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Nigeria’s Finance Minister Mrs. Kemi Adeosun alongside her Guatemalan counterpart Julio Hector Estrada joined the President of the World Bank Group Jim Yong Kim and singer Yvonne Chaka Chaka in Washington DC over the weekend to shine a spotlight on the importance of nutrition in unlocking human capital and economic prosperity.

The ‘Spotlight on Nutrition’ event, co-hosted by the World Bank Group and the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID), follows the Human Capital Summit held in October 2016, and demonstrates the World Bank’s leadership in fighting malnutrition as a barrier to future growth and development.

Civil Society Scaling up Nutrition in Nigeria (CS-SUNN) participated in the live streaming event, via her social media platform where the two Finance Ministers both emphasised the economic importance of investing in nutrition, with Nigeria’s Kemi Adeosun saying ‘It’s not about narrative, it’s about action’.

‘Malnutrition costs the global economy $3.5 trillion per year’ says World Bank Group President, Jim Yong Kim, who also stated that ‘There are no excuses for failing to invest in nutrition’ and that ‘we’re going to do everything we can to make neglect hurt for the powerful’.

Malnutrition still affects one in three people globally, including the 156 million children worldwide who are stunted. In Nigeria, 37% of under five children are stunted, wasting rate stands at 18% while 29% are underweight. About 23% of new-borns in Nigeria do not receive breast milk within the first hour of birth whilst the exclusive breastfeeding rate stands at 17%. (NDHS, 2013)

The evidence is abundantly clear that the ties between nutrition and economic prosperity run deep, and the world (Nigeria inclusive) cannot afford to wait to increase investments in
this area. Investing in nutrition yields permanent and inalienable benefits, with at least a $10 return on investment for every dollar spent.

Jim Yong Kim highlighted the commitment made by Rwandan President Paul Kagame to reduce stunting in Rwanda from 38% to 0% over the next 3 to 4 years. Countries including Peru and Senegal were also praised for the progress they have made in tackling malnutrition. Other governments were called on to play their part and set the same level of commitment.

Mark Lowcock the Permanent Secretary for DfID reinforced the UK’s commitment to match every $1 invested in nutrition through ‘The Power of Nutrition’, with an additional $3, while Singer Yvonne Chaka Chaka closed the event with a rallying call for continued action to tackle malnutrition.

The Civil Society- Scaling up Nutrition in Nigeria (CS-SUNN) has lauded Nigeria’s Finance Minister’s comments on the need to act by investing in nutrition in Nigeria to address the malnutrition challenges bedevilling the country.

CS-SUNN Project Director, Mrs. Beatrice Eluaka says the Nigeria Government has the bulk of the role if malnutrition is to be addressed. She therefore urges Government to:

- Develop and implement Strategic Plan of Action for the National Food and Nutrition Policy (NFNP-2016-2025)
- Fully implement the National Strategic Plan of Action on Nutrition (NSPAN, 2014 -2019) at the National and all states in Nigeria.
- Create Specific nutrition budget lines in all relevant MDA across the federation
- Ensure timely release of allocated funds to nutrition in the 2017 budget
- Uphold her commitment at the Nutrition for Growth Summit.

CS-SUNN is Nigeria’s Civil Society Alliance of the SUN (Scaling up Nutrition) Movement. Nigeria had joined the SUN Movement in 2011 with a commitment to addressing Malnutrition and scaling up nutrition interventions in Nigeria.

In the meantime, the high-level event, kicks off an important year for mobilising political commitment, results, and financing towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal of ending all forms of malnutrition by 2030. The African Development Bank Meetings in May, the World Bank Human Capital summit in October, and Nutrition for Growth event in November will be crucial opportunities for governments to show leadership in addressing all forms of malnutrition.

Further information: http://live.worldbank.org/spotlight-on-nutrition Contact: 08033005903