



UNITED NATIONS
SRI LANKA



2023 SRI LANKA SDG FUND

ANNUAL RESULTS REPORT



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PARTICIPATING UN AGENCIES



CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS



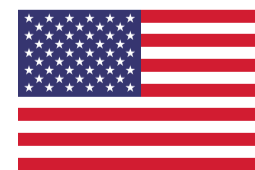
Australia



Canada



United Kingdom



United States

2023 AT A GLANCE

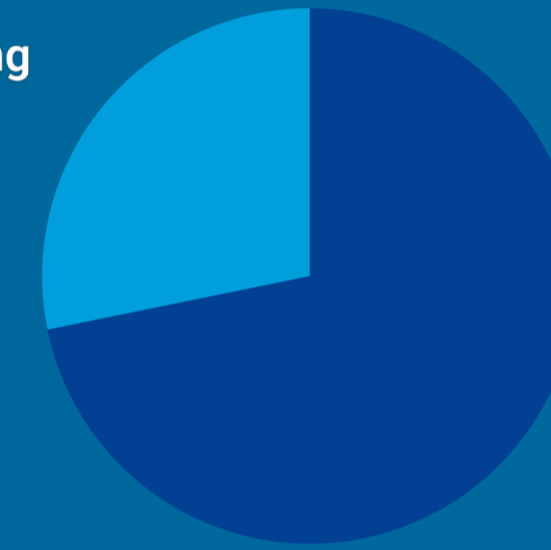
TOTAL FUND PORTFOLIO

\$39 Million

FUNDING BREAKDOWN BY WINDOW

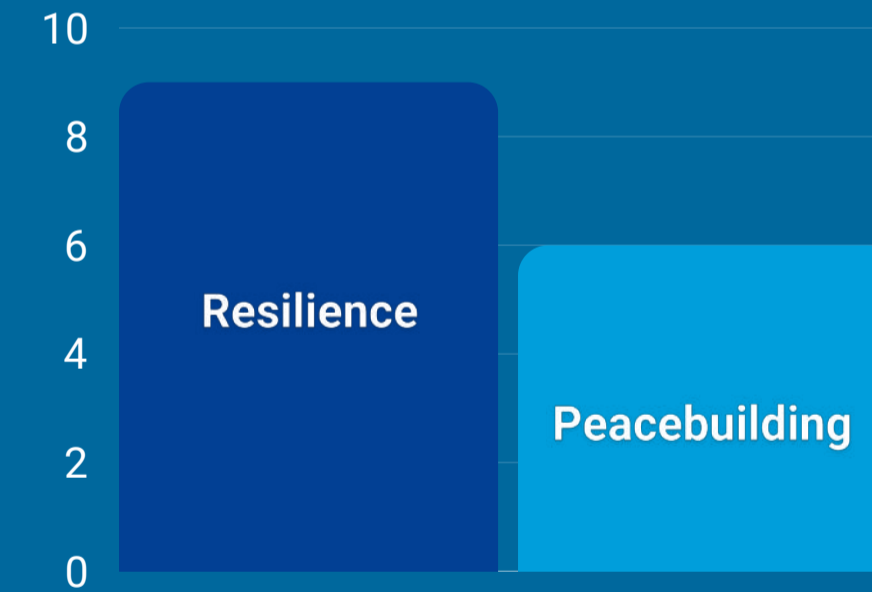
Accounts for **60%** UN Joint programmes in 2023

Peacebuilding \$11M



Resilience \$28M

ACTIVE PROJECTS BY WINDOW



Projects Operationally Active in 2023

KEY RESULTS



160,000 primary school children fed



196,234 women and men of reproductive age and adolescents provided life-saving drugs, medical equipment, and SRH services



455 MT of rice procured for the National School Meals Program for 7,917 schools



701 returnees assisted to obtain civil documents through six mobile clinics in the Northern Province



27,155 files digitised in the Office for Reparations Information Management System



2,491 boys and 2,512 girls engaged on issues around violence against women



Photo: UNRCO Sri Lanka

FOREWORD BY THE RESIDENT COORDINATOR

It is my great pleasure to present the UN Sri Lanka SDG Fund's Annual Report for 2023. This report, and the body of work within it, captures the United Nations' firm commitment towards building sustainable and positive peace, as well as ensuring resilience in Sri Lanka.

As custodians of the Sri Lanka SDG Fund, we are committed towards driving transformative change in Sri Lanka. Our mission is to promote and support innovative, catalytic interventions that align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Our collaborative efforts have now seen us become the main channel for joint programming within the United Nations in Sri Lanka. I am thrilled to announce that in 2023, the Fund played a pivotal role, accounting for an impressive 60% of all joint UN interventions in Sri Lanka. These interventions addressed critical areas such as climate disaster risk reduction, food security, SGBV, resettlement, support for civil society organisations, reparations, and early warning systems.

Having personally visited communities in the Northern and the Eastern Provinces, I witnessed firsthand the transformative power of our joint interventions. The photograph (on the left) captures but just one example where joint efforts have supported social cohesion and resettlement, uplifted livelihoods of vulnerable people and built safer and more resilient communities.

As you turn the pages of this report, you will discover inspiring success stories and learn about the positive impact we have made on the lives of people throughout 2023 in both peacebuilding and resilience efforts.

In peacebuilding, we have facilitated the resettlement and sustainable reintegration of conflict-affected communities through joint action with state and civil society stakeholders. We also worked to enhance the protection and resilience of civil society and to preserve the space for civic expression in Sri Lanka, despite a constrained operational environment. Additionally, we remained committed to addressing the legacy of conflict in Sri Lanka by investing in efforts on dealing with the past and empowering independent institutions. Peacebuilding efforts have been crucial for identifying emergent drivers of conflict at both community and national levels, guiding our prioritization and programming efforts throughout the year.

Our resilience support initiatives have been nothing short of remarkable. We have worked tirelessly to enhance the capacity of government authorities and vulnerable communities in emergency preparedness and response. Together, we fortified our readiness to face emergencies head-on. Through the Good Agricultural Practices and Entrepreneurial School Garden programme, we sowed the seeds of food security. Nutrition-sensitive cash transfers directly benefitted women and primary caregivers of children under two years old. In districts grappling with acute child malnutrition, these interventions made a tangible difference. In our efforts to help end SGBV, we focused on making quality sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence services accessible to all.

