this includes coordinating, and at times, supervising, food aid distribution by development agencies and other government departments Plays a gatekeeping role at the district level – gives permission to food relief actors (i.e. INGOs and Local NGOs and CBOs) to proceed with their work within the district; signs a Memorandum of Understanding with the development agencies working in the districts
District Social Welfare Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focal point person for government food aid distribution at the district level – allocates government-funded food aid to each ward through the councillor Maintains a database of vulnerable and disadvantaged people across the district, as well as all lists of people receiving food aid and livelihoods, support in the district Provides secretarial support to the District Drought Relief Committee
Ward Drought Relief Committee (WDRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The WDRC compiles the list of people (beneficiaries) who are supposed to receive food aid and the committee is supposed to steer (at times supervise) the distribution of food aid, including receiving and handling complaints. Chiefs and headmen are members of the WDRC

¹³The table is based on a compilation of information obtained from various sources, with some of it having been obtained through interviews with a wide range of actors involved in food aid distribution

Councillor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairs the Ward Drought Relief Committee (WDRC) • Leads food distribution in the ward together with other actors such as village heads, social welfare officers, etc. The councillor is also involved in the identification of food aid beneficiaries. • Disseminates information about food aid distribution (i.e. for both government and donor-funded food aid programs). The information is about the dates, times and nature of aid being distributed. The information is communicated during full council meetings and the councillor passes on the information to village heads for further dissemination.
Village Head (chiefs and headmen are sometimes involved in these processes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminates information on food aid distribution and beneficiary identification meetings • Keeps a register of all the people resident in a village under their jurisdiction. These registers are then used to verify whether selected beneficiaries truly reside in the respective village. • Coordinates the selection of beneficiaries of food aid, which is a participatory process led by villagers themselves.
World Food Program (WFP) (a key non-state player in food aid distribution)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading United Nations Agency on food aid, link between International Donors, Government and implementing INGOs • Procures food and distributes to implementing INGOs • Participates in public addresses before distribution and also in the caucus meeting with community leaders before public address • Provides oversight on INGOs handling of the aid • Provides guidelines to INGOs • Evaluates the food relief distribution process
NGOs (community-based, local and international)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs are the main actors involved in the distribution of donor-funded food aid – they also facilitate beneficiary selection at the community level by monitoring the process in which villagers establish a criteria for identifying beneficiaries based on their social status and vulnerability. • Coordinates public meetings to explain food aid programs to the communities • Manning the help desk – investigates violations and provides remedy on deserving candidates
Beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in defining the criteria for vulnerability and, through self-selection, they draw up a list of people who are in need (deserving) of food aid due to their vulnerability and disadvantaged social status. These are the list of beneficiaries which are then used by NGOs and the government social services departments. • They set community indicators for use in ranking beneficiaries
Traditional Leaders – chiefs, headmen and village heads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They convene meetings for villagers to set a criteria for identifying vulnerable households; they lead the compilation and ranking of vulnerable households to receive food aid; they participate in the verification of beneficiary lists; they participate in distributions.

5.0

THE CONFLATION OF FOOD AID, POLITICS AND ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

The food aid distribution matrix described above presents a 'technocratic image' of the structures and processes involved in the distribution of food assistance to vulnerable households. The matrix is intended to be driven by the technical humanitarian goal of assisting the most food insecure sections of the population with food relief. Although food distribution processes are driven by government structures, it must be ensured that they are inclusive by involving non-state development agencies (i.e. CBOs, local NGOs and INGOs) and that they are participatory and democratic by ensuring that communities (villagers) establish the relevant criteria for determining potential beneficiaries. The reality however, is far different from the idealistic technocratic image. In reality, politics plays a significant role in determining who gets to receive food aid. Various media and civil society reports show that distribution of food aid is often politicised. There have been numerous reports of allegations that known and perceived supporters of opposition political parties are discriminated from receiving food aid in rural areas, even if they meet the set vulnerability criteria. Hence, opposition supporters, mainly from the Movement of Democratic Change formations, are at greater risk of their rights to food being undermined.

Partisan influence over food aid beneficiary selection

Selection of food aid beneficiaries is prone to political manipulation and other social dynamics even though the process is supposed to be participatory and democratic. In some areas, traditional leaders (mostly headmen and village heads) organize pre-food aid distribution meetings which are allegedly coordinated through local

ZANU-PF structures.¹⁴ This happens prior to the identification of vulnerable households and potential beneficiaries for food aid by the pertinent community members. These meetings are exclusionary as evidenced by the fact that members and supporters of the opposition MDC and known civic activists are not invited to attend the meetings. This is so, because meetings are organised through ruling party structures. Their exclusion (and absence) from the meetings sets the tone for blatant discrimination when the beneficiary selection and aid distribution processes take place. It is at these meetings that local ruling party leaders emphasise that opposition supporters will not be eligible to receive food aid. This places undue pressure on ordinary villagers to hide their political affiliation and involvement with civil society groups.

