



**World Health
Organization**

Sierra Leone



**HEALTH
FOR ALL**

2023
Annual Report

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FOREWORD

The World Health Organization’s (WHO) presence in Sierra Leone throughout 2023 has been fulfilling. Our attention has been focused on advancing Universal Health Coverage and strengthening emergency preparedness and response. Collaborating closely with the Ministry of Health, our donor partners, and various stakeholders, WHO supported capacities for Health Systems strengthening and delivery of impactful interventions, particularly towards improving maternal and child health outcomes, as well as the overall well-being of the population.

Over the years, Sierra Leone has witnessed a significant reduction in Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) from 1682/100,000 live births in 2000 to 443/100,000 live births by 2020, although achieving the SDG target of less than 70/100,000 live births by the year 2030 remains distant.

To combat maternal mortality as a public health emergency, Sierra Leone is establishing an Incident Management System (IMS) to intensify efforts in this critical area.

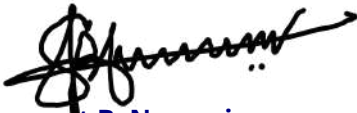
Recognizing the need for innovative health service approaches, Sierra Leone developed and is pioneering a framework for person-centred life stages approach, aiming to make health services address the health needs of everyone at all ages. Post-Ebola recovery efforts focused on enhancing public health emergency response capabilities, however, the global impact of the COVID-19



pandemic exposed vulnerabilities, leading Sierra Leone to renew its commitment to strengthening health system resilience and advancing Universal Health Coverage (UHC). The country piloted the Universal Health and Preparedness Review, adopting a comprehensive whole-of-government approach to build resilience. The National Public Health Agency was also launched.

The technical support from WHO’s Regional Office in Africa and the headquarters was instrumental in achieving results. Furthermore, WHO Sierra

Leone extends its gratitude to donors, partners, and staff for their continuous support and coordinated efforts to address the diverse disease burdens. WHO remains committed to the health agenda in Sierra Leone.


Dr Innocent B. Nuwagira
WHO Country Representative (ai) for Sierra Leone

ABBREVIATIONS

AMR		Antimicrobial Resistance
AMS		Antimicrobial Stewardship
BeMONC		Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care
BFHI		Baby friendly Health facility Initiate
CCM		Country Coordinating Mechanism
CCS		Country Cooperation Strategy
CHE		Current Health Expenditure
COVID-19		Coronavirus Disease 2019
cPIE		Comprehensive Post Introduction Evaluation
CSA		Child Survival Action
DQA		Data quality Audit/Assessment
DSD		Differentiated Services Delivery
DTCs		Drug and Therapeutic Committees
eMTCT		Elimination of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV
ENAP		Every Newborn Action Plan
EPI		Expanded Program on Immunization
EPMM		Ending Preventable Maternal Mortality
ETAT		Emergency Triage Assessment and Treatment
GC7		GF Funding Cycle 7
GF		The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

GoSL		Government of Sierra Leone
GPW13		WHO thirteenth General Programme of Work
HDP		Health Development Partners
HMIS		Health Management Information Systems
IDSR		Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response
IMS		Incident Management System
ITN		Insecticide Treated Bed Nets
LEEP		Electro Surgical Excision Procedures
MCGL		Momentum Country and Global Leadership
MCH		Maternal and Child Health
MMEIG		United Nations Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group
MOH		Ministry of Health in Sierra Leone
MR		Measles Rubella
NASP		National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS 2021-2025
NIS		National Immunization Strategy
NCDs		Non-Communicable Diseases
NGO		Non-Governmental Organization
NHA		National Health Accounts
NHSSP		National Health Sector Strategic Plan
NTDs		Neglected Tropical Diseases
ODCH		Ola During Children Hospital
PBSL		Pharmacy Board of Sierra Leone
PCMH		Princess Christian Maternity Hospital

PIRI		Periodic Intensification of Routine Immunization
RMNCAH		Reproductive Maternal Neonatal Child and adolescent Health
RSSH		Resilient and Sustainable Systems for Health
SDG		UN Sustainable Development Goals
SLMTDP		Sierra Leone Medium Term Development Plan
SRHR		Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
UHC		Universal Health Coverage
UHPR		Universal Health Preparedness and Review
UN		United Nations
UNCT		United Nations Country Team
UNICEF		United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDCF		United Nation Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
USAID		United States Agency for International Development
VPDs		Vaccine Preventable Diseases
WASH		Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WCO		World Health Organization Country Office
WHO		World Health organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In 2023, WHO and other stakeholders supported the Ministry of Health (MOH), to implement health interventions in line with the Government's National Health Sector Strategic Plan (NHSSP), United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and WHO Country Cooperation Strategy (CCS). WHO's support focused on achieving the triple billion goals of universal health coverage, better health and well-being outcomes, and enhanced emergency preparedness and response.

Key achievements for 2023 within the triple billion framework cut across efforts at achieving universal health coverage through the Life course including health systems strengthening initiatives, enhancing Reproductive maternal, new born, child and adolescent health (RMNCAH) services through capacity building on the obstetric guidelines and implementation of the Child Survival Action plan, improving laboratory capacity for quality services, and combating the threat of antimicrobial resistance. WHO also supported the MOH in implementing global strategies to control, eliminate, and eradicate diseases that significantly impact Sierra Leone's socioeconomic development.

WHO further collaborated with the MOH to develop strategic and policy documents including the framework for person-centred life stages approach to health service delivery, the health financing progress Matrix, the 2021 National Health Accounts, and the National Viral Hepatitis Strategic Plan (2024-2030).

As part of its support to the MOH to secure continued funding for TB, HIV/AIDS, and Malaria interventions, WHO provided technical support to the MOH for the GC7 funding request amounting to the allocation of US\$126.44 million for 2023-2025 funding cycle for Sierra Leone. Further, in addressing communicable diseases of special public health focus, WHO supported the integration of elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission (eMTCT), Early Infant Diagnosis (EID) and

paediatric HIV treatment into the integrated obstetric Care guidelines and training packages, and the development and revision of the National Tuberculosis Management Guideline as well as National Consolidated HIV Guidelines.

WHO also conducted the vital training on malaria case management, contributed to the review of the National Malaria Elimination Strategic Plan and provided financial and technical support to the MOH to strengthen immunization, Vaccine-Preventable Diseases (VPDs) surveillance, vaccination campaigns in response to COVID-19 and the upsurge in measles in some part of the country. In effect, the increasing number of confirmed measles among children was interrupted.

WHO in collaboration with the MOH and GoSL piloted the Universal Health Preparedness and Review (UHPR), a process that accorded the country's highest political level indulgence in creating an enabling environment for governance, sustainable financing, and investment towards a resilient national health system to achieve universal health coverage (UHC) in the context of health security. In addition, WHO undertook a scoping mission and conducted the After-Action review for COVID-19 response in the country and Launched the National Public Health Agency.

