

# IOM SRI LANKA

COUNTRY STRATEGY 2021-2022

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IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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# Foreword

I am pleased to present the IOM Sri Lanka Country Strategy 2021-2022. This document serves as an interim document covering January 2021 to December 2022 thereby allowing IOM to align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF) 2018-2022.

The Strategy is in alignment with the global IOM Strategic Vision 2019-2023 and the IOM Regional Strategy for Asia and the Pacific 2020-2024. It presents IOM priorities in support of the people and Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) through contributions towards effective migration management in line with national development priorities, working towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and with the objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). All IOM support is provided in coordination with GoSL, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), civil society organizations (CSOs), the private sector, and other partners. Through the implementation of this Strategy, with the support of dedicated staff members, and in close collaboration with the IOM Regional Office of Asia and the Pacific, and IOM Headquarters, IOM Sri Lanka will provide comprehensive support to GoSL to work towards safe, orderly and regular migration for all.

Sarat Dash  
Chief of Mission, IOM Sri Lanka

# Acknowledgements

IOM expresses its appreciation to the Government of Sri Lanka for its continuous partnership and cooperation since the assisted return of more than 90,000 Sri Lankans during the Gulf War in 1990 and the establishment of the IOM mission in Sri Lanka in 2002. IOM extends its gratitude to the donors whose support has been instrumental in allocating the resources required to implement activities in the framework of this Strategy. Finally, IOM thanks all of its other partners in Sri Lanka, including the United Nations partners, CSOs, academia, research institutions and the private sector, with whom we look forward to working together in the implementation of our initiatives.

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# Acronyms

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| AVRR     | Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration                |
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus disease 2019                                   |
| CBO(s)   | Community-based organization(s)                            |
| CSO(s)   | Civil Society Organization(s)                              |
| DRR      | Disaster Risk Reduction                                    |
| DTM      | Disaster Tracking Matrix                                   |
| FAO      | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations    |
| GCM      | Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration     |
| GOALS    | Governance of Labour Migration in South and Southeast Asia |
| GoSL     | Government of Sri Lanka                                    |
| IBM      | Immigration and Border Management                          |
| IDP(s)   | Internally Displaced Persons                               |
| IOM      | International Organization for Migration                   |
| JPP      | Joint Programme for Peace                                  |
| MGI      | Migration Governance Indicators                            |
| MHPSS    | Mental Health and Psychosocial Support                     |
| MoH      | Ministry of Health   |
| NGO(s)   | Non-Governmental Organization(s)                           |
| SDG(s)   | Sustainable Development Goal(s)                            |
| SEA      | Sexual Exploitation and Abuse                              |
| SRF      | Strategic Results Framework                                |
| TIP      | Trafficking in Persons                                     |
| TOC(s)   | Transnational Organized Crime(s)                           |

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| UNSDF  | United Nations Sustainable Development Framework             |
| UNSDCF | United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework |
| UNCT   | United Nations Country Team                                  |
| WFP    | World Food Programme   |
| WHO    | World Health Organization                                    |



1.

# Introduction

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. About IOM

Established in 1951, IOM is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners. In 2016 IOM became a related Agency of the United Nations. IOM currently operates through 174 member states and offices in over 100 countries. Dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all, IOM provides services and advice to governments and migrants. IOM works to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration problems and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The IOM Constitution recognizes the link between migration and economic, social and cultural development, as well as to the right of freedom of movement.

The global IOM Strategic Vision 2019-2023 articulates IOM plans to meet the organizations' new and emerging responsibilities, including IOM mandated role as Coordinator for the United Nations Migration Network. It sets out the 'direction of travel' for IOM and encourages 'joined up thinking' anchored in the overall framework of the 2030 Agenda and the GCM.

This Country Strategy is aligned with the Strategic Vision, its corresponding Regional Strategy for Asia and the Pacific (2020-2024), and the IOM Strategic Results Framework (SRF). IOM will work with GoSL and partners to harness the potential of migration through a whole-of-government and whole of society approach to achieve sustainable development outcomes for all.

## 1.2. IOM in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka became a Member State of IOM in 1990 following the outbreak of the Gulf War when IOM assisted with the return home of thousands of migrant workers displaced by the conflict. Since opening a country office in 2002, IOM Sri Lanka has implemented more than 180 projects in migration management, crisis response, and migrant assistance in collaboration with GoSL.

In 2021, IOM Sri Lanka has 147 staff members and operates from seven offices and service centres, comprising the following: located in Colombo—the Head Office; Operations and Migrant Services Centre; Migrant Health Assessment Centre (outbound); and Migrant Health Assessment Centre (inbound); and three field offices located in Jaffna, Kilinochchi, and Batticaloa.

