

COUNTRY PROFILE ON NUTRITION 01/2021

MYANMAR



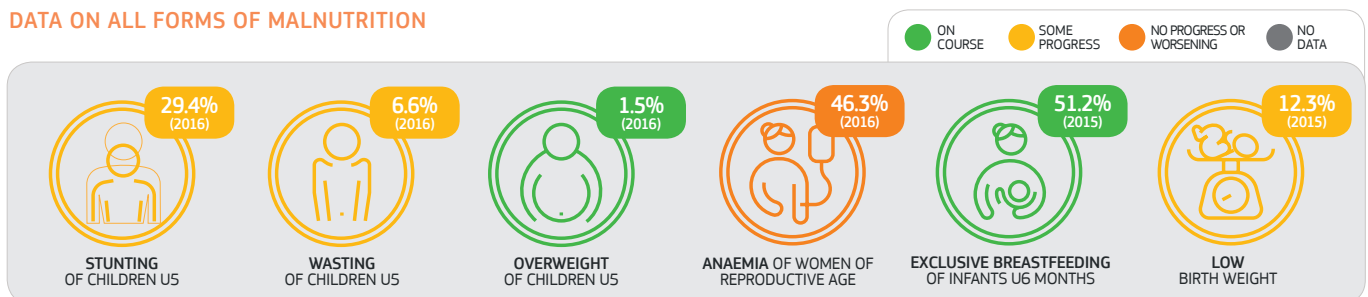
Nutrition situation in Myanmar

AT A GLANCE

With a population of 54.4 million¹, around two thirds of which is rural, three out of every five people in Myanmar are either living in, or vulnerable to, multidimensional poverty. Gender inequalities persist in Myanmar, including in areas such as access to economic opportunities, legislation and political representation². Despite a steady decline in stunting since the 1990s, nine out of 10 of the poorest children (6–23 months) do not have a minimum acceptable diet, while stunting is 2.5 times greater among the poorest children under five compared to the better off. At least a third of the population do not have access to even basic sanitation facilities. While such undernutrition is associated with

lifelong negative consequences for a child's physical and cognitive development, at the same time Myanmar is undergoing a rapid nutrition transition with the prevalence of obesity among adolescents rising five-fold in recent years (2000–2016) and a quarter of all adults currently overweight or obese. Any progress Myanmar has made to date with respect to meeting 2025 World Health Assembly (WHA) targets may now be compromised by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly on the most vulnerable people for whom good nutrition and healthy diets are crucial to build and maintain a healthy immune system.

DATA ON ALL FORMS OF MALNUTRITION



NUTRITION GOVERNANCE

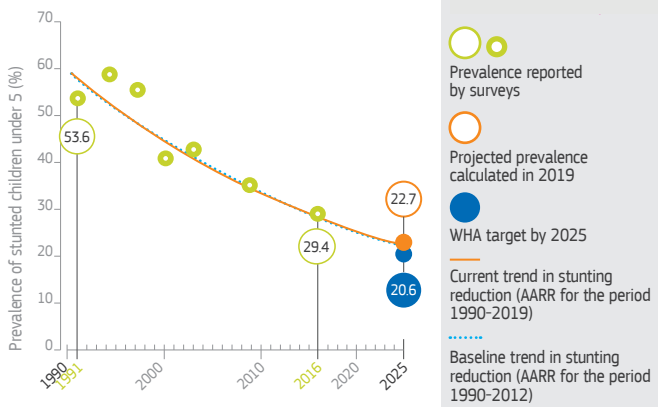
- Myanmar joined the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement in 2013. A multi-stakeholder platform for nutrition brings together ministries of health, agriculture, education and social welfare, and is supported by the National Nutrition Centre (NNC) to develop the government's costed multi-sectoral national plan of action on nutrition (2018–2023). The initial focus has been on capacity assessments, building M&E systems, financial tracking, and subnational structures.
- The NNC-led Myanmar Nutrition Technical Network meets regularly to discuss technical issues. Among key priorities are ensuring effective enforcement of national legislation on maternity leave and the marketing of breast milk substitutes.
- The EU-FAO FIRST Policy Facility has served to raise the profile of nutrition-sensitive agriculture and increased the Ministry of Agriculture's engagement in nutrition.
- The maternal and child cash transfer programme was launched in 2014 as part of the Government's national social protection strategy and there is already strong evidence confirming its impact in reducing child stunting.