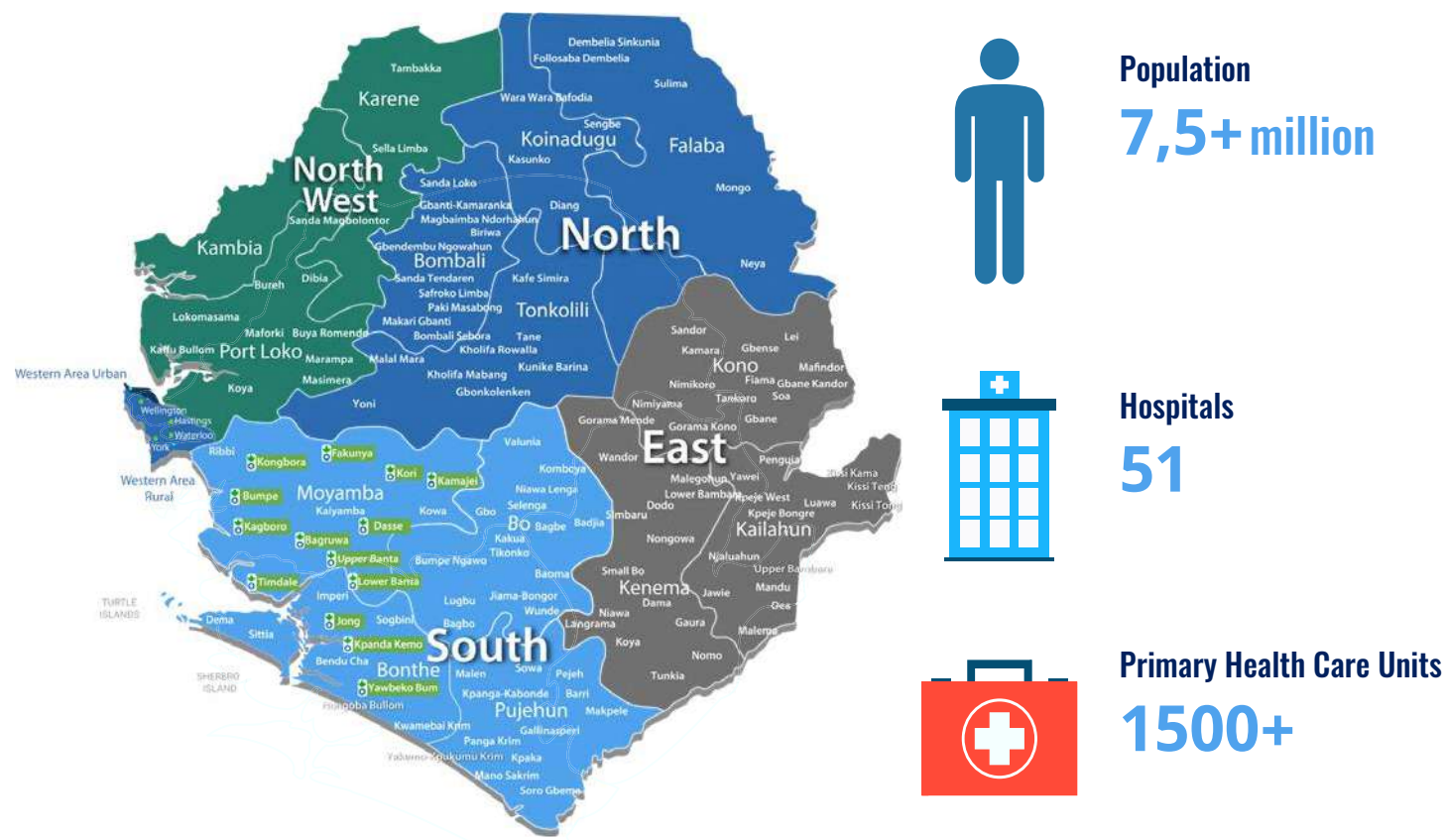
To promote better health and well-being, WHO supported the capacity building efforts including training on severe malnutrition management, development of a handbook on the Breast-Milk Substitute Act 2021, and the supervision for Baby Friendly Hospital Initiatives. A comprehensive

review of the National Health Promotion Policy and World Health Day commemorations in addressing risk factors for NCDs was carried out.

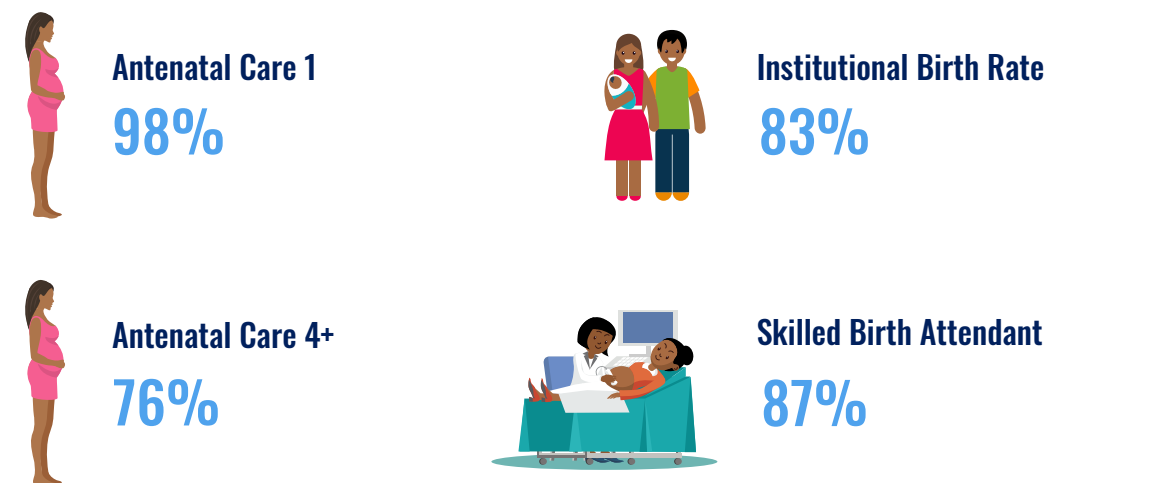
A new Country Cooperation Strategy (CCS) aligned with the NHSSP and UNSDCF for the period 2022-2025 was developed. PRSEAH remains a priority to ensure a safe environment for delivering WHO's mandate in the country.



Key Health and Demographic Statistics

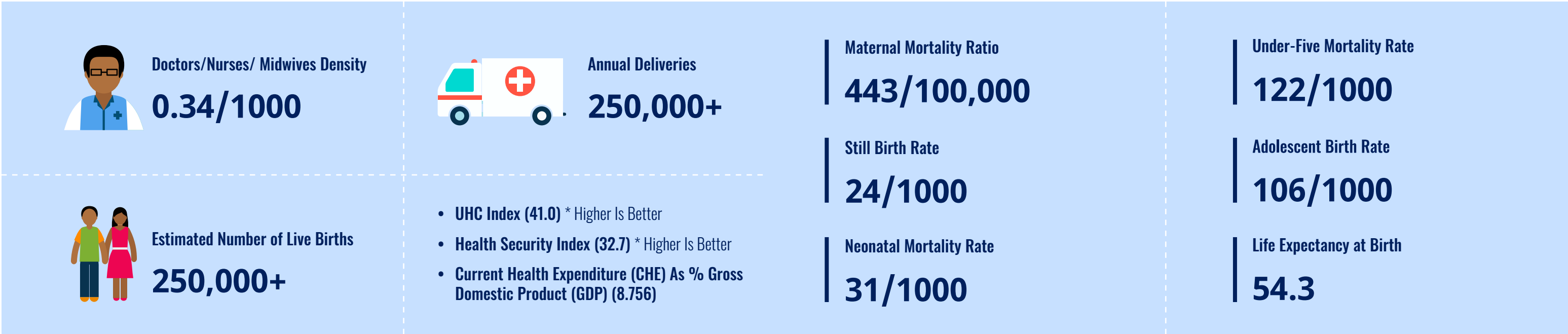


Key Maternal and Child Health Statistics



Early Initiation of Breast Feeding (89.4%) Newborn Dried After Birth (81%) Modern Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (21%)

Key Impact Indicators



1 1 BILLION PEOPLE BENEFITTING FROM UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

Figure 1: Life course chapter showing a transition from childhood to adulthood



Life course photo showing the human being transition from baby, child, adolescent, adult and elderly) by gender Source:OHSU

Achievements

In 2023, WHO's efforts to support the Ministry of Health in Sierra Leone achieve universal health coverage through the Life course included:

Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) and Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

The WHO supported the development and validation of key documents, including the Framework for the Person-Centred Life Stages Approach to Health Service Delivery, the Health Finance in Progress Matrix, the finalization of the 2021 NHA and data collection for the 2022 financial year, Policy Implementation Strategy, Legal Framework and Code of Ethics and Practice to institutionalize Traditional Medicines practice, and Digital Health roadmap in Sierra Leone.

The presence and implementation of the above strategic documents will ensure that the Ministry of Health will be in a position to prepare for the future, prioritize its resources, make challenging decisions, align resources with goals, engage stakeholders, increase efficiency and effectiveness, meet regulatory requirements, promote innovation, and encourage accountability to deliver outputs that would lead to the general wellbeing of the population thereby contributing to the attainment of UHC.

Reproductive Maternal New-born Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH)

To address the high maternal and under-five mortality rates in the country, WHO supported the review of the RMNCAH strategy and its extension to 2025 aimed at reducing maternal, and under-five mortality rates, and stillbirth rates to below 300/100,000 live births, 71/1,000 live births, and 18/1,000 births, respectively.