As an active member of the UNCT, IOM closely coordinates with United Nations and government agencies to build synergies as well as contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). IOM serves as the coordinator and the secretariat to the United

Nations Network on Migration in Sri Lanka, which coordinates the work of a wide range of stakeholders active in the field of migration, working to support the rights and wellbeing of migrants and their communities. IOM also chairs the United Nations Social Cohesion Results Group. Supporting the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, IOM is currently the United Nations focal point for Point of Entry (PoE) and is the co-lead for the Humanitarian Country Team shelter sector.

### 1.3. Vision Statement

IOM Sri Lanka envisages a world where migrants and Sri Lanka benefit socially and economically from safe, orderly and regular migration. We aim to achieve this by supporting GoSL on migration management and addressing challenges migrants and local communities face in collaboration with our partners.

2.

## Context Analysis

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## 2. Context Analysis

### Migration and country outlook in Sri Lanka - challenges and opportunities

Sri Lanka has long been a country of origin for labour migrants with an annual outflow of 230,000 to 250,000 persons and a total of over 1.7 million Sri Lankan migrants working abroad.<sup>1</sup> In 2018, domestic workers comprised 55.2 per cent of total departures for foreign employment, while Sri Lankan migrants also included skilled labour (31.7 per cent), middle-level workers (3.7 per cent) and clerical workers (4.7 per cent).<sup>2</sup> Remittances from migrant workers are a major source of foreign exchange inflow. On average, Sri Lanka receives USD 7 billion from remittances per year, constituting approximately 8 per cent of the country's GDP.<sup>3</sup>

In recent years, Sri Lanka has experienced an increased inward migration trend as the economy has grown. A large proportion of inbound migrants are migrant workers from countries such as India, Bangladesh and China who have come to fill labour shortages, especially in the category of low-skilled labour and to work in projects funded by foreign investments.<sup>4</sup> Inbound migrants also comprise high-skilled workers, tourists, students and returning Sri Lankan citizens. GoSL is in the process of establishing institutional, legal and policy frameworks to better manage the migration flows into the country. Maintaining border security and migrant health are key areas of concern.

Internal migration is characterized by rural-to-urban migration, mainly to Colombo in the Western Province. Disparities in infrastructure development, employment opportunities, educational opportunities, and access to other facilities across the provinces are the main drivers of migration.<sup>5</sup>

The three decades of conflict between GoSL and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) brought a multitude of migration issues including mass internal displacement and regular and irregular outbound migration. IOM work to assist with the voluntary return and sustainable reintegration of Sri Lankans located around the world as a result of the conflict remains ongoing.

With steady economic growth after the end of the conflict, Sri Lanka reached an upper-middle-income country status in 2019 only to fall back to a lower-middle-income country status a year later following a drop in GNI per capita<sup>6</sup> (largely due to the effects on the economy following the 'Easter bombing' in 2019 and political instability). Given the overall rise in economic status, Sri Lanka's efforts as a nation and the interests of donors changed from short-term emergency response and conflict resolution to addressing the challenges and opportunities of long-term development. The focus of IOM work similarly adjusted from tackling humanitarian and early recovery needs mainly in former conflict-affected areas in the Northern and Eastern provinces towards addressing migration issues related to the country's effort towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sri Lanka is a source and destination country for trafficking in persons (TIP) and was placed on the Tier 2 Watch List by the US

<sup>1</sup> Data taken from SLBFE's 'Different Perspectives of Departure Details'. <http://www.slbfe.lk/page.php?LID=1&MID=232>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> World Bank, 2020, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data>

<sup>4</sup> IOM, Sri Lankan Country Report on Migration Governance in Sri Lanka 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Perera E.L.S.J. (2020) Internal Migration in Sri Lanka. In: Bell M., Bernard A., Charles-Edwards E., Zhu Y. (eds) Internal Migration in the Countries of Asia. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-44010-7\\_14](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-44010-7_14).

<sup>6</sup> <https://economynext.com/sri-lanka-growth-stalls-per-capita-gdp-drops-us200-in-2019-after-monetary-instability-69772/>.

