

NIGERIA SAM MEDIA ADVOCACY REPORT

BY

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF MEDIA IN PUBLIC HEALTH



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PROGRAMME SUMMARY

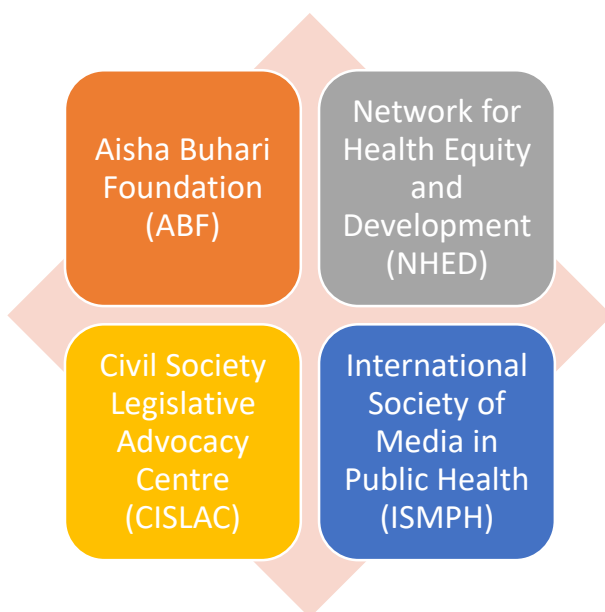
Project Overview: With Nigeria having one of the highest rates of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) in the world, the need for a well-coordinated aggressive and targeted advocacy, civil society mobilization, and media engagement as tools for spurring stronger policies and more funding is not only relevant but imperative to facilitating desired government response towards the treatment and prevention of severe acute malnutrition in the country.

Severe Acute Malnutrition is a life-threatening condition that affects millions of Nigerian children and the Ready to Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTF) have been very effective in the treatment of children with SAM across the various communities in Nigeria through the Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) approach.

Domestic funding and better integration with the country's health system is pivotal to addressing the issue of SAM, it was therefore imperative to get key policy makers, politicians and public spirited private organizations to commit and take action towards prioritizing child health by investing in child nutrition.

SAM Nigeria Advocacy Consortium Partners

The Advocacy for the Treatment and Prevention of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) Project in Nigeria was implemented by a consortium of four organizations including Aisha Buhari Foundation (ABF), Network for Health Equity and Development (NHED), Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), and the International Society of Media in Public Health (ISMPH).



ISMPH led the media strategy of the project to achieve high visibility & high impact for the overall Nigeria SAM Advocacy strategy with the goal of mobilizing the media and public in support of investment in SAM prevention and treatment.

“ISMPH is the powerhouse for media; they are grounded in the Nigerian media. They used their influence in media to raise awareness about the problem of malnutrition as well as galvanize media practitioners to hold government accountable and ensure every child lives a life”

Dr. Mairo Mandara, CIFF

Part of that media strategy was to utilize the media as an effective tool to apply pressure on the Government of Nigeria to be accountable for its commitments and the health needs of its citizens through increased budgetary allocation to child nutrition and specifically SAM treatment and prevention.

The project was implemented over a period of twenty-nine months from November 2018 to March 2021 both at the Federal level and in five focal states namely Bauchi, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano and Katsina.

Summary of Media Programs Implemented & Results Recorded: The media programs led by ISMPH in collaboration with other consortium partners were carefully selected with the aim of amplifying demands and applying pressure on government accountability.

Some of the key media programs implemented over the period of the project include:

- Built capacity of journalists to become advocates and better engage on issues of SAM. A key outcome of these trainings was the high number of aggressive reporting of SAM issues across several media platforms both print and electronic media. These negative media reportage shamed the concerned political leaders into taking action.

- Sustained engagement with media editors and heads of media stations in media dialogue which helped to secure their buy-in and facilitated increased media reportage of SAM issues.
- Strategic social media engagements that broadened the reach of media stories which employed the strategy of tagging the official handles of targeted political and health decision makers.
- Well-coordinated Social media advocacy at national and state levels which helped to hold political office holders accountable on their commitments to citizen's health including their electioneering campaigns promises.
- Partnered with popular social media influencers as moderators of select e-conferences and social media chats to mobilize popular opinion in favour of increased funding for the treatment and prevention of SAM cases as well as generate demand.
- Promoted evidence-based reportage of SAM using data, lived-experiences and photos from CMAN sites with special features on SAM realities in Daily Newspaper.
- Built capacity of journalists on budget tracking that enabled them tracked and monitored government allocation to health and the spending on nutrition budget lines.
- Produced TV documentary and sustained its airing on national TV and local TV stations to raise awareness and address the continued denial of SAM outside of affected communities.
- Aired radio jingles in both English and local languages in project states and at the national level to trigger and influence community voice for the treatment and prevention of SAM.
- Produced and aired radio drama series on child nutrition including SAM to build social demand and action.

