



## The Sri Lanka Education Sector Experience

### Overview

A World Bank project in Sri Lanka helped a greater number of boys and girls complete their basic education by the end of the last decade, with students scoring better in mathematics and English across all nine provinces.

### Challenge

Sri Lanka's general education sector faced challenges in expanding equitable access to primary and secondary schooling and establishing a high quality education system. The government needed to substantially boost participation in basic education to achieve the target of universal completion, as well improve the quality of education. Cognitive achievement tests showed substantial shortfalls in language and numeracy skills. Schools had little voice in the delivery of education services, with nearly all management decisions being taken at higher levels of the education administration. The allocation of resources for education was inadequately prioritized towards higher-order processes, assets and spaces, and towards maintenance and replacement.

### Approach

The Bank's Education Sector Development Program for Sri Lanka promoted equitable access to basic and secondary education through the creation of school attendance committees, and the expansion of basic facilities such as classrooms, water and sanitation, school health and nutrition programs for poor children, and special and non-formal education. The Program improved the quality of education through curriculum modernization, teacher development, and the on-time delivery of textbooks. This initiative, by setting explicit budget targets, also helped increase resources for the training of teachers and principals, and for new or better libraries, science laboratories, multi-purpose rooms, information-technology centers, and activity rooms. The role

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More Results



**93%**

of girls now complete basic education

**2,825**

school facilities were constructed

of schools in the delivery of education services was strengthened through a school-based management pilot program called the Program for School Improvement. This element of the program helped train education managers and administrators, and in-service advisors. A special grant provided support for an over-arching education sector development plan implemented jointly by the central Ministry of Education and the provincial education ministries. Funds were released only as the various education agencies reached certain goals and milestones.

## Results

The proportion of students completing basic education rose from 73 percent for boys and 83 percent for girls in 2005 to 89 percent for boys and 93 percent for girls in 2010. The proportion of students scoring over 50 percent in mathematics at grade 4 increased from 62 percent for boys and 71 percent for girls in 2003 to 77 percent for boys and 87 percent for girls in 2009, and in English from 29 percent for boys and 38 percent for girls in 2003 to 52 percent for boys and 65 percent for girls in 2009. The increase in participation and improvement in learning outcomes was observed in all nine provinces of the country.

During the project timeframe of 2006-2011, the following results were recorded:

- 2,825 school facilities were constructed.
- 1,220 classroom blocks were built.
- 844 toilets were constructed.
- 119 information and communications technology laboratories, 318 science laboratories, 166 libraries, 69 multi-purpose unit activity rooms were constructed.
- 4,029 schools were certified as health promoting schools by provinces.
- 110,501 teachers were trained.
- 113,766 in-service advisors were trained.
- 136 education officials were trained.
- 78 Teacher Centers conducted multi-ethnic teacher training programs.
- 629 schools conducted co-curricular activities among children of different ethnic communities.
- The Program for School Improvement pilot program was tested in eight zones and evaluated before being extended to cover 100 zones across the country.
- The survival rate to grade 9 increased from 78 percent in 2005 to 91 percent in 2010.
- Cognitive achievement scores in first language (Sinhala and Tamil) grade 4 increased from 60 percent in 2003 to 82 percent in 2009.
- Cognitive achievement scores in mathematics in grade 4 rose from 67 percent in 2003 to 82 percent in 2009.
- Cognitive achievement scores in English in grade 4 rose from 32 percent in 2003 to 58 percent in 2009.

### MORE INFORMATION

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## Voices

“Children from very poor families study in our school. We have children who have lost their families due to the war. After the introduction of the computers, children’s attendance has significantly improved, and they are very happy.”

—Victoria Presley, Teacher

## Bank Contribution

The Education Sector Development Program included a US\$60-million grant from the International Development Association (IDA) covering February 2006-June 2011. Approximately 75 percent of these funds were allocated for the provincial education ministries,

and 25 percent for the central Ministry of Education. The project was expanded through an additional US\$10 million in 2008, reflecting the significant achievements being made. The main activities aimed to: (a) promote equitable access to basic education (grades 1-9) and secondary education (grades 10-13); (b) improve the quality of education; (c) enhance the economic efficiency and equity of resource allocation and distribution within the education system; and (d) strengthen education governance and service delivery.

## Partners

The World Bank was the sole financier of this program. Other development partners, such as the Asian Development Bank, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, and the United Nations Children's Fund, and the governments of Japan, Germany and Australia, provided funds support to specific areas of education under separate projects.

## Toward the Future

The government has prepared an Education Sector Development Framework and Program for 2012-2016, using many of the recommendations contained in a World Bank review of the sector. The World Bank is also supporting a new education project, approved by the Board in November 2011, which will also link financial support to the achievement of results.