As we look ahead, we are guided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, which serves as the foundation for our joint efforts in support of national priorities. Guided by principles of inclusivity and gender equality, we forge a path toward a brighter future. With electoral process on the horizon in 2024, the UN in Sri Lanka continues to stand with the people and government of Sri Lanka to support its journey toward the Sustainable Development Goals.

Marc-André Franche



Photo: UNFPA Sri Lanka

THE SRI LANKA SDG FUND

The Sri Lanka SDG Fund was established in 2020. Its strategic framework aims to mobilise resources primarily for joint UN initiatives, focusing on resilience and peacebuilding. Since its inception, the Fund has received support from Australia, Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom, totaling over \$39 million, which has greatly strengthened resilience and peacebuilding endeavours.

The Fund's resilience window mitigates the impacts of enduring crises. Its multifaceted approach includes initiatives to combat food insecurity, enhance shock-responsive social protection systems for vulnerable communities against future adversities, improve climate resilience for both government bodies and at-risk populations, and reinforce healthcare infrastructures.

Peacebuilding efforts are primarily focused on facilitating access and securing sustainable livelihoods for displaced individuals and returnees, advancing resettlement initiatives, safeguarding and nurturing civic spaces, and providing ongoing support for reparations-related activities.

Looking ahead, the Fund will address sensitive issues, drive transformative change, foster innovation, and allocate resources to underfunded development sectors. This strategic direction underscores our unwavering dedication to addressing urgent challenges and advancing sustainable development goals for all.

2 RESULTS



Photo: FAO Sri Lanka



2
projects



27,155 files digitised

related to reparations digitised through the Information Management System



4,255 individuals supported

in Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Batticaloa, Ampara, Puttalam and Polonnaruwa through the Collective Reparations initiative



136 families

supported by 36 case managers to address the psycho-social needs of conflict-affected individuals and families

Strengthening efforts towards dealing with past and independent institutions has been a mainstay of peacebuilding and social cohesion programming via the Sri Lanka SDG Fund. Supporting reconciliation processes and increasing access to person-centred, comprehensive, and credible reparations mechanisms in Sri Lanka ensures that key government institutions such as the Office for Reparations (OR), Office on Missing Persons (OMP), Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) and the Legal Aid Commission (LAC) are adequately capacitated with technical support and essential skills to provide access to reparations, psychosocial support, tracing of victims of conflict.

Technical support was extended to the OR towards implementing National Policies for Reparations. Additionally, assistance was provided to civil society and victim groups advocating for access to state reparation mechanisms and supporting trust-building efforts for transitional justice mechanisms at the community level.

Efforts to implement agencies via the Peacebuilding Window of the SDG Fund also centred on working in conjunction with the Jaffna Social Action Center (JSAC). Workshops were organised to strengthen the capacities of selected independent institutions, including the OMP, the HRCSL, and the LAC. These institutions were empowered in case management, gender-sensitive and survivor-centric service delivery, and redress mechanisms for those affected by the enduring consequences of conflict.

Similarly, efforts via the SDG Fund led to the development of an Information Management System (IMS) accessible to the OR staff based in Colombo and to district-based field reparations officers. This was complemented by digitising hardcopy applications sent by aggrieved persons since the 1990s to REPIA and OR. As of 31 December 2023, the project completed the digitalisation of 27,155 files. Additionally, 8,223 files underwent meticulous data entry, further enhancing the depth and usability of the archived data.

OR signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with IOM on 2 November 2023 that focused on the implementation of the first-ever collective reparations programme for aggrieved communities. The programme aims to promote comprehensive and credible reparations mechanisms in the post-conflict context of Sri Lanka. This programme was piloted in Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Batticaloa, Ampara, Puttalam and Polonnaruwa. It positively impacted 4,255 individuals (2,373 women and 1,882 men) in meeting diverse needs ranging from education and health services to economic empowerment and community development. Results included improved conditions for providing education services, sports, culture-strengthened livelihoods, and psychosocial care.

A needs assessment of the OMP was carried out at the request of the OMP. This was later presented to the Resident Coordinator, and the findings were shared with relevant stakeholders, including the OMP.



Photo: IOM Sri Lanka

Training provided to OR staff on Project Management cycles

The Institute for Health Policy-MHPSS supported the formation of a CSO MHPSS network for individuals seeking psychosocial support, another form of reparations. Mental Health & Psychosocial Support Network (MHPSS.net) established 56 district-level MHPSS CSO networks at the grassroots level in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The Manohari initiative was supported by providing psychoeducation via training of trainers for 81 (42 women and 39 men) counselling teachers and in-service advisors in the Northern Province, which was successfully completed via three 2-day training programs. The quality and impact of mental health interventions were enhanced with a sense of ownership and empowerment among the teachers, enabling them to adapt and innovate based on their communities' specific needs and challenges. As a result, the interventions contributed to building a more resilient and supportive environment for addressing mental health issues and promoting overall well-being.





Photo: UNV Sri Lanka

UNDERSTANDING SRI LANKA'S DRUG POLICY THROUGH A HUMAN-RIGHTS LENS

In Sri Lanka, the predominant approach to drug policy remains largely carceral and punitive. Adopting a necessary human rights-oriented approach that would integrate evidence-based practices with principles of public health is lacking in terms of policy responses. The pursuit of a “drug free” Sri Lanka has normalised the criminalisation of drug use and possession. This normalisation, coupled with factors such as disproportionate sentencing, limited exploration of alternatives to incarceration, and reluctance to decriminalise personal possession, has exacerbated the issue of prison overcrowding.

Further, because drug use, or dependency, is often confused or combined with drug trafficking, individuals who use drugs are frequently penalised. This situation not only perpetuates punitive measures but generally fails to address the underlying issues related to drug use and dependency from a holistic human rights perspective.

Through its ongoing programme, the UN aims to build on its continued commitment to strengthening national strategies and policies on drug demand reduction. The strong analysis of issues in the policy brief and the identification of gaps in national policy, along with proposed reforms, is a starting point for advocacy initiatives and enhancement of the Human Rights Based Approach in all planned interventions to support the implementation of activities about the control of substance use, abuse and dependence.

As an initial step a policy brief was developed on ‘Human Rights’ based advisory support for ongoing legal reform processes related to substance abuse control and prevention strategies’. The brief highlights the need to implement a human rights-based approach to drug treatment, that integrates public health principles. It also reiterates the crucial nature of consent to treatment and the right to withdraw from treatment at any point.

