

## Parents' satisfaction with special education services in Sri Lanka

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### Global Disability

- There are 200 million children with disabilities in the world (The United Nations Children's Fund, 2009)
- Recent interest in improving special education services worldwide, particularly in developing countries

### Disability in Sri Lanka

- Sri Lanka is classified as a developing country (United Nations Development Programme, 2000)
- 10.6% of school-aged children in Sri Lanka have disabilities. Of these, 10.2% have been reported to not attend school because of their disability (Asia and Pacific Program on Education Innovation for Development, 2003)

### Parents' views

- Important to consider parents as a 'consumer group' and seek out their views and expectations (Lindsay & Dockrell, 2004).
- No research that has been done on the special education system in Sri Lanka that examined parents' perspectives or satisfaction with the current system.

### Method

- A semi-structured face-to-face interview was used
- A total of 67 parent participants from three provinces in Sri Lanka (Western, Southern and North-Eastern)

### Results

- (1) Supports and Benefits of the special education system:** Supports that enabled access to (education) and benefits from accessing special educational services

“We are committed to him and do everything we can for our child.”

“The teacher takes a lot of effort to teach the children, to teach them good behavior and other activities that would help them fit in with society.

- (2) Barriers and Negative impacts:** Barriers to accessing special education services and to accessing quality educational services

“This school does not have access to things like speech therapy. Even things like dancing, music we pay for teachers to teach the children because the teacher told us those things are necessary we facilitated for that, we don't receive those things free of cost.”

**(3) Future expectations, goals and fears:** Statements that addressed future expectations, hope and fears

“This is my ultimate goal, this child is very precious to us, because of him we lost all expectations regarding our future, the one hope that both his father and I have is that he will be independent and manage by himself.”

**(4) Recommendations:** Recommendations regarding the special education system

“From the aspects of sports, music... these children enjoy music. Subjects such as music bring them a lot of happiness, these children need to feel happiness so if we improve those things it will be good for them, if they have the opportunity to access those things it will be good for them.”

“Not to isolate children like this that live in this country, to be like a typical child, a normal citizen...to treat these children the same as they would a typical child and to help these children progress forward in society as well.”

**Conclusion**

- Parents across all three provinces shared similar views regarding the special education system.
- Future expectations and fears shared by parents in this study are not just specific to parents of children with special needs in Sri Lanka, but are echoed by parents globally.
- Barriers to accessing education and recommendations regarding the special education system should be taken into consideration to further improve the special education system in Sri Lanka.

**For more information about this study, please email:**

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