

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

### Evaluation Overview

Since 1978, UN-Habitat has supported the development of human settlements policies in Sri Lanka.<sup>1</sup> Since this time, UN-Habitat has cooperated with the Government to initiate a range of national programmes and projects.<sup>2</sup> After the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, UN-Habitat increased its support of Sri Lanka. The Southern Coast and North-East experienced severe damage, with 30,000 houses damaged and 70,000 destroyed. UN-Habitat's activities ranged from advocacy to policy advice, coordination and building partnerships, implementation of housing recovery and reconstruction projects, and technical assistance. From 1983-2009, the conflict between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) resulted in the devastation of the Northern and Eastern Provinces. By 2009, 450,000 people had been displaced and 160,000 houses were damaged or destroyed. Between 2009 and 2016, UN-Habitat facilitated the construction of houses and community infrastructure facilities in these provinces. UN-Habitat's accumulated effects in Sri Lanka over the last four decades are evident in their work in post-disaster reconstruction, housing, climate change and disaster risk reduction, water and sanitation, low-income settlement upgrading, livelihoods, gender equality, urban planning, policy development, and capacity building.

As stated in the ToR, the purpose of this country programme evaluation is, "to document and assess the results and accumulated effects of the UN-Habitat programme in Sri Lanka conducted with emphasis on the period from 2013 to 2017."<sup>3</sup> This period covered the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Sri Lanka (2013-2017), which was linked to priorities defined by the Government of Sri Lanka.

Out of the projects in the country portfolio, two projects with different characteristics were reviewed in-depth with regard to results and accumulated effects at project level. Thematically, UN-Habitat's portfolio in Sri Lanka focusses mainly on housing, infrastructure, and community engagement. The two projects focus on infrastructure and community engagement. Housing is a strong element of UN-Habitat's larger portfolio in Sri Lanka, as outlined below in *Background and Context*.

The selected projects reflect UN-Habitat's vision on the three-pronged approach<sup>4</sup> and its country mission, as well as, focus on improving livelihoods, cross-cutting issues, availability of data, donors, and collaboration with other UN agencies. These two projects are:

1. Sustainable Resettlement through Community-Driven Improvement of the Learning Environment in Mannar, Sri Lanka, 2015-2017
2. Human Development Initiative through Empowerment and Settlement Improvement in the

---

<https://unhabitat.org/srilanka/>

<sup>2</sup> UN-Habitat, Terms of Reference, Evaluation of UN-Habitat's Country Programme in Sri Lanka, 2 November 2017 (updated: 12 January 2018)

<sup>3</sup> UN-Habitat, Terms of Reference, Evaluation of UN-Habitat's Country Programme in Sri Lanka, 2 November 2017 (updated: 12 January 2018)

<sup>4</sup> The three-pronged approach places emphasis on urban legislation, urban planning and design, and urban economy and municipal finance. These correspond to the first three focus areas of the strategic plan for 2014–2019, and they can be seen as the levers for transforming cities and human settlements into centres of greater environmental, economic and social sustainability. A fourth focus area, or sub-programme, urban basic services, is also prioritized, as large numbers of urban dwellers in developing countries still lack access to adequate basic services, especially water and sanitation as well as reliable waste management services, sustainable mobility solutions and safe domestic energy. See, for example, UN-Habitat, Economic Foundations for Sustainable Urbanization: A Study on Three-Pronged Approach: Planned City Extensions, Legal Framework, <https://unhabitat.org/books/economic-foundations-for-sustainable-urbanization-a-study-on-three-pronged-approach-planned-city-extensions-legal-framework-and-municipal-finance/>

Plantation Settlements, Sri Lanka, 2017.

This evaluation will provide information to UN-Habitat management, its offices and staff responsible for project development and implementation in UN-Habitat country offices, regional offices and at headquarters, as well as its governing bodies, donors and key stakeholders in Sri Lanka of the value-added, achievements, lessons, challenges and opportunities for UN-Habitat's Sri Lanka operations.

These findings should inform future strategy, adjustments, opportunities, collaboration, replication and upscaling. These are all important in future mainstreaming, especially given that the Sri Lanka programme is one of the largest in UN-Habitat Asia's portfolio. The findings will highlight country lessons that can be utilized in other countries. Institutional aspects will be emphasized, especially the support received from the Headqua

## Evaluation Objectives and Intended Audience

In terms of the specific objectives, this evaluation will:

1. Assess the **relevance** of UN-Habitat Sri Lanka's programme between 2013 and 2017 to attain accumulated positive results for beneficiaries, local authorities, and government institutions that are supportive of UN-Habitat's strategic objectives.
2. Assess the **efficiency** and **effectiveness** of the UN-Habitat projects in Sri Lanka in achieving results and the accumulation of results.
3. Identify what successful approaches and **strategies** worked, and which did not, drawing out key findings and lessons from UN-Habitat's experience in Sri Lanka.
4. Take into account the intended users of the evaluation, make **recommendations** to effectively deliver, develop and expand UN-Habitat's portfolio in Sri Lanka.

