



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES  
CHANGING LIVES

# WFP Sri Lanka Country Brief May 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 815** cash-based transfers in May 2020

**19** participants (83 beneficiaries) assisted through cash-based transfers in May 2020

**US\$ 1.81 million** – Six months net funding requirement (June 2020 – November 2020)

## Operational Updates

- By the end of May, the number of COVID-19 patients had risen to 1,633, with 10 deaths, and 801 recoveries.
- The Government gradually lifted the emergency curfew imposed island-wide as a precautionary measure, and daily economic activities have restarted in most areas of business. Industries that work closely with the public have been given stringent guidelines on the method of operations to prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, schools have remained closed since 12 March, affecting the school feeding programme.
- WFP is preparing to provide US\$ 400,000 to the Ministry to organise take-home rations for primary school children, supporting their parents to provide nutritious meals amid school suspensions. The Ministry of Education has also started remote classrooms through national television networks to off-set the delay in educational activities.
- During mid-May, strong winds and heavy monsoon rain affected six districts in the south-western region of the island, bringing floods and landslides that affected nearly 10,000 people. WFP supported the Disaster Management Centre to prepare for and respond to the crisis with flood impact mapping and a social hygiene campaign on ways to minimise the spread of COVID-19, including the use of posters for camp settings,
- WFP contributed to the UN Country Team's Socio-Economic Framework – which will be submitted to the Government in June to support the Government's economic and social recovery process. WFP contributed especially to the integration of food security considerations across the framework's five pillars.
- WFP coordinated the Food Security & Livelihoods Sector to bring together humanitarian and development partners in the COVID-19 response, linking to vital government platforms such as the Presidential Task Force on Economic Revival and Poverty Alleviation and agencies under the Ministry of Food Security. The sector facilitated small group discussions on thematic areas of interest, such as food security research and assessments.
- The parliamentary elections earlier scheduled in April, then postponed to 20 June, were again postponed indefinitely, considering the COVID-19 situation and the necessary time required for preparations to hold the elections adhering to COVID prevention guidelines. A new date has not yet been announced.

## Country Strategic Plan (2018-2022)

Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Six Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
46.6 m	18.93 m	1.81 m

## 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.

## Challenges

- The fundraising environment has been particularly challenging, and it is expected that there will be a significant socio-economic impact, with early recovery hampered by the country's high debt ratios.
- Due to restrictions of food commodity imports, including maize, the production at the Ministry of Health's "Thripasha" factory has been halted. This impacts the distribution of the maize-soya blend "Thripasha" as a supplementary food for pregnant and lactating mothers and children under five. While locally grown maize has been deemed unsuitable due to some levels of contamination, the Ministry has been exploring different ways to increase the supply, including requesting WFP assistance to continue this critical programme. WFP has been discussing with the Government and possible donors about ways to support the purchasing of maize to ensure the resumption of the Thripasha programme. A way forward is yet to be determined.
- WFP is reprogramming R5n project activities and has begun planning of activities – the resumption of activities are pending the return of field-based government staff.
- The school feeding programme has been suspended since 12 March due to COVID-19 related school suspensions, though WFP is adjusting through planning for take home rations.

## 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.

## Monitoring

- In May, WFP restarted the work of the Comprehensive Food Security & Vulnerability Assessment (CFSVA) that was postponed due to the COVID-19 situation. The CFSVA was initiated in 2019 through the University of Peradeniya, as a review of available secondary data. Analysis results are expected to provide a baseline for the pre-COVID-19 situation, and to provide indications for areas impacted by the pandemic.