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Final Report

Sri Lanka: Cargo Ship Fire

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

DREF operation	Operation n° MDRLK013;
Date of Issue: 31 March 2022	Glide number: FR-2021-000067-LKA
Operation start date: 13 June 2021	Operation end date: 31 December 2021
Host National Society: Sri Lanka Red Cross Society	Operation budget: CHF 481,250
Number of people affected: 50,000 (Media information)	Number of people assisted: 16,080
Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners currently actively involved in the operation: The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) is a voluntary humanitarian organization; SLRCS has a strong branch network in all the 25 districts of the country, which is well capable in providing relief in times of disasters/emergencies. Over 150 staff and 7,000 active volunteers are trained in disaster response. National Disaster Response Teams (NDRT), Branch Disaster Response Teams (BDRT) and Divisional Disaster Response Teams (DDRT) are available at National, District and Divisional levels. SLRCS is supported by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Sri Lanka Office in this operation, especially in providing the technical support and launching of the DREF.	
Other partner organizations actively involved in the operation: Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL); Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA), National Aquatic Resource Research Development Agency (NARA), Sri Lanka Coast Guard Authority and Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources	

A. SITUATION ANALYSIS

Description of the disaster

On 20 May 2021, cargo ship X-PRESS PEARL, with 1,486 containers on board carrying 25 tons of nitric acid, caustic soda, solid sodium methoxide solution, cosmetics, methanol and vinyl acetate, including micro plastics, plastic pellets together with other cargo, caught fire approximately nine nautical miles (16 kilometres) off the coast of Colombo's commercial shipping harbour. The fire continued to burn until end-May 2021 and a number of small explosions were heard from the container ship during the fire. The Sri Lankan Navy, Airforce and Coast Guard, supported by the Indian Navy, worked around the clock to contain the fire for nearly two weeks.

The firefighting was made difficult and complicated by the southwest monsoon rains/high winds and highly flammable poisonous cargo. A 25-member crew on the ship (with members from India, Philippines, China and Russia) was evacuated and treated in hospitals in Colombo. One crew member tested positive for COVID-19. According to Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA), this was Sri Lanka's worst environmental disaster in its history with unimaginable consequences to the marine environment. The situation was brought under control by 1 June 2021 and the fire was contained, although thick smoke clouds were seen emitted from the ship as well as small explosions continued from the ship.



Negombo beach cleaning by the Sri Lankan navy following the ship explosion. Source: [www.news.cn](#).

The fire caused spilling of damaged containers, micro plastics, about estimated 3 billion tiny plastic pellets, chemicals and other harmful toxic substance into the sea which was spread across vast areas of western side of the coastline mainly affecting the districts of Colombo, Gampaha and Kalutara. Chemical spills and plastic pellets caused massive damage to the coastline, natural marine environment and ecosystem, including damage to a number of popular tourist

areas and resorts. Beaches were thickly coated with plastic pellets; micro plastics and some oil slick was visible in the water. The plastic pallets used to make polythene bags and other plastic products caused fatal damage to marine life and dead sea turtles, fish and birds were seen along the coastline. Local people were strictly advised not to touch any of the debris as it could be highly toxic and harmful for the human body.

Fishing was banned in the area and, according to the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development (DFARD), more than 16,500 fishers and their families living along the western coastal lines were affected. Prior to this incident, the fishers could not venture into the sea for two weeks as they were warned of adverse monsoon weather conditions with heavy rains in the western coastal belt. The fisheries sector had already been affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic and this incident further exacerbated the conditions of lives and livelihoods of fisher communities.

Summary of response

Overview of Host National Society

The SLRCS has a strong branch network in all the 25 districts of the country, which enables providing relief in times of disasters/emergencies. Over 150 staff and 7,000 active volunteers are trained in disaster response. At short notice, SLRCS is able to deploy National Disaster Response Teams (NDRT), Branch Disaster Response Teams (BDRT) and Divisional Disaster Response Teams (DDRT) at national, district and divisional levels. SLRCS also has trained disaster response teams specialized in water and safety comprising 150 active members. These members are well-trained in life saving techniques to assist rescue operations in times of need. Further, trained First Aid (FA) volunteers provide their life saving service in times of disaster. SLRCS has a pool of 25 cash and voucher assistance (CVA) trained personnel, who can be deployed to set up and assist implementation of CVA activities.

Following the cargo ship fire, initially due to the COVID-19 related lock down situation and considering the nature of the disaster, SLRCS response was limited to donating Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits to MEPA and two boat engines to NARA. Although plastic pellets are not harmful to touch, experts believe there can be toxic chemical substances washed ashore together with plastic pellets and other debris. Hence, only military and trained personnel were deployed for beach cleaning and debris removal at the initial stages of the operation.

