

## CHAPTER 3: Providing Free and Compulsory Basic Education for All

### 3.1 Introduction

**EFA Goal 2:** *Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to a complete free and compulsory education of good quality.*

According to the coordinators meeting report on the EFA Mid Decade Assessment in October 2005, Inclusive Education has been recommended as the approach to achieve Education for All. The aim of having this approach is given as “*to focus attention on a much broader range of children who may be excluded from or marginalised within education systems because of their apparent difficulties*”.

#### **Inclusive Education as a developmental approach in education**

*“Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups.”*

*(Salamanca World conference on Special Education 1994, The Salamanca statement and framework for action on Special Needs Education, Para 3)*

The inclusive education approach identified three broad categories of children, They are:

- those who are enrolled in schools, but are excluded from learning
- those who are not enrolled in schools, but who could participate if schools were more flexible in their responses and welcoming in their approach
- relatively small group of children with more severe impairments who may have a need for some form of additional support

The Dakar World Education Forum recognised the urgency to address the needs of these learners as:

*“...Education systems must be inclusive, actively seeking out children who are not enrolled, and responding flexibly to the circumstances and needs of all learners...”*

### 3.2 UBE in Sri Lankan Context

When EFA is viewed through this perspective the necessity arises in formulating an assessment report to look into steps taken to make the education relevant to local contexts, and able to treat all pupils with respect and flexibility so that all can participate.

The **Universal Basic Education** is defined in Sri Lanka as education in grades 1–9, 6-14 years of age. Education is compulsory for **all children** in this age span.

Majority of the 8% non-participating children and those students who are dropouts and low achievers, come from vulnerable groups.

The National Education Commission of Sri Lanka identifies the following as vulnerable groups of children:

- Plantation children
- Children with disability
- Working children including in those domestic service
- Children of migrant women workers
- Street children
- Orphaned, abandoned and destitute children within and outside Children’s Homes
- Children in Remand Homes, Detention Centres and Certified Schools

(NEC, 2003: 87)

Other vulnerable groups such as gypsies, aboriginals (Vedda community), internally displaced children and children in war threatened areas also need mention. The policies, programmes and issues related to above mentioned groups are outlined in the chapter.

### **3.2.1 Sri Lanka's history of Policy and Legal framework for free and compulsory education**

#### **Compulsory Basic Education:**

The Education Ordinance No. 31 of 1939 provided for enabling legislation to enforce the compulsory attendance of the 5-14 age group, but the then government did not take necessary steps to introduce regulations to enforce this policy. The first report of the National Education Commission (1992) drew attention to the need for legislation on compulsory education. Thus, after six decades, regulations to enforce compulsory education for the 5-14 age group was introduced with Gazette notification 1003/5 of 25 November 1997. These regulations require parents to ensure admission of their children to school and their continued attendance.

The Education Ordinance No. 26 of 1947 (amending the 1939 Ordinance) provided for the extension of compulsory education to 16 years of age. However, the enforcement of this requirement did not take place in the attendance regulations of 1997. This was again proposed by the NEC with the 2003 proposals. Yet no positive outcome has been achieved.

#### **Free Education:**

In 1945 Free Education Act paved the way for children from poor families to gain free access to education. The Kannangara Report (SPXXIV) introduced legislation to provide free primary, secondary, university and other

forms of tertiary education to all.

Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (1978) guarantees fundamental rights to all persons to universal and equal access to education at all levels. The constitution of Sri Lanka states that "*the complete eradication of illiteracy and the assurance to all persons of the right to universal and equal access to education at all levels*". (Constitution of Sri Lanka, Article 27).

#### **Language Policies:**

The language policy in education has also facilitated the success stories in reaching the high standards of compulsory education. The law states that the medium of instruction of students should be their mother tongue. Thus Sinhala children study in the Sinhala medium while Tamil children study in the Tamil medium. Although the mother tongue of Muslim students is usually Tamil, they are free to choose either medium. However, some schools have started English medium classes in recent times for those students who opt to study in that medium.

#### **Decentralisation:**

Under the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment to the constitution budget, planning and administrative responsibilities were decentralised to provincial authorities. (for details pl. refer section 1.12)

### **3.2.2 National Plans -after 2000-towards achieving UBE - (National Action Plan for the Children of Sri Lanka 2004-2008)**

The National Plan of Action for Children (NPA) has converted the policy into action in the child development sector. The main focus of the plan is to improve the quality of education. The targets and objectives of the NPA which are focused towards achieving UBE are:

## **I. Provision of Universal Primary Education (UPE) of good quality**

Objectives:

1. Ensure full participation of children in the age group 5-9 in primary education
2. Ensure that 90% of the children completing primary education attain mastery level in essential learning competencies.