To strengthen implementation of interventions that will contribute to the reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality, WHO contributed to the development of a two-year Maternal and Child Health (MCH) acceleration plan, "Ending Preventable Maternal Mortality (EPMM)/ Every Newborn Action Plan (ENAP)," which aligns with key national RMNCAH strategic objectives, and supported the MOH's adaption of the National Integrated Obstetric Care Guideline for positive pregnancy outcomes.



Expanding access to quality Preconception, Antenatal, Intrapartum, and postnatal care for Improving Maternal Survival and Well-being.

Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) indicators in Sierra Leone have improved over the years but remain some of the world's poorly performing countries, with the Maternal and perinatal death surveillance and response (MPDSR) system reporting that 4% - 5% of reported maternal deaths are associated with abortion complications.

To address the above challenge, WHO, working with other partners procured and distributed equipment and other medical supplies to support the 28 hospitals and more than 300 community health centers in Sierra Leone. WHO also supported advocacy, policy and legal reforms and facilitated review/revision of various enabling guidelines and built capacity of health workers in SRSR services provision. Other areas WHO and other partners supported include the development and printing of Family planning policy and guidelines, finalization of the WHO guidelines for the prevention of unsafe abortion and the adaption of the 2021 guidelines on selfcare interventions for health and well-being.

Cervical cancer remains a global challenge. In 2023, WHO supported the screening of 476 women and girls in Sierra Leone for cervical cancer, detecting 62 cases, 10 Loop Electrosurgical Excision Procedures (LEEP) and 47 thermal ablations. The screening was facilitated by 40 health workers trained by WHO on cervical cancer prevention and treatment protocols. And as a follow up, WHO donated 10 LEEP and 20 Thermal Ablation equipment units to expand on the cervical cancer prevention and treatment services in 10 secondary and tertiary healthcare facilities across the country.

WHO through sustained Technical Assistance (TA) instituted National and sub-national coordination mechanisms to enhance the quality of care in the health sector by: redefining Pediatrics care indicators, training health workers on respectful maternity care, conducted a scooping mission for New Child Health Program in selected hospitals for Pediatrics Quality of Care leading to the development of the 2024 national and district child health annual plans and the commemoration of world Patient safety day to raise awareness on improved patient care.

To strengthen hospitals' emergency response capabilities and aligning with the child survival action plan, WHO supported the MOH to train 30 nurses and community health workers in pediatrics wards and in-patient feeding wards at Ola During Children, Bo, Kenema, Makeni, and Port Loko regional hospitals. These training will contribute to reduction of child mortality in the targeted health facilities.

WHO's capacity building program strengthens health workforce at the Maternal Health Unit in Rokupa Government Hospital.

When Margaret Titi Sesay, a beneficiary of the WHO capacity building program on the use of the Integrated Obstetric Care guidelines, was posted to the Maternal and Child Health Care unit of Rokupa Government Hospital in 2020, the monthly maternal deaths were worrying. On average, the hospital recorded three to four maternal deaths per month, which was a big concern for the community, government, and hospital authorities.

In 2023, data obtained from the Monitoring and Evaluation team of Rokupa Government Hospital showed that three mothers had lost their lives while giving life, a number Margaret says is still far too high.

"We love to see zero maternal death in a year" - she says.



Sierra Leone has one of the highest rates of maternal mortality in the world, with 443 mothers dying for every 100 000 live births as of 2020 (UNMMEIG, 2020), and although this figure reduced drastically over the past 20 years from 1682/100,000 in 2000 to 443/100,000, the country is still losing far many mothers in the process of giving life.

To help reduce the number of deaths among mothers, WHO supported the Ministry of Health Sierra Leone to develop and disseminate the National Integrated Obstetric Care (Preconception, Antenatal Care, Intrapartum, and Postnatal Care) guidelines that bring together new and existing recommendations to promote the quality of pre-pregnancy, pregnancy, labour, and childbirth care. To ensure the use of the guidelines, WHO further supported the capacity building of at least two healthcare workers from each facility in the Western Area and Bo district that provide maternity care. Matron Margaret from Rokupa Government Hospital, located in the Western Area and home to nearly 1.5 million people, was one of the beneficiaries of this capacity building.

*Margaret says that the training enhanced her mentorship, supervision, and engagement skills with her staff, a boost that has seen the monthly death rates curbed. **"I monitor, mentor, and supervise nurses and midwives and, in the process, make immediate corrections during my routine supervision inwards as well conduct onsite mentorship," said Margaret.***

*"One of the most incredible things from the workshop was engagement with staff and the patients. Over time, keeping my lines open at any time of the day and night has saved many mothers. Even in the night, I work with the night duty nurses, offering support when situations are critical and sometimes even using videos to work through the most vital and challenging conditions to save mothers and their babies. We made quick decisions. But most importantly, the guidelines provided by WHO have played a critical role in guiding midwives at Rokupa Government Hospital." **said Margaret.***

*"When we receive new midwives, I attach them to an old one for mentorship and guidance on handling mothers and allow them to only work during the day until they can work at night. The midwives and nurses are doing a tremendous job. We are working hard not to go back to the previous state. We sit down as a team and agree on how to manage the team, and we have the guidelines for managing the cases," **she added.***

Margaret also ensured the improvement in respectful maternity care following the training by advocating for and erecting screens to increase women’s confidence in the hospital.

Margaret is thankful and happy to be saving lives and helping to bring life to the world; her biggest lesson is to be alert, receive every call for help with high regard, and support the Midwives with decision-making, which is timely to save lives. On Maternal death accountability, Magrate says to take every death seriously, investigate and work with the Midwives to address the issues that lead to death, and ensure that it does not repeat.

[For more on this story and other WHO impact stories, click here to visit our website](#)

The training was made possible through the support of the Swedish International Development



| Beneficiary voices

*“The BEC training has improved my skills in identifying danger signs and life-threatening conditions among children who access care in my facility. It has also increased my confidence in the provision of timely healthcare services for child survival,” said **Kadiatu Wulloh Bawo**, Nursing Officer, Special Care Baby Unit, Makeni Regional Government Hospital.*

*“Over the past five days, I have learned a lot and gained new skills in oxygen administration c-spine immobilization, management of sucking chest wounds, and effective referral. The skills I have gained have better positioned me to be a competent nurse in emergency care and I am determined to provide patient-centred care in the management of childhood illnesses,” said **Alpha Kamara**, State Registered Nurse, Ola During Children’s Hospital.*



| Promoting Adolescent Health and well-being

The Sierra Leone’s Accelerated Action for the Health and Wellbeing of Adolescents and Young People 2024-2023 was developed with the support of WHO to promote Adolescent Health and well-being. Other outcomes from WHO’s support included: The development of a girl’s manifesto during the 4th National Girls Summit held in Bo district and a sensitization meeting on substance abuse among youth in Sierra Leone held to raise awareness on the magnitude and mobilize support from all stakeholders.



Photo: Cross Section of Adolescent girls and women that attended the 4th National Girls Summit in Bo district, Southern Sierra Leone, 2023.



| Enhancing Laboratory Capacity

In Sierra Leone, the national laboratory system is generally still developing, largely characterized by weak infrastructure and limited capacities to diagnose and confirm epidemic prone diseases in a timely manner. These gaps, which are further exacerbated by the poor coordination across the one health laboratory stakeholders, have slowed down efforts to establish an efficient laboratory.

To strengthen laboratory capacities, WHO supported the MOH with among other things equipment, reagents, and consumables worth USD 739,000, the development & validation of 32 Standard Operating Procedures for the diagnosis of 22 priority diseases and training of 165-laboratory technologist/technicians from all the 16 districts of the country.

There was no major incident of biosafety and biosecurity reported in health facilities and environment country wide in 2023, and as part of its support to further strengthen the observance of the two areas, of, WHO supported the development, review, validation and dissemination of the national biosafety and biosecurity policy and guideline within the concept of One Health approach, trained 28 trainer of trainees (TOT) who cascaded the training to 120 laboratory staff countrywide.



| Antimicrobial Resistance response

The capacity of 35 laboratory staff from Makeni was strengthened in bacterial identification and antibiotic susceptibility testing (AMST). Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) is a rising threat to human health due to poor hygiene and infection prevention and control measures in communities and health facilities, lack of community awareness, and self-medication of antimicrobials without doctors' consultations.

