COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF ONE DAY CIVIL SOCIETY WORKSHOP ON LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY ADVOCACY ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND HEALTH IN NIGERIA ORGANIZED BY THE CIVIL SOCIETY LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY CENTRE (CISLAC) HELD AT BOLTON WHITE HOTEL, ABUJA ON 16TH APRIL, 2015.

PREAMBLE:

Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) organized a one day Civil Society Workshop on Legislative and Policy Advocacy on Agriculture, Nutrition and Health in Nigeria. The meeting aimed at training civil society groups to understand and effectively demand accountability on Nigeria’s legislative and policy process in the areas of agriculture, nutrition and health. The meeting drew about 30 participants from civil society, farmer associations and the media. The meeting featured Dr. David Olayemi, Mallam Y.Z Ya’u and Dr. Babatunde Bello as the lead presenters. After exhaustive deliberations on various thematic issues, the following observations and recommendations were made:

1. Adequate food and optimal nutritional status are foundation blocks for the building of healthy, secure lives, and thus form the basis for development in any nation. Nigeria is one of 20% of countries responsible for 80% of global burden of child malnutrition.
2. In a survey conducted by UNICEF and NBS in 2014, the prevalence of malnutrition has geographical variation as revealed in the rates of stunting and wasting across Nigeria: North West, 53% and 20%; North East, 49% and 20%; North Central 44% and 9%; South West, 31% and 9%; South South, 31% and 7.5%; and South East, 22% and 8.6%.
3. Rising poverty, failure in governance, institutional weaknesses, existing socio-cultural attitudes, gender inequality, food insecurity, inadequate breast feeding, inadequate care and access to health services, inappropriate food intake, and diseases continue to be major drivers of malnutrition in Nigeria.
4. As long as Nigerians remain food insecure, malnutrition is likely to continue thus slowing down Nigeria’s economy by at least 8%.
5. It is noted that a draft National Food and Nutrition policy is pending approval by government and there is no coordinated and fully resourced plan to respond to this silent scourge.
6. In spite various innovative efforts such as the introduced programme and policies to boost agriculture sector, resources from the sector remain largely untapped to enhance growth and development.
7. Lack of curiosity to adopt and transform existing national and international programmes and policies on agriculture into law sabotages efforts at achieving timely growth and policy sustainability in the sector.
8. Inadequate monitoring and delay in approval and release of budgetary allocation to agriculture sector hamper effective implementation of programmes and policies on agriculture.
9. Inadequate empowerment for especially youth population and access to arable land to engage agricultural sector contributes largely to food insecurity in Nigeria.
10. Wide policy advocacy gap to hold legislative and executive arms of government accountable to their commitments, roles and responsibilities on agriculture in Nigeria.
11. So far, various introduced national and international programmes and policies on health have witnessed inadequate implementation resulting in poor access to healthcare facility across the country.
12. Inadequate infrastructural facilities and over-concentration of healthcare facility in urban areas at the expense of rural counterparts has hampered access to adequate health care in the grassroots.
13. Inadequate budgetary allocation to health sector, poor monitoring and lack of judicious utilisation of the existing ones has distorted accountability and effective provision and distribution of health facilities across the country.
14. The recent introduced National Health Act provides opportunity to coordinate, guide, harmonise issues and resolve challenges to health sector.

Recommendations

Participants at the meeting made the following recommendations:

1. National Planning commission to initiate a constructive innovative and bottom-up approach by relevant stakeholders including civil society in addressing malnutrition level in Nigeria.
2. Government to expedite action on the draft National Food and Nutrition Policy and come up with a well-resourced plan to implement the policy.
3. National and state planning commissions to initiate campaigns for early Initiation of Breastfeeding and Exclusive Breastfeeding (EBF) to raise EBF to 50% by 2018 from the current 25% found in the survey.
4. Government should improve access to food and water supply, especially at grassroots levels to drastically reduce cases of malnutrition and childhood illnesses.
5. Immediate legislation of existing national and international programmes and policies on agriculture to ensure their effective implementation and sustainability.
6. Timely approval and release of budgetary allocation to agricultural sector to effectively implement policies and programmes including international commitments on agriculture.
7. Intensifying and coordinate agricultural financing through Bank of Agricultural to enhance financial support to Small and Medium Scale Agriculture; and effective implementation of farmland reform programmes to build new farming communities.
8. Continuous advocacy by civil society and relevant stakeholders for pro-poor agricultural legislation and policy through consultative and constructive engagement of the legislative and Policy Formulating arms of Government.
9. Adequate empowerment for youth population to effectively engage agricultural sector and promote food security; and encouraged land clearing system to provide accessibility to farmland.

10. Effective implementation of various national and international programmes and policies to enhance adequate access to healthcare facilities.

11. Increased priority for rural development and access to healthcare facility; and well-motivated healthcare workers in the rural areas.

12. Immediate domestication and implementation of National Health Act by all levels of governments to enhance healthcare coordination and resolves challenges in the health sectors.

13. Effective tracking and monitoring of resources allocation to health to promote transparency and accountability in the sector.

14. Persistent and evidence-based advocacy to relevant stakeholders by civil society for transparency and accountability in the health sector, using key provisions from the National Health Act.

Conclusion

The participants expressed their appreciation to CISLAC for embarking on the training channeled towards capacity building for civil society capacity to understand and effectively demand accountability on Nigeria’s legislative and policy process in the areas of agriculture, nutrition and health. The participant demonstrated willingness to continue partnering with CISLAC on the initiative. Participants expressed gratitude to the organizers noting that the engagement was revealing and indeed an opportunity to begin to engage legislative process on health, nutrition and agriculture.

Signed:

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