



PAKISTAN

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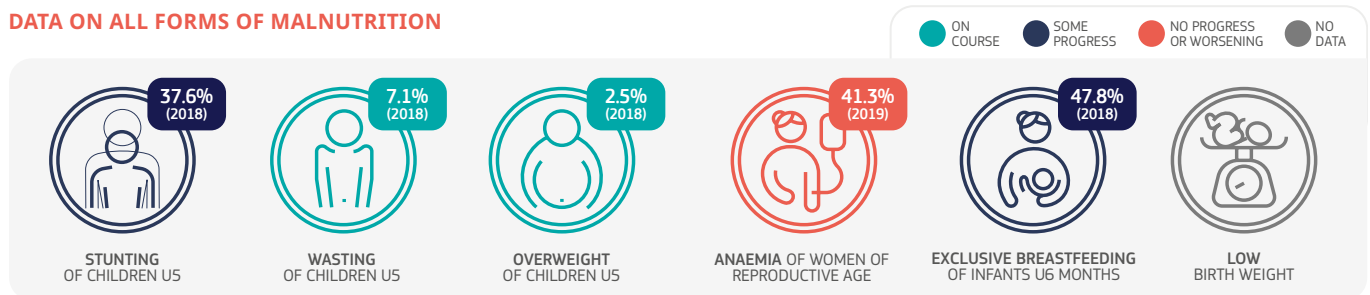
Nutrition situation in Pakistan

AT A GLANCE

The population of Pakistan currently stands at around 240 million¹, with over a third living in urban areas. More than one in three children under five is stunted in Pakistan, with significant inequalities based on province, location and wealth – in rural Sindh, for instance, almost two-thirds of children are stunted and only 6% of young children (6-23 months) are provided with a minimum adequate diet, while in Balochistan province around one in five children suffer from acute malnutrition. A recent study found that poor households in four provinces were unable

to afford nutritious food². In addition, over 40% of women of reproductive age are anaemic, whilst at the same time, a third of adult women are overweight or obese. The devastating impacts of the 2022 floods are likely to have further exacerbated this situation. Making progress with all forms of malnutrition in Pakistan requires a comprehensive multi-sectoral approach that places poverty reduction and the empowerment of women and girls at its core. Pakistan has a Gender Inequality Index value of 0.522 and is ranked at 135 of 166 countries (2022).

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

- Pakistan joined the Scaling Up Nutrition movement in 2013.
- In 2018, the Government of Pakistan made stunting reduction a national priority and the Pakistan multi-sectoral nutrition strategy 2018-2025 was launched. At federal level, nutrition-related initiatives include the 'Nashonuma programme', part of the Benazir Income Support Programme in several districts of Pakistan. A costed multi-sectoral national nutrition action plan 2023-2030 was recently drafted under guidance of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Poverty alleviation and Social Security to facilitate implementation of the nutrition strategy. Efforts are underway to harmonise these federal initiatives with provincial initiatives.
- Nutrition, health and education, have been declared as provincial priorities and provincial nutrition plans have been developed. In Sindh, for example, nutrition strategies for all key sectors are being developed with EU support. It includes the introduction of a comprehensive regulatory, policy/strategic and governance framework along with a dedicated management cadre to manage nutrition services on a sustainable basis.
- The Planning Commission launched its National Gender Policy Framework in March 2022 and declared the empowerment of women a top national priority. Its roll-out is essential to improving consistently low-ranking gender indices and subsequently, the food security and nutrition status of women and children in Pakistan.

Example of EU support

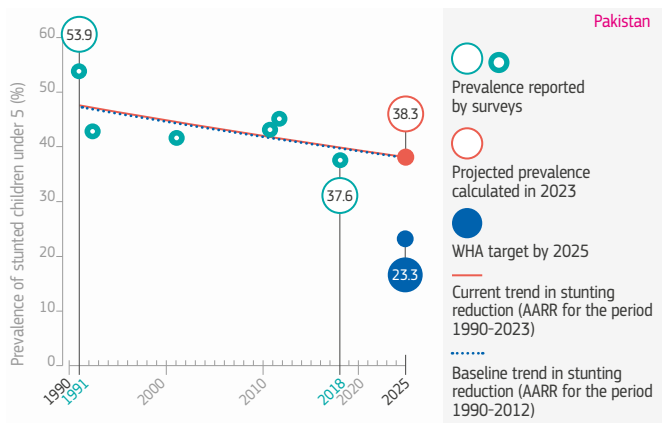
The EUR 60 million 2018-2023 Programme for Improved Nutrition in Sindh (PINS) provided direct assistance to the provincial government to accelerate reduction of malnutrition in 10 districts and strengthen capacity to implement the multi-sectoral nutrition policy. The approach identified opportunities to build on established community-driven development models supported by the EU since 2016 under the Sindh Union Council Community Economic Strengthening Support (SUCCESS) programme.

PINS provided technical assistance to provincial government through adaptive research, data collection and analysis, and nutrition strategy development and budgeting. The nutrition-specific component provided 220 000 children with treatment for severe acute malnutrition, 531 682 children with micronutrient supplementation and 132 874 with deworming. More than 451 000 pregnant and breastfeeding women received iron and folic acid supplementation and more than 500 000 received counselling on breastfeeding practices, complimentary diet, pregnancy care, balanced diet and hygiene.

