



Children at a safety shelter in the Central Province use learning and play materials provided by UNICEF as part of the response to Cyclone Ditwah @UNICEF/2025/Adikaram

Reporting Date: 1st March 2026

unicef

for every child

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UNICEF Sri Lanka Humanitarian Situation Report No. 9

CYCLONE DITWAH

Situation in Numbers



1.2 million
People in Need ¹



526,609
Children in Need²



1,682³
Schools impacted



576,936
UNICEF people targeted

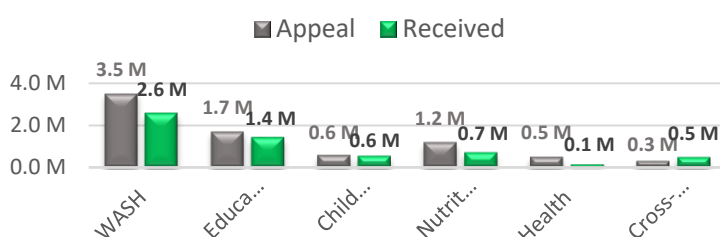


340,450
UNICEF children target

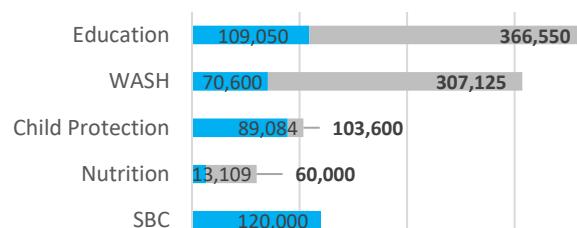
Highlights

- Since the landfall of Cyclone Ditwah on 28 November 2025, displacement has significantly reduced as many families have moved back to their homes. However, many remain in safety centers and cannot return as their homes are located in high-risk areas.
- Humanitarian needs persist, including for sustained WASH services, access to SAM treatment, continuity of learning for affected children, and protection measures to prevent family separation and expand psychosocial support.
- UNICEF continued to provide life-saving assistance across sectors. 70,600 people benefited from WASH services and supplies, 109,050 children received education support, nutrition interventions reached 13,109 2,56 people, and child protection supported 89,084 individuals through case management, family reunification, and psychosocial services.
- UNICEF ordered US\$1.8 million in emergency supplies, with additional supplies over US\$1.6 million in the pipeline.
- UNICEF requested US\$7.8 million to provide life-saving support to people affected by Cyclone Ditwah. As of 2 March, US\$5.9 million was received and US\$0.3 million pledged, leaving a funding gap over US\$1.6 million.

Section-wise Funding Situation



■ UNICEF Reached ■ UNICEF Target



¹ Humanitarian Priorities Plan (HPP), Cyclone Ditwah, Sri Lanka, issued on 11 December 2025

² 526,609 children were estimated to need Education support in the HPP – this is the highest number of children in need across sectors.

³ 1,682 primary and secondary schools are affected according to the Rapid Education Sector needs assessment, January 2026. In addition, 2,700 pre-primary education facilities have been affected.

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

Cyclone Ditwah made landfall on the East coast of Sri Lanka on 28 November 2025, causing widespread floods and deadly landslides across the nation. Some 680 people are reported to have died, while 154 people remain missing.⁴ According to the Humanitarian Priorities Plans (HPP), over 2.2 million people were affected and an estimated 1.2 million people are in need of assistance, including almost 527,000 children.

Displacement reached a peak of 308,000 people. As of 1 March 2026, more than 153,073 people remain displaced. Of these, 97 per cent are staying with host families or in rented accommodation (149,927 people across Badulla, Kandy, Kegalle, Matale, Nuwara Eliya and Trincomalee), while 3 per cent are sheltering in safety centres (3,146 people in 32 centres located in Badulla, Kegalle and Nuwara Eliya). Many families are unable to return home due to extensive housing damage and the need for relocation from high-risk areas. Economic vulnerability is further slowing the recovery of thousands of affected households.

