



UNITED NATIONS
SRI LANKA

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20 ANNUAL 24 RESULTS REPORT



2024 ANNUAL RESULTS REPORT

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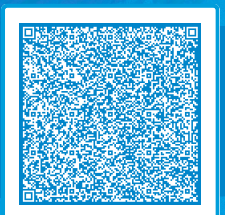
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FOREWORD BY THE RESIDENT COORDINATOR

This Report showcases the work of the United Nations in Sri Lanka in 2024—a year of significant transition marked by political renewal and continued economic recovery. Amid these developments, the UN remains a steadfast partner in supporting Sri Lanka’s efforts to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ensure no one is left behind.

The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for 2023-2027, which brings together 21 UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes around six agreed outcomes, continues to guide our investments with government, civil society and partners.

In 2024, 12% of our investments were carried out through joint programming, reflecting our commitment to integrated approaches that maximize impact. We invested \$79.9 million resulting in an 83% overall delivery from available resources.

Throughout 2024 nearly 2.5 million people received food, supplements, or essential medical care. Over 841,000 farmers benefited from climate-smart agriculture, and thousands of families gained access to safe water, sanitation, and critical health services.

At the same time, legal and social protections for women, children, and persons with disabilities were strengthened, and inclusive education and digital transformation advanced through policy support and national training initiatives.

Key policy and legislative developments laid a solid basis for boosting progress on the SDGs. These included the launch of the National Social Protection Policy, the Women’s Empowerment Act, and advancements in green public procurement and renewable energy integration.

Throughout the year, we continued to collaborate closely with our broad set of partners including government authorities,

civil society, development partners, the private sector, and communities across Sri Lanka.

The success of initiatives such as the expansion of the Aswesuma social protection scheme, the reinstatement of the Human Rights Commission’s “A” status, and flagship support for women-led MSMEs reflects the strength of these collaborations.

At the same time, we recognize the complex challenges that remain—from inequalities in income and access to quality nutrition to the impact of climate change, to the need for continued progress on improving governance and safeguarding civic space.

The UN Country Team adapted and responded to the challenges at hand, drawing on our global experience as well as innovation and community-centred approaches - whether through digital tools, inclusive planning, or new financing models.

Looking ahead, the UN remains dedicated to supporting Sri Lanka’s vision for a more inclusive, prosperous and peaceful society.

Our focus will continue to be on working with the new government and all other stakeholders on boosting green and inclusive growth for poverty reduction, protecting and empowering the most marginalized, strengthening institutions to strengthen governance and rule of law, and protecting the natural environment for future generations.

I extend my sincere appreciation to our partners for their continued trust and for joining in our collective promise of the SDGs becoming a reality for all Sri Lankans.



Marc-André Franche

United Nations Resident Coordinator in Sri Lanka

UN SRI LANKA COUNTRY TEAM



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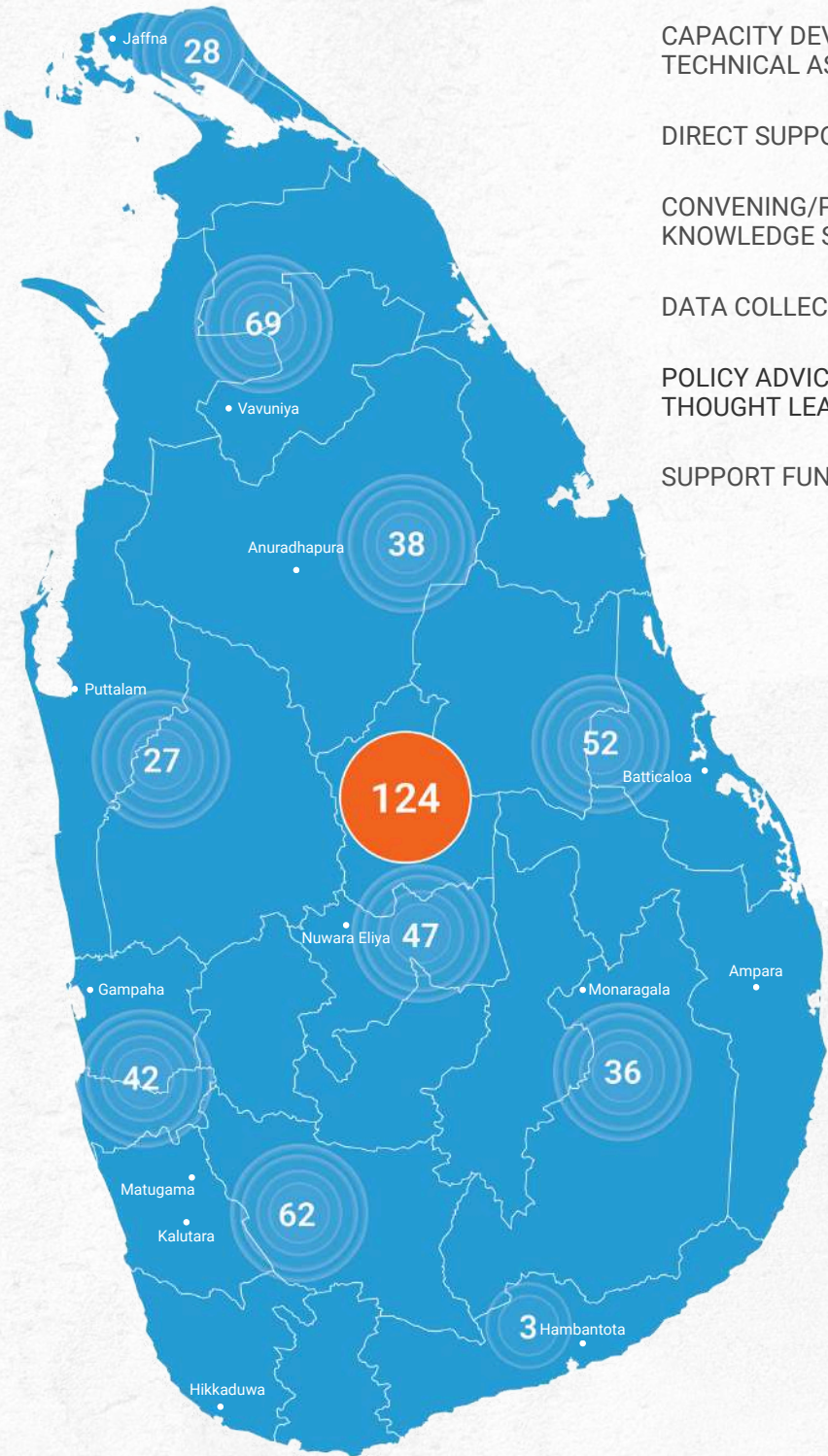
UN ENTITIES SIGNED
THE COOPERATION
FRAMEWORK 2023-2027

17

UN ENTITIES
WITH PERSONNEL
IN SRI LANKA

Photo: UN Sri Lanka

2024 AT GLANCE
OUR WORK IN NUMBERS



TYPE OF INITIATIVES



192
UN INITIATIVES
IN 2024



\$103.8 M
Required Funds



\$96.4 M
Available Funds



\$79.9 M
Expenditure



83%
Delivery Rate



OVER
110,000
HOUSEHOLDS BENEFITED FROM
CASH TRANSFERS, IMPROVING
MATERNAL AND CHILD NUTRITION.