- Frequent site visit to health facility by trained journalists to monitor progress and conduct interviews with key stakeholders including mothers of affected children as a basis for human angle stories and provide evidence for advocacy.
- Facilitated the publication of **30** in-depth investigative reporting that interrogated the level of government's commitment to citizen's health as well as revealed the extent of SAM consequences.
- Developed a collage of lived experiences of families with SAM children which was frequently used for advocacy purpose.
- Engaged young people in the project states to enhance SAM social media advocacy.
- Strengthened partnership with other SAM consortium members to foster synergy by providing effective media coverage of consortium partners' activities and co-facilitation of advocacy programs.
- Developed and frequently reviewed SAM key messages to align with current realities of SAM in the project states.
- Improved budget tracking knowledge and ability of **50 journalists** to constructively and effectively engage with government policies and financing processes towards Prevention and Management of Severe Acute Malnutrition.
- Conducted End-of-Project dissemination meeting to share key lessons learned from Implementing the SAM Nigeria Advocacy project

Key Achievements: In addition to keeping the issues of SAM in the front burner of national discourse within the media spaces, the media advocacy strategy led by ISMPH attained the following key achievements:

- Promoted integration among consortium members through effective partnership and collaboration in the implementation of SAM media advocacy programs thereby enhancing partnership between the journalists and CSOs, such that information

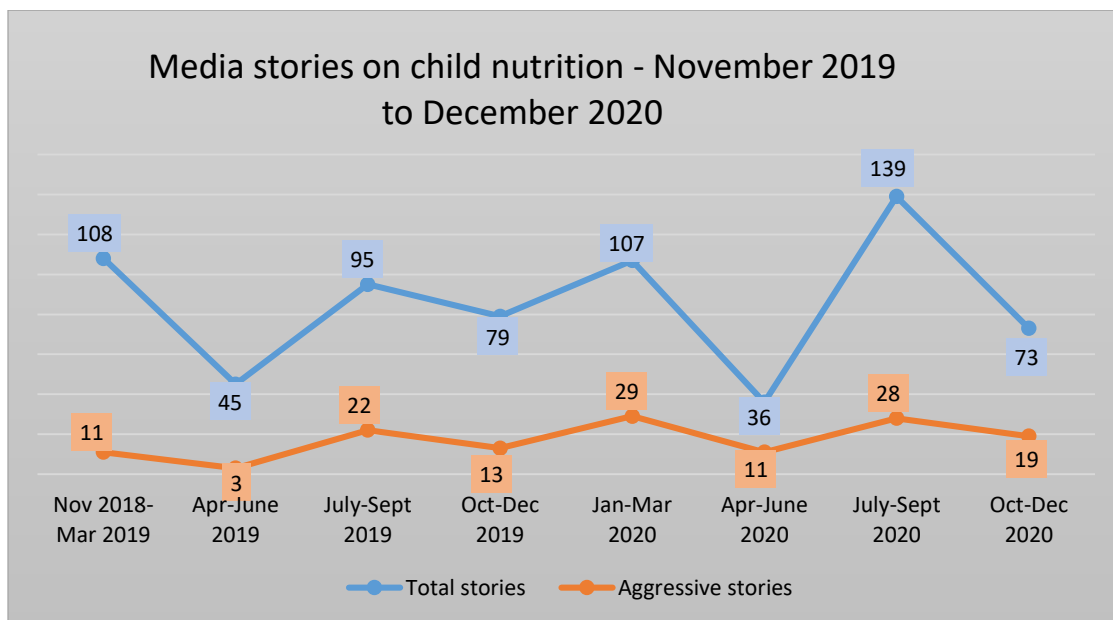
provided by CSOs on issues of SAM were amplified and given massive publicity by the media.

- Built **50** media advocates for SAM to monitor stock out, budget releases and utilization and effectively increased the number of journalists constantly and accurately reporting SAM on the media.