SLRCS organized a series of stakeholder consultation meetings with the participation of MEPA, Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development, NARA and an SLRCS member (a Marine Biologist who had served at NARA previously). The objective of the meetings was to discuss and get a better understanding of the humanitarian consequences of the disaster and how and when SLRCS could collaborate with these agencies to minimize the suffering of affected communities and help restore the marine environment. MEPA welcomed the volunteer support for cleanup operations and assisted SLRCS with trainings. An international Chemical, Biological, Radiological and/or Nuclear (CBRN) surge expert was deployed remotely and provided technical support to SLRCS to develop a risk communication strategy and key messages for activities, along with providing guidance to SLRCS headquarters during the mission.



SLRCS volunteers carry out beach cleaning activities in Gampaha district (Photo: SLRCS)

Table 1: Summary of key response by sector

Sector	Activities	Status	Target	Reached
Livelihoods and basic needs	Multipurpose cash grant amounting to LKR 15,000 (CHF 69)	Completed	3,000 households	2,899 households (14,263 people)
Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)	Beach clean-up campaigns	Completed	18,275 volunteer days 550 volunteers	12,659 volunteer days; 455 volunteers
	International and local procurement of beach cleaning equipment and PPEs	Completed	Stock replenished (Wheelbarrows - 100 Shovels, boots, Goggles - 600)	Stock replenished
Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI)	All activities were completed under the PGI guidelines	Completed	All activities	All activities

Overview of Red Cross Red Crescent Movement in country

SLRCS has a longstanding working collaboration with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in implementing various programmes. During the disaster, the IFRC country office with the assistance of the IFRC Country Cluster Delegation (CCD) in Delhi and ICRC worked together in close coordination to provide technical support to SLRCS and shared information at regional and sub-regional levels. Movement coordination meetings involving SLRCS, IFRC and ICRC were regularly organized.

IFRC provided technical support to SLRCS in developing the Emergency Plan of Action for the DREF request and coordinating with SLRCS for information sharing with the Movement and external partners. The IFRC CCD in Delhi and the Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO) provided further coordination support for information sharing and resources.

Overview of non-RCRC actors in country

The Sri Lanka Army, Navy and Air Force and Department of Coastal Guards, Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources worked as the prime workforce in the coastal cleanup operation with the guidance of NARA, MEPA and other governmental and non-governmental organizations. MEPA developed a national oil spill contingency plan (NOSCP). MEPA activated the NOSCP and managed the incident in collaboration with the Sri Lankan armed forces, relevant technical agencies of the government, local authorities and other key stakeholders. MEPA also deployed assets and personnel to set up barriers around immediate vicinity of the ship, lagoon entrances as well as other identified locations along the beach.

Since the disaster had direct and indirect impact on marine and aquatic resources, NARA took immediate action to investigate the situation and assess the environmental damage caused by the series of fire incidents. In-situ water quality parameters were measured at the point of sample collection and further laboratory analysis were carried out.

Responding to the requests made by the Sri Lankan government for expert technical support, UNEP/OCHA deployed a four-member expert team to advise the Government of Sri Lanka primarily on: 1. Designing and implementing an environmental assessment; 2. Preventing, mitigating and responding to risks from the incident; 3. Strengthening national capacities to deal with future maritime disasters.

Under the overall chairmanship on Minister of Justice, MEPA coordinated the work of 11 experts sub committees that were established to assess the losses and damages focusing on the following areas: 1. Root cause, oil, chemical and damage 2. Environmental impact assessment, 3. Biodiversity impact assessment, 4. Socio-economic impacts, 5. Health impacts, 6. Air quality impacts, 7. Impacts on aquatic resources, 8. Water and seashore impacts, 9. Waste management, 10. Restoration assessment and 11. Economic valuation. The findings of these expert committees were used primarily to claim compensation from the insurance and the shipping company under the supervision of the Attorney General's Office.

Needs analysis and scenario planning**Need analysis**

Although multiday large fishing vessels were allowed to leave the coast for fishing in the deep seas, small scale fishers who fish on a day-to-day basis in the affected area lost their livelihoods as small-scale fishing was banned by the authorities first due to bad weather conditions and then due to the ship fire disaster. Fishing was initially banned along an 80-kilometre stretch along the western coast adjacent to disaster location. The area subject to the fishing ban was subsequently reduced including fishing in Negombo Lagoon.

There was a need to provide compensation and support to fisher communities to recover from the impact of this, particularly to the small-scale fishers who lost their livelihoods for a few months. It is important to note that small scale vendors whose livelihoods depend upon the general public who visit the beaches, also lost their income and the COVID-19 lockdown measures made it even more difficult to support their families and meet their basic household needs.

Furthermore, the fish consumption in Sri Lanka decreased during first few months after the disaster following media broadcasted news of chemical spills and dead marine species. This also adversely affected the fishing community. In addition, it was important to factor in long-term impacts and needs of the fishing community due to potential oil spills.

The communities demanded that fishers be made beneficiaries of whatever compensation and insurance payment was paid by the shipping company, or any other companies. MFARD worked together with the Attorney General's Office to take legal actions to get compensations from the shipping company, which was successful and received the first claim. Government compensation was given according to the impact on fishing families, which started from LKR 5,000 (CHF 16).

