



UNICEF Sierra Leone/2020/Misseyewa

UNICEF is supporting the delivery of essential services for the health, nutrition, safety and protection of every child and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sierra Leone

HIGHLIGHTS

- The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has significantly impacted health, security and overall economic development in Sierra Leone. Coupled with weak preparedness for future disasters, the country faces a perilous future with children at significant risk for nutritional deprivations, including severe acute malnutrition (SAM), and women and girls at increased risk of gender-based violence.
- UNICEF will enable the continuity of health, nutrition and protection services for children and women, including access to life-saving medicines and psychosocial support; increase access to clean water and sanitation and effective infection prevention and control measures in health facilities, schools and communities; and prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable children, women and men, including people with disabilities.
- UNICEF is requesting US\$12.7 million to strengthen health and social protection systems and ensure the provision of services to save lives and protect the welfare and dignity of all persons.

KEY PLANNED TARGETS



1.5 million

children receiving vitamin A supplementation every six months



100,000

people accessing a sufficient quantity of safe water



1.8 million

people accessing safe channels for reporting sexual exploitation and abuse



65,000

households benefiting from new/additional social transfers

unicef 
for every child

Humanitarian
Action for
Children

IN NEED

4.8 million
people¹

3.3 million
children²

TO BE REACHED

1.8 million
people³

1.5 million
children⁴

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

US\$ 12.7
million

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND NEEDS

COVID-19 continues to threaten the safety and well-being of people in Sierra Leone, with young people bearing the brunt of the social, economic and development breakdown. While the Government of Sierra Leone has actively prepared for and responded to the crisis, the pandemic remains a serious threat due to the weak public systems, struggling economy and ongoing recovery from the 2014–2016 Ebola outbreak.

As many as 1.8 million people (23 per cent of the population) are at risk of contracting the virus.⁵ The disruption of essential services due to COVID-19 has the potential to leave 210,000 children without oral antibiotics for pneumonia, 271,000 children without diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus vaccinations and 49,000 women without access to facility-based deliveries.⁶

Rising food insecurity since the beginning of the outbreak has worsened the nutritional situation in Sierra Leone; and 1.9 million people are affected by limited access to health and nutrition services.⁷ The disruption of essential services could raise the already high child mortality rate by 30 per cent over the next year.⁸

In addition, some 3.2 million children are at risk of dropping out of school⁹ following months of school closures. Even as schools reopen, students are faced with the challenge of catching up and the pressure to pursue child labour to financially support their families.⁹ Since the first case of COVID-19 was reported in March 2020, rates of gender-based violence and other forms of abuse of women and girls has increased.¹⁰

Lack of safe water and inadequate infection prevention and control in institutions and communities will fuel the spread of the virus and lead to unnecessary deaths and disabilities, with far reaching consequences for communities. The number of people living in extreme poverty – currently 800,000 people or 160,000 households¹¹ – is expected to increase due to restrictions on movement, limited access to markets and lack of livelihood opportunities.

Sierra Leone currently ranks 181 out of 189 countries and territories on the Human Development Index. The country also faces annual outbreaks of infectious diseases, such as cholera and Lassa fever, as well as frequent floods and landslides. These combined risks seriously limit social and economic growth opportunities and the advancement of the health, security and well-being of children, women and men.

SECTOR NEEDS



Health and nutrition

1.9 million people lack access to nutrition/health services¹²



Water, sanitation and hygiene

2.9 million people lack access to safe water¹³



Child protection, GBViE and PSEA

1.1 million women and girls face increased violence^{14,15}



Social protection and cash transfers

160,000 households live in extreme poverty¹⁶

STORY FROM THE FIELD



Saidu Ture is a community health worker (CHW) in the densely populated informal settlement of Kroo Bay in Freetown. He and his team have been supporting contact tracing of confirmed COVID-19 cases and ensuring that rumours and misconceptions about COVID-19 do not deter access to health services.

“As CHWs, we have the confidence and trust of the people because we have been working in this community for a long time. The assurances we have given them about the need to continue to access maternal and child health services during this difficult time of a pandemic have been well received.”

[Read more about this story here](#)

A young mother receives health and nutrition counselling and support from a veteran community health worker trained on UNICEF interim guidance for health worker programming in the context of COVID-19.

HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

In 2021, UNICEF and the Government of Sierra Leone will apply on lessons learned from the Ebola response and continue to build resilience and strengthen systems to provide services critical to saving lives and preventing morbidity due to COVID-19 and other preventable and treatable diseases, such as cholera and Lassa fever. UNICEF and the Government will also prevent and prepare for unnecessary losses due to annual floods and landslides.

The nationwide presence of UNICEF and its partners in Sierra Leone facilitates the delivery of child protection at scale for children and their families. UNICEF's role as the lead United Nations organization for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), nutrition, education and child protection, as well as lead procurement organization for essential maternal and child health commodities and equipment for the Government, position it as the foremost organization to prevent, mitigate and respond to the numerous humanitarian shocks facing the country.

The UNICEF strategy in Sierra Leone will focus on: facilitating access to clean water and sanitation; establishing effective infection prevention and control measures in health facilities and schools; ensuring the continuity of health, nutrition and protection services for children and women, including access to life-saving medicines, severe acute malnutrition treatment, vitamin A supplementation, vaccinations and health promotion services; innovating for education to allow all school-aged children to access lessons through school or distance learning, including radio teaching programmes; supporting social safety nets and grievance redress mechanisms for the most vulnerable and marginalized in society; and supporting protection actors to address the needs of women and children exposed to violence, particularly gender-based violence.

These elements of the response are bound together with a robust risk communication platform that supports the multi-sectoral provision of timely, accurate and actionable information to prevent and mitigate the risks of COVID-19 transmission and its secondary impacts, and enhance access to essential services. The strategy also strengthens linkages between emergency response and development programmes through community engagement and cash transfers in line with Grand Bargain commitments,¹⁷ and reinforces preparedness and response mechanisms to facilitate access to essential health services.

The UNICEF strategy also builds and expands on the significant investments that have been made in recent years to support national health systems at all levels. In particular, UNICEF will focus on providing community-based primary health care, integrating lessons from previous outbreak and health responses, and drawing on strong risk communication networks, especially for the most vulnerable communities.

2021 PROGRAMME TARGETS



Nutrition

- **38,000** children aged 6 to 59 months with severe acute malnutrition admitted for treatment
- **1,500,000** children aged 6 to 59 months receiving vitamin A supplementation every six months



Health

- **450,000** children aged 6 to 59 months vaccinated against measles
- **314,000** children under 5 years with pneumonia treated at primary health care facilities and in communities with oral antibiotics
- **23,000** children under 23 months who missed their scheduled vaccination (defaulters) traced and referred for vaccination at facilities or outreach sites



Water, sanitation and hygiene¹⁸

- **100,000** people accessing a sufficient quantity of safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene
- **100,000** people reached with critical water, sanitation and hygiene supplies (including hygiene items) and services
- **100** institutions that are supported with a minimum water, sanitation and hygiene and infection prevention and control package and demonstrate infection prevention and control improvements



Child protection, GBViE and PSEA

- **20,000** children and caregivers accessing mental health and psychosocial support
- **63,000** women, girls and boys accessing gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention or response interventions
- **1,800,000** people with access to safe channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse



Education

- **600,000** children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning¹⁹
- **60,000** children receiving individual learning materials



Social protection and cash transfers

- **65,000** households benefiting from new or additional social transfers from governments with UNICEF technical assistance²⁰

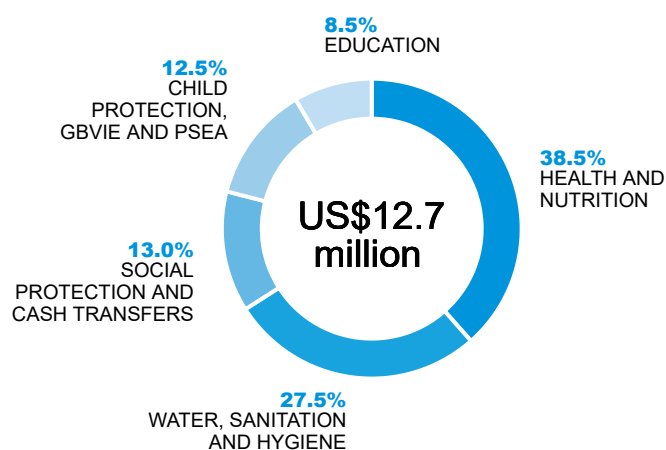


C4D, community engagement and AAP

- **350,000** people participating in engagement actions for social and behavioural change