- Creation and sustenance of functional cluster WhatsApp groups for each state consisting of journalists and CSOs that facilitated real-time collaboration.
- Effective use of aggressive media reportage that exposed government inaction and weak financing of child health which was responsible for the frequent stock outs of RUTF in designated facilities with its associated consequences on child mortality.
- Sustenance of child nutrition issue in the national media space through constructive engagements and frequent publication of human angle stories that tells compelling stories of families and children suffering as a result of government inaction.
- **Over 600%** increase in number of favorable and accurate media reportage on SAM in radio, television, print and online media with about **80%** of that increase directly influenced by the work of the trained journalists.

- Massive **136** aggressive media stories that put political leaders of the project states on the spot on the infant morbidity and mortality associated consequences of their inaction on funding of child health especially child nutrition.



- Robust social media activism on SAM reaching **3,665,552** people with **8,160,911** impressions created.
- Formation of media cells on SAM in Gombe, Bauchi, Katsina, Jigawa and Kano states that closely monitored SAM financing and reportage.
- Formation of network of local pressure groups comprising journalists and CSOs that worked together to constantly mount pressure on key political office holders including lawmakers and commissioners to fast track fund release.
- Frequently updated key messages on SAM to align with its current realities in the **5** project states.
- Organized and recognized key individuals as Nutrition Champions in Nigeria for their undaunted commitment towards the success of the project

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List of Abbreviations

ABF	Aisha Buhari Foundation
ANHEJ	Association of Nigeria Health Journalists
BHCPF	Basic Health Care Provision Funds
CMAM	Community Management of Acute Malnutrition
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
BHCPF	Basic Health Care Provision Fund
CIFF	Children’s Investment Fund Foundation
CiSLAC	Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre
FMoH	Federal Ministry of Health
ISMPH	International Society of Media in Public Health
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
NHED	Network for Health Equity and Development
NPHCDA	National Primary Health Care Development Agency
PHC	Primary Health Care
RUTF	Ready-To-Use-Therapeutic Food
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SHoA	State House of Assembly
SMoH	State Ministry of Health

3. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

“Preventing and treating of cases of Severe Acute Malnutrition requires deliberate efforts. It is therefore the responsibility of health and political decision makers to prioritize and mainstream child nutrition by providing adequate funding through appropriate budgetary allocations”

**Yakubu Ibn Mohammed
DG, NTA**

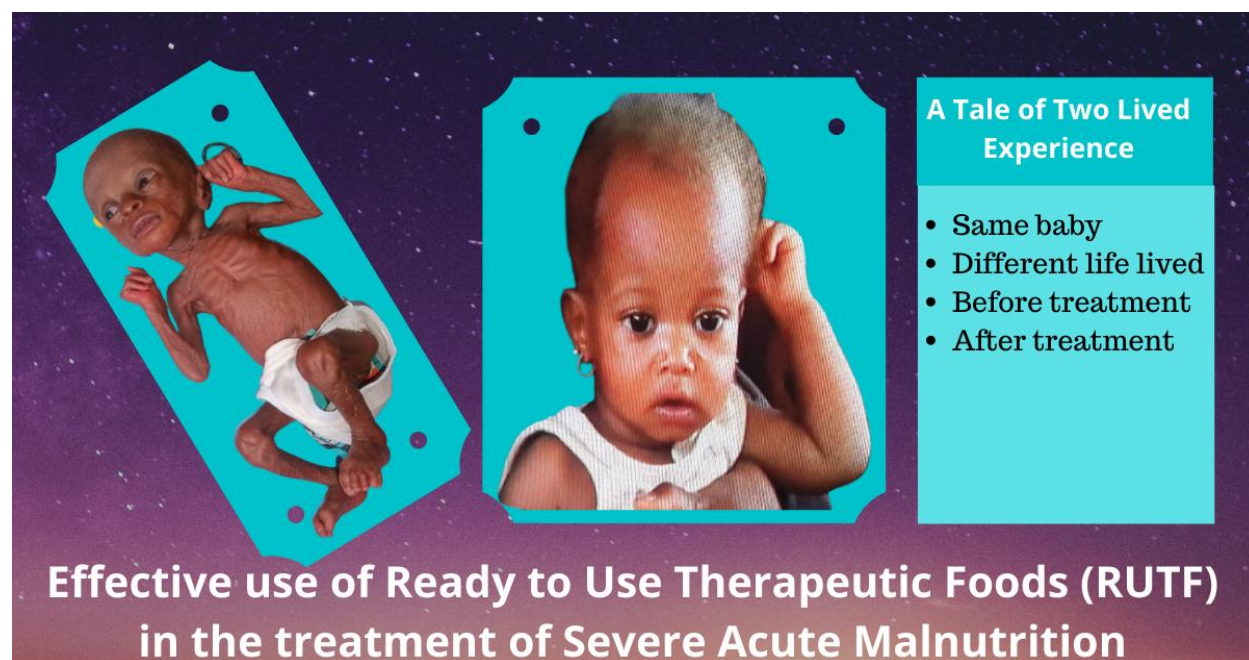
With an estimated 2.5 million Nigerian children under the age of five suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) every year and nearly 420,000 of these children dying as a result of this extremely dangerous condition, Nigeria has one of the highest rates of SAM in the world. The increased frequencies of insurgencies and conflicts across the states in Nigeria also impacted health access and increased vulnerabilities of women and children especially in terms of prevention and treatment of health conditions including SAM.

