CHAPTER VIII

Community Relationship.

Of the three major objectives of preschool education, i.e. Social, Developmental and Educational, the social objective is the oldest and has been very well defined.

The recognition of the need of the child for proper care and protection during the early period of his life when he is entirely dependent on adults, and to help him gradually grow into a useful citizen of the society has prompted the community to organise various institutions for his care and training. The modern advancement of knowledge in science and technology and the untiring efforts of the social scientists and educationalists to create a better human society to live in have resulted in the establishment of various institutions for care and training of the young children throughout the world covered by what is now known as preschool education. Certain facts of life and social living that have irreversible adverse effects on the life and the emerging personality of the young child demand community involvement to a greater extent for effective control. The situations arising out of the conditions like the mother's engagement in work outside the home, ill health of the mother, negligence and violence to and exploitation of the child, etc. poor home conditions,
illiteracy and ignorance of the parents - all these and many such others call for arrangements for protection, care and education of the young children through preschool institutions. The enlightened section of the community recognises its obligation of bringing up children in the right direction by sharing responsibilities with the parents and other families.

The integrated approach to child development which is but another name for proper preschool education, demands pooling together of the community resources to the maximum possible extent for this purpose in the Indian context. Private efforts through voluntary organisations in this field are being encouraged from the very beginning. Voluntary organisations are being supported by the C.S.W.B., I.C.C.W. State Advisory Board for Social Welfare, Departments of Social Welfare, Education, Panchayat and Community Development, etc. through provisions of liberal grants-in-aid. The attitude of the National Government is expressed very clearly through the Report of the members of Parliament on Education, 1967 which runs:


"Greater attention needs to be paid to the development of pre-primary education. Voluntary organisations conducting pre-primary institutions should receive encouragement and financial assistance, especially when they are working in rural areas, urban slums or for children of the weaker sections of the community. Every encouragement should be given to experimentation, particularly in devising less costly methods of expansion".1

The reference may, perhaps, also be made in this connection to the relevant portion of the Draft National Education Policy, 1972 which states, "The school must be developed into a focal centre for the development of the community around it and should provide an opportunity for the community to participate in the educational efforts" - for universalisation of primary education. In the same way the Policy Statement indicates the community involvement in the development of preschool education as under:

"Preschool education may have to be provided through home and other facilities including traditional village resources made available by voluntary organisations and local bodies".2

The Study Group on the Development of the Preschool Child suggests, "Local communities should be involved with the programme in every way possible, not only in the provision of physical and financial resources, but also in the management of institutions and provision of part time services".3

It may be mentioned here that the I.C.D.S. Scheme is based on strong community involvement. In the establishment and management of anganwadis, the community is involved to a great extent; the village panchayat, the anganwadi committee, the local Mahila Samiti are all involved in providing the buildings and management of the centres besides providing the services of local workers.

In reality, one has to work with the community very carefully assessing the resources of the community - both human and material, and also the mode and manner in which these resources can be pooled together to derive maximum benefit. This is the area the preschool teacher must explore and maintain constant liaison with the members of the community.

To create greater awareness among all the members of the community for the needs and establishment of preschool educational institutions and their proper functioning, concerted efforts must be intensified through personal contacts and this can be successfully done by the preschool teacher as the leader of the team of specialists working in this field.

The teachers of the preschool institutions are in a convenient position to make all sorts of community contacts for publicity through the families (particularly the mothers) to which the children belong to receive greater co-operation from the community. The teachers can enlighten the parents with right ideas about the child's development, education and care through means such as informal talks with the parents, organisation of parent-teachers association, seminars, exhibitions, etc. Frequent contacts
with the mothers through home visits would help the
teachers to form better ideas about the child and
the family and thereby help guiding the mother pro-
perly for better education of the child. A teacher,
of course, should be trained properly to achieve
these ends and must be free enough to carry on these
activities on her own initiative with full suppo-
rt and encouragement of the organisation to which she belongs.

The situations in which the preschool tea-
chers of the State are found to have been working
are not at all conducive to assume such roles. The
teachers have to remain confined within the class
rooms carrying on assigned duties more or less me-
chanically. She is not at all the leader of a team,
but a non-entity almost, in the overall design of
developing preschool education in the State of Assam.
The situation is worse still in respect of the teach-
ers working in the privately managed preschool insti-
tutions.