

Primary Education among Children in Slum and Shanty Settlements

By H. L. Hemachandra

Mr. H. L. Hemachandra who is a member of the Research Department of the People's Bank recently completed a study on Primary Education in Slum and Shanty Settlements in Colombo.

Findings of this study are published in this issue of the Economic Review.

Since early 1940's education has been viewed by successive governments in Sri Lanka as a strategy for reducing social injustices and inequalities, narrowing the gap between the have and the have nots and enhancing developing. This commitment to education is safeguarded and guaranteed in the 1978 constitution of Sri Lanka which states in the article 27 that "the complete eradication of illiteracy and assurance to all persons of the right to universal and equal access to education at all levels."

(1)

As a consequence of this political commitments educational reforms and measures were introduced over the last five decades making education compulsory upto the age of 14, expanding education through a network of primary and secondary school spread throughout the island and democratising education by the introduction of free education from the kindergarten through university, making the mothertongue the medium of instruction at all levels, providing a common curriculum including Science and English for all schools upto the GCE (O/L), establishing wide range

of scholarships inclusive of the university and giving free mid-day meals and books.

Studies however, revealed that in achieving national goal it is the investment in primary education that is most rewarding. The World Bank Report 1987 states that investment in primary education in developing countries gives 100 percent more economic return than the same investment in physical assets. It further goes on to state that the rate of economic return of investment in primary education are considerably higher than that in secondary and tertiary education. (2) This provides the rational for stabilising a sound primary education and functional literacy as a necessary foundation for national development.

Because of the various educational programmes implemented over the past five decades Sri Lanka's primary school enrolment rate rose from 57.6 percent in 1946 to 83.7 percent in 1981 while literacy rate of those 10 years and over has increased from 62.8 percent in 1946 to 84.2 percent in 1985/86. (3)

Despite all these developments in primary education in 1985/86, 478,000 children or 13.0 percent of primary school going age (5-14 years old) children (21.5 percent of 5-9 age children and 4.2 percent of 10-14 age children) have had no schooling. (4) During school census year 1986/87, of the total students population from Grade 1 to 8, 4.25 percent had dropped out. The rate varied from 0.88% in grade 1 to 3.06% in grade 3, and from 5.21% in grade 4 to 7.11% in grade 8. (5) This data reveals that Sri Lanka is still far from achieving universal primary education.

Sector wise analysis shows that the difference in the rate of non school

admittance among primary school going age children between the urban sector and rural sector is minimal (10.6 percent in the urban sector and 11.7 percent in the rural sector), but this rate is relatively very higher in the estate sector (37.7 percent). (6) However, in the inter-sectoral analysis it seems that there are several sub locations with lower rate of school participation in terms of non admittance, late admittance, repetitions and drop outs in the rural sector as well as in the urban sector. While in the rural sector these sub locations are remote areas in the interior of the island and the eastern coast where the rural muslims live in the urban sector they are slum and shanty settlements.

Slum and shanty settlements can be seen in the city of Colombo and in provincial towns such as Jaffna, Batticaloa, Kandy, Dehiwela, Mount Lavinia, Kalutara and Moratuwa. But the largest number of slums and shanties are in the city of Colombo. Contrary to the people living in the estate sector and in remote areas, slum and shanty dwellers living in the urban sector particularly in the city of Colombo are in the close proximity to good schools and other basic facilities such as health centres and roads. In this context it is important to study why there is low school participation in slums and shanties in the city of Colombo. Proper understanding of this problem would lead the planners to raise primary school enrolment among the children in slum and shanty settlements in Colombo city, other urban areas; and thereby to improve the national level of primary school enrolment even by a small percentage.

It was decided therefore, to make a preliminary study of the problem - non enrolment, late admission, irregular attendance and early drop outs, among the children in primary school going age in slum and shanties in Colombo city and to identify the reasons for under utilization of educational facilities available to them.

Objectives

In order to obtain background knowledge which would be necessarily useful for a detail study the preliminary study is mainly aimed to:

(i) Gather information on the socio-economic background of the slum and shanty dwellers in the Colombo city.

(ii) Conduct an exploratory study regarding;

(a) level of school participation,

(b) reasons for low school participation among primary school going age children, (i) in a limited sample of 4 slum and shanty settlements in Colombo city specifically and (ii) in all slum and shanty settlements in Colombo city in general.

Methodology

Collection of data necessary for this study was done on a multi-method basis.

(i) Going through the literature relevant to the problem

(ii) Examine the readily available educational statistics.

(iii) Discussing with the officials in relevant governmental and non-governmental institutions such as Ministry of Education, National Institute of Education (NIE), Faculty of Education of University of Colombo, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), National Housing Development Authority (NHDA), Urban Development Authority (UDA), Institute of Marga and Redd Barna; and individuals who are interested in the problem.

(iv) Interviewing parent and when necessary children in a purposive sample of 40 families in 1 slum settlement and 3 shanty settlements in 2 wards of Colombo Municipality area namely Dematagoda and Wanathamulla. Sample ratio is 7.3 percent. (See Table 1)

While information was collected in general about the total number of 81 children who are in primary school going age in 40 families, information was collected in detail of only 34 children who are not in school, particularly regarding the reasons for their non school participation. Though a pre-determined simple questionnaire was used in these interviews, informal discussions were also conducted to gather more details.

Table 1 - Purposive sample of slum and shanty families

Slum/shanty settlements	Condition	Total No. of families	No. of families interviewed	% of families interviewed
181/A, Aramaya Place, Dematagoda	Improved	89	10	11.2
186, Aramaya Place, Dematagoda	Not improved	60	10	16.7
66, Aramaya Place, Dematagoda	-do-	150	10	6.7
54, Watta, Baseline Rd, Wanathamulla	-do-	248	10	4.0
Total		547	40	7.3

Background Information of Slum and Shanty Settlement of Colombo City

Colombo became the capital of the Island after 1815 when British Rulers who already ruled the maritime provinces captured the Kandyan kingdom. The city grew rapidly in the 19th century. Because of its strategic position it became the centre for commerce and shipping. The small sea port was transformed to a protected harbour and it was developed as the principal port of the island.

