



# UNN in Sierra Leone spearheads political dialogue on nutrition, resulting in concrete action



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The UNN took great advocacy strides in the lead up to the country’s Presidential and Parliamentary elections, held in March 2018. To this end, three UNN tools were deployed in Sierra Leone, starting with the Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Overview. This overview reported encouraging trends in the reduction of stunting and wasting levels between 2010 and 2017 (34 to 31 percent and 7 to 5 percent respectively) at the national level. Delving deeper, it found that the situation varied from district to district, with stunting increases reported for a number of them.

**FIGURE 12**

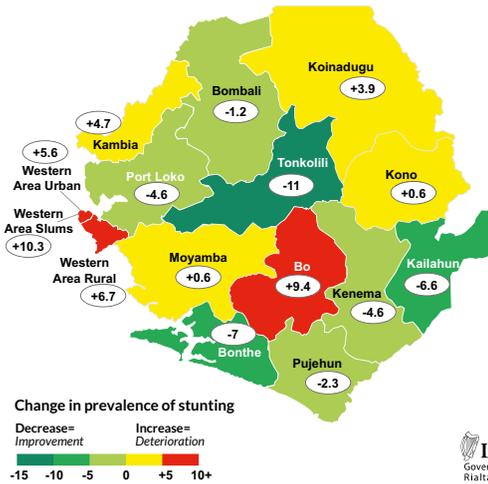
Excerpt from the Multi-sectoral Nutrition Overview in Sierra Leone (2017–18) conducted through UNN-REACH

**Eight districts recorded an increase in chronic malnutrition between 2010 and 2017, while seven recorded a decrease**




The change in chronic malnutrition prevalence (in % points) between 2010 and 2017

- Four districts, Bo and the Western Area districts recorded increases (between 5 –10 % points) in the overall prevalence of chronic malnutrition between 2010 and 2017, indicating a deterioration of the situation
- Tonkolili, Kailahun and Bonthe districts showed a slight decrease (5 % points) in overall prevalence of chronic malnutrition between 2010 and 2017, illustrating that the situation had improved



SMART 2010, SMART 2017



The same UNN tool also highlighted that while moderate stunting and wasting had decreased from 2010 to 2017, levels of severe forms had remained virtually the same. Its in-depth analysis across relevant nutrition indicators from breastfeeding rates to food insecurity, adolescent pregnancy and women's empowerment highlighted geographical areas where additional focus was required.

The second exercise undertaken – a comprehensive mapping exercise – looked at nutrition-specific and sensitive programming supported by all relevant stakeholders, from government to the United Nations, civil society and donors. The mapping is generating valuable coverage data that is critical to identifying gaps, overlaps and potential areas where efficiencies can be enhanced to maximize impact. These findings were complemented by a Policy and Plan Overview, which assessed nutrition-specific and sensitive policy commitments in light of the current needs and existing programmes. The discrepancy, once clearly identified, was taken a step further through advocacy measures, led by UNN in concert with the donor community. Seizing windows of opportunity such as the March elections and national planning processes, Parliamentarians and running candidates were strategically targeted to ensure that nutrition would be placed high on the political agenda of the new Government.

A critical ingredient of success was the coming together of multiple stakeholders, including donors and UN senior leadership, complemented by the hands-on support of the UNN-REACH Facilitator, to collectively advocate for political commitments. A breakfast meeting was held with members of parliament to discuss the country's nutrition needs, culminating in a declaration by parliamentarians during a televised dialogue.

**FIGURE 13**

Excerpt from the Policy and Plan Overview in Sierra Leone (2017–18) conducted through UNN-REACH

Highlighting how nutrition is reflected in related national policies/strategies fosters policy coherence and multi-sectoral nutrition planning



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Document	Next revision	Responsible institution	Nutrition	Remarks
  <p>National Health Promotion Strategy of Sierra Leone</p>	2021	Ministry of Health and Sanitation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9/33 CNAs, 9/24 relevant CNAs</li> <li><i>Strengths of doc:</i> Malnutrition is recognized as a national concern.</li> <li>Recent detailed multi-sectoral strategy.</li> <li><i>Weakness of doc:</i> Remains high-level. Gaps to fill include are nutrition education, nutrition related disease prevention, IYCF, and supplementation sanitation related CNAs.</li> </ul>
  <p>National Sustainable Agriculture Development Plan</p>	2030	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9/33 CNAs, 9/22 relevant CNAs</li> <li><i>Strengths of doc:</i> Detailed implementation for agricultural-sector activities.</li> <li><i>Weakness of doc:</i> Malnutrition is not recognized as a national concern. Mentions few agricultural specific CNAs, and omits mention of fortification, or bio fortification, social protection, emergency preparedness and education on food consumption &amp; health practices.</li> </ul>
  <p>Education Sector Capacity Development Strategy</p>	2016	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2/33 CNAs, 2/6 relevant CNAs</li> <li><i>Strengths of doc:</i> Specific to strengthen sector.</li> <li><i>Weakness of doc:</i> Malnutrition is not recognized as a national concern.</li> <li>No relevant information to nutrition, only to gender equality and girls education.</li> <li>Document is weak on gender inclusion.</li> </ul>
  <p>Sierra Leone National Energy Strategic Plan</p>	TBD	Ministry of Energy and Water Resources		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2/33 CNAs, 2/5 relevant CNAs</li> <li><i>Strengths of doc:</i> Energy strategy detailed across sub-sectors, and women empowerment.</li> <li><i>Weakness of doc:</i> Malnutrition is not recognized as a national concern, and there are no nutrition indicators in the document. It does not include any WASH-related activities.</li> <li>Strategy is from 2006 and doesn't mention when the next revision is.</li> </ul>
  <p>Social Protection Strategy and Implementation Plan</p>	2018	National Commission for Social Action, Social Protection Secretariat		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13/33 CNAs, 13/31 relevant CNAs</li> <li><i>Strengths of doc:</i> Malnutrition is recognized as a national concern.</li> <li>Shows the prevalence rates and the absolute numbers of population at risk.</li> <li>A number of nutrition sensitive actions are included in different outcomes areas.</li> <li><i>Weakness of doc:</i> No nutrition related indicators at beneficiary level mentioned.</li> </ul>

Extent to which nutrition is addressed:

Not at all  
  Adequate  
  Partial  
  Minimal  
  Significant

**Overall, nutrition could be further integrated into 7 out of 10 strategies from different sectors when they are updated next**



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This domino effect prompted the enactment of a Food and Feed Safety Bill later that day. Just two weeks after, fourteen registered political parties included food and nutrition security as well as teenage pregnancy and WASH in their respective manifestos. These measures kept nutrition on the political agenda irrespective of the election outcomes. As a result, the new Government of Sierra Leone is actively engaged in nutrition, including high-ranking officials such as the Vice President.