Awareness raising on the dangers of AMR was widely conducted through a one-day national AMR scientific symposium for health practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and media professionals, and the dissemination of Structured Operational Research and Training Initiative (SORT IT) on AMR.



Thirty-five (35) participants from trained from the three AMR supported facilities in Makeni – Sierra Leone

| Communicable diseases

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), Tuberculosis (TB) and Hepatitis response.

The national HIV prevalence in Sierra Leone among adult population (aged 15 – 49) is estimated at 1.7% (SLDHS, 2019) and continues to be characterized by a low-intensity, mixed epidemic with significant heterogeneity across geographic areas and population groups defined by high HIV transmission streams within some geographic areas and districts. To strengthen HIV/AIDs service delivery, a national scale up plan was developed and revision, printing, and distribution of the 2020 edition of National HIV consolidated guidelines, tools, and the training for health care providers on HIV service delivery was done.

Performance indicators showed improvement in access to HIV services with enrolment of more people with HIV on life-saving quality anti-retroviral treatment to 1500+ health facilities, 860 health facilities expanded HIV Services in 2023. The ART coverage also increased to 89% in 2023 from 39% in 2018, 42.8% in 2019, 59% in 2021 to 72% in 2022.

The HIV treatment was decentralized to the community, enhancing access to treatment for Recipients of Care (RoCs) through a Master Differentiated Service Delivery (DSD) Trainer workshop for 48 HIV program staff. Presently, 18% of ART sites have over 10% of RoCs under a less intensive model, while a significant proportion receives standard care, that involves appointment spacing and multi-month ART dispensing. Diagram 2 illustrates the DSD model.

To provide strategic guidance to the MOH in alignment with the global guidance for the public health threat elimination of viral hepatitis and the national health policy, which supported the development of the National Viral Hepatitis Strategic Plan 2024-2030, its final validation and costing. The document is now under use by the health authorities.



| Tuberculosis Control Programme

To standardize care and ensure quality service delivery across all health system levels, WHO supported the Ministry of Health in revising and updating the National Tuberculosis Management Guideline and, developing comprehensive TB training packages and undertook training of trainers on the management of Tuberculosis.

| Malaria response



Through NMCP 2023 WHO supported the MOH to conduct a national training for health workers on severe malaria management, revised the National Malaria Elimination Strategic Plan (NMESP) and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan, school based the insecticide-Treated Net distribution pilot and planning for the 2023 ITN mass campaign and ITN digitalization campaign pilot in Bo district. With WHO and other partners support 408,256 insecticide-treated bed nets were distributed to 182,798 households, covering a population of 860,584 people in across 16 chiefdoms.

STORY

| Protecting Communities from Malaria:
The Impact of WHO’s Collaboration in Sierra Leone’s ITNs
Mass Distribution Campaign

Malaria constitutes approximately 40% of the overall disease burden in outpatient visits, and it leads to an estimated annual toll of 1,000 fatalities among children under the age of 5 in Sierra Leone.

As part of its preventive initiatives, the Ministry of Health conducts a triennial mass distribution campaign for Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) to enhance ITN coverage.

A delighted Mamie Koroma of Tikonko Chiefdom, mother of 10 children, received 4 ITNs. She said that these nets would shield her and her children from malaria, a cause of constant worry for mothers like hers. She noted, *“As a mother of 10, I am regularly stressed from having to take care of my children when they get sick from malaria; what made it worse was that we did not have tents to prevent us from mosquito bites; it is for that reason I’m happy that you’ve brought these tents.”*

A beneficiary, Kamoh Hassan Kamara conveyed his genuine joy upon receiving the tents. He expressed, *“I am especially delighted about this net because it means I won’t have to spend money unnecessarily on drugs. This is the best thing we have received as a community; now, our women and children can maintain good health. Thank you, WHO.”*



| Neglected Tropical Diseases

The NTD programme in collaboration with the in-country partners conducted annual Schistosomiasis (SCH) Mass Drug Administration (MDA) in nine endemic districts (Kono, Koinadugu, Falaba, Kenema, Kailahun, Bo, Bombali, Karene and Tonkolili districts). About 1.7 million people were targeted for the Schistosomiasis prophylaxis, reaching approximately 88% of the targeted population.

With funds from Sasakawa Health Foundation, WHO supported five districts (Bombali, Bonthe, Kenema, Kono, and Tonkolili) to pilot the establishment of leprosy contacts tracing system. Consequently, 56 cases were identified and initiated on treatment regimen. Also, to facilitate submission of timely, complete, and reliable data by the country, WHO/AFRO/ESPEN provided trainings for WHO and national NTD programme staff on the use of the new NTD Joint Application Package (JAP) forms and DHIS2 leprosy data entry.

| Expanded Program on Immunization

More than 272,400 and 280,400 children received the third dose of Penta and the first dose of Measles/Rubella-1 before age one respectively with the support of WHO as part of the life-saving vaccines to the children. In addition, WHO continued to support COVID-19 vaccination in the country to ensure the population is protected from the pandemic. Some key initiatives taken during 2023 include: development, validation, and submission of the EPI policy to the parliament.

Having achieved the 2022 target of vaccinating at least 70% of target population for COVID-19, in 2023 WHO and other partners supported MOH to integrate COVID-19 vaccines into the Periodic Intensification of Routine Immunization (PIRI) and capturing of COVID-19 data into the DHIS2 platform. By end of 2023, 6,053,668 (74.9%) of all individuals above 12 years had received at least one dose of COVID-19 antigens, with 5,612,115 (69.5%) being fully vaccinated while 1,611,698

individuals had received booster doses. WHO further supported the Post Introduction Evaluation (cPIE) of the COVID-19 vaccine to identify lessons, best practices, and areas for improvement.

In 2023 alone, a total of 125 laboratory-measles confirmed cases were reported, putting a strain on the country's health system. To respond to the cases, WHO and partners supported the MOH vaccinated 250,150 (64%) children 9-59 months in the five districts ((Port Loko, Moyamba, Tonkolili, Western Urban, and Western Rural) including a total of 14,203 children 9-59 months who had never been vaccinated for measles leading to a significant reduction in the number of measles cases reported in the country. Also, a National Measles Preparedness and Response Plan was developed and validated, a tabletop simulation exercise conducted, challenges identified, and actions recommended.

In collaboration with the MOH, WHO conducted supervisory visits to 232 health facilities to assess the Expanded Programme on Immunization and disease surveillance activities, this helped improve some of the key performance indicators,

e.g the non-Polio AFP rate went up from 3.8 in 2022 to 5.1 in 2023 and all the 16 districts achieved 80% stool adequacy in 2023, while only 11 districts met this target in 2022.



2 1 BILLION PEOPLE BETTER PROTECTED FROM HEALTH EMERGENCIES

Piloting the Universal Health and Preparedness Review (UHPR)

Coordination of zoonoses surveillance activities among human, animal, and wildlife Technical Working Group (TWG) was sectors and the integration of a fully functioning Zoonoses TWG into the One Health Platform was initiated, among other recommendations. This follows the government of Sierra Leone launch of the Universal Health Preparedness Review (UHPR) from 2nd to 4th May 2023 with WHO's support becoming the first country in West Africa, second in Africa, and fifth globally to undertake the UHPR. The process involved engaging the highest political level, whole of Society, and multisectoral approaches to create an enabling environment of governance, sustainable financing, and investment towards a resilient national system. The various stakeholders from the highest level of authorities, including H.E. the President, the Vice-President, Ministers of government, senior government officials, diplomatic corps, donors, traditional and community leaders, and representatives of the UN, I/NGOs, and CSOs participated in the UHPR.

“

To have an exponential increase in terms of delivery of our promises, we have combined, health, food security, and education. We have increased the domestic budget for health from 6 to 11 percent. Some results can already be seen such as the recent drastic reduction in maternal mortality by 60%.

Health is important to us. We will intensify our activities so that we can have better results and share with the world.

”



His Excellency, Rt. Hon. Brig. Dr. Julius Maada Bio
President of the Republic of Sierra Leone
Universal Health Preparedness and Review launch

Sierra Leone Launches National Public Health Agency

Government of Sierra Leone committed to enhancing the well-being of its citizens and build a resilient healthcare system capable of addressing existing health challenges through the Launch the National Public Health Agency (NPHA) on December 14, 2023. The NPHA was launched by the President of Sierra Leone, His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio and attended by the Minister of Health, and Government officials and dignitaries of all levels. The NPHA is now functional.



