



**Relief and Hope:
Our Response to a
Humanitarian Call**

**Population
Movement
DREF Operation
2023**



Sri Lanka Red Cross Society

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Population Movement DREF Operation 2023

The decision to leave home and loved ones behind is never easy, yet every day, people around the world risk their lives and leave their family members and communities in search of a safe place and a better future. When attempting to cross the border by sea, these migrants frequently become stranded.

In order to assist a group of stranded migrants from Rakhine State, whom the Sri Lanka Navy had saved in the country's northern waters, we launched our first population movement operation in December 2022 with the support of the IFRC's Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF).

The operation was completed in April 2023 and was carried out in accordance with the seven fundamental principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

This booklet presents the highlights of the operation and our lessons learned, with the purpose of improving the processes and outcomes of future operations.

- Humanity • Impartiality • Neutrality • Independence
- Voluntary service • Unity • Universality

Adherence to the core principles ensures uniformity in the activities of the Red Cross Movement around the world. These principles bind the National Societies together and guide our work throughout.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CEA	Community Engagement and Accountability
DREF	Disaster Response Emergency Fund
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IEC	Information Education and communication
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NHQ	National Headquarters
PGI	Protection, Gender and Inclusion
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
PWD	People with Disabilities
RDHS	Regional Director of Health Services
RFL	Resorting Family Links
SLRCS	Sri Lanka Red Cross Society
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On December 18, 2022, the Sri Lanka Navy rescued 105 distressed migrants from Rakhine State on a stranded boat that was reported to have trespassed into Sri Lanka's northern territorial waters following a mechanical failure. Since their arrival, the government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have coordinated with a number of partners to provide humanitarian assistance.

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS), the country's largest humanitarian organization, joined the operation as an auxiliary organization to the government, assisting the government authorities in providing essential humanitarian assistance and services. This included shelter assistance, relief items, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), health services, and Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) services to the rescued migrants through a four-month Population Movement Operation funded by the IFRC's DREF. Though the SLRCS has a long history and extensive experience responding to a wide variety of man-made and natural disasters, this was the first ever population movement operation of the organization, which was carried out in collaboration with other key stakeholders working in Sri Lanka.

This booklet shares the undermentioned lessons learned and recommendations by the organization and other stakeholders from the stakeholder dialogue and lessons learned workshop held in April 2023 following the Population Movement DREF Operation to improve the organizational internal processes and share some learning and recommendations with external stakeholders for future operations.

There was no coordination mechanism for systematic stakeholder interaction on population movement prior to this crisis. Reaching out to more actors in addition to those who are involved, such as government authorities at different levels, UNICEF, IOM, WHO, and community actors, and forming a pre-crisis stakeholder dialogue is a critical component in the planning process for a future response, as it brings together all relevant stakeholders with varying capacities, resources, expertise, and services to enable a more effective response.

Making a Standard Operating Procedures (SoP) and a response manual available to all actors will ensure a rapid and efficient response to maritime arrival-related emergencies, particularly for displaced persons and asylum seekers, as it provides a similar understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and procedures in making decisions and prioritizing the needs and response.

It is advisable for the organizations involved to develop an inter-agency contingency plan by drawing upon past experiences to offer a unified and comprehensive framework to direct all partners.

A comprehensive needs assessment with the participation of the affected community is pivotal to collecting adequate data and understanding the specific requirements for the most appropriate, efficient, and effective response. It is also critical to do a mid-operational evaluation in order to better understand shifting demands and change responses accordingly with proper documentation for formal approvals.

A resilient and well-prepared SLRCS network with internal cooperation and synergy across departments, branches, the National Headquarters, volunteers, and staff is essential for disaster response. Thus, upskilling staff and volunteers in various response areas, improving their soft skills and language skills, and integrating cross-cutting issues like Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA), Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) into need assessment, information and communication management, implementation, quality assurance, monitoring, and evaluation of the operation is important to add value, ensure a tailored response, and give them international acceptance.