Further, the brief identifies shortcomings in adopting compulsory detention and treatment practices. It emphasises the necessity of abstaining from violations of rights such as the right against arbitrary detention, freedom from torture, and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. It also outlines the need to uphold the UN’s continued commitment to strengthening national strategies and policies on drug demand reduction within a context that bears a high risk for human rights violations.

A separate policy paper was also considered to map and analyse the legislation, legal policies, and regulations that impact Human Rights-based approaches related to substance abuse control and prevention strategies. The primary objective of this analysis is to establish the groundwork for a legal awareness campaign that could be implemented across the justice sector, which will lead to improved access to justice for both offenders and victims involved in drug-related crimes





The enhancement and protection of civic space in Sri Lanka remain an utmost priority for the UN. Civic expression is the cornerstone of ensuring a vibrant democracy and assures engaging and inclusive political, economic, and social exchanges in society.

For Sri Lanka, the constrained space for civic expression is affected by multiple crises and impacts human rights defenders, journalists, activists and civil society. Thus, interventions such as VRIDDHI aim to enhance the protection and resilience of civil society in Sri Lanka amid a constrained operational space.

As part of its intervention, 11 financial grants have been awarded to civil society organisations, benefiting more than 17,000 recipients. These grants have empowered organisations to progress in essential areas like peacebuilding, reconciliation, and social cohesion. Additionally, the grants have backed projects promoting women's empowerment and preventing violence against women and children. Moreover, they have addressed harmful coping mechanisms arising from the ongoing multidimensional crisis in Sri Lanka.

In selected DS Divisions of Manmunai West, Koralaipattu Central, and Eravur Pattu of Batticaloa district, data of 102 beneficiaries has been collected to establish a women's network with 50 selected women. Conditional cash grants have been provided to 50 vulnerable households for livelihood activities.

They also conducted basic business planning training in poultry and goat rearing and linked livelihood support beneficiaries to markets for organic products, thereby assuring livelihood provision for vulnerable groups.

The platform also initiated dialogues with civil society organisations on the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) Bill, demonstrating a proactive approach to legislative engagement. Coordination with the UNODC for protection training for CSOs has further enhanced the project's impact and reach. The project has prioritised enhancing protection monitoring and incident mapping, particularly regarding incidents affecting civil society organisations (CSOs) and land cases. Activities included conducting briefings and campaigns on human rights issues to raise awareness and promote advocacy efforts.

Consultations on access to service and redress mechanisms were completed with judicial officers during the month of October, focusing on strengthening access to justice and on means to protect victims and witnesses identified in practical ways through criminal proceedings.

Furthermore, the project has cultivated a network of civil society actors and organisations, fostering a more independent and self-reliant civil society. It ensures inclusivity through trilingual communications, fostering representation across diverse demographics and locations to promote a narrative of peace and reconciliation. This empowerment equips civil society actors with the resources, skills, and knowledge needed to operate safely and sustainably, furthering their ability to make meaningful contributions to their communities



Photo: UN Women Sri Lanka



Women's Network established

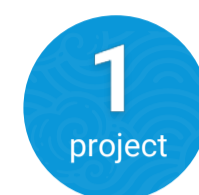
through 11 financial grants to Civil Society Organisations



17,000 benefitted

through 11 financial grants to Civil Society Organisations

ACCELERATING RESETTLEMENT AND STRENGTHENING LIVELIHOODS



701 returnees assisted

with civil documentation through 6 mobile clinics



207 returnees supported

through livelihood initiatives and in-kind support

The project, “Expanded Support for Durable Resettlement and Reintegration in Sri Lanka (EDRR)” supports the resettlement and sustainable reintegration of former conflict-affected communities in Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts.

Support was provided in finding durable solutions to address economic constraints, access to sustainable livelihoods, recovery of civil and legal documents that would facilitate access to necessary services, regain of access to lands lost during the conflict, and interaction with the state to obtain the services.

As such, socio-economic recovery opportunities were improved for 88 returnees by supporting livelihood initiatives such as fishery, livestock, and agricultural farming and through the support extended to micro and small enterprises. The livelihood initiatives helped beneficiaries increase their monthly income by LKR 8,000 - LKR 30,000, depending on the nature of the activity.

A further 119 beneficiaries (61 men and 58 women) were provided with livelihood assistance/economic reintegration through in-kind support. Livelihood assistance was provided for grocery shops, goat rearing, chilli production, automobile painting and three-wheeler service. 48% of these beneficiaries have scaled up/ expanded their businesses.

701 returnees were assisted with civil documents through six mobile clinics. These clinics facilitated obtaining their civil documentation, such as birth, death, and marriage certificates. These documents allow them to prove their legal identity by accessing essential services such as health, education, and financial services, including bank accounts and credit facilities, obtaining legal employment, accessing land allocation schemes or property restitution mechanisms, and exercising voting rights. The mobile documentation clinics also provided an invaluable opportunity for Government officials to engage directly with people in their locality, building trust between local government authorities and resettling communities.

21 returnee families were assisted in completing their houses and restarting their lives in their places of origin. The project also assisted the Government in clearing 13 Acres of land to relocate 70 more IDPs from welfare centres.

The project strengthened the capacity of 429 persons, including returnees, community members and Government officials, through various training and awareness programmes.

12 tube wells for the resettled families in Palay North were constructed benefiting

24 internally displaced families (IDPs) for their cleaning and sanitation needs.

Following the initial reintegration and MHPSS screenings conducted for 72 beneficiaries (40 women, 32 men). 37 beneficiaries, comprising 25 ex-combatants (21 men and four women) and 12 war widows, participated in peer group counselling sessions. Through these sessions, the ex-combatants were able to express their traumatic experiences and learn about the many ways to improve their coping skills to overcome trauma and face challenges.



Photo: UNDP Sri Lanka



Photo: UNDP Sri Lanka

ARULANANTHAM JULIET CHANDRASEKARAM'S JOURNEY TO A PERMANENT HOME

“**Now our children will enjoy uninterrupted sleep during the rainy season. They will joyfully embrace the rains in comfort.**”

In front of their newly completed permanent house

Arulanantham Juliet Chandrasekar is a resilient 44-year-old who originally hails from Jaffna and resides in the Puthukkudiyiruppu division, Mullaitivu district. His life narrative is one of fortitude and determination as he navigates displacement, injury, and the challenges of providing for his family.

