



CASE STUDY

Dependable Power, Dependable Crops

Improved power distribution system improves lifestyles and livelihoods



Photo: USAID/Virginia Foley

Farmer Raasoo Rahis uses an electric-powered pump to water his fields.

“When I want to water my fields now,” says Raasoo, “all I have to do is just switch on my pump.”

Challenge

Raasoo Rahis farms wheat and barley in the village of Surajpur, India. His fields depend on water being reliably delivered by electrical pump. Rather than paying for electricity according to his consumption, Raasoo paid a flat rate, and his power was distributed in government-fixed blocks of time that were not predictable. As a result, many farmers overused their water pumps, not knowing when electricity would flow again. The water table dropped considerably, and electricity theft was rampant, as residents could hook into existing systems without paying.

Initiative

In 1992, Noida Power Company Limited, supported by USAID, started a program to distribute electricity to 118 villages in a 130-square-mile area near New Delhi. USAID helped Noida establish a distribution system that included efficient transformers, enhanced metering and new low-tension distribution lines. To help economize groundwater pumping, a novel financing scheme offered farmers energy-efficient pumps in exchange for their existing sets.

Results

A reliable supply of power has brought social and lifestyle improvements to every resident of the 118 villages in Noida’s program. Raasoo’s water supply is now steady, and his costs are lower. To water his fields now, he says, all he has to do is just switch on his pump. Community groups in the region have built partnerships with Noida, and residents have become involved in distributing bills and teaching people about water conservation. This project is just one of many power distribution improvements that are currently underway in India — and touching the lives of all its residents.