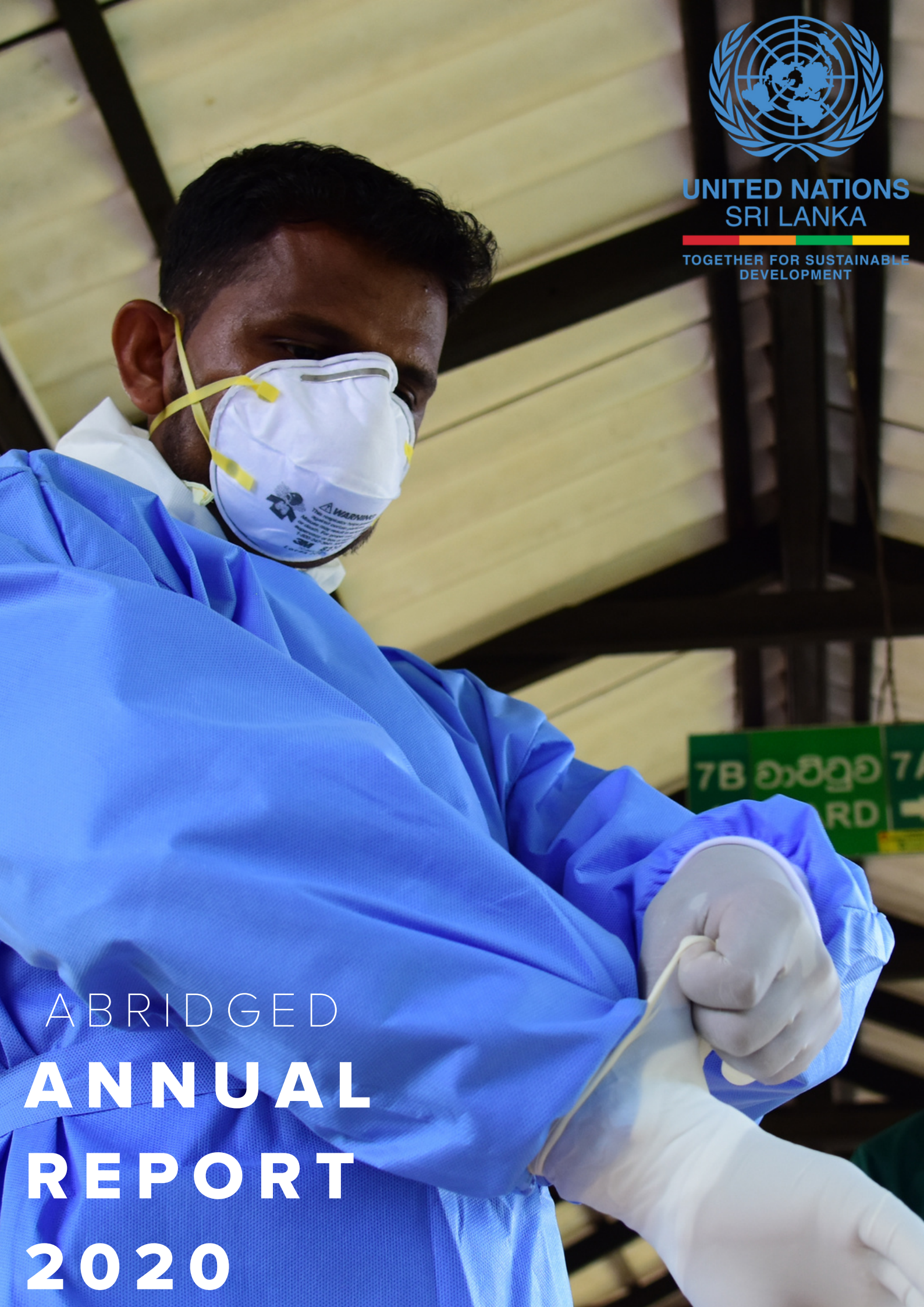




UNITED NATIONS  
SRI LANKA

TOGETHER FOR SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT



ABRIDGED  
**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2020**

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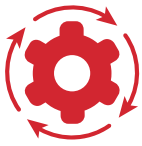
**UNITED NATIONS SRI LANKA**  
**ANNUAL RESULTS REPORT 2020**  
**(ABRIDGED)**



