PRIMARY SCHOOLING IN SLUMS AND SHANTIES : A CASE STUDY OF FOUR SLUM AND SHANTY COMMUNITIES IN COLOMBO

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Abstract

The growing recognition that pure economic criteria do not adequately measure social development, has led to the emergence of a set of social indicators to measure social development. Primary school attendance is one such social indicator. Among the Third World countries, Sri Lanka has achieved a good measure of social development on many indicators including primary school attendance, but with pockets of vulnerable groups where primary school attendance is poor. The urban underprivileged communities are believed to be one such group. This case study of four slum and shanty communities in Colombo reveals that while primary school attendance in these communities is in fact a little better than the national average attendance, yet it is below the Colombo District and Colombo District Urban Sector averages. The study explores the factors contributing to this disparity. A significant finding is that the relatively poor primary school attendance in these communities is less due to poor economic conditions and physical disabilities of the children than is generally believed. The major contributive factors are the incapacity of the schools to absorb all children seeking primary school admission, poor housing conditions, and parental negligence in having children admitted and attend school.

Introduction

In academic literature and policy statements prior to roughly about the 1960's it was customary to view and measure development in the so-called "economic" terms. The level and the rate of growth of the Gross National Product (GNP) and per capita GNP were traditionally used then as major indicators of the level of development a country had reached in relation to other countries and the rate of its development over time. From about the 1960's, however, there has been an

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increasing dissatisfaction over the use of only "economic" indicators to measure development. Development came to be considered a multi dimensional process. As a result it came to be realized that without a set of indicators in which economic, social, political and cultural dimensions in the widest sense of these terms are taken into account, development cannot be measured by using only economic indicators. Such a comprehensive set of development indicators however, could measure the quality of life as it exists in a society at a point of time and its improvement over time and could be considered preferable to purely economic criteria. Among such development indicators primary school enrolment and attendance is considered widely to be a significant one.

A few developing countries, including Sri Lanka have achieved a fair improvement in living standards according to such a wide set of development indicators in spite of their low per capita income levels. In terms of school enrolment in the primary school going age group in Sri Lanka, the country's performance can be considered rather impressive relative to its economic growth particularly and in comparison with other developing countries, some of which would have even higher per capita income levels.

Though Sri Lanka has reached a comparatively high rate of primary school enrolment nationally and at the average level, as in the case of certain other development indicators, it blankets wide disparities among various population groups at the micro level. According to general belief primary school enrolment among the children in economically and socially vulnerable population groups is lower than that of the national average. Among such main population groups recognized as vulnerable in Sri Lanka, the poor living in slums and shanties[1] in the urban sector have drawn the serious attention of researchers over recent years. Colombo, the commercial caiptal of Sri Lanka, consists of a population living in slums and shanties equivalent to a forty five per cent of its total population.[2] Within Sri Lanka it is the city which houses the largest number of slums and shanties.

This study aims at assessing the relative position of the urban poor in Colombo in terms of primary school enrolment rates. It also probes

1. Slums are mainly tenement houses and sub-divided old houses in areas of urban decay. Shanties are built mainly of non-durable materials and constructed by squatters mainly on private, government and municipal land. For further details on slums and shanties in Colombo, see Annexure 1.

2. See Annexure I.

into the allied phenomenon of drop-outs from schools and non-admission of children to school. The study further attempts to uncover the reasons for any differentials that are identified in these phenomena as between the urban poor and the national averages.

Methodology

It was not possible to select a representative sample from the total slum and shanty population in Colombo City because of the non-availability of relevant data on slums and shanties in the City or specific wards to establish a sample frame. What appeared appropriate, in this context particularly given the focus of the study to uncover factors that contribute to lower primary school enrolment and school attendance among the urban underprivileged, was the case study methodology.

With a view to identifying suitable locations for the case studies, discussions were held with the Health Wardens of the Colombo Municipal Council who were used as the front-line community and health welfare workers by the Municipality to improve the quality of life in the underprivileged areas. By a process of discussions and visits to some of the underprivileged areas, four such communities were selected for the case studies. They were not picked at random but purposely from the Dematagoda Ward of the City. The reason for confining them to Dematagoda was that it was a Ward with a high percentage (70 per cent) of slum and shanty dwellers though not in the excessively high range as in some other Wards like Mahawatta and Panchikawatta (vide Table 1.1). That Dematagoda was a fringe ward of the City was not of significance because the adjoining suburb of Kolonnawa (Urban Council) was an urban concentration with characteristics similar to central and eastern regions of the City in which Dematagoda was located (see the Map).

The four communities were at 288 Baseline Road (Community A), with 39 families; 222 Veluwana Road (Community B), with 15 families; 146 Veluwana Road (Community C), with 13 families; and 68 Mahinda Dharma Mawatha (Community D), with 45 families. The composition of the four communities by housing types, viz. slum and shanty is presented in Table 1.2. Community A was predominantly a slum community and located in close proximity to Dematagoda Junction and had access from Baseline Road, the main road that cuts through Dematagoda. Community B was predominantly a shanty