By mid 19th century residential areas of the city were confined to the present Fort, Pettah and Hultsdorf areas and in the late 19th century this expanded towards Mutuwal, Maradana, Slave Island and Kollupitiya. In the 20th century expansion of the city was restricted by the Kelani River on the north, by water logged areas on the east and by the sea on the west. Therefore, expansion of Colombo largely confined to the South and South-East. Colombo city which consists of 47 wards at present is the financial and commercial centre of the country. Although administration centre has now been shifted to the suburb of Sri Jayawardenapura, a major share of administrative functions are still remaining in Colombo city.

Residential areas of the most deprived and underprivileged people in Colombo city are identified as slums and shanty dwellers. The slums are mainly of two types. They are (i) tenement houses and (ii) old houses in areas of urban decay and are now sub divided into small units.

With the growth of the plantation sector in the country industrial and commercial ventures were expanding in the Colombo city. The industries of processing, packing, storage, shipping etc. of plantation products in Colombo city required a big labour force. During this period people migrated to Colombo from various parts of the island to engage in the newly created labour activities.

The first category of slums - slum tenements - were built to be rented out to new labour force in the city. These houses were mostly privately owned and built before the introduction of Rent Control and Municipal Building by-laws. They were built in close vicinity to the working places like the harbour, factories and stores.

The tenements are single roomed units occupied by one family. These were built in rows, occasionally with an open verandah. Each row consists of about 10 rooms and has common water and toilet facilities. They are usually situated in a block of land generally called a "garden" (Waththa) and hence they have common garden. Tenement gardens vary widely in size, containing anything from five and hundred tenements. With the introduction of rent control the housing landlords found it no longer profitable to maintain these tenements. The neglect of the buildings, lack of maintenance, over-crowding, over-use of the limited facilities and lack of adequate sanitary facilities led to rapid deterioration of these tenements over the years.

The slum houses are the once residential houses occupied by the middle class

people and the urban elite. With the expansion of the commercial and trading activities into these residential areas, in the late 19th century, the owners shifted to the less congested areas of the city, and part of the vacated houses which was not used as stores and offices, were sub divided into small slum units and occupied by the low income workers of the city. The absence of repairs and maintenance and over crowding accelerated the deterioration and soon reduced these houses to the slum condition.

Shanties were originally put up by people who lost their houses by floods etc. Later these houses have been built by people coming mainly from suburbs and rural areas in search of city facilities.

The large majority of shanties are temporary structures built hastily of non durable materials such as cadjan, cheap wood; and plank, tin and old zink sheets while some of them are semi-permanent structures built of a mix of temporary and permanent materials. These houses have been built on private, government or municipal lands by squatters coming mainly from suburbs and rural areas who have no legal right to these lands. Generally, these are low lying marshy lands which are in most cases, not economically viable to utilise or not marketable and are occasionally road reservations. For obtaining water and easy disposal of sewerage, generally shanties were built near river or canal banks, public baths and latrines and water logged areas where temporary wells could be dug. In many instances shanties can be seen as shanty gardens (clusters) and sometimes they can be seen in rows but with separate entrances. Some gardens or clusters are really a mix of both slum type and shanty type houses. This is partly due to some of the married children of families having moved into newly built shanties in the same tenement gardens.

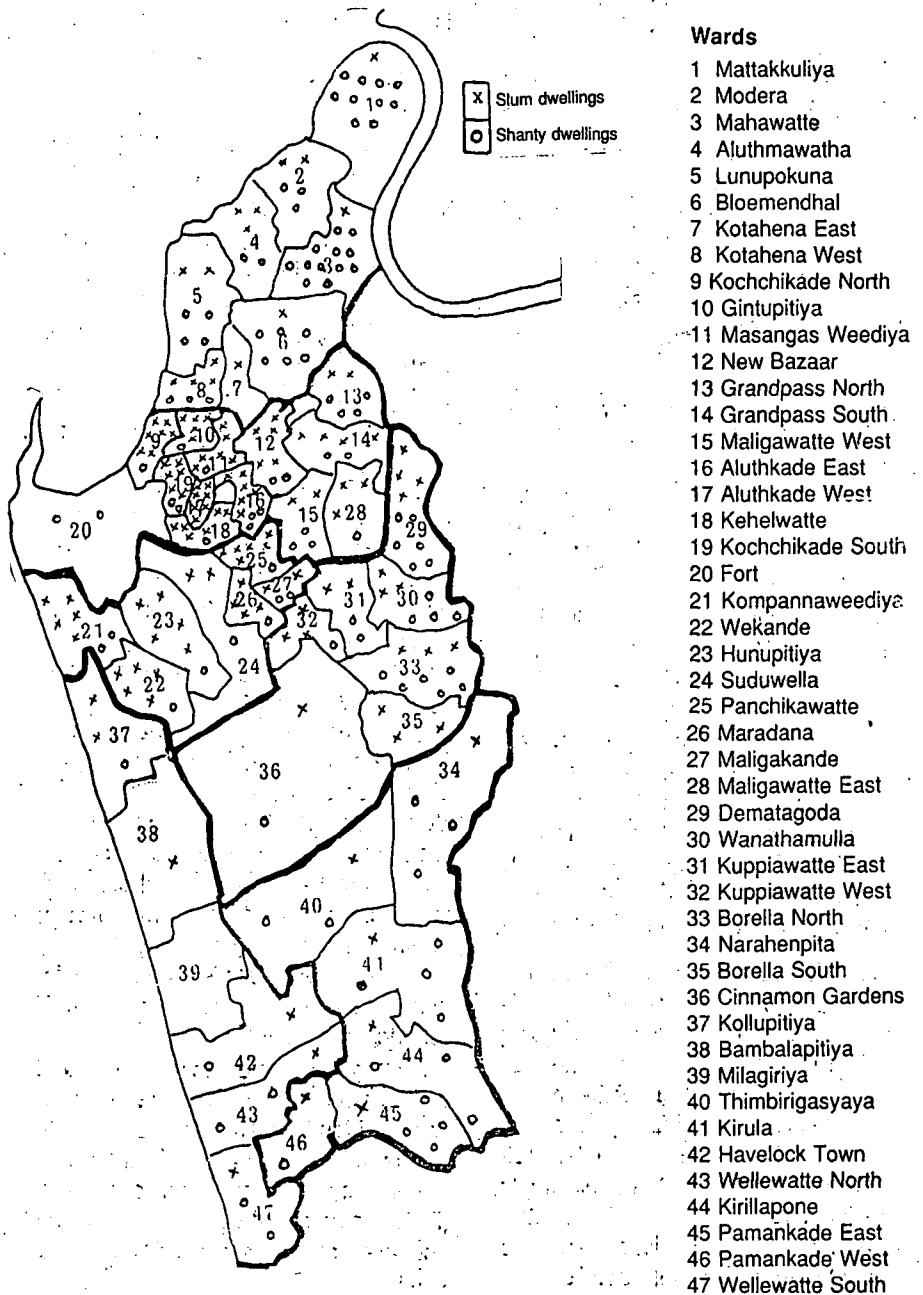
Studies have shown that conditions in these housing settlements are not conducive to healthy and decent living. Generally both these slums and shanty dwellings are overcrowded and congested due to the inadequacy of floor areas and number of rooms; and the

