



Briefing paper

**2013-2016: The trends of Government
funding for nutrition in Sierra Leone**

The Government's commitment for an improved nutritional status of children in Sierra Leone

Over the years the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) has demonstrated its will to improve nutrition into joining several global initiatives, such as the United Nations (UN) Zero Hunger Challenge¹ or Sustainable Development Goals². In 2012, the country joined the Scaling Up Nutrition movement (SUN)³, gathering stakeholders from government, civil society, UN agencies, donors, the academic and private sectors towards the same aim of improving children's nutritional status in Sierra Leone.

In 2013, at the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit in London⁴, leaders from governments, international organisations, private sector and the civil society gathered to place nutrition at the centre of the global development agenda. 94 stakeholders willing to urgently scale up nutrition endorsed the Global Nutrition for Growth Compact⁵ (N4G Compact) and respectively committed to their own specific targets, with the overall objective to prevent 20 million children from being stunted and to save 1.7 million lives by 2020.

As a signatory to the N4G Compact, the GoSL recognised the urgent necessity to reduce the prevalence of stunting and wasting while increasing exclusive breastfeeding. They committed, as a mean to reach that objective, to ***“increase [their] financial allocation to nutrition and food security and create a specific budget line for nutrition in budgets for the Ministries of Health and Sanitation, Agriculture and other relevant Ministries”***⁶.

2013-2016: what progress on government funding for nutrition?

The impact of the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak

In May 2014, a year after the GoSL committed to scale up nutrition at the N4G Summit, Sierra Leone was hit by the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak. Analysing progress on funding for nutrition since 2013 thus has to be made in the light of this health emergency and the considerable means required to address it. The GoSL had to put substantial efforts in the EVD emergency response, which inevitably resulted in a prioritisation of funding for EVD related activities, at the detriment of other sectors such as nutrition.

Budget lines for nutrition: a successful and significant effort which needs strengthening

Nutrition-specific & nutrition-sensitive interventions

Nutrition-specific interventions target the immediate causes of undernutrition as a primary objective – such as inadequate dietary intake and care practices. Ex.: breastfeeding promotion, salt iodisation, vitamin A supplementation.

Nutrition-sensitive interventions contribute to improving nutrition by addressing some of underlying causes⁷ – e.g. food insecurity, poor access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene – through other sectors' programmes that incorporate nutrition goals. Ex.: agriculture and food security, water, sanitation and hygiene, schooling, maternal mental health.

¹ <http://www.un.org/en/zerohunger/pdfs/ZHC%20brochure%20-%20final.pdf>

² <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

³ <http://scalingupnutrition.org/>

⁴ <http://scalingupnutrition.org/news/an-historic-moment-for-nutrition-nutrition-for-growth-summit-in-london#.VzXNGPkr12w>

⁵ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/248760/Endorserscompact_update7_10_2013.pdf

⁶ Global Nutrition for Growth Compact, Nutrition for Growth Commitments: Executive Summary, 2013

⁷ As described in UNICEF conceptual framework of malnutrition, 1991.

Before the EVD outbreak, the GoSL gathered line ministries⁸ through the SUN movement to initiate a discussion on budget lines for nutrition. Though the EVD outbreak interrupted the process, several achievements can be highlighted.

In 2014, the GoSL successfully created a budget line for nutrition within the budget of the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS) entitled “Food and Nutrition” and dedicated to nutrition-specific activities implemented by the Directorate of Food and Nutrition (DFN). The budget line includes four categories of activities: “promoting Infant and Young Child Feeding and food hygiene”, “promoting micronutrient fortification and food supplementation”, “advocacy for scaling up nutrition and coordination”, and “improving identification, monitoring and growth systems”⁹.

The creation of this budget line was followed by an improvement in terms of expenditure recording, and thus accountability, for those activities. From 2014, each DFN’s activity was recorded against one of the four categories mentioned above, instead of being all recorded against the same code¹⁰. Given that it enables the identification of expenditure on each DFN’s category of activity – rather than only the overall amount spent by the DFN – **this is a significant step towards an improved accountability on government expenditure for nutrition in Sierra Leone.**

A budget line for nutrition was also established in 2014 within the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food security (MAFFS) and entitled “Support mainstreaming nutrition activities into the dissemination of technology for crops-based recipes”. However, activities meant to be funded by this line were not clearly determined and as a consequence no activity was recorded against it so far¹¹. For this budget line to be effective, it is now necessary to identify activities, associate each of them with an activity code and use these codes to record the activities in the budget.

