

**National Consultation for Transforming Education Summit:
Report on the Outcome of the Sri Lanka Consultation**

2022

Country Context:

The consultative process and methodology for preparation of the Report involved the studies of the policies, programs and activities presently in place, the new educational reforms, as also, meetings with the stakeholders and partners such as the Ministry of Education, (MOE) and all of its services providing institutions, the Hon. Minister of Education, the UNESCO and the UNICEF at the regional and country levels.

Sri Lanka is a country amongst the countries in the South Asian region that has pioneered in introducing progressive education reforms such as free school education up to the university level even prior to its independence in 1948 and mandatory primary education, equity and equality in access to education, competitive government scholarships for economically marginalized students, teacher training systems and institutions, teacher recruitment policies to absorb graduates into the teaching profession, free uniforms and textbooks and many other infrastructural developments. Eventually, those reforms have enormously contributed to achieving a higher literacy rate in the regions and a significant improvement in some formal education sectors such as gender parity, higher school enrolment rate, and retention rate. In the last 40 years, from 1980 to 2020, the adult literacy rate in Sri Lanka has increased to 92.38% while the female literacy rate was recorded at 91.6% in 2020. Sri Lanka recorded a 91.87% Primary education enrolment rate, 98.62% Junior secondary education enrolment rate, 93.48% Secondary net enrolment rate, and 88.66% retention rate in 2018.

However, Sri Lanka is currently facing the most critical economic crisis since its independence in 1948. With more than USD 50 billion in external debts and a shortage of foreign exchange reserves, the country is struggling to pay for essential imports. The economic crisis which gradually developed over the years and suddenly blew up the whole system with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and monetary policy issues has pushed the country into political uncertainty. The public was engaged in massive protests against the government demanding a systemic change as a solution to the current economic crisis. These protests forced the Executive President to resign and a new government to take the responsibility for driving the country's economy until the next elections at the earliest possible time. Although there are some changes in the government, including the appointment of a new President by the Parliament and the establishment of a new government, yet, the main problems of the people affected by both the COVID-19 pandemic and the unprecedented negative impacts of the downturned Sri Lankan economy, have not been addressed substantially.

The country has experienced low investment flows, disruptions in supply chains, setbacks in human capital accumulation, as well as a substantial increase in debts. According to the Ministry of Finance, Sri Lanka has incurred a total of LKR 117.5 billion (USD 322 million) in 2020 and LKR 53.0 billion (USD 145 million) from January to June 2021 as expenses for the country's COVID-19 response. Special relief schemes were introduced to mitigate the impact on the livelihood of the poor and marginalized communities. The impact of both pandemic and economic crisis on vulnerable and marginalized groups remains critical even amidst the social protection programs introduced by the government. Headline inflation increased drastically while food inflation set a record high of 80% and transport inflation is 120% in the month of June. A recent WFP report revealed that 3 in 10 households of a cohort of 6.3 million people are in food insecurity and 65 600 are severely affected. The Central Bank of Sri Lanka officially announced in April

2022, that Sri Lanka will default on its external debts pending a bailout package from the IMF. International rating agencies also downgraded Sri Lanka last year, effectively blocking the country from accessing foreign capital markets to raise new loans and meet the demand for food, fuel, and medical supplies. For macroeconomic stability and debt sustainability, while safeguarding financial stability, protecting the vulnerable, and stepping up structural reforms to address corruption vulnerabilities and unlock Sri Lanka's growth potential, IMF has reached to a staff level agreement for a 48-month Extended Fund Facility (EFF) of about US\$2.9 billion.

