

RIGHT BASED APPROACH TO EDUCATION FOR ALL IN SOUTH ASIA

¹Juhee Rai
Research Scholar,
Faculty of Education ,
B.H.U.,Kamaccha ,
Varanasi PIN 221010;

²Dr. Alka Rani
Associate Professor ,
Faculty of Education
B.H.U.,Kamaccha,
Varanasi PIN 221010

Abstract : [Education has a multiplying effect ; where the right to education is effectively guaranteed it enhances the enjoyment of all other rights and freedoms, while when the right to education is denied it precludes the enjoyment of many, if not all, other human rights. In 1948, when education was recognized as a human right (UN Declaration of Human rights), only a minority of the world's children had access to any formal education; now a majority of them go to school, and participation in formal education beyond the elementary stages has increased. The goal of a human rights-based approach to education is simple: to assure every

child a quality education that respects and promotes her or his right to dignity and optimum development. Achieving this goal is, however, enormously more complex. This recognition is exemplified in the international goals, strategies and targets that have been set in post 1990s period. The Education for All goals were established at Jomtien (Thailand) in 1990 and reaffirmed at the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar (Senegal). In the Millennium Development Goals, established in 2000, the world's governments committed to achieve universal access to free, quality and compulsory primary education by 2015. In 'A World Fit for Children', the outcome document from the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children in 2002, governments reaffirmed these commitments and agreed to a range of strategies and actions to achieve them. This paper throw light on application of human rights based approaches in education . It attempts to explain concept of right-holders and duty-bearer under the aegis of rights-based approach to education. It also explores effect of this approach on regional cooperation on education under the aegis of SAARC integrated programme of Action. Data is mainly drawn from the Reports of UN commissions, Ministries of Education of the respective Member States, documents from SAARC Secretariat, UNICEF and UNESCO publications for south and West Asia and UNESCO-EFA report]

Key Words: RBA, EFA, Duty bearers under RBA, 4'A' Scheme

I. INTRODUCTION

*And if because ,Of faulty laws , And errors of design,
For me, the classroom door ,With someone who can teach,
Is still beyond my reach, Still out of sight,
Those wrongs do not remove my right.
You don't yet know
That there is much that I can give you in return.
The future is my name
And all I claim Is this: my right to learn.
(source : My right to learn by Robert Prouty, UNESCO, 2007)*

It will be 70 years in December 2018 when the countries of the world , talking through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10 Dec 1948), affirmed that “ Everyone has a right to education” . In spite of eminent endeavors by nations around the world to guarantee the right to education for all , following realities persisted till 1990's ::

- More than 100 million children , including at least 60 million girls , have no access to primary schooling ;
- More than 960 million adults , two thirds of whom are women , are illiterate , and functional illiteracy is a significant problem in all countries , industrialised and developing ;
- More than one-third of the world's adults have no access to the printed knowledge , new skills and technologies that could improve the quality of their lives and help them shape , and adapt to social and cultural change ; and
- More than 100 million children , and countless adults fail to complete basic education programmes ; millions more satisfy the attendance requirements but do not acquire essential knowledge and skills . [UNICEF (1990). p 156]

These figures represent an affront to human dignity and denial of the right to education. All countries need citizens capable of working with and through technology . In a very real sense, to be deprived of Compulsory Basic / Elementary education is to be deprived of the essential tools for modern living. Education is both a human right in itself and an

indispensable means of realizing other human rights . (UNICEF 1990 p 8) .This has been codified recurrently in the following key global human rights treaties :

Table 1: Human Rights Treaties enunciating need of Compulsory Primary Education

Instrument	Year	Referred Article
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	1948	Art.26
UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education	1960	
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of racial Discrimination	1965	Art. 5
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	1966	Art. 13,14
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	1979	Art.10
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	1989	Art. 28, 29

(Hossain 2004) .

But , achieving the right to education for all is one of the biggest challenges of our times. It is noteworthy that application of human rights principles to the Education for all movement forms the fundamental basis of Rights-based approach to Education (RBA Framework). This approach draws attention to the basic obligation of the state to take care of its most vulnerable citizens i.e. child , who can't claim their rights for themselves .It removes the charity dimension of providing *Education to all* . It recognizes child not as beneficiaries, but as active rights holders who

- is entitled to right to education
- is entitled to claim these rights
- is entitled to hold the duty-bearer accountable & can seek redress .
- has a responsibility to respect the rights of others .

