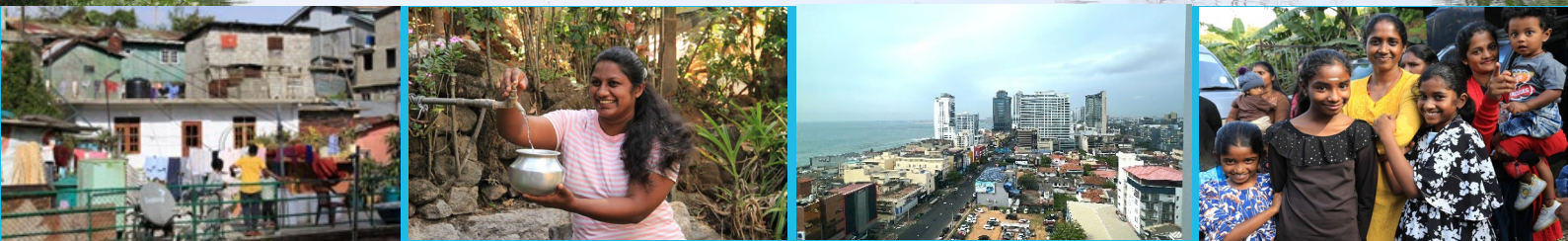


SRI LANKA

2026 – 2029



COUNTRY PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

"A better quality of life in an urbanizing world."



UN-HABITAT

UN-Habitat ROAP Country Programme Overview

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CONTENTS

1. COUNTRY ANALYSIS	4
2. URBAN CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES	9
3. HOUSING, LAND AND BASIC SERVICES.....	10
4. CLIMATE CHANGE	13
5. HUMANITARIAN CRISIS: Cyclone Ditwah in 2025.....	15
6. RECENT AND ONGOING INTERVENTIONS	15
7. COUNTRY FOCUS - THEMATIC PRIORITY AREAS.....	18
8. PLANNED INTERVENTIONS.....	19
9. POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE INTIATIVES	22
10. PUBLICITY AND OUTREACH.....	23

Foreword by the Country Programme Manager

UN-Habitat Sri Lanka Office

Cities are the crossroads where global challenges and solutions meet. Sri Lanka now stands at a decisive moment in its journey toward sustainable urban development. By 2030, nearly half of the nation's population is expected to live in urban areas, intensifying the need to address critical issues in housing, land use, planning, governance, and resilience. These challenges are compounded by the impacts of climate change, the demands of economic recovery, and the devastation left by Cyclone Ditwah in 2025.



In response, the UN-Habitat Country Programme Overview (2026–2030) outlines a strategic vision to guide Sri Lanka's recovery and urban transformation. It emphasizes inclusive growth, environmental sustainability, disaster risk reduction, and resilience. Anchored in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and aligned with UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan, the programme reflects both national priorities and global commitments under the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

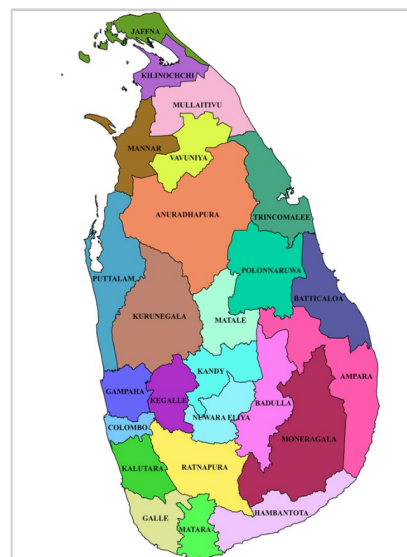
I am pleased to present the Country Programme Overview which reaffirms UN-Habitat's mandate to promote sustainable settlements and adequate housing for all. It emphasizes inclusive growth, environmental sustainability, and resilience to ensure our urban centers become drivers of prosperity rather than centers of vulnerability. Above all, it underscores a commitment to ensuring that no one and no place is left behind as Sri Lanka shapes its urban future.

Harshini Halangode
Country Programme Manager
UN-Habitat – Sri Lanka

1. COUNTRY ANALYSIS

1.1 National Context

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is an island nation located in the Indian Ocean southeast of India covering a land area of 65,610 square kilometers. and a coastline of over 1,790 kilometers. Administratively the country is divided into nine provinces, 25 districts and further divided into 340 Divisional Secretariat (DS) divisions. Each DS division consists of Grama Niladari (GN) divisions (the lowest administrative level), totaling 14,008. 28.1% of the population is concentrated in the Western Province while the Colombo District, home of both commercial and administrative capitals, historically held the largest population, with urban sprawl, the Gampaha district has now overtaken with 2.43 million people versus 2.37 million in Colombo. Notably however, population density is still the highest in Colombo at 3,549 person per square kilometer.



*District Map of Sri Lanka.
Source: Department of Agriculture,
Sri Lanka*

1.2 FACT SHEET



Governance Structure

Executive Presidency
Parliament (225 members)
Provincial Administration (9)
Local Government (340 DS, 14,008 GN)



Housing Land & Basic Services

Housing gap – 189,858 units.

Post Ditwah 113,777 fully and partially damaged (USD 905 million)

Land – tenure security + disputes, 82% government owned.

Post Ditwah 30% estimated as fragile land susceptible to floods and landslides

Housing Affordability- Price to income ratio 55%+

Basic Services

- Access to basic services Rate (water & sanitation)- 95%
- generally satisfactory but access to safe water- 58%.
- waste management problematic.

Post Ditwah – 538 community-managed water supply systems damaged,
- 3670 km local roads (rural and estate) damaged/destroyed,



Urbanization

By 2030 **50%** of population will live in **urban areas**

4.4 million Urban Population

Urbanization Rate- **19.2%**

Rural-urban migration, urban sprawl, ribbon development along arterial roads – **unplanned development, congestion, vulnerability to natural hazards, environmental concerns**

Urban Population



19%

Population - 21,781,800

Population Growth rate: **0.5%** (average annual 2012-2024)

4th most **densely populated** in South Asia

Aging Rate (**65+**)- **12%**

By 2040 **elderly** will be 25%



Climate Change

96% of disasters are climate induced

Cyclone Ditwah recovery needs **USD 3.4 billion**

Floods & landslides have made **land unstable and uninhabitable**
Heat significantly impacts health, education, and productivity.



