

2023 Annual Report



MRCC - COLOMBO

MARITIME RESCUE CO-ORDINATION CENTRE - COLOMBO

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MARITIME RESCUE COORDINATION CENTRE COLOMBO
ANNUAL REPORT 2023

MRCC Colombo in Brief

1. The Sri Lankan Government holds a significant responsibility over a vast maritime Search and Rescue Region (SRR) covering an area of 1,778,062.24 km², which is approximately 27 times the size of its landmass. This region shares boundaries with neighbouring countries such as India, Indonesia, Australia, and the Maldives. The primary purpose of this responsibility is to ensure the safety and well-being of vessels in distress within the area of responsibility.

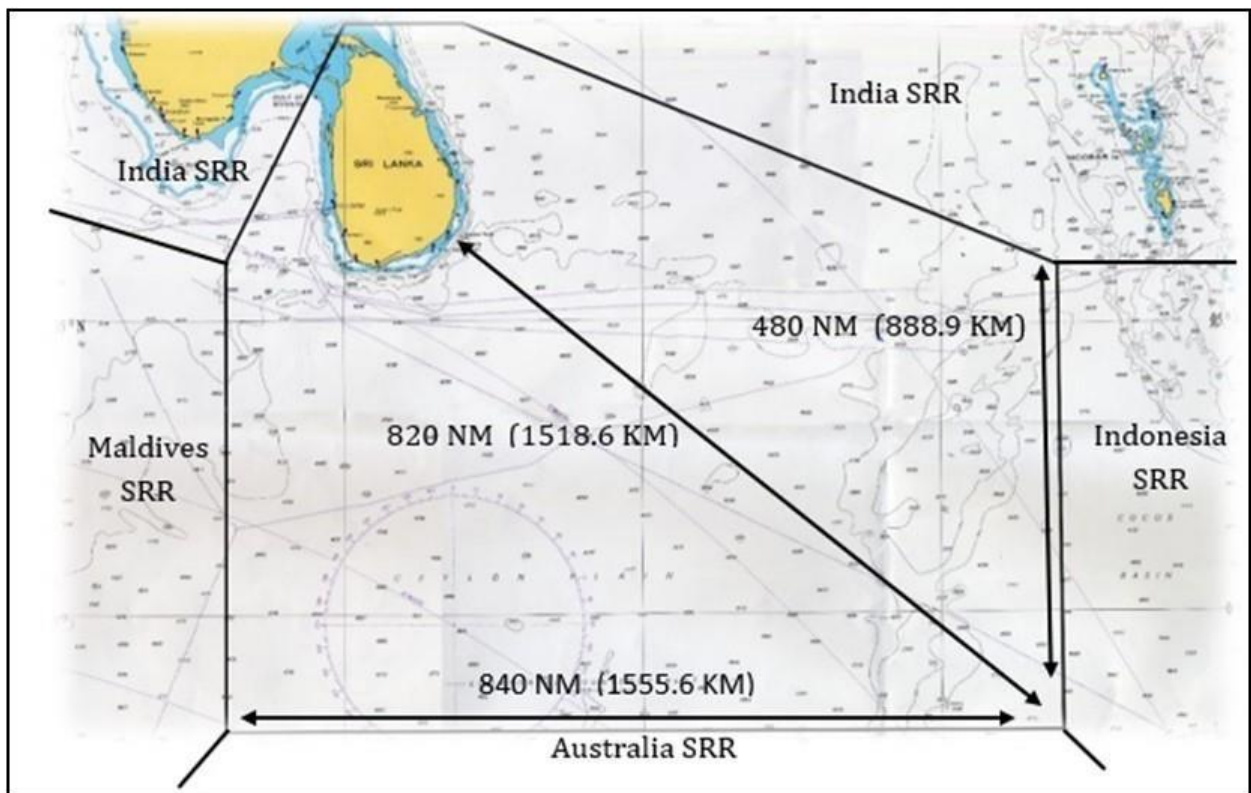


Figure 1: Sri Lanka Search and Rescue Region (SRR)

2. The Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) has been designated as the national responsible authority for conducting maritime Search and Rescue (SAR) operations in the Sri Lanka SRR. To execute this responsibility effectively, the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) Colombo, established at the Navy Headquarters, serves as the central hub for coordinating assistance to vessels in distress using all available means.

3. The MRCC Colombo operates 24/7 and is staffed with qualified naval personnel. The center functions under the supervision of the Director General Operations (DGO) and Director Naval Maritime Surveillance (DNMS). This ensures a continuous and efficient response to any maritime distress incident reported within the Sri Lanka SRR.

4. Given that MRCC Colombo operates under one of the most resourceful maritime arms in the country, the Sri Lanka Navy, it benefits from various facilities. These include access to Maritime Domain Awareness tools and the ability to deploy Search and Rescue units promptly.

5. In the coordination of maritime distress incidents, other entities such as the Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre (ARCC), Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DFAR), Colombo Radio, and other regional Rescue Coordination Centers act as alerting posts.

6. Furthermore, various organizations contribute to the Search and Rescue Units (SRU) deployed in response to distress incidents. These organizations include the Sri Lanka Navy (SLN), Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF), and the Sri Lanka Coast Guard (SLCG). The collaboration of these entities ensures a comprehensive and coordinated approach to maritime Search and Rescue operations in the Sri Lanka SRR, emphasizing the nation's commitment to maritime safety and security

Operational Procedure of MRCC Colombo

7. On receiving a distress alert at the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) Colombo, a well-defined procedure is set in motion to ensure a prompt and precise response to distress incidents. Collaborative operations with adjacent MRCCs have been established, enhancing the collective efforts of MRCC Colombo. This collaborative approach enables a more effective and coordinated response to maritime distress situations within the broader region.

8. The first step in the response process involves recording each incident reported at MRCC Colombo in a comprehensive log sheet. This log sheet serves as a checklist for MRCC operations, ensuring that all necessary details related to the maritime distress are documented. The MRCC team collects information meticulously, considering all possible means to coordinate Search and Rescue (SAR) operations. Once the information is verified, the MRCC determines the best course of action, prioritizing the safety of lives at sea.

9. While continually monitoring the situation, MRCC Colombo issues broadcasts via Inmarsat C terminal, HF/MF and VHF broadcasts to alert maritime traffic in the affected area. Simultaneously, the MRCC feeds Search and Rescue Units (SRUs) with necessary operational instructions, keeping them informed and prepared for the response. Additionally, developments in the ongoing distress situation are shared with adjacent Rescue Coordination Centers (RCCs) as needed, ensuring a seamless and collaborative approach to managing the incident.

10. In an effort to enhance future Search and Rescue (SAR) operations, MRCC Colombo diligently records all incidents coordinated by the center. A detailed sequence of events and survivor feedback are documented to provide valuable insights. Regular reports, generated on a weekly, and annual basis, capture the key information and lessons learned from each incident. These reports are disseminated among stakeholder agencies, contributing to a continuous improvement cycle and ensuring that all involved entities stay informed and prepared for future SAR operations. This systematic approach reflects a commitment to learning from past experiences and optimizing the effectiveness of maritime Search and Rescue efforts.