Sri Lanka's commitment to developing a shared vision of education's future and strengthening political and public commitment is evident from the Medium-Term Strategic Development Plan (MSDP 2020-2025) for the general education sector finalized in May 2020 with many other educational reforms proposed in TVET and Tertiary education sectors. MSDP is prepared to address prevailing issues relating to gaps and challenges in equity, equality, quality, efficiency, effectiveness, and adequacy and embrace the general education sector with sustained advancements. It is expected to pave the way to guarantee '**Learning for All**' at all levels. Indeed, this sector strategic plan has also paid a special focus on improving the living conditions of the bottom 40 percent of target groups in the disadvantaged income groups by providing respectable education for their children. Since the government has recognized the urgency of transforming education as a national priority in the wake of the COVID-19 educational disruption, these consultations were conducted based on the Medium-term Strategic Development Plan considering it as the main national document which requires a further upgrade and strong commitment to ensuring the transformation of education in line with the goals established in the 2030 agenda.

Methodology of the Report

With the sudden closure of schools amidst the rapid escalation of COVID-19 virus in Sri Lanka, MoE was involved in many consultations to identify measures to recover interruptions in the continuation of the annual school calendar and daily learning and teaching processes, conducting public examinations and other school-related activities, as scheduled. Hence, all service-providing institutions, authorities, school communities, and students (front-level beneficiaries) were the stakeholders of the Contingency Emergency Response Plan (CERP) as well as this consultation process. Accordingly, the stakeholders include the MoE, National Institute of Education (NIE), Department of Examinations (DoE), Department of Education Publications (DoEP or EPD), Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs) (18 NCoEs, TTCs and TCs), Provincial Departments of Education (PDoEs) (08) [including 98 Zonal Education Offices (ZEOs) and 310 Divisional Education Offices (DEOs)] and the schools.

In addition to the above consultations, two independent researchers were involved in drafting the National Statement of Commitment with the consultations of pre-identified stakeholders. Their consultation process was started with a study of policies, programs, and activities currently in place and the new educational reforms. Following that, **the consultants** were involved in small group and individual discussions with key educational officers attached to Planning and Performance Review Division, Education Quality Development, and Finance Division. Officers of the Informal and Special Education Branch and STEAM education attended Key Person Interviews. Further consultations/information collections were conducted with National Education Commission, Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO, and the Sustainable Development Council of Sri Lanka. It was extremely encouraging to witness the greater political commitment of

the Minister of Education, Hon. Dr. Susil Premajayantha in transforming Sri Lankan education with his extended guidance and support in the consultation process.

I. Ensure a Full Recovery of Education from the Impact of COVID-19

The education sector of Sri Lanka has been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic at first and then the economic crisis worsened with the impact of the pandemic. Schools and education institutions were partially or fully closed for 20 months during the years 2020 and 2021 at the first and second strikes of the pandemic. Delays in national examinations (*General Certificate Examination of Advance Level (GCE A/L)*, *General Certificate Examination of Ordinary Level (GCE O/L)*, and *Year 5 Scholarship Examination*) were inevitable with the prevailed conditions. The Ministry of Education's (MoE) efforts to gradually re-open government schools from October 2021 were also disturbed on a few occasions. Again, the government had to temporarily close the schools in the major town areas due to inadequate transport facilities caused by shortages of fuel distribution in the mid of year 2022. The prolonged school closures and reduced school days have resulted in a limited engagement of learners, an increase in the number of drop-outs, and worsening exclusion of disadvantaged communities from their right to education. Eventually, the education system is now highly affected by the economic crisis in the country. Even after the reopening of school, many children in economically marginalized communities are in difficulties attending schools since their parents are unable to afford the costs of education support materials such as books, bags, uniforms, and nutritious breakfasts and mid-day meals due to skyrocketing prices of all consumer goods.