Throughout the population movement-related crisis, responders must collect, communicate, and disseminate critical information to the appropriate internal and external audiences via acceptable channels. Hence, a communication strategy and its dissemination to key partners are critical to the operation.

Exploring the expertise and resource sharing of Red Cross movement partners to improve operation planning and execution is beneficial. The SLRCS could have contacted National Societies such as the Bangladesh Red Crescent to learn about the typical needs of displaced people, gather Information on Education and Communication (IEC) materials, experiences, and communication tools, learn about protection acts and legislation, and comprehend the types of relief items procured to assist the affected people.

Before purchasing relief materials, clarifying the requirements precisely and choosing a leader in the affected community to coordinate response operations and determine the specific assistance needed to meet the unique requirements of displaced persons is crucial.

Localization is a long-term solution that is not currently being implemented in Sri Lanka. The UNHCR will continue to work closely with government agencies to ensure that these migrants are protected and assisted until they are provided with solutions. Until a long-term solution is reached, there is a need for the continuation of the provision of

- » a) education for the affected children,
- » b) suitable housing for unaccompanied minors,
- » c) special attention to their health, safety, and mental health,
- » d) English language skills to communicate in their new social and cultural environment,
- » e) livelihood training,
- » f) awareness among displaced persons about their rights, entitlements, local laws, regulations, and cultures to mitigate the potential risks associated with sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as gender-based violence, and
- » g) support for emotional and mental wellbeing to help them achieve some sense of normalcy.

Many thousands of people have been compelled to flee tensions in northern Myanmar's Rakhine State with an unclear future.

1. BACKGROUND

Since the onset of widespread conflict in 2012, hundreds of thousands of Rakhine people have fled to neighboring countries in search of safety and better future prospects. Those who have made it to neighbouring countries have encountered dire humanitarian situations, including difficulties in accessing food, water, and health services.

On December 18, 2022, the Sri Lanka Navy rescued 105 distressed migrants on a stranded boat that was reported to have trespassed into Sri Lanka's northern territorial waters following a mechanical failure. The migrants were on their way from Myanmar to Indonesia when the incident occurred, and the Sri Lanka Navy made strenuous efforts to rescue them despite rough sea conditions. This group of migrants included 49 children (21 girls and 28 boys), including 21 unaccompanied children (8 boys and 13 girls), and 56 adults (26 females and 30 males).

The initial encounter between the Navy and these migrants was challenging due to the communication barrier. However, after providing necessary emergency medical care and other forms of humanitarian aid, the Navy transferred this group to the appropriate agencies for legal proceedings. On December 22, 2022, the Immigration and Emigration Department of Sri Lanka moved these immigrants to detention facilities at Welisara in the Gampaha and Mirihana in the Colombo districts following the legal proceedings.

Since their arrival, the government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have coordinated with a number of partners to provide humanitarian assistance. We, the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS), the country's largest humanitarian organization, joined the operation as an auxiliary organization to the government, assisting the government authorities in providing essential humanitarian assistance and services. This included shelter assistance, relief items, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), health services, and Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) services to the rescued migrants through a four-month Population Movement Operation funded by the IFRC's DREF.

"It was a perilous six-month journey from Bangladesh to Sri Lanka, with no food and heavy rains. We are a four-person family with two sons, aged thirteen and two and a half. My husband (60) accompanied us on the trip, but he died recently and couldn't make it this far. The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society has been extremely helpful in terms of our survival," says Lalaban (30).

Though we have a long history and extensive experience responding to a wide variety of man-made and natural disasters, this was our first ever population movement operation, which was carried out in collaboration with other key stakeholders working in Sri Lanka.

2. OUR RESPONSE

Throughout the operation, we adhered to our seven fundamental principles, ensuring the utmost commitment to the principle of "do no harm" while also understanding the vulnerabilities and needs of the displaced persons from Rakhine State.