11. Operation procedure of the MRCC Colombo is scrutinized at figure 2.

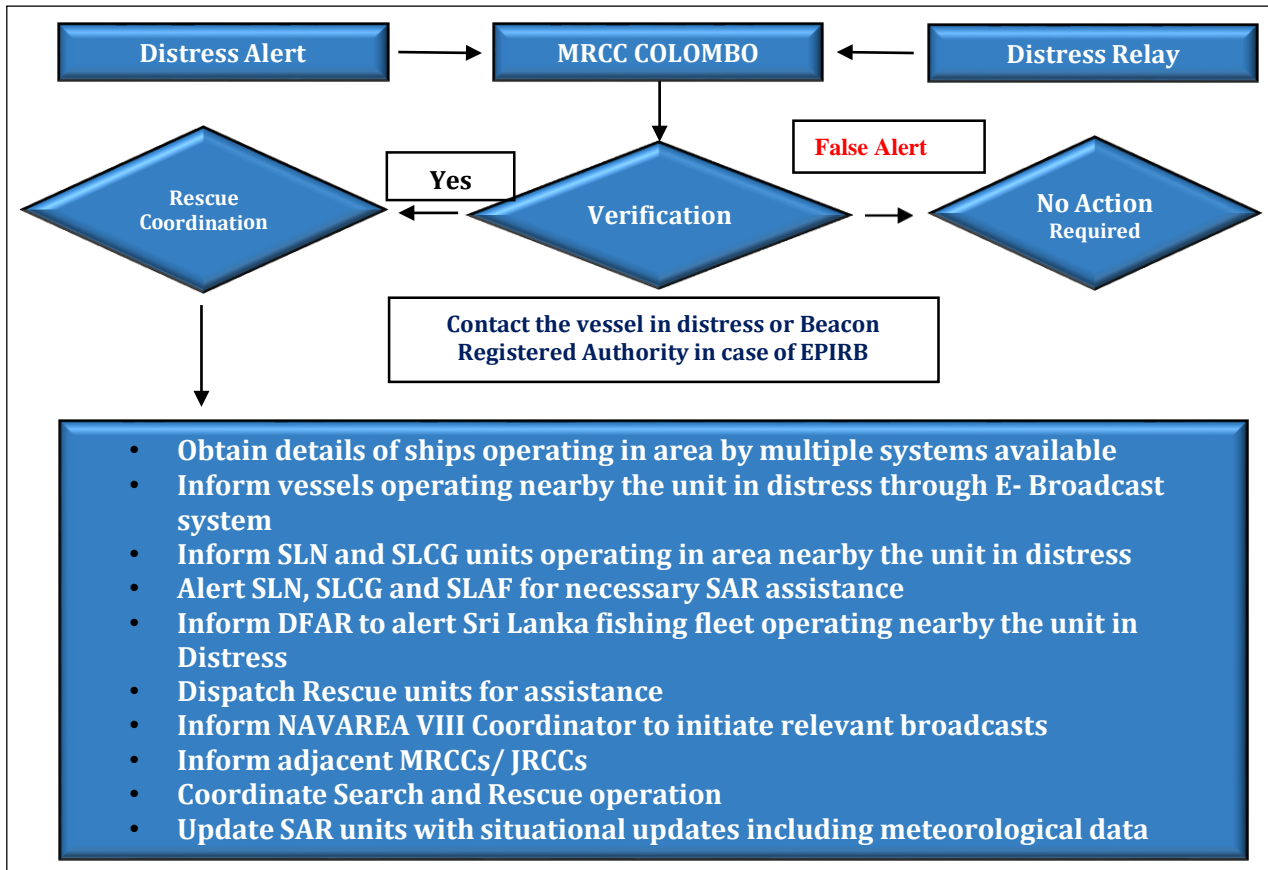


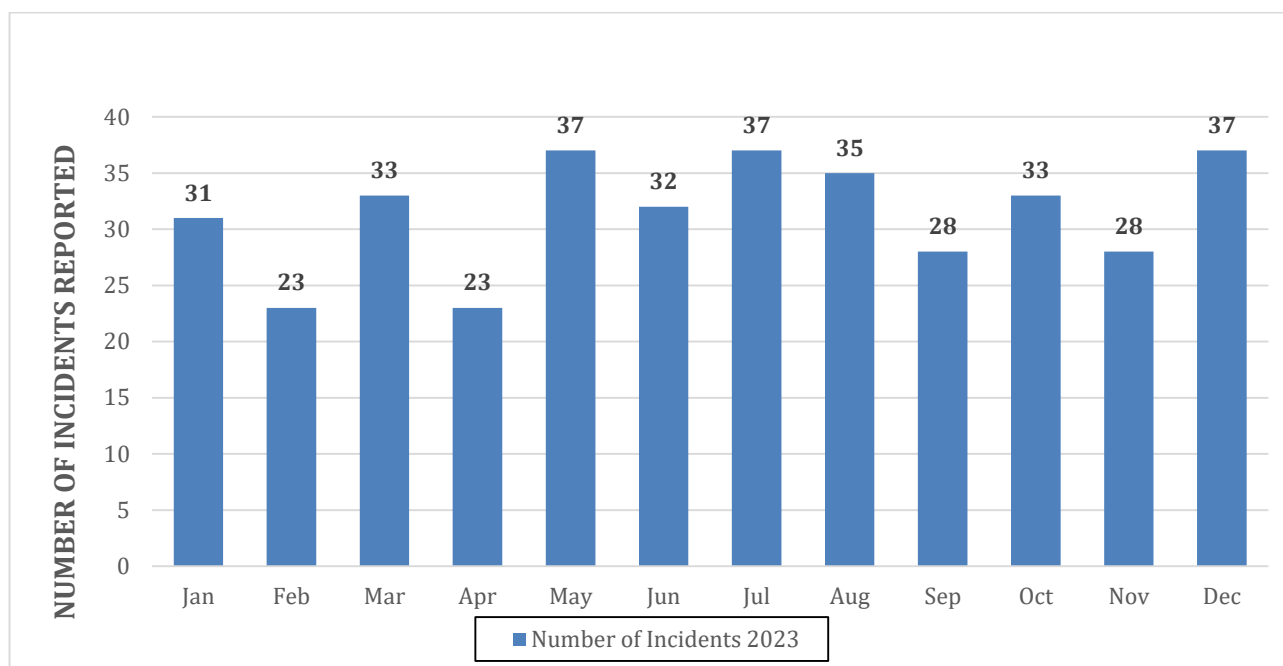
Figure 2: Operation Procedure of MRCC Colombo

Overview of Year 2023

12. **Number of Distress Incidents** In 2023, the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) Colombo responded to a total of 377 incidents, averaging 30 incidents per month. Graph I provides a visual representation of the incidents reported throughout the year. The geographical distribution of these incidents are detailed in Figure 3.

13. Out of the 377 incidents with location information, 67 incidents (15%) took place within territorial waters, 105 incidents (31%) occurred between territorial waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and 175 incidents (42%) occurred beyond the Sri Lanka SRR. Additionally, 30 incidents were reported without specific location details.

14. These statistics underscore the diverse nature and distribution of incidents faced by MRCC Colombo, providing crucial insights into the spatial challenges and operational demands within its jurisdiction. The data contributes to a comprehensive understanding of maritime incidents and aids in optimizing the coordination and response efforts of the MRCC.

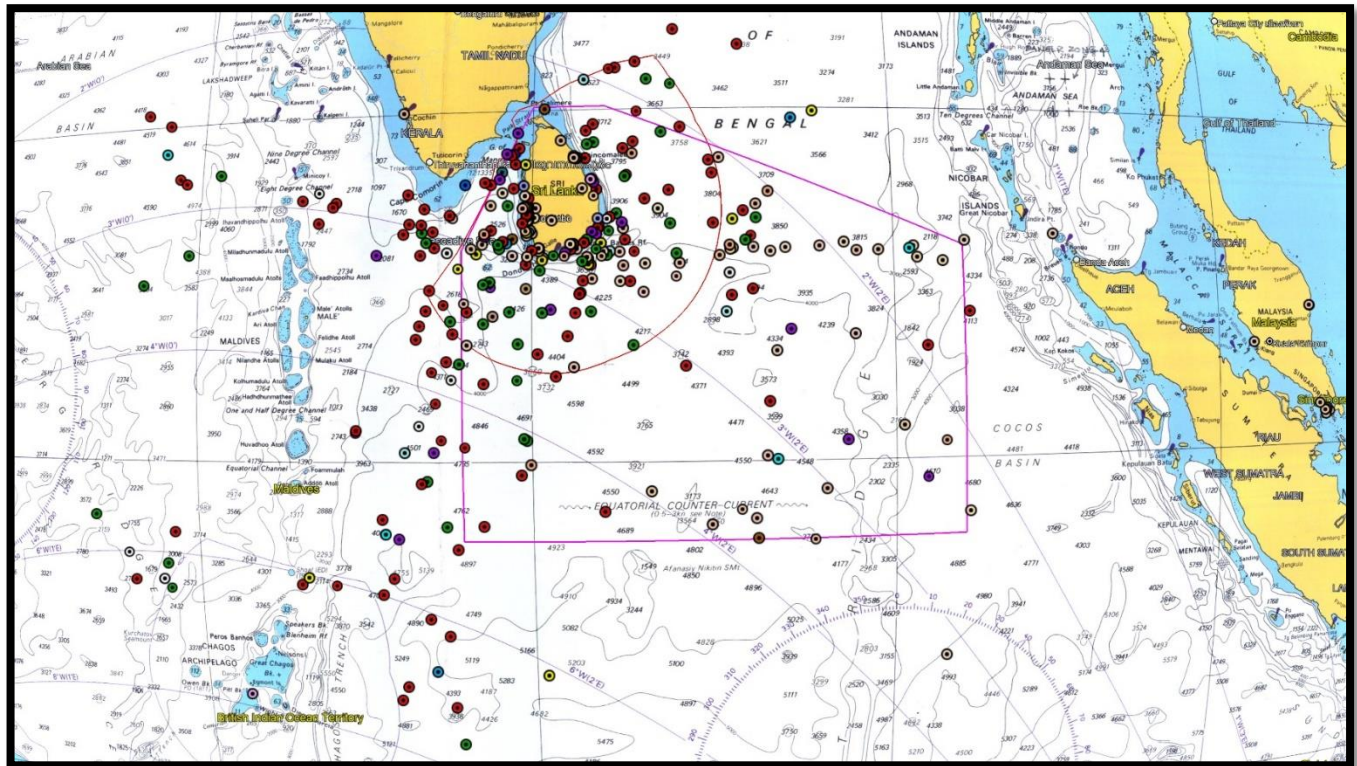


Graph - I: Number of Distress Incidents Reported per Month

15. **Types of Platforms Reported Distress** The predominant source of incidents reported to MRCC Colombo in 2023 stems from Sri Lankan fishing vessels, constituting a significant 57.02% of the total reported cases. This noteworthy figure underscores the prominence of maritime challenges faced by Sri Lankan fishing vessels, reflecting the importance of focused attention and resources in addressing issues within this sector.

