

Country Disease Outlook

Sierra Leone

August 2023



World Health
Organization

African Region

Background

The Republic of Sierra Leone is a country in west Africa, bordered by Guinea, Liberia, and the Atlantic Ocean. It is a low-income country with a GDP per capita of US\$ 461 (2022) and a population of 8.6 million (2022).

Key points

- ◆ Sierra Leone has a high burden of communicable and non-communicable disease (NCDs), with the latter making up 34% of deaths in 2019.
- ◆ Sierra Leone improved its child survival rates between 2015 and 2021, however it is not yet meeting the SDG targets for neonatal or under-five mortality rates.
- ◆ Sierra Leone is endemic for the five NTDs amenable to preventive chemotherapy through mass drug administration (MDA). In 2020, 81% of the 7 million people targeted were treated with MDA.
- ◆ In Sierra Leone 46,445 people were receiving antiretroviral treatment in 2021. However, Sierra Leone has met only one of the 95-95-95 goals and should focus efforts on increasing the testing rates given that only 62% of people living with HIV knew their status in 2021.
- ◆ Sierra Leone's coverage rates of vaccination in children have recently been above or close to the 90% target levels. In 2021, the third dose of DTP-containing vaccine reached 92%, while the coverage rate for the first dose of measles vaccine was 87%. It is important for Sierra Leone to continue to maintain and strengthen its routine immunization system, while also implementing catch-up vaccination strategies in the country to ensure that no children are left unprotected from vaccine-preventable diseases in the future.

UHC/CN

Universal Health Coverage/Communicable
and Non-communicable Diseases
WHO Regional Office for Africa





2019

34%

of deaths due to NCDs

Broad disease outlook

The country has a high burden of both communicable (such as malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS) and non-communicable disease (NCDs). The latter was estimated to have caused 34% of deaths in 2019.

Communicable diseases

Malaria

Malaria remains a public health problem in Sierra Leone with an estimated 2.8 million cases in 2021 (with an incidence rate of 329.8 cases per 1000 people), resulting in 8,314 deaths. The country is currently off track to meet the targets set by the Global Technical Strategy for Malaria. There have been reductions in malaria case incidence from 2015 to 2021.

Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS

With an estimated burden of 289 TB cases per 100,000 in 2021, Sierra Leone is among a high TB burden country in the sub-Saharan region. The mortality rate of TB cases (all forms, excluding HIV) has decreased from 57 to 35 per 100,000 population between 2015 and 2021. The TB mortality rate among HIV-positive people has fallen from 17 to 12 per 100,000 population in the same period.

Sierra Leone has met one of the 95-95-95 goals:

- ▲ 62% of people living with HIV know their status.
- ▲ 98% of the people living with HIV that know their status are on treatment
- ▲ 45% of people living with HIV and on treatment are virally suppressed.

Approximately 46,445 people were receiving antiretroviral treatment in 2021.

Neglected tropical diseases

Sierra Leone is endemic for the five NTDs amenable to preventive chemotherapy through mass drug administration (MDA), namely lymphatic filariasis, schistosomiasis, soil-transmitted helminthiasis, and trachoma. In 2020, 5.7 million of the 7 million people targeted (81%) were treated with MDA.

Other notable NTDs that remain endemic are Buruli ulcer, foodborne trematodiasis, mycetoma, leprosy, rabies, and onchocerciasis.

Non-communicable diseases

NCDs are a significant health problem in Sierra Leone. The age-standardised mortality rate across

four major NCDs (Cardiovascular Disease, Chronic Respiratory Disease, Cancer and Diabetes) was 647 per 100,000 in males and 644 in females in 2021.

Sierra Leone has implemented efforts on the NCD progress indicators on areas including the NCD policy and plan, and tobacco taxes, however there is limited progress against a subset of the indicators. These include NCD guidelines, tobacco smoke free/pollution, tobacco advertising bans, tobacco media campaigns, alcohol advertising restrictions, salt policies, trans fats policies, marketing to children and physical activity awareness.

Childhood Immunization

Sierra Leone's coverage rates of vaccination in children have recently been above or close to the 90% target levels. In 2021, the third dose of DTP-containing vaccine reached 92%, while the coverage rate for the first dose of measles vaccine was 87%. This resulted in an estimated 20,027 under-immunized children and 15,020 zero dose children. It is important for Sierra Leone to continue to maintain and strengthen its routine immunization system, while also implementing catch-up vaccination strategies in the country to ensure that no children are left unprotected from vaccine-preventable diseases in the future.

Child survival

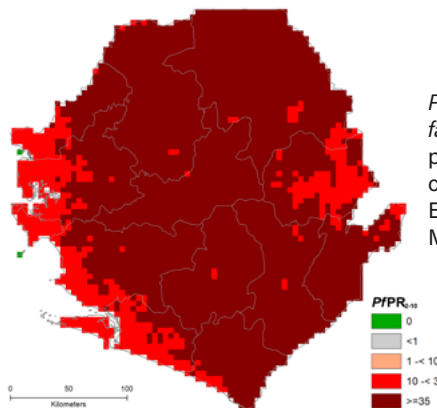
Based on the UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME) estimates, the under-5 mortality rate has fallen from 141 to 105 per 1,000 live births between 2015 and 2021, although it is still above the SDG target of 25 per 1,000 live births. Similarly, the neonatal mortality rate declined from 35 to 31 per 1,000 live births in the same period, remaining above the SDG target of 12.

There is also a commitment from MOH to establish and Child Health programme to oversee implementation of the Child Survival Action Plan 2023-2025.

