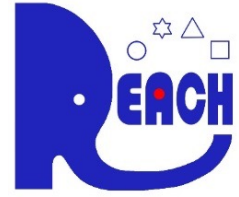


Students are back to School!

The situation of COVID-19 infections in Sri Lanka has been gradually calming down since late August 2021. Education was greatly affected during this period. Schools were closed from March to early August 2020, from early October 2020 to early January 2021, and from late April to late October 2021, for a total of over a year. For the first time in almost two years, the JICA expert team visited the pilot schools to assess the impact of the pandemic and to resume the project activities. In this Newsletter, we are pleased to report on the progress made until March 2022.



First visit to pilot schools in 2 years



Trainings for NCoEs lecturers



The major points identified by the school visits are as follows

- Though some challenges remain such as learning stagnation and truancy due to the pandemic, pupils/students in the Special Education Unit (SEU) have returned to school
- A number of good practices, which were initiated by the schools, have been identified
- More support (immediate/mid-term intervention) is needed for pupils/students with special educational needs (SEN pupils/students) to continue learning in SEU and mainstream classes
- IE coordinators, who support SEN pupils/students, were appointed in many schools, but no concrete activities have been made

Discussions were held with the Ministry of Education, and it was agreed that the intervention in the pilot schools would be carried out as planned, in line with the current PDM framework, and that pilot activities would be positioned as a "trial-and-error process to examine more practical support measures for the nationwide implementation of the IE Circular".

The awareness raising workshops, which had been on hold since February 2020, were also resumed; four schools in February and another four schools in March. It will be held for the remaining two schools as soon as possible.

In early December 2021, training on inclusive education was held for directors and lecturers of all subjects at one teacher training school (National College of Education: NCoE) each in the Northwestern and Western Provinces (37 and 27 participants, respectively).

The topics of the lectures included the concept of inclusive education, the role of teachers, and specific teaching methods. Most of the lectures were Zoom-recorded in advance and interpreted consecutively at the venue. Group discussions were also held on the issues that teachers should consider in order to help SEN pupils/students learn in mainstream classes.

The training was well received by the participants, who were especially interested in the lectures on the role of teachers, subject-specific teaching methods, and individualized education plans. Similar training will be held at NCoEs in the Central and Northern Provinces after May 2022.

