

COUNTRY PROFILE ON NUTRITION 01/2021

SIERRA LEONE

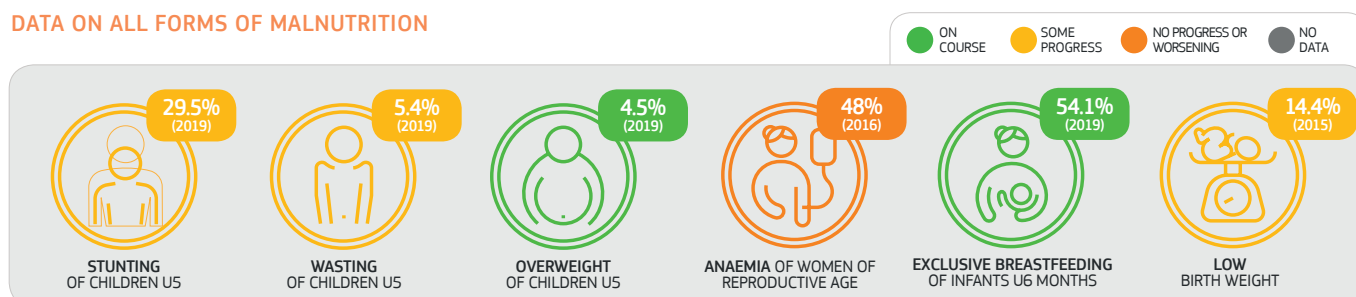
Nutrition situation in Sierra Leone

AT A GLANCE

Sierra Leone has a population of 8 million¹ and is making progress on its childhood nutrition indicators after 20-30 years of persistently high undernutrition. However, productivity in the agricultural sector, which accounts for 60% of GDP and 70% of jobs, is low. Food insecurity remains a major problem: household diets are limited and often lack iron and protein, and a high proportion of women of reproductive age suffer from anaemia. Recent reports indicate that 48% of the population do not consume a nutritious enough diet to lead a healthy life². Deep-rooted

cultural practices and issues of gender inequality prevent progress on food security and nutrition. At the same time, access to essential services such as education, health, water and sanitation is very limited and the services poorly resourced. The situation is compounded by years of conflict in the country, impacts of the Ebola virus in 2014-2015 and most recently the COVID-19 pandemic. Sierra Leone has a Gender Inequality Index value of 0.644 and is ranked at 155 of 162 countries in the 2019 index.

DATA ON ALL FORMS OF MALNUTRITION



NUTRITION GOVERNANCE

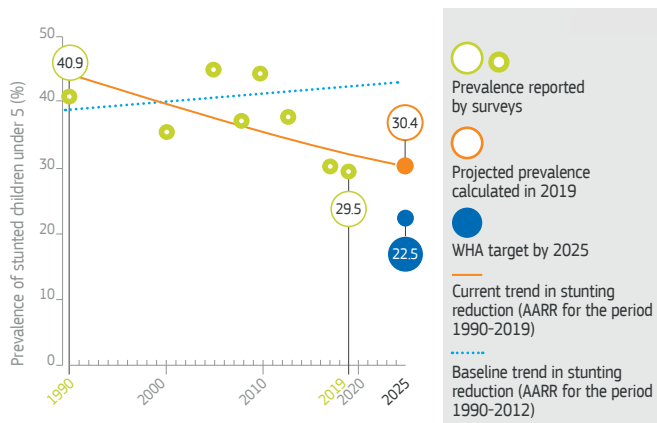
- Sierra Leone joined the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement in January 2012; Irish Aid and USAID are joint SUN donor co-convenors.
- The multi-sectoral Sierra Leone National Food and Nutrition Security Policy and its implementation plan 2012-2016 were launched in 2013.
- The Government of Sierra Leone has integrated nutrition into its National Sustainable Agricultural Development Plan 2010, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) National Investment Plan, the Comprehensive Agricultural Development Programme 2016-2020 and its Agenda for Prosperity 2013-2018.
- In 2016 Sierra Leone became the sixth country in Africa to launch food-based dietary guidelines for healthy eating.
- A high-level Food and Nutrition Security Steering Committee is chaired by the Vice President (who hosts the SUN secretariat). This coordination mechanism is replicated at district level.
- Sierra Leone is supported through the joint EU-FAO FIRST initiative, which has organised meetings to raise awareness among members of parliament about nutrition issues and important practices such as exclusive breast-feeding.
- Fortification of oil with vitamins A and D has been mandated since 2010, iodised salt is marketed on a voluntary basis and one variety of nutrient-enriched high vitamin A cassava has been introduced in the country.

