



National  
Education  
Commission

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4

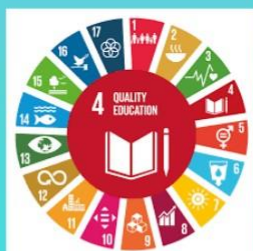
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# SRI LANKA

# NATIONAL SDG 4

# MIDTERM REVIEW

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*Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality  
Education and Promote Lifelong Learning  
Opportunities for All*

*1<sup>st</sup> Draft Report by*  
**National Education Commission**  
National Focal Point for SDG Midterm Review  
August 2023

# National SDG 4 Midterm Review

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# Preface

The year 2023 represents the ‘midway mark’ for implementing strategies and activities targeting the Sustainable Development Goal 4 by the participating countries. At the 2<sup>nd</sup> Asia-Pacific Regional Education Minister’s Conference held on 13 Jun 2022, Sri Lanka as of the other participating countries has made a commitment to make an assessment by 2023 at the national level on the progress made towards achieving SDG 4 targets and other education-related SDG targets since 2015.

It is expected that the Midterm Review of the progress achieved in SDG 4 Targets will help highlight good practices and draw salient lessons and forecast the progress aimed in the future, and to renew and elevate country’s commitments to SDG 4. At the same time, the Midterm Review is also expected to examine existing and emerging challenges and opportunities – taking into special consideration of the **post-COVID-19 pandemic context** – that will help to design an effective learning recovery for all, and to take measures to improve the resilience of national education systems for internal and external shocks.

Against this background, on the initiation of UNESCO Bangkok Office, the **Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO** in consultation with **Hon. Minister of Education** has nominated the **National Education Commission** as the **National Focal Point** to conduct an independent review and prepare the **National SDG 4 Midterm Review Report** for Sri Lanka. When, the Secretary General of Sri Lankan Commission for UNESCO invited the NEC to become the National Focal Point to conduct the National SDG 4 Midterm Review, I gladly accepted the invitation as it comes within the mandate of the NEC. Invitation was extended in latter part of January 2023 and the first draft report is expected to be submitted by 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023.

Though, the NEC was given a very narrow time window to operate, upon receipt of the invitation, the NEC has commissioned a well experienced review team and has adopted participatory and evidenced-based approach for the review as per the UNESCO prescribed Guidelines. The profile the Review Team including the review process adopted is given in Appendix.

It was indeed a very tedious but a challenging and rewarding task. As the Chairman of the National Education Commission, I am pleased to present the first draft of the National SDG 4 Midterm Review Report.

Prof. Harischandra Abeygunawardena  
Chairman  
National Education Commission  
20<sup>th</sup> August 2023

# Abbreviations

<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>ADB/SESIP</b>	Asian Development Bank-funded Secondary Education Sector Improvement Program
<b>ADB/SSDP</b>	ADB-assisted Skills Sector Development Project
<b>ADB/STHRDP</b>	Asian Development Bank-funded Science and Technology Human Resources Development Project
<b>BEd</b>	Bachelor of Education
<b>DCS</b>	Department of Census and Statistics
<b>DPCC</b>	Department of Probation and Child Care
<b>DSU</b>	Disability Studies Unit
<b>ECCD</b>	Early Childhood Care and Development
<b>ECCE</b>	Early Childhood Care and Education
<b>ECD</b>	Early Childhood Development
<b>ECDI</b>	Early Childhood Development Index
<b>ECE</b>	Early Childhood Education
<b>ECEC</b>	Early Childhood Education and Care
<b>ECED</b>	Early Childhood Educational and Development
<b>EGMA</b>	Early Grade Mathematic Assessments
<b>EGRA</b>	Early Grade Reading Assessments
<b>ERD/MoF</b>	Department of External Resources of the Ministry of Finance
<b>ESDP</b>	Education Sector Development Plan
<b>FHB</b>	Family Health Bureau
<b>G.C.E</b>	General Certificate of Education
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GEMP</b>	General Education Modernization Project
<b>GER</b>	Gross Enrolment Ratio
<b>GoSL</b>	Government of Sri Lanka
<b>GPI</b>	Gross Parity Index
<b>HED/MoE</b>	Higher Education Division of the Ministry of Education
<b>JICA</b>	Japan International Cooperation Agency

<b>MEd</b>	Master in Education
<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Education Sri Lanka
<b>MoFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>MPhil</b>	Master of Philosophy
<b>MWCASE</b>	Ministry of Women Child Affairs and Social Empowerment
<b>N/A</b>	Not Available
<b>NCAS</b>	National Centre for Advancement for Social Science and Humanities
<b>NCoEs</b>	National Colleges of Education
<b>NCPA</b>	National Child Protection Authority
<b>NDT</b>	National Diploma in Teaching
<b>NEC</b>	National Education Commission
<b>NEMIS</b>	National Education Management Information System
<b>NFC</b>	National Finance Commission
<b>NIE</b>	National Institute of Education
<b>NSECD</b>	National Secretariat for Early Childhood Development
<b>NSHEIs</b>	Non-state Higher Education Institutions
<b>TCF</b>	Teacher Competency Framework
<b>NVQ</b>	National Vocational Qualification
<b>NVQF</b>	National Vocational Qualification Framework
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OED</b>	Overseas Education Unit
<b>PC</b>	Provincial Councils
<b>PDE</b>	Provincial Departments of Education
<b>PEAs</b>	Provincial Education Authorities
<b>PGDE</b>	Post Graduate Diploma in Education
<b>SBPTDPs</b>	School-Based Professional Teacher Development Programs
<b>SDVERED/MoE</b>	Skills Development, Vocational Education, Research and Innovation Division of the Ministry of Education
<b>SENs</b>	Special Education Needs
<b>SLTSM</b>	Sri Lanka Teacher Service Minute

<b>STR</b>	Student-Teacher Ratio
<b>TCs</b>	Teacher Centres
<b>TEIs</b>	Teacher Education Institutes
<b>THRM</b>	Teacher Human Resource Management
<b>TTCs</b>	Teacher Training Centres
<b>TVEC</b>	Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
<b>UGC</b>	University Grants Commission
<b>UIS</b>	UNESCO Institute of Statistics
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>WB/AHEADP</b>	World Bank-funded Accelerating Higher Education Expansion and Development Project
<b>WB/GEMP</b>	World Bank -funded General Education Modernization Project
<b>ZEO</b>	Zonal Education Office

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# Part I: Introduction

## National SDG 4 Midterm Review

- Purpose
- Scope
- Expected Outputs and Outcomes
- Review Process



## National SDG 4 Midterm Review

With the adoption of the **Incheon Declaration at the World Education Forum (WEF) in May 2015** and of the **Education 2030 Framework for Action at the WEF in November 2015**, the member countries and international community jointly expressed the commitment of governments and the international community to work together towards *‘ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’* by 2030. The **Education 2030 Framework for Action** adopted by UNESCO in 2015 also clearly states that;

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*‘follow-up and review based on robust monitoring, reporting and evaluation policies, systems and tools are essential for the achievement of SDG 4 - Education 2030’.*

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The year 2023 represents the ‘midway mark’ for implementing strategies and activities targeting SDG 4 by the participating countries. In this regard, participants of the recent 2<sup>nd</sup> Asia-Pacific Regional Education Minister’s Conference (APREMC) held in Bangkok, Thailand confirmed that the Asia-Pacific region will conduct a Midterm Review of SDG 4 in 2023. Accordingly, the member States in the region, has made a commitment to make an assessment by 2023 on the progress made since 2015 towards achieving SDG 4 targets and other education-related SDG targets at the national level.

The Midterm Review will also help highlight good practices and draw salient lessons and prospects for education in the future aimed at renewing and elevating country commitments to SDG 4. At the same time, the Midterm Review is also expected to examine existing and emerging challenges and opportunities – taking into special consideration the post-pandemic context – that will help to design an effective learning recovery for all, and to transform education and its systems.

### Purpose

In the light of post-COVID-19 recovery, the Midterm Review is required to assess progress made towards SDG4 and the outcome of the review shall facilitate laying a solid foundation for the accelerating the transformation of education and its systems.

More specifically, the Midterm Review will help Member States to:

- I. Ensure monitoring, follow-up, and review of all targets as a key strategic approach to achieve SDG 4;
- II. Identify progress and gaps, summarize lessons learned, highlight good practices, clarify priorities and strategies for going forward and shaping the future of education;
- III. Strengthen national capacities for the monitoring and evaluation of education; and
- IV. Accelerate the overall implementation of the SDG 4-Education 2030 Agenda.

UNESCO has prescribed Guidelines<sup>1</sup> on how to conduct the SDG 4 Midterm Review which aim to provide guidance to national authorities and SDG 4 stakeholders to organize and conduct their national SDG 4 Midterm Review. It states;

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***‘This Review shall document progress achieved towards the SDG 4 targets; experiences in implementing relevant and appropriate strategies; lessons learned; and emerging issues and challenges, as well as inform the development of strategies to accelerate progress towards achieving SDG 4 and future policy dialogue’.***

The Midterm Review will also take into consideration the impact of COVID-19 on SDG 4 implementation and measures for learning recovery, as well as national, regional and global commitments towards transforming education. In addition, the Guidelines list key indicators of SDG 4 Targets, and guiding questions to examine during the review, and also list the suggested contents and outline for the **National SDG 4 Midterm Review Report**. In addition, the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS)<sup>2</sup> has published country-specific values for benchmark indicators of SDG 4 Targets and the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka through its Education for All Branch (EFA/MoE) has defined national benchmark values, at least for few indicators for 2025 and 2030<sup>3</sup> (**Annex 1 of Appendix**), and those benchmark values will act as referral points in assessing the progress achieved by those respective SDG 4 Targets.

As such this Review shall document the progress achieved towards the SDG 4 targets; experiences earned in implementing relevant and appropriate strategies, lessons learned; and emerging issues and challenges, as well as the areas which require strategic approaches to accelerate progress towards achieving SDG 4.

## Scope

As proposed by UNESCO prescribed Guidelines, the Midterm Review shall focus on the following interlinked strategic objectives or ‘components’:

- I. Assessing progress made towards the SDG 4 targets and other education-related SDG targets;
- II. Reviewing the implementation of national strategies to achieve SDG 4;
- III. Determining existing and emerging challenges and gaps, as well as opportunities in the implementation of SDG 4; and
- IV. Propose a Way Forward by revisiting national SDG 4 frameworks/strategies in light of COVID-19 in relation to the commitments made in the Bangkok Statement 2022<sup>4</sup> and TES

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<sup>1</sup> National SDG 4 Midterm Review – Guidelines for Asia and Pacific Region; <https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/national-sdg-4-midterm-guidelines-asia-and-pacific-meeting-document>

<sup>2</sup> <https://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org>

<sup>3</sup> National Benchmark Document provided by the Education for All Branch, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka (EFAB/MoE, SL)

<sup>4</sup> Bangkok Statement 2022; <https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/bangkok-statement-2022-towards-effective-learning-recovery-all-and-transforming-education>

National Statements of Commitment<sup>5</sup>, and identifying relevant strategies and actions for moving forward.

## Expected Outputs and Outcomes

The expected outputs and outcomes of the Midterm Review include national reports on specific SDG 4 Targets focusing on the current strategies, progress, and remaining challenges. The national review shall include prescribed benchmarks indicators and data on country specific SDG 4 benchmarks indicators reflecting current achievements, as well as the gaps and good practices. Upon completion of the Midterm Review, the participating countries are expected to proactively strengthen capacity development for formulating policies and strategies and implementing the strategy-specific action plans to accelerate programs aimed at achieving SDG 4 Targets.

## Review Process

The National SDG 4 Midterm Review was undertaken by the National Education Commission whose key mandate is to review ongoing policies, strategies and plans and activities, and formulate national education policies and strategies at periodic intervals. From the outset, **the National SDG 4 Midterm Review steered by the NEC has been considered as an independent review conducted by a third party.**

Upon receipt of the nomination from the Secretary General of the Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2022 as the Focal Point to conduct the National SDG 4 Midterm Review (**Annex 2 of Appendix**), the NEC has commissioned an expert team consisting of eminent academics and senior officers of the Ministry of Education with relevant expertise who would conduct the midterm review in liaison with NEC research staff under the guidance of a Steering Committee. The composition of the Steering Committee and the profile of expert team and NEC research staff together with the task(s) assigned for respective experts are given in **Annex 3 of Appendix**.

The midterm review by the Expert Team commenced on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2023 with a briefing given by the Chairman, NEC, Secretary General, Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO and by two team leaders. Each expert was given task-specific Terms of Reference for the assigned responsibilities and a template prepared by the team leaders for each expert team that specified the layout of the draft report and task-specific guidelines/questions (**Annex 4 of Appendix**).

This briefing was followed by a consultative meeting where the expert team members were given briefings by the key officers of the Ministry of Education on the programs specific to SDG 4, spearheaded by the Ministry of Education and the types of data collected and on the databases maintained by the Statistics Unit of the MoE. In addition, the Senior Statistician nominated as the focal point by the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) gave a briefing on the role played by DCS in updating the data bases of DCS with respect of SDG 4 targets. The list of participants attended the above briefings is given in **Annex 5 of Appendix**.

Following the above briefings, the members of the expert team with task-specific assignments have commenced the review from 1<sup>st</sup> week of February 2023. All the task-specific expert teams have adopted participatory and evidence-based approach in their reviews. Further, the expert teams assigned for Chapters and Tasks have been assisted by the NEC Research Staff. Experts together with assigned NEC staff visited the relevant institutions, i.e. Ministries, Departments and Divisions and

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<sup>5</sup> TES National Statement of Commitment; <https://trnsformingeducationsummit.-sdg4 education 2030.org/system/>

National Agencies and conducted stakeholder discussions and perused the documents made available (**Annexure 6 of Appendix**). Further, the experts team members have reviewed all annual reports produced by the Sustainable Development Council of Sri Lanka (SDCSL)<sup>6</sup>, and also the data bases maintained by UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS). In addition, expert team has obtained data from the national statistical office, the DCS. Further, the data from provincial level were collected from Chief Secretaries of the Provincial Councils and Heads of Provincial Departments of Education either by visiting the respective offices and also through written submissions.

Review team has also taken into consideration the impacts of COVID-19 on SDG 4 implementation and measures taken for learning recovery. In addition, the review team has strictly adhered to the UNESCO Guidelines - proposed key indicators and country specific indicator values published by the UIS, and chapter- or task-specific guiding questions posed. In addition, the expert team adopted the layout proposed by the UNESCO guidelines in compiling the final report of the National SDG 4 Midterm Review Report.

As planned at the outset of the midterm review, upon completion of drafting the 1<sup>st</sup> draft of the assigned Chapters or the Review Reports on SDG 4 Targets by the respective expert teams, the NEC has organized two series of mini-workshops with participation of key stakeholders directly involved with respective SDG 4 Targets, drawn from Ministries, Departments, Agencies and NGOs. The first mini-workshop series was conducted from 28<sup>th</sup> March to 6<sup>th</sup> April 2023 (**Annex 7 of Appendix**) and based on the inputs received, the respective expert teams have improved the respective drafts of Chapters/Review Reports on SDG targets.

Following that, the 2<sup>nd</sup> series of mini-workshops were conducted during the period from 2<sup>nd</sup> May to 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023 with participation of same key stakeholders invited for the 1<sup>st</sup> series of Mini-Workshop to discuss the updated versions of drafts on Chapters/Review Reports of SDG 4 Targets (**Annex 8 of Appendix**). The list of invitees of two series of Mini-Workshop are given in **Annex 9 of Appendix**. Having completed the stakeholder reviews at two mini-workshop series, the expert teams were requested to submit the final drafts of the Chapters/Review Reports on respective assignments to the two team leaders by 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023. Upon receipts of the final drafts from respective expert teams, two team leaders have amended and edited the final draft reports submitted by the respective expert teams to ensure the report conform with the guidelines, questions posed and suggested lengths of chapters and the draft review reports on 10 SDG 4 targets. In the draft report, the questions prescribed by the UNESCO Guidelines were reworded as the sub-headings of respective Chapters/Review Reports.

The first draft of the compiled draft of the report on National SDG 4 Midterm Review was tabled at a National Workshop held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023. Participants were invited from all relevant ministries, institutions and agencies including the NGOs. The validation workshop was graced by Hon. Minister of Education as the chief guest. List of participants of national validation workshop is given in **Annex 10 of Appendix**. One-day workshop was well attended including the officers from UNESCO, New Delhi Office via Zoom, and concluded successfully. Inputs from participants were obtained through the discussions held and also through their written submissions. Drafts of Chapters and Reports on SDG 4 Targets were further improved by two team leaders and by the Chairman of the NEC based on the inputs received.

The Part II of this document present first draft of edited and formatted **National SDG 4 Midterm Review Report**.

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<sup>6</sup><https://sdc.gov.lk>

# SDG4: QUALITY EDUCATION – TARGETS







## 1.1 Introduction

Sri Lanka has faced significant challenges in its macro environment since 2015, impacting the country's progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on quality education and lifelong learning. Adverse events such as the Easter Sunday Bomb attacks in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022, and the 2022 economic crisis have hindered economic growth and poverty eradication efforts. The COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis were particularly severe, resulting in an 8.7% contraction in the economy (Fig 1.1 in Annexure 1). As a result, poverty levels have increased, with an estimated rise from 14.3% in 2019<sup>7</sup> to 25% in 2022<sup>8</sup>. Inequality, as measured by the Gini Index, also worsened during this period.

The recovery from these crises has been further complicated by the volatility of the political environment in Sri Lanka. Frequent changes in heads of State, prime ministers, and cabinet reshuffles have led to change of the ministers responsible for education. Along with these, education governance too has been adversely affected; in some instances, the set of education institutions in the country was divided into several ministries, while in other instances institutions not dealing with the subject of education were included under the ministry-in-charge of education. These frequent changes to the governing structure of education have indeed been disruptive to the functioning of education system as well as to the educational-related project planning and implementation, monitoring, and capacity building efforts.

Overall, the combination of adverse shocks, economic downturn, political volatility, disruptions to the education governance structure and frequent shifts in political leadership has posed significant challenges for Sri Lanka in achieving SDG 4 – *‘Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all’*.

## 1.2 Impact of the Macro Environment on the Education Sector

Education sector in Sri Lanka has faced significant disruptions in the recent past due to various adverse shocks in the macro environment. In recent years, these shocks have caused significant challenges and hindered the smooth functioning of education sector. In 2019, after the Easter Sunday bomb attacks, schools were temporarily closed for security reasons. Subsequently, from 2020 to 2021 period, the COVID-19 pandemic led to repeated closures of schools to ensure the safety of students and staff. Adding to the disruptions, in 2022, recurrent trade union strikes, fuel shortages, extended power cuts, etc., arising out of economic crisis disrupted the function of schools once again.

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<sup>7</sup>Department of Census and Statistics (2019) *Poverty Indicators-2019*.

<http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Resource/en/Poverty/PovertyIndicators-2019.pdf>

<sup>8</sup>World Bank (2023) *Poverty and Equity Brief South Asia - Sri Lanka*. Retrieved May 10, 2023;

[www.worldbank.org/poverty](http://www.worldbank.org/poverty)

One of the prominent features of the crisis was the dual-debt burden faced by the country, which severely limited foreign exchange availability and public finance. This foreign exchange crisis impacted all sectors of the economy, including education and healthcare. The government had to curtail imports, including essential items like fuel, leading to transportation issues, electricity blackouts, and shortages of cooking fuel. As a result, schools faced challenges in resuming operations, and even online education was difficult due to disruptions in electricity supply. Additionally, there were shortages of imported inputs such as computers, mobile phones, paper, etc., affecting education services.

Moreover, the lack of public finance limited the country's ability to invest in the development of the education sector. Government expenditure on education as a share of GDP decreased from 2.06% in 2015 to 1.52% in 2022 (Fig 1.2 in Annexure 1). Expenditure also decreased as a share of government expenditure from 9.8% to 8.8% over the same period. If this trend in decline of public finances dedicated for education continues, it is very likely Sri Lanka may not be able to reach national benchmarks set for 2030 by the Ministry of Education<sup>9</sup>; i.e. to allocate 15% of total government expenditure to education and allocate 4.0% of national GDP for education by 2030.

Further, welfare payments related to education also saw a decline, except for Grade V Scholarships and *Mahapola* busaries, despite increased poverty during the pandemic (Fig 1.3 in Annexure 1). The reduced expenditure on nutrition programs has also been a concern, as malnutrition has been identified as a significant contributor to multidimensional poverty in Sri Lanka. Nutrition not only plays a vital role in health but also in ensuring proper growth and learning potential<sup>10</sup>.

The aforementioned disruptions and financial constraints that disrupted the welfare measures have significantly impacted the education sector in Sri Lanka, hindering its progress and effectiveness in providing quality education to the population.

### **1.3 Population Dynamics: Exploring the Impact of Youth, Gender, Minorities, and Aging Society on Societal Development**

The population dynamics in Sri Lanka are undergoing significant transformations, marked by the "youth bulge" and "population ageing" phenomena. These emerging trends bring both challenges and opportunities for social, economic, and environmental development, necessitating proactive policies in areas such as employment, poverty alleviation, social protection, health, education, housing, sanitation, water, food, and energy. Addressing these dynamics effectively is crucial for the success and sustainability of development strategies, requiring the implementation of rights-based, evidence-based and gender-responsive policies<sup>11</sup>.

One notable aspect of Sri Lanka's population dynamics is the presence of a sizable working-age population, offering the potential for a first demographic dividend and subsequent economic growth. Research suggests that this demographic dividend will persist until 2037, providing a significant

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<sup>9</sup> National Bench Mark Document provided by the Education for All Branch, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka.

<sup>10</sup> Department of Census and Statistics. (2019). Multidimensional Poverty in Sri Lanka. Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics; [http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Resource/en/Poverty/GMPI\\_Bulletin2019.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Resource/en/Poverty/GMPI_Bulletin2019.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Dissanayake, Lakshman (2022) Population Dynamics and the Economic Life Cycle: An Analysis of National Transfer Accounts for Sri Lanka, United Nations Population Fund, Sri Lanka.

timeframe to capitalize on this demographic advantage. However, realizing the benefits of a reduced dependency burden requires the productive utilization of this opportunity through well-designed policies, strategies and programs.

According to standard projections, the number of children below 15 years of age is expected to decline from 5.13 million in 2012 to 4.41 million in 2037, representing a 14% decrease over the 25-year projection period<sup>12</sup>. As such, there was a need for increased attention and resources in the education sector until 2022, as the child population showed growth and stability during the 2012-2022 period. However, the pressure on resources shall ease from 2023 onwards in parallel with a significant decline in the child population.

The Sri Lankan labor force is projected to increase continuously from 12.7 million in 2012 to 13.6 million in 2037, although the percentage of the working-age population may fluctuate between 59% and 62%. These fluctuations can be attributed to historical changes in fertility rates and international migration trends. While the expanding global workforce presents an opportunity for economic expansion and GDP growth, it also poses challenges for developing countries like Sri Lanka, as the countries need to create sufficient job opportunities for the growing workforce.

Sri Lanka is experiencing a remarkable growth in its elderly population, which is a significant factor that is becoming increasingly apparent. In 2012, the number of older persons was 2,520,573, and it is expected to reach 5,118,094 in 2037, representing a 103% increase over a 25-year period. Population ageing, observed in Sri Lanka as well as in many developed and developing countries, is primarily driven by declining fertility rates, decreased mortality, increased life expectancy, and socioeconomic advancements.

Thus the understanding and effective management of population dynamics in Sri Lanka are essential for achieving SDG 4 – *ensuring equitable and quality education and provision of lifelong learning opportunities for all*, as it enables policymakers to design and implement evidence-based and gender-responsive strategies that address the emerging educational needs of the changing population.

## **1.4 Environmental Challenges: Climate Change, Pollution Issues, Landscape and Biodiversity Loss Issues and the Need for Sustainable Solutions**

The mitigation of Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and adaptation to climate change are recognized as crucial policy priorities in the country. Various policy documents highlight the significance of these issues. The industrial sector's energy use is identified as a major contributor to GHG emissions, emphasizing the need for policies and strategies and regulations targeting emissions reduction in this sector. Though, the policies dealing with forestry subsector supports GHG emission mitigation, there appears to be a significant inadequacy given to GHG emission mitigation strategies in policies and accompanied strategies that are related to agriculture and land-use and industrial sector.

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<sup>12</sup> Dissanayake, Lakshman (2016) Medium-Term Population Projection for Sri Lanka: 2012 to 2037. 2016. United Nations Population Fund, ISBN: 978-955-8375-13-6; [https://srilanka.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Population%20Projection%20Publications%20%20for%20WEB%20%281%29\\_0.pdf](https://srilanka.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Population%20Projection%20Publications%20%20for%20WEB%20%281%29_0.pdf)

Another threat is the improper solid waste management as it poses a threat to land, wetlands, water bodies, and other ecosystems in Sri Lanka<sup>13</sup>. The rise in per capita incomes and changing consumption patterns in Sri Lanka have resulted in a significant increase in solid waste generation, leading to detrimental effects on the environment, human and animal health, natural resource quality, and the overall aesthetics of the country. Improper waste disposal practices contribute to the pollution of land, air, and water resources, disrupting ecosystems and ecological balances. Improperly managed waste attracts pests and vectors, posing health risks to humans and animals, while contaminated water sources can cause waterborne diseases and illnesses. The presence of hazardous materials in the waste stream further increases long-term health hazards. Additionally, solid waste pollution negatively impacts agricultural productivity, compromises food safety, harms aquatic life, reduces biodiversity, and diminishes clean water resources. The accumulation of solid waste also diminishes the visual appeal of landscapes, public spaces, and tourist destinations, impacting the country's image and thus negating the efforts in promoting tourism. Given these multifaceted challenges, it is imperative to implement effective measures for sustainable waste management and environmental preservation in Sri Lanka. This includes promoting waste reduction and recycling initiatives, establishing proper waste collection and disposal systems, encouraging public awareness and participation, and enforcing regulations and policies related to waste management. By addressing the issue of solid waste generation comprehensively, Sri Lanka can mitigate the adverse impacts on the environment, protect human and animal health, preserve natural resources, and maintain the aesthetic appeal of the country.

## **1.5 Labour Market Dynamics: Gender Disparities, Youth Employment, and Workforce Composition**

Gender and age group disparities persist in Sri Lanka's labour force participation rates. Overall, of those aged 15 and above, 52.3% participate in the labour force<sup>14</sup>. However, there is a significant gap between male (73.0%) and female (34.5%) participation rates. The participation rates are particularly low for individuals aged 15 to 19 (12%) and 20 to 24 (54.9%) compared to older age groups. This discrepancy also highlights the limited access that women have to the labour market, consequential to economic, social, and cultural factors. It should also be noted that 62% of women, not active in the labour market were engaged in household activities, while only 4.3% of males were not in the labour force due to household activities.

Education plays a crucial role in improving women's labor force participation, with highly educated women, such as those with a degree or equivalent qualification, having nearly equal participation rates to men, and this has partly been attributed to government interventions of offering public sector jobs to graduates who are claimed to be unemployed (Fig 1.4 in Annexure 1). However, due to fiscal difficulties facing the country the government has suspended public sector recruitments. This may impact the availability of jobs for the highly skilled workers. Furthermore, a substantial number of knowledge-based workers lack the necessary qualifications. Many jobs in professionals, technical, and

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<sup>13</sup> Climate Change Secretariat, 2021, Optimal Policy Package for Measuring, Reporting, and Verification System (MRV), Sri Lanka Carbon Registry (SLCR), Sri Lanka Carbon Crediting System (SLCCS), and Carbon Pricing Instruments (CPIs), Colombo: Ministry of Environment

<sup>14</sup> Department of Census and Statistics, 2019, Labour Force Survey – Annual Report 2019, Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics; [http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Resource/en/LabourForce/Annual\\_Reports/LFS2019.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Resource/en/LabourForce/Annual_Reports/LFS2019.pdf).

associate professionals jobs that require skill levels 3 and 4 (higher diploma or degree) are performed by employees without possessing the appropriate education<sup>15</sup>. This mismatch is evident in various occupations, as illustrated in Table 1 in Annexure, where workers without the required skill levels are engaged in tasks that demand such qualifications. These findings highlight the need to address gender disparities and ensure equal opportunities for women in the labour market. Moreover, efforts should be made to enhance the skills and qualifications of workers, especially in knowledge-based occupations, to promote productivity and effectively meet the employment market and occupational requirements.

The Sri Lankan government has emphasized the importance of creating a knowledge-based economy to drive socio-economic growth<sup>16</sup>. However, job opportunities for highly skilled workers remain limited (Fig. 1.5 in Annexure 1), with the majority of available positions (63%) being for blue-collar workers. Sectors such as information technology and telecommunications, which require highly skilled workers, show significant growth potential but still lack sufficient employment generation, and yet again these limited opportunities are primarily concentrated in the Western province. The lack of effective macroeconomic management has reduced the economy's resilience to adverse shocks, as evidenced by the 2022 economic crisis. Issues such as absence of evidenced-based planning at national and sectoral-level, failures in adoption of policies and strategies by implementing agencies, inefficient public spending, and weak revenue collection have contributed to the crisis. To overcome these challenges and enhance macroeconomic stability, there is a need to strengthen the capacity of public sector institutions for strategic, evidence-based planning and management coupled with guaranteed public financé.

Boosting export earnings has been a consistent goal for successive governments and the current economic crisis has highlighted the importance of increasing earnings from exports. But the country continues to rely on low value-added agricultural goods, and ready-made garments. Sri Lanka needs to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for developing high-end export-oriented industries. However, the volatile political environment and the unstable policy environment is unattractive to investors. Lack of innovation and technical knowhow, skilled workforce, and poor development of export support services – such as quality assurance mechanisms and certifications – hinder the development of the export sector.

As stated earlier, Sri Lanka has declared 2021-2030 as the decade of technical and vocational skills enhancement to address the workforce deficiencies. The objective is to reduce the share of unskilled workers to 10% by strengthening the technical and vocational training sector<sup>17</sup>. However, challenges exist in streamlining different training institutions, improving their efficiency, and ensuring relevance of training to the labor market. Issues such as low public investments, difficulties in adapting to market changes, and low demand for training due to low incomes and limited job prospects need to be

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<sup>15</sup> International Labour Organization. (2008). International standard classification of occupations. Geneva. Geneva: International Labour Organization., p. 12; [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_172572.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_172572.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Finance, (various years), Budget Speech, Colombo: Ministry of Finance. (See for example, Budget Speech 2016, page 5; Budget Speech 2019, page 22 and Budget Speech 2021, page 2) available at <https://www.treasury.gov.lk/web/budget-speeches/section/2023>.

<sup>17</sup> Hayashi, R, Garcia, M., Jayasundara, H, Balasuriya, H, & Hirokawa, T, (2021) Covid-19 Impact on Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Sri Lanka, Manila: ADB; <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/683046/adb-brief-168-covid-19-impact-tvet-training-sri-lanka.pdf>

addressed<sup>18</sup>. Additionally, the unstable political environment and frequent changes in the governing structure of technical and vocational education and training sector pose obstacles to effective planning, strategy and program development and implementation.

## 1.6 Highlighting Additional SDGs in Relation to the Country's Priorities

**SDG 1/No Poverty**: Sri Lanka has experienced a slowdown in poverty reduction during the 2015 to 2019 period (Fig. 1.6 in Annexure 1) and poverty rates vary across geographic regions (Fig. 1.7 in Annexure 1)<sup>19</sup>. The estate sector has the highest poverty headcount, while urban areas have lower rates. Children are among the poorest age groups, with a little more than a sixth of the children in the country are residing in poor households. Access to decent jobs and quality education are recognized as key factors in reducing poverty and inequality.

**SDG 3/Good Health and Well-being**: An ageing population, changing disease patterns, and limited public finance is threatening the sustainability of achievements in the health sector. The health delivery model in the country has not changed overtime, despite changes in demography, economy and disease patterns. Attention and emphasis given to analyze and understand the changing dynamics in the health sector are rather inadequate to address the emerging challenges for maintaining the health outcomes of the country. The recent multidimensional poverty analysis in the country showed that malnutrition is one of the main contributors of pre-school aged children residing in multidimensionality poor households. Consorted efforts are needed to improve nutrition status of these children, as adequate nutrition is important for life-long health and better concentration in school. Improving education and awareness amongst the population of importance of nutrition is crucial in this regard.

**SDG 5/ (Target 5.6) Gender Equality**: Sri Lanka has performed well in the gender development index, with a relatively small gender gap. Women in Sri Lanka have higher life expectancy and expected years of schooling compared to men, but they have lower gross national income per capita. However, the country's performance in the gender inequality index is less satisfactory, particularly in terms of the share of women in legislative councils at divisional, provincial and national levels and labor force participation rate.

**SDG 6 (Target 6.2) Sanitation and Hygiene**: Majority of households in Sri Lanka have access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation facilities, although access is not equitable across different regions. Estate sector households have lower access to improved drinking water and sanitation compared to rural and urban areas. Access to sanitation in schools is also a persistent problem, leading to issues such as absenteeism among girls due to the lack of proper facilities for menstrual hygiene management.

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<sup>18</sup> National Education Commission, (2021) National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030) ISBN: 978-955-9448-56-3; [http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030\\_Full-Text.pdf](http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Department of Census and Statistics, 2019, Poverty Indicators-2019, Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics; <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Resource/en/Poverty/PovertyIndicators-2019.pdf>

**SDG 8/(Target 8.6) Decent Work and Sustainable Growth:** Access to decent work in Sri Lanka is low, particularly for women (Fig. 1.8 in Annexure 1)<sup>20</sup>. According to 2021, there were 17.1 million working age (15 yrs and above) population in the country. Of these, 8.1 million were employed, and labour force participation rates were much lower for females (31.8%) relative to the males (71.0%). In 2021, 40% of the employed were in vulnerable employment (that is they were either self-employed or unpaid family workers). Further only 32.5% of workers were in the formal sector indicating that only about a third of the employed had access to any form of social protection. Unexpectedly a higher share of female workers (39.3%) were formal workers than male workers (29.1%).

However, all workers in formal employment are not in decent employment. Decent employment consists of many components including social protection, worker's rights, and social dialogue<sup>21</sup>. There is limited data available on all the different aspects of decent work. But available data shows that in 2020, 32.4% of all workers were in full-time formal work, but only 29.8% were receiving the stipulated minimum monthly wages. According to the Decent Work Agenda of the International Labour Organization (ILO), minimum wages need to be earned by employees during normal working hours. Of the working age population, only 13% of workers were earning minimum wages while working legislated usual number of hours, others had to work longer to earn the minimum wage. Others needed to work longer hours to earn the minimum wage. These numbers varied widely across, gender, age-group, sector and level of education.

**SDG 10/Reduced Inequalities:** Sri Lanka faces high inequality in access to decent jobs, with low-skilled workers in both rural and urban areas having limited access to good jobs. Improving access to decent jobs and investing in quality education can help reduce inequalities in the country.

**SDG 12/(Target 12.8) Responsible Consumption and Production:** Sri Lanka's goal of becoming a low-carbon, climate-resilient green economy through sustainable development policies is challenged by lack of legal and institutional capacity to drive such initiatives<sup>22</sup>. Achieving this goal requires effective management of environment resources, and responsible consumption. However, the country is a long way away from realizing these aims. Despite being endowed with natural resources (e.g., rivers and sunshine most of the year) only 30% of electricity in the country is from renewable energy sources. Poor solid waste management has resulted in threatening sensitive ecosystems<sup>23</sup>. Although different policy statements identify the need for controlling greenhouse gases, and effective management of solid waste, the unstable political environment and the fragmented governance structure makes coordination across different institutions and implementation of policies difficult.

**SDG 13/13.8 Climate Change Mitigation:** Sri Lanka experiences natural disasters, but the rates of deaths, displacements, and internal displacement due to such events have been relatively low, although there have been occasional spikes. The country performs well in terms of adopting and implementing policies to reduce disaster risk according to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk

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<sup>20</sup> Arunatilake, N., Fernando, L., Madurawala, S., Vithanage, H., & Kiringoda, K. (2023). Women's Access to Decent Work in Sri Lanka - Addressing Concept-Specific Barriers. Quebec: Partnership for Economic Policy (forthcoming).

<sup>21</sup> Ghai, D. (2003) International labour review. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1564-913X.2003.tb00256.x>

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Environment, (2021). The National Environment Policy (draft). [https://www.env.gov.lk/web/images/pdf/notices/2021/NationalEnvPolicy2021\\_final\\_draft\\_public\\_comments\\_English.pdf](https://www.env.gov.lk/web/images/pdf/notices/2021/NationalEnvPolicy2021_final_draft_public_comments_English.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> Environment Foundation Ltd., (2017). Status of Waste Management in Sri Lanka, 2017. <https://efl.lk/status-waste-management-sri-lanka>.

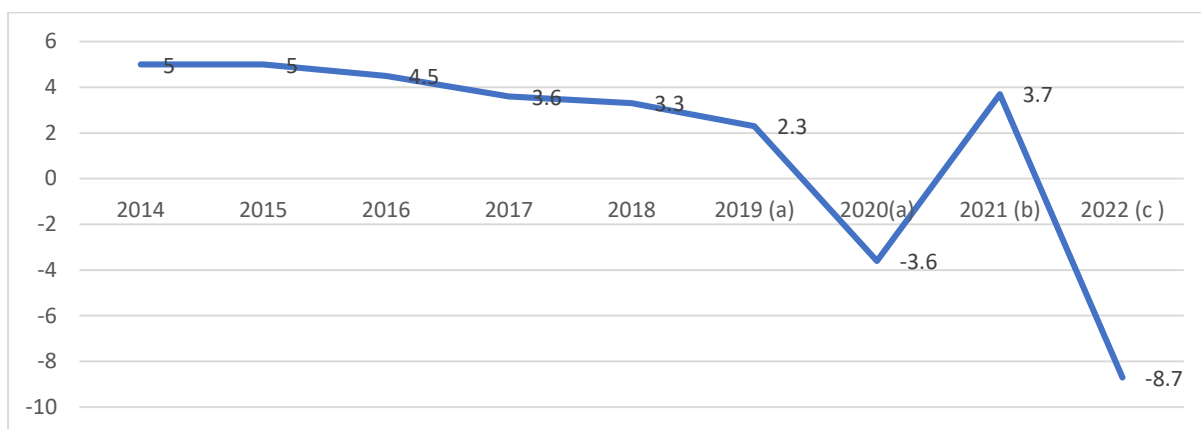
Reduction, and in this context Sri Lanka performs well in the index (i.e. 0.93 in 2020) that measures the adoption and implementation of policies to reduce disaster risk. Although an important part of climate mitigation is education on climate change, Sri Lanka's performance in this regard could not be assessed due to lack of data.

**SDG 16/Peace and Justice and Strong Institutions:** Weak institutional capacity hinders policy formulation, adaptation and implementation and monitoring socio-development agenda in Sri Lanka. The fragmented and constantly changing institutional structure poses obstacles to effective governance and coordination. Strengthening institutions and streamlining the institutional structure, and inter-institutional collaboration and coordination are crucial for fostering economic development, maintaining economic stability, and reducing vulnerability to unexpected internal and external shocks.



## Annexure 1

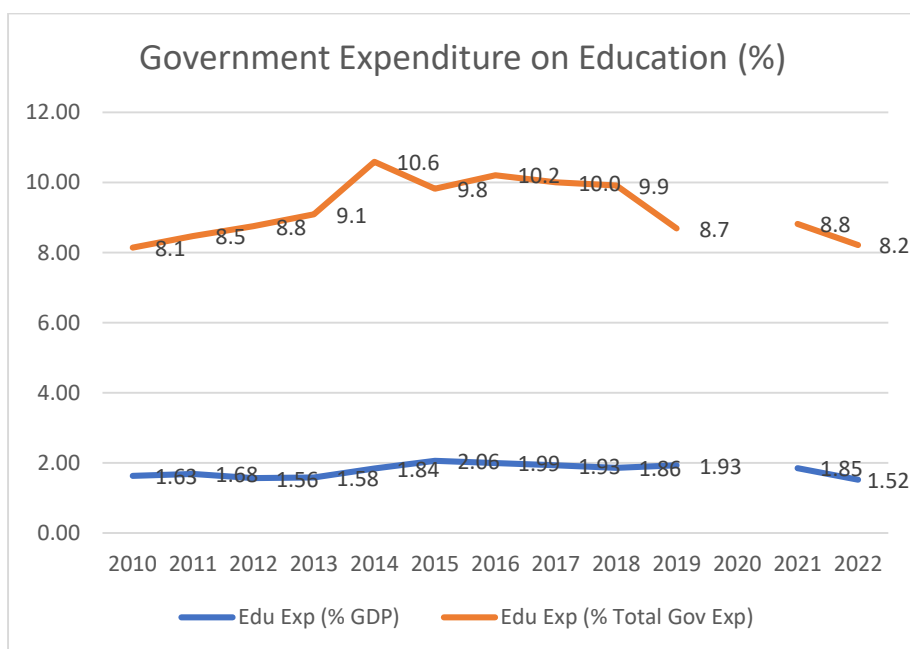
**Fig. 1.1: Real GDP Growth (%)**



Note: a- Revised; b-Estimated.

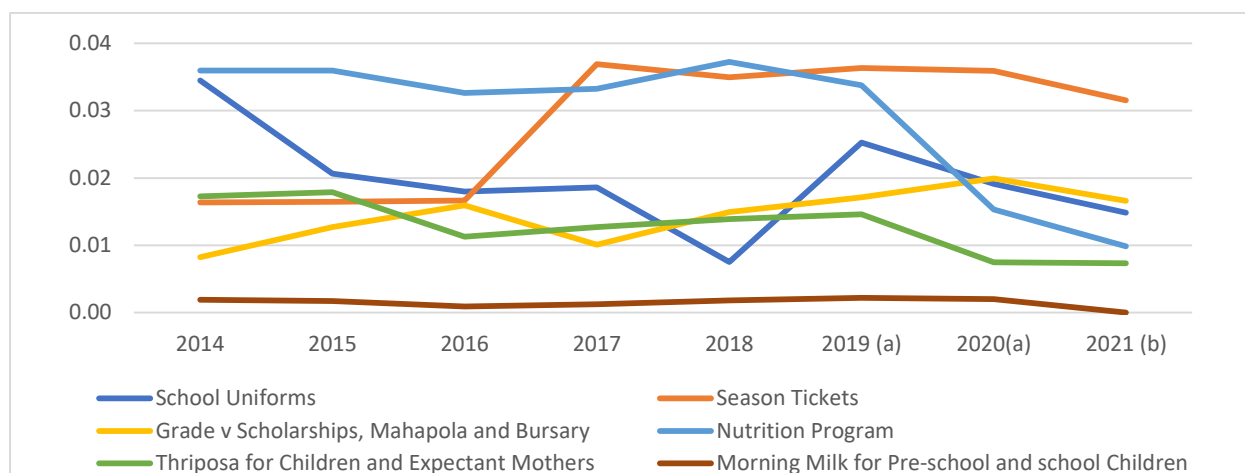
Source: Ministry of Finance Annual Report, 2021. The data for 2022 is from World Economic

**Fig. 1.2: Total Government Expenditure on Education (as a% of GDP and a % of Total Government Expenditure)**



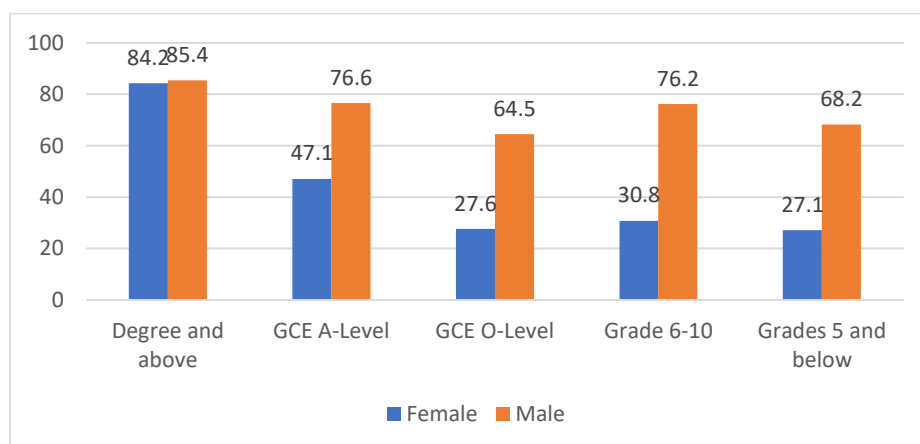
Source: Ministry of Finance

**Fig. 1.3: Welfare Payments in the Education Sector (% of GDP)**



Source: Ministry of Finance Annual Reports

**Fig. 1.4: Labour Force Participation Rates, by Gender and Level of Education**



Source: Compiled using Labour Force Survey data by Department of Census and Statistics, 2019

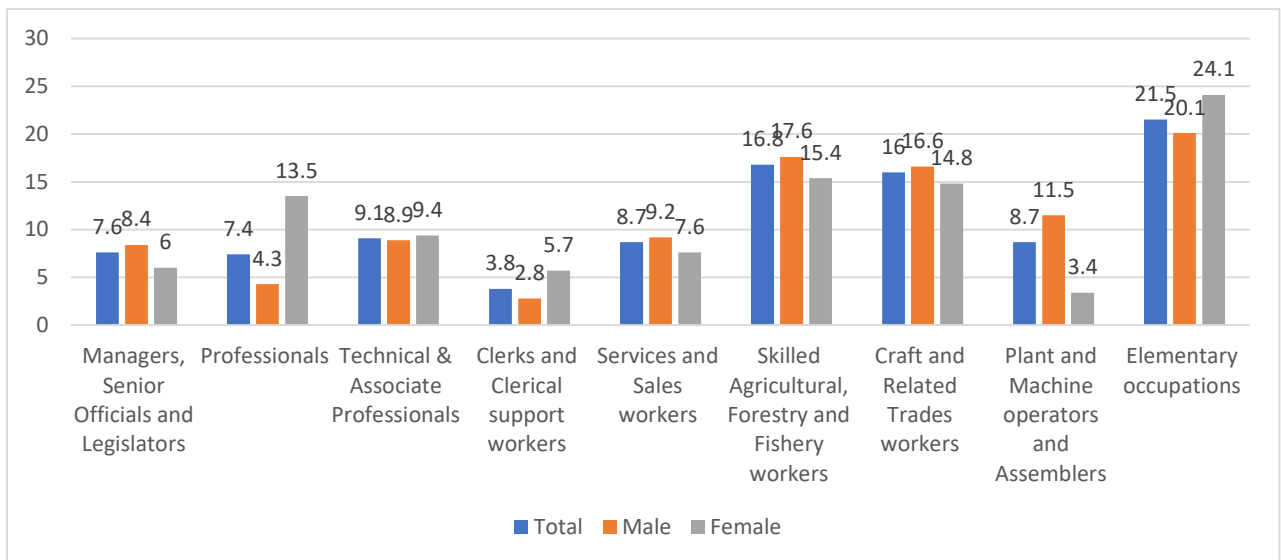
**Table 1.1: Females' Access to Different Types of Occupations by Level of Education**

Occupation	Below O/L (%)	O/L Passed (%)	A/L Passed (%)	Degree & above (%)	Required Skill level
Legislators, sr. officials, & managers	4.5	9.0	6.6	8.6	3&4
Professional	1.0	10.0	29.2	<b>58.2</b>	4
Technicians & Associate prof.	2.6	9.2	15.3	<b>22.6</b>	3
Clerks	0.6	5.4	16.4	7.4	2
Service & market sales workers	7.2	10.1	7.7	1.6	2
Skilled agricultural & fishery	22.0	15.0	6.5	0.7	2
Craft & related workers	18.7	18.9	8.3	0.6	2
Machine operators & assemblers	4.1	6.1	2.1	0.0	2
Elementary occupations	39.3	16.3	8.0	0.3	2
	100	100	100	100	

Note: Categorization is based on ISCO-88. Required skill level indicate the skill level ideally required to effectively perform tasks involved with the relevant occupation.

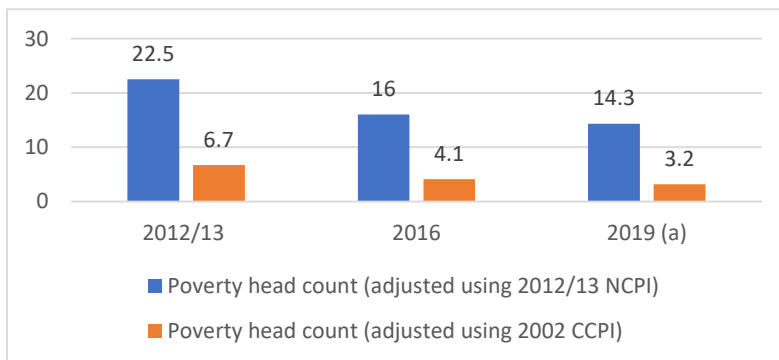
Source: Author's estimates using Department of Census and Statistics, Labour Force Survey Data, 2018

**Fig. 1.5: Distribution of Employed Across Occupations by Gender**



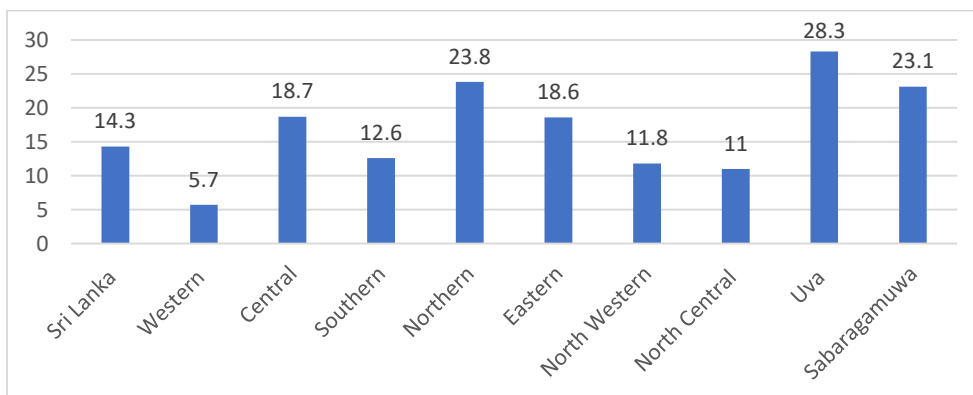
Source: Author's compilation based on Department of Census and Statistics, Labour Force Survey Data, 2019

**Fig.1.6: Poverty Head Count**



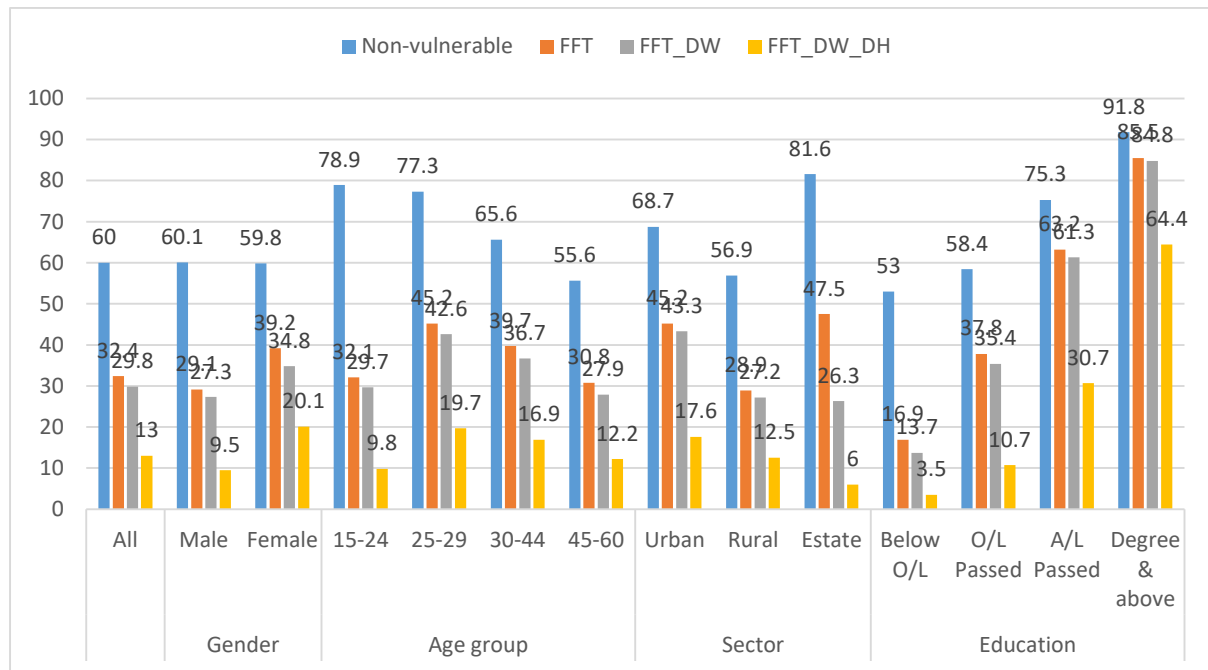
Source: Department of Census and Statistics, 2019, Poverty Indicators-2019

**Fig. 1.7: Poverty Headcount – 2019, by Province**



Source: Department of Census and Statistics, 2019, Poverty Indicators-2019

**Fig. 1.8. Access to Decent Work, by Population Group**



Note: Calculated as a proportion of the employed population. FFT: Formal full-time employment, FFT\_DW: Formal full-time employment with decent wages. FFT\_DW\_DH: Formal full-time employment with decent wages earned within decent working hours.

Source: Author's estimates based on Labour Force Survey, 2020

## 2.1 Introduction

The Sri Lankan has a fairly developed and extensive education system and is often acclaimed for its education achievements<sup>24</sup>. These achievements have been made possible by the progressive reforms in education system that commenced since 1930s<sup>25</sup>. The momentum of progressive education reforms has further been accelerated since independence in 1948 with continuous expansion of the education system coupled with provision of wide range of incentives. These past initiatives have conceivably led to widespread provision of educational opportunities in free and equitable manner across the country. However, despite the early achievements there is increasing evidence that education reforms introduced over the past 7-8 decades in the country has not kept up with economic, social and technological changes taking place globally and nationally<sup>26</sup>.