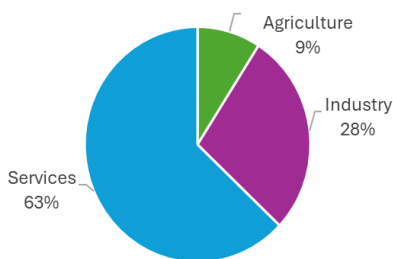
Economy

GDP per Capita **USD 4516**

Human Development Index (HDI)- **0.776**

Sources: Governance: www.gov.lk, Housing Land and Basic Services: Department of Census and Statistics, 2024, Post Disaster Needs Assessment Cyclone Ditwah, 2025, Urbanization: Department of Census and Statistics, 2024, Population: Department of Census and Statistics, 2024, Climate Change: World Bank Climate Portal, Post Disaster Needs Assessment Cyclone Ditwah, 2025, Economy: World bank, 2024 and Central Bank Sri Lanka, 2024

1.3 Economy



Economic Sectors. Source: Economic Statistics, 2024

Sri Lanka has maintained stable macro-economic conditions emphasizing private sector-led development and foreign investment, leading to rapid growth in the Industrial and Service sectors (especially apparel and tourism), and a corresponding decline in the contribution of agriculture to GDP. Remittances from overseas workers also contributed significantly to the national economy.

The post-conflict era saw economic growth peak at 8% in 2010, By 2019 Sri Lanka graduated to Upper Middle Income status but, with back-to-back shocks starting with the Easter terror attacks in 2019, compounded by the impact of COVID19, policy missteps and socio-political turmoil that aggravated an already fragile macroeconomy, Sri Lanka went into debt default in 2022. Since 2023, aided by an

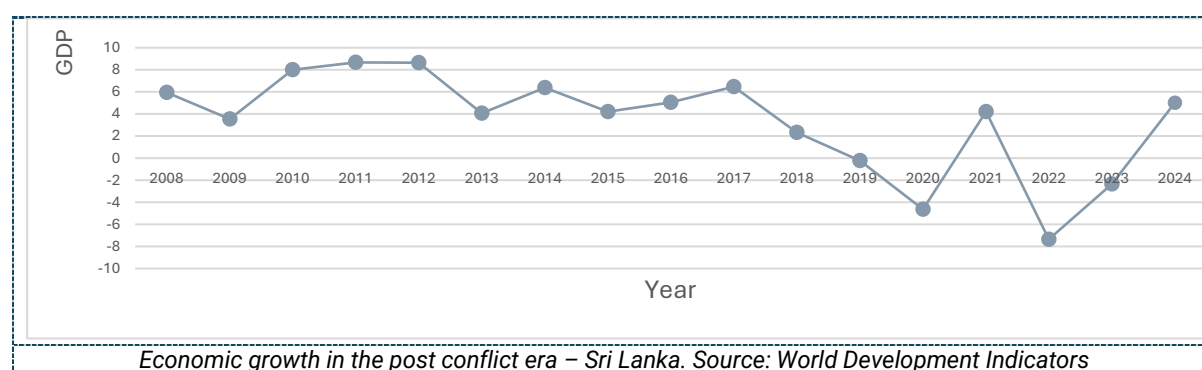
International Monetary Fund's Extended Fund Facility, debt restructuring, and prudent policies, the economy has shown slow recovery although poverty remains at 24.5% (World Bank Development Update, April 2025). With the landfall of Cyclone Ditwah in November 2025, the tentative gains made have been eroded and the necessity to Build Back Better and Safer is emphasized.



Tea plantation workers. Credit: Dennis Keller

1.4 Poverty

With the economic downturn, the growth of a new urban poor within informal settlements is witnessed. This 'new poor' population contributed to tripling poverty post COVID and the economic crisis and are highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change – urban heat islands, flooding, vector borne diseases – and face constraints in accessing basic services, affordable accommodation, and safe and sanitary public spaces. Informal employment accounts for about two-thirds of employment in Sri Lanka, with around 5.5 million workers lacking access to formal safety nets (Sri Lanka: Selected Issues in: IMF Staff Country Reports, 2022), underscoring the urgency for inclusive urban policies.



The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) indicates that 2.9% of the population in Sri Lanka is multidimensionally poor while an additional 14.3% is classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty. It disproportionately affects the estate sector (Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (2024)).

1.5 Gender and Social Inclusion

The Constitution of Sri Lanka secures women's rights, equality and prohibits discrimination based on sex. Yet women face persistent barriers to resources and opportunities despite high levels of literacy, education and healthcare attainments. Systemic gender inequality remains entrenched in key sectors such as economic participation¹, political representation and access to assets, including land tenure, and livelihood opportunities.



*Female home gardener from Nuwara Eliya District.
Source: UN-Habitat Sri Lanka Office*

Women continue to face a combination of systemic obstacles, such as gender-based violence and harassment at work and in public transport and entrenched social and cultural norms. They are also penalized by their disproportionate unpaid care burdens and higher gender pay gap. These lead to occupational segregation, limited skills and opportunities, undervaluing of work, and lower quality jobs.

With an aging population and shrinking labour force, if the full potential of women in the workforce is not garnered, Sri Lanka risks facing a prolonged period of economic stagnation, hence gender equality is a critical economic imperative for sustaining future growth and prosperity.

1.6 Historical and cultural heritage

Sri Lanka's written history spans over 2,500 years, with evidence suggesting human habitation between 75,000 to 125,000 years ago. This rich history has left behind a wealth of tangible cultural assets including religious and historical monuments and irrigation systems scattered throughout the island, some declared as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. Similarly, the influence of diverse cultures and international trade has resulted in a rich and varied heritage of intangible assets such as pageants, temple festivals, diverse dance forms practiced by different communities, handicrafts and cuisines.



