

ANNUAL REPORT 2023





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Ensuring Rights and Choices for All





CONTENTS

Reflections on 2023: A Year in Review	08
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01	
Our Work	10
Empowerment Through Rights and Choices	12
Prioritizing Maternal Safety	16
Creating Secure Environments for Women, Girls and Marginalized Groups	18
Living in the Data Age: Navigating Everyday Insights	20

02	
Navigating the Frontlines in Challenging Times	22
Medicines, Commodities, Essential Services	30
Standing Firm Against Violence: A Zero Tolerance Approach	34
Fostering Strength and Resilience	36

03	
Embodied Inspiration: Turning Vision into Action	42
Collaborating for Commitments	44
Youth-Driven Transformation: Leaders of Change	46

04	
Partnerships, Communications and Advocacy	48
Fashion for a Cause - UNFPA Bodyright Campaign	52
Staging Change: Theater as a Tool Against Gender - Based Violence	54
Act Now to End Violence Against Women and Girls	56
Encouraging Thoughtful Dialogue - Winner of Effie Awards 2022	58

05	
Financial Snapshot	60

Reflections on 2023: A Year in Review

Message from the UNFPA Representative in Sri Lanka

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Sri Lanka has made significant strides in bolstering the resilience of all Sri Lankans, amidst the country's ongoing socioeconomic hardships. Steadfast in our mission, we've stood by those significantly affected, especially women, girls and marginalized groups like the elderly, helping create positive change by strengthening systems and advocating for the rights and well-being of all Sri Lankans.

Working closely with the Government of Sri Lanka to impact progressive change, we focused on policy reforms and community mobilization in areas of vital importance such as family planning, maternal health and response to gender-based violence (GBV) across the humanitarian, peace and development nexus.

In response to the humanitarian appeal of 2022 where UNFPA Sri Lanka mobilised \$11 million, a humanitarian response was rolled out to ensure that women and girls at risk could access crucial medical supplies, general commodities, obstetric care and protective services. Enhancing service provision in family planning, maternal health and multi-sectoral GBV, especially in areas lacking such services in low-performing districts, we dedicated resources to capacity building and infrastructure development. Our focus on youth well-being led to the strengthening of youth-friendly Yowun Piyasa centres, ensuring that Sri Lanka's young population can easily access sexual and reproductive health services.

Sexual and reproductive health outcomes received an intensified focus within our programmes. Implementing a maternal and neonatal health information system across three districts now helps in accurately monitoring health indicators, leading to improved allocation of resources and informed decision-making. The digitalization of data management systems and comprehensive sexuality education reflects our commitment to modernising service provision and access to information and services in maternal health and family planning.

UNFPA's commitment to gender equality and fighting GBV saw significant steps, including the technical contribution towards the National Policy for Gender Equality and the second iteration of the National Action Plan for Sexual and Gender Based Violence. This, along with leading the consultative process of developing a national GBV prevention strategy and public events like the 16 Days of Activism Against GBV, reinforced our determination to create a society that condemns violence and promotes equality.

Sri Lanka is at a critical juncture in its socio-economic development which underscores the potential of data to drive economic recovery and sustainable development. UNFPA is collaborating with the World Bank to support the government in formulating the Sri Lanka Strategy for the Development of Statistics (SLSDS) to strengthen statistical capacity. Our support to the Department of Census and Statistics for the 2024 Population and Housing Census contributes to a fundamental resource that will guide policy and national planning, ensuring strategies reflect the real needs of Sri Lankans after a significant gap since the last census in 2012.

Looking back at 2023, we are proud yet not complacent, knowing the journey to our three transformative goals is ongoing. Our ambitions are bolstered by the generous contributions of our donors, especially Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Government of Japan, and the Government of Norway.

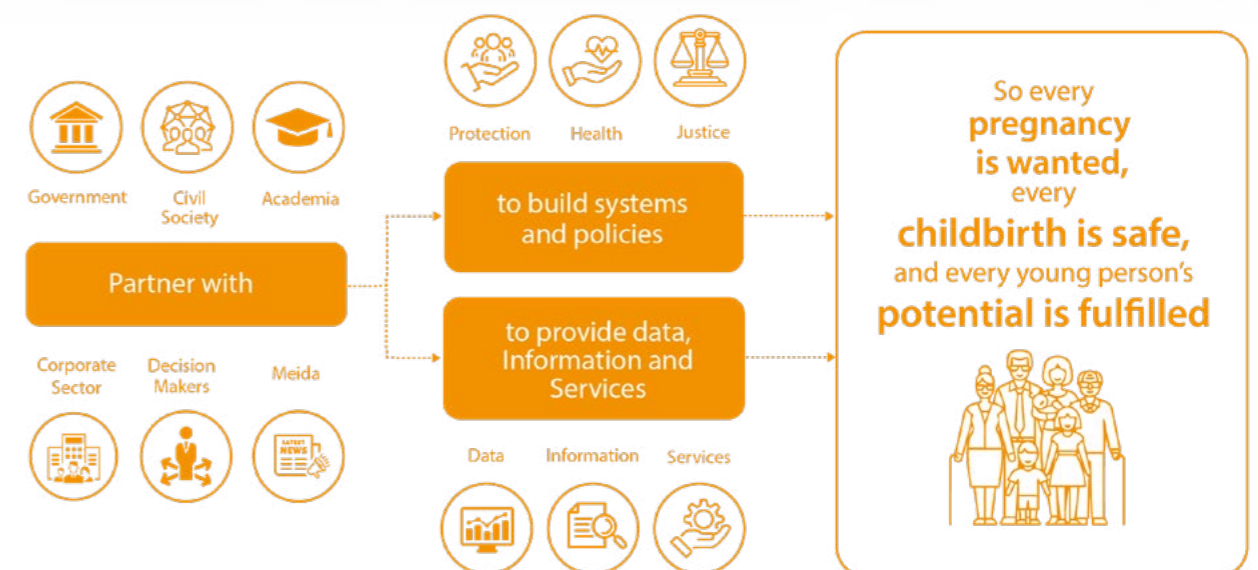
As we conclude the first year of our 10th Country Programme, let's carry forward the unity and determination that has brought us this far. Together, we can forge a future of equal opportunities, where every person, irrespective of gender or circumstance, can lead a fulfilling life. With eyes on the horizon, we continue, driven by solidarity, partnership, and the shared vision of a more inclusive and prosperous Sri Lanka.



