

HIGHLIGHTS

- **CSONA Secretariat & MPTF**
- Engagement with other stakeholders & platforms
- Nutrition related legislation & policies
- Establishment of district nutrition platforms
- **CSONA in 2014**

Welcome

Dear Members

It's a brand new year and what better way to start the 2014 with an update from the Civil Society Organization Nutrition Alliance (CSONA). Although we have not met for the past two months, work continues to happen among our members, and behind the scenes here in the secretariat. Here are highlights of some of the activities that have taken place in the past few months.

UPDATES

CSONA Secretariat & MPTF

- It is with great pleasure that CSONA announces the hiring of Ms. Virginia Mzunzu, our Partnership Support Officer (PSO) who will be responsible for establishing and supporting nutrition platforms at district level. Virginia is a graduate in nutrition with extensive working experience in nutrition and agriculture as well as in Scaling-Up Nutrition (SUN) activities. She joined CSONA in November 2013 and is eager and enthusiastic about her new role.
- Several meetings have taken place between the CSONA chairs and the interim steering committee members to discuss initial thoughts on what activities have been implemented, what are the gaps and how should CSONA progress. Issues of soliciting an official steering committee, conducting an appreciative inquiry to define CSONA and its members as well as advocacy strategies that need to be put in place were some of the planned activities discussed for 2014. Further discussions will be held when the platforms and its members convene early this year
- The 2nd quarterly progress report has been accepted by the SUN MPTF secretariat and is posted on the SUN MPTF gateway. Here is the final version as available on the SUN MPTF gateway at the following link: <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/SUN00>

Engagement with other stakeholders and platforms

- In the minutes of our last meeting, we announced that CSONA had been invited to make a presentation at the International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) Forum. The purpose of the presentation was to create an awareness of SUN, and to highlight CSONA's scope of work and how it fits within the national nutrition arena. The intended outcome of the presentation was to mobilize more active members and spark interest of key heads of departments and Country Directors who may become part of the CSONA's steering committee. Through this presentation we have seen increased interest from INGOs eager to become members of the CSONA, which has raised the active membership by 10% in-



Virginia Mzuzu—Project Support Officer, CSONA.

Virginia has worked for more than 4 years in nutrition and agriculture with both the local government and NGO sectors. She has a Bachelor's degree in Home Economics & Advanced Nutrition obtained at the University of Malawi, Chancellor College. She has undertaken a course in Scaling up Nutrition (SUN) strategies that oriented middle level nutrition managers in SUN activities.

crease. Following the presentation, INGO forum members suggested that we have a follow-up meeting with all interested INGOs to discuss the CSONA in more detail.

(NB The INGO forum is made up of key decision makers of different INGOs who are key people in influencing policy)*

- In September 2013, the CSONA secretariat participated in the SUN Global Gathering and SUN CSN side meeting that was held in New York. The Principal Secretary of the Department of Nutrition and HIV/AIDS (DNHA) elected the CSONA to represent Malawi as a delegate. The CSONA and Malawi government was highly profiled during the gathering, breakout sessions and side meeting mainly because of how decentralized our strategies are in implementing SUN activities as well as activities of the Multi-Partner Trust Fund, which is a global fund that facilitates the establishment of a CSO network, and which currently funds CSONA.
- CSONA continues to participate in the Donor Nutrition Security (DoNuts) group and the SUN Taskforce forums where all related national nutrition issues are discussed. In addition, information is being channeled towards the CSONA by its members. CSONA has contributed to global efforts of the SUN Civil Society Network (CSN) by providing country specific information and updates regularly. Currently the global SUN CSN carried out a mapping exercise of which the results and feedback will be shared to CSONA members once the mapping report is finalized.

Nutrition-related legislation and policies

- On the 10th of October 2013, CSONA participated in a consensus building meeting that was organized by DNHA at Capital Hotel in Lilongwe. The purpose of the consensus building was to discuss the National Nutrition Policy and the Food & Nutrition Act. While the process of reviewing the National Nutrition Policy and Strategic Plan is still underway, CSONA noted that the Food And Nutrition Act was missing certain nutrition specific legislation for instance; inclusion of the International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes. This was reiterated by CSONA and other members and currently awaits feedback from DNHA.*

**(NB A second consensus building workshop has been scheduled on January 27th 2014)*

Establishment of District Nutrition platforms

- Introductory presentations were made at the District Executive Committees (DEC) meetings in Dedza and Mchinji in November and December 2013. The purpose was to raise awareness as well as get feedback on how the members envision the establishment of district nutrition platforms that feed into and facilitate advocacy and lobbying activities at district level. Members of the DEC and other lead NGOs have showed keen interest and several CSOs have been identified for follow-up meetings to brainstorm on the establishment of these district nutrition platforms.

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CSONA IN 2014

The question now remains: **IS 2014 A YEAR FOR CSONA?**

It can be. It all depends on active participation from its members. Here are a few windows of opportunity that the CSONA needs to actively engage in if we are to kick-start and massively profile ourselves as a strong CSO;

- SUN launch in Ntchisi District on **23rd January 2014**
- Review of the Micronutrient strategy **13th – 16th January 2014 - Lilongwe**
- National Nutrition Policy and Strategic Plan review and consensus building workshop **27th – 31st January 2014 – Ufulu Gardens, Lilongwe**
- Launch of the CSONA and its advocacy strategy led by Save the Children **Feb-March 2014**
- Malawi Elections 2014 - **May 2014**
- National Budget Pre-budget consultation meetings and consultations - **January – May 2014***
- National budget presentation - **June-July 2014***

*(*Please note these are tentative dates and might change, especially with the Malawi Elections being held in May which will delay activities until a new cabinet is selected and announced. However CSONA will have the responsibility of communicating to its members beforehand on specific details as well as dates)*

What is the way forward?

In preparation for 2014 and the official launch of CSONA, the CSONA looks forward to

- Preparatory meetings with members to feed into the National Nutrition Policy review consensus building workshop
- Conducting an appreciative inquiry that will help the CSONA define its vision, goals, and core identity, as well as where and how it will position itself within the national nutrition arena and put its members to task. This is an opportunity for members to contribute to a grand vision for civil society in nutrition in Malawi, emphasizing “blue sky” thinking, and we hope all members will participate.
- Strategic planning meeting – following the appreciative inquiry, this will lay out specific strategies and objectives for CSONA over the coming 3-5 years
- Revamping its interim steering committee
- Proactive engagement and contribution to the National Nutrition Policy and Strategic Plan and the Food and Nutrition Bill through the review process
- Official launch of the CSONA
- Launch of CSONA’s advocacy strategy that take into account national and international commitments made by government and donors
- Budget Analysis and engagement with Parliament
- Identification of nutrition champions
- Rolling out of advocacy and coordination activities in selected districts

As you can see 2014 is a big year for us. Let us gear ourselves up and prepare to maintain and surge the momentum in nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive issues. Now is the time for us to harness the energy and excitement for nutrition to improve outcomes for women, children and the citizens of Malawi.