



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES  
CHANGING LIVES

# WFP Sri Lanka Country Brief April 2020



## Operational Context

Sri Lanka has shown steady growth over the last years with progress on SDGs – reflecting the country’s elevation to upper middle-income status. Presidential elections were held in November this year, with parliamentary polls scheduled for April 2020.

Despite the progress, the country faces many socio-economic challenges, including the impact of a nutritional ‘double burden’ — undernutrition rates unchanged for over a decade in addition to soaring rates of overweight and obesity. For 2020, Sri Lanka is ranked 6<sup>th</sup> on the Climate Risk Index.

WFP has been present in Sri Lanka since 1968, working together with the Government for the past 50 years.



Population: **21 million**

2019 Human Development Index: **71 out of 189**

Income Level: **Upper middle**

Chronic malnutrition: **15% of children between 6-59 months**

## In Numbers

**45 percent** of women in the reproductive age group are overweight or obese

**33 percent** of pregnant and lactating women are anaemic

**USD 0** cash-based transfers in April 2020

**US\$ 3.49 million** – Six months net funding requirement (May 2020 – October 2020)

## Operational Updates

- The first confirmed case of COVID-19 was reported on 27 January, and as of late May, had risen to **over 850** confirmed cases, with nine deaths, 117 under observation, and 366 cases recovered.
- From 18 March throughout April, the Government imposed an emergency curfew in certain districts and followed it with a curfew for the entire island, with intermittent relaxations to allow people to purchase provisions. Together with the private sector and state food distribution agencies, the Government organized door deliveries of essential food items. Essential service workers were allowed to operate, after obtaining a permit, as were small holder farmers and tea and other cash crop producers. The Government initiated a number of social assistance packages for vulnerable populations.
- Schools have been closed since 12 March, affecting the provision of school meals and WFP’s planned school feeding activities.
- The parliamentary elections that were due in April, have been fixed for 20 June, however this may change further depending on the health situation.
- To plan out the economic and social recovery process, the Government established a new Presidential Task Force for Economic Revival and Poverty Eradication. This committee has replaced the former task forces which focused on the supply of essential services.
- WFP has developed an integrated approach to mitigate the socio-economic impact from COVID-19. This includes:
  - Immediate access to food through school meals - support an estimated 80,000 children in primary schools in Central, Uva, Northern and Eastern Provinces by providing a take-home food pack sufficient for one month;
  - Enhance availability and access to food through the provision of nutrition-sensitive home-gardening kits using the mechanism of the National Saubagya Home Gardening Programme;
  - Prepare and respond early to South-West Monsoons, including in COVID-19 high risk areas, to reduce compounding effects;
  - Analyse the impact of COVID-19 on food security on vulnerable populations;
  - Effectively coordinate the Food Security & Livelihoods, Cash, and Logistics clusters.
- WFP co-hosted the first Food Security and Livelihoods sector meeting on 7 April to enhance coordination amongst government, UN agencies and INGOs.

## Country Strategic Plan (2018-2022)

Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Six Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
<b>46.6 m</b>	<b>18.93 m</b>	<b>3.49 m</b>

### Strategic Result 1: End hunger by protecting access to food

**Strategic Outcome #1:** Crisis-affected people have access to food all year round.

**Focus area:** Crisis Response to ensure humanitarian assistance

**Activities:**

- Provide food assistance to crisis-affected people

**Strategic Outcome #2:** School-age children in food-insecure areas have access to food all year round.

**Focus area:** Root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition among school-age children

**Activities:**

- Provide nutrition-sensitive food assistance, in partnership with the government, to school-age children.
- Provide technical and policy support for the delivery of nutrition-sensitive school meals programmes to the government.

### Strategic Result 2: No one suffers from malnutrition

**Strategic Outcome #3:** Children under 5, adolescent girls and women of reproductive age have improved nutrition by 2025

**Focus area:** Immediate and underlying causes of malnutrition.

**Activities:**

- Provide evidence-based advice, advocacy, and technical assistance to the government and implementing partners.
- Provide technical assistance and advocate the scaling up of the fortification of staple food and specialized nutritious foods to the government and other stakeholders, including the private sector.

### Strategic Result 4: Food systems are sustainable

**Strategic Outcome #4:** Vulnerable communities and smallholder farmers have strengthened livelihoods and resilience in the face of shocks and stresses all year round.

**Focus area:** Resilience building to enable vulnerable communities to better withstand shocks and stresses and to augment government capacity to implement disaster-management and integrated disaster-risk-reduction strategies.

**Activities:**

- Support nutrition-sensitive and gender-transformative livelihood diversification and income generation through integrated resilience-building activities.
- Provide technical assistance for emergency preparedness and response operations to the government.
- Provide technical assistance to the government and related agencies in the building of improved, unified, shock-responsive safety-net systems.

- WFP also provided technical support to the Disaster Management Centre and district authorities in planning a potential flood response in the COVID-19 context, ensuring compliance with health regulations. Together with the Disaster Management Centre, WFP also developed a risk communication strategy to help convey pre-evacuation plans to people in high risk areas.

- In preparation for the approaching monsoon season, WFP developed a Concept of Operations (CONOPS) to complement and support the Government's wider disaster response activities, in case of need.
- In anticipation of restarting project activities in the coming weeks as the country opens up, WFP developed risk communication posters in local languages to sensitize participants and beneficiaries of the resilience building projects on adhering to health regulations.

## Monitoring

- Responding to a request by the Ministry of Health, WFP started working with Johns Hopkins University and Wayamba University to develop a food access and consumption surveillance system that will monitor negative coping mechanisms and household diet diversity over the coming months. The system will be complemented with information on market functionality. This will inform and support a wider impact assessment due to be led by FAO.

## Challenges

- The fundraising environment has been particularly challenging. The socio-economic impact of COVID-19 will be significant and early recovery will be hampered by the country's high debt ratios.
- The comprehensive food security and vulnerability assessment based on secondary data analysis which began last year, is also suspended until government offices re-open after the lockdown, in order to obtain the necessary secondary data for some remaining variables of the study.
- Due to the absence of the government counterparts at central and divisional levels as part of the social distancing measures and curfew, R5n (asset creation and resilience) project activities have been suspended. Re-programming and planning of activities is underway.
- The suspension of the school feeding programme from 12 March will have gendered consequences, given the additional stressors on caregivers, more often women, to take care of their children and provide meals in these difficult economic times.

## Donors

Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Government of Japan, UN Peace-building Fund, The Earth Group, Italian Comitato, Government of Australia, Office of the US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), Government of Denmark, Japan Association for WFP, FEED, DSM N.