



USAID's Asia Bureau - 2022 Higher Education in Asia Strategic Review Summary

USAID's Higher Education Programming in Asia

Higher Education (HE) is an increasingly important actor in advancing locally led sustainable development, leveraging its broad reach across sectors, communities and intersecting systems. It also plays a significant role in U.S. development goals, evidenced most recently by its inclusion in the National Security Council's [2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy \(IPS\)](#). The strategy highlights the value of HE as a vehicle to promote regional economic prosperity and security, and to build regional resilience to transnational threats such as COVID-19 and climate change.

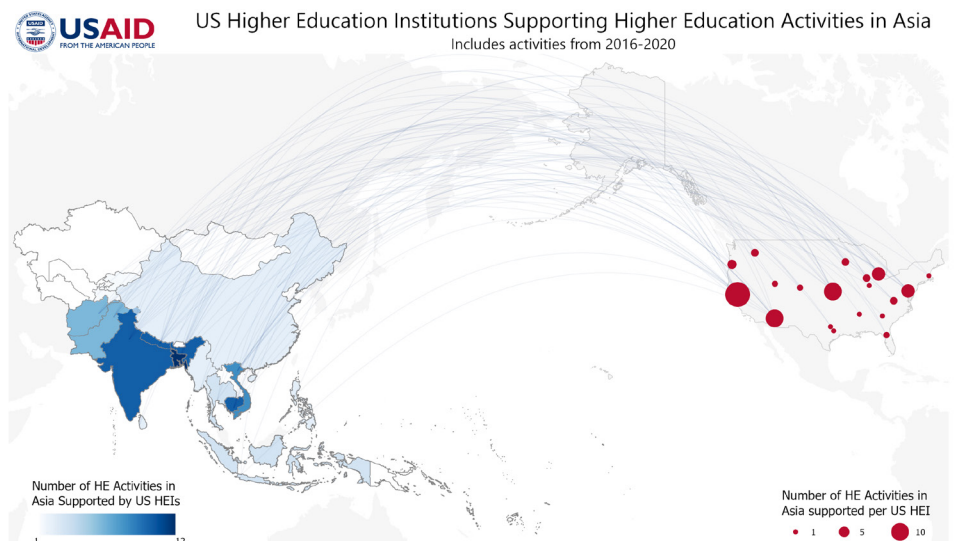
USAID has engaged HE through diverse partnerships based on a [framework](#) that invests in individuals, institutions and systems impact. The framework employs guiding principles of: local ownership and country focus; strengthened systems and capacity development in local institutions; innovative partnerships; data-driven decision making; and systematic promotion of equity and inclusion.

2022 Higher Education in Asia Strategic Review

With USAID support, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the U.S. and throughout Asia are helping to advance the U.S. Government's (USG) most critical priorities for the region. USAID's Office of Technical Services within the Asia Bureau conducted a Strategic Review to examine the depth and breadth of USAID HE projects in Asia over the last five years (2016-2021). The purpose was to help inform future programming and provide recommendations for policy makers on how to enhance the potential of HEIs as development partners.

The review found that USAID's significant investments in HE in Asia have proven crucial to fostering innovation across sectors, supporting economic and social opportunities for individuals at national and local levels and creating systemic change. Across the region, there are numerous examples of U.S. and local HEIs aligning research priorities and resources around the most pressing development challenges — from countering malign influence and strengthening democratic systems, to conducting cutting-edge research to fight COVID-19 and other public health threats, to improving natural resource management and fostering resilience to climate change.

In 2021, USAID partnered with 270 HEIs from across the Asia region and with more than 20 U.S. HEIs, and engaged thousands of individuals as well as the private sector.



Importantly, the review found that these cross-cutting programs have been a vehicle to drive growth not only in education but for all sectors, including:



Food Security and Agriculture



Democracy, Governance, Human Rights, Peace and Security



Economic Growth and Workforce Development



Global Health



Food Security and Agriculture BANGLADESH



[Feed the Future](#) brings together U.S. HEIs — Mississippi State University, Cornell and Purdue Universities — with Bangladeshi institutions to develop Innovation Labs that support USAID's investments in aquaculture, food safety and nutrition. The program focuses on agriculture-led growth, addressing women's empowerment and engaging the private sector.

The review identified several emerging best practices for HE programs in Asia and beyond:

- Establish demand-driven partnerships between U.S. HEIs, local HEIs, the private sector and other stakeholders that are mutually beneficial to education ecosystems and economies.
- Engage with smaller HEIs and state universities, which can often be more motivated and agile partners than national, elite HEIs.
- Partner with micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that can localize results and drive uptake.
- Use flexible funding and adaptive management to allow HE programs to support responses to public health crises such as COVID-19.
- Engage youth and promote Positive Youth Development (PYD) through research and extension opportunities.

EMERGING BEST PRACTICES



Democracy, Governance, Human Rights, Peace and Security PAKISTAN



USAID partners with faculty in universities in a program that is countering violent extremism (CVE) through establishing sustainable mechanisms for dialogue, critical thinking and peace education for at-risk youth, engaging local organizations and creating CVE curricula at universities throughout Pakistan focused on tolerance building and community cohesion.

The review also provided several recommendations to improve future programming and advance HE development within the region:

1. More clearly capture gains from USAID-funded HE programming across sectors through knowledge management and targeted communication efforts.
2. Evaluate the performance, cost effectiveness and impact of HE activities (or contributions to activities) across sectors to inform better activity designs and support scalability.
3. Explore how private sector entities (PSEs) might help HEIs provide high-quality and affordable professional development programs for faculty — such as improving R&D capacities of faculty across sectors — conduct robust and innovative research and improve facilities and equipment.
4. Explore the additive relationship between investments in basic education and HE programming, especially in crisis and conflict contexts.
5. Prioritize locally led development and strengthen the capacity of local HEIs such that they are enabled to address the most pressing humanitarian and democratic challenges across the Asia region.
6. Systematize a focus on equity across HE programs within education and other sectors.

IMPROVING FUTURE PROGRAMMING



Economic Growth and Workforce Development PHILIPPINES



The [Science, Technology, Research, and Innovation for Development \(STRIDE\)](#) program focused on inclusive economic growth by providing technical assistance to all major stakeholders in the Philippines' innovation ecosystem in support of the government's whole-of-community approach to innovation. A consortium of Rutgers University, Florida State University, University of Michigan and local resource partner Philippine Business for Education (PBE) engaged 125 Philippine universities and 200 industry partners in a decentralized, voluntary and market-led approach.

The Higher Education in Asia Strategic Review documents how USAID's partnerships with HEIs can continue to play an important role in solving development challenges as well as creating increased opportunities for individuals in the region. Its recommendations should inform continued USAID investment that positions HEIs and local organizations as not just recipients of aid funding, but as the long-term thought partners they have proven themselves to be in many instances. The recently awarded Improving Learning Outcomes for Asia (ILOA) mechanism provides an opportunity to support USAID's Asia Bureau and missions throughout the region to implement these recommendations, as well as to commission additional studies and pilot test programming on strengthening the role of HE in sustainable development.



Global Health SOUTHEAST ASIA



The [One Health Workforce - Next Generation](#) project is working with the Southeast Asia One Health University Network (SEAOHUN) to develop a resilient and robust public health workforce to prevent, detect and respond to infectious disease threats. SEAOHUN engages a regional network of 102 universities in eight Southeast Asian countries – Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam – collaborating to build the human resources for more effective disease surveillance and control. USAID recently awarded SEAOHUN a 2-year Transition Award.