Livelihoods

Understanding the time duration that would take to complete the compensation process, SLRCS provided immediate assistance such as food aid and cash assistance to meet basic needs to fishing families at least for the entire period that they are banned from fishing. Therefore, based on needs assessments, 2,500 families were targeted in Gampaha district while 500 families were targeted in Colombo districts with multipurpose cash grants.

Beach clean-up activity

It is estimated that over three billion tiny plastic pellets and other debris from the ship spread across an 80 kilometer stretch of the beaches on the western coast and even beyond due to exposure to heavy rain, plastic pellets submerged in sand. A massive mobilization of human resources was needed to clean the beaches and remove debris. Furthermore, as the plastic pellets were mixed with toxic substances, general public were not allowed to visit beaches and touch the debris on the coast.

The cleaning personnel were provided with protective gear such as special PPE kit and equipped with necessary tools such as shovels, wheelbarrows, boots, goggles and small machinery for the cleaning efforts. At the initial stages of the operation, the government mobilized military personnel to undertake beach clean-up operations under the technical guidance of MEPA. However, after a few weeks, the military was withdrawn from the clean-up operation, hence there was a need for SLRCS to scale up beach cleaning activities in close coordination with MEPA. Ground level observations and assessments results showed that large amounts of pellets and other debris were found in Gampaha, Puttalam and Colombo districts including locations where accessibility was difficult – such as mangroves and lagoon area. Thus, operation suggested beach cleaning and cleaning of mangroves and lagoon sites in these districts.

To fill the gap of additional trained personnel and volunteers in Gampaha, Colombo, Kalutara, Galle, Matara and Puttalam districts for the beach cleaning activities, SLRCS deployed volunteers in above districts. Considering the risk of the disaster those volunteers were trained about dealing with toxic mixed materials and identifying cleanup sites by MEPA. There was also a need for additional special PPE kits for volunteers, tools to minimize the risk of contact with toxic materials. According to the experiences of volunteers, working on the beach wearing the same PPE was very difficult and hence there was a need to change the PPE every 2-3 hours depending on the conditions of that particular cleaning site.

Main beach cleaning up activities were conducted in Gampaha, Puttalam and Colombo districts while small scale cleaning up conducted in the beaches of other districts (Kalutara, Galle and Matara) as there were less quantities of plastic pellets and debris compared to Colombo, Puttalam and Gampaha. Although manual labor was the prime workforce for cleaning up activities, some machinery such as light earth moving equipment and transport vehicles were needed to help move piled up debris from the beaches in selected safe locations.

Apart from that, considering the damage to Mangrove vegetation along Gampaha coastal belt, MEPA requested SLRCS to support and scale up beach and mangrove clean-up activities.

Given the complexity of the operation and situation of COVID-19, it was challenging to deploy SLRCS volunteers to conduct emergency community level needs assessment. Hence, at the initial stages of the operation, SLRCS conducted stakeholder consultations at district and national levels to collect information related to needs and affected coastal communities due to this disaster. The Disaster Management Centre was not involved in this operation as the coordinating lead agency. The main focus of the scientific and research institutions such as MEPA and NARA, who led this operation, was to protect marine environment and address other long-term consequences to biodiversity along the coast. There was less focus on the short, medium and long-term humanitarian consequences of the disaster hence SLRCS played an important role to support the most vulnerable to meet their immediate basic needs as well as to ensure their voices were heard at decision making platforms at national levels.

Risk Analysis

Detailed assessment was carried out in affected communities of Gampaha, Puttalam, Kalutara, Galle, Matara and Colombo districts to select the target beneficiaries. It was mandatory to ensure volunteers were insured prior to deployment. Therefore, they were provided with trainings, necessary protective gear such as sanitizers and masks in order to prevent the lives of the Red Cross volunteers at risk. With the prevailing COVID-19 situation there was a risk for community transmission at field level. These volunteers were already trained on how to work according to COVID-19 guidelines in order to assure safety of both volunteers and beneficiaries. Further trainings were provided to volunteers on dealing with toxic substances in the cleanup operations and closer guidance was provided with expert technical support from the scientific institutions that are leading the operation on the ground.

B. OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

Overall Objective

The aim of the operation was to assist 15,000 people (3,000 families) from the small-scale fishing communities in the two worst affected districts of Colombo (500 families) and Gampaha (2,500 families) with LKR 15,000 (CHF 69) multipurpose cash grants to meet their basic needs as well as to support the authorities on the cleanup activities in six districts. The operation deployed 455 volunteers in six districts with a total of 12,659 volunteer days spanning over a period of six months. Provision of special PPE kits, tools (Shovels, wheelbarrows, boots, goggles etc.) happened through the operation.

Proposed strategy

Beneficiary selection was carried out in the two targeted districts for multipurpose cash grants involving Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, local authorities and affected community members. The proposed strategy was formulated based on the short-term basic needs of the affected people and aligned with the government's marine environment protection strategy. The focus was on providing support to 3,000 families in Colombo (500 households) and Gampaha (2,500 households) districts with multipurpose cash grants to address the basic needs. The operation included provision of protective gear such as PPEs, working tools such as shovels, wheelbarrows, goggles, boots as well as hiring of machinery for the cleanup operations.