lack ventilation owing to the inadequacy of doors and windows. Part of these slums and the large majority of shanties are single roomed while the average floor areas of slums and shanties are about 300 sq. ft. and 150 sq. ft. respectively. The large majority of shanties have only one door without any windows. Sanitary facilities and basic amenities in both types of settlements in terms of water service and toilet facilities etc. are very poor. In case of shanties generally one road tap and one common toilet serves about 50 shanty units. In some instances there is not even a

single toilet for an entire shanty settlement. Environments of both types of these settlements are very unclean, noisy and troublesome. Diseases, particularly water borne diseases, malnutrition child mortality and infant mortality are comparatively higher among them owing to lack of sanitary facilities and unhealthy environment.

However, as a result of the introduction of laws restricting the ownership of houses, after mid 1970's a considerable number of slum dwellers became the owners of the slums. The transfer of

Density of Slum And Shanty Dwellings in The City of Colombo



slum ownership encouraged a good part of these slum dwellers to improve the conditions of their slum dwellings.

Since late 1970's through the implementation of various types of urban sector housing development programmes such as Urban Basic Services Programme (UBS), Slum and Shanty Upgrading Programme (SSU), Community Development Programme, and Urban Housing Sub Programme (UHSA) of the Million Houses Programme (MHP), a large number of slum dwellings were provided with some basic amenities while about half the shanty dwellings were up-graded to a certain level. However, these developments are not enough to meet dwellers' basic requirements adequately. Nearly half the shanty dwellers have not received any basic facility yet and they remain the most deprived and underprivileged section of the city.

One study reveals that in 1979 about half of the total population in Colombo city lived in unfavourable housing settlements of slums and shanties. (7) According to another recent survey at the end of 1987 almost half of the total housing stock in the city was slum type upgraded old settlements and shanties (27 percent was slum types upgraded old settlements and 23 percent was shanties.) (8) The same survey reveals that by that time 17 percent of the city population or about 109,000 people were in the shanties while it is estimated that 29 percent of the city population or about 180,000 people were in the slum settlements. (See table 2.)

At present slums and shanty settlements are scattered in every ward of the city but at different levels of concentration (see map). Relatively higher concentration of slum settlements can be seen in the wards around Fort and Pettah – the centre of the trading and commercial activities of the city, particularly in the wards such as Kochchikade North, Kochchikade South, Ginthupitiya, Masangas Weediya, Aluthkade East, Aluthkade West, Kehelwatta and Panchikawatta. Shanty settlements are highly concentrated in the wards in the Northern and Eastern fringe of the city such as Mattakkuliya, Modera, Bloemendhal, Grandpass North, Dematagoda, Wanathamulla and Borella North. It can be seen relatively very low concentration of slum and shanty settlements in a cluster of wards such as Cinnamon Gardens, Bambalapitiya, Miligiriya and Havelock Town where there are residences of the middle class and elites.

When the age composition of the slum and shanty population of the city is analysed it can be seen that children in the 6-14 year age group, who belong to the target group for primary school going age children, constitute about 28 percent and 36 percent of the slum population and shanty population respectively. Children 5 years and below who will enter the target group in the coming years are about 8 percent and 11 percent of the slum population and the shanty population respectively. As the date suggests the problem of primary school going is more serious among shanty settlements since they have higher percentage of children belonging

to this age group. However, average household size is higher in slum (5.8) than in shanties (5.2) since there is a lower percentage of older people in shanties.

The large sector of the labour force of these slum and shanty settlements engaged in blue collar work, while a small percentage of them engage in clerical and professional work. Most of the white collar and blue collar workers are in the fields of commerce, trade and services. They engage in work of working places and institutions like the harbour, Pettah Market and Colombo Municipal Council. Their working places are in the vicinity of their housing settlements or in the close distance which can be reached quickly by easy transport. A considerable number of women too work in Middle-East countries as domestic servants. Further, in areas which are predominantly slum and shanty areas informed economic activities are very high and women and children too in these areas engage in these activities to earn their living.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF NON SCHOOL PARTICIPATION RATES

It is difficult to compare the non school participation rate of children in slums and shanties in Colombo City with the national or sectoral rates because though few studies have been done on school participation rates of children at national level and sectoral level and in slums and shanties in Colombo city these studies are not based on the same age group.

Non School admittance

School participation rate of 40 slum and shanty families which was surveyed in this study could not be properly used for this type of comparison mainly because of smallness of the sample. However, attempts were made to compare non school participation rate in slums and shanties in Colombo city with the national and sectoral rates using available survey results though they are based on different age groups.

