

Achieving the SDGs in South Asia: Key Policy Priorities and Implementation Challenges

Michael Williamson

**South and South-West Asia Forum on Implementation of the SDGs
1-2 November 2017, Kathmandu**

Transformational potential of SDGs for South Asia

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which comprises the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), were adopted by world leaders at the United Nations Summit in September 2015
- The SDGs are especially relevant for the eight countries of South Asia which, despite their economic dynamism and remarkable MDG achievements, still account for nearly 40% of the world's poor
- Countries in the subregion also suffer from a number of development and infrastructure gaps, and low levels of human development
- Given South Asia's weight in world population (nearly a fourth) and widespread poverty, the global achievement of the SDGs will not be possible without South Asia achieving them.

MDGs still an unfinished agenda for South Asia

Goal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	\$1.25 per day poverty Underweight children	Primary enrolment Reaching last grade Primary completion	Gender primary Gender secondary Gender tertiary	Under-5 mortality Infant mortality	Maternal mortality Skilled birth attendance Antenatal care (≥ 1 visit)	HIV prevalence TB incidence TB prevalence	Forest cover Protected area CO ₂ emissions per GDP Safe drinking water Basic sanitation
Asia-Pacific	● ●	▶ ●	● ● ●	■ ■	■ ■ ■	● ● ●	● ● ● ●
South-East Asia	● ●	▶ ■	● ● ●	■ ■	■ ■ ▶	● ● ●	▶ ● ● ●
South Asia	● ●	▶ ■	● ■ ■	■ ■	■ ■ ■	● ● ●	● ● ● ●
Pacific Islands	▶	● ■	● ● ■	■ ■	■ ▶ ■	● ● ●	▶ ● ● ■
North and Central Asia	●	▶ ●	● ● ●	■ ■	■ ■ ▶	● ● ●	■ ■ ■
Asia-Pacific LDCs	● ▶	■ ■	● ● ■	▶ ■	■ ■ ■	● ● ●	▶ ● ● ■
South & South-West Asia	Afghanistan	■ ▶	▶ ■	● ●	■ ■	▶ ▶	▶ ▶
	Bangladesh	▶ ▶	▶ ■	● ●	● ●	▶ ▶	▶ ▶
	Bhutan	● ●	■ ■	● ●	● ●	● ▶	● ●
	India	● ●	▶ ■	● ●	■ ■	■ ■	● ●
	Iran (Islamic Rep. of)	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	▶ ▶	▶ ▶
	Maldives	● ●	▶ ▶	● ●	● ●	▶ ▶	● ●
	Nepal	● ●	● ▶	● ●	● ●	■ ■	▶ ▶
	Pakistan	● ●	■ ■	▶ ▶	■ ■	■ ■	▶ ▶
	Sri Lanka	● ▶	▶ ▶	● ●	■ ■	■ ■	▶ ▶
	Turkey	● ●	▶ ▶	● ●	● ●	▶ ▶	● ●

● Early achiever
 ▶ On track
 ■ Slow
 ▶ Regressing/No progress



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD



Sustainable Development Goals

A renewed global partnership for development

17. Means of Implementation and revitalize global partnership for sustainable development

- Finance
- Technology
- Capacity-building
- Trade
- Systemic Issues
- Data, monitoring and accountability



Towards a policy agenda for achieving the SDGs in South Asia

- Interrelationships between many goals and targets
- Positive spillovers of integrating economic, social and environmental pillars
- Identify key policy priorities for South Asia that will help maximize the interrelationships and positive spillovers



