



Empowerment of Survivors from the Gukurahundi Massacres in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe through Traditional Chiefs

[Project initiated in March 2020 – Second phase initiated in October 2021](#)

Summary:

Nunca Más accompany its partners Ukuthula Trust(UT) and Tree of Life (ToL) to give a sense of empowerment, justice and emotional support to men and women of the Matabeleland province of Zimbabwe who have been affected by the 'Gukuharundi' massacres of the 1980's where 10,000-20,000 individuals were shot dead by government appointed soldiers. During the first phase it became evident that the collaboration with the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) was minimal, as they failed to roll out hearings to communities regarding the victims and injustices. Therefore, in this second phase, Chiefs, who represent the highest level of the traditional structure inscribed in the constitution of Zimbabwe and governed by the Traditional Leaders Act of 2008, will form part as a stakeholder. Chiefs are expected to play a significant role in providing political space for victims and support to UT and ToL. In addition to this the Chiefs will recognize the citizens trained by UT and ToL as part of victim support team.

Historical Context:

In the first years of independence in Zimbabwe during the 1980s, the western provinces in the nation, home to the minority Ndebele ethnic group, experienced massacres, rape, beatings, and property losses at the hands of a Zimbabwe national army unit, the 5th Brigade, also known as the 'Gukurahundi' Brigade. These soldiers wreaked havoc in rural villages, killing an estimated 20,000 civilians, beating, and raping indiscriminately. Along with end of the massacres in 1987, 'Gukurahundi' came the end of discussing the devastating long-term consequences that the brigade had caused on citizens. Nevertheless, the directly affected generation continues to live with fear, as well as the legacies of body and heart aches, and the poverty caused by reduced mobility, apathy, and depression. There have been complicated cultural impacts because of mass and single graves of people buried in 'wrong' places, without traditional rituals: the 'angry dead' are for many families an apparently inseparable problem.

Our Approach:

Nunca Mas will play a key role in connecting UT and ToL with other partners engaged in similar work. Nunca Mas will ensure exchange of ideas and training in situ for Ukuthula and partners, in approaches to testimony therapy. Nunca Mas can amplify the voices of victims, through publicizing Ukuthula UT on human rights abuses to ensure there is greater acknowledgement in the EU, including Denmark of this history of crime against humanity in post-independence Zimbabwe.

Overall, the intervention will empower communities that will include women and youth and men to demand accountability, transparency and rights and influence the political environment. They will also be able to vote for the political leaders of their choice as opposed to what is currently taking place where people vote out of fear for the politicians who have perpetuated collective violence for decades.

Our Partners