*Yapahuwa Rock Fortress.
Source: Blue Lanka Tours*

¹ Women's labour force participation is significantly low, declining from 36.6% in 2017 to 29.6% in Q1 of 2024, with 59% of women (versus 4.4% of men) remaining outside the labour force due to care responsibilities.

1.7 Biodiversity



Map of Western Ghats- Sri Lanka biodiversity hotspot Source: Conservation International

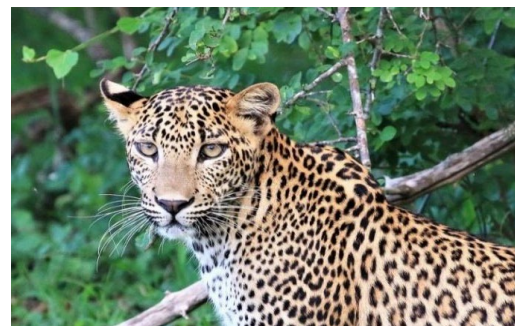
Sri Lanka is globally recognized as part of the “Western Ghats–Sri Lanka Biodiversity Hotspot,” one of the 36 biodiversity hotspots identified by Conservation International, due to its exceptional biodiversity and high vulnerability. It also possesses exceptional endemism, with approximately 3,016 endemic species recorded of which 133 are on the IUCN Red List, including the Asian elephant.

Sri Lanka is divided into three main ecological zones, each possessing unique topography, climatic, geological, and biodiversity features (National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan 2016-2022). While almost three quarters of the total land area had forest coverage in 1900, natural forest is 29.7% of the total land area in 2015 (UN-DESA, Sri Lanka Monitoring Frameworks Report 2023).

Depletion of forest cover is a result of historical and contemporary pressures including expansion of the plantation economy, land settlement, irrigation and mega-infrastructure development projects.

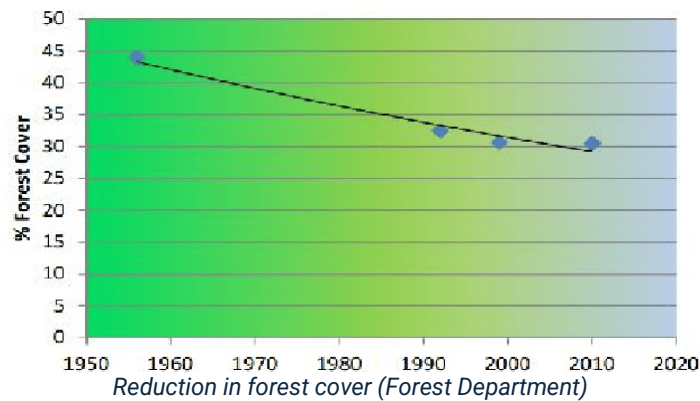


Asian Elephant (*Elephas maximus*).
Credit: Charmalee Jayasinghe



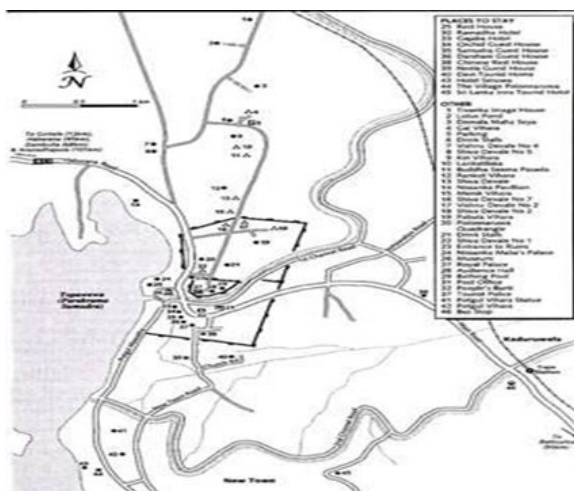
Sri Lankan leopard (*Panthera pardus kotiya*).
Credit: Charmalee Jayasinghe

While Sri Lanka is a signatory to key international treaties on biodiversity and has a comprehensive policy regulatory framework which includes protected areas, the efficiency of conservation efforts is hampered by overlapping or unclear responsibilities among government bodies, inadequate funding and management capacity, together with a lack of community awareness and engagement in conservation efforts.



Source: Identification of Forest Cover Changes in Polonnaruwa District of Sri Lanka

2. URBAN CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES



Map of ancient city Polonnaruwa.

Source: Sri Lanka Travel Guide- Kingdom of Polonnaruwa

The urbanization process in Sri Lanka dates back to the 7th to 8th Century B.C with the development of several cities, known as “Nagara,” strategically located along international and internal trade routes, and irrigation tank systems. These early urban settlements exhibited hallmarks of complex societies, including social hierarchies, established governance systems, and craft specializations.

2.1 Post-Independence Urban Dynamics



Low-income settlement in Colombo.
Credit: UN-Habitat Sri Lanka Office

Early post-independence era saw rapid population growth around Colombo, the commercial capital as well as other provincial capitals. This growth often led to the proliferation of urban low-income settlements known as “Watta” (garden) on marginal lands within the city limits.

The Urban Development Authority (UDA) was established by Act No. 41 of 1978 to promote integrated planning and implementation of economic, social, and physical development in urban areas, offering regulatory oversight and technical expertise to local authorities. The National Physical Planning Department (NPPD) was later established in 2000 through an

amendment to the Town and Country Planning Ordinance, responsible for formulating national physical plans.

2.2 Contemporary Urbanization Challenges and Characteristics

Present-day urbanization in Sri Lanka exhibits unique characteristics compared to its regional neighbors. Officially, it remains one of the least urbanized nations in the region, with just 19% of the population residing within officially defined urban administrative boundaries. However, this captures only those settlements termed as municipal or urban, but many Pradeshiya Sabha areas are urban by nature but listed as rural – hence the definition of urban does not consistently represent increasingly urban characteristics. Research suggests that urbanization is closer to 40% or higher.