Against this backdrop, Sri Lanka has made a commitment to uphold the pledge made at the Incheon Declaration of World Education Forum (WEF) in May 2015<sup>27</sup>. All participating member countries and the international community at this forum have jointly agreed to work together towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). All countries have affirmed that the *“fundamental responsibility for successfully implementing this agenda lies with governments”*, and they are *“determined to establish legal and policy frameworks that promote accountability and transparency as well participatory governance and coordinated partnerships at all levels and across sectors and to uphold the right to participation of all stockholders”*. Further, they called *“for strong global and regional collaboration, cooperation, coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the education agenda based on data collection, analysis and reporting at the country level, within the framework of regional entities, mechanism and strategies”*. Most importantly, all the member countries resolved *“to develop comprehensive national monitoring and evaluation systems in order to generate sound evidence for policy formulation and the management of education system as well as to ensure accountability”*.

## 2.2 Most Important Political Developments in Support of SDG 4

Sri Lanka 's political landscape has played a vital role in supporting sustainable development agenda, particularly in education and health. Recognizing the importance of education in the country's development, the education sector has consistently been given the priority by the successive governments.

<sup>24</sup> World Bank (2005). *Treasures of the education system in Sri Lanka: restoring performance, expanding opportunities and enhancing prospect*.  
<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/986131468164667945/pdf/470340WP0Box331ebruary200501PUBLIC1.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> Report of the Special Committee on Education Sessional Paper XXIV of 1943 Compiled under the Chairmanship of Dr. C.W.W. Kananagara"; [https://www.educationforum.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Report\\_Kannangara\\_1943.pdf](https://www.educationforum.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Report_Kannangara_1943.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> National Education Commission, Chapter 1 of National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030). [http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030\\_Full-Text.pdf](http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Education 2030 – Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action.  
[https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en\\_2.pdf](https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en_2.pdf)

Going along with the pledge made at the Incheon Declaration of World Education Forum (WEF) in May 2015 and as reaffirmed at the Education 2030 Framework for Action at the WEF conference in November 2015, the Government having recognized the importance of achieving SDG targets has taken a pioneering initiative to enact the Sri Lanka Sustainable Development Act, No. 19 of 2017<sup>28</sup>, This Act, seeks to develop and implement a national policy and strategy on sustainable development, establish a sustainable development council, and align the country's development agenda with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and associated targets.

Following the enactment of Sri Lanka Sustainable Development Act, No. 19 of 2017, the Government took steps to establish the Sustainable Development Council of Sri Lanka (SDCSL)<sup>29</sup>. The SDCSL is expected to serve as the central government institution responsible for coordinating, facilitating, monitoring, and evaluating, and reporting the progress in implementation of the SDG 2030 Agenda in regular manner. Its mission is '*Promoting Sri Lanka towards a sustainably developed nation through an inclusive and holistic approach that ensures environmental, social and economic harmony*'.

## 2.3 Analysis of the Roles and Functions of Ministries and Development Partners Involved in Achieving SDG 4

It is imperative that for achieving success in all ten (10) SDG 4 targets in terms of the benchmark indicators and national benchmark values necessitates the involvement of multiple players: national agencies such as national level ministries and policy and regulatory agencies, provincial levels authorities, all key stakeholders, and international agencies and development partners.

**National Agencies:** The line agency for education, the Ministry of Education (MoE) plays a key role in spearheading the SDG 4 agenda. And at present all the subsectors of education, namely general education, higher education and technical and vocational education are placed under the administrative preview of MoE. As certain powers and functions in relation to education are devolved to Provincial Councils, the MoE together with respective provincial authorities and national agencies like National Education Commission (NEC), University Grants Commission (UGC), Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC), National Secretariat for Early Childhood Development (NSECD), and National Institute of Education (NIE) together with the universities and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, host of teacher training institutions (TEIs) such as National Colleges of Education (NCoEds), Teacher Training Centres (TTCs) and Teacher Centres (TC) and together with the national and provincial schools take the responsibility for the implementing SDG 4 agenda across the respective subsectors of education. At the central ministry level, the Education for All Branch of the MoE (EFA/MoE) has been assigned with the responsibility of spearheading and coordinating the activities related SDG 4 Targets. In addition, to the above listed agencies, a host of other national agencies contribute directly and indirectly to the achievement of SDG 2030 Agenda<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> [https://sdc.gov.lk/themes/sdgap/pdf/sustainable\\_development\\_act.pdf](https://sdc.gov.lk/themes/sdgap/pdf/sustainable_development_act.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> <https://sdc.gov.lk/en/about>

<sup>30</sup> <https://sdc.gov.lk/en/agencies/22/50>

**International Funding Agencies and Development Partners:** Several international funding agencies and development partners have been actively involved in improving the quality of education and promoting access to education in Sri Lanka.

The key funding agencies include the World Bank (WB) and Asian Development Bank (ADB): The WB has provided continuous financial and technical support through a series of projects: more recent ones are Higher Education for Twenty First Century (WB/HETC -2010-2016)<sup>31</sup>; Accelerating Higher Education Expansion and Development (WB/AHEAD (2017-2030); Secondary Education Modernization Project (WB/DEMP)<sup>32</sup>; and Skills Sector Enhancement Program (ADB/SSEP -2014-2022)<sup>33</sup>. Besides those projects, the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) has extended support to Sri Lanka in areas such as gender equality, teaching quality, and overall capacity building in the education sector<sup>34</sup>.

In addition, many collaborative efforts have been initiated by several UN development agencies in achieving SDG 4 Target. These development partners include the UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, WHO, FAO, WFP, ILO, UNESCO, USAID, etc. The collaborative efforts between these international agencies and Ministry of Education, as well as with the Department of National Planning of the Ministry of Finance have been crucial for advancing the goal of providing equitable, inclusive and quality education and lifelong learning opportunities in Sri Lanka.

## 2.4 Policies, Laws, Strategies, Programs that are Meant to Support SDG 4 since 2015

What Sri Lanka has done and achieved in the sphere of education since 2015 cannot be analyzed without giving due consideration to what has been happening over the past few decades. As stated in Section 2.1, successive governments since pre-colonial period have introduced progressive reforms in education system. The momentum of progressive education reforms has further been accelerated since independence in 1948 with further expansion of the education system coupled with provision of wide range of incentives that led to widespread provision of educational opportunities to ensure free and equitable manner across the country.

In order to spearhead the development efforts in all aspects of education – access, equity, inclusivity, relevance and quality and standards, Sri Lanka has established a host of statutory bodies and regulatory agencies and training institutions since late 1970s: National Education Commission (NEC)<sup>35</sup> for policy formulation; University Grants Commission (UGC)<sup>36</sup> for regulating the higher education; Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC)<sup>37</sup> for regulating technical and vocational education; National Institute of Education (NIE)<sup>38</sup> for curriculum development and teacher training

<sup>31</sup>Higher Education for Twenty First Century (WB/HETC -2010-2016),

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/297451468335532412/pdf/HETC1Project0110Stage1December022.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> WB/GEM Project <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P163714?lang=en>

<sup>33</sup> Sri Lanka Skills Sector Enhancement Programme (2014-2022); <https://www.adb.or/projects/42251-018/main>

<sup>34</sup> Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) - <https://reliefweb.int/report/sri-lanka/australia-supports-education-sri-lanka>

<sup>35</sup> National Education Commission, <http://www.nec.gov.lk>

<sup>36</sup> University Grants Commission, <https://www.ugc.ac.lk/>

<sup>37</sup> Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission, <https://TVEC.gov.lk/>

<sup>38</sup> National Institute of Education, <https://www.nie.ac.lk/>

for general education; National Secretariat for Early Childhood Development (NSECD)<sup>39</sup> for early childhood development and pre-school education; training institutions such as Universities and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions for tertiary education, and teacher education institutions (TEIs) such as National Colleges of Education(NCoE)<sup>40</sup>, and teacher Training Centres (TTCs) and Teacher Centers(TCs) for teacher training. Since 2015, these institutions have indeed aligned their strategic development frameworks and accompanied annual actions plans with those of the SDG 4 agenda relevant to their mandate.

**Early Childhood Care and Education:** Early childhood care and education is recognized as a crucial aspect of SDG 4, which seeks to provide quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for everyone from pre-primary level. The NEC has released two national documents since 2015; National Policy on Preschool Education (2019) and National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030)- Volume I: National Policy Proposals and recommended Strategic Activities on Early Childhood Care and Education. The NSECD jointly with many national and international agencies has implemented several policies, programs and initiatives in this area, including the National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Education<sup>41</sup> which was formulated based on NEC policy documents, National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum, Early Childhood Development Centers, and the Pre-school Education Expansion Project<sup>42</sup>.

**Inclusive and Equitable Education:** The Government of Sri Lanka is dedicated to foster inclusive and equitable education, with specific efforts made to support children with disabilities and special education needs (SENs). The Government since late 1990s has implemented several policies and initiatives that promote special and inclusive education, such as the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act No. 28 of 1996<sup>43</sup>, the Compulsory Education Regulations of 1997<sup>44</sup>, the National Policy on Disability for Sri Lanka in 2003<sup>45</sup>, the National Policy on Inclusive Education in 2009<sup>46</sup>, the Education First: Education Sector Development Framework and Program from 2013 to 2017<sup>47</sup>, the Education Sector Development Plan from 2018 to 2025<sup>48</sup>, etc. The NEC as the policy making body, released its most recent key policy document in 2022; National Education Policy Framework (2020-2022): Volume VI - National Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activities on Special and Inclusive Education<sup>49</sup>. These policies and plans highlight Sri Lanka's commitment to promoting inclusive education and ensuring the rights and education of persons with disabilities.

**General Education:** Sri Lanka places a strong emphasis on general education sector particularly in improving access, equity, inclusiveness and quality and standards as this sector directly contributes to

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<sup>39</sup> National Secretariat for Early Childhood and Development, <https://www.childsec.gov.lk/>

<sup>40</sup> Ministry of Education, <https://moe.gov.lk/>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.childsec.gov.lk/resources/105/English%20Policy%20Draft.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/education-early-childhood>

<sup>43</sup> Disabilities Act No. 28 of 1996, <https://www.lawnet.gov.lk/protection-of-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2/>

<sup>44</sup> Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (Extra Ordinary), No.1003/5, dated 25.11.1997

<sup>45</sup> National Policy on Disability for Sri Lanka in 2003,<http://67.199.83.28/doc/NatPolicyDisabilitySep2003srilanka1.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Ministry of Education, National Policy on Inclusive Education (Draft), Battaramulla

<sup>47</sup> Education First: Education Sector Development Framework and Programme from 2013 to 2017,[https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/sri\\_lanka\\_esdfp\\_2013-2017.pdf](https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/sri_lanka_esdfp_2013-2017.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka (2017). Education Sector Development Plan. General education in Sri Lanka 2018-2025

<sup>49</sup> National Education Commission, National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030: Volume VI: National Policy and Recommended Strategic Activities on Special and Inclusive Education: [http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030\\_Full-Text.pdf](http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf)



many targets of SDG 4 agenda. The NEC has released a series of policy documents in this sector over the past two decades and most recent ones are; Proposals for National Policy on General Education (2016) and National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030): Volume II- National Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activities on General Education. The Ministry of Education has issued several key circulars such as the "Raising up to 1000 National schools"<sup>50</sup>, "13-Years Guaranteed Education Program"<sup>51</sup>, and "Nearest School is the Best School" program<sup>52</sup>, with the aim of ensuring inclusive and equitable education. Further, the Government, as part of its development initiatives focusing on increasing investment in education, has introduced a Sri Lanka: General Education Sector Development Plan (2020 - 2025)<sup>53</sup> to address equity, quality, and efficiency issues and provide accessible education for all, particularly for the underprivileged groups.

**Higher Education:** The University Grants Commission (UGC) is responsible for apportionment of funds allocated by the Treasury for higher education and regulating and monitoring higher education institutions. It spearheads various programs aimed at improving access and quality and standards and relevance of educational provisions, research and innovations and internationalization focusing to foster SDG 4 agenda. The NEC has released two national policy documents on higher education recently; National Policy on Higher Education (2020) and National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030): Volume III- National Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activities on Higher Education. The UGC in liaison with the MoE has implemented two WB-funded projects from 2010 onwards; Higher Education for Twenty First Century (WB/HETC -2010-2016)<sup>54</sup>, Accelerating Higher Education Expansion and Development (WB/AHEAD (2017-2030))<sup>55</sup> with the aim at improving access, quality and standards of educational provisions through activities such as strengthening quality assurance system, improving curriculum development and delivery, improving soft skills of undergraduates and promoting ethnic harmony and social cohesion, with emphasis on several targets of the SDG 4 agenda.

**Technical and Vocational Education:** Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) play a crucial role in equipping students with vocational skills for decent jobs which is directly related several targets of SDG 4. The NEC has released 2 recent policy documents on TVET sector; National Policy on Technical and vocational Education (2018) and National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030): Volume IV - National Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activities on Technical and Vocational Education and Training. The TVEC regulates the TVET sector through instruments such as the National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF)<sup>56</sup>, quality assurance and accreditation<sup>57</sup>, competency-based curricula, training and assessment, and apprenticeship programs focusing on

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<sup>50</sup> Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, Circular No. 03/2020(I), "Raising up to 1000 National Schools".

<sup>51</sup> Ministry of Education Circular No 37/2017, dated 2017/09/20. "13 Years Guaranteed Education Programme"

<sup>52</sup> Ministry of Education (2020) Annual Performance Report: Retrieved March 30 from <https://moe.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Annual-Report-2020-English.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> [https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/sri\\_lanka\\_general-education-sector-development-plan-2021-2025.pdf](https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/sri_lanka_general-education-sector-development-plan-2021-2025.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> Higher Education for Twenty First Century (WB/HETC -2010-2016), <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/297451468335532412/pdf/HETC1Project0110Stage1December022.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> Accelerating Higher Education Expansion and Development (WB/AHEAD (2017-2030)), <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/412911486473597625/pdf/112649-REVISED-EA-P159995-Box402900B-PUBLIC-Disclosed-4-5-2017.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> National Vocational Qualification Framework (2005), [https://www.tvec.gov.lk/?page\\_id=140](https://www.tvec.gov.lk/?page_id=140).

<sup>57</sup> [www.tvec.gov.lk/?page\\_id=2852](https://www.tvec.gov.lk/?page_id=2852)

enhancing quality of TVET provisions<sup>58</sup>. In order to address the persisting challenges, the TVEC has recently prepared a draft on the National Development Plan for the TVET sector (2023-2030)<sup>59</sup> and it is awaiting for approval for implementation.

However, despite initiating progressive reforms and programs, there still remain challenges in improving access, particularly to higher education, quality and standards of education provisions offered by all sectors, and promoting lifelong learning opportunities. The expansion of physical facilities and educational resources in the education system has not always been accompanied by improvements in quality, leading to concerns about compromised free education and stifled parental aspirations. Although, Sri Lanka's education system emphasizes providing quality, equitable and inclusive education to all and foster functional literacy and numeracy skills, it is yet to adopt an internationally recognized measurement tools to assess the country's functional numeracy and literacy levels.

## 2.5 Data Collection Authority(-ies), their Roles and their Limitations

In Sri Lanka, several authorities are responsible for data collection related to SDG 4, which focuses on education. These authorities include the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS), Ministry of Education (MoE), University Grants Commission (UGC), Tertiary and Vocation Education Commission (TVEC), and Sustainable Development Council of Sri Lanka (SDCSL). However, they face challenges related to data quality, coverage, and accessibility. Gaps in data collection may exist in remote areas, and data collected by different authorities are not shared through a common portal.

The SDCSL and DCS are the two major authorities responsible for overall data collection on the SDGs. The SDCSL, in collaboration with the United Nations Sri Lanka Office, has developed a website<sup>60</sup> that provides access to SDG-related data. The website features a dashboard for viewing data, access to data, and an SDG Data Tracker specific to Sri Lanka, which help track and monitor the progress of SDGs in the country. The DCS as the main data authority in the Sri Lankan Government, collecting and disseminating data on the SDGs through its website. The DCS has developed a classification system for SDG indicators in Sri Lanka<sup>61</sup>, but it lacks consideration for disaggregation levels, which are important for identifying inequalities. To address this, the SDCSL can request relevant authorities for specific SDGs to provide the necessary information recommended by the UN classification. Another approach is for the DCS to streamline the data collection on SDG Targets in liaison with the SDCSL which would facilitate data collection and analysis using statistical and demographic techniques to disaggregate data for different socio-economic groups. Improving the classification and collection of data will help understand and address inequalities in SDG monitoring and reporting in Sri Lanka.

Another significant challenges in data collection on the SDGs in Sri Lanka is incomplete and infrequently updated websites maintained by the SDCSL and the DCS, hindering access to timely information. It is essential to mandate regular data provision to the SDCSL by government agencies

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<sup>58</sup> <https://www.tvec.gov.lk/?news=sri-lankas-tvet-system-benchmarked-by-south-asian-countries>

<sup>59</sup> National Development Plan for the TVET Sector (2023-2027) (Draft). [https://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Development\\_Plan\\_2023\\_27.pdf](https://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Development_Plan_2023_27.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> SDG Data Portal Sri Lanka, <https://data.sdg.lk/>

<sup>61</sup> <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/sdg/index.php/sdg/page/Database>

and development partners to ensure comprehensive and reliable data availability. The DCS website lacks comprehensive and properly structured data for most SDG 4 indicators, with limited time series trends, and the quality of evaluation of SDG-related data is insufficient, thus impeding informed assessment of progress of SDG targets. Another deficiency noted was the lack of information about the SDGs on the National Planning Department's website.

Therefore, collaboration, coordination, capacity-building, and resource allocation among data collection authorities are necessary to enhance the quality and coverage of SDG-related data in Sri Lanka, particularly for SDG 4, addressing issues such as data coverage and quality, and accessibility to remote and conflict-affected areas.

## **2.6 Exploring the Importance of Quality, Equitable and Inclusive Education as a National Priority for Achieving SDG 4**

Sri Lanka has made commendable strides in its efforts to achieve SDG 4, placing special emphasis on specific targets that are aligned with national priorities.

One of the crucial objective is the elimination of gender disparities in education, along with ensuring equitable access for vulnerable groups while improving the quality of education provisions. While considerable progress has been made in promoting gender equality in education, challenges still persist for children with disabilities, those from low-income families, and those residing in conflict-affected areas. Sri Lanka is committed to providing inclusive education and support for all children, necessitating investments in access, resources, and inclusive practices.

Another pivotal target is equipping learners with knowledge and skills for sustainable development and cultural preservation and for fostering social cohesion and ethnic harmony. Given Sri Lanka's abundant biodiversity and cultural heritage, and multiethnic and multi-religious social fabric, these objectives assumes national significance and priority. The integration of sustainable development principles, global citizenship concepts and cultural themes into the education curricula, alongside the promotion of experiential learning and community-based projects serves as key strategies to attain this goal.

The realization of above objectives required unwavering political commitment and funding, robust partnerships among the government, civil society, development partners and private sector. By tackling barriers to education and fostering sustainable development agenda, Sri Lanka aspires to ensure inclusive and equitable access to quality education for all, thereby contributing to create a more sustainable and equitable future for its people.



## Chapter 3: Assessment by SDG 4 Targets

3.1 SDG 4 Target 1	Free Primary and Secondary Education
3.2 SDG 4 Target 2	Equal Access to Quality Pre-Primary Education
3.3 SDG 4 Target 3	Equal Access to Affordable TVET and Higher Education
3.4 SDG 4 Target 4	Increase the Number of People with Relevant Skills for Decent Work
3.5 SDG 4 Target 5	Eliminate all Discrimination in Education
3.6 SDG 4 Target 6	Universal Youth Literacy and Numeracy
3.7 SDG 4 Target 7	Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship
3.8 SDG 4 Target a)	Build and Upgrade Inclusive and Safe Schools
3.9 SDG 4 Target b)	Expand Higher Education Scholarships for Developing Countries
3.10 SDG 4 Target c)	Increase the Supply of Qualified Teachers in Developing Countries
3.11	Matrix of Policies and Regulations, Programs and Activities Adopted



**3.1  
SDG 4  
Target 1**

**By 2030, Ensure that All Girls and Boys Complete Free, Equitable and Quality Primary and Secondary Education Leading to Relevant and Effective Learning Outcomes**

**Introduction**

The Sri Lankan education system has been acclaimed in the past, for its success in providing widespread access to primary and secondary education and enabling the country to attain high level of human development<sup>62</sup>. These achievements have been made possible by the progressive reforms in education system that commenced from 1930s – enactment of Education Ordinance of No. 31 of 1939<sup>63</sup>, making the provision of education formally free in 1939, adoption of Free Education Policy that came into effect in 1945 making every child above the age of 5 and not more than 16 is entitled to free education together with the adoption of mother tongue (i.e. Sinhala or Tamil) as medium of instruction in schools), and commencement of establishment of the Central School System to cater for clusters of feeder schools<sup>64</sup>. The momentum of progressive education reforms has further been accelerated since independence in 1948 with further expansion of the education system coupled with provision of incentives such as scholarships and bursaries, provision of free uniforms and textbooks and midday meals. These past initiatives have conceivably led to widespread provision of educational opportunities free and equitable manner across the country.

**Progress Made Towards Target 4.1**

The progress made towards the Target 4.1 is analysed by referring to the indicators defined by UNESCO and the values reported in the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS)<sup>65</sup> database. In the absence of UIS data, proxy data obtained from Sri Lankan sources were used as and when available. The UIS has defined seven indicators, namely 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.3, 4.1.4, 4.1.5, 4.1.6 and 4.1.7. Although UNESCO has listed 7 indicators, data is available only for 5 indicators (i.e. for 4.1.3, 4.1.4, 4.1.5, 4.1.6 & 4.1.7). For the Indicator 4.1.2, proxy data obtained from the Sustainable Development Council of Sri Lanka (SDCSL)<sup>66</sup> is used. Further, though the UIS database present a data table with respect to indicator 4.1.6 were not considered as no assessments at Grade 2 or 3 or at the end of lower secondary were conducted (as referred in the Section titled “Assessment of Learning Outcome of Primary and Secondary Students”). All relevant data tables with respect to 5 indicators (i.e. for 4.1.2, 4.1.3, 4.1.4, 4.1.5 & 4.1.7) are given in Annexure 3.4.1.

<sup>62</sup> World Bank (2005). *Treasures of the education system in Sri Lanka: restoring performance, expanding opportunities and enhancing prospect*. <http://documents.worldbank.org>.

<sup>63</sup> Education Ordinance No. 31 of 1939. <https://www.ilo.org> ;

<sup>64</sup> Report of the Special Committee on Education Sessional Paper XXIV of 1943 Compiled under the Chairmanship of Dr. C.W.W. Kananangara"; [https://www.educationforum.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Report\\_Kannangara\\_1943.pdf](https://www.educationforum.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Report_Kannangara_1943.pdf)

<sup>65</sup> <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org>

<sup>66</sup> Sri Lanka: Status of SDG Indicators and Baseline Data; <https://sdc.gov.lk/en/resources>

### Indicator 4.1.2: Completion Rate (Primary, Lower Secondary and Upper Secondary Education)

The data as regards to the Indicator 4.1.2 from 2018 to 2020 were obtained from the SDCSL publication titled “Sri Lanka: Status of SFG Indicators and Baseline Data 2023” are listed in Table 4.1.2 of Annexure 3.4.1. As indicated, the completion rates of both sexes at primary level was 90% in 2018, and increased to 93%, and then again declined to 90% by 2020. At lower secondary level, it was 88.4% in 2018 and it decreased marginally to 87% in 2020, and at upper secondary level, it was 80.6% in 2018 and increased marginally to 81.3% in 2020. At all three levels, the female completion rates were higher than those of males. Although, the completion rates were satisfactory at all three levels, a declining trend in completion rates from primary to upper senior secondary levels in both sexes was observed. Contrary to the data reported by the SL/SDC, another publication (Sustainable Development Report 2023, Sustainable Development Network, Dublin University Press; <https://dashboards.sdcindex.org>) presented value of 100.5% in 2020 for the completion rate at lower secondary level. But no data were presented in this report for other levels. As authenticity of this data was not apparent, the value reported in this report was not considered in the analysis.

A comparison of the values reported for the benchmark Indicator 4.1.2 by the SL/SDC Publication and the national benchmarks values defined by the Education for All Branch of Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka (EFAB/MoE, SL) for the Indicator 4.1.2 is given below:

Indicator	National Benchmark 2025 <sup>1</sup>	National Benchmark 2030 <sup>1</sup>	Achievement as of 2020 <sup>2</sup>
Completion rate at primary education level (in both sexes)	98.0	99.5	90.0
Completion rate at lower-secondary level (in both sexes)	90.2	90.3	87.0
Completion at upper-secondary level (in both sexes)	77.2	81.1	81.3

1. National Benchmark Values for Indicator 4.1.2 defined by EFA/MoE, SL (see Annexure 1 of Appendix of this Report)

2. Values for the Indicator 4.1.2 reported by the report titled ‘Sri Lanka: Status of SDG Indicators and Baseline Data; <https://sdc.gov.lk/en/resources>

As shown by above comparison, Sri Lanka is lagging behind the benchmark values prescribed for 2025 for the completion rates at primary education and lower-secondary levels in both sexes level while surpassing the national benchmark values defined for upper-secondary education level for 2025 and 2030.

### Indicator 4.1.3: Gross Intake Ratio to the Last Grade (Primary Education, Lower Secondary Education)

The data as regards to Indicator 4.1.3 from 2012 to 2020 period are listed in Table 4.1.3 of Annexure 3.4.1. Gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary education, both sexes was 99.5% in 2015 and remained around that level till 2020. Gross intake ratio to the last grade of lower secondary, both sexes was 96.11% in 2015 and reached 100.52%. No differences between males and females were noted during this period.

No national benchmarks were defined for the Indicator 4.1.2



#### **Indicator 4.1.4: Out-of-School Rate (Primary Education, Lower Secondary Education, Upper Secondary Education)**

The data as regards Indicator 4.1.4 from 2012 to 2018 are listed in Table 4.1.4 of Annexure 3.4.1. Out of school rate for primary education in both sexes has declined from 4.76% in 2012 to 0.54 in 2018. Similarly, the out of school rate at lower secondary had declined from 6.58% in 2012 to 0.13% in 2018. However, the out of school rate at upper secondary level of both sexes has remained as high as above 18.88% in 2017, but declined 15.79% by 2018. The out-of-ratio in males was higher than that of females in 2017 (21.54% vs 16.21%), and the decline was more marked in females compared to males in 2018 (18.09% vs 13.49%).

A comparison of the values reported for the benchmark Indicator 4.1.4 by the UIS data base and national benchmarks values defined by Education for All Branch of Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka (EFAB/MoE, SL) for the Indicator 4.1.4 is given below:

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>National Benchmark 2025<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>National Benchmark 2030<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Achievement as of 2018<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Out of school rate for primary education (in both sexes)</b>	1.5	1.0	0.54
<b>Out of school rate at lower secondary (in both sexes)</b>	2.2	2.0	0.13
<b>Out of school rate at upper secondary level (in both sexes)</b>	17.6	12.8	15.79

1. National Benchmark Values for the Indicator 4.1.4 defined by the EFAB/MoE, SL

2. Values for the Indicator 4.1.4 reported by the report titled 'Sri Lanka: Status of SDG Indicators and Baseline Data'; <https://sdc.gov.lk/en/resources>

As shown by above comparison, Sri Lanka has already achieved the benchmark values prescribed for 2025 for all three levels. However, more efforts are needed at upper- secondary level to reduce out-of-school rate (from 15.79% to 12.8%) over the next few years to reach the benchmark value defined for 2030.

#### **Indicator 4.1.5: Percentage of Children Over-Age for Grade (Primary and Lower Secondary Education) Enrolled**

The data as regards Indicator 4.1.5 from 2012 to 2020 period are listed in Table 4.1.5 of Annexure 3.4.1. Percentage of children over-age for primary grade for both sexes were low as 0.71% in 2013 and this was further declined to 0.09% in 2020. Similarly, the percentage of children over-age for lower secondary for both sexes were low as 1.48% in 2013 and this was further declined to 0.2% in 2020.

No national benchmarks were defined for the Indicator 4.1.5

#### **Indicator 4.1.7: Number of Years of Education at (A) Free Primary and Secondary Education Level and (B) Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education Level Guaranteed by Legal Frameworks**

The data as regards to the Indicator 4.1.7 from 2012 to 2022 are listed in Table 4.1.7 of Annexure 3.4.1. As shown in Table 4.1.7, the free education guaranteed through the legal framework has remained at 13 years from 2012 to 2022. Number of years of compulsory primary and secondary education guaranteed through the legal framework had been 9 years till 2015 and since 2016 it was increased to 11 years through the government Gazette No. 1963/30 dated 20.04.2016<sup>67</sup>.

No national benchmarks were defined for the Indicator 4.1.7

### Comments on Progress Achieved Towards Target 4.1

As discussed under the section on **Progress Made Towards Target 4.1**, the completion rates at upper-secondary level, Sri Lanka has already surpassed the benchmark values defined for 2025 as well as for 2030. However, the completion rates in primary, lower-secondary education as of 2020 are far behind the benchmark values defined for 2025 and 2030. Nevertheless, it is certain that Sri Lanka may reach benchmark values by 2025 and 2030, as it has taken several measures recently to improve school enrolment and retention.

The drop out ratios in all three level of school education is also minimal. Further, the gender disparities in achievements related to these indicators have also been minimal. However, there is a trend for students of higher grades to drop out from the school system in Sri Lanka. Yet measures have been taken to minimize the dropout rates further through welfare activities including mid-day meal, uniforms and textbooks, and also by introducing a landmark measure; the 13-Years Guaranteed Education program, targeting those students who fail to proceed to upper senior-secondary education {General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) - G.C.E(A/L) level}.

Though the values for Indicator 4.1.1 is not available , the national measurements conducted by the National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC) of Faculty of Education of the University of Colombo at the level of Grade 4 and 8 (as detailed in the section titled “Assessment of Learning Outcomes of Primary and Secondary Students”), has reported a glaring deficiency in the achievement of learning outcomes of students at both primary and secondary levels implying the need of urgent attention and interventions.

### Policies and Programs Initiated since 2015 to Improve Access to Primary and Secondary Education

The Ministry of Education (MoE) in collaboration with the Provincial Education Authorities (PEAs) and national-level education institutions had developed a medium-term strategic plan for the period from 2018-2025. This sector development plan has been prepared, based on the principles of “learning for all” in primary and secondary stages of education (Education Sector Development Plan 2018 – 2025.p.ix.)<sup>68</sup>. This Strategic Plan is based on four thrust areas of which the first is “To strengthen equity in education: equitable learning opportunities for all children”. Under this thrust area there are six components and some of the programs initiated under these components are:

- Implementation of the 13-Years Guaranteed Education Program<sup>69</sup> since 2017,
- Continue to provide free textbooks, free midday meals and free school uniforms, and

<sup>67</sup> Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (Extra Ordinary), No. 1963/30, dated 20.4 2016.

<http://www.documents.gov.lk>

<sup>68</sup> Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka (2017). Education Sector Development Plan. General education in Sri Lanka 2018-2025.

<sup>69</sup> Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, Circular No: 37/2016 on ‘13 Years Guaranteed Education Programme’, dated 20.9.2017.

- Continue to provide scholarships and bursaries for students from low income households.

## Policies and Strategies to Improve Completion at Primary and Secondary Levels

The MoE has issued a series of regulations with the aim of increasing the student participation and hence completion rate in primary and secondary education.

- i) Compulsory education policy enacted in 1945 which had further been strengthened by regulations issued in 1997<sup>70</sup> was further re-enforced in 2016 by issuing further guidelines on school attendance through an extraordinary Gazette notification (*Regulation No. 1 of 2015 issued by the extraordinary Gazette notification bearing the number 1963/30 dated 20.04.2016*)<sup>71</sup> Under this regulation, “School Committees” were established to facilitate the school attendance covering each feeder area and “Supervision Committees” were established to supervise the compulsory school attendance in each education division.
- ii) In addition, the MoE issued the instructions (*through Circular No. 36/2022 dated 03/12/2022 issued with the title “Circular on implementing, monitoring and Supervision of Non-Formal Education Programs and Record Book for Entering Data”*)<sup>72</sup> to school principals and staff on how to deal with children who are in compulsory school going age but devoid of formal education.

Besides the above initiatives, numerous measures have also been taken to enable students entering school to complete the primary and secondary cycles by spending the recommended time in school. These measures come under two main categories. They are (i) widening the student welfare activities and (ii) development of physical resources in schools. Some student welfare activities initiated under the theme “widening the student welfare activities” are (i) ‘*Suraksha*’ insurance scheme<sup>73</sup> (ii) providing shoes to selected students (iii) ‘*Sisu Sariya*’, the school bus service with reduced ticket fare, (iv) providing sanitary pads to girls (provide to 500 schools with the assistance of private sector well-wishers and (v) scholarship programs initiated through foreign donor assistance<sup>74</sup>. Some Physical development activities undertaken under this initiative are; i) “Nearest School the Best School Program”<sup>75</sup> to encourage parents to seek admission to the nearest school to their homesteads, ii) refurbishing the buildings of the primary sections of schools under ‘Child-friendly School Program’ commenced in 2013<sup>76</sup>, and (iii) development of “1000 National Schools Program” that commenced in 2022<sup>77</sup>.

## Policies and Strategies to Reduce the Number of Out-Of-School Children

Several initiatives have been undertaken to reduce the number of out-of-school children.

<sup>70</sup> Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (Extra Ordinary), No..1003/5, dated 25.11.1997

<sup>71</sup> Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (Extra Ordinary), No. 1963/30 dated, 20.4. 2016.  
[http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2016/4/1963-30\\_S.pdf](http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2016/4/1963-30_S.pdf)

<sup>72</sup> Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, Circular No: 36/2022 dated 03.12.2022.

<sup>73</sup> Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, Circular No: 35/2022 dated 31.10.2022 on “*Suraksha*” Student Insurance Scheme”.

<sup>74</sup> Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, Annual Performance Reports (from 2015 to2021).

<sup>75</sup> Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, Circular No: 17/2016 dated 27.4.2016 on ‘Nearest School the Best School programme’.

<sup>76</sup> Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, Circular No: 23/2013 dated 27.03.2013.

<sup>77</sup> Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, Circular No: 03/2020 dated 04.11.2022.

- i) Compulsory Education Regulations initially implemented in 1997 was further strengthened through another series of regulations and guidelines issued in 2015<sup>78</sup> and 2017<sup>79</sup>. Regulation No. 1 of 2015 issued by the MoE- under Article (ii) of Paragraph (3) of Compulsory School Attendance Regulation No.1 of 2015”- states that *“students who do not come to school regularly” should be identified and provide facilities to them to ensure they attend schools regularly*. These initiatives have helped to a large extent get students into the formal school. The instructions issued by the MoE Administrative Letter in 2017 titled *“Implementation of Compulsory Education Regulations”* state that the *“School Committee established under the guidelines issued in 2015 should identify students who do not attend school according to the guidelines prescribed, and should take measures to send them back to school”*.
- ii) Another landmark initiative taken in 2017 which aimed to reduce dropping-out students is the introduction of *“13 - Years of Guaranteed Education Program”*<sup>80</sup>. This scheme would enable students who complete the Grade 11 and sit for the G.C.E (O/L) Examination irrespective of their performance to proceed for another 2 years of compulsory education (at Grade 12 and 13) that is focused on providing training on vocational subjects.

The long-term aims of above-mentioned policies and programs implemented have been to increase access to primary and secondary education, improve retention and completion of education, and thereby reducing dropout rates, and the benefits of these initiatives have already been noted (as shown in Tables 4.1.3 and Table 4.1.4).

### Assessment of Learning Outcomes of Primary and Secondary Students

As stated elsewhere, there is no *“Administration of nationally representative learning assessment in a) grade 2 or 3; b) at the end of primary education; and c) at the end of lower secondary education”*. However, this does not mean that there is no administration of nationally representative learning assessment in Sri Lanka. Considering the need for a dedicated research institution in education, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education with assistance from World Bank established the National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC) as a Centre affiliated to the Faculty of Education of the University of Colombo. Since 2003, NEREC has been conducting National Assessment of Learning Outcomes at the request of the Ministry of Education covering Primary and Lower Secondary students. However, the assessments are conducted not at grades 2 or 3 but at the end of Grade 4 and Grade 8. Findings of these assessments were shared with the Ministry of Education and published for the information of wider readership. Further, the findings of these assessments are used by the MoE for planning and preparing education sector development plans and programs. Hence, it could be assumed that the findings of the National Assessments have been used in the development of the Education Sector Development Plan 2018-2025<sup>81</sup>.

### Monitoring of Basic Literacy and Numeracy Skills

<sup>78</sup> Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (Extra Ordinary), No. 1963/30 dated 20.4. 2016.  
[http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2016/4/1963-30\\_S.pdf](http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2016/4/1963-30_S.pdf)

<sup>79</sup> Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, Administrative letter titled *“Implementation of Compulsory Education Regulations”* bearing the number ED/9/18/2/1/2 dated 30/01/2017.

<sup>80</sup> Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, Circular No: 37/2017 dated 20.9.2017.

<sup>81</sup> Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, *Education Sector Development Plan. General Education (2018-2025)*.

The Family Health Bureau (FHB) of the Ministry of Health has taken steps to collect data to estimate the Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI) to identify whether children aged 24 to 59 months are developmentally 'on-track'. One of the domains evaluated under this index is literacy and numeracy skills (this aspect is covered in details Target 4.2). However, when students enter formal education system there is no holistic monitoring of basic literacy and numeracy skills.

An attempt was made by the Ministry of Education in 2021/22 to assess achievement levels of foundation skills in literacy and numeracy of Grade 03 students in Sri Lanka and the report was published in 2023<sup>82</sup>. However, the methodology of this study needs to be refined and teachers must be trained on its application, if it is to be used for island wide monitoring.

## Public Expenditure for Education for Primary and Secondary Education as Percentage of the Total Public Education Expenditure? What Efforts are being Made

The expenditure on general education in terms of Annual GDP in 2015 was 2.06%. and it was reduced to 1.52% In 2022<sup>83</sup>. However, these values cannot be disaggregated to assess the expenditure made for primary and secondary education. Nevertheless, the annual performance review reports of the MoE indicate the expenditure made on activities that comes under primary and secondary education.

In addition, WB-funded General Education Modernization Project (WB/GEMP Project- 2019-2024)<sup>84</sup>, has also supported the Primary and Secondary-Education sector development since 2019, and more specifically for "Enhancing quality and strengthening stewardship of primary and secondary education" (Component 1 of GEMP Project).

## Major Gaps and Challenges, and Measures Taken to Address Them

Although, the data were incomplete, the analysis of available data indicates that there are few areas requiring interventions to address prevailing the gaps. They are detailed below:

- i) **Completion rates at primary, lower secondary and upper secondary level of education:** Although the rates have increased over the 2015 -2022 period, when compared with prescribed national benchmarks for this criteria, Sri Lanka is lagging behind the benchmark values prescribed for 2025 in primary education and lower-secondary levels while making a satisfactory progress in upper-secondary level. Therefore, more determined efforts are needed over the next few years at all three level to reach the benchmark value prescribed for 2025 and then for 2030.
- ii) **Out of school rate:** Out of school rate has also lowered in all three levels during the same period. Moreover, the percentage of children over-age for the grade for primary and lower secondary too has declined during the same period. However, when compared with prescribed national benchmarks for this criteria, Sri Lanka has already achieved the benchmarked values

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<sup>82</sup> Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, (2023). Report on *Assessment on Achievement Levels of Foundational Skills in Literacy and Numeracy of Grade 03 Students*. <https://moe.gov.lk>

<sup>83</sup> Central Bank of Sri Lanka, *Annual Report (2022)*. <https://www.cbsl.gov.lk>

<sup>84</sup> General Education Modernization Project (2019-2024). <https://moe.gov.lk>

prescribed for 2025 for primary education and at lower-secondary levels while more efforts are needed at upper-secondary level over the next few years to reach the benchmark value prescribed for 2025 and then for 2030.

- iii) **Achieving relevant and effective learning outcomes:** The review noted inadequacies in achieving relevant and effective learning outcomes. National Assessment results over the years have shown that there is disparity in students' achievement of learning outcomes in the subjects assessed. Report on National Assessment of Achievement of Students Completing Grade 04 in Year 2015 states that the overall performance in First Language differs among the two languages used (Sinhala vs Tamil) with greater heterogeneity is noted in Tamil medium (NEREC, 2015)<sup>85</sup>.

Report by the NEREC (NEREC 2016)<sup>86</sup> on the assessment of achievement of Grade 8 students concludes that there is disparity in achievement between provinces, between boys and girls, between different language or ethnic groups, among school types, different medium of instruction and according to the location of the school. Besides inter-provincial disparities there were intra-provincial disparities. Some of these patterns that emerged in 2013 has continued up to 2015.

- iv) **Ensuring all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes:** According to NEREC Report (2020)<sup>87</sup>, the disparity in students' achievement prevails among the provinces and the subgroups such as school type, gender, medium of instruction and location. Since, the location where the school is located is linked with the availability of resources, it could be clearly seen that the, students' achievement was higher in schools located in very convenient localities than those of schools located in non- convenient locations or in very difficult areas. Yet among the very convenient schools also there were greater variation in students' achievements indicating that all students are not provided quality and equitable education.

As a corrective measure, the MoE has implemented a WB funded project, General Education Modernization Project (2019-2024)<sup>88</sup> to improve the achievement in learning outcomes in Mathematics and English Language.

- v) **Data collection, compilation, analysis and report generation:** The major gaps noted throughout the review on the country's efforts in achieving the SDG 4 targets is the absence of centralized data portal for the collection, collation and analysis of data. This is also reflected in the UIS data bases where many data tables were incomplete having many gaps /empty cells.

## Causes for Remaining Gaps and Challenges for Reaching this Target

<sup>85</sup> National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC) (2015). *National Assessment of Achievement of Grade 8 students in Sri Lanka*. University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

<sup>86</sup> National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC) (2016). *National Assessment of Achievement of Grade 8 students in Sri Lanka*. University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

<sup>87</sup> National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC) (2020). *National Assessment of Achievement of Grade 8 students in Sri Lanka*. University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

<sup>88</sup> General Education Modernization Project (2019-2024). <https://moe.gov.lk>

As highlighted elsewhere, one of the major gaps in achieving SDG 4 Target 4.1 is the lack of a robust monitoring of primary grade students' literacy and numeracy. This deficiency was highlighted in the NEREC Reports which reported that there are students who score between 0-10 marks both at Grade 4 and Grade 8 levels, but they are left unattended as there has not been any form of continuous monitoring. Though the Education Sector Development Plan (2018-2025)<sup>89</sup> states that Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA) and Early Grade Mathematic Assessments (EGMA) will provide tools for the assessment of foundational competencies in reading and mathematics, this has not yet been implemented.

## Conclusion

The analysis on Target 4.1 has revealed that Sri Lanka is lagging behind the national benchmark values prescribed for 2025 for the completion rates at primary education and lower-secondary level in both sexes level while making steady progress in completion rates at in upper-secondary education level. Further, though Sri Lanka has already achieved the national benchmark values prescribed for 2025 for the out-of-school rate for primary education and lower-secondary levels, it lags behind benchmark values prescribed for the upper-secondary levels. Moreover, another deficiency noted is the low-level of achievement of learning outcomes of students at both primary and secondary levels. Thus, it could be concluded that if Sri Lanka to ensure all boys and girls complete primary and secondary education by 2030 and attain the expected learning outcome at primary and secondary grades, more focused and determined efforts are needed at all levels to enhance learning outcomes while promoting completion rates at primary and lower-secondary levels and for reducing the out-of-school rates at upper-secondary levels.

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<sup>89</sup> Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, Education Sector Development Plan. General education in Sri Lanka (2018-2025).

## Annexure 3.4.1

### Indicator 4.1.2: Completion Rate (Primary, Lower Secondary and Upper Secondary Education)

**Table 4.1.2: Completion Rate (Primary Education, Lower Secondary Education, Upper Secondary Education- by Sex)**

Indicator Name	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Completion rate of Primary Education - Both Sexes (%)	90	93	90	N/A	N/A
Completion rate of Primary Education - Male (%)	89	91	89	N/A	N/A
Completion rate of Primary Education - Female (%)	92	94	92	N/A	N/A
Completion rate of Lower Secondary Education (%) - Both Sexes (%)	88.4	87	87	N/A	N/A
Completion rate of Lower Secondary Education (%) - Male (%)	86	86.2	87	N/A	N/A
Completion rate of Lower Secondary Education (%) - Female (%)	90.5	90	91	N/A	N/A
Completion rate of Upper Secondary Education (%) - Both Sexes (%)	80.6	81.4	81.3	N/A	N/A
Completion rate of Upper Secondary Education (%) - Male (%)	77.3	78.5	78	N/A	N/A
Completion rate of Upper Secondary Education (%) - Female (%)	84	84.5	84.8	N/A	N/A

Source: Sri Lanka: Status of SDG Indicators and Baseline Data; Sri Lanka: Status of SFG Indicators and Baseline Data: <https://sdc.gov.lk/en/resources>; derived from data submitted by EFA/MoE

### Indicator 4.1.3: Gross Intake Ratio to the Last Grade (Primary Education, Lower Secondary Education)

**Table 4.1.3: Gross Intake Ratio to the Last Grade (Primary Education, Lower Secondary Education)**

Indicator Name	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary education, both sexes (%)	97.26	98.31	98.11	99.05	101.11	102.39	N/A	99.26	98.24
Gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary education, male (%)	97.89	99.66	99.19	100.10	102.23	103.14	N/A	99.53	98.58
Gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary education, female (%)	96.62	96.96	97.01	98.00	99.98	101.63	N/A	98.99	97.90
Gross intake ratio to the last grade of lower secondary general education, both sexes (%)	92.33	95.18	95.92	96.11	94.75	96.42	N/A	97.96	100.52
Gross intake ratio to the last grade of lower secondary general education, male (%)	91.22	94.30	95.39	96.13	94.63	96.75	N/A	97.83	100.46
Gross intake ratio to the last grade of lower secondary general education, female (%)	93.46	96.06	96.45	96.08	94.88	96.09	N/A	98.10	100.59

Source: UIS; <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org>



**Indicator 4.1.4: Out-of-School Rate (Primary Education, Lower Secondary Education, Upper Secondary Education)**
**Table 4.1.4: Out-of-School Rate (Primary Education, Lower Secondary Education, Upper Secondary Education)**

Indicator Name	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Out-of-school rate for children of primary school age, both sexes (%)	4.76	3.49	2.58	0.94	0.94	0.72	0.54
Out-of-school rate for children of primary school age, male (%)	3.80	2.53	1.70	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Out-of-school rate for children of primary school age, female (%)	5.74	4.46	3.47	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Out-of-school rate for adolescents of lower secondary school age, both sexes (%)	6.58	5.90	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.33	0.13
Out-of-school rate for adolescents of lower secondary school age, male (%)	6.70	5.76	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.07	0.15
Out-of-school rate for adolescents of lower secondary school age, female (%)	6.47	6.05	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.59	0.11
Out-of-school rate for youth of upper secondary school age, both sexes (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	18.88	15.79
Out-of-school rate for youth of upper secondary school age, male (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	21.54	18.09
Out-of-school rate for youth of upper secondary school age, female (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	16.21	13.49
Out-of-school rate for children and adolescents of primary and lower secondary school age, both sexes (%)	5.55	4.54	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.99	0.36
Out-of-school rate for children and adolescents of primary and lower secondary school age, male (%)	5.05	3.93	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.47	0.07
Out-of-school rate for children and adolescents of primary and lower secondary school age, female (%)	6.05	5.15	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.51	0.65
Out-of-school rate for adolescents and youth of lower and upper secondary school age, both sexes (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	9.91	7.83
Out-of-school rate for adolescents and youth of lower and upper secondary school age, male (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	11.07	8.95
Out-of-school rate for adolescents and youth of lower and upper secondary school age, female (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	8.75	6.70
Out-of-school rate for children, adolescents and youth of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school age, both sexes (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6.31	5.00
Out-of-school rate for children, adolescents and youth of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school age, male (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6.72	5.46
Out-of-school rate for children, adolescents and youth of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school age, female (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5.90	4.54

Source: UIS; <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org>

#### Indicator 4.1.5: Percentage of Children Over-Age for Grade (Primary and Lower Secondary Education) Enrolled

**Table 4.1.5: Percentage of Children Over-Age for Grade (Primary and Lower Secondary Education) Enrolled**

Indicator Name	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Percentage of pupils enrolled in primary education who are at least 2 years over-age for their current grade, both sexes (%)	N/A	0.71	N/A	0.66	0.49	0.55	0.58	0.56	0.09
Percentage of pupils enrolled in primary education who are at least 2 years over-age for their current grade, male (%)	N/A	0.79	N/A	0.72	0.54	0.49	0.54	0.52	0.07
Percentage of pupils enrolled in primary education who are at least 2 years over-age for their current grade, female (%)	N/A	0.62	N/A	0.60	0.44	0.60	0.63	0.61	0.10
Percentage of pupils enrolled in lower secondary general education who are at least 2 years over-age for their current grade, both sexes (%)	N/A	1.48	N/A	1.52	1.20	1.15	1.10	1.14	0.20
Percentage of pupils enrolled in lower secondary general education who are at least 2 years over-age for their current grade, male (%)	N/A	1.78	N/A	1.86	1.40	1.44	1.36	1.42	0.23
Percentage of pupils enrolled in lower secondary general education who are at least 2 years over-age for their current grade, female (%)	N/A	1.19	N/A	1.18	0.99	0.87	0.84	0.86	0.18

Source:UIS; <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org>

#### Indicator 4.1.7: Number of Years of Education at (A) Free Primary and Secondary Education Level and (B) Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education Level Guaranteed by Legal Frameworks

**Table 4.1.7: Number of Years {(a) Free Primary and Secondary Education and (B) Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education} Guaranteed in Legal Frameworks**

Indicator Name	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of years of free primary and secondary education guaranteed in legal frameworks	13.00	13.00	13.00	13.00	13.00	13.00	13.00	13.00	13.00	13.00	13.00
Number of years of compulsory primary and secondary education guaranteed in legal frameworks	9.00	9.00	9.00	9.00	11.00	11.00	11.00	11.00	11.00	11.00	11.00

Source: UIS; <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org>

**3.2**  
**SDG 4**  
**Target 2**

**By 2030, Ensure that All Girls and Boys Have Access to Quality Early Childhood Development, Care, and Pre-Primary Education so that They Are Ready for Primary Education**

**Introduction**

Early childhood is internationally defined as the period from conception to age eight and early childhood development refers to the cognitive, physical, language, motor, social, and emotional development of these children and care refers to all care provisions including health, welfare, maintenance, and protection provided to them<sup>90</sup>. The term pre-primary education refers to the education designed for children from 3 years of age to the start of primary school<sup>91</sup>. Considering the admission age to primary schools in Sri Lanka, the National Policies on Early Childhood Care and Development,<sup>92,93</sup> have defined early childhood as the period from conception to five.

Different terms are used to describe the care and education services provided to children in early childhood. The most commonly used terms are *early childhood care and development (ECCD)*, *early childhood development (ECD)*, *early childhood care and education (ECCE)*, and *early childhood education and care (ECEC)*. But all these terms refer to the holistic development of children from conception to age five or eight, depending on the definition they adopt for early childhood. As such, the terms ECCD, ECD, and ECCE are used interchangeably in this mid-term review report for all care and education services offered to children in early childhood.

**Progress Made Towards the Target 4.2**

The progress made towards the Target 4.2 is analyzed by referring to the indicators defined by UNESCO and the values reported in the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) database. The UIS has identified five indicators, namely 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.2.4, and 4.2.5. Although UNESCO has listed 5 indicators, data is available only for the Indicator 4.2.4<sup>94</sup>. The table with UIS data on Indicator 4.2.4 and the other tables prepared based on proxy data collected are given in the Annexure 3.4.2.

**Indicator 4.2.1: The Proportion of Children Aged 24-59 Months Who Are Developmentally on Track in Health, Learning, and Psychosocial Well-Being, by Sex.**

<sup>90</sup> World Health Organization (2020). Improving Early Childhood Development: WHO Guidelines. Retrieved March 10,2023 from <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331306/9789240002098-eng.pdf>

<sup>91</sup> International Bureau of Education of the United Nations Education Scientific Cooperation (n.d) Retrieved March 10,2023 from <https://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/glossary-curriculum-terminology/p/pre-primary-education-or-preschool-education>

<sup>92</sup> Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and Social Empowerment (2018) The National Policy on ECCD Retrieved March 20,2023 <https://www.childsec.gov.lk/resources/105/English%20Policy%20Draft.pdf>

<sup>93</sup> Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and Social Empowerment (2004) The National Policy on ECCD, Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and Social Empowerment, Colombo.

<sup>94</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics (n.d.). SDG 4 March 2023 Release. Retrieved March 20, 2023, from <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org/>

The indicator is a broad measure of children’s development and their preparedness to begin schooling. According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), there is no globally accepted definition of “developmentally on track”. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey’s Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI), cited by UIS Metadata (2018)<sup>95</sup> defines ‘on track’ as the percentage of children aged 36-59 months who are developmentally on track in at least three of the four domains: literacy and numeracy, physical, socio-emotional, and learning. A high value indicates that many young children are well-prepared to start primary school in the areas of physical wellbeing and health, learning, and psychosocial well-being.

