

## *Eight* | Lessons Learnt

### **Adoption of Vision**

The Universalisation of Elementary Education (U.E.E.) project of Veilpoor mandal looked like any other Government project. However, in reality, it was quite different from the other mandals. One of the differences which was clearly observed by the project team was that every government officer of the mandal, revenue officials, Anganwadi supervisors and workers, health and medical officials, police officials, mandal education officials, government teachers, panchayat officials, etc., who were interviewed, had focused discussions which revealed that sending all the children below 14 years of age to the school had become the motto of each one of them. It was also observed through individual interviews, that everyone was keeping an eye on the out-of-school children and their family members. The officials visited parents of out-of-school children in the late evenings at their homes. It was also discovered that children, who were carrying out various activities e.g., grazing cows, engaged in construction work,

agriculture, paddy work, etc. at different places, were brought to schools. All the officials said in one voice that we wanted every child of Veilpoor mandal to be in school by 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2001. Interestingly this vision of putting every child in the school was also adopted by the non-governmental organizations, political leaders, caste leaders, children, parents of children, teachers' associations, mandal parishad presidents, etc. Adoption of the vision to put every out-of-school child in the school became the part and parcel of each and every person. It was possible only because of sensitive district, mandal and village leadership and their foresightedness.

### **Visionary Leadership**

Veilpoor District Collector, G. Asok Kumar was a different type of leader. He led his own team and representatives from the civic society in a different way. He took keen interest in conducting district level committee meetings and made the project the personal commitment of the officials who were working for the success of the project. He also played an active role in attending the meetings at the district, mandal, and village level. He visited all the villages of the mandal and had one-to-one meetings with panchayat parishad members, mandal and village education committee members and created a positive, open, and informal environment at all levels. It was mentioned by many villagers that the District Collector became a part of the village and one among their families. The rewards given in appreciation by the Collector were still vividly remembered by many of the respondents. Many of them were missing him. He had created volunteers from