## **II. Improve quality, access and equity in Secondary Education**

Objectives:

1. Increase enrolment in secondary education
2. Improve the quality of education at junior secondary level
3. Enhance equity in provision of secondary education
4. Reduce dropouts to less than 1%

## **III. Development of Education in conflict affected areas**

Objectives:

1. Ensure provision of infrastructure facilities to meet the needs of total student population
2. Ensure the availability of human resources to provide quality instruction
3. Ensure total population of children between 5-14 age group in education
4. Strengthen programmes to meet the educational needs of out of school children
5. Ensure access and improve the quality of pre-school education

(National Plan of Action for the children of Sri Lanka, 2004-2008)

The Plan originated along with the primary education reforms. A number of stakeholders, especially the MoE, participated in the formulation of this plan coordinated by National Planning Department. It was planned to be implemented and monitored under the all relevant ministries and authorities. However, this plan is not being implemented to fulfil the original objectives. Now this task is taken over by newly formed Ministry of Child Development and Women's Empowerment. Therefore implementation and monitoring is done by administrators without experience or implementing and monitoring responsibilities in the field of education.

### **3.2.3 Programmes and Strategies to achieve UBE**

#### **3.2.3.1 General Policies and Programmes**

##### **I. Enhance equity in the provision of primary and secondary education**

###### **a. Networking**

The development of the network of schools providing primary and secondary education in disadvantaged locations (primary education within 2km and secondary education within 4km) was attempted to improve student access. However, disparities in the provision of quality education have been a concern for many years.

###### **b. Admission Policy**

Recent developments regarding the policy of admission of children to the first grade of the primary cycle had alarming undertones for access to education. There is a widely held belief that the quality of education delivered by some, so called “popular” schools is better than that of other schools. These schools are invariably urban, mostly 1AB, most congenial type. The belief of

better education, although not entirely correct, is not without some foundation as these prestigious schools have much more facilities than the rest. Due to this belief there is a heavy demand for admission to grade 1 of the urban, especially the popular, schools. Hence there were strict regulations governing admissions to grade one issued by the MoE to ensure fair play, giving quotas to different categories, such as children of close proximity, children of past pupils, etc. But there were frequent disputes regarding the adhering to the circular instructions some of which end up in courts of law. In 2007, the Supreme Court intervened in the matter and issued guidelines for the formulation of fresh regulations for admission to grade 1 in 2008. According to these guidelines the children were tested for competency and were given marks, in addition to other considerations. Due to this practice, some children who are residing very close to a given school were denied admission while children living several kilometres away were admitted. The subjectivity/reliability of these competency marks were also questioned. This policy negates two main accepted policies for equitable access to education:

1. providing a primary school within two kilometres of a child's residence. This tends to affect the initial intake rates
2. Accepted policy for inclusive education

Fortunately, the government has decided to amend this circular to ensure equity of access. (Pls also see **VIa**)

Students can also gain admission to popular schools through results of the

grade 5 scholarship examination (pls. refer section **VIa**)

## II. General Education Reforms

**The most recent education reforms at all levels up to senior secondary began in 1997. They are:**

- Enforcement of Compulsory Education Regulations through School Attendance Committees (Pl. refer. Appendix 2) at primary and secondary levels
- Improving the quality of learning that covers grades 1 to 5 through an appropriate mix of play, activity and desk work with an emphasis on the development of competencies related to communication, natural- and the artificial- environment, ethics and religion, use of leisure and learning to learn.
- A strengthening of English by introducing Oral English in key stage 1 and improving the teaching of formal English from grade 3 to grade 5.
- Three kinds of books – text books for the use of pupils to direct their own learning, work books designed to help pupils to master the material, and supplementary readers to help pupils to receive further information through reference were to be provided to the school.
- School-based assessment (SBA) was to be used to assess the abilities and capabilities of each pupil. It was to be undertaken in a manner that promotes group work and co-operation among pupils.
- Emphasis was placed on practical work and projects.
- English language, which was introduced at primary level, was to be strengthened at junior secondary school stage also

with a modification of syllabuses, and new textbooks, workbooks and supplementary readers being provided.