Kunle Adeniyi
Representative, UNFPA Sri Lanka



HOW UNFPA WORKS IN SRI LANKA





Our Work



Empowerment Through Rights and Choices

In 2023, UNFPA committed to strengthening health infrastructure and service provision in maternal health, family planning, and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS). This aims to guarantee that women and youth can readily access a range of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services such as contraception, maternal healthcare, testing for HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), well women care and GBV services. UNFPA partnered with youth as catalysts for change, equipping them with the knowledge to make informed decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health through comprehensive sexuality education (CSE).

UNFPA focused on addressing the obstacles that women and girls face in accessing services, such as harmful social norms and misinformation. As part of this effort, UNFPA conducted targeted awareness campaigns, with a particular emphasis on family planning, healthy spacing, subfertility and prevention of teenage pregnancy.

In recent decades, Sri Lanka has made significant strides in advancing its social and health development objectives. In comparison to other South Asian countries, Sri Lanka has the best indicators in maternal mortality ratio, neonatal mortality rate, infant mortality rate and child (1 to 5 years) mortality rate. Despite progress in the indicators and performance compared to South Asian counterparts, Sri Lanka is currently facing the risk of regression.

UNFPA Sri Lanka has placed a high priority on empowering women to make informed choices regarding their sexual and reproductive health, recognizing reproductive rights as essential human rights. The country's strong primary healthcare infrastructure and network have played a pivotal role in reducing infectious disease rates and maintained its status as the country with the best indicators in under-five mortality, and maternal and child health challenges. UNFPA, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and World Health Organization (WHO) partnered with civil society towards achieving the status of Elimination of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV and Syphilis in Sri Lanka.

With the assistance of UNFPA, the Youth Wellness Centre at the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo, was founded. The centre is designed to offer a holistic range of services to undergraduate students, encompassing nutritional health, psychosocial counselling, sexual and reproductive health information, menstrual health products and services, referrals for the prevention and response to GBV, food security and other relevant support services.

UNFPA conducted a comprehensive evaluation of digital CSE platforms in Sri Lanka against top-performing platforms in the region, laying the groundwork with effective digital platforms. This assessment has played a crucial role in developing and strengthening digital CSE platforms in collaboration with the government, civil society and the private sector. With young people increasingly turning to digital platforms for sexuality education, leveraging technology for education and service delivery is more vital than ever, especially as education systems adapt to post-pandemic challenges by integrating digital learning alongside traditional classroom methods.



498,552
women

reached community-level sexual and reproductive health services in humanitarian contexts.

2,475
health staff capacities

strengthened in HPV DNA testing, sexual and reproductive health service provision, cervical cancer testing, the Minimum Initial Service Package, emergency obstetric and neonatal care, mental health and psychosocial support, clinical management of rape, and supply chain management.

365
health facilities

in seven districts supported with essential medicines, and commodities.

325
police officers

sensitized on adolescent sexual and reproductive health, laws and policies to improve rights-based sexual and reproductive health service provision.

161
health workers

provided ICT to improve access for data collection.

34
youth-friendly centres

supported.

20
young peer educators

trained on social cohesion and sexual and reproductive health.

4,385
youth

capacitated and engaged in advocacy for social norm change, quality sexual and reproductive health, including family planning services, and promoting social cohesion.

1,770
healthcare workers

capacitated to deliver quality family planning services in districts with lower uptake of family planning.

1,372
public healthcare workers

capacitated in line with international standards to ensure a human rights-based approach to family planning in a nonjudgmental, youth-friendly, disability-inclusive and gender-responsive manner.

191
mobile clinics

and health outreach programmes established in nine districts.

149
healthcare workers

trained in clinical management of rape.





Prioritizing Maternal Safety

Maternal health services are lifesaving and essential. In 2023, UNFPA worked to enhance national and subnational capacities to deliver high-quality maternal health services for women, adolescents, and vulnerable groups particularly in regions with high maternal mortality rates. This included enhancing the skills of healthcare professionals and advocating for systems strengthening and data and evidence strengthening with digitalization.

A notable milestone was reached in the improvement of maternal and newborn health services with the creation of the National Bereavement Care Package. This comprehensive guideline furnishes evidence-based care pathways, delivering essential guidance to professionals engaged in providing bereavement care to parents and families. This will enable hospital staff to be trained to provide bereavement care services, which is critical for women and families following stillbirth or newborn deaths.

In partnership with the Sri Lanka Medical Association, Perinatal Society of Sri Lanka, and Menopause Society of Sri Lanka, UNFPA facilitated successful advocacy dialogues highlighting the significance of integrating sexual and reproductive health and justice into healthcare sectors. These dialogues tackled critical topics such as challenges in midlife fertility, women's ability to make choices, and addressing gaps in disability during pregnancy. The dialogues indicated a need for increased investment and domestic resource mobilization for sexual and reproductive health to achieve universal health coverage, innovative strategies to focus on

client-centred rights-based care, services to cater for and be accessible to different users, all health services to be accessible to women living with disabilities, and inclusive healthcare practices. The dialogues recognized the intersectionality of disability with other social identities, such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status.

In 2023, UNFPA endorsed the establishment of a data visualization system on maternal and neonatal death, marking a transition from the previous manual data entry system, to help vital policy and programme decision-making. The digitalization of the maternal and neonatal health information system, implemented in three districts – Puttalam, Kandy, and Batticaloa – plays a crucial role in monitoring shifts in maternal and neonatal health levels and coverage. Through the support aimed at strengthening the capabilities of healthcare personnel, UNFPA actively contributes to expanding the pool of skilled professionals dedicated towards ensuring safer motherhood.

UNFPA enhanced youth-friendly centres and trained service providers to strengthen health services for young people. An assessment of 18 hospital-based Yowun Piyasa centres pinpointed service gaps and capacity issues, leading to recommendations for improvements with UNFPA's guidance. Additionally, 325 individuals from law enforcement agencies in Badulla, Ampara, Colombo, Gampaha and Kalutara Districts received comprehensive training on adolescent sexual and reproductive health to eliminate legal barriers faced by health workers providing contraceptives and sexual and reproductive health services to young people. These sensitization sessions are crucial as they address knowledge gaps and misconceptions, empowering police officers to support unmarried youth in accessing contraceptives and healthcare, thereby reducing stigma and improving access to services.



108
health workers and
peer educators

capacitated to provide comprehensive STI and HIV information and services.

455
healthcare workers

trained in comprehensive maternal health services.

325
officers

in law enforcement agencies were trained on adolescent sexual and reproductive health.

34
youth-friendly centres

supported with infrastructure development and capacity building.

07
referral level
healthcare facilities

strengthened to provide comprehensive maternal health services.