TIP Report for three consecutive years.<sup>7</sup> Within Sri Lanka, men, women and children are trafficked for forced labour and sex trafficking. Sri Lankan nationals migrating to the Middle East in search of semi or low-skilled jobs are often subject to trafficking and exploitation by recruit agencies and employers. Transnational and internal trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation is also observed. GoSL has highlighted curbing irregular migration as a key priority.<sup>8</sup>

Owing to its geostrategic location in the Indian Ocean Region, Sri Lanka remains vulnerable to other transnational organized crimes (TOCs) including human smuggling, drug trafficking, fisheries crime and illicit trade in goods. The country is both a transit point and source for TOC activities.<sup>9</sup> Effective and efficient border management remains a policy priority for GoSL both in terms of economic development and security of the country.

Climate change affects human mobility in Sri Lanka through extreme weather events and natural disasters. The consequences of such events have adversely impacted socio-economic progress and have pushed people to migrate within the country and across international borders.<sup>10,11</sup> Extreme weather events and the impact of climate change have reduced the capacity of vulnerable communities to respond to and prepare for such events. Sri Lanka was ranked 6<sup>th</sup> among 176 countries most affected by extreme weather events on the Global Climate Risk Index 2020.<sup>12</sup> The GoSL has prioritized addressing climate change and its knock-on effects (including on migration) in its national policy framework.<sup>13</sup>

COVID-19 impacts, including reduced employment opportunities, and international responses to the pandemic such as restricted international travel, have directly affected Sri Lankan migrants overseas. Over 50,000 Sri Lankan migrant workers have returned home, creating challenges for existing social protection systems, care networks, and returnee support services.<sup>14</sup> Many more migrant workers who lost their jobs are expected to return to Sri Lanka over the coming months.<sup>15</sup> GoSL aims to upskill migrant workers and has highlighted the strategic need to promote local employment for migrant returnees to facilitate their return and reintegration into the country.<sup>16</sup> The pandemic has also highlighted the fragility of social cohesion in the country with several incidents of stigmatization, discrimination and hate speech towards returning migrant workers, foreigners and minorities reported during the crisis.<sup>17</sup>

Sri Lanka has a robust health system compared to countries at a similar economic level and was able to respond to the initial challenges posed by COVID-19. However, pressure on the health system increased significantly following surges in cases in October 2020. The disruption of primary health care services has made access to essential services difficult, particularly for vulnerable groups, including internal migrants, IDPs, asylum seekers and refugees with pre-existing medical conditions.<sup>18,19</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> US Trafficking Report 2021, available at <https://lk.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/149/2021-TIP-Sri-Lanka.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> National Policy Framework, available at <http://www.doc.gov.lk/images/pdf/NationalPolicyframeworkEN/FinalDovVer02-English.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.sundayobserver.lk/2018/07/15/news/transnational-organised-crime-sri-lanka-needs-extraordinary-measures-protect-itself>.

<sup>10</sup> Understanding Migration Trends from Climate Change Affected Districts in Sri Lanka 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in coordination with the Ministry of Environment and Wildlife Resources revealed that communities resort to internal migration as a strategy, mostly perceived as “unwilling” and not as a proactive decision stemming from desire to migrate.

<sup>12</sup> Global Climate Risk Index 2020, available at <https://www.germanwatch.org/en/17307>.

<sup>13</sup> National Policy Framework, available at <http://www.doc.gov.lk/images/pdf/NationalPolicyframeworkEN/FinalDovVer02-English.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> United Nations Sri Lanka. 2020. UN Advisory Paper: Immediate Socioeconomic Response to COVID-19 in Sri Lanka.

<sup>15</sup> Socio Economic Impact of COVID19 on Migrant Population Communities in Sri Lanka.

<sup>16</sup> National Labour Migration Policy for Sri Lanka (2008).

<sup>17</sup> United Nations Sri Lanka. 2020. UN Advisory Paper: Immediate Socioeconomic Response to COVID-19 in Sri Lanka.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> World Bank, Sri Lanka's COVID-19 Response: Saving Lives Today, Preparing for Tomorrow.

3.

## Strategic Priorities

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## 3. Strategic Priorities

### 3.1. Strategic priorities

Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2018-2022, Outcome 1: Towards improved data, knowledge management and evidence-based policy (SDG driven national planning, financing and data)

Strategic Results Framework, Objective Four: Migration Governance (Long Term Outcome 4 a - Data and Evidence for Policymaking)  
IOM Regional Strategy for Asia and the Pacific 2020-2024, Strategic Priority 4.3.1

#### Key Programme Area – Migration Governance Indicators and Migration and Development

The Migration Governance Indicators (MGI) framework, developed by IOM in collaboration with the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) offers a consolidated framework to assess the comprehensiveness of country-specific migration policies, to identify gaps and areas that could be strengthened, and to act as a potential source to inform the implementation of migration-related SDGs.<sup>20</sup> IOM is currently conducting a follow-up assessment and consultation process to the original exercise conducted in 2016 to produce an updated MGI Sri Lanka report. IOM has also initiated a Migration and Development (M&D) country assessment to identify current national goals and priorities to mainstream migration into the development strategies of Sri Lanka.