Malnutrition is a major public health problem of developmental concern with both health and socioeconomic consequences and although the problem is more widespread in northern Nigeria, there are malnourished children in every state in Nigeria.

With these realities, the need for a well-coordinated aggressive and targeted advocacy, civil society mobilization, and media engagement as tools for spurring stronger policies and more funding was not only relevant but imperative to facilitating desired government response towards the treatment and prevention of severe acute malnutrition in Nigeria.

Severe Acute Malnutrition is a life-threatening condition that affects millions of Nigerian children. The increased frequencies of disasters, conflicts and insurgencies in Nigeria has also adversely impacted health and increased vulnerabilities of women and children especially in terms of prevention and treatment of health conditions including SAM. Ready

to Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTF) have been very effective in the treatment of children with SAM across the various communities in Nigeria through the Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) approach.



Domestic funding and better integration with the country's health system is pivotal to addressing the issue of SAM, it was therefore imperative to get key policy makers, politicians and public spirited private organizations to commit and take action towards prioritizing child health by investing in child nutrition.

The Advocacy for the Treatment and Prevention of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) Project in Nigeria was implemented by a consortium of four organizations including Aisha Buhari Foundation (ABF) Network for Health Equity and Development (NHED), Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), and the International Society of Media in Public Health (ISMPH) with ISMPH leading the media strategy of the project to achieve high visibility & high impact for the overall Nigeria SAM Advocacy strategy with the goal of mobilizing the media and public in support of investment in SAM prevention and treatment.

Part of that media strategy was to utilize the media as an effective tool to apply pressure on the Government of Nigeria to be accountable for its commitments and the health

needs of its citizens through increased budgetary allocation to child nutrition and specifically SAM treatment and prevention.

4. RATIONALE FOR MEDIA ADVOCACY

Media as the fourth estate of the realm is a critical sector of governance as it has overtime influenced policy direction of successive governments in Nigeria and the world over. The media strategy for the Nigeria SAM advocacy was therefore built on increasing political support in order to achieve increased domestic resource mobilization for the prevention and management of Severe Acute Malnutrition in Nigeria.

The project was implemented over a period of twenty-nine months from November 2018 to March 2021 both at the Federal level and in five focal states including Bauchi, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano and Katsina.

5. KEY INTERVENTION / PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

5.1 Media Advocacy to Chief Executives – At the inception of the project, media parley was held with Editors and Chief Executives of media houses to secure the buy-in and commitment of the leadership of key media houses in FCT and the project states to drive the media advocacy on SAM. The primary aim of the parley was to expose Chief Executives of media houses to the SAM epidemic and secure their commitments towards using the media to hold policy makers accountable on SAM prevention and treatment through intense reportage of SAM. Also, the parley provided the opportunity to engage the media executives to use the media as an advocacy platform to pressure key decision makers to ensure that the prevention and treatment of SAM for Nigerian children is prioritized and included in Nigeria’s UHC service provision through Basic Health Care Provision Funds (BHCPF).

As the project progressed, media Forum were subsequently conducted to consolidate and strengthen partnership with the Editors and Chief Executives of Media Houses to follow

up previous commitments made and further strengthen partnership while articulating the role of the media in holding key decision makers accountable in support of SAM prevention and treatment.

A major outcome of this sustained engagement is the evidenced increased & accurate reportage on SAM by local media organizations.

5.2 Capacity Building on SAM for Journalist – **50** journalists were trained in the 5 project states which effectively increased the number of journalists constantly and accurately reporting SAM on the media. These trained state level journalists became advocates for SAM and monitored stock out, budget releases and utilization in Gombe, Kano, Katsina, Jigawa and Bauchi states.