- The change from science to science and technology was another. Junior Science Laboratories and ICT facilities were provided with the change
- The subject of social studies was to be enriched with an inclusion of components with contemporary significance such as Peace Education, National Integration, Democratic Principles, Human Rights, Gender Equality and Environmental Conservation.
- “Life Competencies” was introduced through several subjects (for details pl refer section 4.3.2)
- In order to direct pupils to self-learning by using simple equipment and techniques, an activity room was to be provided to every school.
- To develop and strengthen linkages between vocational training and school education, guidance and vocational counseling was to be provided to both pupils and their parents.

By the end of 2003, the introduction of the reforms across primary grade span was completed. There were shortcomings in the implementation process such as awareness building at school and other levels.

The MoE in collaboration with the NIE and the provincial education authorities was expected to develop a system for continuous monitoring and supervision of the implementation of the reforms. But a proper monitoring mechanism did not materialise for the smooth functioning of new system at school level.

The continuous teacher training need for the sustaining of the reforms did not take place properly.

With a view to promoting a sense of belonging and patriotism and a Sri Lankan identity rooted in the country’s rich tapestry of culture and respecting and sharing these diverse cultures and to meeting the immediate need for social cohesion through learning to live with others in harmony respecting the diversity of cultures in a multi ethnic, multi religious and multi cultural society with sensitivity to differences, preventing and resolving conflict through discussion and rejecting violence, the following changes are being implemented, starting at grades 6, 9 and 12 in 2007:

- Introduction of History, Civics and Geography as separate subjects, at grades 6 to 9, to replace environmental studies in grade 6 and social studies in grades 7 to 11
- Integration of generic skills such as critical thinking, initiative, problem solving, team work and human values in the content, activities and teaching learning experiences
- Introduction of a new subject called Technology with 6 options and practical components in grades 12 and 13 (GCE A/L) present curriculum

The competencies that each pupil should attain at the end of each key stage have been identified and grouped into two categories the essential learning competencies and desirable learning competencies. At key stage one the mode of learning is primarily play and activities. In key stage two there is a mix of play, activities and deskwork. In key stage three there is greater emphasis on deskwork.

There are several key features in the junior secondary school curriculum. The curriculum comprises twelve subjects. In this curriculum some of the subjects which were in operation

before 1999 have been modified and subject titles changed. The curriculum places emphasis on strengthening and consolidation of the five sets of basic competencies focused at primary school level.

As per MoE Circular 2006/09, students at senior secondary stage 1, leading to GCE O/L examination (grades 10 and 11), are offering nine subjects including three “optional” subjects. These subjects are to be picked from three baskets. The student needs to pass six subjects including Mathematics and Mother Tongue, and have at least three credit passes among them, to be considered as having passed the GCE O/L with qualification to enter GCE A/L.

Students at senior secondary stage 2, leading to GCE A/L examination (grades 12 and 13), are offering three subjects. In addition they are allowed to sit for General English, and must take and pass the General Knowledge subject in order to enter a national university. Though they may take any combination of three subjects, there are three main streams, Science, Commerce, and Arts, they need to follow, in order to enter most streams at university level. The Z-score method is used to compare the results of different examination subjects in selecting prospective undergraduates.

### **III Effective recruitment and deployment of teachers**

A circular with a ‘ready reckoner’ is used by the MoE to calculate the teacher requirement of each school. Deficits and excesses of any given school are calculated on the criteria included in this circular. The required number of teachers for a given school is calculated on the basis of enrolments in grades 1 to 5, 6 to 11 and 12 to 13. Teachers are allocated on the basis of one teacher for about every 30 students. (However, a minimum of 3 teachers are allocated to small schools

irrespective of the size of enrolment.) The allocation includes teachers for general subjects, Science and Mathematics, English, Aesthetics and Technical subjects. A teacher is also given for Guidance and counselling. In addition, grade coordinators and sectional heads are allocated to medium and large schools based upon enrolment in the primary and secondary cycles. Every school is entitled to a principal in addition to the above. The average overall student teacher ratio comes down to about 22:1 excluding the principal with all allocations. Teacher transfers are expected to be sanctioned and new teacher recruits are distributed among the provinces on the basis of this circular. However, factors outside the regulations such as intervention by politicians and interested officials have made this issue a messy problem. Unplanned recruitment has created an oversupply causing unfruitful drain on scarce resources. The mass recruitment of nearly 50,000 new, mostly unqualified teachers in early 90’s created a lot of problems for the school system. 30000 graduates have been recruited recently as teachers with only three month intensive training. Majority of these are working at basic education level.

