RIGHT TO EDUCATION FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE PLANTATION COMMUNITY IN SRI LANKA

ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

RESEARCH CONDUCTED AMONG THE SCHOOLS IN THE PLANTATION SECTOR
(FINAL REPORT : DECEMBER 2023)

Caritas **Sri Lanka**

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Right to Education for the Children
of the Plantation Community in Sri Lanka:
Issues, Challenges and Future Directions

(Final Report: December 2023)

Research Conducted among the Schools
in the Plantation Sector

Message from His Lordship
Rt. Rev. Dr. Justin Gnanapragasam

Chairman of the Catholic National Commission for Justice, Peace and Human Development and Bishop of Jaffna Diocese

As Bishop Chairman of Caritas Sri Lanka SEDEC, I am honored to share my message to this research document.

The years 2023 and 2024 mark the 200th Commemoration of the arrival of the Indian Origin Tamil People of the Plantation Community in Sri Lanka in and around 1823/24. The Catholic Church of Sri Lanka has been working for five decades to empower and advocate for this marginalized Malayaga Tamil community. In June of last year, the Catholic Bishop Conference of the Plantation Region provided recommendations for interventions aimed at the inclusion of this vulnerable community in the national social services, with the goal of accompanying them "Towards a Meaningful Citizenship" in Sri Lanka.

The Malayaga Plantation Community is deprived of their basic needs and faces differential treatment compared to other communities, particularly in terms of their educational rights. In light of this situation, I am deeply appreciative of Caritas Sri Lanka for taking the initiative to conduct this research. It is crucial to shed light on the challenges and disparities faced by this community, and I believe that this research will play a significant role in advocating for their rights and improving their overall well-being.

The research has brought to light the significant disparities in educational infrastructure within the Plantation Community. It is essential to recognize these disparities as the initial step towards rectifying them and ensuring that every child has the opportunity to receive a quality education. Economic challenges faced by families within the Plantation Community have a profound impact on children's education, leading

to increased school dropouts. The research highlights the harsh reality of poverty within these families, often forcing children to forgo their education in order to contribute to the immediate economic needs of their households. It is crucial to acknowledge and address these economic hardships to ensure that every child has the opportunity to pursue their education without undue financial burden.

I urge that the recommendations from the research be taken up for policy change. It is crucial that these findings are utilized to advocate for necessary policy adjustments and resource allocations to address the educational disparities within plantation communities. The implementation of these recommendations will be a significant step towards ensuring that every child has access to quality education and that their educational rights are upheld.

Thank you and May God Bless you!

Rt. Rev. Dr. Justin Gnanapragasam
Chairman
Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC

Message from Rev. Fr. Luke Nelson Perera
National Director, Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC

Dear colleagues and stakeholders,

I am delighted to present the research report on the "Right to Education for the Children of the Plantation Community in Sri Lanka: Issues, Challenges, and Future Directions." As the National Director, I wanted to reach out to express my appreciation for your commitment to advancing research on critical social issues, particularly in the critical aspect of our nation's Educational landscape.

The plantation community in Sri Lanka has long been marginalized, facing numerous challenges that hinder their access to fundamental rights, including education. By shedding light on the specific barriers these children encounter in accessing quality education, your research has the potential to spark meaningful dialogue and catalyze tangible change.

The findings underscore disparities in educational opportunities and reveal systemic hurdles that hinder the realization of this basic right. It is our collective responsibility to address these challenges and work towards creating an inclusive and equitable educational environment. This publication will bring out the power to amplify their voices and advocate for the necessary reforms to ensure that every child, regardless of background, has equal access to education.

The report not only identifies the issues but also proposes viable solutions and future directions. It calls for collaborative efforts among government bodies, NGOs, and the local community to implement targeted interventions. By doing so, we can pave the way for a brighter future for the plantation community's children, ensuring they have the necessary tools to break the cycle of poverty through education.

I extend my gratitude to all involved in this research endeavor and urge everyone to use the insights provided in this report as a catalyst for positive change. Together, let us strive towards a nation where every child, regardless of their background, can exercise their right to education and build a better tomorrow.

Fr. Luke Nelson Perera
National Director
Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC

Message from Very Rev. Fr. Michael Rajendram

Towards A 'Meaningful Citizenship'
Of the Indian Origin Tamils in the Plantation Community in Sri Lanka…

It is with great sense of content and joy, I wish to pen this message.

It all began over a cup of tea with Rev.Fr. Mahendra Gunatilake, the former National Director of Caritas Sri Lanka (SEDEC) when he visited me at Deniyaya Parish which consists the Indian Origin Tamils of the Plantation Community mostly. When inquired as to what kind of a dream I have had for the above Community as a person born & bread among the same community. I replied him saying "it is high time now to work collectively to end the untold miseries faced by this community and to find ways and means for '*a meaningful citizenship for them in Sri Lanka with equal opportunity with dignity*'. It is so sad & bad to see this Community is deprived of basic needs even after offering sacrificial services to the nation for the last 200 years.

He was taken up by my reply and indeed was the turning point for him to leave no stone unturned to work on *a special program for the Community on a 'right based' approach with lobbying & advocacy by Net working with Community Service Organizations (CSOs) at regional & national levels.* I was invited to assist Caritas Sri Lanka (CSL) with the blessings of the Catholic Bishops Conference (CBCSL) to design and coordinate the program funded by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) USA among the six plantation regions (dioceses) with the support of the diocesan Caritas Centers in the plantation region.

Thus was the humble birth of the Program which was christened as 'Lighting the Lives of the Plantation People' (LLPP) - an Empowerment Program to better the lives of the people of the Plantation Community in Sri Lanka. It became a unique contribution by the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka *in view of the 200th Commemoration of the arrival of the ancestors of the Plantation Community in 2023/24 which is a Benchmark in the history of both the community & the nation.* The main objective was to NETWORKING of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) who work /serve the Plantation Community in 12 Civil Districts of the

provinces of Central, Uva, Sabaragamuwa, Wayamba, and Southern & Western.

The Research done under the LLPP Program on the present situation of Education among the Children of the Plantation Community in Sri Lanka is a unique contribution by Caritas Sri Lanka for which I congratulate Rev. Fr. Nelson Perera, the Director, the able staff members of CSL and all those who contributed towards its success. *I am very confident that this research will certainly become a referral to those who wish to study/research on the subject of Education of Children in the Plantation Community in Sri Lanka.*

As a person who had been involved in the Community Empowerment Program for more than 30 long years, I very strongly feel that the traditional understanding of human/community development is to be revisited & revised. The need of the time is the RIGHT BASED APPROACH, which necessarily demands Linkages & Networking, and Lobbying & Advocacy with all the stakeholders in order to *voice together on the grievances faced by this most vulnerable and underprivileged community in the Sri Lankan Society, due to the structural discrimination both systemically & politically.*

I only pray that all the right-thinking people both in Sri Lanka & abroad forge ahead to voice their concerns over the plight of this Plantation Community. *I also call upon the Government to have the POLITICAL WILL TO MAKE POLICY CHANGES based on the theory of inclusion and leave no one behind, so as to end the miseries in the lives of the Plantation Community that has approached the benchmark of 200 long years of their existence in Sri Lanka with much sacrificial services to the Sri Lankan Nation.*

May the Lord Jesus Christ who had a great compassion & love for the downtrodden and poor in society, help all of us to bring a CHANGE in the lives of this Community, *so that they enjoy a Dignified Life with a Meaningful Citizenship in Sri Lanka!*

Fr. Michael Rajendram
Vicar General - Diocese of Galle

Message from Mr. Jayasiri Premaratne
Unit Head - Ecological Conservation and Plantation People,
Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC

The year 2023 holds particular significance for Sri Lanka as it commemorates the bicentennial anniversary of the arrival of Indian Origin Tamils (IOT) to the island. This community, with roots tracing back to the British colonial era when indentured laborers were brought to Sri Lanka, has played a pivotal role in the country's economic development. Despite their contributions, the plight of Indian Origin Tamils remains a pressing issue, and this research document seeks to shed light on the historical context, contemporary challenges, and potential solutions, specifically focusing on the "Right to Education for the Children of the Plantation Community in Sri Lanka: Issues, Challenges, and Future Directions."

The research emphasizes the often-overlooked contributions of the Indian Origin Tamil community, urging policymakers to recognize and address the unique challenges they face. Chief among these challenges is the inadequate access to education, a circumstance that perpetuates cycles of poverty and restricts socio-economic mobility. Understanding the root causes of educational disparities is crucial for formulating targeted interventions that can enhance educational access and quality for the Indian Origin Tamils.

Land rights emerge as another critical facet of the struggles faced by this community. The complex legacy of colonization has resulted in a convoluted landscape of land ownership, leaving Indian Origin Tamils marginalized within the existing system. Ensuring secure land tenure for the Indian Origin Tamils is not only a matter of justice but also a pivotal step towards economic empowerment and community stability.

This research document serves as a call to action, urging policymakers to allocate resources and implement policies that address the specific needs of the Indian Origin Tamil community. By doing so, Sri Lanka

can progress towards a more inclusive and equitable society, wherein all citizens, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background, can benefit from development and progress. The recommendations presented in this research aim to guide policy formulation and implementation, fostering an environment where the Indian Origin Tamils can lead lives of dignity, free from the historical injustices and contemporary challenges they currently face.

As the nation commemorates the 200 years of the Indian Origin Tamil community's presence, it is an opportune moment for reflection on the past and a call to action to chart a course towards a more inclusive and harmonious future for all communities in Sri Lanka. This research envisions a society where the contributions of the Indian Origin Tamils are acknowledged and where targeted policies pave the way for their socio-economic upliftment, contributing to a more just and prosperous nation.

Mr. Jayasiri Premaratne
Unit Head

PREFACE

This year (2023) marks the completion of two hundred years of existence of the upcountry Tamil people or Malaiyaha Tamils in Sri Lanka. It is assumed that the upcountry Tamil people were brought from India by the British colonial regime in 1823 to be employed in the coffee plantations in the upcountry area of the then Ceylon. This historical event is being commemorated through various forms here and many other countries this year.

At this historical moment, Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC has brought out this important research document that traces the education history of the community, discusses the issues and challenges of the current educational scenario, and makes viable recommendations that might transform the educational horizons of this neglected, unfortunate community in the future.

Sri Lanka has relatively a laudable history of education in the developing world. The national education system was established in 1869 under a single authority that was designated as the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) which after independence became the Ministry of Education. Before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declared on 10th December 1948 that education is a human right and at least primary education is compulsory and must be provided free, the great son of Sri Lanka and Minister of Education in the State Council Dr.C.W.W.Kannangara made education free from Grade One to the University first degree in 1939 that transformed Sri Lanka as one of the most literate society in the developing world.

However, the Malaiyaha Community had to wait for a very long time to get the fruits of free education policies. The father of free education unequivocally refused to integrate plantation education into the national education system saying that the education of the plantation children was the responsibility of the estate management thus unkindly rejecting the plea from the Matale MP Mr. Bernard Aluvihara who pleaded to integrate plantation children into the free education scheme. Unfortunately, the eight plantation parliamentarians who had the moral duty to struggle for the liberation of their people through education did not seem to support the pleas of the MP from Matale.

The country got independence in 1948 from the British and the same year the plantation Tamil people were disenfranchised and lived in this country as "Stateless people" while the national economy flourished out of the foreign exchange produced by their labour in the tea and rubber estates. They finally got their political representation in 1977 when they returned their first member to the parliament, but much water has flown under the bridge while they languished without enjoying the fruits of independence which other citizens of the country enjoyed. In Angela Little (1987) words, "People inside the plantations were the means to the end of people outside the plantations."

However, one should agree that the educational scenario in the plantations is slowly but steadily changing within the last fifty years. With generous inputs from SIDA and GTZ projects the infrastructure facilities in schools have improved; since the 1970s plantation youth have been getting teaching appointments in schools as well as in education administration. Consequently, the results in public examinations are improving and about 600-700 students are entering the state universities per year though mostly in Arts streams. There are representations at the public service as well as universities and other academic institutions. However, there is a long way to go and the journey is difficult and arduous due to the historical discrimination and negligence the plantation community suffered from the successive governments. But there is definitely hope in the horizon and the publication of this study by Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC is definitely a step forward provided at least some of the 38 recommendations made in the study are implemented by the relevant authorities.

While appreciating the dedication and hard work of PASS Asia Core Team, I hope the plantation community will be ever grateful to Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC for this most important contribution when the plantation community is completing its two hundred years of existence in Sri Lanka.

Prof. T. Thanaraj
Member - Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

About Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC

Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC is the social arm of the Catholic National Commission for Justice, Peace, and Human Development, operating under the guidance and supervision of the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Sri Lanka (CBCSL).

It serves as the National Secretariat of the Commission, supported by a network of 13 Diocesan Centers, each functioning under the direct guidance of the respective Diocesan Bishops.

Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC operates independently of all political parties or ethnic and religious affiliations. It draws inspiration from the teachings of Jesus Christ and His unconditional love for all, with a mission rooted in the social doctrine of the Catholic Church.

Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC is a member of Caritas Internationalis, an international confederation under the purview of the Holy Father and the respective Episcopal Conferences, promoting Solidarity, Social Justice, and Integral Human Development.

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ABBREVIATIONS

GCE A/L	General Certificate of Education Advanced Level Examination
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
COVID 19	Coronavirus disease - an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.
DO	Development Officer
DS	Divisional Secretariat
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IDI	In-Depth Interview
KII	Key Informant Interview
KoBo	Mobile data collection technology
KSSM	Secondary School Standard Curriculum
KSSR	Primary School Standard Curriculum
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
O/L	General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level Examination
PS	Pradeshiya Sabha Act
QuIP	Qualitative Impact Protocol
RPCs	Regional Plantation Companies
RTE	Right to Education
SEDEC	Social and Economic Development Centre
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research would not have been possible without the voluntary contribution of representatives of students, teachers, parents, and stakeholder respondents for both quantitative and qualitative data collection interviews and discussions in Badulla, Colombo, Galle, Kandy, Kalutara, Kegalle, Matara, Matale, Monaragala, Nuwara Eliya and Ratnapura districts during the very hard time of political and economic crisis in the country. Therefore, we are grateful to those students, teachers, parents, government officers, and other stakeholders who are the owners of both qualitative and quantitative data of this study.

We are pleased for the opportunity and support given by Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC. We are especially indebted to the National Director, the program team, and other Caritas colleagues for their technical, financial, and operational support to carry out this research study. The research team would exclusively like to thank Caritas Diocese Center team members based in the above districts for their support and cooperation in arranging community-level interviews and meetings.

This report and the research behind it would not have been possible without the exceptional support of the enumerators, consultants, and the PASS Asia core team whose dedication and commitment are with us in whatever we pursue during the challenging times of data collection, analysis, and report writing. This report is an outcome of all the above contributors and the findings, conclusions, and recommendations are not necessarily the opinion of Caritas and its project stakeholders.

On behalf of the research team,
PASS asia – A Multi-disciplinary and Multi-cultural Research,
Consultancy and Training Firm

30 November 2023

ABSTRACT

The constitution of Sri Lanka acknowledges the right to universal and equal access to education at all levels, with compulsory education for children aged 5-16. While there have been significant improvements in literacy rates in Sri Lanka, particularly for the plantation community, there is still more work to be done to ensure equal access to education across all segments of the population.

This study aims to identify the issues, challenges, and future directions of the right to education of the children in the plantation community and proposes alternative strategies to overcome emerging issues in the free education system. The study conducted a review of related literature and examined historical and current trends in the education system. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used in the research methodology. Recommendations were based on a critical analysis of the data, constructive views, and previous research experiences.

The research focused on plantation communities residing in the districts of Nuwara Eliya, Kandy, Matale, Badulla, Monaragala, Rathnapura, Kegalle, Galle, Matara, Kalutara, and Colombo. The methodology used in this study was exploratory sequential mixed methods data collection using a cross-sectional design. The samples included 461 quantitative surveys and 99 qualitative surveys.

The study concluded that the Sri Lankan education system needs urgent reform to address emerging issues in the plantation community with regard to policymaking, implementation, and regulatory levels. The study found that education is crucial for the development of the plantation community and policymakers should invest in education, including higher education and vocational training, to provide necessary skills for better job opportunities.

Policymakers should ensure access to quality education for all children in the plantation community and provide adequate infrastructure and qualified teachers. Bilingual education should be promoted to increase language skills, while teacher training programs should focus on student-centered and participatory learning environments. Programs should be developed to address gender disparities in education for girls and promote parental involvement in their children's education. Implementing these programs can improve academic outcomes, increase future opportunities, and contribute to the overall development of the community.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview of Caritas

"Caritas" means 'love between peoples' and reflects the love shared by its over 160 national members. Caritas works with marginalized and excluded people, irrespective of their race or religion, and requires professional competence and a heart formed by faith expressed through charity (Caritas, 2023).

Caritas Sri Lanka – Social and Economic Development Centre (SEDEC) is a manifestation of the Catholic Church's concern for justice, peace, and human development in Sri Lanka. It carries out its mission under the mandate of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka, which is delegated to the Board of Management. It serves as the national secretariat for the Commission for Justice, Peace, and Human Development of the Catholic Bishops' Conference, and has implemented Caritas Diocesan Secretariats in each diocese.

Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC is non-partisan and non-sectarian, drawing its inspiration from Jesus Christ's teachings and the social doctrine of the Catholic Church. It is a member of Caritas Internationalism, a global confederation of Catholic organizations working to promote solidarity, social justice, and integral human development under the authority of their respective Episcopal Conferences (Caritas Sri Lanka, 2023).

Caritas Sri Lanka is a faith-based organization. Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC attained its legal recognition through the enactment of the Catholic Bishop's Conference in Sri Lanka (Incorporation) Act No. 17 of 1983, granting it official status as an incorporated entity.

1.2. Background of the study

In Sri Lanka, out of the 20,359,439 people, 77.4% of the population lives in a rural area while 4.4% live in the estate sector and the remaining population lives in urban areas in 2012 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2022). In 2020, according to the statistics of the State Ministry of Estate Housing and Community Infrastructure, there are 999,168 people in the estate sector (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2002). Sri Lanka is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic country. According to the census report in 2012, Sinhalese comprise the majority representing 70% of the population, Muslims account for 10%,

while Sri Lankan Tamils comprise 10%, and the balance is made up of Malays, Indian Tamils, and others. According to State Ministry of Estate Housing and Community Infrastructure (2020), the estate sector is made up of 454 estates scattered in selected districts, which are largely isolated from broader society. The majority of workers on these plantations belong to a Tamil-speaking community known as "Indian Tamils" or "Hill country Tamils," whose origins date back to the British colonial period in the early 19th century. The plantation community[1] represents an ethno-linguistic minority that comprises around 4.4 percent[2] of Sri Lanka's total population. In the 1820s, the British colonial rulers of Sri Lanka, then known as Ceylon, brought in thousands of ethnic Tamils from South India to work as cheap labor in the mainstay industries of the Sri Lankan economy: coffee, coconut, and rubber plantations. Many of these workers were, and in some cases still are, living in barrack-style "line" rooms.

After the Donoughmore Constitution (1931–1947), which allowed Sri Lanka a position of semi-independence, the phrase "free education" entered the conversation (Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2013). Dr. C.W.W. Kannangara, the then Minister of Education successfully introduced free education from Grade 1 to university first degree which completely positively changed the educational scenario of Sri Lanka. However, the question of education of the plantation children, unfortunately, dropped for the time being by Dr. C.W.W. Kannangara although the education of the plantation children should also be included in the free education system as requested by Mr. Aluwihara, the Member of Parliament from Matale. The plantation children had to patiently wait for another three decades until 1977 to enjoy the fruits of free education.

1.3. Problem Statement

The statistics provided in Table 1 show a significant improvement in literacy rates in Sri Lanka over the past century, with literacy rates in all sectors increased. Specifically, the literacy rates in the plantation community were very low, but they have increased substantially since the mid-1980s (World

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[1] In this study, the following terms; Indian Tamils, estate community, tea plantation community and plantations community, are also referred to the 'plantation Tamil community'.

[2] The plantation community may be about 6% of the population. However, during last census there was an assumed complication in declaring their ethnicity either Indian Tamil or Sri Lankan Tamil.

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Bank, 2007). This is particularly true for females, who have seen a striking improvement in literacy rates. However, despite these improvements, the literacy rate in the plantation community still lags behind that of the non-estate rural population. This gap is more pronounced for females, who lag their rural counterparts by 16% while the gap among males is only 6% (World Bank, 2007). Overall, these statistics suggest that while progress has been made in improving literacy rates in Sri Lanka, there is still more to be done to ensure that estate sector to have equal access to education and the opportunity to develop their literacy, as enshrined in the 1978 constitution.

Table 1: Literacy rates by sector and by gender

	Rural	**Estate**	**All Sectors**
1986-7	**89.5**	**68.5**	**88.6**
Male	92.8	80.0	92.2
Female	86.5	58.1	85.2
1996-7	**92.3**	**76.9**	**91.8**
Male	94.4	87.2	94.3
Female	90.4	67.3	89.4
2003-4	**92.8**	**81.3**	**92.5**
Male	94.7	88.3	94.5
Female	91.1	74.7	90.6

Source: CFSES report, 2003-4, cited in World Bank, Sri Lanka Poverty Assessment

Despite some improvements in their socio-economic situation, the plantation community remains one of the most marginalized in Sri Lankan society due to factors such as limited education, geographical isolation, social status, cultural differences and administrative barriers. According to the World Bank (2007), negative stereotypes and resulting discrimination, which are both structural and everyday experiences, contribute to their significant lagging behind the rest of the population in all facets of life. This fact has been further elaborated by Little (2007), stating that in terms of education. Plantation workers are at a disadvantage compared to the overall `population in and around plantation areas. For instance, in 1981, the national literacy rate was 87%, while for Indian Tamil it was 67% and for female Indian Tamil it was only 5%. In 1984, there were only 58 government-run plantation schools available for these workers.

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Moreover, the estate sector exhibits a high dropout rate, with an average of 8.4 percent in grade five, compared to the national average of 1.4 percent, as reported by the Ministry of Education. In the Nuwara Eliya district, the male transition rate from primary to secondary levels is lower than in other districts, with many boys being forced to join the workforce. A World Bank, (2017) report found that enrollment rates in plantation community are the lowest at all education levels, compared to urban and rural sectors. Additionally, children in plantation communities are less likely to complete both primary and secondary education than their urban counterparts.

Furthermore, as highlighted by Dundar et al (2017), the plantation community lags behind the urban and rural sectors in terms of classroom learning environments. This includes inadequate equipment and materials, insufficient water supply for functional toilets, and overall hygiene concerns. In addition, a significant number of teachers in plantation schools do not have adequate training skills. Both rural and plantation schools encounter difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers, particularly in core subjects such as English, Science, and Mathematics.

1.4. Research objectives

The purpose of this paper is to explore the issues, challenges, and also future directions of the right to education for the children of the plantation community in Sri Lanka. To achieve this objective, this study explores the existing literature on education systems, and experts' views, and uses previous research experiences. Furthermore, this study aims:

- To review the status of the education of the children in the plantation community;
- To identify the gaps of the education of the children in the plantation community;
- To identify policy and advocacy interventions to improve the education rights of the plantation community; and
- To make recommendations from the findings to ensure the right to education and to enjoy facilities in par with the children of the other communities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Education

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has identified education as the mechanism for facilitating learning and acquiring skills, knowledge, habits, and beliefs (UNESCO, 2021). Additionally, UNESCO has mentioned quality education encompasses the provision of relevant school infrastructure, educational materials and resources, skills development, gender parity, scholarships, and teaching force. Education provides more opportunities for technical and vocational training for youth and adults, enabling them to secure better jobs. Further, it's also, a means to end inequality in educational opportunities between men and women; and provides the right education for children with disabilities, indigenous people, and victims of conflict. According to the ECLT Foundation, (2023) a child's lifetime earning potential goes up by 10% for each year of school he or she completes, up to double that for girls. Education is the key to combatting poverty and child labor.

Alawattegama (2020) conducted a study on the education system, which is considered essential for any country's sustainable development and plays a significant role in promoting social, cultural, historical, and overall development. The education system is often referred to as the backbone of society, as it produces competent graduates, professionals, technical experts, and responsible citizens who are enriched with social and cultural values, ultimately leading to an improvement in the quality of a country's workforce. Some countries have implemented a free education policy, recognizing the significance of the education system in a country's integral development.

Biesta (2015) focused on teaching and teachers, which have recently received increased attention from policymakers and researchers. Education has a universal influence, regardless of gender, country, or any other aspect, and teaching is essential to ensure education. However, the question of why teaching matters is often overlooked or only indirectly answered. The role, status, and significance of education are crucial, and the fundamental question in all educational endeavors is a normative question relates to three domains of purpose: qualification, socialization, and subjectification. Recent developments in educational policy and practice, such as changes in student status, accountability, and the role of evidence, have threatened the space for teacher judgment in education. It is necessary to critically analyze these developments and identify why, where, and how they are problematic and what implications they have for regaining space for teachers' professional judgment.

2.1.1 Education in Plantation Community

Many researchers pinpoint reasons why educational change does not happen in the plantation community. A few reasons cited were the maintenance of the status quo, resistance to educational change, and keeping workers as a labor supply (De Silva, 1982; Little, 2007). According to the well-known political scientist S. B. de Silva, education was not a part of plantation culture, and it was considered neither technically necessary nor of survival value. For children in the plantation community, education is emancipation, while for planters, it is a threat to the labor supply (De Silva, 1982). The education of children of plantation workers in Malaysia in the 1970s failed to facilitate social mobility (Marimuthu, cited in Little, 2007).

2.2. Phases of Educational Progress in Plantation

However, a historical perspective reveals that education in the plantation community happened gradually over time. Little (2007) identified five distinct phases of education that provide a framework for understanding the educational advancements in the plantation community. According to Little (2007), the following sections describe the evolution of the school system in the plantation sector:

1840 to1869-diffuse inception of line and mission schools

In the earliest phase, the first plantation in Sri Lanka was not tea but coffee. Since coffee crops were seasonal, labours of up-country Sinhalese living in the Kandyan region were abandoned, and Tamil workers from South India were imported (Little, 2007). Most of the male labourers were illiterate and migrated seasonally between coffee plantations. The need for education arose primarily from religious and cultural aspirations within the community residing on the plantation and from missionary efforts (Beckford, 1983).

During this time, the main agents driving educational change were the Kanganies (labour recruiters and supervisors), Missionaries, and a few prominent planters. Kanganies established night schools, known as line schools, mainly to strengthen their control over the workers or to uphold the value of the plantation community. Missionaries, on the other hand, had an external or exogenous influence and carried out religious work beyond the plantations. Additionally, the individual prominent planters such as Ferguson, Bird, Tyler, and Wall also established schools for the community (Little,1970).

However, educational progress during this phase was fragmented and slow. The seasonal labourers were primarily focused on their work and had low levels of literacy. Education was often perceived as a threat to the labour supply by the planters (De Silva, 1982).

1869 to1900-slow growth of line schools and mission schools

During this period, the nature of plantations had changed from coffee to tea as the main crop. Seasonal labors were replaced by permanent workers, as tea cultivation required a year-round workforce, consisting of settled and female workers. Kanganies who were increasingly involved in line schools, started attracting school children from their own staff grades, and occasionally children of labors. Additionally, missionaries expanded number of schools within the plantation community (Little,1970).

The economic influence promoted a docile, uneducated, and low-paid workforce within the plantation production system. With the growing demand for tea in the English market, labor needs increased leading to higher profit. Consequently, there was a push to involve women and children in the workforce. While mothers worked full-time, and children were not required to work full-time. Thus, during this phase, education primarily focused on children rather than adults.

Outside of the plantations, there was a growing social demand for education among the middle classes. During this period, Kanganies set an educational benchmark with line schools while, missionary agencies established schools through the support of state-sponsored grant-in-aid. These opportunities provided a greater access to education for children in the plantation community, contributing to the improvement of their educational status.

1900 to1948-widespread establishment of estate schools

During the beginning of the twentieth century, several key players promoted education and literacy in Sri Lanka (formerly known as Ceylon) in general and within the plantation community, in particular. The Ceylon census report of 1901 indicated gaps in literacy rates among nationalities in Sri Lanka. Significantly, in 1903 the secretary of state for the Colonies in Westminster raised concerns about the overall concerns about the overall literacy level in the country and the lack of educational facilities in the plantations (Little,1970). Under pressure from Westminster, the colonial government influenced the planters to prioritize the education of children on the plantations. Using the planter's association, few individual planters continued to support children's

education while some offered passive support for the actions of the Kanganies who ran the line schools. Tea yielded an economic surplus for both colonial government and private companies, the government raised the condition of labors on plantations. Planters had two concerns, start-up costs of schools and the potential threat to the supply of child labor if they establish schools for children (Marimuthu, 1971).

Elli's report in 1901, the Wace report in 1905, and a series of government ordinances in 1906 and 1907 established guidelines for the provision of elementary schools in town and rural areas. However, due to the economic and political influence of the planters, the 1907 rural school ordinance included separate and less restrictive clauses specifically related to estate education. These clauses did not make education compulsory for children residing in the plantation community. Nevertheless, the influence of kanganies, planters, and religious agencies influence on education in the nineteenth century transitioned into a concern of colonial state ordinance in the twentieth century. The introduction of ordinances in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s helped increase the number of recognized schools from 423 in 1904 to 968 in 1948.

Trade unionism and political franchise were two significant movements for the plantation community that had an impact on education. The first trade union in the plantation was established in 1931 despite resistance from planters. The onset of the global economic depression and the retrenchment of plantation workers created a demand for improvements in wages. However, the union collapsed after two years. Secondly, the Ceylon Indian Congress Labor Union which later became the Ceylon Worker's Congress successfully represented laborers in political elections (Little, 1999).

1948 to1977-slow consolidation of low-quality estate schooling

During this phase, the government took over educational development, but it was not properly followed up. Furthermore, many Indian passport holders were repatriated to India, resulting in a declining population from 11.7% in 1946 to 9.4% in 1971 and further declining to 5.6% by 1981. Therefore, educational enrolment also declined between 1946 to 1981 (Little, 2007).

