The children of Sri Mihindu Preschool in Udawatta lining up behind each other to go into their classroom

Prepared by: UNICEF Sri Lanka

March 2024
A. Expression of Thanks to Donor Partners who Made Results Possible

UNICEF’s work for children is funded entirely through individual donations and the voluntary support of our partners in government, civil society, and the private sector. Voluntary contributions enable UNICEF to deliver on its mandate to protect children’s rights, to help meet their basic needs, and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

UNICEF expresses its sincere gratitude to all resource partners whose overall contributions supported humanitarian action in 2023 in Sri Lanka. The achievements described in this report were the result of these new and continued partnerships.

In particular, UNICEF extends special thanks to all resource partners that contributed thematically to the organization’s work in humanitarian responses. Thanks to thematic funding and its flexibility, UNICEF Sri Lanka has been able to provide comprehensive and timely responses to the economic crisis affecting all women and children, particularly those most vulnerable. On behalf of children, their families and communities in urgent need, UNICEF is especially grateful to the Government of France, Government of Japan, Government of the United Kingdom, and National Committees for UNICEF for contributions of country humanitarian thematic funds in 2023 and donors contributing to global and regional humanitarian thematic funds, which provide the most flexible resources for emergency response.
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C. Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAP    Accountability to Affected Population
AoR    Area of Responsibility
CC-DRR Child-Centred Disaster Risk Reduction
CERF   Central Emergency Response Fund
CFSAM  Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission
CMC    Colombo Municipal Council
CMT    Country Management Team
CSO    Civil Society Organizations
DMC    Disaster Management Centre
DPCCS  Department of Probation and Child Care Services
ECD    Early Childhood Development
ENSO   El Niño Southern Oscillation
EPR    Emergency Preparedness for Response
FAO    Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD    Focus Group Discussions
GoSL   Government of Sri Lanka
HAC    Humanitarian Action for Children
HCT    Humanitarian Cash Transfers
HMIS   Health Management Information System
IMF    International Monetary Fund
INGO   International Non-Government Organizations
ISWG   Inter-Sector Working Group
IYCF   Infant and Young Child Feeding
MHPSS  Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MMN    Multiple Micronutrients
MoH    Ministry of Health
MoE    Ministry of Education
MSG    Mothers’ Support Groups
MTS    MultiTech Solutions
NDMP   National Disaster Management Plan
NITAG  National Immunization Technical Advisory Group
NIE    National Institute of Education
PCA    Participatory Community Appraisal
PDE    Provincial Department of Education
PSEA   Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
RCCE   Risk Communication and Community Engagement
RCO    Resident Coordinator’s Office
ROSA   Regional Office for South Asia
RUTF   Ready to Use Therapeutic Food
SAM    Severe Acute Malnutrition
SLCO   Sri Lanka Country Office
WASH   Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP    World Food Programme
WHO    World Health Organization
D. Executive Summary

In 2023, Sri Lanka saw some stabilization of its economy with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) debt restructuring agreement signed on 20 March 2023. However, many vulnerable families faced food insecurity and nutrition challenges, loss of livelihoods, and rising protection concerns as they continue to depend on negative coping mechanisms. The Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission in May 2023 by the Food and Agriculture Organization and World Food Programme revealed that 3.9 million people were moderately food insecure with over 10,000 households facing severe food insecurity. Overall, over 2.9 million children needed humanitarian assistance to access lifesaving nutrition, health, education, water and sanitation, protection, and social protection services as detailed in UNICEF Sri Lanka’s Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal for 2023.

In 2023, valuable and flexible humanitarian thematic and donor funding enabled UNICEF to deliver timely and lifesaving humanitarian assistance to address the critical needs of over 1.8 million people, including 1.4 children, in a country in crisis. UNICEF worked in close collaboration with national government partners, other UN Agencies, and civil society organizations on the ground to deliver results for women and children. The humanitarian response strategy built on investments in the social sectors and drew upon strong partnership networks, especially to reach the most vulnerable communities. This strategy was guided by UNICEF’s Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action and aligned with the Humanitarian Country Team’s Multi-Sectoral Preparedness and Response Plan. Working through the sector system established under the Humanitarian Country Team, UNICEF strengthened its accountability to affected populations and remains the provider of last resort for sectors that UNICEF leads/co-leads, namely Protection, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Education and Nutrition.

In the nutrition sector, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health (MoH) and other key stakeholders to strengthen the nutrition system and services to reverse the alarming trend of increasing malnutrition rates amidst a food insecurity and nutrition crisis. This involved the design and delivery of a comprehensive nutrition service package ensuring that all vulnerable children under 5 years and pregnant and lactating women have access to timely nutrition services and supplements at household, facility, and pre-school level in the most vulnerable districts. Through these services, 16,516 children under 5 years with severe acute malnutrition were admitted for treatment; 508,872 children aged 6 to 24 months received multiple micronutrients; 378,000 primary caregivers of children aged 0 to 23 months receiving Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) counselling and 49,446 pre-school children benefitted from school feeding programmes.

In the Education sector, UNICEF reached the most vulnerable children through learning recovery programmes and supported continued access to education despite disruptions due to the crisis. More than 30,000 children had improved access to formal or non-formal primary or secondary education and more than 70,000 children received learning materials. UNICEF also facilitated mental health and psychosocial support services in schools to help children and their families cope, as well as at household and village level, including strengthening referral networks through existing divisional mental health and psychosocial forums and community support networks in the Northern, Eastern, Uva and Central provinces.

In the Health Sector, amidst a shortage of essential medicines during the crisis, UNICEF supported the MoH in the procurement of essential medicines that were distributed across 51 hospitals across the country. In addition, in response to a measles outbreak in May 2023,
UNICEF supported the National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NITAG) campaign to improve immunization rates of children and worked on addressing vaccine hesitancy. Overall, 31,530 children and women had improved access to primary health care with support from UNICEF.

In the Child Protection Sector, UNICEF supported the Government to improve the collection, analysis, and use of routine data on child protection. Further, UNICEF helped ensure that vulnerable children continue to receive adequate protection services, especially during a time of crisis. Specifically, UNICEF strengthened the case management system, particularly online, benefitting 682 children; provided family-strengthening support services to prevent institutionalization; and supported the National Child Protection Authority and the Department of Probation and Child Care Services to roll out stronger business continuity plans. UNICEF also prioritized Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), by strengthening the capacities of relevant stakeholders and community establishments offering psychosocial support in the Northern, Eastern, Uva and Central Provinces reaching more than 950,000 children and parents/caregivers.

In the WASH Sector, UNICEF’s support ensured that 120,000 people have improved access to a sufficient quantity of safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene. UNICEF also strengthened hygiene management, including through menstrual hygiene for 6,000 girls and women and the provision of critical WASH supplies, including hygiene items, for 158,000 people. In the health sector, UNICEF technically supported the MoH to develop adequate standards for WASH and relevant monitoring indicators to be included in the Health Management Information System. UNICEF also improved water facilities in health clinics providing 120,000 people with access to safe water and sanitation facilities in targeted hospitals.

In the Social Protection Sector, UNICEF aimed to address critical gaps in the national social protection system. Specifically, UNICEF provided nutrition-sensitive cash transfers to 113,481 households with children up to 24 months in age in selected districts of the country. Each eligible family received a monthly stipend of Sri Lankan Rupees 6,750 (approximately US$ 21.50) for a period of five months.

These achievements across sectors were enabled and enhanced by cross-sectoral areas of work, including effective social and behaviour change communication using platforms such as the Mother’s Support Groups and village-level health promotion networks to promote positive health and nutrition behaviours, accountability to affected people through complaints and feedback mechanisms and child/youth participation and engagement. UNICEF continued to engage with children and young people to ensure that their voices and concerns are embedded in its responses using community-based and online platforms such as U-Report, which media reached 15 million and engaged 2.9 million individuals through social media. In addition, UNICEF invested in staff and partner capacity building on emergency response and preparedness and accountability to affected people.

In 2024, UNICEF will continue to prioritize residual humanitarian needs through its multi-year workplans in collaboration with the Government of Sri Lanka. UNICEF will invest in ensuring stronger emergency preparedness through advocacy, capacity building and joint planning with relevant government institutes. UNICEF will continue to advocate jointly with other UN agencies and I/NGOs for better preparedness and ensure a humanitarian-development nexus in risk reduction planning. In addition, UNICEF will engage children and youth in strategic policy advocacy to bridge the gap between climate change and disaster risk reduction spheres.
E. Humanitarian Context

Amidst a severe cost-of-living crisis characterized by shortages in food, fuel, and medicines, as well as political instability, Sri Lanka defaulted on its debt in 2022. The deteriorating macro-fiscal conditions – a result of longstanding structural weaknesses elevated by multiple external shocks – have disproportionately affected poor and vulnerable children and families, who have had to cope with rampant inflation that contributed to declining real incomes, increases in health costs and extended school closures, and an increase in the proportion of the population suffering from acute food insecurity².

Sri Lanka’s economy showed signs of stabilization in 2023 after Sri Lanka secured adequate debt relief assurances from the official creditors on 20 March 2023 and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Board approved US$ 2.9 billion for 48 months under the Extended Fund Facility programme. The bailout opened up additional funding from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank for social protection, financial sector development and infrastructure development. Headline inflation³ substantially declined by August 2023 to 4 per cent, which helped limit further increases in food insecurity and malnutrition among poor households⁴.

Data reveals the continued de-prioritization of the health and education sectors in total government expenditure over the past years, further widening investment gaps against international benchmarks and lagging significantly behind regional peers. Child protection remains invisible in the national level budget. Out-of-pocket payments by households on health and education and spending disparities heighten equity concerns, risking that the most vulnerable segments of the population are further left behind. These trends are even more concerning against the backdrop of deteriorating child outcomes; emerging evidence links major losses in human capabilities to rising levels of undernutrition, significant learning losses, increasing child protection concerns and heightened poverty rates.

The Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) to Sri Lanka in May 2023, led by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP), reported that 3.9 million people were moderately acutely food insecure, while over 10,000 households were severely acutely food insecure⁵. The estate sector communities were found to be suffering from the highest level of acute food insecurity followed by households highly dependent on social protection schemes, such as Samurdhi⁶ or disability benefits.⁷ Despite the apparent economic stability and improved food security in the country, a significantly high percentage of households (62 per cent) were adopting livelihood-based coping strategies (i.e. withdrawing savings, borrowing money, purchasing food on credit, etc.) to access food, compared to 48 per cent in May 2022. The report highlighted that 26 per cent

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³ Headline inflation is measured by the year-on-year change in the Consumer Price Index, which calculates the cost to purchase a fixed basket of goods to determine how much inflation is occurring in the country’s economy.
⁶ The Samurdhi subsidy is Sri Lanka’s main cash transfer intervention, part of the larger Samurdhi programme whose objective is poverty eradication via empowerment of people, “development of human capital, promotion of livelihood activities and development of rural infrastructure”
⁷ ibid. p.1
of households were employing emergency or crisis-level livelihood coping strategies, which included "selling productive assets (e.g., farming equipment), reducing essential health/education expenses, withdrawing children completely from school, and selling land". The National Nutrition and Micronutrient Survey (2022) indicated that the prevalence of wasting among children 6-59 months of age was increasing, from 13.2 per cent in 2021 to 19.8 per cent in 2022\(^8\). The prevalence of severe wasting also increased from 1.7 per cent\(^9\) to 2.5 per cent\(^10\) in the same years. Similar worsening of indicators was noted against all undernutrition indicators and across various age groups from 2021 to 2022; the prevalence of stunting in children aged 6-59 months increased from 12.7 to 13.7 per cent and the prevalence of thinness in children aged 5-9 years increased from 20.9 to 25.8 per cent. A high prevalence of Vitamin D deficiency and emerging micronutrient deficiencies, such as vitamin B12 and Zinc, particularly among children between 5-9 and 10-17 years of age, were the other nutritional concerns the country faced in 2023. The data from the Nutrition Month assessment undertaken by the Family Health Bureau of the MoH also confirmed the worsening trend of malnutrition of young children. The levels of stunting and underweight in children under five have also worsened between 2022 and 2023 (stunting from 9.2 per cent to 10.3 per cent and underweight from 15.3 per cent to 17.1 per cent\(^11\)). In October 2023, the percentage of children under 5 years who were underweight was 17.2 per cent, compared to 15.2 per cent in October 2022\(^12\).

A year into the economic crisis, which began in May 2022, more families have resorted to negative coping mechanisms to prioritize food consumption over expenses for education, health, and protection. Parents faced many challenges in prioritizing income at the household level for education. As a result, partner reports indicated increasingly irregular school attendance among children, which could eventually lead to school drop-out, along with increasing mental health issues. The education sector focused on prioritizing remedial programmes and learning recovery to address the long-term learning crisis in line with the ongoing Education Reforms. A study by the Ministry of Education (MoE) revealed that in 2021 and 2022, only 14 per cent and 15 per cent of Grade 3 students achieved minimum essential learning competency in literacy and numeracy respectively, and that pre-existing disparities in learning outcomes are widening due to the adverse impact of the last three years of serious disruptions in children’s learning. Moreover, the data showed that all positive gains in education achieved before the COVID-19 pandemic, including access to education and learning outcomes, had been reversed. These results are concerning as basic literacy and numeracy skills, along with socio-emotional skills, are essential for the success of all other educational objectives.

Rising levels of poverty – more than doubling between 2021 and 2023 according to World Bank estimates\(^13\) – undernutrition and significant learning losses also speak to the limited ability of Sri Lanka’s social protection system to reduce and prevent poverty and ensure basic income security for children to access nutrition, education, and care. Already, before

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\(^9\) Nutrition Status and Gaps in the Diet of Sri Lankans during the Pre-economic crisis period (from September to December 2021); Department of Nutrition, Medical Research Institute, Ministry of Health, in collaboration with WHO and UNICEF, 2022.

\(^10\) National Nutrition and Micronutrient Survey Sri Lanka 2022; Department of Nutrition, Medical Research Institute, Ministry of Health, in collaboration with WFP and UNICEF


\(^12\) FHB Dashboard https://fhb.health.gov.lk/stat_dashboard_fhb.html

the crisis, 2019 data showed that 4 in 10 children under the age of 5 are multi-dimensionally poor, of which more than one-third are underweight or stunted. The existing Pregnancy Voucher Programme provides support to mothers only during six months of pregnancy and four months of lactation, and, from 2023 onwards, is only targeted to low-income households.

Heightened poverty and vulnerability are also a concern for the protection of children. Families struggling to make ends meet tend to request placements in institutional care. Despite the implementation of the Alternative Care Policy, there are still over 10,000 children in institutional care and detention living in conditions that fall far short of what they need to develop to their full potential. Over 90 per cent of these children have a family to go to and, with the right support, could return home. Further, violence against children continues at home, at school and in the community, with a risk of increase in cases due to economic hardships. However, there is a lack of national prevalence data on all forms of violence against children. Therefore, it would be important to undertake a national prevalence survey of all forms of violence against children and adolescents. The ability of child protection authorities to respond to these issues were constrained by weak child protection systems; low availability of funding for front-line services and delayed/uncertain fund disbursals to relevant authorities.

The country also faced a delay in the Southwest monsoon and less rainfall, due to the strengthening of El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO), causing drought and water scarcity for 139,149 people in seven districts. The Government of Sri Lanka distributed drinking water through bowsers to 57,718 people (21,122 families) in the severely affected districts. Drought conditions also negatively affected the irrigated agriculture season in the middle of the year\(^\text{14}\), destroying over 45,000 acres of paddy fields in severely affected districts\(^\text{15}\). The drought situation and intermittent rainfall caused an increase in the number of reported cases of dengue throughout Sri Lanka, with at least 89,799 people contracting dengue fever during the year (17.4 per cent increase compared to 2022)\(^\text{16}\). The Western Province reported the highest number of dengue cases (28.8 per cent of the total).

\(^\text{14}\) Rice is the staple food in Sri Lanka and is cultivated twice year with rainwater during Northeast monsoon (Maha season) and using irrigated water during May to end of August (Yala season).


\(^\text{16}\) Dengue update, Week 52 by the National Dengue Control Unit, Ministry of Health
F. Humanitarian Results

During the reporting year, UNICEF Sri Lanka reached over 1.8 million people, including 1.4 children with humanitarian assistance. This included provision of multiple micronutrient powders for 508,872 children aged 6-59 months; mental health and psychosocial support for 952,551 adolescents; safe drinking water for 120,000 people; learning recovery programmes and educational materials for 100,747 children; mid-day meals for 49,446 pre-school students; and cash transfers for 113,481 households with young children in the most vulnerable districts.

UNICEF maintained a high level of emergency preparedness, including situation monitoring, planning, coordination, fundraising and capacity building. UNICEF also ensured a coordinated response in the Protection, WASH, Education, Nutrition and Risk Communication and Community Engagement sectors as the sector lead under the Humanitarian Country Team. To facilitate the efficient and timely achievement of the reported humanitarian results, in 2023, UNICEF and its partners strengthened their capacities in Emergency Preparedness for Response (EPR) and Accountability to Affected People (AAP). As part of EPR, UNICEF partnered with the Disaster Management Centre (DMC) to conduct a national simulation exercise to create awareness of tsunami threats in identified high-risk areas in the country, thereby improving the early warning system and preparedness for a Tsunami. Together with UNICEF’s Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA), UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Office (SLCO) conducted an assessment toward the end of the year to document lessons learned from its response to the economic crisis to provide insights into how UNICEF can better position itself in a similar situation. The assessment report is currently being finalized by the SLCO and ROSA.

Health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Sector 2023 Target</th>
<th>Sector Total results</th>
<th>UNICEF 2023 Target</th>
<th>UNICEF total results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of children and women accessing primary health care in UNICEF-supported facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,236,480</td>
<td>31,530¹⁷</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sri Lanka has a strong health system, with health services provided through a wide network of hospitals and field health clinics for the entire population. The facilities are maintained, and medicines provided by the Government using state resources. However, during the economic crisis, the production and procurement of medicines through the routine government system (i.e., either production at the State Pharmaceutical Corporation or procurement by the Medical Supply Division) were seriously impeded and some hospitals ran out of essential medicines. While there were no reports of clinics or hospitals closing, severe shortages in medicines and other commodities in hospitals were reported, impacting the delivery of critical health services.

¹⁷ Under the HAC appeal in 2023, the Health Sector was 93 per cent unfunded and therefore, only 2.5 per cent of the total target could be reached. However, UNICEF Sri Lanka reached more beneficiaries through funds received via GAVI and COVAX facilities which are not included in this report.
The severe impact of the crisis on all essential health services affected hundreds and thousands of patients, including mothers and children, and health workers. Measures have been taken to re-distribute emergency drugs within hospitals to address the current shortages, however, there were reports that some hospitals had to prioritise only emergency surgeries. The MoH identified the essential drugs that would be in short supply/out of stock on a regular basis. Donor agencies were regularly informed of the stock-out status in the hospitals and based on the requests from the Medical Supplies Division of the MoH, UNICEF supported the procurement of essential medicines that were distributed to 51 hospitals across the country for the management of 31,530 patients.

Another key result was related to immunization. In May 2023, a measles outbreak was reported, despite the country having eliminated measles since 2019. To control the current outbreak, the National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NITAG) recommended vaccination of all children between the ages of 6 to 9 months in selected high-risk districts and vaccination of zero dose children aged between 9 months to 15 years. UNICEF supported the campaign, mainly in ensuring effective communication, and continues to work with the Epidemiology Unit of the MoH in addressing vaccine hesitancy in the identified population groups.

