CONCLUSION
The significance of education as an instrument of national development, as a means of upward economic and social mobility and as an effective strategy for improving the quality of life of people was recognised late in this South-Asian region. However, the most effective tool for bringing about macro and micro economic changes in any society is the primary and elementary level of education. Primary education is the first five years of learning and elementary education is the first eight years of study.

In chapter two an attempt is made to bring a theoretical framework relating to investment in primary education. The micro level experiments demonstrate that sustainable development is possible only when the masses are brought into the mainstream. In the process it is possible to use the local resources and knowledge to bring a more holistic approach through participatory development process.

In the case of South-Asian region, which has large human resources, the only way to achieve sustainable development could be through human resource-led-development strategy. Besides the paradigm of sustainable human development values human life for itself and does not value life merely because people can produce material goods. Nor does it value one person's life precious than another. Therefore human development and sustainability are the two important components of the ethic of universalism and moreover it assures intragenerational and intergenerational equity.

If the objective is to ensure equity and social justice to the masses, this can be achieved through providing universal primary education. Besides the social rate of return is higher in the case of primary education than that of the private rate of return.
Along with this Strumlin had made a study on erstwhile Soviet Union which shows that primary education results in a 79 percent increase in the output and wages of labourers. Jainson in his study of "Farmer Education and Farm Efficiency" has reinforced by concluding that "each year of schooling is estimated to raise output by an additional 2 to 3 percent". So also the linkages between female education and declining fertility has been highlighted. The contribution of education in bringing about modern values in the society is also equally important for a democratic set up.

Chapter three deals with the status of primary education in South Asia. Realising the significance of primary education, in building a modern society, the status of South-Asian countries in this field is really frustrating. The goal of universal access to basic education and completion of primary education of at least 80 percent of primary-school-age children by the end of this century seems to be a dream only. The enrolment ratio entering grade one is 96 percent (UNICEF, 1994) whereas the completion rate, that is the students completing the five years of formal schooling, is 50 percent. The regional features regarding primary education is not very impressive.

However, the high rate of enrolment in grade one justifies that the parents are interested to give education to their children, but due to some reasons, mostly socio-economic, they have to drop out. Looking at the enrolment figures for boys and girls, there is a big gap between them. In the whole region the enrolment ratio is very low for Bhutan and Pakistan and specifically among girls. Srilanka is the only country in this region which has become able to achieve universal primary education. However,
the female enrolment ratio has improved a lot between 1960-90 in Bangladesh and India and for the whole South-Asian region the improvement has been from 39 to 73 percent.

Looking at the figures of central Government expenditure, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal spent the maximum of 11 percent in the education sector. In India and Pakistan it is around 3 percent whereas in Srilanka after achieving universal primary education and free education up to University level, it is 8 percent. For the whole South-Asian region, the expenditure in the health and education sector is 2 and 3 percent respectively, whereas in defence it is 18 percent. What is needed at the point of time is a trade-off between arms and human development.

The past few decades have witnessed the rapid growth of indigenous and foreign aided programmes and projects on primary education in South-Asia. Few of the successful programmes undertaken in this region are highlighted in this work which provide valuable insights for all the countries of this region. Few of the programmes particularly relating to the girl’s education have become really successful in this region and can be followed on a similar pattern in the other countries which lag behind in achieving universal primary education for girls.

Chapter four which deals with the universalization of primary education in Bangladesh, specifically undertaken by the government organizations, gives the clear picture and the status of primary education. The time series data for the period 1980-90 gives the exponential growth rate for both the sexes and the changes in the overall enrolment ratio. However, the growth rate has been highest for the girls and is around
5.65% which is higher than that of the growth rate for the total enrolment i.e. 4.35%.

The growth rate for the boys during this period is 3.32%. The growth rate was highest in the year 1988 and it has been mostly due to the specific programmes undertaken by the government as well as non-governmental Organizations in Bangladesh.

However, the statistical figures shows a very frustrating completion rate which is expected to reach 60 percent towards the end of the century. The dropout rate is equally high for all the grades. During this period the gross enrolment figure has increased from 58 percent to 77 percent. Besides there is high rate of repetition which explains the non-attendance of the students and leads to wastage in primary education. Due to such reasons the completion rate achieved was 35 percent in 1990, the corresponding figure being only 24 percent in 1980. Along with this the sincerity and the commitment of the government is highlighted by taking certain measures like Compulsory Primary Education Schemes, Food for Education programmes etc.

