



BRIEFING NOTE FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR

HUMANITARIAN PRIORITIES PLAN: CYCLONE DITWAH

DECEMBER 2025

Photo: UNICEF Sri Lanka

PEOPLE AFFECTED

2.2 million

PEOPLE IN NEED

1.2 million

NUMBER OF PEOPLE TARGETED

658 thousand

REQUIREMENTS (US\$)

\$35.3 million

CRISIS OVERVIEW

Sri Lanka experienced massive flooding following heavy rains brought on by Cyclone Ditwah, leading to the worst flood disaster in two decades.

Torrential rains, landslides, and severe flooding swept across all 25 districts of the country, with 22 districts formally being declared “National Disaster Affected Areas”, disrupting essential services, damaging infrastructure, and affecting nearly two million people. Hundreds of lives were lost and many remain unaccounted for.

Over 200 severe landslides damaged or destroyed around 87,000 houses, with 5,325 fully damaged and more than 81,000 partially damaged across multiple districts. Infrastructure damage is severe: only 30 per cent of the rail network is operational, bridges and roads are damaged, electricity outages affected 3.9 million consumers (85 per cent restored), and water supply to more than 2.5 million people was disrupted. Public health risks remain elevated due to stagnant water, overcrowded shelters, and disrupted sanitation.

On 29 November, the President declared a nationwide State of Emergency and requested immediate humanitarian assistance across food security, water, sanitation, and hygiene, shelter, agriculture, nutrition, education, livelihoods, and early recovery.

The United Nations in Sri Lanka released the Humanitarian Priorities Plan for Cyclone Ditwah. In support of Government-led relief efforts, humanitarian partners are scaling up lifesaving and life-sustaining assistance.

What are humanitarian clusters?

Humanitarian clusters are groups of organizations working in the main sectors of humanitarian action – for example, providing shelter, promoting food security, or ensuring access to water, sanitation, and hygiene.

The [Humanitarian Priorities Plan for Cyclone Ditwah](#) is organized around sectors including education, food security, agriculture, nutrition, health, protection, shelter, water and sanitation, and early recovery.

ACCESSING RELIABLE, ACCURATE, AND UP-TO-DATE DATA AND INFORMATION

Access to trustworthy and timely data and information is the key to effective humanitarian response, ensuring that affected people and responding organizations alike can target their efforts precisely, allocate resources efficiently, and respond promptly to urgent needs.

ReliefWeb Response is a specialised digital service from OCHA that aggregates information from multiple trusted sources and platforms to provide an authoritative source of knowledge in humanitarian emergencies to facilitate situational understanding and decision-making. Visit the ReliefWeb [Tropical Cyclone Ditwah emergency page](#) for the latest situation reports, flash updates, maps, infographics, and more.

The [Flash Updates by the United Nations in Sri Lanka](#) summarize key developments as well as relief operation highlights.

HOW THE PRIVATE SECTOR CAN HELP

Local, regional, and global businesses and private foundations have long played a critical role in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies. This is not surprising – businesses of every size have a clear interest in making themselves more resilient to disasters, and a clear desire to support their customers, employees, and suppliers during times of crisis. The United Nations encourages the private sector to engage as a partner in humanitarian response, and OCHA has established a dedicated Private Sector Unit to provide neutral advice and facilitate public-private partnerships and collaboration.

Resources for Local and Regional Businesses

The **Connecting Business initiative** (CBI) is a joint programme established by [United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA) and the [United Nations Development Programme](#) (UNDP) to partner with local businesses to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. CBI's Member Networks are independent chambers of commerce and business federations that are ready, willing, and able to lead local private sector engagement and collaboration in humanitarian emergencies.

The [Asia Pacific Alliance for Disaster Management Sri Lanka \(A-PAD SL\)](#) is CBI's member network in the country, working closely with national authorities, the Disaster Management Centre, and the private sector to strengthen disaster preparedness and response. Businesses affected by Cyclone Ditwah or wishing to support humanitarian relief efforts are encouraged to coordinate with A-PAD SL to ensure assistance is channeled effectively. For more information, contact info@apad.lk or connectingbusiness@un.org.

CBI also maintains an [online portal for Cyclone Ditwah](#) consolidating information and resources for global, regional, and local businesses.



1 MAKE A FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION

Financial contributions to reputable aid agencies are one of the most valuable and effective forms of help during humanitarian emergencies. For information on trusted humanitarian organizations operating on the front lines of the Cyclone Ditwah response, please write to OCHAPrivateSector@un.org.

