

# OPERATIONS UPDATE



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge  
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja  
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

## **SRI LANKA: DROUGHT**

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*The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in 178 countries. For more information: [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)*

*Appeal No. 18/2002*

*Launched on 1st July 2002 for CHF 2,457,000 for 9 months. **The operation has been completed.***

*Budget revised to CHF 1,748,000*

*Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) Allocated: CHF 200,000*

*Beneficiaries: 18,000*

*Operations Update No. 2 Period covered: 1 August to 15 November 2002;*

*Next Ops Update (No. 3) expected **end February 2003 (final)***

### IN BRIEF

*Appeal coverage: 31.9%*

*Related Appeals: 01.29/2002 Sri Lanka Annual Appeal, 01.24/2002 South Asia Regional Appeal*

*Outstanding needs: CHF 1,189,667*

*Summary: Through this appeal, and based on funding available, it was planned to support 3,000 families by providing food packets and water distribution to seven divisional areas of the Hambantota district and to carry out preventive health care activities. The operation also including demonstrating long term water conservation practices in ten schools by constructing rainwater harvesting water storage tanks. Food distribution has been carried out in two phases and the water distribution has been completed. As a result of heavy rainfalls and consequent reassessments by the Sri Lanka Red Cross and the Federation on the beneficiary selection the operation has changed. Reassessment after each distribution phase, including community scrutiny, is being carried out to avoid aid dependency. When the need for food distribution diminishes because of the increased rainfall, funds will be diverted into construction of more water tanks for schools and other drought mitigation activities. Due to the sufficient provisions in the funding received already for these changed priorities, the appeal is now closed. The remaining funds will be deployed to support longer term drought mitigation measures to strengthen community level coping mechanisms into the future. An experienced Regional Disaster Response Trained (RDRT) staff member of the*

*Nepal Red Cross has been assigned to support the Sri Lanka Red Cross branch to draw from relevant similar experiences from within the region and to support the final phase of implementation of the programme in this regard.*

### **Operational Developments:**

The overall goal of this drought operation of the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Federation) is to provide supplementary food and water support to the most vulnerable communities within the drought affected areas until the anticipated first harvest of crops in January 2003 (providing rainfall this year is normal). Further generous and valuable donations to support the objectives of this appeal were received from the Swiss Government's Agency for development and Co-operation (SDC), Jersey Overseas Aid through the British Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross, and the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent Society.

The first and second phases of distributions have been carried out. Following consultations with affected communities and subsequent to increased rainfall it was found that income earning opportunities and therefore the purchasing power of affected families were increasing. The criteria for support was changed so that families with four members or less get half a ration as from the second phase distribution. In the second phase, a half ration for one month (i.e. 36 kilos of rice, 7.2 kilos of lentils, 2.7 kilos of edible oil, and 2.7 kilos of sugar) was distributed to 1,814 families in Hambantota and



*Due to lack of proper containers, the initial water distribution through tankers was done house to house. This distribution was discontinued on 15th November. The first rain water capturing tank is currently being constructed in the division of Hambantota and is expected to be completed by the end of December.*

Lunugamvehera divisions. To 700 out of these 1,814 families, another half ration will be distributed in November as they have five family members or more.

The first and second phases of the relief distributions have enabled the Sri Lanka Red Cross to identify and provide critical assistance to the most affected people in the divisions of Hambantota and Lunugamvehera on the basis of economic vulnerability. The Federation's regional disaster response delegate and disaster preparedness manager visited Hambantota in early October and again in mid

November. The purposes were to assist the Sri Lanka Red Cross to evaluate distribution procedures, rainwater harvesting programme, initiate a lessons-learned exercise, and to conduct a training programme on logistics and procurement. The following are some points of operational interest:

- Attendance in some schools have dropped drastically, for example in the school of Kaliyapura the numbers had dropped from 200 to 60.
- Rainwater harvesting is not practised in most areas. Plastic containers provided by local NGO`s are being used for water collection purpose.
- The ground water in most of the areas is not suitable for drinking.
- Most people are ready to contribute for development projects in terms of free labour, provided that some food items are given to them.
- The government’s subsistence scheme “Samurthi” (*Prosperity in Sri Lanka*) provides Sri Lankan Rupees 250-400 (CHF 4-6) per month to each poor family, depending on the number of family members, which is still not sufficient to enable them to supplement their meagre earnings to purchase basic nutritional needs.
- There is a need for a mass awareness campaign as most people do not maximize the use of their waste water to irrigate small kitchen gardens.
- Due to insufficient funds to cover the cost of distribution and the large number of people to be helped, the water provided by the local government to families is sufficient only for drinking purposes but is insufficient for all cooking needs.
- Most farmers only engage in for paddy farming without considering, or having access to informed information about, any alternative measures i.e. fruit plantation, herbs/medicinal plants etc. This erodes their chances of having some secured and diversified earning opportunities from their land.