In an attempt to continue learning during school closure, the Ministry initiated distance learning methods and tools in association with mass media, online and digital learning schemes and home-based learning as the most feasible methods to keep children engaged in learning. It was also concerned with ensuring access to at least one such alternative method to ensure equity and inclusion in distance learning. Local television channels collaborated with MoE to broadcast lessons, especially for the secondary stage students who were in preparation for GCE OL and AL examinations. Teachers were encouraged to use the web and mobile phone-based applications such as open learning platforms, social networks, blogs, web channels, instant message applications, emails, telephone calls so on and so forth to continue the teaching and learning process during this period. In the situations preferable to the limited opening of schools with a lesser number of students in a classroom, provincial education officials were permitted to take decisions considering the regional pandemic situations and risk level as a measure to reduce inequality of access to online learning approaches, especially in remote areas. However, the absence of facilitation from authorities to teachers and students such as special communication and data packages and subsidies for purchasing digital communication apparatuses were some of the common challenges to continuing their interactions through digital applications. According to the 2019 statistics, only 22.2% of households had either a laptop or desktop. In the Eastern province, it was less than 4%. Although the government proposed to provide facilities for online learning during the post-COVID period for public schools in the 2022 budget, those plans could not be fully implemented owing to the restrictions in funding. All the government universities have been closed due to the lack of basic supplies. Students are encouraged to engage in online education; however, the lack of facilities and the frequent power cuts have become the main impediments to continuing their education.

As an effective and rapid response to ensure the readiness of the education system to face the challenges of the COVID-19 outbreak, the MoE formulated a Contingency Emergency Response Plan (CERP) to minimize COVID-19 pandemic disruptions in the School Education Sector in Sri

Lanka. This plan is applicable for both the 'period of COVID-19 outbreaks (from March 2020 to June 30, 2020) and the post-COVID-19 pandemic period (from July 2020 onwards) whilst it covers the entire state school education system. The plan has developed around six strategies mainly identified as Distance Learning, Phyco-Social Wellbeing and Prevention, Safe Operations, Curriculum Updates, Education Workforce Development, and Catchup and Accelerate Learning. It is expected to improve the quality standards of the education system while mitigating the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the general education system. MoE paid much focus on facilitating school children's learning at home; facilitating learning of schoolchildren in rural, smaller, under-resourced schools; promoting e-learning and self-learning facilities in schools; strengthening teacher professional development with e- and distance-learning modes; creating safe and hygienic school environment for students; improve students' physical and psycho-social well-being; develop a comprehensive risk analysis and emergency response continuity plan, and establish a comprehensive risk analysis and emergency response units through the CERP.

In implementing several remedial measures to back up the continuation of students' education through different modalities, the MoE had consultations with respective authorities to ensure financial and technical support from different sources (i.e., consolidated funds, development partners' contributions, third sector well-wishers, etc.). In the stakeholder consultations, it was also revealed that many other challenges existed related to implementing CERP. Among them, adaptability and attitudes of teachers and officers in using technology-based routing environments, unavailability of digital-based learning support infrastructures such as mobile connectivity and devices, the capacity of teachers and quality of professionalism for teaching and learning, and resourcing schools located especially in non-urban locations in Sri Lanka. It was well agreed that any attempt towards the promotion of digital-based education needs prior actions for mitigating gaps in appropriate infrastructure and tech know-how among teachers and learners. The promotion of digital learning may result in increasing inequity otherwise. Further, appropriate measures are being identified to mitigate the consequences of school closure on scheduled examinations, school terms, children's mental and physical well-being, and for preparing school communities for reopening of schools according to the guidelines of the health authorities. The top priority of the ministry is given to the protection of the lives and health of students, teachers, and other immediate stakeholders.

The MoE has given its highest priority to reopen all schools, universities, and vocational and technical training centers following the successful control of the COVID-19 outbreak with an effective vaccination process. Even though the unprecedented supply chain disruptions caused by the economic crisis led sometimes to a temporary or limited closure of schools, the MoE has taken immediate measures to continue functions of both government and private schools and other educational institutions to ensure recovery of learning loss experienced during the periods of closure of schools.

Stakeholders who attended consultations highlighted the importance of enhancing technology-integrated teaching and learning processes and dissemination of knowledge among relevant stakeholders involved in general education with interactive and standard digital education content and resources and technology-integrated teaching-learning process for both face to face classroom and online approaches. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, e-learning has become vital in teaching the learning process through a blended approach, and also it has paved the way to consider the different types of e-learning models, including blended learning, flipped learning, and so forth. The Ministry of Education has already taken action to establish a National Content Development Center with the purpose of developing the contents and e-learning systems to

implement the National e-learning platform e-thaksalawa with connecting all Zonal Information and Communication Technology Centers and Provincial Information and Communication Technology Centers at the provincial level to ensure the regional level e-learning penetration accordingly. In addition to that, the Ministry of Education has already introduced the following e-learning initiatives for the school community with classrooms available facilities.