Example of EU support

The EU-funded 'Boosting Agriculture and Food Security' (BAFS) project is a flagship initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry which awards grants to private sector companies and NGOs to implement activities in cash crop development, livestock and crop diversification. One grant recipient is the Bennimix project which will operate for three years from December 2019. The project's total eligible cost is EUR 0.5 million funded 85% by the EU. The Bennimix Food Company (BFC) began producing a supplementary food formula in the 1980s on a pilot basis. However, its factory in Bo town, Southern Province, was looted during the war and it subsequently faced competition from food aid imported by WFP (Corn Soya Blend), which limited sales to less than 100mt annually. With technical support from Helen Keller International, BFC changed and diversified the formula (replacing rice with sorghum) and developed a new product, SierraMix, which was successfully introduced into the WFP school feeding programme in 2013-2014. The EU grant to BFC is scaling up production of this and other nutritious formulae through a scheme whereby farmers receive technical training in production practices and gain access to a ready market for their crops.

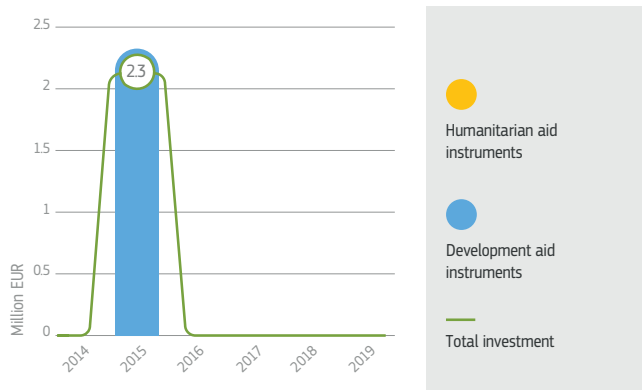
Progress on the two EU pledges for nutrition

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



At the Nutrition for Growth event in June 2013, Sierra Leone committed to reduce stunting to 11.7% and wasting to 2% by 2020. Unfortunately, the decline in the prevalence of stunting has been inconsistent since 1990 and the number of children stunted has increased due to population growth. The rate of reduction in the number of children stunted has however accelerated from -0.27% in 2012 to 1.08% in 2019. Even if this is maintained, 365 000 children are expected to be stunted in 2025 and prevalence will still be well above the Government's target for 2020.

EU FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS TO NUTRITION BETWEEN 2014 AND 2019 – A TOTAL OF EUR 2.3 MILLION



The principal support in this period has been through the Pro-Resilience Action to enhance the resilience to food shocks of people suffering from chronic and acute food insecurity by improving climate change adaptation, combating desertification, promoting nutrition-sensitive activities and policies and encouraging sustainable and resilient, small-scale agricultural practices. The total amount of this action in 2015 was EUR 9 million, of which 25% was targeted to nutrition.

The BAFS project 2017-2023, cited in the example of EU support, comprises of many different thematic components including institutional capacity building, agriculture research, production and value addition in crops and livestock, agribusiness and innovation, so it has not been categorised as an EU financial commitment to nutrition.

¹ UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019 population estimate 2020

² Findings of Sierra Leone January 2020 Food Security Monitoring conducted by WFP/Government of Sierra Leone.

³ Rice is the most consumed cereal in the country (300 g/capita/day).

⁴ <https://bpi.harvestplus.org/index.html>