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For Immediate Release:

KEY NUTRITION STAKEHOLDERS PLEDGE INCREASED NUTRITION FUNDING IN 2020 BUDGETS AND IMPROVED POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Stakeholders across nutrition line ministries, including legislators have committed to improved funding for nutrition and implementation of state specific plans of action for nutrition. These commitments were made at a just concluded 2-day meeting organized by the Civil-Society-Scaling Up Nutrition in Nigeria (CS-SUNN) in collaboration with Alive and Thrive and Save the Children International on improved nutrition investments in the 2020 state Annual budgets with key stakeholders from Kaduna, Nasarawa and Niger states in Abuja. The meeting was among others aimed at ascertaining the level of nutrition investment and performance in the states. It also sought to secure commitments of the states towards domestic investment in high impact and low-cost interventions as captured in the state specific plans of action in the 2020 annual budget.

CS-SUNN Executive Secretary, Beatrice Eluaka while welcoming participants to the meeting decried low budgetary allocations and releases for nutrition which she said was not commensurate to the burden of malnutrition across the states. She urged participants to adopt strategies that will improve nutrition allocation and releases in their state’s 2020 budget to prevent more children dying from malnutrition. In her words “This is why we are here today with key government officials from nutrition line ministries to understand malnutrition and its consequences, the current situation and the need for increased funding as well as timely releases of allocated funds”.

CS-SUNN reports that the Nasarawa State Director for Planning, Ministry of Finance, Budget and Planning, Dr. Isa Abdoul Osama, acknowledged the magnitude of malnutrition and its attendant challenges bedeviling women and children in the state and promised an increase in the state’s 2020 budget for nutrition and timely releases of allocated funds. In the same vein, the Acting Director for Budget, Kaduna State Planning and Budget Commission, Yusuf Auta revealed that only two Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in the state have specific budget lines for nutrition line items. He restated the commission’s resolve to support the creation of budget lines in the other nutrition-related line MDAs.

Also speaking, the Permanent Secretary of the Niger state ministry of finance, Mr. Mohammed Saduaki pledged timely cash backing of approved funds for nutrition interventions in the state. In his words, Chairman House committee on health and nutrition in the state assembly, Hon. Hussaini Yabagi said “we all have a role to play in saving our children from preventable deaths. We will provide the needed support to the cause”.


A communique signed by a 10-man committee chaired by Member, Nasarawa State House of Assembly, Hon. Aliyu Dogara Mohammed, observed a substantial increase in budgetary allocations by Kaduna, Nasarawa and Niger states in the 2019 and 2020 budgets for nutrition but emphasized releases and cash backing as key challenges. It noted the non-alignment of planning and budgeting for health and nutrition programmes in these states with the state's nutrition plans and coverage data on key nutrition interventions. According to the communique, key policy and decision-makers at the legislative and executive levels are not fully carried along in the planning, budgeting and implementation of health and nutrition programmes in the states. It further identified absence of trained Nutritionists in some states at the PHC level as well as delay in preparation and submission of activity request memos for planned Health and Nutrition activities across relevant MDAs. The meeting rated budgetary performance for nutrition activities across the three states as low or just average and settled for a benchmark of at least 75 percent budgetary performance by the states going forward.

The communique made the following recommendations:

✓ Matching budgetary increment for nutrition with timely releases and cash backings.
  Advocating for quarterly releases of funds to carry out nutrition activities in the states.
✓ States’ plans and activities be based on the state multi-sectoral plan on nutrition and on evidence including ensuring budget realism in annual sector budgets at the state and LGA levels
✓ Tracking of key nutrition indicators to inform programme planning strategic decision making
✓ Continuous advocacy and engagement of the executives and legislators to secure their buy-in for improved budget allocation and appropriation for nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive activities in the three states.
✓ Recruitment and deployment of trained nutritionists to PHCs as well as retraining of existing nutritionists for optimal performance
✓ Intensified efforts by Committees of the State Assemblies that oversee nutrition line Ministries in their oversight functions by ensuring strict implementation of approved budgets for nutritional activities.
✓ Funds for women empowerment programmes should focus more on preventive initiatives to address malnutrition.
✓ Focus should be placed on promoting and implementation of the multi-sector strategy to provide a platform for holistic delivery of nutrition specific and sensitive interventions in all states.

The meeting had participants drawn from three PINNS focal states of Kaduna, Nasarawa and Niger, comprising of Chairmen and Members of the House Committees on Health, Finance & Appropriation, Permanent Secretaries, State Accountant Generals, relevant Directors of the key line Ministries of Finance, Budget & Planning, Health and Agriculture as well as State Nutrition Officers and partners from Alive and Thrive as well as Save the Children.

Signed,

Beatrice Eluaka
Executive Secretary - CS-SUNN

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