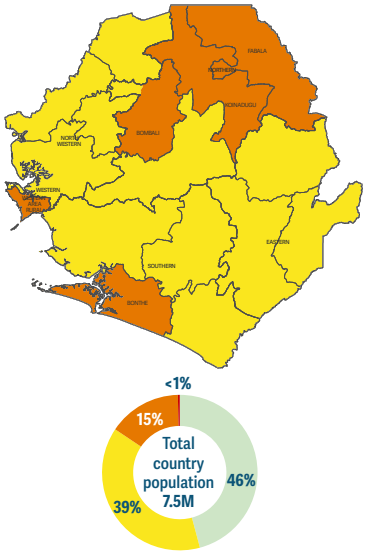
Sierra Leone

ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY | Rampant inflation expected to drive high levels of acute food insecurity in 2024.

PEAK 2023 (JUNE–AUGUST)

1.2M people or 16% of the population faced high levels of acute food insecurity.

This marks a significant decline since the same peak period in 2022, when 1.6 million people or 19 percent of the population faced high levels of acute food insecurity as favourable weather conditions led to increased agricultural production. Nevertheless, 34 400 people were in Emergency (CH Phase 4) – 8 000 more than the previous year.

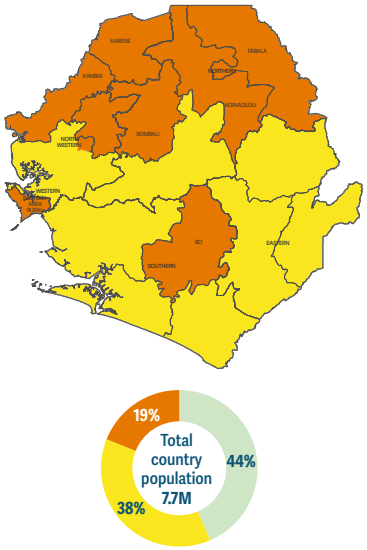


Source: CH Sierra Leone, March 2023.

PROJECTION 2024 (JUNE–AUGUST)

1.5M people or 19% of the population are projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity.

This projected deterioration mostly reflects the likelihood of high inflation constraining household purchasing power. However, no populations are projected to be in Emergency (CH Phase 4).



Source: CH Sierra Leone, November 2023.

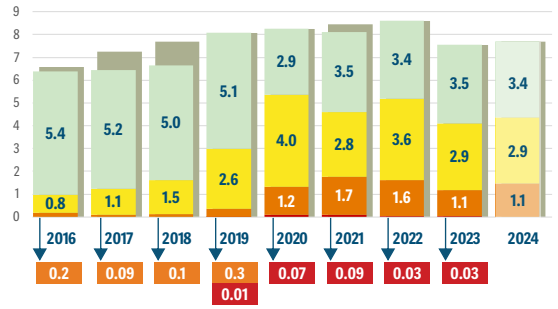
DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS 2023–2024

Economic shocks Food inflation steadily increased between early 2022 and September 2023, when the annual rate peaked at 65 percent. Across most markets, there was a noticeable increase in the prices of all major agricultural products compared with the previous year. Specifically, prices of local and imported rice, the country's staple cereal, were up to 55 percent higher compared with November 2022 (FAO FPMA, 2023; Sierra Leone CH, November 2023).

Global increases in input costs, such as fuel and fertilizers, coupled with exchange rate fluctuations, substantially influenced domestic food prices (CH, November 2023).

Conflict/insecurity No major insecurity was reported to have had an impact on food security. However, a growing risk of conflict between livestock herders and farmers in the Northern and Eastern regions could lead to reduced agricultural and pastoral productivity in 2024 (CH, November 2023).

Peak numbers of people (in millions) by phase of acute food insecurity, 2016–2024



Source: CH Sierra Leone.

A protracted food crisis A low-income country, Sierra Leone has been included in all eight editions of the GRFC, and for the last four years has been classified as a major food crisis with more than 1 million people in Crisis or worse (CH Phase 3 or above).

The food crisis escalated in June–August 2020, mainly driven by price spikes and job losses associated with COVID-19, and peaked in 2021 at 1.8 million people. In 2023 and 2024, levels are still above 1 million people, mostly reflecting persisting economic access constraints amid high food inflation rates.

ACUTE MALNUTRITION

0.2M children under 5 years old with acute malnutrition in 2023

0.14M MAM | 0.06M SAM

Source: SMART, 2021.

The number of acutely malnourished children under 5 years old was projected to increase marginally between 2022 and 2023. Child acute malnutrition levels were classified as Medium at 5 percent at the national level, while they were up to 10 percent in the Western Area Urban District and 8 percent in Western Area Slums (SMART, 2021).

Around 6 percent of pregnant and breastfeeding women were acutely malnourished (MUAC <23cm) which is considered a medium prevalence (SLNNS, 2021).

DRIVERS OF ACUTE MALNUTRITION 2023–2024

Inadequate practices An Extremely Critical 5 percent of children aged 6–23 months received a Minimum Acceptable Diet. The situation was worst in the southern district of Bonthe (SLNNS, 2021).

Just over half (53 percent) of infants up to 6 months old were exclusively breastfed – considered Alert.

Inadequate services Around 12 percent of assessed children experienced one or more communicable childhood diseases (e.g. fever, cough, diarrhoea, among others) in the two weeks prior to the assessment. Morbidity levels were aggravated by the poor WASH conditions in many parts of the country, characterized by poor access to safe drinking water, lack of sanitation facilities and poor handwashing practices at critical times (SMART, 2021).

Lack of food High consumption of cheaper starchy staple diets and poor consumption of iron-rich animal-sourced foods, such as milk, meat and eggs, led to nutrient intake deficits. Micronutrient deficiencies accounted for anaemia in approximately 73 percent of children aged 6–59 months and 43 percent of women of reproductive age (15–49 years), indicating a severe public health problem for both (WHO, 2019).

1 - None/Minimal | 2 - Stressed | 3 - Crisis | 4 - Emergency | 5 - Catastrophe/Famine | Total population