SCOPING STUDY INTO HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACHES TO EDUCATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Educational Research Unit*
SEAMEO INNOTECH

she@seameo-innotech.org

ABSTRACT: *The right to education is a universally recognized human right. Like all human rights, it is inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated with other human rights. As such it is an enabling rights as well because it allows people to exercise and strengthen their voice to claim and secure their rights (Global Campaign for Education, n.d.). But while the right to education is internationally recognized, it remains to be one of the biggest challenges to date, as millions of children are still denied of their basic entitlement to education. SEAMEO INNOTECH, in fulfilling its mandate to provide innovative solution to address the educational needs and concerns of the countries in the region, this study identifies the approaches that each SEAMEO member country has employed in implementing rights-based approach to education. Through a descriptive case study method, this research answered the question, what are the nature and extent of approaches to human rights-based education of the 9 member countries in SEA? This study brings to fore the 9 (i.e. Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam) Southeast Asian (SEA) countries' diverse strategies in implementing rights-based approach to education using a common framework. Moreover, the different programs and projects of the 9 SEA countries on human rights-based education, effective practices, lessons learned and areas for further strengthening, as well as the barriers for children and citizens to claim their right to education were identified.*

Keywords: Human Rights-Based Education, Southeast Asia, Case Study, Laws and Policies

INTRODUCTION

The assertion that every human being is entitled to education has been highlighted in several international treaties on human rights. Government leaders/authorities are expected to play a key role in initiating and steering efforts to provide this human right to education. But while the right to education is internationally recognized and has been affirmed in several global treaties (e.g., Convention against Discrimination in Education) and conferences (e.g., World Education Forum), it remains to be one of the biggest challenges of our times as millions of children are still denied their basic entitlement to education. Data showed that although the number of children who are out of school have fallen through the years, there are still 57 million out-of-school children worldwide in 2011 (UNESCO, 2014). In East Asia and the Pacific where the 11 SEAMEO members belong, around 7.9 million children of primary school age were not in school in 2008 (UNESCO,2011).

Overall, while this represents a substantial decline from previous years, the rate of decline across the region is uneven, with some countries (e.g., Philippines) tending to have a slower pace of decline than the others.

*This paper was written by the Educational Research Unit team members: Dr. Ethel Agnes P. Valenzuela, Ms. Rhea Christina Rabin, Mr. Joselito R. Ereño, Ms. Donnalyne Cielo R. Lampa, Ms. Merjielyn Calimag-Emia, Ms. Nicole Asedillo, Ms. May Ann Garay, and Dr. Sherlyne A. Almonte-Acosta who worked under the guidance of Mr. Philip J. Purnell, Manager and Dr. Ramon C. Bacani, Center Director.

UNICEF and UNESCO both promote a rights-based approach to education. A rights-based approach, according to UNICEF (2007), focuses on the human rights of each individual. It is premised on the dignity of and respect for a person. Thus, it employs the standards, principles and methods of human rights, social activism and development to be able to promote justice, equality and freedom, as well as to address the causes and issues that underlie poverty, injustice and exploitation. On the other hand, for Save the Children Sweden (2005), a rights-based approach to education applies internationally agreed upon human rights principles and standards into the concepts, categories and language commonly used in education programs. Its goal is to guarantee that every child acquires a quality education that upholds and respects her/his right to dignity, identity, agency, integrity and optimum development; and that prepares her/him to handle challenges in life towards reaching her/his full potential. Rights-based education acknowledges the children as subject of rights and that as rights

holders, along with parents, teachers and others, they are entitled to demand that their government, the duty bearer, meets its obligation to fulfill, respect and protect the right to education of all children.

Similarly, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) was founded to serve the rights of the people in the region as it is an organization that intends "to promote cooperation among the Southeast Asian nations through education, science and culture in order to further respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are the birthrights of the peoples of the world" (SEAMEO, 2012).

Being one of the SEAMEO regional centers hosted by the Government of the Philippines, SEAMEO INNOTECH's mandate is to develop innovative and technology-based solutions to problems and needs of the region. Part of its usual undertaking is to conduct policy researches that would strengthen the educational system in the region, particularly in determining the educational issues and needs of member-countries and coming up with innovative solutions to address them towards the full realization of Southeast Asians' full potential.