Local ZANU-PF structures are also used to communicate information about the distribution of food aid i.e. information about the type of aid being distributed, dates for beneficiary selection, dates for distribution, etc. The partisan nature of these information channels gives a misleading impression that ZANU-PF has significant influence over the distribution of food aid which can deter ordinary villagers from associating with the opposition or CSOs. The influence of local ZANU-PF structures and leaders over beneficiary identification and selection processes sometimes results in opposition members being openly denied food aid even when said food aid has been donated by INGOs. The Forum also noted such a case:

Residents, namely Moses Deveramudhuva, Gibson Mudhuva, Pharaoh Katiyo, Wurayayi Ngulube, Joel Chafunda and Wilson Chigwaza reported that they were being excluded in the distribution of food aid based on their affiliation with the MDC-T party. The affected community members highlighted that they had not been benefiting from the Camfed Food Aid Program since 2016 and their names were deliberately excluded from the distribution lists.

Cases of partisan distribution of food aid usually happen when the aid is provided by the government. Government-sponsored food aid is mostly distributed by either ZANU-PF legislators or their local party leaders, even though the distributions are supposed to be led by social welfare officers. For example, a report compiled in 2017 by the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) cited a case where potential beneficiaries of food aid were told to first join ZANU-PF in order for them to benefit from the aid:

ZANU-PF Chairperson Taruvinga Dandira for Muzveze ward 15, Karoi, Mashonaland West distributed food aid obtained from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to ZANU-PF supporters. Supporters from the opposition parties were advised to join ZANU-PF if they wanted to benefit.

In another case, a ZANU-PF House of Assembly representative in Chiredzi allegedly used his political influence to buy subsidized mealie meal related to the COVID-19 relief efforts. The mealie meal was intended for distribution through supermarkets. The mealie meal was priced at a significantly lower rate than the prevailing market rate and it was intended to benefit ordinary villagers. The legislator then proceeded to sell the mealie meal at the same subsidized prices but only to ZANU-PF supporters, using a beneficiary list that had been compiled by the party structures.¹⁵ This meant that opposition supporters could not buy the subsidized mealie meal leaving them more vulnerable to food insecurity.

Local ZANU-PF leaders and activists also abuse their political power and they demand that beneficiaries of food aid pay certain amounts of money before they can receive aid packages. For instance, a field report compiled by the Forum cites a case where

ZANU-PF leaders:

On 21 September 2020, three ZANU-PF activists led by a villager known as Ndou, deprived 7 households their monthly share of Social Welfare aid, in Beitbridge West, Ward 10. The community had gathered in anticipation of receiving their food allocation but were told that they must pay ZWL50 for transport in order to receive their share. Community members were reportedly confused as it is the first time they have been requested to pay 'transport costs' since the maize is delivered in government vehicles.

The case cements the point that local ZANU-PF structures have undue partisan influence over food aid distribution processes, to the extent that they can manipulate the processes for their personal and political gain.

Partisan role of traditional leaders in food aid distribution

Traditional leaders namely Chiefs, Headmen and Village heads have influence over food aid distribution in rural areas, given that they have customary, administrative and developmental roles and responsibilities within their jurisdictions.¹⁶ The Traditional Leaders Act mandates Chiefs, Headmen and Village Heads to keep updated registers of all villagers residing within their jurisdictions, and the registers are used for state administrative purposes e.g. censuses, provision of social protection and welfare, crime prevention etc.¹⁷ It is for these reasons that traditional leaders play an important role in identifying vulnerable households which receive food aid. The role of village heads in the food distribution matrix is threefold. Firstly, village heads serve as the main communication channel whenever food aid distribution is supposed to happen. They receive information from Social Welfare Officers on planned food aid distribution programmes and their responsibility is to 'spread the word' around the villages within their jurisdiction. Secondly, village heads convene and chair meetings where villagers set the criteria for vulnerable households intended to benefit from the food aid. They also lead villagers in ranking vulnerable households onto a list of beneficiaries. Thirdly, village heads sometimes lead the process of distributing food aid when it is brought to ward

ensure that the rightful people on the beneficiary list are the ones receiving food aid packages.

