

**INTERVENTION OF GOVERNMENT AGENCIES  
FOR THE EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT  
OF DISABLED INDIVIDUALS**



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**AUDITOR GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT  
PERFORMANCE AND ENVIRONMENT AUDIT DIVISION**



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## **1. Executive Summary**

Marriage constitutes a significant step of humans passing different stages in life. The single-minded aspiration of every married couple is to give birth to a healthy and intelligent child and gift him or her to the society as a beneficial and decent individual. However, due to health problems and karmic influences, at times, children with disabilities are born into this world. Although disabled, they are a community deserving to be treated on an equal level with the other members of society. Therefore, the Government has launched various programs for their benefit.

To equip such children to be on an equal level with the rest of the society by educational capabilities in childhood and vocational capabilities in youth, the Government expects the two tasks to be implemented chiefly by the Ministry of Education and the Vocational Training Schools of the Department of Social Services.

The objective of this audit was to assess whether the health care facilities and education provided to disabled children were adequate and whether after schooling, they were given effective Vocational Training to engage in waged employment or self-employment.

The audit thus carried out observed the following situations: Teachers who had received Special Education Teacher-Training and had been assigned to Special Education Units of schools did not serve in that capacity but served in classrooms of ordinary children. There was a large number of vacancies of Special Education Teacher Cadre. Accessibility facilities to the Special Education Units, and educational and health care equipment, were not adequate.

As regards the Government Special Schools, the following situations were observed: A standard Sign Language methodology did not exist for children using Sign Language. Although teachers reading out examination papers to students sitting the Year Five Scholarship Examination and the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) Examination were those trained in Special Education, their lack of understanding of the subjects they were invigilating, created problems. Children using Sign Language could not complete their syllabuses during the allocated length of time and the examination results were at a very poor level.

Although blind students received Braille medium text books, diagrams could not be presented in this medium, and created difficulties in answering questions put to them in relation to the diagrams. Also the disadvantageous effect on these children by teachers who read out examination questions to them without a proper understanding of such children or the subject matter was observed.

In addition to the above, the absence of Teacher-Instructors, ineffective liaison with teachers of Special Education Units and Special Schools for seminars and training programs conducted on frequent syllabus changes, non-receipt of Teacher-Training Manuals and insufficiency of Carer staff were observed about the Special Schools.

Dropout of courses by the Students enrolled for Vocational Training Schools of the Department of Social Services, and unavailability of employment information in this Department regarding students who had completed the course, were observed.

According to all the above observations, the following points require attention: Creating accessibility facilities to students when establishing Special Education Units, introducing a standard Sign Language for children with hearing disabilities, deploying the services of teachers with Special Education Training in Special Education Units instead of other classrooms, making available prescribed Teacher-Training material, making teachers in Special Education Schools essentially knowledgeable about syllabus changes and other special situations, and deploying teachers who possess an understanding of children with special needs and subject matter to read out examination papers to such children at public examinations. Also, Department of Social Services must enquire into the existing needs of its Vocational Training Schools and make arrangements to fulfill them without delay. A follow up action must be taken out to find out whether the training the students received has been productive, and whether a sufficient quantity of students with disabilities have been employed in relation to the cost borne on education provided to them. An evaluation methodology must be constructed to ascertain whether the targeted goals have been achieved.

## **2. Introduction**

A person with disability means any person who as a result of any deficiency in his/her physical or mental capabilities, whether congenital or not, is unable by oneself to ensure for oneself, wholly or partly, the necessities of life.

These disabled individuals are equal members of society and deserve equal rights in the community to which they belong. It has been internationally recognized that these persons must be provided with education, health care, employment, accessibility facilities, welfare and any other need as for other individuals.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the Children's Charter of 1989 and Sustainable Development Target No. 4 confirm that education is a basic right of all children. Therefore, the Ministry of Education, as well as the Departments of Provincial Education, have intervened to provide physically and mentally disabled children with an education equal to that given to other children.

On the recommendation of Sessional Report No. vii of Sir Ivor Jennings Commission appointed on 10 July, 1944, the Department of Social Services, established on 1 February 1948, provides Vocational Training to disabled persons.

The Campaign for Disability in Sri Lanka had urged the Government for a number of years to formulate a National Policy for disabled people. As a result of this, then the Minister of Social Services had passed in Parliament the National Policy on Disability No. 28 of 1996. This was to legally empower the rights of disabled people.