A survey conducted on a sample of 2,337 slum and shanty families in the city of Colombo in 1984 by the Non-formal Education Branch of the Ministry of Education reveals that 19.3 percent

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Table 2

Distribution of Housing Stock and Population in Colombo City at the end of 1987 by Type of Housing

Type of Housing	Housing Units		Population	
	No.	%	No.	%
Good houses	40,861	49.64	337,000	53.83
Upgraded old settlement	22,338	27.14	180,000	28.75
Shanties	19,118	23.22	109,000	17.41
Total	82,317	100.00	626,000	100.00

Source: Report on the survey of squatter settlements in the city of Colombo

Note: Population in upgraded old settlements (slums) was estimated by using the average number of members in a slum housing unit in 1979 as revealed by the Policy Paper of Slum and Shanty Upgrading in Colombo Municipal Council.

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of children within 6-8 year age group and 9.8 percent of children within 9-14 years age group in these slum and shanty families had not been admitted to school. (9) (See Table 3).

The Labour Force and Socio-economic Survey of 1985/86 reveals that 21.5 percent of children within 5-9 year age group in the island had not been admitted to school. According to the same survey percentage for the children in same age group in urban sector, rural sector and estates sector were 18.0 percent, 20.3 percent and 46.0 percent respectively. From the above two surveys it is observed that non school admittance rate is slightly lower among the children within 6-8 year age group in slums and shanties in Colombo City compared to the national average.

However, the rate of non school admission among children within the 5-9 age group is higher in the Labour Force and Socio-Economic Survey particularly due to inclusion of 5 year old children. Rate of non school admission is comparatively higher among 5 year old children in the Labour Force and Socio-Economic Survey mainly due to two reasons. (i) Generally 5 year old children form and highest percentage of those admitted late to school, (ii) Some of the children who have completed 5 years at the time of conducting the national survey (Labour Force and Socio-Economic Survey) has not completed 5 years in January of that year. Therefore, these children had not been admitted to school when the national survey was conducted. Under these conditions it is expected that the rate of non-school admittance is higher among 5-9 years age group than the 6-8 year age group at the national level as well as at sub levels.

Though the non school admittance rate was slightly higher among the children within the 5-9 age group in the country than among the 6-8 age groups in slums and shanties in Colombo city, according to above explanation it can be reasonably expected that non school admittance rate among early primary school going age children should be higher in slums and shanties in Colombo city than in all the country. This situation is more clear in shanty settlements than slum settle-

ments in the city. According to the same analysis the rate of non school admittance among early primary school going age children should be much higher in slum and shanty settlements in Colombo city than in the rural sector. It is clear that compared to the urban sector, rate of non school admittance is very much higher among the children in slums and shanties in Colombo city. However, compared to the estate sector an educationally most disadvantaged sector - it is very obvious that the rate of non school admittance is very low. A survey conducted in 1985 by the Non-Formal Education Branch of the Ministry of Education reveals that 11.3 percent of children within the 6-8 year age group in a set of interior villages (old villages and colonies) in the Anuradhapura District - educationally disadvantage area - had not been admitted to school. (10) Compared even with the situation in a remote area in the interior a higher percentage of children within the same age group (6-8 years) in slums and shanties in Colombo city had not been admitted to school.

According to the Labour Force and Socio-Economic Survey of 1985/86, 4.8 percent of children in late primary school going age of 10-14 years in the country

had not been admitted to school while that percentages according to the same survey for the children in same age group in urban sector, rural sector and estates sector were 4.1%, 2.9% and 24.9% respectively. (11) Accordingly as shown in Table 4, when late primary school going age children are considered it is very clear that the rate of non school admittance is very higher in slums and shanties in Colombo city than in the all island. In the sectoral analysis it can be seen that the rates of non school admittance are very higher in slums and shanties in Colombo City compared to Urban sector and rural sector. However, again non school admittance rate is lower in the slums and shanties in Colombo city than the estate sector. According to the survey conducted in 1985 in a set of interior villages in Anuradhapura district, 5.7 percent of children within 9-14 year age group in these villages had not been admitted to school. (12) Accordingly rate of non school admittance among the children within 9-14 age group is higher in slums and shanties in Colombo city than the interior villages.

Late School admittance

According to a recent Case Study on primary schooling in 4 slum and shanty

Table 3

Rates of non-school admittance among early primary school going age children			
Area/Sector	Age group	Year	% of non School admittance
Colombo Slums	6-8 age group	(1984)	16.7
Colombo Shanties	6-8 age group	(1984)	22.1
Colombo Slum and Shanties	6-8 age group	(1984)	19.3
Urban Sector	5-9 age group	(1985/86)	18.0
Rural Sector	5-9 age group	(1985/86)	20.3
Estate Sector	5-9 age group	(1985/86)	46.0
All Island	5-9 age group	(1985/86)	21.5

Sources: 1. Report on Baseline Survey on the Educational Needs of Non-school Going Children Among Low Income Groups in the City of Colombo
2. Labour Force and Socio-economic Survey 1985/86, Sri Lanka.

Table 4

Rates of non-school admittance among late primary school going age children			
Area/Sector	Age group	Year	% of non school admittance
Colombo slums	9-14 age group	(1984)	7.8
Colombo shanties	9-14 age group	(1984)	11.7
Colombo slums and shanties	9-14 age group	(1984)	9.8
Urban Sector	10-14 age group	(1985-86)	4.1
Rural Sector	10-14 age group	(1985/86)	2.9
Estate Sector	10-14 age group	(1985/86)	24.9
All Island	10-14 age group	(1985/86)	4.2

Sources: 1. Report on Baseline Survey on the Educational Needs of Non school going Children Among Low Income Groups in the City of Colombo.
2. Labour Force and Socio-Economic Survey 1985-86, Sri Lanka.