In an effort to strengthen the Southeast Asian nations' pursuit of EFA and MDG goals, SEAMEO INNOTECH conducted a scoping study of the achievements of the different SEA countries in promoting education from a human rights perspective over the past decade. This scoping study aims to assess the status of RBE in SEAMEO member-countries through the review of the implementation of RBE-related policies, programs and projects and to recommend effective innovations and possible solutions to RBE issues. To this end, the Center organized a regional workshop on Scoping Study into Rights-Based Education in Southeast Asia from 27 to 29 August 2014 in SEAMEO INNOTECH in Quezon City. The workshop on rights-based

education was participated in by nine SEAMEO member-countries, namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. Each participating country prepared a country paper based on the state of RBE. During the regional workshop, country delegates worked collaboratively to identify best practices, issues and challenges, as well as recommendations to address them and to move RBE forward. Prior to the conduct of the regional workshop, the participants answered a survey on RBE. The data gathered during the regional workshop and the survey results form part of the scoping study on RBE.

Research Objectives

This research project aims to gauge the extent to which countries in the region enabled children to claim their right to education. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to document the following:
• Definitions of rights-based education in Southeast Asian countries;
• Evidence of rights-based approaches to education in constitutional provisions, laws and policies, and specific examples of programs and projects;
• Examples of innovative models of RBE implementation in Southeast Asian schools; and
• Issues and challenges to RBE in the region and future directions toward more effective and targeted policies against barriers and discrimination.

SEAMEO INNOTECH Framework for the Scoping Study into Rights -Based Education

The following rights-based education framework was followed to determine the progress and level of attainment of children's right to education in each country in Southeast Asia. It is hoped that the results of this study will contribute towards strengthened approaches to RBE in the region.
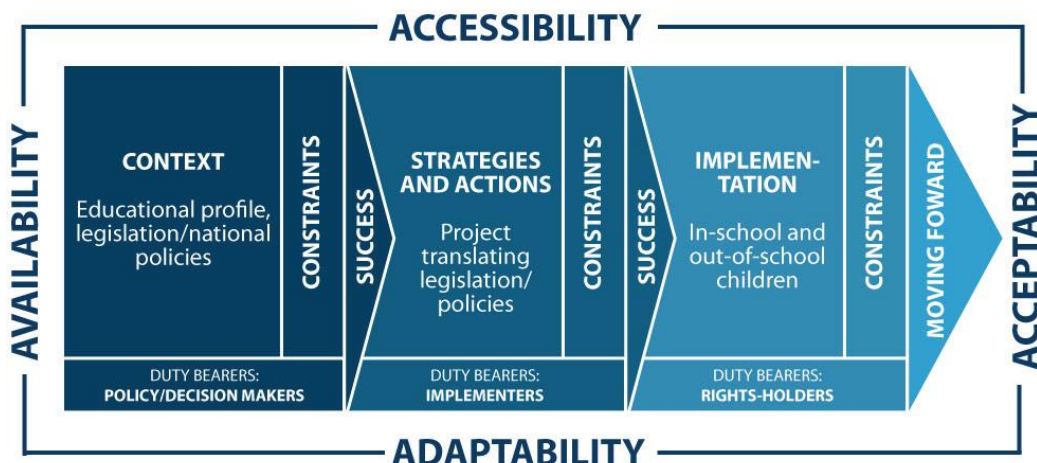

124

Figure 1: Framework for the Scoping Study into Rights-Based Education

The research was guided by the *Manual on Rights-Based Education: Global Human Rights Requirements Made Simple* by Katarina Tomasevski (2004), which provides governments, particularly policy-makers and education practitioners, with pointers on how to fulfill their human rights obligations. In particular, it makes use of a four-fold schema as the overarching conceptual framework in assessing rights-based education, comprising i) availability, ii) accessibility, iii) acceptability, and iv) adaptability of education.

• *Available education* means that it should be free and compulsory for all children, at least at the primary level.
• *Accessible education* is the removal of barriers such as discrimination.
• *Acceptable education* refers to quality education that sets standards on content, medium of instruction, and methods of teaching.
• *Adaptable education* is ensuring that education is responsive to the needs and interests of children.