### **2.1 Scope of Audit**

This performance audit was carried out in the following fields:

- (a) In examining Special Education provided to disabled children in Government Schools, the audit paid attention to the 25 Government-assisted Schools established across the Island specially for disabled children in Sri Lanka and governed by Ministry of Education. Also, schools with Special Education Units

in Zonal Offices and Divisional Education Offices governed by the Department of Education of Western Province were examined.

- (b) In examining the Vocational Training given to disabled individuals, all Vocational Training Centers governed by the Department of Social Services were subjected to audit.

## **2.2 Authority for Audit**

The audit was carried out under my direction in pursuance of provisions in Article 154(1) of the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

## **2.3 Reasons for Selection of Topic**

Annual statistics show a day by day increase of people becoming disabled due to congenital or various environment factors, or human activity. Although disabled, these people must have all the privileges enjoyed by other citizens. Therefore, the Government often intervenes on behalf of these individuals.

As the chief intervening institutions, the Ministry of Education and Provincial Departments of Education implement educating disabled children, and the Ministry of Social Services and Provincial Departments of Social Services implement the provision of Vocational Training to the disabled to make them active participants in social development.

The above institutions annually spend a large amount of money for the disabled community. This topic was selected to evaluate whether, in relation to this expenditure, these disabled individuals acquire an ability to live as active participants in social development, with a specific identity, respect and value in society.

## **2.4 Approach to Audit**

In approach to audit, provisions in the following Acts and Orders, Gazette Notifications and Circulars were considered:

- Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act No. 28 of 1996, amended by the Act, No. 33 of 2003
- National Policy on Disability of 2003
- Circulars issued on Special Education from time to time by Ministry of Education and Department of Education of Western Province
- Review of other relevant documents and enquiries made from relevant officials

## **2.5 Objective of Audit**

The main objective of this performance audit was to evaluate whether disabled people have all the rights entitled to other sections of society, which comprises evaluating performance of the provision of Special Education for small children, and later, the provision of Vocational Training by various Government Agencies.

### **3. Detailed Audit Findings, Recommendations & Institutional Responses**

#### **3.1 Education for Disabled Children**

Education for disabled children must be provided methodically, according to accepted standard methodologies, and taking psychological principles into maximum consideration. This requires human and material resources and a suitable environment. Such an educational system will help to integrate disabled children into society in an orderly manner.

##### **3.1.1 Observations on Special Education Units in Government Schools**

(a) According to physical verification conducted in 2014, in relation to 25 Special Education Units in Government schools in Western Province, and information obtained at Divisional Level about these Units, instances were confirmed where human and material resources were inadequate. Namely, Special Education Units in 15 schools did not have accessibility facilities; 13 schools did not have educational equipment; 19 schools did not have building and toilet facilities; and 04 schools did not have teachers.

##### **(b) Vacancies in the Posts of Teacher-Instructor of Special Education & Subject Director**

The following were observed: There was not an approved cadre of Teacher-Instructor for Special Education Units in schools. For 171 schools with Special Education Units in 38 Educational Divisions of Western Province, only 17 Special Education Teacher-Instructors had been engaged. Of the 11 Educational Zones, Subject Directors related to Special Education were on the covering basis in 03 zones.



As at 13 May, 2015

Zone	Number of Schools with Special Education Units	Number of Teacher-Instructors Deployed in Zone
Colombo	16	02
Jayawardenapura	14	02 (covering work)
Piliyandala	17	01
Homagama	11	01 (covering work)
Gampaha	10	02
Minuwangoda	15	02
Kelaniya	17	02
Negombo	19	02
Kalutara	16	02
Matugama	20	01 (covering work)
Horana	16	none

### 3.1.2 Audit Observations on Special Schools

The following observations are made on 25 Special Schools established across the Island for providing education to blind, deaf and otherwise-disabled children:

#### (a) Education in Special Education Units and Special Schools

According to the Table given below, the number of Special Education Units for children with special needs in Government schools of Western Province was observed as well as the fact that the number of students studying in Special Schools was higher than the number of students studying in those Special Education Units.

Zone	Year 2014			
	Number of Special Education Units in Government Schools	Number of Students Studying in these Schools	Number of Special Schools	Number of Students Studying in these schools
Colombo	13	95	01	272
Jayawardanapura	13	97	02	55
Piliyandala	09	60	02	190
Homagama	13	82	-	-
Gampaha	11	156	02	196
Kelaniya	16	122	-	-
Minuwangoda	16	122	-	-
Negambo	17	128	01	197
Horana	19	208	01	54
Kalutara	15	157	01	105
Matugama	17	77	01	33

As indicated by facts given below, it was observed that adequate attention had not been paid by the relevant institutions to uplift education in these schools.

