Highlights

With the start of the Southwest monsoon on 25 May 2017, Sri Lanka has received heavy rainfall in its Southern and Western regions, with some parts getting over 500mm of rainfall. Flash floods and landslides have affected over 471,542 people and displaced over 100,000 people as of 29 May 2017. So far 169 deaths have been reported and 112 people are still missing. The Government is prioritizing search and rescue, and evacuation and management of safe locations for the rapidly increasing number of displaced people.

- The Government of Sri Lanka had not yet declared a national emergency. However, on 27 May 2017, the Government requested UN assistance to provide relief for the disaster-affected people through the mobilization of international technical teams for search and rescue as well as relief items.
- Since the onset of the Southwest monsoon, UNICEF is leading emergency response coordination for the humanitarian community, providing regular updates as the situation evolves. In addition, UNICEF supports the Disaster Management Center (DMC) with overall response coordination.
- As initial support, UNICEF mobilized water storage equipment, tarpaulin sheets and water purification tablets, while preparing to contribute to a joint Government-UN needs assessment and to respond more comprehensively once the needs of affected children and families have been identified.

29 May 2017

**Over 141,400**
Estimated # of children, out of

**471,542**
Total # of people in need of humanitarian assistance

**75,236**
people living in 336 safe locations/centres

(Source: Disaster Management as of 29 May 2017)
Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

With the start of the Southwest monsoon over Sri Lanka, torrential rains – the worst to hit the country since 2003 – inundated the western and southern regions of the country. Many instances of deadly landslides have been reported along with flash floods causing so far 169 deaths and 112 people missing. The authorities expect the number of casualties to rise as the situation evolves. Currently, 75,236 people are reported as displaced in 336 evacuation centres in 15 districts (out of 25). However, this number does not include the people stranded in their homes without access to safe locations or those who are sheltering at host families. Therefore, the actual number of people displaced and affected could be significantly higher than reported. The search and rescue operations are facing difficulties receiving information about location and stranded people due to power outages and telecommunication hindrances (e.g. no battery power in mobile phones).

Five major river basins (Kelani, Kalu, Gin, Nilawala and Attanagalu Oya) are flooded since 26 May 2017 and the flood water continues to rise in many locations. Flood resistant dams along many rivers are either overflowing or reaching saturation points with some already at risk of breach. The Department of Irrigation had issued a warning to people living in downstream in Kalutara district to evacuate with immediate effect on 28 May 2017.

The Department of Meteorology warns of continued heavy rainfall (above 100 mm) throughout the same areas on 30 May 2017. Strong winds (about 80 kmph) and thundershowers are expected over the country.

As of 13:00hrs on 28 May 2017, the National Building Research Organization (NBRO) had issued “red alerts” to people living in unstable slopes (landslide risk areas as mapped out by NBRO) in Rathnapura, Kegalle, Galle, Kalutara, Matara, Hambanthota and Nuwara Eliya districts to evacuate immediately if rain continues in the next 24-48 hours.

Today, the ministry of Education (MOE) announced that all schools in Colombo, Gampaha, Kalutara, Galle, Matara, Hambantota, Ratnapura and Kegalle will remain closed until Friday, 2 June 2017.

In the absence of a proper Government-led needs assessment (which is expected to be conducted next week), for the time being, the humanitarian response is planned based on estimations derived from analysing/comparing the demographic data (Census, 2012) and historical flood/landslide statistics (especially May 2016).

Humanitarian leadership and coordination

Sri Lanka’s disaster management framework and structure was established legally in 2005 after the Asian Tsunami. The National Council for Disaster Management (NCDM) chaired by the President of Sri Lanka assumes all powers of humanitarian leadership and coordination at the national level during a state emergency. However, this single command structure which was used over the past decade had not been utilized since 2015. Instead, the President and the Prime Minister had called for separate ad-hoc coordination meetings. There is no report/information of a Presidential Task Force (PTF) being established for this emergency as it was the practice since 2016. The Ministry of Disaster Management (MDM) is mandated to reach out to the humanitarian community and to provide emergency response coordination services. The Disaster Management Center (DMC), an organization under the purview of the Ministry of Disaster Management, requested UNICEF support for overall coordination and information management since the onset of the disaster.