Consequently, those who have the obligation to respect, protect, and fulfil the rights of the right-holder are duty-bearers. State is the legal duty bearer. In a society , Every individual or institution that has the power to affect the lives of right-holders is a moral duty bearer viz... private companies, local leaders, civil society organisations, international organisations, heads of households, and parents, and in principle every individual are moral duty-bearers . (Boesen and Martin 2007)

STATE being a legal duty-bearer also has a duty to regulate the actions of moral duty-bearers .

2. Role Of Duty Bearers

Under the RBA framework , education must be made '*a*'available, '*a*'ccessible , '*a*'cceptable and '*a*'daptable (4 As scheme) to each child as shown below –

Availability– that education is free and government-funded and that there is adequate infrastructure and trained teachers able to support education delivery.

Accessibility– that the system is non- discriminatory and accessible to all, and that positive steps are taken to include the most marginalised.

Acceptability – that the content of education is relevant, non-discriminatory and culturally appropriate, and of quality; that the school itself is safe and teachers are professional.

Adaptability – that education can evolve with the changing needs of society and contribute to challenging inequalities, such as gender discrimination, and that it can be adapted locally to suit specific contexts.

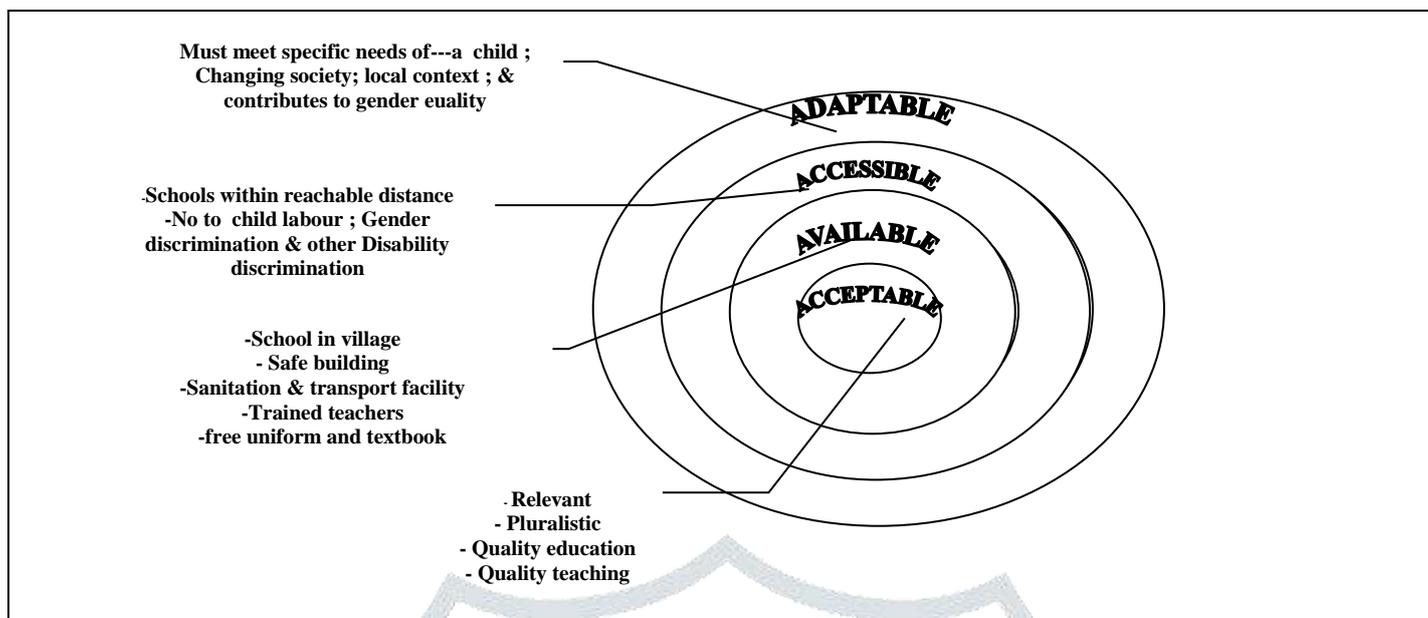


Fig 1: 4 'A' Scheme (Tomasevski , 2004)

The concept of these 4 As was developed by the former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Katarina Tomasevski, and it is one of the best ways to assess and act upon the situation to arrange Quality primary/ elementary education for children. The 4 As are to be respected, protected and fulfilled by the STATE, as the prime duty-bearer , but this framework confers some duties on other actors in the education process viz.

