

NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CHILDREN OF SRI LANKA, 2004-2008

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The government policy statement the “Economic Policy Framework of the Government of Sri Lanka (2004)” accords high priority to uplift the disadvantaged sectors of the population and underserved regions in the country. The policy statement stresses that all efforts should be made to bring the underserved areas on par with more developed regions of the country, such as the Western Province to ensure an equitable growth and development. It is in this context that the National Plan of Action for Children has been formulated to address the issues of children, particularly of less privileged children in the country. The overall objective of the National Plan of Action (NPA) for the children is to ensure universal access for services that children require for their full and free development as well as to provide them with the opportunity to develop a safe and enabling environment.

Despite impressive achievements, Sri Lanka has made in the areas of education, health and other social sectors further efforts are required to improve the well-being of the children in the country. The focus areas of the NPA are education, health, child protection, child labour, juvenile, justice and water & sanitation. Efforts are directed in the plan to resolve issues relating to school drop outs and low achievers in learning, child malnutrition, access to safe drinking water and sanitation , child abuse and exploitation, cognitive and psychological development etc. The situation in the conflict affected areas, in relation to all these aspects is worse than the rest of the country. The NPA gives special attention to the children in these areas of the country. An important feature of the NPA is that it is a combination of efforts of all stakeholders including government agencies, UNICEF, NGOs, the private sector and the children themselves. The NPA also identifies the current deficiencies in resource needs, specifically the financial resources needed to reach the objectives set out in the document by 2008.

Some salient targets to be achieved through the implementation of the NPA are summarized in the following table-

Table 01- Targets to be Achieved through the implementation of the NPA

Target
1. Increase in the enrolment of pre-school children from 60 per cent at present to 80 percent
2. Increase in the primary school enrolment from 96 per cent at present to 100 percent
3. Reduce in the infant mortality rate from 12 per 1000 live births to 8 per 1000
4. Reduce maternal mortality from 42 per 100,000 to 23 per 100,000
5. Increase the access to safe drinking water for 70-80 percent of the child population
6. Strengthen enforcement of the law pertaining to child labour and reduce domestic child labour by 30 percent each year
7. Eradicate child sex abuse
8. Protect children from all forms of abuse, negligence exploitation and violence

Major Actions Proposed in the Focused Areas of the NPA

Education

The challenge at present is how to provide a quality education to Sri Lanka's future citizens and equip them with the competencies necessary to face the uncertainties of a rapidly changing environment. There has been a gradual reduction in numbers in the school entry age group, due to demographic factors which have helped to achieve the quantitative coverage of education that the system requires. Attention is now focussed on the improvement of quality in formal education, the provision of opportunities to acquire essential competencies to those who have dropped out of school and the expansion and quality improvement of early childhood education. The major activities of the NPA are therefore-

- (i) expansion of quality improvement of early childhood care and education,
- (ii) quality improvement of primary education,
- (iii) quality improvement of secondary education,
- (iv) development of non formal education and
- (v) reconstruction of education in the conflict affected areas.

Health

The broad aim of the health policy in Sri Lanka is to increase life expectancy and improve the quality of life of the people. The activities of the NPA are directed to

- (i) reduce high maternal morbidity and mortality,
- (ii) improve nutritional status of mothers so that weight gain during pregnancy would increase,
- (iii) improve nutritional status of infants, pre-school and school children,
- (iv) improve oral health of children by improving access to dental services in schools,
- (v) improve support services for adolescent health problems by providing more opportunities to adolescent and make available more information for them on reproductive health etc.

Child Labour

The NPA will make all efforts to reduce the incidence of child labour by taking action to

- (i) strengthen the legal framework and policies,
- (ii) strengthen enforcement of laws relating to child labour,
- (iii) improve availability of data on incidence of child labour,
- (iv) increase the intake of out-of-school youth into vocational training and
- (v) sensitize the public on the need to eradicate child labour.

In the process of implementation of this strategy steps will be taken to amend the existing law relating to domestic workes, build closer cooperation and partnerships between official enforcement agencies, the public, NGOs, community leaders and social workers to identify places and sensitize adults and children on the need to eliminate child labour, its adverse effects on child, the laws on child labour and on the rights of the child.

Child Protection

The child protection sector in the NPA includes abused children, disabled children, children affected by the armed conflict, street children, children of migrant mothers, children in conflict with the law and the children in institutional care. Various programmes have been identified in the NPA to address the problems faced by above groups of children. These programmes will contribute;

- (a) an all round improvement of the coverage and quality of services available to disabled children so as to enable them to integrate into the mainstream of society
- (b) to the provision of day care and after school care to under five year and primary school going street children
- (c) to improve the quality and availability of rehabilitation centres
- (d) to contribute towards ensuring adequate care and a safe and healthy environment for children of migrant mothers and
- (e) working mothers to improve the quality of care, protection and rehabilitation provided to children in institutional care and so on.