The Government of Sri Lanka, together with partners, has continued to provide support to the affected population based on the outcome of the Joint Rapid Needs Assessments (Phases I and II) which identified preliminary impacts and quantified damages, losses and recovery needs following Cyclone Ditwah. The government finalizing the Post-Disaster needs assessment, which provides a comprehensive quantification of damages, losses and recovery needs in the Cyclone affected areas along with recommendations particularly on resettlement. The results are expected in March and will help guide future response efforts. A total of 32 safety centers continue to accommodate people whose areas have been categorized as “high risk” for return and temporally learning centers have been established to accommodate schools that have been damaged or categorized as high risk.

On 27 February, the Ministry of Defence, serving as the line ministry for the Disaster Management Centre (DMC) and responsible for strengthening Sri Lanka’s national disaster response system, convened a comprehensive After Action Review (AAR) on Cyclone Ditwah. Bringing together government stakeholders and partners, the review examined the effectiveness of recent relief efforts and assessed the country’s preparedness for future emergencies. While acknowledging that the response helped reduce the cyclone’s impact, the Government also noted significant operational, structural, and institutional shortcomings within the national disaster management framework. The AAR outlined these gaps, identified systemic weaknesses, highlighted best practices for institutionalization, and proposed practical measures to enhance the country’s emergency response capacity.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

All UNICEF response interventions are implemented within the framework of the Humanitarian Priorities Plan (HPP), ensuring coherence with the collective response of the humanitarian community and alignment with nationally agreed priorities.

The overall implementation of the response remains on track; however, several operational challenges continue to affect delivery across sectors. In WASH, delays in procurement of required items for WASH facility repair work, and shortages of government technical staff continue to slow repairs and maintenance of water supply systems. These two challenges are expected to be addressed in March as most of the supplies are expected to be delivered and recruitment support is underway to help address these capacity gaps. Additionally, UNICEF has also engaged qualified engineers as UN volunteers to support the implementation and monitoring activities of the water supply systems.

In Education, host schools continue to face space, staffing and teaching aid constraints after absorbing students from fully damaged schools, while challenges persist in cleaning and maintaining school WASH facilities. In Child Protection, overcrowding and lack of adequate partitioning in safety centres continue to pose protection risks, and dialogue with local authorities is ongoing to support minimum safety standards.

⁴ Disaster Management Center, Situation Report as of 1 March 2026, online available at https://www.dmc.gov.lk/index.php?option=com_dmcreports&view=reports&Itemid=273&report_type_id=1&lang=en

Supply

Since the onset of the Cyclone and as of 2 March 2026, UNICEF has ordered emergency supplies worth US\$1.8 million. Additional supplies over US\$1.6 million are in the pipeline, such as gully bowsers, water pipes, materials for temporary learning spaces, including education kits.

WASH

Response highlights

- 70,600⁵ people have been reached with WASH services and supplies, including water, hygiene kits, NFIs, chlorine and other disinfection and cleaning materials; 16 per cent of the overall target of 307,125.
- Over 650 contaminated dug and boreholes have been cleaned and restored to function.
- Provision of construction material for the rehabilitation of WASH facilities in safety centers across the Rattota area of the Kandy district, Amapara district and Helboda Tamil schools in the Kothmale Division Secretary Area of Nuwara Eliya District
- Sanitation facilities are being provided at 20 safety centres in seven divisional areas of Kandy district.
- Materials required for the provision of essential WASH facilities have been procured and delivered to two temporary safety centres in Kandepuhulpola and Haggalawatta for over 50 families in the Badulla district, with procurement of materials for other safety centers ongoing.
- Procurement of materials for the rehabilitation of 6 community water supply systems that serve over 250 families is in progress.
- With UNICEF support, the Department of National Community Water Supply (DNCWS) is mobilizing additional technical staff to accelerate the rehabilitation of rural water supply schemes.
- In collaboration with Education department officials, UNICEF initiated the rehabilitation of WASH facilities in 37 schools in Badulla and Nuwara Eliya.
- UNICEF is facilitating the desludging of 36 school septic tanks in the Nuwara Eliya district and 76 school septic tanks in the Badulla district, while procuring acutely needed desludging equipment.
- UNICEF provided Vacuum Dump Trucks and 3 generators to the National Water Supply and Drainage Board (NWSDB).

