



**UNITED NATIONS  
SRI LANKA**

TOGETHER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

# SRI LANKA PARTNERSHIP LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT



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# Acknowledgements

The Partnership Landscape Assessment (PLA) is a research study based on data collected between December 2020 and March 2021. Interviewees included representatives from: Government, UN entities, international and non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and collectives, private sector and industrial bodies, professional associations, and academia.

We are grateful for the invaluable insights shared with us, as well as for the indispensable service of all multisectoral partners within Sri Lanka towards the containment of the COVID-19 virus and for efforts to enable long term recovery.

Prepared as part of the 2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator by Selyna Peiris, consultant for UNRCO, in collaboration with the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office in Sri Lanka. Design and review by Ola Goransson (UN DESA). Editorial review by Ruth Findlay (The Partnering Initiative).

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# 2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator

The 2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator is a collaborative initiative of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and The Partnering Initiative (TPI), in collaboration with United Nations Office for Partnerships (UNOP), UN Global Compact, and the UN Development Coordination Office. The initiative aims to significantly help accelerate effective partnerships in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Direct partnership training support and advisory services are offered to member States and UN Entities/Resident Coordinators/Country teams wishing to foster stronger collaboration between stakeholders and sectors and enhance their capacities in forging new multi-stakeholder partnerships and partnership platforms.



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## More information

[sustainabledevelopment.un.org/PartnershipAccelerator](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/PartnershipAccelerator)

## Contact

Mr. Ola Göransson  
Sustainable Development Officer, Project Coordinator 2030  
Agenda Partnership Accelerator  
Division for SDGs  
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
Email: [goranssono@un.org](mailto:goranssono@un.org)

# Executive summary

This report is based on extensive desk research, reviewing material from March 2020 to April 2021, and subsequent consultations with key Government actors, UN entities, international and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), private sector and industrial bodies, and other relevant development partners and networks in Sri Lanka. The research identifies stakeholders involved in driving the country's COVID-19 response, including their level of engagement with sectors outside their own networks, and their capacity to work towards developing new and inclusive partnerships. The research also analyses the existing partnership mechanisms within Sri Lanka, areas for development and further engagement, and best practice. Key thematic areas are identified, with strong potential to develop new partnerships, as well as ways to harness and bring together areas of expertise for the support of the population.

The report uses the **UN Advisory Paper: Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 in Sri Lanka**<sup>1</sup> as a baseline. The Advisory Paper advocates five strategic priorities for immediate socio-economic response, in line with the UN (Global) Framework (launched on 27 April 2020)<sup>2</sup>:

- 1 Health First:** Protecting Health Systems and Services during the Crisis
- 2 People First:** Social Protection and Basic Services
- 3 Economic Recovery:** Protecting Jobs, Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) and Informal Economy Workers
- 4 Social Cohesion and Community Resilience**
- 5 Macroeconomic Response and Multilateral Cooperation**

The assessment is organized around the **5Ps** of the 2030 Agenda: **People, Planet, Peace, Prosperity and Partnerships**.

The 5Ps highlight the interconnected nature of the SDGs; progress on one P must balance and support progress on another. This feels particularly relevant in the devastating aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.



<sup>1</sup> UN SDG (2020). UN Advisory Paper: Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 in Sri Lanka. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/6bw4J49>]

<sup>2</sup> UN SDG (2020). A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/YbecLnm>]

## Prosperity and the social safety net

The assessment suggests there are opportunities for partnerships in enabling access to formal financial services for unregistered and informal MSMEs, as well as enabling efficient and equitable social security schemes. An examination of the socioeconomic needs and priorities post-COVID-19 should lead to the establishment of partnerships that contribute to the fiscal and macroeconomic reforms that are necessary for the country.

## People, health, education

Support for the maintenance of essential social structures was facilitated by partnerships during the COVID-19 response and there will be a continuing need for them in areas like food supply and nutrition advice, and assuring equality of access to healthcare and psycho-social support across communities. In education, the nationwide need for capacity-building and technical support as the delivery of learning was forced to become virtual, is an area where partnerships have a significant potential to make a difference at all levels.

## Planet - natural resources and climate change

There is a general lack of reliable data on two significant issues: equality of access to clean water and sanitation, and the impact COVID-19 has had on reverse migration resulting from job losses due to pandemic lockdowns. Sri Lanka's commitments to address climate change impacts need more reliable data - derived from robust impact assessments - to better inform decision-making.

## Peace and stability

The centralized and often militarized response of state authorities in Sri Lanka to COVID-19 has limited the development of civic engagement. Partnerships have made a contribution where possible to promoting safeguarding measures, especially in view of the reported increase of incidents of domestic violence. In general the development of greater transparency of official information and processes may be an area where partnerships can play a role.

## Partnerships

The assessment highlights stakeholder enthusiasm for multi-sectoral partnerships (MSPs). The mobilization of MSPs, especially during the initial stages of the pandemic, has demonstrated the deep-rooted value system of Sri Lankan communities to respond collectively in the face of crisis and adversity. There is, however, an inherent governance and process deficiency, centered around lack of transparency and communication, amplified by lack of access to data, that results in partners being unable to contribute effectively to the needs of the community, especially in times of crisis. This report



# Methodology

The PLA utilises the strategic priorities identified in the June 2020 'UN Advisory Paper: Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 in Sri Lanka' as the basis for identifying and categorising partnerships during the initial stages of the research<sup>3</sup>. The Advisory Paper advocates the following five strategic priorities for immediate socio-economic response, in line with the UN (Global) Framework (launched on 27 April 2020)<sup>4</sup>:

A desk research process reviewed material from March 2020 to April 2021. This helped to identify key stakeholders during the immediate stages of the pandemic response, who in turn constituted the first round of key informant interviews (KIIs). Continued desk research and the initial round of KIIs, identified the second round. All KIIs were selected to best represent multiple sectors, including Government, UN agencies, NGOs, INGOs, CSOs, private sector, and the major organising entities and umbrella networks.

The research does not constitute an exhaustive assessment of partnerships and stakeholders. Interviews were semi-structured and based on a predetermined list of questions [see Annex 1]. A combination of the desk research and stakeholder interviews highlighted initiatives and partnerships which were active within the research period, which were not directly related to the COVID-19 response. However, it was observed these partnerships were either adapted for the immediate response or would support future responses and activities within a COVID-19 landscape and were included in the PLA.

<sup>3</sup> UN SDG (2020). UN Advisory Paper: Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 in Sri Lanka. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/6bw4J49>]

<sup>4</sup> UN SDG (2020). A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/YbecLnm>]



## Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is built on a fundamental shift in approach to development as it seeks to engage the unique roles and resources of **all sectors of society** and requiring extensive collaboration across sectors to achieve its ambitious goals. Partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are multi-stakeholder initiatives voluntarily undertaken by Governments, intergovernmental organizations, and other stakeholders, and whose efforts are contributing to the implementation the 2030 Agenda.

SDG 17, which reads “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development”, recognizes multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) as important vehicles for mobilizing and sharing knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources to support the achievement of the SDGs in all countries, particularly developing countries. Goal 17 further seek to encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.

The UN in Sri Lanka is working with the GOSL and partners to help alleviate the health and socio-economic consequences of the pandemic. In support of these efforts, the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office in Sri Lanka, in collaboration with the 2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator, will be engaging a broad range of stakeholders, including the GOSL, the UN system, academia, private sector, and civil society, to support the implementation of the SDGs and building back better, by enhancing cooperation among sectors and stakeholders, and inspiring new multi-stakeholder initiatives.

As an output of this process, a **Sri Lanka Partnership Roadmap** will be produced, capturing ideas for new partnerships that emerged from the landscape assessment, the Forum discussions and its preparatory virtual workshops, partnership good practices, and a mapping of actors engaged in partnerships and development in Sri Lanka. The present Partnership Landscape Assessment is a part of this support, and aims to identify:

- An overview of development actors engaged in partnerships within Sri Lanka’s socio-economic landscape.
- An overview of existing key partnerships and actions that are taking place.
- Existing mechanisms for engaging stakeholders and sectors towards the SDGs in Sri Lanka.
- Thematic areas and issues where there is strong potential for new partnerships across sectors in Sri Lanka, and with regional and global institutions and donors.

Sri Lanka, an island nation with a population of nearly 22 million people, is a lower-middle-income country with a GDP per capita of USD 3,852/-<sup>5</sup>. Prior to the pandemic, the economy was in a transitory stage; from a predominantly rural-based economy towards a more urbanized economy oriented around manufacturing and services<sup>6</sup>. Social indicators ranked the nation among the highest in South Asia, and compared favourably with other middle-income countries .

<sup>5</sup> World Bank Group (2021). The World Bank in Sri Lanka. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/DbetFRR>]

<sup>6</sup> The International Trade Administration (2019). Sri Lanka – Market Overview. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/ebeyQ4N>]

<sup>7</sup> World Bank Group (2021). The World Bank in Sri Lanka. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/DbetFRR>]



## Partnerships and Sri Lanka

Despite growing recognition of the importance of partnerships to achieve the SDGs, partnerships are not relevant in all scenarios, and several fundamentals need to be in place for a partnership to be appropriate.

1. **Creating value:** A partnership needs to have synergies that create more value than the resources being spent on the partnership.
2. **Key stakeholders:** It is essential the partnership includes all relevant stakeholders with the resources and interest to make a partnership successful.
3. **Shared vision:** A shared vision across partners that is consistent with their individual interests.
4. **Compatible values:** Partners should have compatible values, consistent with the shared vision.
5. **Empowered to contribute:** For a partnership to take place, prospective partners need to feel their participation is valued, and be allocated the resources required to contribute to the partnership.
6. **Culture of partnerships:** A culture of partnerships that is endorsed at the highest level of the organisation is essential to ensure the right mindset and skill sets are in place.

# COVID-19 Response

As COVID-19 spread globally, the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) initiated strict measures, including regional and national lockdowns in March and April 2020<sup>9</sup>. These measures successfully contained the spread of the virus during the first outbreak<sup>10</sup>. Strengthened by confidence in low numbers and faith in the country's free public health system, a general election was held in August 2020<sup>11</sup>. However, the first 'super-spreader' outbreak was recorded in October 2020 commencing the 'second wave' of the pandemic<sup>12</sup>. Several areas were under strict curfew. The number of fatalities rose rapidly in early 2021, and by March the death count stood at over 480 persons<sup>13</sup>. At the time of this report being compiled, Sri Lanka records 91,839 confirmed cases, 558 deaths and 88,388 recoveries discharged from hospital<sup>14</sup>.

Over 500,000 people in Sri Lanka have been vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus thus far<sup>15</sup>. The first vaccination programme rolled out on 29 January 2021 with the arrival of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines donated by India; prioritizing frontline workers within the country<sup>16</sup>. Most of the coverage has been targeted within the Western Province, which has claims to a larger percentage of people carrying the virus. The GOSL aims to vaccinate most of the population this year and plans to provide the vaccines free of charge<sup>17</sup>.