Chapter five deals with the role of non-governmental and voluntary organizations in promoting primary education in Bangladesh. The increasing trends of enrolment in general and of girls in particular, can be attributed to the work done by the non-governmental organizations in Bangladesh. Understanding the rigidity of the formal approaches of providing primary education, Government of Bangladesh could not ensure hundred percent enrolment and participation in the existing schooling systems. Realising the need for flexible approaches, Government of Bangladesh undertook various non-formal approaches in order to have better participation of the school going children. This has
become really successful in Bangladesh and have brought out significant changes in the participation rates since 1987.

Besides, the role played by the Maqtabs in providing primary education to the children in rural areas are commendable. Understanding the existing social system, the mosque is the real community centre for the Muslim in the rural areas. These mosque schools can be of great use in providing facilities relating to primary education and adult literacy programmes. Such schools can be of great use for the girls. Girls generally do attend Maqtabs and many of them receive informal religious training. So recognizing the lower literacy rates among girls, this can be developed further to cater to the needs of the girls education.

Along with this, the role played by the Non-Governmental Organizations and Voluntary Organizations have been mainly to promote non-formal education for women, adult and weaker sections of the society. The works undertaken by Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Mass Education Programme of DANIDA, Bangladesh Association for Community Education, Village Education Research Centre and many others have really brought in significant changes in the existing participation rates in the field of primary education. Mostly these programmes are based on micro planning which take the existing operational constraints of the parents as well as of the society into consideration and make relevant changes in the schooling system in order to accommodate them in the educational systems. The experience of these NGOs with community participation, their knowledge of the values and behaviour of village people,
are essential ingredients for the success of non-formal primary schools.

Chapter six which deals with the existing constraints in achieving universal primary education shows that the education system in Bangladesh is presently quite wasteful and unproductive. At the primary level only 77 percent enrol and of them, 50-60 percent attend regularly and 65 percent drop out during the five year cycle. Therefore the completion rate is very low and is around 35 percent. The situational analysis of enrolment and retention indicates that the participation of children in primary school is dependent on many factors. The existing socio-economic-politico-cultural conditions play a great role in affecting the participation rates of the school age going children. Besides, the educational status of a particular village also plays an important role in facilitating the active participation. This acts as a cultural domain which induces the children to go to schools.

Poverty can be singled out as one of the major obstacles in enrolment and retention in the schools. This is shown by analysing the statistical figures which shows a high rate of drop out at grade I, II and IV. The pressure on the children to assist their parents is so high, that they fail to attend the class regularly and finally drop out. In this respect the constraints are higher for the girls due to the orthodox society and low level of education of the parents.

Chapter seven deals with the qualitative aspect of the primary education. Participation in education is determined not only by the education opportunities that are provided, but also by the degree to which such opportunities are used and the quality of the education
is maintained. Along with this, the curriculum of the primary education should be relevant enough to accommodate the existing cultural values of a society so that there would not be much of resistance. Curriculum development is a continuous process which reflects the purpose and content of education in relation to the needs of the country. Primary school curricula are remarkably similar worldwide. Regardless of level of economic or educational development, countries teach the same subjects and accord them the same relative importance. In Bangladesh approximately 33 percent of available instructional time is devoted to the acquisition of language skills, 20 percent to mathematics and 17 percent towards environmental sciences. The rest of time is distributed equally among religious, physical and art and culture. However, most of the curriculum reforms have concentrated on redefining the courses and time allotment rather than preparing a coherent and appropriate instructional programmes and developing effective instructional materials.

Besides the poor quality of teachers has been one of the main obstacle in promoting universal primary education. In Bangladesh, the need for an adequate number of female teachers at the primary level was recognized because of the belief in the affectionate and efficient role of women in handling children of the primary age group. In 1991, the percentage of female teachers at primary level was only 19.5 percent. Besides the non-availability of the proper and adequate Primary Teachers Training facilities, fails to give proper training to the teachers which is essential to retain students in schools.
Islamic education has a much older tradition in Bangladesh. However, the relevance and utility of this education has become very limited. Realising the significance of the modern education, there has to be certain changes in the existing curriculum of the mosque school, so that it does not restrict the further upward movements of the students who complete primary education from these schools.