2.5M

NUTRITIONALLY VULNERABLE
PEOPLE WITH PROVIDED FOOD

2,500

FARMERS AND MEAL SUPPLIERS
CONNECTED TO THE HOME GROWN
SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME



240,000
PEOPLE GAINED IMPROVED
ACCESS TO WASH SERVICES



840,000
SMALLHOLDER FARMERS ADOPTED
CLIMATE-SMART PRACTICES

27%

REDUCTION IN
PADDY WATER USE



2,800 Tons of CO₂e
IN EMISSIONS SAVINGS



4,000
HEALTH WORKERS TRAINED



160,000
PEOPLE IMPROVED THEIR
ACCESS TO THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

FOR THE FIRST TIME
ESTABLISHED



EMERGENCY WAITING AREAS
FOR VICTIM-SURVIVOR
SUPPORT AT POLICE STATIONS



SDG BUDGET
TAGGING IN THE
2024 NATIONAL
BUDGET



318,000

PEOPLE BENEFITTED
FROM VOCATIONAL TRAININGS



25,000

PEOPLE IMPROVED AWARENESS
OF ANTI-CORRUPTION MEASURES



700

PUBLIC OFFICIALS TRAINED TO
COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COUNTRY

2024 was shaped by political shifts against the background of continued efforts to stabilize the economy.

The political landscape changed significantly with presidential and parliamentary elections held in September and November. In the presidential elections 80% of registered voters exercised their votes with very low levels of community tensions.

Anura Kumara Disanayake of the National People's Power (NPP) was elected as the Head of State. In the parliamentary elections, the NPP won a super-majority, reflecting a strong public mandate for change and a break from traditional party politics.

In a historic development, the NPP received unprecedented support from minority communities in the North and East of the country.

On the economic front, Sri Lanka made important progress. GDP growth reached 5% in 2024, exceeding expectations.

Implementation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme continued apace, with Sri Lanka meeting most of its quantitative targets under the Extended Fund Facility. Inflation dropped, and foreign reserves improved.

These gains suggest that ongoing fiscal measures and reforms are beginning to yield tangible benefits. However, the recovery remains fragile and vulnerable to external shocks, with the IMF stressing the importance of sustained reform and the finalization of the debt restructuring process.

The new administration proceeded rapidly to set national priorities. Chief among these is inclusive economic development, aimed at reducing disparities and ensuring broader participation in growth, notably by fighting rural poverty.

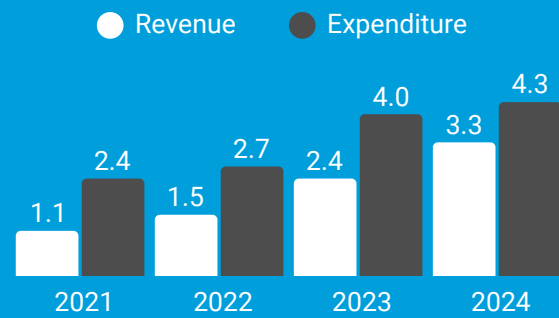
The government has pledged to reject racism and promote national integration, with further measures towards these ends expected to be unveiled in 2025.

Anti-corruption efforts were elevated as a priority, including through the 'Clean Sri Lanka' initiative, which promotes broader environmental, social, and governance renewal.

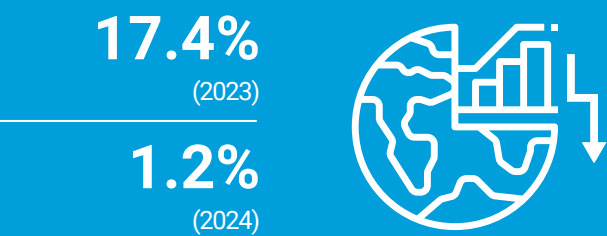
Digital transformation is also central to the government's agenda, with plans underway to roll out a unique digital ID system and expand e-governance and digital public infrastructure.

Taken together, these national priorities represent a bold agenda to tackle Sri Lanka's most pressing challenges and move decidedly towards achieving the SDGs —from governance and economic reform to social inclusion, digital innovation, and climate resilience – which the United Nations will continue to support side by side with our stakeholders.

GOVERNMENT REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE (LKR TRILLION)



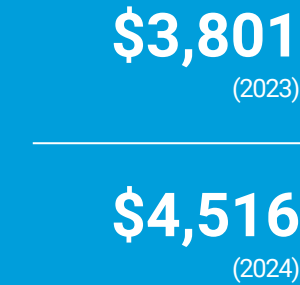
ANNUAL INFLATION



GDP GROWTH



GDP PER CAPITA



FOOD INSECURITY

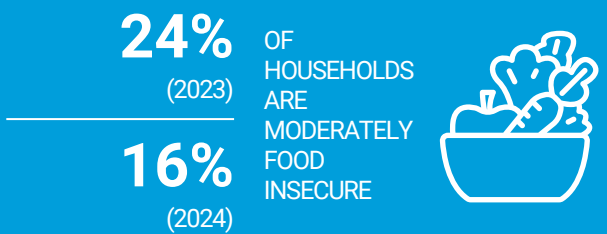




Photo: UNDP Sri Lanka

HOW WE MEASURE PROGRESS

At the core of the UN's commitment is the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for 2023-2027, which guides the collective contributions of the UN across the country.

Progress against the Cooperation Framework commitments is tracked using both outcome and output level indicators, to ensure accountability and the ability to adapt strategies as needed.

Outcome indicators capture long-term changes in people's lives or systems and are the result of actions by a wide range of stakeholders including the UN and government.

Output indicators reflect more immediate results, such as services delivered or policies developed, and are directly attributable to the work of the UN.

The chapters that follow in this Annual Report are based on the six outcomes of the Cooperation Framework.

In each chapter, outcome indicators are highlighted in blue. Output indicators are listed next to arrows that show the level of progress made in 2024.

Scan the **QR code** to access the Cooperation Framework.

Outcome indicator

support for vulnerable communities. Public spending on health and education increased as a share of GDP, reversing the decline observed in 2023.

Output indicator

New or revised national policies on health

Progressing

No progress

Regressing



OUTCOME 2

Sustainable and Inclusive, Green-Led Growth, People-Centered Economic Recovery, Livelihoods and Productivity

OUTCOME 4

Inclusive Governance, Justice and Rule of Law

OUTCOME 6

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

OUTCOME 1

Strengthened, Resilient and Equitable Social Service Systems and Enhanced Well-Being

OUTCOME 3

Natural Resource Management, Climate Resilience & Environmental Sustainability

OUTCOME 5

Social Cohesion, Sustaining Peace and Human Rights





HEALTH & WELL-BEING

2024 PROGRESS

New or revised national strategies/policies on health



Strengthened primary health care system



Implementation of guidelines on comprehensive sexuality education



Use of digital and telemedicine practices in public health system



UN support helped Sri Lanka strengthen its healthcare system by improving data, policies, and emergency preparedness. UN support toward disease trend analysis and healthcare workforce needs are now guiding the country's next National Health Policy, ensuring better planning and resource allocation.

The development of the National Action Plan for Health Security 2024-2028 benefited from UN contributions, making Sri Lanka better prepared for health emergencies and disease outbreaks. A nationwide assessment of zoonotic diseases helped prioritize threats from animal-to-human infections, while targeted campaigns helped control measles and other infectious diseases. The UN also conducted the Global School Health Survey which helped assess and prevent long-term health risks for young Sri Lankans.

