

Sri Lanka

Country programme document 2013-2017

The draft country programme document for Sri Lanka (E/ICEF/2012/P/L.13) was presented to the Executive Board for discussion and comments at its 2012 annual session (5-8 June 2012).

The document was subsequently revised, and this final version was approved at the 2012 second regular session of the Executive Board on 14 September 2012.

Basic data[†]

(2010 unless otherwise stated)

Child population (millions, under 18 years)	6.2
U5MR (per 1,000 live births)	17
Underweight (% , moderate and severe, 2006-2007)	21 ^a
(% , urban/rural, poorest/richest)	../., 29/11
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births, 2008)	39 ^b
Primary school enrolment/attendance (% net, male/female, 2009)	95/96
Survival rate to last primary grade (% , male/female, 2008)	93
Use of improved drinking water sources (%)	91
Use of improved sanitation facilities (%)	92
Adult HIV prevalence rate (% , 15–49 years of age, male/female, 2009)	<0.1
Child labour (% , 5-14 years of age, male/female)	..
Birth registration (% , under 5 years of age, 2006-2007)	97
(% , male/female, urban/rural, poorest/richest)	97/97, 97/98, 97/98
GNI per capita (US\$)	2290
One-year-olds immunized with DPT3 (%)	99
One-year-olds immunized against measles (%)	99

[†] More comprehensive country data on children and women can be found at www.childinfo.org/.

^a Underweight estimates are based on the WHO Child Growth Standards adopted in 2006.

^b The reported estimate is 39 deaths per 100,000 live births (2006), as presented in the Family Health Bureau Annual Report, Ministry of Health, 2006-2007. The estimate of 39 deaths per 100,000 live births is also the 2006 estimate developed by the Maternal Mortality Estimation Interagency Group (WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Bank, together with independent technical experts), adjusted for underreporting and misclassification of maternal deaths. For more information, see www.childinfo.org/maternal_mortality.html.

Summary of the situation of children and women

1. Sri Lanka has a multi-ethnic and religiously diverse population of nearly 21 million. It is ranked 97th out of 183 countries on the Human Development Index (2011), a result achieved in large measure by the provision, since 1948, of free and compulsory universal education up to age 14, free health services and several poverty alleviation schemes.

2. Following the May 2009 end of the conflict of almost three decades and recovery from the tsunami devastation of 2004, the country is ready to take advantage of emerging opportunities for durable peace with sustained and equitable growth. The country is increasingly investing in economically lagging areas to reduce regional disparities. It encourages more equitable development towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals through the national plan ‘A Ten-Year Horizon Development Framework: Mahinda Chinthanaya: Towards a New Sri Lanka, 2006-2016’ (referred to here as the Ten-Year Development Plan 2006-2016). Prevailing peaceful conditions contribute to free mobility within the country, facilitating economic and social integration.

3. Sri Lanka achieved lower middle income status in 2009, with a per capita GDP of \$2,400, and recorded 8 per cent economic growth in 2011.¹ In relation to Millennium Development Goal 1, the rate of poverty fell from nearly 23 per cent in 2002 to 8.9 per cent in 2009/10, excluding three districts in the north where the survey was not completed, as information needed was not available due to the high movement of the population immediately after the cessation of the conflict. The incidence of poverty ranges from 3.6 per cent in Colombo district in the Western Province to 20.3 per cent in Batticaloa district in the Eastern Province. The Gini coefficient for household income increased from 0.47 in 2006/2007 to 0.49 in 2009/2010, indicating a skewed income distribution.²

4. Sri Lanka is on track to achieve Millennium Development Goal 2 (universal primary education) and Goal 3 (gender equality). It has a total adult literacy rate of 91 per cent. The country has achieved near-universal primary school enrolment of 99 per cent, which varies little across provinces or by gender. The retention rate to last primary grade is 98 per cent, and the secondary gross enrolment ratio is 86 for males and 88 for females. Yet the quality of education requires attention, as the pass rate for grade 5 exams averages just 57 per cent.³

5. The current unemployment rate is less than 5 per cent (males, 2.9 per cent; females, 7.1 per cent).⁴ The Government has provided vocational and technical training facilities to help young people develop marketable skills. However, a substantial proportion of youth have limited opportunities for skills development.

