

Methodology

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the final report on the Complex Emergency Operation and Assessment of Humanitarian Needs in Sri Lanka serves dual purposes. Firstly, it aims to evaluate the relevance, appropriateness, and outcomes of the humanitarian interventions under the MDRLK014 Sri Lanka Complex Emergency operation. Secondly, it intends to assess the ongoing and unmet humanitarian needs stemming from Sri Lanka's prolonged economic crisis and its exacerbating factors (IFRC, 2024).

This section outlines the methodological framework and approaches adopted for the comprehensive evaluation of the IFRC's humanitarian interventions in response to the economic crisis in Sri Lanka. The evaluation utilizes a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative techniques to ensure a thorough analysis of the intervention outcomes and ongoing needs. This methodology ensures a robust and ethical approach to evaluating the IFRC's humanitarian operations in Sri Lanka, providing a basis for strategic improvement and sustained humanitarian engagement.

Evaluation Objectives and Scope

The evaluation and assessment are designed to (IFRC, 2024):

- Evaluate the performance of the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) concerning their response strategies and the implementation of interventions.
- Assess remaining and unmet humanitarian needs to identify populations still marginalized by the crisis and highlight areas needing continued assistance.

Evaluation Methodological Approach

The methodology will combine qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods to gather comprehensive data across the nine provinces of Sri Lanka. Techniques have included (IFRC, 2024):

- Field visits and observations at intervention locations.
- Interviews with stakeholders including government officials, partner organizations, and affected populations.
- Focus groups and surveys among community households to gather data on key evaluation criteria.
- Case studies to explore personal narratives and the impact of interventions.

Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation will be guided by several criteria, including (IFRC, 2024):

- Relevance and Appropriateness: How well the interventions addressed the needs and conditions of the affected populations.
- Outcomes: The impact of the interventions on the target populations.
- Adherence to Fundamental Principles and Code of Conduct: Ensuring that actions taken align with the ethical standards of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Deliverables

Key deliverables for the evaluation include (IFRC, 2024):

- An inception report detailing the methodology, tools, and work plan.
- A draft and final report presenting findings, conclusions, challenges, and recommendations.
- Workshops to discuss preliminary findings and lessons learned with stakeholders.

Annex IV

Timeline

The evaluation has been scheduled to last 60 working days from March to June 2024. The detailed evaluation will help inform the strategic direction and long-term programs of the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society and the IFRC, enhancing their capacity to respond to future crises and linking with governmental social protection mechanisms (IFRC, 2024).

Research Questions

- 1) *Evaluating Humanitarian Action: How effective, efficient, and impactful were the humanitarian interventions in addressing immediate needs?*
- 2) *Sustainability, Resilience and Long-Term Impact: What has been the long-term impact of the interventions on community resilience?*
- 3) *Community Engagement and Participation: How were affected communities engaged in the planning and execution of the interventions?*
- 4) *What are the primary unmet educational needs in Sri Lanka?*

Mixed methods approach

Rationale: To achieve a balanced understanding of both the statistical outcomes and the contextual nuances of the emergency operation's impact.

Implementation: Combining data from surveys, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and case studies to construct a holistic view of the intervention effects and future needs.

Qualitative Data: KIIs, FGDs, and Case Studies

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): Conduct interviews with stakeholders including government officials, local community leaders, IFRC and SLRCS staff, and beneficiaries to gain insights into the operation's execution, challenges, and impacts.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Organize discussions with diverse groups affected by the crisis to understand their perceptions, experiences, and satisfaction with the humanitarian aid provided.

Case Studies: Undertake detailed case studies in selected communities to document specific success stories, challenges, and lessons learned from the intervention strategies used.

Area	Branch	KII Branch	FGD Volunteers	FGD/KII Communities /Case studies
Western	Colombo	X	X	Daily Workers
	Kalutara	X	X	Multipurpose Cash/Conditional Livelihood Cash
North/Western	Puttalam	X	X	Floods Affected
	Kurunegala	X	X	Conditional Livelihood Cash/Food Security
Nothorn	Mullaittivu	X	X	
	Trincomalee	X (online)		
Central	Vavuniya	X	X	Multipurpose Cash/Conditional Livelihood Cash
	Nuwera Eliya	X	X	School Feeding/Multipurpose Cash Estate Community
Central/Eastern	Badulla	X	X	Child Health Clinique/SAM
South/Eastern	Monaragala	X	X	School Feeding
Southern	Galle	X (online)		

Data Analysis

Integration of Data: Combine qualitative insights from KIIs and FGDs with quantitative survey results to perform a comprehensive analysis.