Table 1.1

Estimated POPULATION IN THE CITY OF COLOMBO IN 1984 CLASSIFIED BY TYPE OF HOUSING AND WARD

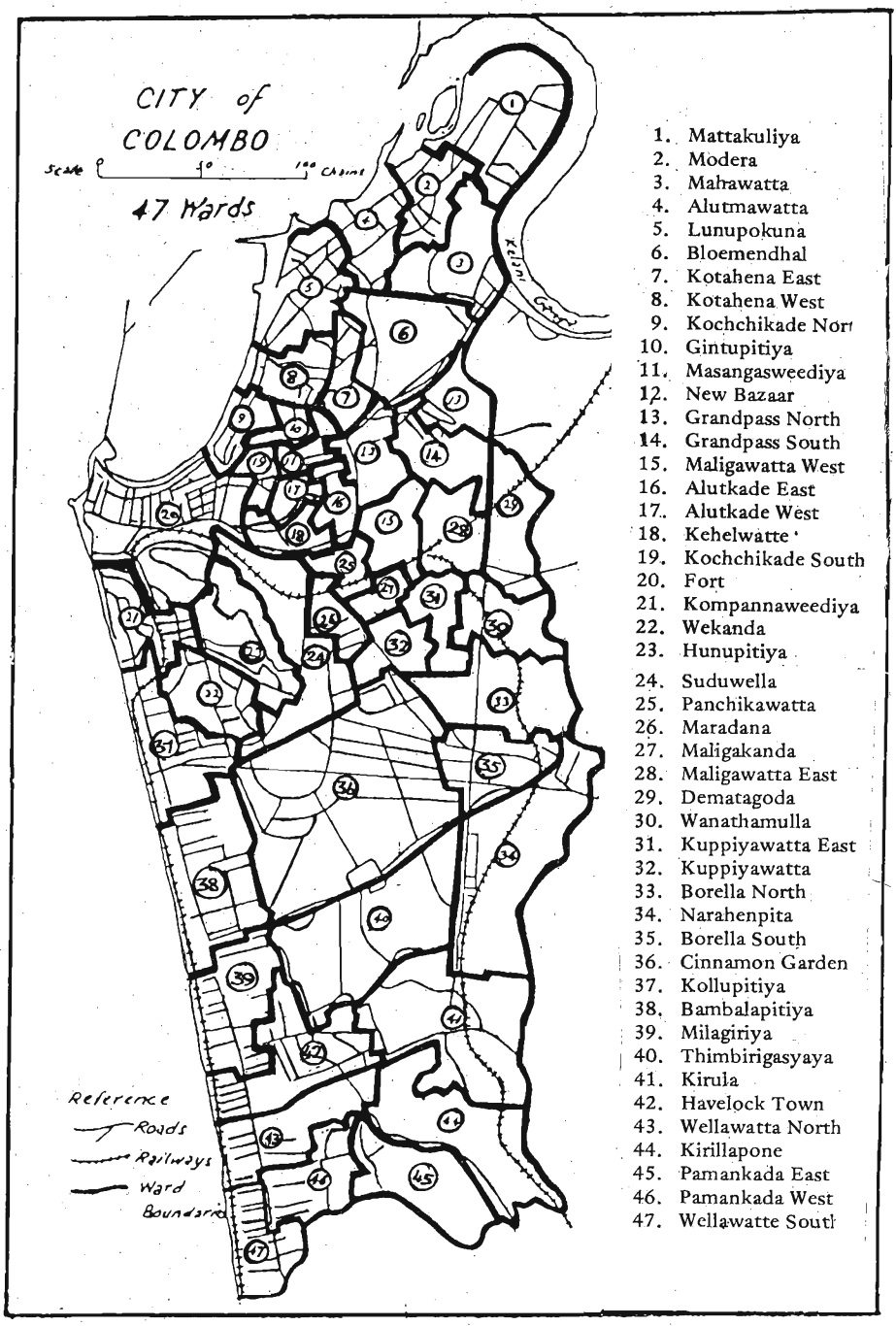
Ward	Population in Slums (1)		Population in Shanties (2)		Population in Slums & Shanties (1 + 2)		Others (3)		Total Population (1 + 2 + 3)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1. Mattakkuliya	1,519	7.9	10,450	54.3	11,969	62.2	7,286	37.8	19,255	100.0
2. Modera	2,551	21.6	3,012	25.5	5,563	47.1	6,263	52.9	11,826	100.0
3. Mahawatta	601	4.0	12,475	82.1	13,076	86.4	2,069	13.6	15,145	100.0
4. Aluthmawatha	3,671	25.7	1,855	13.0	5,5529	38.7	8,751	61.3	14,277	100.0
5. Lunupokuna	2,525	21.9	4,601	38.1	7,126	59.0	4,947	41.0	12,073	100.0
6. Bloemendhal	1,177	7.7	6,652	43.7	7,829	51.4	7,406	48.6	15,235	100.0
7. Kotahena East	563	6.9	228	2.8	791	9.7	7,349	90.3	8,140	100.0
8. Kotahena West	4,405	35.1	2,817	22.5	7,222	57.6	5,325	42.4	12,547	100.0
9. Kochchikade North	7,197	55.4	981	7.5	8,178	62.9	4,828	37.1	13,006	100.0
10. Jinthupitiya Road	5,083	44.6	1,544	13.5	6,627	58.1	4,777	41.9	11,404	100.0
11. Masangasweediya	6,665	66.1	759	7.5	7,424	73.6	2,654	26.3	10,078	100.0
12. New Bazaar	5,523	48.3	2,241	20.3	7,564	68.6	3,462	31.4	11,026	100.0
13. Grandpass North	2,165	17.0	4,019	31.6	6,184	48.6	6,530	51.4	12,714	100.0
14. Grandpass South	3,975	24.8	2,550	15.9	6,525	40.7	9,518	59.3	16,043	100.0
15. Maligawatta East	2,190	13.1	3,424	20.5	5,614	33.6	11,090	66.4	16,704	100.0
16. Aluthkade East	6,253	49.4	3,203	25.3	9,456	74.7	3,197	25.3	12,653	100.0
17. Aluthkade West	7,165	73.6	380	3.9	7,545	77.5	2,194	22.5	9,739	100.0
18. Kehelwatta	6,469	62.9	1,082	10.5	7,551	73.4	2,741	26.6	10,292	100.0
19. Kochchikade South	6,177	53.8	2,620	22.9	8,797	76.7	2,682	23.3	11,479	100.0
20. Fort	06	0.1	2,127	14.2	2,133	14.5	12,620	85.5	14,753	100.0
21. Kompannaweediya	5,209	36.8	2,336	16.5	7,545	53.3	6,613	46.7	14,158	100.0
22. Wekanda	5,487	56.5	1,298	13.4	6,785	69.9	2,919	30.1	9,704	100.0
23. Hunupitiya	4,823	56.4	1,437	16.8	6,260	73.2	2,298	26.8	8,558	100.0

Continued. . .

Table 1.1 (contd.)

Ward	Population in Slums (1)		Population in Shanties (2)		Population in Slums & Shanties (1 + 2)		Others (3)		Total Population (1 + 2 + 3)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
24. Suduwella	2,310	29.1	544	6.8	2,854	35.9	5,097	64.1	7,951	100.0
25. Panchikawatta	9,402	85.9	1,506	13.8	10,908	99.7	35	0.3	10,943	100.0
26. Maradana	4,114	49.6	689	8.3	4,803	57.9	3,491	42.1	8,294	100.0
27. Maligakanda	2,475	25.9	861	9.0	3,336	34.9	6,219	65.1	9,555	100.0
28. Maligawatta East	3,038	24.3	1,519	12.1	4,557	36.4	7,976	63.6	12,533	100.0
29. Dematagoda	4,184	29.2	5,848	40.9	10,032	70.1	4,278	29.9	14,310	100.0
30. Wanathamulla	3,418	23.1	4,620	31.2	8,038	54.3	6,755	45.7	14,793	100.0
31. Kuppiyawatta East	2,355	22.1	1,911	18.0	4,266	40.1	6,372	59.9	10,638	100.0
32. Kuppiyawatta West	3,595	42.8	867	10.3	4,462	53.1	3,947	46.9	8,409	100.0
33. Borella North	3,247	17.8	6,683	36.6	9,930	54.4	8,311	45.6	18,241	100.0
34. Narahenpita	1,538	10.6	3,620	24.9	5,158	35.5	9,380	64.5	14,538	100.0
35. Borella South	3,019	29.0	114	1.1	3,133	30.1	7,282	69.9	10,415	100.0
36. Cinnamon Garden	816	4.7	1,095	6.2	1,911	10.9	15,677	89.1	17,588	100.0
37. Kollupitiya	2,279	19.4	956	8.1	3,235	27.5	8,509	72.5	11,744	100.0
38. Bambalapitiya	892	7.0	367	2.9	1,259	9.9	11,493	90.1	12,752	100.0
39. Milagiriya	430	3.7	215	1.9	645	5.6	10,878	94.4	11,523	100.0
40. Thimbirigasyaya	1,551	11.1	2,228	15.9	3,779	27.0	10,213	73.0	13,992	100.0
41. Kirula	1,576	7.5	4,570	21.7	6,146	29.2	14,888	70.8	21,034	100.0
42. Havelock Town	816	6.9	1,101	9.3	1,917	16.2	9,890	83.8	11,807	100.0
43. Wellawatta North	551	3.9	2,215	15.5	2,766	19.4	11,517	80.6	14,283	100.0
44. Kirillapana	1,544	10.6	3,120	21.3	4,664	31.9	9,970	68.1	14,634	100.0
45. Pamankade East	551	4.0	4,475	32.4	5,026	36.4	8,773	63.6	13,799	100.0
46. Pamankade West	785	7.2	1,095	10.1	1,880	17.3	8,953	82.7	10,838	100.0
47. Wellawatta South	557	4.9	1,791	15.7	2,348	20.6	9,080	79.4	11,428	100.0
TOTAL	146,442	24.5	124,101	20.8	270,543	45.3	326,304	54.7	596,847	100.0

Note: Population in slums and shanties for 1979 was obtained from the Colombo Master Plan Project and total population for 1981 was obtained from the Department of Census and Statistics. Annual population growth rates for Colombo Districts for 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1983 were 1.8, 1.7, 1.1 and 1.5 per cent respectively. Using these data slum population, shanty population, and total population were estimated. (Since population growth rate for 1984 was not worked out yet, growth rate for Colombo District for 1983 was used for 1984 too. And due to the non-availability of separate growth rates for population in slums and shanties, the growth rates for the total population were used to estimate population in slums and shanties.)