Creating Secure Environments for Women, Girls and Marginalized Groups

Gender-based violence represents one of the most prevalent human rights violations. In 2023, UNFPA collaborated with the social and health systems to enhance response and prevention of GBV and ensure the health, safety, and protection of survivors. UNFPA amplified its efforts to enhance mechanisms and capacities of national and community level stakeholders to challenge discriminatory gender and social norms, specifically sensitizing faith based organizations, the National Youth Services Council and media as key influencers at the community level.

A noteworthy milestone in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment was the launch of the National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment on International Women's Day, led by the Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment with technical support by UNFPA. This policy offers comprehensive guidance for both national entities and civil society organisations dedicated to advancing the rights of women, girls, and marginalized communities. Additionally, it serves as a crucial advocacy document for securing increased national-level funding to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Continuing the efforts to strengthen both social and health systems, UNFPA collaborated with the Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment, Women's Parliamentary Caucus, and the input from civil society to develop three landmark bills on gender equality, women's empowerment and the establishment of an independent national commission of women.

In 2023, UNFPA Sri Lanka stepped up its efforts on prevention and laid the foundation by convening 91 government and non-government stakeholders for a national level workshop on identifying pathways to challenge gender and social norms, and were supplemented by community-level sensitization on GBV with the engagement of faith-based organizations, youth councils, and media representatives. This comprehensive approach empowered 249 gatekeepers and young individuals to enhance their capacity to address GBV at the community level. Formative research studies conducted in two districts supported the development of contextualized training modules. These modules are designed to be evidence-based and tailored to address local needs effectively. Contributing to the evidence base on prevention, 399 men and boys were reached together with civil society partner Foundation for Innovative Social Development (FISD) in four districts to have dialogues on change promoting inclusivity, and safe spaces to share life experiences to break power dynamics that influence inequality.

A total of 278 stakeholders representing the Legal Aid Commission, the Human Rights Commission and the Office on Missing Persons from Vauvniya and Jaffna, were reached to build capacity on gender sensitive reparations and case management.

Together, these initiatives play a pivotal role in catalyzing positive societal changes in gender equality, women's empowerment, and the prevention of GBV, operating at both policy and community spheres.



553
individuals

reached via social norm activities.

39
community leaders

selected for training of trainers.

500
community members

sensitized on gender and social norms.

05
community-led interventions

for GBV prevention, engaging community, women rights organisations, religious leaders and youth.



Living in the Data Age: Navigating Everyday Insights

In 2023, UNFPA efforts to address the changing population dynamics focused on enhancing the national capacity to produce, analyse, distribute, and leverage disaggregated population data to formulate inclusive, rights-based, and gender-transformative development policies.

Commencing the formulation of the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics in Sri Lanka (SLSDS) represents a significant milestone in enhancing the country's capacity to generate, analyse, and disseminate population data. UNFPA Sri Lanka's high-level advocacy efforts with key officials, including the State Minister of Finance, Secretary to the Treasury, and Director General of the Department of National Planning, effectively positioned the development of the national statistical system as crucial for the government's commitment to a modern digital economy, particularly in the current socioeconomic landscape. A roadmap for SLSDS development was drafted as the first step, with implementation set for 2024 led by the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) with the technical support of UNFPA and the World Bank.

UNFPA contributed to strengthening data dissemination through the provision of technical guidance for the development of the census dashboard and conducting capacity-building sessions for DCS staff on data anonymization methods. As a result, DCS is poised to implement new methods aimed at enhancing microdata dissemination in the future. UNFPA also strengthened the capacity of DCS, National Planning Department and the University of

Colombo to produce national and sub-national level population projections through training on population projection methodology. This support has enabled DCS to collaborate with the National Planning Department and the University of Colombo to produce population projections using the population census data.

Addressing gaps in knowledge and evidence was prioritised by UNFPA, through the collaboration with the Center for Ageing Studies and academics from the University of Colombo, which led to the creation of two reports: one focusing on the effects of COVID-19 and the economic downturn on fertility, and another examining the status of older individuals. These reports are poised to shape policy discussions regarding pressing matters such as declining fertility rates and population ageing.

Through official collaboration with United Nations agencies and civil society organizations, two policy briefs addressing crucial issues were developed. The first policy brief focuses on the impact of El Nino on women and girls, with the goal of advocating for gender-sensitive preparedness and response efforts. The second issue brief on gender and climate advocates for the incorporation of a gender lens and a gender-responsive framework for climate action in national policies, contributing to transformative policy reform.



The Government of Sri Lanka through DCS is preparing to conduct the Population and Housing Census in 2024, which is an immense national undertaking to count every citizen and collect vital socioeconomic data to inform and shape the country's democracy, public policy and distribution of resources based on needs. It also supports monitoring demographic and social change over time. UNFPA's support for the census ensured the continuity of the preparation for conducting the census amidst the challenges faced by the government due to the ongoing economic crisis.



Navigating the Frontlines in Challenging Times





“

Our family doesn't have something to call a secure income every day, because my husband doesn't have a permanent job. He is a daily wage worker, and when he does get called in for various jobs, the income is very little. It's difficult going by each day, not knowing whether he will be able to earn some money every day. Due to this uncertainty, we find it difficult to plan and manage our expenses. We live in a very small house, which is barely enough space for our family of five.

My daughter, Ishini* is very eager to learn and is doing well in school, but I feel upset to think that she doesn't have all she needs to have for her education. They don't even have a study table and are very careful about their writing books as well, to make sure they don't waste any pages.

”

- Jayanthi

Jayanthi*, 33, is a mother of three who lives with her husband, Nalin* in a village in the Ratnapura District, located in the Sabaragamuwa Province of Sri Lanka. Her husband, Nalin*, is a daily wage worker and the main breadwinner of their family. When he has work, he earns approximately LKR 1,000 per day (\$3). As Sri Lanka was spun into its worst economic crisis in 2022, Nalin* has not had much work since last year and therefore has not been able to earn a stable income to support his family. Unfortunately, 10 years ago Nalin* was also involved in a motor accident that permanently affected his ability to work, after undergoing a knee surgery.

With these difficult conditions, Jayanthi* and her family have had to manage their expenses with what little they have, which meant foregoing certain needs. With two school-going children, a daughter, Ishini* who is 13 years old and son, Omith* who is 7 years old, many crucial needs arise, relating to their nutrition, education and health. On most days, Jayanthi* prepares two vegetable curries and rice for their meals, but since the crisis, they cannot afford to include protein in their diet anymore. The economic crisis was not kind to expectant mothers like Jayanthi*; many lacked the financial means and support to ensure a safe pregnancy and family planning.

