

MULTI-DIMENSIONAL CHILD POVERTY

IN SIERRA LEONE

In 2017, with the support of UNICEF and other partners, the Government of Sierra Leone, was the first worldwide to launch the sixth round of the multiple indicators cluster surveys (MICS6). In addition to providing information for a large number of indicators, including for the SDGs, this survey was designed to analyze child poverty and guide policies and programmes.

The Sierra Leone definition of child poverty remains in line with the international definitions as well as with that used for the 2010 child poverty profile.

MICS6 data was used to estimate child poverty and disaggregate it to better understand its extent and drivers. When possible, the trend with the estimates from MICS4–2010 have been presented. MICS is funded by UNICEF and implemented by the Government (Statistics Sierra Leone) using a standardized worldwide comparable methodology. Sierra Leone has been the first country to implement MICS6 worldwide, hence providing updated information to analyze child poverty trends. Globally, this is also the first child poverty analysis using MICS6 data.

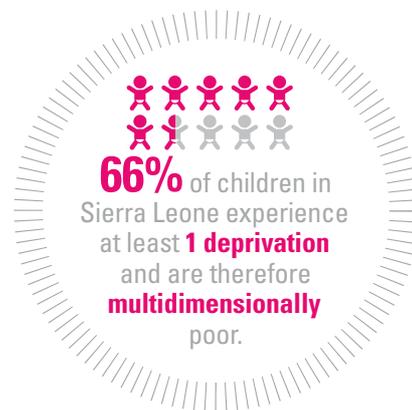
A child is defined as poor if deprived they are deprived in one or more of the following seven dimensions:



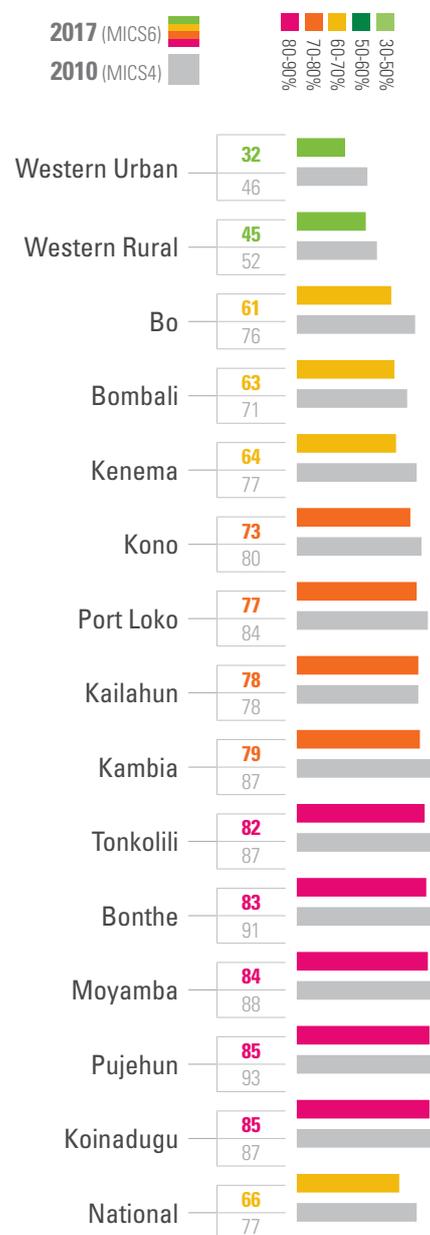
DEFINING POVERTY

Monetary poverty approaches are commonly used to measure poverty, using either international comparison standards based on the World Bank \$1.90/day measure, and/or nationally defined monetary poverty cut-offs

Multidimensional poverty measures complement the traditional monetary poverty measures by capturing the deprivations that each person or child faces in key dimensions such as health, water, sanitation and education.



Child poverty trends by geographical area

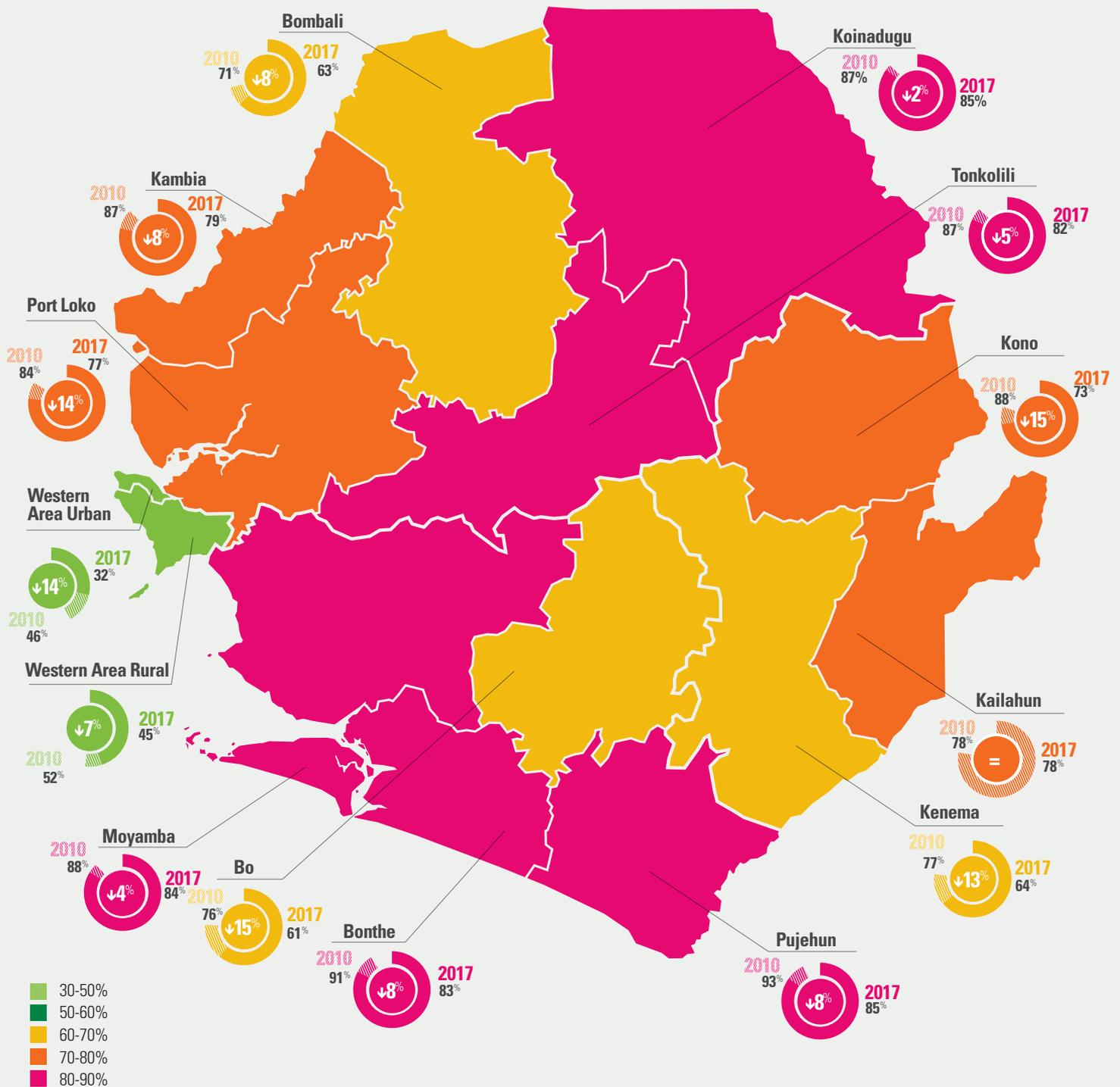


01 INCIDENCE OF POVERTY

REGIONAL DISPARITIES EXIST IN SIERRA LEONE

More than 80% of children are poor in Koinadugu, Pujehun, Moyamba, Bonthe and Tonkolili.
In the Western area/urban only 32% of children are poor.