16. Chart I complements this observation by presenting a comprehensive categorization of total incidents. The chart delineates incidents into seven distinct categories, offering a visual representation that aids in understanding the diverse nature of challenges and emergencies encountered within the maritime domain. This categorization provides a valuable tool for stakeholders and authorities to analyze trends, allocate resources effectively, and implement targeted measures to enhance maritime safety and security.

a.	Sri Lankan Fishing Vessels	-	216
b.	Merchant Vessels	-	80
c.	Foreign Fishing Vessels	-	05
d.	Aircraft	-	26 (Emergency Locator Beacon alerts)
e.	Foreign Pleasure Craft	-	05
f.	Unidentified Vessel classes	-	44



Technical Failure



Vessel Capsize



Vessel Overdue

Man Over Board



Patient on-board



Vessel Grounded



Death of a Crew Member

Fire onboard



Distress Beacon Alert



Collided



Other Incidents



Figure 3: Geographical Distribution of Incidents

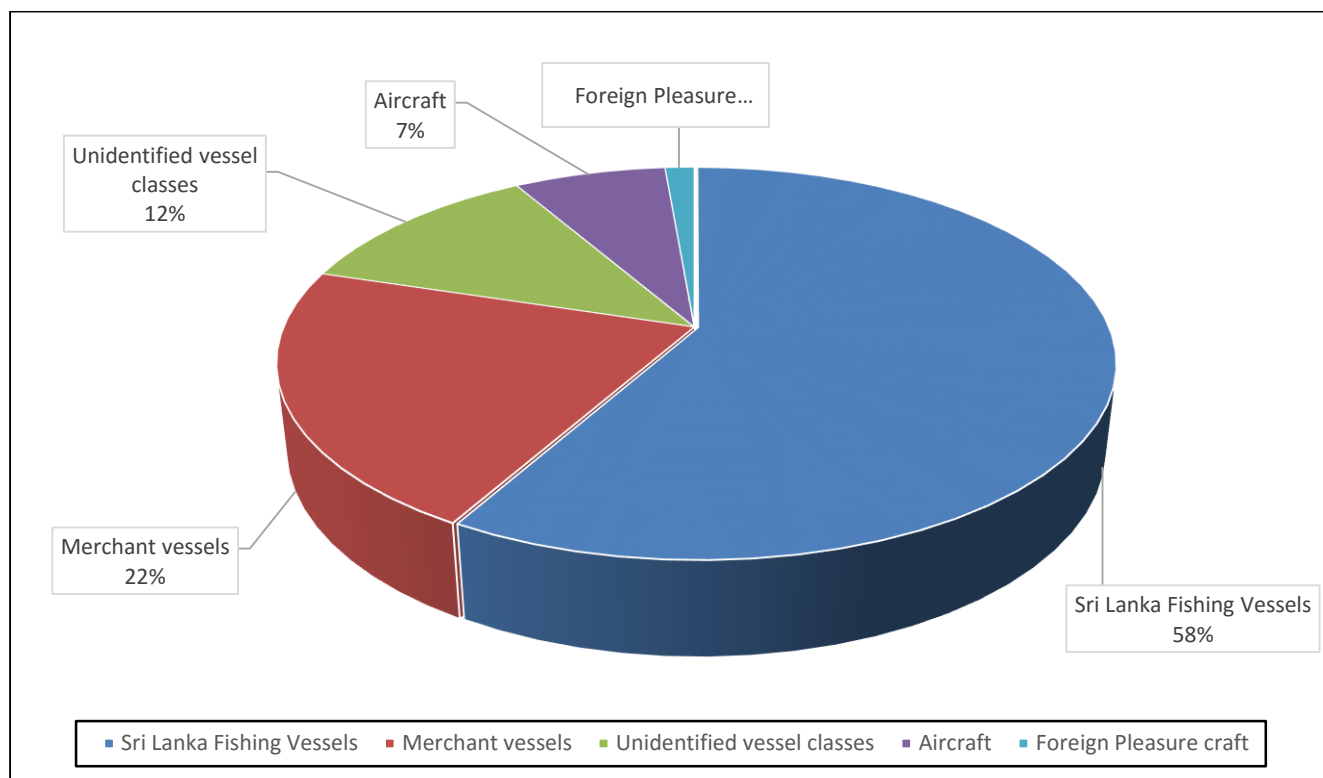


Chart - I: Types of Platforms Reported in Distress in 2023

17. **Types of Incidents reported** In year 2023, the distress incidents reported at the MRCC Colombo can be classified into various categories. Notably, there has been a substantial 11% increase in technical breakdowns of Sri Lankan fishing vessels compared to the data from 2022. The graphical representation of this data is depicted in Chart II, providing a visual overview of the observed trends in distress incidents, particularly highlighting the significant uptick in technical breakdowns.

a.	Fishing vessels drifting due to technical breakdown	-	111
b.	Patients onboard who required medical assistance	-	48
c.	Fishing vessels ceased communication or overdue	-	35
d.	Alerts generated by Distress Beacons	-	131
e.	Man Over Board	-	12
f.	Capsizing of vessels	-	06
g.	Vessel run-aground	-	07
h.	Collision	-	02
j.	Death of a crew member	-	14
K	Fire on board	-	01
l.	Other incident types	-	10

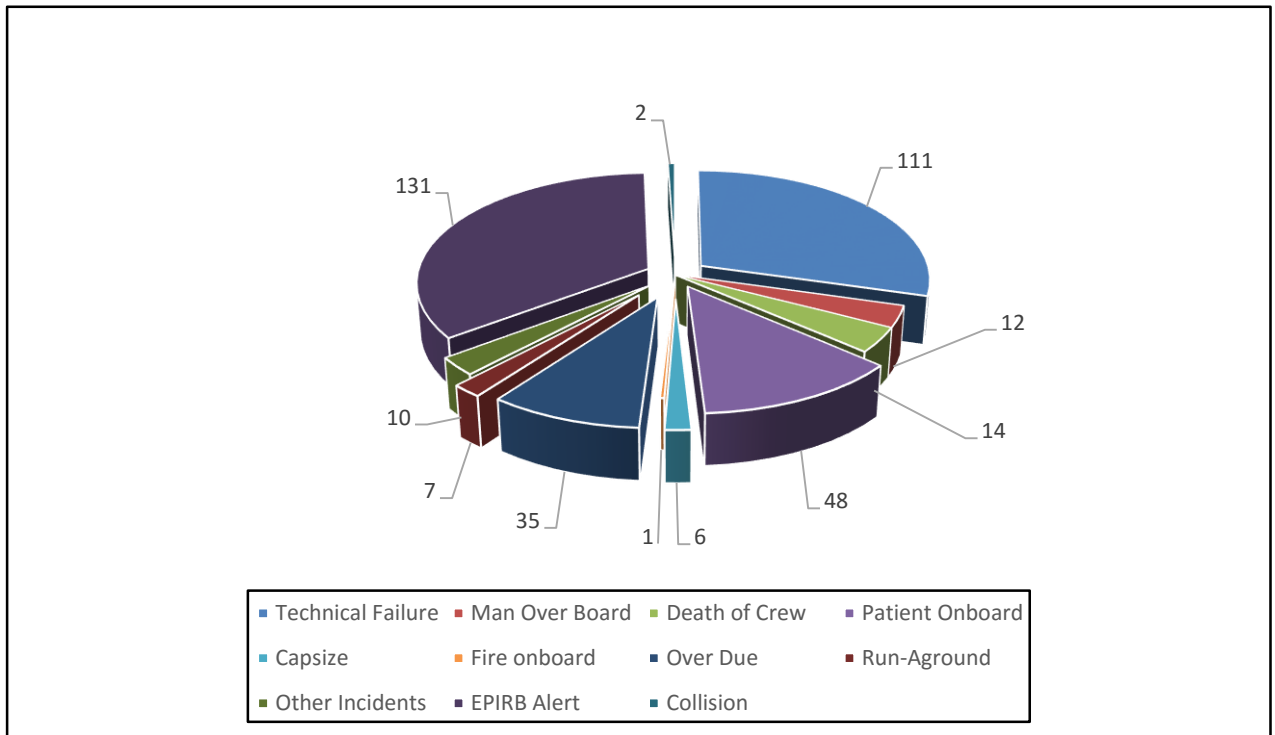
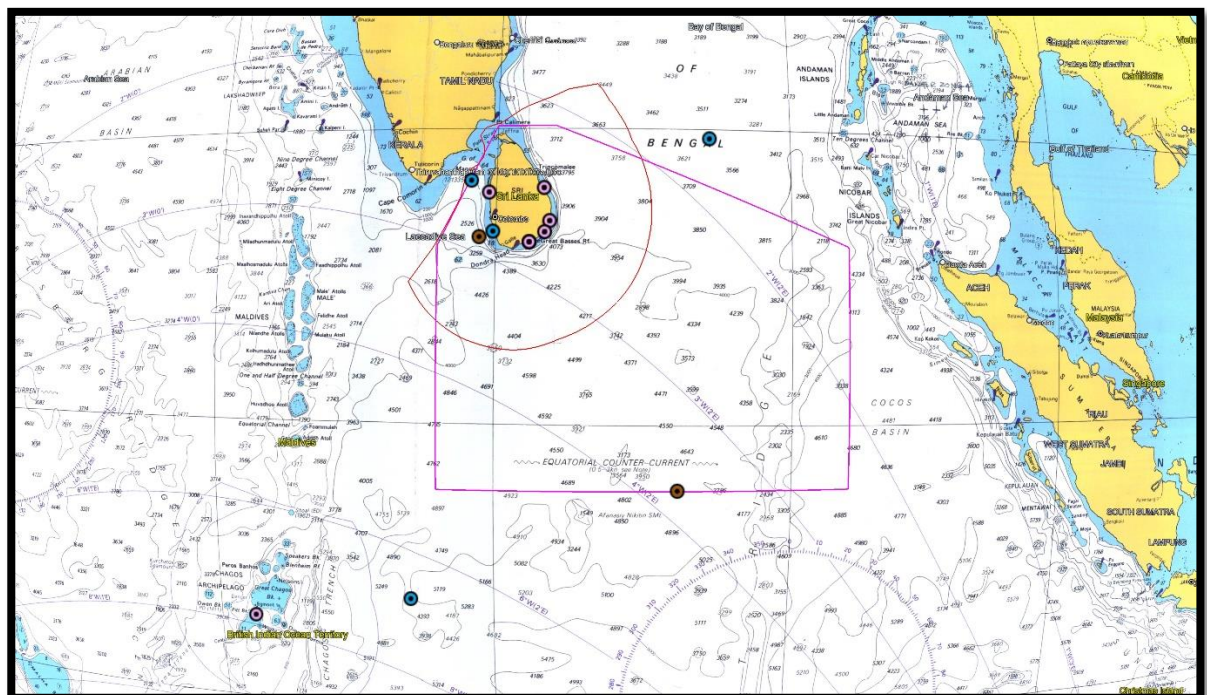


