ALL CHILDREN IN SCHOOL BY 2015

COUNTRY STUDY

# OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN SRI LANKA

Ministry of Education

Australian AID

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNESCO INSTITUTE for STATISTICS

unicef

# Out-of-School Children in Sri Lanka: Country Study

**UNICEF Sri Lanka**
**Colombo**
**February 2013**

United Nations Children's Fund
35, Balapokuna Road
Colombo 5
Sri Lanka
Tel. : +94 11 2555270
Fax : +94 11 2555133
www.unicef.org

# Message of the Hon. Minister of Education

When a high literacy prevails in a country it is possible to come to the conclusion that the country has a high level of education. Sri Lanka already has a literacy rate of 92.3 percent. It is our expectation to bring it up to 100 percent by 2015. With this in view, the Ministry of Education and the Provincial Education Departments are implementing various programmes. The study promoted by UNICEF on non-school-going children is a timely contribution to reinforce these efforts.

By conducting this survey in several selected Divisions, it has been possible to identify much analytical information about children of school-going age who do not attend school. The contributory factors to this situation are analysed thus providing an opportunity to adopt remedial measures.

The survey has identified poverty, illiteracy of parents, distance to school and various disabilities as the main reasons for some children avoiding school. The best approach to provide education to these children is formal school. It is therefore important that principals and teachers do their best to make education available to all children in their respective feeder areas. In this context, more admission to school is not only sufficient. It is equally important to adopt suitable, student-friendly teaching methods and to use modern technological equipment. While drawing the attention of all education professionals to this need, I would like to express my appreciation of the Non-formal and Special Education Branch of this Ministry which has helped in this study with great commitment and also of the Provincial Education Departments which have provided much valuable assistance. I would also like to express my thankfulness to UNICEF for sponsoring this study and to CENWOR for handling it.

Bandula Gunawardane
Minister of Education

# Message of the Hon. Deputy Minister of Education

This study, covering several selected Education Divisions in the country to ascertain the causes for and the background in which some children of school-going age avoid school and also as to why having entered the school stream some children leave prematurely, addresses a very important and timely need.

In spite of the availability of wide facilities in the formal education system, it is evident that there is a section in our society that is unable to reap the intended benefits from this system. Several factors underlying this situation have been identified in this study which also includes some proposals to improve the situation.

The Sri Lankan government, which is committed to the concept of 'Education for All', considers making education facilities available to these children who have dropped out from the system as an important responsibility. It is thus necessary to act to make both formal and non-formal education opportunities available for this purpose.

I would like to express my thankfulness to the Non-formal and Special Education Branch of the Ministry of Education for their commitment to this cause, to UNICEF for sponsoring this study, and to CENWOR for conducting it.

It is my wish that it will be possible for all to benefit from our education system by 2015.

Gamini Vijith Vijayamuni Zoysa
Deputy Minister of Education

# Message of Hon. Mohan Lal Grero the Monitoring MP for Education

When people possess the advantage of literacy they become empowered; they are open to the world and will be encouraged to be vigilant about their fundamental rights. At the same time, a high literacy rate reflects the progress achieved in the country's development process.

Sri Lanka's literacy rate compares well with that of the other South Asian countries. The contribution of school education to this commendable achievement is praiseworthy. Nevertheless, it is seen that still there are children who remain outside the education stream and also children who leave the education stream prematurely.

In our efforts to achieve 100 percent literacy by 2015, this lagging group cannot be ignored. In this context, the study, which sought to provide an insight to the living conditions and the factors that contributed to their failure to benefit from the country's educational system, is extremely timely.

It is hoped to use this findings of this study in future education planning and policy decisions.

I would therefore like to make use of this opportunity to express my respectful thankfulness to all who made this study possible.

Mohan Lal Grero
Monitoring MP of Education

# Message of the Secretary to the Ministry of Education

There is a need for further special programmes to ensure a literacy of rate of 100 percent in Sri Lanka. Since we are working towards this target by 2015, it is our responsibility to ensure that a higher literacy rate is reached in all categories of persons—the young, adults and the old.

In our endeavor to achieve this target, the survey that has been conducted with UNICEF sponsorship will shed light on many aspects of the problem at hand. By analysing the results of this study, effective planning to achieve 'Education for All' will be facilitated.

According to this study, among the important factors that keep some children away from the school system are poverty, distance to school, low education level of parents and difficulty in satisfying special needs. It is our responsibility to get to grips with these problems and seek plausible solutions. Education for all is a matter that should receive the attention of the general body of citizens.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my thanks to UNICEF for providing financial sponsorship, to CENWOR for conducting the survey, to the Provincial Education Departments for making the relevant information available, and the Non-formal and Special Education Branch of this Ministry for discharging, coordinating, directing and supervising activities effectively with a great sense of responsibility.

S.M. Gotabhaya Jayaratne
Secretary Ministry of Education

# Message of the Additional Secretary, Education Quality Development

Non-formal Education provides educational opportunities to children, young people and elders who are confronted with difficulties and who couldn't make use of appropriate educational opportunities from the formal school. I sincerely appreciate the conduct of a survey study by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with UNICEF in the Education Divisions selected by CENWOR.

In this survey study, central attention has been paid to identify reasons as to why children in the age of compulsory education do not attend the school and to come up with proposals to address the issue.

The factors like economic difficulties, education for parents being at a low level, unavailability of permanent residencies, unavailability of nearby schools, being with special needs have been identified by this study as reasons for students not attending school. Here, the need of undertaking a special course of action by the government in providing education to students with difficulties of this nature has been emphasized.

Accordingly, the need for broadening educational opportunities to all children, creating awareness among parents, enhancing health facilities within the school, providing the students with special needs with appropriate equipment and facilities, implementing productive education programs with the proper coordination of Governmental and Non-governmental organizations and monitoring educational programs without any interruption has been identified by this survey study.

It is my expectation to take measures to provide education for all by means of implementing education programs of high quality as per the needs of relevant areas through the analysis of information relevant to Non-formal Education sector.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Non-formal & Special Education Branch under the Ministry of Education, to UNICEF and CENWOR for the efforts made to conduct the survey study successfully.

H.U Premathilake
Additional Secretary (Education Quality Development)
Ministry of Education

# Message of the Director of Education, Non-formal & Special Education Branch

Directing all students in the age of compulsory education (5 – 14 years) to education is a policy of the government. However, only 98% of students are admitted to the formal school out of the qualified owing to different reasons. Our overriding aim is to guide to education all the children belonging to the rest of 2%, through formal or non-formal education.

In implementing this process, it has been possible to acquire the information necessary to channel the group referred to above who are out of the education stream towards the system through a survey study conducted jointly by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF in the Education Divisions selected by CENWOR.

This survey has revealed reasons for children in the age of compulsory education are out of education stream. Further, in this study, an emphasis has been given to a special area to be undertaken in addressing this issue.

Accordingly, a need has been identified for further broad implementation of activities undertaken at present under Non-formal Education such as surveys at Provincial level, basic literacy programs, functional literacy programs, adult literacy programs, programs to enhance personality, vocational training programs, consultancy programs and awareness programs.

It is my main intention to take possible measures to reach the target of 100% of Education for All by 2015 by mobilizing required human and financial resources.

H.P.N. Lakshman
Director of Education
Non-Formal & Special Education
Ministry of Education

# Message from the UNICEF Representative

UNICEF Sri Lanka welcomes this opportunity to take part in the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children, a joint project by UNICEF and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), through the publication of this country report, Out-of-School Children in Sri Lanka: Country Study. This report presents an analysis of the most recent and reliable statistical information on out-of-school children in Sri Lanka, and examines the factors that lead to exclusion from schooling in the country. Its aim is to provide policy-makers with information about gaps in data, analysis and policy on the participation of children in school and so guide concrete reforms in the education sector and beyond to ensure that all children can exercise their right to education.

Sri Lanka has an excellent record on bringing children aged 5–14 years into school, following seven decades of universal free primary and secondary education. However, it is also acknowledged that some children with particular characteristics are vulnerable to exclusion from school or might be prevented from completing a full basic education of good quality. Using statistics gathered by the Ministry of Education, this study has identified profiles of children who fall into five dimensions of exclusion and are consequently most likely to be out of primary or lower secondary school or at risk of dropping out.

Out-of-school children often face deep-rooted structural inequalities and disparities. This study found that in Sri Lanka these are most commonly to linked to income poverty, child labour, inadequacies in the supply of schools and teachers, deficiencies in the teaching–learning process, lack of facilities for children with disabilities, conflict and disasters caused by natural hazards, lack of political commitment and politicization of the system, weak coordination and implementation of programmes, problems with monitoring and data collection, and inadequate budget allocations and resource distribution.

By understanding the bigger picture through this systematic analysis, it is hoped that policies and strategies to address the problem of out-of-school children in Sri Lanka can be refined and strengthened to ensure the more equitable targeting of excluded groups of children, both by programmes within the education sector and more widely through multi-sectoral social protection measures.

UNICEF Sri Lanka would like thank the Ministry of Education for their support and leadership throughout this country study. We also acknowledge the work of the Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR) for their technical expertise in producing this country study. UNICEF Sri Lanka is grateful for the continuous support of the Government of Australia and hope that the recommendations made will help policy-makers to drive forward their efforts to further reduce the number of out-of-school children.

Reza Hossaini
Representative
UNICEF, Sri Lanka

# Acknowledgements

CENWOR would like to thank UNICEF Sri Lanka for inviting us to participate in this country study on out-of-school children. We would particularly like to thank Brenda Haiplik and Manoja Wickramarathne of UNICEF Sri Lanka for their valuable support.

CENWOR would also like to acknowledge Friedrich Huebler, Sheena Bell and Shailendra Sigdel from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics for their cooperation; Leotes Helin, Education Specialist, and Lieke van de Wiel, Education Regional Advisor, of UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia for their valuable inputs; Indu Bandara of the Department of Census and Statistics for collaborating in the study; Raja Gunawardena and Ramani Jayathilake for their support; A.M.S. Abeykoon, Janakie Abeywardane, Harini Amarasuriya, P. Arumugam, K.D. Chandra, A.N.S. Jayasena, Sarathchandra Jayawardena, M. Karunanithy, S. Krishnamoorthy, Anula Maddumabandara, T. Thanaraj, A.L.A. Rasool, and K. Sinnathamby for undertaking the field study and Annie V. Kurian for participating in the training workshop; W.S. Perera and H.P.N. Lakshman of the Ministry of Education for their support; Siva Sivasubramanium for her conscientious work in data processing and analysis of the field study; Soma Athukoralage and K. Shakeela for assisting in data processing; Indika Edirisinghe for coordination of the study; Savitri Hirimuthugoda, Vathany Narendran, Thakshila Udayanganie, Kamani Perera and Sugandhika Nawana of CENWOR for their cooperation; and all the interviewees who participated in the study for their patience and cooperation.

Swarna Jayaweera
Chandra Gunawardena
Thana Shanmugam
Sirimevan Colombage
CENWOR
September 2011

# Contents

# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| 5DE | Five Dimensions of Exclusion |
| ADB | Asian Development Bank |
| ANAR | adjusted net attendance rate |
| ANER | adjusted net enrolment rate |
| CENWOR | Centre for Women's Research |
| CMF | Conceptual and Methodological Framework |
| DCS | Department of Census and Statistics |
| DHS | Demographic and Health Survey |
| DSD | Divisional Schools Development [Project] |
| ECD | early childhood development |
| ESDFP | Education Sector Development Framework and Programme 2006–2011 |
| GCE A/L | General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) |
| GCE O/L | General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) |
| GDP | gross domestic product |
| GIZ | German Agency for International Cooperation (formerly GTZ) |
| GPI | gender parity index |
| GTZ | German Technical Cooperation (now GIZ) |
| HIES | Household Income and Expenditure Survey |
| HIV | human immunodeficiency virus |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| INGO | international non-governmental organization |
| ISA | In-service Adviser |
| JICA | Japan International Cooperation Agency |
| LTTE | Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam |
| MCDWE | Ministry of Child Development and Women's Empowerment |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goal |
| MOE | Ministry of Education |
| MOF | Ministry of Finance |
| NCPA | National Child Protection Authority |
| NEC | National Education Commission |
| NEREC | National Education Research and Evaluation Centre |
| NFE | non-formal education |
| NGO | non-governmental organization |
| NIE | National Institute of Education |
| OOSC | out-of-school children |
| PPP | purchasing power parity |
| SAARC | South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation |
| SLRs | Sri Lankan rupee |
| TSEP | Transforming School Education Programme |
| UIS | UNESCO Institute for Statistics |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| WFP | World Food Programme |

# Executive Summary

This study is part of the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children launched by UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics in 2010. Sri Lanka has been selected to conduct a country study on out-of-school children (OOSC) with the objective of examining currently available statistical information on OOSC, scrutinizing factors related to exclusion from schooling, and identifying existing policies that are effective at enhancing participation as well as gaps in policy and social protection provisions.

This study uses the Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE) to analyse the problem of OOSC. Dimension 1 represents children of pre-primary-school age (four-year-olds only) who are not in pre-primary or primary education. Dimension 2 captures the out-of-school population of primary-school-age children (not in primary or secondary education) and Dimension 3 captures OOSC in the lower-secondary-school age group (not in primary or secondary education). Dimension 4 covers children in primary school who are considered at risk of dropping out, and Dimension 5 covers children in lower secondary school who are at risk of dropping out.

Firstly, macro-level data sources were examined to determine how many and which children were out of school and which children were at risk of dropping out. OOSC were also classified by whether or not they were engaged in child labour in order to see whether child labour contributes to why children are not in school. The three main data sources[1] used were the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2006/07, the Annual School Census 2010 and the Child Activity Survey 2008/09. Using data from these sources, profiles of children in the 5DE were created. However, it should be noted that the DHS did not cover the five districts of the conflict-affected Northern Province, thus data on OOSC could be under-reported.

To refine the profiles of excluded children, the barriers and bottlenecks that are responsible for non-enrolment or dropout of children in Sri Lanka were identified, mainly through an analysis of micro-level studies on OOSC. Policies to address the barriers and bottlenecks were examined in terms of their impact on the exclusion of children. In addition, social protection measures that encourage the education of children and reduce the numbers of OOSC were identified. Finally, recommendations have been made on ways to improve the policy framework to ensure that all children in Sri Lanka are able to access a full cycle of basic education and are protected from exclusion.

### *Profiles of OOSC*

- Children in Dimension 1, pre-primary OOSC, are more likely to be from the estate sector than rural and urban areas, and from poorer families than richer families. Gender is not a significant factor in non-attendance; however, girls in the estate sector are much less likely than boys in the estate sector to be attending an education programme. The overall attendance rate for four-year-olds is 92.7 percent.

- Children in Dimension 2, OOSC of primary school age, are as likely to be girls as boys, are also more likely to be from the estate sector than rural and urban areas, and to be from poorer families than richer families. In terms of absolute numbers, more primary-school-age children are out of school in urban areas than in rural or estate areas. Children in this dimension are less likely to be involved in child labour than those in Dimension 3 (older children). Disparities at primary level tend to be less pronounced than at lower secondary level. It is possible that a number of five-year-olds are not in a school as a result of admission regulations. It is estimated that 1.9 percent of primary-school-age children are out of school.

- Children in Dimension 3, OOSC of lower secondary school age, are slightly more likely to be boys, especially older ones, than girls. There is no disparity between children in rural and urban areas. Children in this dimension are most likely to belong to households in the poorer wealth quintiles. Of children in Dimension 3 who are engaged in child labour, they are most likely to be boys and children from urban areas. It is estimated that 3.3 percent of lower-secondary-school-age children are out of school.

[1] *All figures quoted in this Executive Summary are derived from these three data sources, unless otherwise indicated.*

- Children in Dimension 4 are at risk of dropping out of primary school. They are as likely to be boys as girls. Children of this age are not very likely to be involved in child labour; but for those that are, a high proportion are still attending school and therefore at risk of dropping out. Boys are more likely than girls to be in-school working children. There are more overage boys than girls in primary school and repetition rates are higher for boys than for girls. Current dropout rates for in-school children aged 5–9 years are around one percent.

- Lower-secondary-school-age children at risk of dropping out (Dimension 5) are more likely to be boys than girls. Involvement in child labour puts children at risk of dropping out, particularly for boys; however, by this age, many working children have already become OOSC. There are more overage boys than girls in lower secondary school and repetition rates are higher for boys than for girls. Current dropout rates for lower-secondary-school-age children climb from 1.0 percent for 10-year-olds to 5.1 percent for 13-year-olds.

### *Barriers and bottlenecks to education*

Although national statistics show few patterns of exclusion at primary and lower secondary levels, with no significant findings on age, gender, wealth or rural–urban divide, it is acknowledged that undoubtedly a substantial number of children aged 5–14 years are still out of school and are being denied their right to an adequate basic education. Examination of micro-level studies on OOSC revealed the following common barriers to education.

Demand-side socio-cultural barriers and bottlenecks influencing exclusion from school in Sri Lanka are mainly related to parents' and children's attitudes to education, especially when the benefits to be derived from education are considered against the advantages to be gained by children carrying out other activities. In some instances, gender is also a concern. Poor health and disabilities can also prevent children from obtaining a full cycle of basic education.

Demand-side economic barriers to education centre on family poverty, which is closely linked to child labour and the migration of mothers.

Supply-side barriers and bottlenecks that result in children being excluded from school or in dropping out early include the uneven distribution of schools, inadequate school infrastructure facilities, problems with teacher deployment and training, deficiencies in the teaching–learning process, corporal punishment and poor teacher behaviour, and lack of facilities for children with disabilities.

Political, governance, capacity and financing factors often underlie both demand-side and supply-side barriers and bottlenecks. In addition, studies indicate that these barriers rarely occur separately but mostly in combination and are thus multifaceted. The most important barriers of this type affecting the exclusion of children from education in Sri Lanka are conflict, institutionalization of children, lack of birth certificates, lack of political commitment and politicization of the system, issues with devolution to the provinces, weak coordination and implementation of programmes, problems with monitoring and data collection, and inadequate budget allocations and resource distribution. Furthermore, data from the Divisional Schools Development Project and other studies show that enrolment in conflict-affected districts is lower than in the rest of the country, particularly for girls.

### *Policies to address barriers and bottlenecks*

The Education Sector Development Framework and Programme (ESDFP) 2006–2010 and Transforming School Education as the Foundation of a Knowledge Hub 2011–2015 are Sri Lanka's two foremost policies supporting the country's education system. Both address the barriers to education to a large extent and are supported by policies developed by the Ministry of Education and the ministries of other related sectors.

The ESDFP is helping to address the need for greater parental awareness through participatory bottom-up planning at the school level and the reinvigoration of Compulsory Attendance Committees. To address gender concerns, the ESDFP states that 'schools will promote gender integration and mutual respect for boys and girls, and emphasize equal rights and equality in all

aspects of life and mutual respect for each other.' Gender issues have also been addressed through amendments to legislation concerning early marriage and through a focus on providing adequate sanitation facilities for girls in programmes on school infrastructure enhancement. The policy for Transforming School Education promotes equal access for boys and girls to globalized knowledge and avenues for advancement. Health concerns are addressed though School Medical Inspections and the recently introduced School Health Promotion Policy and Programme 2008–12. Malnutrition is addressed through school-feeding/school meals programmes for primary grades.

Poverty is largely tackled through the national policy of free education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels as well as scholarships, free textbooks, free school uniforms and subsidized transport. The ESDFP includes guidelines to ensure that no child is left out of school due to poverty. Social protection programmes also target poor households; for example, the Samurdhi Poverty Alleviation Programme provides scholarships for the schooling of eligible children in very poor beneficiary families. The Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs also supports the education of poor children.

Major policy measures related to child labour include ILO conventions and the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act. Child labour is also tackled through child rights policy and legislation. Policies specifically targeting working OOSC include providing opportunities for a 'second chance' or an alternative avenue for education through non-formal education programmes organized by the Ministry of Education.

The uneven distribution of schools is a primary concern of the Mahinda Chintana: Development Framework 2010, which intends the development of 1,000 secondary schools attached to 4–5 primary schools in each locality. The policy for Transforming School Education also envisages a primary school in each village and a secondary school within a reasonable distance. The Education Act recognizes the need for the removal of disparities in the distribution of schools.

The ESDFP and Transforming School Education policy both include provisions for constructing and improving school infrastructure such as toilets and water supply, classrooms, science laboratories, computer rooms and playgrounds. The Child-Friendly Schools Programme introduced by UNICEF is being integrated across more primary schools.

The issue of teacher deployment and training is addressed in the ESDFP. One objective is to 'introduce divisional-level teacher recruitment and deployment to ensure availability of required teachers to all schools.' The training of teachers is also addressed through a variety of measures from pre-service to in-service training as well as re-training where appropriate. Curriculum reform is also envisaged, particularly with respect to 'increasing the relevance of the curriculum to future requirements and to higher order abilities through curriculum and examination reforms.'

The Department of Probation and Child Care is mandated to protect the rights of children. An administrative circular from the Ministry of Education prohibiting corporal punishment has been sent to schools.

The Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act has been enacted to meet the needs of those with physical, mental, psychiatric and multiple disabilities. The National Policy on Disability addresses a wide range of needs including accessibility to schools, combating of negative socio-cultural attitudes, and promotion of inclusive education. The ESDFP acknowledges that children with disabilities needed specific attention to ensure their access to education. The Non-Formal Education Division of the Ministry of Education has developed a number of services for children with disabilities.

The Ministry of Education is currently addressing problems created in the education system by conflict. As well as repairing infrastructure and returning schools to normalcy, it has established Psychosocial Care Units and Psychosocial Resource Centres in all nine provinces. The Ministry of Social Services provides assistance to the victims of disaster. The Central Disaster Management Centre has been established to provide legislative and institutional arrangements for disaster risk reduction. The Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights has developed National Guidelines for School Disaster Safety. A National Policy and a Comprehensive

Framework of Actions on Education and Social Cohesion and Peace has been developed, and a Social Cohesion and Peace Education Unit established in the Ministry of Education. One objective of the ESDFP is to transform the planning process through a bottom-up approach such as with the introduction of Annual School Development Plans. It also aims to improve monitoring of the education programme with a Results-Based Monitoring Framework and a Public Expenditure and Quality of Education Tracking System.

The ESDFP's third theme is 'increasing equity in the distribution of resources'. It has implemented several new measures and modified the formula for allocations in order to direct more resources to disadvantaged districts.

The country's main social protection programme is the Samurdhi Poverty Alleviation Programme, which comprises a consumption income transfer for poor households along with a compulsory savings component and social insurance. The programme covers 35–40 percent of the population. However, expenditure on this programme has declined in recent years from 1.9 percent of GDP in 2001 to 0.2 percent in 2009.

### *Recommendations*

Although Sri Lanka has an inclusive and universal education policy that has resulted in the vast majority of school-age children being enrolled in school and successfully completing a full cycle of basic education, there are a number of concerns that still need to be addressed. The following recommendations are intended to support the further strengthening of the education system to help ensure that no child is excluded. They are also intended as responses to social protection as well as education concerns.

#### *Demand-side socio-cultural recommendations*

- Curricula for teachers and schools should include materials that will promote critical thinking on socio-cultural issues and change stereotypical attitudes in order to promote gender equality and social harmony.

#### *Demand-side economic recommendations*

- As proposed in recent education policy documents, the age for compulsory education should be extended to 16 years, as many studies have observed that it is difficult to exit poverty without an education to at least GCE O Level standard. A scholarship scheme at the end of Grade 9 should be introduced with donor assistance (as in the Asian Development Bank scholarships) to assist children with recognized ability in economically disadvantaged families to continue studies without having to engage in economic activities. However, it is acknowledged that it would require further resources from national and local governments; this should also be addressed.

- The Compulsory Education Regulations and ancillary policies such as alternative provisions for admission of children without birth certificates and prohibition on the levying of school admission fees/donations should be strictly enforced. Compulsory Attendance Committees should be activated to visit homes to identify OOSC. They should be enabled to take proactive measures to raise awareness among parents and caregivers on the value of education and provide support to ensure that children are not deprived of their right to education.

- If education is to compensate to some extent for poverty, education programmes should focus directly on vulnerable groups and meet their specific needs for assistance in order to facilitate their access to education. For instance, a small committee of stakeholders familiar with the needs of targeted communities could be appointed to develop specific programmes to ensure that such initiatives are not lost in larger programmes.

- Sri Lanka should develop a universal social insurance scheme, as targeted programmes such as the Samurdhi programme have had less impact than the free education and health services policies. Meanwhile, as a transition measure, the Samurdhi programme should be revamped to meet the needs of only the most vulnerable families.

- Assistance should be obtained to extend the school meals programme to secondary schools in disadvantaged locations.
- The current policy of providing nutritional supplementation should be continued.
- School Medical Inspections should be extended to all schools so that early detection of illnesses and disability and referral for specialized treatment is possible.
- The National Education Commission should formulate a policy to meet the needs of children with disabilities and request the Ministry of Education to sensitize the provincial and zonal authorities regarding this policy, especially on the need for resource allocations sufficient for effective implementation.
- The Ministry of Education and Provincial Ministries of Education should establish Special Education Units in schools, which can cater to severely disabled children, and train a cadre of teachers for such units. In addition, as present policy is to include children with special needs who are not severely affected in mainstream classes, inclusive education should be offered as an optional subject in all teacher education programmes.
- Awareness programmes should be conducted to address stigma surrounding disability.
- Labour legislation should be implemented effectively to prohibit child labour and hazardous employment not only in the formal sector but also in the informal sector as a universal policy.
- The National Child Protection Authority should be strengthened with human and financial resources to equip it to monitor child abuse at the local level.
- The circular prohibiting corporal punishment should be implemented purposefully, and education and social protection officials should monitor implementation and take legal action against violations. Alternative and positive approaches and strategies should be adopted to create a 'disciplined' environment in classrooms.
- An accelerated learning and action programme needs to be implemented to reinvigorate education and social protection services in conflict-affected areas.
- The Disaster Safety Policy and the Social Cohesion Policy should be incorporated in the primary and secondary school curricula, as they have not reached many schools at present.

*Supply-side recommendations*

- Innovative ways of making the school an inclusive institution—catering to diverse student needs, preparing teachers in inclusive education to support a child-friendly learning–teaching environment, and providing cost-effective resources to encourage student participation—should be piloted and implemented at both local and national levels. Improvements in infrastructure should ensure that schools are gender-sensitive and disabled-friendly and include inputs such as separate toilets for boys and girls, safe water, child-friendly classrooms, playgrounds and sports equipment, and appropriate technological facilities.
- The nature of the examination-dominated and overloaded school curriculum appears to be a factor that pushes children out of school. Curriculum guides should give priority to providing adequate space and time for creative and practical work appropriate for all types of learners and different learning styles.
- Considering the number of children who are unable to cope with studies and perform poorly before dropping out of school, it should be mandatory that Standard Assessment Records are maintained for all children from when they enter school. Recording of periodic assessments should be continued throughout schooling so that growth and progress of all children, including children with disabilities, can be assessed and assistance provided where necessary.

- It is critical to develop teachers through pre-service and in-service training who understand their role not as disciplinarians but as empathetic facilitators. This is especially important in ensuring the participation and retention of children from deprived socioeconomic backgrounds and disadvantaged locations.

- An in-service multi-grade teaching programme should be offered for all teachers serving in schools with multi-grade classes to equip them to cater to the special circumstances in these schools.

- Considering the importance of pre-primary education in the development of young children, there is an urgent need to improve the quality of preschool teachers, their conditions of service and the infrastructural facilities provided in early childhood development (ECD) centres, in compliance with the guidelines for minimum standards laid down by the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs.

*Political, governance, capacity and financing recommendations*

- Priority should be given to capacity-building of all local-level officials to improve their knowledge and skills relating to the implementation of programmes.

- Coordination mechanisms such as the District Child Development Committees should be strengthened, as they cut across education, social protection and health. Monitoring mechanisms should be established at the provincial level to monitor their performance. Awareness should be created among officials of relevant ministries on the importance of collaboration in order to synergize their efforts to achieve maximum success.

- Mechanisms should be introduced at provincial, district/zonal and divisional levels for the purpose of monitoring the implementation of programmes.

- It is suggested that education policy should strengthen the role of divisional administrations to ensure effective implementation and monitoring of programmes in schools. This would also facilitate collaboration with divisional-level officials in other ministries and promote a focused approach to non-enrolment of children in school.

- All data should be disaggregated by sex and division to facilitate monitoring, and should be easily accessible to researchers and the public. It is suggested that data for the estate sector should be presented separately so that it is possible to monitor progress in this sector.

- Financial provision for education should be increased steadily to six percent of GDP and around 20 percent of the total government budget to support access to education and improve the quality of education. It has been reported that provision for some forms of social protection has declined. It is important to increase financial provision in this area in order to eliminate the effects of poverty and strengthen the capacity of disadvantaged families to ensure that children's rights are upheld.

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of 2010, UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) launched the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children. The goal of the initiative is to introduce a more systematic approach to addressing the problem of out-of-school children (OOSC), and to guide concrete sectoral reforms in this regard. Analysis of the situation shows that there are key data, analysis and policy gaps underlying the problem. As part of this initiative, Sri Lanka has been selected to conduct a country study with the objective of examining currently available statistical information on OOSC, scrutinizing factors related to exclusion from schooling, and identifying existing policies that are effective at enhancing participation as well as gaps in policy and social protection provisions. The country studies will feed into regional overviews, a global study, and a global conference to leverage resources for equity in education. In early 2011, UNICEF Sri Lanka commissioned the Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR) to conduct the analysis for the Sri Lankan country study and prepare this report.

The report is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 is an introduction, giving the country context, an overview of the current education system, and the methodology for the study. Chapter 2 examines macro-level data from national surveys to create profiles of children likely to be excluded, using a methodology provided by UIS as part of the global initiative. Chapter 3 analyses secondary data on barriers and bottlenecks that affect school participation in Sri Lanka and relates these to the profiles of excluded or at-risk children. Chapter 4 examines education and social protection policies and programmes that address barriers and bottlenecks and identifies gaps in policy and provision. Chapter 5 presents conclusions and recommendations.

## 1.1 Country context

Sri Lanka is an island nation located in the tropics just south of India. It has a population of 20 million, of whom 28.9 percent are children aged less than 18 years and 17.8 percent are children aged 5–14 years (the compulsory-education age group for Sri Lanka) (UNICEF, 2011; DCS, 2011a). It has a score of 0.691 on the Human Development Index, ranking it at 97th of 187 countries (UNDP, 2011). It is categorized as a medium human development country, with a per capita GDP of US$ 4,772 in 2009. The urban population accounts for 14.3 percent of the total population. The ethnic composition is Sinhalese (82.0 percent), Sri Lankan Tamil (4.3 percent), Indian Tamil (5.1 percent), Sri Lankan Moors (7.9 percent), Malays (0.3 percent), Burghers (0.2 percent) and others (0.2 percent) (DCS, 2008a). A selection of socioeconomic indicators is given in Table 1.1.

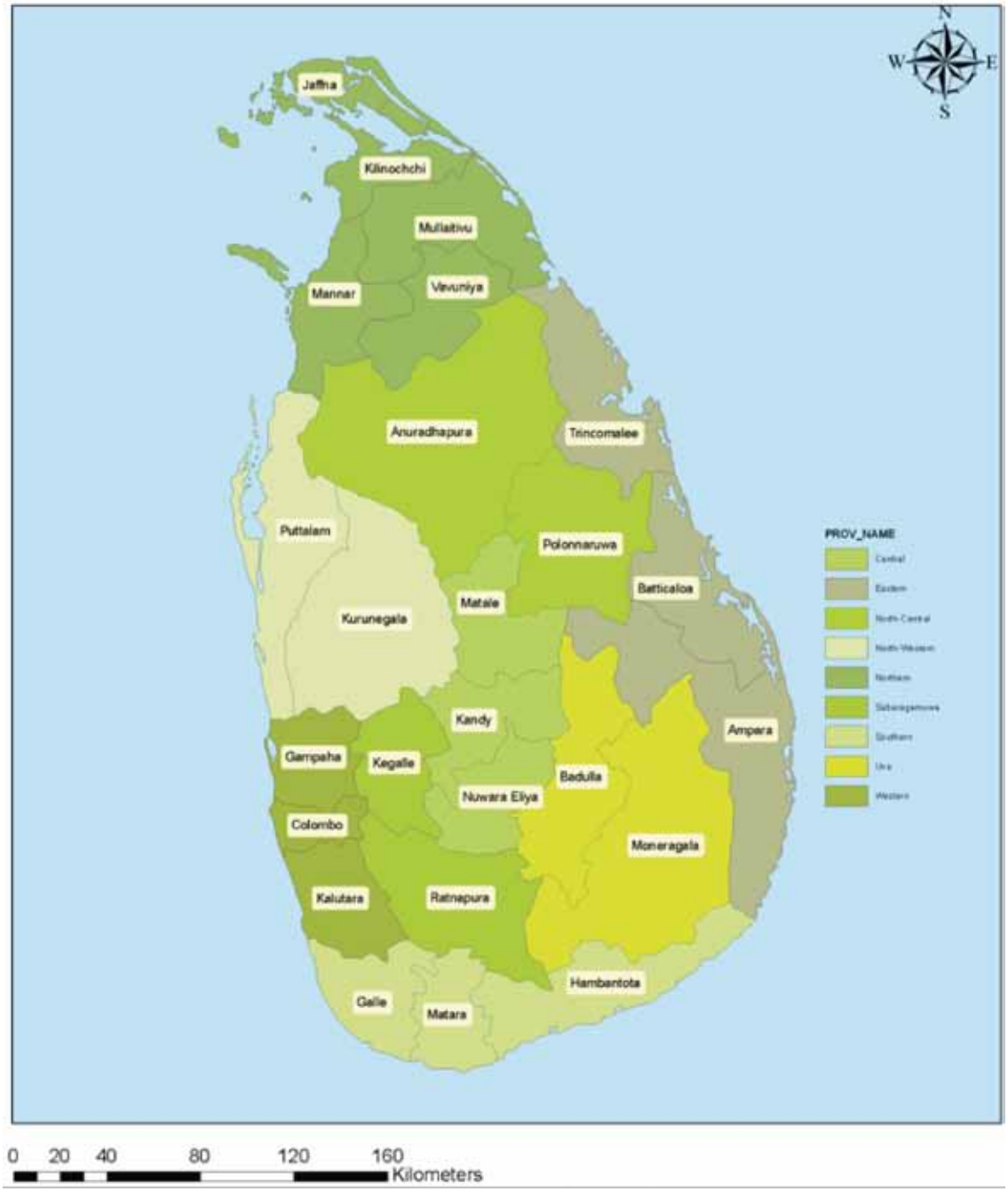
### Table 1.1: Socioeconomic indicators for Sri Lanka

| Indicator | Value |
|---|---|
| Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (2011) (constant 2005 PPP $) | 4,943 |
| Income Gini coefficient (2000–2011) | 40.3 |
| Population below income poverty line (2000–2009) (%) | 7.0 (PPP $1.25 a day)<br>15.2 (national poverty line) |
| Multidimensional poverty index (2003) | 0.021 |
| Population in multidimensional poverty (headcount) (2003) (%) | 5.3 |
| Poverty headcount ratio 2009/10 (%) | 8.9* |
| Population in severe poverty (2003) (%) | 0.6 |
| Gender inequality index (2011) | 0.419 (ranked 74th) |
| Maternal mortality ratio (2008) (per 100,000 live births) | 39 |
| Life expectancy at birth (2011) (years) | 74.9 |
| Under-five mortality (2009) (per 1,000 live births) | 15 |
| Population under age 5 suffering from stunting (2000–2009) (%) | 17.3 |
| Population under age 5 suffering from wasting (2000–2009) (%) | 21.1 |
| Mean years of schooling (2011) (years) | 8.2 |
| Expected years of schooling (2011) (years) | 12.7 |
| Adult literacy rate (% aged 15 and older) (2005–2010) | 90.6 |
| Gross enrolment ratio (for the 10-year period of 2001–2010) (%) | 96.9 (primary)<br>87.0 (secondary) |
| Population with at least secondary education (2010)<br>(% aged 25 and older) | 56.0 (female)<br>57.6 (male) |
| Pupil–teacher ratio (pupils per teacher) (2005–2010) | 23.1 |
| Birth registration (2000–2009) (%) | 97 |
| Share of multidimensional poor with deprivations in<br>environmental services (2003) (%) | 3.0 (clean water)<br>2.6 (improved sanitation)<br>5.3 (modern fuels) |
| HIV prevalence (2009) (% aged 15–24 years) | <0.1 |
| Labour force participation rate (2009) (%) | 34.2 (female)<br>75.1 (male) |
| Public expenditure on education (2010) (% of GDP) | 1.9† |
| Public expenditure on health (2009) (% of GDP) | 4.0 |

*Sources: All figures are taken from the Human Development Report 2011 (UNDP, 2011), except * which is from DCS (2011b) and † which is from MOF (2010a).*

Sri Lanka is a republic with an Executive President, a Prime Minister and Cabinet of Ministers, a Parliament elected by universal franchise, and a constitution that guarantees fundamental human rights. The country was divided into nine provinces during the 19th century and various powers have been devolved since 1987. Each province has two or three districts (see Figure 1.1), administered by a District Secretariat. The country's 25 districts are further subdivided into 256 Divisional Secretariats (Pradeshiya Sabha) and these, in turn, into approximately 14,008 Grama Niladhari, the smallest administrative unit. Large towns are administered by Municipal Councils (18) and small towns by Urban Councils (13).

**Figure 1.1: Map of Sri Lanka's provinces and districts**




*Source: http://mapsof.net/map/sri-lanka-districts*
*Note: The boundaries and names shown and designations used on this map do not imply an official endorsement or acceptance from UNICEF or the United Nations.*

Between 1983 and 2009, Sri Lanka experienced intermittent but violent armed conflict between government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). This has had a severe impact on the provision of services, including the functioning of the education system. Districts in Northern and Eastern Provinces have been particularly affected.

An important socioeconomic category that needs to be defined for this study is the estate or plantation sector. It comprises the tea and rubber plantations established during the British colonial administration. This community, descendants of South Indian Tamil immigrants brought over by the colonial administration as estate labourers, has been a marginalized population since the 19th century. In particular, it has been disadvantaged educationally, confined initially to

plantation enclaves and provided with minimal primary education facilities. After estates were nationalized in the 1970s, 830 plantation schools were integrated into the national education system. Plantation children still remain at a disadvantaged with respect to infrastructure at secondary education level; however, a national plan of action for the development of plantation schools has been prepared by the Plantation Unit of the Ministry of Education (MOE). In the MOE's Annual School Census, data on the estate sector are currently absorbed into the larger rural sector; other data sources do disaggregate this sector for some education-related parameters to a certain extent. Central Province has a high concentration of estates and plantations.

## 1.2 Education sector

Since the late 1940s, government policy has actively sought to eliminate socioeconomic and linguistic inequalities in education. Initiatives have included free state education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels; the provision of incentives such as scholarships for secondary and higher education; the organization of Central Schools in rural areas; and the initiation of steps to use either national language (Sinhala or Tamil) as the medium of instruction. These policies have resulted in high participation in education for a country that, until recently, had a low-income status. National schools are controlled directly by the MOE and provincial schools are administered by the provincial governments.

National policies and programmes are implemented by the MOE and its adjuncts: the National Institute of Education (NIE) is responsible for curriculum development in schools and teacher education institutions; the National Evaluation and Testing Centre conducts all public examinations; and the Department of Publications is responsible for publication of primary and secondary school textbooks. Implementation at provincial and local levels is conducted by Provincial and Zonal Departments of Education, assisted by Divisional Offices of Education. Financial allocations are made by the Ministry of Finance to the MOE for national programmes and schools, and through the Finance Commission to provincial governments, who in turn allocate for provincial schools through zonal offices.

There are five levels of education in Sri Lanka: pre-primary for 3–4-year-olds; primary for 5–9-year-olds (Grades 1–5); lower (or junior) secondary for 10–13-year-olds (Grades 6–9); upper (or senior) secondary for 14–15-year-olds (Grades 10–11); and collegiate for 16–17-year-olds (Grades 12–13). However, it should be noted that, as the school year starts in January and children are only eligible to join Grade 1 if they have completed five years of age by 31 January, each grade will have a substantial number of children who are older than the official age for their grade by the end of the school year.