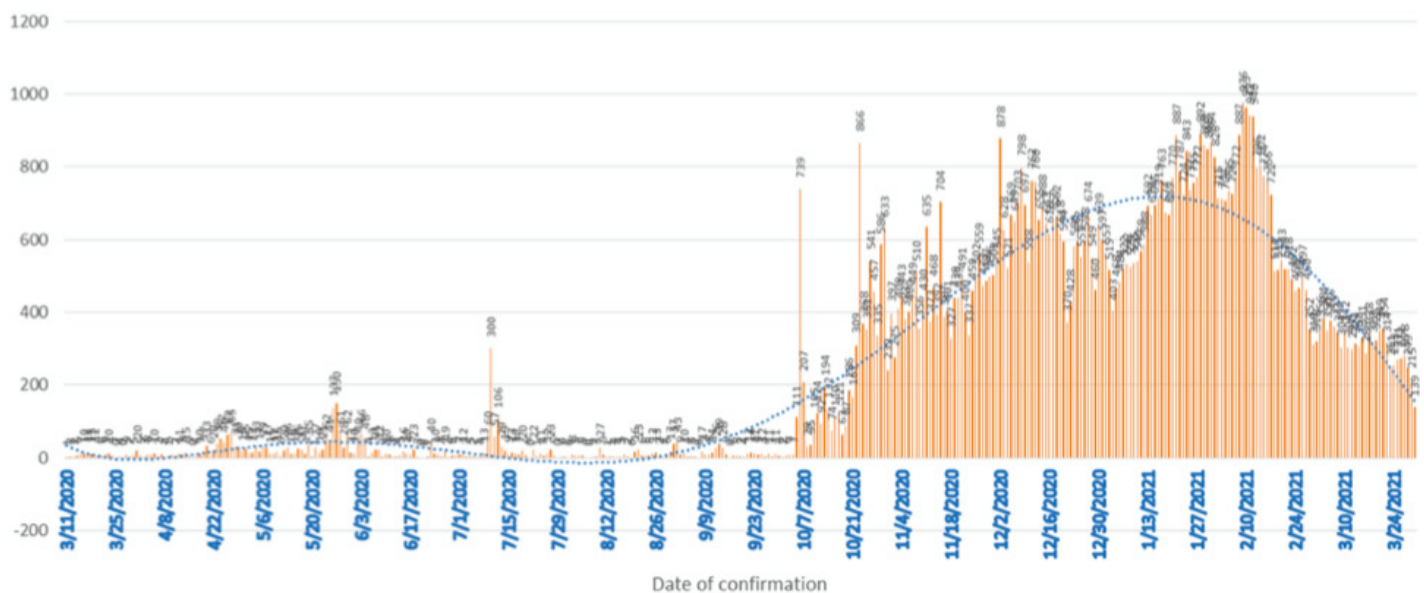


Chart 1.1: Epi Curve of COVID-19 patients, Sri Lanka (as of 30-03-2021)<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Health Sri Lanka (2021). Epi Curve of COVID-19 patients, Sri Lanka (as of 30-03-2021)

<sup>9</sup> Reuters (2021). COVID-19 Tracker – Sri Lanka. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/KbeiQaE>]

<sup>10</sup> Borgen Magazine (2020). Sri Lanka's COVID-19 Response: Successes & Shortcomings. [Access at <https://cutt.ly/bbeoLE0>]

<sup>11</sup> Deutsche Welle (2021). Sri Lanka votes in pivotal election following coronavirus delay. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/DbefeDn>]

<sup>12</sup> The Hindu (2020). COVID-19 cases continue to surge in Sri Lanka. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/2behb2m>]

<sup>13</sup> World Health Organisation (2021). Health Emergency Dashboard – Sri Lanka. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/ObejpNu>]

<sup>14</sup> Health Promotion Bureau (2021). COVID-19: Live Situation Analysis Dashboard of Sri Lanka. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/FbejMVQJ>]

<sup>15</sup> Explore Xinhuanet (2021). Over 500,000 people vaccinated against COVID-19 in Sri Lanka. [Accessed at <https://cutt.ly/dv5AVZJ>]

<sup>16</sup> The Hindu (2021). Sri Lanka receives 500,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines from India. [Accessed at <https://cutt.ly/mv5AXRW>]

<sup>17</sup> Ceylon Today (2021). Free Covid vaccinations for half the country. [Accessed at <https://cutt.ly/Rv5AQth>]

**Chart 1.2 (below)** reflects the extent of involvement in partnerships by each stakeholder group. The area of each circle in chart 2.1 is proportionate to the number of stakeholders from the respective stakeholder groups who are engaged in partnerships. The lines connecting the circles reflect the partnership linkages between them.



Chart 1.2 : Overview of stakeholders engaged in partnership in Sri Lanka

Horizontal color represents stakeholder groups and vertically shades represent each of the SDG 5Ps. Lines in chart show partnership linkages between stakeholder groups.

**Chart 1.3 on the right** reflects the overall partnership landscape observed during this assessment. The area of each circle is proportionate to the number of multi-stakeholder projects which were recognised, key partnerships during the pandemic. Reflective of the social impact of the pandemic, a large portion of the MSPs were focused on People, while the focus on Planet and Peace was de-prioritised.

These areas which went unaddressed are further explained in the chapters for Planet and Peace.

The Disaster Management Act No.13 of 2005<sup>18</sup> provides the legal basis for disaster relief management in Sri Lanka. The Act established the National Council for Disaster Management (NCDM)<sup>19</sup> which directs national disaster relief management, and is chaired by the President and vice-chaired by the Prime Minister. The Act also set up the Disaster Management Centre (DMC)<sup>20</sup>, the executing agency of the NCDM, mandated with implementing and coordinating national and regional level programmes.

The pandemic response was coordinated by the Presidential Task Force for the Prevention of COVID-19 (PTF)<sup>21</sup>. The PTF coordinated the GOSL and Private Sector response to provide continuous delivery of public services to ensure normal community life. The DMC was a part of this task force and played a key role in gathering information, especially via the 117 hotline and in implementation as directed by the PTF.

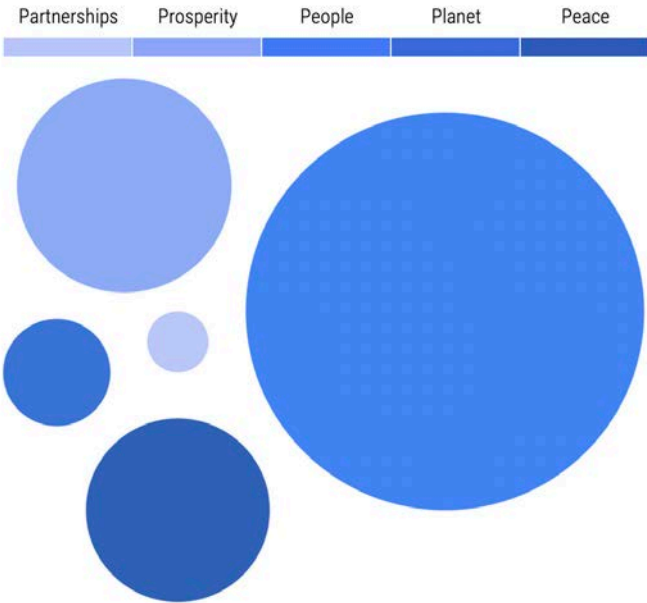


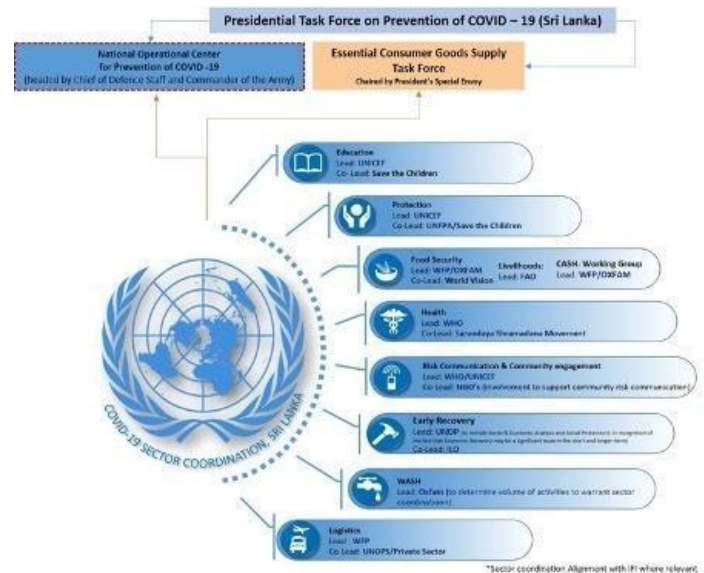
Chart 1.3: Overview of partnerships observed during the pandemic under each of the 5Ps. Area of each circle proportionate to number of partnerships.

During the initial lockdown from March to May 2020, several mechanisms were directed by the PTF to meet immediate needs. Multi-sectoral partnerships were enabled by the PTF via existing partnership mechanisms such as the UN Humanitarian Country Team. New mechanisms were also created, such as the Civil Society Collective for the COVID-19 response.

## Presidential Task Forces

Several Presidential Task Forces (PTF's) were appointed by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa as a response to COVID-19. The first<sup>22</sup> PTF was established to coordinate Sri Lanka's COVID-19 response and to **direct, coordinate and monitor the delivery of continuous services** for the sustenance of community life, including the supply of food produced in rural areas, and connecting producers direct to consumers, giving priority to districts<sup>23</sup> recognised as high-risk zones. The PTF mandate set out 12 key tasks mainly within the health, social services, supply chains and transportation sectors to afford the provision of essential services and emergency response. Others include a PTF to study and provide instructions on measures to be taken by all Armed Forces to prevent Coronavirus infection<sup>24</sup>, one relating to poverty alleviation<sup>25</sup> and one on primary, secondary, and tertiary education<sup>26</sup>; the latter two not only looked at immediate and essential needs but also medium to long term priorities.

Several GOSL interviewees mentioned the "recent" set-up of inter-ministerial steering committees on areas such as livelihoods, social infrastructure, and improving local production. This is convened by the Prime Minister's office and requires relevant Cabinet and State Ministers and officials to visit districts for consultations with all stakeholders. This enables inter-ministerial coordination and is also a forum for stakeholders at district level to highlight their requirements to decision makers at national level. Further research is needed to clarify how this mechanism can be further expanded to initiate MSPs necessary to address medium and long term COVID-19 priorities.



## UN - Humanitarian Country Team

The UN - Humanitarian Country Team (UN-HCT) comprises organisations that undertake humanitarian action in-country, with the primary purpose of ensuring a prompt, effective and accountable country-level response in the event of a disaster or humanitarian emergency. These interventions are made in close collaboration with the DMC. The UN-HCT operates via sectors and smaller 'working groups', like the Inter-Agency Standing Committee 'clusters', which ensure robust coordination during small-to-medium scale localised disasters. The sectors work towards a wide range of objectives whilst adhering to established humanitarian standards and guidelines. The UN Resident Coordinator chairs the UN-HCT in Sri Lanka and usually meets quarterly with key UN organizations, INGOs and donor agencies. In addition, the UN-HCT is the main platform for multilateral cooperation for CSOs/NGOs, and organizations such as Sarvodaya and Sri Lanka Red Cross engage on a regular basis. Government stakeholders such as the DMC, the National Disaster Relief Services Centre (NDRSC) and the Department of Meteorology are invited on a need's basis; UN focal points based in GOSL offices provide regular consolidated updates to the UN-HCT. The private sector is engaged via the Asia Pacific Alliance for Disaster Management (A-PAD).