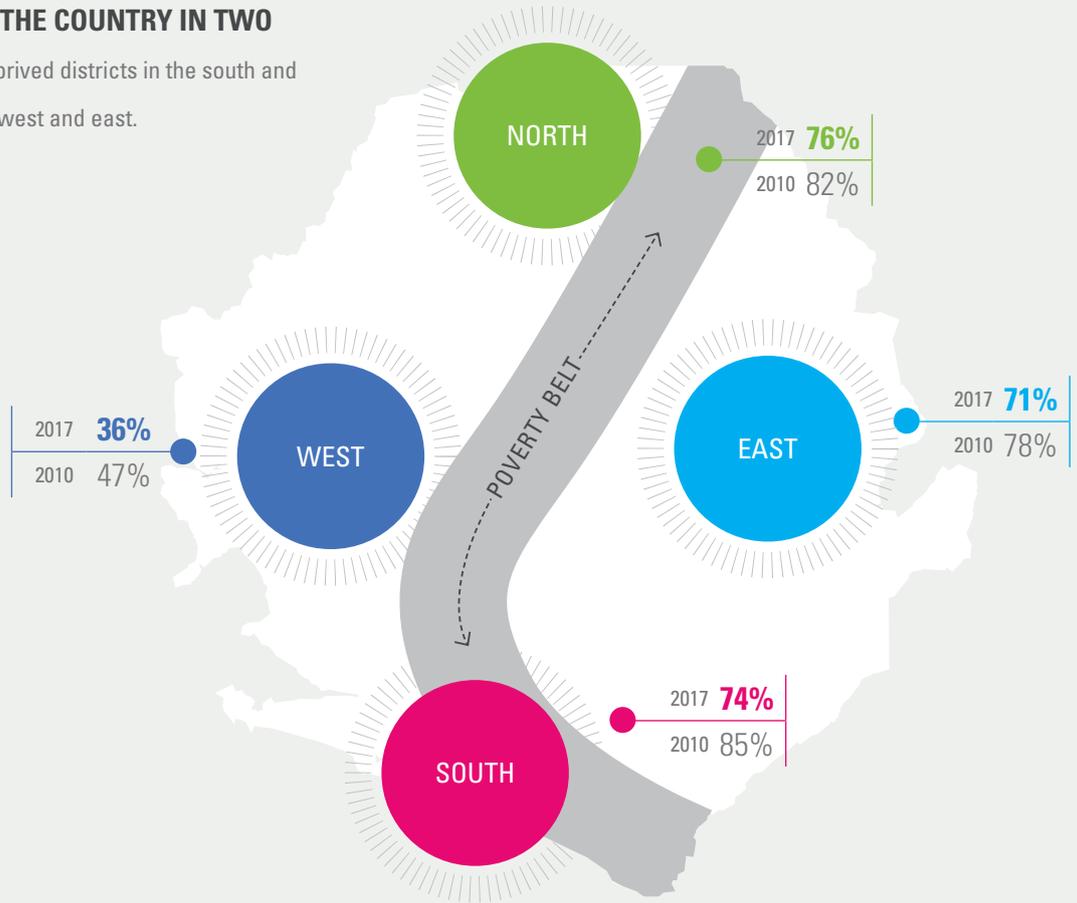
Percentage of multi-dimensionally poor children (2010–2017)



For consistency, we have presented the results using the old map of Sierra Leone since MICS 6, the source of the data for the analysis, did not consider Karene and Falaba Districts during the survey. The figures for Koinadugu District apply to Falaba whereas those for Karene are spread between Koinadugu and Bombali Districts. Stats SL will work on the data to ensure that future analyses will report on Falaba and Karene Districts.

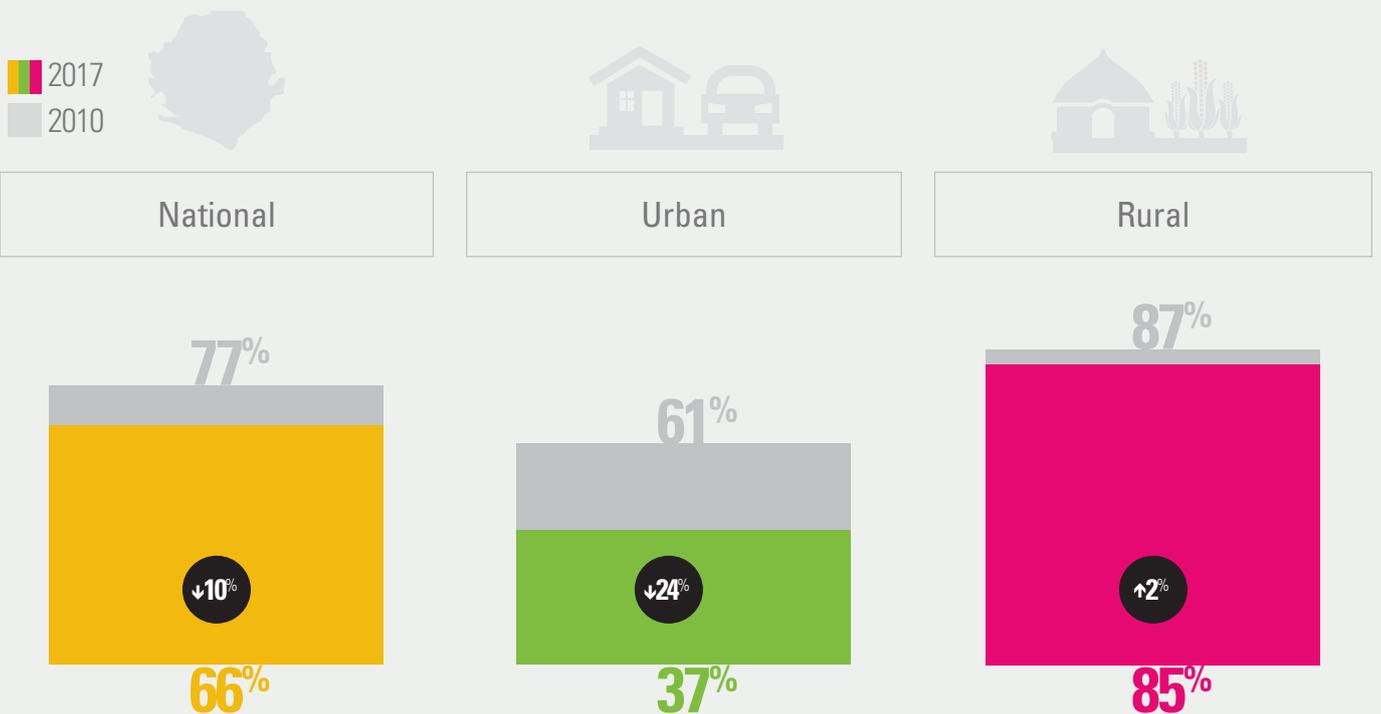
A POVERTY BELT SPLITS THE COUNTRY IN TWO

There are a greater number of deprived districts in the south and north than in the west and east.