Example of EU support

Budget Support for Nutrition (BS4N) 'Enhancing Rural Nutrition in Myanmar' is a sector reform contract committed in 2019 that is supporting the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation with implementing the national agriculture development strategy's contribution to the multi-sectoral national plan of action on nutrition 2018–23. With a budget of EUR 112 million to be disbursed in the period 2020–2025, the programme will directly contribute to reducing undernutrition in women of reproductive age, infants and under-five children through diversifying food production, improving rural incomes and enhancing food safety and access to safe drinking water. The first budget support for nutrition in Myanmar follows BS4N interventions in South and South-East Asia, reflecting a growing recognition that policy dialogue can be harnessed as an effective tool to address the multiple causes of undernutrition. Areas of focus for complementary measures include: enhancing the inclusion of especially vulnerable populations in geographic areas where public service delivery is constrained by conflict; strengthening the nutrition sensitivity of the agricultural development strategy's framework for monitoring and evaluation; and reinforcing planning and budgeting systems for improved service delivery.

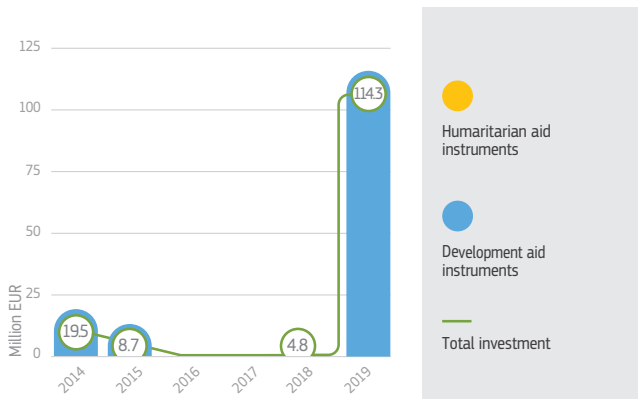
Progress on the two EU pledges for nutrition

TREND, PROJECTION AND TARGETS IN THE PREVALENCE AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN (U5) STUNTED



Within the framework of the multi-sectoral national plan of action on nutrition 2018-2023 the Government of Myanmar has committed to reduce stunting to 21% in 2025. Myanmar has experienced a strong decline in the prevalence of stunting and in the number of children stunted since the early 1990s. Recent projections anticipate that it will come close to meeting both its government's own nutrition target and the WHA target by 2025, but this may be compromised by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The rate of decline in the number of children stunted has very marginally decreased from 2.79% in 2012, to 2.75% in 2019; if this is maintained, then 1 million children would be stunted by 2025.

EU FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS TO NUTRITION BETWEEN 2014 AND 2019 – TOTAL OF EUR 147 MILLION



EU nutrition commitments in Myanmar from 2014 to 2019 include EUR 12.8 million for humanitarian assistance. In addition, in 2014 and 2018 the EU committed EUR 17.5 million to nutrition through the Livelihoods and Food Security Fund (LIFT). This multi-sectoral programme addresses the basic, underlying and immediate causes of nutrition, focusing on improved nutrition of women, men and children³, increased incomes and resilience of rural households, and improved policies and effective public expenditure for pro-poor rural development. In 2015, EUR 9 million was committed for the Myanmar Sustainable Aquaculture Programme. The largest single EU commitment for nutrition in Myanmar was made in 2019 for the new sector reform contract, 'Enhancing Rural Nutrition in Myanmar', amounting to EUR 112 million (described above). The EU-FAO FIRST Policy Facility also supports two Policy Officers in the Ministry of Agriculture to address issues on nutrition and land.

¹ World Population Prospects <https://population.un.org/wpp/>

² Myanmar has a Gender Inequality Index of 0.478 and is ranked at 118 out of 162 countries in the 2019 index.

³ Nutrition has been an explicit part of the LIFT strategy since 2014.419

⁴ Ling, A. and Travis, C., Strengthening Resilience in Rural Myanmar, Aline Impact Ltd, 2019.