The major objectives of the project were to:

i) increase primary school enrolment, especially of girls,

ii) reduce wastage caused by drop out and repetition,

iii) improve the quality of instruction,

iv) reduce unit costs,

v) provide school buildings and other basic facilities for learning,

vi) improve school-community relations, and

vii) strengthen administration and supervision of the primary school at the local level. 5

At the time of launching the project its estimated cost was Taka 6537 lakh, of which IDA's contribution was US $ 50 million. The project has been receiving technical assistance from UNESCO, the British Council and some individuals on the basis of personal service contracts. UNESCO has been providing technical assistance in the categories of general advice, planning and organization of training and project research and evaluation.

Over the period 1980-86, covering the project period, the rate of enrolled students in the primary level was around 10.9 percent. However, the enrolment rate of girls recorded an annual increase of 6.4 percent which is quite appreciable. The drop out rate in the primary schools in the project areas showed a downward trend for all classes from 1980 which indicated higher retention. Besides the training of teachers and field supervisors appeared to have been intensified during this period in comparison with the

earlier period. The supply level of other inputs namely furniture, books and uniforms appears to have increased significantly.6

However, it was felt that the desired improvement in enrolment and attendance as per target would require serious involvement of the non-government organizations as well as coordinated efforts of all concerned government functionaries in a more effective manner through Upazila Education Officer. Along with this there is a need for greater involvement of community participation for the successful implementation of the UPE/IDA programmes.

8.2.2 Instructional Management by Parents, Community and Teachers: (IMPACT Experiment)

The IMPACT experiment, a component of the UPE (IDA) project, is an innovative programme or strategy to achieve quality education, to increase participation and retention rates and to reduce the cost of primary education. It is claimed that this strategy was tested and adopted in the Philippines.

The experiment was to be implemented in three stages:

Stage I: Project planning, key personnel training and instructional materials preparations,

Stage II: System try out in four pilot schools to verify the whole system,

Stage III: Experiment of the system in 18 schools and its evaluation.7

6 Ibid, p.61.
7 Ibid, p.63.
The IMPACT system was pretested in four pilot schools to modify the original model and make it suitable to the local conditions. The systems try out in the four pilot schools with the cooperation of community leaders, parents, teachers and students was completed in 1984.

The basic objective is to allow the child to proceed at his own pace. Without in-service training, teachers have not adapted to the new curriculum and the widespread introduction of a new methodology is likely to end in disappointment. Bangladesh needs encouragement to develop its own low cost materials, its own appropriate methodologies. If this is used to encourage indigenous ideas and development, it will be useful otherwise it will have little value.

8.3 The Role of UN Agencies

The overall development of the child is the concern of UNICEF, the United Nations Childrens' Emergency Fund and the School Affairs Department of the United Nations. UNICEF, as a result of a policy review made in 1972, now allocates all its educational aid to basic education and in phasing out its assistance to the second level.

The UNDP, United Nations Development Programme is the largest provider of educational aid of all kinds after the World Bank group within the United Nations system and its affiliated agencies, but has allocated a small proportion of its resources to primary education. Simultaneously, the World Food Programme also helps primary education with substantial sums to provide meals for school children, which permits the funds saved in
the recipient countries to be used for other means of the development of primary education. The International Labour Organisation, ILO and the Food and Agricultural Organisation, FAO, also support out-of-school education for older children and adolescents in non-formal education.

Of the individual countries which give educational aid to developing and underdeveloped countries on bilateral basis like international agencies (with the exception of UNICEF) largely concentrated upon the second and higher levels of general education, and upon technical education and have given little support to primary education. This has largely resulted from the view that educational aid had to be linked to the immediate problems of nation building and economic development in the newly developing countries by meeting the needs for cadres of people trained at the second, technical and higher levels.

This view, as indicated elsewhere, is gradually changing. UNESCO which is a specialised agency of the United Nations responsible for education, has revived its interest in primary education and the Commission on International Development of Education (The Faure Commission) recommended that basic education should be given top priority for the 1970s.

Accordingly, today the aid given consists of assistance in modernizing their primary education systems rather than the actual supply of materials. UNICEF and also some bilateral donors do provide equipment, but it is usually in the form of material supplies, needed such as paper and printing machinery for textbooks, equipments, jeeps.
etc., as part of pilot projects or other programmes designed to produce improvement in educational organization and content, in methods and teaching aids and in teacher training.