2.1 Initial need assessment

We worked in close coordination with the UNHCR, local authorities, and other stakeholders to understand the specific and unique needs of this migrant group and to ensure that our responses were based on actual requirements. On December 23, 2022, when the migrants were transferred to the detention centers and we were granted access to them, a team comprised of SLRCS and IFRC visited the detention centers to conduct an initial assessment of their needs. The staff and volunteers of the SLRCS Gampaha branch conducted the assessment in the Welisara center, while those of the SLRCS Colombo branch conducted it in the Mirihana detention facility.

The primary requirements identified for the displaced persons were food, relief items, medical assistance, and water and sanitation facilities. The main obstacle encountered was communication, which made it difficult for them to fully comprehend their needs, so assessment teams utilized a few Rakhine migrants who arrived in 2017 as translators.

2.2 Resource mobilization

Our Colombo branch, with the cooperation of National Headquarters (NHQ) and IFRC, began to assist displaced persons in detention centers on December 23, 2022, by giving bed sheets, linen, and sanitary napkins from their warehouse. The branch immediately found and deployed local volunteers for this activity. Simultaneously, SLRCS-NHQ focused on resource mobilization for the response by requesting assistance from IFRC-DREF.

2.3 Population Movement DREF Operation

In the long run, the UNHCR is collaborating with authorities to identify solutions. Meanwhile, through the IFRC-DREF funds, we worked with the Department of Immigration and Emigration and other government agencies, as well as the UNHCR and other non-governmental parties, to provide the displaced persons with a safe environment with necessary services in detention centers and to ensure that their basic household, health, and other psychosocial needs were met after they transitioned to new residences, through the following interventions:

1. Shelter, housing and settlements

Out of the total of 105 people who were rescued, 103 were provided accommodation in a detention center upon their arrival. One individual passed away, while another was immediately detained pending the outcome of a criminal charge brought against him as the boat driver.

The government and the UNHCR took the lead in coordinating efforts to move people from detention centers to rented housing. They negotiated a one-year housing agreement with the respective house owners and resettled these 103 displaced persons by April 10. Muslim Aid, the UNHCR's implementation partner, played a crucial role in facilitating this process.

Due to the migrants' relocation, there was a shift in their humanitarian requirements. Consequently, it became necessary for us to make certain adjustments to our operational strategy by incorporating additional activities to ensure the fulfillment of their various needs, including security and food security.



Under the operation, we provided,

- » household items such as mosquito nets, pillows, bed sheets, mats, kitchen facilities, utensils, jerry cans, and the required amount of clothes and non-food items
- » dry ration packs
- » Cash vouchers worth Rs. 52,500 from selected shops where they could purchase food and essential items for all 103 migrants. (This amount was determined based on a minimum expenditure basket prepared in coordination with the National Cash Working Group .)
- » Cash envelopes worth Rs. 55,000.00 for 97 migrants except for six (6) unaccompanied minors who were under the supervision of the Department of Probation and Childcare Centre

People's living conditions and lifestyles improved significantly. All migrants are currently living in rented housing, with children having access to playgrounds and enhanced social contacts. The UNHCR began providing them with skills and language training so that they could communicate on their own.

“We didn't have any household items after moving into this rented house, so I used the Red Cross grant to buy all the necessary household items and food. I am grateful to the Red Cross, and I also request that monetary assistance be continued in the future because we do not have any other source of daily income to meet our living expenses,” says Lala Banu, a 30-year-old widow with two children.

¹The Cash Working Group (CWG) in Sri Lanka, consisting of both national and international stakeholders, has been reestablished since June 2022 to effectively implement the Humanitarian Needs Priorities (HNP) response and integrate it with existing programming efforts. At present, the group is comprised of three programmatic co-chairs, namely the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and Save the Children.



2. Health

For the displaced persons to be able to restore their lives, as an initial step, good physical and mental health is an absolute necessity.



According to the rapid assessment report, almost all migrants had skin infections and head lice. We held six medical camps with the Regional Director of Health Services (RDHS) and offered clinical services with laboratory testing along with medication provision for migrants in need. In addition to the medical camps, we provided logistical support for the physicians and other supporters of the camps while also establishing a service center and ambulance services. To help them rebuild their lives, be resilient, and have strength, we also deployed trained volunteers to provide mental health and psychosocial support throughout their stay in the detention centers.