Source: Survey General's Department

community while C was predominantly a slum community. Both were located in the high density area around Veluwana Road that runs parallel to Baseline Road and connects Cattle Mart Road to Kolonnawa Road. Community D was almost exclusively a shanty community and part of a bigger area commonly known as Kallipullawatta. It is situated at the very end of Mahinda Dharma Road which is off Baseline Road. It can also be approached by a path-way from Kolonnawa Road.

Non-availability of precise data on housing and population of slum and shanty dwellers made it problematic to bring rigour into the methodology. However, with available data, the population coverage in four communities amounted to 6.7 per cent coverage of the slum and shanty population in Dematagoda Ward. In terms of separately identified slum and shanty population, it was 5.6 per cent and 7.5 per cent of the total population in the slums and shanties in Dematagoda Ward. Of all housing types, including middle class residence etc., the population of the four communities totalling 672 represented 4.7 per cent. These data are presented in Table 1.3.

All families in the four communities totalling 112, were interviewed to identify families with children in the primary school-going age of 5 — 14 years. 82 families had a total of 160 children in the primary school-going age group while 30 families had no children in the primary school-going age (vide Table 1.2). In the interviews with the 82 families with primary school-going age group children, data was collected to identify children attending school and children not attending school. Families which had children of primary school-going age who had not been admitted to school, admitted late to school, and dropped out of school, were interviewed in depth to uncover possible factors that led to the children not being in school as well as to clarify non-attendance by non-admission, dropping out and late admission. All interviews were carried out by the author personally in August, 1984.

These interviews were not structured but a hard-core two-page questionnaire was used to ensure that the minimum data required were elicited during the interview. Ten families were initially interviewed to test out the questionnaire and interview techniques, and refinements were made where necessary. In all instances, either the father or mother or in their absence an elder member of the family was interviewed. When necessary the children were also interviewed. While this study is mainly a quantitative analysis, attempts were made in appropriate instances to use simple statistical analysis viz. two variables coefficient correlation to examine the level of co-operation between non-school admission,

TABLE 1.2

POPULATION OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN OF PRIMARY SCHOOL GOING AGE AND TYPE OF HOUSING IN THE FOUR COMMUNITIES

Community	Total Families		Composition of Families				Housing Type of Families			
			with school – going Children		without school – going Children		Slums		Shanties	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
A 288 Base-line Road	39	100.0	29	74.4	10	26.6	23	59.0	16	41.0
B 222 Velu-wana Road	15	100.0	12	80.0	3	20.0	5	33.3	10	66.7
C 146 Velu-wana Road	13	100.0	9	69.2	4	30.8	9	69.2	4	30.8
D 68 Mahinda Dharma Road	45	100.0	32	71.1	13	28.9	2	4.4	43	95.6
TOTAL	112	100.0	82	73.2	30	26.8	39	34.8	73	65.2

TABLE 1.3

POPULATION IN THE FOUR COMMUNITIES AND DEMATAGODA WARD IN 1984
CLASSIFIED BY HOUSING TYPE

Community	Population in Slums (1)		Population in Shanties (2)		Population in Slums and Shanties (1 + 2)		Population in in other Houses (3)		Total Population (1 + 2 + 2)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
A	138	3.3	96	1.6	234	2.3	–	–	234	1.6
B	30	0.7	60	1.0	90	0.9	–	–	90	0.6
C	54	1.3	24	0.4	78	0.8	–	–	78	0.6
D	12	0.3	258	4.4	270	2.7	–	–	270	1.9
Four Communities	234	5.6	438	7.5	672	6.7	–	–	672	4.7
Dematagoda Ward	4184	100.0	5848	100.0	10032	100.0	4278	100.0	14310	100.0

late admission, dropping out and factors contributing to these situations; further attempts were made to make a comparison of findings of the study with available national and sectoral data.

Some Comparative Analysis

School attendance and non-attendance

Children in primary school-going age which in Sri Lanka is generally accepted as 5 to 14 years can be divided broadly into two categories: children attending school and children not attending school. In the four communities 84.4 per cent of children were attending school while the Balance 15.6 per cent were notattending school (vide Table 2.1).

According to the National Census of Population and Housing, in Sri lanka in 1981, the percentages of non-school attendance for the Urban Sector of Colombo District, Colombo District and Sri Lanka were 13.8, 12.8 and 16.8 per cent respectively.[3] Compared to these figures, the percentage of non-school attendance in the four communities was higher than that of Urban Sector of Colombo District and Colombo District by 1.8 percentage point and 2.8 percentage point respectively. However. the level of non-school attendance among children in the four communities was lower than the national level (16.8 per cent) by 1.2 per cent.

One reason for the higher percentage of non-school attendance in the Urban Sector of Colombo District than that of the entire Colombo District is that the slum and shanty communities are concentrated in the urban sector where the largest proportion of children in the District were not attending school. The findings of this study is supportive of this argument.

Admittedly, non-school attendance among the children of the four communities under study is higher than the rate for the Urban Sector of Colombo District and the Colombo District only by 1.8 per cent and 2.8 percentage point respectively. It would have been more meaningful to compare the four communities with the Colombo City. For the underlying thrust of this study is that the urban poor communities of Colombo, even though within easy physical access to schools, have low primary school attendance and a good indicator of this would have been a comparison with city primary school attendance rate. But unfortunately, this data are not available. Other relevant data such as the

3. Sri Lanka Census of Population and Housing, 1981.

TABLE 2.1

CHILDREN OF PRIMARY SCHOOL GOING AGE IN THE FOUR COMMUNITIES, URBAN SECTOR OF COLOMBO DISTRICT, COLOMBO DISTRICT AND SRI LANKA CLASSIFIED BY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND NON-ATTENDANCE

Area	Total		Attending		Not Attending	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Four Communities (1984)	160	100.0	135	84.4	25	15.6
Urban Sector of Colombo District (1981)	250,146	100.0	215,602	86.2	34,544	13.8
Colombo District (1981)	341,790	100.0	297,887	87.2	43,903	12.8
Sri Lanka (1981)	3,379,703	100.0	2,811,426	83.2	568,277	16.8

Sources: Census of Population and Housing, Sri Lanka, 1981.

number of schools and the primary school-going population in the Colombo City and Colombo District Urban Sector are also not readily available to examine school attendance in the context of primary school-going population to schools ratio. However, impressionistically the primary school attendance rate should be high in the City schools servicing the privileged areas. In this context, the four communities' primary school attendance being lower than the Colombo District Urban Sector and Colombo District is significant and supportive of the observation that there is disparity in primary school attendance between the privileged and underprivileged sections of Colombo City population. The focus of the study is to examine and if it is possible, identify factors which contribute to this disparity.

