



LEAP4YOUTH PROJECT

Enhancing Inclusive Youth-Led Platform for Evidence-Based Agricultural Policymaking and Implementation in Malawi

Training report for Agri-Skills Lab

Name of the Activity	LEAP4YOUTH District Agri-skills lab	
Name of the Project	LEAP4YOUTH	
Project Period	2025-2027	
Date of Submission	9 th February 2026	
Name of Donor	Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) through Youth Entrepreneurship for the Future of Food and Agriculture (YEFFA) Project	
Name of IP	MwAPATA Institute and National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM)	
District	Zomba	
Location/Venue	Zomba Community Hall	
Activity Dates	5 th February 2026	6 th February 2026
Submitted by	Bonface Nankwenya	

Background

MwAPATA Institute and the National Youth Council of Malawi are implementing the LEAP4YOUTH project that aims to establish hybrid platforms, both physical and digital, that provide structured opportunities for the youth in the agricultural sector to access information and to engage in policy dialogues that shape policymaking processes within the agrifood systems. The Project seeks to bridge gaps by fostering inclusive and sustainable youth-driven engagement through targeted interventions inspired by AGRA's Youth Employment for Food and Agriculture (YEFFA) Programme. The project is being implemented in four selected YEFFA districts namely Salima, Mchinji, Dedza, and Zomba. As part of the process of institutionalizing youth-led agri-food systems platforms, a district agri-skills lab with youth networks has been organized. The agri-skills Labs were designed to equip young farmers, agripreneurs, and innovators with the critical skills needed to engage effectively in agricultural policymaking.

Objective of the Agri-skills lab

The objective of the Agri-skills lab is to cultivate a new generation of informed, confident and influential youth leaders capable of driving transformative change in agrifood systems in Malawi. The Agri-skills lab is an interactive, hands-on capacity-building program designed to equip young farmers, agripreneurs, and innovators with the critical skills needed to engage effectively in agricultural policy processes. Youths will gain practical knowledge and skills in policy literacy (understanding agricultural policies and mechanisms that influence them), advocacy and leadership (amplifying youth voices and fostering proactive participation in decision-making), and strategic communication (effectively engaging with stakeholders, the media, and local communities).

Participants

The Agri-skills lab brought together 47 youth participants (23 male and 24 female). These included youths from three networks in Zomba namely Malemia (17), Nkagula (13) and Chikowi (17). Personnel from Zomba District Council who attended the agri-skills lab include the Director of Planning and Development, the Director of Social Services, the District Youth Officer, the Assistant District Youth Officer, and the District Agriculture Officer. Also in attendance were media personnel from Times Newspaper, Malawi Broadcasting Station (MBC) and MIJ radio.

Type of Participants	Male	Female	Total
MwAPATA Institute	4	1	6
National Youth Council of Malawi	2	1	3
Zomba District Council	3	2	5
Media	3	0	3
Youths	23	24	47

Total	35	28	64
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Approach to the agri-skills lab

Presentations

- Four interactive presentations were made on the following topics: the policy-making processes, mindset change and leadership, policy advocacy, and strategic communication.

Group work and plenary

- During the group work session, youths were tasked to discuss on the following questions
 - Are there any pressing youth related challenge/problem/focusing events that would warrant the formulation of a policy?
 - Can you think of youth policy champions in your constituency? What is unique about them? What makes them influential?
 - What youth-related agricultural needs should be taken on board in the implementation of the 5 billion CDF, 100 million CDF, and 50 million for women?
 - In what ways are policymakers currently engaging with young people in policy formulation?
 - What do you need to do to hold your government accountable for some of its agricultural policies?

General Issues from the discussion

- There is a need for grants that support the youth to be group-focused. Learning from previous individual youth grant beneficiaries, some sold the equipment and left for South Africa.
- Youths are invited to various development forums such as ADC/VDC meetings, but they are rarely accorded the opportunity to voice out their concerns. Similar sentiments were shared for the CDF consultations. The training on advocacy and strategic communication emphasized the need for the youth to position themselves for opportunities that concern them.
- The issues lamented that they are usually sidelined in discussions that concern money/financing.
- Politicians (mainly MPs and councilors) usually prefer a top-down approach to development initiatives for the youths, such that the youths are just final recipient of
- There seems to be a lack of coordination among the different sectors at the council with the youth network, with the agricultural sector pointed out as the most isolated sector. The sector has its own structures that it works with, making integration of the youth a challenge (as they youths are mainly in village/area level structures (ADC/VDC).

Youth-related agricultural needs to be taken on board in the implementation of the CDF

- Ensure access to agricultural inputs for the youth, including fertilizers and improved seeds

Challenges and mitigation

The following challenges were identified, along with suggested mitigation measures.

Challenges	Solution/Mitigation
The budgeted transport refunds for youth were insufficient to cover transport for youth from remote networks.	We were only able to recruit youths from 3 networks (out of the available 15 networks in Zomba). The next policy event will focus on youth who were underrepresented. This should include youth from Chisi Island, who are often marginalized.
Youths were not provided with the training materials to ensure that they are able to pass on the knowledge gained to their fellow youths	Training materials should be translated and printed, and distributed to each attending network for youths to use in orienting their peers.

Recommendations and action points

- The youths (four in total) who attended the agri-skills lab and are part of VDC/ADC will be followed to monitor their participation and engagement in the development platforms.
- Youths from Chisi Island on Lake Chirwa are usually sidelined from capacity-building training. It is important that they be considered in the next policy event.

Photos from the training