Chart - II: Types of Incidents Reported in 2023

18. **Errors in Navigation** In 2023, 15 incidents have resulted due to navigational errors. It shares 4% of total incidents. All incidents are of Sri Lankan Fishing vessels including six capsized vessels, two collisions and seven vessels run-afground. According to the geographical distribution, 53% of incidents were reported in the Southern Sea area, 7% in Western Sea area, 7% in Southeastern Sea area, 7% in North Sea area, 13% each in Eastern Sea areas and 13% in Northwestern Sea area. Relevant Maritime Safety Instructions were issued to prevent further hazards to navigation. Graph II graphically compares the incidents and Figure 4 illustrates the geo-positioning of incidents.



Vessel Ran aground

Vessel Collided

Vessel Capsized

Figure- 4: Geo Positioning of Incidents Resulted due Error in Navigation

19. **Actions initiated by MRCC Colombo** Upon receipt of a distress alert, MRCC Colombo evaluates and categorizes it under the emergency phases of Uncertainty, Alert and Distress. Thereafter, MRCC actions are decided based on the severity and associated developments such as weather in the area. Such actions initiated in 2023 are presented in Table I and graphically presented through Charts III and IV.

Ser.	Month	Incidents Reported	MRCC Action			No. of Lives Saved
			Secured Assistance	Coordinated	Monitored	
1.	January	31	00	16	15	00
2.	February	23	02	14	07	03
3.	March	33	03	18	12	06
4.	April	23	00	20	03	00
5.	May	37	05	22	10	08
6.	June	32	02	22	08	00
7.	July	37	02	30	05	00
8.	August	35	04	22	09	09
9.	September	28	02	17	09	03
10.	October	33	02	22	09	02
11.	November	28	01	18	09	00
12.	December	37	03	17	17	04
Total		377	26	238	113	36

Table- I: Actions Initiated by MRCC Colombo in 2023

20. On completion of the evaluation, MRCC Colombo revealed that no immediate intervention is required for 113 incidents, constituting 30% of the total incidents. Therefore, owners of such vessels were educated to arrange relief, whilst MRCC continually monitored the developments taking place and updated the vessels operating nearby to extend assistance. Due to the distress position, incomplete distress message, less clarity of information and involvement of several other stakeholders; MRCC Colombo coordinated 238 incidents with relevant domestic/ foreign agencies. The number accounted for 63% of total incidents. Considering the involvement of life-threatening risk, MRCC Colombo secured assistance for 26 incidents leading to saving 36 lives in the year 2023. Among these, 24 incidents were assisted by the SLN, whilst MV Spar Mira (IMO 9490727) and MV African Turaco (IMO 9701700) recovered 07 Sri Lankan Fishermen stranded at sea. MRCC actions initiated in 2023 are graphically illustrated through Chart III and the types of platforms assisted are denoted by Chart IV.

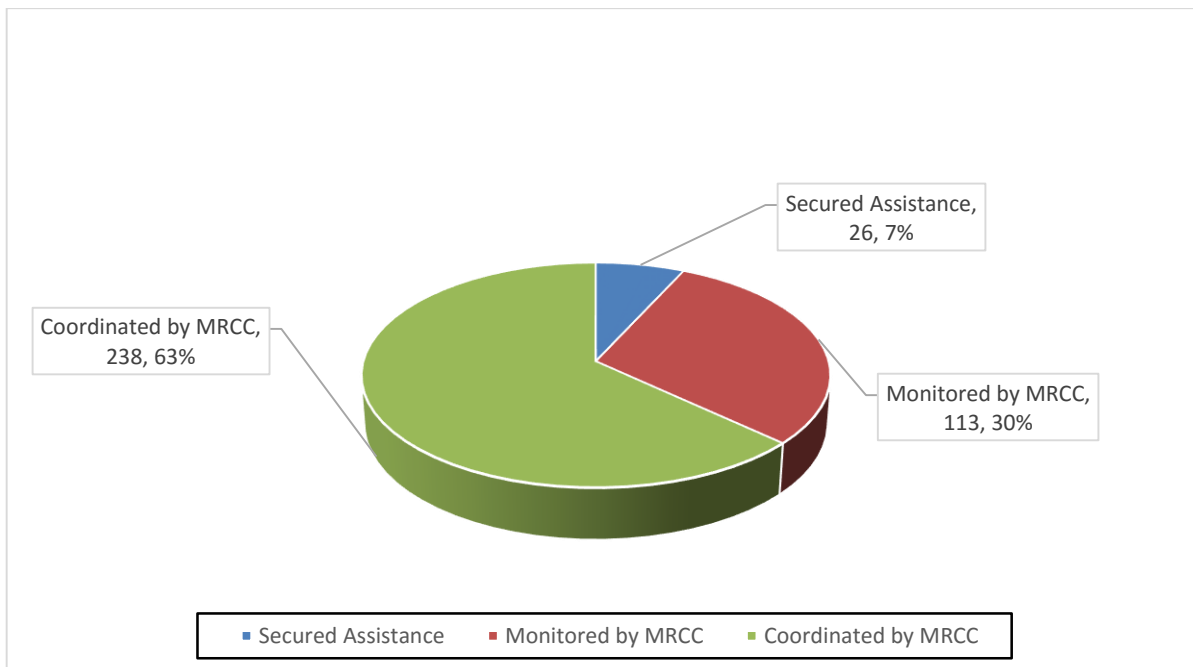


Chart III: Action Initiated by MRCC Colombo in 2023

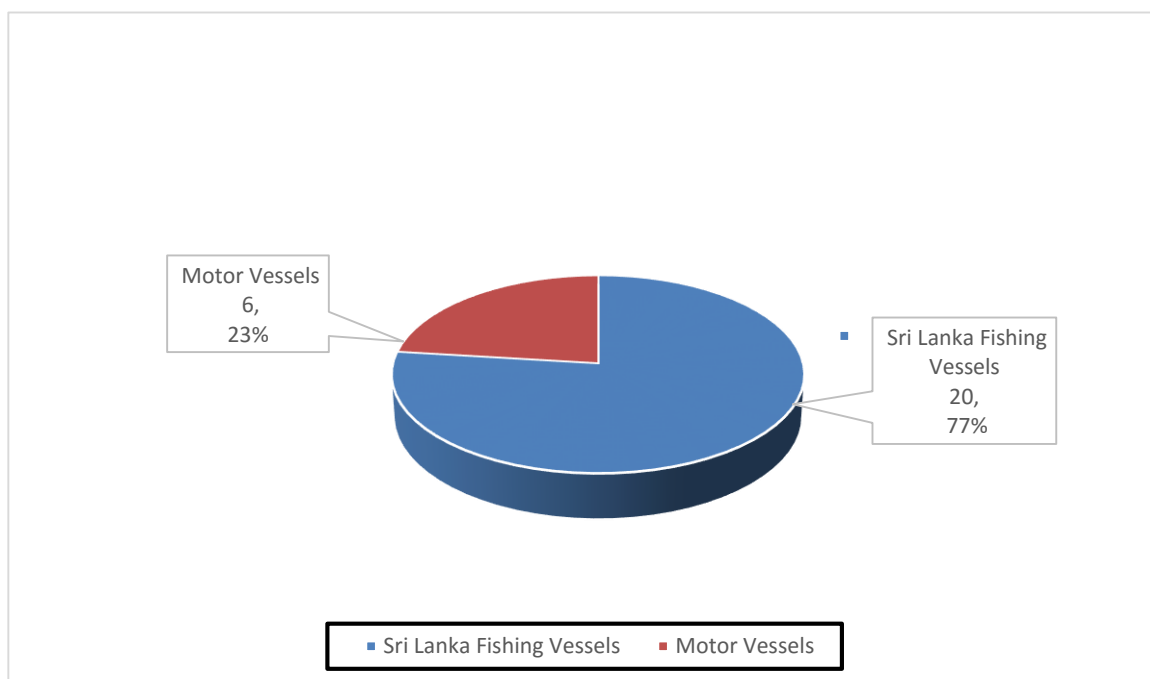


Chart IV: Types of Platforms Assisted by SLN in 2023

21. **Assistance Provided by the Sri Lanka Navy** Sri Lanka Navy is the designated Search and Rescue Unit (SRU) provider of the country. On the request of MRCC Colombo, Sri Lanka Navy deployed SRUs to assist 34 distress incidents in 2023 with a total expenditure of Rs. 194,805,429.52 Chart V demonstrates the types of assistances provided by the SLN.