The Free Education Act of 1945 played a crucial role in safeguarding the right to education for the Sinhalese and Sri Lankan Tamil communities (Little, 2007). Additionally, the 1947 ordinance had prescribed the state's responsibility to establish new schools in the plantation community, but there is no evidence of the state actually establishing any new schools under the new legislative provisions of the ordinance. Many schools were closed

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between 1948 and 1951, and 24 schools were taken over from 1948 to 1955 (Little, 1999).

An obstacle to integrating estate schools into the emerging national education system was the language or medium of instruction. While the Sinhala people supported the integration of estate schools, they suggested making Sinhala a compulsory language and using it as a medium of instruction for both Sinhala and Tamil students. However, plantation Tamils preferred their children to learn through the medium of Tamil, although they were positive about integrating schools into the national mainstream (Marimuthu, 1971).

Meantime, the issue of school integration and language was linked to broader issues of citizenship. The value of education for the plantation community, whose future was uncertain, was doubtful. Although the period from 1900 to 1948 had a political influence in expanding plantation schools, it had the reverse effect from independence to 1977 (Little, 2007).

1977 to1994-state take-over and widespread expansion of enrolments

The take-over of plantation schools by the government was a process started in the 1950s (Little, 2007). Due to the economic decline of tea and a surplus of labor during the 1980s, there was little need to employ children, and unemployment became a problem in some estates. Since the schools were taken over by the government, it assured no cost and responsibility from planters for the education of children in the plantation community.

Moreover, citizenship and social demand from plantation labor parents influenced families to look forward to a future as citizens of Sri Lanka. Many young people who obtained jobs through education served as role models for estate families, influencing more children to pursue free education. Furthermore, in the 1980s, the ministry established the Plantation Sector Teacher's Program, which encouraged young individuals with GCE O/L qualifications to become teachers in plantation schools. These schemes contributed to an increase in the number of teachers in the estate schools from 1,146 in 1984 to 4,843 in 1994 (Little, 2007).

Additionally, multilateral and bilateral European agencies provided foreign funds for development assistance by building and rehabilitating schools and crèches to improve the quality of teaching and learning. These programs were well-planned, regularly monitored, periodically evaluated, and well-managed by the Ministry, district, and provincial departments of education (Little, 2007).

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2.3. Education System in Sri Lanka

From primary education to university (first-degree level), the Sri Lankan government has a policy of providing free education. The compulsory school education span is 13 years. After successful completing school education, Sri Lankan children have opportunities to pursue tertiary education through universities, vocational training centers, and higher education institutes (Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2013). Accordingly, the Sri Lankan education system consists of different levels, including:

- Early childhood care and education
- General education (school education)
- Tertiary and university education
- Vocational and technical education
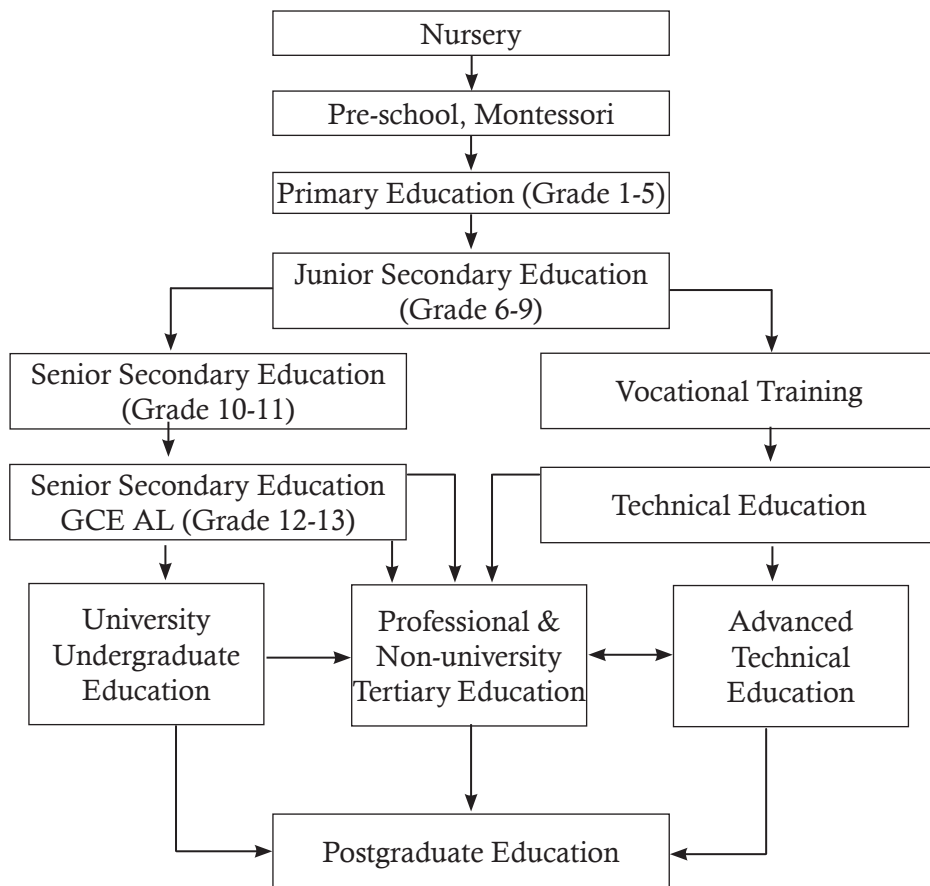
Figure 1: General organization structure of the education system in Sri Lanka (Source: Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2013)

From the age of zero to five years, it is considered early childhood care and development. During this stage, the government is responsible for child health and the upbringing of children. From ages zero to three, and from ages four to five, children attend pre-schools. This stage aims to promote the physical, mental, social, and emotional development of children (Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2013).

General education also known as school education comprises grades 1 to 13. This stage further is divided into substages as follows:

- Primary stage of education (grade one to five)
- Secondary stage of education (grade six to thirteen)
    o   Junior secondary level (grade six to nine)
    o   Senior secondary level leading to GCE O/L
    o   Senior secondary level leading to GCE A/L

Tertiary or university education can be obtained from government or private universities and higher education institutes by successfully completing GCE A/L. Other tertiary level institutions in technology, business studies, and professions like teaching and nursing are open to students who are not admitted to universities (Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2013).

2.4. Equal Opportunities for Education

Equal opportunities for education for all children have been one of the main provisions enacted by the Government of Sri Lanka over the last six decades. It is assumed that the universalization of education in Sri Lanka has been identified and protected as a principle even before the Jomtien Conference held in 1990. The free education act of 1945 is a historical landmark that made provision for free education from kindergarten to the university level. Additionally, there have been other progressive steps such as distributing free uniforms, free schoolbooks, etc. (Ministry of Education, 2009).

Equal opportunity for primary education facilities is provided by the government through the following important measures:
1) Enacting compulsory education regulations in 1997 and relaxing admission regulations.

2) Establishing special committees at the village level to identify and motivate non-schoolers.

3) Transforming learning into a pleasant and interesting experience by encouraging new changes and primary classes' infrastructures, teaching methodologies, and curriculum materials.

4) Emphasizing learner-centered education and learning activities

5) Introducing a school-based assessment system as an intervention strategy to improve the teaching- learning process.

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that education is a fundamental right and should be free and compulsory during the elementary stages. In 2009, India passed the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, which mandates free education for all children between the ages of 6 and 14. However, despite the law being in effect for two years in Haryana, there has been only some progress in terms of enrolment and basic infrastructure, while quality education and awareness among stakeholders are lacking. Ojha Seema (2013) mentioned that "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages".

Theobald, Danby, & Ailwood (2011) conducted a study on the international agenda of child participation and found that the concept of participation is multi-dimensional and can be interpreted in various ways. Participation is a process in which children are involved in making decisions about matters that affect their lives, either independently or as a group. However, despite a movement and commitment to participatory ideals, the change in key agendas and practices for early childhood education remains slow. The acknowledgment and adoption of children's rights, including participation, by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) took place two decades ago. However, the concept of children's participation rights is still viewed as contentious and challenging (Alderson, cited in Theobald et al., 2011) due to the perception that children are too young to form opinions. Child participation as a field of inquiry remains contested and often disputed.

2.5. Right to Education

Sri Lanka is obligated to comply with certain international human rights laws

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including the UDHR, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), all of which have significance within the local context.

Although the UDHR was not seen as imposing legal obligations on states at the time of its adoption, it has since come to be considered by many as a source of customary international law, and thereby universally binding.

As for the ICESCR, ICCPR, and CEDAW, Sri Lanka became a party to these the covenants in 1980 and to the convention in 1981, making them binding obligations. Certain provisions of the UDHR are particularly relevant to estate workers in Sri Lanka.

Article 2 of the UDHR demands that "everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms outlined in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or any other status." Similarly, Article 7 of the UDHR states that "all are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law."

Meanwhile, Article 10 of the UDHR, for example, emphatically recognizes the language rights of all citizens and Article 25 stipulates that "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and their family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services."

The ICESCR provides similar and further protections. The following ICESCR provisions are worth considering Article 2(1) states that each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to take steps, individually and through international assistance and cooperation, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Covenant by all appropriate means, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures. The State is a Party to the present Covenant and undertakes to guarantee that the rights enunciated in the present Covenant

will be exercised without discrimination of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status. Article 13(1) of the ICESCR recognizes the right of everyone to education. The ICESCR, therefore, stipulates that everyone has a right to non-discrimination, fair wages, social security, healthcare, education, and an adequate standard of living.

The ICCPR provides for rights that are of a political or civil nature, while CEDAW focuses on women's rights, including reproductive rights. Accordingly, articles 2, 14, and 25 of the ICCPR together guarantee the right of everyone, without any distinction of any kind, to vote, access public services, and seek an effective remedy if their rights have been violated. Meanwhile, articles 10 and 16 of CEDAW stipulate that women shall have access to information, education, and the means necessary to exercise their reproductive rights.

The Education Ordinance No. 31 of 1939, as amended by Law No. 35 of 1973, serves as the primary law governing the school system in Sri Lanka. Part VI of the Ordinance specifically addresses estate schools. The under-resourcing of estate schools compared to other schools in the country can be attributed to three factors.

Firstly, although estate schools are operated by the government, Regional Plantation Companies (RPCs) are responsible for the 'infrastructure and maintenance of these schools. Section 40 of the Education Ordinance mandates that estate owners allocate an area on the estate for the establishment of government schools for children residing on the estates. This requirement includes providing a building that meets prescribed standards as may be prescribed, a suitable house for a married head teacher, and an uncultivated land of at least one acre to be used partly as a school playground and partly as a school garden. If an estate owner fails to comply, the government will intervene, but the owner will incur a debt to the government. The relatively inferior infrastructure of estate schools can thus be largely attributed to the actions of RPCs, coupled with inadequate government oversight (Education regulation, 1977).

Secondly, inadequate, or non-existent transport facilities and roads in most

estates have made estate schools unattractive to many teachers, resulting in a low teacher-to-student ratio of one to three teachers in certain estates. This is largely due to the exclusion of estates from the purview of the Pradeshiya Sabha Act (PS), which has led to the underdevelopment of estates compared to villages. Poor infrastructure on estates is therefore connected to a lack of access to quality education. For secondary and higher education, many children of estate workers must travel to urban areas since there are limited estate schools offering education beyond the secondary level. The educational achievement of estate workers' children is further hindered by limited transport facilities and poor-quality estate roads (Jayawardena, 2014).

Thirdly, according to Sections 27 and 28 of the Education Ordinance No. 31 of 1939, PSs may borrow sums of money necessary to secure "adequate educational facilities and industrial training," provide "free meals and schoolbooks to children of poor parents," and enable the education of "blind, deaf, defective and epileptic children." Village Councils, upon the powers of any such council to borrow money for such other law." However, until the amendment of the PS Act in 2018, PS Act were not allowed to borrow money for works in estate schools for these purposes, placing estate schools at a disadvantage compared to urban and rural schools.

The inequality in access and quality of education in Sri Lanka is not only a consequence of national law but also a violation of both national and international law. Article 27(2)(h) of the Sri Lankan Constitution states that "the State is pledged to establishing a Democratic Socialist Society in Sri Lanka, with the objectives of eradicating illiteracy completely and ensuring universal and equal access to education at all levels of all individuals. "Furthermore, Article 12 of the Constitution mandates that all rights apply equally to all citizens without discrimination.

According to Education Ordinance No. 31 and 39 of 1939, Section 43, it is stated that "where the parent of a child aged between   five and fourteen years, resides on an estate, they must ensure that the child attends school."

The Covenant demands that all state parties guarantee the exercise of rights without discrimination, including the right to education for everyone. However, unequal access to education in the estates contradicts Article 25

of the ICCPR, which guarantees the right to equal access to public services. In the face of the RPCs and the Government's failure to ensure adequate education to children living on estates, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) – such as the Satyodaya Centre for Social Research and Encounter, have attempted to fill the gap by providing supplemental educational programs (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966).

2.6. Empirical Gaps

Although research on plantation economies and community is widespread, there is a lack of research on education in these settings. Recognizing this gap, researchers have conducted specific studies, such as Ramathass (2015) examination of the impact of teacher deployment on education quality in the Hatton Educational Zone, and Sarma, Wijesinghe, & Sivananthawerl (2013) investigation of the link between nutritional status and educational performance in the primary schools in Nuwara Eliya Educational Zone. However, these studies have mostly been limited to the tea plantation sector, and there have been fewer comprehensive studies on education in the plantation sector.

2.7. Methodological and Theoretical Gaps

Most analyses of education in plantations tend to focus on why educational change does not occur, rather than on the reasons why it does or the prevalence of some form of education in estate communities. Such analyses are valuable in understanding the persistent aspects of education, as well as the resistance to change and the preservation of the status quo within plantation communities (De Silva, 1982; Marimuthu, 1971; Beckford, 1983).

According to Little (2007), many studies related to education in the plantation community are primarily narrative-based and lack primary research elements. Few studies have conducted mixed-method primary research using both quantitative and qualitative data to investigate issues and challenges of education in the plantation community. There is no evidence to prove the use of a mixed-method primary research approach to collect responses from

children, parents, and teachers in a single study and focus on the community across all the districts in Sri Lanka. Sirikanth (2021) investigated the challenges of e-learning in the plantation sector, which involved gathering responses from 250 students using mixed-method primary research.

2.8. Initiatives toward education of plantation children in other countries

2.8.1 Malaysia

The Malaysian government has implemented the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, which includes initiatives to improve the quality of education for all children in Malaysia, including those in the plantation sector. The government also launched the Primary School Standard Curriculum (KSSR) and Secondary School Standard Curriculum (KSSM) to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in schools (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2022).

In addition, the Malaysian government has established various programs and initiatives to provide support for students in the estate sector, including scholarships, financial aid, and free textbooks. The government has also implemented initiatives to enhance access to education, such as the construction of new schools and the expansion of existing ones, particularly in rural areas (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2022).

Overall, the Malaysian government is committed to improving the quality of education in the estate sector and ensuring that children in this sector have access to quality education and opportunities for academic and personal growth (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2022)

2.8.2 Kenya

To address the challenges facing education in the estate sector, the Kenyan government has implemented various initiatives to improve access to education and the quality of education in these areas. These initiatives include construction of new schools, the expansion of existing schools, and the provision of free primary education to all children, including those in the estate sector (The Republic of Kenya, 2003).

The Kenyan government has also established various programs to support students in the estate sector, such as the School Feeding Program, which provides free meals to students to ensure they receive proper nutrition and can focus on their studies (Ministry of Education, 2017). Additionally, the government provides free textbooks and has implemented programs to improve teacher training and professional development, aiming to equip teachers in the estate sector with the necessary skills and resources to deliver quality education (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, 2020).

Overall, the Kenyan government is committed to improving education in the estate sector and ensuring that all children have access to quality education and opportunities for academic and personal growth.

2.8.3 India

In India, the education rights of the estate sector are governed by various laws and policies. The Indian Constitution guarantees the right to education to all citizens, including those in the estate sector (Ministry of Law and Justice, 1950).

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, commonly known as the Right to Education (RTE) Act, is a landmark legislation that mandates free and compulsory education to all children in the age group of 6-14 years, including those in the estate sector (Ministry of Education, 2009).

The government has also launched various initiatives to improve access to education for children in the estate sector, such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) (Ministry of Education, n.d). These initiatives aim to provide free and compulsory education up to the secondary level for all children, including those in the estate sector.

Additionally, the Indian government has set up special schools and residential hostels for children from the estate sector to provide them with access to education and improve their living conditions (Ministry of Education, n.d)

Overall, the Indian government has made a significant commitment to improving access to education and ensuring that children in the estate sector

have equal opportunities for academic and personal growth (Ministry of Education, n.d).

2.9.Principle of Equality

Equality is a new frontier of judicial activism in Sri Lanka. The guarantees of equality provided by Article 12 of the Sri Lankan Constitution of 1978, to a considerable extent, resemble corresponding provisions in the Indian Constitution (Articles 14 and 15). The early phase of the jurisprudence of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka relating to equality revolved around the traditional doctrine of reasonable classification, mainly developed by the US Supreme Court.

In India, a new orientation has been given to Article 14 of the Indian Constitution (which corresponds to our article 12) by the Supreme Court of India. The Supreme Court of India, for the first time laid down in Royappa's case in 1974 'a new dimension' of Article 14. Justice Bhagwathi was the first to propound this new doctrine. The claim was repeated in Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India (1978); Ramana v. International Airport Authority of India (1979), and Ajay Hasia v. Khalid Mujib (1981). In Hasia's case, the claim was formulated as follows:

"Equality is a dynamic concept with many aspects and dimensions, and it cannot be cribbed, cabined, and confined within traditional and doctrinaire limits. From a positivistic point of view, equality is antithetic to arbitrariness".

By embracing the new doctrine on equality developed by the Indian Supreme Court, the Sri Lankan Supreme Court introduced a new dimension to the guarantee of equal protection of the law. It pronounced that this guarantee includes the right to public administrative justice, free from a caprice of arbitrary executive or administrative actions. Article 12 of the 1978 Constitution of Sri Lanka allows a reasonable classification, but grounds mentioned in Article 12 (2) cannot be a valid basis for classification. The Article specifically bars the State from discriminating against any citizen on any of those grounds. Article 12 (1) offers equality to all persons in which the right to equality is generally stated.

Article 12 (2) of the Constitution specifies the institutionalized grounds on which discrimination against any citizen is prohibited, including race, religion, language caste, sex, political opinion, place of birth, or any one of such grounds. Additionally, Article 12(3) prohibits discrimination in the form of any

disability, liability, restriction, or condition with regard to access to shops, public restaurants, hotels, places of public entertainment, and places of public worship based on a person's religion. Furthermore, Article 12(4) allows for the creation of 'special provision' through law, subordinate legislation or executive action, for the advancement of women, children or disabled person. It is important to note that Article 12 (2) applies specifically to citizens while Article12 (1) provides a general statement on the right to equality. If discrimination is alleged on a ground not specified in Article 12 (2), the case must be decided under general Article 12 (1).

3.METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research philosophy

This study is conducted under the paradigm/philosophy of pragmatism research. The research framework employed in this study includes advocacy and participatory research (Baruch College, 2022). The selection of this research philosophy is justified by the constant change, renegotiation, debates, and reinterpretation of challenges faced by children in the plantation community in Sri Lanka.

The research employed both inductive and deductive approaches to investigate an existing issue in the Sri Lanka plantation sector. It is applied research aimed at formulating an effective policy guide for the education Sector in Plantation areas. The focus was on conducting descriptive research to examine a phenomenon, plan strategy measures and identify the challenges and future direction of the children in plantation community. The study adopted a cross-sectional design, and data collection took place in Central, Uva, Sabaragamuwa, Southern, and Western Provinces in Sri Lanka. The data collection occurred from December 2022 to January 2023, capturing a snapshot at a specific point in time. The mode of inquiry of the research is exploratory sequential design as mixed methods (Creswell, 2014) using an initial phase of quantitative data collection and analysis followed by a phase of qualitative data collection and analysis.

3.2 Research design, approach, and strategy

An exploratory sequential mixed methods approach was employed for data collection in this study. The research design involved initially collecting quantitative data followed by qualitative data collection and analysis. The table below provides further details of the approach and strategy, along with the main references used for developing research tools.

Table 2: Research approach and steps

Step	Tool	Description	Expected Outcome
01	**Literature Review** (Quantitative and Qualitative Secondary data)	Research methods including instruments identified with the completion of the initial literature review	
02	**Quantitative Primary Data** Questionnaire Survey to collect quantitative data.	A survey questionnaire was completed with the selected sample respondents as a face-to-face interview	Multi-stage stratified systematic sampling was adopted to interview students, parents, and teachers as survey respondents.
03	**Advance Qualitative Data Collection**	Completed advanced qualitative data collection using Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), In-depth Interviews (IDIs), and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	Comprehensive causal understanding of hardship, challenges faced by Children in the plantation sector based on their cultural identity, education rights awareness; and required developments

This research was completed by employing the mixed method approach to achieve objectives. Those are as follows:

1. Quantitative primary data collection through Survey
2. Qualitative primary data collection through In-depth Interviews (IDs), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) for stakeholders & government officials, and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) for parents and children.

3.3 Quantitative research method

3.3.1 Study population

The estimated total of the plantation is approximately 1 million, across several districts including Nuwara Eliya, Kandy, Matale, Badulla, Kegalle, Monaragala, Ratnapura, Galle, Matara, Kalutara, and Colombo districts. The study focused on eleven districts, specifically Central, Sabaragamuwa, Southern, Western, and Uva provinces. The unit of analysis in this research was the plantation community residing in the plantation areas. A minimum sample size of ten samples per community location was considered. However, the research study successfully completed 461 samples for quantitative survey and 99 samples for qualitative survey. The sample sizes were determined based on the size and population of the plantations. Consequently, compared to other provinces central province had relatively more samples due to their larger plantation Community.

3.3.2 Sampling frame and sample

The research adopted a multistage stratified sampling technique, identified as the most suitable sampling approach for the study (Scribbr, 2022). In the first stage, stratification was applied to select districts where tea, rubber, and coconut plantation are located out of the total of 25 districts. In the second stage, random selection was conducted to choose the divisional secretariat (DS) divisions from the eleven selected districts. These DS were proposed by Caritas Sri Lanka. The next stage involved stratification to select schools and estates using a systematic sampling approach. The table below provides further details of the sample size for quantitative survey.

Table 3: Quantitative sample details

Province	Pradeshiya Sabha	Sample Children			Sample Teachers			Sample Parents		
		Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Central	Nuwara Eliya	19	7	26	3	2	5	23	2	25
	Kandy	12	8	20	5	0	5	18	2	20
	Matale	12	8	20	2	3	5	12	8	20
Uva	Badulla	10	10	20	4	1	5	13	7	20
	Monaragala	5	5	10	3	2	5	5	5	10
Sabaragamuwa	Kegalle	13	7	20	2	3	5	8	12	20
	Ratnapura	4	16	20	2	3	5	9	12	21
Southern	Galle	8	12	20	5	1	6	9	11	20
	Matara	11	10	21	1	4	5	7	13	20
Western	Kalutara	10	6	16	4	1	5	6	10	16
	Colombo	3	7	10	3	2	5	7	3	10
Sub totals		107	96	203	34	22	56	117	85	202
Total		461								

3.3.3 Survey data collection tool

The survey questionnaire for collecting quantitative data primarily consisted of close-ended questions with a few open-ended questions included. In addition to standard educational measurement questions, several new questions were added to align with the study requirements. To ensure the validity and reliability of data collection, most of the questions were adopted from existing literature. The survey questionnaire covered various aspects such as demographics, accessibility, facilities available, opinion on safety and security, community support, community behavior, and awareness of education rights. The survey questionnaire was digitalized using KoBo mobile data collection technology (KoBo Inc, 2022). A detailed survey questionnaire was utilized for conducting in-person interviews.

The questionnaire was initially developed in English and subsequently translated into Sinhala and Tamil languages. Pre-testing was conducted on the survey questionnaire, and improvements were made to enhance its effectiveness. The respective survey links for each survey can be found below:

Children survey questionnaire
- English- https://ee.humanitarianresponse.info/3SIwFz4G
- Sinhala - https://ee.humanitarianresponse.info/zBxYo0Kd
- Tamil- https://ee.humanitarianresponse.info/4e8cPFhh

Parents survey questionnaire
- English- https://ee.humanitarianresponse.info/98rJdRhh
- Sinhala - https://ee.humanitarianresponse.info/1AHdqdnG
- Tamil- https://ee.humanitarianresponse.info/pWAO2c78

Teachers survey questionnaire
- English - https://ee.humanitarianresponse.info/v5n0vTKo
- Sinhala - https://ee.humanitarianresponse.info/IYW90zto
- Tamil - https://ee.humanitarianresponse.info/JXBo8Mgw

3.3.4 Enumerator training and survey data collection

The data collection process was planned in collaboration with the Caritas District Coordinators to ensure easy access to stakeholder communities. Pretesting was conducted before the data collection, and minor changes were made to all three questionnaires based on the feedback received. A total of nine enumerators consisting of four females and five males, participated in the data collection process, which covered 11 Districts. Additionally, the Consultants were allocated specifically for qualitative data collection. Two online orientations were conducted prior to the data collection, one in Tamil medium and the other in Sinhala medium. In addition to the group orientation, each enumerator received individual explanations on the process and questionnaire to address any concerns they had. District Coordinators of Caritas Sri Lanka arranged communities and schools to gather data collection. Both online orientations were conducted by three female consultants under the leadership/supervision of the principal researcher/team leader.

To assure the accuracy of data, 10% of the completed surveys were randomly checked by the statistical consultant for the quality of the data collection process. We conducted once in three days progress review meetings with the team of enumerators. A dedicated trilingual consultant was made available around the clock to offer mentoring and coaching support for enumerators.

3.3.5 Survey data analysis

The survey data was transferred from KoBo to Microsoft Excel format, and the Excel database was subsequently uploaded to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Quantitative data analysis was conducted using SPSS with descriptive statistics, correlations, and cross-tabulations of key variables. Quantitative findings are presented using tables and graphs. Survey data analysis focused on cross-tabulated with gender, districts, and ethnicity. In addition, project and non-project area cross-tabulations were completed.

3.4 Qualitative research method

Qualitative data collection was conducted through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), In-Depth Interviews (IDIs), and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). The qualitative data collection guide and questionnaire were developed using standards tools recommended by previous research studies, universities, and UN agencies. The table below provides a summary of the interviews and discussions conducted during qualitative data collection.

Table 4: Details of qualitative data

Data Collection Tool	No. of Interviews / Discussions	Total Respondents		
		Female	Male	Total
IDIs	22	13	09	22
FGDs	22	86	63	149
KIIs	53	18	35	53
Sub-totals	**97**	**117**	**107**	**224**

FGDs were carried out separately for children and parents. The FGD questionnaire for children consisted of various questions such as understanding the obstacles they face in their educational journey, reasons for not attending school, the availability of a safe environment for studying, learning opportunities and knowledge acquisition, the level of support received from teachers and guardians, their enthusiasm towards studies, whether teachers inquire about their health concerns, satisfaction with meals provided, reasons for staying at home, opinion of parents on education, their biggest supporter, and any gender-based challenges they may have encountered.

The FGD questionnaire for parents aimed to explore the following key areas;

obstacles the parents face when sending their children to school, ensuring regular attendance of their children at school, alternative educational methods for children who do not attend to formal education, efforts to taken to ensure the safety of children in the community, incidents where children are harassed within the community, the relationship with school teachers, perspective on receiving good education, meal choices which effect on children and their studies, the quality of meals provided for the children, health concerns of the school children and the future expectations of children.

The KIIs were conducted as part of the research on education in the plantation communities in the selected districts of Sri Lanka. These interviews were intentionally conducted with various stakeholders, including the Development Officers (DO), Grama Niladhari Officers, Estate Superintendent, School teachers, Child DOs and the community.

The KIIs included questions on various topics, such as gaps in school education, challenges and how you try to overcome them, community and family support, community's contribution to protecting children from the issues they are facing, feeling on children's early childhood education, children's education rights, community empowerment and advocacy ability to work on the educational rights of the children, challenges faced by children based on gender, incidents where children were discriminated against based on ethnicity, religion, or language, strategies to increase engagement of the children, observation of the poorest families, lessons learned from educational journey, authority's interventions and level of collaboration among stakeholders' government, public, and private partners, changes to be done for education development in the future, and future plans and projects conducted by the government or other organizations.

3.4.1 In-Depth Interviews (IDI)

The IDI component of the qualitative research aimed to gather much more in-depth information about the challenges faced by children in accessing their educational rights. This type of information adds a richer layer of insight beyond the closed ended questions that focus on the current status quo. This approach aligns with the principles of the Qualitative Impact Protocol (QuIP) (Copestake & Remnant, 2015)

The qualitative IDI sample was selected using stratified purposeful sampling (Suri, 2011). This sampling technique was chosen to explore the underlying causes of

deep-rooted issues in the education sector in the plantation community. A total of 22 IDIs were conducted from the 11 districts. The purposive sample was selected in a way to ensure the representation of gender as available in Table 5.

Table 5: Sample of In-Depth Interviews

Province	Pradeshiya Sabha	Sample		
		Female	Male	Total
Central	Nuwara Eliya	01	01	02
	Kandy	01	01	02
	Matale	01	01	02
Uva	Badulla	02	00	02
	Monaragala	01	01	02
Sabaragamuwa	Kegalle	01	01	02
	Ratnapura	02	00	02
Southern	Galle	01	01	02
	Matara	01	01	02
Western	Kalutara	01	01	02
	Colombo	01	01	02
Sub totals		**13**	**09**	**22**

The length of each IDI was approximately 60 minutes and led by a researcher with significant experience in research on sensitive topics and knowledge of the topic. The researchers were trained in QuIP-style causal questioning. There were several orientations online to provide knowledge and skills on facilitating IDIs and to make sure their understanding of concepts and the tool.

3.4.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

Two separate FGD guides were finalized for conducting FGDs with children and parents, respectively, by referring to established standards. FGD tool was pre-tested during the initial qualitative data collection process and based on the experience and findings, it was adopted to modified specific context, including culture and other sensitive factors.

