

# 2022

UN COUNTRY  
**ANNUAL  
RESULTS  
REPORT**  
SRI LANKA



**UNITED NATIONS**  
SRI LANKA



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**ANNUAL  
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## **2022 UN COUNTRY ANNUAL RESULTS REPORT SRI LANKA**

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United Nations  
Office of the UN Resident Coordinator  
202-204, Bauddhaloka Mawatha,  
Colombo 7,  
Sri Lanka.

Phone: +94 (11) 2583805  
Fax: +94 (11) 2581116 or 2589691  
Email: [rcs-srilanka@un.org](mailto:rcs-srilanka@un.org) | Web: [srilanka.un.org](http://srilanka.un.org)



**UNITED NATIONS**  
**SRI LANKA**





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## FOREWORD BY THE UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM

The United Nations Country Team in Sri Lanka is pleased to share with you the Annual Report for 2022. In this report we highlight the combined achievements and results of the UN Entities in the country, all of which have worked collectively to make a positive impact on the lives of Sri Lankan people. Our Annual Report is one of several tools for our partners and stakeholders, aimed at sharing the highlights of our diverse portfolio of work in support of national development priorities.

The year 2022 was marked by a difficult and challenging period for the majority of people in Sri Lanka, particularly so for the most vulnerable. A depreciating currency, fuel and electricity shortages, high inflation, increasing costs of living and political changes culminated in seven million people being assessed as in need of humanitarian assistance. Our sympathies are with all who have experienced increased hardships under these circumstances. We remain fully committed in our efforts to reach as many as possible with the support and assistance needed.

Amid this context, the UN in Sri Lanka pivoted to deploy significant humanitarian relief, while continuing to contribute to longer-term development priorities to support broader socioeconomic recovery. Through rapid mobilization of aid and interventions, we helped reach a total of 2.9 million people – more than 10 per cent of the country – with urgently needed assistance.

We take this opportunity to underscore the importance of our partners in civil society, the private sector, and particularly of the donor community who generously stepped up and met the call to assist the people in Sri Lanka beyond any of our expectations. We also underline the crucial role of our partnership with the Government of Sri Lanka in achieving the results detailed in this report.

In 2022, the United Nations commenced the next stage of its cooperation with the Government of Sri Lanka with the signature of a new five-year Sustainable Development

Cooperation Framework. The UNSDCF 2023-2027 enters into force in 2023 and defines the collective development priorities and contributions of the UN in Sri Lanka.

As we look back on the year, the UN Country Team are also grateful for the dedicated and diligent service of Ms Hanaa Singer-Hamdy as UN Resident Coordinator in Sri Lanka, who concluded her assignment in December 2022. During her tenure, Ms Singer-Hamdy provided compassionate leadership amid unprecedented challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic, the X-Press Pearl maritime disaster and the economic crisis, steering the UN Country Team's collective efforts to deliver results for the people in Sri Lanka.

It is clear that the year ahead will continue to hold challenges. Sri Lanka finds itself in a precarious situation that particularly impacts the most vulnerable and risks seeing a regression on gains made against achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Yet there are encouraging developments on the horizon as Sri Lanka looks to work closely with international financing partners.

As we look ahead with our partners and stakeholders, we will continue to be guided by the promises we made as part of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals: to focus on the most vulnerable to leave no one behind, and to prioritise solutions that are sustainable, inclusive and anchored in human rights for all.



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# UN SRI LANKA 2022 HIGHLIGHTS

## FACILITATING COVID-19 RELIEF AND RESPONSE

COVID-19 relief and response activities were facilitated through the procurement of emergency laboratory and medical equipment, including safety equipment for MSEs. With partner support, UNOPS was able to address the scarcity of oxygen generation through the installation of 10 Oxygen Generation Plants in hospitals across Sri Lanka, and supplied Genomic Sequencing Machines to increase the efficiency of identifying new virus variants.



## GENDER-RESPONSIVE CAPACITY BUILDING

974 businesses operated by marginalized women are more effective, resilient and have better infrastructure through capacity building and in-kind support by UN Women. Government officers also now provide gender-responsive services to women following implementation of cross-regional coordination and capacity building.

## BOOSTING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Over 100,000 tonnes of Urea fertilizer provided to more than 200,000 smallholder paddy farmers by FAO. 9,000 farmers and over 12,000 fishers empowered through FAO's emergency cash assistance, and over 600 households and 200 schools in underserved areas provided assistance in establishing home gardens.



## VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND SUPPORT

More than 3,400 of the most vulnerable households in the Northern Province assisted through ILO's cash-for-work programme. Over 2000 workers, returned and aspirant migrant workers, youth, school community, Government Institutions, Employer and Business Membership Organizations (EBMO's) and Workers Organizations benefited from ILO-led vocational trainings across different sectors including caregiving, migration, crane operating and tourism.



## STRENGTHENING VOLUNTEERISM FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

UNV successfully launched V-NET, which consists of 139 entities (State, Corporate, Civil Society) with an outreach to over 700,000 volunteers. In total, V-NET clocked in 712 volunteering initiatives and mobilized over 3,675 volunteers.



## INVESTING IN LOCAL AGRI-BUSINESS

36 public-private producer partnerships supported 42,962 households through loans, grants and technical know-how needed to develop agri-businesses. IFAD also helped 4,500 tea smallholders start green leaf production. UNIDO capacitated enterprises across agri-food value chains on meeting buyer requirements to enhance market access that contributes to foreign currency reserves and makes widely accessible, safer and higher quality food for all. ILO introduced three digitalization tools in value chains to make the agri-business relevant to the evolving situation in the country, to help register farmers, collect yield, acreage and production data.

## IMPROVING ACCESS TO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

61,230 women and girls received cash voucher assistance amounting to \$950,000 to access health services and menstrual health products and UNFPA provided the Ministry of Health with life-saving family planning and maternal health drugs and commodities which is estimated to benefit 65,000 people.



## SUPPORTING REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

UNHCR reached nearly 40,000 people from host communities with basic food rations and hygiene packs and provided 1,300 refugees, asylum seekers and refugee returnees with cash assistance to meet their rising costs of living. UNODC supported migrants' right to free movement by encouraging legal pathways in and out of the country.





### BUILDING EFFECTIVE AND INCLUSIVE INSTITUTIONS

1,094 prison staff and inmates trained through 20 UNODC-led training sessions at Pallansena and Mahara prisons. 571 children prevented from institutionalization and 203 children in detention reunified with their families with UNICEF's support. UNDP supported 28 provincial level language audits and sign-language interpretation of 85 general parliamentary sessions.



### STRENGTHENING FOOD SECURITY

WFP reached nearly 1.8 million food-insecure people through its cash and food assistance, school meals and Thripasha programme, and supported smallholder farmers to strengthen their resilience and improve nutrition security. UNICEF supported 32,250 vulnerable preschool children with preschool meals. ILO trained private food processing SMEs on food safety and sustainability for more than 1,000 farmers.

### MOBILIZING EMERGENCY RELIEF

UNDP's 'Individual, Donor and Private Sector Giving Facility for Emergency Relief' enhanced food security, health and protection by supporting over 40,000 vulnerable farmers and 228,000 people in need of medical services.



### COUNTERACTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

UNFPA reached 2 million individuals through a national level campaign conducted to enhance help-seeking behavior and awareness on GBV by promotion of the national hotline resulting in an 80% increase in calls. 10 national level shelters for survivors of GBV were supported to remain accessible for women and girls. IOM trained 160 GBV sector staff to identify, prioritize and support GBV survivors and at-risk groups.



### SUSTAINING VITAL HEALTH SERVICES

WHO's efforts helped sustain vital health services through direct financial assistance and the ongoing provision of medicines and supplies and helped reduce hospital admissions for dengue in high risk districts by 60 per cent.



### SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

372,000 children aged 6 to 23 months received multiple micronutrient powders and 15,900 children treated for severe acute malnutrition as a result of UNICEF's emergency response. Further, 391,000 disadvantaged children gained access to continued learning and learning recovery opportunities. 210,052 secondary school aged children were reached through psychosocial support services. Over 13,000 children and vulnerable families received an emergency case management response, to keep children safe and keep families together.

### POLICY SUPPORT FOR SDG FINANCING

ESCAP collaborated with the Ministry of Finance, Central Bank of Sri Lanka and Sustainable Development Council to support the development of the country's Green Bond Framework, while UNDP supported the development of the Sri Lanka SDG Investor Map and collectively provided technical assistance on financing options for pursuing the SDGs.



### ASSISTING TRADE-RELATED DEVELOPMENT

ITC provided trade-related assistance to Small and Medium Sized Enterprises by supporting implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and formulation of the National Policy for Industrial Development, and promoting digitalization and sustainability in mainstreaming of green and digital perspectives into policies.



# UN COUNTRY TEAM



International Financial Institutions



# FINANCING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



**\$69,465,532**  
TOTAL EXPENDITURE IN 2022

**14%**  
OF EXPENDITURE TOWARDS JOINT INITIATIVES

**306** SINGLE AGENCY INITIATIVES

**39** JOINT INITIATIVES

2022 Expenditure by SDG

1	No Poverty	13,331,043
2	Zero Hunger	13,657,472
3	Good Health and Well-being	24,815,246
4	Quality Education	4,726,701
5	Gender Equality	1,718,444
6	Clean Water and Sanitation	856,781
7	Affordable and Clean Energy	306,370
8	Decent Work and Economic Growth	335,906
9	Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure	2,978,762
10	Reduced Inequalities	145,022
11	Sustainable Cities and Communities	45,285
12	Responsible Consumption and Production	31,684
13	Climate Action	1,581,532
14	Life below Water	150,357
15	Life on Land	831,397
16	Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	2,596,824
17	Partnerships for the Goals	1,356,707
Total		<b>69,465,532</b>

\*These are estimated figures and may not include all funds.

## CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS



### Driver 1

**Towards improved data, knowledge management, and evidence-based policy**

Government of Australia  
 Government of Japan  
 Government of the United States of America  
 Government of Canada  
 Government of China  
 Government of Sweden  
 Government of Korea  
 The European Union  
 The World Bank  
 Asian Development Bank  
 The Global Environment Facility  
 The Green Climate Fund  
 UN Sri Lanka DFG Multi-Partner Trust Fund  
 UNICEF Thematic Fund  
 World Food Programme Multilateral Fund  
 International Fund for Agricultural Development  
 Central Emergency Response Fund



### Driver 2

**Strengthened innovative public institutions and engagement towards a lasting peace**

Government of Germany  
 Government of Norway  
 The European Union  
 Government of the United Kingdom  
 Government of the United States of America  
 Government of Australia  
 Government of Japan  
 Asian Development Bank  
 The Global Environment Facility  
 UN Sri Lanka SDG Multi-Partner Trust Fund  
 Central Emergency Response Fund  
 IOM Development Fund  
 National Committee for UNICEF - Germany, Hong Kong & Australia



### Driver 3

**Human security and socioeconomic resilience**

Government of China  
 Government of Denmark  
 Government of Norway  
 Government of Australia  
 Government of Germany  
 Government of Japan  
 Government of Sweden  
 Government of Korea  
 Government of Thailand  
 Government of the United States of America  
 Government of the United Kingdom  
 The European Union  
 Asian Development Bank  
 The World Bank  
 Public Digital  
 Cargills Foundation - Sri Lanka  
 Global Thematic Funding  
 The Commonwealth Secretariat  
 The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria  
 The Global Environment Facility  
 The Green Climate Fund  
 UN Sri Lanka SDG Multi-Partner Trust Fund  
 UNDP Biodiversity Finance Initiative



