

# ***Sri Lanka***

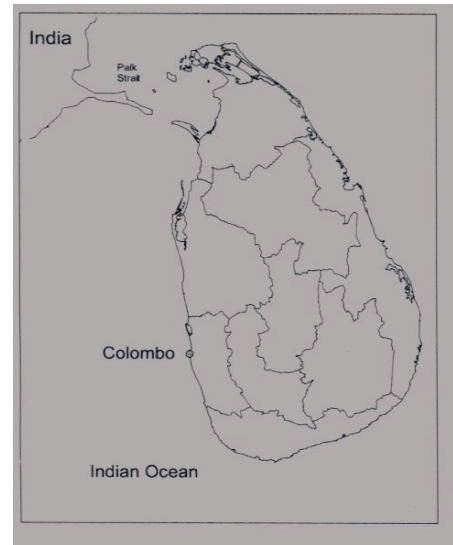
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## **The Current Situations and Future Trends of Educational Practice for Children with Visual Impairments**

### **1. Sri Lanka**

#### **1.1 Geography**

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is a tropical island in the Indian Ocean, situated close to the Southeastern tip of India. (6°-10° North and 80°-82° East). The land area is 65, 525 km<sup>2</sup> The average temperature varies from 24°-33° C in low country and 17°-26° C in the upcountry. The annual average rain fall Varies between 130-350 cm. Rice, Tea, Rubber and Coconut are the main crops. Although the country's main income is based on agriculture, steps being taken to improve economy by moving towards modern technological developments.



#### **1.2 The People**

Estimated population is 19.36 million. It is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society. Majority of 74.0% are Sinhalese, 18.3% Tamil, 7.0% Malays and Moors 0.7% Burghers and Chinese. Religion wise majority of 69.3% are Buddhists, 15.5% are Hindus, 7.4% Islam, and 7.7% Catholic and Christians.

### **2. Education System in Sri Lanka.**

Education from Grade 1 to University level is provided free of charge by the government. School going age is 5+years. In the tertiary level there are institutes for vocational and technical education. In addition, there are Government approved Private institutes which provide a wide range of opportunity for professional education. The ministry of Education has been taken steps to improve accessibility equity and quality of Education to

- Attain 9 national goals of Education
- Acquire essential life competences

### **3. Visual Impairment.**

For Education and Rehabilitation purpose Visual Impairment is classified in to 5 categories.

- Total blind.
- Legal blind.
- Vision range 20/200 - 20/70.
- Vision in one eye.
- Other Vision disabilities.

#### 4. Educational Opportunities for Visually Impaired Children.

- Government Schools : with Special Education units.  
: with out Special Education units
- Assisted schools.
- Community Based Rehabilitation Programs.
- Special Education Programmes conducted by Non-Governmental Organizations.

##### 4.1 Government Schools.

Government schools (1) with special education units and (2) without special education units function in implementing Inclusive Education, some times as an evolution of Integration.

##### Education Information - 2002

Total No. of Government Schools	9,887
Total No. of Students in Government Schools	4,190,657
Total No. of Disabled Students in Government Schools	84,545
No. of Visually Impaired Children in Government Schools	13,480
No. of Special Education Unit in Government Schools	852
No. of Special Education Teachers in Government Schools	931
No. of Special Education Directors/Deputy Directors	30
No. of Special Education In service Advisor	74

Source: School Census 2002

##### Provincial Statistics - 2002.

Province	Total No of Students (A)	Total No of Disabled Students (B)	Total No of Visually Impaired Students (C).	% (B/A)	% (C/A)
Western	901,878	13,881	3,136	1.54	0.35
Central	568,699	12,820	1,928	2.25	0.34
Southern	567,216	9,633	1,814	1.70	0.32
North Eastern	638,846	16,146	1,837	2.53	0.29
North Western	504,833	8,763	1,295	1.74	0.26
North Central	280,437	6,003	778	2.14	0.28
Uva	210,921	7,699	1,217	3.65	0.58
Sabaragamuwa	417,829	9,600	1,475	2.30	0.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,090,659</b>	<b>84,545</b>	<b>13,480</b>	<b>2.07</b>	<b>0.33</b>

Source: School Census 2002

There is a wide range in Special Educational Needs (SEN) of disabled children. Therefore a special strategic approach is followed in implementing Inclusive Education. The variable opportunities provided for the Visually Impaired Children are,

- Spend full time in special Education Unit but participate in Co-curricular activities with other children.
- More time in Special Unit and less time in regular class.
- Part-time in Special Unit and Part-time in regular class.
- Studying in regular class while going to Special Unit for Special Educational Programmes and Techniques.
- Studying in regular class with special assistance of a Special Education Teacher.
- Studying in regular class without special care.

The last variable is being practiced for most students. Above approaches provide the following for the Visually Impaired child.

1. Care.
2. Rehabilitation.
3. Inclusive Education in regular school.

#### **4.2 Inclusive Education.**

It is the concept of educating the Visually Impaired child in the regular class room with other normal children.

