

**The
BLACK
Commentator**
Commentary, analysis and investigations
on issues affecting African Americans
www.blackcommentator.com

October 16, 2008 - Issue 295

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

Click Here

[Home](#)

Desperate Teachers Eat Pupils' Food
By Godfrey Mutimba
BlackCommentator.com Guest Commentator

Click on the back button of your browser to return to non printer friendly page of this article

[Click here](#) to get helpful hints for viewing and printing this printer friendly plain text page

This article originally appeared in [The Standard](#), Zimbabwe's Sunday newspaper.

Starving teachers in the rural Masvingo central constituency have resorted to eating porridge meant for primary school children for survival as hunger blights the province.

The porridge is donated by humanitarian aid organizations and targets starving school children most of whom are dropping out of school due to hunger.

When *The Standard* news crew visited several constituencies in the province, teachers were queuing up for porridge alongside their pupils at break-time although the porridge is only meant for pupils. The teachers said they had turned to sharing the porridge with the children because their paltry salaries could not sustain them. Teachers earn about \$100 000 a month.

"We have no option but to share the porridge with our pupils, for us to survive and also for the energy to teach them," said Jeffrey Gumbo, a teacher at Mutenda primary school. "There is widespread hunger and starvation and we have not been spared, so we have to eat anything we get in order to escape hunger."

He said there was a severe scarcity of grain in the area such that sometimes they spent several days without eating *sadza* (Zimbabwe's staple maize meal). The teachers said they could not afford to buy the grain that is being sold in foreign currency by local businesspeople who draw allocations from the Grain Marketing Board (GMB).

"With the current drought situation, grain has become a rare commodity here. We go for days without eating *sadza*," he said. "Imagine a bag of grain is costing R300 and with my salary I can't afford to buy even half a bag." Another teacher at a school in Mapanzure, who also survives on porridge meant for school children, praised organizations like Christian Care and the Red Cross for saving people's lives in the province. "When we heard that the ban on food aid was lifted, we breathed a sigh of relief because we knew food would be coming to school children and we will be saved. If this was not the situation some teachers here would starve to death," said a teacher, who declined to be named.

Takavafira Zhou, the Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ) president, said government had forced teachers to depend on donated food:

"This confirms what we always said that teachers' salaries are just pathetic. That is why they are now scavenging for food," Zhou said. "Their salaries cannot buy food and they have no option but to demean themselves queuing for donated food with their pupils. They are losing respect in their communities as they end up looking like miserable people."

He called on government to raise teachers salaries, enough to enable them to buy food and sustain themselves.

[Click here to comment on this article
or see what others are saying in the](#)
The BlackCommentator Readers' Corner Blog

BlackCommentator.com Guest Commentator Godfrey Mutimba writes for [The Standard](#), Zimbabwe's Sunday newspaper.

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

[Click Here](#)

[Home](#)

[Click Here To](#)

[CONTRIBUTE TO !\[\]\(9c2e8d1b5bd77cb5c9f83b7a9cff79fd_img.jpg\) NOW](#)

[Click Here To](#)

[CONTACT !\[\]\(f60b7a900783ac3fd531bfd9c111be6d_img.jpg\)](#)

Your comments are always welcome.

e-Mail re-print notice

If you send us an e-Mail message we may publish all or part of it, unless you tell us it is not for publication. You may also request that we withhold your name.

Thank you very much for your readership.

Website Design and Hosting provided by



Copyright © 2002 - 2008
www.BlackCommentator.com
All Rights Reserved