



[#OneSouthAsia Conversations](#) explore ideas for regional cooperation in economic connectivity, climate resilience, and human development. The series began in 2020 and is open to the public. The World Bank's South Asia Regional Integration and Engagement team organizes the events and welcomes your feedback at OneSouthAsia@worldbank.org.

Highlights and Key Ideas

Watch a video recording of our [16th OneSouthAsia Conversation](#) on Advancing Higher Education Cooperation in South Asia. Visit our [website](#) for more information.

Key ideas discussed included:

- In South Asia, higher education sector is expanding. The enrollment rate in tertiary education has grown from 16% in 2010 to 26% in 2020. Countries need sufficient financial and human resources to accommodate the rising numbers of students, and to invest in high quality research and academic outputs.
- Regional cooperation can help countries leverage human capital investments and support collaborative research and academics. Other benefits include fluency in foreign languages, understanding socio-cultural environments, addressing common challenges, bringing new ideas and strengthening capacity.
- Starting from a low base, there are many opportunities for collaboration in higher education in South Asia. These collaborations can be in various areas including multi-campus universities or setting up branch campuses, joint delivery of instructions, joint research projects, networks for academics and higher education institutions, and student exchange programs.
- Smaller nations in the region with limited resources can benefit from shared infrastructure and resources. They can contribute by developing their own expertise in specific areas like oceanography and marine biology in Maldives and hydropower in Bhutan.
- Collaborative research can also enhance South Asia's scientific research output. Currently, the region has 20% of the world's total student enrollment in higher education but contributes only 5% of global scientific research output. This number is small compared to the number of universities in the region.
- Women participation in research is low in South Asia. They hold only 18.5% of the research positions as compared to 23.4% in East Asia and Pacific. Higher education collaborations can specifically target greater participation of women in tertiary

education and research to ensure equity.

- Countries can devise metrics to track academic and research collaborations based on number of joint papers published, institutions and individuals working together, and number of platforms. This will encourage and help track cooperative efforts.



Archana Thakur

Joint Secretary, University Grants Commission, India

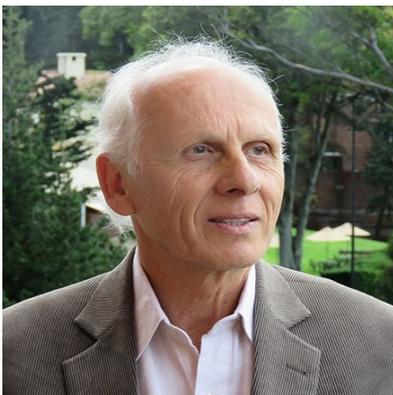
“With a growing demand for skilled professionals and managers in South Asia, there is a consensus on the need of greater regional cooperation and cross border collaboration among the higher education institutions. Efforts among the universities are focusing on collaboration in instruction delivery, student exchange, capacity building, and curriculum development.”



Cecile Fruman

Director, Regional Integration and Engagement, South Asia, World Bank

“Higher education is indispensable to build dynamic economies and cohesive societies. The countries of South Asia have a formidable opportunity to increase cooperation in higher education to meet the needs of a rapidly changing world, in particular in the areas of academic excellence and high quality research.”



Jamil Salmi

Global Tertiary Education Expert

“Working together to address scientific issues is one of the main benefits of involving higher education institutions in skills formation and research to fund new solutions. We can also build institutional capacity through mutually beneficial partnerships. In South Asia, we have the example of the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh; in Africa, we have a network of African Centers of Excellence that have pooled their resources to achieve critical mass in some areas where each country individually would not have had the resources to do it.”

Mahmood UI Hassan Butt

Member, Higher Education Commission, Pakistan



“Higher educational systems in South Asia need to be proactive in promoting collaboration and cooperation. And this will mean fundamental changes, like making it possible for students to have their credits transferred, or facilitating students to build on their own cultural traditions and at the same time, see what else is happening in other countries in the region. This is educational diplomacy, which can help break down barriers and open up many new opportunities.”

Seeram Ramakrishna

Director, Center for Nanotechnology & Sustainability, National University of Singapore



“East Asia Pacific is politically, culturally very diverse just as South Asia. But the need for economic growth, job creation, and global competition brought the countries together to cooperate as deeply as possible. South Asia can emulate some good practices of education cooperation in their own way and support economics students and researchers come together, cooperate on climate mitigation technologies, decarbonization, energy solutions and also look at cooperation in new areas like artificial intelligence.”

Tell us what you think

We value your feedback. Please click [here](#) or use the QR code on the right to answer a four-question survey about how we can improve future #OneSouthAsia events.



Follow our activities supporting regional cooperation

The #OneSouthAsia Conversation series has examined regional responses to air pollution, digital tools to advance human development, plastic pollution of the ocean, women entrepreneurship, food trade, and COVID-19. All past events are available [here](#), with links to video recordings, text summaries, blogs, and related World Bank reports.

Follow our activities supporting regional cooperation in economic connectivity, climate resilience, and human development:

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THURSDAY, JULY 20, 2023 8:00 AM ET
Washington D.C.



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