

Intervention of

Ms Pauline Mapfumo

Youth Advocate, Zimbabwe

I am Zimbabwean. I am a young person. This morning I woke up and ate maize-meal porridge with peanut butter and sugar, a staple breakfast for many young people, and often the healthiest meal of the day.

By the end of the day, I will most likely have consumed too much sugar, salt, processed foods, but too little iron, calcium, and other nutrients. I, like many others of my age in Zimbabwe, may be both undernourished and overweight. Nutrition Specialists often talk about ‘hidden hunger’. Today I’m here to talk to you about hidden hunger in hidden people - youths and adolescents.

We need you to hear us!

My name is Pauline Mapfumo. I recently graduated in nutrition and am the founding nutritionist for the start-up; YOLO4Health –founded with support from UNICEF during the 2019 Nutrition Hackathon.

Today, I’m stepping up and speaking out for young people. Our voices and solutions need to be larger and brighter and more colourful than the billboards and advertisements that surround us everywhere – popularizing and glamourizing consumption of over-processed and unhealthy foods and drinks.

We have the right to a healthy diet, and the governments have the accountability of providing us with nutritious, safe, and affordable diets. We need to have a healthy food environment that contributes to our growth, learning and well-being, especially food environments in schools, which should only offer nutritious and safe food options, not bad food, fast food, trash food. I understand the government has taken many initiatives as part of the national nutrition strategy, and the national food and nutrition security policy to prevent all forms of malnutrition, but we need all hands-on deck and more investments to be able to counter the growing challenge of overweight and obesity, including among school age children and adolescents.

We applaud previous engagement efforts: the hackathon, co-creation workshops and food systems dialogues that have attempted to see nutrition through our eyes. In Zimbabwe we have also lent our voices to the Adolescent Nutrition Strategy and School Nutrition Programme. We implore you to continue investing your effort, energy, and resources in nutrition for young people. With us, for us!

Help us to thrive into the generation that will carry our nations forward.

Thank you!