As the data related to indicator 4.2.1 was not available on the UIS website, this review used data collected by the Family Health Bureau (FHB) of Ministry of Health on children aged 24 to 59 months who are developmentally ‘on track’. The FHB has used the Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI) to identify developmentally ‘on-track’ children. This indicator showed that many young children (83.4%) in Sri Lanka are well-prepared for starting primary school in the areas of health, learning, and psychosocial well-being. However, data also showed a slight variation between males (82.0%) and females (83.7%) children between 2-5 years<sup>96</sup>.

#### **Indicator 4.2.2: Participation Rate in Organized Learning (One Year Before the Official Primary Entry Age), by Sex**

The UIS Metadata defines this indicator as the percentage of children in the given age range who participate in one or more organized learning programs, including programs that offer a combination of education and care. Participants in early childhood education and in primary education are both included in the participation rate. In Sri Lanka, organized learning is provided in preschools or ECD centres for children aged 3 and 4 (3-5 years).

As the data related to the Indicator 4.2.2 was not available on the UIS database, proxy data collected from three sources, namely the National Secretariat for Early Childhood Development (NSECD) of the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and Social Empowerment (MWCASE), ECD Units of Provinces, and Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) were examined during the review. Since there were gaps in the first two sources, estimates made by the DCS based on actual births recorded at the Registrar General’s Department from 2012 onwards were used in the analysis. Proxy data with respect to Indicator 4.2.2 are given in Table 4.2.2 of the Annexure 3.4.2. As shown in Table 4.2.2, the estimates based on the proportions calculated by the DCS show that more than 85% of boys and girls participated in organized learning in Sri Lanka during the period from 2015 to 2022.

#### **Indicator 4.2.3: Percentage of Children Under 5 Years Experiencing Positive and Stimulating Home Learning**

The UIS Metadata defines this indicator as the percentage of children aged 36-59 months who live in households where their mother, father, or other adult household members engage with them in the

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<sup>95</sup> UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2018) Metadata for the global and thematic indicators for the follow-up and review of SDG 4 and Education 2030. Retrieved March 20, 2023 [http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/metadata-global-thematic-indicators-sdg4-education2030-2017-en\\_1.pdf](http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/metadata-global-thematic-indicators-sdg4-education2030-2017-en_1.pdf)

<sup>96</sup> Family Health Bureau (n.d.) Sri Lanka, unpublished data

activities such as reading or looking at picture books, telling stories, singing songs, taking children outside the home, playing, naming, counting, drawing, etc.

As the data related to this indicator was also not available on the UIS database, the review team has made an attempt to comment on this indicator based on the proxy data generated by the Sri Lanka Demographic Health Survey of 2016<sup>97</sup>. The relevant data extracted from this survey are given in Table 4.2.3 of Annexure 3.4.2. As shown by these data, most children (over 80%) have books and playthings at home. However, no data was available on how family members engage in the activities mentioned for this indicator.

#### **Indicator 4.2.4: Gross Early Childhood Education Enrolment Ratio in (A) Pre-Primary Education and (B) Early Childhood Educational Development**

The UIS Metadata defines this indicator as the total enrolment in, (a) pre-primary education and (b) early childhood educational development (ECED) regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population of the official age for early childhood education. It further defines the data requirements for this indicator i.e. enrolment in pre-primary education and early childhood educational development, population estimates by single year of age (if using administrative data), and data on early childhood education's structure (entrance age and duration). Generally, in Sri Lanka, children are enrolled in ECE at the age of 3 years and the official age of admission to primary education is 5 years. Therefore, education provided to 4-year-olds was considered as pre-primary, and education provided to 3-year-olds as ECED.

Data on the gross enrolment ratio (GER) of pre-primary education and ECED is available in the UIS database and it is given in Table 4.2.4 of Annexure 3.4.2. As mentioned elsewhere in this document pre-primary refers to children aged 4-5 years while early childhood education refers to children aged 3-4 years. However, the UIS data given for both these categories are the same. These data show that gross enrolment ratios of both sexes in ECED and pre-primary education were 70.61% and 71.84%, respectively in 2015 and 2020. This data illustrates that gross enrolment ratios have increased only very marginally over the years. Further, gross enrolment ratios of females from 2015 -2020 (75.00% to 73.86) are higher than those of male counterparts (66.33% to 69.89%) in both ECED and pre-primary education.

#### **Indicator 4.2.5: Number of Years of (A) Free and (B) Compulsory Pre-Primary Education Guaranteed in Legal Frameworks**

No data were given in UIS database as Sri Lanka has not enacted any legislation to make pre-primary education free and compulsory. Nevertheless, pre-primary or early childhood education is widely accepted and promoted, and catered both by the State and non-State providers

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<sup>97</sup> Department of Census and Statistics of the Government of Sri Lanka (2016) Demographic Health Survey. Retrieved from <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Resource/en/Health/DemographicAndHealthSurveyReport-2016-Contents.pdf>

## Innovative and Effective Approaches since 2015 to Strengthen ECCE Sector

Several innovative and effective approaches and practices have been initiated since 2015 to strengthen the capacity of ECCE teachers, facilitators, and other practitioners, and these are listed below. Data related to these were collected from the relevant institutions.

- i) Interactive preschool teacher trainers' programs conducted by the World Bank-funded ECD project of the Ministry of Women Child Affairs and Social Empowerment (MWCASE). (2016-2023).
- ii) Interactive in-service preschool teacher training program conducted by the same project (2016-2023).
- iii) Production of awareness-raising videos on ECD for ECCE teachers, facilitators, and other practitioners as well as parents by the NSECD from 2022 onwards.  
<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=children%27s%20secrerariat>.
- iv) Guidebook to strengthen preschool teachers' capacity to integrate children with autism spectrum disorder into preschool was prepared and published by the NSECD in 2017
- v) Manual on Management of Severe and Moderate Acute Under Nutrition of Children Under 5 Years of Age prescribed by the FHB in 2020.
- vi) Early Child Care and Development Guidelines prescribed by the FHB in 2018.
- vii) Child Development Screening Checklist developed and prescribed by the FHB in 2019.
- viii) Inclusive Early Childhood Development (Include Sri Lanka) Program initiated by FHB<sup>98</sup> in 2022.
- ix) Early Child Care Development Package prescribed by the FHB in 2020.
- x) Cerebral Palsy National Guidelines prescribed by the FHB in 2022.
- xi) Training programs for pre-school and Grade 1 teachers provided through the "Likelier Pitu Atharata" ('From Playing Field to Books') by the NSECD in 2017.

## Policies and Programs Initiated since 2015 to Improve Children's Development in Health, Learning, and Psychosocial Well-Being at the Pre-Primary Level

Several policies have been initiated since 2015 to improve children's development in health, learning and psychosocial well-being at the pre-primary level. These policies are as follows.

- i) The National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Development, 2018<sup>99</sup> (NSECD of MWCASE)
- ii) Revised National Nutrition Policy 2021-2030<sup>100</sup> (Nutrition Division, Ministry of Health)
- iii) National Alternative Care Policy for children in Sri Lanka, 2019<sup>101</sup> (Department of Probation and Child Care of MWCASE): This policy is significant as it deals with care alternatives for all children from birth to eighteen years of age. Children in early childhood could be found among

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<sup>98</sup> Hewamalage, A. (2021) Inclusive Early Childhood Development (Include) Programme. Retrieved from <https://nurturing-care.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/srilanka.pdf>

<sup>99</sup> Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and Social Empowerment (2018) The National Policy on ECCD Retrieved April 20, 2023 from <https://www.childsec.gov.lk/resources/105/English%20Policy%20Draft.pdf>

<sup>100</sup> Ministry of Health (2022) National Nutrition Policy 2021-2030 <https://nutrition.health.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/NNP-English.pdf>

<sup>101</sup> Department of Probation and Child Care Services (2019) National Alternative Care Policy for children in Sri Lanka Retrieved May 10, 2023 from <http://www.probation.gov.lk/documents/downloads/Draft%20Alternative%20Care%20Policy.pdf>

these children in Government Receiving Homes that provide residential facilities for infants and children under 5 years of age.

- iv) Some of the other relevant policies are;
  - a. Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, 2023<sup>102</sup> (Women's Bureau of MWCASE); One of the thematic areas of this policy is "*Children – with a special focus on The Girl Child,*"
  - b. National Policy on Child Protection, 2020<sup>103</sup> {National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) of MWCASE},
  - c. National Policy on Preschool Education, 2019<sup>104</sup>, (National Education Commission), and
  - d. National Education Policy Framework 2020-2030<sup>105</sup> (National Education Commission).

To implement these policy initiatives, many programs have been implemented by relevant institutions. Some these programs are:

- i) Nutrition Allowance program for Pregnant and Lactating Mothers implemented since 2015 by the MWCASE;
- ii) Morning Meal Program: Initiated in 2017 for preschool children by the MWCASE;
- iii) '*Guru Abhimani*' Program, implemented since 2015 by the MWCASE for teachers serving in registered pre-schools. Pre-school teachers allowance has been increased from Rs. 250.00 monthly to Rs. 2500.00 month since 2021;
- iv) Training program initiated for preschool teachers with the assistance of the WB funded ECD project to guide pre-primary children to achieve 'Early Childhood Development Standards (ECDS) implemented in 2015;
- v) Introduction of the Standardized Early Childhood Development Assessment Tool in 2017 by the NSECD to assess preschool children's achievement of ECDS;
- vi) Social Protection of Children Project (2016-2018): This project was implemented by Department of Probation and Child Care (DPCC) and NCPA to minimize risk situations of vulnerable children; and
- vii) "*Athvela*" Parent Sponsored Child Support Scheme implemented by the DPCC since 2022. This Program helps children to meet their needs, such as education, nutrition, health, and protection by providing financial and material support and service support, as the case may be.

Results of the Policies and Programs related to the provision of early childhood care provided to children from conception can be identified from several indicators as described below:

- i) **Under 5-year mortality rate and maternal mortality rate estimated by the FHB<sup>106</sup>.** Under 5-year mortality rate ranged from 10.75 per 1000 live births in 2015 with very marginal

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<sup>102</sup> <https://srilanka.unfpa.org/en/publications/national-policy-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment>

<sup>103</sup> National Child Protection Authority (2020) National Policy on Child Protection Retrieved April 25, 2023 from <https://childprotection.gov.lk/images/pdfs/acts-guidelines/2020.12.31%20National%20Policy%20on%20Child%20Protection.pdf>

<sup>104</sup> National Policy on Preschool Education (2019), National Education Commission.

<sup>105</sup> National Education Commission (2022) National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030), National Education Commission, Sri Lanka

<sup>106</sup> Family health Bureau (n.d) Retrieved May 10,2023 from <https://fhb.health.gov.lk/index.php/en/statistics/statistics-2>

increase to 12.00 in 2022. Maternal mortality ratio showed a significant decrease from 33.7 per 100,000 live births in 2015 to 29.5 in 2020, except for 2017 which recorded a value of 39;

- ii) **Percentage of children on track as measured by 4 key criteria by the FHB** – On-going study conducted by FHB reports values for ‘children on track’ as high as 83.4%; and
- iii) **Participation rates in organized learning one year before the primary entry age for both genders** – as of data from the DCS, this indicator has recorded a value greater than 86 % during the period from 2015-2022 which is considered higher value for a developing country.

However, the disparities in body weights with the appropriate ages were reported by FHB. As of this report, the percentage of pre-school children (2-5-year group) who were underweight was 16.97% in 2015 and increased it to 19.10% by 2022<sup>107</sup>.

## Monitoring of Children’s Development Health, Learning, and Psychosocial Well-Being

At the national level, there is a well-organized State-funded National Health Care Network to monitor children’s health, learning, and psychosocial well-being holistically. Health services provided to children in early childhood period cover health and care as well as the assessment of age-appropriate development in literacy-numeracy, physical, socio-emotional and learning aspects of children while the services provided by the DPCC and NCPA focus primarily on monitoring of child care and child protection.

In the Provinces, the provincial bodies established for ECE are responsible for monitoring the quality of ECE provisions. However, their focus is more on children’s learning and their psychosocial development in the ECE settings. Since all Provincial Regulatory Bodies are members of the National Coordinating Committee on ECCD of the NSECD, they have become active members of policy making and programming at the national level as well.

The data reported by the National Health Care Network, DPCC and NCPA are used by the national level agencies such as MWCASE, NSCED, FHB, DPCC, NCPA, etc., in policy formulation and programming development at the national level while the Provincial-Level Regulatory Bodies of ECE and Provincial Departments of Probation and Childcare (P/DPCCs) use this data for provincial level policy formulation and program development. Further the coordinating committees established to implement the National Policy on ECCD from the national-, provincial- to divisional-levels provide a platform to effectively discuss this data and use them in formulating policy reforms and program development.

## Gaps and Challenges in Implementing Target 4.2 and Measures Taken to Address Them

There appear to be many challenges faced by Sri Lanka in achieving the SDG4 Target 2 successfully by 2030:

- i) Lack of an enforceable national policy on ECE despite having seemingly appropriate policies prescribed by the NEC, and the lack of a legal framework that empower agencies national and

<sup>107</sup> Family health Bureau (n.d) Retrieved May 10,2023 from <https://fhb.health.gov.lk/index.php/en/statistics/statistics-2>



- provincial levels (such as NSCED and Provincial Regulatory Bodies) to implement national and provincial ECE policies and programs;
- ii) Inadequate dialogue and coordination among national and provincial agencies/institutions vertically and horizontally that has created a gap in implementing ECCE/ECCD policies and programs;
  - iii) Absence of national curriculum framework for ECCE and enforceable ECCE curriculum that caters to the holistic development of pre-school children;
  - iv) Inadequate medical screening of children to assess their health and developmental status and for early identification of children with special education needs;
  - v) Absence of a dedicated budget line in public expenditure committed for early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education;
  - vi) Absence of public-private partnerships;
  - vii) Absence of quality assurance and certification system to promote the compliance with prescribed ECCE guidelines and standards;
  - viii) Inadequate opportunities available for acquiring tertiary education level training and qualifications for existing ECE staff as well as for those who aspire to venture into ECE sector;
  - ix) Inadequate remunerations and incentives provided to ECE staff in both State and private sector pre-school settings.
  - x) Absence of reliable and accurate data at national and provincial levels on ECE sector (i.e. on participation, enrolment, quality and quantity of facilities, services, and on outcome such as children's readiness for primary education, etc.) and on home environments

The absence of a dedicated budget line in public expenditure committed for early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education has been major impediment. There appear to be limited public funding that is channeled through the MWCASE, provincial allocations and through local government institutions such as Municipal Councils, Urban Councils, and *Pradeshiya Sabhas*. Even the expenditure of these institutions does not appear to provide a clear picture on the fraction of expenditure channeled to early childhood development, care, and on pre-primary education, and as such even estimating of the percentage of limited public expenditure channeled through diverse institutional channels to ECE sector is difficult.

### **Way Forward to Achieve Target 4.2 By 2025 and 2030**

Several measures as detailed below can be taken to achieve Target 4.2:

- i) Strengthening the pre-primary education with appropriate national policy on ECDC backed by a necessary legal framework;
- ii) Improving the coordination among the agencies/institutions responsible for ECCE/ECCD at national and provincial levels in policy formulation, program development and implementation and monitoring;
- iii) Developing a national curriculum framework for ECCE and enforceable national curriculum that caters to the holistic development of pre-school children;
- iv) Improving quality and standards of ECCE system through strengthening the registration and monitoring of ECD centres and introducing quality assurance and certification system to promote the adoption of early childhood development standards prescribed by NSECD;
- v) Increasing public investments in ECCE;

- vi) Facilitating public-private partnerships,
- vii) Improving the status of ECE teachers by providing better wages and expanding training opportunities to acquire pre-service qualifications and for in-service continuing professional development;
- viii) Identifying children that need support in the transition to primary school and taking remedial measures to help them, as and when required;
- ix) Implementing appropriate mechanisms for health screening of children in ECCE centres for detection of nutritional deficiencies and introduce nutritional supplementation programs and for early identification of children with special education needs and providing specialized training at the ECD centre level as well as directing them for professional counseling and interventions; and
- x) Strengthening information collection and collation systems at national, provincial, and centre levels with the adoption ICT- based tools.

## Conclusion

Sri Lanka has been implementing many programs at national and provincial levels to expand the coverage and improve the quality and standards of ECCE provisions. The positive results of the progressive steps taken are shown by the values reported under SDG 4.2 indicators. However, it's concerning to note that there are still significant shortcomings and gaps that would impede the progress of programs and activities that are aimed at reaching the SDG Target 4.2 by 2030. These include absence of enforceable national policy on ECCE and regulations that empower national and provincial agencies, inadequate dialogue and coordination among national and provincial agencies/institutions, inadequate public investment on early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education, absence of national curriculum framework and enforceable curriculum for ECCE, absence of quality assurance and certification system, absence of regular health screening mechanism, inadequate professional competencies of and remunerations of ECE staff, and absence of reliable and accurate data at national and provincial levels on ECE sector. It is imperative, these shortcomings and gaps need to be urgently addressed to ensure the achievement of SDG Target 4.2 by 2030.

## Annexure 3.4.2

### Indicator 4.2.1: The Proportion of Children Aged 24-59 Months Who Are Developmentally on Track in Health, Learning, and Psychosocial Well-Being, by Sex

No data was available in the UIS database

### Indicator 4.2.2: Participation Rate in Organized Learning (One Year Before the Official Primary Entry Age), by Sex

**Table 4.2.2: Participation Rate in Organized Learning (One Year Before the Official Primary Entry Age), by Sex (Proxy Measurements based on Estimated Data)**

Year	Total No. of Males* (4-5 years)	No. of Boys in an Organized Learning**	Participation Rate %	Total No. of Females* (4-5 years)	No. of Girls in an Organized Learning**	Participation Rate (both sex) %
2022	200,545	173,808	86.67	196,574	169,938	86.44
2021	200,274	173,574	86.67	196,307	169,707	86.44
2020	198,082	171,673	86.67	194,160	167,851	86.44
2019	196,980	170,719	86.67	193,080	166,917	86.44
2018	195,723	169,629	86.67	191,847	165,852	86.45
2017	193,631	167,816	86.67	189,797	164,080	86.45
2016	191,464	165,938	86.67	187,674	162,244	86.44
2015	189,253	164,022	86.67	185,507	160,371	86.41
2012***	183,602	159,124	86.67	179,962	155,577	86.44

\* Actual number of births recorded at the Register General's Department

\*\* Estimates made by Dept. of Census and Statistics (DCS) on the participation rate of boys/girls in organized learning based on the actual births in a given year recorded at the Register General's Department and data from the Census of Population and Housing of the Year 2012.

\*\*\* Data from Census of Population & Housing 2012, conducted by DCS

Source: Department of Census and Statics, Sri Lanka

### Indicator 4.2.3: Percentage of Children Under 5 Years Experiencing Positive and Stimulating Home Learning

**Table 4.2.3: Percentage of Children Under 5 years Experiencing Positive and Stimulating Home Learning Environment (Proxy measurements based on survey data)**

Indicator	Percentage
Children aged 24–59 months who have three or more children's books at home	77.10%
Children aged 24–59 months who have three or more children's books at home according to sector	
• Urban	79.60%
• Rural	81.30%
• Estate	70.80%

Children who play with two or more playthings at home	69.40%
Children who play with two or more playthings at home according to sector	
• Urban	65.90%
• Rural	69.90%
• Estate	71.40%
Children who play with manufactured playthings	89.70%
Children who play with manufactured playthings according to sector	
Urban	90.7%
Rural	89.6%
Estate	88.1%

Source: Source: Sri Lanka Demographic Health Survey (2016), Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka

#### Indicator 4.2.4: Gross Early Childhood Education Enrolment Ratio in (a) Pre-Primary Education and (b) Early Childhood Educational Development

Table 4.2.4: Gross Early Childhood Education Enrolment Ratio in (a) Pre-Primary Education and (b) Early Childhood Educational Development (UIS Data)

Indicator Name	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Gross enrolment ratio, early childhood education, both sexes (%)	70.61	73.28	70.83	68.68	70.54	71.84
Gross enrolment ratio, early childhood education, male (%)	66.33	71.91	66.95	66.68	68.47	69.89
Gross enrolment ratio, early childhood education, female (%)	75	74.69	74.82	70.75	72.68	73.86
Gross enrolment ratio, pre-primary, both sexes (%)	70.61	73.28	70.83	68.68	70.54	71.84
Gross enrolment ratio, pre-primary, male (%)	66.33	71.91	66.95	66.68	68.47	69.89
Gross enrolment ratio, pre-primary, female (%)	75	74.69	74.82	70.75	72.68	73.86

Source: Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics, <https://uis.unesco.org/>

#### Indicator 4.2.5: Number of Years of (a) Free and (b) Compulsory Pre-Primary Education Guaranteed in Legal Frameworks

No data was available in the UIS database (As there has not been any logistic enactment in this regard)

**3.3**  
**SDG 4**  
**Target 3**

**By 2030, Ensure Equal Access for all Women and Men to Affordable, Quality Technical, Vocational and Tertiary Education, Including University**

## Introduction

The Target 4.3 encompasses two sub-sectors of operating in parallel. That is the vocational education sector which is commonly referred in Sri Lanka as vocational and technical education and training (TVET) and the tertiary education that include higher education which is commonly referred in Sri Lanka as higher education or university education

Therefore, for this review, the term ‘vocational and technical education and training’ (TVET) refers to vocational education while the term higher education or university education refers to tertiary education.

## Definitions

According to International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011)<sup>108</sup>

There are four levels of tertiary education

- Level 5 - short cycle tertiary education
- Level 6 - Bachelors or equivalent level
- Level 7- Masters or equivalent level
- Level 8 -Doctoral level

However, the population of the official age for tertiary education as defined by UIS Metadata<sup>109</sup> as the age group 18-22 years. Hence, this review covers only levels of 5 and 6 which are in line with levels 5 and 6 of Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework (SLQF)<sup>110</sup> targeting the age group 18-22 years for assessing the status and major challenge for access to higher education. If the basic qualifications are fulfilled, and a person could afford to seek Level 7 and 8, which are at post-graduate level as it offers on fee-levying basis, and as such it is assumed that there are no significant issues regarding access to level 7 and 8. On the other hand, the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is a part of lifelong learning, and hence can take place at several levels; i.e. from lower-secondary, upper-secondary and post-secondary levels, and it also includes work-based learning and continuing training and professional development leading to qualifications<sup>111</sup>. Therefore, at the outset it was decided to consider TVET and higher education sectors as two separate entities while recognizing few cross linkages that may exist between two sectors.

<sup>108</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2011). *International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 2011*.

<https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf>

<sup>109</sup> UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2018). *Metadata for the global and thematic indicators for the follow-up and review of SDG 4 and Education 2030*. [http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/metadata-global-thematic-indicators-sdg4-education2030-2017-en\\_1.pdf](http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/metadata-global-thematic-indicators-sdg4-education2030-2017-en_1.pdf)

<sup>110</sup> University Grants Commission (2015). *Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework (SLQF)*. [https://www.ugc.ac.lk/attachments/1156\\_SLQF\\_2016\\_en.pdf](https://www.ugc.ac.lk/attachments/1156_SLQF_2016_en.pdf)

<sup>111</sup> UNESCO (2015). Recommendation concerning technical and vocational education and training (TVET). <https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/UNEVOC+Publications/akt=detail/lang=en/qs=5968>

## Progress Made Towards Target 4.3

The progress made towards the Target 4.3 is analyzed by referring to the indicators defined by UNESCO and the values reported in the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS)<sup>112</sup> database. The UIS has identified three indicators (i.e. 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3) for Target 4.3 and data for all three indicators are available, and the relevant indicators and tables are given in Annexure 3.4.3.

### **Indicator 4.3.1: Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training**

According to the guidelines provided by UIS Metadata, the participation is defined as '*number of youth and adults in a given age range (e.g. 15-24 years), participating in formal or non-formal education or training in a given time period (e.g. last 12 months)*'. Participating rate is the number of people in the selected age groups participating in formal or non-formal education or training expressed as a percentage of the population of the same age.

According to Table 4.3.1 of Annexure 3.4.3, the participating ratio of youth and adults in formal and in non-formal education and training had increased from 47.90% in 2015 to 56.10% in 2019. This is nearly a 8% increase. When compared with male and female participation a similar increase can be seen. Since UIS provides data are available only up to 2019, it is not possible to find out whether this trend continues beyond 2019.

However, the UIS Metadata analysis (p.37) states that formal and non-formal education and training can be offered in a variety of settings including schools and universities, workplace environments and others, and can have a variety of durations. Administrative data often capture only provisions in formal settings such as schools, universities and State TVET institutions. As such the participation rates do not capture the intensity or quality of the provision nor the outcomes of the education and training on offer, particularly the trainings offered by institutions outside this formal setting.

### **Indicator 4.3.2: Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education**

According to Table 4.3.2(a) of Annexure 3.4.3, the gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education for both sexes has increased from 19.67% in 2015 to 22.17% in 2021. When gender-wise increase is considered the female enrolment has increased by 3.07% (23.93% in 2015 to 27.00% in 2021) while the male enrolment has increased by only 1.77% (15.52% in 2015 to 17.29% in 2021)

Table 4.3.2(b) of Annexure 3.4.3 displays the gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education in the region of Central and Southern Asia where Sri Lanka also belongs. The gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education for both sexes was 24.76% in 2015 and 26.99% in 2020. By comparison with Central and Southern Asia, with Sri Lanka's gross enrollment rate is 5% less than that of the region. Further, this gap has continued without much change even up to 2020.

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<sup>112</sup> UNESCO Institute for statistics (n.d.). *SDG 4 March 2023 Release*. Retrieved April 03, 2023, from <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org/>

### **Indicator 4.3.3: Participation rate in vocational programs (15-24 year olds) by sex**

Table 4.3.3(a) of Annexure 3.4.3 provides information for only 2017 and 2018. According to this limited data, the participation rate in vocational programs (15-24 year olds) of both sexes has increased from 2.85% in 2017 to 3.88% in 2018. When considering the male and female participation separately, male participation has increased from 3.05% in 2017 to 4.33% in 2018 (1.28% increase) while female participation increased from 2.64% to 3.42% in 2018 (0.78% increase) indicating a lesser increase in participation by females.

Table 4.3.3(b) of Annexure 3.4.3 gives data on the participation rate in vocational programs in Central and Southern Asia for indicator 4.3.3 as per the UIS data. According to Table 4.3.3(b), the participation rate in Central and Southern Asia region has also increased over the years from 1.38% in 2015 to 2.35% in 2020 with higher participation of males compared to females; 1.74% in 2015 to 3.40% in 2020 in male's vs 0.98% in 2015 to 1.19% in 2020 in females.

However, when compared with participation rate data of the Central and Southern Asia region, Sri Lanka's participation in vocational programs is higher than these of Central and Southern Asia region values for both sexes compared (2.85% in 2017. vs 1.41% 2017) and this difference has continued even up to 2018 (3.88% vs 1.56% in 2018). No data is available for Sri Lanka for comparison beyond 2018.

## **Comments on Progress Made on Key Elements of Target SDG 4.3**

### **Equal Access**

Equal access to vocational and tertiary education including university is a key aspect the Target 4.3. It is commendable to note that Sri Lanka has been able to provide equal access to both to TVET and higher for a considerable extent.

**Higher Education:** Admission to State universities is highly competitive and as such, historically, only about less than one fourth of the students who have become eligible annually for admission into State universities are admitted while leaving behind nearly more than three fourth of eligible students<sup>113</sup>. As of the UGC data bases<sup>114</sup>, during the period concerned (2015-2020), the number of students who sat for the G.C.E (A/L) examination as well as the number passed in three subjects and become eligible for university admission has increased. As shown in UGC data from 2015-2022, only around 20% of the eligible students were provided higher education opportunities in State universities. However, the overall increase of admission rate from 2015-2020 has been 3.9%. The highest percentage of admission had been in 2019 (23.0%). Thereafter, there has been a slight decrease which may be due to the impact of the COVID 19 (22.6%). As a measure to increase access to higher education, State universities have commenced offering study programs through open and distance mode as early as 1960s. Accordingly, there has also been an expansion in the enrolment into external degree programs, offered by most of the State universities. However, since 2010 onwards, there has been a drop in intake into different study programs due to the restructuring of External Degree programs which was done with the aim of

<sup>113</sup> Ministry of Higher Education (2022). National Report, Sri Lanka. RecoAsia - Regional Cooperation in the field of recognition among Asian Countries. [https://www.recoasia.eu/PDF/national-report/RecoASIA-National\\_Report-SRI\\_LANKA.pdf](https://www.recoasia.eu/PDF/national-report/RecoASIA-National_Report-SRI_LANKA.pdf)

<sup>114</sup> University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka University Statistics (from 2016- 2022). <https://www.ugc.ac.lk>

improving standards and quality of educational provision offered through the often and distance mode<sup>115</sup>.

The non-State sector of Higher Education too has expanded rapidly since 2015. By 2022 there were 25 non-State Higher Education Institutions (NSHEIs) institutes which have received degree awarding status and registered under the Ministry of Education. Besides that, there are an unaccounted number of NSHEIs offering programs at tertiary education levels through cross-border arrangements with overseas HEIs. These unregistered non-state sector institutes enroll a significant portion of students with upper secondary school qualifications (i.e. G.C.E (O/L) and G.C.E A/L qualifications). Unfortunately, data with respect to this sector is not available to make any comments.

**Vocational and Technical Education and Training:** As regards to access to technical and vocation education, as depicted in Table 4.3.3 (a) of Annexure 3.4.3, only less than 4% of age cohort (15-24 age group) was enrolled over the period 2017/2018 in institution-based TVET training signifying relatively low enrollment in TVET sector by this eligible age cohort. This happens despite having the capacity of TVET sector to cater for larger annual enrollments and having provided different entry points, even for those who do not have formal schooling. This sector caters even to individuals without having formal education through the “*mature rout of certification*” while entry for NVQ level 1 and above of Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF)<sup>116</sup>, are expected from candidate who comes after some form of formal education. As such a majority of enrolments for lower level; i.e. for NVQ 1-3 are from candidates with G.C.E (O/L) education while the enrollments for NVQ 4 and above are from those who complete G.C.E (A/L) level education. Some of the candidates who pass three subjects at G.C.E (A/L) but are not selected to State universities also opt to join the TEVET sector. Further, compared to higher education, male enrolment in TVET is higher than female enrolment<sup>117</sup> in most of the fields of training as the targeted occupations are considered as male oriented. . Though the pathway for NVQ 5 and 6 qualifiers to seek entry into higher education has been cleared by mapping NVQF and Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF)<sup>118</sup>, it appears that the cross-mobility, particularly the lateral transfer from TVET sector into the programs offered by higher education institutions has not been adopted by most State universities yet. In general, it could be stated that despite having opportunities, only less than 4% of the age cohort (15-24 age group) appear to opt for opportunities offered by TVET sector.

### **Affordability**

As stated already in this report, Sri Lanka provides free education from primary to tertiary education. In addition, the Government of Sri Lanka provides financial assistance to those students who enrolled in study programs in State universities under several grant schemes - ‘*Mahapola*’ scholarships and bursary schemes - to support economically deprived students to continue their education. Further, the students who are seeking higher education opportunities in non-State sector are supported through the concessionary bank loan scheme. However, this scheme is open only to those students

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<sup>115</sup> Circular No.932, dated 15.10.2010. Policy Framework and Guidelines for offering External Degrees and Extension Programs by Universities/Higher Educational Institutions /Institutes. University Grants Commission. [https://ugc.ac.lk/attachments/777\\_Commission%20Circular%20No%20932.pdf](https://ugc.ac.lk/attachments/777_Commission%20Circular%20No%20932.pdf)

<sup>116</sup> Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (2021). National Vocational Qualifications Framework of Sri Lanka, Operations Manual. [https://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/NVQ\\_Operation\\_Manual\\_2021\\_new.pdf](https://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/NVQ_Operation_Manual_2021_new.pdf)

<sup>117</sup> Tertiary & Vocational Education Commission (2021). Labour Market Information Bulletin. Ministry of Education. <https://www.tvec.gov.lk>

<sup>118</sup> University Grants Commission (2015). Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework (SLQF). [https://www.ugc.ac.lk/attachments/1156\\_SLQF\\_2016\\_en.pdf](https://www.ugc.ac.lk/attachments/1156_SLQF_2016_en.pdf)



who are enrolled in NSHEIs that are operating with degree-awarding status granted by the Ministry of Education.

Public sector TVET institutions offered courses free of charge, or cost-recovery basis for selected socially demanding courses. Nevertheless, some of the courses with higher labour market demand are offered free of charge to encourage the participation. All public TVET institutions have now started charging course fees for the socially demanded courses. Private sector TVET institutions charges varying fees due to various cost factors governed by the regulations stipulated by the TVEC.

### **Gender-wise Enrolment**

As stated elsewhere, admission into higher education and TVET study programs is based only on merit-based selection, as such there is no form of negative or positive discrimination based on gender, ethnicity or socio-economic background. However, when enrollment data were analyzed, as shown in Table 4.3.2(a) of Annexure 3.4.3, there has been an increasing trend in female enrollment in higher education. However, this is not due to the fact that there is more preferential access given to females than males. Analysis of admission data into different study programs offered by different tertiary education institutes revealed that some programs such as Arts, Science, Medicine, etc., are more preferred by females compared to Engineering and Technology study programs which are considered as male-oriented occupations. As explained elsewhere, this is due to culturally influenced gender stereotyping which results in the perception that some occupations and professions are better suited to females than males. Similarly, as shown in 4.3.3(a) of Annexure 3.4.3, there is more male participation in the TEVET sector and this is again due to individuals' preferences and not due to any positive or negative discrimination based on gender at admission into these institutes. Therefore, it could be concluded that there is equal access to both men and women are guaranteed for both in higher education as well as in TVET.

### **Quality**

The quality and standards of study programs and institutions of State higher education sector are monitored by the Quality Assurance Council (QAC) of the University Grants Commission (UGC), and fostered through the Internal Quality Assurance Systems operating in individual HEIs. However, there is a continuing trend of graduate unemployment in the labour market and this phenomenon has been partly attributed to poor quality and standards and relevance of study programs offered<sup>119</sup>. Therefore, the UGC and respective universities have been taking progressive measures to improve the quality and standards and relevance of their offerings, including development soft-skills among the undergraduates. Unfortunately, quality assurance system operated by the QAC/UGC does not cover the non-state HE sector – for both, the MoE approved degree-warding institutes and as well as the NSHEIs which offer study programs mostly through cross-border arrangements.

## **Policies and programs to improve access and quality of TVET and tertiary education**

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<sup>119</sup> Ranasinghe R.K.R.S., Jayasinghe. W. A. D. T., Ponnampereuma.G., Abeygunawardena.H. Congruence of Human Resources Produced by Universities with Employment Market: Part I: Intake and Output, Employability Trends, and Employability by Discipline. National Education Commission (Unpublished)

There have been several policies and programs initiated since 2015 to improve access and quality of tertiary education. Some of them are as follows.

### **Policies and Programs relevant to Higher education**

- National Policy Proposals on Higher Education 2019<sup>120</sup>
- National Policy Framework on Education (2023): Part IV-Volume III- Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activities on Higher Education (2020-2030)<sup>121</sup>
- UGC Strategic Plan (2019 – 2023)<sup>122</sup>
- University Grants Commission has taken steps to improve quality and standards of higher education provisions – under this initiative, steps have been taken to streamline the Quality Assurance Activities of the Quality Assurance Council of the UGC (QAC/UGC) and academic development and planning by universities. Under this activity, a revised version of Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF) was released in 2015 which prescribes level specific qualification descriptors and competency profiles. In addition, guidelines on adoption of outcome-based student-centered learning (OBE-SCL) were issued. Further, updated versions of the Quality Assurance Manuals – one for the review of Study Programs and the other for the review of Universities and Higher Education institutes were prepared and released in 2015. Further, subject benchmark statements (SBSs) were updated, and few more SBSs were developed for the new study programs/discipline<sup>123</sup>.
- Continuation of donor funding for further improvement of higher education - Upon completion of the World Bank project, titled “Higher Education for Twenty-First Century (WB/HETC)” Project (2010-2016), continued funding for further improvement of quality and standards of higher education has been provided through another the WB-funded project titled “Accelerating Higher Education Expansion and Development (WB/AHEAD) project that has commenced in 2017, and it will continue till 2023.

### **Policies and Programs relevant to TVET**

Policies and programs initiated since 2015 to improve access and quality of TVET are as follows;

- The National Policy on TVET (NPTVET) was formulated by the NEC in 2018<sup>124</sup> and it was further updated by the National Policy Framework on Education (2020-2030): Volume IV- Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activities on Technical and Vocation Education and Training (2020-2030)<sup>125</sup>.

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<sup>120</sup> National Education Commission (2019). *National Policy Proposals on Higher Education*. [http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Higher-education-Policy\\_2019\\_English.pdf](http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Higher-education-Policy_2019_English.pdf)

<sup>121</sup> National Education Commission (2022). *National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030)*. [http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030\\_Full-Text.pdf](http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf)

<sup>122</sup> University Grants Commission (2019). *Strategic Plan 2019 to 2023*. [https://www.ugc.ac.lk/downloads/corporate\\_plan/University%20Grants%20Commission%20Strategic%20Plan%202019-2023.pdf](https://www.ugc.ac.lk/downloads/corporate_plan/University%20Grants%20Commission%20Strategic%20Plan%202019-2023.pdf)

<sup>123</sup> University Grants Commission, Annual Reports (from 2015 to 2022).

<sup>124</sup> National Education Commission (2019). *National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education*. [http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TVE\\_NP\\_2018\\_English.pdf](http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TVE_NP_2018_English.pdf)

<sup>125</sup> National Education Commission (2022). *National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030)*. [http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030\\_Full-Text.pdf](http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf)

- The Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) prepared a draft on the National Development Plan for the TVET Sector (2023-2027)<sup>126</sup> based on the NEC policies on TVET sector.

## Public Expenditure on Tertiary Education and TVET

As of UGC statistics<sup>127</sup> the total expenditure on Higher Education as a percentage of total expenditure on education has increased from 21.90% in 2015 to 28.66% in 2021. Further, this data showed that it stagnated around 28% from 2019 to 2021. As of TVEC data sources<sup>128</sup>, the total expenditure on TVET as a percentage of total expenditure on education has decreased from 3.52% in 2016 to 2.71% in 2021. This could be due to the financial downturn that commence in the aftermath of the COVID -19 pandemic which was followed by the dual debt burden experienced by the country.

## Measures to Ensure Increasing Investment in Tertiary Education and TVET

**Higher education sector:** Even though the total expenditure on higher education from the total expenditure on education has been limited to around 28%, several measures have been taken to increase investment in the different sectors of tertiary education.

- i. The State has invested in the expansion of university education. Two new universities, 27 Faculties, and 193 Departments have been established since 2015 up to 2021<sup>129</sup>.
- ii. An interest-free loan scheme targeting the students enrolled in NHEIS operating with degree-awarding status granted by the Ministry of Education<sup>130</sup>.
- iii. In addition, there have been several donor-funded development projects. World Bank funded, Accelerating Higher Education Expansion and Development (AHEAD) Project (US\$ 100.00 million) is currently in progress. Under the AHEAD project several public-private partnership programs have been developed by some of the Faculties and University Business Linkage Cells were established for this purpose. Asian Development Bank funded Science and Technology Human Resource Development Project (ADB/STHRD US\$ 83.02 million)<sup>131</sup> is also ongoing. The project will support the government in developing the applied science and technology faculties in four universities to nurture a new breed of technology-oriented graduates equipped with market relevant skills and entrepreneurial spirit

**Vocational Education Sector:** For the vocational education, there had been only one donor-funded project for the development of TVET sector in Sri Lanka in the last two decades (2000-2022); i.e. ADB funded *Skills Sector Enhancement Program (ADB/SSEP) (2014-2022)*<sup>132</sup>. The ADB/SSEP was aimed at

<sup>126</sup> Tertiary & Vocational Education Commission (2022). *National Development Plan for the TVET Sector (2023-2027) (Draft)*. [https://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Development\\_Plan\\_2023\\_27.pdf](https://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Development_Plan_2023_27.pdf)

<sup>127</sup> University Grants Commission, Annual Reports (from 2015 to 2022).

<sup>128</sup> Ministry of Education, Annual reports (from 2015 to 2021).

<sup>129</sup> University Grants Commission (2021). *Sri Lanka University Statistics 2021*. [https://www.ugc.ac.lk/downloads/statistics/stat\\_2021/Chapter%201.pdf](https://www.ugc.ac.lk/downloads/statistics/stat_2021/Chapter%201.pdf)

<sup>130</sup> Ministry of Higher Education (2021). *Annual Performance Report-Higher Education*. Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka. [https://www.mohe.gov.lk/images/3\\_2022\\_Annual\\_Report\\_English\\_1\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.mohe.gov.lk/images/3_2022_Annual_Report_English_1_compressed.pdf)

<sup>131</sup> ADB Sri Lanka: Science and Technology Human Resource Development Project; <https://www.adb.org/projects/50275-002/main>

<sup>132</sup> ADB (n.d.). Sri Lanka: Skills Sector Enhancement Program. Retrieved July 17, 2023, from <https://www.adb.org/projects/42251-018/main>

reorienting the TVET system in the country to focus on increasing gainful employment of TVET graduates, thus contributing to the development human resource capital of the country.

### Gaps and Challenges in Implementing Target 4.3

Both the TVET and Higher Education Sectors have been faced with many gaps and challenges and they are briefly elaborated below:

#### Higher Education Sector

- i) **Limited access to higher education:** As discussed elsewhere, the inability of the State sector HEIs to provide access for higher education for all those who become qualified and become eligible had been the major challenge faced by Sri Lanka over past few decades. As of 2022 data, only about 22% of the eligible students were admitted into State higher education institutions. This gap has continued despite the progressive expansion taking place in the State higher education sector.

Therefore, the alternative is to expand the provisions provided by private higher education providers. However, though there is a sizable presence of private higher education providers in terms of number of institutions, the contribution to address the issue of access has rather been limited. Only a limited number of State and Private HEIs have got the degree-awarding status from the Ministry of Higher Education and again these HEIs cater only to a small segment of students seeking higher education. Though, many private HEIs operate only with the registration from Board of Investment and/or Registrar of Companies as cross-border HEIs providing study programs offered by foreign universities, this large segment of private higher education institutes are yet to get legitimacy and public acceptance as they are operating without any registration, supervision and quality certification by the Ministry of Education or by the UGC.

- ii) **Low employability of graduates coming out from State Universities:** Many reviews on graduate employability have revealed that the graduates of Sri Lankan State universities have historically faced unemployment, and this is more so with graduates of humanities and social sciences fields<sup>133</sup>. This stems from many issues related to quality and relevance of the study programs offered as well as inability of the country to create employment opportunities for the educated youth.
- iii) **Absence of regulatory and quality assurance system for private higher education sector:** As highlighted above (under section i), at present most of the NSHEs operate without any regulatory control by the State authorities. Similarly, they are not subjected rigorous quality assurance system as has been done for the State universities.

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<sup>133</sup> Ranasinghe R.K.R.S., Jayasinghe. W. A. D. T., Ponnampereuma.G., Abeygunawardena.H. Congruence of Human Resources Produced by Universities with Employment Market: Part I: Intake and Output, Employability Trends, and Employability by Discipline. National Education Commission (Unpublished)

## TVET sector

- i) **Low demand for enrollment:** This stems from several factors. Firstly, many students graduating from upper- secondary level of education wish to seek higher education instead of TVET due to many socio-cultural and economic reasons. Absence of minimum wage policy for NVQ qualifications holders coming out from the TVET sector has resulted in TVET graduates faced with under-employment as well under-remuneration. This is considered as one of the primary causes for low demand for TVET enrollment.
- ii) **Inadequate financial incentives given to TVET trainees:** Even though students in State universities are granted scholarships or bursaries, none of that nature has been granted for trainees of TVET sector. As such, there is less attraction for enrollment into TVET programs, and even after enrollment, many appear to leave or drop out from programs due to economic reasons.
- iii) **Low public investment on TVET sector compared to higher education sector:** As of data on public expenditure on education, the TVET sector receives the lowest allocation compared to general and higher education sectors.
- iv) **Inadequacies in human and physical resources:** Many TVET institutions are faced with the problem of attracting quality candidates for teaching staff, and even after recruitment, many opt to leave the job for better paid employment. In addition, most TVET institutions lack adequate physical resources including common amenities and training facilities, and even the existing facilities appear to be in need of urgent upgrading.
- v) **Limited assistance from international development partners:** Compared to higher education, sector, the TVET has not been able to attract overseas development assistance over the past few years.
- vi) **Inadequacies in data collection, compilation and report generation for policy and development planning:** In the absence of a centralized, information management system encompassing wide spectrum TVET providers result in significant gaps in data with respect to participation, enrollment, dropout and graduation rates and or also in monitoring of the performance of TVET institutions. This deficiency has seriously affected the evidenced-based policy making and development planning by the higher authorities.

## Conclusion

Sri Lanka has taken many progressive measures since 2015 towards achieving Target 4.3. However, the efforts taken so far in higher education sector have not been able to expand access to higher education to a significant extent, at least to the level reported for the Central and South Asian region, and improve

the quality and relevance of study programs to a considerable extent. Similarly, the TVET sector, despite taking measures to increase youth enrollment into TVET programs by increasing the training capacity, has not been successful in attracting potential trainees as well as to retaining them in the program to a significant extent. Therefore, much more focused and targeted interventions are needed in both sectors to reach the Target 4.3 by 2030.

## Annexure 3.4.3

### Indicator 4.3.1: Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex

Table 4.3.1: Participation rate of youth and adults

Indicator Name	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, 15-24 years old, both sexes (%)	47.90	48.50	49.80	53.50	56.10	N/A	N/A	N/A
Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, 15-24 years old, female (%)	47.80	49.30	50.90	55.50	56.80	N/A	N/A	N/A
Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, 15-24 years old, male (%)	48.10	47.70	48.70	51.40	55.40	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: UIS, <https://uis.unesco.org/>

### Indicator 4.3.2: Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education by sex

Table 4.3.2 (a): Gross enrolment ratios in for tertiary education by sex

Indicator Name	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education, both sexes (%)	19.76	18.84	18.96	19.63	21.13	21.61	22.17	N/A
Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education, female (%)	23.93	22.90	22.82	23.44	26.02	26.67	27.00	N/A
Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education, male (%)	15.52	14.73	15.07	15.80	16.22	16.53	17.29	N/A

Source: UIS, <https://uis.unesco.org/>

Table 4.3.2 (b): Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education in the Region – Central and Southern Asia

Target and Indicators	Region(s)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education, both sexes (%)	SDG: Central and Southern Asia	24.76	24.66	25.04	25.43	26.46	26.99	N/A
Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education, female (%)		24.19	24.16	24.79	25.49	27.06	27.86	N/A
Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education, male (%)		25.29	25.11	25.26	25.38	25.91	26.20	N/A

Source: UIS, <https://uis.unesco.org/>

### Indicator 4.3.3: Participation rate in technical-vocational programs (15- to 24-year-olds) by sex

**Table 4.3.3 (a): Proportion of 15 to 24-year-olds enrolled in vocational education**

Indicator Name	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Proportion of 15- to 24-year-olds enrolled in vocational education female (%)	N/A	N/A	2.64	3.42	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Proportion of 15- to 24-year-olds enrolled in vocational education, male (%)	N/A	N/A	3.05	4.33	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Proportion of 15- to 24-year-olds enrolled in vocational education, both sexes (%)	N/A	N/A	2.85	3.88	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: UIS, <https://uis.unesco.org/>

**Table 4.3.3 (b): Proportion of 15- to 24-year-olds enrolled in vocational education in the Region – Central and Southern Asia**

Target and Indicators	Region(s)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Proportion of 15- to 24-year-olds enrolled in vocational education, both sexes (%)	SDG: Central and Southern Asia	1.38	1.39	1.41	1.56	1.64	2.35	N/A
Proportion of 15- to 24-year-olds enrolled in vocational education, female (%)		0.98	0.99	0.97	1.07	1.11	1.19	N/A
Proportion of 15- to 24-year-olds enrolled in vocational education, male (%)		1.74	1.75	1.82	2.02	2.12	3.40	N/A

Source: UIS, <https://uis.unesco.org/>



### 3.4. SDG 4 Target 4

**By 2030, Substantially Increase the Number of Youth and Adults Who Have Relevant Skills, Including Technical and Vocational Skills for Employment, Decent Jobs and Entrepreneurship**

## Introduction

Within the context of Target 4.4, the terms 'relevant skills' and 'decent work' play a crucial role. 'Decent work' is defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as productive work that ensures freedom, equity, security, and human dignity, encompassing fair income, equal opportunities and treatment, safe working conditions, social protection, personal growth, and freedom of expression<sup>134</sup>. While typically associated with non-white-collar and non-professional jobs, where employment conditions and remuneration may be less defined, the concept of decent work also extends to professional and white-collar occupations, especially considering the challenges faced in developing countries. Therefore, in this report, 'decent work' includes any job offered to men and women, including university graduates. 'Relevant skills' for this group encompass Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills, as well as technical and vocational skills, which are crucial for individuals to thrive in the job market and contribute to sustainable development.

## Progress Made Towards Target 4.4

The progress made towards the Target 4.4 is analysed by referring to the indicators defined by UNESCO and the values reported in the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) database. The UIS has identified three indicators, namely 4.4.1, 4.4.2, and 4.4.3<sup>135</sup>. Although UNESCO has listed 3 indicators, data is available for only for the indicator 4.4.3 within UIS database. Therefore, proxy data for the indicator 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 were obtained from the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS). All data tables relevant to the indicators are given in the Annexure 3.4.4.

### **Indicator 4.4.1: Proportion of Youth and Adults with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Skills, by Type of Skills**

Data related to indicator 4.4.1 was not available on the UIS website. Therefore, this report used data obtained by the DCS and they are presented in Table 4.4.1 of Annexure 3.4.4. Upon reviewing the data, it was noted a general trend of improvement of ICT skills in the yearly figures, particularly in the projected values for the 15-24 age group nationwide. It is important to note that the analysis does not provide a breakdown by skill type but rather focuses on ICT skills generally applicable across various skill types. Overall, the data suggests progress in developing ICT skills among youth and adults, and

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<sup>134</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO) (2023) The Decent Work Agenda Retrieved March 10, 2023 from: <https://www.ilo.org/asia/decentwork/lang--en/index.htm>

<sup>135</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics (n.d.). SDG 4 March 2023 Release. Retrieved March 20, 2023 from <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org/>

the increasing numbers indicate a growing emphasis on equipping individuals with essential ICT skills for the evolving job market and digital landscape.

**Indicator 4.4.2: Percentage of Youth/Adults Who Have Achieved at Least a Minimum Level of Proficiency in Digital Literacy Skills**

Data related to indicator 4.4.2. was not available on the UIS data base. Therefore, this review used data collected by the DCS and the data are presented in Table 4.4.2 of Annexure 3.4.4.

When identifying the minimum level of proficiency in digital literacy skills and the literacy rate, the following definitions adopted by the DCS<sup>136</sup> were used:

- **Computer literacy:** Refers to individuals (aged 5-69) who can independently use a computer.
- **Computer literacy rate:** Represents the percentage of computer literate population (aged 5-69) within the respective domain.
- **Digital literacy:** Refers to individuals (aged 5-69) who can independently use computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone.
- **Digital literacy rate:** Represents the percentage of digital literate population (aged 5-69) within the respective domain.

The data presented in Table 4.4.2(a) show the computer literacy rates by sector, province, and survey year in Sri Lanka for the years 2015-2022. The table demonstrates the computer literacy rates of youth/adults for different sectors, such as urban, rural, and estate, as well as for various provinces within Sri Lanka. Table 4.4.2(b) provides information on the percentage of youth and adults who have achieved at least a minimum level of proficiency in digital literacy skills for the years 2016-2021. Data focuses on the youth population (15-24 years) and the adult population (25-69 years).

Analyzing the data, it is evident that the overall computer literacy rate is not impressive, as even the most urban Western Province has not reached a 50% computer literacy rate. However, the data in Table 4.4.2(b) reveals a positive trend in terms of the youth population's proficiency in digital literacy skills. The figures show that nearly 90% of youth have achieved the minimum level of proficiency in digital literacy skills (as opposed to 48.1% in adult population in 2021) indicating a significant increase of approximately 25% since 2016. This rise may be attributed to the increased reliance on ICT for formal learning during COVID-19 pandemic, which forced many young learners to adopt online platforms. If this upward trend continues, Sri Lanka may approach near 100% proficiency in digital literacy skills in the youth age group in the coming years, even in non-pandemic times.

However, there is a risk of plateauing in this trend due to the remaining 10% of youth who lack the minimum proficiency in digital literacy skills. To address this, it is important to purposefully identify and track this segment of the youth population. Additionally, the data highlights that the adult population does not exhibit the same level of proficiency, with less than 50% having achieved the

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<sup>136</sup> Department of Census and Statistics (2022) Retrieved May 2,2023  
<http://www.statistics.gov.lk/ComputerLiteracy/StaticInformation/Bulletins/2022-Annual> Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka

minimum proficiency in digital literacy skills. This trend may improve as the current youth population ages beyond 25 years and gains more experience and exposure to digital technologies.

Overall, while progress has been made in improving computer and digital literacy skills among the youth population, efforts should continue to bridge the gap and enhance proficiency among adults as well.

