



Action brief

Youth Leaders for Nutrition (YL4N) Maxwell Mumba, Zambia

Country: Zambia **Themes:** Social Mobilization, Advocacy and Communication **Sub-themes:** Engaging the Youth

Date: February 2023



Overview



As part of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Civil Society Network’s flagship Youth Leaders for Nutrition programme, a platform was created to provide young people with the skills and understanding to engage key decision makers in the nutrition and food sector, influence policy change and raise the profile of youth advocacy

on nutrition within the Civil Society Network (CSN) and the broader SUN Movement. Maxwell Mumba of Zambia was one of the CSN’s Youth Leaders for Nutrition representatives.

Zambia is a country of young people, with 53.4 per cent of the population younger than 18, according to UNICEF. More than one-third (35 per cent) of children under 5 years old are stunted, and children in rural areas (36 per cent) are more likely to be stunted than those in urban areas (32 per cent), according to data from the United States Agency for International Development. Since the United Party for National Development came to power in Zambia in 2021, nutrition has increasingly become an agenda priority. “The wealthiest investment is in the future generation of children,” Mumba said.



Period covered

Mumba undertook his YL4N project from 2019 to 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted activities and led to significant setbacks due to the difficulties of

conducting advocacy work remotely and reaching key decision-makers – not to mention a lack of ability to connect to the Internet.



What action was taken?

Before becoming a youth leader, Mumba was engaged in advocacy work and already had begun to develop relationships with key decision-makers to discuss challenges and advocate for solutions at the community level related to HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. During his tenure as a YL4N, he learned the importance of a multisectoral approach to advocacy, given the many intersections among nutrition, food security, agriculture and climate change. As such:

→ He continued to develop and build relationships with national-level policymakers working in nutrition and food security. This led to engagement with the Ministry of Health on the inclusion of nutrition in the adolescent health strategy, which was subsequently implemented.

- He engaged with the National Food and Nutrition Commission to discuss how young people can take center stage and be included in various nutrition activities. This also was implemented.
- His advocacy with the Parliamentary Committee on Health led to an increased budget allocation for nutrition.
- He engaged with and amplified the stories of the local constituency, visiting and engaging with youth in the most rural parts of Zambia, across all ten provinces. He spoke with them about good nutrition and received their concerns, and feeding this information back to policymakers to advocate for community-led responses.
- Due to a lack of youth engagement related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), he led the establishment of the National Youth Network on SDGs in Zambia. Through this network, he mobilized young people to meet with policymakers, leading to a conference at which students from the highlands and government representatives came together to discuss the importance of youth engagement in the SDG space, focusing mostly on food security and climate change. This signified a shift, highlighting the readiness of the Government to listen to young people and hear their needs.



Working with the CSN exposed Mumba to many partners working in the arena of nutrition and food security. The gains from this programme could be made more sustainable if other SUN Movement networks, namely the SUN Business Network, widened their remit to include more young people, especially as more youth are going into enterprise. This can improve access to more youth voices working on the food systems agenda.

Key lessons:

Young people need to be given the right and the platform to advocate on issues surrounding food security. More than anything, youth need resources to carry out activities at the country level and bring about systemic change.



What would the country do differently?

- Utilize different digital platforms to connect with key decision makers and other stakeholders for engagement and advocacy. Use social media to amplify stories from the community to influence change.
- Create a platform to enable local young people to express their experiences, needs and calls for change in relation to food security and nutrition in their local languages.



Adaptation and Applicability

What advice will you give to other countries that want to embark on this journey? Mumba advised:

1. Have a youth strategy in place outlining what change you want to achieve in your country and what area you want to focus on – e.g. malnutrition, stunting or climate change – and use this strategy to guide your work on how to advocate for community-led change.
2. Develop a resource mobilization strategy to ensure sustainability and equip young people to implement their projects well. Many resources are required for travel, research and engagement.



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Next steps

- Work to strengthen networks at the regional level to ensure the continuity of the work, as it cannot rest on the shoulders of one person. Mumba will be taking on a mentoring role to support other youth.



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This Good Practice was developed in collaboration with the SUN Civil Society Network (SUN CSN). For more information about the SUN CSN, please visit their website: <https://www.suncivilsociety.com/>