6. Sri Lanka is also on track to achieve Millennium Development Goal 4 (child mortality), Goal 5 (maternal health) and Goal 6 (HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases). The under-five mortality rate is 15 deaths per 1,000 live births and the infant mortality rate is 13 deaths per 1,000 live births (2009). Almost all deliveries (98 per cent) are attended by skilled personnel, and the maternal mortality ratio is 33.4 per 100,000 births (2008).⁵ Regional disparities in maternal mortality remain a challenge; the highest-performing district (Polonnaruwa, in the North Central province) has 14.4 per 100,000 live births while in the lowest performing (Mannar, in the Northern province) it is 66.9 per 100,000 live births. The success in reducing child mortality is matched by near-universal immunization coverage. The estimated HIV prevalence rate for the age group 15-49 is low, at less than 0.1.

7. Child nutrition is not on track to reach the Millennium Development Goal target by 2015. Low birth weight afflicts 17 per cent of babies, and one sixth of women have low body mass index. The percentage of underweight children below the age of 5 has been reduced nationally from 34 per cent in 1987 to 21 per cent in 2006/07. However, the percentage varies across districts, from 12 per cent in Gampaha (Western province) to 33 per cent in Badulla (Uva province). In other nutrition indicators, 19 per cent of children under 5 years are stunted, varying from 8 per cent in Colombo to 41 per cent in Nuwara Eliya in the plantation areas.⁶

¹ Central Bank Annual Report, 2010.

² Household Income Survey, Department of Census, 2009/10.

³ Annual Statistical Abstracts, 2011, Department of Census.

⁴ Central Bank Annual Report, 2010.

⁵ Annual Report of the Family Health Bureau, Ministry of Health, 2008. The data provided in the UNICEF database is averaged over time, whereas the information from the Government is for the year 2008 only.

⁶ Demographic and Health Survey 2006/2007, Department of Census.

8. Sri Lanka is on track to achieve Millennium Development Goal 7 (environmental sustainability). It has achieved estimated national coverage of 90 per cent for water supply and 91 per cent for access to sanitation, though these high national figures mask disparities across the country.⁷ Water quality remains an issue, as does sustaining groundwater levels and reducing salinization.

9. The country has made many gains for children, though promotion of child protection rights requires further attention. Child protection legislation, policies and standards exist, but they need to be fully operationalized in line with the international treaties to which Sri Lanka is a signatory. Psychosocial, probation, child care and social welfare services require strengthening in terms of human and financial resources. More collaboration is needed between the Department of Social Services and the Department of Probation and Child Care Services to generate multi-sectoral community-based responses for children and their families.

10. Ongoing child protection issues include the number of children in residential care, violence and abuse against children, the low age (8 years) of criminal responsibility and the long average time it takes for courts to deal with abuse cases. Children left behind by parents migrating for employment remains a concern.

11. In the areas formerly affected by conflict, the civil administration, the justice system and the police require further strengthening. Individuals and communities in these areas also continue to face threats from land mines and other explosive remnants of war. Post-conflict recovery and rehabilitation efforts, under way since 2009, address the basic needs of displaced communities. The promotion of livelihood and other welfare activities for communities in the former conflict areas are led by the Government in partnership with the United Nations and other stakeholders. This support ranges from provision of education, health, water, sanitation, shelter and demining services to strengthening administrative and social service networks, developing road networks, rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-combatants, and livelihood improvement.

12. Populations in areas affected by the former conflict, in remote rural areas and in the tea plantation sector are especially vulnerable. This indicates the need for effective targeted interventions through decentralized planning and resource allocation.

13. Sri Lanka is vulnerable to environmental degradation, natural hazards and climate change. In late 2010, heavy rainfall — the worst in 100 years — caused floods and landslides affecting more than 1.2 million people, mostly in Eastern, Central, North Central and Northern provinces. Environmental risk management and mitigation need improvement at national and decentralized levels.

