



[#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 [17th #OneSouthAsia Conversation](#) on Harnessing Transboundary Waters in South Asia. Visit our [website](#) for more information.

Key ideas discussed included:

- South Asia is home to **1/4th of the global population**, and it is estimated that by 2050, between **1.5 and 1.7 billion** people in the region will be exposed to water scarcity.
- The region has **20 main transboundary rivers** and hundreds of smaller rivers that cross political boundaries. Most of these transboundary waters lack any type of cooperative arrangement. South Asian countries have a few bilateral agreements, but a regional and multilateral cooperation framework for water resource management is missing.
- **Climate change** is changing water patterns and introducing urgency for enhanced transboundary water cooperation to manage the **quantum and quality of water**, but also **the timing of water-sharing**. Riparian countries and states need effective water management during distress and peak demand periods.
- **Objective, fact-based scientific and technical cooperation**, and **knowledge-sharing** among countries is critical including in areas like hydropower generation, data sharing and early warnings on floods, managing salinity and sedimentation, ground water management, and other climate change-related challenges.
- South Asia has examples of successful bilateral agreements like the **Ganges Water Treaty** (Bangladesh-India), the **Mahakali Treaty** (India-Nepal), and the **Indus Water Treaty** (India-Pakistan).
- While **government-to-government** and **Track II dialogues** are important, there is a need to include **grassroots participation** and **community-level dialogue** for effective management of water resources to help communities that are directly impacted. All of these efforts participate in building trust and collective approaches that

benefit all parties.

- The World Bank has established a **global facility for transboundary water cooperation**, which will share technical assistance, global expertise, and good practices with countries.



Ajaya Dixit

Senior Advisor, Institute for Social and Environmental Transition

“In South Asia, some bilateral treaties on water cooperation have been successful, but then these treaties do not look at water management in a holistic way. They do not look at nature, ecosystems, or emerging climate change risks. There are also hundreds of small and seasonal transboundary rivers, which do not find place in conversations that are dominated by larger rivers and shared basins. We need to look at multiple values, multiple rules, and multiple requirements of water. We need to revisit our own efforts of transboundary water management. Our aim must be to share water equitably so that we can thrive together.”



Ashwin Pandya

Secretary General, International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage

“South Asia is a one hydrological unit. The development patterns do not match the water availability patterns—when the water demand is high, and the availability is low. One of the main challenges of transboundary water dialogue is not just the quantum of water sharing, but also the timing of it. We also need dialogue, which is neutral, honest, and takes into account scientific and technical data, as well as the views of the grassroots who are most impacted by water stress.”



Cecile Fruman

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

“In South Asia, rivers sustain life in the region – they are a source of drinking water and livelihood, they irrigate fields, they facilitate transport and trade, and they sustain complex ecosystems. Transboundary water cooperation is urgent and pressing to address the rising climate change impacts and to sustain peace and stability in the region and globally. The World Bank stands ready to support action, investments, and convening, building on our 10-year experience with the South Asia Water Initiative.”



Malik Fida Khan

Executive Director, Center for Environmental and Geographic Information Services, Bangladesh

“In South Asia, we need a regional river basin organization, especially for the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna basin. This will help harness the economic, ecological, and development benefits of our shared rivers more effectively. We need multilateral cooperation, which will involve governments, policymakers, technical experts, and local communities. We need more initiatives and cooperation among the people who are using water, like the farmers and riverine communities.”



Runa Khan

Founder and Executive Director, Friendship

“In South Asia, rivers are like the veins of a person's body, they carry different kinds of needs, especially for communities who live along the rivers and are dependent on them. These communities are also amongst the most vulnerable. Besides transboundary and national-level water management and cooperation, we need micro-level management at the community level, which takes into account the real needs and requirements of the grassroots and implements solutions with impact.”



Saroj Kumar Jha

Global Director, Water Global Practice, World Bank

“Water is at the core of development agenda. There is a close nexus with climate, energy, and food security. Over 60 percent of global freshwater resources are shared between countries. At the World Bank, out of the \$85 billion+ active water sector portfolio globally, almost half of it supports transboundary projects between countries. We have also established a global facility for transboundary water cooperation, which will share technical assistance, global expertise, and good practices with countries.”

Tell us what you think

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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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#OneSouthAsia Conversations

**Flowing Waters:
Harnessing Transboundary
Rivers in South Asia**

**THURSDAY
NOVEMBER 9,
2023**
8:00 AM ET
Washington D.C.

6:00 PM Islamabad / Male
6:30 PM Colombo / New Delhi
6:45 PM Kathmandu
7:00 PM Dhaka/Thimpu

Moderated by: **Cecile Fruman**
Director, Regional Integration and Engagement, South Asia Region, World Bank

Opening remarks: **Saraj Kumar Jha**
Global Director, Water Global Practice, World Bank

Malik Fida Khan
Executive Director, Center for Environmental and Geographic Information Services, Bangladesh

Runa Khan
Founder, Friendsip, Bangladesh

Ajaya Dixit
Senior Advisor, Institute for Social and Environmental Transition, Nepal

Ashwin Pandya
Secretary General, International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage, India

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