Software Tools: Utilize data analysis software like SPSS or R for quantitative analysis and NVivo for qualitative data coding and thematic analysis.

Annex IV

Analytical Techniques: Apply statistical methods for trend analysis and thematic analysis for qualitative data to draw meaningful conclusions about the intervention's impact and effectiveness.

Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent: Ensure all participants are informed about the purpose of the study and consent to participate voluntarily and confidentially.

Privacy and Confidentiality: Maintain the confidentiality and security of participant data throughout the evaluation process.

Cultural Sensitivity: Conduct all data collection activities with respect for local customs and sensitivities.

Reporting

Preliminary Findings: Present initial insights to stakeholders through workshops or briefings to validate findings and gather additional feedback.

Final Report: Compile a comprehensive evaluation report detailing the methodology, findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future operations.

Dissemination: Share the final report with all relevant stakeholders, including the IFRC, SLRCS, government agencies, and donor communities to inform future strategies and interventions.

Enhanced Methodology and Framework for Comprehensive Evaluation

Triple Nexus Approach

This evaluation integrates a Triple Nexus approach that combines humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts. This approach assesses the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions and how well they address the complexities of the Sri Lankan crisis. It provides an understanding of the synergies and interdependencies between emergency response, sustainable development, and peacebuilding efforts.

Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is a critical focus throughout this evaluation. It ensures that gender-specific impacts are central to the analysis and recommendations. The evaluation methods incorporate gender-sensitive data collection tools and analysis techniques, identifying differential impacts on various genders and ensuring equitable humanitarian support.

Advanced Analytical Strategies

To deepen the understanding of complex datasets, the evaluation utilizes advanced analytical strategies including thematic, normative, and discourse analyses. These methodologies enhance the evaluation of qualitative data collected through key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and field observations, enabling more nuanced insights into the effects of humanitarian interventions.

Digital Data Collection Tools

The evaluation employs state-of-the-art digital data collection tools, such as Kobo for surveys and NVivo for qualitative data analysis. These tools facilitate efficient data gathering and robust analysis, ensuring high data quality and accessibility for comprehensive evaluation.

Photographic and Video Documentation

Photographic and video documentation are used to visually substantiate the findings. This evidence provides compelling illustrations of the humanitarian impacts and the effectiveness of interventions, making the results more tangible and relatable for stakeholders.

Feedback Mechanisms

Feedback mechanisms are integral to this evaluation, ensuring continuous stakeholder input into the evaluation process. These mechanisms enhance the responsiveness and adaptability of the assessment, allowing for real-time adjustments and improvements based on stakeholder feedback.

Annex IV

Enhanced Sampling Methods

The evaluation incorporates refined sampling methods designed to ensure comprehensive and representative data collection. These methods are particularly attuned to reflecting the Triple Nexus and gender considerations, thereby enhancing the reliability and relevance of the findings.

Ethical Considerations and Informed Consent

Adhering to international ethical standards, the evaluation follows stringent ethical considerations and informed consent processes. Participants are fully informed of the study's purpose, the confidentiality of their responses is guaranteed, and their participation is voluntary, ensuring respect and protection of their rights.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is a cornerstone of this evaluation. The process is designed to be inclusive and collaborative, involving key stakeholders from the planning phase through to the dissemination of findings. This approach ensures that the evaluation is grounded in the realities of the affected populations and that the findings are actionable and relevant.

Sustainability and Long-Term Impact

The long-term sustainability of interventions and their impact on community resilience and development are critically assessed, aligning with the Triple Nexus approach. This analysis aims to identify sustainable practices and lessons learned that can inform future humanitarian and development initiatives, ensuring that interventions not only address immediate needs but also contribute to lasting peace and development.

Methodology Unmet Needs Assessment

Multi-sector survey

A multi-stage stratified survey was performed between the 30 April and 13 May 2024 via face-to-face interviews of 1,379 households covering urban and rural sectors in six districts in six provinces. The six districts were chosen to ensure coverage of the urban/rural sectors, major ethnicities, and livelihood sources. In addition, over the same period, a separate case study of estates in Nuwara Eliya was performed, sampling 113 households from six estates. The survey revisited the same locations as the 2022 SLRCS needs assessment survey, and covered similar themes, although the original survey covered five additional districts.

Districts and their characteristics (ethnicity, location (urban, rural and estate) and the number of households) are shown in Table 1. Districts were chosen to provide a representative sub-set of the previous 2022 needs assessment survey, with broad geographic and environmental coverage, and a range of ethnicities, circumstances, and livelihoods. SLRCS branch capacity was one of the background factors.