Launch of the NPHA at Bintumani

WHO African Regional Office for Africa (AFRO) Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) Flagship Programmes

A joint WHO/Africa CDC scoping mission assessment of the Sierra Leone public health emergency preparedness and response programs was undertaken in November 2023 aimed at reviewing the health security capacities of the country and to draw up a road map for the journey towards the eventual goal of preparedness resilience in the face of public health emergencies. The mission sought to understand the country context, identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for accelerating progress toward health security. The mission developed a rollout plan for the desired transformation in health emergency preparedness



| Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response

Sierra Leone continued to sustain a robust public health surveillance system with electronic transmission of weekly epidemiological data and case-based investigation findings and the utilization of public health surveillance data to inform public health preparedness, supported by WHO and other key partners including the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). On average, 99.6% of the expected weekly epidemiologic reports were submitted to the national level each week and 98% of these weekly reports were submitted on time.



| Border Health and Compliance with International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005

The second Joint External Evaluation (JEE) in March 2023 showed significant progress in Sierra Leone's health security capacities compared to the initial assessment conducted in 2016 and the subsequent implementation of the National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS 2018-2022).

As part of the International Health Regulations (IHR-2005), WHO and MOH enhanced awareness among stakeholders in eight border districts with Guinea and Liberia and strengthened the capacity of border health staff through targeted training. In addition, the WHO supports enhanced information sharing, joint planning, and coordinated responses to public health events through cross-border meetings between Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia.

The journey towards building the health security of the country has been a steady success. However, there are still numerous areas for improvement that technical and financial support from WHO and other partners can help achieve.

| Controlling Zoonotic Diseases through ONE Health

The One Health Governance Manual was revised along with ten priority zoonotic diseases and a costed One Health strategic plan 2024 – 2028 developed with the support of WHO, US-CDC, Africa CDC, and FAO. A roadmap towards establishing a coordinated surveillance system for One Health threats was created with the support of partners and data elements to establish an interoperable data platform for human, animal, and environmental health surveillance identified. Prevention and control strategies for anthrax and Brucellosis were developed.

| Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)

A surgical site infection report from 16 hospitals across the country revealed that in 2023, more than 4,100 caesarean sections (CS) surgeries were performed between June and November 2022, 2,024 (49%) of them were reviewed, and 68 (6%) of them were confirmed with surgical site infection cases. Surveillance remains a major challenge, evidenced by the close to half (51%) of the eligible CS cases not included in the surveillance, while 21% were lost to follow-up. To address these, WHO, in collaboration with the US CDC, supported the MOH in establishing and implementing comprehensive Health Care Associated Infection (HAI) surveillance, including developing a national HAI surveillance strategy, protocol, and tools. WHO and the US CDC also supported capacity building for active surveillance, all together ensuring economical methodology for the systematic collection, analysis, and reporting of actionable information on the occurrence of HAIs in the country. These will continue to be supported beyond 2023.





COUNTRY STATUS AND KEY ACHIEVEMENTS BY 2023

01

Public health laws and legislation (Public Health Bill, Animal Health Bill, and Animal Welfare Bill) in the human and animal health sectors have been revised.

02

The National IHR Focal Point centre is now running and is adequately equipped with human resources and administrative and technological capacities.

03

Two levels of FETP (frontline and intermediate) are in place in the country. The country has equally launched the FETP Light, a less demanding programme, that equips a wider range of technical staff with preliminary analysis skills.

04

Improved multisectoral coordination at the national level.

05

The list of priority zoonoses was developed using the One Health Zoonotic Disease Prioritization Process in a multisectoral forum convened in 2018. They are anthrax; salmonellosis; plague; viral haemorrhagic fevers (Ebola Virus Disease, Marburg, and Lassa fever); rabies and zoonotic influenza.

06

The country has a national One Health AMR strategic plan (2018–2022) approved in 2019.

07

There is a Multi-hazards Public Health National Emergency Response Plan developed in coordination with the MOHS EPR unit.

08

Cross-border coordination meetings have been conducted with the neighbouring countries.

3 1 BILLION PEOPLE ENJOYING BETTER HEALTH AND WELL-BEING.

Health Promotion and Addressing Risk factors for NCDs

WHO is committed to contributing 1 billion more people enjoying better health and well-being. “Charity begins at home”; a person’s or an organization’s first responsibility is for the needs of their own family, friends, and workers. As part of the WHO support to the adaptation of the Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018-2030 to the national context and the development of a National Action Plan for Physical Activity 2024- 2030, WHO staff regularly engaged in physical exercise activities to help prevent and manage non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and several cancers and to avoid hypertension, maintain healthy body weight, and improve mental health, quality of life and well-being.



| **Nutrition and Food safety**

To support program implementation in the newly established stabilization centre at the St. John of God Hospital in Lunsar, Port Loko district, WHO and MOH built trained 15 health workers on the management of severe acute malnutrition with medical complication resulting to the facility now managing severely malnourished cases.

Designated breastmilk substitutes, including Infant formula, feeding bottles, and pacifiers have been banned from Bo, Makeni, Kenema, Port Loko, King Harman Road Maternity Hospital, and the University Teaching Hospital (PCMH) except only under exceptional cases and medical reasons following the development of a user-friendly handbook for health workers and orientation sessions for Hospital Management and District Health Management Teams in Bo, Makeni, Kenema, Port Loko, King Harman Road Maternity to raise awareness and ensure full compliance by health care providers on the Breastmilk Substitute Act of 2021.

The Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) was successfully implemented in six hospitals (Bo, Bombali, PortLoko Kenema, PCMH, and King Harman Road Maternity Hospital), with 11,677

(67%) out of 17,413 infants-initiated breastfeeding within the first hour of birth, and 57% of mothers receiving personalized counseling, hence attaining 84% reporting timely breastfeeding initiation. These successes were recorded following WHO’s support to the MOH in training ten nutritionists on using the WHO competency verification toolkit to enhance supportive supervision and conducting a competency-based assessment of 149 maternity staff from the above six health facilities trained on the BFHI.

The food safety standards in the country shifted from red (Level 1: No capacity) to amber (Level 2: Limited capacity) as per the Joint External Evaluation (JEE) score card, partly due to WHO’s efforts to strengthen the multisector coordination and collaboration among food safety actors through the Food Safety Technical Working Group using the One Health approach. And to prevent and respond to foodborne risks, WHO supported the development and validation of the Case definition manual for priority foodborne diseases, Food safety training manual for food business operators and Six (6) standard operating procedures (SOPs) on food safety.

