

## THE GAMBIA

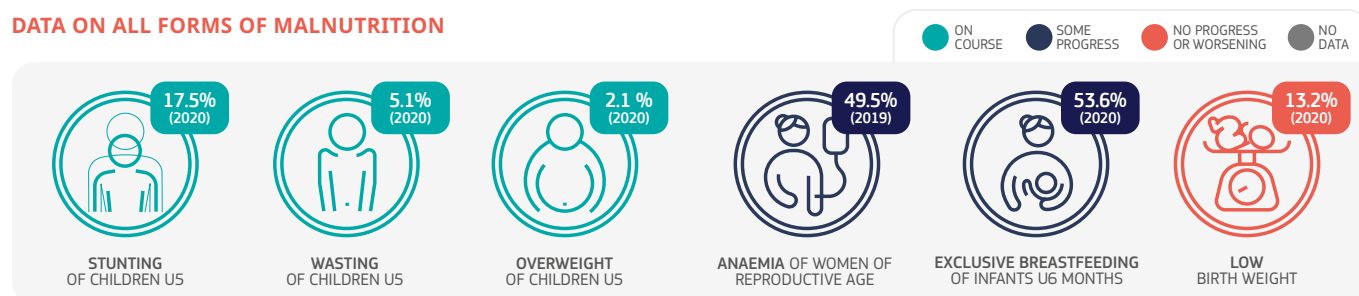
### Nutrition situation in The Gambia

#### AT A GLANCE

The Gambia (population 2.8 million people<sup>1</sup>) is principally an agrarian economy (with tourism contributing 15% of GDP), but still imports some 50% of its food requirements. It frequently suffers from poor and irregular rains. However, The Gambia has made considerable progress in reducing the prevalence of stunting and wasting among children under five over the past 10 years, despite poor basic services, inadequate sanitation, very fragile food and nutrition security and the current crises (COVID19, food crisis). There are significant disparities, nevertheless, between the west (capital Banjul) and the east of the country up-river, where rural households are poorer and gender inequalities prevail. Of concern

is that iron deficiency has increased in recent years among both children and women; about 50% of children and women suffer from anaemia<sup>2</sup>. Vitamin A deficiency affects almost 20% of children up-river, and many more in certain locations. The Gambia has promulgated in June 2021 a food fortification regulation (salt, edible oil and fats and wheat flour) to address the growing issue of micronutrient deficiency. Nutrient-rich crops were also introduced to promote production and consumption of micronutrient-rich foods. The Gambia has a Gender Inequality Index value of 0.585 and is ranked at 149 of 166 countries in the 2023-2024 Human Development Report (Human development index).

#### DATA ON ALL FORMS OF MALNUTRITION



The data reported in the 2023 EU Nutrition Country Profiles is drawn from the UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates and the Global Nutrition Report (GNR).

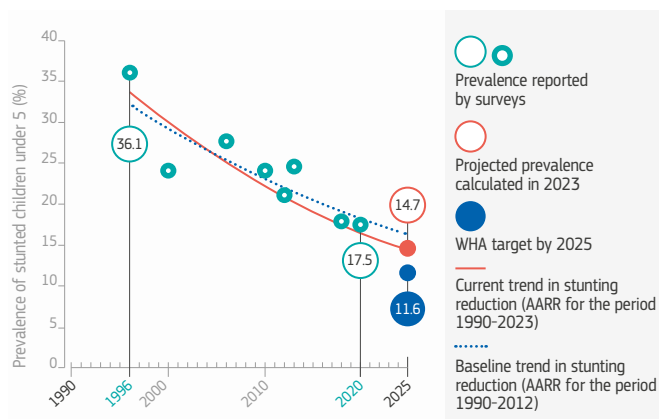
#### NUTRITION GOVERNANCE

- The Gambia joined the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement in July 2011. Three networks (SUN Civil Society Network, SUN Business Network, UN Nutrition) are active.
- A comprehensive National Nutrition Policy 2021-2025 contributes to the country's realisation of the United Nation's SDGs (2016-2030). Several commitments were made during the N4G summit and the UNFSS to achieve the SDGs targets in 2030.
- A National Food Fortification Alliance (NAFF) was established in 2019 to enhance efforts to reduce micronutrient deficiencies.
- The ever first Food Fortification Regulations 2020, provide the necessary legal authority and a regulatory framework to implement an effective food fortification programme.

#### Example of EU support

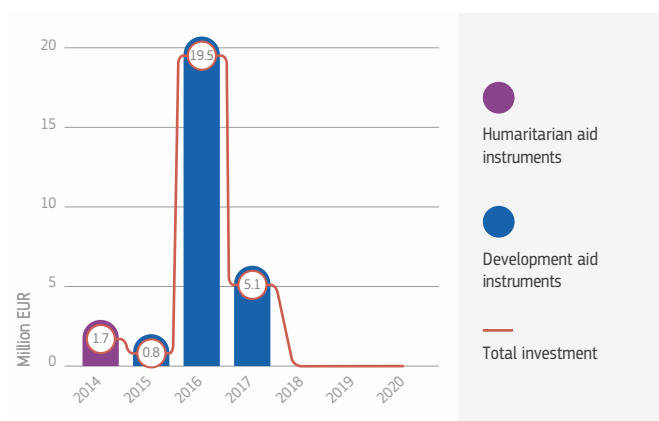
More than 2 billion people globally suffer from micronutrient deficiencies: particularly women, adolescent girls and young children. In 2016, following an EU Call for Proposals on Inclusive and Sustainable Value Chains and Food Fortification, the Gambia was selected to implement two projects on food fortification and biofortification. The first project (EUR 5.5 m) was implemented by FAO and supported the National Nutrition Agency, the Food and Safety Quality Authority and The Gambia Standards Bureau to formulate appropriate policies, legislation, and standards for food fortification. The second project under the NGO United Purpose (EUR 2 m) aimed to improve the nutritional and health status of the most vulnerable by increasing their knowledge and skills about diversifying their diet through the production and consumption of nutrient-rich crops in vitamin A (orange-fleshed sweet potato) and iron (pearl millet); good agricultural practices and nutrition education. The projects ended in August 2022 and contributed to maintain and strengthen the efforts of The Gambia government and the EU to reduce all forms of malnutrition and achieve the SDG2 targets.