#### **Indicator 4.4.3: Youth/Adult Educational Attainment Rates by Age Group and Level of Education**

The data obtained from the UIS database given in Table 4.4.3 of Annexure 3.4.4. According to the Table 4.4.3, the educational attainment rate in terms of completion rate of lower-secondary education or higher in both sexes was 81.61% in 2016 and 81.85% in 2021 with a disparity among urban and rural in both sexes (87.10% vs 60.48 % in 2016, and 88.91% vs 80.39% in 2021). Educational attainment rate in terms of completion rate upper-secondary education or higher in both sexes has marginally increased from 61.68% in 2016 to 63.68% in 2021 with a widening disparity among urban and rural in both sexes (68.51% vs 60.27 % in 2016, and 74.69% vs 61.41% in 2021). Educational attainment rate in terms of Master's or equivalent education or higher in both sexes has been low; 0.83% in 2016 to 0.76% 2021 with widening disparity among urban and rural setting (1.86% vs 0.61% in 2016 and 2.07% vs 0.48% in 2021). Educational attainment rate in terms of short-cycle tertiary education or higher in both sexes has also been low; 4.06% in 2016 to 5.03 %in 2021 with widening disparity among urban and rural settings (6.63% vs 3.53% in 2016 and 10.73% vs 4.05% in 2021). However, educational attainment rate in terms of at least some primary (ISCED)<sup>137</sup> in both sexes was 96.61% in 2021 with marginal disparity among urban and rural settings (98.36% vs 96.39% in 2021).

The above analysis revealed, though the education attainment rate in terms at least some primary (ISCED 1) in both sexes and lower-secondary education or higher in both sexes was higher (>95% and >80%, respectively), it is somewhat lower at upper-secondary or higher (around 60%) with lower rates reporting for short-cycle, tertiary education (around 5%) and for Master's or equivalent or higher (<1.0%) implying that lower attainment education at the levels of upper-secondary, short-cycle tertiary education or Mater's or equivalent or higher.

### **Policies and Programs for Enhancing Skills for Employment and Entrepreneurship Among Youth and Adults since 2015**

Since 2015, national-level organizations in Sri Lanka have implemented various policies and programs to increase the number of individuals with relevant technical and vocational skills for employment and entrepreneurship<sup>138</sup>. Key initiatives include:

- i) Expanding higher education institutions and strengthening of TVET training centres (as cited in Report on 4.3), expansion of competency-based training, improving the social image of craft occupations, emphasizing non-technical skills, developing national

<sup>137</sup> <https://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/international-standard-classification-education-isced>

<sup>138</sup> Ministry of Education (n.d) *The Sector Skills Development Program* Retrieved June 20,2023 from <https://www.skillsmin.gov.lk/skill-sector-development-programssdp/>

- competency standards, aligning with international qualification frameworks, introducing vocational education paths in schools, and promoting entrepreneurship;
- ii) Introduction of updated version of Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework<sup>139</sup> by the UGC in 2015, and it focuses on technical, socio-emotional, and entrepreneurship skills among undergraduates of State universities;
  - iii) Introduction of quality assurance and accreditation mechanism by the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission to accredit private TVET providers<sup>140</sup>;
  - iv) National Education Policies formulated by the National Education Commission that prescribed policies to strengthen technical and vocational education in 2018<sup>141</sup>, and in 2022<sup>142</sup>. These policy documents prescribed, policies and programs for expanding training centers, fostering public-private partnerships, providing further training for industry employees, and addressing skills for foreign employment;
  - v) In 2006, ICT was integrated in to the G.C.E. (O/L) as a technical subject and as a main subject for G.C.E. (A/L) from 2007<sup>143</sup>. In addition, in 2013 Technology stream was introduced as a study stream in the G.C.E. (A/L) examination on par with Mathematics/ Science, Commerce and Arts streams<sup>144</sup>; and
  - vi) Conduct of awareness programs for the youth by the National Youth Council to create awareness on the availability of vocational and technical education and training opportunities<sup>145</sup>.

However, there is a need for strengthening implementation and evaluation of these initiatives to ensure their effectiveness.

## Policies and Programs to Increase Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Skills Among Youth and Adults since 2015

Since 2015, several policies and programs have been introduced in Sri Lanka to enhance vocational and technical skills development, including ICT skills:

- i) The NEC National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030) emphasizes the importance of ICT skills in education, while the SLQF issued in 2016 includes information handling as a specific competency domain;
- ii) The Digital Economy Strategic Plan (2020-2024)<sup>146</sup> developed and adopted by Information and Communication Technology Agency (ICTA) focuses on technology industry development, diffusion, capacity building, and regional cluster development;

<sup>139</sup> University Grants Commission (2015) *Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF)*, <https://www.ugc.ac.lk>

<sup>140</sup> Tertiary and Vocation Education Commission (2021) *Code of Functions* Retrieved May 8, 2023 [https://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/TVEC\\_info\\_english.pdf](https://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/TVEC_info_english.pdf)

<sup>141</sup> National Education Commission (2018). National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education, National Education Commission, Sri Lanka. <http://nec.gov.lk/>

<sup>142</sup> National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030), National Education Commission, Sri Lanka. <http://nec.gov.lk/>

<sup>143</sup> De Silva, D.G.N.T. & Amaradasa, R. (2022) Technology Mediated Education in Sri Lanka: Expectations, Challenges and Strategies. *Journal of Economics & Management*. Volume 3(3): 2-7

<sup>144</sup> National Institute of Education (2017) International and communication technology syllabus for grades 12 and 13. Retrieved from <http://nie.lk/pdf/files/tg/eALSyl%20ICT.pdf>

<sup>145</sup> National Youth Council (n.d.) Retrieved June10, <https://www.nysc.lk/page/view/youth-club>

<sup>146</sup> Information and communication Technology Agency (2020) *Digital Economy Strategic Plan (2020-2024)* <https://www.icta.lk/news/vision-2024-for-icta-a-digitally-transformed-sri-lanka/>

- iii) The Digital Government Competency Framework<sup>147</sup> identifies competencies for different government employment levels;
- iv) The Teacher Digital Competency Framework<sup>148</sup> aims to transform teachers for ICT education; and
- v) The Policy for Digital Transformation of Education<sup>149</sup> promotes international licenses and certificates through key policy objectives and programs.

Additionally, many other programs have been initiated, including teacher training, information technology competitions, capacity building, the National ICT Skills Platform, the *Suhuruliya* National Forum 2023 and, the Digital Maturity Model for the Government<sup>150</sup>, and initiatives taken by the Ministry of Skills Development and Sri Lanka Association for Software Services Companies (SLASSCOM)<sup>151</sup>, the national chamber for the knowledge and innovation industry in Sri Lanka. These efforts aim to address the demand for ICT skills, foster digital literacy, and prepare individuals for the evolving digital landscape.

## Policies and Programs for Skills Development, Including ICT Skills, Since 2015: Results and Intermediate Results

Efforts have been made by the ICTA<sup>152</sup> to evaluate the impact of current policies and programs. These evaluation efforts include:

- i) Report on ICT Project Utilization Data: Prepared by ICTA and Skills International, providing data on the utilization of ICT projects as of 2021;
- ii) Outcome Assessment of Industrial Development Program (IDP): Conducted by Skills International on behalf of ICTA, assessing the outcomes of the IDP from 2016 to 2020;
- iii) Final Assessment of Contingent Emergency Response Component (CERC): Conducted by ICTA with World Bank support in December 2022 to evaluate the impact of the CERC;
- iv) Assessment of the Cross Government Digital Document Management System (DDMS): Carried out by Skills International on behalf of ICTA to assess the effectiveness of the DDMS; and
- v) ICTA Entrepreneurial-related Evaluation: Evaluation of entrepreneurial initiatives by ICTA.

Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) has also been engaged in preparation of Vocational Education and Training (VET) Plans for growing industry sectors with the view of rationalizing training as required by the industry<sup>153</sup>.

<sup>147</sup> Information and communication Technology Agency (2022) *Digital Government Competency Framework* Retrieved May 8, 2023 from <https://www.icta.lk/icta-assets/uploads/2023/05/Annex-7-Digital-Government-Competency-Framework.pdf>

<sup>148</sup> Information and communication Technology Agency (2023) *Teacher Digital Competency Framework* Retrieved May 8, 2023 from <https://www.icta.lk/icta-assets/uploads/2023/04/To-Web-Project-Progress-To-Board-2023-March-V1.0-2023-03-21.pdf>

<sup>149</sup> Information and communication Technology Agency (2022) *Policy for Digital Transformation of Education* Retrieved May 20, 2023 <https://www.icta.lk/icta-assets/uploads/2022/04/Policy-for-Digital-Transformation-of-Education-English-1.pdf>

<sup>150</sup> Digital Maturity Model, <https://www.icta.lk/icta-assets/uploads/2023/05/Annex-4-Digital-Maturity-Model-for-GoSL.pdf>

<sup>151</sup> Sri Lanka Association for Software Services Companies (SLASSCOM) Retrieved May 5, 2023 from <https://slasscom.lk/>

<sup>152</sup> Information and communication Technology Agency (2023) Retrieved May 5, 2023 from <https://www.icta.lk/icta-assets/uploads/2023/04/To-Web-Project-Progress-To-Board-2023-March-V1.0-2023-03-21.pdf>

<sup>153</sup> Tertiary Vocational Education Commission (2021) VET plan for Electrical and Electronics Sector

Ministry of Education has established 'Skills Development and Vocational Education Division' and commenced evaluation of programs such as 'Smart Classes' conducted by the Ministry of Education<sup>154</sup>.

In addition, as reported by Ministry of Skill Development several initiatives have been taken in this regards. These efforts include i) development and maintenance of Management of Information System and computer-based information systems, ii) implementation of Quality Management System in training institutes, iii) assessment and accreditation of courses, iv) introduction of National Competency Standards and vi) curricular updates<sup>155</sup>.

Although the ultimate results of many programs are not specified in these reports, the impact of certain programs implemented by Ministry of Education can be evaluated to some extent through the improvement in student performance in ICT at the G.C.E O/L and A/L examinations. The results show an increase in pass rates over the years<sup>156</sup>.

While the evaluation of ICT programs has shown some success, there is a need for more comprehensive impact assessment studies in the future. The data available mainly focuses on ICT skills, and data for evaluating other skills is limited. Therefore, it is important to conduct evaluations that encompass a broader range of skills, and also to ensure that meaningful data is obtained for evaluation purposes.

### **Efforts to Address the Need for Increased Investment in Skills Development for the Labour Market, Including ICT Skills**

Policy-level efforts have been made to address the need for increased investment in skills development, particularly in ICT skills. These efforts include:

The NEC National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030)<sup>157</sup> emphasizes the importance of ICT skills and outlines strategies for enhancing training provisions and access to TVET centers. These policies and accompanied strategies include the following:

- a) Policy-TVET 3.1: Aims to strengthen the TVET center network, improve training facilities, and attract potential trainees through grant schemes and subsidized loans for private training providers;
- b) Policy-TVET 3.3: Encourages partnerships between public and private training centers to enhance training capacity and industry relevance; and
- c) Policy-TVET 3.4: Calls for TVET institutions and centers to provide both pre-employment training for youth and further training or re-training for industry employees.

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<sup>154</sup> Ministry of Education (2021) *Annual Report* Retrieved May 5,2023 from <https://moe.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/3.-2021-Annual-Report-English.pdf>

<sup>155</sup> As reported by skill Development, Vocational Education, Research and Innovation Division of Ministry of Education

<sup>156</sup> Department of Examinations (2019) STATISTICAL HANDBOOK 2017 – 2019; [https://www.doenets.lk/images/resources/STAT/2017%20-%202019%20HandBook%20Final%202021.10.13\\_1634126955231](https://www.doenets.lk/images/resources/STAT/2017%20-%202019%20HandBook%20Final%202021.10.13_1634126955231).

<sup>157</sup> National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030), National Education Commission, Sri Lanka. <http://nec.gov.lk/>

In addition to the above policy efforts, the Government of Sri Lanka has demonstrated its commitment to skills development by allocating special financial provisions to the Ministry/Division of Skills Development of MOE. As of the information provided by the Ministry of Skills Development, the capital expenditure figures from 2015 to 2021 show that there has been a constant increase in an investment in skills development.

Moreover, the "Suhuruliya" Initiative, also known as "Pudumaippen" initiated by ICTA, together with the United Nations' Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (UNAPCICT), has made a significant impact in empowering rural women in Sri Lanka through ICT-enabled entrepreneurship and digital dissemination throughout its five-year long journey (2017-2022). The Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and Social Empowerment and Meta (#SheMeansBusiness)<sup>158</sup> partnered with ICTA in these efforts. So far, this program has capacitated more than 15,000 women entrepreneurs and enriched the lives of more than 175,000 women while contributing significantly to the economy in terms of improving digital literacy, economic contribution, and digital adoption of females<sup>159</sup>.

In addition, Ministry of Education in partnership with UNICEF and ICTA has developed the Teacher Digital Competency Framework for training teachers signifying the emphasizes given to efforts to transform teachers for ICT education<sup>160</sup>.

In general, it could be stated that there have been well-focused policy-level efforts and programs coupled with financial investments to promote skills development for the labour market, including ICT skills. These efforts are aimed at improving training provisions, expanding access to TVET centers, and fostering partnerships between public and NGO sectors. The involvement of UN organizations and international collaborations has also contributed to investment in ICT education and skills development initiatives.

## Major Gaps and Challenges in implementing Target 4.4, and Measures Taken to Address Them

Gaps in implementing Target 4.4 and measures to address them are given below:

- i) Inadequate coordination among the multitude of training institutions at secondary and higher education and at TVET levels and absence of national level plan to equip youth and adults of all segments of population with relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship;
- ii) Insufficient monitoring of on-going programs and activities including taking corrective actions;
- iii) inadequate linkages between training providers and employers;

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<sup>158</sup> <https://about.meta.com/>

<sup>159</sup> Information and Communication Agency Sri Lanka (2023) *Suhuruliya National Forum 2023*  
<https://www.icta.lk/news/suhuruliya/>

<sup>160</sup> Ministry of Education (2021) *Annual Performance Report*: <https://moe.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/3.-2021-Annual-Report-English.pdf>

- iv) Inadequate tracking and data generation on the progress on development of essential skills in diverse target groups for decent jobs and entrepreneurship; and
- v) Insufficient funding and support.

Measures to address the above mentioned gaps is crucial for equipping Sri Lanka's workforce with relevant skills, including ICT skills, for decent work. Urgent actions that are needed include:

- i) improving coordination among key education and training organizations;
- ii) enhancing links between training providers and employment market;
- iii) improving monitoring of progress of on-going programs;
- iv) tracking on essential skills on annual basis (as a component/module of annual Labour Force Survey conducted by DCS) for decent jobs and entrepreneurship among diverse target groups in the population and data generation; and
- v) enhancing funding and support.

## Conclusion

Though Sri Lanka has made some progress in addressing the Target 4.4, and in achieving some success particularly in equipping the youth with ICT Skills, many more efforts are required for equipping the country's workforce with other relevant skills for decent work and entrepreneurship. In this regards, there are many gaps that need to be addressed urgently such as improving coordination among key education and training organizations and institutions, enhancing links between training providers and employment market, improving monitoring of progress of on-going programs, tracking on essential skills in the general populace on annual basis and data generation, and enhancing funding and support. These measures are crucial, if Sri Lanka to achieve the Target 4.4 by 2030.



## Annexure 3.4.4

### Indicator 4.4.1: Proportion Youth and Adults with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Skills, by Type of Skills

**Table 4.4.1: Proportion Youth and Adults with information and communication technology (ICT) skills, by type of skills (Data Obtained from DCS)**

Year	Sri Lanka	Youth (Aged 15-24)	Adults (Aged 25-69)
2015	27.1	56.5	19.7
2016	28.2	58.8	20.4
2017	29.0	60.3	20.9
2018	29.6	59.8	21.6
2019	31.2	62.2	23.2
2020	32.7	66.1	23.8
2021	34.4	69.8	25.0

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka

### Indicator 4.4.2: Percentage of Youth/ Adults Who Have Achieved at Least a Minimum Level of Proficiency in Digital Literacy Skills

**Table 4.4.2(a): Computer literacy rates of youth/adults by sector, province and survey year**

Sector/Province	Computer literacy rate (%)							
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Sri Lanka	27.1	27.6	28.6	29.0	30.8	32.3	35.0	35.7
<b>Sector</b>								
Urban	39.2	39.2	40.5	40.4	43.6	45.4	49.8	49.1
Rural	25.5	26.1	27.1	27.5	29.0	30.7	32.9	34.2
Estate	9.0	10.4	9.1	10.8	12.6	12.7	15.3	11.5
<b>Province</b>								
Western	38.4	38.1	38.8	40.0	44.1	45.2	47.1	47.1
Southern	27.3	27.4	29.3	30.6	31.2	31.6	31.7	33.3
Central	25.9	26.3	28.8	28.7	28.8	31.9	31.8	34.2
Northern	19.4	21.1	16.9	19.5	19.3	18.0	29.1	31.4
Eastern	13.2	14.8	14.7	14.8	15.7	19.7	28.9	31.4

North Western	25.3	27.1	28.0	29.8	29.1	29.3	31	31.4
North Central	21.7	21.7	23.6	21.6	21.7	22.5	24.8	23.6
Uva	17.8	18.3	17.9	18.8	21.6	22.3	26.1	24.8
Sabaragamuwa	22.1	24.0	26.8	23.5	27.2	32.0	33.9	34.6

Adapted from Statistical Information/Bulletins, Department of Census and Statistics: 2017, 2020, 2022

**Table 4.4.2(b): Percentage of Youth/ Adults Who Have Achieved at Least a Minimum Level of Proficiency in Digital Literacy Skills (Data Obtained from DCS)**

Year	Youth (15-24)	Adults (25-69)
2015	Not available	Not available
2016	66.1	27.1
2017	73.9	32.9
2018	75.5	35.0
2019	78.1	38.7
2020	83.3	42.3
2021	89.1	48.1

Source: Department of Census and Statistics of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka

**Indicator 4.4.3: Youth/Adult Educational Attainment Rates by Age Group and Level of Education**
**Table 4.4.3.: Youth/adult educational attainment rates by age group and level of education (UIS Data)**

Target	Indicator	Indicator Name	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed lower secondary education or higher, population 25+ years, both sexes (%)	81.61	82.27	82.87	81.03	84.09	81.85	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed lower secondary education or higher, population 25+ years, male (%)	81.57	82.35	82.89	82.06	84.24	83.29	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed lower secondary education or higher, population 25+ years, female (%)	81.65	82.20	82.84	80.17	83.96	80.65	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed lower secondary education or higher, population 25+ years, urban, both sexes (%)	87.10	88.66	89.09	88.96	90.49	88.91	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed lower secondary education or higher, population 25+ years, urban, male (%)	89.15	89.79	90.37	90.97	91.73	90.40	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed lower secondary education or higher, population 25+ years, urban, female (%)	85.36	87.68	87.97	87.31	89.42	87.67	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed lower secondary education or higher, population 25+ years, rural, both sexes (%)	80.48	80.88	81.52	79.38	82.72	80.39	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed lower secondary education or higher, population 25+ years, rural, male (%)	80.00	80.72	81.26	80.22	82.64	81.82	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed lower secondary education or higher, population 25+ years, rural, female (%)	80.89	81.03	81.74	78.67	82.79	79.19	N/A
<b>Target</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Indicator Name</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed upper secondary education or higher, population 25+ years, both sexes (%)	61.68	62.50	63.03	62.30	64.83	63.68	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed upper secondary education or higher, population 25+ years, male (%)	60.10	61.17	61.53	61.46	63.18	63.35	N/A

4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed upper secondary education or higher, population 25+ years, female (%)	63.02	63.64	64.32	63.01	66.25	63.96	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed upper secondary education or higher, population 25+ years, urban, both sexes (%)	68.51	72.20	72.21	73.66	75.24	74.69	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed upper secondary education or higher, population 25+ years, urban, male (%)	71.72	73.71	73.10	75.31	76.69	76.93	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed upper secondary education or higher, population 25+ years, urban, female (%)	65.80	70.90	71.44	72.30	74.00	72.81	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed upper secondary education or higher, population 25+ years, rural, both sexes (%)	60.27	60.40	61.05	59.94	62.60	61.41	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed upper secondary education or higher, population 25+ years, rural, male (%)	57.70	58.43	59.00	58.61	60.31	60.54	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed upper secondary education or higher, population 25+ years, rural, female (%)	62.44	62.08	62.80	61.06	64.59	62.13	N/A
<b>Target</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Indicator Name</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed Master's or equivalent education or higher, population 25+ years, both sexes (%)	0.83	0.68	0.71	0.75	0.72	0.76	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed Master's or equivalent education or higher, population 25+ years, male (%)	0.92	0.77	0.78	0.87	0.79	0.87	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed Master's or equivalent education or higher, population 25+ years, female (%)	0.75	0.61	0.64	0.64	0.66	0.66	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed Master's or equivalent education or higher, population 25+ years, urban, both sexes (%)	1.86	1.93	1.68	1.91	1.54	2.07	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed Master's or equivalent education or higher, population 25+ years, urban, male (%)	2.31	2.25	2.07	2.55	1.88	2.45	N/A

4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed Master's or equivalent education or higher, population 25+ years, urban, female (%)	1.47	1.66	1.34	1.38	1.25	1.75	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed Master's or equivalent education or higher, population 25+ years, rural, both sexes (%)	0.61	0.41	0.50	0.50	0.54	0.48	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed Master's or equivalent education or higher, population 25+ years, rural, male (%)	0.63	0.45	0.50	0.53	0.55	0.54	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed Master's or equivalent education or higher, population 25+ years, rural, female (%)	0.60	0.38	0.49	0.49	0.53	0.44	N/A
<b>Target</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Indicator Name</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed short-cycle tertiary education or higher, population 25+ years, both sexes (%)	4.06	4.24	4.39	4.52	4.82	5.03	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed short-cycle tertiary education or higher, population 25+ years, male (%)	3.92	4.18	4.00	4.19	4.24	4.67	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed short-cycle tertiary education or higher, population 25+ years, female (%)	4.18	4.29	4.72	4.80	5.32	5.32	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed short-cycle tertiary education or higher, population 25+ years, urban, both sexes (%)	6.63	8.42	8.57	8.74	8.20	9.74	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed short-cycle tertiary education or higher, population 25+ years, urban, male (%)	7.22	9.18	8.88	9.54	8.44	10.73	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed short-cycle tertiary education or higher, population 25+ years, urban, female (%)	6.13	7.76	8.30	8.08	7.99	8.92	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed short-cycle tertiary education or higher, population 25+ years, rural, both sexes (%)	3.53	3.33	3.48	3.64	4.10	4.05	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed short-cycle tertiary education or higher, population 25+ years, rural, male (%)	3.23	3.09	2.93	3.09	3.35	3.42	N/A

4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment rate, completed short-cycle tertiary education or higher, population 25+ years, rural, female (%)	3.78	3.54	3.95	4.11	4.74	4.57	N/A
<b>Target</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Indicator Name</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment: at least some primary (ISCED 1), population 25+ years, both sexes (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	96.59	N/A	96.61	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment: at least some primary (ISCED 1), population 25+ years, male (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	97.72	N/A	97.86	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment: at least some primary (ISCED 1), population 25+ years, female (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	95.63	N/A	95.56	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment: at least some primary (ISCED 1), population 25+ years, urban, both sexes (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	98.18	N/A	97.67	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment: at least some primary (ISCED 1), population 25+ years, urban, male (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	98.96	N/A	98.36	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment: at least some primary (ISCED 1), population 25+ years, urban, female (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	97.54	N/A	97.10	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment: at least some primary (ISCED 1), population 25+ years, rural, both sexes (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	96.26	N/A	96.39	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment: at least some primary (ISCED 1), population 25+ years, rural, male (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	97.47	N/A	97.76	N/A
4.4	4.4.3	Educational attainment: at least some primary (ISCED 1), population 25+ years, rural, female (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	95.23	N/A	95.24	N/A

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics, <https://uis.unesco.org/>

**3.5.  
SDG 4  
Target 5**

**By 2030, Eliminate Gender Disparities in Education and Ensure Equal Access to All Levels of Education and Vocational Training for the Vulnerable, Including Persons with Disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and Children in Vulnerable Situations**

**Introduction**

Target 4.5 focuses on two main aspects; eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all children in vulnerable situations including persons with disabilities and indigenous people. The Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2015<sup>161</sup>, recognized that “*gender equality is inextricably linked to the right to education*” and should eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls by 2030.

The UN glossary of gender concepts and terms defines<sup>162</sup> gender disparities as “*statistical differences (often referred to as “gaps”) between men and women, boys and girls that reflect an inequality in some quantity*”. According to the Convention on the Rights of Children 2006<sup>163</sup>, the most vulnerable groups of young children and those who are at risk of discrimination (Art. 2) includes girls, children living in poverty, children with disabilities, children belonging to indigenous or minority groups, children from migrant families, children who are orphaned or lack parental care for other reasons, children living in institutions, children living with mothers in prison, refugee and asylum-seeking children, children infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS, and children of alcohol- or drug-addicted parents.

As stated in the report on Target 4.1, Sri Lankan education system since 1930s has been greatly influenced by the progressive legislative enactments and regulations and policies such as enactment of Education Ordinance No. 31 of 1939<sup>164</sup>, introduction of free education along with making in mother tongue as the medium of instruction in primary education in 1945<sup>165</sup>, establishment of Central School system to cater for clusters of feeder schools<sup>166</sup>, etc. The momentum created was further accelerated by the sound policies and programs developed and implemented since independence in 1948 that have helped not only to promote access but also to improve participation and achievement of all students, with special attention to those who are excluded, vulnerable, or at risk of being marginalized. Besides that, the children belonging to indigenous people are given the opportunity to attend neighboring state schools, and even pursuing tertiary education at university level, and as such there has not been discrimination towards them in the country. Moreover In the year 2016, Sri Lanka has ratified the ‘Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the National Secretariat for

<sup>161</sup>United Nations Development Programme, Retrieved July 15, 2023 from [https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals?gclid=Cj0KCQjwqs6lBhCxARIsAG8YcDh565zllgRfIERnpIoO9ssIV3vrHMjAvTW\\_Eo3fDkujVqRgo5G4P6kaAtIREALw\\_wcB](https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals?gclid=Cj0KCQjwqs6lBhCxARIsAG8YcDh565zllgRfIERnpIoO9ssIV3vrHMjAvTW_Eo3fDkujVqRgo5G4P6kaAtIREALw_wcB).

<sup>162</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/1761/file/Genderglossarytermsandconcepts.pdf>

<sup>163</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child (2006), COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD GENERAL COMMENT No. 7 (2005)

<sup>164</sup> Education Ordinance, No 31 of 1939, <https://www.ilo.org>.

<sup>165</sup> School Grants (Revised Conditions) Regulations, Dated 1945/08/24

<sup>166</sup> The Rise and Fall of the Central Colleges: A cursory Glance, C. T. M. Fernando, Retrieved 2023.7.25, from, [featur01 \(infolanka.com\)](http://featur01.infolanka.com)

Persons with Disabilities’ and has developed and adopted the inclusive plan for promoting inclusive education from 2019 onwards {Inclusive Education Plan Sri Lanka (2019–2030)}<sup>167</sup>.

## Progress Made Towards Target 4.5

The progress made towards the Target 4.5 is analyzed by referring to the indicators defined by reviewing UNESCO prescribed indicators. UIS has identified five indicators as 4.5.1, 4.5.2, 4.5.3, 4.5.4, 4.5.5 for the Target 4.5. The local provider of data for Targets 4.5 is the Ministry of Education (MoE) through its Data and Information Management Branch. All data related indicators are given in Annexure 3.4.5

**Indicator 4.5.1: Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available).**

As defined by UIS, the Gross Parity Index (GPI) is computed by dividing the percentage of females by the percentage of males. A GPI below 0.97 indicates gender disparity in favour of males, whereas a GPI above 1.03 indicates a disparity in favour of females. GPI values between 0.97 and 1.03 reflect gender parity.

According to Table: 4. 5.1(a) given in Annexure 3.4.5, the parity index of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for early childhood education from 2015 to 2020 period was more than 1.03 which indicates a disparity in favor of females. According to the Table: 4.5.1(b) participation rate in school education in 2016 was more than 1.03 indicating a disparity in favor of females. The parity indices for the completion rate of primary education in 2020 was 1.0 indicating no gender disparity. Further, the parity indices for the completion rate of lower secondary education and upper secondary education in 2020 were 1.04 and 1.08, respectively showing disparity in favor of females.

**Indicator 4.5.2: Percentage of students in a) early grades, b) at the end of primary, and c) at the end of lower secondary education who have their first or home language as language of instruction**

According to the Constitution of Sri Lanka, Sinhala and Tamil are the two national languages. As of the national policy on medium of instruction, all students shall be entitled to be educated through the medium of either of the national languages in primary education and beyond. Therefore, all government schools, as the national policy provide instructions to students at all levels in their first or home language.

According to Table 4.5.2 of Annexure 4.5, the completion rates of students in all three levels who have their first or home language as language of instruction were satisfactory; 90.0%, 87.0% and 81.3% in 2020 respectively, at primary, lower-secondary and upper secondary levels. Further, the female completion rates were higher than males in 2020 at all 3 levels.

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<sup>167</sup> Disability Education practice in Sri Lanka, 2021. August, UNICEF Regional Office for Sri Lanka. Colombo.



**Indicator 4.5.3: Existence of funding mechanisms to reallocate education resources to the disadvantaged populations**

UIS data was not available for this indicator. Hence, proxy data obtained from the MoE was used to analyze the progress achieved. However, according to the Budget Brief: Education Sector, Sri Lanka (2021),<sup>168</sup> as shown in Table 4.5.3 of Annexure 3.4.5, there was no dedicated funding mechanisms or budget line to allocate education resources to disadvantaged populations.

**Indicator 4.5.4: Education expenditure per student by level of education and source of funding.**

The UIS data with respect to the above indicator is given in Table 4.5.4 of Annexure 3.4.5. As of data in the Table 4.5.4, there has not been any government expenditure on pre-primary education. In general, the education expenditure per student at primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary levels has declined over the years: initial government funding per primary student as a percentage of GDP per capita has decreased from 11.3% in 2015 to 6.0% in 2020; initial government funding per lower-secondary student as a percentage of GDP per capita decreased from 11.6% 2015 to 6.56% in 2020; and a similar declines was observed in government funding per upper secondary student as a percentage of GDP per capita, but the data was available only from 2015 (10.67%) to 2018 (6.48%). As regards to tertiary education, initial government funding per tertiary level student as a percentage of GDP per capita was 29.69% in 2015 and in 2018 it was 28.44% with a decline observed in 2016 (26.37%).

**Indicator 4.5.5: Percentage of total aid to education allocated to least developed countries.**

This indicator is not relevant to Sri Lanka.

## **Policies and Programs Initiated since 2015 to Eliminate Gender Disparities in Education**

### **Policy Initiatives**

The National Education Policies proposed by the National Education Commission (NEC) since 2015 have emphasized the need for further efforts in eliminating all forms of disparities, and hence proposed policy proposals and recommended strategies to address the identified issues/gaps. In this regards, the NEC formulated two policy proposals on preschool education in 2019<sup>169</sup> and in 2022<sup>170</sup> which refers to children in vulnerable situations.

- The NEC policy proposals on preschool education in 2019 stated that *“Every child should be valued and supported equally. To ensure that they are provided with safe and caring environments, a preschool setting shall be free from any form of discrimination on the basis of*

<sup>168</sup> UNICEF Sri Lanka. (2021). Budget Brief: Education Sector Sri Lanka, UNICEF Sri Lanka.

<sup>169</sup> National Education Commission (2019). National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education. National Education Commission, Sri Lanka.[http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TVE\\_NP\\_2018\\_English.pdf](http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TVE_NP_2018_English.pdf)

<sup>170</sup> National Education Commission (2020-2030). National Education Policy Framework, National Education Commission, Sri Lanka.[http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TVE\\_NP\\_2018\\_English.pdf](http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TVE_NP_2018_English.pdf)

*actual or perceived ethnicity, language, colour, ancestry, national origin, religion, religious practice, parental status, physical or mental disability, gender, or socio-economic conditions”.*

- National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030)<sup>171</sup> - Volume VII: Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategies and Activities on Non-formal Education deals school dropouts and adult learners, particularly the NEET groups, who are in need of an alternative pathway to engage and progress in education.
- National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030) - Volume VI: Policy Proposals and Recommended Activities on Special and Inclusive Education deals exclusively on educational needs of children with special education needs.
- Education Sector Development Framework 2018-2025<sup>172</sup> of the MoE has identified two strategies to ensure equity, inclusion and gender equality for providing access to quality learning opportunities for all students.
- In 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the Circular No.37/2020 dated 03.12.2020<sup>173</sup> on Special and Inclusive Education and the Guidance Manual on “Giving Inclusive Education for all Children including the Provision of Education Facilities for the Children with Special Education Needs and Special Needs”.
- As cited in a report by the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) 2021, Sri Lanka has developed and adopted an Inclusive Education Plan for the period from 2019 to 2030<sup>174</sup>. As described, the Inclusive Education Plan 2019–2030 articulates five key areas in disability-inclusive education: policy, curriculum development, human resources development, infrastructure development and awareness of inclusive education. There is an apparent focus on ensuring children with disabilities are admitted in regular classrooms through the revision of existing admission policies. The Inclusive Education Plan 2019–2030 recognizes the need to establish structures for inclusive education within the formal school system. Hence, MoE will identify and build the capacity of inclusive education officers, in-service advisers and Special Education Needs (SEN) coordinators at the central and local levels. Special education teachers will also be recruited and deployed. Furthermore, the pre-service curriculum offered by the National Colleges of Education will be revised in 2022 to add inclusive education as a mandatory subject by then.
- Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission identified persons with disabilities as one of the disadvantaged groups, and has recognized the need for the provision of reasonable adjustment in assessments schemes and systems, and hence in certification process. Accordingly, they have introduced reasonable adjustments to National Vocation Qualification (NVQ) assessment scheme for candidates with disabilities through NVQ Circular 01/2020<sup>175</sup> dated 01.10.2020.
- University Grants Commission (UGC) in Sri Lanka has established a Standing Committee on Gender Equity/Equality in Higher Education to promote gender equity/equality in Sri Lankan universities. According to the UGC policy of admitting students to universities under special

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<sup>171</sup> National Education Commission (2020-2030). National Education Policy Framework, National Education Commission, Sri Lanka.[http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TVE\\_NP\\_2018\\_English.pdf](http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TVE_NP_2018_English.pdf)

<sup>172</sup> Ministry of Education. (2017). Sri Lanka: Education Sector Development Plan- General Education in Sri Lanka (2018-2025), Ministry of Education, Battaramulla, Sri Lanka.

<sup>173</sup> Ministry of Education, Circular No.37/2020, dated, 03.12.2020 Special and Inclusive Education and the Guidance Manual.

<sup>174</sup> Disability Education Practice in Sri Lanka, 2021 August, UNICEF Regional Office for Sri Lanka.

<sup>175</sup> Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission, NVQ Circular, 01/2020, dated 01.10. 2020. Reasonable adjustments in NVQ Assessments for Candidate with Disabilities.

provision, few places are allocated to blind and differently-abled candidates. According to the UGC Hand Book 2021 (P.160)<sup>176</sup> under this special provision, candidates with disabilities will be considered, provided they satisfy the minimum requirements, for university admission and appropriate subject pre-requisites for the relevant course of study. According to the UGC Standing Committee on Education, a disability policy for all universities has been prepared and is pending approval of the UGC.

## **Programs Initiated**

### **a) General Education Level**

Annual Performance Review Reports of the MoE (2015 to 2022) listed several programs implemented for empowering Special Education and Inclusive Education, and Non-formal Education. (Annual Performance Review Reports, MoE, 2019-2021<sup>177</sup>).

Some of the programs conducted for special needs students include;

- i) Completion of the construction of the buildings and the water therapy pools of the ‘*Shishyoda*’ National Resource Center for Special Education constructed in Weniwelkola in 2019. This building had been equipped with necessary equipment in 2020 and 2021;
- ii) Commencement of sports tournament since 2020 at provincial and national levels with the participation of students with special needs;
- iii) Preparation of assessing tools to identify students with special needs at an early stage has also been a significant achievement. In this regard several initiatives were taken; i) formulation of a guidance manual for the education of intellectually impaired children, ii) printing and distribution of 22,000 Sinhala copies and 8,000 Tamil copies of the Circular No.37/2020 dated 03.12.2020, iii) formulation of Guidance Manual on “Giving Inclusive Education for all Children Including the Provision of Education Facilities for the Children with Special Education Needs and Special Needs” and iv) preparation of the first Teachers Guide Books: Towards Inclusive Education - Part I and II; and
- iv) Establishment of the Autism Child Development Centre at the NCoE at Maharagama as an institution where children diagnosed with moderate to severe autism are taught in a classroom setting.

### **b) Tertiary Education Level**

There have been several landmark programs/activities initiated at several institutions. These include;

- i) Establishment of the Department for Special Needs Education at the Open University of Sri Lanka in 2003. It provides training for master teachers and educational directors on special education. Further, several Pre-service Special Education Programs are offered by the department.

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<sup>176</sup> University Grants Commission (2021). *Sri Lanka University Statistics 2021*. University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka.

<sup>177</sup> Ministry of Education (2019), Annual Performance Evaluation Reports 2019, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka.  
Ministry of Education (2020), Annual Performance Evaluation Reports 2020, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka.  
Ministry of Education (2021), Annual Performance Evaluation Reports 2021, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka.

- ii) Establishment of the Department of Disability Studies at the Faculty of Medicine of University of Kelaniya in 1991 by upgrading the Disability Studies Unit (DSU) that was established in 1995 under a collaborative agreement between the University of Kelaniya and the University of Uppsala, Sweden and with the cooperation of the World Health Organization, Save the Children, and the Swedish Handicap Institute.
- iii) Establishment of a Disability Centre at the University of Colombo for providing courses and services to disable students.
- iv) Commencement of offering special education program on dealing with children with autism by the National Colleges of Education

## Education Finance to Address Issues of Equity and Inclusion

According to the Budget Brief: Education Sector Sri Lanka (2021), as shown in Table 4.5.3, in Annexure 3.4.5, the central government budget allocation estimates for the education sector has grown by 58% in nominal terms throughout the period between 2015 and 2021. But according to Table 4.5.3, there is no funding mechanisms or budget line to allocate education resources to disadvantaged populations. Although the ESDP 2018–2025<sup>178</sup> indicates the Government’s intention to gradually raise the education budget in the coming years, it does not articulate a line budget for inclusive education in spite of listing the programs supportive of special education needs. Nevertheless, based on the sector plan and action plans set forth by the MoE, it can be inferred that the Government prioritizes supporting the inclusion of children with disabilities in regular schools.

Further, funding had been provided through international donor funded projects. One such example is “ Empowerment of the Education of Students with Special Needs”, Project (2019-2022)<sup>179</sup> funded by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) through a Technical Cooperation Project as a pilot project of value of Yen 435 Million (Annual Performance Evaluation Report, MoE (2019;p.9)

In addition, the UGC has instructed all universities/HEIs to allocate funds for providing facilities for students with disabilities and achieve outcomes of the national action plan on disability (UGC, Finance Circular Letter No.03/2019 dated 5<sup>th</sup> April 2019)<sup>180</sup>.

## System to Monitor Gender Disparities and Other Parity Indices

Though there is no dedicated mechanism to monitor gender disparities and other parity indices, the following routine data collection, collation and analyses that are conducted by Ministry of Education, Department of Census and Statistics, and Department of Examination would reveal to progress made in this regard:

- Annual School Census conducted by the Ministry of Education

<sup>178</sup> Education Sector Development Plan (2018 - 2025), Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka

<sup>179</sup> Japanese International Cooperation Agency, The Project for Strengthening Education for Children with Special Needs through Inclusive Education Approach in Sri Lanka;

<https://www.jica.go.jp/Resource/project/english/srilanka/009/outline/index.html>

<sup>180</sup> University Grant Commission (2019). 03/2019 dated, 5<sup>th</sup> April 2019, Annual allocation.

- Annual Labour Force Survey, conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics,
- National Education Management Information System (NEMIS) operationalized by Ministry of Education
- Annual data base of Department of Examination on candidates with disabilities who for national examinations
- Annual Performance Evaluations conducted by Planning Branch and Monitoring and Evaluation Branch of Ministry of Education

## Major Gaps and Challenges in Implementing Target 4.5, and Measures Taken to Address Them

The progress towards achieving the Target 4.5 has been constrained by several factors. The notable gaps and shortcomings and recommended interventions are given below:

- i) **Inadequate access to Early Childhood Education (ECE)**- Though the access to ECE has increased over time but it is still low compared to most middle-and high-income countries. Further, there exist disparities by income group and geographical location. As of 2016<sup>181</sup> data, the enrolment rate of three to five-year-olds in preschool education was 55.6% with disparities in enrolments among urban, and rural areas, and among high- and low-income groups.

**Recommended Intervention:** At least one year of compulsory free early childhood quality education is needed with particular attention to the most marginalized students.

- ii) **Absence dedicated mechanism for data collection, collation and analysis and reporting**- It is well recognized the need for continuous updating of Information on children with disabilities, disadvantaged and marginalized children such as street children, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations.

**Recommended Intervention:** Collection of better-quality data on annual basis on children with disabilities, cataloguing different disabilities and impairments and assessing their level of severity. Updated data should be used to formulate evidence-based policies and programs. Further, the performance indicators have to be developed and target-specific intervention must be developed and implemented.

- iii) **Inadequate government finances for education**- As highlighted in Chapter 1 and emphasized in the Target 4.1, Sri Lanka currently devotes a comparatively small percentage of its government expenditure towards education. Further, there is no funding mechanism or line budget dedicated to allocate education resources to disadvantaged populations.

**Recommended Intervention:** Increase in financing to education sector with special allocation targeting vulnerable groups at all levels of education is necessary. Further, the

<sup>181</sup> Ministry of Women and Child Affairs. (2016), National Census of Early Childhood Development Centres in Sri Lanka,

opportunities for public-private partnership programs should be sought and implemented at zonal and school levels to help the vulnerable and marginalized students.

## **Additional Efforts that Would Enable the Country to Achieve the Goal by 2025 and 2030**

The following initiatives and efforts are recommended to pursue to move the country towards the achievement of Target 4.5:

- Ensure that education policies and sector plans and the annual budgeting process guarantee the principles of non-discrimination and equality and develop and implement well formulated strategies and programs with accompanying action plans targeting the vulnerable and marginalized groups;
- Identify the barriers that keep vulnerable children and youth out of quality education programs and take action to eliminate those barriers;
- The MoE as the implementing and monitoring agency of SDG 4, shall develop indicators to measure progress towards all the SDG 4 Targets. Ensure the use of multiple sources of data and information, including from Education Management Information Systems and relevant school and household surveys to facilitate monitoring all elements of SDG 4 targets; and
- The MoE in liaison with the other relevant ministries and agencies shall commence gathering of information and data regarding other categories of vulnerable children mentioned in the Convention on the Rights of Children 2005 such as children who are orphaned or lack parental care for other reasons, children living in institutions, children living with mothers in prison, refugee and asylum-seeking children, children infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS, and children of alcohol- or drug-addicted parents as the data on this aspect is insufficient.

## **Conclusion**

Sri Lanka has taken several commendable measures over the past few decades to achieve education targets captured in Target 4.5 and has made steady progress in achieving some. Country has achieved gender equity at all levels of education with a disparity in favor of females. Further, the completion rates of students in all three levels who have their first or home language as language of instruction were satisfactory with the values above 80% with higher rates of completion rates in females compared to males. However, more effort is needed to identify gaps and implement the remedial measures with regards to the provision of education to children with disabilities and in vulnerable situations. Moreover, there was no dedicated funding mechanisms or budget line to allocate education resources to disadvantaged populations. Therefore, more efforts are needed, particularly to identify gaps and implement the remedial measures with regards to the provision of education to children with disabilities and in vulnerable situations coupled with dedicated budget lines focusing this aspect, if Sri Lanka to achieve Target 4.5 by 2030.

## Annexure 3.4.5

**Indicator 4.5.1:** Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated

**Table 4.5.1(a): Gross enrollment ratio in early childhood education, adjusted gender parity index (GPIA)**

Indicator	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Gross enrolment ratio, early childhood education, adjusted gender parity index (GPIA)	1.12	1.04	1.11	1.06	1.06	1.05

Source:UIS, <https://uis.unesco.org/>

**Table 4.5.1(b): Parity indices in participation rate in school education and completion rates at primary, lower secondary and upper-secondary education**

Indicator	Year	Value
1 Parity indices for participation rate in School Education	2019	Female/Male:1.4
2. Parity indices for a Completion rate of primary education	2020	Female/Male: 1
3 Parity indices for Completion rate of lower secondary education	2020	Female/Male :1.04
4. Parity indices for Completion rate of upper secondary education	2020	Female/Male: 1.08

Source: UIS, <https://uis.unesco.org/>

**Indicator 4.5.2: Percentage of students in a) early grades, b) at the end of primary, and c) at the end of lower secondary education who have their first or home language as language of instruction**

**Table 4.5.2: Completion Rates at Primary Education, Lower Secondary Education and upper-secondary education a) at the end of primary, b) at the end of lower secondary and c) at the end of upper-secondary education who have their first or home language as language of instruction**

Year	Completion Rate of Primary Education (%)			Completion Rate of Lower Secondary Education (%)			Completion Rate of Upper Secondary Education (%)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
2018	90	89	92	88.4	86	90.5	80.6	77.3	84
2019	93	91	94	87	86.2	90	81.4	78.5	84.5
2020	90	89	92	87	87	91	81.3	78	84.8

Source: UIS, <https://uis.unesco.org/>

**Indicator 4.5.3: Existence of funding mechanism to reallocate education resources to disadvantage populations**

**Table 4.5.3: Education Sector - Budgetary allocation**

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Estimate, Current (in SLRs.)	100,093,757	243,756,330	133,219,806	160,586,058	186,703,040	162,263,552	158,455,250
Revised Budget, Current (in SLRs.)	110,623,492	321,999,163	166,183,611	166,183,611	179,271,217	192,501,120	192,501,120
Actual, Current (in SLRs.)	115,476,849	9,124,742,403	136,355,600	129,294,856	152,584,038	N/A	N/A

Source: UNICEF Sri Lanka (2021). Budget Brief: Education Sector Sri Lanka 2015 to 2021



**Indicator 4.5.4: Education expenditure per student by level of education and source of funding****Table 4.5.4. Initial Government funding per student in all levels**

	2015	2016	2018	2019	2020
Initial government funding per pre-primary student as a percentage of GDP per capita	0	0	0	0	0
Initial government funding per primary student as a percentage of GDP per capita	11.30	10.09	6.88	6.88	6.00
Initial government funding per lower secondary student as a percentage of GDP per capita	11.62	10.70	7.11	6.62	6.56
Initial government funding per secondary student as a percentage of GDP per capita	11.16	10.34	6.77	N/A	N/A
Initial government funding per upper secondary student as a percentage of GDP per capita	10.67	9.95	6.48	N/A	N/A
Initial government funding per tertiary student as a percentage of GDP per capita	29.69	26.37	28.44	N/A	N/A
Existence of funding mechanisms to reallocate education resources to disadvantaged populations	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: UIS, <https://uis.unesco.org/>

**Indicator 4.5.5: Percentage of total aid to education allocated to least developed countries**

This indicator is not relevant to Sri Lanka

### 3.6. SDG 4 Target 6

## By 2030, Ensure that All Youth and a Substantial Proportion of Adults, Both Men and Women, Achieve Literacy and Numeracy

### Introduction

The focus of the Target 4.6 is the development of literacy and numeracy of youth and adults, both men and women for promoting inclusive and sustainable development. It is very conceivable that this multifaceted target has been directly influenced by the progressive education reforms taken place since 1930s such as enactment of Education Ordinance No. 31 of 1939<sup>182</sup>, and commencement of establishment of Central Schools since 1943<sup>183</sup>, implementation of fee education policy in 1945 coupled with compulsory education policy and adoption of mother tongue as the medium of instruction up to primary grades<sup>184, 185</sup>. The momentum of progressive education reforms has further been accelerated since independence in 1948 with the expansion of educational opportunities island-wide coupled with introducing wide ranging welfare measures aiming to increase student enrollment and retention. The positive impact of such policies and programs has been reflected data on status of literacy rates in youth and adults. A detailed accounts of Impact of these efforts are provided in the reviews on Targets 4.1, 4.3 and 4.4.

However, it must be stated at the outset of this review, there is no data in Sri Lanka as regard to youth and adult numeracy levels. Hence, the review uses only the indicators and programs relating to literacy skills. Accordingly, the review on Target 4.6 focuses only on assessing the impact of country's efforts of providing literacy programs, advocacy initiatives, and capacity development endeavors to youth and adults through non-formal education endeavors. In this exercise an effort is made to examine specific examples of non-formal education initiatives to promote literacy among different age groups, and gain an insight into the impact of such programs on the UNESCO prescribed target-specific indicators by examining the indicator values given in UIS database for the period from 2015 to 2021.

### Progress Made Towards Target 4.6

The progress made towards the Target 4.6 is analysed by referring to the indicators defined by UNESCO and the values reported in the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) database. The UIS has identified three indicators, namely 4.6.1, 4.6.2 and 4.6.3<sup>186</sup>. However, UIS data base provide data only for Indicator 4.6.2 and the relevant data table is given Table 4.6.2 in Annexure 3.4.6.

#### **Indicator 4.6.1: Proportion of Population in a Given Age Group Achieving at Least a Fixed Level of Proficiency in Functional (A) Literacy and (B) Numeracy Skills, by Sex**

<sup>182</sup> Education Ordinance, No 31 of 1939. <https://www.ilo.org>

<sup>183</sup> Sumathipala K.H.M, (1968) *History of Education in Ceylon 1796-1965* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.) Thisara Prakasakayo

<sup>184</sup> Kanangara C.W.W. (1943) Report of the Special Committee on Education, Sessional Paper XXIV of 1943 [https://www.educationforum.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Report\\_Kannangara\\_1943.pdf](https://www.educationforum.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Report_Kannangara_1943.pdf)

<sup>185</sup> School Grants (Revised Conditions) Regulations, Dated 1945/08/24

<sup>186</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics. SDG 4 March 2023 release. [uis.unesco.org](https://uis.unesco.org)

According to the UIS Metadata definition<sup>187</sup>, the functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills are defined as “Percentage of youth (aged 15-24 years) and of adults (aged 15 years and above) who have achieved or exceeded a given level of proficiency in (a) literacy and (b) numeracy”. The fixed or minimum level of proficiency will be measured relative to literacy and numeracy scales defined according to national, regional and international learning assessments. However, Sri Lanka does not participate in such learning assessments for literacy and numeracy.

Therefore, data for Indicator 4.6.1 for Sri Lanka is not available in the UIS data base.

#### **Indicator 4.6.2: Youth/Adult Literacy Rate**

According to the UIS Metadata Analysis, the youth /adult literacy rate is defined as the “Percentage of youth (aged 15-24 years) and adults (aged 15 years and older) who have the ability to both read and write, with understanding, a short, simple statement about everyday life”. Accordingly, the data as regards to Indicator 4.6.2 from 2016 to 2021 are listed in Table 4.6.2 of Annexure 3.4.6<sup>188</sup>.

According to the data presented in Table 4.6.2, the literacy rates in 2016 in all categories of the population except the category of 65+ years were above 90% and this rate has sustained with marginal increases in some categories throughout the period from 2016 to 2021. However, the literacy rate values of adult age category (65+ years) are comparatively lower than the values of youth age categories. Further, the data show the existence of gender, and urban and rural disparities in literacy rates among youth and adults. Further, the Annual Labour Force Survey conducted by DCS indicate as of 2021 data, lower literacy rate of 82.5% in estate population which is much lower than the value of 93.3% reported for general population for the same year<sup>189</sup>.

However, it is pertinent to state here that the data on literacy rate were generated through the Labour Force Survey conducted on annual basis by the DCS rely on a very narrow definition of literacy; i.e. the ‘ability to both read and write with understanding a short statement’. Further, the UIS Metadata analysis stated the literacy rate as defined in Sri Lanka is a binary indicator: persons are either literate (meaning they have at least a minimum of reading and writing skills) or illiterate. In fact, there is a continuum of literacy skills that is not captured by literacy rates based on a division of the population into literate and illiterate persons. Further, the binary literacy rate conveys no information on functional literacy skills, i.e. the application of reading and writing in daily life.

#### **Indicator 4.6.3: Participation Rate of Illiterate Youth/Adults in Literacy Programs**

The data for this indicator is not available in the UIS data base.

## **Policy Initiatives and Programs for Enhancing Youth and Adult Literacy and Numeracy and Examples of Youth and Adult Literacy Programs and Advocacy and Capacity Development Initiatives**

<sup>187</sup> Metadata for the global and thematic indicators for the follow up and review of SDG 4 and Education 2030 Retrieved March 30, 2023 <https://tcg.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/08/Metadata-4.6.1.pdf>

<sup>188</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics (n.d.). SDG 4 March 2023 Release. Retrieved March 30, 2023, from <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org/>

<sup>189</sup> Department of Census and Statistics (2017, 2018,2019, 2020 and 2021) *Annual Reports of Labour Force Survey*

Sri Lanka has taken several policies initiatives and implemented several progressive measures to achieve the Target 4.6.

- i) In 2016, the Ministry of Education (MoE) issued a set of regulations<sup>190</sup> (through the Gazette dated April 20, 2016, bearing the number 1963/30) titled "*Series of Regulations of Sending Children Compulsorily to School of 2015/01*" which provided further instructions and steps to be taken to reinforce compulsory education regulations issued in 1997<sup>191</sup> and to ensure all children attend schools and prevent dropouts. It mandates the School Principals, Deputy/Assistant Directors of Divisions, Zonal Directors of Education, and Provincial Directors of Education to ensure the enrollment and retention of children in schools. To implement the above mentioned compulsory education regulations, another Circular No ED/9/18/2/1/2, dated 2017/01/30, titled "Guidelines on Implementation of Compulsory Education Regulations" was issued by the Ministry of Education<sup>192</sup>.
- ii) Non-formal education programs initiated and coordinated by the Non-Formal Education Branch of the Ministry of Education (NFE/MoE), through MoE Circular No 36/2022, dated 2022/12/03. "Guidelines on Implementation, Monitoring, and Supervision of Non-Formal Education Programs and the Data Recording Book"<sup>193</sup> has provided guidelines on implementation, monitoring, and supervision of non-formal education programs and data recording which aim to strengthen and expand the non-formal education programs covering a wide range of themes and topics.

