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Action brief

# Parliamentary pledge in Zimbabwe to support the 2021 Nutrition for Growth Summit

**Country:** Zimbabwe

**Date:** 2023

**Topics:** Social Mobilization, Advocacy and Communication

**Sub-topics:** Engaging parliamentarians for legislative advocacy, budget oversight and public outreach



## Overview



Through legislative, budgetary and oversight mandates, Members of Parliament play a key role in improving nutrition. They ensure that the right laws, policies, strategies and plans are adopted, enacted, funded and enforced to address the multiple burden of malnutrition. Investing in nutrition is one of the smartest economic decisions countries can make; for every dollar invested in nutrition, governments can expect \$16 in return via increased productivity and improved health outcomes, cognitive development, school readiness and performance, [according to the World Health Organization](#).



## Objectives of the action brief

This action brief aims to inspire other Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Networks to actively engage parliamentarians in advocating for SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) nutrition commitments. It also shares lessons learned in tracking nutrition commitments and lobbying governments to translate commitments into action.



## Period covered

An exercise was conducted in 2018 to track progress in Zimbabwe in honoring the country's Nutrition for Growth (N4G) commitments. In 2020 and 2021, advocacy activities helped shape and inspire the Government of Zimbabwe to formulate SMART N4G commitments. Some project activities were executed during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the Zimbabwe Civil Society Organizations Scaling Up Nutrition Alliance (ZCSOSUNA) facilitating all necessary national permissions to implement activities in line with regulations.



## What action was taken?

To ensure that Zimbabwe honours its commitments to nutrition, ZCSOSUNA held a breakfast event in January 2020 with 28 Members of Parliament who sit in the health and childcare committee to inform them of progress in honoring the country's 2013 N4G commitments, based on data gathered in collaboration with the SUN Research and Academia Platform.

Attendees noted with concern that success was difficult to assess due to a lack of clarity and precision in the wording, despite efforts to honor commitments on some indicators. Given this, the parliamentarians pledged to encourage government ministers to consider ambitious financial and policy commitments for nutrition at the N4G Summit.

The parliamentary pledge played a crucial role in sustaining national political commitment to nutrition. The Government consulted academia, civil society, the United Nations, media personnel and youth in formulating its 2021 N4G commitments, and Zimbabwe

was well represented at the summit despite COVID-19 pandemic fears.

### Lessons learned:

- ZCSOSUNA noted a need to strengthen civil society organizations, citizens, journalists and parliamentarians in demanding government accountability in nutrition governance, with a focus on N4G commitments.
- The network also learned that civil society organizations must be supported in using commitment trackers to monitor progress in honoring nutrition pledges.
- Policymakers need to be held to account consistently (rather than waiting until the next summit is close) regarding nutrition promises.
- Government commitments to the N4G Summit will ensure that nutrition remains at the heart of development plans.



## What would the country do differently?

Thanks to the cordial relationship between the network and Parliament of Zimbabwe, the project has not encountered any major difficulties. In the future, the network plans to place a parliamentary research team at the center of

evidence generation and analysis of progress towards commitments. This is a key element of ownership and validation of results.





## Adaptation and Applicability

Countries implementing similar activities are advised to form a multi-stakeholder team to assess previous commitments and analyse the progress that has been made. The team may need to consider adopting the SUN three-step approach to budget analysis and conducting key informant interviews with responsible officials. The team also may need to lead a consultative process in developing future nutrition commitments. It is also advisable to follow the summit's principles of engagement in the consultative process so that commitments address the real challenges at hand.

To better engage the government, it will be important to support parliamentary nutrition champions on nutrition commitments, as parliamentarians often pay attention to their counterparts.



## Next steps

The ZCSOSUNA plans to lobby the Government to set up an independent committee to monitor and report on progress made in honoring commitments.

It also will be important to consistently strengthen parliamentarians, media members and citizens on nutrition commitments as a means of increasing demand for accountability. The network plans to build capacities for advocacy among various constituencies to ensure that they hold government officials to account on nutrition pledges.

In addition to conducting budget analysis in estimating domestic investments in nutrition, the network needs to track public expenditures as a way of monitoring real expenditures on nutrition.



## Further information



<https://spikedmedia.co.zw/government-urged-to-make-smart-commitments-ahead-2020-japan-nutrition-for-growth-summit/>



<https://healthtimes.co.zw/2020/01/17/gvt-urged-to-make-realistic-commitments-towards-improving-nutrition-standards/?fbclid=IwAR1Q1AQ Ls4UEdLTKNDcCXOI4JQAagag2luuqDnZfTfu7InuTS Jz84Cslldw>

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