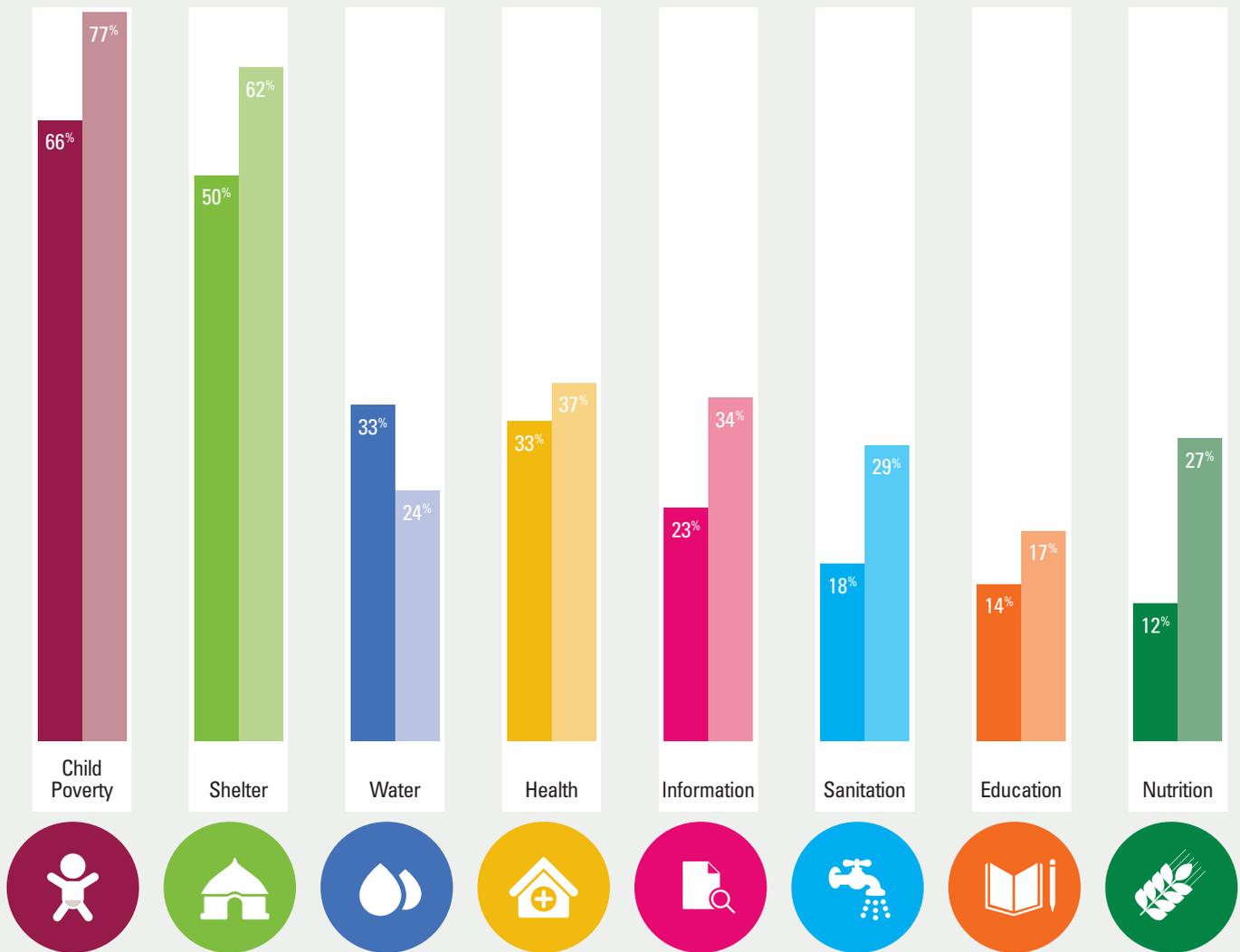
CHILDREN LIVING IN RURAL AREAS ARE MORE AFFECTED BY CHILD POVERTY THAN THOSE LIVING IN URBAN AREAS.

The proportion of poor children significantly declined by about 24 percentage points in urban areas between 2010 and 2017, while child poverty slightly increased in rural areas from 85 per cent to 87 per cent.



DEPRIVATIONS IN THE SEVEN CHILD POVERTY DIMENSIONS AFFECT CHILDREN DIFFERENTLY.

Percentage of children deprived in each dimension (2010–2017)



50%

Deprivation in the **shelter** dimension affects children the most, with half of the children in Sierra Leone living in shelters that are overcrowded and/or have poor flooring material.



12%

Severe malnutrition declined from 27 per cent to 12 per cent between 2010 and 2017, making it the dimension in which children are least deprived in Sierra Leone.



30%

When **moderate nutrition** is considered, the deprivation rate almost triples to reach 30 per cent. Moderate malnutrition prevalence remains very high among children aged under five years.