At the age of 16, Arulanantham's family sought refuge in Mullaitivu due to military movements in Jaffna. They secured half an acre of state land and, with determination, erected a humble hut, initiating a new chapter in their lives. However, in 2009, tragedy struck when Arulanantham was injured by shelling while patrolling the border for LTTE, leaving his leg impaired. Subsequently, the family faced displacement once again during the last war between SLA and LTTE in May 2009, finding themselves in the "Menik Farm" IDP camp in Cheddikulam, Vavuniya.

After enduring numerous hardships, Arulanantham returned to his land in Puthukkudiyiruppu in 2011, greeted only by a sparse collection of trees. His parents, displaying resilience, divided the land into quarter-acre plots for their two children. Arulanantham, a daily labourer skilled in masonry and carpentry work, faced the substantial challenge of providing his family with a temporary shelter. In 2014, he got married, and his married life unfolded within the confines of the temporary shelter.

The couple welcomed their firstborn, a son, now seven years old, followed by the joyous arrival of twin daughters, now four years old. As a family of five, they persisted in residing within the limitations of the temporary shelter. The family endured uncomfortable conditions in their temporary shelter, with tin sheet roofing without proper side walls causing discomfort during hot seasons and leaking and floor wetting during the rainy season. Arulanantham's wife, Kamala, recounted sleepless nights enduring the heavy rain's hardships.

In 2018, a glimmer of hope appeared when the family was selected for a permanent housing scheme by the National Housing Development Authority (NHDA), receiving initial support of LKR 100,000 and 50 packets of cement. Despite setbacks, the family trustingly invested their savings, pawned jewelry, and borrowed funds to complete construction up to the roof level. However, the housing scheme was abruptly halted, leaving families in financial turmoil, worsened by the economic crisis and the impact of Covid-19.

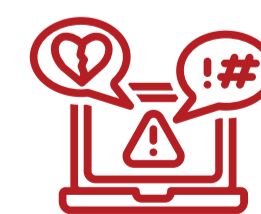
Subsequently, the family was selected to complete their house. With renewed energy and an injection of LKR 500,000, Arulanantham embarked on the building work. Before the monsoon season 2023, the family joyfully moved from their temporary shelter to their new home, a symbol of permanence and security.

EARLY WARNING, EARLY ACTION



The prevailing socio-political and socio-economic crises have had severe and far-reaching impacts on the social landscape, with the growing likelihood of deepening divisions along communal lines and intensified isolation of youth. In particular, as Sri Lanka gears towards the scheduled 2024 elections, there are increased challenges to social cohesion as political parties may manipulate identity politics to gain votes, which may lead to increased political and ethnic polarisation, intensified existing social fault lines and re-escalation of hate speech. Given this context, the project has proved instrumental in generating targeted, verified and conflict-sensitive data-driven insights on public perceptions of peace, reconciliation and transitional justice processes to inform peace programming, policy, and decision-making.

EWS interventions under this project have helped to strengthen the evidence base with up-to-date data on public perceptions of various aspects related to peace, reconciliation, and transitional justice following the completion of a national perception survey on peace and stability. The insights from the peace survey have helped to inform peacebuilding programming, policy, and decision-making by UNDP and development partners.

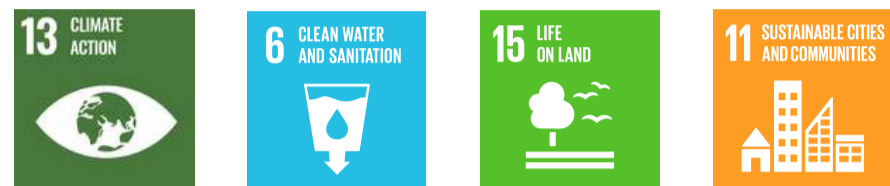


3,354 posts identified

containing dangerous speech on social media (Facebook, YouTube and Tiktok)

State and non-state actors have an increased understanding and strengthened capacities to effectively respond to/prevent/manage conflict trends following the operationalisation of a dynamic and robust UN early warning system (EWS). Fifteen (15) EWS recipients (nine from within the UN system and six from among development partners) noted that they utilised insights from EWS products to inform their work. Furthermore, five data pipelines already established (i.e. hate speech, religious and human rights violations and land issues in the North and East, national and subnational economic trends and patterns) have been strengthened by enhancing the capacities of two civil society organisations.

Furthermore, a network of 70 provincial-level peacebuilders and 918 district-level peacebuilders have been mobilised to systematically monitor and report on more granular level data on identified conflict indicators. Mobilisation of multiple data pipelines and analyses from civil society have helped enrich the dynamism, reliability, scalability and sustainability of the early warning tool for effective conflict mapping in the country. Early access to conflict data and increased capabilities among state and non-state actors have helped to generate more robust advocacy mechanisms to bolster political will to address conflict triggers. Additionally, improved partnerships and increased engagement between state and non-state actors, development partners and civil society have helped develop and mainstream a more systematic and cohesive approach to conflict prevention/management before conflict triggers escalate into violence.



The UN Joint Programme for Resilience (JPR) in Sri Lanka brought together WFP, UNICEF and UNFPA to strengthen the capacity of government authorities and vulnerable communities on emergency preparedness and response, and to promote community resilience and meaningful engagement in disaster preparedness and response. The programme aimed to prove the use of risk-informed programme planning to strengthen the resilience of the Government and communities against climate-related hazards.

Key interventions were aimed at empowering and building the capacities of children and adolescents as agents of change, while supporting duty-bearers at the grass-root level to create an enabling environment for these children and adolescents to reach their full potential and participate in decision-making platforms.



12,000 children & adolescents

have enhanced knowledge on emergency preparedness and response



1,000 govt officials

have enhanced knowledge on child protection in emergencies

Disaster Management agencies were supported in the contingency planning and emergency preparedness for both the South-West Monsoon (SWM) and Northeast Monsoon (NEM) during monsoon seasons.

A country-wide children and youth consultations convened through an online platform, U-Report, on various themes, including Sri Lanka Children's Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation; Water Protection; and Conferences of Parties (COP) 28, to ensure their voices are heard in policy decision-making platforms. These engagements resulted in successful initiatives for policy change at national and provincial levels.

The UN has enhanced community and sectoral resilience through improved risk-informed program planning and budgeting, addressing climate-related hazards. This advocacy led to a provincial policy on regularization, Protection, Conservation and Management of Watersheds, Water Sources, Reserves, and local statutes.

