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Operational Updates

Severe drought in Sri Lanka:

- The WFP Sri Lanka Country Director and Resident Coordinator met the President and other officials at a Presidential Special Drought Task Force meeting.

- The Ministry of Disaster Management (MoDM) and the External Resources Department of the Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs have requested drought-related support from WFP, in particular Cash for Work/Food Assistance for Asset Creation. WFP is deciding on response options while awaiting the Government’s formal request for assistance to the international community.

- Based on a request by the MoDM, WFP technical experts led a preliminary drought rapid assessment using WFP modelling. The report was submitted to a sub-Cabinet Ministers meeting on the drought held on 3 January and was pivotal in alerting government and other stakeholders to the severity of the drought.

- In February, WFP and the Government will lead a joint emergency assessment to assess the impact of the drought on household food security and livelihoods.

National Strategic Review of Food Security and Nutrition towards Zero Hunger (SR):

- The report will be launched on 13 February by the President, along with the presence of the Lead Convenor, former President Madame Bandaranaike, and the WFP Executive Director. Three hundred high-level officials are expected to attend.

- In mid-January, the Lead Convenor presented the SR recommendations to a High Level Committee meeting including 8 Ministers and the WFP Regional Director.

Challenges

- Parts of the country received heavy rains in late January, causing floods in some areas. This will temporarily alleviate water shortages for human and animal use in some areas, but the damage done to the Maha crop is irreversible and there is continued concern for the subsequent Yala season due to the still very low water levels in reservoirs (73 major reservoirs stand at only 28% of their capacity). Based on historical trends, the combined production of staple crops foreseen from the two 2017 harvests is expected to result in the worst rice production levels in the last 10 years.

Country Background & Strategy

Sri Lanka graduated to lower middle-income country status in 2010 due to the adoption of effective development policies. Notwithstanding, the country continues to struggle with the effects of a 27-year civil conflict that resulted in significant economic and social damage. Improvements in human development, and the nutritional status of children, women and adolescents have remained stagnant.

The increased frequency of natural disasters such as drought and flash floods further compounds food and nutrition insecurity. 4.7 million (23 percent of the population) people are undernourished according to the State of Food Insecurity in the World, 2015, and underweight and anaemia affects a quarter of children and women. As per WFP’s most recent Cost of Diet Analysis, 6.8 million people (33 percent) of the population cannot afford the minimum cost of a nutritious diet.

WFP is aligned with the Government’s commitment to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

WFP has been present in Sri Lanka since 1968.

Population: 20.9 million
2015 Human Development Index: 73 out of 188
Income Level: Lower middle income
Malnutrition (stunting): 13.1%
Acute Malnutrition (wasting): 19.6%

Donors

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