



SLRCS volunteers in Badulla district, Uva Province, distribute soft drinks and snacks for people waiting in line at fuel stations in May 2022. (Photo: SLRCS)

Appeal No: MDRLK014	Secretariat Funding requirements: CHF 28 million	
Glide No: CE-2022-000199-LKA	People [affected/at risk]: 2.2 million people	People to be assisted: 500,000 People (100,000 households)
DREF allocation: CHF 691,002	Appeal launched: 07/06/2022	Appeal ends: 06/06/2023

SITUATION OVERVIEW

An economic crisis and a ban on synthetic fertiliser in Sri Lanka, which has been developing since March 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, has sparked civil unrest and food insecurity. The pandemic, with all its containment measures, resulted in the rapid decline in foreign currency income primarily through Sri Lanka's adversely impacted tourism sector, worker and diaspora remittances, foreign direct investment (FDI) flows and world trade.

The Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) announced several tax increases to reduce the fiscal deficit and limited the import of essential items to save its foreign currency reserves¹. Protests erupted due to the resulting shortages and sharp increase in food prices including milk, dhal/lentils, locally produced vegetables, rice, bread, wheat flour, cooking gas, fertiliser and fuel. Medications and medical consumables were also in short supply.

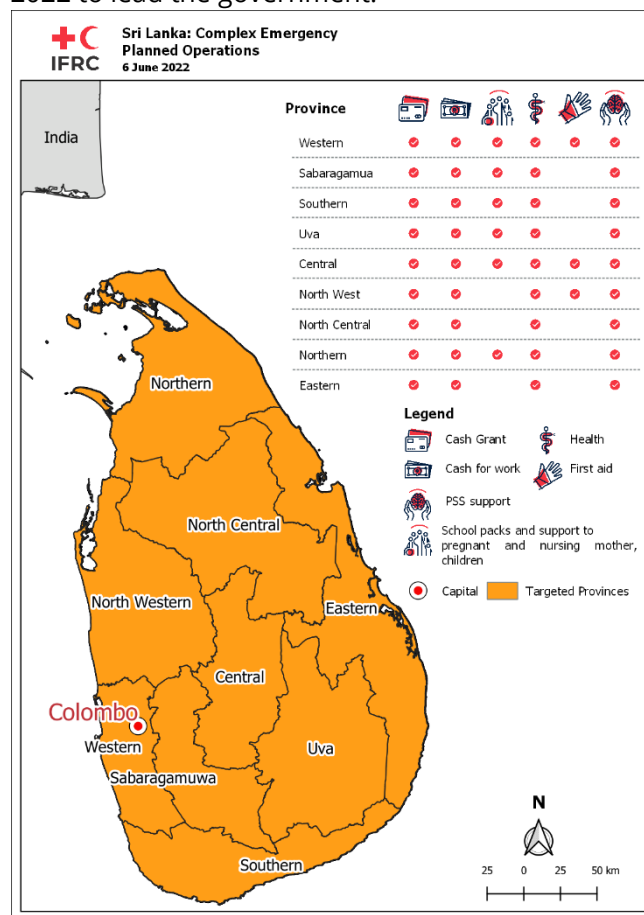
In the first quarter of 2022, GoSL was unable to import the required quantity of petroleum products such as diesel, petrol, coal, and other hydrocarbons used in thermal power plants. This resulted in long power cuts, even 13 hours a day, long queues at fuel and cooking gas stations for days and disrupted schedules for public transport services. The cumulative fuel price increase was 170 per cent from the March-May 2022 period. In addition, the shortage of essential food and non-food household items continued to deteriorate. The government's last recorded annual inflation rate was 21.5 per cent. However, John's Hopkins University estimates that Sri Lanka's actual annual inflation is as high as 132 per cent as of March 2022.

Since the GoSL decided to limit the import of non-organic fertiliser in January 2022, homegrown agricultural product inflation increased to 24.7 per cent in February 2022, due to production shortages. By April 2022, food inflation in the country increased to 45.1 per cent from 29.5 per cent in March 2022.

The inflation rate reached 69.8 per cent in September 2022, before easing in October 2022 for the first time since the crisis started and decreasing for the third consecutive month to 57.2 per cent in December 2022, the lowest since June².

