

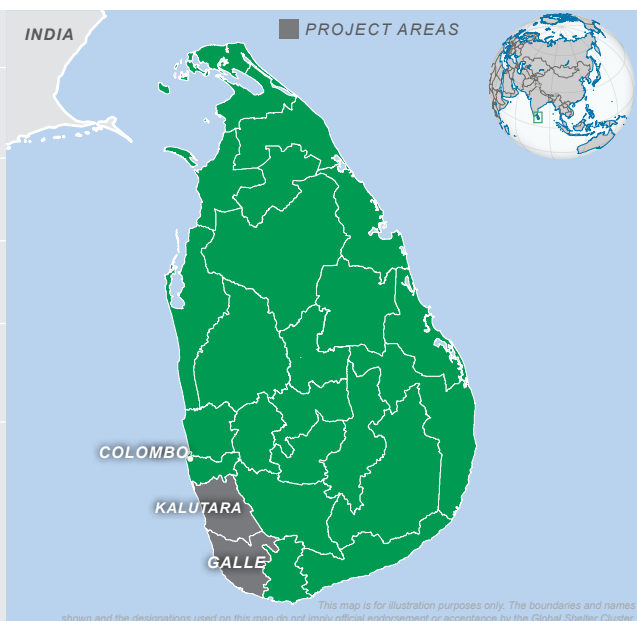
CASE STUDY

# SRI LANKA 2017 / FLOODS

**KEYWORDS:** Housing repair, Transitional shelter, Evacuation centre upgrade, Disaster Risk Reduction, Community-based organizations

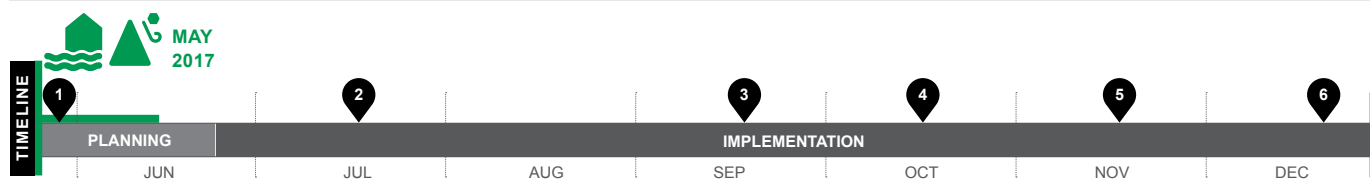
<b>CRISIS</b>	<b>Floods and Landslides, 24 May 2017</b>
<b>TOTAL PEOPLE AFFECTED*</b>	<b>229,233 households</b> (879,778 people) as of 31 May 2017
<b>TOTAL HOUSES DAMAGED<sup>1</sup></b>	3,048 fully damaged and 76,803 partially damaged
<b>PROJECT LOCATIONS</b>	Kalutara District (Western Province) and Galle District (Southern Province)
<b>PROJECT BENEFICIARIES</b>	<b>6,358 households</b> (28,075 individuals, 52% female)
<b>PROJECT OUTPUTS</b>	<b>89 transitional shelters</b> <b>692 households</b> provided with shelter repair assistance <b>6,358 households</b> provided with NFIs <b>4 evacuation centres</b> upgraded
<b>SHELTER SIZE</b>	<b>18.5m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>SHELTER DENSITY</b>	<b>4.5m<sup>2</sup></b> per person
<b>MATERIALS COST</b>	<b>USD 1,545</b> for transitional shelters <b>USD 95</b> for shelter repairs <b>USD 65</b> for NFIs
<b>PROJECT COST</b>	<b>USD 2,600</b> per household

\* Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, May 2017, <https://bit.ly/2sGXLGK>. On 31 May, as flood waters were yet to recede, the number of damaged houses was expected to increase.



**PROJECT SUMMARY**

The project targeted a total of 25,365 people affected by floods and landslides with lifesaving shelter and NFI assistance. A network of community-based organizations and affected families themselves were engaged to conduct shelter repairs, build transitional shelters for those unable to return, distribute NFIs and upgrade evacuation facilities. Disaster risk reduction features were included in the response and salvaged materials were reused in the repairs.