UN-backed initiatives improved nutrition, immunization, and neonatal care. More mothers and children received life-saving care. Treatment for severe acute malnutrition expanded through local production of

therapeutic food, ensuring a steady supply and reducing reliance on imports. Nearly 4,000 health workers were trained to improve maternal and newborn care, leading to safer pregnancies and healthier babies. UN assistance in designing digital tools helped health workers respond faster and prevent future risks.

Food safety was also improved with UN support. As a result of a Food Safety Policy developed together with the Ministry of Health, regulations were updated, and food industry compliance was strengthened. This means better food quality and safety for consumers, reducing the risk of foodborne illnesses.

Despite challenges such as funding gaps, procurement delays, and health emergencies like measles outbreaks and frequent floods, these efforts have strengthened Sri Lanka's healthcare system. Continued investment in data-driven decision-making, stronger health policies, and better preparedness will help ensure quality healthcare for all.



4,000

health workers
trained



1,000

healthcare
facilities upgraded



11

national health strategies
developed with UN support

1

UNSDCF
OUTCOME



33.8 M

Required Funds



30 M

Available Funds



27.2 M

Expenditure



91%

Delivery Rate

Despite continued economic pressures, Sri Lanka made meaningful progress in strengthening social service systems in 2024. The Aswesuma programme was expanded, reaching 2.4 million families, alongside efforts to better target support for vulnerable communities. **Public spending on health and education increased as a share of GDP, reversing the decline observed in 2023.** ↑

Maternal health services were expanded, improving access to reproductive healthcare and nutrition for women and children. In education, reforms advanced through the development of a new national policy and greater emphasis on digital literacy.

Food insecurity declined, aided by stronger agricultural productivity and wider adoption of climate-smart practices, leading to better outcomes for farmers. Access to safe water and sanitation also improved, particularly in schools and healthcare settings. However, persistent challenges—such as rural-urban disparities, undernutrition, and gaps in data—highlight the need for more inclusive, coordinated, and well-monitored systems.



Photo: UN Sri Lanka





FOOD & NUTRITION

2024 PROGRESS

Implementation of national policy and a multisectoral action plan to eradicate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition



Nutritionally vulnerable people receiving UN support



Translation of commitments made at the UN Food Systems Summit and Nutrition for Growth Summit into a country food systems pathway



The UN helped improve food security and reduce malnutrition in Sri Lanka through targeted nutrition support, community-based food production, and strengthened policy coordination. Local production of high-quality therapeutic food was successfully expanded, reducing reliance on imports and improving access to life-saving treatment for severe acute malnutrition.

Over the course of 2024, nearly 2.1 million children and 360,000 pregnant women received food, supplements and/or medical treatment. Over 4,000 households were trained and equipped to start home gardens, helping families grow nutritious food, improve child nutrition, and build resilience to future food crises.

Through the Home-Grown School Feeding model, the UN supported over 2,500 micro-farmers and food suppliers—many of them women—who now provide daily meals to 230,000 schoolchildren.

This not only improved student nutrition but also supported rural livelihoods and local food systems.

Social protection efforts also contributed to food security. A UN-implemented cash transfer programme reached over 110,000 households, enabling caregivers to provide more nutritious meals. According to survey results, 97% of caregivers reported improved diets for their children, demonstrating a clear link between financial assistance and better nutrition outcomes.

To support early detection and treatment, the UN promoted growth monitoring and developed national guidelines on childhood obesity, undernutrition, and nutrition for children with cancer. Efforts also included fortified food distribution, improved school meals, and enhanced coordination through the Multisector Action Plan for Nutrition, which was revitalized to guide national nutrition efforts.



2.5M

nutritionally vulnerable people provided with food



230,000

schoolchildren served daily nutritious school meals



110,000

households received cash transfers



“With the support I’ve received, I am empowered to provide school meals and earn an extra income for my family.”

Indra Kumari is one of 2,500 school meal suppliers and farmers supported through the UN’s Home-Grown School Feeding programme, which sources food locally to feed children in schools while strengthening rural livelihoods.

In her community, this model is doing more than improving nutrition—it’s revitalizing local food systems, generating jobs, and building economic resilience. By supporting school meal suppliers, micro-farmers and poultry producers, the initiative ensures daily meals for schoolchildren nation-wide.



2,500+

farmers and meal suppliers connected to the Home Grown School Feeding programme



Scan to learn more

Photo: WFP Sri Lanka



EDUCATION

2024 PROGRESS

Improved access to skills and learning programmes	↑	Effectiveness of digital learning solutions for the education system	↑
National policy instruments ensuring inclusive, accessible, equitable and adaptive learning	↑	Gender-responsive and equitable education systems	↓

In 2024, the UN helped improve the quality and inclusivity of education in Sri Lanka by supporting national policy reform, digital learning, and teacher training. The Citra Innovation Lab supported the development of a National Education Policy Framework, laying the foundation for a more future-ready and equitable education system. With the National Institute of Education, the UN also helped create the country's first Early Childhood Education curriculum framework, ensuring stronger learning outcomes from the earliest years.

To enhance digital learning, the UN supported teacher training for 300 master trainers, helped develop a Digital Content Accreditation Framework and facilitated a mapping initiative across all schools in Sri Lanka to assess and

expand digital connectivity. A national AI strategy was developed with support from the UN, integrating digital literacy into school curricula and creating reskilling opportunities for students and educators.

The UN worked with the Ministry of Education to strengthen inclusive education, training school-level coordinators and conducting a national study to assess progress. A gender-responsive curriculum framework was also developed for Health and Physical Education, helping embed principles of equality in classroom learning.

School safety and social inclusion were advanced through a UN-led anti-hate speech programme, which reached over 4,000 students and 250 teachers across 125 schools. The initiative promoted respectful dialogue, media literacy, and student-led action to counter discrimination and misinformation.

UN support allowed for the upgrading of water and sanitation facilities in nearly 500 Maternal and Child Health Centres and supported safer hygiene conditions for over 55,000 patients and staff across the country. Clean energy initiatives in over 1,000 healthcare facilities further improved sustainability and service delivery.

The UN installed handwashing stations in 120 schools and preschools, promoting better hygiene for children and teachers. Educational sessions raised awareness around sanitation, climate resilience, and good hygiene practices.

To strengthen medical waste management, the UN installed medical incinerators and provided waste disposal trucks to 37 peripheral hospitals, ensuring safer waste disposal.

Around 950 government staff were trained in sanitation planning, climate resilience, and WASH audits.

Efforts to improve menstrual health included the distribution of sanitary pads and awareness sessions for 15,000 women and girls, helping reduce stigma and improve access to essential hygiene products.



240,000

people gained improved access to WASH services



WATER & SANITATION

2024 PROGRESS

Improved water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools and healthcare settings	↑
Access to basic water, sanitation, and hygiene services	↑

UN support helped improve access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene for over 240,000 people, particularly in underserved communities, schools, and healthcare settings. To expand clean water access, 16 rural water supply schemes reaching over 43,000 people were extended, and newly

built community systems now serve an additional 1,600 people. In Nuwara Eliya, the UN contributed to the design of a water purification plant, sewerage treatment facility, and home garden water recycling system, improving water security and sanitation for nearly 100,000 residents.



