



A baby at a medical clinic in the tea estate area in Hatton, located in central Sri Lanka where several babies are born underweight or stunted.

unicef 
for every child

Humanitarian Action for Children

Sri Lanka

HIGHLIGHTS

- Children are disproportionately affected by the rapidly unfolding economic crisis in Sri Lanka. Rising food and fuel prices, along with frequent power cuts, shortages of life-saving medicine, are particularly impacting the poorest and most marginalized.
- More than 5.7 million people, including 2.3 million children, require humanitarian assistance. Sri Lanka is among the top ten countries with the highest number of malnourished children and the numbers are expected to rise further.¹ Essential health and WASH services have been severely impacted by stockouts of essential commodities, and access to education and child protection services is severely constrained. Loss and precariousness of income means that children are being exposed to violence and stress, and increased school absenteeism/dropout due to the current crisis could further increase such risks. In addition, more families are soliciting to institutionalize their children in face of aggravating poverty.
- In line with Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action and the inter-agency Humanitarian Needs and Priorities Plan for Sri Lanka,² UNICEF requires US\$25.3 million to meet critical needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized children and their families by ensuring continued access to essential services and support.

IN NEED

5.7 million
people³

2.3 million
children⁴

TO BE REACHED

2.8 million
people⁵

1.7 million
children⁶

KEY PLANNED TARGETS



430,650

children receiving multiple
micronutrient powders



1.2 million

people accessing primary
health care in UNICEF-
supported facilities



984,300

children/caregivers
accessing mental health
and psychosocial support



665,690

children accessing
educational services

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

US\$25.3
million

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND NEEDS

Children are disproportionately affected by the unfolding economic crisis in Sri Lanka. Concurrent challenges of increasing public debt and fiscal deficit have impacted availability and affordability of essential commodities such as food, fuel, fertilizers, and medicine. These in turn have disrupted livelihoods and reduced household incomes across the country. As a result, around 5.7 million people, including 2.3 million children, are now in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. Sri Lanka's food production and harvest is expected to drop by at least 40 to 50 per cent in the coming months resulting in a further deterioration of the situation. Families are already struggling to afford food, with 70 per cent of households reporting reduced food consumption.⁷ Sri Lanka is second in South Asia in terms of wasting among children under five.⁸ Halted distribution of free supplementary food for malnourished children and the faltering provision of nutritious school meals will result in more children suffering from acute malnutrition.

Sri Lanka's alarming food security and nutrition situation is further threatened by a reduction in the availability of safe water, increasing the risk of diarrhoeal diseases. The provision of safe water has been severely impacted by the power crisis and constraints in importing purification and disinfection chemicals, including chlorine.

All essential health services have been severely impacted by critical shortages of medicine. There are ongoing stockouts of essential medicines affecting pregnant and lactating women and children, which are likely to continue for several months.

Learning has also been severely interrupted – many schools just re-opened following some of the longest pandemic-related school closures in the region – disrupting learning for 4.8 million children.⁹ School attendance rates have fallen dramatically and are likely to fall further with the halt in school meals – often the only source of nutritious food for many marginalized children.

The current crisis is exacerbating existing protection concerns and psychosocial issues among children,¹⁰ exposing them to numerous protection risks. Over 10,000 children are in institutions (poverty is the major driver for placement¹¹) and their conditions will be compromised as the crisis worsens and as additional families place their children in institutional care since they cannot afford to feed or educate them.

High inflation and shrinking fiscal space could mean that poverty doubles in the next 24 months, with 93 per cent of those below the poverty line in the rural and the estate sector.¹² Sri Lanka's social protection system is fragmented, and several programmes do not reach the most vulnerable, and many negative coping mechanisms have been reported including institutionalization of children, school absenteeism/drop-out, limited food intake, aggravated by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and current socio-economic and political crisis.

SECTOR NEEDS



2.4 million children and women requiring nutrition services¹³



2 million people in need of healthcare services¹⁴



2.6 million people in need of access to safe drinking water¹⁵



984,300 children in need of MHPSS services¹⁶



1.2 million children in need of access to education¹⁷

STORY FROM THE FIELD



Logeswary, a 40-year-old mother from the village of Shanthapuram, Kilinochchi in northern Sri Lanka is extremely worried about how she can continue to put food on the table to feed her four children. The family depends on her husband's income of 3000lkr (about U\$8.5 dollars) per week from his job as a part-time grass cutter at a farm.

Their two-year-old daughter, Krishanthi, is suffering from severe acute malnutrition, and their 9-month-old baby Debora, is also at risk of malnutrition. Little Krishanthi does not have access to the much-needed therapeutic food which could help improve her condition.

