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How Africa Can Build a Future Free
from Hunger and Malnutrition



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MALI



CASE STUDY



Between 2000 and 2016, child undernutrition in Mali has shown signs of modest improvement, possibly hampered by the conflict in the country in recent years, particularly in the north. The Global Hunger Index was reduced from 44 in 2000 to 28 in 2016 (equivalent to a 36 percent change). This progress is also evidenced by a reduction in stunting from 43 percent to 35 percent, but Mali is still off-track to achieve the Malabo Declaration target of reducing stunting to less than 10 percent by 2025.¹ Institutional reforms, such as increased responsibility of the Nutrition Division, and interventions through agriculture and water, sanitation, and hygiene played key roles in making and sustaining progress.

INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

In Mali, the Nutrition Division is situated within the National Directorate of Health within the Ministry of Health. Since 2001, this division has overseen interventions and support to decentralized healthcare structures. In 2003, the *Agence Nationale de la Sécurité Sanitaire des Aliments* (National Agency for Food Safety) was created to ensure the coordination of all actions related to food safety. In 2004, the Office of the Food Security Commissioner was set up within the Presidency of the Republic with the mission of ensuring the implementation of the national food security policy. In addition, the adoption of the national nutrition policy² in 2013 led to the creation of the National Nutrition Council (NNC) and the Intersectoral Technical Committee for Nutrition (ITCN). The mission of the NNC is high-level planning and coordination of the national nutrition policy while the ITCN acts as a nutrition observer, publishing indicator trends, and ensures that the various sectoral operational plans are harmonized.³ In addition, any legislation specific to nutrition, including the International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes and Food Fortification, are enforced through the ITCN. Furthermore, the government has undertaken to finance nutrition as one of its priority development areas. In 2015, Mali included a separate government budget line for nutrition, enabling transparency and accountability for spending on nutrition-related interventions and activities.⁴

POLICY AND PROGRAMMATIC INTERVENTIONS

Relative to other countries, Mali's medium- and long-term national development policy (*Cadre Stratégique pour la Croissance et la Réduction de la Pauvreté*) assigns strong importance to nutrition.⁵ Mali's Ministry of Health has introduced several programs that have a specific bearing on improved nutrition, including the Management of Acute Malnutrition Program, the Nutrition Management Program for People Living with HIV/AIDS, the Infant and Young Child Feeding Program, and the Essential Nutrition Actions Program. Nutrition has been an integral part of the Strategic Framework for Growth and Poverty Reduction since 2007. In 2011, Mali joined the Scaling Up Nutrition movement (SUN). To operationalize the national nutrition policy, Mali made a clear programmatic commitment in 2014 by adopting a detailed multisectoral nutrition action plan to tackle undernutrition.

Interventions to tackle malnutrition appear to be effective in Mali. The Strengthening Community-Based Acute Malnutrition Prevention and Treatment Program (2012–2014) was implemented in the Koulikoro and Sikasso regions.⁶ The program aimed to strengthen community-based detection, referral, and follow-up of acute malnutrition. The program also sought to increase the number of women involved in producing nutrient-rich plant and animal-source foods, to ensure that the most nutritionally vulnerable household members consumed these products, and assisted women in selling surplus produce in nearby markets to enhance household income and resilience. An evaluation revealed a 29 percent and 40 percent increase in essential knowledge about child feeding among women in Koulikoro and Sikasso, respectively. The recovery rate among children treated for moderate acute malnutrition reached 89 percent in Sikasso and 86 percent in Koulikoro.

Further evidence from Mali indicates that a value chain approach to boosting the production and consumption of nutritious food is an effective way to improve nutrition. In 2012, the Improving Vegetable Production and Consumption project, implemented in the region of Sikasso, focused on developing seed lines and gardening practices and on improving dietary diversity, training cooperatives to develop complementary feeding recipes for young children using locally-available and locally-produced nutrient-dense food cereals and vegetables, and established commercial linkages between the cooperatives and input suppliers.⁷ The project also encouraged local women farmers' cooperatives to increase off-season vegetable production by providing inputs and training on gardening techniques. Not only did the project improve household food consumption, but it increased incomes through the sale of surplus produce.

In 2012, an integrated water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and nutrition program was initiated in northern Mali to improve the nutritional status of 187,000 women and 60,000 of their children (especially those under the age of two) in poor, rural households and communities across 180 villages. Four hundred community extension workers were trained to promote improved WASH and nutrition practices at the household level. Activities included the promotion of access to and use of latrines, water treatment demonstrations at the community level, individual household visits that focused on promoting exclusive breastfeeding, handwashing with soap, and nutrition counselling and referrals. Furthermore, extension workers regularly monitored and referred malnourished children in project intervention villages.⁸

Although Mali has shown signs of improving levels of undernutrition, currently the country is still off-track to meet national and international nutrition targets. The institutional and programmatic interventions by the government, including the newly established Nutrition Coordination Unit, show that progress can be made. However, violent conflict in the north of the country continues to put a strain on food production and on improving livelihoods and government budgets, as well as jeopardizing any progress that has been made in reducing undernutrition.

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¹ Grebmer, K. von, Bernstein, J., Hossain, N., Brown, T., Prasai, N., Yohannes, Y., Patterson, F., Sonntag, A., Zimmermann, S-M., Towey, O., Foley, C., 2017, 2017 Global Hunger Index: The Inequalities of Hunger. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute; Bonn: Welthungerhilfe; and Dublin: Concern Worldwide. <http://ebrary.ifpri.org/utils/getfile/collec-tion/p15738coll2/id/131422/filename/131628.pdf>

² Ministère de la Santé Mali, 2014, Politique Nationale de la nutrition Mali. <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/mli152514.pdf>

³ Scaling Up Nutrition Movement, 2014, Mali SUN Movement Compendium.

⁴ http://docs.scalingupnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/SUN_Compendium_ENG_20141026_09Mali.pdf

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Government of Mali, *Cadre Stratégique pour la Croissance et la Réduction de la Pauvreté*, 2011, http://www.maliapd.org/IMG/file/pdf/DOCUMENTS_CLES/1_CSCR-P/2012_Plan_d'Actions_Prioritaires_CSCR_2012_2017_VF2.pdf

⁷ Nielsen J. and Knieriemien, M., 2014, Strengthening Community Based Management Of Acute Malnutrition And Food Security In Two Region Of Mali: Koulikoro And Sikasso, USAID and Helen Keller International. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00K6VF.pdf

⁸ USAID, 2014, Mali Nutrition Profile. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1864/USAID-Mali_NCP.pdf

⁹ Bery, R., Traore, S. and Shafritz, L., 2016, WASHplus in Mali: integrating WASH and nutrition for healthy communities. Field Exchange 51, January 2016. p134. www.enonline.net/fex/51/washplusmali