



Thematic Area 3: Education: *Towards Education for All*

Rationale

Education has a profound impact on economic development of the regions and is key to improving the human development in all SAARC countries. Despite significant achievements in primary enrollment, the Education for All (EFA) remains a continuing challenge in South Asia. Only 5 out of the 8 countries have managed to reach the South Asian and World averages in terms of secondary education enrolment, and all 8 Member States perform below world averages at the tertiary education levels.

Aside from having low gross enrolment rates at the tertiary level, many young workers in the region are failing to develop the right skills for today's jobs. In South Asia, employer surveys increasingly suggest that inferior education systems and a shortage of skills are barriers to private sector investment and growth. Rising youth unemployment across the region and within the Member States also point to the inadequacy of the education system to prepare the South Asian youth for today's world of work.

Children with disabilities in South Asia continue to be excluded from their community and schools. Societal attitudes toward children with disabilities and limited resources available to accommodate their needs adds to their difficulties in accessing education. Along with access to schools, the ability of the education system to ensure and provide quality education for children with disabilities are challenges that South Asian governments are only now acknowledging and trying to understand.

OUTCOME STATEMENT: Increase opportunities, especially for women and disadvantaged groups through education and skill development

Quality Secondary and Higher Education and Skill development

Investments in education are necessary for raising human development, strong economies, healthier livelihoods and more equitable societies. It is a foundation for sustainable development and for the attainment of the SDGs.

SDF strongly believes that regional efforts must be supported to expand the reach of education at the secondary and tertiary levels, where enrolments rates are still low by improving the quality of education and reducing the inequalities in access. It also believes the education system at these levels should focus on improving the employability of the youth by investing in skill development (technical and vocational education and training)-maximizing on the potential of human capital and reaping

the benefit of the demographic dividend of the SAARC region.

To contribute towards improving education outcomes in the SAARC region, SDF will invest in projects that aim towards upgrading the quality of teachers across the SAARC region to support the large and growing population of students with diverse learning capabilities and expectations. It will support the piloting and upscaling of innovation in education delivery and the use of ICT in imparting education, and development of skills to prepare youth for the labor market.



investments by Governments in strengthening the inclusion of all children, regardless of their abilities.

SDF will work with the regional bodies and Member States through project funding support to ensure the Member States are able to uphold both regional and international commitments with regard to children's rights, and most specially for children with disabilities. It will support initiatives that strengthen the enabling environment for ensuring access to education for all, including supporting the work of local organizations to complement government and parental support in meeting the needs of children with disabilities.

Potential Areas for Collaboration

- Investments in capacity building for quality education
 - Teachers training
 - Faculty development
 - Innovations
- Investments for skill development
 - Incubation of sector skill councils
 - Investments in skill development centres
 - Curriculum development

Potential Areas for Collaboration

- Strengthen implementation of Regional Frameworks and Instruments related to children, education and human rights
- Ensure physical access to schools (including water and sanitation) and recreational facilities
- Strengthening of the education system and capacities of teachers for inclusive education
- Piloting and Upscaling of community initiatives that support access to education for children living with disabilities

Education for Children Living with Disabilities in the SAARC Region

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Education for All Framework, and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities calls on and reminds Governments of its responsibilities *'to take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children.'* They also call on Governments to *'ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning.'*

In addition, the SDGs call for access to quality education for all children by 2030, requiring commitment and significant