The NFE/MoE has initiated and conducted various youth and adult literacy programs, advocacy initiatives, and capacity development initiatives in liaison with Provincial Education Authorities and Technical and Vocational Training Centres in regular manner<sup>194</sup>. Some examples of these initiatives are:

- Functional Literacy Programs to non-school-going children, youth and adults;
- Community Learning Programs for adult target groups including unemployed youth and housewives – such as literacy training programs, awareness programs on social issues, and short-term training program on income generation activities;
- 'Nenasarana' Programs for Street Children to provide basic education and care for homeless children;
- Vocational Training Programs designed for school leavers to acquire vocational skills;
- Orientation Programs for preparing women for foreign employment;
- Gap filling training programs for assisting non-school-going children in transitioning them to formal education; and

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<sup>190</sup> Gazette Notification, No. 1963/30, dated 2016/04/20, " Series of regulations of sending children compulsorily to school of 2015/01 "

<sup>191</sup> Gazette Notification, No. 1003/5 Dated 1997/11/25, "Compulsory Education Regulation"

<sup>192</sup> Circular No ED/9/18/2/1/2, dated 2017/01/30 "Further Guidelines on Implementation of Compulsory Education Regulations", Ministry of Education: Sri Lanka

<sup>193</sup> Circular No 36/2022, dated 2022/12/03. "Guidelines on Implementation, Monitoring, and Supervision of Non-Formal Education Programs and the Data Recording Book", Ministry of Education: Sri Lanka

<sup>194</sup> Ministry of Education (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021) *Annual Performance Report of Non-Formal Education Branch*

- Entrepreneurship Training Programs offered to school leavers/dropouts to foster entrepreneurial skills.
- iii) The 13-Years Guaranteed Education Program<sup>195</sup> launched in 2017 with the goal of providing vocational-oriented education during the 12<sup>th</sup>- and 13<sup>th</sup>- year of schooling for those student who fail to proceed G.C.E(A/L) grades and also those students who wish to pursue vocational education. This was aimed to reduce the number of students leaving school after taking the G.C.E. (O/L) examination. This program allows students to select subjects of their preference from eight common subjects and 26 applied subjects. Unlike traditional programs, passing subjects at the G.C.E. (O/L) examination is not a requirement to participate in this program.
  - iv) Continued expansion of vocational and technical education and training opportunities provided through the network of State and non-State TVET institutions and centres. To regulate and improve the quality and standards of TVET training programs, and improve the vocational literacy and numeracy among youth and adult, the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) was established in 1991 (through the through Tertiary and Vocational Education Act No. 20 of 1990), and the TVEC has proceeded to introduce National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF)<sup>196</sup> in 2004 as a part of its efforts to improve the quality and standards of TEVET programs. In 2018, the TVEC adopted the National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education prescribed by the NEC<sup>197</sup>, and implemented many initiatives which specifically targets disadvantaged youth, disadvantaged/vulnerable women, people with disabilities (including students leaving special education schools), and the economically down-trodden/poor. These efforts were also supported by several foreign funded projects (also cited in the Report on Target 4.3).
  - v) In addition to the above initiatives, specific educational programs have been conducted by the Department Prisons. Prison Authorities in liaison with the Ministry of Education and Provincial Departments of Education have conducted non-formal education programs for imprisoned juvenile convicts. These centres provide training up to G.C.E. (O/L) and such centres are available in the following prisons: Suneetha Vidyalaya in Watareka Prison, the school in the Anuradhapura prison, and the Training School of Juvenile Convicts in Ambepussa<sup>198</sup>.

## Monitoring Youth and Adult Literacy and Numeracy, Disaggregating Data to Address Gender and Other Parity Indices and Utilization in Policy Development, Planning and Programming

**Monitoring of youth and adult literacy and numeracy:** In the absence of any national authority responsible for collecting data on this multifaceted target, the DCS functions as the only agency which collect and collate data on youth and adult literacy through its periodic censuses and annual surveys such as Annual Labour Force Survey, Annual Health and Demographic Surveys, etc. This survey relies on self-reported data, where individuals provide information about their literacy skills without being

<sup>195</sup> Circular No 37/2017, dated 2017/09/20. "13 Years Guaranteed Education Programme", Ministry of Education: Sri Lanka

<sup>196</sup> *National Vocational Qualification Framework (2004)*, <https://www.TVEC.gov.lk>

<sup>197</sup> National Education Commission (2018) *National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education*

<sup>198</sup> Ministry of Education (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021) *Annual Performance Report of Non-Formal Education Branch*

subjected practical testing. The literacy data reported to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics by Sri Lanka is also based on the data generated by the Annual Labor Force Survey.

Nevertheless, by looking at the data from the DCS, it is evident that Sri Lanka's literacy rates, as defined by the *'ability to read and write with understanding'*, are higher compared to those values reported for other countries in South Asian region. Though the literacy rates among the youth in 2021 are above 90% (i.e. 99.3%, for 5-19 age group; 98.4% for 20-24 age group), the literacy rates are lower among the 65+years category (79.16%) and in rural (91.82%) and estate (82.5%)<sup>199</sup> sectors indicating existence concentrated pockets of illiteracy within the country.

As mentioned earlier, it must be reiterated here, the DCS does not collect data on numeracy levels in the country. Consequently, there is a lack of data regarding numeracy skills, which poses challenges for assessing and addressing the numeracy skills of youth and adults.

**Disaggregating data to address gender and other Parity Indices:** Disaggregated data on youth and adult literacy rates presented in Table 4.6.2 given in Annexure 3.4.6 reveals the following:

- Literacy rate among the youth population (15-24 years) has increased from 98.69% in 2016 to 99.32% in 2021. However, disparities exist among males and females, urban and rural population.
- Literacy rate among the adult population (25-64 years) is comparatively lower with a rate of 93.01% in 2016 and 93.28% in 2021. However, disparities exist among males and females, urban and rural population.
- Literacy rates among the elderly population (65+ years) were much lower than 15-24 year and 25-64 categories with values of 79.46% in 2016 and 79.16% in 2022. However, disparities exist among males and females, urban and rural population; For males, the literacy rate increased from 86.83% in 2016 to 86.57% in 2021, while for females, it increased from 76.37% in 2016 to 76.86% in 2021.
- The literacy rate among the estate sector stands at 82.5%, indicating concentrated pockets of illiteracy within specific communities.

**Utilization of disaggregated data in policy development, planning and programming:** The data collected by the DCS is usually disaggregated age wise, location wise and gender wise and published in their annual publications. All ministries, departments and agencies use DCS databases in conducting sector reviews as a prelude to making evidenced-based policy formulation and development planning.

## Addressing Gaps and Challenges in Implementing Target 4.6: Measures Taken and Way Forward

There are many gaps and challenges impeding the achievement of Target 4.6.

### Gaps:

- i) Sri Lanka does not make any assessment on numeracy and hence does not collect data related to numeracy rates in Sri Lanka.

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<sup>199</sup> Department of Census and Statistics (2017, 2018,2019, 2020 and 2021) *Annual Report of Labour Force Survey*

- ii) Assessment on literacy done by the DCS is based on very narrow definition, namely *“percentage of person who can both read and write with understanding a short statement”* and the outcome such measurement does not reflect the functional literacy which is defined by the UNESCO as *“as percentage of youth and adults who have achieved ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts”*<sup>200</sup>.
- iii) Absence of reliable and up to date data on youth and adult literacy rates of the country. This stems from the absence of dedicated government agency to monitor the implementation of adult and non-formal education and vocational training opportunities offered through limited State and non-State training providers. This gap is partly filled by the DCS which make assessments on the basis of findings made on the data collected through Annual Labour Force Survey from a sample of households.
- iv) Inadequacies of institutional arrangements at the national and provincial and zonal levels and the low capacities in terms of human resources and finances of existing organizations which are expected to address the literacy and numeracy aspects of a wider group – such as out of school children, unemployed youth and adults and household women, and marginalized communities.

### Challenges:

There are many hindering factors that need to overcome, if Sri Lanka to move towards achieving Target 4.6. These include:

- Filling the gaps listed above;
- Enhancing efforts to reach the specific target groups;
- Enhancing participation rate of target group by increasing number Community Learning Centers (CLCs) operated by the MoE; and
- Improving the quality of non-formal education programs offered by the CLCs through provision of adequate financing to meet the cost of hiring resource persons and training places.

## Conclusion

Data with respect to Target 4.6 is very scanty and available data provides information only on youth and adult literacy but not on numeracy. Further, this assessment on literacy is based on very narrow definition. Nevertheless, Sri Lanka's literacy rates which is defined as the *‘ability to read and write with understanding’*, are higher compared to those values reported for other countries in South Asian region. Though the literacy rates among the youth (15-24-year category) are well above 95%, the literacy rates among the 24-64 year and 65+years categories and rural and estate sectors are lower indicating existence concentrated pockets of illiteracy within the country. Therefore, more determined and concerted efforts are needed to address the gaps highlighted, if Sri Lanka is to achieve the Target 4.6 by 2030.

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<sup>200</sup> Metadata for the global and thematic indicators for the follow up and review of SDG 4 and Education 2030 Retrieved March 30, 2023 <https://tcg.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/08/Metadata-4.6.1.pdf>

## Annexure 3.4.6

### Indicator 4.6.1: Proportion of Population in a Given Age Group Achieving at Least Fixed Level of Proficiency in Functional Literacy and b) Numeracy Skills, by Sex

Data for Indicator 4.6.1 for Sri Lanka is not available in the UIS data base.

### Indicator 4.6.2: Youth/Adult Literacy Rate

**Table 4.6.2: Literacy Rates of Youth, Adult and Elderly Population**

Indicator	Indicator Name	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
4.6.2	Elderly literacy rate, population 65+ years, rural, both sexes (%)	79.46	78.89	77.22	79.19	79.16	79.16
4.6.2	Literacy rate, population 25-64 years, urban, male (%)	95.46	94.61	94.09	95.56	95.89	95.83
4.6.2	Literacy rate, population 25-64 years, rural, male (%)	92.92	92.26	92.35	92.34	92.66	92.66
4.6.2	Adult literacy rate, population 15+ years, urban, female (%)	93.75	93.54	93.10	94.89	94.19	94.35
4.6.2	Adult literacy rate, population 15+ years, urban, both sexes (%)	94.66	94.24	93.91	95.40	95.09	95.32
4.6.2	Adult literacy rate, population 15+ years, rural, female (%)	91.03	90.42	90.31	90.89	91.06	91.06
4.6.2	Literacy rate, population 25-64 years, both sexes (%)	93.01	92.38	92.51	92.92	93.28	93.28
4.6.2	Youth literacy rate, population 15-24 years, urban, both sexes (%)	98.76	98.84	99.52	99.32	98.89	99.32
4.6.2	Youth literacy rate, population 15-24 years, male (%)	98.41	98.55	98.51	98.72	98.59	98.71
4.6.2	Adult literacy rate, population 15+ years, both sexes (%)	92.39	91.90	91.71	92.25	92.38	92.43
4.6.2	Youth literacy rate, population 15-24 years, rural, female (%)	98.97	99.17	98.90	99.09	99.14	99.14
4.6.2	Elderly literacy rate, population 65+ years, both sexes (%)	80.97	80.32	79.09	81.22	80.88	81.07
4.6.2	Elderly literacy rate, population 65+ years, urban, female (%)	84.42	82.08	83.68	89.91	84.72	85.54
4.6.2	Adult literacy rate, population 15+ years, female (%)	91.49	90.97	90.80	91.58	91.60	91.64
4.6.2	Literacy rate, population 25-64 years, rural, both sexes (%)	92.62	91.92	92.24	92.45	92.78	92.78
4.6.2	Youth literacy rate, population 15-24 years, both sexes (%)	98.69	98.86	98.78	98.97	98.86	98.93
4.6.2	Youth literacy rate, population 15-24 years, urban, female (%)	98.84	99.07	99.69	99.83	99.02	99.14



4.6.2	Adult literacy rate, population 15+ years, rural, male (%)	92.99	92.53	92.33	92.42	92.69	92.69
4.6.2	Elderly literacy rate, population 65+ years, rural, female (%)	74.54	73.94	72.35	75.18	74.83	74.83
4.6.2	Elderly literacy rate, population 65+ years, male (%)	86.83	86.45	85.10	85.84	86.35	86.57
4.6.2	Elderly literacy rate, population 65+ years, female (%)	76.31	75.44	74.40	77.59	76.66	76.86
4.6.2	Adult literacy rate, population 15+ years, urban, male (%)	95.73	95.07	94.85	95.99	96.12	96.43
4.6.2	Youth literacy rate, population 15-24 years, female (%)	98.94	99.15	99.04	99.21	99.12	99.14
4.6.2	Adult literacy rate, population 15+ years, male (%)	93.46	92.98	92.77	93.03	93.28	93.34
4.6.2	Literacy rate, population 25-64 years, female (%)	92.73	92.14	92.38	92.93	93.33	93.34
4.6.2	Literacy rate, population 25-64 years, male (%)	93.35	92.67	92.66	92.90	93.22	93.21
4.6.2	Youth literacy rate, population 15-24 years, rural, male (%)	98.35	98.54	98.34	98.70	98.55	98.55
4.6.2	Literacy rate, population 25-64 years, urban, both sexes (%)	94.94	94.60	93.80	95.11	95.69	95.67
4.6.2	Elderly literacy rate, population 65+ years, urban, male (%)	92.73	92.43	92.22	93.75	93.64	94.94
4.6.2	Elderly literacy rate, population 65+ years, rural, male (%)	85.60	85.10	83.50	84.30	84.74	84.74
4.6.2	Adult literacy rate, population 15+ years, rural, both sexes (%)	91.92	91.39	91.24	91.60	91.82	91.82
4.6.2	Youth literacy rate, population 15-24 years, urban, male (%)	98.68	98.58	99.34	98.83	98.77	99.50
4.6.2	Youth literacy rate, population 15-24 years, rural, both sexes (%)	98.67	98.86	98.62	98.89	98.85	98.85
4.6.2	Literacy rate, population 25-64 years, urban, female (%)	94.50	94.59	93.55	94.74	95.52	95.53
4.6.2	Elderly literacy rate, population 65+ years, urban, both sexes (%)	88.02	86.66	87.46	91.60	88.56	89.49
4.6.2	Literacy rate, population 25-64 years, rural, female (%)	92.38	91.63	92.14	92.55	92.88	92.88

Source: UIS, <https://uis.unesco.org/>

### Indicator 4.6.3: Participation Rate of Literate Youth/Adults in Literacy Programs

Data for Indicator 4.6.1 for Sri Lanka is not available in the UIS data base.

**3.7.  
SDG 4  
Target 7**

**By 2030, Ensure that All Learners Acquire the Knowledge and Skills Needed to Promote Sustainable Development, including, among others, through Education for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Lifestyles, Human Rights, Gender Equality, Promotion of a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence, Global Citizenship, and Appreciation of Cultural Diversity and of Culture's Contribution to Sustainable Development**

## **Introduction**

The Target 4.7 encompasses expected outcomes of many elements which have already been discussed under some of the SDG 4 targets (i.e. SDG 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.6). Further, many concepts and principles are also embedded within the terms listed in the target. Further, many of such concepts and principles are also embedded in the term 'global citizenship' which is a nebulous concept without a tightly worded definition. As of UNESCO definition<sup>201</sup>, it encompasses "*a sense of belonging to a universal community with a shared responsibility and collective identity, acting as a framework for collective action through civic engagement for a better world*". Global citizenship education (GCE) aims to empower learners to actively engage locally and globally, addressing global challenges and promoting a just, peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable world through cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral dimensions<sup>202</sup>.

## **Progress Made Towards the Target 4.7**

The progress that has been made towards the Target 4.7 is analyzed by reviewing UNESCO prescribed indicators. The UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) has identified six indicators (4.7.1 to 4.7.6) for Target 4.7. However, data is available only for indicator 4.7.2 Percentage of schools that provide life skills-based HIV and sexuality education<sup>203</sup>.

Nevertheless, the progress made with regards to the elements captured in other UIS indicators, namely, **i) 4.7.1.** *Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies, (c) curricula, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment, ii) 4.7.3.* *Extent to which the framework on the World Program on Human Rights Education is implemented nationally (as per the UNGA Resolution 50/113), iii) 4.7.4.* *Percentage of students in lower secondary education showing adequate understanding of issues relating to global citizenship and sustainability, iv) 4.7.5.* *Percentage of students in lower secondary level showing proficiency in knowledge in environmental science and geoscience, and v) 4.7.6.* *Extend to which the national*

<sup>201</sup> UNESCO (2017). The ABCs of global citizenship education

<sup>202</sup> UNESCO (Retrieved 2023, 19 June). What is global citizenship education? <https://en.unesco.org/themes/gced/definition>

<sup>203</sup> UNESCO Institute for statistics (n.d.). *SDG 4 March 2023 Release*. Retrieved March 30, 2023, from <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org/>

education policies and education sector plans recognize a breadth of skills that needs to be enhanced in national education system are discussed in the different sections detailed in this review.

#### **Indicator 4.7.2: Percentage of Schools Providing Skills-Based HIV Sexuality Education**

Data for this indicator is given in Table 4.7.1 in Annexure 3.4.7. As of the data, the percentage of upper-secondary schools providing skills-based HIV and sexuality education stood at 100% in 2016 and declined to 91.7% in 2018. Data beyond this year was not available. As regards to lower-secondary school, the value was 98.7% in 2016 and reached 100% by 2017 which continued at that level till 2019. No data was available beyond that year.

### **Mainstreaming of Global Citizenship Education, Education for Sustainable Development, and Gender Equality in National Education Policies, Curricula, Teacher Education, and Student Assessment**

#### **(i) Global Citizenship Education**

- a) **National Education Policies** -The National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030) highlights Civic Consciousness and Patriotism as Core Area 8, focusing on global citizenship education and related matters<sup>204</sup>. Additionally, the Centre for Policy Alternatives in 2021 in its recommendations on Prevention of Violent Extremism suggests short, mid, and long-term actions to strengthen ethnic harmony and social cohesion<sup>205</sup>.
- b) **Curricula** - In 2021, the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) and the National Institute of Education (NIE) through a joint project developed the Global Citizenship Education (GCED) curriculum framework which encompasses themes, sub-themes, and learning outcomes for different levels of school education. These elements have been integrated into GCED modules<sup>206</sup>. Universities have also incorporated relevant aspects of GCED into specific degree programs at the tertiary education level. Additionally, the NIE has introduced a Civic Education Curriculum Concept Framework for Grades 6 to 11 in 2023<sup>207</sup>, consisting of seven concepts that are elaborated as theme(s), learning outcomes, subject content, performance standards, and activity-based continuous assessment in each modular plan. The Ministry of Education published a book called "Socio Emotional Skills Approach" in 2022<sup>208</sup>, which serves as a comprehensive guide on integrating these essential soft skills into the curriculum that aim to nurture well-rounded global citizens.

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<sup>204</sup> National Education Commission (2022). *National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030)*. National Education Commission, Sri Lanka. [http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030\\_Full-Text.pdf](http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf)

<sup>205</sup> Centre for Policy Alternatives (2021). *Policy Recommendations on Preventing Violent Extremism in Sri Lanka*. [https://www.cpalanka.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/PVE-Eng\\_webfile.pdf](https://www.cpalanka.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/PVE-Eng_webfile.pdf).

<sup>206</sup> Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding & National Institute of Education (2021). *GCED Curriculum Development and Integration Project – 2021 Final Report Sri Lanka*. National Institute of Education, Sri Lanka. [https://gcedcurriculum.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/%5BFinal%20Report%5D%202021%20Final%20Report%20Sri%20Lanka%20GCED%20Curriculum%20Development%20and%20Integration%20Project%20\\_Sri%20Lanka\\_2021\\_0.pdf](https://gcedcurriculum.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/%5BFinal%20Report%5D%202021%20Final%20Report%20Sri%20Lanka%20GCED%20Curriculum%20Development%20and%20Integration%20Project%20_Sri%20Lanka_2021_0.pdf)

<sup>207</sup> National Institute of Education (2022). *Civic Education Curriculum Concept Framework for Grades 6 to 11*.

<sup>208</sup> Ministry of Education (2022). *Socio Emotional Skills Approach*. <https://moe.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/english-book.pdf>

<sup>208</sup> Ministry of Education (2022). *Socio Emotional Skills Approach*. <https://moe.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/english-book.pdf>

- c) **Teacher Education** - The GCED curriculum implementation includes the integration of GCED concepts into teacher guides, as mentioned in the GCED Project Report<sup>209</sup>. In addition, as reported by the Peace Education and Reconciliation Unit of the Ministry of Education, Activity Books on “Civic Education, History, and Co-Curricular Activities” were developed to promote good citizenship education equivalent to the concept of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and conducted programs of Training of Trainers (ToTs) on Activity Books and these books were distributed to all secondary school. The Peace Education and Reconciliation Unit also organizes annual capacity development programs for teachers at provincial and zonal levels, focusing on enhancing their pedagogical practices to promote social cohesion. National Colleges of Education (NCoEs) too has incorporated GCE as a curricular component, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared to teach GCE concepts upon their appointment as school teachers. At the university level, staff development workshops have been held to foster GCE and sustainable development. In the past, the World Bank funded Higher Education for Twenty First Century (WB/HETC Project-2008-2014) had a significant component dedicated to promoting ethnic cohesion and social harmony, which resulted in various activities in higher education institutions, some of which have continued beyond the project duration.
- d) **Student Assessment-** In assessing the students on GCE concepts delivered through the GCED curriculum framework, two examples can be highlighted. Firstly, the assignments within the GCED curriculum, such as Grade 8 Module 1, Step 3 - Assignment 3, serve as a means of evaluating students' understanding and application of GCE principles<sup>210</sup>. Secondly, the G.C.E (O/L) examination results of Civic Education Paper. In 2021 results displayed an overall pass rate of above 83% among the test takers<sup>211</sup>. It should be noted that while the pass rate provides an indication of performance, it does not explicitly assess knowledge and appreciation on specific GCE concepts. Furthermore, the NEREC has conducted a study on Civic Education in Sri Lanka in 2017<sup>212</sup>. However, there is no available evidence of subsequent surveys conducted to evaluate the impact of ongoing programs in relation to social cohesion and leading to inculcation of the concepts of global citizenship.

## (ii) Education for Sustainable Development

- a) **National Policies** -The National Education Policy Framework (NEPF 2020-2030) prescribed by the NEC recognizes the importance of achieving sustainable development as stated in Aims 1 and 2 (Page 66)<sup>213</sup>. These policy aims highlight the necessity of integrating sustainable development principles into the education system.

<sup>209</sup> Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding & National Institute of Education (2021). *GCED Curriculum Development and Integration Project – 2021 Final Report Sri Lanka*. National Institute of Education.

<sup>210</sup> Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding & National Institute of Education (2021). *GCED Curriculum Development and Integration Project – 2021 Final Report Sri Lanka*. National Institute of Education.

<sup>211</sup> Department of Examinations (2021). *Performance of Candidates G.C.E.(A/L) Examination – 2021*. [https://www.doenets.lk/images/resources/STAT/OL2021%20POC%20WP\\_compressed\\_1669722876516.pdf](https://www.doenets.lk/images/resources/STAT/OL2021%20POC%20WP_compressed_1669722876516.pdf)

<sup>212</sup> National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (2018). *Civic Education in Sri Lanka - 2017, National Research Report*. <https://edu.cmb.ac.lk/nerec/?p=824>

<sup>213</sup> National Education Commission (2022). *National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030)*. National Education Commission, Sri Lanka. [http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030\\_Full-Text.pdf](http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf)

- b) Curricula** - The GCED Project implemented jointly by the APCEIU and NIE, has played a significant role in strengthening school education curricula by incorporating concepts of sustainable development. For instance, the GCED curriculum includes - Theme 6: Global Issues and Sustainable Development, along with specific assignments like the GCED Grade 8 Module 1, Step 3 Assignment<sup>214</sup>. Additionally, the Civic Education Curriculum Framework developed by the NIE from 2023 onward emphasizes the production of individuals who actively contribute to sustainable development as its primary aim. At the tertiary education level, the infusion of sustainable development education concept into relevant parts of the curriculum varies depending on the discipline of study.
- c) Teacher Education** -The GCED Project Report highlights the development of teacher guides on the modules on the sustainable development theme (Theme 6) and its subthemes. As reported by the Ministry of Environment, they have also conducted a 3-day residential teacher training programs across the island to train science teachers on the principles sustainable development. As indicated in annual reports of universities, they also play a significant role in promoting sustainable development principles through various workshops and strategic plans that incorporate goals, objectives, or strategies related to sustainable development concepts.
- d) Student Assessment** - As reported by the Central Environment Authority, the Environment Pioneer program initiated by them has been assessing school children's environmental knowledge. The number of schools participating in this program has increased from 3245 in 2015 to 4381 in 2021<sup>215</sup>. Moreover, the Civic Education Curriculum Framework prescribed by the NIE includes explicit assessment criteria for evaluating various concepts related to sustainable development in all assessments.

### (iii) Gender Equality

- a) National Policies** - The National Education Commission Policy (NEPF 2020-2030): under the Core Area 1 – Directive Principle 7 (Page 73) upholds gender equality in terms of providing need-based support to all learners. Further, the National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, launched Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment in 2023, represents a significant step towards promoting gender equality<sup>216</sup>.
- b) Curricula** -The Global Citizenship Education (GCED) curriculum of general education prescribed by the NIE addresses gender equality under Theme 3 (Human Rights and Duties), specifically within the sub-theme 'Equity, equality, and sensitivity (social hierarchy, gender, age, race)'. Universities

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<sup>214</sup> Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding & National Institute of Education (2021). *GCED Curriculum Development and Integration Project – 2021 Final Report Sri Lanka*. National Institute of Education, Sri Lanka. [https://gcedcurriculum.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/%5BFinal%20Report%5D%202021%20Final%20Report%20Sri%20Lanka%20GCED%20Curriculum%20Development%20and%20Integration%20Project%20\\_Sri%20Lanka\\_2021\\_0.pdf](https://gcedcurriculum.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/%5BFinal%20Report%5D%202021%20Final%20Report%20Sri%20Lanka%20GCED%20Curriculum%20Development%20and%20Integration%20Project%20_Sri%20Lanka_2021_0.pdf)

<sup>215</sup> Central Environmental Authority, Ministry of Environment. <https://www.cea.lk/>

<sup>216</sup> Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment (2023). *National Policy on Gender Equality And Women's Empowerment – Sri Lanka*. [https://srilanka.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/sri\\_lanka\\_national\\_policy\\_gewe\\_english.pdf](https://srilanka.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/sri_lanka_national_policy_gewe_english.pdf)

incorporate gender studies and related topics in curricula at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

- c) **Teacher Education-** Under Theme 3 and Sub-theme 3 of the GCED curriculum, teachers will receive training on module development on gender equality. Additionally, parallel to these efforts, teacher guides have been developed to facilitate teacher education. The NIE has also produced a Tutor Training Manual in 2021 titled 'Gender Equity in Open Schooling' to enhance teacher education in this area<sup>217</sup>.
- d) **Student Assessment** -The G.C.E (O/L) Civic Education Paper includes questions on gender equality, and the overall pass rate in 2021 exceeded 83% for candidates who took the exam<sup>218</sup>.

Overall, gender equality along with the concepts of global citizenship and sustainable development, is being adequately addressed at the secondary education level. Efforts have also been made to incorporate these topics into higher education as well. However, there is room for further improvement, particularly in teacher education, both at the secondary and tertiary levels.

## Efforts to Ensure Increasing Investment

Although evidence for national monetary support for this specific area was not available, there is evidence of funding received through international donor organizations and collaborative efforts. Examples include:

- The Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) collaborated with the National Institute of Education (NIE) in 2021 to develop the Global Citizenship Education (GCED) curriculum framework, indicating collaborative investment in education<sup>219</sup>.
- UNICEF collaborated with the Peace Education and Reconciliation Unit of the Ministry of Education to review the national policy on social cohesion and peace education in 2008, demonstrating collaborative investment in promoting social harmony<sup>220</sup>.
- The establishment of the Ministry of Women, Child Affairs, and Social Empowerment (MWCACE) by the Government of Sri Lanka in June 2022 (Gazette Extraordinary No. 2283/34)<sup>221</sup> can be seen as a step towards giving national importance to these concepts and principles and enhancing funding for this field. This establishment creates a budget line specifically designated for funding the work of initiated and spearheaded by the ministry.

<sup>217</sup> Open School Unit (2021). *Gender Equity in Open Schooling*. National Institute of Education, Sri Lanka

<sup>218</sup> Department of Examinations (2021). *Performance of Candidates G.C.E.(A/L) Examination – 2021*.

[https://www.doenets.lk/images/resources/STAT/OL2021%20POC%20WP\\_compressed\\_1669722876516.pdf](https://www.doenets.lk/images/resources/STAT/OL2021%20POC%20WP_compressed_1669722876516.pdf)

<sup>219</sup> Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding & National Institute of Education (2021). *GCED Curriculum Development and Integration Project – 2021 Final Report Sri Lanka*. National Institute of Education, Sri Lanka. [https://gcedcurriculum.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/%5BFinal%20Report%5D%202021%20Final%20Report%20Sri%20Lanka%20GCED%20Curriculum%20Development%20and%20Integration%20Project%20\\_Sri%20Lanka\\_2021\\_0.pdf](https://gcedcurriculum.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/%5BFinal%20Report%5D%202021%20Final%20Report%20Sri%20Lanka%20GCED%20Curriculum%20Development%20and%20Integration%20Project%20_Sri%20Lanka_2021_0.pdf)

<sup>220</sup> Social Cohesion and Peace Education Unit (2008). *National Policy and a Comprehensive Framework of Actions*. Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka.

<sup>221</sup>The Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (Extra Ordinary), No. 2283/34 dated on 09 June 2022. [https://www.defence.lk/upload/doc/2283-34\\_E%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.defence.lk/upload/doc/2283-34_E%20(1).pdf)

In conclusion, while there is evidence of international collaboration and some local funding, the investment in this field appears to be fragmented and project-specific rather than part of an overall national plan. To address this gap, it would be beneficial to establish an independent, dedicated budget line to streamline and sustain activities within this target area. This would ensure a more coordinated and sustained investment efforts towards this target.

## **Policies and Programs to Improve Learning Outcomes in Global Citizenship Education and Sustainable Development Education including Environmental Science and Geoscience for Primary and Secondary School Students since 2015**

- a) **Policies:** In addition to the policies mentioned earlier, two circulars have been issued by the Ministry of Education to improve learning outcomes in environmental science and geoscience in primary and secondary school Students;
- i) Circular 32/2016: This circular provides instructions for the regularization of solid waste disposal in schools. Its aim is to promote proper waste management practices within educational institutions<sup>222</sup>.
  - ii) Circular 05/2016: This circular focuses on reducing plastic usage in schools. It provides instructions and guidelines to minimize the use of plastic materials, encouraging more sustainable alternatives<sup>223</sup>.

These circulars demonstrate the Ministry of Education's commitment to addressing environmental concerns and promoting sustainable practices within school settings.

- b) **Programs:** Several programs have been implemented by the Ministry of Education, yielding positive results. These include the development of the GCED curriculum by the NIE, incorporation of 14 environmental topics into the Science Stream curriculum from grades 6 to 11<sup>224</sup>, and the 'Environmental Pioneer Program' conducted by the Central Environment Authority. These initiatives have enhanced students' environmental knowledge and skills, increased their sense of appreciation and responsibility towards the environment, and raised environmental consciousness. Additionally, the Ministry has conducted many programs for promoting environmental conservation such as the 'GLOBE Program', 'Green School Program', and few other sustainable development initiatives, including the establishment of school farms<sup>225</sup>. The Peace Education and Reconciliation Unit of the Ministry of Education has engaged in various activities to promote social cohesion and empathy among teachers and students, including the promotion of good citizenship and intercultural understanding.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, commendable efforts have been made to promote GCE at the school level through policies and programs, yielding encouraging intermediate results.

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<sup>222</sup> Ministry of Education, Circular No: 32/2016, dated 17.11.2016. "2016.11.01 දින සියලුම මහනගර සභාවල කසල වෙන් කෙඩ එකතු කිරීමට සමගම්ව සියලුම අධ්‍යාපන ආයතන භාෂ්‍යල්වල ඝන අපද්‍රව්‍ය කළමනාකරණය".

<sup>223</sup> Ministry of Education, Circular 05/2016, dated 01.01.2016. "ඒලෂ්ටික් භාෂ්‍යල්වල භාවිතය නිසාදී වී ඇති සෘජු හා වක්‍ර ව්‍යාජ, පරිසරික හානිමණිය බලපෑම අවම කරගනීම සඳහායෙහි වඩාසටහන ක්‍රියාවට නැවීම".

<sup>224</sup> Report provided by Ministry of Environment, Sri Lanka

<sup>225</sup> Report provided by Agriculture Branch, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka

However, to ensure wider impact, certain programs, like the ‘Environmental Pioneer Program’ should ideally be implemented on a larger scale to reach more participants.

## Policies and Programs Promoting Health-Promoting Learning Environments for Health Education since 2015

Since 2015, several policies and programs have been initiated to ensure health-promoting learning environments that support health education. These initiatives aim to create conducive environments for students to learn about health and well-being.

**a) Policies:** There are two key policy initiatives under taken in this regards:

- i) **Obesity Prevention Policy and Guidelines** - Cabinet Paper on National Policy Guidelines<sup>226</sup>: The School Health Unit (SHU) of the Family Health Bureau of the Ministry of Health developed a policy, accompanied program and guidelines on obesity prevention among school children which have received the approval of the Cabinet of Ministers and the Parliament. The paper served as the foundation for the development of Obesity Prevention National Guidelines. These guidelines provide a framework for schools to promote healthy lifestyles and combat obesity. Additionally, training sessions on obesity prevention (TOT) were conducted, ensuring coverage across all districts.
- ii) **National School Health Policy:** The School Health Unit (SHU) of the Family Health Bureau of the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Ministry of Education has also developed a National School Health Policy to prioritize health education in schools. This policy aims to create a comprehensive approach to school health, addressing various aspects of student well-being. It has been approved by the Secretary of Health and the Secretary of Education, pending Cabinet approval for further implementation<sup>227</sup>.

**b) Programs:**

Several programs were conducted by the National STD/AIDS Control Program of the Ministry of Health to promote Health-Promoting Learning Environments for Health Education during the period of 2015 to 2021<sup>228</sup>. List of programs conducted during the period from 2015 to 2021 are given below:

2021:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• UNFPA Sri Lanka and NSACP organized a debate competition for young people on World AIDS Day.</li><li>• A drama competition among prison inmates was conducted to raise awareness of HIV infection.</li></ul>
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<sup>226</sup> School Health Unit of Family Health Bureau (2018). *Prevention of Overweight and Obesity among School Children in Sri Lanka*. Ministry of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine, Sri Lanka.

<http://fhb.health.gov.lk/images/FHB%20resources/School%20Health/Publication/Obesity%20Guide%20English%20.pdf>

<sup>227</sup> Ministry of Education (2022). *National School Health Policy (Draft)*.

<sup>228</sup> National STD/AIDS Control Programme, *Annual Report* (from 2015-2021). Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka.



2020:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of an e-learning platform on sexual health and STIs, including HIV, targeting youth.</li> <li>• Advocacy programs planned with institutions to promote the e-learning platform.</li> <li>• Social media campaign for AIDS Day with attractive posters published in multiple languages</li> </ul>
2019:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducting 2226 information education and communication (IEC) programs island wide, covering 214,330 participants. Programs included lectures, exhibitions, workshops, and other activities.</li> </ul>
2018:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One hundred school programs conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.</li> <li>• Conducting 2505 IEC programs island wide, reaching 286,738 participants. Programs included lectures, exhibitions, workshops, and other activities.</li> </ul>
2017:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducting 103 awareness programs island wide, reaching 59,896 participants.</li> <li>• National Communication Strategy (NCS) on STI/HIV/AIDS launched on World AIDS Day.</li> </ul>
2016:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducting 129 awareness programs on HIV/AIDS island wide, reaching 156,505 participants.</li> <li>• Draft of the national communication strategy (NCS) on STD/HIV/AIDS was developed by National STD/AIDS Control Program of the Ministry of Health.</li> </ul>
2015:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducting 91 awareness programs on HIV/AIDS island wide.</li> </ul>

**c) Other Contributions<sup>229</sup>:**

- The Family Health Bureau (FHB) of the Ministry of Health indirectly contributes to global citizenship education through teaching soft skills like life skills and mindfulness.
- The School Health Unit (SHU) conducts, monitors, and evaluates School Medical Inspection (SMI) and School Health Programs (SHP) to improve children's physical, nutritional, and psychological well-being.
- Educational programs on life skills, sexual and reproductive health, and career guidance are conducted for school children.
- Weekly Iron Folic Acid Supplementation (WIFS) has been provided to students in grades 1-13 since 2014 to prevent iron deficiency.
- The Ministry of Education's initiative of "Child Friendly Schools" includes goals related to health and well-being, creating suitable learning environment for health education.

<sup>229</sup> Report provided by Family Health Bureau, Ministry of Health

## **Monitoring Students' Proficiency in Environmental Science and Geoscience Knowledge and Promoting Skills Related to Global Citizenship and Sustainability**

The 'Environment Pioneer Program', conducted by the Central Environment Authority, assesses students' knowledge of the environment. Through comprehensive curricula and the environment pioneer program, students are expected to develop a strong understanding of sustainability principles, thereby fostering their consciousness towards sustainable practices. Geoscience knowledge is tested through some items in the G.C.E (O/L) Geography paper as well.

## **Mechanisms for Tracking Holistic Learning Outcomes and their Use in Policy Development and Planning**

At present there is no effective tracking the mechanism to assess learning outcomes on concepts such as such as global citizenship and sustainable development. The only assessment conducted on annual basis is the national assessment done at the conclusion junior-secondary education (i.e. G.C.E(O/L) examination) and at the conclusion of upper-senior secondary education; i.e. G.C.E(A/L) examination. Yet, the current national level examinations primarily focus on assessing the students' knowledge in prescribed subjects rather on assessing students' awareness and appreciation of these universal concepts.

## **Conclusion**

Sri Lanka has made substantial progress in advancing SDG 4 Target 7 by integrating global citizenship concepts and sustainable development principles into its education system. Initiatives such as aligning the curriculum and teaching and assessments in general education system with GCE concepts and sustainable development principles together with creating awareness on environmental conservation and geoscience elements, and the collaboration among national, international development partners and NGOs have enhanced awareness and engagement in sustainable development education. However, addressing disparities in resource distribution and further strengthening of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be critical in accelerating the progress towards achieving Target 4.7.

## Annexure 3.4.7

**Indicator 4.7.1** - Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment

Data was not available in UIS database

**Indicator 4.7.2** - Percentage of schools that provide life skills-based HIV and sexuality education

**Table 4.7.1: Percentage of schools providing skills-based HIV sexuality education**

Indicator Name	2016	2017	2018	2019
Percentage of upper secondary schools	100.00	96.55	91.72	N/A
Percentage of lower secondary schools	98.78	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics, <https://uis.unesco.org/>

**Indicator 4.7.3** - Extent to which the framework on the World Program on Human Rights Education is implemented nationally -

Data was not available in UIS database

**Indicator 4.7.4** - Percentage of students in lower secondary education showing adequate understanding of issues relating to global citizenship and sustainability

Data was not available in UIS database

**Indicator 4.7.5** - Percentage of students in lower secondary showing proficiency in knowledge of environmental science and geoscience

Data was not available in UIS database

**Indicator 4.7.6** - Extent to which national education policies and education sector plans recognize a breadth of skills that needs to be enhanced in national education systems

Data was not available in UIS database

**3.8.  
SDG 4  
Target (a)**

**Build and Upgrade Education Facilities that are Child, Disability and Gender Sensitive and Provide Safe, Non-Violent, Inclusive and Effective Learning Environments for All**

**Introduction**

The Target 4(a) deals with the building and upgrading education facilities and providing and effective learning environment for all. It is expected that the education facilities should be child, disability and gender sensitive. Further, the learning environment has to be inclusive, safe, respectful and non-violent.

**Progress Made Towards the Target 4(a)**

The progress that has been towards the Target 4(a) is analyzed by reviewing UNESCO prescribed indicators. The UIS<sup>230</sup> has identified 3 indicators (4.a.1, 4.a.2 and 4.a.3) for Target 4(a). All tables with data relevant to indicators are given in Annexure 3.4(a). In additions, the review also includes an analysis of measures taken to address the diverse components of the target and their outcomes, and brief narrations on respective components are given under relevant subsections.

**Indicator 4.a.1: Proportion of schools offering basic services, by type of service**

The proportion of schools offering basic services by type of service is given Table 4.a.1 of Annexure 3.4(a). As shown in the Table 4.a.1, the percentage of schools of primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary grades with supply of electricity was above 94.5 % in 2016 and increased further to reach > 99.5% in 2019. However, the number of schools with safe drinking water and basic hand washing facilities in all three categories were around lower 80% in 2016 and remained at that level without much significant improvement over time. Similarly, only around 90% of all three categories of schools had single sex basic sanitary facilities in 2017 and remained without much improvement over time. Moreover, the access to computers for pedagogical purposes was low in all three categories of schools with lowest availability at primary schools (35.52%) with some increase reaching 56.34%, 76.55% and 79.61%, by 2019, respectively in primary, lower secondary and upper-secondary schools. Most striking deficiency was the low access to internet for pedagogical purposes. Only 18.57% in primary, 38.02% in lower-secondary and 45.46% in upper secondary schools had access to internet for pedagogical purposes by 2019.

The above analysis show that an uneven distribution among and relative low availability basic facilities except electricity in primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary schools with striking deficiency of access to computer with internet access for pedagogical purposes.

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<sup>230</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics (n.d.). SDG 4 March 2023 Release. Retrieved March 20, 2023, from <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org/>

**Indicator 4.a.2: Percentage of students experiencing bullying in the last 12 months in a) primary, and b) lower secondary education**

Data with respect to the Indicator 4.a.2 is available only for lower-secondary schools. No data with respect to primary or upper secondary schools. Further, the data for lower-secondary schools is available only for 2016. As of this limited data, bullying is apparent among both sexes with a rate of 39.40% students reporting. The incidences appear to be higher among boys (50.20%) compared among female students (28.80%). Though, data were limited, bullying appear to be a significant menace among school children indicating the lack of safe environment in schools to promote effective learning.

**Indicator 4.a.3: Number of attacks on students, personnel and institutions**

Data with respect indicator 4.a.3 are presented in Table 4.a.3 in Annexure 3.4(a). As shown, the data with respect to this indicator is scanty, and even the limited data given showed big fluctuations among years suggesting the inadequacies in monitoring of this aspect that may occur in many forms such as attacks on students and teachers, damage to school properties, sexual abuse, violence, etc. The data and information presented in UIS data is insufficient to make any analysis, and hence to make any inferences.

Nevertheless, the data obtained from the National Child Protection Authority of Sri Lanka<sup>231</sup>, indicate high prevalence of complaints on alleged attacks on children (as high 10,732 cases in 2015 and 10,497 in 2022); such as negligence, child labour, child begging, cruelty to children, sexual abuse and rape, trafficking, juvenile delinquency, etc., with fluctuations of number of incidences different types during the period from 2015 to 2022. This data indeed highlights the need for taking urgent attention on this menace, and implementing measures to mitigate the occurrence of incidences of this nature.

### **Percentage of Public Expenditure Allocated to Education Facilities**

As stated in Chapter 1, the Government expenditure on education as a share of GDP decreased from 2.06% in 2015 to 1.52% in 2022. Expenditure also decreased as a share of government expenditure from 9.8% to 8.8% over the same period. Though, a part of the annual budget allocation would have gone into development of education facilities, an accurate estimates of the quantum of funds gone into that purpose could not be estimated from the MoE records.

### **Efforts in Increasing Investment in Education Capitals and Facilities; Ensuring Inclusive Funding Mechanisms for Child, Disability, and Gender-Sensitive Facilities**

Efforts have been made to improve the infrastructure of schools in Sri Lanka, with a particular focus on schools with minimal facilities. The "Nearest School is the Best School" project that commenced in 2016 has played a significant role in providing physical resources to 3,595 schools during 2016 to 2020

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<sup>231</sup> National Child Protection Authority of Sri Lanka (2015-2022) statistics Retrieved May 2,2023 from <https://childprotection.gov.lk/index.php/en/resource-centre/statistics-3>

period<sup>232</sup>, including sanitary facilities, classrooms, laboratories, aesthetic units, quarters, and hostels. Besides these special projects, both the Central Government and Provincial Councils allocate provisions on annual basis for infrastructure development in government schools as well as for providing facilities for children with special education needs (SENs), aiming to ensure equal and inclusive educational opportunities and reduce regional disparities. Despite the financial constraints, substantial progress has been made in enhancing school facilities, such as increasing access to electricity, providing safe drinking and sanitary facilities, and improving computer availability.

As of the reports furnished by the MoE, prepared based annual budget estimates for the 2015 to 2019, there has been significant growth in nominal terms, with a 3.43% increase in construction expenditure and a 2.17% increase in machinery and equipment purchases for the said period<sup>233</sup>.

## **Risk-informed Resilience of School Buildings; Investing in Sustainable and Inclusive Infrastructure for Safe and Effective Learning Environments**

Various programs have been implemented in schools to ensure safety of buildings and other infrastructure facilities and protection against potential disasters and vulnerable situations. The Ministry of Education, along with Provincial Councils and Regional Engineering Offices of the Department of Buildings monitors the construction and conduct regular inspection of school buildings to ensure compliance with the prescribed standards and guidelines.

The Ministry of Education has issued the National Guidelines for School Disaster Safety (2008)<sup>234</sup> to ensure safer environments in schools, and in these directives there have been strict instructions to remove hazardous constructions. In addition, the Ministry of Education has issued circular (Circular No. 16/2021) giving instruction and guidelines to cope with emergency situations and implement the "School Safety Program for Disaster Risk Management"<sup>235</sup>. However, despite these proactive measures, the MoE is yet to conduct formal assessment national-wide to assess the status of schools' infrastructure facilities, particularly the availability of access facilities for children with special education needs.

In summary, Sri Lanka has implemented a range of programs and initiatives to protect students from disasters, ensure accessibility, provide support for special education, offer scholarships, and promote inclusive and multilingual education. However, as shown in Table 4.a.1, some portion of schools in primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary school categories still lack the required basic facilities such as safe drinking water, sanitary facilities and computers and access to internet.

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<sup>232</sup> Ministry of Education (2020) Annual Performance Report: Retrieved March 30 from <https://moe.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Annual-Report-2020-English.pdf>

<sup>233</sup> Ministry of Finance, Economic Stabilization & National Policies (2015-2019) Budget Estimates

<sup>234</sup> Ministry of Education (2008) National Guidelines for School Disaster Safety, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/25231\\_25100nationalguidelinesbookenglish1.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/25231_25100nationalguidelinesbookenglish1.pdf)

<sup>235</sup> Circular No. 16/2021, dated 2021/09/10 " To cope with emergency situations and implement the "School Safety Program for Disaster Risk Management, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka

## Preventing School Violence and Bullying; Creating Healthy and Supportive Learning Environments for Student and Staff Well-Being

The Ministry of Education has taken several measures to improve school discipline - minimize and prevent bullying and violence so as to create safe, healthy and supportive learning environment for students and staff well-being.

- i) **School discipline:** Efforts to reduce corporal punishment and violence against children in schools have been recognized as urgent and necessary. Measures such as the establishment of 'Child Safety Committees' and the issuance of circulars have been implemented to promote a safe and secure environment for children. The MoE Circular No.2011/17 dated 2011/05/10 on 'School Children Protection Committee'<sup>236</sup>, and the MoE Secretary's Circular No. 12/2016 dated 27/04/2016 on "Ensuring Discipline Within Schools"<sup>237</sup> have prescribed procedures on addressing the issues like corporal punishment, conflicts among students, harassment and violence.
- ii) **Supplementary nutrition program:** School mid-day meal program commenced few decades ago has further been strengthened with the provision of glass of milk every child with a focus on schools with fewer than 200 children<sup>238</sup>.
- iii) **Preventive healthcare measures:** Preventive health measures were implemented by issuing guidelines to educational institutions to prevent the spread of the virus to combat the spread of COVID-19 among students – such as raising awareness on the epidemic, promoting hand hygiene, wearing face masks, maintaining distance, etc. In addition, schools were kept closed for few months and online delivery instructions was adopted to reach the students.
- iv) **Psychological well-being of students:** Various activities were introduced during school closures. Such as school counseling services for providing guidance and emotional support, and the recruitment and training of teachers on counseling. In addition, "*Sathi Pasala*" program was implemented to provide guidance and promote mental health among students<sup>239</sup>. These activities were aimed to create a positive learning environment and address student issues such as frustration, aggression, and disobedience so as to promote students' engagement in the learning process, Home-based learning activities involving adults were also encouraged.
- v) **Medical screening:** Regular medical examinations have been introduced for students in primary grades to assess their health and nutritional status, and identify any disabilities<sup>240</sup> and provide directions for early interventions.

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<sup>236</sup> Ministry of Education Circular No.17/2011 dated 2011/05/10 on "School Children Protection Committee"

<sup>237</sup> Ministry of Education Circular No.12/2016 dated 2016/04/07 on "Ensuring discipline within schools"

<sup>238</sup> Ministry of Education Circular No. 24/2023 dated 19-5-2023 on Government Nutrition Program on providing Meals for School Children

<sup>239</sup> Ministry of Education (2023) Mindfulness for Your School; Retrieved May 25, 2023 from <https://www.satipasala.org/mindfulness-for-your-school-sinhala/>

<sup>240</sup> Ministry of Education Circular 02/2019 dated on 2019/1/22 School Health Promotion Programme

- vi) **Reproductive health and personal hygiene:** Modules on reproductive health and personal hygiene education have been included in the science and health and physical education curricula<sup>241</sup>. The curriculum covers topics such as preventing underage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, with different approaches for each age group.
- vii) **Prevention of potential threat of substance abuse:** The MoE has also implemented various initiatives to prevent any likelihood of occurrences of substance abuse among school students, including teacher training workshops, counseling camps, etc., and in collaboration with experts from relevant government agencies, School Health Unit of Family Health Bureau of the Ministry of Health and the police.
- viii) **Child abuse and violence against children:** Data on child abuse, violence, and complaints received by education authorities indicate a considerable number of cases reported annually<sup>242</sup>. Despite the implementation of various programs and strategies, the complete elimination of violence and abuse remains to be a challenge. Though, the task of dealing with these matters and taking migratory measures lie outside the preview of the MoE, it liaises with the National Child Protection Agency and other relevant agencies in combatting this menace.

## Ensuring Safe and Inclusive Learning Environments: Resource Allocation and Impact Assessment Since 2015

As highlighted in the reports on Targets 4.1, 4.5 and 4.6, the implementation of free education and compulsory education commencing from early 1940s, together with the establishment of Central Schools to cater for clusters of feeder schools, student scholarships, free textbooks, school uniforms, provision of access children with special education needs., etc., have ensured to some extent the provision safe and inclusive learning environments for all.

In addition to the above measures, the following specific measures were taken during the 2015 to 2022 period for ensuring safe and inclusive learning environment:

- i) In 2016, the compulsory education policy which was introduced in early 1940, re-enforced through regulations issued in 1997<sup>243</sup> has been further been strengthened by issuing further regulations to ensure educational opportunities for all children aged 5-16 years<sup>244</sup>.
- ii) In 2017, the 13-years Guaranteed Education Program<sup>245</sup> was introduced to promote continuous education beyond G.C.E (O/L) for those who do not fare well at the upper-junior secondary level to prevent dropouts by provision of vocational stream of education as an alternative pathway.

<sup>241</sup> Ministry of Education (2020) NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION IN

SRI LANKA [https://educationforum.lk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/MoE\\_Framework\\_SecondaryEducation\\_2020Nov.pdf](https://educationforum.lk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/MoE_Framework_SecondaryEducation_2020Nov.pdf)

<sup>242</sup> National Child Protection Authority of Sri Lanka (2015-2022) statistics Retrieved May 2,2023 from <https://childprotection.gov.lk/index.php/en/resource-centre/statistics-3>

<sup>243</sup> Gazette Notification, No.1003/5 dated 1997/11/25, "Compulsory Education Regulation"

<sup>244</sup> Gazette No: 1963/30 dated 2016.04.20 "compulsory attendance of Children at School Regulations"

<sup>245</sup> Ministry of Education Circular No 37/2017, dated 2017/09/20. "13 Years Guaranteed Education Programme"



- iii) In 2016, the accessibility facilities for children with disabilities were emphasized and assessments for children with special needs have been addressed through specific circulars and instructions<sup>246</sup>.
- iv) In 2016, further regulations and guidelines were prescribed on procedures on addressing the issues like corporal punishment, conflicts among students, harassment, etc., through the Circular No. 12/2016 dated 27/04/2016 on “Ensuring Discipline Within Schools”<sup>247</sup>.
- v) In 2021, the MoE has issued circulars and instructions to cope with emergency situations and implement the "School Safety Program for Disaster Risk Management"<sup>248</sup>. This is further, to the National Guidelines for School Disaster Safety (2008)<sup>249</sup> that have been implemented to remove hazardous constructions and create safer environments in schools.
- vi) As highlighted, in the Section on “Preventing School Violence and Bullying; Creating Healthy and Supportive Learning Environments for Student and Staff Well-being”, efforts have been implemented to improve school discipline, prevent the occurrence of substance abuse by students and eliminate harassment and violence.
- vii) Further, as stated in the Section on “Reproductive Health and Personal Hygiene” the general education curriculum includes modules on sex education and reproductive health, and teachers are being trained to deliver this information effectively<sup>250</sup>.
- viii) School Health Promotion Program conducted by the Ministry of Health jointly with MoE which commenced in 2007<sup>251</sup> has further been strengthened in 2019 through the Circular No. 1/12 of 28-1 -2019<sup>252</sup> that gave instructions to initiate micronutrient supplementation (i.e. Iron, folic acid and Vit.C) for school children and this initiative has further been complemented by introducing a health insurance scheme that was initiated in 2017<sup>253</sup>.
- ix) In 2020, the minimum age for employees has been increased from 14 to 16 according to a Cabinet memorandum<sup>254</sup> to minimize child labour.
- x) Scholarships and support services have been provided to economically disadvantaged children through various programs such as ‘Subhaga’ scholarship program, UNESCO scholarship Program, ‘Sujatha Diyani’ Korean Scholarship Program, etc., to support student from economically disadvantaged segments of the society<sup>255</sup>.

