1. General overview and weather

Sri Lanka received heavy rainfall after the South Western monsoon set in on 25 May 2017. The rains have subsided, with many parts of the country now experiencing much drier weather conditions. The Department of Metrology has predicted that the rainfall would further reduce beginning 31 May 2017.

2. Current disaster situation

The inundated areas are gradually becoming accessible facilitating relief efforts. A total of 604,713 persons in 15 districts have been affected. As many as 83,224 people have been moved to 376 safe locations in seven districts. Maximum displacement has been reported from Ratnapura district where 42,975 people had to be moved to 181 safe locations. In Ratnapura, Kalutara, Matara and Galle, the resettlement could take several weeks to months, in view of the landslides. The toll in flood and landslides is expected to rise as more bodies are being recovered during the ongoing operations with the assistance of Sri Lanka army, navy and Air Force. As on 31 May, the number of deaths are 194 with 99 reported missing.

Impact on the healthcare network

Sixteen hospitals have been affected by floods/ landslides. All occupants of the divisional hospital in Ayagama, one of the badly affected areas, had to be evacuated. Air Force and Army medical teams are manning the temporary health posts established in the Ayagama, Kalawana and Hiniduma divisions where survivors are still marooned.

Over 80 000 people have been displaced by the floods
Photo Courtesy - Sri Lanka Air Force Media
The Ministry of Health has mobilized 26 medical teams to man the health posts established in safe locations. With the power grind being impacted by the floods and landslides, many hospitals/health posts are experiencing power shortages which is hampering healthcare service delivery.

3. WCO support and current priorities

WHO is providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Health on critical health care services to the affected population. WHO has disbursed South-East Asia Regional Health Emergency Fund to Sri Lanka to support health operations in eight affected districts. The key concerns are medical team deployment, strengthening surveillance of communicable diseases, mental health and psychosocial support for survivors, and health promotion.

A joint MOH-WHO field assessment will be carried out on 01 and 02 June to ensure that health service delivery to the survivors is need based, efficient and effective.

WHO is also leading the health sector relief and response coordination activities of the UN and is working closely with other health sector partners to assist the government to prioritize needs of the affected, and plan recovery efforts.