Photo: UNDP Sri Lanka



PROTECTION

2024 PROGRESS

Availability of a Quality Assurance system for the social welfare service workforce



Reach of essential services for people at risk of sexual and gender-based violence



Delivery of services to reduce or prevent violence, exploitation and abuse



Increased access to adequate housing and/or urban services



Existence of national comprehensive social protection policy framework



Implementation of integrated social protection system



Provision of cash, voucher and/or in-kind social protection benefits



Formulation of national urban policies to support sustainable cities and communities



The launch of Sri Lanka's first National Social Protection Policy (NSPP) marked a major step toward building a more inclusive and sustainable safety net. With technical support from the UN, the policy outlines a long-term vision to improve coverage, coordination, and resilience. The UN is also supporting the development of a National Social Protection Strategy, which will guide its implementation.

A new Social Protection Service Offer helped integrate lessons from past humanitarian programmes into longer-term systems, including support for unemployment insurance, digital transformation, and data protection. Other initiatives also strengthened coordination between social protection and disaster risk management actors.

In 2024, the UN supported the planning and implementation of housing projects by improving guidelines and providing technical support. These efforts helped make housing delivery more efficient and better suited to the needs of low-income and vulnerable families.

Protection services for survivors of violence were expanded. With UN support, more than 9,000 people affected by gender-based violence, human trafficking, and child protection risks received critical assistance. At the same time, over 1,500 officials and frontline workers—including civil servants, faith leaders, and journalists—were trained to prevent GBV, trafficking, and violence against children.



9,000

GBV-affected people received support



1,500

practitioners trained to prevent violence and human trafficking

Photo: UNDP Sri Lanka

IN FOCUS

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

Progress toward disability inclusion advanced across leadership, programming, and operations, guided by the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS).

A key milestone was the development of a comprehensive Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Sri Lanka, produced in collaboration with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), government partners, and the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD).

The analysis provided the most detailed national picture to date of disability rights, identifying gaps and opportunities to align national efforts with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the 2030 Agenda.

Partnerships with OPDs were strengthened, ensuring their participation in programme design, policy dialogue, and humanitarian planning—especially around risk assessment and emergency preparedness.

Work also advanced on accessibility through infrastructure reviews and improvements to inclusive procurement processes. UN-led awareness sessions and inter-agency training improved institutional understanding of disability rights and inclusive practices.

However, significant challenges remain—particularly around the systematic collection of disability-disaggregated data. Strengthening collaboration with national statistical bodies will be key to improving evidence-based and inclusive programming in the years ahead.



Scan to
learn more



Photo: ILO Sri Lanka



DECENT WORK & ECONOMIC GROWTH

2024 PROGRESS

Initiatives developed to implement transformational economic strategies



Innovative financing mechanisms implemented



Provision of services that promote economic development, employment and decent work



Economic growth of private sector entities, including MSMEs



Enhanced capacity of TVET to deliver trainings and assessments



Inclusivity in the labour force and digital economy



Upskilling opportunities for women, youth and PwDs



Enhanced innovation in private sector to mainstream social, economic or environmental practices



The UN supported sustainable and inclusive economic strategies in collaboration with the government and development partners. Policy advances included the adoption of a Marine Investment Plan, a Climate Finance Strategy, and SDG budget tagging in the 2024 national budget—highlighting Sri Lanka’s growing emphasis on green and gender-responsive planning.

More than 318,000 individuals benefited from skills development, employment services, and enterprise support through UN programmes. This included an upgraded Recognition of Prior Learning system that certified 2,500 workers, expanding access to better jobs locally and abroad. Another 430 individuals, including many women and persons with disabilities, gained modern skills tailored to evolving labour market needs. Over 34,000 people were supported through vocational training and livelihoods

programmes, while targeted initiatives helped 369 youth, 789 women.

The UN helped 66 agri-food enterprises develop action plans and pursue environmental and social certifications. A further 338 micro-, small and medium sized enterprises (MSME)—including 285 women-led businesses—received training on workplace safety, solar energy, and zero-waste solutions. Support also included 15 new rain shelters, interest-free loans, and post-harvest technologies to strengthen local value chains and reduce crop losses.

By promoting inclusive business models, decent work, and access to finance, the UN contributed to a more resilient, gender-equitable, and environmentally sustainable economy.

UNSCF
OUTCOME

2



\$14.1 M
Required Funds



\$13.7 M
Available Funds



\$12.5 M
Expenditure



92%
Delivery Rate

Sri Lanka’s economy showed clear signs of stabilization in 2024, with **GDP per capita growth reaching 5%, a significant turnaround from -2.3% in 2023.** This progress came amid continuing reforms and the country’s engagement with the IMF Extended Fund Facility.

However, structural challenges remain, including a high rate of informal employment, limited industrial diversification, and persistent youth unemployment. Continued investment, policy reform, and inclusive growth strategies will be essential for long-term stability.



318,000
people benefited
from vocational trainings



34,000
workers
upskilled



338
MSMEs improved
workplace safety

Photo: ILO Sri Lanka

“Society holds the belief that it’s difficult for women to work in an industry like this.”

Hinduja is one of the few women pursuing a career in Sri Lanka’s male-dominated maritime sector. As a participant in a UN-supported work-based learning programme, implemented with the National Union of Seafarers, she is challenging traditional gender roles and gaining hands-on skills for employment at sea.

The initiative is helping young people from vulnerable communities, including women, gain access to decent work in industries that have long excluded them. By equipping participants with practical experience and confidence, the programme is breaking down barriers and building pathways to inclusion in high-growth sectors.



Scan to
learn more



IN FOCUS FROM BASE TO SUMMIT

In 2024, the United Nations in Sri Lanka worked closely with the Presidential Secretariat and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support the country’s meaningful engagement in the Summit of the Future—a landmark UN event aimed at renewing global cooperation and shaping a more inclusive, sustainable international system.

A national event in Colombo brought together government officials, civil society, youth, diplomats, and development partners to discuss Sri Lanka’s contributions to the Summit. Conversations focused on key themes of the Pact for the Future, including sustainable development, climate financing, digital inclusion, and youth and women’s empowerment.

The UN also co-led a National Youth Consultation, ensuring that the voices of young people from all provinces—urban and rural—were heard.

Their ideas were captured in the National Youth Statement, presented at the Summit as a powerful call for a more just and sustainable future.

The UN also marked United Nations Day 2024 with a high-level event exploring the newly adopted Pact for the Future. The Prime Minister, along with development partners and civil society leaders, joined discussions on how Sri Lanka can align its national priorities with the Pact’s global vision—strengthening progress on the SDGs, advancing peace and security, and embracing digital transformation.

Together, these initiatives ensured that Sri Lanka’s voice—across generations and communities—was reflected in global conversations about the future.



Scan to
learn more

Photo: UNDP Sri Lanka





CLIMATE & RESILIENCE

2024 PROGRESS

Policy measures are in place that support achievement of the Nationally Determined Contributions 

National policy instruments aimed at supporting shift to sustainable consumption and production 

Integrated approaches for efficient implementation of multilateral environmental agreements 

The UN worked with the government in scaling climate action across agriculture, fisheries, forestry, energy, and water sectors. Technology Needs Assessment and Action Plans were finalized, helping guide climate adaptation, mitigation, and disaster risk reduction.