In 2010, there were 9,675 state schools classified into four types (Table 1.2). Type IAB schools offer instruction for Grades 1–13 or Grades 6–13 in all curriculum streams; Type IC schools offer instruction only in arts and commerce for the same grades as above; Type 2 schools offer instruction for Grades 1–11; and Type 3 schools offer instruction for Grades 1–5 or, in a few instances, for Grades 1–9. Of these schools, 96.6 percent are coeducational. Around 70 private schools (with an enrolment of 2.7 percent of the total school population) are registered with the MOE, and an unknown number of international schools, which have mushroomed since 1980 and are registered under the Company's Act, are outside the ministry's purview. The total number of teachers in state schools is 215,141, of whom 70 percent are women. Each school has a School Development Society in which stakeholders from the community are represented.

**Table 1.2: Distribution of state schools by type of schools**

| Type | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| IAB | 713 | 7.4 |
| IC | 2,013 | 20.8 |
| 2 | 4,084 | 42.2 |
| 3 (primary) | 2,865 | 29.6 |
| Total | 9,675 | 100.0 |

*Source: MOE, 2010.*

## 1.3 Main educational stakeholders

National education policy, finalized at the highest political level, is implemented through education programmes. Currently, the main national education programme is the Education Sector Development Framework and Programme (ESDFP), focusing on equity in access, improved quality of education, efficiency and equity in resource allocation, and improved service delivery (MOE, 2006). Its first phase was planned from 2006 to 2010. A second phase, entitled Transforming School Education as the Foundation of a Knowledge Hub (TSEP), has started recently and will cover 2012 to 2016. Its objective is to enhance access to, and the quality of, primary and secondary education in order to provide a foundation for the knowledge-based economic and social development of the country. The education sector's largest donors are the World Bank, which chiefly supports the ESDFP and the TSEP, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which supports upper secondary education, providing inputs such as computer centres, science laboratories, scholarships and assistance in curriculum development for schools in the poorest divisions. In addition, UNICEF and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) have provided assistance to schools for several decades. UNICEF has traditionally supported basic education. Its current programme introduced the child-friendly approach to primary education to improve both equity and quality in primary education, and also assists child protection programmes and rehabilitation programmes for recovery in Northern and Eastern Provinces.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has promoted reproductive health education in secondary schools; the World Food Programme (WFP) funds a part of the school meals programme in primary schools; the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) supports psychosocial care for children, disaster risk reduction/safety management in the school system, teaching of the second national language[2], and promotion of social cohesion for national harmony through schools; and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) supports the teaching of mathematics and science. Two international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) also undertake educational programmes: Save the Children funds programmes to promote equity and quality in schools, and Plan International provides assistance for infrastructure projects.

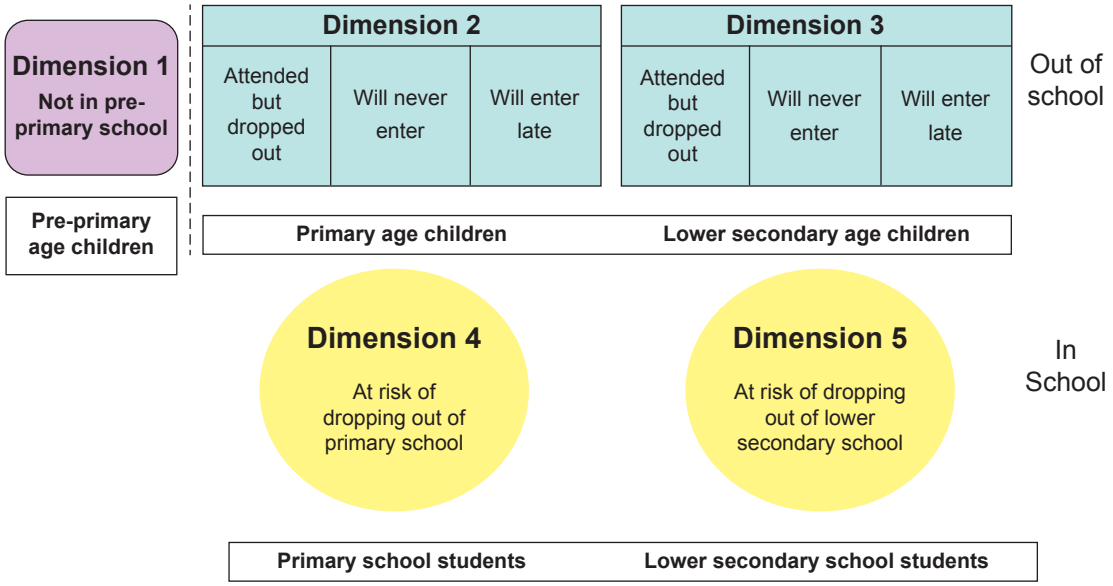
## 1.4 Overview of the Five Dimensions of Exclusion

This study uses the Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE) to analyse the problem of OOSC as laid out in the Conceptual and Methodological Framework (CMF) for the UNICEF and UIS Global Initiative on OOSC (UNICEF and UIS, 2011). This approach examines five categories of children divided into three levels of education (pre-primary, primary and lower secondary) and two population groups (children who are out of school, and those who are in school but at risk of dropping out). Each group represents a distinct dimension of exclusion.

Dimension 1 represents children of pre-primary school age who are not in pre-primary or primary education (see Figure 1.2). Dimension 2 captures the out-of-school population of primary-school-age children (not in primary or secondary education) and Dimension 3 captures OOSC in the lower-secondary-school age group (not in primary or secondary education). Dimension 4 covers children in primary school who are considered at risk of dropping out, and Dimension 5 covers children in lower secondary school who are at risk of dropping out.

[2] *The national languages are Sinhala and Tamil. The second national language is Sinhala for students whose mother tongue is Tamil and Tamil for students whose mother tongue is Sinhala.*

**Figure 1.2: Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE)**




The 5DE framework combines four unique approaches that have key policy implications for addressing the equity-related challenges to universal primary education (UNICEF and UIS, 2011).

Firstly, by generating data on OOSC of both primary and lower secondary school age, as well as pre-primary school age, the model underlines the importance of the life cycle approach and of effectively linking the provision of education to the different developmental stages of children's lives. Primary education alone is insufficient to ensure that children are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary for their own development and to build societies and economies for the 21st century. Addressing the whole life cycle of children's educational needs, including the transitions between the levels of basic education, is necessary to attain universal primary education successfully. Evidence shows that pre-primary education is crucial for entry into and success in primary education levels and that widening access to lower secondary opportunities increases primary completion rates and improves school-to-labour-market transitions. This feature of the model has implications in relation to improved coherence and balance between policies throughout the basic education cycle, and improved attention to transitions between different education levels and grades.

Secondly, the model has a particular strength in drawing attention to the various patterns and forms of exposure to schooling for OOSC (early school leavers, children who will enter in the future, children who will never enter school, as well as exposure to community-based pre-primary education and non-formal education (NFE) services that are not recognized by the formal system and are not captured by statistics). This focus has key implications for improved analysis of the barriers to school participation, for improved targeting, and for accounting, strengthening and developing policies and strategies that provide for multiple and alternative pathways to education and learning.

Thirdly, the disparity analysis within the 5DE is key for a better understanding of the multiple and overlapping forms of exclusion and barriers to inclusion, for increasing the visibility of marginalized groups, for more effective tracking and targeting of disadvantaged groups and areas (while working on universality of access), and for improving the linkage between education policies and social protection systems.

Finally, the 5DE framework covers children who are currently in school but at risk of leaving before completion, thus identifying at-risk groups who may become the OOSC of tomorrow. This is a key feature in linking equity in access to quality education, demand-driven poverty-focused policies to supply-side provision of quality (especially in relation to school-level processes), and policies for OOSC to policies for children in school. In fact, while the 5DE model is focused on issues of access and retention, it also opens channels for a more sophisticated analysis of learning and completion, and highlights the importance of education quality as a factor related to parental decisions about sending children to school and school participation more generally.

## 1.5 5DE in Sri Lanka

The following paragraphs provide an overview of the extent of children in the 5DE prior to the analysis conducted for this study, using the most up-to-date information available.

*Dimension 1:* A survey conducted in 2006 found that, in the 185 divisions covered (excluding conflict-affected divisions in Northern and Eastern Provinces), 79.9 percent of preschool-age children were receiving a preschool education (MCDWE, 2010). It is estimated that 84 percent of four-year-olds were enrolled in pre-primary education in 2010 in institutions of varying quality. According to the MOE, 95 percent of children admitted to Grade 1 in 2010 had some exposure to preschool education (MOE, 2010).

A survey in 2009 by the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Empowerment found that 48 percent of children in preschool education were aged four years, while the remainder were aged either 5–6 years (29 percent) or 2–3 years (23 percent) (MCDWE, 2010). Of children attending early childhood development (ECD) centres, Western Province had the highest proportion at 23.5 percent and Northern Province had the lowest proportion at 5.6 percent; these rates are commensurate with population size, as Western Province accounts for 28.8 percent of the country's population and Northern Province accounts for 5.2 percent. Approximately 50 percent of children attending ECD centres were girls, and 76.1 percent were from the Sinhala community, 15.4 percent were Tamil, and seven percent were Moor/Malay. There was no gender difference by residential status. Using father's employment, education and income as indicators of socioeconomic status, two thirds of children (66.6 percent) were from households with the highest socioeconomic status, and only 6.7 percent were from households with the poorest socioeconomic status; this is probably due to the fact that the majority of ECD centres are private and fee-levying.

*Dimension 2:* According to the DHS 2006/07, two percent of children in Sri Lanka are out of school at primary level. Disaggregation indicates that this ranges from one to four percent across the nine provinces, and is highest in plantation schools at nine percent. Differences by gender and wealth quintile are minimal. Dropout rates are small and retention rates are high.

*Dimension 3:* Nearly 3.3 percent of children aged 11–14 years in lower secondary education (Grades 6–9) are out of school. Again, there is little difference by gender, but the impact of poverty is more noticeable for this age group than for younger children. Dropout rates range between two and five percent by age and are higher for boys than for girls. Retention rates are over 90 percent and are better for girls than for boys. Child labour in this age group is higher than for younger children. The Labour Force Survey 2009 estimates that 1.4 percent of the labour force is in this age group (DCS, 2010), while the Child Activity Survey 2008/09 estimates that 5.4 percent of the labour force is aged 12–14 years (DCS, 2011c). Many more children are also employed in the informal sector. Access to alternative education is available in state non-formal literacy centres, and children in this age group also have access to vocational training programmes.

*Dimensions 4 and 5:* At-risk children are enrolled in primary and lower secondary schools but factors such as overage for the grade, irregular attendance, failure in studies, ill health, the need to assist families through employment, child marriage and child abuse can precipitate their dropping out of school. No reliable estimates currently exist on the numbers of at-risk primary- and lower-secondary-school children.

## 1.6 Methodology

The objectives of this study are as follows.

- To improve statistical information and analysis on OOSC.
- To examine the factors that determine exclusion of children from school.
- To review existing policies and programmes related to increasing participation in education.

The focus is on children in the 5DE.

- Children of pre-primary school age who are not in pre-primary or primary school
- Children of primary school age who are not in primary or secondary school
- Children of lower secondary school age (to 14 years)[3] who are not in primary or secondary school
- Children in primary school who are at risk of dropping out
- Children in lower secondary school who are at risk of dropping out

This study had two components: (i) collection and analysis of macro-level and secondary data for the global initiative as laid out in the CMF; and (ii) the conducting of a field study on disadvantaged communities and analysis of field data.

Macro-level quantitative data on the education of children were available from administrative records and household surveys conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS), the Central Bank of Sri Lanka and the World Bank. In addition, official reports from relevant divisions of the MOE, the National Child Protection Authority and the Department of Probation and Child Care were used to gather information on enrolment, retention, attendance, dropout, repetition, performance, teacher availability, school facilities and infrastructure, and educational expenditure.

Qualitative data were also collected from secondary sources such as micro-level studies on vulnerable children and their participation in education, children with disabilities, child labour, poverty, access to social protection, impact of disaster and conflict, teacher deployment and performance, and other information relevant to non-schooling and children at risk of dropping out to help explain the 5DE profiles that emerged from national statistics.

The field study focused on children whose characteristics are associated with inequality and marginalization in education. A total of 316 households with OOSC were purposefully selected in 12 locations of the nine provinces, representing urban, rural, agriculture, estate, fishing and conflict-affected communities. The sample comprised 121 key informants, 48 principals, 316 parents/caregivers, 400 OOSC and 69 children in school who were considered at risk of dropping out; they were interviewed and/or took part in focus group discussions.

[3] *According the Education Act, compulsory education is defined as 5–14 years.*

# CHAPTER 2:
# PROFILES OF EXCLUDED CHILDREN

Based on procedures defined in the CMF, this chapter uses household surveys and administrative data sources to determine (i) how many children are out of school; (ii) which children are out of school; and (iii) which children are at risk of exclusion.

## 2.1 Sources of data

Various sources of data were considered for this study. The last population census was not used, as it was conducted in 2001 and it was felt that the data would not be sufficiently up to date. Data from the 2011 census, which covered the whole country, are still being processed and analysed, so results were not yet available for use in this study.

The report of the DCS's Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2009/10 was published in August 2011 and provides relevant data on households, income, poverty, school attendance and non-attendance. The HIES is a year-long sample survey, which is conducted in 12 consecutive monthly rounds, and an island-wide representative sample of equal size is enumerated in each monthly round to capture seasonal and regional variations of income, expenditure and consumption patterns. This data source has been used for comparison and corroboration, wherever relevant, but is not the main source of data as the final report had not been released when the study was begun. It must also be mentioned that the three districts of Mannar, Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu in Northern Province were excluded from the HIES, as they could not be reached during the 26 years of armed conflict.

The most recent and relevant data source, therefore, is the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2006/07[4], which has data disaggregated by sex, residential sector and wealth quintile. The sample for the DHS 2006/07 covered 18,000 children (weighted), with 50 percent males and 50 percent females. Data on the age of children has been adjusted by one year for this study, as the DHS was conducted 9–10 months after the start of the school year. This follows the standard practice used by UNICEF for analysis of its Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)—when the gap between the start of the academic year and the survey collection period is greater than six months, age data are adjusted by one year in order to minimize errors in this regard. UIS also adheres to this practice. Put simply, children were not likely to be the same age at the time of the DHS interview as they were at the start of the school year up to 10 months earlier.

It must be noted that data were not collected from the five districts (Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Vavuniya and Mullaitivu) of the conflict-affected Northern Province, as data gatherers from the DHS had no access to these districts at the time. Unfortunately, this has implications for the results of this study, as figures will under-represent conflict-affected regions where it is known that schooling has been heavily impacted. Therefore, it is important to bear in mind when analysing these national figures that they are indicative only, and that levels of enrolment, attendance, retention and achievement are probably lower and levels of non-enrolment and dropout are probably higher. It is also argued that the conflict has differently impacted girls and boys, so sex-disaggregated data may also be distorted. Disaggregation by wealth quintile and information on child labour are also likely to under-represent the impact of the conflict on the education of children from poor and vulnerable households.

*[4] It should be noted that datasets from the DHS 2006/07 are not available in the public domain. They were obtained for this study from the Department of Census and Statistics. See Annex 1.*

The Annual School Census 2010 has also been used in this study for school-based administrative data on enrolment and non-enrolment. Data were collected in June 2010 from all government schools in all districts, including those in conflict-affected provinces. The Annual School Census collects data from all schools except international schools; 2–3 percent of the country's schools are categorized as international and are not covered by this study. Administrative data and household survey data will yield different results, as the school census measures children enrolled in school at the beginning of the school year, while household surveys ask whether a child has attended school at any time during the academic year. This difference in methodology is in turn reflected in differences in resulting estimates of OOSC.

Data pertaining to child labour is from the Child Activity Survey 2008/09 released in September 2011. This survey covered 17 of the country's 25 districts, excluding the eight districts of Northern and Eastern Provinces.

A detailed description of the three main data sources is given in Annex 1.

## 2.2 Participation in pre-primary education

As data on pre-primary education in Sri Lanka are limited, the profile of children in Dimension 1 is also limited to some extent. However, the study looked at the school attendance of four-year-olds using DHS data. Dimension 1 represents children who are one year younger than primary school entrance age, which is five years old in Sri Lanka, and do not attend pre-primary or primary school. Four-year-old children in either pre-primary or primary levels are considered to be attending school. DHS data were used, as the Annual School Census does not include information on pre-primary education.

The attendance rate for children of pre-primary age is quite high in Sri Lanka when compared to other countries in South Asia. Table 2.1 shows that 92.7 percent of four-year-olds attend pre-primary or primary education. However, the attendance rate for those in the estate sector is much lower at 79.8 percent, compared to 95.2 percent for those in urban areas and 93.3 percent for those in rural areas. In addition, four-years-olds in the lowest wealth quintile are less likely than those in other wealth quintiles to be participating in education.

Overall, gender is not likely to be a significant factor in non-attendance; however, females in the estate sector are much less likely than males in the estate sector to be attending education, with participation rates of 71.5 percent for girls and 88.5 percent for boys.

**Table 2.1: Attendance rates of four-year-olds by sex, residence and wealth quintile, 2006/07**

| | Not attending primary or pre-primary education | Attending primary or pre-primary education |
|---|---|---|
| **MALE** | | |
| **Residence** | | |
| Urban | 2.9 | 97.1 |
| Rural | 7.4 | 92.6 |
| Estate | 11.5 | 88.5 |
| **Wealth quintile*** | | |
| Poorest | 11.0 | 89.0 |
| Second | 8.0 | 92.0 |
| Middle | 6.9 | 93.1 |
| Fourth | 5.1 | 94.9 |
| Richest | 3.1 | 96.9 |
| **Total** | 7.1 | 92.9 |
| **FEMALE** | | |
| **Residence** | | |
| Urban | 7.0 | 93.0 |
| Rural | 6.0 | 94.0 |
| Estate | 28.5 | 71.5 |
| **Wealth quintile** | | |
| Poorest | 13.5 | 86.5 |
| Second | 8.0 | 92.0 |
| Middle | 4.0 | 96.0 |
| Fourth | 5.7 | 94.3 |
| Richest | 4.8 | 95.2 |
| **Total** | 7.6 | 92.4 |
| **TOTAL** | | |
| **Residence** | | |
| Urban | 4.8 | 95.2 |
| Rural | 6.7 | 93.3 |
| Estate | 20.2 | 79.8 |
| **Household wealth quintile** | | |
| Poorest | 12.4 | 87.6 |
| Second | 8.0 | 92.0 |
| Middle | 5.5 | 94.5 |
| Fourth | 5.5 | 94.5 |
| Richest | 4.0 | 96.0 |
| **Total** | 7.3 | 92.7 |

*Source: DHS 2006/07.*
*Note: *Household wealth quintile is a socioeconomic indicator that is used in the DHS 2006/07 report as a proxy for the long-term standard of living of a household. It is based on data on the household's ownership of consumer goods, dwelling characteristics, type of drinking water source, toilet facilities, and other characteristics that are related to a household's socioeconomic status.*

## 2.3 Participation in primary and lower secondary education

The age of admission to Grade 1 in Sri Lankan schools is completion of five years by the end of January in the year of admission; the school year runs from January to December. Consequently, children who are aged less than five years after the end of January will either be attending

a pre-primary programme or will remain at home until they become eligible for admission in the subsequent year.

Using data from the DHS 2006/07, Table 2.2 shows that, in total, 98.3 percent of five-year-olds, between 90 and 99 percent of 6–14-year-olds, 65.4 percent of 15-year-olds, 51.4 percent of 16-year-olds and 39.9 percent of 17-year-olds attend some level of education. While for most ages there is little difference between genders, at 17 years, 44.0 percent of girls still attend school compared to only 35.6 percent of boys.

Specific information on the type of educational institution (public, private, non-formal, etc.) was not gathered. Therefore, results may include students attending varying forms of educational institutions.

## Table 2.2: Percentage of children attending school by age, sex and level of education, 2006/07

| Age (years) | Pre-primary | Primary | Lower secondary | Upper secondary | Education level attended unknown | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **MALE** | | | | | | |
| 5 | 1.2 | 96.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.5 | 98.0 |
| 6 | 0.0 | 98.0 | 0.3 | 0.0 | 0.3 | 98.6 |
| 7 | 0.0 | 98.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 98.7 |
| 8 | 0.0 | 95.5 | 2.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 97.9 |
| 9* | 0.0 | 51.4 | 46.8 | 0.2 | 0.0 | 98.4 |
| 10 | 0.0 | 8.6 | 89.8 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 98.5 |
| 11 | 0.0 | 2.7 | 94.7 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 97.8 |
| 12 | 0.0 | 0.9 | 93.2 | 1.7 | 0.1 | 95.9 |
| 13 | 0.0 | 0.7 | 54.9 | 37.2 | 0.1 | 92.9 |
| 14 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 13.4 | 75.4 | 0.2 | 89.1 |
| 15 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 4.5 | 58.8 | 0.1 | 63.4 |
| 16 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.8 | 45.1 | 0.4 | 46.3 |
| 17 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.3 | 35.2 | 0.1 | 35.6 |
| **FEMALE** | | | | | | |
| 5 | 1.3 | 97.4 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 98.8 |
| 6 | 0.4 | 97.0 | 0.0 | 0.2 | 0.4 | 98.0 |
| 7 | 0.4 | 98.1 | 0.7 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 99.4 |
| 8 | 0.0 | 94.5 | 3.0 | 0.0 | 0.5 | 98.0 |
| 9* | 0.0 | 53.7 | 44.2 | 0.0 | 0.6 | 98.5 |
| 10 | 0.0 | 6.4 | 91.4 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 97.9 |
| 11 | 0.0 | 1.7 | 95.4 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 97.5 |
| 12 | 0.0 | 0.7 | 95.3 | 1.0 | 0.0 | 97.0 |
| 13 | 0.0 | 0.4 | 52.9 | 42.1 | 0.1 | 95.5 |
| 14 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 10.9 | 80.3 | 0.1 | 91.3 |
| 15 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.5 | 64.6 | 0.1 | 67.2 |
| 16 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.8 | 55.9 | 0.2 | 56.9 |
| 17 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.2 | 43.5 | 0.3 | 44.0 |
| **TOTAL** | | | | | | |
| 5 | 1.2 | 96.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.3 | 98.3 |
| 6 | 0.2 | 97.5 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.4 | 98.3 |
| 7 | 0.2 | 98.4 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 99.0 |
| 8 | 0.0 | 95.1 | 2.7 | 0.0 | 0.2 | 98.0 |
| 9* | 0.0 | 52.6 | 45.4 | 0.1 | 0.3 | 98.4 |
| 10 | 0.0 | 7.6 | 90.6 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 98.3 |
| 11 | 0.0 | 2.2 | 95.1 | 0.3 | 0.2 | 97.8 |
| 12 | 0.0 | 0.8 | 94.3 | 1.3 | 0.0 | 96.4 |
| 13 | 0.0 | 0.6 | 53.9 | 39.7 | 0.1 | 94.3 |
| 14 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 12.1 | 77.8 | 0.1 | 90.1 |
| 15 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 3.5 | 61.8 | 0.1 | 65.4 |
| 16 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.8 | 50.3 | 0.3 | 51.4 |
| 17 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.3 | 39.4 | 0.2 | 39.9 |

*Source: DHS 2006/07.*

*Note: *The unusual numbers for nine-year-olds are due to the timing of the survey in relation to the start of the school year. The academic year starts in January, and the survey was conducted from August 2006 to October 2007. The question for 'current attendance' asked about the 2006 school year: this means that when the survey was conducted, children were 8–15 months older than they were at the beginning of the 2006 school year.*

Using more recent data collected for the Annual School Census 2010[5] , the proportions of children enrolled in school were 89.6 percent of five-year-olds, between 93 percent and 98 percent of 6–9-year-olds, and between 88 percent and 99 percent of 10–15-year-olds (Table 2.3). There is little gender difference at any age. As the school census excludes children in Grades 12 and 13, where the official ages are 16 years and 17 years, respectively, Table 2.3 is not comparable to Table 2.2 for these ages. The figures for 16- and 17-year-olds represent those still enrolled in secondary level and below. Overall, 17.1 percent of 16-year-olds and 2.9 percent of 17-year-olds were enrolled in school levels below the official level for their age.

The primary-level figures from the Annual School Census 2010 are slightly lower than those collected for the DHS; this may be a reflection of the inclusion of all government schools in the Annual School Census 2010, including those in the conflict-affected Northern Province, rather than only those in districts that could be accessed safely in 2006.

*[5]As the report for the Annual School Census 2010 has not been published yet, figures were computed from data supplied by the MOE and the medium variant population of the 2010 Revision Population Database of the United Nations Population Division. The breakdown of the 2010 population of males, females and both sexes into single age groups was done with a tool supplied by UIS.*

**Table 2.3: Percentage of children enrolled in school (Grades 1 to 11) by age, sex and level of education, 2010***

| Age (years) | Primary | Lower secondary | Upper secondary | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **MALE** | | | | |
| 5 | 89.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 89.2 |
| 6 | 93.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 93.0 |
| 7 | 93.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 93.4 |
| 8 | 97.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 97.5 |
| 9 | 96.2 | 0.5 | 0.0 | 96.8 |
| 10 | 7.0 | 90.4 | 0.0 | 97.4 |
| 11 | 1.8 | 92.6 | 0.0 | 94.4 |
| 12 | 0.3 | 96.6 | 0.0 | 96.9 |
| 13 | 0.0 | 96.3 | 0.6 | 96.9 |
| 14 | 0.0 | 9.9 | 82.8 | 92.7 |
| 15 | 0.0 | 2.1 | 83.5 | 85.6 |
| 16 | 0.0 | 0.4 | 17.0 | 17.3 |
| 17 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 2.8 | 2.9 |
| **FEMALE** | | | | |
| 5 | 90.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 90.0 |
| 6 | 92.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 92.8 |
| 7 | 95.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 95.0 |
| 8 | 97.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 97.3 |
| 9 | 97.1 | 0.6 | 0.0 | 97.8 |
| 10 | 6.0 | 92.0 | 0.0 | 98.0 |
| 11 | 1.3 | 94.3 | 0.0 | 95.6 |
| 12 | 0.2 | 99.2 | 0.0 | 99.5 |
| 13 | 0.0 | 99.8 | 0.8 | 100.5 |
| 14 | 0.0 | 7.6 | 89.4 | 96.9 |
| 15 | 0.0 | 1.5 | 90.1 | 91.6 |
| 16 | 0.0 | 0.3 | 16.6 | 16.9 |
| 17 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 2.9 | 2.9 |
| **TOTAL** | | | | |
| 5 | 89.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 89.6 |
| 6 | 92.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 92.9 |
| 7 | 93.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 93.9 |
| 8 | 97.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 97.7 |
| 9 | 96.7 | 0.6 | 0.0 | 97.3 |
| 10 | 6.5 | 91.2 | 0.0 | 97.7 |
| 11 | 1.6 | 93.4 | 0.0 | 95.0 |
| 12 | 0.3 | 97.9 | 0.0 | 98.2 |
| 13 | 0.0 | 98.0 | 0.7 | 98.7 |
| 14 | 0.0 | 8.7 | 86.0 | 94.8 |
| 15 | 0.0 | 1.8 | 86.8 | 88.6 |
| 16 | 0.0 | 0.3 | 16.8 | 17.1 |
| 17 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 2.8 | 2.9 |

*Source: Annual School Census 2010.*

*Note: *The table covers only government schools and excludes children in Grades 12 and 13—the official ages for these grades are 16 and 17 years, respectively.*

Other data sources report similar levels of attendance at primary and lower secondary levels. The HIES 2009/10 reported that 98.2 percent of children aged 5–14 years were attending school (DCS, 2011b), and the Child Activity Survey 2008/09 reported school attendance rates of 94 percent in the 5–17-years age group, broken down as 97.9 percent in the 5–11-years age group, 97.0 percent in the 12–14-years age group and 82.4 percent in the 15–17-years age group (DCS, 2011c).

In order to assess the number or percentage of children of the intended age for a particular level of education who are enrolled in that level or in higher levels, the adjusted net attendance rates (ANAR) and the adjusted net enrolment rates (ANER) can be calculated. In other words, ANAR or ANER can be used to calculate age-appropriate enrolment. Generally, enrolment rates are calculated by using the official enrolment data, which are collected from schools by the national education ministry or national statistics agency. Net attendance rates are, on the other hand, calculated by using data from household surveys.

Using data from the DHS 2006/07, the ANAR is calculated as 98.1 percent for primary level and 93.9 percent for lower secondary level (Table 2.4). The gender parity index (GPI)[6] of 1.00 at primary level and 1.02 at lower secondary level indicate that there is little gender difference in attendance at primary or lower secondary levels.

**Table 2.4: ANAR* by sex and level of education, with GPI, 2006/07**

| Level of education | Male | Female | Total | GPI |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Primary | 98.1 | 98.1 | 98.1 | 1.00 |
| Lower secondary | 93.1 | 94.7 | 93.9 | 1.02 |

*Source: DHS 2006/07.*

*Note: *ANAR for the primary level is the number of children of primary school age attending primary or secondary level divided by the number of children of primary school age (expressed as a percentage). Similarly, ANAR for the lower secondary level is the number of children of lower secondary school age attending lower secondary or secondary levels divided by the number of children of lower secondary school age. For the purposes of this report, when identifying OOSC, a primary- or lower-secondary-school-age child is not considered out of school if he or she is attending at any level above pre-primary.*

Data from the Annual School Census 2010 suggest that the ANER is 94.2 percent at primary level and 95.2 percent at lower secondary level (Table 2.5). The GPI is 1.01 at primary level and 1.03 at lower secondary level. These figures are slightly higher than those for the DHS, as would be expected when the differences between enrolment and attendance rates and district coverage are taken into account. In addition, the two data sources (school census and DHS survey) use different age reference points, so that data are not fully comparable, especially for five-year-olds and 10-year-olds, i.e., the points of transition to primary and secondary levels.

**Table 2.5: ANER by sex and level of education, with GPI, 2010**

| Level of education | Male | Female | Total | GPI |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Primary | 93.7 | 94.5 | 94.2 | 1.01 |
| Lower secondary | 94.1 | 96.4 | 95.2 | 1.03 |

*Source: Annual School Census 2010.*

[6]*The GPI is the ratio of female to male values of a given indicator. A GPI between 0.97 and 1.03 indicates parity between genders. A GPI below 0.97 indicates disparity in favour of males, while a value above 1.03 indicates a disparity in favour of females (UIS Online Glossary, www.uis.unesco.org, accessed 23 November 2012).*

DHS 2006/07 data suggest that over 25,000 children of primary school age and over 43,000 children of lower secondary school age were out of school (Table 2.6). Overall, in absolute numbers, more boys than girls were out of school; however, as the GPI for primary ANAR is 1.00, it suggests that there is no gender disparity in access to primary education.

**Table 2.6: Number of children out of school by school age and sex, 2006/07**

| School age | Male | Female | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Primary | 13,745 | 11,341 | 25,086 |
| Lower secondary* | 23,905 | 19,196 | 43,101 |

*Source: DHS 2006/07, combined with figures for the medium variant population of the 2010 Revision Population Database of the United Nations Population Division.*
*Note: *ANAR is not sufficient to calculate the number of lower secondary OOSC as the population attending primary level must be considered. This adjustment has been made and the results are shown in the table.*

The DHS 2006/07 estimates that 1.9 percent of primary-school-age children and 3.3 percent of lower-secondary-school-age children were out of school (Table 2.7).

**Table 2.7: Percentage of children out of school by school age and sex, 2006/07**

| School age | Male | Female | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Primary | 1.9 | 1.9 | 1.9 |
| Lower secondary | 3.7 | 3.0 | 3.3 |

*Source: DHS 2006/07.*

Using data from the Child Activity Survey, the proportion of OOSC was a little lower than when using data from the DHS. However, the age groups defined in the Child Activity Survey were slightly different from the official ages for primary (5–9 years), lower secondary (10–13 years) and upper secondary (14–15 years) levels. Despite this, findings from the Child Activity Survey still suggest that between one and three percent of primary- and lower-secondary-school-age children were out of school.

## 2.4 Classification of OOSC by school exposure

OOSC can be classified into three subgroups: dropouts or early school leavers, children who will enter school in the future, and children who will never enter school. Dropouts or early school leavers can be identified directly with either administrative or household survey data: they have had some contact with schooling but do not currently attend school. In contrast to dropouts, children who will enter school in the future or children who will never enter school cannot be directly identified in administrative or survey data while they are still out of school. It is not possible to state for an individual child whether he or she will attend school in the future, it is only possible to estimate the proportion of children who will enter school among the total out-of-school population by estimating the probability using school entry rates at each age.

Table 2.8 presents the findings for Sri Lanka, using data from the DHS 2006/07. Most children who were not attending school, at either level, were dropouts or early school leavers. Of total OOSC, 48.4 percent of primary school age and 82.9 percent of lower secondary school age had dropped out. Only 18.4 percent of primary-school-age OOSC and 16.8 percent of lower-secondary-school-age OOSC were expected to never enter school. It is calculated that 33.1 percent of primary-school-age OOSC were expected to enter school in the future, as late entrants. Very few (0.4 percent) were expected to enter primary education after reaching the official entry age for the lower secondary level; many will have already entered or will never enter school after reaching this age. The data indicate that a high percentage of children will enter school at some point.

There were noticeable gender differences for OOSC at the primary level. At primary school age, girls were more likely than boys to drop out (56.9 percent compared to 40.9 percent), and less likely to enter in the future (26.3 percent compared to 37.3 percent); however, they were less likely to never enter school (16.8 percent compared to 21.7 percent). By the time OOSC had reached secondary school age, gender differences were negligible. Girls (82.5 percent) were as likely as boys (83.1 percent) to drop out of lower secondary school, and as likely to never enter school (17.5 percent for girls and 16.5 percent for boys).

**Table 2.8: Percentage of OOSC by school exposure, by age group and sex, 2006/07**

| School exposure | Dimension 2 (primary-school-age OOSC) | | | Dimension 3 (lower-secondary-school-age OOSC) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| Dropped out | 40.9 | 56.9 | 48.4 | 83.1 | 82.5 | 82.8 |
| Expected to enter in the future | 37.3 | 26.3 | 33.1 | 0.4 | 0.0 | 0.4 |
| Expected never to enter | 21.7 | 16.8 | 18.4 | 16.5 | 17.5 | 16.8 |

*Source: DHS 2006/07, using spreadsheet developed by UIS and methodology explained in the CMF.*

## 2.5 Disaggregated data on children in and out of school

Looking more deeply into enrolment/attendance figures, it is also important to disaggregate the data by characteristics such as sex, age group, residence (urban/rural/estate) and wealth quintile.

Using ANAR figures for primary school calculated from DHS 2006/07 data, there was little disparity between age groups and gender differences within age groups were minimal (Table 2.9). Similarly, there was only a slight difference by sector. Those in the estate sector were the least likely to attend school, especially males in the estate sector (although only by a small percentage). Those children in the lowest wealth quintile showed lower attendance rates, but the difference was minimal with no discernible pattern among other wealth quintiles. A World Bank study of poverty found that enrolment rates rose with increased income, although differences were minimal at primary level (World Bank, 2007).

**Table 2.9: Primary school ANAR by sex, age, residence and wealth quintile, 2006/07**

| | Male | Female | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Age (years)** | | | |
| 5 | 96.8 | 97.5 | 97.1 |
| 6 | 98.6 | 97.5 | 98.1 |
| 7 | 98.7 | 99.0 | 98.8 |
| 8 | 97.9 | 98.0 | 97.9 |
| 9 | 98.3 | 98.4 | 98.4 |
| **Residence** | | | |
| Urban | 96.2 | 97.8 | 96.9 |
| Rural | 98.6 | 98.2 | 98.4 |
| Estate | 94.9 | 96.3 | 95.6 |
| **Wealth quintile** | | | |
| Poorest | 96.7 | 97.1 | 96.9 |
| Second | 97.9 | 98.1 | 98.0 |
| Middle | 98.5 | 98.9 | 98.7 |
| Fourth | 98.9 | 97.7 | 98.3 |
| Richest | 98.8 | 98.6 | 98.7 |
| Total | 98.1 | 98.1 | 98.1 |

*Source: DHS 2006/07.*

Using ANAR figures for lower secondary education calculated from DHS 2007/06 data, there was little disparity between age groups and gender differences within age groups were minimal (Table 2.10). Girls showed higher attendance rates than boys. Children in the estate sector showed lower attendance rates at 80.2 percent than those in urban areas (94.3 percent) and rural areas (94.8 percent). Girls in the estate sector showed the lowest attendance rates overall at 79.9 percent. Children from the lowest wealth quintile had lower attendance rates, especially boys; the remaining four quintiles revealed no discernible patterns.

**Table 2.10: Lower secondary school ANAR by sex, age, residence and wealth quintile, 2006/07**

| | Male | Female | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Age (years)** | | | |
| 10 | 89.9 | 91.5 | 90.7 |
| 11 | 95.1 | 95.9 | 95.5 |
| 12 | 95.0 | 96.3 | 95.6 |
| 13 | 92.2 | 95.0 | 93.7 |
| **Residence** | | | |
| Urban | 93.8 | 95.3 | 94.3 |
| Rural | 93.8 | 95.8 | 94.8 |
| Estate | 80.7 | 79.9 | 80.2 |
| **Wealth quintile** | | | |
| Poorest | 86.2 | 90.1 | 88.2 |
| Second | 94.8 | 93.6 | 94.1 |
| Middle | 96.8 | 97.2 | 97.0 |
| Fourth | 94.9 | 96.9 | 96.2 |
| Richest | 96.5 | 97.5 | 96.9 |
| Total | 93.1 | 94.7 | 93.9 |

*Source: DHS 2006/07.*

Using HIES 2009/10 data disaggregated by sector, primary school ANARs were 98.6 percent for the urban sector, 98.3 percent for the rural sector and 95.3 percent for estate sector. These figures are higher than those calculated from DHS data. The Child Activity Survey 2008/09 reports primary school attendance rates of 93.3 percent for boys and 94.7 percent for girls, and 93.0 percent for the urban sector, 94.6 percent for the rural sector and 87.7 percent for the estate sector. Again, there is little disparity by age or residential sector.

Overall, it is clear that, irrespective of the data source, attendance rates are generally high at primary and lower secondary levels, and the largest disparity exists in the estate sector for children at lower secondary level.

Using DHS 2006/07 data, Table 2.11 shows that a small percentage of lower-secondary-school-age children were attending primary education. Some 7.6 percent of all 10-year-olds (the official entry age for lower secondary) were still attending primary level. However, the percentage dropped to 2.2 percent by 11 years of age. Of all lower-secondary-school-age children (10–13 years) in the estate sector, 9.7 percent were attending primary education—a high percentage compared to their rural (2.4 percent) and urban (2.2 percent) contemporaries. In fact, figures show that for boys in the estate sector some 30 percent of 10-year-olds and 15 percent of 11-year-olds were still enrolled in primary education. Girls in the estate sector had better rates than boys, with only 15 percent of 10-year-olds still attending primary level. These figures partially account for the lower ANARs in Table 2.10. Children of lower secondary school age in the poorest wealth quintile had the highest rates of primary participation. Overall, children of lower secondary school age in the estate sector (especially boys) and children in the poorest wealth quintile were the least likely to be enrolled in the appropriate level for their age.

**Table 2.11: Lower-secondary-age children attending school at primary level, 2006/07**

| | Male | Female | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Age (years)** | | | |
| 10 | 8.7 | 6.5 | 7.6 |
| 11 | 2.7 | 1.7 | 2.2 |
| 12 | 0.9 | 0.7 | 0.8 |
| 13 | 0.7 | 0.4 | 0.6 |
| **Residence** | | | |
| Urban | 2.7 | 1.6 | 2.2 |
| Rural | 2.8 | 2.0 | 2.4 |
| Estate | 11.3 | 8.1 | 9.7 |
| **Wealth quintile** | | | |
| Poorest | 5.5 | 4.5 | 5.0 |
| Second | 2.3 | 3.1 | 2.8 |
| Middle | 1.8 | 1.0 | 1.4 |
| Fourth | 2.8 | 0.8 | 1.8 |
| Richest | 2.5 | 1.0 | 1.7 |
| Total | 3.2 | 2.2 | 2.7 |

*Source: DHS 2006/07.*

The percentage of primary-school-age children out of school is calculated by subtracting the ANAR from 100 percent (which represents universal attendance). However, at the lower secondary level, the percentage of OOSC is the difference between universal attendance (100 percent) and the ANAR plus the number of lower-secondary-school-age children still attending primary education.

For primary-school-age children, there was no gender difference in the percentage of boys and girls who were out of school (Table 2.12). Five-year-olds (2.9 percent) were more likely than children of other ages (around 1-2 percent) to be out school. Children in the estate sector (4.4 percent) were most likely to be out of school, followed by urban children (3.1 percent) and rural children (1.6 percent). Poorer children were more likely than wealthier children to be out of school; some 3.1 percent of primary-school-age children in the lowest wealth quintile were out of school compared to 1.3 percent in the highest wealth quintile.

