

SRI LANKA

Drought



Need for international assistance	Not required	Low X	Moderate	Significant	Major
Expected impact	Very low	Low	Moderate X	Significant	Major

Crisis overview

Sri Lanka has been experiencing a drought in most of the country since the beginning of 2016. As of 21 February 899,235 people in Sri Lanka have been affected by drought, across nine provinces (Disaster Management Centre of Sri Lanka 21/02/2017).

The total cumulative rainfall has been below normal and erratic, despite extremely heavy rain during mid-May 2016. It is highly unlikely that the drought situation will improve before the inter-monsoon showers expected between late March and April 2017 (WFP/Government of Sri Lanka 14/01/2017).

Affected areas	Resident population (2012)	No. people affected (2017)
Kilinochchi (Northern)	113,510	61,188
Batticaloa (Eastern)	526,567	Not available
Monaragala (Uva)	451,058	38,828
Puttalam (North-Western)	762,369	60,985
Kurungala (North-Western)	1,618,465	19,838

Source: Disaster Management Centre of Sri Lanka 21/02/2017

Limitations

Numbers of people affected have been rigorously monitored, but little on needs has been assessed or reported.

Key findings

Anticipated scope and scale

The current drought is forecast to have a devastating impact on rice production. Even if rainfall is received in the early months of the year, Sri Lanka's agricultural sector is unlikely to make a full recovery in 2017. With much of the poor households concentrated in the rural areas and dependent on agriculture for access to income, and local production representing the bulk of food sources in the country, livelihood opportunities and food insecurity are only likely to worsen among the most vulnerable.

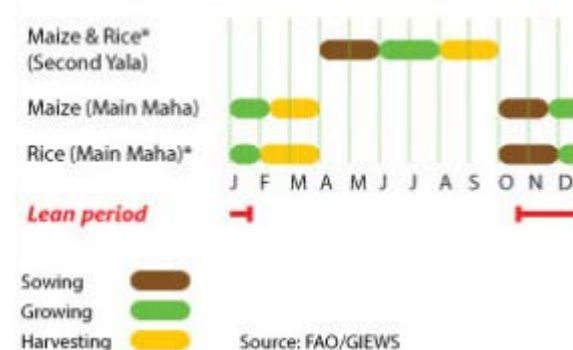
Priorities for humanitarian intervention

- **Food security and livelihoods** assistance is a priority due to prolonged crop damage and agricultural loss. Agriculture is an important source of both food and income.
- **WASH** is a concern, particularly water availability, as the level of reservoirs is significantly low.

Humanitarian constraints

Access in Northern and Eastern provinces may be hindered by landmine and unexploded ordnance (UXO) contamination. Poor quality of roads and extent of highway network may also present challenges to access.

Sri Lanka crop calendar



Source: FAO 17/01/2017

Crisis impact

Sri Lanka has been experiencing a drought since the beginning of 2016 in 23 of its 25 districts. As of 21 February 899,235 people in Sri Lanka have been affected by drought, across nine provinces (Disaster Management Centre of Sri Lanka 21/02/2017).

Despite extremely heavy rain across the country during mid-May 2016, the total cumulative rainfall has been below normal and erratic. Inter-monsoon showers are expected between late March and April 2017, but the impact of these on the prevailing drought situation is unclear (WFP/Government of Sri Lanka 14/01/2017).

Although the Disaster Management Centre of Sri Lanka has not provided numbers of affected people for Batticaloa district, Eastern province, the area was identified as hardest hit by OCHA in January. According to the OCHA report covering the period from 17–23 January, 302,000 of the approximately 520,000 people in Batticaloa are affected by the current drought (OCHA 24/01/2017).

WASH: Since December 2016, the water capacity of the country's main water reservoirs has been reported at 29%. Planting seasons require at least 50% water availability for irrigation. The main October–November planting season (*maha*) has already been affected by the drought, and as rainfall forecasts until April 2017 are unlikely to be insufficient for a full recovery in irrigation capacity, the coming April–May planting season (*yala*) is also expected to be heavily affected (WFP/Government of Sri Lanka 14/01/2017).

Since January 2017 access to drinking water has become a challenge in 22 out of 25 districts and is therefore a main priority (WFP/Government of Sri Lanka 14/01/2017). Lack of access to drinking water was a major concern in previous droughts in Sri Lanka, particularly for rural and poorer populations in the hardest hit areas (IFRC 04/04/2013).

Food security and livelihoods: No numbers are available on acute food insecurity. Domestic agriculture provides more than 80% of Sri Lanka's food requirement, with rice being the staple. The combined production of staple crops foreseen for the two 2017 harvests is expected to be the lowest in the last 10 years (WFP 31/01/2017). Food availability is likely to be severely impacted. In addition, agriculture plays an important role as source of income. For example, one third of the population of Northern province depends on agriculture for income, and lack of seeds for planting has already been widely reported in the affected regions countrywide (Thomson Reuters Foundation 24/12/2014; WFP/Government of Sri Lanka 14/01/2017). Crop losses and lack of seeds are expected to impact on the rural population's purchasing power, which, in turn, is likely to impact on access to food items and livelihood.

