

Sri Lanka: Expanding Education Attainment and Promoting Learning



PROJECT INFORMATION:

- Education Sector Development Project - Additional Finance
- Sri Lanka Education Sector Development Project

PRESS RELEASE:

- Education Sector Development – Additional Financing

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- Education in Sri Lanka
- Treasures of the Education System in Sri Lanka

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CHALLENGE

Background

Sri Lanka has one of the leading education systems among developing and lower-middle income countries. The country has met the first-generation challenge of achieving universal enrolment and completion of primary (grades 1-5) education. Sri Lanka now faces the second generation challenges of achieving universal completion of basic (grades 1-9) education and improving the quality of basic and secondary education. Raising education quality in lagging regions, including the conflict-affected Northern and Eastern Provinces, is especially important.

The Education Sector Development Project (ESDP) is a US\$ 60 million grant which follows a programmatic sector-wide approach (SWAp), and supports the Education Sector Development Framework and Program (ESDFP) of the Government of Sri Lanka to develop the general education system in the country.

Principal Challenges

The main challenges faced by the general education system are to:

- ensure that all children aged 6-14 years complete basic education,
- improve the learning environment and cognitive achievement levels of children,
- increase the social benefits of investment in human capital, and
- strengthen management, especially at the decentralized levels of service delivery

The education system also has an important role to play in promoting social equity by improving the economic opportunities of children and youth living in poor households and lagging regions, and by promoting a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society.

Goals

The goals of the Education Sector Development Project which commenced in 2006 are to promote equitable access to education, improve learning outcomes, enhance economic efficiency and equity, and strengthen the delivery of education services.

APPROACH

ESDP implementation is organized on four themes:

(i) Promoting equitable access to basic and secondary education.

This includes:

- upgrading the network of schools to relax constraints on geographically equitable access to good quality basic and secondary education,
- programs for children with special learning needs and
- non-formal education programs for adolescents requiring skills to enter the labor market;

(ii) Improving education quality through:

- curriculum enrichment,
- teacher development,
- modernization of the examination system, and
- improvement of textbook publication and delivery.

(iii) Enhancing the economic efficiency and equity of resource allocation through a rolling education sector development plan, supported by a medium-term public expenditure framework and a public expenditure tracking system; and

(iv) Strengthening education governance through the introduction of school-based management, and organizational strengthening and capacity building of the national and provincial education administrations.

The ESDP will also support monitoring, evaluation, research and policy development

RESULTS

- The percentage of children completing basic education has increased from 78 percent in 2005 to 83 percent in 2007.
- About 60 percent of subjects in the school curriculum for the primary (grades 1-5) and secondary (grades 6-11) cycles have been revised to promote a competency based approach to general education.
- Teacher instructional manuals have been produced for all subjects where curriculum revision has taken place.
- On-site school based teacher development programs have been introduced in all provinces in the country.
- Examination guidelines have been produced for the key subjects in the GCE O/L Examination, Sinhalese, Tamil, Mathematics and Science.
- Preparation has commenced on a bank of 10,000 test items, to be eventually used for the public examinations.
- The timely delivery of textbooks to schools has increased from less than 90 percent to more than 95 percent over two years.
- Subject panels have been appointed to carefully scrutinize the contents of textbooks and correct any errors of fact, argument or presentation.
- National assessments of learning outcomes have been completed for Primary Education (at Grade 4) in First Language (Sinhalese and Tamil), English and Mathematics.

- There is evidence of improving language skills, including vocabulary, reading and writing. In addition, there is evidence of rising mathematics skills, including conceptual understanding and problem solving.
- The national and provincial education sector development plans and budgets are now being prepared with a key focus on the results and outcomes to be achieved under the ESDFP
- School-based management has been introduced in 35 education zones through the Program for School Improvement.
- A new organizational structure has been prepared for the Ministry of Education.
- Policy research studies have been completed in curriculum delivery, public expenditure flows through the education system, learning levels of children in the secondary education cycle in science and mathematics, teacher competencies and skills, examination systems, principals development and in-service advisors by the National Institute of Education, Ministry of Education, Department of Examinations, Peradeniya University, Colombo University and the Open University.

WORLD BANK CONTRIBUTION

- A grant of US\$ 60 million effective from 2006.
- An Additional Financing credit of US\$ 10 million approved in June 2008 to expand activities that scale up the impact and development effectiveness of the Project, with emphasis on the improvement of educational opportunities of children living in poor regions of the country. This funding is from the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank's concessionary lending arm, and has 20 years to maturity with a 10-year grace period

NEXT STEPS

The ESDP will expand support for the development of education in the lagging regions, particularly the rural and estate schools. Special emphasis will be given to meeting the basic needs of schools in the poorer provinces.

In addition, English language skills and bilingual medium education will be a priority focus under the additional financing. The latter will also expand support for social cohesion and peace-building through investments in: (i) producing a range of diverse and culturally sensitive teaching and learning materials; (ii) supporting schools and other institutions with mixed media-of-instruction and culturally diverse mixes of teachers and students; (iii) providing instructional materials and aids using the three languages; and (iv) encouraging programs such as peace education camps ("pal of two cities"), and mixed cultural and sporting events to promote greater understanding and respect between all students.