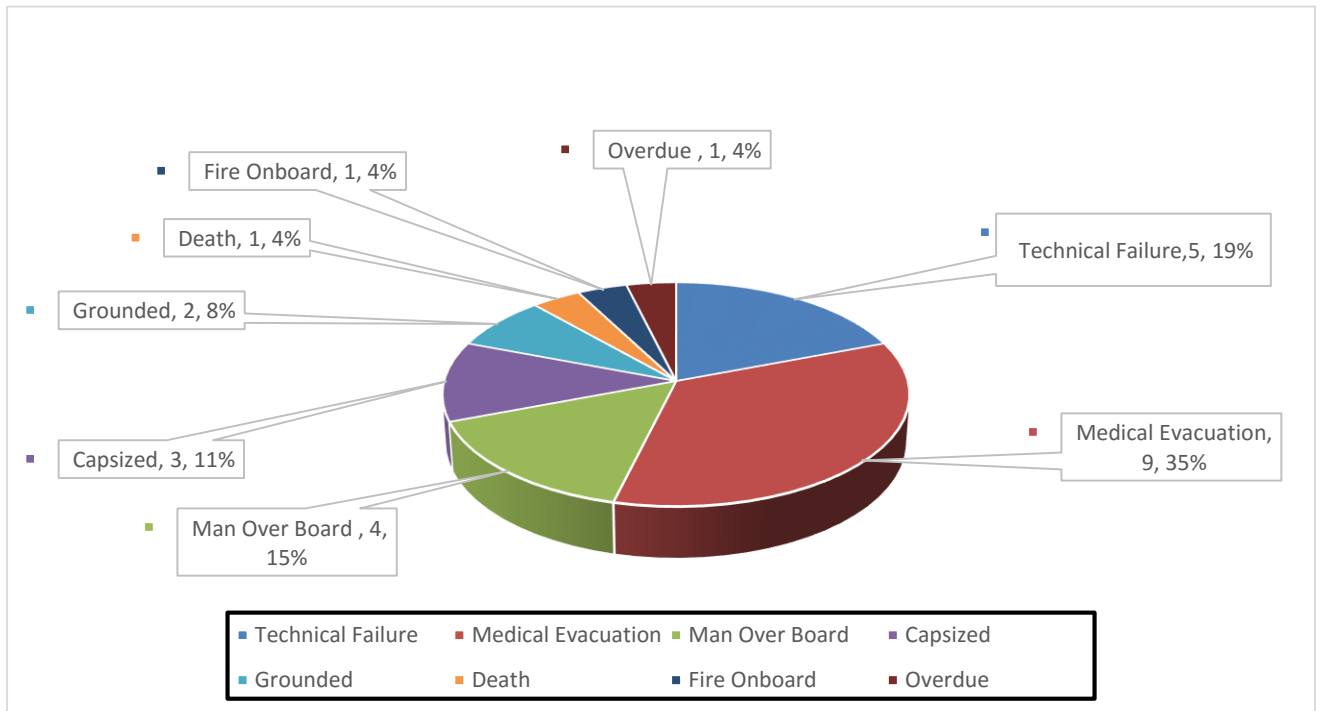


Chart- V: Types of Incidents Assisted by SLN in 2023

22. **Issuing of Maritime Safety Instructions (MSI)** During 2023, MRCC Colombo issued 113 MSI in Inmarsat 'C' terminal through Australia Maritime Safety Agency (AMSA) E-Broadcast system with the intention of preventing further casualties and securing assistance in search efforts. In addition, 04 MSI broadcasts were made through the NAVAREA VIII coordinator for the incidents which posed a danger to maritime traffic in the area.

23. **Alerts Generated by Distress Beacons** MRCC Colombo receives distress alerts generated by Distress Beacons such as Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB), Emergency Location Transponder and Personal Locator Beacon through COSPAS-SARSAT Mission Control Centres (MCC) and associated RCCs. MRCC staff verifies the distress alert directly from the subject platform or by contacting relevant authorities as per the situation demands. In 2023, 131 distress beacon alerts were received at MRCC Colombo and all were confirmed false after verifying through the aforesaid process.

System Effectiveness and Efficiency of MRCC Colombo.

24. System effectiveness and efficiency of a SAR system describes how well the programme has minimized the loss of lives and property. The success rate of MRCC Colombo was calculated as per the following formula available in Chapter 5 of the IAMSAR Manual Volume I

$$a. \text{ Programme effectiveness for preventing loss of life: } EFF(L) = \frac{LS}{LS + LLA}$$

$$b. \text{ Programme effectiveness for preventing loss of property: } EFF(P) = \frac{PLP}{PLP + PL}$$

Key: LS - Lives Saved
 LLA - Lives Lost After Notification
 PLP - Value of Property Loss Prevented (calculated estimated amount of property loss that would have occurred had the SAR system not rendered assistance).
 PL - Value of Property Lost

In 2023, MRCC (Colombo) successfully coordinated and saved 36 lives, while three patients reported dead prior to assistance was coordinated by MRCC Colombo. Further, 12 men fallen overboard were also failed to locate and recover. In addition, 11 vessels have destroyed due to grounding, collision and error in navigation whilst four vessels were recovered through the assistance rendered. The value of property loss prevented and value of property lost (PL) for each vessel is depicted below.

Vessel	PLP
IMUL-A-0484 TLE	7,500,000.00
IMUL-A-0592 GLE	4,500,000.00
IMUL-A-0611 CHW	6,500,000.00
IMUL-A-438 CHW	6,000,000.00
IMUL-A-318 CHW	9,500,000.00
IMUL-A-0641 MTR	4,500,000.00
IMUL-A-0819KLT	9,500,000.00
IMUL-A-0738CHW	25,000,000.00
IMUL-A-5004 PTM	5,000,000.00
IMUL-A-0305 MTR	5,000,000.00
IMUL-A-0352MTR	49,000,000.00
Total	132,000,000.00

Vessel	PLP
IMUL-A-0792TLE	7,500,000.00
OFRP-A-7638 CHW	800,000.00
IMUL-A-0360 MTR	2,300,000.00
IMUL-A-1604 TLE	800,000.00
Total	11,400,000.00

The system effectiveness and efficiency of MRCC Colombo as follows.

a. EFF (L): $\frac{36}{36 + 15} = 70.58\%$

b. EFF(P): $\frac{11,400,000.00}{11,400,000 + 132,000,000} = 7.94\%$

Case Studies

25. This section features the case studies of significant distress incidents reported at the MRCC Colombo in 2023.

Medical Evacuation

Date and time of report : 09 July 2023 on 1405 hrs (UTC)
Unit Reported : The Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
Unit in distress : Sri Lankan fishing vessel 'Sachintha Putha' (IMUL-A-0460 CHW)
Nature of Distress : One of the crew members had been injured as a result of an Explosion.
Distress position : 00° 22'S, 077° 00' E (208° from Galle light- 430 nm)
Incident in Brief : MRCC Colombo secured assistance from the MV Spar Mira (IMO 9490727). The recovered patient was transferred at 0621 UTC P 474 on 11 July 2023 by P 474 Provided First Aid, brought to Port of Galle and subsequently transferred to the Karapitiya Hospital Galle, Sri Lanka



After the patient taken on board MV Spar Mira



While attending first aid medicine onboard P 474

Towing Assistance

Date and time of report : 07 March 2023 at 0903 hrs (UTC)
 Unit Reported : The Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
 Unit in distress : Sri Lankan fishing vessel 'Uvindu Putha 03' (IMUL-A-0792 TLE)
 Nature of distress : Vessel Drifting due to water seeping into the engine sump at
 Distress position : 08° 59'N, 082°49'E (073 deg from Foul Pt Lt distance 94nm)

Incident in brief : MRCC Colombo educated owner to secure assistance from fishing Vessels which are near by 30 Nm radius. Concurrently, promulgated An E-broadcast educating the MVs in area. In coordination with Naval Headquarters, Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) Ship Ranadheera left Trincomalee harbour for towing assistance. At 1726(UTC) on 09 March 2023, the SLN ship reached the location and commenced the Tow. The defected vessel successfully towed to Cod Bay, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka



The powerless SLFV 'Uvindu Putha' drifting in mid sea



SLFV 'Uvindu Putha' being towed by SLN Ship Ranadheera

Search and Rescue

Date and time of report : 27 February 2023 at 1450 UTC
 Unit Reported : Director Maritime Surveillance (DNMS)
 Unit in distress : New Zealand Non-Motorized pleasure craft (Little Donkey
 MMSI 512010855)
 Nature of distress : Defect of pedal based rowing system.
 Distress position : 07.00 N, 085.51 E (080° from HBT Pt distance 285 nm) as at
 271454Z Feb 2023

Incident in brief

: Upon receipt the distress, MRCC (Colombo) promulgated E-Broadcast and subsequently contacted the local agent. Understood they are waiting for spares. At 0940 (UTC) on 02 March 2023 SLN craft P 483 left from Hambanthota International Port (HIP) to deliver the spares. However, due to the prevailed sea condition at the distressed location the pleasure craft was highly likely to drift Eastwards, therefore 02 personnel on board P483 embarked the and towed to HIP, at 2325(UTC) on 02 March 2023.