Additional efforts are now needed to strengthen accountability for government expenditure on nutrition through an improved recording of all nutrition-related activities. The GoSL developed and adopted the Food and Nutrition Security Implementation Plan (FNSIP) for years 2013 to 2017 along with a costed plan that estimates expenses for the 5 years at \$117.2million with an \$81million funding gap¹². Accountability for the FNSIP would be significantly improved if activities planned in it were associated with activity codes that Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) could use to record them. This would considerably facilitate the FNSIP’s monitoring, since activities would be reflected in the GoSL annual budget.

While nutrition-specific activities are becoming a higher priority for government...

Compared to the very low level of funding for nutrition-specific activities in 2012, the GoSL made considerable efforts towards that aim from 2013¹³. Expenditure on nutrition-specific activities associated with the MoHS budget line¹⁴ followed a significant increase in 2013, a year after the

⁸ Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), Ministry of Social welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs (MoSWGCA).

⁹ Budget book (hard copy accessed in the Budget Bureau within Ministry of Finance and Economic Development).

¹⁰ Oxford Policy Management, *Tracking government expenditure on nutrition in Sierra Leone, Piloting the SUN three step approach*, Alex Jones, May 2015.

¹¹ Ibid.

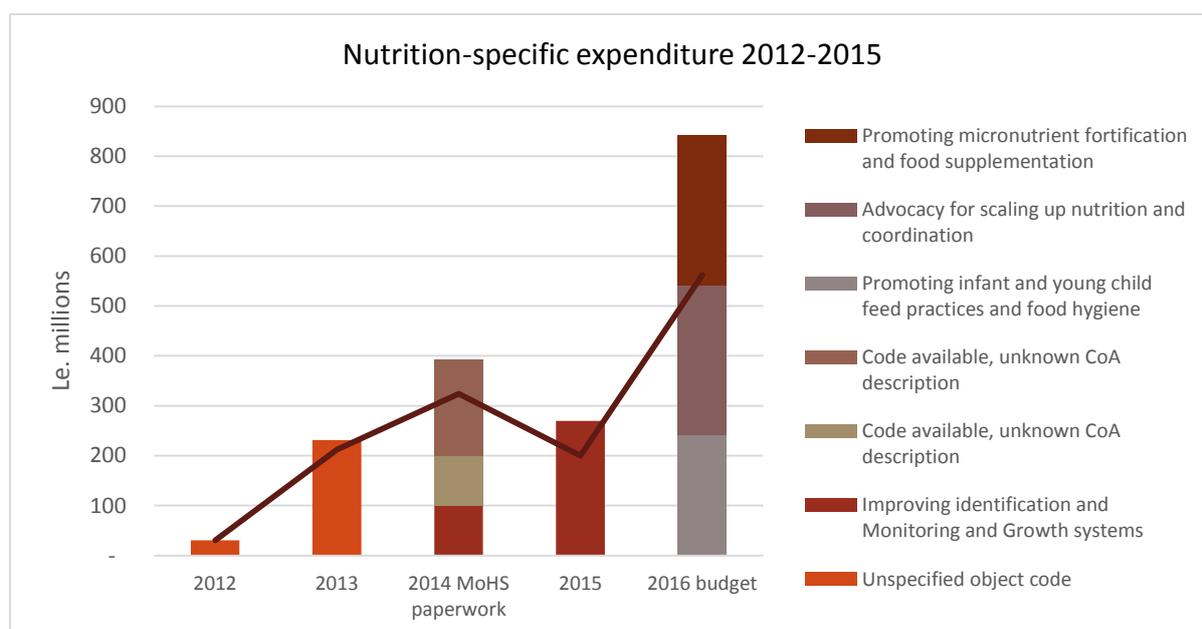
¹² Scaling Up Nutrition Sierra Leone, “Sierra Leone Call for commitments for nutrition”, June 2013.

