



## Sri Lanka

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### **Inclusive Education: Effective practices in Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka has a rather history of impressive achievements in the field of education. Our participation rates and retention rates rank high among the developing nations. However, we still have some way to go in achieving total participation. The quality of education delivered is perhaps a bigger concern for the country. Since human resource development is a primary requisite in improving the economy as well as the quality of life, the present government is determined to carry forward the development process of education and equip the younger generation with skills and competencies needed to face the challenges of the modern world.

Compulsory Basic Education and also the Free Education are major concerns of the country. Although the compulsory education ordinance for 5-14 age group was there since 1939, it was made legislative in 1997. The Free Education Act came in 1945. The 1978 Constitution guaranteed the universal and equal access to education at all levels. The law of language policy state that the medium of instruction of students should be their mother tongue. Enhancing equity, development of the network of schools in disadvantaged locations were some of the attempts made to improve student access. Major reforms in general education at all levels began in 1997. The competencies that each pupil should attain at the end of each key stage have been identified. The policy for provision of Quality Inputs was changed, drawing special attention to the small schools.

In order to encourage children attending schools and also to ease the burden of parents a number of programmes implemented. Free school text books, free school uniforms, Grade 5 scholarships, subsidized transport facilities are some of the attractive ones. In addition, improvement of small rural schools under various projects has made the schools attractive to the children. It has contributed to increase participation in rural, plantation, and other vulnerable sectors of the system. The government has not neglected the schools in the conflict affected areas. They are given priority in provision of facilities.

Thorough a number of non-formal and special education programmes the state tries its best to accommodate every child in the education system. Sri Lankan government has taken steps to adopt the concept of inclusive education for special education. Community Learning Centre programme is an intervention to direct street children into education. At these centres children are provided with opportunities to improve literacy and vocational skills.