

**PRIMARY SCHOOLING IN SLUMS AND SHANTIES;
REASONS FOR LOW PARTICIPATION**

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Difference in children's school admittance between the urban sector (89.4%) and rural sector (88.27%) is minimal though school admittance is relatively very low in the estate (37.7%) in 1985. However, in the inter sectoral analysis it seems that there is a low school participation among children in slum and shanty settlement in the urban sector. Though slum and shanty settlements can be seen in a number of cities in the country the largest number of these settlements are in the Colombo city. Contrary to children living in the rural sector, children in slum and shanty settlements in the urban sector particularly in Colombo city are in the close proximity to many schools. In this context it is more important to study why there is comparatively low school participation among children in slum and shanty settlements in Colombo city.

This study aims to (i) find out school participation rate and (ii) examine reasons for school non participation among the children in primary school going age (5-14) in slum and shanty settlements in Dematagoda and Wanathamulla in Colombo city. Using pre-determined simple question-naire, in addition to informal discussion, information was collected from parents and when necessary children of 40 families selected purposively. (Sample ratio is 7.3%)

Out of 81 primary school going age children in the sample only 47 children (58%) are attending school. Of 34 children (42%) not in school 15 have been never admitted while other 19 are early drop outs.

About half of attendance are not in school mainly due to poverty (7), absence of parents (6) and disputes in families (5). 12 children are not attending due to non availability of birth certificates (4), illhealth (4) and inadequacies of the formal school system (4). Balance 4 children are not in school as a result of change of residence and some other reasons.

Accordingly, if schools catering to these children had been provided minimum amount of physical requirements, relevant instruction regarding school admission and facility fees, and birth certificates part of these non attendance could be avoided.

Reference: Dept. of Census and Statistics, (1987)
Labour Force and Socio Economic Survey 1985/86,
Sri Lanka.