The study begins with Article 7 of the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All. This states that although national, regional and local educational authorities have a unique obligation to provide basic education for all, they cannot be expected to supply every human, financial or organizational requirement for this task. It continues: "New and revitalized partnerships at all levels will be necessary [including] partnerships between government and non-governmental organizations, the private sector, local communities, religious groups and families". Taking this statement as a framework, the study analyzes the nature of community partnerships in education. It notes the rationale for this clause in the World Declaration, comments on the experiences upon which it was based, charts some of the paths which have been forged during the decade which followed the 1990 World Conference, and discusses appropriate future directions.

The main part of the study presents in greater depth the conceptual framework and major trends over the decades. The Jomtien conference was held during a period in history in which the central role of the state was increasingly being questioned. The period since the Jomtien conference has taken the trend further, and this has had implications for communities as well as for governments. Much has now been learned about the nature of partnerships and about administrative structures within centralized and decentralized systems.

The study then turns to two particular mechanisms through which partnership is operationalized, namely school committees and community financing. Under each heading the study notes positive and negative features. The next section analyzes the impact of innovations in a number of domains. It gives particular attention to recruitment and retention of pupils, to recruitment, salaries and monitoring of teachers, to educational achievement, and to social inequalities. The concluding section highlights major lessons learned, summarizes trends since 1990, and condiments on future prospects.