- The CHILD as the privileged subject of the right to education and the bearer of the duty to comply with compulsory-education requirements;
- The child's PARENTS who are the 'first educators'; and
- The professional educators, namely TEACHERS.

CHILD as a partner –

While a child has a right to be listened to and have her or his views given due weight, she or he has a corresponding responsibility to listen to the views of others , keeping the classroom in order , cooperating with school administration and, so far as it is within their means, arriving regularly and ,on time .One of the most effective means of promoting children's understanding of the *reciprocal basis of rights and responsibilities* is to create an environment where their own rights are respected. One can ensure their active participation and can sensitize them towards their responsibilities through following ways :-

- as peer educators and mentors for younger children;
- in setting up and running school councils that act as a forum for addressing children's concerns; in helping develop school policy, including behaviour codes and discipline;
- in advising on such issues as playground design, and location and design of latrines;
- in contributing to the curriculum;
- in providing feedback and evaluation on the curriculum and teaching methods;
- as mediators helping resolve conflicts;
- in participating on school governing bodies.
- One approach to creating a participatory environment is to employ the use of 'circle time', a process whereby children come together on a day fortnightly in a circle to discuss issues of concern to them, identify problems and explore solutions .
- Children can also be involved in establishing the indicators used to monitor how well a school is respecting the rights of all its members, and they can take part in a process of regular evaluation of compliance with those indicators (UNICEF 2007)

PARENT as a partner – In this framework , investment in parents is as important in the education of a child as the direct learning in school. Schools need to organize regular meetings of parents to share with them the goals of the school, the curriculum that is being taught and updates on the child's progress to enable them to better understand the child's education.

TEACHER as a partner- Success of this framework is dependent on the commitment, creativity and competence of teachers .Teacher-training courses need to include a rights-based approach and must offer understanding of issues such as: Child-centred education.; Evolving capacities of children ; Learning through participation. Acting as a learning facilitator; Children's rights, including the principle of non-discrimination. Positive forms of discipline and class management; Teaching in inclusive environments.; The participation of children at all levels in educational environments. It is necessary to review both initial and in-service training and to develop a rolling programme to provide all teachers with training on the rights-based framework . In order

to embrace a culture that is inclusive and respectful of every child in a school, it is essential that, teachers' rights must also be fully acknowledged and respected. (UNESCO, 2007, pp 32-34)

In light of above, a need was felt that Governments need data to plan and ensure availability of education for all. Mechanisms therefore need to be introduced to measure and monitor access, quality and respect for rights in education, in terms of both individual children and the education system as a whole. This need of the time brought UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, UN Development Program and UN Population Fund together in the 1990s.

This move created greater international cooperation in education in 1990 with the adoption of the World Declaration on Education for All, in Jomtien, Thailand, by some 150 governmental and non-governmental organizations. The aim was to create universal access to basic education for all children, youth and adults by the end of the decade (2000).

This was not achieved by 2000 when new impetus was given at the World Education Forum in Dakar where 164 governments pledged to achieve Six Education for All (EFA) goals incorporating the concepts of gender equality and quality Elementary Education.

In 2000, the United Nations adopted the 8 Millennium Development Goals with Goal 2 being to achieve universal primary education by 2015.

In 2015, the World Education Forum in Incheon, Republic of Korea adopted the Incheon Declaration reaffirming the Education for All commitments of Jomtien and Dakar and committing to the new Global Education 2030 Agenda. The Sustainable Development goal 4: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all.

It is noteworthy that, all these EFA Forum declarations placed the need of Quality Elementary Education for all Nations struggling with the problem of illiteracy and poverty.

