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 631,346 people and displaced over 77,643 people as of 31 May 2017. So far 203 deaths had been reported and 96 people still remain missing due to the disasters. The Government is prioritizing search and rescue, and evacuation and management of safe locations for rapidly increasing number of displaced people.

- On 29 May, the Ministry of Education (MOE) announced that all schools in Colombo, Gampaha, Kalutara, Galle, Matara, Hambantota, Ratnapura and Kegalle will remain closed until 2 June.
- On 30 May, the HCT initiated the development of an in-country response plan to respond to the most immediate needs of the flood and landslide affected communities.
- As initial support, UNICEF continues to mobilize water storage equipment, tarpaulin sheets and water purification tablets. UNICEF also mobilized around 200 government officials, 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.
- UNICEF continues 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.
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 incidents of deadly landslides had been reported along with flash floods causing 203 deaths and 96 people missing. The authorities expect the number of casualties to rise as the situation evolves. Currently, 77,643 people are reported as displaced in 368 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 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.

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Based on available information, at least 16 hospitals were evacuated fully or partially as facilities were directly affected by the floods or exposed to landslides according to the World Health Organization (WHO) and partners. Affected hospitals are evacuating critical patients with the support of the Sri Lanka Armed Forces. Several hospitals in the affected areas are without electricity which has critically impeded their operability.

In the absence of a proper Government-led needs assessment, 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 and 30 May 2017 to discuss the collective emergency response from the humanitarian community.

As a result of the meeting held on 30 May, the sector coordination groups, consisting of both UN and non-UN agencies, were established to enhance accountability and partnership. UNICEF leads the protection coordination group and co-leads the WASH, education and food security and nutrition coordination groups.

In addition, UNICEF Sri Lanka provides technical support to the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) by coordinating the Child Protection sector response and liaising 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 (NFIs), mainly mats, bedsheets, 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.
- Australian Search and Rescue teams remain on standby. In addition, the Australian Government’s assistance of AUS$500,000 (US$372,400) will support the deployment of inflatable boats and outboard motors to contribute to search and rescue efforts, the delivery of clean water, the establishment of safe spaces for children, and the provision of vital health services to affected women and girls.
- China announced its contribution of emergency relief goods (including tents, blankets, sheets, rain boots and life jackets) worth approx. US$2.2 million to help the disaster-affected people.
- On 29 May, Japan announced donation of emergency relief goods (tents, plastic sheets, sleeping pads) through the Japan International Cooperation Agency.
- OCHA team arrived 28 May, midnight, to provide coordination and information management assistance from Monday, 29 May.
- Teams from the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) are *en route* to Sri Lanka to assess the situation in support of local partner organizations.

**Humanitarian response**

On 30 May, the HCT initiated the development of an in-country response plan to respond to the most immediate needs of the flood and landslide affected communities. A sectoral approach to coordinate the international communities' immediate response was also endorsed.

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 linked up with its relief Hub in Malaysia to obtain an inventory of relief items available and to compile a stock list that can be
referred to, if needed. WHO is providing support to the Ministry of Health in coordinating the medical team deployment to affected areas.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Water, sanitation and hygiene: UNICEF prioritized the provision of WASH supplies as immediate response (see section below for more details).

Health and nutrition: Joint statement of Ministry of Health (MoH), WHO and UNICEF was released to appeal to all relevant parties to be mindful of the continued need for breastfeeding infants during the current flood and landslide emergency, and caution against unnecessary and potentially harmful donations and use of infant formula and powdered milk.

Disease surveillance and vector control is also a priority with the risk of communicable diseases. Over the past few months, health partners have recorded a significant increase in dengue cases (53,200 cases with over 125 deaths) compared to annual data from 2016. The Ministry of Health has deployed medical teams mainly in Kalutara, Ratnapura and Galle districts.

Child protection: 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.

The 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):

- 1,260 10L Jerry cans (handed over on Monday, 29 May 2017 to MDM and already distributed to affected communities)
- 1,000 tarpaulins (handed over on Monday, 29 May 2017 to MDM and already distributed to affected communities)
- 100,000 water purification tablets (handover by Tuesday, 30 May 2017 to MOH and already distributed to affected communities); additional 1,000,000 water purification tablets in the process of being procured;
- 10 Submersible water pumps;
- 6 sludge water pumps (in the process of being procured);
- 6,000l water bowser (in the process of being procured);
- 20,000 chlorine tablets (in the process of being procured).

Media and External Communication

UNICEF Sri Lanka’s Communications Specialist is liaising with the programme team as well as the Emergency Communication Team (ECT) located in the RCO in developing key messages, producing communication materials and shaping a social media communication strategy.

Funding

UNICEF developed an emergency response plan and a funding concept note highlighting the needs of disaster-affected children which was shared with donors.

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 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).

The Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) provided US$ 70,000 to support SLCO’s response to the ongoing emergency. This is used to cover urgent supply procurement, freight costs and technical support actions as per the CCCs.
UNICEF is currently collaborating with the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Colombo to mobilize additional resources (US$ 600,000) for the provision of WASH supplies and services, child-friendly spaces, psychosocial support and education in the areas affected by floods and landslides.

In addition, UNICEF is partnering with the Australian Department for Foreign Aid and Trade (DFAT) to focus on the needs of affected children in the most affected areas, focusing on WASH and child protection.

On 29 May UNICEF Sri Lanka launched its first ‘text-to-donate’ fundraising appeal, designed to enable individuals to directly support UNICEF’s flood emergency response. By texting ‘UNICEF 300’ to short code 77100, supporters are able to donate 300LKR (approximately US$ 1.96), and receive a confirmation message from UNICEF on completion. Currently the service is available to Dialog and Hutch users within Sri Lanka only.

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