**Table 2.12: Percentage of primary-school-age children out of school by sex, age, residence and wealth quintile, 2006/07**

| | Male | Female | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Age (years)** | | | |
| 5 | 2.5 | 3.2 | 2.9 |
| 6 | 2.5 | 1.4 | 1.9 |
| 7 | 1.0 | 1.3 | 1.2 |
| 8 | 2.0 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| 9 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 1.6 |
| **Residence** | | | |
| Urban | 2.2 | 3.8 | 3.1 |
| Rural | 1.8 | 1.4 | 1.6 |
| Estate | 3.7 | 5.1 | 4.4 |
| **Wealth quintile** | | | |
| Poorest | 2.9 | 3.3 | 3.1 |
| Second | 1.9 | 2.1 | 2.0 |
| Middle | 1.1 | 1.5 | 1.3 |
| Fourth | 2.3 | 1.1 | 1.7 |
| Richest | 1.4 | 1.2 | 1.3 |
| Total | 1.9 | 1.9 | 1.9 |

*Source: DHS 2006/07.*

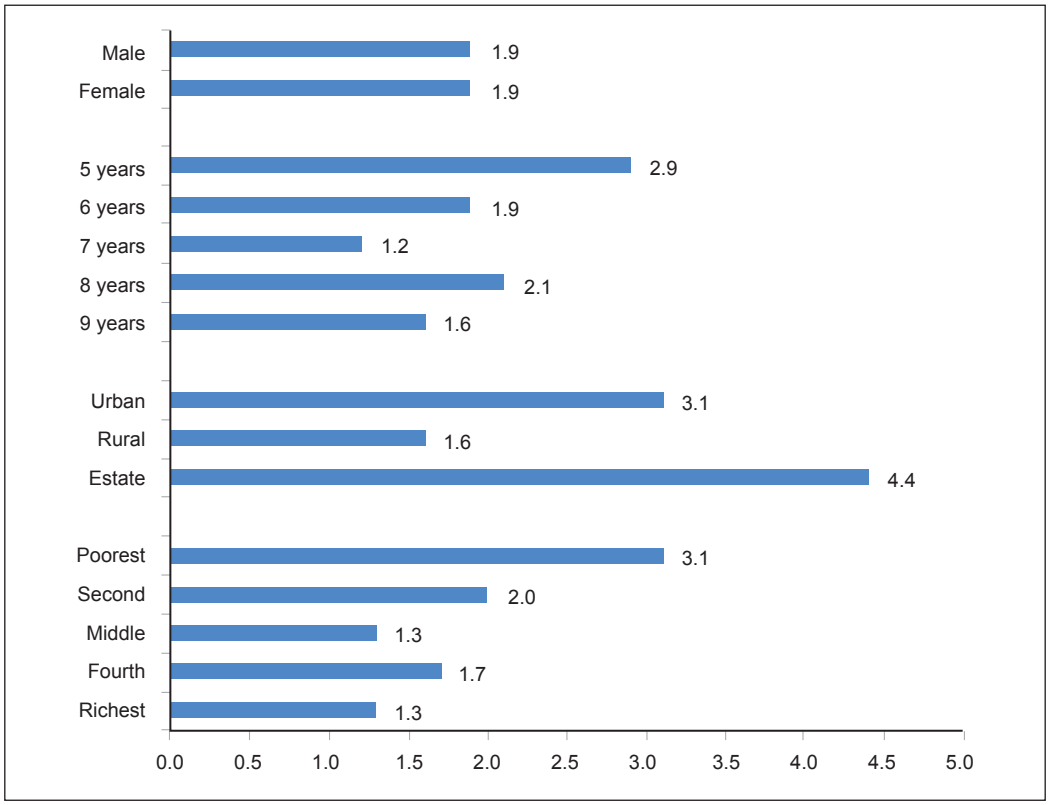
The school admissions procedure adopted by the MOE only allows children who have completed five years of age by 31 January each year to be eligible for admittance to Grade 1 of primary school; children who complete five years of age later in the year are only eligible for admittance to school in the following year. Therefore, this accounts for the relatively high number of five-year-olds who were out of school.

Historically, the population living in the estate sector has been disadvantaged by high rates of poverty and difficulties in accessing schools within plantations. The higher percentage of OOSC in the estate sector compared with other sectors reflects these disadvantages. Similarly, urban areas also have pockets of disadvantage (slum and shanty populations) and this has an effect on children's enrolment and retention in school.

Although education is provided free of charge and other ancillary services are available, parents do incur some expenditure for children's education. There are also opportunity costs. Poorer parents tend to keep children out of school to help with family income-generating activities and other forms of work.

Using DHS 2006/07 data, Figure 2.1 illustrates which characteristics primary-school-age OOSC, i.e., those in Dimension 2, are most likely to exhibit. They are most likely to be female five-year-olds, children living in the estate sector, and those from households in the poorest wealth quintile. However, disparities at this level are small. Although, again, it should be noted that DHS 2006/07 data excludes households in the conflict-affected districts of Northern Province.

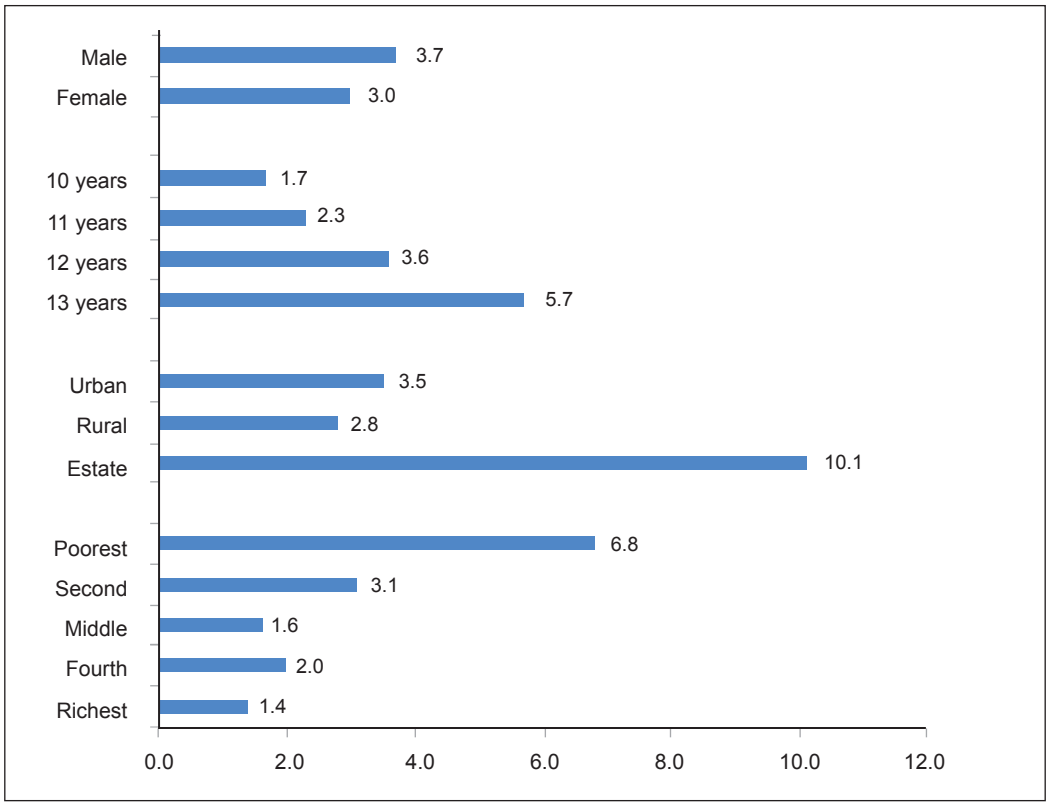
**Figure 2.1: Percentage of primary-school-age children out of school by sex, age, residence and wealth quintile, 2006/07**




*Source: DHS 2006/07.*

Of lower-secondary-school-age children, boys were more likely than girls to be out of school (3.7 percent compared to 3.0 percent) (Table 2.13). Older children were more likely than younger children to be out of school. There was little disparity between urban and rural children; however, children from the estate sector were far more likely to be out of school, especially girls (12.0 percent). Poorer children were more likely than wealthier children to be out of school; some 6.8 percent of lower-secondary-school-age children in the lowest wealth quintile were out of school (8.3 percent for boys and 5.4 percent for girls).

**Figure 2.2: Percentage of lower-secondary-school-age children out of school by sex, age, residence and wealth quintile, 2006/07**




*Source: DHS 2006/07.*

## 2.6 OOSC and their engagement in child labour

This study also attempts to classify OOSC by whether or not they are engaged in child labour in order to see whether child labour contributes to why children are not attending school, as this is important for policy purposes. Survey data on school attendance can be linked with data on child labour to study the relationship between child labour and school participation.

The Child Activity Survey 2008/09 has been used for information on child labour; however, it must be noted again that the survey was unable to collect data from Northern Province and, consequently, figures may be distorted. The Child Activity Survey[7] defined child labour as follows: (i) for the 5–11-years age group, all children engaged in some form of economic activity excluding those who worked less than five hours per week as contributing family workers in non-agricultural, non-hazardous activities, and those who worked less than 15 hours per week as contributing family workers in agricultural, non-hazardous activities; (ii) for the 12–14-years age group, all children engaged in some form of economic activity excluding those who worked less than 15 hours per week in non-agricultural, non-hazardous activities, and those who worked less than 25 hours per week as contributing family workers in agricultural, non-hazardous activities; and (iii) for the 15–17-years age group, all children engaged in some form of economic activity excluding those who worked less than 44 hours per week in non-hazardous activities.

[7] *It should be noted that age groups categorized in the Child Activity Survey were slightly different from the official ages for primary (5–9 years), lower secondary (10–13 years) and upper secondary (14–15 years) levels.*

Of children who do not attend school, 19.1 percent were engaged in child labour (Table 2.14). Older OOSC were more likely than younger OOSC to be engaged in child labour: 20.8 percent were aged 12–14 years and 1.1 percent were aged 5–11 years. Out-of-school boys were more likely than out-of-school girls to be engaged in child labour (24.7 percent compared to 11.8 percent). OOSC in the urban sector were more likely than those in the rural or estate sectors to be engaged in child labour: 28.1 percent in the urban sector, 18.4 percent in the rural sector and 11.2 percent in the estate sector.

**Table 2.14: Percentage of OOSC involved in child labour by age group, sex and residence, 2008/09**

| | Percentage |
|---|---|
| **Age group (years)** | |
| 5–11 | 1.1 |
| 12–14 | 20.8 |
| **Sex** | |
| Male | 24.7 |
| Female | 11.8 |
| **Residence** | |
| Urban | 28.1 |
| Rural | 18.4 |
| Estate | 11.2 |
| **Total** | 19.1 |

*Source: Child Activity Survey 2008/09.*

Of OOSC engaged in child labour, most were aged over 14 years: 12.4 percent were aged 12–14 years and 1.0 percent were aged 5–11 years (Table 2.15). Evidence based on the Child Activity Survey 2008/09 shows that out-of-school child labourers were more likely to be boys than girls. In addition, 23.0 percent lived in urban areas, 69.9 percent in rural areas and 7.1 percent on estates. When compared to national population statistics, urban children were disproportionately represented in the population of out-of-school child labourers.

**Table 2.15: Percentage of out-of-school child labourers by age group, sex and residence, 2008/09**

| | Percentage |
|---|---|
| **Age group (years)** | |
| 5–11 | 1.0 |
| 12–14 | 12.4 |
| 15–17 | 86.6 |
| **Sex** | |
| Male | 72.9 |
| Female | 27.1 |
| **Residence** | |
| Urban | 23.0 |
| Rural | 69.9 |
| Estate | 7.1 |

*Source: Child Activity Survey 2008/09.*

Effective policy responses often require detailed information on the nature and extent of the work that OOSC perform instead of attending school. According to the Child Activity Survey 2008/09, 58.5 percent of out-of-school girls aged 5–17 years worked for nine or more hours per day and 13.9 percent worked for 7–8 hours per day (Table 2.16); this was mostly in domestic work. Average working hours for out-of-school girls were 15.2 hours per day. Some 33.0 percent of out-of-school boys worked 1–2 hours and 21.3 percent worked nine or more hours. Average working hours for out-of-school boys were 5.5 hours per day. Although OOSC boys were more likely to be engaged in child labour, on average girls worked longer hours than boys.

**Table 2.16: Percentage of OOSC aged 5–17 years by sex and number of hours per day spent in family work, 2008/09**

| | Male | Female | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Hours spent working** | | | |
| Less than 1 | 3.4 | 0.0 | 1.8 |
| 1–2 | 33.0 | 11.6 | 23.0 |
| 3–4 | 18.3 | 9.3 | 14.1 |
| 5–6 | 12.0 | 6.7 | 9.5 |
| 7–8 | 11.9 | 13.9 | 12.8 |
| 9 and above | 21.3 | 58.5 | 38.7 |
| **Average number of hours** | 5.5 | 15.2 | 10.1 |

*Source: Child Activity Survey 2008/09.*

## 2.7 Indicators for children at risk of becoming excluded

While all children face some risk of dropping out of school, Dimensions 4 and 5 focus on those children who are at the greatest risk—the potential OOSC of tomorrow. An examination of children who have recently dropped out can provide insight into the profiles of those currently at risk.

According to the DHS 2006/07, 1.7 percent of all children aged 5–13 years dropped out of school (Table 2.17). Children aged 5–10 years were the least likely to drop out; the dropout rate begins to climb from 11 years of age. Until the age of 12 years, dropout rates were similar for boys and girls. However, boys aged 12–13 years had higher dropout rates than girls of the same age, with the largest discrepancy at 13 years of age (6.4 percent for boys and 4.0 percent for girls). Again, it should be noted that these data do not include children from the conflict-affected Northern Province.

**Table 2.17: Dropout rate by age and sex, 2006/07**

| Age (years) | Male | Female | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 0.6 | 0.8 | 0.7 |
| 6 | 0.7 | 1.4 | 1.1 |
| 7 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.7 |
| 8 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 1.1 |
| 9 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 1.1 |
| 10 | 0.9 | 1.1 | 1.0 |
| 11 | 1.4 | 2.0 | 1.7 |
| 12 | 3.4 | 2.2 | 2.8 |
| 13 | 6.4 | 4.0 | 5.1 |
| Total | 1.8 | 1.6 | 1.7 |

Another useful indicator for examining the incidence of OOSC is survival rate. According to the UIS Online Database, using data from 2006, 99 percent of all children starting Grade 1 reached (or survived to) the last grade of primary school, regardless of whether they repeated grades or not (Table 2.18). The GPI of 1.0 indicates that there was no gender difference.

**Table 2.18: Survival rate to the last grade of primary education by sex, with GPI, 2006**

| | Male | Female | Total | GPI |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Survival rate to the last grade of primary education (%) | 98 | 99 | 99 | 1.0 |

*Source: UIS Online Database; accessed 28 August 2012. The most recent available data are for 2006.*

The Annual School Census 2010 disaggregates survival rates by sex and grade. As can be seen from Table 2.19, girls had slightly higher survival rates than boys at the end of both primary and lower secondary education. This is consistent with the higher dropout rates for boys.

**Table 2.19: Survival rates by grade and sex, 2010**

| | Grade 2 | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 | Grade 6 | Grade 7 | Grade 8 | Grade 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 99.5 | 98.7 | 98.5 | 97.0 | 96.9 | 95.7 | 93.2 | 89.3 |
| Female | 99.7 | 99.0 | 98.6 | 98.2 | 97.9 | 97.4 | 95.8 | 92.8 |
| Total | 99.6 | 98.8 | 98.5 | 97.6 | 97.4 | 96.5 | 94.4 | 91.1 |

*Source: Annual School Census 2010.*

The HIES 2009/10 revealed that 2.0 percent of children in the estate sector had not attended school and 2.3 percent had dropped out. Unlike other data sources, the HIES 2009/10 suggested that fewer urban children than rural or estate children had never attended school and fewer had dropped out. However, the disparities were small.

A second way to analyse the at-risk population is to examine various indicators linked to children attending school. In particular, pre-primary education, repetition rates and transition rates provide information about which children who are currently attending school may be at risk of dropping out in the future.

According to the Annual School Census 2010, 5.0 percent of new entrants to primary education had no pre-primary experience, implying that 95.0 percent did (Table 2.20). There was gender parity in pre-primary exposure.

**Table 2.20: New entrants to primary education with pre-primary experience by sex, 2010**

| | Male | Female | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| New entrants to primary education with pre-primary experience (%) | 95.3 | 94.7 | 95.0 |

*Source: Annual School Census 2010.*

Being overage is another risk factor for dropping out of school. One reason for overage attendance is repetition. Therefore, grade repetition rates can indicate whether this is a likely cause of dropout. Using UIS data for 2008, repetition rates were low, at less than 1.4 percent for any primary grade even when disaggregated by gender (Table 2.21). Data showed that the higher the grade, the higher the repetition rate. It is also noteworthy that boys were more likely than girls to repeat.

### Table 2.21: Repetition rate by grade and sex, 2008

| Grade | Female | Male | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 0.7 | 0.9 | 0.8 |
| 3 | 0.8 | 1.0 | 0.9 |
| 4 | 0.9 | 1.2 | 1.1 |
| 5 | 0.9 | 1.4 | 1.1 |

*Source: UIS Online Database; accessed 28 August 2012. The most recent available data are for 2008.*

Table 2.22 shows that although a low percentage of children repeat at each level of education, boys were much more likely than girls to be repeaters, with a GPI of 0.75 at primary level and 0.56 at lower secondary level.

### Table 2.22: Percentage of repeaters in primary and lower secondary education, 2010

| School level | Female | Male | Total | GPI |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Primary | 0.6 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 0.75 |
| Lower secondary | 0.7 | 1.3 | 1.1 | 0.56 |

*Source: UIS Online Database; accessed 28 August 2012.*

Data from the Annual School Census 2010 suggested that repetition rates were higher in later grades for both boys and girls and that repetition rates for boys were higher than for girls (Table 2.23); this is consistent with data presented in Table 2.22.

### Table 2.23: Repetition rates by sex and grade, 2010

| Grade | Male | Female |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 0.6 | 0.5 |
| 2 | 0.8 | 0.7 |
| 3 | 0.8 | 0.6 |
| 4 | 1.0 | 0.7 |
| 5 | 1.2 | 0.8 |
| 6 | 1.7 | 0.9 |
| 7 | 1.4 | 0.7 |
| 8 | 1.3 | 0.7 |
| 9 | 1.2 | 0.7 |

*Source: Annual School Census 2010.*

Data from the Annual School Census 2010 showed that a significant proportion of children in primary school were overage: 6.7 percent of 10-year-olds, 1.6 percent of 11-year-olds and 0.2 percent of 12-year-olds were still in primary school (Table 2.24). Data also revealed that boys were more likely than girls to be overage in primary education.

### Table 2.24: Percentage of overage children enrolled in primary education by sex and age, 2010

| Age (years) | Male | Female | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 10 | 7.2 | 6.1 | 6.7 |
| 11 | 2.0 | 1.4 | 1.6 |
| 12 | 0.3 | 0.2 | 0.2 |

*Source: Annual School Census 2010.*

One last way to assess the risk of dropout is to look at the effective transition rate from primary level to lower secondary level. Using UIS data for 2009, the transition rate was 97.3 percent—100 percent for boys and 94.4 percent for girls—with a GPI of 0.94 (Table 2.25). The transition rate from primary to lower secondary education computed from data collected for the Annual School Census 2008 was 99.6 percent.

**Table 2.25: Effective transition rate from primary to lower secondary education by sex, with GPI, 2009**

| | Female | Male | Total | GPI |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Transition to lower secondary education | 94.4 | 100.0 | 97.3 | 0.94 |

*Source: UIS data for 2009.*

Children's involvement in labour is a particularly important individual risk factor for dropping out. Children attending school who are simultaneously involved in child labour often lag behind their non-working peers, and may ultimately be at greater risk of premature dropout. According to the Child Activity Survey 2008/09, 57,315 children were involved in child labour while still attending school. These children accounted for 53.6 percent of all working children. School-going working children were more likely to be younger than older: 51.6 percent were aged 5–11 years, 27.1 percent were aged 12–14 years, and 12.2 percent were aged 15–17 years (Table 2.26). They were also more likely to be boys than girls. Some 1.4 percent of all children attending school were engaged in child labour and, therefore, at risk of dropping out (Table 2.26).

**Table 2.26: Percentage of working children also attending school and children attending school also working by age group and sex, 2008/09**

| | Percentage of working children also in school | Percentage of children in school also working |
|---|---|---|
| **Age group (years)** | | |
| 5–11 | 51.6 | 1.3 |
| 12–14 | 27.1 | 1.6 |
| 15–17 | 12.2 | 1.4 |
| **Sex** | | |
| Boys | 64.3 | 1.8 |
| Girls | 35.7 | 1.0 |
| **Total** | 100.0 | 1.4 |

*Source: Child Activity Survey 2008/09.*

Data on the amount of time that in-school children spent on household chores was collected by the Child Activity Survey 2008/09. In-school children who spend five hours or more a day on household chores are considered at increased risk of dropping out. In total, 38.4 percent of children spent five hours or more a day on household chores (Table 2.27). This was more common for girls than boys (45.8 percent compared to 30.9 percent). On average, girls worked 5.5 hours a day and boys worked 3.9 hours.

**Table 2.27: Percentage of working children attending school by sex and number of hours spent in family work, 2008/09**

| Hours spent working per day | Male | Female | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Less than 1 | 6.7 | 4.1 | 5.4 |
| 1–2 | 39.7 | 28.3 | 33.9 |
| 3–4 | 22.8 | 21.8 | 22.3 |
| 5–6 | 12.1 | 13.3 | 12.7 |
| 7–8 | 9.8 | 14.1 | 11.9 |
| 9 and above | 9.0 | 18.4 | 13.8 |
| Average number of hours | 3.9 | 5.5 | 4.7 |

*Source: Child Activity Survey 2008/09.*

The availability of water and sanitation facilities at school can also have an impact on children's participation. Table 2.28 shows the number of schools with water facilities. Nearly 43 percent of schools had access to water from wells and 28 percent had tap water. Seventeen percent had no water facilities.

**Table 2.28: Water facilities at schools, 2010**

| | Well/tube well | Tap water | Water from mountains | From bowser | No water facilities | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number | 4,150 | 2,726 | 1,083 | 68 | 1,648 | 9,675 |
| Percentage | 42.9 | 28.2 | 11.2 | 0.7 | 17.0 | – |

*Source: MOE, School Health & Nutrition Branch 2010.*

Information provided by the School Health and Nutrition Branch of the MOE also shows that around 20 percent of toilets were in need of repair before they could be used. These conditions can contribute to the non-participation of students, especially girls who have reached the age of puberty.

## 2.8 Profiles of excluded children

The information provided in the tables above shows that a large proportion of Sri Lanka's primary- and lower-secondary-school-age children are attending school. This may be due to the educational policies implemented over the last seven decades that include free state education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, free textbooks, free uniforms, free midday meals in primary school and subsidized transport. National averages show that there is a high degree of gender equality in access to education and urban–rural differences are not remarkable. However, disparity exists in the estate sector. There are minimal differences in access by wealth quintile, although gaps are wider at secondary level than at primary level.

The data provided in this chapter are intended to assist in identifying profiles of excluded children. This is possible to a certain extent, although the 'broad brush' approach used by national-level surveys makes the pinpointing of characteristics that define children in Dimensions 1–5 a little difficult in Sri Lanka where the numbers of OOSC and children at risk of dropping out are small. The profiles suggested below are necessarily blunt and greater nuance will be added by information in the following chapter on barriers and bottlenecks to education in Sri Lanka.

Again, a major caveat of this report is that much of the data used in the tables above excludes information on children from conflict-affected districts in Northern Province. In addition, it was not possible to disaggregate the data available by district or ethnic/language group; it is suspected that this would have been useful in refining the following profiles.

### *Dimension 1: OOSC of pre-primary school age*

Attendance rates for pre-primary-age children are quite high in Sri Lanka. However, attendance rates for those in the estate sector are much lower than for those in rural and urban areas. Additionally, children in the lowest wealth quintile are much less likely than those in other wealth quintiles to be participating in education at the age of four years. Overall, gender is not likely to be a significant factor in non-attendance; however, girls in the estate sector are much less likely than boys in the estate sector to be attending an education programme. However, as data from the MOE indicate that 95 percent of children in Grade 1 have some exposure to preschool education, the number of children in Dimension 1 is likely to be small.

### *Dimension 2: OOSC of primary school age*

Children in Dimension 2, OOSC of primary school age, are as likely to be girls as boys, are more likely to be in the estate sector than urban or rural sectors, and are most likely to come from the poorest wealth quintile. They are unlikely to be involved in child labour.

### *Dimension 3: OOSC of lower secondary school age*

Of lower-secondary-school-age children, boys are slightly more likely than girls to be out of school. Older children are more likely than younger children to be out of school. There is no significant disparity between urban and rural children. However, children from the estate sector are far more likely to be out of school, especially girls. Poorer children are more likely than wealthier children to be out of school; some 6.8 percent of children in the lowest wealth quintile are out of school, with 8.3 percent of boys in this wealth quintile being out of school. Disparities at the lower secondary level are greater than at the primary level.

### *Dimension 4: Primary-school-age children at risk of dropping out*

Children in Dimension 4 are those at risk of dropping out of primary education. They are as likely to be boys as girls. Children of this age are not likely to be involved in child labour; but for those that are, a high proportion are still attending school and therefore at risk of dropping out. Boys are more likely than girls to be in-school working children. There are more overage boys than girls in primary school, and repetition rates are higher for boys than for girls.

### *Dimension 5: Lower-secondary-school-age children at risk of dropping out*

Lower-secondary-school-age children at risk of dropping out (Dimension 5) are more likely to be boys than girls. Involvement in child labour puts children at risk of dropping out, particularly for boys; however, by this age, many working children have already become OOSC. There are more overage boys than girls in lower secondary school and repetition rates are higher for boys than for girls.

# CHAPTER 3:
# BARRIERS AND BOTTLENECKS

This chapter discusses the barriers and bottlenecks that result in the non-enrolment or dropout of children from schools in Sri Lanka. Although national statistics show few patterns of exclusion at primary and lower secondary levels, with no significant findings on age, gender, wealth or rural–urban divide, it is acknowledged that undoubtedly a substantial number of children aged 5–14 years are still out of school and are being denied their right to an adequate basic education. Therefore, it was felt that analysis of micro-level studies of OOSC might be useful for disclosing relevant information on the reasons for exclusion. Again it must be emphasized that, as a result of the 26-year armed conflict, collecting reliable and representative data from Northern and Eastern Provinces has been difficult, if not impossible. Therefore, most of the studies mentioned below have not been able to look at the situation in these conflict-affected areas, and consequently their conclusions are at best indicative. It can only be assumed at this stage that the findings reported here under-represent the true situation.

It must also be noted that the factors preventing children from enrolling in school or causing them to drop out are complex and usually interlinked, so most children who are excluded from school or are at risk of exclusion experience a combination of the barriers and bottlenecks discussed below.

## 3.1 Demand-side socio-cultural barriers and bottlenecks

Demand-side socio-cultural barriers and bottlenecks influencing exclusion from school in Sri Lanka are mainly related to parents' and children's attitudes to education, especially when the benefits to be derived from education are considered against the advantages to be gained by children carrying out other activities. In some instances, gender is also a concern. Poor health and disabilities can also prevent children from obtaining a full cycle of basic education.

### *Parents' and children's attitude to education*

A study of schools with high dropout rates found that among the most frequent reasons given for children dropping out were 'parents not interested in children's education' and 'parents not encouraging children to attend school regularly' (MOE *et al*., 2009). The need for children to look after younger siblings, the absence of adequate study space, and a disturbed or violent home environment were also cited as probable causes.

A small study in 2000 of 29 street children found that 79 percent had either not enrolled in school or had dropped out early (Manchanayake, 2000). Factors affecting their education included, among other things, parental ignorance and the absence of appropriate socio-cultural values. The majority of parents had no understanding of the economic and social benefits of education; they felt that an education would not benefit their children, preferring instead that they contributed to the household income by earning a living.

Another small study of 31 boys aged less than 17 years engaged in the fireworks industry found that the majority of those aged less than 14 years were school dropouts (Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2005). The parents of these child workers had a low level of education and poor understanding of the value of education, and it was concluded that this had contributed to their children dropping out of school and working in this industry.

A study of 210 child beggars and their families in Western Province found that two thirds of children had never attended school and about half were illiterate. 'Parental disinterest' was a primary reason for non-schooling and school dropout (Gunawardena *et al*., 2005).

A study commissioned by Save the Children in 2009 found that some children dropping out of school had done so as a result of parental pressure. 'My parents do not want me to continue at school' was a commonly cited reason (Jayaweera and Gunawardena, 2009). It was concluded that this was mainly for financial reasons rather than for socio-cultural reasons, but clearly these parents placed a lower priority on schooling than on work.

Parental (or older siblings') lack of interest in education in combination with poverty or by itself can result in non-enrolment of children. Second among the reasons given by children who were out of school in the field survey for this study was 'parents not interested in sending child to school' (37.8 percent) (see Annex 2).

Despite the findings above, it should be noted that the role of negative parental attitudes on participation in education shown in many micro-level studies is not obviously reflected in macro-level data.

### *Gender*

Although gender does not appear to be a major factor leading to lack of access to or dropout from education, it is noteworthy that gender appears to be a socio-cultural barrier in certain ethnic groups (e.g., plantation Tamils and Moors/Malays). In some communities, there may be cultural factors that pull girls out of school and into work. In the study by Kannangara *et al*. (2003) of child domestic workers, girls were more often employed than boys and approximately 59 percent of child domestic workers were from the Tamil-speaking community.

The field survey conducted for this study found that some girls in the Muslim community dropped out of school after menarche; this was most prevalent in low-income families (see Annex 2).

Although child marriage is a sensitive subject and difficult to collect information on, it has been reported that early marriage, especially for girls, was a common feature in some conflict-affected districts during the war, where the view of parents was that marriage was a 'safety measure' to prevent recruitment by the LTTE. Some Tamil families in the field survey for this study had taken girls out of school to get them married at a very young age in order to prevent their recruitment as child soldiers by the LTTE (see Annex 2).

### *Impact on 5DE*

Demand-side socio-cultural barriers and bottlenecks in Sri Lanka tend to affect older children, i.e., secondary-school-age children, rather than younger children. Of the five dimensions, children in Dimension 5, secondary-school-age children in school but at risk of dropping out, are the most likely to be affected by demand-side socio-cultural barriers associated with the low priority given to schooling by parents or children. This is usually combined with strong economic factors that result in children dropping out of school.

Although not widely covered in studies of OOSC, ill health and disabilities could also act as a barrier to children in Dimensions 4 and 5 who are already attending school but at risk of dropping out.

## 3.2 Demand-side economic barriers and bottlenecks

Demand-side economic barriers to education centre on family poverty, which is closely linked to child labour and the migration of mothers.

### *Poverty*

Analysis of data from the DHS 2006/07 indicates that there is relatively little disparity by wealth quintile for primary-school-age children; however, this increases for secondary-school-age children (see Table 2.13). Indeed, a Central Bank survey in 2005 concludes that there was a negative relationship between income level and non-schooling rates: school avoidance declined as income rose. Thus, school avoidance rates were calculated to be 2.8 percent for the poorest quintile and 1.3 percent for the richest quintile (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2005). Moreover, smaller studies specifically on OOSC and child labourers often cite 'poverty' and 'financial difficulties' as the main reason for children being out of school. It is not always clear whether families cannot afford the actual costs of schooling or whether the opportunity costs are too high.

Data from the 2001 population census for about one third of the most economically backward divisions in the country present a clear picture of the link between poverty and the lack of education (DCS, 2006). The proportion of the population below the national poverty line in these divisions ranged from 37.3 percent in Badulla to 6.4 percent in Colombo. Eight districts from the conflict-affected Northern and Eastern Provinces were not included in the analysis, thus leaving out the worst affected regions. The highest percentages of children not attending school in selected divisions were from Ratnapura (16.0 percent), Colombo (14.1 percent), Galle (12.2 percent), Kalutara (12.2 percent), Ampara (11.8 percent), Batticaloa (11.5 percent), Puttalam (11.5 percent), Badulla (11.4 percent) and Matara (10.1 percent). These figures indicate that those disadvantaged in education are found not only in remote and difficult districts but also in pockets of disadvantage in better-off districts. Of the above districts, Ampara, Batticaloa and Puttalam were also affected by the conflict.

In 2006, while the national dropout rate for children aged 5–14 years was less than five percent, it was between six percent and 15 percent for 15 of the 100 most economically disadvantaged divisions (DCS, 2006).

Arunatilake (2005) in her analysis of Sri Lanka Integrated Survey (SLIS) data found that despite large-scale government spending on education, out-of-pocket expenditure on education was quite high. As much as 27 percent of total spending on education came from private sources. On average, expenditure on education for a child in the richest quintile was SLRs 518 (US$ 6.80) per month, while it was SLRs 121 (US$ 1.60) per month for a child in the poorest quintile. A significant proportion of private spending on education was on clothing, stationery, private coaching and books. She also found that the type of employment, and hence the income, of the head of the household was statistically significant in explaining the schooling of children. Households where the head owned farmland, was employed in the informal sector or was not working were most likely to have children out of school. Moreover, living in a community where the main livelihood was agriculture or fishing increased the likelihood of children being out of school compared to communities where the main livelihood was employment in services. She suggested that, as agricultural communities provide more opportunities for employment, the opportunity costs of staying in school are increased for children from agricultural households. MOE *et al*. (2009) reported that some parents had difficulties in meeting the economic costs of educating their children.

In Gunawardane and Jayaweera's (2004) study of children from low-income communities, the majority of school dropouts attributed dropping out to economic reasons. The 'inability to contribute money for school activities' (i.e., facilities fees, colour-washing, purchasing furniture, school sports meets, cleaning toilets, religious activities, etc.) was a factor in the non-attendance of children. Girls (18.3 percent) were more likely than boys (14.1 percent) to have never been to school, and boys (46.3 percent) were more likely than girls (42.3 percent) to have dropped out. The study concluded that this could have been the result of boys being more likely than girls to engage in child labour.

A study by Jayaweera and Gunawardena (2009) confirmed the conclusions of earlier studies that poverty was a strong determinant of non-schooling. Of 494 students who responded to a question on dropping out, 18.6 percent had reported poverty as a major factor, giving replies such as 'my parents do not have enough money to send me to school' and 'I want to help my family financially'. This second reason often provides the push for children to drop out of school and become involved in child labour.

Jayaweera *et al*.'s (2001) study of the incidence of non-schooling and child labour among 5–14-year-olds in low-income households in Western, Uva and Sabaragamuwa Provinces found that enrolment data suggested 85–90 percent of children were attending school. However, in the weeks preceding the survey, almost three quarters of the children in urban schools were irregular in attendance, and 43.1 percent of boys and 59.3 percent of girls in rural schools were irregular. Dropout rates tended to be lower in urban schools; but more children had never attended school in rural areas.

The field survey for this study also found a clear relationship between poverty and non-schooling (see Annex 2). The occupations of household members of the 316 households with children not in school indicated that all households belonged to the lowest tier in terms of income and prestige, as not one member had even a middle-level job such as clerk or technician. Over half (57.6 percent) were labourers (manual labourers or estate workers), 16.0 percent were workers in the primary agricultural and fisheries sector, 13.3 percent were service sector workers, and 7.7 percent were artisans and industrial workers.

Furthermore, although 81.3 percent of heads of households had had access to some form of education, the fact that 18.4 percent had never enrolled in school and 73.4 percent were primary or secondary school dropouts suggested that poverty had been a pervasive barrier to the optimal utilization of educational opportunities (see Annex 2). Another indicator of the economically disadvantaged status of these households was that only around half had access to safe water, satisfactory sanitation facilities, electricity, housing, land, and minimal household assets—radio, mobile telephone and television. Few had access to other assets.

The field survey also found that boys were more likely than girls to mention 'financial difficulties' (possibly because of the need for them to contribute to family income), lessons being uninteresting and school being boring, transport problems, and the conflict as reasons for not attending school (see Annex 2). However, whereas boys did not explicitly mention their engagement in economic activities as a reason for being out of school, it did emerge as a major reason in the responses given by their parents or caregivers. The most frequent reasons mentioned by girls for being out of school were 'parents uninterested' (which could possibly be linked to the attitudes of parents to the education of girls), mothers leaving home for employment (linked to girls' safety as well as their additional responsibilities in the home), helping with domestic work, and looking after younger siblings (connected to the traditional roles of females).

There were also noteworthy differences between girls and boys regarding their absence from school. Boys were more likely than girls to be absent because of engagement in economic activities, both household and other (32.0 percent for boys compared to 11.7 percent for girls) (see Annex 2). However, girls were more likely than boys to be absent in order to help with domestic work (26.6 percent compared to 8.9 percent) or look after younger siblings (20.2 percent compared to 5.9 percent). Parents were reported to be less interested in school attendance for girls (34.0 percent) than for boys (21.9 percent). This indicates that gender role socialization continues to operate in some locations. Caregivers responded that boys were more likely than girls to not like going to school (45.6 percent compared to 23.4 percent), possibly explaining the higher participation of girls than boys in secondary school. The difference between genders with regards to 'could not cope with school work' was minimal (46.8 percent for girls and 48.5 percent for boys).

Excerpts from the life stories of children who had dropped out of school vividly illustrate the experiences that had led to their dropout.

Suganthan, a 12-year-old boy from Kilinochchi, said, "The reason I dropped out of school was the poor economic situation of my family. As I could not get the necessary financial support, I stopped going to school."

Rathnadevi, a 14-year-old girl from Batticaloa, said, "Mother works as a labourer 2–3 days a week for SLRs 250–300 a day. When she has money we manage to eat enough. After school, if we are hungry, I go to the river to catch fish. I use the mosquito net given to us by the Ministry of Health for preventing dengue fever as my fishing net."

'Financial difficulty; no money to buy exercise books, etc.' was the most important factor given by children who had never enrolled in school for being out of school, with 51.1 percent giving this reason (see Annex 2). Saritha, a seven-year-old girl from Colombo, and other children describe severe deprivations that prevented them from enrolling in school.

Saritha and her mother beg near the Dehiwala mosque. This helps them to earn money. However, it is an offence to go begging with children and, if the police catch them, they are taken to court. Some days they have no food in the mornings, but there is always something for lunch and dinner. Her parents never went school. The family lives in a small wooden hut built on unauthorized land near the Keththaramaya. The house does not have basic amenities other than a water tap.

Kanishka, an eight-year-old boy from Ampara, said that, because of poverty and indifference, his parents had never thought about his education. There are eight family members living in their one-roomed house. As the house is built of metal sheets, they are unable to stay inside during the hot season.

Nishantha, a 13-year-old boy from Ampara, explained how the home and area he lives in lacks the environment for studies, instead he plays games and spends his time uselessly.

### *Poor health and nutritional status*

The field survey for this study also found that chronic ill health resulted in a relatively high rate of irregular attendance and sometimes led to dropout or non-schooling (see Annex 2). Illnesses affecting school attendance most frequently cited by children in the study included colds, weak eyesight, asthma, earache, swollen knees, pain in legs, fever, headache, stomach ache and chest pain. Some children were prone to sickness and thus missed school. While some children stated that they were undergoing treatment, it was not clear whether adequate attention had been given to improving their health. Some children's life stories describe how ill health had compelled them to leave school.

> Ilhaz, an 11-year-old boy from Puttalam, has poor eye sight and suffers from headache. He could not read and dropped out.
>
> Malathika, a 14-year-old girl from Puttalam, also has headaches and so was unable to read.
>
> Thizal, a 15-year-old boy from Moneragala, had to undergo surgery to remove a growth on his tongue. This resulted in him missing school for a long time until the wound healed. He resumed school and his sister helped him catch up with missed work. But the growth reappeared again and had to be operated on again. This time he gave up school.
>
> Vageesha, a 13-year-old boy from Ampara, fell off his bicycle and fractured his arm. As a result, he was in Batticaloa for four months during which time he could not attend school. When he recovered and went back to school, his name had been removed from the class list so he dropped out.

The most significant health problem identified in a number of studies of school-age children is malnutrition, and the Medical Research Institute has estimated that 30 percent of school children are undernourished (Jayatissa and Hossaine, 2009).