8.4 Bilateral Aid to Bangladesh

Among the bilateral donors, Sweden, France and Canada also show special interest in primary education. In addition, there is a very substantial educational aid effort going to the developing countries from non-government organizations. The proportion of this overall aid which goes to primary education is considerably higher than in the case of the international or bilateral donors, since the voluntary organizations, mostly religious groups, have traditionally been concerned with education at the local level and the establishment of missionary schools.

In Bangladesh the most revolutionary step taken to eradicate illiteracy is the launching of the ambitious Universal Primary Education project (UPE) in 1985, which is commonly known as the Second Primary Education Project. The project is now being implemented by the Ministry of Education through the Directorate of Primary Education. The project is being financed jointly by the Government and four international agencies, viz. IDA, SIDA, UNICEF and UNDP. The IDA is providing assistance as a soft loan while other agencies are providing as grants.
The objectives of the project are to:

- increase primary school enrolment to over 70 percent of the 6-10 years age group with a goal to achieve Education for All by 2000,
- ensure that a great majority of those who enrolled in 1985-90, complete the 5 year primary cycle,
- improve internal efficiency of the primary school system through better management, supervision and quality of instructions.

8.5 The Asia Pacific Programme for Education for All (APPEAL)

The APPEAL was launched on 23 February 1987 from New Delhi, India by the then Director General of UNESCO. Through regional cooperation APPEAL aims to facilitate the national efforts of the Member States in Asia and Pacific with a view to:

i) achieving universal primary education

ii) eradicating illiteracy

iii) providing continuing education in support of (i) and (ii) above.\(^8\)

After the launching of APPEAL, the Member States formed National Coordination Mechanisms for APPEAL to mobilize public opinion in favour of literacy programmes, primary education and continuing education, and strengthening those programmes at government as well as non-governmental levels. Many Member States have organised

\(^8\) Asia Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL), National Studies: Bangladesh, (Bangkok, 1991), Preface.
national special events like seminars and workshops to mark the launching of APPEAL in their respective countries. As of December 1989, 20 Member States have formed National Coordination Committees for APPEAL or designed existing organizations as National-Coordination Mechanisms for APPEAL.

In order to assist the Member States to formulate national strategies to implement APPEAL in their countries, the UNESCO Principal Office for Asia and the Pacific (PROAP) organised a regional workshop for National Coordinators of APPEAL in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Government of Thailand in 1987. This workshop discussed and developed approaches and strategies to implement APPEAL at the regional, national and local levels.

In order to achieve the objectives of APPEAL, the Government of Bangladesh formed a National Committee with Minister of Education as Chairman and the Education Secretary as Member Secretary. In addition, a Coordination Committee was formed with the Education Secretary as Chairman as the Joint Secretary.

However, during the current five year plan, the government came to the conclusion that UPE alone could not increase the literacy rate. An experimental programme of mass education was launched in January 1988. It is a joint programme conducted by the government and the NGOs. The component of the programme conducted by the NGOs is called Mass Education Through Small Local Organisation (METSLO).  

UNESCO convened the first meeting for Regional Coordination of APPEAL in

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9 Ibid, p.4.
Bangkok, November 1988. Preparatory to this first meeting for the Regional Coordination of APPEAL, UNESCO/PROAP requested the National Coordination Committees to conduct a national survey of APPEAL highlighting achievement, problems, policies and plans to achieve the goals of APPEAL.

8.6 World Declaration on Education for All

Bangladesh was a party to the "World Declaration on Education for All", at the World Conference on Education for All at Jometian, Thailand, in March 1990 as well as a signatory to the World Declaration on Survival, Protection and Development of Children at the World Summit for Children in New York in September 1990. A worldwide consensus has been reached on an expanded vision of basic education which aims at meeting the basic learning needs of all children, youth and adults. These needs encompass both

i) essential learning tools comprising literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving,

ii) basic learning content including knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capabilities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives to make informal decisions and to continue learning.10

The Summit set a number of goals as well as sectoral goals that would support the process. The sectoral goals relating to basic education are:

* Expansion of early childhood development activities, including appropriate low cost family and community based intervention.