<sup>246</sup> Gazette No: 1963/30 dated 2016/04/30 disabled Persons (Accessibility) Regulations, No. 1 of 2006

<sup>247</sup> Ministry of Education Circular No.12/2016 dated 27/04/2016 on “Ensuring discipline within schools”

<sup>248</sup> Ministry of Education Circular No. 16/2021, dated 10/09/2021 " To cope with emergency situations and implement the "School Safety Program for Disaster Risk Management

<sup>249</sup> Ministry of Education (2008) National Guidelines for School Disaster Safety, [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/25231\\_25100nationalguidelinesbookenglish1.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/25231_25100nationalguidelinesbookenglish1.pdf)

<sup>250</sup> Ministry of Education (2020) NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA [https://educationforum.lk/wp-Content/uploads/2021/08/MoE\\_Framework\\_SecondaryEducation\\_2020Nov.pdf?](https://educationforum.lk/wp-Content/uploads/2021/08/MoE_Framework_SecondaryEducation_2020Nov.pdf?)

<sup>251</sup> Ministry of Health General Circular No. 1/37/2007, dated 26-11-2007 – School Health Programme

<sup>252</sup> Ministry of Health General Circular No. 1/12/2019, dated 28-1-2019 – Weekly Iron, Folate Supplementation (WIFS) for School Children

<sup>253</sup> Ministry of Education (2018) Annual Performance Report 2018 Retrieved April 10, 2023 from <https://www.parliament.lk/uploads/documents/paperspresented/performance-report-ministry-of-education-2018.pdf>

<sup>254</sup> Cabinet memorandum /20/1290/307/003 dated 2020.09.20, Ministry of Education. Sri Lanka

<sup>255</sup> MoE Annual Performance Reports – 2015 to 2022

The above mentioned initiatives reflect the government's commitment to promoting safe and inclusive education while ensuring the well-being of students and providing equal opportunities for all.

## Addressing Gaps and Challenges in Implementing Target 4.a: Measures and Strategies for Improvement

Several impediments that have hindered the progress on this Target are noted:

- i) **Inadequate public expenditure:** As stated elsewhere, to promote equal access to education, the Government has introduced many measures such as free-education, school uniforms, textbooks, meals, scholarships, free health insurance, etc., to students including the students with special education needs. Despite these welfare measures, the education budget, in terms of percentage of total government GDP expenditure has remained below the requirement thus creating a shortfall in funds available on annual basis. As reported in Chapter 1 and Report on Target 4.c of this report, the Government share of expenditure on education (including general, higher education and technical and vocational education) has been low and as a percentage of GDP it has been fluctuating below 2.0% during period from 2015 to 2022. Further, in terms of another measures, the share of education expenditure out of total Government expenditure has declined from 9.8% in 2015 to 8.2% in 2022.
- ii) **Inadequacies in infrastructure facilities and education resources:** As highlighted under the indicator 4.a.1, a significant number of schools still lack basic facilities such as safe drinking water, gender-sensitive sanitary facilities, and access to computers and the internet. Further, though there are no empirical data, evidences do exist on Insufficiencies in the provision of learning resources for curricular and co-curricular activities – such as equipment for science laboratories and, resources for sports, aesthetics, etc., including access facilities and learning resources for students with special education needs.
- iii) **Need for promoting school discipline:** There have been frequent reporting on incidents of indiscipline and bullying among students in schools. As highlighted under the indicator 4.a.2, the incidences appear to be higher in lower-secondary schools and among boys compared among female students.
- iv) **Need for mitigating potential drug abuse among children:** Concerns have been continuously raised by the civil society and media regarding the potential diffusion of substance abuse among school children.
- v) **Need for mitigating violence against children:** As highlighted under Indicator 4.a.3, the complaints on alleged attacks on children including child abuse, neglect, and domestic violence, etc., have still been prevalent.

## **Measures Taken**

- i) Ministry of Education together with Provincial Education Authorities has already taken measures to enhance educational resources to schools. In this regard, efforts have been made to provide computer and internet facilities, gender-separated sanitary facilities, and drinking water facilities in schools within specified time frames.
- ii) Ministry of Education has taken steps to strengthen educational facilities in schools for students with special education needs by expanding access facilities and learning aids, and supplementing teaching programs with visiting teachers<sup>256</sup>. Further, a new Legislative Bill is being drafted to enhance the rights of persons with disabilities, including provisions for access facilities and social integration.
- iii) Ministry of Education has already issued circulars to schools to provide guidelines on maintaining discipline, among students, and for preventing conflicts and violence among students.
- iv) Ministry of Education has already initiated programs to combat likely drug abuse among children. These include training of teachers on counseling and mobilizing many resources – such as school health advisory committee, community police officers, and police officers - to prevent likely substance abuse and violence among students.
- v) Ministry of Education has taken measures to address malnutrition among children by continuing to provide a glass of milk and mid-day meal to children of selected schools.
- vi) Though, the task of dealing with violence against children lies outside the purview of the MoE, it liaises with the National Child Protection Agency and other relevant agencies in combatting this menace.

## **Conclusion**

The review highlights many initiatives taken by the Government and the limitations and gaps that still prevail within the school system with respect to the Target 4(a). Despite inadequate public financing, the Ministry of Education together with Provincial Education Authorities have taken many initiatives and efforts to provide basic facilities to schools including the provision of computer facilities with access to internet for pedagogical purposes. Besides that, the government has implemented a range of programs and initiatives such as to improve school attendance, protect students from disasters, ensure accessibility for students with disabilities, promote inclusive education, improve school discipline, improve nutrition, health and psychological well-being of students, prevent incidences of violence and harassment, mitigate likely substance abuse, etc. Despite all these measures, there are still many gaps in the areas of educational resources, in terms of availability and equal distribution of

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<sup>256</sup> Ministry of Education Circular No. 37/2020, dated 12-3-2020- "Provision of Educational Services for Children with Special Education Needs and Guidelines on Inclusion of Such Children into Regular Class Rooms

educational infrastructure and learning resources, and provision of inclusive, safe, and conducive learning environment free of harassment and violence and any threats of likely substance abuse. Therefore, more determined and aggressive measures with enhanced public finance need be made to build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environment for all.

## Annexure 3.4(a)

### Indicator 4.a.1: Proportion of schools offering basic services, by type of service

Table 4.a.1: Proportion of schools offering basic services, by type of service

Target	Indicator	Indicator Name	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of primary schools with access to electricity (%)	N/A	94.74	96.66	99.96	99.44	N/A	N/A	N/A
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of lower secondary schools with access to electricity (%)	N/A	96.90	98.94	99.97	99.86	N/A	N/A	N/A
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of upper secondary schools with access to electricity (%)	N/A	98.21	98.99	99.99	99.90	N/A	N/A	N/A
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of primary schools with access to basic drinking water (%)	N/A	83.07	83.74	86.71	78.91	N/A	N/A	N/A
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of lower secondary schools with access to basic drinking water (%)	N/A	85.22	87.13	90.13		N/A	N/A	N/A
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of upper secondary schools with access to basic drinking water (%)	N/A	86.59	87.74	90.26	82.90	N/A	N/A	N/A
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of primary schools with basic handwashing facilities (%)	N/A	83.07	83.74	86.71	78.91	N/A	N/A	N/A
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of lower secondary schools with basic handwashing facilities (%)	N/A	85.22	87.13	90.13		N/A	N/A	N/A
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of upper secondary schools with basic handwashing facilities (%)	N/A	86.59	87.74	90.26	82.90	N/A	N/A	N/A
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of primary schools with access to computers for pedagogical purposes (%)	N/A	35.52	N/A	50.76	56.34	N/A	N/A	N/A
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of lower secondary schools with access to computers for pedagogical purposes (%)	N/A	58.76	N/A	72.02	76.55	N/A	N/A	N/A
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of upper secondary schools with access to computers for pedagogical purposes (%)	N/A	61.03	N/A		79.61	N/A	N/A	N/A
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of primary schools with single-sex basic sanitation facilities (%)	N/A	N/A	90.47	90.49	84.93	N/A	N/A	N/A
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of lower secondary schools with single-sex basic sanitation facilities (%)	N/A	N/A	92.91	93.06		N/A	N/A	N/A
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of upper secondary schools with single-sex basic sanitation facilities (%)	N/A	N/A	93.35	92.73	85.62	N/A	N/A	N/A
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of primary schools with access to Internet for pedagogical purposes (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	15.85	18.57	N/A	N/A	N/A
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of lower secondary schools with access to Internet for pedagogical purposes (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	38.02	N/A	N/A	N/A
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of upper secondary schools with access to Internet for pedagogical purposes (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	45.46	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: UIS, <https://uis.unesco.org/>

**Indicator 4.a.2: Percentage of students experiencing bullying in the last 12 months in a) primary, and b) lower secondary education**

**Table 4.a.2: Percentage of students experiencing bullying in the last 12 months in a) primary, and b) lower secondary education**

Indicator	Indicator Name	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
4.a.2	Percentage of students experiencing bullying in the last 12 months in lower secondary education, female (%)	N/A	28.80	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4.a.2	Percentage of students experiencing bullying in the last 12 months in lower secondary education, both sexes (%)	N/A	39.40	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4.a.2	Percentage of students experiencing bullying in the last 12 months in lower secondary education, male (%)	N/A	50.20	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: UIS, <https://uis.unesco.org/>

**Indicator 4.a.3: Number of attacks on students, personnel and institutions**

**Indicator 4.a.3: Number of attacks on students, personnel and institutions**

Indicator	Indicator Name	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
4.a.3	Number of attacks on students, personnel and institutions	1.00	0.00	4.00	8.00	9.00	1.00	1.00	N/A

Source: UIS, <https://uis.unesco.org/>

**3.9.  
SDG 4  
Target (b)**

**By 2020, Substantially Expand Globally the Number of Scholarships Available to Developing Countries, in Particular Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States and African Countries, for Enrolment in Higher Education, Including Vocational Training and Information and Communications Technology, Technical, Engineering and Scientific Programs, in Developed and Other Developing Countries**

## **Introduction**

The Target 4(b) deals with the availability and disbursement of development assistance for promoting human resource development (HRD) through provision of opportunities at tertiary education level including promotion of engagement in Vocational Training and Information and Communications Technology, Technical, Engineering and Scientific Programs.

The Government of Sri Lanka has established various institutional arrangements and programs in this regard. These initiatives are primarily coordinated through the Department of External Resources of the Ministry of Finance (ERD/MoF) and the Higher Education Division of the Ministry of Education (HED/MoE). Higher education scholarships are awarded through diverse means; i) bilateral partnerships with other countries, ii) development partner-funded projects, and iii) annual government allocations. Additionally, the government has implemented national policies and programs to expand higher education opportunities, including provision of scholarships through the *Mahapola* Higher Education Scholarship Trust Fund for students of low-income families. Furthermore, interest-free loan schemes are available for students studying in non-state higher education institutions (NSHEIs) operating with degree-awarding status granted by the MoE.

Key institutions responsible for implementing the above mentioned programs include the HED/MoE, University Grants Commission (UGC), and Skills Development, Vocational Education, Research & Innovation Division of the Ministry of Education (SDVERED/MoE).

## **Progress Made Towards the Target 4(b)**

The progress that has been made towards the Target 4(b) is analyzed by reviewing the UNESCO prescribed indicators. The UIS has identified only one indicator for this target, and its status is given below.

**Indicator 4.b.1: Volume of Official Development Assistance (ODA) Flows for Scholarships by Sector and Type of Study**

Data for this indicator is given in Table 4.b.1 in Annexure 3.4(b). As per the UIS data<sup>257</sup>, the overseas development assistance received for scholarships have fluctuated over the period of 2015-2020 around US\$ 9 million with significant dips noted in the years of 2016 and 2017. As of UIS information, these data have been collected from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and thus this information refers only to the resources provided OECD countries to Sri Lanka for scholarships.

## Funding Mechanisms for Scholarships in Higher Education and Vocational Training in Sri Lanka

As highlighted in the reports on Targets 4.1 and 4.3 as well as in other reports, Sri Lanka has implemented free education policy since early 1940s from primary to university education level provided by the government educational institutions. The country has 17 State universities offering undergraduate and postgraduate education, and as mentioned previously has introduced two scholarship schemes – *Mahapola* Scholarships and bursaries for students from low-income families. This demonstrates the government's commitment to investing in higher education through its annual budget allocations. In this section, we will analyze, i) the strategic approaches adopted by the government to fund scholarships for higher education, ii) the means adopted to finance scholarships within the vocational and technical sector, and iii) the expenditure on scholarships as a percentage of the total public expenditure on higher education and vocational training.

### i) Strategic Approaches for Funding Scholarships for Higher Education Enrollment:

Several strategic approaches have been adopted to secure funding for scholarships in higher education, both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels for Sri Lankan students seeking opportunities abroad. These funding modalities can be categorized into six main types:

**(a) Scholarships for overseas undergraduate and postgraduate education under bi-lateral partnerships, coordinated by the HED/MoE:** The HED/MoE coordinates the scholarships offered by other countries through bi-lateral agreements with the Government of Sri Lanka<sup>258</sup>. The Overseas Education Unit (OEU) of the HED, in collaboration with relevant Embassies, handles the application and selection process. The data on these scholarships are presented in Tables 4.b.2 (a) and 4.b.2 (b) of Annexure 3.4(b).

**(b) Long-Term and Short-Term overseas training programs under multi-lateral and bi-lateral agreements:** The ERD/MoF provides information on the training programs offered by organizations such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank (WB), Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation, SAARC Secretariat, and foreign governments<sup>259</sup>.

**(c) Scholarships directly offered by Foreign Governments:** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) reports that certain foreign governments offer scholarships directly to Sri Lankan students for overseas training at diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate levels. For example, Bangladesh,

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<sup>257</sup>UNESCO Institute for statistics (n.d.). *SDG 4 March 2023 Release*. Retrieved April 02, 2023, from <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org/>

<sup>258</sup> Development Division (Overseas Education), Ministry of Education (Higher Education), Sri Lanka.

<sup>259</sup> Department of External Resource, Ministry of Finance, Sri Lanka. <https://www.erd.gov.lk/index.php?lang=en>



Pakistan, Vietnam, Japan and Zambia had offered scholarships for undergraduate and postgraduate scholarship in diverse fields of studies<sup>260</sup>.

**(d) Postgraduate scholarships through development partner-funded projects/programs operating under the HED/MoE:** The HED/MoE operates two major projects, namely, the World Bank-funded Accelerating Higher Education Expansion and Development Project (WB/AHEADP) and the Asian Development Bank-funded Science Technology Human Resources Development Project (ADB/STHRDP). These projects provide postgraduate scholarships for academic staff of universities. The WB/AHEADP which aims at promoting academic excellence in higher education has offered 190 higher education scholarships in the fields of natural sciences, humanities and management to 15 public universities/institutions<sup>261</sup>. Total estimated cost of these programs is Rs. 1,710 million. The ADB/STHRDP which aims at strengthening science and technology fields of education has invested Rs. 199 million for long-term HRD programs (20 numbers of MScs and PhDs) and Rs. 29.2 million for short-term training.

**(e) Postgraduate scholarships funded by the UGC:** The UGC annually awards scholarships for postgraduate education to university academic staff through Treasury funds. From 2015 to 2020, 137 scholarships were granted under this scheme at a cost of Rs. 397.14 million<sup>262</sup>.

**(f) Other programs for higher education opportunities:** Universities utilize their self-generated funds to provide scholarships to academics for overseas postgraduate studies. International funding agencies such as Fulbright Foundation and British Council also offer postgraduate scholarships for academics and fellowships for senior academics for overseas training. In addition, many private sector organizations and individuals offer need-based scholarships to undergraduate students in State universities. Unfortunately, the details of these programs were not available.

## ii) Funding Strategies for Vocational Education Scholarships

The SDVERID/MoE is responsible for vocational training in Sri Lanka. The University of Vocational Technology (UNIVOTEC) and the Ocean University play a significant role in contributing to SDG Target 4(b). University of Vocation Technology (UNIVOTEC) offers postgraduate scholarships, including master's and doctoral degrees, funded by the ADB-assisted Skills Sector Development Project (ADB/SSDP) with a total approved cost of around Rs. 4.5 million<sup>263</sup>, while the Ocean University has provide varying number of scholarships for postgraduate education to its academic staff<sup>264</sup>.

## iii) Expenditure on Scholarships

Expenditure on scholarships in Sri Lanka is primarily focused on postgraduate scholarships for university academic staff, funded through various sources such as the UGC, international development partners (WB and ADB) and university generated funds. However, in the absence of a centralized data portal estimating the actual monetary value of these scholarships and calculating the percentage of

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<sup>260</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka, <https://mfa.gov.lk/>

<sup>261</sup> Development Division, Ministry of Education (Higher Education), Sri Lanka. <https://mohe.gov.lk/index.php?lang=en>

<sup>262</sup> International Co-operation Division, University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka.

[https://www.ugc.ac.lk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1337&Itemid=142&lang=en](https://www.ugc.ac.lk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1337&Itemid=142&lang=en)

<sup>263</sup> University of Vocational Technology, Sri Lanka. <http://univotec.ac.lk/>

<sup>264</sup> Ocean University, Sri Lanka. <https://ocu.ac.lk/>

total education expenditure spent on scholarships funded through diverse mechanisms has proven to be a challenging task.

## Efforts to Enhance Investment and Equitable Distribution of Scholarships

The higher education sector in Sri Lanka has implemented several strategic approaches to increase opportunities for Sri Lankan students and improve the quality of university academics. Details of the initiatives undertaken are given below:

**i) Mahapola Scholarship Scheme:** This scheme provides scholarships to around 14,000-16,000 students annually from low-income families who are selected for State universities. Each recipient is granted Rs. 5,000 per month for 10 months per year for the duration of the respective study programs. Currently, this program is jointly funded by the *Mahapola* Trust Fund and UGC through Treasury funds. The Treasury allocated Rs. 1.53 billion in the year 2023 to support a total of 62,510 students<sup>265</sup>.

**ii) Bursary Scheme:** To assist economically disadvantaged students pursuing university education, the government allocates funds for monthly bursary payment of Rs 4,000 per student. Approximately 9,000 students from each intake benefit from this scheme. The UGC provides funds for this scheme through annual Treasury allocations. For example, the Treasury has allocated Rs 1.3 billion for the year 2023 to support approximately 33,000 bursary recipients<sup>266</sup>.

**iii) Postgraduate Scholarships from University Generated Funds:** As stated previously, State universities allocate scholarships, primarily for postgraduate studies, from their generated revenue. However, due to the impact of COVID-19, there has been a decline in the number of scholarships offered from university funds.

**(iv) National Centre for Advancement for Social Science and Humanities (NCAS):** The NCAS provides scholarships through the Treasury funds to academic staff in the field of social sciences and humanities.

**(v) Interest-free Loan Scheme for Non-State Higher Education Institutes (NSHEIs):** An interest-free loan scheme has been offered through a State bank (Bank of Ceylon) for students choosing to study in NSHEIs which are operating with degree-awarding status granted by the MoE. By 2022, around 13,864 students studying in NSHEIs have benefited from this scheme. The Treasury pays annual interest to the bank and the students are expected to repay the loan after completing their degree programs and entering the labour market<sup>267</sup>.

Other innovative approaches include the establishment of dedicated divisions for international cooperation at universities. These divisions are expected to establish linkages with international institutions, providing opportunities for academics and postgraduate students for international collaboration.

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<sup>265</sup> Report provided by Accounts Division of the University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka.

<sup>266</sup> Report provided by Accounts Division of the University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka.

<sup>267</sup> Non-State Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education (Higher Education), Sri Lanka.

To ensure equitable fund distribution, the HED/MoE and UGC follow government principles in managing scholarship granting processes. Advertisements are published calling for applications with clear description of eligibility criteria. Applications are shortlisted based on minimum criteria, interviews are conducted, and selection lists are published, ensuring transparency. Furthermore, scholarships such as *Mahapola* and bursary schemes are meant to support students from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds while the interest-free loan offered to students enrolled in NSHEIs are offered irrespective of social status or gender or ethnicity.

### **Addressing Gaps and Challenges in Implementing SDG Target 4(b)**

In general, there has been a decline trend in the number of scholarships offered through international development agencies, bilateral partnerships and Sri Lankan institutions. Nevertheless, despite the financial difficulties faced, the Government has continued to implement equity-based scholarship schemes (*Mahapola* and Bursary scheme) to students enrolled in State universities and interest-free loans scheme provided to students enrolled in NSHEIs which are operating with degree-awarding status granted by the MoE.

In the face of declining scholarships support both from the international development agencies and countries, Sri Lanka needs to take decisive steps to address inadequacies in overseas scholarship opportunities for Sri Lankan academics both in higher education and technical and vocation education sectors, particularly in developed country settings. Further, the issue of the absence of a centralized data portal at the national level to collect data on scholarships offered by multitude of agencies (such as development agencies, foreign countries and Sri Lankan institutions) that has made difficulties in estimating the quantum of scholarships and funds made available towards achieving this target needs to be addressed.

### **Conclusion**

Sri Lanka has taken significant steps towards expanding scholarship opportunities in higher education and vocational training. Efforts have been made in this regard through bilateral partnerships, direct arrangements with foreign governments, and collaborations with international development agencies. The Government has also implemented programs to support economically disadvantaged students to pursue higher education opportunities. However, in the face of declining support for scholarship opportunities, particularly from overseas sources, the country needs to make decisive measures to provide adequate overseas training opportunities for academics in higher education and TVET sectors. Further, the issue of absence of a centralized portal for collecting and collating data and information on this aspect needs to be addressed. By continuing to invest in overseas scholarships, particularly at postgraduate level, establishing a centralized data management system coupled with a sound monitoring and impact evaluation mechanism, Sri Lanka can further its efforts in moving towards achieving the SDG Target 4(b).

## Annexure 3.4 (b)

**Indicator 4.b.1:** Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships by sector and type of study

**Table 4.b.1: Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships by sector and type of study, constant US\$**

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
10,593,610.00	11,416,959.00	10,839,171.00	9,629,311.00	6,883,306.00	6,509,234.00	7,086,458.00	8,999,326.00	9,628,045.00

Source: UIS, <https://uis.unesco.org/>

**Table 4.b.2(a): Scholarships for undergraduate education through bi-lateral agreements**

Name of the Scholarship Program	Country offered	Year					
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	Bangladesh	11	6	12	0	0	0
Nehru Memorial Scholarship Scheme, Rajive Gandhi Memorial Scholarship Scheme, Ayush Scholarship program	India	145	139	116	105	109	56
Chinese Government Scholarship Program	China	10	10	1	12	10	0
Cuban Government Scholarship program	Cuba	2	1	1	1	1	1
Russian Government Scholarships Program	Russia	18	18	22	18	7	0
Pakistan Technical Assistance Program (PTAP)	Pakistan	13	11	11	11	18	0
Serbian Government Scholarship program	Serbia	2	1	0	0	1	2
Vietnam Government Scholarship Program	Vietnam	5	0	5	5	5	5
MEXT scholarship program	Japan	1	1	1	1	0	0
Brunai Darussalam Scholarship Program	Brunai	2	0	0	0	0	0
Global Korea Scholarships	Korea	2	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>211</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>64</b>

Source: Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education

**Table 4.b.2(b): Scholarships for postgraduate education through bi-lateral agreements**

Name of the Scholarship Program	Country offered	Year					
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Nehru Memorial Scholarship Scheme, Maulana Azard Scholarship Scheme	India	56	27	31	34	41	63
Chinese Government Scholarship Program	China	8	5	18	12	13	11
MEXT scholarship program	Japan	10	7	7	7	7	7
Russian Government Scholarships Program	Russia	0	3	2	6	3	0
New Zealand Commonwealth Scholarship Program	New Zealand	2	1	2	1	2	0
UK Commonwealth Scholarship Program	United Kingdom	14	8	7	5	0	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>90</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>84</b>

Source: Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education

**3.10.  
SDG 4  
Target (c)**

**By 2030, Substantially Increase the Supply of Qualified Teachers, Including through International Cooperation for Teacher Training in Developing Countries, Especially Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States**

**Introduction**

The Target 4(c) deals with supply of teachers at all levels of general education including pre-primary level who have received at least minimum organized teacher training at pre-service and/or in-service levels required for teaching at relevant levels in a given country.

The line agency for education, the Ministry of Education (MoE), and at present all subsectors of education, namely general, higher education and technical and vocational education come under administrative purview of the MoE. As such the MoE is responsible for all components of all subsectors of education inclusive of teacher education, and it formulates administrative and operational policies and procedures on education including teacher administration, teacher development and teacher deployment.

Currently, there are 241,054 teachers serving the government schools. Out of them 42,541 are at national schools and 198,513 at provincial schools (School Census, MoE, 2021)<sup>268</sup>. All teachers of government schools come under the regulatory provisions defined by the Sri Lanka Teacher Service Minute (SLTSM)<sup>269</sup>, which came into operation in 1994. Norms, criteria and procedures required to determine and review teacher cadres, teacher deployment and transfers are decided by the MoE in accordance with the provision given in the SLTSM in collaboration with the provincial education authorities (PEAs).

Teacher training at pre-service and in-service levels are provided by a multitude of national and provincial level entities. The foremost national institute in this regard is the National Institute of Education (NIE) which comes under the direct administrative purview of MoE, and its mandate is prescribing teacher education curriculum for all teacher education institutions (TEIs), providing in-service training to teachers aimed at enhancing teacher competencies and offering diploma, graduate and postgraduate level training leading to recognized teacher professional qualifications. In addition, the MoE also operate host of TEIs for providing pre-service and in-service training for teachers. First network of TEIs is the 19 National Colleges of Education (NCoEs) located in different parts of the country, and NCoEs offer pre-service National Diploma of Education qualification. The second is the network of Teacher Training Centres (TTCs), and the other is the network of Teacher Centres (TCs) located at different parts of the country. At Provincial level, in-service training programs for teachers are arranged and conducted by the Provincial Departments of Education in liaison with In-service Training Advisors (ISAs) who are kept updated regularly by the NIE.

<sup>268</sup> <https://moe.gov.lk/ministry/statistics-reports/>

<sup>269</sup> Minutes of the SLTS (GoSL Gazettes Extraordinary No 1885/38 dated 2014.10.23; No. 2120/2 dated 2019.04.22; No. 2255/14 dated 2021.11.14)

In addition, State universities also play a significant role in teacher training; there are two Faculties of Education (University of Colombo and Open University of Sri Lanka) and 4 Departments of Education (University of Peradeniya, University of Rajarata, Eastern University and University of Jaffna) that offer pre-service teacher qualification (i.e. Bachelor of Education – B.Ed. qualification) and also provide professional development programs such as PGDE, MEd and MPhils in Education. Moreover, from the recent past, several non-state higher education institutions (NSHEIs) operating with degree-awarding status granted by the MoE also have commenced offering pre-service training in education at diploma and degree levels.

## Progress Made Towards Target 4(C)

The progress that has been made towards the Target 4(c) is analysed by reviewing the data presented for the UNESCO prescribed indicators. The UIS has identified seven indicators (4.c.1, 4.c.2, 4.c.3, 4.c.4, 4.c.5, 4.c.6 and 4.c.7) for Target 4(c). However, data is available only for six indicators and the data for 4.c.7 is not available.

### Indicator 4.c.1: Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications, by education level

Data for this indicator is given in Table 4.c.1 of Annexure 3.4(c). As per the Table 4.c.1 the proportion of teachers with minimum required qualifications in pre-primary grades in both sexes has declined marginally from 82.62% in 2015 to 81.52% in 2020. Similarly, the proportion of primary grades teachers with minimum required qualifications declined from 86.23% in 2015 to 82.63% in 2020. At lower-secondary level this proportion declined from 86.13% in 2015 to 83.75% in 2020. However, at upper secondary level, this proportion has shown a slight increase from 77.27% in 2016 to 78.94% in 2020.

A comparison of the values reported for the benchmark Indicator 4.c by the UIS and the benchmarks values defined by Education for All Branch of Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka (EFA/MoE, SL) for the Indicator 4.c is given below:

Level of Education	National BM- 2025 <sup>1</sup>	National BM- 2030 <sup>1</sup>	Recorded value in 2020 <sup>2</sup>
Pre-primary	85.0	90.0	81.52
Primary	93.0	97.0	82.63
Lower-Secondary	90.0	95.0	83.75
Upper-Secondary	84.0	88.0	78.94

1. National Benchmark Values for Indicator 4.c defined by EFA/MoE, SL

2. Values for the Indicator 4.c reported by the UIS; <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org>

As shown by the above comparison, Sri Lanka needs to make decisive and determined efforts to achieve the defined national benchmarks for the Indicator 4.c.1 by 2025, and then by 2030.

#### **Indicator 4.c.2: Pupil-trained teacher ratio by education level**

Data for this indicator is given in Table 4. c.2 of Annexure 3.4(c). As the Table 4.c.2 indicates the pupil-to-trained-teacher ratio (number of pupils per trained teacher) stand at 17.9 in 2015 with marginal improvement to 15.57 by the 2020. In primary level, the pupil-to-trained teacher ratio has more or less remained same (26.85 in 2015 and 26.32 in 2020). In lower-secondary level the ratio was 20.04 in 2015 and then declined marginally to 21.15 in 2020. At upper-secondary level there was a marginal decline from 23.15 in 2016 to 23.59 in 2018. No data was available beyond 2018.

No national benchmarks values for Indicator 4.c.2 were defined by the EFAB/MoE, SL.

#### **Indicator 4.c.3: Percentage of teachers qualified according to national standards by education level and type of institution.**

Data for this indicator is given in Table 4.c.3 of Annexure 3.4(c). As per the Table 4.c.3, the percentages of qualified teachers at pre-primary level was 84.93% in 2015 and showed a marginal increase to 86.43% in 2019. At primary level, the percentage was 85.15% in 2015 and then decreased to 83.76% in 2020. At lower secondary level the value was 84.78% in 2015 and then increase to 85.01% in 2020. At upper secondary level, the percentage of teachers qualified was 83.19% in 2016 and declined to 78.14% in 2020.

No benchmarks values for Indicator 4.c.3 were defined by the EFAB/MoE, SL.

#### **Indicator 4.c.4:Pupil-qualified teacher ratio by education level**

Data for this indicator is given in Table 4.c.4 of Annexure 3.4(c). As the Table 4.c.4 indicates the pupil-to-qualified teacher ratio (i.e. number pupils per qualified teacher) stand at 17.43 in 2015 with marginal improvement to 15.26 by the 2019. In primary level the pupil-to-qualified teacher ratio was 27.19 in 2015 and then has improved to 25.96 in 2020. In lower-secondary level the ratio was 20.36 in 2015 and then declined slightly to 20.84 in 2020. At upper-secondary level, there was a substantial decline from 21.50 in 2016 to 24.18 in 2018. No data was available beyond 2018.

No benchmarks values for Indicator 4.c.4 were defined by the EFAB/MoE, SL.

#### **Indicator 4.c.5: Average teacher salary relative to other professions requiring a comparable level of qualification**

Data for this indicator is given in Table 4.c.5 of Annexure 3.4(c). As shown in Table 4.c.5, the ratio was 1.04 in 2018 indicating marginally higher salary paid to teachers in all categories compared to



other professional categories requiring comparable levels of qualifications. However, this has deteriorated to 0.87 in 2020 indicating the teachers drawing lower salaries than those of employees in other comparable categories.

However, the situation has changed subsequently, particularly with salary increase granted in 2021 to all categories of teacher cadre of Sri Lanka Teacher Service (SLTS) as per the circular issued by the Ministry of Public Administration, Home Affairs, Provincial Councils and Local Government through its Circular No. PAC 03/2016 (IV) dated 05 Jan 2021<sup>270</sup>. A comparison of salary scales of teachers relative to other professions requiring a comparable level of qualification is given Table 4.c.5 (a)<sup>271</sup>, and shown by the Table, there are positive differences towards teachers of SLTS ranging from 14% to 26% at different salary steps, compared to other services requiring similar qualifications.

#### **Indicator 4.c.6: Teacher attrition rate by education level**

Data for this indicator is given in Table 4.c.6 of Annexure 3.4(c). As shown in the Table 4.a.6, the data is available only for two years- 2016 and 2017. Again for all 4 levels, data was available only for 2017, and no data was available for subsequent years. Teacher attrition rate at primary education level for both sexes was 2.14 in 2016 and 1.49 in 2017. Teacher attrition rate at lower-secondary education in both sexes was 0.50% in 2017 and teacher attrition rate at general secondary education level in both sexes was 0.64% in 2017. The attrition rates reported here appear to be expected given the variation that may occur at the point of recruitment into teacher cadres in terms of age of candidates and number of vacancies prevailed.

### **Public Expenditure on Teachers' Development and Training as a Percentage of Total Public Education Expenditure**

#### **Public expenditure on education**

As reported in Chapter 1 of this Report, the Government share of expenditure on education (including general, higher education and Technical and vocational education) as a percentage of GDP during the period 2015 to 2022 has been fluctuating below 2.0% during period from 2015 to 2022; 1.9% in the years of 2017, 2018 and 2019; 1.8% in 2021 and 1.5% in the year 2022, showing a significant decline in 2022. No data was reported for the year 2020 by CBSL Annual reports<sup>272</sup> (CBSL Annual Reports, years 2017-2022; cbsl.gov.lk). Education expenditure out of total Government expenditure is reported as 9.8% in 2015, 10.2% in 2016, 10.00% in 2017, 9.9% 2018, 8.7% 2019, 8.8% in 2021 and 8.2% in 2022. The decline in government expenditure out of total government expenditure from 2019 may be due

<sup>270</sup> Circular No. PAC 03/2016 (IV) dated 05 Jan 2021 <https://www.pubad.gov.lk/web/images/circulars/2022/S/1641393863-03-2016-iv-s.pdf>

<sup>271</sup> Information provided by National Pay Commission, <https://www.presidentsoffice.gov.lk/index.php/national-salaries-and-cadre-commission/>

the economic down turn that commenced with COVID-19 pandemic which has continued even to date. No data were reported for year 2020 (CBSL Annual Reports, cbsl.gov.lk)

### **Expenditure on teacher training**

Treasury allocation for education for teacher training is disbursed primarily through two agencies; Ministry of Education and Departments of Education of 9 Provincial Councils. Further, the NIE receives its annual budget allocation from the Treasury under the budget head of the Ministry of Education. In addition, the State universities also receive Treasury funds through University Grants Commission.

The MoE invests significantly in pre-service, in-service, and continuing teacher education, as well as infrastructure development and maintenance at Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs). The Provincial Councils (PCs) also allocates funds to Provincial Departments of Education (PDEs) for teacher training.

Details of disbursement of Budgetary provisions by different agencies for teacher development and training are given below:

- i) **Budgetary provisions received by the MoE:** The MoE secures an annual allocation of approximately Rs. 3 billion per year for teacher development and training through the Budget Program on Teacher Development. This budget covers administration, management, infrastructure development, and training at National Colleges of Education (NCoEs), Teacher Training Centres (TTCs), and Teacher Centres (TCs), as well as for the monthly allowances paid to teacher trainees of the NCoEs. The MoE also allocates funds for continuing professional/capacity development programs related to teacher development indirectly through other budget programs listed under separate budget headings - such as primary and secondary education, special education, general education development programs/projects, etc.
- ii) **Budgetary provisions by provided through the Provincial Councils:** Provincial council allocate funds for teacher training from their annual budgets, which include the Provincial Specific Development Grants and funds from the World Bank-funded General Education Modernization (WB/GEM) Project. In addition, the Provinces receive allocations distributed by the MoE from the Asian Development Bank-funded Secondary Education Sector Improvement Program (ADB/SESIP) and also from development partners like UNICEF. With these allocations, the Provincial Departments of Education (PDEs) and Zonal Education Offices (ZEOs) conduct regular teacher training in liaison with the ISAs for teachers of provincial schools. However, there may be disparities in investments made by different Provinces. Unfortunately, accurate estimate of the expenditure incurred by the respective Provinces cannot be made because of the difficulties encountered in collecting data from different entities in spite of repeated attempts made.
- iii) **Expenditure on teacher training and development by the National Institute of Education:** The NIE spends its allocation for curriculum development as well as for in-service teacher training. However, the bulk of funds are delivered for activities related curriculum development/reforms which also accompanies with a teacher training component.
  - a. **Teacher training coupled with new/ revised Curriculum Implementation:** Curriculum of general education is revised and updated at 8-year cycles. The next cycle is expected to commence in 2024 and therefore the NIE has been taking steps in this regards since early

2018. The data received from the NIE indicate that the NIE received a total Rs 275 million in 2018 and Rs. 166.5 million in 2019 for curriculum development from different funding sources - Treasury, WB, UNICEP and ADB. Out of this amount, the NIE invested around 50% in 2018 and 25% in 2019 for teacher training related to the planned curriculum revision. However, no spending on teacher training was reported since 2020, and this may perhaps due the pandemic- precipitated work disruptions.

- b. **Professional Development Programs conducted by NIE:** The NIE offers a variety of programs for educational professionals, leading to post recruitment qualifications such as Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), Bachelor of Education (BEd), Masters in Education (MEd), and Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in Education. While the majority of participants are teachers, and the programs are primarily funded through the revenue generated from course fees.

However, it must be stressed that calculating the quantum of public expenditure on teacher training and development in the school education sector is complex due to several factors. The funds are distributed by multiple agencies through multiple channels including the MoE, National Institute of Education (NIE), Provincial Councils (PCs), and universities. Further, the dual fund flow mechanism operating at central and provincial levels, multiplicity of implementing agencies and the authority vested with the Provincial Councils to determine annual education budgets make it very difficult to make an accurate estimate on the quantum of public expenditure invested on teacher training and development.

### Percentage of Teacher Salary in Educational Costing and Financing:

Allocations of funds by the Treasury for teachers' salary budget are made to the MoE for national schools and to the PCs for provincial schools. As stated elsewhere, in 2021, the salary increase granted for teachers through PAC Circular No. PAC 03/2016 (IV), dated 05 Jan 2021 resulted in a substantial increase of salaries of teachers compared to other employees with similar qualifications of employed by comparable services.

**National level:** According the MoE data, the annual expenditure on academic staff salary in national school system has increased gradually from Rs.17.8 billion in 2015 to Rs.27.4 billion in 2021 and thereafter a steep increase to 54.5 billion in 2022 as a result of salary increase granted in 2021<sup>273</sup>.

**Provincial-level:** Provincial level expenditure data on teacher salaries was very difficult to obtain. Therefore, the reviewers had to rely on alternative data source, the MoE. According to the MoE's estimations, the total actual expenditure on teacher salary in 2017 was Rs 120 billion and based on the MoE's information on increased teacher salary, the annual estimated allocation for teacher salary for 2022 for both national and provincial schools would estimate be around Rs.160 billion.

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<sup>273</sup> MoE Annual Budget Estimate for teacher salaries (Provided by Accounts Division of MoE)

## Efforts and Mechanisms for Increasing Investment and Equitable Distribution of Funds to Increase the Supply of Qualified Teachers

As highlighted in Section on “**Public Expenditure on Teachers' Development and Training as a Percentage of Total Public Education Expenditure**”, the government invest substantially for maintaining and operating the NIE, NCoEs, TTCs, TCs and universities for providing pre-service training and/or in-service professional development programs of teachers. The MoE in accordance with the provisions of SLTSM, strictly adheres to competitive, examination-based teacher recruitment process. In addition, the government from time to time recruit graduates of specialized in disciplines other than in education into the teaching service, and they too are given in-service professional training in education to make them graduate-trained teachers. In addition, teacher deployment across the provinces and schools are also done on criteria-based procedures to ensure the teachers are placed/deployed on need basis and in fair manner.

In addition, the MoE defines the norms and criteria for teacher cadre reviews considering the subjects of curriculum and teachers' qualifications. The norms and criteria defined by the MoE are issued through circulars: Circulars on Determination of the Academic Staff of a School No. 01/2016 dated 07.01.2016 and 06/2021 dated 28.04.2021<sup>274</sup>. Accordingly, the cadres for schools are calculated by the Provincial Departments of Education and the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Finance/ Department of Management Services grant the final approvals for the school-based academic cadres in respect of provincial schools to the Provincial Councils and for national schools to the MoE. This mechanism ensures the fair distribution of teachers in school system.

Besides that, with the objective of ensuring supply of teachers to schools located in difficult and very difficult areas, the MoE has introduced a scheme for incentivizing teachers who are deployed to and serve in such schools<sup>275</sup>. Such schools are managed by the Provincial Councils and annual allocations for the incentives are made through their annual budgets by the Treasury to the Provincial Departments of Education.

## Initiatives to Introduce and Upgrade Teacher Competency Framework and Training Programs since 2015

All teachers in SLTS are provided with ample opportunities with the view to upgrade their competencies in teaching, training and assessments. Some of the new initiatives as well as the routine but continuing teacher development programs are detailed below:

- i) **Teacher Competency Framework (TCF):** The MoE, in 2021 commenced working towards the design and introduce a National Competency Framework for Teachers that defines the criteria-based teacher competencies and evaluation procedures of teachers with the

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<sup>274</sup> MoE, Circulars on Determination of the Academic Staff of a School No. 01/2016 dated 07.01.2016; MoE, Circulars on Determination of the Academic Staff of a School No. 06/2021 dated 28.04.2021;

<sup>275</sup> MoE Circulars, No. 2005/01 dated 2005.01.18; No. 2005/02 dated 2005.01.18; No. 2006/43 dated 2006.11.24 and No. 2006/44 dated 2006.11.27

aim of improving teacher competencies and professionalism. However, this is yet to be introduced to the education system.

- ii) **In-service teacher training programs:** As stated elsewhere, recruitment into SLLTS is done based on multiple eligibility criteria: Persons with G.C.E (A/L) qualifications, NDT obtained NCoEds and SLIATE (only for limited disciplines), graduates in BEd qualification and graduates of other disciplines. Persons with G.C.E (A/L) qualifications as well as the graduates of disciplines other than education are required to become professionally qualified teachers by going through - in-service training leading to recognized professional qualifications. All such 'untrained' teachers are provided study leave with pay to follow such courses at the TTC or NIE or universities.
- iii) **Teacher performance appraisals:** All teachers in SLTS are required to submit themselves for annual as well as periodic appraisals as per the SLTS Minute, and as a prerequisite for such appraisal, all teachers have to go through continuing professional development programs (CPDs) periodically. To facilitate this, the MoE in liaison with the PEDs, implements modular-based CPD programs, country wide, through the Teacher Centres (TCs) located at zonal education levels.
- iv) **School-based Professional Teacher Development Programs (SBPTDPs):** The SBPTDPs are arranged by principals in liaison with ISAs which helps teachers to improve their professional practices with the help of the peers of the same school or of neighboring schools.

Thus, the prevailing in-service teacher training system coupled with the provisions the incentives such as duty leave for attending teacher training programs, payments of participation fees, study leave (full-time/part-time) and course fee to read for professional qualifications provides a promising environment for upgrading teachers' competencies on continuous basis, and it is expected that the proposed TCF will strengthen the system further when it is introduced to and institutionalized in the education system.

## Results and Intermediate Outcomes of Policies and Programs for Enhancing Teacher Competency Framework and Training

As a result of the teacher professional development programs implemented over the past few years, approximately 77.6% of teachers in service hold a degree and a PGDE or higher qualification or have completed professional training (NCoEs or TTCs). As of the data provided in School Census Report of 2021, the student-teacher ratio (STR) considering the total number of teachers is 16.8:1, while the STR considering only qualified teachers is 21.6:1 (MoE, School Census, 2021).

However, the efforts in improving teacher competencies have been negatively impacted by two factors; a delay happening at the MoE level in finalizing Teacher Competency Framework (TCF) and hence the delay in implementing it, and also by the delay in the proposed upgrading of NCoEs to degree-awarding status.

## Monitoring of Teacher Development and Performance in the Education System and Its Impact on Policy Development and Planning

All teachers as practiced for all government employees, are required to undergo an annual performance appraisal that is conducted and certified by their immediate authorities. This appraisal process takes into account the performances of the employees on assigned duties and the extent of engagement in continuing professional development / in-service training programs. Based on the outcomes of the annual appraisals, the annual increments and subsequent promotion are granted.

In addition, teaching competencies of teachers are evaluated regularly at multiple points: at the school level, through teacher-self evaluations on annual basis and evaluations by Subject Heads/Deputy Principals of the schools while subject-based In-Service Advisors (ISAs) visit schools regularly and provide advocacy to teachers. Also, ISAs and zonal level Subject Directors, as a part of the school supervision programs, supervise teachers as well. Quality Assurance programs conducted by the MoE for national schools and by the PDEs for provincial schools also include supervisions of teaching practices. However, due to shortages of officers and disruption occurred as result of COVID-19 pandemic have somewhat disturbed these programs happening regularly. Moreover, at national level, the Ministry of Education (MoE) utilizes the information available through Teacher Human Resource Management (THRM) database to analyze teacher profiles on regular basis, based on the norms and criteria defined in the MoE circulars on determination of academic staff of schools.

Thus, the monitoring of teachers' development and performance includes annual performance appraisals, quality assurance reviews – both internal and external evaluations, and the national reviews of teacher profiles using the THRM database. The outcomes of these assessments are used at different levels to design and implement relevant policies, strategies and action plans to continually enhance teachers' competencies. Further, the outcome of the above mentioned evaluation are conveyed to all TEIs including the NIE and universities to ensure the appropriate revisions of curricula of the existing programs and also for designing and offering further opportunities for teacher education.

## Major Gaps and Challenges

There are several gaps and challenges in Sri Lanka's education system with respect to teacher establishment matters.

**Relative high percentage of untrained teachers:** According to the School Census data of 2021, only 77% of teachers are qualified (graduate-trained and trained teachers). Despite the '*vision for a full graduate teacher cadre*' since the mid-2000s, this goal has not yet been fully achieved. Approximately 43% of teachers (104,056 out of 241,054) are non-graduates, although many of them possess NCoE Diploma or TTC certificates. Moreover, even among the graduate teachers, only 66% (90,371 out of 136,998) have received professional training to become 'trained' graduate teachers. This situation stems from the practice of recruiting university graduates in disciplines other than in education, and thus without having the necessary teaching skills from time to time in large numbers as teachers and

delay in providing provisions for them for acquiring post-recruitment professional training at TTC, NIE and Faculties of Education of Universities.

**Inadequate coordination among MoE and Teacher Education Institutions:** Absence of a coordinated plan and efforts between the Ministry of Education (as the client) and teacher education institutions, such as the NCOEs, NIE, TTCs and universities (as the trainers), hinders the effective achievement of targets with the available resources. At the university level, there is inadequate collaboration among the Departments/Faculties of Education with the other Departments/Faculties which offer training in disciplines like science, mathematics, and management, and thus hindering the production of subject-specific, professionally qualified graduate teachers to teach disciplines like, languages (English, Sinhala and Tamil), science, mathematics, management, technology, etc. As a result, there is shortages of teachers in above subjects in schools, particularly in schools located in semi-urban and rural areas of the country and in plantation areas, especially for teaching at G.C.E(A/L) level subjects such as sciences, mathematics and English. Further, there are shortages of teachers in Tamil medium schools.

**Declining opportunities for teacher training provided through International Corporation:** As emphasized in the Report on Target 4(b), there has been a declining trend in the number of scholarships offered for teacher training, particularly for academics and master trainers of TEIs through aids/grants provided by the international development agencies, and through bilateral partnerships.

## **Additional Efforts to Enable Sri Lanka to Achieve Education Goals by 2025 and 2030**

Several measures have already been taken to address these gaps. The NIE has expanded its services by offering part-time PGDE and postgraduate opportunities. Additionally, new initiatives have been taken by several universities to design and offer BEd study programs in collaboration with Faculties of Sciences to train graduates with BEd qualifications with specialization in science and mathematics so as to train pre-qualified graduates teachers in disciplines of science and mathematics.

However, additional measures are required to achieve the Target 4.c by 2025 and 2030. These include the following:

- i) Upgrading of National Colleges of Education (NCoEs) to degree awarding status, and allowing for the admission of students on merit in parallel to the selection done for national universities. However, upgrading NCoEs would requires government commitment and support in terms of financial and human resources.
- ii) Exploring alternative approaches such as establishing links between NCoEs and regional universities that could facilitate resource sharing and enhancing cost-efficiency.
- iii) Tighter coordination among MoE, NIE, and Faculties/Departments of Education in universities to expedite the provision training leading to acquisition professional qualifications for 'untrained' graduate teachers to acquire professional training in education such as PGDE or MEd or higher degrees in education.
- iv) Providing flexibility for undergraduate curricula offered by university, particularly in Faculties of Science and Humanities and Social Sciences to allow the students to sign up

for cross-faculty study programs (joint degree programs). Through such platforms, the undergraduates interested in teaching profession could acquire pedagogical skills along with their subject-specific training.

- v) Strengthening of all aspects of operation including academic activities of the South Asia Centre for Teacher Development (UNESCO Category-II institution) by providing adequate funds and resources and by linking it with national universities and overseas teacher training centres.
- vi) Establish separate budget lines/heads for teacher training and development in each key institution; that is at the MoE, NIE, Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education. This would enable utilization of funds allocated and better tracking and monitoring of public expenditure on teacher training and development.
- vii) Provision of sufficient annual funding by the Government is undeniable pre-requisite to ensure adequate investment on education including teacher training and development. The share on education expenditure in terms of GDP as well the total Government expenditure has been declining in recent years (as reported in Chapter 1) and therefore attention is needed to improve the situation in the light of the prescribed national benchmark value of 15% for the share of education expenditure out of the Total Government Expenditure and 4.0% share of the Government expenditure as a parentage of GDP by 2030

## Conclusion

The comparison of actual values for proportion of teachers with minimum required qualification for all 4 level of education in 2020 with those of the prescribed national benchmarks for 2025 and 2030 reveals that Sri Lanka lags behind in its efforts to meet the expected targets by 2025 and 2030. This stems from several key impediments such as existence of relatively high percentage of untrained teachers, inadequate funding for teacher training from national and provincial budgets, inadequate coordination among MoE and teacher education institutions, declining opportunities provided for teacher training through international corporation, discrepancies in the equitable deployment of qualified teachers, and absence of well formulated teacher competency framework coupled with inadequacies in quality assurance and performance monitoring of teachers. These impediments conceivably have impacted the progress of this target. Therefore, decisive and determined and well targeted policies, programs and activities backed by enhance government funding are required over the next few years to accelerate the progress of activities connected with SDG Target 4(c).