Qualitative FGD sampling was conducted using stratified purposeful sampling (Suri, 2011). All significant variations and potential inclusion were considered during the sampling process. In each district, two FGDs were completed and a total of 22 FGDs were executed with the participation of a total of 149 adult and children community members (47 female & 31 male adults and 39 girl & 32 boy children). In each location parents and children's groups were formed and

then each group was facilitated as a separate FGD with the main facilitation. Four female and five male experienced researchers were engaged in this exercise. However, the principal researcher/team leader provided training for consultants to make sure a better understanding of the concept and tools. The table below shows details of the FGD sample completed for the study.

The findings from the FGD were analyzed in two steps. In the first step, all answers were categorized into main areas and then keywords and codes were identified for summarization and to make possible conclusions to complete other findings of the research.

Table 6: Sample of Focused Group Discussions

Province	Pradeshiya Sabha	Number of FGDs		Total Participants				
				Children		Parents		
		Children	Parents	Girls	Boys	Female	Male	Total
Central	Nuwara Eliya	1	1	2	3	6	0	11
	Kandy	1	1	4	1	8	1	14
	Matale	1	1	4	4	5	4	17
Uva	Badulla	1	1	4	4	4	3	15
	Monaragala	1	1	4	2	4	2	12
Sabaragamuwa	Kegalle	1	1	3	3	3	3	12
	Ratnapura	1	1	3	3	2	3	11
Southern	Galle	1	1	3	3	3	4	13
	Matara	1	1	3	3	4	3	13
Western	Kalutara	1	1	4	3	3	2	12
	Colombo	1	1	5	3	5	6	19
Total		11	11	39	32	47	31	149

3.4.3 Key Informant Interviews (KII)

The KII questionnaire guide was completed using standards open-ended questions (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2002). The Key Informants were selected based on the nature and the requirements of the research. A total of 53 key informants provided their responses for the qualitative data collection. Four female and five male researchers were engaged with KII facilitation.

Table 7: Sample of Key Informants

No	Key Informants (KIs)	
1.	Grama Niladhari	7
2.	Principal	10
3.	DO	3
4.	Child DO	2
5.	Teacher	7
6.	Child Rights Officer	2
7.	Agriculture Officer	1
8.	Religious Leader	1
9.	Director of Centre for Social Justice & Equity	1
10.	DS Officer	2
11.	Economic DO	3
12.	Samurdhi Officer	4
13.	Estate Superintendent / Plantation officers	2
14.	Welfare Officer	1
15.	Youth Service Officer	1
16.	Student Counselor	1
17.	Project Coordinators	2
18.	Human Resource Officer of District Secretarial	1
19.	Former Provincial Director of Youth Services Center	1
20.	Former Samurdhi Niladhari of the estate	1
Total KII respondents		**53**

The KII findings were analyzed into two steps. In the first step, all the answers were categorized into main areas. Then, keywords and codes were identified to summarize the data and draw possible conclusions to complete other findings of the research.

3.5 Data triangulation and report writing

After completing the analysis of all the community survey findings, interpretations were made considering the response from the IDIs, FGDs, and KIIs. Qualitative findings were presented separately to enhance understanding and when necessary, triangulations were performed with the survey findings.

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Interpretations and report writing were completed as consultant brainstorming group work. Most of the brainstorming discussions were online and several discussions were physical to data triangulations and report writing.

3.6 Ethical consideration

The research team has paid attention to ethical considerations.

The principal researcher/team leader who has successfully completed the Protecting Human Research Participants (PHRP) online course[1] (PHRP, 2022), provided training to enumerators and consultants on PHRP using the obtained knowledge and the training materials. Further, each enumerator and consultant agreed to and signed the UN Evaluation Group Ethical Guidelines (UNEG, 2022) and the PASS asia (PASS asia, 2022) internal code of ethics for enumerators and consultants. Moreover, enumerators and consultants were trained on the importance of ethical considerations including adopting an appropriate coping method if any participant needed such services. To protect the rights of the research participants the purpose of this research was explained and received their consent prior to commence the interview.

3.7 Limitations of the study

Technical Limitations

- Very few studies have been found relating to the subject scope, despite various types of research conducted targeting tea plantations.
- An insignificant misinterpretation was identified in the questionnaire regarding the words ''Protecting'' and ''Participating'' in relation to the educational rights of the Children. Consequently, data received may reflect the meaning of ''Participation'' but we analyzed and presented it as ''Protecting'' because our team of consultants and Enumerators asked the questions with that understanding. Some of the data received from the Plantation community is contradictory when analyzed separately using quantitatively and qualitative methods.
- Many of the students were not aware of the income situation of the family, and in some cases, they were reluctant to share accurate data regarding their

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[1] Date Completed: 2022-06-01 Certification Number: 2978898

educational performance. Therefore, there are limitations in the accuracy of the data.

Operational Limitations

- In many cases, when taking qualitative data, plantation authorities were reluctant to share actual information. The data and stories received from the government and plantation authorities.
- Significant challenges arose, particularly in Ratnapura and Colombo areas due to the lack of prior permission from the government and plantation authorities. This resulted in multiple interruptions during the data collection process.
- Unavailability of children and Family members in the estate sector due to holidays and the economic and political situation in the country resulted in some respondents being unwilling to dedicate additional time for interviews as their estate work took precedence.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographics characteristics of the survey respondents: CHILDREN

This survey was conducted with the participation of 203 children who primarily attend schools in the estate plantation areas. This survey covered 11 districts, with approximately 20 children participating in each district. However, in the Monaragala and Colombo districts, 10 children participated. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of the participants across the districts.
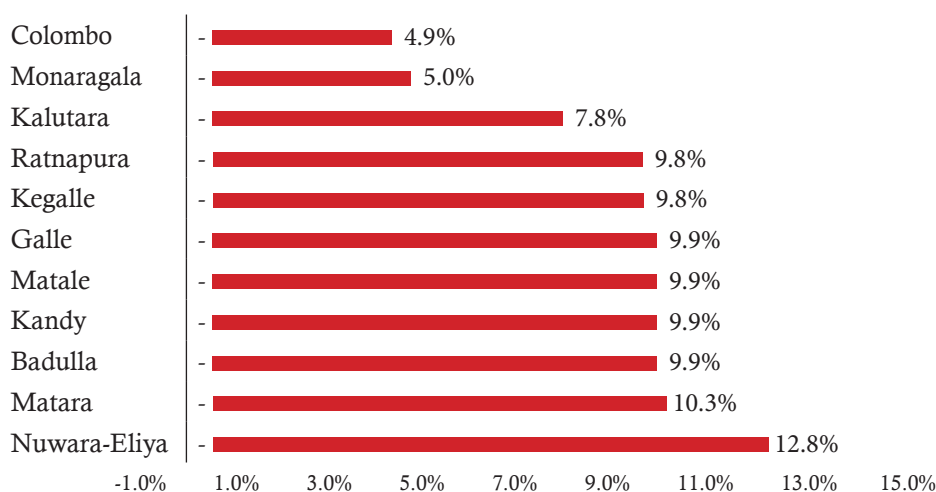
Figure 2: Children surveyed based on districts

Analysis further reveals that 62.6% of the surveyed children are from the tea plantation, while 37.4% are from rubber plantation. The majority (52.7%) of the children who participated in this research are girls, while 47.3% are boys. The data on gender of surveyed children is visually represented in figure 3.

Figure 3: Gender of surveyed children

The relationship between the district and the gender of the children surveyed is shown in figure 4. Except in Rathnapura district, most of the surveyed children were represented by girls in all other ten districts.
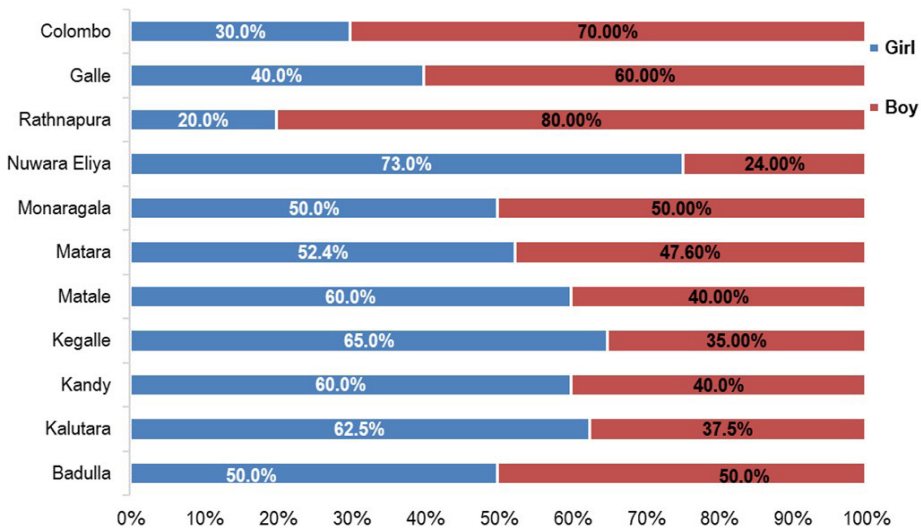
Figure 4: Relationship between district and gender of the children surveyed.

The analysis reveals that most children (61.1%) participating in this research study are studying in mixed-gender schools that offer classes up to Grade 13 (G.C.E. A/L). 26.6% of the surveyed children are studying in mixed-gender schools, which have classes only up to gra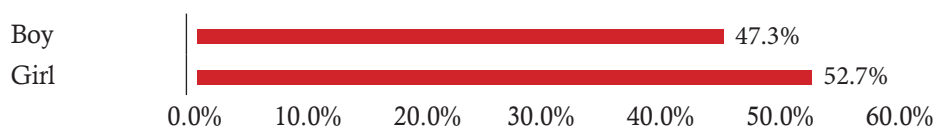de 11 (G.C.E. O/L), and another 11.8% are studying in mixed-gender schools, which have classes up to grade 5. The remaining 0.5% of the total surveyed children are studying in girls' schools which have classes up to grade 13 (A/L). The analysis is presented in figure 5.
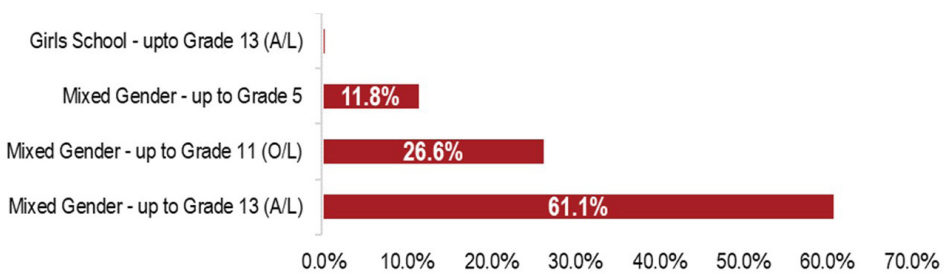
Figure 5: Type of the school of children surveyed

The ages of the children who participated in this research ranged from 12 to 20 years. Most of the participants fall within the age range of 16. On the other hand, a minority of participants fall within the age range of 20. Further analysis in this regard is presented in Figure 6.
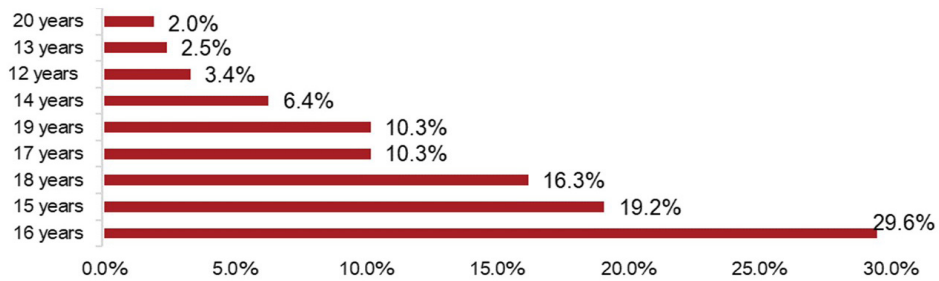
Figure 6: Age of the children surveyed

When analyzing the ethnicity of the children surveyed, it was observed that the majority (89.2%) / (n=181) are of Tamil ethnicity, while the remaining 10.8% (n=22) belong to the Sinhala ethnicity. Similarly, when considering religion, children from three different religious backgrounds participated in this survey. Among the total participants, 80.8% (n=164) identified as Hindus, 10.3% identified as Buddhists, and 8.9% identified as Christians. Figure 7 provides a visual representation of this analysis.
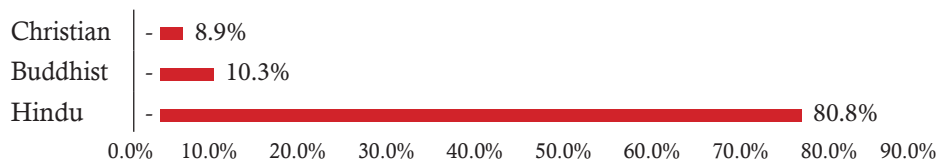
Figure 7: Religion of the children surveyed

Demographics characteristics of the survey respondents: PARENTS

The parents' survey was conducted with the participation of 202 parents residing primarily in the plantation area. This survey was conducted in 11 districts, with approximately 20 parents participating from each district, except for Colombo, Monaragala, and Kalutara. 10 parents participated each in the Monaragala and Colombo districts. The highest participation was recorded in the Nuwara Eliya district. Figure 8 illustrates the district-wise distribution of the participants.
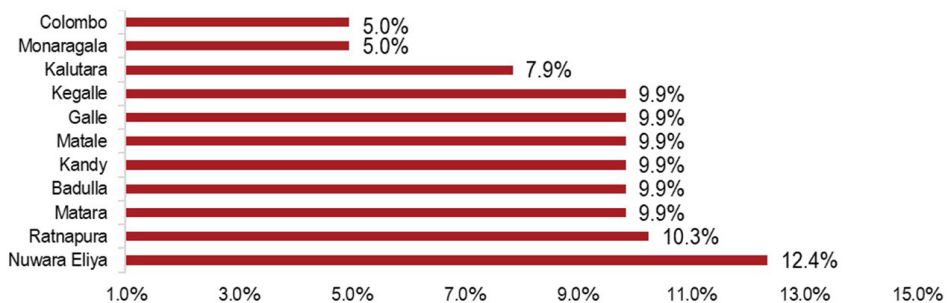
Figure 8: District wise distribution of the parents surveyed

Analysis further reveals that 62.4% of the parents surveyed are based on tea plantations, while 37.6% are based on rubber plantations.

Analysis reveals that 52.7% of the participants in this research are women, while 47.3% are men. The visualization of data on gender is shown in figure 9.
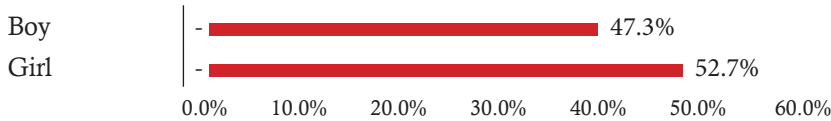
Figure 9: Gender wise distribution of the parents surveyed.

The relationship between the district and the gender of the parents surveyed is shown in the figure 10.
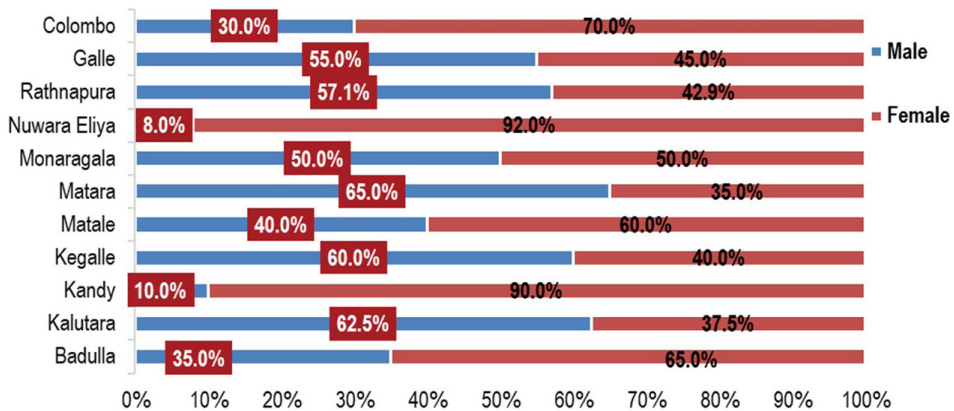
Figure 10: Relationship between district and gender of the parents surveyed

When it comes to the age of the parents who participated in this research, the analysis revealed that adults in the age range of 22 to 71 years participated. It was further noted that the majority of them are between the ages of 41-50 years. Minorities are above the age of 60. Further analysis in this regard is presented in figure11.
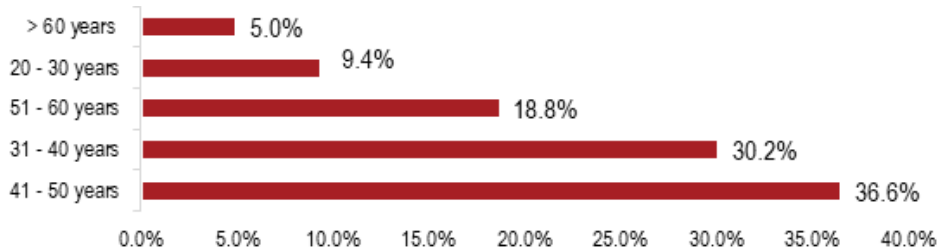
Figure 11: Age of the parents surveyed

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When it comes to ethnicity, the majority of the parents surveyed are Tamils, accounting for 85.6% (n = 173) of the total respondents. Further analysis shows that 11.9% (n = 24) are of Sinhala ethnicity and 2.5% belong to the Muslim ethnicity. As well, the surveyed parents belong to four different religions. Out of the total number of parents surveyed, 71.8% (n = 145) are Hindus, 11.9% are Buddhists, 13.9% are Christians, and 2.5% are Muslims. Figure 12 shows the analysis in this regard:
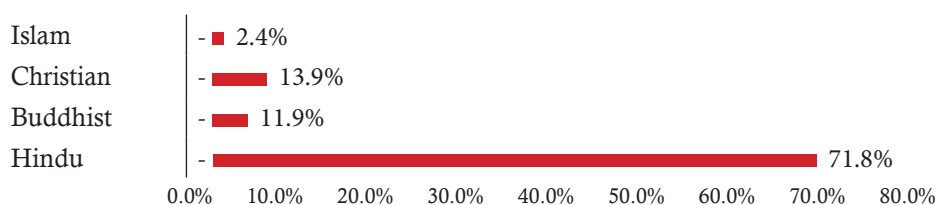
Figure 12: Religion of the parents surveyed

The parents' survey revealed that there are 86.6% male-headed households, and the other 13.4% are female-headed households.

Demographics characteristics of the survey respondents: TEACHERS
This survey was conducted with the participation of 56 teachers who work in schools in the estate plantation area. This survey was conducted in 11 districts. Except in Galle, where six teachers participated in the survey, five teachers participated in the survey in each district.

Approximately 54% of the teachers surveyed are teaching students based in tea plantation while the remaining teachers are teaching in rubber plantation.

In the survey sample, there were 39.3% male teachers and 60.7% female teachers. The visualization of data on gender is shown in figure 13.
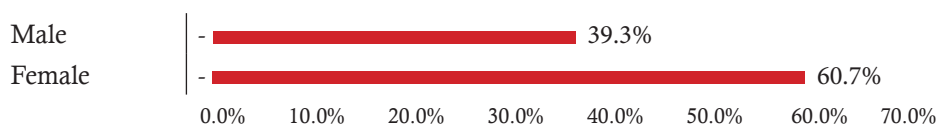
Figure 13: Gender of participants (Teachers)

Analysis shows that the majority (52%) of the respondents are teaching in mixed-gender schools that offer classes up to Grade 13. Further, 39% of them

are teaching in mixed-gender schools that offer classes only up to grade 11. The remaining teachers are teaching in schools that have both genders but only offer classes up to grade 5. Figure 14 presents the analysis of the types of schools in which teachers are teaching.
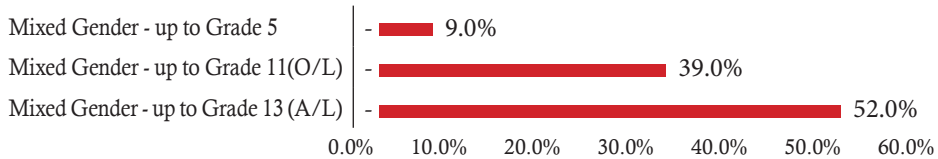
Figure 14: Type of the School of Teachers surveyed

The cross tabulation on the type of school versus the gender of the teachers surveyed is shown in figure 15. Accordingly, it was observed that most of the female teachers surveyed are teaching in mixed-gender schools that offer classes up to grade 11 and grade 13.
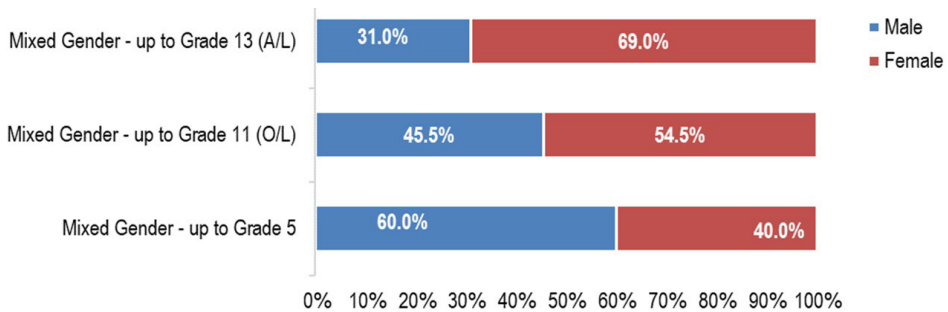
Figure 15: Cross tabulation respondent's gender vs type of school

When considering the age of the teachers who participated in this research, it was found that they were in age between 25 – 58 years. The analysis revealed that most of them are between the age of 36 and 45. The marital status of the teachers shows that 87.5% of them are married and the rest are unmarried. Further, analysis on the age of the teachers is presented in figure 16.
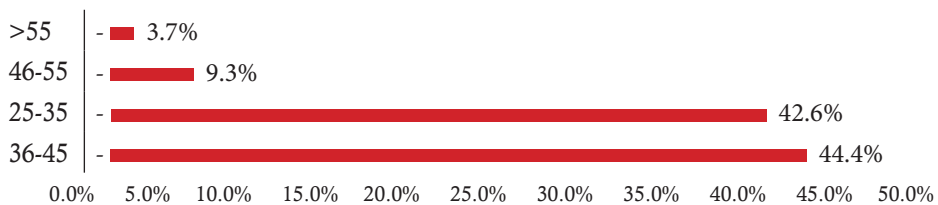
Figure 16: Age of the respondents (Teachers)

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When it comes to ethnicity it was noted that majority (80.3%) of the teachers surveyed are Tamils. Further analysis shows that 17.9% are belong to the Sinhala ethnicity and 1.8% are from Muslim ethnicity. Figure 17 visualizes further details in this regard.
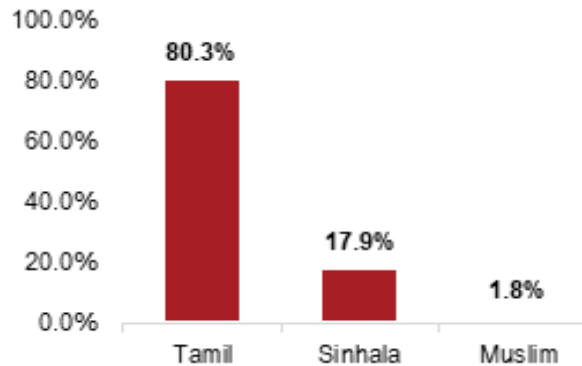
Figure 17: Ethnicity of the respondents (Teachers)

As with ethnicity, religion-wise, community members of different religions also participated in this survey. Out of a total, 38.6% (n=40) are Hindus, 31.4% are Buddhists, 19.3% are Muslims, and 10.7% are Christians. Figure 18 presents the analysis in this regard.
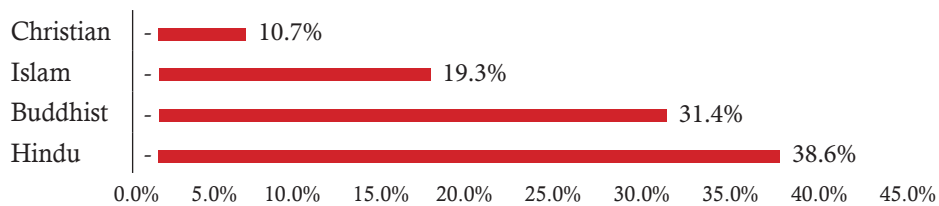
Figure 18: Religion of the participants (Teachers)

Figure 19 shows the analysis regarding the educational qualifications of the teachers surveyed. Accordingly, it was noted that the majority (46.4%) of them are having degree, 35.7% are having diploma. It means most teachers have higher education qualifications.
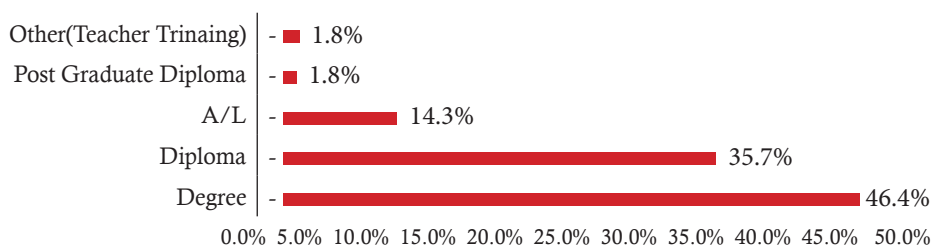
Figure 19: Educational level of the teachers surveyed

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4.1 Accessibility

Findings from the children survey

In order to determine the accessibility to schools, the children were asked about the distance they had to reach their schools. The findings suggest that most children surveyed (84.6%) have to travel less than 10km to reach school. However, some children reported traveling more than 10km, which can consume a significant amount of time. Further analysis on this topic is presented in Figure 20.
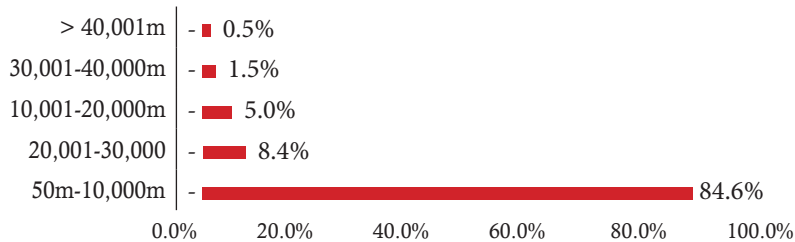
Figure 20: Distance from children's home to school

It was further noted that the time consumption to reach their schools was very high for some children. The figure 21 shows the analysis regarding the time taken for the children surveyed to reach the school:
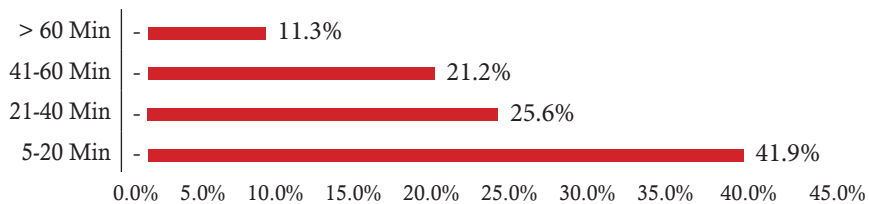
Figure 21: Time taken to reach the school for children surveyed.

The mode of transportation to school varies among the children, with most of them (59.1%) walking, followed by using a bus or van (35%). Other modes of transportation were also reported. Figure 22 shows the analysis of the transport methods used by the children surveyed.
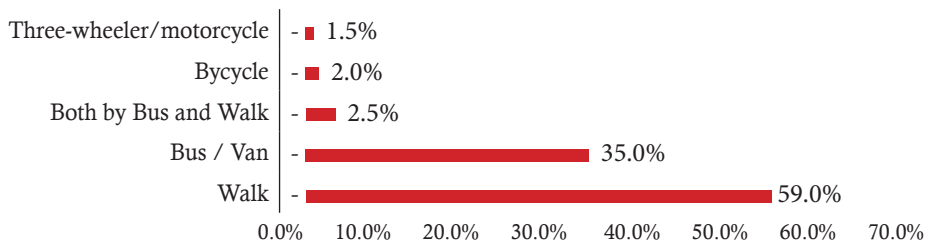
Figure 22: Method of transport used by children to reach school

47.8% percentage of children spend money on transportation, while the majority (52.2%) do not spend money as they walk to school. Further analysis on this regard is presented in Figure 23.

More than 5000 - 9.0%
Below Rs. 1000.00 - 10.8%
Rs. 3001 - 5000 - 11.3%
Rs. 1001 - 3000 - 16.7%
Nothing - 52.2%

0.0%   10.0%   20.0%   30.0%   40.0%   50.0%   60.0%
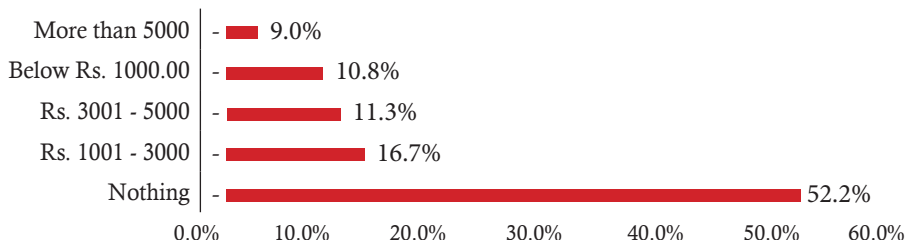
Figure 23: Amount spent for transportation by the children

The children's survey got opinion about availability of challenges regarding accessibility. The majority (55.7%) of the children surveyed did not have many challenges about accessibility to the schools. The rest of the participants indicated that they faced challenges. However, the remaining children mentioned various challenges, such as long travel times, lack of proper transportation, and poor road conditions. The analysis of this data is visualized in Figure 24.