Traditional leaders, particularly village heads, who politicise food aid on behalf of ZANU-PF supporters take advantage of their role and influence within the distribution matrix. Village heads in some areas are accused of convening pre-food aid distribution meetings which are not usually attended by representatives of NGOs and Social Welfare Officers.¹⁸ The village heads announce to the villagers that there will be an upcoming food aid distribution programme. Local ZANU-PF leaders then address the villagers and claim that the aid has been either donated or facilitated by the government or the ruling party. In some cases, this won't be true because the food aid will be distributed by NGOs, but their representatives will not be in attendance to refute the claims. The party leaders go on to tell the villagers that only ZANU-PF members and supporters will be given the food aid packages and those who support the opposition will not receive anything. They also use the meetings to denounce opposition political parties and intimidate villagers from supporting the parties. The intimidation and threats affect the villagers in that they will not openly support opposition political parties for fear of being denied food aid. They thus 'secure' their right to food by forgoing their right to free political association.

In some cases, village heads are accused of removing opposition supporters from beneficiary lists even though their names would initially have been included. A Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) report on human rights violations between January to August 2020 cites cases where known opposition supporters were denied COVID-19 food aid relief by village heads as they were told that their names were not on the beneficiary list:

On 14 March 2020, MDC District chairperson Kachiri was denied a bag of maize from the Social Welfare by village head Peter Chaparira. Reports confirm that Chaparira denied Kachiri food aid because of his political affiliation. During a community distribution convened at Chaparira village Kachiri's name was missing from the list of beneficiaries. One of the beneficiaries Emmanuel Chigango told Kachiri that Chaparira had removed him because of supporting the opposition MDC.

Another case reported by ZPP in Ward 10, Munyanyi Village, Buhera where a traditional leader compiled

a list of beneficiaries comprised of ZANU-PF supporters only:

It was reported that all Headmen were ordered to write names of those people who were not currently benefiting from any food aid program. Each village was given an allocation according to the number of households not receiving aid, but it was unfortunate that most of the Village Heads listed only ZANU-PF members. They were supposed to be sold COVID-19 relief mealie meal from the government at the price of ZWL121 per 10kg. Most of those who were not listed for this affordable mealie meal were opposition members. Villagers like Tatenda Mutanga, Garabha and Mahwite were not listed when they are the most vulnerable.

ZPP has also recorded more brazen cases wherein traditional leaders repossess food aid packages from suspected opposition supporters at distribution centres:

It is alleged that Village Head Chaparira forced Kachiri [a known opposition supporter] to surrender a bag of maize which he benefited under the government COVID-19 social assistance programme in Mt Darwin South at Chaparira village in Ward 14. Verified reports indicate that on 26 May 2020, Village Head Chaparira took the victim's maize prior to allegations of him supporting the MDC Alliance party. According to other verified reports, Village Head Chaparira has been accused of confiscating maize from beneficiaries perceived to be opposition supporters during community distributions. He reportedly takes away the rations from the victims in a routine manner at each community distribution scheduled in the ward.

The partisan conduct of the traditional leaders during food aid distribution can be linked to their conflated relationship with the ruling party ZANU-PF. This is despite the fact that the Constitution states that traditional leaders should be non-partisan and independent from political influence. There are several reports by the media and civil society groups which have shown that traditional leaders have been incorporated into ZANU-PF structures such that their customary, administrative and developmental functions are indistinguishable from party [ZANU-PF] activities.¹⁹ Some traditional leaders in Makoni District reported that they were repeatedly instructed by local ZANU-PF leaders to convene village assemblies so that the party could carry out their political programmes at the meetings.²⁰ In the worst cases reported, some

traditional leaders have been implicated in either facilitating or leading political violence against suspected opposition supporters. A 2017 report by the Zimbabwe Coalition of Community Based Organisations (ZiCCBO) cited the case of the late Chief Kasekete of Muzarabani communal area:

An informant who resides in Muzarabani communal area described how the late Chief Kasekete convened a meeting at his [homestead] a few weeks after the 2008 harmonized elections.²¹ The meeting was addressed by the late Chief Kasekete, ZANU-PF leaders, war veterans and military officials, the informant alleged. Chief Kasekete is alleged to have declared that all opposition supporters were going to be chased away from his area, and he provided his tractor and lorry to transport youth militias who were instructed to raze down houses belonging to known or suspected MDC supporters. One of the ZANU-PF councilors in the area and the party's district chairperson allegedly used the chief's vehicle to supervise the youth who were destroying and burning down the houses.²²

The partisan association between traditional leaders and the ruling party ZANU-PF, and their participation in the intimidation of opposition supporters means that villagers will not have the courage to challenge them whenever they are discriminated against during food aid distribution.

Partisan influence over government food aid distribution structures

The ruling party ZANU-PF exerts undue influence over local government structures, such as Provincial Administrators, District Administrators and the Department of Social Welfare, which are involved in the distribution of food aid at local levels. This opens food aid distribution processes to political interference from ruling party functionaries such as local party leaders and activists, as well as war veterans and youth militias aligned to the party. The partisan control and distribution of aid enables ZANU-PF to bolster its electoral support whilst also punishing villagers who voted for opposition councillors. This significantly undermines the right to food for people who are perceived to be members or supporters of the opposition. Additionally, wards which elect opposition councillors are also punished.