METHODOLOGY
To achieve the objectives stated above, the study was implemented in phases and employed various research approaches as cited below:

Preliminary Research Work:
A review of literature on rights-based education, both general and specific to countries in Southeast Asia, was conducted. The review covered empirical studies, manuals, reports, proceedings, and other documents to shed more light on the current status of implementation of rights-based education in Southeast Asia.

Data-Gathering and Analysis: A conference-workshop was held on 27-29 August 2014 with local and regional experts in the field of rights-based education in Southeast Asia in attendance. The workshop focused on examining strategies, approaches, innovations, successes, and remaining barriers in promoting rights-based education. It was participated in by nationals nominated by Ministry of Education officials from each SEAMEO member-country. Each nominated participant has expertise/experience in RBE.

• The country delegates of the conference workshop were asked to respond to a scoping survey that aims to document current policies and practices in promoting rights-based education in their respective countries.
• The outputs of the conference-workshop, including the country presentations, workshop discussions and the review of literature, were analyzed and synthesized into a research report.

• Follow up questions were administered to ensure that the research report contains accurate and updated information.

Scope and Limitation of the Study
The scoping study attempted to cover all 11 countries in Southeast Asia to come up with a regional landscape of rights-based education. Unfortunately, two countries—Singapore and Timor-Leste—did not participate in the regional workshop, nor did they provide responses to the survey. Nonetheless, available online data and information about Timor Leste were included, particularly those pertaining to its education laws. The data collection period was from August 2014 to December 2015. Specifically, it covers programs and projects that are implemented within the last five years. For laws, it covers those that are in effect at the time of the writing/revisions of this study. While the study mainly focused on basic education, both the formal and non-formal education, there were examples of informal education programs, pre-school, and higher education programs related to RBE that were also cited to illustrate the extent to which RBE is implemented.

Key Findings
RBE as Defined in the Region
Currently, most Southeast Asian countries are implementing major education reforms designed to improve the quality, efficiency and accessibility of their education systems. A major catalyst of these reforms is the global Education for All (EFA) movement, which pushed for the recognition of access to quality education as a basic human right. In their bid to achieve their respective national EFA goals, SEAMEO member countries have crafted new policies, revised national curricula, as well as developed and implemented innovative programs and projects that seek to improve access to quality education for their citizens. A significant number of these reform initiatives have been aimed at making quality education more accessible to the unreached, marginalized and vulnerable learners in order that they too are able to realize their right to basic education.

The adoption of such a rights-based approach to educational reforms has also contributed to socioeconomic development in the region. Ensuring access to quality education supports the development of knowledgeable and skilled individuals who are better able to participate as productive and contributing members of society and serve as valuable human resources in promoting economic growth, community development and greater national economic prosperity.

The success of these educational reforms is evident from the rate of participation of children in primary education, expressed in terms of the Net Enrollment Rate (NER), which is nearly universalized in countries in the region. On the other hand, much still needs to be done to ensure universal access to secondary education. A review of the constitutional provisions, law/legislations, policies, as well as selected programs and projects reveals that SEAMEO countries have defined rights-based education (RBE) as a kind of education that is free from discrimination of whatever form and mandates the government to protect and promote such a right by establishing a system of accessible quality education that is free and compulsory. Specifically, education is a right that should be enjoyed by everyone, including those incapacitated by their circumstances (children with disabilities, victims of disasters, extremely poor, residents of remote/ underserved areas), those confined by their situation (ill, in prison), those undocumented/unregistered, and those marginalized (girl/boy, IPs). Governments are enjoined to protect and promote through the establishment of a system of free and compulsory quality education that is accessible and adaptable to all.

Accordingly, SEAMEO member-states have enacted laws and policies to define the specifics of a free and compulsory system of education, to protect and promote the right to education of children, and to underscore the inclusiveness of education particularly to those with disability or those who experienced discrimination. In addition, countries in the region are state parties to international human rights convention and have adopted the recognition of human right to education in their national laws.

RBE-related Interventions and Innovations

Educational services were delivered to disadvantaged learners through a range of interventions and innovative programs and projects.