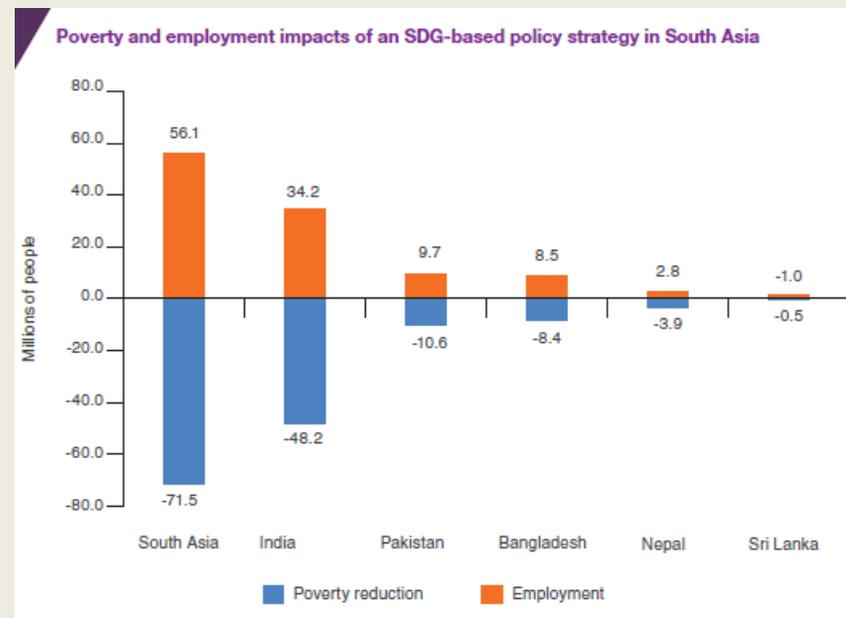
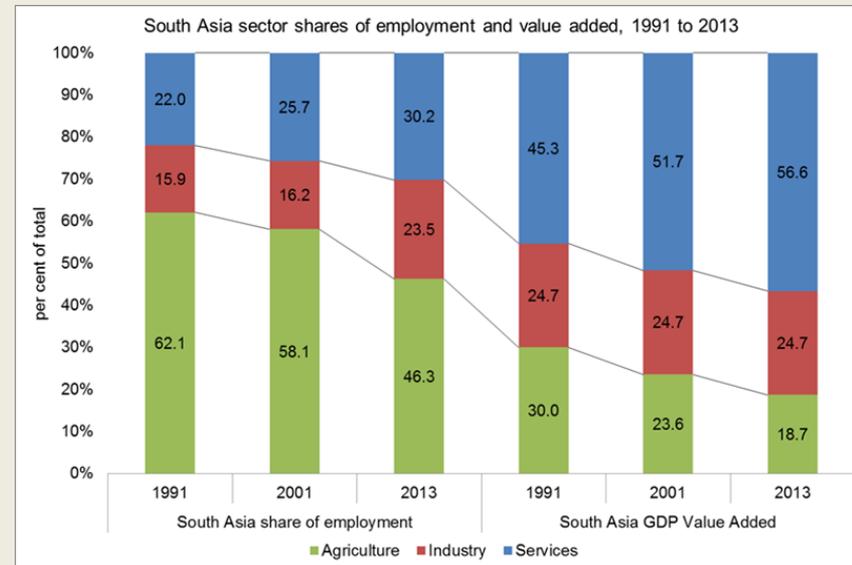
Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in South Asia

Key Policy Priorities and Implementation Challenges



And sustainable industrialization

- Structural transformation in South Asia moved from agriculture to industry bypassing industry
- Agriculture still sustains nearly half of the workforce
- Share of manufacturing in GDP in South Asia much lower in South Asia compared to East Asian countries
- ESCAP-SANEM model simulations suggest that an industry-oriented growth would lift an additional 71 million people out of extreme poverty and create an additional 56 million jobs by 2030 (based on five countries in South Asia).



b. Close gaps in infrastructure by providing essential basic services to all

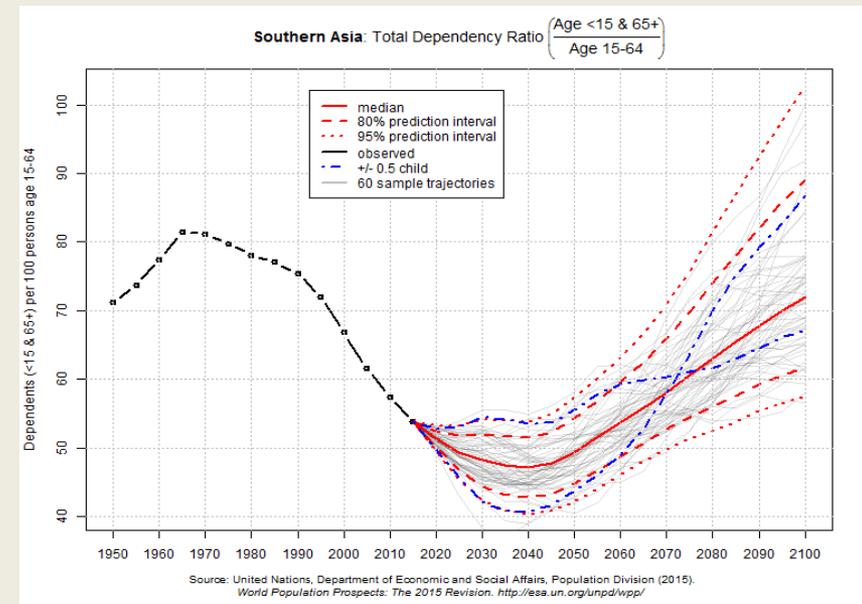
- Wide infrastructure gaps in South Asia
- Infrastructure availability affects achievement of other SDGs
- Access to infrastructure also source of inequality (between rural-urban)
- Important multiplier effects of infrastructure investment
- Accelerating access to sustainable infrastructure and basic services: a policy imperative for South Asia

