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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CS-SUNN calls for Improved implementation of Nutrition Policy and Plans of Action and timely releases of budgetary allocation for Nutrition in Nasarawa State.

Distinguished Members of the Press,

I welcome you all to this media engagement aimed at highlighting the nutrition situation in Nasarawa State and government efforts in addressing the malnutrition menace. It is also to call on the Nasarawa state government to prioritize nutrition and ensure timely releases of funds allocated to nutrition in order to scale up nutrition interventions in the state.

The Civil Society-Scaling Up Nutrition in Nigeria (CS-SUNN) commends the Nasarawa state government’s commitment to addressing malnutrition in the state. One of such efforts is evident in the budgetary allocations made to nutrition. The state government also recorded some progress on the implementation of the National Strategic Plan of Nutrition as is evident in CS-SUNN’s Performance scorecard in 2016 which scored the Nasarawa state government, 56.8% in the implementation of the plan.

We want to draw attention to the fact that the burden of malnutrition in the state is much bigger than the nutrition allocation in Nasarawa state. The attendant non-release of funding allocated for nutrition even makes the situation much worse thus making it impossible to reverse the disturbing statistics on malnutrition in Nasarawa state.

Available data from the National Demographic Health Survey and latest Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (NDHS 2013 and MICS 2017), indicate a rise in the state’s malnutrition burden. Malnutrition, which continues to be a key contributor to infant and maternal mortality and morbidity also leads to poor cognitive development and increased severity of diseases, adversely affecting under-5 children in the state. The 2013 NDHS reported a stunting rate in Nasarawa state of 34.5% while underweight and wasting rates were put at 20.9% and 9.8% respectively. The latest Multiple Cluster Indicator Survey (MICS 2017) puts stunting rate at 37.2%, with underweight and wasting rates put at 20.7% and 6.8% respectively.

Stunting in children under five, a condition of physical and intellectual impairment that has lasting negative effects, is defined by low height for age. Stunting is a condition in which the child is too short for his or her age with accompanying poor brain development and is a result of long-term undernutrition.
Globally, stunting is currently an indicator for measuring a country’s development and it is a fact that malnutrition impedes economic development, hence the need for urgent action to address the problem.

Wasting or acute malnutrition is a condition whereby a child is too thin for his or her height as a result of long-term or current undernutrition or illness. The current wasting rate in Nasarawa State is above the WHO acceptable level and calls for emergency action.

CS-SUNN calls on the State Government to ensure timely release of funds allocated to nutrition as well as effective and efficient utilization of nutrition funds. We charge the state government to ensure release of the amount allocated to nutrition this year. The state government needs to provide clarity in budgeting for nutrition to include preventive interventions such as promoting nutrition education to ensure optimal infant and young child feeding practices, staple food fortification and Maternal nutrition programs. These measures will prevent more children from becoming malnourished and ensure that cured children do not relapse upon discharge from the treatment centres, as is currently the case in many communities.

We further task the Nasarawa State Government to improve on the implementation of existing nutrition policies in the State.

We urge the media to step up reportage of nutrition issues to draw the attention of policy makers and concerned stakeholders on the urgent need to take the right steps towards curbing malnutrition in Nigeria, particularly in Nasarawa State.

The Civil Society-Scaling Up Nutrition in Nigeria (CS-SUNN) is a non-governmental, non-profit making coalition of organizations with a shared vision to transform Nigeria into a country where every citizen has food and is nutrition secured. Projects implemented by CS-SUNN aim at strengthening the Nigeria nutrition systems to make them more Result-driven, Effective, Serviceable, Efficient and Transparent (RESET) in delivering on their mandate. We focus on strengthening governance, policy implementation, effective coordination, financing, building the capacity of state actors, generation and effective communication of evidence as well as promoting accountability.

I welcome you all again to CS-SUNN’s Media Engagement.

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