In Sri Lanka, UNFPA in partnership with Save the Children supported Jayanthi* by providing cash support. At the time, she was pregnant with her third child, she was experiencing a few complications as she suffers from pre-existing high blood pressure and was unable to access the required healthcare during this challenging time. The closest hospital is located in Ratnapura town, which is approximately 18 kms away from her home, and therefore transport costs her LKR 5,000 (\$15) for a single trip to the hospital and back, and this is a significant expense. Her inability to visit the clinic and do her scans posed a risk to her pregnancy.

While Jayanthi* was able to safely deliver her baby, even though he was three weeks premature, she is still grappling with many difficulties in her everyday life. From worrying about their daily meals, children's education, her newborn baby's health and her own, she has been feeling overwhelmed and helpless.

With the cash assistance she received from UNFPA's humanitarian response programme, Jayanthi* was able to purchase the medicines she requires, which are crucial to her health as a new and lactating mother to a newborn baby.

“

Hearing about this programme from the Divisional Secretariat office, where pregnant mothers facing difficulties were receiving cash assistance was truly a blessing. With the LKR 10,000 (\$30) cash support we received, I was able to finally get the necessary treatment and medicine for my high blood pressure, and visit the hospital to complete my scans, especially since it was causing a risk to my pregnancy. During this time when my husband didn't have much work as well, the cash we received was a huge help.

”

- Jayanthi



Responding to the pressing requirements during Sri Lanka's recovery phase, the humanitarian initiatives supported by funding from donors and implementing partners on the ground, underlining the critical aspects of sexual and reproductive health and GBV services.

The programme is aligned with UNFPA Sri Lanka's Humanitarian Response Strategy and Plan and the Humanitarian Needs and Priorities Plan, targeting communities in Jaffna, Mullaitivu, Batticaloa, Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Puttalam, Anuradhapura, Galle, Gampaha, Ratnapura, Monaragala, Ampara and Colombo.

The humanitarian response included system strengthening for integrated and increased availability and accessibility of sexual and reproductive health services, strengthening

grassroot healthcare, supporting at-risk individuals, responding to the needs of women and girls during disasters with the provision of maternity and dignity kits, supply of essential drugs and contraceptives, capacity building and training, strengthening maternal healthcare units, shelter enhancement, establishing one-stop centres, and emergency waiting areas.

By ensuring the availability of high quality sexual and reproductive healthcare to create a comprehensive support system that respects the dignity and rights of women, girls and other at-risk groups and the provision of essential life-saving sexual and reproductive health drugs, contraceptives and medical equipment, UNFPA has reached 527,798 individuals across nine districts.

\$1,917,430

distributed to 50,691 marginalized individuals in nine districts through CVA.

336,480
individuals

reached with medical equipment, drugs, commodities and supplies.

11,039
individuals,

including women and girls, reached via mobile clinics.

21,000
kits

6000 maternity kits, 6000 dignity kits | 9,000 adolescent kits procured for distribution

1,465
pregnant women

empowered with knowledge on maternal danger signals during pregnancy.

1,050
kits

1000 dignity kits and 50 maternity kits distributed as part of the flood response efforts in the Southern Province.

239
healthcare workers

reached through seven mental health and psychosocial support services sessions.

181
mobile clinics

conducted.



954
midwives,

public health inspectors, and other healthcare workers were provided with knowledge and skills on basic sexual and reproductive health and maternal and child health. These extensive training efforts have not only expanded the reach of services, but has also made service delivery at the grassroots level more efficient.

588

women development officers,

nursing officers, police officers, counselling officers, probation officers, public health midwives, and public health inspectors were trained on case management.

105

healthcare professionals

received emergency obstetric and neonatal care refresher training.

100

healthcare workers

were trained on clinical management of rape.

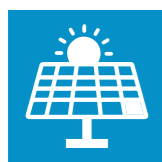
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mental health and psychosocial support services sessions

were conducted for 239 healthcare workers.



Medicines, Commodities, Essential Services



Powering systems with solar

The installation of a solar power system for the contraceptives and drugs stores at the Family Health Bureau is a crucial step to ensure uninterrupted power supply. This enhancement not only facilitates efficient storage but also safeguards against potential disruptions, especially benefiting the most vulnerable populations. The installation of the solar system is in progress and will be handed over to the facility in late February.

UNFPA initiated the installation of solar power units in maternal and neonatal units at Nuwara Eliya District General Hospital and Puttalam Base Hospital to address power supply challenges, particularly during frequent power failures in the recovery phase. These units aim to reduce maternal mortality rates by ensuring reliable power for essential medical equipment used in childbirth and routine procedures.

The initiative aligns with UNFPA's commitment to sustainable solutions and benefits marginalized women, including estate workers. Additionally, UNFPA supplied essential medical drugs and equipment, including continuous positive airway pressure machines and ultrasound scanners, to maternal clinics in rural hospitals and MOH Offices across seven districts. The provision of these vital medical resources enhances childbirth safety, reduces child and maternal mortality, and improves access to modern contraceptive family planning methods.



Health on Wheels: An opportunity to reach the most at-risk

The deployment of three innovative electric mobile women's health units reflects UNFPA's commitment to enhancing accessibility to essential healthcare services. The introduction of mobile 'Health on Wheels' units provides a mobile and flexible platform for delivering health services, reaching remote or marginalized communities where healthcare infrastructure may be lacking. The innovative nature of electric mobile health units can attract attention and engagement, potentially reaching a larger number of women who might otherwise not seek or have access to health services.

The mobile unit/clinic provides gynaecological medical examination, integrated management of neonatal illness, screening facilities for gynaecological cancers, reproductive healthcare services and vaccination of women in reproductive age groups in the hard to reach isolated vulnerable populations, and can also be mobilized to different areas of the country during a crisis when health service accessibility is limited.



Continuous support for family planning in low-prevalence areas.

441,334 combined low-dose oral contraceptive pills, 85,330 male standard and flavoured male condoms, 63,000 non-hormonal and 71,000 hormonal IUDs were distributed through the humanitarian programme. In addition, 900 HIV test kits, 300 syphilis test kits, 1,500 magnesium sulphate vials, and 20 mini-autoclaves were distributed. The test kits assist in improving diagnostic capacity in the healthcare system, while the mini-autoclaves ensure support for grassroots health care units like MOHs to deliver specialised care. In addition, to augment the screening and diagnostic capacities of major laboratories, six Biosafety Class II Cabinets, six ELISA washers and six ELISA readers along with six microscope cameras have been brought down and distributed to national reference laboratories on HIV/AIDS and STIs. Through the delivery of these items, we have supported 336,480 individuals.