Updates to the National Biodiversity Strategy and Land Degradation Neutrality targets, as well as new policies on watershed management, further strengthened environmental governance.

To boost climate-smart agriculture, the UN helped develop a national investment plan that reached more than 840,000 smallholder farmers. Improved water use, land management, and crop resilience enabled over 32,000 farmers to cultivate 17,000+ hectares and earn USD 18.3 million.

Practices such as Alternative Wetting and Drying reduced paddy water use by 27%, cut methane emissions, and increased cropping intensity.

Additional UN-supported initiatives trained over 21,000 farmers in sustainable farming practices. A separate programme trained 800 farmers to increase yields by 40% and reduce water usage by 35%.

In the energy sector, 262 clean energy installations were supported, reducing an estimated 2,196 tons of CO₂ emissions over 10 years. Solar electrification of health facilities and energy management training contributed to energy savings of 12.4 GWh and avoided another 2,800 tons of CO₂ emissions.

UNSDCF
OUTCOME

3



\$28.3 M
Required Funds



\$25.8 M
Available Funds




\$19 M
Expenditure



74%
Delivery Rate

In 2024, Sri Lanka made important progress on watershed management, renewable energy, and sustainable consumption. A lead institution was designated to implement the National Watershed Management Policy, while work advanced on developing a national watershed database and identifying priority areas to improve water resource planning.

Sri Lanka maintained a 50% renewable energy share in its national energy mix, reflecting continued momentum toward affordable and clean energy. 

Efforts to promote sustainable consumption and production moved forward through the implementation of the National Policy on Green Procurement. A public sector survey, development of eco-labelling standards, and integration of sustainability criteria into draft procurement guidelines were among key milestones. An interagency expert committee was established to steer implementation.



840,000

smallholder farmers adopted
climate-smart practices



27%

reduction in
paddy water use



262

solar and clean
energy installations

Photo: UNDP Sri Lanka

2024 PROGRESS

People benefitting from UN initiatives to protect nature and promote sustainable use of resources



Climate-vulnerable populations reached with initiatives to protect natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems



Adoption of environmentally-friendly and climate-smart practices by businesses



Access to clean, affordable and sustainable energy



Existence of a national disaster risk reduction strategy



Development of sound environmental data, statistics, scientific assessments, and early warning systems



Climate-resilient and risk-informed water and sanitation national sector strategy



Efforts to reduce plastic pollution engaged over 5,600 people and a number of women-led recycling centers. MSMEs received training and equipment to improve grain storage, milling, and food processing using low-waste, energy-efficient technologies.

To enhance disaster preparedness, early warning systems and local planning were

strengthened, including updates to flood risk planning in the Kelani River Basin.

The National Disaster Management Coordination Committee was reconvened to improve coordination. UN-supported audits of 10 high-risk urban water systems and training for 130 professionals helped improve adaptive capacity in water management.



“The skills and knowledge we've instilled in them will empower them to confidently tackle future challenges.”

In Sri Lanka's Dry Zone, UN Volunteers are helping farmers adapt to climate extremes through the Climate Resilience Integrated Water Management Project.

By restoring ancient irrigation systems, improving water access, and promoting climate-smart farming, they've supported over 130,000 farming households to boost yields and build resilience. The initiative is projected to generate over USD 8 million annually, strengthening both livelihoods and food security.

Scan to learn more



Photo: UNV Sri Lanka



“Previously, it took an entire day to fertilize our land. Now, a single 20-liter fertilizer bucket covers over 500 crops, saving us time, effort and money.”

Nirosha is one of over 840,000 Sri Lankan farmers who received training and tools to modernize their agricultural practices. With support from the UN, she and her peers were equipped with climate-smart agriculture kits containing essential items such as drip irrigation systems, plastic mulch, and insect-proof netting.

These simple yet transformative tools have reduced the cost of cultivation and enabled more efficient use of water, fertilizer, and pesticides—leading to higher yields, greater income, and more sustainable practices.

Beyond personal success, Nirosha’s experience reflects the broader potential for a greener, more resilient agricultural sector in Sri Lanka. Through initiatives like these, farmers are becoming key agents in building a more food-secure and climate-smart future.



Scan to
learn more



Photo: FAO

4

UNSDCF
OUTCOME



During a year of political transition, Sri Lanka made important strides in strengthening governance and improving access to justice. The adoption of the Parliamentary Development Action Plan and the introduction of a formal mechanism for youth participation in parliamentary oversight signaled a growing emphasis on inclusivity and transparency in decision-making.

Despite these improvements, the proportion of **unsentenced detainees in the overall prison population increased from 61.7% in 2023 to 69% in 2024**, highlighting ongoing systemic bottlenecks. **Public perception of corruption remained high**, underlining the continued need for institutional accountability and integrity.

While significant challenges persist, these reforms represent important steps toward a more responsive, efficient, and inclusive system of governance. Strengthened institutions and improved service delivery can lay the foundation for rebuilding public trust and fostering long-term sustainable governance.



GOVERNANCE & JUSTICE

2024 PROGRESS

Capacity-building activities for government to ensure an inclusive, transparent and effective public administration



Public consultations held during policy formulation



Public satisfaction with quality of services provided by public institutions



To strengthen anti-corruption efforts, the UN supported the establishment of the Integrity Commission, the enhancement of the National Anti-Corruption Plan, and collaboration with key institutions such as the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption, the Ministry of Finance, and Sri Lanka Customs.

A comprehensive policy framework was developed to improve public sector accountability and align national policies with global best practices.

Parliamentary reforms progressed with the Parliamentary Development Action Plan 2024–2026, which restructured key oversight committees to improve efficiency.

A new process was introduced to engage young people in parliamentary decision-making and collaborated with the Women

Parliamentarians' Caucus to promote gender-inclusive policies and mentorship for women leaders.

Access to justice was expanded through the provision of legal assistance to over 160,000 individuals across the country, particularly in marginalized communities, through support to the Legal Aid Commission.

A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) was developed for virtual court hearings, which was implemented in two prisons which has made significant progress in enhancing access to justice through virtual courts.

The UN also conducted 23 training programmes for personnel from the judiciary, parliament, public administration, and independent institutions.



\$17.2 M
Required Funds



\$17.2 M
Available Funds



\$13 M
Expenditure



76%
Delivery Rate

Photo: UNDP Sri Lanka

2024 PROGRESS

Alignment of national budgeting system with SDGs



Data collection mechanisms aligned to monitor SDGs and enhancing policy coherence for sustainable development



Existence of national SDG financing strategy



People provided access to justice



Institutions, plans and cross-border initiatives that protect and prevent human rights violations to end all forms of violence, promote rule of law and ensure equal access to justice



New and revised laws, policies and procedures aligned with international standards



Trainings covered both thematic areas—including child protection, trafficking, corruption, SGBV, and local governance—and technical skills such as ICT, prosecution, and evidence-based policymaking.

Child protection capacities were strengthened through training for 266 police officers, 94 state prosecutors, and 104 judicial officials.

To address human trafficking, the UN trained over 400 immigration officers and nearly 300 administrative staff, while supporting the implementation and monitoring of the National Action Plan on Human Trafficking (2021–2025).

Regional collaboration through BIMSTEC and the Bali Process was enhanced, and support was provided to improve coordination in line with the U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report recommendations. Victim-survivors received livelihood assistance, psychosocial support, and legal aid.