Two-year-old Krishanthi from Shanthapuram village in Kilinochchi in northern Sri Lanka is suffering from severe acute malnutrition

HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

As the lead partner for child rights, child survival and development in Sri Lanka, UNICEF is collaborating with national government partners, other UN agencies, non-governmental organizations and civil society organization (CSO) partners to meet the urgent needs of children.

In line with its Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action and the inter-agency Humanitarian Needs and Priorities Plan for Sri Lanka,¹⁸ UNICEF will (i) reach vulnerable children and women with essential services; (ii) ensure coherence between humanitarian and development programming, and (iii) scale up preparedness and early warning efforts to monitor the evolving situation. UNICEF Sri Lanka will ensure the delivery of life-saving assistance through public and private partnerships in the most equitable, sustainable, and effective way.

UNICEF aims to underpin existing social services to reach 2.8 million people and 1.7 million children. UNICEF leads the nutrition, education, protection, WASH and social protection sectors and plays a key role in the health sector. UNICEF is partnering with the Government, other UN agencies, and local partners to assess the situation and how the most vulnerable women and children are being impacted and will remain agile in defining where the most vulnerable children are located as the situation unfolds.

Priority interventions will include procuring and distributing life-saving supplies (maternal, neonatal, and nutritional items) in response to extensive stock outs and a deteriorating food security situation coupled with messaging and counselling for infant and young child feeding. UNICEF will also support the water supply sector given the lack of water purification supplies which threatens the availability of safe drinking water in urban and rural settings. UNICEF will also provide material and support to enable catch-up learning to all small, resource-poor, rural schools across Sri Lanka, as these children are at high risk of dropping out and have already missed significant periods of schooling. To safeguard children, UNICEF will work with partners to strengthen emergency case management services for the most vulnerable children and prevent and respond to family separation, including children with disabilities, through government and CSO partners. UNICEF will work with frontline workers, families, and youth to provide psychosocial support to help manage the stress and prevent violence in families. UNICEF will use cash or vouchers, depending on access to markets and availability of products, to support pregnant and lactating mothers, using existing systems where possible.

2022 PROGRAMME TARGETS¹⁹



Nutrition

- **56,000** children aged 6 to 59 months with severe acute malnutrition admitted for treatment
- **320,000** primary caregivers of children aged 0 to 23 months receiving infant and young child feeding counselling
- **430,650** children aged 6 to 59 months receiving multiple micronutrient powders
- **100,000** pre-school children reached through school feeding programmes



Health

- **2,000** health care facility staff and community health workers trained in infection prevention and control
- **1,236,480** people accessing primary health care in UNICEF-supported facilities²⁰



Water, sanitation and hygiene

- **1,502,426** people accessing a sufficient quantity of safe water for drinking and domestic needs²¹
- **2,500** girls and women accessing menstrual hygiene management services
- **10,000** people reached with hand-washing behaviour-change programmes
- **300,000** children use safe and appropriate WASH facilities and hygiene services in learning facilities



Child protection, GBViE and PSEA

- **984,300** children and parents/caregivers accessing mental health and psychosocial support²²
- **300** women, girls and boys accessing gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions²³
- **1,800** people who have access to a safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse
- **3,000** girls and boys assisted through individual case management and specialized services²⁴



Education

- **665,690** children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning
- **665,690** children receiving individual learning materials



Social protection

- **121,769** households reached with cash transfers through an existing government system where UNICEF provided technical assistance and/or funding²⁵



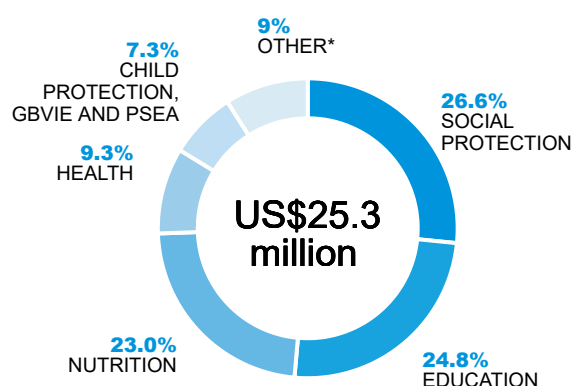
Cross-sectoral (HCT, C4D, RCCE and AAP)

- **350,000** people reached through messaging on prevention and access to services
- **25,000** people engaged in risk communication and community engagement actions

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2022

In line with the inter-agency Humanitarian Needs and Priorities Plan for Sri Lanka, UNICEF is appealing for US\$25.3 million to respond to the urgent needs of children and caregivers affected by the deepening socio-economic crisis and looming humanitarian crisis until end of 2022. Out of this amount, US\$5 million is fully reflected in the four-month inter-agency appeal. This HAC appeal goes beyond the scale and duration of Humanitarian Needs and Priorities for Sri Lanka, and would allow UNICEF to respond to the urgent needs, including access to health, nutrition, education, safe drinking water and child protection services, and mitigate the risks of negative coping mechanisms through cash or voucher programmes. This support will also enable UNICEF to ensure inclusive and integrated approaches for vulnerable groups including persons with disabilities and children in institutional care, strengthen prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, and ensure preparedness for the rapidly escalating humanitarian situation until the end of 2022.