Based on the findings from the MGI follow-up and the M&D national assessments, IOM will support the establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Migration and Development (IMCMD). The IMCMD will lead the development of a GCM National Implementation Plan, which will guide actions to mainstream migration into national policies and programmes.

UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2018-2022, Driver 2: Strengthened, Innovative Public Institutions and Engagement Towards a Lasting Peace (Social Cohesion<sup>21</sup>)

Strategic Results Framework, Objective Two: Individuals and communities are empowered and resilient.  
IOM Regional Strategy for Asia and the Pacific 2020-2024, Strategic Priority 4.1.1 and 4.3.3

Key Programme Areas: (a) Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (b) Community Stabilization (c) Immigration and Border Management (d) Operations and Migrant Services (I. Document verifications and solutions)

#### (a) Social Cohesion and Reconciliation

IOM will continue to work within the first United Nations SDG Multi-Partner Trust Fund (Peace Window – the Joint Programme for Peace (JPP)) in Sri Lanka working towards durable peace in Sri Lanka.<sup>22</sup> IOM social cohesion programme will support the JPP through 1) technical support extended to the Office for

<sup>20</sup>Migration Governance in Sri Lanka (2018), available at

[https://srilanka.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1356/files/documents/MGI%20Country%20Report\\_2018%20New.pdf](https://srilanka.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1356/files/documents/MGI%20Country%20Report_2018%20New.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Restructured results Groups, October 2020 – The UNCT Retreat decided that the priorities of the UN Socioeconomic Advisory Paper (Health, Social Protection, Economic Recovery, Social Cohesion, Macroeconomic Response) will become priorities up until the end of 2021. *Social protection, health is identified as amended result areas*.

<sup>22</sup> The United Nations established a Joint Programme for Peace (JPP) to ensure harmonized and sustainable support towards securing a durable peace that would supplement the process of economic development embarked upon by the government. Resources under the JPP are aligned under three pillars: a) the process of dealing with the past, b) social cohesion/reconciliation and c) durable returns/resettlement and economic development.



Reparations/Ministry of Justice and 2) collaborating with CSOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) to strengthen and facilitate efforts to promote social cohesion and reconciliation.

### (b) Solutions to Displacement

In line with the National Policy Framework *Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour*, which prioritizes both infrastructure and livelihood development of former conflict-affected districts, IOM will work to address overarching economic, legal and social challenges in the areas. IOM aims to provide an enabling environment to overcome the socio-economic challenges of Sri Lankan refugee returnees from Tamil Nadu, related to livelihoods and employment, civil and legal documentation and psychosocial wellbeing to support their sustainable reintegration, promoting social integration at inter and intra community with the aim of contributing to reconciliation efforts. The learnings from this initiative can be utilized to strengthen existing legislative frameworks related to the return and reintegration of Sri Lankan refugee returnees from Tamil Nadu and formulate a larger intervention for sustainable reintegration in the future.

### (c) Immigration and Border Management <sup>23</sup>

The Immigration and Border Management (IBM) programme supports improvements to the GoSL policy, legislation, operational systems, human resources capacities and administrative and technical structures required to respond to diverse migration and border management challenges. IBM activities are aligned with the Sri Lanka Integrated Border Management Strategy, which lays a foundation for border management agencies to operate in an integrated manner to enhance national security, including risk detection and prevention of TOCs, while facilitating travel and trade, supporting Sri Lanka's economic development. IOM acts as the secretariat of the newly established National Border Management Committee and supports its Member Agencies. IOM will also prioritize cross mobility challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic by introducing safe travel programmes and the use of new technologies. New initiatives include work with government authorities to support the management of Sri Lanka's maritime border through the introduction of a vessel monitoring system to regulate a fleet of over 5,000 fishing vessels.

### (d) Operations and Migrant Services<sup>24</sup>

The Operations and Migrant Services Centre in Sri Lanka supports governments and individuals from 34 countries through a range of services for temporary or permanent migration. Services include document verification for visa applicants, pre-departure orientation and counselling, resettlement assistance for refugees and permanent immigrants, DNA testing to support family reunification and humanitarian return assistance for stranded migrants.

## UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2018-2022, Driver 3: Human Security and Socio-economic Resilience (Social Protection, Socio-Economic and Recovery, Health<sup>25</sup>)

Strategic Results Framework, Objective Two: Individuals and communities are empowered and resilient.

IOM Regional Strategy for Asia and the Pacific 2020-2024, Strategic Priority 4.2.1 and 4.3.1

<sup>23</sup> NSDF Results Group: Institutional support to strengthen digital governance and digital processing solutions mechanisms.

<sup>24</sup> contributes to IOM Strategic Response Framework, Objective Two: Resilience and Empowerment.

<sup>25</sup> Restructured results Groups, October 2020 – UNCT Retreat decided that the priorities of the UN Socioeconomic Advisory Paper (Health, Social Protection, Economic Recovery, Social Cohesion, Macroeconomic Response) will become priorities up until the end of 2021. Social protection, health are identified as amended result areas.

Key Programme Areas: (a) Assisted Voluntary Return (b) Holistic Reintegration (c) Counter-Trafficking and Preventing Irregular Migration (d) Labour Migration (e) Migration Health (f) Operations and Migrant Services

#### (a) Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR)

Since the beginning of its operations in Sri Lanka in 1990, IOM has assisted over 97,000 Sri Lankans (stranded migrants, failed asylum seekers, victims of human trafficking and those in extremely vulnerable situations who are unable or unwilling to remain in host countries) to voluntarily return to Sri Lanka and to reintegrate into their communities of origin.<sup>26</sup> Drawing from the extensive experience of implementing AVRR programmes, IOM is supporting the repatriation of migrant workers stranded in the Middle East due to the COVID-10 pandemic. The Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment reports that some 110,000 Sri Lankan nationals have returned to Sri Lanka since the pandemic began with GoSL plans to repatriate 30,000 Sri Lankan migrants from the region.

#### (b) Holistic Reintegration

IOM integrated approach to sustainable reintegration encompasses economic, social and psychosocial dimensions of migrant reintegration by comprehensively targeting interventions around the individual, their community and at an overall structural level. Sustainable reintegration is a priority requirement under the long-term interventions in the National COVID-19 Response Plan, the Sub-policy and National Action Plan on Return and Reintegration and the Strategic priorities identified in the UN Advisory Paper: Immediate Socioeconomic Response to COVID-19 in Sri Lanka.<sup>27,28</sup> IOM will support the implementation of these policies in the areas of the reintegration of returning migrant workers through protection of returnee migrants and preparation for effective social reintegration, skill development for future employment opportunities and integration in the national labour market, and the strengthening of the capacity of the vocational training centres supporting returnees. IOM support for the returnees will comprise of a wide array of interventions including facilitating opportunities for skills transfer, productive employment and building market linkages, in-kind support, infrastructure development and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). This intervention will have a special focus on women returnees to enhance their skills for successful socio-economic reintegration.

#### (c) Counter-Trafficking and Preventing Irregular Migration

In partnership with the Chair of the National Anti-Human Trafficking forum, the Ministry of Justice, IOM will implement the recommendations of the new National Strategic Action Plan (2021-2025), developed with the technical assistance of IOM. With a view to promoting safe and regular migration, IOM will conduct training to capacitate government officials in providing protection services for victims of trafficking and awareness programmes to sensitize community members. Building upon current actions, campaigns will be accompanied by an expanded IOM hotline service offering advice on safe migration to potential migrants.

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<sup>26</sup> 97,000 migrants are comprised of the 90,000 migrants repatriated from Lebanon during the Gulf war in 1990s and over 7000 supported since 2002 to date.

<sup>27</sup> COVID-19 Sri Lanka Strategic Preparedness & Response Plan 2021, available at [http://www.health.gov.lk/moh\\_final/english/public/elfinder/files/publications/2021/Edited%20Final%20SPRP%20on%2015th%20May%202021%20.pdf](http://www.health.gov.lk/moh_final/english/public/elfinder/files/publications/2021/Edited%20Final%20SPRP%20on%2015th%20May%202021%20.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> Available at [https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/LKA\\_Socioeconomic-Response-Plan\\_2020.pdf](https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/LKA_Socioeconomic-Response-Plan_2020.pdf).

#### (d) Labour Migration

- Regional Labour Migration Programme – Governance of Labour Migration in South and South-East Asia (GOALS) Programme

IOM Sri Lanka provides secretariat and technical support to the five thematic area working groups (TAWG) of the Colombo Process--a twelve-country regional consultative process for labour sending countries in Asia. IOM is also the co-convenor of the Governance of Labour Migration in South and Southeast Asia (GOALS) programme, a three-year joint programme implemented in conjunction with the International Labour Organisation and UN Women. The GOALS programme responds to the current context, achievements, gaps and challenges relating to safe, orderly and regular labour migration from the countries of the Colombo Process.