### **IV Teacher Education**

The National Colleges of Educations are providing the pre-service teacher training. National Institute of Education, Universities, and Provincial Authorities of Education are other main institutions for in-service training. Professional development of graduate teachers is provided through Departments of Education in the Universities and National Institute of Education. Approximately 100 Teacher Centres and 30 Regional English Support Centres were established to support continuing teacher education of all teachers in the system.

### Weakness of the teacher training programmes:

- Most of the teachers are teaching at primary level non-primary teachers. Although some have had training at the colleges of education, others are not trained professionally of their subjects.
- Most of postgraduate diploma programmes are too theoretical. These do not provide skills for teaching young children, especially methods based progress
- Most of teacher training programmes do not provide competencies in methods for assessing pupil's progress.
- The teacher centres do not meet the original objectives as established due to the administration and staff problems. It is necessary to develop a mechanism to strengthen the capacity to conducting continuing teacher education at zonal and school level.

### V Provision of teaching learning aids (Quality Inputs)

The Norm-Based Unit Cost Resource Allocation Mechanism is adopted to allocate resources to schools. The first stage of implementation of this formula treated all schools similarly with adjustments only for school size to accommodate economies of scale, poverty levels of most disadvantaged schools and variations of subjects taught and grade cycles covered.

However, this mechanism has been gradually improved to give schools more flexibility to satisfy the specific needs of every school. This is a positive step taken to improve the equality of education.

Continuing monitoring mechanism needs to be introduced at zonal and school levels for proper implementation and functioning of the system.

### VI Special Programmes

#### a) Provision of a range of subsidies to students

The MoE each year allocates 10% of its budget for subsidies to provide free textbooks to all students from grade 1 to grade 11, children including private schools and high-income households.

The current subsidy budget is LKR 3.435 billion. The subsidies and its coverage is summarised as follows:

#### Free Textbooks

Textbooks, workbooks and supplementary reading books are provide for the primary students in their mother tongue. Textbooks and Workbooks are provided for each student up to grade 11.

#### School Uniform

As the largest subsidy school uniform material is provided to all students.

The problem is supplying these uniform materials and textbooks to all students without identifying the needs. This is a main causes for wastage of resource.

**Table 3.1: Student Subsidies from Sri Lankan Government**

Subsidy programme	Coverage	Estimated Budget (year) LKR MI
Free Textbooks	For all	1,165
Bursaries/Scholarships	Targeted	2.4
School Nutrition	Targeted	700
Supply of Spectacles	Targeted	0.33
School season transport	For all	
School Uniforms	For all	1,260

Source: Ministry of Education.

### **Grade 5 Scholarships**

The Grade 5 Scholarship is provided to students of low-income families. Annually 10,000 bursaries are given to children of families with an income below LKR 24,000.00 (about US\$ 218) per annum to enhance access to secondary education.

However, the question remains whether the children selected are the most deserving as the selection is made through a competitive examination. It has been found that the students from higher income families fare much better than those from families below the poverty line. Hence the most deserving may not qualify for the bursaries and be automatically left out.

### **Other Scholarships**

*Sisusaviya* scholarships for disadvantaged students funded by the Asian Development Bank was implemented from 2002 to 2005 for students in grades 10 and 11 who, having successfully completed GCE O/L at the first attempt and wish to continue their studies further. 65% of the total number of scholarships was allocated to “difficult” districts only. The threshold income level remained at LKR 24,000. A monthly grant of LKR 500 for 10 months amounting to LKR 5000 is payable to awardees. Unlike in the Grade 5 scholarship, purposes for which the award money should be spent are specified. The specifications include study material such as books and school equipment, hostel facilities and traveling expenditure. (MoE, Secondary Modernisation project, 2005)

The Employees Trust Fund (ETF) offers financial grants to the successful children of those parents who are subscribers to the fund. ETF is a government maintained fund.

### **School nutrition programmes**

School nutrition programmes are implemented in approximately 8023 focus schools in difficult areas, mainly for students of grades 1 and 2. Approximately 6500 schools are supported by the government subsidy. Another 1378 are

supported by the World Food Programme and the rest are supported by the Provincial Councils of the country. The allocation per student is LKR 15.00 per day. Annually LKR 500 million is allocated by the MoE. Other two sources incur about LKR 200 million per year (ESDFP, 2006).

### **Other subsidies**

Spectacles are provided to the needy students of selected schools on request. LKR 330,000 is allocated annually for this.

Transport subsidy is paid to the public transport providers to issue season tickets at 25% of the actual fare to students to travel to and from school.