**UNITED NATIONS**  
**SRI LANKA**

TOGETHER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

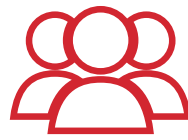
# UN SRI LANKA RESULTS 2020



**53.5**

**MILLION USD**

spent on programmes  
and operations

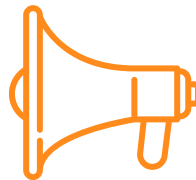
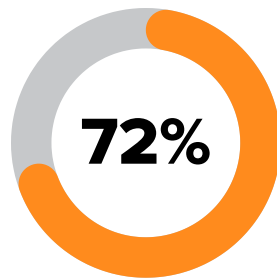


**18**

**MILLION**

people reached

**16 MILLION**



of Sri Lankans reached through  
UN and Govt. Risk Comms

World Bank and the Asian  
Development Bank mobilised

**USD**

**150 MILLION**

to support MoH's Strategic  
Response & Preparedness Plan

UNCT mobilised

**USD**

**43 MILLION**

in support of joint priorities



USD 40 Million  
repurposed towards  
COVID-19 response  
activities



Globally first to  
complete UNCT  
Gender-Swap Card



# UN SRI LANKA RESULTS 2020



## ALL TESTS

for PCR and RDT in 2020 were done by state laboratories enrolled in WHO EQAP



## PANDEMIC RESPONSE

was strengthened through UN strategic and technical guidance; alongside non-COVID service delivery



## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

by the UN, allowed emergency cash transfers from Gov to reach around 66% of households



## 2 MILLION

children, women, men, and health care workers benefited from essential equipment and IPC supplies



## 185,000

farmers to optimize their livelihoods through accurate weather advisories and climate smart agriculture packages



## VICTIMS OF SGBV

supported with legal aid, shelter, psychosocial assistance, COVID-19 protection equipment and grants



## JUSTICE SECTOR

digitization through substantive and technical assistance for business continuity in courts and prisons



## 60,000

returnee workers benefitted from port-of-entry equipment and safety procedures

# FOREWORD

It is no understatement to say that the year 2020 was unlike any other in recent history, as COVID-19 upended lives and livelihoods and threatened to overwhelm us with uncertainty and loss.

Yet, Sri Lankans faced the situation with impressive resilience and energy. So did the United Nations System in the country, as Agencies, Funds and Programmes stepped up with life-saving support from the very onset of the pandemic.



As it became clear that we were in it for the long haul, the UN broadened its approach to include the crucial socio-economic dimension, working closely with the Government to support the most vulnerable – women, children, migrants and hard-hit small enterprises. With a glimmer of hope now on the horizon, I am optimistic that the worst is behind us.

We must however remain steadfast and commit clearly to an inclusive, rights-based and green path to recovery. The Sustainable Development Goals, the most comprehensive framework ever developed to reduce poverty and protect the environment, has never been more relevant in this regard. On behalf of the United Nations, I look forward to embarking on this hopeful and exciting journey in support of all the people of Sri Lanka.

A handwritten signature in grey ink, which appears to read "Hanaa Singer-Hamdy".

**Hanaa Singer-Hamdy**  
**Resident Coordinator**

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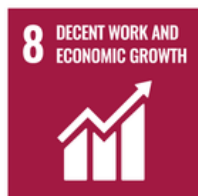
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GENDER EQUALITY



# UN COUNTRY TEAM





# ACRONYMS

<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease 2019
<b>CPRP</b>	Country Preparedness and Response Plan
<b>FDI</b>	Foreign Direct Investment
<b>GoSL</b>	Government of Sri Lanka
<b>GTG</b>	Gender Theme Group
<b>HCT</b>	Humanitarian Country Team
<b>HPB</b>	Health Promotion Bureau, Ministry of Health Sri Lanka
<b>HRDDP</b>	Human Rights Due Diligence Policy
<b>ICU</b>	Intensive Care Unit
<b>IFI</b>	International Financial Institutions
<b>JPP</b>	Joint Programme for Peace
<b>MPTF</b>	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
<b>NDCs</b>	Nationally Determined Contributions of Climate Change Mitigation, Adaptation, and Loss & Damage Sectors
<b>PPP</b>	Peacebuilding Priority Plan
<b>PPE</b>	Personal Protective Equipment
<b>PSEA</b>	Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SMEs</b>	Small and Medium Enterprises
<b>SRPP</b>	Strategic Response and Preparedness Plan for COVID-19
<b>UNCT</b>	UN Country Team
<b>UNCT-SWAP</b>	UNCT System-Wide Action Plan
<b>UNGC</b>	United Nations Global Compact
<b>UNSDF</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Framework