Craft at distress



Pleasure craft "Little Donkey " being towed by P 483

Under Water Search and Rescue

Date and time of report : 16 May 2023 at 1323UTC
Unit Reported : MRCC China
Unit in distress : China fishing vessel 'Lu Peng Yuan Yu 028' (MMSI 412331039)
Nature of distress : Chinese fishing vessel 'Lu Peng Yuan Yu 028' has capsized and all Crew members were reported missing.
Distress position : 050 46' S, 077° 05 E (195° Galle Lt 720 nm)
Incident in brief : Upon receipt of the distress alert, MRCC (Colombo) in Coordination with Naval Headquarters dispatched a diving Team from Galle, Sri Lanka on board SLN craft P 483 and the Diving team embarked onboard SLNS Vijayabahu at High seas. On 20 May 2023 at 0719 (UTC) SLN Ship Vijayabahu arrived to the location and commenced the diving operation at 1028 (UTC). The diving team recovered 03 corpse and hand over to MV Shandong De Long at 1811 (UTC) on 22 May 2023.



Navy divers recovering a dead body from the capsized vessel

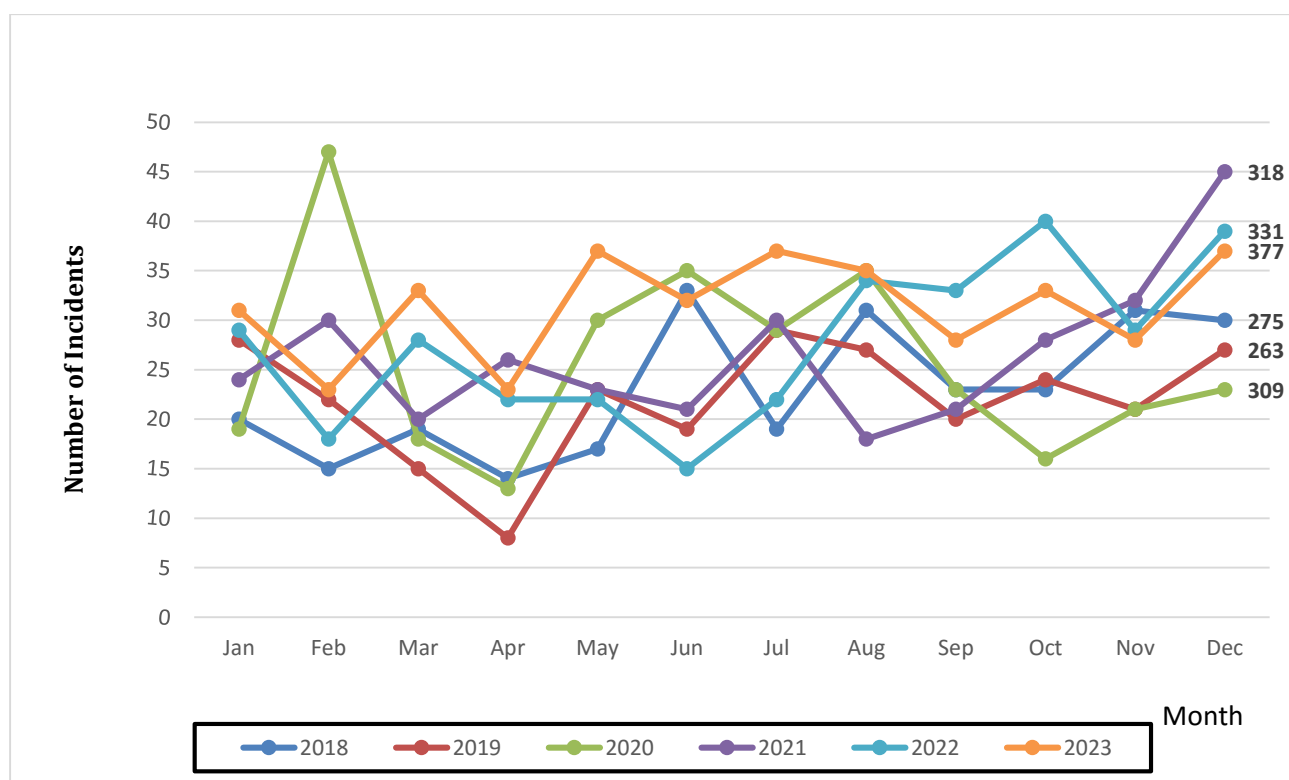


SLNS Vijayabahu acting as the OSC

26. **Number of Distress Incidents** Over the last six years from 2018 to 2023, the number of incidents reported at MRCC Colombo varies between 275 and 377. Within the said period, the lowest count was reported in 2019 (263) and the highest count was 377 in 2023. The highest increment of 46 incidents was reported between 2019 to 2020 and 2022 to 2023, an increase of 17.5% and 14% respectively. The only decline reported between 2018 and 2019 by 12 incidents equal to 4.3%. The figures are placed under Table II and graphically demonstrated in Graph III.

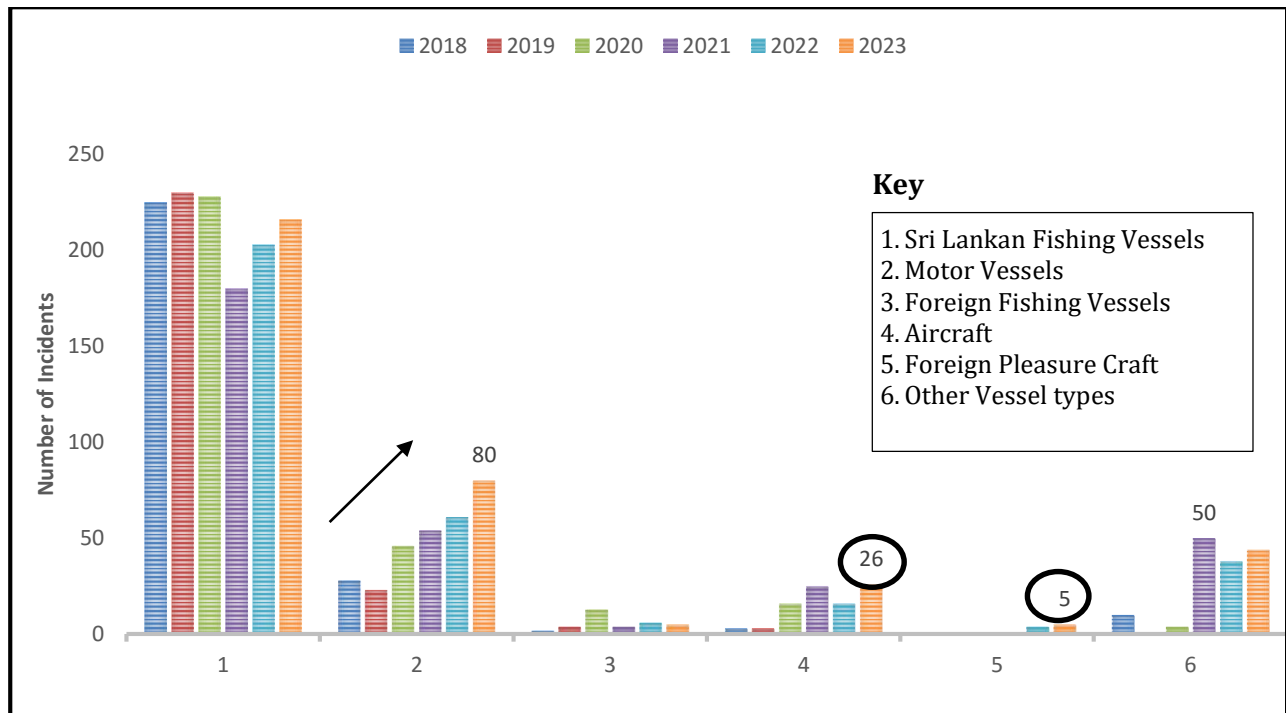
S/ NO	Month	YEAR					
		2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
1.	January	20	28	19	24	29	31
2.	February	15	22	47	30	18	23
3.	March	19	15	18	20	28	33
4.	April	14	8	13	26	22	23
5.	May	17	23	30	23	22	37
6.	June	33	19	35	21	15	32
7.	July	19	29	29	30	22	37
8.	August	31	27	35	18	34	35
9.	September	23	20	23	21	33	28
10.	October	23	24	16	28	40	33
11.	November	31	21	21	32	29	28
12.	December	30	27	23	45	39	37
Total		275	263	309	318	331	377

