COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF AN EXECUTIVE, LEGISLATIVE CSOs AND MEDIA ROUNDTABLE ON FINANCING FOR NUTRITION IN NASARAWA STATE ORGANISED BY CIVIL SOCIETY LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY CENTRE (CISLAC) IN PARTNERSHIP WITH UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN’S FUND (UNICEF) HELD AT HILLCON ROYAL HOTEL, NASARAWA STATE, LAFIA ON 9TH OCTOBER, 2018.

Preamble

The Civil Society Legislative United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) in partnership with organized a Roundtable Dialogue. The Dialogue aimed at bringing under one roof the state’s executive, legislature, CSOs and the media to identify opportunities for financing nutrition, understand existing efforts by the State towards increasing domestic investment for nutrition and addressing nutrition emergency, giving cognizance to the importance of timely release of funds for nutrition, increased domestic investment for the scale-up of CMAM, and increased budget line for nutrition in Nasarawa state. After exhaustive deliberations on various thematic issues, the following observations and recommendations were made:

Observations:

1. While malnutrition constitutes a serious setback to socio-economic development of a nation, sustainable growth in Nasarawa state cannot be achieved without prioritized attention to scale-up and sustain investment for nutrition.

2. An estimated 2.5 million Nigerian children under-5 suffer from Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) annually, exposing nearly 420,000 children under-5 to early death from common childhood illnesses such as diarrhoea, pneumonia and malaria.
3. Nassarawa state falls within the worst hit region on malnutrition with 37.2% stunting, 6.8% wasting and 20.7% underweight rates of children under-5 (NDHS, 2013).

4. In 2017, no fewer than 33 children reportedly died from Acute Malnutrition in Nassarawa state.

5. Malnutrition arises from ignorance, high cost of living, poverty, vulnerability, weak immunity, insecurity, micro-nutrient deficiency, inappropriate breastfeeding.

6. Malnutrition by implications increases susceptibility to infection, slow recovery from illness, low quality breast milk; retards physical and cognitive development.

7. While State Ministry of Budget and Planning has taken as priority a nutrition budget line across relevant MDAs, the Ministry is as well charged with the mandate to oversee nutrition activities.

8. Inadequate funding and poorly paid journalists remains a challenge to sustainable investigative reportage on malnutrition in the state.

**Recommendations:**

1. Strengthening the State Committee on Food and Nutrition for improved performance.

2. Prioritizing the establishment of Community Management of Acute Malnutrition programmes in the state through existing policies implementation, adequate budgetary allocation, timely release, cash backing and utilization of funds and oversight activities.
3. Increased policy and public awareness on the importance of adequate nutrition status through adequate and appropriate consumption of local nutrients.

4. Adequate knowledge and individual re-orientation on required daily dietary to promote consumption of appropriate nutrients in the state.

5. Agenda-setting by the media through dedicated programmes and activities promoting adequate and sustainable nutrition investment in the state.

6. Enhanced investigative journalism to amplify public and policy awareness on timely release of nutrition funds for sustained intervention.

7. Proactive synergy among the civil society groups and the media to galvanize policy advocacy for the timely release of fund for nutrition interventions.

8. Appropriate multi-sectoral coordination among Ministries, Departments and Agencies, private sectors, CSOs and the media to advance adequate budgetary allocation and timely release of funds for nutrition intervention in the state.

9. Timely implementation of existing policies and laws on nutrition to enable appropriate policy and legislative interventions in the state.

10. Recognising nutrition as a development issues to identify areas of priority for policy and legislative interventions.
11. Promoting adequate security at national, state and local levels to consolidate existing efforts and interventions on nutrition in the state.

Action point:

1. Ministry of Budget and Planning in collaboration with development partners to organize a capacity building training for relevant MDAs on quality memo for fund accessibility.

2. CSOs to galvanise effort towards budget tracking and monitoring to enhance timely release of funds.

3. CISLAC to strengthen the capacity of CSOs in the state through proposed Capacity Building Workshop on Nutrition Budget Tracking.

4. Media to pay more attention to nutrition issues in their programmes and activities.

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