Planned priority activities

- Supply and distribution of essential materials, including pipes, pipe fittings, pumps and other equipment required for community water supply systems.
- Completion and handover of WASH facilities in 20 safety centres to the relevant authorities in Kandy.
- Procurement and delivery of materials for rehabilitation of WASH facilities in schools and safety centres.
- Procurement of a gully emptier to facilitate the desludging of septic tanks.
- Recruitment of 10 technical officers to support the rehabilitation of the rural supply scheme and one chemist to strengthen the nine existing laboratories for water quality testing.

Protection

Response highlights

- Since the onset of the response, 89,084 children, women and men were reached with Child Protection support provided by UNICEF and its partners from the Government Department of Probation and Child Care Services (DPCCS) and the CSOs Sarvodaya, Sri Lanka Red Cross Society, Rural Development Foundation, and MHPSS.net; 85 per cent of its target of 103,600 people.
- 4,856 children (90 per cent of the target) received direct child protection support during the response. This includes 2,155 children assisted through case management and protection services delivered by DPCCS and divisional secretariate officers and 2,701 by CSO partners.
- 43 children were reunified with their families.
- 38,984 children and 18,842 caregivers (58 per cent of the target) were reached with protection services in 30 Child Friendly Spaces and areas of return in Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Ampara, Puttalam, Nuwara Eliya, Badulla and Kandy.
- 10,148 individuals benefited from community-based or targeted mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services since the onset of the response.

⁵ The number of people reached under WASH is low compared to target due to delayed procurement of materials required for water point rehabilitation however, the materials are expected to be delivered by Mid-March

- 553 frontline workers were trained in the provision of basic MHPSS (Psychological First Aid).
- 16,155 children and community members were reached through awareness raising programmes on preventing violence against children, positive parenting, MHPSS, and other key child protection and wellbeing issues.

Planned priority activities

- Basic psychological support and PSS activities will continue, noting that the protracted displacement and ongoing uncertainty for some families may require more advanced interventions.
- Case management will remain in place in safety centres and in areas where families have returned, to ensure coordinated care and protection services for children.

Nutrition

Response highlights

- 13,109 people were reached by UNICEF and its partners from Scaling Up Nutrition People's Forum (SUN PF) with nutrition support since the onset of the emergency; 21 per cent of its target of 60,000 people.
- 1,271 children with severe or moderate acute malnutrition received treatment.
- 2,213 children over six months with moderate malnutrition received BP-5⁶ emergency rations, a high-energy food supplement.
- 2,583 pregnant women and 2,110 breastfeeding women were provided with micronutrients and nutritious food and 1,526 pregnant and lactating women received cash or voucher support.
- UNICEF has entered new partnerships with Sarvodaya, Children's Emergency Relief International (CERI), OfERR Ceylon, and SUN PF to enrol 3,500 Severely Acute Malnourished Children for treatment in the 10 worst affected districts, in coordination with the Ministry of Health. Initial orientation and planning of the clinics and inception meetings have commenced. Household visits started at the end of February and treatment admissions of new and defaulted cases are expected shortly.
- UNICEF, in partnership with SUN PF, Sarvodaya, OfERR Ceylon and CERI, conducted a mapping exercise on daily main meals provided in the safety centers and transitional accommodations to identify gaps against minimum acceptable diet standards in the districts of Nuwara Eliya, Badulla and Kegalle, interviewing 133 people in 48 safety centres. The exercise covered the service providers separately to understand the current provisions related to main meals and the plans by Government and NGOs. Key findings from the mapping exercise include the following:
 - 93% of the meals are provided by the Government and 7% by national and international NGOs and community organizations. In Kegalle and Badulla, 100% are provided by the Government.
 - 88% of the centers practice common cooking, while 12% engage in individual cooking. In Badulla and Nuwara Eliya 100% practice common cooking.
 - The quantity of cooked food made available (portion size) seems to be adequate, whereas the dry food rations are quoted to be not satisfactory by 74% of the people interviewed.
 - Based on the past 7 days' main meal dietary recall, rice, wheat flour, dhal and soya meat emerged as the common food ingredients they consumed. Consumption of vegetables, fruits, green leaves and animal protein is reported at a low level.