Not having any challenges - 55.7%
Having challenges regarding accessbility - 44.3%

0.0%   10.0%   20.0%   30.0%   40.0%   50.0%   60.0%

Figure 24: Availability of challenges with regard to accessibility for children

The relationship between the district and availability of challenges related to accessibility is shown in Figure 25. It was observed that children from Ratnapura, Matale, Nuwara Eliya, Kegalle and Kalutara districts mostly face challenges in terms of the accessibility to their school.
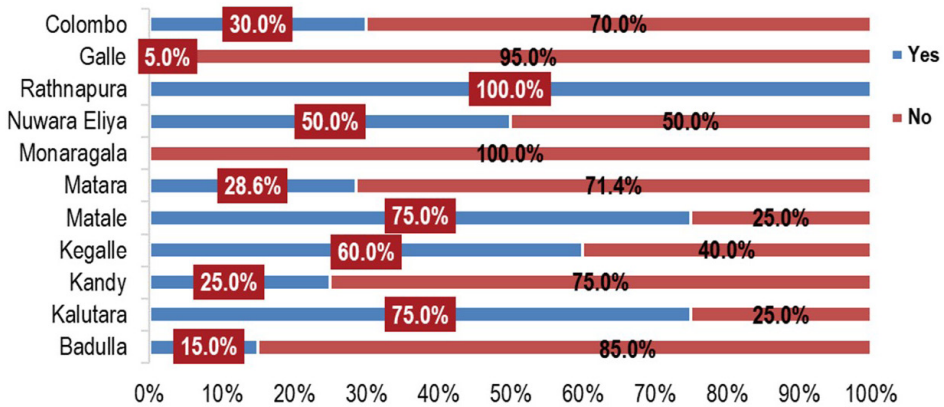
Figure 25: Relationship between district & availability of challenges related to accessibility

Cross tabulation on the gender of the children vs availability of challenges related to accessibility is shown in Figure 26. Accordingly, it was noted that an almost equal portion of the girls and boys face challenges regarding accessibility.
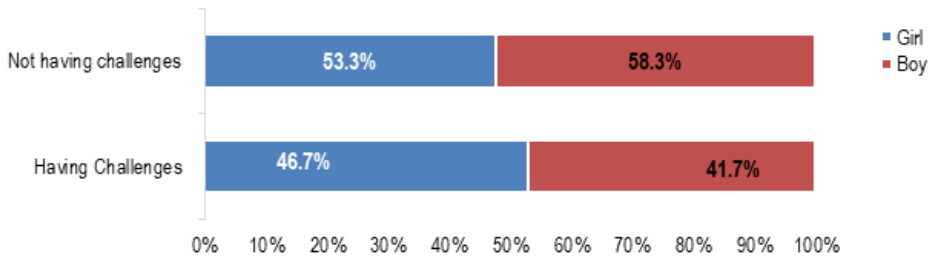
Figure 26: Cross tabulation gender vs availability of challenges related to accessibility.

Figure 27 shows the challenges stated by the children surveyed and the challenge mentioned by majority of the children is "no regular transport services".
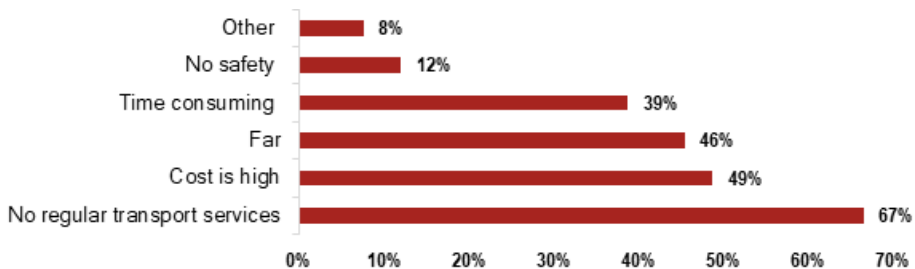
Figure 27: Challenges faced by children in terms of accessibility

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The children who face challenges were inquired how they manage or cope these challenges, and their responses, include the following: going early from home, try to stay in a nearby place to the school, go by three-wheeler (with the support of the parents), get the monthly travel card from the transport board (season ticket) or pay and go by private buses etc.

Out of the children who stated that they face challenges, approximately, 41.1% stated that they have ideas to mitigate these issues, while the remaining respondents stated that they do not have any idea.

According to the results of the KIIs, the respondents emphasized that the transportation problem is critical for children in plantation community. They must walk a long distance to reach the main road, which is extremely tiresome and unsafe. Upon returning home in the evening, they have limited time to study due to exhaustion. The findings also suggest that poor attendance is a concern due to inadequate transportation services for both teachers and students. This issue is compounded by inadequate school facilities and teacher shortages. However, despite these challenges, most children attend school every day due to their interest in studying, learning discipline, being with friends, and achieving their life goals. Some children, however, do not attend school due to poverty, lack of interest from parents, sickness or sadness, stubbornness, or economic issues. It was also noted that some students come to school for reasons other than education, such as having fun or fulfilling their parents' expectations.

The KII participants expect the relevant authorities to take necessary action to allocate the required number of buses or at least to repair the damaged roads or construct the proper roads to walk. They further expect separate buses for school students to be allocated etc.

Findings from parents' survey

64.4% of the parents stated that there were pre-school facilities in their estates, while 35.6% stated that there were no such facilities in their estate. The parents, who indicated that their estate has pre-school facilities, were further requested to state their opinion on the standard of activities at those pre-schools, and the figure below shows the analysis of the responses received. The majority of the parents 'expressed that the standard of the preschool activities is good.
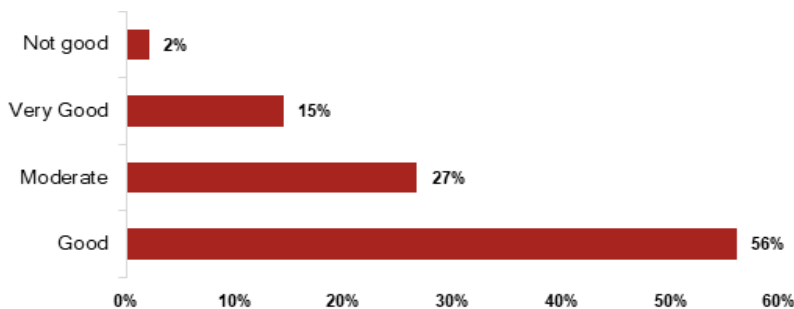
Figure 28: Opinion on preschool available in the estate

Lack of facilities, not being clean, not having proper toilet facilities, a lack of qualified teachers, the non-availability of Tamil-speaking teachers, the lack of a fence around the building, and the fact that the quality of the education is not enough are the reasons given by the parents, who are not very happy with the standard of activities.

The parents were asked to state the distance between their home and the school where their children are studying. The majority (87.6%) of them stated it as 200-10000m. The figure 29 shows a summarized version of the analysis in this regard.
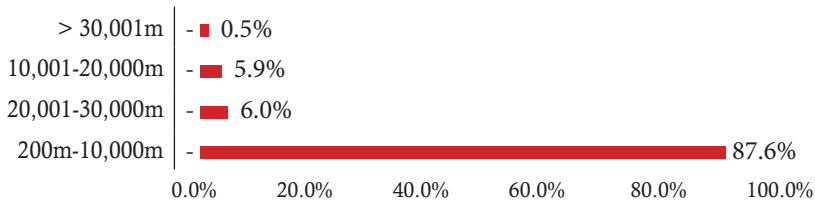
Figure 29: Distance from home to children's school

Parents were further inquired on the time taken for their children to reach the school, and figure 30 shows the analysis in this regard.
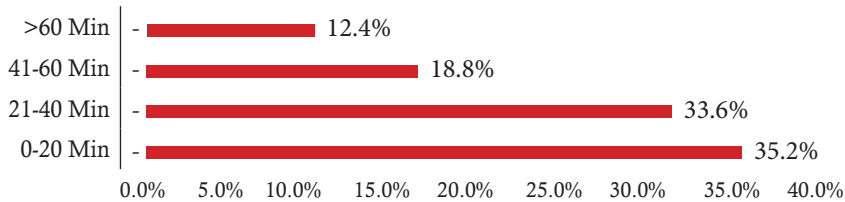
Figure 30: Time taken to reach the children's school

The majority (59.4%) of parents stated that their children walked to school. While 29.2% of them stated that their children used a bus or van transportation. The figure 31 shows an analysis of the transport method used by the children of the respondents.
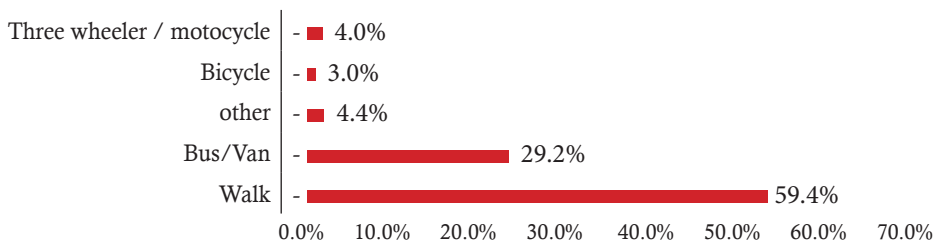
Figure 31: Mode of transport used by children to reach school

The participants were requested to mention the amount they spent per month on the education of their children, and it was noted that the majority (70.7%) of

them are spending in the range of Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 10,000. It was further noted that 1.1% spent more than Rs. 40,000 because they have two or more children. The figure 32 presents further analysis in this regard:
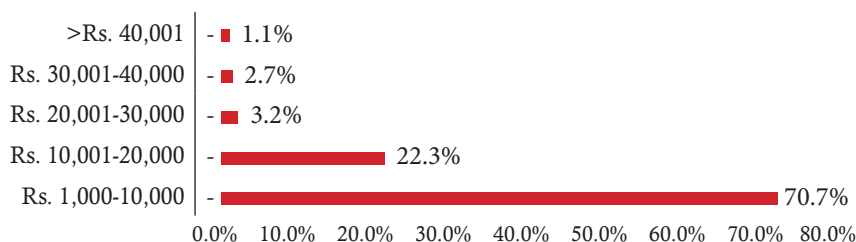
Figure 32: Travelling expenses by children to attend schools

After analyzing views of the parents' views from both quantitative and qualitative studies it is evident that parents in the surveyed area face several challenges in sending their children to school. These challenges include economic issues, high costs of educational equipment, security concerns, transportation issues, and lack of water facilities.

Findings from teachers' survey

In order to know the status of the accessibility to the schools, the teachers were asked how long they have to travel to reach the schools where they are teaching. The majority (62.5%) of them stated a distance in between 150m – 10 km. Another 17.8% stated that they have to travel around 10 – 20 km to reach the school. The figure 33 shows further analysis in this regard:
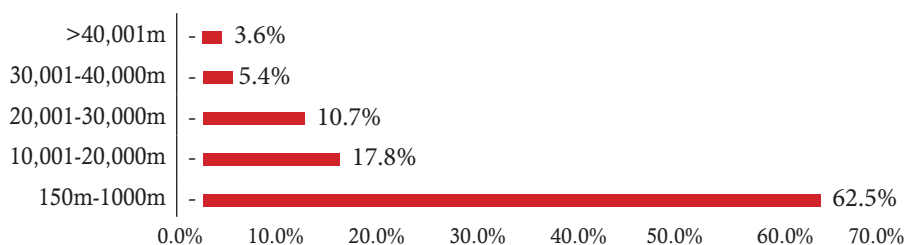
Figure 33: Distance from Teacher's home to School

Discussions with KII and FGDs with parents & students also revealed that some of the teachers have to travel a very long distance to reach the school.

It was further noted that many teachers have to spend a considerable amount of time on the road to reach the schools. The figure 34 shows the analysis with regarding the time taken for the surveyed teachers to reach the school:
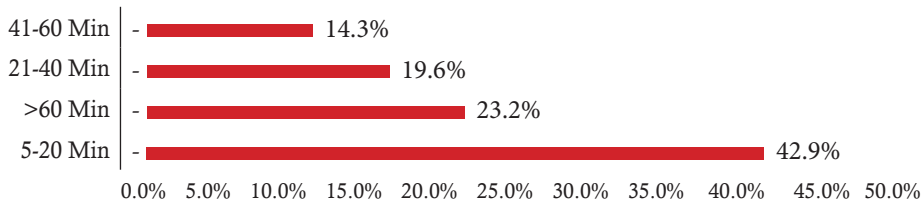
Figure 34: Time taken to reach the school for teachers surveyed

Figure 35 shows an analysis of the transport methods used by the surveyed teachers to reach the school. 44.6% of teachers use bus/van as their mode of transport.
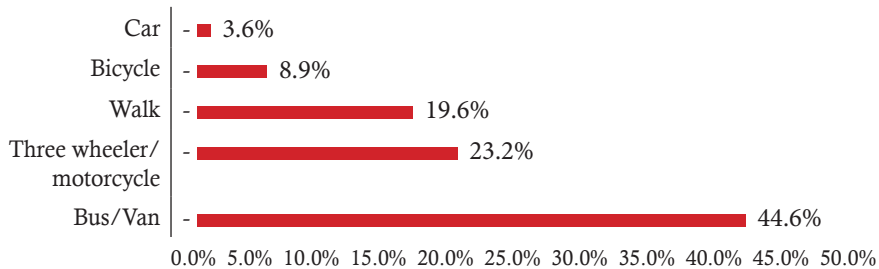
Figure 35: Method of transport used by teachers to reach school

The participants were requested to mention the amount of money they spend on transportation to reach the school and it was noted that most of them (34%) are spending more than Rs.5, 000.00 per month. It was further noted that 18% of the participants stated that they are not spending money on transportation. The figure 36 presents further analysis in this regard;
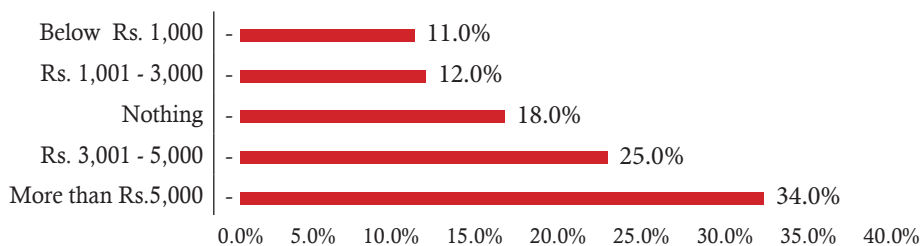
Figure 36: Amount spent for transportation

According to KII results it revealed that the lack of transport facilities is an

issue for schoolteachers. Teachers have to come to the school by three-wheeler spending around Rs.1, 200 for a one-way trip. As a result, Teachers are not very happy to work in the school and tend to leave within a short period of time. Consequently, they have a very limited number of teachers.

Most of the teachers who mentioned having these challenges further stated that they come to school very early, use their own vehicles, walk, travel with the support of their parents or relatives, take the bus & then walk and mostly rely on public transport to manage the situation. However, a few said they could not find any solution to face the above challenges and most of their salary has been spent on transportation.

Analysis shows that 52% of the teachers surveyed are facing challenges regarding accessibility to the schools. The rest of them stated as "No" in this regard.

Figure 37 visualizes the analysis of challenges regarding accessibility:
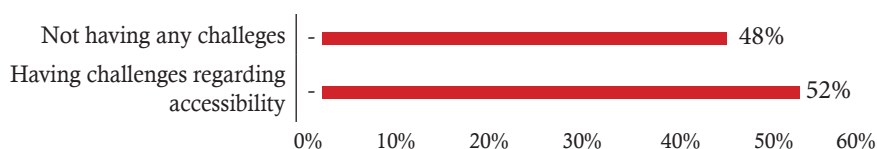
Figure 37: Availability of challenges regarding accessibility

Figure 38 shows the accessibility challenges stated by the teachers surveyed:
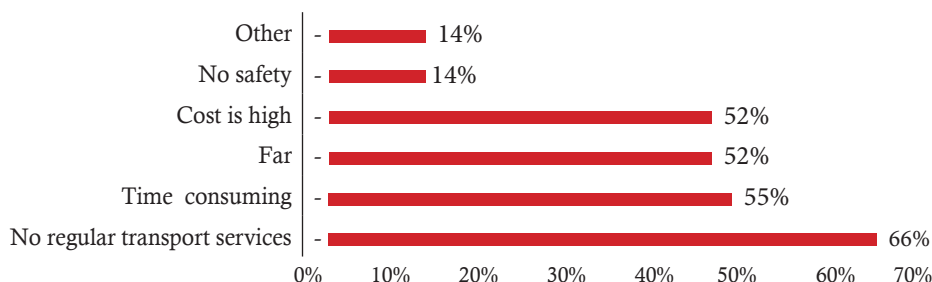
Figure 38: Challenges faced by teachers in terms of accessibility

Most of the teachers who mentioned having these challenges further stated that they come to school very early, use their own vehicles, walk, travel with the support of their parents or relatives, take the bus & then walk and mostly rely on public transport to manage the situation. However, a few said they could not find any solution to face the above challenges and most of their salary has been spent on transportation.

Various strategies can be implemented to address the challenges regarding the accessibility of schools for teachers. Some possible solutions include resolving the issue, such as requesting relevant authorities to construct teachers' quarters in the school, improving public transport services, and expecting a reduction in fuel prices. Around 53.8% of the teachers who face challenges in accessibility know how to resolve or find a way to solve the issue, while the rest do not have any idea. Overall, the data suggests that there are significant challenges regarding the accessibility of schools for teachers, which may have an impact on the quality of education provided.

The findings of previous research, such as the study conducted by Lindberg (2010), support current understanding of the challenges in accessing education facilities, and ensuring quality education in plantation and rural sectors. The research highlights the need for further qualification of indicators like pupil-teacher ratios and the availability of national schools to achieve a national level of educational quality in this area. The study points out that the mere presence of national schools does not perform in examinations, similarly, low pupil-teacher ratios in sparsely populated areas with many small schools may not necessarily be indicative of high-quality education. The lack of teachers emerges as a critical issue in realizing educational aspirations in these regions. The government's decision to establish small schools without adequately providing teachers and facilities has further aggravated the issue. Insufficient attendance rates among teachers and the ineffective system of teacher transfers have made it challenging to meet the required number of teachers in rural schools. The politicization of teacher transfers has also negatively impacted both the potential for providing quality education and credibility of the political system.

The research findings, both quantitative and qualitative, contribute to our understanding of the accessibility of schools, the quantitative data provides numerical insights, while the qualitative data offers valuable perspectives on the challenges faced by the children and their coping strategies. The results underscore the importance of enhancing transportation services, improving infrastructure, and addressing socio- economic factors and parental attitudes towards education. These efforts are crucial for ensuring equitable access to quality education for all children.

4.2 Family background

Findings from children's survey

Figure 39 shows the type of families of the surveyed children. Analysis shows that most of the children come from nuclear family backgrounds.
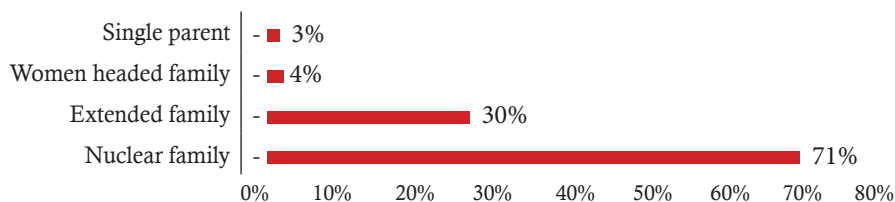
Figure 39: Type of families of the children surveyed

About 71% of the children stated that they have younger siblings. In most cases (53.1%) both parents are taking care of their younger siblings. Less than one percent of the children indicated that they look after their younger siblings after school time. The rest of them stated that either their father, mother, grandparents or relatives are taking care of their children.

Based on this survey, most (36.5%) of families have two children. Only six families have more than four children. Further analysis in this regard is presented in Figure 40.
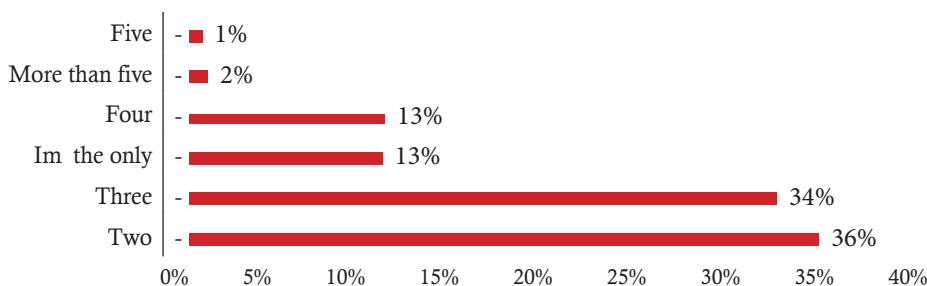
Figure 40: Number of children available in the family

About 38% of the children said that their family has only a female child, while 45.2% of the children said that their family has only a male child. Further analysis in this regard is presented in table 8.

Table 8: Number of girl and boy children available in the family

No. of Girl children in the family	% responded	No. of Boy children in the family	% responded
0	18.3%	0	22.3%
1	38.1%	1	45.2%
2	29.4%	2	25.9%
3	10.7%	3	3.0%
4	3.6%	4	3.6%

The majority (35.5%) of the children's fathers are employed in estate plantations. Moreover 15.8% are engaged in labor work, 10.8% are working in the private sector. Five children stated that their fathers are working abroad, while 6% of the fathers are unemployed or not working. Further analysis in this regard is presented in figure 41.
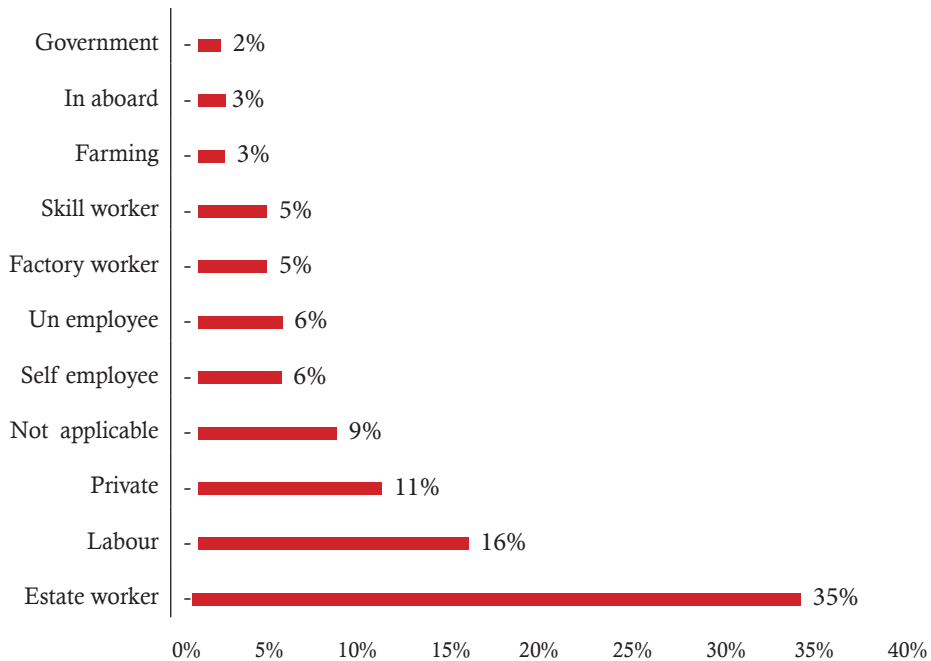
Figure 41: Job of the fathers of the children surveyed.

Approximately 41% of the children stated that their mothers are engaged in estate work. It was further noted that 17.2% of the children's mothers are housewives. Further analysis in this regard is shown in figure 42.
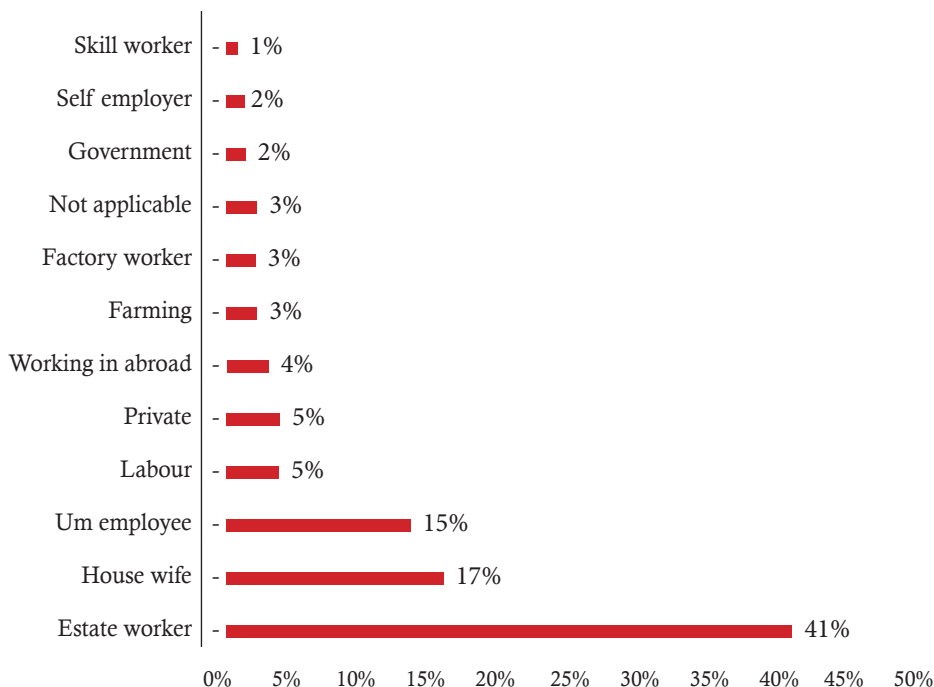
Figure 42: Job of the mothers of the children surveyed

Almost all the children (98%) stated that they are not involved in any income-generating activities. However, it was noted that only 2% (n=4) of them are engaged in income generating activities. These children are between the ages of 16 to 19 years, and all of them are boys.
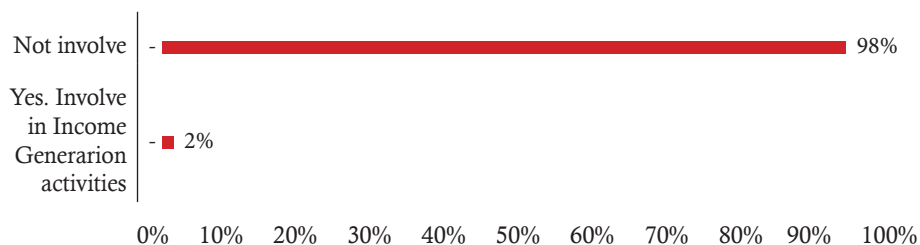
Figure 43: Children involved in income generation activities

The activities done by the children who stated that they are involved in income generation activities include helping in others' agricultural works, doing home gardening to earn some money, and engaging in handcrafting and selling them during the holidays. About 91% of the parents of the children are engaged in their usual work. However, 9% of children stated that their parents have secondary income generating activities. Out of this, 72.2% of the respondents mentioned that "Samurdhi" (Poverty

alleviation program by the government) is considered as their secondary income. Other percentages are exposed through Figure 44.
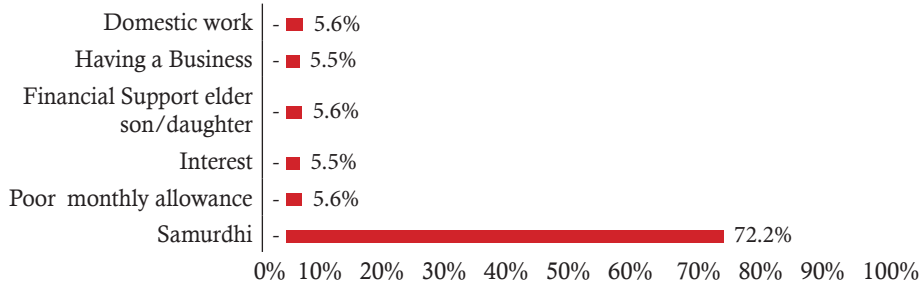
Figure 44: Alternative source of income of the children's parents

In terms of total monthly income of the family, the children stated that it ranges from Rs. 5,000 – Rs. 80,000. However, the majority (49%) of the children stated that their average family income is Rs.30, 000 per month. The higher family income is mostly drawn by one of the parents who work abroad. Figure 45 shows the analysis in this regard.
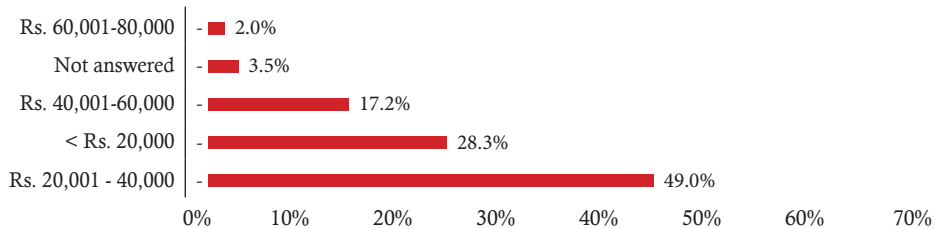
Figure 45: Total monthly income of the family of the children

About 22% of the respondents mentioned that they spend Rs.5, 000 per month for educational purposes. Even though 14 (7%) children said that they spend Rs.15, 000 per month. Further analysis in this regard is presented in Figure 46.
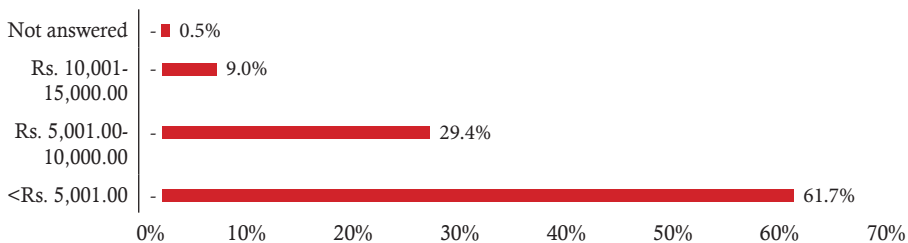
Figure 46: Total monthly expenditure on education of the children

Most of the children (62%) are dissatisfied with their family income as they think

it is not enough to fulfill their families and their educational needs due to price hikes in the country. Only 1% (n=2) of the children stated that they are highly satisfied with their family income. Other values are indicated in Figure 47.
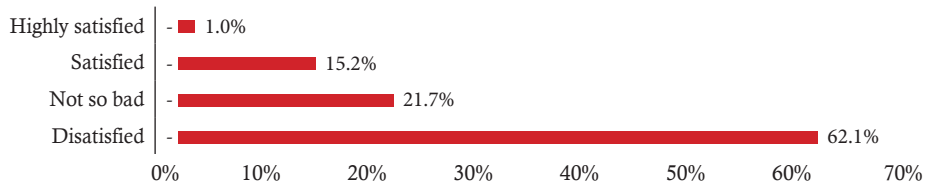
Figure 47: Satisfaction of the children on their monthly income of the family

Cross tabulation on gender of the children vs satisfaction on family's monthly income is shown in figure 48. Accordingly, it was noted that almost an equal portion of the girls and boys are dissatisfied with regard to the monthly income of their families.
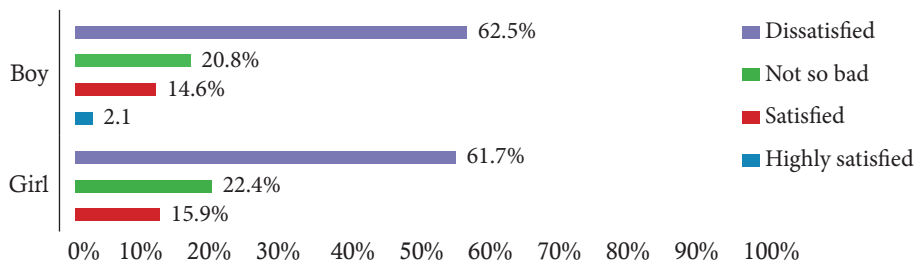
Figure 48: Cross tabulation on gender vs satisfaction of the monthly income of their family

Only 28.6% of the children have come up with suggestions to overcome the issue of their family income same. The suggestions put forward by them are; helping their parents with self-employment, pursuing a good job after completing A/Ls, advocating for increased salaries in the plantation sector for their parents, searching for scholarships for further studies.