- 1 May 2017 Planning phase and rapid damage assessment conducted.
- 2 Jul 2017 Awareness sessions on resilient constructions conducted. Shelter construction begins.
- 3 Sep 2017: NFI distributions begin.
- 4 Oct 2017: Procurement of materials and hiring of labour completed.
- 5 Nov 2017: NFI distributions completed.
- 6 Dec 2017: Project closure, lessons learned, handover of temporary accommodation centres (safe locations) to community-based organizations.

**STRENGTHS**

- + Timeliness and effectiveness of the project thanks to the partnership with CBOs.
- + Reuse of salvaged building materials.
- + Linkages with government and local authorities.
- + Participatory monitoring and evaluation.
- + Geo database increased transparency and accountability.



The 2017 floods caused extensive damage, especially in rural areas.

**WEAKNESSES**

- Slow internal processes caused delays.
- Challenges in adjusting activities and target locations.
- Delay in recruiting emergency field staff.

**CONTEXT**

Rapid, unplanned settlement development and climate change have increased Sri Lanka’s vulnerability to disasters. The impact of recurrent climate-induced disasters is most severe in rural areas with high poverty levels in the south-west, where livelihoods and assets, pivoting on agriculture, have been repeatedly depleted.

**SITUATION BEFORE THE FLOODS**

In the years before the floods, affected districts had faced a rapid increase in population. Settlements had grown along rivers and streams bordering main cities. Informal housing and economic activities increased, surpassing the local government’s capacities to control development.<sup>1</sup>

**SITUATION AFTER THE FLOODS**

In May 2017, heavy rains resulted in floods and landslides, affecting over 220,000 households. A week after the disaster, an estimated 73,560 people were displaced from their homes and then relocated to 354 evacuation centres in public buildings, such as schools, temples and other facilities located on higher ground, unaffected by the floods and landslides. In June, the flood waters receded and the affected people returned to their villages. Many of their homes were destroyed or inhabitable, so they stayed with friends, relatives or other host families.

