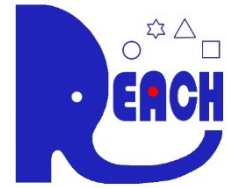


Never Give up!!

Inclusive Education in Sri Lanka during the COVID-19 Outbreak



In Sri Lanka, the number of newly infected COVID-19 patients has been rapidly increasing since October, but the damage is still relatively small among South Asian countries (9,791 cases, 19 dead, as of October 30th, 2020) . On March 11th, when the pandemic was declared, an immigration ban was applied , and a nationwide curfew was imposed on March 20th. The curfew was lifted on June 28th, and as the number of infection cases has settled down to a certain level, tourists resumed coming to Sri Lanka in August. However, Sri Lanka now faces a resurgence of infections. Although the number of infection cases per day has been less than 50 since the end of July, the number has risen to 500 per day as of the end of October. During this difficult time when travel to and within the country was restricted, the project has continued to work through online meetings. We will update our progress from April to October 2020.

School resumed

Following the lifting of the curfew in June and the gradual easing of domestic travel, classes in public schools resumed on July 6th. However, it was closed again on July 13th due to an outbreak in the country. Classes resumed on August 10th as the spread of the infection has been settled down. Special Education Unit (SEU) for students with disabilities has also resumed since August. The summer vacation, which normally falls in August, will be from October 5th to November 9th this year.

Inclusive Education Coordinators to be placed

A circular was issued by MOE on July 28th that an Inclusive Education (IE) Coordinator will be placed at all public schools with/without SEU in Colombo and Kurunegara (pilot districts of the project). This initiative is intended to develop and coordinate necessary resources to enable students with special needs to learn in mainstream classrooms. Heads of primary education section will be appointed as IE Coordinators, and SEU teachers will work together as resource persons.

Training conducted for advisors

The long-awaited training programs for In-service Advisors (ISAs), were held online. Following the suggestion of the Ministry of Education (MOE), not only the zonal-level officers for special education, but also those for primary education participated in the program.

- June 30 Kurunegala district 41 participants
- July 20 Colombo district 35 participants



The importance of the roles and responsibility of both special education and primary education officers for promoting inclusive education was well recognized. In the discussion on the future training menu, it was found that there was a high need for training on understanding the characteristics of various types of disabilities and teaching methods corresponding to them.

For the online training, careful preparation was made with support of local staff, and efforts were made to deepen participants' understanding of the topic, such as allocating more time to a Sri Lankan expert so that lectures could be given in Sinhalese without interpretation.

Seminar on the Good Practices

A seminar was held on September 17th for 54 participants, including ISAs, SEU teachers, and IE Coordinators, to encourage cooperation in collecting existing good practices in inclusive education in Sri Lanka. At the beginning of the seminar, a JICA expert team member, Prof. Kawaguchi introduced the "Special Needs Education Database" (available on the web in Japanese and English), which is a database of practical examples extracted from special needs education practices at the University of Tsukuba's special needs schools, and gave a demonstration of cases that could be used in Sri Lanka. In addition, MOE explained the expected role of IE coordinators, and the JICA expert team explained the role of special needs education coordinators in Japan for reference. The JICA expert team will continue to strengthen its network with provincial education departments and practitioners to collect good practices.



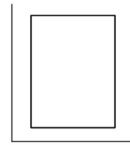
Irreplaceable project members in Sri Lanka



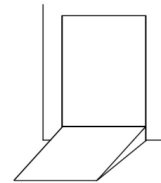
The Japanese members of the JICA expert team has not been able to travel to Sri Lanka since February 2020. During this period, project activities have been continued thanks to the dedications of the local expert, Ms. Surangani (former Special Needs Education ISA, left), Research Assistant, Ms. Nirmani (center) and Project Secretary Ms. Dilani (right). No doubt but holding seminars/trainings remotely and sustaining frequent communication with MOE have been possible only because of the efforts of these staff. **Bohoma stutti!!**

Guidelines on School Infrastructure and Environmental Arrangement

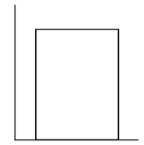
The draft of “the Guidelines for School Infrastructure and Environmental Arrangement”, one of the project’s outputs, was completed. The school building branch, MOE, has checked and made comments. A seminar will be held in the future to disseminate the content to the stakeholders. The guidelines will be elaborated for nationwide dissemination while getting feedback from the activities in pilot schools.



Not Accessible



Accessible design



Universal design

The guidelines mentions from the concept of accessibility to the key to making the school accessible

Contact: projectreachssbyjica@gmail.com