The economic status of plantation families has a significant an impact on children's education and well-being, Factors such as low productivity and reduced monthly wages directly affect their income level, leading to inadequate living spaces in their homes and a lack of motivation to study.

Findings from parents' survey

The following figure shows the type of family of the parents surveyed. Analysis shows that the majority of the parents' family type is nuclear:
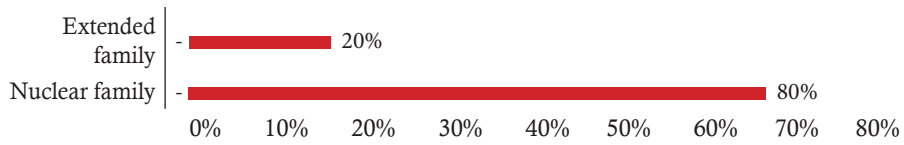
Figure 49: Type of the family of the parents surveyed

Based on the analysis, it was revealed that the majority (37.1%) of the parents surveyed have two children. Only one family has more than six children. Further analysis in this regard is presented in the Figure 50:
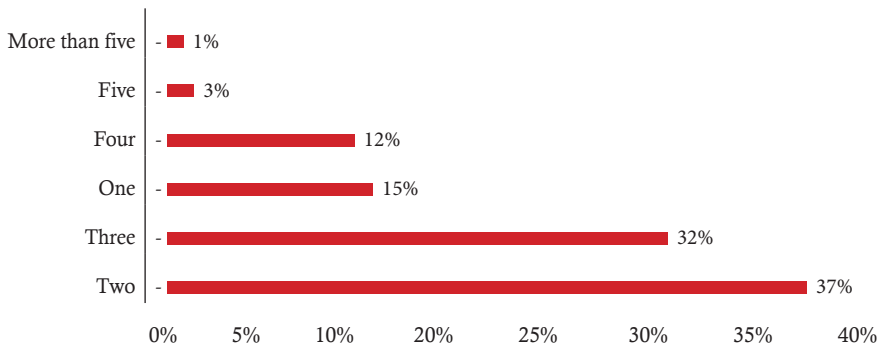
Figure 50: Number of children available in the family of parents surveyed

40.9% of the parents said that they have one daughter. 43.1% of parents reported having one son. Further analysis in this regard is presented in the table 9:

Table 9: Number of girl and boy children available in the family of parents surveyed

No. of daughters in the family	% responded	No. of sons in the family	% responded
0	17.1%	0	20.3%
1	40.9%	1	43.2%
2	26.5%	2	27.9%
3	12.4%	3	8.6%
4	2.6%		
5	0.5%		

The parents surveyed were asked how many children in their family are going to school, and the analysis of the responses provided by them is presented in table 10. According to the table, it was noted that the majority of the families have two school-going children.

Table 10: Number of schools going children in the family of parents surveyed

No. of school going children	% responded
1	35.8%
2	42.4%
3	20.1%
4	1.1%
5	0.6%

During the parents FGD, it was noted that parents face several obstacles in sending their children to school. These obstacles the high cost of educational equipment, economic issues, concerns about security, particularly for girls, demands from preschools to provide five different varieties of foods for five days, which is unaffordable for them, transportation issues, unsafe roads, lack of water facilities, inability to prepare the healthy food, and a lack of available tuition centers.

The results of this research show that the majority (96%) of the families surveyed do not have any children who do not currently attend school. However, it was further noted that 4% of families have a child who is not attending school.
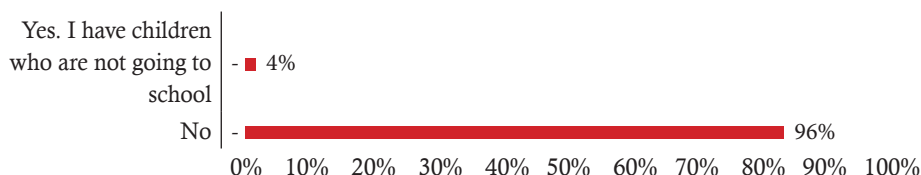
Figure 51: Children not going to school

It was noted that in most cases (37.6%), the head of the family surveyed is employed in estate work. Moreover, 18.8% are in the labor force, and 18.3% are working in the private sector. Further analysis in this regard is presented in the Figure 52:
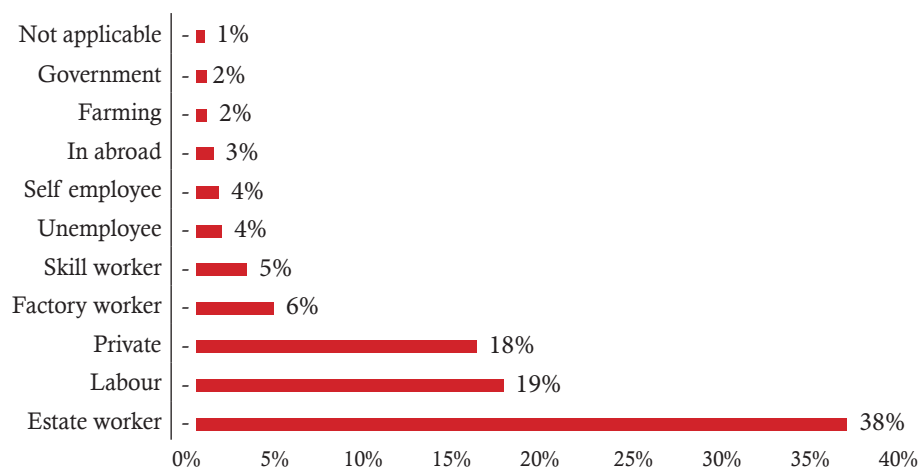
Figure 52: Occupation of the head of family

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The spouse's occupation of the surveyed families is depicted in figure 53. Majority of them are state workers (27.7%) and 18.3% are 'housewife'. Further analysis in this regard is shown in the Figure 53:
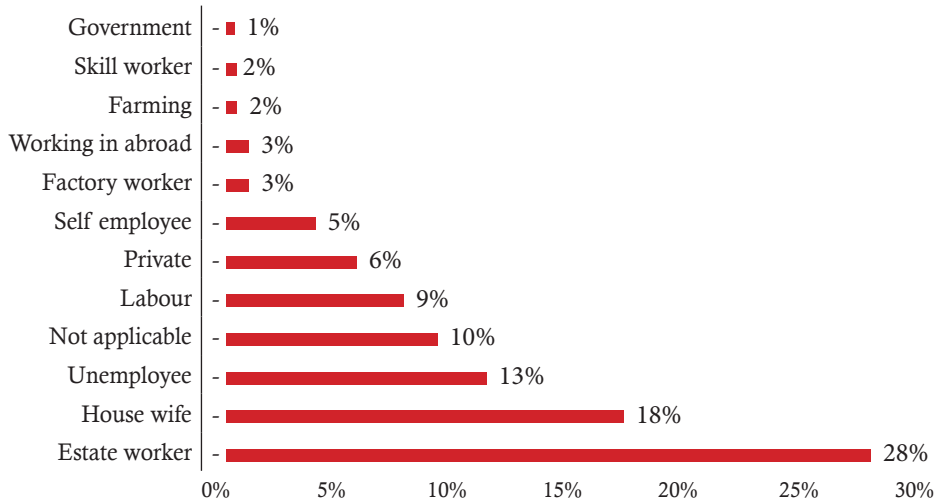
Figure 53: Occupation of the spouse

86.6% of parents have only one occupation to generate income. However, 13.4% stated that they have other income-generating activities as well. Specifically, they mentioned "Samurdhi" (44.4%) as their secondary income source. Other percentages are shown in Figure 54:
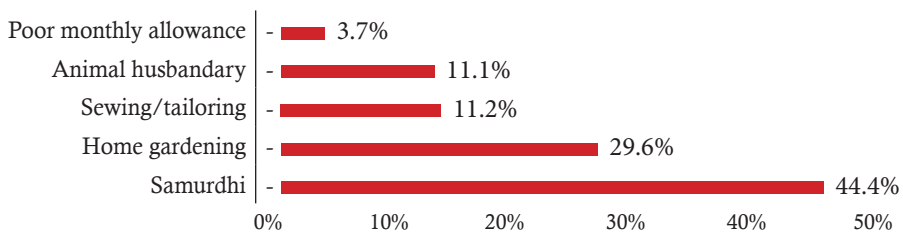
Figure 54: Alternative source of income of the parents

In terms of the family's total monthly income, the parents stated that it was in the range of Rs. 6,000.00–Rs. 100,000.00. The analysis revealed that the majority (27.4%) of the respondent's family income falls within the range of Rs. 20,000.00 to Rs. 40,000.00. Figure 55 shows the analysis regarding this matter:
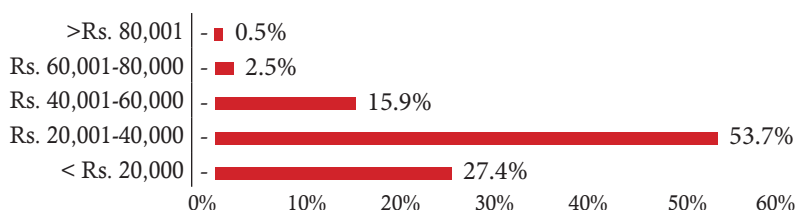
Figure 55: Total monthly family income of the children

76.2% of the parents stated that they or their spouse discuss with their children about their studies. On the other hand, 23.4% stated that they do not engage in such discussions.

Analysis shows that 34.2% of parents spend more time with their children; while 29.7% spend more than one hour with their children. Additionally, it was noted that 4% of parents do not have time to discuss with their children. Figure 56 visualizes the analysis regarding this matter;
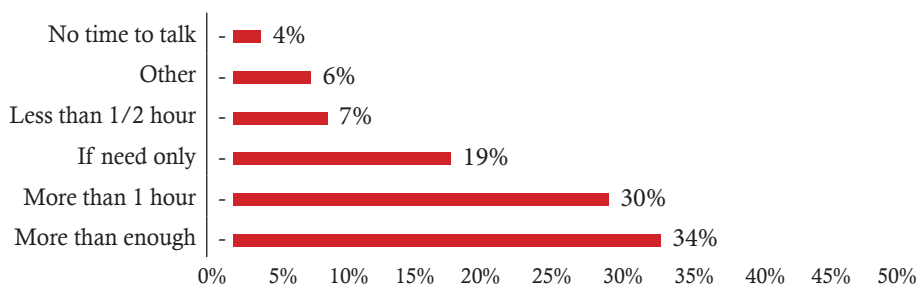
Figure 56: Time engaged with children by parents on studies

The findings from the FGDs indicate that parents believe that providing a quality education for their children will lead better and more successful lives, enabling them to achieve their goals and become responsible citizens. Parents generally have high expectations for their children's future, hoping they will secure government employment rather than work in the plantation sector. However, there is also a sense of fear among some parents due to the current situation in the country, while others remain highly confident about their children's future. It is noteworthy that parents maintain a positive and supportive relationship with teachers, actively participating in parent-teacher meetings on a regular basis.

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Teachers' background

The teachers surveyed were asked to state the grades for which they are teaching, and the analysis of their responses is presented in the Table 11:

Table 11: Grades for which the teachers are teaching

Answer	%
Primary	30.4%
Secondary	46.4%
O/L	37.5%
A/L	10.7%

Analysis shows that the majority (41.1%) of the teachers surveyed have been teaching in their present school for a period of 5 – 9 years. Further analysis in this regard is shown in the figure 57:
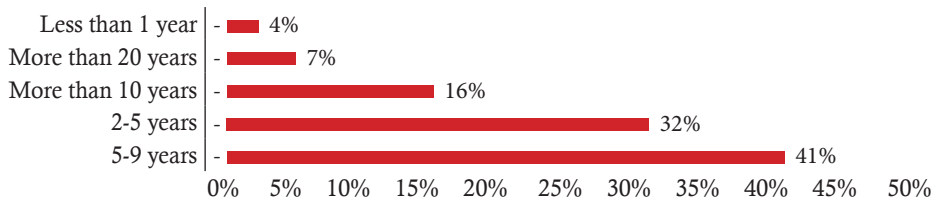
Figure 57: Number of years teaching in the present school

As per the teachers surveyed these are the challenges- they stated in giving their full effort to teach; sometimes it's hard to teach to children due to their economic issues; unable to concentrate on studies due to economic issues; lack of facilities in the school to purchase instruments for practical sessions; bad behavior of students; lack of resources; some students are not showing interest in studying; the number of teachers are very low due to distance to the school; language issues; unable to practice English language among the children;some children are not attending school regularly due the issues at home; and parents are unaware of the importance of education and transportation issues.

Regarding the monthly salary of the teachers, the salary of the majority (66.1%) of the teachers surveyed are in the range of Rs. 40,000.00 – Rs. 60,000.00. 17.9% have mentioned as Rs. 20,000.00 – Rs. 40,000.00. Figure 58 shows further analysis in this regard:

>Rs. 80,001 — 1.7%
<20,000 — 3.6%
Rs. 60,001-80,000 — 10.7%
Rs. 20,001-40,000 — 17.9%
Rs. 40,001-60,000 — 66.1%
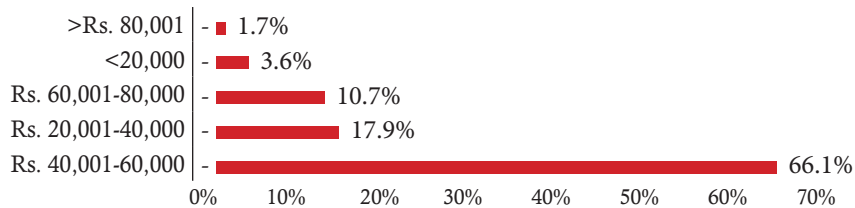
Figure 58: Monthly salary of the teachers surveyed

45% of the teachers surveyed mentioned that they are satisfied with their salaries while the rest (majority) stated that they are not satisfied with their salaries.

Figure 59 shows the relationship between the salaries and the satisfaction of the teachers surveyed in their salary category. Accordingly, it is noted that all the teachers who are receiving salaries more than Rs. 80,000.00 are satisfied with their salary while the teachers in other ranges have mixed kind of opinion on their salaries.

> Rs. 80,001.00 — 100.0%
< Rs. 20,000.00 — 50.0% | 50.0%
Rs. 60,001.00 - 80,000.00 — 16.7% | 83.3%
Rs. 20,001.00 - 40,000.00 — 60.0% | 40.0%
Rs. 40,001.00 - 60,000.00 — 43.2% | 56.8%
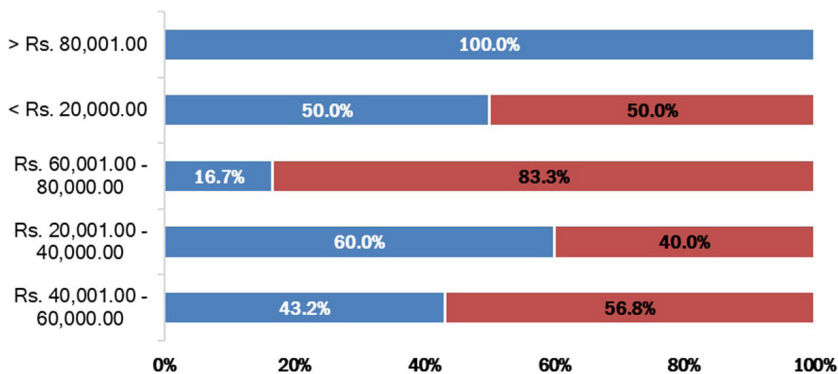
Figure 59: Relationship between teacher's salary and their satisfaction

Figure 60 shows that 80.4% of the participants responded "No" to the question on whether they conduct private tuition classes, while only 19.6% responded as "Yes." This indicates that most of the teachers surveyed do not engage in tuition activities.

Yes — 19.6%
No — 80.4%
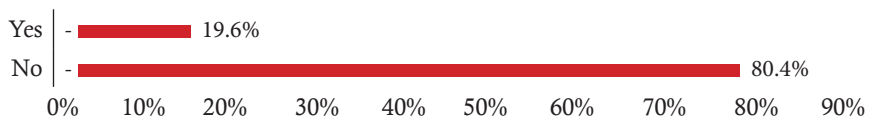
Figure 60: Conducting tuition classes

The study of Lindberg (2010) has presented similar findings, indicating that

parents in the rural and plantation sectors have a desire for their children to pursue better opportunities beyond traditional occupations such as peasant farming or fishing. They perceive education as a means for their children to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Living in rural areas is not seen as desirable for their children's future, as parents believe there are limited prospects for a decent life. Only one household expressed a preference for their child to stay in the village or local town. This suggests a shifting social and spatial dynamic in the district, though further research is needed to understand the underlying factors such as lack of rural livelihood opportunities, exposure to media, or new urban prospects.

4.3 External environment

Findings from children's survey

156 out of 203 children mentioned that they received help from their family members for their studies; while 47 children stated that they did not receive such assistance.
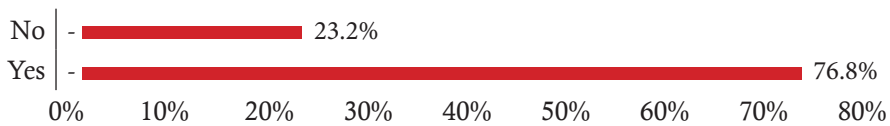
Figure 61: Support from family members for studies

The relationship between the support received from family members and gender of the children for their studies is shown in the figure 62. It was noted that 82.2% of the girls and 70.8% of boys receive support from their family members for their studies.
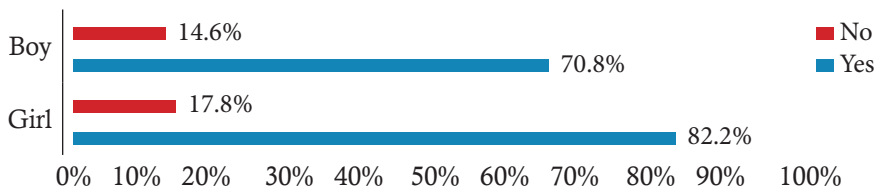
Figure 62: Cross tabulation on gender vs receive support from family for studies

Table 12 shows the details of the family members who support the children for their studies. According to the table 12 mostly both parents are supporting the children in their studies:

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Table 12: Details of the family members supporting studies of the children

Family member supports	% responded
Father	19.9%
Mother	35.3%
Parents (both)	42.3%
Elder brother/sister	17.3%
Grandparents	5.1%
Others	5.1%

According to IDI results too, it was noted that the parents, elder brother, sister, teacher, cousin and friends encourage and support the children with their studies. The children who stated that they are being supported by their family members for their studies had further mentioned the type of support they received from their family members. The table 13 shows the details of such support:

Table 13: Details of the support received for children education

Support	% responded
Giving motivation	41.0%
Financial help	79.5%
Teaching or free tuition	28.8%
Reffering /Guiding	40.4%

However, during a KII, it was revealed that a lack of parental motivation is a significant barrier to fulfilling children's education. The lack of motivation has resulted in children stopping their education after Grade 11. Additionally, financial difficulties prevent them from attending private classes. According to KII respondents there is also an issue with the monitoring process, as some parents don't pay sufficient attention to their children's education. This could be due to the family's lack of education and their busy schedules with estate work.

According to interviews with key stakeholders in the plantations, community or family support for children is not in a desirable state. According to the respondents, some parents are uneducated, which leads to reluctance to attend meetings regarding their children's education. Additionally, some parents are influenced to send their children to work resulting in harm to those children who aspire to continue their education. Only a few individuals in the community provide full support and motivation for children to pursue education. Because of the legal requirements some parents complain about sending their children to school. Beyond that, there is limited support from them. It is crucial for parents to be motivated and aware of the importance of providing proper education for their children. However, they face challenges within the current economic setting.

The majority (57.6%) of the children stated that there is no separate place for studies at their homes. Only 42.4% of them said "Yes" to it.

No. I do not have a separate place for studies - 57.6%
Yes. I have a separate place for studies - 42.4%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%
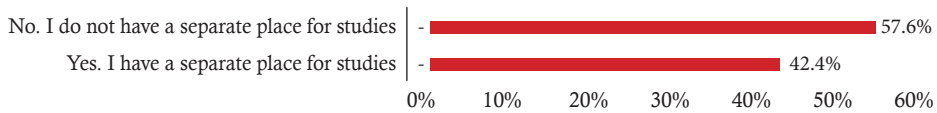
Figure 63: Availability of a separate place at home for studying

The relationship between the availability of separate place at home for studying and the gender of the children is shown in Figure 64. According to the data most of the girls (56.3%) and boys (58.9%) surveyed don't have separate place at home for studying.

Boy   56.3%
      43.8%
Girl 58.9%
      41.1%

■ No
■ Yes

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%
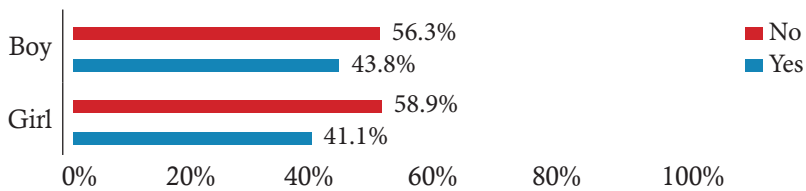
Figure 64: Cross tabulation on gender vs availability of separate place for studies

The relationship between the district and the availability of a separate place for studying at home is shown in Figure 65. According to the data it was noted that most of the children from districts of Kalutara, Kegalle, Matale, Matara, Monaragala, Nuwara Eliya, Ratnapura and Galle don't have a separate place for studying at their homes.

District	Yes	No
Colombo	80.0%	20.0%
Galle	50.0%	50.0%
Rathnapura	35.0%	65.0%
Nuwara Eliya	38.5%	61.5%
Monaragala	10.0%	90.0%
Matara	28.6%	71.4%
Matale	40.0%	60.0%
Kegalle	5.0%	95.0%
Kandy	95.0%	5.0%
Kalutara		100.0%
Badulla	80.0%	20.0%
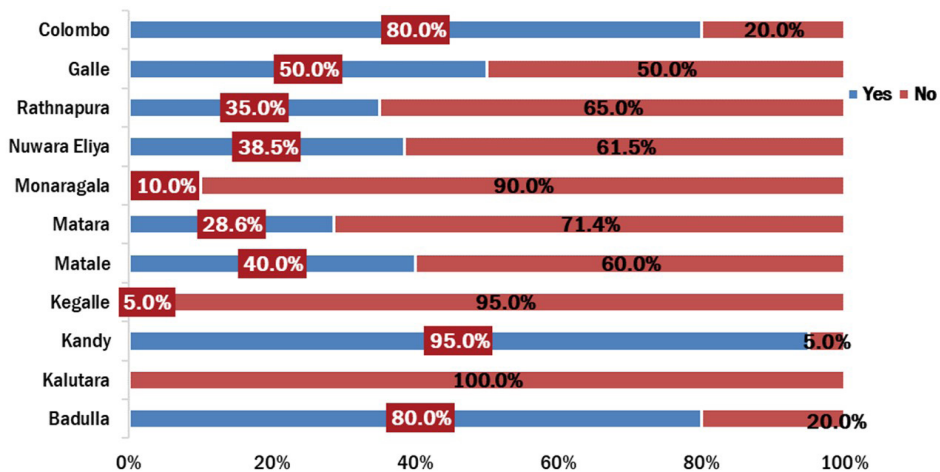
Figure 65: Relationship between district & availability of separate place for studies

Out of children who mentioned not having a place for studying at their homes, approximately 94% stated that they manage their studies inside their houses

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wherever it is possible. Further analysis in this regard is presented in the Figure 66:

Others – 0.9%
Not studying at home – 1.7%
At friends place – 1.7%
Outside of the home – 1.7%
Inside where it is possible – 94.0%
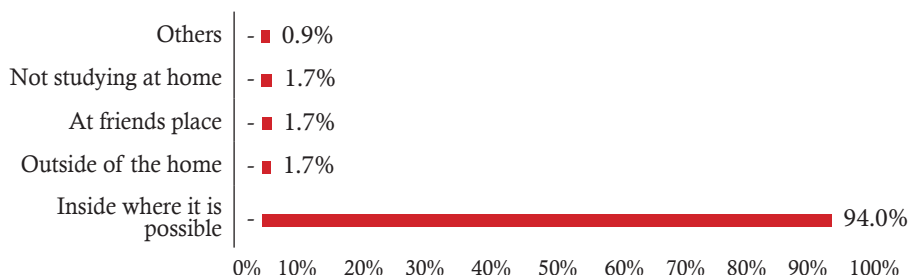
Figure 66: Places where the children study after school

The children who said as they have a separate place for studies further stated the facilities they have in the place for their studies and the table 14 shows the analysis on the answers provided by them:

Table 14: Facilities available to study at home

Facilities available	% responded	Facilities available	% responded
Chair	95.3%	Fan	10.5%
Table / desk	93.0%	Laptop	1.2%
Book rack	37.2%	Phone	37.2%
Stationaries	43.0%	Tab	-
Night lamp	32.6%		

Approximately 60% (n=122) of the children stated that they have additional educational support other than school teaching. The remaining children mentioned as "no" in this regard.

No. I do not get such support – 39.9%
Yes. I get additional educational support/ access rather than school teaching – 60.1%
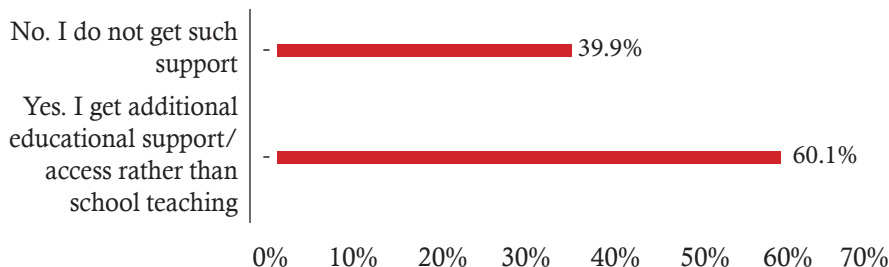
Figure 67: Additional educational support for children

Cross tabulation on gender of the children vs getting additional educational support by children is shown in figure 68. Accordingly, it was noted that most of the boys and girls are receiving additional educational support beyond school teaching. However, it is further noted that a considerable number of children are not receiving such support.
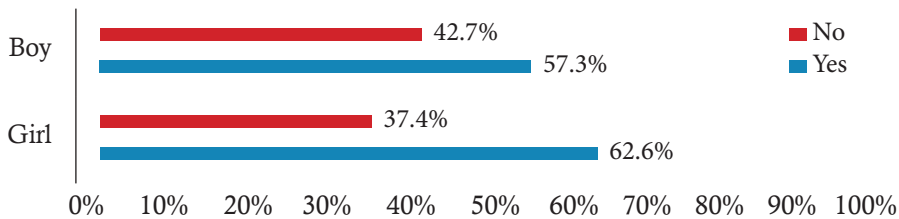
Figure 68: Cross tabulation on gender vs additional educational support for children

The children who stated that they receive additional educational support rather than school teaching further mentioned the type of educational support they received, The table 15 visualizes the different type of supports:

Table 15: Details of additional educational support received by the children

Additional support	% responded
Tution	75.4%
Peer learning	1.6%
Family members support	22.1%
Self learning	56.6%
Library facilities	20.5%
Extra classes at school	38.5%

The analysis revealed that 80.8% of the children have not faced any challenges regarding their external environment, while only 19.2% of the children surveyed have faced some challenges. Further analysis in this regard shows that 17.8% of the girls and 20.8% of the boys surveyed have some challenges regarding their external environment, while 82.2% of the girls and 79.2% of the boys don't have such challenges.