3.A Profile Of Human Deprivation In South Asia

The expression 'South Asia', usually includes the following countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka as per United Nations geo scheme of Classification of Nations and sometimes including Iran also. In this Study, we shall use South Asia to mean the Eight countries mentioned above thereby constituting one geo-political space. (NCERT, 2007, www.un.org)

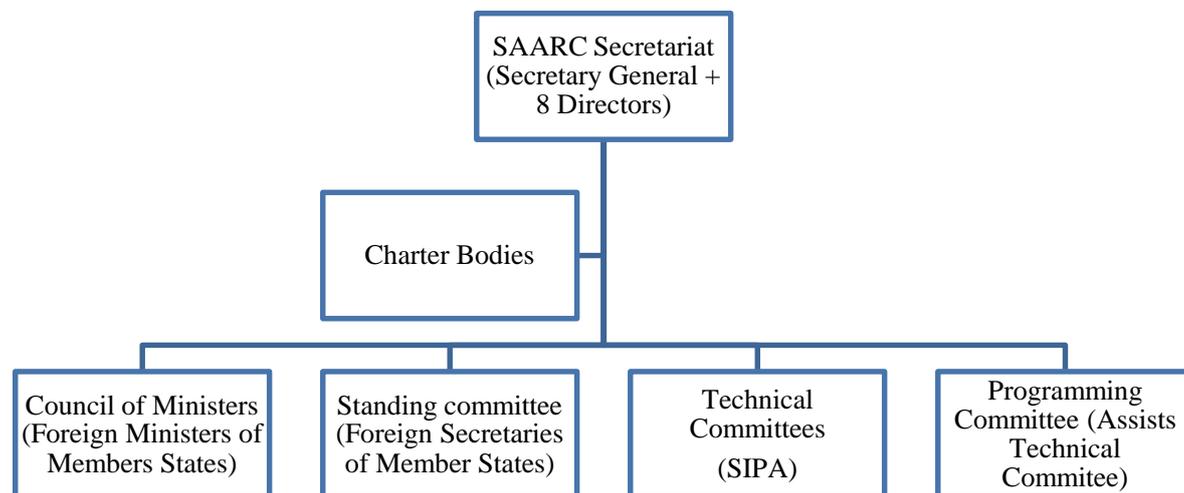
South Asia is home to 1.8 billion people, or roughly one-fourth of the global population (7.6 billion), and is one of the most densely populated regions (296 people per Km²) in the world. (Worldometers.info). This region harbours 627 million children under 18 years of age - approximately 36 percent of the total population of 1.82 billion (UNICEF, 2016). South Asia is home to the largest numbers of out-of-school children and youths at 31.8 million with 8.2 million at primary level (6 to 9 years) and 23.6 million at the secondary level (10 to 14 years). At the same time, millions of children are completing primary education and not able to master foundational literacy and numeracy. (UNESCO, 2017). This makes the region important in terms of challenges and opportunities in education. This represents a tremendous potential provided their rights are fulfilled and their needs are met.

The state of human deprivation in the South Asia region was summed up graphically by the first Report on Human Development in South Asia 1997 when it observed: 'South Asia is fast emerging as the poorest, the most illiterate, the most malnourished, the least gender-sensitive — indeed, the most deprived region in the world.' (Haq & Haq :1998). South Asia faces serious challenges to its progress as listed below –

- (i) enrolling all children in primary schools;
- (ii) improving the quality and relevance of education;
- (iii) providing more and better teachers;
- (iv) removing all gender disparities;
- (v) building relevant technical skills;
- (vi) mobilizing adequate financial resources

4.Education Under The Aegis Of SAARC -

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) as a regional bloc was founded on December 8, 1985 by the Heads of State of Government of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Afghanistan Joined this Association in April 2007 during the Fourteenth SAARC summit held in Delhi, India. The main goal of the association is to accelerate the process of economic and social development in the member states through joint action in the agreed areas of cooperation. (SAARC Secretariat, 1995). The SAARC Charter lays down the institutional framework of SAARC defining its administrative and operational machinery as given below – The Organogram of SAARC



(Charter of (SAARC; SAARC Secretariat Publication, 1995 ; Sharma, 2002)

The highest Authority of the Association rests with the Heads of State of Government. Institutional arrangements as discussed above are delineated under articles III to VIII of the SAARC Charter. The SAARC has a four tier institutional set-up including the Summits (Article III), Council of Ministers (Article IV), Standing Committee (Article V) and Technical Committees (Article VI). (Saxena, 1989) . The SAARC Technical Committees are the primary mechanism for the implementation of the SAARC integrated programme of action (SIPA).