* Universal access to basic education and achievement of primary education by at least 80 percent of primary school age children through formal schooling or non-formal education of comparable learning standard, with emphasis on reducing the current disparities between boys and girls.

* Reduction of adult illiteracy rate (the approximate age group to be determined in each category) to at least half the 1990 level, with emphasis on female literacy.

* Increased acquisition by individuals and families of the knowledgeable, skill and values required for better living, made available through all educational channels, including the mass media, other forms of modern and traditional communication and social action, with effectiveness measured in terms of behavioural change.\textsuperscript{11}

Being a signatory to the Summit declaration, Bangladesh committed herself to try and attain the above goals.

8.7 Role of SAARC

A quarter of world's children live in South Asia. Everyday many of the children

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid, p.1.
of this region are exposed to the scourge of poverty and economic deprivation. In the traditional socio-cultural environment of South Asia, the value placed on children is a common unit factor among the nations of the region. In this context the National Plan of Action which has been prepared by each Government provides the means for removing obstacles to the improvement of the condition of the children of this region and forge cooperation through participatory research and institutional arrangements.

Universal Primary Education was first adopted as a goal for the countries of the Asia region in the Karachi Plan (1960), which proposed "that every country of this region should provide a system of universal, compulsory and free primary education of seven years or more within a period of not more than 20 years (1960-80)". This target has not been achieved alone, in part, to a more rapid population growth than foreseen.\(^\text{12}\)

Universal provision of school facilities has been the top priority of the SAARC countries. This does not ensure effective participation and the member countries have started thinking seriously about to increase the internal efficiency by reducing wastage. Moreover, the rigidities of the formal system has been cited as a reason for causing absenteeism and subsequent drop out among rural children who are seasonally required to help in parent’s occupation.

In order to overcome the waste, it is hoped that a more flexible school calender which permits rural children to participate in agricultural production seasonally may be

a solution to retain the children. An important strategy in the intervention measures might be to make provision for incentive programmes. As poverty features prominently as one of the most important causes of absenteeism, drop-out and repetition, the provision of free text-books, midday meals, health services will also help to retain the children in the school system.\textsuperscript{13}

The SAARC Technical Committee on Education agreed to the fact that wastage in education is a critical area at the first hand of education which needs priority attention. Educationists are also concerned with learner achievement and outcome. To them, any educational process which does not ensure achievement of minimum learning competencies, particularly in language and mathematics would not be acceptable. The suggestion from the Technical Committee to the member countries is to bring in needful flexible approaches in the existing formal system to ensure that all children are covered.

Realising the significance of literacy, post-literacy and continuing education, all the member countries, have decided to make it a part of the basic minimum needs of the masses. With the exception of Srilanka and the Maldives, the literacy scene in the SAARC region is characterised by an overwhelming majority of the people being illiterate and a far worse situation amongst females. While the Governments have reiterated their determination to eradicate illiteracy, the statements are seldom matched by necessary provision of funds and the needed support for this important and complex venture. Much remains to be done in the spheres of technical resource support-production of

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, p.4.
instructional materials, training, evaluation etc. Literacy statistics need to be improved. Arrangements for post-literacy and continuing education are insufficient.¹⁴

Some of the areas which call upon for rural cooperation within the framework of SAARC are as follows:

a) Analytical studies of literacy strategies, including the issue of student involvement, mass campaign vs. selective approach, intensive area programmes etc.

b) Cooperation in the spheres of technical resource support including
   - methods of literacy learning at a fast pace
   - development of techniques of training and preparation of training materials
   - learner evaluation
   - summative evaluation and research
   - networking of institutions in technical resource support

c) Post literacy and continuing education, including
   - institutional arrangements
   - public library system
   - one of mass/electronic media
   - production of books suited for neo-lifemates.¹⁵

Pursuant to the decision of the Sixth SAARC Summit, the Ministers of SAARC Member States and other representatives of government and the people, assembled in Colombo on 16-18 September 1992 on behalf of the 410 million children of South Asia. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the World Summit for Children 1990 and the respective National Plan of Action provided the frame of reference for regional cooperation on a range of policy, legal technical and operational issues.

Education is the basic right of every child, notwithstanding the poverty status of families and the resource constraints of low income countries. The cost of the denial of this right is high for both the child and the nation. The Member countries while participating reiterated the goals accepted by the SAARC member countries at the World Summit in New York in 1990, of universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 percent of primary school age children by the year 2000.

