

Continuing Issues in the Sri Lankan Education System

By Rohan Senarath from the EENET Asia Newsletter, 4th Quarter 2007



Children Playing Outside of School

- ကြိမ်လှအေးအေးထိုင်ကြိတ်တဖန်အင်္ဂါ တီ၊ အ လှ အ ပျှေ တ အိန်လကန့်လီကဒါကွါကွါလတ်လီလအဘူးဒီးအ ဝဲသုန်အိန်တလီနုန်ဘဉ်.

- ပျှေကမျှါပျှေတဝတ်တဟ်သုန်ပသးဘဉ် ယး တာ် အ စာ လှ အကဟဲအိန်ထိုင်ခိဖျိမိသုန်တဖန်ဟးထိုင်ကွိုင်လှကွိုင်ဒီး တထိုင်ကွိုင်နုန်ဘဉ်. ပျှေဘဉ်မူဘဉ်ဒါစွာ်ကီးတမူဒါ လကကတဲနာ်ဟ်ဒီး ငး ပလီမိဟ်တဖန်, ပျှေဘဉ်မူဘဉ် ဒါ တ

ဖန်ဒီးပျှေတဝတ်တဟ်လကမလီတံာ်လမိသုန်ကီးကအိန် ဒီးတဲာ်ခွဲးတဲာ်ယာ်ထဲသီးတုးသီးလကနုန်ဘဉ်တဲာ်ကွိုင်ဘဉ် ကွိုင်သုလအဂုအင်္ဂါနုန်ဘဉ်.

- တာ်စံဉ်ညီဉ်မိသုန်တဖန်ဆါ ဆါ ကလဲာ်, ဒီးမိသုန် လှ အမိအပမူ မျှါဘဉ်ဖူး ပျှေ ခိဉ် ပျှေ နာ် မး ဒီး တာ် ကြိ အီ လှ တာ်ကဟုန်အီတဲာ်စံဉ်ညီဉ်နုန်လီ.

- ပျှေဟုန်ကွိုင်ဟုန်ဖးတဲာ်ဝဲကွါလှတီဟုန်ဒီးတီစာ်သး ကြိတဖန်အင်္ဂါတအိန်ဘဉ်.

- မိသုန်လှတအိန်ဖျှိုင်ထိုင်ဖဲကီာ်စံးရဲလဲကဉ်အပူဘဉ် တဖန်အင်္ဂါတဲာ်ကွိုင်ထွဲတအိန်ဘဉ်.

- ကြိ အတဲာ် အိန် ဆူဉ် အိန် ချွဲဒီး တဲာ် အိန်တဲာ်အိန် ကွိုင် ထွဲ တလှတပျှေဘဉ်.

INGOs အတဲာ်ကရုကရိအါဖုမစာ်တဲာ်ကီာ် ရျှဉ်တဲာ်ကွိုင်ဘဉ်ကွိုင်သုဝဲကွါတဖန်လကစးထိုင်မကွဲ အသိတဖန်လကီာ်ရျှဉ်အါဘုဉ်လှစံးရဲလဲကဉ်အပူလှ အပူကွိုင်စွာ်နုန်အတီာ်ပျှေလဲလဲနုန်လီ. ခိဖျိလှတဲာ်မာ စာ ဝဲအံး အယိ နုန်, ဝဲအံးတဲာ်ကွိုင်ဘဉ်ကွိုင်သု ပျှေ ဘဉ် မူ ဘဉ် ဒါ လကီာ် အဝဲအံး အပူစးထိုင်မကွဲထိုင် ပ သိ ထိုင် တဲာ်ကွိုင်ဘဉ်ကွိုင်သုအကွဲအကွဲအမုန်child-friendly ကြိ အကွဲအကွဲ တဖန် လှ ပဒိဉ် အကြိ ကီး ဖျှဉ် ဒဲး အပူ နုန်လီ. INGOsတဲာ်ကရုကရိလှအသးဝဲလကမစာ် တဲာ်တဖန် ကျး စး လှ က သုဉ် ထိုင် စာမိ သုဉ် ခိဉ် သုဉ် တဲာ် သိဉ်လဲ အကွဲ, တဲာ် အံး ထွဲ ကွိုင် ထွဲ မိ သုဉ် တဖန် နုန် လီ. တဲာ် ကွိုင် ဘဉ်ကွိုင် သု အပူ ဘဉ်မူဘဉ် ဒါ တဖန် စးထိုင် မဲဝဲchild-friendly အကွဲဒီးကျးစးစွာ်ကီးလကမစာ် လီ. ကွိုင်တဲာ် ဝှာ် ကီ လှ ပယာ် ထိုင် အီ လှ အဖိ ခိဉ် သုဉ် တ ဖန်စွာ်ကီးနုန်လီ.