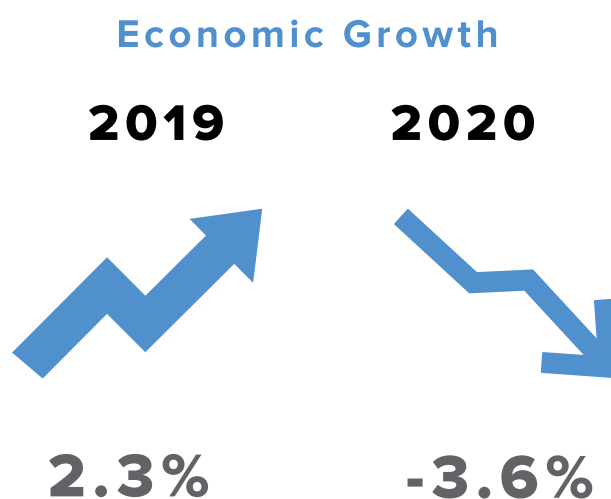


## KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND COUNTRY CONTEXT

The COVID-19 pandemic deeply affected the work of the United Nations in Sri Lanka in 2020.

Even as case numbers remained low in the country during 2020, the pandemic still resulted in an unprecedented public health emergency and an increase of socio-economic vulnerabilities. The Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) responded to the initial outbreak of the virus with a comprehensive lockdown that saw the country avoid a serious first wave of the pandemic. However, reliance on a public security response also raised some rights issues including large number of arrests for breaking curfew. Movement restrictions affected a large part of the working population, especially daily wage earners.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Sri Lankan economy contracted by an unprecedented -3.6 per cent in 2020, the first negative figure since 2001 and following a growth of 2.3 per cent in 2019. This was in part fueled by a sharp drop in exports, remittances, and the sharp downturn in tourism amidst travel restrictions. External debt dynamics, which pre-



## KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND COUNTRY CONTEXT

dated the pandemic, remained challenging and resulted in shrinking government revenue and limited fiscal space. This limited the ability to roll out extensive social safety measures during the pandemic. The central government debt-to-GDP ratio rose from 86.8 per cent to 101 per cent between the end of 2019 and the end of 2020, with adverse assessment by rating agencies limiting access to capital markets and raising international borrowing costs.

**As a result of the pandemic, the economy contracted, in part fueled by a drop in exports, remittances, and the sharp downturn in tourism amidst travel restrictions.**

Following a four month delay due to COVID-19, Sri Lanka held Parliamentary Elections in August 2020 that were recognised as peaceful and credible. The vote resulted in a two-thirds legislative majority for the new Government. However, as deep-rooted structural barriers continued to impact women's political participation, the 2020 Parliament comprises only 5 per cent women legislators (12 out of 225).

### Women in voting population



### Women in 2020 Parliament



The new Government retained a wide-ranging policy framework called 'Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour', derived from the presidential election manifesto in 2019. It is focused on increasing domestic production, scaling up value added exports, and improving public service delivery through digital transformation to attract foreign direct investment. It also makes notable pledges to advance sustainable development and renewable energy. In this regard, new climate-related goals were announced, with GoSL committing to meet 70 per cent of the

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND COUNTRY CONTEXT

country's electricity demand using renewable energy sources by the year 2030. However, incomplete regulatory enforcement and illicit activities such as the destruction of forests and wildlife sanctuaries by commercial activities or rising plastic pollution remain as challenges to Sri Lanka's sustainable development agenda. Signs of the effects of climate change in Sri Lanka are increasingly visible in the areas of human health, agricultural livelihoods, and costly natural disasters. The pandemic clearly highlighted the importance of digital service delivery. While progress on digital transformation continued, it remained below potential due to low digital literacy and institutional barriers. However, the window of opportunity to leverage this agenda as an accelerator of sustainable and inclusive development remains open. An asset in this regard is the greater awareness and willingness amongst citizens and leaders to become part of the digital transformation, with the private sector ready to support such initiatives.



