



LIBERIA

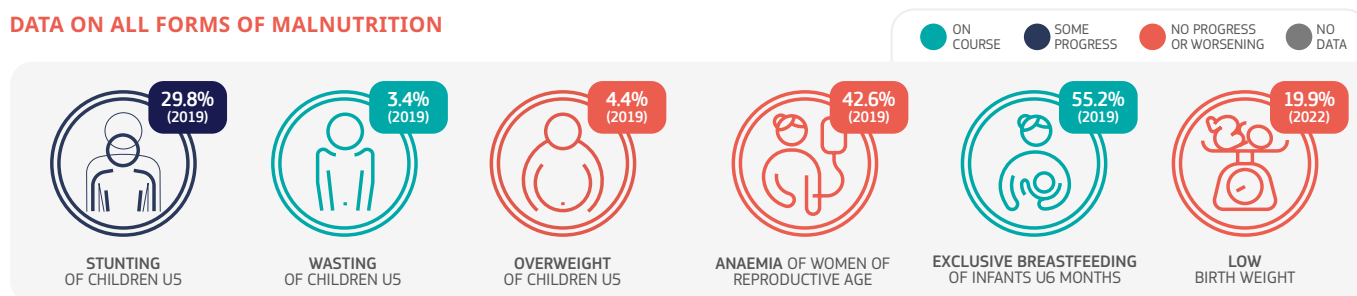
Nutrition situation in Liberia

AT A GLANCE

After more than two decades of civil unrest¹ and armed conflict² and a virulent Ebola outbreak, Liberia (population 5.2 million³) has high levels of poverty and poor basic services. Much of the food is imported and the rest is produced by traditional subsistence farming with little access to inputs, technology, credit or extension services. In 2022, almost 30% of people experienced inadequate food consumption⁴. However, an effective community health programme, launched in 2016, with nutrition services being mainstreamed in health services resulted in improved nutrition indicators⁵. The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the desorganisation of supply chains resulting from

Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine could set back this result. Nearly one in three children under five is stunted and more than two in three children as well as 40% of women of reproductive age suffer from anaemia⁶. Malnutrition is related to the high number of adolescent pregnancies and is also associated with wealth inequalities, poor water and sanitation and inadequate diets. Only 3% of children aged 6-23 months eat a minimum acceptable diet⁷. Furthermore, there is an increasing prevalence of overweight amongst women, indicative of a poor diet. Liberia has a Gender Inequality Index value of 0.656 and is ranked as 161st of 166 countries in the 2022 index⁸.

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

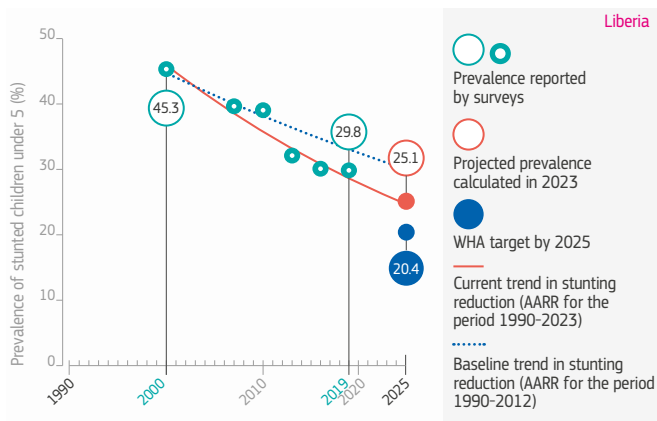
- A National Nutrition Policy (NNP) adopted in 2008 was designed to complement actions set out the same year in the National Health & Social Welfare Policy and the National Food Security & Nutrition Strategy (NFSNS, revised in 2015).
- The NNP for the health sector was revised in 2019, but still requires further alignment with the on-going National Health Plan revision and the NFSNS.
- Liberia joined the SUN movement in 2014. Since the end of 2022, the SUN secretariat is hosted by the Vice-President's Office which has assigned a SUN coordinator.
- The SUN secretariat is the bridge between the National Food & Nutrition Security multi-stakeholder/sector Steering Committee and Platform. The former operates at the political level (convened by the Vice-President), while the latter at the technical level (with the Nutrition Unit of the Ministry of Health in a coordinating role).
- The Liberia Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Costed Strategic Plan with a common results framework has been validated. Resource commitment to this plan will be subject to annual assessments.
- Since the peaceful transition of power early 2024, the new Government is developing its development plan, building on the President's ARREST agenda⁹, cognisant of the SDGs.
- Fortification is compulsory for oil,¹⁰ salt¹¹ and wheat flour¹².

