

Country Handbook: Sri Lanka

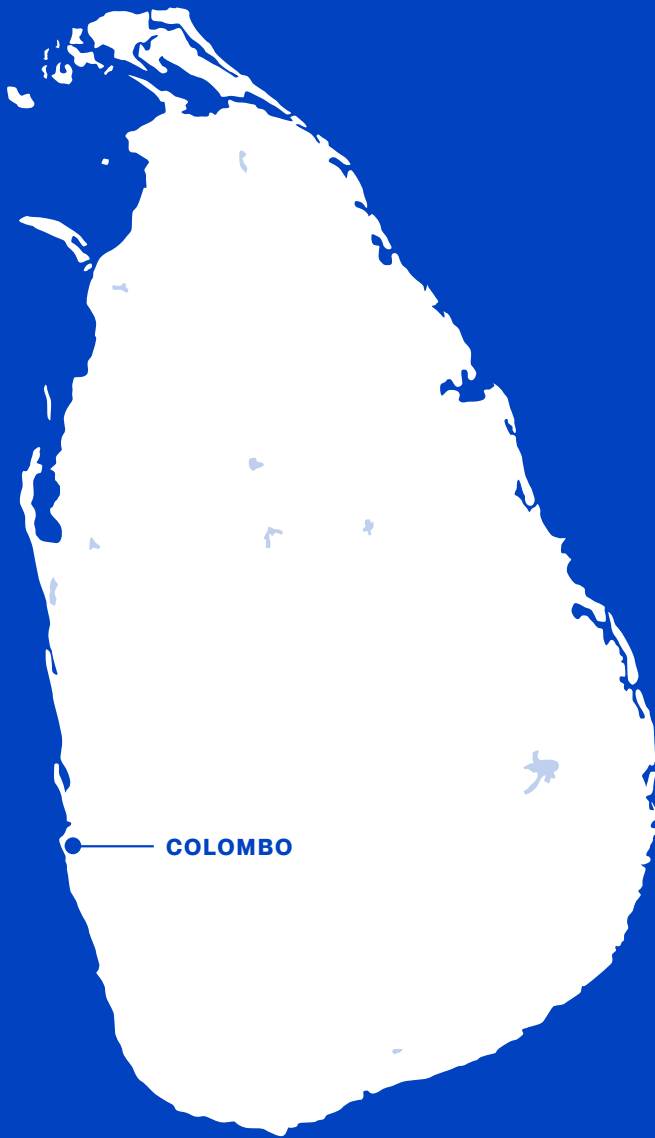


Introduction

Travelling to see the work of Compassion and our local partners firsthand is an unforgettable experience. On this trip, you'll see for yourself how children are known, loved and protected, and witness how local staff and volunteers are committed to releasing children from poverty.

This Country Handbook is designed to start preparing you for your trip to Sri Lanka. Please read it before you depart, and we'd also recommend that you keep it handy for easy reference.

We hope that your time in Sri Lanka will be blessed!



100km

Country Information



Sri Lanka means 'resplendent island' and is most famous for tea and cricket. Sri Lankans are known for their hospitality and tend to value simplicity, humility and joy.

Main languages:

Sinhala, Tamil

Climate:

Tropical (warm temperatures and high humidity)

Main religions:

Buddhist (70.2%), Hindu (12.6%), Muslim (9.7%), Roman Catholic (6.1%)

Currency:

Sri Lankan Rupee



Compassion in Sri Lanka

Compassion has been working to release children from poverty in Sri Lanka since 2009. 14.3 per cent of the population live below the poverty line.

Compassion's Child Sponsorship Program is tailored to be age-appropriate for each child.

Children **AGED 1 TO 3** receive home-based care.

Children and youth **AGED 3 AND OLDER** attend their local child development centre on weekends, usually Saturdays.



For more information on the Sri Lanka, scan the QR code or visit: compassion.com.au/where-we-work/sri-lanka

Here is an example of what a typical program day looks like:

8:00am - A time for songs, games and introductions. .