### **b) Developing school libraries**

Financial provision was made in 2001 by the General Education Project -2 to construct over 250 new libraries, convert over 700 excess buildings as libraries, purchase books for over 200 libraries, conduct programmes for development of reading habits in 200 schools and to train 4000 Library Development Officers attached to libraries.

### **c) Development of small schools at disadvantaged locations**

Small rural schools scattered island wide provide access to basic education for a substantial proportion of the population. SIDA, UNICEF, and GTZ supported the development of small schools from the ‘90s. But there is no continuation or sustainability.

Successive governments began secondary schools development projects, such as Navodya, DSD, and Isuru (active at present), and other programmes. They do not take the disadvantaged schools in the vicinity into account. Without a proper plan or strategy, the small schools are threatened with closure due to the lack of intake, thereby disadvantaging those vulnerable groups who find it most difficult to go to schools further away. The original plan,



envisaging a network of primary feeder schools around a secondary school with better facilities, although gaining Cabinet approval, did not materialise.

### **3.2.3.2 Education for specific vulnerable groups**

#### **I. Education of the Children of the Plantation Community**

'Children of resident plantation labour families' have been integrated in the national system of education starting from early seventies. The plantation population is about 6.3% of the population and is mainly in Nuwara Eliya, Badulla, Ratnapura and Kandy districts. These schools have benefited from special donor assisted programmes. Special programmes were initiated since 1983 with funding from the Swedish International Development Agency. The most recent phase of funding was from the German Technical Corporation (GTZ). A National College of Education was established to train plantation youth with GCE A/L qualifications as teachers for the plantation sector schools. The teacher shortages in these schools will be rectified in the near future.

#### **II. Special provisions to improve schools and education in conflict affected areas**

Construction of buildings, toilets, water supply in North and East Provinces and adjacent districts, reactivating School Attendance Committees, devising and implementing Catch-Up Education programmes are attempted. Teacher training on psycho-social counselling focused to teachers in the North, East and other threatened areas was provided. Master teachers in other parts of the country were also given the training.

Although programmes are implemented on an ad-hoc basis there is no way to obtain data on the issues of education in the conflict-affected areas.

### **III. Children with Disabilities**

Sri Lanka has taken steps to adopt the concept of inclusive education for special education. However, implementation of the concept of inclusive education has encountered problems. The current statistics on children with disabilities from MoE (2007) indicates that 22,500 of the 5-14 age group are disabled. However, accuracy of this statistics is questionable as there had been discrepancies in the figures in the past few years. Currently special education services are provided through 850 special education units in government schools and 25 assisted special schools.

The curriculum reform with child friendly school, activity based learning, competence based approach and extended continuous assessment has been supportive to the education of the children with disabilities.

A programme for teacher training on inclusive education has been introduced in one of the NCOEs and the NIE has prepared materials for teacher training. A decision was taken to establish a Special Education Needs Department in one of the Universities. However, the staff and resources have not been provided for this department.

The provision of education along with other students in the standard classroom has been introduced. However, the process of identification of disabilities and assessment of their special needs is not well established.

Although Sri Lanka has adopted the inclusive education concepts,

implementation has not taken place properly at all relevant levels, due to the lack of awareness of the concepts among education authorities, school principals, teachers, parents and community. The required resources need to be provided to the schools to create an inclusive environment.

#### **IV. Reduce incidence of child labour**

The minimum employable age is 16 years. Provision of compulsory education as a means of prevention, strengthening legal framework and policies related to child labour, sensitizing the public on the need to eradicate child labour, providing career guidance and counselling in schools are some of the measures implemented. However, lack of a strong mechanism to collect data on child labour has hindered addressing the issue comprehensively. The Department of Labour has identified several types of child labour prevalent in Sri Lanka mainly hidden in the informal sector. The forms of child labour are:

- Domestic labour where children work for others as servants
- Employment in boutiques as workers carrying out a range of tasks from lifting weights, packaging and running errands
- Street vending
- Begging
- Rural crafts makers or helping adults in their work
- Petty trade
- Family business
- Small and medium factories and automobile repair shops
- Working in restaurants and way side eating places
- Child soldiers

Employment of children in domestic work and in various forms of industrial, mining, agricultural, fisheries and service sector enterprises, as well as for military purposes and in criminal activities, are considered as worst forms of child labour. The use of children for pornographic activities, prostitution, armed combat and drug trafficking, are also condemned and identified for elimination.