Sri Lanka withdrew co-sponsorship of Human Rights Council Resolution 30/1, in favour of exploring options for a domestic alternative for reconciliation and peacebuilding. The passing of the 20th Amendment to the Constitution in October 2020, reset relations between many institutions in the country. Civil society, minority and human rights groups reported shrinking of civic space. In a January 2021 report mandated by the Human Rights Council, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights noted concerns regarding several developments in 2020.



## KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND COUNTRY CONTEXT

As in previous years, the United Nations engaged both with the Government and other stakeholders on Sri Lanka's international human rights commitments and continued to offer support for peaceful and inclusive solutions to historical as well as more recent challenges to social cohesion.

Despite a challenging operational context, the UN Country Team in Sri Lanka utilised the collective strength of 23 resident and non-resident Agencies, Funds and Programmes to directly or indirectly reach 18 Million people or 81% of the population.

# 53.5

**MILLION USD**

spent on  
programmes and  
operations.

# 23



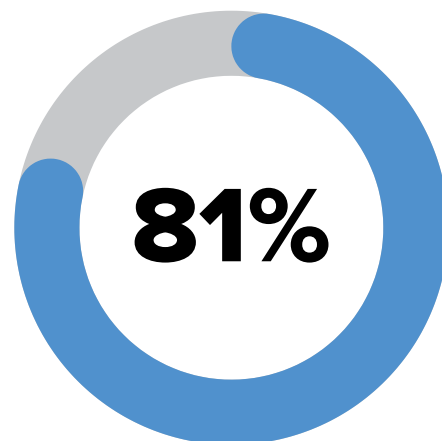
UN Programmes,  
Funds and Agencies  
working in Sri Lanka

Reaching

# 18

**MILLION**

people



of the population

# COVID-19 RESPONSE

A One UN response to COVID-19, with effective partner coordination, helped the Government and the people of Sri Lanka address the most pressing health and socio-economic challenges during the pandemic in 2020.

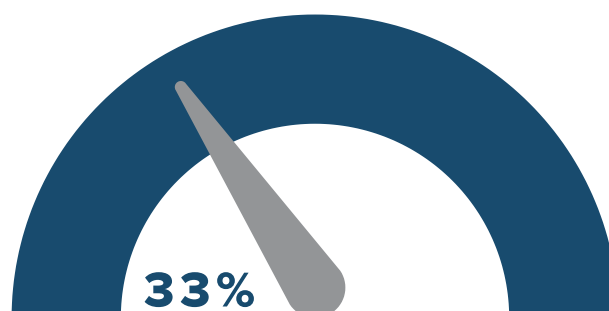


Following WHO's March 2020 declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Secretary-General launched a global response to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. Subsequently, the UN in Sri Lanka, in coordination with its donor partners, quickly adapted its response to support the health and socio-economic actions from the Government, mobilising or reallocating programming equal to over a third of the UNSDF budget (see Chapter 3 for more details).

## HEALTH RESPONSE

The public health response, led by the WHO Country Office, kicked off by helping develop the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Strategic Response and Preparedness Plan (SRPP) – a key tool for the UNCT to mobilise funds for immediate needs on health, socio-economic support and communication. Led by the Resident Coordinator, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) joined efforts through its Country Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP) to assist the Government.

**UN in Sri Lanka, adapted its response to focus on supporting the health and socio-economic response mobilising or reallocating programming of a third of the UNSDF.**



## COVID-19 RESPONSE

### World Bank and the Asian Development Bank mobilised



**USD 150  
MILLION**

**to support the MoH's Strategic  
Response and Preparedness  
Plan**

treatment and isolation facilities. The technology needed to monitor and track the virus in sentinel sites was enhanced, and support for virus genomic sequencing at a leading university was provided.



**400,000**

**Test kits provided  
to state labs**

Actions included procuring – through WHO, UNICEF, UNDP and UNOPS – medical machinery, test kits, PPEs and ICU beds distributed in hospitals around the country. Similarly, funds mobilised by WHO and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) – namely, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank – helped deliver support under the SRPP. The ability of the Government at sub-national levels to conduct public health, epidemiologic and surveillance activities was boosted, for instance by WHO helping to conduct assessments to plan surge capacity, and thus expand