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communities in Colombo city out of the total number of primary school going age children in these 4 communities 21 percent had been admitted to school later than the normal school admission age. Children who had got late to be admitted to school had been late for 1-5 years. While 13 percent and 4 percent had been admitted one year later (13) and 2 years later respectively the balance percent had been admitted more than 2 years later. Due to the non availability of late admittance rates among primary school going age children at national level of sectoral levels, it is not possible to compare the rate of late school admittance among children in slums and shanties in Colombo city, with that of all the island and sectors.

According to the same case study when only the children who had been admitted late to school was considered 67 percent, 23 percent and 10 percent had been admitted late to school by 1 year, by 2 years and by more than 2 years respectively. According to the school census in 1986 in the island, of the children those who had been admitted late to school 74 percent, 16 percent and 10 percent had been late to school by 1 year, 2 years and more than 2 years respectively. (14) If these two sets of data are examined it is clear that out of the children who had been admitted late to school, higher percentage had been by more than one year later in the slums and shanty settlements than to the all island.

Early School drop outs

The survey conducted in 1984 by the Non Formal Education Branch of the Ministry of Education revealed that of the children who entered school and belonged to the 6-8 age group and were living in slums and shanties in Colomb city, 22.3 percent were early school drop outs. This was 21.0 percent for slums and 23.7 percent for shanties. (15) According to the school census in 1985 the national drop out rates for grades 1, 2 and 3 were 1.3 percent, 1.7 percent and 3.7 percent respectively. National average drop out rates for grades 1, 2 and 3 was 2.2 percent. (16) Children studying in grade 1 to 3 in schools are generally belong to 6-8 age group. But

Table 5

Rate of School dropout among early primary school going age children		
Areas	Year	% dropouts
Colombo slums, 6-8 age group,	(1984)	21.0
Colombo shanties, 6-8 age group,	(1984)	23.7
Colombo slums & shanties, 6-8 group	(1984)	22.3
All Island, grade 1-3	(1985)	2.2

Sources: 1. Report on the Baseline Survey on the Education Needs of the Non-school Going Children Among Low Income Groups in the City of Colombo.
2. School Census 1985, Ministry of Education

Table 6

Rate of School drop-outs among late primary school going age children			
Area	Age group	Year	% of school dropouts
Colombo slums,	9-14 age group	(1984)	22.7
Colombo shanties	9-14 age group	(1984)	21.7
Colombo slums & shanties	9-14 age group	(1984)	22.1
All Island Grade 3-8		(1985)	6.1

Source: 1. Report on the Baseline Survey on the Education Needs of the Non-school Going Children Among Low Income Groups in the City of Colombo.

2. School Census 1985, Ministry of Education

Table 7

Primary School Going Age Children In The Sample by Type Of Schooling									
Children attending school			Children not attending school					Grand Total	
Admitted at correct admission age to school	Admitted late to school	Sub Total	Not admitted to school					Sub Total	
			Still in school admission age	Passed school admission age	Sub Total	Dropped out			
36 (44.4)	11 (13.6)	47 (58.0)	8 (9.9)	7 (8.6)	15 (18.5)	19 (23.5)	34 (42.0)	81 (100.0)	

drop out rates of these 2 sets of children (children within 6-8 age group living in Colombo slums and shanties, and children studying in grades 1, 2 and 3 in government school) cannot be compared accurately. This is because in case of 'Slum and Shanty children those who dropped out from school upto that particular year has been considered as drop outs while in case of school census (of children studying in grade 1, 2 and 3 in all government schools in the island) those who dropped out from school within that particular year has been considered as drop outs. That was the main reason for large difference in drop out rates between children in slums and shanties (22.3%) and children in all island (2.2). However, this large difference apparently

indicates that school drop out rates among early primary school going age children are higher in both slums and shanties in the city when compared to the national average (see table 5).

The same survey revealed that the children who had entered school and belonged to the 9-14 years age group and were living in slums and shanties in the city, 22.1 percent had dropped out of school. (17) For the 1985 school census year national school drop out rates varied from 3.7 percent in grade 3 to 7.7 percent in Grade 8. The average national drop out rate for grades 3 to 8 was 6.1 percent. Thus apparently, rates of school drop out among late primary school going age children are higher in both slums and shanties in Colombo city than the national average. (See table 6).

It is also observed that though the drop-out rate is higher among the higher age group children at the national level there is no significant change in this rate between low age group children and higher age group children in slums and shanties in Colombo city. In other words compared to the national situation, in Colombo slum and shanties more children are drop out at their younger ages (See table 5 and 6).

When examining the 40 families surveyed in this study of 81 children in primary school going age, 47 children (58%) are attending school while the balance 34 children (42%) are not attending. (See table 7). Of 47 children attending school only 36 children (44.4%) have been admitted to school at the correct school admission age while the other 11 children (13.6%) have been admitted late. When examining 34 children who are not attending school 15 children (18.5%) had not been ever admitted to school. However, about half of them (8 children) are within the 6-9 year age group and therefore it can be expected that part of them may be admitted to school during the next 2 or 3 years as late school entrants. The other half of the children (7 children) would not enter the formal school system since they have passed even the late school admission age. 19 children (56% of children who are not attending school or 24 percent of total number of children in primary school going age) have dropped

out before completing their primary schooling. (See table 7).

Accordingly if comparisons are made it is clear that school non participation rates i.e. school non admittance and school drop outs are much higher among primary school going age children in 40 families in the 4 slum and shanty settlements surveyed compared with slum and shanty settlements in Colombo city. (See table 8 and 9).

Reasons for Low School Participation

In this study information gathered from relevant literature, officials, individuals interested in the problem, and parents and children of the sample was used to identify and analyse the reasons contributing to low school participation among primary school going age children in 40 families in 4 slum and shanty settlements in particular and in all slum and shanty settlements in Colombo city in general. These reasons vary from poverty to poor health of child, lack of school facilities, family dispute absence of parents, parental negligence, change of residence, non availability of birth certificates, poor housing, distributing environment etc. while poverty and poor health are given more prominence. Though there are relationships at various levels among these reasons, in the analysis reasons are discussed separately for easy presentation. at the

analysis of each reason first analyse how it effects non school participation among children in 40 families in the sample specifically and then in all slum and shanty settlements in Colombo city in general. (See table 10).

