

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

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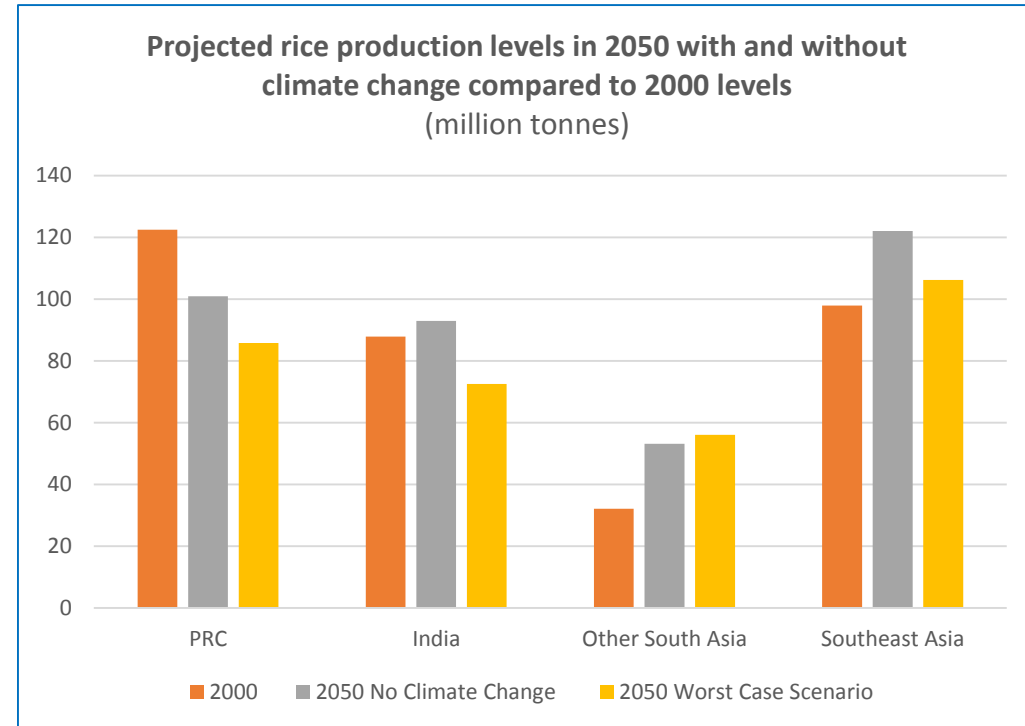
Introduction

- 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 regional food bank may not be enough
 - Bank too small and procedures too cumbersome
- Ultimately freer trade on food-grains is essential



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

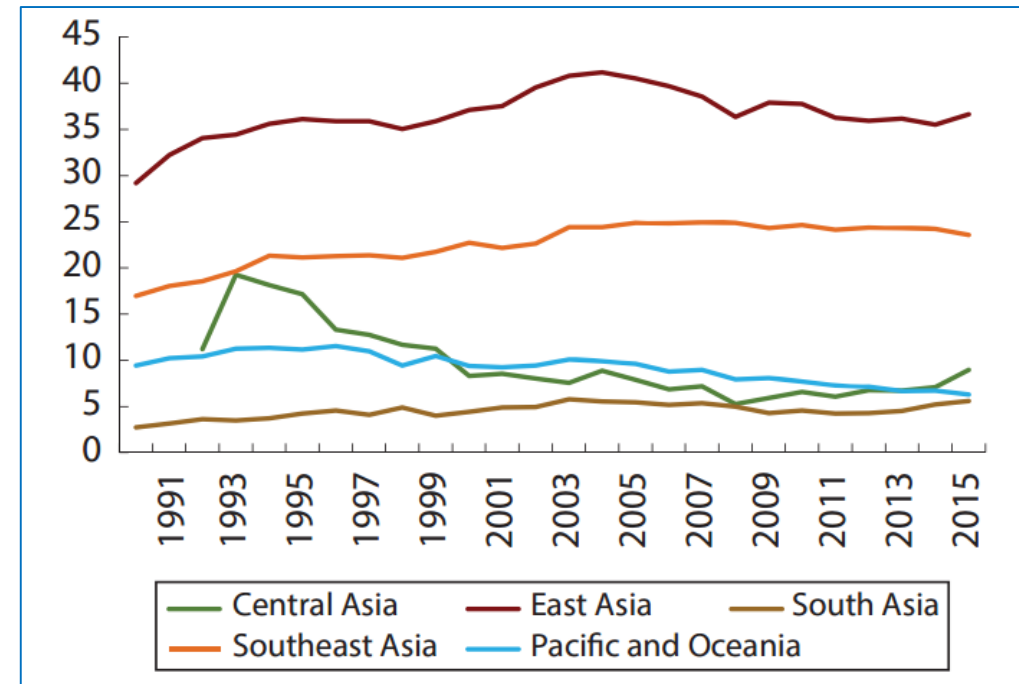
- Insufficient progress on SAFTA
- Poorly developed surface transport links
- Poor supply capabilities hindering cross-country supply chain formation

Table 3: Exports to GDP Ratio (%) in countries of South and South West Asia

Countries	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Average 2008-2012
Afghanistan	18.0	14.7	10.0	6.1	5.5	10.9
Bangladesh	17.7	16.9	16.0	19.9	20.2	18.1
Bhutan	46.6	44.7	42.5	41.2	38.7	42.7
India	23.6	20.0	22.0	24.3	24.4	22.9
Iran, Islamic Rep.	
Maldives	93.0	79.0	86.1	98.4	111.9	93.7
Nepal	12.8	12.4	9.6	8.9	10.1	10.8
Pakistan	12.4	12.4	13.5	14.0	12.4	12.9
Sri Lanka	24.8	21.3	22.4	23.1	22.8	22.9
Turkey	23.9	23.3	21.2	24.0	26.3	23.7
Low income	24.5	20.7	22.9	24.0	24.4	23.3
Lower middle income	28.8	24.7	26.0	28.0	27.2	26.9
East Asia & Pacific (all income levels)	34.7	28.8	31.7	32.5	31.7	31.9
South Asia	22.0	19.0	20.6	22.7	22.7	21.4

Source: World Development Indicators

Intra-subregional trade shares, Asian subregions



Source: ADB. Asian Economic Integration Report 2016

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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