**(i) Non-participation in Workshops for Changes in Syllabuses**

Although awareness programs had been conducted for teachers of all schools in the year 2014 on syllabus changes to Years 6 and 10 from the year 2015, fifty nine teachers from 08 Special Schools had not been directed to these programs.

**(ii) Non-receipt of Guidance from Teacher-Instructors**

For necessary guidance for teachers of Government schools, assistance of Teacher-Instructors had been given from time to time to certain schools. But, in the year 2014, thirty four teachers in 06 Special Schools had not received such guidance.

**(b) Lack of Opportunity to participate in Other Workshops, Seminars and Training Programs**

Workshops, seminars and training programs intended to improve subject knowledge of teachers in Special Schools were not organized in a manner to give an opportunity to all these teachers. Teachers in certain schools had not been invited for them. In certain instances, the invitation had not been communicated to the teachers. Although these teachers desired to participate in them, they did not have the opportunity. Therefore, of 202 teachers in 13 Special Schools, only 51 had attended the seminars, while 38 teachers had participated in Lip Reading workshops relating to deaf students, and only 124 teachers had participated in other training programs.

**(c) Non-receipt of Teacher-Instruction Manuals**

While teachers in certain special schools had received Teacher-Instruction Manuals (Teacher's Handbooks) required for such teachers, 51 teachers in 11 special schools had not received Teacher's Handbooks related to their subjects. Therefore, teaching could not be carried out in a satisfactory manner.

**(d) Completing Education in Special Schools**

An investigation carried out in 25 Special Schools revealed that, there had not been a satisfactory trend of students accessing vocational training after completing education in Special Schools during the year 2013 and 2016. Details are as follows:

School -----	Year 2013 -----		Year 2014 -----	
	No. of Students Completed Education	Number of Students entered the Vocational Education	No. of Students Completed Education	Number of Students entered the Vocational Education
W/Sri Sudarshi Blind & Deaf Vidyalaya	13	07	07	04
R/Yasodara Blind & Deaf Vidyalaya	07	none	None	none
WP/C/Sukhitha Special School	09	02	13	03
WP/Matu/Mayura Special School	01	none	09	03
WP/Chitra Lane School	12	05	10	01
Maha/Senkadagala Blind & Deaf Viduhala	15	none	11	none
Hala/Mahawewa Siviraja Special School	23	08	18	06
WP/Neth Savan Sarana J. Viduhala	05	04	08	06
Ku/Sandagala Special School	18	13	07	02
	----- 103 =====	----- 39 =====	----- 83 =====	----- 25 =====

(e) **Insufficiency of Caretakers**

According to Regulation No. 5 of Section 12 of Social Services Charter No. 03 of 2006 of Western Provincial Council, homes and institutions for disabled persons must employ a group of staff deemed satisfactory by Director of Social Services. Nevertheless, certain some Special Schools did not have a single Caretaker staff. Accordingly, although 08 schools observed in 2014 had 296 resident students, it was observed that these residential homes did not have any Caretaker staff on duty. Details are as follows:

<b>School</b>	<b>Total No. of Students</b>	<b>No. of Residential Students</b>
Mara/Rohana Special Viduhala	123	59
W/Sri Sudharshi Blind & Deaf School	158	none
Hala/Mahawewa Siviraja Special School	94	49
WP/Ho/Sukhitha Special School	48	23
Ka/Sri/Chandrasekera Special School	70	55
WP/Matu/Mayura Special School	29	15
G/Neth Savan Sarana Ga. Viduhala	60	40
Rienzy Alagiyawanne Blind & Deaf Viduhala	77	55
	<b>659</b>	<b>296</b>

**(f) Non-Provision of Relevant Equipment for Disabled Students of Special Schools**

Even though there was a shortage of walking sticks, hearing aids, Braille machines and other equipment required by the students of 08 Special Schools But these requirements were not fulfilled. Details are as follows:

School	Annual Requirement in 2014			Number of Supplies in 2014		
	Walki ng Sticks	Heari ng Aids	Braille machin es	Walki ng Sticks	Heari ng Aids	Braille machin es
i. Mara/Rohana Special Viduhala	08	20	08	-	-	-
ii. W/Sri Sudharshi Blind & Deaf Vidyalaya	15	-	12	10	-	06
iii. R/Yasodhara Blind & Deaf Vidyalaya	05	49	01	-	-	01
iv. G/Neth Savan Sarana Ga. Viduhala	-	12	04	-	04	02
v. Ku/Sandagala Special School	-	05	09	-	02	-
vi. Rienzie Alagiyawanna Blind & Deaf Viduhala	-	-	10	-	-	-
vii. A/Senkadagala Blind & Deaf Viduha	10	103	04	-	-	-
viii. Hala/Mahawewa Siviraja Special School	-	04	-	-	-	-