Key results and lessons learned from previous cooperation, 2008-2012

Key results achieved

14. The current programme has predominantly addressed the multiple needs of populations affected by the tsunami and the conflict, but it also provided policy

⁷ Household Income Survey, Department of Census, 2009/10.

support to partners and services for resettled populations and residents of other economically lagging areas.

15. The child-friendly school approach to improve school access and quality has been institutionalized by the Ministry of Education. Rural water supply units have been established in 17 of 25 districts to improve water management. Children were reunified with their families through family tracing and reunification, as well as the establishment of gatekeeping mechanisms, such as social support, income-generating activities and cash grants, which prevented and protected children at high risk of being separated from their families. Implementation of the Fit Person Order, enabling provision of foster care, aided in deinstitutionalizing children. Social care centres were established to provide coordinated and comprehensive child care services.

16. In an effort to address the root causes of malnutrition, UNICEF supported the development and adoption of a national nutrition policy in 2010 and the introduction of an infant and young child feeding package. Successful advocacy contributed to the establishment in January 2011 of a National Nutrition Council headed by the President, and UNICEF is supporting a related nutrition secretariat. A multi-sectoral approach to address nutritionally-at-risk households is being modeled in two provinces. In four districts a marginal budgeting for bottlenecks analysis for the health sector was conducted on a pilot basis to assess investment directions.

17. An inclusive-education policy was supported to improve rates of enrolment and school completion. A policy for water quality surveillance and testing was supported, and a sanitation policy is being drafted. Contributions were made for the first draft of the Children's Judicial Protection Act, national guidelines on case management, a model orphanage ordinance and redirection of minor child offences from criminalization to mediation.

18. Immediately after the conflict ended UNICEF supported the new internally displaced students aged 5-14 years to attend school within the first six weeks of displacement. Water and sanitation were provided to about 280,000 displaced persons in welfare centres and to resettling populations. Severely undernourished children who were internally displaced were provided with therapeutic feeding, significantly reducing under-nutrition prevalence. Children released by armed groups were provided with reintegration support. The Office of the Commissioner General for Rehabilitation was supported during development of a new emergency regulation for children affected by armed conflict to provide the legal framework to protect child surrendees from prosecution and to guarantee rehabilitation and reintegration into society for children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups.

19. The programme supported government officials at central and provincial levels to strengthen their skills and capacity in planning, monitoring and evaluation and to improve quality and timeliness of routine data collection. Micro-level planning and monitoring mechanisms were supported to reduce inequities at the divisional level. The population census of 2012, the first covering the entire country since 1981, was also supported.

Lessons learned

20. Reviews showed that policies are often well developed but inadequately implemented and monitored. Additionally, variability in capacities among service providers undermines effective implementation. This underlines the importance of strengthening the capacities of provincial authorities and enhancing devolved functions in education, child protection, health, planning, monitoring and budget tracking for equitable service delivery.

21. Lessons drawn from experience in planning for emergency preparedness, relief, recovery and early-development interventions, and from the tsunami and the conflict, highlighted the importance of balancing between investments in assets and infrastructure and in longer-term capacity strengthening.

22. Analysis of previous conflicts in Sri Lanka suggests that disenfranchised and unemployed youth have often been main drivers of conflicts. To contribute to reconciliation and lasting peace, the partnerships with government and development partners need strengthening to ensure that children and youth are respected and protected and receive help to fulfil their rights and respond to their aspirations.

The country programme, 2013-2017

Summary budget table

Programme component	<i>(In thousands of United States dollars)</i>		
	<i>Regular resources</i>	<i>Other resources</i>	<i>Total</i>
Disparity reduction and equitable, high-quality social services	1 560	23 435	24 995
Young people's protection, empowerment and participation	935	14 060	14 995
Policies and advocacy for a caring society and equitable development	625	9 375	10 000
Cross-sectoral	630	9 380	10 010
Total	3 750	56 250	60 000

Additional funds for emergency response will be raised if necessary.

