**Vote Nutrition Campaign by the Civil Society Scaling Up Nutrition Alliance (CSO-SUN Zambia)**

**Report by Miss Mwandwe Chileshe, Intern**

The problem of malnutrition continues to be a major challenge facing Zambia. Preliminary findings of the 2013/2014 Zambia Demographic Health Survey report show that 40% of children below five years are stunted, while six percent (6%) are acutely malnourished, with the prevalence for underweight being 15%. Currently Malnutrition underlies up to 52% of all under-five deaths while the rates of micronutrient deficiencies are also high.

Despite these alarming levels of malnutrition, Nutrition development has not yet taken centre stage amongst political players this is evident going by the party manifestos which are void of any concrete strategies to address Nutrition issues. These political parties are realistically governments in waiting. This is a concern to CSO-SUN as we have seen from cross-country studies on the Governance of Nutrition which have highlighted that political will given to tackling malnutrition is one of the most critical factors for success in any efforts to raise the profile nutrition. It’s therefore important that political parties have nutrition clearly outlined in there manifestos as a starting point for political will.

Following the death of His Excellency Mr. Michael Chilufya Sata, a presidential campaign period ensued, leading up to the presidential by elections which were held on the 20th of January, 2015. Given the above, the **CSOSUN Alliance** recognised that the time was ample for influencing political party’s campaign issues.. As such, a **Vote Nutrition** campaign was embarked upon as a way of ultimately achieving the goal of drawing attention to the importance of nutrition.

The vote nutrition campaign was done by using six award winning Musicians that have social standing in their communities due to their fan base, to lend voice to a jingle that run on three major radio stations including **Radio phoenix, Hotfm** and **Radio 2** which has the advantage of being a national broadcaster. In efforts to get the nutrition agenda to a mass audience, the jingle run twice a day during prime radio time, additionally the radio stations on which the clip run were selected for the campaign, on the basis of their popularity and number of listeners they reach.

The line up of musicians the Alliance partnered with for the vote nutrition campaign is of particular interest, as all the artists have strong ties to communities and are preview to the problems affecting these communities. **Pilato,** **Dalitso** and **T-sean** were among this group, all are award winning musicians with strong influence and following. The line up also included, Macky 2 a popular artist who is a former big brother Africa contestant finalist and is thus a recognisable face on the continent, but particularly stands out because of his work with the **Macky2** Hope foundation, a non profit organisation that aims to be a voice for the marginalised. Of noteworthy mention, is Mwila Musonda popularly known as **SlapD**, award winning artist and ‘ONE AFRICA CAMPAIGN’ ambassador, who highlights in the clip that he would be voting for a candidate that ensured that nutrition took priority in existing national programs. His work with the alliance eventually unfolded into him being a Nutrition Champion. Credibility

Further efforts in the vote nutrition campaign saw the Alliance joining other partners, to host the presidential debates. The interest of the alliance in the debates lay in the want to mainstream nutrition and particularly get commitments from candidates on what they would do to improve nutrition. Vital to mention, is that these parties where in the unique position to eventually form government

Through the Vote nutrition campaign the CSO Alliance was able to sensitise both leaders and citizens on the problems of malnutrition. Additionally, politicians’ messages on Nutrition were recorded and will be essential in holding politicians accountable. What’s more, the Alliance was able to contribute to the democratic process of the elections. As a result of the campaign, many times during key rallies and interviews, during the presidential campaign, nutrition was mentioned.

What generally came out of many political parties including the winning party’s president Edgar Chagwa Lungu was the recognition that nutrition is a multisectoral issue that needed to be addressed by different sectors which he was going to spearhead. Time and again we recorded politicians mention causes of malnutrition – mostly what coming out was inadequate education among parents, teenage pregnancies and the low status of women among others.

Before the Presidential debates, CSO-SUN managed to reach out to all political parties campaign teams providing with information on nutrition as well as lobbying them to ensure nutrition was among the top priorities they were going to address.

The following is the full script for the Jingle, which run as follows:

“**Malnutrition is huge problem in Zambia, which is the reason why our children are growing up stunted…Due to this, their brains will not grow properly, they are not enjoying good health, in school they will not perform well, and in future they are likely to earn less money, simply because they lack good nutrition… That’s why in the upcoming 2015 presidential by-election, am putting my vote on a leader that advances Nutrition… People with good nutrition are key to Zambia’s development, am looking for a presidential candidate who has the best plan for nutrition improvement… Am voting for a candidate who will put more money on nutrition and ensure that existing programs include nutrition, you should do the same… What commitments is your party making towards Nutrition? Because, am voting Nutrition in the 2015 elections, for a Zambia where every mother and child is assured of sufficient nutrition”**

**Ends with, this message has been brought to you by the Zambia Civil Society Scaling Up Nutrition Alliance (CSO-SUN Zambia).**