Based on the detailed analysis, targeted meal-enrichment support for pregnant women and children under 2 years will be rolled out as of 9 March in the districts of Kegalle, Nuwara Eliya and Badulla.

Planned priority activities (Next 10 days)

- Household visits will be conducted by CSO partners to identify children with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and register them for admission to outpatient nutrition clinics in tertiary hospitals and specially organized outreach clinics.
- Following the conclusion of the main meal provision assessments, the meal enrichment programme will be operationalized, targeting 1,000 pregnant women and children under 2 years, affected by the cyclone, in Badulla, Nuwara Eliya, Kegalle and Kandy districts for three months.
- 4,000 cartons of BP-100 therapeutic food were procured, to be delivered to support the treatment of SAM children in the country.
- Procurement initiated for the anthropometric equipment to meet the gap in field clinics and hospitals in the cyclone "Ditwah" affected areas.

⁶ BP-5 is a compact, ready-to-eat fortified food to provide essential nutrients and energy for individuals with moderate malnutrition

Health

Planned priority activities⁷

- Following the completion of the needs assessment with the Family Health Bureau of the Ministry of Health, UNICEF has initiated the procurement of essential medical supplies and equipment to ensure uninterrupted maternal, newborn, child health, and nutrition services in the most affected areas. The items under procurement include blood pressure apparatuses, stethoscopes, anthropometry equipment, and certain IT equipment, in addition to the nutritional commodities.

Education

Response highlights

- UNICEF, in collaboration with the Provincial Departments of Education, has reached 109,050 children with the emergency education response; representing 30 per cent of the target of 366,550 people.
- UNICEF has so far distributed a total of 16,900 primary and 7,000 secondary student individual learning kits to support affected children to resume learning across the nine provinces.
- Procurement of an additional 1,270 primary school teaching learning kits, 180 secondary school kits and 540 preschool kits (e.g. localized school in a box) is underway to support the resumption of learning in Temporary Learning Spaces (TLS) and affected schools.
- Distribution of construction materials for 2 temporary learning spaces has been completed. Procurement of materials for 27 additional severely damaged schools is ongoing. The design and construction plan for TLS have been agreed through a high-level deliberation between the provincial education authorities, UNICEF and the army.
- A total of 495 school cleaning supplies have been distributed since the onset of the response to severely affected schools across the nine provinces, ensuring safe school reopening.
- The Ministry of Education, with support from UNICEF, developed the National Emergency Education Sector Response Plan covering preschool to higher education and tertiary education. The short and long-term response interventions pay special attention to children with disabilities and other vulnerable populations, thereby ensuring a more inclusive education response. In line with the national plan, the Provincial Departments of Education, with UNICEF support, are in the process of developing the provincial disaster response plans. Data collectors across all provinces were trained for the school-based needs assessment of affected schools. Data collected was completed across all provinces and is now being analyzed by the Ministry of Education to inform the implementation of the Response Plan.

Planned priority activities

- Train education officials on education in emergency frontline responder package.
- Finalize the procurement process for 120 digital devices for TLS in Central and Uva provinces and for 10 *tuktuks* to help schools and local officials overcome transport issues.
- Finalize the needs assessment data analysis, provincial disaster response plans and begin implementation at national and provincial level.
- Validate and launch the National Education Emergency Response Plan.
- Design the Training of Trainers and the implementation plan for strengthening the delivery of MHPSS services in affected schools.

Social Behaviour Change (SBC), Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

Response highlights

- As co-lead of the AAP Working Group, UNICEF conducted a capacity-building training on integrating AAP into emergency response for approximately 60 participants representing government authorities, UN agencies, national and international NGOs, and CBOs, strengthening cross-sectoral understanding and practical application of AAP commitments.
- UNICEF developed a public Community Voices dashboard to consolidate and visualize complaints and feedback received from people affected by Cyclone Ditwah through the HPP partners. The dashboard

⁷ UNICEF has not carried out any new Health response activities since the last SitRep published on 1 January. Please see previous SitReps for information about UNICEF support provided to the health response.

enhances visibility of community concerns and supports evidence-informed coordination and response adjustments.