**Nutrition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Sector 2023 Target</th>
<th>Sector Total results</th>
<th>UNICEF 2023 Target</th>
<th>UNICEF total results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># children 6 - 59 months with severe wasting admitted for treatment</td>
<td>47,567</td>
<td>16,516</td>
<td>47,567</td>
<td>16,516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of children aged 6 to 24 months receiving multiple micronutrient powders</td>
<td>430,000</td>
<td>508,872</td>
<td>430,000</td>
<td>508,872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of primary caregivers of children aged 0 to 23 months receiving IYCF counselling</td>
<td>320,000</td>
<td>378,000</td>
<td>320,000</td>
<td>378,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of pre-school children reached through school feeding programmes (age group 2 - 5 years)</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>49,446</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>49,446</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18 While the expected caseload was much higher, during the Nutrition Month in October 2022 (where the nutrition status of 99 per cent of children under 5 is monitored), the total number of children identified with SAM was 18,420; however, the caseload keeps changing. UNICEF expanded its programme to cover all nine provinces and supported the enrolment of 16,516 children with SAM for treatment at hospitals.
In Sri Lanka, too many children have been deprived of their right to nutrition for too long, leading to higher likelihood of morbidity, poor child development outcomes and mortality. The crisis, together with consecutive poor crop yields, have heightened food insecurity and reduced food consumption in quantity and quality, putting young children at greater risk and worsening already poor child malnutrition levels. The country lacks availability of essential nutrient supplements for pregnant and lactating women and children under two years of age and budget allocations for cash vouchers for these vulnerable population groups was constrained even before the crisis. The strong link between low maternal body mass index and low birth weight in babies contributes to intergenerational undernutrition.

UNICEF supported the procurement of essential medicines that were distributed in its emergency response, UNICEF helped ensure that the most vulnerable women and children have uninterrupted access to essential health and nutrition services. In 2023, UNICEF helped procure Ready to Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF), BP-100, for the treatment of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) in children under 5 years throughout Sri Lanka. To complement this, UNICEF, in partnership with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), supported parents to transport their children to treatment centres and outreach clinics for further management of SAM. This initiative contributed to the enrolment of 16,516 children with SAM in clinical management across all 25 districts in the country. Further, UNICEF procured and supplied Multiple Micronutrients (MMN) for all children aged 6, 12, and 18 months over a period of two months to improve their micronutrient status. Caregivers of these children received awareness on how MMN could be effectively given to children aged 6-24 months with the food.

Under the nutrition-sensitive humanitarian cash transfer programme, a cash plus component was designed to enhance the nutritional outcomes through home visits, cash management trainings to improve the financial management of the family income, food demonstrations to introduce appropriate complementary feeding and dietary practices and capacity building of frontline workers. During the year, home visits were conducted to 89,245 households that received cash assistance to provide age-appropriate nutrition messages using communication materials. Further, since household cash management was identified as a major concern, cash management training was provided to 4,984 community members in the
targeted nine districts. Given the unique age group and the critical life stage of the targeted children, food related demonstrations were also used as a means of delivering messages and increasing the skills of mothers and caretakers on complementary feeding and feeding during illness. The sessions helped families appreciate the importance of a diverse diet and the need to comply with the recommended IYCF practices. Families were also encouraged to access services to obtain nutritional supplements and counseling.

With UNICEF’s support, Early Childhood Development (ECD) authorities in Uva, Central, and Sabaragamuwa Provinces facilitated school meal programmes for 18,035 children in 652 preschools during 2023. These preschools are in the tea estates and most of them cater to highly disadvantaged children from families living within the estates but not employed by the estates. Discussions with relevant stakeholders have revealed that this programme has contributed to an increase in the number of children regularly attending preschool, visible improvements in the physical health and wellbeing of children, and greater awareness of the importance of nutrition for learning outcomes among preschool teachers, parents, and school communities. In the Eastern Province, the UNICEF-supported preschool meal programme, overseen by the respective District Secretaries, benefited 30,121 children. Local health authorities monitored the health and nutrition aspects, while ECD officers and government authorities engaged in regular supervision during field trips. Despite challenges in programme monitoring and timely payments due to the crisis, preschool attendance and parental participation appear to have increased. In the Western Province, UNICEF partnered with the Colombo Municipal Council (CMC) to provide mid-day meals to 37 preschools and four daycare centres in Colombo (until 30 April 2023, with dry ration packs provided in May). An estimated 1,290 urban-poor preschool aged children, including 20 children with disabilities, benefited from these meals. Recognizing the positive, multi-faceted impacts of the programme on children’s school attendance and development, the CMC allocated government funding to continue the meal programme from June 2023 onwards. To ensure sustainability of these initiatives, with UNICEF’s support, all CMC public health staff were trained on the importance of having a balanced diet and good nutrition during the early years. UNICEF also introduced drama therapy as a highly effective modality to disseminate messages to the urban-poor population with low literacy levels.

### Child Protection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Sector 2023 Target</th>
<th>Sector Total results</th>
<th>UNICEF 2023 Target</th>
<th>UNICEF total results$^{19}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of children and parents/caregivers accessing mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)</td>
<td>1,994,400</td>
<td>952,551</td>
<td>1,994,400</td>
<td>952,551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of children who have received individual case management includes: # (women), girls and boys accessing GBV risk mitigation, prevention and/or response intervention</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>2,235</td>
<td>5000 (CM) including 400(GBV)</td>
<td>682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of children and adults have access to safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA)</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of girls and boys assisted through access to assistive devices and specialized services</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^{19}$ Under the HAC appeal in 2023, the Child Protection Sector was 71 per cent unfunded and therefore, UNICEF could not reach the expected targets in full.
UNICEF continued to support the design, coordination, management and monitoring of the protection sector response by key stakeholders. UNICEF undertook an assessment of the routine data collection system for child protection, which provided baselines against key indicators, and which would support the Government to regularly collect and disaggregate data on child protection. The final report was published on International Children’s Day in November 2023, with the support of the Ministry of Justice. UNICEF continued to strengthen the online case management system, which was introduced in response to COVID-19, through the development and roll-out of Standard Operating Procedures and training of Child Protection Officers on the online system.

During the year, 682 children (317 boys and 365 girls, including nine children with disabilities) benefitted from emergency case management and family-strengthening support services by governmental and non-governmental organizations.

To address growing concerns around children’s mental health due to the economic crisis, UNICEF built the capacities of 96 government officers and front-line workers (out of 500) in the Northern, Eastern, Uva and Central Provinces to provide MHPSS. Together with these trained officials and other partners in these provinces, UNICEF supported the establishment of mental health coordination networks to strengthen divisional-level psychosocial capacities benefiting 1,652 children (713 boys and 939 girls) and 612 parents/primary caregivers, with another 107 children receiving individual psychosocial support. UNICEF also supported different community outreach modalities to provide psychosocial support. In the Eastern province, ‘Listening Places’ continue to function in targeted locations to help identify children who need support and provide psychological first aid20, as well as promote play and recreational activities. In the Northern province, the child befriender network provided 287 children with psychosocial support and referred 36 for specialized services. UNICEF also supported the training of 70 Probation Officers and Child Rights Promotion Officers in Uva and Central Provinces as trainers and mentors to provide peer support and psychological first aid. These officers conducted field-level training for 112 youth leaders (School Prefects and leaders of Children’s Clubs) on peer support mechanisms, including psychological first aid for at-risk peers. Further, UNICEF helped establish 12 Village Child Development Committees and 8 Children’s Clubs to help identify and address mental health and psychosocial issues faced by children.

The COVID-19 crisis and the ongoing economic crisis highlighted the need for strong business continuity plans to be in place to ensure that vulnerable children continue to receive protection support they need even in times of crisis. In this regard, UNICEF is continuing to support the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) and the Department of Probation and Child Care Services to roll out their business continuity plan in response to a crisis and any ensuing country lockdown or restriction of movement. The plan includes uninterrupted child helpline services during an emergency, for which six interns were

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20 Psychological First Aid (PFA) involves humane, supportive and practical assistance for people who are distressed, while maintaining their dignity, culture and abilities (WHO).
recruited to support the 1929 child helpline\textsuperscript{21}. Further, relevant infrastructure was also put in place, helping reach an estimated 386 children with referral support and follow-up services.

**Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Sector 2023 Target</th>
<th>Sector Total results</th>
<th>UNICEF 2023 Target</th>
<th>UNICEF total results\textsuperscript{22}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of children accessing formal or non-formal primary or secondary education</td>
<td>665,690</td>
<td>30,733</td>
<td>665,690</td>
<td>30,733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of children receiving individual learning materials (teaching-learning materials)</td>
<td>665,690</td>
<td>70,014</td>
<td>665,690</td>
<td>70,014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The MoE, with UNICEF’s support, is addressing the learning crisis by focusing on foundational learning at primary and preschool levels as a top priority and calling on extended support from the UN and other partners.

The learning continuity programme to help children catch up on lost learning was implemented in 271 schools in Uva and Central Provinces benefitting 24,569 students (12,530 girls and 12,039 boys) from Grades 1 to 4 in Type 3 schools\textsuperscript{23} in rural and estate areas. The provinces were selected based on the vulnerability criteria used in the Humanitarian Needs and Priorities appeal in 2022. The programme was implemented two days per week after school hours, one hour for Grades 1 and 2 and one and a half hours for Grades 3 and 4. Students were provided with a snack to help them stay for the extended learning hours and teachers were provided with an additional allowance for travel purposes. Based on the observations and feedback received from each education zone, the programme was very successful. Students were highly motivated to attend school and had requested the teachers to implement this programme daily. Teachers also expressed their satisfaction with the programme and some teachers have started to use the new methodologies in their regular teaching approach after seeing the benefits. This led to dialogue with the MoE and the National Institute of Education (NIE) on incorporating the identified teaching methodologies into the mainstream teaching/learning approach.

At the national level, UNICEF supported the design and implementation of a strategy to roll out psychosocial guidelines together with provincial counterparts. To-date, 6,650 teacher trainers have been trained across the nine provinces by the provincial resource teams and a cascade model was used to reach all teachers at the school level. Through this initiative, over 950,000 secondary students have improved access to MHPSS in school, which has been appreciated by education authorities at national and provincial levels as a timely intervention to address emerging psychosocial issues stemming from the COVID-19 and economic crises.

In the Eastern province, the literacy and numeracy programme, which commenced in 2022, supported learning recovery for an identified 6,650 under-performing primary students. The end-line assessment found that 74 per cent and 86 per cent of the targeted students enhanced numeracy and literacy skills respectively. As a result, 1,346 students continued to attend the programme in 2023. In addition, UNICEF supported the Provincial Department of Education (PDE) in the Eastern Province to conduct a diagnostic assessment among

\textsuperscript{21} ChildLine 1929 is a private and confidential service for child related inquiries and reporting any child protection cases.