- National Labour Migration Programme - Creating foreign employment-ready workforce

IOM will continue to support the Ministry of Foreign Employment in the implementation of national policy objectives for foreign employment to enhance the skills of prospective migrant workers.<sup>29</sup> IOM will introduce an integrated solution supported by an employer-pay model that will bring all stakeholders involved in the worker upskilling process to a single platform and enable them to more efficiently coordinate the upskilling of potential migrant workers to help Sri Lanka to increase its pool of higher-skilled potential migrant workers.

#### (e) Migration Health

In line with the National Migration Health Policy, IOM will continue to conduct migration health assessments for inbound and outbound migrants and to provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Health (MoH) in developing standards for implementing and monitoring pre-departure and post-arrival health assessments. In addition to the Outbound Migration Health Centre for outbound Sri Lankan migrants and refugees, since 2019, IOM has supported the MoH in the implementation of the National Migration Health Policy, working together to develop and operate an Inbound Health Assessment Programme--the first such operation supported by IOM globally. The objective is to mitigate the impact of migrants' disease burdens on the national health system and social services, and to contribute to maximizing the developmental impact of migrants on Sri Lanka. IOM will continue to advocate for migrant inclusive health services and provide technical support to the MoH in establishing migrant inclusive health services. In addition, IOM will continue to support Sri Lanka's national vertical health programmes to address migratory related health issues.

#### (f) Operations and Migrant Services

IOM will continue to support refugees and migrants to adapt to their destination countries smoothly through pre-departure orientation and counselling services. IOM will also continue to assist the resettlement of refugees, who are nationals from countries other than Sri Lanka, and designated migrants from Sri Lanka to resettle to third countries through document processing, health assessments and international travel assistance. Through travel and operational support services, IOM will also assist the

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<sup>29</sup> National Policy Framework Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour, available at <http://www.doc.gov.lk/images/pdf/NationalPolicyframeworkEN/FinalDovVer02-English.pdf>.

GoSL to provide return assistance to foreign nationals who are stranded in Sri Lanka and Sri Lankan nationals stranded overseas.

#### UN Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF) 2018-2022, Driver 4: Enhancing Resilience to Climate Change and Disasters and Strengthening Environmental Management (Climate Change<sup>30</sup>)

IOM Strategic Results Framework, Objective Two - Individuals and communities are empowered and resilient.

IOM Regional Strategy for Asia and the Pacific 2020-2024, Strategic Priority 4.1.1 and 4.3.2

### Key Programme Areas: (a) Disaster Preparedness (b) Climate Resilience

Building on the major emergency response work undertaken following the 2017 floods and landslides, IOM continues to support the GoSL to address and adapt to health emergencies, climate-related disasters and multi-hazard risks.

#### (a) Disaster Preparedness

IOM will continue to support the Government and communities to improve preparedness systems and capacities to manage their immediate response to disasters or climate hazards. IOM plans to help local authorities in setting up evacuation centres and assist the GoSL to document the locations that have been previously used as evacuation centres and to develop guidelines for quality and management of the centres. IOM intends to mobilize resources to support the GoSL with planned relocation and resettlement of communities as well. Moreover, IOM will support local authorities for effective land use planning to prepare for possible displacements in identified areas. As part of this activity, IOM will assist local authorities in creating plans, assessing the impact of floods or landslides and developing an evacuation plan. IOM also plans to work with Sri Lanka's Disaster Management Centre and other GoSL entities to establish the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) in Sri Lanka to support tracking and monitoring of displacement, relocation, returns, process, and services in each site.

#### (b) Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation

IOM is currently implementing a research project to help enhance the evidence base on human mobility and climate change in the Sri Lankan context. This research report builds on a previous rapid assessment jointly conducted by IOM, FAO and WFP, in coordination with the Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment. These products are intended to strengthen Government efforts to mainstream human mobility dynamics into policies and programmes dealing with disasters and climate change and to increase community resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in Sri Lanka. Together with other IOM initiatives, such as the MGI assessment, the research findings will support the Government in mainstreaming human mobility dynamics into policy processes within Sri Lanka and globally, including the ongoing Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) review process (2020-21) and other Government policy development efforts.

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<sup>30</sup> Restructured results Groups, October 2020 – UNCT Retreat decided that the priorities of the UN Socioeconomic Advisory Paper (Health, Social Protection, Economic Recovery, Social Cohesion, Macroeconomic Response) will become priorities up until the end of 2021. The area of work is categorized under climate change.

