



World Food Programme

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LIVES  
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LIVES

# WFP Sri Lanka Country Brief March 2022



## 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. Despite the progress, the country faces many socio-economic challenges, including a nutritional 'triple burden' comprising of undernutrition, overnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies.

Sri Lanka is ranked 23rd globally on the Climate Risk Index highlighting the exposure and vulnerability to climate change. Hydro-meteorological hazards have a serious impact on vulnerable communities. Moreover, the outbreak of Covid-19 in March 2020, 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, in reaching zero hunger by 2030 in all its forms.

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: **72 out of 189 countries**

Income Level: **Lower middle**

Chronic malnutrition: **17% of children between 6-59 months**

## In Numbers

**45 percent** of women of reproductive age group are overweight or obese; (Demographic and Health Survey, Sri Lanka, 2016). **33 percent** of pregnant and nursing women are anaemic (WFP).

## Situation Updates

- With Sri Lanka suffering a severe economic crisis with the depletion of foreign exchange reserves, demonstrations were held regularly in the capital city of Colombo and other towns around the country. One such demonstration on the evening of 31 March 2022 near the President's private residence took a violent turn as protestors attempted to storm the President's residence. The Police anti-riot squad reportedly fired tear gas and water cannons to disperse protesters. The police imposed a curfew in Colombo was subsequently lifted early the next day. The declaration of a public emergency was also revoked. This incident marked a turning point in public anger in their perception of the Government's inability to address the economic crisis, the rising cost of living, shortages of petrol/ diesel, liquid petroleum gas, food and medicine, and the power-outages of nearly 12 hours. Mass protests started in Colombo and other districts demanding the resignation of the President and the Government. The full cabinet of Ministers resigned along with many other key officials, and a plan to form an all-party interim government was discussed. This was however, rejected by opposition political parties. Discussions are continuing, to find a way out of the current political impasse.
- With inflation rates reaching 18.7 percent in March, the Government appointed a new Governor to the Central Bank to take corrective measures to steer the economy, ahead of talks with the International Monetary Fund for a bail-out package.
- COVID-19 infections continued to rise, bringing the total cases to 661,453. Deaths also increased to 16,473, but so did the cumulative recoveries, totalling 637,240. The third booster dose has been taken by 7.8 million people out of a total vaccinated population of 13.4 million.

## Operational Updates

- To help maintain food consumption, fulfil basic needs, and compensate for the loss of livelihoods, WFP, together with UNICEF, provided cash-based transfers totalling LKR 6,370,000 (approximately USD 24,000) for 637 households with children under 5, in flood prone 11 divisions in Kalutara district. Cash was transferred through 36 Samurdhi community-based Banks, using the WFP's SCOPE platform.

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## Country Strategic Plan (2018-2022)

Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Six Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
<b>53.97 m</b>	<b>35.32 m</b>	<b>2.04 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.

- To mark International Women's Day 2022, WFP collaborated with the Sri Lanka Women's Bureau in their initiative to raise awareness about the role of women in the National School Meal Program. WFP helped produce a television program with selected school children, teachers, parents and caterers in the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) pilot project in Thanamalwila division in Monaragala district. The show aimed to raise public awareness of the unparalleled role of women in providing school meals, the challenges they face and the role

of WFP in meeting some of these challenges through the HGSF program.

- In partnership with International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), WFP held a two-day training programme for central level government stakeholders and civil society organizations on ecosystem-based adaptation for disaster risk reduction (DRR). In the training, the 40 participants, learnt to define the existing risk environment and how to adopt ecosystem-based approaches towards disaster risk reduction and building community resilience. WFP's Senior Climate and DRR Advisor gave a keynote speech on WFP's approach and experience. Based on positive feedback, WFP may consider expanding the training programme to other districts.
- As part of technical support to the national road map for rice fortification, WFP worked with stakeholders to develop a policy brief by consolidating major findings from different studies conducted under the Rice Fortification programme. The policy brief will reflect the significance of rice fortification in Sri Lanka, and its cost effectiveness as a long-term intervention. The main findings will serve as solid evidence to advocate for the integration of Rice Fortification in the National School Nutrition Programme as a public health strategy to combat iron deficiency in the country.

## Monitoring

- Ahead of the scaling up of the HGSF programme, WFP conducted an individual selection assessment of school caterers in Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Batticaloa and Vavuniya districts, using services of government enumerators trained for data collection. The results of the assessment will be available in April.
- Following WFP's advocacy efforts, the Department of Census and Statistics agreed to include components of the "Washington Group" questionnaire on assessment of the needs and status of the country's disabled population, in the national census scheduled to be launched in 2023.

## Donors

Top donors to WFP Sri Lanka CSP 2018-2022 include:

Government of Republic of Korea, Regional Trust Fund allocations, Government of Russian Federation, flexible funds, Government of Japan, USAID/BHA, Private donors.