The Disaster Management Centre (DMC) received support to review the National Emergency Operation Plan (NEOP) and to organize a training workshop on impact-based early warning forecasting and simulation for DMC district officials. The workshop aimed to enhance the capacity of the district officials in disaster management activities and in operating the district Emergency Operation Centres (EOCs).

Support extended towards the development of a handbook and capacity building initiatives played a vital role in shaping two national policies: National Disaster Management Plan of the Ministry of Disaster Management and the National Action Plan on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (2024-2028) of the Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment. These capacity building endeavors fostered a shift in institutional frameworks and attitudes/beliefs among officers and communities involved, ensuring the integration of Sexual health and reproductive rights and gender-based violence into disaster response.



Photo: UNFPA Sri Lanka

A handbook was developed together with the MoH and Disaster Management agencies for the public health sector, which enables the sub-national level DMC to conduct multi-hazard scenario-based training.

The IOWAVE 2023 Tsunami Early Warning Dissemination Testing Simulation Training and Simulations were carried out in 14 districts that are vulnerable to tsunamis. The training and simulations were conducted in collaboration with DMC and involved all the key stakeholders and private sector/ school and community members, thereby reinforcing preparedness and response mechanisms at multiple levels.



Through trained government officers, 4,812 children were equipped with the skills and knowledge on CC-DRR enabling them to engage in the development of 32 DRR and CCA plans in the targeted districts UNICEF also implemented targeted CC-DRR training programmes for children living in childcare institutions due to the vulnerabilities they face in an emergency without the protection of family-based care and support. Through these programmes, 388 children in 15 childcare institutions were trained on the conduct of child-centered risk assessments and development of risk mitigation plans in childcare institutions. This resulted in the development of risk mitigation plans to improve the safety and security of children in the 15 targeted institutions.

Further training of 300 Development Officers and 25 Officers-In-Charge (OICs), attached to the National Department of Community Water Supply, responsible for community-managed water supply schemes at district level in the Northern, Eastern and Central provinces, resulted in their ability to provide evidence-based risk informed programme planning and budgeting.

The Disaster Risk Management Centre has been bolstered with technical support, leading to the development of emergency plans for monsoon-affected districts and the development of a comprehensive National Disaster Management Plan for 2023-2030, which is currently awaiting cabinet approval. Additionally, the partnership with the Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA) has resulted in the training of 90 public servants, 55% of whom are women, enhancing gender representation in disaster preparedness.

This partnership extended to the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT) and UNESCAP, to deliver three training sessions on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) for disaster risk management (DRM), marking a significant stride in building resilience and administrative competence in the face of disasters.

Currently underway is the development of a handbook on Disaster Risk Management for administrators.

Based on the risk criteria index developed by technical experts, high-risk water sources in Uva and Central provinces for immediate protection were identified and prioritised. High-risk water sources were demarcated and protected through life fencing and concrete polls and community-based water source protection plans were developed by village development societies.

To ensure water safety in relation to the drinking water sources located in each Municipal Council area identified by the Municipal Council, a Gazette notification was introduced on the policies to be implemented as needed by the respective Municipal Council.

Technical support was extended to build an improved, unified, and shock-responsive safety net system for the Department of Samurdhi Development (DSD), thus continuing to strengthen the government's capacity to respond effectively. A digital preregistration in System of Cash Operation (SCOPE) proceeded according to the plan.



Photo: UNICEF Sri Lanka

“WEATHER KIDS” CLIMATE PROGRAM

The "Weather Kids" climate education programme conducted in the district of Kalutara, yielded significant benefits for participants. By fostering a collaborative partnership with Gavesha Labs and the DPCCS, the initiative leveraged technology and robotics to demystify climate change concepts.

Beneficiaries, including over 100 children and 17 DPCCS officers, engaged in hands-on activities and data-driven sessions, enhancing their understanding of climate dynamics and data science's societal relevance. This comprehensive educational experience empowered the young attendees, equipping them with knowledge and skills to navigate and address the complexities of climate change.



325 officers trained

on evidence-based risk informed programme planning and budgeting



4,812 children equipped

with skills and knowledge on CC-DRR

HARVESTING HOPE: INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO FOOD SECURITY



In the face of severe economic turmoil, Sri Lanka witnessed the launch of a pivotal Food Security Initiative (2022-2023) to bolster agricultural production and enhance the food security of vulnerable farming communities.

The initiative's implementation of the Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) programme yielded significant results, with a substantial increase in the adoption of GAP among small-holder farmers in targeted districts, rising from 12% to an impressive 74%.

Moreover, 95 extension officers are now equipped to support and extend GAP's reach. 317 farmers are now connected to reliable buyers, including a notable partnership with the Cargills Food City chain, opening up new market access avenues.

400 school gardens were established through the Entrepreneurial School Garden (ESG) program, promoting diverse and nutritious eating habits among students by enhancing their understanding of food production and nutrition.

The successful integration of 311 schools into the agricultural supply chain has created a new financial stream by allowing the sale of produce from school gardens. In addition, this has also enhanced the educational experience by providing practical agricultural knowledge to students.



160,000
primary school children fed

enhancing their learning milieu



18,860 people

received cash assistance, a supplement to the Samurdhi monthly social assistance

103 technical people and 505 teachers were trained on the ESG concept, which enabled 480 schools to provide nutrition counselling.

The Samrudhi recipients were also equipped with essential training. This training covered nutrition, gender awareness, domestic cash management, and Social Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) to bolster immediate and long-term livelihood opportunities.

A rapid food security assessment was conducted among 1,500 households in collaboration with Johan Hopkinson University and Wayamba University, contributing to our understanding of food security and informing future policy decisions in this area.



Photo: FAO Sri Lanka



455MT rice procured

for the National School Meals Program, in 7,917 schools

The UN Communications Group (UNCG), with the support of the UN Country Team (UNCT), launched a communications campaign to raise awareness of the Integrated plant nutrient management system (IPNMS) among smallholder farmers across Sri Lanka, focusing on those in the Mahaweli region.

IPNMS is a holistic approach to supplying plant nutrients through inorganic, organic and biological resources to sustain optimum yields, improve or maintain the soil's chemical and physical properties and provide crop nutrition packages that are technically sound, economically attractive, practically feasible and environmentally safe. Which will reduce reliance on chemical fertilisers and encourage environmentally sound farming practices.



