Country Profile on Nutrition

Sri Lanka

The European Commission (EC) is continuing to work strategically to secure traction on its commitments to reduce stunting and to allocate EUR 3.5 billion (2014-20) for this purpose. Preliminary results for 2016 indicate a three-fold increase in the EC’s commitments to nutrition since 2014. This is a significant development, but this pace of investment needs to be maintained in order to reach the pledge by 2020. The scope to achieve this lies in the strategic design of programmes that are still to be funded – especially in the focal sectors of Food & Nutrition Security, Sustainable Agriculture, Health and Education – so that nutrition is integrated alongside other objectives. This approach is particularly relevant to the new EU Consensus on Development which places emphasis on human development and dignity as well as partnership, prosperity, peace and the planet itself.

While, at 14.7%, the prevalence of child stunting in post conflict Sri Lanka is significantly lower than other South Asian countries, undernutrition remains a key concern. The Government did not meet its own Nutrition for Growth commitment to reduce stunting to 8.4% by 2016 and significant disparities persist across regions and income quintiles. Despite attaining middle-income country status since 2010, the prevalence of wasting appears to have increased in recent years and at 21.4% exceeds the humanitarian threshold. As a result, Sri Lanka appears to have considerably more wasted than stunted children. The Government’s commitment to nutrition is evident from the fact that Sri Lanka’s high-level National Nutrition Council (NNC) brings together 17 line Ministers, Chief Ministers of Provinces, and Members of Parliament from all parties. Guided by the Agenda for Change and EU development Consensus, the EU Delegation’s Multi-annual Indicative programme for Sri Lanka 2014-2020 focuses on rural development to address the key priorities of both sustainable growth / jobs creation and climate change through the focus on integrated rural development. The objective of the EU’s development cooperation is to move from post humanitarian and development assistance towards cooperation with the Government and support to country reform processes.

Progress against the World Health Assembly targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GNR 2016 analysis of progress</th>
<th>WHA (and SDG) nutrition indicators</th>
<th>Data last referenced by EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Off course - Some progress</td>
<td>Stunting of children U5 years of age (SDG2)</td>
<td>Prevalence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off course</td>
<td>Wasting of children U5 years of age (SDG2)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On course - Good progress</td>
<td>Overweight of children U5 years of age</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently off course</td>
<td>Anaemia of women of reproductive age</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Low birth weight</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Exclusive breastfeeding of infants U6 months</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td>75.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^4 Data last referenced by EU International Cooperation and Development

Number of stunted children under 5

- Current: 0.28 million (2012)
- National target: 0.10 million (2018)
- WHA Target: 0.20 million (2025)
- Expected according to current trend: 0.15 million (2025)
Trend, projection and targets in the prevalence and number of children (under-five) stunted

Number of stunted children estimated by surveys (million)
Projected number of stunted children calculated in 2016 (million)
Average annual rate of reduction in stunting estimated in 2016 (no new data since 2012)

Implications for development planners

Sri Lanka has experienced a strong decline in both the prevalence of stunting and the number of children stunted since the 1980s. Recent projections anticipate that although Sri Lanka will probably not meet the Government’s own target of 7.3% by 2018, it is on track to meet the World Health Assembly (WHA) target by 2025. The rate of decline in the number of children stunted is 2.99% as of 2016; if this is maintained, then 150,000 children are expected to be stunted in 2025. This is well under the WHA target of 200,000 children. However, in order to ensure progress with regard to Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2), additional efforts are required by the Government and development partners to end all forms of malnutrition.