## Annexure 3.4(c)

### Indicator 4.c.1: Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications, by education level

Table 4.c.1: Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications, by education level

Indicator	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications in pre-primary education, both sexes (%)	81.25	82.61	89.47	84.62	N/A	84.62	82.35	N/A	81.52
Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications in primary education, both sexes (%)	N/A	72.06	N/A	86.13	81.37	84.52	81.46	80.77	83.75
Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications in lower secondary education, both sexes (%)	N/A	80.24	N/A	86.23	85.04	85.48	83.05	83.33	82.63
Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications in secondary education, both sexes (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	77.27	79.83	76.83	N/A	78.94
Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications in upper secondary education, both sexes (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	79.44	82.31	79.26	N/A	81.41

Source: UIS; <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org>

### Indicator 4.c.1: Pupil-trained teacher ration by education level

Table 4.c.2: Pupil-trained teacher ratio by education level

Indicator	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Pupil-trained teacher ratio in pre-primary education (headcount basis)	18.58	19.08	17.07	17.90	N/A	15.89	15.05	N/A	15.57
Pupil-trained teacher ratio in primary education (headcount basis)	N/A	29.60	N/A	26.85	27.24	26.83	26.50	26.10	26.32
Pupil-trained teacher ratio in lower secondary education (headcount basis)	N/A	24.06	N/A	20.04	20.90	20.21	20.88	20.69	21.15
Pupil-trained teacher ratio in secondary education (headcount basis)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	21.93	21.20	22.13	N/A	N/A
Pupil-trained teacher ratio in upper secondary education (headcount basis)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	23.15	22.37	23.59	N/A	N/A

Source: UIS; <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org>

**Indicator 4.c.3: Percentage of teachers qualified according to national standard by education level and type of institution**

**Table 4.c.3: Percentage of qualified teachers according to the national standards by education level and type of institution**

Indicator	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Percentage of qualified teachers in pre-primary education, both sexes (%)	83.57	85.51	84.34	84.93	84.63	84.80	87.19	86.43	N/A
Percentage of qualified teachers in primary education, both sexes (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	85.15	85.23	85.67	83.15	83.65	83.76
Percentage of qualified teachers in lower secondary education, both sexes (%)	N/A	89.13	N/A	84.78	82.77	82.80	81.67	82.71	85.01
Percentage of qualified teachers in secondary education, both sexes (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	82.97	81.89	78.48	N/A	81.68
Percentage of qualified teachers in upper secondary education, both sexes (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	83.19	80.86	74.97	N/A	78.14

Source: UIS; <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org>

**Indicator 4.c.4: Pupil-qualified teacher ratio by education level**

**Table 4.c.4: Pupil-qualified teacher ratio by education levels**

Indicator	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Pupil-qualified teacher ratio in pre-primary education (headcount basis)	18.00	18.10	17.57	17.43	17.44	16.31	15.02	15.26	N/A
Pupil-qualified teacher ratio in primary education (headcount basis)	N/A	N/A	N/A	27.19	27.18	26.77	26.47	26.00	25.96
Pupil-qualified teacher ratio in lower secondary (headcount basis)	N/A	19.45	N/A	20.36	20.55	20.63	20.82	20.20	20.84
Pupil-qualified teacher ratio in secondary (headcount basis)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	21.00	21.31	22.35	N/A	N/A
Pupil-qualified teacher ratio in upper secondary (headcount basis)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	21.50	22.09	24.18	N/A	N/A

Source: UIS; <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org>

**Indicator 4.c.5: Average teacher salary relative to other professions required a comparable level of qualifications**

**Table 4.c.5: Average teacher salary in primary, lower and upper secondary level relative to other professions requiring a comparable level of qualification, both sexes**

Indicator	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Average teacher salary in primary education relative to other professions requiring a comparable level of qualification, both sexes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.04	0.91	0.87
Average teacher salary in lower secondary education relative to other professions requiring a comparable level of qualification, both sexes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.04	0.91	0.87
Average teacher salary in upper secondary education relative to other professions requiring a comparable level of qualification, both sexes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.04	0.91	0.87

Source: UIS; <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org>

**Table 4. c.5. (a): Comparison of approved salaries between 'Teachers, In-Service Advisors and Principals' of the education sector and the cadres recruited to the public service positions with corresponding qualifications**

Service (1)	Qualification (2)	Salary Code (3)	Grade (4)	Salary Step (5)	Salary as per PAC . 03/2016 (6)	Teacher Salary as per PAC. 03/2016 (IV), 2021.01.05 (7)	Corresponding public service				
							Qualifications (8)	Salary code (9)	Starting salary (10)	Difference (increase) by step (11)= (7)-(6)	% of increase by step (12)= (7)-(6)/(6)*100
Teaching Service	GCE AL	GE 1	3-II	1	27,740	31,490	GCE/ OL+GCE/AL 01 subject	MN 1	27140	3,750	14%
							GCE/OL+ GCE/AL	MN 2	28940		
	Diploma(Untrained)		3-I C	7	29,540	34,160	GCE/OL+GCE/AL+NVQ 5	MT 1	29840	4,620	16%
							GCE/OL+GCE/AL+NVQ6	MT 2	30140		
							GCE/OL+GCE/AL (Sc) 3 passes at one sat + NVQ 6	MT 3	30840		
					GCE/AL with 01 year full-time Diploma	MT 4	31190				

	Trained teachers (NCoE Diplomates)		3-I B	11	30,300	36,260	GCE/AL with 1&1/2 years fulltime Diploma	MT 5	31635	5,960	20%	
							GCE/AL with 2 years fulltime Diploma	MT 6	32080			
							GCEAL(Sc) pass with NVQ6	MN 3	31040			
							GCE/AL with 3 year Diploma	MT 7	32525			
							Degree	MN 4	31490			
	Graduates		3-I A	14	32,200	37,835	Degree Recruitment exam	MN 5	34605	5,635	18%	
Teacher service	(Trained+Degree) / (Degree+PGDE)/ (BEd)	GE 2	2-II	3	34,290	40,825	Degree+Postgraduate degree	MN 6	36585	6,535	19%	
										Degree+PGDE+Med	7,195	20%
											8,250	21%
											11,820	26%
ISA	Being a teacher of SLTS Class 1 or class 2-1	GE 3	II	1	34,615	41,385				6,770	19.6%	
			I	11	46,000	53,520				7,520	16%	
Principals service	Being a teacher of SLTS with appropriate qualifications and service experience	GE 4	III	1	35,280	42,175	Promotions to be made on the service in a defined period in a Selection grade position (degree+05 years' service experience/10 years' service experience)	MN 7	41580	6,895	20%	
			II	8	40,040	48,685				8,645	25%	
			I	15	46,325	58,345				12,020	26%	

Source: National Pay Commission, Sri Lanka (2022)

#### Indicator 4.c.6: Teacher attrition rate by education level

Table 4.c.6: Teacher attrition rate from primary education, both sexes (%)

Indicator	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Teacher attrition rate from primary education, both sexes (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.14	1.49	N/A	N/A	N/A
Teacher attrition rate from lower secondary education, both sexes (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.50	N/A	N/A	N/A
Teacher attrition rate from general secondary education, both sexes (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.64	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: UIS; <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org>

### 3.11 Matrix

## Policies and Regulations, Programs and Activities Adopted

Target	Policies and Regulations	Programs/Activities
<p><b>Target 4.1: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free and compulsory education policy enacted in 1945</li> <li>• Compulsory education regulation in 1997</li> <li>• Guidelines on school attendance issued through gazette notification in 2016</li> <li>• Circular on implementing and monitoring, supervision of non-formal education programs and record book for entering data in 2022</li> <li>• Implementation of several programs namely '<i>Nearest School the Best School</i>' program (2016)', '<i>Child-friendly School</i> (2013)' program and '<i>Development of 1000 National Schools</i> (2017)' program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education Sector Development Plan 2018 – 2025.</li> <li>• Compulsory Education Regulations- 1997 (Under this regulation, "School Committees" were established.)</li> <li>• Circular No. 36/2022 dated 03/12/2022 "Circular on Implementing, Monitoring and Supervision of Non-Formal Education Programs and Record Book for Entering Data"</li> <li>• '<i>Suraksha</i>' Insurance Scheme</li> <li>• Providing shoes to selected students</li> <li>• '<i>Sisu Sariya</i>', the school bus service with reduced ticket fare,</li> <li>• Providing sanitary pads to girls (provide to 500 schools with the assistance of private sector well-wishers and</li> <li>• Scholarship programs initiated through foreign donor assistance.</li> <li>• "Nearest School the Best School" implemented in 2016</li> <li>• "Child-friendly School" Program commenced in 2013</li> <li>• Development of 1000 National Schools Program commenced in 2022</li> <li>• 13 - years of Guaranteed Education Program implemented since 2017</li> <li>• Implementation of ADB funded General Education Modernization Project (GEMP)- 2019 to 2021</li> </ul>

<p><b>Target 4.2: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Nutrition Policy 2010-2018</li> <li>• National Nutrition Policy 2021-2030</li> <li>• National Action Plan for Children 2016-2020</li> <li>• The National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Development, 2018</li> <li>• National Alternative Care Policy for children in Sri Lanka</li> <li>• Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, 2023</li> <li>• National Policy on Child Protection, 2020</li> <li>• National Policy on Preschool Education, 2020 (Ministry of Education)</li> <li>• National Education Policy Framework 2020-2030 –NEC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactive preschool teacher training programs and in-service preschool teacher training programs – Conducted by the World Bank-funded ECD project of the Ministry of Women Child Affairs and Social Empowerment (MWCASE). (2016-2023).</li> <li>• Production of awareness-raising videos on ECD for ECCE teachers, facilitators, and other practitioners</li> <li>• Guidebook to strengthen preschool teachers’ capacity to integrate children with autism spectrum disorder</li> <li>• Manual on Management of Severe and Moderate Acute Undernutrition of Children Under 5 Years of Age prescribed by the FHB in 2020</li> <li>• Early Child Care and Development Guidelines prescribed by the FHB in 2018</li> <li>• Child Development Screening Checklist developed and prescribed the FHB in 2019</li> <li>• Inclusive Early Childhood Development (Include Sri Lanka) Programme initiated by FHB in 2022</li> <li>• Early Child Care Development Package prescribed by the FHB in 2020</li> <li>• Nutrition Allowance program for Pregnant and Lactating Mothers implemented by the MWCASE since 2015</li> <li>• Morning Meal program: Initiated in 2017 for preschool children by the MWCASE</li> <li>• ‘Guru Abhimani’ program implemented by MWCASE in 2021</li> <li>• Introduction of the Standardized Early Childhood Development Assessment Tool by NSECD in 2017</li> <li>• Social Protection of Children Project by DPCC and NCPA (2016-2018)</li> <li>• “Athvela” Parent Sponsored Child Support Scheme by DPCC since 2022</li> </ul>
<p><b>Target 4.3 :By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable, quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Policy Proposals on Higher Education -NEC</li> <li>• National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030)- NEC</li> <li>• The National Policy on TVET (2018)-NEC</li> <li>• UGC Strategic Plan (2019-2023)</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Programs relevant to Higher education</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University Grants Commission has taken steps to improve quality and standards of higher education provisions by implementing several initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- streamlining the Quality Assurance Activities of the Quality Assurance Council of the UGC,</li> <li>- adoption of OBE-SCL approach for academic development and planning,</li> <li>- issuing of guidelines on adoption of outcome-based, student-centered learning (OBE-SCL) were issued,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- updating the Quality Assurance Manuals in 2015– two new manuals; one for the Review of Study Programs and the other for the Review of Universities and Higher Education institutions, and</li> <li>- updating Subject Benchmark Statements (SBSs) and developing Benchmark Statements for new degree programs.</li> <li>• Continuation of donor funding for further improvement of higher education - Upon completion of the World Bank project, titled “Higher Education for Twenty-First Century (WB/HETC)” Project (2010-2016), a new WB-funded project titled “Accelerating Higher Education Expansion and Development” (AHEAD project 2017-2023) has been implemented.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Programs relevant to TVET</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Development Plan for the TVET Sector (2023-2027)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Target 4.4: By 2030, substantially <i>increase</i> the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The National Policy on TVET (2018)-NEC</li> <li>• National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030)- NEC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of updated version of Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework by the UGC in 2015</li> <li>• Introduction of Sri Lanka National Vocational Qualification Framework by the TVEC in 2005</li> <li>• In 2006, ICT was integrated in to the G.C.E. (O/L) as a technical subject and as a main subject for G.C.E. (A/L) from 2007</li> <li>• in 2013, Technology was introduced as a study stream in the G.C.E. (A/L) examination</li> <li>• Conduct of awareness programs for the youth by the National Youth Council to create awareness on the availability of vocational and technical education and training opportunities – continuation of regular training programs</li> <li>• Digital Economy Strategic Plan developed by ICTA (2020-2024)</li> <li>• Digital Government Competency Framework developed by ICTA (2022)</li> <li>• Teacher Digital Competency Framework developed by MoE in partnership with ICTA in 2023</li> <li>• Policy for Digital Transformation of Education developed by MoE in partnership with ICTA in 2022</li> <li>• VET plan for Electrical and Electronics Sector developed by TVEC in 2021</li> <li>• “<i>Programs on Smart Classes</i>” conducted by the Ministry of Education in 2021</li> </ul>

<p><b>Target 4.5: By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy Proposals on Preschool Education (2019)- NEC</li> <li>• National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030) - NEC</li> <li>• Education Sector Development Policy Framework (2018-2025) - MoE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the Circular No.37/2020 dated 03.12.2020 on Special and Inclusive Education</li> <li>• In 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the Guidance Manual on “<i>Giving Inclusive Education for All Children</i>” including the provision of education facilities for the children with special needs</li> <li>• University Grants Commission has established a Standing Committee on Gender Equity/Equality in Higher Education</li> <li>• Completion of the construction of the buildings and the water therapy pool of the ‘<i>Shishyoda</i>’ National Resource Center for Special Education constructed in Weniwelkola in 2019</li> <li>• Commencement of sports tournament since 2020 at provincial and national levels with the participation of students with special needs</li> <li>• Establishment of the Autism Child Development Centre at the NCoE at Maharagama</li> <li>• Establishment of the Department for Special Needs Education at the Open University of Sri Lanka in 2003</li> <li>• Establishment of the Department of Disabilities’ Studies at the Faculty of Medicine of University of Kelaniya in 1991</li> <li>• Establishment of a Disability Centre at the University of Colombo in 2012</li> </ul>
<p><b>Target 4.6: By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The National Policy on TVET (2018) - NEC</li> <li>• National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030) - NEC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2016, the Ministry of Education (MoE) issued a set of regulations (through the Gazette dated April 20, 2016, bearing the number 1963/30) titled "<i>Series of regulations of sending children compulsorily to school of 2015/01</i>"</li> <li>• The NFE/MoE has initiated and conducted various youth and adult literacy programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Functional Literacy Programs to non-school-going children and adults</li> <li>- Community Learning programs for adult target groups including unemployed youth and housewives</li> <li>- ‘<i>Nenasarana</i>’ Programs for Street Children to provide basic education and care for homeless children</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vocational Training Programs designed for school leavers to acquire vocational skills</li> <li>- Orientation Programs for preparing women for foreign employment</li> <li>- Gap-filling training programs for assisting non-school-going children in transitioning them to formal education</li> <li>- Entrepreneurship Training programs provided to school leavers to foster entrepreneurial skills</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of ‘13-Years Guaranteed Education Program’ in 2017</li> <li>• Introduction of National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF) by the TVEC in 2005</li> <li>• Conduct of specialized educational programs by the Department of Prisons in liaison with the Ministry of Education and Provincial Departments of Education for imprisoned juvenile convicts since 2015</li> </ul>
<p><b>Target 4.7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030) - NEC</li> <li>• Obesity Prevention Policy and Guidelines by the FHB in 2018</li> <li>• National School Health Policy by the FHB in 2022 (Draft)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asia Pacific Centre of Education on International Understanding (APCEIU) and the NIE developed and adopted the Global Citizenship Education (GCED) Curriculum Framework in 2021</li> <li>• UNICEF collaborated with the Peace Education and Reconciliation Unit of the Ministry of Education to review the national policy on social cohesion and peace education in 2008</li> <li>• Establishment of the Ministry of Women, Child Affairs, and Social Empowerment (MWCASE) by the Government of Sri Lanka in June 2022</li> <li>• Development of the GCED curriculum by the NIE in 2021</li> <li>• “<i>Environmental Pioneer Program</i>” conducted by the Central Environment Authority since 1984</li> <li>• ‘<i>Green School Program</i>’ conducted by MOE since 2015</li> <li>• Establishment of school farms since 2015</li> <li>• UNFPA Sri Lanka and NSACP organized a debate competition for young people on World AIDS Day in 2021</li> <li>• STD/AIDS Control program of the Ministry of Health has conducted the following programs from 2015-2021:</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A drama competition among prison inmates was conducted to raise awareness of HIV infection in 2020</li> <li>- Development of an e-learning platform on sexual health and STIs, including HIV, targeting youth in 2020</li> <li>- Advocacy programs planned with institutions to promote the e-learning platform in 2020</li> <li>- Social media campaign for AIDS Day with attractive posters published in multiple languages in 2020</li> <li>- Conducting 2226 information education and communication (IEC) programs island wide, covering 214,330 participants by the MoH. Programs included lectures, exhibitions, workshops, and other activities since 2019</li> <li>- Conducting 2505 IEC programs island wide, reaching 286,738 participants. Programs included lectures, exhibitions, workshops, and other activities in 2018</li> <li>- Conducting 103 awareness programs island wide, reaching 59,896 participants in 2017</li> <li>- National Communication Strategy (NCS) on STI/HIV/AIDS launched on World AIDS Day in 2017</li> <li>- Conducting 129 awareness programs on HIV/AIDS island wide, reaching 156,505 participants in 2016</li> <li>- Draft of the national communication strategy (NCS) on STD/HIV/AIDS was developed by National STD/AIDS Control program of the Ministry of Health in 2016</li> <li>• Regular Programs conducted by Family Health Bureau: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- School Medical Inspection (SMI)</li> <li>- School Health Programs</li> <li>- Educational programs on life skills, and sexual and reproductive health.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Weekly Iron Folic Acid Supplementation (WIFS) has been provided to students in grades 1-13 since 2014 to prevent iron deficiency</li> </ul>
<p><b>Target 4.a :Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MoE issued National Guideline for Disaster Safety in 2008</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of Child Safety Committees and the issuance of circulars by the MoE to promote a safe and secure environment for children</li> </ul>

<p><b>sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MoE circular on School Safety Programme on Disaster Risk Management in 2021</li> <li>• MoE circular on Child Protection in 2011</li> <li>• MoE Circular on ensuring discipline in schools in 2016</li> <li>• MoE regulations issued through gazette notification on accessibility regulations in 2016</li> <li>• Cabinet memorandum on minimum age for employees in 2020</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuation of supplementary nutrition program commenced few decades ago and the program has further been strengthened with the provision of glass of milk for every child</li> <li>• Preventive healthcare measures implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic</li> <li>• Psychological well-being of students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>“Sathi Pasala”</i> program commenced in 2023</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Regular medical examinations have been introduced for students in primary grades</li> <li>• Modules on reproductive health and personal hygiene education have been included in the science and health and physical education curricula</li> <li>• Preventive measures to mitigate potential threat of substance abuse among children; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teacher training workshops</li> <li>- counseling camps</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>‘13-years Guaranteed Education Program’</i> introduced in 2017</li> <li>• Increase minimum age of employment from 14 years to 16 years of age since 2020 to minimize child labour</li> <li>• Scholarships and support services have been provided to economically disadvantaged children through various programs since 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>‘Subhagya’</i> scholarship program</li> <li>- <i>‘Sujatha Diyani’</i> Korean Scholarship Program</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Target 4(b): By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing states and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training</b></p>	<p>No national Policy except;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the provision of scholarships and bursaries for students for low income groups enrolled in State universities and higher education institutions, and</li> <li>- requirement of having postgraduate level qualification, preferably from a centre of excellence for confirmation and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuation of “Mahapola” Scholarship program for students from low income families to pursue higher education</li> <li>• Continuation of “Bursary” payment scheme for students from low income families to pursue higher education</li> <li>• Post graduate scholarship programs for academics in overseas universities through generated income by the respective universities</li> <li>• Interest free loan schemes offered to students registered in non-State higher education institutions operating with degree awarding status obtained from MoE</li> <li>• Overseas scholarships offered for undergraduate and post graduate studies through bilateral programs</li> </ul>

<p><b>and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programs, in developed and other developing countries</b></p>	<p>promotion of staff in their respective services in teacher cadres in Sri Lanka Teacher Service catering to education and academic cadres in universities and TVET training institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long term overseas scholarships offered to university academic staff through development partner-funded projects such as World Bank, ADB, Commonwealth Foundation, Fulbright Foundation and by the foreign governments.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Target 4(c) : By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030) - NEC</li> <li>• Sri Lanka Teacher Service Minute of 1994</li> <li>• PAC circular no. 03/2016 dated 05<sup>th</sup> January 2021 granting salary increase for teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuation of Teacher training programs conducted by teacher training institutions such as NCOEs, TTCs, TCs, NIE and universities</li> <li>• Continuing teacher professional development programs offered by TTCs, NIE and universities</li> <li>• Granting substantial salary increase for all cadres of teacher categories in 2021</li> <li>• Formulation of Teacher Competency Framework by the MoE in 2021 (process is still on-going)</li> </ul>

## 4.1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound effect on education in Sri Lanka, including university and technical and vocational education and training (TVET). In response, the Sri Lankan government and education stakeholders have implemented various measures. These efforts include the provision of online learning resources, the development of new learning materials, and training programs for teachers to adapt to online teaching methods. However, there remains a pressing need to ensure that all students can access high-quality education throughout and beyond the pandemic. The shift to online and distance learning has been a significant change in university education, presenting challenges for students and faculty alike. Limited internet connectivity, lack of access to computers and technology, and the adjustment to new learning formats have posed difficulties for many students. In the case of TVET, the disruption of practical training and apprenticeships has been a notable consequence of the pandemic. Social distancing measures and movement restrictions have made it challenging to provide hands-on training, leading to delays in completing programs and impacting graduates' employability.

## 4.2 Impacts and Lessons Learned on Education due to COVID-19

### 4.2.1 Impact of the pandemic in terms of access, learning outcomes and wellbeing

The effects of COVID-19 Pandemic can be observed in various areas:

Access to education has been greatly affected, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized groups. Children from low-income families, those with disabilities, and those residing in rural areas face difficulties in accessing education. Limited access to technology, internet connectivity, and essential resources hinders their participation in remote learning.

Learning outcomes have been significantly impacted by the shift to online and distance learning. Students have struggled to adapt to the new format, and disruptions to academic calendars have led to delays in completing degrees and certifications. Such challenges may have long-term implications for graduates' employability and the overall achievement of SDG 4 targets.

The pandemic has taken a toll on the mental health and well-being of students, teachers, and parents. Social isolation, increased stress, and uncertainty have contributed to a rise in mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, negatively affecting the overall well-being of individuals involved in the education system.

Sri Lankan schools have been basically dysfunctional for over 15 months since initial closures in March 2020, despite some brief periods of operation<sup>276</sup>. The total number of missed school days has been

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<sup>276</sup> <https://www.unesco.org/en/covid-19/education-response#durationschoolclosures>

relatively high, surpassing averages seen in other countries. This extended disruption has further exacerbated the challenges faced by students and hindered progress towards SDG 4.

Regarding access to education, data from After Access<sup>277</sup> nationally representative surveys reveal that only 34% of Sri Lankan households with children have some form of internet connection. Furthermore, a mere 48% of households with children possess a smartphone or working computer, indicating the limited availability of connected devices for online learning. The lowest socioeconomic groups and households, in particular, face even greater difficulties, with only 21% meeting the criteria for access to online learning resources.

To gauge the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on learning outcomes, a survey conducted in 2021<sup>278</sup> found that approximately half of the parents felt their children's educational progress had stagnated during school closures. Another study by LIRNEasia<sup>279</sup> revealed that 85% of enrolled school-age children received some form of educational services during closures, with varying levels of satisfaction. Nevertheless, the closure of schools and the resulting loss of learning hours have posed significant challenges to achieving SDG 4.

Although Sri Lanka has demonstrated swift and coordinated efforts in responding to the pandemic, including a whole-of-society approach and strong leadership, the overall impact on learning outcomes remains significant (UNICEF, 2021)<sup>280</sup>. Disadvantaged students continue to face obstacles in accessing technology and internet connectivity, hindering their educational progress. It is crucial for the government and education stakeholders in Sri Lanka to prioritize equitable access to quality education for all students, recognizing its significance not only during the pandemic but also in the post-pandemic era. Collaborative efforts are essential in developing innovative solutions that can effectively address and eliminate the lingering effects of the pandemic on education.

#### **4.2.2 Lessons learned on the provision of remote learning during COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated remote learning in Sri Lanka, revealing challenges and lessons. Key takeaways include:

1. Digital infrastructure is crucial, especially in rural and low-income areas. Equal access to technology and improved connectivity should be prioritized.
2. Flexibility and adaptability are essential. Education must be delivered and managed in innovative ways, leveraging digital tools.
3. Teacher training in digital pedagogy is important. Educators need support to effectively use digital tools and create engaging online experiences.
4. Collaborative partnerships among institutions, educators, and policymakers are vital for resilience. They can address the digital divide, promote professional development, and support student and teacher well-being.
5. Equity and inclusion must be prioritized. Targeted support is needed for vulnerable and marginalized groups, ensuring equal access to education and resources. These lessons inform

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<sup>277</sup> <https://lirneasia.net/2020/05/internet-access-for-households-with-children-under-18-is-34/>

<sup>278</sup> <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1303575.pdf>

<sup>279</sup> <https://economynext.com/sri-lanka-online-education-goes-to-85-pct-of-students-despite-dissatisfaction-study-88708/>

<sup>280</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/media/2296/file/Situation%20Analysis%20on%20the%20effects%20of%20and%20Responses%20to%20COVID-19%20on%20the%20Education%20Sector%20in%20Asia.pdf>

future education policies and practices, aiming for a resilient and inclusive system that supports Sustainable Development Goal 4.

## 4.3 Impact After School Re-Opening

### 4.3.1 Enrolment, retention and dropout rates

The re-opening of schools in Sri Lanka following the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on enrolment, retention, and dropout rates, which directly influence the progress towards SDG 4 of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all<sup>281</sup>. Notably, the attendance monitoring reports from UNICEF-supported Provinces highlight a contrasting scenario compared to the first school closure period, primarily due to the presence of community transmission. The lower attendance rates of students and teachers compared to pre-COVID-19 times can be attributed to the increasing concerns about the heightened spread of the virus within the community.

Upon the second reopening of schools on 23 November 2020, during the initial weeks, the average attendance rate for students across the Uva, Central, East, and Northern Provinces was 51.25 percent. The Province with the highest attendance rate was Uva at 67.08 percent, whereas Central Province had the lowest at 32.3 percent. In terms of teachers' attendance rates, the average across the four Provinces was 77.63 percent, with the highest in Uva Province at 87.02 percent and the lowest in Central Province at 61.5 percent. The primary reason cited for the decreased attendance levels was the perceived link between COVID-19 cases and schools, which caused parental reluctance to send their children for in-person schooling.

The repercussions of the pandemic on enrolment, retention, and dropout rates in Sri Lanka's education system underscore the need for action. To achieve SDG4, measures must be taken to encourage students' return to school, promote retention, and minimize dropouts. This involves creating a safe and supportive learning environment that addresses parental concerns and instills confidence in health and safety measures. Targeted support should be provided to students facing socio-economic challenges. Reports on school re-openings show increased enrolment rates, but barriers like financial constraints and limited access to resources must be addressed. The prolonged period of remote learning has affected retention, making it crucial to provide academic and emotional support and nurture a conducive learning environment. Dropout rates may decrease with time, but efforts are needed to ensure vulnerable students return to schools and economic factors don't force their withdrawals. By prioritizing these actions, Sri Lanka can make strides towards inclusive and high-quality education for all, despite the setback experienced with COVID-19 pandemic.

### 4.3.2. Learning loss

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in significant learning loss for students in Sri Lanka, aligning with the global impact on education systems. Reports indicate that learning loss during the years 2020 and 2021 amounted to 54% and 88%, respectively<sup>282</sup>. According to UNICEF, 69% of parents of primary school children reported that their children were learning "less" or "a lot less". The negative effects have been particularly pronounced for girls from disadvantaged households and children with

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<sup>281</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/press-releases/repeated-school-closures-due-covid-19-leading-learning-loss-and-widening-inequities>

<sup>282</sup> <https://www.parliament.lk/en/committee-news/view/2615?category=33>

disabilities, who have faced greater challenges in remote learning. The engagement between students and teachers plays a crucial role in ensuring successful learning outcomes, especially for younger students. However, UNICEF found that most students had limited or no contact with their teachers after schools closed. In private primary schools, 52% of teachers reported contacting their students five days a week, whereas only 8% of teachers from public primary schools maintained such regular contact.

To address learning loss, the Sri Lankan Government has implemented various measures. These include providing tablets and laptops to students and teachers, developing online learning resources, and offering additional support to struggling students. However, the reach and effectiveness of these efforts remain limited.

Efforts to mitigate learning loss need to be intensified and expanded to ensure that all students receive the necessary support and resources. This includes addressing the digital divide by providing access to technology and internet connectivity to disadvantaged students. Furthermore, targeted interventions and tailored support should be provided to marginalized groups, including girls and children with disabilities, to ensure their educational needs are met.

In conclusion, addressing the learning loss caused by the pandemic requires comprehensive and inclusive strategies that prioritize student-teacher engagement, equitable access to resources, and targeted support for vulnerable populations. By taking these measures, Sri Lanka can work towards recovering and rebuilding its education system while striving to achieve the goals of inclusive and quality education for all.

#### **4.3.3 Health and socio-emotional well-being**

Health and socio-emotional well-being have been prioritized in schools across Sri Lanka, with various measures implemented to support students' physical and mental health.

Schools in Sri Lanka have traditionally provided essential health and nutrition services, including school meals, nutritional screening, support for malnourished children, and immunization and deworming programs. The Ministry of Education has also provided a checklist for setting up and maintaining hand washing facilities, emphasizing the importance of proper hygiene practices.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, additional actions have been taken to ensure health and well-being of school children. Children with immunocompromised diseases or on immunocompromising medication were advised to delay attending school until further notice, prioritizing their safety. Health promotion efforts were intensified, particularly in high-risk areas, with staff collaborating with school health clubs and public health inspectors to educate students on safety measures.

To address nutrition, apart from providing dry food rations, families were encouraged to cultivate healthy foods in home kitchen gardens, involving school children in the process. School medical inspections, including immunization programs, resumed in low-risk areas. De-worming and iron folate supplementation continued during school hours, although achieving the usual high coverage levels might have been challenging in 2020.

Mental health support was a key focus, with helplines made available to cater to mental health needs. Mental health clinics also resumed operations in May 2020. Qualified teachers played a vital role in



providing psychosocial support and student counseling, working closely with students to address their emotional well-being.

Furthermore, public health midwives expanded their responsibilities to include adolescents, providing advice and guidance on accessing specific health services throughout the lockdown period. Teacher training sessions, as per Ministry of Education guidelines, focused on protocols for managing sick students in schools, including the use of sick bays, communication with health authorities, and area-specific hotlines for reporting outbreaks.

These comprehensive efforts demonstrate the commitment of the education system in Sri Lanka to prioritize the health and socio-emotional well-being of students. By integrating health promotion, nutrition, mental health support, and teacher training, schools have been striving to create a safe and nurturing environment for students to thrive both academically and personally

## 4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching implications on the education sector in Sri Lanka. The closure of schools and universities disrupted the learning process, resulting in a loss of instructional time and exacerbating learning inequalities. Students from low-income families, rural areas, and those with disabilities faced significant challenges in accessing online learning, widening the education gap. The pandemic also took a toll on students' mental health, with anxiety and stress becoming prevalent due to the sudden closure of schools and the uncertainties brought about by the pandemic. Additionally, the economic impact of COVID-19 made it difficult for many families to afford the necessary resources for online learning, further deepening educational disparities.

To address these challenges, the Government of Sri Lanka needs to take proactive initiatives. Conducting a comprehensive national evaluation of the impact of school closures and reopening on learning outcomes is essential to inform policymaking and ensure resilience in the education system. Establishing robust data governance and tracking procedures will foster accountability, enabling informed decision-making and timely adjustments to programs based on new evidence. By prioritizing these initiatives, Sri Lanka can work towards mitigating the effects of the pandemic on education and building a more inclusive and resilient education system for the future.



## 5.1 Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a comprehensive framework for countries to tackle global challenges, including education. SDG 4 specifically focuses on ensuring inclusive and quality education for all. This chapter examines the revision of national SDG 4 frameworks/strategies and indicators in Sri Lanka, considering the impact of COVID-19 and aligning with the commitments made in the Bangkok Statement 2022 and the TES National Statements of Commitment. It also outlines the immediate actions Sri Lanka intends to take to achieve the SDG 4 2030 Education Agenda.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching implications for education in Sri Lanka<sup>283</sup>. The sudden closure of schools disrupted the traditional learning environment, leading to significant learning loss among students. Reports indicate a severe learning loss of 54% in 2020 and 88% in 2021. UNICEF highlighted the negative impact on children from disadvantaged households, especially girls and children with disabilities, who experienced limited engagement between students and teachers, particularly in public primary schools<sup>284</sup>. The shift to remote learning exposed the digital divide, with marginalized communities and underserved areas having limited access to technology and online resources. Socio-economic factors such as poverty further exacerbated educational disparities<sup>285</sup>.

Recognizing these unprecedented challenges, Sri Lanka acknowledges the need to revise its national SDG 4 frameworks/strategies and indicators. The revision aims to ensure that education policies and programs effectively respond to the immediate and long-term implications of the pandemic. By adapting appropriate strategies, Sri Lanka can address the specific needs and challenges faced by students, teachers, and educational institutions during these exceptional circumstances. The revised frameworks should prioritize inclusive and equitable access to education, bridging the digital divide, and ensuring students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds have the necessary technology and internet connectivity for effective remote learning. Furthermore, enhancing education quality in the immediate post-pandemic phase is crucial to address the significant learning loss experienced in 2020 and 2021. Further, Sri Lanka should implement initiatives that provide equitable access to education, particularly for marginalized groups, while also focusing on the socio-emotional well-being of students and addressing mental health challenges stemming from the pandemic. Engaging in comprehensive consultations and partnerships with stakeholders, including government entities, education experts, teachers' associations, parents, and students, will be essential in developing responsive strategies tailored to the specific needs and challenges of Sri Lanka's education sector.

In conclusion, Sri Lanka recognizes the vital role of education in sustainable development. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated the revision of national SDG 4 frameworks/strategies and indicators to address the unique challenges arising from the crisis. By adapting education policies, prioritizing inclusivity, and fostering partnerships, Sri Lanka can navigate the challenges posed by the

<sup>283</sup> <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1303575.pdf>

<sup>284</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/media/2296/file/Situation%20Analysis%20on%20the%20effects%20of%20and%20Responses%20to%20COVID-19%20on%20the%20Education%20Sector%20in%20Asia.pdf>

<sup>285</sup> [https://reliefweb.int/report/sri-lanka/it-time-change-narrative-measuring-devastating-impact-covid-19-education-children? gclid=CjwKCAjw5remBhBiEiwAxL2M90MoggAGgQe5wotm7tYdkX6gHjvyXSJ2w5bmHfPgk\\_diqvTY-t735hoCJboQAvD\\_BwE](https://reliefweb.int/report/sri-lanka/it-time-change-narrative-measuring-devastating-impact-covid-19-education-children? gclid=CjwKCAjw5remBhBiEiwAxL2M90MoggAGgQe5wotm7tYdkX6gHjvyXSJ2w5bmHfPgk_diqvTY-t735hoCJboQAvD_BwE)

pandemic and continue making progress towards achieving SDG 4 in an evolving socio-economic landscape.

## 5.2 Revisiting National SDG 4 Frameworks/Strategies

To address the challenges posed by the pandemic effectively, Sri Lanka needs to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the specific impacts it has had on the country's education system. This analysis should encompass multiple dimensions, including access to education, learning outcomes, and socio-economic factors affecting students and teachers.

- I. **Access to Education:** The pandemic-induced school closures have significantly disrupted access to education in Sri Lanka. The analysis should assess the extent to which students, particularly those from marginalized communities and remote areas, had been able to access alternative learning opportunities during school closures. It should examine the availability and effectiveness of remote learning modalities, such as online classes, televised lessons, and take-home learning materials. Additionally, it should identify barriers to access, such as limited internet connectivity, lack of necessary technology devices, and socio-economic disparities that hinder students' ability to engage in remote learning.
- II. **Learning Outcomes:** The disruption caused by the pandemic has resulted in substantial learning loss among school children. The analysis should evaluate the impact of school closures and remote learning on students' academic progress and learning outcomes. It should identify the areas of the curriculum that have been most affected and assess the effectiveness of remote learning methods in mitigating learning loss. Additionally, the analysis should consider the differential impacts on different grade levels, marginalized groups, and students with disabilities to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the learning losses.
- III. **Socio-Economic Factors:** The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated existing socio-economic disparities in access to education and learning outcomes. The analysis should examine the socio-economic factors that have influenced students' ability to engage in remote learning effectively. This includes evaluating the impact of household income, access to technology, availability of conducive learning environments, and parental support. Furthermore, it should consider the psychological and emotional well-being of students and teachers, as the pandemic has resulted in increased stress and anxiety of both categories.
- IV. **Equity and Inequalities:** The pandemic has widened existing educational inequities in Sri Lanka. The analysis should identify the disparities in access to education and learning outcomes among different groups, such as rural versus urban areas, boys versus girls, socio-economically disadvantaged students versus their more privileged counterparts, and students with disabilities. Understanding these inequalities is crucial for developing targeted interventions and policies to ensure that '*no one is left behind*' in the education system.
- V. **Long-term Implications:** The analysis should also consider the potential long-term implications of the pandemic on the education sector in Sri Lanka. This includes assessing the impact on dropout rates, educational trajectories, and the overall quality of education. It should identify emerging trends and challenges that may persist beyond the immediate crisis precipitated by COVID-19 pandemic and influence the future of education in the country.

By conducting a comprehensive analysis of the COVID-19 impact on the education sector in Sri Lanka, policymakers, education authorities, and stakeholders can gain valuable insights into the specific challenges and needs that must be addressed. The findings of this analysis will inform the development of targeted strategies, policies, and interventions to mitigate the negative consequences of the pandemic and ensure the continuity of quality education for all students in Sri Lanka.

### 5.3 Bangkok Statement 2022 and TES National Statements of Commitment

Sri Lanka's active participation in the Bangkok Statement 2022 and its commitment to the TES National Statements of Commitment signify the country's recognition of the importance of innovative and inclusive approaches to education, particularly in the context of COVID-19 recovery<sup>286</sup>. These documents provide valuable guidance and principles for Sri Lanka to align its national SDG 4 frameworks/strategies with the goals and objectives outlined within them.

- I. **Bangkok Statement 2022:** The Bangkok Statement 2022 was a global response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in the field of education. Sri Lanka's participation in this statement indicates its engagement with the international community and its dedication to finding innovative and inclusive solutions to the educational challenges arising from the pandemic. The Bangkok Statement highlights the importance of ensuring equitable access to quality education, leveraging technology for remote learning, and prioritizing the needs of marginalized and vulnerable learners. Sri Lanka will incorporate these principles into its national SDG 4 frameworks/strategies, taking into account the specific context and challenges faced by the country.
- II. **TES National Statements of Commitment:** The TES National Statements of Commitment further solidify Sri Lanka's dedication to enhancing education quality, equity, and inclusivity. These commitments reflect Sri Lanka's acknowledgment of the need to address existing disparities and ensure that every child has equal opportunities for quality education. The TES National Statements of Commitment emphasize the importance of teacher training and support, inclusive education practices, and the integration of technology into teaching and learning. Sri Lanka will align its national SDG 4 frameworks/strategies with these commitments, integrating the principles outlined in the TES National Statements of Commitment into its policies, programs and action plans.

By aligning its national SDG 4 frameworks/strategies with the principles and goals set forth in the Bangkok Statement 2022 and the TES National Statements of Commitment, Sri Lanka demonstrates its commitment to international best practices and global efforts to promote inclusive and quality education. This alignment ensures that Sri Lanka's educational initiatives are in line with the global consensus on addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and advancing towards achieving SDG 4.

Sri Lanka will integrate the principles of innovation, inclusivity, equity, and quality into its national SDG 4 frameworks/strategies. This may involve developing policies and programs that promote digital literacy, expanding access to technology and internet connectivity, enhancing teacher training and professional development, fostering inclusive educational environments, and targeting resources towards marginalized and disadvantaged communities. By aligning its strategies with international

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<sup>286</sup> <https://apa.sdg4education2030.org/asia-pacific-vision-education-recovery-and-transformation-bangkok-statement-2022>

commitments, Sri Lanka can leverage global expertise and best practices while tailoring them to its specific context and needs, ultimately driving progress towards achieving SDG 4 and ensuring a brighter future for its learners.

## 5.4 Identifying Relevant Actions

To accelerate progress towards achieving the SDG 4/2030 Education Agenda, Sri Lanka will undertake immediate actions<sup>287</sup>, including:

- i) Conducting comprehensive assessments to identify learning gaps and prioritize interventions, ensuring that no student is left behind.
- ii) Implementing catch-up programs and remedial education initiatives to address the learning losses incurred during the pandemic.
- iii) Expanding access to digital resources and online learning platforms to reach remote and underserved areas, ensuring equal educational opportunities for all.
- iv) Strengthening school health and safety measures to create a conducive learning environment that prioritizes the well-being of students and staff.
- v) Improving data collection and monitoring systems to effectively track progress towards the targets of SDG 4 and inform evidence-based decision-making.

In the long term, Sri Lanka will develop and implement comprehensive strategies to achieve the SDG 4/2030 Education Agenda, focusing on the following key areas:

- i) Expanding the access to education, particularly in pre-primary and higher education. As regards to pre-primary education, more investment by the State coupled with introduction of regulatory framework, national curriculum framework and enforceable curriculum, quality assurance and certification must be given priority. With respect to higher education, while investing more on State higher education sector, more efforts are needed to promote private sector participation in higher education by providing conducive legal framework including the introduction of quality assurance and accreditation system.
- ii) Enhancing vocational and technical education to align with the evolving demands of the job market, equipping students with relevant skills for employment and entrepreneurship. In this regards underutilization of TVET sector capacity must be addressed by institutionalizing national wage policy and by providing student scholarships/bursaries.
- iii) Promoting inclusive education by removing barriers and providing necessary support for children with disabilities to access and thrive in mainstream educational settings.
- iv) Investing in quality teacher education and professional development programs in all sub-sectors of education (i.e. school education, university education and technical and vocational education) to ensure a highly skilled and motivated teaching workforce.

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<sup>287</sup> <http://www.srilanka2030.lk/goal4.php>

- v) Addressing gender disparities particularly in vocational education while ensuring equal opportunities for boys and girls, and also by providing conducive and decent work environment for female to engage in occupations in the vocational and technical fields.
- vi) Expanding and fostering adult education through provision of non-formal education opportunities for all school dropouts, young adults who are not in employment or education and training (NEET group) and adults who are engaging in non-formal occupations and housewives.
- vii) Revisiting and redefining the roles and responsibilities assigned to key agencies in formulating policies and strategies, and implementing the programs and activities towards achieving SDG 4 (i.e. Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and Social Empowerment, National Education Commission, Sustainable Development Council, University Grants Commission, Tertiary and Vocational, National Secretariat for Early Childhood Development, National Institute of Education, Department of Census and Statistics, etc.) with the view to accelerate the national drive towards achieving the SDG 4 Targets by 2030.
- viii) Streamlining and strengthening data collection and monitoring by designated agencies (i.e. DCS, SDC, MoE, Provincial Departments of Education etc.) and use of outcomes of such monitoring for evidence based policy making and program planning.

Through these immediate action and long-term strategies, Sri Lanka shall aim to navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic, promote resilience, and make substantial progress towards achieving SDG 4 in an evolving socio-economic landscape.

## 5.5 Conclusion

The revision of National SDG 4 Frameworks and Strategies, and Indicators is of paramount importance for Sri Lanka to effectively address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its education sector and align with global commitments. The challenges posed by the pandemic have necessitated a comprehensive reassessment of educational policies, institutional arrangements and roles and responsibilities assigned, and the programs and activities in operation towards achieving the SDG 4 targets.

The recommended priority interventions in this regards are: i) expanding access to and enrolment, particularly in pre-primary and higher education levels while increasing the quality and relevance of education provision at all levels, ii) increasing enrolments and minimizing the dropout rates in vocational and technical education and training sector, iii) reforming general education curricula in alignment with level-specific national learning outcomes and adopting authentic teaching learning approaches coupled with school-based assessments, iv) strengthening digital infrastructure and widening the access to computers and internet, v) enhancing teacher training in all sub sectors of education, vi) promoting inclusion of vulnerable groups (i.e. *children with special education needs, children of the poor including street children, and indigenous community*) in the main stream of education, vii) strengthening non-formal education provisions in liaison with vocational training systems to reach school-drop outs, youth 'not in training or employment', and adults including housewives, viii) integrating socio-emotional and health-promotion learning programs and co-curricular activities into national curricula, ix) integration of global citizenship concepts and

sustainable development principles Including promotion of ethnic cohesion and social harmony into general and tertiary education, x) promoting and evidenced-based policy making and development planning, and collaboration among key ministries, departments and agencies, and xi) strengthening data collection, collation, analysis and reporting together with systematic monitoring.

In conclusion, the revision of National SDG 4 Frameworks and Strategies including Indicators present an opportunity to address the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and to accelerate the programs and activities that are aimed towards the SDG 4 -2030 Education Agenda. Through greater collaborative efforts, prioritizing and implementing the prioritized programs and activities coupled with monitoring, Sri Lanka can overcome setbacks and obstacles to promote quality, equity and inclusivity of education thus contributing to a brighter and a sustainable future for its learners and the nation as a whole.



**Annex:**

**Relevant regulatory documents, references and stakeholders and their responsibilities by SDG 4 targets and indicators**

SDG 4 target	SDG 4 indicator	Name and hyperlink of the relevant policy, strategy, other regulation	Key references in the policy/strategy/regulation which address the target/indicator	Responsible stakeholder	Type of responsibility	Key Achievement	Challenges	Data sources
4.1	4.1.1	Sri Lanka is yet to commence national assessments in reading and mathematics.						
	4.1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compulsory Education Regulations enacted in 1997;</li> <li>Further guidelines on school attendance through an extraordinary Gazette notification in 2016</li> <li>MoE issued the instructions (through the Circular No. 36/2022 dated 03/12/2022 issued with the title "Circular on implementing, monitoring and Supervision of Non-Formal Education Programs and Record Book for Entering Data")</li> </ul>	<p>Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (Extra Ordinary), No.1003/5, dated 25.11.1997</p> <p>Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (Extra Ordinary), No. 1963/30 dated, 20.4. 2016.  <a href="http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2016/4/1963-30_S.pdf">http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2016/4/1963-30_S.pdf</a></p> <p>Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, Circular No: 36/2022 dated 03.12.2022</p>	Ministry of Education, Provincial Ministries of Education / Departments of Education, and Zonal and Divisional Education Offices	Monitoring of compliance ensuring every child complete primary, lower and upper secondary education.	Completion rate of primary levels is over 90%, lower secondary over 80%, and upper secondary over 75% during 2015-2020 period.	Absence of national assessments in reading and mathematics; and inability to address the socio economic factors preventing children of low income families/marginalized communities to complete school education.	UIS MoE

4.1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Compulsory School Attendance Regulation No 1/2015’ Issued by the extra special gazette notification bearing the number 1963/30 dated 20.04.2016.</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2016/4/1963-30_S.pdf">http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2016/4/1963-30_S.pdf</a>	Ministry of Education, Provincial Ministries of Education /Departments of Education, and Zonal and Divisional Education Offices	Monitoring of compliance ensuring every child over 5 year of age has access to free education and they attend schools in regular manner	Gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary education, both sexes was 99.5% in 2015, and remained around that level till 2020. Gross intake ratio to the last grade of lower secondary, both sexes was 96.11% in 2015 and reached 100.52%. in 2020.		UIS MoE
4.1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Compulsory School Attendance Regulation No 1 / 2015” Issued by the extra special gazette notification bearing the number 1963/30 dated 20.04.2016.</li> <li>• Circular No: 37/2017 dated 20.9.2017 “Thirteen years of Guaranteed Education Programme”</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2016/4/1963-30_S.pdf">http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2016/4/1963-30_S.pdf</a>  Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, Circular No: 37/2016 on ‘13 Years Guaranteed Education Programme’, dated 20.9.2017.	Ministry of Education, Provincial Education Departments and Zonal and Divisional Education Offices and School committees	Monitoring the school attendance in each education division  To provide facilities to attend schools	Out of school rate for both primary and secondary is less than 0.5% in 2018 while the out of school in upper secondary around 15% in 2018.	Prevent school drop outs at upper-secondary levels	UIS MoE
4.1.5	Not applicable as the percentage of overage children for both sexes at both levels (primary, secondary) is minimum.						
4.1.6	<p>Sri Lanka at present does not conduct nationally representative learning assessment.</p> <p>However, National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC) conduct national assessment regularly at the level of Grade 4 and 8.</p>		MOE and NEREC	MoE to facilitate NEREC Conducting national assessments.	NEREC has reported a glaring deficiency in the achievement of learning outcomes of students at both primary and secondary levels	Improving student learning outcomes at primary and secondary level	UIS MoE

						implying the need of urgent attention and interventions.		
	4.1.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compulsory School Attendance Regulation No 1 / 2015” Issued by the Government Extra Special Gazette notification bearing the number 1963/30 dated 20.04.2016.</li> <li>Number of years of compulsory primary and secondary education guaranteed through the legal framework had been 9 years till 2015 and since 2016 it was increased to 11 years through the Government Gazette notification no 1963/30 dated 20.04.2016.</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2016/4/1963-30_S.pdf">http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2016/4/1963-30_S.pdf</a>  Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (Extra Ordinary), No. 1963/30 dated, 20.4. 2016	Ministry of Education, Provincial Education Departments and Zonal and Divisional Education Offices and School Committees.	Continuous monitoring of school attendance and addressing any impediments to ensure students engagement in school education	Out of school rate for both primary and secondary is less than 0.5% in 2018 while the out of school in upper secondary around 15% in 2018.	Prevent school drop outs at upper-secondary levels	UIS MoE
4.2	4.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Development, 2018 (NSECD of MWECASE)</li> <li>Revised National Nutrition Policy 2021-2030<sup>288</sup> (Nutrition Division, Ministry of Health)</li> <li>National Alternative Care Policy for children in Sri Lanka, 2019</li> </ul>	Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and Social Empowerment (2018) The National Policy on ECCD Retrieved April 20, 2023 from <a href="https://www.childsec.gov.lk/resources/105/English%20Policy%20Draft.pdf">https://www.childsec.gov.lk/resources/105/English%20Policy%20Draft.pdf</a>	Family Health Bureau of MoH and the NSECD of MWECASE  FHB/ Provincial/District Health Authorities	Implementing programs to improve nutrition status of children under 5 years of age  Coordinating various institution related to ECD	Many young children (83.4%) in Sri Lanka are well-prepared for starting primary school in the areas of health, learning, and psychosocial well-being	Improving nutritional status of children in early childhood care and education facilities	UIS Family Healthy Bureau of Ministry of Health  NSECD of MWECASE

<sup>288</sup> Ministry of Health (2022) National Nutrition Policy 2021-2030 <https://nutrition.health.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/NNP-English.pdf>

		<p>Ministry of Health (2022) National Nutrition Policy 2021-2030 <a href="https://nutrition.health.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/NNP-English.pdf">https://nutrition.health.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/NNP-English.pdf</a></p> <p><sup>1</sup> <a href="http://www.probation.gov.lk/documents/downloads/Draft%20Alternative%20Care%20Policy.pdf">Department of Probation and Child Care Services (2019) National Alternative Care Policy for children in Sri Lanka</a> Retrieved May 10, 2023 from <a href="http://www.probation.gov.lk/documents/downloads/Draft%20Alternative%20Care%20Policy.pdf">http://www.probation.gov.lk/documents/downloads/Draft%20Alternative%20Care%20Policy.pdf</a></p>		and Implementing programs			
4.2.2	National Policy on ECCD 2018	<p>Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and Social Empowerment (2018); National Policy on ECCD Retrieved March 20,2023 <a href="https://www.childsec.gov.lk/resources/105/English%20Policy%20Draft.pdf">https://www.childsec.gov.lk/resources/105/English%20Policy%20Draft.pdf</a></p>	NSECD of MWCASE and Provincial Councils (Provincial Regulatory bodies).	<p>NSECD Implements programs at national level</p> <p>Provincial Regulatory bodies manage, supervise and monitor preschools</p>	As of the DCS data more than 85% of boys and girls participated in organized learning one year before the official primary entry age	No equitable access to quality early childhood education among urban poor, rural and estate sectors	UIS DCS
4.2.3	National Policy on ECCD 2018	<p>Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and Social Empowerment (2018); National Policy on ECCD Retrieved March 20,2023 <a href="https://www.childsec.gov.lk/resources/105/English%20Policy%20Draft.pdf">https://www.childsec.gov.lk/resources/105/English%20Policy%20Draft.pdf</a></p>	NSECD of MWCASE and FHB of MoH	Issue guidelines, Circulars, and Implement programs	According to Sri Lanka Demographic Health Survey (SLDHS) of 2016, a vast majority of children have books (80.6%) and playthings (69.4%)	No data was available how family members engages in the activities mentioned by this indicator.	UIS DCS

						in homes		
	4.2.4	National Policy on ECCD 2018	Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and Social Empowerment (2018); National Policy on ECCD Retrieved March 20,2023 <a href="https://www.childsec.gov.lk/resources/105/English%20Policy%20Draft.pdf">https://www.childsec.gov.lk/resources/105/English%20Policy%20Draft.pdf</a>	NSECD of MWCASE and Provincial Councils (Provincial Regulatory bodies).	Expansion of ECE centres and support parents to enroll children in ECE	Department of Census and Statistics data show that gross enrolment ratios of both sexes in ECED and pre-primary education were 70.61% and 71.84%, respectively in 2015 and 2020	Enhance Gross Enrolment in (a) pre-primary education and (b) early childhood development	UIS DCS
	4.2.5	Sri Lanka has not enacted any legislation to make preprimary education free and compulsory.						
4.3	4.3.1	National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education (2018)  National Policy Proposals on Higher Education (2019)  National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030): Vol III- Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activities on Higher Education  National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030): Vol IV- Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activities on Technical and Vocational Education and Training  National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030): Vol VI- Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activities on Non-Formal Education	National Education Commission (2019). <i>National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education</i> . <a href="http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TVE_NP_2018_English.pdf">http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TVE_NP_2018_English.pdf</a>  National Education Commission (2019). <i>National Policy Proposals on Higher Education</i> . <a href="http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Higher-education-Policy_2019_English.pdf">http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Higher-education-Policy_2019_English.pdf</a>  National Education Commission (2022). <i>National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030)</i> . <a href="http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/N">http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/N</a>	Skills development Division of MoE – (TVEC)  UGC for higher education  Non-formal Education Branch of MoE for non-formal education	Conducting skill development courses and assessments, and monitoring	Participation rate of formal and non-formal education program has increased.	Collection of data pertaining to informal settings; Providing financial support to TVET trainees to participate in course/programs	UIS MoE UGC TVEC