#### **4.3 Practice f Inclusive Education.**

It is the most popular and widely accepted strategic approach in educating SEN children. Some schools which implement Inclusive Education has Special Education Units to fulfill Special Educational Needs of SEN children. In Sri Lanka Inclusive Education Is carried out in two different methods.

- (1). Student is first admitted to Special Education Unit. Once the child has mastered the special techniques he/she is introduced to the regular class. Student goes to Special Education Unit for special techniques and programmes.
- (2). Student is admitted to regular class. (this is possible if child suffers a lesser degree of impairment.) He/she is sent to Special Education unit as appropriate to learn special techniques.

In both above methods while the student is in the regular class, class teacher/subject teacher is assisted by a Special Education Trained Teacher, or by a voluntary aid/mother, If necessary but, responsibility lies on the class teacher/subject teacher.

#### **4.4 Objectives of Inclusive Education.**

- Socialization of Visually Impaired child.

- Personality development and training for life competencies.
- Vocational training.
- Create awareness among other children that they are a part of society

#### **4.5 Special Education Unit.**

It is a part of the regular school, which serves as a Resource Centre in providing Technical and Teaching assistance to the Visually Impaired child studying in the regular class. The unit is kept in charge of a Special Education Teacher. This teacher along with the class teacher/subject teacher work as a team to provide special educational needs of the SEN child when and where necessary. Visually Impaired children are given Vocational Training such as Sewing, handicraft etc. In the special unit.

#### **4.6 Current Supporting Activities.**

- (i) Pre service and In-service teacher training.
- (ii) New Educational Policy.
- (iii) Partnerships & Services
- (iv) Identification, Assessment and other support by special Laboratory Services.
- (v) Adaptation of Special Curriculum and Teaching Methods.

#### **4.6 (i) Pre-service and In-service Teacher Training.**

- Two year teacher training in special education at National Colleges of Education.
- In-service short- term training for teachers at National Institute of Education.
- Bachelors' degree in special education at university.
- Introduction of Special Education as a subject to the curriculum of Primary and Secondary teacher training programmes.
- Training programme for In-service Advisors.

#### **4.6 (ii) New Special Educational Policy.**

1. Special Education Branch (SEB) in the Ministry of Education to identify.
  - Requirements of 25 special education Assisted schools and expand them.
  - Requirements of existing 852 special education units in Government schools.
  - 200 more schools to be provided with special education units.
2. SEB of Ministry to prepare budget proposal for current year.
3. SEB of Ministry to project future requirements of teachers.
4. National Institute of Education to plan and implement In-service training for 30,000 primary teachers.
5. National Authority for teacher Education to plan intake of teachers for Pre-service training.
6. National Institute of Education to develop curriculum for special education.

7. School principals to inform Divisional Directors of Education the list of pupils who need spectacles. (where parents can not afford to buy them)
8. SEB to procure and supply spectacles to students.

#### 4.6 (iii) Partnership & Services.

Partnership of \*Parents, \*Community organizations, \*Local Government Authorities, \*Ministry of Health, \*Ministry of Social Services, \*Voluntary individual Donors & Non-governmental Organizations (local & foreign)