### *Child labour*

The Central Bank survey in 2005 indicated that the main reason for non-schooling was the inability to provide for basic requirements, resulting in children's withdrawal from school in order to contribute to household income through child labour (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2005).

De Silva and de Silva (2001) studied 258 street children, of whom 24 percent were not attending school. Most of these children were used for begging in places of worship or crowded areas. In Gunawardena *et al.*'s study (2005) of child beggars, 42 percent of children indicated that they had become beggars to help their families financially.

A 2009 study by the MOE found that children were compelled to seek employment to support their family, and had to assist parents in activities such as farming, fishing and small businesses (MOE *et al.*, 2009). The Child Activity Survey 2008/09 found that 2.6 percent of children aged 5–17 years were involved in child labour (DCS, 2011c). Some 46.4 percent of these children were out of school. Of child labourers aged 5–14 years (compulsory schooling age), 12.9 percent were not attending school. Of children engaged in hazardous forms of child labour, only 29.9 percent were attending school, suggesting an important relationship between the nature of work and school attendance. The Child Activity Survey 2008/09 also found that, of 261,978 children aged 5–17 years, 19.6 percent cited 'financial difficulties' as the reason for not attending school; girls were more likely than boys to give this reason, and children in the estate sector were more likely than others to give it.

A study of a low-income community in Colombo found that poverty was a major factor impacting children's education (Ariyapala, 2002). 'Money' was considered more important than 'education', with 50 percent of children engaged in work. This again reflects the opportunity costs associated with schooling.

Studies have inquired into the occurrence of child labour, and how it impacts on children's attendance and dropout. Kannangara *et al*.'s (2003) study on children in domestic labour collected information from 4,076 families and 7,574 children in five districts. The study found that 13.3 percent of children were engaged in some form of work. Most of them (40 percent) had been attending school at the time they were recruited for domestic work and claimed to have basic literacy and mathematical skills. Only nine percent were still attending school while working.

Jayasena's (2005) study of domestic labour sampled 185 domestic workers in three major towns of Central Province. Over two thirds were less than 18 years of age and more than half were less than 14 years. Poverty was identified as the main reason compelling parents to send their children to be domestic workers. Most families were identified as living below the poverty line. The majority of live-in workers reported excessive hours of work and most employers did not provide child workers with access to formal school or NFE centres.

In Gunawardena *et al*.'s (2006) study of schools located in six communities of six districts (Anuradhapura, Colombo, Galle, Hambantota, Kandy and Moneragala) representing the three sectors (urban, rural and estate), about one third of parents reported that they expected their children to contribute to the household income. Working children were mainly drawn from slum and beach communities, had parents with a lower income, came from larger families, and lived in houses that lacked amenities such as water and electricity. The majority was working all year round. As the number of working hours increased, children were more likely to report that they were late for school, with children working for more than 28 hours per week reporting that they were often late. Irregular attendance is closely linked to school dropout.

The field survey for this study also found that some children dropped out of school to engage in economic activities (see Annex 2).

Sirinivasan, a 14-year-old boy from Batticaloa, explained, "My father told me to work in a shop. I am still working there. I serve food, clean the premises, and do some selling. I leave home in the morning and come back in the evening. I work 7–8 hours a day. I receive food and SLRs 400 a day."

Harish, a 16-year-old boy from Polonnaruwa, said, "As father does a seasonal job, I help him plucking coconuts whenever he needs me. I have been doing this since Grade 6. I used to do this only after school and during holidays. I receive SLRs 50–100 a day for this work. I also work as a cowherd, earning a wage of SLRs 3,000 a month."

Ariam, a 16-year-old boy from Nuwara Eliya, said, "I help my uncle in the nursery working a few hours a day, watering plants. I receive board and lodging but no pay."

Sudhir cleans houses in his village and picks coconuts to earn to money. Sometimes he helps to make bricks. During such times, he does not go to school and his education is disrupted. He says it is his duty to look after his mother and sisters, and earn money so that his siblings can go to school.

### *Migration of mothers*

Another economic factor that influences exclusion from school in Sri Lanka is the widespread labour migration of mothers; this can result in children dropping out of school for a variety of reasons. Economic pressures have resulted in many women migrating without their families to work as unskilled labourers, often as overseas domestic workers in Middle Eastern countries. This migration of mothers has both beneficial and adverse effects. On one hand, mothers are able to send money back to their families to improve their standard of living; this will include providing the necessities for children's education and may prevent the removal of children from school for child labour. On the other hand, children who are left behind, especially in the absence of support from an extended family or a caring father, may be neglected in terms of basic needs such as health and nutrition as well as in regards to conscientious supervision of their attendance at school.

Pinto-Jayawardena (2006), in a random sample of 1,200 households with migrant mothers in the two districts of Colombo and Kurunegala, looked at the effects of migration on children and families. Comparing the school attendance and performance of children from three groups comprising children of migrant mothers, children with mothers working in Sri Lanka and children of non-working mothers, the educational performance of children with migrant mothers was clearly lower than that of the other two groups. It was concluded that this was because of the adverse consequences on the family such as neglect of children, emotional distress suffered by children, alcoholism of fathers, etc. Children of migrant mothers were most likely to attain the lowest scores in three subject areas, and to show the lowest rates of school attendance. These findings were confirmed in the MOE *et al*. (2009) study on children who have dropped out of school. Jayasena's study (2005) of child domestic workers also suggested that the migration of parents had resulted in children dropping out of school prior to their involvement in child labour.

In the field survey for this study, 14.6 percent of the children (aged 5–16 years) who were out of school responded that the migration of their mother for employment was responsible for their dropout (see Annex 2). Umesh (a 16-year-old boy from Polonnaruwa) said his mother had been in the Middle East for a long time, and suggested that this was one of the reasons he had abandoned school life. She had worked in various places and had spent some time in jail. She was unable to earn much money. While she was away, his father had looked after the children.

### *Impact on 5DE*

Thus, among economic demand-side barriers, poverty emerges as an important factor influencing exclusion and dropout from school. It is multifaceted, with poverty leading to child labour or migration of mothers, aggravating the situation for many children.

Despite the availability of free schooling from primary level, children are being excluded from education (pre-primary, primary and lower secondary—Dimensions 1, 2 and 3) because their families either cannot afford the incidental costs of school or cannot overlook the opportunity costs. Furthermore, children in Dimension 5 are also being pulled out of school as a result the poverty experienced by their families either to become child labourers or because of family dysfunction when mothers migrate. Finally, children in Dimension 4 from poor families are likely to have irregular attendance records and are thus more likely to drop out.

## 3.3 Supply-side barriers and bottlenecks

Supply-side barriers and bottlenecks that result in children being excluded from school or in dropping out early include the uneven distribution of schools, inadequate school infrastructure facilities, problems with teacher deployment and training, deficiencies in the teaching–learning process, corporal punishment and poor teacher behaviour, and lack of facilities for children with disabilities.

### *Distribution of schools*

Imbalances in the types of school that exist can lead to inequities in the allocation of school resources. This is reflected in high regional variations in average learning achievements. The National Education and Research and Evaluation Centre study (NEREC, 2003) looked at learning achievements of 16,383 Grade 4 students across the country. The proportion of students attaining mastery of their first language (Sinhala or Tamil) varied from 54.5 percent in Northern Province to 72.8 percent in Western Province. Similarly, mastery of mathematics ranged from 50.3 percent in Northern Province to 71.1 percent in Western Province, and mastery of English varied from 35.6 percent in Northern and Eastern Provinces to 54.3 percent in Western Province. The urban–rural differences in these three subjects were also significant. Some 50.3 percent of students in urban schools attained mastery in their first language compared to 33.2 percent in rural schools; 51.3 percent in urban schools attained mastery in mathematics compared to 34.8 percent in rural schools; 21.6 percent in urban schools attained mastery in English compared to 6.7 percent in rural schools. Colombo, Gampaha, Matara and Kalutara had the highest achievements, and Trincomalee, Nuwara Eliya, Batticaloa, Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi had the lowest. 'Being weak in studies' is often cited by children as a reason for dropping out of school.

Exclusion from education can also be affected by the lack of particular types of school and by the distance required to travel to get to school. In 2001, 68.5 percent of plantation schools were Type 3 schools with only primary grades (Korale, 2004). This could have an effect on the ability of children to transition to lower secondary education in these areas, and their willingness to stay in primary school. The National Education Commission's (NEC, 2003) study on rationalization of schools found that, as a result of the closure of some small schools, an additional 5–30 children had dropped out of each school in 34 percent of the 221 schools examined.

Where children have to travel a long distance to school or where travelling is difficult or dangerous, this contributes to raised levels of dropout; this is seen especially in the conflict-affected districts of Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Ampara (MOE *et al*., 2009). Gunawardane and Jayaweera (2004) also found that 'distance to school' was a factor in children's non-attendance in the schools they sampled.

### *School infrastructure and facilities*

MOE *et al*.'s (2009) study identified lack of basic facilities such as latrines and drinking water as contributing to dropout. The Annual School Census 2008 found that 13.4 percent of schools had no toilet facilities, 19.3 percent lacked water, and 8.5 percent lacked electricity (MOE, 2008a). Provincial disparities were apparent; unsurprisingly, schools in conflict-affected and disadvantaged provinces were most likely to lack these essential resources. The Annual School Census 2010 indicates similar disparities within provinces. Thus, while 42.7 percent of schools nationwide had access to water from wells and another 28.1 percent from taps, in Central, Uva

and Sabaragamuwa Provinces only around 50 percent of schools had access to water from either source. Of all schools in the country, 73.6 percent had student toilets, ranging from a high of 93.9 percent in Western Province to a low of 64.9 percent in North Central Province. Access to electricity was available in 80.9 percent of schools countrywide, ranging from in 97.5 percent in Western Province to 59.0 percent Northern Province. Telephone facilities were grossly inadequate in all provinces, with only 32.8 percent of schools having this facility. Laboratories for GCE O Level studies were available in 26.9 percent of schools and science rooms in another 16.9 percent. Schools in Western (32.4 percent), Southern (33.0 percent), North Western (33.4 percent) and Uva (34.9 percent) Provinces had percentages higher than the national average with regard to laboratories, while again Northern Province (17.2 percent) was the lowest. On the whole, distribution of essential facilities does not appear to be equitable, although the situation has improved when compared with 2008 data.

Jayaweera and Gunawardena's (2009) study showed that essential amenities such as safe water, separate toilets and electricity were not available in 35 percent of the 80 conflict-affected schools they sampled. More than 30 percent lacked science laboratories, workshops, computer centres, playgrounds, school gardens and telephones. Principal's quarters and teachers' quarters, which can attract teachers to schools even in remote locations, were not available in more than 70 percent of schools. There were evident disparities between schools in Colombo district and more disadvantaged districts such as Nuwara Eliya, Moneragala, Jaffna, Vavuniya and Ampara. The quality of infrastructure also differed between more privileged schools (1AB and 1C) and Type 2 and 3 schools. Fifty percent of schools in conflict- and tsunami-affected communities needed improvement. Furthermore, Little (2003) highlighted the lack of housing for teachers in plantation schools, and the cramped working conditions for students and teachers. Gunawardane and Jayaweera (2004) found that 'lack of sufficient classrooms' and 'lack of playing facilities' were factors in the non-attendance of children in the schools that they sampled.

### *Teacher deployment and training*

Teacher supply also impacts exclusion and dropout from school. MOE *et al*. (2009) found that the lack of an adequate number of teachers in a school and the absence of a guidance and counselling teacher were linked to dropout. High teacher absenteeism is another challenge faced by the education system (World Bank, 2005). The highest rates of teacher understaffing occur in economically disadvantaged rural communities, which typically have less voice and less power.

Gunawardane and Jayaweera (2004) indicated that, among other things, lack of teachers for some subjects and transfer of teachers without replacements were factors likely to increase dropout in affected schools. Jayaweera and Gunawardena (2009) found that insufficiency of teachers was experienced mostly by Grade 5 children in Type 2 and Type 3 schools and by Grade 9 children in Type 2 schools. A shortage of teachers at primary level was experienced in the districts of Matara (Southern) and Vavuniya (Northern) and, at secondary level, in the districts of Batticaloa (Eastern), Moneragala (Uva) and Nuwara Eliya (Sabaragamuwa). Perera *et al*. (2003) found that, for Grades 6–9, severe shortages of teachers were experienced by all school types in three subjects: health, aesthetic studies, and technical studies. Teacher shortage was more pronounced in Type 2 and 1C schools. Arunatilake (2005) attributed lower participation in education by Sri Lankan Tamil, Indian Tamil and Muslim children when compared to Sinhalese children to teacher shortages in Tamil-medium schools.

The NIE/UNICEF study of conflict-affected areas reported a shortage of teachers, especially of Tamil-medium teachers (18 percent) and English teachers (51 percent) (NIE, 2003). Furthermore, a third of schools were without a principal. Volunteer teachers had been recruited to bridge the gap but many lacked training and were not paid adequately.

School census data for 2008 showed that 1.2 percent of schools had one teacher, 2.2 percent had two teachers, and 12.1 percent had 3–5 teachers (MOE, 2008a). These were mostly small schools with an enrolment of less than 100 students. The majority were in Central and Sabaragamuwa Provinces. Eighty-eight schools had a teacher–student ratio of between 1:1 and 1:9. The quality of education in small schools is often poorer than in other schools as, among other things, low staffing levels cannot adequately cover the full curriculum.

High teacher absenteeism also poses a major problem, especially in schools located in difficult areas. A World Bank (2005) study estimated that the average leave taken per teacher in an academic year ranged from 33 days in North Western Province to 42 days in Uva Province and 43 days in North Central Province. As a proportion of the school year, the incidence of teacher absenteeism varied from 15 percent in North Western Province to 20 percent in North Central and Uva Provinces. Furthermore, low teacher salaries and poor teacher motivation led to poor quality teaching. Teacher status, motivation and work attitudes have deteriorated over the years, and teacher salaries have declined in real terms over the past 25 years (World Bank, 2005).

Until recently, there were no minimum qualifications for teaching, and subsequently there has been wide deviation in the recruitment of teachers with professional qualifications. School census data for 2010 shows disparity among provinces in the deployment of teachers with different qualifications. Of total teachers in the country, 36.4 percent are graduates with bachelor and postgraduate degrees (MOE, 2010). The highest percentage of graduate teachers is in Western Province (22.6 percent) and the lowest in North Central Province (6.0 percent). In addition, 2.9 percent of teachers are completely untrained, with Central Province having 36.1 percent of all untrained teachers. It is possible that teacher recruitment, which is the responsibility of Provincial Ministries of Education, is to a certain extent related to this situation.

### *Deficiencies in the teaching–learning process*

Although studies do not report any problems with shortages of textbooks and learning materials that are provided free by the state, the attitude of teachers to teaching and punishment are frequently cited as factors that discourage children from attending school and possibly dropping out. Gunawardane and Jayaweera (2004) found that children linked their non-attendance in school to various teaching–learning factors including ‘uninteresting/poor teaching’, ‘apathy of teachers’, ‘harsh punishments’, ‘making children kneel in the hot sun’, and ‘teachers not allowing children to play’. These factors were identified mostly in deprived schools.

Jayaweera and Gunawardena (2009) found that children reported a high level of punishment, including corporal punishment, by teachers: 75.6 percent of children in Type 1AB schools, 74.4 percent in 1C schools, 67.1 percent in Type 2 schools and 51.4 percent in Type 3 schools. Similarly, MOE *et al*. (2009) found that teachers often punished children and did not try to understand the difficulties children might face in learning. They identified this as a probable cause of early dropout.

In the field survey for this study, nearly one in 10 children spoke about teachers’ and principals’ attitudes that discouraged their involvement in education (see Annex 2). Some children, identified

as at risk, had interests, for example, in drawing and practical work, which did not receive adequate, or any, support. One child, Sudhir, described his experience in joining a new school.

> Sudhir explained, "Due to a quarrel at home, my mother took us to my grandmother's house at Illupadichenai and put me in school there. As I was new to the school, I did not know what to do and was a bit afraid. Teachers would start the lesson as soon as they entered the classroom, and not take any interest in my situation. I did not understand what was being taught and could not answer my homework. Since I could not do my work properly, the teachers would scold and beat me. I hated lessons and could not score good marks on tests. I did not like school."

### *Disability*

Another supply-side barrier to the inclusion of every child in school is the issue of appropriate schooling for children with disabilities. Disability appears to be an issue that prevents a substantial number of children from enrolling and continuing their education. The Child Activity Survey 2008/09 found that 'disability/illness' was the second highest reason given for non-attendance, with 13.0 percent of girls and 10.8 percent of boys reporting this (DCS, 2011c).

DCS (2003) revealed that a large proportion (31.7 percent) of the disabled population had never attended school. As Mendis (2004) points out, more disabled females than males had never attended school. The proportions of disabled students attending school in 2000 were 59.5 percent for boys and 40.5 percent for girls. The Association of Women with Disabilities claims that one third of respondents to an unpublished study it conducted in 2009 reported that disability was the main reason for their non-schooling or early dropout.

Saddhananda (2001) found that it is not easy for those with disabilities to enter the school system and there are few facilities for them to obtain an education. There is a scarcity of schools for the blind, and an inadequacy of teachers with competency in sign language. Lack of proper alternative facilities in educational institutions and provision of Braille equipment and audio tapes, etc., and insufficiency of teachers trained in inclusive education hamper the translation of inclusive education policies into practice.

Ahuja and Mendis (2002) found that teachers very rarely identified children with disabilities as being within the Special Educational Needs Group. Instead, they focused on children with psychological, social and economic problems such as those whose parents were migrant workers or were poor, or those who had alcoholic fathers or other difficult circumstances. Teachers were of the opinion that children with disabilities should be placed in Special Education Units and had no place in the 'normal' classroom.

Gunawardena's (2009) study found that the identification of slow learners appears to be based solely on class assessment without any reference to the Standard Assessment carried out on entry to school. Zonal directors responding in this study attributed 63.6 percent of the responsibility for slow learning to school factors, while 21.7 percent of students felt the conflict had influenced their slow learning. The supply-side factors identified as associated with slow learning and children with special needs were (i) lack of human and physical resources; (ii) poor attendance by principals, teachers, and in-service advisers; and (iii) negative attitudes by principals and teachers.

Disability emerged as an indicator of non-enrolment in the field survey for this study (see Annex 2). The following descriptions indicate how children had been affected by various disabilities.

Farooque, a nine-year-old boy from Puttalam, cannot speak, cannot walk, his hands and legs do not function, and his mental faculties are impaired. He has a brother with similar disabilities. Neither has ever been enrolled in school.

Prasad, a 15-year-old boy from Moneragala, has been mentally challenged since birth. He has never been to school.

Yasas, an 18-year-old from Nuwara Eliya, never went to school, as he has a serious speech impediment with acute stammering. He uses both his hands to express himself. His parents and sister understand him easily. His parents did not know about speech therapy, although this could have helped Yasas to a certain extent. They did not have the time, money or awareness to take Yasas to Kandy or Colombo for treatment.

Dravid, a 12-year-old boy from Badulla, fell sick and both his legs became paralysed. “I am unable to walk. I cannot play like other children. I cannot go to school. I have no friends. Someone has to carry me but it is not easy because I am fat. If the school were closer to my house, I could perhaps go and study.”

Clearly, disability is not the only cause of non-enrolment for children with disabilities. Even when children with disabilities could have received some form of education, family poverty or parental lack of knowledge or some other circumstance has prevented them from doing so.

### *Impact on 5DE*

Supply-side barriers that strongly correlate with the exclusion of children from education include disparities in basic school facilities, variable availability of services and teachers, poor quality teachers and teaching processes, and lack of educational provisions for children with disabilities.

Children in Dimension 1 are heavily impacted by inadequate numbers of affordable ECD centres, particularly in rural areas. They also experience variable quality of teaching as a result of untrained ECD facilitators.

Children in Dimension 2 are mainly impacted by the lack of adequate numbers of primary schools, particularly in rural areas and conflict-affected districts. Furthermore, the poor quality or lack of facilities for teachers and students discourage children from enrolling in school. Deficiencies in the teaching–learning process and harsh punishments can also deter children from entering school.

The poor coverage of secondary schools, particularly in rural areas, and the lack of appropriate amenities and teaching staff result in large numbers of children in Dimension 3 being excluded from school.

Children in Dimensions 4 and 5 are most affected by poor quality facilities and poor teaching–learning processes. Corporal punishment and poor teacher behaviour are most likely to impact these children, and are often cited as reasons for dropout.

Finally, children with disabilities in Dimensions 1, 2 and 3 are particularly vulnerable to exclusion from education as a result of the lack of appropriate facilities and trained teachers.

## 3.4 Political, governance, capacity and financing barriers and bottlenecks

Political, governance, capacity and financing factors often underlie both demand-side and supply-side barriers and bottlenecks. In addition, studies indicate that these barriers rarely occur separately but mostly in combination and are thus multifaceted. As a result, most studies have looked at these barriers in conjunction with each other.

### *Conflict and disasters caused by natural hazards*

The most pressing political barrier to inclusion in education in Sri Lanka has been conflict. It has had a major impact on all aspects of civil life, disrupting people's economic activities, leading to destruction of infrastructure, public as well as private, and causing school closures, irregular student attendance, low performance, high dropout, poor teacher deployment and poor teacher attendance. In some cases, children were recruited as soldiers (Somasunderam, 1998). Its impact on different ethnic groups has also varied. With regards to this study, one particularly important aspect of conflict has been the limited capacity of the government and others to collect reliable data on schools and school-age children in conflict-affected districts of Northern, North Central and Eastern Provinces between the early 1980s and 2009, when the fighting ended.

The quality of school infrastructure has deteriorated in conflict-affected areas. One study found that nearly 12 percent of schools (162 of 1,372) were non-functioning; others had buildings that were totally or partially damaged, and 321 schools were functioning in temporary sheds (NIE, 2003). Some 63 percent lacked toilets and 50 percent lacked drinking water. Over two fifths needed science laboratories, activity rooms or libraries, and a large number lacked teachers' quarters. School supplies and equipment were also in short supply, including student desks and chairs, teachers' tables and chairs, blackboards, teaching–learning materials, and science equipment and chemicals.

Enrolment in conflict-affected districts is lower than in the rest of the country, particularly for girls. In schools within the Divisional Schools Development (DSD) Project, only 36.9 percent of those enrolled in Northern Province were girls compared to 55 percent in Uva Province (Kularatne, 2003). It was concluded that the low enrolment of girls in Northern Province was due to the conflict. Girls accounted for only 37.3 percent of enrolment in Jaffna DSD schools and 29.7 percent in Vavuniya DSD schools. In non-conflict-affected districts, gender disparities were much less pronounced, with gender parity in most places.

The Central Bank survey (2005) found that 'school avoidance' rates were higher in conflict-affected provinces than in others, a rate of 4.1 percent in Eastern Province compared to 1.3 percent in North Central Province.

A survey conducted by De Silva (2003) covered government schools in seven districts in conflict-affected provinces and four districts bordering these areas. The study estimated the dropout rate in North Eastern Province (before the province was demerged) at 15.8 percent compared with the national rate of 3.9 percent. This rate ranged from 7.8 percent in Puttalam to 31.8 percent in Mannar. Qualitative information revealed that dropout rates were high in general, the highest numbers being for displaced children. Irregular attendance was very common, with poor nutrition and health status influencing attendance. A large number of students were affected by psychosocial problems.

In Gunawardane and Jayaweera's (2004) study of OOSC, 15.7 percent had never been to school and 44.7 percent had dropped out early. There were most OOSC in the 10–14-years age group (61.7 percent). The percentage of OOSC was relatively high among Sri Lankan Tamil children. This can be attributed to the conflict in Northern and Eastern Provinces, where a high percentage Sri Lankan Tamils were residing. Of dropouts, most (96.4 percent) had left school before completing lower secondary education and 35.7 percent had left school before completing primary education.

Wimaladharma *et al*. (2005) interviewed members of 303 households in three districts of Eastern Province. Half of respondents had been displaced by the conflict and 38 percent said that their children's education had been disrupted. Some 89 percent of children aged 10–14 years were enrolled, but only 49 percent of those aged 15–17 years. Educational attainment of 19–25-years-olds indicates the impact of the conflict on education. Close to 70 percent had dropped out before completing 10 years of education, with 36 percent having 5–9 years and six percent having less than five years. Of those with less than five years, twice as many were girls as boys. Overall, more than 86 percent of Sinhalese had completed 10–13 years of education compared to only half of Tamils and Muslims. About 10 percent of Muslims had less than five years of education and most were females. These differences in ethnicity could be linked to the residence of Tamils and Muslims in conflict-affected areas. Children often dropped out of school if their household's main income earner was killed or disabled. During conflict periods, even while children remained formally enrolled in schools, their attendance was poor and many school days were lost because of insecurity and violent incidents. In some instances, schools were taken over to house refugees or armed personnel.

Somasunderam (1998) presents case studies of child soldiers under the LTTE who were not only deprived of the right to education and development but also suffered psychological trauma. Children reported that they were abducted, prevented from returning home, trained extensively, and made to participate in warfare and torture.

The effects of the conflict can be seen in the wide intra-province variations. The Annual School Census 2008 found that 67 of the 698 1AB schools (9.6 percent) were in Colombo district, while the economically disadvantaged and conflict-affected districts of Kilinochchi, Mannar, Vavuniya, Mullaitivu, Trincomalee and Batticaloa had only 6, 7, 6, 5, 16 and 19 1AB schools, respectively. Jaffna district, with historically better provision for education although conflict-affected, had 39 1AB schools. World Bank (2005) estimates, based on school census data, indicate North Eastern Province and North Western Province had participation rates at primary level of lower than 80 percent. At lower secondary level, Vavuniya and Batticaloa had participation rates of just 55 percent and 65 percent, respectively. In contrast, Colombo had a participation rate of 93 percent.

In the field survey for this study, 10–20 percent of students and caregivers gave a reason related to the conflict (displaced, school closed because of conflict, etc.) as a cause of dropout; over two thirds of caregivers in Kilinochchi and one third in Batticaloa gave a conflict-related reason (see Annex 2). Boys in conflicted-affected districts were much more likely than girls to give a conflict-related reason for dropout; it was the major reason given in Kilinochchi. Children also described how the conflict had impacted their schooling.

Nine-year-old Chandrahasan and 14-year-old Kaveeshawaran, two boys from Kilinochchi, both said that long breaks without schooling had left them unable to understand lessons. They both dropped out because they could not cope with school work.

Kathiresan, a 14-year-old boy from Kilinochchi, explained, "Our area was affected by the conflict and we had to leave our house and seek shelter in other places. When they put us in welfare institutions, we spent our time taking care of our basic needs. We did not want to go to school. We really missed out on school."

Sameera, also from Kilinochchi, said, "As a result of the conflict, my family had to leave home and was pushed into poverty. The continuous displacement and being separated from my family, relatives and friends affected my mental ability and totally destroyed my eagerness for studies. Schools were also closed and their activities ceased."

Janith, a 14-year-old boy from Batticaloa, explained that due to the conflict, and the frequent closure of his school, he did not attend regularly. He was keen about his studies at the start but lost interest later.

### *Orphans and vulnerable children*

One of the main consequences of the conflict is the high number of orphans, abandoned and destitute children. UNICEF estimates that 340,000 children aged less than 18 years have been orphaned due to all causes in Sri Lanka (UNICEF, 2011). These children are particularly vulnerable to non-schooling. Many have been placed in institutions, and are sent to the nearest school for their education.

Jayatilleke and Amarasuriya (2005) studied 2,961 children in 86 institutions from four provinces. They found that the majority of children in institutions were from families with socioeconomic or relationship problems and were not necessarily orphaned. In North Eastern Province, in particular, the conflict had resulted in displacement of families that had led to homelessness and loss of income-generating opportunities. The study found that, except for children in remand homes, all other children in state-run homes attended school. However, these children experienced a number of difficulties that made them more likely to be excluded from or drop out of school: they were stigmatized by other children at school; they lacked proper spaces and environments for studying in their residential institutions; they were often overage for their grade because of frequent disruption in their schooling; they were subject to discriminatory practices in school; and some had problems being enrolled because they lacked birth certificates. Although they valued education and were often given extra coaching, they did not perform well in school. Principals and teachers complained of a lack of interest by caregivers in children's activities, and there was little interaction between the institution where children resided and the school they attended. Although children with disabilities at these institutions were expected to take part in formal education as part of their rehabilitation, most schools lacked properly trained teachers and appropriate equipment to support them.

A similar situation was found by De Zoysa (2005) in a study that focused on the educational achievement of 180 children in State Voluntary Homes who were attending school. There was a significant difference in the achievement of institutionalized children and home-based children, even when they attended the same schools. It concluded that the family backgrounds and traumatic incidents experienced by the institutionalized children had affected them negatively

and caused their low achievement. Homes lacked an atmosphere conducive to educational achievement, and carers often did not possess appropriate professional qualifications or training. Schools providing education for institutionalized children possessed varying levels of infrastructure, some with excellent facilities and others with very meagre resources. With just one exception, all principals had a negative attitude towards these children.

### *Birth certificates*

A study by the Centre for the Study of Human Rights (2004) of 319 children living in children's homes found that, of the nearly 10 percent of children who did not attend school, 23.3 percent said that they did not have a birth certificate. Other children in these homes who were out of school included children awaiting court cases and children with disabilities. The lack of a birth certificate also prevented street children from enrolling in school (Manchanayake, 2000).

### *Political will*

Despite the strong and long-standing national commitment to universal basic education, political barriers include a lack of political will at the local level. This is particularly apparent among state officials engaged in translating policies into proactive implementation. An apt illustration is the lethargy that overtook the local Compulsory Attendance Committees appointed to seek out and assist in enrolling OOSC, and the resultant failure to reach the most vulnerable children and universalize primary and lower secondary education (Perera, 2004). This apathy in implementation is also seen among some officials involved in child protection programmes, resulting in failure to protect children from abuse as well as in violations of their rights including the right to an education.

### *Politicization*

Politicization at the ground level has hampered the implementation of education policies to a certain extent. For example, politicization of the process by which schools were identified for development as 'centre of excellence' in the Navodaya Schools Programme resulted in the selection process being impaired. Resources were to be allocated to these schools so that a more equitable distribution of quality schools would prevail. However, a subsequent evaluation of Navodaya schools in 2003 found that only 15 percent had reached a satisfactory standard. Resources had been spread thinly and inappropriately and many of these schools lacked essential infrastructure, qualified teachers and equipment, and continued to be the ill-equipped 'schools of the poor' (Kularatne, 2003).

Politicization has also caused deviation from recruitment policies for deployment, transfer and promotion of teachers and school officials, resulting in the inequitable distribution of teaching staff. Politicization in the allocation of financial and physical resources has exacerbated disparities in the provision of education and welfare services.

### *Gap in capacity for devolution/decentralization*

Sri Lanka has had an extremely centralized education system until recent decades and attempts to decentralize education to the district level have been largely limited to routine administration. Furthermore, the policy of devolution has been challenged by the lack of required capacity at decentralized levels to implement the increased responsibilities.

### *Inter-sectoral planning and coordination of programmes*

Weak coordination between sectors has affected the smooth implementation of policies and programmes, resulting in failure to synergize education with health, child protection and social protection programmes. Attempts by the MOE, supported by the World Bank since the introduction of the ESDFP in 2006, to adopt the sector-wide approach (SWAp) to incorporate all programmes supporting the national education plan have not been entirely successful. This has, among other things, resulted in continued overlapping, duplication, confusion and lacunae in programme implementation at school and local levels (Jayaweera and Gunawardena, 2007; World Bank, 2006–2010). Mechanisms have been created at the local level for coordination and promotion of synergies, such as the Compulsory Attendance Committees to implement compulsory education. However, these committees have not been functioning as well as anticipated, with irregular meetings and limited collaboration.

### *Role of the community*

There is little operational space for local participation in the planning and management of education at community and school levels. The role of the community in assisting schools has been limited largely to *shramadana* campaigns, repairing buildings, and fund-raising for school events such as sports meets and school excursions.

### *Budget allocations*

Financing barriers are currently related to a decline in expenditure on education. Total government expenditure on education as a proportion of GDP has decreased from 2.7 percent in 2006 to 1.9 percent in 2010 (Table 3.1). Expenditure on education as a share of total government expenditure has also fallen from 11.0 percent in 2006 to 8.1 percent in 2010. This is mainly as a result of increased expenditure on interest payments, defence, and economic services such as transportation and communication. Interest payments and defence expenditure, which together account for around two fifths of total government expenditure, exert severe pressure on fiscal operations, leaving little space to expand outlays for economic and social services including education, health, welfare and infrastructure. Spending per student has also declined at the primary level from US$ 29 in 2006 to US$ 26 in 2010, although it has increased at the secondary level from US$ 76 in 2006 to US$ 80 in 2010.

### Table 3.1: Government expenditure on general education

| | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Education expenditure** | | | | | |
| Total public expenditure on education as % of GDP | 2.7 | 2.6 | 2.3 | 2.1 | 1.9 |
| Total public expenditure on education as % of total government expenditure | 11.0 | 11.0 | 10.0 | 8.4 | 8.1 |
| **Total public expenditure per student** | | | | | |
| Spending per student as % of GDP – pre-primary | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Spending per student as % of GDP – primary | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.5 | 0.6 | 0.5 |
| Spending per student as % of GDP – secondary | 1.9 | 2.0 | 1.7 | 1.8 | 1.6 |
| Spending per student (PPP US$) – pre-primary | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Spending per student (PPP US$) – primary | 29 | 29 | 24 | 28 | 26 |
| Spending per student (PPP US$) – secondary | 76 | 85 | 77 | 84 | 80 |
| **Nature of education expenditure** | | | | | |
| Salaries, all staff (PPP US$ million) – primary | 40.0 | 41.9 | 34.1 | 36.9 | 37.3 |
| Total recurrent (PPP US$ million) – primary | 46.4 | 46.9 | 39.4 | 46.1 | 43.9 |
| Salaries, all staff (PPP US$ million) – secondary | 142.2 | 173.2 | 147.3 | 151.6 | 145.1 |
| Total recurrent (PPP US$ million) – secondary | 168.9 | 197.9 | 176.0 | 187.6 | 181.1 |

*Note: The above figures were computed using data from the following sources: Government expenditure – Annual Budget Estimate, Ministry of Finance; Number of students – MOE; GDP – Central Bank Annual Reports; PPP US$ conversion rates – International Monetary Fund.*

Sri Lanka's education sector has depended heavily on donor assistance in recent decades, from multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, ADB, UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA and UNESCO, and bilateral agencies such as GIZ, JICA and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) as well as INGOs such as Save the Children and Plan International.

The Ministry of Finance allocates funds to national and provincial schools through different channels. For national schools, it provides direct funding for recurrent expenditure; for provincial schools, funds for recurrent expenditure are sent by the MOE to provincial education authorities through the Finance Commission. To meet capital expenditure for both national and provincial schools, the Ministry of Finance allocates a block grant for schools. There are also other sources of capital funds for national and provincial schools, including foreign-funded and special education projects. Table 3.2 shows the allocation of expenditure for provincial and national schools for 2008 and 2009.

### Table 3.2: Education expenditure (in SLRs million)

| Year | Provincial schools | | | National schools | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Recurrent | Capital | Total | Recurrent | Capital | Total |
| 2008 | 42,300 | 2,152 | 44,452 | 21,400 | 3,531 | 24,931 |
| 2009 | 46,647 | 2,590 | 49,237 | 22,961 | 3,671 | 26,632 |

*Source: Aturupane, 2009*

### *Impact on 5DE*

Most political, governance, capacity and financing barriers impact on the exclusion of children from education by hampering the effective functioning of the education system; this is more intense in certain districts, particularly those that are affected by conflict or disadvantaged in other ways.

First and foremost, it must be noted that children in all dimensions who are living in Northern and Eastern Provinces have had their access to education severely affected by conflict and its continuing impact on the education system. All the limited data that are available indicate that children in these regions are more disadvantaged than children in other parts of the country in almost all aspects of the education system, including through political, governance, capacity and financing barriers and bottlenecks.

To summarize, weaknesses in the administration of education have had a negative impact on the quality of education. At the local level, there is confusion caused by overlapping instructions from central and provincial authorities under the policy of devolution. Coordination among relevant officials at the local level is weak or non-existent, planning is affected by the lack of capacity among some local officials, monitoring has low priority, and data collected at divisional level are not readily available. Financing barriers are mostly related to a decline in expenditure on education.

Children in Dimension 1, pre-primary school age, are most severely impacted by the lack of funding for ECD centres. They are also affected by lack of birth certificates.

Primary-school-age children in Dimension 2 are impacted by lack of funding and politicization of the system that prevents their local authorities from accessing the resources needed to build an effective school system in their area. They are also affected by lack of birth certificates.

Children in Dimension 3 are also affected lack of political commitment and politicization of the system as well as lack of funding. Supply-side barriers to secondary education are closely related to political, governance, capacity and financing barriers; greater political will for secondary education would impact strongly on children in this dimension. These children are also affected by lack of birth certificates.

Children in Dimensions 4 and 5 are impacted by lack of political commitment and politicization of the system, weak coordination and implementation of programmes, and poor monitoring and data collection. These issues all combine to hamper the smooth functioning of the education system, resulting in poor quality schools that are a discouragement to continued learning.

# CHAPTER 4: POLICIES AND STRATEGIES IN RELATION TO THE 5DE

This chapter builds on the preceding two chapters and aims to provide a focused analysis of policies and strategies related to the problem of OOSC. This analysis will discuss gaps in policies and shortcomings in implementation that have marginalized vulnerable OOSC in Dimensions 2–5 in economically disadvantaged families and have impacted their access to quality education and its rewards. This will help to inform policy-making and planning at the national level, and guide concrete and effective reforms of the education sector.

The major barriers to enrolling in and/or completing primary and lower secondary education identified by this study are broadly covered by (i) socio-cultural issues; (ii) poverty; (iii) disability and health; (iv) child labour; (v) lack of social protection against abuse and neglect; and (vi) conflict and disasters caused by natural hazards, in the context of Sri Lanka's recent history.

### *Policy context*

In Sri Lanka, educational policies and programmes to address the issue of socioeconomic inequality were introduced over seven decades ago during the transition years to independence in the 1940s, largely as a reaction to the inequalities reinforced by education policies based on socioeconomic, linguistic and regional differentiation implemented by the colonial administration. The major response, among others, was the policy of universal free primary, secondary and tertiary education in state and state-assisted institutions. This policy has been implemented since 1945 without socioeconomic or gender differentiation (Education Ordinance 31 of 1939; Amendment 1945). It was complemented by a package of pro-poor policies and programmes including scholarships awarded on merit at the end of primary education (Grade 5) to facilitate access to secondary and higher education, subsidized transport to schools, free health services in a countrywide network of health institutions, and subsidized food for some families. The provision of these incentives resulted in enrolment in the 5–14-years age group reaching 75 percent by 1963 and 85 percent by 1980; the achievement of gender equality in enrolment and retention in education, as parents no longer used limited economic resources to educate only their sons; and literacy rates rising from 46 percent in 1946 to 86 percent by the end of the 1970s. Sri Lanka thus gained a positive image as an 'outlier' in the extension of educational opportunities in less developed countries.

The priority given to the use of education as an instrument for poverty reduction and social equity survived the vicissitudes caused by macroeconomic policies and development trends in subsequent decades. Consequently, these equity-oriented educational policies have been supplemented by the provision of free textbooks to students in Grades 1–11 in state or state-assisted schools since 1980, free school uniforms since 1993, free school meals for children from economically disadvantaged families intermittently over the years, and the expansion of secondary school facilities in the hitherto neglected rural sector. Commitment to these policies was reinforced by the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the endorsement of the UN Education for All Programme in 1990. Despite the achievements, universalization of basic education still remains a goal yet to be achieved.

## 4.1 Demand-side socio-cultural policies and strategies

Ethnicity and gender are two socio-cultural characteristics of the child population that have the potential to affect access to education. In multi-ethnic Sri Lanka, the policy of universal free education has contributed greatly to reducing the gaps in opportunities available to all population subgroups. The Sinhalese and Tamil communities are represented proportionately in the number of schools in the country. Rural Muslim communities, which had earlier relatively lower rates of enrolment due largely to socio-cultural norms, have now overcome this barrier and are sending their children to school. The plantation community, descendants of South Indian Tamil immigrant families brought over by the colonial administration as estate labour, has been educationally disadvantaged over the years. With nationalization of the estates in the 1970s, the integration of 830 plantation schools into the national education system by 1980 and the assistance of donor-funded programmes, children in this sector in the 5–14-years age group have gradually increased their enrolment rates from around 50 percent to 91.8 percent by 2006/07; however, this compares to around 97 percent in the urban and rural sectors. Plantation children still remain a disadvantaged group with respect to infrastructure at secondary education level and a National Plan of Action for the Development of Plantation Schools has been prepared in order to strengthen development and funding of this sector (MOE, 2011b).