At the local level, governance capacity was strengthened in the North, East, North Central, and Uva Provinces through improved planning, service delivery, and financial management.

The UN also supported the development of the Sri Lanka Strategy for the Development of Statistics (SLSDS), helping align national data systems with development priorities and strengthening the evidence base for SDG implementation.

The UN also promoted a shift toward a more humane and effective drug policy, advocating for health-based approaches over punitive measures. Trainings on transnational organized crime, marine pollution legislation, and forensic detection improved law enforcement and judicial capacities.



160,000

people improved their access to the justice system



700

public officials trained to combat human trafficking



25,000

people improved awareness of anti-corruption measures





SOCIAL COHESION

2024 PROGRESS

Functioning mechanisms that conform to international human rights standards



Action plan on education for social cohesion



Institutions, plans and cross-border initiatives that protect and prevent human rights violations, address conflict drivers, and strengthen social cohesion



Participation of right-holders, especially women and discriminated groups in UN-supported processes



Strengthened capacity to address social cohesion and harmful speech



Engagement of young people and vulnerable groups in governance and decision-making processes



UNSDCF
OUTCOME

5



\$6.1 M

Required Funds



\$5.6 M

Available Funds



\$4.6 M

Expenditure



82%

Delivery Rate

During 2024, government-led efforts continued in the areas of legislative reforms, trust-building, and promoting social cohesion. **A key milestone was the re-accreditation of the Human Rights Commission's "A" status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)**, an important step in reinforcing institutional credibility and independence in line with the Paris Principles.

However, challenges remain around creating an enabling environment for transitional justice by implementing confidence-building measures such as releasing military occupied lands, releasing long-term detainees held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and decriminalizing and supporting victim's memorialization initiatives. Serious human rights violations continued to be reported including allegations of torture in detention, deaths in custody and sexual and gender-based violence.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in his report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/57/19) in September 2024, raised concern regarding legislative developments, including the proposed Non-governmental Organizations (Registration and Supervision) and Registration Bill, the continued misuse of the PTA, and the enactment of the Online Safety Act, on the restrictions on civic space, and in relation to vague definitions of offences, broad powers conferred on the authorities to enforce the laws, disproportionate penalties, and inadequate or absent judicial oversight.

The UN continued to work with government and civil society partners to advance social cohesion and the protection and promotion of human rights. Support was provided to strengthen the Human Rights Commission, the Office for Reparations, media institutions, and civil society organizations to improve service delivery, promote gender equality, and counter disinformation and hate speech.

A wide range of community-based organizations were trained and resourced to integrate gender, sexual and reproductive health, and climate justice into initiatives promoting peaceful coexistence. The UN also strengthened the capacity of civil society and media professionals to monitor economic, social, and cultural rights and promote inclusive governance.

Through targeted interventions, 450 families were supported to resettle in newly released areas in the Northern Province.

Assistance included support to diversify incomes and improve access to essential services and systems needed for sustainable community reintegration.

Fourteen mobile documentation programmes reached more than 1,000 returning refugees, enabling them to obtain civil documents and access healthcare, education, and financial services.

To combat hate speech and misinformation, the UN helped 17 media institutions adopt ethical reporting guidelines, trained 350 journalists in gender-sensitive reporting, and established a Community of Practice with 23 CSOs to promote responsible communications. Digital storytelling campaigns reached over 2 million viewers, raising awareness of the harmful impact of online disinformation, especially on women and girls.

Photo: UNDP Sri Lanka





“There are still refugees in India who are afraid to return home because of a lack of work opportunities. We urge them to come back—organisations like the United Nations can help them rebuild their lives.”

After years in refugee camps in India, Vishnubawan returned to Sri Lanka seeking stability and a fresh start. Like many refugees from the Northern and Eastern Provinces, he faced hardship, limited job opportunities, and the challenge of rebuilding his life from scratch.

Upon his return to Sri Lanka, Vishnubawan received business training and equipment to start his own venture. He now runs a successful welding and carpentry business, employing several young people from the community.

The support he received helped him gain financial independence, build sustainable livelihoods, and contribute to his community. His business now provides employment for others, promote social cohesion, and serve as a model for what is possible with the right opportunities.

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learn more



Photo: UNDP Sri Lanka

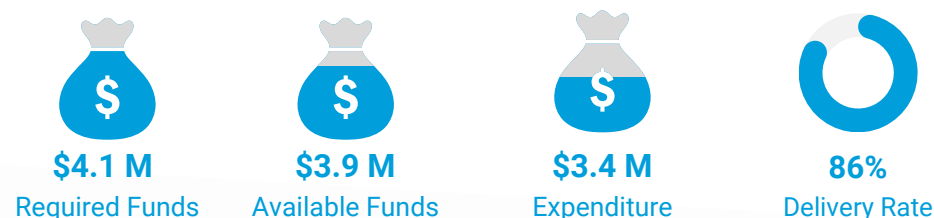
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In 2024, Sri Lanka made notable strides toward gender equality. The appointment of the country's third female Prime Minister and **a record high 9.7% female representation in Parliament marked historic gains in women's political participation**—breaking the long-standing 5.2% ceiling. The enactment of the **Women's Empowerment Act No. 37 of 2024** established stronger institutional mechanisms, including a National Commission on Women, a Woman Ombudsperson, a dedicated fund for women, and a framework for implementing the National Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy.

The launch of the second National Action Plan on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and the introduction of national shelter guidelines marked important steps toward improving survivor protection and access to quality support services. The Ministry of Women and Child Affairs also began work on a Gender Responsive Budgeting Act to institutionalize inclusive and equitable public spending.

Despite these advances, persistent challenges remain. Structural barriers, limited access to quality jobs, and disproportionate unpaid care work continue to constrain women's full participation in the economy and public life.



GENDER EQUALITY

2024 PROGRESS

Mechanisms to address discriminatory gender norms and practices



Multi-sectoral initiatives to address gender inequality in development, peace and humanitarian contexts



Measures to eliminate gender-based discrimination in labour market, increase women's access to digital technologies, ensure women's economic empowerment



Laws and policies targeting gender equality and women's empowerment



Measures to advance female leadership and participation in decision-making



The UN played a key role in the development and adoption of the Women's Empowerment Act and the SGBV National Action Plan and supported the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs in initiating the National Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment through inclusive national consultations.

Over 1,000 women entrepreneurs and women-led MSMEs received training and support, leading to business growth and greater economic resilience in their communities.

To boost women's participation in the digital economy, 120 female undergraduates were trained in design thinking, user-centred design, and artificial intelligence.

In the area of peacebuilding, 600 women leaders were trained in conflict analysis, negotiation, and mediation. A tracking mechanism was introduced to monitor implementation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, supporting accountability and progress.

Photo: UNICEF Sri Lanka



20,000

adolescents
upskilled



600

women leaders trained
in conflict management



11,000

women, children and PwD
improved access to justice

The UN also supported initiatives that challenged harmful social norms. More than 500 women and male household members were engaged in peaceful conflict resolution at community and household levels. Men and boys were trained as allies for gender equality through partnerships with civil society, youth groups, and religious leaders.

In the education sector, a gender-responsive curriculum framework was developed with the National Institute of Education, integrating gender equality into Health and Physical Education. Life skills and sports programmes addressed stereotypes and reached over 20,000 adolescents, including children with disabilities and youth in rural communities.

