Distinguished Members of the Press,

It is indeed my pleasure to welcome you to this media engagement on the Partnership for Improving Nigeria Nutrition Systems issues, research findings, progress and call to action to improve salience of nutrition policy and funding on the agenda of the Lagos state government, holding today in Lagos State. I wish to convey CS-SUNN’s appreciation to you, members of the press for responding positively to our invitation.

Malnutrition remains a key contributor to infant and maternal mortality and morbidity, poor cognitive development, increased severity of diseases which adversely affects productivity in Nigeria. According to the National Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) 2013, more than 5 million new-borns in Nigeria lack essential nutrients and antibodies that would protect them from diseases and death as they are not being exclusively breastfed.

The National Nutrition and Health Survey (NNHS) 2014, puts Exclusive Breastfeeding rate in Nigeria at 25%. Also, the 2017 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) puts stunting rate at 43.6% as against 32.9% in 2015, wasting in 2017 at 10.8% as against 7.2% in 2015 and Underweight at 31.5% in 2017 as against 19.4% in 2015. For Lagos State, The MICS 2017 puts Stunting rate at 11.4%, Wasting at 11.4% and Underweight at 14.5%.

These negative results indicate an alarming rising trend in Nigeria’s malnutrition burden which will continue to further impede the nation’s economic development if not checked as globally, stunting is currently an indicator for measuring a country’s development.
Despite these negative indices, we however must not fail to commend the Lagos State Government for extending maternity leave for female civil servants to 6 months and introducing a 10-day paternity leave for fathers. This policy is a step in the right direction towards promoting Exclusive Breastfeeding which ensures optimal physical growth and brain development of children, engenders them to thrive well and live up to their full potentials at adulthood. It also prevents malnutrition. The extension of maternity and introduction of paternity leaves will also provide nursing parents-employees the privilege to devote fuller attention to their infants, thereby promoting emotional bonding between parents and infants.

We are therefore calling on other state governments in Nigeria to emulate the Lagos State Government as this will contribute to encouraging the practice of Exclusive Breastfeeding especially among working mothers thereby boosting Nigeria’s EBF rate and contributing to a reduction in malnutrition in the country.

Recently, at the just concluded Ministerial Press Briefing in Abuja to commemorate the 2018 World Breastfeeding Week, the Honorable Minister of Health, Prof. Isaac Adewole revealed that the Ministry of Health was working closely with the Ministry of Labor to extend Maternity leave in Nigeria from 4 to 6 months. We are urging the Ministers and other key stakeholders involved in the process of implementing this policy to fast-track the process of this extension as it will go a long way to encourage and boost Nigeria’s EBF rates which will contribute to a reduction in malnutrition.

The Partnership for Improving Nigeria Nutrition Systems (PINNS), a product of consultations between a Donor/CS-SUNN is targeted at strengthening the Nigeria nutrition systems to be more Result-driven, Effective, Serviceable, Efficient and Transparent (RESET) in delivering on their mandate. It is also aimed at holding government accountable on commitments made to allocate, release and use transparently funds for implementation of high impact Nutrition interventions in Nigeria through evidence-based advocacy.

This project will also contribute to a reduction in malnutrition particularly among women and children in Nigeria as is focused on strengthening governance, policy implementation, effective coordination, financing, building the capacity of state actors, generation and effective communication of evidence as promoting accountability.
The Civil Society Scaling-Up Nutrition in Nigeria (CS-SUNN) recognizes that the Media are instruments of mobilization, awareness creation, information exchange and dissemination and that they have a great role to play in setting nutrition as an agenda for public discourse. Without the media, it might be difficult for CS-SUNN and others stakeholders in the nutrition circle to communicate nutrition information, monitor and coordinate nutrition interventions to ascertain optimal delivery of benefits to Nigerians especially, the vulnerable women and children in Lagos state.

This media engagement on PINNS issues, research findings, progress and call to action is aimed at:

1. Informing Lagos State Correspondents about PINNS project, issues and prayers
2. Establishing media role/responsibilities for increased visibility of PINNS/Nutrition issues in Lagos State
4. Increasing salience of PINNS and nutrition issues among Media in Lagos State.

This engagement will further jumpstart CS-SUNN’s media team in Lagos State with a common understanding of the goal and objectives of the project while presenting the PINNS project Asks and prayers.

We therefore urge the media to step up reportage of nutrition issues to attract policy makers and concerned stakeholders to take the right steps that will curb malnutrition in Nigeria, particularly Lagos State. We would on our part, continue to equip members of the press with useful and relevant information that would help and enable them step up thorough and factual reportage of Nutrition.

On this note, I welcome you all again to this Media Engagement on PINNS. We look forward to the most successful engagement with members of the press.

Thank you all.