Table- II: Incidents Reported at MRCC Colombo from 2018 to 2023



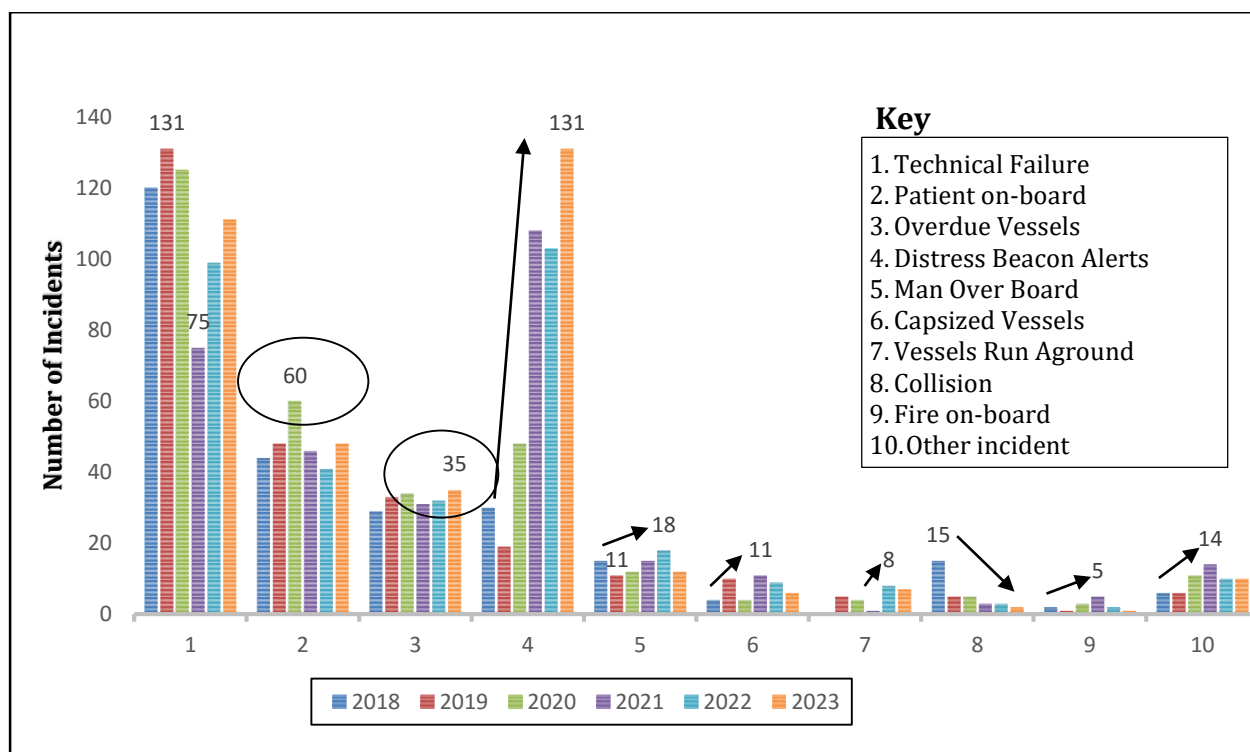
Graph - II: Comparison of Incidents Reported at MRCC Colombo from 2018 to 2023

27. **Number of Distresses Reported by their Platform** MRCC Colombo receive distress alerts from various platform types and Graph IV demonstrates the details collected over the last five years from 2018 to 2023. As a fact of common, Sri Lankan fishing vessels mark the highest contribution in every year. Further, reports made by Motor Vessels have continually grown over the time whilst reporting from foreign pleasure craft and foreign naval vessels marking the lowest count.



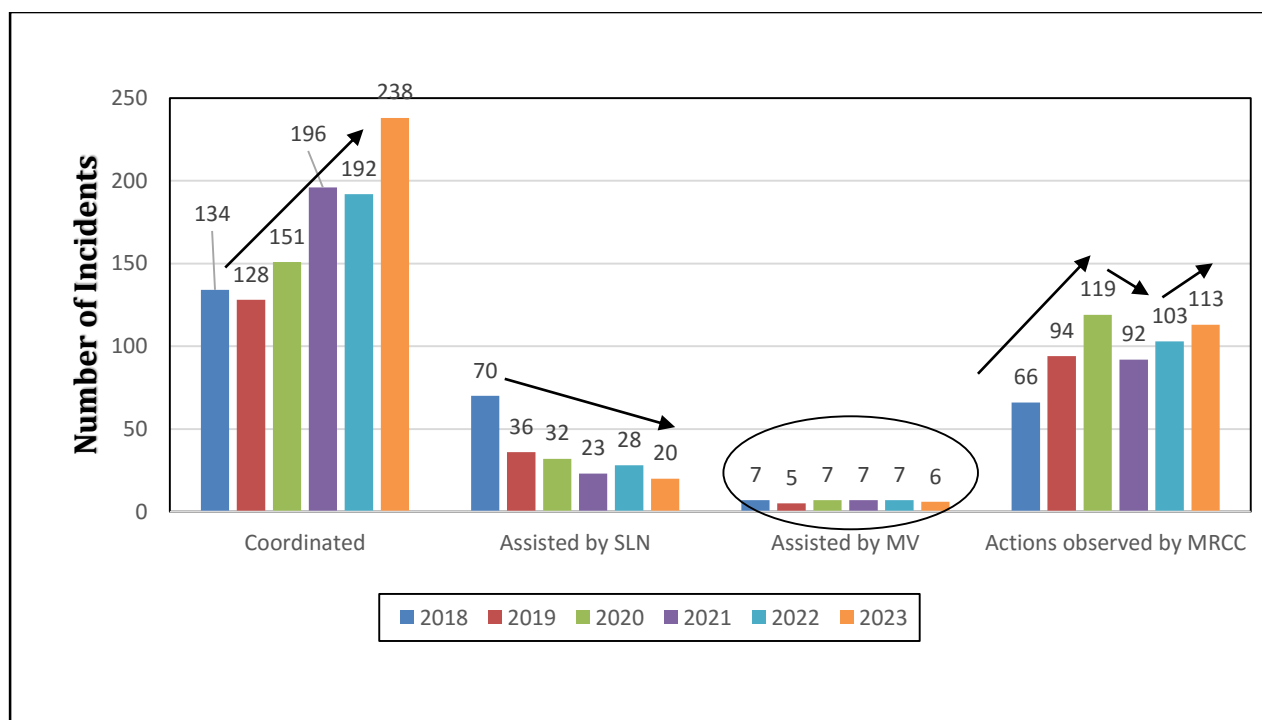
Graph - III: Comparison of Platforms Reported in Distress from 2018 to 2023

28. **Number of Distresses Reported by their Nature** Incidents reported at the MRCC Colombo from 2018 to 2023 are categorized by nature of distress under graph V. Technical failure is the most reported type of distress at MRCC Colombo from 2018 to 2023. Reports on patients' on-board and overdue vessels have maintained a similar trend with marginal deviations over time. However, Distress Beacon alerts, Men falling overboard and capsized vessels demonstrate continuous growth whilst rapid growth could be observed in Distress Beacon alerts from 2020 to 2021. In contrast, the number of vessels run- aground and collisions have reduced over the period.



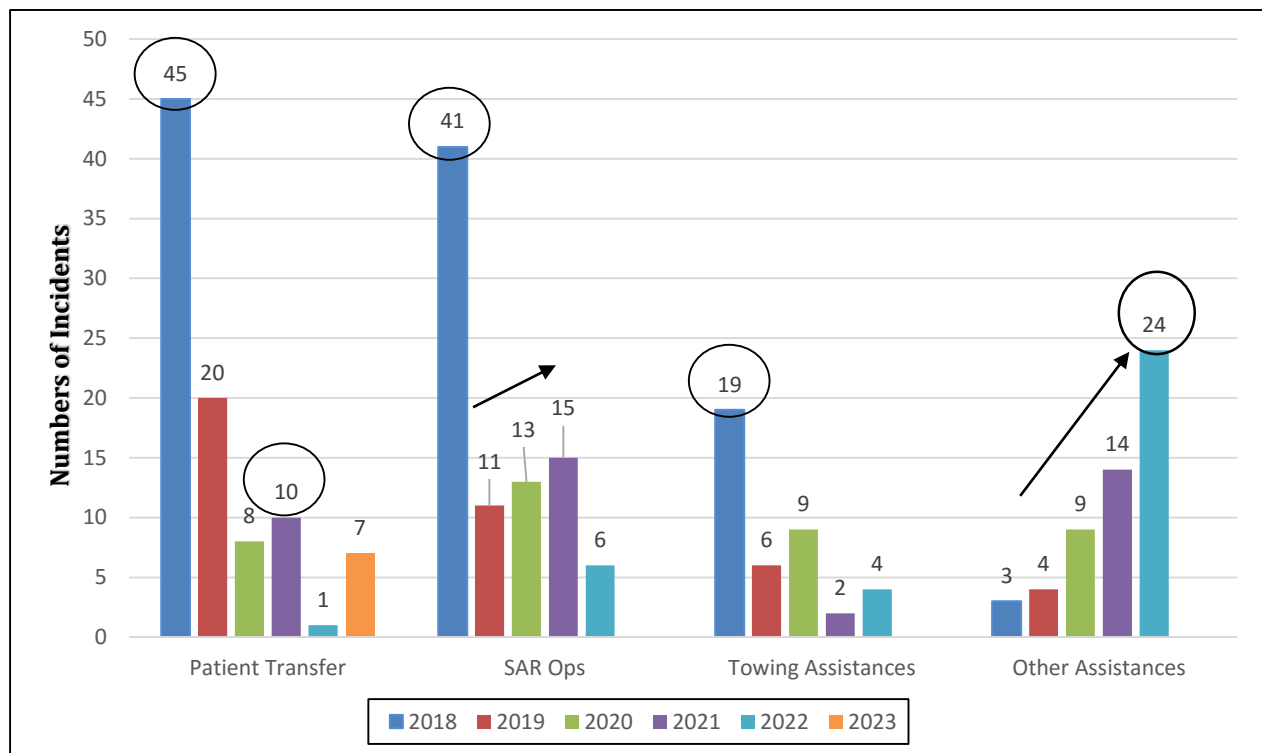
Graph -IV: Comparison of Type of Incidents Reported from 2018 to 2023