<sup>18</sup> Parliament of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (2005). Sri Lanka Disaster Management Act, No 13 of 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Disaster Management Centre (2021). National Council. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/ibe7ide>]

<sup>20</sup> Disaster Management Centre (2021). DMC Profile. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/Kbe5DcZ>]

<sup>21</sup> Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (2020). Extraordinary Gazette No. 2128/8 on 26.03/2020.

<sup>22</sup> Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (2020). Extraordinary Gazette No. 2128/8 on 26.03/2020.

<sup>23</sup> Colombo, Kalutara, Gampaha, Puttalam, Jaffna, Mannar, Kilinochchi, Vavuniya and Mullaitivu

<sup>24</sup> Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (2020). Extraordinary Gazette No. 2173/4 on 27.04.2020.

<sup>25</sup> Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (2020). Extraordinary Gazette No. 2172/9 on 22.04.2020.

<sup>26</sup> Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (2020). Extraordinary Gazette No. 2173/7 on 28.04.2020.



With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, clusters such as Health were reactivated and new clusters such as Risk Communication & Community Engagement were created. The latter now works closely with the Health Promotion Bureau, the centre responsible for health education, health promotion and publicity of health information in the country. A 'Livelihood' component was added to the 'Food Security' cluster to meet the demands of the pandemic. Clusters such as Education, Health, and Social Protection, largely led by the relevant UN organisation, worked closely with GOSL counterparts for crisis response planning. The revised structure enables communication and data sharing to be streamlined with the GOSL, with the PTF feeding into the work of the cluster and vice-versa to respond to the pandemic. It is unclear if this adapted mechanism will be used in the medium- and long-term. Also, it is unclear how this mechanism enables new partnerships; most of the work done during the pandemic was with existing partners.

KII's with civil society actors revealed that while national level NGOs and CSOs were able to access and engage with the UN, some district level CSOs and NGOs did not have access to crucial networks and remained isolated. Whilst acknowledging that COVID-19 related travel restrictions may have exacerbated this gap, some key informants requested more frequent visits to the districts by the UNRCO to facilitate better communication and enable partnerships between the UN and district level NGOs/CSOs.

UN partnerships with the GOSL during the pandemic were largely among existing partners and were concentrated on meeting immediate needs (see examples in Key Partnership tables in chapters 3 to 6); in most instances, by diverting funding from ongoing projects. This flexibility by the UN and

donor agencies was appreciated across the stakeholders interviewed.

The UN-HCT highlights the potential of the UN in enabling multi-stakeholder partnerships, especially in crisis response. Across the KIIs, a clear role for the UN as a facilitator for engagement between non-government stakeholders and the GOSL was highlighted. Private sector actors too expressed interest in further collaborations with international agencies, such as the UN, for long term partnerships to address development needs.

Overall, to enable partnerships, it seems necessary to foster inclusive networks (not only centred at a national level) with more streamlined methods of communication. As highlighted by the district level KIIs, the widespread use of digital platforms for communications will support this. In this context, the role of the UN as a facilitator and enabler needs to be further explored.

## Civil society collective for COVID-19 response

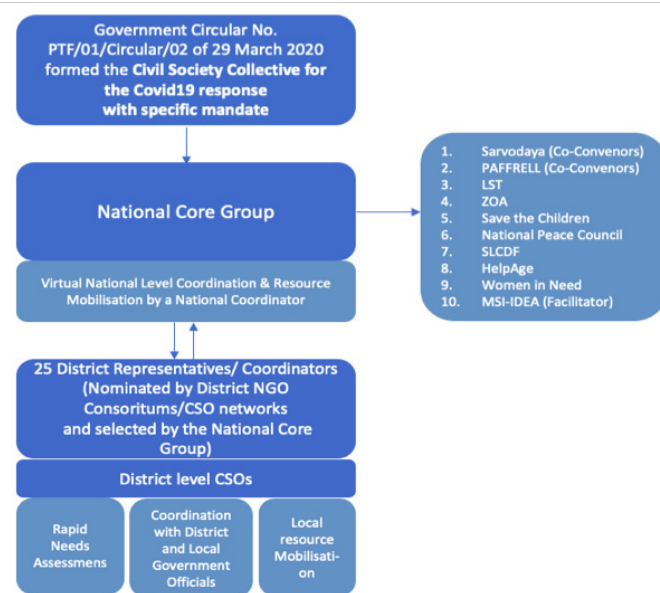
The Civil Society Collective for the COVID-19 Response (the CSO Collective) was formed<sup>28</sup> to facilitate civil society support to the GOSL in the immediate pandemic response. The CSO Collective enabled civil society actors in all 25 districts to work with relevant Government officials to address the urgent food security, hygiene, and medical needs of identified vulnerable groups: residents of children's and elders' homes (both Government and Private), centres for people with special needs, rehabilitation centres, safe houses for women, and probation centres.



Enabled by the authority provided by the PTF, the CSOs, co-convened by two nationally respected organizations - **Sarvodaya**<sup>29</sup> and **PAFFREL**<sup>30</sup> - created an inclusive and representative national group to lead the efforts. This included **Law & Society Trust**<sup>31</sup>, **ZOA – Sri Lanka**<sup>32</sup>, **Save the Children**<sup>33</sup>, **National Peace Council**<sup>34</sup>, **Sri Lanka Centre for Development Facilitation**<sup>35</sup>, **HelpAge**<sup>36</sup> and **Women in Need**<sup>37</sup>. This initiative was facilitated by **Management Systems International**<sup>38</sup>. A virtual national office was set up to coordinate the response with the appointment of a national coordinator, working on a voluntary basis. District NGO consortia and other CSO networks (where district consortia didn't exist) were mobilized to nominate coordinators/representatives, who were then vetted and selected by the national core group. This inclusive approach led to a sound partnership mechanism which enabled the organisation of CSOs at a district-level to address local needs.

The coordinators established contact with the relevant centres and under the direction of their respective District Secretariats, they worked alongside the corresponding Government officers within the districts. They were able to quickly assess urgent needs and mobilize available local resources. The national coordinator played a key role in facilitating resource mobilization at a national level and acquired specific permissions (such as curfew passes)

needed to ensure immediate delivery of services. The CSO collective was able to help approximately 500 centres and 15,000 individuals, across 25 districts<sup>39</sup>.



<sup>28</sup> Government Circular No. PTF/01/Circular/02 of 29 March 2020

<sup>29</sup> Lanka Jathika Sarvodaya (2021). About Us. [Accessed at: <https://www.sarvodaya.org/about-us>]

<sup>30</sup> People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (2021). About: Objectives. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/UbrK8uh>]

<sup>31</sup> Law & Society Trust (2021). About Us. [Accessed at: <https://lstlanka.org/about-lst>]

<sup>32</sup> ZOA (2021). Sri Lanka. [Accessed at: <https://www.zoa-international.com/files/sri-lanka/>]

<sup>33</sup> Save the Children International (2021). Sri Lanka. [Accessed at: <https://srilanka.savethechildren.net/>]

<sup>34</sup> The National Peace Council (2021). About Us: Introduction. [Accessed at: <https://www.peace-srilanka.org/about/introduction>]

<sup>35</sup> Sri Lanka Centre for Development Facilitation (2021). About Us. [Accessed at: <https://slcdf.net/about-us>]

<sup>36</sup> HelpAge Sri Lanka (2019). About Us. [Accessed at: <https://www.helpagesl.org/helpage-about-us/>]

<sup>37</sup> Women in Need (2019). About Us. [Accessed at: <https://www.winsl.net/about-us/>]

<sup>38</sup> Management Systems International (2021). Who We Are. [Accessed at: <https://www.msiworldwide.com/about-us>]

<sup>39</sup> Key Informant Interviews

Despite the contribution made at the onset of the pandemic and the clear offer to provide further services, the PTF has not engaged the CSO Collective to continue the delivery of further essential services in the medium and long term. In addition, inspired by the success of the Collective, further attempts at district levels to reconvene this mechanism to partner towards the medium to long term pandemic response have not yet been successful. This experience confirms the innate ability of all Sri Lankan stakeholders to come together during crises, but also draws attention to the serious challenges of continuing these partnerships to enable medium to long term responses to the pandemic.

KII's with the national core group suggested those challenges include the inability to find common ground due to differing priorities and approaches. There was sometimes lack of trust among the group and, in the absence of a set agenda and/or a convenor, partnerships were not sustainable in the longer term. It is also noteworthy that most of the core group interviewed felt that the authority given to them by the PTF/GOSL at the outset greatly enabled their work, especially with the District and Local Government authorities. They also felt that this experience had given them the opportunity to proactively engage with these Government bodies and they were able to build trust and win the confidence at this level, which they felt was useful to the work ahead.

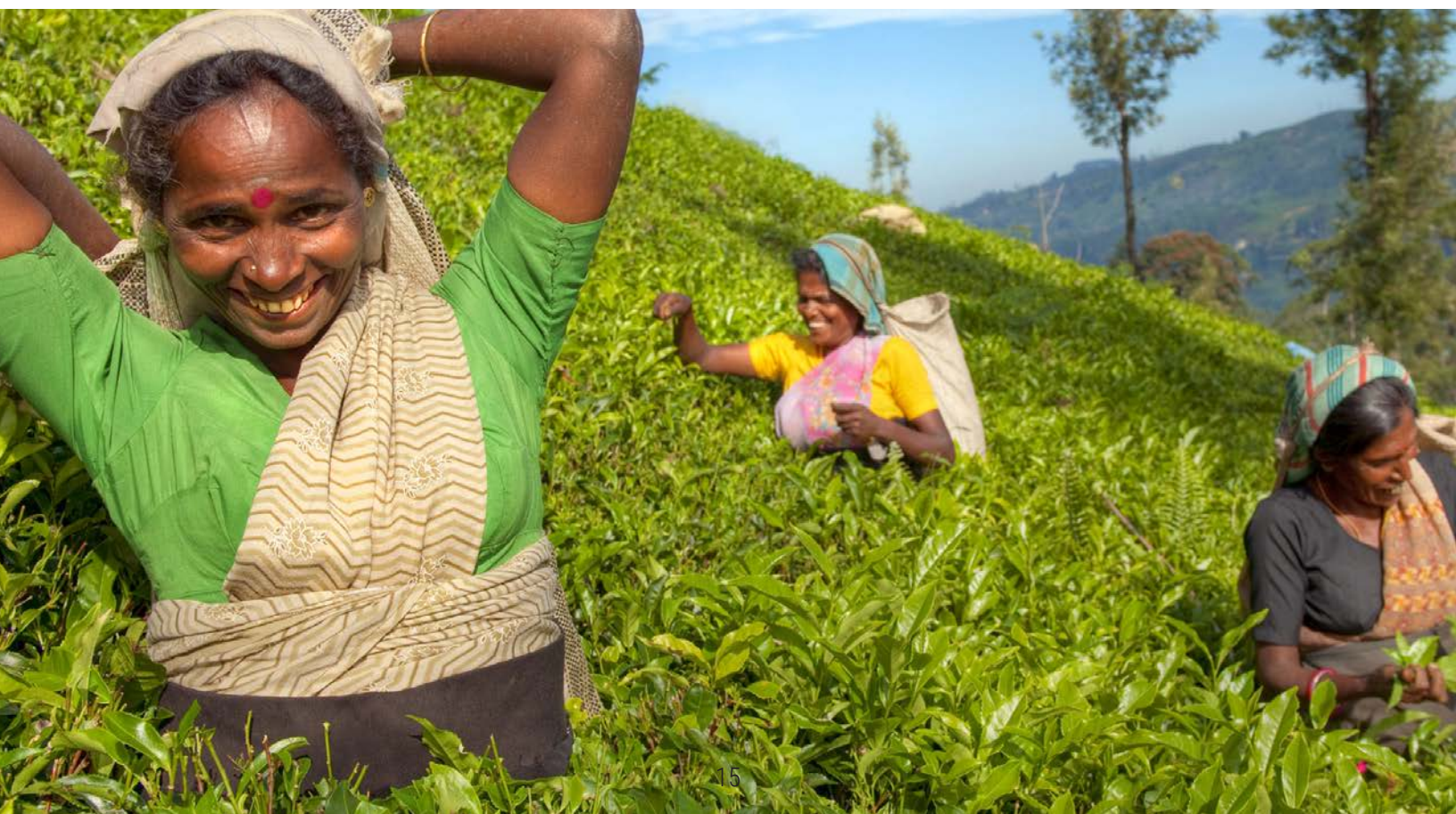
## Other Multi-stakeholder Collaborations