### Driver 4

**Enhancing resilience to climate change and disasters and strengthening environmental management**

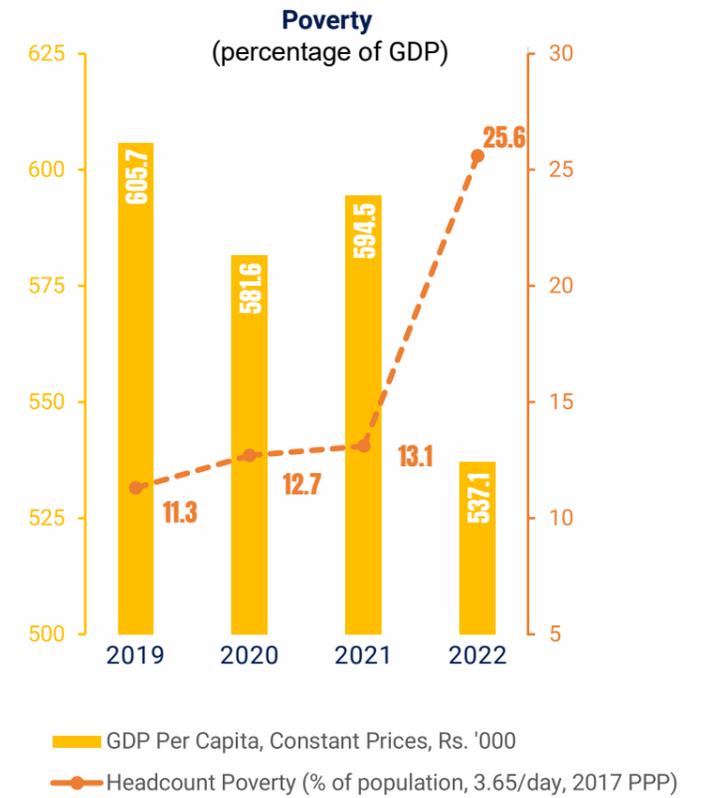
Government of Australia  
 The European Union  
 One Planet MPTF

# CHAPTER 01

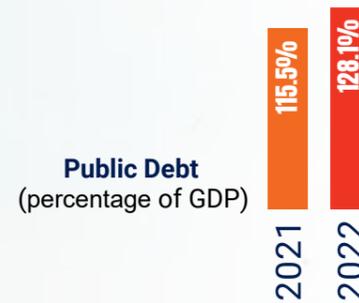
## COUNTRY CONTEXT



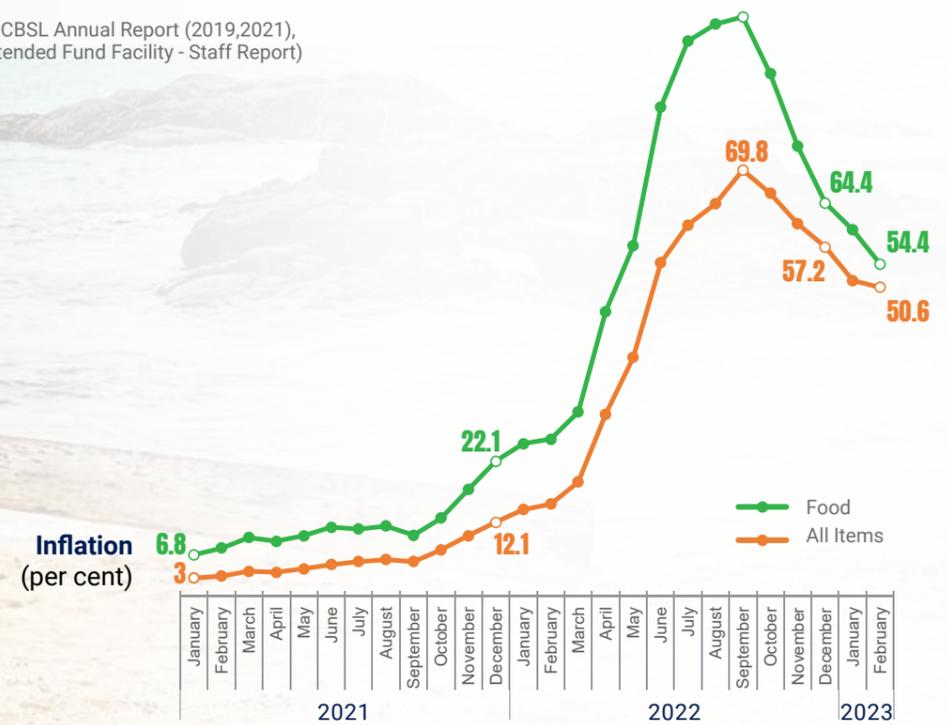
Source: Department of Census and Statistics; Ministry of Finance/Central Bank of Sri Lanka



Source: IMF World Economic Outlook, October 2022; World Bank Sri Lanka Development Update, October 2022; World Bank Poverty and Inequality Global Platform (2023)



Source: CBSL Annual Report (2019,2021), IMF (Extended Fund Facility - Staff Report)



Source: Department of Census and Statistics

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Sri Lanka witnessed a challenging year throughout 2022, marked by a sharp economic contraction and significant political change. Despite undergoing severe pressure on their living standards, the people of Sri Lanka nevertheless demonstrated remarkable resilience.

Sri Lanka has been experiencing a balance-of-payments crisis since the first quarter of 2022. A combination of disruptions to the country's main sources of foreign income and energy price shocks in early 2022 have contributed to critical shortages of foreign exchange and near complete exhaustion of the country's foreign currency reserves. On 18 May 2022, these events culminated in a default on nearly US\$ 35 billion of foreign currency debt. Shortages of essential imports caused the economy to contract by 7.8 per cent in 2022, with a further contraction of 3 per cent forecast for 2023.<sup>1,2</sup>

Alongside the Ukraine war, lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and global food and energy prices, a depreciating currency and an increase in the money supply have generated inflationary pressure. The Colombo Consumer Price Index (CCPI) increased by 57.2 per cent over the year to December 2022, driven in most part by prices of food and non-alcoholic beverages, which increased by 64.4 per cent over the period.<sup>3</sup> Cost of living pressures arising from persistently high inflation pose significant challenges to meeting basic needs, particularly for the most vulnerable populations. A World Bank microsimulation suggests the ongoing economic crisis is expected to more than double the poverty rate (\$3.65 per capita, 2017 PPP) between 2021 and 2023 to 28.2 per cent.<sup>4</sup>

On 20 March 2023, the IMF Executive Board approved a 48-month, \$3 billion Extended Fund Facility for Sri Lanka. This approval was granted following the receipt of financing assurances from all major bilateral creditors as part of an ongoing, country-led debt restructuring process to reduce public debt to a sustainable level. The debt restructuring process is expected to be completed within a six-month period coinciding with the first review of the IMF Extended Fund Facility.<sup>5,6</sup>

Recent macroeconomic developments threaten to reverse progress across the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Sri Lanka. Additional dollar financing inflows – including inflows as part of the IMF Extended Fund Facility – are essential to facilitate improved access to imported medicines, agricultural inputs and food items for basic nutrition, good health and well-being in Sri Lanka. Restoring access to essential imports is likely to improve the country's production capacity and economic activity in the medium term, and also provide relief in the form of reduced pressure on income and employment for firms and workers ahead of a period of structural and fiscal adjustment as part of an IMF programme.

The economic and social dislocation caused by Sri Lanka's economic crises has contributed to political instability and, ultimately, significant political changes. Protests on currency devaluation and electricity shortages occurred from late March through early April 2022 amid political tensions. These protests spilled over into violence in Colombo on 9 May. Subsequently, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned along with the Cabinet. Shortly thereafter, Ranil Wickremesinghe

was appointed prime minister by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. Through May and June, economic hardships continued to erode public confidence and a sustained protest movement dubbed the Aragalaya (Struggle) was formed. In June and July, foreign exchange shortages resulted in an additional shock in the form of acute shortages of electricity and automotive fuel. Mass protests in Colombo on 13 July forced President Rajapaksa from office. He subsequently left the country and resigned a few days later while in Singapore. Subsequently, Prime Minister Wickramasinghe was elected president by a majority in a parliamentary vote. Local government elections are expected in 2023, presidential elections in 2024 and parliamentary elections are due by 2025, although the president holds the constitutional power to dismiss parliament any time after February 2023.

Calls for constitutional reforms intensified in the wake of the economic crisis. The protest movement, demanding greater transparency, accountability for corruption, and economic mismanagement and increased participation in democratic life, spread throughout the country and in several instances the security forces acted with disproportionate use of force against generally peaceful protestors. Scores of people involved in the protest movement were arrested and detained, including under the controversial Prevention of Terrorism Act. Instances of beatings and use of live ammunition by police and military forces have been captured and circulated on social media.

There has been limited progress in advancing a reconciliation agenda to deal with the past and address the legacy of the conflict. Activists and victims in the north and east continue to report harassment and surveillance. Meanwhile, a concerning pattern of deaths in police custody of alleged members of drug-related organised crime has continued during 2022.

1 Sri Lanka, Department of Census and Statistics, National Accounts Estimates of Sri Lanka: Provisional Estimates for the Annual 2022 and Revised Estimates for the Annual 2020 & 2021. Table 7: A10 (2023); Percentage growth of GVA and GDP at constant (2015) prices (15 March 2023). Available at [http://www.statistics.gov.lk/NationalAccounts/StaticInformation/Reports/2022\\_Annual\\_Provisional](http://www.statistics.gov.lk/NationalAccounts/StaticInformation/Reports/2022_Annual_Provisional).

2 Sri Lanka, Ministry of Finance, Economic Stabilization and National Policies, Fiscal Management Report 2023: Medium-Term Fiscal Strategy (14 November 2022).

3 Sri Lanka, Department of Census and Statistics, Colombo Consumer Price Index by Sub groups [base 2013=10]. Accessed 15 March, 2023.

4 World Bank, Sri Lanka Development Update: Protecting the Poor and Vulnerable in a Time of Crisis (October 2022).

5 IMF Statement on Board Approval [forthcoming].

6 Uditha Jayasinghe, "Sri Lanka to Announce Debt Restructuring Strategy in April - Cenbank Chief", Reuters, 9 March 2023. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/markets/asia/sri-lanka-announce-debt-restructuring-strategy-april-cenbank-chief-2023-03-09/>.



## A COORDINATED HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE



**7 MILLION**  
PEOPLE  
IN NEED



**\$123.5 MILLION**  
RAISED



**2.9 MILLION**  
PEOPLE REACHED  
SO FAR

The past year brought about unprecedented challenges as seven million people were assessed as being in need of humanitarian assistance due to the multifaceted impact of the country's economic crisis. Meeting this rapid increase in vital needs was a key collective priority of the United Nations in 2022.

Inflation and shortages of many essential goods including fuel, electricity and cooking gas were a key driver of humanitarian needs. Compounded by a reduction in agricultural production over several harvest seasons and rapidly rising food prices, close to a third of the population were assessed as facing some degree of food insecurity. Livelihoods and incomes also faced severe pressure as many households exhausted their coping strategies and were forced to sell their belongings or engage in other practices with a negative impact for future well-being. Up to 72 per cent of households were reported as resorting to food-based coping mechanisms. Wasting among children under five years old increased significantly.

The healthcare system was severely affected by shortages. In June 2022, close to 200 essential medicines (e.g., blood-thinners, antibiotics, vaccines and cancer chemotherapy drugs) were out of stock. Protection concerns also increased

due to a combination of economic stress factors and livelihood losses. Since the beginning of the crisis, district officials reported both a rise in domestic violence and an increase of stress and mental health impacts, particularly among women and girls. This unprecedented challenge called for a coherent, system-wide UN response aimed at averting further deterioration and preventing a full-scale humanitarian crisis.

At the request of the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and in order to help prevent a deterioration of the humanitarian situation, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), launched the Humanitarian Needs and Priorities Plan (HNP)<sup>7</sup> on 9 June 2022, targeting 3.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. Against an ask of \$149.7 million in humanitarian funding,<sup>8</sup> the HNP centered around three strategic objectives: (1) to save lives through the provision of food assistance, essential medicines, targeted nutrition services, safe drinking water and emergency livelihood support for the most vulnerable; (2) to provide immediate agricultural support that allows the resumption of basic productive activities for the maintenance of livelihoods and food security; and (3) to provide protection from violence, especially for vulnerable groups, and prevent and mitigate other protection risks through timely assistance,

including mental health and psychosocial support and education. These objectives and corresponding priority needs were implemented through five sectors centred around Food Security; Agriculture and Livelihoods; Nutrition and WASH; Health; and Protection (including Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection) and Education.