29. **Actions Initiated by MRCC Colombo** A comparison of actions initiated by MRCC from 2018 to 2023 is demonstrated through Graph VI. Over the period, the number of incidents coordinated by MRCC Colombo has generally increased and displayed a significant inclination in 2023. 2018 marks a sudden peak of SLN's assistance, which has gradually declined in 2023, the lowest figure in 6 years. The assistance provided by Motor Vessels has remained constant over the last six years whilst incidents observed by the MRCC have gradually grown up to 2020.



Graph - V: Types of MRCC actions from 2018 to 2023

30. **Assistance provided by the Sri Lanka Navy** Assistances provided by the SLN over the last six years are categorized under patient transfer, SAR Ops, towing assistance and all other types and demonstrated under Graph VII. Except for other assistances, the highest number of SLN assistances have been extended in 2018. The towing assistance and transfer of patients have been significantly reduced in 2021 and 2022 respectively. SLN involvement in SAR Ops has gradually increased across 2019 to 2021 after a notable decrease from 2018 and marked a 60% downfall in 2022. Further, towing assistance rendered has been significantly reduced from the year 2018 to 2019. However, towing assistance provided has remained at a very low number from 2019 to 2023. The economic downturn experienced by Sri Lanka aftermath of Covid 19 and soaring prices on fuel and other costs are to be blamed for the significantly low number of physical assistances that the SLN provided from the year 2019 to 2023.



Graph – VI: Type of Assistance Provided by Sri Lanka Navy

31. **Comparison of Lives Saved and Cost Incurred by the SLN for Assisting Distress Incidents** Table III compares the number of incidents assisted, lives saved and costs incurred for six years from 2018 to 2023. The highest number of lives have been saved in 2018 by assisting 90 incidents. However, 226 lives were saved in 2022, through assisting 35 incidents, which is the second highest saving of lives in a year.

S/No	Year	Assistance Secured by MRCC	Lives Saved	Cost incurred (Rs.)
01.	2018	90	466	241,278,776.89
02.	2019	41	103	28,029,294.05
03.	2020	40	117	287,217,093.87
04.	2021	30	42	49,000,495.24
05.	2022	35	226	98,934,614.39
06.	2023	26	35	194,805,429.52

Table- III: Comparison of Lives Saved and Cost Incurred by the SLN

Conclusion

32. The Southern tip of Sri Lanka hosts one of the most bustling trade routes, contributing to a significant influx of merchant traffic throughout the year. Operating a deep draught hub port in Colombo further amplifies this maritime activity. Despite the advantageous economic prospects, managing the maritime environment in Sri Lanka is intricate due to various factors.

33. As an island nation, Sri Lanka contends with a substantial fishing fleet, comprising over 5000 ocean-going multi-day trawlers and approximately 32700 artisanal fishing vessels operating in coastal waters. This complex scenario is compounded by the attraction of recreational vessels and the burgeoning popularity of seaborne leisure activities in Sri Lankan waters. Consequently, Sri Lanka finds it imperative to establish a robust mechanism ensuring the safety of mariners navigating these responsible waters.

34. In compliance with its commitment as a signatory to the 1974 Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) convention, Sri Lanka is obligated to implement and maintain numerous safety measures within its Search and Rescue Region (SRR). Recognizing these responsibilities, an upgradation project, supported by the government of India, aims to enhance the rescue coordination centre network. This initiative includes the addition of a Maritime Rescue Sub Centre (MRSC) and seven coastal radio stations (sub- units), scheduled for commissioning in early 2024.

35. Upon completion of this project, the Search and Rescue (SAR) coordination network in Sri Lanka will be fortified, featuring one main Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC), one Maritime Rescue Sub Centre (MRSC), and seven sub-stations. Figure V provides a visual representation of the planned upgrades, illustrating the strategic reinforcement of Sri Lanka's maritime safety infrastructure.

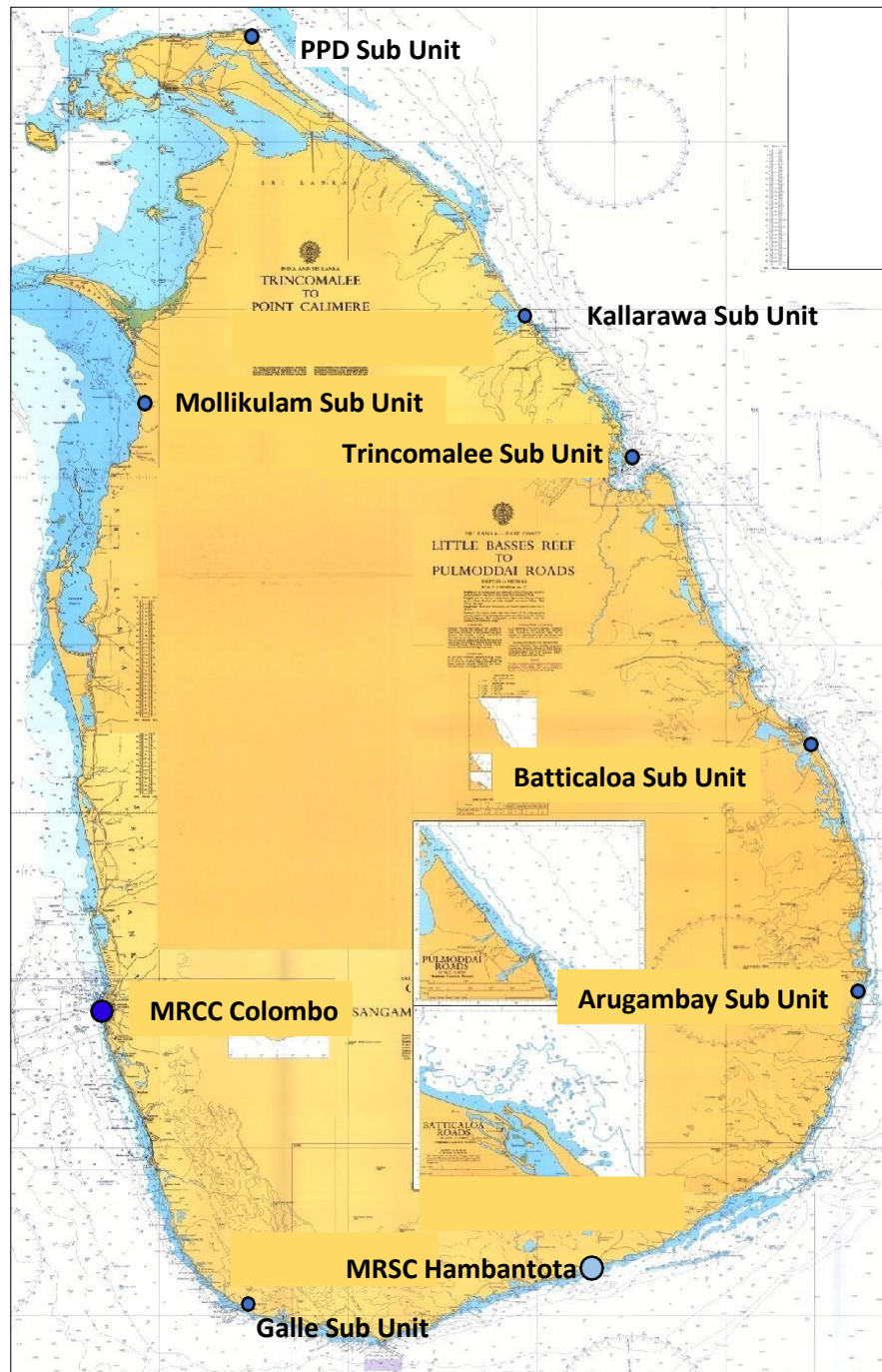


Figure- 5: Planned Rescue Coordination Centre Network