

PREFACE

Provision for the retention of primary school pupils beyond the first few years of schooling is an endemic problem in the developing member countries of the Commonwealth. In recognition of this stark reality the learning needs of children by-passed by the formal system were discussed at the pan-Commonwealth Specialist Conference on Non-Formal Education for Development held in New Delhi, in February 1979. That conference recommended that member states should "ensure that non-formal education programmes are available to provide drop-outs and school leavers with second chances for education, thus enabling them to acquire knowledge and skills for self-employment". To facilitate this the conference also recommended that the Commonwealth Secretariat should commission a series of monographs/case studies on specific ongoing non-formal education programmes for children and adults and ensure that they are widely circulated.

Commonwealth Ministers of Education at their meeting in Colombo in 1980 examined the role of non-formal education in the context of the development of human resources. Recognising that many systematic and vital learning activities take place outside the school they agreed that non-formal education could significantly contribute to the expansion of basic learning opportunities at all levels, particularly in meeting the needs of groups such as un-schooled and under-schooled children, adolescents, adult illiterates and especially women in rural areas. They welcomed the recommendation calling for systematic collection and dissemination of information through case studies on current programmes of non-formal education for out-of-school children.

The present study is a response to that concern. Significant action has been taken in the Asian sub-continent. In Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka non-government agencies have been active in the last few years in providing alternative forms of schooling. India and Bangladesh have given high priority in their current development plans to the universalisation of primary education by utilising both formal and non-formal systems. The present volume of case studies which is the first in a series is therefore devoted to this region.

We are grateful to Mrs Aruna Roy for compiling and editing this volume. The case studies reflect a variety of approaches. In her introduction the experiences of administrators and planners concerned with the provision of education to children out-of-school are ably analysed and presented.

The views expressed and factual presentations contained in this book are those of the authors and the editor and not necessarily those of the Commonwealth Secretariat. We recommend this volume to the attention of all those concerned with the provision of education to out-of-school children - a need which remains a major challenge for educational policy-makers throughout the Commonwealth.

Michael Sinclair
Acting Director
Education Programme
Human Resource Development Group