The most notable of these are the child-friendly school (CFS) projects that have been institutionalized in countries in the region such as Cambodia's CFS policy, Myanmar's CFS Framework, Philippines' CFS System, and Thailand's CFS Project towards the creation of child-centered learning environment and learning process. Added to this are the efforts of several governments in the region to push for mother tongue-based learning in Cambodia, Philippines, and Thailand, and bilingual education in Brunei Darussalam and Vietnam. Targeting the school attendance of the poor and malnourished children are school feeding programs that have been proven effective in motivating children to go to school and stay there as in the case in Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, and Philippines.Moreover, there were pioneering solutions to address the access to education of the marginalized and disadvantaged learners such as mobile schools in Myanmar, Cambodia's barefoot teachers or schools on wheels in the Philippines that bring schools to where the unreached learners are. In relation to this, several unorthodox schools were established to target specific groups of disadvantaged children such as schools in hospitals and schools in prisons in Malaysia.

RBE Duty Bearers:

Aside from the national government which is obligated to implement RBE, there are specific duty bearers who are working to realize children's right to education. They are as follows:

• Teachers
• Educational Institutions Personnel
• Learners
• Parents/Guardians
• Local Government
• Members of the Community
• Local NGOs/Private
• International Development Agencies/Partner Organizations

SEAMEO member-countries have cited instances where these duty bearers have collaborated or worked together towards attaining a common agenda—to promote rights-based education.

RBE Programs and Projects

Using the 4As Framework (Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Adaptability of Education), a survey among nine SEA countries was conducted to provide a picture of how RBE is being realized in the region, from development to implementation of policies, programs, and projects. Respondents were asked to rate the items in the questionnaire on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest.

The survey brought to light the translation of RBE legal mandates into government concrete actions. The respondents scored indicators under "adaptability" quite high (4.4), indicating that government focused their efforts in adapting/customizing education based on children's needs. Meanwhile, respondents rated relatively lower (4) indicators pertaining to acceptability of education. The survey was supported by specific examples of policies and programs that each country has developed and implemented.

A. Making Education Available

The survey shows that most countries performed well in terms of providing free and compulsory education. Though all SEAMEO member-countries have provisions on compulsory education, the length of compulsory education

varies, ranging from five years to 12 years. Primary education pupils do not have to pay for education in all SEAMEO member-countries. Students in secondary level also do not have to pay in many countries in the region such as in Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand. The length of free basic education varies across nations in the region (e.g., in Timor-Leste, free primary education lasts for nine years). Constitutional guarantee on free basic education is indicated in the constitutions of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, and Thailand. Other countries have laws that mandate free primary education.

On the other hand, the budget for education of several nations in the region remains insufficient to meet the needs of school-age children. Lack of necessary financial resources makes it more challenging for the governments to construct sufficient schools and classrooms, employ quality teachers, print out and distribute adequate quality teaching/learning resources, and provide other inputs necessary to ensure inclusive quality education that is available to all. Several strategies have emerged to make education more available, such as establishing schools in strategic locations, and offering unconventional schools such as mobile schools.

There are policies that expand parents' options in terms of their children's education, through private school registration laws, the standardization of curriculum in all schools, and the financial assistance for private junior school enrollees who graduated from a government elementary school. Moreover, there are programs that empower parents to facilitate the delivery of education to their children, e.g., home-based early childhood education.

B. Making Education Accessible

High on the agenda of actions to expand accessibility of education is the adherence of governments to international treaties that aim to remove discrimination as well as ensure gender parity on access to basic education. Although governments affirm that they prohibit discrimination on the delivery of basic education services, the results gathered from the scoping study indicate there are relatively few actions on advocacy-related measures to remove discrimination in education.

A few countries surveyed promote access of children with disabilities (CWDs) to education through improved facilities, establishment of schools catering to their special needs, and provision of scholarships. Special education/inclusive education programs likewise facilitate access of CWDs to education. Additionally, a few of the countries surveyed seek to increase education access of indigenous peoples (IPs) by setting up hostels for IP learners and schools in remote IP communities.

Non-formal education as well as unconventional learning modalities have been established targeting marginalized and unreached groups such as those in hospitals and prisons, and undocumented children. Moreover, countries developed several financial assistance programs that support the education of the economically-challenged individuals. These programs include education loans, scholarships, and conditional cash transfer schemes.

