



SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

Emergency Response

Helping *vulnerable communities in Sri Lanka meet their food, nutrition, and other essential needs during and after crises.*

In times of crises, the threat of food insecurity and rising malnutrition loom even larger. Shocks and stresses and man-made crises lead to food shortages and inflation disproportionately affecting poor and marginalized communities. With limited resources to cope, these short-term emergencies can escalate into prolonged crises, hindering vulnerable communities ability to meet their food and nutritional needs which could jeopardize years of development progress.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) upon the request from the Government provides assistance to affected populations, helping them meet their food, nutrition, and other basic needs. Emergency response is rooted in WFP's country strategic plan, enabling the organization to activate an operation to respond to emergencies caused by conflict, natural hazards, and other disasters. An emergency response can often include distributing food, cash, and vouchers, along with supporting

national food and nutrition programs, such as school feeding initiatives.

In 2022, Sri Lanka faced its worst economic crisis since independence, with depleted foreign reserves, reduced agricultural production, unprecedented political turbulence, high inflation, and increased public debt. The economic crisis, compounded by the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, posed multiple challenges to the entire food system and triggered the need for immediate humanitarian assistance across the country.

In the face of its adverse affects, poverty in Sri Lanka reached over a quarter of the population (World Bank, 2024) which compromised their ability to access sufficient, nutritious food. Women and children were especially hard-hit, due to severe disruptions of services in education, health, protection, nutrition, and social protection.

WHAT WE DO



Support to the Thriposha programme

The crisis disrupted the Thriposha fortified food programme provided to pregnant and nursing mothers and young children with restriction on import. Women and children, who had benefited from the programme was without this crucial lifeline for several months. WFP supported Thriposha through the procurement of maize and soya as a part of the emergency response, to over 700,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under 5 across the island.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE 2022 AND 2023

WFP commenced its emergency operation to support the Government of Sri Lanka in response to the economic crisis in June 2022. This emergency response continued in 2023, reaching nearly 3 million food-insecure vulnerable people with:



General food distribution

WFP began general food distribution in August 2022, supporting crisis-affected people across 14 districts. This food distribution comprised rice, pulses and cooking oil.



Cash-based transfers

WFP provided cash assistance for the most vulnerable communities across 11 districts giving them the means to obtain food and other essential needs. Cash was provided using different modalities which also included PlugPAY -- WFP's digital payment solution in which money can be directly transferred directly to beneficiary accounts from WFP.



Support to the National School Meal Programme

The economic crisis disrupted Sri Lanka's National School Meal Programme which came to a halt. WFP supported around 1 million schoolchildren across 7000 schools with fortified rice and lentils as part of the food distribution for the national school meals programme in 2023.

FLOOD RESPONSE 2024

In early January 2024, extensive rainfall across Sri Lanka led to widespread flooding in various regions of the island. Ampara bore the heaviest brunt which caused impact to infrastructure and livelihoods. WFP assisted over 10,000 flood-affected households in the district of Ampara with two-weeks worth of food rations which comprised of rice, pulses, and cooking oil.



THE MONEY HAS MADE A BIG DIFFERENCE TO ME. SINCE I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT FOOD, I CAN NOW PAY FOR MY CHILDREN'S EDUCATION.

NIROSHA NILMINI



Scan the QR code to watch Nirosha's short video on how WFP's cash assistance helped her during the economic crisis in 2022.