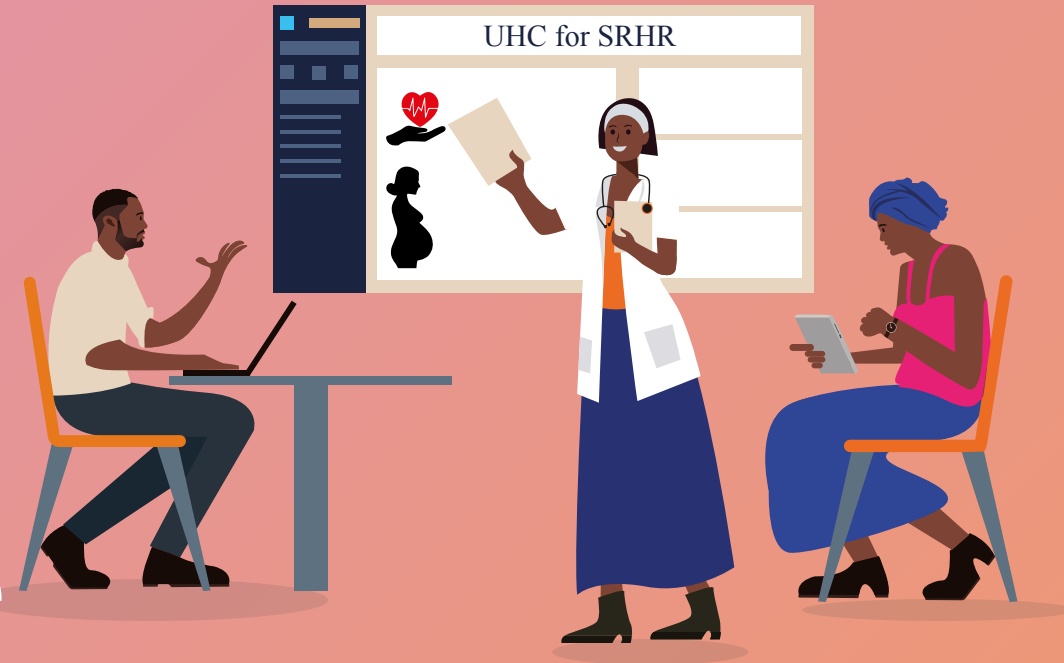


# Towards inclusion of sexual and reproductive health in the universal health coverage package

## Creating enabling environments in Sierra Leone



This case study was developed by the WHO country office with support from the Country Strategy and Support (CSS) and the Prevention of Unsafe Abortion (PUA) unit at UNDP-UNFPA-UNICEF-WHO-World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction (HRP) Department of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research (SRH). The work was undertaken as part of a collaborative project to address unsafe abortion through a health system strengthening approach. The project ran from 2019–2023 and included ten countries; three WHO regional offices; and five WHO HQ departments working together through a technical working group coordinated by HRP.

# Background

Sierra Leone faces multiple challenges in the provision of sexual and reproductive health and Universal Health Coverage.

## Sierra Leone: Facts

### Health sector



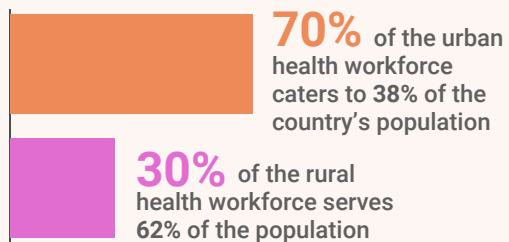
64.6%

Out-of-pocket expenditure<sup>2</sup>

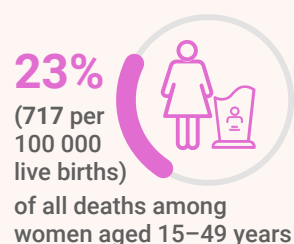
Ratio of doctors and nurses to population

12.3  
per 10 000 population<sup>3</sup>

### Rural-urban imbalance<sup>4</sup>

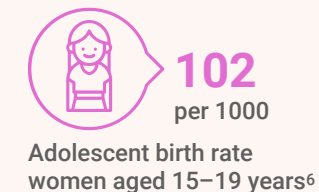
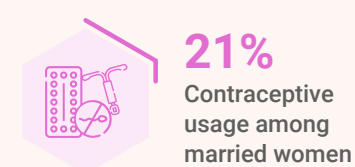
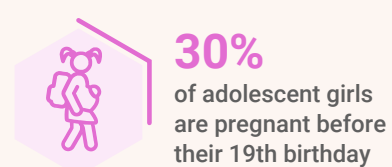


### Mortality



1 in 20  
adult women face lifetime risk of dying from maternal causes

### Family planning



### Highest unmet need among adolescents

Those aged 15-19 years



Those in the lowest wealth quintile



33 abortions occur annually per 1000 women aged 15-49 years<sup>7</sup>

## Legal status of abortion

The 1861 Offences Against the Person Act severely restricts abortion in Sierra Leone. However, the country is looking to bring about change through the framing of a Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Bill.