Regular coordination meetings were conducted with the participation of DFARD, Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development (MFARD), UNDP and WFP on the selection of geographical areas and beneficiaries for cash grants to avoid duplication of efforts as well as to ensure most vulnerable families received assistance. Furthermore, these coordination meetings were used as a platform to share information, knowledge and seek help from the authorities to resolve issues that might arise during the implementation.

Attention was given to knowledge management and developing communication products from the experience gained from this operation. Regular reviews and updates were made available during and after the operation. Actions were taken to document the lessons learned and experience from this operation and shared widely within and outside the Movement.

SLRCS committed to work in line with SLRCS and IFRC policies, procedures, commitments and mandates to ensure that programmes under this operation were aligned with its gender commitments as well with the IFRC minimum standard commitments to gender and diversity in emergency programming. Specific considerations were paid to the elderly, persons with disability, pregnant women, lactating women, women-headed households, migrants, quarantine people due to COVID-19 and households with infants or young children. Since these groups were more vulnerable to challenges related to access to nutrient-rich food, safe water and were more susceptible to diseases/infections

Livelihood and basic needs- essential household assistance

Considering the impacts due to the ship fire and the ban imposed by the authorities, most of the small-scale fishers in Colombo and Gampaha districts became vulnerable and lost their income. Therefore, this operation provided a cash grant of 15,000 LKR (CHF 69) per month considering the prolonged impact on their livelihoods. The standard criteria to determine cash grant was to provide 50 per cent of average daily wage into 20 days, which is LKR 15,000. BDRT trained 50 volunteers on conducting assessment for multipurpose cash grants support.

During beneficiary selection, special attention was given to vulnerable categories including female/single headed households, households with differently abled people and elderly people. Consideration was given to families whose economic condition had worsened due to the COVID-19 lockdown situation. However, during the operation period, COVID-19 transmission increased in Colombo district. As a result, most of the selected areas were under strict

lockdown, many people were unable to provide the reference documents on time since the selected locations were under lockdown. Further, escalating this problem, many of the officers who were involved in the operation tested positive for COVID-19 due to which government offices were closed for more than two months. As a result, out of 500 beneficiaries targeted, 101 were unable to be finalized for registration, leaving only 399 to assist with CVA in the Colombo district. In the Gampaha district, all were covered at the same time (2,500).

WASH promotion

According to the needs analysis, about three billion tiny plastic pellets and other debris from the ship spread across the beaches of Gampaha, Puttalam, Colombo, Kalutara, Galle and Matara. At the initial stages of the operation, military personnel conducted beach cleaning activities. However, once the military was no longer engaged in the clean-up, there was still a need for more human resources to clean the polluted areas. Understanding the importance of engaging in clean-up activities to minimize the impact of this environment pollution, reducing the risk of fishing communities, SLRCS joined the authorities to carry out beach cleaning activities in affected areas.

Special training was conducted for 300 volunteers initially and an additional 155 volunteers were trained under the revised operation, as the volunteers should have knowledge to deal with toxic mixed materials before deploying for beach cleaning up activities.

All the necessary gear for cleaning were supplied by the operation including special PPE kits, SLRCS was continuously provided the support for conducting ground level activities from, relevant organizations including MEPA, Coastal Guard Department and military officials.

Additional volunteers were deployed in Gampaha and Puttalam district under the revised operation as the concentration of plastic pellets were high in these districts as well as there were mangrove plantations, lagoons and marsh lands in these two districts where plastic pellets were deposited which require labor intensive methods of cleaning.

National Society capacity building

SLRCS was responsible for the overall coordination and implementation of the humanitarian response operation, supported by the IFRC and in-country Movement partners. SLRCS had well established cooperation with lead agencies like NARA, MEPA, DFARD and local authorities. SLRCS Colombo and Gampaha branches worked hand in hand with these agencies as all these agencies were located in the western province. However, training and skills development of staff and volunteers were needed to deal with these types of technological disasters such as chemical spills and oil spills. Further, a CBRN surge expert deployed provided technical support to SLRCS to develop risk communication strategy and key messages for RCCE activities as well as guided the SLRCS team during the mission.

Implementing lessons learned from previous operations

Although SLRCS has implemented a number of response operations for natural and human made disasters, there was limited experience in dealing with marine disasters. SLRCS used the lessons learned from other operations to plan and implement the response activities. Most recent experiences, lessons learned and knowledge gathered from COVID-19 response activities were integrated into this operation.

Movement-wide approach

SLRCS was responsible for the overall coordination and implementation of the disaster response operation, supported by all components of the Movement. Considering the nature and scope of the response, IFRC mobilized resources via this DREF on behalf of SLRCS, while coordinating with the ICRC at the same time. The latter has a long-time presence in Sri Lanka and, among others, supported restoring family links (RFL) interventions which – although included in this plan to reflect the totality of actions – were not factored in the budget. The budget for RFL interventions was covered by ICRC outside of this DREF. Contributions of Partner National Societies (PNS) was considered but finally there was no PNS involvement in the operation.