To improve survivor protection, the UN helped establish a new women's shelter in Kalutara, upgraded 13 others, and opened the first-ever Emergency Waiting Areas in Women and Child Police Units—providing safer and more dignified spaces for those seeking protection.

Training programmes improved access to justice and protection for more than 11,000 women, children, and persons with disabilities. A further 250 local government officials were trained in gender-responsive budgeting and GBV prevention.

IN FOCUS

MAINSTREAMING GENDER EQUALITY

Gender equality remains a cross-cutting priority of the United Nations in Sri Lanka. It is integrated into every area of programming—from governance and food security to education, justice, employment, and social protection.

To promote equality in both policy and practice, the UN partnered with civil society organizations and women human rights defenders to address persistent legal and social challenges. This included support for personal law reform, protection of LGBTQ+ rights, and efforts to increase women's political participation and leadership.

Awareness and advocacy were central to the UN's approach. Initiatives such as forum

theatre performances and targeted social media campaigns helped spotlight issues including economic inequality, period poverty, and gender-based violence—bringing attention to the structural barriers women and girls face in daily life.

Within the UN system, internal dialogues and trainings fostered a deeper understanding of gender power dynamics, mental health, and workplace safety. These discussions also addressed issues around sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics—reinforcing a culture of inclusion, reflection, and accountability.

“If girls and women were given equal opportunities, we would be seeing much more efficient development.”

Recognizing the gender gap in STEM education, Nevindaree Premarathne founded Makers Global—an EdTech company encouraging young women to explore robotics, innovation, and tech-driven solutions. In partnership with the European Union, the UN helped introduce initiative to schools around the island, providing girls with the resources to pursue non-traditional careers, challenge limiting gender norms and break stereotypes around science and technology.

“If we had equal access to technology, the world look better,” said 18-year-old Safa Rizan, who also emphasized that the programme opened doors for students like her.



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Photo: UN Women Sri Lanka

IN FOCUS

COMBATTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

From 25 November to 10 December, the United Nations in Sri Lanka joined hands with partners across sectors to mark the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence—a global campaign calling for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.

The campaign mobilized government institutions, civil society, youth groups, artists, the private sector, and international partners to amplify one clear message: violence against women and girls must end—and everyone has a role to play.

From community dialogues and training workshops to media outreach, the campaign created safe spaces for voices often left unheard. These initiatives promoted solidarity, challenged stigma, and inspired action across all segments of society.

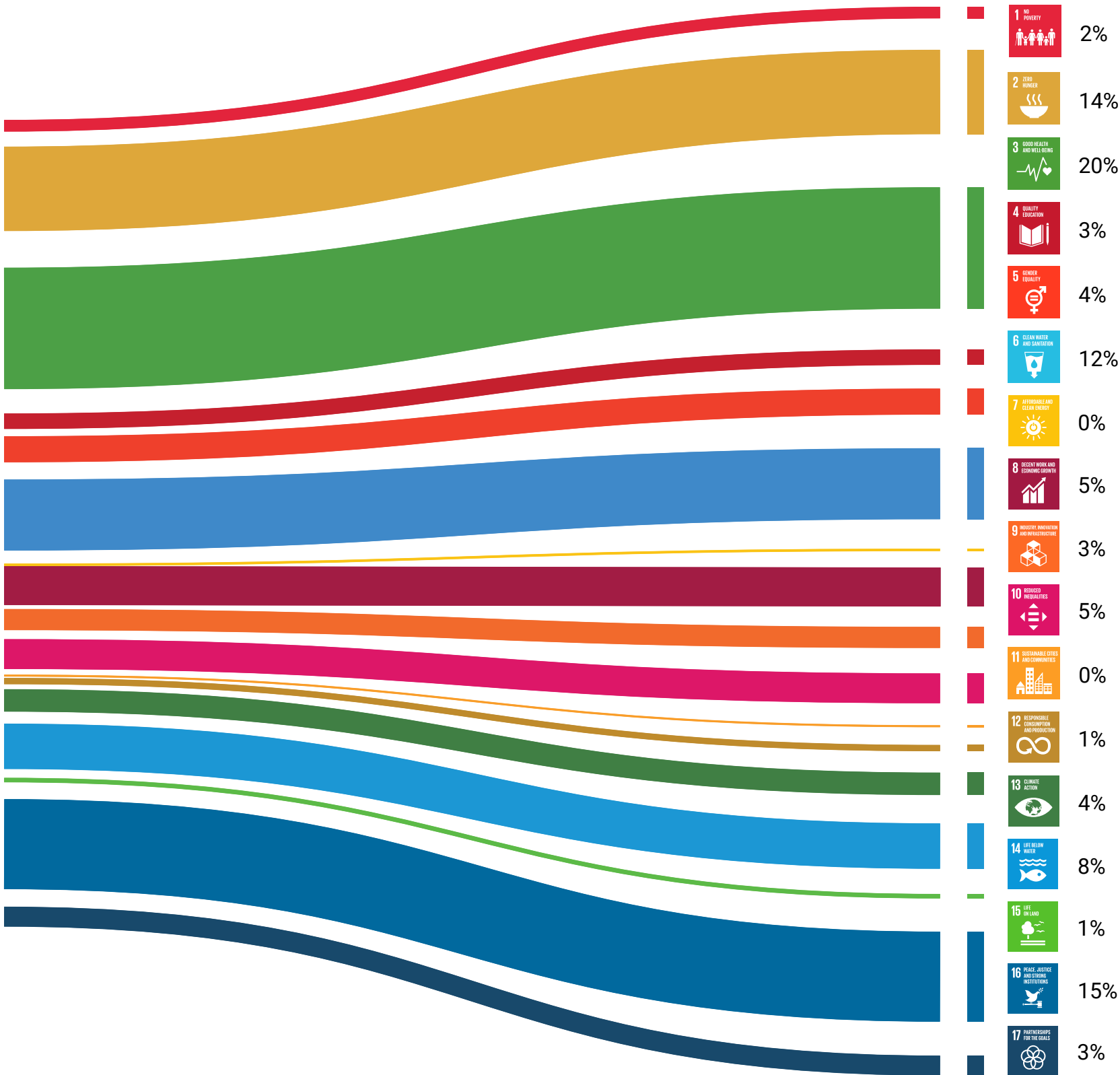
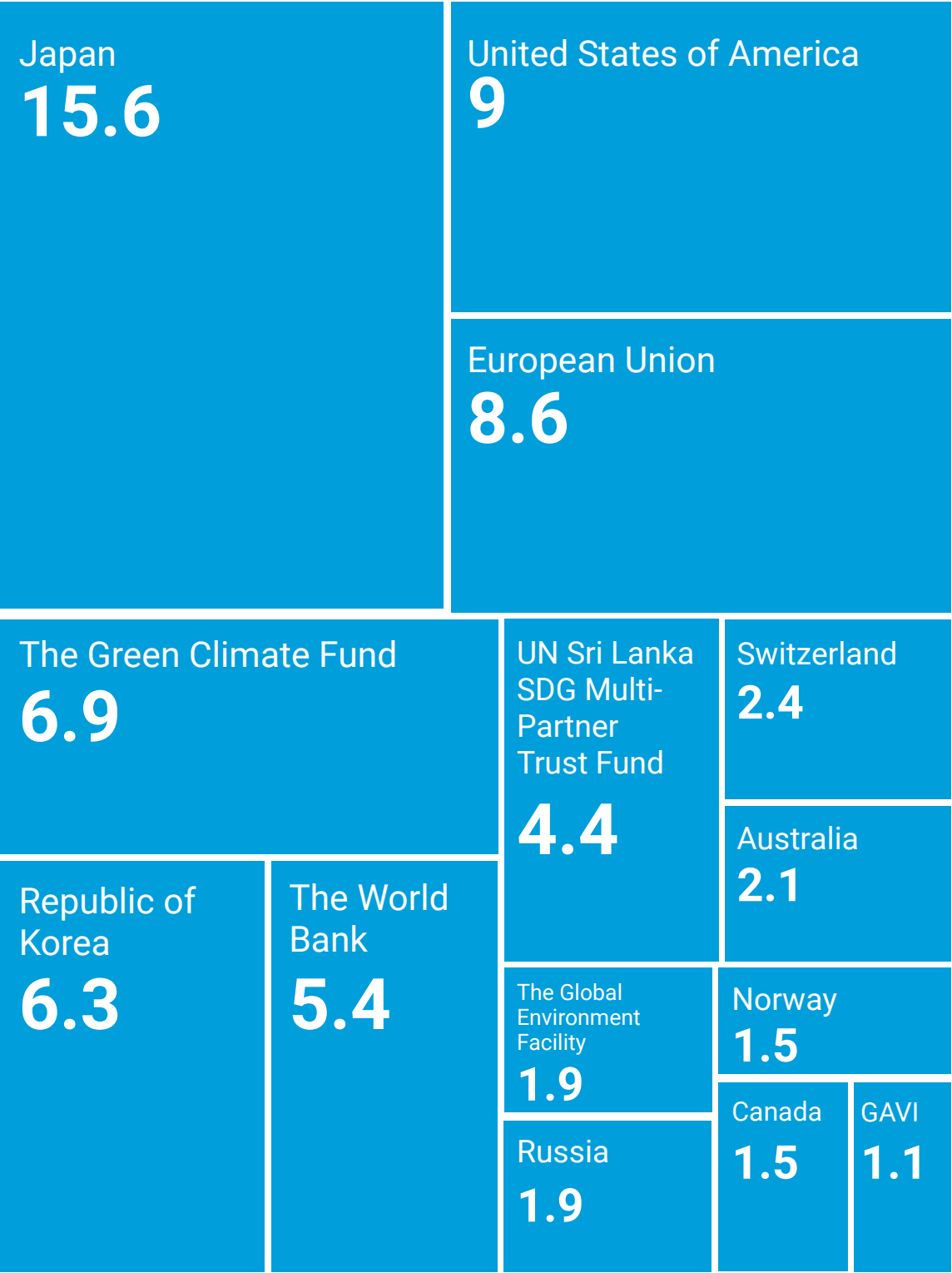
This public advocacy effort reinforced the UN's broader work throughout the year to empower women and girls socially, economically, and politically. As momentum grows, continued investment in institutional reforms and gender-responsive policies will be critical to building a more inclusive and violence-free future for all.