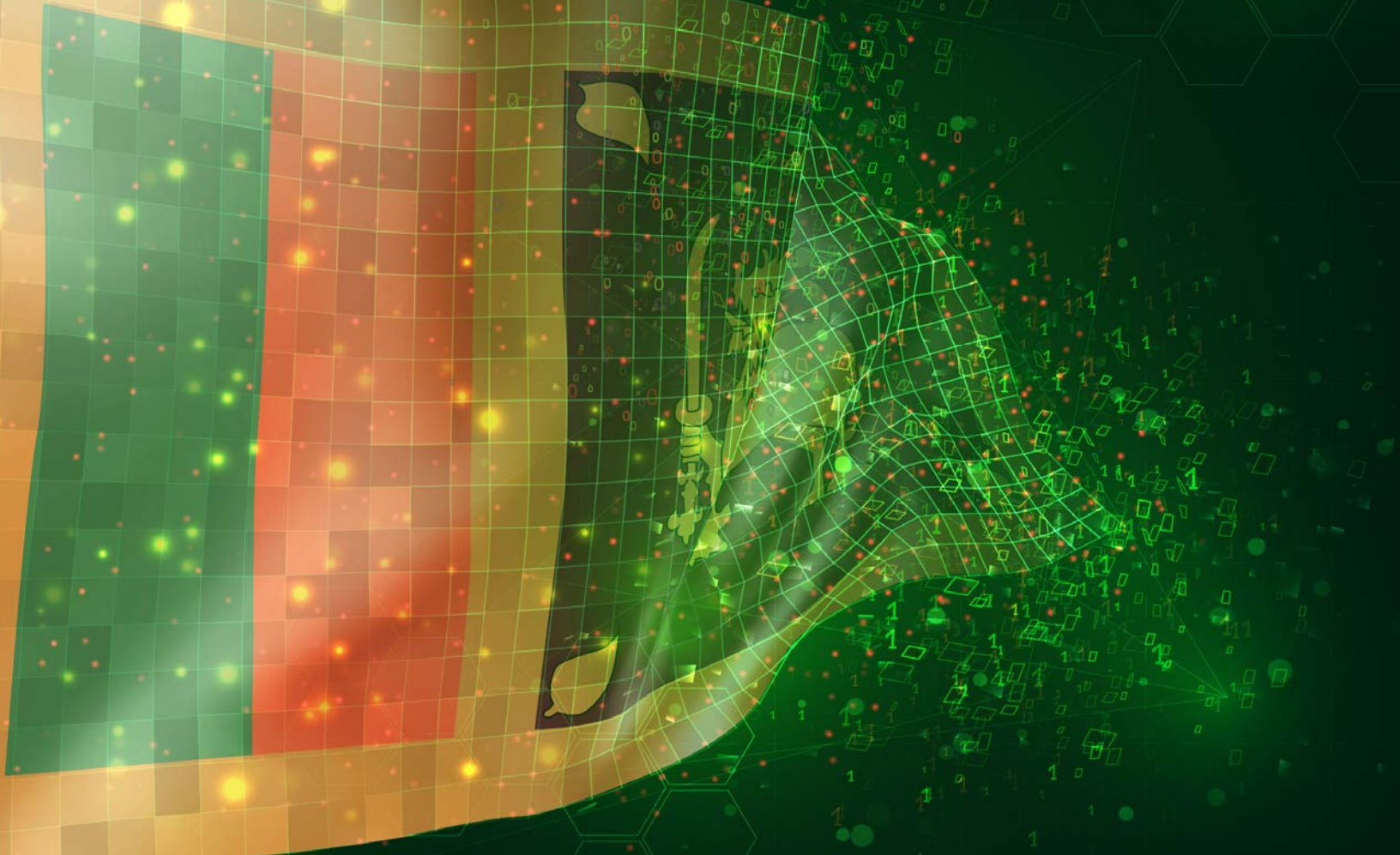
It is worthwhile mentioning here the following multi-stakeholder collaborations which were observed during the landscape assessment. Further study is required to understand the potential of these platforms to enable partnerships, as and when these mechanisms are fully operational.

The 2018 **Sri Lanka Voluntary People's Review (VPR)**<sup>40</sup> on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was completed by the **Sri Lanka SDG Stakeholder Platform (SL SDG Platform)** which comprises CSOs, private sector, academia, professional associations, trade unions, etc. The **Centre for Environment and Development** facilitated the exercise. The VPR exercise was able to draw over 500 direct contributions from the Government, academia, CSO, CBO, business, and other stakeholders. The SDG stakeholder platform has only been utilized thus far for the 2018 VPR.

<sup>40</sup> Sri Lanka Stakeholder SDG Platform (2018). Sri Lanka Voluntary People's Review. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/KbrVort>]

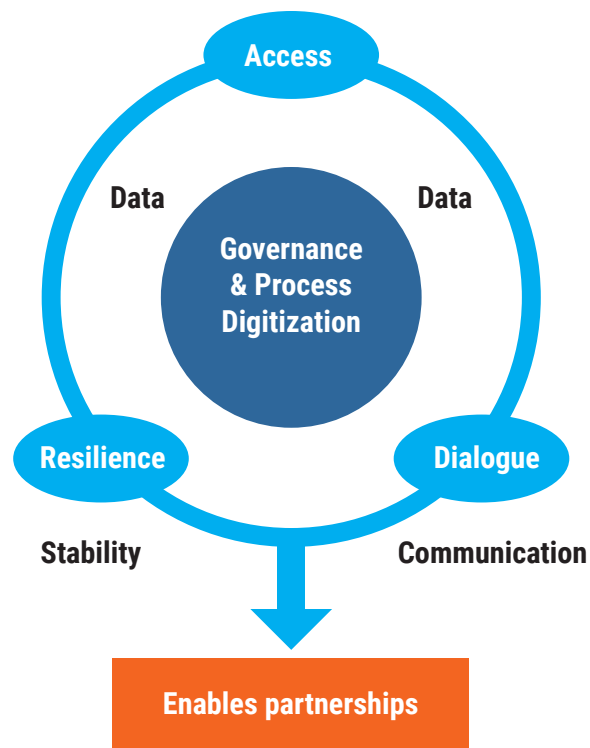
<sup>41</sup> Sejahtera et al (2018). Enablers and Inhibitors of Effective Use of Big Data: Insights from a Case Study. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/lbtPDi4>]





## Bringing in Big Data

At the root of these challenges is the absence of accurate and updated data that will enable stakeholders and partners to mobilize for meaningful interventions. Big data has attracted significant attention in the last few years due to its versatility. The effective use of big data has the potential to transform economies and deliver a new wave of growth<sup>41</sup>. It must be accessible, accurate and efficient to prevent delays, duplication, and misinformation. Understanding the enablers and inhibitors that influence effective use of big data is a necessary step towards ensuring that the full potential and value of big data is realised. It is important that the process of accepting the value of big data, also works to normalize and dispel disinformation and mistrust surrounding the merits of its usage. Security and data protection must be central to the process in ensuring that all key stakeholders have the option of informed, trusting participation. While this assessment does not go into a detailed analysis of the enabling and inhibiting factors in this context, it highlights two high level structural enablers that need immediate addressing to overcome the big data void and its use in Sri Lanka for policy formulations and interventions by all stakeholders.



## Governance & process

Ensuring accuracy and relevance of data requires strong governance mechanisms and processes. A robust governance structure will help to alleviate concerns around sharing data and build trust in the data provided. It is also essential for fostering a culture for data driven policy formulation and interventions. A governance mechanism provides the checks and balances required to ensure the veracity of information and its continued use to avoid the data systems becoming obsolete. Efficient and effective processes are vital for capturing data on a continuous basis, ensuring the most up to date information is made available to users. Processes need to consider the human interaction concerning the collection, compilation and use of data. A detailed study and mapping of governance and process requirements will need to be conducted as part of a national big data initiative, with the participation of all stakeholders from across different sectors.

## Digitisation

The unavailability and inaccessibility of data remains a serious issue. The nature of the pandemic increased the need for digitised, non-contact services and the digital infrastructure within the country fell short in its delivery. Digitising data and ensuring ethical access to data is crucial for equitable and timely delivery of services. In some instances, where data is available, access is limited due to the lack of digitisation as the GOSL relies heavily on manual records. Where digitised data is available, it is not easily accessible as access points are not clearly promoted or marked, gaining access involves lengthy and cumbersome processes, user interfaces are outdated, or the user experience is unsatisfactory and digitised data is held in silos within each Government body. Therefore, an initiative to digitise data must consider the nature of the data, access points, user experience, value generation and be closely aligned with the governance and process requirements, and together form the foundations of a big data system.

In the absence of a shared data system, the following **key observations** are made:

- Formally, some existing partnership mechanisms such as the UN-HCT were adapted and utilized to respond, and some new mechanisms such as the CSO Collective were created.
- There is a high involvement of military personnel in the GOSL's approach to tackling the pandemic; the PTF, with a strong military leadership presence, ran a largely centralized response operation. This was the case even where existing legal and institutional frameworks could have been effectively utilized.
- Outdated legislation, administrative processes & practices at all levels of Government inhibited the agility to respond effectively and efficiently with immediate service delivery during the crisis. Although some key partnerships with and between non-Governmental stakeholders were mobilised to fill certain gaps, these are predominantly on an ad hoc basis.
- Lack of exposure, capacity building and training for the public service disrupts equitable and gender-sensitive service delivery.
- Absence of a comprehensive and continuous multi-sectoral assessment - led by the GOSL - that maps the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups leads to structural inequalities.
- Absence of inclusive participatory platforms and channels, from local to national level, hinders communication and the active contribution of vulnerable and marginalised groups towards national policy and planning.
- The GOSL relies heavily on manual records and where computerised the data is not easily accessible among and between various Ministries, Departments and across Provinces. Non-Governmental stakeholders have limited or no access to this data, especially during a pandemic of this nature, unless published online.

The failure to recognise these issues will result not only in the under-allocation of state resources to address urgent needs and gaps, but also the inability of the public sector to deliver related services. There is therefore an urgent need to constructively engage partners across Sri Lanka, with regional and global institutions and donors to fill these gaps.