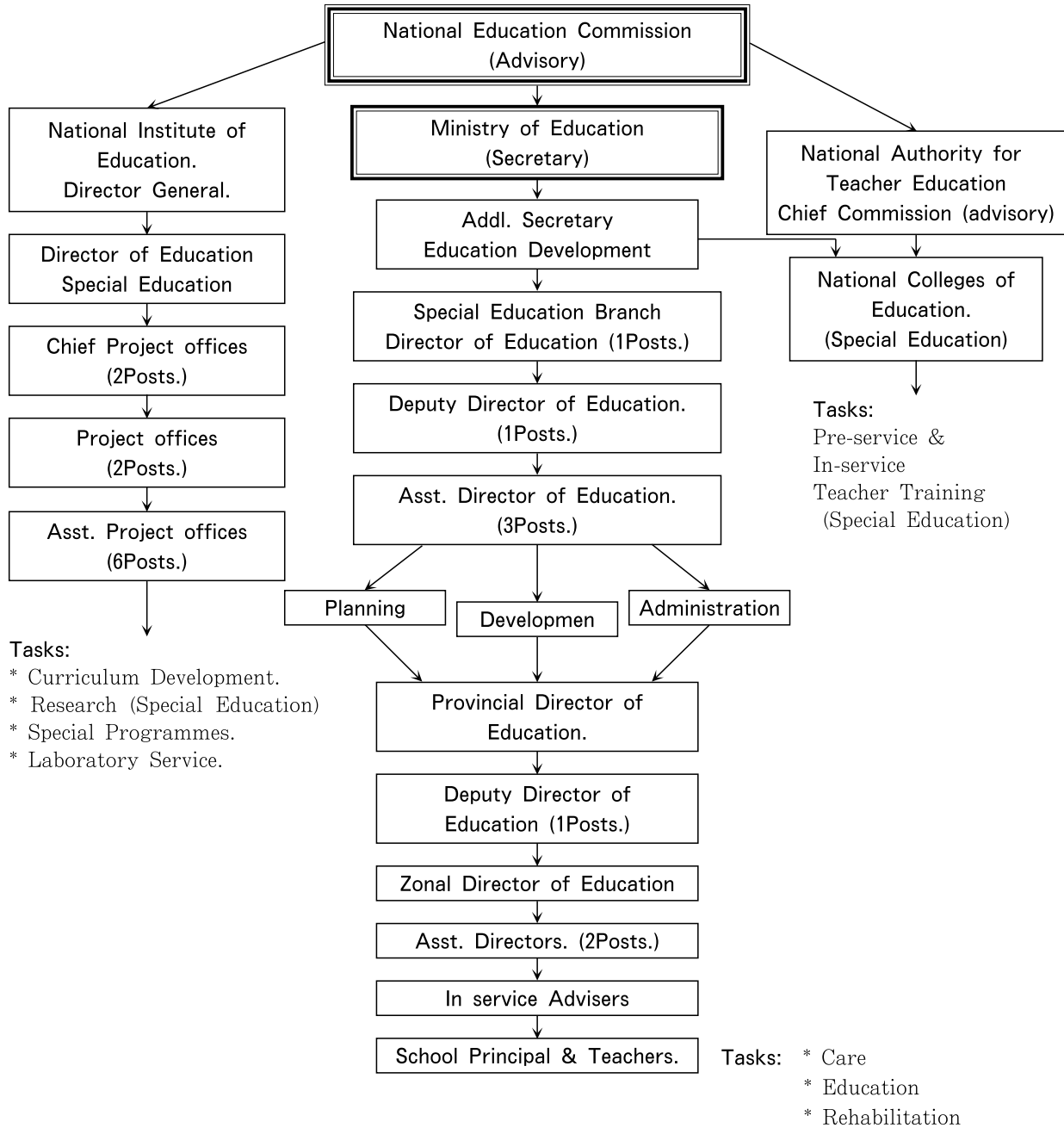
#### 4.6 (iv) Identification, Assessment and other support by special Laboratory Services.

Services	Eye Clinic	Vision Text	Assessment and Grading	Guidance to Teachers	Guidance to Parents	Demonstration for use of Special Equipments	Repair of Equipment	Supply of Spectacles
Government Eye Hospital	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	-	-
Nagoda Eye Hospital	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	-	-
Meegoda Resource Centre under Ministry of Education	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-
National Institute of Education	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-
Bandaragama Special Education Laboratory	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	-
Mayura Centre Matugama	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	-	-

#### 4.6 (v) Adaptation of Special Curriculum and Teaching Methods.

- Special syllabus for Mathematics in General Certificate of Education, Ordinary Level (Gr.10 & 11)
- Maintain teacher, Student ratio 1:6/7 for visually impaired children.
- Teaching in small groups with normal children.
- Assistance of peer group.
- Identification and development of special talents such as music, Sewing, Handicraft etc.
- Opportunity for sports activities.
- Development of available sight and other senses to the maximum.

## 5. Administrative Structure (Special Education)



## 6. Programmes of Special Education for 2002 by National Institute of Education.

1. A study on policy and implementation of Inclusive Education in Sri Lanka with view to improve opportunities.
2. Preparation of a resource pack on Inclusive Education.
3. Implement new Education Reforms in special education for visually impaired.
4. Conducting certificate course for Pre-school teachers.
5. Early identification, and assessment of SEN children
6. Conducting Diploma course for parents.
7. Counseling programmes for parents of SEN children

## 7. Assisted Schools.

These schools get government assistance for their teachers' salaries. Other funding is met by local and foreign Donor Agencies and by individual donors. These schools are either Residential or Non-residential. Most of children in these schools show multiple disabilities and are not practical to be put in regular class. These schools also implement the general curriculum.

1. No. of Assisted schools	- 25
2. Total no. of disabled children in these schools	- 2789
3. No. of Visually Impaired children	- 583
4. No. of teachers for special education	- 416

*Source.* special education branch of Ministry of Education.

*Haturusinghe, L.P Special Schools for Disabled Children in Sri Lanka*

## 8. Key Issues and Strategies for Improvement.

1. Master plan to improve Infrastructure and Physical resource. The classroom environment should facilitate the students to participating in activities freely. There should be space for equipments and also a supply of relevant equipments & materials.
2. Create awareness among parents and community with respect to
  - Early identification of disability.
  - Available opportunity for assessment.
  - Need for Special Education.
  - About Inclusive Education.
3. Strategies to develop special abilities and talents.
4. Professional development through coordination and implementation of In-service programmes for Teachers, school Heads, In-service Advisors and other educational personals.
5. Implementation of a close supervision and monitoring system, to be conducted by In-service Advisors, Directors/ Dep. Directors.
6. Establish a mechanism to facilitate an effective feedback on school level implementation of curriculum and teacher training.
7. Review progress of all activities pertaining to Special Education.
8. Plan for establishment of Pre-School Education for SEN children & Training pre-school teachers.
9. Improve and expand facilities for early identification and assessment by special laboratory & medical services.