Operational Support

Human resources

SLRCS allocated full-time staff at national headquarters to oversee the operation and a finance staff to ensure smooth flow of settlements. At the branch level, a District Project Officer and a Community Mobiliser were hired for each branch to oversee the operation. IFRC supported implementation via its existing staff. Mobilization of around 60 National, Branch and District Disaster Response Team (NDRT, BDRT and DDRT) members as well as staff expenses were covered in the operational budget.

Logistics and supply chain

Logistics activities aimed to effectively manage the supply chain, including cash grants, procurement, customs clearance, fleet, storage and transport to distribution sites in accordance with the operation's requirements and aligned to IFRC's logistics standards, processes and procedures.

In line with audit guidelines, IFRC conducted the procurement of special PPE kits and tools in close coordination with SLRCS, ensuring efficient and timely delivery. The IFRC country office provided logistics support to SLRCS to ensure transparency and accountability in the local procurement process. Additional logistics support was made available by the Asia Pacific Regional Logistics Unit and CCD, Delhi, as per need.

Information Technologies (IT)

High-speed Wi-Fi internet connectivity was available at the IFRC Sri Lanka country office as well as at SLRCS national headquarters. Staff members and volunteers in the field operation were supported by 3G modems and internet data packages for their smartphones which enabled them to communicate electronically with the headquarters and to send reports and pictures in quick time. Open Data Kit (ODK) based assessments were carried out electronically through mobile applications on digital tablets or mobile phones. An orientation session on digital assessments and data protection was provided to prepare the volunteers using tablets or mobile phones for assessments. Given COVID-19 restrictions, regular Zoom meetings were conducted to coordinate with stakeholders and branches to share information and plan operational activities.

Communications

Throughout the operation, a regular flow of information was maintained between all stakeholders. SLRCS communications staff worked in close coordination with the IFRC regional communications team to ensure that the evolving humanitarian needs and the response of SLRCS were covered. To maintain the transparency of the operation, SLRCS disseminated information via social media platforms and in the national and international media. A proactive approach was taken to maintain media outreach and to produce communication materials including press releases, news stories, photos/video, key messages and infographics for external promotion by National Societies in their domestic markets. A Viber group was created to share information and photos between volunteers, branches, SLRCS national headquarters and IFRC.

Security

SLRCS security framework is applicable for SLRCS staff and volunteers. IFRC security framework is applicable for IFRC and integrated PNS staff. In case of need for deployment all IFRC staff must, and Red Cross Red Crescent staff and volunteers were encouraged, to complete the IFRC Stay Safe e-learning courses, i.e., Stay Safe Personal Security, Stay Safe Security Management and Stay Safe Volunteer Security online training. Staff and volunteers were aware of the security status and briefed on reactions in emergency. SLRCS and IFRC security focal points continued to monitor the situation. All security concerns were handled with local authorities as per the existing security framework.

Civil-Military Relations (CMR)

The IFRC supported SLRCS in its auxiliary role to ensure core humanitarian values and Red Cross Red Crescent fundamental principles will never be compromised when working in the same humanitarian space as the military and other security services. If the SLRCS branches are required to work in close coordination with military and/or other security actors, it will be done following the principles of last resort, do no harm, distinction, not resort to armed protection, sharing information that does not threaten the neutrality and independence of their humanitarian action and promote the proper use of the Red Cross emblem. All SLRCS staff and volunteers were advised to refer to the IFRC Stay Safe – Guide to a Safer Mission when there is a need to cooperate and coordinate with national military and/or other security services. IFRC and SLRCS operations and programme managers/coordinators adhered to the IFRC Stay Safe – Guide to Managers especially Chapter 5 – Working with the military.

Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, & Reporting (PMER)

SLRCS oversaw and monitored all operational, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting aspects of the present operation in the affected coastal areas through its country-wide network of branches and volunteers. IFRC, through its country office in Colombo and CCD in Delhi provided technical support in the management of the operation to ensure that objectives were met.

Crosscutting issues

PGI

PGI considerations were mainstreamed in this operation. Among others, areas of focus were included prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and child protection. Mainstreaming of protection, gender and inclusion was also ensured that accountability lines were in place for GBV prevention and response. SLRCS committed to capturing sex, age and disability disaggregated data for the purpose of understanding the number and specific vulnerability of females to males based on their gender roles and age (to understand if a higher proportion of women, boys, girls or men are made vulnerable).

Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA)

Even with the COVID-19 restrictions, efforts were made to integrate community feedback mechanisms into the operation to ensure that affected populations had access to timely and accurate information on the nature and scope of services provided by SLRCS, expected behavior of staff and volunteers shared questions, suggestions, concerns, and other feedback with SLRCS. Community engagement and accountability services were implemented through context-specific channels, group discussions, face-to-face discussions, and publishing of selected recipient lists. Movement-wide commitments and minimum actions for CEA were mainstreamed into operations as much as possible.