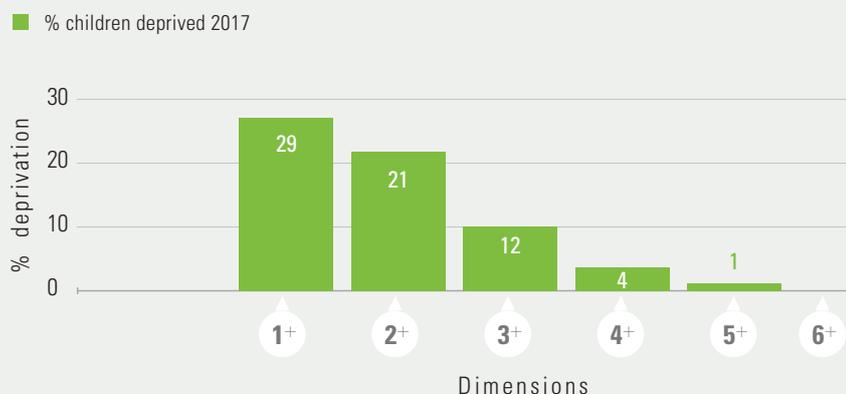
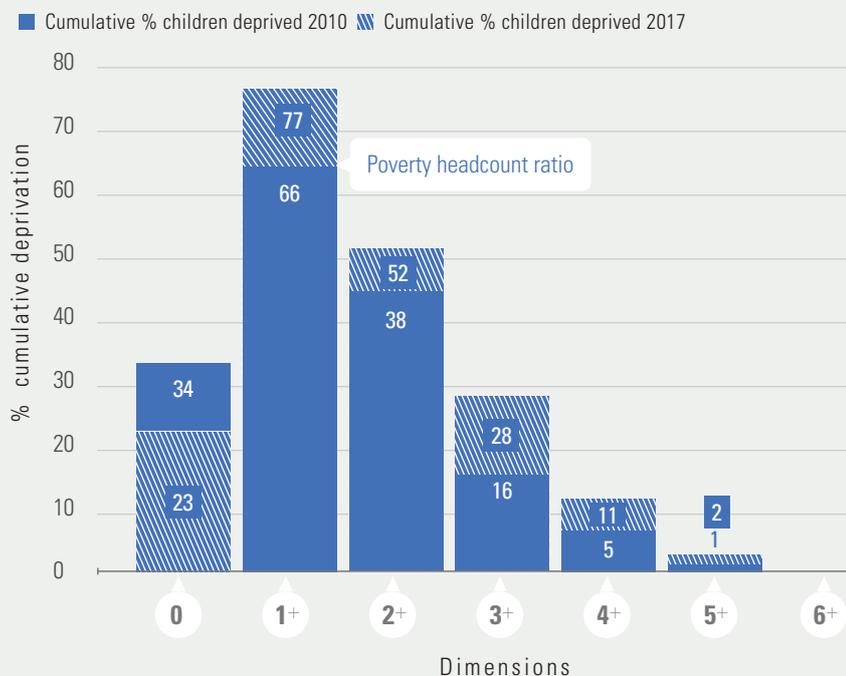


97%

The results of the **water quality** testing show that 97 per cent of households use drinking water that is infected with the *E. coli* bacteria found in feces.

Results point to a need to further address moderate nutrition and water quality that may affect children's long-term ability to **GROW AND THRIVE IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT.**

02 DEPTH AND SEVERITY OF POVERTY



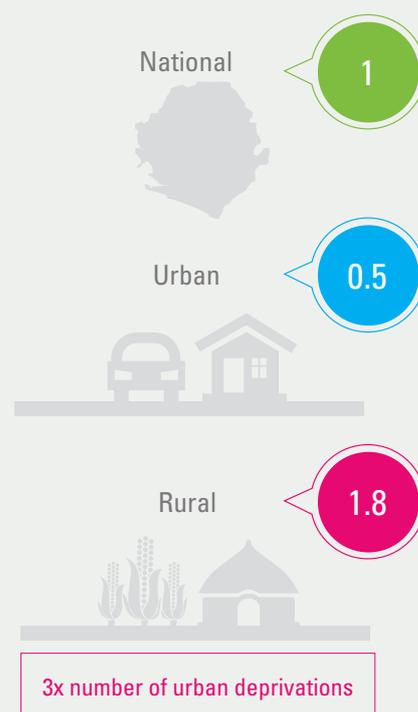
Understanding child poverty headcount ratio variations is important for policy responses. However, another aspect of poverty often analyzed and of use in making policy decisions is the depth of poverty.

Conceptually, the poverty depth or poverty gap measures the extent to which individuals fall below the poverty line (the poverty gaps) as a proportion of the poverty line. The sum of these poverty gaps gives the minimum cost of eliminating poverty, if transfers were perfectly targeted for example.

The depth of child poverty is measured by the average number of deprivations suffered by children in a specific country or geographical location. Child poverty depth hence measures how poor those children living in poverty are in terms of distance from the poverty threshold. The graph below shows the average number of deprivations suffered by children in Sierra Leone at national and regional levels.

The results show that more than 66 per cent of Sierra Leonean children experience one deprivation or more, a large majority of them are deprived in one (28.5 per cent) or two (21.1 per cent) dimensions and almost none of them is deprived in six or seven dimensions.

The depth of child poverty has reduced in Sierra Leone compared to the 2010 estimates. Therefore, in addition to having a lower proportion of children that are poor, the number of deprivations experienced by poor children is also reducing. However, children living in rural areas experience on average 1.8 deprivations, which is more than three times that of children living in urban areas (0.5 deprivation on average).



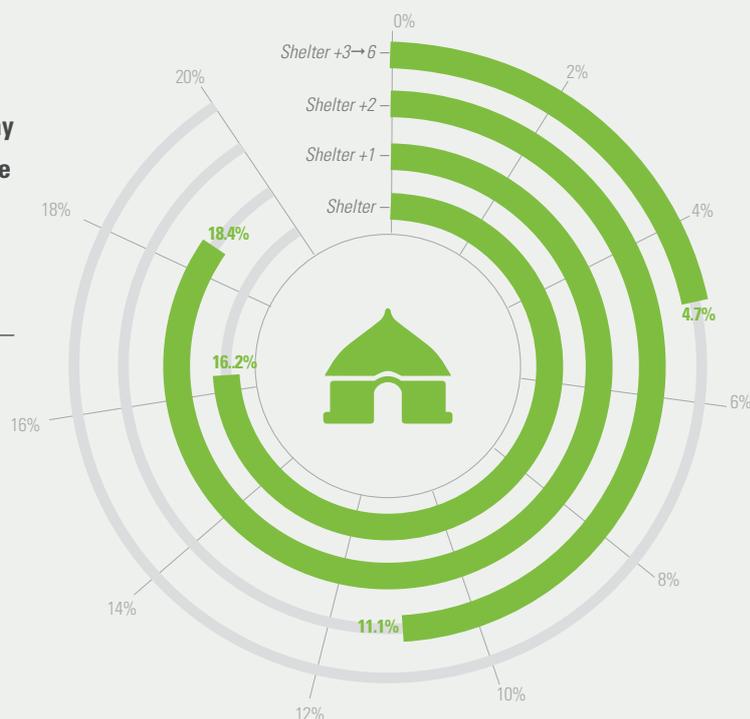
03 OVERLAPPING DEPRIVATIONS

Child poverty analysis can also be presented based on the way the various dimensions overlap. Overlapping analysis can give interesting information on the dimensions in which children tend to be deprived at the same time and the extent to which these deprivations overlap.