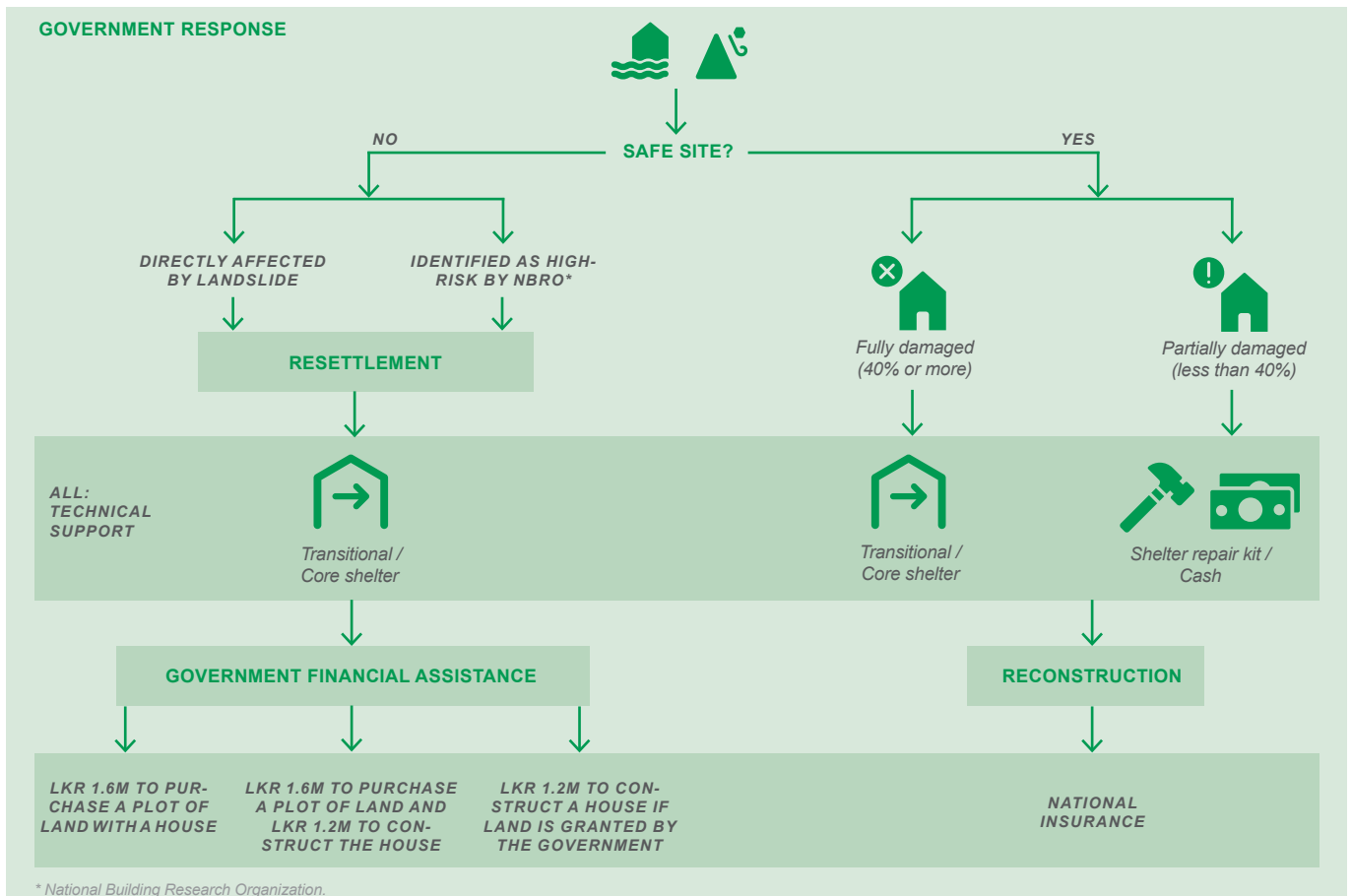
<sup>1</sup> Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, May 2017.

**NATIONAL SHELTER PLAN**

The Disaster Management Centre was officially mandated to coordinate the emergency response to the floods and developed a plan centred around three strategic objectives: 1) provide immediate life-saving and protection assistance; 2) facilitate early recovery through emergency livelihood and provision of basic services; and 3) strengthen the resilience of affected communities to recover.

The shelter strategy – developed based on early damage and needs assessments – focused on four main objectives:

- **Emergency shelter:** support vulnerable households (whose homes had been partially damaged, but were able to return or were already living near their houses) through the provision of emergency shelter items contributing to self-recovery, such as shelter kits (including tools and CGI) or their cash equivalent;
- **Return:** support the most vulnerable households to return through the provision of NFI kits (including kitchen sets and solar lights), or their cash equivalent;
- **Relocation and resettlement:** provide transitional shelter options for vulnerable households in designated high-risk zones, where a permanent housing solution would need to be found;
- **Technical support:** provide information, education and communication (IEC) on safer construction principles, community-based hazard awareness, preparedness and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), during all phases of the response.



The government response included an advance of LKR 10,000 from the national insurance to affected families, and a monthly subsidy of LKR 7,500 for three months for households in evacuation centres. Government officers conducted technical assessments to assess the level of damage and determine the national insurance coverage.

**TARGETING AND PROJECT COMPONENTS**

The project initially targeted a total of 25,365 people vulnerable to landslides and floods across five of the most affected divisions. Thanks to additional funding and budget reallocations, the project could target additional locations and reach 2,710 more beneficiaries. Approximately five per cent of the people with shelter needs in the targeted districts were assisted. The project aligned with the national strategy by supporting return or safe relocation, as well as by upgrading evacuation facilities, coupled with technical support on DRR features. Cash amounts and kits contents were defined based on Sector recommendations.