District Drought Relief Committees (DDRC) are

meant to identify and rank wards that should receive food aid relief in addition to determining the quantities to be allocated to each ward, based on the number of vulnerable households and the extent of drought and famine in each ward. There are allegations that in some places the DDRCs do this exercise in a partisan manner which discriminates against wards that are under Councilors from opposition political parties. A report by the Zimbabwe Coalition of Community Based Organisations (ZiCCBO) quotes the Councilor of Ward 33 in Buhera accusing the Buhera DDRC of partisan bias against his ward.²³ The Councilor, who chairs the Ward Drought Relief Committee for Ward 33, accused the Buhera DDRC of allocating 185 bags of maize only to his ward, which has a population of 13,000 people (that is, 3199 households) while other wards, with fewer people, received between 1500 to 2000 bags. The other wards that received more bags of maize are under ZANU-PF Councilors. The maize was being distributed through the Department of Social Welfare. In another case, the opposition Councilor negotiated with an NGO distributing aid in the district. The NGO conducted an 'independent' census of vulnerable households and allocated 1431 bags of maize, 1561 bags of sorghum and bottles of cooking oil to the vulnerable people in Ward 33. However, the DDRC and the Department of Social Welfare used their bureaucratic influence to force the NGO to reduce the quantities of maize to 800 bags arguing that there were irrigation plots in the ward yet most of the irrigation infrastructure was dilapidated and not in use.

Councillors are influential in the distribution of food aid as they chair Ward Drought District Committees (WDRD). The WDRDs verify the beneficiary lists generated at the village level. It is during these verifications that opposition supporters, or villages that are known to be sympathetic to the opposition, are ranked lower on the beneficiary lists.²⁴ This means that opposition supporters will have a lower chance of receiving food aid especially if the aid is not enough to cover everyone. This happens in cases where the Councillor for the respective ward is from ZANU-PF. Villagers who are worst affected by this partisan verification and ranking of beneficiary lists are usually resident in areas that are within the vicinity of polling stations that would have overwhelmingly voted for the opposition. In some instances where there is an opposition Councillor, officials from the DAs office and the Department of Social Welfare bypass the opposition chaired WDRD and they channel food aid through the losing

Councilor candidate from ZANU-PF. The losing ZANU-PF Councilor by-passes the WDRC and distributes government-sponsored aid together with local ZANU-PF leaders and structures. The same applies when there is distribution of government-sponsored farming inputs and small livestock. In the worst case scenario, the aid is distributed at ZANU-PF rallies superintended by ruling party legislators, despite the fact that this process ought to be conducted in a non-partisan manner by WDRCs and government structures.

In certain instances, the DAs, and other security agencies such as the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) working in a particular district, can stop the operations of a food aid distribution NGO if it refuses to abide to their partisan directives. The NGO can be 'banned' from operating in the district. An anonymous informant working for an INGO operating in Manicaland and Masvingo provinces gave an elaborate account of a case where an INGO was 'banned' from working in one of the provinces after refusing to budge into the partisan demands of the DA and CIO:

It happened once in a certain district I will not mention. The DA and CIO gave NGOs working in the area a hard time. They would tell you that if you do not comply with their partisan directives, they would cease your operations and ban you from distributing food aid. They would say even if they banned your organisation there were going to be other NGOs coming to operate in the district so you will not be the last organisation working in the area. There is a case of an organisation called Concern which defied the DA and CIOs partisan directives and they were given 48 hours to cease operations and vacate the district. Concern was distributing food aid on behalf of the World Food Programme (WFP). When our organisation moved in to distribute food aid in the district, we brought ten field monitors and ten enumerators we had recruited through advertising in the local press. The DA and CIO demanded that we fire our field monitors and enumerators and replace them with 'locals' they were recommending or employ additional people from their recommended list. We could not give in to these demands as they were against our policies and practices.

The locals being referred to by the informant included local ZANU-PF activists, and this was likely meant to ensure that the food aid distribution process would remain under the watch and influence of the ruling party. This is one way in which the ruling party influences the operations of food aid NGOs. They abuse the powers of the DA to register and de-register organisations working in districts where food aid is distributed.

Food aid as a tool for political control and mobilization of electoral support

Food aid is usually politicised by the ruling party for purposes of political control and building electoral support for the ruling party in rural areas. Conversely, opposition political parties are precluded from doing the same and building their support in the same rural areas. This is a blatant violation of the right to food which in turn is a violation of constitutionally guaranteed rights to free political association and the right to vote for a political party of one's choice.