5. Articulations Of SAARC Summits On Education

The SAARC principles have recognized the literacy is a fundamental human right and the foundation for lifelong learning which adopt through education. It is fully essential to social and human development in its ability to transform lives. For individuals, families, and societies alike, it is an instrument of empowerment to improve one's health, one's income, and one's relationship with the world. (saarc-sec.org)

During the Second SAARC Summit (Bangalore, 16-17 November 1986), The Member States emphasized the need for promoting greater contacts among the peoples of the region through such action as regular and frequent interchange of scholars, academics, artists, authors, professionals and businessmen as well as facilitation of tourism.

At the Third Summit (Kathmandu, 02-04 November 1987), the leaders have noted the dates for the institution of the SAARC Chairs, Fellowships and Scholarships among SAARC member states to promote the educational facilities in the SAARC region.

During the Fourth Summit (Islamabad, 29-31 December 1988), the leaders decided that Education may be included as an agreed area of cooperation since all children was the principal means of human resources development. Children should, therefore, be given the highest priority in national development planning.

At the Eighth Summit (New Delhi, 02-04 May 1995), the Heads of State or Government 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 programs aimed at eradicating illiteracy in the region preferably by the year 2000 A.D. The leaders decided to observe 1996 as the "SAARC Year of Literacy. To enhance the literacy level in the region, recognizing the resource, manpower and infrastructural constraints to the promotion of vocational and higher education in the region, the Leaders at the Ninth Summit (Malé, 12-14 May 1997) agreed that new and innovative methods like Open Learning and Distance Education can play an effective role in meeting regional needs in a cost effective and flexible manner. Accordingly, the leaders agreed that the institutional facilities in such education available in the region should be utilized on a regional scale. The possibility of the creation of a Consortium of Open Universities in the region should also be explored.

At the Eleventh Summit (Kathmandu, 04-06 January 2002), the Heads of State or Government recognized that access to quality education was an important element for the empowerment of all segments of society, and undertook to develop or strengthen national strategies and action plans to ensure that all children particularly the girl child have access to quality primary education by 2015; and to improve levels of adult literacy by fifty percent by eliminating gender disparities in access to education as envisaged in the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All adopted by the World Education Forum held at Dakar in April 2000.

At the Thirteenth SAARC Summit (Dhaka, 12-13 November 2005), the leaders noted the achievements of the Member States during recent years in the area of primary education and stressed that to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century Member States must make important strides in the areas of science, technology and higher education.

The Heads of State or Government during the Eighteenth Summit (Kathmandu, 26-27 November 2014) expressed their resolve to eliminating illiteracy from the region in line with the global goal of education for all and ensuring quality education in all institutions by reforming curricula, teaching methods and evaluation systems adequately supported by physical, technical and other facilities. The leaders agreed to promote regional cooperation in the field of vocational education and training. The leaders directed their Education Ministers to develop a Regional Strategy for Enhancing the Quality of Education in order to raise the standards of South Asian educational institutions in order to better serve the youth in the region. (Compendium of SAARC Summits, SAARC Digital Library)

From the above , It is evident that Education as an instrument of empowering the mass was recognized at the earliest reference point of the alliance . Promoting Mass Education was considered as an antidote to Poverty in the region. Priority was given to Girl education and to devise new means of reaching the unreached. In Summits of post 1990 era, access to Quality Primary Education for all was emphasised. Eighteenth summit declaration has rightly suggested the need of A Regional Strategy for Enhancing the Quality of Education in order to raise the standards of South Asian educational institutions in order to better serve the youth in the region.