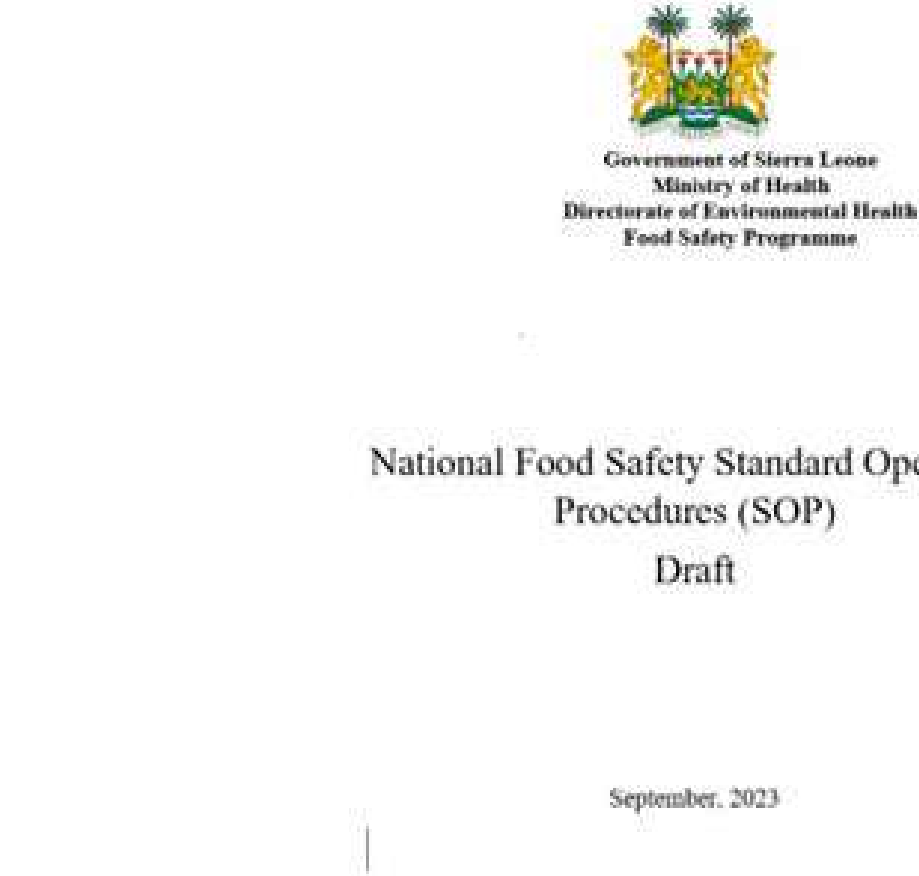
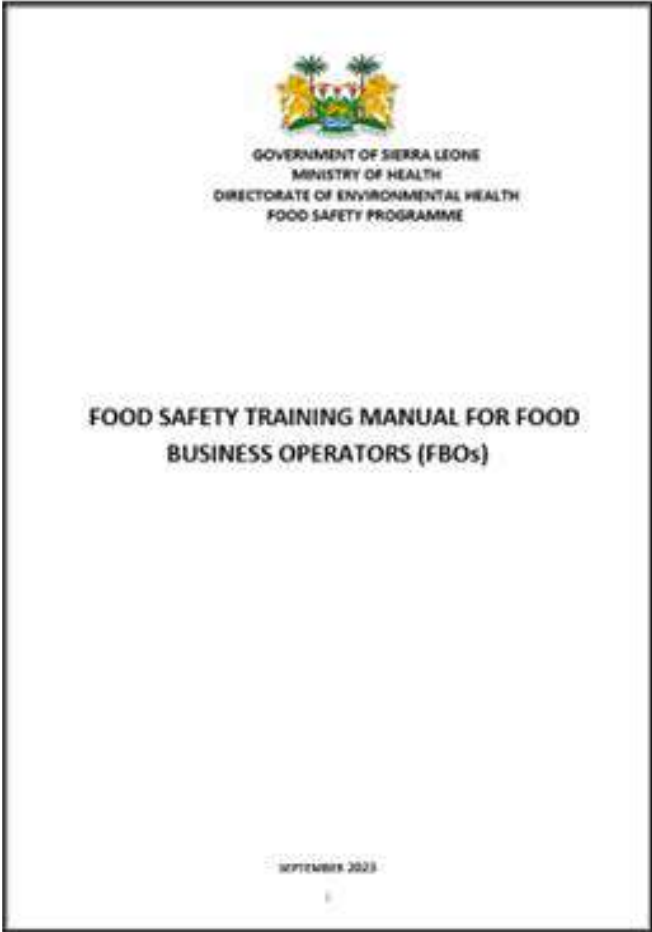
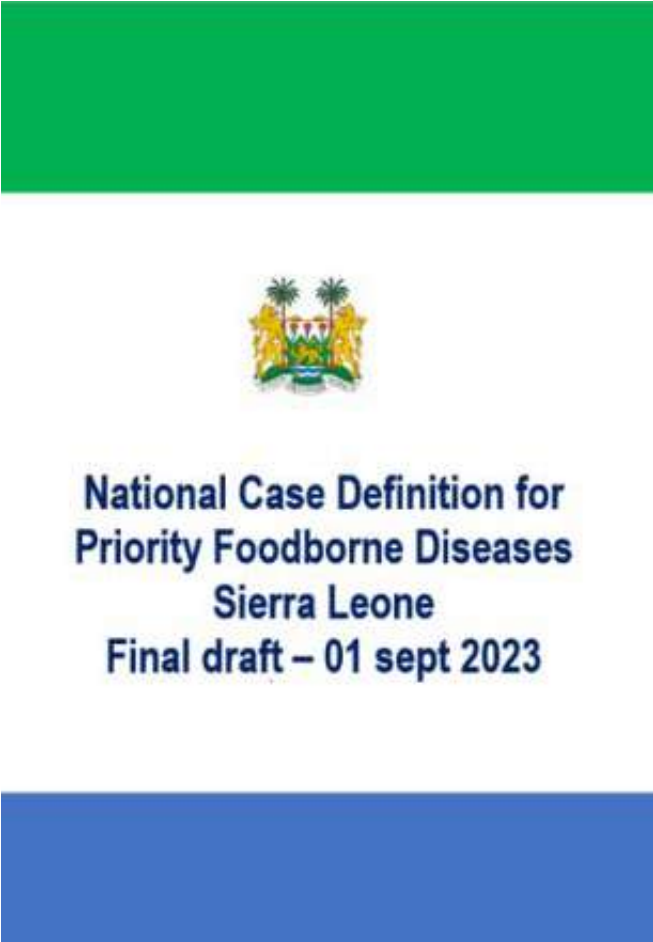




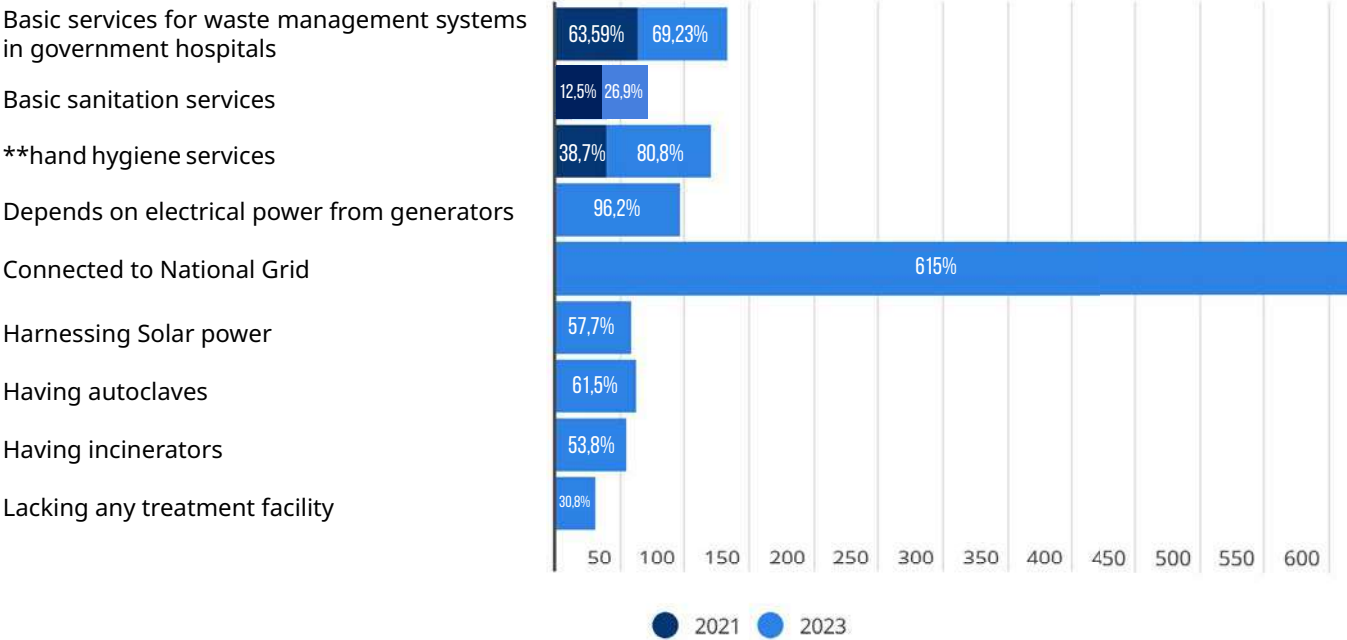
**Ministry of Health Sanitation
Directorate of Food and Nutrition**



**Handbook on the Breastmilk Substitute Act
of 2021 for Health Workers**



Status of WASH in Hospitals



*** Patient care areas need improvement in hand hygiene facilities*

WHO’s support fostered the establishment of partnership and resource mobilization initiatives for tobacco control and garnered support from key line ministries, including Health, Finance, Trade, Local Government, and Youth Affairs, as well as the National Revenue Authority, to facilitate the implementation of the Tobacco and Nicotine Act.