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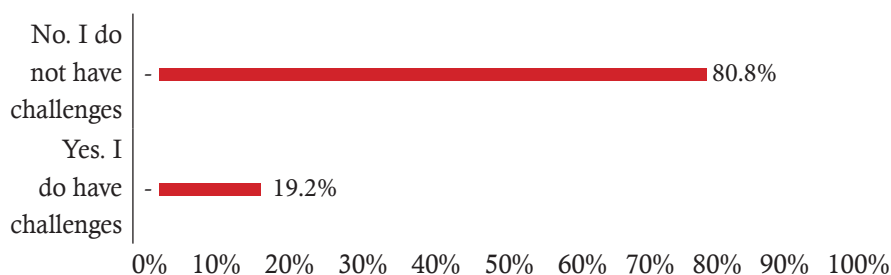
Figure 69: Challenges regarding the external environment

Table 16 shows the factors mentioned by the children as the challenges they have faced with regard to the external environment:

Table 16: Challenges faced with regard to the external environment

Answer	% responded
Sounds (at home)	28.2%
Sounds (out side)	59.0%
Fighting / family disputes (at home)	35.9%
Fighting / family disputes (neighbours)	66.7%
Other	10.3%

The children who stated they have some challenges regarding their external environment were further questioned on how they manage these challenges. They mentioned various strategies such as keeping silent when someone is shouting near their house, requesting neighbours to reduce the volume when they play loud music, going to sleep once the noise reduces, feeling uncomfortable and unsure what to do, finding ways to concentrate on their studies, studying in another place, and asking their parents to normalize the situation.

About 61.5% of the surveyed children stated that they have no idea how to mitigate the challenges they face regarding the external environment. Only 38.5% said that they have some ideas.

Children stated that the community should be made aware that it is difficult for them to study if the environment is very noisy. Also, they stated that it is better to inform the police regarding the disturbances they are facing in their external environment. Also, they expect the relevant authorities to

take necessary actions to control drugs. They expect individual houses with separate rooms for their privacy in life and to do their studies.

A few children who participated in the IDI indicated that the environment is good for their studies. Another few mentioned feeling neutral. Most of them mentioned that their environment is not conducive to continuing their studies. It is extremely challenging as adult males who consume alcohol and engage in illegal selling, resulting in frequent fight with their family members in houses every evening. This situation has made it difficult for the children to study, as all the houses are closely situated. Such incidents occur daily in the estate. When the father or grandfather is heavily intoxicated and fights with the family members, the children must find alternative places to study.

Some individuals do not have electricity or other essential facilities in their homes making their environment unfavorable for studying. Due to the nature of estate houses, there is generally a lack of peace and a constrained environment which hinders education. Most plantation residents live in small line rooms which do not provide sufficient space for living. As a result, they don't have a separate place to study and often resort to studying outside of their homes.

The result of the IDI shows that most of the children have never experienced any incidents where they feel unsafe or threatened. However, some respondents mentioned feeling afraid when witnessing fights among people in the neighborhood. They expressed their concerns about the drug users in the village, which also makes them fearful. Additionally, some children mentioned that family members who consume alcohol pose a threat to their safety. Even though schools are generally located in safe areas, many children are influenced by the drug dealers and drug addiction is prevalent outside of the school environment.

The stakeholders who participated in the research have stated that the environment is not very secure for children. Child abuse, insecurity, and neglecting their opinion or wishes were observed in society.

Teaching environment

Table 17 shows the percentage of respondents who reported having various facilities,

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teaching aids, and equipment in their schools. The highest reported items were chairs and tables/desks, with 91.1% of respondents having access to these items.

Table 17: Facilities / teaching aids available

Answer	%
Chair	91.1%
Table/desk	91.1%
Book rack	32.1%
Stationaries	62.5%
Fan	17.9%
Whiteboard/blackboard	80.4%
Laptop	10.7%
Phone	32.1%
Tab	3.6%
Other	17.9%

About 80% of teachers responded by having a whiteboard or blackboard in their school, which is an essential teaching aid for most classrooms. Stationeries such as pens, pencils, and markers were reported by 62.5% of respondents, while book racks were only reported by 32.1%.

Less common items such as laptops and tablets were only reported by 10.7% and 3.6% of respondents, respectively. Fans were reported to by 17.9% of respondents.

Figure 70 shows that out of all the respondents, 39.3% reported having challenges regarding the environment at their school, while 60.7% did not report any challenges.
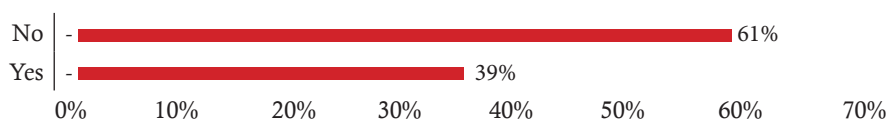
Figure 70: Challenges regarding the environment at the respondent's school

Among those who reported challenges, the majority (95.5%) reported a lack of essential facilities, such as classrooms, toilets, and drinking water. Additionally, 59.1% reported a lack of extra facilities, such as library or computer lab. Further analysis shown in the table 18:

Table 18: Type of challenges regarding the environment at the respondent's school

Answer	%
Lack of essential facilities	95.5%
Lack of extra facilities	59.1%
Children's behavior	40.9%
Other teachers' behaviors	18.2%
Busy schedule	18.2%
Parents poor cooperation	50.0%
Others	22.7%

Based on table 18 other reported challenges included children's behavior (40.9%), poor cooperation from parents (50.0%), and another teachers' behavior (18.2%).

These results indicated that a significant proportion of respondents' face challenges related to the environment at their school, owing to lack of essential and extra facilities. These challenges may impact the quality of education and the overall learning experience for students. It highlights the need for schools and policymakers to prioritize addressing these challenges to provide a conducive learning environment for students.

Based on the survey responses, 48.6% of the participants reported having ideas to mitigate the challenges they face in their school environment, while 51.4% reported not having any ideas.
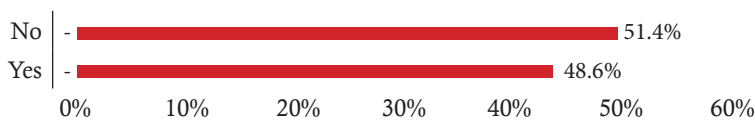
Figure 71: Availability of ideas to mitigate the school environment related changes

Seek help from external sources, such as NGOs or government agencies to support to get the required facilities for the school, create awareness among parents & students, getting transfer to another school are ideas given by the teachers as the ideas to mitigate these challenges.

The quantitative data shows that a teacher does not conduct private tuition

classes, while the qualitative data suggests that economic issues are a significant challenge for both teachers and students. This research can infer that the lack of private tuition classes may be related to economic issues faced by both teachers and students.

According to a similar study conducted by "Lindberg (2010)", it has become evident that social resources, including family networks and social capital are also important in determining educational opportunities. In some cases, families will pool resources to send one child to school, while in others, families with a history of education may have more influence in the community and can use this influence to ensure their children have access to better educational opportunities. Furthermore, cultural resources such as attitudes towards education, expectations for children's achievement, and knowledge of the school system also contribute to educational outcomes. For example, in some households, there may be a greater emphasis on girls' education, while in others, traditional gender roles may limit girls' access to education. Additionally, parents with more knowledge of the school system may be better equipped to advocate for their children and navigate the educational bureaucracy effectively.

Overall, the dynamics of the school network are shaped by a complex interplay of economic, social, and cultural factors. To ensure equal educational opportunities for all children, it is important to understand and address the various barriers that families may face in accessing education.

4.4 Health and nutrition

Findings from children's survey
About 88% of the children don't have the "Child Health and Development Record" while only 24 (11.8%) children possess it. Among these 24 children, only 22 children received appropriate vaccines. One child was not vaccinated, and another has incomplete data. Approximately 46% of the children experienced some form of sickness in the last 12 months while the remaining children were in good health.

The relationship between the gender of the children and their experience of sickness in the last 12 months is depicted in Figure 72. It was noted that 43.8%

of the boys and 48.6% of the girls surveyed reported having experienced sickness during the last 12 months.
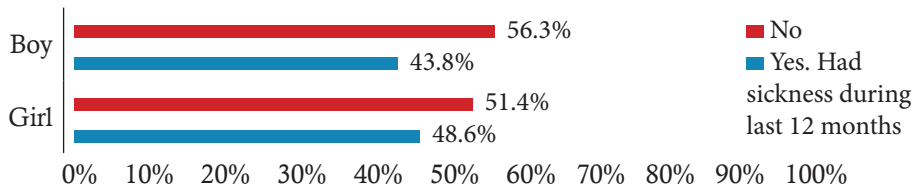
Figure 72: Cross tabulation on gender vs sickness during the last 12 months

The table 19 shows the sicknesses stated by the children in last 12 months:

Table 19: Type of the sicknesses faced by children in last 12 months

Answer	% responded
Fever	74.5%
Diaherrea	2.1%
Kidney related issues	1.1%
COVID 19	2.1%
Cough and cold	30.9%
Wheezing	5.3%
Other (accident, chest pain, injured, gastric, headache, skin desease, leg pain, low vision, stomach ache, toothpain, an opertaion)	17.0%

Most of the children (n=31) indicated that they had experienced the disease only once. Meanwhile, 12 children (12.8%) mentioned that they suffer from diseases on a daily basis. Further analysis in this regard is presented in Figure 73:
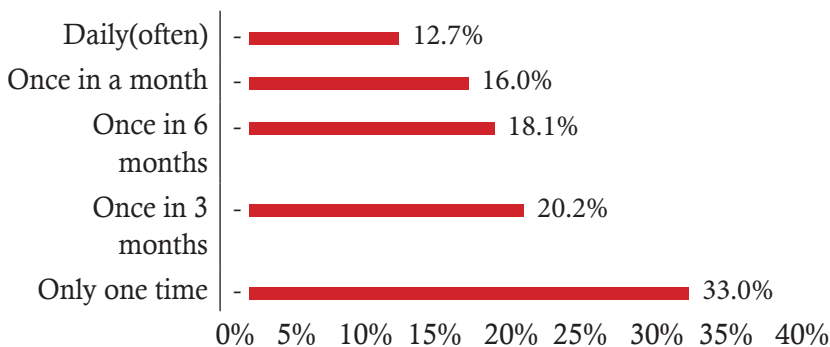
Figure 73: No. of time children got sick during last 12 months

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About 95% of them received treatment for their diseases, while others did not receive any treatment for their illnesses. For treatment, most of the time, they go to dispensaries/ maternity ward and dispensaries/ hospitals. However, some of them go to the private hospital and seek traditional handmade treatment too.

Table 20: The place where go for treatments

Answer	% responded
Dispensaries/ Maternity wards and dispensaries/ hospitals	79.8%
Private hospital	18.0%
Traditional handmade treatments	1.1%
Others (Specify)	1.1%

The following food items were presented to the respondents, and they were asked whether they had consumed these   food items within the 24 hours prior to the survey. The analysis of the answers provided by them is presented in table 21. The analysis shows that most of the children surveyed consumed rice and rice flour products (such as hoppers, string hoppers, pittu etc.). Others are consumed by less than 50% of the children. Cowpea, green gram, black gram, chickpeas, beans, soya beans, dhal, peanuts and sesame seeds were consumed by 55.2% of the children.

Table 21: Food items consumed by children on the day before the survey

Food Groups	Food Item	% Consumed within the last 24 hours of the evaluation day
01. Grains, roots and tubes	Rice & Rice flour products (hoppers, string hoppers, pittu etc.)	92.6%
	Wheat & wheat flour products (Bread, buns, etc.)	43.8%
	Potatoes, mannioc & Kiri ala	17.7%
02. Pulses and seeds/ nuts	Cowpea, green gram, black gram, chickpeas, beans, soya beans, dhal, peanuts and sesame seeds	55.2%
03. Milk & milk product	Fresh milk	14.3%
	Curd, youghert, cheese	7.4%
	Powdered milk	15.8%
	Ice cream	7.9%
04. Meat and fish	Fish / Dry fish	48.3%
	Meat: poultry, pork, beef etc.	25.6%
	Liver/Organ meat	0.5%
05. Eggs	Eggs: hens, ducks etc...	42.9%
06. Vitamin A rich foods	Yellow colored fruits (papaya, mangoes etc..), dark green leafy vegetables, pumpkin, carrot, yellow sweet potatoes	47.3%
07. Other fruits and vegetables	Other fruits and vegretables	47.8%

Parents who participated in the FGDs stated that meal choices have an impact on children and their studies, as it can decrease brain power and make them less active. They emphasized the importance of providing healthy meals and suggested the inclusion of non-vegetarian foods at least once a week. They

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also expressed concerns about the health problems in their society including malnutrition, underweight, lack of activity, anemia, low birth weight of babies and child mortality. Additionally, they mentioned that girls are often affected by sinus condition with the cold climate. They highlighted the difficulty of accessing medical help, as hospitals are not located nearby, and they have to walk long distances for medical assistance.

On the issue of food security, approximately 35.5% of the children stated that they face challenges while the majority (n=131) indicated that they did not experience any challenges. Figure 74 illustrates the relationship between the gender of the children and whether they have any challenges regarding food security. It was noted that the majority (41.7%) of the boys who participated in this survey are facing some challenges, while a minority (29.9%) of the girls are facing similar challenges:
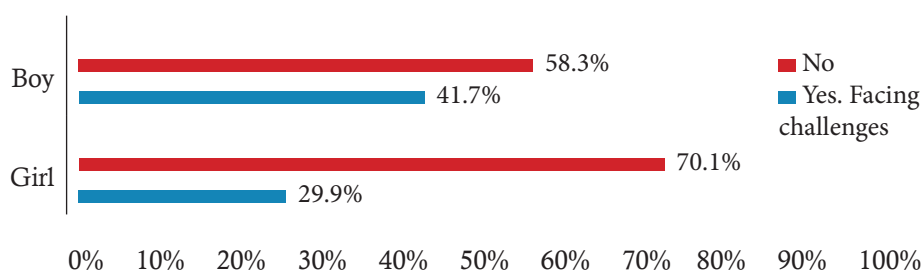
Figure 74: Cross tabulation gender vs challenges with regard to food security

As shown in figure 75, the main challenge regarding food security is "getting an adequate quantity of food". It takes 50% of the total results. Moreover 34.7% of the children indicate that they have "challenges in getting 3 meals per day". Other results are exposed by figure 75:

Figure 75: Challenges in food security

The children mentioned various coping methods for dealing with food security challenges. Some of these coping methods are, eating one or two meals per day, manage with whatever food available, eat "roti" (made with wheat flour) for three times, eating rice with only one curry, utilizing vegetables from their home gardens, mothers scarify their food for their children.

From the FGDs, it was revealed that teachers are mostly concerned about the health and mental well-being of the students. Some participants mentioned that their school provides breakfast to the primary section through a government program, which is beneficial for children who do not have breakfast at home. The schools also maintain health monitoring cards. Children mentioned that they are unable to request specific food items from their parents, but they are satisfied with the meals provided to them. However, they are unsure about the nutritional value or healthiness of the food.

Findings from parents' survey

The following food items were presented to the respondents, and they were asked whether they had included such items in their meals within the 24 hours prior to the survey day. An analysis of the answers provided by them is presented in the Table 22. The analysis shows that rice and rice flour products (hoppers, string hoppers, pittu, etc.) are the food groups consumed by the majority of the surveyed children. Other items were only consumed by less than 50% of the children. Pulses, seeds, nuts, fish, dried fish, and other fruits and vegetables were consumed by more than 50% of the parents:

Table 22: Food items consumed on the day before the survey – parent

Food Groups	Food Item	% Consumed within the last 24 hours of the evaluation day
01. Grains, roots and tubes	Rice & Rice flour products (hoppers, string hoppers, pittu etc.)	97.5%
	Wheat & wheat flour products (Bread, buns, etc.)	39.1%
	Potatoes, mannioc & Kiri ala	14.9%
02. Pulses and seeds/ nuts	Cowpea, green gram, black gram, chickpeas, beans, soya beans, dhal, peanuts and sesame seeds are all examples of legumes.	50.5%
03. Milk & milk product	Fresh milk	7.4%
	Curd, youghert, cheese	4.0%
	Powdered milk	17.3%
	Ice cream	5.0%
04. Meat and fish	Fish / Dry fish	51.0%
	Meat: poultry, pork, beef etc.	22.8%
	Liver/Organ meat	0.5%
05. Eggs	Eggs: hens, ducks etc...	43.1%
06. Vitamin A rich foods	Yellow colored fruits (papaya, mangoes etc..), dark green leafy vegetables, pumpkin, carrot, yel-low sweet potatoes	46.0%
07. Other fruits and vegetables	Other fruits and vegretables	58.4%

52% of the parents stated that they are facing some challenges with regard to food security. While the remaining 48% indicated that they are not facing such challenges. As shown in Figure 76, the main challenge regarding food security is "getting an adequate quantity of food". Which accounts for 55.2% of the total results. Moreover, 37.1% of the parents indicate that they have challenges getting three meals per day. Other results are shown in Figure 76.
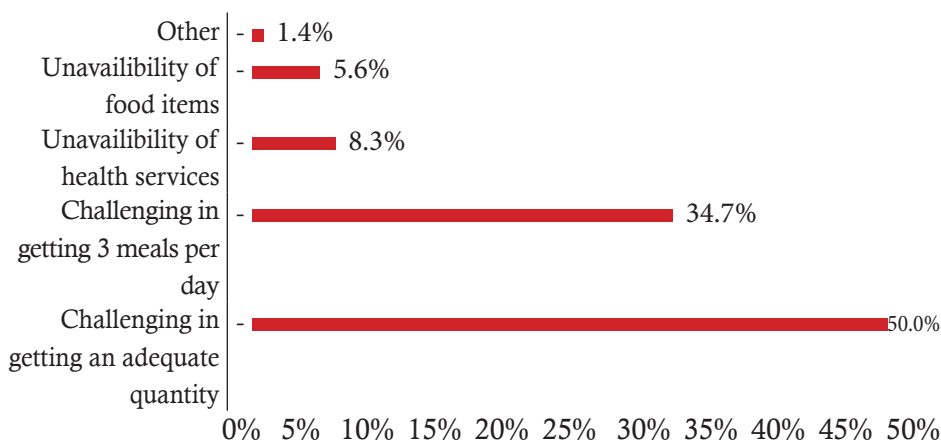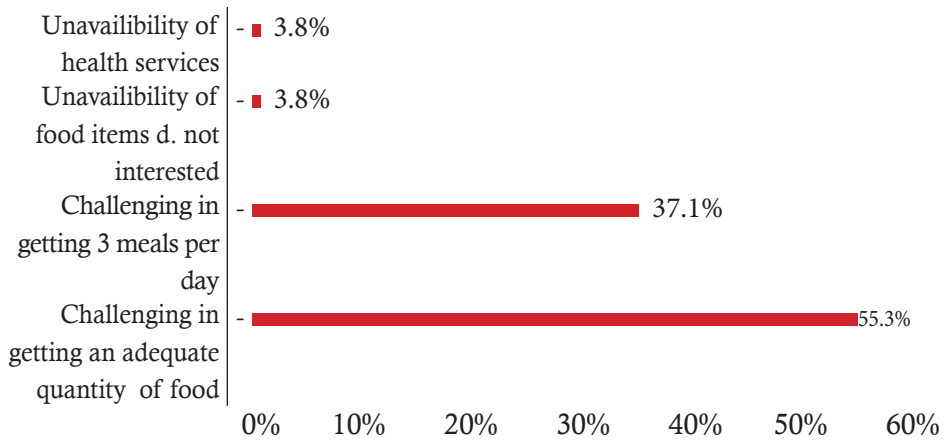
Figure 76: Challenges in food security

Eating one or two meals per day, eating whatever is available without thinking about nutrition, borrowing money to buy required items, managing with whatever is available, using vegetables from the home garden, giving food only to the children and parents in smaller quantities, eating "roti" (home-made bread) most of the time, and trying to earn additional income are the aspects stated by the parents as the coping methods for the challenges regarding food security.

67.6% of the parents who face challenges regarding food security have no idea how to mitigate these challenges. The rest (32.4%) have ideas to overcome these challenges. The ideas stated by the parents include doing home gardening; providing facilities and raising awareness on how to preserve foods. Additionally, they have been involving themselves in some income-generating activities to earn extra income for the family; trying to get financial assistance; and requesting that the government provide some support.

The study underscores the necessity of implementing interventions aimed at improving healthcare accessibility and promoting healthy eating habits for children in the surveyed area. Sarma, Wijesinghe, & Sivananthawerl (2013) conducted a study investigating the relationship between nutritional status and educational performance in primary schools within the Nuwara Eliya Educational Zone. The findings of this study align with similar research conducted in developing countries, which have demonstrated a correlation between height-for-age (an indicator of stunting) and educational achievement

(Shariff, Bond, & Johnson, 2000; Glewwe, Jacoby, & King, 2001., 2001; Alderman, Appleton, Haddad, Song, & Yohannes, 2001). Height-for-age as an indicator of long-term nutritional deprivation, which can impact a child's cognitive development (Shariff, Bond, & Johnson, 2000). In Sri Lanka, the Central and Uva Provinces have recorded the highest prevalence of stunted and underweight was also high (MRI, 2002). In the plantation sector of Sri Lanka, completion rates for primary schooling are only 58%, with a significant dropout rate of 8.4% at Grade five, compared to the national average of 1.4% (Wijesiriwardane & Amaranath, 2009). The transition rate of males from primary to secondary education in the Nuwara-Eliya district is also lower than other districts, with many boys leaving to join the workforce (Wijesiriwardane & Amaranath, 2009).

4.5 School infrastructure

Findings from children's survey

About 65.5% of the children stated that their school has classes up to A/L, while about 8% of them stated that the school has classes up to grade eight only. Further analysis in this regard is presented in Figure 77:
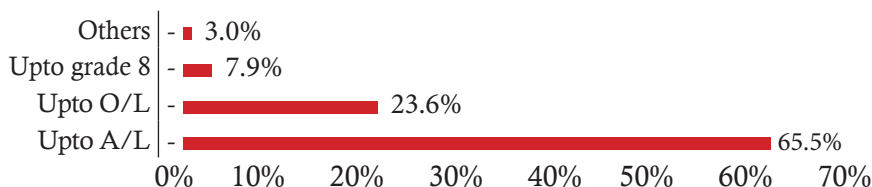
Figure 77: Details of the classes available at the school

The majority of the children who studied in schools that offer classes up to A/L stated that their schools do not have the facilities to offer Science and Math streams. If they want to study these subjects, they have to go to another school where these streams are available. Some children mentioned that due to lack of facilities, they do not attempt to pursue other streams and instead, study what is available in their school. Only a few students attempt to pursue these streams.

Most of the children surveyed (85.7%) stated that they have teachers for all

the subjects, while 14.3% of the children stated that they do not have teachers for all subjects.
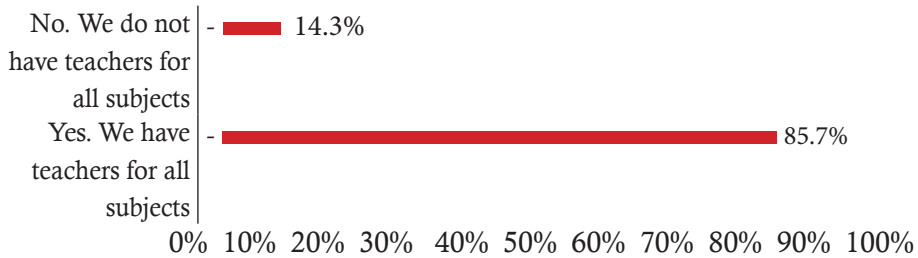
Figure 78: Availability of teachers for all the subjects

As per figure 78, 14.3% states that they do not have teachers for some subjects. As a result, they have to attend additional private classes, learn from other subject teachers, and learn through self-studies.

Table 23 shows the availability of the facilities in the classroom according to the children's survey. Accordingly, it was noted that the majority of the children have all the items typically found in a classroom. However, compared to other aspects, the issues such as damaged or leaking roof, damaged floor and no cleaning equipment are still there.

Table 23: Facilities available in the classroom

Facilities	% respond as Available	% respond as not available
Chairs for all students	97.5%	2.5%
Desk for all students	94.1%	5.9%
White board/Blackboard	98.5%	1.5%
Roof without damage or leaking	77.8%	22.2%
Floor without damage	75.9%	24.1%
Cleaning equipment broomstick / dust bin	73.9%	26.1%

About 70% (n=143) of the children stated that they have comfortable toilet facilities while others did not have comfortable toilet facilities:
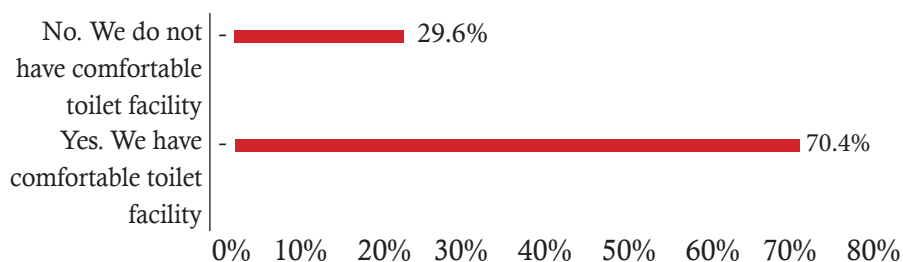
Figure 79: Availability of comfortable toilets

Further analysis reveals that comfortable (adequate and clean) toilets are not available for 31.8% of the girls and girls and 27.1% of the boys. This issue was reported by respondents from Badulla, Kalutara, Kandy, Kegalle, Matara, Nuwara Eliya, Ratnapura and Galle. The analysis of this issue is presented in the Figures 80:
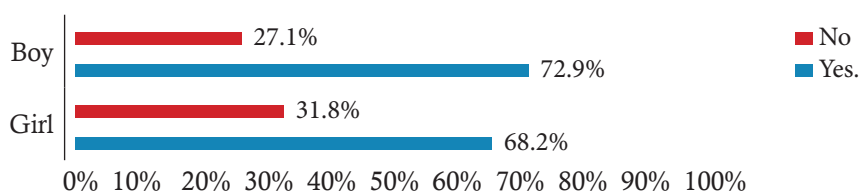
Figure 80: Cross tabulation gender vs availability of comfortable toilets

The relationship between the district and availability of comfortable toilets is shown in the figure 81.
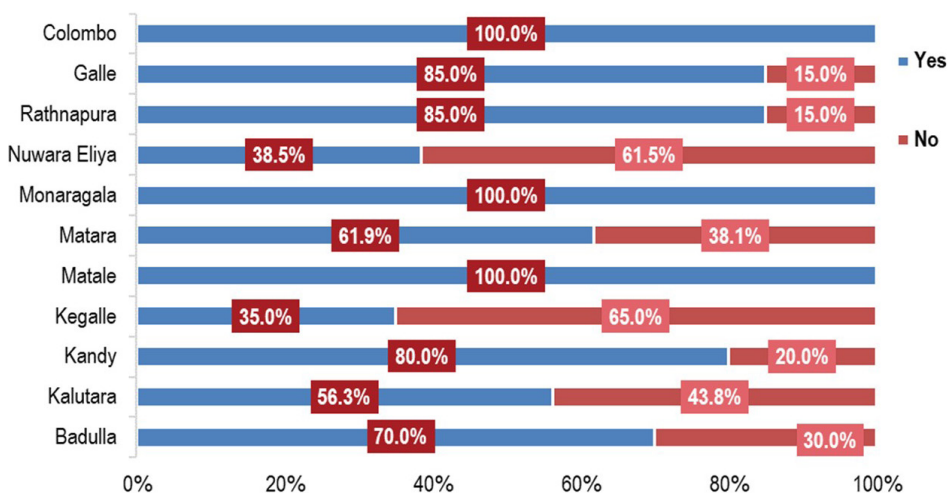
Figure 81: Relationship between district & availability of comfortable toilets

The children who stated that they do not have comfortable toilet facilities in their school further mentioned the following issues: damaged and unclean toilets, lack of cleaning items, insufficient water facility, availability of only one toilet for girls, and inadequacy of toilets:

About 91% (n=185) children stated that they have safe drinking water facilities at the school, while 8.9% have rejected it.
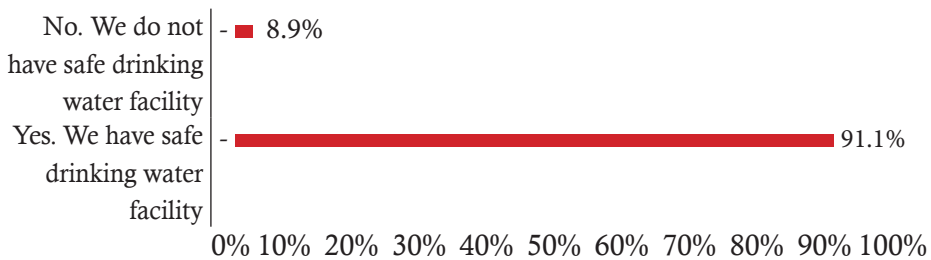
Figure 82: Availability of safe drinking water facilities

The children mentioned that the water sources where they receive water are supplied from water boards, spring and well.

In the meantime, the children who stated that they do not have safe drinking water facilities at their school mentioned that they used to bring the water from home to drink at school and they use the water available in the school only for washing and not for drinking.

The children were asked to indicate whether certain infrastructure facilities are available in their school, and the analysis of their responses is presented in Table 24. The majority of the children reported that the library (89%) and principal office (90.1%) are available in their school. However, according to the children's responses the majority (71%) of schools do not have a canteen in their schools.

Table 24: Facilities available in the school

Facilities	% respond as Available	% respond as not available
Library	89.2%	10.8%
Principal office	90.1%	9.9%
Canteen	29.1%	70.9%
Cultural hall	52.2%	47.8%
Sick room / isolation room	53.7%	46.3%
Science lab	58.1%	41.9%

According to a children's survey 30.5% of the children had stated that they have challenges in the school infrastructure while the rest 69.5% of them stated that they do not have challenges regarding school infrastructure. Table 25 shows the challenges regarding the school infrastructure facilities.

Table 25: Challenges regarding the school infrastructure facilities

Challenges	% responded
Inadequate number of toilets	50.0%
No separate toilets for girls and boys	21.0%
Damaged toilets	53.2%
Some important facilities are miss-ing	56.5%
Other	6.5%

Some children who participated in IDIs indicated that they have sufficient facilities in their schools. However, most of the children face various challenges, including shortage of experienced teachers, insufficient buildings and lack of opportunity for extra-curricular activities. In some cases, although the primary school does not have canteen facility, library facility, and enough number of teachers, the secondary level schools are enriched with most of the facilities and teachers.