- The [UN Central Emergency Response Fund](#) (CERF), which marks its 20th anniversary this year, remains one of the fastest and most effective mechanisms for delivering urgent humanitarian assistance to people affected by crises. Established by the UN General Assembly in 2005, CERF enables rapid, life-saving response whenever and wherever emergencies occur. In support of relief efforts following Cyclone Ditwah, [CERF has allocated US\\$4.5 million to bolster immediate humanitarian operations in Sri Lanka](#).
- The [United Nations Development Programme in Sri Lanka](#) has launched the next iteration of its [Giving Facility for Flood Relief and Livelihoods Support](#) to mobilize fast, transparent assistance for affected communities. The Facility offers a trusted platform for partners to support immediate livelihoods relief, early recovery, and long-term resilience, building on a previous phase that mobilized over USD 6 million and assisted more than 275,000 people through medical and livelihoods support. Support packages include cash-for-work initiatives, micro-grants for affected entrepreneurs, market and agricultural asset restoration, and climate-resilient reconstruction aligned with Government coordination and strong financial safeguards.
- The [A-PAD SL](#) has activated its emergency response to support communities affected by Cyclone Ditwah, mobilizing trained Search and Rescue teams, volunteers, and private sector partners to deliver life-saving assistance and essential relief supplies. In coordination with national authorities and local partners, A-PAD SL is supporting rescue operations, food and water distribution, and immediate relief for flood-affected households. Businesses and individuals wishing to contribute financially may refer to the [A-PAD SL Cyclone Ditwah response page](#) for donation instructions and further details.

2 MAKE AN IN-KIND CONTRIBUTION OF GOODS OR SERVICES

While humanitarian aid is urgently needed, OCHA urges donors to refrain from sending unsolicited in-kind donations that may not correspond to identified needs or meet international quality standards. Donors are highly encouraged to send cash rather than in-kind donations.

In-kind donations are useful when they meet a pre-identified need on the ground for which supply through other means (procurement, prepositioned stock, logistics) is not available. In other circumstances they may not fit needs, can potentially be administratively burdensome (placing demands on thinly stretched emergency personnel), and may undermine local markets (where local supply is available).

The [Rapid Needs Assessment](#) led by the [Disaster Management Center of Sri Lanka](#) identifies immediate in-kind needs in **food security and agriculture** (including dry rations and essential food items), as well as urgent **shelter, WASH, and health supplies**, such as temporary shelter materials, hygiene items, safe drinking water, and basic medical supplies, driven by damaged water systems, impaired health facilities, disrupted markets, and overcrowded safety centres.

If you wish to make an in-kind contribution of goods or services, please email OCHAPrivateSector@un.org. Provide as much detail as possible, including the item(s) and quantities you wish to donate, the estimated market value, time frame for delivery, shipping details, and any other conditions.

Please Report Your Contributions to OCHA

If your company or foundation is providing cash or in-kind contributions to any humanitarian organization responding to Cyclone Ditwah, or if your organization is directly involved in delivering assistance, you are strongly encouraged to share this information with OCHA. By letting OCHA know about the assistance your organization provide, you can contribute to improved coherence and efficiency of response operations while minimizing gaps and duplication of efforts. Please reach out to OCHAPrivateSector@un.org for more information and assistance with reporting.

Businesses and individuals are actively supporting relief efforts following Cyclone Ditwah, but much of this assistance remains undocumented. The **CBi Private Sector Response Activity Tracker** enables companies to report financial, in-kind, logistical, and volunteer contributions so this support is recorded, recognized, and incorporated into coordinated response planning. To ensure their efforts are reflected in national and UN systems, businesses and individuals are encouraged to submit information through [CBi Private Sector Response Activity Tracker - Submission Form](#).

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

Core Humanitarian Principles and Standards

- All humanitarian response activities must be guided by the principles of **humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence**. For more information, read the [CBI Business Brief: Introduction to the Humanitarian System](#). You may also wish to consult the [Sphere Handbook](#), a detailed guide to minimum standards in humanitarian response that was initially developed by a group of prominent non-governmental organizations and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.



HUMANITY

Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings.



NEUTRALITY

Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious, or ideological nature.



IMPARTIALITY

Humanitarian action must be carried out based on need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases and making no distinctions based on nationality, race, gender, religion, class, or political opinions.



INDEPENDENCE

Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military, or other objectives that any actor may hold regarding areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

- People in need of humanitarian assistance must be protected from sexual exploitation and abuse as well as have access to channels to report and address it. Private sector actors involved in humanitarian operations have the same obligations as any other humanitarian organization. For more information, download the [CBI Guidance Note on Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Private Sector Disaster Management](#).

Accountability to Affected People

- Accountability to affected people must be at the core of any humanitarian intervention. The basic concept is that people who receive humanitarian assistance should have the right to say what they need, receive information on what is being provided, and have an opportunity to assess and provide feedback about the assistance they receive. If your company or foundation is directly involved in delivering humanitarian assistance, learn more by downloading the [CBI Guidance Note on Accountability to Affected People in Private Sector Disaster Management](#).

Coordination with the United Nations

- The United Nations Secretary-General encourages companies to coordinate their response efforts with the United Nations to ensure coherence with priority needs and minimize gaps and duplications with the other responders. The Sri Lankan government, through its [Disaster Management Centre](#) (DMC), is leading the national response to Cyclone Ditwah and has requested for donations via the official government platform <https://donate.gov.lk>.

Commercial Offers

- If you wish to make a commercial offer or otherwise do business with the United Nations, please visit the United Nations Global Marketplace at ungm.org.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For additional information, please email Sadhana Mohan, Regional Lead for Asia and the Pacific, Connecting Business Initiative, sadhana.mohan@un.org.