4 COUNTRY SUPPORT AND ENABLING FUNCTIONS

Engagement with high-level Country authorities and partners enhanced the country ownership and involvement of the whole-of-government, and the whole-of-society for emergency preparedness and response and contributing to the GPW13 targets. WHO strategically positioned itself as a credible leader in the health landscape by advocating and negotiating for health priorities among the top leadership of the country through engagements between WHO Representative and His Excellency President of Sierra Leone, the Vice President, the Minister of Health, other ministers of government, the UN Country Team, members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps and serving as a secretariat for the Health Development Partners.

Strategic directions, technical advice and solutions on the health sector issues were provided by WHO to authorities through regular meetings and consultations with MOHS. Among others, the Person-Centred Life Stages Approach Framework for Health Service Delivery was developed to implement the MOHS vision for achieving UHC.

WHO leveraged its comparative advantage as a technical organization and advanced the health agenda in the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) through the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) Workplan by leading the Results Group 3 "Access on Basics services" and providing regular updates in weekly UNCT on health matters.

WHO offered effective leadership in brokering relationships between MOH and Health Development Partners (HDP) through coordinating monthly meetings of Health Development Partners (HDP). The regular coordination meetings with HDP and UNCT enhanced the integration of the health agenda within the UNCT and improved harmonization and alignment with development Partners toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other health priorities at the country level.

WHO established a collaboration mechanism with the MOH through quarterly coordination meetings between WHO Representative and Chief Medical Officer with his Senior Management team including two Deputy CMO, Directors, and Program Managers. The forum defined the joint priorities and implementations monitoring, and key outcomes improved management of resources with reduction of overdue DFCs (Direct Financial Cooperation) from 12 in 2022 to Zero in 2023.



WHO Representative assessment of hospitals in Freetown

The WHO team, led by the WHO Country Representative along with a team from the Ministry of Health headed by the Deputy Chief Medical Officer Clinical, made a courtesy visit to five referral hospitals in the Western Area Rural and Urban districts to understand the context, monitor progress, and address critical challenges hindering service delivery. The team gained insights into the health system challenges as they engaged with the health facilities. The visit enhanced WHO and MOH specs on the work towards implementing a person-centered life stage framework for service delivery in the country, including establishing demonstration sites, and laid a foundation for future collaboration and partnerships towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

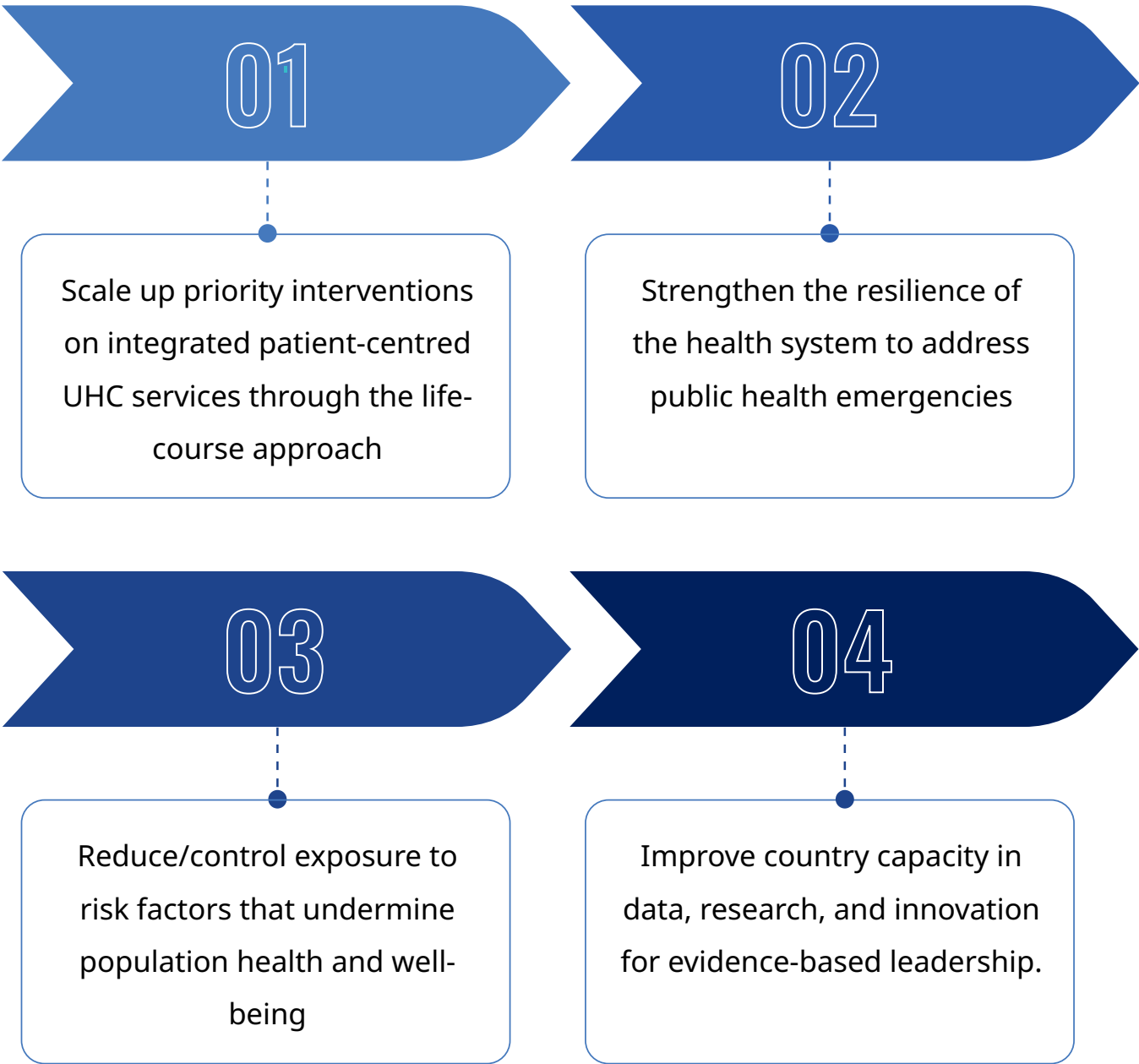


Development of Strategic Operational Plans for the biennium 2024-2025

WHO developed and launched the Country Cooperation Strategy (CCS) 2022-2025, officiated by the Vice President of Sierra Leone. The CCS is aligned with global regional and national priorities, as defined in the Medium-term Development Plan, the National Health and Sanitation Policy and National Health Sector Strategic Plan 2021-2025, and the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and informed by evaluation results of the previous CCS (2017 -2021) and consultations with all stakeholders including the MOHS, other MDAs, UN agencies, Development Partners, and Civil Societies.



Strategic Priorities of the WHO CCS 2022-2025



WHO developed the 2024 -2025 biennial work plan tailored to achieve 23 technical outputs for GPW13. The prioritized outputs will support FastTrack Universal Health Coverage impacts, addressing health emergencies, improving health and well-being, and providing efficient support to the Country Office. The table below summarizes the costed Workplan for 2024-2025.



Programme Budget Costing 2024-2025 for WHO Sierra Leone				
Strategic Priority		Human Resource Costing	Activity Costing	Total Costing
UHC	1. Universal Health Coverage	4,616,300	6,066,225	10,682,525
HEM	2. Health Emergencies	2,485,572	2,788,974	5,274,546
HPO	3. Health and Well-being	252,000	75,993	327,993
CSU	4. Better Support	4,028,984	662,485	4,691,469
Total		11,382,856	9,593,677	20,976,533

Resource Mobilization and Partnership

In 2023, WHO mobilized more than 80% of 2022-2023 budget to support the implementation of its strategic priorities across different pillars. Voluntary contributions increased from USD 6,052,014 at the beginning of the Biennium up to 20,784,463 at the end of December 2023.

WHO co-chaired the task force and a core committee, and provided guidelines that facilitated the identification of priorities used by the Government of Sierra Leone in the development and submission of the Global Fund Proposals for Grant Cycle 7 for HIV, Malaria, TB, and RSSH.