¹ [Sri Lanka Country Commercial Guide](#)

The shortages in food, fuel, and medicine turned months of peaceful protests into violence which killed 10 people and injured more than 250 by May 2022. Forty-five buses were burnt and nearly 150 properties mainly belonging to ruling party parliamentarians were destroyed. Sri Lanka's president declared a state of emergency on 6 May 2022, the second time in a span of five weeks. Protests continued to take place sporadically, also after a new prime minister was appointed on 12 May 2022 to lead the government.



Sri Lanka announced its first nationwide elections since the crisis has started and the local government polls will be held before the end of February 2023.

In December 2022, the World Bank approved Sri Lanka's request to access concessional financing from the International Development Association (IDA). With this financing, offered at low interest rates, the government is looking to implement a reform program to stabilize the economy and protect the livelihood of millions of people facing poverty and hunger³.

² [Sri Lanka Inflation Rate](#)

³ [The World Bank](#), update 5 Dec 2022

Humanitarian impacts of the crisis

Severe food shortages are expected in the coming months as food production dropped approximately 50 per cent during the last season (Maha cultivation season September 2021- March 2022) and more than 50 per cent of commercial farmers have stopped cultivation in the current season (Yala season, May-August 2022) due to non-availability of fertiliser and fuel to operate their equipment. This sharp decline in agricultural production has resulted in rapid price increases for staple food items like rice and vegetables, which directly impact the household economy and food security of the most vulnerable.

According to a World Food Programme (WFP) rapid assessment, an estimated 38 per cent of people are already (April 2022) facing moderate to severe food insecurity. The most affected are the estate sector households in both rural and urban areas. Based on a household analysis, female-headed and irregular income households are most likely to be classified as food insecure.

Household access to food has been limited and there has been a significant and rapid deterioration in the Food Consumption Score. While 91 per cent of people had an acceptable Food Consumption Score in 2021, over 40 per cent of those now (second quarter of 2022) surveyed by WFP had an unacceptable score.

According to FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) in September 2022, an estimated 6.2 million people in Sri Lanka (28 per cent of the population) are facing moderate acute food insecurity, and 66,000 people severely acute food insecurity⁴.

Due to unaffordability, households are consuming less food products such as meat, eggs, vegetables, and fruits. Households are also buying less but buying more often on credit, and they limit portion sizes especially for adults, in order to save food for children. Only 14 per cent of households are not applying a food related coping strategy or use a low stress coping strategy.

Over a third of households in urban and rural areas were applying emergency coping strategies, such as withdrawing children from school, migrating to other areas in search of employment and selling houses or land at the beginning of 2022. While by September, two in five households (41.8 per cent)

spend more than 75 per cent of their expenditures on purchasing food, leaving little to spend on health and education. Many families have exhausted their savings and are struggling due to crippling inflation⁵.

Families in the estate sector are widely adopting coping strategies and more severe measures to deal with food shortages. Rural households with access to land for home gardening or that cultivate commercially are likely better able to maintain adequate levels of food consumption and dietary diversity than urban and estate sector households.

The lack of fuel has affected the income of staff employed in the transportation sector as well as the capacity of fishing communities, for example, to operate their fishing boats which they depend on for sustenance. The suspension of routine surgeries was reported in four major hospitals due to a shortage of medical supplies, medicines, and 10-13 hours-long power cuts. Daily labourers have lost their incomes due to shortages in construction materials and other resources in addition to having to spend their days in queues for essential commodities.

Key humanitarian impacts due to the ongoing crisis:

- Civil unrest and violence resulting in injuries, hospitalisations, property damage and arrests.
- Loss of livelihoods, particularly by urban and rural daily wage earners, who consequently face food insecurity due to the sudden loss in income and high price increases of essential food and household items; by fishing communities which do not have fuel to operate their fishing boats; and farmers who lack fertilisers and are hit by sharp price increases in agricultural inputs.
- A severe food insecurity crisis is looming across the country while certain food supplements for children and nursing mothers, such as milk powder, fresh milk and Thripasha (an additional food rich in nutrients) are not available.
- Children's education is affected due to power cuts, inadequate public transport, and the lack of stationery items.
- Days spent in the hot sun and rain waiting in long queues without drinking water, food and sanitation is resulting in deaths and hospitalisations.