School Attendance and non-attendance by age

When the rates of children attending and not attending school are analysed by their age, it shows some interesting trends (vide Table 2.2). The general trend is for a high percentage of children not attending school among the five-year olds and 14-year olds. The former is due to late school entry, while the latter is due to dropping out.

The dropping out is most pronounced at this age in the four

communities under study compared with Urban Sector of Colombo District, Colombo District and Sri Lanka. In the case of late entry in the four communities, it is once again more pronounced than in the Urban Sector of Colombo District and Colombo District, but less than Sri Lanka. While in all four categories under comparison the peaks are in ages 5 and 14 and a deep trough between these two peaks, in the four case study communities, this trough is less smooth and more erratic. It lacks the smooth curve of the other three categories. This is indicative of dropping out occurring at all age levels, though it gets more pronounced when the children are getting to 14, and 14 remains the peak.

TABLE 2.2

PROPORTION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL GOING AGE CHILDREN NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL IN THE FOUR COMMUNITIES, URBAN SECTOR OF COLOMBO DISTRICT, COLOMBO DISTRICT AND SRI LANKA CLASSIFIED BY AGE

Age	Four Communities % (1984)	Urban Sector of Colombo District % (1981)	Colombo District % (1981)	Sri Lanka % (1981)
5	36.4	34.7	33.9	39.1
6	0.0	10.0	8.8	13.4
7	7.1	6.4	5.5	9.2
8	23.5	5.7	5.2	3.6
9	9.1	5.4	5.4	3.5
10	9.1	8.2	7.3	9.9
11	10.7	9.1	8.4	11.5
12	8.3	15.3	14.2	17.9
13	15.0	18.5	17.2	21.8
14	33.3	24.9	23.6	29.2
Total	15.6	13.8	12.8	16.8

Source: Sri Lanka Census of Population and Housing, 1981.

Characteristics of Non-School Attendance in the four Communities

Having briefly compared the four communities with sectoral and national averages, we shall now examine some of the characteristics of non-school attendance in the four communities. Unfortunately, comparison with sectoral and national data is not possible as relevant data are not available.[4]

School drop-outs and non-admittance to school

Non-school going children can be classified into two categories of school drop-outs and non-admittance to school. Out of the total children in primary school-going age in the four communities, 8.1 per cent were dropouts while 7.5 per cent did not enter school or have never been to school (vide Table 2.3).

School drop-outs and non-admittance to school by age

When the percentage of school dropouts and non-admittance to school in each age group is examined, though some fluctuations exist, there is once again a trend within these fluctuations. Table 2.3 shows there was only a very small percentage of school dropouts among students in the early primary school going age, and this percentage of school dropouts gradually increased when the higher age groups were reached. The dropouts in the age of 5 years is nil and reaches the peak of 27 per cent at 14 years. Comparatively, a high percentage of children in early primary school-going age groups have not been admitted to school. The percentage of non-admittance gradually becomes lower in the higher age groups of primary schooling. For instance, the percentage of non-admittance among the 5-year olds and 14-year olds were 36 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. The higher percentage of non-school admittance in early primary school going ages and higher percentages of school dropouts in late primary school-going ages are apparently causative of the higher percentage of non-school attendance in early primary school-going ages and late primary school-going ages.

School drop-outs by age and grade of dropping out

Out of the children who dropped out of school in the four communities, 15.4 per cent have dropped out at the age of 5 in the lower kindergarten, almost soon after entering school. Other school

4. Due to lack of complete data in national level on school dropouts and non-school admittance, it is difficult to compare the levels of drop-outs and non-admittance in four gardens with the levels of drop-outs and non-admittance in the island.

TABLE 2.3

CHILDREN OF PRIMARY SCHOOL GOING AGE IN THE FOUR COMMUNITIES CLASSIFIED BY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, NON-ATTENDANCE AND AGE

Age in 31.3.84	Total		Attending School		Not Attending School					
					Total		Dropped-out		Not Admitted	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
5	11	100.0	7	63.6	4	36.4	—	—	4	36.4
6	7	100.0	7	100.0	—	—	—	—	—	—
7	14	100.0	13	92.9	1	7.1	—	—	1	7.1
8	17	100.0	13	76.5	4	23.5	1	5.9	3	17.6
9	11	100.0	10	90.9	1	9.1	—	—	1	9.1
10	22	100.0	20	90.0	2	9.1	1	4.6	1	4.6
11	28	100.0	25	89.3	3	10.7	3	10.7	—	—
12	12	100.0	11	91.7	1	8.3	1	8.3	—	—
13	20	100.0	17	85.0	3	15.0	2	10.0	1	5.0
14	18	100.0	12	66.7	6	33.3	5	27.8	1	5.6
Total Male	82	100.0	68	82.9	14	17.1	8	9.8	6	7.3
Total Female	78	100.0	67	85.9	11	14.1	5	6.4	6	7.7
Grand Total	160	100.0	135	84.4	25	15.6	13	8.1	12	7.5

dropouts had been distributed among all age groups and grades without any particular significant trend.

Dropouts and grade repeaters

As reflected in Table 2.4, there is some relationship between grade repetitions and school dropouts in the four communities. Children who repeated less number of times per grade, had a lower dropout percentage. On the other hand, children who repeated a large number of times per grade, a higher percentage had dropped out. For instance, out of children who repeated the least number of times (between 0.00 — 0.10) per grade, record the lowest percentage (only about 6 per cent) of dropping out. Children who repeated the gratest number of times 0.51 or more) per grade, had the highest percentage of 25.0 per cent dropping out.

The correlation between average number of times repeating per grade and the percentage of dropping out was 0.52.

TABLE 2.4

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND SCHOOL DROPPED-OUTS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL GOING AGE IN THE FOUR COMMUNITIES CLASSIFIED BY GRADE REPETITION*

Grade Repetition	Total		Attending School		School Drop-outs	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0.00 — 0.10	103	100.0	97	94.2	6	5.8
0.11 — 0.20	19	100.0	16	84.2	3	15.8
0.21 — 0.30	4	100.0	3	75.0	1	25.0
0.31 — 0.40	9	100.0	8	88.9	1	11.1
0.41 — 0.50	9	100.0	8	88.9	1	11.1
0.51 and over	4	100.0	3	75.0	1	25.0
Total	148	100.0	135	91.2	13	8.8

* Grade repetition is computed as follows:—

$$\frac{\text{Number of times repeating grades}}{\text{Number of grades studies upto}}$$

Late admittance to school

Out of the total number of children in primary school-going age in the four communities, 18.7 per cent has been admitted to school one or

more years later than the normal school admission age.[5] While 73.8 per cent have been admitted in normal school admission age, the balance 7.5 per cent have not been admitted to school at all (vide Table 2.5). Children who have got late to be admitted to school had been late from 1 to 5 years. No children had been late more than 5 years to be admitted to school in the four communities.

A large percentage of children had been admitted late to school by one year and only a small percentage of children had late admission by periods more than one year. For instance, 12.5 per cent of children had been admitted to school only one year late and only 0.6 per cent of children had been admitted to school five years late.

Late admittance to school by age

There is no significant trend among the children in different age groups regarding late school admissions. However, it is observed that children in early primary school-going age have been late only by short periods while children in late primary school going age have been late in admission comparatively by a larger number of years. For instance, children in age groups of 5, 6 and 7 years have been late only by one year, while children in the age group of 14 years have been late from 1 to 5 years to be admitted to school. This suggests that in recent years admissions have been improving and late entry has been becoming shorter though the total percentage of late school entrance has not been significantly changing.