¹³ *Tracking government expenditure on nutrition in Sierra Leone, Piloting the SUN three step approach*, op. cit.

¹⁴ See paragraph above.

country joined the SUN movement. While this increase from USD7,000 in 2012 to 44,000 in 2015¹⁵ reflects the GoSL's will to make nutrition-specific activities a higher priority, **it is important to note that it seems high because of the low baseline of 2012, when government funding for these interventions was very limited.**

The 2016 budget plans to triple funding for nutrition-specific activities compared to 2015¹⁶, which is an encouraging improvement. **However in May 2016 no funds have been released yet for the year¹⁷.** The GoSL must urgently address the late disbursement issue to enable an effective implementation of planned nutrition-specific activities and renew its efforts towards increasing funding for these interventions.



Source: Tracking government expenditure on nutrition in Sierra Leone, Piloting the SUN three step approach

...priority for nutrition-sensitive activities remains unchanged

Nutrition-sensitive activities, that address underlying causes of undernutrition, are mainly implemented through the MoHS, the MAFFS, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), the Ministry of Social welfare, Gender and Children's affairs (MoSWGCA) and the Ministry of Water resources (MoWR). Line ministries should develop a precise set of nutrition activities they have to implement based on the FNSIP and **funding for nutrition should be accordingly allocated by the Ministry of Finance and Economic development (MoFED) to these ministries.**

While from 2013 to 2015 expenditure on nutrition have increased within MoEST (from 41% to 45%) and MoSWGCA (from 51% to 67%), it remained constant in MAFFS (around 75%) and decreased within MoHS (from 88% to 36%)¹⁸. However, those figures must be treated with caution.

¹⁵ Tracking government expenditure on nutrition in Sierra Leone, Piloting the SUN three step approach, op. cit.

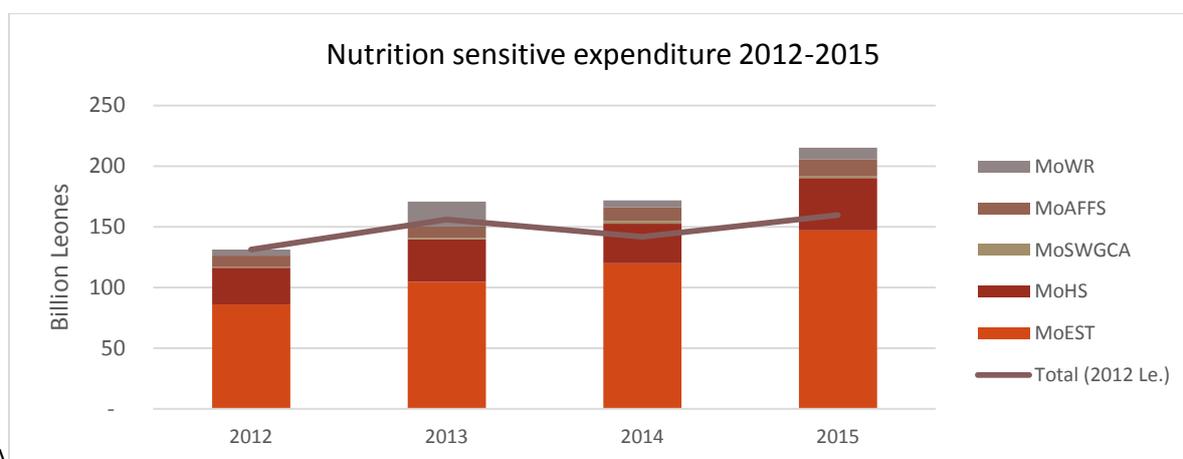
¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Those figures do not include payroll expenditure. Tracking government expenditure on nutrition in Sierra Leone, Piloting the SUN three step approach, op. cit. In 2015 the MoHS received huge funds from government under the budget line "Management Services Programmes". The specific activities for this line were not quantified in this study. However they must have served the MoHS numerous

The scope of nutrition-sensitive activities is not as clear as the nutrition-specific scope. As a result, tracking expenditure on those activities is a complex task whose findings are less precise than for nutrition-specific activities and that will need improvement over the years through new budget analyses.