# Prosperity

We are determined to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.



After being classified as an upper-middle-income country in 2019 by the World Bank, Sri Lanka was downgraded back to a lower-middle-income country in 2020<sup>42</sup>. At the same time, the country's debt situation, weak export outlook and fiscal policies have compelled international rating agencies to downgrade the country's credit rating<sup>43</sup> while significantly increasing the cost of raising public debt via international capital markets<sup>44</sup>.

However, owing to the GOSL's publicly stated position on macroeconomic and fiscal management, which was further reinforced by several KIIs, this assessment did not observe any notable partnerships that addressed the immediate priorities arising in the macroeconomic and fiscal space.

The current Government has resorted to bilateral credit facilities, namely with China and India, while declining to seek assistance from the IMF to manage its immediate debt capital and interest payment obligations<sup>45</sup>. This has continued to raise fears in international capital markets that Sri Lanka will not undertake urgently needed reforms for long-term fiscal sustainability<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> The World Bank Group (2021). World Bank Country and Lending Groups. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/wbrMCYj>]

<sup>43</sup> Fitch Ratings, Inc. (2020). Fitch Downgrades Sri Lanka to 'CCC'. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/Ebr1y1Y>]

<sup>44</sup> The Sunday Morning (2020). Alarming rise in Sri Lanka's Sovereign Bond yield rates. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/bbr1flp>]

<sup>45</sup> Nikkei Inc. (2020). Sri Lanka turns to China rather than IMF to avoid default. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/lbr1lsx>]

<sup>46</sup> Fitch Ratings, Inc. (2020). Fitch Downgrades Sri Lanka to 'CCC'. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/Ebr1y1Y>]

# Key Partnerships

Strategic Priorities	Implementing Partners	Activities
<b>Health First: Protecting Health Systems and Services During the Crisis</b>		
<b>Focus 1.3:</b> Developing A Comprehensive Plan for Sustainable Medium- Term Health Financing	MOH x Dialog Axiata PLC	Enabled high-speed PCR testing at the Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) with Robotic Arm 4000 test kits administered using a Robotic Arm.
	GOSL x ADB	Developed prior to COVID-19, the project supports the delivery of a more responsive and comprehensive primary health care (PHC) system in Sri Lanka. It will develop delivery of essential healthcare to geographically and socioeconomically deprived populations of Central, North Central, Sabaragamuwa, and Uva provinces.
<b>Economic Response and Recovery: Protecting Jobs, Micro Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) And Informal Economy Workers</b>		
<b>Focus 3.2:</b> Protecting Jobs and Incomes and Stimulating Employment	ILO x Ceylon Biscuits Limited x Alli Food (Pvt) Ltd.	Explore two new value chains, maize and black gram to generate employment and income for local communities, particularly for women.
	IFC x Nations Trust Bank PLC	The proposed investment comprises of a one-year <b>Working Capital Solutions (“WCS”)</b> loan of USD 25 million to Nations Trust Bank PLC (under the IFC COVID-19 Emergency Response WCS Envelope (WCS FIGE) to support the financing needs of companies in countries affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
	IFC x Commercial Bank of Ceylon	USD 50 million loan to help SMEs to deal with the adverse economic impacts of COVID-19.
	MOH x World Bank	<b>Sri Lanka COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project:</b> Under Component 1 of the USD 128.6 million emergency facility, financial support to poor households through cash transfers.
	Ministry of National Policies & Economic Affairs x World Bank	USD 75 million <b>Social Safety Nets Project</b> will contribute to the improved equity, efficiency, and transparency of Sri Lanka’s social safety net programs for the benefit of the poor and vulnerable.

## Key Partnerships

Strategic Priorities	Implementing Partners	Activities
<b>Focus 3.3:</b> Ensuring Continuity and Resilience of Businesses, Especially MSMEs	Ministry of Agriculture & Ministry of Primary Industries x World Bank	USD 125 million Sri Lanka Agriculture Sector Modernization Project will support to increase agriculture productivity, improving market access, and enhance value addition of smallholder farmers and agribusinesses in the project areas.
	Ministry of Agriculture x Ministry of Finance (World Bank funded)	Funds of USD 18.68 million will be allocated for immediate response in the agriculture sector and food security under the World Bank-funded <b>Sri Lanka Agriculture Sector Modernisation Project</b> CERC.
	Ministry of Finance x ADB x Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR)	A loan of USD 165 million and grants worth of USD 3 million from the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR), to provide a credit line to SMEs through ten qualified Participating Financial Institutions (PFIs).
	IFC x John Keels Holdings	Invested USD 175 million in John Keels Holdings Businesses in Sri Lanka and the Maldives to boost retail and tourism. This investment will be used to support the Group's plans to open about 100 new supermarkets in Sri Lanka over the next three to five years, with a focus on less developed regions – a move that will benefit MSMEs as well as farmers who will become part of the supply chains to the new stores.
	GOSL x IFC	<b>Accelerating Competitive Entrepreneurship Sri Lanka:</b> The USD 0.5 million project aims to strengthen tech-led entrepreneurship/start-ups in Sri Lanka through improvements to the nascent entrepreneurship/start-up ecosystem in the country.
	IFC x Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia	Working to increase women's workforce participation in Sri Lanka's private sector
	IFC x Private Sector	<b>SheWorks Sri Lanka Partnership</b> - a collaboration of 15 leading Sri Lankan companies across a range of sectors which began in March 2018. Participating companies are implementing business solutions that help boost the quality and quantity of jobs for women and men in the private sector, which is good for business, employees, communities, and the economy.

# Areas with strong potential for partnerships

## Social safety net

Prior to COVID-19 the large informal sector<sup>47</sup>, not covered by any form of social security scheme, was recognised as a significant socio-economic risk<sup>48</sup>. Owing to the weak fiscal position as pointed above, GOSL financial relief for the unemployed, informal sector and economically vulnerable groups during the pandemic was limited<sup>49</sup>. At the same time, discrepancies in distributing relief to people were observed and there were disagreements about identifying which segments in the population were hardest hit<sup>50 51</sup>. An innovative mechanism to recognise the informal sector and economically vulnerable groups is a key priority for Sri Lanka. While a USD 75 million Social Safety Nets Project between the GOSL and the World Bank has been initiated, there remains significant scope for new partnerships to help enable effective and efficient social security schemes.

## MSME access to finance and assistance

The more persistent interventions in the sector came from the debt moratoriums and concessionary loans mandated by the Central Bank<sup>52</sup>. A rapid assessment of 413 SMEs commissioned by the IFC found that 75% of the respondents had difficulties accessing their regular financial services while women led SMEs were less likely to have taken a loan from a formal financial institution than from an informal source<sup>53</sup>. As 45% and 11% of micro and small enterprises respectively are unregistered, eligibility and access to benefits for many MSMEs are further complicated<sup>54</sup>. Bringing unregistered and informal MSMEs into the formal sector, capacity building for both MSMEs in accessing formal financial services, reducing obstacles to accessing financial services and reducing the gender disparity in accessing such services are areas which can benefit immensely through coordinated partnerships.

## Macroeconomic stability and fiscal reforms

Owing to the GOSL's stated position on macroeconomic and fiscal reforms, including its plans to manage its public debt obligations through bilateral facilities<sup>55</sup>, the scope for partnerships is limited. However, for the country to sustainably finance the post Covid recovery, such reforms remain essential. Therefore, international partners need to continue engagement with the GOSL to set the conditions for future partnerships. The continuing financing obligations for public health services, education and social security schemes amongst others will further exacerbate the already high budget deficit of 8.9% of GDP in 2021<sup>56</sup>. With weak fiscal revenue collections<sup>57</sup> and limited access to international capital markets to raise debt<sup>58</sup>, partnerships that directly address the socio-economic priorities arising from Covid and those that will enable an environment for much needed macroeconomic and fiscal reforms will be vital for the country.

<sup>47</sup> Department of Census and Statistics (2020). Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey: Annual Report 2019. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/kbr0afJ>]

<sup>48</sup> ILO (2021). Social Security in Sri Lanka and the Maldives. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/6br0Fw3>]

<sup>49</sup> KPMG International (2020). Sri Lanka Government and institution measures in response to COVID-19. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/mbr06NV>]

<sup>50</sup> Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. (2020). COVID-19: The Socio-Economic Impact on Sri Lanka. Part-1: The Economic Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Sri Lanka.

<sup>51</sup> UN Sri Lanka (2020). Tackling the COVID-19 economic crisis in Sri Lanka: Providing universal, lifecycle social protection transfers to protect lives and bolster economic recovery.

<sup>52</sup> KPMG International (2020). Sri Lanka Government and institution measures in response to COVID-19. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/mbr06NV>]

<sup>53</sup> IFC (2020). Gendered Impacts of COVID-19 on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Sri Lanka.

<sup>54</sup> UN DESA/DSDG (2020). The Impact of COVID19 on the MSME Sector in Sri Lanka.

# People

We are determined to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment.



MOH with advice from the WHO, responded immediately to the first signs of COVID-19 in Sri Lanka<sup>59</sup>, with measures to control the spread of the virus by imposing a strict island-wide lockdown on 16 March 2020.

As a result, high levels of unemployment, loss of job security and pay cuts have occurred and have resulted in anxiety and economic stress; especially among concentrated pockets of the community, such as apparel sector workers, foreign migrant workers and daily-wage earners.

Furthermore, several vulnerable groups including minority communities, women, children, persons living with disabilities, the elderly, persons living in institutional settings etc. continue to be severely affected. This assessment acknowledges that it has been unable to focus on people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities, refugees, IDPs, refugee returnees and asylum-seekers and persons living with HIV/Aids and other chronic medical conditions.

# Key Partnerships

Strategic Priorities	Implementing Parties	Activities
<b>Health First: Protecting Health Systems and Services During the Crisis</b>		
<b>Focus 1.1:</b> Strengthening Health System Capacity and Preparedness For Emergencies	ICTA x ICT private sector volunteers	MyHealth Sri Lanka App - This app enables users to access a verified newsfeed with updated COVID-19 statistics. This is populated by data shared by medical authorities. The application locally maps the trail of the mobile app user's locations travelled and in an unfortunate event of the user being infected, they can disclose the stored location history information with the authorities to protect their family and friends who they have associated with, in the last 14-days.
	ICTA x MOH x ICT sector volunteers	Contact Tracing (DHIS2) - Designed by ICTA the contact tracing app that's built on top of the DHIS2 solution is able to visually depict the graph of people who they have associated with during an investigation by an authorized contact tracer from the MOH <sup>1</sup> .
	Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation (SLRC) x MOH	SLRC together with the Disaster Preparedness and Response Division, MoH worked in support of a special news segment highlighting how people and occupational settings have adapted to combat the virus. Titled "Rise again 2021- move forward with confidence" ("Yali Nagitimu 2021, Vishvasayen Perata") is a communications approach which intends to build confidence in the community.
	ADB x GOSL	<p>Primary Health Care Service Development Project. The proposed project will improve efficiency, equity, and responsiveness of the Primary Health Care (PHC) system based on the concept of providing universal health coverage and continuum of care to quality essential health services. Assistance under the SPRP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renovation/refurbishment of Port Health Offices</li> <li>• Capacity building and provision of equipment to Quarantine Unit and all points of Entry into the country</li> <li>• Strengthening IT facilities for points of entry for digitizing information</li> <li>• Training for Medical Officers in Quarantine Unit and Points of Entry</li> <li>• Provision of vehicles to Quarantine Unit &amp; Port Health Offices</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> The application was produced entirely by volunteers from the ICT sector in Sri Lanka.