Late admittance and dropouts

When one examines whether there is any relationship between late school admission and school dropouts in the four communities very little significance is observed. Among children who were admitted to school at the correct age, 8.5 percent had dropped out, while among children who were admitted to school late only 10.0 percent had dropped out (vide Table 2.6).

TABLE 2.5

CHILDREN OF PRIMARY SCHOOL GOING AGE IN THE FOUR COMMUNITIES CLASSIFIED BY ADMISSION AT CORRECT AGE, LATE ENTRY BY YEARS AND NON ADMISSION

Age in 31.01.84	Total		Admitted at correct age	Admitted late by 1 year	Admitted late by 2 years	Admitted late by 3 years	Admitted late by 4 years	Admitted late by 5 years	Not Admitted at all
	No.	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
5	11	100.0	63.6	—	—	—	—	—	36.4
6	7	100.0	71.4	28.6	—	—	—	—	—
7	14	100.0	78.6	14.3	—	—	—	—	7.1
8	17	100.0	64.7	17.7	—	—	—	—	17.7
9	11	100.0	72.7	9.1	9.1	—	—	—	9.1
10	22	100.0	72.7	18.2	4.6	—	—	—	4.6
11	28	100.0	78.6	10.7	3.6	—	7.1	—	—
12	12	100.0	83.3	—	16.7	—	—	—	—
13	20	100.0	70.0	20.0	5.0	—	—	—	5.0
14	18	100.0	77.8	5.5	5.5	—	—	5.5	5.5
Grand Total	160	100.0	73.8	12.5	4.4	—	1.2	0.6	7.5
Total Male	82	100.0	75.6	12.2	4.9	—	—	—	7.3
Total Female	78	100.0	71.8	12.8	3.9	—	2.5	1.3	7.7

TABLE 2.6

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND SCHOOL DROPPED-OUTS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL GOING AGE IN THE FOUR COMMUNITIES CLASSIFIED BY ADMISSION AT CORRECT AGE AND DATE

	Total		Admitted Correct Age		Admitted Late	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Attending School	135	91.2	108	91.5	27	90.0
Dropped-out of school	13	8.8	10	8.5	3	10.0
Total	148	100.0	118	100.0	30	100.0

Factors Contributing to Non-admission, Late Admission and Dropping Out

As indicated earlier, a major focus of this study is to examine the factors contributing to non-admission, late admission and dropping out. With this in view, indepth interviews were held with parents of children as well as children themselves who had dropped out, admitted late and never admitted to school. These interviews provided not only direct responses of these parents and children of factors that they recognize as contributing factors but an understanding and insight in to the conditions that lead to less school attendance etc. in four communities. These may be discussed under the following headings.

5. From 1972, a child should be 6 years of age to be admitted to school. From 1978 the minimum age limit of school admission was reduced to 5 years.

Factors contributing to non-admission

Out of the 12 children who were never admitted to a school, 3 children (25 percent) had not been admitted to school because they could not find a school in the vicinity which was willing to give them admission. Parents of these children had tried on one or more occasions without success to have their children admitted to any one of the schools in the area. Parents of all such children had sent applications on due dates to schools to admit their children. They were later informed that these children have not been admitted due to lack of facilities in the schools or some other reason. Though there are about four low or middle level schools within a radius of less than a mile, they were not able to absorb these children.

A significant feature that emerged in the interviews was that one of the children, a 9 year old Tamil girl, was very keen to enter and study in a Sinhala medium school. The parents were also supportive of the child's desire to study in Sinhala. But the school had rejected the application and had asked the parents to admit the child to a Tamil medium school.

Out of non-school admittance, another 3 children (25 per cent) had not been admitted to school due to physical disability. Parents of these children had not made any attempt to admit the children to any specialized school catering for such children. There was negligence and lack of interest on the part of the parents to provide some schooling for the children even though they suffered from physical disabilities.

2 children (17 percent) had not been admitted to schools due to economic conditions of parents. Apparently, though education is free, some money is required for schooling by way of clothes, books etc. At bare subsistence level, cut-sacks on schooling occur quickly, the first priorities being to keep off hunger and get some shelter.

Another 2 children (17 per cent) of non school going children have not been admitted to school mainly because of parental negligence. Though the parents have adequate income and reasonable education

compared to other families in the four communities, they have not paid attention and interest to admit their children to school.

The balance 2 children (17 per cent) had not been admitted to school since parents had changed their residence when children reached school admission age. The parents of these children had not apparently pursued the matter at least to have the children admitted later, and this partially displays parental negligence.

Factors contributing to dropping out

Out of 13 school dropouts 3 children (23 per cent) had dropped out mainly because of their lethargy to attend school or to concentrate on studies in school. 2 of them had stopped their schooling at Kindergarten, that is in their first year of schooling, and parents had tried their best to send them to school again, but their attempts had failed. The other dropout was a 11 year old girl who had given up her schooling at Grade 3. She had repeated grades four times when she dropped out. According to the parents, she was very weak in studies and the school teacher had adivsed her several times to stop schooling. Teachers had frequently punished her for her poor performance in studies.

However, parents in these families were economically and educationally in a very poor position. Their poverty and lack of knowledge on how to encourage and help a child in schooling may have contributed to some extent for the children dropping out.

Out of dropouts, 2 children (15 per cent) had dropped out mainly due to economic factors. One dropout, a 14 year old girl had stopped her schooling at Grade 6 as she had to go for work because the income of her father (an unskilled labourer) was inadequate for family subsistence. After she left the school, she started working at a garment factory and earned Rs. 650/- per month. Her parents viewed school education beyond Grade 5 as being unimportant for a girl. This parental attitude had influenced to a certain extent her dropping out. The other child, a 11 year old boy, had given up schooling at Grade 5, since parents could not afford his schooling expenditure. According to both parents and the child, the school had asked the child frequently to pay various types of school fees. Since the parents could not pay such fees, the child had stopped schooling.

Out of school dropouts, 2 children (15 per cent) have dropped out due to the change of family residence. One had dropped out (a 10 year

old boy) at Grade 1, when the parents shifted residence to this community. Though they had brought the child's school certificate from the former school when they came to the new residence, they alleged the father was sick and could not attend to the child's admission. Apparently, the parents lacked interest to admit the child to a school in the new residential area.

The other child, a 13 year old boy, had dropped out at Grade 7 when his parents shifted to this community. Though the parents wanted to admit the child to a school in the new residential area, they could not go to the child's old school for some reason or other to collect the child's school certificate.

Out of school dropouts, another 2 children (15 per cent) had dropped out due to lack of adequate and/or proper teachers in the school to teach them. A 14 year old boy had stopped his schooling at Grade 7 since teachers in the school had not been able to teach to the required standard. The child was interested in obtaining admission to another school and his parents too were keen but somehow failed to gain admission. The other 14 year old boy had stopped his schooling at Grade 6 as his class teacher was transferred and no replacement had been made.

The balance 4 children (31 per cent) had dropped out mainly due to some other factors: such as to help in household work and look after younger siblings, death of father, negligence of parent and physical disability of child.

Factors contributing to late admission

Out of 30 late school admissions, 9 children (30 per cent) had gained admission to school late due to incapacity of the formal school system to absorb them at the correct age. The parents of these children had sent applications to schools in the vicinity, but these schools had not accepted the applications due to some reason or the other. The most common explanation given by most school Principals was the inadequate facilities in these schools to cater to all children who sought admission even though they were in very close proximity to the school.