Preparation process

23. The preparation of this CPD benefited greatly from the consultative process to develop the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which included a desk review of relevant secondary data and literature. In lieu of a comprehensive situation analysis, several studies informed the CPD. These included the government's 2011 household income and expenditure survey, the 2010 UNICEF-Ministry of Health food and nutrition survey, and the updated UNICEF 2011 study on child well-being.

24. Additionally, UNICEF conducted a series of brainstorming exercises to identify its comparative advantages as the organization repositions itself from emergency to development engagement in a middle-income country. Local

stakeholders, including senior government officials, civil society organizations, academics and youth representatives, were consulted on challenges and options for Sri Lankan children and youth in the changed country context.

25. The development of this CPD was further guided by the Ten-Year Development Plan 2006-2016, provincial development plans, national and district studies, and the findings of the 2010 midterm review.

Programme components, results and strategies

26. The overall goal of the 2013-2017 country programme is to support fulfilment of the rights of children, youth and women to a protective environment, equitable development and inclusive high-quality social services. By maximizing the peace dividend, the programme also aims to promote a caring society with fewer inequities and lasting peace. In this light, the programme will focus on underserved and vulnerable groups living mainly in remote rural areas, areas formerly affected by conflict and the plantation sector, as identified in the country's Ten-Year Development Plan 2006-2016.

27. All three programme components will make use of a variety of strategies under the human rights-based approach:

(a) **Capacity development** will be realized through strengthening of national and provincial systems and authorities to improve efficiency and effectiveness in planning and resource allocation. Disaster preparedness and risk management will be improved across all components;

(b) **Service delivery** will be reinforced to fill gaps and improve access to and quality of services across all programmes. The emphasis will be on reducing under-nutrition, improving education quality and promoting community child protection;

(c) **Strategic partnerships** will be established with government authorities, the private sector, civil society, development partners and the United Nations system, using a rights-based approach to policy formulation and implementation. Complementary approaches will be sought in order to benefit from efficiencies in delivery;

(d) **Advocacy** will promote required changes in programmatic interventions. Advocacy and partnerships will be strengthened to leverage resources to fulfil the rights of children and women in the context of a middle-income country.

(e) **Communication for development** will be used to promote best practices and behavioural changes in the community to sustain interventions. It will be employed to increase the participation of young people in decision-making processes, both within their homes and as citizens of the country. The objective is to enable them to express their opinions broadly with a view to increasing well-being and empowerment.

(f) **Knowledge management** will be employed to identify current and emerging challenges and to support informed decision-making and evidence-based policymaking. This will include scaling up proven interventions to reduce inequities.

28. Though gender parity has been achieved in all social indicators, all three programme components will contribute to sustaining gender equality. Environmental

sustainability is addressed through water and sanitation initiatives as well as disaster and risk reduction advocacy through schools. Environmental sustainability will be incorporated into the capacity development and advocacy strategies to encourage guardianship of the environment by the next generation.

Programme components

29. **Disparity reduction and equitable, high-quality social services.** This programme component will contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the results outlined in the medium-term strategic plan, and to fulfil the commitments of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It will be implemented mainly through the public sector and will aim to strengthen capacities and service delivery to support survival and development of children, quality education, a protected environment and adequate water and sanitation facilities. The component will emphasize equitable access to services by underserved people. Special attention will be paid to improving behavioural changes in communities using existing best practices. It comprises four sub-components designed to be implemented in a targeted and mutually reinforcing manner for maximum impact:

(a) The **nutrition and health sub-component** aims to improve the nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women, children and adolescents, through improved food and nutrition policies and related practices. Micronutrient supplementation will be strengthened by improving service delivery in lower-performing areas. Major emphasis will be given to providing malnourished groups with a selected package of high-impact and cost-effective interventions across sectors to reach the most nutritionally at-risk groups, such as poor people and residents of the estate sector. Quality health care services will be strengthened to reduce neonatal mortality and improve early childhood care and development. Continued attention will be paid to emergency preparedness and access to health and nutrition services during emergencies. Attention will also be paid to enhancing risk communication, where messages are communicated to parents/clients in low-coverage areas that the benefits of immunization outweigh the rare risk associated with immunization. Attention will also be paid to eliminating new HIV infections among children and mothers;