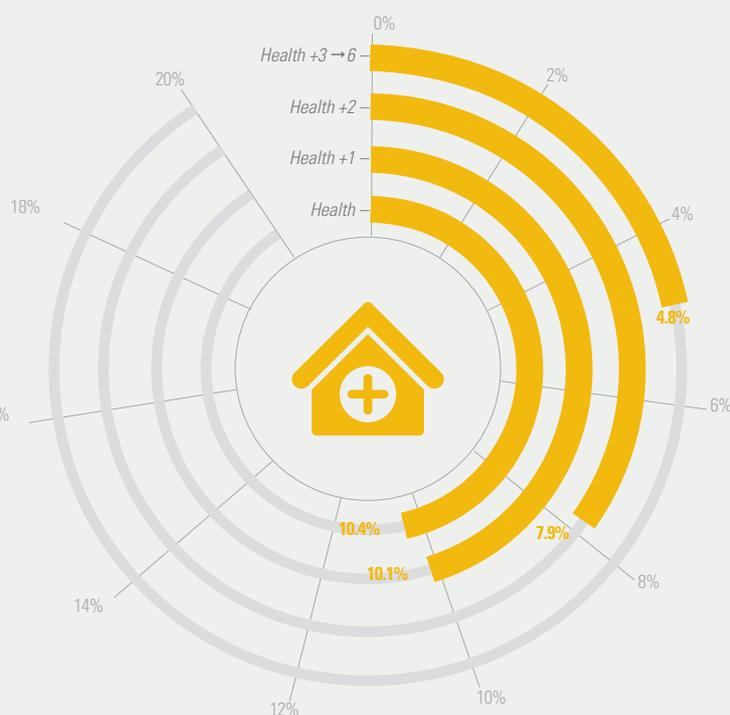
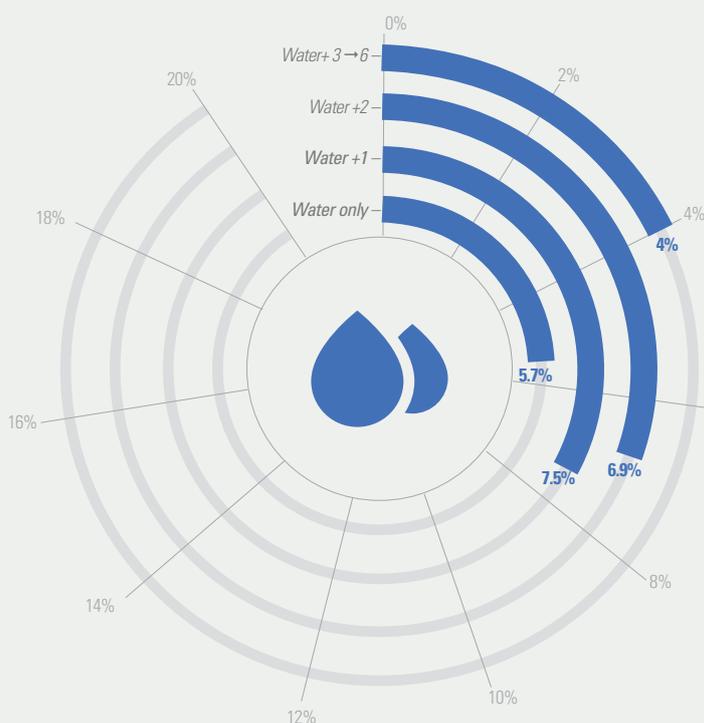
Understanding whether different deprivations are experienced simultaneously – and for which combinations of the different child poverty dimensions – can provide useful information for integrated policy and legislative responses.

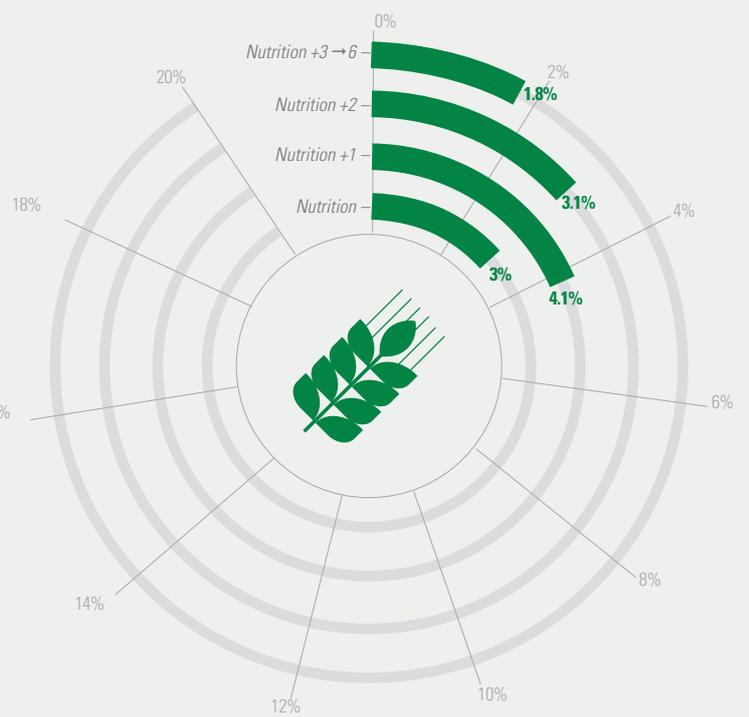
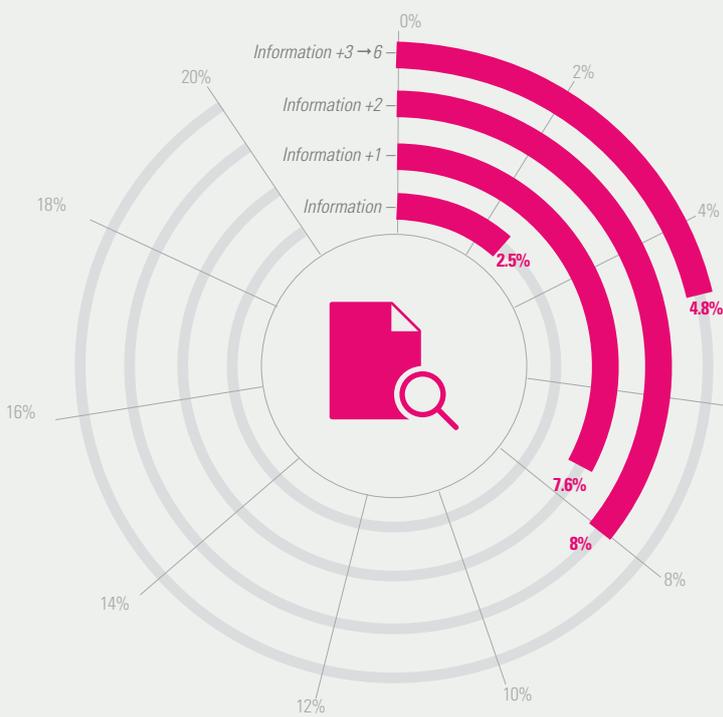
These figures represent those children that are deprived in each dimension. It shows four categories:

- those deprived only in the specific dimension;
- those deprived in that specific dimension and one other;
- those deprived in that dimension and two others; and
- those deprived in that dimension and 3 to 5 others.