## 3.2. Cross-cutting themes

(a) **Environment:** In 2017, IOM launched its global Environmental Sustainability Programme (ESP) with the objective of mainstreaming environmental sustainability principles across the Organization (C/109/4). In line with the environment-related commitments of the SDGs (inter alia, sustainable natural resource management, climate action, sustainable water management, biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, circular economy, environmentally sound management of chemicals and waste) and the United Nations environmental sustainability standards, IOM made an institutional commitment to improve the environmental sustainability of its operations at the strategy / policy level in its programmes and projects, and in its facilities and operations. IOM Sri Lanka will continue to support a more sustainable IOM through the identification and implementation of new and innovative initiatives.

(b) **Human Rights:** IOM is guided by the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including upholding human rights for all. Respect for the rights, dignity and well-being of migrants remains paramount. Safeguarding the rights, dignity, and well-being of migrants and their families, and protecting them from all forms of discrimination and marginalization is fundamental to IOM work. Drawing on core international human rights instruments, IOM will continue to adopt the rights-based approach<sup>31</sup> in its activities to protect the rights of migrants and people vulnerable to forced migration in close coordination with its partners. Moreover, IOM has a zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by IOM staff members and the employees or any other persons engaged and controlled by IOM contractors. The Organization ensures that it is accountable to its beneficiaries and is committed to protecting against and preventing SEA.

(c) **Equality and Diversity:** IOM mainstreams gender across all activities and pursues gender equality in accordance with the IOM Gender Equality Policy. Gender is central to the causes and consequences of migration, and thus, it is crucial to integrate a gender-responsive approach into all programmes to meet the objective of safe, orderly, and regular migration for all. IOM will continue to ensure that programmes recognize and respond to the different needs of all gender groups and ages throughout the migration cycle. In line with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy 2019 and the GCM objectives, IOM will identify and respond to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of people with disabilities through our projects to ensure the inclusion and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities at all levels.

(d) **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support:** IOM will continue to ensure that its activities address the MPHSS needs of migrants and communities through a person-centred, rights-based and community-based approach.<sup>32</sup> Working with partners and key stakeholders such as MHPSS.net and WHO MHPSS capacity will be strengthened for migrants and their communities.

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<sup>31</sup> IOM, Manual on the Right-Based Approach for Programming, available at <https://publications.iom.int/books/rights-based-approach-programming>.

<sup>32</sup> IOM, Manual on Community-Based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergencies and Displacement. IOM, Geneva.

### 3.3. Partnerships and Coordination

Guided by the principles of a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, IOM works closely with government institutions, communities, migrants, donors and other partners to address the complex migration challenges to enable effective migration governance. IOM Sri Lanka's funding is from multi-lateral funds such as United Nations SDG Multi-Partner Trust Fund and Peace Building Fund, donor governments and international entities. The private sector is a key partner to amplify important migration messages and as potential donors.

4.

# Institutional Development

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## 4. Institutional Development

### 4.1. Internal Governance Framework

IOM extensive operations in the country since 2002 have earned the organization a reputation as a credible and responsive organization. IOM will continue to improve internal governance, risk management, staffing and financial management to ensure transparency and accountability.

### 4.2. Holistic Integration of Programming and Innovation

IOM will continue to invest in coordination and strategic collaboration across programme areas encouraging cross fertilization and sharing of innovative practices to address issues of migration and mobility.

### 4.3. Staff Development and Inclusive Workplace Environment

IOM will strengthen the culture of continuous learning among its staff and will make the required investments to allow access to resources to develop skills and knowledge. The Organization will utilize the established institutional resources for staff training and development to facilitate growth and enhanced performance. IOM is committed to creating an inclusive workplace, where every staff member feels secure and respected.



5.

# The Way Forward

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## 5. The Way Forward

The IOM Country Strategy 2021-2022 provides a programmatic framework to address pressing migration issues in Sri Lanka. The Strategy identifies IOM programmatic priorities in line with the UNSDCF and will guide IOM approach to implement the migration-related development goals and priorities of the GoSL.

Looking ahead, IOM will develop a new Strategy for 2023 to 2027 to align with the timeframe of the forthcoming UNSDCF. This will build on and expand the existing priority areas to support the Government and people of Sri Lanka.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has already had a considerable impact on migration and human mobility, its longer-term implications are yet to be fully observed. As the situation evolves, IOM will monitor and adapt its programming to ensure emerging challenges are addressed.