## Key Partnerships

Strategic Priorities	Implementing Parties	Activities
<b>Focus 1.1:</b> Strengthening Health System Capacity and Preparedness For Emergencies  <b>(continued)</b>	World Bank x GOSL	Additional financing for the Sri Lanka COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project AF (IDA credit: \$87.24 million). Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility (PEF): \$1.72 million. The project will help boost Sri Lanka's capacity to prevent, detect and respond to the threat posed by COVID-19 and strengthen national systems for public health preparedness in the country. The Additional Financing will finance temporary cash transfers to high-risk populations to enable them to stay at home as a preventive measure against the spread of COVID-19.
	Private Sector x GOSL	The private sector came forward to raise USD 50 mn in support of the GOSL's COVID-19 vaccination procurement drive. A committee of business leaders have been appointed to spearhead the initiative.
	MOH x Commonwealth Centre for Digital Health	UK Hub at University of Southampton Academic Group of Sri Lankan Commonwealth fellows in Digital Health, University at Southampton Assistance in digital health activity for the MOH including framework development in Telemedicine. World related-analysis of Digital health technology for COVID-19 management, projection analysis on COVID-19 health care burden. Learning and sharing experience of Health Information systems used in the UK.
	GOSL x MOH x World Bank	Sri Lanka COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project: The Implementation Management and Monitoring and Evaluation component aims to support the strengthening of public structures for project coordination and management. This is part of the USD 128.6 mn emergency response fund from the World Bank

## Key Partnerships

Strategic Priorities	Implementing Parties	Activities
<b>Focus 1.2:</b> Maintaining Equitable Access to Essential Health Services, Particularly for At-risk and Vulnerable Groups.	The Presidential Secretariat x Health Promotion Bureau x National Operations Centre for Prevention of Covid -19 Outbreak x Department of Government Information x Ministry of Defence and Sri Lanka Army x ICTA	Launched a National Website for COVID-19 response <a href="http://www.Covid19.gov.lk">www.Covid19.gov.lk</a> . This was developed considering the unprecedented situation in the country due to COVID-19, and with the objective of providing information to the public through reliable sources that are accredited by the GOSL.
	MOH x WHO	Carried out rapid assessment of Infection and Prevention Control (IPC) gaps within the Sri Lankan medical system. Also implemented training programmes (refer previous column) to urgently inform and update key front-line medical workers on COVID-19 response.
	MOH x UNICEF x WFP	Procured and delivered a consignment of PPEs to the MOH in support of Sri Lanka's ongoing response to COVID-19
	Dialog Axiata PLC x Odoc	Telemedicine - Partnered with Dialog to refer calls from patients to doctors free of charge, through the 1390 service
	Dialog Axiata PLC x MyDoctor.lk	Partnered to enable remote patient monitoring service through 1390 service
	EChannelling PLC x Odoc	Partnership established to provide audio consultations through their 225 service
	Sri Lanka Medical Association x Sri Lanka Telecom Mobitel PLC	Providing services for free, as well as a screening process for patients as a first port-of-call before seeking hospital care if needed.
	GOSL x World Bank	Local Development Support Project for Sri Lanka is to strengthen local government authorities' capabilities to deliver services to communities in a responsive and accountable manner, and to support economic infrastructure development in participating provinces.

# Key Partnerships

Strategic Priorities	Implementing Parties	Activities
<b>People First: Social Protection and Other Basic Services</b>		
<b>Focus 2.1:</b> Scaling Up and Expanding Social Protection as an Investment in Households and the Economy	GOSL x World Bank	USD 25 million Sri Lanka Public Sector Efficiency Strengthening Project to improve transparency and the efficiency of core government and public financial management functions.
	IFC x Pick-Me	With investment from IFC, Pick-Me scaled up distribution services during the lock-down periods, mobilising over 1,000 drivers with the necessary training within the first week and PPE to conduct more than 7,000 deliveries.
<b>Focus 2.2:</b> Maintaining Essential and Food-related Services	Dialog PLC x University of Moratuwa	Introducing 'smart farming' technology (digital tools) to locally based farmers for increased productivity, crop management and resilience.
	MOE x WFP x Government of Australia	Supplied take-home food rations as an alternative method of providing food security to children until the recommencement of the National School Meal Programme.
	MOE x WFP x Global Affairs Canada	Funding of CAD 1 million (LKR 151 million) to help smallholder farmers cultivate nutritious crops for the National School Meal Programme.
	GOSL x WFP x KOICA	Provided funding worth USD 118,000 (LKR 22 mn) to provide vegetable seed packets to rural farming communities (restructuring a pre-Covid partnership)
	GOSL x ILO	Working with Coops, government officials, and private sector to create sustainable livelihoods, and empowered communities
	PTF, GOSL x EU	Assistance of EUR 16.5 million for the benefit of pandemic hit agricultural supply chains in Sri Lanka.

# Key Partnerships

Strategic Priorities	Implementing Parties	Activities
<b>People First: Social Protection and Other Basic Services</b>		
<b>Focus 2.3:</b> Securing Sustained Learning for All Children and Adolescents, Preferably in School	MOE x Save the Children	Collaborative action taken to develop an alternative learning strategy/distance learning strategy that is inclusive.
<b>Focus 2.4:</b> Supporting the Continuity of Social Services and Access to Shelters	ZOA x CSO Collective	Continued support through delivery of dry rations and medications for persons living in shelters, as well as children's and elderly homes.
<b>Economic Response and Recovery: Protecting Jobs, Micro Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) and Informal Economy Workers</b>		
<b>Focus 3.1:</b> Protecting Workers from COVID-19 Related Health Risks in the Workplace	UNDP x GOSL	Development of masks and PPE kits for rural localities, as a source of income but also as a self-made source of prevention from contagion.

## Areas with strong potential for partnerships

### **Delivery of medical and health services**

Despite GOSL action and several partnerships enabling the same, several challenges such as the difficulty in acquiring adequate PPEs and a shortage of trained health care providers have persisted<sup>60</sup>. With the continued uncertainty of the pandemic, prolonging these partnerships may still be necessary.

### **Enabling adequate social protection and other basic services**

Efforts to provide rations and financial support via emergency schemes to reach the most vulnerable, were hindered by lack of data which did not capture last-mile communities and families. The situation was further convoluted due to restrictions in mobility and difficulties in accessing supporting lists and documents. Thus, most services were provided on an ad hoc basis and could not be sustained in the long-term. There remains significant scope for new and innovative partnerships to contribute to enable effective and efficient social security schemes; the integration of technology to map vulnerable groups could be considered.

### **Support for schools and education services**

Students and their families were negatively affected by extended school closures, especially in the case of schools receiving assistance from the National School Meals programmes. Over 1.1 million students from Grade 1 - 5 benefit from weekly mid-day meals that provide underprivileged children with a daily quota of required nutrients as well as added incentives to stay in school<sup>61</sup>. Ministerial support and urgent action through development agencies and donor partners ensured that students receiving school meals would be provided with 'take-home' rations (food packs containing a month's worth of groceries) as an alternative option<sup>62</sup>. Due to the prevailing uncertainty, these efforts need continued assistance.

Students and families struggled to accommodate and acclimatize to the new virtual learning environments where traditional classrooms were conducted online. As revealed by the KIIs, students, especially in rural areas, will continue to be unable to afford equipment such as laptops, smartphones and afford adequate data for schooling purposes. Connectivity also remains an issue. The Sri Lankan education system requires technical and administrative support in ensuring that e-learning facilities are accessible to all students across the island. Establishing innovative structures that permit trilingual online learning, access to digitized school resources as well as adequate ICT training is a crucial element requiring urgent support in the face of unprecedented lockdowns. Teachers, school administrative staff and parents will need awareness-raising and capacity-building to adjust to these changes. Pre-school and primary education require greater focus. This is a vital area for partnerships to be encouraged.

<sup>59</sup> Wickramaarachchi et al (2020). COVID-19 epidemic in Sri Lanka: A mathematical and computational modelling approach to control.

<sup>60</sup> PwC (2020). COVID-19: Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/cbtA9GL>]

<sup>61</sup> The World Bank Group (2020). Assessing Public Financing for Nutrition in Sri Lanka.

<sup>62</sup> WFP (2020). WFP and Australia provide funds to help 80,000 school children [...]. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/3btR9HW>]

## Areas with strong potential for partnerships

### **Prioritizing psycho-social and mental wellbeing**

Despite some credible efforts<sup>63 64</sup>, it was evident that mental health and well-being needs are not given adequate attention, undermining the importance of psychosocial support for the community at large especially for frontline workers and vulnerable groups. Failure to recognise the importance of psychosocial support for the community at large especially for frontline workers, and vulnerable groups can be detrimental to long term recovery and require urgent attention.

### **Ensuring equal access to healthcare for the elderly and differently abled**

The KIIs uncovered gaps within the system in terms of providing essential information and updates to the elderly and individuals with communication difficulties and/or mobility issues who additionally rely on carers and/or health staff for daily support. Poor accessibility included inability to sign up for the Government-issued relief package and being unable to collect food rations and cash transfers. This is especially concerning as differently abled persons and the elderly remain more susceptible to the virus<sup>65</sup>. CSOs and volunteer organizations have offered their services to fill in gaps however sustainable systematic support is required for longer term solutions. Private sector partnerships could be nurtured to encourage commercial care projects which are accessible to different levels of society.

### **De-prioritisation of core priorities relating to vulnerable groups results in the under-allocation of state resources to address urgent needs and gaps**

There exists an urgent need to create inclusive participatory platforms and channels to enable better communication and the active contribution of vulnerable and marginalised groups towards national policy and planning.

<sup>63</sup> American Psychological Association (2020). Psychologists in Sri Lanka respond to COVID-19. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/FbtYPOK>]

<sup>64</sup> Counselling and support services were immediately shifted online, with hotline hours extended to fit a 24-hour service time frame. A dedicated WhatsApp group for mental health practitioners in Sri Lanka was set up to streamline information and resources, as per information received through the KIIs.

<sup>65</sup> National Health Law Program (2020). COVID-19 Crisis: Unspoken Impacts on Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/WbtUtRe>]

# Planet

We are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations.



Sri Lanka's sanitation coverage is the best in South Asia<sup>66</sup>. In 2015 the drinking water and sanitation coverage in Sri Lanka stood at 94% and 92% of the population respectively.

Rural school sanitation, sanitation facilities for the disabled and the problem of ground-water contamination resulting from on-site sanitation in congested townships were identified as areas requiring urgent attention<sup>67</sup>. Despite this progress, many Sri Lankans are at risk of being left behind due to a lack of access to water and sanitation and this risk was further exacerbated with the onset of the pandemic<sup>68</sup>.

Sri Lanka had multiple partnerships between the Government, international agencies, and local and international NGOs to address the water and sanitation gaps during the pandemic. These projects, along with partnerships directly addressing priorities emerging from COVID-19, are presented in following pages.