Another 9 children (30 per cent) of late school admissions had gained admission to school late due to parental negligence. Those parents had not sent applicatins in time or had not sent their applications at all when the children reached the age of admission. Some of these parents did not know that the children were at an age when

admission had to be sought. Parents of one child had admitted the child two years late after their neighbours had advised them several times on the need to have the child in school.

Of the late school admissions, 4 children (13 per cent) had gained admission to school late due to the unfavourable economic condition of the parents. All these families were in very poor economic circumstances and were not able to spend any money to admit and maintain their children at school. They were thus compelled to postpone their children's school admission. Those parents sought to admit their children only to schools in the vicinity, yet the amount of money that had to be spent on children's clothes and other necessities such as school admission fees etc., made it difficult for them to do so. The poor families find even a little expenditure on schooling a big burden.

Out of the late school admissions 4 children (13 per cent) had not been admitted to school since they were not in good health, on reaching school admission age. When their health improved, they were admitted to school.

The balance 4 children (13 per cent) had gained admission to school later due to some other factors such as staying at home to look after younger siblings; difficulty to obtain their birth certificates; change of family residence; and lack of a permanent house when they reached school admission age.

An overview of the factors

Aggregating the factors contributing to the triple and linked phenomena of non-admission, late admission and dropping out gives an overview of the causative conditions. The aggregated data is presented in Table 2.10. The incapacity of the formal system as a causative factor is a very significant factor. Its significance is due to many reasons. Firstly, it was a largely unidentified or unrecognized factor, the usual reason often trotted out for non-school attendance being economic or physical inability. Secondly, it has implications for development policy-making and implementation. This will be dealt with in the summary. Thirdly, it accounts for 25.4 per cent, the single highest percentage among the causative factors. The second factor is also significant quantitatively — it accounts for 21.8 per cent. The negligence of the parents is reflective of social attitudes — apathy, lack of aspirations for their children etc. This again has development implications if developing

policy, planning and programming is to reach the unreached. The run of the mill explanation for non-school attendance, dropping out etc. namely economic and health factors together account only for 29.2 per cent. The significance is that they are not as crucial as 'official' explanation often making them out to be for non-school attendance etc.

TABLE 2.7

AGGREGATE OF CONTRIBUTIVE FACTORS FOR THE PHENOMENA OF NON-ADMISSION, LATE ADMISSION AND DROPPING OUT IN THE FOUR COMMUNITIES.

	Contributive Factors	Number	%
1.	Incapacity of the formal school system*	14	25.4
2.	Negligence of parents	12	21.8
3.	Economic conditions	8	14.6
4.	Physical disability of child	8	14.6
5.	Change of residence	5	9.1
6.	Child lethargic of weak in studies	3	5.4
7.	Others	5	9.1
	TOTAL	55	100.0

* This includes inadequate physical facilities, lack of teachers, non-replacement for transferred teachers etc.

SOCIAL PROFILE OF FAMILIES

In this study, an attempt was made to capture the social profile of the families with children who are in school as well as not in school. This, it was felt, would help to analyse the factors contributing to the incidence of non-school attendance.

Father's educational background

A clear relationship can be seen between father's education and the children's school attendance. A large percentage of children whose fathers had comparatively higher levels of educational attainment were attending school. Conversely, a low percentage of children whose fathers had a low level of educational attainment were attending school. Similarly, a large percentage of children whose fathers had low levels of education had dropped out of school. The relationship between fathers'

TABLE 2.8

CHILDREN OF PRIMARY SCHOOL GOING AGE IN THE FOUR COMMUNITIES CLASSIFIED BY TYPE OF NON-SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND THEIR FATHERS' EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Fathers' Educational Attainment	Total		Attending School		Not Attending School					
					Total		Dropped Out		Not Admitted	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
No Schooling	20	100.0	16	80.0	4	20.0	3	15.0	1	5.0
Passed Gr. 1 or 2	6	100.0	3	50.0	3	50.0	3	50.0	0	0.0
Passed Gr. 3 or 4	37	100.0	25	67.6	12	32.4	6	16.2	6	16.2
Passed Gr. 5 or 6	22	100.0	20	91.0	2	9.0	1	4.5	1	4.5
Passed Gr. 7 or 8	38	100.0	36	94.7	2	5.3	0	0.0	2	5.3
Passed Gr. 9 o r10	37	100.0	35	94.6	2	5.4	0	0.0	2	5.4
TOTAL	160	100.0	135	84.4	25	15.6	13	8.1	12	7.5

education and their children's non-admission is not so clear (vide Table 2.8).

The correlation between the grade passed by the fathers and their children attending school was 0.75, a considerably high positive correlation. Apparently, parent's educational attainments have contributed in a positive way to the children's schooling in these four communities.

Family Heads' occupation

Occupation of people in general reflect their level of education, income and style of life to a certain degree as well as social class position and status. These are important for aspirations for children and hence for children's schooling. The nexus is observed once again between family heads' occupation and children's schooling. Comparatively, a small percentage of children of family heads engaged in low status and income occupations were attending school while a large percentage of children with family heads engaged in relatively higher status and income level occupations were attending school. Similarly, a large percentage of children of family heads in low status/income occupations had dropped out and vice versa. The same relationship can be seen between family heads' occupation and non-school admissions too. These data are presented in Table 2.9.

Family income

There is a negative relationship between low-income levels of the families and non-school attendance of the children in these families in these four communities. While it is possible that some of the families may not have provided reliable income data as income is a sensitive area for information divulgence. There are slso reasons for both under-statement or over-statement of income. However, the findings suggest that low-income per se is not a factor contributing to non-school attendance in these four communities.

Slum and shanty communities have an income stratification within the broad low-income bracket, though employment opportunities in the Middle East in recent years had led to the upper income levels to rise considerably. There are also other social variants like educational attainments of parents, housing and household assets, life styles, ethnic-religious cultural patterns etc. Low income may act in conjunction with a mix of other factors. Indeed the findings that low-income groups have higher school attendance is even suggestive that low- income and upward mobility needs and aspirations could be motivating higher school attendance, education being viewed as an upward

TABLE 2.9

CHILDREN OF PRIMARY SCHOOL GOING AGE IN FOUR COMMUNITIES CLASSIFIED BY TYPE OF NON-SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND OCCUPATION OF FAMILY HEAD

Occupation of Family Head	Total		Attending School		Not Attending School					
					Total		Dropped Out		Not Admitted	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Unskilled labour	86	100.0	69	80.2	17	19.8	9	10.5	8	9.3
Skilled worker*	51	100.0	44	86.3	7	13.7	4	7.8	3	5.9
Petty Trader	10	100.0	9	90.0	1	10.0	0	0.0	1	10.0
White Collar Workers	9	100.0	9	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Businessmen	1	100.0	2	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Unemployed	3	100.0	3	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL	160	100.0	135	84.4	25	15.6	13	8.1	12	7.5

* Skilled workers include Tailors, Drivers, Cooks, House Maids, Security Guards and Salesmen.

mobility avenue. At higher income levels poor educational background of parents, negligence or disinterest of parents occur resulting in poor school attendance even if income levels facilitate school attendance. So a certain mix of factors at higher income levels can have a negative impact on school attendance.

Ethnicity

Analysing the data by ethnicity in these four communities, the highest percentage (93.3 per cent) of children attending school, one among Muslims, with the Sinhalese at second place (89.7 per cent), while Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils were at third and fourth places (78.8 percent and 72.7 percent) respectively (vide Table 2.10).