Example of EU support

The EU Liberia Agriculture Programme (EULAP), with an envelope of EUR 30 million implemented over the period 2018-2024, aimed to reduce poverty, increase income and resilience in rural areas and improve food and nutrition security. The programme had four components: (i) increasing productivity of a sustainable cocoa value chain; (ii) strengthening nutrition-sensitive agriculture at the level of small-scale producers; (iii) enhancing the competitiveness of coastal and inland fisheries; and (iv) operationalising agricultural policies for small-scale farming. All components contributed to reduce hunger and malnutrition and to improve dietary diversity. In particular, the project 'Prosperous Agriculture Roadmap to Nutrition and Entrepreneurship Reinforcing Sustainability' supported nutrition-sensitive agriculture in coastal counties. The programme adopted an integrated and sustainable approach to increasing productivity working with farmer groups; it built resilient households among others through VSLAs¹³; strengthened value chains of six selected crops (cassava, plantain, pineapple, groundnut, cowpea and moringa); provided processing equipment and storage facilities; financed small businesses; improved nutrition awareness (teaching mother groups on breastfeeding, dietary diversity and improved WASH practices), and built the capacity of local partners.

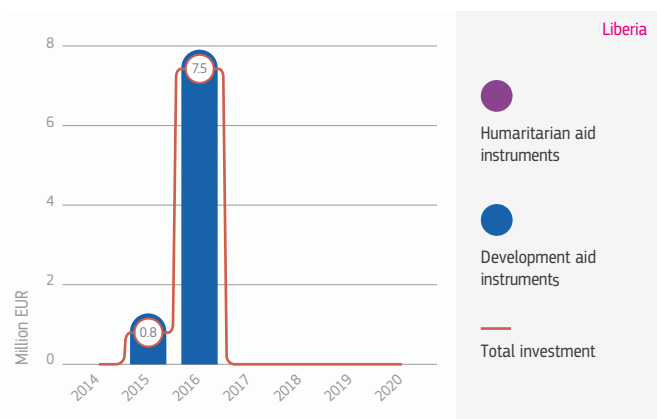


Progress on the two EU pledges for nutrition



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

Pending a new national development plan, Liberia was committed to reduce stunting to 22% by 2023 in its Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity & Development (PAPD) 2019-2023. Liberia has experienced a decline in the prevalence of stunting since 2000, but at the same time the number of children stunted is influenced by population growth. The rate of decline in the number of children stunted has accelerated from 1,56% in 2012 to 2,41% in 2022; if this is maintained, then almost 200 000 children are expected to be stunted in 2025, falling short of the World Health Assembly target (158 000) set in 2012.



EU FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS TO NUTRITION BETWEEN 2014 AND 2020 – A TOTAL OF EUR 8.3 MILLION

The principal EU commitments to nutrition funded under the 11th EDF were the Pro-Resilience Action in 2015¹⁴ and the EU Liberia Agriculture Programme (see Example of EU Support) in 2016¹⁵. The commitment in 2015 was part of a multi-country initiative targeting food and nutrition insecure communities including those affected by the Ebola outbreak. The commitment to EULAP aimed to reduce Liberia's dependency on imported foods and build on the agricultural and fisheries' potential to reduce food and nutrition insecurity. Both interventions have been implemented through NGO or international organisations. For EULAP, the Ministry of Agriculture provided the strategic direction, and the project has utilised the coordination structures of the Liberia Agricultural Transformation Agenda.