There are also strategies to promote school attendance such as school feeding and health programs, All School-Age Children in School (ACIS) Projects, and Early Registration programs. To make education accessible, more effort is needed to monitor and collect disaggregated data to inform decision-making and policy formulation.

C. Making Education Acceptable

In regard to making education acceptable, countries in the region have aligned their curriculum with human rights requirements and have integrated human rights topics in the curriculum. Moreover, countries have ensured that teaching and learning adhere to human rights standards. In relation to this, efforts have been exerted on making education learner-centered through recent curriculum reforms such as the National Education System for the 21st Century (Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad Ke-21 - SPN 21) in Brunei Darussalam and the K to 12 Basic Education System in the Philippines. Moreover, the promotion of child-friendly schools as a cornerstone of basic education is helping make education more relevant, responsive, and acceptable.

The institutionalization of mother tongue-based instruction in several SEAMEO member-countries (e.g., Philippines) is a positive development as it improves the acceptability of education. Several countries report having bilingual education programs and implementing mother tongue-based education for marginalized learners.

On the other hand, the survey indicates that there are challenges being faced with regard to the training of teachers on human rights, and the promotion of teachers' rights such as appropriate compensation, professional development and welfare. Among the indicators on the acceptability of education, the promotion of students' participation in policy development garnered the lowest rate.

D. Making Education Adaptable

The survey shows that governments exerted efforts to mainstream marginalized learners (e.g., those disadvantaged by gender, the CWDs, and minority groups), and to establish educational programs that

specifically address gender disparity, and cater to CWDs and minorities. Examples of these programs are the individualized education for CWDs and remediation program for CWDs in Brunei Darussalam, specialized curriculum for IP learners in Malaysia, and scholarship program to promote girls' participation in school in Cambodia.

Education is being adjusted to suit the needs of learners in difficult circumstances through flexible learning options such as home-schooling programs and education in emergencies such as during flooding in Cambodia, and in typhoon-affected communities in the Philippines.

There is still work to be done in terms of addressing child labor and child marriage. Even without specific policies on child labor, there are non-formal education programs that cater to working children's educational needs. On the other hand, child marriage is being addressed by setting a specific age requirement for marriage in some countries.

Addressing Barriers and Challenges on RBE

The study identifies ten issues and challenges that impinge on the right to education, especially in the areas of availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability. The discussion includes a number of recommendations to address the issues.

i. **Duty bearers are not aware nor are they sufficiently informed about the right to education.**
    The first step involves reviewing existing education structures, system and policy implementation to inform the development of a plan to raise awareness and solicit support for RBE. It is recommended that RBE promotion be part of the stipulated roles and responsibilities of the national government and local governments, education sector officials, parents, and community members. Students themselves should be given greater opportunities to take part in education planning, policy and program development, and monitoring and evaluation. To strengthen duty bearers' ability to fulfill their RBE obligations, capacity-building programs should be conducted.

ii. **Investment in education is either insufficient or improperly utilized impeding the realization of everyone's right to education.**
    The suggested courses of action are to mandate the prioritization of education in the national budget and to raise allocations to the global standard of 4-6 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP); to use evidence-based information for budget planning and spending; and to seek the cooperation of local governments, private institutions, donor agencies and communities in developing and implementing education programs targeting the unreached and marginalized and to converge their resources to avoid duplication and wastage and to ensure complementation.

iii. **There are governments that have stringent school admission policies barring those without proper documentation or those unable to comply with school requirements from being enrolled.**
    The recommendations for this include inter-government dialogue and collaboration on issues related to the undocumented and a review of admission policies. To address the lack of documentation, there should be a birth registration program for families of poor households or ethnic minorities or acceptance of alternative identification documents such as certificate of residence issued by local government authorities.

iv. **The insufficient number of qualified teachers creates challenges to the availability and acceptability of education**
    There is a need for governments: to set minimum teaching standards, conduct training and provide appropriate support for teachers; to offer incentive packages for teachers who serve marginalized and underserved learners; and review the policies on hiring, performance management, and dismissal of teachers.