6.Regional Conventions

Besides Summit declarations , regional commitment in following documents reflect an urge of transforming human populace into economically and socially productive populace as tabulated below :

Table 2 : Regional Commitments

Year of Commitment	Impact / Proposals
SAARC Conference on South Asian children (1986, 27-29 oct ,New Delhi ; India)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> _A ministerial level conference organised before the second SAARC Summit , Banglore , India _brainstorming to identify practical proposals to promote child survival and development _Impact : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) that meeting the basic needs of all children is the principal means of human resources development ii) accepted universal primary education as one of basic need iii) establishment of a Technical Committee on Education in 1989. iv) Following the <u>World summit for children in 1990</u> in the region, member states observed 1990 as the SAARC year of the Girl child , 1991-2000 as the SAARC decade for the girl child .
Colombo Resolution on Children (1992 , Sep Colombo , Srilanka)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> _A ministerial level conference on children endorsed at 7th Summit , Dhaka _ National plan of action's were finalized to realise the rights of children to survival and participation in region _ set common Illustrative goals to be achieved through 1990's.
Rawalpindi resolution on children of south Asia (1996,20-22August, Rawalpindi Pakistan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> _ a ministerial level conference Endorsed in Male in 1997 _ illiteracy is a major contributing factors in to the region's economic backwardness and social imbalance _ unanimously accepted that , It is the duty of states to enable <u>all children of primary school age to complete school</u> at the required level of learning. _ Identified pockets of children requiring special protection to achieve target of Education For all – the girl child , working children , children in urban slums , and without shelters , children exposed to sexual exploitation and violence, disabled and displaced children and those caught in socio-political and armed conflicts. _ identified <u>Issues organismic to primary education sector</u> viz. universal enrollment with narrowing of gender gaps ; access and retention at school ; quality of learning achievement. _ agreed to initiate and strengthen <u>community based social support system</u> , to build enabling environment for EFA _ Recommended that the year 2001-2010 be declared as the <u>SAARC Decade of the Rights of the Child</u> to enable all children of primary school age to complete school.
Adoption of SAARC Social	-Endorsed in 12 th Summit , Islamabad

Charter , (4 January 2004)	-Endorsed the target of providing <u>free education</u> to all children between the ages of 6 - 14 years .(article V) -Education has been kept under special services to be extended by the government to increase education, literacy, and skill development amongst adolescents and youth (Article VII) . _Member States shall formulate a national plan of action or modify the existing one, if any, in order to operationalise the provisions of the Social Charter.(Article X)
Adoption of SAARC Development Goals (SDG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Proposal of Identifying SDG was made in Twelfth Summit (Islamabad , Jan 2004)</i> - <i>Draft titled as “An Engagement with Hope for 2005-2010) prepared by Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation (ISACPA)</i> - Includes 22 goals & 67 indicators - SDG’s were decided in the backdrop of endorsements being given to Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 and the World Summit for Children (WSC), 1990. followed by Dakar framework of Action (EFA 2001) and Millennium Development Goals (UNDP) <p>Goal 13 - Access to primary/communal school for all - children, boys and girls Goal 14 - Completion of primary education cycle Goal15 – Universal functional literacy Goal 16 - Quality education at primary, secondary and vocational levels</p>
Colombo statement on Children of south Asia 2009, 10 July ;Colombo , Srilanka	_Expand <u>non-discriminatory access to free primary health and education services</u> through provision of child-friendly education and quality health services; _Ensuring that education leads to employable skills and all children, including girl child and children with special needs, complete at least primary schooling. _Emphasised for time bound National plans by respective members taking in to account the SAARC Decade on Poverty Alleviation (2006-15)
New Delhi declaration (31 st October 2014)	Formulation of the SAARC Framework for Action for the post-2015 education agenda

(saarc-sec.org; Basniyat, 2009; Ahmad and Mir, 2016; UNESCO, 2016)

Taking note of the Rawalpindi Resolution on Children(1996) , The decade 2001 – 2010 was declared as ”SAARC Decade of the Rights of the Child”. Following impacts are seen in this decade :