	UGC Strategic Plan 2019 - 2023	<a href="https://www.ugc.ac.lk/downloads/corporate_plan/University%20Grants%20Commission%20Strategic%20Plan%202019-2023.pdf">ATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf</a>  <a href="https://www.ugc.ac.lk/downloads/corporate_plan/University%20Grants%20Commission%20Strategic%20Plan%202019-2023.pdf">https://www.ugc.ac.lk/downloads/corporate_plan/University%20Grants%20Commission%20Strategic%20Plan%202019-2023.pdf</a>					
4.3.2	National Policy Proposals on Higher Education (2019)  National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030): Vol III- Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activities on Higher Education  UGC Strategic Plan 2019 - 2023	<a href="http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Higher-education-Policy_2019_English.pdf">http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Higher-education-Policy_2019_English.pdf</a>  <a href="http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf">http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf</a> <a href="https://www.ugc.ac.lk/downloads/corporate_plan/University%20Grants%20Commission%20Strategic%20Plan%202019-2023.pdf">https://www.ugc.ac.lk/downloads/corporate_plan/University%20Grants%20Commission%20Strategic%20Plan%202019-2023.pdf</a>  <a href="https://www.ugc.ac.lk/downloads/corporate_plan/University%20Grants%20Commission%20Strategic%20Plan%202019-2023.pdf">https://www.ugc.ac.lk/downloads/corporate_plan/University%20Grants%20Commission%20Strategic%20Plan%202019-2023.pdf</a>	UGC  Higher Education Division of the Ministry of Education	Regulating and funding higher education  Expand the capacity to increase more enrolments in tertiary education	Percentage of enrolment in tertiary education has increased from 19.67% to 22.17% in 2021.  Provision of interest free loans for students enrolling in non-State higher education institutions operating with degree awarding status granted by the Ministry of Education	Inability to provide equal access to tertiary education.  Absence of any regulatory mechanism on non- State Higher Education Sector	UIS MoE UGC
4.3.3	National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education (2018).  National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030): Vol IV- Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activities	<a href="http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TVET_NP_2018_English.pdf">http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TVET_NP_2018_English.pdf</a>  <a href="http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-">http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-</a>	Skills Development Division of MOE  TVEC	Regulating and funding TVET institutes/centers	Participation rate in vocational programmes (15-24 year olds) of both sexes has increased from 2.85% in 2017 to 3.88% in 2018.	Attracting school drop outs, youth 'not in education or training', into TVET programs and courses.  Increasing Female	UIS TVEC  Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational

		<p>on Technical and Vocational Education and Training</p> <p>National Development Plan for the TVET Sector (2023-2027) (Draft)</p>	<p>2030_Full-Text.pdf  <a href="https://www.ugc.ac.lk/downloads/corporate_plan/University%20Grants%20Commission%20Strategic%20Plan%202019-2023.pdf">https://www.ugc.ac.lk/downloads/corporate_plan/University%20Grants%20Commission%20Strategic%20Plan%202019-2023.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Development_Plan_2023_27.pdf">https://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Development_Plan_2023_27.pdf</a></p>				<p>participation in TVET programs; at present</p> <p>the female participation is lower than that of male participation.</p>	Training
4.4	4.4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Policy on TVET by the NEC in 2018</li> <li>National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030): Volume II) General Education, III) Higher Education, IV) TVET, IV) Non-formal Education</li> <li>The Digital Economy Strategic Plan (2020-2024) developed and adopted by Information and Communication Technology Agency (ICTA) focuses on technology industry development, diffusion, capacity building, and regional cluster development;</li> <li>The Digital Government Competency Framework identifies competencies for different government employment levels;</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TVET_NP_2018_English.pdf">http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TVET_NP_2018_English.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf">http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf</a></p> <p>Information and communication Technology Agency (2020) <i>Digital Economy Strategic Plan (2020-2024)</i>  <a href="https://www.icta.lk/news/vis-ion-2024-for-icta-a-digitally-transformed-sri-lanka/">https://www.icta.lk/news/vis-ion-2024-for-icta-a-digitally-transformed-sri-lanka/</a></p> <p><sup>1</sup> Information and communication Technology Agency (2022) <i>Digital Government Competency Framework</i> Retrieved May 8,</p>	MOE TVEC UGC ICTA	Expanding ICT skills among youth and adult	Percentage of ICT skills of youth is around 70% and adult is 25 % at year 2021.	Increasing ICT literacy among the Youth and adults.	MoE DCS TVEC ICTA

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Teacher Digital Competency Framework aims to transform teachers for ICT education; and</li> <li>The Policy for Digital Transformation of Education promotes international licenses and certificates through key policy objectives and programs.</li> </ul>	<p>2023 from <a href="https://www.icta.lk/icta-assets/uploads/2023/05/Annex-7-Digital-Government-Competency-Framework.pdf">https://www.icta.lk/icta-assets/uploads/2023/05/Annex-7-Digital-Government-Competency-Framework.pdf</a></p> <p>Information and communication Technology Agency (2023) <i>Teacher Digital Competency Framework</i> Retrieved May 8, 2023 from <a href="https://www.icta.lk/icta-assets/uploads/2023/04/To-Web-Project-Progress-To-Board-2023-March-V1.0-2023-03-21.pdf">https://www.icta.lk/icta-assets/uploads/2023/04/To-Web-Project-Progress-To-Board-2023-March-V1.0-2023-03-21.pdf</a></p> <p>Information and communication Technology Agency (2022) <i>Policy for Digital Transformation of Education</i> Retrieved May 20, 2023 <a href="https://www.icta.lk/icta-assets/uploads/2022/04/Policy-for-Digital-Transformation-of-Education-English-1.pdf">https://www.icta.lk/icta-assets/uploads/2022/04/Policy-for-Digital-Transformation-of-Education-English-1.pdf</a></p>					
4.4.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Policy on TVET by the NEC in 2018</li> <li>National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030): Volume II) General Education, III) Higher Education, IV) TVET, VII) Non-formal Education</li> <li>The Digital Economy Strategic Plan (2020-2024) developed and adopted by Information and Communication Technology Agency</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TVET_NP_2018_English.pdf">http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TVET_NP_2018_English.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf">http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.ugc.ac.lk/downloads/corporate_plan/University%20Grants%20Commission%20Strategic%20Plan%202019-">https://www.ugc.ac.lk/downloads/corporate_plan/University%20Grants%20Commission%20Strategic%20Plan%202019-</a></p>	MOE TVEC UGC ICTA	Foster digital literacy, ICT skills of more individuals	Data indicates minimum level of proficiency of youth is around 90% and Adult is around 48 % is at 2021.	Reaching the 50% of the adults and 10% of Youth who lack the minimum proficiency in digital literacy skills.	MoE DCS TVEC ICTA	



		<p>(ICTA) focuses on technology industry development, diffusion, capacity building, and regional cluster development;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Digital Government Competency Framework identifies competencies for different government employment levels;</li> <li>• The Teacher Digital Competency Framework aims to transform teachers for ICT education; and</li> <li>• The Policy for Digital Transformation of Education promotes international licenses and certificates through key policy objectives and programs.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">2023.pdf</a></p> <p>Information and communication Technology Agency (2020) <i>Digital Economy Strategic Plan (2020-2024)</i>  <a href="https://www.icta.lk/news/vision-2024-for-icta-a-digitally-transformed-sri-lanka/">https://www.icta.lk/news/vision-2024-for-icta-a-digitally-transformed-sri-lanka/</a></p> <p><sup>1</sup> Information and communication Technology Agency (2022) <i>Digital Government Competency Framework</i> Retrieved May 8, 2023 from  <a href="https://www.icta.lk/icta-assets/uploads/2023/05/Annex-7-Digital-Government-Competency-Framework.pdf">https://www.icta.lk/icta-assets/uploads/2023/05/Annex-7-Digital-Government-Competency-Framework.pdf</a></p> <p><sup>1</sup> Information and communication Technology Agency (2023) <i>Teacher Digital Competency Framework</i> Retrieved May 8, 2023 from  <a href="https://www.icta.lk/icta-assets/uploads/2023/04/To-Web-Project-Progress-To-Board-2023-March-V1.0-2023-03-21.pdf">https://www.icta.lk/icta-assets/uploads/2023/04/To-Web-Project-Progress-To-Board-2023-March-V1.0-2023-03-21.pdf</a></p> <p><sup>1</sup> Information and communication Technology Agency (2022) <i>Policy for Digital Transformation of Education</i> Retrieved May 20, 2023</p>					
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	4.4.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030): Volume II) General Education, III) Higher Education, IV) TVET, and VII) Non-formal Education.</li> <li>UGC Strategic Plan 2019 - 2023</li> </ul>	<a href="http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf">http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf</a>  <a href="https://www.ugc.ac.lk/downloads/corporate_plan/University%20Grants%20Commission%20Strategic%20Plan%202019-2023.pdf">https://www.ugc.ac.lk/downloads/corporate_plan/University%20Grants%20Commission%20Strategic%20Plan%202019-2023.pdf</a>	MOE TVEC UGC	Evaluation of current policies and programs and introducing programs and activities to enhance educational attainments of all age groups.	The education attainment rate in terms at least some primary in and lower-secondary education in both sexes was higher in both sexes (>95% and >80%, respectively), but it was somewhat lower at upper-secondary or higher (around 60%).	Expanding the educational opportunities and provision of scholarships bursaries for students of both in higher education and TVET sector	MoE TVEC UGC
4.5	4.5.1	<p>Sri Lankan Constitution (Art. 12 (1) and 12 (2))</p> <p>(1) All persons are equal before the law and are entitled to the equal protection of the law.</p> <p>(2) No citizen shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex, political opinion, place of birth or any one of such grounds:</p>	<a href="https://www.lawnet.gov.lk/the-constitution-of-the-democratic-socialist-republic-of-sri-lanka-2/">https://www.lawnet.gov.lk/the-constitution-of-the-democratic-socialist-republic-of-sri-lanka-2/</a>	Ministry of Education	Monitoring of compliance ensuring equal access to pre-primary, primary and secondary education	Parity indices for completion rate of primary education shows no gender disparity	At the upper secondary and tertiary education level, boys are lagging behind in terms of enrolment and performance	UIS MoE
	4.5.2	Providing education from primary grade onwards in mother tongue of children through the Free-Education Policy enacted in 1945	School Grants (Revised Conditions) Regulations, Dated 1945/08/24	Ministry of Education	Setting of strategies and programs and monitoring of implementation at national and provincial level	Completion rate of students in all three levels (primary, lower-secondary and upper secondary) were satisfactory	To increase male participation in upper secondary education.	UIS MoE

					while providing funds to acquire facilities and resources to ensure equitability and inclusivity.	and the values are above 80% and further the female completion rate were higher than the males in all three levels.		
	4.5.3	No funding mechanism to reallocate educational resources to the disadvantaged population other than providing funding for all levels of education to ensure equity and inclusivity.						
	4.5.4	Free-education Policy enacted in 1945	School Grants (Revised Conditions) Regulations, Dated 1945/08/24  Report of the Special Committee on Education Sessional Paper XXIV of 1943 Compiled under the Chairmanship of Dr. C.W.W. Kannangara"; <a href="https://www.educationforum.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Report_Kannangara_1943.pdf">https://www.educationforum.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Report_Kannangara_1943.pdf</a>	MoE Treasury	Providing funds on annual basis	Initial government funding per student in all level were decreased over the period (2015-2019)	Inadequate government findings and fund disbursement	UIS MoE
	4.5.5	Not applicable to Sri Lanka						
4.6	4.6.1	Sri Lanka does not conduct an assessment of fixed level of proficiency in functional literacy and numeracy						
	4.6.2	Set of regulation issued through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gazette Notification, No. No.1003/5, dated 25.11.1997</li> <li>Gazette Notification, No. 1963/30,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (Extra Ordinary), No.1003/5, dated 25.11.1997</li> </ul>	Ministry of Education (MoE)	Monitoring of compliance ensuring youth /adult literacy	UIS data shows that literacy rates among the youth in 2021 are above 90% (i.e. 99.3%,	Numeracy data is not available and observed data only reflect on nominal literacy rate	UIS MoE

		<p>dated 2016/04/20, " Series of regulations of sending children compulsorily to school of 2015/01</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MoE Circular No 36/2022, dated 2022/12/03</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (Extra Ordinary), No. 1963/30 dated, 20.4.2016. <a href="http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2016/4/1963-30_S.pdf">http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2016/4/1963-30_S.pdf</a></li> <li>Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, Circular No: 36/2022 dated 03.12.2022</li> </ul>			for 5-19 age group; 98.4% for 20-24 age group), while the literacy rate were lower among the 65+years age category (79.16%)	Literacy is defined as a very narrow definition statement and does not focus on the functional literacy approach, as stated in the UNESCO meta-data analysis.	
	4.6.3	Not applicable to Sri Lanka						
4.7	4.7.1	<p>National Education n Policy Framework (2020-2030): Volume II – Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activities for General Education</p> <p>National Institute of Education (2022). Civic Education Curriculum Concept Framework for Grades 6 to 11.</p>	<a href="http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf">http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf</a>	MoE and NIE	Education Reforms and curriculum development on Global Citizenship Education Concepts and Sustainable Development Principles	NIE has already prepared GCED curriculum Framework and plan to introduce global citizenship concepts and sustainable development principles into the General Education Curriculum with the next curriculum cycle that is expected to be commenced in 2024.	Training of Teachers and Provision of funds and facilities	MoE and NIE
	4.7.2	Draft on National School Health Policy	Ministry of Education (2022). National School Health Policy (Draft).	Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health	Develop, implement and monitor programs	Programs are offered in almost all schools at upper and lower secondary levels.		UIS MoE MoH

4.7.3	World Program on Human Rights Education is not implemented nationally							
4.7.4	National Education Commission Policy Framework (2020-2030): Core Area 8 (Civic Consciousness and Patriotism) – Directive Principles 45-47 (Page 76) refer to global citizenship education and related matters	<a href="http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf">http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf</a>	Ministry of Education NIE	Formulation of programs and activities to promote the concept of global citizenship and sustainability principles.  NIE to introduce the GECD curriculum incorporating the concept of global citizenship and sustainability principles in to the curriculum.	The curricula with modules will be implemented with the next curriculum revision cycle which is expected to commence in 2024. However, the current General Education Curriculum provides training on Civic Education and students of upper secondary education have obtained satisfactory results at the GCE (O/L) Examination in this subject.	Absence of any national level assessments to evaluate secondary school students' knowledge and appreciation on global citizenship concept and sustainability principles.	UIS MoE	
4.7.5	Circular No: 32/2016, dated 17.11.2016 on Instructions for regularization of solid waste disposal in schools  Circular 05/2016, dated 01.01.2016 on instructions for reducing plastic usage in schools by the Ministry of Education	Ministry of Education, Circular No: 32/2016, dated 17.11.2016. "2016.11.01 දින සියලුම මහනගර සභාවල කසල වෙන් කොට එකතු කිරීමට සමගම්ව සියලුම අධ්‍යාපන ආයතන හා පසල්වල ඝන අපද්‍රව්‍ය කළමනාකරණය".	Ministry of Education  Ministry of Environment  Provincial Councils and Local Government Institutions	Policy formulation, implementation and evaluation  Provincial Councils and Local Government Institutions to comply with the instructions issued by the	Upper secondary students showing satisfactory results in the subject of Geology which includes modules on environment and geoscience	Absence of any national level assessments to evaluate upper secondary school students' knowledge and appreciation on the concepts of Environment and Geoscience.	UIS MoE MoEnviorn.	

			Ministry of Education, Circular 05/2016, dated 01.01.2016. “ජලජීවික හතපලිනීන් හවිතය නිසසිදු වී ඇති සෘජු හවිකර සෙබය, පරිසරික හා සමජීය බලපල අවම කරගනීම සඳහා යෙජීන වඩසටහන කරියවට නෑවීම”		Ministry of Environment.			
	4.7.6	National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030): Volume II - Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activities for General Education Volume III – Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activities for Higher Education Volume IV– Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activities for TVET  National Development Plan for the TVET Sector (2023-2027) (Draft)	<a href="http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf">http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf</a>  <a href="https://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Dvelopment_Plan_2023_27.pdf">https://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Dvelopment_Plan_2023_27.pdf</a>	MoE NIE UGC TVEC	Widening the access to general, higher and vocational and technical education and continuous revision and upgrading of curricula of general education offered by schools and study program and courses offered by universities and TVET institutions.  Revision of General Education curricula to ensure provision of training on environment and geoscience		Increase the access to higher education and promote enrolment in technical and vocational education	UIS MoE UGC TVEC
4.a	4.a.1	Ministry of Education (2017) Education Sector Development Plan:	<a href="https://moe.gov.lk/">https://moe.gov.lk/</a>	Ministry of Education	Improving the infrastructure and	Electricity supplies to	Improve Water and Sanitary facilities,	UIS MoE

		General Education in Sri Lanka 2018-2025.			learning resources (i.e. electricity, water, sanitary, computers and internet)	schools have reached more than 95%, and provision of safe drinking water, wash and sanitary facilities in more than 80% of the schools.	and provide computers and access to internet.	
	4.a.2	Circular no.12/2016 dated 2016/04/27 "Ensuring discipline within schools" MoE, Sri Lanka.  Circular no.17/2011 dated 2011/05/10. "School children protection committee" MoE, Sri Lanka	<a href="https://moe.gov.lk/">https://moe.gov.lk/</a>	Ministry of Education, Provincial Education Department and Zonal and Divisional Education Offices and School administration	Monitoring of strict implementation of guidelines issued on preventing school violence and bullying	Establishment of School Children Protection Committees and several sub-committees aiming to improve school discipline.	Limited data on incident of bullying and violence in schools	UIS MoE
	4.a.3	Circular no.12/2016 dated 2016/04/27 "Ensuring discipline within schools" MoE, Sri Lanka.  Circular no.17/2011 dated 2011/05/10. "School children protection committee" MoE, Sri Lanka	<a href="https://moe.gov.lk/">https://moe.gov.lk/</a>	Ministry of Education, Provincial Education Departments and Zonal and Divisional Education Offices and School administration and law enforcement agencies	Ensuring discipline and providing security for school children, staff and properties.	Number of attacks on students has decreased since 2019 from 9 to 1 in 2021.	Obtaining accurate data.	UIS MoE
4.b	4.b.1	No national policy except the requirement of having postgraduate level qualifications, preferably from a centre of excellence for confirmation and promotion of staff in their respective services in teacher cadres	-	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, External Resource Department, Higher	Expand opportunities for post graduate education for Sri Lankans, assuring transparency and	Respective agencies have taken steps to utilize all received scholarship opportunities for	Declining trends in annual receipts of scholarships opportunities under bi-lateral partnerships; Lack	UIS MoE

		in school education and academic cadres in universities and TVET training institutions.		Education/ MOE, & UGC	fairness.	the benefit of the Sri Lankans.	of strong coordination among ministries/institutions with a centralized data bases.	
4.c	4.c.1	Eligibility for recruitment, promotion and confirmation of teaching staff in schools has been done in accordance with the Sri Lanka Teacher Service Minutes.	(i) Sri Lanka Teacher Service Minutes (SLTS; Gazette Extraordinary No 1885/38 dated 2014.10.23; No. 2120/2 dated 2019.04.22; No. 2255/14 dated 2021.11.14);  (i) MoE, Circular on Determination of the Academic Staff of a School No. 01/2016 dated 07.01.2016;  (ii) MoE Circular on Determination of the Academic Staff of a School No. 06/2021 dated 28.04.2021.	MoE and Provincial Miniseries of Education	Ensure recruitments, promotions and confirmations in respective services in compliance with the prescribed criteria by the Sri Lanka Teacher Service Minutes.	Student: staff ratio in school education is satisfactory in terms of teachers with the minimum required qualifications.	There are certain gaps remaining in terms of targets 4c1 to 4c4. Thus, suitable measures need to be adopted. (ii) there are gaps in deploying qualified/trained teachers across schools. Thus, further reviews and corrective measures are recommended.	UIS MoE
	4.c.2	-do-	-do-		-do-	-do-	-do-	-do-
	4.c.3	-do-	-do-		-do-	-do-	-do-	-do-
	4.c.4	-do-	-do-		-do-	-do-	-do-	-do-
	4.c.5	Teacher salary anomalies have been resolved in 2022 while increasing the salary scales of all categories of teachers in Sri Lanka SLTS.	<a href="https://www.pubad.gov.lk/web/images/circulars/2022/S/1641393863-03-2016-iv-s.pdf">https://www.pubad.gov.lk/web/images/circulars/2022/S/1641393863-03-2016-iv-s.pdf</a>	Ministry of Finance, MoE and Provincial Ministries of Education	Implementation of the Circular	Placing teachers at higher salary categories compared with the employees of other services with similar qualifications.		MoF MoE
	4.c.6	No national policy except the regular recruitment to fill cadre vacancies and new cadres positions	-	MoE and Provincial Ministries of	Ensure timely recruitments to fill vacancies	Annually, around 4,500 pre-service-qualified (03 year-	Deficiencies of teacher cadres for teaching certain	UIS MoE.



				Education	occurred due to attritions.	NCoE, National Teaching Diploma) recruited into the Teaching Service.	subjects. Another issue is having the relatively high percentage of 'untrained' or professionally not-qualified graduate teachers.	
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# Appendix

## Annex 1: National Benchmark Values for 2025 and 2030



### National Benchmarks on SDG 4 Indicators

SRI LANKA


	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Indicator	Latest year	Latest value	Regional average at baseline	2025 national minimum benchmark	2025 national feasible benchmark	2025 national benchmark	2030 national minimum benchmark	2030 national feasible benchmark	2030 national benchmark	2025 minimum regional benchmark	2030 minimum regional benchmark
1.a.2 Proportion of total government spending on essential services (education)	2018	11.3	13.1	15.0			15.0		<b>15.0</b>	15.0	15.0
1.a.GDP Government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	2018	2.1	3.3	4.0			4.0		<b>4.0</b>	4.0	4.0
4.1.1.a Proportion of students in Grade 2 or 3 achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in mathematics			46.1			<b>75.0</b>			<b>82.5</b>	49.9	61.9
4.1.1.a Proportion of students in Grade 2 or 3 achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading			45.2			<b>87.0</b>			<b>90.0</b>	59.3	69.0

4.1.1.b Proportion of students at the end of primary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in mathematics	2015	73.4	42.5	86.4	90.7		93.0	99.4		33.4	39.9
4.1.1.b Proportion of students at the end of primary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading	2015	55.5	47.9	62.7	75.9		66.3	86.1		39.7	43.3
4.1.1.c Proportion of students at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in mathematics	2016	50.6	40.9	56.5	58.4	<b>65.0</b>	59.4	62.4	<b>69.0</b>	28.0	32.7
4.1.1.c Proportion of students at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading	2016	21.3	40.6	31.3	39.5		36.3	47.5		35.3	40.0
4.1.2.i Completion rate primary			90.6			<b>98.0</b>			<b>99.5</b>	87.6	90.5
4.1.2.ii Completion rate lower secondary			78.6			<b>90.2</b>			<b>90.3</b>	73.3	78.1
4.1.2.iii Completion rate upper secondary			48.8			<b>77.2</b>			<b>81.1</b>	36.5	41.4
4.1.4.i Out-of-school rate, primary	2006	1.8	5.1			<b>1.5</b>			<b>1.0</b>	15.2	11.7
4.1.4.ii Out-of-school rate, lower secondary	2006	3.3	9.8			<b>2.2</b>			<b>2.0</b>	17.1	13.9
4.1.4.iii Out-of-school rate, upper secondary	2006	37.2	31.0	23.1	15.2	<b>17.6</b>	19.8	10.3	<b>12.8</b>	36.5	32.5
4.2.2 Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age)			77.2							46.7	52.7


4.c.1.a Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications, pre-primary	2018	87.0	96.6	95.0	100.0	<b>85.0</b>	100.0	100.0	<b>90.0</b>	81.4	88.4
4.c.1.b Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications, primary	2018	83.1	72.1	89.4	95.3	<b>93.0</b>	93.8	100.0	<b>97.0</b>	79.6	84.3
4.c.1.c Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications, lower secondary	2018	81.5	74.2	89.8	96.9	<b>90.0</b>	95.1	100.0	<b>95.0</b>	76.5	83.2
4.c.1.d Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications, upper secondary	2018	76.8	75.4	83.8	90.5	<b>84.0</b>	88.0	98.9	<b>88.0</b>	79.4	84.2

Source: Education for All Branch, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka

**Annex 2: Letter of Nomination as the Focal Point for the SDG 4 Midterm Review**



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இலங்கை யுனெஸ்கோ தேசிய ஆணைக்குழு  
SRI LANKA NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO  
අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය, 05 වන මහල, ඉසුරුපාය, බත්තරමුල්ල.  
கல்வி அமைச்சு, இசுருபாயா, பத்தரமுல்ல.  
Ministry of Education, 5th Floor, Isurupaya, Battaramulla.



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

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**Prof. H Abeygunewardena,**  
Chairman, National Education Commission  
Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH),  
Colombo 7

Dear Prof Abeygunewardena,

**Nomination of the focal point for the National Midterm Progress Review of SDG4 in the Asia-Pacific Region**

UNESCO is conducting a midterm review of SDG 4 targets in 2023, which constitutes the midpoint of the SDG4-Education 2030.

UNESCO Bangkok has invited all Member States in the Asia-Pacific region to conduct a national SDG4 Midterm Review, and to prepare a National Report summarizing progress made and challenges encountered, to date, in achieving the SDG4 targets.

I am pleased to inform you that with your concurrence, we have nominated the **National Education Commission** as the focal point for Sri Lanka in consultation with Hon Dr Susil Premajayantha, Minister of Education, to prepare the National Mid Term Review Report of SDG 4 for Sri Lanka.

The collective findings of the Midterm Reviews will be presented by UNESCO Bangkok, at the forthcoming 6<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education (APMED-6), planned for 2024, to review successes and remaining challenges, and to identify actions to accelerate SDG4 implementation.

The findings from the Midterm Reviews are also expected to constitute important inputs to the next education agenda beyond 2030.

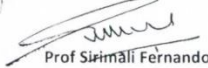
UNESCO guidelines on carrying out the Midterm Review were shared with you via email on 22.12.2022. These guidelines are intended to provide methodological and operational references and should in no way determine or limit the manner in which Sri Lanka undertakes its Review.

Please note that UNESCO expects to receive the first draft of our National Report by **31 August 2023**, to facilitate the peer review process, and your final National Report by **15 December 2023**.

Please do not hesitate to contact the National Commission for UNESCO for any clarification.

Season's Greetings and with best wishes for 2023!

Your sincerely



**Prof Sirmali Fernando**  
Secretary General

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## 2.4 Responsibilities assigned for the Expert Team:

### a) Compilation of the Full Report

Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake, and Prof. Marie Perera

### b) Tasks assigned for respective experts – See Table Below

Chapter/Section	Expert (s) <sup>289</sup>	NEC Staff
Chapter 1: Chapter 1: Socio-economic Context	<b>Dr. Nisha Arunathilake</b>	Dr. Nirosha Priyadharshani,
Chapter 2: Country's Adaptation and Implementation of SDG	<b>Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake</b> Dr. Madura Wehella,	Dr. Viraj Ranawakage,
<b>Chapter 3: Assessment by SDG 4 Target</b>		
3.3.1 SDG 4 Target 1 Pre-primary and Secondary Education	<b>Mr. Nalaka Ilapperuma,</b> Dr. Madura Wehella Prof. Marie Perera	Dr. Nirosha Priyadharshani Ms. Achala Damayanthi,
3.3.2 SDG4 Target 2- Equal Access to Quality Pre-primary Education	<b>Prof. T. Mukunthan,</b> Dr. Indrani Thalagla, Dr. Anoma Alwis,	Dr. Nilmini Wanniarachchi Ms. Achala Damayanthi
3.3.3 SDG4 Target 3- Equal Access to Affordable TVET and Higher Education	<b>Prof. Marie Perera,</b> <b>Dr. Janka Jayalath</b>	Dr. Rajika Ranasinghe Dr. Viraj Ranawakage
3.3.4 SDG4 Target 4- Increase the Number of People with relevant Skills for Decent Work	<b>Prof. Gominda Ponnampereuma</b> Mr. Nalaka Ilapperuma Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake	Dr. Nilmini Wanniarachchi Mr. Suranga Lakmal Mr. Mayuran Christy Mr. NPJ Hewage
3.3.5 SDG 4 Target 5- Eliminate all Discrimination in Education	<b>Dr. Anoma Alwis,</b> Mr. KAD Punyadasa, Mr. Janaka Chaminda Kumara	Dr. Nirosha Priyadharshani Mr. NPJ Hewage

<sup>289</sup> Dr. Dr. JSNP Dharmawardena, Focal Point nominated by the Department of Census and Statistics is expected assist all expert teams by providing required data and information from data bases of Department of Census and Statistics

3 3.6 SDG4 Target 6- Universal Youth Literacy and Numeracy	<b>Mr. Nalaka Ilapperuma,</b> Prof. Gominda Ponnampereuma Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake Ms. Padmini Ranaweera	Dr. Viraj Ranawakage Senior Policy Research Officer  Mr. Suranga Lakmal Policy Research Officer
3.3.7 SDG4 Target 7- Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship	<b>Prof. Gominda Ponnampereum</b> <b>Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake</b> <b>Ms. Padmini Ranaweera</b> Dr. Madura Wehella	Dr. Rajika Ranasinghe Senior Policy Research Officer
3.3.8 SDG 4 Target a) Build and Upgrade Inclusive and Safe Schools	<b>Mr. KAD Punyadasa,</b> Mr. Janaka Chaminda Kumara Dr. Anoma Alwis	Dr. Nilmini Wanniarachchi Senior Policy Research Officer  Mr. NPJ Hewage Policy Research Officer
3.3.9 SDG 4 Target b) Expand Higher Education Scholarships for Developing Countries	<b>Dr. Madura Wehella,</b> Mr. Nalaka Ilapperuma, Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake	Dr. Rajika Ranasinghe Senior Policy Research Officer Mr. NPJ Hewage Policy Research Officer
3.3.10 SDG 4 Target c) Increase Supply of Qualified Teachers in Developing Countries	<b>Dr. Madura Wehella.</b> Mr. Nalaka Ilapperuma, Prof. Gominda Ponnampereuma	DR. Nirosha Priyadharshani, Senior Policy Research Officer  Mr. NPJ Hewage Policy Research Officer
3.11 Matrix of Policies and Practices Adopted	<b>Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake,</b> <b>Prof. Marie Perera</b> Dr. Madura Wehella,	DR. Thikshani Somarathne Senior Policy Research Officer Ms. Dumani Jayasinghe Program Officer



Chapter 4: Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Progress of SDG 4	<b>Prof. Marie Perera</b> Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake Dr. Madura Wehella	Dr. Thikshani Somarathna Senior Policy Research Officer
Chapter 5: Revision of National SDG 4 Framework /Strategies and Indicators, and the Anticipated Way Forward	<b>Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake</b> Prof. Marie Perera Dr. Madura Wehella	Dr. Thikshani Somarathna Senior Policy Research Officer Ms. Dumani Jayasinghe Program Officer
Annex: Relevant Regulatory Documents, References and Stakeholders and their Responsibilities	<b>Prof. Marie Perera</b> Dr. Madura Wehella	Dr. Thikshani Somarathna Senior Policy Research Officer Ms. Dumani Jayasinghe Program Officer
a) Compilation of the Full Report	Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake Prof. Marie Perera Prof. Harischandra Abeygunawardena (Chairman, NEC)	Dr. Thikshani Somarathna Senior Policy Research Officer Ms. Dumani Jayasinghe Program Officer

#### **Annex 4: 1<sup>st</sup> Briefing Session on Midterm Review of SDG 4 Targets**

**Date & Time:** 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2023 from 9.30 am to 11.30 am at the NEC

**Purpose:** To assign tasks for the midterm review

**In attendance:** Chairman NEC, VC's NEC, Secretary General of Sri Lanka Commission for UNESCO, 12 experts and NEC staff

At this meeting, the Chairman of the NEC gave a briefing on the review process – UNESCO Guidelines, purpose, scope, expected outcomes, review process, time lines. In addition, the Secretary General of Sri Lanka Commission for UNESCO also gave a briefing on the expected outcome of the review process.

Following, the initial briefing, the expert Team members were handed over the Terms of Reference (ToRs) of individual expert members and signatures for the respective agreements were obtained. In addition, they were provided with the following documents:

- UNESCO Guidelines on Midterm Review
- Work Plan of the Midterm Review
- Report Format of the assigned SDG 4 Targets /Chapters

#### **Annex 5: 2<sup>nd</sup> Briefing Session on the Status of Implementation of SDG 4 Targets**

**Date & Time:** 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023 from 9.30 am to 1.00 pm on at the NEC

**Purpose:** At this briefing session key personnel responsible for coordinating the implementation of SDG 4 at national level and for collecting and collating data as regards to SDG 4 were invited to make presentations. The names of invited speakers and the topics of the presentations are given below:

**Mrs. Badra Withanage**, Director, Education for All Branch, MOE.

- A Presentation on SDG4 Targets and MoE program(s) in relation to SDG 4 and the national benchmarks for UNESCO defined indicators

**Mr. Nalaka Ilapperuma** Former Commissioner General of Education Publication, Former Director, Information and Data Management, MOE.

- A Presentation on available data on SDG 4 at MOE

**Mr. Sampath Perera**, Statistician, DCS, Ministry of Education

- A Presentation on available Data regards to SDG 4 at Statistical Unit DCS at MOE

**Dr. J. S. N. P. Dharmawardhana** Senior Statistician from DCS

- Data access and information of SDG 4(a) at the DCS Data Bases.

## Annex 6: List of Institutions Visited

	<b>Name of the Institute</b>
<b>i.</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>ii.</b>	Ministry of Finance/Department of External Resources
<b>iii.</b>	Sustainable Development Council
<b>iv.</b>	Department of Census and Statistics
<b>v.</b>	University Grants Commission
<b>vi.</b>	Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission
<b>vii.</b>	National Secretariat for Early Childhood Development
<b>viii.</b>	National Institute of Education
<b>ix.</b>	National Finance Commission
<b>x.</b>	National Colleges of Education (Only few)
<b>xi.</b>	Teacher Training Colleges (Only few)
<b>xii.</b>	National Youth Services Council
<b>xiii.</b>	Provincial Departments of Education
<b>xiv.</b>	Vocational and Technical Authority
<b>xv.</b>	Child Protection Authority

## Annex 7: 1<sup>st</sup> Mini-Workshop to Review Progress of the Review

**Date & Time:** From 28th March to 6th April 2023 at the NEC, from 9.30 am to 3,30 pm

**Purpose:** Review the progress achieved as of end of March and seek the stakeholder views on draft reports.

Workshop Number	SDG 4 Target /Expert Assignment	Team Leader (s) <sup>1, 2</sup>	Proposed Dates and Times
WS I	SDG 4-Target 1- Free-Primary and Secondary Education	<b>Mr. Nalaka Ilapperuma</b> Dr. Madura Wehella Prof. Marie Perera	28 <sup>th</sup> March (Tuesday) 9.30 am to 12.00 pm
	SDG 4-Target 2- Equal Aces to Quality Pre-primary Education	<b>Prof. T. Mukunthan</b> Dr. Indrani Talagala Dr. Anoma Alwis	28th March (Tuesday) 1.00 pm to 3.00 pm
WS II	SDG 4-Target 3- Equal Access to affordable TVET and Higher Education	<b>Prof. Marie Perera</b> <b>Dr. Janaka Jayalath</b>	29th March (Wednesday) 9.30 am to 12.00 pm
	SDG 4-Target 4- Increase the number of people with relevant skills for decent work	<b>Prof. Gominda Ponnampereuma</b> Mr. Nalaka Ilapperuma Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake	3rd April 2023 (Monday) 9.30 am to 12.00 pm
WS III	SDG 4-Target 5- Eliminate all Discrimination in Education	Dr. Anoma Alwis Dr. K.A.D. Punyadasa Mr. Janaka Chaminda Kumara	30th March (Thursday) 9.30 am to 12.00 pm
	SDG 4-Target 6- Universal Youth Literacy and Numeracy	<b>Mr. Nalaka Ilapperuma</b> Prof. Gominda Ponnampereuma Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake Ms. Padmini Ranaweera	30 <sup>th</sup> March (Thursday) 1.00 pm to 3.00 pm
WS IV	SDG 4-Target 7- Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship	<b>Prof. Gominda Ponnampereuma</b> Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake, Prof. Marie Perera Ms. Padmini Ranaweera	4 April (Tuesday) 9.30 am to 12.00 pm

		Dr. Madura Wehella	
	<b>SDG 4-Target a)</b> Build and Upgrade Inclusive and Safe Schools	<b>Dr. K.A.D Punyadasa</b> <b>Mr. Janaka Chaminda Kumara</b> Dr. Anoma Alwis	4 April (Tuesday) 1.00 pm to 3.00 pm
<b>WS V</b>	<b>SDG 4-Target b)</b> Expand Higher Education Scholarships for Developing countries	<b>Dr. Madura Wehella</b> Mr. Nalaka Ilapperuma Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake	6 April (Tuesday) 9.30 am to 12.00 pm
	<b>SDG 4-Target c)</b> Increase the supply of Qualified Teachers in Developing Countries	<b>Dr. Madura Wehella</b> Mr. Nalaka Ilapperuma Prof. Gominda Ponnampereuma	6 April (Tuesday) 1.00 pm to 3.00 pm

### Annex 8: 2nd Series of Mini-workshops to review progress of the Review

**Dates:** From 2<sup>nd</sup> May to 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at the NEC, from 9.30 am to 3.30pm

**Purpose:** Review the 2<sup>nd</sup> draft of Chapters/Reports and seek stakeholder views on findings

<b>SDG 4 Target</b>	<b>Expert Team</b>	<b>NEC Staff</b>	<b>Scheduled Date and Time</b>
<b>SDG 4.1:</b> Free-primary and Secondary Education	<b>Mr. Nalaka Ilapperuma,</b> Dr. Madura Wehella Prof. Marie Perera	Dr. Nirosha Priyadarshani Ms. Achala Damayanthi	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> May 2023</b> <b>9.30 am-12.00 noon</b>
<b>SDG 4.2:</b> Equal access to quality Pre-primary Education	<b>Prof. T. Mukunthan,</b> Dr. Indrani Talagala, Dr. Anoma Alwis	Dr. Nilmini Wanniarachchi Ms. Achala Damayanthi	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> May 2023</b> <b>1.00 -3.30 pm</b>
<b>SDG 4.3:</b> Equal access to affordable TVET and Higher Education	<b>Prof. Marie Perera,</b> <b>Dr. Janaka Jayalath</b>	Dr. Rajika Ranasinghe Dr. Viraj Ranawakage	<b>4<sup>th</sup> May 2023</b> <b>9.30 am-11.00 noon</b>

<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Dr nisha Arunathilaka</b>		<b>4<sup>th</sup> May 11-12.00</b>
<b>SDG 4.4:</b> Increase the Number of People with relevant Skills for decent work	<b>Prof. Gominda Ponnampereuma,</b> Mr. Nalaka Ilapperuma, Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake	Dr. Nilmini Wanniarachchi Mr. Suranga Lakmal Mr. Mayuran Christy	<b>4<sup>th</sup> May 2023</b> <b>1.00-3.30 pm</b>
<b>SDG 4.5:</b> Eliminate all discrimination in Education	<b>Dr. Anoma Alwis,</b> Dr. K.A.D. Punyadasa, Mr. Janaka Chaminda Kumara	Dr. Nirosha Priyadarshani Mr. Mayuran Christy Mr. NPJ Hewage	<b>8<sup>th</sup> May 2023</b> <b>9.30 am – 12.00 noon</b>
<b>SDG 4.6:</b> Universal Youth Literacy and Numeracy	<b>Mr. Nalaka Ilapperuma,</b> Prof. Gominda Ponnampereuma Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake Ms. Padmini Ranaweera	Dr. Viraj Rnawakege Dr. Lakmini de Silva Mr. Suranga Lakmal	<b>8<sup>th</sup> May 2023</b> <b>1.00-3.30 pm</b>
<b>SDG 4.7:</b> Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship	<b>Prof. Gominda Ponnampereuma</b> Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake Prof. Marie Perera, Ms. Padmini Ranaweera Dr. Madura Wehella	Dr. Rajika Ranasinghe	<b>9<sup>th</sup> May 2023</b> <b>9.30 am – 12.00 noon</b>
<b>SDG 4 (a)</b> Build and Upgrade Inclusive and Safe Schools	<b>Dr. K.A.D Punyadasa,</b> <b>Mr. Janaka Chaminda Kumara</b> Dr. Anoma Alwis,	Dr. Nilmini Wanniarachchi Mr. NPJ Hewage	<b>9<sup>th</sup> May 2023</b> <b>1.00-3.30 pm</b>
<b>SDG 4 (b)</b> Expand Higher Education Scholarships for Developing Countries	<b>Dr. Madura Wehella,</b> Mr. Nalaka Ilapperuma, Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake	Dr. Rajika Ranasinghe	<b>10<sup>th</sup> May 2023</b> <b>9.30 am – 12.00 noon</b>
<b>SDG 4 (c)</b> Increase Supply of Qualified Teachers in Developing Countries	<b>Dr. Madura Wehella,</b> Mr. Nalaka Ilapperuma, Prof. Gominda Ponnampereuma	Dr. Nirosha Priyadarshani Mr. Suranga Lakmal Mr. NPJ Hewage	<b>10<sup>th</sup> May 2023</b> <b>1.00-3.30 pm</b>

## Annex 9: List of Invitees of 1st and 2nd Mini-workshop Series

**Dates:** From 28<sup>th</sup> April to 6<sup>th</sup> April 2023 and 2<sup>nd</sup> May to 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at the NEC

Name and the designation of the invitees		
<b>SDG 4.1 Target</b>		
1.	Mr. Sampath Perera	Senior Statistician, Ministry of Education, Battaramulla
2.	Mrs. Dakshina Kasthuriarachchi	Director of Education, Data Management Branch, Ministry of Education, Battaramulla
3.	Mrs. Achinie Balapatabandige	Deputy Director of Education, Primary Ed. Branch, Ministry of Education, Battaramulla
4.	Mrs. Sajini de Silva	Deputy Director of Education, Private Schools Branch, Ministry of Education, Battaramulla
5.	Ms. MBMBK Gawarammana	Assistant Director of Education, Ministry of Education, Battaramulla
6.	Ms. RMK de Silva	Director, Policy and Planning division, Ministry of Education, Battaramulla
<b>SDG 4.2 Target</b>		
7.	Ms. Rukmali Kariyawasam	Director, Primary School Branch, Isurupaya, Battaramulla
8.	Mr. H. U. Premathilake	Additional Secretary - Educational Quality Development & Education Reforms, Ministry of Education, Primary School Branch, Isurupaya, Battaramulla
9.	Ms D D.V. Rasadari	Deputy Director, NSECD, 6th floor, Sethsiripaya Stage ii, Battaramulla
10.	Ms. Shashikala Rathnayake	Program Officer, UNICEF of Sri Lanka, 3 1, Rajagiriya Mawatha, Colombo 7
11.	Dr. Asiri Hewamalage	Child development, Family Health Bureau, 231, De Saram Place, Colombo 10
12.	Mr. Mahinda Kodithuwakku	Assistant Director of Education, Non Formal Education/Counselling /Pre School, Western Provincial Department of Education, No. 76, Ananda Coomaraswamy Mawatha, Green Path, Colombo 07
13.	Mr. Ashila Canagasooriya	Provincial Director of Education, Eastern Province
14.	Mr. John Quintuss	Provincial Director of Education, Northern Province
15.	Ms. D H M P S Dissanayake	Deputy Director General, North Western Provincial Education Department , Kurunegala
16.	Nine provincial directors	
<b>SDG 4.3 Target</b>		
17.	Senior Professor Sampath Amaratunge	Chairman, University Grants Commission, No. 20, Ward Place, Colombo 07
18.	Ms. B H C Shiromali	Director, Department of Manpower and Employment
19.	Ms. Nadeeka Amarasinghe	Assistant Director, Sustainable Development Council of Sri Lanka

20.	Ms. Nilmini Diyabadanage	Director General , UNIVOTEC
21.	Mr. Jalitha Hewage	Employers Federation of External Resources Department of Ceylon
22.	Mr. Sanjaya Ariyawansa	Economist, Ceylon Chamber of Commerce
<b>SDG 4.4 Target</b>		
23.	Mr. Dammika Marasinghe	Capacity Forum Head- SLASSCOM
24.	Ms. Vasana Rodrigo	SLASSCOM
25.	Mr. Thushara Kalubowila	SLASSCOM
26.	Mr. Gothami Gannoruwa	SD & VE Division
27.	Ms. M M P Muthumali	AD/P – SD & VE Division
28.	Mr. Udesh I W Senevirathna	ADG
29.	Ms. H P Rukmalee	Deputy Director - Ministry of Education
30.	Ms. P S Sandamali	Deputy Director
<b>SDG 4.5 Targets</b>		
31.	Ms. Hemantha Gunasekera	President Hapitigama NCOE
32.	Ms. A M D U S Amaratunga	President, Maharagama NCOE
33.	Dr. Ayesha Lokubalasureya	Consultant Community Physician, Family Health Bureau
34.	Ms. M P R Dhanawardena	Additional Director General, National Institute of Education
<b>SDG 4.6 Target</b>		
35.	Mr. Nalaka Illaperuma	Former Commissioner General of Education Publication from Ministry of Education
36.	Mr. Janaka Chaminda Kumara	Deputy Director of Education (Non formal Ed.), Ministry of Education
37.	Mr. Mahinda Kodituwakku	Deputy Director of Education (Non formal Ed.), Western Provincial Department of Education
<b>SDG 4.7 Target</b>		
38.	Professor S. S. M.W. Seneviratne	Director, Centre for the Study of Human Rights Faculty of Law, University of Colombo
39.	Dr. J. S. N. P Dharmawardena	Senior Statistician, Department of Census and Statistics
40.	Mr. S. Muralidaran	Director, Peace Education and Reconciliation Unit, Ministry of Education
41.	Ms. S.U.I.K. de Silva	Senior Lecturer, National Institute of Education
42.	Ms. A A D M Visanthi	Addl. Director General, Ministry of Education
<b>SDG 4 (a) Target</b>		
43.	Mr. Aruna Weligalla	National Secretariat for Person with Disabilities, Sethsripaya
44.	Ms. A G S Chamini	Department of Engineering, Ministry of Education



45.	Ms. W R G Wickramasinghe	Ministry of Education
46.	Mr. D Wijesinghe	Ministry of Education
<b>SDG 4 (b) Targets</b>		
47.	Ms. Shrimathi Wijewardane	Deputy Secretary (International Corporation Division) UGC
<b>SDG 4 (c) Target</b>		
48.	Mr. A.T.M.U.D.B. Tennakoon	Secretary, Finance Commission
49.	Ms./Mr AB Handunpathirage	Deputy Director, Finance Commission
<b>Chapter 1 &amp; 2</b>		
50.	Mrs. B H C Shiromali	Director, Department of Manpower and Employment
51.	Ms D D.V. Rasadari	Deputy Director, NSECD, 6th floor, Sethsiripaya Stage ii, Battaramulla
52.	Ms. Nadeeka Amarasinghe	Assistant Director, Sustainable Development Council of Sri Lanka
53.	Ms. A P S Dilusha	National Planning Department, Ministry of Finance
54.	Ms. S P N P N Abeysekara	National Planning Department, Ministry of Finance

## Annex 10. List participants of the National Validation Workshop held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at the Auditorium of Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration

**Time: 9.00 am to 5.00 pm**

Name and Designation of the Participants		
1.	Dr. Susil Premajayantha	Minister of Education
2.	Ms. Maheshi Weerasooriya	Add. Secretary /Planning and Performance Review, Ministry of Education
3.	Mr Kithsiri Munagama	Additional Secretary(Information Technology & Digital Education)
4.	Mr. P.M.P. Anura Kumara	Director General - Census & Statistics, Ministry of Education
5.	Ms. Vasana Jayakody	Additional Director General (Statistics) I Department of Census and Statistics
6.	Ms. Nadeeka Amarasinghe	Additional Director General Sustainable Development Council Sustainable Development Council of Sri Lanka,
7.	Prof. Sirimali Fernando	Secretary General/ Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO
8.	Ms. Avanthi Senaratne	Deputy Secretary General Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO
9.	Mr. D N S Athukorala	DDG/Examination

		Department of Examination
10.	Prof. Sampath Amaratunga	Chairman/University Grants Commission
11.	Mr. Udeni Wickramasinghe	Chairman/TVEC
12.	Dr. K. A. Lalithadheera	Director General , TVEC
13.	Mrs. Waruni Rasadari	Deputy Director , NSCED
14.	Mr. Sagara Abeyrathna	Addl. Director/Planning
15.	Ms. Udani Warusavithana	Director (Overseas Education), Ministry of Higher Education
16.	Mr. K G H R Kiriella	Director General/Chief Executive Officer, Department of Manpower and Employment
17.	Mr. A D K Arachchi	Head, Information , University Grants Commission
18.	Mr. Orlando Edward	Country Director, British Council of Sri Lanka
19.	Prof Harischandra Abeygunawardena	Chairman, National Education Commission
20.	Mrs Padmini Ranaweera	Vice chairperson (Policy), National Education Commission
21.	Mr. Kingsly Fernando	Vice chairman (Planning), National Education Commission
22.	Dr. Anuruddha Padeniya	Commission Member, Pediatric Neurologist, Lady Ridgeway Hospital
23.	Mrs. S S Roshini	Secretary, National Education Commission
24.	Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake	Former VC, University of Colombo
25.	Prof. Marie Perera	Professor, University of Colombo
26.	Dr. Nisha Arunathilake	Director Research and Head of Labour, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka
27.	Prof. T. Mukunthan	Professor, OUSL
28.	Dr. Indrani Talagala	Commission Member, NEC
29.	Dr. Janaka Jayalath	Director General (Actg.), TVEC
30.	Mr. Nalaka Ilapperuma	Former Director, MOE , Commissioner General of Educational Publications
31.	Mr. K.A.D. Punyadasa	Director of Education MOE
32.	Mr. Janaka Chaminda Kumara	Deputy Director of Education, Non Formal & Special Education Branch, Ministry of Education
33.	Dr. Madura Wehella	Former Director, MOE
34.	Mrs. A D Balapatabandige	Deputy Director of Education, Primary Education Branch ,Ministry of Education
35.	Ms. A G S Chamini	Department of Engineering ,Ministry of Education
36.	Ms. A G Athukorala	Assistant Director, Data Management Branch, Ministry of Education
37.	Ms. Nadeeka Dassanayaka	Deputy Director of Education, Monitoring & Performance Review Branch, Ministry of Education
38.	Ms. Rukmali Kariyawasam	Director Primary Education Branch ,Ministry of Education
39.	Mrs. Vasana Edirisuriya	Director, Information Technology & Digital Education, Ministry of Education
40.	Mr. G C Gannaoruwa	Director (PI), Skill Development and Vocational Education

41.	Mr K R Pathmasiri	Deputy Director General, Faculty of Science & Technology, NIE
42.	Dr. Dharshana Samaeraweera	Additional Director General , National Institute of Education
43.	Mrs. MPR Dhanawardhana	ADG/NIE - Research , National Institute of Education
44.	Dr. ADA de Silva	Director, National Institute of Education
45.	Ms. RMK de Silva	Director, National Institute of Education
46.	Ms. Sujani Diwakara Dissanayake	Additional Provincial Director of Education/North Central Province
47.	Mr. Thusitha P Wanigasinghe	Chairman, National Human Resources Development Council
48.	Mr. Chandradasa Munasinghe	Director, Provincial Recurrent Needs & Cadre Assessment Division, Finance Commission
49.	Ms. WG Manoja Wasanthi	Addl. Director, Provincial Recurrent Needs& Cadre Assessment Division, Finance Commission
50.	Mr. Aruna Weligalla	National Secretariat for Person with Disabilities
51.	Mr. RMHG Gunarathna	Additional Secretary , Sri Lanka Council for the Blind
52.	Dr. Swarna Wijethunga	Lady Ridgway Hospital
53.	Dr. Asiri Hewamalage	Head, Child Care Development & Special Needs, Family Health Bureau
54.	Dr. Enoka Wickramasinghe	Health Promotion Bureau
55.	Dr. Hemali Jayakodi	Additional Director Family Health Bureau
56.	Mr. HAES Prasanna Kumara	Former Assistant Director of Special Education
57.	Mr. Dhammika Marasinghe	Chairman, Sri Lanka Association for Software Services Companies (SLASSCOM)
58.	Prof. CS Lewangamage	Director General , Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education , Ministry of Education
59.	Professor C. Mahesh Edirisinghe	Vice Chancellor, University of Vocational Technology
60.	Mr. T Senthuran	Director, Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission
61.	Mr. Rushika Dias	Senior Technical Advisor – Education- Save the Children Sri Lanka
62.	Mr. Nishantha Warnasooriya	Program Assistant, ILO country office
63.	Mr. Renuka Peiris	(WFP)
64.	Prof. Nilanthi De Silva	Vice-Chancellor, University of Kelaniya
65.	Dr. Asanka Pallewatta	Gampaha Wickramarachchi University of Indigenous Medicine

## Acknowledgements

The National Education commission wishes place on record its appreciation of the services and cooperation extended by many individuals and organizations:

- Honorable Minister of Education, Dr. Susil Premajyantha and Prof. Sirimali Fernando, Secretary General of the Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO for nominating the NEC as the focal point to conduct National SDG 4 Midterm Review as a third party evaluation,
- Secretary of Ministry of Education and the staff of the Ministry of Education for extending the cooperation in getting information and data on SDG targets,
- Director General of Sustainable Development Council of Sri Lanka and the staff for providing data on SDG 4 Targets,
- Director General of Department of Census and Statistics, and the staff for providing data on SDG 4 Targets,
- Secretaries of Provincial Council and Officers of the Provincial Department of Education for providing data on SDG 4 Targets and other relevant data,
- Director, National Secretariat for Early Childhood Development for providing data on SDG 4 Targets and other relevant data,
- Staff of the National Finance Commission for providing data on SDG 4 Targets and other relevant data,
- Workshop Participants who responded to our invitation and participated in workshop deliberations,
- All members of the Expert Team for undertaking the review as per the guidelines provided,
- Research and administrative staff of the NEC for providing technical and logistics support
- Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration for providing the venue for National Validation Workshop, and
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## **National Education Commission**

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