



REGIONAL POLICY PRIORITIES AND PROCESSES REGARDING GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE AND FOOD SECURITY IN THE IGP

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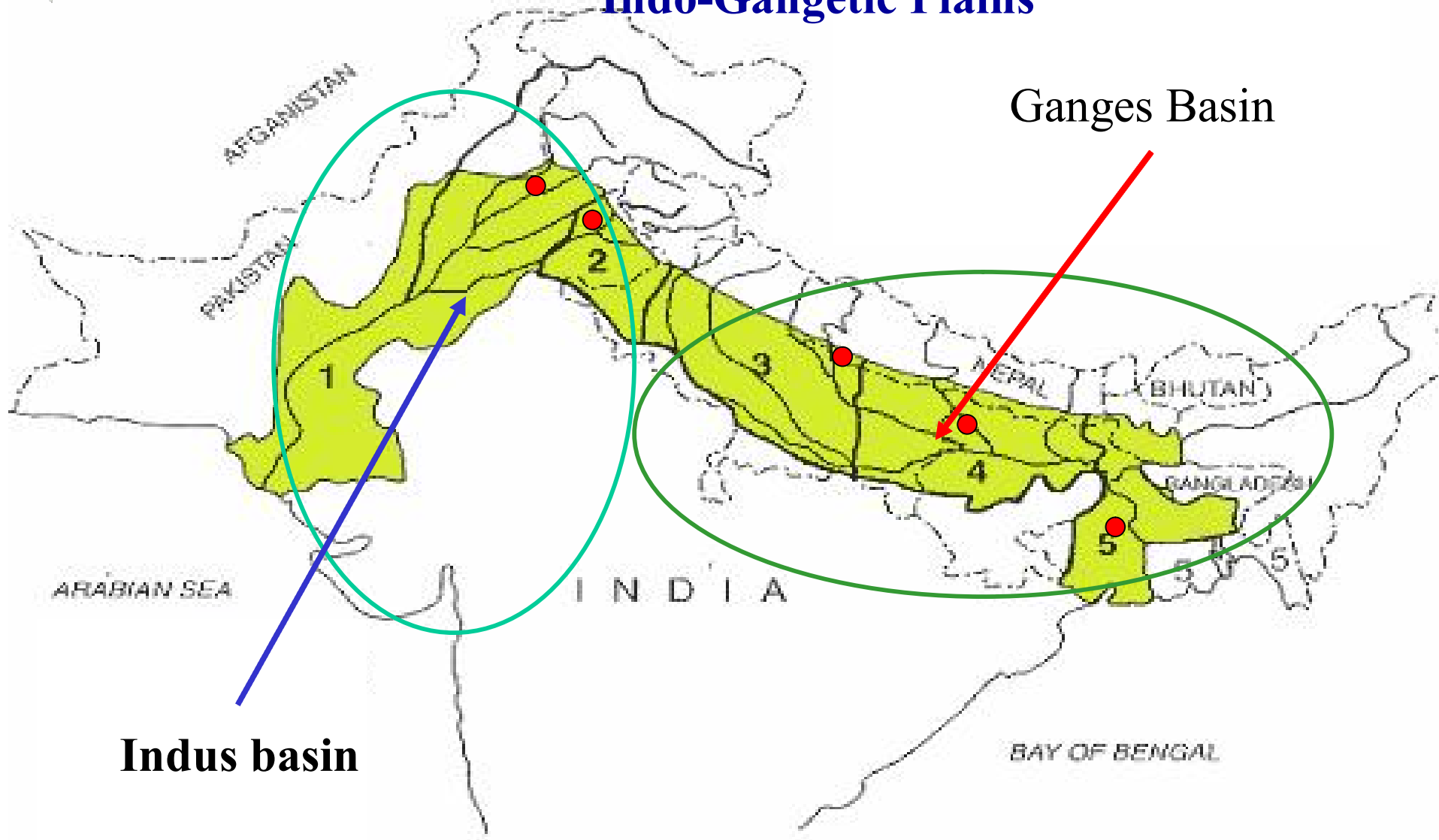
Centre for Global Change

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Indo-Gangetic Plains

Ganges Basin



Indus basin

BAY OF BENGAL

Ground Realities

Old river-based civilizations

Fertile land, once known as prosperous

Crop agriculture

Occasional occurrence of hazards (water-related)

Changes in not-so-distant past

Large population, increasing

Poverty

Frequently occurring hazards turning into disasters



Features of the Region

- Eight countries
- Diverse natural setting: from low-lying delta to the highest mountains on earth; wettest region to dry desert environment
- Diverse cultures, environments and food provision systems
- From self-reliance to gradual shift towards food imports
- Increasingly becoming industrial society from agrarian society
- Susceptibility to weather extremes
- Weak regional-level institutional connectivity



Regional Differences

IGP Western Region

- high productivity – food surplus region
- high investment in infrastructure
- major use of fertilisers and ground-water for irrigation
- in-migration of labour

IGP Eastern Region

- low productivity – food deficit region
- poor infrastructure and low inputs of fertilizer and water
- high risk of flooding
- out-migration of labour



IGP Vulnerability Issues

Western region

- Dependence on irrigation from groundwater (and rivers)
- Soil degradation and yield stagnation
- Dependence on national and state “guaranteed price”
- Dependence on seasonal labour influx

Eastern region

- Climate variability-induced risk of drought and flood
- Poor early-warning systems
- Weak physical and institutional infrastructure to cope with climate extremes
- Few alternative markets for diversification



Regional Policy Priorities

- Higher levels of food self sufficiency through increased productivity and diversification of agricultural production.
- Establishment of a regional ‘food bank’ to avoid hunger.
- Jointly developing a modernized early warning system against water-induced hazards/extreme weather events.
- Enhanced regional cooperation in disaster risk reduction (Regional Centre for Disaster Management, on-time data sharing, forecasting, etc.).



Regional Policy Priorities *(contd.)*

- Improved trade policies and competitiveness through greater export of products.
- Enhanced sustainability of the food and agricultural sector and poverty alleviation in rural communities, through greater opportunities for rural employment.



Regional Policy Processes

- **South Asia Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC).**
- SAARC Summits: regularly convened.
- SAARC Summit decision in April 2007: to establish a ‘regional food bank’ to avoid hunger following crop loss anywhere in the region.
- SAARC Ministerial Meeting in December 2005: Establishment of a Regional Centre for Disaster Management (in New Delhi).
- Already a functional Regional Meteorological research Centre (in Dhaka) and a SAARC Agricultural Information Centre.
- **South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA):** Working on for a better mobility of products, to ensure better access and fair price throughout the region.



GECAFS Research Sites in the IGP

