October 9TH, 2018
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:


Distinguished Members of the Press,

I welcome you all to this media engagement aimed at highlighting the nutrition situation in Niger State and government efforts in addressing the malnutrition menace. It is also to call on the Niger state government to 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) recognizes that the Niger state government is committed to addressing malnutrition in the state. We laud the responsiveness of the government to the worrisome challenge. Data from CS-SUNN’s Trend Analysis of Health and Nutrition Budget in Nigeria (2014-2018) showed that the Niger state government budgeted the sum of N89, 218, 166 for nutrition in 2017. No releases were however made from this allocation. This year, the state government budgeted N137,746, 250.00 for nutrition but still no releases have yet been made.

We want to draw attention to the fact that the burden of malnutrition in the state is so huge when compared with nutrition allocation and the attendant non-releases of funding allocated for nutrition – a situation that makes it impossible to reverse the disturbing statistics on malnutrition in Niger State.

Available data from the National Nutrition and Health Survey (NNHS 2014 and 2015), indicate a marginal rise in the state’s malnutrition burden, which continues to be a key contributor to infant and maternal mortality and morbidity, poor cognitive development and increased severity of diseases, adversely affecting under-5 children in the state. The 2014 NNHS reported a stunting rate in Niger state of 35.4% while underweight and wasting rates were put at 17.5% and 4.4% respectively. In 2015, stunting rate in the state increased to 38%, wasting rate to 6.1% with underweight reducing slightly to 17.3%. While the latest Multiple Cluster Indicator Survey (MICS 2017) shows a slight decrease in the rate of stunting to 37.3%, wasting and underweight have increased to 24.3% and 8.8% 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 Niger State is above the WHO acceptable level and calls for emergency action.

CS-SUNN calls on the Governor Abubakar Sani Bello-led administration 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 releases from the N137, 746, 250 budgeted for 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 programmes. These measures will prevent more children from becoming malnourished and ensure that cured malnourished children do not relapse upon discharge from the treatment centres, as is currently the case in many communities.

We further task the Niger 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 Niger 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 and promoting accountability.

On this note, I welcome you all again to CS-SUNN’s Media Engagement.

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Beatrice Eluaka FNSN

*Executive Secretary (CS-SUNN)*