



COUNTRY PROFILE ON NUTRITION 01/2021

SRI LANKA

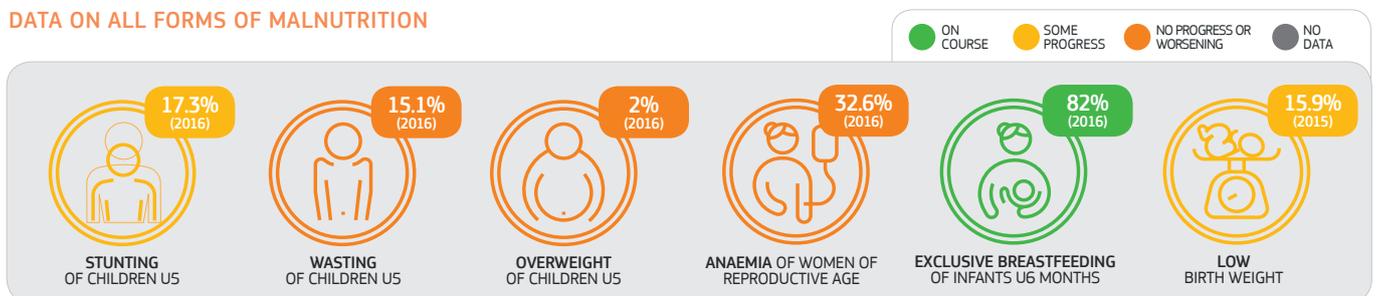
Nutrition situation in Sri Lanka

AT A GLANCE

The population of Sri Lanka currently stands at 21.4 million¹, with just over 80% living in rural areas. Sri Lanka has made significant strides in addressing gender inequality, although many women and girls continue to face discrimination and violence. Despite substantial progress in social and economic development, considerable inequalities (socio-economic² and geographic) remain and the country faces a significant double burden of malnutrition. Rates of undernutrition were unchanged from 2006 to 2016 and wasting rates are among the highest in the world. There is growing concern over the threat of noncommunicable diseases, for which overweight and obesity are known to be critical risk factors. Demographic and

socioeconomic changes have had an impact on diets: more than a quarter of women are overweight and one in 12 is obese and/or diabetic, while around a third are anaemic. Many agriculture value chains are currently dominated by a seasonal workforce without a guaranteed annual income, while significant gender inequalities persist with respect to wages in the agriculture sector. The COVID-19 pandemic poses a further threat to nutrition and food security in Sri Lanka, due to reduced income from tourism and remittances, and job losses. According to the Global Climate Risk Index (2020) Sri Lanka is highly affected, including by the negative impacts of changes in rainfall patterns on agricultural production.

DATA ON ALL FORMS OF MALNUTRITION



NUTRITION GOVERNANCE

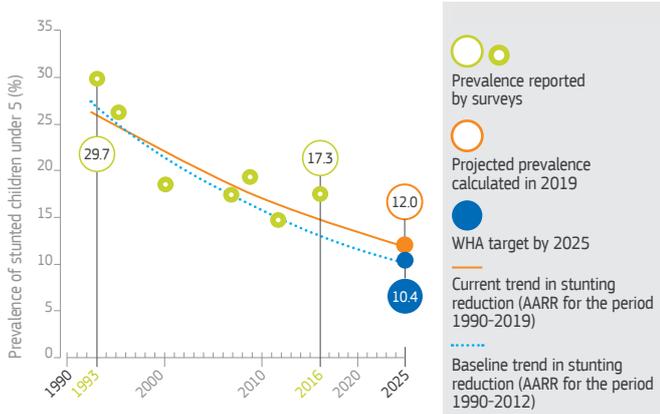
- Sri Lanka joined the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement in 2012.
- The national nutrition policy is currently being revised to better align it with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Originally developed by the Ministry of Health in 2010 as a basis for effective intra-governmental coordination, the revised policy (which will cover the period 2020-2030) and the multi-sector action plan for nutrition (2018-2025), with its greater emphasis on mechanisms and capacities could serve to enhance multi-sectoral coordination and partnership at various levels.
- Launched in 2020, the Food Production National Programme is primarily focused on boosting food security by increasing domestic food production and responding to possible shortfalls in import supplies due to the COVID-19 crisis.
- The National Nutrition Council was established in 2013 and is supported by the National Steering Committee on Nutrition together with the Technical Advisory Committee on Nutrition.
- Steering committees have also been established at provincial and district level, while district action plan preparation processes have been initiated in eight districts.