Local ZANU-PF structures and their elected leaders such as Councillors and Members of Parliament are notoriously known for politicising food and agricultural aid provided by the government through the Social Welfare Department. The food and agricultural aid is usually used for political control and building an electoral support base. The Forum documented cases where food aid from the Social Welfare Department was hijacked by ZANU-PF candidates and used for campaigning purposes ahead of the 2018 elections:

On 12 July 2018, ZANU-PF aspiring councillor for Bulilima West Ward 20, Benjamin Nleya, only registered known ZANU-PF supporters as recipients of food aid donated by the Social Welfare Department. It is alleged that he told villagers that the food aid was part of ZANU-PF campaign strategy and should therefore be given to ZANU-PF supporters only.

In some places, ZANU-PF activists demanded that villagers produce their voter registration slips so that they could be given food aid:

From the above observations, the ZHRC came to the conclusion that there was indeed discrimination and exclusion in the distribution of food aid in Bikita East Constituency, Mazowe Central Constituency, Muzarabani North and South and Buhera North.

The Commission also reported that there was politically motivated discrimination during the distribution of farm inputs, and this had a bearing on one's capacity to produce food for themselves. The Commission went on to further state that those targeted were members of the opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change:

There were undisputable and corroborated facts which were that the Villagers in the Mazowe Central Constituency, Dewure Resettlement Scheme of Bikita East, Muzarabani and Buhera North were facing discrimination in the distribution of food aid and agriculture inputs on the basis of their political affiliation to the opposition party, the MDC.

The findings by the ZHRC shows that even absence from ZANU-PF meetings can result in one not getting food aid, something which extends beyond the right to food but also negates freedom of association.

There was exclusion from food aid and agriculture inputs lists on the grounds of political affiliation and non- attendance of ruling party meetings. For example, in Buhera North there was information that some officials had made statements that food distributed was only meant for ZANU-PF members, or that non-ZANU-PF member should get their ration from 'their parties' or 'Morgan Tsvangirai.'

The patterns of discrimination observed by the ZHRC in 2016 are similar to what has been reported with regards to the politicisation of COVID-19 relief food aid. An Amnesty International report bemoaned the fact that people who do not belong to the ruling party were being denied means to survive as COVID-19 food aid was being politicised to favour members of ZANU-PF.²⁸ The report went on to quote an individual only referred to as Peter from Murehwa, who highlighted the plight of villagers who were discriminated from receiving food aid because they are perceived to be supporters of the opposition:

It's really tough here. local leaders here are from ZANU-PF and say anyone who belongs to any other party does not get food aid. They say we must get it from the parties we support. Even if our names are on the list of deserving people, we are skipped.²⁹

The politicisation of COVID-19 relief food aid is also affecting those who are most vulnerable in society. The Executive Director of Heal Zimbabwe Trust, Mr Rashid Mahiya³⁰ noted that "women and older people are being denied food aid on the basis of political affiliation yet there is drought and COVID-19." These are groups of people who are already marginalised and are the most affected by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Complaints mechanisms and remedies

There are mechanisms in place to handle complaints from people who have grievances about the distribution of food aid, including handling complaints about the partisan distribution of aid. There are also monitoring mechanisms put in place to check for partisan distribution of aid, but this has somehow not worked efficiently as shown in the discussions above. On the government side, there are monitoring teams from the national, provincial and district levels who are supposed to monitor food aid distribution and to investigate complaints raised at the respective ward distribution centres. District social welfare departments also handle and investigate complaints, but this has not been very successful given the overbearing influence of ZANU-PF structures over local government structures, as discussed above. There are instances where people who have been discriminated against receiving food aid on partisan lines have raised complaints to local social welfare officers and they were ultimately given their food aid packages. But, in most instances, affected villagers choose not to complain for fear of being victimized by either village heads or ZANU-PF activities in their communities.

On the other hand, NGOs have more effective monitoring systems and complaints handling (feedback) mechanisms that they use before, during and after food distribution exercises. Most NGOs have established help desks in food aid distribution areas which are manned by their field officers.³¹ They also set up suggestion boxes and toll-free numbers where aggrieved villagers can lodge complaints anonymously. The NGO field teams collect the complaints and they go on to investigate them. If the teams find out that there are villagers who have

On 04 January 2018, at Hoya Business Centre in Ward 17, Muzarabani South, villagers were reportedly being asked to produce voter registration slips in order to benefit from the rice that was being distributed. All those who did not comply were labelled as MDC-T supporters and did not receive their share. Councillor Proud Pfofso of ZANU-PF gave Fiton Mupinga, their ZANU-PF chairman and other village heads 2kg per head to facilitate the process.²⁵

Prior to elections, food aid is generally used as a tool to deter villagers from supporting or voting for the opposition. After elections, food aid is used to punish villagers suspected of voting for the opposition, as noted by ZPP:

On 24 July 2018 at Creglea Farm Ward 29, Mazowe, Gift Kashiri and other MDC Supporters were denied access to 'presidential farming inputs' by ZANU-PF supporters aligned to Mazowe North aspiring Member of Parliament, Champion Mugweni. They were told that the inputs were from the president and should benefit ZANU-PF supporters only.

