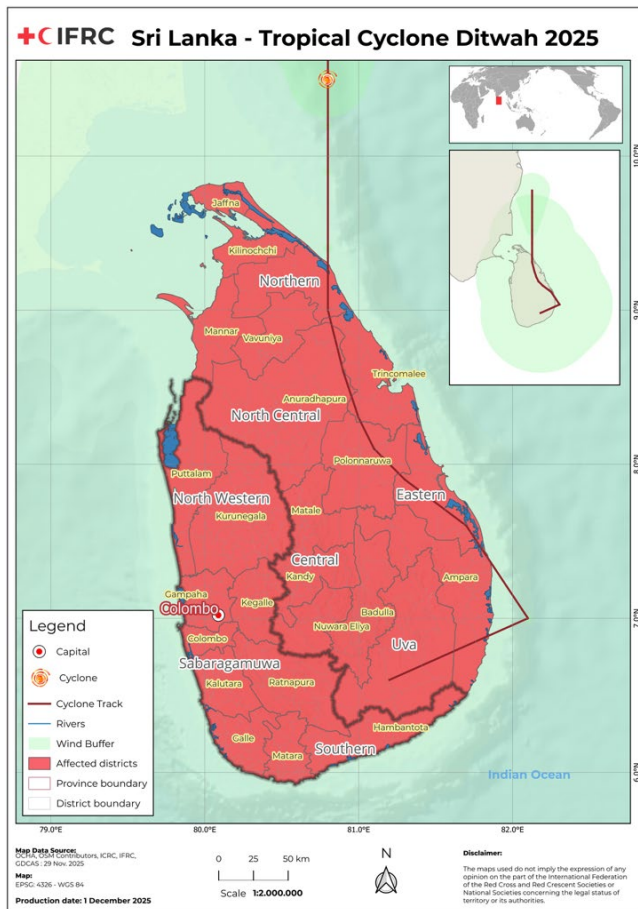




Cyclone Ditwah has unleashed catastrophic rainfall and severe flooding across Sri Lanka, impacting more than 1.5 million people. Entire communities are cut off, homes lie in ruins, and the threat of landslides and rising waters remains. (Photo: JJ/IFRC)

Appeal No: MDRLK023	IFRC Secretariat Funding requirements: CHF 12 million Federation-wide Funding requirements: CHF 14 million	
Glide No: FL-2025-000213-LKA	People affected: 1,702,719 people	People to be assisted: 597,365 people
DREF allocation request CHF 1 million	Appeal launched: 02/12/2025	Appeal ends: 31/12/2027
Appeal Revision	Revision #: 1	Date: 05/01/2026

SITUATION OVERVIEW



A low-pressure system that developed over the southwest Bay of Bengal near Sri Lanka on 25 November 2025 rapidly intensified into a deep depression by 26 November 2025, bringing heavy rains and strong winds across the island. The Department of Meteorology, along with the Disaster Management Centre (DMC), issued early warnings from 26 November as the system began to track north-northwestwards, positioning itself approximately 100 kilometres south of Sri Lanka's eastern coastline.

Cyclone Ditwah intensified into a devastating tropical storm system, unleashing unprecedented rainfall and severe weather impacts across Sri Lanka. According to the DMC's situation report issued on 29 November 2025 at 2:00 p.m., the cyclone affected 25 districts nationwide, impacting 490,385 families and 1,702,719 individuals, with 643 confirmed deaths and 183 people reported missing ([Disaster Management Centre, Sri Lanka](#)). [Initial data](#) shows that more than 218,000 people from at least 61,000 families were evacuated to

1,564 safety centres run by the government. Many people affected have begun returning from safety centres or have started living with their relatives. As of 17 December, more than 66,000 people from at least 22,000 families remain in 732 evacuation centres. Widespread infrastructure damage has been reported, including more than 107,000 houses destroyed and 101,055 partially damaged. Torrential rainfall exceeding 200 mm within 24 hours, and in some districts surpassing 540 mm, triggered catastrophic flash flooding in low-lying areas and along major river basins. The Department of Meteorology issued a 'RED ALERT' on 27 November, the highest level of warning, covering both land and sea areas. By 28-29 November, the cyclone had tracked north-northwestward, moving away from Sri Lanka toward Tamil Nadu and Puducherry in India, where red alerts were also issued for coastal regions anticipating extreme rainfall. Despite the system's gradual departure, Sri Lanka remained under critical threat through 30 November, with forecasts of an additional 200 mm of rainfall likely to worsen flood risks, while the Irrigation Department's flood warning remained in effect until 3:00 p.m. on 30 November. In response to the widespread devastation, the Government of Sri Lanka declared a nationwide state of emergency, confirming that all districts were severely affected by Cyclone Ditwah.