IOM recognizes that partnerships provide a key platform for advancing cooperation on migration. In the implementation of this strategy, IOM Sri Lanka looks forward to working with partners in government, donor agencies, United Nations agencies, NGOs, CBOs, academia, research institutions and the private sector to ensure effective migration management.

# Annex I: Communication Plan

During this interim strategic planning period, IOM will continue to strengthen and expand strategic networks and partnerships with the media, local communication specialists, grassroots organizations, wider civil society, and public and private sectors and influencers in fields related to IOM work to leverage our contents and reach a wider audience.

Results and achievements will continue to be communicated on a regular basis, issued to a wide range of outlets including press releases and social media.

The IOM Sri Lanka website will be updated on a regular basis with published press releases, info sheets, job vacancies, human interest stories and creative communication products that will enable the media and the public to better understand IOM work.

Finally, the country has an active social media community with Facebook being the most popular platform. In line with the recommendations in the Social Media Annual Report 2020, IOM will invest more resources in creative content creation, dissemination of evidence-based objective information on migration and campaigns to engage with social media users to promote safe, regular and orderly migration.

# Annex II: United Nations Sustainable Development Framework 2018-2022

The current UNSDF 2018-2022 in Sri Lanka comprises four driver statements to which IOM is actively contributing, as presented below together with linkages to the IOM SRF.

UNSDF Driver 1: By 2022, people in Sri Lanka benefit from improved data and knowledge management to address inequalities and ensure inclusive and responsive decision making.

- SRF: Outcome 4.a: Accurate, disaggregated evidence on migration (human mobility) is collected, shared and utilized for evidence-based policy making by governments (at the local, national, regional and global level).

IOM Sri Lanka will contribute to increased evidence-based policymaking and planning across various sectors of migration management. IOM will also deepen partnerships with the government and strengthen relationships with other stakeholders such as academia and the private sector to increase the production and use of evidence-based data.

UNSDF Driver 2: By 2022, people in Sri Lanka, especially the marginalised and vulnerable, benefit from more rights based, accountable, inclusive and effective public institutions, to enhance trust amongst communities and towards the State.

- SRF: Outcome 3.b: Migration flows and cross-border mobility are well managed, with measures to ensure well-being, including health, security, and safety through the mobility continuum.
- SRF: Outcome 3.a: Sustainable channels for regular migration are efficient, innovative and responsive to current and emerging trends.
- SRF: Outcome 4.b: Government institutions, systems and migration policy and legal frameworks are well-coordinated, aligned with international standards, and coherent with broader development and policy planning from the global to the local level.
- SRF: Outcome 4.c: Negative perceptions of migration and xenophobia are mitigated through evidence-based public discourse.

IOM Sri Lanka will continue to combat Trafficking in Persons and ensure the sustainable return and reintegration assistance to vulnerable migrants. IOM will work to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration across borders and work to mitigate threats of smuggling and trans-border crimes. Further, IOM will work to ensure that health systems are migrant-friendly and contribute to reducing the risk of the public health impact of mobility.

UNSDF Driver 3: By 2022, people in Sri Lanka, especially the vulnerable and marginalised groups of children, youth, women, elderly and disabled, benefit equitably from dynamic and responsive social protection systems.

- SRF: Outcome 2.a The adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their homes are addressed or minimized.

- SRF: Outcome 2.d: Cohesive societies with equal opportunities and access to services enable (migrations and displacement affected populations) irrespective of gender, age, disabilities to contribute to sustainable development.

IOM will support initiatives working towards increased employment opportunities for vulnerable youths. IOM will ensure effective pre-departure and orientation programmes to address and reduce potential inequalities and vulnerabilities and improve access to safe, regular, and orderly migration services and will contribute to improved policies and programs to ensure safe, ethical, and beneficial labour migration.

UNSD Driver 4: By 2022, people in Sri Lanka, in particular the vulnerable and marginalized are more resilient to climate change and natural disasters and benefit from increasingly sustainable management of natural resources, better environmental governance and blue/green development.

- SRF: Outcome 2.a: The adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their homes are addressed or minimized.
- SRF Outcome 2.b: Migrants and displaced affected populations irrespective of gender, age, disabilities, and legal status are protected from violence, exploitation and abuse, and their rights are upheld.
- SRF Outcome 2.c: Communities affected by crises (or situations of vulnerability) recover and transition towards development, with needs, vulnerabilities and risks sustainability reduced.

IOM will support improved government and community preparedness to manage disasters and the effects of climate change and build resilience in communities especially vulnerable to climate change.





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