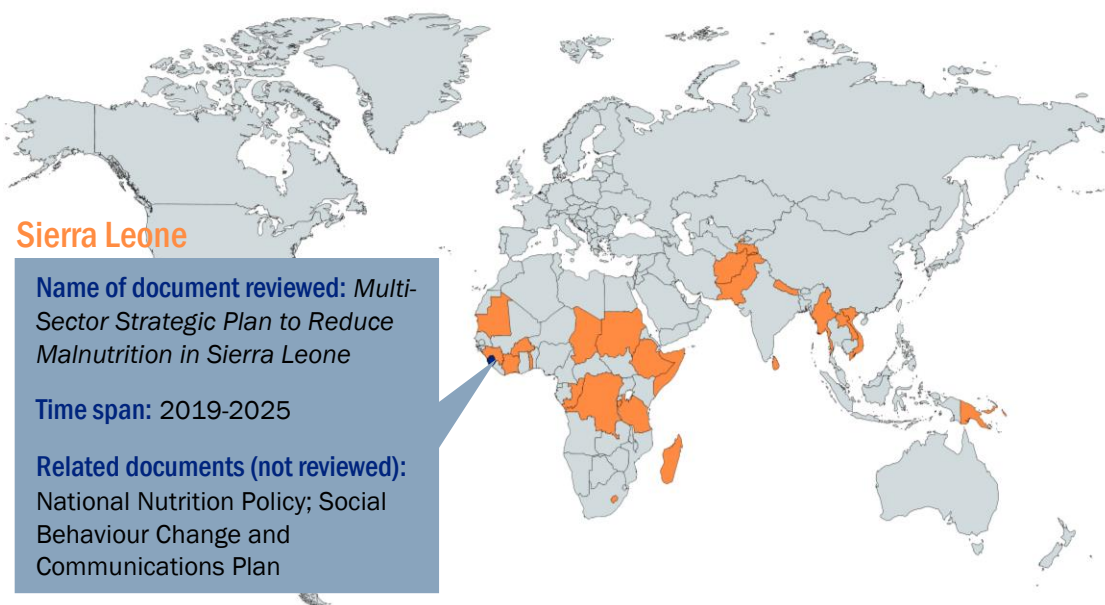


National Nutrition Plan Review: **Sierra Leone**

In December 2016, the United Nations Network for the SUN Movement and the SUN Movement Secretariat (SMS), with the support of an expert group, developed and launched the [Checklist on the Criteria and Characteristics of “Good” National Nutrition Plans](#) (“SUN Checklist”). In 2018 and 2020, at the request of the SMS, the Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus (MQSUN+) project undertook a systematic review of 26 countries’ multisectoral national nutrition plans, according to the criteria in the SUN Checklist. This brief summarises select strengths and suggested areas for improvement with recommendations for Sierra Leone, organised by each of the five areas in the SUN Checklist: (1) situational analysis and policy and programming review; (2) stakeholder engagement and high-level political commitment processes; (3) costs and budgetary framework; (4) implementation and managing arrangements; and (5) monitoring, evaluation, operational research and review. Where relevant, specific suggestions for increasing gender sensitivity for the plan are also included (see MQSUN+’s [gender brief](#) for more information).



Overview

The *Multi-Sector Strategic Plan to Reduce Malnutrition in Sierra Leone* outlines the government of Sierra Leone’s plan for a coordinated response to the multifaceted causes of malnutrition in the country through a coordinated multisectoral approach. The plan outlines key nutrition-specific, nutrition-sensitive and governance components related to improving the health, food security and nutritional status of the populations and ultimately seeks to reduce all forms of malnutrition, including stunting amongst young children, and achieve related nutrition objectives as specified in the Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy.

Key strengths

The plan is intended to serve as a framework to prioritise, scale up and intensify the implementation of existing actions, include minimal new actions based on key learnings and define roles and responsibilities across sectors and actors. Below are a few key strengths that emerged from the review:

- Clearly describes alignment with other country plans and broader regional and international commitments.
- Includes most of the World Health Assembly nutrition indicators and diet-related, non-communicable disease targets in the key expected results.
- Provides an in-depth risk analysis and mitigation framework, including potential consequences and measures for mitigation and delineation of associated roles and responsibilities.
- Describes plans for district-level, multi-stakeholder joint annual reviews and quarterly reporting.

Key recommendations

Area 1: Situational analysis and policy and programming review

- Whilst the situational analysis does mention disparities in malnutrition along geographic and socioeconomic lines, it does not provide any specific examples or disaggregated indicators. In addition, the policy and situational analysis have not been updated since the last iteration of the plan.
 - **Recommendation:** Where available, collect disaggregated indicators on and details regarding nutrition outcomes and key risk factors and underlying causes in the situational analysis to underline the focus areas for the subsequent planned actions. To ensure the pertinence of the identified actions to the current needs and to the policies / strategies of the stakeholders involved, it is recommended that the policy and situational analyses are updated.
- Although the plan proposes some actions to address gender-related determinants of nutrition, it does not explicitly describe how the gender dimensions of nutrition would be addressed across plan activities.
 - **Recommendation:** Consider a mechanism or responsible entity to support addressing equitable participation of women, men, boys and girls across activities (as relevant) as well as the consideration and mitigation of unintended consequences or potential inequities that may arise from existing gender norms. Drawing from other countries' plans, this could potentially be addressed through including a gender focal point in the plan's multisectoral coordination groups or assign the Ministry of Women/Gender to support the incorporation of gender consideration across all nutrition-sensitive activities.
- Some issues raised in the situational analysis are not directly addressed by the plan's objectives and actions (for instance, the need for additional anaemia research and to improve governance structures). As well, several weaknesses are identified in the review of the previous plan, but many of these remain unaddressed in the new version.