Water Supply and Sanitation

The provision of water supply and sanitation and hygiene education are key factors in a child's physical mental and social growth and development. The provision of safe drinking water and adequate sewerage and sanitation services is frequently cited as the single highest priority social service for poor households. The focus of the NPA is directed towards two specific areas of clear benefit to children . They are

- (i) improving water supply and sanitation facilities in schools and hospitals in underserved areas and
- (ii) enhancing awareness and sensitizing children on the need for and proper use and maintenance of water supply and sanitation facilities.

Budgetary Requirements for the Implementation of the Plan, 2004-2008 (Rs.Mn.)

Sector & Programme	Total Cost	Financing from CF	Gap to be filled with Donor Assistance	Govt. budget estimates for 2005
Education	7083.00	964.00	6119.00	100.00
Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)	69.00	9.39	59.60	
Provision of Universal Primary Education	2234.00	304.05	1929.95	
Improve Quality, Access and Equity in Secondary Edu.	2695.00	366.79	2328.20	
Non-formal Education	41.00	5.58	35.42	
Promotion of Human Values, Peace, National Harmony etc.	53.00	7.21	45.79	
Conflict affected areas	1991.00	270.98	1720.02	
Health	6078.04	700.00	5378.04	120.00
Unborn and Newborn Child	5683.27	655.00	5028.27	
Infant and Preschool Child	43.45	5.00	38.45	
The School Child	351.32	40.00	311.32	
Juvenile Justice	63.19	63.19	--	
Reform of Substantive Law	0.01	0.01	--	2.00
Reform of Procedural Law	0.03	0.03	--	
Improving Enforcement	57.25	57.25	--	
Undertaking Ancillary Procedural Measures	5.90	5.90	--	
Child Labour	222.70	175.00	47.70	6.00
Strengthen Enforcement	6.60	5.00	1.60	
Prepare Data Base by the year 2006	16.10	13.00	3.10	
Increase intake of children over 14 yrs. into Vocational Institutions	180.00	141.00	39.00	
Sensitizing adults on the need to eliminate Child Labour.	20.00	16.00	4.00	
Child Protection	533.00	200.00	333.00	4.00
Abused Children	150.00	56.00	94.00	
Disabled Children	72.00	27.00	45.00	
Street Children	24.00	9.00	15.00	
Children of Migrant Mothers and Working Women	25.00	9.00	16.00	
Children in Conflict with the Law	79.00	30.00	49.00	
Children in Institutional Care	183.00	69.00	114.00	

