



Press statement

## **16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence**

25 November 2016

Sixteen Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence marks a time when Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) joins the rest of the world and collaborates with community members and its stakeholders in highlighting issues pertinent to preventing and ending violence against women and girls.

This year's theme is *From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Make education safe for all*. As part of its mandate, ZPP monitors the violations to women's rights and has come to realise that depriving women of education results in them being deprived of a myriad of rights. ZPP is inspired, in its peace building initiatives, to include awareness-raising on gender-based violence, women's human rights and children's rights.

ZPP is aware that both boys and girls are vulnerable to different forms of violence in and around the education system. This partly stems from Zimbabwe being a patriarchal society with deeply rooted gender norms, stereotypes, systematic inequalities and unequal power dynamics based on gender. As the country goes through the El Nino induced drought it's also paramount to recognise that poverty and hunger further exacerbate the vulnerability of women and children. In Goromonzi South an increasing number of children, most of whom are girls, are dropping out of school due to hunger and opting to offer manual labour in exchange for vegetables and other basic food commodities. ZPP calls on the responsible Ministry as well as the school institutions to play a transformative role in shifting harmful gender norms like girls dropping out of school to fend for their families. ZPP has also noted with concern that women bear the brunt of discrimination on political lines when food and other aid are distributed. This affects peace in the home and in the world. ZPP therefore demands that the responsible authorities take seriously complaints of food being distributed along political lines.

Women unfortunately became targets and also witnessed some gruesome acts of violence in the run up to the Norton by-election and during some of the protests. ZPP therefore implores government to adopt comprehensive, gender-responsive and multisectoral action plans to eliminate gender-based violence and enact laws that will protect women and girls from all forms of violence.

As ZPP continues to monitor and document human rights violations it is concerned that the number of women affected by the violations far exceeds the number that affects men. While women are direct victims of human rights violations their situation is made worse as most men affected by human rights violations are related to a woman in one way or the other.

In its community initiatives ZPP has learnt that peaceful communities are better placed to end harmful social and cultural beliefs. ZPP has hosted sporting tournaments that place women and girls as equal and capable competitors in a bid to use the platforms to address conflicts that risk tearing apart whole communities.

The prevention of violence against women and girls should not just be a cause for concern for Zimbabwe and other countries around the world during the 16 days of activism but it should be a culture that is adopted and fostered throughout the year. ZPP challenges all responsible stakeholders to adopt an attitude that is conscious on bringing down violence against women and girls.

ZPP was founded in 2000 by a group of faith based and human rights NGOs working and interested in human rights and peace-building initiatives. ZPP has become a vehicle for civic interventions in times of political crises. In particular, ZPP seeks to monitor and document incidents of human rights violations and breaches of peace.

If you are concerned about acts of violence in your community ZPP encourages you to get in touch with us on Hotline and WhatsApp numbers +263 774 883 406 and +263 774 883 417

**Zimbabwe Peace Project**

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