520 trilingual posters

displayed in Agrarian Service centers all over the country

As a result of this collaborative effort, Sri Lankan farming communities received easily understandable introductory guidelines in Sinhala and Tamil on using the Integrated Plant Nutrient Management System.

Two press advertisements were placed in Sinhala and Tamil National newspapers, with the highest readership.

Bilingual (Sinhala and Tamil) radio advertisements were broadcast daily for two weeks, with 883 brief advertisements aired on the National Broadcasting Corporation Radio Channels in total. Additionally, 4 Billboards were installed in the Mahaweli region, where paddy cultivation is prevalent.

SAFEGUARDING MATERNAL AND CHILD NUTRITION AMIDST ECONOMIC CHALLENGES



In 2022, Sri Lanka grappled with its worst economic crisis since independence leading to a significant increase in poverty and malnutrition. According to the World Bank, poverty rates have doubled since 2021 and continued to rise into 2023. Government data indicates a concerning growth in undernutrition, underscoring the urgent need for enhanced measures to bolster the social protection system, particularly to safeguard the nutrition of women and children.

In an effort to address critical gaps in the national social protection system, UNICEF's intervention through nutrition-sensitive cash transfers directly impacted women and primary caregivers of children under two years, particularly in districts facing acute child malnutrition.

The initiative not only provided monetary support but also integrated a comprehensive approach to bolster nutritional knowledge and healthcare utilization, thereby enhancing dietary intake and quality for mothers and children.

This was achieved through home visits to 93,487 of these households, providing essential nutrition education and promoting improved dietary practices. Additionally, the program offered messages on complimentary feeding practices and feeding during an illness; complemented by food demonstration sessions and trainings on cash management reaching 3800 CBOs and 3000 families.

Emergency nutrition interventions significantly improved acute malnutrition management in children under five, boosting Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) treatment coverage from 32% in 2021 to over 89% in 2023. Additionally, UNICEF's efforts led to the Ministry of Health's adoption of Multiple Micronutrient Supplements (MMS) for all pregnant women, targeting low birth weight and dietary deficiencies during pregnancy.

UNICEF's roll out of its digital solutions, namely, Aurora and Humanitarian Cash Operation and Programme Ecosystem (HOPE) has led to the training of key health and social service personnel, enhancing data protection standards. The initial phase of HOPE saw 114,145 mothers and caregivers enrolled, benefiting 57,217 girls and 58,552 boys through improved humanitarian cash transfer management.

The program demonstrated a strong commitment to Accountability to Affected Populations, as evidenced by the significant engagement with the dedicated hotline, which received 107,677 calls. This communication preference was confirmed by a post-distribution monitoring survey. Furthermore, the incorporation of 90 Focus Group Discussions led by Sarvodaya, with the participation of 947 women, was instrumental in adapting the program to meet the unique needs of the communities, ensuring a responsive and effective implementation.

CASH TRANSFERS TRANSFORMED DAMAYANTHI'S LIFE

Ms Damayanthi Dissanayake (36), a mother of five children from Ratnapura, in Sri Lanka's Sabaragamuwa Province, is one of many recipients of the UNICEF nutrition-sensitive short-term cash transfer programme – a lifeline transforming the lives of many vulnerable families with young children across Sri Lanka.

Fortunately, in April, UNICEF's nutrition-sensitive short-term cash transfer programme commenced registration in Ratnapura. This was a turning point for Damayanthi.


Damayanthi's story is one of strength and determination. The mother of five only studied upto level 8 in a local school and has had no gainful employment. Ms. Damayanthi strives to make ends meet by selling betel quid (paan) - a small home-based business she runs whilst taking care of her children; the three older girls are 15, 11 and 7 years of age and attend a nearby school; the one-year-old twins, a girl, and a boy, are the latest addition to the family




Photo: UNICEF Sri Lanka

“ I got to know about the programme from the midwife. I registered at the nearby clinic. It has made a big difference in our lives. ”

 **114,000 households** received cash assistance for 5 months

 **247,988 pregnant women**

and primary caregivers have successfully received counseling on maternal, infant, and young child nutrition

 **5,493 children with SAM** enrolled for treatment and counselling support

STRENGTHENING LIFELINES: ENHANCED SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH & SGBV SUPPORT SERVICES



196,000 individuals
received essential
medications, contraceptives,
and medical equipment

The project enhanced the Availability, Accessibility, and Acceptability of Quality Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and Gender Based Violence (GBV) Services in the nine targeted Districts. During this period, the crisis-affected population in the targeted districts saw a 50% increase in access to comprehensive lifesaving SRH and GBV services. The urgent supply of lifesaving drugs enabled ten referral hospitals nationwide to replenish stocks, ensuring service to vulnerable communities. Similarly, the provision of essential equipment has enhanced the capabilities of frontline physicians in managing obstetric and neonatal emergencies, contributing directly to reducing the maternal death ratio resulting from the crisis.

Furthermore, 123 out of 130 targeted Mobile Outreach clinics were successfully conducted in Sri Lanka. These clinics delivered 37,748 services across four districts, focusing on maternal health education for 1,465 pregnant women and providing STI/HIV services to 442 individuals, including marginalised communities.

132,000 individuals
benefited from essential
SRH drugs, contraceptives,
and medical equipment

Additionally, 451 volunteers have enhanced knowledge of the provision of psychological support, and 391 health workers have essential skills and knowledge to ensure the delivery of quality SRH and MHPSS services to vulnerable populations.

3,375 youth were empowered with knowledge spanning reproductive health, family planning methods, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and strategies to combat Gender-Based Violence.

Cash and voucher assistance to support access to lifesaving SRH services was provided to 19,262 vulnerable women and girls, 51,700 pregnant and lactating women, people with disabilities, and women-headed households.

217 SRH sessions reached 7,428 adolescent girls in the rural and estate sectors. And 504 protection workers were trained in case management across three districts.

The grant support has been instrumental in sustaining eight shelters located in the districts, of Colombo, Anuradhapura, Kandy, Monaragala, Ratnapura, Jaffna, Mullaitivu, and Kilinochchi, ensuring ongoing assistance and protection for those in need.

SUPPORTING EXPECTANT MOTHERS: JAYANTHI'S STORY

In the heart of Ratnapura, Sri Lanka, Jayanthi, a 33-year-old mother of three, embodies the struggles faced by families during the nation's devastating economic crisis. Her husband, Nalin, the family's sole wage earner, grapples with sporadic employment due to an old knee injury from a past motor accident. Aggravated by the economic downturn, he earns a modest Rs. 1000 per day (USD 3).