C. DETAILED OPERATIONAL PLAN



Livelihoods and basic needs

People reached: 14,263

Male: 6,738

Female: 7,525

Indicators:	Target	Actual
# of people targeted/reached support on basic needs and livelihoods	15,000	14,263
# of households provided with emergency cash grants	3,000	2,899

Narrative description of achievements

Multipurpose cash grant assistance of LKR 15,000 (CHF 69) per family, was given to 2,899 of the most affected families in Colombo (399 families) and Gampaha (2,500 families) districts.

As soon as the disaster occurred, SLRCS branches conducted need assessment in affected districts, namely: Colombo, Gampaha, Puttalam, Galle, Matara and Kalutara. Since the nature of the disaster was new to Sri Lanka, SLRCS kept close coordination with the Ministry of Fisheries, MEPA, and NARA. During the stakeholder meeting, each stakeholder agreed with the selection criteria of target households introduced by the SLRCS. Through a participatory process, assessment was completed by deploying trained volunteers. Once the beneficiaries were selected, SLRCS, sensitized them on the assistance process.

Though the initial target was 3,000, the unexpected increase of COVID-19 cases in Colombo district delayed the whole cash process. Thus, the operation was able to cover only 2,899 beneficiaries within the project framework. The cash was transferred to beneficiary accounts from the SLRCS Sampath Bank account which is the financial service provider. Following COVID-19 safe guidelines, PPEs were procured and provided to volunteers who conducted the field work.

Post distribution monitoring showed that people had mostly used the cash grant for their basic needs, children's needs and medication. People were very appreciative of the support having lost their livelihood income. Procedurally the PDM highlighted the challenges encountered during the cash grant documentation process, such as beneficiaries submitting the domain bank accounts. Also, 64 per cent of the fishing community does not use commercial bank accounts, as they are using rural banks. Further, 15per cent mentioned that giving cash voucher or dry ration would be better as it would not take a considerable time duration and documentation process like cash grants. This further showed that 94per cent of beneficiaries were fully affected. There were 14 per cent pregnant and lactating mothers in the selected population.

Challenges

Due to the COVID-19 related lockdown situation in the country (travel restrictions), it was challenging to conduct activities as planned. Most of the field locations were under quarantine regulations. Branches were coordinating with local authorities to carry out response work following COVID-19 safe response practices. All volunteers were provided with PPEs. Some of the government stakeholders who were coordinating with SLRCS were under quarantine and offices were closed for several weeks, delaying the cash grant programme.

Lessons Learned

One of the main lessons learned during the process was the importance of sharing knowledge about cash grant process with all stakeholders to ensure that they would understand the urgency of involvement in the verification process. The importance of having an internal discussion among SLRCS staff and governors was also highlighted, to simplify the cash transfer process introducing new mechanisms with less documents, efficient and with less human resources during DREF operation.

During the initial stage of the DREF operation, one of the main barriers was the coordination gap between stakeholders. In order to avoid that happening in future, it was proposed to continue the established relationship with MEPA, NARA and the Fisheries department for a better response.



Water, sanitation and hygiene

People reached: 16,080

Male: 8,546

Female: 7,534

Indicators:	Target	Actual
# of people reached by beach clean-up activities	15,000	16,080
# of beach clean-up days	18,275	12,659
# of people reached by beach cleaning activities	15,000	16,080

Narrative description of achievements

A total number of 455 volunteers was selected and trained from 3,000 families targeted (15,000 people) for beach and lagoon cleaning activities. Of this, 250 volunteers were provided with specialized training in dealing with toxic materials and techniques for beach cleaning in Gampaha, Puttalam, Kalutara, Galle and Matara districts.

Throughout the operation, there were 12,659 volunteer days in Gampaha, Puttalam, Kalutara, Galle and Matara districts and trained volunteers made every effort to disseminate their knowledge on the following to communities living along the beaches:

- The importance of marine and coastal environment
- Impacts of the MV X-press Pearl accident chemical spill
- Plastic pellets and their impact
- Shoreline types and different shoreline clean up methods
- Shoreline clean up organization-team work
- Hazard and safety management
- Waste collection and waste storage

Protective equipment and tools¹ for beach cleaning were distributed to stakeholders and volunteers to conduct the beach cleaning activity.

Challenges

The main challenge faced during the operation was the lockdown situation in the country (travel restrictions), which made it difficult and challenging to conduct activities as planned. Most of the field locations were under quarantine regulations. Some of the volunteers were infected by the virus during the process, this further delayed the cleaning activities. Especially in Colombo district, the volunteers were reluctant to attend the activity as the area had a high risk of transmission of COVID-19. Branches coordinated with local authorities to carry out response work following COVID-19 safe response practices. All beach cleaning volunteers were provided with special PPE kits and tools.