Health outreach and mobile clinics

The co-creation and delivery of health outreach programmes with the grassroots level public health institutions of the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka (FPASL), demonstrate a commitment to increasing access to sexual and reproductive health and maternal and child health services. Collaborating with provincial and regional health authorities, Ministry of Health officers, and other stakeholders, 181 clinics, providing 49,196 services for 8,224 individuals in the Central, Eastern, Western and Southern districts were conducted.





Standing Firm Against Violence: A Zero Tolerance Approach

A safe space with essential services

The Establishment of seven Emergency Waiting Areas (EWAs) at the Women and Children's Desks in selected Police Stations within seven localities aim to address the most critical issue in providing secure havens for the survivors of gender-based violence, particularly women and children, ensuring their safety, privacy, confidentiality and provision of essential services. These areas offer immediate refuge and support services, alleviating the absence of safe spaces during nighttime arrivals at police stations.

Supporting survivors

Informed by extensive shelter capacity assessments, UNFPA is continuing to support the capacity and infrastructure development of shelters in Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Jaffna, Mullaitivu, Anuradhapura, Ratnapura and Monaragala. Accordingly, shelter infrastructure improvements and minor internal renovations of the Ratnapura shelter to enhance the security of the survivors are already completed, with Kandy (expansion of maternity section at the Women's Development Centre shelter) and Anuradhapura (expansion of kitchen facility and bathrooms, and installing handrails to make the shelter disability-friendly) expected to be completed by mid January.

Efforts are in progress to establish one-stop centres, a novel concept in service delivery where GBV survivors receive comprehensive care, including medical, psychological, legal, and social services, all under one roof.

The one-stop centre in Marawila, located in the Puttalam District, aims to provide integrated services for pregnant and lactating mothers, women of reproductive age, and GBV survivors. It offers temporary shelter facilities, recognizing the complex emotional, social, medical, and legal needs of survivors. This model caters to the most marginalized women, offering sexual and reproductive health, maternal and child health, psychosocial support, medico-legal assistance, and rehabilitation services.





Fostering Strength and Resilience



Training for first responders to deliver essential services

Capacity building of healthcare staff, volunteers and others through a series of trainings namely: national emergency obstetric and neonatal care, Minimal Initial Service Package, clinical management of rape, mental health and psychosocial support, and introduction to case management, has strengthened their capacities to reach and address the specific sexual and reproductive health and GBV needs among women, girls and people with disabilities at the community level. 1,745 healthcare workers and individuals were trained to deliver essential services for women, girls, young people and communities.



National-level assessment

The ongoing national emergency obstetric and neonatal care needs assessment underscores UNFPA's dedication to informed decision-making. The findings from this assessment will play a pivotal role in identifying and prioritising key areas of improvement for emergency obstetric and neonatal care, contributing to the overall enhancement of maternal and neonatal health outcomes in the selected provinces. By supporting this assessment we are strengthening the healthcare delivery system for emergency obstetric and neonatal care.





Cash voucher distribution

Cash and voucher assistance has played a crucial role in supporting the health and protection needs of women and girls amidst the humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka. In collaboration with Save the Children, UNFPA provided a one-time cash distribution of LKR 10,000 to 50,691 marginalized individuals in 9 districts, including Anuradhapura, Puttalam, Gampaha, Galle, Mullaitivu, Kandy, Batticaloa, Monaragala, and Ratnapura. In total, \$1,917,430 cash was distributed among at-risk individuals across the country. The cash assistance:

- 1 Allowed 9,923 pregnant women, 9,439 persons with disabilities, and women-headed households to access sexual and reproductive health and maternal and child health services and purchase needed health-related items;
- 2 Provided a much needed boost in access to GBV services and coverage of individual needs, and help reducing the risk of GBV, for women and girls at risk of GBV. In addition, training was conducted to enhance the capabilities of 97 project volunteers systematically and safely managing referrals while interacting with at-risk communities.



Kit distribution

The strategic distribution of 6,000 maternity kits, 6,000 dignity kits and 9,000 adolescents kits has emerged as a significant support for pregnant mothers, women and girls facing challenges in accessing essential commodities for their basic needs. Each meticulously curated kit comprises vital components, including infant hygiene items, sanitary supplies for mothers, information, education and communication materials, referral helplines, and warnings about maternal danger signs. The comprehensive provision of these maternity kits has demonstrated an impact in mitigating the risk of maternal mortalities linked to unclean deliveries and the oversight of danger signs. By directly addressing critical needs and imparting essential information, this activity contributes to improving maternal health outcomes within vulnerable communities.

UNFPA Sri Lanka responded to the flood response efforts in the Southern Province by providing 1,000 dignity kits and 50 maternity kits, in collaboration with the Ministry of Women, Child Affairs, and Social Empowerment.



Faces of Hope: Chronicles of Courage and Compassion



“With COVID-19 and the economic crisis, women are the most impacted and are struggling to make ends meet. Many women are only eating one meal a day and they face higher incidences of domestic violence. Women sometimes want to consume poison to escape their suffering. What we are trying to do through the safe house is to save a human life.”

Thisaranee runs the Women's Resource Center in Monaragala. She says the cases she encounters can sometimes be extreme

The economic crisis in Sri Lanka has been a brutal extension of the economic downturn of COVID-19. The twin crises created conditions where the most marginalized people across the country were at even greater risk. With money scarce and fuel and food expensive, women's needs for medicine or even clinic visits were left unmet during the prolonged emergency.

Things have improved since the acute stage of June 2022, but for many in Sri Lanka, life remains a daily struggle to survive. The UNFPA humanitarian response targeted groups like pregnant mothers, adolescent girls, older persons and persons with disabilities. The support, like dignity kits with essential hygiene and sanitary items to get them through the crisis or cash vouchers give people choices in difficult circumstances. The projects delivered through partners on the ground helps people maintain their dignity and make sure they can access healthcare even in the most remote communities.



Dhammika is 21 and she has two children. She works in the tea plantations in Nuwara Eliya. She earns LKR 1,000 (\$1.50) a day only if she harvests over 20kg of tea leaves. The conditions are dangerous, on steep muddy tracks with cold, windy conditions a regular part of the job. She got a dignity kit as part of the humanitarian response. She says it helped her with essential hygiene items that she otherwise couldn't afford.



“When the global pandemic happened, the economy in these areas completely collapsed and was further compounded by the economic crisis. With inflation, people can no longer afford meals. Parents cannot afford to send children to school. This has contributed to increasing problems between couples. Women are facing a lot of issues in the community. The response to the crisis has given us knowledge to help ourselves and the women in our communities face their challenges.”

Susila is a peer leader at the Women's Resource Centre in Monaragala.

