



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/driving-progress-asia-through-science-innovation-partnership>

Driving Progress in Asia through Science, Innovation & Partnership

Nepal is a place of mesmerizing beauty. Located in the Himalayas with eight of the world's 10 highest mountains, including the highest peak on Earth, Mt. Everest, it's no wonder more than 20 percent of the country is protected. The diverse terrain ranges from emerald green tea gardens, terraced paddy fields and historic temples nestled in hillsides to thick jungle, sprawling forest, pristine lakes and the largest concentration of glaciers outside the polar region.

But what lurks behind this idyllic landscape is a growing problem—climate change. Nepal struggles with both water scarcity and increased flooding, impacting everything from health and nutrition to livelihoods and food production. With agriculture employing 80 percent of the population and one in three suffering from food insecurity, these ecological shocks can present serious setbacks for farmers and their families, robbing them of their livelihoods or ability to put food on the table.

At USAID, one of our top priorities is developing innovative solutions that can help vulnerable communities withstand chronic threats, such as pandemics or climate change, and sustain progress when disaster strikes—not get pushed further into poverty. This is important across the globe but particularly in Asia, where half the world's poor live and more than half of all natural disasters occur. In today's interconnected world, our success matters to the United States. As the fastest growing region in the world accounting for more than half the world's GDP and nearly half its trade, Asia has become a key driver of global politics and economics. Progress—or instability—in Asia has ripple effects throughout the world and can impact us here at home. Across the region, we're hard at work.

In Nepal, we're helping farmers and families mitigate the adverse impacts of a changing environment on their lives and livelihoods. We're helping them adapt to new rainfall patterns and adopt new water-saving tools such as multiple-use water systems for sanitation needs, drinking and growing food. We're also introducing solar-powered pumps, which enable farmers to use drip irrigation for high-value crops, increasing their annual income by over a third. Our work has had a transformational impact on women in particular—who are typically responsible for collecting water—freeing up their time and energy to invest in other aspects of their lives.

We're forging partnerships that leverage resources and harness the science, technology and innovation that exist throughout the region to maximize impact—and reach. **USAID recently announced three new partnerships with Indian organizations** to share successful, low-cost agricultural innovations and technologies with African countries. These partnerships are a win-win for all: The organizations gain access to new market space; USAID advances its efforts to increase food security and farmers' incomes in Africa; and African countries gain access to new tools to help their citizens escape extreme poverty. These include a low-cost tractor, an organic fertilizer made out of seaweed and a solar-powered food dehydrator—all devised to increase yields and incomes by mechanizing operations, fertilizing depleted soils and preventing post-harvest losses.

In Timor-Leste, we saw a great opportunity to extend our reach by **partnering with ConocoPhillips**, which has significant investments in the country and contributes to sustainable community development—particularly in agriculture and education to **help Timor-Leste improve agricultural productivity** and increase its pool of skilled workers. This is vital in a country where nearly 40 percent of people live in extreme poverty and more than 60 percent of the population work in agriculture. Together, we are helping more farmers than ever before diversify their crops to increase their incomes and improve their families' health and nutrition. Through this partnership, we have been able to double the number of farm families benefiting from this project. Farmers practicing new horticulture techniques have boosted their incomes by up to 300 percent.

And we're bringing transformative science and technology to remote corners of the world where they're needed most. Due to climate change and rapid urbanization, the coastal nation of Bangladesh—which has the highest malnutrition rates in the region—is losing up to 1 percent of its arable land each year. Adding to the challenge, 80 percent of the country rests in a low-lying river delta prone to flooding.

To tackle these challenges, USAID is training farmers in the use of **high-yielding varieties of rice seeds** that are tolerant

to soil salinity and adverse weather, as well as in the use of [fertilizer deep placement technology](#), which allows for fertilizer to be placed *under* the soil and closer to the root where it is most effective, as opposed to on top of the soil where it is more likely to be washed away. As a result, soil fertility is improved, fertilizer use is reduced and yields are increased. Our efforts helped the coastal district of Barisal end its rice-deficiency and produce enough rice to feed its people.

Asia faces complex and integrated problems on a scale never before seen in history. These issues demand innovative approaches that combine resources and expertise at every opportunity. We are committed to the task, and hope you'll [click here to find out how you can join us](#).

This post originally [appeared](#) on the USAID blog.