<sup>66</sup> WHO (2015). UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/kbtSE0I>]

<sup>67</sup> WHO (2015). UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/kbtSE0I>]

<sup>68</sup> Mongabay (2020). Fighting COVID-19 with a precious resource [...]. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/Vbtm5Wf>]

# Key Partnerships

Strategic Priorities	Implementing Parties	Activities
<b>People First: Social Protection and Other Basic Services</b>		
<b>Focus 2.6:</b> Ensuring Continuity and Quality of Water and Sanitation Services	MOE x MOH x UNICEF	Collaborated to develop infection prevention and control guidelines for safe school reopening, operations and mobilise funding and resources for washing stations and sanitisation.
	MOE x UNICEF x World Bank	UNICEF assisted the MOE to assess and reprogramme funding from existing World Bank funded projects already in operation with the MOE.
	MOE x Save the Children x World Vision x Oxfam x ACTED	Supported the MOE in providing 175 schools in the South and North of the country with WASH stations
	United States Agency for International Development (USAID) x Global Communities	Under the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) project, USAID funded the procurement and distribution of 400,000 hygiene packs to help vulnerable women during the pandemic.
	Department of National Community Water Supply x World Bank x Community Based Organisations	<p>Sri Lanka's Water Supply and Sanitation Improvement Project (WaSSIP) works to extend access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and improved hygiene behaviour for nearly 700,000 people in urban, rural and estate areas in seven districts in Sri Lanka.</p> <p>Local CBOs trained to operate and maintain the water supply systems. Each household agrees to pay a tariff that ensures that immediate operation, maintenance, and replacement is done, and costs are covered.</p> <p>Database being developed showing all rural water supply systems in the country. Database to allow the Department of National Community Water Supply to track performance of CBOs and provide CBOs with information and support needed. 24-hour call centre established, where anyone can call or text for advice or to lodge a complaint for CBO-managed water supply systems.</p> <p>Approx. 900 hygiene awareness training conducted. Over 100,000 attendees - 64% female in rural areas and 80% female in estate areas. Resources made available in local languages.</p> <p>Hygiene programs rolled out in schools. Eight schools have been provided with improved sanitation facilities, including menstrual hygiene facilities.</p>

# Key Partnerships

Strategic Priorities	Implementing Parties	Activities
	European Union x Solidarity Network x Nucleus Foundation x Institute of Social Development	"Reaching the Unreached Estates and Surrounding Communities on Equitable Water, Sanitation, Hygiene (WASH) for Improved Health and Nutrition" project is seeking to improve the health and nutrition status of marginalised and underserved communities living in 50 estates and 100 rural villages by increasing access to quality services for safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene practices.
	Ministry of Finance x Ministry of Water Supply x National Water Supply and Drainage Board x World Bank	LK Water Supply and Sanitation Improvement Project; The development objectives of the project are to increase access to piped water services and improved sanitation in selected Districts; and to strengthen the capacity of associated institutions.

## Areas with strong potential for partnerships

### Clean water and sanitation

The National Water Supply and Drainage Board (NWSDB) has stated that despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, it will continue to provide safe drinking water<sup>69</sup>; aligning with the priorities stated in the National Policy Framework<sup>70</sup>. In addition, partnerships and initiatives were mobilised immediately within the various sectors including health and education, by the private sector, NGOs and UN Agencies to meet WASH requirements and establish safety and precautionary measures (provision of PPEs, sanitizers and handwashing stations, social distancing and mask-wearing). However, concerns were raised by some key informants that certain groups, especially vulnerable groups, were left behind due to lack of a robust needs assessment. In some instances, ad hoc interventions had created duplications. Several key informants interviewed highlighted instances where certain safety precautions added further barriers to the daily activities of persons with disability and that these persons remained at risk.

### Reverse migration

Reverse migration stemming from job losses and lengthy pandemic lockdowns was not adequately captured in response mechanisms and therefore its effects were not addressed. A lack of data on internal labour migration and informal employment is a considerable barrier to identifying and implementing much needed interventions to support labour returning to their origin and to limit subsequent impacts on the environment, as unemployed migrants turn to smallholder agriculture<sup>71</sup>. In addition, human-wildlife conflicts<sup>72 73</sup> are likely to rise due to reverse migration from urban centres to rural communities, according to the MOEN<sup>74</sup>. Again, lack of data on reverse migration and its effects on the rural environment has meant its impacts have remained unaddressed.

## Areas with strong potential for partnerships

### Climate change

Despite the pressing needs emerging during the pandemic, continued focus on climate change remains crucial. Climate change will intensify and impact natural resources, including access to clean water and sanitation<sup>75</sup>. The country's agriculture sector is highly susceptible to changes in weather patterns. Persistent temperatures above 35 C during the flowering stage of rice crops can cause a 40% to 50% reduction in the rice harvest, affecting food security of the entire nation and economic security of farmers<sup>76</sup>.

Natural resources also face severe threat with the recent increase in rates of deforestation, including in designated UNESCO World Heritage sites<sup>77</sup>. The National Policy Framework commits to increase Sri Lanka's national forest cover by 30%<sup>78</sup>. The MOEN is in the process of developing a National Environment Action Plan (NEAP) to balance the rising demand for development while preserving the environment. This takes into concern the current pandemic situation in the country and attempts to understand urgent needs.

The NEAP will be aligned with the SDGs 2030 and involves cooperation with several agencies in the country<sup>79</sup>. Reports suggest Sri Lanka needs an additional LKR 30.71 billion to meet biodiversity conservation targets between 2018-2024 as outlined in the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (NBSAP)<sup>80</sup>. Due to fiscal constraints, meeting this funding gap and the targets outlined in the NBSAP will be challenging.

<sup>69</sup> Ministry of Finance (2020). Budget Speech 2021. [Accessed at: <https://www.treasury.gov.lk/budget/speeches>]

<sup>70</sup> Ministry of Finance (2020). Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour. [Accessed at: <https://www.treasury.gov.lk/national-policy>]

<sup>71</sup> KII representing the Ministry of Environment

<sup>72</sup> Mongabay (2020). Sri Lanka: Rich in biodiversity, and human-wildlife conflict. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/LbtmWVP>]

<sup>73</sup> Hindustan Times (2020). Sri Lanka records highest elephant deaths in world. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/YcqUvVE>]

<sup>74</sup> KII representing the Ministry of Environment

<sup>75</sup> Mongabay (2020). Fighting COVID-19 with a precious resource [...]. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/Vbtm5Wf>]

<sup>76</sup> UNDP (2019). Our Biodiversity. Our Sri Lanka. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/kbtQkf2>]

<sup>77</sup> NewsFirst (2021). Revelation on large scale deforestation at world heritage site [...]. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/dbtQD0b>]

<sup>78</sup> Ministry of Finance (2020). Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour. [Accessed at: <https://www.treasury.gov.lk/national-policy>]

<sup>79</sup> KII representing the Ministry of Environment

<sup>80</sup> UNDP (2019). Our Biodiversity. Our Sri Lanka. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/kbtQkf2>]

# Peace

We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.



The National Policy Framework prioritizes ‘making a safe and secure country for all citizens, especially for women and children’ and ‘dismantling all the structures supporting terrorism and extremism.’

The 13.7% and 25.6% year-on-year increase in the funds allocated to the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Justice respectively in the 2021 Appropriation Bill is evidence of the GOSL following through on its stated priorities above. In addition, recent statements by the Cabinet Minister for Justice, Hon. Ali Sabry reaffirmed the Governments’ intentions to expand the court system, integrate ICT solutions and expedite pending cases, which stood at 766,784 cases by end of 2019<sup>81</sup>.

<sup>81</sup> Daily FT (2021). Time for a complete structural change to country's legal system [...]. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/ZbtE3Mp>]

# Key Partnerships

Strategic Priorities	Implementing Parties	Activities
<b>Social Cohesion and Community Resilience</b>		
<b>Focus 4.1:</b> Improving Community Resilience, Participation, and Equitable Service Delivery	Ministry of Foreign Relations x ICTA	Developed an emergency portal to connect Sri Lankans overseas with stakeholders in Sri Lanka and the network of Sri Lanka Missions abroad.
	ICTA x Sri Lanka Tourism development Authority x Ministry of Foreign Affairs x ILO (funding)	Maintenance of a website for all foreign nationals in Sri Lanka. This website, in addition to COVID-19 health information provides information useful for foreign nationals like visa extension notices, special regulations of using Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA), Katunayake.
	ILO x UNOPS	Purchased and initiated the delivery of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) worth 47 million Sri Lankan Rupees. With funding from the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund (UN COVID-19 MPTF) the intervention was to assist the socio-economic recovery of the micro and small enterprise sector of Sri Lanka.
	WHO South-East Asia Regional Office (SEARO) x WHO	Supplied 100 000 rapid antigen detection tests to support COVID-19 surveillance activities and resilience-building in Sri Lanka.
	UNICEF x Verite Research	Phone assessment of ground situation to identify immediate needs of vulnerable populations.
	ICTA x GOSL	A free and easy to use video conferencing platform based on Jitsi for Sri Lanka's state sector. It allows one to easily build and deploy secure video conferencing solutions.

# Key Partnerships

Strategic Priorities	Implementing Parties	Activities
<b>Focus 4.2:</b> Promoting Inclusive Social Dialogue, Advocacy and Citizens' Engagement		Key informant interviews with the National Peace Council highlighted that interfaith groups at community levels mobilised delivery of essential services during the lockdown period. Religious premises were used as centre-points for such mobilisation.
<b>Focus 4.3:</b> Protecting Fundamental Freedoms and The Rule of Law	Justice Ministry x ICTA x Government Analysts Department	The process of digitizing the entire judicial process including maintaining the files of the judiciary, managing the judiciary, keeping case records, and issuing case reports, and payment of fines online. The benefits of the project include increasing the efficiency of the judicial process, transparency, and cost reduction.
<b>People First: Social Protection and Other Basic Services</b>		
<b>Focus 2.5:</b> Supporting Survivors of Sexual Abuse and Gender-based Violence	Asia Foundation x Sri Lanka Police	The Asia Foundation worked with the Sri Lanka Police to formulate sensitive and effective responses to domestic and gender-based violence, even though maintaining access to basic services continued to be a challenge for both survivors and the police.
	Women in Need x USAID x Asia Foundation	Supported the purchase of mobile phones to be used to broaden hotline outreach for women and girls subjected to gender-based violence during lockdowns.

## Areas with strong potential for partnerships

### Addressing SGBV

The pandemic's impact on safeguards and support systems for women and girls in Sri Lanka has been especially challenging. A UN Women report highlighted a surge in reported cases of violence against women and girls because of close cohabitation with oppressors and abusive partners and/or family members during extended periods of lockdowns<sup>82</sup>. Women's mobility was reduced because of curfews, therefore access to police stations and hospitals was greatly limited. Issuing interim protection for women facing distress (as per Article 11 [a] of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act) was impossible due to social distancing and curfew being deemed high priority. Most women's shelters could not accommodate new additions without prior testing, thus prolonging the process and requiring additional resources and access to PCR testing kits.