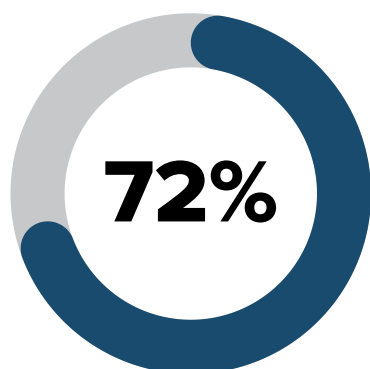
UN partners contributed to strengthening the health system – with UNICEF upgrading several hospitals with isolation facilities and assisting thousands of health workers with remote conferencing capacity, and UNOPS providing technical assistance to the MOH on construction of different isolation facilities and an advanced biosafety lab, IOM and UNICEF enhancing procedures and equipment at points of entry and UNFPA providing hygiene kits to women and girls in lockdown, among others.

Communications specialists from across the UN system also provided surge capacity in support of the Government, especially the MOH's Health Promotion Bureau (HPB), reaching over 16 million Sri Lankans (72 per cent of the country's population).

UN agencies provided media and production support for over 26 pieces of multimedia communication, identified the spread of public misinformation on COVID-19 on social media to combat misinformation in real-time. While a lot of the messaging focused on public health, other initiatives addressed non-clinical health interventions, human interest stories on the social impact of the pandemic, its effect on micro and small enterprises

## COVID-19 RESPONSE

# 16 MILLION



**of Sri Lankans  
reached through  
UN and Govt.  
Risk Comms**



outreach among refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, the hidden epidemic of gender-based violence, and the important role of volunteerism within the COVID-19 response. Innovative messaging and media channels, and partnerships with health experts, community leaders, influencers and celebrities were also utilised in support of the Government's response.

Work was begun in 2020 to help Sri Lanka prepare its vaccinations efforts, including under the COVAX facility led by the UN and other partners globally. WHO and UNICEF assisted in developing the National Pandemic Vaccine Deployment Plan, expanding regulatory capacity,

enhancing cold storage distribution, updating health protocols and government vaccine distribution plans, together with advocacy and communication efforts. The RC led high-level advocacy with the Government, as well as facilitating systematic information sharing and cooperation among partners and between the technical work of WHO and UNICEF and the crucial financing role of the IFIs.





# COVID-19 RESPONSE

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESPONSE

An Advisory Paper which helped define and channel funds – of some \$40 million – for the immediate COVID-19 socio-economic response in support of Sri Lanka was developed with key coordination, data and assessments by the RCO, UNDP and UNICEF. This contributed to the work of the national pandemic response Task Force, and became the main roadmap for the whole UN System by linking short and medium term priorities and promoting continued action on underlying SDGs in the context of the pandemic's socio-economic impact (see more details on this in Chapter 3).



Areas of activities and interventions included social protection, where UNICEF helped the Government to scale up its assistance to affected households.

Other areas of action included micro and small enterprises, with ILO and UNOPS helping the Government to provide specialised trainings, mental health support and other services; UNFPA and UNDP helping to maintain and expand specialised helplines, shelters and transport as safeguards against sexual and gender-based violence during COVID-19; and UNFPA, UN Women, UNICEF, WHO, WFP and UNDP together with the civil society developing a joint prevention and response strategy to SGVB. Support to workers, through ILO and WHO, to children, through UNICEF and WFP, to the tourism and technology sectors through UNDP, and to migrants and refugees through IOM and UNHCR, was also provided to assist the Government and people of Sri Lanka.

## COVID-19 RESPONSE



**1,055,348**

People receiving  
critical WASH  
supplies

**173,926**

Health workers  
supported with  
essential services



**788,417**

Children  
supported with  
distance/ home  
based learning

**79,828**

Primary school  
children receiving  
meals / meal  
alternatives



**351,619**

Formal and  
informal sector  
workers  
supported

**219,017**

People benefited  
from food supply  
protection  
programmes



# UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



Sustainable development results in support of all Sri Lankans, their institutions, their well-being and their environment.

UN Sri Lanka's programmatic activities for 2020 were guided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework, 2018-2022 (UNSDF) – an overarching instrument for the work of the UN in Sri Lanka developed in

cooperation with the Government in line with its national development priorities, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs.

The four strategic drivers of the UNSDF were jointly identified with the Government of Sri Lanka and in consultation with civil society and development partners. A rigorous consultation process ensured these outcomes were fit-for-purpose and grounded in the realities of the country, and provided a common strategy for the United Nations and its development partners.