Once these displaced persons moved into the rented homes, we helped them adjust by giving them extra medical checks, first aid, and referrals as needed.

3. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

The authorities of the water board provided water connections to the temporary shelters/safe houses where the detained individuals were housed. We offered support in disinfecting the premises and providing hygiene products, including toothbrushes, toothpaste, hand sanitizer, razors, face masks, soap, handwash, detergent, sanitary napkins, water-carrying buckets, basins, and waste disposal bins. Additionally, we facilitated hair-cutting services for the displaced persons.

During the rapid assessment, the menstrual hygiene needs of migrant adolescent girls and women were identified as an immediate need, and adequate menstrual hygiene items had to be provided to the girls and women in the detention centers.

Because feminine hygiene is often overlooked and women and girls are reluctant to discuss their needs openly, we conducted sessions to promote hygiene. In addition, we carried out sessions on appropriate excreta disposal to prevent any risks of spreading infections.

4. Protection, Gender and Inclusion

The SLRCS and the IFRC country team have prioritized the concerns of Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) since the start of the operation and integrated PGI across all sectors. A total of 49 Red Cross volunteers underwent training on the PGI. The information obtained from the needs assessment regarding age, gender, and disability enabled us to effectively address the needs of these specific populations by ensuring adequate coverage that considers their vulnerabilities.

We gave the utmost priority to the safety and well-being of children and women and arranged appropriate living arrangements at the detention center to uphold dignity, promote accessibility, and ensure a secure environment. The operation successfully implemented child-focused activities, including their engagement in education-related activities, by also providing kids toys and stationary (books, pencils, pens, colored pencils, clarion, watercolor, carrom boards, and badminton sets), and these activities and support were designed to promote the mental well-being of children residing in detention centers while also ensuring that children had access to safe spaces and recreational materials.

Upon their relocation to rented homes, we provided school packs and recreational materials for all 49 children to facilitate activities like drawing, writing, painting, etc. Additionally, we established the necessary coordination with local leaders to ensure that the children of migrants have access to the playground, allowing them to engage in quality recreational activities.

The operation provided 46 push bicycles for 46 men to allow freedom of movement and a free mode of transportation in meeting their daily short-distance transportation needs.

“There are six of us in my family, and four of them are kids. I'm thankful and delighted that I now have my own push bicycle so that I won't have to pay for tuk-tuks to get to the market or drop my kids off at school. I miss the one I had in Myanmar, but now I have one in Sri Lanka,” says a recipient, Salimullah.

RFL (Resorting Family Links) services:

We worked closely with the ICRC to set up assistance points to provide RFL services. We, together with the ICRC, facilitated connecting 73 persons with their loved ones living in other locations through mobile phones and letters.

Registration of migrants:

All migrants were duly registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and they were fully informed about their rights. To date, no instances of negative consequences, such as harassment, attacks, or any other form of abuse, have been reported.

3. LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section contains the lessons we learned on our own as well as the insights shared by other stakeholders during the stakeholder dialogue and lessons learned workshop held in April 2023 following the end of the Population Movement DREF Operation. Through this chapter, we aim to share insights to improve our own internal processes and some learning and recommendations with external stakeholders for their consideration in future operations.

1. Effective coordination with other stakeholders

Improving coordination and communication among stakeholders is crucial for enhancing the efficiency and sustainability of population movement programs, enhancing support for immigrants, and facilitating resettlement operations.

Effective collaboration with various stakeholders, including government authorities, the UN, and other organizations, is crucial right from the beginning of the response effort and throughout the implementation and monitoring of an emergency operation.