⁴ [UNICEF report](#)

⁵ [UNICEF report](#), Sri Lanka

- The multiple challenges and increased burdens are having a detrimental effect on people's mental well-being.
- The shortage of consumables in the country and sharp decline in agricultural production has resulted in rapid price increases in staple food items like rice and vegetables.



Low-income communities in Colombo wait at a fuel station in May 2022 to buy kerosene to be used as a substitute for cooking gas. (Photo: SLRCS)

TARGETING

While the nationwide crisis is impacting the entire population of 22 million people in Sri Lanka, the vulnerable below the poverty line, which consists of **2.2 million people** (a projected 10-11 per cent of the population in 2022, or approximately 500,000 households)⁶ are the most affected by the loss of livelihoods, shortages of essential items and resulting high price increases.

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) is looking to support **500,000 people/100,000 households** with livelihood and basic needs support, safe drinking water and hygiene support. This will include 50,000 farmers and fisher communities, 30,000 pregnant and lactating women, 40,000 people living in elderly homes, Children in orphanages, 120,000 children and adolescents at high risk of dropping out of school in poor estate, urban and rural areas (including 60,000 female teenage students) and 500 refugees/vulnerable migrants from other countries.

The SLRCS will focus on the most vulnerable households of farmers in Northern, North Central, Central, Uva, Sabaragamuwa, Eastern, Southern and North-western provinces, low-income fishing community in the coastal districts and irregular income labourers in Western province. The SLRCS will also support the health sector with in-kind medications sourced through partners and distributed through health facilities in coordination with the Ministry of Health (MoH).

The most vulnerable people will be targeted, including those with disabilities, the elderly, single/female headed households, and young mothers. Assessments will also identify potentially affected populations expected to suffer due to the escalating situation, and consideration will be given to the needs of these groups, such as day labours, refugees/vulnerable migrants, children at orphanages, elderly people living alone.

PLANNED OPERATIONS

Through this Emergency Appeal, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) aims to support the SLRCS in responding to the civil unrest/food insecurity. The IFRC's response strategy will address the immediate needs of the most vulnerable populations affected by the civil unrest and/or food insecurity and will focus on the following sectors:

⁶ [World Bank Overview](#), updated in April 2022.



Integrated assistance
(Shelter, Education, Livelihoods and Multi-purpose Cash)



Support the livelihoods and basic needs of vulnerable low income urban, fishing, and rural (farming) households through cash assistance, including home gardening with technical support and resources.



Support will be provided to households with pregnant and nursing mothers, children with malnourished conditions through the provision of nutritional dry rations. School packs will be distributed to children in the most vulnerable households and economically disadvantaged families in the poorest districts of the country. School feeding activity will be conducted to promote school attendance by ensuring food security



Health & Care including Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) (Mental Health and psychosocial support / Community Health)

SLRCS volunteers will provide first aid and psychosocial support in protest and queueing areas as per need. In-kind medication donations are being sought from partners and distributed to health facilities in coordination with the MoH. Safe drinking water will also be provided at the queueing and protest areas by placing water tanks refilled by the SLRCS per need. Menstrual hygiene awareness raising and sanitary napkins will be provided to underprivileged schools with teenage girl students.



Protection and Prevention
(Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI), Community Engagement and Accountability)

Training will be provided for volunteers on sex and gender-based violence, and volunteers will be deployed based on need. Child-friendly spaces (CFS) will be set-up in the communities



aiming to provide holistic support to children. Vulnerable refugees/vulnerable migrants will be provided with assistance. Movement-wide commitments and minimum actions for CEA will be mainstreamed into operations as much as possible, including consultations and feedback mechanisms.



Enabling approaches

The sectors outlined above will be supported and enhanced by the following enabling approaches:



Coordination and partnerships
Coordination and engagement with the UN system and private sector.



Secretariat services
IFRC coordination and technical support to ensure a coordinated Federation-wide response.



National Society Strengthening
Strengthening the capacity of district branches and the SLRCS headquarters per operational needs.

The planned response reflects the current situation and is based on the information available at the time of this Emergency Appeal launch. Details of the operation can be found in the revised Operational Strategy. The revised Operational Strategy also provides further details on the Federation-wide approach which includes response activities of all contributing Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, and the Federation-wide funding requirement.