**A total of \$123.5 million was raised against the HNP, as well as significant additional funding for related medium-term interventions. With some activities fully implemented and others still ongoing, a total of 2.9 million people – more than 1 in 10 of the population – have so far been reached with assistance across the country.**

The humanitarian community in Sri Lanka was able to rapidly scale up interventions and put in place coordination mechanisms to ensure a coherent and effective response. A surge of support from the UN Office for Humanitarian Coordination (OCHA) assisted in these efforts. This enabled the HNP, aligned with multiple UN agency and NGO appeals, to function as a single basis for planning, advocacy and reporting.

Building on the pre-existing capacities of UN agencies, international and local NGOs, as well as institutional knowledge of responses to large scale natural disasters in Sri Lanka, the process of strengthening humanitarian coordination structures with the launch of the HNP was completed rapidly. With support from OCHA, Humanitarian Country Team meetings became more regular, as did Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) and sector-specific meetings. Where the need for a substantive scaling-up of coordination became evident, including information gathering and management, and cash-based interventions, dedicated working groups were strengthened.<sup>9</sup> By the end of 2022, more than 30 humanitarian assessments had been completed across

all sectors, including food security, nutrition and protection.<sup>10</sup> Assessments continue into 2023, and another large-scale Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) is planned for March and April of this year. Much of the response planning for the HNP relied on assessment results,<sup>11</sup> and ongoing monitoring of project implementation allowed for making subsequent adjustments as necessary.

The strengthening of coordination structures also helped address common challenges. The fuel shortage in the country, for example, impeded operations on the ground and often demanded innovative solutions to ensure that urgent assistance could reach those in need. Other disruptions to operations, such as recurring power cuts and procurement challenges for international commodities, further impeded some activities but could be mitigated through increased cooperation and joint requests to authorities.

The HCT worked in close consultation with both international and national NGOs and CSOs. An Accountability to Affected Populations Working Group (AAPWG) was established with the aim of strengthening collective engagement with crisis-affected people, communities and local actors. This helped ensure a more principled, effective and accountable humanitarian response. The HCT also worked to ensure that especially vulnerable groups remained at the center of the humanitarian response and that protection concerns, including sexual abuse and violence, were mainstreamed into the response.

Looking ahead, the UN intends to transition from a humanitarian support phase centered on short-term and highly targeted interventions towards a more development-driven paradigm that addresses needs beyond the immediate crisis and targets systemic root causes. These will be incorporated in the broader effort to help accelerate recovery from the crisis and redouble progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the UNSDCF 2023-2027.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Sri Lanka (2022), Humanitarian Needs and Priorities - Food Security Crisis Sri Lanka. <https://srilanka.un.org/en/185471-sri-lanka-humanitarian-needs-and-priorities-plan>

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2022), Financial Tracking Service: Sri Lanka Multi-Dimensional Crisis - Humanitarian Needs and Priorities 2022 <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/1107/flows>

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Sri Lanka (2022), Revised Humanitarian Needs and Priorities - Multi-Dimensional Crisis Sri Lanka. <https://humanitarianaction.info/>

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2023). Sri Lanka Humanitarian Response 5Ws. <https://app.powerbi.com/>

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2023). Sri Lanka Humanitarian Situation. <https://reliefweb.int/country/lka>

# CHAPTER 02

## UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM SUPPORT TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

The UN Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF) 2018-2022 continued to guide the work of the UN in Sri Lanka. While the UNSDF is structured around four priority areas or “drivers,” the operationalization of its Outcomes was reconceptualised through eight results groups. This has allowed the UN to better align itself with evolving priorities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its socioeconomic impact. The chapters that follow give a brief account of the collective results of the United Nations along these eight results areas.



### Driver 1

Towards improved data, knowledge management and evidence-based policy



### Driver 2

Strengthened innovative public institutions and engagement towards a lasting peace



### Driver 3

Human security and socioeconomic resilience



### Driver 4

Enhancing resilience to climate change and disasters and strengthening environmental management

1



Health

2



Nutrition and Food Security

3



Social Protection

4



Employment, Skills and Economic Recovery

5



Social Cohesion

6



Climate Change

7



Digital Transformation and Innovation

8



SDG-driven Planning, Financing and Data

## SUPPORTING SRI LANKA'S SECOND NATIONAL VOLUNTARY REVIEW

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encourages member states to conduct regular and inclusive progress reviews. The Voluntary National Review (VNR) is the main instrument for this and is presented at the ECOSOC high-level political forum (HLPF). The VNR includes reviewing a country's SDG performance within existing national development and planning frameworks, including governance and institutional arrangements, service delivery, enabling partnerships, data, monitoring and evaluation and financing.

In 2022, the UN supported the development of Sri Lanka's second VNR of the SDGs, presented to the High-Level Political Forum in July 2022. UN agencies provided technical, financial and in-kind support across all stages of the VNR development process to Sri Lanka's Sustainable Development Council (SD Council) – the body within government focused on Sri Lanka's progress towards the SDGs – and the Department of National Planning within the Ministry of Finance. UN resourcing supported the development of a comprehensive VNR report, along with assistance for a comprehensive programme of stakeholder engagement. In 2022, VNR consultations and outreach extended across government, civil society organizations, the private sector, UN agencies and across many subnational governments, with in-person consultations occurring across the island despite intermittent restrictions on mobility over the course of the year. The UN continues to provide surge capacity to the SD Council in their ongoing programme of identifying and refining new sources of data across government entities to better monitor Sri Lanka's progress towards the SDGs.



## MAPPING AND FINANCING THE SDGS

The UN in Sri Lanka and the SD Council successfully brokered partnerships with ESCAP on developing data sources to measure progress and "nationalize" key SDG targets in Sri Lanka, building on work done in 2021 with UNDP support to validate over 100 SDG indicators and operationalize the National SDG Data Portal. The collaboration also engaged ESCAP to build capacity in macroeconomic modelling within Sri Lanka's Central Bank and Ministry of Finance to 'build forward better' from the economic crisis in a manner that is consistent with the SDGs. Additionally, ESCAP worked with the Ministry of Finance to support the development of a Sovereign Green Bond Financing Framework. UNDP, together with ESCAP and the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), further supported sustainable finance workshops and capacity-building and preparations towards the application of innovative financing instruments in Sri Lanka, including Green Bonds and Debt-for-Nature Swaps in coming years.



## HEALTH



**15 MILLION**  
PEOPLE REACHED VIA RISK-COMMUNICATION ON COVID-19



**38,000**  
HEALTH CARE WORKERS PROVIDED WITH ESSENTIAL PPE



**61,230**  
WOMEN RECEIVED CASH VOUCHER ASSISTANCE TO ACCESS SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE/ MATERNAL HEALTH



©WHO Sri Lanka

The country's foreign exchange situation has had a protracted impact on pricing and access to essential medicines. Around 80 per cent of medical supplies in Sri Lanka are imported, meaning issues with facilitating imports have disrupted key inputs to the health sector. In June 2022, around 200 essential medicines, including blood-thinners, antibiotics, vaccines and cancer chemotherapy drugs, were out of stock in Sri Lanka. While the number was reduced to around 120 in August 2022, it then increased to 151 by early October 2022, while 3,500 essential surgical consumables and 531 regular laboratory items were also out of stock. Shortages posed operational challenges for primary healthcare services. Recent input shortages and reduced operational capacity in the health system has meant routine non-emergency surgeries, medical procedures, and laboratory tests have been delayed or put on hold.

The immediate requirement in the second and third quarter of 2022 was to secure critical medicines and supplies to keep the health system functional. WHO and UNFPA worked closely with development partners and donors to support the Ministry of Health (MoH) in ensuring swift, strategic and coherent action to address shortages of medicines and medical supplies. WHO assisted MoH with continuous monitoring of the availability of essential supplies, providing strategic information for partners and donors

to align contributions, including reprogramming of loans by IFIs. As an emergency response, the UN coordinated Donor from SEAR countries, including Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and Thailand. The UN also made the case for urgent humanitarian health interventions in the Humanitarian Needs and Priorities plan (HNP) which collectively requested \$9.7 million.

The delivery of essential medicines – including those to support maternal health care and sexual and reproductive health care – was a crucial component of the joint UN efforts to reduce the shortage of essential medicines in the country, which benefited more than 1.4 million people. Thirty-nine health institutions offering vital health services for mothers and newborns were part of the support.

In 2022, the WHO in collaboration with the MoH and other development partners conducted a series of analytical activities to identify crucial policy reform options to safeguard the country's primary health care approach, while also addressing evolving needs and improving health sector resilience. Key activities included evidence reviews of health service delivery reforms during and after an economic crisis in selected countries; a community-based survey to assess the impact of COVID-19 and the economic crisis on the access to health services and financial risk protection; and a review of country exemplars to identify health financing reform options for Sri Lanka. Other technical analyses explored the areas of health workforce and essential medicines. Preliminary results of the technical work were presented in December 2022 to inform the MoH and key national stakeholders on potential policy interventions. Going forward, these recommendations will be consolidated into an evidence-backed policy options document intended as a guide to building back better essential health services, in turn advancing universal health care and health-related Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2022, to support the reorganization of primary health care in Sri Lanka, UNICEF conducted an evaluation of community health worker policies, support systems and their readiness for expanding roles and responsibilities. Within the context of economic constraints on the

healthcare system, UNFPA organized a panel discussion for health professionals, key decision makers and media personnel on sustainable financing and quality enhancement in the health sector which contributed towards policy recommendations in this critical area.

In the area of communicable diseases and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF supported the availability of adequate and optimal cold chain capacity at national, subnational and district levels, including some 420 health facilities. This support was informed by a National Effective Vaccine Management Assessment. Support was also provided to construction at the central vaccine stores, including three walk-in cold rooms and a total installation of 13 cold rooms countrywide. The UN supported provision and installation of Remote Temperature Monitoring Devices (RMTD) at the central level and all 27 regional-level vaccine stores. Incinerators were provided to three hospitals to manage healthcare waste. Additionally, hand-washing facilities were provided to healthcare institutions, particularly hospital clinics. Communications developed by the UN enabled 15 million people to be reached with creative messages on COVID-19 prevention, with UNICEF also supporting the Environmental and Occupational Health Directorate in conducting a national survey on the management of healthcare waste generated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNFPA provided the MoH with more than 10.8 million pieces of essential personal protective equipment for use by a total of 38,000 health care workers and 5,746 midwives in all districts of the country.

In response to mental health needs, the UN continued its support to the MoH in developing the National Mental Health Policy, which contains important provisions including promoting mental well-being, and protecting the human rights of people with mental health conditions. Guidelines for its use were also developed for primary medical care institutions in their assessment, diagnosis and management of persons with mental health.

IOM and UNHCR continued to provide psychological support to refugees in Sri Lanka amid the civil unrest that resulted in government-imposed lockdowns in 2022. IOM organized 40 sessions of its psychiatry clinic, where 51 patients received psychiatric treatment and 63 patients received counseling.

In support of reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (RMNCAH) services, UNFPA provided 23,248 women with maternal health and GBV services, while 578 men received sexual and reproductive health services through 61 mobile clinics. Mobile medical clinics also provided 789 elderly people (mainly women) with medical care. A total of 61,230 vulnerable pregnant and lactating women, women-headed households and people with disabilities received cash voucher, amounting to a total of \$950,000, and assistance to access sexual and reproductive health/maternal health services. Further, maternity kits were provided to 2,990 pregnant and lactating women to support them with essential items to meet their hygiene needs and care for their baby. UNICEF conducted hygiene and menstrual hygiene and health programmes in poor urban settlements targeting adolescents. Communications developed by the UNFPA on family planning addressing healthy spacing, subfertility, and teenage pregnancy reached 12.7 million people via a mass media campaign that received positive feedback from viewers. Following an assessment of oxygen-related needs in maternal and newborn units, UNICEF supported the installation of four PSA plants to strengthen the efficient and effective supply of oxygen to maternal and child health units.