Another main challenge highlighted was a disagreement between local authorities and SLRCS regarding the waste collected. As per the normal procedure, waste collection and disposal are done by the municipal council of the area. However, considering the toxic nature of the debris of ship explosion, the municipal council was at first reluctant to accept the waste collected by the SLRCS volunteers, but an agreement was reached at the end.

Lessons Learned

Since the selected volunteers were from the affected local fishing communities, this created a sense of belonging and responsibility among community members. This resulted in their increased involvement in the operation until its final stage and involvement of community leaders to minimize disagreements during the operation.

Additionally, there is necessity of having a documented relationship between municipals and other local level stakeholders, to ensure that each local stakeholder is aware of their role during the operation.

¹ 600 Shovels, Boots, Goggles and 100 number of wheelbarrows were procured for the operation.



Protection Gender and Inclusion

People reached: 16,080

Male: 8,546

Female: 7,534

Indicators:	Target	Actual
<i>Does the operation demonstrate evidence of addressing the specific needs to ensure equitable access to disaster response services?</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>Does the operation demonstrate evidence of NS programmes improve equitable access to basic services, considering different needs based on gender and other diversity factors?</i>	Yes	Yes
Narrative description of achievements		
<p>From the initial stage, SLRCS carried out the following to ensure PGI during the field implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation for staff and volunteers on the PGI minimum standards • Collection and analysis of sex, age and disability disaggregated data • Ensure community engagement and accountability through consultations (i.e., multi-sectoral community feedback mechanism, community engagement regarding selection criteria etc.) <p>Post disaster monitoring showed that out of the selected beneficiaries, 94% were economically vulnerable, while there were 14% pregnant and lactating mothers in the community. As for the beach cleaning activities, 44% women engagement was reported.</p>		
Challenges		
<p>Challenges due to the lockdown situation in the country (travel restrictions) made it difficult and challenging to conduct activities, as planned. Most of the field locations were under quarantine regulations. SLRCS branches coordinated with local authorities to carry out response work following COVID-19 safe response practices. All volunteers were provided with PPEs.</p>		
Lessons Learned		
N/A		

Strengthen National Society		
Indicators:	Target	Actual
<i># of SLRCS branches that are well functioning</i>	6	6
<i># of volunteers insured</i>	505	455
Narrative description of achievements		
<p>Under the operation, it was ensured that SLRCS volunteers were fully trained before deploying them to the beach cleaning activity.</p>		
Challenges		
<p>Not having prior experiences or knowledge about method of responding to CBRN related disasters were highlighted.</p>		
Lessons Learned		
<p>The importance of having trained and skilled volunteers on CBRN was stressed.</p>		

International Disaster Response		
Indicators:	Target	Actual
<i># of NDRT deployed</i>	3	4
<i>Ratio of people reached by the IFRC disaster response operations to the people affected by these emergencies</i>	Minimum of 5%	20% of affected
<i># of surge deployed</i>	1	1
<i>% Compliance with Principles and Rules for Humanitarian Assistance</i>	100%	100%

# Of coordination meetings with other stakeholders	10	9
Movement coordination is in place	Yes	Yes
Involvement in regular coordination meetings.	Yes	Yes
Narrative description of achievements		
From the initial stage SLRCS worked with National and local level stakeholders to minimize the duplication that can occur during the operation. Apart from that, SLRCS was able to assist more than 20% of the total affected.		
Challenges		
As the COVID-19 cases started to rise, few planned stakeholder meetings were called off, and this impacted the efficiency of the DREF operation as well.		
Lessons Learned		
Since this disaster was new experience to SLRCS and other stakeholders, there was dialogue raised about importance of keeping contact with these new stakeholders for future purposes.		

Influence others as leading strategic partner		
Indicators:	Target	Actual
<i>IFRC and NS are visible, trusted and effective advocates on humanitarian issues.</i>	Yes	Yes
<i># of communications materials produced (social media, media articles, interviews, etc.)</i>	7	9
<i># of rapid and detailed assessment teams deployed at branch level</i>	6	6
Narrative description of achievements		
URL links for published SLRCS social media posts:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://www.facebook.com/srilankaredcross/photos/pcb.4836083629756791/4836083413090146/ https://www.facebook.com/133902706641597/posts/4843130089052145/ https://www.facebook.com/133902706641597/posts/4836083629756791/ https://www.facebook.com/133902706641597/posts/4775765799121908/ https://www.facebook.com/133902706641597/posts/4755193004512521/ https://www.facebook.com/133902706641597/posts/4716545938377228/ https://www.facebook.com/133902706641597/posts/4618114528220370/ https://www.facebook.com/133902706641597/posts/4575891532442670/ 		
<u>Project review workshop</u>		
Progress review was conducted in September 2021 at SLRCS national headquarters. IFRC representatives, branch staff, volunteers and national headquarter staff who were involved in the DREF operation participated in the meeting. Progress made from June 2021 to September 2021 was discussed during the meeting. Field staff discussed the difficulties they faced working in the COVID-19 context and planned how to mitigate issues over the following few months.		
Challenges		
Some of the general challenges faced by the operational staff were mentioned during the lessons learned workshop. Having separate authorities to regulate the coastal environment, wildlife, fisheries and welfare was highlighted as one of the main concerns of actively engaging in response and relief activities in coastal areas.		
Lessons Learned		
N/A		