During the months of August, September and October early substantial rainfall was experienced in the drought affected Hambantota district in the targeted areas of Sooriyawewa, Lunugamwehera and Hambantota divisions (the latter with the same name as the district). The reported rainfall for August, September and October in the affected divisions of the Hambantota district are as follows (in millimetres):

<b>Divisions</b>	<b>August</b>	<b>September</b>	<b>October</b>	<b>Total</b>
Hambantota	82	6.6	119.3	<b>207.9</b>
Sooriyawewa	13	13.7	254.9	<b>281.6</b>
Lunugamwehera	9.3	33	160.9	<b>203.2</b>

The rain has resulted in increased paddy cultivation and employment opportunities for an estimated 50% of the Red Cross beneficiaries in the targeted areas.

As the need for food distribution continues to diminish further because of the increased rainfall and cultivation, Sri Lanka Red Cross and the Federation plan to conduct community level assessments at the end of November to identify food and nutritional requirements over the next two months until the harvest for chenna and paddy farmers. If final food distributions are decreased in size and frequency, funds will be diverted to more water tanks for schools and other drought mitigation activities. Once the mitigation activities bring significant results, a longer drought mitigation project will be considered as part of the national disaster preparedness programme of the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society, and the plans for this have already been finalized for implementation in 2003 and 2004.

Initial problems regarding design and tendering procedures to identify the most qualified personnel to assist in tank design and construction for the water tanks have been solved through a series of lessons-learned exercises. This was complemented by further training on procurement and logistics as well as management meetings for the Sri Lanka Red Cross volunteers and staff.

Water distribution through tankers was discontinued on 15th November. The first rain water capturing tank is currently being constructed in the division of Hambantota and is expected to be completed by

the end of December. The remainder, including an increased additional number of tanks envisaged to strengthen the mitigation objectives of the final phase of the programme, will be accelerated by the technical support to be provided by an experienced staff member from the Nepal Red Cross who will assist the programme until its completion. He began his three month mission on 25 November.

As a result of these recent findings, the operation will put more emphasis on demonstrating methods to capture, conserve and recycle rain water to maximize the effectiveness of its safe use in this rainfall-scarce environment. The purpose will be to reduce the vulnerability to future droughts within the traditionally affected communities.

In response to the external changes and to the outcome of the continuous assessments of the beneficiary needs and selection etc., the operation is changing in direction. Reassessment after each distribution phase, including community scrutiny, is being carried out to avoid aid dependency.



**Co-ordination w**

As in the previous drought relief operation, the Federation has played an important role in facilitating co-ordination between all agencies. Further national level co-ordination meetings under the auspices of the Consortium for Humanitarian Agencies were held on 2nd August and 6th September. These were well attended by WFP, Oxfam, UNDP, UN office of the Resident Co-ordinator, Ministry of Social Services (from both Hambantota District as well as national Ministry levels), World Vision, and the Government’s National Disaster Management Cell. A number of coordinated interventions were discussed and planned. The USAID has shown an increased interest over the drought in Hambantota and the UNICEF has recommended a rainwater capturing system as a possibility for drought mitigation in Sri Lanka.

*Initial problems regarding design and tendering procedures to identify the most qualified personnel to assist in tank design and construction for the water tanks have been solved through a series of lessons-learned exercises.*

In order to continue to raise awareness about the specific food, water, and community health needs of the most long-term affected communities, the Red Cross has also continued to share the results of its findings with other agencies and missions. In response to the need to assess the longer term development perspectives within which the drought affected communities live, the Federation is working with other interested agencies to convene a national development policy workshop in early 2003. The objectives of the workshop would be to convene policy makers from government and all other institutions to relate the humanitarian situation in a wider developmental context and search for more sustainable long term solutions to the needs of the communities in the most highly vulnerable pockets. These objectives continue to make the drought affected areas another global strategic example of “slow onset and hidden” disasters.