1. Introduce e-thaksalawa Learning Content Management System with a wide range of e-content and activities.
2. Introduce e-thaksalawa LMS for virtual learning remotely for schools and NCOEs.
3. Introduce SMART textbook for grade 11 science subject By the Education Publication Department.
4. Introduce a Digital panel/ interactive board with collaborative software and content library to enhance virtual learning.

However, disparities in the distribution of resources between provinces as well as between schools within provinces remain a major challenge in promoting e-learning in schools. The increasing cost of equipment and restrictions on importing with the current economic crisis faced by the nation has become an extra challenge.

With the growing economic and food crisis, the children's nutrition and the costs of learning supportive equipment have become the main challenge in the continuation of education among middle-income and low-income families. The definite outcome of such economic hardships could be the increased dropout rate, child labor, and girls in rural areas being away from the education system. The mental and physical fitness of children to engage in school education activities is identified as more common in many rural schools. The government proposed a special subsidiary program for low-income families to assist their nutrition needs. However, still there is a great need in introducing programs such as free mid-day meals, or nutritious snacks during school hours for children. The same welfare initiatives need to be introduced to preschool children as well.

II. Identify Major Strategic Changes and Levers to Accelerate Progress Towards Common Educational Goals and to Reimagine Education for the 21st Century

Sri Lanka has been a country that has a greater commitment to achieving world education goals at all times. With the commitment extended to the EFA agenda, the country was able to achieve a high satisfactory level including minimized gender parities in access to education and a higher completion rate in lower secondary education although the completion rate of upper secondary remains moderate. The government has given higher priority to achieving SDG 4 Goals by 2030. The incorporation of SDG 4 Goals into national policies and strategies to transform the education system has initiated the **General Education Sector Development Plan** prepared for 5 years from 2020 to 2025. The plan is expected to bring a coherent, paradigm shift across curriculum, pedagogy, materials, assessment, and accountability in education administration with the purpose of addressing prevailing issues relating to gaps and challenges in equity, equality, quality, efficiency, effectiveness, adequacy and embrace the general education sector with sustained advancements through introducing a results-based object-oriented education

system. The plan has developed around the following key objectives to transform the Sri Lankan education system for achieving SDG 4 Goals in the 2030 agenda;

- a. ensure equal educational opportunities and compulsory free education for all children by expanding quality primary and secondary education facilities with adequate human and physical resources;
- b. ensure equity in access and participation of students in meaningful learning;
- c. improve the overall quality, effectiveness, and relevance of the education system for improving learning outcomes of students;
- d. improve the efficiency, accountability, and stewardship of general education;
- e. facilitate to improve 21st-century Rising Skills and transversal skills of students: transversal, social, socio-emotional, inter-personal, critical thinking, creative, problem solving, learning acquisition, and communication skills;
- f. reach higher levels of standards pertaining to the quality of education;
- g. delegate autonomy to the implementation levels, including schools;
- h. strengthen good governance, timely service delivery, and accountability within the education system;
- i. improve teacher quality and teacher management systems;
- j. improve assessment and evaluation (both formative and summative) systems;
- k. ensure efficiency, equity, and adequacy of resource allocation; and
- l. promote the national/Sri Lankan identity, ethics, and cultural values. and understanding of Sustainable Development Goals

The MoE has assumed the responsibility of developing human capital to achieve national goals of knowledge-based economic development through this education sector development plan. The MoE has already taken several measures to facilitate this by formulating **a National Education Policy Framework** from 2020 to 2030 which incorporates SDG 4 Goals national plans of curriculum modernization, reforms in testing and evaluation systems, and various other programs for developing primary and secondary education. The proposed National Policy Framework on general education in Sri Lanka is also expected to provide particular emphasis on TVET and tertiary & university sectors. It will pay high priority to strengthen science, mathematics, technology, ICT education, Rising Skills Education and English and foreign languages for making learners ready to meet the needs of the local and international future labor markets and the cognitive and soft skills such as critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, emotional skills, empathy, respect, understanding of Peace and Sustainable Development, which are being identified as required knowledge for creating a global citizen and a peaceful world.

