

Zambia's Vice President Launches Global Nutrition Report

Zambia's Vice President, Ms. Inonge Wina, says 'it is in my portfolio to connect what all sectors of the government can do to improve food and nutrition security of the Zambian people. And also ensure a multi-sectoral approach to the issue nutrition is adequately implemented'. She said this during the launch of the Global Nutrition Report on 8th December 2015 in Lusaka. The launch was organised by the Indaba Agricultural Policy Research Institute (IAPRI), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Civil for Society for Scaling up Nutrition (CSO-SUN) Alliance. The event was also attended by the Minister of Agriculture Hon. Given Lubinda, his Deputy Minister and two permanent secretaries.

Ms Wina acknowledged that Zambia's nutrition status is by almost all measures still in a dire state. She observed that, 'we can argue about differences in methodologies but the fact remains the same: Zambia's nutrition is worrying'. The 2013/2014 Zambia demographic and health survey data show that 40% of children under age 5 were considered to be stunted. This is a reduction from the 2007 figure of 46 percent but it is still high. Zambia aims to reduce stunting to 23% by 2023.

The Vice President said that, given its concern about the problem of malnutrition, her Government is putting up measures to redress the situation in Zambia. She stated that some of these measures include; the Government has established a cabinet steering committee on nutrition which is meeting regularly to agree on service delivery channels and track progress against targets, Government's intention to soon revitalize the community welfare centres, as focal points for mothers and young children, to access a range of social welfare and nutrition services in the Country, revising of the National Food and Nutrition Commission Act, and strengthening accountability of the national food and nutrition commission (NFNC) to adequately coordinate across key sectors. On this, she further stipulated that a decision was made at the 23rd Cabinet meeting held on 19th October 2015 to approve the introduction of a bill in parliament to amend the current NFNC no. 308 of 1967.

Speaking earlier during the launch the Minister of Agriculture said that it was embarrassing to have such high levels of malnutrition and that it is time to ensure effective diversification of Agriculture for the production of diverse foods.

In the presentation of the highlights of the Global Nutrition 2015 William Chilufya, Country Coordinator for CSO-SUN urged the Government and all stakeholders to elevate nutrition across the 7th National Development Plan that Zambia will soon develop. He also echoed an appeal to the Government to strengthen ability of the NFNC to fulfil its mandate. 'We need to enhance the NFNC's ability to coordinate the national nutrition agenda. This includes changing the placement of the NFNC within the Government structure, so that it has the authority to call all stakeholders to the table and hold them accountable to their responsibilities and commitments' Chilufya said. He appealed to the Government to ensure that at the next nutrition for growth summit in Brazil Zambia makes smarter commitments and above all implement them.

Report by CSO-SUN Secretariat.