

Mapping UNSW Impact Global Development

Primary SDG	2: ZERO HUNGER
Broad theme	Security in South Asia
Research	Investigating the human side of security in South Asia
Impact region	South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives)
Faculty	Arts and Social Sciences
School/Institute	Social Sciences
Academic	Dr Monika Barthwal-Datta
Project partners	South Asian University (Delhi)
Related SDGs	1: No Poverty
	10: Reduced Inequalities

Elevator pitch

UNSW research is shifting the focus on security in South Asia from a military-centric focus to one that considers community access to food, land rights and the impact of climate change, helping to improve food security and the quality of life in these communities.

The Challenge: Security is more than a military issue in South Asia, it's a hunger issue

Security in South Asia is thought of traditionally in military terms with a focus on borders and insurgencies. But in one of the poorest regions in the world where hunger remains a key issue, security in everyday life means having access to water and food, and not falling prey to human traffickers. A new understanding of what security means in South Asia and the kind of efforts that should be taken by government and non-governmental organisations is required.

The UN originally defined food security in terms of food supply and demand. Realising that even if there is food people might not be able to access it, they incorporated food access into their definition. However, the power dynamics that underpin food systems in South Asia remain largely unaddressed, including who controls or has access to land, freshwater and the coast.

UNSW's solution: Redefine security

In the past, Monika has assessed food security challenges and government policy in India, Cambodia, the Philippines, Vietnam and China. Her work focused on analysing food security challenges and policies in these countries, and the complex interactions between the two. Her research was funded by the MacArthur Foundation.

Through independent research and together with academic colleagues in South Asia, Monika is seeking to shift the discussion around security in South Asia, and food security in particular. Recently, she undertook a case study on the role of regional-level efforts to combat food insecurity and discovered that they were not

adequately designed to help small-scale farming communities in rural areas who have poor access to food. The case study demonstrated food security needs to incorporate the experiences of communities and the sustainable use and management of food-producing resources in the region.

Monika is looking to undertake other case studies to broaden and deepen understandings of what security in South Asia really means and how state and non-state actors can work together to tackle food insecurity in the region. This includes accounting for issues like agrarian reform, land rights and stable and secure access to food, food-producing resources and supply lines, and factors that impact these areas like economic and agricultural policies, development strategies, energy, climate change, and migration.

Her current areas of research also include India's foreign policy, the US-India nuclear deal and India's role as a 'responsible nuclear actor'.

The Impact: Influence government policy and NGO work, increase food security for poor farmers

Monika is seeking to change the way people think about security in the region and influence government policy and NGO work. In the context of food security, a focus on small-scale farming communities and their rights is needed. Farmers should be supported to embrace agroecological farming techniques, and to connect with urban markets. Empowering small-scale farmers to choose what they grow and how they grow can play a key role in enhancing food security, income and quality of life.

Researcher

Dr Monika Barthwal-Datta is a Senior Lecturer in International Security at UNSW and Director of the School of Policy and Governance (India). She is the author of *Food Security in Asia: Challenges, Policies and Implications* (IISS and Routledge, 2014) and *Understanding Security Practices in South Asia: Securitisation Theory and the role of non-state actors* (Routledge, 2012). Her work is born out of a passion to see South Asian governments prioritise key issues like hunger and poverty over military and external threats.

Ben Falkenmire 21.11.17