Ensuring Free Education Policy as an Education Priority

As a strategy to accelerate progress towards the common education goal of increasing access and participation in primary and secondary education, MoE has identified the need to further strengthen the current free education policy which has been the fundamental norm of the Sri Lankan education system. Present non fee-free schooling facilities, free uniforms, free textbooks, and limited scholarships programs planned to expand with more subsidiary programs such as scholarships and bursaries to talented students from low-income families, midday meals for students in disadvantaged schools, health insurance for all schoolchildren, provide transport subsidies to students, grants for gifted students, a glass of milk for school children in identified disadvantaged schools, and shoes for students in difficult & very difficult schools. The expansion of education opportunities with equitable access in every administrative division through the increasing number of national schools and facilities therein is also identified as a need for an empowered free education policy.

13 Years Guaranteed Education Program

With the objective of diversifying and reforming the national curriculum and improving learning facilities in all schools for inclusive and equitable quality education, MoE has introduced the 13 Years Guaranteed Education Program which facilitates the retention of thousands of students in the education system after GCE OL of those who have not qualified for Higher Secondary level studies. It has been introduced as the seventh Advanced Level subject stream with the expectations of ensuring a smooth transition for school students to the world of work, generating the required labor for the nation's future workforce, minimizing the percentage of youth not in education, employment or training (26.1%: as per DCS, 2016), minimizing the post ordinary level dropout rate (35%: as per MoE, 2016), and reaching the targets 4.3 and 4.4 in the Global Sustainable Development Agenda. Following the pilot project initiated in 42 schools, it has now been implemented in 423 schools. The selection of the schools and classrooms was prioritized based on the rationale of the number of GCE OL failures in each zone and the medium of instruction. The capacity of the current schools ensures the accommodation of 44% of OL failures. The next stage expansion is planned so that the stream will accommodate at least 80% of OL failures.

STEAM Education as a New Approach to Develop Skills

MoE Sri Lanka has taken steps to introduce STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Aesthetic, and Mathematics) education which is considered a multidisciplinary stream of experience relevant to economic value creation and living in harmony with nature for making learners equipped with Rising Skills (Internet of Things- IoT), Big Data, Data Sciences and Analytics leading to Artificial Intelligence, Cloud Computing, Logistics, Block Chain Management, etc...which have been recognized as needs for the 21st century. In this integrated approach, the MoE expects to build interest and competencies in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics as a lifelong process that would produce a creative citizen with the capability of contributing innovatively to sustainable national development in a global context. The approach is enriched by incorporating Aesthetic, Social Sciences, Languages, and Economics in a different context. Today, it is well acknowledged that real-life problems are multifaceted and integrated knowledge is needed in problem-solving. MoE believes that to apply such knowledge in real life, students' mindsets should relate science with technology, mathematics with science, and mathematics with technology. It is accepted that nearly 40% of job losses that happen due to job market shifts, move to these areas of rising skills in rapidly transforming economies. Engineering

Designs would arise with an integrated knowledge of these subjects. In light of that MoE is involved in introducing a National Policy on STEAM within a multi-sectoral broader thinking framework mainly considering the economic direction and future development agendas of the country.

Establishment of Curriculum Development and Assessment Center

The proposed center may be entrusted with developing a broad and integrated framework of curricula for general, vocational, and university-level education to maintain an integrated system. This center should develop broad curricula, including broad subjects and contents, standards, and strands for competencies, knowledge, and skills that every child should complete at the end of every grade. Assessment methods of knowledge and skills also should be included in the broad framework.

