

### Anticipated crisis impact

- The Disaster Management Centre (DMC) states that the current weather pattern in the sea areas off the coast extending from Puttalam to Batticaloa via Colombo, Galle and Hambanthota, is currently making heavy showers/thunderstorms and sudden increase of wind speed (up to 70-80 km/h) in the shallow and deep sea areas likely. Warnings to the population, especially to naval and fishing communities have been issued. (DMC 06/05/2020)
- The Southwest Monsoon is expected to arrive over Sri Lanka in mid to late May 2020. Colombo, Kalutara, Gampaha, Galle, Matara, Ratnapura and Kegalle districts are at very high risk of monsoon impact. (WFP 29/04/2020)
- According to the National Department of Meteorology, an estimated 35,000 to 50,000 families may be displaced, based on analysis of previous floods and landslides. (WFP 29/04/2020)
- Additionally, Colombo and Kalutara districts are identified as high-risk areas for COVID-19 outbreak, while Gampaha and Puttalam are at moderate risk. Special guidelines at central and district level have been issued for response and relief management, planning for early evacuations to pre-identified safe centres, camp management, and food supply. A separate quarantine centre will be established in each district exposed to the southwest monsoon. (WFP 29/04/2020)

### Key figures across the country



**35,000 - 50,000**  
families living in high-risk districts

**7 districts**  
at very high risk of monsoon impact

**National response capacity**

The Disaster Management Centre (DMC), the National Department of Meteorology and the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS)

**International response capacity**

UN agencies (WFP) and several NGOs are monitoring the weather forecast and preparing action plans

### Anticipated scope and scale

In May 2017, the worst flooding since torrential rains soaked the island nation in 2003, the state-run Disaster Management Center reported more than 150 death, more than 1,800 damaged homes and almost half a million people temporarily homeless. The worst-affected area has been Bulathsinhala in Kalutara District. (New York Times, 28/05/2017)

Humanitarian needs reported in 2017 have included access to safe, clean water for drinking and household use. Ensuring the safety of temporary shelters for displaced people remained a key priority. (Relief web, May 2017)

### Lessons learned

Despite significant improvements to early warning systems and response capacity, inadequate water drainage systems and steep slopes cut for housing expansion, plantations, and road infrastructure contributed to disasters and persist. Remote communities previously have been disadvantaged in disaster responses due to unequal distribution of aid caused by limited access and lack of infrastructures. (UNDRR 2019)

### Humanitarian access constraints



- COVID-19 measures restrict travelling between districts except for official and other essential purposes. (ColomboPage, 25/04/2020)
- Domestic travel restrictions are likely to affect the delivery of humanitarian assistance.
- All commercial borders are still open to cargo movements. All international airports nationwide are currently closed. (Logistics Cluster, 07/04/2020)

## Sectoral needs across the country



### WASH

- Flooding is likely to contaminate drinking water sources across the country. Previous flood crises outlined the importance of providing water storage containers and safe drinking water. (IFRC, January 2019)
- Awareness sessions on safe water, food handling and vector controls in order to improve hygiene promotion were included in previous flood-disaster action plans. (IFRC, January 2019) They are critically important now to also stop the spread of COVID-19.



### Health

- Increases in temperature, rainfall, and humidity will likely increase the prevalence of vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue. (UNDRR 2019)
- In the case of increased flooding (especially in areas with unmanaged waste), communities and people living in poverty without access to adequate sanitation will become increasingly affected by diarrhoeal diseases. Leptospirosis and other rodent-borne diseases have also been found to correlate with monsoon seasons, and an increase in the prevalence of dysentery, hepatitis, and typhoid is expected. (UNDRR 2019)



### Food and livelihoods

- Concerns for the impact of flooding on agriculture are significant, given 26.1% of the employed are working in the sector. (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2018) If unable to grow their own crops, many families will have to buy food at local markets, where prices are likely to spike due to the crisis. (Floodlist, 22/06/2017)
- Damage to the fisheries industry including fishing boats and implements (outboard motors, ice storage, fishing gear and nets), have often occurred after flooding. (IFRC, January 2019)

## Aggravating factors

### Seasonal hazards

Sri Lanka has two distinct monsoon seasons, typically associated with flooding because of the extreme rainfall. The Southwest monsoon (May-September) usually affects southern provinces the most. During the Northeast monsoon (December-February), eastern, northern, and north-central provinces are most prone to flooding. Despite significant improvements to early warning systems and response capacity, numbers of lives lost have increased during the past decade linked to flash flooding resulting from exceptional precipitation levels. (UNDRR 2019)

High impact disaster events are occurring frequently since 2011, and affecting more than 1 million people annually on average.

### Poor environmental management

Both floods and landslides are closely related to land-use practices and the pressure of human activities over sensitive areas. (Ministry of Disaster Management, May 2017)

Poor land-use planning and utilisation have been highlighted in the disasters from 2016 to 2018. Unstable river banks resulting from sand mining, loss of natural buffer zones, blocking downstream waterways and construction in retention areas all contribute to the increased risks of flooding and landslides.

### Physical and social vulnerability

Houses most affected in the 2016 flooding were of inadequate design; in the urban areas, 65% of the affected houses were makeshift or semi-permanent constructions. (UNDRR 2019) Some informal areas of the cities also lack infrastructure and services, which is creating significant exposure to hydrometeorological hazards. Informal settlements on the outskirts of the urban areas are built up on floodplains, which means that the poorest people are most vulnerable to flooding events and habitually end up displaced. In December 2019, flooding forced more than 15,000 people to leave their homes. (UNDRR 2019)

### COVID-19

As of 5 May 2020, the country has reported 771 confirmed cases of COVID-19. Colombo and Kalutara districts have been identified as high-risk areas for COVID-19 outbreak, while Gampaha and Puttalam are at moderate risk.

Flooding is likely to increase the number of people needing hospital treatment at a time when services are already stretched because of the pandemic. A joint response to COVID-19 and flooding – including safely housing people displaced by flooding without increasing their risk of COVID-19 infection – is crucial. (PreventionWeb, 27/04/2020)

## Map of Monsoon Anticipated Impact

Source: WFP 29/04/2020