Overall, nutrition-sensitive interventions did not benefit from the scale up observed for nutrition-specific activities during the last three years. Though GoSL funding for nutrition-sensitive activities grew by 21% from 2012 to 2015¹⁹, it remains close to 5% of total government expenditure over the years²⁰. This shows that despite the efforts to fund these activities, the priority given has not changed, as it does not represent a higher proportion of what the GoSL chooses to finance each year.



Source: Tracking government expenditure on nutrition in Sierra Leone, Piloting the SUN three step approach

The FNSIP was associated with a \$117.2 million costed plan that identified an \$81 million funding gap²¹. **In 2013, the government funded 37% of the estimated costs for the year. This percentage goes down to 28% in 2014 and up to 32% in 2015²².** Though the FNSIP is not meant to be entirely funded by the government, additional efforts are needed to ensure that GoSL funds a more significant part of the activities.

management activities including for both nutrition sensitive and specific. In view of this, when compared to 2014, the total expenditure of the MoHS in 2015 reflects a lower proportion of funds spent for both nutrition sensitive and specific.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ 4% in 2012, 5% in 2013, 4% in 2014 and 5% in 2015. Source: Tracking government expenditure on nutrition in Sierra Leone, Piloting the SUN three step approach, op. cit.

²¹ Scaling Up Nutrition Sierra Leone, "Sierra Leone Call for commitments for nutrition", June 2013

²² Given that the FNSIP activities are not automatically associated with an activity code in the budget, these figures are only an estimation based on the identification, in the budget, of activities that seem relevant to the FNSIP. Source: Tracking government expenditure on nutrition in Sierra Leone, Piloting the SUN three step approach, op. cit.

²² Food and Nutrition Security Implementation Plan 2013-2017

Recommendations

While we acknowledge the GoSL's achievements on the N4G financial commitments despite the challenge faced with the EVD outbreak, we recommend that renewed efforts be made to reach the defined objectives. Especially, we recommend that:

1. **The FNSIP and its costed plan be monitored and evaluated on an annual basis** to secure funding and progressively address the FNSIP funding gap;
2. **The GoSL ensure that line ministries develop a set of nutrition activities based on the FNSIP and are provided with adequate funding for nutrition**, as recommended by the Decade of Action on Nutrition²³ adopted by the 69th World Health Assembly, accordingly to their responsibility in FNSIP's implementation, and thus contribute more significantly to its funding;
3. **Activity codes are created for all FNSIP's activities**, to improve recording in the budget and thus strengthen accountability for government expenditure for nutrition-related activities and monitoring of the FNSIP;
4. **MDAs are trained on the use of these new activity codes**, use them to record the activities implemented thus participating to the improvement of nutrition expenditure recording, monitoring and accountability;
5. **Clarification is made on the set of activities from the FNSIP that the MAFFS budget line is meant to be associated with**;
6. **Budget transparency on nutrition is improved by making the information on nutrition funding public**, through the inclusion of nutrition related budget lines in the annual budget profiles released on the MoFED's website;
7. **Action be taken by the GoSL to ensure timely disbursements** to ministries.

For an increased efficiency of the efforts on financial commitments, a synergy must be created between all government stakeholders to develop a strong coordination on nutrition. We thus recommend that the GoSL:

8. **Gather line ministries to create awareness among stakeholders on the multifaceted aspect of malnutrition and on the need to address it through a cross-sectoral approach** requesting the involvement and cooperation of all line ministries;
9. **Consider means of mainstreaming nutrition within line ministries, such as the development of nutrition-sensitive policies** that include nutrition activities and indicators;
10. **Restart the discussions on the creation of budget lines for nutrition** within the budgets of MoEST and MoSWGCA and conduct an exercise to identify nutrition-sensitive interventions within these two ministries' policies to justify the creation of budget lines;
11. **Give specific attention to mainstreaming nutrition within the MoWR**, to strengthen the understanding of the link between malnutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene and engage in discussions on how MoWR contributes to nutrition. A nutrition-sensitive policy for the MoWR has to be developed accordingly, and the next FNSIP should involve the MoWR. Finally, the creation of a budget line dedicated to the implementation of nutrition activities identified should be considered.

²³ http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA69/A69_ACONF5Rev1-en.pdf