These d are:



## Driver 1

Towards improved data, knowledge management and evidence-based policy



## Driver 2

Strengthened innovative public institutions and engagement towards a lasting peace



## Driver 3

Human security and socio-economic resilience



## Driver 4

Enhancing resilience to climate change and disasters and strengthening environmental management

# UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

## BUILDING A STRONGER DEVELOPMENT COORDINATION ARCHITECTURE IN SRI LANKA IN 2020

The pandemic and other political and electoral developments impacted the work on sustainable development, but both the Government's commitment to more formal institutional mechanisms to monitor the SDGs, such as an empowered Sustainable Development Council launched at the end of 2020 supported by advocacy from the RC and Heads of Agencies, and UN Sri Lanka's internal restructurings – including a revamped UNCT Results Groups set-up which combines outcomes from the UNSDF and the Socio-economic Advisory Paper – helped guide the necessary investments for Sri Lanka to realise the SDGs by 2030. Areas of work which benefitted from this approach, with the support of IFIs and development partners, included the immediate socio-economic response to the pandemic, joint programmes and evidence generation in support of the four outcomes, and relevant UNSDF common advocacy and messaging.



Together with the UNSDF, the UN's Advisory Paper on the Immediate Socio-economic Response identified the impact of the pandemic on sustainable development, and guided the work across the four strategic outcomes – with the UN becoming an immediate provider of policy advice to the Government to mitigate the impact and reallocating up to \$40 million to support the response and recovery.



# UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

## KEY RESULTS FOR 2020 UNDER THE UNSDF

Key 2020 results under the UNSDF included multi-year programme deliverables and activities reorganised to tackle Sri Lanka's immediate and evolving needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Driver 1: Towards improved data, knowledge management and evidence-based policy

The acute global need for accurate information during the pandemic was addressed at the country level by quick telephone surveys from UN agencies on the impact on households and families which aimed at closing the information gap to enhance social protection policies. Engagement with trade unions and employers identified economic risks and the impact of curfews on the vulnerable workers and other important indicators. Further, a roadmap and strategic plan for the recovery of international tourism in the country was developed, awaiting a positive change in the pandemic situation.



**Strategic plans  
to rebuild  
national tourism  
industry**



**Economic  
reintegration of  
returning  
migrant workers**

### Driver 2: Strengthened innovative public institutions and engagement towards a lasting peace

With the support of the UN System, national and local governments worked together to provide tailored, community-led solutions and responses to their needs, especially during the challenging pandemic period. Work was carried out with dozens of community-based organisations to ensure service continuity during curfews, and dialogue sessions on extremism and hate speech with journalists, youth and religious groups were organised. Communications specialists from across the UN system also provided surge capacity to the government of Sri Lanka's public communications efforts, reaching over 16 million Sri Lankans in 2020. Refer to Chapter 2 for more detailed information.

# UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

## Driver 3: Human security and socio-economic resilience



With COVID-19 threatening the economic security of the country and its people, the UN system supported the necessary protection policy responses for all, especially the most vulnerable. School meals were distributed even when students were learning at home, and micronutrient deficiency support was given to thousands of additional vulnerable households, among other projects. Sri Lanka's mobile workforce abroad was assisted upon their return to the country with health screening, testing, administrative and data management,

in support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Regarding non-COVID health responses, technical assistance from UN agencies enabled Sri Lanka to be one of the first in the region to eliminate measles and rubella of the 2023 target, while enabling the enacting of a national mental health policy.

## Driver 4: Enhancing resilience to climate change and disasters and strengthening environmental management

UN supported national partners in integrating and submitting the NDCs and lent its assistance to projects on waste management and conflict prevention, climate migration, cash transfers and livelihood diversification. The country's Disaster Management Centre benefitted from support during flood and landslide seasons and UN agencies worked together on a natural disaster plan adapted to the COVID-19 situation, which was put into effect during a cyclone event in 2020.

## PARTNERSHIPS AND FINANCE

Sri Lanka and its partners strengthened their ways of working together, mobilising resources, and sharing knowledge, with the UN playing a strong coordinating role to strengthen sustainable development.