Shivakumar works with the Family Planning Association Sri Lanka (FPASL) in Nuwara Eliya in central Sri Lanka. For the last twelve years, he has been delivering sexual and reproductive health services to the women and girls working on tea plantations. The mountainous district covers a huge area where bad weather and dangerous roads make the mobile health clinics he leads extremely challenging. As part of UNFPA's humanitarian response to the ongoing economic crisis, Shiva and his team at FPASL have been increasing the mobile health workshops they deliver as the needs of women and girls are even more urgent in the ongoing crisis.

“With the economic crisis after COVID-19, the prices of the goods increased and marginalized groups in communities where I work were just unable to handle it, We know many families that have only one meal a day. We saw how their lives changed after COVID-19; economic issues have affected their health.”

Shiva says most women, especially pregnant mothers “have serious malnutrition. People face issues in their lives and they do not have enough money for healthy food.”



Chandrathilaka works at the Women's Resource Centre in Kandy. The centre is a key partner to deliver a range of support for women and marginalized groups in the community. From women's collectives that promote economic empowerment to a multi-year school for children with disabilities, the centre has been driven by the needs of its members.

Chandralatha is from Galle. She is 75 years old and during the crisis she received a dignity kit that was specially adapted for older people. In an economy where many earn less than LKR 400(\$1.2) a day, the contents of the kit can cost up to 19,000 rupees depending on the content and contain items most older people could not afford. She described her relief at having clean white sheets from the kit when she was admitted to the hospital earlier this year. Receiving the kit was also the first time in her life that she ever owned her own towel.

“Their main concern is just daily survival so health matters are not their priority.”

Angalika Kumari is a counsellor supporting women and girls in Nuwara Eliya. She leads information sessions with teenage girls and pregnant mothers to help them access sexual and reproductive health services. She leads the sessions in Sinhalese and in Tamil, and handles taboo subjects like virginity, sex, and relationships with humour and trusted big-sister energy. She says GBV is a big problem in the plantations where she works. Her workshops always include the numbers girls can call to get protection from GBV.

“With this economic crisis within the country, many women have lost their jobs. Some of them have lost their small businesses. They are dealing with the high cost of raw materials. There are lots of connections in between them; there are issues within the family, maybe separation, sometimes domestic violence. That has a big impact on their lives.”





Embodying Inspiration: Turning Vision into Action



Collaborating for Commitments

Sri Lanka participates in the 7th Asian and Pacific Population Conference

The Asian and Pacific Population Conference (APPC) serves as a pivotal regional multilateral platform wherein nations converge to address critical population issues. It provides an invaluable opportunity for collective review of commitments, facilitating dialogue on population-related challenges, and fostering the exchange of innovative ideas, particularly as we approach the International Conference on Population and Development 2030.

At the 6th APPC convened in 2013, Sri Lanka, among other participating nations, pledged its commitment to the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development. This declaration articulates a rights-based, gender-sensitive, and non-discriminatory approach to population and development strategies, programmes, and policies for the ensuing decade. The 7th APPC stands as a testament to our collective resolve to prioritize population issues and work towards sustainable development and inclusive growth for all.

Organised by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in collaboration with UNFPA, the Seventh APPC convened from 15 to 17 November 2023. In the national statement for Sri Lanka, the country reaffirmed its commitments to:

- 1** Reduce preventable maternal mortality to 20 per 100,000 live births by 2030 by providing equitable services to vulnerable populations.
- 2** Enhance the Family Planning Programme by funding advocacy, capacity building, community empowerment, safe commodity distribution and sub-fertility services. We commit to meet the sexual and reproductive health needs of all population segments, especially the socially disadvantaged.



- 3** Develop policies and programmes to integrate population dynamics and climate action for sustainable development. Sri Lanka will invest in education, healthcare, skills development, inclusive economic growth, and climate adaptation and mitigation.
- 4** Prioritize comprehensive sexuality education, in order to empower youth to make educated decisions, prevent sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies, prevent GBV, and promote healthy and respectable attitudes.

- 5** Increase social services to address GBV and expand care for survivors through our Mithuru Piyasas. Further, discriminatory laws will be revised and repealed and social protection systems for marginalized people strengthened.
- 6** Ensure the country's economic and political decision-making processes are inclusive of, responsive to, and transformative for women and youth.

- 7** Strengthen South-South and triangular cooperation, facilitating the transfer of knowledge and technology and sharing of best practices, for addressing implementation challenges.



Youth-driven Transformation: Leaders of Change

Youth can be a positive force for development when provided with the knowledge and opportunities they need to thrive. UNFPA Sri Lanka engages with young people to support transformative change by harnessing the power of youth through strategic partnerships with youth-led initiatives and to encourage youth participation in advocacy and decision-making on issues affecting their health, well-being, and development.

UNFPA, in collaboration with its partners, successfully concluded the Social Cohesion and Sexual and Reproductive Health Training of Trainers in two additional districts this year. The programme empowered a cohort of 20 young peer educators, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively engage their communities. These youth leaders underwent comprehensive training aimed at enhancing their capacity to implement grassroots initiatives.

Following the training, these peer educators embarked on their own small grant projects which used arts, theatre, community dialogues and intergenerational work to challenge prevalent myths and misconceptions surrounding sexual and reproductive health and harmful gender norms. Through their innovative approaches, they actively contributed to breaking down barriers and promoting positive behavioural changes within their respective communities.

UNFPA Sri Lanka, in partnership with the Economics Students Association at the Department of Economics, University of Colombo, organized a tripartite competition engaging 350 participants from 17 state universities. This event served as a platform for young individuals to delve into crucial topics surrounding sexual and reproductive health and rights, acquainting them with available information and services. Moreover, the competition shed light on various dimensions of gender equality, including GBV, and their profound impact on the participants' health, well-being, and future prospects, creating a dialogue.



In a thrilling culmination, the University of Sabaragamuwa clinched victory in the grand final, prevailing over the University of Jaffna.



UNFPA Sri Lanka participated alongside various United Nations agencies in the 57th Annual Colombo Scout Camporee, which brought together nearly 5,000 scouts, club scouts, and Singithi scouts under the theme 'Leaders for a better tomorrow', focused on fostering dialogue and discussions concerning consent, relationships, decision-making, and life choices. It also aimed to offer information and referrals on sexual and reproductive health, GBV, and mental health to young people aged 15 to 24.





Partnerships, Communications and Advocacy





Partnerships and Collaboration

In the wake of unprecedented challenges, the first year of the 10th Country Programme of UNFPA Sri Lanka (2023-2027) laid a strong foundation in the journey towards Sri Lanka achieving the three transformative goals. marks a beacon of hope amidst adversity. As Sri Lanka traverses through the waves of economic collapse to a multidimensional humanitarian crisis and now towards recovery, the implementation of this programme stands as a testament to resilience and collective determination.