Effective, credible and accountable IFRC		
Indicators:	Target	Actual
<i>IFRC enhances its effectiveness, credibility and accountability</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>% of financial reporting respecting the IFRC procedures</i>	100%	100%

Narrative description of achievements

SLRCS finance department is currently working on introducing digital systems and applications to make the financial reporting more effective and efficient. Although the system is installed, there is still some more work to be done to train staff before having it fully functional. IFRC Finance Manager in-country is working regularly with SLRCS to ensure reports are submitted within the agreed timeframe. A special meeting was held with Director General to discuss the delays in financial reporting and appropriate actions were taken to minimize the delays in future. The process is still ongoing and will be closely monitored.

Challenges

N/A

Lessons Learned

N/A

D. Financial Report

CHF 481,250 was allocated for SLRCS to respond to the disaster. Overall, the operation utilized CHF 449,415, recording 93 per cent utilization of the allocation. The balance of CHF 31,836 will be returned to the DREF pool.

Full financial report is attached at the end of this report.

The major donors and partners of the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) include the Red Cross Societies and governments of Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, German, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland, as well as DG ECHO and Blizzard Entertainment, Mondelez International Foundation, and Fortive Corporation and other corporate and private donors. The IFRC, on behalf of the National Society, would like to extend thanks to all for their generous contributions.

Contact information

Reference documents



Click here for:

- [Previous updates](#)
- [Emergency Plan of Action \(EPoA\)](#)

For further information, specifically related to this operation please contact:

In the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society

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For resource mobilization and pledges

- **In IFRC Asia Pacific Regional Office:** Alice Ho, Partnership in Emergencies Coordinator; email: partnershipsEA.AP@ifrc.org

For planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER) enquiries

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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the **Code of Conduct** for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere)** in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, **encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities** by National Societies, with a view to **preventing and alleviating human suffering**, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

DREF Operation

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	2021/06-2022/02	Operation	MDRLK013
Budget Timeframe	2021/06-2021/12	Budget	APPROVED

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Prepared on 28/Mar/2022

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

MDRLK013 - Sri Lanka - Cargo Ship Fire

Operating Timeframe: 13 Jun 2021 to 31 Dec 2021

I. Summary

Opening Balance	0
Funds & Other Income	481,250
DREF Allocations	481,250
Expenditure	-449,415
Closing Balance	31,835

II. Expenditure by area of focus / strategies for implementation

Description	Budget	Expenditure	Variance
AOF1 - Disaster risk reduction			0
AOF2 - Shelter			0
AOF3 - Livelihoods and basic needs	225,980	216,001	9,979
AOF4 - Health			0
AOF5 - Water, sanitation and hygiene	217,907	204,985	12,922
AOF6 - Protection, Gender & Inclusion			0
AOF7 - Migration			0
Area of focus Total	443,887	420,986	22,901
SFI1 - Strengthen National Societies	32,902	25,117	7,786
SFI2 - Effective international disaster management	4,313	3,312	1,001
SFI3 - Influence others as leading strategic partners			0
SFI4 - Ensure a strong IFRC	148		148
Strategy for implementation Total	37,363	28,428	8,935
Grand Total	481,250	449,415	31,836

DREF Operation

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	2021/06-2022/02	Operation	MDRLK013
Budget Timeframe	2021/06-2021/12	Budget	APPROVED

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Prepared on 28/Mar/2022

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

MDRLK013 - Sri Lanka - Cargo Ship Fire

Operating Timeframe: 13 Jun 2021 to 31 Dec 2021

III. Expenditure by budget category & group

Description	Budget	Expenditure	Variance
Relief items, Construction, Supplies	363,102	349,266	13,836
Medical & First Aid	124,999	114,796	10,203
Other Supplies & Services	29,962	33,219	-3,256
Cash Disbursement	208,141	201,251	6,889
Logistics, Transport & Storage	11,008	7,199	3,810
Distribution & Monitoring	3,238	2,754	484
Transport & Vehicles Costs	7,771	4,445	3,325
Personnel	58,575	50,947	7,628
National Staff		217	-217
National Society Staff	13,810	10,931	2,880
Volunteers	44,765	39,799	4,966
Consultants & Professional Fees	2,662	2,945	-283
Consultants	2,662	2,945	-283
Workshops & Training	10,333	7,149	3,184
Workshops & Training	10,333	7,149	3,184
General Expenditure	6,198	4,480	1,718
Information & Public Relations	4,047	2,451	1,596
Office Costs	1,110	512	598
Communications	999	392	607
Financial Charges	42	1,125	-1,083
Indirect Costs	29,372	27,429	1,943
Programme & Services Support Recover	29,372	27,429	1,943
Grand Total	481,250	449,415	31,836