The evaluation will examine mainstreaming of such issues as resource mobilization, coordination, ownership, and adherence to critical cross-cutting issues (human rights, gender, youth, and climate change). The intended audience is the UN-Habitat management, its offices and staff responsible for project development and implementation in UN-Habitat country offices, regional offices and at

## Methodology

In the ToR, UN-Habitat proposed using the five *evaluation criteria*. These criteria consist of: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability. The evaluation was conducted by two independent consultants, Dr Stephen Van Houten (International Team Leader) and Mr Manikku Wadu Leelaratne (Local Evaluator), in close consultation with the UN-Habitat Evaluation Unit, the Regional Office for Asia and Pacific, and the UN-Habitat Country Office Sri Lanka. The evaluation was carried out during February and March 2018.

Based on the ToR and discussions with UN-Habitat, the following multi-faceted, mixed design methods were used, all of which are participatory, inclusive and target group sensitive. The data was collected through the following methods: Desk review, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), observation, site visits, photos, videos, and validation workshops.

Interviews and FGDs were conducted in Colombo, and Mannar and Nuwara Eliya Districts. Skype and telephone interviews were used where required. FGDs were used to accommodate larger groups of key

respondents. The total number of respondents was 256, with 62 interviews and 15 FGDs, with 45% female and 55% male respondents. There were 10 site visits (see *Summary in Annex 2*), 5 for each project, and 2

## Most Important Findings and Conclusions

This first Sri Lanka Country Programme evaluation by UN-Habitat shows satisfactory overall and project-specific results achieved for the period 2013-2017. These achievements were evident in the areas of post-disaster construction, housing, urban planning, climate change, disaster risk reduction, water and sanitation, low income settlements and upgrading, and humanitarian relief. This evaluation showed that the Country Programme made significant contributions to Goal 11 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable – as well as to the other Goals, namely (number of the goal in brackets):

- Provide equitable and inclusive quality education and life-long learning opportunities for all (4)
- Attain gender equality, empower women and girls everywhere (5)
- Secure water and sanitation for all for a sustainable world (6)
- Ensure access to affordable, sustainable, and reliable modern energy services for all (7)
- Reduce inequality within and among countries (10)
- Promote actions at all levels to address climate change (13)
- Achieve peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law, effective and capable institutions (16)
- Strengthen and enhance the means of implementation and global partnership for sustainable development (17).

These results achieved spanned a period of marked political upheaval, civil war, and natural disasters with subsequent displacement and damage. This evaluation showed that UN-Habitat responded positively to the ensuing needs and opportunities in Sri Lanka.

A summary of the findings according to the five evaluation criteria is provided below.

NO.	CRITERIA	SCORE	FINDINGS
1	RELEVANCE	Highly Satisfactory	Stakeholders, at all levels, claimed that the Country Programme (2013-2017) and the two projects that were in-depth reviewed were relevant and useful, in response to the global, UN, UN-Habitat, donor, national, regional and local needs and priorities. UN-Habitat’s success in consistently responding to beneficiary needs across almost four decades was the common theme of the evaluation. UN-Habitat, based on its history, current projects, and planned work, is well placed to remain relevant and useful in Sri Lanka.
2	EFFECTIVENESS	Satisfactory	This evaluation showed that the Country Programme (2013-2017) has a strong history of effectiveness in Sri Lanka. Stakeholders shared numerous positive changes to beneficiaries. The People’s Process has been instrumental in ensuring involvement and ownership in these projects. How these results are achieved, and can be further enhanced, with the involvement of HQ was a common theme in the interviews. Certain UN-Habitat strategies and policies remain a challenge to the Country Programme In the two projects, this evaluation showed that results were achieved in a coherent manner. Both projects show clear signs of participation, inclusion, and ownership, all of which contribute to impact and sustainability.
3	EFFICIENCY	Satisfactory	This evaluation showed the Country Programme delivers projects in a timely and cost-effective manner. Stakeholders highlighted UN-Habitat’s reputation for efficiency, as well as their strong operations. There was

			clear evidence that UN-Habitat's progress and efficiency gains from 2013-2017 worked through the Government's national programmes with respect to design, management, implementation, reporting, and resource mobilization. The UN-Habitat Country Office, ROAP, and national partners had the capacity to design and implement projects. Institutional arrangements were adequate for implementing UN-Habitat's Country Programme. This evaluation showed that the two projects: acquired appropriate resources with due regard for cost; implemented activities as simply as possible; attempted to keep overheads as low as possible; achieved deliverables on time and budget; and addressed duplication and conflicts.
4	IMPACT	Satisfactory	Over the last 39 years, the UN-Habitat Country Programme's projects have had an impact in Sri Lanka. This is evident in their attainment of accumulated results to the targeted population, beneficiaries, local authorities, government institutions, and national priorities across a wide range of areas like providing permanent shelter, safe and secured infrastructure, healthy and more climate resilient environments, a sense of personal and community dignity, livelihood, skills training, and capacity building programmes. This evaluation showed that that Country Programme (2013-2017) and the two projects had impact on the individual, community and institutional levels. Stakeholders spoke strongly and appreciatively about UN-Habitat's impact on both the operational and normative levels. There was much discussion about the need to investigate and communicate the linkages between operational and normative interventions. Respondents argued that the accumulated results are supportive of UN-Habitat's strategic objectives.
5	SUSTAINABILITY	Satisfactory	The UN-Habitat Country Programme Sri Lanka (2013-2017) engaged the participation of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and reporting phases of the programmes. National project staff's capacity was built to enhance and sustain their involvement in urban development. Projects showed UN-Habitat's ability to promote innovative and lasting partnerships and multi-stakeholder engagements. These projects, including the two under review, can clearly be replicated or scaled up in Sri Lanka and other similar countries. Sri Lanka's classification as a Middle-Income Country (MIC) has resulted in less donor consideration and funding. Opportunities exist for Government prioritized projects.