Photo: UNFPA Sri Lanka



PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS
SDG INVESTMENT IN 2024 (MILLION USD)



IN FOCUS

PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS



Joint
SDG Fund



United Nations
Peacebuilding



Canada



United
Kingdom



Australia



European
Union



United
States

The UN Sri Lanka SDG Fund is a financing instrument in support of the Cooperation Framework, focused on promoting joint, catalytic and strategic interventions in selecting programming areas.

Since its establishment in 2020, the UN Sri Lanka SDG Fund has mobilized over USD 40 million through its respective Resilience and Peacebuilding windows. In 2024, nearly USD 5 million in new contributions were secured from the PBF, the Joint SDG Fund and the UK.

Through its **Peacebuilding Window**, the Fund continued to invest in reintegration and recovery in the Northern and Eastern provinces by improving access to housing, legal identity, psychosocial support, community-based leadership, and sustainable livelihoods. New investments were made to strengthen social dialogue in priority sector of the public and private sector and enhance early warning systems.

Moreover, the Fund supported efforts to counter hate speech, misinformation, and disinformation helping reduce harmful online content promoted more inclusive, respectful public discourse.

To that end public awareness campaign has been rolled out to combat hate speech and disinformation.

The Fund's **Resilience Window** focused on advancing digital transformation, including the launch of the flagship 'One Registry' programme that supports government efforts to modernize civil registration systems. To date, the One Registry initiative completed a systems mapping and governance analysis, offering clarity on existing processes, gaps, and opportunities within the civil registration and vital statistics ecosystem.

Together, these investments contributed to institutional resilience, human security, and more inclusive governance – strengthening the long-term foundations for a peaceful and sustainable future.

For the year ahead, the Fund will continue strategic investments in the priority areas, based on an in-depth analytical update to take into account emerging priorities and the changing country context.

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learn more



Photo: UN Sri Lanka

LOOKING AHEAD

PRIORITIES FOR 2025

The global environment for development cooperation is expected to face considerable challenges in 2025 including important reduction of resources. In response to these unprecedented shifts and on the heels of the Pact of the Future agreed by Member States in 2024, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres recently launched the UN80 Initiative, aimed at identifying efficiencies and improvements while undertaking a review to explore necessary structural changes.

At the country level in Sri Lanka, the UN will similarly be pursuing further efficiencies, while working with our stakeholders to navigate the uncertain times ahead.

At the same time, through the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, the United Nations in Sri Lanka will continue to support national priorities for inclusive, sustainable development—aligned with the government’s vision of a ‘Thriving Nation and a Beautiful Life’ for all.



Accelerating Economic Growth

Boosting economic growth will remain a top priority for 2025, with a focus on increasing productivity, exports, and digitalization, improving financial governance, and advancing anti-corruption reforms. The government aims to achieve 5% growth while laying the foundation for long-term stability.

The UN will support these efforts through initiatives such as the promotion of inclusive entrepreneurship, strengthening MSMEs, and enhancing productivity, resilience and equitable value chains. The UN will also contribute across this broad portfolio, for example by supporting climate commitments and innovative financing for green transition.



Tackling Poverty

Reducing poverty is a flagship national priority, to be achieved through better-targeted social protection systems, expanded economic opportunities and improved access to basic services, especially in rural areas.

The UN will continue providing expert advice on modern, shock-responsive social protection, while also supporting programmes that address the root causes of rural poverty, such as by improving market access, ensuring fair pricing for farmers, and optimizing the use of local resources.



Driving Digital Transformation

Digitalization is a critical enabler of growth, service delivery, and transparency. The government has outlined ambitious plans to expand digital infrastructure and streamline public administration.

The UN, a longstanding partner in this area, will provide technical support across multiple sectors. Flagship initiatives such as the *One Registry* project aim to fully digitize Sri Lanka’s civil registration system, unlocking broader access to digital services including social protection and financial inclusion.



Advancing sustainability, inclusion and social cohesion

The UN will help promote national unity, peacebuilding, and human rights, including through initiatives to address land disputes, reduce harmful online content, and strengthen inclusive public dialogue. Key initiatives in this area will continue focusing on the North and East.



Photo: UNDP Sri Lanka