Poverty

As explained in table 10 of 34 children not attending school 7 children do so mainly because of poverty. Of them 4 children have not been admitted to school since their parents could not incur expenditure on children's school admission. One child has stopped his schooling since his parents could not spend to maintain him at school. Another female child has been compelled to stop her schooling to engage in a casual job at a garment factory. Another female child had stoped her schooling mainly to engage in household work and to look after younger brothers and sisters.

Though teaching, text books and mid-day meals for school children are provided free, some money has to be spent by the parents on children's admission fees, facility fees, clothes, writing and drawing material and other requirements. Families those living below poverty line in slum and shanty settlements in Colombo city find even a little expenditure on their children's education as a big burden. Most of them are not in a position to spend to admit their children to school and maintained them there. High inflation of school stationery over the past and high school admission fees (ranging from Rs 200/- to Rs 350/-) has further aggravated this problem.

In addition to the cost of education the opportunity cost of education has also contributed to keep these children out of school. With or without their willingness children are compelled to leave school before completing their primary education in order to supplement their family budgets by working in the informal sector such as petty trade, street vending manual work and domestic service in middle class houses. Female children are forced to stay at home without schooling to help in household work and look after younger siblings. Since their parents generally engage in casual or temporary jobs their meager earning

Table 8

Rates of non-school admittance among primary school going age children in the sample, in slums and shanties in Colombo city and in all Island			
Area/Sector	Age group	Year	% of non admittance
40 slum and shanty families surveyed (sample)	5-14 age group	(1990)	18
Colombo slum and shanties	6-14 age group	(1984)	13
All Island	5-14 age group	(1985/86)	13

Table 9

Rate of School drop outs among primary school going age children in the sample in slums and shanties in Colombo City and in all Island			
Area/Sector	Age group	Year	% school drop outs
40 slums & shanties	5-14 age group	(1990)	29.8
Colombo slums and shanties	6-14 age group	(1984)	23.0
All Island Gr. 1-8	5-14 age group	(1985)	4.6

are subject to higher fluctuations due to a variety of reasons. When earnings come down it badly affects the children's schooling.

The survival needs of the poor families in these settlements surpasses the educational needs of their children. Their poverty has prevented them from making use of even available educational facilities.

Inadequacies of the formal school system

Four children are not in school due to the inadequacies of the formal school system. Of them 3 children had not been admitted to school. Though parents of 2 children had sent applications to admit them to schools very close to their settlements, the schools did not admit the children. According to these parents, when they inquired later, they have been informed that these children were not admitted due to the lack of facilities in these schools. While 2 of these 3 children are only 6 year olds, the other one is a 9 year old. Parents of the 9 year old child had not tried more than once to admit their child to a school partly because of parents indifference. The other 13 year old child had stopped his schooling at the age of 11 years. The reason given by the child for this is that number of teachers to teach in his class were insufficient. The parents also have not taken enough interest to send him to another school.

Unlike the primary school going age children in remote areas, children in slum and shanty settlements in Colombo city have easy physical access to more than one school. But these schools are not able to absorb all the children seeking admission due to lack of facilities or some other reasons, this situation leads to a high rate of non admittance and late school admittance among children in slums and shanties in the city.

Compared with city schools catering to the children of middle class and city elite, schools which serve predominantly the children of slums and shanties are highly disadvantaged and ill equipped in terms of inadequate classrooms, insufficient furniture, non availability of ade-

quate and/or qualified teaching staff and lack of pure water and sanitary facilities etc. In addition to these disadvantages the class room environment and teaching methods in these schools are not attractive to retain pupils. All these negative features contribute to a high incidents of irregular school attendance, class repetitions and early school leavings. As a result of children's stubborn behaviour or lack of discipline, irregular school attendance, lack of attention on studies and non availability of necessary school stationery and inadequacy of teaching and other physical facilities in schools teachers have little interest in teaching in these underprivileged schools. This has a further negative effect on children's school performances.

age. The parents have not made any other attempts to admit him to another school. However, they send the child to the evening classes conducted in the same school. One child had been admitted to school at the correct admission age. However, since the child could not speak properly both teachers and parents have allowed the child to stop schooling at the age of 7. Another child who had been admitted to school suffered from illnesses frequently, as a result of that he had repeated grades 4 times when he reached grade 3. Since the class teacher of this child had asked the parents to stop his schooling, the parents have done so. Another child had refused to go to school at grade 4 after staying at home for about one year under

Table 10 Children not attending school in the sample by reason for not attending

Reason	Children not Admitted to School		Total	Children dropped out of school	Grand Total
	Still in school admission age	Passed School admission age			
1. Poverty	2 (25.0)	2 (28.6)	4 (26.7)	3 (15.8)	7 (20.6)
2. Inadequacies of the formal school system	2 (25.0)	1 (14.3)	3 (20.0)	1 (5.3)	4 (11.8)
3. Ill-health of children	1 (12.5)		1 (6.7)	3 (15.8)	4 (11.8)
4. Low aspiration, negative feelings and indifference towards school education				2 (10.5)	2 (5.9)
5. Absent of parent	1 (12.5)	1 (14.3)	2 (13.3)	4 (21.0)	6 (17.6)
6. Dispute in families		1 (14.3)	1 (6.7)	4 (21.0)	5 (14.7)
7. Change of residence				2 (10.5)	2 (5.9)
8. Non-availability of birth certificates	2 (25.0)	2 (28.6)	4 (26.7)		4 (11.8)
Total	8 (100.00)	7 (100.0)	15 (100.0)	19 (100.0)	34 (100.0)

Illhealth of children

As a result of illhealth 4 children are not attending school. One child had suffered from measles at the age of 6 and chickenpox at the age of 7. When the parents attempted to admit him to the nearest school at the age of 8 the school had refused to admit him. According to his parents the reasons given for refusal was that the child was over-

medical treatment. Though the child was in a position to re-start his schooling after his recovery parents had not given enough interests to that matter.