High level engagements took place between WHO Country Representative, ambassadors, donors and partners from I/NGO with discussions on current partnership and future opportunities of collaboration. Among donors that WHO engaged were with Japanese Ambassador, African Development Bank (AfDB) and Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) etc.

Regular meetings were also held between the WHO leadership and donors, which improved the grant management, donor reporting and relationship.



Resource Mobilization and Partnership

WHO currently boasts of team of 79 dedicated professionals, including 13 international staff, 58 national staff, 1 UN Volunteer (UNV), four consultants and three stop team members. Within this workforce, more than 50% individuals are technical officers, both national and international, playing integral roles in the organization’s core functions.

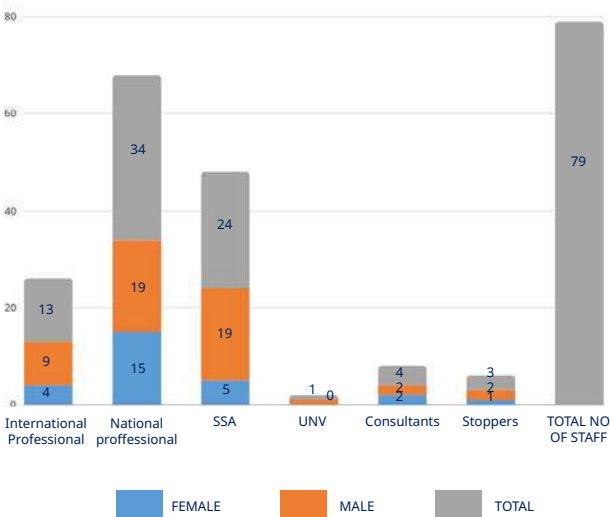
A total of USD20.7 million was available for programme implementation during the biennium contributed as indicated below:

Fund Type	Funds Available	%
Flexible Funds	4,998,551	24%
VCS	15,785,912	76%
Grand Total	20,784,463	100%

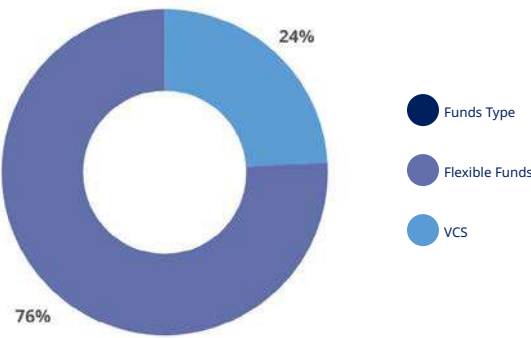
24% of the funding received was assessed contribution while the balance was from voluntary contributions from different partners/donors.

18 vehicles were available to support field travels and the organization made extensive use of long-term agreements for the procurement oof goods and services to support programme implementation.

Status of HR per Category



Funds distribution

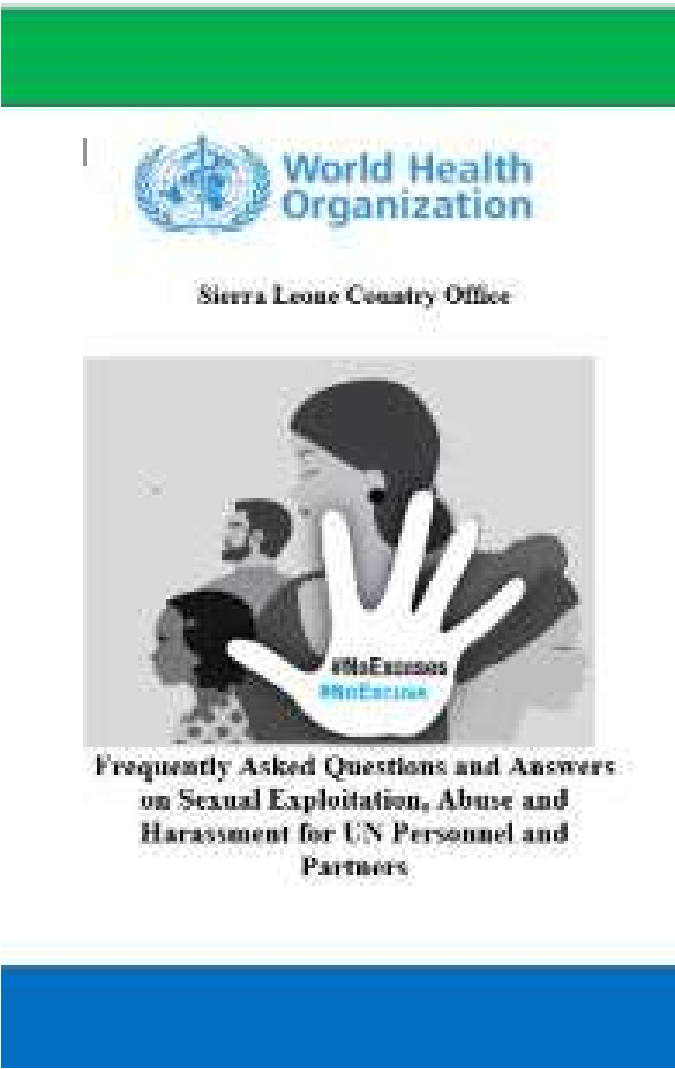


Preventing and Responding to Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment

WHO takes the prevention of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment (PRSEAH) seriously. As part of the regular orientation of its workforce, a series of awareness-raising sessions on PRSEAH were conducted for WCO staff as a reminder of staff members’ obligations to comply with and uphold the values of the organization in executing their duties and promoting the principles of “do no harm” and ensure “zero tolerance” for all forms of sexual misconduct.

The promotional materials were also integrated into various workshops and meetings of WHO and MOH, partners and communities; Including joint WHO and MOH retreat for Directors and Programme Managers and events held in various locations across the country.

Frequently ask questions and answers on SEAH and other IEC material were produced and displayed in all workstations and conference rooms within country office and distributed to staff across UN agencies.



5 CELEBRATING GLOBAL HEALTH DAYS

WHO marked its 75th on April 7, 2023. On this day in 1948, the United Nations fulfilled its ambition to create a global health body to make the world safer and serve those most in need. Every year since then, it has been observed as World Health Day. In Sierra Leone, activities were conducted to commemorate the day, including the monthly walk to keep WHO staff healthy and printing and distributing communication materials with a message on WHO at 75 years old. The commemoration was graced by the presence of the Vice President of Sierra Leone, His Excellency Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh and other stakeholders, including WHO and Sierra Leone’s government staff.

In addition, WHO supported and participated in commemorating the following international days in 2023:

01

Children and women in Gay Bush, Moa Wharf, and Waterloo reached during the observance of the African Vaccination Week or World Immunization Week from 24th to the 30th of April 2023.

02

More than 500 people were reached through various initiatives to commemorate the World AMR Awareness Week (WAAW) including a national AMR scientific symposium involving various stakeholders, dissemination of Structured Operational Research and Training Initiative (SORT IT) on AMR, and awareness meetings held with teachers and student to highlight the magnitude of the AMR in Sierra Leone.

03

The International UHC Day 2023 under the theme “Health for All: Time for Action” was commemorated with the keynote address given by the Minister of Health, who pledges government’s continuous commitment and support for quality health care for all in Sierra Leone.

6 LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

WHO will continue supporting the MOH to promote, provide and protect health through the implementation of the CCS that aligns with the GWP13, SDG, USSDCF and the National Medium Term Development Plan, and use lessons learned to inform contribution to the development of the GPW14, this includes:

01

Scaling up priority interventions on integrated patient-centred UHC services through the life-course approach

02

Strengthening the resilience of the health system to address public health emergencies

03

Reducing and controlling exposure to risk factors that undermine population health and well-being

04

Strengthen health sector governance, leadership, and accountability





7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Throughout 2023, WHO delivered support to the government and the people of Sierra Leone because of the generous contributions of our donors and partners, without whom the response to the health needs of the Sierra Leonean people would not have been met. Thank you, and we look forward to your continued generosity to the people of this country



To learn more about WHO work in Sierra Leone, visit:

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**World Health
Organization**

📍 PO Box 529 Freetown, Sierra Leone
✉ afwcosl@who.int
☎ +232 22 233565