→ **Recommendation:** Ensure the objectives and planned actions respond to all key issues identified in the situational and policy analyses and further assess and document how lessons learned from the evaluation of the previous plan can be addressed in the current timeframe.

Area 2: Stakeholders' engagement and high-level political commitment process

- There is a brief description of the methods by which the plan was developed, including the stakeholder consultation process, however, the type and range of stakeholders involved are not mentioned.

→ **Recommendation:** Continue to involve a wide range of stakeholders from across sectors, levels of government and both state and non-state actors in continued and future planning efforts, including in the suggested assessment to update the policy and situational analyses. Additionally, ensure that gender-related groups (e.g. civil society, government, or United Nations groups specialising in gender issues) are included. In future iterations of the plan, add further documentation on which stakeholders were involved; this ensures transparency on the commitment of different sectors and stakeholders to the targets and holds them accountable for implementing actions to achieve the plan's goals.

- Communications and advocacy actions are mentioned within the list of activities, however, there is no clear strategy or plan on how this will be executed.

→ **Recommendation:** Consider developing a plan for disseminating and advocating for the plan to ensure adequate support and ownership from all relevant stakeholders, including at national and subnational levels as well as civil society and communities.

Area 3: Costs and budgetary framework

- Whilst the plan proposes tracking financial resources for nutrition interventions, it does not explicitly state whether it will include off-budget government funding.

→ **Recommendation:** Ensure that off-budget contributions to government programmes are included in the financial tracking system, along with tracking of allocations to individual sector nutrition budget lines and expenditures over time.

Area 4: Implementation and management arrangements

- While the plan briefly outlines roles and responsibilities of various state and non-state actors, it does not indicate responsible parties for individual actions and does not describe a mechanism through which stakeholders can be held mutually accountable for fulfilling their roles and responsibilities under the plan or for annual operational planning.

→ **Recommendation:** Consider the development of a corresponding operational framework to further detail actions on a sector-by-sector basis with clear timeframes and define a mutual accountability mechanism between stakeholder groups. The structures, roles and responsibilities for the governance of the plan at the national and subnational levels should be further clarified. If needed, a mapping of stakeholders and ongoing actions could be undertaken to inform this.

- Whilst the plan notes low capacity at all levels, capacity-strengthening needs are not identified in detail, and there is no proposed action included for a more complete capacity assessment to take place.

→ **Recommendation:** Consider undertaking a capacity assessment of technical, management and coordination skills needed to undertake the plan's actions, including identification of capacity

gaps, and use the findings of the assessment to formulate an in-depth capacity development plan. To ensure the participation of men, women, girls and boys, also consider the unique needs of all groups to encourage active participation when designing capacity development activities.

Area 5: Monitoring, evaluation (M&E), operational research and review

- Whilst the plan includes an M&E framework, it does not describe how data for monitoring and evaluation processes will be managed, include prospective data sources and collection methods, existing gaps, and planned information flows, or describe how indicators will be drawn from or be integrated into sectoral information and surveillance systems.
 - **Recommendation:** Further elaborate how M&E data will be collected, how existing gaps identified, how information will flow from community to national level and how indicators will be integrated into sectoral information systems and used for learning. These elements could be further considered and elaborated in the development of a corresponding M&E plan.
- The plan does not provide details on operational research priorities or related activities.
 - **Recommendation:** Identify relevant stakeholders to work with the National Nutrition Council to develop a prioritised operational research programme informed by monitoring and evaluation and review processes of the plan.

Moving forward

These recommendations can be considered and applied to the ongoing implementation process for Sierra Leone's national nutrition plan, as relevant and feasible, or can be considered in the development of the next iteration of the plan where it is not feasible to prioritise at this time. Immediate priorities of focus could be to conduct an updated situational and policy analysis to inform ongoing prioritisation and planning; if feasible, further assess and document how lessons learned from the evaluation of the previous plan can be addressed in the current timeframe; and further define governance mechanisms and specific roles and responsible agencies per action. For additional information on how closely this plan aligns with the SUN Checklist, please contact SMS to request a full copy of the plan review.

For more practical guidance on multisectoral nutrition planning, see the resources included in the [SUN Checklist](#) and refer to the [forthcoming multisectoral nutrition planning toolkit from MQSUN+](#)

MQSUN+ belongs to the Technical Assistance for Nutrition (TAN) programme with partners Nutrition International and the Emergency Nutrition Network to strengthen the capacity of the 60 countries within the SUN Movement to deliver policies and programmes which reduce malnutrition.

For more information about MQSUN+

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Acknowledgements

This brief was compiled by PATH under MQSUN+. Contributors included Rebecca Brown, Chris Coffey, Amanda Coile, Carrie Hemminger and Jolene Wun.

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