



- USAID contributed to a 60 percent reduction in under-5 child mortality between 1993 and 2011.
- By expanding the use of fertilizer technology and seed varieties, USAID has helped increase rice production for small-scale farmers in Barisal, a formerly rice deficient district in southern Bangladesh.
- USAID was instrumental in helping communities co-manage forests and wetlands with the Government of Bangladesh, thereby protecting critical natural resources.

Photo credit: Wasif Hasan/USAID

Country Profile

With its democratic traditions and active participation in international peacekeeping operations, Bangladesh is a key U.S. strategic partner in South Asia. Yet with nearly one in three people living in poverty, the country faces immense development challenges and currently finds itself at an important crossroads in its democratic evolution. The United States works to address the underlying factors that threaten Bangladesh's ability to serve as a voice for progress and stability in the region and beyond.

Bangladesh is committed to becoming a middle-income country by 2021, its 50th year of independence. USAID assistance supports this goal by promoting democratic institutions and practices, economic opportunity, effective health and education services, food security, responsiveness to climate change, and preparedness and response to natural disasters.

OUR WORK

With a population of more than 155 million in a low-lying, riverine area the size of Iowa, Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated and climate change-vulnerable countries in the world. Yet, Bangladesh's economy has sustained average annual growth rates of about 6 percent over the past 15 years, helping the country cut its poverty rate in half. The country has become the world's second largest exporter of ready-made garments and has achieved self-sufficiency in rice production. Between 2001 and 2010, maternal mortality declined by 40 percent, and since 1990, female literacy has doubled.

Despite these advancements, more than 45 million people continue to live in poverty, Bangladesh still has an overall food deficit, and thousands of preventable deaths of mothers and young children occur each year. Due to climate change and rapid urbanization, Bangladesh is losing up to 1 percent of its arable land every year. And, as a young democracy, the country faces highly centralized and weak governance, corruption, adversarial politics and lack of women's empowerment.

Bangladesh is a partner country for the U.S. Government's three major development initiatives: Feed the Future (addressing global food insecurity), Global Climate Change and the Global Health Initiative. In addition, USAID provides assistance to improve local government, address gender-based violence and empower women, and combat human trafficking. USAID has been a development partner in Bangladesh since the country's independence in 1971.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

Despite recent gains in rice production, Bangladesh remains food deficient with diets lacking in diversity, resulting in 41 percent of children being stunted. USAID has helped more than three million small-scale farmers increase the efficiency of their rice production by introducing a new fertilizer technology and higher yielding seeds. In 2013, USAID programs helped farmers raise fish and shrimp worth more than \$127 million. USAID also helps improve child nutrition by promoting exclusive breastfeeding for infants up to 6 months of age, a balanced diet for older children and better hygiene practices such as hand-washing.

GLOBAL HEALTH

Since 1990, USAID has helped Bangladesh reduce maternal and child mortality by more than 60 percent and dramatically increase the use of family planning services. Despite gains in child survival, each year about 80,000 infants die during the first month of life and Bangladesh also has one of the highest tuberculosis rates in the world. Through a network of private sector clinics, USAID provides more than 20 million maternal, child and family planning consultations a year. USAID has also introduced technology to help Bangladesh detect deadly multidrug-resistant tuberculosis within two hours.

ENVIRONMENT AND GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

A dense population and intense agriculture have put extreme pressure on natural resources. As a result, Bangladesh has one of the lowest percentages of remaining forested lands worldwide. USAID helps Bangladesh conserve its biodiversity by helping people who live in or near 26 forests and wetlands find employment so they will rely less on exploiting natural resources. In addition, USAID is improving the local management of more than 1.8 million acres of wetlands and forests.

DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND GOVERNANCE

USAID promotes responsive governance in Bangladesh by improving the accountability and transparency of key institutions and building the capacity of local governments to deliver health and other social services. USAID is helping the government implement legislation to reduce domestic violence, expand access to legal aid and stem human trafficking. USAID is also addressing labor issues and in 2013, helped Bangladeshi workers register 50 labor unions to advocate for improved working conditions.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

USAID's Food for Peace program targets more than 600,000 food-insecure households with interventions to improve nutrition, agriculture, incomes, maternal and child health, and disaster preparedness. USAID is constructing 100 multipurpose cyclone shelters to protect people and their livestock during storms and to serve as schools during other times.

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USAID teaches women how to grow vegetables in household gardens to provide food and generate income for their families. Photo credit: Wasif Hasan



USAID's Aponjon program sends cell phone messages with health information to pregnant women, new mothers and their families. Photo credit: Dnet