Recently a UNICEF survey (2004) was conducted among 800 households from each district. When a child is used in labour activities for more than 4 hours a day on any household or outside household work it is considered as child labour. In the north and east districts an average of 4% of children in the school-going-age, without gender difference, work for more than 4 hours a day. However, a similar survey (UNICEF, 2004) conducted in seven other districts revealed that the average is much higher (12.2%). It is reported that 95% of working children are employed to work within the premises of the houses. However, this figure is not based on population figures. Nevertheless, it is an indication of the degree of prevalence.

Jayathilake (2004) reviews several studies which points out that poverty is the main reason for child labour. (Jayaweera et al. 2002; Amarasinghe 2002; SAPI 2002)

A National Plan of Action for the elimination of worst forms of child labour is being prepared. The state has made a firm commitment to the elimination of child labour by being signatories to the relevant UN and ILO conventions.

## V. Education for Street children

The 'street children' are those who live alone or with their families on the streets. They face this situation due to lack of housing, conflict, dysfunction of families and escape from detention centres. Most of these children come from slum areas. They are malnourished and burdened with acute poverty. Sometimes these children engage in petty work and odd jobs. Some of them are exploited by beggar-masters, narcotic dealers or robbers. The facilities to assist them to enter into mainstream education are minimal. Community Learning Centre programme is an intervention to direct street children into education. These are run with the assistance of the government as well as non-governmental organisations. The number of Community Learning Centres in operation in 2006 was 138. The total number participated in these programmes was 7495. Number of instructors involved in this programme was 430. (MoE, NFE, 2006). At these centres children are provided with opportunities to improve literacy and vocational skills. After this programme the children are admitted to the nearby government schools. Lack of reliable data prevents any further action to address this issue. Lack of organised day care/drop-in centres, lack of training for the caregivers in drop-in and learning centres and stigma attached to the street children are aspects that need further attention.

## VI. Education for Displaced children

Displaced children could be identified in relation to the causes of displacement.

The following are some of the categories of children who are displaced:

- Due to the conflict in the North and East
- Security reasons have caused evacuations resulting in displacement
- Due to natural disasters such as Tsunami, floods, land slides  
The displacement occurred due to Tsunami was addressed comparatively quickly and most children are back in schools. One of the most obvious areas the state has to deal with is that of education of the displaced as a result of the internal conflict.

The categories of children who are displaced can be categorised as:

- Children in grades for which they are much overage
- Children in grades for which their levels of achievement are too low for the particular grades
- Children without schools closer to their residence
- Children who cannot be enrolled in any grade of a formal school without adequate preparation

A situational analysis of catch-up education programmes was done in November 2003 with the sponsorship of UNICEF. Catch Up Education generally means providing extra support to children as a temporary measure.

In the absence of proper data collection it is very difficult to assess the incidence of displacement. It is only the existence of this phenomenon that can be reported. Extracts from reports, news items, give an idea on the groups of displaced children.

## **VII. Education for Children in detention**

A considerable number of reforms have been carried out for the better protection of the child within the judicial system since 1995.

- Penal Code (Amendment) Act No.22 of 1995
- Penal Code (Amendment) Act No.29 of 1998
- Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Act No. 20 of 1995
- Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Act No. 19 of 1997
- Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Act No. 28 of 1998
- Judicature Act (Amendment) No. 27 of 1998
- Evidence (Special Provisions) Act No.32 of 1999

However further revisions have been proposed to the existing provision by considering the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A juvenile justice code is prepared.

## **VIII. Education for children of ‘Vedda’ community**

‘Veddas’ are a near extinct aboriginal community, confined at the moment to a narrow strip of forest. The few hundred people belonging to this community live at present as four groups. They speak a different dialect which is basically Sinhala and have no difficulty in being educated in the Sinhala medium. Access to education is not an issue since state schools are located in these villages. A study conducted by the NEREC in 2004 reveals the access issues related to this community. A sample survey conducted in one of the villages indicates that school going ‘Vedda’

children from grades 1-5 constitute 60% of the total population in the relevant age group. However, a 50% decrease is shown in attendance in the secondary education. Educational achievement in basic education is low due to poverty, mismatch between the curriculum and their daily life, non-use of reading and writing in their daily life. Only 9% remain in the grades 10 and 11.