Under the 2021-2027 programming cycle, the EU signed a financing agreement with the Government around the programme 'From productivity to product, linking peers to peers'¹⁶, which supports the development of nutrition-sensitive value chains, through systemic interventions on seed systems and food safety, and provides technical assistance to government institutions with a mandate in food systems¹⁷.

Planning for nutrition 2021-2027

After years of internal conflict, the development challenges facing Liberia run deep and affect both the social and economic situation of the country. Furthermore, the natural reserves of Liberia, including its rainforests, have been depleted during decades of mismanagement and exploitation. In response to these challenges, ahead of the UN Food Systems Summit, Liberia developed a national *Dialogues' Pathways paper* for viable and subsidised food systems (06.10.2021).

Nutrition forms part of the 360-degree approach of the EU's Global Gateway. The EU Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) for Liberia includes three priority areas: (i) enhancing and preserving natural resources for sustainable growth; (ii) promoting decent jobs and inclusive growth; and (iii) improving financial and democratic governance.

The first strategic priority area places strong emphasis on food security and nutrition and recognises the inter-dependency between a healthy, sustainable natural environment and healthy diets, which is fundamental to the Liberia context. The emphasis on diverse agricultural production and agro-ecological practices is conducive to developing nutrition-sensitive food supply chains. Concretely, production of nutritious foods through agriculture, fish farming and fisheries will help meet demands for a healthier diet and respect the environment. Strengthening nutrition governance – multi-sectoral coordination to deliver on a broad plan of actions for nutrition set against a results framework – at both national and sub-national levels is also covered under this priority area.

Adopting a pro-poor agenda to combat malnutrition and mainstreaming nutrition education through a professional cadre of workers associated with agriculture, fisheries, forestry, food safety and the environment could be a strategic approach. The educational component is fully integrated in the second priority area, in support of job creation and economic growth opportunities for diversification of, and higher value addition in the rural economy. Such interventions provide opportunities to focus on small and medium enterprises active in nutrition-sensitive and -specific value addition, especially women-led, including improved storage, conservation, processing and marketing along the value chain, reducing dependency on imported foods and re-building the rural economy. This would link the first two priority areas very effectively.

The third priority area has no dedicated focus on nutrition, even though progress in priority areas one (nutrition governance and ecosystem- and nutrition-sensitive food production) and two (education, job creation and growing/emerging MSMEs in nutrition-sensitive and -specific value addition) will contribute to a peaceful and inclusive society.

1 - 1979-1989

2 - The 1st civil war took place between 1989 and 1996, the 2nd civil war between 1999 and 2003.

3 - UNDESA World Population Prospects 2022 population estimate 2022.

4 - Rapid Food Security Livelihoods Nutrition and Markets Assessment RFSLNMA 2022 – WFP.

5 - Liberia is identified as "exemplar" in global health because of its recent achievements in rolling out its community health worker programme and the positive impact this has had on health outcomes.

6 - Liberia Demographic & Health Survey 2019-2020

7 - Data from the Liberia Demographic and Health Survey 2019-2020

8 - Data from UNDEP – it is a composite metric of gender inequality using three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market.

9 - An acronym representing Agriculture, Roads, Rule of Law, Education, Sanitation, and Tourism

10 - Since 2013 – data from the [Global Fortification Data Exchange](#)

11 - Since 2010 – data from the [Global Fortification Data Exchange](#)

12 - Since 2017 – data from the [Global Fortification Data Exchange](#)

13 - Village Savings and Loan Associations

14 - With an envelope of EUR 3 m (of which EUR 0.8 m for nutrition)

15 - With an envelope of EUR 30 m (of which EUR 7.5 m for nutrition)

16 - With an envelope of EUR 22 m

17 - Data in this section excludes some regional, global and policy/research/information commitments that could not be disaggregated by beneficiary country. Data for 2022 are preliminary. The European Commission applied the methodology of the SUN Donor Network for nutrition resource tracking 2014-2020 and the OECD DAC's nutrition policy marker from 2021 onwards