*A view of Colombo skyline with the lotus tower in distance.
Credit: Charmalee Jayasinghe*

Much of Sri Lanka's urbanization is characterized by urban sprawl, ribbon development along arterial roads, and rapid expansion in peripheral areas. This pattern has generated several developmental issues, including significant loss of productivity due to traffic congestion, increased costs for providing infrastructure and services, greater vulnerability to natural and environmental impacts.

Unlike many other South Asian countries, the percentage of shanties remains low in Sri Lanka, with most housing units seeing in-situ improvements, and access to basic services including individual pipe-borne water and metered electricity is notably high, while settlements are typically small. Furthermore, these multiethnic low-income communities possess long-standing and robust social structures and networks.

3. HOUSING, LAND AND BASIC SERVICES

Sri Lanka's housing landscape is diverse and complex. Although homeless is very low at 2,281 persons as per the Census of Population and Housing 2024, housing poverty is around 900,000 units irrespective of income levels and geographical sectors (urban, rural and estate). The annual demand for housing is estimated at between 50,000-100,000 new units per year, while the housing gap is estimated at 189,858 units, being 3.23% of the total housing stock and growing at a steady rate due to rising demand and inadequate supply. In addition, Cyclone Ditwah caused extensive damage to over 113,000 housing and critical infrastructure, underscoring the urgency of climate resilient development.



Housing demand and supply in Sri Lanka. Source: Department of Census and Statistics 2012



*High-rise housing unit in Colombo.
Credit: UN-Habitat Sri Lanka Office*

Although the demand for housing in cities is growing, issues of affordability, particularly of land, have limited supply especially in the low and middle-income segment. While the number of informal settlements in cities has stabilized, the number of housing units within the settlements are growing steadily due to population growth and domestic migration. Land tenure security is a major constraint for self-investment for housing quality improvement as most residents do not possess adequate legal land tenure. Although the recent urban regeneration projects aimed at improving housing and releasing land by relocating over 20,000 households into multi-story apartments, these have faced considerable criticism over unaffordable maintenance costs, poor quality of

construction, vandalism and most significantly the breakdown of established social networks (Sevanatha-Colombo Settlements Survey 2023).

Lack of adequate housing also has historical legacies particularly among the plantation communities and conflict affected households in the central, northern and eastern provinces. Families engaged in the plantation sector continue to live in deteriorating “line rooms” with minimal amenities and no tenure security. While government and donor investments have been made, over 175,000 units still require reconstruction and formal land allocation.



Line rooms in Nuwara Eliya. Source: Sri Lanka Planters (SLP)

Although major investments have been made by the government and development partners for housing reconstruction in the conflict affected areas including construction of over 33,000 units by UN-Habitat alone, 137,000 units remain to be reconstructed. Landlessness is further exacerbated by state-citizen land conflicts, including government acquisition of land previously owned by communities displaced by conflict, as well as the government's limited capacity to re-issue lost land tenure documentation.

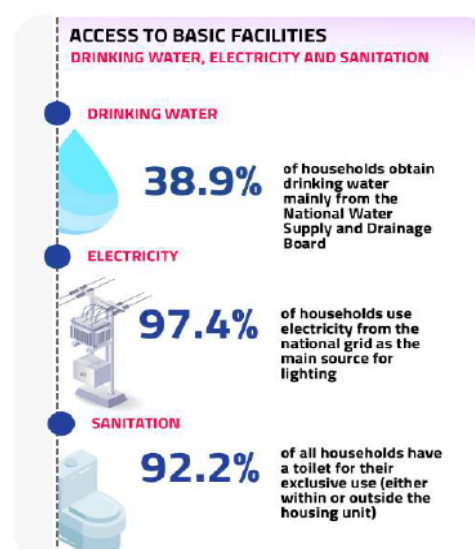
Meanwhile, the rental market remains weak, with rising demand for affordable housing unmet due to outdated legislation, high construction costs, and limited investment in middle-income housing. Renters face poor living conditions, long commutes, and limited options to expand access and supply across income groups.

A conservative banking sector lacking innovative housing finance products, restrictive policies including taxation on rental housing income, play a crucial role in limiting housing supply. Therefore, a multi-faceted approach to improve access to finance and housing solutions across the spectrum of various demand segments in the housing market through close collaboration between the public and private sector is required to provide equitable solutions to the housing crisis.

Current trends and developments have made the National Housing Policy (2019) outdated, while complex administrative processes continue to hinder sector progress. Revising the policy through wider stakeholder consultation to create a conducive and vibrant housing sector is strongly needed to streamline procedures, strengthen institutional capacities and create progressive investment to advance housing development in Sri Lanka.

3.1 Urban Basic Services

In general Sri Lanka's level of basic services remains at a satisfactory level in 2024. However, some aspects of basic service provision need urgent attention to ensure a satisfactory quality of life mainly for poor and vulnerable households. Although access to drinking water is high, access to piped water sources remains at 58%. The country records higher rate of non-revenue water in the piped water schemes accounting around 30% which makes water supply cost unsustainable. Over 55% of households use firewood as the primary mode of cooking contributing to both environmental and



