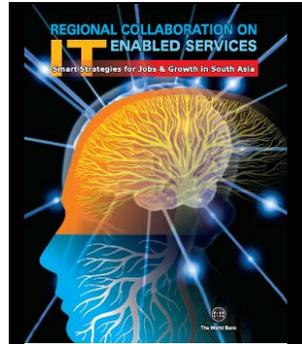




Invitation to the High-Level Dialogue on South Asia Regional Collaboration

“Concept Note Review for Regional Collaboration on IT Enabled Services in South Asia”



A multi-country two-hour video conference discussion connecting World Bank Headquarters, Washington DC with the GDLN VC Centers at Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka

MC 4-860, Wednesday March 10, 2010
(Washington DC time 7:45 AM – 10:00 AM EST)

You are cordially invited to a multi-country two-hour video conference discussion connecting the World Bank Headquarters in Washington, DC with the South Asian countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The multi-country video conference is part of a series of South Asian regional cooperation GDLNs organized by the World Bank with an objective to initiate and enrich the dialogue among the various stake holders as well as bring forward actionable steps towards progress on a diverse range of issues of regional cooperation in South Asia. The goal is to build understanding/deepen knowledge among the stakeholders including policy makers and civil society, on the opportunities, challenges and the path leading to more effective cooperation in the South Asia region.

Description of the Event:

South Asian countries share many characteristics that lend themselves to collaboration; particularly in IT Enabled Services (ITES). These include a young population, high adoption of the English language, and a strong quantitative focus in education. This provides an environment where the ITES Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry can thrive. India has dramatically shifted its export-led economy through services mainly in the ITES-BPO industry; it has 37% of the market share in global off-shoring. Nonetheless, India is facing a talent crunch and wage inflation which has prompted a shift in location to minimize talent cost. The rest of the SAR countries are following suit through different paths. However, those countries require support to build their capabilities in the industry. This effort can be facilitated through effective regional collaboration based on the cost advantages and talent pool the smaller countries

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can bring and the knowledge and infrastructure investment the more established SAR countries can provide.

The ITES-BPO industry offers much needed foreign exchange and is a significant employer in major cities in the region and has the potential to become one in less urban areas as well; it requires relatively low investment in infrastructure from the government and potential employers. It is also an attractive employment option for women as it offers more flexibility and usually offers a workplace that is more conducive than one finds within traditional male dominated industries in the SAR.

Stimulating a strategic dialogue leading to regional collaboration and integration within the SAR has many gains for each country within the region and the region as a whole. **Knowledge partnerships resulting from such collaboration can be a key growth driver for the ITES- BPO industry as well as the region.**

The Regional GDLN Dialogue session on **Wednesday, March 10, 2010 (7:45 AM – 10:00 AM EST)** has been organized to follow-up on the multi-country regional cooperation dialogue on ITES that was organized in July 2009. The discussion will *focus on a draft regional project Concept Note on regional collaboration in ITES* developed by the Financial and Private Sector of the World Bank within the SAR. The framework was developed based on consultations with key actors in government, facilitating the ITES industry development as well as the key trade associations in each country representing the industry. The regional report (2009) which provides the intellectual underpinning for the project, discussed in the first GDLN dialogue, was produced after the Bank ascertained strong client demand from SAR counterparts and key stakeholders. Recent VCs to disseminate the report also confirmed a strong desire to progress these recommendations into tangible actions.

The discussion will focus on the proposed Project Concept:

1) To develop knowledge partnerships across South Asian ITES Trade Associations and also with local public and private institutions involved in industry development and promotion; **2)** To transfer global best practices and technical assistance to create successful enterprises offering sustainable and well paid employment in the SAR; **3)** Encouraging collaborative behavior in the ITES sector and related sectors in its value chain, such as: a) increasing business through joint promotional activities, sub-contracting of work, building common standards, and creating centers of excellence; and b) developing supply side resources such as technical skills, support infrastructure, and enabling policies.

Format of the Event:

The event will be interactive, and we encourage open discussion and comments by the participants. Manju Haththotuwa, South Asia Finance & Private Sector Development (SASFP), will present the highlights of the proposed Concept Note.

The discussion will address the following questions:

1. How can **ITES become a catalyst for regional cooperation and growth**, particularly for underserved regions and segments of the population?
2. What are the **3 top priority market responsive areas of collaboration** we should forge in the proposed regional initiative?
3. How can the project components be refined - i.e. **SAR ITES venture fund, Policy imperatives and institutional capacity building?**

March 3, 2010



Location and Time:

BANGLADESH

Time: 6:45-9:00 PM

BRAC University
66 Mohakhali C/A Room AH 504 Dhaka 1212

Contact: Fahima Khanam
E- mail: fahima@bracu.ac.bd
Mobile: +88-01199111028

BHUTAN

Time: 6:45-9:00 PM

Royal University of Bhutan
VC Room
Lower Motihang
Thimphu

INDIA

Time: 6:15-8:30 PM

TERI Distance Learning Center
Darbari Seth Black
6C, India Habitat Center, Lodhi Road, New Delhi

Contact: Col. Vinod Bhargava
E- mail: bhargava@teri.res.in
Work phone: +91 11 2468 2142
Mobile: +91 98110 09263

NEPAL

Time: 6:30-8:45pm

World Bank Office
The World Bank, Yak & Yeti Hotel Complex, Lal Durbar,
Kathmandu, Nepal

Phone: (977-1) 4226792
Fax: (977-1) 4225112



PAKISTAN

Time: 5:45-8:00pm

Higher Education Commission,
H-9,
Islamabad

Contact: Ms. Iffat Ahmed

Work phone: +92 51 9040 429

SRI LANKA

Time: 6:15-8:30 pm

Sri Lanka Distance Learning Center
4th Floor SLIDA building
Colombo, Sri Lanka

Contact: Shalika Subasinghe

E- mail: lka_ssubasinghe@gdlnmail.org

Work phone: +94 11 255 4966/2554947 (Direct)