Department of Examination will assign to develop a pragmatic testing and assessment system with a proper combination of summative and formative assessments. It will include guidelines to conduct classroom-based assessment tools that can help teachers identify, monitor, and support the learners. Supervision by teachers at different stages of an assignment given to the students, including selecting topics, the methodology to collect and analyze data, and a draft of the assignments should be practiced (learning process) rather than assessing only the final product. At present, it is observed that there are various external entities who prepare final assignments for commercial purposes. Strong emphasis will be given to formative assessments (School/classroom-based, teacher-based) of which the scores are recognized.

Modification of Teacher Development, Teacher Education, and Teacher Management

MoE is well aware that the transformation of education to meet knowledge and skill requirements for the 21st century is also highly dependent on the reinforcement of competencies and skills of the present and future teacher labor force. National Colleges of Education (NCOE) are the main arm of providing pre-service teacher training in the Sri Lankan Education system. Stakeholders, however, pointed out that trainees who spent three years of full-time in-house training at NCOEs had to spend another four to six years to get an external degree from a university. This is a distressing situation for trainee teachers.

With the objective of modernization of training curricula and processes, MoE has planned to bring the management of NCOE under the National Institute of Education (NIE) which is the main institute for curriculum development and teacher development. MoE has initiated a proposal to upgrade NCOEs as degree awarding institutions under the NIE-affiliated universities. The cabinet has approved the proposal to upgrade diploma qualification to degree status with an amendment to the University Grants Commission Act of 1978. The present NCOE's selection mechanism of teacher trainees, which is being treated as a secondary option for students who are not selected for universities, is planned to equalize with the selection of university degree programs based on GCE AL results.

Furthermore, a Centre for Teacher Development to cater to the Continuous Professional Development of the upper echelons of the teaching fraternity, comprising the teacher educators, counsellors, advisors and mentors has been already established under the aegis of UNESCO as a Category 2 Centre within the overall framework of the National Institute of Education. (NIE) that has been given recognition as a South Asian Centre for Teacher Development. The Government of Sri Lanka is committed to transform this Centre to become a Regional Hub for Teacher

Development and plans are under way to create this Centre as a self-financing autonomous entity by way of a separate Act of Parliament.

Sharing of human resources among the schools.

With the prevailing economic crisis at present, the MoE has faced greater difficulties in fulfilling the requirement of teachers in all schools in a rational manner. Schools located in remote areas are the severely affected schools with shortages of teachers. Simultaneously, some schools in urban areas are reported to have a larger excess of teachers in some subjects and therefore it has been difficult to address the deficiency with the new recruitment of teachers. Sri Lanka recorded the national teacher-student ratio as 1:16.3 in 2020. After the failure of several attempts to find a feasible and practical solution to this issue over the past years, MoE has initiated a new program for exchanging human resources which allows regional education administration to allocate excess hours of teachers to share nearby schools with needs.

Improved Quality Assurance(QA) practices in Sri Lankan schools

MoE has identified the urgency of improving QA practices in the Sri Lankan education system in aligning with the Education Sectoral Development plan and requirements of SDG 4 goals. The present QA process was introduced by the 31/2014 circular and guidelines to measure “Our school; how good is it?” in 2015. Education stakeholders pointed out the need for evaluation criteria based on both results and values to ensure the quality of education aligns with international standards and indicators. The present QA process is mainly divided into two methods; internal evaluation and external evaluation. The main purpose of internal evaluation is to empower each school to understand their performance and external evaluation support to develop quality in schools. Internal evaluation in schools has been carried out by School Management Committees in the form of self-evaluations. The strengths and weaknesses of the schools are identified by zonal, provincial, or national level teams.

III. Ensure Adequate and Sustainable Public Investment in Education

Education funding has been always a highly debatable issue in Sri Lanka nevertheless it has been able to achieve higher outcomes in some sectors. Among countries in the region as well as countries with similar economic conditions, Sri Lanka invests considerably a lesser amount of public finance in education. The highest education expenditure percentage was reported in 2017, which was 2.7% of GDP. In the recent two years, there has been a 2.3 % decrease in the central government budget allocation for education. the subsequent drop in government revenue due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was the main reason for that decrease. The main investment for Sri Lanka’s education has been domestic funding between 2015 and 2021. Approximately 97% is funded through domestic resources while only 3% is funded by foreign resources. The majority (66%) of foreign resources came in the form of loans while the remaining (34%) was in the form of grants.