Nutrition: Sri Lanka has one of the highest rates of wasting prevalence in the world, at 19.6%, with 23% of the population (4.7 million people) undernourished (WFP 31/01/2017; WFP 14/02/2017). 33% of the Sri Lankan population cannot afford the minimum cost of a

nutritious diet (WFP 31/01/2017). The impact of drought on food availability and access to income is likely to lead households to limit food intake and shift to less nutritious meals. This is likely to compound the existing acute malnutrition situation in the country (WFP 14/02/2017).

NFIs: The drought has impacted on the power sector due to a significant dependency on hydropower for electricity provision (WFP/Government of Sri Lanka 14/01/2017). Power shortages may have negative impacts, such as failed water pumping for irrigation or further limitation of access to water, aggravating WASH and food needs.

Vulnerable groups affected

- Children are particularly affected by food insecurity as a result of drought (The Guardian 2014).
- In Sri Lanka, more women than men are employed in the agricultural sector, making female-headed households more vulnerable to the impact of drought (WFP 14/02/2017).
- Farmers previously affected by the war, mainly in the northern and eastern parts of the country, can be considered as a highly vulnerable group to the impact of climate hazards due to limited resilience (WFP 14/02/2017).

Humanitarian and operational constraints

- Access in Northern and Eastern provinces may be hindered by landmine and unexploded ordnance (UXO) contamination (Mines Advisory Group 13/03/2015).
- The Eastern province, and parts of the Northern and Uva provinces, have severe road accessibility problems, including density, quality, and width (WFP 14/02/2017).

Aggravating factors

Previous droughts

The increased frequency of natural disasters, including drought, compounds food and nutrition insecurity (WFP 31/01/2017).

2014: The northeast monsoon, which supplies water for agriculture across the key rice-producing areas of Sri Lanka, received below average rainfall between September 2013 and March 2014. This culminated in a drought that extended throughout most of 2014, finally easing in December. Over 1.8 million people were affected and severe agricultural loss was reported (WFP 30/04/2014; OCHA 18/08/2014).

2012: Dry conditions that started in December 2011 and stretched throughout 2012 led many water reservoirs to dry up. Those in the worst-hit remote rural areas were severely impacted, particularly safe drinking water availability and access. The drought eased towards the end of 2012, however, subsequent flooding impacted on the vulnerability of many poor households, particularly in the areas previously affected by the drought. Similarly to 2014, approximately 1.8 million people were affected (IFRC 04/04/2013).

Economic impact of the civil war

Sri Lanka's civil war from 1983 to 2009 was concentrated largely in the northern and eastern portions of the country. During the war, farming and fishing, the two of the main livelihood sources in the region, were affected by myriad factors, including embargoes, transport difficulties, insecurity and breakdown of market systems. The rural economy collapsed in many areas in Northeast province (Peace and Conflict Monitor 27/02/2012). The effects of the war are still felt on the local economy. These provinces presenting a significantly lower level of economic development in comparison with the rest of the country. In the north, the median monthly household per capita income stands at about USD 37 and in the east USD 36, while the national figure is around USD 53 (CNBC 27/04/2016).

Key characteristics

Population

Sri Lanka: 20,277,597.

Northern province: 1,060,023.

Eastern province: 1,547,377.

North-Western province: 2,380,861.

Uva province: 1,266,463 (Government 2012).

Rural–urban breakdown

Sri Lanka: 77% rural.

Northern province: 83% rural.

Eastern province: 75% rural.

North-Western province: 95.5%.

Uva province: 81.7% (Government 2012).

Food security: 6.7% of Sri Lanka's population are unable to meet a daily calorie intake of 2,030 kcal due to low income. Northern province: 10.7%. Central province: 6.5%. Eastern province: 10.8% (2012) (World Bank 08/2015).

Nutrition: Sri Lanka has one of the highest rates of wasting prevalence in the world, at 19.6%, with 23% of the population (4.7 million people) undernourished (WFP 31/01/2017; WFP 14/02/2017). 15% of children under five are stunted (2012) (Global Nutrition Report 2014).

Health: Sri Lanka has an infant mortality rate of 8 per 1,000 live births, an under-five mortality rate of 10 per 1,000 live births, and a maternal mortality ratio of 30 per 100,000 live births (World Bank 2015).

WASH: 95% of the population has access to improved sanitation and 96% has access to an improved source of drinking water (World Bank 2015; CIA World Factbook 2015).

Lighting and cooking: 74% of households use solid fuels for cooking. 64% use electricity for lighting, 35% use kerosene (Clean Cookstoves 2015).

Literacy: Sri Lanka: 96% of the population is literate (male: 97%; female: 95%). Northern province: 98%. Eastern province: 92%. North Western province: 96%. Uva province: 92% (Government 2012).

Response capacity

Local and national response capacity

Based on the drought conditions, in January the government asked the public to limit its use of water and electricity. In addition, the government deployed officials to several areas, including Kurunegala, Puttlam, Kilinochchi, Batticaloa, Mulativu and Monaragala to assess the situation with local authorities and allocate money for relief provision, if necessary (Government of Sri Lanka 13/01/2017).

