



**Country/Region/Global: Sri Lanka**  
**Initiation Plan**

**Project Title** Immediate support to respond to the Maritime Disaster in Sri Lanka

**Expected UNDAF/CP Outcome(s):** UNDAF Outcome 4

**Expected CPD Output(s):** CPD Output 2.4

**Initiation Plan Start/End Dates:** 10 June 2021 – 9 December 2021 (6 months)

**Implementing Partner:** UNDP Sri Lanka

**Brief Description**

The overall objective of this Initiation Plan is to provide immediate assistance to the Government of Sri Lanka to respond to the recent and largest maritime disaster of Sri Lanka - the fire and sinking of the cargo ship, MV X-press Pearl, docked off the coast of Colombo. UNDP aims to support the Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA), the National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA) and the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development with immediate procurement, coordination, risk communications, impact assessments and alternative livelihoods support to the vulnerable fishing communities.

This IP will cover following specific interventions:

- i) Immediate support to the Government of Sri Lanka to reduce the environmental impacts and provide emergency employment to communities at risk
- ii) Rapid assessments and coordination support to inform Government strategy and potentially feed into a disaster needs assessment
- iii) Accurate and timely risk communications to the communities affected by the disaster

Programme Period: 2021

Atlas Project Number: 136608

Atlas Output ID: 00127426

Gender Marker: 2

Total resources required

Total allocated resources: USD 300, 000

• Regular TRAC3

• Other: UNDP

○ Donor \_\_\_\_\_

○ Donor \_\_\_\_\_

○ Government \_\_\_\_\_

Unfunded budget: \_\_\_\_\_

In-kind Contributions

Agreed by UNDP: Faiza Effendi, Officer in Charge

*Faiza Effendi*

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## I. PURPOSE AND EXPECTED OUTPUT

### 1.a) Current Context Analysis

Since May 20<sup>th</sup> 2021, Sri Lanka Navy and other coast and marine protection agencies, with the support of the Indian Coast Guard have been working around the clock to curb the fire on the cargo ship, MV X-press Pearl, docked off the coast of Colombo. The ship was carrying 1,486 containers, including 25 tons of nitric acid 278 tons of bunker oil, 50 tons of marine gas oil and 78 tons of low-density polyethylene granules (plastic pellets or nurdles). After burning on Sri Lankan waters for about 2 weeks, following an explosion, the vessel hit the sea bottom defeating efforts to tow the ship to deeper seas. Thus, the increasing possibility of an imminent oil spill is escalating the fire into a catastrophic environmental disaster. The damages to the marine environment and the coastal communities are extensive and far-reaching, especially in the vicinity of the site of the incident and the western coast with gradual spread towards the eastern coast.

The authorities are bracing themselves for one of the worst ecological disasters in its history as the oil and chemicals leaks into the ocean, nearby lagoons and along a 30 kilometer- (18.6 mile-) stretch of coastline from the tourist spot of Negombo to Dikowita, threatening marine life, birds as well as livelihoods of around 50,000 fishermen dependent on the seas for daily sustenance. Debris from the vessel including vessel wreckage, floating container parts, burnt cargo and a large volume of plastic pellets/nurdles have washed ashore spreading rapidly on account of the ongoing monsoon with strong winds and ocean currents down to southern Sri Lanka, with the possibility of reaching the eastern coast, carpeting beaches along the coastline. Initial observations from the coastline reports death of marine life and birds due to the severe pollutants released into the environment. The fishing communities along the coastline have been banned from fishing within the 80 KM area of the vessel, which is affecting their COVID19 impacted livelihoods further. In addition, the lack of information on the extent of the pollutants released into the marine environment, especially the speculation on if the oil has spilt or if it has been burnt, is further complicating the already disastrous situation.

The Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA), the National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA), the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development and other civil society organization like Oceanswell, headed by sector experts, have begun the immediate response to the disaster and are mobilizing resources to clean the coastline. Further, a team of experts from the Environmental Studies Division, Marine Biological Resources Division, National Institute of Oceanography and Marine Sciences and Inland Aquatic Resources and Aquaculture Division have also been mobilized to monitor and investigate the current water quality status, impacts on marine organisms, and damages caused to the other marine resources in the area while the NARA has deployed teams to collect samples of marine and coastal species affected by this incident, for testing. However, all the deployed teams and the authorities lack experience and expertise to deal with a marine disaster of this extent, especially one involving chemical, oil and microplastics pollution. In addition, the authorities only possess the capacity to assess the environmental impact, and has limited expertise to translate these impacts to economic and recovery needs. And, given the magnitude of this disaster, the authorities are overwhelmed and this is evident by the fact that MEPA still could not release a situation report on the incident, two weeks after the ship caught fire.

In addition to the damages on the ground, speculations on social media, and the lack of verified communications from the overwhelmed authorities directly working on this disaster are further compounding the impacts of this marine ecology disaster across the island. Unverified information on social media about the fish and salt from these coastal areas and the island's beach areas being contaminated may have long term repercussions on the tourism and coastal industries and communities. Some experts expressed their concern on long-term nutritional issues due to misinformation being circulated. Initial estimates of the immediate environmental and social impacts are being pulled together. But, experts predict that these will be significant, and the actual extent of the damage caused to the marine and land species will take months to fully realize. The lack of clear, accurate and timely information on the situation, is exacerbating the difficulty in ascertaining the extent of the actual impact on the marine environment and communities, thus, preventing policy and decision-makers from making informed decisions, further compounds the severity of the impacts. Working with authorities, CSOs on the ground to extract verified and timely information and to disseminate this information at the community and national levels is an urgent necessity.

The ongoing 3<sup>rd</sup> wave of COVID-19 with accompanying lock down protocols is hampering the process of assessing the damage and rolling out damage mitigation response. Given the growing severity of the marine and environmental pollution that could cut across the Sri Lankan border, the weak and uncoordinated institutional capacity, the loss of livelihoods for the fishing communities for the months ahead and the need for informed assessments and information to feed into government recovery framework the proposed assistance by UNDP is time-critical.

## **1.b) Objectives and Outputs**

There are 03 main outputs to this IP:

### **Output 01: Immediate response support to the Government of Sri Lanka to reduce the environmental impacts and emergency employment to communities at risk**

This output takes a holistic approach to support the Government's immediate measures by focusing on 3 key areas of support:

- 1.1 As per the request from MEPA, provide protective gears and contamination equipment including Coveralls, Gloves, Goggles, Boots, Waste container bags-Polysack, Oil spill absorbent, Rolls and oil containment Booms.
- 1.2 Provide testing instruments (including equipment and protective gears) to NARA
- 1.3 Mobilize Fishing communities and volunteers (through the Sri Lanka Red Cross and United Nations Volunteers) for coastal clean-up and cash for work programmes to support the fisheries communities. This includes engagement of the fishermen in the coastal clean-up, upon providing adequate training and compensation for services

### **Output 02: Impact assessments, and coordination support to the Government and MEPA**

- 2.1 Build on the Technical Environmental Assessment led by the Government, provide technical inputs to integrate aspects of socio-economic analysis to ascertain and quantify the economic, monetary, and financial implications of the disaster
- 2.2 Conduct Livelihood Impact Assessment on communities impacted by the disaster (e.g., fisheries)
- 2.3 Provision of technical and coordination support to MEPA to effectively respond to and avoid/minimize further impacts (coordinated support with other UN agencies, such as UNEP)

### **Output 03: A series of disaster sensitive communication activities developed and disseminated**

This output takes an approach to support Government to provide timely and accurate information of the marine ecology disaster as it develops for informed decision-making.

- 3.1 Develop a risk communication strategy to provide additional communication capacity to the Government
- 3.2 Community based activities including awareness raising campaigns and research initiatives through the engagement of CSOs, local communities and environmental organizations

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## **II. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

The Initiation Plan (IP) is managed by UNDP Sri Lanka country office under the overall guidance of the Resident Representative (RR), and oversight of the Deputy Resident Representative (DRR). The IP will be managed and implemented by the Climate and Environment Team (CET) with the support of the UNDP Country Office (CO) other teams. The Policy Specialist and the Team Leader (CET) will be accountable on behalf of the CO for the IP's overall results, and quality assurance.