- i) SAARC Conventions to Combat and Prevent Trafficking of Women and Children for Prostitution was ratified on 5th January 2002
- ii) Regional Arrangement were made for Promotion of Child Welfare and to combat and suppress all offences against a person’s dignity and the life of the child.
- iii) Adoption of the SAARC Social Charter - a major policy guideline for the region that also outlines the responsibility of the member states in relation to the well-being and protection of children.
- iv) A regional task force responsible to monitor progress on the implementation of the Convention to Prevent Trafficking and Promotion of Children was finalised in last May, 2007. The Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) – an instrument to monitor the implementation of the said Convention.
- v) In addition, two toll-free help line has been set up across the borders in the region to help children and women in related vulnerable situations. In addition, a SAARC multidisciplinary Technical Committee on Women, Youth and Children has been established since 2010.
- vi) The budget for the SAARC Development Fund (SDF) Social Window was approved by the SAARC Finance Ministers Meeting in September 2007 with a focus, among others, on a regional project on Maternal Health and Child Care.
- vii) Initiatives have been put in place to monitor child related conventions. (Basniyat, 2009)

During the 4th SAARC Ministerial meeting(Colombo, 2009), the situation of children of South Asia was assessed, and inter alia gave guidelines aimed at improving the situation of issues such as malnutrition and child care that eventually promulgated as “Colombo Statement on Children of South Asia” that states --

“ Enhance and make effective child protection efforts by gradual introduction of compulsory and free registration of all births and marriages; eliminating the practice of child marriage; eradicating child labour through measures of social protection such as decent work or incentives for vulnerable families; and ensuring children living in or displaced by conflict are afforded care, counseling and support; and ensuring harshest possible punishment for perpetrators of violence against children and strengthening justice for children, rehabilitation, care and support systems for child victims of all forms of abuse and survivors of trafficking.”
Article V : Colombo Statement on Children of South Asia, 2009

This meeting also emphasized that it is highly important that national level institutions in the respective countries monitor the provisions of CRC and SAARC Conventions.

In September 2000, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, world leaders of 191 countries came together to adopt the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The eight goals provide a concrete, time-bound, measurable framework for tackling various dimensions of extreme poverty , Education and environment degradation (Appendix:). Regions as well as respective countries have made attempts to localize the MDGs. One of such attempts is made by SAARC in the preparation of SAARC Development Goals (SDGs). These goals essentially revolve around the MDGs. The report- “An Engagement with hope” on the SDGs was finalized in 2004 & it identified a set of 22 goals. Of these, eight are related to livelihood, four to health, four to education & six to environment.(Appendix---)

The SDGs provided a road map for the implementation of the SAARC Social Charter. Initially SDG was launched for the period of five years, 2007-12. The third SAARC Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation, held in Kathmandu on 5th April 2013, has extended the terminal year of SDGs from 2012 to 2015 to coincide with the MDGs. To make an assessment of the progress made towards achieving the SDGs adopted, SAARC countries decided that Finance Ministers should meet within the first quarter after every summit and also on the sidelines of the World Bank & ADB annual meetings, to take stock of macro- economic developments and outlook for South Asia; achievement of SDGs as co-related to MDGs and to assess the investment climate, foreign capital inflows, financial sector reforms and other areas of cooperation. (saarc-sec.org & Ahmad & Mir, 2016).

The Member States have also adopted the declaration at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York on 25-27 September 2015 thus strengthening 17 SDGs, with a stand alone goal on education. The Incheon declaration is a declaration on education adopted at the World Education Forum in Incheon, South Korea on 15 May 2015. It is the logical continuation of the Education For All (EFA) movement and the Millennium Development Goals on Education, and many of its goals were based on a review of progress made since the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar.

The adopted Education 2030 Framework for Action in Incheon, recognises lifelong learning for all as one of the underpinning principles of this new vision, stating that “all age groups, including adults, should have opportunities to learn and continue learning.” Those who signed onto the declaration committed to provide twelve years of primary and secondary education paid for by the public. Further, nine of those years will be compulsory. It also calls on countries to “develop policies and programmes for the provision of quality distance learning in tertiary education, with appropriate financing and use of technology, including the Internet, massive open online courses (MOOCs) and other modalities that meet accepted quality standards to improve access.” (United Nations, 2015 & UNESCO 2017)

In view of this a Sub-regional Initiatives on SDG4-Education 2030 in SAARC region started as listed below