The group further recommends the following intermediate goals for member countries access to and enrolment in primary education at least by 80 percent of boys and 75 percent of girls, and completion of primary education by at least 50 percent of boys and girls, by 1995.

To achieve these targets:

* Member countries must give priority to resource allocation for basic education and introduce safeguards for the protection and effective use of this allocation.

* Till gender equality is achieved, special support programme must be developed and access to education facilities endured for the girl child, e.g. scholarships, child
care centres and flexible recruitment schemes for women teachers for a special
time till an adequate number of women teachers is available.

Complementary, non-formal, part-time educational opportunities must be provided
in the next five years for children who are precluded by their circumstances from
enrolling in formal schools, in centres that provide a "bridge" to formal or further
education and do not relegate these children to a second class education system
for the economically disadvantaged. To ensure the provision of such a bridge,
criteria for equivalence should be established through identification of basic
minimum levels of learning for school years 1-3 and 4-5.

Children in especially difficult circumstances, such as disabled children, street
children, working children and victims of child above must have access at least
to centre for out-of-school children. The extension of educational opportunities
should be seen as a mechanism for reducing and finally elimination child
labour.16

As a consequence to the prevailing narrow perceptions of employment-oriented
human resource development, general education has tended to be overshadowed by other
sectors of development. This has brought in a very distorted form of priorities which have
kept this great human resources underutilised. It is therefore recommended that in view
of the urgent need to expand the outreach and to improve the quality of primary

education, which in any case is the base of further education, the state should increase budgetary resources allocated for primary education and give priority to primary schools in disadvantaged communities in the distribution of national funds. It is recommended that member countries should aim at mobilizing 4-6 percent of their GNP for education through governmental, local authority and non-government efforts and support the targets already proposed to basic education.

Resource mobilization at local level needs to be encouraged by motivating non-governmental organizations and the community to develop programmes that would supplement the efforts of the State in carrying out its primary responsibility of meeting the educational needs of the community. Simultaneously, the international agencies assisting SAARC countries should be urged to augment substantially their flow of resources to the social sector, particularly to basic education.

In order to provide the feedback, research is an indispensable adjunct to the development of primary education. Therefore the suggestions from the meeting have been:

- Indigenous research needs must be encouraged to prevent the indiscriminate application of foreign models.
- Ongoing research is necessary in universities, research institutions and in the institutes of education, on child development and on aspects such as how children learn and behavioural change, indeed on all aspects of basic education.
- Operational or action research is necessary as classroom practice and school
organization in order to increase relevance and to improve the efficiency of schooling.

- Critical studies including examination of micro and macro level quantitative data and local level in-depth qualitative investigations should be promoted as a prerequisite to change and reform in primary education.

- All research findings should be disseminated widely and be used by policy makers in formulating and revising programmes.\(^\text{17}\)

Some of the countries in the region have unacceptably high rates of female literacy. As studies have indicated, since there is a positive relationship between literacy and health status, family size, economic development and other indicators of the quality of life, it is necessary that adequate attention is given to implementing adult literacy and functional literacy programmes particularly for women:

- While reaffirming the summit goals of reducing adult illiteracy by 50 percent by the year 2000, it is recommended that member states take measures to reduce adult and adolescent illiteracy by 25 percent by 1995.

- Voluntary organizations, universities, teachers and religious and indigenous institutions should be involved in the organization of literacy programmes.

- Continuing education programmes should be developed to prevent relapse into illiteracy and to provide opportunities for further education. In this respect, the Heads of State or Government of the South Asian Region in the Eight SAARC

\(^{17}\) Ibid, p.30.
Summit held in May 1995 at Delhi noted that illiteracy is one of the major causes of poverty, backwardness and social injustices. It is therefore decided in this Summit to initiate more concrete programmes aimed at eradicating illiteracy in the region preferably by the year 2000 A.D. They decided to observe 1996 the "SAARC Year of Literacy".\textsuperscript{18}

8.7.2 Regional Cooperation

The SAARC countries have had positive and useful developments that can stimulate policies and action within the region. Hence intra-regional cooperation needs to be promoted particularly by:

- sharing information and documentation with regard to country experiences in basic education and adult literacy,
- exchanging personnel and expertise within the region,
- engaging in collaborative research on child development and the process of learning,
- developing media programme on success stories and other relevant information to sensitize the public regarding the value of education and to exchange experiences,
- strengthening existing South-Asian networks such as Education for All network and promoting other initiatives in this region.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, p.31.
8.8 **Education for All Summit**

In December 1993, the first ever Education For All Summit was hosted by India. Attending the Summit, the leaders of nine high population developing nations of the world, reaffirmed the global commitment to provide basic learning opportunities to all people. The countries represented at the Summit (Bangladesh, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan) accounted for more than half the world's population and together accounted for 70 percent of the world's illiterate people.