v. **The unequal distribution of learning resources affects the proper provision of quality education services.**
    To address learning resource constraints and gaps, there is a need to carry out an inventory of existing national requirements. The use of technology/open educational resources and teacher-made learning resources can be introduced/enhanced. Sharing of local/indigenous learning materials should be encouraged. Moreover, private sector groups, through their programs, serve as potential sources of needed learning resources in schools.

vi. **Lack of infrastructure and facilities are barriers to accessible education.**
    The recommendation is for governments to provide sufficient investment in education, build infrastructure, schools or community learning centers, and introduce/strengthen innovative alternative learning systems or delivery modes such as mobile teachers,

mobile schools, multigrade instruction, small schools/integrated schools in remote areas.

vii. **Poverty hinders access to education for many, particularly in developing countries in the region.**
This could be addressed through conditional cash transfer programs, scholarships, and strict adherence to a fee-free/zero-collection policy in education.

viii. **Learners in remote and underserved areas are sometimes unable to access quality education.**
For this, recommendations include providing transportation services or allowances for students, establishing multigrade or K9 integrated schools in remote areas, and strengthening and expanding the reach of alternative learning programs.

ix. **Children suffering from poor health and malnutrition maybe incapacitated from availing the education they deserve because they are unable to attend regular classes.**
The recommendation is to strengthen linkages between health and education sectors in order to offer comprehensive health and nutrition programs in schools, promote water sanitation and hygiene, and ensure education service to sick children in hospitals.

x. **Real and virtual threats to child safety exist in some schools such as bullying, exploitation, and other forms of abuse.**
To address this, child protection policies should be implemented through inter-government agency collaboration (education, health, social welfare, and justice) at the national level, and child protection committees should be established at the school level. Moreover, there should be guidelines promoting safe, responsible and ethical use of ICT to address child safety concerns and foster the development of effective digital citizenship for both students and teachers.

The study resulted in the identification of the four types of learners who, because of their difficult circumstances, are least likely to claim their right to education. They are:
• Children with disabilities
• Undocumented children/migrant workers' children
• Indigenous peoples' children
• Children in conflict with the law
• Children who are victims of disasters

CONCLUSIONS
In conclusion, it is clear that rights-based education is not only recognized but is also operationally defined by Ministries of Education in the region. Countries in the region have constitutional provisions on RBE, or have developed and implemented RBE policies that are responsive to the right to education. Free and compulsory education is the most common RBE policy, which is either enshrined in the countries' respective Constitutions or mandated in national laws. Though all governments are mandated to provide free compulsory education, the scope and length of free education vary across the SEA countries. Many countries have not made preschool and upper secondary level free and compulsory.

Despite these efforts, RBE as a component of national development goals can be further strengthened. On a positive note, SEA countries support the humanistic principle of EFA, which highlights the advantages of education for each person, and is consistent with rights-based education.

Governments in the region have been active in pursuing a RBE agenda through several effective and innovative initiatives that operationalize the right to education. These include child-friendly schools, school feeding and/or health and nutrition programs, mother tongue-based education, and alternative learning modes/systems such as mobile schools or schools in hospitals, schools in prison, among others. Moreover, countries in the region have targeted interventions and support programs for those who are marginalized in education such as CWDs, IPs, the poor, and the geographically unreached, among others.

To enhance the impact of RBE, the prevailing issues such as those pertaining to sufficiency of budget and availability of qualified teachers, as well as the neglected issues of child labor and child marriage should be dealt with so that all could claim their right to education. Moreover, the least served sector of society should be identified and programs that cater to their educational needs should be institutionalized.

Moving RBE forward in the Region: While much has been achieved in promoting RBE in the region, there are a number of strategic measures that can move forward and strengthen rights-based education in Southeast Asia as follows:

i. **RBE Communication and Advocacy**
Countries in the region are obliged by international agreements and global covenants such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child,

International Conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to promote and protect their citizens' rights including the right to education. However, government officials and personnel who play a key role in realizing the citizens' right to education are not always active in advocating for this right. This gap may be addressed through communication and advocacy that promote RBE and ensure that RBE is integrated in the practices of the key actors in RBE, specifically government officials at various levels of government, school heads, and teachers in government schools.

ii. **RBE Capacity-building**

Crucial to the successful implementation of RBE policies and programs is the building of the capacity of key stakeholders, namely, the teachers, school heads, and education personnel, to be more inclusive and child-friendly in their approaches to education and in dealing with learners in their care.