Also, **25** national level journalists' capacity were built as advocates for SAM that monitored federal government response to SAM as well as monitor national budget releases for child nutrition and SAM treatment and prevention specifically.

A major outcome of this kind of engagements with the journalists was the publication of **564** number of favorable and accurate media reportage on SAM in radio, television, print and online media. This translated to 672% increase in number of favorable and accurate media reportage on SAM in radio, television, print and online media with about 80% of that increase directly influenced by the work of these trained journalists.



5.3 Formation of Media Cells and Network of Pressure Groups – **5** media cells (one in each state) were formed in Gombe, Bauchi, Katsina, Jigawa and Kano states that closely monitored SAM financing and reportage.

ISMPH also facilitated the formation of network of local pressure group working comprising of **15** local CSOs in Gombe, Bauchi, Jigawa, Katsina and Kano who worked closely with the media cell in their state to constantly mount pressure on key political office holders including lawmakers and commissioners to fast track fund release.

5.4 Production and Airing of TV Documentary and Jingles at the National and Local Project States – ISMPH developed a collage of families dealing with SAM children to generate stories as tool for advocacy for the SAM Nigeria Advocacy Project. The rushes from the video shooting were also used to develop reality documentary that were aired on major media channels in the five project states.

The project also produced and aired jingles in English and Hausa languages which triggered and influenced community voice for treatment of SAM in Gombe, Kano, Jigawa, Katsina and Bauchi states and FCT.

5.5 Special Appearances and Features in State Media and National Daily – There were special features in National Dailies on RUTF out-of-stock and non-inclusion of RUTF budget line in project states which led to immediate Kano state government response and release of N50million (Fifty Million Naira) for RUTF in the state and financial commitment for RUTF in other states.

5.6 Radio Drama Series to Drive Action – **13** episodes (30 minutes each) of radio drama series titled “Rainon Dan Adam” in local languages were produced and aired in Gombe, Kano, Jigawa, Katsina and Bauchi states reaching families in the communities and policy makers alike.

5.7 Investigative Reporting on SAM Related Issues – In an attempt to pressure key decision makers to ensure the prevention and treatment of SAM, **30** journalists (5 from each of the project states) were commissioned by ISMPH to respectively carry out

investigative reports on the SAM situation in each of the states. The journalists were selected from the media cells of each of the project states based on their vibrancy and also taking into cognisance previous articles/reports they have worked on. Some of the key areas of investigation include the number of children that have died due to out of stock of RUTF, impact of Corona virus pandemic on nutrition financing, 2. Potential of having locally produced RUTF, allocation and utilization of the Basic Health Care Provision Funds, amongst others. The reports generated a lot of media debates and government reactions which consequently lead to financial commitment for RUTF in the states.

5.8 Promotion of Effective Collaboration among Consortium Partners and Provided Support to Partners with Media Coverage during Activities – ISMPH promoted integration among consortium members through effective partnership and collaboration in the implementation of SAM media advocacy programs. The organization successfully mobilized the media to cover all Consortium partners’ advocacy and other activities in the 5 project states and FCT. Also, **125** women were engaged to advance SAM as a child right issue in Katsina, Kano, Gombe, Jigawa and Bauchi states in partnership with CISLAC.

5.9 Building Partnerships for Action – The project effectively partnered with Association of Nigeria Health Journalists through capacity building resulting in increased pool of journalists reporting and advocating issues of SAM at the national level.

5.10 Capacity Building on Budget Tracking for Journalist – In order to strengthen the capacity of the media and civil society actors to constructively and effectively engage with government policies and financing processes towards Prevention and Management of SAM, **50 journalists** and **15 CSOs** in Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Bauchi and Gombe states capacity were built to have a better understanding of the bottom up processes that leads to the democratization of local and national public policy making process and allocation of resources. The training helped to improve the quality and effectiveness of reportage on issues of SAM as well as informing and mobilizing the public towards action for improved public financing and accountability for SAM.

5.11 Inauguration of Nutrition Champions in Nigeria – Since the takeoff of this Nigeria SAM Advocacy project in 2019, many individuals displayed great commitment towards actualizing the goal and some institutions aligned their project goals to accommodate advocacy for increased government funding and favorable policies for child nutrition in Nigeria. It was against this backdrop that the project made efforts to inspire deliberate action towards recognizing the efforts of these individuals and institutions to amplify their heroic acts and encourage more commitments toward improved child nutrition in the country. The initiative also provided the opportunity to recognize the efforts of federal and state governments in the prevention and treatment of severe acute malnutrition in Nigeria.