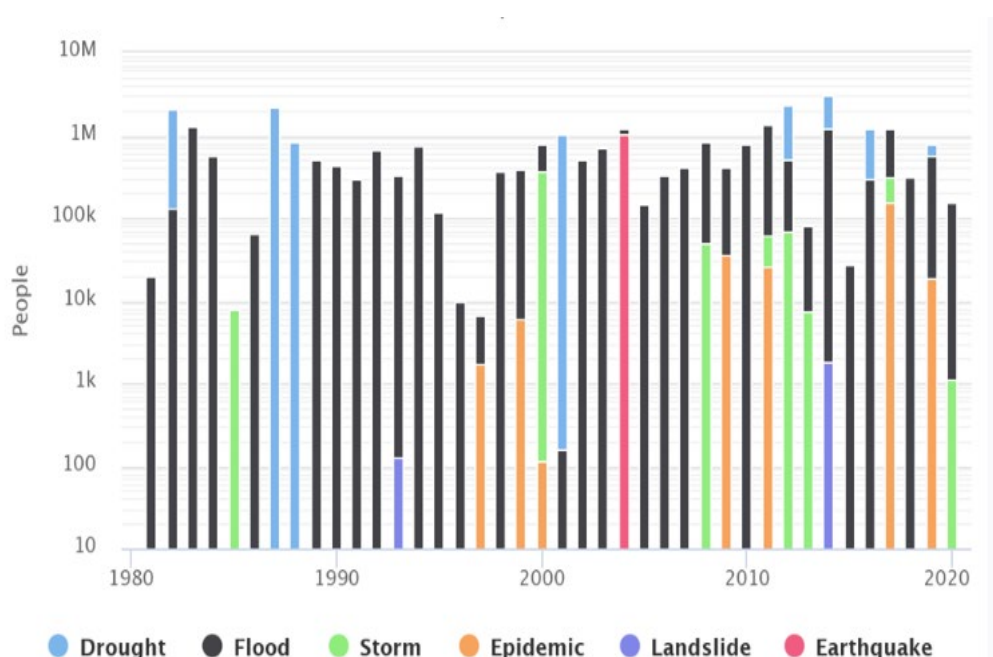
Provision of urban basic services
Source: Dept of Census & Statistics

household air pollution. The conflict affected northern and eastern provinces and communities in the hill country districts of Nuwara-Eliya and Badulla, including estate sector communities, lag behind in basic service provision (Statistics 2024).

4. CLIMATE CHANGE

Sri Lanka faces a high and escalating climate risk, consistently ranking in the top 10 countries globally, and notably placed within the top five countries with the highest climate risk in 2016 and 2017. The nation's position in the Indian Ocean significantly influences its climate and associated risks. The country's climate is classified as tropical monsoon climate and characterized by three main climatic and three topographic zones.

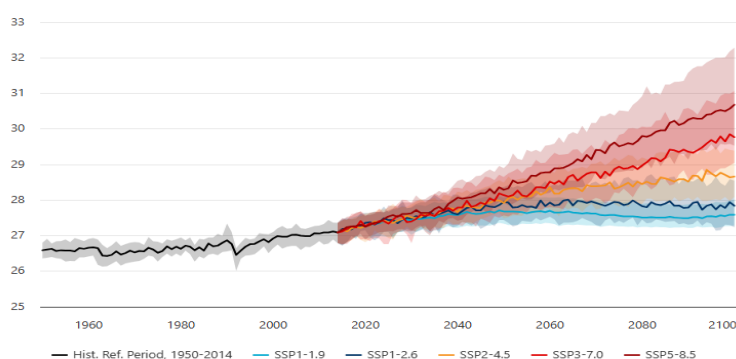
A significant "Warm/Wet" trend has been observed over the past five decades with increases in temperature and precipitation. Historically, 96% of all natural disasters in Sri Lanka are climate induced. Between 1975 and 2022, the country experienced over 2,500 extreme weather events, costing approximately 0.4% of the GDP annually. Tropical storms are the most common, with cyclones occurring every 3-4 years. Heat stress is significantly impacting health, education and the economy due to reduced productivity.



The number of people affected by natural disasters between 1980 and 2020.

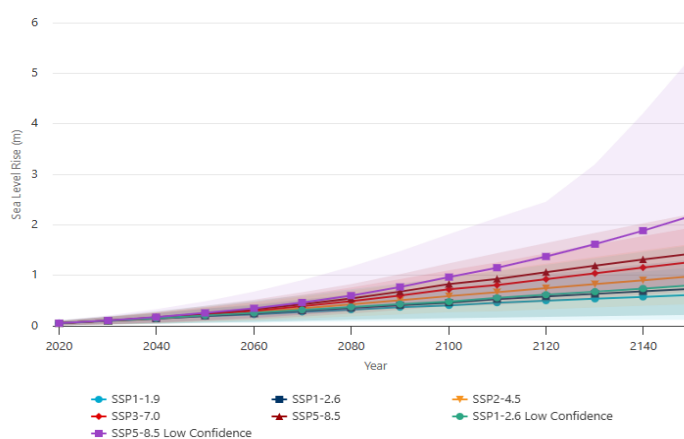
Source: World Bank - Climate Change Knowledge Portal

4.1 Future Climatic Projections and Impacts



Projected mean temperature until 2100- 2020
Source: World Bank - Climate Change Knowledge Portal

Future projections (SSP1-2.6 to SSP3-7.0 scenarios) indicate a continuation of the warm wet trend. Sea levels are projected to rise by 0.2 to 0.23m by 2050, increasing to 0.46 to 0.72m by the end of the century, while fractional increase in tropical storms and cyclones is also predicted (climate



Projected sea-level rise under various Climate Change prediction scenarios
Source: 2020 World Bank Climate Change Knowledge portal

Change Knowledge Portal, World Bank). These changes are predicted to increase climate disaster losses to 1.2% of GDP under SSP1-2.6. Severe flooding under SSP3-7.0 could increase urban infrastructure damages up to US\$160 million annually, impacting housing, health, education infrastructure, and hydropower generation. Extreme rainfall is likely to intensify landslides, threatening 20% of Sri Lanka's land, particularly the Central Highlands. Critical infrastructure, including coastal arterial road and rail links, and main water supply systems, are vulnerable to sea level rise and salinity intrusion.

Health impacts, decreased yields of agriculture, fisheries and livestock products and lack of productivity in agriculture and in urban informal economy, are predicted due to extreme heat and water stress under high emission scenarios. The bottom 40% of the population, including those reliant on agriculture, will be disproportionately affected. The gender gap is expected to widen, and social cohesion is projected to decrease due to natural resource conflicts.