The project components were:

- **Shelter repair:** cash grants were provided to 692 returnee households to implement basic repairs;<sup>2</sup>
- **NFI:** direct NFI assistance was provided to 6,358 households who required essential items for day-to-day living, the contents being customized in consultation with community members;
- **Transitional shelter:** 89 extremely vulnerable households whose houses had been fully destroyed received cash grants to build transitional shelters. These included female-headed households, households with infants, elderly and persons with disabilities;
- **Evacuation centre upgrade:** 50 landslide-affected households facing prolonged displacement in evacuation centres were also supported with maintenance and repairs.

**PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

The project was implemented through a **network of 16 local community-based organizations (CBOs)** overseen by a team of 15 staff from the lead organization: one project manager, one assistant engineer, four technical officers, four community mobilization assistants and several operational staff. The CBOs included farmer organizations, welfare and funeral societies, self-help groups and village development committees. While all activities were conducted by the CBOs and the people themselves, **the lead organization facilitated the process** through technical assistance, community mobilization, monitoring, quality assurance and financial tracking.

The project was designed based on surveys with affected people and discussions with government officials. **Affected communities were closely involved in project planning** stages, which included the selection of beneficiaries and CBOs, and the design of shelter and NFI assistance.

<sup>2</sup>These included roof repairs, kitchen renovations, carpentry and joinery, WASH repairs, plastering, structural works and floor rendering.



The project was implemented through a network of community-based organizations, which conducted assessments in the affected areas after the floods.



The lead organization distributed household items to affected populations

**The CBOs undertook damage and needs assessments** in 20 divisions and conducted a baseline survey to collect household information, data on land ownership and present residence, vulnerability of the families, extent of damage to the former residence and NFI requirements.

After finalizing the community contracts, the lead organization transferred 80 per cent of the agreed funds to the CBOs, which then **disbursed cash grants to selected households through their bank accounts**. This proved to be fast and effective, as most people in Sri Lanka have bank accounts. For people who did not have an account, cash distributions were conducted. The households then commenced construction of their transitional shelters or repair works. For NFI distributions and evacuation centre upgrades, activities were conducted by the CBOs.

**The CBOs mobilized the communities to assist vulnerable beneficiaries** who were unable to manage construction activities. **Community networks were mobilized to pull resources** to procure building materials in large quantities (especially for women-headed and vulnerable households), to reduce overall material and transportation costs. **Many families contributed** in kind with skilled and unskilled labour, as well as financially from savings and small loans.

**The CBOs and project staff helped** the families to select good building materials and identify skilled construction workers. In consultation with the lead organization, the CBOs also assisted the families to reuse building materials from their damaged houses and ensure their quality before use.

**Participatory monitoring and evaluation methods** were used throughout the project, such as the establishment of community monitoring committees in all locations. A geo-referenced database accessible to field-based staff was developed to increase transparency and accountability of the utilization of the funding. Beneficiary selection data (including scores), visual evidence of shelter damage and progress of construction, were included in the database, which enabled real-time, off-site monitoring. Financial monitoring of the CBOs was undertaken by the lead organization.



People displaced by the floods found shelter in public buildings. The project upgraded such evacuation centres in cases where families could not go back quickly.



For very vulnerable households with a completely destroyed home, cash grants were given to build a transitional shelter.

### PARTNERSHIP WITH CBOS

Partnering with local CBOs enabled timely and effective project implementation, ensured lower administrative costs and increased accountability to affected populations. The lead organization overcame the delays in processing agreements with other international organizations through community contracts signed with registered CBOs. After transferring the funds, the lead organization, together with government officials, monitored the progress and approved the release of funds to beneficiaries only after certification of the withdrawal slip or a fund request form for accounting and bookkeeping. Wherever possible, electronic transfers with vouchers were used to improve organizational accountability.

### COORDINATION

Following the floods, sector working groups were activated to coordinate the response. The Shelter Sector was led by two other international organizations and coordinated closely with both the National Disaster Relief Services Centre and the National Building Research Organization (NBRO). The project team participated in coordination meetings at all levels to coordinate activities in the same location and engaged relevant government authorities to facilitate and monitor project activities. Coordination was also essential for the lead organization to oversee the 16 CBOs implementing the project.

### DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

The Shelter Sector developed technical IEC brochures based on NBRO construction guidelines to support owner-driven recovery and resilient construction and posters for distribution in evacuation centres and safe relocation sites, to increase awareness of site selection, environmental hazards and other risks. It also disseminated general IEC materials developed by the Disaster Management Centre amongst partners, to increase community DRR awareness and support capacity-building activities.

Beneficiaries and CBOs included key DRR features in construction and repairs, such as choosing safe locations or plots and the best orientation of buildings to mitigate wind impacts, raising foundations above flood levels, reinforcing structures and anchoring roof elements against high winds (using metal straps and hooks) and improving slope stability with recycled materials.



In some cases, transitional shelters were also built using salvaged materials.

### SALVAGED MATERIALS

Reclaimed materials were used to reduce costs by decreasing the procurement of new materials and limit the environmental impact of the disaster by recycling debris. Affected households recovered roof tiles and timbers, doors and windows damaged by the disaster, stored them on site and reused them both for repairs and new construction. The debris available on site (such as bricks and concrete rubble) were sorted, cleaned and reused as aggregates into foundations and as floor concreting.

### CROSSCUTTING ISSUES

Design and construction of transitional shelters and shelter repair assistance included accessibility considerations for people with disabilities, such as construction of ramps and the installation of support bars in toilets.

The project also mitigated risks of gender-based violence (GBV) associated with communal living spaces. Firstly, GBV awareness sessions were conducted and community mobilizers monitored the evacuation centres regularly. Secondly, women and children were assisted to return to their homes.

### MAIN CHALLENGES

As funding was received very early after the disaster, in a rapidly changing environment, accurate data was not available in the planning stage for some of the most affected areas. This created challenges in moving funds from one affected location to another or in changing proposed activities, once better data came in. In the end, the worst affected areas were targeted based on written requests from government authorities.

The project also faced delays in processing contractual agreements and payments due to internal processes. Mobilization of community resources mitigated this challenge in most instances, thus enabling a timely response.



Community engagement was essential throughout the project, from mobilizing resources jointly to ensure vulnerable families would get support.

## STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

### STRENGTHS

- + **The project was implemented timely and effectively** thanks to the partnerships with local community-based organizations, which also ensured lower administrative costs and higher accountability to affected populations.
- + **Salvaged building materials from damaged houses were reused** for shelter construction, enabling cost savings and reduced environmental impacts.
- + **Strong linkages with government departments** and local authorities enabled a smooth information flow and support both in decision-making and implementation activities.
- + **Participatory monitoring and evaluation methods** were used throughout the project.
- + **The development of a georeferenced database** accessible to field-based teams helped increase transparency and accountability of the utilization of funds.

### WEAKNESSES

- **Slow internal processes delayed contractual agreements and payments** to CBO partners.
- Partial assessments in the early stages led to **challenges in adjusting project activities and target locations**. This was also due to the limited flexibility of the emergency funding received. Quicker release of funds from within the lead organization could have avoided this.
- **Delay in recruiting field staff for the emergency response** due to slow recruitment processes. The lead organization could have focused more on building staff capacities in emergency response, to deploy trained personnel in the aftermath of the disaster.



Along with distributing NFIs and shelter repair grants, the project supported 89 households in building transitional shelters via transferring funds to their bank accounts.

### LESSONS LEARNED

- **Engaging CBOs with prior recovery experience**, an understanding of the social context, demographic data, and lists of local service providers, was a timely and effective approach.
- **Community contracts have a lower turnaround time** in the lead organization's procurement system, which allowed quicker implementation, critical to the timeliness of the emergency assistance.
- A major challenge in the aftermath of a disaster is often the disposal of construction debris. By reusing and recycling construction materials, **the project contributed to reducing the environmental impact** in the disaster-affected areas, as well as reducing costs.