



World Food Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

WFP Sri Lanka Country Brief July 2020



The WFP-supported "Supreme Chef" nutrition-based competition (TV series) dedicated their 13th episode to WFP.

Operational Context

Sri Lanka has shown steady growth over the last decades with progress on SDGs, reflecting the country's elevation to middle-income status. Parliamentary polls were held in August 2020, resulting in a major victory for the incumbent political party.

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 high rates of overweight and obesity.

Sri Lanka is ranked 6th on the Climate Risk Index reflecting the extent and impact of hydro-meteorological hazards brought about by climate change.

Moreover, the outbreak of Covid-19 in March this year, with serious effects on the economy and livelihoods of vulnerable people, will hinder progress towards the country's socio-economic status, as is the case globally.

WFP has been present in Sri Lanka since 1968, working in partnership with the Government for the past 50 years to save lives in times of crises, and improve livelihoods for the future.



Population: **21 million**

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

Income Level: **Lower 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 5,605 paid as cash-based transfers in July 2020

62 participants (248 beneficiaries) assisted through cash-based transfers in resilience projects for July 2020

US\$ 0.42 million – Six months net funding requirement (August 2020 – January 2021)

Situation Updates

- By the end of July, the count of COVID-19 confirmed cases had risen to 2,814, mainly from a cluster associated with a quarantine centre. The number of mortalities remained at 11 and 2,391 patients had recovered from the disease.
- Schools that were closed due to COVID-19, were set to open at the end of July, however, this was further postponed due to a surge in COVID-19 cases. Schools are due to open again after the parliamentary election scheduled for 5 August, likely with a staggered approach.

Operational Updates

- WFP provided resources to the Government to distribute take-home rations to about 80,000 children in the national school feeding programme, which was suspended due to COVID-19 related school closures. As a symbolic gesture, the Government distributed the first take-home rations in a ceremony at a school close to the capital in Colombo, attended by some parents and pupils. Phase 1 of the Ministry's distribution plan, which was initially due for completion by the end of July, had to be extended and is now due for completion in August.
- The WFP-supported "Supreme Chef" nutrition-based competition (TV series) dedicated their 13th episode to WFP. Focussing on "healthy snacks", contestants took up two 90-minute challenges to produce a nutritious snack and main course. The Health Promotion Bureau and the Chef's Guild of Sri Lanka judged the competition, with school students joining to sample and comment on the snacks and take part in a 'Nutritional Quiz'.
- WFP supported the Disaster Management Centre to finalize standard operating procedures together with government stakeholders, for emergency response to the most nutritionally vulnerable groups in the south-western areas susceptible to monsoon rains.
- To boost emergency preparedness, WFP also extended support to the Disaster Management Centre in developing standard curricula for capacity strengthening in search and rescue, in line with international search and rescue advisory group (INSARAG) guidelines, as well as to finalize risk and resources maps.

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Country Strategic Plan (2018-2022)

Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Six Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
46.6 m	25.25 m	0.42 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.

- WFP organized a stakeholder monitoring visit for Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and relevant government officials to seven R5n resilience building project sites in Batticaloa and Moneragala districts, to discuss project progress, the impact of COVID-19, and plans for 2020/2021.

- The comprehensive nutrition and food security survey conducted during July-October 2019 by WFP with the Medical Research Institute, among the urban under-served settlements in Colombo district, will serve as an important baseline of the food security and nutrition situation of Colombo's urban poor, prior to the disruptions cause by the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings, which indicated that malnutrition was present across the lifecycle, including overweight or obesity in adults. In children under five, results indicated undernutrition was more problematic, with the prevalence of stunting, wasting and underweight being 17, 11 and 19 percent, respectively.

Challenges

- The Ministry of Health's production of "Thripsha", continues to be suspended due to lack of maize – a key commodity in the cereal mix. "Thripsha" is distributed to pregnant and lactating mothers and children under five as a supplementary cereal food.
- In the COVID-19 situation, food commodity imports including maize was temporarily suspended, however the locally grown maize was deemed unsuitable due to some level of contamination by aflatoxins.
- WFP continues to look for means to support the Ministry to restart this critical programme.

Donors

WFP entered into an agreement with the Government of Japan, wherein they committed to providing, through WFP, 388 metric tonnes of canned fish towards the national school meals programme. This is sufficient for the preparation of 19 million nutritious and protein-rich meals for 270,000 school children. The previous consignment supplied from the Government of Japan, will last up to mid-2021, but this latest contribution ensures that canned fish will continue to be offered to school children into 2022.

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.