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society mobilised its 25 branches and 300 volunteers to conduct assessments and collect impact data from the respective districts, providing First Aid services, while NHQ began sending essential household items to branches in landslide affected districts to support affected communities.

Access to many affected areas remains severely constrained, with more than 200 roads still impassable and at least 10 key bridges damaged, limiting overland deliveries and restricting population movement from isolated communities. The President of Sri Lanka declared a nationwide state of emergency on 28 November 2025 in response to the severe impacts of Cyclone Ditwah, granting the

government broad powers under the Public Security Ordinance to safeguard public order and ensure the continuity of essential services. Through an Extraordinary Gazette, the Essential Public Services Act No. 61 of 1979 was activated, legally designating critical sectors such as healthcare, water supply, electricity, transport, communications, and disaster response operations as essential to the community life. This declaration prohibits strikes or work stoppages in these services and obliges workers to continue their duties, thereby guaranteeing uninterrupted delivery of

vital public services during the crisis. Together, the state of emergency and the activation of the Essential Public Services Act provide the government with the authority and mechanisms needed to stabilise the situation, protect vulnerable populations, and coordinate national disaster response more effectively in the face of widespread flooding and infrastructure disruption caused by the cyclone.

EMERGENCY APPEAL REVISION

The needs of affected communities are becoming increasingly distinct as more information becomes available from the field. These needs include multi-layered cash support to affected households for transitional shelter, latrines, and expanded livelihood interventions that restore sustainable income sources, incorporating enhanced protection, gender and inclusion (PGI), and community engagement and accountability (CEA) activities. In parallel, a strong emphasis will be placed on branch capacity building in disaster preparedness to strengthen community resilience against future climate-related shocks.

The operational timeframe has been revised to 24 months (December 2025-December 2027), with a total Federation-wide Funding ask of CHF 14 million, aiming to reach 597,365 people. All larger operational changes are to be described in the revised Operational Strategy.

TARGETING

This operation will target approximately 597,365 of the most vulnerable people from 119,473 households across the 20 districts most severely affected by Cyclone Ditwah, prioritising those currently displaced in safety centres, staying with relatives, or returning to damaged homes.

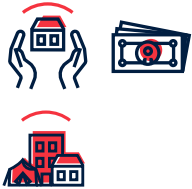
Targeted vulnerable groups will be reached through inclusive mechanisms: rural communities will be identified through village-level coordination with Grama Niladhari divisions and Divisional Secretariats; estate sector workers will be prioritised; migrants and refugees will be verified through UNHCR coordination and government immigration authorities; LGBTQ individuals will be engaged through established community networks in Colombo and Gampaha; and women-headed households, the elderly, people with disabilities, pregnant and lactating women, and households with infants will be identified through disaggregated household assessments.

PLANNED OPERATIONS

Through this Emergency Appeal, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) aims to support the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) in responding to Cyclone Ditwah. The IFRC's strategy is to strengthen immediate relief and recovery efforts, focusing on the following priority areas:

Integrated assistance

(Shelter, Livelihoods, and Multi-purpose Cash)



The integrated assistance strategy is designed to provide a comprehensive response that bridges immediate relief, early recovery, and long-term resilience building. In the emergency phase, families living in temporary shelters or hosting displaced persons will receive essential household items such as bedding, hygiene kits, and cooking sets to restore basic living conditions and dignity. To ensure flexibility and address diverse needs, unconditional cash grants will be introduced, allowing households to cover critical expenses, including food, healthcare, and transportation. As the situation stabilises, conditional cash support will be provided for transitional shelter items, complementing in-kind assistance to guarantee safe and adequate housing. Livelihood recovery efforts will prioritise vocational training, skills development, and income-generating activities through a conditional cash grant, with a focus on vulnerable groups and linking them to local markets. Together, these interventions aim to restore economic stability, promote social reintegration, and strengthen community resilience against future shocks, ensuring that affected populations can rebuild their lives with dignity and security.