**(g) Examination Results of Hearing-Impaired Students being at a Poor Level**

Although the results of Year Five Scholarship Examination and General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) Examination of visually-impaired students of Special Schools were at a satisfactory level, the results of the two examinations of hearing-impaired students were not so satisfactory. Accordingly, in 03 schools investigated in 2014, the analysis of results of main subjects revealed that 57 visually-impaired students had sat the examination and 41 students passed the examination. Although 109 hearing-impaired students had sat the examination, only 11 students passed the examination. It was observed that the following reasons led to this situation:

- (i) These children had to cover the same syllabuses as ordinary children. But as they had special needs, they could not complete the syllabuses during the allocated length of time.
- (ii) Signs for terminology of different subjects not being established.
- (iii) There were instances of signs used differing from Province to Province.

**(h) Difficulties Faced by Visually-Impaired Students Sitting the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) Examination and Year Five Scholarship Examination**

Difficulties faced by visually-impaired children in Special Schools during Year Five Scholarship Examination and General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) Examination were as follows:

- (i) As in both General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) Examination and Year Five Scholarship Examination, questions were presented in mediums such as pictures, maps and diagrams, visually-impaired students had no ability to approach such questions.

e.g. Name the parts labeled as A, B and C.

Indicate parts of the heart in arrows and name them.

- (ii) The question papers of visually-impaired students are translated to Braille medium after they sit in the examination hall. Therefore, they have to wait and waste time for about half an hour. That can affect their powers of concentration. Also, the question paper is given to the students, section by section. So, decisions about the question paper cannot be made at one time.
- (iii) Although blind students are given a special question paper for Mathematics, a syllabus for it does not exist.
- (iv) The invigilating teachers at the examination hall have no proper understanding or knowledge of disabled children. Therefore, when these teachers read out questions from the question paper to the students, the students find it difficult to understand them.
- (v) The disabled children are given the same text books given to ordinary children after translating them into Braille. Although diagrams in those text books cannot be presented in Braille, disabled children have to answer diagram-related questions.
- (vi) At Year Five Scholarship Examination, if the teacher reading out the examination paper to visually-impaired children is not associated with the relevant subject, the children find themselves at a disadvantage. Examples can be, a teacher ignorant of Science reading out the Science paper and a teacher not learned in Music reading out the Music paper.
- (vii) A methodology facilitating visually-impaired children to read library and other books and papers is connecting machines with software such as



Scanners and Optical Character Readers to computers, to read print devices and documents. Such facilities were not available.

**(i) Teachers trained in Special Education being Deployed in Other Classrooms and Schools**

Principals had been notified by Circular No. E.D./1/18/8/2/6 of 22 August 2014 issued by the Secretary of the Ministry of Education, on establishing Special Education Units for students with special needs and appointing teachers. But, the number of vacancies of Special Education teachers in the 09 Provinces during the year 2014 was 411. Nevertheless, it was observed that 355 teachers who had received training on Special Education were deployed in other schools and classrooms. Details are as follows:

Province	Year 2014	
	Total Number of Vacancies	No. Serving in Ordinary Classrooms after Special Education Appointments
Western	164	56
Central	40	36
Southern	30	69
North Western	36	31
North Central	24	42
Nothern	51	19
Eastern	28	48
Uva	08	25
Sabaragamuwa	<u>35</u>	<u>29</u>
Total	<u>411</u>	<u>355</u>

**(j) Tamil Medium Schools with Special Education Units**

Although 161 schools in 38 Educational Divisions in Western Province had Special Education Units in Sinhala medium as at 13 May 2015, only 04 Tamil medium Special Education Units had been established. However, there had been no estimate made of the number of disabled Tamil medium children by the Special Education Unit of Western Province.