In other places villagers who were polling agents for opposition candidates/parties were 'punished' for doing so and barred from receiving food aid:

On 07 August 2018, a ZANU-PF leader in Ward 5, Makoni, Mrs Nyamuranga, denied opposition polling agents for Zimbabwe Partnership for Prosperity (ZIPP) political party from getting farming inputs that were from the Grain Marketing Board (GMB), yet the inputs were supposed to benefit everyone under the government scheme.

On 15 August 2018, at Kawanzarwa village, Ward 8, Mazowe, Headlast Kamota, an MDC supporter, was denied maize seed by Councillor Israel Nyani because he was an MDC-T polling agent during the elections.

On 01 September 2018, in Ward 2 Nyanga, MDC Alliance Activists and polling agents were denied food aid from the Social Welfare Department by ZANU-PF Councillor, Mr Shabanie Dzawanda. ZANU-PF polling agents in the area were awarded 50 KG bags of maize while all MDC Alliance members were denied.

On 21 September 2018, in Chapatarongo village, Ward 6, Nyanga, ZANU-PF activist Kenneth Baruku and Councillor Didymus Nyamahumba called for a meeting at Chapatarongo village court advising MDC Alliance activists who received farming inputs during the election period to return them because they were meant for ZANU-PF members only.²⁶

During electoral seasons, local ZANU-PF activists and candidates disregard the participatory and democratic processes of selecting food aid beneficiaries. Instead they use their party membership lists to identify beneficiaries:

On 6 June in Buhera North constituency, ZANU-PF MP, Honourable Mutomba, used a ZANU-PF membership register during a food distribution exercise by the Department of Social Welfare. It was reported that known MDC Alliance supporters including, Cleophas Zvaita, were not allowed to receive food aid despite having been advised by workers from the Department of Social Welfare that they were eligible.

On 20 June at Negomo Primary School in Ward 19, Guruve, there was a food aid distribution programme from the Department of Social Welfare. Reports indicated that ZANU-PF Councillor Ranagai Nzvimbo was in charge of the distribution and only ZANU-PF supporters benefited from the distributions.²⁷

The cases highlighted above illustrate a disturbing trend wherein food aid is hijacked by local ZANU-PF activists and candidates to mobilize votes for the ruling party. Opposition parties are denied the chance to build their own support base in rural areas. Food aid is also used to control the political conduct of rural populations and to undermine any form of dissent or opposition to the ruling party.

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, an independent organ established in terms of section 242 of the Constitution, also published damning findings in respect of the politicisation of food aid in the country. In a report released in 2016, made in response to complaints by several individuals from villages across the country, the Commission said:

not been included on beneficiary lists, they go on to correct the anomaly ensure that deserving villagers receive their food aid packages. The NGO monitoring teams also address cases where the District Administrator (DA) and the Department of Social Welfare disavow elected opposition Councillors and their Ward Drought Relief Committees and instead work with shadow Councillors (i.e. ZANU-PF losing candidates) in compiling food aid beneficiary lists.

There are times when we approach the DA and request for the list of councillors in the respective district. We then realize that one of the names we have been given is not an elected councillor but a ZANU-PF losing candidate whom they are calling a shadow councillor. This once happened in Nyanga. When we arrived at the ward food distribution centre there were two people claiming to be the rightful councillor of the ward – one was from the MDC and the other from ZANU-PF. We asked the headman and village heads from the area why there were two people claiming to be councillors and we were told that the DA does not recognize the MDC councillor and he only works with ZANU-PF councillors whether they won or lost the election. We also did further investigations and realized that the person we had been referred to as a ZANU-PF councillor had actually lost the election. We then insisted that our [NGO] policy did not allow us to work with so called shadow councillors because we are only supposed to distribute food aid through an elected councillor and their Ward Drought Relief Committee. We then made sure that the rightfully elected councillor [from the MDC] was involved in the distribution of food aid in their ward. We also made sure that the elected councillor verified the beneficiary list and made sure that no one was discriminated against on partisan grounds.³²

The NGO monitoring and complaints mechanisms are effective in terms of providing remedies and redress to people discriminated against during food aid distribution. But they can only work if the affected people are confident enough to use the mechanisms and they are not afraid of being victimized after they raise complaints.

¹⁴Interviews with an informant from a village in Chiredzi District, an Advocacy Officer with a human rights CSO operating in Zaka District, a Field Monitor for a human rights CSO who is based in Makoni District, and a Field Officer of an INGO distributing aid in Mutasa District.

