Sub-regional Cooperation Goals for achieving the SDGs in South Asia

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Introduction

• The SDGs cannot be achieved merely through national action; in certain areas sub-regional cooperation is needed to undo the artificial divisions created by history

• The SDGs which have international acceptability and aim high, could be utilized to spur much needed but delayed regional agreements

• Most critical sub-regional actions fall among the SDG subjects

• These are recast here as 9 critical “Sub-regional SDGs”
Sub-regional social SDGs
1. Establish an effective sub-regional food security system

• **ADB-IFPRI study (2009)** considers most of South Asia as “most vulnerable” and Pakistan as “significantly vulnerable” due to climate change.

• **SAARC’S efforts** at establishing a regional food bank may not be enough:
  • Bank too small and procedures too cumbersome.

• Ultimately freer trade on food-grains is essential.

![Projected rice production levels in 2050 with and without climate change compared to 2000 levels](Source: ADB & IFPRI 2009)
2. End cross-border health vulnerabilities and establish seamless regional health services

- Halting spread of communicable diseases across borders
  - setting up surveillance systems
  - sharing of information on disease outbreaks
  - Sharing experiences on handling epidemics
- Health services for patients across borders in SAARC
  - Considerable medical tourism already taking place
- Cooperation in medical education
Sub-regional SDGs relating to trade, infrastructure, growth and employment
3. Establish an effective SAFTA

- Insufficient progress on SAFTA
- Poorly developed surface transport links
- Poor supply capabilities hindering cross-country supply chain formation

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>2008</th>
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<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>Average 2008-2012</th>
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</table>

Source: World Development Indicators
4. Establish free trade in services and a regulated sub-regional labor market to achieve employment for all

• SAARC agreement on trade in services (SATIS) of 2010 has largely remained as good intentions

• Promotion of an integrated labor market with formalization and regulation of labor flows within the sub-region would ultimately be powerful growth and poverty reduction measure
5. Accelerate sustainable energy cooperation

• Hydroelectricity potential from Himalayan states and India’s market
• Natural gas (Bangladesh-India)
• Trade in electricity generated from renewable (solar and wind) sources
  • India has committed to increase share of renewable energy in total energy generation to 40% from the current 10% by 2030.
  • This creates more potential for trade in energy and knowledge and technology on energy production from renewable sources
Sub-regional environment and climate change SDGs
6. Reach agreement on sharing of river waters, establishing flood and disasters management system

- The Himalayan river system includes 10 river systems covering over 20% of the world’s population involving 13 countries.
- With climate change, disputes over sharing the water from these river systems may increase.
- Likewise, cooperation on flood management is another imperative.
- Amicable resolution within the medium term of all pending water sharing and flood management issues is required.
- Establishing sub-regional disaster management system.
7. Accelerate cooperation on critical sub-regional environment issues

• Protection of forestry and wild life, where resources spill across national boundaries needs to be well coordinated
  • Example: Sundarbans mangroves and tigers
• Conservation of marine resources requires more heightened cooperation among the neighboring states
  • A continuous and unnecessary area of conflict
• Better sharing of knowledge and best practices in the environment field needs to be promoted.
Sub-regional SDGs on governance and institutions
8. Halt all cross-border crime

• Trafficking of women and minors
• Smuggling of contraband and narcotics
• All other cross-border crime
Sub-regional SDG on means of implementation
9. Establish institutions to end gaps in critical sub-regional capacities

• Sharing of knowledge, best practices and expertise in SDG areas
• Cooperation in technology (e.g. sustainable frugal technology)
Thank You!

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