A dashboard visualizing maternal mortality data was developed to improve the use of data for evidence-based policy and programme decision-making in achieving zero maternal mortality in Sri Lanka. UNICEF provided essential training of health staff in 25 health institutions on Neonatal Advanced Life Support. This enabled improvements in the quality of maternal and newborn care and easier access in some of the most vulnerable areas. In collaboration with the Perinatal Society of Sri Lanka, UNICEF also successfully developed and launched an Introductory Guide to Neonatal Intensive Care Training.



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## NUTRITION AND FOOD SECURITY



**1 MILLION**

SCHOOL CHILDREN TARGETED BY NATIONAL SCHOOL MEALS PROGRAMME



**196,763**

PADDY FARMERS PROVIDED UREA FERTILIZER



**1.5 MILLION**

PACKS OF MICRONUTRIENT SUPPLEMENTS IMPROVED YOUNG CHILD NUTRITION



**500,000**

PREGNANT AND LACTATING WOMEN PROVIDED HIGH-NUTRIENT THRIPOSHA



**15,000**

PEOPLE FROM VULNERABLE GROUPS IMPROVED HYGIENE-RELATED KNOWLEDGE



**15,900**

CARTONS OF BP-100 RUTF PROVIDED FOR TREATMENT OF CHILDREN WITH SEVERE ACUTE MALNUTRITION



© WFP Sri Lanka

The first six months of 2022 saw a deterioration in household food and nutrition security. The Joint WFP/FAO Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) completed in September 2022 estimated 6.3 million Sri Lankans (28 per cent of the population) to be moderately or severely acutely food insecure in July 2022, based on WFP's CARI methodology. Acute food insecurity is a result of import shortages, livelihood disruptions, reduced household purchasing power and exhaustion of less severe household coping strategies. Around one in four households are also using crisis or emergency strategies that are likely to severely impact their income-generating activities, while a total of 2.43 million people are estimated to need malnutrition prevention and treatment services, including at least 56,000 children with severe acute malnutrition.

In this context two million people were targeted for nutrition assistance by the UN, which was able to substantially exceed this estimate, reaching some 2.3 million people. Collectively the UN provided 1.2 million children with school and preschool meals and almost 300,000 children aged under 24 months received micronutrient feeding through UNICEF.

Meanwhile, more than 500,000 pregnant and lactating women were supported with high-nutrient Thriposha. Some 1.2 million people have been reached with food or cash/voucher assistance with WFP distributing some 11,300 metric tonnes of food. Almost one million people have been reached through agriculture and livelihoods interventions with FAO and UNDP providing more than 900,000 households with seeds and fertilisers for the cultivation of maize and paddy in the Maha season. FAO also procured 36,000 metric tonnes of urea to benefit over one million small holder paddy farmers across the island in the 2023 Yala and Maha seasons.

United Nations agencies played an instrumental role in promoting nutrition security in Sri Lanka. These organizations have collaborated with various stakeholders and advocacy initiatives to develop effective tools and strategies to improve the nutrition status of vulnerable populations. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF developed communication tools to promote a balanced diet for school children.

The organizations have also provided technical support to the MoH to identify gaps in nutrition indicators. UNICEF collaborated with the Medical Research Institute to develop locally made Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food. Nine formulations were successfully lab tested and are now undergoing trials and feasibility studies. Furthermore, UNICEF supported the National Micronutrient Survey to investigate the micronutrient status of women and children in Sri Lanka, which revealed an increase in acute and chronic malnutrition and a decrease in overweight and obesity.

UNICEF's efforts to improve the nutrition status of children with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) have been particularly noteworthy. The organization procured 1,475,000 packs of Multiple Micronutrient Supplements and 15,900 cartons of therapeutic food (BP 100) for the treatment of children with SAM. UNICEF also engaged with MoH and CSO partners to improve the coverage of SAM treatment in seven provinces. On the other hand, WFP distributed 1,471 metric tonnes of rice to over 7,000 schools to reach its target of one million schoolchildren through the Government's national school meals programme.

In addition, the Emergency Nutrition Plan 2022-24 was developed with UNICEF's support. The plan aims to address inequities in food access and affordability, address health systems gaps, serve vulnerable populations, and facilitate communication and empowerment. UNICEF also conducted research on infant and young child feeding practices and developed an online training package.

WFP further contributed to national food security and nutrition policies and decision-making by completing the Cost of the Diet exercise. Moreover, WFP's public awareness and visibility during Nutrition Month and a review of school meal menus through its SMP platform have contributed to an increase in funding for the national school meal programme in 2023. UNICEF also assisted the MoH in advocating for low-cost nutrition sources and the printing of child health development records. Various initiatives were implemented in Sri Lanka to promote agricultural productivity and food security. FAO introduced pilot scale interventions of quality seed production and technologies for

better crop management, as well as post-harvest practices to inhibit germination.

Farmers received seeds and cash grants as part of UNDP's assistance to improve food security, with support from the private sector and other donors. 891 farmers harvested 90,000 kg of produce and earned a total of \$196,000. The typical farmer made an additional \$219. A partnership donation of \$1,720,652 will help 35,821 recipients with seed grants. Additionally, WFP trained 2,000 individuals to supply fresh produce from home gardens for the school meal program.

FAO provided over 9,000 green gram farmers with a cash transfer of \$60, as well as refresher training on soil nutrient management and mung bean crop management to help farmers and vulnerable populations meet their protein requirement. FAO also provided 15,619 farmers with agricultural inputs and \$867,636 in cash, enabling paddy farmers to cultivate paddies in the 2022 Maha cropping season, providing lifesaving assistance to 22,034 people. Additionally, FAO provided 50 kg of urea fertilizer per farmer to 196,763 paddy farmers in dry and intermediate zones for use in the 2022/2023 Maha cropping season.

WFP constructed four fertilizer stores and provided seedlings and equipment to 3,000 farmers to further support agricultural productivity in Sri Lanka. These initiatives, aimed at improving crop management, providing necessary input and training, and promoting the production of nutritious food, are all crucial to achieving sustainable food security in Sri Lanka.

The United Nations' efforts in Sri Lanka have been aimed at improving the availability and accessibility of safe water and sanitation facilities, particularly in vulnerable communities.

A vulnerability assessment was conducted to identify ways to improve groundwater quantity and quality, and a feasibility study was conducted to explore options for groundwater recharging. Additionally, knowledge products were developed and disseminated to support the implementation of water safety plans.

Capacity-building was another a key focus of UNICEF's efforts in the community water supply sector. Over 120 development officers, engineers and plumbers were trained on improving the operation of rural water supply systems, and 48 cost-effective models on climate-resilient water safety and security plans were implemented.

UNICEF also collaborated with provincial councils to protect catchment areas of drinking water sources and supported preliminary data analysis of the national-level household water quality assessment. Furthermore, hygiene-related knowledge of 15,000 people from vulnerable groups was improved through hand-washing and promotion programmes.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF reached out to 170 low-income urban settlements and 120 tea estates to provide messages on COVID-19 prevention and control. The organization also supported the upgrade of WASH facilities in 1,500 rural schools, enabling 450,000 school children to resume their education during the pandemic. A draft behavioural change strategy was developed to improve handwashing behaviours among vulnerable populations.

UNICEF and WHO conducted a rapid assessment of urban settlements in Colombo to identify gaps in social services and coping mechanisms. UNICEF implemented initiatives to improve the nutritional quality of cash transfers and the preschool feeding program. WFP provided unconditional food assistance to food-insecure households through in-kind food and cash-based transfers and e-vouchers. These efforts were aimed at alleviating food insecurity and supporting vulnerable populations in Sri Lanka.



## SOCIAL PROTECTION



A contraction in economic activity has meant that social protection systems have come under increasing pressure. An expected doubling of the poverty rate (\$3.65/day, 2017 PPP) from 13.1 per cent in 2021 to 28.2 per cent in 2023 suggests an increasing need for social assistance to support households during a difficult period of structural adjustment. Inflation has also sharply eroded the purchasing power of households currently receiving social assistance benefits, making transfer values increasingly inadequate relative to the needs of beneficiaries. These developments make the exceedingly urgent business case for investing in an adequate, comprehensive, shock-responsive and sustainable social protection system to mitigate longer-term impacts of the crisis on economic and human development.

In 2022, the UN quickly recognized the importance of social protection as an immediate means of support amid Sri Lanka's economic crisis and mobilized to generate key knowledge products that underline the necessary scope and direction of social protection reform in Sri Lanka.

UNICEF commissioned a costing of several configurations for achieving universal social protection (including child benefits, benefits for people with disabilities and older persons) and the impact of an expansion of benefits on social protection coverage, consumption, poverty, economic growth and employment. This exercise builds on several key knowledge products finalized in 2022, including UNICEF's Public Expenditure Review on Social Protection; an assessment of development finance for social protection; and a UNDP landscape mapping of the social protection sector and ongoing assessment of the "new poor" affected by the unfolding crisis and the expanded social assistance service offer required to reach them. These publications served as a basis for discussion with the GoSL and IFIs on the government's commitment to expand coverage of existing social protection systems. UNICEF also partnered with Sri Lanka's Department of Census and Statistics and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative to produce measures of multidimensional child poverty as part of the recently released 2019 Household Income and Expenditure Survey,

while WFP worked with the Asian Development Bank on an operational review evaluating the feasibility of commodity voucher-based programmes in the context of inflationary pressure in Sri Lanka.

UN agencies also provided direct cash and in-kind support to beneficiaries to safeguard household welfare as the economic crisis worsened. In the first half of 2022, WFP provided a \$40,000 vertical expansion of a UNICEF-funded shock-responsive cash assistance programme to 637 vulnerable households with pregnant and nursing mothers affected by the economic crisis, intended to help reduce negative coping mechanisms. As social protection pressures and food insecurity increased in the second half of 2022, WFP's portfolio was expanded by \$1.7 million to include emergency cash assistance to 41,710 Sri Lankan households across seven districts. The joint FAO-WFP Food Security Initiative also provided cash assistance valued at over \$300,000 to a further 4,820 of the most vulnerable households in Monaragala and Mullativu affected by the economic crisis, along with communication sessions focusing on promoting positive nutrition, gender and domestic cash management behaviours. From August to October 2022, UNICEF provided \$100,000 in short-term nutrition-sensitive cash transfers to around 3,000 mothers with children aged 0–6 months in Colombo City,

with a further 100,000 mothers of children aged 5–24 months targeted as part of an \$11.5 million expansion planned to commence in 2023.

To preserve the dignity, hygiene and well-being of women, UNFPA provided dignity kits to 74,800 women and girls of reproductive age. UNFPA contributed a further \$175,000 to provide access to life-saving GBV services.

In the spirit of Leaving No-One Behind, UN activities in 2022 also made concerted efforts to integrate the most vulnerable groups into basic service provision. These efforts included more than \$340,000 provided by IOM and the United States Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons to strengthen Sri Lanka's anti-trafficking capacity, and \$33,000 provided by UN-Habitat to align national policies for urban settlements with the principles of safety, inclusiveness and access for the disabled.

In 2023, UN agencies will continue to provide cash and in-kind support to vulnerable and at-risk groups to bridge the resourcing gaps within Sri Lanka's existing social protection system, highlighted by the expansion of UNICEF's cash-transfer activities for mothers with children. Joint efforts from ILO, UNICEF and UNDP will also continue to promote tripartite dialogue on a vision for social protection in Sri Lanka in 2023 and beyond.



Despite the easing of public health orders, access to education services experienced further disruption in 2022. On 19 June 2022, Sri Lanka's education ministry closed urban government schools for nearly one month due to an island-wide fuel shortage – the fourth instance of government school closure in 2022. The country's foreign exchange situation has also disrupted vital components of the education system such as textbooks, printing paper and ink, which in some cases has forced postponement of term tests and other continuous assessment of students. Preliminary reports indicate the deteriorating economic situation has resulted in increased school dropouts and absenteeism, while outward migration and changes in public sector working conditions have contributed to a nationwide teacher shortage.<sup>12</sup>

UN activities in education and early childhood development in 2022 balanced the immediate physical and human resourcing needs for schools during the economic crisis with ongoing technical support in learning recovery and curriculum reform. Advocacy efforts to promote more inclusive education were also coupled with support for stronger fiscal planning and oversight mechanisms in education expenditure.