To fortify government's commitment to fulfill its citizens' right to education, there should also be initiatives to build the capacity of education officials on human-rights based approaches to education so that they may act as promoters and protectors of the right to education.

Moreover, RBE capacity-building programs should gear duty bearers to act on the core message that education is the right of everyone, and everyone has the responsibility to make it happen.

iii. **Research, Monitoring and Evaluation**

More research is needed to identify and profile those whose right to education remains unclaimed, and to formulate plans, programs, and interventions for them. Moreover, RBE-oriented policy, planning, and budgeting should be systematically formulated through proper monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of education performance. The results of systematic and purposeful data gathering can be more meaningful by including a dissemination action plan targeting key duty bearers in RBE.

iv. **Regional, National and Local Collaboration**

The remaining gaps on RBE can be addressed through inter-government, governmental and nongovernmental organization (GO-NGO), public-private collaboration and support mechanisms at various levels such as school-based management and international development cooperation. This collaboration and support system have led to the success of several RBE-oriented programs and projects, i.e., child-friendly schools, locally-financed classroom construction, and school feeding programs.

v. **Rights-Based Education in the 21st Century**

The onset of the digital age raises new possibilities and challenges in making education more accessible. Digital technologies have the potential to extend citizens' right to education through a myriad of new learning pathways and access to learning resources. On the other hand, such technologies bring with them associated risks that threaten RBE such as issues of exclusion related to digital divide, cyber safety and cyber pollution, and threats to indigenous knowledge and culture.

Thus, while countries in the region are increasingly using digital technology in education and harnessing its potential to support RBE, it is crucial that measures are taken to ensure inclusiveness, child safety, and cultural sensitivity of ICT-based programs/projects.

Since there are common challenges to RBE in the region, duty bearers at the regional, national and local levels can respond to these challenges by sharing resources and technical expertise. RBE alliances and knowledge networks at these levels can be established and strengthened to enhance the capacity of duty bearers to fulfill their obligation of ensuring that children claim their right to education.

The success of RBE policy and program implementation depends on nations coming together to overcome barriers to the right to education. The ultimate beneficiaries of RBE are the education rights holders whose lives will change for the better when they get access to education that is acceptable and responsive to their needs.

REFERENCE

Global Campaign for Education (n.d.). *Education rights: A guide for practitioners and activists.* Accessed September 9, 2013 from http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/1._education_rights__a_guide_for_practitioners_and_activists.pdf.

Ministry of Education, Brunei Darussalam, (2009). *The national education system for the 21st century: SPN21.*

Author.

Save the Children Sweden, 2005. *Child rights programming* (2nd ed.). Lima, Peru: Author. Accessed

August 8, 2016, from http://images.savethechildren.it/f/downloa d/Policies/ch/child-rights-handbook.pdf.

SEAMEO, (2012). *Charter of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO)*, Revised ed., Accessed March 23, 2015 from http://www.seameo.org/SEAMEOWeb2/i mages/stories/SEAMEO_General/About_ SEAMEO/SEAMEO charter/charter2013.pdf.

Tomaševski, Katarina, (2004). *Economic, social, and cultural rights: The right to education.* Geneva: UN, Accessed March 23, 2015 from http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/3e2ebaeb4.pdf

UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) (2014). *Statistical yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2014.* Bangkok, Thailand: Author. Accessed December 2, 2015 from http://www. unescap.org/resources/statistical-yearbook-asia-and-pacific-2014

UNESCO, (2002). *Final Report of the Workshop on Universalizing the Right to Education of Good Quality: A Rights-based Approach to Achieving Education for All, Quezon City, Philippines, October 29-31, 2002.* Accessed July 7, 2015 from http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_ upload/appeal/human_rights/Final_report_ Rights-Based_workshop.pdf

———. (2011). *Regional Overview: East Asia and the Pacific*. Accessed September 9, 2013 from http:// unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001917/1 91719E.pdf

UNESCO, and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2007). *A Human Rights-based Approach to Education.* New York, USA: Authors. Accessed August 23, 2015 from http://www. unicef.org/publications/files/A_Human_Ri ghts_Based_Approach_to_Education_for_ All.pdf