(b) The objective of the **education sub-component** is to improve levels of pre-primary enrollment, retention and completion up to at least grade 9 in under-performing districts and to improve learning outcomes. UNICEF will be an active partner in ongoing curricula reform efforts. Preschool learning will be improved with quality teaching and support to social cohesion, peace education and higher rates of school attendance. School-based management and development plans for disaster risk reduction will also be promoted;

(c) The **child protection sub-component** will work to improve the quality of social welfare services by supporting more effective targeting of vulnerable children and their families. It will also strengthen prevention of and response to violence and abuse and support family preservation, in line with the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child following submission of the Sri Lanka state report in 2010. Support will focus on alternative care reforms, including prevention of family separation and family-based care and deinstitutionalization; psychosocial well-being of the most vulnerable children and families; access to effective and coordinated services for vulnerable groups such as

children with disabilities; children affected by migration, substance abuse or HIV/AIDS; children at risk or victims of violence, abuse or exploitation; and children needing protection in emergencies. With these interventions, systems will be strengthened to provide such services more efficiently;

(d) The **water, sanitation and hygiene sub-component** aims to ensure the sustainable use of improved water supply and adequate sanitation services. It will work to help strengthen the government's community water supply and sanitation division and the groundwater study group at national and subnational levels. This support will also help to stop the deterioration of water quality, dropping water tables and seasonality of water supply. Hygiene education through health and education services will also be promoted along with adequate water and sanitation facilities. *This sub-component will be coordinated with the Nutrition and Health, Education and Child Protection sub-components* in implementing cost-effective interventions targeting underserved groups. It will also address equity issues along with strengthened coordination during emergencies.

30. **Young people's protection, empowerment and participation.** This programme component aims to improve the capacities of service providers and address gaps in service delivery, contributing to a protective environment for children and adolescents. Vocational training opportunities will be supported and linkages encouraged with the private sector to strengthen young people's marketable skills and to build participation and support for economic and social empowerment.

31. The objective is to protect, respect and fulfil the rights of all young people — boys and girls — in accordance with their evolving capacities. They will be supported to acquire the marketable and employable skills, values and experience needed to negotiate multiple life domains. They will be helped to become economically independent, to be protected from exploitation and abuse, and to avoid risky behaviours. They will also be encouraged to participate in a positive way in their families and communities. Support will be provided for young people's life skills training and access to education, health services and information of particular interest to young people. This will enable them to make informed choices in life and to avoid risks such as HIV and injuries from landmines and explosive remnants of war.

32. Knowledge sharing and participation activities also offer important potential for cross-community reconciliation. Advocacy in support of law reform will concentrate on the care and protection of children in conflict with the law and child victims of violence, abuse and exploitation. To further strengthen the juvenile justice system, the Government will be supported to redirect children in conflict with the law, for example for minor theft infractions, to the Mediation board and to develop additional court diversion models for other minor crimes. Effective and timely expediting of cases concerning violence, exploitation and abuse of children requires also strengthening.

33. **Policies and advocacy for a caring society and equitable development.** This programme component will contribute to more effective and efficient resource allocations and interventions, focusing on improving the well-being of vulnerable and underserved groups. Its objective is to contribute to system building through social policy and balanced regional development. Capacities of local bodies will be reinforced for evidence-based planning and resource allocation to improve the efficiency of service delivery for underserved groups. Towards this result, the

quality and timely availability of routine disaggregated data will also be strengthened with systems to track child-related budgets and results. Such evidence will inform advocacy and development of public/private partnerships.

34. Advocacy will be undertaken and partnerships strengthened and developed to increase awareness and protection of children's rights. Advocacy and partnership building will also be critical for supporting resource mobilization, which is vital for reaching the planned results. In addition disaster and climate risk management will be supported. The objective is to strengthen the capacity of government and its partners to minimize the effects of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters.

