

## FOREWORD

Human development is one of the strategic objectives of the Asian Development Bank. The Bank recognises that social and economic development ultimately depends on the quality of human development. People with basic education are more productive and more likely to play an active role in development. Well-nourished people are healthier and learn better. The synergies among education, health and nutrition are well documented, and it is universally recognised that investment in human development is an essential component of any development plan.

The Bank has been investing directly in human development for more than twenty years. Since 1990 alone the Bank has provided over \$2 billion and \$.5 billion for health, or about seven percent of overall Bank lending for development in that period. Within its education portfolio, there has been a substantial shift in recent years towards primary, lower secondary, and non-formal education in recognition of the fact that investment in basic education has a much higher rate of return. The Bank continues to support higher and technical-vocational education but is increasing its focus on basic education.

Within basic education, the Bank understands that quality and access are perhaps the two most critical issues. People must be able to attend school, and the education provided to them must be good enough to enable them to learn effectively. Provision of adequately trained teachers is all too often an impediment to providing quality basic education. Distance education has been shown to be an effective means of reaching untrained teachers in remote areas, enabling teachers to receive information and techniques that would otherwise have to be acquired through prohibitively expensive classroom-based instruction.

The Bank has in the last decade supported a number of regional activities in the area of distance education, and extended that support to the area of distance education for primary teacher training in the context of a regional technical assistance project implemented together with United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and The Commonwealth of Learning. The project aimed to develop national action plans for primary teacher training through distance education in selected countries and to develop capacity to plan and implement distance education programmes. The Commonwealth of Learning collaborated with the Bank to undertake a series of training workshops in distance education and to develop materials for these workshops.

Those materials comprise three topics in this series of six: (i) planning and management of open and distance learning, (ii) use and integration of media in open and distance learning, and (iii) designing open and distance learning materials. The materials have been designed in a flexible manner so that they can be used by a

variety of trainers in a variety of situations. Their basic aim is to contribute to the development of essential skills related to the design and implementation of distance education programmes – an aim of great importance to both the Bank and The Commonwealth of Learning in their efforts to ensure that quality education is made available to all persons in a cost-effective manner.

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