	Access to telecommunications, 2014 (per 100 people)	Access to electricity, 2012 (% of population)	Access to improved water, 2015 (% of population)	Access to improved sanitation, 2015 (% of population)	Internet users, 2014 (per 100 people)	Rail density, 2012 (km of railway per 1000 km ²)	Road density, 2011 (km of road per 1000 km ²)	Paved roads, 2012 (% of roads)
East and North-East Asia	118	98	96	80	53	8	400	64
South-East Asia	132	77	90	72	29	5	276	55
South Asia	76	73	92	45	17	19	1123	52
Afghanistan	74	..	55	32	6	..	35	36
Bangladesh	76	60	87	61	10	22	1838	10
Bhutan	85	..	100	50	34	..	219	34
India	75	75	94	40	18	22	1578	54
Maldives	192	..	99	98	49	..	293	100
Nepal	85	76	92	46	15	..	139	54
Pakistan	76	69	91	64	14	10	341	73
Sri Lanka	120	85	96	95	26	23	1819	15
World	111	78	91	67	40	9	275	57

Sources: Based on the UNESCAP (2016d) (accessed 23 June 2016). Data for electricity access from REN21 (2015).

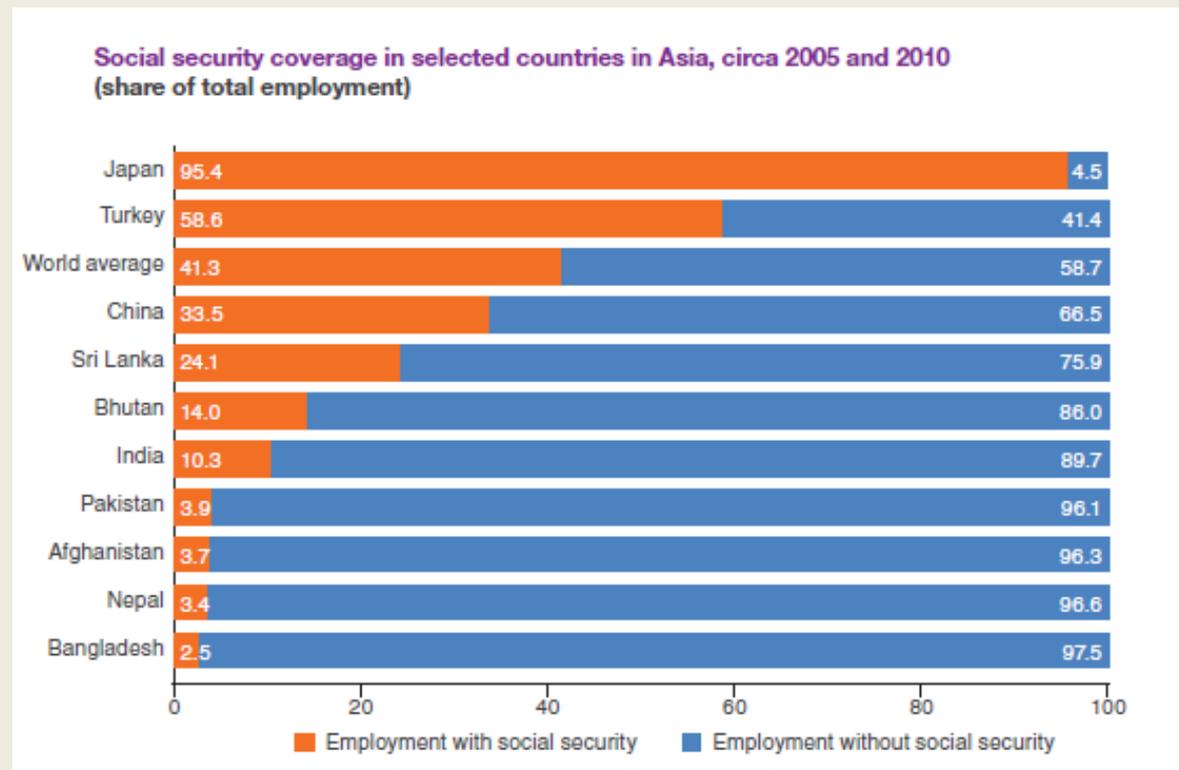
c. Harness the demographic dividend through universal access to education and health

- South Asia must prioritize closing remaining gaps in universal access to health and education, crucial to harness dividend from its youth bulge
- Although MDG targets for primary enrolment and completion met, quality remains an issue
- SDGs provide last window as dependency ratio in South Asia will begin to increase between 2030 and 2050.
- With human resource development and productive jobs, South Asia could be home to largest middle class in the world and engine of global growth
- South Asia needs to move towards universal health coverage



d. Provide universal social protection and financial inclusion to reduce inequalities and dire deprivations