**Recommendations**

- (i) Appointing Special Education Subject Directors for all Educational Zones and deploying Special Education Teacher-Instructors for all Educational Divisions.
- (ii) Preventing teachers with Special Education Training being directed to other classrooms and schools.
- (iii) Provision of education equipment for Special Education Units as required. When establishing Special Education Units in ordinary schools, selecting locations as much as possible, to provide easy access paths to children using wheel chairs, hand grips, white canes, etc.
- (iv) Introducing standards for maintaining classrooms of Special Education Units in Government schools.
- (v) Have the teachers participation the Special Education Units and Government-assisted Schools in training programs and seminars on syllabus changes happening from time to time.
- (vi) When selecting invigilators for Year Five Scholarship Examination, General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) Examination and General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) Examination, deploying invigilators with an understanding of the subjects, the nature of disabilities of candidate children with special needs and their mentality.

- (vii) Regularizing printing and distribution of Braille medium books and distributing them on time to all teachers requiring them.
- (viii) Preparing fully definitive information on the number of Carers who must be employed in Government-assisted Schools where students are resident and providing that number to all such schools.
- (ix) Introducing a standardized Sign Language as educational results of deaf students are at a very poor level.

### **Comment of the Institution**

“In modern society, the most suitable and accepted method of providing education to students with special needs is Inclusive Education. Accordingly, in future, instead of directing students to Special Schools and Special Education Units, consideration will be given to directing students with special needs to ordinary classrooms, which is Inclusion.”

## **3.2 Observations on Vocational Training provided to Disabled Individuals**

Given below are the observations made on Vocational Training Centers for the Disabled, governed by Department of Social Services:

### **3.2.1 Successful Completion of Vocational Training**

When examining information pertaining to the years 2013 and 2014, regarding enrolment of trainees to Vocational Training Centers governed by the Department of Social Services, and the successful completion of training by these trainees, the following discrepancies between the number of trainees enrolled and the number of trainees completed the training were observed:

Vocational Training Centre	Year					
	2013			2014		
	Number of Trainees Enrolled	Number of Trainees Completed the Training	Difference	Number of Trainees Enrolled	Number of Trainees Completed the Training	Difference
Seeduwa	123	62	61	107	61	49
Ketawala	45	03	42	43	11	32
Wattegama	79	61	18	110	55	55
Thelembuyaya	66	13	53	110	61	49
Amunu- kumbura	55	10	45	56	29	27
	<u>368</u>	<u>149</u>	<u>219</u>	<u>426</u>	<u>217</u>	<u>212</u>

According to above information, 60 per cent of the enrolled students in the year 2013, and 49 per cent of the enrolled in the year 2014, had failed to complete the training. Therefore, it was observed that the goal of conducting training to impart vocational ability to uplift their living conditions was not achieved as intended.

### 3.2.2 Future to take Steps to Fill the Vacancies of staff

Although 12 positions of Matron are approved for Vocational Training Centers, , 08 positions of these were vacant throughout the year 2014. It hindered the efficient running of the hostels.

### 3.2.3 Follow up Action taken on the Students Completed the Training

The following matters were revealed at the audit examination carried out on the students who had completed training in Vocational Training Centers subjected to audit.

- (i) Neither the Department of Social Services nor the Vocational Training Centers had directly intervened to provide whatever employment to students who had completed the training. An example can be given as not creating a link between these children and institutions carrying a demand for employment.

- (ii) Approximately Rs.48,960,889 had been spent as direct expenses on Vocational Training activities during the year 2014. But, in relation to that spending, whether the disabled individuals were economically empowered by the Vocational Training received was not explicitly ascertained.

#### **3.2.4 Provision of Funds**

According to above observations, to carry out this task, funds must be obtained adequately. As revealed by the investigation on this, out of the annual funds requested from the Treasury during the period of past 04 years, funds for 17.35 per cent of recurrent expenditure and 29.12 per cent of capital expenditure had not been received. It was observed that the problem of not receiving adequate funds can be minimized to a certain extent, by providing detailed reports of future programs and special projects, justifying the requirements, when requesting the Treasury for funds for such programs and special projects.

#### **Recommendations**

- (a) Taking steps to provide equipment for Vocational Training activities without delay.
- (b) Taking steps to obtain from officials of Social Services, a Report on follow up Actions for two years or more, regarding students who had completed Vocational Training.
- (c) Taking steps without delay to fill the vacancies in the posts of Vocational Training Instructor

#### **4. Conclusion**

- (a) It is concluded that due to inadequate attention paid at Ministry of Education and Department of Provincial Education levels to Special Education Units and Government- assisted Schools for children with special needs, these children are deprived of equal opportunities in education.
  
- (b) It is concluded that the follow up action taken are not adequate to successfully accomplish the endeavor made by Ministry of Social Services and Department of Social Services by encouraging Vocational Training activities and spending a large amount of money, to engender a group of individuals with self-esteem who can stand on their own feet.