### *Gender*

Gender disparities in education have largely been eliminated in Sri Lanka as a result of the long-standing policy of free education. In fact, girls have higher retention rates than boys. By the end of the 1960s, there were more girls than boys in upper secondary grades as boys tended to dropout early to join the labour force and girls continued in schools in the context of the provision of free education. In 2009, 57.5 percent of those enrolled in Grades 12 and 13 were girls (MOE, 2009a). Clearly, the preponderance of coeducational schools (96.6 percent) has accelerated progress towards gender parity. Sri Lanka has achieved the third Millennium Development Goal of eliminating disparities in enrolment in education in primary, secondary and tertiary education as a consequence of the positive social policies implemented over many decades. Significantly, gender parity was achieved at the primary level by 2006, even in the historically disadvantaged estate sector, with 94.4 percent of boys and 94.8 percent of girls enrolled (DCS, 2006).

No specific gender-related policies and programmes have been introduced, as it is not perceived to be a major concern. However, while gender parity has been achieved, gender equality has been delayed. This is commonly attributed to positive sex-disaggregated data creating complacency that has overshadowed the need to promote substantive gender equality through education processes such as the curriculum and teaching–learning activities. A negative and visible outcome is gender differences in enrolment in science, commerce and arts streams at upper secondary level and higher levels of education. It is a matter of concern that education policies and programmes have yet to be directed at empowering girls to challenge gender stereotypes and societal norms, to enlarge their education and career choices according to their aptitudes, and to exercise agency in their decision-making with regards to situations that affect their quality of life.

The issue of early marriage in conflict-affected districts may be diminishing now that the conflict is over. Amendments have been made to the Marriage Ordinance 1995 to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 years; however, this does not apply to the Muslim community.

### *Parents' and children's attitude toward education*

No strategies or policies have been adopted to address the issue of parental lack of interest in education. There has been an attempt to revive the Compulsory Attendance Committees, first appointed in 1998 but non-functional since 2000. The intention is that these committees are expected to set local targets for the reduction of dropouts, visit homes to identify OOSC, and take proactive measures to raise the awareness of parents and caregivers on the value of education. At present, only around 50 percent of these committees are active; however, where they are functioning properly, there has been an increase in the number of children in NFE centres who then transition to formal school (MOE, 2009b).

## 4.2 Demand-side economic policies and strategies

The concern for ensuring equity in access to education for all segments of the population has been reiterated in the plethora of policy documents formulated over the last two decades. The education reforms implemented on the advice of the National Education Commission in 1997 introduced regulations for the enforcement of compulsory education for the age group 5–14 years from January 1998, and the appointment of Compulsory Attendance Committees at the local level to ensure that all children enrol in school (MOE, 1997). The National Education Commission that functioned from 2001 to 2004 recommended extension of these regulations to children of 16 years of age and proposed that attention should be focused on vulnerable and impoverished groups such as children with disabilities, 'street children', child labourers and child beggars, and destitute, orphaned and abandoned children who tended to be denied access to education that would assist them to exit poverty (NEC, 2003). Education policies to address children in poverty groups were restated in the National Plan of Action for the Children of Sri Lanka 2004–2008 and its proposed second phase in 2010–2014, and in the SAARC Social Charter Plan of Action 2008–2015.

Universalizing primary and secondary education to ensure social equity is a prime recommendation in national policy documents including the Mahinda Chintana 2005, the Ten-Year Horizontal Development Framework Programme 2006–2016, and most recently, the Mahinda Chintana: Development Framework 2010. They firmly reiterate continuity of the policy of free education at all levels to university undergraduate level, and the incentives provided over the years—scholarships, free textbooks and uniforms, subsidized transport, and a school feeding programme initially at primary level.

At the implementation level, the adoption of a sector-wide approach as well as a concern for promoting equity are reflected in the ESDFP, the first phase of which was implemented from 2006 to 2011. ESDFP I had four themes, of which the objective of Theme 1—'Increasing equitable access to basic and secondary education'—was to ensure that 95 percent of children in the 5–14-years age group completed the nine years of compulsory primary and lower secondary education and enhanced their access to upper secondary education. The NFE Division of the MOE was assigned the responsibility of bringing all children into school, including children with disabilities and 'street children', and providing a second chance for education for OOSC through non-formal basic literacy and functional literacy programmes from which lateral entry to formal school is possible. The third theme—'Enhancing economic efficiency and equity of resource allocation'—was intended to improve equity and reduce disparities in the distribution of resources for education programmes (MOE, 2006). The new phase of the ESDFP, entitled Transforming School Education as the Foundation of a Knowledge Hub 2012–2016, has as its first theme or pillar 'Promoting equity of access to basic and secondary education', ensuring continuity in the provision of the demand-side incentives.

The contours of the current scenario on participation in education have been determined by the pace of implementation of these policies as well as by lacunae in addressing barriers at central and

local levels. The positive impact of these policies and programmes is seen in the relatively high education participation and survival or retention rates in the first decade in this millennium.

The provision of opportunities for a 'second chance' or an alternative avenue for the most vulnerable children is the responsibility of the NFE Division of the MOE. Compulsory Attendance Committees, initially appointed in 1998 but mainly inoperative since around 2000, have been resuscitated in a number of districts following implementation of the ESDFP in 2006. However, it has been reported that only around 50 percent are active. They are intended to set local targets for reduction in dropouts and, through community-level awareness-raising, to identify and motivate OOSC to stay in school. As a result of the activation of some Compulsory Attendance Committees under the ESDFP, it is reported that the number of children in NFE centres increased from 4,175 in 261 centres in 2005 to 11,453 in 539 centres in 2009. In addition, a further 5,480 OOSC were enrolled in Functional Literacy Centres in 2007 and 2,071 in 2009 (MOE, 2009b).

Those achieving the required standard for admission or readmission to formal school ranged from 5,907 children aged 5–14 years in 2007 to 6,784 in 2009, and amounted to 70.3 percent of the target for 2007–09 (Finance Commission, 2009). It is to be noted that there is a discrepancy between the data provided by the NFE Division of the MOE and the data of the Finance Commission, as targets for bringing children into school are reported to have been exceeded by 127 percent between 2006 and 2010 in data provided by the NFE Division. 'Hard to reach' children appear to continue to be deprived of educational opportunities, as the number of centres for enrolling 'street children' has declined from six centres in 2006 to four centres in 2010, with only about 100 children attending (MOE, 2011a).

As it is estimated that there are over 250,000 OOSC aged 5–17 years and nearly 79,000 aged 5–14 years, data pertaining to enrolment in programmes to provide a 'second chance', or channels for lateral entry into formal school, indicate clearly that the provision of relevant educational facilities are adequate only for a limited proportion of these children. More proactive strategies are needed to ensure equity in access to education for all these children. In this context, the World-Bank-funded MOE project 'Transforming School Education as the Foundation of a Knowledge Hub 2011–2015' has proposed that School Attendance Committees be appointed for each school's local community in order to promote enrolment and attendance (World Bank, 2011b). It is expected that this strategy will bring OOSC into NFE centres as a transition to enrolment in formal school or, in the case of older students, into vocational training institutions.

It is salutary to note that despite these positive policies, the second Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education has been only 'nearly achieved', as 'hard to reach' children continue to be outside the formal education system, while socioeconomic and regional disparities reflecting uneven economic development have not yet been eliminated.

### *Poverty*

Although poverty levels have fallen nationally to the relatively low level of 8.9 percent in 2009/10, there are still noticeable disparities by sector and region. According to the HIES 2009/10, 5.3 percent of the urban population were below the national poverty line, 9.4 percent of the rural population and 11.4 percent of the estate population (DCS, 2011b). Within districts, the poverty headcount ratio in 2006/07 ranged from 4.5 percent in Colombo to 34 percent in Nuwara Eliya.

Despite the country's acknowledged developmental disadvantages, Sri Lanka has long prided itself on its inclusive educational policies and programmes that were introduced over seven decades ago to address socioeconomic, linguistic and regional differences.

However, the overarching factor that has prevented the achievement of expected educational outcomes, despite the provision of free education services, is poverty. Over the years, it has been perceived that non-schooling is prevalent in low-income families living in urban areas and in pockets of remote and rural areas, particularly in the plantation sector and conflict-affected districts. The highest incidence of poverty among household heads has been recorded for casual labourers, and agricultural, livestock and fishery workers, who also have the lowest educational attainment. Poverty continues to determine the degree of access to education as seen by the fact that disparity in enrolment at the three levels of education widens with rising income levels—from 95 percent for the lowest income quintile and 97 percent for the highest income quintile in primary education (Grades 1–5), to 61 percent for the lowest and 76 percent for the highest in lower secondary education (Grades 6–9), 31 percent for the lowest and 60 percent for the highest in upper secondary education (Grades 10–13) and two percent for the lowest and 13 percent for the highest in tertiary education (World Bank, 2007).

The interface of education and poverty is reflected in the fact that the poverty headcount of household heads[8] was found to decline with rising educational attainment: 35.7 percent among household heads with no schooling; 24.6 percent among household heads with primary education; 13.6 percent among household heads with Grades 6–10; 3.7 percent among household heads with GCE O/L (Grade 11); and 1.6 percent among household heads with GCE A/L (Grade 13) and above (World Bank, 2005).

The field survey for this study confirmed this association between poverty and participation in education. The majority of parents/caregivers and OOSC stated that financial difficulties prevented children from enrolling in school or precipitated their dropout. It was noted too that children who had dropped out had a high rate of absenteeism—76 percent among girls and 83 percent among boys—and that a major reason for frequent absences was financial difficulties (59.7 percent). Specific references were made to the cost of shoes, school bags and stationery, and the school feeding programme was a cogent reason for attendance (see Annex 2).

> A school principal in Batticaloa explained that attendance was good when a midday meal was given. Depending on the midday meal, children came to school.
>
> Raja, a 13-year-old boy from Batticaloa living with his grandmother, said “I like school, and when there is a school meal, I make sure I can go.”

The abovementioned national policies target children in all five dimensions by attempting to ensure that poverty will not be a barrier to exclusion from education or a reason for dropping out for both primary- and lower-secondary-school-age children as well as for pre-primary children. However, policies that target particular poverty groups with specific interventions such as scholarships or income-generation opportunities would also help reduce the number of children in Dimensions 2 and 3 who are out of school as result of their family’s poverty and children in Dimensions 4 and 5 whose family face the pressure of opportunity costs that put these children at risk of dropping out.

It should be noted that many policies aimed at poverty reduction offer a good opportunity to link social protection with education.

[8] *Poverty headcount is the percentage of household heads below the official poverty line determined by the Department of Census and Statistics.*

### Poor health and nutritional status

Free healthcare services have been available throughout the country from a network of institutions for around seven decades and have contributed substantially to improved health in all segments of the population. Nevertheless, the ill health of students negatively impacts their school attendance as well as their learning capacity and performance, which can lead to dropout. School health policies and programmes are aimed at addressing this issue.

The School Adolescent Health Unit of the Family Health Bureau of the Ministry of Health Care and Nutrition implements specific policies in collaboration with the MOE. The oldest school-centred policy has been to conduct regular School Medical Inspections in Grades 1, 4, 7 and 10, and in all grades in schools where there are less than 200 children. Local Medical Officers of Health report medical issues and refer children to clinics where necessary, and Public Health Inspectors identify problems in schools regarding water and sanitation facilities and report to principals for action. However, as the result of a shortage of personnel, equipment or drugs, these inspections do not appear to have been conducted regularly or in all schools, so their impact is limited (pers. comm., Family Health Bureau, Ministry of Health Care and Nutrition, 2010). The Public Health Inspector's role in ensuring safe water and clean sanitation does not appear to have been given adequate recognition in all schools, nor is there any certainty that action is taken by school authorities, particularly in regard to the provision and maintenance of water and sanitation facilities. A School Health Promotion Policy and Programme 2008–12 has been introduced recently (Ministry of Health Care and Nutrition, 2008) and a School Canteen Policy has been implemented since 2006 jointly by the Ministry of Health Care and Nutrition and the MOE.

In view of the concern regarding under-nutrition and malnutrition, a school feeding/school meals programme has been organized in schools in economically disadvantaged locations and communities, and is reported to have reached 80 percent of all primary schools within the programme area (World Bank, 2011a). In secondary grades, a five-year project is being implemented to provide iron foliate for six months to adolescents in Grades 7–10. Child under-nutrition or malnutrition, however, continues to be an issue of concern.

These policies seem to be well directed at the children in Dimensions 4 and 5 who might by irregular in their school attendance as a result of ill health. Undoubtedly, more effective implementation of policies, especially those on inspection, would improve the situation further. As malnutrition is a particular concern, well-designed and targeted social protection policies could also help to link good nutrition with regular schooling.

### Child labour

Child labour which is largely a family strategy to cope with poverty is both a cause of dropping out and a sequel to dropping out. It deprives children of their right to an education that facilitates exit from poverty and exposes them to various forms of exploitation. Its elimination is therefore an educational objective and a social protection issue. Child labour is reported to have declined to around 2.5 percent in 2008/09, following the strengthening of labour legislation and the spread of education and compulsory education regulations since 1998 (DCS, 2011c).

Major policy measures related to reduction of the incidence of child labour include the ratification in 1999 of ILO Convention 138 on the Minimum Age of Employment (below 14 years in Sri Lanka) and ILO Convention 182 on the Prohibition of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and relevant amendments in 2003 and 2006 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act 1956.

However, discrepancy between the prohibition of child labour below 14 years and regulations making education compulsory to 14 years creates difficulties for the enforcement of compulsory education in the 14-year-old age cohort and precipitates dropping out before the age of 14 years. This situation will be exacerbated when compulsory education is extended to 16 years, as proposed in current education policy documents. In 2009 and 2010, the Ministry of Labour with ILO support initiated a Decent Work Policy and a Road Map to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour. Labour Officers of the Department of Labour, who function at the local level, work with Probation and Child Care Officers to identify and rehabilitate child labourers, and the police are expected to take those who violate labour legislation to court.

However, the interface of the demand for and supply of child labour continues to leave children exposed to harsh labour concentrated largely in the low-skill, low-income informal sector of the economy, and to denial of the education from a young age that could assist them to exit poverty. Micro-level studies have highlighted the travails of children engaged in exploitative and often in hazardous employment such as domestic service (Jayasena, 2005; Kannangara *et al*., 2003; Marga Institute, 2004), manufacturing industries in the informal sector (Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2005), domestic agriculture, plantation labour, fishing (Marga Institute, 2004), casual manual labour, child beggars (Gunawardena *et al*., 2005), commercial child sex workers (Jayaweera, 2005; Ratnapala, 1999; Seneviratne, 2006) and trafficked children (Squire and Wijeratne, 2008).

Child labour is also tackled through child rights policy and legislation. A positive policy outcome was the establishment of the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) by Act No. 50 of 1998 to formulate national policies on the prevention of child abuse including child labour, the protection and treatment of child victims of such abuse under 18 years, and for coordinating and monitoring actions against all forms of child abuse. It is interesting to note the wide scope of the functions of the authority, as the act defined child abuse as contraventions of (i) relevant sections of the Penal Code, (ii) the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act, (iii) the Children and Young Persons Ordinance, and (iv) regulations relating to compulsory education under the Education Ordinance, as well as the involvement of children in armed conflict. Non-schooling is clearly recognized as a violation of the rights of a child; this includes non-schooling as a result of child labour.

Child labourers are usually older children and most frequently fall into Dimensions 3 and 5. Policies on NFE that encourage children back into the formal school system to complete their education are especially useful for children in Dimension 3. As child labour is closely linked to family poverty, policies that address poverty in general and particularly the opportunity costs associated with education also help to reduce child labour and keep children in school (Dimension 5). As noted above, there is a good opportunity to link social protection policies aimed at reducing child labour with policies on education.

### *Migration of mothers*

There are currently no policies targeting the educational vulnerabilities of children whose mothers have migrated for labour purposes. This is an obvious policy gap, and again could be addressed through linking policies on social protection to the education of children with migrant mothers, benefiting children mostly in Dimensions 3, who have fallen out of school because of family dysfunction.

Although special assistance is provided for children of female migrant domestic workers who have qualified for the Grade 5 scholarship, children of other women female workers are vulnerable to

dropping out. The new National Policy on Labour Migration 2009 also addresses this issue; it proposes a registration and monitoring system that tracks all children of migrant workers at divisional level, and provides support services and benefits to children and families in distress and to neglected and abused children.

## 4.3 Supply-side policies and strategies

### *Distribution of schools*

The supply-side response to the demand created by the policy of free state education was the formulation and implementation of a countrywide network of schools including Central Schools in rural locations. In recent years, the number of primary and secondary schools has fluctuated between 9,500 and 10,000 schools, of which the majority offer both primary and secondary education. Over 96 percent of these schools are coeducational.

Nevertheless, unplanned policies of education expansion and, particularly since the 1970s, the absence of priority on reducing urban–rural and socioeconomic disparities have created a school system characterized by disparities that adversely impact the quality of education available to the poor. Policies responsive to strongly articulated demands from more developed districts have resulted in the relative marginalization of less developed districts in the hinterland such as Moneragala, particularly in access to secondary education (Jayaweera, 1971). The policy over the decades has been to ensure access to primary education within 2 km of children's residence and to secondary education within 4–5 km. It is estimated that at least 85 percent of primary-school-age children have access to schooling within 2 km of their home; however, a substantial proportion of secondary-school-age children in remote and rural locations do not have access to a secondary school within a reasonable distance.

Evidence from the field survey for this study underscores the difficulties experienced by students and their families in physically accessing schools in some areas. Steep terrain, lack of public transport, inability to acquire bicycles, flooding, and the presence of wild elephants and poisonous snakes were given as reasons for dropping out of school, and children who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping have claimed that they had to walk 2–5 km to reach their school (see Annex 2). Another facet of unplanned policies in the quest to extend educational opportunities is that secondary schools have been established chiefly with provision for low-cost arts courses. This has resulted in the exclusion of most rural children from access to science education, which is perceived to be an effective avenue to upward socioeconomic mobility.

Schools are classified according to levels of attainment and type of upper secondary education. Two thirds of primary schools and around 30 percent of all schools have less than 100 students and are located in economically disadvantaged districts. Overt neglect of these small schools, failure to appoint qualified principals and teachers, and the absence of basic minimum facilities have resulted in their marginalization. As poor, ill-equipped schools, they are unable to retain their students and are often closed down as 'uneconomic units', depriving children in poor locations of access to education (NEC, 2003).

However, policies to redress regional inequalities have been in place since the 1990s. The National Education Commission, appointed in 1991, proposed the development of one or two schools in each administrative division as 'centres of excellence', Navodaya schools (modelled on earlier Central Schools). Resources were to be allocated to these schools so that a more equitable distribution of quality schools would prevail. Regrettably, extraneous factors, such as politicization

of the process by which schools were identified for development, impaired the selection of schools, and an evaluation of Navodaya schools in 2003 found that only 15 percent had reached a satisfactory standard. Resources had been spread thinly and inappropriately and many of these schools lacked essential infrastructure, qualified teachers and equipment, and continued to be the ill-equipped 'schools of the poor' (Kularatne, 2003).

The Ten-Year Horizontal Development Framework Programme 2006–2016 proposed that a specified number of quality secondary schools should be developed, with priority being given to the 100 poorest divisions in the country identified by the Department of Census and Statistics in 2006. Consequently, a policy of establishing Isuru quality schools in the poorest 100 divisions is being implemented. Information on their progress in meeting the educational needs of vulnerable children in the country's most disadvantaged locations is yet to become available.

The most recent effort to reduce regional and socioeconomic disparities in the provision of education is the new policy announced in the national policy document, Mahinda Chintana: Development Framework 2010, to be introduced in 2012. The intention is to develop 1,000 secondary schools, according to divisional requirements, and to attach 4–5 primary schools as feeder schools to each secondary school to facilitate equal educational opportunities (MOF, 2010b). Objective criteria, based on a school mapping exercise, have been proposed and the critical need is to adhere to this scheme and eliminate politicization of the selection process.

The proposal is also included in the second phase of the ESDFP, currently being developed with assistance from the World Bank. Transforming School Education as the Foundation of a Knowledge Hub 2011–2015 has as its first pillar 'promoting equity of access to basic and secondary education'. The programme envisages a primary school in each village and a secondary school within a reasonable distance. This builds on the third theme of the current ESDFP, 'enhancing economic efficiency and equity of resource allocation', which is intended to improve equity and reduce disparities in the distribution of resources for education programmes (MOE, 2006).

Proposals for revision of the Education Act, which have been discussed by the Parliamentary Consultative Committee, also recognize the need to remove disparities in the distribution of schools, as well as for discrimination in favour of poor, backward and disadvantaged schools.

UNICEF's Child-Friendly Schools Programme for primary schools and its consistent support to NFE centres for OOSC have made significant contributions to extending education equitably to all types of children.

These policies, many of which focus on improving the coverage of secondary schools, obviously encourage the education of all children but will have the greatest impact on children in Dimension 3, secondary-school-age children who are currently out of school. They also promote the construction and upgrading of primary schools in rural and underserved areas, which will benefit children in Dimension 2. Regulations to prevent problems such as politicization will have to be put in place alongside these policies, if they are to be truly effective.

### *School infrastructure facilities*

Shortcomings in the implementation of supply-side policies are clearly seen in the continuing wide disparities reflected in the distribution of safe school buildings and adequate water and sanitation amenities. Despite policies that have as their objective the 'modernization' of the school system with all required facilities, financial constraints have limited the resources available for infrastructure

development. The most disadvantaged are the small schools, which amount to 30 percent of all schools. They have received minimal attention and consequently lack adequate buildings and classrooms, access to safe water and separate toilet facilities, and often insufficient equipment such as desks, chairs and blackboards. Many plantation schools continue to lack safe school buildings, well-equipped classrooms and appropriate learning materials (MOE, 2011b).

According to the School Health and Nutrition Unit of the MOE, 17.0 percent of schools had no access to water in 2010; this ranged from 0.9 percent in Colombo to 21.9 percent in Moneragala, 22.9 percent in Anuradhapura, 23.9 percent in Badulla, 26.9 percent in Nuwara Eliya and 29.2 percent in Ampara (MOE, 2011c). Additional data indicate that 74.3 percent of schools have teachers' toilets and 73.5 percent to students' toilets, while 81.9 percent have access to electricity and 37.2 percent to telephones (MOE, 2010). A study conducted in 2009 in 617 households in selected locations in 10 districts representing the nine provinces found that 72.2 percent households had improved sources of drinking water, 88.1 percent had satisfactory sanitation facilities and 64.1 percent had both these amenities. However, wide disparities were apparent within the three sectors (urban, rural and estate), between districts and across income quintiles (Jayatissa and Hossaine, 2010).

In 2007, the MOE classified schools according to a level of 'congeniality', with a low score indicating poor infrastructure and facilities. As Table 4.1 shows, the conflict-affected Northern and Eastern Provinces, the rural North Central Province, and Central Province with its concentration of plantations have the highest percentage of schools classified as 'uncongenial' or 'very uncongenial'.

**Table 4.1: Classification of schools according to level of 'congeniality' by province, 2007**

| | Very congenial | Congenial | Non-congenial | Uncongenial | Very uncongenial |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Western | 24.4 | 41.4 | 27.7 | 5.9 | 0.5 |
| Central | 10.5 | 18.6 | 30.3 | 30.3 | 10.2 |
| Southern | 11.7 | 31.0 | 34.0 | 18.1 | 5.1 |
| Northern | 4.1 | 18.6 | 15.8 | 13.4 | 47.8 |
| Eastern | 5.4 | 19.3 | 17.4 | 21.0 | 36.9 |
| North Western | 11.5 | 21.7 | 30.1 | 23.5 | 13.2 |
| North Central | 7.2 | 17.0 | 15.9 | 31.8 | 28.1 |
| Uva | 6.7 | 23.2 | 32.5 | 26.7 | 10.8 |
| Sabaragamuwa | 15.9 | 25.2 | 31.1 | 23.7 | 4.2 |
| Sri Lanka | 11.6 | 24.6 | 26.8 | 21.3 | 15.6 |

*Source: MOE, 2007.*

The quality of school facilities has a profound impact on whether children enrol in school or decide to drop out early. This is especially true for schools with inadequate sanitary amenities. Children in all dimensions are affected by poor quality infrastructure. Policies and funding must especially address the shortcomings in infrastructure for schools in conflict-affected and poor districts at both primary and secondary levels; this is important for children in Dimensions 2 and 3 to bring them into school and for children in Dimensions 4 and 5 to keep them in school. Improvement in sanitation and water facilities will particularly help prevent girls in Dimension 5 from dropping out. School sanitation programmes are an obvious place for coordinated policy between the ministries of education and health.

### *Teacher deployment and training*

The teaching force in Sri Lanka numbers 215,141, of whom 71.2 percent are women. However, the impact of gender norms appears to account for the fact that only 25 percent of school principals are women.

A major policy issue that impacts the quality of education available for children in disadvantaged communities is the inequitable distribution of teachers, and shortages of teachers in critical subjects juxtaposed with surplus teachers in others. It has been claimed that the use of the uniform 'ready reckoner' computation in allocating teachers to schools has perpetuated the inequitable distribution of teachers over the years. More pernicious is the deviation from recruitment policies by politicization of deployment, transfer and promotion practices. A third factor is the reluctance of teachers to work in schools with minimal amenities and those located in difficult areas. The proposal in the ESDFP to allocate an allowance amounting to 40 percent of salary to teachers in remote and difficult areas as an incentive has been accepted but has yet to be implemented as a result of budgetary constraints. Consequently, schools in disadvantaged locations continue to be marginalized with respect to qualified and committed teachers and are vulnerable to closure as 'uneconomic' and inefficient institutions, resulting in deprivation for the very poor of their right to education. The gulf between policy and practice remains wide and largely unbridged.

Teacher education is conducted from diploma to graduate and postgraduate levels by university faculties and departments of education, the National Institute of Education (NIE), 17 National Colleges of Education, and nine Teacher Training Institutes. In-service training is conducted by these institutions and, to a limited extent, by the 100 Teachers' Centres that were established for this purpose in the last decade but have been underutilized as a conduit for in-service teacher development at the local level. The NIE has tended to rely on the 'cascade' form of training, i.e., NIE staff training in-service advisers (ISAs) functioning at local level, and ISAs training teachers in their districts/divisions. However, evaluation studies have been critical of the resultant uneven and poor quality of training received by teachers from ISAs of varying quality, in particular their inability to transfer requisite knowledge and skills to teachers (Perera, 2008, 2009; Jayaweera, 2010). The consequences of these inadequacies are seen in the statements made by some students who have dropped out of school that they found lessons boring, teachers negligent and abusive, and schooling unattractive (MOE *et al*., 2009; Jayaweera and Gunawardena, 2009). Nor do teachers, as potential change-agents, appear to have acquired knowledge of and sensitivity to issues such as human rights, social equity, gender equality, and national harmony that impinge on the issue of equal educational opportunity and 'education for all'. A telling illustration is the claim by students from poverty groups that teachers have no empathy and are indifferent to their educational needs and inflict harsh punishments that precipitate dropping out of school (Jayaweera and Gunawardena, 2009).

Policies that are directed at overcoming shortages and uneven distribution of teachers are important primarily for children in Dimensions 4 and 5 but also for encouraging children in Dimensions 2 and 3 to enrol in school. Policies and programmes that aim to improve the quality of teacher training have a great impact on improving the quality of teaching and thus on reducing the level of dropout and keeping children in Dimensions 4 and 5 in school.

### *Deficiencies in teaching–learning processes*

Studies of OOSC referred to earlier have noted that some children who have dropped out of school or are at risk of dropping out have (i) experienced failure in that they have attended school but have not acquired adequate knowledge or skills, or (ii) become alienated and have withdrawn from school in the context of an unattractive curriculum and poor teaching. Learning and its outcomes are at the core of the educational experience. Sri Lanka has a common curriculum in primary and lower secondary grades but curriculum reforms over the years have failed to replace rote-learning by a meaningful, creative and activity-based approach in secondary grades, and to a lesser extent in primary grades, that could stimulate the development of children with varying abilities, interests and economic resources.

Curriculum reforms in the 1950s introduced 'pre-packaged' course guides to ensure a minimum knowledge base for all students; however, initiative, creativity and flexibility were stifled in the process. The ESDFP has as its second theme 'improving the quality of education and learning outcomes'; this is to be achieved through curriculum reforms at primary and secondary levels and the production of improved textbooks, underscoring in particular the promotion of 'higher order spaces and processes' in terms of equipment and the inclusion of non-cognitive or generic skills and values (MOE, 2006). These reforms have also been spelled out in the Ten-Year Horizontal Development Framework 2006–2016 (MOF and DNP, 2006).

UNICEF introduced the concept of child-friendly schools that encompasses rights-based, inclusive and gender-responsive education, and improving learning outcomes in attractive, stress-free classrooms using child-centred methodologies (MOE and UNICEF, 2008). The Mahinda Chintana: Development Framework 2010 proposes meeting the challenges of a knowledge-based economy and society by enhancing the quality and relevance of education.

Despite such substantial inputs into policy planning, resource allocation and programme implementation, there appears to be little visible change in the teaching–learning process in schools. As underscored in recent studies (Jayaweera, 2010; Lekamge *et al*., 2008; McCaul, 2007; Perera 2008, 2009), the curriculum continues to be overloaded and tends to be centralized and therefore insensitive to local conditions, providing minimal space for activities and student participation. It offers a uniform model of teaching and learning that has been questioned for its failure to recognize differences in the pace of learning and the interests of students and for the way it inhibits the creativity and freedom of teachers and students. It is not surprising that unattractive curricula have been predisposing factors for students dropping out of school.

While student performance has improved in recent years, overall statistics conceal wide disparities as shown in NEREC studies, including the poor performance of students in disadvantaged families, which often underlies their propensity to withdraw and drop out of an unstimulating school environment (NEREC, 2003).

While there are a number of policies and programmes that aim to improve the teaching–learning and classroom experience for children, their implementation has been weak. In order for children in Dimensions 4 and 5 to benefit fully from these policies, shortcomings must be addressed and efforts made to extend the child-friendly schools concept across more of the education system. This is an area where policy-makers on education and social protection can collaborate effectively.

### *Child abuse*

The incidence of child abuse in the home, at school and in communities, which is often hidden behind a façade of privacy, has become a more visible issue of concern in Sri Lanka since the last decade of the 20th century. Measures have been taken to protect children in and out of school from violence and other forms of abuse through legislation and access to services. However, the impact has been minimal. An administrative circular from the MOE prohibiting corporal punishment has been sent to schools repeatedly.

Amendments to the Penal Code in 1995, 1998 and 2006 included increases in punishments for rape and the specifying of incest, grave sexual abuse and sexual harassment as criminal offences. The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act 2005 makes it possible for victims to gain assistance to obtain a Protection Order to seek court action if they chose to do so. Sri Lanka endorsed the SAARC Convention on Trafficking of Women and Children 2002 and introduced relevant legislation in 2008. Amendments were made to the Marriage Ordinance 1995 to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 years and the age for statutory rape to 16 years, except for Muslim children.

The NCPA has mechanisms for handling complaints such as a 'hotline' and a legal officer and police unit to take action in court. Its role is to work with Child Promotion and Rights Officers of the Department of Probation and Child Care and District Children's Development Committees on issues of child abuse, and also with Non-Formal Education Officers to investigate why children are not in school and facilitate school attendance. Currently, it has 13 drop-in centres for children and youths, with a curriculum, psychosocial activities and awareness programmes on child rights as well as on combating abuse and corporal punishment. It appears, however, that the NCPA is under-resourced and thus unable to carry out its full functions throughout the country.

The Department of Probation and Child Care is mandated to protect the rights of children including those in conflict with the law. Under the Commissioner of Probation and Child Care, Child Rights Promotion Officers (CRPOs) at divisional level are expected to create awareness on child rights and on the need to prevent child abuse, and to report such abuse to the Divisional Secretary and to the District Probation Officers. These probation officers have no legal power but are required to work with the police to send offenders to court. The department has 20 institutions for children who need protection, support and remedial programmes. However, evaluation studies of these institutions have indicated that they are largely under-funded and have many shortcomings in management and services thereby limiting their role in the protection, care and welfare of children in need (Jayatilleke and Amarasuriya, 2005).

There is clearly a wide gap between policies and their implementation; this is due to lack of awareness of legislation on the part of both public and law enforcement officials, lack of sensitivity to the implications of abuse, and conservatism and passivity in response by families. Hence, children continue to be vulnerable to all forms of abuse and violence. For instance, despite the issuing of a ministry circular prohibiting corporal punishment in schools, there is evidence of a high incidence of such violence still continuing. A recent study on school participation noted that 60 percent of principals and 71 percent of teachers said that corporal punishment was administered in their schools, and children often complain of harsh punishments as a reason for dropping out (Jayaweera and Gunawardena, 2009). While probation officers are known to have taken principals and teachers to court following complaints by parents, school authorities often appear to be disinclined to take action to eliminate such abuse. It appears that punishment as a means to enforce discipline in schools continues to be favoured with impunity and that there is inadequate supervision and monitoring of enforcement of the MOE circular on corporal punishment by local education officials.

Corporal punishment is a particular concern of children in Dimensions 4 and 5, and policies aimed at eliminating its use must be more forcefully implemented. This is an area that would benefit from greater collaboration between the education and social protection sectors, particularly with regards to 'teaching and learning with dignity'.

### *Disability*

Until recently, disability was not perceived as a vulnerability that required policy and action from the perspective of human development and human rights, and was exacerbated by stigma, social exclusion and lack of social protection. The majority of children with disabilities were denied access to education and to the incentives provided for children to facilitate school attendance. Nevertheless, some voluntary organizations were able to establish 25 special schools in 17 districts for children with physical or mental disabilities (six of the eight districts in which there were no special schools were conflict-affected) and *ad hoc* programmes were introduced in a limited number of mainstream schools.

In response to widely voiced concerns, legislation in the form of the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 1996 was enacted to meet the needs of those with physical, mental, psychiatric and multiple disabilities. A National Secretariat for Persons with Disabilities was set up in 1996 in the Ministry of Social Services, and community or project assistants were appointed to assist social service officers at the local level in implementing programmes. A National Policy on Disability has been implemented since 2003 to promote equity and inclusion as equal citizens for those with disabilities. The policy addresses a wide range of needs including accessibility to schools, combating of negative socio-cultural attitudes, promotion of inclusive education, development of skills, and access to teacher training through the NIE and a National College of Education assigned to train teachers for inclusive education (Ministry of Social Services, 2003).

It was only in the first decade of the 21st century that the needs of children with disabilities were recognized as an issue that should be addressed in the national education policy. The ESDFP proposed that children with disabilities needed specific attention to ensure their access to education. A special unit was established in the NFE Division of the MOE to develop action plans to achieve this objective. As a consequence, services have been developed for children with visual impairment, hearing impairment, mental disabilities, autism, Down's syndrome, emotional and behavioural disorders, learning disabilities, physical disabilities and multiple disabilities. The NFE Division has also organized services that include Braille textbooks and writing services, hearing aids, speech-training devices, exercise and sports toolkits; appropriate teaching and learning methodologies, and learning together in regular classrooms; construction of access facilities; and awareness programmes to identify disabilities. An Autism Children's Development Centre and nine Special Education Resource Centres have also been established (MOE, 2009b).

In 2009, 2,742 children (55.5 percent boys and 44.5 percent girls) were enrolled in 25 Special Schools and 52,786 in state schools (60.8 percent boys and 39.2 percent girls) (MOE, 2009b). However, since 2006, attrition rates have been high and only around half have transitioned from primary to secondary level. Annual reviews of the ESDFP indicate that progress has been slow in enrolling more children with disabilities. Many of these children, therefore, continue to be marginalized and vulnerable.

Policies aimed at bringing children with disabilities into school benefit children in Dimensions 1, 2 and 3. While much progress has been made in recent years, it is apparent that this momentum

needs to be accelerated. Again policies on social protection aimed at children with disabilities could be effectively linked with education to encourage these children to enrol in school. At the same time, schools and teachers need to be supported with appropriate facilities and skills development to ensure that once children with disabilities are in school they are able to continue successfully and are not at risk of dropping out.

## 4.4 Governance and management policies and strategies

### *Responses to conflict and disasters caused by natural hazards*

A major impact of recent disasters that have overwhelmed Sri Lanka has been damage to school infrastructure and the displacement of families; this has disrupted children's education and called for special measures to assist victims, including getting children back to school.

The 26 years of armed conflict in the north and east of the country have had a profound impact on families in the areas affected as well as in neighbouring districts. Children's education has been affected by closure of schools, loss of school infrastructure and teachers, displacement and disruption affecting the continuity of their schooling and, in the case of child combatants recruited by the LTTE, denial of the right to schooling. Informal and 'catch-up' programmes have been conducted by regular and voluntary teachers for children without access to formal education during the closure of schools in some conflict-affected areas (Jayaweera and Gunawardena, 2009). With the cessation of fighting in May 2009, relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes have been conducted for the internally displaced population seeking to return to their homes and for former child soldiers to enter mainstream education. Studies have indicated that the resilience of Sri Lankan communities and their resolve to get on with their lives have facilitated recovery to a certain extent (Jayaweera, 2005; Jayaweera and Gunawardena, 2009).

The tsunami of December 2004 that devastated the southern, eastern, northern and south-western coastal areas, resulting in loss of life, displacement of thousands of families, and destruction or damage of houses, schools, hospitals and other infrastructure required immediate and long-term programmes to assist recovery. Besides welfare services and grants for rehabilitation or reconstruction of housing and restoration of livelihoods, a massive programme was introduced to ensure access to education to the large number of displaced students. The UNICEF-supported Back-to-School campaign, the 'school in the box' materials provided to families, and the construction of temporary structures to accommodate children from destroyed or damaged schools contributed to restoring normalcy in schools (Jayaweera, 2005). Psychosocial Care Units were set up in the MOE and NIE, Psychosocial Resource Centres were established in all nine provinces, and educational personnel trained as trainers at the local level and teachers trained as counsellors. However, not all schools have counsellors to assist children with problems; this could precipitate dropping out.

The Disaster Management Act 2005 provides legislative and institutional arrangements for disaster risk reduction under the umbrella of the Central Disaster Management Centre. Disaster safety education, supported by GIZ, has been integrated in the school programme, and National Guidelines for School Disaster Safety were developed in 2008 by the NIE in collaboration with the Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights and supported by GIZ (MOE, 2008b). These guidelines comprise a school security programme and school awareness programme; incorporation of disaster-related topics in the school curriculum and teachers' education curriculum; seven steps in school disaster safety planning; and indicators and monitoring tools for school safety. A landmine risk education programme in conflict-affected areas and an emergency

preparedness and response programme are supported by UNICEF. Capacity-building programmes for educational personnel to implement these activities also have been conducted. These programmes have yet to reach all schools but are being implemented in at least 200 schools with the support of GIZ. They need to be further integrated into the curriculum to be truly effective.

The destructive impact of conflict on political, economic and social stability and on lives and human development including denial of access to education has also stimulated initiatives to undertake preventive measures. Causes that predispose conflict are perceived to be factors such as ethnic disharmony in a multicultural society, the absence of cross-cultural understanding, lack of tolerance and acceptance of diversity, and lack of respect for the rights of all communities. It has been noted too that education policies and programmes have not promoted a concept of national harmony. Hence, a National Policy and a Comprehensive Framework of Actions on Education and Social Cohesion and Peace 2008 has been developed and a Social Cohesion and Peace Education Unit established in the MOE to implement the programme with technical and financial support from GIZ. The programme includes curriculum inputs in school and teacher education to develop an appropriate school culture, co-curricular activities and social integration (MOE, 2008c). However, there is no evidence as yet that this policy has been integrated into the programmes of most schools (MOE *et al*., 2010).

It is urgent for children in Dimensions 2 and 3 that primary and secondary schools in conflict-affected districts are repaired and rehabilitated as quickly as possible. Furthermore, political, governance, capacity and financing barriers impacting children affected by conflict and natural hazards must be addressed effectively through specific policies aimed at ensuring these children firstly have adequate access to school and secondly are able to obtain a high-quality education once they are there. This is an area where social protection measures aimed at conflict-affected families can be extremely useful when linked with education.