Table 1: Survey districts

Province	District	Distribution of people's ethnicity*			Number of households* (Average size of 4.1 people)			Surveyed** households		
		S	T	O	Urban	Rural	Estate	U	R	E
		(%)	(%)	(%)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)
Central	Nuwara Eliya	40	58	2	10,692	74,116	96,405	101	100	113
Eastern	Ampara	39	17	44	39,399	126,843	0	145	169	
Northern	Mullaitivu	10	88	2	0	25,234	0	0	151	

Annex IV

Northwestern	Puttalam	74	7	19	19,105	185,911	411	152	153	
Uva	Monaragala	95	3	2	0	122,386	2,117	0	152	
Western	Colombo	77	11	12	459,065	131,500	2,369	152	104	
Total								550	829	113

*Census of Population and Housing 2012. Definitions according to GoSL.

**Urban definition used was a GN that has a population of at least 750 people and a population density of at least 500 people per km². Rural definition was the inverse of the urban definition.ⁱ

S = Sinhalese, T = Tamil, O = Other, U = Urban, R = Rural, E = Estate

The multi-stage stratified survey and the case study were both analyzed using multilevel regression models to account for the sampling structure, and higher-level estimates were obtained by weighting urban district and rural district estimates by population size, using the same methodology and sampling as the original 2022 needs assessment survey.ⁱⁱ All data was analyzed using Rⁱⁱⁱ version 4.1.3 and the R packages lme4^{iv} and arm^v. This involved a comparative analysis of the selected districts from the original 2022 survey.

Table 2: Survey sampling structure

Survey type	Multi-stage stratified survey		Case study of estates in Nuwara Eliya
Data collection	Face-to-face interviews		
Analysis method	Multilevel regression and poststratification (MRP)		
Strata	6 districts in 6 provinces, as a sub-set of the 2022 needs assessment survey		N/A
Substrata	Urban sector	Rural sector	N/A
Primary sampling units (PSU)	Divisional secretariat (DS) eligible for urban sampling n=3 per district* (SRSWOR)	Divisional secretariat (DS) eligible for rural sampling n=3 per district* (SRSWOR)	Estate n=10 (Convenience sample)
Secondary sampling units (SSU)	Grama Niladari n=5 per PSU (SRSWOR)	Grama Niladari n=5 per PSU (SRSWOR)	Households n=30 per PSU (Systematic sampling)
Tertiary sampling units (TSU)	Households n=10 per SSU (Systematic sampling)	Households n=10 per SSU (Convenience sampling)	N/A
Total sample size (planned)	550 households	800 households	100 households
Total sample size (collected)	550 households	829 households	113 households

SRSWOR = Simple random sampling without replacement

*In some districts there were fewer than 3 DSs eligible for sampling and hence fewer DSs were sampled. A DS eligible for urban/rural sampling is a DS that has at least 10 urban/rural GNs and is within 20km of the RC local branch headquarters (10km in Nuwara Eliya).

The process for implementing the survey involved questionnaire development, translation to local languages, uploading and formatting using the Kobo platform,^{vi} pre-testing and adjustment, development of guidelines for data collection, training for Branch Executive Officers, installation of the Kobo application on volunteer's mobile devices, volunteer training, follow up and technical support, tracking of progress and updates, data verification, and data cleaning.

Annex IV

Focus group Discussions (FGDs)

Four FGDs were completed to provide details, context and complementarity to the survey, at four locations (Ampara, Colombo, Matara and Nuwara Eliya), based on practical considerations, capacity, and geographic and ethnic representation.

Within each participating district, purposeful sampling was used to identify potential participants, based on those who were readily accessible, whilst also ensuring an inclusive range of participants from affected communities (for example, in terms of ethnicity, livelihoods, persons living with disability, age). Groups were limited to a maximum of fifteen, although in practice more persons participated.

Moderators and note-takers were assessment team members or were nominated by SLRCS. Moderation involved a semi-structured approach with clear parameters, using a predetermined schedule, and scripts for prompts within the broad themes of food security and livelihoods, health and protection. Note-takers used a standard report format for recording.

At the start of each FGD, informed consent was sought from participants, and they were assured that no personal information would be published.

A simplified form of deductive content analysis^{vii} was used to sort, organize and interpret data.