The outputs and activities are based on the urgent needs of the country and requests from the GoSL for providing immediate coordination and assessment support and provide programmatic support. UNDP Sri Lanka has a long-standing partnership with GoSL, specifically with MEPA, DMC, NARA and other relevant agencies and organizations at both national and sub-national level. Through these ongoing partnerships, three outputs mentioned above are managed as below;

1. Output 01: UNDP CO will partner with Sri Lanka Red Cross Society and UN Volunteers to support the Government's immediate response. UNDP CO will directly procure equipment and material inputs required for the authorities responding to the emergency
2. Output 02: UNDP CO will procure local and international experts' services with previous experience on similar disasters to assist MEPA and other relevant agencies with the assessments.
3. Output 03: UNDP CO will leverage capacities from GPN/BPPS to extend expert inputs to mainstreaming risk communications and will partner with local CSOs (e.g., Oceanswell) to roll out the risk communication campaign

UNDP Sri Lanka has sufficient implementation and operational capacity to rapidly roll out the project and deliver support to beneficiaries on an immediate basis, in collaboration with the support of relevant Ministries and line agencies and partner agencies

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### **III. MONITORING**

In accordance with UNDP's Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures, the project will be monitored following the corporate standards and requirements. The Deputy Resident Representative (DRR) together with the Climate and Environment Team Lead/Policy Specialist will be responsible for overall monitoring of the initiation plan, with support as needed from UNDP Country Office Results and Resource Management Team.

## IV. WORK PLAN

Period<sup>1</sup>:

EXPECTED OUTPUTS <i>And baseline, indicators including annual targets</i>	PLANNED ACTIVITIES <i>List activity results and associated actions</i>	TIMEFRAME						RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PLANNED BUDGET		
		M1 June 2021	M2 July 2021	M1 Aug 2021	M1 Sept 2021	M1 Oct 2021	M1 Nov 2021		Funding Source	Budget Description	Amount
<b>Output 1</b> Provision of immediate support to the Government of Sri Lanka to reduce the environmental impacts and emergency employment to communities at risk	<b>Activity 1.1</b> As per the request from MEPA, protective gears and contamination equipment including Coveralls, Gloves, Goggles, Boots, Waste container bags-Polysack, Oil spill absorbent, Rolls and oil containment Booms procured	x	x					UNDP	TRAC3	72300-Material and goods	110,000
	<b>Activity 1.2</b> Testing instruments (including equipment and protective gears) to NARA, procured	x	x	x						72300-Material and goods	10,000
	<b>Activity 1.3</b> Fishing communities and volunteers (through the Sri Lanka Red Cross and United Nations Volunteers) mobilized for coastal clean-up and cash for work programmes to support the fisheries communities implemented through the same modality i.e., engagement of the fishermen in the coastal clean-up, upon providing adequate training and compensation for services	x	x	x	x						72100-Contractual services - Companies
<b>Output 2</b> Impact assessments, and coordination support to the Government and MEPA	<b>Activity 2.1</b> Build on the Technical Environmental Assessment led by the Government to integrate aspects of socio-economic analysis to ascertain and quantify the economic, monetary, and financial implications of the disaster	x	x	x	x			UNDP	TRAC3	71300-Local Consultants	20,000

<sup>1</sup> Maximum 18 months

	<b>Activity 2.2</b> Livelihood Impact Assessment on communities impacted by the disaster (i.e., fisheries)	x	x							71300-Local Consultants	20,000
	<b>Activity 2.3</b> Provision of technical and coordination support to MEPA to effectively respond to and avoid/minimize further impacts, with other UN agencies (e.g.: UNEP)	x	x	x	x	x	x			71300-Local Consultants	30,000
<b>Output 3</b> A series of disaster sensitive communication activities developed and disseminated	<b>Activity 3.1</b> Develop a risk communication strategy to provide additional communication capacity to the Government	x	x							71300-Local Consultants	20,000
	<b>Activity 3.2</b> Community based activities including awareness raising campaigns and research initiatives through the engagement of CSOs, local communities and environmental organizations	x	x	x	x	x	x			74200- Audio visual and print product cost	30,000
<b>TOTAL</b>											<b>300,000</b>