MALARIA

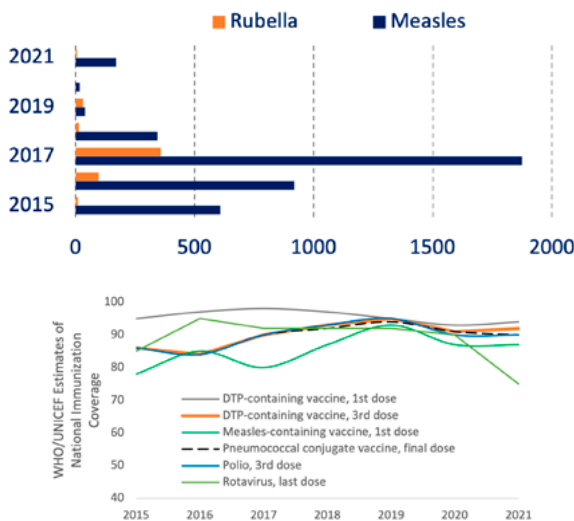
POPULATION AT RISK IN 2022	TOTAL MALARIA CASES IN 2021	TOTAL MALARIA DEATHS IN 2021
8.4 million	2.8 million	8,314

ITN use in children under five years 59.1% and 22.9% use of ACTs among those with fever for whom care was sought and received a finger or heel prick

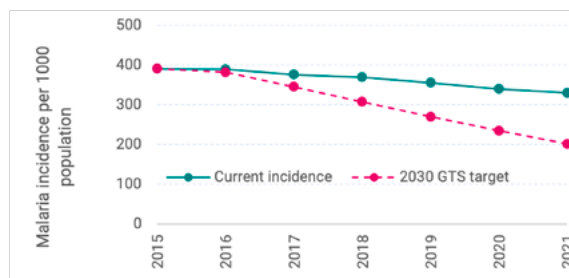


Plasmodium falciparum malaria prevalence in children in 2020. Estimates from the Malaria Atlas project

EXPANDED PROGRAMME ON IMMUNIZATION IN CHILDREN



Malaria incidence in Sierra Leone since 2015 compared to GTS targets shows that the country is not on track to achieving GTS targets.

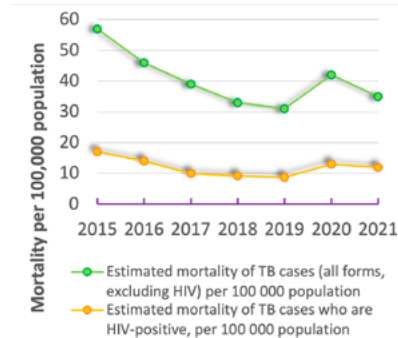
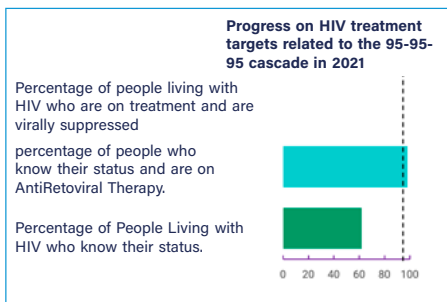


Zero dose children 15,020 **Under-immunized 20,027**

WUENIC estimates show that, for most basic antigens, coverage declined in 2019. Cases of measles were reported in 2021.

HIV AND TUBERCULOSIS

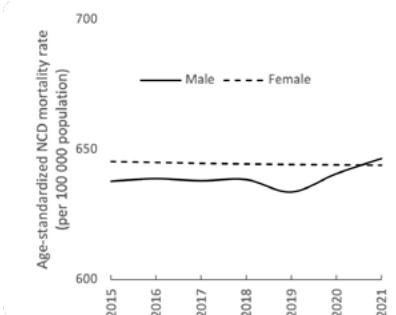
- 46,445** people receiving antiretroviral therapy in 2021
 - 79%** Treatment success rate for HIV-positive TB cases
 - Unknown** of children (aged < 5 years) household contacts of bacteriologically-confirmed TB cases on preventive treatment
- <10%** Domestic funding for TB
<10% Domestic funding for HIV



- Indicator 1 - Targets
- Indicator 2 - CRV Mortality
- Indicator 3 - Surveys
- Indicator 4 - NCD policy and Plan
- Indicator 5A - Tobacco taxes
- Indicator 5B - Tobacco smoke free/polution
- Indicator 5C - Tobacco health warning
- Indicator 5D - Tobacco advertising ban
- Indicator 5E - Tobacco media campaign
- Indicator 6A - Alcohol availability
- Indicator 6B - Alcohol advertising restrictions
- Indicator 6C - Alcohol taxes
- Indicator 7A - Salt policies
- Indicator 7B - Trans fats policies
- Indicator 7C - Marketing to children
- Indicator 8 - Physical activity awareness
- Indicator 9 - NCD guidelines

NCD PROGRESS INDICATORS

- **Achieved**
- **Partially achieved**
- **Not achieved/Unknown**



NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES

- Endemic NTDS requiring Preventive Chemotherapy (PC)**
- Lymphatic filariasis
 - Soil-transmitted helminthiasis
 - Schistosomiasis
 - Trachoma
 - Onchocerciasis (non-endemic)
- PC-NTDs treatment in 2021**
7.0 Million targeted for MDA
5.7 Million treated with MDA

OTHER MAJOR NTDS

- Buruli ulcer
- Foodborne trematodiasis
- Mycetoma
- Leprosy
- Rabies