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2021

UNICEF is requesting US\$12.7 million to meet the critical needs of children, women and men whose coping capacities have been impacted by COVID-19 and weak disaster preparedness systems. This funding will facilitate the continuity of essential health and nutrition service delivery; support enhanced infection prevention and control measures at health facilities and communities; increase the coverage of SAM treatment services; enable catch-up vaccinations; and support the pre-positioning of emergency medical supplies. This support will also enable child protection case management service provision with integrated prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse interventions, as well as system strengthening and prevention and response to gender-based violence. The appeal will enable learning continuity through radio and other digital learning platforms, school safety and psychosocial support. Support for social protection will cover cash transfers for disability-affected households and households with adolescents; capacity strengthening to ensure disability-inclusive and accessible communication; and cash-based assistance for 1,000 households in response to anticipated emergencies. The overall funding requirement includes timely and reliable life-saving and actionable information on COVID-19 and essential services, support for social cohesion, and the empowerment of community platforms to drive community-led solutions.



Sector	2021 requirements (US\$)
Health and nutrition	4,900,000
Water, sanitation and hygiene	3,500,000
Child protection, GBViE and PSEA	1,596,000
Education	1,078,000
Social protection and cash transfers	1,660,000
Total	12,734,000

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ENDNOTES

1. Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census, December 2016; and World Health Organization (WHO)/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene, 2019.
2. Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census, December 2016.
3. This figure was calculated using the highest coverage programme target under health related to communication for development activities, specifically people to be reached through messaging on access to services; and under prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, people to be reached with access to safe channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse. The total includes 918,000 women/girls (51 per cent), 882,000 men/boys (49 per cent) and 2,500 people with disabilities. UNICEF is committed to needs-based targeting, which means covering the unmet needs of children; and will serve as the provider of last resort where it has cluster coordination responsibilities.
4. This figure was calculated using the highest coverage programme target of children aged 6 to 59 months to be reached with vitamin A supplementation. This includes 799,296 girls (52 per cent) and 749,727 boys (48 per cent). At this time, the number of children with disabilities to be reached is not available. The Government and partners will reach the remaining children in need.
5. The projected number of people at risk of COVID-19 was calculated using the World Health Organization (WHO) level 4 transmission model (i.e., community transmission); and United Nations Sierra Leone, 'Sierra Leone Humanitarian Response Plan for the COVID-19 Pandemic', July 2020.
6. Global Financing Facility, 'Preserving Essential Health Services During COVID-19 Pandemic: Sierra Leone', 2020.
7. Sierra Leone Emergency Food Security Monitoring System, June 2020; and 'Sierra Leone Humanitarian Response Plan for the COVID-19 Pandemic'.
8. 'Preserving Essential Health Services During COVID-19 Pandemic: Sierra Leone'.
9. Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census, December 2016.
10. United Nations Children's Fund, 'Responding to the Shadow Pandemic: Taking stock of gender-based violence risks and responses during COVID-19', Child Protection Learning Brief No. 1, UNICEF, 20 August 2020.
11. Government of Sierra Leone, 'COVID-19 Quick Action Economic Response Programme (QAERP)', March 2020; and Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey, 2018.
12. 'Preserving Essential Health Services During COVID-19 Pandemic: Sierra Leone'; and Sierra Leone Food Assistance and Nutrition Pillar, 2020.
13. WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene, 2019.
14. Due to space constraints, the following acronyms appear in the appeal: GBVIE (gender-based violence in emergencies); PSEA (prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse); C4D (communication for development); and AAP (accountability to affected populations).
15. Sierra Leone Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2017; and 2015 Population and Housing Census.
16. 'COVID-19 Quick Action Economic Response Programme (QAERP)'.
17. The Grand Bargain is a unique agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organizations, who have committed to getting more means into the hands of people in need and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action.
18. The needs identified and the target set to address these needs are based on the expected situation for the 12-month lifespan of this Humanitarian Action for Children appeal. In addition to the 100,000 targeted individuals, an estimated 50 health facilities and 50 schools will be directly targeted. Note that UNICEF Sierra Leone is not proposing to distribute chlorination tablets, for example, which could have a significant reach. UNICEF Sierra Leone is focusing on improving the water and sanitation facilities in periphery health units, hospitals and schools to enable infection prevention and control measures.
19. The remaining needs will be met through the sector and Government response.
20. Additional needs will be met through existing World Bank support to the Government.