

SIERRA LEONE

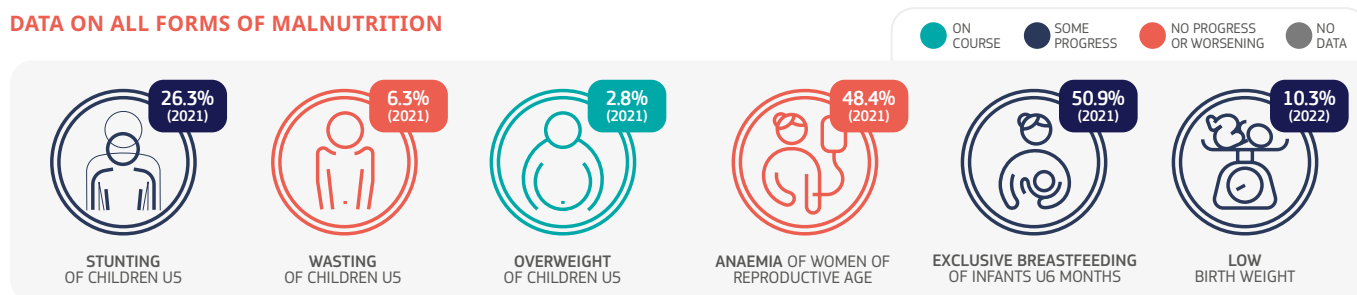
Nutrition situation in Sierra Leone

AT A GLANCE

Sierra Leone has a population of 8.8 million people¹ 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 58% 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 80% of households cannot afford a healthy diet². 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 are 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 0.613 and is ranked at 157 of 166 countries in 2022. The [Children's Climate Risk Index](#) (CCRI) ranks Sierra Leone as the 26th worst country for where children are at risk from the impacts of climate change.

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

- Sierra Leone joined the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement in January 2012; Irish Aid and USAID are joint SUN donor co-convenors.
- The Multi-Sector Strategic Plan to Reduce Malnutrition 2019-2025 outlines key nutrition-specific, nutrition-sensitive and governance components to reduce all forms of malnutrition.
- Sub-national multi-stakeholder platforms exist which also have multi-sector plans.
- The Government of Sierra Leone has integrated nutrition into its National Agricultural Transformation Plan (NAT 2025) 2019-2025.
- Agriculture has become a key priority for the new presidential mandate 2023-2027.
- The flagship initiative: 'Feed Salone' integrates nutrition as a key component.
- With the support of UNICEF, the Government is working on a national nutrition information strategy aiming at improving timely, quality and reliable nutrition-related data to support planning, management and decision-making.

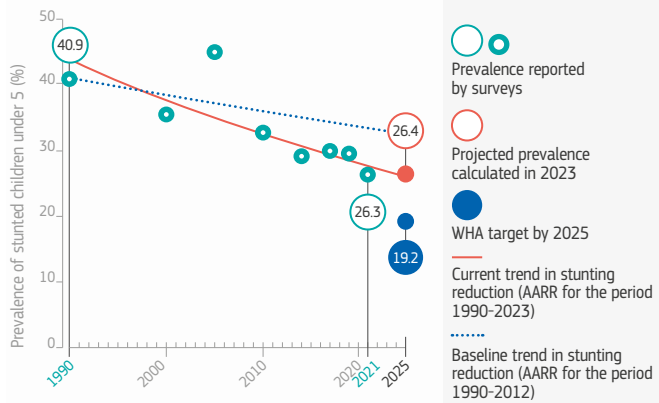
Example of EU support

The EU-funded '[Boosting Agriculture and Food Security](#)' (BAFS) project is an initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry which awards grants to private sector companies and NGOs to implement cash crop development, livestock and crop diversification. One recipient is the Bennimix project whose total eligible cost is EUR 0.5 million, funded 85% by the EU. With technical support from Helen Keller International, the Bennimix Food Company (BFC) diversified the formula (replacing rice with sorghum) and developed SierraMix, which was introduced into the 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 and gain access to a market ready for their crops. EU support has increased complementary food production and made it more affordable, while access remains an issue in rural areas where homemade alternatives are preferred for economic reasons.