Although females are enrolled, gradually the number decreases and participation is very low in the upper grades. Both school and community related factors contribute to the low participation in education. Among the school related factors the mismatch and the low quality of education provided by the school are the main contributory factors for the low motivation and performance in education. Another main factor for the decrease in student population from grades 6-9 is the fact that they join the family and community in their diverse economic activities. Some of them serve as tour guides to tourists who visit the ‘Vedda’ community. Disruption of schooling is a serious problem. However, one special feature is that unlike other state schools the ‘Vedda’ students are allowed to re-enter the school even after an absence of one year.

## **IX. Others**

In addition to the groups mentioned in the NEC report there are a few groups of children who need special attention, such as:

- **Children of migrant parents**  
The education of children of parents who have migrated to foreign countries as unskilled labourers falls into this

category. Depending on the quality of substitute care received from the caregiver children will continue their education.

- **Children who are recruited by the LTTE (Child soldiers)**

Many reports are available through the media and the armed forces about children in the compulsory school-going-age being forcefully recruited as soldiers by the LTTE in the North and the East.

Reliable data is not available regarding both these groups.

### 3.3 Educational financing towards compulsory education

National Expenditure on education declined from 3.5% in the 1990s to about 3% of the national income by 2005. The government education expenditure in Sri Lanka currently amounts to about US\$ 415 million annually which is about 7-9% of government spending (Aturupana, 2005). The escalation of defence expenditure in the context of civil war has contributed to the decline of expenditure allocated to education. Defence expenditure in 2005 absorbed over 5% of the GDP. The other reasons for relatively moderate public education investment include: the broad range of public services such as free health care, wide ranging access to poverty alleviation programmes such as the 'Sammurdhi', low public revenue which has contributed to the large budget deficits and constrained government expenditures.

Sri Lanka has a dual system of financing in the education sector as the subject of education is devolved to the provinces. The national government assumes the responsibility for the administration of National Schools through the MoE. The Ministry of Finance provides funds under the two headings namely, recurrent and capital expenditure. Capital expenditure is given to the central Ministry as a block grant while recurrent expenditure for the schools run by provincial councils is channelled through the Finance Commission to the Provincial Education Authorities.

The major proportion of recurrent expenditure (nearly 75%) is spent on teacher salaries. Teacher salaries, school text books and uniforms account for nearly 95% of all recurrent expenditure.

The short fall from the national budget is partly offset by donor funding. Until the 1980s flow of foreign aid to education had been a trickle.

The UN- agencies such as UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF and bi-lateral assistance from Commonwealth countries and Colombo Plan were the sources of grants. In 1982 SIDA started to provide funds to develop education in the estate sector in mid 1980s GTZ, the German arm of state assistance to developing countries, also stepped in for assistance.

Funding by both organisations were in the form of grants. Since 1990, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank stepped in with large loans. In addition, the Swedish SIDA, JICA and JBIC from Japan, DFID of the United Kingdom, and various INGOs also appeared on the scene. Donor funding has been utilised mainly for quality improvement programs and infrastructure development.

### 3.4 Policy and System Indicators

Here we analyse indicators of primary and secondary education in detail regarding coverage, efficiency, quality, equity, and their impact upon the system.

#### 3.4.1 Coverage

In order to ensure equitable access to basic education the government has established a

widely scattered network of schools throughout the country. At present there are 9,714 government schools. Out of them, 2,486 are primary schools with classes from grade 1 to grade 5, 490 are primary schools with classes from grade 1 to grade 8 and 6,412 are schools with grade 1 to grade 11 or 13. The rest have classes from grade 6 and above.

**Table 3.2: Number of Government Schools by Functional Grade Span 2006**

Grade 1-5	Grade 1-8	Grade 1-11	Grade 1-13	Grade 6-11	Grade 6-13	Total
2486	490	4199	2213	27	299	9714

Source: Annual School Census, Ministry of Education

The policy of the government is to provide a primary school within two kilometres of every child of the age range of 5 to 9 years and a secondary school within four kilometres of

every child of 10 to 16 age range. Because of this policy a number of schools with small classes are seen especially in remote areas.

**Table 3.3: Number of Government Schools by size of Student Population 2006**

Number/Percentage of Schools with							
<50 Students	51-100 Students	101-200 Students	201-500 Students	501-1000 Students	1001-2500 Students	>2500 Students	Total
1,549	1,392	1,966	2,514	1,340	817	136	9,714
16.0%	14.3%	20.2%	25.9%	13.8%	8.4%	1.4%	100.0%

Source: Annual School Census, Ministry of Education

According to the student population some schools are found to be in diametrically opposed extremes. At the lower end there are:

- one school with one student,
- four schools with two students,
- seven schools with three students,
- five schools with four students,
- 11 schools with five students,
- 11 schools with six students,
- 22 schools with seven students,
- 16 schools with eight students,
- 15 schools with nine students and
- 20 schools with 10 students.