This is an interesting pattern because impressionistically, the Sri Lankan Tamils give high priority for schooling and education, and Muslims least so. Obviously, in the case of Sri Lankan Tamils this is more so among the middle class and the Sri Lankan Tamils in the four under-privileged communities being of working class background may not share such middle class attitudes and aspirations. It is also likely that Tamils of Indian origin in the four communities may have indicated that they are Sri Lankan Tamils thereby distorting the pattern. In the case of Indian Tamils, their low placement in school attendance is keeping with the national pattern. While all this could explain the Sri Lankan Tamil's variation from the national pattern it is not easy to explain why the Muslims have ranked number one in school attendance in the four communities. Generally, it is believed that Muslims have less aspiration for education than the Sinhalese and Sri Lankan Tamils nationally. Does the variant then suggest interesting characteristics among urban Muslims or specifically urban under-privileged area Muslims? Or is it that this school attendance among Muslims is limited to primary school to gain minimum proficiency in language and numerals crucial for trading, a major occupational choice for Muslims? Unfortunately, these could not be analysed at depth due to lack of comparative data by ethnicity on school attendance even nationally let alone by urban sector etc.

Broken homes

There is a slight difference between the percentage of children attending school in families where both parents are present at home and families where both or either of the parents are dead, or away from home. Though the percentage in the former category is slightly higher, it is not of significance.

TABLE 2.10

CHILDREN OF PRIMARY SCHOOL GOING AGE IN THE FOUR COMMUNITIES CLASSIFIED BY TYPE OF NON-SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND ETHNICITY

Ethnicity	Total		Attending Schhol		Not Attending School					
					Total		Dropped Out		Not Admitted	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sinhala	68	100	61	89.7	7	10.3	4	5.9	3	4.4
Sri Lankan Tamils	66	100	52	78.8	14	21.2	7	10.6	7	10.6
Indian Tamiles	11	100	8	72.7	3	27.3	2	18.2	1	9.1
Moors	15	100	14	93.3	1	6.7	0	0.0	1	6.7
TOTAL	160	100	135	84.4	25	15.6	13	8.1	12	7.5

TABLE 2.11

CHILDREN IN PRIMARY SCHOOL GOING AGE IN THE FOUR COMMUNITIES CLASSIFIED BY TYPE OF NON-SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND TYPE OF HOUSING

Housing Type	Total		Attending School		Not Attending School					
					Total		Dropped Out		Not Admitted	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Permanent	52	100.0	48	92.3	4	7.6	2	3.8	2	3.8
Semi-permanent	61	100.0	50	82.0	11	18.0	7	11.5	4	6.5
Improvised	47	100.0	37	78.7	10	21.3	4	8.5	6	12.8
TOTAL	160	100.0	135	84.4	25	15.6	13	8.1	12	7.5

Housing

There was a very positive relationship between the type of the houses and school attendance (vide Table 2.11). A higher percentage of children in permanent houses attended school. It was also so in semi-permanent houses and least improvised houses. Permanent houses are generally slum tenement type while improvised houses are typically shanty type. Semi-permanent are also mostly shanty type.

As income levels did not have a positive relationship, the impact of housing on school attendance is not the poverty of the poorer housing types. Perhaps the housing structure itself by facilitating studies leads to the better housing types having higher school attendance.

The positive relationship is further indicated when analysed by the number of rooms. Children's school attendance is higher in houses with a greater number of rooms and vice versa.

Correlation between the number of rooms in the houses and percentage of children attending school from such houses was positive at 0.93. Conversely, this means a negative correlation between the number of rooms and non-attendance was present. Further analysing this a negative correlation at —0.90 between number of rooms in the houses and dropping out as well as a negative correlation at —0.89 between number of rooms and non-admittance was observed.

A similar relationship between the number of tables available in the houses and percentage of children attending school was observed. Correlations between number of tables available in the houses and percentage of children attending school, percentage of children dropped out of school, percentage of children who did not enter school were 0.94, —0.85 and —0.99 respectively.

As Table 2.12 shows there was a clear relationship between the type of lighting used in the house and percentage of children attending school. There was 100 per cent school attendance of children in houses with electricity. School attendance of children in houses with kerosene oil lamps or petromax lamps were 91 per cent. Of children in the houses with only kerosene oil bottle lamps only 82 per cent attended school.

TABLE 2.12

CHILDREN IN PRIMARY SCHOOL GOING AGE IN THE FOUR COMMUNITIES CLASSIFIED BY TYPE OF NON-SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND TYPE OF LIGHTING IN THE HOUSING

Type of Lighting	Total		Attending School		Not Attending School					
					Total		Dropped Out		Not Admitted	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Electricity	17	100.0	17	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Kerosene oil and/or Petromax	117	100.0	107	91.4	10	8.6	5	4.3	5	4.3
Kerosene oil bottle lamps only	26	100.0	11	42.3	15	57.7	8	30.8	7	26.9
TOTAL	160	100.0	135	84.4	25	15.6	13	8.1	12	7.5

Summary and Conclusion

An understanding of the causes of low primary school attendance contributes towards social planning and programming, particularly in any efforts to increase the primary school attendance rate. This is even more crucial for Sri Lanka with its fairly high primary school attendance rate of 83.2 per cent. For any upward push or increase of this rate even marginally requires much greater understanding, planning and programming efforts than to increase it from say, for example, 50 per cent to 70 per cent. In other words, to achieve one unit or a one per cent increase at the higher levels is far more problematic than such a unit increase at low or mid levels.

One strategy to effect increases at higher levels, as is the case in Sri Lanka, is to identify and mobilize efforts to improve the school attendance rates among under-privileged groups. This would eventually help towards raising the national average. It is in this context that the findings of this study and its implications for social development planning and programming can be discussed or argued out. The urban poor are one of the vulnerable groups and any understanding of the factors causing non-school attendance in the under-privileged areas of Colombo, where the urban poor of Sri Lanka are concentrated, may help in any effort to plan the raising of the national primary school attendance rate.

Though this study is a case study of four communities in one ward of Colombo city, due to the wide similarities that seem to appear among all such under-privileged communities in terms of their socio-economic conditions as well as services provided for them, the findings of the study can be treated as common to a considerable extent to the people living in all under-privileged areas of Colombo and may be discussed in this context.

As indicated in Chapter Two, a significant finding of this study is the incapacity of the schools to absorb all those who seek admission for schooling in the four underprivileged communities of Colombo City. The importance of this finding, particularly since it ranks first among the factors and accounts for 25.4 per cent (Table 2.7), is many-fold. Firstly, it dismisses or displaces to lower ranking the customarily explained reasons for non-school attendance of poor economic conditions and physical disability. Secondly, it suggests that a major factor for non-school attendance does not lie within the social conditions of the under-privileged urban communities, but in the wider society whose

responsibility it is to provide a school service with adequate capacity to absorb all children who seek admission. And this is particularly crucial because the communities serviced are an underprivileged and a vulnerable group.

It should be underlined here the schools which are unable to absorb the children due to inadequate facilities like number of teachers, tables, chairs, space etc. are not the prestigious schools of the City, particularly in the Southern Wards of City like Kollupitiya, Cinnamon Gardens, Havelock Town etc. which are bursting at the seams with children of upper and middle classes of the City and suburbs. But it is the small schools that one may even fail to notice when one passes by in one of the less prestigious Wards of the City—Dematagoda—that this is occurring. The prestigious schools of the elite areas of the City are likely to have been provided with maximum possible facilities within the resources of the wider society to cater to the maximum possible admission of the upper and middle class children. Or to put it in another way, any cut-backs on social welfare expenditure including education which the dwindling resources of the country might necessitate is often least felt on the privileged schools. This brings out the class character in planning. For the upper and middle classes, education is not merely an avenue of social mobility but an important mechanism of social class reproduction and to achieve their goals they would strive to maintain the system exerting their power and pressure in the wider society, in the state, and perhaps even supplementing it with 'tuition systems' when the rat race gets acute. So this study surfaces the question of the class character in planning and the close nexus between social class and education as well.