35. **Cross-sectoral.** The cross-sectoral programme component will cover coordination and management of the country programme in the country and zone offices, including logistics, communication, planning and monitoring and evaluation.

Relationship to national priorities and the UNDAF

36. The goals of the Ten-Year Development Plan 2006-2016 are that every Sri Lankan family will enjoy decent and healthy living conditions in a culturally vibrant, multilingual, environmentally sustainable and economically productive nation. It identifies three central areas of focus: achieving more equitable development; accelerating growth; and strengthening public service delivery. A national plan for a trilingual Sri Lanka is being implemented to support reconciliation.

37. The 2013-2017 UNDAF will contribute to the country's Ten-Year Development Plan 2006-2016, emphasizing equitable economic and social development in support of a caring society. The development plan addresses the conflict-affected areas as well as socially and economically deprived areas of the country.

38. The four main pillars of the 2013-2017 UNDAF are: (a) equitable economic growth and sustainable livelihoods; (b) disparity reduction and equitable and quality social services; (c) governance, human rights, gender equality, social inclusion and protection; and (d) environmental sustainability, climate change and disaster risk reduction. The UNICEF 2013-2017 CPD results will contribute to achievement of all four of these themes.

Relationship to international priorities

39. This country programme will be in line with the UNDAF and the national priorities, both of which are designed to assist Sri Lanka in achieving the Millennium Development Goals with equity while pursuing a lasting peace. The country programme will contribute to achieving results in all focus areas of the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan. It supports implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and their Optional Protocols, and in particular the Concluding Observations and Recommendations of the respective committees of the conventions in response to the State reports.

Major partnerships

40. UNICEF will continue to nurture strong partnerships formed during the previous country programmes with key government ministries, provincial authorities, development partners and civil society organizations at subnational levels. It will also develop new alliances with the private sector. The sector coordination mechanisms will be maintained to assist in times of emergency and natural disasters.

41. With the end of the conflict and the attainment of lower middle income status in 2009, support from traditional donors has been significantly reduced. Fundraising efforts will be further intensified and will focus more on leveraging resources from public-private partnerships. Furthermore, funding availability should improve with better evidence-based planning and implementation along with more targeted use of existing resources.

42. Advocacy, communication and new partnerships will promote and protect rights, leading to higher priority for children, youth and women in national policies and plans. Parliamentarians, civil society, non-governmental organizations and think tanks will be engaged, as well as domestic and international news organizations. Existing and prospective partnerships with donors and resource providers will be nurtured and strengthened. Sustained visibility of UNICEF will play an important role in securing new partners and mobilizing resources. Partnerships with United Nations sister agencies will be reinforced through the UNDAF and the United Nations country team. This will support joint programming, collective advocacy and leveraging of resources. In addition, collaboration will continue with experts and academics from universities and research organizations, both state and private, for the purpose of generating knowledge for evidence-based advocacy.

Monitoring, evaluation and programme management

43. Key monitoring indicators are set out in the summary results matrix, which will provide the basis for the five-year database for the Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. It will be consistent with the monitoring and evaluation plan of the UNDAF.

44. Results-based programme management is vital to improve equity and social cohesion. The programme will work with all partners to reinforce routine collection of gender-disaggregated data and to develop capacities in data and bottleneck analysis. Collaboration with other partners, especially the Department of Census, will build on the nationwide population and housing census of March 2012. Information from this census will help to identify the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and will inform the targeting of UNICEF interventions in the pursuit of social equity.

45. UNICEF will support the conduct of selected studies to address evolving and emerging issues. Surveys will be conducted jointly with stakeholders and a steering committee of government partners, practitioners and academics from universities and research institutions.

46. The Ministry of Finance and Planning takes the lead in joint monitoring of programme implementation with relevant stakeholders. The country programme will be monitored at different levels in the country, during annual UNDAF and UNICEF reviews with the Government and also with other stakeholders, some of whom

conduct reviews twice yearly at central and provincial levels. Monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals is conducted by the Government as part of its national development strategy, and UNICEF will liaise with and support the Department of Census and Statistics.