Findings from IDIs further state that some schools don't have separate toilets for female students, inadequate amount of toilets, and lack of water facilities. In some cases, it was noted that although enough toilet facilities are available those are not clean. There are an insufficient number of books in the library, inadequate classrooms and furniture. There is a huge shortage of sports equipments and musical instruments.

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About 47% (n=29) of the children said that they have ideas to mitigate the challenges regarding school infrastructure while others did not have any idea to mitigate those challenges. Cleaning the toilets by themselves, hiring a person to clean the toilets, and constructing new toilets, and managing with available resources, are the coping methods mentioned by the children to face the challenges they have regarding the school infrastructure facilities.

Findings from teachers' survey

As per the data, the majority of the teachers (35.7%) stated that their classes have 10-20 children. 32.1% of the classes have 20-30 children, while 21.4% have more than 30 children. Only 10.7% of the classes have fewer than 10 children.
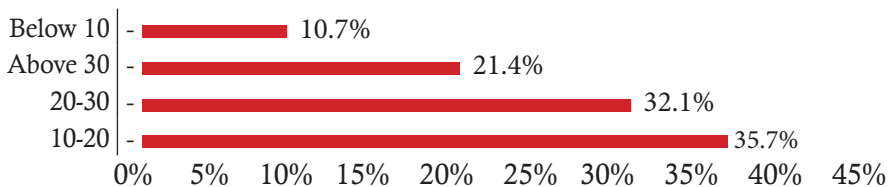
Figure 83: Number of students available in the teacher's classroom

Table 26: Facilities at teacher's classroom

Answer	Yes
Chairs for students	94.6%
Desk for all students	89.3%
White board / blackboard	100%
Roof without damage or leaking	71.4%
Floor without damage	75.0%
Cleaning equipment broomstick / dust bin	71.4%

According to table 26, the majority of classrooms have chairs for students (94.6%) and desks for all students (89.3%). Additionally, all classrooms have whiteboards or blackboards (100%). However, there are some areas for improvement, as 28.6% of classrooms have a damaged or leaking roof, and 25% have a damaged floor. Only 71.4% of classrooms have cleaning equipment such as broomsticks or dust bins.

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Overall, while there are some areas for improvement, the classrooms seem to be well-equipped with basic furniture and teaching aids. However, the school may need to invest in repairing or maintaining some of the classrooms to ensure they provide a safe and comfortable learning environment for students.

Most of the respondents (67.9%) reported that their schools have comfortable toilet facilities with adequate numbers and cleanliness, while the remaining 32.1% reported that their schools do not have such facilities.
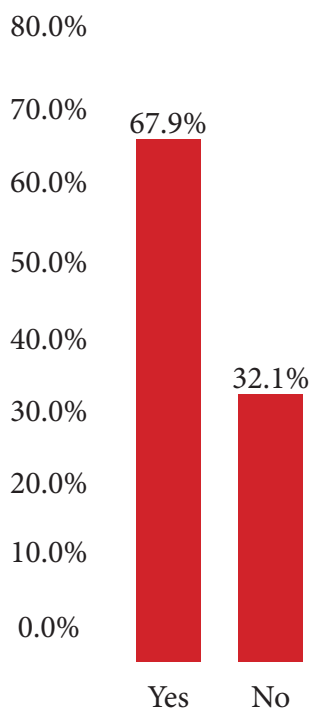
Figure 84: Availability of comfortable toilet facilities at schools

Most of the respondents (83.9%) reported that their schools have safe drinking water facilities, while 16.1% reported that their schools do not have such facilities.
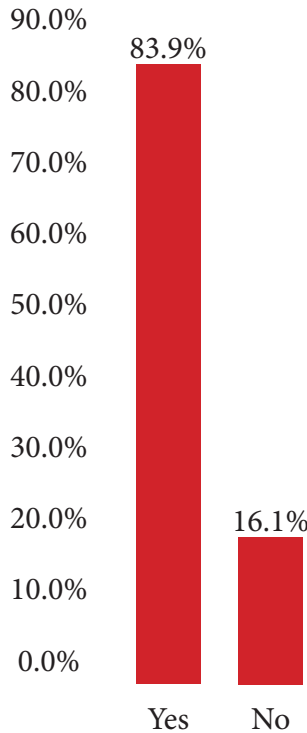
Figure 85: Availability of safe drinking water at schools

Table 27 shows that 82.1% of schools have a library, 42.9% of teacher's schools have a cultural hall, 19.6% have a canteen, 50.0% have a sick room/ isolation room, 91.1% have a principal room, and 57.1% have a science lab.

Table 27: Infrastructure facilities in teacher's school

Answer	Yes
Library	82.1%
Cultural hall	42.9%
Canteen	19.6%
Sick room / isolation room	50.0%
Principal room	91.1%
Science lab	57.1%

Among the infrastructure facilities available in the school, the presence of a library was reported by the majority (82.1%) of respondents. This is a positive

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finding as libraries provide access to books and other resources that can help students with their learning. According to the teacher survey less than half of the schools have a cultural hall, with only 42.9% reporting that their school has one. This could be an area for improvement, as cultural halls can be used for a variety of events and activities that can enrich students' educational experiences.

A minority of schools have a teacher's canteen, with only 19.6% of respondents indicating that their school has one. This may be a concern for students who rely on school meals for their daily nutrition. Half of the schools surveyed have a sick room or isolation room, which can be important for managing illness and preventing the spread of contagious diseases. The vast majority (91.1%) of schools have a principal room. This is a necessary facility for school administration and management. Science labs were available in just over half of the schools surveyed, with 57.1% of respondents indicating that their school had one. This is an area for potential improvement, as science labs can be important for hands-on learning and scientific exploration.

Overall, the survey results suggest that while some schools have a range of facilities and infrastructure in place, there may be opportunities for improvement in areas such as cultural halls, canteens, and science labs.

The analysis shows that out of the respondents, 41.1% reported having challenges or issues regarding school infrastructure, while 58.9% did not report any issues. The challenges stated by them are mentioned in the Table 28:

Table 28: Infrastructure facilities in teacher's school

Answer	Yes
Inadequate number of toilets	65.2%
No separate toilets for girls and boys	39.1%
Damaged toilets	69.6%
Some important facilities are missing	47.8%
Other	17.4%

Among those who reported issues, the most common issue was damaged toilets, with 69.6% of respondents reporting this as a problem. The inadequate number of toilets was also a significant issue, with 65.2% of respondents reporting this problem. Other issues that were reported include missing important facilities

(47.8%) and the lack of separate toilets for girls and boys (39.1%).

It is worth noting that having adequate and clean toilet facilities is a basic requirement for schools to ensure the health and well-being of students. Therefore, addressing the issue of lack of toilet facilities should be a top priority for schools. Additionally, providing missing facilities and ensuring that separate toilets are available for girls and boys can also contribute to creating a safe and comfortable learning environment for students.

Based on the survey among the teachers, 52.9% of the respondents have ideas to mitigate the issues regarding school infrastructure challenges, while 47.1% do not have any ideas.
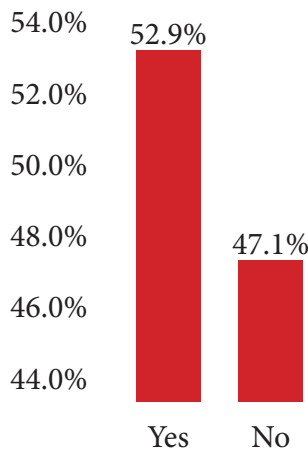
Figure 86: Availability of ideas to mitigate school infrastructure related challenges

The quantitative data emphasizes the importance of addressing the lack of adequate and clean toilet facilities, as this is a basic requirement for ensuring the health and well-being of students. It also highlights the need to provide missing facilities and ensure that separate toilets are available for girls and boys to create a safe and comfortable learning environment. Furthermore, the data shows that over half of the respondents have ideas to mitigate the issues regarding school infrastructure challenges, indicating that there is potential for schools to address these issues with the help of their teachers.

4.6 Education rights and protection

Findings from children's survey
Only 6.9% of the children have full awareness about e rights. Others either

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have some knowledge or not at all. The majority do not have complete knowledge of educational rights and protection.
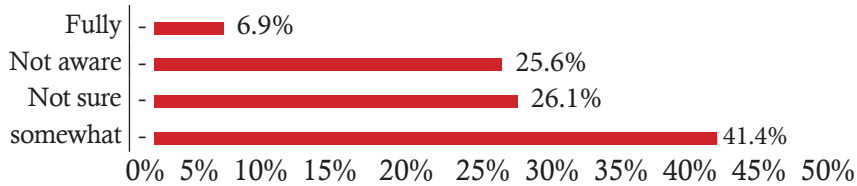
Figure 87: Awareness on education rights

Cross tabulation of gender vs awareness on education rights is shown in figure 88. It was noted that 5.6% of the girls and 8.3% of the boys surveyed are fully aware about education rights:
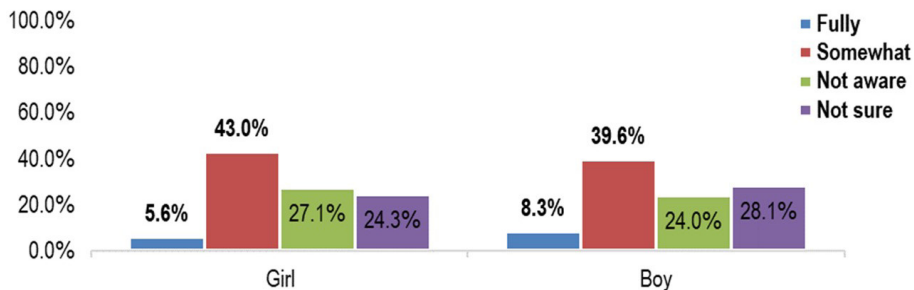
Figure 88: Relationship between gender and awareness on education rights

The relationship between the district and level of awareness of children surveyed on education rights is shown in the Figure 89:
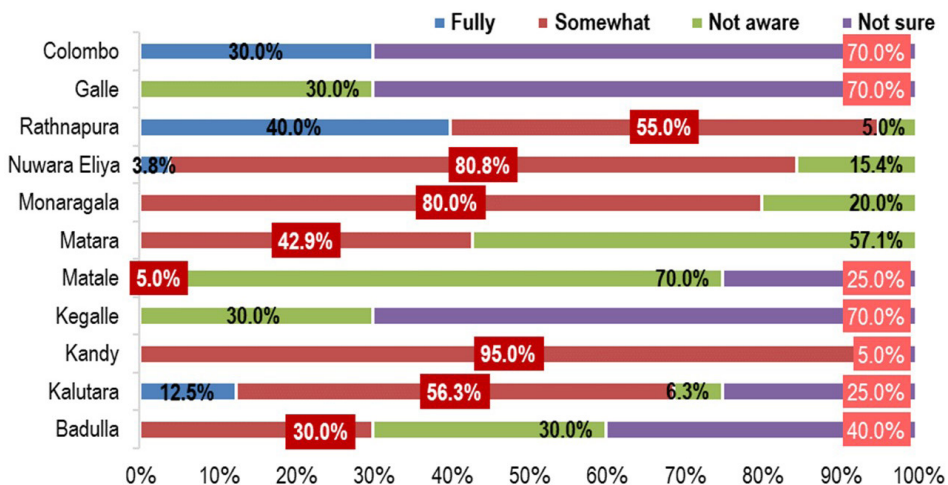
Figure 89: Relationship between district and awareness on education rights

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The majority (95%) stated that they did not feel uncomfortable at their home or school or any other places. However, it was noted that 5.4% of them felt uncomfortable environment at their home or school. Children felt uncomfortable due to alcohol consumption of their fathers, not having suitable place for studies and some issues faced in some public places.
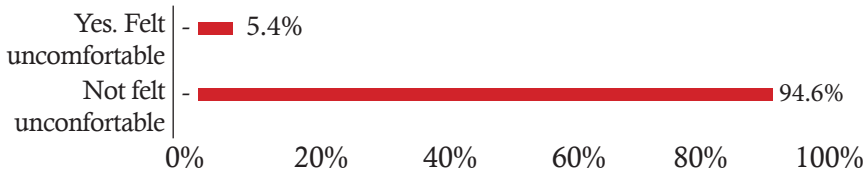
Figure 90: Felt uncomfortable at home / school / any other places

41.4% of the children are aware about whom to inform once education rights get violated. However, the remaining 58.6% weren't aware of it.
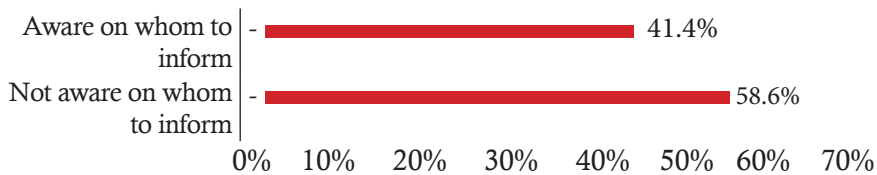
Figure 91: Inform if faced any protection / rights related issues

Most of them (48.8%) stated that "mother" is the best person to inform. Further analysis in this regard is presented in the table 29;

Table 29: Who inform if faced any protection / rights related issues.

Answer	% responded
Mother	48.8%
Father	17.9%
Teacher	10.7%
Police	10.7%
Principal	9.5%
Probation officer	2.4%

Only 6.4% of the children have been informed if they face any issues related to education rights and protection while 93.6% do not inform anyone.
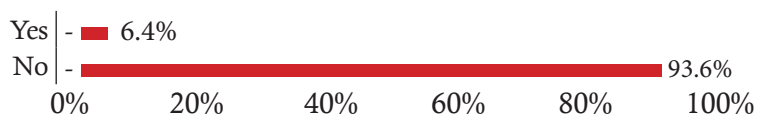
Figure 92: Inform if faced any protection / rights related issues

Only 21.7% stated that they are aware of the person who is responsible for the education rights and protection, while the majority stated that they are not aware of it.
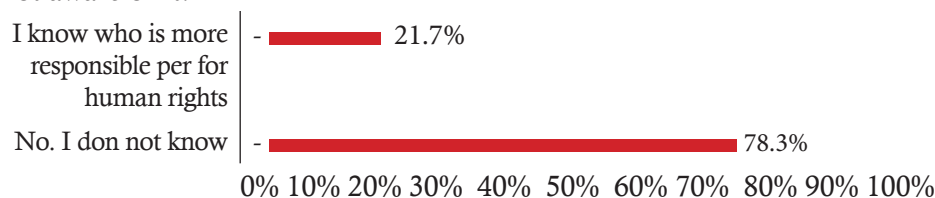
Figure 93: Aware on the responsible person for education rights

About 25% of the children surveyed stated that there is an organization working for child development at their school or village level while the majority (75.4%) stated that they are not aware of it.
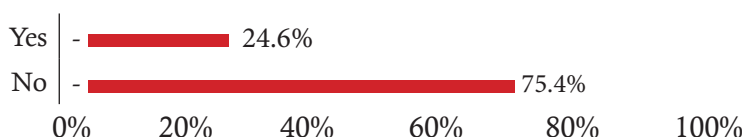
Figure 94: Aware on organization working for child development

As per the analysis it has been noted that only 4% of the students are aware that, the organization is for protection on education rights and others are described as, in the Table 30:

Table 30: Activities implemented by the organizations working

Answer	% responded
Education	56.0%
Livelihood	14.0%
Protection	4.0%
Preschool	4.0%
Water and sanitation	8.0%
Health promotion	4.0%
Others	10.0%

Only 13.8% of the children heard about the universal declaration of human rights. The rest of them have not heard about it at all:

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Heard about Universal Declaration — ▬▬ 13.8%

Not heard about it — ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬ 86.2%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
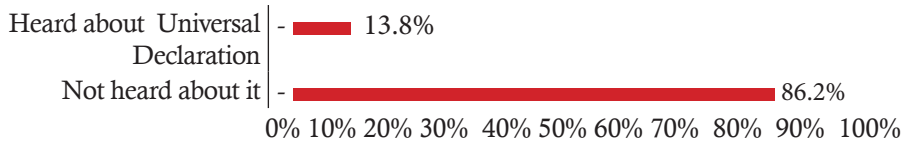
Figure 95: Heard about universal declaration of human rights

Table 31 shows the analysis on the awareness of the children regarding their rights. Analysis shows that more than 75% of them have awareness of the rights.

Table 31: Awareness on rights

Answer	% responded
Right to play	82.1%
Right to education	100.0%
Freedom of speech	82.1%
Freedom of belief/ religion	75.0%

About 7% (n=14) of the children have experienced incidents where their rights have been violated. The rest of them did not have such an experience.

Experienced such incidents — ▪ 6.9%

Not experienced — ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬ 93.1%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
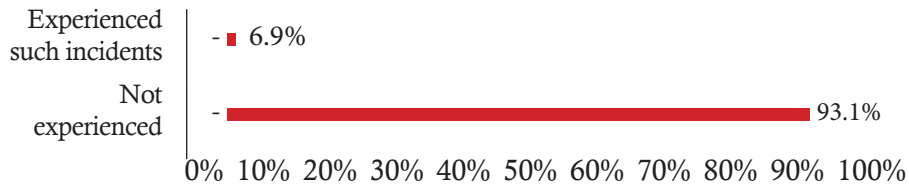
Figure 96: Experienced the incidents where the rights have been violated

Based on this survey, 74.9% of the children are aware that education is their fundamental right while 25.1% stated that they are not aware of it.

No. I do not know — ▬▬▬▬ 25.1%

Yes. I know — ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬ 74.9%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
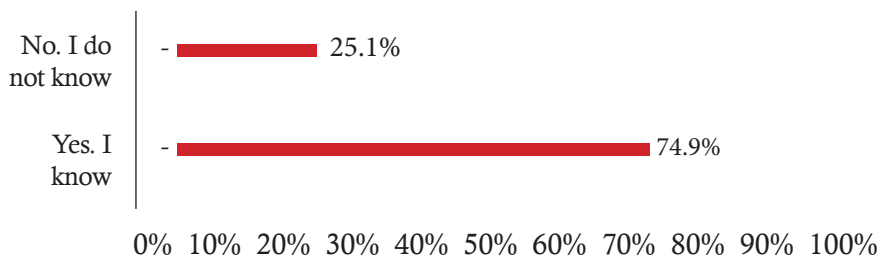
Figure 97: Aware that the education is a fundamental right

Cross tabulation of gender vs awareness that education is a fundamental right is shown in Figure 98. It was noted that 80.4% of the girls and 68.8% of the boys surveyed are fully aware that education is their fundamental rights:

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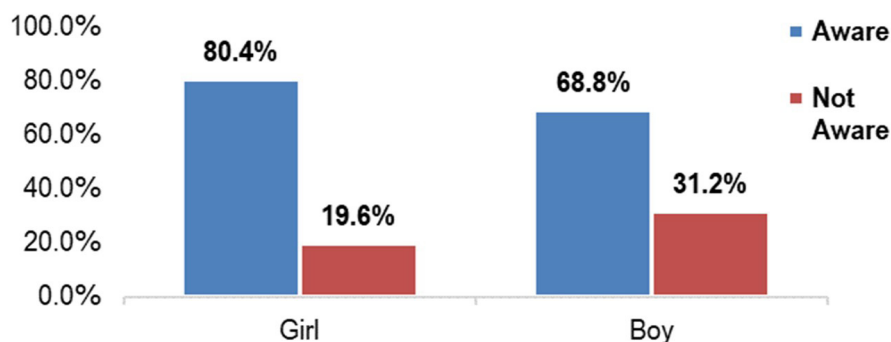
Figure 98: Relationship between gender and awareness that education is a fundamental right

Both IDI and children's survey results show that the majority of children are aware that education is their fundamental right. However, the findings also show that still there are some children who lack awareness regarding education rights and some children have no idea about this matter.

KII results indicated that the contribution of parents towards child protection is very poor, and some children experience abuse from their parents. Additionally, parents do not seem motivated to support their children in completing their studies. However, it is fortunate that a few families send their children to town by bus from Grade 6 onward or keep their children at relatives' houses for secondary - level education.

The respondents stated that regular awareness programs for children as well as for the parents on education rights is essential and education is a must. Because the community is not well educated, it is not concerned about these rights and issues. However, DS divisions are attempting to implement programs to empower them.

The KI interviewees expressed their views on the impact of educating the children on education rights by looking at it from different angles. The knowledge of education rights will protect the children from any harm in their communities. If responsible authorities provide awareness programs for children about their rights, then they can take actions against any harmful actions in their surroundings.

When analyzing the qualitative inputs derived from KIIs, it was revealed that the community level of engagement in child protection is low. Community members, including past students, do not interfere with child protection

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actions in the villages. Most of the interviewees aware about the educational rights while some plantation community not aware of education rights and importance of education and emphasized the importance of educate, educational rights to children in plantation community and "Education For All" must be ensured among that community. Further it expressed that education is the right of the children, and their future can only be determined by their education. When providing education for all, quality education must be ensured for all, and compulsory education should be provided to children from five to 16 years old. However, relevant authorities ready to take actions to ensure the educational rights of plantation community children (Ex: try to get more teachers and facilities to the schools), the parents or the community not ready to come forward. It means, the plantation community is not empowered that much.

Only 2.0% of the children stated that they are satisfied with the extent they are enjoying their rights. However, the majority stated that they are dissatisfied / highly dissatisfied to the extent they are enjoying their rights:
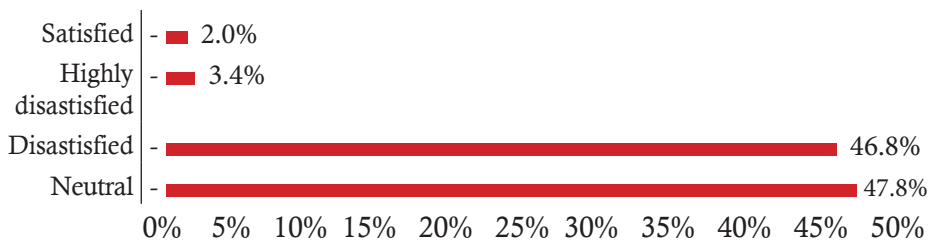
Figure 99: How extend the children feel they are enjoying the rights

Findings from parents' survey

Only 4.5% of parents have stated that they are fully aware of education rights. While 31.2% are somewhat aware. The majority do not have a full understanding of education rights and protection.
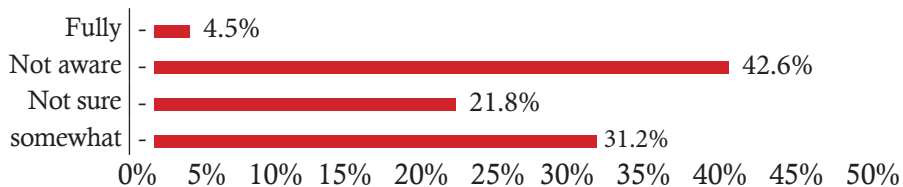
Figure 100: Awareness on the child protection

Parents were asked whether they had experienced any protection-related issues with their children or neighbors. Only 8.4% of them stated that they have had such experiences. While the majority (91.6%) do not have such experiences.
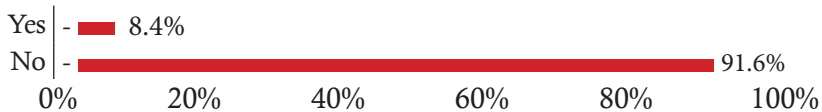
Figure 101: Experienced any protection related issues

Some of the parents who participated in the FGDs have experienced many incidents where children are harassed or assaulted within the community or at school. In response, parents have taken various actions such as complaining to the police. In some instances, families have engaged fight at night while consuming illegal alcohol, which puts the children at risk of assault. Parents have expressed a desire for alcohol to be banned as it severely affects their children.

During the parents' FGD's. Several suggestions made to ensure the safety of children in the community. These include appointing a police officer for school safety (morning and after school), parents' meetings and awareness programs, closely monitoring and being present with their children, engaging in discussions and sharing ideas with them and giving appropriate attention to children.

Regarding child development organizations 25.2% of the surveyed parents stated that there is an organization working for child development at their children's school or in their village, while the majority (74.8%) stated that there is none in this regard.
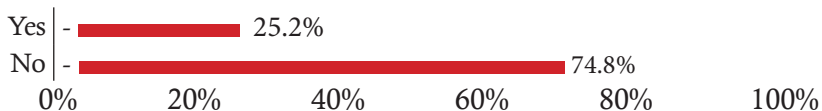
Figure 102: Aware of organization working for child development.

As per the analysis, it was noted that most of these organizations are engaged in education-related activities. Further activities carried out by them are shown in the Table 32:

Table 32: Activities implemented by the organizations working

Answer	% responded
Education	45.1%
Livelihood	9.8%
Preschool	3.9%
Waterand sanita-tion	35.3%
Health promotion	5.9%

Only 7.4% of the parents stated that they have heard about the universal declaration of human rights. The rest of them have not heard about it.
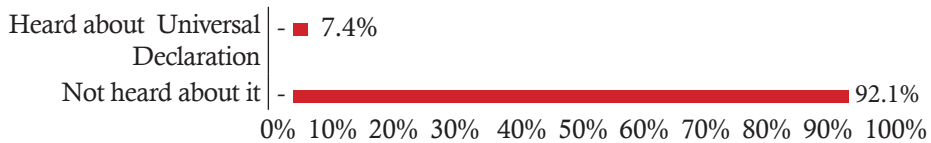
Figure 103: Heard about universal declaration of human rights

The parents, who stated that they have heard about the Universal Declaration, further mentioned that they came to know about it from various sources; some knew about it from their childhood, through television programs, relatives and news, others stated that they learned about it through non-governmental organizations.

Parents (n = 16) who stated that they have heard about the Universal Declaration were further inquired to specify some rights, and the rights specified by them are shown in the Table 33:

Table 33: Awareness on rights

Answer	% responded
Right to play	100.0%
Right to get education	100.0%
Freedom to speak	100.0%
Freedom to follow reli-gion	93.8%

14.4% (n = 29) of the parents stated they have experienced incidents where their education rights have been violated. The rest of them have not experienced such incidents.
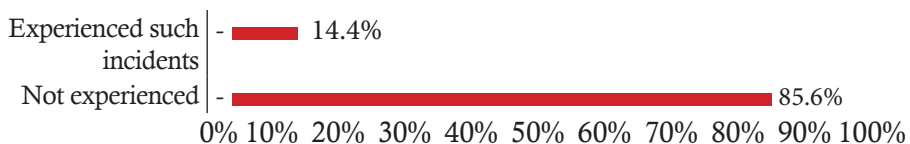
Figure 104: Experienced the incidents where the child rights have been violated

Lack of resources at school, transport issues, economic challenges, children's behavioral issues due to living in line houses in the estates, the unavailability of smart phones for online classes, schools with O/L and A/L facilities being located far away from the home, household chores, leaving children with insufficient time for studies, Inability to purchase stationary items, shoes, bags, etc. due to price hikes, shortage of teachers, inadequate access to nutritious food, some parents stating that their children get tired due to traveling to school, after which they are unable to attend, some children being addicted to phones and unable to concentrate on studies, and drug usage are among the challenges their children have encountered in getting an education.

Findings from teachers' survey

Figure 105 shows that 32.1% of schoolteachers are fully aware of children's rights, while 50.0% are somewhat aware. Only 5.4% of teachers reported that they are not aware of children's rights, and 12.5% are not sure. It is important for the teachers to have a good understanding of children's rights, as they play a crucial role in promoting and protecting the rights of children in their schools and communities. Therefore, efforts can be made to provide training and resources for teachers to increase their knowledge and awareness of child rights.
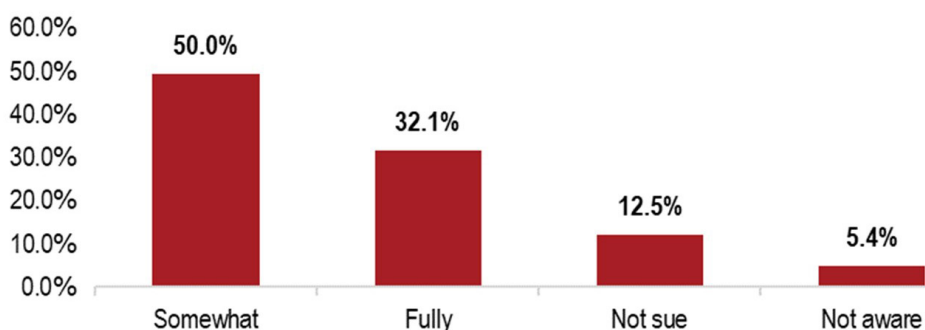
Figure 105: Awareness on child rights

The minority communities of Tamils experience difficulties accessing the seminars on human rights and children's rights in the estates because of the language gap. As an example, since there are smaller number of Tamil teachers in the plantation community, Tamil people have to attend the seminars conducted in Sinhala or they have to attend seminars which were conducted in Tamil medium in another district at their own cost.

Figure 106 indicates that 87.5% of the respondents believe that children are enjoying their rights, while only 10.7% reported experiencing protection-related issues with their students or neighbors.

Yes - 12.5%
No - 87.5%

0.0%   20.0%   40.0%   60.0%   80.0%   100.0%
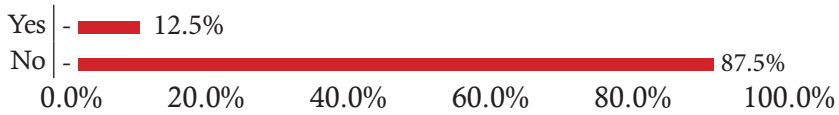
Figure 106: Percentage of teachers believe that children are enjoying their rights

Yes - 10.7%
No - 89.3%

0.0%   20.0%   40.0%   60.0%   80.0%   100.0%
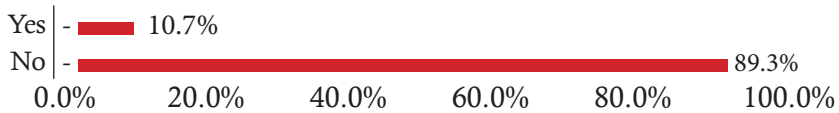
Figure 107: Experienced with students or neighbors related to protection issues

Overall, most respondents believe that children are enjoying their rights, which is a positive indication of the overall well-being and protection of children in the community. However, it is important to continue monitoring and address any issues or concerns to ensure that all children are able to enjoy their rights and live in a safe and supportive environment.