Example of EU support

'Supporting effective domestic finance for nutrition' is an EU supported assessment to track public financing for nutrition in Sri Lanka. Undertaken with the World Bank, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (UK) and UNICEF in 2019-2020, it has supported the Government of Sri Lanka to better understand whether sufficient resources are being allocated for nutrition priorities³. The task was found to be complex due to the multi-sectoral nature of investments for nutrition (managed by at least nine ministries) and the absence of a single database to compile these investments. The assessment found that the total public investment share for nutrition has been declining gradually since 2015. Several challenges were detected to identifying nutrition-related investments from input-based budget lines. The exercise found that a rigorous prioritisation exercise would be warranted to better understand the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of nutrition interventions. Additional recommendations included the use of a standard budget coding system and a budget tagging mechanism to improve resource tracking and accountability. A key message was that it would be important for the future to increasingly mainstream nutrition across decision-making for all key sectors.

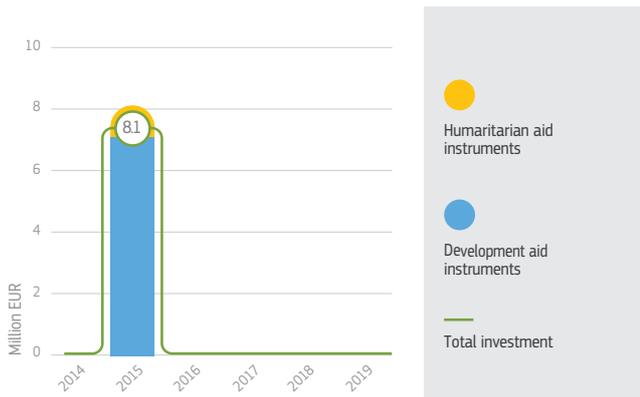
Progress on the two EU pledges for nutrition

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



Sri Lanka has experienced a strong decline in both the prevalence of stunting and the number of children stunted since the 1990s. Recent projections anticipate that although Sri Lanka will likely not have met the government's own target of 9.0% (0.15 million stunted children) by 2020, it will be close to meeting the World Health Assembly (WHA) target by 2025. The rate of decline in the number of children stunted is 2.43% as of 2019. If this trend is maintained, then nearly 185 000 children are expected to be stunted in 2025.

EU FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS TO NUTRITION BETWEEN 2014 AND 2019 – TOTAL OF EUR 8 MILLION



Between 2014 and 2019 the EU's nutrition commitments in Sri Lanka amount to EUR 8.1 million, including EUR 0.6 million in humanitarian support linked to disaster preparedness. The project 'Support to Integrated Rural Development in the Most Vulnerable Districts of Central and Uva Provinces' (nutrition investment of EUR 7.5 million) focuses on districts whose stunting and wasting rates are among the highest in the country. It centres on the mutually reinforcing objectives of both employment opportunities/livelihood promotion and improved health and nutrition of women and children. Through a focus on the first 1 000 days of life, information, education and communication initiatives also promote behavioural changes. The specific objective of the project (which runs from 2017 to 2022) is 'the promotion of integrated, sustainable, climate-resilient, inclusive socio-economic development for rural and estate communities'.

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

² Sri Lanka has a Gender Inequality Index value of 0.401 and is ranked at 90 of 162 countries in the 2019 index.

³ World Bank. 2020. Assessing Public Financing for Nutrition in Sri Lanka (2014–2018). Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/33419>

⁴ <https://www.ifc.org>: Gendered Impact of Covid-19 on Employment in the Private Sector, Sri Lanka.

⁵ Mani, Muthukumara, Sushenjit Bandyopadhyay, Shun Chonabayashi, Anil Markandya, and Thomas Mosier. 2018. South Asia's Hotspots: The Impact of Temperature and Precipitation Changes on Living Standards. South Asia Development Matters. Washington, DC: World