With two school-going children and a third on the way, Jayanthi's family confronts the harsh reality of prioritizing needs. The economic storm crisis compromises, impacting vital elements like nutrition and healthcare for the growing children and the pregnant mother.

The crisis has hit expectant mothers hard. Jayanthi, with a history of high blood pressure, faces the daunting task of ensuring a safe pregnancy amid financial constraints. The closest hospital, 18 kilometers away, becomes a financial burden, with transport costs at LKR 5000 (USD 15) for a single trip. UNFPA through its partner Save the Children has stepped in to provide a lifeline of support. Jayanthi received LKR 10,000 (USD 30.65) in cash assistance.

Jayanthi's story is a testament to the transformative power of targeted humanitarian assistance, rebuilding lives, and fostering resilience amidst adversity. Jayanthi's journey, though challenging, embodies the spirit of endurance and hope, illustrating the impact of collaborative efforts in times of crisis.



Photo: UNFPA Sri Lanka

“Over the course of my pregnancy, I tried my best to go to the clinic for the regular check-ups, but this is a huge expense for my family. Hearing about this program... the cash we received was a huge help.”

This support is instrumental in addressing immediate medical needs and securing crucial medicines for her well-being as a new mother. Even with the safe delivery of her baby, Jayanthi grapples with daily hardships, sacrificing personal comfort for her family's needs. The intervention becomes a beacon of hope, offering financial assistance and empowering Jayanthi with knowledge about family planning.

Transport challenges, tuition fees, and monthly expenses become hurdles, but Save the Children and UNFPA's support empowers Jayanthi to prioritize health and education.



The Sri Lankan health system faced a dual challenge of a prolonged global pandemic and an unprecedented economic crisis. Amidst these challenges, prioritising efforts have been directed towards bridging the shortfall of essential medication and enhancing the health system's preparedness and resilience against future pandemics.

The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the World Health Organization, successfully implemented a robust mental health care package aimed at enhancing the psychological resilience and overall well-being of frontline healthcare professionals. This initiative established a structured framework to deliver personalised, rights-focused mental health services.

The influenza surveillance program has successfully expanded to include monitoring OIE-listed viral diseases. The establishment of genomic sequencing capabilities for these diseases has been initiated. In a targeted effort, 450 nasal swabs were collected from 90 pig farms across Gampaha, Colombo, and Puttalam from November to December 2023 to screen for the Nipah virus using Real-Time PCR techniques. Of these, 75 samples have been analysed, yielding negative results for the virus. The analysis of the remaining samples is scheduled for early 2024.

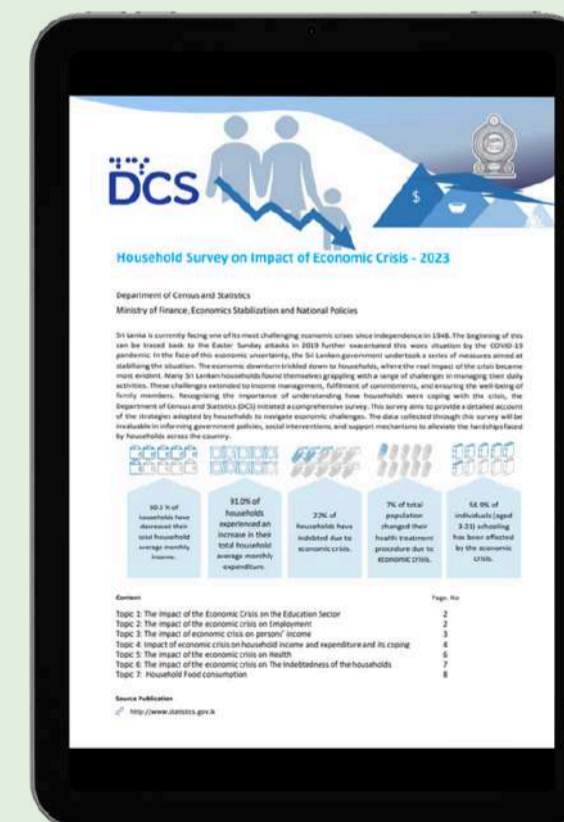
Moreover, 50 fresh samples of droppings from migratory birds were gathered in Jaffna and Mannar within the same timeframe and have been preserved at -80°C for subsequent testing in early 2024.

In 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) enhanced the capacity of the National Blood Transfusion Services (NBTS) to ensure high-quality blood transfusion services in the country and minimise incompatible transfusions. Key outcomes included advancing medical laboratory technicians' expertise in good manufacturing practices, strengthening mobile blood donation teams, and comprehensive staff training to improve blood safety, patient safety, and care quality. Additionally, a critical evaluation program was implemented via hospital blood transfusion committees to address deficiencies in blood safety protocols.

Additionally, the concerted efforts to curtail alcohol, tobacco, and other drug (ATOD) consumption in marginalised communities have been actualised through the WCO-endorsed programs led by the Alcohol and Drug Information Center (ADIC). These programs have been active in ten select communities, including Jaffna and Hambantota, targeting diverse occupational groups to elevate awareness and reduce substance reliance.



Photo: WHO Sri Lanka



In collaboration with WHO and other UN agencies, the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) successfully executed a comprehensive survey to gauge the economic crisis's impact at the household level across all 25 districts of Sri Lanka, encompassing approximately 6,500 households. The collected information spans critical areas such as household income, expenditure patterns, indebtedness, and alterations in health treatment practices. These insights are poised to significantly influence policy formulation, ensuring decisions are grounded in concrete household-level data.

STRENGTHENING LIFELINES: ENHANCED SGBV SUPPORT SERVICES



Between November 2022 and March 2023, 832 vulnerable women-headed households in the districts of Batticaloa, Nuwara Eliya, Monaragala, Mullaitivu, and Nuwara Eliya received relief packages in the form of vouchers. The vouchers enabled the beneficiaries to meet their essential needs and maintain their purchasing power during the crisis.

The joint programme aimed to deliver essential services across nine districts, focusing on women, girls, individuals with disabilities, and households led by women. This strategic intervention reached vulnerable populations, ensuring access to vital SRH services and support for GBV survivors, thereby contributing to the overall well-being and resilience of communities affected by the crisis.

832 women led households received relief vouchers to sustain their economic stability amidst challenging times

Through the implementation of a transformative Social and Behaviour Change communication initiative, vital information was disseminated, and networks strengthened awareness of seeking assistance and accessing resources for GBV survivors.