**UNCT mobilised**



**in support of  
joint priorities**

Through the establishment of the UN Sri Lanka SDG Pooled Fund – and its three themes of Peace, Resilience, and Data, Finance and Planning – the UN in Sri Lanka mobilised over \$40 million on areas of work including peace and human rights, resilience during the pandemic, support to the justice sector (UNDP, UNICEF), institutional capacity against terrorist activities (UNODC), addressing violence against women and girls (UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women), and support to the recovery





## PARTNERSHIPS AND FINANCE

of micro and small enterprises (ILO, UNOPS). Upcoming activities planned and agreed upon in 2020 with plans to be carried out in following years include support to food safety and quality (FAO, UNIDO).

Through partnerships with different international donors, such as Australia, the EU and the US, helped fund activities and projects to strengthen Sri Lanka's preparedness and response to emergencies, or reach communities with tailored messaging. Strategic innovative financing submissions from UN System members in Sri Lanka (UNDP, UNICEF, WHO) to a global sustainable development fund were selected to launch projects which will support and further boost important sustainable financing for government priorities.

Through the RC-chaired Development Partners (DP) Forum knowledge and experiences were shared among UN entities and international donors, both from foreign governments and multilateral institutions. This One UN approach to partnerships facilitated the cooperation between the UN, government ministries and some NGOs to address COVID-19.

**Through the Development Partners Forum knowledge and experiences were shared among UN entities and international donors, which facilitated the cooperation between the UN, government ministries and NGOs to address COVID-19.**

Other areas of partnership coordinated by the RCO included research documents on national development planning, SDGs and assessing the country's partnerships in conjunction with UN HQ; supporting thematic webinars, for example on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) during the pandemic, jointly by UN entities and the private sector through the UN Global Compact (UNGC); engaging with IFIs on COVID-19 response, emergency budget support, macroeconomics and fiscal issues, and other topics.

Partnerships were identified and initialised by the RCO with the academic sector, for instance the University of Colombo, on research, promotion and knowledge sharing regarding SDGs; and with the private sector, for example with WFP gathering a number of companies to work on workplace nutrition, awareness raising on healthy diets and others.



## PARTNERSHIPS AND FINANCE

Further private sector outreach strengthened the embedding of corporate sustainability aligned with the SDGs, enhanced collaboration to create awareness among the private sector around specific SDGs goals and targets through various initiatives of the local network; and facilitated relationships between companies and UN agencies through an online platform for SMEs during the pandemic.



# HUMAN RIGHTS AND INCLUSION

The UN System focused efforts on building peace, inclusion and promoting and protecting of human rights for equitable development for all Sri Lankans

The links between the SDGs and their normative foundation in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which advocate for peaceful, just, inclusive and equitable development are reflected in the core UNSDF programming. Ensuring the protection and promotion of human rights, sensitivity to conflict in the context of reconciliation and sustaining peace, and the goal of Leaving No One Behind, in alignment with the Government's overarching priorities, therefore remained key tenets in the pursuit of sustainable development in Sri Lanka.

The United Nations continued to work with the Government of Sri Lanka towards the fulfilment of its commitments to international human rights instruments and international frameworks. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, no Special Procedures visited Sri Lanka in 2020 despite standing invitations. However, engagement remains, with eight communications being issued since January 2020,



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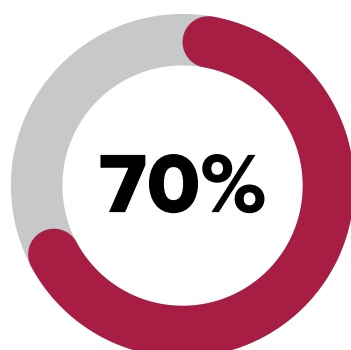
to which the Government responded to two. The Government has also agreed on dates for a country visit by the Special rapporteur on modern forms of slavery in 2021.

In a context where the responsibilities of the armed forces were significantly expanded, among others in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the operationalisation of an updated Human Rights Due Diligence Policy

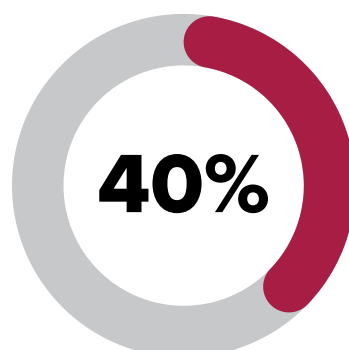
**Operationalisation of an updated Human Rights Due Diligence Policy ensured that important United Nations support to national counterparts remained rooted in the normative framework of the UN system**