¹⁵Interviews with an informant from a village in Chiredzi District as well as a local councillor and a Field Monitor for a human rights CSO operating in the district.

¹⁶Traditional leaders' roles, responsibilities and functions are formally prescribed in Section 15 of the Constitution (2013), the Traditional Leaders Act and the Rural District Councils Act, amongst other legislation, and they are also guided from time to time by government policies and practices in relation to rural administration.

¹⁷Sections 5(s), 9(h) and 10(n)

¹⁸Interview with an informant from a village in Chiredzi District

¹⁹See the following: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/05/the-unholy-matrimony-between-the-chiefs-and-zanu-pf/>
<https://mg.co.za/article/2018-07-25-00-traditional-leaders-in-zimbabwe-must-toe-the-ruling-party-line-or-else/>
<https://iharare.com/chiefs-role-in-politics-sparks-debate/>
<https://www.healzimbabwetrust.org/traditional-leaders-acting-in-a-partisan-manner-in-tsholotsho/>

²⁰Interviews with Village Heads under different chieftaincies in Makoni District

²¹Interview with an informant who resides in the Kasekete chieftaincy (cited in ZiCCBO report)

²²There are various media and CSO reports which have documented Chief Kasekete's involvement in political violence and intimidation e.g. http://www.swradioafrica.com/News_archives/files/2012/January/Thurs%2019%20Jan/lg-expose-of-chief-kasekete-and-zanu-pf-election-violence.html

²³"The captive rural vote: Electoral politics and the 'State-Party-Chieftaincy' system of rule in rural Zimbabwe" – a report by the Zimbabwe Coalition of Community Based Organizations (ZiCCBO) (2017)

²⁴Interview with the MDC Councillor for Ward 18 in Chiredzi District.

²⁵Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum Rights Violation Report for 2018

²⁶NGO Human Rights Forum rights violation report for 2018

²⁷NGO Human Rights Forum rights violation report for 2018

²⁸<https://www.voanews.com/COVID-19-pandemic/amnesty-zimbabwe-playing-politics-food-aid-distribution>

²⁹<https://www.voanews.com/COVID-19-pandemic/amnesty-zimbabwe-playing-politics-food-aid-distribution>

³⁰<https://zimorningpost.com/8-million-zimbabweans-face-food-crisis-says-un/>

³¹Interview with a Field Officer of an INGO operating in Mutasa and Makoni Districts.

³²Ibid



6.0

CONCLUSION

The study has shown that despite the governments efforts to put in place several food and nutrition policies, setting up institutional frameworks to facilitate food and nutrition security, food self-sufficiency remains elusive for millions of people and for the nation at large. It is a paradox that the same government making significant financial and institutional investments into agricultural production is also accused of enabling the politicisation of food aid, as shown in this study. Nonetheless, there are opportunities for reforming the food aid distribution system and ensuring that said processes are transparent, participatory, non-discriminatory, democratic and anchored in human rights. The policies and frameworks are already in place and what is needed is adherence, compliance and enforcement at all levels.

The study has also shown that the right to food cannot be viewed in isolation, the realization of the right is dependent on a broad range of socio-economic and political factors. The right to food is equally tied to other civil and political rights such as the right to free political association, freedom of expression, the right to vote for a political party or candidate of one's choice, etc. It is therefore key for rights-focused Civil Society Organisations and humanitarian NGOs to work closely together to ensure that the right to food is protected and guaranteed across the board.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are made to civil society:

- a. Rights-based CSOs should work closely with humanitarian NGOs to advocate for reforms of the food aid distribution matrix,

, particularly emphasizing the need to adhere to set standards and principles on the non-politicisation and non-discrimination of food aid distribution.

- b. Civil society should intensify its advocacy efforts in relation to the depoliticisation of traditional leadership institutions so that they do not continue to infringe on the right to food
- c. Civil society should advocate for legislation which criminalizes infringements on the right to food so that perpetrators can either be prosecuted or sued for damages in their personal capacity as well as their institutions.
- d. Civil society should advocate for the depoliticization of rural administration so that developmental programmes in rural areas, which include food aid distribution and farming input support, are not captured by the partisan interests of a single political party.
- e. Civil society should monitor, support and strengthen the work of rural development institutions such as VIDCOs, WADCOs, WDDRC, Food Distribution Committees, RDDC, DDRCs etc. so that developmental interventions are non-discriminatory and non-partisan.
- f. Civil society should demand the de-securitization of rural administration i.e. dismantling structures of violence and intimidation, demobilize militias and groups involved in political violence and intimidation, and removing state security agents from influencing rural administration along partisan lines.

Annex 1:

LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

All interviewees have been anonymized for security reasons.