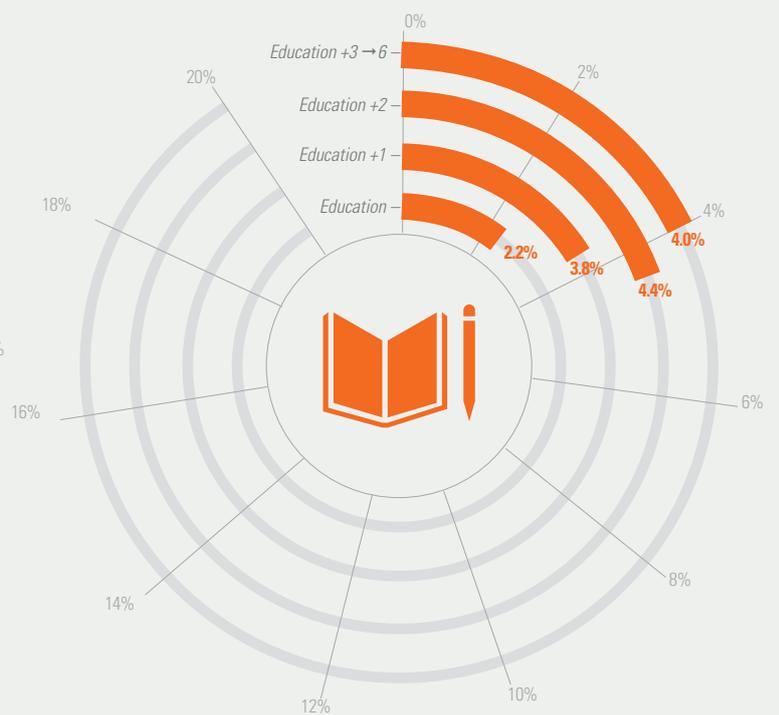
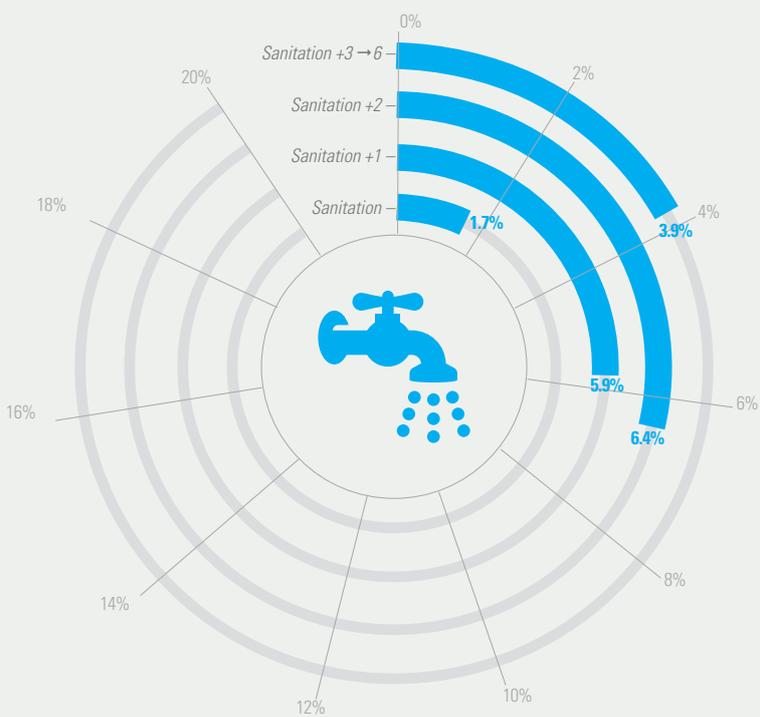


SHELTER IS THE DIMENSION IN WHICH children are the most deprived.