The coming together of their Heads of the State heralds a unique solidarity among developing countries in the common endeavour to fulfill the dreams and aspirations of millions of people by laying the foundations for a better future for them, and for the generations to come. The Summit sponsored by UNESCO, UNICEF and UNFPA saw the participation of 23 other international organizations and carried forward the vision of the 1990 World Conference on Education for All at Jomtain.

The deliberations focussed on mobilization, people's participation, decentralisation, internal and external financing and resources, education for girls and women, empowerment of women, population issues and education and society. The Summit called for a dynamic action-oriented holistic approach to education. It also highlighted the need for a spirited, participatory involvement of communities and for greater financial resources to be mobilized towards achieving EFA goals to create a better, more informed global environment in which universal human values, the quality of human resources and respect for cultural diversity can be upheld. The 1993 Summit deliberations bear testimony to
education taking centre stage on the world's agenda. Moreover, Education For All holds out the larger promise that if the nations of the world succeed in their educational endeavours this will contribute in large measure to solving the grave problem of disease, poverty and ignorance that prevent the full realisation of the potential, talent and energies of the peoples' of the world.

The focus of the Declarations and the Programme of Action adopted to implement the pledge taken by nations and organizations at the Summit, rests on universal primary education and universal literacy with a special emphasis on removing gender disparities.

The priority areas where cross-country cooperation and sharing are envisaged in the race to achieve EFA goals by the year 2000 A.D. are:

i) Ensuring a place for every child in a school or appropriate education programme according to his or her capabilities,

ii) Consolidating basic education efforts within the framework of an integrated education strategy for children, youth and adults from public and private sources,

iii) Eliminating disparities of access to basic education,

iv) Improving the quality and relevance of basic education,

v) Ensuring that a growing share of national and community resources is dedicated to basic education and to improving the management of existing resources for education,
vi) Promoting the new 9-nation initiative to collaborate in the development of distance education.20

8.9 International Literacy Day

Bangladesh observed International Literacy Day in 1995 with the rest of the world with a pledge to wideout illiteracy in the country within the shortest possible time. The day is assigned by the United Nations to focus global attention to the fact that, there are millions of people around the world who are illiterate.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in her message on the occasion of International Literacy Day said efforts were needed to eradicate illiteracy from the country. She said the country's constitution had given the right to education to all men and women and it is the duty of all citizens to help in the national drive to wipe the curse of illiteracy. It was observed in Bangladesh through mass awareness programmes in order to motivate the people to participate in the movement and make it a successful one.21

It is now realized that financial and technical assistance are especially useful if their aim is to facilitate the establishment or strengthening of the recipient country’s structures and cadres for its own development. Since it is intended to increase its potential rather than its present performances, such aid is necessarily medium-term or long-term


and it is therefore particularly suitable for action by the specialized agencies. The value of cooperation in the preparation and adoption of policies, strategies and plans has become increasingly apparent. The new relationship between national authorities and international organizations could no longer be referred to as aid or assistance, but constituted cooperation in the form of joint research, in which the role of the international organizations is primarily to encourage and perhaps to expand that research but not to direct it. The role of the international agencies should be complementary in nature to revitalize the existing process of universalization of primary education in Bangladesh.

In this context, there should be considerable external aid from the more advanced countries to help Bangladesh to face the challenge with new efforts and methods, to tide over its immediate deficiencies in finance, expertise and materials and to increase its longer term capacity to plan, undertake and manage the necessary improvements and innovations in structural organizations and pedagogic methods. It must be helped less than in the past by expertise and institution building based on western patterns and more by direct aid so that it may find solutions fitted to its own needs and aspirations and undertake local research and development in regard to new learning and technical patterns.