Chapter eight gives a brief account of the concern shown by various international organizations in helping Bangladesh in achieving UPE. The role of international agencies in promoting primary education has become significant after certain changes in the policies of World Bank. Initially external aid was available only in case of foreign exchange intensive, capital intensive sectors only. However, the role of UNESCO in establishing Asia Pacific Programme For All in 1987 with a view to achieving universal primary education, eradicating illiteracy and providing continuing education, strengthened the programmes at government as well as non-governmental levels. The major programme undertaken in Bangladesh is the UPE/IDA project. In this project International Development Agency provided the financial assistance and UNESCO provided the technical assistance which brought in an annual increase of 6.4 percent in the enrolment of girls. Besides, these project schools showed a lower drop out ratio and high retention rates. The role played by UNICEF and UNDP have been to highlight the problem and undertake research and to support teacher training programmes to make the universalisation of primary education programme a successful one by extending financial assistance to the various governmental and non-governmental initiatives.
Besides, in pursuant to the decision of the Sixth SAARC Summit, the Ministers of SAARC Member States assembled on 16-18 September 1992 to reiterate the goals accepted by the SAARC member countries at the World Summit 1990. The objective is to provide universal access to basic education and completion of the primary education by at least 80 percent of primary school age children by the year 2000. In this respect, the Eighth SAARC Summit held on 2-4 May 1995 at New Delhi noted that illiteracy is one of the major causes of poverty, backwardness and social injustices and called on the Member States to initiate more concrete programmes aimed at eradicating illiteracy in the region preferably by the year 2000 and decided to observe 1996 as the "SAARC Year of Literacy".

The role played by the bilateral donors such as Sweden, Canada, France have been quite significant in promoting primary education in Bangladesh. Specifically the Mass Education Programme undertaken by DANIDA is of great importance in the field of primary education. Besides there is a need for greater cooperation among the donor agencies and donee organization so that a healthy working relationship continues till the goal is achieved.

After analysing the existing operational constraints and facilities in the field of primary education in Bangladesh, a few lessons may be drawn which is amenable to replication in other South Asian countries. These are summarised below:

i) Equitable and easy access: The first and foremost objective of the government should be to provide easy access to all the school-age going children regardless
of their place of residence. The distance of the school should not be more than one kilometre. This can be done through multiple shifts, low-cost construction of schools and large classes.

ii) Emphasize learning: Along with high enrolment ratio, the children should be imparted proper education through developed curriculum.

iii) Student friendly schools: There should not be discriminatory treatment towards children. The school atmosphere should be friendly so that the children should not feel scared of going to schools.

iv) Quality of teachers: In order to make the school student friendly, the teachers should be given proper training so that they are able to motivate the parents to send their children to school and be able to retain the students in the classrooms. Along with this, the recruitment of female teachers should be accelerated in order to ensure the better participation of girl child.

v) Flooding of books: As the primary education is declared free, the government should take utmost care to distribute the books to the children in time. As this programme has become very successful in Fiji, this is expected to bring the same result if undertaken in Bangladesh.

vi) Promoting adult literacy: Promotion of adult literacy is a prerequisite to ensure better participation of the school age going children. Through this only, it is possible to convince the parents to send their children to school regularly rather than asking them to cooperate in household works.
vii) **Awareness campaign:** The importance of education can be highlighted through informal channels like print media and electronic media. Through this it is possible to create awareness among the masses in order to have community participation in the process of universalization of primary education.

viii) **More finance to primary level:** The government should provide maximum funds in this sector as it brings changes in the attitude of the people.

ix) **Institution building measures:** In order to have a proper and effective management of the UPE programmes, the government should take care to build various institutions in order to coordinate the whole programme. This has to be provided with the proper feedback from the research and development department.

x) **Recruitment of national volunteers:** This programme of UPE is a labour intensive programme. In this respect one can use the secondary level students in programmes like "each one teach one" as a compulsory assignment after which only he or she will be allowed to get the degree.

xi) **Greater participation of NGOs:** There is still a need for greater participation of NGOs in promoting the process of universalisation of primary education in Bangladesh.
### Number of Primary Schools, Teachers and Students by District, Sex and Management, 1990

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### APPENDIX

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**Total: Dhaka Division**

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**Bangladesh**

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Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics; 1992, Dhaka (p.04-07).