3 drama groups undertook 34 forum theatre workshops across the 9 provinces in 12 districts, reaching over 54,000 women, girls, school students and communities.

The campaign reached 3,987,400 individuals through various social media platforms and influencers.

125,000 women and girls at risk received IEC cards with information about GBV helpline.



Photo: UNFPA Sri Lanka

The recipient utilized the vouchers to purchase basic food items like, rice, sugar, wheat flour, coconut oil, vegetables, over a three-month period from November 2022 to January 2023. Additionally, the vouchers were used to purchase vital medications required for her ongoing kidney treatment and various hygiene products, including soap and washing powder.

When meeting with the UN officers, she expressed her heartfelt gratitude;

“I felt really happy, and it was very helpful for me and my family because my family is impoverished.”

Essential equipment such as laptops, cameras, tripods, stationery, wheelchairs, and mobile phones were provisioned to support the frontline anti-trafficking units and to enhance their operational capabilities. In addition, the Ministry of Defence, spearheading the National Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force, was supported to execute an Information, Education, and Communication campaign successfully. Collaboratively, 20,000 informative leaflets were disseminated across police stations and key stakeholders nationwide, describing the different forms of human trafficking, referral pathways and reporting mechanisms.

Furthermore, 135 members of the National Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force (NAHTTF) and other key stakeholders have enhanced their knowledge and skills to respond to cases of human trafficking effectively.

Through a network of 11 shelters, essential services were extended to 2,283 individuals across 7 districts, comprising 1,035 direct and 1,248 indirect beneficiaries. The comprehensive support these shelters provide encompasses critical lifesaving assistance, streamlined case management, accessible legal aid, and dedicated counselling and psychosocial services.

The capacity of 220 peer support group leaders was enhanced to provide emergency support within communities for women and girls facing gender-based violence.

100 frontline health workers and councillors engaged in GBV case management are trained in mental health and psychosocial support.

A database of service providers was developed across 10 districts to improve access to information regarding available GBV services for survivors and women and girls at risk.

STRENGTHENING LIFELINES: PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

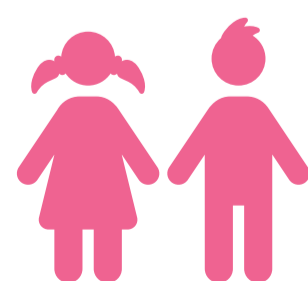


In Mannar district, a powerful collaboration between UNICEF, UNFPA, and UN Women has illuminated a path to combat violence against women. This signifies a significant step forward in the ongoing battle against gender-based violence, showcasing a vision of unity and empowerment.

The project included the provision of comprehensive life skills programs for the youth, aiming to cultivate a generation well-versed in fostering equitable and respectful relationships. A resource pool of 173 key government officials was trained, including CRPOs, dedicated Probation Officers, and steadfast Women Development Officers.

The impact of these programs could be seen in Children's Clubs, where 3,012 adolescents aged 14 to 18, including 1,358 boys and 1,654 girls, earned invaluable lessons on gender and sexuality.

Further, Children's clubs engaged 2,491 boys and 2,512 girls who emerged as passionate advocates around issues of violence against girls, poised to confront and dismantle the barriers of gender inequality.



2,491 boys and 2,512 girls engaged
on issues around violence against girls

The programme has empowered women beneficiaries by enhancing the resilience of their livelihoods, social autonomy, and access to local government officials and mentorship networks. Consequently, this has bolstered their access to vital social support services. The initiative has significantly reinforced the prevention and response to violence against women and girls by offering sustainable livelihood opportunities and social backing while also fostering a shift in community norms through constructive dialogues and educational initiatives.

These women reported increased agency, confidence, and vocalisation, with the potential to lead to heightened participation in local governance, challenging gender stereotypes, and promoting awareness about addressing gender-based violence.

122 women entrepreneurs from Mannar Town and Manthai West DS Divisions honed their financial and business acumen, including skills in market and digital engagement.

74 entrepreneurs refined their business strategies and received practical support to sustain their enterprises based on a rigorous evaluation of business proposals. Notably, despite the prevailing economic challenges, about 13% of these businesses (10 out of 74) have successfully diversified or expanded their operations following the comprehensive business capacity enhancement program.

In terms of providing support to victims of gender-based violence, the AKASA shelter for individuals with disabilities received technical and infrastructure support tailored to their specific needs. This assistance was informed by a detailed needs assessment and gaps identified in collaboration with the Thambuththegama Divisional Secretariat and the Department of Social Services in the North Central Province. The enhancements to the shelter's infrastructure and operational capacity resulted in a notable increase in residents, rising from 5 to 13 individuals—an impressive 160% upsurge.

The project's advocacy efforts established a multi-sectoral stakeholders' committee to strengthen collaboration among the government, divisional secretariats, and Civil Society Organisations. This initiative led to AKASA's recognition as a government-supported shelter, culminating in Cabinet approval for governmental backing in 2022.

For the first time, a Memorandum of Understanding was also formalised between AKASA and the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, ensuring the shelter's sustainability beyond the project's conclusion.

Furthermore, a training manual titled "Changing Prevalent Beliefs and Attitudes that Reinforce Harmful Norms and Behaviors Contributing to Violence Against Women" was crafted based on formative research outcomes. This manual was specifically designed to target parents and communities in Mannar, with the strategic aim of reshaping entrenched beliefs that perpetuate harmful gender norms. By fostering greater empowerment of women, promoting mutual understanding, and cultivating equitable attitudes within families, the manual aimed to facilitate discussions on nonviolent conflict resolution within households across selected divisions in Mannar.



Government support to AKASA shelter secured

MoU between AKASA and the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs ensuring the shelter's sustainability



122 women entrepreneurs
honed financial and business acumen



Photo: UNDP Sri Lanka

3 2024 PRIORITIES

PEACEBUILDING



Reducing land conflicts and accelerating resettlement of displaced families in the Northern and Eastern Provinces



Strengthening actors engaged in the protection of human rights and promotion of social cohesion



Reducing hate speech and disinformation in the context of elections

RESILIENCE



Green financing - Develop climate-focused projects that could feasibly be included in a green financing issuance



Social Protection - Graduation from Social Assistance Programmes



Transforming Local Administrative Data Collection Systems



Digital Social Protection



UNITED NATIONS
SRI LANKA