In 2021, Sri Lanka allocated LKR 158.4 billion to the education sector at the central level. It was a 2.3% decline in allocation in nominal terms compared to the revised estimated cost of 2020 and an increase of 4.3% in comparison to the actual expenditure in 2019. In real terms, the 2021 budget estimate for the education sector decreased by 6% relative to the 2020 revised budget estimate and decreased by 5% in real terms compared to the 2019 actual education sector expenditure. In 2022 government allocated LKR 199.5 billion to the education sector. Again, in

the interim budget of 2022, the government increased allocation up to LKR 200 billion for education expenses in the remaining period of the financial year. In the interim budget speech, the government insisted on its commitment to expanding higher education opportunities, facilitating the establishment of branch campuses in Sri Lanka, particularly focusing on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects as well as finance, information technology, and medicine, and enabling the state to ensure preserving free education and expanding beyond present levels through encouraging private investment in higher education sector. The government also highlighted their priority in skills development as per the requirement of the labor market and improvements in TVET education. The diffidence of foreign funding mainly with IMF loans has been the main challenge at present for the sustainability of education funding.

In the Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) MoE has identified the necessity of gradually increasing the government share of education expenditure up to a reasonable level of the GDP in the future ensuring equity in education and providing quality education for all. Since the education system is a decentralized subject in Sri Lanka, MoE and Provincial Education Authorities are collaboratively engaged in implementing activities related to the education system. According to the midterm budgetary framework estimates MoE required LKR 335,654 million for the year 2022, LKR 373,022million for 2023, LKR 420,322 million for 2024, and LKR 473,420 million for the year 2025 at the time of preparation of the sector developments plan. These amounts need to be adjusted with the 18.4% annual average inflation rate prevalent today.

Summary of the Medium-Term Budgetary Framework (2018-2025)*

MoE expects to ensure the sustainability of the implementation of the education sectoral development plan with both external and internal funds. As a portion of the main ESDP, The Secondary Education Sector Improvement Program (SESIP) receives a sum of \$ 400 million through a results-based lending (RBL), following a request by the Ministry of Education (MOE), Government of Sri Lanka (the government) for 5 years period. The RBL program supports systemwide reforms in the education sector and will focus on 750 schools, of which 80% are provincial schools. By 2026, reforms supported by the program will benefit about 953,000 students (503,000 females and 450,000 males) annually. The program will also have equipped 47,853 teachers (31,583 women and 16,270 men) with skills that will benefit successive generations of students.

Stakeholders highlighted that the education sector has received a lot of Official Development Assistance (ODA) for educational reform, but consecutive governments have not given adequate priority to ensure that learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development in Sri Lanka. Gender equality, human rights, inclusion, a culture of peace and nonviolence, and peer-to-peer learning are in policy documents but not in practice.

IV. Expectations on National Education Goals and Benchmarks

The medium-term education sector development plan for the period from 2020 to 2025 prepared by the MoE in collaboration with the Provincial Education Authorities (PEAs) and national-level education institutions identifies the goals and benchmarks mainly related to transforming formal national education in aligning with SGD 4 goals in 2030 agenda. It is more focused on the primary and secondary stages of education. The medium-term sector development plan established education goals under a few thematic areas.

Formulation of national education policy has been identified as the biggest priority goal by the sector development plan. Within that, the MoE expects to update the present education legal framework and enforce a guaranteed education policy. The national policy will incorporate a well establish school supervision service, restructured school systems and re-categorized schools as primary and secondary schools in the system of education in Sri Lanka, updated a national strategy on the establishment of new national schools, and a mechanism to regulate other general education providers. Streamlining of zonal education management structure and establishment of an education sector development fund also will be core areas of the policy.

*(Source: General Education Sector Development Plan 2020 - 2025)