

A study of equity in resource allocation in primary schools under the current educational reforms

D Hoole^{1*}, M Sinnathamby², P Pathberiya² and R Wijesinghe³

¹ *Save the Children in Sri Lanka, Colombo*

² *Department of Economics, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya*

³ *Faculty of Engineering, University of Ruhuna, Galle*

The current education reforms encompass the dimension of equity in development towards strengthening the social capital of Sri Lanka. However, it is widely perceived even by children that resourcing of schools is not uniform. This study was an attempt to see whether this perception was true at the primary school level now that the implementation period of the 1997 primary education reforms is over. It attempts to identify, quantify and understand the nature of any disparity in resource allocation towards effective learning. A total of a hundred and eighty schools were chosen from nine zones (stratified based on socioeconomic factors) in three provinces of differing educational attainments. The selection was also gender sensitive. The resources studied were those identified by service-users as absolutely necessary for effective learning and were found to fall within the governmental norms for the provision of educational resources. Single factor analyses of variance on the data indicated that there was significant disparity in resource provision and use within and between the nine zones and the various categories of schools even though at the central level resource allocation is on a per capita basis (for e.g. for material resources the estimated F ratio was 17.54576, which is highly significant at the critical value of 1.9932. For the availability and usefulness of human resources the F value was 3.3389). Allocations of resources between types of schools also showed significant disparity. (e.g. for the availability of infrastructure facilities $F = 20.01957$). Within a zone, Mannar and Bibile showed the smallest and largest disparities respectively with respect to material resources while Killinochchi and Moneragala respectively showed the least and most disparities in the availability of human resources among the selected zones. The study also assesses teacher effectiveness and the participatory capacity of parents in the schools towards development of education. When the education budget is tight as in Sri Lanka it is imperative that equity is practised diligently to avoid education from becoming meaningless and even damaging to children at risk. Further, for the sustainability of the present reforms it is essential that education provision be more egalitarian.

* dushyanthi@savethechildren.lk