The drought relief operation offers many advocacy opportunities to connect learning from the multi-institutional responses so far, to the need to strengthen the national Disaster Management Policy which is currently being drafted by the Government. Discussions have already been held between the Federation and the Government’s National Disaster Management Council to explore how the lessons from the drought relief operation can effectively feed into the drafting of the Government Policy.

**Red Cross Action w**

Relief distributions of two month rations (September and October) for the 1,000 most affected families was completed in mid October and the distributions for one month rations for November are ongoing.

As a result of the rainfall received during August and September paddy cultivation started and in mid October the first crop could be harvested. This increased the employment opportunities for an estimated 50% of the Red Cross beneficiaries in the targeted areas. The changed situation has been taken into account and recommendations have been made concerning the selection criteria and beneficiary selection for the remaining distributions. As a result the Lunugamvehera division has been included for the beneficiary selection.

As an example, while some of the farmers are better off now due to the increase of irrigation water in their area, fishermen of the fresh water ponds in the same area have no expectations for income from their traditional source, hence they are more vulnerable. Targeting only farmers as a selection criteria (occupation rather than economic vulnerability) in these areas is counter productive and has led to strong objections by the communities. The introduction of community scrutiny of the beneficiary lists in this operation will be a connecting factor in the programme. The revised beneficiary list is shown in the table below

No	Division	Number of families	Number of beneficiaries
	<b>Hambantota DS Division</b>		
1	Bandagiriya	96	576
2	Yahangala East	61	366
3	Julgamuwa	174	1'044
4	Yahangala West	56	336
5	Pallamallala	70	414
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>2'736</b>
	<b>Lunugamvehera DS Division</b>		
1	Karambawewa	208	1'248
2	Rambukwewa	275	1'650
3	Ranasiripura	215	1'290
4	Keerthipura	66	396
5	Samanpura	79	474
6	Agbopura	240	1'440
7	Paddawgama	274	1'644
	<i>Subtotal</i>	<b>1'357</b>	<b>8'142</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1'814</b>	<b>10'878</b>

**Red Cross Society w**

40 volunteers in the district branch are actively involved in the operation. In order to further improve the service delivery and efficiency of the relief operation a training session on logistics and procurement took place on 9 October for 14 participants, including volunteers, officials from NHQ and the government. On the following day, a lessons learned exercise targeting 28 volunteers and beneficiaries was carried out. The results of this exercise will be written up as part of a regional case study and will be shared separately with those interested.

***Objectives, activities and results***

**Restoration of food supply w**

***Objective 1: To distribute food to 3,000 families for 9 months.***

*Activity 1: Personnel from the NHQ of the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society, Hambantota Red Cross branch and a Federation delegate will conduct a rapid assessment to identify an immediate 1,000 of the most vulnerable families in the district. This will be completed before mid-July, with an immediate first food distribution to these families by end of July.*

This objective has been met (see previous update).

*Activity 2: Food will be procured and distributed to a further 2,000 families starting first week of August until end of February 2003 (4 distributions, with each distribution consisting of a 2 month supply and a final distribution of a one month supply).*

Further assessments revealed that many beneficiaries are afraid to store large amounts of food in their houses for fear of elephant attacks. This threat increased due to elephants encroaching into the villages in some areas in search of food and water and it has therefore been decided to provide monthly distributions in stead of bimonthly.

The recent heavy rainfall in the area has increased the chances of obtaining labour work for non-farming beneficiaries. Consequently the Hambantota District branch has modified the beneficiaries list to include the other Divisional area, Lunugamhevera.

The first and second phases of distributions have been carried out. In the second phase half a ration was distributed to 1,814 families in Hambantota (456) and Lunugamvehera (1,357) divisions. Another half ration will be distributed shortly to 500 of these families who have five family members or more.

After the early rains and consequent labour opportunities for part of the population in the area, continuous need assessments are planned to assess their immediate requirements.

*Activity 3: The warehouse currently available in the district will be upgraded and repaired to provide a storage area for relief and food stocks.*

The logistical arrangements with the suppliers of the food items have worked out as planned. Until further funds are received, priority is accorded to the long term water security measures, which includes creating structures for rain water harvesting in selected schools.

A procurement and logistics training programme was arranged for NHQ and branch personnel which resulted in a smooth implementation of the second phase distribution. Currently, warehousing is not required as the suppliers deliver the food rations to pre-identified locations, thus saving costs on warehousing, storage and transportation.