### *Political will*

Political will at the highest level has long been manifested in Sri Lanka, as stated earlier; since the transition to political independence and during the post-independence years, policy-makers have ensured the formulation and implementation of free education and health services in state and state-assisted institutions. This stance has been unhesitatingly reiterated in recent years. The priority attached to education and health policies is seen to have brought around 95 percent of the country's children into school and to have provided the most economically disadvantaged segments of the population with overt social protection. However, the incidence of poverty, although reported to be declining, has militated against the optimal use of these liberal policies, and some children in the most vulnerable families, as have been seen in this study, continue to be deprived of access to education and to be exposed to economic and sexual exploitation.

Furthermore, two trends in the implementation of policies have diluted their positive impact from the perspective of governance. The absence of strong commitment has been noted among a proportion of state officials engaged in translating these policies into proactive implementation at the local level. Furthermore, apathy in implementing direct social protection programmes has resulted in failure to protect children from abuse and in violation of their right to fulfilling and stress- and violence-free lives.

### Birth certificates

Although over 97 percent of children in Sri Lanka have a birth certificate, the lack of one was sometimes given as a reason for children in Dimensions 2 and 3 being out of school. Circulars have been repeatedly sent to schools to address this issue, instructing principals to admit children without birth certificates on the basis of an affidavit from the certification of the village officers (Grama Niladhari).

### Politicization

There is a trend for politicization of appointments, promotions and transfers of educational personnel and officials and allocation of financial and physical resources that exacerbates disparities in the provision of education and welfare services. Politicization within the education sector is a problem that has been acknowledged by policy-makers. For example, the Mahinda Chintana: Development Framework 2010 intends to expand the distribution of primary and secondary schools according to divisional requirements, and has defined objective criteria, based on a school mapping exercise, to ensure that the selection process is adhered to and politicization is eliminated.

### Devolution

In 1987, under the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, authority was devolved to the provincial level on the basis of three lists of responsibilities: national/central, provincial and concurrent. The policy of devolution, however, has gaps, creating overlap and confusion at the local level, and re-examination of the guidelines is needed to ensure their efficient implementation.

### Coordination of programmes

Absence of effective coordination is seen in three areas of programme operation: within the education sector, between sectors and with donors. It was noted earlier that mechanisms have been created for coordination at the local level, e.g., the Compulsory Attendance Committees to implement the compulsory education regulations, and the District Child Development Committees functioning under the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs. While these committees are expected to have representation from state agencies involved in NFE, social services, probation and child care, labour, child rights promotion, the Samurdhi programme and the Grama Niladhari (state officials in the lowest administrative unit), meetings were reported to be irregular and collaboration to be limited. In extenuation, local officials said that they could not afford the transport costs incurred by participation in meetings.

### Planning and implementation of programmes

A breakthrough in the traditional centralization of planning and plan implementation towards a participatory approach was partially achieved with the introduction of the ESDFP. The objective has been to transform the planning process through a bottom-up approach, with Annual School Development Plans being prepared at the school level in cooperation with local stakeholders and the community as an initial step. While this innovation has been set in motion and the preparation of Annual School Development Plans has been incorporated in the planning process, there have inevitably been 'teething problems' as a result of the lack of capacity in schools and local education offices to cope with the new procedures.

A study in 2008 carried out in 135 schools in 27 zones in all nine provinces found that 85 percent of schools had annual plans, minimally in small primary schools; however, in the majority of these schools the plans had been prepared by the principal, deputy principal and a few senior teachers without the expected participation of the School Development Society, past students, students, parents and community representatives (Coalition for Educational Development, 2008). There were complaints that the planning guidelines were complicated and that the delay in receiving funds and the inadequacy of funds had affected the implementation of plans (Jayaweera and Gunawardena, 2007). Nevertheless, this innovation has contributed towards increased effectiveness of the planning process, identification and inclusion of OOSC, and a better distribution of resources that could accelerate the task of bringing all children into the school system.

A further innovation that has had positive consequences has been the focus on higher order processes and the accelerated learning campaign to improve student learning outcomes in core subjects; this is likely to reduce the incidence of dropout (World Bank, 2006–2010). An innovation in the management sphere has been the incorporation of efforts towards school-based management through the Programme for School Improvement (PSI); the intention is to empower stakeholders in the local community to become more involved in their school, as they are likely to be more sensitive to the needs of local children from disadvantaged families. Awareness campaigns for this programme were carried out and seed grants allocated to schools in 65 pilot zones under the ESDFP (MOE, 2006; World Bank, 2011a). An evaluation of selected primary schools found that, among other things, parents in poorer communities had become more aware of the importance of supporting children in their school work, and thereby ensuring their continued attendance in school (World Bank, 2011a).

Another positive initiative has been the child-friendly schools programme sponsored by UNICEF which has had an impact on bringing OOSC to school, improving the quality of the teaching–learning process, and ensuring community participation in planning and management even in small, disadvantaged schools. The child-friendly approach needs however to be integrated in all schools.

### *Monitoring*

The weakest aspect of management and delivery mechanisms is the absence of an effective monitoring process that ensures smooth implementation of policies and programmes and provides feedback for corrective action. Although the ESDFP has developed a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, which is expected to be used at all levels of implementation, in actual practice there is very little monitoring, as seen clearly in the poor enforcement of compulsory education regulations and minimal activities of District Child Development Committees. This weakness in monitoring stems from the lack of capacity of some members of school and office staff to engage in such tasks and/or the low priority accorded to tasks. There also appears to be structural weakness in the education sector caused by the marginalization of Divisional Offices in the planning, implementation and monitoring of education programmes, despite the fact that this office, unlike the zonal office, has a manageable number of schools and communities in its domain for implementation and ongoing monitoring of programmes.

### *Availability of data*

Sri Lanka has comprehensive and efficient data-gathering and analysis procedures implemented by the national agency, the Department of Census and Statistics, and by the Central Bank and line ministries and other sectoral agencies such as the ministries of education, health and labour that focus on programmes for children in or out of school. Unfortunately research and evaluation studies are constrained by the fact that not all this information is in the public domain and accessible to data users perhaps due to resource limitations, and that accessing data within these institutions is a time-consuming process, as was experienced firsthand by this study.

## 4.5 Financial allocations and educational expenditure

A major constraint in the education sector is limited financial resources available for implementation of policies. This is not a new problem. However, government expenditure on education has decreased in recent years both as a percentage of GDP and as a percentage of the total government budget. Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP fell from nearly five percent in the late 1960s to 2–3 percent in the 1980s, and as a percentage of total expenditure from around 16 percent to eight percent over the same period, with the advent of structural adjustment programmes. Since then, it has declined further from 2.7 percent of GDP in 2006 to 1.9 percent in 2010, and from 11 percent of total expenditure in 2006 to 8.1 percent in 2010.

Social protection is viewed largely in terms of the provision of free state education and health services. These services have been complemented by welfare payments to some households under poverty alleviation programmes (two percent of total public expenditure) and through small-scale cash transfers offered to some families, for instance, by the Ministry of Social Services and the Department of Probation and Child Care (MOF, 2009). However, this has amounted to a very limited quantum of financial assistance. It has to be noted too that quantitative and qualitative improvement has depended heavily on donor assistance in recent decades from multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, UNICEF, World Food Programme, UNFPA and UNESCO; bilateral agencies such as GIZ, JICA and DFID; and INGOs such Save the Children and Plan International. In the context of a lack of comprehensive information on the funds provided, it is only possible to estimate that donor contributions have made up about six percent of the total education budget.

Since devolution to the provincial level, there have been two paths for financial allocations for recurrent and capital expenditure from the Ministry of Finance to the various levels of educational administration and to educational institutions. Funds are channelled to the central MOE to be allocated for administration at the national level, and through the Finance Commission for allocation to the provincial administrations. In the context of the wide regional disparities that prevail in the country, the Finance Commission is expected to assist in meeting the needs of each of the nine provinces and to allocate funds to achieve balanced regional development. It also accords priority to monitoring progress in enrolling OOSC in school (Finance Commission, 2009).

Deviating from the tradition of allocating resources each year on a historical basis, the government, with assistance from the World Bank, introduced a norm-based unit cost resource allocation mechanism (NBUCRAM) in response to a suggestion by the National Education Commission. Since 2000, some funds have been allocated directly to schools for quality inputs according to this mechanism. Since 2006, the ESDFP, under its third theme of ‘increasing equity in the distribution of resources’, has implemented several new measures and has modified the formula in order to direct more resources to disadvantaged districts. This was accompanied by a move towards decentralization of financial authority to secondary schools through school-based grants for specific subjects.

For more effective monitoring under the ESDFP, education officers and schools have been using a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. In addition, a Public Expenditure and Quality of Education Tracking System (PEQETS) is being gradually introduced. The impact of these monitoring tools is yet to be assessed.

It has been reported that implementation of the ESDFP's wide-ranging initiatives have been affected by several problems such as lack of capacity on the part of education and school authorities in budget planning and keeping accounts, inability of small schools to access quality inputs, complexities of rules and regulations, irregular flow of funds to local levels, the limited involvement of stakeholders in the formulation of budgets despite expectations, and the absence of effective monitoring in the official or public environment (Coalition for Educational Development, 2008).

## 4.6 Social protection

### *Key social protection programmes*

Social protection is intended to address the problems created by factors such as poverty, vulnerability, ageing and social exclusion. Sri Lanka implements various social welfare measures, which in 2009 required expenditure of 6.8 percent of GDP (Gunatilaka, 2010). They encompass social transfers in cash or kind, social safety nets, social care and support services, provision of economic and social access to services, and protective legislation.

The largest cash transfer programme is the Samurdhi Poverty Alleviation Programme, implemented since 1995, which comprises a consumption income transfer not indexed to inflation for poor households along with a compulsory savings component and social insurance for events such as deaths, births, marriages and sickness. There is also mandatory participation of a family member in community-based rural infrastructure development programmes and the promotion of micro-enterprise development through access to micro-credit. The programme covers 35–40 percent of the population. Expenditure on this programme is declining, from 1.9 percent of GDP in 2001 to 0.2 percent in 2009. Studies have noted that, although extensive in reach, the effectiveness of the programme is undermined by targeting errors at the local level, which exclude some of the poor while including persons from higher income quintiles. It has also been noted that benefits are spread too thinly and that the impact on family welfare is limited as a result of mandatory deductions and the small amount of assistance received (Alailima, 2007; Gunatilaka, 2010; World Bank, 2006, 2007).

The Constitution and the legal system provide protection from discrimination, but protection through labour legislation is confined to employees in the formal sector who have access to pensions and provident funds. For the 60 percent of the labour force engaged in economic activities in the informal sector and therefore vulnerable to exploitation, provision is minimal, with some minuscule, *ad hoc* contributory pension schemes. In addition, inadequate small-scale safety nets are provided for the destitute by the Public Assistance Programme.

Safety nets for the very poor through promotion of participation in education have been included also in the social welfare programmes of other ministries as revealed in interviews with representatives of these ministries. The Samurdhi Programme provides Sipdora scholarships of SLRs 500 per month for two years for school children with good educational attainment in very poor Samurdhi beneficiary families. The Department of Probation and Child Care Services in the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs has three schemes: a foster parent programme through which grants of SLRs 100–200 per month are given to assist children aged 6–13 years to pursue education; a sponsorship programme of SLRs 200 per month for some families with children under 18 years of age; and the Senehasa Bank Account Programme of SLRs 1,500 per month for children who lost their parents in the tsunami (Department of Probation and Child Care Services, 2010). In addition, OOSC and children irregular in attendance

are provided with school equipment and books to encourage them to attend school. The Children's Secretariat of the same ministry has responsibility for developing a national policy for early childhood development, preparing a database of pre-schools, developing minimum standards for pre-schools, and training pre-school teachers (Department of Probation and Child Care Services, 2010). While these programmes are limited in size and are targeted to specific groups, they are likely to reach some of the most vulnerable children who perhaps lack the capacity to utilize the opportunities available under the free education scheme and its ancillary subsidies.

There are currently no policies specifically aimed at improving the education of orphans and vulnerable children who are living in institutions such as children's homes. These children are protected to a certain extent by general child rights legislation but policies are needed to ensure that children in Dimensions 4 and 5 do not drop out of school as a result of poor supervision or social stigma. Again targeted social protection could help these children to stay in school.

In the absence of a universal social insurance policy, the policies of free state education and free state health services have been relatively effective agents of human development cum social protection for the poor. Although a few vulnerable groups have yet to be reached, the waiver of user fees, access to extensive education and health services, scholarships, compulsory education, and the provision of incentives for participation have improved the human capabilities of the poor for exiting poverty. However, it is an issue of concern that these policies have yet to fully achieve their targets; in this context, it appears that the gap between policy and implementation in education and social protection is still a major barrier that needs to be addressed, particularly at the local level.

# CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 Conclusions

### *Profiles of OOSC*

Data analysed for this study suggested the following profiles of OOSC for Sri Lanka.

- Children in Dimension 1, pre-primary OOSC, are more likely to be from the estate sector than rural and urban areas, and from poorer families than richer families. Gender is not a significant factor in non-attendance; however, girls in the estate sector are much less likely than boys in the estate sector to be attending an education programme. The overall attendance rate for four-year-olds is 92.7 percent.
- Children in Dimension 2, OOSC of primary school age, are as likely to be girls as boys, are also more likely to be from the estate sector than rural and urban areas, and to be from poorer families than richer families. In terms of absolute numbers, more primary-school-age children are out of school in urban areas than in rural or estate areas. Children in this dimension are less likely to be involved in child labour than those in Dimension 3 (older children). Disparities at primary level tend to be less pronounced than at lower secondary level. It is possible that a number of five-year-olds are not in a school as a result of admission regulations. It is estimated that 1.9 percent of primary-school-age children are out of school.
- Children in Dimension 3, OOSC of lower secondary school age, are slightly more likely to be boys, especially older ones, than girls. There is no disparity between children in rural and urban areas. Children in this dimension are most likely to belong to households in the poorer wealth quintiles. Of children in Dimension 3 who are engaged in child labour, they are most likely to be boys and children from urban areas. It is estimated that 3.3 percent of lower-secondary-school-age children are out of school.
- Children in Dimension 4 are at risk of dropping out of primary school. They are as likely to be boys as girls. Children of this age are not very likely to be involved in child labour; but for those that are, a high proportion are still attending school and therefore at risk of dropping out. Boys are more likely than girls to be in-school working children. There are more overage boys than girls in primary school and repetition rates are higher for boys than for girls. Current dropout rates for in-school children aged 5–9 years are around one percent.
- Lower-secondary-school-age children at risk of dropping out (Dimension 5) are more likely to be boys than girls. Involvement in child labour puts children at risk of dropping out, particularly for boys; however, by this age, many working children have already become OOSC. There are more overage boys than girls in lower secondary school and repetition rates are higher for boys than for girls. Current dropout rates for lower-secondary-school-age children climb from 1.0 percent for 10-year-olds to 5.1 percent for 13-year-olds.

### *Barriers and bottlenecks to education*

Although national-level statistics show few patterns of exclusion, with no significant findings on age, gender, wealth or rural–urban divide, it is acknowledged that a relatively small number of children are still at out of school and are being denied their right to a quality basic education. Examination of micro-level studies on OOSC revealed the following common barriers to education.

Demand-side socio-cultural barriers and bottlenecks influencing exclusion from school in Sri Lanka are mainly related to parents' socio-economic status and children's attitudes to education, especially when the benefits to be derived from education are considered against the advantages to be gained by children carrying out other activities. In some instances, gender is also a concern. Poor health can also prevent children from obtaining a full cycle of education.

Demand-side economic barriers to education centre on family poverty, which leads to child labour and the migration of mothers.

Supply-side barriers and bottlenecks that result in children being excluded from school or in dropping out early include the uneven distribution of schools, inadequate school infrastructure facilities, problems with teacher deployment and training, deficiencies in the teaching–learning process, corporal punishment and poor teacher behaviour, and lack of facilities for children with disabilities.

Political, governance, capacity and financing factors often underlie both demand-side and supply-side barriers and bottlenecks. Studies also indicate that these barriers rarely occur separately but mostly in combination and are thus multifaceted. The most important barriers of this type affecting the exclusion of children from education in Sri Lanka are weak coordination in implementation of programmes, ineffective monitoring and data collection at local level, and inadequate budget allocations and resource distribution.

### *Policies addressing barriers and bottlenecks*

In Sri Lanka, socio-cultural factors have not had markedly adverse effects on participation in education in the context of the policy of universal free state education. The overarching issue is poverty in disadvantaged segments of the population. This was met relatively effectively from the perspective of educational participation and social protection by the policy of free and universal access to state education and health services, and by the wide range of government incentives provided over past years as well as currently by existing policy and the ESDFP. Nevertheless, poverty still prevents some children in the most vulnerable groups from accessing education, while regional disparities in provision and utilization, prevailing as a consequence of uneven development, have affected full access to education for other children.

On the supply side, action has been taken through policies and programmes to provide an extensive network of primary and secondary schools; however, development trends and unplanned interventions have sometimes reinforced disparities in the quality of infrastructure facilities and services, and the impact of programmes has tended to be distorted by extraneous factors. In addition, it cannot be said that education policies and programmes have promoted child rights, gender equality and national harmony through the content of education. NFE, which offers a second chance to OOSC, has yet to meet the needs of most of the children who are not attending school. Free access to health services and the provision of free school meals have contributed to increasing school participation. Social protection programmes such as cash transfers to families through poverty alleviation programmes and small-scale safety nets provided by agencies outside the educator sector appear to have made a less significant contribution.

At the same time, education policy-makers have not been active in protecting children from abuse and violence and from the social stigmatization that affects access to education for children with disabilities. Social protection programmes have introduced legislation to prevent child labour,

sexual abuse and violence, and have implemented programmes by state agencies such as the NCPA, the Department of Probation and Child Care Services and the Department of Labour. However, they have still a long way to go to eliminate or even reduce child abuse. In the context of the tsunami and the armed conflict, education policies have facilitated return to normalcy and promoted psychosocial care programmes. Both education and social protection systems have responded in recent years, although largely at the policy level, to the need to provide assistance through programmes in coping with disaster and in preventing future conflict.

In the sphere of governance, it was seen that strong high-level political will has been a major factor in providing access to education. However, the impact of this commitment has been diluted by the apathy of some local officials in implementing programmes and distorted by local-level politicization. The shift from centralization to devolution was seen to have been hampered by lack of clarity in policies, except for financial allocations through the Finance Commission to the provinces. Innovations have been introduced through the ESDFP and the child-friendly approach to change school culture and promote participatory planning and the more equitable distribution of financial resources.

Nevertheless, coordination and monitoring continue to be weak in both education and social protection, with ineffectiveness of coordinating mechanisms at the local level, inter-sectorally and with donors, and a virtual absence of monitoring at the local level. The only mechanism that that has the potential to integrate or coordinate education and social protection policies and programmes is the NCPA; however, it does not receive sufficient funding to carry out its mandated functions. Inadequate financial resources have been a major constraint to implementation of both education and social protection programmes. Communities too have yet to participate proactively in school-related programmes.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Although Sri Lanka has an inclusive and universal education policy that has resulted in the vast majority of school-age children being enrolled in school and successfully completing a full cycle of education, there are a number of concerns that still need to be addressed. The following recommendations are intended to support the further strengthening of the education system to help ensure that no child is excluded. They are also intended as responses to education as well as social protection concerns.

### *Demand-side socio-cultural*

- Curricula for teachers and schools should include materials that will promote critical thinking on socio-cultural issues and change stereotypical attitudes in order to promote gender equality and social harmony.

### *Demand-side economic*

- As proposed in recent education policy documents, the age for compulsory education should be extended to 16 years, as many studies have observed that it is difficult to exit poverty without an education to at least GCE O Level standard. A scholarship scheme at the end of Grade 9 should be introduced with donor assistance (as in the ADB scholarships) to assist children with recognized ability in economically disadvantaged families to continue studies without having to engage in economic activities. However, it is acknowledged that would require further resources from national and local governments; this should also be addressed.

- The Compulsory Education Regulations and ancillary policies such as alternative provisions for admission of children without birth certificates and prohibition on the levying of school admission fees/donations should be strictly enforced. Compulsory Attendance Committees should be activated to visit homes to identify OOSC. They should be enabled to take proactive measures to raise awareness among parents and caregivers on the value of education and provide support to ensure that children are not deprived of their right to education.
- If education is to compensate to some extent for poverty, education programmes should focus directly on vulnerable groups and meet their specific needs for assistance in order to facilitate their access to education. For instance, a small committee of stakeholders familiar with the needs of targeted communities could be appointed to develop specific programmes to ensure that such initiatives are not lost in larger programmes.
- Sri Lanka should develop a universal social insurance scheme, as targeted programmes such as the Samurdhi programme have had less impact than the free education and health services policies. Meanwhile, as a transition measure, the Samurdhi programme should be revamped to meet the needs of only the most vulnerable families.
- Assistance should be obtained to extend the school meals programme to secondary schools in disadvantaged locations.
- The current policy of providing nutritional supplementation should be continued.
- School Medical Inspections should be extended to all schools so that early detection of illnesses and disability and referral for specialized treatment is possible.
- The National Education Commission should formulate a policy to meet the needs of children with disabilities and request the MOE to sensitize the provincial and zonal authorities regarding this policy, especially on the need for resource allocations sufficient for effective implementation.
- The MOE and Provincial Ministries of Education should establish Special Education Units in schools, which can cater to severely disabled children, and train a cadre of teachers for such units. In addition, as present policy is to include children with special needs who are not severely affected in mainstream classes, inclusive education should be offered as an optional subject in all teacher education programmes.
- Awareness programmes should be conducted to address stigma surrounding disability.
- Labour legislation should be implemented effectively to prohibit child labour and hazardous employment not only in the formal sector but also in the informal sector as a universal policy.
- The NCPA should be strengthened with human and financial resources to equip it to monitor child abuse at the local level.
- The circular prohibiting corporal punishment should be implemented purposefully, and education and social protection officials should monitor implementation and take legal action against violations. Alternative and positive approaches and strategies should be adopted to create a ‘disciplined’ environment in classrooms.
- An accelerated learning and action programme needs to be implemented to reinvigorate education and social protection services in conflict-affected areas.
- The Disaster Safety Policy and the Social Cohesion Policy should be incorporated in the primary and secondary school curricula, as they have not reached many schools at present.

### *Supply-side*

- Innovative ways of making the school an inclusive institution—catering to diverse student needs, preparing teachers in inclusive education to support a child-friendly learning–teaching environment, and providing cost-effective resources to encourage student participation—should be piloted and implemented at both local and national levels. Improvements in infrastructure should ensure that schools are gender-sensitive and disabled-friendly and include inputs such as separate toilets for boys and girls, safe water, child-friendly classrooms, playgrounds and sports equipment, and appropriate technological facilities.
- The nature of the examination-dominated and overloaded school curriculum appears to be a factor that pushes children out of school. Curriculum guides should give priority to providing adequate space and time for creative and practical work appropriate for all types of learners and different learning styles.
- Considering the number of children who are unable to cope with studies and perform poorly before dropping out of school, it should be mandatory that Standard Assessment Records are maintained for all children from when they enter school. Recording of periodic assessments should be continued throughout schooling so that growth and progress of all children, including children with disabilities, can be assessed and assistance provided where necessary.
- It is critical to develop teachers through pre-service and in-service training who understand their role not as disciplinarians but as empathetic facilitators. This is especially important in ensuring the participation and retention of children from deprived socioeconomic backgrounds and disadvantaged locations.
- An in-service multi-grade teaching programme should be offered for all teachers serving in schools with multi-grade classes to equip them to cater for the special circumstances in these schools.
- Considering the importance of pre-primary education in the development of young children, there is an urgent need to improve the quality of preschool teachers, their conditions of service and the infrastructural facilities provided in ECD centres, in compliance with the guidelines for minimum standards laid down by the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs.

### *Political, governance, capacity and financing*

- Priority should be given to capacity-building of all local-level officials to improve their knowledge and skills relating to the implementation of programmes.
- Coordination mechanisms such as the District Child Development Committees should be strengthened, as they cut across education, social protection and health. Monitoring mechanisms should be established at the provincial level to monitor their performance. Awareness should be created among officials of relevant ministries on the importance of collaboration in order to synergize their efforts to achieve maximum success.
- Mechanisms should be introduced at provincial, district/zonal and divisional levels for the purpose of monitoring the implementation of programmes.
- It is suggested that education policy should strengthen the role of divisional administrations to ensure effective implementation and monitoring of programmes in schools. This would also facilitate collaboration with divisional-level officials in other ministries and promote a focused approach to non-enrolment of children in school.

- All data should be disaggregated by sex and division to facilitate monitoring, and should be easily accessible to researchers and the public. It is suggested that data for the estate sector should be presented separately so that it is possible to monitor progress in this sector.
- Financial provision for education should be increased steadily to six percent of GDP and around 20 percent of the total government budget to support access to education and improve the quality of education. It has been reported that provision for some forms of social protection has declined. It is important to increase financial provision in this area in order to eliminate the effects of poverty and strengthen the capacity of disadvantaged families to ensure that children's rights are upheld.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ahuja, A. and Mendis, P., 2002. *Review of Inclusive Education for Children Who Have Disability in the Context of Child-Friendly Schools.* Colombo: UNICEF Sri Lanka.

Alailima, P.J., 2007. *Growth Distribution and Poverty. Peradeniya:* Kandy Books.

Ariyapala, M.W.C.S., 2002. *Children Living in a Shanty Town on the Periphery of Colombo.* Relevance and Expression of Child Rights in Contemporary Sri Lanka, Vol. 12. Colombo: Initiatives in Research and Education for Development in Asia (INASIA).

Arunatilake, N., 2005. *Education Participation in Sri Lanka: Why All Are Not in School.* Paper presented at Global Conference on Education Research for Developing Countries. Prague, 31 March–2 April 2005. Prague: Global Development Network.

Aturupane, H., 2009. *The Pearl of Great Price: Achieving Equitable Access to Primary and Secondary Education and Enhancing Learning in Sri Lanka.* Create Pathways to Access Research Monograph No. 29. Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity. Brighton: Centre for International Education, University of Sussex.

Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2005. *The Consumer Finances and Socio-economic Survey Report 2003/04. Part 1.* Colombo: Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2010. *Annual Central Bank Report. C*olombo: Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2005*. Regional Study on the Demand Side of Trafficking of Women and Children in Asia: Fireworks Industry, Sri Lanka Case Study.* Colombo: ILO Sri Lanka. (Unpublished.)

Centre for the Study of Human Rights, 2004. *The Vulnerable Child: Research Report on Institutions which Protect Children's Rights.* CSHR Series 2004/1. Colombo: University of Colombo. (Unpublished.)

Coalition for Educational Development, 2008. *Budget Process and Budget Tracking in Formal School Education in Sri Lanka.* Colombo: Coalition for Educational Development. (Unpublished.)

DCS, 2003. *Information on Disabled Persons: Census of Population and Housing 2001.* Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics.

DCS, 2006. *Socio-economic Indicators: For Selected 119 Divisional Secretariat Divisions.* Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics.

DCS, 2008a. *Statistical Abstract 2008.* Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics.

DCS, 2008b. *Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2006/07.* Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics.

DCS, 2008c. *MDG Indicators of Sri Lanka. A Mid-Term Review 2008.* Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics.

DCS, 2010. *Labour Force Survey 2009.* Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics.

DCS, 2011a. *Housing and Population. By Age and Sex.* Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics.
http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/Mid%20Year%20Population/midyearsex&age.pdf

DCS, 2011b. *Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2009/10.* Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics.

DCS, 2011c. *Child Activity Survey 2008/09.* Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics.

Department of Probation and Child Care Services, 2010. *Statistical Report 2008.* Colombo: Department of Probation and Child Care Services.

De Silva, H., 2003. *Power Games in War and Peace: The Tragic Impact of Corruption, Violence and Impunity on the Sri Lankan Child.* (Unpublished.)

De Silva, H.D.G. and de Silva, D.S., 2001. *An Assessment of Children in the Streets of Colombo.* (Unpublished.)

De Zoysa, T.S.V., 2005. *A Study of the Factors Influencing the Educational Achievement of Institutionalized Children in Sri Lanka.* Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. Colombo: Open University of Sri Lanka.

Finance Commission, 2009. *Annual Report 2009.* Colombo: Finance Commission.

Gunatilaka, R., 2010. *Safety Nets for Social Protection: Sri Lanka's Samurdhi Programme.* Prepared for Research Meeting on Social Protection Policies in South Asia, March 2010. New Delhi: UNESCO and CSSR. (Unpublished.)

Gunawardane, C. and Jayaweera, S., 2004. *National Survey on Non-schooling and Absenteeism.* Colombo: Save the Children Sri Lanka. (Unpublished.)
http://commonwealtheducationfund.org/downloads/sri%20lanka%20survey%20on%20non-schooling%20and%20absenteeism.pdf

Gunawardena, C., 2009. *Inclusive Education in Sri Lanka.* Colombo: National Education and Research Evaluation Centre, University of Colombo, and UNICEF.

Gunawardena, C., Lekamge, G.D. and de Zoysa, T.S.V., 2005. *Regional Study on the Demand Side of Trafficking of Women and Children in Asia: Child Beggars, Sri Lanka Case Study.* Colombo: Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR) and ILO. (Unpublished.)

Gunawardena, C., Kularatne, N.G. and Lekamge, D., 2006. Child work, school attendance and performance in Sri Lanka. In Fernando, L. and Wijewardena, S. (eds.), *Sri Lanka: Challenges of a Society in Transition.* Colombo: Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo.

Hammond, C., Linton, D., Smink J., and Drew, S., 2007. *Dropout Risk Factors and Exemplary Programs: A Technical Report.* Clemson, SC: National Dropout Prevention Center.

ILO, 2008. *Social Security in Sri Lanka.* Geneva: Social Security Department, ILO.

*Jayasena, A., 2005. Regional Study on the Demand Side of Trafficking of Women and Children in Asia: Domestic Labour, Sri Lanka Case Study.* Colombo: Centre for Women's Research and ILO. (Unpublished.)

Jayatissa, R. and Hossaine, S.M.M., 2010. *Nutrition and Food Security Assessment in Sri Lanka 2009.* Colombo: Medical Research Institute.

Jayatilleke, R. and Amarasuriya, H., 2005. *Home Truths: Children's Rights in Institutional Care in Sri Lanka.* Colombo: Save the Children Sri Lanka.

Jayaweera, S., 1971. Regional imbalances in education. *Journal of the National Education Society,* Vol. XX.

Jayaweera, S., 1998. Education in Sri Lanka: fifty years since independence. In Indraratne, A.D.V. de S. (ed.) *Fifty Years of Sri Lanka's Independence. A Socio-economic Review.* Pp. 311–343. Colombo: Sri Lanka Institute of Social and Economic Studies.

Jayaweera, S., 2005. *The Impact of the Tsunami on Households and Vulnerable Groups in Two Districts in Sri Lanka.* CENWOR Study Series No. 34. Colombo: Centre for Women's Research.

Jayaweera, S., 2010. *A Study on the Current School Curriculum and its Contribution Towards the Achievement of National Goals and Basic Competencies Identified by the National Education Commission. Vol. 1.* Colombo: Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Education, National Education Commission and Asian Development Bank.

Jayaweera, S. and Gunawardena, C., 2007. *Social Inclusion: Gender and Equity in Education SWAps in South Asia. Sri Lanka Case Study.* Kathmandu: UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia.

Jayaweera, S. and Gunawardena, C., *2009. School Participation in Conflict-Affected and Selected Districts in Sri Lanka.* Colombo: Save the Children Sri Lanka. (Unpublished.)

Jayaweera, S., Sanmugam, T. and Ratnapala, C., 2001. *Child Labour and Non-schooling in Selected Locations in Low-Income Communities in Sri Lanka.* CENWOR Study Series No. 25. Colombo: Centre for Women's Research.

Kannangara, N., de Silva, H. and Parandigamage, N., 2003. *Sri Lanka Child Domestic Labour: A Rapid Assessment.* Geneva: ILO/International Programme for Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC).

Korale, R.M.B., 2004. *Sectoral Review of General Education: Provision and Participation in Primary and Secondary Education.* Colombo: National Education Commission.

Kularatne, N.G., 2003. *An Evaluation of the Divisional Schools Development Project and the Programme to Revamp Central Schools.* Colombo: National Education Commission.

Lekamge, D., Gunawardena, C., Karunanaayake, S. and de Zoysa, S., 2008. *A Study on Instructional Strategies used by Teachers for Development of Higher Order Cognitive Skills in Students.* Colombo: Faculty of Education, Open University of Sri Lanka.

Little, A.W., 2003. *Labouring to Learn: Towards a Political Economy of Plantations, People and Education in Sri Lanka.* Colombo: Social Scientists Association.

McCaul, T., 2007. *Study of the Implementation of Mathematics and Science Curriculum in Grades 6 and 10.* Colombo: World Bank.

Manchanayake, S.M.N.B., 2000*. Street Children in the City of Colombo: Children Living in a Shanty Town on the Periphery of Colombo.* Relevance and Expression of Child Rights in Contemporary Sri Lanka, Vol. 14. Colombo: Initiatives in Research and Education for Development in Asia (INASIA).

Marga Institute, 2004. *Child Rights Violations in Sri Lanka: Cases and Recommendations. Parts I & II.* Colombo: Save the Children Sri Lanka.

Mendis, P., 2004. *Sectoral Review of General Education: Children Who Have Disability (Special/Inclusive Education).* Colombo: National Education Commission.

MCDWE, 2010*. National Survey on Early Childhood Development in Sri Lanka.* Colombo: Ministry of Child Development and Women's Empowerment.

MOE, 1997. *General Education Reforms 1997. Presidential Task Force for General Education.* Colombo: Ministry of Education.

MOE, 2006. *Education Sector Development Framework and Programme 2006–2010.* Colombo: Ministry of Education.

MOE, 2007. *Survival Rates.* Colombo: Statistics Division, Ministry of Education.

MOE, 2008a*. Annual School Census 2008.* Colombo: Ministry of Education.

MOE, 2008b. *National Guidelines for School Disaster Safety.* Colombo: Ministry of Education.

MOE, 2008c. *National Policy and a Comprehensive Framework of Actions on Education for Social Cohesion and Peace.* Colombo: Ministry of Education.

MOE, 2009a. *Annual School Census 2009.* Colombo: Ministry of Education.

MOE, 2009b. *Non-Formal Education Division Reports 2005–2009.* Colombo: Ministry of Education.

MOE, 2010. *Annual School Census 2010.* Colombo: Ministry of Education.

MOE, 2011a. *Non-Formal Education Division Reports 2011.* Colombo: Ministry of Education.

MOE, 2011b. *National Plan of Action for the Development of Plantation Schools.* Colombo: Plantation Unit, Ministry of Education.

MOE, 2011c. *Water and Sanitation Facilities.* Colombo: School Health and Nutrition Unit, Ministry of Education. (Unpublished.)

MOE, NIE and GTZ, 2010. *Education for Social Cohesion. Baseline Survey Report.* Colombo: Ministry of Education.

MOE and UNICEF, 2008. *Child-Friendly Schools.* Colombo: Ministry of Education and UNICEF.

MOE, UNICEF and MG Consultants, 2009. *Study on Children who have Dropped out of School with Emphasis on Schools with High Dropout Rates.* Colombo: Ministry of Education.

MOF, 2009. *Annual Report. Colombo:* Ministry of Finance.

MOF, 2010a. *Annual Budget Estimate 2010/11.* Colombo: Ministry of Finance.

MOF, 2010b. *Mahinda Chintana: Development Framework 2010.* Colombo: Ministry of Finance.

MOF and DNP, 2006. *Ten-Year Horizontal Development Framework 2006–2016.* Colombo: Ministry of Finance and Department of National Planning.

Ministry of Health Care and Nutrition, 2008. *A School Health Promotion Policy and Programme 2008–2012.* Colombo: School and Adolescent Health Unit, Family Health Bureau.

Ministry of Social Services, 2003. *A National Policy on Disability for Sri Lanka.* Colombo: Ministry of Social Services.

NEC, 1997. *General Education Reforms.* Colombo: National Education Commission.

NEC, 2003. *Envisioning Education for Human Development: Proposals for a National Policy Framework on General Education in Sri Lanka.* Colombo: National Education Commission.

NEREC, 2003. *National Assessment of Grade 4 Cognitive Achievement.* Colombo: National Education Research and Evaluation Centre, University of Colombo.

NIE, 2003. *Rapid Needs Assessment Survey: Education of Children in Conflict-Affected Areas of Sri Lanka.* Colombo: UNICEF.

Perera, G.M.T.N., 2008. *An Evaluation of the Process of Development and Implementation of the New Curriculum in Grades 6 and 10.* Colombo: NIE and World Bank.

Perera, G.M.T.N., 2009. *An Evaluation of the Process of Development and Implementation of the New Curriculum in Grades 7 and 11.* Colombo: NIE and World Bank.

Perera, L., Gunawardena, C. and Wijetunge, S., 2003. *Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Implementation of the Educational Reforms in the Secondary Level (Grades 6–11).* Colombo: National Education Commission.

Perera, W.S., 2004. *Implementation of Compulsory Education Legislation. Sectoral Review of General Education, Study Series No. 2.* Colombo: National Education Commission.

Pinto-Jayawardena, K., 2006. *Left Behind, Left Out: The Impact on Children and Families of Mothers Migrating for Work Abroad.* Colombo: Save the Children Sri Lanka.

Ratnapala, N., 1999. *Sex Workers of Sri Lanka.* Colombo: Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha Publications.

Saddhananda, K.W.S., 2001. *Analysis of Disability Statistics in Sri Lanka 2001.* Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics.

Seneviratne, M., 2006. *Commercial Sex Exploitation of Children in Sri Lanka: the Crime against Children.* Colombo: PEACE.

Somasunderam, D., 1998. *Scarred Minds: The Psychological Impact of War on Sri Lankan Tamils.* New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Squire, J. and Wijeratne, S., 2008. *The Sexual Abuse, Commercial Exploitation and Trafficking of Children in Sri Lanka.* Colombo: Swiss Solidarity, Terre des Hommes and SAPSRI.

UNDP, 2011. *Human Development Report 2011. Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All.* New York: UNDP.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). *Online Database and Glossary.* http://www.uis.unesco.org

UNICEF, 2011. *Sri Lanka. Statistics.*
http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/sri_lanka_statistics.html

UNICEF and UIS, 2011. *Conceptual and Methodological Framework (CMF). Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children.* New York: UNICEF and UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (Unpublished.)

Wimaladharma, S., de Silva, A. and de Silva, N., 2005. *Growing Up with War: Experiences of Children Affected by Armed Conflict in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka*. Working Paper Series, No. 11-2005. Colombo: Centre for Policy Alternatives.

World Bank, 2005. *Treasures of the Educational System in Sri Lanka: Restoring Performance, Expanding Opportunities and Enhancing Prospects.* Colombo: World Bank.

World Bank, 2006–2010. *Aide Memoire. Sri Lanka Education Sector Development Framework and Programme.* Colombo: World Bank.

World Bank, 2006. *Sri Lanka: Strengthening Social Protection.* Colombo: World Bank.

World Bank, 2007. *Sri Lanka Poverty Assessment.* Colombo: World Bank.

World Bank, 2011a. *An Impact Evaluation of Sri Lanka's Policies to Improve the Performance of Schools and Primary School Students through its School Improvement and School Report Card Programmes.* World Bank and Education for All Fast Track Initiative. Colombo: World Bank.

World Bank, 2011b. *Transforming School Education as the Foundation of a Knowledge Hub 2011–2015.* Colombo: World Bank.