5. HUMANITARIAN CRISIS: Cyclone Ditwah in 2025

Sri Lanka suffered its worst disaster in two decades, as Cyclone Ditwah triggered massive floods and landslides. The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment places recovery and reconstruction costs at USD 3.4 billion under the Build Back Better and Safer Framework. Housing and settlements - many completely washed away - emerge as one of the most politically and socially sensitive priorities, requiring USD 905 million. Restoring transport networks is vital to re-establish supply chains, market access, and essential services. Water infrastructure too is severely damaged, leaving rural communities without safe water supply. Environmental losses, driven by ecosystem degradation, weakened flood protection, and watershed damage, are estimated at USD 214 million, more than 60% higher than recorded damages.

Medium- long term investments focus on terrestrial and freshwater ecosystem restoration, coastal and marine habitat rehabilitation, wildlife recovery, and strengthened environmental valuation and biodiversity impact assessment systems, positioning nature as critical infrastructure for long-term resilience.

6. RECENT AND ONGOING INTERVENTIONS

1 Build Resilience to Climate Change and Climate Variability of Vulnerable Communities in Mullaitivu District of Sri Lanka

The project aims to improve climate-related socio-economic outcomes in the targeted fishing and agricultural communities through the implementation of community-based adaptation solutions; and to support climate resilient development and increase institutional and community capacity to adapt to the changing and variable climate.



2023 - 2027



USD 2 M

Adaptation fund



Ministry of Environment, Mullaitivu District Secretariat, CBOs

2 Safe and Resilient Water Supply for Western Cities - Integrating Climate Resilience into Water Safety Plans of the Ambatale and Biyagama Water Supply Schemes

The project aims to improve catchment management capacities of Urban Local Bodies and early warning capacities of the National Water Supply & Drainage Board to increase the resilience of operations and maintenance of the Ambatale and Biyagama Water Supply Schemes, pertaining to climate change induced floods and droughts, by aligning with WHO Water Safety Plan Edition II, enabling upscaling at national level.



2025 - 2027



USD 469,232



Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)
Water Supply & Drainage Board, Urban Local Authorities

3

Enhancing Interregional Knowledge Exchange and Capacities of National Governments in Lao PDR, Madagascar, South Africa, and Sri Lanka on Financing for Urban Sustainable, Net-Zero, Climate Resilient and Nature Positive Development for the Most Vulnerable Urban Communities (Part of the RISE UP flagship programme)

This project will enhance capacities of national governments in LDCs and SIDS, especially Lao PDR, Madagascar, Sri Lanka, and South Africa, on financing for urban sustainable, net-zero, climate resilient and nature positive development. It will mobilize finance for accelerating climate adaptation and resilience efforts of the cities where the cascading and compounding urban risks and vulnerabilities are the highest.



2024 - 2027



USD 176,000



2030 Agenda Sub Fund of the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund



Colombo Municipal Council and Wattala-Mabola Urban Council

4

Strengthening Socioeconomic Resilience of Communities Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Central and Uva Provinces of Sri Lanka

This project is supporting and strengthening socioeconomic recovery and resilience of estate and rural communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in Central and Uva Provinces of Sri Lanka. Key project outcomes: People have uninterrupted access to safely managed water supply, sewerage and waste management systems; and farmers and communities have improved agricultural productivity and food security.



2022 - 2026



USD 5,500,000



Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA)



Ministry of Public Administration, Home Affairs, Provincial Councils and Local Government, District Secretariats, Nuwara Eliya and Badulla, Divisional Secretariats, Provincial Councils and Local Authorities, CBOs.

5

Indian Housing Project in Plantation Areas

Phase III of the Indian Housing Project in the Central and Uva Provinces of Sri Lanka constructed 1,615 houses, as part of India's overall commitment of 50,000 houses enabling the sustainable resettlement of plantation worker families in newly created cluster villages and small townships, under the MoU between the GoI and GoSL. A total of 17,662 individuals benefited from training activities. Key lessons highlight the importance of early stakeholder engagement, timely land and beneficiary finalization, readiness of basic infrastructure, adopting an integrated and demand-

driven approach, and allowing house design customization to enhance beneficiary ownership and satisfaction.



2016-2021



USD 1,000,000 (beneficiary grants not included)



Government of India (GoI)



Government of Sri Lanka, High Commission of India, Plantation Human Development Trust, Regional Plantation Companies, Estate Worker Housing Cooperative Societies



Support Initiative for Green Building Based Prevention and Control Measures for Vulnerable Communities in Mullaitivu District

The project reduced risks from poor housing structures and promoted safer, cleaner, and climate-resilient cities in Asia and the Pacific during the COVID-19 pandemic through green building initiatives. In Sri Lanka, Cambodia, and Nepal, the project implemented community-based rapid assessments to identify urgent green building improvements and promote efficient use of energy, water, and other resources. In Sri Lanka, 110 staff and approximately 1,150 users of 15 community buildings benefited from energy-efficient cookstoves and solar lighting systems. A total of 171 households adopted alternative solar energy solutions and energy-efficient cooking stoves, improving indoor air quality, reducing costs, and enhancing resilience to climate change impacts.



2022-2023



USD 452,611



Government of Japan



Government of Sri Lanka, District Secretariats, Divisional Secretariats, Provincial Government of Northern Province, CBOs, Department of National Planning



Project: RE-Think Buildings Programme

Led by UN-Habitat in partnership with UNEP and UNOPS, this project supported the One Planet Network Sustainable Buildings and Construction Programme for SDG 12. Its overarching aim was to promote a common approach to help countries leverage their buildings, construction, and housing sectors to achieve the SDGs. This initiative focused on mainstreaming resource efficiency in Sri Lanka's housing, buildings, and construction sector. Through stakeholder mapping, country assessments, and the development of a national "Roadmap for Buildings and Construction 2020–2050," it strengthened UN country teams' capacity to support governments in implementing sustainable, low-carbon, and climate-resilient building practices



2021 - 2022



USD 112,000



Multi-partner Trust Fund for Sustainable Consumption and Production



Ministry of Urban Development and Housing Sri Lanka

7. COUNTRY FOCUS - THEMATIC PRIORITY AREAS



RESILIENT HOUSING & INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

- Climate-resilient housing including informal settlement upgrading
- Settlement planning on habitable land with secure tenure,
- Urban planning & policies and related capacity development.