The UN Resident Coordinator leads the humanitarian community through the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) with active secretariat support from UNICEF. UNICEF provides humanitarian monitoring and advice to the RC and the HCT. HCT meeting was called on 29 May 2017 to discuss the collective emergency response from the humanitarian community.
UNICEF Sri Lanka provides technical support to the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) in coordinating the Child Protection sector response and liaise with other children agencies (World Vision, Save the Children, and ChildFund) to ensure that the most vulnerable communities are prioritized in this response. UNICEF also participates in the WASH and Health sector coordination meetings (led by the Government).

Humanitarian Strategy

The Government of Sri Lanka had not yet declared a national emergency. However, on 27 May 2017, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) officially requested the United Nations to mobilize international search and rescue support as well as relief assistance. UN Resident Coordinator, a.i. requested the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) to keep the relevant teams on standby which later stood down on 28 May 2017 upon government request.

Government of Sri Lanka prioritized saving lives through search and rescue missions conducted by the Tri Forces and the military. However, many media reports indicate that the government teams could not access specific areas and hence the communities execute search and rescue for people buried under mud from earth slips. The National Disaster Relief Services Center (NDRSC) under the MDM is responsible for camp management and relief coordination. The NDRSC through MDM and MOFA requested the humanitarian community to assist initially with non-food items (NFI), mainly mats, bed sheets, tarpaulins, drinking water, tents, clothing, etc. District authorities are leading the emergency relief coordination at district levels. On 26 May 2017, DMC activated Sentinel Asia, a satellite-based system to support disaster management activities in the Asia-Pacific through WFB-GIS and space-based technology.

International Assistance

- Indian Search and Rescue teams from the first naval ship have been deployed and are currently assisting Sri Lanka Tri-Forces in affected areas. Additionally, Indian Navy ships are expected to arrive today, 28 May and tomorrow, 29 May, to provide further support and basic relief items.
- Australian Search and Rescue teams remain on standby.
- OCHA team arrived on 28 May, midnight, to provide coordination and information management assistance from today (Monday, 29 May).
- China announced emergency humanitarian disaster relief goods (including tents, blankets, sheets, rain boots and life jackets) worth approx. US$2.2 million to help the disaster-affected people.

Humanitarian response

Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRC), World Vision, Oxfam and Save the Children Sri Lanka is providing NFI assistance and mobilized their staff in their operational areas to strengthen the government's emergency response coordination. The Asia-Pacific Alliance for Disaster Management (A-PAD SL) is coordinating search and rescue teams and brought in the private sector volunteers to strengthen response coordination through advance mobile technologies and rescue equipment/assets.

WFP and UNDP are providing support to the DMC with information management, as of 27 May 2017 onwards. WFP contacted its relief Hub in Malaysia to obtain an inventory of relief items available and to compile a stock list that can be accessible, if needed. WHO is providing support to the Ministry of Health in coordinating the deployment of a medical team to affected areas.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

UNICEF prioritized the provision of WASH supplies as immediate response (see section below for more details). In addition, UNICEF mobilized around 200 government officials attached to Divisional Secretary Offices, who were trained on child-friendly camp management, information management and basic First Aid in 2016, as surge capacity to severely flood/landslide affected areas. Sri Lanka Country Office plans to respond comprehensively in education, child protection, health and nutrition and WASH sectors once more information is received from the field and a better analysis of the situation is conducted. A joint needs assessment is planned by the HCT for next week and UNICEF is taking leadership in ensuring that children’s issues are highlighted in all relevant sectors.

Supply and Logistics

As initial response, UNICEF will provide the following supplies to the Ministry of Disaster Management (MDM) and Ministry of Health (MOH):
Media and External Communication

UNICEF Sri Lanka’s Communications Specialist is liaising with the programme team as well as other UN agencies in developing key messages, producing communication materials and shaping a social media communication strategy.

Funding

UNICEF Sri Lanka received earlier this year US$900,000 from the Emergency Fund (EPF) to respond to the prolonged drought situation which continues to affect over 1 million people in North central and Northern provinces. A portion of the EPF amount has now been reprogrammed for the immediate response to cover urgent supply procurement, freight costs and technical support actions as per the Core Commitments for Children (CCCs).

UNICEF is currently elaborating an emergency response plan and a funding concept note highlighting the needs of disaster-affected children.

Next SitRep: 31/05/2017

UNICEF Sri Lanka: https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/

Who to contact for further information:

Timothy Sutton
Representative
UNICEF Sri Lanka
Tel: +94 11 267 7550
Fax: +94 11 267 7110
Email: tsutton@unicef.org

Jeremy Sprigge
Communications Specialist
UNICEF Sri Lanka
Tel: +94 11 2677550
Fax: +94 11 2677110
Email: jsprigge@unicef.org