Health and Care including Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

(Mental Health and Psychosocial Support/Community Health)



The health and care response, including water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), will focus on urgent measures to protect public health and prevent the spread of disease in disaster-affected communities. Mobile health clinics and medical camps will be deployed to reach isolated populations where access to health facilities has been cut off due to road closures, while trained volunteers will provide first aid to reduce hospitalisation risks. Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services will be offered to help individuals cope with trauma, while disease surveillance systems will be reinforced to detect and respond to potential outbreaks of diarrhoea, leptospirosis, and dengue. Immediate WASH interventions will prioritise the supply of safe drinking water through bowers and purification tablets, alongside well cleaning and disinfection in inundated areas. Hygiene kits containing soap, detergent, sanitary napkins, and toothpaste will be distributed, with special attention given to women and adolescent girls in safety centres. Temporary latrines and portable sanitation facilities will be installed in areas where infrastructure has been damaged, alongside targeted support for household latrines through cash grants. As conditions begin to stabilise, community clean-up campaigns will be organised in schools, shelters, and public spaces to eliminate mosquito breeding grounds and restore sanitary conditions. Preventive health messaging and hygiene promotion will continue into the recovery phase, strengthening resilience against waterborne and vector-borne diseases. In the longer-term, the operation will support the capacity building of staff and volunteers in public health emergencies, expansion of first aid services, epidemic preparedness, and the training of first aid

trainers, ensuring that communities are better equipped to respond to future health crises.

Protection and Prevention

(Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI), Community Engagement and Accountability, Migration, Environmental Sustainability, Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation and Recovery, Education)



Training programmes will be organised to equip volunteers with the necessary skills and awareness to address issues related to sex and gender-based violence (SGBV), ensuring they are prepared to provide appropriate support, protection, and referral services to survivors. Key messages on protection will be shared among those affected still living in safety shelters. Volunteer deployment will be carefully planned and based on assessed needs, allowing resources to be directed to the most affected communities and ensuring equitable coverage. In parallel, Movement-wide commitments on community engagement and accountability (CEA) and protection, gender, and inclusion (PGI) will be systematically integrated into all aspects of the operation. This will involve establishing consultation processes with affected populations, creating accessible feedback and complaint mechanisms, and promoting inclusive participation to ensure that diverse voices – particularly those of women, children, persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups – are heard and acted upon. By mainstreaming these minimum actions, the operation will strengthen accountability, enhance transparency, and promote trust between responders and communities, while ensuring that humanitarian assistance is people-centred, protective, and responsive to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of all affected groups.

The recovery plan will incorporate disaster risk reduction initiatives at the branch and community level to increase resilience capacity through participatory approaches.

Enabling approaches

The sectors outlined above will be supported and enhanced by the following enabling approaches:

Coordination and Partnerships



In terms of coordination and partnerships, the National Society continues to uphold its auxiliary role to the public authorities, ensuring alignment with national priorities while actively contributing to key humanitarian clusters such as WASH, Health, and Cash. This engagement enhances sectoral coordination and promotes integrated responses to emerging needs. Regular tripartite meetings between the IFRC, SLRCS, and ICRC provide a platform for strategic dialogue and operational coherence, while Partners Calls facilitate broader engagement with diplomatic actors to strengthen collaboration and mobilise resources. These mechanisms collectively reinforce a unified and partnership-driven approach to humanitarian action.

Shelter, Essential Household Items, CCCM Cluster Coordination

In Sri Lanka, the Shelter Cluster is part of the global humanitarian coordination system, activated during major disasters to organise shelter-related responses. The SLRCS, together with the IFRC, plays a key role in supporting coordination, providing technical expertise, and delivering shelter assistance to affected communities.



The operation will reinforce leadership and coordination for shelter, essential household items, and CCCM to ensure a coherent, quality, and inclusive response across all partners. This includes setting the strategic direction for the cluster, aligning priorities with preparedness, localisation, and the Humanitarian Priority Plan, while promoting harmonised standards and capacity building to strengthen delivery.

In addition, the approach will emphasise evidence-based coordination and advocacy, ensuring decisions are informed by needs and gap analysis, and that resources are mobilised effectively through engagement with the Humanitarian Country Team and other stakeholders. These actions will enable a consistent, accountable, and well-integrated response that meets agreed standards and addresses the most urgent needs of affected populations.

IFRC Secretariat Services



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) will continue to provide extensive technical and operational support to the SLRCS, ensuring accountability, compliance, and the highest quality of delivery throughout the emergency operation. This support encompasses guidance across all stages of response planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation – under a Federation-wide approach that guarantees adherence to established IFRC standards and procedures. Surge deployment has occurred to provide technical support in key areas. To maximise impact, these roles are strategically positioned at both National Headquarters and field levels as needed, enhancing coordination and technical capacity across the organisation. In addition, the IFRC will oversee procurement and financial management processes in strict alignment with international standards, ensuring transparency and efficiency. A central pillar of this support strategy will be the mobilisation, engagement, and capacity-building of Red Cross volunteers, recognising their vital role as the backbone of the response and as key agents in delivering humanitarian assistance to affected communities. This comprehensive approach aims not only to address immediate needs but also to reinforce institutional resilience and preparedness for future emergencies.