- MOU between UNESCO, UNICEF and SAARC - Achieve Education-related SAARC Development Goals
- New Delhi declaration (31st October 2014) - Formulation of the SAARC Framework for Action for the post-2015 education agenda
- Incheon, Republic of Korea (May 2015) - Discussed in a sideline meeting in Incheon
- New Delhi agreement (14th October 2015)- Identifying critical bottlenecks to meet SDG- 4 and completing the EFA/MDG unfinished business ; Interpreting, contextualizing and prioritizing the SDG 4 indicators and sharing national strategies to achieve SDG 4 in the SAARC Member States
- Bangkok (25-27 November 2015)- The Member States also built a common understanding on SDG4/Education 2030 and discussed regional and national coordination, partnership, monitoring and follow-up mechanisms in the first Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED- I 2030)
- Kathmandu (March 2016)- Sub-regional workshop on the SAARC Framework for Action for Education 2030, Kathmandu, 30-31 March 2016
- September 2016 -SAARC FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION endorsed by 3rd technical meeting of senior officials on education in South Asia
- Bangkok (29-31 may 2017)- Asia –Pacific Regional seminar on Sub – Regional Cooperation for achieving SDG4-Education 2030 again was held as APMED II.

All these endeavours placed some Priority Areas of SAARC Action for Education 2030 Agenda-

- i. Expanding educational access and accelerate OOSC (Out of School Children) reduction
- ii. Ensuring educational equity and inclusion
- iii. Achieving gender equality
- iv. Improving learning outcomes and promoting quality education

- v. Promoting acquisition of skills for life and for work
- vi. Harnessing the potential of ICTs
- vii. Improving the quality and relevance of teacher development programmes
- viii. Improving education governance
- ix. Strengthening institutional and human capacity for monitoring progress towards SDG4
- x. Enhancing financing of education
- xi. Ensuring lifelong learning opportunities
- xii. Strengthening partnership and collaboration

SAARC Action Plan for Implementation of the New Delhi Declaration on Education (13-14 October 2015) led to identification of some regional commitments endorsed by every member of SAARC as tabulated below :

Table 3: Action Plan for Education 2030

Lead Country	Action Plan
India/ Maldives	Formulation of the SAARC Education 2030 Framework for Action
Bhutan / Sri Lanka	Technical Cooperation and Exchange of Experts
India	Generating/Expanding the Knowledge Base Required to Support Policy Formulation Harnessing the Potential of ICTs for Enhancing Educational Access and Quality
Afghanistan	Networking with Institutions to Improve Collaboration
Maldives	Policy Dialogue, Advocacy and Programme Support Communications
Nepal / SAARC Secretariat	Monitoring of Progress towards SDG4 and Corresponding Targets Documentation and Sharing/Dissemination of Information/Knowledge
Pakistan	Skills Development Facilitating Mutual Recognition of Qualifications and Student Mobility
Sri Lanka/ Bhutan	Teacher Development and Management
Bangladesh	Approaches to Reducing Out-of-School Children and Improving Literacy Rates Promotion of Lifelong Learning for all

(UNESCO, 2016 & UNESCO, 2017a)

As enumerated above, Member States have resolved to develop policy that can manage the best interest of the child in the region .

7. REAFFIRMATION –

As a concept, RBA to education ensures the meaningful and systematic inclusion and empowerment of the Child , being most vulnerable member of society. Rights-based education prioritizes the primary schooling of all children The recognition of the rights of the child necessitates that all the Key actors as mentioned above, accept specific obligations and responsibilities to articulate and defend Right To Education . It is within this context that we need to review the educational challenge that lies ahead of South Asia in the coming decades specifically mobilizing adequate financial resources for SDG- 4 Targets. Above mentioned Regional conferences and Drawing up of SAARC Development Goals has reflected the regional determination to shun differences and participate in a broader process of development to free their people from abject poverty and illiteracy. Thus ,these regional endeavours has created an enabling environment thereby providing a foundation for the development of robust national policies and plans for Education of Children in the region. Every effort must be made to guarantee that this time the goal and targets are achieved for the unfinished EFA Agenda in Education 2030.

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