To address the bottlenecks caused by the economic crisis, UNICEF provided paper and stationery for 274,000 students in four provinces. Some 254,000 primary students in disadvantaged schools in and estate areas benefitted from learning continuity initiatives, recovery programmes and educational materials while 137,000 children were supported in literacy and numeracy programmes. 32,250 disadvantaged

preschool children, including 20 with disabilities, received nutritious preschool meals. In partnership with KOICA, the UN completed a \$6.75 million project in Kilinochchi District which upgraded learning environment and capacity building for quality teaching/learning, including online teaching capacities. 210,052 secondary school aged children were reached through psychosocial support services.

The UN supported National Education Curriculum Reform, and advocacy initiatives promoting child rights and community participation in education. Through UN support the national curriculum was revised to include child-centred teaching/learning approaches drawing on principles of multi-level pedagogy, positive discipline, as well as peace and inclusive education. Through the child-friendly cities initiative, the UN improved the safety and protection of children in school and play environments as well as promoting children's rights and participation in local government decision-making.

The UN utilised the ECD Index (ECDI 2030) to assist in a holistic approach to early childhood development (ECD) as part of the SDGs. The UN also jointly worked to support the Ministry of Education and the GoSL to formulate and submit the Country Statement for the Transforming Education Summit (TES). The Country Statement renewed the government's vision and commitments in achieving the education-related SDGs, particularly in response to Sri Lanka's growing learning crisis.

## Education and Early Childhood Development



**\$6.75 MILLION**  
UPGRADING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR QUALITY TEACHING/LEARNING, INCLUDING ONLINE TEACHING CAPACITIES



**274,000**  
STUDENTS BENEFITTED FROM PROCUREMENT OF STATIONARY AND LEARNING MATERIALS



**391,000**  
DISADVANTAGED PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN GAINED ACCESS TO LEARNING CONTINUITY AND LEARNING RECOVERY OPPORTUNITIES, FOCUSING ON FOUNDATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY

<sup>12</sup> Neshella Perera, "Crisis-hit Sri Lanka to open new university for fresh teachers as outflow, retirement hurt", EconomyNext, 17 December 2022. Available at: <https://economynext.com/crisis-hit-sri-lanka-to-open-new-university-for-fresh-teachers-as-outflow-retirement-hurt-106772/>.

## EMPLOYMENT, SKILLS, AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY



15,000

TOURISM-RELATED WORKERS SUPPORTED THROUGH UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE SCHEME



\$130,000+

PROVIDED TO SRI LANKA'S MINISTRY OF COMMERCE TO ENHANCE TRADE PROCEDURES FOR SMALLER FIRMS ENGAGED IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE



1,300

MIGRANT RETURNEES EMPOWERED THROUGH INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS



\$400,000

INVESTED TO SUPPORT CONTINUITY OF EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS ACTIVITIES IN MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES



2,000

SMEs TRAINED ON FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY-RELATED BEST PRACTICES



©UN Women Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's economic crisis caused a sharp contraction in economic activity in 2022, the effects of which may continue through 2023. Over 100,000 fewer Sri Lankans were employed in September 2022 compared to the end of 2021 – a contraction of 1.3 per cent<sup>8</sup> – in addition to the estimated 200,000 jobs lost between the fourth quarter of 2019 and the second quarter of 2021 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>9</sup>

Against this backdrop, the UN has worked with government counterparts and in partnership with bilateral donors to monitor, analyze and promote structural reforms needed to support employment amid macroeconomic stabilization, while focusing on its mandate of promoting a human-centered, job-rich recovery in Sri Lanka. The UN delivered a suite of policy support and knowledge products of this objective. ILO provided thought leadership in this area in their presentation of a policy framework for job-rich, inclusive recovery and growth, with interventions that focus on policies to stabilize the economy and restore investor confidence; support economic diversification, particularly through technological innovations and digitalization; and labor market policies to enhance skills and inclusive access to decent jobs.

This builds on the ongoing UN engagement with the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) and Department of Trade, Commerce and Tourism of Central Province to promote tourism sector recovery in Sri Lanka. In 2022, UNDP continued working with the SLTDA through its \$556,190 Transforming Tourism in Sri Lanka initiative. The initiative saw the development of a Roadmap for Resilient Tourism Sector in Sri Lanka in January 2022, the establishment of a Tourism Advisory Unit within the SLTDA and a certification system for the Sri Lankan tourism industry. The Roadmap builds on the completion of the ILO's work with the Ministry of Tourism supporting 1) an unemployment insurance scheme for nearly 15,000 tourism-related workers to mitigate the immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and 2) the integration shock-responsive social protection with tourism industry employment.

<sup>8</sup> Sri Lanka, Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey: Quarterly Report – 2022, Third Quarter. Accessed 21 February 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Ramani Gunatilaka and Sunil Chadrasiri, "The Labour Market Implications of Sri Lanka's Multiple Crises", ILO Sri Lanka. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-colombo/documents/publication/wcms\\_856157.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-colombo/documents/publication/wcms_856157.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> International Trade Center, "Sri Lanka: Trade Facilitation for SMEs". Available at: <https://open.intracen.org/projects/XM-DAC-45001-B986>.

Key to UN efforts to promote a human-centered, job-rich recovery is the promotion of greater participation of firms and workers in international markets. In 2022, ITC provided trade facilitation for SMEs. The programme provides automation to selected trade procedures, establishes online payment solutions and simplifies export procedures for smaller firms engaged in international trade.<sup>10</sup> UNIDO facilitated integration of selected value chains into regional and global markets by enabling actors to meet requirements of modern trade partners, including modernizing food control systems, mainstreaming self-regulatory application of standards in the agri-food sector, strengthening food safety and quality (FSQ) related compliance capacity of the private sector, and raising stakeholder awareness and adherence to FSQ-related best practices, standards and technical regulations.

On the employment side, ILO and IOM continue to work with Sri Lanka's Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission, the Sri Lanka Vocational Training Authority, and Sri Lanka's State Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion. The goal of this collaboration is the introduction of a pilot programme to upskill aspirant Sri Lankan labour migrants to pursue foreign employment in the higher-skilled caregiving sector, and also to support skills certification for decent jobs and entrepreneurship among migrant workers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Five hundred government officials were provided training in digital marketing, financing and support services for MSMEs under the programme. ILO and IOM also provided investment in 18 community infrastructure projects in Kurunegala, Kilinochchi, Batticaloa, Galle, Puttalam and Kalutara to support and restore the livelihoods of over 1,300 migrant returnees, with two further developments planned for 2023. In 2022 the UN also completed its three-year project to support disaster- and climate-resilient livelihoods for 460 men and women who are part of resettled communities in the North and East.

The efforts of the UN in 2022 and further ahead in 2023 place particular focus on making Sri Lanka's labour market more inclusive, with initiatives focusing on promoting the participation of women and youth in formal labour markets. In 2022, ILO partnered with the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce and Dialog Axiata PLC to deliver the South Asia Leadership in Entrepreneurship (SALE) initiative, which involved four national policy dialogues on improving the enabling environment for youth entrepreneurship; training for 41 mentors in youth entrepreneurship promotion; and a "Know About Business" tailored training module for 21 schools and six vocational education centres across the country's Western and Southern Provinces. In 2022, ILO supported short-term relief mechanisms for 3,463 vulnerable women and men – including 175 persons with disabilities, 223 women heads of households and 180 MSMEs – in the Mannar, Kilinochchi, Vavuniya, and Mullaitivu districts as part of the Local Empowerment through Economic Development and Reconciliation (LEED+)

Project. LEED+ has invested over \$400,000 in agricultural input, cash-for-work programmes and employment programmes to support continuity of employment and business activities in marginalized communities during the economic crisis, with employment-related activities in 2022 supporting irrigation for farming, cultivation of 2,028 acres of paddy field, clearing farm access paths and renovating four fisheries landing sites. In 2023, UN Women plans to continue its efforts towards the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS) in Sri Lanka by partnering with the State Ministry of Women and Child Development and Chrysalis to provide resourcing and capacity-building for women entrepreneurs in Colombo, Ampara, Vavuniya and Moneragala to support the continuity of business activities following the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis. UN Women's 2023 initiatives also include supporting income-generating activities for women to promote financial independence and decision-making, and reducing the incidence of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

## DISABILITY

The UN in Sri Lanka has continued to promote disability inclusion both through its programmes and inside the organization. Following close consultations with Persons with Disabilities (PWD), UN agencies have included disability inclusion as a key cross-cutting area of concern in their country programme documents for 2023-2027. UN agencies collaborated with organizations working with persons with disabilities (OPDs) towards developing the Humanitarian Needs and Priorities plan and included OPDs as part of their emergency response. The UN Country Team has also taken initiatives for including data on disability in the development of an SDG Tracker for Sri Lanka. UNICEF for its part is finalizing a mapping of social protection grants for persons with disabilities as part of its programming in response to the crisis.

Led by UNDP, the UN has also worked on improving physical accessibility within the main UN Compound, thereby opening up the offices of multiple UN agencies to a broader group of stakeholders and potential future employees. In addition, the joint UN Communications Group's Annual Work Plan includes advocacy for PWD and accessibility for all media products, highlighting the agency and self-determination of PWD. Concerns regarding the rights of persons with disabilities are also included in the Universal Periodic Review and the UN stands by to support the implementation of relevant recommendations.





## SOCIAL COHESION

### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TOWARDS REPARATIONS AND RECONCILIATION

### PREVENTION OF HATE SPEECH AND DISINFORMATION

### PEACEBUILDERS CAPACITATED TO ADDRESS CONFLICT TRIGGERS



Sri Lankans have shown high levels of community resilience and social solidarity in response to COVID-19 and the subsequent economic crisis, as demonstrated by examples of social solidarity and community initiative from around the country. At the same time, incidences of stigmatization, exclusion and hate-speech stand to counter these positive narratives. As communities come under economic and social stress, social cohesion can weaken, and public trust can wane.

In 2022, the UN invested in safeguarding and securing gains made in previous years

in relation to social cohesion, as well as addressing emerging issues in building social cohesion across all communities. Initiatives included supporting independent institutions, addressing violence against women and girls, protecting fundamental freedoms and the rule of law and promoting inclusive social dialogue – both online and offline. These programmes involved collaborative engagement with various government and civil society actors at central, provincial, district and local level in addition to multiple United Nations agencies.

As part of sustained efforts to provide technical assistance towards reparations and reconciliation, IOM and WHO continued to support the Office for Reparations (OR) in 2022. Support centered on sensitizing OR staff on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), development of a training manual, conducting trainings for Case Managers on delivering psychosocial skills, and providing MHPSS support to victims. Outreach efforts by the OR were also strengthened, in addition to the establishment of a civil society/OR platform aimed at active engagement between civil society and OR staff. In efforts to strengthen institutions, Together with stakeholders, including political parties and other development partners, UNDP advocated and supported the Parliament of Sri Lanka in re-establishing sectoral oversight committees. These joint efforts culminated in the establishment of 17 sectoral oversight committees in December 2022. The committees cover a vast range of thematic topics, including Just and Law-Abiding Society; Environment, Natural Resources and Sustainable Development; Energy and Transport; and Media, Youth, Heritage and Citizenry. Additionally, UNDP advocated and assisted the Parliament of Sri Lanka to establish its first-ever Parliamentary Caucus for Youth through providing technical assistance to the Parliament Secretariat in conceptualizing the Terms of Reference for the Parliamentary Caucus for Youth. Interventions by UNDP and UNOPS primarily dealt with shoring up CSO capacities and ensuring that functioning space for civil society is maintained. UNOPS support took place in the form of providing grants, equipment and technical assistance on project and financial management skills development. UNODC contributed to the capacity building of civil society and state officials by providing skills and knowledge to address imminent rights violations.