Since we entered the operation, we have maintained coordination and collaboration, working with the relevant government and non-governmental actors to implement the planned activities in a timely manner. The key stakeholders we coordinated with in this population Movement Operation were:

- » The Sri Lanka Navy, which initiated this operation by rescuing the boat,
- » The Department of Probation and Child Care, which supports providing children's basic needs and protection in collaboration with the Human Rights Commission,
- » The Department of Immigration and Emigration, which is proceeding with the legal requirement for irregular immigrants,
- » The UNHCR, which has been providing support for Myanmar migrants since 2008 in housing, food, education, and livelihood development, and leading this particular response with the Sri Lankan Government to coordinate with all stakeholders involved in this response,
- » ICRC, who worked with us to provide Restoring Family Links (RFL) services,
- » Muslim Aid, the agency the UNHCR has partnered with in responding to the basic humanitarian needs of the displaced persons from Rakhine State and providing housing and education facilities such as assistance for teaching language, computer, and psychosocial development classes, and
- » Health authorities such as the Regional Director of Health Services (RDHS), who offered medical services to the immigrants at the detention centers. Throughout the implementation phase, two meetings were conducted to facilitate stakeholder coordination. Additionally, day-to-day coordination was carried out at the field level as needed. This coordination significantly improved the efficiency of the operation towards the end of the operation.

A coordination mechanism for systematic stakeholder interaction: There was no coordination mechanism for systematic stakeholder interaction on population movement prior to this crisis.

Communication with government agencies was difficult in the early stages of the operation, and there was also little support, delaying the planning process.

The limited engagement of partners in the initial stage and the challenges encountered in this particular response area may mostly be attributed to Sri Lanka's limited experience in population movement, which stems from its relatively low popularity as a destination for migrants. Consequently, this operation necessitated the involvement of non-conventional partners and stakeholders, diverging from our traditional partnerships, and consuming more time to establish the initial rapport.

Reaching out to more actors in addition to those who are involved, such as government authorities at different levels, UNICEF, IOM, WHO, and community actors, and forming a pre-crisis stakeholder dialogue is a critical component in the planning process for a future response, as it brings together all relevant stakeholders with varying capacities, resources, expertise, and services to enable a more effective response. It is critical to bring the relevant actors together more effectively to ensure that there are no operational gaps from the time they arrive until they are supported for longer-term integration.

2. A need for a Standard Operating Procedures (SoP)

Making a SoP and a response manual available to all actors will ensure a rapid and efficient response to maritime arrival-related emergencies, particularly for displaced persons and asylum seekers, as it provides a similar understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and procedures in making decisions and prioritizing the

needs and response. This procedure may involve key national authorities such as the Department of Immigration and Emigration as well as other national and international experts and representatives working on this subject, such as UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Mapping the agencies involved in population movement response, examining the current roles of various stakeholders, and identifying operational weaknesses and difficulties could serve as the starting point for this activity.

3. A multi-multi-agency contingency plan

Humanitarian actors benefit greatly from contingency planning since it allows them to plan ahead of time when the chance arises.

Our experience in other disaster preparations and responses has demonstrated that the degree of preparation and planning, as well as the resources and capacities available to them, have a significant impact on timely responses upon the onset of a crisis. This idea also holds true in this situation. All organizations that will be involved in future population movement responses should be ready to provide services when required in order to ensure a rapid and efficient response.

Inter-agency contingency planning offers a unified and comprehensive framework to direct all partners' collective action. In the future, it is advisable for the organizations involved to develop a contingency plan by drawing upon past experiences. This plan should involve a thorough analysis of the potential impact of similar population movement crises.

However, it is essential to understand that an inter-agency contingency plan cannot serve as a substitute for an organizational contingency plan.

4. Adequate information for planning responses

A comprehensive needs assessment is pivotal to collecting data and understanding the specific requirements for the most appropriate, efficient, and effective response.

As we were unable to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment during the planning phase, there wasn't adequate and detailed primary or secondary data at the onset of the crisis to prepare the operational strategies for each sector. Although the number of migrants was 105, it took a few weeks to collect age, gender, disability disaggregated data, and other specific vulnerabilities and identify respective needs to come up with a detailed need- and fact-based operational plan and design the DREF operational strategy, particularly at the initial stage, leading to slow decision-making and approvals at both NHQ and IFRC levels.