## Positive shifts in policies

### Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019–2023

- Builds a well-resourced and functioning health-care system
- Ensures universal health coverage, including sexual and reproductive health

### Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health Policy and Strategy

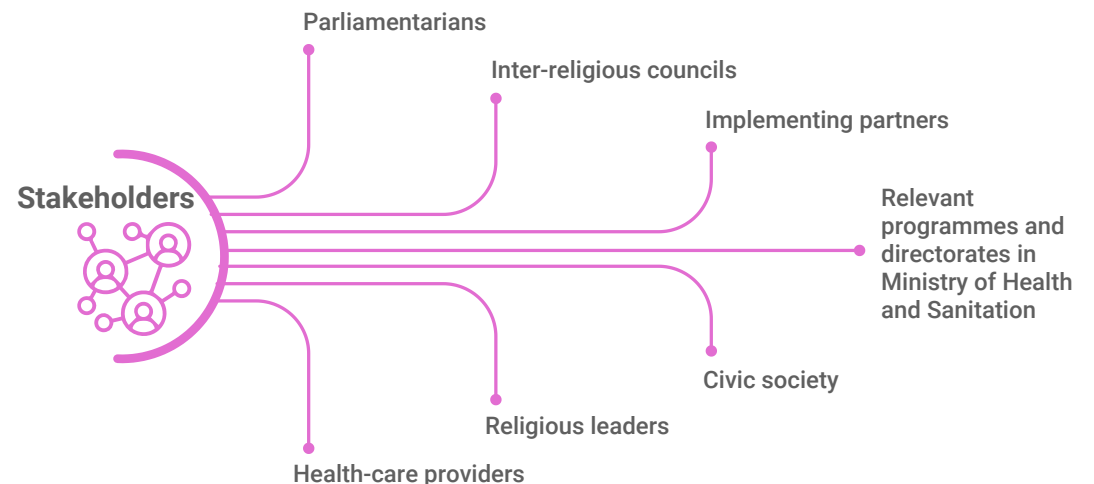
- Accelerates the reduction of maternal, newborn and child morbidity and mortality
- Ensures access to universal sexual and reproductive health services

## Intervention

### Policy dialogues and stakeholder workshops

Recognizing that stakeholder resistance to sexual and reproductive health and rights issues would impact the success of the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health Policy and Strategy, Ministry of Health and Sanitation collaborated with World Health Organization to build wide-ranging consensus with the People's Alliance for Reproductive Health and Advocacy Coalition and 420 stakeholders from 12 districts in Sierra Leone through policy dialogues and workshops on 'Universal Health Coverage for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights' in 2018. Presentation of evidence-based information including case studies, testimonials, adverse future impact analysis, medical expert opinions helped to build common ground.

### Process chart of consultations with stakeholders





# Impact



Momentum to the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Bill which has been approved for drafting by the Cabinet



Incorporation of sexual and reproductive health and rights in primary and secondary school



Introduction of the self-care intervention for sexual and reproductive health and rights

## Scaling-up of facilities offering post-abortion care services

### Achieved

**51**  
(basic emergency obstetric and newborn care and comprehensive emergency obstetric and newborn care)

**115**  
(including community health centres and peripheral health-care units)

### In process

**110**  
additional community health centres and hospitals being trained and equipped for further expansion

### Intended

- Universal coverage for post-abortion care
- Surgical and medical management at all community health centres and hospitals
- Medical management at all lower peripheral health-care units

## The following action points emerged from the consultations

- 01 Reducing unsafe abortion practices
- 02 Lowering the current rate of abortion-related complications and mortality
- 03 Improving reporting of deaths due to complications during abortion through health management information system
- 04 Improving health system preparedness and readiness for provision of safe abortion and post-abortion care
- 05 Designating all community health centres for abortion-related services
- 06 Expanding medical management of post-abortion care at community and lower peripheral health-care unit levels
- 07 Revitalizing the health management information system for sexual and reproductive health and rights (family planning and post-abortion care)
- 08 Operationalizing skills labs for sexual and reproductive health and rights in every hospital to be used as training centre for the catchment health facilities that bolster the networking and referral system

## Conclusion

Building consensus and creating an enabling environment for sexual and reproductive health and rights have helped to set in motion changes that bring focus on improving the health and rights of women and adolescents in Sierra Leone. Progress has been made in providing care and strengthening the system for sexual and reproductive health service delivery and management. It is hoped that this will pave the way for the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Bill.

<sup>1</sup> Government of Sierra Leone. Ministry of Health and Sanitation (2017). Service Availability and readiness assessment (SARA) report, Quality of Care survey, and Data Quality Review, pp 34,97 | [https://mohs2017.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/mohs-sierra-leone\\_sara-report\\_final.pdf](https://mohs2017.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/mohs-sierra-leone_sara-report_final.pdf)  
<sup>2</sup> National Health Account Report 2017: <https://www.afro.who.int/news/launching-national-health-accounts-report-2017> and <https://mohs2017.files.wordpress.com/2017/03/nha-2013.pdf> | <sup>3</sup> Health Labour Market Analysis Report | <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240035546> | <sup>4</sup> Ibid. | <sup>5</sup> The Republic of Sierra Leone. Ministry of Health and Sanitation (2019). Demographic and Health Survey, pp 141 | <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR365/FR365.pdf> | <sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp 39 | <sup>7</sup> GUTTMACHER Institute report in 2020 | [https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/page\\_files/guttmacher-2020-annual-report.pdf](https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/page_files/guttmacher-2020-annual-report.pdf) | <sup>8</sup> Basic emergency obstetric and newborn care | <sup>9</sup> Comprehensive emergency obstetric and newborn care services