UNDP and UNICEF continued their work in relation to monitoring and supporting efforts to prevent hate speech and disinformation. UNDP worked closely with youth and women-led organizations to unpack data and proactively use evidence from online monitoring on hate speech and social cohesion in a push for greater accountability from social media platforms. Moreover, UNDP, with support of CSO partners, worked with 76 peacebuilders to capacitate them to address conflict triggers through an improved evidence-

based information mechanism for grassroots conflict and crisis responses. This was in addition to working with over 50 selected female leaders across government institutions and CSOs to increase their understanding of how to address and combat hate speech and disinformation. UNICEF provided training to religious leaders on digital literacy and the effective use of social media in addition to reaching over 560 community members through messaging on civic responsibility, violence prevention, hate speech and the promotion of peace and social cohesion. UNICEF expanded its work with adolescents and youth on hate speech in hotspots in five districts (Batticaloa, Kurunegala, Trincomalee, Badulla and Kandy) and trained 172 government officers in an educational programme on hate speech prevention.

The UN in Sri Lanka partnered with National Youth Services Council of Sri Lanka to support strengthening peacebuilding capacities of 573 youth leaders including those from the youth parliamentary network, the federation of youth clubs and other youth leaders representing all 25 districts. Further, UNDP introduced the 'Youth for Diversity and Inclusion' programme which supported 79 young advocates on diversity and inclusion to build capacities and initiate action, that fosters respect and peaceful co-existence.

Work on addressing and reducing incidences of violence against women and girls continued in 2022 under the joint efforts of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women. The UN in Sri Lanka recognizes that violence directed at women and girls is extremely damaging to their mental and physical health and well-being. Additionally, violence is a serious violation of their human rights and negatively effects the social cohesion of the country. To this end, in 2022 UNFPA successfully oversaw the development of staff capacities at the AKASA shelter for women and girls. Additionally, support was provided for renovation of a safe house in addition to refurbishing the shelter's vocational training centre, as well as developing a vocational training guideline for AKASA staff. UNDP supported AKASA with lifesaving support, counseling and legal aid assistance through the humanitarian assistance programme in order to sustain their shelter operation and continued essential services to victim survivors of SGBV. Similarly, UNICEF continued community outreach activities

in the Mannar district. UNICEF facilitated cascade trainings for children and parents on life skills and positive parenting respectively, reaching 1,055 people in Manthai West, Mannar town and Musali Divisions. UN Women engaged with 974 women owning or engaging in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, utilizing training, mentorship programmes and access to markets to strengthen their financial and business literacy based on a needs assessment and value chain analysis.

In parallel, UNOPS, supported by OHCHR, worked on strengthening CSOs to build resilience among survivors of domestic violence in addition to providing timely food assistance, nutrition services, emergency agriculture, livelihood and protection support. This was in addition to working with beneficiaries of peacebuilding and conflict prevention in relation to land rights, as well as establishing a village-level platform for GBV prevention. UNDP supported seven SGBV shelters in five districts with timely food assistance, counselling, case management and legal aid with specific assistance to teenage mothers who needed special medical attention. Finally, UN Women continued support to the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs in the development of a National Action Plan (NAP) on Women Peace and Security (WPS). The NAP is expected to be approved by Cabinet in 2023.

The UN recognises the risk that protracted economic and social pressure can strain the capacity of government institutions, their continuity of key service provision, and their ability to adjust to the increasing need for services, putting the most vulnerable further at risk. To that end, in 2023 the UN will continue its support to government and non-government institutions in order to positively reinforce the drivers of social cohesion.

## Access to Justice and Effective, Accountable and Inclusive Institutions

Recognizing a steady increase in crime rates in 2022, driven in part by the ongoing economic crisis, the UN's interventions focused on strengthening the rule of law, improving access to free legal advice, shelter and support, addressing child justice and protection concerns, and supporting prison reforms among other intervention areas.

UNDP and UNICEF rolled out a large Joint Programme (JURE) with the aim to strengthen inclusive access to justice, improve transparency and ensure swift and responsive justice delivery in line with international best practices. Recommendations to enhance the provision of efficient and meaningful legal aid services were identified following the completion of a legal aid stakeholder mapping and capacity assessment. As a direct follow-up to the assessment, capacities of and links between 84 Legal Aid Commission (LAC) centres were strengthened through a training session on recent developments in the law. UNDP has also initiated updating the Strategic Action Plan of the cabinet – approved National Legal Aid Policy to reflect the changes in the legal aid landscape since plan development in 2016.

With prison overcrowding becoming a pressing issue, UNDP supported the MoJ's legal division in the formulation of key legislation including the Amendment to the Penal Code (Statutory Rape) and Amendment to the Community Based Corrections Act. Capacities of state justice sector actors were strengthened to deliver victim-centric and equitable services following training of 310 High Court judges and Magistrates on the Assistance to and Protection of Victims of Crime and Witnesses Act.

The people's right to peaceful assembly was strengthened following the development of guidelines on Police Conduct during Public Protests in line with international standards. UNDP's support to the Human Rights Commission (HRCSL) to carry out their inquiry mandate and conduct field investigations ensured that justice was meted out to civilians who were impacted by the spate of arrests.

As part of UN initiatives to strengthen rule of law institutions and rights-based solutions in the criminal justice sector, UNODC in partnership with civil society and independent entities provided for several critical interventions in 2022. The first of these involved strengthening institutional capacities through enhanced legal aid, along with greater public awareness to claim rights and entitlements guaranteed under the law. UNDP supported the Ministry of Women & Child Affairs in the development of a knowledge product on Laws and Rights of Women and Children to assist the capacity development of the mid level officials of the ministry with the aim of enhancing the service provision. Additionally, UNODC provided technical assistance to national drug demand reduction programmes to help prevent and treat substance abuse. Another intervention worked with the Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP) in supporting the Department of Prisons, strengthening the skills and capacities necessary to help reduce the prison population and strengthen overall prison management while also reducing recidivism through vocational training. In 2022, trainings were conducted on Prevention of Violent Extremism, Nelson Mandela Rules, and Health, in addition to modern sustainable agriculture practices. Similarly, standard operating procedures and contingency plans for crowd control, hostage taking, fire outbreaks and mass protests were developed and disseminated. Further, a joint UN initiative, "Crops for Tomorrow:

Improving the wellbeing of Sri Lanka Prisoners," was implemented by the GMCP, together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in close collaboration with the Department of Prisons and the Department of Agriculture in Sri Lanka. Finally, GMCP worked with Maritime Law Enforcement (MLE) agencies such as Navy, Coast Guard and Customs to counter various forms of maritime crimes. This included visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS), and pier-side vessel search techniques training as well as procurement of equipment. GMCP trained the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources on fishing vessel boarding operations, to address crimes in the fisheries sector. Further, training was provided to prosecutors on maritime crime cases, including organizing with simulated trials to address 'on-the-ground' challenges, including those of case preparation and evidence handling. GMCP is providing Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) training to Sri Lanka, along with satellite imagery to help the MLE agencies monitor activities in Sri Lankan waters. In response to maritime disasters, GMCP is working with the National Disaster Management Centre, Marine Environment Protection Authority, Port Authorities, Merchant shipping and MLE agencies to coordinate disaster preparedness and response activities, ensuring an effective response during emergencies.

### MIGRATION

The national Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) implementation plan for Sri Lanka was developed with the inputs from both government and non-governmental stakeholders including civil society, academia and the UN Migration Network in Sri Lanka.

As the Coordinator of the UN Network on Migration in Sri Lanka, IOM helped establish a GCM Implementation Committee in December 2021 under the auspices of the Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A workshop was then organized in October 2022 to discuss on how the Network could support the Government on the implementation, review, and follow-up of the GCM plan. During the workshop, the UN Heads of Agencies agreed on the importance of jointly support the GCM.





## CLIMATE CHANGE



**300**

E-TUK-TUK CONVERSIONS PROMOTING E-MOBILITY AMID FUEL SHORTAGE



**15,000**

ACRES OF DEGRADED LANDS REHABILITATED



**25,000**

CHILDREN REACHED BY DISASTER RESPONSE AND RECOVERY TRAINING



**9,308**

PEOPLE PROVIDED ACCESS TO CLEAN DRINKING WATER



**22,000**

YOUNG PEOPLE EDUCATED ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTER



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In 2022, the UN provided both technical and policy support to the GoSL with the support of its development partners. This included promoting a transition to low-carbon energy and green development, biodiversity conservation and green financing, strengthening national and provincial authorities in disaster risk management, and ensuring water safety and security through improved management of water resources.

In support of Sri Lanka's ambitious commitments under the Paris Agreement and enabling the country's transition to low-carbon energy and green growth, the UN worked to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). UNDP supported the development of the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) Implementation Plan and created gender-responsive, socially inclusive indicators for water, livestock, fisheries and energy sectors, with support from UNICEF for drinking water NDC revisions. This was underpinned by an advocacy campaign lobbying for expedited implementation of the NDCs. UNDP also supported the drafting of the 2050 Carbon Net Zero Road Map & Strategic Plan, complemented by a capacity-building programme to implement and monitor the Road Map.

At the outset of the country's economic crisis and fuel shortage, UNDP partnered with the Ministry of Transport to promote e-mobility (300 e-tuk-tuk conversions). In complement, the Department of Motor Vehicles was upgraded to an electronic registration system. Renewable energy technologies were provided to 237 smallholders in five provinces. These technologies serve to improve agri-productivity and production efficiency, and result in yearly energy savings of 43,800 kWh, which over 10 years will reduce GHG emissions by 130 MT.

A new South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) HQ building for the region, incorporating the latest eco-friendly, energy-efficient carbon-neutral design, is being built with infrastructure assistance from UNOPS. UNOPS is also offering advice on grant administration to SACEP to support women-led organizations that work on plastic waste management, with a target of 30 per cent female beneficiaries.

With the aim of providing alternative energy options, UN-Habitat supported 186 low-income

homes and public buildings with locally made fuel-efficient cook stoves and rooftop solar systems. This support will enhance indoor air quality and enable a transition to cleaner renewable energy for cooking purposes. ILO supported strategy implementation to enable the creation and growth of sustainable enterprises. This included the completion of "Opportunities for Employers and Business Member Organization (EMBOs)," a study on the growth of platform-based gig labor in Sri Lanka.

Biodiversity is another key priority in mitigating the effects of climate change in Sri Lanka. To this end, UNDP adopted three strategic landscape approaches in the Knuckles Mountain Conservation Forest and its Buffer Zone, Colombo Wetlands, and Coastal Region from Mannar to Jaffna, all of which support the preservation of biodiversity through improved livelihood solutions. These initiatives expanded the scope of environmental protection efforts to include 29,783 ha of improved management practices to benefit biodiversity and sustainable land management in production systems and ultimately rehabilitated 15,174 ha of degraded lands. Additionally, the first-ever Atlas on Mangroves and Saltmarshes of the Northwestern Coastal Region of Sri Lanka was developed and presented to the GoSL. Following approval of the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) Policy, technical support was provided to develop a gender-responsive national scaleup plan on the identification and management of ESAs.

Green financing instruments were promoted to support economic recovery and to maintain continued investments on biodiversity, including the mobilization of commercial banks to support the sustainable biodiversity financing structure. This included a UNDP-led initiative on green tourism, which supported the development of the National Tourism Policy and the National Sustainable Certification Scheme for tour operations.

The UN's interventions in disaster risk management and improved environmental management also contributed to enhancing climate resilience. UNICEF's flagship U-Report platform enabled 8,800 children and youths to contribute towards the Children's Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change

Adaptation. Additionally, the Ministry of Education received support to develop and disseminate the Comprehensive School Safety Guidelines, and also for a provincial-level Training of Trainers session on guidelines for school principals and zonal educational officials. Three hundred seventy-nine government representatives at the subnational level received training in child-centered disaster response and recovery, allowing them to incorporate children's needs into divisional development and emergency and response preparation plans, currently reaching over 25,000 children.

