

## Chapter 2: The Reasons for Community Support

Community provision often starts at a time when government resources are not available. During the last century many governments refused to support education because they did not consider it necessary or desirable. Today, governments do recognise their responsibilities; but many are unable to stretch their resources far enough.

Most communities prefer governments, with their greater resources, to provide all the facilities and staff for their schools. When funds are short, though, communities may decide to bridge the gap so that their children do not suffer.

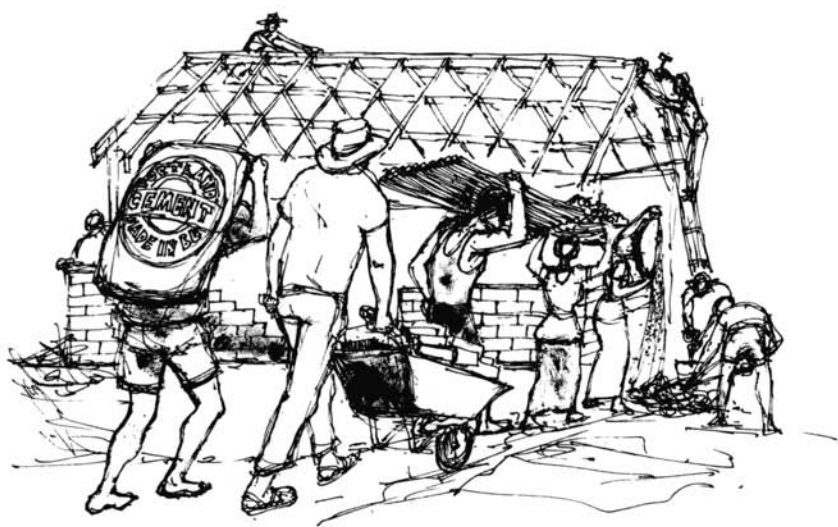
Sometimes, the problem is worse than a shortage of materials in the school: the absence of any school at all. In this case, a community may resort to self-help to get something started, hoping that the government will take over the school later. Many schools in the public system can trace their history back to a time when they were unaided.

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\* *Community Support within the National System* \*  
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\* *Most community support seeks to 'bridge the gap' between what* \*  
\* *the government can provide and what the communities want to* \*  
\* *be provided. Communities erect extra buildings, employ* \*  
\* *teachers, buy books etc. to supplement what already exists.* \*  
\* \*  
\* *Sometimes, communities have to bridge the gap by estab-* \*  
\* *lishing a completely new school. Usually, these communities are* \*  
\* *keen for the government to take over their school as soon as* \*  
\* *possible.* \*  
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In other cases, government funds are available but communities refuse to accept them. The communities choose to establish schools outside the public system because they want to express their separate identity. Such cases are especially common in religious communities. Churches, for example, may accept financial help only if it does not have too many ‘strings’ attached and if they can retain control of curriculum and staffing.

However, the existence of schools outside the main education system can create problems for government planners and for pupils who want to transfer between the systems. Also, some community schools are established for petty rather than noble reasons. Community leaders may open schools only to advance their political ambitions, and some communities may support institutions only because of rivalries with their neighbours. In these cases schools may divide society and be uneconomic in size. Governments may need to exercise controls and find a balance between encouraging community vitality and discouraging social divisions. Issues of government control are considered at several points in this book, particularly Chapter 11.

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 \* *SDAs as an Example of an Independent Community* \*  
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 \* *In many countries, the Seventh-day Adventist church runs its* \*  
 \* *own schools completely separate from the main education* \*  
 \* *system. In Papua New Guinea, the SDAs even have their own* \*  
 \* *university. Some funds come from abroad, but a lot is provided* \*  
 \* *by local church members. The SDAs wish to remain separate so* \*  
 \* *that they can control their teachers and have their own* \*  
 \* *curriculum.* \*  
 \* \*  
 \* *Some government officers have misgivings about the lack of* \*  
 \* *unity in the system. The different curriculum makes it hard for* \*  
 \* *SDA children to transfer into government schools, and the* \*  
 \* *government officers are would like to have more control.* \*  
 \* \*  
 \* *But the SDA schools in PNG operate efficiently, and are open* \*  
 \* *to government inspection. And the fact that the church runs its* \*  
 \* *own schools relieves the government of a burden. The official* \*  
 \* *policy, therefore, is to respect the wishes of the SDA community* \*  
 \* *while keeping a general eye on standards.* \*  
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**When communities build their own schools, they often use local materials to keep costs low.**