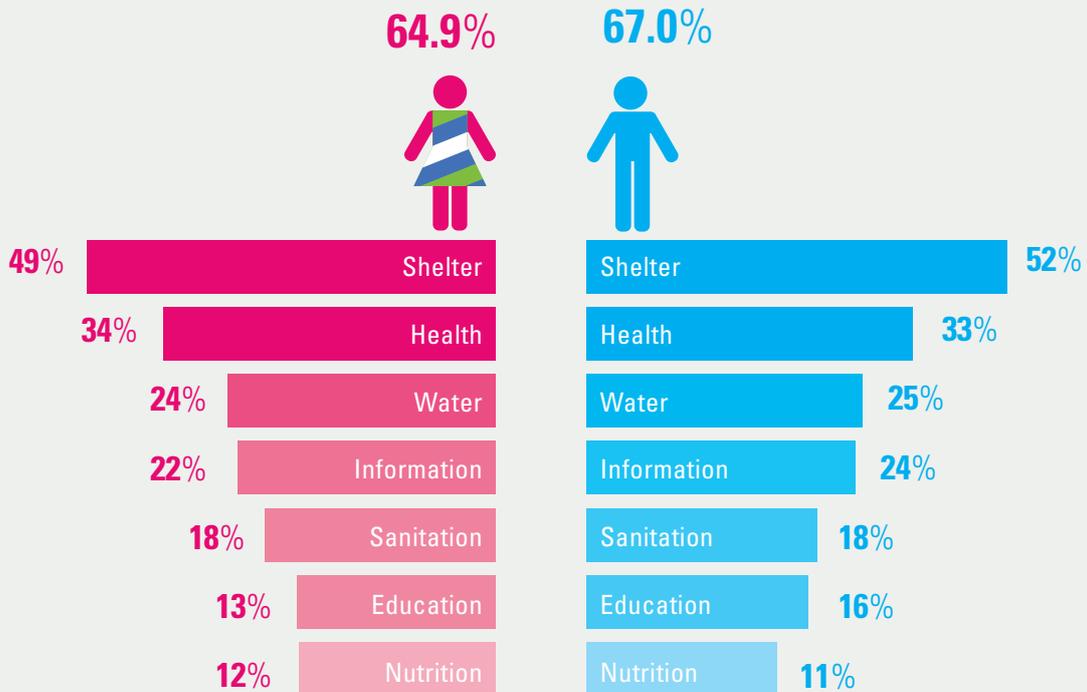


Deprivation in the **NUTRITION DIMENSION IS THE LOWEST.**

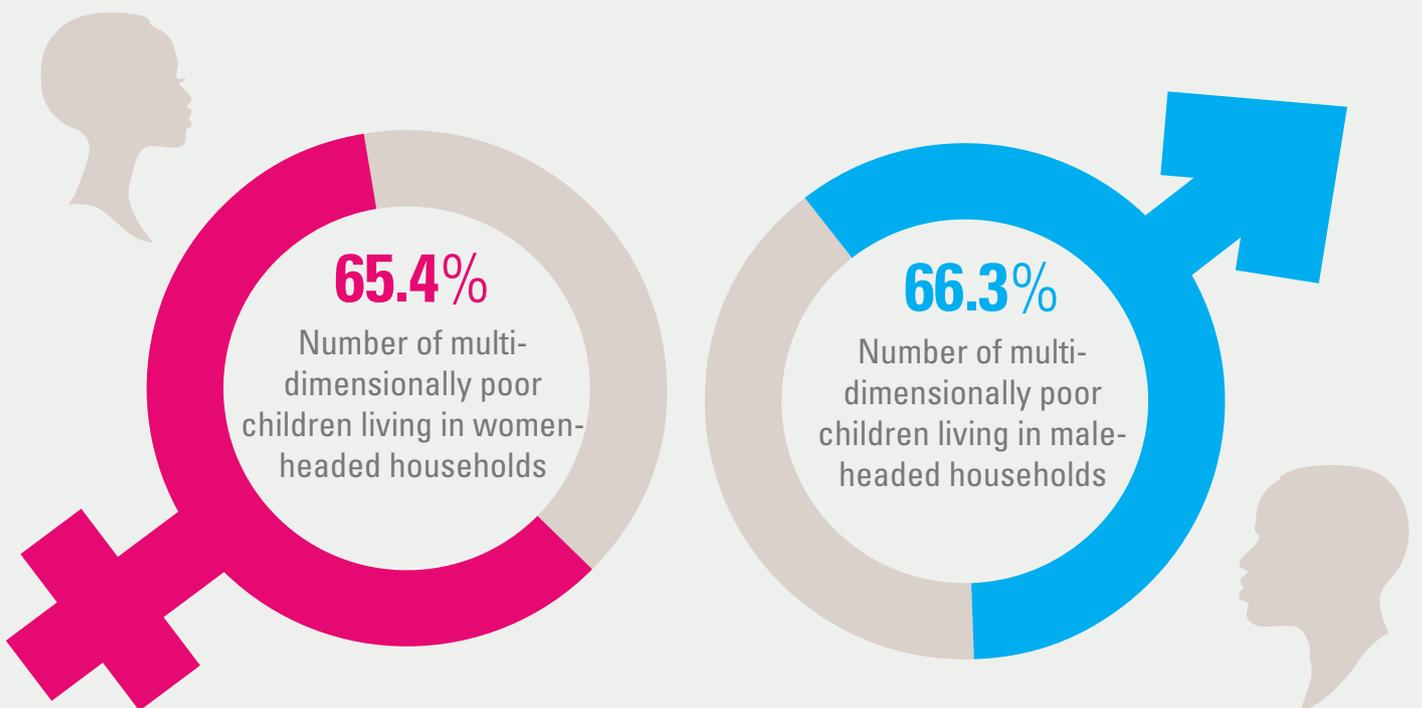


04 ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

To better understand the drivers of child poverty, the socioeconomic situation of the children and their families has been analyzed. The findings show slightly more boys are deprived than girls, but those differences are not statistically significant. Poverty has, however, significantly declined for both girls and boys from 2010 to 2017.

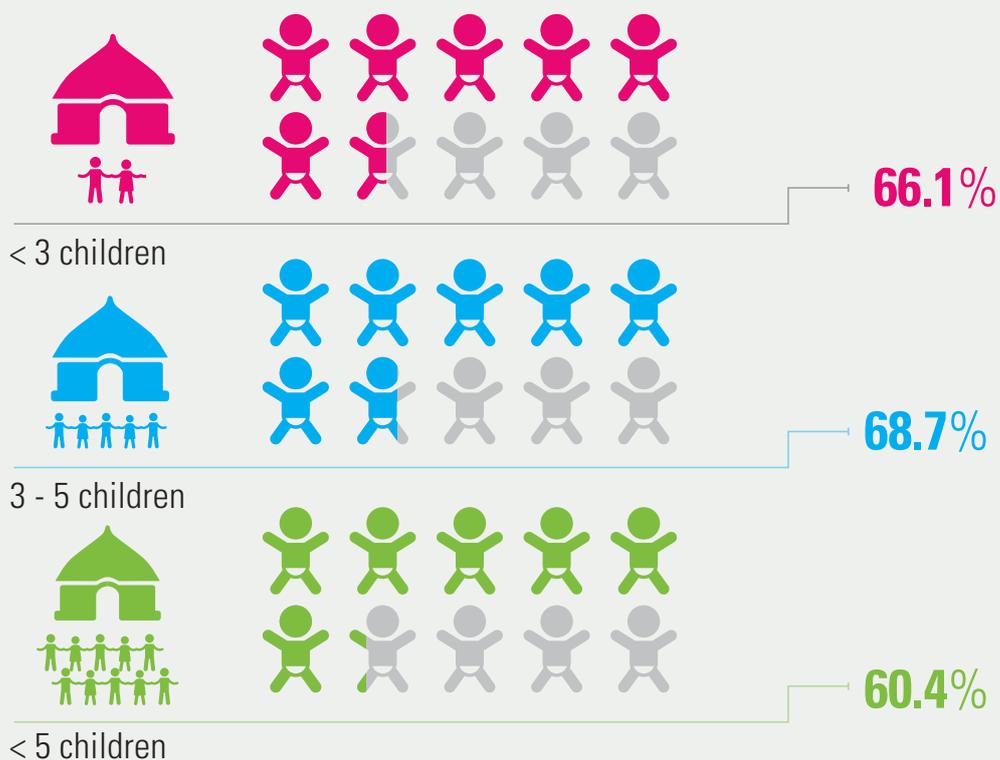


No significant difference was found between **HOUSEHOLDS HEADED BY A MAN AND A WOMAN.**



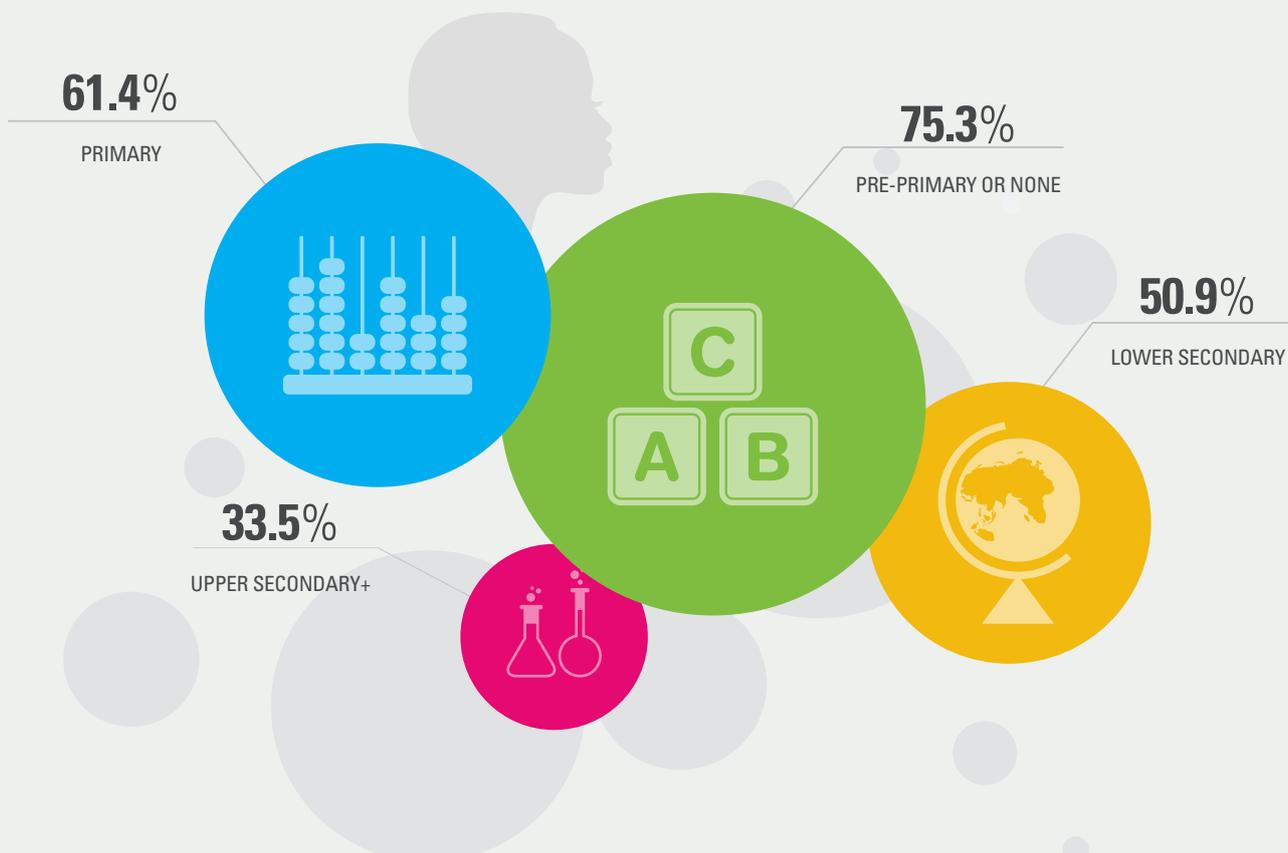
ANALYSIS ALSO PROVIDES EVIDENCE THAT THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN THE HOUSEHOLD