The EUD is supporting an orange flesh sweet potato value chain to increase production and processing into biscuits, bread and other products. Some products will be used in the school feeding programme.

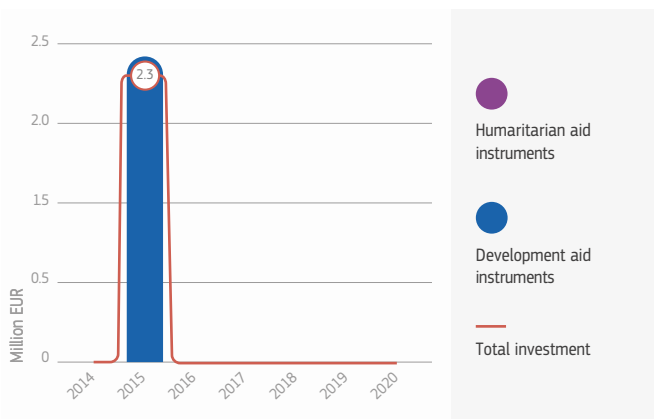


Progress on the two EU pledges for nutrition



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

In the Tokyo Compact on Global Nutrition for Growth, the Government of Sierra Leone committed to reduce the prevalence of stunted children under five years of age from 29.5% in 2019 to 25% by 2025. The decline in the prevalence of stunting has been inconsistent since 1990 and the number of children stunted has remained relatively stable due to population growth. The rate of reduction in the number of children stunted has however accelerated from 0.6% in 2012 to 1.4% in 2022. Even if this is maintained, 322 000 children are expected to be stunted in 2025 and prevalence will still be above the Government's 2025 target.



EU FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS TO NUTRITION BETWEEN 2014 AND 2020 – A TOTAL OF EUR 2.3 MILLION

The principal support in 2014-2020 was 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. This amounted to EUR 9 million, of which 25% was targeted to nutrition³.

Planning for nutrition 2021-2027

At Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit in 2021, and as listed in the Annex of N4G Compact, the Government of Sierra Leone committed to:

- create a budget line for nutrition specific programming for the Directorate of Food and Nutrition under the Ministry of Health and Sanitation;
- increase the rate of exclusive breastfeeding among infants below six months from 54% in 2019 to 70% in 2025;
- reduce the prevalence of stunted children under five years from 29.5% in 2019 to 25% in 2025.

Actions identified in Pathways to Attain Sustainable Access to Safe and Nutritious Food for all in Sierra Leone (version 20.09.2021) prepared ahead of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, include among others:

- climate-smart technologies and practices to reroute farming and rural livelihoods to new climate-resilient and low-emission trajectories;
- food environments that increase the accessibility and affordability of healthy foods;
- nutrition education on food production, processing, marketing and consumption;
- restructuring and strengthening the capacity of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) secretariat in the Presidency.

Nutrition forms part of the 360-degree approach of the EU's Global Gateway. The MIP for Sierra Leone is well positioned to support the above commitments under:

- Priority area 1 (Green economy); which aims to contribute to sustainable, employment-orientated agriculture and fisheries food systems for health and nutrition through more economic, social and environmentally sustainable food value chains.
- Priority area 2 (Human development) which aims to strengthen the capability and sustainability of the social protection system (to improve the resilience of vulnerable groups to shocks and stresses) which would enable the integration of nutrition into quality early childhood, primary and secondary education curricula.

The Team Europe Initiative⁴ on 'Green Pact for Sierra Leone' complements the MIP by adopting a food systems approach to enhance food security, nutrition and health.

In this context, the EUD will join efforts in supporting the national school feeding. Furthermore, the EUD is currently designing support for three climate smart value chains that are important contributors to the economy, major sources of livelihoods and key for food and nutrition security: cassava, palm oil and complementary food. The Action will support the development of viable business models in the three value chains concerned; fostering support to multi-actor partnerships and ensuring inclusive participation of smallholder farmers in commercial development using out-grower approaches.

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

2 - WFP, Food Security Monitoring System Report, Feb 2023

3 - Data in this section excludes some 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.

4 - With Germany and Ireland