



The recipe for success: how policy-makers can integrate water, sanitation and hygiene into action to end malnutrition

Country profile: Mali



Key statisticsⁱ

- **38.5%** of children under five are stunted
- **15.3%** of children under five are wasted
- **74%** of the population have access to at least basic drinking water services
- **31%** of the population have access to at least basic sanitation services
- **16%** of the population have access to basic hygiene

Background

Mali is among the countries with the highest under-five stunting prevalence in the world, with very little progress in the reduction of stunting in the past 30 years. It is also lagging behind in access to drinking water and sanitation, missing its Millennium Development Goal targets for both.

At the public policy level, Mali has made real progress in the past few years with the adoption in 2013 of the National Nutrition Policy (Politique Nationale de Nutrition, PNN) and the Multisectoral Nutrition Plan (Plan d'action multisectoriel de Nutrition, PAMN) for 2014–2018. Mali's National Water Policy (Politique Nationale de l'Eau) has been in place since 2006, the National Sanitation Policy of 2009 is currently under revision, and the Strategic Plan for WASH in Health Centres in the process of validation. Beyond WASH and Nutrition policies, the 2016–2018 Strategic Framework for Economic Recovery and Sustainable Development (Cadre Stratégique pour la Relance Economique et le Développement Durable) – the national reference framework for development policies and strategies – considers nutrition as a priority theme. The Socio-Sanitary Development Program 2014–2018 (PRODESS III) includes an aim to create a healthy environment by addressing the social determinants of health, including hygiene. Nutrition is part of the growth and poverty reduction strategic framework 2012–2017.

Mali has committed to 'Nutrition for Growth' (N4G) targets on child wasting, stunting in children under two, and reducing micronutrient deficiencies. The country is also a member of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, REACH (Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and undernutrition) and the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) partnership, and has agreed to the Second International Conference on Nutrition

(ICN2) framework for action. Mali has signed the Malabo, Abuja and Ngor Declarations.

Is water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) integrated within national nutrition plans?

National Policy on Nutrition (Politique nationale de nutrition) 2013; Multisectoral Plan for Nutrition (Plan d'action multisectoriel de nutrition – designed for the implementation of the PNN)

The PNN makes very limited reference to WASH, with no mention of it in any of the policy's objectives. However, it explicitly recognises that poor sanitary conditions can lead to diseases (in particular diarrhoea), which, in turn, can affect the nutritional status of a child. The only WASH interventions included in the document focus on the prevention and treatment of diarrhoea and on food hygiene, and these are the only activities for which the Ministry of Water has responsibility. The PNN and the Multi-sectoral Plan for Nutrition that derives from it call for the involvement of multiple sectors and ministries, led by the Health Ministry.

The actions the health sector lead occupy a large part of the financing, with budget also allocated for agriculture, social development and food security. Apart from water access in schools, there is no inclusion of WASH in the budget. At the institutional level, the PNN is implemented through different structures, including an Intersectoral Technical Committee on Nutrition, from which the Ministry of Water is absent. The participation of Ministries responsible for WASH services in implementing the plans is implied but not explicitly stated. Overall, although the nutrition policy and action plan do recognise the importance of multi-sectorality to increasing the efficiency of nutrition programmes, WASH is not considered a priority.

Is nutrition integrated within national WASH plans?

National Water Policy (Politique nationale de l'Eau), 2006

The National Water Policy (Politique nationale de l'Eau) does not include any objectives linked to the reduction of undernutrition. The policy does aim to contribute to the development of agro-sylvo-pastoral activities, which is considered to actively contribute to the fight against poverty and enable food security. This could be an opportunity to make links with nutrition. The policy recognises that the WASH sector's lack of efficiency is partly due to the absence of dialogue between the various stakeholders and the absence of a national strategy. This recognition could be an entry point to improve coordination with nutrition, which is not mentioned in the policy.

National Sanitation Policy (Politique nationale d'assainissement), 2009

The National Sanitation Policy is implemented by the National Directorate for Sanitation and the control of Pollution and Pollutants, which is under the Ministry

of the Environment and Sanitation. The policy does not make the links with nutrition. Expected results include the equipment of public spaces with sanitation services, including schools, health centres and marketplaces. This presents an opportunity to add areas with high undernutrition as an indicator for determining priority locations for these sanitation interventions and including nutrition within the approach to behaviour change (that is, environmental and food hygiene).