Studies reveal that malnutrition is very high among the children in poor slum and shanty families in Colombo city. This weakens learning capacity of children and contributes to keep a large number of these children out of school.

Provision of mid-day meal in forms of biscuits, kola-kenda (and later granting money for mid-day meals) to school going children has not had desired impact on strengthening their nutritional status (18). Children in slums and shanties constantly subject to illnesses and diseases mainly because of lack of pure water and sanitary facilities. Due to prolonged ill-health or disease these children are admitted late or not admitted to school, their attendance is highly irregular and thus they repeat grades many times and drop out of school at early stages. Comparatively the handicapped and disabled children are more in these slum and shanty settlements partly due to the poor nutrition of pregnant mothers and mothers negligence in child bearing. Almost all these handicapped and disabled children are not in school since their parents have not made attempts to send them to other schools specialised for these type of children.

Low aspiration, Negative feelings and indifference towards school education

Two school drop-outs or their parents could not give any direct reason for the dropping out. However, during indepth informal discussions conducted with the parents the author realised that there was negligence, negative feeling and low aspiration towards the children's school education. Parent of a male child who dropped out of school at grade 5 expressed the idea that they could not obtain economical gains by giving further school education to their children. Tamil parents of another female child had decided to stop her schooling after she attained puberty at the age of 12 as they think female children should not go to school after attaining puberty.

Low aspiration, negative feelings and indifference of parents of slums and shanties towards their children's education have negative effects on their children's primary education. The low aspirations regards their children's education among the urban poor is associated with their low socio-economic conditions and their low aspirations towards upward social mobility. Their negative feeling towards school education is partly due to their bitter experiences such as

difficulties of admitting their children to schools near-by and due to discrimination taking place even in certain underprivileged schools against their poor children, and due to their lack of confidence towards school and education. Indifference towards education is linked with their low education and lack of awareness of importance of child education. And also this indifference is partly because they are busy with problems related to their essential needs.

Parents lack of knowledge on how to encourage and help children in their studies and schooling also contribute to children's non school attendance in these settlements. Negative attitudes particularly of Muslim and Tamil parents in these settlements that female children should not study beyond mid primary school level, and they should not go to school after attaining puberty keep these female children away from school before they complete even primary schooling.

Low aspiration and negative feelings towards education ultimately result in negligence on a child's education. As a result of negligence some parents in these settlements do not send applications at all or send applications late to the schools to admit their children. In many cases, when parents fail to admit their children to a school near-by they do not try another school in the vicinity. In certain instances when children reached the school admission age parents do not know about that. When handicapped children can not be admitted to the normal school parents do not try to admit them to a specialised school catering to them. All these things contribute to high incidence of non school admittance and late school admittance among these children.

Absence of parents or dispute in the family

Eleven children are not in a school mainly due to absence of their parent and disputes in their families. Of them a 7 year old child had not been admitted to school since his father was a labourer, doing his job at a distant place and was staying there. Child's mother is not knowledgeable enough to follow the

procedure of school admission, and filling up of forms which are necessary when admitting a child. A father had left his four year old child alone at the child's grandmother's house when the child's mother died. Now the child is 9 years but she has not been admitted to school mainly as a result of loss of his parents. A ten year old child has not been admitted to school since his mother lost her way of main income after her husband had left his family when the child was a baby.

A ten year old child had stopped her schooling after the mother's death since the father had no interest to incur expenditure on the child's schooling. Another 10 year old child has stopped his schooling since his father had left him at his grand mother when the child's mother died. A mother of two school going children (8 years and 10 years) had gone to Middle East as a domestic servant and as a result of that after about one year both children had stopped their schooling. However, father also had not paid enough interest on the schooling of these children. Another 3 children in two families had stopped their schooling (at the age of 8, 10 and 13 years respective) after their father had deserted their families. Their mothers lost their main source of income and therefore they could not afford children's school expenses further. Another child had stopped schooling as a result of his father becoming drug addict.

A quite number of mothers in these slums and shanty settlements have migrated to the Middle East countries as domestic servants owing to their poverty and also due to easy access contracting foreign employment agencies in the city. Most of the primary school going children in these families not only discontinue their schooling but also begin to engage in various activities unfavourable to themselves and society since they have been released from the attention of their mothers who had looked after them and their education. Specially the girls are compelled to stay at home to engage in domestic work and to look after their younger sisters and brothers in the absence of mothers.

It is common in these settlements that fathers, in most cases who had been the

breadwinner of the family have left deserting their families. In the cases of these broken families and at the death of either parent or both school going children in these families are compelled to discontinue their schooling due to lack of money to be spent on their schooling or because they have to engage in some work to supplement family budget or they have to engage in household activities.

Over the recent past number of chief households those who becoming drug addicts in these slum and shanty settlements have been increasing rapidly. They weaken themselves and economic conditions of their families very fast and lead family disputes constantly. This affects very badly not only their children's schooling and concentration on studies but also on these children's mental health, personal development and day to day life.

Change of residence

After the communal riots took place in a shanty settlements at the Kelani bridge one family with two female school going children had shifted their residence to a same type of settlement at Baseline Road (54 Watta), which was surveyed. After changing residence parents were not able to re-admit the 2 children to a school in the vicinity of the new settlements as a result of parental negligence and difficulty of re-admitting them to a school in the vicinity.

Considerable number of slum and shanty families particularly, shanty

families change their residence from time to time within the city limits mainly due to the distructions of their house by floods, riots etc. When families with children in school admission age come to new residential areas it is difficult for them to admit their children to a school in the vicinity of new residence. Thus apart of these children admitted late and some of them are never admitted to school. When they shift to a new residential area with school going children, due to the difficulties of re-admitting them to a school near by part of these children became early drop outs of school. However, this situation is partly because they are busy in early days in new settlements with other necessary work such as putting up of new shelters and partly due to their negligence in finding schools in the vicinity of new settlements for their children.