Based on Figure 108, 35.7% of the respondents reported that there is an organization working for child development at their school or village, while 64.3% answered negatively. Among those who answered in the affirmative, the most common activity being implemented is education, with a percentage of 50.0%. This is followed by protection (15.0%), livelihood (10.0%), health promotion (10.0%), water and sanitation (5.0%), and other activities (10.0%).
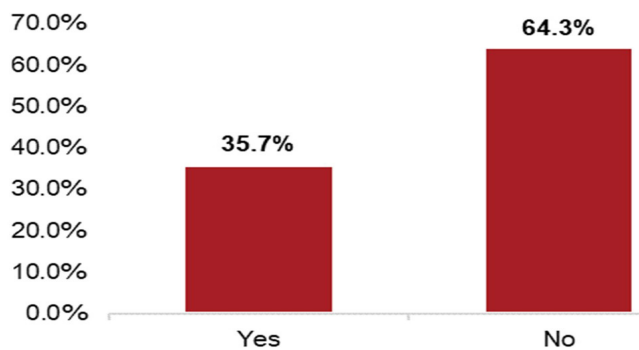
Figure 108: Awareness on organizations working on child development
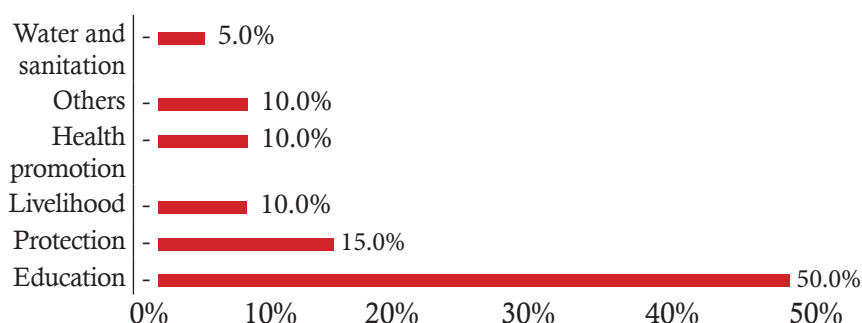
Figure 109: Activities implemented by the organization working on child development

Based on the Figure 110, 42.9% of the respondents have heard about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
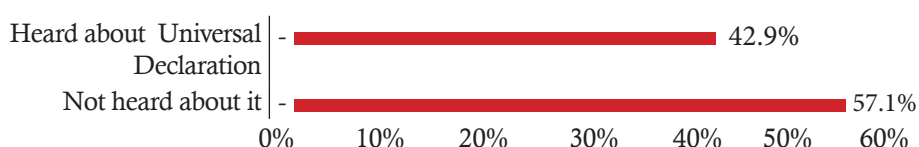
Figure 110: Heard about Universal Declaration of HR

Among those who have heard of it, the majority (100%) have heard about the "right to get education", while 66.7% have heard about the right to play, 91.7% have heard about freedom of speech, and another 91.7% have heard about freedom to follow religion.

Table 34: Awareness on rights

Answer	% responded
Right to play	66.7%
Right to get an education	100.0%
Freedom of speech	91.7%
Freedom to follow religion	91.7%

Based on Figure 111, 16.1% of schoolteachers have experienced incidents where child rights have been violated. However, all of the schoolteachers (100%) are aware that education is a fundamental right. Additionally, 12.5% of the teachers reported that children in their school have faced discrimination based on their gender, ethnicity, religion, or language.
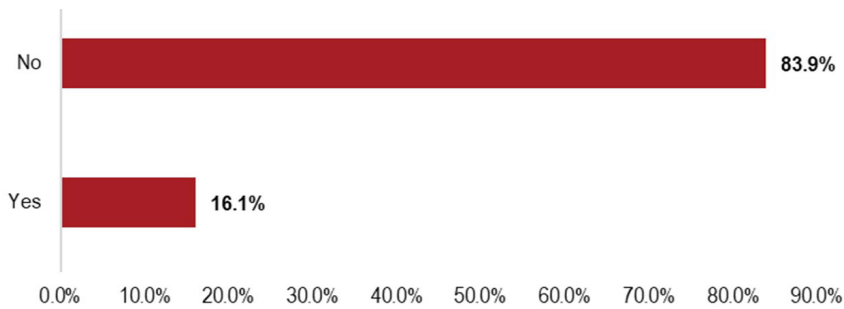
Figure 111: Experienced any incidents where child rights have been violated
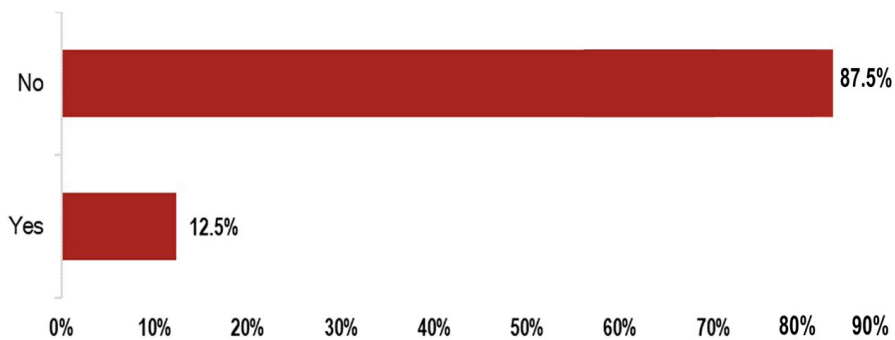
Figure 112: Discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion and gender

It is concerning to note that some teachers have witnessed violations of child rights, and steps should be taken to address and prevent such incidents from happening in the future. It is encouraging, however, to see that all teachers are aware of education being a fundamental right, indicating a baseline understanding of child rights.

Regarding discrimination, it is important to recognize that any form of discrimination can have negative impacts on a child's well-being and development. It is essential to ensure that children are provided with a safe and inclusive learning environment that is free from discrimination of any kind.

Figure 113 shows, only a small percentage (3.6%) of the respondents are satisfied with how much children are enjoying their rights, while almost half (48.2%) are dissatisfied. A significant portion (39.3%) of the respondents is neutral on the matter, while a small percentage (8.9%) are highly dissatisfied.
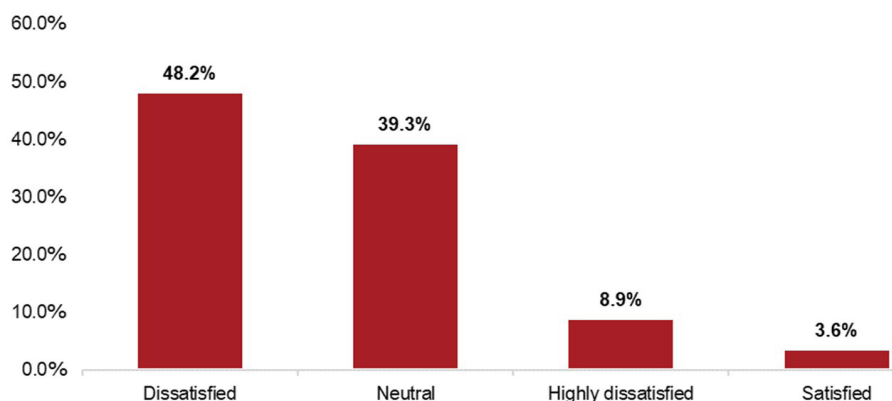
Figure 113: How extend the teachers feel the children are enjoying the rights

The tables below visualize conclusions of plantation children's rights on education as per the opinion of children, teachers, and their parents. The data was triangulated with KII, FGDs and IDIs. Education rights were considered respecting, protecting, and fulfilling children's education rights. Color code used to derive conclusions are presented below:

Low(L)		Moderate (M)		High (H)	

Table 35: Contribution of the government for education rights

District	Respecting			Protecting			Fulfilling		
	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High
Badulla	88.0%	8.0%	4.0%	76.0%	24.0%		92.0%	8.0%	
Kalutara	52.4%	42.9%	4.8%	61.9%	28.6%	9.5%	57.1%	33.3%	9.6%
Kandy		20.0%	80.0%	0.0	20.0%	80.0%	0.0	20.0%	80.0%
Kegalle	92.0%	8.0%		100.0%			100.0%		
Matale	24.0%	56.0%	20.0%	64.0%	32.0%	4.0%	91.6%	4.2%	4.2%
Matara	46.2%	30.8%	23.1%	38.5%	42.3%	19.2%	57.7%	23.1%	19.2%
Monaragala	66.7%	33.3%		40.0%	46.7%	13.3%	40.0%	60.0%	
Nuwara Eliya	29.0%	12.9%	58.1%	29.0%	9.7%	61.3%	25.8%	12.9%	61.3%
Rathnapura	56.0%	28.0%	16.0%	52.0%	28.0%	20.0%	52.0%	36.0%	12.0%
Galle	100.0%			100%			100%		
Colombo	100.0%			100%			100%		

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Table 36: Contribution of the local government for education rights

District	Respecting			Protecting			Fulfilling		
	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High
Badulla	92.0%	8.0%		92.0%	8.0%		92.0%	8.0%	
Kalutara	61.9%	23.8%	14.3%	66.7%	23.8%	9.5%	66.7%	23.8%	9.5%
Kandy	0.0	72.0%	28.0%	0.0	72.0%	28.0%	0.0	72.0%	28.0%
Kegalle	0.0			0.0			0.0		
Matale	25.0%	54.2%	20.8%	58.3%	41.7%		83.3%	12.5%	4.2%
Matara	50.0%	30.8%	19.2%	50.0%	42.3%	7.7%	46.2%	42.3%	11.5%
Monaragala	66.6%	26.7%	6.7%	46.7%	46.7%	6.7%	33.3%	60.0%	6.7%
Nuwara Eliya	33.3%	43.3%	23.3%	32.3%	41.9%	25.8%	32.3%	41.9%	25.8%
Rathnapura	52.0%	28.0%	20.0%	56.0%	24.0%	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%
Galle	100.0%			96.2%	3.8%		100.0%		
Colombo	80.0%	13.3%	6.7%	86.7%	13.3%		80.0%	20.0%	

Table 35 shows the contribution of government for respect, protect, and fulfill education rights in each district and Table 36 shows the contribution of local government for education rights. Contribution of government for education in Kandy and Nuwara Eliya districts are comparatively high. The contribution is low in Kegalle, Galle, and Colombo districts. This may be due to presence of officers who can speak Tamil in Kandy and Nuwara Eliya districts and shortage such officers in Kegalle, Galle and Colombo districts. Those officers contribute more to protect the rights of estate people.

Table 37: Contribution of civil society for education rights

District	Respecting			Protecting			Fulfilling		
	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High
Badulla	72.0	28.0		80.0	16.0	4.0	76.0	24.0	
Kalutara	71.4	19.0	9.5	76.2	14.3	9.5	71.4	9.5	19.0
Kandy	4.0	92.0	4.0	8.0	92.0		8.0	92.0	
Kegalle	50.0	50.0		62.5	37.5		100.0		
Matale	25.0	66.7	8.3	75.0	25.0		83.3	12.5	4.2
Matara	23.1	38.5	38.5	23.1	65.4	11.5	38.5	46.2	15.4
Monaragala	73.3	20.0	6.7	33.3	66.7		60.0	40.0	
Nuwara Eliya	40.0	33.3	26.7	41.9	32.3	25.8	40.0	33.3	26.7
Rathnapura	24.0	56.0	20.0	28.0	40.0	32.0	28.0	40.0	32.0
Galle	26.9	57.7	15.4	11.5	46.2	42.3	11.5	50.0	38.5
Colombo	46.7	33.3	20.0	46.7	26.7	26.7	60.0	33.3	6.7

According to Table 37 in most cases educational rights are not properly respected, protected and fulfilled by the estate, LGAs and civil society organizations. This may be due to lack of awareness and lack of education in plantation communities. However, in Kandy, Matale, Ratnapura, and Galle district civil society moderately contributes to respect, protect, and fulfill the education rights, because those districts have somewhat good education background.

Lack of awareness on Universal Declaration of human rights and education rights and especially educational rights of children among teachers, parents and schoolchildren was observed. Due to this fact, parents and children do not properly respect their educational rights. When not respecting they do not feel it.

Table 38: Contribution of community for education rights

District	Respecting			Protecting			Fulfilling		
	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High
Badulla	72.0	28.0		72.0	24.0	4.0	76.0	20.0	4.0
Kalutara	71.4	28.6		71.4	14.3	14.3	71.4	14.3	14.3
Kandy	48.0	52.0		48.0	52.0		50.0	50.0	
Kegalle	93.3	6.7		100.0			93.3	6.7	
Matale	33.3	45.8	20.8	87.5	12.5		87.5	12.5	4.2
Matara	15.4	38.5	46.2	15.4	42.3	42.3	20.0	32.0	48.0
Monaragala	40.0	53.3	6.7	33.3	66.7		46.7	53.3	
Nuwara Eliya	45.2	32.3	22.6	45.2	32.3	22.6	45.2	32.3	22.6
Rathnapura	44.0	36.0	20.0	24.0	48.0	28.0	32.0	36.0	32.0
Galle	7.7	19.2	73.1	7.7	19.2	73.1	11.5	19.2	69.2
Colombo	26.7	60.0	13.3	20.0	66.7	13.3	40.0	46.7	13.3

Table 38 shows the contribution of the community for education rights. Contribution of community for respect, protect, and fulfill education rights is low in Badulla, Kaluthara, Kegalle, Matale, Monaragala, Nuwara Eliya, and Ratnapura. Kandy, Matara, Galle, and Colombo district communities moderately contribute to education rights. In order to respect, protect, and fulfill education rights, the community should know what education rights are, what are the importance of having such rights, and what is mean by respecting, protecting, and fulfilling education rights. For that the community needs awareness and to get that knowledge the community should be educated.

Respecting, protecting and fulfilling educational rights of the plantation children as a whole

Table 39: Matrix of contribution for education rights in districts

District	Government			Local Government			Civil society			Community		
	Respecting	Protecting	Fulfilling	Respecting	Protecting	Fulfilling	Respecting	Protecting	Fulfilling	Respecting	Protecting	Fulfilling
Badulla	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
Kalutara	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
Kandy	H	H	H	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	L
Kegalle	L	L	L				M	L	L	L	L	L
Matale	M	L	L	M	L	L	M	L	L	M	L	L
Matara	L	M	L	L	L	L	M	M	M	L	M	H
Monaragala	L	M	M	L	M	M	L	M	L	M	M	M
Nuwara Eliya	H	H	H	M	M	M	L	L	L	L	L	L
Rathnapura	L	L	L	L	L	L	M	M	M	L	M	M
Galle	L	L	L	L	L	L	M	M	M	H	H	H
Colombo	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	M	M	M

L- Low / M- Moderate / H - High

It indirectly has shown that relevant government officers are not sensitive enough on educational rights of children and some of the institutions and the plantation companies have also failed to properly respect and protect educational rights by providing the necessary physical and human resources to make sure access to education with required quality, consistency and sustainability.

The present political and economic crisis has aggravated the status of respecting, protecting and fulfilling education rights of the children in the plantation community.

Though there is overall improvement, significant inequality was observed, in terms of respecting, protecting and fulfilling educational rights of the children. This is due to multiple factors including controlled livelihood, employments, and the living with controlled resources (noises, housing and other), challenged and difficulties to go to schools, extra challenges to study at home due to inappropriate microenvironment and resources.

4.7 Child achievement

Findings from children's survey

52.2% of them stated that they have access to extra curriculum activities while 47.8% stated that they do not have access.
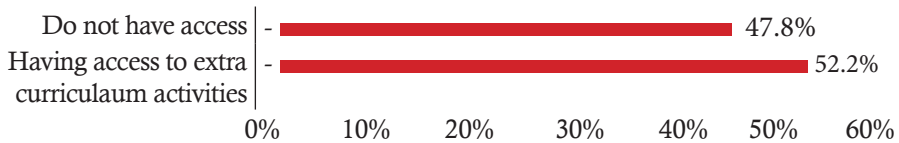
Figure 114: Access to extra curriculum activities

It was found by IDI that the family members are supporting the children to be involved in extra curriculum activities and the mode of support given is financial, kind and mental support. Further family members are motivating and guiding too. However, in one case it was noted that the family is not supporting the child.

Table 40 shows the analysis of achievements of the children on their co-curricular activities.

Table 40: Achievements of the children on co-curricular activities

Answer	% responded
Learning	46.2%
Participating	62.3%
Won prices	34.0%
Performing	33.0%
Other	11.3%

The children were asked where they see themselves in five years from now and majority stated that they will be in a good job such as teacher, lawyer, journalist, policeman, dance teacher, electrician, bank officer, doctor, public service, software engineer, accountant, artist, sportsperson. Some stated that they will be doing their A/L in the university as students and some stated that they want to see them living abroad. Few stated they wanted to see them in a good position, as good human beings and good citizens.

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The data collected through IDIs, FGDs, and surveys with children reveals several barriers that prevent children from accessing education in the plantation sector. Qualitative data suggests that economic issues, high costs of stationery, lack of resources, power cuts, and inability to attend tuition classes, lack of transport facilities, lack of teachers and facilities, and challenging family backgrounds are some of the main barriers to education.

KII results revealed the following points: The standard of education is poor, and the dropout rate is high in the plantation sectors. Dropouts can be attributed to a variety of factors, including mothers working abroad, fathers abusing alcohol, poverty, a lack of nutritious food, the economic crisis, and so on. Some of the students are having issues continuing their studies, such as economic and family issues, and in some cases, the students are not interested in studying. Some of the students have dropped out of schools due to inability of understanding or concentrating on their studies, though they tried their best to do so.

The findings from the children survey, FGD and KII show that as most parents in the plantation sector are unaware of the value of education, most children do not receive the necessary support from their parents to continue their studies. The economic status of the family has caused some students to drop out of school. The management of plantations is not encouraging the estate workers to provide education for their children. Instead, they are attempting to keep the people as slaves to obtain labor.

4.8 Gaps in education system

Children in plantation community have no idea about how to use technology for their educational improvements. The main gap of the school education is they have no idea about education completion and new education methods beyond that. Support from family is very limited. Another gap is transportation. The children must reach their school by walking through a difficult road like a steep road with tea bushes for 2km (shortcut roads are created by themselves). As a result, they are hesitating to go to school every day. Students rarely attend school unless they are forced to do so by teachers. During the school year, they learn to respect teachers and try to attend as many classes as possible. However, once school resumes, it becomes

difficult to retrain their mindset toward their studies. Poor economic status of the families also affects the education of the children in the plantation community. Because of poor economic status, there is a problem in food security. Food security issues lead to negative impact on physical, mental, and social well-being of children. In addition to these gaps there is also a shortage of teachers, lack of infrastructural and other essential facilities in schools. This situation may result in poor attendance, poor performance and finally lead to school dropouts.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

This study was conducted to identify the issues, challenges, and future directions of the right to education of the children in the plantation community and proposes alternative strategies to overcome emerging issues in the free education system. The research focused on plantation communities residing in the districts of Nuwara Eliya, Kandy, Matale, Badulla, Monaragala, Ratnapura, Kegalle, Galle, Matara, Kalutara, and Colombo.

This study brought out the following:
- From primary education to university (first-degree level), the Sri Lankan government has a policy of providing free education (Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2013). The free education act of 1945 is a historical landmark that made provision for free education from kindergarten to the university level. (Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009). Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that education is a fundamental right and should be free and compulsory during the elementary stages. Ojha-Seema (2013) mentioned that "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages". However, the study concluded that most of the children, parents, and teachers were not fully aware of the education rights and in most cases, educational rights are not properly respected, protected, and fulfilled in the plantation community. Due to this, children and parents do not properly respect their educational rights. The contribution of government, LGAs, civil society organizations, and communities is low in many plantation areas. The contribution is somewhat high in Kandy and Nuwara Eliya districts because of the presence of Tamil-speaking government officers. Education rights and protection issues arise due to lack of awareness of education rights, lack of officers and relevant institutions responsible for protecting rights, unconducive environmental conditions, lack of motivation and interest of parents, lack of resources, and negative economic conditions.

- De Silva (1982) and Little (2007) stated that educational change does not happen in the plantation community because to maintain the status quo and to keep continuous labor supply for plantation sector. Further De Silva mentioned that for the children in the plantation community, education is emancipation, while for planters, it is a threat to the labor supply. The study indirectly shows that government officers are not

sensitive enough on educational rights of children and some plantation companies have also failed to properly respect educational rights by providing necessary physical and human resources to make sure access to education with required quality, consistency, and sustainability.

- According to Marimuthu (1971) language or medium of instruction is an obstacle to integrating estate schools into the emerging national education system. The study also highlights there is a language barrier when accessing education and fulfilling education rights.

- To get advantage of education rights parental support is necessary. However, the study highlighted that there is a significant gap in parental motivation and community support for education. Only a few community members fully support and pursue education. Additionally, there is an issue of parents not giving adequate attention to their children's education. This will negatively impact the educational aspirations of those children.

- According to UNESCO, by 2021 to ensure quality education the provision of relevant school infrastructure, learning materials and resources, skills development, gender parity, scholarships and teaching forces are necessary. However, this study highlights there are issues related to the quality of education, such as a shortage of qualified teachers and limited educational resources.

- The research has unequivocally highlighted the stark disparities in educational infrastructure within the Plantation Community. Insufficient schools, inadequate facilities such as classrooms, toilets, safe drinking water, and a lack of resources such as chairs, desks, blackboards, etc. have created barriers that impede children's access to quality education. Recognizing these disparities is the first step toward rectifying them.

- The survey underscores the significance of accessible transportation in overcoming geographical challenges faced by children in remote plantation areas. Most of the children in the plantation community have issues when accessing their school. They must travel long distances to reach their schools. Because of the unavailability of public transport services children must walk this long distance. It takes more time to travel. Ultimately it will affect their education due to poor attendance and wastage of time. Further, they do not have enough money to spend on other mode of transport such as three wheeler due to the economic

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hardship of children's families. The same issue persists within the teachers in plantation schools. Because of that many teachers are not willing to work in schools in the plantation areas.

- Economic hardships significantly impact on children's education and school dropouts within the Plantation Community. The survey underscores the impact of poverty on families, compelling children to abandon their education in pursuit of immediate economic contributions to household income.

- Other than the financial support, support from family members is necessary to continue educational activities as children in this community are in difficulty to attend private classes due to economic hardship of their families. However, parents do not have enough time to engage in their children's activities as they are always busy in earning extra income to make both ends meet.

- The survey emphasizes the inextricable link between health challenges and access to quality education for children in the plantation community. A myriad of health issues, including malnutrition, inadequate healthcare facilities, and the prevalence of diseases, underweight, lack of activity, anemia, low birth weight of babies and child mortality, directly impede these children's ability to engage in and benefit from the educational system. Foster collaborations between educational institutions and healthcare professionals to create a holistic support system that addresses both immediate health concerns and long-term well-being.

- A secure and friendly external environment is a crucial factor for education. This study highlights that there are issues in the external environment not conducive for the children to study.

- The study reveals the importance of providing facilities for co-curricular activities. Overall, the results of the study suggest that the plantation sector face challenges to provide quality education to its children, but there is interest and ambition among the children to overcome these barriers and succeed in their educational and career goals.

- A key takeaway is the importance of involving the community in educational initiatives. Collaboration between local authorities, educational institutions, and community leaders can foster a sense of ownership and commitment, leading to more sustainable improvements in educational outcomes.

5.2 Recommendations

1. Advocate for policy reforms at the national and regional levels that address the systemic issues contributing to school dropouts, ensuring that the right to education is actively protected and upheld.

2. Policymakers should develop and implement programs that promote bilingual education, which can help children to better understand and engage with their curriculum and increase their language skills.

3. Implement language support programs to address language barriers, ensuring that children from the plantation community are proficient in the language of instruction.

4. Establish Tamil medium schools in particular regions or introduce Tamil streams in Sinhala medium schools.*

5. Policymakers should develop and implement programs that promote parental involvement in the education of their children, particularly in the plantation community. These programs can increase parental awareness of the importance of education and their role in supporting their children's academic success.

6. Unveil community-wide awareness campaigns to educate parents and community members of the plantation community about the long-term benefits of education, dispelling myths and misconceptions that may contribute to school dropouts.

7. Develop community-led initiatives to raise awareness about the importance of education and encourage parental involvement in their children's schooling.

8. Establish parent-teacher associations and community forums to foster communication and collaboration between educators and families.

9. Absorb management of pre-schools into the government school management structure.*

10. Relevant authorities should ensure that all children in the plantation community have access to quality education, regardless of their socio-

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* Recommendations given at the media conference by the Catholic Bishops of the Plantation Region

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economic background. This can be achieved through the provision of adequate infrastructure such as schools, classrooms, learning materials, as well as recruitment of qualified teachers.

11. Establish GCE (AL) Science & Maths Streams in Tamil medium at least in one school in an Education Zone.*

12. Advocate for increased investment in building and upgrading school infrastructure in plantation areas.

13. Provide purified drinking water to schools via national Water Supply and Drainage Board.*

14. Introduce a special program to provide sufficient sanitary (toilet) facilities in plantation schools.

15. Conduct after-school classes and free seminars to support children.

16. Investments in teacher training programs, curriculum development, and technology integration are imperative to enhance the learning experience and equip these children with the skills needed for a brighter future.

17. Policymakers should invest in teacher training programs that provide teachers with necessary skills and knowledge to cater to the specific needs of children in the plantation community. These programs should focus on promoting student-centered and participatory learning environments.

18. Ensure that plantation schools have access to adequate and up-to-date educational resources, including textbooks, technology, and supplementary materials.

19. Establish parent-teacher associations, community workshops, and informational sessions to promote collaboration and mutual understanding.

20. Improved transportation facilities are not only a logistical necessity but also a key enabler for ensuring regular attendance and fostering a positive learning environment.

21. Improve transportation facilities to overcome geographical barriers, ensuring that children can easily commute to and from school.

* Recommendations given at the media conference by the Catholic Bishops of the Plantation Region

22. Collaborate with local authorities to implement safe and reliable transportation options, such as school buses, for children in remote areas.

23. Establish more schools to reduce the travel distance for children and ensure that every child has access to a nearby educational institution.

24. Implement a program to enhance income level of the plantation parents and to introduce activities to generate secondary income.

25. Include plantation community into the poverty alleviation and other economic rehabilitation program by the national government.*

26. Find ways and means to lessen the existing restrictions and make arrangement to encourage alternative livelihood.*

27. Introduce and train for alternative job opportunities like animal husbandry, agriculture, home gardening, flower gardening, small business etc.*

28. Foster collaborations between educational institutions and healthcare professionals to create a holistic support system that addresses both immediate health concerns and long-term well-being.

29. Collaborate with health organizations to implement programs that address health challenges affecting students' ability to learn.

30. Integrate the estate medical system into the national medical stream*

31. Introduce a special nutrition program to improve the nutrition of the identified children in the plantation community.*

32. Establish a study hall near the residences of the plantation children in a quite environment to facilitate studies after school.

33. Provide individual housing system with basic facilities to respect the human privacy and decent living standard.*

34. Policymakers should develop policies to promote investment and job creation in the plantation sector to increase employment opportunities and improve the economic status of the community.

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35. Introduce vocational training courses in Tamil medium in vocational training schools/institutions.*

36. Establish a university campus, affiliated to a state university existing in the plantation region to cater to the higher education needs of the community and also undertake research on the plantation industry and the plantation community.*

37. Prioritize sustainability and continuity in educational initiatives, recognizing that long-term success requires ongoing commitment and collaboration.

38. Policymakers should ensure that community development programs are sustainable and include long-term measures to improve the well-being and economic status of the plantation community. Additionally, the general school curriculum should be promptly revised to align with the changing world and a student-centered and participatory learning environment should be promoted. Furthermore, the economic, career, and social welfare of teachers also should be prioritized to establish an effective learning system.

5.3 General recommendations

Central government and local government authorities must collectively work to allocate resources to address the existing gaps to fulfill educational rights of the plantation children. In this regard, a special budget line should be allocated within the Ministry of Education to enhance the education of the plantation children.

Relevant government institutions together with plantation companies must work collaboratively to protect the educational rights of plantation children. In this regard sensitization and skills development programs should be introduced for relevant stakeholders to promote and abide educational rights of the children.

INGOs, NGOs and civil society organizations must support empowering children, parents, and teachers through awareness programs on the educational rights of children. Special programs should be introduced to address respect, protection, and fulfillment of educational rights of the children in plantation communities.

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* Recommendations given at the media conference by the Catholic Bishops of the Plantation Region

5.4 Further research

Based on the current mixed quantitative and qualitative study on the plantation community in Sri Lanka, here are some potential research areas that could be explored in the future:

- **Long-term impact assessment:** The current study focused on the short-term impact of a community development program on the plantation community. A future study could assess the long-term impact of such programs on the well-being and economic status of the plantation community.

- **Gender-based analysis:** The current study did not differentiate the impact of the community development program on men and women. Future research could explore the differential impact of such programs on men and women in the plantation community.

- **Comparison with other communities:** The current study focused on the plantation community. A future study could compare the impact of community development programs on plantation community with other communities in Sri Lanka to identify best practices that could be implemented across communities.

- **Educational intervention:** The current study identified education as a key area for development. A future study could explore the impact of educational interventions on the plantation community, such as access to higher education, vocational training, and skill-building programs.

- **Sustainability assessment:** The current study did not explore the sustainability of the community development program. Future research could assess the sustainability of such programs in the long run and identify factors that influence their success or failure.

Overall, there are many areas for future research that can build upon the findings of the current mixed quantitative and qualitative study on the plantation community in Sri Lanka. These studies could help to better understand the challenges faced by the plantation community and identify effective interventions that could improve their well-being and economic status.

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