Further, a handbook on Gender and Gender-Based Violence in Disaster Settings was developed by UNFPA in collaboration with the Disaster Management Centre and the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs. The handbook informed the training of 580 officers and community leaders, tri-forces and senior leadership in five districts. As part of IOM's contribution to the intersections of migration and climate change, the "National Assessment Report on linkages between Migration and Climate Change (2022)" was completed, with primary data collected from 1,501 households in 15 districts. With the support of WFP, disaster management authorities and stakeholders received training on GIS and remote sensing & risk-sensitive planning, with technical assistance to develop shock-responsive social protection systems. Additionally, UN agencies worked on finalizing sub-national action plans to implement disaster risk reduction in key regions of the country.

To improve waste management capacities, UNDP facilitated the institution of innovative gender-sensitive solutions to localized management of Health Care Waste Management (HCWM). This included the development of localized, gender-sensitive HCWM, last-mile safe disposal systems and waste-to-income generation solutions, with the updating of HCWM standards. A five-year national action plan was also developed for the MoH that incorporates results from the pilot project on improving waste management capacities in the health care sector. UNDP's support to KMC's waste-to-energy system now exports electricity to the national grid. The annual electricity generation is 108,000 kWh and will reduce GHG emissions by 1,300 metric tonnes.

Enhancing water governance in Sri Lanka, the Strategic Plan for Water Resources Development and Management 2020-2025 was designed and formalized for the Ministry of Irrigation. Water management capacity-building was conducted by UNDP for Community Based Organizations (CBOs) comprising 48 per cent women, pushing women into leadership in water governance. Seven Community Water Supply Schemes managed by CBOs provide drinking water access for 9,308 people. The Ministry of Water Supply received technical and financial assistance to conduct a vulnerability assessment on groundwater depletion risks, and to improve the quantity and quality of groundwater used for rural water supply. The National Department of Community Water Supply was supported both technically and financially to develop data collection tools, finalize research methodology and train 100 development officers on conducting a household water quality assessment.

The Water Safety Plan Manual for CBO-operated water supply schemes and the Trainers' Guide for the Implementation of the Rural Water Safety Plan were jointly developed by UNICEF, the State Ministry of Rural and Divisional Drinking Water Supply Projects Development and the Water Safety Plan Advisory Unit. Two hundred forty development officers and 25 Officers in Charge at the district level were trained on emergencies and implementation of the Plan. In partnership with IWMI, FAO enhanced the capacity of stakeholders to purpose WaPOR data for water allocation and water productivity models in Sri Lanka, as well as analyze satellite data to prepare the WaPOR database. A comprehensive Water Accounting, Auditing, and Tenure Assessment of Sri Lanka and Malwathu river basin was completed and validated.



# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND INNOVATION

**E-EXTENSION**  
INFORMATION FOR  
PADDY FARMERS

**INTEGRATED**  
BORDER  
MANAGEMENT  
SYSTEM

**ONLINE**  
LEARNING AND  
ASSESSMENT



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Digitalization remains a key national priority in Sri Lanka, though work needs to be done to promote digitalization of the public sector, especially at subnational and local levels. The pandemic and subsequent mobility restrictions during the economic crisis seriously disrupted continuity of public services and affected the capacity of local-level government institutions to deliver relief and services to communities. In turn, this revealed the extent of disparities in digital accessibility and utilization among citizens. The UN's efforts in 2022 prioritized the acceleration and scaling-up of the digitalization of government workflow processes in line with the national policy framework. The UN continues to advocate for digitalization efforts to be complemented by adequate legal and regulatory frameworks governing its applications.

FAO developed an integrated e-extension information service for paddy farmers, which is now in the final stage of the validation process. Several workshops were conducted in 2022, and will continue in 2023, to familiarize intended users with this service. FAO successfully registered 500 schools through an IT platform developed to monitor and evaluate the school garden program and generate engagement with school children, parents and teachers via social media.

The Integrated Border Management (IBM) System continued to receive support from IOM, which delivered a training on API/PNR-based

passenger risk assessment to 33 officers and also extended support to the Sri Lanka Border Risk Assessment Centre to optimize their system functions. IOM also established the 24-7 Fisheries Monitoring Centre (FMC) at the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DFAR) in June 2022, which led to improvements in real-time vessel monitoring capabilities, improved maritime safety, maritime border security, sustainable fisheries management and improved compliance with international fisheries regulations. Support for the Office for Reparations continued with the development and design of a comprehensive IMS framework.

HackaDev, one of UNDP's flagship innovation-related projects with a focus on young people, launched the HackaDev Green Innovation Challenge to crowdsource and incubate green innovations, which complements the UN's climate interventions. The challenge, which built green innovation capacities of 386 young people, supports a cohort of 11 youth-led enterprises to develop their innovations and bring them to market. Digital support to Parliament and the justice sector which began during COVID-19 pandemic continued in 2022. Parliament Committees on Public Enterprises and Public Finance ensured public access to committee proceedings through broadcasting facilities, while the Justice sector received support on remote court hearings, and legal aid support to victims which reached 2,125 women and 486 men. UNDP's digital support to the Colombo High Court equipped the courts with the means to hear online bail applications, resulting in 950 e-bail application submissions, of which 694 cases were concluded. An online Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool and enhanced Clearing House Mechanism was also developed and delivered by UNDP to the Ministry of Environment.

Another timely innovative intervention by UNDP was the building of an Individual, Donor and Private Sector Giving Platform to support the relief efforts of the economic crisis. The platform secured \$1,720,652 contributing to 35,821 beneficiaries, through which 881 farmers were able to reap a harvest of 90,000 kg, leading to total earnings of \$196,000.

The National Volunteering Network (V-NET) was established in August 2022 as a virtual voluntary multi-stakeholder network of volunteer-involving organizations and philanthropists initiated by UNV to optimize resources and carry forward the nationwide volunteering agenda. UNICEF's continued investment in developing an Education Management Information System (EMIS) for preschools in the Western Province passed two milestones: incorporation of a revised monitoring template to enable comprehensive pedagogical monitoring, and completion of the training of preschool officers as system users. UNICEF, along with its government partners, built institutional capacity on blended learning and online pedagogy and assessment, contributing to a dialogue on developing a national ICT education policy and the completion of a framework for national assessment of teacher ICT capacity and curriculum.

Additionally, a UNICEF-initiated programme allowed 100 rural schools to access digital education by means of a SMART Classroom. The U-Report, a mobile youth empowerment platform, continued to disseminate educational content to 22,000 young people on climate change and disasters, food availability and affordability during the socioeconomic crisis, and corporal punishment, ultimately reaching up to 12 million individuals through social media.

UN Women trained 90 young women to counter hate speech and build peace by providing digital devices to support online activism, monitoring the reach of their content with the help of a hate speech tracker that enabled them to identify and report negative content. Despite challenges related to procuring and distributing devices during the crisis and travel restrictions, this activity strengthened young women's engagement in peacebuilding while also promoting sustainability via the provision of digital infrastructure and training.



## VOLUNTEERISM

Volunteering in Sri Lanka has shown itself as a means for ‘whole-of-society’ partnership and engagement, including in times of increased challenges such as the current crisis. It is unique in its scope to reach and support communities and especially vulnerable groups.

The United Nations system continued to deliver on the 2030 Agenda by expanding opportunities for more people to contribute their talent and capacity solutions to development, peace and humanitarian efforts, including through deployment of 116 UN Volunteers and 278 V-Force Volunteers. Notable examples of how volunteers played critical roles in the crisis response were provided by UNICEF and WFP. Volunteers were essential in WFP’s emergency response by distributing food vouchers to pregnant women in underserved districts and WFP’s food assistance programme supporting the coordination and verification activities within Moneragala district. UNICEF’s data entry and registration assignment related to the short-term cash transfer programme supporting women with newborn babies in urban underprivileged communities in Colombo Municipality area also featured significant contributions by volunteers.

UNV extended support to the response and recovery efforts in the country by engaging a broad range of stakeholders to form the National Volunteering Network (V-NET) of 139 entities with an outreach to 700,000 volunteers. The V-NET recorded over 712 volunteering initiatives between September and December.

UNV worked with the Sustainable Development Council (SDC) to gather inputs on volunteering contributions to the SDGs in preparation of the Voluntary National Review (VNR) 2022 for Sri Lanka. A National Situation Analysis (NSA) on Volunteering in addition to an Online Survey and Sectoral Focus Group Discussions were conducted as inputs to the VNR 2022 which reaffirmed volunteers as key contributors driving the 2030 agenda. UNV further supported the Government (Department of Social Services) in establishing the National Volunteering Secretariat (NVS) and the development of the Volunteer Management System (VMS) to coordinate volunteering in Sri Lanka. These are key resources in strengthening volunteering infrastructure in the years to come.





## SDG-DRIVEN PLANNING, FINANCING AND DATA

**CHILD POVERTY REPORT**  
FINALIZED

**SRI LANKA SDG INVESTOR MAP**  
LAUNCHED

**SRI LANKA SUSTAINABLE HOUSING AND CONSTRUCTION ROADMAP 2020-2050**  
DEVELOPED



Mobilising financing to invest in the SDGs in Sri Lanka has become an increasingly challenging task in the context of the country's economic crisis. Sri Lanka requires significant resource mobilisation in a number of policy areas. Among these are mobilising greater own-source revenue to fund essential government expenditure in majority publicly funded areas such as health, education and social protection, and exploring ways to better facilitate other financing instruments like Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) or other concessionary finance arrangements to meet infrastructure needs.

The UN in Sri Lanka has made significant progress in supporting the country's sustainable development goals through various SDG-driven initiatives in national planning, financing and data. In collaboration with other development partners, UNDP continued to provide technical coordination

assistance to execute the Parliamentary Development Action Plan. This included conducting an Advisory Board meeting to discuss the plan's implementation.

UNICEF facilitated the Child Poverty Report's finalization for launch in 2023, with support from the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative. The report includes a child module in the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (2019), and capacity-building for the Department of Census and Statistics on Multidimensional Poverty.

To address sustainable housing and construction in Sri Lanka, UNEP, UN Habitat, and UNOPS worked together to develop the Sri Lanka Sustainable Housing and Construction Roadmap 2020-2050. This roadmap was based on a country assessment to identify each sector's status in relation to resource efficiency, sustainability and achieving zero emissions by 2050.

UNDP developed the SDG Data Portal, which was officially handed over to the Sustainable Development Council (SDC). The organization also provided the SDC with training on the portal's effective use. UNDP moreover conducted a scoping mission on SDG budget tagging, which aimed to identify, tag and monitor SDG initiatives across government agencies. This exercise is expected to strengthen the country's SDG planning, implementation and financing capabilities. In collaboration with the Sustainable Development Council and Board of Investments for Sri Lanka, UNDP also launched the Sri Lanka SDG Investor Map in 2022, identifying 15 investment opportunity areas across five key sectors.

UNFPA provided technical and financial support to the Department of Census and Statistics to help strengthen its communication and data visualization capacity. This included the

development of dashboards visualizing pricing information and key socioeconomic indicators, as well as a podcast series to reach persons with disabilities. UNFPA also provided support to conduct the census, including training officials and providing hardware and software. UNFPA also produced a report on counting women's full contribution to the economy which provides evidence for strengthening gender-sensitive policy and programming. Key government agencies were trained on using new methodologies for analyzing population data to inform policymaking.

The UN continues to explore options for a potential Debt for Nature Swap (DFNS) instrument. Progress has been made by UNDP in creating an umbrella framework for DFNS involvement, including the creation of an SDG investor platform. This was evidenced by nominations to green finance committees at the presidential and ministerial levels, with backing from the government's advisor on debt restructuring.

### GENDER

The new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Sri Lanka significantly elevates the importance of gender as a Strategic Priority and a dedicated programming outcome. The outcome on gender equality is poised to be a strong and centralized channel for the UN system's collective work on gender equality, particularly focusing on women in leadership, women's economic empowerment, and violence against women.