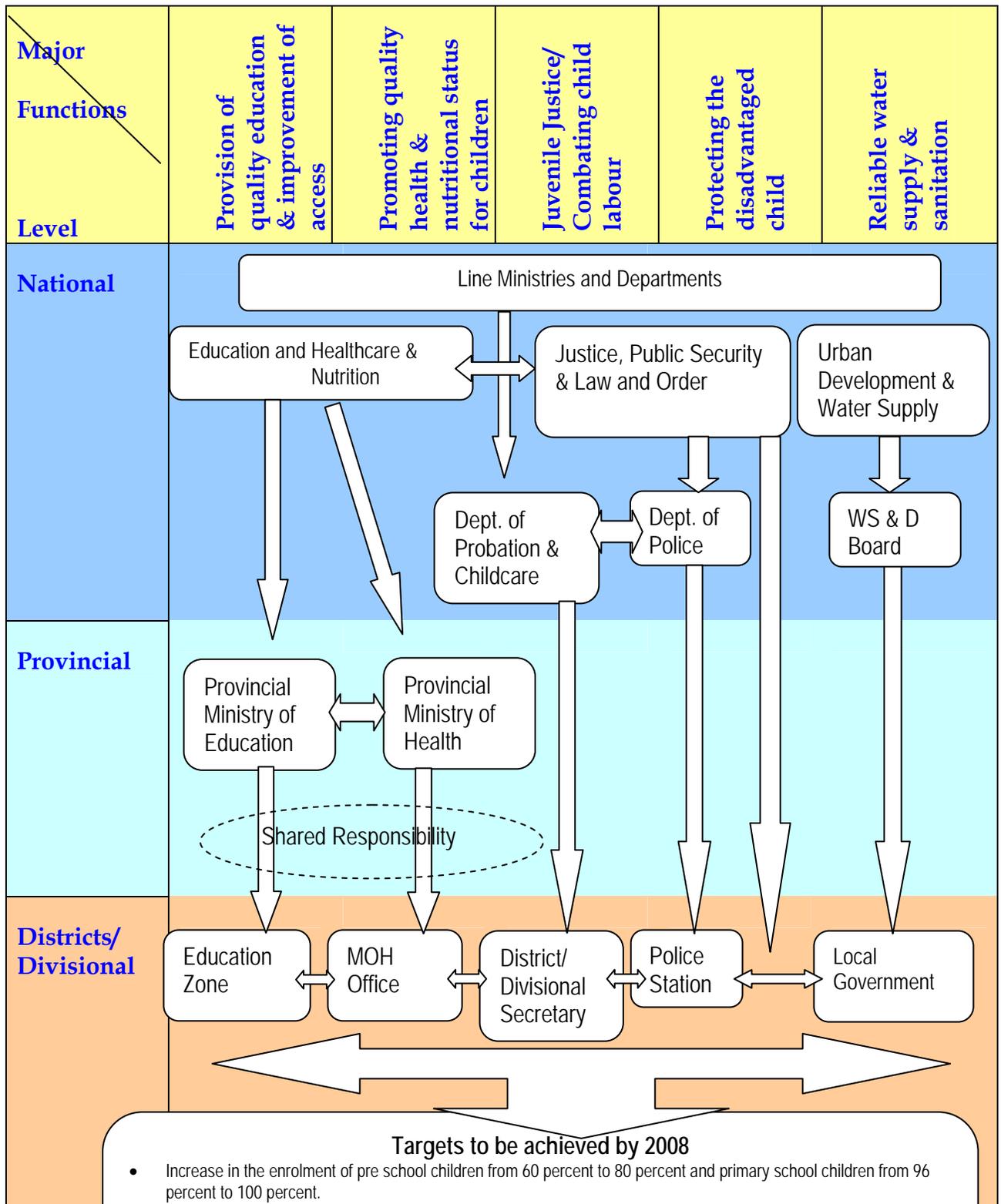
Water Supply & Sanitation	182.50	100.00	82.50	
Assess Status of Water Supply in Schools and Hospital	0.40	0.30	0.10	10.00
Provision of Water Supply & Sanitary Facilities to Schools	120.00	66.00	54.00	
Provision of Water Supply & Sanitation Facilities to hospitals	50.00	27.70	22.30	
Participatory Hygiene Education Interventions	4.00	2.00	2.00	
Introducing/Improving Hygienic Practices and Attitudes	4.00	2.00	2.00	
Safeguard Local Environment and Natural Resource Base	2.00	1.00	1.00	
Maintain Facilities/Services Provided	2.10	1.00	1.10	
Total	14,162.39	2202.19	11,960.24	242.00

The cost of implementation of NPA over the planned period of five years is Rs. 14 billion. An amount of Rs. 2 billion is to be raised from the national budget. The 2005 budget imposed a 0.24 percent cess under the Finance Act on all taxes other than VAT, Debit tax and withholding tax on interest income, to be earmarked for the NPA. An amount of Rs. 450 mn. is annually expected from this cess. Donor assistance is therefore sought to implement the NPA by way of filling the resource gap.

Implementation Arrangements

National level organizations such as Ministries and other institutions share the responsibility for implementation of many NPA activities with the provincial authorities. This shared responsibility of implementation is related to devolved subjects of education, health, social welfare etc. The implementation of activities of the NPA relating to juvenile justice is the sole responsibility of national level organizations including the Ministry of Justice & Judicial Reform. Likewise, activities under NPA relating to water supply and sanitation are implemented through local government bodies by the Water Supply and Drainage Board which is a central level organization. Regarding monitoring arrangements, in the case of education, health and social services, Steering Committees have been established to monitor the implementation of activities at national and provincial levels. For other sectors national and local government level organizations are involved in monitoring the progress of work under NPA in their respective subject areas.

Implementation Arrangement



- Targets to be achieved by 2008**

 - Increase in the enrolment of pre school children from 60 percent to 80 percent and primary school children from 96 percent to 100 percent.
 - Reduction of infant mortality from 12 to 8 per 1000 live births and maternal mortality from 42 to 23 per 100,000.
 - Increase in access to safe drinking water for 70-80 percent of the child population.
 - Strengthening the enforcement of law. Reduce domestic child labour by 30 percent each year.
 - Eradication child sex abuse
 - Protection of child from all form of abuse, negligence, exploitation & violence