

Education issues confronting three backward areas in Sri LankaD Hoole^{1*}, A Sivarajah², M M Naleer³, S Balakrishnan⁴ and R Nagendiran⁴¹ *Save the Children in Sri Lanka, Colombo. Now with Plan International, Colombo.*² *Department of Political Science, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya*³ *Department of Computer Science, South Eastern University, Oluvil*⁴ *Centre for Development Alternatives, Kandy*

The average achievement levels of children studying in areas such as the Moneragala district and the estate regions are widely known to be lower than those of the other children in Sri Lanka. The aim of the new education reforms was to give all children equal educational opportunities, for it is mandated by the 1997 General Education reforms that its implementation should be "in the spirit of bringing benefits to all people and not as a means of conferring privileges on select groups and areas". Such schools at educational risk have been specially targeted by the government and certain non-governmental agencies for development in the past decade. However this study shows that the Moneragala educational zone has still not reached the minimum standards set by the government with respect to resourcing. That is its schools cannot impart effective primary education. The estate schools and those in the Killinochchi district in the "uncleared" area were found to be even worse off. Though the relationship between resourcing and achievement levels has not been shown to be critical in developing countries, in this study the resourcing level of the school seems to parallel the achievement levels of students. This study found that the schools in these areas are equipped well below governmental norms (49% - 30%) for effective learning. The disparity within the three areas studied is highest for the Moneragala zone (s=27) while the schools in the uncleared areas were uniformly equipped. (s=17). If Sri Lanka is to reach the millennium goals by 2015, it is imperative that special measures be taken to help these schools to reach the minimum standards in terms of school quality.

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