- UNICEF supported the National Disaster Relief Services Centre (NDRSC) in strengthening its Complaints and Feedback Mechanism by training 30 officers responsible for handling feedback and complaints received from the affected population. UNICEF also developed and disseminated promotional materials targeting the general public to raise awareness of the mechanism. Finally, UNICEF procured additional IT accessories and recruited call centre operators to support its effective rollout.
- To address increased dengue risks following Cyclone Ditwah, UNICEF, in collaboration with the National Dengue Control Unit of the Ministry of Health, developed and disseminated promotional materials, reaching approximately 989,300 school children.
- UNICEF continues to train volunteers and new implementing partners on PSEA, with reporting channels displayed in safe and community centres.

Planned priority activities

- In its role of co-lead of the AAP Working Group, UNICEF will further engage HPP partners to systematically share complaints and feedback data for inclusion in the public Community Voices dashboard and will initiate monitoring of the agreed AAP common indicators to strengthen accountability tracking across the response.
- UNICEF will continue supporting the NDRSC to strengthen its Complaints and Feedback Mechanism by expanding capacity-building to all frontline officers (approximately 400 officers). In addition, UNICEF will support NDRSC in scaling up public awareness efforts to promote the mechanism and encourage affected populations to safely access and use it.
- UNICEF will provide technical support to government authorities and HPP partners to further integrate AAP as an active and operational commitment across preparedness and response efforts.
- In collaboration with the Health Promotion Bureau (HPB), UNICEF will support the review of the Ministry of Health's AAP programming and identify priority actions to strengthen systems, processes, and institutional capacity.

Funding Requirement

On 11 December, a costed Humanitarian Priorities Plan (HPP) was released, requesting US\$35.3 million, with UNICEF's share amounting to US\$7.8 million.

As of 2 March, UNICEF received US\$5.9 million, and an additional US\$0.3 million has been pledged, leaving a funding gap over US\$1.6 million. UNICEF thanks the Governments of Japan, Norway, Cyprus, UK and New Zealand, ECHO, CERF, the Gates Foundation and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints via the United States National Committee for UNICEF (Natcom) and the German Natcom for their generous and timely contributions.

Humanitarian Leadership, Coordination and Strategy

UNICEF Sri Lanka is coordinating closely with the Government, national and sub-national authorities, and international, local CSOs and NGO partners to coordinate an integrated humanitarian response.

UNICEF co-leads the WASH, Nutrition, Education and Child Protection response. UNICEF is co-leading the WASH Sector with the Ministry of Housing, Construction and Water Supply, the Education Sector with Save the Children, the Protection Sector with UNFPA, and the Nutrition sub-Sector under WFP and FAO's overall leadership. Furthermore, UNICEF is leading the PSEA Taskforce and co-leading the AAP Working Group with UNFPA. Regular meetings are held within all these coordination groups, bringing together Government, UN agencies, INGOs, and NNGO partners to ensure a harmonized response. UNICEF is an active actor in the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), as well as the Inter-Sector Coordination Group.

Human Interest Stories and External Media⁸

[ECHO and UNICEF visit Ditwah affected communities in Central and Uva provinces](#)

⁸ Please see SitRep 6 to 8 for human interest stories and media coverage up to 26 February 2026.

UNICEF with support from UNCERF provides dedicated psychosocial support, to children impacted by Ditwah to regain confidence and return to normalcy [VIDEO].

With funding from UN CERF, UNICEF is helping restore community water supply systems under the Humanitarian Priorities Plan [VIDEO].

UNICEF and partners have been on the ground restoring access to safe drinking water and sanitation. To date, the WASH response has reached 49,600 individuals

Healing Young Minds : With support from UNICEF and UNCERF, children affected by Cyclone Ditwah are finding comfort, stability, and hope again.

Next Update: 17 March 2026

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