# ANNEX 1: INVENTORY FOR OOSC NATIONAL DATA SOURCES

## A1.1 Demographic and Health Survey Data

**Data source**

| |
|---|
| Demographic and Health Survey Sri Lanka 2006/07 |

**Agencies responsible for collection and dissemination of data**

| |
|---|
| Department of Census & Statistics, Ministry of Health Care & Nutrition |

**Data collection date (not publication date)**

| |
|---|
| Sinhala Speaking Households August 2006 – May 2007<br>Tamil Speaking Households August 2007 – October 2007 |

**Frequency of data collection (for example, annual, every two years)**

| |
|---|
| Once in 5–6 years, First survey was in 1987. This is fourth survey in the series. |

**Definition of an out-of-school child (for example, is not enrolled, did not attend in the last three months)**

| |
|---|
| Not currently attending school or never attended school. Currently attending school referred to any time during the school year 2006. |

**Definitions of other education terms**

| | |
|---|---|
| Out-of-school children | Not specifically defined. It is implied from the questionnaire that those who 'never attended' school and those who did not attend school during the school year 2006 were OOSC. |
| Enrolment | Enrolment was not specifically defined in the survey and not needed. |
| Attendance | Non-attendance relates specifically to school year 2006 |
| School year | January – December |

**Sample design and coverage of data collection (for example, national, specific geographic region, specific sub-population group)**

| |
|---|
| Primary sampling units – Census blocks (clusters)<br>2,500 clusters were selected and those clusters updated. Then, secondary sampling units (10 housing units from each cluster) were selected from these clusters, using systematic sampling technique.<br>Finally, 21,060 households were selected (excluding Northern province) and 19,862 households were interviewed. |

**Smallest administrative area for which statistics on the out-of-school population are statistically accurate**

| |
|---|
| District |

**Types of disaggregation possible with data (for example, by age, sex, area, wealth quintile, socio-economic group, ethnicity, religion, type of school)**

| |
|---|
| Age, sex, attendance of school, education level |

**Data availability and access (include information on type of data available and procedure to acquire the data)**

| |
|---|
| Data available in txt format from Department of Census and Statistics. Data released free of charge on request, on an agreement form DRI, and on approval, 25% of data will be released in the first stage. After submitting a report from the 25% sample, full dataset can be obtained, if approved by respective authorities.<br>(Ref: www.statistics.gov.lk/page.asp?page=Health) |

**Data limitations (coverage, accuracy)**

| |
|---|
| Five Districts from Northern Province are excluded. |

**Other information**

| |
|---|
| |

## A1.2 Child Activity Survey Data

**Data source**

| |
|---|
| Child Activity Survey Sri Lanka 2008/09 |

**Agencies responsible for collection and dissemination of data**

| |
|---|
| Department of Census & Statistics<br>Ministry of Finance & Planning Sri Lanka, Sponsored by ILO/IPEC |

**Data collection date (not publication date)**

| |
|---|
| October 2008 – April 2009 |

**Frequency of data collection (for example, annual, every two years)**

| |
|---|
| 10-year interval. The first survey was conducted in 1998/99. This is the second survey. |

**Definition of an out-of-school child (for example, is not enrolled, did not attend in the last three months)**

| |
|---|
| No reference period indicated. |

**Definitions of other education terms**

| | |
|---|---|
| School entrance age | Not needed |
| Enrolment | Not needed |
| Attendance | Not specifically defined |
| Dropout | Children not attending school at the time of interview were requested to state whether they ever attended school. |
| Educational attainment | Grade passed |
| Other relevant terms | |

**Sample design and coverage of data collection (for example, national, specific geographic region, specific sub-population group)**

| |
|---|
| Stratified two-stage sample design |

**Smallest administrative area for which statistics on the out-of-school population are statistically accurate**

| |
|---|
| Sri Lanka |

**Types of disaggregation possible with data (for example, by age, sex, area, wealth quintile, socio-economic group, ethnicity, religion, type of school)**

| |
|---|
| Age, sex, area of residence (urban, rural) ethnicity |

**Data availability and access (include information on type of data available and procedure to acquire the data)**

| |
|---|
| Data available in txt format from Department of Census and Statistics. Data released free of charge on request, on an agreement form DRI, and on approval, 25% of data will be released in the first stage. After submitting a report from the 25% sample, full dataset can be obtained, if approved by respective authorities.<br>(Ref: www.statistics.sltidc.lk/ddibrowser/?id=954#reports) |

**Data limitations (coverage, accuracy)**

| |
|---|
| Survey excludes 5 districts from North Eastern Province that are Jaffna, Vavuniya, Batticaloa, Ampara and Trincomalee and 3 districts from Eastern Province that are Mannar, Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi |

**Other information**

| |
|---|
| This survey is focused on type of activities engaged by children. A child is considered to be engaged in educational activities if he/she is attending school / other educational institution which provides regular education. |

## A1.3 Annual School Census 2010

**Data source**

| |
|---|
| Census of government schools |

**Agencies responsible for collection and dissemination of data**

| |
|---|
| Ministry of Education |

**Data collection date (not publication date)**

| |
|---|
| 1st June of each year |

**Frequency of data collection (for example, annual, every two years)**

| |
|---|
| Annual |

**Definition of an out-of-school child (for example, is not enrolled, did not attend in the last three months)**

| |
|---|
| Not enrolled in school |

**Definitions of other education terms**

| | |
|---|---|
| School Entrance Age | A child who reached the age of 5 before 31st January of the school year. School year is January–December. |
| Enrolment | Registered as a student in school |
| Dropout | A child who stopped attending school during the school year |
| Educational Attainment | The highest grade completed by a student. |
| Educational attainment | Grade passed |
| Primary School Education | Grades 1–5 |
| Lower Secondary Education | Grades 6–9 |
| Upper Secondary Education | Grades 10 & 11 |

**Sample design and coverage of data collection (for example, national, specific geographic region, specific sub-population group)**

| |
|---|
| Not applicable as it is a census. Coverage of data restricted to government schools (functional). All districts covered during 2006–2008, but in 2009 two districts Kilinochchi & Mullaitivu in Northern Province excluded, and only schools that were not closed in Vavuniya & Mannar were included in the census. In 2010 all districts covered. |

**Smallest administrative area for which statistics on the out-of-school population are statistically accurate**

| |
|---|
| Only the population of children enrolled in schools is covered by census. |

**Types of disaggregation possible with data (for example, by age, sex, area, wealth quintile, socio-economic group, ethnicity, religion, type of school)**

| |
|---|
| Disaggregation possible on data pertaining to student's enrolment. Age, sex, type of school (functional grades of school), administrative areas, language medium of instruction. |

**Data availability and access (include information on type of data available and procedure to acquire the data)**

| |
|---|
| Data available in mdb and xls format from Ministry of Education. Data is released free of charge on request and on approval of Additional Secretary (PPR). Total data requested will be released. A selected data set is available on MOE website (http://moe.gov.lk) |

**Data limitations (coverage, accuracy)**

| |
|---|
| Private schools providing formal education not covered. |

**Other information**

| |
|---|
| Latest available on the website is for 2008 |

# ANNEX 2: FIELD STUDY

## A 2.1 Introduction

To complement the analysis of macro-level data, a field study was conducted on the current situation of OOSC in 12 selected locations of Sri Lanka from all nine provinces, representing communities in which substantial numbers of OOSC are found (Table A1).

**Table A1: Survey sample**

| District | DS Division | Community | Percentage OOSC (6–10 years)* | No. of of households |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ampara | Navithanveli | Agriculture and conflict-affected | 11.5 | 26 |
| Badulla | Haldummulla | Estate | 11.4 | 30 |
| Batticaloa | Eravur Pattu | Urban, fishing and conflict-affected | n/a | 27 |
| Colombo | Colombo | Urban, low income | 14.1 | 30 |
| Galle | Hikkaduwa | Urban, fishing | 5.6 | 23 |
| Galle | Neluwa | Rural, agricultural | 12.2 | 14 |
| Kilinochchi | Kilinochchi | Conflict-affected | n/a | 30 |
| Moneragala | Badalkumbura | Rural | 6.0 | 29 |
| Nuwara Eliya | Hanguranketha | Estate | 4.8 | 30 |
| Polonnaruwa | Welikande | Rural and conflict-affected | 8.9 | 30 |
| Puttalam | Kalpitiya | Fishing | 11.4 | 30 |
| Ratnapura | Elapatha | Estate and rural | 6.8 | 17 |

*Note: *Based on statistics in DCS, 2006.*

The objective of the field study was to provide concrete evidence on the current situation of OOSC in Sri Lanka and how policies and programmes addressing barriers to education impact on their access to school. In addition, initiatives to ensure that all children can fulfil their right to education were identified.

A total of 316 households having a child or children aged 5–16 years who were not currently enrolled in school were identified by field researchers in consultation with local key persons through a 'snowballing' process. School-related information was obtained from four schools in each location.

The instruments used were:

- interview schedules for key informants, principals of selected schools, and caregivers and OOSC in each household;
- guidelines for focus group discussions with selected teachers in each school;
- guidelines for life stories of four children in each household type; and
- guidelines for dialogue with six children identified as at risk of dropping out in each school.

The final sample comprised 121 key persons, 48 principals, 316 caregivers and 400 OOSC (including life stories of 48 of these children), and 69 children in school who were considered at risk of dropping out.

Data obtained through questionnaires and close-ended questions in the interviews were analysed using SPSS, and the qualitative data obtained from focus group discussions and life stories were analysed using NVivo. Quantitative data analysis mainly used descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and chi-square testing. Data analysis helped to identify factors leading to non-enrolment, dropout and irregular attendance (which contributes to later dropout), and strategies that can be adopted to reduce the numbers of children who are out of school or at risk of being so. Selected variables such as family size, occupations and the education level of caregivers were correlated with variables related to exclusion from school; but, due to the purposive nature of the sample and its small size, no statistically significant relationships emerged except for family size and OOSC.

## A 2.2 Socioeconomic context of sample

The 316 sample households[9] had the following main features. The majority (61.4 percent) were located in the non-plantation rural sector; 26.3 percent were plantation households in the two districts of Nuwara Eliya and Badulla, and the three rural locations of Elapatha in Ratnapura district, Neluwa in Galle district and Badalkumbura in Moneragala district; and 12.3 percent were urban households from economically disadvantaged locations in the city of Colombo and from the coastal fishing community of urban Hikkaduwa, which is also a centre of tourist activity.

The distribution of heads of households by ethnicity was 63.0 percent Tamil, mainly from conflict-affected districts and plantation households (Table A2); 22.2 percent were Sinhala; and 14.9 percent were Moor/Muslim.

**Table A2: Head of households by ethnicity**

| Location | Sinhala | | Tamil | | Moor/Muslim | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Ampara | – | – | 22 | 84.6 | 4 | 15.4 | 26 | 100.0 |
| Badulla | 1 | 3.4 | 28 | 96.6 | – | – | 29 | 100.0 |
| Batticaloa | – | – | 27 | 100.0 | – | – | 27 | 100.0 |
| Colombo | – | – | 3 | 10.0 | 27 | 90.0 | 30 | 100.0 |
| Galle–Hikkaduwa | 23 | 100.0 | – | – | – | – | 23 | 100.0 |
| Galle–Neluwa | 8 | 57.1 | 6 | 42.9 | – | – | 14 | 100.0 |
| Kilinochchi | – | – | 30 | 100.0 | – | – | 30 | 100.0 |
| Moneragala | 8 | 47.1 | 9 | 52.9 | – | – | 17 | 100.0 |
| Nuwara Eliya | – | – | 30 | 100.0 | – | – | 30 | 100.0 |
| Polonnaruwa | 12 | 40.0 | 17 | 56.7 | 1 | 3.3 | 30 | 100.0 |
| Puttalam | 3 | 10.0 | 13 | 43.3 | 14 | 46.7 | 30 | 100.0 |
| Ratnapura | 15 | 50.0 | 14 | 46.7 | 1 | 3.3 | 30 | 100.0 |
| Total | 70 | 22.2 | 199 | 63.0 | 47 | 14.9 | 316 | 100.0 |

The occupations of household members indicate that all households belonged to the lowest tier in terms of income and prestige, as not one member had even a middle-level job such as clerk or technician (Table A3). Over half (57.6 percent) were labourers (manual labourers or estate workers), 16.0 percent were workers in the primary agricultural and fisheries sector, 13.3 percent were service sector workers, and 7.7 percent were artisans and industrial workers. These can all be considered as low-income occupations suggesting that there could be a link between family poverty and non-schooling of their children.

[9] *It should be noted that the sectoral distribution of households was not representative of the national distribution in this purposively selected sample.*

### Table A3: Occupation of household members

| Occupation | Male | | Female | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Manual labourers | 167 | 40.8 | 48 | 21.6 | 215 | 34.1 |
| Estate workers | 80 | 19.6 | 68 | 30.6 | 148 | 23.5 |
| Service workers and shop and market sales workers | 35 | 7.6 | 51 | 23.0 | 84 | 13.3 |
| Skilled agricultural workers | 48 | 11.7 | 22 | 9.9 | 70 | 11.1 |
| Fishery workers | 29 | 7.1 | 2 | 0.9 | 31 | 4.9 |
| Craft and related workers | 13 | 3.2 | 13 | 5.9 | 26 | 4.1 |
| Plant and machine operators and assemblers | 23 | 5.6 | – | – | 23 | 3.6 |
| No response | 16 | 3.9 | 18 | 8.1 | 34 | 5.4 |
| Total | 409 | 100.0 | 222 | 100.0 | 631 | 100.0 |

Some 81.3 percent of household heads had received some level of education; however, 43.7 percent had dropped out of school by the end of Grade 5 and 29.7 percent by the end of Grade 10 (Table A4). A significant proportion (18.4 percent) had never enrolled in school.

### Table A4: Educational level of household head

| Educational level | Male | | Female | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| No schooling | 46 | 17.7 | 12 | 21.4 | 58 | 18.4 |
| Grades 1–5 | 113 | 43.5 | 25 | 44.6 | 138 | 43.7 |
| Grades 6–10 | 78 | 30.0 | 16 | 28.6 | 94 | 29.7 |
| Sat for GCE (O/L) | 9 | 3.5 | 2 | 3.6 | 11 | 3.5 |
| Passed GCE (O/L) | 2 | .8 | – | – | 2 | 0.6 |
| Sat for GCE (A/L) | 4 | 1.5 | – | – | 4 | 1.3 |
| Passed GCE (A/L) | 3 | 1.2 | 1 | 1.8 | 4 | 1.3 |
| No response | 5 | 1.9 | – | – | 5 | 1.6 |
| Total | 260 | 100.0 | 56 | 100.0 | 316 | 100.0 |

Some 58.0 percent of the 286 households who responded had safe water, 49.7 percent had a toilet, 53.5 percent had electricity, and 61.9 percent had a separate kitchen (Table A5). These figures are suggestive of the economically disadvantaged status of these families.

### Table A5: Basic facilities in households

| Location | Safe water | | Toilet | | Electricity | | Separate kitchen | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Ampara | 5 | 19.2 | 1 | 3.8 | 10 | 38.5 | 10 | 38.5 | 26 | 100.0 |
| Badulla | 22 | 75.9 | 15 | 51.7 | 22 | 75.9 | 18 | 62.1 | 29 | 100.0 |
| Batticaloa | 10 | 37.0 | 4 | 14.8 | 4 | 14.8 | 16 | 59.3 | 27 | 100.0 |
| Colombo | 20 | 66.7 | 17 | 56.7 | 24 | 80.0 | 18 | 60.0 | 30 | 100.0 |
| Galle –Hikkaduwa | 19 | 82.6 | 21 | 91.3 | 20 | 87.0 | 19 | 82.6 | 23 | 100.0 |
| Galle–Neluwa | 14 | 100.0 | 14 | 100.0 | 10 | 71.4 | 10 | 71.4 | 14 | 100.0 |
| Kilinochchi | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| Moneragala | 9 | 52.9 | 11 | 64.7 | 10 | 58.8 | 7 | 41.2 | 17 | 100.0 |
| Nuwara Eliya | 19 | 63.3 | 5 | 16.7 | 16 | 53.3 | 20 | 66.7 | 30 | 100.0 |
| Polonnaruwa | 4 | 13.3 | 12 | 40.0 | 11 | 36.7 | 16 | 53.3 | 30 | 100.0 |
| Puttalam | 22 | 73.3 | 23 | 76.7 | 16 | 53.3 | 23 | 76.7 | 30 | 100.0 |
| Ratnapura | 22 | 73.3 | 19 | 63.3 | 10 | 33.3 | 20 | 66.7 | 30 | 100.0 |
| Total | 166 | 58.0 | 142 | 49.7 | 153 | 53.5 | 177 | 61.9 | 286 | 100.0 |

Some 60.8 percent of households owned a house and 53.5 percent owned land (Table A6). In addition, 51.9 percent owned a radio, 49.7 percent owned a mobile telephone, and 44.6 percent owned a television.

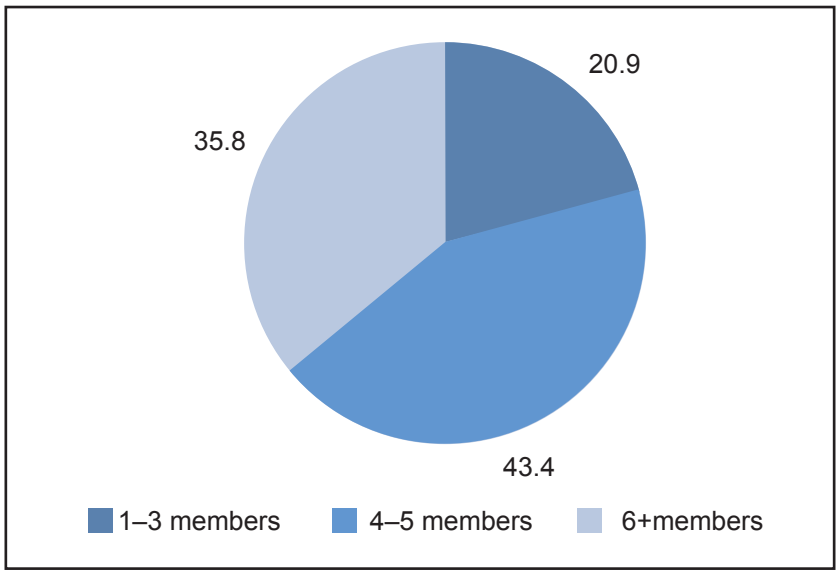
### Table A6: Household assets

| Household assets | No. | % |
|---|---|---|
| Ownership of house | 192 | 60.8 |
| Ownership of land | 169 | 53.5 |
| Radio | 164 | 51.9 |
| Mobile telephone | 157 | 49.7 |
| Television | 141 | 44.6 |
| Bicycle | 86 | 27.2 |
| Telephone | 39 | 12.3 |
| Sewing machine | 27 | 8.5 |
| Refrigerator | 22 | 7.0 |
| Gas cooker | 14 | 4.4 |
| Motor bike | 9 | 2.8 |
| Tractor | 4 | 1.3 |
| Van/ motor car | 2 | 0.6 |

*Note: N = 316.*

Of sampled households, 20.9 percent had 1–3 members, 43.4 percent had 4–5 members and 35.8 percent had six and more members (Figure A1).

### Figure A1: Family size of sampled households




According to the 379 children interviewed, 63.3 percent were looked after by both parents, 18.7 percent by mother only, 8.7 percent by father only, 5.8 percent by grandparents and 3.2 percent by other relatives (aunt, brother, sister, cousin, etc). Furthermore, 9.8 percent of mothers and 1.8 percent of fathers were working abroad; 2.4 percent of mothers and 8.1 percent of fathers had died; 1.04 percent of mothers and 1.8 percent of fathers had left the families and remarried; one mother and three fathers were in prison; two fathers were in a detention camp; and one father had disappeared.

## A 2.3 Schooling status of children in sampled households

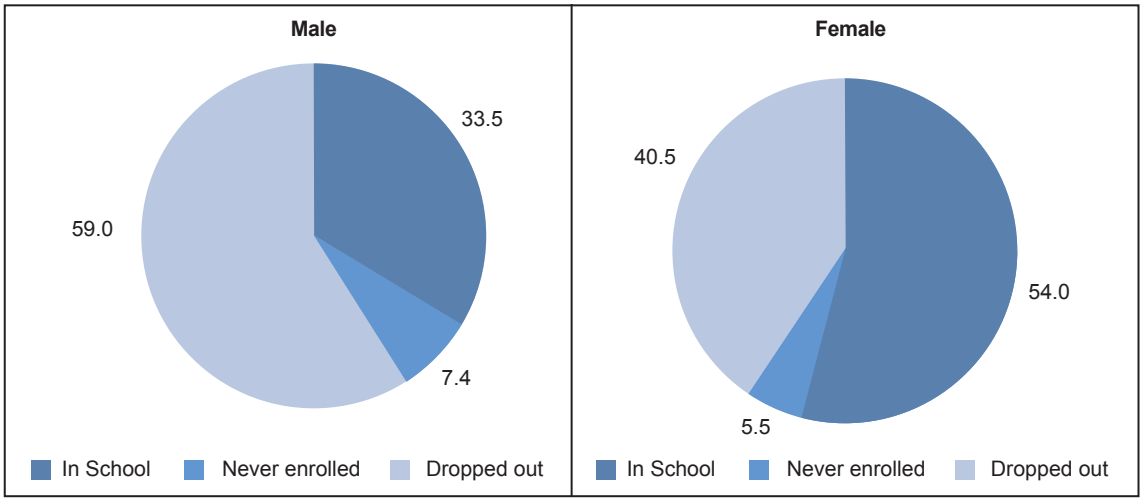
The study found that of the 702 children in the sample households aged 5–16 years, 43.0 percent were attending school, 6.6 percent had never enrolled and 50.4 percent had dropped out; 46.0 percent of girls and 66.5 percent of boys were out of school (Table A7). Of the 207 children aged 5–10 years, 68.4 percent were attending school, 15.5 percent had never enrolled and 16.4 percent had dropped out; 21.6 percent of girls and 38.5 percent of boys were out of school. Of the 300 children aged 11–14 years, 45.7 percent were attending school, 3.7 percent had never enrolled and 50.7 percent had dropped out; 46.2 percent of girls and 61.9 percent of boys were out of school. Never enrolled was highest in the 5–10 years age groups and dropped out was highest in the 15–16 years age group; girls were more likely than boys to be in school at all age levels.

### Table A7: Schooling status of children

| | 5–10 years | | 11–14 years | | 15 –16 years | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| **MALE** | | | | | | | | |
| In school | 59 | 61.5 | 59 | 38.1 | 8 | 6.4 | 126 | 33.5 |
| Never enrolled | 18 | 18.8 | 8 | 5.2 | 2 | 1.6 | 28 | 7.4 |
| Dropped out | 19 | 19.8 | 88 | 56.8 | 115 | 92.0 | 222 | 59.0 |
| Total | 96 | 100.0 | 155 | 100.0 | 125 | 100.0 | 376 | 100.0 |
| **FEMALE** | | | | | | | | |
| In school | 82 | 73.9 | 78 | 53.8 | 16 | 22.9 | 176 | 54.0 |
| Never enrolled | 14 | 12.6 | 3 | 2.1 | 1 | 1.4 | 18 | 5.5 |
| Dropped out | 15 | 13.5 | 64 | 44.1 | 53 | 75.7 | 132 | 40.5 |
| Total | 111 | 100.0 | 145 | 100.0 | 70 | 100.0 | 326 | 100.0 |
| **TOTAL** | | | | | | | | |
| In school | 141 | 68.1 | 137 | 45.7 | 24 | 12.3 | 302 | 43.0 |
| Never enrolled | 32 | 15.5 | 11 | 3.7 | 3 | 1.5 | 46 | 6.6 |
| Dropped out | 34 | 16.4 | 152 | 50.7 | 168 | 86.2 | 354 | 50.4 |
| Total | 207 | 100.0 | 300 | 100.0 | 195 | 100.0 | 702 | 100.0 |

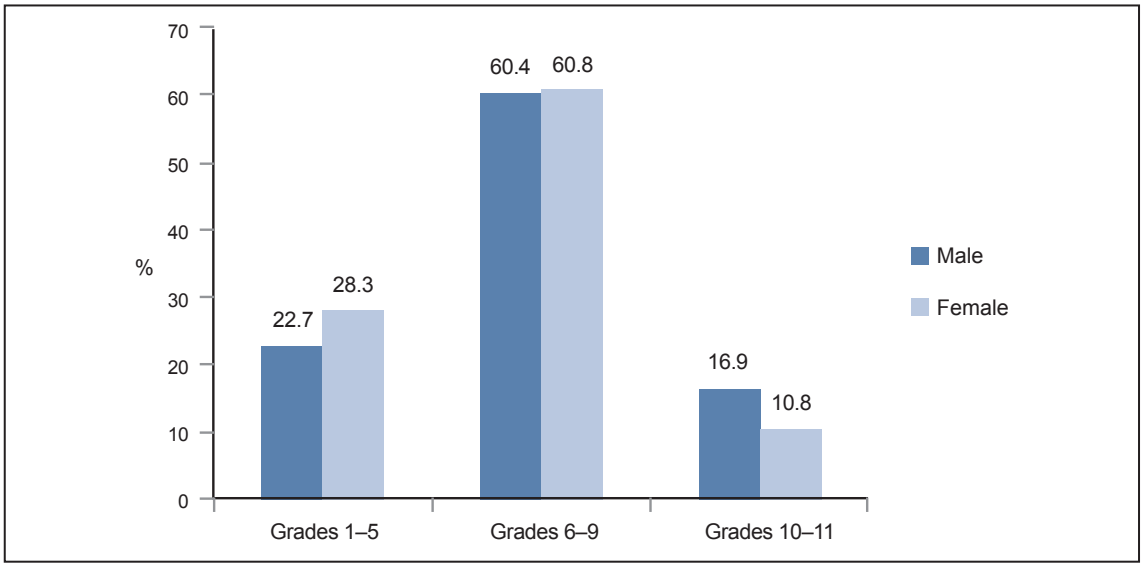
Of all children in the 316 households, boys were more likely than girls to be out of school (Figure A2).

### Figure A2: Percentage of boys and girls by schooling status



Of 327 children who responded on when they had dropped out of school, girls were more likely than boys to drop out in Grades 1–5, the gender difference was negligible for Grades 6–9, and boys were more likely than girls to drop out in Grades 10–11 (Figure A3).

**Figure A3: Timing of male and female dropout**




## A 2.4 Reasons for non-enrolment

Of the 46 children who were identified as never having enrolled in school, 45 were interviewed about the reasons for their non-enrolment along with their caregivers. Teachers also discussed reasons for non-enrolment. Most of the interviewees provided multiple responses, indicating that in most instances there are multiple causes for non-enrolment.

### *Children*

The most common reason given by children for never having enrolled in school was financial difficulties (51.1 percent) (Table A8). This was followed by 'parents not interested in sending child to school' (37.8 percent) and disability (31.1 percent). In addition, 17.8 percent cited a transport problem and 4.4 percent said there was no school within a reasonable distance; 11.1 percent had to look after younger siblings and 2.2 percent had to help with housework; and 6.7 percent had ill health.

**Table A8: Reasons given by children for never having enrolled in school**

| Reason | % |
|---|---|
| Financial difficulties | 51.1 |
| Parents not interested in sending child to school | 37.8 |
| Disability | 31.1 |
| Transport problem | 17.8 |
| Had to look after younger siblings | 11.1 |
| Ill health | 6.7 |
| No school within travelling distance | 4.4 |
| Had to help with housework | 2.2 |

*Note: N = 45. Multiple answers allowed.*

### *Caregivers*

The most common reason given by caregivers for never having enrolled the child in school was also financial difficulty (55.6 percent) (Table A9). This was followed by disability (37.8 percent), no school within a reasonable distance (22.2 percent) and no one to accompany the child to school (17.8 percent). The child's ill health and the inability to obtain the required certificate were both given by 15.6 percent of respondents. In contrast to children, only one caregiver said that a child was not enrolled because education was not considered important. It is noteworthy that two caregivers (in Badulla and Batticaloa) stated that their child was not enrolled because she was a girl.

**Table A9: Reasons given by caregivers for children never having been enrolled in school**

| Reason | % |
|---|---|
| Financial difficulties | 55.6 |
| Disability | 37.8 |
| No school within reasonable distance/ transport problem | 22.2 |
| No one to take him/her to school | 17.8 |
| Ill health | 15.6 |
| Unable to obtain required certificate from Grama Niladhari (birth certificate/ voters' list) because of insufficient money or knowledge | 15.6 |
| Mother sick | 8.9 |
| For gender-based reasons | 4.4 |
| Family dispute | 4.4 |
| Did not like to go school | 2.2 |

*Note: N = 45. Multiple answers allowed. Other answers given included 'did not feel that education is important', 'father in camp or mother at workplace', and 'had to look after younger siblings'.*

### *Teachers*

Focus group discussions with teachers in one school from each district indicated that non-enrolment, although it exists, is considered to be relatively low in occurrence. Teachers in Ampara, Badulla, Batticaloa, Galle–Hikkaduwa, Kilinochchi, Moneragala and Ratnapura said that non-enrolment is not a problem in their communities. Teachers in Colombo said they had heard that some parents had been unable to admit children to school because they could not make the necessary payments. Teachers also felt that children were not admitted to school due to parental ignorance or disinterest, parents having no time to attend to schooling matters as they are busy earning a living, etc.

Teachers generally felt that lack of a birth certificate was not an issue in enrolment of children. In Galle–Hikkaduwa, it was mostly children from the children's home who sought admission without birth certificates but, even for them, it was not an obstacle. One child who lacked a birth certificate was mentioned by teachers in Puttalam. Apparently, contrary to regulations, the child had continued his studies, although he was not officially admitted. He was not entitled to free textbooks but the principal had arranged unofficially for him to have some.

Teachers identified specific disadvantaged groups within their locations in which non-enrolment could be prevalent. Thus in Galle–Neluwa, children who never go to school were considered to be mainly from the Tamil-speaking estate community. In Polonnaruwa, children engaged in tending cattle, children from broken families and disabled children were considered not to enrol in school. It was known in Puttalam that a few children from internally displaced families had not been admitted to school; however, with resettlement, the situation was considered to have diminished. While poverty was considered a cause of non-enrolment, it surfaced only indirectly in focus group discussions, unlike in interviews with children and caregivers.

### *Life stories of never-enrolled children*

Life stories[10], recounted either by children who had never enrolled in school or by their caregivers, illustrate the information gained from the respondents above. Relevant excerpts from life stories are presented under the themes of poverty and related deprivation, disability, family disputes/issues, parental lack of interest in education, and teacher attitudes.

Several children suffered severe deprivations and were unable to enrol in school.

Seven-year-old Saritha, a girl from Colombo, begs with her mother near the Dehiwala mosque. This helps them to earn money. However, it is an offence to go begging with children and, if the police catch them, they are taken to court. Some days, they have no food in the mornings, but there is always something for lunch and dinner. Her parents never went school. The family lives in a small wooden hut built on an unauthorized land near the Keththaramaya. The house does not have basic amenities other than a water tap.

Kanishka, an eight-year-old boy from Ampara, said that because of poverty and indifference his parents had never thought about his education. There are eight family members living in their one-roomed house. As the house is built of metal sheets, they are unable to stay inside during the hot season.

Nishantha, a 13-year-old boy from Ampara, explained how the home and area he lives in lacks the environment for studies, instead he plays games and spends his time uselessly.

Disability also emerged as an indicator of non-enrolment. The following descriptions show how children have been affected by various disabilities. In most cases, disability was not the only cause of non-enrolment. Even when children could have received some education despite their disability, parental poverty or lack of knowledge prevented them from doing so.

Farooque, a nine-year-old boy from Puttalam, cannot speak, cannot walk, his hands and legs do not function, and his mental faculties are impaired. He has a brother with similar disabilities.

Sashini, a 13-year-old girl from Ratnapura, is unable to walk. Her mother says that her bones are weak, so she cannot attend school. However, although Sashini is disabled, she is able to attend to her own personal needs such as washing herself, using the toilet, etc.

Ravindra, a 14-year-old boy from Ratnapura, has epilepsy and 'lifeless' legs. As a result, someone always has to be with him. This has prevented his mother from going to work.

Yasas, an 18-year-old from Nuwara Eliya, never went to school, as he has a serious speech impediment with acute stammering. He uses his both hands to express himself. His parents and sister easily understand him. His parents did not know about speech therapy, although this could have helped Yasas to a certain extent. They did not have the time, money and awareness to take Yasas to Kandy or Colombo for treatment.

Dravid, a 12-year-old boy from Badulla, fell sick and both of his legs became paralysed. "I am unable to walk. I cannot play like other children. I cannot go to school. I have no friends. I cannot go for any religious activities. Someone has to carry me but it is not easy because I am fat. If the school was closer to my house, I could perhaps go and study."

[10] *Names have been changed.*

Family issues such as alcoholism, estrangement and disputes can also cause problems.

Saritha says, “Father drinks too much and fights with mother at night.” This was normal for her.

Nishantha’s father was an alcoholic; he died last year. His mother has gone abroad to work, so he lives with his maternal grandmother and aunts in a very small house. The family is very poor.

Dravid’s mother passed away when he was seven years old. His brother Suresh had to stay home to look after his siblings, as his father goes out for work and comes late. The three children are looked after by an old lady next door.

Family lack of interest in education can result in non-enrolment of children.

In Nishantha’s case, when the application form to admit him to school was obtained, his father tore it up and said no. As there was no primary school in their locality, his parents did not take his education seriously.

Kanishka too did not show much interest in going to school, as his elder siblings had not been either.

Teachers’ attitudes can also result in a child’s non-enrolment in school.

Kanishka’s mother reported: “Before he was formally admitted to school, he was overactive and naughty. The teacher said that I should not bring him to school, as the other children would be disrupted by him. So I didn’t enrol him”. Clearly, this was a violation of official regulations on school admission. However, the parents did not take this issue up with the principal or higher authorities; perhaps because they lacked awareness about the right to education for children.

Overall, children’s, caregivers’ and teachers’ responses are corroborated by these life stories. Poverty and disability, sometimes singly and at other times in combination with other adverse circumstances, continue to prevent children from enrolling in school.

The data collected in this field study confirm the findings of previous studies. The main causes for non-enrolment in school are poverty, disability, lack of access to knowledge on existing regulations for school entry, etc. Thus, economic barriers combine with socio-cultural and supply-side barriers to exclude children from school. Importantly, in this context, disabled children are particularly disadvantaged in school enrolment by the lack of a definite policy on inclusive education, the lack of assessment procedures to identify their special needs, and insufficient resources at the school level to cater for them.

## A 2.5 Reasons for dropout

Children and caregivers were asked about the reasons for children dropping out of school.

### *Children*

Of the 325 children who responded, ‘financial difficulties’ was given by 57.5 percent of respondents (Table A10). This was followed by ‘could not cope with school work, experienced failure’ (46.8 percent), ‘lessons uninteresting, school boring’ (24.3 percent) and ‘parents not interested’ (20.3 percent). Boys were more likely than girls to drop out because of transport

problems or the conflict, and girls were more likely than boys to drop out because mother left home or to help with domestic work and younger siblings. When data were disaggregated by location, most children in Batticaloa, Nuwara Eliya, Polonnaruwa, Puttalam and Ratnapura gave 'financial difficulties' as the major reason for dropout; those in Ampara, Colombo, Galle–Hikkaduwa and Moneragala gave 'could not cope with school work, experienced failure'; those in Galle–Neluwa gave 'lessons uninteresting, school boring'; those in Kilinochchi gave 'conflict'; and those in Badulla gave 'ill health'.

**Table A10: Major reasons given by children for dropping out of school by sex**

| Reason | Male | | Female | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Financial difficulties | 122 | 59.5 | 65 | 54.2 | 187 | 57.5 |
| Could not cope with school work, experienced failure | 98 | 47.8 | 54 | 45.0 | 152 | 46.8 |
| Lessons uninteresting, school boring | 58 | 28.3 | 21 | 17.5 | 79 | 24.3 |
| Parents not interested | 35 | 17.1 | 31 | 25.8 | 66 | 20.3 |
| Transport problems | 44 | 21.5 | 13 | 10.8 | 57 | 17.5 |
| Mother left home for employment / other reasons | 27 | 13.2 | 24 | 20.0 | 51 | 15.7 |
| Ill health | 23 | 11.2 | 27 | 22.5 | 50 | 15.4 |
| Conflict | 44 | 21.5 | 6 | 5.0 | 50 | 15.4 |
| Had to help with domestic work | 17 | 8.3 | 28 | 23.3 | 45 | 13.8 |
| Had to look after younger siblings | 15 | 7.3 | 23 | 19.2 | 38 | 11.7 |

*Note: N = 325. Multiple answers allowed. Other answers given included 'had to help parents in economic activities' (10.2 percent), 'disability and no school facilities' (9.8 percent), 'teachers unkind–corporal punishment, abuse' (9.2 percent) and 'harassed by class- or school mates' (9.2 percent).*

Children who had dropped out were asked about their perception of their performance at school. Of the 326 children who responded, nearly two thirds admitted they had either not been able to understand lessons/cope with what was taught (49.4 percent) or failed had tests (14.4 percent); boys were more likely than girls to say this (67.3 percent compared to 57.9 percent) (Table A11). This suggests that dropping out is closely related to children's level of interest and ability to cope with studies. When responses were disaggregated by location, most children in Badulla, Puttalam and Ratnapura felt their performance had been good, indicating other reasons may be the cause of dropout in these districts.

**Table A11: Perception of performance by dropped-out children by sex**

| Reason | Male | | Female | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Good | 67 | 32.7 | 51 | 42.1 | 118 | 36.2 |
| Could not understand and cope with what was taught | 105 | 51.2 | 56 | 46.3 | 161 | 49.4 |
| Failed in tests | 33 | 16.1 | 14 | 11.6 | 47 | 14.4 |
| Total | 205 | 100.0 | 121 | 100.0 | 326 | 100.0 |

### *Caregivers*

Caregivers gave 23 different reasons for dropout of 336 children. Of the top 10 reasons, 'financial difficulties' was given as the reason for 66.7 percent of dropouts (Table A12). This was followed by 'could not cope with school work, experienced failure' (47.3 percent), 'did not like going to school' (33.6 percent), and 'lessons uninteresting, school boring' (26.8 percent).

**Table A12: Major reasons given by caregivers for children dropping out of school**

| | No. | % |
|---|---|---|
| Financial difficulties | 177 | 66.7 |
| Could not cope with school work, experienced failure | 159 | 47.3 |
| Did not like going to school | 113 | 33.6 |
| Lessons uninteresting, school boring | 90 | 26.8 |
| Parents not interested | 73 | 21.7 |
| Family problem | 54 | 16.1 |
| Mother left home for employment / other reasons | 46 | 13.7 |
| Ill health | 45 | 13.4 |
| Had to help with domestic work | 44 | 13.1 |
| School closed because of conflict | 41 | 12.2 |

*Note: N = 336. Multiple answers allowed. Other answers given included 'displaced' (11.6 percent), 'had to help parents in economic activities' (11.6 percent) and 'teachers unkind–corporal punishment, abuse' (11.0 percent).*

For caregivers too, poverty emerges as the most important factor in children dropping out. In addition, supply-side factors are influential in the dropout of children. In certain areas, the conflict has also been a major reason for dropout. When disaggregated by location, financial difficulties was the most important reason in Badulla, Batticaloa, Galle–Neluwa, Kilinochchi, Nuwara Eliya, Polonnaruwa, Puttalam and Ratnapura; 'could not cope with school work, experienced failure' was most important in Ampara, Colombo, Galle–Hikkaduwa and Moneragala. Conflict-related reasons were also important in Batticaloa and Kilinochchi.

When disaggregated by sex, boys were more likely than girls to have dropped out for economic reasons, because they 'could not cope with school work, experienced failure' or because of the conflict. Girls were more likely than boys to have dropped out for reasons associated with household work and looking after siblings. It is also noteworthy that eight girls from Colombo and one girl from Galle–Hikkaduwa had dropped out because of parental attitudes regarding the education of older children, notably of girls.

### *Teachers*

Teachers who participated in the focus group discussions suggested that, from their point of view, dropout was often related to the low educational performance or irregular attendance of students; these two factors are strongly linked, with low educational performance leading to irregular attendance and, conversely, irregular attendance leading to low educational performance. Here, analysis of data on the reasons for low performance is given; the reasons for irregular attendance are presented later. The reasons for low performance are given in Table A13.

### Table A13: Reasons for low performance by location

| Reason for low performance | Location |
|---|---|
| Poverty | Ampara, Badulla, Batticaloa, Colombo, Galle–Hikkaduwa, Kilinochchi, Moneragala, Ratnapura |
| Family problems/environment/ father in prison/mother gone off with another man | Batticaloa, Colombo, Galle–Hikkaduwa, Kilinochchi, Moneragala, Polonnaruwa, Ratnapura |
| Parents being unable to guide children/lack of role models | Colombo, Nuwara Eliya, Galle–Hikkaduwa, Polonnaruwa |
| Malnutrition | Ampara, Badulla, Nuwara Eliya |
| Schools being located far from places of residence and lack of transport facilities | Ampara, Badulla, Kilinochchi |
| Poor in reading/writing/listening skills/not keen in studies-as a result, performance is affected | Batticaloa, Hikkaduwa, Moneragala |
| Low intelligence and hence lack capacity to comprehend | Hikkaduwa, Kilinochchi, Moneragala |
| Parents being illiterate/ignorant | Ampara, Hikkaduwa |
| Hereditary factors | Ampara, Polonnaruwa |
| Parents going abroad for employment | Ampara, Badulla |
| Ill health/ weak eye sight | Moneragala, Hikkaduwa |
| Children's lack of interest in studies | Polonnaruwa |
| Irregular attendance | Nuwara Eliya |
| Engagement in sowing and harvesting | Kilinochchi |
| Physical and mental disabilities | Kilinochchi |
| Exposure to unhealthy social practices-alcoholism, drug addiction | Colombo |
| Lack of communication between parents and school | Colombo |
| Overcrowded households | Colombo |
| Parents being addicted to liquor | Ampara |
| Residential problems-no basic facilities such as electricity | Ampara |

Reasons given by teachers point to family situations such as poverty and poor household environments as being the causes of low performance by students. Some also suggest that children are not capable of learning (e.g., low intelligence, hereditary factors, physical and mental disabilities). It is noteworthy that teachers appeared to blame children and their families more often for low performance, whereas caregivers also mentioned supply-side factors as being responsible for their children's dissatisfaction with the school as well as demand-side issues.