\textsuperscript{22} Under the HAC appeal in 2023, the Education Sector was 97 per cent unfunded and therefore, UNICEF could not reach the expected targets.

\textsuperscript{23} Type 3 schools are those that have classes up to Grade 5 or Grade 8. According to the School Census 2021, there are 653,503 students learning in 3,968 Type 3 schools across the country.
117,548 primary grade students (59,949 girls and 57,599 boys) in Grades 1-5. The analysis established a baseline for another cohort of students in literacy and numeracy programmes in both Tamil and Sinhala schools. The assessment revealed that certain students faced challenges with foundational skills, with between 4.2 to 14.4 per cent achieving less than 50 marks. Consequently, the PDE identified an additional 4,818 children from 233 schools who received this remedial support with UNICEF’s assistance in 2023. The programme included awareness sessions for 17 zonal primary officials and the 233 school principals, as well as a two-day refresher training for 235 teachers with a focus on multi-level approaches, inclusiveness, positive disciplining, functional skills, and activity-based teaching.

Further, in the Eastern province, 26,014 individual learner kits and 500 teacher kits were provided to poorly resourced schools and vulnerable children, such as those who have lost both parents, come from single-parent families or are poor. UNICEF also provided exercise books to 44,000 primary students and 1,907 teacher kits in Uva, Central and Sabaragamuwa Provinces as additional support for children to continue their education.

To address learning loss in foundational literacy and numeracy, with the support of UNICEF, the MoE launched a national learning recovery strategy (2023-2025) based on the RAPID Framework targeting students in Grades 1 to 5. For the first time, all provinces developed their learning recovery programmes with alignment to a standardised national framework. UNICEF financially and technically supported the implementation of action plans and strengthened the assessment frameworks in line with the newly formulated key performance indicators for education.

While the prolonged economic crisis posed challenges for learning continuity and quality, it also provided UNICEF with opportunities to gain experience on strengthening the nexus between humanitarian and development work. Through initiatives such as learning recovery, UNICEF supported the MoE to establish important linkages between providing support to the most vulnerable children, i.e., students who were not achieving the essential learning competencies and overall system strengthening related to improving the quality of learning, i.e., pedagogy, assessments, and monitoring.

### WASH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Sector 2023 Target</th>
<th>Sector Total results</th>
<th>UNICEF 2023 Target</th>
<th>UNICEF total results24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># people accessing sufficient quantity of safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>152,000</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>120,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24 Under the HAC appeal in 2023, the WASH Sector was 45 per cent unfunded and therefore, UNICEF could not reach the expected targets in full.
UNICEF helped improve the hygiene conditions of households, including menstrual hygiene benefitting 6,000 adolescent girls, in 20 urban-poor settlements in Colombo District. The hygiene promotion programmes were conducted by the Urban and Estate Health Unit and Health Promotion Bureau with a focus on oral health and hand hygiene, including the supply of hygiene items and awareness material and using behaviour change monitoring tools. Further, a training of trainers programme was conducted for the Development Officers of the Urban Settlement Development Authority to promote hygiene knowledge.

UNICEF also supported the MoH to develop WASH standards and monitoring indicators for the integration of WASH indicators into the Health Management Information System (HMIS). Two workshops have been conducted at the national level to finalize the standards and monitoring indicators related to WASH in Health Care Facilities. This resulted in the training of an estimated 100 health staff on Health Care Waste Management across 12 districts. Further, 40 provincial level health staff were trained to conduct provincial level healthcare waste assessments and develop a healthcare waste management plan in each province. This was complemented by the provision of 451 pedal-operated waste bins and waste carts based on need, fulfilling the total requirements of several hospitals and health clinics in Colombo and Kandy Districts. Further, UNICEF supported the MoH to strengthen coordination with provincial level healthcare facilities by purchasing online communication facilities (zoom package for one year) and facilitating online training sessions.

UNICEF improved WASH facilities in 116 health clinics which benefitted approximately 120,000 people, including children under 5 years, pregnant and lactating mothers, well-women clinic clients, and family planning clients. Another 30,000 people received hygiene items in 28 clinics. Additionally, UNICEF improved the sanitation facilities in four targeted hospitals.

UNICEF worked with the Directorate of Estate and Urban Health of the MoH, Urban Settlement and Development Authority, Health Promotion Bureau, and Planation Human Development Trust to implement a hygiene promotion programme in the urban and estate sectors. This programme reached 3,000 vulnerable families with undernourished children in urban-poor settlements and 39,500 families in the estate sector. Hygiene items and information booklets on hand washing and personal hygiene were also distributed through the Child Development Centres.

**Social Protection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Sector 2023 Target</th>
<th>Sector Total results</th>
<th>UNICEF 2023 Target</th>
<th>UNICEF total results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of households reached with UNICEF-funded humanitarian cash transfers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>121,796</td>
<td>113,481</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To address critical gaps in the national social protection system, UNICEF provided nutrition-sensitive cash transfers to women and caretakers with children up to the age of 24 months in the most vulnerable districts in terms of severe child wasting for a period of five months.
UNICEF aimed to increase the purchasing power and knowledge of women/caretakers with young children to access nutritious foods and essential health and nutrition services, and ultimately improve child and maternal diets. In addition to the cash assistance, families received nutrition-relevant and age-appropriate messages, information and communication materials, and regular home visits (as reported under ‘Nutrition’).

Children were eligible for the programme when (1) they are born between 1 May 2021 and 31 December 2022, thereby prioritizing an age that is in the formative stage of life and, hence, particularly vulnerable and (2) the households reside in one of the most vulnerable districts in terms of the prevalence of severe wasting (based on the Demographic and Health Survey of 2016, which was the latest data available when the programme was designed). The targeted districts are Anuradhapura, Kegalle, Kilinochchi, Monaragala, Mullaitivu, Nuwara Eliya, Puttalam, Ratnapura, and Vavuniya. Each family with an eligible child received a monthly benefit amount of Sri Lankan Rupees (LKR) 6,750 (approximately US$ 21.50) for five months, in most cases via bank transfers. The beneficiary registration was coordinated by district authorities in close collaboration with UNICEF. UNICEF supported the registration planning process through an in-depth training of enumerators on a UNICEF-developed digital data collection tool. Frontline workers such as Public Health Midwives and Development Officers, nominated by district officials, worked as the enumerators.

By the end of 2023, 114,143 registrations had been completed. A total volume of nearly US$ 12.5 million was disbursed to 113,481 households, including 115,093 eligible children (58,191 boys and 56,902 girls).

### Cross-Sectoral

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Sector 2023 Target</th>
<th>Sector Total results</th>
<th>UNICEF 2023 Target</th>
<th>UNICEF Total results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of parents and caregivers provided with messages on positive parenting and MHPSS</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>1,000&lt;sup&gt;25&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of people with access to established feedback and accountability mechanisms</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>114,067</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># people reached through messaging on prevention and access to services</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>8,600,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In line with UNICEF’s corporate commitments and the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, all staff engaged in emergency preparedness and response in Sri Lanka were trained on EPR, including a simulation, with technical and financial support from

<sup>25</sup> The limited funding for MHPSS meant that UNICEF could not reach its planned target for 2023.
the regional office. In partnership with the Resident Coordinator’s Office (RCO) and the DMC, in July 2023, UNICEF conducted a contextualized, interagency capacity building programme on AAP with participation from 35 officials from various UN agencies, International Non-Government Organizations (INGOs), local CSOs, and government ministry departments. One of the key areas of focus of the three-day capacity building programme was on overall preparedness, including for other types of emergencies, such as health pandemic related, and ongoing response and recovery efforts to the multidimensional crisis in the country. In addition, UNICEF partnered with the MoH to conduct several capacity building workshops on AAP for over 130 medical frontline doctors to improve their Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) strategy as part of overall disaster preparedness. In 2024, UNICEF plans to expand this initiative to sub-national level based on the action plans developed during the training. Together with the Urban Development Settlement Authority, UNICEF also conducted a training programme for 30 social mobilizers on strengthening AAP during their work with the urban underserved communities. This aimed to facilitate a systematic, predictable, and responsive process of addressing feedback or complaints and contribute to ensuring that crisis response and recovery efforts are more accountable to those affected by them. In addition, UNICEF partnered with a local CSO, Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, to ensure AAP throughout the nutrition-sensitive cash transfer programme. This included communication on the programme to ensure that no one is left behind, establishing feedback and complaints mechanisms (through a toll-free hotline, text messages, and by email), and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

Together with the MoH, UNICEF also helped strengthen and mobilize the Mothers’ Support Groups (MSGs), which acts as a community-level platform to promote health and nutrition, particularly among pregnant and lactating mothers and children under 5 years. Through these platforms, over 200,000 people were reached and over 90,000 individuals actively engaged in establishing new MSGs and reactivating existing groups; improving the monitoring of MSG activities in the community; promoting financial management; and introducing locally developed cereal products (nutritional snacks) mainly for children with nutritional problems. This resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of MSGs in the country by 85 per cent. Further, UNICEF collaborated with Sarvodaya to establish 256 village-level health promotion networks during the year. Together with field-level public health officials, UNICEF strengthened the capacity and mobilized more than 3,800 community leaders attached to these networks on aspects of health and nutrition. Through community-level actions to promote health and nutrition conducted by these networks, over 97,000 community members were reached and 94 per cent of these networks were able to connect with the public health system in their areas. Understanding the potential of youth as change agents, UNICEF partnered with YouPAH (a local CSO) to mobilize and build the capacity of 50 youth teams to improve nutrition and food security through community actions. Similarly, UNICEF...
engaged scout leaders and mobilized them to initiate community-level nutrition promotion actions with over 4,000 scouts.

UNICEF collaborated with the Provincial Council of the Northern Province to introduce a Participatory Community Appraisal (PCA) model to improve community participation in the sub-national planning process. A contextualized model of PCA was introduced after a rigorous consultation process with provincial officials, which was used to train 185 front-line workers and establish a pool of master trainers. UNICEF also recommended required amendments to the existing planning procedures of the province to institutionalize the model and improve community participation in planning for development and emergencies.

UNICEF amplified the voices of young people through U-Report, a mobile messaging platform aimed at engaging young people in programme priorities, emergency response and advocacy actions. UNICEF conducted opinion polls to understand the effects of the socio-economic crisis, provided key related information, and channelled the voices of young people in areas such as corporal punishment, poverty, climate change and disasters, and water source protection. The U-Report platform reached 15 million and engaged 2.9 million individuals through social media. U-Report was also used to rally young people around ‘Sri Lanka Children’s Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation’, which was awarded the ‘Best in Emergency Innovation’ during the 2023 Inspire Awards – an annual internal awards programme organized to recognize UNICEF campaigns and initiatives in fundraising, advocacy, communication, and engagement. Further, together with its partners, UNICEF conducted a digital boot camp to groom and equip 25 young people as digital advocates who UNICEF hopes to engage with in scaling up the voices of young people.

As a result of the economic crisis, the platforms available for children were restricted, mainly due to a lack of physical spaces. Together with the Department of Probation and Child Care Services (DPCCS), UNICEF promoted Digital Storytelling as an effective approach to improving child participation through the sharing of their stories. UNICEF conducted a national level validation programme and provincial level Training of Trainers programmes for over 600 Children’s Club members and Child Rights Promotion Officers. The best digital stories developed by the children were recognized during the International Children’s Day event, and UNICEF plans to expand this programme to the Children’s Club network in 2024.

UNICEF supported the development of positive parenting manuals to help prevent violence in times of stress for families, which was launched in June 2023, reaching around 1,000 parents. As part of these positive parenting programmes, a webinar on the prevention of corporal punishment was conducted in April 2023 reaching around 100 officials from government, INGOs, and NGOs.
Cluster/sector leadership:

UNICEF is leading four sectors and one Area of Responsibility (AoR): the Protection sector, including the Child Protection AoR, Nutrition sector, Education sector, and WASH sector. The Child Protection AoR and the Education sector leadership are co-led with Save the Children, while the WASH sector is co-led with the Ministry of Water Supply. The nutrition sector is co-led with WFP to ensure close collaboration with the food security sector. As the economic crisis stabilized by early 2023, the Humanitarian Country Team, led by the UNICEF Representative as the UN Resident Coordinator a.i. and guided and coordinated by UNOCHA, took the decision to scale down humanitarian response operations by March 2023. The Inter-Agency Appeal (Humanitarian Needs and Priorities 2022) was not extended to 2023 but a three-month extension period from January to March 2023 was granted to all humanitarian agencies to complete implementation of all humanitarian operations. UNICEF’s co-led sectors and AoR are part of the Inter-Sector Working Group (ISWG) led by the RCO at the national level, based on the guidance provided in the transition strategy on Humanitarian Response and Coordination in 2023. UNICEF also actively participates in the in-country inter-agency PSEA Task Force and leads and coordinates the UN Communications Group which supports the UN Country Team on humanitarian communication and advocacy.

G. Results Achieved from Humanitarian Thematic Funding

Humanitarian Thematic Funds contributed significantly to UNICEF Sri Lanka’s humanitarian response to the economic crisis in 2023 under its HAC appeal. These valuable and flexible funds enabled UNICEF to deliver on its Core Commitments to Children and to ensure timely responses to the humanitarian needs of the most affected population groups in the country, specifically women and children. The key results achieved with thanks to Humanitarian Thematic Funds are detailed below:

Nutrition

Under UNICEF’s overall nutrition response to the economic crisis, Humanitarian Thematic Funds enabled UNICEF to provide mid-day meals to pre-school children under 5 years in selected districts reporting an alarming nutrition status. These meals had a dual purpose of providing an incentive for parents to send their children to pre-school and ensuring that these children have a nutritious meal – sometimes the only one for the day. UNICEF collaborated with local authorities to facilitate pre-school feeding programmes for vulnerable pre-school children in Uva, Central, Sabaragamuwa and Eastern Provinces and in the Colombo District for a period of six months. This programme benefitted 49,446 children, including 20 children with disabilities, in resource-poor pre-schools and day-care centres, out of which, 48,156 children (97 per cent) in Uva, Central and Eastern Provinces were reached thanks to Humanitarian Thematic Funding.

Child Protection

UNICEF remained a reliable partner to the Government during the crisis through its support to continue essential child protection services and provide psychosocial support to communities affected by the economic crisis. Humanitarian Thematic Funds enabled UNICEF to strengthen the online case management system, which was introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure more effective and multi-disciplinary support to handle cases of children who are victims or at risk of violence, abuse, and neglect. Specifically, UNICEF supported the development and roll-out of Standard Operating Procedures on
online case management and trained Child Protection Officers on the use of this online system.

Humanitarian Thematic Funds were also used to assist child protection authorities in providing emergency case management and family-strengthening support services to 682 children (317 boys and 365 girls, including nine children with disabilities). These services ensured that these vulnerable children received timely and effective protection and helped prevent their separation from their families.

Given the impact the crisis is having on the mental health of people, in the Northern, Eastern, Uva, and Central Provinces, UNICEF established mental health coordination networks to strengthen divisional-level psychosocial capacities. Through this network, 1,652 children (713 boys and 939 girls) and 612 parents/primary caregivers received psychological first aid and psychosocial support, with another 107 children receiving individual targeted mental health and psychosocial support. Under this overall psychosocial programme, Humanitarian Thematic Funds enabled UNICEF to provide individual psychosocial support to 790 of these children (47 per cent). The funding also helped ensure uninterrupted operation of the 1929 Child Helpline during the crisis by providing additional human resources (six interns) and relevant infrastructure, which supported an estimated 386 children to receive guidance and referral to follow-up services.

**Social Policy**

UNICEF aimed to address critical gaps in the national social protection system in its response to the economic crisis. Thematic Humanitarian Funds enabled UNICEF to provide nutrition-sensitive cash transfers to women with children up to the age of 24 months in the most vulnerable districts in terms of severe child wasting. In line with the inter-agency Humanitarian Needs and Priorities Plan, UNICEF closely collaborated with national and subnational government authorities to implement the programme. More than 114,000 households in the nine districts with the highest prevalence of severe wasting received Sri Lankan Rupees 6,750 per eligible child for five months, benefiting more than 115,000 children (57,217 girls and 58,552 boys registered), which is approximately 25 per cent of the age group. UNICEF complemented the cash transfers with activities to enhance awareness of and access to nutrition and health services to improve food intake and quality of maternal and child diets. This was achieved through the conduct of monthly home visits that received the cash assistance to deliver critical nutrition messages on complimentary feeding practices and feeding during an illness; complemented by food demonstration sessions and trainings on cash management.

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[2] ChildLine 1929 is a private and confidential service for child related inquiries and reporting any child protection cases.
Under this nutrition-sensitive cash transfer programme, UNICEF partnered with Sarvodaya to ensure AAP through adequate communication and mechanisms for complaints and feedback. Humanitarian Thematic Funds significantly contributed to this partnership, which included the establishment of a toll-free hotline for complaints and feedback and the conduct of FGDs to collect feedback. This is in line with UNICEF’s commitment to place people – women, men, families, children – at the center of its work. In practice, this means that people have a say in decisions that affect their lives, receive the information they need to make decisions, and can provide feedback or complaints. In total, 107,677 calls were registered during the programme duration; with the hotline being the preferred way of contacting UNICEF as shown in the post-distribution monitoring survey; and a large majority of people being very satisfied (70 per cent) or satisfied (20 per cent) with how their feedback or complaint was handled. In addition, between June and November 2023, Sarvodaya conducted 90 FGDs with a total of 947 women in all nine targeted districts. UNICEF provided the guidelines for these FGDs and trained facilitators to gather qualitative information from communities on their experiences, needs, and perceptions related to cash transfers; maternal, infant, and young child feeding nutrition practices and linkages to existing health and nutrition services; and community expectations and preferences, with a view to improving programme design. These voices have been published in a first issue of the Community Voice Bulletin and widely disseminated, and a second issue is currently being finalized.

Visibility

- Human Interest Story: UNICEF’s Cash Transfer Programme brings hope to vulnerable families with young children in Sri Lanka | UNICEF Sri Lanka
- Blog by our Regional Director (highlighting also his experience meeting two families benefiting from the cash transfer programme): Challenges for children hit hard, in my home Sri Lanka | UNICEF South Asia
Case Studies

Global Humanitarian Thematic Funding Case Study

Top Level Results:
In 2023, in response to a severe economic crisis with increasing child protection concerns, UNICEF Sri Lanka provided urgent child protection support services reaching a total of 2,334 children (1,004 boys and 1,330 girls) and 612 parents/primary caregivers. With the provision of global thematic humanitarian funds, UNICEF was able to reach a total of 1,472 of these children through family-strengthening support services that prevented family separation and deinstitutionalisation for 682 children and individual psychosocial support for 790 children.

Issue/Background:
A year into the economic crisis, more families have resorted to negative coping mechanisms, prioritizing food consumption over expenses for education, health, and protection. Heightened poverty and vulnerability cause concern for the protection of children. Families struggling to make ends meet tend to request placements in institutional care. Further, violence against children continues at home, at school and in the community, with a risk of an increase in cases due to greater stress for families caused by the economic hardships. Within this context, UNICEF supported the delivery of key child protection services related to case management and family strengthening support.

Resources Required/Allocated:
The ability of child protection authorities to respond to these issues were constrained by weak child protection systems; low availability of funding for front-line services and delayed/uncertain fund disbursals to relevant authorities. UNICEF, as the Protection Sector lead, guided the sector in developing humanitarian programmes to address gaps in protection services for children and women. UNICEF required US$ 2,494,440 to provide a comprehensive child protection response to the crisis in 2023 but was only able to mobilize US$ 933,136 (29 per cent) for the entire sector. Of the funds mobilized, 43 per cent was from Global Humanitarian Thematic funds.

Progress and Results:
In response to the crisis, UNICEF supported the delivery of essential child protection services and psychosocial support to vulnerable communities. With the provision of global humanitarian thematic funds, UNICEF strengthened emergency (online) case management and family-strengthening support services providing timely and effective protection and helping prevent family separation and institutionalization for 1,472 vulnerable children. To address growing concerns around children’s mental health, UNICEF facilitated Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services in the Northern, Eastern, Uva and Central Provinces of the country. Through the establishment of mental health coordination networks, around 1,652 children (713 boys and 939 girls) and 612 parents/caregivers benefitted from psychosocial support. Global humanitarian thematic funds enabled UNICEF to reach an estimated 790 of these children (47 per cent) with individual psychosocial support. The funding also helped ensure uninterrupted operation of the 1929 Child Helpline during the crisis by providing additional human resources and relevant infrastructure, which supported an estimated 386 children to receive guidance and referral to follow-up services. These results contributed towards the overall outcome of more children, especially the most vulnerable, benefitting from child-friendly services and positive social norms that better protect them from violence and exploitation in all settings and prevent family separation.
Criticality and value addition:
The severe economic crisis in the country has disproportionately affected poor and vulnerable children and families, who have had to cope with rampant inflation that contributed to declining real incomes, increases in health costs and extended school closures, and an increase in the proportion of the population suffering from acute food insecurity. Severe fiscal constraints have impacted social sector allocations and spending, with child protection receiving limited funding in the national budget. These issues are leading to deteriorating child outcomes; rising levels of undernutrition, significant learning losses, increasing child protection concerns and heightened poverty rates. This required UNICEF to take immediate action to support the continuity of essential child protection services. Building on the humanitarian-development nexus, UNICEF invested in strengthening the child protection system to respond in the short term but also to sustain such capacities in the longer term, well beyond the crisis.

Challenges and Lesson Learned:
A key challenge faced during the economic crisis was related to physically reaching affected families and communities to provide access to protection related services, as well as conduct monitoring visits, due to fuel shortages. To mitigate this, UNICEF selected partners based on their proximity and availability to the affected communities, which proved effective in expanding child protection services to the most vulnerable communities. Another challenge was the direct impact of the crisis on the service providers, such as the Child Protection Officers, who faced economic hardships and mental stress. Recognising this, UNICEF invested in providing targeted self-care and psychological support to the Child Protection Officers, enabling them to strengthen their resilience and coping skills, as well as work more effectively during the crisis.

Moving Forward:
Given the unique nature of Sri Lanka’s economic crisis, UNICEF’s humanitarian response was firmly embedded in its regular initiatives to strengthen the existing child protection system. UNICEF Sri Lanka mainstreamed all emergency response activities (under the HAC 2023) into the Multi-Year Work Plans for 2023-2024, which are being implemented by relevant implementing partner agencies – both government and non-government. As a result of this, UNICEF was able to ensure that the system strengthening efforts would continue beyond the humanitarian response phase into 2024, thereby ensuring a stronger and more shock-responsive child protection system in the country.
Country Thematic Funding Case Study

Top Level Results:
Given alarming rates of food insecurity due to the economic crisis and an increasing trend of malnutrition rates among children under 5 years, UNICEF Sri Lanka commenced a preschool feeding programme in eight districts. This programme provided nutritious meals for 49,446 children, with country humanitarian thematic funding contributing to reaching 97 per cent of these children (48,156 children).

The preschool meal programme has been well-received and owned by local government partners and school communities. This programme is seen to have multi-faceted positive effects - not only minimizing a worsening nutritional status but also serving as a powerful incentive for parents to keep sending their child to preschool, with visible improvements in their physical and psychosocial well-being.

Issue/Background:
Deteriorating macro-fiscal conditions are disproportionately affected poor and vulnerable children and families, who had to cope with rampant inflation that contributed to declining real incomes, rising costs, extended school closures and increasing food insecurity. Financial constraints also forced the Government to scale back nutrition programmes, such as school meals and fortified food to mothers and undernourished children. The increasing levels of wasting among children aged 6-59 months required accelerated actions from all stakeholders to help reduce the impact of the crisis on children and women. Within this context, UNICEF supported preschool meal programmes in eight districts of the country.

Resources Required/Allocated:
Maternal, newborn and child malnutrition remain a major challenge for the country, with little improvement over the last two decades. Sri Lanka is the seventh most malnourished country in the world in terms of levels of wasting in children under 5 years of age, leading to higher likelihood of morbidity, poor child development outcomes and mortality. Overall, much of the efforts in response to the economic crisis and food security focused on food assistance with limited attention to the direct, underlying and enabling interventions for the early prevention, detection, and treatment of child wasting, such as ensuring nutritious and safe foods for children, essential nutrition services and positive nutrition and care practices to prevent malnutrition in children, particularly among the most vulnerable such as the youngest, the poorest and those left behind by humanitarian crises.

UNICEF, as the Nutrition sector lead together with WFP, guided the sector in developing nutrition programmes to address the determinants and drivers of the food and nutrition crisis on children through the at-scale delivery of a package of proven essential interventions for the early prevention, detection, and treatment of child malnutrition. UNICEF prioritized the treatment of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) among children under 5 by ensuring access to care and nutrition services for the families of children with SAM through transport support to reach clinics for treatment, conduct of outreach clinics and provision of pre-school meals.

UNICEF required US$ 6,432,900 for these nutrition interventions in 2023, of which US$ 2,718,300 was required for the preschool feeding programme for 100,000 children. In 2023, UNICEF was able to mobilize global and country thematic humanitarian funds for the preschool feeding programme amounting to US$ 328,161 and carry forward funds from 2022 of US$ 101,975 from country humanitarian thematic funding.

Progress and Results:
With UNICEF’s support, preschool feeding programmes were provided to 18,035 vulnerable children in 652 preschools in Uva, Central, and Sabaragamuwa Provinces and 30,121
children in 849 preschools the Eastern Province. The preschool feeding programme, which was driven and owned by the local authorities, were implemented in districts where the needs are the highest, thereby addressing widening issues of inequity due to the adverse impacts of the economic crisis.

The targeted preschools reported that students received nourishing food on a regular basis, which, for many vulnerable children, was the most important meal they had for the day due to the difficult economic situation most families are in. This programme is seen to have many positive impacts - there was a clear indication of increased and more regular attendance by children in the targeted preschools and a visible improvement in their physical and psychosocial well-being with more active engagement of children in class being reported by teachers.

These preschool feeding programmes directly contributed towards the overall outcome of more children, especially the most vulnerable, benefitting from an inclusive, quality, and resilient education and skills development system that contributes to continued and improved learning and acquisition of skills for the future.

**Criticality and value addition:**
Due to the crisis and alarming malnutrition situation among young children, nutrition interventions were extremely timely and critical in preventing a worsening situation. As the Nutrition sector-lead, UNICEF successfully advocated with the highest level of Government to draw attention to the worsening levels of malnutrition. As a result, the Government prioritized the implementation of the Emergency Nutrition Plan which is the foundation for all nutrition interventions in the country, including the preschool feeding programme.

The preschool feeding programme enabled timely and critical responses to address the priority nutrition and education needs of vulnerable children, who were among the hardest hit by the economic crisis, bringing about long-lasting positive impacts across the life cycle of a child. This programme directly addressed issues of food security and adequate and quality nutrition for vulnerable children through the provision of at least one cooked, nourishing meal per day, reaching 48,156 children in 1,501 preschools across the eight targeted districts.

The programme also enhanced the capacities of midwives, health and education workers, preschool teachers and parents, to promote a holistic approach to a child’s development and sustain the impacts of the meal programme.

Improvements were recorded in school attendance and retention, as well as enhanced participation and empowerment of disadvantaged preschool children and their families. A pro-equity approach was applied to the programme design and targeting, thereby reducing the widening disparities in continuous access to nutrition and education services among those most vulnerable.

**Challenges and Lesson Learned:**
The multisectoral, interdisciplinary approach that this programme employed was found to be very effective and impactful in supporting the holistic development of a young child, addressing issues of physical and psychosocial wellbeing and growth, as well as foundational learning and skills development.

A key challenge was the increase in the workload of provincial Early Childhood Development (ECD) officers - who managed the preschool feeding programmes - due to the newly added responsibilities and a significant amount of paperwork required for processing payments to food suppliers at the divisional level. This caused delays in programme implementation, for
which UNICEF advocated for the placement of additional government officers to monitor the preschool feeding programme.

Efforts to engage parents systematically in preschool activities remained challenging due to the hardships they continue to face in the ongoing crisis. Parents also found it difficult to supply the food according to the government’s set menu due to the non-availability of certain grains, grams, and other items, particularly for specific ethnic communities. Further, the rising prices for fuel, transportation, and water indirectly impact food suppliers, especially those who rely on three-wheeled transportation or are located farther away. To address these challenges, preschools were given some flexibility to adopt local food items, and, in some cases, a group of parents were organized as a food supplier, thereby sharing the responsibility.

**Moving Forward:**
As outlined above, the nutrition-sensitive preschool meal programmes have resulted in multi-layered impacts beyond the delivery of school meals. The programme’s design was based on meeting local needs, with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged, and existing local systems, thereby ensuring ownership and accountability of key stakeholders in sustaining such programmes.

The operational modality of the preschool meal programme ensured the active participation of field-level officials, preschool teachers, targeted communities, and parents in the successful delivery of the programme. The programme encouraged voluntary engagement from the community in terms of preschool development, which could be observed in school cleaning and home gardening initiatives across majority of the targeted preschools, which – together with the provision of preschool meals – led to increased child participation and attendance in the targeted preschools. For example, the ECD authorities, in collaboration with the provincial health authorities, developed food menus to promote the use of local ingredients. Capacity building initiatives and regular programme monitoring led to improved coordination between the relevant stakeholders, including from both the health and education sectors.

Some municipal councils (local governments) pledged funding and committed to continue the preschool meal programmes - including the provision of meals and supporting teacher incentives - in some of the most disadvantaged preschools, ensuring programme sustainability. Efforts are also being made to engage local government authorities in planning how these meal programmes can be sustained and scaled up.

UNICEF is now working on increasing the knowledge of parents and caregivers of preschool-aged children on the importance of age-appropriate nutrition. These awareness sessions are complemented with practical sessions on making low-cost, highly nutritious food items using easily available ingredients in the specific localities. The Health Promotion Bureau attached to the MoH is planning to introduce preschools as a health promotion setting, with support from UNICEF, with a focus on age-appropriate nutrition, health, and hygiene practices, including provision of mid-day meals.
As the economic crisis stabilized, and the situation in the country improved substantially by early 2023, the Humanitarian Country Team took the decision to scale down humanitarian response operations by March 2023. The Inter-Agency Appeal (Humanitarian Needs and Priorities 2022) was not extended to 2023 but a three-month extension period (from January to March 2023) was granted to all humanitarian agencies to complete implementation and liquidate finances of all humanitarian operations. The UNICEF SLCO was the only UN agency with an international appeal valid for 2023 (HAC 2023). Therefore, the Humanitarian Country Team did not conduct any inter-agency needs assessments during the reporting year. UNICEF Sri Lanka’s emergency response activities for 2023, included in the HAC appeal, were mainstreamed into the Multi-Year Work Plan 2023-2024, which was implemented by relevant implementing partner agencies and discussed in various platforms, including the monthly Programme Planning Meetings, periodic sector meetings and the monthly Country Management Team (CMT). Monitoring of emergency response activities were integrated into overall monitoring systems in the office through frequent partner monitoring, field visits and review meetings.

Given that school children in Sri Lanka faced continuous long-term school closures since 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and, thereafter, the economic crisis, UNICEF together with the MoE launched an assessment survey. The survey, involving key stakeholders the MoE and PDEs, aimed to collect data and information on the challenges faced by the Sri Lankan education system and make recommendations for action that would mitigate the risks posed by the economic crisis. The survey assessed the levels of attendance/engagement by students and teachers in school; direct costs associated with education; mental wellbeing of students; gender dynamics; and perception of education continuity during a crisis.

In the area of nutrition, UNICEF supported the National Nutrition and Micronutrient Survey 2022, which was conducted jointly with the Medical Research Institute of Sri Lanka, WFP, World Health Organization and the World Bank. The report was verified and finalized during 2023 and indicated rising levels of wasting among children aged 6-59 months, revealing an increase from 13.2 per cent to 19.8 per cent between the last quarter of 2021 and the third quarter of 2022. This trend was also confirmed by assessments undertaken by the Family Health Bureau of the MoH, with support from UNICEF, during the dedicated Nutrition Months.

Under the short-term nutrition-sensitive cash transfer programme, UNICEF built in robust monitoring and feedback mechanisms into the programme design. Prior to initiating the cash transfers, data was verified by a contracted service provider (MultiTech Solutions – MTS) to ensure an effective segregation of duties and that data quality was sufficient to initiate bank transfers. Following each monthly payment, the same service provider conducted a short payment verification survey on a representative sample of beneficiaries provided by UNICEF to inquire whether a household had received the payment and the amount; and to triangulate this information with the information provided in the reconciliation reports by Financial Service Providers. In total, 11,936 payment verification surveys were conducted. UNICEF also set up a toll-free hotline (available from Monday to Saturday) registering 107,677 calls. To improve programme design, 90 FGDs were conducted with a selected group of women to gather qualitative information on their experiences, needs, and perceptions related to cash

transfers. The UNICEF team also conducted frequent field visits to monitor progress in the field. In addition to payment monitoring and FGDs, UNICEF conducted a post-distribution monitoring survey to understand the suitability of the offered payment options and any barriers to receiving cash assistance; how the assistance has been used and whether there were any constraints; and how well AAP mechanisms were working. In total, 4,874 randomly selected beneficiaries (97.5 per cent female) participated in the phone surveys that were conducted in October and November 2023. According to the survey results, 99.5 per cent of the respondents found the payment options suitable. In terms of the use of cash assistance, 83.0 per cent of households indicated that the cash assistance helped them a lot in meeting their basic needs, and for another 15.2 per cent it offered some help. It was reported that the support was mainly used for food and nutrition (94.8 per cent) or medicine (2.7 per cent).

The survey also indicated important areas to further improve AAP, with only half of the respondents knowing exactly why they were selected for the programme. Approximately 8 in 10 people felt that they had all the information they needed or at least somewhat, yet there was also a small percentage of people (12.9 per cent) who felt that they did not have a lot of information. Two thirds of respondents knew how to make a complaint or provide feedback. Among the 25.2 per cent who did get in touch, 92.6 did so through the hotline. Of the people who sought contact, 91.7 per cent reported that they received a response, and most people were very satisfied (66.9 per cent) or satisfied (19.9 per cent) with how their complaint or feedback was handled. Finally, overall satisfaction with the programme was high, with 84.7 per cent being very satisfied and 12.8 per cent satisfied with the programme. With a view to closing the feedback loop, UNICEF organized a one-day learning and reflection workshop at the end of November 2023 to report back to stakeholders on the cash assistance delivered, capture stakeholder feedback on the cash-related aspects of the programme and identify lessons learnt. The workshop brought together about 70 people representing district and divisional secretariat authorities, Sarvodaya, MTS and people assisted.

To further evaluate the nutrition-sensitive component of the cash transfer, UNICEF is partnering with researchers affiliated to the University of Peradeniya and the International Food Policy Research Institute. The evaluation investigates questions related to barriers to using cash transfers and other household resources to improve maternal and child diets, such as poor nutrition knowledge, lack of empowerment, household economic constraints based on other spending needs, time constraints, food environment constraints, norms, and cultures. It will also assess what modifications could be made to improve the effectiveness of nutrition-sensitive cash transfers in such a setting. For this evaluation, a technical advisory group was formed, and ethical approval has been obtained through the University of Peradeniya.

As the direct implementation of the nutrition-sensitive cash transfer programme has come to an end, UNICEF is documenting lessons learnt that can be fed into the national social protection system, such as strengthening linkages with other services (in particular nutrition), building a modern beneficiary data repository, improving a (integrated) management information system, modernizing the payment system, and supporting programme monitoring and evaluation.
I. Financial Analysis

In June 2022, UNICEF appealed for US$ 25 million to provide timely life-saving services for women and children affected by the economic crisis in Sri Lanka. Following this, in December 2022, a second HAC was launched by UNICEF to cover the requirements for 2023. UNICEF expresses its sincere gratitude to donors for the US$ 3.7 million received in 2023, including from the Governments of France, Japan and the United Kingdom, National Committees for UNICEF, and donors contributing to Global Humanitarian Thematic Funds. An additional US$ 21.6 million was carried forward from 2022 to enable UNICEF to continue to respond to the crisis in 2023.

Table 1: 2023 Funding Status against the Appeal by Sector (US$)

This Table 1 shows the funding status against appeal targets by sector. The “Funds Received” column includes all humanitarian funds received in 2023 against the appeal and the “Carry-Forward” column reflects the funding carried over from 2022. While the nutrition and social protection sectors were well funded, the other sectors faced significant funding gaps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Funds Available Against Appeal as of 31 December 2023*</th>
<th>% Funding Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Humanitarian Funds Received in 2023</td>
<td>Carry-Forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>6,432,900</td>
<td>2,183,112</td>
<td>7,031,243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>2,337,000</td>
<td>116,811</td>
<td>54,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water, Sanitation and Hygiene</td>
<td>984,000</td>
<td>545,748</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Protection, Gender Based Violence &amp; PSEA</td>
<td>2,494,440</td>
<td>414,895</td>
<td>518,241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>6,455,040</td>
<td>236,534</td>
<td>182,913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Protection</td>
<td>9,319,232</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13,657,774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-sectoral</td>
<td>246,000</td>
<td>43,000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28,268,612</td>
<td>3,540,100</td>
<td>21,444,291</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Funds available includes funds received against current appeal and carry-forward from previous year. Funds received through ACT-A HAC, COVAX and GAVI facilities are not included in Table 1 as per guidance for Situation Reports.

Table 2: Funding Available by Donor and Funding Type

This table includes all resource partners and all types of funding received and available for emergency activities in the humanitarian appeals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donor Name/Type of funding</th>
<th>Grant reference</th>
<th>Overall Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. Humanitarian funds received in 2023</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>a) Thematic Humanitarian Funds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Humanitarian Thematic Fund</td>
<td>SM229910</td>
<td>356,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Humanitarian Thematic Fund</td>
<td>SM229920</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Humanitarian Thematic Fund</td>
<td>SM229930</td>
<td>149,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>b) Non-Thematic Humanitarian Funds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>SM230052</td>
<td>1,851,851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>SM230359</td>
<td>545,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland</td>
<td>SM170463</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Non-Thematic Humanitarian Funds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,457,599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>c) Pooled Funding</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) CERF Grants (ii) Other Pooled funds - including Humanitarian Response Funds, UN Trust Fund for Human Security, Country-based Pooled Funds etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidated Funds from NatComs</td>
<td>SM230460</td>
<td>413,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidated Funds from NatComs</td>
<td>SM220679</td>
<td>116,811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>d) Other types of humanitarian funds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>e) Other resources – development funding towards HAC (SH grant)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>SH220020</td>
<td>1,080,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>f) Other resources – development funding towards HAC (SC grant)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total humanitarian funds received in 2023</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>4,574,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II. Carry-over of humanitarian funds available in 2023</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>g) Carry over Thematic Humanitarian Funds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Humanitarian Funds</td>
<td>SM189910</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Humanitarian Thematic Funds</td>
<td>SM229910</td>
<td>255,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Humanitarian Thematic Funds</td>
<td>SM229920</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Humanitarian Thematic Funds</td>
<td>SM229930</td>
<td>151,974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>h) Carry-over of non-Thematic Humanitarian Funds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN Multi Partner Trust Fund (Australia)</td>
<td>SM220811</td>
<td>7,080,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA USAID United States Agency</td>
<td>SM220675</td>
<td>6,408,727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance USAID BHA</td>
<td>SM220656</td>
<td>5,807,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Fund for UNICEF</td>
<td>SM220362</td>
<td>436,963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>SM220573</td>
<td>381,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>SM220488</td>
<td>357,777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>SM230359</td>
<td>252,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland c/o Swiss Agency for Development</td>
<td>SM220757</td>
<td>182,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland</td>
<td>SM170463</td>
<td>75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>SM220777</td>
<td>44,861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidated Funds from NatComs</td>
<td>SM220679</td>
<td>9,259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwegian Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>SM210872</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total carry-over non-Thematic Humanitarian Funds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>21,037,317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total carry-over humanitarian funds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>21,444,291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III. Other sources</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total other resources</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IV. Today and Tomorrow Insurance payouts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Today and Tomorrow Insurance payouts</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Thematic Humanitarian Contributions Received in 2023

Table 3 captures all the thematic humanitarian funding received in 2023. Sri Lanka Country Office received humanitarian thematic funding from several national committees for UNICEF, including the United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF, Luxembourg Committee for UNICEF, Australian Committee for UNICEF and UNICEF Thailand, and an allocation from Global Thematic Humanitarian Funding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donor Name/Type of funding</th>
<th>Grant Reference</th>
<th>Total Contribution Amount (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GHTF (if any):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>SM229910</td>
<td>356,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total (allocation from EMOPS/HQ):</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>356,722</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional thematic (if any):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total (allocation from RO):</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country thematic contributions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>SM2299300282</td>
<td>99,866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>SM2299300309</td>
<td>73,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>SM2299300227</td>
<td>28,223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>SM2299300287</td>
<td>21,593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF Thailand</td>
<td>SM2299300206</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total (received directly at CO level):</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>223,600</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>580,322</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

J. Future Work Plan

UNICEF has achieved important humanitarian results in 2023 through its HAC appeal. In 2024, Sri Lanka will be part of the Regional HAC with stronger attention to emergency preparedness through strengthening of existing systems and building resilient capacities of the most vulnerable communities, taking a humanitarian-development nexus approach. UNICEF Sri Lanka has already mainstreamed the humanitarian responses and emergency preparedness into its annual workplans and based on the valuable lessons learned during 2023, will further focus on strengthening capacities on risk-informed planning and implementation and emergency preparedness for response through its ongoing development work with the Government and partners.

In 2023, UNICEF invested in supporting the DMC to develop the National Disaster Management Plan 2023-2030 (NDMP) which was passed by the Cabinet of Sri Lanka on 7 February 2024. With the approval of the NDMP, UNICEF aims to support the DMC and other relevant government stakeholders in implementing the strategic activities related to Child-Centred Disaster Risk Reduction (CC-DRR) and emergency preparedness at national and

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27 Based on HAC funding status report, recovery rate is part of the amount.
28 Total for this section’s points a) to d) is equal to the total Humanitarian funding received in 2023 SitRep table, e) and e) are equal to the total of the other resources regular in SitRep table.
29 2022-2025 GHTF (funding allocated by EMOPS)
30 Regional humanitarian thematic fund
31 Country-level humanitarian thematic fund
32 This total equals Funds Available Against Appeal as of 31 December 2023 in the SitRep table
33 Programmable amount, total equals to the carry-forward total in the SitRep table
34 Same list as it was prepared for the Q1 FTS reporting
sub-national levels. This includes targeted assistance to strengthen the capacities of the government through regional knowledge exchange programmes, ensuring participation of children and youth in decision-making platforms, capacity building on risk-informed programming and engagement with the private sector to bring in business community resilience and investments for risk reduction. UNICEF will continue to scale-up the CC-DRR programme together with the DPCCS and the DMC at national and sub-national levels, including bringing in new stakeholders in local governments to ensure localization and children’s participation within the local governance systems and structures.

UNICEF will continue to advocate jointly with other UN agencies and I/NGOs for better preparedness and ensure a humanitarian-development nexus in risk reduction planning. In addition, UNICEF will engage children and youth in strategic policy advocacy to bridge the gap between climate change and disaster risk reduction spheres through Children’s Clubs networks and the National Youth Services Council.
K. Annexes to the CER

a) Human Interest Stories

A safe and supportive school environment

**UNICEF’s teacher training on mental health and wellbeing results in better learning for children**

Mr. Aruna Prasath (38), a teacher at St. Sebastian’s College, Madampe, in Sri Lanka’s North-Western Province, has made remarkable progress in establishing a psychologically safe environment for children in the school. Particularly focusing on identifying and responding to students’ mental health conditions post-COVID-19, Aruna has created a support system to help sustain their education.

“Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools were closed for most of 2020. This trend continued to 2021 which then relayed into further school disruption due to the economic crisis in the country,” explains Aruna.

“When schools finally recommenced, we the teachers faced a lot of problems as the students’ attitudes towards schooling had changed: students were disinterested in learning; there was excessive usage of mobile devices; others, whose families were drastically affected by the crises, resumed a sporadic learning journey.”

“We didn’t know how to address these issues. But we knew we had to find a way beyond the traditional teaching approaches to ensure successful educational outcomes for all students.” As teachers across the country were grappling with the new dynamics of negative student attitudes to learning, UNICEF along with the Ministry of Education (MoE) identified the need to support teachers to deal with the emerging psychological issues of the students.

As a result, a programme was designed to provide teachers with the basic knowledge and competencies of psychology and mental health. Funded by the Government of Norway, this included a nationwide Training of Trainers (ToT) with practical guidance on approaches to ensure the well-being of all students and strategies to identify and provide additional support such as engaging with parents or referring them to appropriate professional services.
Aruna was among the 600 teachers to receive the training. “The training has enabled me to guide 21 of my fellow teachers to support the students. We are now aware of approaches to ensure the well-being of students – we know how to identify the sensitivities and the emotions of the children and strategies to apply when children require additional support. Where needed, we have identified concerns such as violence and mental health conditions and have successfully engaged with parents and welfare and health services to provide the child with the needed support. Our commitment has guided students towards a healthier and positive life and created a conducive learning environment.”

Mr Ashane Lahiru (36), who teaches Mathematics to Grade 11 students, acknowledges the difficult times they faced as teachers post-COVID-19. “The students’ interests had changed considerably; they were no longer engaged in the class, not keen to attend school, and were overall, performing poorly.”

“When my colleague, Aruna, received the special training and distributed a handbook amongst us, we were keen to work with him to explore means to help children transition back to the school environment. With his guidance, we deviated from our previous ways of disciplining, such as warnings and punishments, and sought means to identify and overcome the obstacles that are preventing them from enjoying their childhood and benefitting from the education we provide,” Ashane continues to explain.

“There are 450 students in this school, and they are from different backgrounds; various ethnic and religious backgrounds, different social statuses and about 50% of the students come from estranged families. Sometimes a child does not have a responsible parent to send them to school. Sometimes they don’t come to school because they don’t have proper clothing.”

“So, in the interest of the entire school, the teachers got together to strategize the approaches Aruna taught us.”

“At a school level, the teachers have introduced an ‘inspirational thought’ during assembly which is engaging for students. We also intervene at individual levels – we seek the welfare of each student by understanding the difficulties the students may face in their homes and providing the necessary support such as counselling and talking to parents and guardians. We have also implemented small projects to support families that face economic hardships with food and other rations so that their children can continue to attend school.”

“We are now reaping the benefits of all the efforts,” affirms Ms Himali Hettikanda (45), who teaches Ordinary Level English Language. “We have got to know our students better and there is increased interaction between students and teachers. Student engagement at the classroom level has also improved and as teachers, our stress levels have also decreased. The school performance has also improved: last term we were able to bring the average result up to 90 percent.”
Boosting safe childbirth and obstetric care in Sri Lanka

UNICEF’s medicine supplies help sustain quality healthcare for mothers and newborns through challenging times.

Dr. Darshana Abeygunawardana (48) heads the obstetrics and gynaecology unit at the Base Hospital Homagama (BHH) – a leading public healthcare facility in western Sri Lanka. With his 20+ years of experience, he guides the unit to create a safe and caring environment for expectant mothers, ensuring a pleasant and healthy journey into motherhood. The unit also provides gynaecology care and is equipped to handle emergencies.

BHH has the second-highest population catchment in the country and Dr. Abeygunawardana’s unit handles over 100 births, cares for over 70 warded pregnant mothers, 300 outpatients and undertakes 50+ major surgeries each month. However, in 2022, as the impacts of the economic crisis began trickling into the health sector, the unit’s capacity was severely curtailed due to shortages of essential drugs.

“During the economic crises, we faced a shortage of Oxytocin injections,” Dr. Abeygunawardana recalled. Oxytocin is an essential drug that assures effective healthcare for the mother and the baby during obstetrics emergencies and complications such as delayed labour, haemorrhaging after childbirth, and miscarriages. Haemorrhaging after the delivery of the baby, also known as Postpartum Haemorrhage (PPH), is a life-threatening situation that requires prompt action.

“Oxytocin is a naturally occurring hormone in the human body and plays an important role in pregnancy and childbirth ensuring the health of the mother and the child. For specific obstetric complications and emergencies, synthetic Oxytocin is administered to ensure the good health and safety of the mother and the baby,” he explained further. With a vital drug such as Oxytocin running low, the obstetrics and gynaecology unit was met with the challenge of ensuring a smooth flow of their crucial operations. “We were faced with a grave concern at the hospital as childbirth and obstetrics care cannot be delayed or postponed. We needed to be ready and equipped to provide for the usual flow of births regardless of the crisis and ensure a safe environment for the mothers and their newborns,” Dr. Abeygunawardana explained.

In August 2022, UNICEF helped sustain the emergency obstetrics services at BHH through the procurement of Oxytocin injections. “The support from UNICEF was a timely intervention; by ensuring the availability of essential drugs we could assure all mothers at this health facility access to effective care to experience a safe birth and a healthy life beyond,” he added.

The procurement of Oxytocin injections by UNICEF, with funding from Rotary International, was part of a supply of essential medicines to the Ministry of Health (MoH) during a critical time when the country faced shortages of medicine supplies. The scarcity of life-saving drugs disrupted the public health system, which covers approximately 95% of the country’s in-patient care and 50% of out-patient care. Ensuring the continuous supply of essential medicines helped the network of base and teaching hospitals across Sri Lanka continue to provide quality healthcare for mothers and their newborns.
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