A third component, led by the Rural Support Programme Network, addressed basic and underlying causes of malnutrition, supporting community efforts to enhance dietary diversity through small-scale farming and strengthening provision of safe drinking water and improved sanitation.

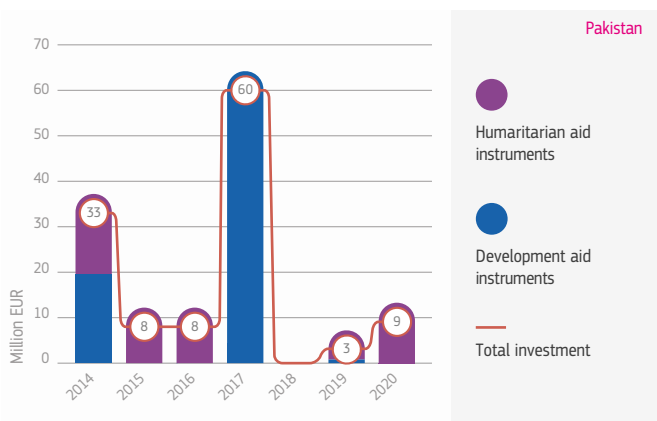


Progress on the two EU pledges for nutrition



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

As part of its multisectoral nutrition strategy 2018-2025, the Government of Pakistan has committed to reduce stunting to 33% in 2025. The country has seen a gradual decline in the prevalence of stunting since the 1990s, but only a nominal decline in the number of stunted children due to population growth. Recent projections anticipate that Pakistan will meet neither the Government's own target nor the World Health Assembly target by 2025. If the current rate of decline in the number of children stunted (0.64%) is maintained, then 11.67 million 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 AND 2020 – A TOTAL OF EUR 122 MILLION

Between 2014 and 2020, the EU committed EUR 41.4 million to nutrition through humanitarian and food assistance interventions, while EUR 80.2 million of development assistance was provided for nutrition interventions via two key projects in Sindh Province, which has the highest poverty and stunting rates in the country. SUCCESS had a total budget of EUR 77.5 million of which EUR 19.4 million was for nutrition and the total budget of PINS was EUR 60 million. SUCCESS aimed to reduce poverty in eight districts of Sindh, promoting women's empowerment, enabling higher and diversified sources of income for communities and households, and strengthening dialogue between community/village level organisations and district/local governments. Building on this model, PINS focuses on supporting the provincial government to accelerate reduction of child stunting.

Between 2021 and 2022, the EU committed EUR 3.6 million to nutrition through humanitarian and food assistance interventions³.

Planning for nutrition 2021-2027

In the past couple of years, the Government of Pakistan has committed to a set of nutrition targets including the reduction of stunting, wasting, and maternal and child anaemia, as well as to increasing breastfeeding rates (e.g. at the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit in 2021, as noted in the Compact Annex). To this end, the Government of Pakistan recently pledged to increase the production of diversified safe food, to establish sustainable and nutritionally balanced consumption patterns, to incentivise regenerative and organic agriculture, and to increase on-farm and off-farm incomes and demand for industrial products through advanced equitable livelihoods. The approach promotes building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stresses, and to develop climate resilient technologies, as well as the promotion and incorporation of a more conservative use of natural resources ([Strategic National Pathways Document](#) - July 2021). These commitments are reflected in the forthcoming Multi Sectoral National Nutrition Action Plan. However, despite provincial and federal recognition of the multi-sectoral nature of malnutrition, malnutrition remains a multi-generational challenge with long-term impacts for the population. As such, enhanced government coordination and accelerated implementation remain key to help ensure long term impacts of policies and approaches. Following the societal and economic impacts of the 2022 floods, these elements have come into sharper focus and urgency, particularly in areas where short to medium term food security has been compromised.

Nutrition forms part of the 360-degree approach of the EU's Global Gateway. The Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) for Pakistan is well-placed to contribute to the Government of Pakistan commitments, in particular the very high burden of malnutrition, by tackling root causes and enabling factors. The adoption of a 'Farm to Fork' approach, as envisaged under the European Green Deal and outlined under Priority Area 1 (Green inclusive growth) is of particular relevance as it provides a conceptual basis for fostering a sustainable Agri-Food Systems approach for improved access to safe and nutritious food and healthy diets. Enhanced nutrition outcomes can also be achieved through actions to improve access to safe drinking water (also under the same priority area), as well as through the MIP's approach to 'building resilience of communities to climate change with a focus on the areas prone to recurrent drought and floods'. In addition, under the Human Capital priority area, it is envisaged that strengthening workforce skills can also benefit nutritional outcomes, in particular where women are targeted. Furthermore, areas such as gender equality, women's empowerment through the generation of economic opportunities and governance, offer additional opportunities to address malnutrition in Pakistan.

1 - UNDESA [World Population Prospects 2022](#) population estimate per July 2023.

2 - [UNICEF \(2018\) Cost of Diet Analysis Report in Pakistan](#).

3 - 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.