## HUMAN RIGHTS AND INCLUSION

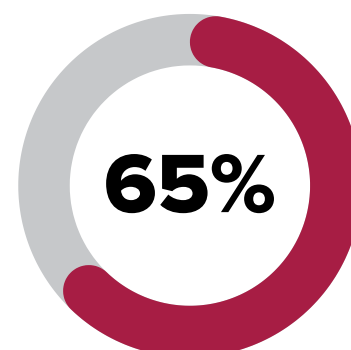
### Resettlement



**Increased  
incomes**



**Improved living  
standards**



**Confidence in  
resettlement**

As reported to UNDP Sri Lanka

ensured that important United Nations support to national counterparts remained rooted in the normative framework of the UN system, which establishes special procedures when supporting non UN security forces. Cooperation on rule of law and security matters, such as support for remote court hearings on bail proceedings and the construction of facilities to reduce concentration in prison populations was carried out, together with training programmes on prison security which uphold human rights in accordance with the Nelson Mandela Rules.

Cooperation in the area of peace and reconciliation was marked by accelerated transition in 2020, as the Peacebuilding Priority Plan (PPP) was phased out and implementation of an updated Joint Programme for Peace (JPP) was scaled up with the support of additional donor resources. While Sri Lanka's decision to withdraw from co-sponsorship of UN Human Rights Council Resolution 30/1 and 40/1 resulted in key areas of support to be reconsidered, revisions to the programme created new common ground to continue supporting the Government's aspirations to achieve relevant SDG targets under the 2030 Agenda, especially SDG 16.

JPP investment is focused on strengthening the institutions that contribute to peacebuilding, with a particular emphasis on the process of dealing with the past, social cohesion, and durable returns/resettlement and economic development.





## HUMAN RIGHTS AND INCLUSION



### **11 UN Agencies, in partnership with the Government launched the UN Network on Migration to promote migration policies that support the wellbeing of migrants**

With formidable COVID-19 challenges to programme implementation, progress was made in, among others, the JPP supporting the Office on Missing Persons (OMP) to launch its website in November 2020 and in the historic step of consolidating and publishing a verified list of 9391 missing persons across the 9 provinces; the Office of Reparations (OR) strengthening its mental health and psychosocial support, establishing an Information Management System and submitting a draft National Reparations Policy to the Ministry of Justice; and lending its support to several workshops with civil society on gender sensitivity in reparations programmes.

The UN further continued supporting the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, both in implementation of its statutory mandate and in its role of screening/vetting of Sri Lankan troops and individuals prior to service in UN Peacekeeping. Through a new initiative supported by the Peacebuilding Fund, the UN also helped strengthen the partnerships and technical capacities of Lankan CSOs in tracking online hate speech on social media platforms and engage with a range of stakeholders in Government and society on constructive counter-narratives.



# GENDER EQUALITY

Inter-agency collaboration and systematic assessment of gaps, needs, best practices and challenges was key to advance gender equality among all UN entities in the country.



**First to complete UNCT Gender-Swap Card**

The UN in Sri Lanka made significant strides in 2020 as it became the first Country Team that completed the UNCT-SWAP (System-wide Action Plan) Gender Equality Scorecard online, in the peak of the pandemic. At a targeted training at the regional level, UN Women, the RCO and WHO (as the Gender Theme Group Chair) exchanged knowledge and lessons learnt and enabled the team to strengthen their substantive support system when implementing these scoring systems.

The scorecard process – which included an awareness survey to understand staff perceptions on gender sensitivity and build capacity, something identified as a best practice regionally – gauged the status of gender equality, sensitivity and focus within the UN's activities in Sri Lanka, and helped identify specific actions to fully meet and exceed the scorecard's standards.

Encouragingly, the assessment found that the UN in Sri Lanka meets standards on UN Development Assistance Framework indicators, joint programmes, and both leadership and staff capacity on gender. Pending areas were identified, prioritised and targeted in subsequent UNCT processes – such as establishing a dedicated UNCT Gender coordinator.

Other areas of work include using similar processes and lessons learnt for the UNCT and RCO in the Disability Inclusion and Youth Scorecards in 2020; and developing an action plan of activities and procedures on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse.

**UN Sri Lanka meets the standards on UNDAF indicators, joint programmes, and both leadership and staff capacity on gender**



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