

Nepal



The Asia Foundation

Improving Lives, Expanding Opportunities

Nepal's new Constitution provides for a federal form of governance and mandates local, provincial, and national elections by January 2018. The return of elected local government after nearly two decades represents an opportunity to bridge the historical gap between the Nepali state and its citizens. The Asia Foundation supports the foundations of state restructuring through more inclusive civic engagement in political processes and improved governance capacity at subnational levels. Our programs also mitigate conflict, support women's leadership, promote economic governance, and enhance regional discourse on environmental resilience and human security.



STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE

Frequent changes in government leadership, fitful promulgation of the new Constitution, intractable differences among the political elite, and the destruction wrought by the 2015 earthquakes continue to hobble governance in Nepal. The Asia Foundation supports Nepal's transition to federalism through programs that promote accountable and transparent institutions and enhance understanding of critical issues facing local governments during this period of fluidity and contestation.

To help government and other providers deliver vital earthquake relief more effectively, a mixed-methods research program is tracking changing needs, recovery patterns, and aid effectiveness in all earthquake-affected districts. Recent Foundation work on municipal budgeting, transparency, and service delivery as well as an unfolding multi-year program on subnational governance in support of state restructuring have sharpened the focus on urban and peri-urban governance, highlighting the need for capable local government to effectively implement the new Constitution's vision of federalism.

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AND PEACEBUILDING

Since 2001, The Asia Foundation's flagship Community Mediation program has been instrumental in institutionalizing mediation in Nepal. The program increases access to justice, builds positive state-community relations, and promotes a culture of peaceful dispute resolution at the community level. After the earthquakes, the Foundation provided mediation and facilitated-dialogue services to address relief-related disputes. As of January 2017, mediation services are provided in 513 locations across Nepal.

We also support the Community Mediators' Society Nepal, a nationwide network of over 7,000 mediators that promotes uniform, professional mediation practices. In addition, Foundation support for the Mediation Act, since 2014, now includes coordination with the Supreme Court's Mediation Council and the government of Nepal.

At the local and subnational levels, the Foundation's Dialogue Forum program helps manage socioeconomic and political disputes in five conflict hotspots. These forums provide safe, confidential spaces for political parties and civil society repre-



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Asia Foundation mediation programs increase access to justice, build positive state-community relations, and promote peaceful dispute resolution by communities.

The Foundation encourages women's equal participation in social, political, and economic life by combating trafficking and gender-based violence.

sentatives to strengthen relationships and manage politically charged and policy-related conflicts. Mitigating Conflict and Improving Implementation of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Policies is a Foundation program that helps communities learn to collaborate across caste and gender divides, fostering more constructive relationships between service providers from government and civil society and local communities. The Foundation has also developed knowledge products, such as training manuals and interactive toolkits, providing practitioners and communities with practical guidance and suggested avenues for cross-learning on gender equality, social inclusion, identity transformation, and advocacy for reconciliation.

EMPOWERING WOMEN

The Asia Foundation works to increase women's participation in social, political, and economic life by combating gender-based violence (GBV) and trafficking of women and girls. