

Overview of the Emergency Operation

SLRCS Emergency Appeal for Sri Lanka Economic Crisis 2022-2023

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society emergency appeal was launched in response to the complex emergency triggered by the economic crisis in Sri Lanka (IFRC, 2023a, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d, 2022e). This initiative sought to mitigate the severe impacts of civil unrest and food insecurity exacerbated by the crisis, targeting assistance towards 500,000 people. This emergency appeal highlights the multidimensional impact of economic crises on food security, health, and social stability, showcasing the critical role of coordinated humanitarian response in alleviating such impacts.

Key Details of the Appeal

- **Appeal Number:** MDRLK014
- Total Funding Requirement: CHF 28 million through the IFRC Emergency Appeal
- DREF Allocation: CHF 691,002
- People Targeted: 500,000 people across 100,000 households.
- Appeal Duration: June 7, 2022, to June 6, 2023
- Glide Number: CE-2022-000199-LKA.

Background and Crisis Description

The economic crisis in Sri Lanka has led to severe shortages and sharp price increases of essential commodities due to foreign currency deficits, impacting public services and increasing food insecurity. The situation was aggravated by a ban on synthetic fertilizers and reductions in public sector expenditures, which hindered local food production and medical services (IFRC, 2022e).

Strategic Sectors of Intervention

- **Food Security and Livelihoods:** Efforts included providing cash grants and support for food production, specifically targeting low-income farmers and households affected by the crisis (IFRC, 2022c).
- **Health and Care:** Focused on providing emergency healthcare, medications, and support to cope with shortages in medical supplies (IFRC, 2022c)
- **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):** Initiatives to ensure access to safe drinking water and improve sanitation, especially in overcrowded areas like queues for fuel and other essentials (IFRC, 2022c).
- **Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI):** Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable groups, including women, children, and the disabled, through targeted programs (IFRC, 2022c).

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- Education: Supporting children's education by distributing school packs and facilitating access to educational resources amid disruptions (IFRC, 2022c).

Achievements and Impact

- Food and Livelihood Assistance: Significant efforts were made to provide immediate relief through cash grants and food aid to affected families, aiding them in coping with the escalating food prices and shortages (IFRC, 2023a).
- Health Services: Despite challenges, health services were maintained, focusing on the most critical needs, including maternal health and emergency medical care IFRC, 2023).
- WASH Activities: Installation of water tanks and provision of sanitation facilities helped mitigate the health risks associated with the lack of access to clean water IFRC, 2023).
- Educational Support: The distribution of school materials supported continued education for children whose families were hit hardest by the crisis IFRC, 2023).

Challenges and Adaptations

The response faced challenges such as funding gaps and logistical issues, primarily due to fuel shortages affecting the transportation of supplies and mobility of aid workers. The SLRCS adapted by prioritizing emergency interventions and using cash voucher assistance to provide flexible support to the affected populations (IFRC, 2023a).

Post-Distribution-Monitoring Overview

Utilization of Cash Assistance

The 2023 PDM report reveals significant insights into how cash assistance was utilized by beneficiaries. A substantial amount of the cash disbursed was spent on essential needs such as food, health care, and utility bills. This allocation underscores the dire economic situation many households face, where basic survival takes precedence over other expenditures. The report also noted that cash assistance helped prevent negative coping strategies, such as reducing food consumption or incurring further debt, which are common in crises (SLRCS and IFRC, 2023).

Beneficiary Feedback and Service Delivery

Feedback mechanisms were robust, featuring hotlines and complaint boxes, which facilitated a direct communication channel between beneficiaries and the SLRCS. This system allowed the SLRCS to address concerns and adapt their strategies accordingly. Beneficiary satisfaction was generally high, with many appreciating the timeliness and impact of the assistance. However, challenges were noted in accessing funds, particularly in remote areas where banking infrastructure is less developed or entirely

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absent, highlighting a need for logistical improvements or alternative distribution methods (SLRCS and IFRC, 2023).

Mid-Term Evaluation Insights

Strategic Impact and Implementation

The mid-term evaluation provided critical insights into the overall impact of the emergency operations. It confirmed that the aid was pivotal for vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, and those with health conditions, particularly in mitigating malnutrition and enhancing access to essential services. The evaluation praised the SLRCS for its effective community engagement, which helped tailor the interventions to the specific needs and circumstances of the affected populations (IFRC, 2023b).

Challenges in Operations

Despite the successes, the operation faced logistical and financial challenges that hindered the full realization of its goals. These included difficulties in beneficiary selection due to geographic and accessibility issues, and the need for increased funding to match the scale of the crisis. The evaluation highlighted the necessity for more robust planning and funding mechanisms to ensure that assistance could be delivered efficiently and on a sufficient scale (IFRC, 2023b).

Recommendations for Future Operations

The mid-term evaluation made several recommendations to improve future operations. These include enhancing the financial and logistical frameworks to ensure quicker and more comprehensive delivery of assistance, expanding community engagement practices to better understand and meet beneficiary needs, and continuing to develop feedback mechanisms to maintain transparency and trust with the community (IFRC, 2023b).

Sri Lanka Red Cross Disaster Relief Emergency Fund Operations 2022-2023

SLRCS DREF for Floods

The Sri Lanka Red Cross DREF operation for the 2023 floods, detailed under the appeal number MDRLK018, has been strategically mobilized in response to severe flooding across several districts due to heavy rainfall and adverse weather conditions associated with an intensified monsoon season.

Key Details

- ***DREF Number: MDRLK018***
- Total DREF Allocation: CHF 359,690 initially, with an additional request for CHF 139,983.
- Affected Population: Initially 75,000 people were affected, with targeted assistance for 14,750 people.

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- Crisis Category: Yellow
- Event Type: Sudden onset flood
- Operation Timeframe: From October 19, 2023, to February 29, 2024, with an extension to April 30, 2024.

Geographic Focus

Targeted Areas: Initially, the response focused on Sabaragamuwa, Southern, and Western provinces. Later updates expanded the response to include Northwestern and Northern provinces due to the continuing adverse weather.

Objectives and Response

- Main Objective: To support the immediate needs of the flood-affected population by providing essential household items, clean drinking water, and ensuring health and sanitation through medical camps and WASH activities.
- Activities: Distribution of essential household items and non-food items, cash grants to meet basic needs, health services through medical camps and first aid, water purification, and sanitation services.

Resource Allocation and Usage

- Financial Overview: Utilization of DREF funds for immediate relief operations, including purchasing relief supplies, conducting medical camps, and providing multipurpose cash grants.
- Operational Strategy: Immediate distribution of essential goods, cash assistance for recovery, and strategic partnerships with government agencies for effective response coordination.

Impact and Adjustments

The floods caused significant damage to homes, agriculture, and infrastructure, displacing thousands, and exacerbating the ongoing economic crisis in Sri Lanka.

Adjustments to the operation included extending the timeframe and expanding geographical coverage in response to persistent adverse conditions and emerging needs. This operation reflects the Sri Lanka Red Cross's commitment to addressing urgent humanitarian needs while coordinating closely with government agencies and adapting to evolving circumstances during the disaster.

Extreme Weather

The Sri Lanka Red Cross DREF operation for extreme weather in 2022, under the appeal number MDRLK015, was launched in response to severe weather conditions caused by the Southwest monsoon

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activation. This operation illustrates the Sri Lanka Red Cross's adaptability in disaster response by adjusting activities and extending support as per evolving community needs and weather conditions.

Overview

- **DREF Number:** MDRLK015
- **Glide Number:** LS-2022-000283-LKA.
- **Operation Timeframe:** 7 months, from 17 August 2022 to 31 March 2023
- **Funding:** CHF 499,554 allocated over two phases (initial CHF 221,665 and second allocation of CHF 277,889)
- **Target Population:** 50,000 people across five districts

Geographic and Temporal Focus

Initially Affected Districts: Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Rathnapura, Colombo, Gampaha

Added Areas: Colombo and Gampaha districts expanded coverage following additional needs assessment.

Response Objectives and Activities

- **Cash Grants:** Provided unconditional cash grants and conditional cash for housing repairs.
- **Health Services:** Organized medical camps and first aid services, focusing on dengue prevention and general healthcare.
- **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):** Included well-cleaning and hygiene promotion activities.
- **Education Support:** Distributed school packs to affected children to mitigate educational disruptions.
- **Infrastructure:** Supported well-cleaning and public place disinfection efforts to improve community health environments.

Adjustments and Impact

- **Adjustment of Activities:** Due to community preferences and assessments, some funds were reallocated, such as from first aid camps to school pack procurement.
- **Extended Impact:** The operation initially aimed to assist directly affected individuals but expanded to include preventive measures and broader community support due to ongoing weather impacts.

Partnerships and Coordination

Worked closely with IFRC, ICRC, the Government of Sri Lanka, local authorities, and other humanitarian partners to coordinate and maximize the operation's effectiveness.

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Dengue Fever

The Sri Lanka Red Cross launched a DREF operation to address a severe dengue outbreak across several districts, compounded by flooding due to Cyclone Mocha. This operation illustrates the challenges of dealing with compound emergencies involving health epidemics and natural disasters, demonstrating the importance of integrated response strategies to address both immediate and longer-term needs.

Key Details

- ***DREF Number: MDRLK017***
- Total DREF Allocation: CHF 348,470
- Affected Population: 48,728 people.
- People Targeted: 236,000 people.
- Operation Timeframe: June 2, 2023, to October 31, 2023
- Targeted Areas: Central, Eastern, Northwestern, Northern, Sabaragamuwa, Southern, Western provinces

Description of the Event

- **Dengue Outbreak:** Dramatic increase in dengue cases, three times higher than in the previous two years. The Western and Central provinces, including districts such as Colombo, Gampaha, and Kandy, were particularly hard hit.
- **Flood Impact:** Concurrently, Cyclone Mocha caused significant flooding, especially in the Galle and Matara districts, exacerbating the dengue situation by creating ideal breeding conditions for mosquitoes.

Response Objectives and Activities

- **Health:** Deploying health campaigns focusing on dengue prevention, including cleanup activities to remove mosquito breeding sites and community awareness programs.
- **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):** Addressing needs for clean drinking water and sanitation, particularly in flood-affected areas, to prevent waterborne diseases.
- **Shelter and Non-Food Items:** Providing necessary supplies to those displaced or affected by the floods and dengue outbreak.
- **Education and Community Engagement:** Ensuring children affected by floods have access to educational materials and incorporating community feedback mechanisms to enhance response effectiveness.

Impact and Adjustments

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The operation adapted to the escalating situation by intensifying dengue control efforts and flood response, highlighting a flexible and responsive approach to disaster management.

Partnerships and Coordination

Worked in coordination with IFRC, ICRC, local health departments, and government disaster management agencies to maximize the effectiveness of the response and avoid duplication of efforts.

Population Movement

The Sri Lanka Red Cross (SLRCS) DREF operation for extreme weather in 2022 was launched in response to the displacement crisis that arose from a population movement event, specifically addressing the needs of 104 migrants rescued by the Sri Lanka Navy. This operation highlights the challenges and complexities of responding to migration crises, particularly in providing immediate humanitarian assistance and facilitating long-term integration into local communities.

Key Details

- ***DREF Number: MDRLK016***
- DREF Allocation: CHF 91,140
- Affected Population: 104 people.
- Operation Timeframe: December 29, 2022, to April 30, 2023
- Targeted Areas: Western Province

Description of the Event

Population Movement: In December 2022, the Sri Lanka Navy rescued a boat carrying 104 migrants from Rakhine, Myanmar, which had encountered engine trouble off Sri Lanka's eastern coast. The migrants, including children and elderly, were initially housed in detention centers after being rescued.

Response Objectives and Activities

- **Shelter and Housing:** SLRCS provided shelter and necessities to the migrants during their initial accommodation in detention centers.
- **Health Services:** Health assessments and medical care were provided, including hospitalization for three migrants due to deteriorating health.
- **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):** Essential WASH services were delivered to ensure health and hygiene in the detention centers.
- **Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI):** Special attention was given to vulnerable groups among the migrants, including unaccompanied children and the elderly.

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- **Community Engagement and Integration:** Efforts were made to integrate the migrants into local communities with the support of UNHCR, which facilitated rental housing agreements.

Adjustments and Impact

Relocation Efforts: By April 2023, all migrants were relocated to rental housing within the Colombo district, improving their living conditions and easing integration efforts.

Language and Cultural Barriers: Ongoing challenges remained in communication due to language barriers, impacting the full understanding of the migrants' needs and facilitating their adaptation to new environments.

Partnerships and Coordination

SLRCS worked closely with the Sri Lanka Navy, UNHCR, and other government agencies to provide a coordinated response to the needs of the migrants.

Strategic Responses and Lessons Learned: Sri Lanka Red Cross Society's Population Movement Operation

Initiated in December 2022, the SLRCS undertook its first-ever population movement operation to assist 105 migrants from Rakhine State who were rescued by the Sri Lanka Navy (SLRCS, 2023).

This operation, funded by the IFRC's Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF), included humanitarian assistance and services such as shelter, health, and sanitation over four months, concluding in April 2023 (SLRCS, 2023).

Humanitarian Challenges and Response

The operation faced challenges such as coordinating with multiple stakeholders and the logistics of providing immediate and adequate support to the migrants in detention centers. Various interventions were made, including providing household items, medical assistance, and implementing a cash voucher system to support the migrants' daily needs (SLRCS, 2023).

Key Lessons and Recommendations

The operation highlighted the necessity of a systematic coordination mechanism for stakeholder interaction in population movement situations. Developing Standard Operating Procedures (SoP) and a response manual for maritime arrival-related emergencies was identified as essential to ensure a rapid and efficient response. A comprehensive needs assessment and mid-operational evaluation are crucial for adapting strategies to changing requirements and ensuring effective response (SLRCS, 2023).

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Capacity Building and Community Engagement

Upskilling staff and volunteers, particularly in areas of sexual exploitation and abuse prevention, gender inclusion, and handling cultural sensitivities were underscored. Engaging and educating the migrant community about local laws, rights, and services available to them is vital for their integration and well-being (SLRCS, 2023).

Future Preparedness and Policy Implications

The need for inter-agency contingency planning was emphasized to provide a unified and comprehensive framework for responding to similar crises in the future. The operation also underscored the importance of integrating community engagement and accountability measures across all stages of the humanitarian response (SLRCS, 2023).