



Background

Starting on 26 December 2010, Sri Lanka was struck by the heaviest rains in almost one hundred years, causing devastating floods and landslides. Prior to the floods, recent returnees in the North and East had started to resume sustainable livelihood activities, including planting their own crops, following the end of more than two decades of civil conflict. The most recent floods were preceded by intense rainfall and two cycles of flash flooding in November, which had already put many of the conflict-affected returnees at risk. The floods have affected more than 1 million people, 94 percent of whom live in the Eastern province. So far, the floods have claimed over two-dozen lives and displaced around 367 500 people across 12 districts.

Damage was incurred to homes, infrastructure, schools, water supply and sanitation systems, among other vital resources and services. The recent floods are yet another setback for those flood victims who have rebuilt or are beginning to rebuild their lives and livelihoods following the December 2004 Tsunami and years of civil conflict. High water levels have submerged roads and damaged bridges, which have rendered many areas inaccessible to relief operations.



More than 1 million people have been affected by the floods

The Sri Lanka Flash Appeal 2011 was launched on 19 January 2011 to support Government efforts in responding to the most critical needs in food security, agriculture and livelihoods, shelter, education, health and nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene over a six-month timeframe. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), along with the World Food Programme and the United Nations Development Programme, is a co-lead agency of the Food Security, Agriculture and Livelihoods Sector.

Challenges facing food security and agriculture

The destruction of houses, agricultural land, livestock, livelihood assets, market places and other infrastructure as a result of the floods is having a dramatic impact on households' ability to generate food and income. Preliminary estimates reveal that the floods inundated and damaged 250 000 acres of agricultural land. In Ampara district, which is known as the breadbasket of the country, over 20 percent of paddy land has been severely damaged. In Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts, the figures are 35 percent and 80 percent respectively.

Most farmers in the Northern and Eastern provinces have already lost much of the primary harvest from the *Maha* planting season (September–January). If the second harvest during the *Yala* plating season (March–September) were to fail, it is expected that the prices of rice and other commodities would increase and compromise the food security of families until the next harvest. The prices of vegetables have already risen by 80 percent in some districts. Farmers must be able to plant crops in time for the *Yala* season. Replacing lost inputs and assets and damaged infrastructure will be crucial in reviving sustainable agricultural livelihoods.

In addition to damaging agricultural land, the floods have also destroyed many irrigation tanks and canals. Agricultural recovery is further threatened by the possibility of receding waters unearthing land mines in the Northern and Eastern provinces and carrying them to areas once considered safe. The prolonged monsoon season is expected to last until February, leaving the affected populations even more vulnerable to further shocks. Failing to act now would risk the adoption of negative coping strategies and dependency on food aid.



FAO's response

Within the framework of the Sri Lanka Flash Appeal 2011, FAO seeks **USD 4 765 000** to assist Sri Lankan households to rapidly restore crop production, irrigation infrastructure, livelihoods and self-reliance during this critical time.

FAO's activities aim to:

- assess the full scale and impact of the flood-related agricultural damage in consultation with Government counterparts so as to adapt humanitarian response activities to the most urgent needs and achieve sustainable outcomes for the greatest number of beneficiaries;
- restore productive agricultural livelihoods that have been destroyed by replacing lost assets, especially for paddy, other field crops and home gardens; and
- repair essential irrigation tanks that have been damaged by the heavy rains and flooding.





FAO'S COMPONENT OF THE SRI LANKA FLASH APPEAL 2011

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS: USD 4 765 000

Project Title: Emergency Agricultural Assistance to Flood Victims in Ampara, Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts.

Objectives: To restore productive agricultural livelihoods that have been destroyed by floods in the Eastern province and Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa districts through replacement of lost agricultural assets.

Beneficiaries: 60 000 households.

Implementing Partners: Eastern Provincial Council: Department of Agrarian Development and Department of Agriculture.

Funds Required: USD 3 665 000

Project Title: Essential Rehabilitation of Flood Damaged Minor Irrigation Tanks in Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts.

Objectives: To restore productive agricultural livelihoods through repair of minor irrigation tanks that have been damaged by heavy rains and flooding.

Beneficiaries: 2 000 households

Implementing Partners: Eastern Provincial Council: Department of Agrarian Development, Department of Irrigation and community-based organizations.

Funds Required: USD 1 100 000

"Emergency Agricultural Assistance to Flood Victims in Ampara, Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts" aims to assist farming households to rapidly resume their livelihoods in time for the upcoming cropping seasons.

Most of the crops planted for the *Maha* season, especially paddy, have already been lost. Cultivation can be restored for some crops for the *Yala* season depending on the availability of water and other resources. Initial estimates by the Ministry of Agriculture indicate that 450 000 tonnes of paddy have been destroyed by heavy rains and inundation.

Given the importance of paddy in the overall food security of Sri Lanka, it is essential that action be taken now to prepare the land and prevent negative coping strategies in anticipation of the upcoming *Maha* season, which is when most of the paddy in the country is harvested.

With donor support, FAO will replace lost productive assets used for the cultivation of paddy, other field crops and home gardens to farming households most affected by the recent floods. The proposed activities will directly benefit 60 000 households (approximately 240 000 individuals).

Inputs will be provided alongside technical guidance and training in improved farming to maximize the impact of project efforts.

"Essential Rehabilitation of Flood Damaged Minor Irrigation Tanks in Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts" aims to restore the irrigation infrastructure of the flood-affected farming households in Batticaloa and Trincomalee districts.

Unlike the *Maha* planting season, the *Yala* season is heavily dependent on irrigated water for a successful harvest. Given that most of the *Maha* harvest, which is generally the more productive of the two seasonal harvests, has already been lost, the success or failure of the *Yala* harvest will largely determine the food security situation for the vast majority of Sri Lanka's flood victims over the next year.

The damage to irrigation infrastructure was extensive, particularly in the Eastern province, where many water tanks were destroyed or damaged and irrigation canals were breached by the flood waters and are in need of repair. Failure to address such irrigation needs runs the risk of two consecutive failed harvests and prolonged dependence on food aid. Restoration of irrigation capacity would represent a strong step forward in the early recovery process.

For more information please contact:

Patrick Thomas Evans

FAO Representative, Sri Lanka
FAO Representation in Sri Lanka
202 Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7
P.O. Box 1505
Tel: +94-11-2504672 | Fax: + 94-11-2587990
Email: FAO-LK@fao.org

Daniele Donati

Chief
Emergency Operations Service
Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla; Rome 00153, Italy
Tel.: +39 06 570 53032
Email: Daniele.Donati@fao.org
Website: www.fao.org/emergencies

