Operational Context

Reverberations from the Ukraine war have put a further strain on food and nutrition security and people’s quality of life in Sierra Leone, as they are coinciding with longer-term macro-economic decline in the country. The rise of petroleum prices by 50 percent in one month (March) had a domino effect on the prices of other commodities, including food and transportation. This happened as the local currency, the Leone, continued to deteriorate against the U.S. dollar, contributing to a rapid rise in the cost of living and poverty.

WFP’s monthly market surveys, which are conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, showed that there was a 20 and 40 percent increase in the price of imported and local rice respectively between January 1 and 30 March 2022. Compared to the same period last year, the surveys found that the price of palm oil increased by 17 percent. Rice is the main staple food and palm oil is a commonly consumed foodstuff.

In the June ECOWAS/WFP/FAO assessment on the impact of the Ukraine crisis in the region, Sierra Leone registered the highest rise in food prices over the last five years (62 percent) and the fastest local currency depreciation.

As a result of these shocks, household incomes have been significantly eroded, which is disrupting food access among vulnerable households due to declining purchasing power.

The 2020 Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) already showed that 57 percent of the population of Sierra Leone (4.7 million people) were food insecure, with the level of severe food insecurity higher among female-headed households (13 percent) compared to male-headed ones (11 percent).


Population: 7.5 million
2020 Human Development Index ranking: 182 out of 189

Income level: low income
Chronic malnutrition: 30% of children between 6-23 months

Operational Updates

Resilience Building

- WFP carried out its first round of conditional cash-based transfers under the cross-border UN Peacebuilding Fund project in Falaba district, reaching 500 participating households (2,500 people, half of them women). The transfers were provided to support the development of small-scale irrigation systems in inland valley swamps for climate-smart agriculture. This aspect of the project is intended to facilitate the cultivation of rice and nutritious foods all year. In turn, this will foster social cohesion, trust and economic collaboration within and between Falaba district in Sierra Leone and Faranah prefecture in Guinea, while strengthening livelihoods, especially those of women, whilst protecting the environment.

- WFP in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) trained 37 Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) extension workers in the Technical Package for Rice Production (TPRP). The TPRP was developed jointly by JICA and the MoA to promote best practices in rice cultivation for community-level food security. The trainees will use their newly acquired skills to establish farmer field schools in 140 communities in seven districts in Sierra Leone, demonstrating the benefits of nursing and transplanting of rice, adequate spacing, weeding, and timely application of fertilizer.

- To further boost productivity among smallholders while supporting the MoA’s goal for increased mechanization, WFP provided five power tillers to high-performing farmer-based organizations (FBOs) in Moyamba, Kenema, and Pujehun districts. Ninety-seven percent of farming activities in Sierra Leone are undertaken by hand, and mostly by women, which places a high labour burden on them.

- WFP participated in a workshop that developed standard operating procedures (SOPs) for school feeding in Sierra Leone. The new SOPs will enhance food storage, handling and distributions. The exercise is part of WFP’s systems strengthening agenda under outcome 5 of the Country Strategic Plan (2020-2024) in Sierra Leone.
Strategic Result 1: Everyone has access to food

Strategic Outcome 1: Crisis-affected populations can meet their basic food and nutrition needs during and in the aftermath of crises

Focus area: Crisis response

Activities:
- Provide food and nutrition assistance to crisis-affected households and support their recovery needs.

Strategic Result 2: No one suffers from malnutrition

Strategic Outcome 3: Nutritiously vulnerable populations in targeted districts – including children, pregnant and lactating women and girls and adolescents – have improved nutritional status in line with national targets by 2025.

Focus area: Root causes

Activities:
- Provide comprehensive malnutrition prevention support, including complementary food and nutrition messaging, while strengthening the capacity of peripheral health units and staff on health and nutrition.

Strategic Result 3: Smallholders have improved food security and nutrition

Strategic Outcome 4: Smallholder farmers and communities in targeted areas have resilient livelihoods that better meet their food security and nutrition needs by 2030.

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:
- Provide integrated resilience-building support to smallholder farmers, including farmers’ organizations and women’s groups.

Strategic Result 5: Countries have strengthened capacity to implement the SDGs

Strategic Outcome 5: National and subnational institutions have strengthened capacities to manage food security and nutrition programmes by 2024.

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:
- Provide integrated resilience-building support to smallholder farmers, including farmers’ organizations and women’s groups.

Challenges

- The 50 percent increase in the price of fuel in March in Sierra Leone, resulted in a need for WFP to re-negotiate contracts with transporters and suppliers and adjust its programmatic budgets. It is expected that fuel prices will continue to rise in Sierra Leone as the country adjusts to the far-reaching impacts of the Ukraine crisis.

- A shortage of maize in-country delayed WFP’s supply of chicken feed to six mother support groups implementing poultry farming projects in Pujehun and Moyamba districts. WFP is piloting this activity to improve the diets of pregnant and lactating women and children aged between 6-23 months with a view to reducing chronic malnutrition, but also to boosting livelihoods of the groups, whose members are mostly smallholder farmers. With a steady flow of chicken feed, there will be more protein-rich eggs for the women and children and for sale by the groups. The groups registered much success in the first three months of the pilot, even using their earnings to buy their own feed in some cases.

Resourcing

- As the lean season approaches, coupled with rising food prices, WFP is facing a 95 percent shortfall (USD 5.8 million) for its unconditional cash-based transfers (CBT) programme from June to November 2022. Consequently, WFP would not be able to provide emergency assistance to 20,000 food insecure households or be in position to respond to sudden-onset shocks that could arise during the rainy season.

Donors

- Donors to the Country Strategic Plan [2020-2024]: Government of Sierra Leone, China, European Union, Ireland, Japan, the World Bank and private and multilateral donors (Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom). Additional support is provided by UN Peacebuilding Fund.