#### *Life stories of children who have dropped out from school*

The following excerpts from the life stories of children who have dropped out of school vividly illustrate their experiences which led to dropout. Several children described their poverty and poor economic circumstances.

> Suganthan, a 12-year-old boy from Kilinochchi, said, "The reason I dropped out of school was the poor economic situation of my family. As I could not get the necessary financial support, I stopped going to school."
>
> Rathnadevi, a 14-year-old girl from Batticaloa, said, "Mother works as a labourer 2–3 days a week for SLRs. 250–300 a day. When she has money we manage to eat enough. After school, if we were hungry, I would go to the river close to home to catch fish. I used the mosquito net given to us by the Ministry of Health for preventing dengue fever as my fishing net."

The second highest reason for dropout was an inability to cope with studies.

Azaruddin, a 14-year-old boy from Colombo, said, “Although I went to school, I could not remember the lessons I learnt. I could not do the homework assigned. I could not read properly or do sums correctly. I could not remember the mathematical tables or my lessons satisfactorily. So I disliked going school and started cutting classes. I leave home in the morning, spend my time somewhere and come home when the other children come home. My schooling came to an end when I was in Grade 8. Now, I work in shop for 7–8 hours a day. I get food and SLRs 400 a day.”

Suganthan, from Kilinochchi, said: “I did not understand what was being taught or the activities involved in learning. I was unable to cope with school work.”

Nazeer, a 14-year-old boy from Ampara, said he could not remember things, as he had a memory problem. Although he went to school till Grade 8, he could not read or do sums.

Some children drop out of school as a result of family dysfunction.

Lalanthi, a 14-year-old girl from Puttalam, experienced violence at home and then the migration of her mother to work overseas, resulting in her having to care for her younger siblings. Her father was an alcoholic and would hit her mother and sometimes his children. As he could not work, his wife eventually migrated for work and left her eldest daughter to look after the younger children, as there was no other guardian. Lalanthi had to drop out.

Damayanthi, an eight-year-old girl from Hikkaduwa, had a violent home environment. As her house had no basic necessities such as water, toilets or electricity, she would ask to borrow these facilities from her neighbours. This situation led to her being ridiculed by adults and children living around her and she felt too ashamed to go to school anymore.

Sameera, a 15-year-old boy from Kilinochchi, dropped out of school because too many people in his house made it difficult to study.

Kathiresan from Kilinochchi was abandoned when her mother married another man. Her father was in a rehabilitation camp. Although he is released now, her parents’ separation has prevented her from going back to school.

Ilhaz, an11-year-old boy from Puttalam, explained that, since his father does not always have work, his mother has migrated overseas for a job. The family is living with his aunt. Without his mother, there is no one to give him encouragement in his studies. His aunt does not worry about Ilhaz’s education because she has her own children to look after.

Unexpected family illness can result in children having to drop out of school.

Rathirani, a 13-year-old girl from Badulla, said, “My home environment was very good. My father and mother were employed in the estate work and the family’s financial standard was good until my father fell sick. Then, our family environment became harder. We decided that I would have to stay home to look after my father, while my mother went to work. I was doing well in my studies until this happened. But as I am an only child, I am compelled to help my mother by looking after my father.”

Saliya, a 15-year-old boy from Moneragala, had been studying in Grade 10 but had given up school to earn money so his sister could have an operation. The family have spent all they owned in an attempt to save his sister’s life.

Some children described how ill health had caused them to leave school.

Ilhaz, 11-year-old boy from Puttalam, has poor eye sight and suffers from headache. He could not read and dropped out.

Malathika, 14-year-old girl from Puttalam, also has headaches and so was unable to read.

Thizal, a 15-year-old boy from Moneragala, had to undergo surgery to remove a growth on his tongue. This resulted in him missing school for a long time until the wound healed. He resumed school and his sister helped him catch up with missed work. But the growth reappeared again and had to be operated on again. This time he gave up school.

Vageesha, a 13-year-old boy from Ampara, fell off his bicycle and fractured his arm. As a result, he was in Batticaloa for four months during which time he could not attend school. When he recovered and went back to school, his name had been removed from the class list so he dropped out.

Some children complained that harassment by peers at school had caused them to drop out.

Sirinivasan from Batticaloa complained that sometimes the children who studied with him would tease him. He had no friends to study or play with, and he would sit at the back of the class on his own.

Musammil, a 13-year-old boy from Colombo, recounted how, when he was in Grade 7, the children used to call him Thadiya (fat one) or Hambayas (a derogatory term for Moors). Sometimes, the Sinhala children would fight with the Muslim children. Although the principal punished all the children for this, Musammil still dropped out of school.

For some, the conflict had a strong effect on their education and caused them to drop out.

Nine-year-old Chandrahasan and 14-year-old Kaveeshawaran, two boys from Kilinochchi, both said that long breaks without schooling had left them unable to understand lessons. They both dropped out because they could not cope with school work.

Kathiresan, a 14-year-old boy from Kilinochchi, explained, “Our area was affected by the conflict and we had to leave our house and seek shelter in other places. When they put us in welfare institutions, we spent our time taking care of our basic needs. We did not want to go to school. We really missed out on school.”

Sameera, also from Kilinochchi, said, “As a result of the conflict, my family had to leave home and was pushed into poverty. The continuous displacement and being separated from my family, relatives and friends affected my mental ability and totally destroyed my eagerness for studies. Schools were also closed and their activities ceased.”

Janith, a 14-year-old boy from Batticaloa, explained that due to the conflict, and the frequent closure of his school, he did not attend regularly. He was keen about his studies at the start but lost interest later.

Children also spoke about problems with teachers as a reason for dropping out.

Sunimal, a 13-year-old boy from Ratnapura, said, "I hated school because the teachers hit me."

Ariam, a 16-year-old boy from Nuwara Eliya, said, "Sometime the teachers asked me for money for school sports meets, puja, etc. As I couldn't pay, I stayed away from school and was punished when I returned. So I dropped out."

Janith, a 14-year-old boy from Batticaloa, said, "I could not grasp what the teachers taught. I did not understand mathematics and English. At times, I didn't understand at all what the teachers said. Since I was punished by teachers, I did not like to go to school."

Harish, a 16-year-old boy from Polonnaruwa, explained that he was sometimes punished for coming to school without proper shoes; but his family could not afford new ones. He was not good in his studies and the principal wanted to demote him to a lower grade. However, as he was 14 years old at the time, he was reluctant to be in a lower grade and so dropped out.

Transport problems were also cited as a cause of dropout.

Surendran, a 12-year-old boy from Polonnaruwa, had to walk 3–4 km to school and, because of poor health, he could not walk that far. He often fell ill and sometimes fainted after the long walk home from school.

## A 2.6 Reasons for irregular attendance

Even among children who are attending school, there is a category of children who are at risk of dropping out. These are mainly children with low performance and irregular attendance. Low performance and irregular attendance are mutually reinforcing: low performance can lead to irregular attendance and irregular attendance can lead to low performance.

Of the 333 children who responded, 81.4 percent said they had been irregular in attendance compared to 18.6 percent who had not; 83.8 percent of boys and 77.2 percent of girls had been irregular (Table A14).

**Table A14: Irregular attendance among dropped-out students as reported by children by sex**

| | Male | | Female | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Irregular | 176 | 83.8 | 95 | 77.2 | 271 | 81.4 |
| Regular | 34 | 16.2 | 28 | 22.8 | 62 | 18.6 |
| Total | 210 | 100.0 | 123 | 100.0 | 333 | 100 |

Caregivers were asked about the attendance of children who had dropped out. Of the 340 children reported on, 77.4 percent had been irregular and 22.6 percent had been regular; 78.3 percent of boys had been irregular and 75.8 percent of girls (Table A15). Thus, there was an apparent link between irregular attendance and drop out for both sexes.

**Table A15: Irregular attendance among dropped-out students as reported by caregivers by sex**

| | Male | | Female | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Irregular | 166 | 78.3 | 97 | 75.8 | 263 | 77.4 |
| Regular | 46 | 21.7 | 31 | 24.2 | 77 | 22.6 |
| Total | 212 | 100.0 | 128 | 100.0 | 340 | 100.0 |

Teachers reported that the attendance of children was regular in Badulla, Moneragala Puttalam and Ratnapura; varying during particular periods in Ampara; and not regular in Batticaloa and Colombo. In Galle–Neluwa, apart from estate children, attendance of the others was reported as regular. In Galle–Hikkaduwa, the attendance of children in Grades 1 and 2 was felt to be regular, and the attendance of children in other grades was irregular. Similarly, in Nuwara Eliya, around 50 percent of children were reported as irregular. Thus, according to the perceptions of teachers, the likelihood of children in school being at risk of dropping at as a result of irregular attendance was low; this was contrary to information received from caregivers of children who had dropped out and from the children themselves.

### *Children*

Of the 334 children who responded, the main reason for irregular attendance was financial difficulties (48.5 percent) (Table A16). This was followed by 'could not cope with school work' (43.4 percent), 'parents not interested' (17.7 percent) and ill health (16.5 percent). There were noteworthy differences between the responses for boys and girls. Only boys reported that the cost of transport to school prevented them from attending regularly, and boys were more likely than girls to report that engagement in economic activities regularly prevented them from attending school. Girls were more likely than boys to have irregular attendance because of family duties (helping with domestic work and looking after siblings).

**Table A16: Major reasons given by children for irregular attendance at school by sex**

| | Male | | Female | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Financial difficulties | 105 | 50.0 | 57 | 46.0 | 162 | 48.5 |
| Could not cope with school work, experienced failure | 101 | 48.1 | 44 | 35.5 | 145 | 43.4 |
| Parents not interested | 27 | 12.9 | 32 | 25.8 | 59 | 17.7 |
| Ill health | 35 | 16.7 | 20 | 16.1 | 55 | 16.5 |
| High cost of transport | 44 | 21.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 44 | 13.2 |
| Had to help with domestic work | 18 | 8.6 | 25 | 20.2 | 43 | 12.9 |
| Had to look after younger siblings | 13 | 6.2 | 19 | 15.3 | 32 | 9.6 |
| Lessons uninteresting, school boring | 15 | 7.1 | 17 | 13.7 | 32 | 9.6 |
| Did not like going to school | 9 | 4.3 | 22 | 17.7 | 31 | 9.3 |
| Had to help parents in economic activities | 22 | 10.5 | 8 | 6.5 | 30 | 9.0 |

*Note: N = 334. Multiple answers allowed. Other answers given included 'teachers unkind–corporal punishment, abuse' (8.4 percent) and conflict (7.2 percent).*

When data were disaggregated by location, financial difficulties was the most important reason in Nuwara Eliya, Polonnaruwa and Ratnapura; 'could not cope with school work, experienced failure' was most important in Ampara, Colombo, Galle–Hikkaduwa, Galle–Neluwa and Moneragala; 'high cost of transport' was most important in Badulla and Kilinochchi; conflict was most important in Batticaloa; and ill health was most important in Puttalam.

**Table A17: Major reasons given by caregivers for irregular attendance of children at school**

| | No. | % |
|---|---|---|
| Financial difficulties | 177 | 50.1 |
| Could not cope with school work, experienced failure | 126 | 35.7 |
| Did not like going to school | 99 | 28.0 |
| Parents not interested | 69 | 19.5 |
| Lessons uninteresting, school boring | 54 | 15.3 |
| Had to help parents in economic activities | 42 | 11.9 |
| Ill health | 41 | 11.6 |
| Had to help with domestic work | 40 | 11.3 |
| Travel to school obstructed, e.g., floods, landslides, wild elephants | 38 | 10.8 |
| Teachers unkind–corporal punishment, abuse | 31 | 8.8 |

*Note: N = 353. Multiple answers allowed. Other answers given included 'had to look after younger siblings' (8.2 percent) and 'had to engage in economic activities' (6.5 percent).*

Caregivers suggested that financial difficulties covered reasons such as lack of school materials, uniforms or shoes, or the need to provide money for school events. On the whole, these reasons were similar to the reasons given by caregivers about why children had dropped out, suggesting a strong link between irregular attendance and dropout. When data were disaggregated by location, financial difficulties was the most important reason in Batticaloa, Colombo, Kilinochchi, Moneragala, Polonnaruwa and Ratnapura; 'could not cope with school work, experienced failure' was most important in Ampara and Puttalam; 'did not like going to school' was most important in Galle–Hikkaduwa, Galle–Neluwa and Puttalam; 'had to help parents in economic activities' was most important in Nuwara Eliya and Puttalam; ill health was most important in Puttalam; and 'travel to school obstructed, e.g., floods, landslides, wild elephants' was most important in Badulla.

### *Life stories of children who had irregular attendance at school*

The life stories of children considered at risk of dropping out of school were collected. They illustrated why children were compelled to be absent from school.

Some children suggested poverty and economic deprivation made it hard for them to attend school regularly.

Viraj, a 13-year-old boy from Batticaloa, said that he often went to school without breakfast. He stays out of school not because of illness but because of hunger.

Suresh, a 13-year-old boy Batticaloa, said that he was unable to study well because of hunger; he often has no food in the morning or at night. He came to school to get a midday meal.

Rehana, a nine-year-old girl from Colombo, lives with six family members in two small rooms. There is no space for her to study or keep her school things.

Madhavan, a boy from Batticaloa, lives in a thatched hut with six family members. He has nowhere to keep his school bag and his school things get spoilt by his little brothers.

Sudhir from Batticaloa lives in a crowded house, which is still under construction. There is no table and he has to do his school work on the floor.

Anne, a 13-year-old girl from Batticaloa, lives with her aunt in single-roomed thatch hut. There is no electricity and no quiet place to study.

Some children had to contribute to the family income also.

Sudhir cleans houses in his village and picks coconut to earn to money. Sometimes he helps to make bricks. During such times, he does not go to school and his education is disrupted. He says it is his duty to look after his mother and sisters, and earn money so that his siblings can go to school.

Rajan, a 13-year-old boy from Badulla, chops firewood to sell after school and during holidays, so that he can contribute to his family's income.

Domestic responsibilities such as attending to household chores and looking after younger siblings or sick family members also led to irregular attendance. In some cases, these responsibilities were taken on by children because their mother had migrated for employment or their father was absent.

Priyan from Puttalam had to collect water and firewood for his home. When he had to do these duties, he could not go to school. His father punished him, if they were not done.

As the eldest in the family, Mahindra, a 10-year-old boy from Puttalam, had to shoulder lot of work at home. He had to look after his younger siblings and collect firewood and water. His mother punishes him, if he fails to help.

Abitha, a nine-year-old girl from Ampara, has to help her mother with household chores. This often prevents her from going to school.

Ashani, a 12-year-old girl from Neluwa, is responsible for doing all the housework when her mother goes to Colombo to work. While her mother is away, Ashani and her younger brothers do not go to school.

Tharani, a girl from Nuwara Eliya, had to do all the household work and could not go to school when her father was detained by the police.

Eresha, a 13-year-old boy from Colombo, has a bedridden mother. As a result, he has to help with the daily household work.

An inability to cope with studies was given by children as a reason for irregular attendance. Psychological problems or learning disabilities might contribute to this.

Devi, a 13-year-old girl from Nuwara Eliya, said she was often absent from school because she could not do her homework properly.

Eresha said that he was slow at school and could not complete his assignments. This made him reluctant to go to school. He felt that he could not match the other children in class, as he said he could not read or do sums.

Suresh, a 13-year-old boy from Hikkaduwa, said, "I am not good at the subjects in class. I can read but I cannot write. Friends in the class do sums and other things. I just watch!"

Ravindri, a 13-year-old girl from Colombo, said, "School work is difficult. I cannot understand maths. I only read and write with difficulty. I get low marks for all subjects."

Uttham, a 13-year-old boy from Batticaloa, was not happy in school, as he could not understand the lessons and gets low marks.

Madhava, a 13-year-old boy from Colombo, does not go to school for two or three days when there are homework assignments. He is embarrassed to ask his friends for help with school work. When he returns to school, he often cannot follow the class.

Praveen, a 13-year-old boy from Hikkaduwa, could read more or less normally but could not write. He was weak in other subjects too. He preferred to stay away from school. He remained silent in class, when the other children answered.

The class teacher of Sandhya, a nine-year-old girl from Moneragala, says that Sandhya cannot remember things and sometimes she just stares out sadly in one direction.

Punishments from teachers or parents sometimes prevent children from attending school.

Kalhara, a 14-year-old boy from Nuwara Eliya, is often absent from school because his teacher punishes him when does not do his homework.

Azra said, “If I go to school without doing my homework, my teacher punishes me. This hurts me.”

Mahendra says many teachers at school punish him if he doesn’t do his homework. One teacher is very aggressive and Mahendra is scared of him.

Lalith said he was absent from school for over a week when he had been beaten so badly by his mother that he could not walk.

Sometimes children attribute irregular attendance to harassment and bullying.

Sudhir says, “My classmates did not like me and I was scared of them.”

Abitha told how the children at school called him names, so he did not like going to school.

Madhavan complained that the other students did not like him and subjected him to violence. They mocked him and would not play with him or eat their meals with him.

Ill health was a frequent reason for irregular attendance. While some children stated that they were undergoing treatment, it was not clear whether adequate attention has been given to improving their health. In addition, some children have psychological or physical problems that disrupt their schooling.

Azra said, “Whenever I get boils on my hands, I don’t go to school. This happens every two or three months and lasts for a week or two. Also, when I get my monthly period, it lasts for nine days and I can’t go to school.”

Samantha, a nine-year-old girl from Badulla, has a problem with faeces passing through the urethra rather than the anus. This causes not only physical pain but also mental anguish. Her parents cannot afford corrective surgery for her. She is often absent from school.

Kolitha, a 13-year-old boy from Ratnapura, has had several surgeries on his stomach and has to attend a clinic once a week. This takes time and is expensive too.

Komali's teacher said, "Whenever I am not in the classroom, this child tears down and destroys the pictures, charts and decorations on the walls. She jumps up and down, even when she talks, and cannot stay still in one place. It is very disturbing for the other children in the class. She is often absent."

Nivantha from Hikkaduwa was reported as "stubborn and naughty. He scolds and hits the other children in the class." He is often absent.

Anura from Neluwa has a speech disability and also appears to have Down's syndrome. She is often absent.

Schools attended by children were sometimes located in areas without sufficient transport facilities.

Madhavan said, "My friends and I walk 2 km from our village to school. Sometimes buffaloes in the field attack us. Once, a buffalo chased us and I fell and broke my hand. During treatment, I could not attend school for one month."

Uttham walks 4 km to school. As the path is across paddy fields, when the crop matures, the farmers do not allow him to walk that way and he does not come to school as often. There is another route but it is 1 km longer.

Samantha, a nine-year-old girl from Badulla, said the distance between her home and school is too far much and she has to climb 200 steps. This makes her tired and lethargic.

Several irregular children admitted that they were not interested in studies and others blamed poor teaching and inadequate school facilities. Two children from Kilinochchi and three from Batticaloa were prevented from attending school due to the conflict; they were either displaced or their school destroyed.

## A 2.7 Barriers to education and policies/programmes to address them

The responses of children, caregivers and school personnel suggest that the barriers and bottlenecks identified in Chapter 3 of the main text are also evident in the exclusion of children sampled in the field study.

### A 2.7.1 Demand-side socio-cultural factors

*Parents' and children's attitude to education*

'Parents not interested' was a major reason given by children for non-enrolment in school (37.8 percent), although only one caregiver said this. In addition, it was given as reason for dropout by children (20.3 percent) and caregivers (21.7 percent) and as a reason for irregular attendance by children (17.7 percent) and caregivers (19.5 percent).

This suggests that parents' attitude to education has a significant impact on exclusion from school. Awareness-raising about the importance of education might address this barrier.

'Did not like going to school' was not mentioned by children as a reason for non-enrolment and by only 2.2 percent of caregivers. However, it was given as reason for dropout by caregivers (33.6 percent) and as a reason for irregular attendance by children (9.3 percent) and caregivers (28.0 percent). Children also admitted this in their life stories. There was usually an underlying reason for this such as non-success at school or family needs; policies should be aimed at the underlying reason rather than simply at a dislike of school.

### *Gender*

Gender-based reasons for non-enrolment or dropout were not expressed explicitly in the interview data. However, both children and caregivers acknowledged that girls often dropped out of school to help with domestic chores or look after siblings and boys dropped out to help parents in economic activities. In children's life stories, some girls mentioned that they missed school during their menstrual periods. In addition, nine Muslim girls in Colombo stated that they had dropped out of school, as girls in their community were not sent to schools after menarche.

Over one third (37.5 percent) of key informants, chiefly in Batticaloa, Colombo, Galle–Hikkaduwa, Galle–Neluwa, Polonnaruwa, Puttalam and Ratnapura, stated that child marriage was responsible for the dropout of some girls. No information was forthcoming about child marriage from caregivers, except one brief mention of a girl in Ampara; this appears to be a sensitive issue. However, researchers received information from officials or the community that early marriage among girls and boys was a common in rural Batticaloa. It was suggested that this was because, during the conflict, some parents viewed marriage as 'a safety measure' to thwart their child's recruitment into the LTTE. Tamil families in Polonnaruwa had also taken girls out of school to get them married and prevent their recruitment by the LTTE.

Although free state education is available to girls and boys up to the age of 14 years, in some circumstances, children are excluded as a consequence of their sex. Policies that target the underlying reasons for gender-based exclusion should look at gender stereotypes, child labour, menstrual hygiene facilities at school, and child marriage. In addition, existing legislation to prevent gender discrimination should be enforced.

### *Poor health and nutritional status*

Ill health was given as a reason for children's non-enrolment in school by children (6.7 percent) and caregivers (15.6 percent). It was also given as reason for dropout by children (15.4 percent) and caregivers (13.4 percent) and as a reason for irregular attendance by children (16.5 percent) and caregivers (11.6 percent). No specific mention of malnutrition was made, although a number of children mentioned in their life stories that hunger and going without food had an impact on their education. Some teachers also said that certain children came to school because of the free midday meal.

Ill health can cause children to miss school, thereby disrupting their education. This can lead to experience of failure, making children vulnerable to dropout. Although free basic health services are available, disadvantaged families need support to access them in time, before health problems and malnutrition become too severe. Financial and other support may be required for serious conditions.

There appears to be minimal interface among education, health, social services and Samurdhi officials, without which health-related problems of school-age children cannot be addressed satisfactorily. The Ministry of Health has a policy of conducting school medical inspections, and the new School Health Policy proposes greater linkages with schools in terms of promoting health and nutrition.

The ministry has acknowledged that the regular inspections in Grades 1, 4, 7 and 10 have not been conducted in all schools, as a result of human resource constraints. However, 17 health officials interviewed in nine locations during the field study stated that schools were visited, children were immunized, a few children referred to hospitals and dental clinics, and the school canteen and school meals were supervised. There was no response in three locations.

## A 2.7.2 Demand-side economic factors

### *Poverty*

'Financial difficulties' was given as a reason for children's non-enrolment in school by children (51.1 percent) and caregivers (55.6 percent). It was also given as reason for dropout by children (57.5 percent) and caregivers (66.7 percent) and as a reason for irregular attendance by children (48.5 percent) and caregivers (50.1 percent). When questioned, specific references were made to the cost of shoes, school bags, exercise books and stationery.

Free education and other incentives have had a major impact on bringing poor children into school. Some children considered to be at risk said that they came to school because of the midday meal. Although the overall incidence of poverty has declined to 8.9 percent (DCS, 2011b), significant disparities still prevail and those living below the poverty level or on its margins remain vulnerable to severe economic hardships. Policies to target the poverty reduction of vulnerable families would help to ensure that their children enter and remain in school through a full cycle of education. The Samurdhi programme and social safety nets provided by the Ministry of Social Services need to have greater outreach.

### *Child labour*

Although child labour was not mentioned explicitly or indirectly as a reason for the non-enrolment of children in school, two never-enrolled boys were working full time. Furthermore, 'had to help parents in economic activities' was given as a reason for dropout by children (10.2 percent) and caregivers (11.6 percent) and as a reason for irregular attendance by children (9.0 percent) and caregivers (11.9 percent); 'had to help with domestic work' was given as a reason for dropout by children (13.8 percent) and caregivers (13.1 percent) and as a reason for irregular attendance by children (12.9 percent) and caregivers (11.3 percent); and 'had to look after younger siblings' was given as a reason for dropout by children (11.7 percent) and as a reason for irregular attendance by children (9.6 percent) and caregivers (8.2 percent). These figures suggest that OOSC are undertaking a substantial amount of work that should preferably be done by adults to enable children to have the time to go to school.

The life stories revealed that children worked in daily manual labour, domestic service, fishing, garment factories, small shops, estate work, tailoring, farming, gardening, bakery work, electrical work, carpentry, street-vending, seasonal work, rearing goats and cattle, and breaking stones. Children identified as at risk of dropping out were engaged in tasks such as helping in houses, picking coconuts, making fences, chopping firewood, and harvesting.

These findings suggest that there is weak enforcement of legislation and policies to eliminate child labour despite the availability of Labour, Child Rights Promotion, Probation, Samurdhi, Social Service and Health Officers in the study locations. Most children were working at home or in the informal sector, where legislation on child labour is non-existent or minimal. Most of the work was in low-income, unprotected, informal sector jobs with little promise of upward mobility.

Although children were openly engaged in these tasks, they did not seem to have received any attention from education officials, labour officers or from officers in other social protection fields. Lack of awareness may have contributed to a relatively high incidence of child labour.

*Migration of mothers*

Although the migration of mothers was not mentioned as a reason for non-enrolment, 'mother left home for employment/other reasons' was given as reason for dropout by children (15.7 percent) and caregivers (13.7 percent). Some children also mentioned in their life stories that their mother had migrated and they had dropped out of school to take on domestic responsibilities or because of family dysfunction.

Despite the acknowledged link between the migration of mothers and dropout of their school-age children, there is no formal policy targeting this issue.

## A 2.7.3 Supply-side factors

*Distribution of schools*

The uneven distribution of schools means that some children may face difficulties in physically accessing schools because of long distances to travel or lack of adequate transport to take them there. 'Transport problem' or 'no school within travelling distance' was given as a reason for non-enrolment by children (17.8 percent) and caregivers (22.2 percent); 'transport problem' was given as a reason for dropout by children (17.5 percent); 'high cost of transport' was given as a reason for irregular attendance by children (13.2 percent); and 'travel to school obstructed, e.g., floods, landslides, wild elephants' was given as a reason for irregular attendance by caregivers (10.8 percent). Children also mentioned problems with travelling to school in their life stories.

Policies aimed at improving the distribution of appropriate schools are in place and the second phase of the ESDFP envisages a primary school in each village and a secondary school within a reasonable distance. These policies must be implemented fairly and within a reasonable period of time to ensure that all children are provided with effective access to school.

School infrastructure and facilities

Schools in the field study lacked a number of basic amenities. Principals provided information on the infrastructure available at their school. Although nearly two thirds (62.5 percent) of sampled schools had access to safe water, less than a half (45.8 percent) had separate toilets for girls and boys (a particular concern for keeping girls in school) (Table A18). Other physical structure such as separate classrooms, science laboratories/rooms, computer rooms and workshops for practical skills development were available in less than one in three schools. Around half of schools did not have playgrounds or gardens for children to use for recreation. Furnishings and equipment were also inadequate, with only half of schools having an adequate number of desks and chairs for all students and only around one in six having a computer or sports equipment. One third did not have the teachers' manuals required for implementing the school curriculum. In addition, most schools did not have living quarters for principals or teachers, making it hard to retain teaching staff in often remote areas. Schools in Colombo were best equipped, while those in Badulla, Kilinochchi and Nuwara Eliya were poorly supplied. Schools affected by the conflict also had minimal facilities.

**Table A18: Infrastructural and other facilities in school**

| | % |
|---|---|
| Access to safe water | 62.5 |
| Separate toilets for girls and boys | 45.8 |
| Separate classrooms | 25.0 |
| Science laboratories/rooms | 27.1 |
| Computer rooms | 29.2 |
| Workshops for practical skills development | 14.6 |
| Playground | 50.0 |
| School garden | 58.3 |
| Adequate number of desks and chairs for students | 50.0 |
| Computers | 18.8 |
| Sports equipment | 14.6 |
| Teachers' manuals | 66.7 |
| Principal's quarters | 16.7 |
| Teachers' quarters | 10.4 |
| Telephone connection | 33.0 |

Policies, such as the child-friendly schools approach, aimed at improving the quality of school infrastructure and the school environment will help to ensure that children are not put off school by the lack of facilities, particularly sanitation facilities, and that teachers are willing and able to operate in settings that are conducive to effective teaching and learning.

### *Teacher deployment and training*

Teacher deployment was also an issue in many sampled schools. Principals reported that only 58.3 percent had a sufficient number of teachers for primary grades and 41.7 percent for secondary grades. Some 64.6 percent of the schools had mathematics teachers, 58.3 percent had science teachers, and 66.7 percent had English teachers.

Shortage of teachers can result in inadequate teaching, leading to students' low performance which, in turn, is an important reason for dropout. Teachers in schools in eight of the locations said that school authorities have taken steps to improve low performance by organizing remedial teaching by special teachers; although limited in nature, these measures were acknowledged to have resulted in some improvement in the attendance and interest of students.

Policies aimed at ensuring the adequate deployment of teachers in all schools must look at teacher allocation processes as well as teacher training procedures. Both the first and second phases of the ESDFP specifically address issues surrounding teacher deployment and training, and include the provision of incentives for teachers in remote schools.

### *Deficiencies in teaching-learning processes*

The quality of education can affect both how interested children are in lessons and how successfully they attain expected standards. Both of these issues can have a major impact on the dropout of children. 'Could not cope with school work, experienced failure' was given as a reason for dropout by children (46.8 percent) and caregivers (47.3 percent) and as a reason for irregular attendance by children (43.4 percent) and caregivers (35.7 percent). In addition, 'lessons uninteresting,

school boring' was given as a reason for dropout by children (24.3 percent) and caregivers (26.8 percent) and as a reason for irregular attendance by children (9.6 percent) and caregivers (15.6 percent).

These findings suggest that there is some validity in the common criticism that the teaching–learning process is not imparting knowledge effectively or in a stimulating manner. Policies are being put in place by the ESDFP to address these concerns. The focus is on curriculum reform and transformation of the learning culture, allowing for 'higher order processes and spaces' and an 'activity-oriented, child-friendly approach' that challenges children and maximizes their participation.

### *Corporal punishment and poor teacher behaviour*

'Teachers unkind–corporal punishment, abuse' was given as a reason for dropout by children (9.2 percent) and caregivers (11.0 percent) and as a reason for irregular attendance by children (8.4 percent) and caregivers (8.8 percent). In addition, experiences recounted by children in their life stories indicate that punishment is common and that teachers lack empathy regarding the economic or family constraints affecting students as well as individual differences in ability.

Although most teachers do not resort to violence or punishment, it appears that, when it occurs, corporal punishment is generally administered with impunity; this is despite the Ministry of Education circular forbidding it and the presence of local officials to take action. However, it was reported that action had been taken in some cases, ranging from visiting the school or home to mediate in the matter and reporting it to a Human Rights Officer. Legal action was taken in two locations.

### *Disability*

Disability was given as a reason for non-enrolment by children (31.1 percent) and caregivers (37.8 percent). In addition, disability both physical and mental was mentioned as a reason for failure at school by children in their life stories and by teachers in the focus group discussions. Life stories also suggested that some teachers had negative and dismissive attitudes towards children with disabilities and that the issue has not received much attention from local education officials. One child had been sent to a Special School but had dropped out as a result of punishment. Stigmatization of disabled children appeared to be common. According to the principals interviewed, only two schools in Hikkaduwa and Kilinochchi had special units for children with disabilities, and three schools in Ampara, Galle–Hikkaduwa, and Galle–Neluwa had teachers trained to teach children with disabilities.

National policy is in place to increase accessibility to school for children with disabilities and to promote inclusive education. A special unit has been established in the Non-Formal Division of the Ministry of Education to offer services through resource centres and facilitate the admission of these children to school. The ESDFP has also attached importance to meeting the educational needs of this vulnerable group.

## A 2.7.4 Governance and management factors

### *Conflict and natural disaster*

Although the conflict ended in 2009, its impact was still affecting access to education in the two conflict-affected locations in the study. Conflict was given as a reason for dropout by children (15.4 percent) and caregivers (12.2 percent) and as a reason for irregular attendance by children (7.2 percent). The closure of schools had affected 38 students and displaced 14. In Batticaloa, children stated they had dropped out of school as a result of frequent displacement, the shortage of teachers, destruction of school infrastructure, and loss of interest in studies. One student remarked that she had rejoined her school after it was re-opened but, as students did not receive the free textbooks and uniforms that should have, she dropped out after some time. In Kilinochchi, children said they faced similar problems: the lack of an adequate number of schools meant that those that were open were often far from home and also overcrowded. In addition, family and economic problems resulting from the conflict kept some children out of school.

Policy should focus on revitalizing the education system in conflict-affected districts and ensuring that all children are able to access schools.

At the time of the study, tsunami-affected locations had returned to normalcy and other forms of natural disaster such as floods, cyclones, landslides had usually short-term impact requiring transitory assistance.

### *Birth certificates*

The inability to obtain the certificate required for a child's enrolment in school from the Grama Niladhari (birth certificate/ voters' list) was mentioned as a reason for non-enrolment by 15.6 percent of caregivers. They suggested that this was usually because they had insufficient money or knowledge to acquire the right documents. Although children were sometimes admitted without the required documents, this caused 'problems' for the school as free textbooks and other provisions were not allocated for such children.

There are policies in place such as the Compulsory Education Regulations that make alternative provisions for admission of children without birth certificates; however, these are not widely known about or understood. Therefore, awareness-raising on this issue would perhaps improve the situation.

### *Political will*

Compulsory Education Regulations were introduced in 1998 and mechanisms were created in the form of committees at divisional and Grama Niladhari levels to ensure their enforcement. The ESDFP assigned the task of resuscitating these committees to the Non-Formal Division of the Ministry of Education, operating under the devolution of responsibility to provincial administrations through Non-formal Education Officers at the local level. Over half of key informants in the field study reported that Compulsory Education Committees had been established in their locations, ranging from 90 percent in Batticaloa and 83.3 percent in Ampara to 28.6 percent in Nuwara Eliya and 23.1 percent in Ratnapura. Only 11.6 percent of said that committees were very active and 75.4 percent said that they were moderately active, while 66.7 percent said they were effective.

Individual officers too do not appear to be proactive in getting children to school. Only 26.1 percent of caregivers in households with OOSC said that an official had requested them to send a never-enrolled child to school, and 37.8 percent of never-enrolled children said their parents had been requested to send them to school. Among dropped-out children, 39 percent said that they had been requested by an official to go back to school. Although nearly all caregivers (91.5 percent) said that it was important that children should go to school and 67.6 percent of children who had dropped out said that their life chances would have improved had they continued in school, little action appears to have been taken. It appears that neither officials nor families are sufficiently motivated.

However, the experiences of children recorded in their life stories indicate that some officials have endeavoured to motivate or assist families or children to pursue their education. In Galle–Neluwa, the Child Rights Promotion Officer, the Probation Officer, and the Non-formal Education Officer had all actively helped to get OOSC into school. The Grama Niladhari in Polonnaruwa and Moneragala had also tried to persuade OOSC to return to school. Key persons reported that Child Rights Promotion Officers in Batticaloa and Kilinochchi were very active. In Batticaloa, the Samurdhi Officer had informed families that OOSC must be sent to school. A few principals had also visited homes to persuade parents to send children to school.

Another strategy to provide access to education for all children is the organization of non-formal literacy/education classes for OOSC that would allow them to be admitted to formal school when they have acquired adequate functional literacy and numeracy skills. Some 43.8 percent of key informants (excluding those in Nuwara Eliya, Moneragala and Polonnaruwa) reported that there were non-formal literacy centres/classes in their location and 36.4 percent said that children had re-entered formal school. However, they also mentioned that lack of financial resources, lack of recognition of the need for such classes, and low student participation have contributed to the failure to open more centres.

Only one caregiver reported sending a never-enrolled child to non-formal literacy classes and 11.1 percent of caregivers claimed to have encouraged dropped-out children to enrol. Some 3.1 percent of dropped-out children had enrolled in these classes and 9.2 percent reported that they had been asked by officials to join a class. Although alternative educational opportunities have benefited only a small proportion of those in need, 33.9 percent of OOSC expressed a wish to enrol in a class and re-enter formal school.

### *Planning and implementation of programmes*

The ESDFP introduced Annual School Development Plans and 37.2 percent of key informants reported that they have been involved in the preparation of such plans. Although it was not possible for this study to assess the impact of these plans on the quality of education provided in schools, analysis of school-related factors suggests that they have had little effect on school-side factors such as infrastructure, curriculum renewal or teacher development.

### *Monitoring*

It appears that monitoring has been the weakest aspect of management and that there has been little coordination to synergize interventions in education with other sectors such as social protection. The two mechanisms established at local level do not appear to have functioned effectively. Almost half the proposed Compulsory Attendance Committees, which were intended to include representatives of the local administrative unit and line ministries involved in child-related

issues, had not functioned and the District Child Development Committees, which were intended to protect child rights cutting across all sectors, have not met regularly in some districts. Not all schools have cooperated with health officials in maintaining a healthy school environment in terms of access to safe water and satisfactory sanitation, while school medical inspections have not been a regular feature. The role of the central government in the devolution process is not clear, and is seen to have affected school-level monitoring of programmes for teacher education and curriculum reform.

### *Role of the community*

The ESDFP has allocated an important role to the community in school development under the Programme of School Improvement, which is however limited to specific zones. Nevertheless, 81 percent of key informants said that communities were involved in assisting their schools. Around half said the chief modality was the organizations of *shramadana* programmes. In a few locations, communities had contributed funds to the development of the school and for the assistance of able students constrained by economic difficulties as well as for the purchase of building materials and the provision of school security. Community leaders in one location had visited the homes of OOSC to advice parents to send their children to school.

Only six principals had mentioned financial assistance from NGOs. A unique example of such assistance was by a development foundation in Hikkaduwa; this was a welfare organization headed by the grandson of the founder of the school. It met some of the needs of the school by providing SLRs 10,000 a month for school development, school midday meals in secondary grades (as primary grades received this assistance from the state or WFP), and stationery, school bags and shoes for needy children. It also organized school trips and extracurricular activities with the assistance of foreign volunteers.

Another example was a school in a low-income location of Colombo, which had had only eight students and was on the verge of closure by the administration. The new principal used unconventional strategies to attract OOSC, including street children, to the school; these included singing and music in classes, the installation of old computers obtained from his friends to enable children to learn to use them, asking teachers and the community to prepare midday meals for the school, and persuading members of the community to make school uniforms. He had received cooperation from the community, education officials and the police to identify OOSC and bring them to school. Today, the school has 128 children in Grades 1–5 and an attractive environment, and is no longer facing the risk of closure.

### *Budget allocations*

Financial allocations reach schools from various sources—chiefly from the provincial administration through the zonal offices, from the central government for specific purposes, and from donors for their programmes. However, only 7.4 percent of key informants and 27.1 percent of principals reported that they received adequate financial resources to implement programmes. All key informants in Colombo, Galle–Neluwa, Galle–Hikkaduwa, Nuwara Eliya and Polonnaruwa and all principals in Galle–Neluwa, Galle–Hikkaduwa and Puttalam reported that the funds were inadequate. Principals were most concerned that they did not receive funds for the implementation of the Annual School Development Programme and that funds they received were often delayed. There was also a perception that expenditure was estimated according to official circulars and not according to the needs of schools. Around 65 percent of principals said they received additional financial support from well-wishers, school development societies, parent–teacher associations and parents; a few school also received funds from NGOs, teachers, religious organizations and past pupils; and one school received funds from the sale of school produce.