CLIMATE-RESILIENT URBAN SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Expand access to climate-resilient services - WASH, waste, mobility, energy.
- Empower communities through People's Process & maintain systems adapted to local risks:
- Strengthening governance to integrate risk reduction, climate adaptation, and emergency response



NATURE POSITIVE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE URBANIZATION

- Promote nature-positive settlements by conserving blue-green ecosystems
- Integrate nature-based solutions into planning to reduce climate risks.
- Safeguard cultural heritage and embed community identity and diversity in urban-rural continuum.

UN-HABITAT'S STEPS TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS COUNTRY IN NUMBERS (ACHIEVEMENTS)

USD 25 Mn



FUNDS SECURED FOR PROJECTS IN THE COUNTRY

500,000



BENEFICIARIES ASSISTED BY THE PROJECTS

1,500



RESILIENT HOUSES BUILT

8. PLANNED INTERVENTIONS

1

The Future Foundations Initiative: Improving Access to Housing for All

Project's aim

To facilitate the creation of an enabling environment for universal access to climate resilient resource-efficient housing and secure land tenure.

TOTAL BUDGET:
USD 6 million



Relevance to regional implementation plan:

Resilient, risk-informed and climate-sensitive housing and community for all

TIME FRAME:
48 months



Additional Priorities:

Universal access to resilient, risk-informed and climate-sensitive basic services and infrastructures
Urban management transformation through integrated planning, participatory governance and advanced technology

LOCATION:
Sri Lanka



OUTPUT, OUTCOME AND IMPACT:

Output

- Build capacities of state authorities to resolve state-citizen land conflict in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, land assessments and relocation from fragile areas, land tenure issues in the plantations and urban underserved settlements
- Improved Policy framework and strategies to facilitate growth in the housing sector

Expected Outcomes

- Improved climate resilient, socially and culturally appropriate housing and land tenure security for conflict and disaster affected households, plantation communities and underserved settlements
- Enabling environment for participation in low and middle-income housing development created through conducive policy framework, strategies and financing mechanisms
- Improved capacities to mainstream resilience and resource efficiency into the housing sector
Knowledge and skills available for construction of climate resilient, resource efficient housing and increased stock of adequate affordable housing for all



Underserved Settlement in Sri Lanka. Source: UN-Habitat Sri Lanka Office

2

Sub-National Resilience and Nature-Based Adaptation (SRNA) Project

Project's aim

To strengthen institutional capacities of sub national authorities to mainstream climate change into development planning to improve resilience, adaptive capacity and quality of life of vulnerable communities across the urban rural continuum promoting nature-based solutions.

TOTAL BUDGET:
US\$12 million



Relevance to regional implementation plan:

Universal access to resilient, risk-informed and climate-sensitive basic services and infrastructures

TIME FRAME:
48 months



Additional Priorities:

Urban management transformation through integrated planning, participatory governance and advanced technology
Harmonized co-existence of cities and nature and preservation of cultural heritage

LOCATION:
Sri Lanka



Nationally Determined Contributions 3.0 (2025)

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

OUTPUT, OUTCOME AND IMPACT

Output 1: Ecosystem based adaptation and innovative engineered solutions mainstreamed by sub national authorities to improve stormwater drainage, flood risk management, extreme heat stress and reduce economic vulnerability of communities.

Output 2: Improved capacities of local level authorities to manage and reduce water stress, heat stress and droughts through improved access to water for household use and agriculture during droughts for vulnerable communities, particularly women and other socio-economically vulnerable groups.

Output 3: Strengthen central and local government capacity to identify urban/rural settlement planning and regulatory gaps and support the integration of disaster risk management and climate resilience into development plans.



*Flood damage to the infrastructure in the dry zone of Sri Lanka 2015.
Source: Red Cross Sri Lanka*

Expected outcomes

- Reduced impacts of climate induced flash and riverine floods on communities particularly women and other socio-economically vulnerable groups and infrastructure.
- Reduced water stress and improved access to water for household use and agriculture during droughts for vulnerable communities, particularly women and other socio-economically vulnerable groups.
- Management of impacts of extreme heat including Urban Heat Island effects through capacity building of local governments and CBOs and innovative pilot interventions.
- Reduced adverse health impacts, increased comfort levels and productivity through implementation of adaptation and resilience building measures to reduce impacts of extreme heat.

3

Leveraging Nature and Culture for Sustainable Growth

Project's aim

To optimize the economic contribution and reduce vulnerabilities of cultural and natural assets of Sri Lanka through integrated spatial planning and inclusive destination development promoting cultural and biodiversity-based livelihood solutions to benefit local communities and asset preservation.

TOTAL BUDGET:

US\$ 7,000,000



Relevance to regional implementation plan:

Harmonized co-existence of cities and nature and preservation of cultural diversity

TIME FRAME:

60 months



Additional Priorities:

Universal access to resilient, risk-informed and climate-sensitive basic services and infrastructures
Urban management transformation through integrated planning, participatory governance and advanced technology
National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan
Sri Lanka Tourism Strategic Development Plan

LOCATION:

Sri Lanka



OUTPUT, OUTCOME AND IMPACT:

Output

- Inclusive and sustainable tourism destination plans incorporating cultural and natural assets
- Pilot projects implemented to demonstrate the benefits and viability of the approach
- Local tourist facilities supported to obtain national and international standard certifications
- Roadmap and strategy for implementation