The focus on humanitarian response, a vital lifeline extended to those grappling with the aftermath of the crisis, saw concerted efforts and mobilized support, as the transition to recovery began to take shape. Within this landscape of challenges, UNFPA assumes a pivotal role, championing the cause of health and protection system strengthening, fostering resilience within communities, and advocating for inclusive governance processes. It is through these endeavours that the life-saving needs of women, girls, and other marginalized communities can be safeguarded in the short to medium term.

In collaboration with our long-standing donors and partners, UNFPA Sri Lanka is keen to foster a data driven culture and advocate for women's inclusion in decision-making in economic and political spheres. Amidst the climate related adversities, UNFPA Sri Lanka takes the lead in advocating for gender inclusive climate governance, triggering the energy and intellect of the youth. UNFPA is also committed to include women peace and security and women and youth participation in decision-making and social cohesion.

Strategic engagements were developed for both humanitarian and development interventions, with government, civil society, academia and the corporate sector. These organizations include World Vision, Save the Children, Sarvodaya, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo, Dialog, DP Education, Diversity Collective Lanka, SLYCAN Trust and Zonta Club. Collaborative partnerships with Prevention Collaborative and Equipundo for the prevention of GBV and social and gender norm change work and technical collaborations with the World Bank on the National Strategy for Developing Statistics were developed. Interagency partnerships and collaborations were strengthened with the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UN Women, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), International Organization for Migration (IOM), World Food Programme (WFP), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and UN Volunteers.



Investments and financing

UNFPA Sri Lanka is committed to advocating with governments and international financial institutions, such as multilateral banks, to prioritize investment in vital areas like gender equality, women's empowerment, and sexual and reproductive health. This strategic approach marks a significant shift in UNFPA's vision.

In line with this, UNFPA conducted a feasibility study to establish a South Asian Centre of excellence in collaboration with the University of Colombo. The functions of the proposed include research, capacity building, generating evidence for policy advocacy, sharing learning across the region, digital health innovation, fostering innovation to promote gender equality. Furthermore, UNFPA will actively engage with the private sector, aiming to incorporate UNFPA's Return on Investment Tool into its strategy to attract corporate investment. This initiative, dubbed 'Invest in Her', aims to emphasize the importance of investing in women's health and empowerment, thereby fostering sustainable development and inclusive growth.





Fashion for a Cause - UNFPA Bodyright Campaign

In a remarkable fusion of fashion and advocacy, Amilani Perera’s showcase at the 2023 Colombo Fashion Week illuminated the UNFPA Bodyright Campaign’s crucial message, centering on the impact of technology-facilitated GBV.

This groundbreaking collection not only captivated audiences with its creativity and style but also served as a powerful platform to amplify the voices of survivors.

The partnership between UNFPA Sri Lanka and Sri Lankan Fashion Brand Label Amilani Perera, forged in 2020, epitomizes the convergence of fashion and social change. Recognizing the significant presence of women in the apparel industry, from design to production and modelling, the collaboration aimed to address the pervasive issue of violence against women and girls.

Through this innovative partnership, Amilani Perera was introduced to the Women’s Development Centre in Kandy, an organization providing shelters and safe havens for survivors of violence. Here, survivors actively contributed to product development, lending their invaluable perspectives and experiences to the creative process.

Beyond product development, the partnership also facilitated mentoring programmes, empowering

survivors with enhanced design skills and fostering a supportive environment for their personal growth and development.

Building upon the success of this collaboration, UNFPA expanded its reach by joining forces with Colombo Fashion Week 2021. Together, they seized the opportunity to engage a broader audience in critical conversations surrounding GBV, with a special emphasis on intimate partner violence.

Through the transformative power of fashion and advocacy, this partnership has not only elevated the voices of survivors but has also catalyzed meaningful change within the industry and beyond. As fashion becomes a vehicle for social impact, the legacy of this collaboration serves as a testament to the enduring power of solidarity, creativity, and compassion.



Staging Change: Theater as a Tool Against Gender-Based Violence

In an effort to bolster response and prevention measures against GBV, a campaign was launched, focusing on community mobilization and engagement. Recognizing the barriers posed by technological limitations and geographical remoteness, the campaign strategically targeted individuals and families who are often inaccessible through traditional means.

At its core, the campaign emphasized the imperative of preventing GBV and rallied men and boys to take proactive roles in ending such atrocities. Central to its mission was the illumination of prevailing harmful norms and attitudes that fuel GBV, advocating for a collective shift towards equality and respect.

This ambitious initiative made significant strides, reaching 300,000 individuals across 32 locations throughout the island. Through dynamic forum theatre performances and a robust media campaign, the message of empowerment and support resonated far and wide.



A key focus of the campaign was to raise awareness about available referrals and services for survivors of GBV, particularly targeting women and girls in rural communities. Simultaneously, efforts were directed towards engaging men and boys, enlightening them about their pivotal roles in eradicating and preventing GBV.



Furthermore, the campaign prioritized the empowerment of school-aged girls and boys, instilling in them the values of gender equality and fostering a generation of changemakers. Importantly, it also shed light on the scourge of technology-facilitated GBV, providing crucial information and support services to those affected.

Through concerted action and unwavering dedication, this campaign exemplifies a beacon of hope in the fight against GBV. Its impact reverberates across communities, igniting conversations, fostering empathy, and paving the way towards a future free from violence and discrimination.





Act Now to End Violence Against Women and Girls

In 2023, the UNiTE campaign emphasized the theme: 'Invest to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls'. This powerful message underscores the crucial need to allocate resources towards various prevention strategies, aiming to halt violence before it takes root.

This year's campaign theme is not only a call to action but also a strategic alignment with the 2024 priority theme of the Commission on the Status of Women. With a shared focus on accelerating gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, the emphasis lies on tackling poverty, strengthening institutions, and financing through a gender lens.

To mark this significant initiative, United Nations Sri Lanka, led by UNFPA Sri Lanka, with the Government of Sri Lanka, orchestrated a momentous event on 30 November 2023. Under the theme 'Act Now to End Violence Against Women and Girls', a walk was organized, serving as a poignant reminder of the urgency to eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls.

ENCE AGAINST
ENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE IS
ENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE

#NOEXCUSE4VIOLENCE



The objective of this gathering was clear: to amplify advocacy efforts, striving to eliminate every manifestation of violence while actively implementing measures to prevent GBV. Through collective action and unwavering commitment, the event with over 300 participants across international organizations, government, civil society, private sector and public, symbolised a steadfast resolve to create a world where every woman and girl can live free from fear and violence.