At the initial stages, the needs were identified in consultation with authorities and stakeholders; however, the identified needs differed from the actual needs in the early stages. Language barriers and cultural differences were key factors that limited free interaction with the displaced persons and communication with them for various activities and needs assessments. It is crucial that at least a few leaders from the affected community participate actively in data collection, need assessment, and decision-making processes, particularly in identifying the relief items and specific services required for various categories of beneficiaries, such as unaccompanied minors, children, girls, boys, people with disabilities (PWD),

elderly, women, and men. Even after gaining access to the displaced persons, the language barrier prevented SLRCS from identifying their requirements.

It is also critical to do a mid-operational evaluation in order to better understand shifting demands and change responses accordingly with proper documentation for formal approvals.

5. Capacitated branches, staff and volunteers

The presence of a resilient network of branches, along with the capabilities of both volunteers and staff members, constitute crucial resources for effectively addressing diverse forms of disaster.

We have a robust volunteer network and a staff with expertise in disaster management and relief work, health and WASH, etc.; consequently, the organization is always prepared to respond to a disaster. Because this was our organization's first response to a population movement crisis, personnel and volunteers had limited experience handling such a response, even though it was a vital prerequisite.

a) Upskilling staff and volunteers:

Our staff and volunteers had been primarily trained to respond to natural disasters and not this type of crisis; therefore, there was a lack of trained staff and volunteers in specific areas such as Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), Gender and Inclusion (PGI), and Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV). Under this operation, we had to train the workers in these specific areas because their skills needed to be improved before they could be used effectively. Continuous training of staff and volunteers in these areas will have a

significant impact on future operations. In addition, it will be essential to keep the staff, volunteers, and other stakeholders informed of the IFRC's policy on migration and how the National Society (SLRCS) ensures that activities and programs adhere to the policy.

b) Improving soft skills and language skills:

Understanding and being able to communicate in a language allows humanitarian workers to access information and make informed decisions. The major challenge the responders faced was the language barrier, as no displaced person spoke English or another common language to communicate with the authorities or any other humanitarian aid workers or volunteers. Therefore, certain responses, such as the provision of mental health and psychosocial support, were restricted as the affected persons were unable to explain their true wants, challenges, and issues. To guarantee the best level of communication, the operation had to deploy interpreters at medical camps and other exchanges.

The cultural norms and attitudes of the migrants presented significant challenges in implementing activities such as hygiene promotion. The migrants preferred to have separate awareness sessions for women and men due to their cultural sensitivities. Hence, it is imperative for operations of this nature to pay attention to creating awareness among the staff and volunteers and sensitizing them to demonstrate appropriate soft skills such as cultural sensitivity, empathy, positive attitudes, and humanity in addition to their language skills, at least to a certain degree.

c) Integrating cross-cutting issues:

All actors involved in similar operations should place a greater emphasis on integrating cross-cutting issues such as Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA), Protection, gender, and Inclusion (PGI) into need assessment, information and communication

management, implementation, quality assurance, monitoring, and evaluation of the operation in order to add value, ensure a tailored response, and give them international acceptance.

d) The need for a well-prepared branch network:

Given the necessity for rapid deployment of staff and volunteers in an unanticipated humanitarian operation, all branches should be fully equipped and capacitated with human and financial resources to respond to any type of crisis situation throughout the year. Prior to receiving DREF funding, the Colombo and Gampaha branches were quick to act with the relevant stakeholders, such as the RDHS offices, when a need arose since they had more of their own resources. To maintain this stability and mobilize resources at the branch level when a need arises, it is critical to invest in developing financial and human resources in all branches, involve all branches when the NHQ prepares operational budgets, and share expertise and experiences among all branches in order to stay current.

e) Internal cooperation and synergy across departments, branches, and the National Headquarters:

This type of response should demonstrate commendable collaboration and synergy across NHQ departments such as finance, logistics, livelihood, PGI, Disaster Management, and other departments and branches in supporting procurement and financial management and exchanging experiences. It is best practice to form a task force to plan the operation and review the response activities when a similar crisis occurs in the future.