## Progress on the two EU pledges for nutrition



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

The Government of The Gambia has committed in the new national nutrition policy to reduce the prevalence of stunting to 13% by 2025. The country has seen a strong decline (by over half) in the prevalence of stunting since the early 1990s. However, due to population growth, the number of children stunted has not shown a similar decline. The rate of decline in the number of children stunted accelerated from 2.3% in 2012 to 2.8% in 2022. If this is maintained, then approximately 63 850 children are expected to be stunted in 2025, higher than it has been recently, despite the decrease in prevalence of stunting.



## EU FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS TO NUTRITION BETWEEN 2014-2020 – A TOTAL OF EUR 27.1 MILLION<sup>3</sup>

The two principal EU commitments to nutrition during this period were the 'Post-Crisis Response to Food and Nutrition Insecurity in The Gambia' (EUR 11.5 million, see above) and EUR 20.6 million, of which 25% targeting nutrition, for 'Agriculture for Economic Growth and Food Security/Nutrition to Mitigate Migration'. The latter, implemented by FAO, contributes to sustainable growth in the agricultural sector, working with the National Agriculture Research Institute on establishing a seed secretariat – including the development of drought resistant climate smart seeds – and to reducing food insecurity and malnutrition. Furthermore, the project Building Resilience through Social Transfers (BRsT, EUR 3 million, 25% for nutrition), and two Food Fortification projects (described above) implemented by FAO (EUR 5.5 million) and United Purpose (EUR 2 million) were instrumental in reducing prevalence of all forms of malnutrition over the recent period.

## Planning for nutrition 2021-2027

Nutrition forms part of the 360-degree approach of the EU's Global Gateway. The Team Europe Initiative (TEI with Germany and France) in support of a 'Green Gambia' focuses on the environment and climate change. A third pillar on green agriculture, good food and fisheries is particularly relevant to nutrition and to the priorities of the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy at global level. This will help facilitate a shift from rice consumption to resilient cereals and more horticulture, with promotion of agro-ecological practices. The initiative will also build on existing support to develop sustainable management of the fisheries value chain and the food fortification projects introduced already. Areas with high malnutrition prevalence will be prioritised and include vulnerable smallholder farmers, and the economic empowerment of rural women will be strengthened. Investments in storage, markets, feeder roads and transportation in collaboration with the private sector will facilitate the growth of relevant nutrition-sensitive value chains. Research into the links between agriculture, social protection, and healthier food systems and evidence from 2020 suggests that such combined interventions have had a positive impact on reducing child malnutrition in The Gambia<sup>4</sup>.

The EU has in recent years developed a strong partnership with the National Nutrition Agency in its role to plan and coordinate the multi-sectoral response for nutrition and to monitor progress. There is a need to continue to invest in improving information systems and analysis that more effectively monitor nutrition indicators, especially dietary diversity of the most vulnerable individuals/groups. During the N4G summit 2021, The Gambia committed to increase the national nutrition budget from GMD 500 million in 2021 to GMD 800 million<sup>5</sup> by 2030 (c.f. the N4G Compact and [Annex](#) on commitments). In the strategic [National pathway document](#) for the UNFSS summit, The Gambia committed to increase resources to the agriculture and natural resources sectors (in line with the Malabo Declaration) with the intention to promote the right to food and end hunger and malnutrition in all its forms by 2030.

The EU continues to be a key financial partner to The Gambia in addressing nutrition and food insecurity through transformation of the food systems. As part of the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme for The Gambia (MIPS) 2021-2027, an allocation of EUR 20 million is earmarked for sustainable food systems. Additionally, a call for proposals for civil society organisations on organic fertilisers (EUR 2.81 million) aims at promoting agro-ecological agricultural practices and circular economy. A regional programme in the pipeline will promote clean cooking in West Africa.

1 - UNDESA World Population Prospects 2022, population estimate as per 1 January 2024.

2 - In the last 20 years the prevalence of iron deficiency in children has almost tripled, and in women doubled.

3 - Data excludes some other regional, global and policy/research/information commitments that could not be disaggregated by beneficiary country. The European Commission applied the methodology of the SUN Donor Network for nutrition resource tracking 2014-2020. To note EUR 7.5 M are part of a global commitment DCI-FOOD/2015/038-326.

4 - Summative evaluation of Building Resilience for Nutritional Security in The Gambia through Social Transfers 2016-2019 project (January 2020).

5 - Gambian Dalasi 800 million equals approximately EUR 11.2 million (November 2023).