These lessons learned highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the programme preparation, design, and implementation that affected performance, outcome, and impact.

- Ensuring projects are **relevant** to global, regional, national, and local needs results contributes to stakeholder buy-in and participation. Responding to beneficiary needs remains central to any successful project.
- The utilisation of the **People's Process** was central to the success of projects. Respondents not only appreciated the openness and inclusion of the process, but they have also incorporated the process into Government, school, community, and business activities.
- Project **ownership** resulted from the engagement of the stakeholders in the project planning, implementation, monitoring and maintenance planning.
- **Transparency** with stakeholders builds trust. It is also relatively uncommon in similar projects, and much appreciated and emulated by stakeholders.
- UN-Habitat's ability to form **transformative partnerships** shows how this can have significant intended and unintended impacts of projects, and how they form the basis of future collaboration.
- Having strong **project leadership and staff** contributes to good outputs, outcomes and impacts.

- The backbone of projects is a decentralised **operations** team who can respond to requests and problems effectively and efficiently.
- Understanding the importance of and the linkages between **operational-normative** activities is key to UN-Habitat’s future work and how it chooses to engage with countries and projects. This evaluation showed strong evidence for their linkages and the importance of creating a “one model” approach.
- A robust **M&E** system with an M&E officer on-site is crucial to projects, including short-term projects.
- The development and measurement of **impact indicators** are important for both operational and normative activities, for example, the use of the good practice of monitoring dash boards.
- The integration of **cross-cutting issues** can be achieved with commitment, planning, and good monitoring.
- **Local economies** were boosted through project interventions. This was evident in the capacity building of builders, creating a local skilled labour force, expansion of building material suppliers and manufacturers, and the procurement of locally produced furniture and school equipment.
- Having a **standardised selection process** of beneficiary sites allowed for transparent selection and communication.
- It is possible to implement a **fast-track participatory infrastructure** project consisting of multi-faceted activities over 15-18 months (social and technical assessment 3 months, civil work 9-12 months, and consolidation 3-6 months), with adequate Government and Donor support.
- The use of **Community Action Plans** and **Community Contracting** are successful modes of operation

## Main Recommendations

These recommendations aim to be specific, practical, related to verifiable actions, and identify the responsible person or entity (addresses: CP = Country Programme; ROAP = Regional Office; and HQ = Headquarters). They apply across the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation levels.

NO.	RECOMMENDATION	ADDRESSEE
1	Develop a funding plan to deal with the current funding challenges in Sri Lanka that is coherent and in line with the HQ resource mobilization strategy	ROAP, CP, HQ
2	Support Government efforts to develop a coherent project actions budget to present to major donors	ROAP, CP
3	Ensure integration of cross-cutting issues and its funding during planning, implementation, reporting and evaluation	HQ
4	Identify and mobilize private sector opportunities in the provision of investment capital and the upscaling of activities	HQ, ROAP, CP
5	Decide on UN-Habitat’s role in supporting the implementation of the National Housing Policy, as requested by the Government	ROAP, CP
6	Supplement the strengths of the Country Programme through the appointment of a programme manager with substantive knowledge and skills to drive national programmatic issues	HQ, ROAP, CP
7	Continue strengthening and enhancing collaboration, capacity, and performance management of the country programmes	HQ, ROAP, CP
8	Facilitate international exposure for key country team staff to enhance familiarity with new technology and international business processes, for example, through twinning arrangements between country teams	ROAP, CP

9	Decentralise financial functions through increased delegation of authority to functioning country teams, with adequate oversight	HQ, ROAP
10	Review and respond to current problems reported with Umoja	HQ
11	Develop more policies to support lower-middle income and low-income families through housing financing, social housing, etc.	HQ, ROAP, CP
12	Improve M&E activities at the country level by recruiting an M&E Officer for the Sri-Lanka country programme	CP
13	Increase community participation in the joint monitoring of project progress	CP
14	Create online M&E dashboards to provide live progress of progress against baselines and targets	CP
15	Create impact indicators for future projects, especially for training and capacity related activities	CP
16	Improve organisational knowledge management system and learning processes	HQ
17	Support knowledge management and learning initiatives from UN partners in the integration of cross-cutting issues	HQ, ROAP
18	Ensure that key recommendations from monitoring and evaluation activities are shared with other regional offices and HQ, and consider how to transfer knowledge through training opportunities	HQ