### **Health w**

For the purposes of this appeal the “health” programme objectives and activities have been integrated and presented under the following Water-sanitation section as most of the health related disease prevalence is connected to water-sanitation issues in this drought situation.

### **Water-sanitation w**

The field visit by the Federation mission during early October revealed that the attendance in schools has dropped drastically and there is a potential diarrhoeal endemic due to poor hygiene practices in the schools as a consequence of water non-availability. A training programme is scheduled for volunteers to continue to upgrade their knowledge to disseminate key messages on importance of personal hygiene and water conservation practices in early December.

*Objective 2: To provide drinking water to ten water collection containers at ten schools including rainwater harvesting system and hand pump.*

**Activity 1:** *Personnel from the NHQ of the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society and Hambantota Red Cross branch will identify the ten most suitable schools, in the worst affected areas, to receive water tanks. School assessment will be based on the scarcity of water, quality of the school's roof to maximize run-off catchment, the distance of the school from the village, and the availability of volunteers in the area for maintenance of the tanks and pumps. This assessment will be carried out by the end of June.*

The assessment to identify the ten schools in the most water scarce areas as locations for the construction of longer term underground water storage tanks was completed by the Sri Lanka Red Cross in July. The selected schools are mentioned in the previous operations update.

**Activity 2:** *Construction of water collection tanks by the end of August.*

The rationalization of the original water distribution mechanism following the Federation mission to Hambantota in October has led to considerable savings in the fund allocations for this activity. This enabled additional funds to be allocated to support the construction of rainwater harvesting tanks in schools, in order to help them manage the year round drinking water requirement.

A design tested by the UNICEF using Ferro Cement technique will be used to construct ten 30,000 litre tanks for the use of communities and schools. Technical discussions about the construction of rainwater harvesting tanks have been held with the Sri Lanka Red Cross and local government engineers. The first tank is due to be completed by the end of December 2002. The involvement of the communities will be ensured for its long term operation and management.

**Activity 3:** *Bowsering (tankering) water to these water points will begin in mid-July. In the first month, while tanks are being constructed, water will be distributed directly from bowzers. Bowzers will deposit water directly into the tanks once construction is complete. This activity will continue until the first rains appear in November/December. The contract is to be renewed on a monthly basis until the rains start but with a maximum of five months.*

The water transportation activity was revised on demand from the community to include supply of water to their respective homes as people were facing problems in carrying many small containers. The water collection point was changed (from Ambalantota to Suriyawewa) to better utilize the lorry bowser capacity and rationalize the total expenditure on water distribution.

After the heavy rainfall in the area, the water distribution was discontinued on the 15th November. However, based on further field assessments a decision to provide support with chlorine tablets will be taken when the quality of the surface water in the Red Cross supported area proves to be below standard.

Co-ordination with local government bowsering has resulted in the Sri Lanka Red Cross supplying water to 7 of the 16 most water scarce divisions, while government provided water to the remaining 9 divisions. The local government officials did request the Red Cross to consider another 4 divisions for water bowsering but donations did not allow for this scaling up.

The water bowsering programme commenced on 12 August. A training programme is scheduled for volunteers to disseminate key messages on importance of personal hygiene and water conservation practices in early December. Public health education will be given to communities so that clean water can be adequately stored and protected in households (see objective 3 activity 1 below).

**Activity 4:** *The system will be maintained by volunteers throughout the project.*

The Federation's regional Disaster Response Delegate and Disaster Preparedness Manager have discussed with branch officials the roles required of Red Cross volunteers and community level designated volunteers to maintain water catchment and pumping activities. Further community level training is planned to be carried out in December for the beneficiaries who will be using the water tanks after completion. The objective is to ensure community level maintenance and repair and water quality maintenance at a sustainable level.

***Objective 3: To disseminate sanitation and health practices through a sustainable network of volunteers targeting female heads of families.***

***Activity 1: The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society will train 40 volunteers in Community Based Health and First Aid (CBFA) and provide them with a first aid kit, a bicycle and dissemination material. Two of these volunteers will be selected to be trained as trainers in order to facilitate further development of the volunteer pool.***

Training of 40 Sri Lanka Red Cross volunteers is planned for 14 December. The training for these 20 female and 20 male volunteers is to be conducted by highly credible local health professionals including retired Principal of the Nurses Training School, Sri Lanka Red Cross Health Director, and Sri Lanka Red Cross national First Aid Co-ordinator.