Inaction will result in the most vulnerable children paying the highest price. Without sufficient, timely, and flexible funding, UNICEF will be unable to address the humanitarian needs arising from the ever-worsening crisis, and the most vulnerable and marginalized children and their families will be left without access to life-saving services and social assistance.



Sector	2022 requirements (US\$)
Nutrition	5,816,519
Health	2,344,134
Water, sanitation and hygiene	1,414,500
Child protection, GBVIE and PSEA	1,834,492
Education	6,273,000
Social protection	6,713,750
Cross-sectoral (HCT, C4D, RCCE and AAP)	615,000 ²⁶
Emergency preparedness	246,000
Total	25,257,395

*This includes costs from other sectors/interventions : Water, sanitation and hygiene (5.6%), Cross-sectoral (HCT, C4D, RCCE and AAP) (2.4%), Emergency preparedness (<1%).

Who to contact for further information:

Christian Skoog
Representative
T +94 11 267 7550
cskoog@unicef.org

Manuel Fontaine
Director, Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS)
T +1 212 326 7163
mfontaine@unicef.org

June Kunugi
Director, Public Partnership Division (PPD)
T +1 212 326 7118
jkunugi@unicef.org

ENDNOTES

1. UNICEF/WHO/WB Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates, 2021: Retrieved from <<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240025257>>
2. UNICEF activities are aligned with the inter-agency Humanitarian Needs and Priorities with a total request for US\$5 million included. Due to differences in duration and scale of response, UNICEF HAC calls for an additional US\$20.3 million that was not included in the HNP.
3. Humanitarian Needs and Priorities: Food Security Crisis Sri Lanka, 2022
4. This figure was calculated based on the children under 5 in need of micronutrient powders (861,300); children in schools registered for school meal programme with the Ministry of Education (1,081,927) and new born babies requiring assistance with IYCF and growth monitoring (320,000).
5. This figure was calculated based on the people benefiting from the procurement of essential medicines and supplies (1,114,503 adults: 121,977 children extracted from the total of 1,236,480 people targeted for the sake of removing potential overlaps); children targeted for MMN and SAM treatment (430,650); newborn babies supported with IYCF and growth monitoring (320,000) and children (above 6 years) targeted for education support and MHPSS in schools (984,300).
6. This figure was calculated based on the children targeted for MMN and SAM treatment (430,650); newborn babies supported with IYCF and growth monitoring (320,000) and children targeted for education support and MHPSS in schools (984,300).
7. UNICEF telephone survey conducted in May 2022
8. UNICEF/WHO/WB Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates, 2021
9. UNESCO Education: From disruption to recovery. Retrieved on May 29, 2022 from <<https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse#schoolclosures>>
10. An assessment conducted by ChildFund Sri Lanka in 9 districts with the participation of 590 children and 262 parents in May 2022
11. Department of Census and Statistics (2019), Census of Children in Childcare Institutions
12. Estimated data using Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2019 data and current inflation, due to be published by a research institute in Sri Lanka.
13. As per the needs identified in the Humanitarian Needs and Priorities for Sri Lanka
14. As per the needs identified in the Humanitarian Needs and Priorities for Sri Lanka
15. As per the needs identified in the Humanitarian Needs and Priorities for Sri Lanka
16. Total adolescents in need of MHPSS in communities and at school as estimated by UNICEF
17. As per the needs identified in the Humanitarian Needs and Priorities for Sri Lanka
18. UNICEF activities are aligned with the inter-agency Humanitarian Needs and Priorities with a total request for US\$5 million included. Due to differences in durations and scales, UNICEF HAC calls for an additional US\$20.3 million that was not included in the HNP.
19. 50 per cent of all programme targets are women and girls.
20. 1,236,480 people including 630,605 women and 121,977 children require support to access quality life-saving and high-impact hospital care.
21. Safe water will be provided through the distribution of water treatment chemicals via the Ministry of Water Supply who is managing water treatment for pipe water connections in urban areas and rural community managed water schemes.
22. Total secondary school children targeted for MHPSS through teachers at school and in communities
23. This will be implemented under the case management intervention, targeting girls and boys, as women will be covered by other UN agencies
24. Emergency case management includes life saving services, a care plan, MHPSS, Fit Persons allowance and supporting girls and boys who are survivors of GBV.
25. UNICEF's selection criterion is pregnant and lactating women. UNICEF will use either voucher or cash modalities, depending on the access to markets and availability of products.
26. Includes SBC including messages on positive parenting and MHPSS and engagement in RCCE actions.