### Citizen engagement

Sri Lanka has a relatively low level of citizen engagement, and this is most notably reflected in women's participation in governance and political representation<sup>83</sup>. Without a functioning Parliament during the early stages of the pandemic, significant concerns remained over the legitimacy of certain regulations imposed by the Government<sup>84</sup>. The ability for stakeholders from outside of the Government sector to engage in partnerships or initiatives to address fundamental freedoms and rule of law were curtailed due to Government's policies, such as arresting critics of the Government response during the lockdown period and increased surveillance of civil society actors<sup>85</sup>. While limitations in mobility have impacted activities focusing on citizen engagement, social cohesion, and advocacy, it is evident that any form of dialogue implemented thus far, has been through the UN agencies, CSOs and other grass-root level groups; and not through structured Government or private sector networks<sup>87</sup>. Promotion of inclusive participation and dialogue has not been evident during this period, despite several incidents which have elicited public uproar.

<sup>82</sup> UN Women (2021). Female-heads of households see their struggles compounded by pandemic. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/RbtHm7D>]

<sup>83</sup> Kodikara (2009). The Struggle for equal Political Representation of Women in Sri Lanka.

<sup>84</sup> Centre for Policy Alternatives (2020). Q and A on Regulations Issued under the Quarantine and Prevention of Diseases Ordinance & how this impacts the COVID-19 response in Sri Lanka. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/KbtJiS8>]

<sup>85</sup> Human Rights Watch (2020). Sri Lanka Uses Pandemic to Curtail Free Expression. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/FbtJskY>]

<sup>86</sup> CIVICUS (2020). Sri Lanka: Civil society subjected to intensified military surveillance and other restrictions. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/BbtJlrK>]

<sup>87</sup> Echelon Media (2020). Civil Society organisations say the COVID 19 crisis should not be an excuse for militarization. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/3btJYbn>]

<sup>88</sup> Department of Census and Statistics (2019). Computer Literacy Statistics – 2019 (Annual). [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/jbtElKV>]

<sup>89</sup> ICTA (2021). COVID-19 Response. [Accessed at: <https://www.icta.lk/covid19-response/>]

<sup>90</sup> Pathmanathan and Poulier (2017). A comprehensive citizen engagement framework for effective resolution of public complaints in cities. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/QbtHrHT>]

## Areas with strong potential for partnerships

### Service delivery mechanism

Traditionally, a majority of GOSL services in Sri Lanka are delivered through non-digital media, and the digital literacy level in Sri Lanka stood at 46% in 2019<sup>88</sup>. This led to a lapse in service delivery, especially essential services, during the initial lockdown and curfew periods of the pandemic. However, with the leadership of the ICTA, successful partnerships were mobilised, among other things, to migrate some Government services on to digital platforms<sup>89</sup>. These can be considered as examples of best practice and offer case studies for the GOSL to mobilise partnerships to continue bringing more Government services on to digital media.

### Grievance mechanisms

As citizen complaints are primarily maintained on physical records, there is a lack of transparency and accountability<sup>90</sup> which was exacerbated by the pandemic as citizens lost access to complaint mechanisms. KII's revealed that there is considerable disconnect between citizens and the GOSL, owing to the slow responsiveness of the Government to citizen concerns, often not providing a satisfactory solution.

# Partnerships

We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalised Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focussed in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.



## Key learnings

- The assessment highlights the clear value of partnerships, both before and after the pandemic. The mobilisation of informal partnerships between public, private and community stakeholders, especially at a local level, during the initial stages of the pandemic, demonstrates the deep-rooted value system of Sri Lankan communities to respond collectively in the face of crises and adversity. These adaptable and agile stakeholders were able to overcome inherent challenges such as lack of trust and differing priorities or approaches during a crisis. This is true not only for the COVID-19 pandemic but also in the face of many other disasters and crisis situations that have been faced by the country. However, partners are mostly unable to remain engaged into the medium and long term unless established mechanisms are in place.
- In the immediate response period, the PTF played a key role in setting the agenda, disseminating the required data, and engaging the GOSL authorities required for response and monitoring the situation. Most key stakeholders interviewed stated that Government authority was vital for the success of actions taken towards immediate response. However, questions arise as to how well the mechanism will work in the medium to long term, especially as the partnership mechanisms activated during the onset of the pandemic were largely ad hoc. Concerns have also arisen around the continued militarized nature of recovery efforts.

- A recurring concern is that existing mechanisms were overlooked, and/or underutilized due to changes in leadership or governance structures and due to lack of awareness, especially during times of crisis. Further, unavailability or lack of access to data, especially in relation to the needs of vulnerable groups resulted in failure to meet their essential needs.

## Gaps & challenges

- There is no permanent partnership mechanism to engage the district and local level CSOs and NGOs. While the CSO Collective was successful in their work towards a specific agenda and while district NGO consortiums exist, it is unclear how learnings from a district level feed into national policy making. The establishment of inter-ministerial steering committees with their mandate to engage with district level partners is an interesting development. Further study is required to understand how this mechanism can be utilized to mobilize partnerships.

The highly centralized approach of the PTF, augmented by military leadership in response to the crisis, resulted in Sri Lanka successfully controlling the spread in the initial onset of the pandemic. However, to meet medium to long term challenges, it is vital that institutional capacities, especially with the GOSL - at district and local levels, continue to be consciously fostered.

# Conclusions

The effects of the pandemic have been devastating mainly for the socio-economic development of Sri Lanka, significantly setting back progress that has been made in the recent past. A December 2020 progress update by the SDC of Sri Lanka acknowledges the challenge of covering the current funding gap of USD 2-4 billion per year to achieve the SDGs by 2030 which is likely to be exacerbated due to the economic slowdown.

*"Socio-economic impacts of Covid19 will be the greatest challenge in achieving progress towards SDGs and the funding gaps for SDGs (currently estimated to be between USD 2-4bn per year by the UN) is likely to be further widened due to the contraction of the economy consequent to the pandemic. While the Government has taken every possible means to ensure a sustainable and resilient recovery from the pandemic, its impacts are likely to reverse some of the most important gains achieved by Sri Lanka towards attaining sustainable development". - Sri Lanka's Progress of Sustainable Development Goals in the Context of the Covid19, The Sustainable Development Council of Sri Lanka*

Despite ongoing uncertainty, the mobilisation of informal partnerships between public, private and community stakeholders, especially at a local level during the initial stages of the pandemic, demonstrates the deep-rooted value system of Sri Lankan communities to respond collectively in the face of crises and adversity.

While the initial phase during March-May 2020 may have been successful in containing the pandemic, once the response required a more nuanced approach, considering the various socio-economic aspects impacted by the crisis, the PTF was not fully successful in ensuring the equitable delivery of services. This is to be expected in the face of an unprecedented crisis and is one of the reasons partnerships should be enabled in a constructive manner, so that various stakeholders may not only step into providing essential services, but to also support medium to long term recovery.

It is of concern that the GOSL has been unable to prioritise, and also failed to predict upcoming negative trends in certain key areas, especially in relation to vulnerable groups (most urgently the rise in SGBV – women and children – and providing continued social protection for disabled groups and seniors citizens) as well as the health and education sectors. On-going concerns include inconsistent communication about the vaccination process, limited interventions to address the psychosocial needs of communities, and the failure to recognize the gaps created by school closures, especially at preschool and primary levels.

On top of the looming public debt repayment, the impact on the informal sector, SMEs and women led enterprises, and the reintegration of returning migrants, need to be urgently addressed, considering the impact these sectors have on the economy. Failure to address the impact of the pandemic on the environment is of grave concern, particularly deforestation due to the abrupt increase in small-holder farmers as people migrate from cities to towns and villages. Efforts to foster social cohesion have been deprioritized, and what this all means for continued peace in the country remains to be seen.

<sup>91</sup> SDC (2020). Sri Lanka's Progress of Sustainable Development Goals in the context of the Covid19 - Towards a sustainable and resilient recovery: Progress Update, December 2020. [Accessed at: <https://cutt.ly/BbtIm10>]

## Recommendations

The exercise observed a wide range of partnerships across the different priorities, and a close analysis highlighted three overarching challenges across the partnership landscape. Interviews conducted with key informants reinforced these three key challenges which need to be addressed to enable effective permanent partnerships mechanisms/platforms:

1

Limited access to data results in inadequate needs assessments which negatively impacts equitable service delivery and interventions in times of crisis. Primarily, lack of transparency remains a key issue, often becoming the most significant obstacle to delivering equitable public services, and interventions in times of crisis. The challenge to enabling access is two-fold; one, there is the inability and/or unwillingness to share information, mostly due to the lack of governance and processes to enable secure sharing of information; and two, the lack of up-to-date data primarily due to long time-lags in carrying out research and to its unavailability in digital forms. Inadequate privacy laws in Sri Lanka also add to this challenge.

2

Instability affects resilience of both service providers and communities, especially in times of crisis. A culture of accountability and inclusivity, especially in the public sector, is vital for a stable environment to build greater resilience for both service providers and communities. The absence of vital checks and balances, and the absence of processes necessary for the implementation of existing checks and balances, are key reasons for a culture that lacks accountability and inclusivity. Therefore, even a big data system will not achieve its desired results without the necessary governance mechanisms and processes.

3

Inconsistency and incoherence in communication between stakeholders was observed in partnerships and was highlighted by key informants interviewed. This often resulted in a breakdown of dialogue between stakeholders, ultimately resulting in partnerships falling short of achieving their desired results. Information asymmetry is a recognised cause of power imbalances, which is a persistent challenge to participatory platforms for dialogue. Equitable access to data will provide all constituent parties with the same information, thereby helping to eliminate power imbalances within a platform for dialogue.

4

The role of the UN: Whilst recognising the current role played by the UN eco system in enabling multi-stakeholder partnerships in Sri Lanka, this assessment sees potential for the UN system to play a more cohesive role in this regard. Stakeholders within Sri Lanka recognise the multi-faceted role the UN can play which includes capacity building, resource mobilisation and facilitation to enable multi-stakeholder partnerships, both existing and new. To do so, it is vital that effective, efficient, and consistent communication mechanisms, both at the national and local levels, are employed to better understand and address the needs of stakeholders.

# Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank	SCORE	Social Cohesion and Reconciliation
BIA	Bandaranaike International Airport	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
CSO	Community Service Organization	SDC	Sustainable Development Council
DMC	Disaster Management Centre	SEARO	South-East Asia Regional Office
EU	European Union	SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
GOSL	Government of Sri Lanka	SLPA	Sri Lanka Psychological Association
ICTA	Information and Communication Technology Agency	SLRC	Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation
IFC	International Financial Corporation	SPRP	Sri Lanka Preparedness and Response Plan COVID-19
ILO	International Labour Organization	UN	United Nations
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization	UNGC	United Nations Global Compact
IPC	Infection and Prevention Control	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
JFPR	Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Education Fund
KII	Key Informant Interviews	UNRCO	United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office
KOICA	Korea International Cooperation Agency	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam	VPR	Voluntary Peoples Review
MOE	Ministry of Education	WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
MOEN	Ministry of Environment	WCS	Working Capital Solutions
MOH	Ministry of Health	WFP	World Food Programme
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise	WHO	World Health Organization
NCDM	National Council for Disaster Management		
NEAP	National Environment Action Plan		
NGO	Non-governmental Organization		
NTB	Nations Trust Bank PLC		
NWSDB	National Water Supply and Drainage Board		
PHC	Primary Health Care		
PPE	Personal Protection Equipment		
PTF	Presidential Task Force		
SCA	Senior Citizens Allowance		



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