Access to education and retention in schools has been identified as the main challenges facing the Sri Lanka education system. Except in the many new private schools and international schools, education in Sri Lanka is provided free by state owned schools. An increasing number of children from economically privileged families are educated in international and private schools where English is the language of instruction. Local languages are used as language of instruction in most state owned schools with limited access to English as a subject. Children face strong competition accessing the most popular or so called "good" schools, children in conflict affected and rural areas experience other challenges and barriers.

Many UN organizations and INGOs [international non-governmental organizations] have conducted surveys and studies to reveal the causes of the many obstacles to the existing education system in Sri Lanka. The challenges summarised below are gathered using different study reports, articles, and journals related to the situation in the Sri Lankan education system. This exercise disclosed important information and identified a number of important reasons for the increasing number of children out of school in Sri Lanka. Most of the challenges are probably similar to those found in other countries in South and Southeast Asia but others are more specific to the Sri Lankan context.

The language of instruction in government schools is Sinhala and Tamil. Although the majority of districts (officially) indicate that the percentage of children who drop-out or do not go to school (or start schooling) is negligible, in one of the conflict affected districts 17% of children drop-out of school, do not attend school or never enroll in school.

The literature review has revealed the following critical issues as causes for non-enrolment and non-retention in schools:

- Lack of child-friendly education systems
- Lack of knowledge among teachers of interactive teaching methods, modern pedagogies and child-centred learning approaches
- Teachers focus on "fast" learners while neglecting "slow" learners
- Favouritism by teachers
- Teachers lacking empathy for poor students
- Teacher prefer to work in urban areas causing teacher shortages in rural schools

- Lack of interest among education authorities to implement compulsory education polices that have been in place since 1997
- Political interference in teacher placement processes
- Lack of pressure, motivation and support from the community for increased enrolment and attendance
- Children are increasingly vulnerable in war affected areas.
- Internal displacement
- Low income families struggle to provide school material such as shoes, school uniforms stationary and books for their children
- Lack of collaboration with the private sector and philanthropists in solving education issues
- No community participation in monitoring the proper use of education budgets
- Lack of inclusive education policies and practices
- Gradually decreasing percentage of GDP [Gross Domestic product] allocated for education
- Children are engaged in home based economic activities to support the family rather than attending to schools, or need to take care of younger siblings
- No system to care for children of migrating mothers despite this being Sri Lanka's no. 1 source of foreign revenue
- Inadequate school health and insufficient school feeding programmes

With the goal of addressing shortcomings listed above, a number of INGOs assisted the Provincial Education Departments to implement new approaches as pilot projects in different districts in Sri Lanka during the past few years. Taking into account the best practices, the Ministry of Education is now focusing on developing and implementing a child-friendly school [CFS] system in all government schools with the help of INGOs. A number of interested INGOs have contributed to develop a common framework for implementing child-centred, child-focused, child-friendly schools in Sri Lanka. The Ministry of Education is planning to launch a countrywide operation to implement the childfriendly school [CFS] system in the near future and minimise the majority of effects caused by the above issues.

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