is not necessarily the main determinant of child poverty.



HOWEVER, IT CLEARLY APPEARS THAT MOTHER'S EDUCATION IS ONE OF THE MAIN DETERMINANT SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS FOR CHILD POVERTY

and should therefore be targeted by policies and programmes.



05 POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILD POVERTY AND THE SDGS

Though multidimensional child poverty has declined by 11 percentage points between 2010 and 2017 some districts have shown a minimum to no decline, for instance Koinadugu and Pujehun respectively.

Therefore, policies and programmes need to be deliberate in addressing inequalities in service provisions that affect children in different districts. Poverty rates are not equal to poverty headcount ratios. A holistic approach is required to reduce child poverty. Interventions, policies and programmes should, therefore, be focused on enhancing equitable access to social services, child-friendly budgets and plans, safe environment and spaces, social justice and social protection, all of which play a critical role in ensuring that every child everywhere has an equitable chance to live and that no child is left behind.

Three main policy areas have been identified:



INVESTING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

MICS6 data show that public policies need to focus on early childhood development (ECD) to give each child a fair chance to grow and thrive. This should include all the components of ECD (nutrition, health, education and WASH). Health seems to be the dimension that affects children the most, independent of the district or area they live in.

Policy should be based on evidence and effective monitoring and evaluation of actions taken. Public expenditures tracking and service delivery surveys of the health and education sectors will support the design and monitoring of these policies. The early childhood development policies that emanate from this analysis are:

ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH CARE

- Strengthen the system to provide free and quality health services for children, pregnant women and lactating mothers. Special attention should be paid to ensure access among those most vulnerable, including adolescent pregnant girls/mothers and their children, people living with disabilities and HIV, and the income poor.
- Incentivise health-care professionals who agree to stay in hard-to-reach areas
- Institutionalize community health in the context of strengthening primary health care so that essential health services are available at people's door steps in the remote hard-to-reach areas.
- Explore fiscal space options for health-care provision

ADEQUATE NUTRITION PROGRAMMES

- Scale up evidence-based nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programmes.
- Build an enabling fiscal and policy environment to meet global commitment to the 2025 World Health Assembly nutrition targets and Sustainable Development Goals.
- Prioritize the worst-off groups and districts
- Conduct a national awareness programme to educate households on good nutritional practices.
- In order to address multifaceted problems of malnutrition (lack of nutritional knowledge and awareness, household poverty and food insecurity, etc.) work across multiple systems, with particular emphasis on food system in synergy with the health, water and sanitation, education and social protection systems.

CHILD GRANTS FOR POOR HOUSEHOLDS

- Explore the provision of child grants in addition to the free and quality education and free health-care programme of government.
- Create awareness of the importance of education to children, households and the economy.

EXPANDING ECD AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

- Prioritize early child development programmes.
- Promote positive parenting skills.
- Communities/parents need to be further sensitized around health seeking behavior and family care for sick children, as well as disease prevention.



EMPOWERING FAMILIES AND CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN

One of the most important findings is that child poverty is strongly linked to their households' situation. This implies that addressing children's deprivations must consider the situation of the households they live in. Adequate shelter plays a critical role in improving education, health and sanitation deprivations. Rates of shelter deprivation have been constantly bad since the 2016 child poverty analysis, indicating the need for more strategic solutions.

EXPLORE A POLICY OF SOCIAL SHELTER AND INCREASING THE NUMBER OF SAFE LOW COST SHELTERS.

- Introduce legislative initiatives to limit new shelter constructions that do not respect minimum standards
- Target those households that are in need and avoid capture by the elite

INCOME SUPPORT FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS

- Expanding the existing cash transfer programme while ensuring that it has sufficient flexibility to use conditionality based on local specificities. Strengthen communication for development of the cash transfer programme and target all community members
- Strengthen the food security and agriculture sector

A PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN

- Explore initiatives such as: safe city projects, adolescent/girls' spaces; and child-friendly city programmes.
- Introduce child protection modules into the education curricula to provide children with the necessary information to know, understand, claim and defend their rights as a citizen.
- Build the capacity of community leadership to safeguard children from harm, abuse and exploitation.

ADOLESCENT EMPOWERMENT AND VOICE



The result of this study shows that while some children are deprived in education, mother's education is a determinant of the likelihood that a child will be poor or not. Investing in education for children as well as for young adults is imperative for Sierra Leone, not only for the short term but also to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

District-level analysis shows that there are disparities in children's poverty and deprivations according to the area of residence (rural or urban). It is important that policies enable children and adolescents to express their opinions and aspirations. Some of the policy options that can be explored include:

IMPROVING ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

- Ensure that all children have access to quality education services in all areas of the country at the primary education and vocational training level
- Strengthen the education management system and supporting households through cash transfers
- Support families to address the learning barriers for children and adolescents.
- Support vulnerable learners and/or children with special needs.

INCREASING CHILDREN'S AND ADOLESCENTS' VOICES

- Seek opinions from children and adolescents when planning, programming and budgeting for development

MONITORING EXPENDITURES

- Ensure that the plans are well implemented, and resources spent to produce equitable results for children
- Use a combination of Unit Cost Analysis and Expenditure Performance Assessments to ensure that children and their families take full advantage of budgetary expenditures.

STRENGTHENING DISTRICT LEVEL PLANS AND BUDGETS

- Build the capacity of district management and sectors on child-friendly and gender-sensitive participatory planning and budgeting processes.

BUILDING CHILD-RESPONSIVE BUDGETS

- Develop plans and budgets that integrate children's priorities will lead to more effective and sustainable results

INSTITUTIONALIZING MOBILE TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT VOICE AND PARTICIPATION

- Use mobile technology to facilitate the participation of adolescents and children in government development processes