At the other end there are:

- one school with over 8000 students,
- six schools with over 5000 students and
- seven schools with over 4000 students

The seriousness of this situation is highlighted by the fact that:

- Ten most populace schools have 54,294 students (1.38% of the total student population)
- Bottom 100 schools altogether have only 664 students (0.02% of the total student population)
- Bottom 500 schools altogether have 7234 students less than the enrolment in the largest school (8175 students)

### 3.4.2 Access

Although enrolment rates in Sri Lanka have been impressive, she has still not been able to achieve the target of total participation in basic education. The progress achieved over the last five years is also not very satisfactory. In 2001,

the national GER in primary education was 95% for males and 94% for females. In 2005, the rates were 99% for males and 94% for females. (See Table 1 in appendix 2)

#### Gross Enrolment Rates

**Table 3.4: Gross Enrolment Rates in Primary Education-Progress between 2001 to 2005 (National Level)**

Year	Male	Female	Total	Gender Parity Index(GPI)
2001	109	108	108	1.00
2002	106	104	105	0.98
2003	101	99	100	0.97
2004	107	102	101	0.98
2005	99	94	97	0.98

Source: Calculated with school census data from MoE and estimated midyear population data from DCS

Although more girls than boys participated in primary education in the urban sector according to the GER, the participation of girls is slightly lower than that of boys in the rural sector. In the plantation sector, the GER is lower for females

than for males. However, the rates for both genders are better than the national rates. Among the ethnic groups, the male participation in primary education is better for the minority ethnic groups except for Tamil females.

**Table 3.5: Gross Enrolment Rates in Primary Cycle by Social Groups, 2005**

Category	GER in Primary Education	
	Male	Female
National Rates	99*	94*
Urban Sector	103	106
Rural Sector	103	102
Sinhala Ethnic Group	103	102
Tamil Ethnic Group	107	100
Muslim Ethnic Group	109	106
Plantation Workers' Children	106	97

Source: Calculated with school census data from MoE and estimated mid year population data from DCS.

\*The National rates were computed using national level estimated data since actual data for all districts were not available. The other rates were calculated using available actual data. Hence there is a discrepancy between national figures and others.

The gross enrolment rates for the secondary cycle are also close to those in the primary cycle. In 2001 the GER for both males and

females were 96%. See table 2 in appendix 2 for details.

**Table 3.6: Gross Enrolment Rates in Secondary Education between 2001 to 2005 (National Level)**

Year	Male	Female	Total	GPI
2001	96	96	96	100
2002	95	97	96	102
2003	95	96	95	101
2004	94	96	95	102
2005	92	95	94	103

Source: Calculated with school census data from MoE and estimated mid year population data from DCS

Net enrolment rates show a downward trend from 2001 to 2005. In 2001, the NER for males was 91% while the rate for females was 93%. These rates have dropped to 90% for males and 88% for females by 2005. It has to be noted that an unspecified number of children in the 5 to 14 age range attend international schools. Enrolment data of these schools are not available with the MoE. However, it is estimated that about 2% of the children in the relevant age range are enrolled in these schools. Absence of this data tends to pull down the NER as well as the GER. Unavailability of

population data for seven administrative districts tends to distort the GER and NER rates. Data for these seven districts are not available as the population census could not be held in them due to the prevailing conflict situation. Population estimates for these districts have been calculated based upon the census data of 1981. However, a district wise breakdown of this data is not available. National level GER and NER have been computed using the population estimates for the whole country including the seven districts in question and therefore do not reflect the district level values.

### Net Enrolment Rates

**Table 3.7: Net Enrolment Rates in Primary Education Progress between 2001 to 2005 (National Level)**

Year	Male	Female	Total	GPI
2001	91	93	92	103
2002	95	95	95	100
2003	92	92	92	100
2004	92	90	91	99
2005	90	88	89	100

Source: Calculated with school census data from MoE and estimated midyear population data from DCS

Net enrolment rates in the secondary cycle remain more or less constant during the period in review. The rates for the districts vary between 82 and 99 for males and between 83 and 99 for females in 2001. Colombo registers an NER of 101 for males in 2005.

This is a result of students migrating from other districts to enrol in grade 6 in Colombo schools. Other values for males vary between 82 and 92 among the districts. The NER for females in 2005 is slightly better than that of males.