Open Letter to Kenya’s nutrition key stakeholders

We, the undersigned, call on key stakeholders to collectively invest in the human capacity of front line workers (FLW) to deliver quality nutrition services.

WHY FRONT LINE WORKERS MATTER

In Kenya malnutrition is a major driver of poverty and inequality. It is attributed to 53% all deaths of children under five\(^1\). Despite our best efforts we are still off course to achieve the World Health Assembly (WHA) target for stunting, with levels in some counties e.g. West Pokot and Kitui exceeding 45%\(^2\).

The varied cadres of front line workers, including agricultural extension, health, nutrition and social support are the first and often the only link to health and nutrition care for millions of our citizens. They are the most immediate and cost-effective way to improve health and save lives.

WHY STRENGTHEN EXISTING CAPACITY

The scaling up of interventions and actions identified in the National Nutrition Action Plan (NNAP) is being put at risk because of constraints in existing capacity, and because training across all cadres to manage and implement nutrition programmes has been limited to-date.

If we are to achieve the reduction in stunting required to meet the SDG indicators and improve the health and well-being of our people, we must invest collectively in strengthening the human capacity of those who are working on the ground, our front line workers (FLW), on nutrition good practice.

Members of the nutrition community, convened by the East, Central and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC), have collaboratively developed learning resources required to build the core skills for current and future generations of FLWs. The developed nutrition curricula and training packages are ready for deployment.

WHAT COMMITMENT IS REQUIRED

To realise the value of the packages recently developed we need…

- Champions! Civil society leaders, elected representatives, public figures and the media to celebrate front line workers
- Co-operation! Government Ministries, professional bodies, training institutions and NGOs to mobilise for action.
- Financial investment! Purse-holders at national and regional levels to resource implementation of these packages.

WHY WE MUST TAKE ACTION NOW

The change we seek can be realised if our community of health and nutrition stakeholders collaborate collectively on this. Join us and the undersigned in mobilising support for action.

Sincerely,

Prof Yoswa Dambisya
Director-General of ECSA-HC

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