During the year, UN Sri Lanka supported the implementation of the National Action Plan on SGBV and is in the process of collectively supporting on the formulation and adoption on a second iteration of the National Action Plan on SGBV, a policy on gender equality, and a Bill on Women's Rights. The UN also collaborated with the EU in Sri Lanka on an advocacy campaign on domestic violence and prevention of violence in humanitarian work across the 16 days of activism in 2022 and via the Gender Forum Against Gender Based Violence conducted a joint advocacy campaign on prevention of violence against women. Furthermore, as part of the UN's internal initiatives, UN Communications Group incorporated gender equality as a priority area of engagement.

The National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment is a policy framework to facilitate the development of laws, policies, programmes and mechanisms that ensure equal rights and opportunities for women. The aim is to enhance the agency of women in all spheres of society, workplace, community, family and within civic space. UNFPA is providing technical support together with other UN agencies for the development of the policy which will be submitted to cabinet in 2023.

The Government of Sri Lanka adopted the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (NAS WPS) and the National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment with the assistance of the UN, as part of the UN's strategic support for the development of legislation and policies that promote gender equality and women's empowerment. This is a significant milestone in Sri Lanka's ambition to achieve gender equality and contributes to the nation's efforts towards the attainment of the SDGs.



By adopting the NAP WPS, Sri Lanka joins the more than 70 countries that have reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 through localized plans. Sri Lanka's NAP WPS was developed and validated in consultation with women across all 25 Districts in the country, as well as key stakeholders from government, civil society and the development sector. UN Women provided technical support for the development of the policy.



## PARTNERSHIPS AND FINANCING FOR THE 2030 AGENDA

With the goal of achieving national SDG priorities and leveraging funding to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN in Sri Lanka continued to strengthen its extensive partnerships with the government, development partners, civil society, the private sector and local communities during 2022.

The UN Sri Lanka SDG Multi-Partner Trust Fund (Fund) remained an instrument of choice for flexible and joint-up programming on complex topics under the Peace and Resilience Windows. In 2022, the Fund helped promote better coordination, coherence, and strategic resource allocation among UN Agencies and development partners, while lowering fiduciary risks and transaction costs.



**\$21.32 MILLION**

TOTAL DONOR DEPOSITS TO THE SDG FUND IN 2022

**\$36.65 MILLION**

TOTAL DONOR DEPOSITS TO THE SDG FUND (SINCE INCEPTION)

Development Partner deposits to the Fund (since inception):



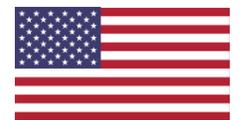
AUSTRALIA  
**\$29.06 MILLION**



CANADA  
**\$1.38 MILLION**



UNITED KINGDOM  
**\$4.28 MILLION**



UNITED STATES  
**\$1.93 MILLION**

Dealing with the past, social cohesion, governance, SDG 16 and resettlement are the main topics of the Peace Window, the successor to the Joint Programme for Peace (JPP) which was successfully concluded in mid-2022. Three post-JPP initiatives are currently in place that build on JPP's achievements, with a focus on dealing with the past, peace survey, early warning systems and civil society involvement. In 2022, the UK pledged a total of GBP 3 million to the Peace Window to be disbursed in subsequent years.

With the support of the Australian Government, a total of \$21.3 million in new funding was mobilized in 2022 under the Resilience Window, which served as a flexible financing option to support the Humanitarian Needs and Priorities

(HNP) plan. To alleviate the impact of a potential food security crisis, funding was mobilized for food security initiatives. The HNP's Protection Sector received flexible assistance, with activities concentrating on child protection and gender-based violence through the Fund.

Gender remains a cross-cutting theme under the Fund's objectives, receiving due consideration in projects funded. With the GoSL's endorsement of the new UNSDCF 2023-2027, the United Nations has launched an exercise of aligning the SDG Fund more closely with the new Cooperation Framework, aiming to further develop it into a flexible and strategic collective resource mobilization instrument beyond the two existing Peace and Resilience windows.



## STEPPING UP ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR



Strengthening partnerships with the private sector on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development continued to be an important focus area for the UN. Among other entities, the UN provided technical assistance to the IT & BPO industry to develop and execute a sustainability strategy that would facilitate transition to net-zero, improved working conditions and social impact investments. The UN also supported the Sri Lanka Sustainable Development Council in its efforts to develop a private sector engagement framework including a private sector steering committee. Our work also helped establish stronger engagement with the UN Global Compact Network Sri Lanka and support the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce in recognizing and promoting sustainability best practices within the private sector.

## UN COHERENCE, EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

The UN continued to advance reform process under the Secretary General's "Efficiency Agenda." Collectively, the Efficiency Agenda reforms aim to increase UN operational collaboration resulting in reduced costs and increased business efficiencies. The accrued financial and administrative savings allow the UN to channel more resources into programmes which serve the people of Sri Lanka. Cumulative savings through the Business Operations Strategy (BOS) are currently estimated at some \$800,000 since 2020, of which savings of \$340,000 materialized in 2022 despite the devaluation of the Sri Lankan rupee.

The UN conducted a systematic mapping of entities' field presences and intentions to scale up as part of the crisis response, allowing for optimal utilization of existing common premises without the need for standalone arrangements. Outside of the capital Colombo, UN entities now share common premises, which is one of the means of realizing the largest operational efficiencies and savings and of fostering coordination. Within Colombo twelve entities already share premises in the UN Compound, with a new building within this compound currently in planning stages to accommodate UNICEF.

One of the key issues for the UN in Sri Lanka in terms of operations and business continuity were power cuts and a shortage of fuel in the market, which negatively impacted the delivery of urgent assistance activities. Drawing on the expertise of a UN a fuel logistics expert, the UN in coordination with the Government of Sri Lanka developed short and long-term strategic options to secure fuel availability for UN and NGO humanitarian activities.

As an equal opportunity employer, the UN has also sought to improve workplace inclusion, and has identified concrete areas for further improvement. Efforts are currently underway to improve disability and gender inclusion practices in recruitment, procurement and within the workplace.

# CHAPTER 03

## UNCT PRIORITIES FOR 2023

### Supporting a sustainable and inclusive recovery

To safeguard development gains and protect the population from further adverse effects, the UN in Sri Lanka will prioritise accelerating actions that help set the path for recovery from the current crisis. Accordingly, we aim to support government efforts to revitalise the economy and economic activities, ensure access for all to quality social services and decent employment, pursue social cohesion, and promote improved health and lifelong well-being for all people in Sri Lanka.

Our technical expertise will be available to ensure that the resumption of economic growth is inclusive and green-led, with a positive impact on the natural environment and social cohesion, including through advice on innovative development financing models.

### Commitment to the needs of the most vulnerable

Food security, livelihoods and access to essential services have deteriorated for a significant part of the population. This has resulted in a significant increase in negative coping mechanisms and protection concerns, particularly for already vulnerable groups. Addressing the needs of those most at risk will continue to be a cross-cutting priority for the contributions of the United Nations in 2023, anchored in the principles of human rights and non-discrimination and ensuring that “no one is left behind.”

Monitoring and assessment of humanitarian needs will continue throughout the year. Implementation of activities already funded through the Humanitarian Needs and Priorities (HNP) plan or through newly mobilized resources will also continue, so that acute needs can be met alongside our longer-term development programming. The UN in Sri Lanka will maintain a dedicated coordination and reporting structure for these activities at least through the end of 2023.

The UN will also work closely with all stakeholders including international financial institutions to prioritise solutions that safeguard social protection for the most vulnerable at the present moment, while implementing necessary longer-term system reforms.

### A NEW STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR OUR ENGAGEMENT IN SRI LANKA FOR 2023-2027

The UNSDCF Joint Steering Committee is the main mechanism to ensure strategic leadership and joint decision making of the UNSDCF process, both for its development and implementation including for monitoring and review. It is co-chaired by the Secretary to the Treasury and the UN Resident Coordinator, and comprises secretaries of the key partner ministries and heads of UN agencies in the country.

On 17 August 2022, the United Nations and the Government of Sri Lanka signed the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for 2023-2027. The Cooperation Framework is mutually owned and anchored in national development priorities, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the principles of the UN Charter.

The UNSDCF 2023-2027 is part of a new generation of Cooperation Frameworks designed to boost coordination, efficiency and joint-up approaches in the operation of UN agencies, funds and programmes. This is in line with the United Nations Development System reform enacted by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in response to Member States' call for more effective development support. Accordingly, the UNSDCF guides the work of all UN Agencies in Sri Lanka by setting the organization's collective vision and contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals for the five-year period starting in January 2023.

Strategic priorities for the United Nations' contributions during this timeframe comprise Inclusive and Equitable Human Development and Well-being; Resilient and Green Recovery and Growth for Shared Prosperity and Environmental Sustainability; Social Cohesion and Inclusive Governance & Justice; and Gender Equality. Across the five-year period of implementation, the UNSDCF 2023-2027 will be funded through core budget allocations of an estimated \$60 Million, in addition to the mobilisation of approximately \$325 Million in resources.



# ACRONYMS

GBP	British Pound Sterling	GHG	Greenhouse gas
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development	GIS	Geographic Information System
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	GMCP	Global Maritime Crime Programme
UNSCR 1325	UN Security Council Resolution 1325	GoSL	Government of Sri Lanka
AAPWG	Accountability to Affected Populations Working Group	HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
ADB	Asian Development Bank	HCWM	Health Care Waste Management
API/PNR	Advance Passenger Information/Passenger Name Record	HRCSL	Humanitarian Needs and Priorities Plan
BOS	Business Operations Strategy	HNP	Human Rights Commission Sri Lanka
BPO	Business process outsourcing	ICT	Information and Communication Technology
CARI	Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators	IFIs	International Financial Institutions
CBOs	Community Based Organizations	ILO	International Labour Office
CFCI	Child-Friendly Cities Initiative	IMF	International Monetary Fund
CFSAM	Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission	IMS	Integrated Management System
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease	IOM	International Organization for Migration
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations	ISCG	Inter Sector Coordination Group
DFAR	Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources	ITC	International Trade Centre
DFNS	Debt for Nature Swap instrument	IT	Information Technology
ECDI	Early Childhood Development Index	IWMI	International Water Management Institute
ECOSOC HLPF	Economic and Social Council high-level political forum	JPP	Joint Programme for Peace
EFF	Extended Fund Facility	KOICA	Korean International Cooperation Agency
EMBOs	Employers and Business Member Organization	KWh	Kilowatt hour
EMIS	Education Management Information System	LEED+	Local Empowerment through Economic Development and Reconciliation
ENP	Emergency Nutrition Plan	MDA	Maritime Domain Awareness
ESAs	Environmentally Sensitive Areas	MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	MLE	Maritime Law Reinforcement
EU	European Union	MMS	Multiple Micronutrient Supplements
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	MoH	Ministry of Health
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment	MSMEs	Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
FMC	Fisheries Monitoring Centre	NAP	National Action Plan
FSQ	Food Safety and Quality	NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
Fund	UN Sri Lanka SDG Multi-Partner Trust Fund	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
GBV	Gender based violence	OCHA	United Nations Office for Humanitarian Coordination
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration	OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
GDP	Gross Domestic Products	OPDs	Organizations working with persons with disabilities
GFF	Green Financing Framework	OR	Office for Reparations
		PPP	Public Private Partnerships
		PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
		PTA	Prevention of Terrorism Act
		PWD	Persons with disabilities

RMNCAH	Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health
RMTD	Remote Temperature Monitoring Devices
SACEP	South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme
SALE	South Asia Leadership in Entrepreneurship
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SD Council	Sustainable Development Council
SDC	Sustainable Development Council
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEAR	South East Asia Region
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SLTDA	Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority
TES	Transforming Education Summit
UHC	Universal Health Care
UK	United Kingdom
UNCG	UN Communications Group
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNODC	UN Office for Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	UN Office for Project Services
UNRC	United Nations Resident Coordinator
UNSDF	UN Sustainable Development Framework
UNSDCF	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN	United Nations
UNV	UN Volunteers
USD	United States Dollar
V-NET	The National Volunteering Network
VMS	Volunteer Management System
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WaPOR	Water Productivity Open-access portal
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WB	World Bank
WFP	UN World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WPS	Women, Peace and Security Agenda
WTO	World Trade Organization



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