- a. INGO Deputy Country Director
- b. 2 x social welfare officers
- c. 1 x ex-social welfare officer
- d. 3 x Field Officers for INGOs
- e. 3 x Programs Officers for rights based CSOs
- f. Communications and Documentation Officer for rights based CSO
- g. Manicaland (NGO Forum) Monitor
- h. Midlands (NGO Forum) Monitor
- i. Masvingo (NGO Forum) Monitor
- j. Councilor – Zaka District
- k. Councilor – Macheke District
- l. Councilor – Chiredzi
- m. 10 x food aid beneficiaries

Annex 2:

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The study used qualitative research techniques to assess various aspects of the right to food and the food relief distribution matrix. Both primary and secondary data was collected and analysed using the methods mentioned below.

Document Search and Literature Review

A comprehensive review of existing literature – i.e. studies, CSO reports (NGO Forum and Zimbabwe Peace Project Reports included), media articles, and policy documents was conducted on the right to food in Zimbabwe. United Nations Agencies documents on the food situation in Zimbabwe were reviewed, in particular the WFP, FAO and UNICEF source documents. Official Ministry of Labour, Public Services and Social Welfare documents on the distribution of food aid in Zimbabwe, as well as relevant government records and reports were reviewed. Reports, records and other source documents generated by local and international humanitarian NGOs involved in food relief initiatives were also be reviewed. Domestic, regional and international legal instruments and protocols were also be reviewed. The 'search and review' was done using a Document Review Matrix which was used to compile and organize data mined from the sources mentioned above. Preliminary findings from the documentary review was used to guide the interviews.

Key Informant Interviews (KII)

A key informant interview guide was developed to collect information from selected respondents with knowledge on food relief aid, on the right to food and on the prevailing food security situation in Zimbabwe. The list of key informants is summarised in Annex 1. They were selected through a

combination of purposive and snowball sampling. All interviewees were asked to consent to participation without duress or undue pressure. The purpose of the interview was explained to all interviewees and their rights to further explanations or opting out of the interview process was respected and followed through on.

Data cleaning, evaluation and analysis

All data was captured, cleaned and organised into thematic areas using NVivo software; the data was triangulated in comparison to data collected from the document review (i.e. reports, etc.). 'Narrative analysis' was used to interpret data collected from interviews and documentary review –emerging patterns were established, and these were used to draw conclusions on the socio-political dynamics of food aid distribution. Narrative analysis was used as a continuous and iterative process throughout the study, i.e. during data collection, data analysis and the writing phase.

Ethical considerations

The consultant and research team ensured confidentiality was assured to all study participants. Participants were informed about the nature and purpose of the study. Verbal consent was obtained from each interviewee, and they had the right to discontinue the interview at any stage due to discomfort or any other circumstances. Respondents were encouraged to express themselves in languages of their choice. The information gathered during the interviews has been strictly used for purposes of this study only and it will not be shared with third parties.

Annex 3:

INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS

Food security situation and the right to food

1. What are some of the factors contributing to food insecurity and hunger?
2. What are some of the policies, protocols and legal frameworks which guide the right to food in Zimbabwe?
3. What is the government and development partners doing to ensure that the right to food is realized?
4. To what extent are government efforts contributing to the fulfilment of the right to food, or failing to do so?
5. What changes need to be done on government policy and the work of development partners (NGOs) to ensure food self-sufficiency?
6. What are some of the challenges faced by government and development partners in addressing food insecurity and hunger?
7. Is the existing legislation adequate to address the right to food, is there sufficient compliance with the law, and are there enforcement mechanisms?

Food distribution matrix

1. Who are the players (state and non-states) involved in the distribution of food aid? What are their individual roles? Who makes decisions and how are decisions made?
2. How are beneficiaries of food aid identified, selected and allocated rations/packages? Who does the identification and selection? Who does the distribution? What are the criteria used?
3. Are there guidelines used in food aid distributions? If yes, what are the guidelines and who developed them? Are the guidelines being followed? What happens when the guidelines

are not followed?

4. Are there cases where people are denied food aid? What are some of the reasons why someone can be denied food aid? Does someone have an opportunity to appeal against a decision to deny them food aid? Who handles the appeal?
5. How effective is the food aid distribution matrix, what are the weaknesses and possible remedies?

Politics, elections and food aid

1. Are political parties or politicians involved in the distribution of food aid? If yes, which ones? What is their role and influence?
2. In what ways does party politics and elections influence the distribution of food aid?
3. Are there cases where people are denied food aid because of their political party affiliation? If yes, who denies them access to food aid?
4. Are there measures put in place to ensure that people are not denied food aid because of their political party affiliation? If yes, what are these measures, are they effective, how are they enforced and by whom?
5. Is food aid used during elections to mobilize votes? If yes, how and by whom?
6. Which type of food aid is usually politicised? E.g. government sourced aid or NGO sourced aid?