National Society Strengthening

To help the SLRCS quickly identify practical ways to strengthen their capacity for the current crisis, a readiness check is recommended. In the shorter-term,

priority will be given to quick improvements such as strengthening coordination mechanisms, streamlining information management, and reinforcing volunteer engagement to boost efficiency and responsiveness. The rapid check serves as an entry point to address urgent needs in this crisis, yet a proper PER process will be essential to guide longer-term, systematic strengthening of preparedness and response. Building on this, strategic investments will target critical areas including logistics, planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting (PMER), and disaster response planning, ensuring that immediate improvements are complemented by sustainable institutional capacity. This dual-track strategy – addressing urgent operational requirements while building sustainable institutional capacity – will enable the SLRCS to respond efficiently and effectively to current operations, while also positioning the National Society to manage future crises with greater predictability, accountability, and localisation. This will include specific activities and support to branches to increase their skills, knowledge, and capacities. Ultimately, these measures are designed to reinforce resilience, enhance preparedness, and ensure that the SLRCS continues to serve as the humanitarian partner of choice while upholding the confidence and trust of government, communities, and partners.

The planned response reflects the current situation and is based on the information available. Details of the operation are updated in the Operational Strategy. This will be further specified once the assessment data is available. As of 29 December, the multi-sectoral needs assessment has been completed, with preliminary findings expected in early January 2026.

After 31 December 2027, the remaining supplementary activities will continue under the [IFRC Network Sri Lanka Country Plan](#), which provides an integrated approach to ongoing emergency response, recovery, and longer-term programming tailored to the country's needs, while also providing a Federation-wide perspective on actions in the country. This aims to streamline activities under one plan while ensuring that the needs of those affected by the disaster are met in an accountable and transparent manner.

RED CROSS RED CRESCENT FOOTPRINT IN THE COUNTRY

Sri Lanka Red Cross Society



Core areas of operation



Number of staff:

90

Number of volunteers:

3,895

Number of branches

25

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) has a strong disaster response capacity, supported by 25 branches strategically located across the country and thousands of trained volunteers ready for rapid deployment. With extensive experience in managing floods, landslides, cyclones, and complex emergencies, the SLRCS

delivers timely life-saving assistance including first aid, emergency relief, and restoring family links (RFL). Its well-coordinated branch network, pre-positioned stocks, and partnerships with government and Movement actors enable the SLRCS to respond effectively to disasters while strengthening community resilience.

IFRC Membership coordination

There is currently no Participating National Society presence in Sri Lanka. The IFRC has launched the Emergency Appeal (EA) on behalf of the SLRCS and is coordinating international support to the SLRCS through the EA. The IFRC, in particular, is working hand in hand with the SLRCS to facilitate the sharing of information across the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and with external partners, thereby strengthening transparency and collective action. In addition, the IFRC Country Cluster Delegation in Delhi and the IFRC Asia-Pacific Regional Office are providing extended coordination support, offering technical guidance, resource mobilisation, and strategic oversight to reinforce the national response. This layered coordination structure ensures that the SLRCS benefits from both localised support and regional expertise, enabling a more coherent, accountable, and impactful humanitarian operation.

Red Cross Red Crescent Movement coordination

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) maintains an active presence in Sri Lanka and is fully engaged in supporting the SLRCS through contributions to the ongoing emergency response. To ensure strong Movement coordination, regular tripartite meetings between the ICRC, SLRCS, and IFRC are convened to review the evolving situation and agree on joint actions, maintaining collaboration and alignment throughout the operation.

External coordination

The SLRCS and the IFRC actively engage with the United Nations system to ensure coordinated and complementary humanitarian action. Their participation extends to Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) meetings, as well as sectoral clusters and working groups focused on food security, health, and cash assistance. Through these platforms, the SLRCS and IFRC contribute to joint assessments, share operational updates, and align their interventions with broader humanitarian priorities, thereby strengthening collective impact. This engagement not only enhances coordination with UN agencies and other humanitarian actors but also ensures that Red Cross Red Crescent activities are integrated into national and international response frameworks. By maintaining a strong presence in these forums, the SLRCS and IFRC reinforce accountability, promote resource mobilisation, and advocate for the needs of vulnerable communities, while promoting collaboration that supports both immediate relief and long-term recovery efforts.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation, please contact:

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Reference



Click here for:

- [Link to IFRC Emergency landing page on GO](#)