A Presidential Special Drought Task Force meeting has been organised and The Ministry of Disaster Management and the External Resources Department of the Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs have requested international support (WFP 31/01/2017).

The Disaster Management Centre of Sri Lanka has been monitoring the progress in numbers of affected people across the country since 24 January (Disaster Management Centre of Sri Lanka 24/01/2017).

International response capacity

The World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and other international organisations, such as the World Bank, provide sponsor aid

programmes and are also directly involved in providing assistance, particularly in food and nutrition sectors (WFP 14/02/2017). In addition, the UN Country Team is providing information management support to national authorities (OCHA 24/01/2017).

As of 22 February, no appeal has been made for targeted funding or coordinated international response.

Population coping mechanisms

In 2016, crop losses during two consecutive harvest seasons (*yala and maha*) due to drought undermined household food security. This is likely to have impacted on the resilience of most affected families, and to trigger negative coping mechanisms, should they sustain further impact from the current drought (WFP 31/12/2016).

Information gaps and needs

Numbers of people affected have been rigorously monitored, but little on current needs has been assessed or reported.

Information on the number of affected in Batticaloa is lacking.

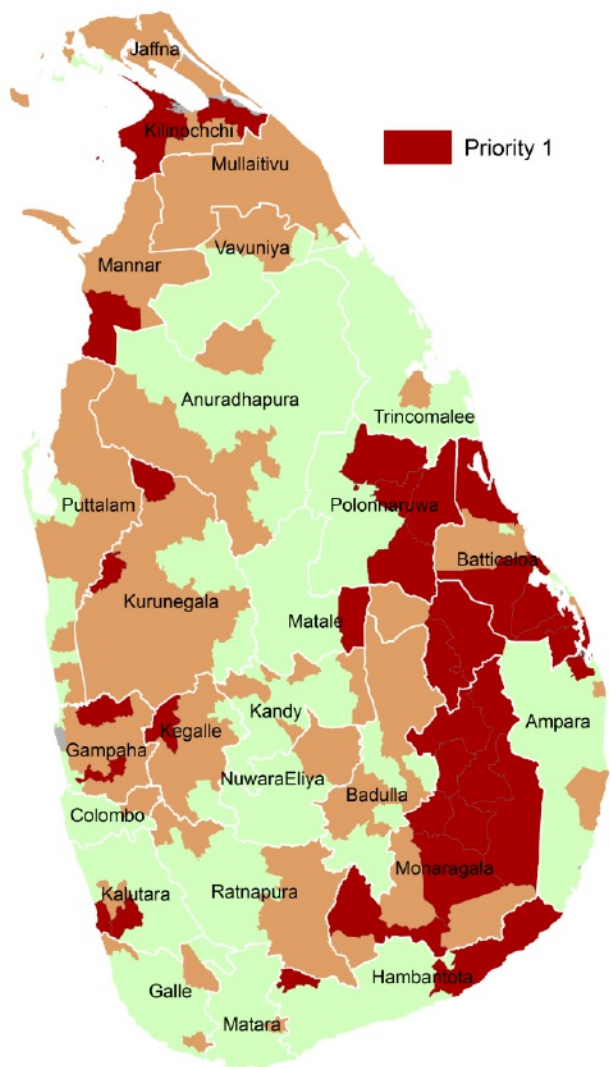
Lessons learned

- Ensuring access to safe drinking water is a priority in order to avoid increasing the risk of waterborne diseases (Stanke, Kerac, Prudhomme, Medlock and Murray, 2013).
- The 2012 drought affected 1.8 million people in Sri Lanka. Many of the water reservoirs dried up, resulting in lack of access to safe drinking water for people living in remote rural areas of the hardest-hit provinces (IFRC, 4 Apr 2013).
- Associated with food insecurity, drought may also exacerbate chronic malnutrition (Everyday Health 14/08/2014; Stanke, Kerac, Prudhomme, Medlock and Murray, 2013).
- The 11-month drought that hit Sri Lanka in 2014 severely impacted the farming sector, with losses estimated over 30% (Thomson Reuters Foundation 24/12/2014).
- Drought and the consequent loss of livelihoods is often a trigger for population movement, particularly rural–urban migration. The 2012 drought in Sri Lanka displaced 50,000 people (IPCC 2007; IFRC, 4 Apr 2013).

- Population movement can lead to increases in the prevalence of communicable diseases and poor nutritional status resulting from overcrowding, and a lack of safe water, food and shelter (IPCC 2007).
- Livelihood damage can have serious impacts on mental health (Hindustan Times 16/04/2016).
- Education may be impacted by drought as schools may be in need of water tanks (IFRC, 4 Apr 2013).
- Flooding may occur after drought. After the 2012 drought eased, accurate assessments of harvest losses were hampered by floods (IFRC, 4 Apr 2013).

Map

Priority areas for early response as of 14 January



Source: WFP/Government of Sri Lanka 14/01/2017.