

FLASH UPDATE 3

Sri Lanka: Tropical Cyclone Ditwah

As of 1 December 2025, 6 p.m. local time, all information subject to confirmation

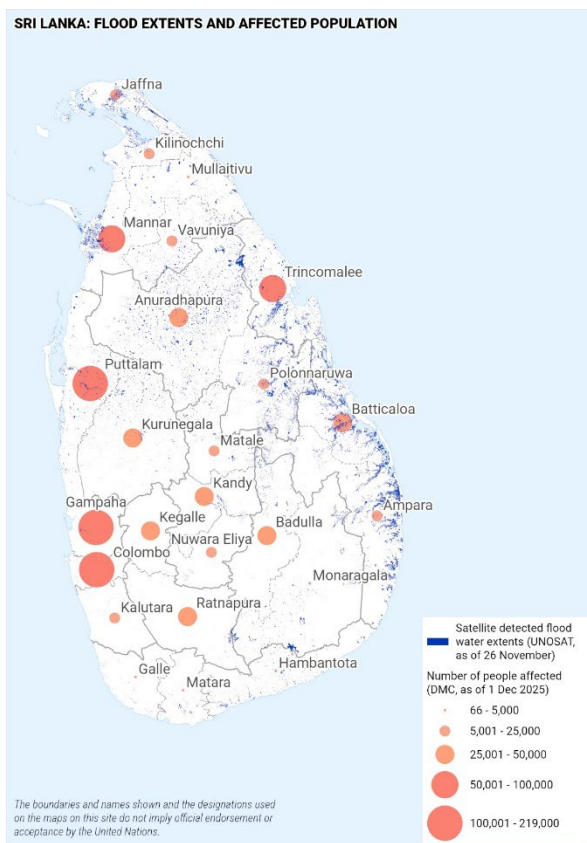
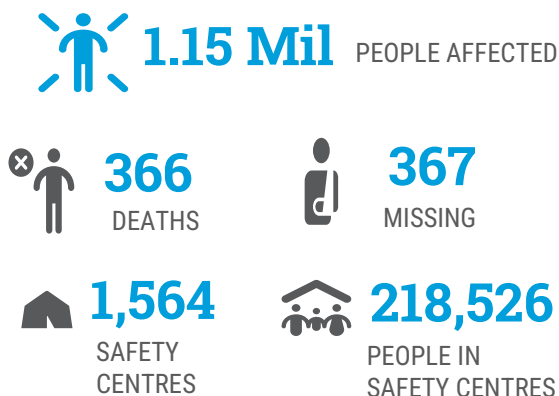
Situation Overview

Latest assessments continue to reveal the extensive scale of Cyclone Ditwah's impact, with widespread flooding and landslides deepening humanitarian needs across the country. Updated government figures report 366 deaths and 367 people missing, with 1,151,776 people (316,366 families) affected across all 25 districts. The cyclone, which moved across Sri Lanka on 28 November, has left 218,526 people from 61,612 families sheltering in 1,564 government-run safety centres.

The highest numbers of affected people are recorded in Gampaha, Colombo and Puttalam, each exceeding 170,000 people. Numerous landslides have been reported in parts of the central highlands, particularly around Kandy and Gampola, with new displacement continuing as of 30 November.

Critical infrastructure disruptions persist, though access has been restored along several main roads following previous closures. Electricity supply is gradually being restored, although current information suggests that outages persist in districts where flooding, landslides, and damaged transmission lines continue to hinder repairs.

Evacuation alerts continue for several low-lying suburbs, with floodwaters entering parts of greater Colombo, further hindering search, rescue and relief operations.



Government Response

On the night of 30 November, the President addressed the nation, emphasizing the severity of the disaster, outlining the government's coordinated response, and calling for unity. Rescue operations are ongoing, with survivors accommodated in homes, with relatives, or in shelters. The government has allocated Rs. 30 billion for immediate relief, bypassing parliamentary delays, and further assistance will be provided through a supplementary estimate. Restoration of essential services and infrastructure is underway, while plans to revive livelihoods and industries are being implemented. A national fund will support long-term reconstruction with contributions from international partners and Sri Lankans abroad. The President urged citizens to set aside political differences and unite for recovery.

Recovery efforts continue with the support of the Armed Forces and Police. Tragically, five Navy officers and one Air Force pilot lost their lives during rescue operations. Emergency assistance including cooked meals, dry rations, clothing, sanitary items, and other essentials is being mobilized and distributed by the government, civil society organizations, political entities, media, and the private sector with the generous support by the public. The Ministry of Transport has announced the reopening of several roads affected by the recent inclement weather, including the Ella–Wellawaya, Padeniya–Anuradhapura, Kandy–Jaffna, and Kurunegala–Trincomalee routes, which are now open for vehicular movement.

Addressing concerns about potential food insecurity, the government reassured the public that essential food commodities remain available nationwide despite temporary disruptions. The Ministry of Trade has also provided contact numbers for complaints against traders who artificially inflate consumer goods prices. Additionally, the government announced an initial grant of LKR 10,000 to each affected household to restore sanitation and make homes safe for living until further support arrives. Under emergency regulations, provisions have been introduced to curb misinformation and hate speech in circulation. Responding to concerns raised by civil society organizations and human rights defenders about the potential misuse of these regulations to suppress dissent and restrict fundamental rights, the President reiterated that the emergency measures will only be used to better coordinate relief efforts.

The government announced a medium to long-term recovery strategy aimed at rebuilding highways, irrigation systems, and other critical facilities via a public-private partnership. A Joint Management Committee comprising government officials and private sector representatives, will be appointed with Cabinet approval to oversee fund management and project execution.

To mobilize financial contributions for relief operations, the government launched an official donation portal, 'Stand with Sri Lanka.' The public can make contributions directly through the GovPay portal, in addition to the bank details already provided for foreign currency donations. China, Australia, the USA, Japan, and New Zealand have pledged assistance, alongside on-the-ground support from India and Pakistan. A rapid clearance mechanism has been introduced to ensure swift processing of relief items, categorized into four main groups: aid from multilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations, foreign businesses, and individual donors. Donations designated for the Disaster Management Centre will be exempt from customs duties and Value Added Tax.

Humanitarian partners coordination, preparedness and response

The United Nations in Sri Lanka and key humanitarian partners continue to support urgent assessment and response efforts through the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), in coordination with national authorities and other partners, focusing on the following sectors: food security, livelihoods and agriculture with nutrition as a sub-sector; education; water and sanitation; health with sexual and reproductive health as a sub-sector; protection; shelter/non-food items (NFI)/camp Coordination and camp management (CCCM) and early recovery. The HCT will continue meeting frequently and provide regular updates and briefings.

The UN is leading the development of a Joint Rapid Needs Assessment in close coordination with the Disaster Management Centre (DMC) and humanitarian partners. This effort includes analyzing geospatial data to identify the flood impact and coordinating a data collection process across partners to fully understand the situation.

UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes in Sri Lanka are also rapidly mobilizing to provide immediate and life-saving support on the ground, including energy biscuits, micro-nutrient powders and therapeutic foods, safe drinking water, hygiene and shelter items, maternity and dignity kits.

Contact:

Andreas Karpati, Head of Office, karpati@un.org

Wagisha Perera, Humanitarian and Resilience Officer, Wagisha.perera@undp.org