Another factor identified in this study as having a strong relationship to school attendance is housing. It was fairly clear that within the four communities those with the most poor type of housing, least number of rooms, without electricity, with least number of tables, (a household asset of importance in studies) had greater non-school attendance. It is useful to remember that the study indicated a negative correlation between income and school attendance. One cannot therefore support a simplistic argument that the nexus between poor housing and non-school attendance is eventually related to income levels.

What it suggests as implications for social development planning is the identification of critical factors and groups, in this instance a group namely, a housing class (shanty dwellers) in the efforts towards raising school attendance. A further implication for social development policy

and planning is that the finding confirms the sinister alliance of poor education and the need for social development efforts to synergestically attack these linked factors. It also suggests the importance of housing in social development and more crucially that planning mechanisms be developed to ensure that housing programmes like the million houses programme reach the unreached. This may help housing classes like shanty dwellers move up not only on housing type indicators but on other social indicators such as primary school attendance.

Another finding of the study, the positive relationship between the edcuational attainment of the father and school attendance of the children brings out a feature of the sinister alliance in a time sequence — a vicious circle. The cutting edge of intervention to increase school attendance among such families is important to cut the vicious circle.

The negligence of parents, an important factor identified in this study is perhaps a cumulative impact of the negative forces which brings out a submission and fatalistic acceptance of the conditions they are placed in. It can lead to a fatalistic situation of not seeking or striving to improve their conditions — in this instance a better schooling for their children in the hope that this could lead to a better future for them. But perhaps when basic problems of employment, income, housing, easy admission to schools are solved such negligence may also drop.

To end on a positive note, non-attendance of school in the four communities are high compared to Colombo District and the Urban Sector of Colombo District. Data specifically for Colombo City are not available but as argued earlier non-attendance of school among the children from the four communities is likely to be much higher than the city average. We also noted in an earlier section that non-attendance of school in the four communities is less than national average. The thrust of Sri Lankan social development in the last few decades was to keep urban-rural disparities to a minimum. But in recent times there have been fears that in this process the urban poor might have become more disadvantaged than the rural sector. In this context the non-school attendance of the four communities being less than the national allays such fears.

ANNEXURE 1

Historical background of slums and shanties in the Colombo City

The urban poor in Colombo are the population living in the disadvantaged residential or housing areas of the city commonly known as the slums and shanties. In 1981, of the total population of 585,776[1], in the City of Colombo, 265,523 or 45 per cent were residents of slums and shanties (vide Table below). The slums are mainly tenement houses and old houses in areas of urban decay, now sub-divided into small units. It is useful to briefly describe these types of housing.

Tenements were mostly privately owned and built before the introduction of rent control and the introduction of the Municipality's Building By-laws. They were meant to house the city's labour force at a time when industrial and commercial ventures in the city were

POPULATION IN THE CITY OF COLOMBO
IN 1981 CLASSIFIED BY TYPE OF HOUSING

Type of Housing	Population	
	Number	Percentage
Slums	143,723	24.54
Shanties	121,800	20.79
Sub-total (slums & shanties)	265,523	45.33
Others	320,253	54.67
Grand Total	585,776	100.00

Note:

1. According to the Colombo Master Plan Project Report, population in slums and shanties in 1979 were 138,882 and 117,648 respectively. Population growth rates for the Colombo District for 1980 and 1981 wrere 1.8 and 1.7 respectively. Using these data the figures for the slum and shanty population was estimated (due to the non-availability of separate growth rates for population in slums and shanties, here growth rates of total population were used to estimate population in slums and shanties).
2. The grand figure in line number 5 was obtained from the Department of Census and Statistics data.
3. The figures in line number 4 is the difference between figures in line number 3 and 5.

expanding and were situated in close proximity to the harbour, factories, stores and other work places employing labour in large numbers. The construction of these units has taken place during the growth of plantations and when their products required labour for processing,

1. Sri Lanka Census of Population and Housing, 1981.

packing, storage and shipping. During this period, housing was an area of investment. The tenements are barrack-type single roomed units with a verandah and a common use garden area with common water and latrine facilities. The tenement units are built in rows, consisting of about 10 houses. They are usually situated in a block of land commonly referred to as a "garden". Tenement "gardens" vary widely in size, containing anything between five and one hundred tenements. They are generally ill-equipped with sanitary facilities. In some instances one latrine serves as many as fifty units. With the introduction of rent control, the housing landlords no longer found it profitable to maintain the tenements. The neglect of the building, the lack of adequate sanitation and overcrowding which set in when more than one family occupied a tenement, led to a rapid deterioration and urban decay of the tenements. Most tenement gardens have thus been reduced to slum neighbourhoods.

Upto about the mid-nineteenth century the residential area of the City was confined to the present Fort, Pettah and Hulftsdorf areas. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, this expanded northwards to Mutwal, east to Maradana and Slave Island, and south to Kollupitiya. In the twentieth century the expansion to the north was blocked by the river, to the east by the water-logged areas and thus the expansion was largely confined to the south and south-east (viz. Bambalapitiya, Wellawatta, Cinnamon Gardens, Borella, Havelock Town etc.). During this development of the City, the large houses of the residential areas of the nineteenth century were utilized as offices, stores and sub-divided housing units for low-income groups. The over-crowding of buildings and the absence of maintenance and repairs accelerated once again the deterioration and the setting in of urban decay and slum conditions.

Shanties are built mainly of non-durable material such as cadjan, planks, jute-hessian or old zinc sheets and constructed by squatters mainly on private, government and municipal land. The shanties emerged originally as temporary dwellings put up hastily by flood refugees and by people de-housed by floods etc. and more importantly later on as a response to the inadequate investment in housing stock by private investors consequent to rent control legislation as well as the inadequate government investment in housing stock. Although the structures do not conform to the requirements of the Municipal Building By-laws, action was not taken to evict these squatters. In course of time, the Colombo Municipality has provided them with some basic services by way of standpipes, public baths and toilets. Since the lands are owned by private owners, municipality or government, shanty

dwellers have no legal right to live or build houses. These lands are mostly canal and river banks or low-lying areas which are frequently subject to floods. Though a large majority of shanties are in temporary structures built of temporary materials, a few of them are in semi-permanent structures built of a mix of temporary and permanent material. Most of the shanties have only a single room. In some cases shanties also can be seen as clusters or 'shanty gardens' and also as rows of shanties but with separate entrances.

Some clusters or gardens are difficult to identify either as slum gardens or shanty gardens since they have a mix of both slum and shanty type of houses. This is partly due to some of the married children of the families having moved into the newly created shanties in the same tenement garden.

Studies on slums and shanties suggest that people in slums and shanties, are the most deprived and unprivileged section in the urban sector. They have poor sanitary facilities; they do not have sufficient water and toilet facilities, their houses are over-crowded, congested and lack ventilation. The environment is very unclean and diseases, particularly water-borne diseases, malnutrition and infant mortality are compartively high among them. All these conditions are more acute among the shanty dwellers than the slum dwellers. In terms of income, occupation and education, the shanty dwellers are believed to be the very bottom group in the urban sector while slum dwellers are somewhat better placed.

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