Nutrition governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member of SUN Movement</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Since 2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Government’s commitment to nutrition (including N4G event) | Yes | Public finance constitutes 95% of the allocations for nutrition programmes and there is a dedicated budget line for nutrition. In addition to being a SUN member, Sri Lanka was one of the first countries to adopt the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes in the 1980s (currently under review). |
| Multi-sectoral policy framework nutrition | Yes | A review of the National Nutrition Policy (NNP) 2010 – 2018, and corresponding Multi-Sector Action Plan for Nutrition, is underway. In addition, nutrition is integrated into several sector policies including agriculture, livestock and early child development. |
| Multi-sectoral platform for nutrition coordination | Yes | The National Nutrition Council (NNC) is chaired by the President and relies on the National Steering Committee on Nutrition (NSCN) as an implementation body. The NSCN is replicated at sub-national level. |
EU financial commitments to nutrition 2008–2016

Data collected March 2017

The EU commitments to nutrition in Sri-Lanka through DEVCO from 2008 to 2016 are illustrated below in Figure 1. Under the DCI Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2014-2020 for Sri-Lanka nutrition is prioritised through the Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture (FNSSA) focal sector to which EUR 210 million have been allocated. By the end of 2016, a total of EUR 30 million is committed under FNSSA sector of which EUR 7.5 million is for nutrition (as per the SUN methodology).

Preliminary results for 2016 indicate a 3-fold increase in the EU’s global funding commitments to nutrition since 2014 as illustrated in Figure 2. The total amount of funding commitments for nutrition globally in the last three years is EUR 1.8 billion, which represents 51 % of the EU overall financial commitment for the period 2014-2020. In 2016 alone, the EU’s financial commitments to nutrition have reached EUR 790 million. This is a significant development, but this pace of investment needs to be maintained in order to reach the EUR 3.5 billion target by 2020.

Figure 1

![DEVCO Nutrition commitments in Sri Lanka (In EUR million) 2008-2016](image1.png)

Figure 2

![DEVCO and ECHO global commitments 2014–2016 to the EU pledge of EUR 3.5 billion to nutrition 2014–2020](image2.png)
Support of the EU and Member States

**MIP Focal sector(s) for nutrition 2014–2020**

- Integrated Rural Development

### Enhance mobilisation and political commitment for nutrition

- Ongoing support to the Scaling Up Nutrition movement at country level together with strengthening national strategic frameworks and institutional coordination mechanisms both at national and district levels.

- The Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation initiative (FIRST) is a global FAO and EU partnership. The programme provides a highly experienced and technically competent policy expert with a solid grasp of systems change in a multi-sectoral context. Drawing on international experience and best practice, the expert is dedicated to support government counterparts to generate and implement evidence based policy as well as capacity development.

### Scaling-up actions

- The ‘Support to Integrated Rural Development in the Most Vulnerable Districts of the Central & Uva Provinces of Sri Lanka’ Programme 2016-2021 supports the poorest and most vulnerable communities in four districts. The programme centers on the mutually reinforcing objectives of both employment opportunities / livelihood promotion and improved health and nutrition of women and children. Through the focus on the first 1000 days, Information, Education and Communication (IEC) initiatives promote behavioural changes.

- In partnership with the World Bank, the ‘Modernisation of Agriculture’ initiative seeks to promote a more productive, climate-resilient, market-oriented and equitable approach to the sector. As the initiative will increase the participation and competitiveness of the most vulnerable smallholder farmers in value chains in agriculture (and improve the governance of the agriculture sector at the national and sub-national levels), it is expected to bring about further progress with in nutrition.

- The “Strengthening Reconciliation Processes in Sri Lanka” programme aims to promote a just, peaceful and inclusive society in the country. This is especially important for nutrition in terms of the psycho-social assistance it provides as well as the support to enhance access to much needed public services, including health and education for everyone.

### Strengthen expertise and knowledge-base

- Support to strengthen nutrition information systems (including early warning systems) and investment in nutrition causal analysis to enhance the nutrition sensitivity of District Development Plans.

- The programme supporting civil society and local authorities in governance and accountability will enhance CSOs’ contribution to the development process by advancing more effective accountability and inclusive policy-making.

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1. The EU stunting reduction target is embodied in the EU’s Communication on Enhancing Maternal and Child Nutrition and the Action Plan on Nutrition to operationalise that policy
2. [http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/nutrition_globaltargets2025/en/](http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/nutrition_globaltargets2025/en/)
3. There are differences between the GNR 2016 and the EU 2017 analysis of progress in achieving the WHA target for stunting, this is because the EU draws upon data over a more extended period.