Key informant interviews

Interviewees were approached because they had particularly informed perspectives and first-hand knowledge on aspects of the current crisis in the thematic areas of food security and livelihoods, health and protection, and other relevant sectoral interests, mainly at district government and central levels, identified by the assessment team and SLRCS.¹ Where possible the same interviewees as those who participated in the 2022 needs assessment were contacted. Interviewers were drawn from the SLRCS.

The interviews were loosely structured, relying on a thematic list of issues to be discussed, in part based on the responses and concerns raised in the 2022 interviews, and the specific sectoral focus of the interviewee. Interviewers also framed questions spontaneously, probed for information and took notes, which were summarized later.

Transcripts and summaries were used directly to help interpret and complement quantitative data and for insights into possible recommendations.

Table 3: KIIs

	District	Sector	Role
1	Ampara	Health	Government official
2	Ampara	Agriculture	Government official
3	Ampara	Protection	Government official
4	Jaffna	Fisheries	Trade Union representative
5	Jaffna	Education	Government official
6	Jaffna	Protection	Government official
7	Jaffna	Health	Government official
8	Negombo	Education	School representative
9	Negombo	Fisheries	Government official
10	National	Protection	Government official
11	National	Disability	NGO representative

¹ KIIs were limited to three districts and the national level so as not to over-burden SLRCS branches, and the range of interviewees was limited because of time constraints and practicalities.

Limitations

This assessment is not statistically representative of Sri Lanka as a nation but is intended to provide insights into the ongoing humanitarian impact of the protracted crisis, and confirmation of concerns, and unmet needs and priorities, particularly at the community level. The purposeful sampling/selection of 6 districts for the survey provides a representative overview of the urban and rural sectors in the 6 districts that were selected. The case study of estates in Nuwara Eliya may not be representative of all estates in Sri Lanka (or even Nuwara Eliya) but is still useful as a source of information.

Random sampling errors are more likely to occur with smaller samples. Consequently, smaller samples typically have a higher margin of error, meaning that there is less confidence that survey results reflect the true population. However, internal consistency, triangulation with external information, and plausibility (a 'common sense' approach) can help provide validation. For example, fishing households are now less affected, while low-income households and those impacted by floods, landslides, or droughts are consistently adversely affected across most indicators in the kobo survey. This is in keeping with the understanding of the course of the crisis from other sources of information.

Small communities might not be captured in the kobo survey or FGDs. In addition, community perceptions might not always accurately reflect broader trends due to biases or unique local conditions.² While community-level insights are invaluable, they might not provide a comprehensive picture of the national situation. Neither did the assessment consider wider concerns as to how the current crisis is affecting macroeconomic or political fault lines and breaking points.

References

IFRC, 2024. TERMS OF REFERENCE Evaluation of the Complex Emergency Operation and Assessment of the Humanitarian Needs in Sri Lanka.

ⁱ Weeraratne, Bilesha. (2016). Re-Defining Urban Areas in Sri Lanka. Working Paper Series No. 23, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka.

ⁱⁱ Downes, M., Lyle C Gurrin L.C., Dallas R English, D.R. et al (2018). Multilevel Regression and Poststratification: A Modeling Approach to estimating population quantities from highly selected survey samples. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, vol. 187, no. 8, Oxford UP (OUP), Apr. 2018, pp. 1780–90. <https://doi.org/10.1093/aje/kwy070>. Accessed 23 Sept 2022.

ⁱⁱⁱ R Core Team (2022). R: A language and environment for statistical computing. R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria. URL <https://www.R-project.org/>

^{iv} Douglas Bates, Martin Maechler, Ben Bolker, Steve Walker (2015). Fitting Linear Mixed-Effects Models Using lme4. *Journal of Statistical Software*, 67(1), 1-48. doi:10.18637/jss.v067.i01

^v Andrew Gelman and Yu-Sung Su (2021). arm: Data Analysis Using Regression and Multilevel/Hierarchical Models. R package version 1.12-2. <https://CRAN.R-project.org/package=arm>

^{vi} IFRC. <https://www.ifrc.org/ifrc-kobo>. Accessed 23 Sept 2022.

^{vii} Bingham, A.J., and Witkowsky, P. (2022). Deductive and inductive approaches to qualitative data analysis. In C. Vanover, P. Mihas, & J. Saldaña (Eds.), *Analyzing and interpreting qualitative data: After the interview* (pp. 133-146). SAGE Publications.

² In particular, the purposeful selection of districts to administer focus group discussions and key informant interviews (and purposeful/convenience selection of participants/interviewees) was based on expediency and capacities, and to triangulate survey data expeditiously.