Non availability of birth certificates

Parents could not admit 4 children to school due to non availability of children's birth certificates which are considered necessary documents for their school admission. One family had lost the birth certificate of their two children when their house was set on fire when they were living in another settlement at Sedawatta few years ago. Now both children have passed the school admission age. Parents of another unmarried family explained that though they had made a number of attempts, they could not obtain the birth certificates of their two children yet. However, these children are still in school admission age of 6 years and 8 years respectively.

Considerable number of children in these settlements could not be admitted to schools due to non-availability of their birth certificates. These children do not have their birth certificates due to a number of reasons such as parents have not paid enough interest on registering their children's births. children's birth certificates have been misplaced when slum and shanty dwellers shifted their residents, birth certificates have been victimised to the floods and fires, they were destroyed at the disputes in the families and at the various type of riots in these settlements.

Physical environment of slum and shanty settlements

Studies had proved that there is strong co-relation between home environment and child's educational performances. It is rather difficult for a child to concentrate on studies in noisy and troublesome environment of these settlements. Non-availability of minimum number of furniture necessary for child's studies, lack of space and number of rooms and conjection in these houses disturb child's education very badly. Though slum and shanty children are compelled to attend only to the disadvantaged schools in the city, environmental difference between even these schools and children's homes disturbs the children's education at school.

Conclusion

Non school participation rates are higher among children in slum and shanty settlements in Colombo city compared with the National rate and the Sectoral rates except that for the rural sector owing to a number of factors which are operating more seriously in these settlements against children's schooling. These factors at broader level are poor economic and social conditions, poor health of children, lack of school facilities, parental negligence, disunity in families, change of residence, non availability of children's birth certificates, unfavourable environment and bad housing conditions.

Non school participation rates are higher among children in shanties than among those in slums in Colombo city due to the fact that factors contributing to their low school participation are operating more unfavourably in shanties than in slums.

In contrast to the national situation non school participation is higher among girls than boys in shanty settlements, because compared to the national situation more girls in these settlements are not sent to school after a certain age limit due to their parental attitude and social customs.

According to 1981 census non school attendance rate among primary school

Table 11
Of the children who are attending school in the same those who have been admitted late to school by reasons for late admission

Reasons for late admission	No. of late admittance
Poor economic conditions	3 (27.2)
Incapacity of the formal school system	1 (9.1)
Physical disability of children	2 (18.2)
Change of residence	1 (9.1)
Non availability of birth certificates	4 (36.4)
Total	11 (100.00)

going age children was higher in the Urban sector of Colombo district than in the entire Colombo district⁽¹⁹⁾. This is mainly due to the fact that slums and shanty dwellers among whose non school participation rates are comparatively higher are highly concentrated in the Colombo city (urban sector). Findings of this survey are supportive of this conclusion.

However, according to some case studies there are certain slums and shanty settlements where non school attendance rates among primary school going age children are lower than the national average.⁽²⁰⁾ While a very large majority of parents in slum and shanty settlements send their children to underprivileged schools in the city a very small percentage of parents in these settlements who are having relatively better educational, economical and socio-political capacity together with aspirations for upward social mobility is capable of sending their children to privileged schools in the city.

Within Colombo city limit, between schools catering to the children from slums and shanties and schools catering to the children of the middle class and city elite there is a high disproportion in resource allocation, partly as a result of that, there is a high educational wastage too in the first category of schools.

Though children from slums and shanties could not make full use of even the ill-equipped formal school facilities available for them children of upper middle class in the city make use of better school facilities supplementing these facilities by very efficient private tuition system too⁽²¹⁾.

Problems of charging various forms of school fees and consideration of birth certificate as a necessary document at the time when a child is admitted to schools can be solved by giving necessary instructions to these schools, and thereby non admission and late admission could be reduced to a certain level in these settlements in a very short term. By providing minimum amount of necessary physical requirements to these schools to admit all the children seeking

admission, and by educating these parents about the importance of their children's education, school attendance could be raised by a good percentage in these settlements in the medium term.

Teachers should be appointed to these schools on a selective basis, taking their willingness to work among these children as a main criterion. These teachers should be given a special training to work with these children, and also they should be granted incentives in terms of facilities or remunerations or both. This helps to improve the teacher-student relationship and to retain children in these schools.

Understandably the large majority of the children who have not gone to school are neither literate nor numerate at all, while the majority of the children who dropped out before completing grade 3 (year 4) are not properly literate or numerate. Since the rate of non school admittance and early school leavers are comparatively higher among the children in these settlements it is more important to expand non-formal education classes among them. Otherwise it will be a clear obstacle for these children's future individual development and for proper implementation of development programmes in these settlements.

In the attempts of expanding non-formal education classes among these children making knowledgeable parents and children about the classes and educating them about the importance of the classes, increasing a number of places and times convenient for children are equally important.

This preliminary study suggests to study, in detail, a more representative sample of children in primary school going age and their parents living in slum and shanty houses in Colombo city and schools and teachers catering to these children to:

(i) Analysis socio-economic and cultural background of these slum and shanty dwellings.

(ii) Analyse educational facilities available for children in upper class and middle class families and in slum and

shanty families in Colombo city.

(iii) Find out (a) the rates of various types of non-school participation i.e. non admittance, late admittance, irregular attendance, class repetition and early drop out; and (b) the total non school attendance rates.

(iv) Find out and analyse factors contributing to various types of non-school participation and educational wastage.

These rates and contributory factors should be analysed according to slum and shanty children, male and female children, early primary and late primary school going age children and attempts should be made in possible instances to compare these rates and factors of slums and shanties in Colombo city with that rates and factors of all island, sectors total Colombo city and educationally disadvantaged sub geographical location and sub population groups. Finally this detailed study must try to present possible remedies which could be implemented in order to reduce non school attendance rate in these settlements.

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