6. Having a communication and dissemination plan in place

Effective communication is a central element of any humanitarian operation.

When responding to a population movement-related crisis with a number of partners, it is important that responders collect, communicate, and disseminate vital information to the appropriate internal and external audiences through suitable channels at the onset and in the aftermath of the crisis. Therefore, the availability of a communication plan and sharing it with the relevant partners are essential aspects of the operation. This plan should serve as a guideline for all partners and define the approach and tools to be employed for the operation's communication needs. While elaborating on the purpose of the communication tasks, it should also bring clarity on who communicates what messages to whom and when. The plan should also consider the project's visibility while sharing the impact it has created with the relevant audiences.

7. Exploring the potential for knowledge and resource sharing from the movement partners:

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has extensive experience responding to similar situations in other countries. To better plan and implement the operation, the SLRCS could have reached out to National Societies such as the Bangladesh Red Crescent to obtain information about the typical needs of the displaced persons, collect Information Education and communication (IEC) materials, experiences, and various communication tools, gain knowledge on protection acts and legislation, and understand the types of relief items that have been procured to assist the affected people.

8. Clarifying the precise needs for relief items prior to purchase:

Prior to initiating the procurement process for the purchase of relief items, such as nutritional food packs, sports items, household items, hygiene kits, temporary shelter items, and men's and women's clothing, it is essential to determine and clarify the precise requirements of those impacted. During the implementation phase, it was discovered that certain items did not adequately address the priority needs of the affected individuals, primarily due to shifts in locations and conditions.

It is important to document the relief items and specific services provided by all stakeholders to meet the needs of the affected people, which could be used as a reference to plan future responses. Additionally, it would be advantageous to designate a leader within the affected community to facilitate the coordination of response efforts and ascertain the specific assistance required to address the unique needs of the displaced persons.

9. Integrating displaced persons into a community is a crucial endeavour:

Localization is a long-term solution that is not currently being implemented in Sri Lanka. The UNHCR will continue to work closely with government agencies to ensure that these migrants are protected and assisted until they are provided with solutions. In the long run, Parliament must establish new immigration and emigration laws as well as convene government officials to discuss local integration as a long-term solution. However, for the upcoming year or two, it is crucial to plan ahead to support them as they integrate into a new community while concentrating on the following essential requirements:

- » Education is a fundamental human right, and the right of affected children to education must be recognized. Though no one has objected to providing education, actual access to education can be extremely difficult; therefore, the Department of Probation and Child Care will need to intervene on a continuous basis to ensure that all children's educational needs are met.
- » Resettling unaccompanied children in an ordinary housing arrangement can be extremely challenging; therefore, the Department of Probation and Child Care will need to identify suitable housing for unaccompanied minors, paying special attention to their health, safety, and mental health.
- » Communication has been the major obstacle for these people. English language skills might make it simpler for them to communicate in their new social and cultural environment. Therefore, offering English education to everyone to enhance communication and improve their social skills will enable them to improve their current situation while also enhancing their future potential.
- » Education and earning a living in Sri Lanka are difficult for the affected persons as they do not receive a proper legal status in Sri Lanka. Provisions will need to be secured to provide good training, such as electrical wiring, in the detention centers and empower them to support local integration until they receive solutions in a third country.
- » Displacement has a disproportionately negative impact on women and children. Lack of awareness among displaced persons about their rights and entitlements in an unfamiliar environment increases the risk of exploitation and abuse; thus, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV) training will need continuation.
- » To help these displaced persons live in the existing settlement, it is important to make them aware of the local laws, regulations, and cultures.
- » The displaced persons are stressed for a variety of reasons. Separation from families, hopelessness, xenophobia, a lack of livelihood prospects, perilous journeys, security challenges, and a lack of community support are some of the pressures they face; thus, support for emotional and mental wellbeing is needed to help them achieve some sense of normalcy.
- » The operation responded to changing health demands, such as providing sufficient medical camps and treatment for skin illnesses; however, it is ideal to continue to hold awareness sessions on basic hygiene and sanitation to help prevent any disease spread.

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