RED CROSS RED CRESCENT PRESENCE IN COUNTRY

Sri Lanka Red Cross Society



Core areas of operation



Number of staff:	100
Number of volunteers:	6,000
SRCS presence across the country	100%

The SLRCS has been closely monitoring the situation, mindful of its sensitive nature and the safety of staff and volunteers. The headquarters has maintained close communications with the branches discussing options, preparedness, and contingencies. The governing board met to determine a possible mode of intervention at the outset in April. On 10 April, the SLRCS Colombo branch deployed trained first aid volunteers to provide their services close to the protests. The National Society will ensure its adherence to the fundamental principles of the Movement to guarantee safer access.

The SLRCS maintains 25 branches in all districts of the country. Over 100 staff and 6,000 active volunteers are trained in disaster response and capable of providing relief in times of disasters/emergencies. National Disaster

Response Teams (NDRT), Branch Disaster Response Teams (BDRT) and Divisional Disaster Response Teams (DDRT) are available at the national, district and divisional levels. The SLRCS also has trained disaster response teams specialised in water safety, which has 150 active members. These members are well-trained in life-saving techniques to assist rescue operations in times of need. Trained first aid volunteers are available in all districts, ready for immediate deployment at the time of disasters for life-saving purposes. The SLRCS has a pool of 25 Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) trained persons, who could be deployed to set up and assist implementation of CVA activities.

IFRC Membership coordination

There is currently no Participating National Society presence in Sri Lanka. However, the SLRCS is implementing programmes supported by the Red Cross Society of China through the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, while the Qatari Red Crescent expressed interest and others have shown tentative interest in pledging support. The Singapore Red Cross has pledged support to the SLRCS bilaterally or multilaterally. The IFRC is launching this Emergency Appeal on behalf of the SLRCS and will be coordinating international support to the SLRCS through the EA.

Movement coordination

The ICRC has a country delegation in Sri Lanka. Having worked closely with the IFRC and ICRC, the SLRCS has close coordination with the two in-country offices. The IFRC will coordinate with the SLRCS in sharing information with the Movement and external partners. The IFRC Country Cluster Delegation in Delhi and the IFRC Asia Pacific Regional Office will provide further coordination support for information sharing and resources.

External engagement

The SLRCS is conducting discussions on current needs with humanitarian actors, the MoH, and the Ministry of Education. On 4 April, the MoH requested assistance from the SLRCS for medical supplies. Several local NGOs are working along with the SLRCS, providing emergency medical care.

The SLRCS and IFRC engage with the UN system by participating in HCT meetings, Food Security, Health and Cash Cluster and working group meetings. The SLRCS is looking to enhance its engagement with the private sector, particularly in regard to donations of medications.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation, please contact:

At the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society

- Mahesh Gunasekera, Director General; email: mahesh.gunasekara@redcross.lk
- Damitha Chanaka, Assistant Manager DM; email: damitha.chanaka@redcross.lk

At the IFRC Country Cluster Delegation, Delhi

- Udaya Regmi, Head of Country Cluster Delegation (CCD) Delhi; email: udaya.regmi@ifrc.org
- Naduni Abayasiriwardana, Officer-in-charge, Sri Lanka; email: naduni.abayasiriwardana@ifrc.org

At the IFRC Regional Office for the Asia Pacific, Kuala Lumpur

- Alexander Matheou, Regional Director; email: alexander.matheou@ifrc.org
- Juja Kim, Deputy Regional Director; email: juja.kim@ifrc.org
- Joy Singhal, Head of Health, Disasters, Climate, and Crises; email: joy.singhal@ifrc.org
- Eeva Warro, Operations Coordinator; email: OpsCoord.southasia@ifrc.org
- Olle Kaidro, Logistic Coordinator; email: olle.kaidro@ifrc.org
- Afrhill Rances, Regional Communications Manager; email: afrhill.rances@ifrc.org

At the IFRC Geneva

- Christina Duschl, Senior Officer, Operations Coordination; email: christina.duschl@ifrc.org

For IFRC Resource Mobilization and Pledges support

- Juliene de Bernard; Strategic Engagement and Partnership in Emergencies – Surge; email: PartnershipsEA.AP@ifrc.org

For Performance and Accountability support (planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting enquiries)

- Mursidi Unir, PMER in Emergencies Coordinator; email: mursidi.unir@ifrc.org

Reference



Click here for:

- [Link to IFRC Emergency landing page](#)