Encouraging Thoughtful Dialogue - Winner of Effie Awards 2022

In 2022, under the Government of Japan funded 'PROMISES' campaign, UNFPA Sri Lanka joined hands with the Sri Lanka College Of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Institute of Participatory Development, to deliver the media campaign 'A well thought decision'. The campaign focused on family planning and sexual and reproductive health.

The campaign stood out proudly among the nominees at the prestigious Effie Awards 2022, shining a light on advocacy and education, non-profit and social good, and disease control. This recognition celebrates the campaign's remarkable effectiveness in sparking positive change as Sri Lanka faced the multidimensional crises in 2022.

At its core, the campaign aimed to cultivate an environment conducive to transforming perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours among individuals of reproductive age. Its primary mission was to introduce the concept of family planning and underscore the importance of planned, desired, and healthy pregnancies.

The campaign also focused on providing sexual and reproductive education for youth, including people with disabilities, and the role of men in family planning and decision-making.



With a laser focus on raising awareness about sexual and reproductive health choices, the campaign championed the benefits of modern contraceptives. The campaign also focused on providing CSE for young people.

More than just a campaign, it ignited vital conversations on sub-fertility, fostering meaningful engagement and support for young individuals' healthy lifestyles. The campaign addressed the misconception regarding family planning that often excludes consideration of sub-fertility, which emphasizes the importance of achieving the desired number of children with the desired space. It courageously addressed socio political and religious sentiments, navigating a complex landscape with sensitivity and resilience.

Utilizing a multi-pronged approach, the campaign deployed diverse tools and techniques to drive behavioural change effectively. Its holistic strategy was a testament to its commitment to empowering individuals and communities with knowledge and choice.

In the tapestry of impactful initiatives, this campaign stands tall, embodying the spirit of progress and transformation. Its legacy will endure, shaping a future where every individual has the agency to make informed decisions about their reproductive health and well-being.

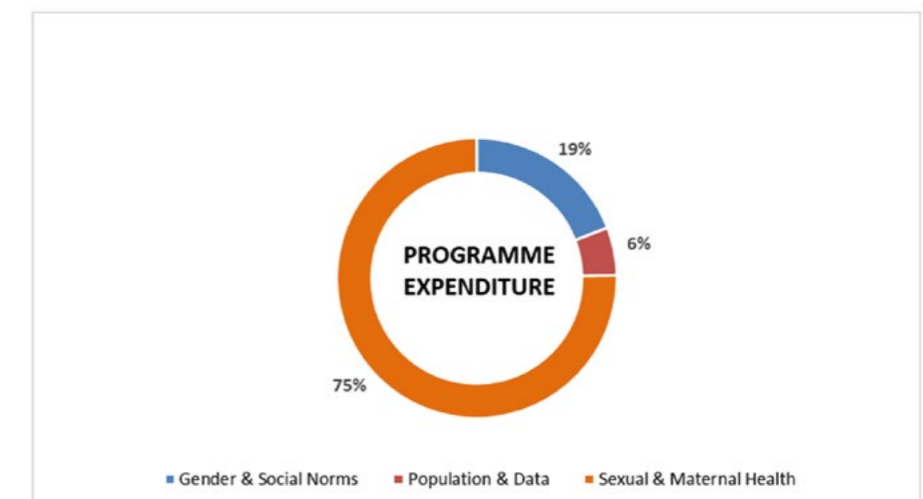
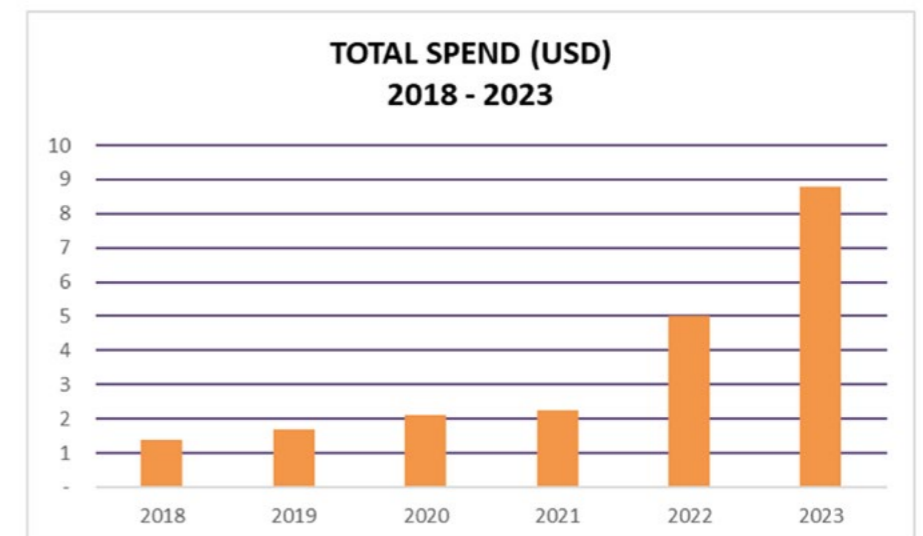
The campaign won three awards for this campaign; Social Good: Brands, Non Profit; Disease Awareness and Education Advocacy; and, Non-Profit/Pro-bono public service.



Through strategic partnerships and resource mobilisation efforts, the UNFPA Country Office in Sri Lanka successfully secured essential funding for the inaugural year of its 10th Country Programme. The tangible outcomes of these endeavours became evident in 2023, with co-financing exceeding USD \$11 million, surpassing predetermined targets effortlessly.

This notable accomplishment was primarily attributed to the adept mobilisation of funds by the Country Office through the Humanitarian Response Plan initiated by UNFPA Sri Lanka in direct response to the socio-economic crisis.

The steadfast generosity of our donors and support from implementing partners has enabled us to deliver vital assistance to women and girls affected by the crisis, propelling us closer to realising UNFPA's ambitious goals of achieving zero maternal deaths, zero unmet need for family planning, and zero gender-based violence.



Financial Snapshot

5



Thank You to our esteemed Donors and Partners

We extend our deepest gratitude to our esteemed funders and partners for their invaluable support in advancing UNFPA Sri Lanka's mission to improve the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women, girls, young people, and key populations. Your unwavering commitment and contributions make a lasting impact on the lives of countless individuals, empowering them to lead healthier, more fulfilling lives. Together, we are creating a brighter and more equitable future for all. Thank you for standing with us in this vital endeavour.

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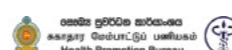
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