The curriculum includes:

- Training in monitoring of children's' weight.
- Maintaining growth charts.
- Preventing diarrhoeal dehydration by oral rehydration therapy.
- Maintaining proper nutritional standards in families.
- Education on personal hygiene and environmental sanitation.

***Activity 2: Volunteers will organise meetings with families in the most vulnerable areas, targeting particularly female heads of families, to disseminate information on nutrition and sanitation, and to discuss possible community based programmes in these areas.***

The volunteers who will be trained under the above objective will travel widely in the worst affected areas on bicycles and meet with the most vulnerable families, female heads of households. They will conduct community level education in safe water, nutrition, prevention of communicable diseases, and environmental sanitation.

### **National Society Capacity Building w**

In addition to the above mentioned training, the Hambantota district branch has been provided with a computer, printer, fax machine, photocopier etc. to develop a proper database of beneficiaries and to access the Internet for better information sharing. A procurement and logistics training programme was organized on 9 and 10 October on the specific request of the National Society, for NHQ and branch officials. To analyse the effectiveness of the relief operation, a lessons learned exercise was carried out in October by the NHQ personnel of the Sri Lanka Red Cross, with the facilitation of the Federation staff.

In the beginning of November, two NHQ staff of the Sri Lanka Red Cross visited drought affected areas of Alwar in the Indian state of Rajasthan in order to learn about the coping mechanisms and practices in the field of water management and conservation. Rajasthan has experienced over 42 droughts during last 50 years. The visit enabled them to get an in-depth understanding of the coping mechanisms in a drought situation and their suitability for application in Hambantota.

The national and branch structures of the Sri Lanka Red Cross have been further strengthened with the recruitment of a field relief co-ordinator to support the work of the National Relief Co-ordinator. This ensures continuous branch access to support when required and proper implementation of the programme. An accountant has been deployed full time to support the operation for its entire duration.

The National Society has continued to grow in confidence in promoting the needs of most vulnerable people through media coverage and advocacy. Its increased networking with the national Ministry of Social Services, and with local government officials at Hambantota district level, have brought credibility and requests for expanding the geographical coverage of their work.

The three month deployment of the technical support staff member from Nepal Red Cross will enable the Branch to scale up its expertise in water tank construction techniques. This capacity building secondment from another Red Cross Society in the South Asia region will enable the local branch and NHQ to undertake further long term drought mitigation measures in the future.

### **Federation Delegation w**

The delegation office in Sri Lanka (one expatriate and three national staff) are playing a pivotal role as a hub for information sharing and field monitoring. The Federation's regional disaster response Delegate has visited the programme during every stage of the operation, and the regional disaster preparedness manager visited Hambantota in early October to evaluate distribution procedures, rainwater harvesting programme and to initiate a lessons-learned exercise.

The main role of the Federation delegation in Sri Lanka is to provide support to the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society in its assessment work, and assisting it in the facilitation of national level drought co-ordination meetings with other INGOs, NGOs and UN family agencies. In November, the delegation will be expanded with a Federation country representative while the current regional Organizational Development Delegate cum Federation representative will be able to focus solely on OD issues.

### **Advocacy/Public Information w**

Media interest has continued at a sustained level. The cumulative effects of four years of drought, which created the humanitarian crisis in this traditionally dry zone, are also the effects of longer term development policies.

The Minister of Social Services, participating at the first phase of the relief distribution on 11 and 12 August, commended the Red Cross initiative and welcomed both longer term development programmes and short term humanitarian interventions in time of disasters. The Prime Minister's Office showed an active interest by requesting detailed assessment information on drought, collected by the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society in March, May and June.

### **Outstanding needs w**

In addition to the global DREF fund the following donors have contributed to the appeal: The Swiss Government and the Swedish, Korean, Monaco, Japanese, British, United Arab Emirates and Spanish Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies (the latter is a bilateral donation to support the appeal's objectives) have also given their generous support.

The Federation and the Sri Lanka Red Cross have adjusted the budget according to available income for the appeal and in order to respond to operational needs. Further funds are no longer required as the available balances will be spent to ensure immediate household water security (one to two years) and to support the vulnerable communities with long term drought mitigation projects.

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*All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.*

*This operation seeks to administer to the immediate requirements of the victims of this disaster. Subsequent operations to promote sustainable development or longer-term capacity building will require additional support, and these programmes are outlined on the Federation's web site.*

*For further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation web site at <http://www.ifrc.org>.*

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