*Elephants at Minneriya Park.
Credit: Charmalee Jayasinghe*

Expected outcomes

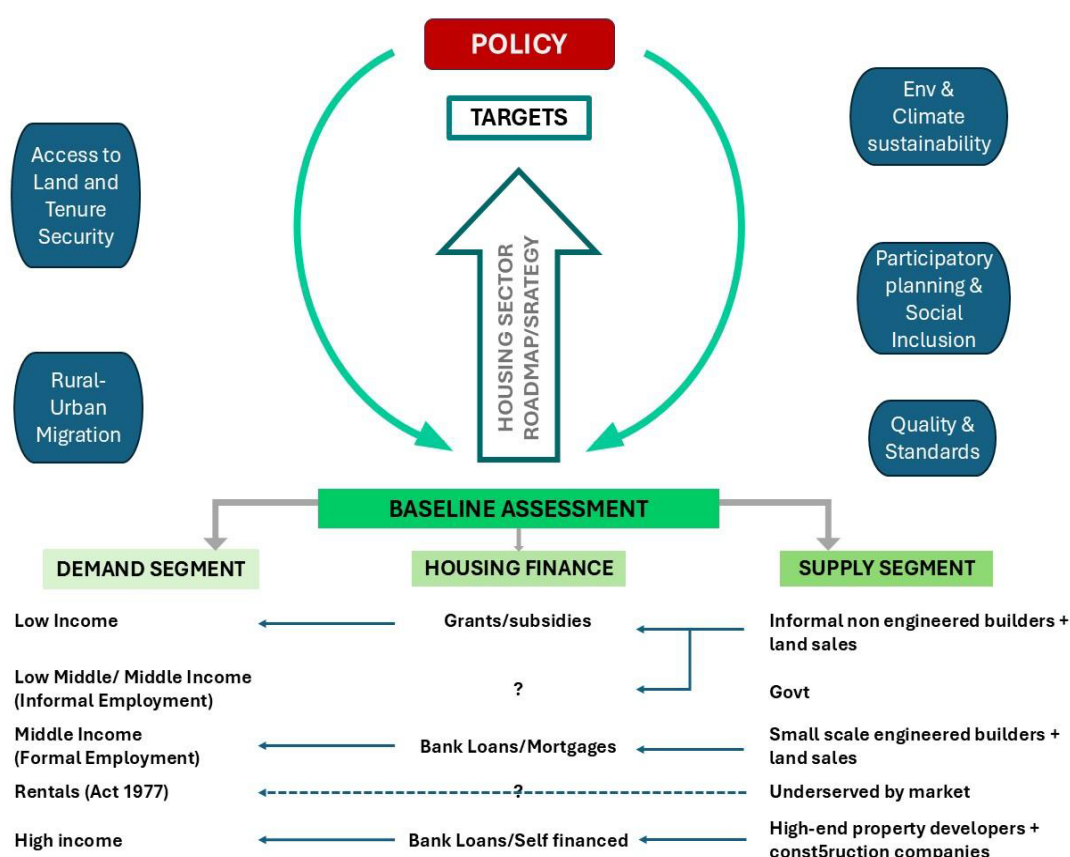
- Increased economic resilience of communities through engagement in promoting biodiversity-compatible livelihoods including eco-tourism, climate-smart agriculture, water management, and Non-Timber Forest Product enterprises to increase rural economic resilience.
- Reduced vulnerabilities of cultural and natural assets including mitigation of human animal conflicts
- Destinations meet national and international standards

9. POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

UN-Habitat Sri Lanka will pursue a series of complementary policy, normative and knowledge initiatives designed to create an enabling environment for inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban transformation. These interventions aim to strengthen institutional capacities, deepen policy coherence, and advance the localization of global commitments.

9.1 Policy and Legislative Initiatives

UN-Habitat will support the Government of Sri Lanka in developing, updating, and implementing key housing and urban policies to ensure coherence with global frameworks. Priority areas include support to updating the National Housing Policy, Strategy and Roadmap, and Urban Policy that promotes sustainable, decentralized, and resilient urban and regional planning, integrating climate adaptation, economic development, digital transformation, renewable energy initiatives and gender-inclusive accessibility across sectors.

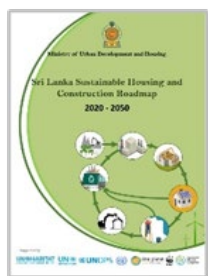


Proposed Modality for Housing sector development. Source: UN-Habitat Sri Lanka Office

10. PUBLICITY AND OUTREACH

Sri Lanka Sustainable Housing and Construction Roadmap 2020-2050

Highlights

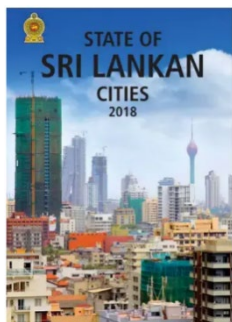


This report presents the findings of the Sustainable Building Construction Country Assessment for Sri Lanka (SBC-CA) and a Roadmap for Sustainable Housing and Construction towards achieving NDCs in the construction industry in Sri Lanka. It examines the current status, and potential opportunities and challenges for adopting Sustainable Building Construction (SBC) practices and policies.

[Sri-Lanka-Sustainable-Housing-and-Construction-Roadmap-2020-2050.pdf](#)

The State of Sri Lankan Cities 2018

Highlights



This report presents the first comprehensive assessment of Sri Lanka's recent urban development. The Report is a key output of the *State of Sri Lankan Cities Project*. It outlines a vision of a *better urban future for all Sri Lankans*, drawing on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and New Urban Agenda, as well as key Government of Sri Lanka strategic documents. The Report provides an analysis of the spatial attributes of Sri Lanka's urbanization and an overview of its people and functions and examines city economies, urban housing, municipal services, urban connectivity and municipal transport, climate risk and resilience, and governance.

[UN-Habitat Sri Lanka | The State of Sri Lankan Cities 2018](#)

Video: From Crisis to Resilience: Voices of Urban Communities

Highlights



This video highlights some of the key challenges faced by urban underserved communities in Sri Lanka and illustrates how communities adapt and build resilience in the face of disasters. The video showcases UN-Habitat Sri Lanka's efforts in conducting geospatial Multi Layered Risk and Vulnerability Assessments in the cities of Colombo and Wattala-Mabola to identify priority areas for risk-informed planning and targeted

resilience building interventions.

[From Crisis to Resilience UN Habitat Sri Lanka Rise up video documentary](#)



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