The initiative which was titled “Nutrition Champions in Nigeria” was an attempt to drive the conscious awakening of advocating and taking action for the prevention and treatment of severe acute malnutrition in Nigeria through increased health financing for child nutrition.

A total of **94 recipients** were awarded with the inaugural Nutrition Champions in Nigeria including **11** key government officials and policy makers for always taking the lead on issues of child nutrition in Nigeria.

5.12 Social Media Interventions – Social media as a unique medium of communication that is different from the conventional media has the ability to reach a larger number of audience in real time. The project therefore employed strategic use of social media advocacy / campaigns which included **weekly** tweet conferences featuring social media influencers that mobilized citizens in support of investment in SAM treatment and demand accountability from government on SAM. This partnership with popular social media influencers as moderators of select e-conferences and social media chats helped to mobilize popular opinion in favour of increased funding for the treatment and prevention of SAM cases as well as generate demand.

The strategic social media engagements broadened the reach of media stories and employed the strategy of tagging the official handles of targeted political and health decision makers. This well-coordinated Social media advocacy at national and state levels helped to hold political office holders accountable on their commitments to citizen’s health including their electioneering campaigns promises. As part of the social media strategy, **50** young people were trained in Gombe, Bauchi, Katsina, Jigawa and Bauchi states on social media advocacy who used their various social media platforms and networks to demand government’s action in funding RUTF in their states.

@SAMAdvocacy Social Media Handles ONLY	
Social media	Cumulative (Nov 2018 to Jan 2021)
Twitter	
Followers	1,194
Tweets	3,726
Reach / Impressions	717,231
Instagram	
Followers	1112
Posts	844
Likes	11,701
Facebook	
Followers	19,405
Posts	1,505
Engagements	35,996
Reach	455,291

The social media advocacy mobilized citizens’ support towards SAM treatment and prevention by the number of new people that engaged with the hashtag #FundChildNutrition and #SAMAdvocacy on a weekly basis. The SAM Advocacy project sustained a robust social media activism on SAM reaching **3,665,552** people with **8,160,911** impressions created.

Hashtags Engagements		
Cumulative (Nov 2018 to Jan 2021)		
	#SAMAdvocacy	#FundChildNutrition
Tweets	3,193	3,805
Retweets	1,789	2,294
Reach	1,347,652	2,317,900
Impressions	3,433,369	4,727,542

5.13 Development & Review of SAM key messaging

– Developed and frequently reviewed SAM key messages to align with current realities of SAM in the five project states. These key messages were regularly reviewed with human angle messages.



5.14 End-of Project Dissemination Meeting – An end-of-project lessons learnt dissemination meeting on the SAM Nigeria Advocacy project was conducted in collaboration with other consortium members. The dissemination offered the opportunity

to share lessons learned from the project that can serve as resource to efforts in improving child nutrition in Nigeria.

6. KEY PROGRAMME INDICATORS VERSUS MILESTONES ACHIEVED

Indicator	Target	Milestone achieved
Number of Journalists and CSO's trained on SAM.	65	88
Number of Aggressive News Stories on SAM	125 (10 per year in each focal state; and 25 per year at national level)	136
Media coverage on SAM	Increased by 250% influenced by the CIFF project (Baseline: 22)	672% increase (564 stories)
Number of time people engage with post on SAM Advocacy and Fund Child Nutrition on social media	5,000,000	8,160,911

7. KEY CHALLENGES

- Weak institutional capacity of the relevant MDAs to better understand the situation and extent of how child nutrition is fundamental to basic health.
- Physical engagements restrictions imposed by governments in response to the novel corona virus pandemic which limited opportunity for engagements with key stakeholders.
- Reduced nutrition budget allocations occasioned by the dwindled resources available to government due to the impact of COVID-19.

8. LESSONS LEARNT

- ✓ Capacity building is key to mobilizing the media towards achieving a particular objective.
- ✓ Visiting the CMAM sites with the trained journalists spurred their skills in investigative reporting and encouraged aggressive reportage of human angle story.
- ✓ Using a holistic approach that involves the media and CSOs engaging civil policy makers at the highest level of both the executive and legislative arms of government at the federal and state levels is critical to advocacy project targets.
- ✓ There is need to strengthen capacities of key nutrition stakeholders including relevant MDAs, CSOs and the media to influence proper planning, budgeting, efficient fund release and effective utilization.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- All nutrition programs should be integrated across the country to yield better results.
- There should be increased and sustained efforts towards local production of RUTF and other nutrition commodities.