Ten-year Plan for Health and Social Development (Plan décennal de développement sanitaire et social [PDDSS]) 2014–2023

The PDDSS, which incorporates hygiene promotion, states that promotion of hygiene depends on the Ministry of Health. Hygiene promotion in schools is implemented jointly by the Ministries of Education and Health, and does not mention nutrition or any joint work with nutrition actors.

Overall, the WASH sectoral policies do not explicitly aim to contribute towards reduced undernutrition and do not mention nutrition indicators for the monitoring of WASH objectives. However, although no explicit link is made, it is clear that several of the planned interventions, such as expanding coverage of access to drinking water and protected sanitation systems, and prioritising health facilities and schools, correspond well with nutrition-sensitive WASH approaches.

Recommendations for the Government of Mali

- Prioritise WASH as a sector for integrated policy and programming together with health, agriculture and social development.
- Strengthen cross-ministerial coordination on WASH and nutrition, for example by ensuring the participation of the Water Ministry in the Intersectoral Technical Committee on Nutrition.
- The Government should facilitate institutional dialogue between policy-makers involved in nutrition and the different WASH sub-sectors. Strengthen this by agreeing clear roles and responsibilities for the different ministries in charge of WASH interventions in relation to nutrition.
- The review of the National Water and Sanitation policies could be an opportunity to integrate nutrition objectives and targets to ensure maximum impact of the included nutrition-related activities.
- Integrate planning between WASH and nutrition specialists, so that WASH interventions are targeted to geographical areas that have high rates of undernutrition, on the basis of nutritional status data.
- Strengthen the nutrition-sensitivity of WASH policies and plans by going beyond food hygiene to include environmental hygiene and by integrating key nutrition messages into hygiene promotion strategies.
- Make 'BabyWASH' interventions a strategic priority, in order to target WASH interventions at those most vulnerable to malnutrition – babies during the 1,000 days from the start of a mother's pregnancy until the child is two years old.

Recommendations for all national governments

- Ensure policies align with the Sustainable Development Goals and their interconnected targets, to strengthen WASH and nutrition coordination and collaboration, using opportunities such as policy reviews and joint sector reviews.
- Establish effective cross-ministerial coordination mechanisms championed at the highest level by heads of state, to support sharing of information and joint planning and implementation of policies.
- Ensure cross-ministerial coordination structures incorporate meaningful participation of and consultation with civil society and affected communities.
- Ensure up-to-date national WASH and nutrition plans and progress reports are easily accessible online, to allow civil society to monitor progress and hold governments to account.

Nutrition policy-makers and practitioners should:

- Prioritise nutrition-sensitive WASH interventions and include specific objectives to improve WASH within nutrition plans and policies. Clear entry points to integrate WASH and nutrition include: behaviour change promotion; improvement of provision of WASH in healthcare facilities and schools; and co-location of interventions to areas with lowest WASH access and highest prevalence of undernutrition.

WASH policy-makers and practitioners should:

- Increase the 'nutrition-sensitivity' of policies and programmes, including by: targeting geographical areas where undernutrition is most prevalent; prioritising women and children; and including nutrition-relevant interventions, such as improving WASH in health and nutrition centres.

This country profile is drawn from the global report 'The recipe for success: how policy-makers can integrate water, sanitation and hygiene into action to end malnutrition' produced by ACF, the SHARE Consortium and WaterAid. Read the full report at www.wateraid.org/recipeforsuccess

ⁱ To ensure consistency and cross-country comparability, we have used the most recent figures published by global monitoring reports. In some countries, more up-to-date national statistics are available. Nutrition statistics from UNICEF, WHO & World Bank Group (2017) *Child malnutrition estimates*. Available at www.who.int/entity/nutgrowthdb/jme_dataset2017_final.xlsx?ua=1
WASH statistics from UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme (2017) *Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene: 2017 update and SDG Baselines*. Available at washdata.org/report/jmp-2017-report-launch-version1