- Extending financial inclusion and social protection as critical for SDG achievement, low coverage related to prevalence of poverty in South Asia
- Across South Asia, fewer than 10.6 % of workers have social security (except Sri Lanka). Global average of over 40%
- Bank account ownership in South Asia only reached about 46% of adult population (highest gender gaps in financial inclusion)



e. Address food security and hunger with sustainable agricultural productivity improvements

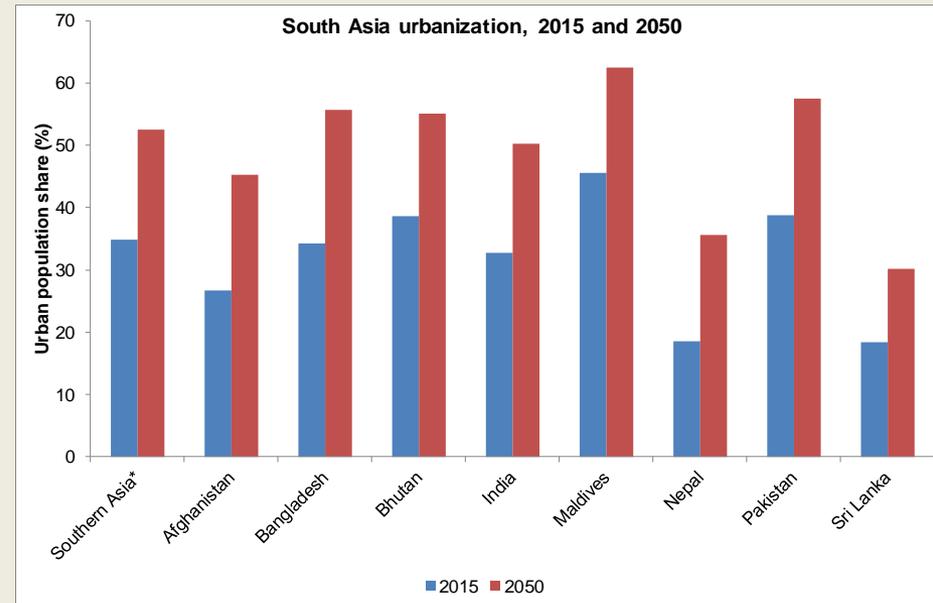
- South Asia remains one of the largest hunger hotspots in the world
- In 2014-2016, about 281 million people were undernourished in South Asia
- Food security and eradication of hunger requires policy action in four priority areas:
 - Eradicate extreme poverty to ensure better access to food and reduce inequality
 - Provide more nutritious food (to reduce anemia and vitamin A deficiency)
 - Extend social protection programmes to improve household incomes and consumption
 - Increase smallholder agricultural productivity through sustainable agricultural practices

f. Promote gender equality and women's empowerment through entrepreneurship

- Although MDG goal on gender equality in primary and secondary education achieved, South Asia lags behind in economic and political empowerment of women
- South Asia also has highest level of female child mortality and violence against women and girls remains prevalent
- Low female workforce participation rate
- Opportunity cost gender inequality very high ranging between \$800 billion to \$3.5 trillion additional GDP by 2025 in South Asia
- Promoting women's entrepreneurship through gender-friendly ecosystem and credit facilities for women entrepreneurs as potent catalyst for achieving inclusive and sustainable development.
- Only about 8-9% of formal SMEs owned by women in the subregion

g. Enhance environmental sustainability through low-carbon climate-resilient pathways

- Growing vulnerability to climate change and disasters
- Addressing the challenges through enhancing energy efficiency and mix
- Sustainable urbanization
- Sustainable production, consumption and waste recycling



Regional Cooperation for the SDGs

- Vast potential of regional cooperation and coordination in implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda
- Sharing development experiences and good practices in contextualizing and localizing the SDGs
- Building up productive capacities through a coordinated industrial development strategy, strengthened regional connectivity and regional value chains
- Strengthening collective energy and food security, and enhance resilience to natural disasters
- Developing low-carbon pathways through pooling of resources

Concluding remarks

- The 2030 Agenda is a unique opportunity to provide a life of dignity to all in South Asia within a generation
- Accelerate achievements through exploitation of synergy and interlinkages
- Seven key policy priorities may help accelerate progress
 - including industry-oriented job creating economic growth, closing gaps in basic infrastructure, providing universal education and health, social protection, women entrepreneurship, sustainable agriculture and low-carbon growth paths
- Exploit the potential of domestic resource mobilization
- Stronger global partnership for finance, technology and market access
- Critical role of regional cooperation and integration
- South Asia's turn to lead the global achievements?

Thank you

www.unescap.org