10:30am - Break time, when children can play in a safe environment and develop friendships.

11:00am - Social-emotional lessons ranging from conflict resolution to developing healthy self-esteem. Children often come from challenging home environments and are taught social and personal skills.

12:00pm - Lunch and social time. Children enjoy a meal of rice, meat or fish, vegetables and fruit.

1:00pm - Health lessons, in which children learn practical health and hygiene lessons.

2:00pm - Letter writing and career planning. Older children work with local staff to identify their strengths and interests and set goals for their future.

Children can also attend camps, sporting events, field trips and talent shows. Parents of Compassion assisted children meet once a month to learn about a variety of topics.

Cultural Considerations



Clothing

- **Women:** Modest, loose-fitting clothing is recommended. Dresses, skirts or pants should be below the knee.
- **Men:** Long shorts, pants or trousers along with t-shirts are recommended.
- Tattoos with religious symbols should be covered in public and all tattoos should be covered when visiting local partners.

Greetings

- Greetings vary depending on the ethnic group, but the younger generation often shake hands. Men should wait for a woman to initiate a handshake. A more traditional greeting is to slightly lower your head and press your palms together under your chin in front of your chest.
- It is traditional to greet the oldest person first.
- When addressing people older than you, it is polite to use the appropriate title followed by their surname. Wait for the other party to move to a first-name basis.
- 'Where are you going?' is a common conversation starter in Sri Lanka, similar to 'how are you going?' in Australia.
- Sri Lankan women generally refrain from physical contact with any man outside their family.

Tipping

- Although a 10 per cent service charge is added to food and accommodation bills, this usually goes straight to the owner rather than the worker. Drivers expect a tip, as do guides (in these cases you should make certain a fee is discussed in advance). It is recommended to tip 10 per cent.

Emergency contact information:

Local emergency number: 112
Compassion Sri Lanka office: +94 11 2588752
Australian Embassy: +63 2 7757 8100

Body language

- The left hand is considered unclean, given its use in the bathroom. In Sri Lanka, the left hand is for below the waist and the right hand is for above the waist. It is courteous to use either only the right hand or both hands when receiving or giving items.

Language

- Useful Sinhalese phrases:
Hello: Ayubowan
How are you? Kohomadhe?
What is your name? Nama mokadhdha?
My name is: Mage nama
Do you speak English? Ingirisi dannevada?
I don't understand: Mata terinne neh
Please: Karunakerela
Thank you: Istuti
Yes: Ow
No: Naa
- **Topics to avoid:** comparisons between Sri Lanka and India, politics, questions about someone's romantic life
- Please avoid Christian terms and do not speak negatively of other religions.

Eating

- Meals are eaten with your right hand. Utensils are uncommon.
- When visiting someone's home, expect to be offered tea and something to eat. Accepting this gesture is a sign of respect. It is polite to bring a gift when visiting a Sri Lankan home, but flowers and leather goods should be avoided.
- It is normal to socialise for hours before a meal is served and leave soon after the meal is over.
- It is inappropriate for women to drink alcohol.
- Avoid using local moneychangers as they are renowned for taking advantage of tourists.



Key Challenges and Prayer Points

Schools were completely closed during lockdown periods in Sri Lanka. Children in poverty were further endangered by their lack of access to education. Many Sri Lankan classrooms are overcrowded, under-resourced and lack basic facilities like water and sanitation. Our local partners are working hard to find ways to help Sri Lankan children catch up on missed learning and open opportunities for their future.

In 2022, Sri Lanka experienced a period of protests and civil unrest due to a high inflation rate. The economic crisis in Sri Lanka is still being felt by local families who are finding it increasingly difficult to afford or access basic goods.

Hunger is pervasive in Sri Lanka due to the global food crisis. Many children do not receive enough nutritional meals. 16 per cent of children under 4 years old are underweight. Our local partners ensure children receive tailored nutritional and medical support to secure their healthy development.



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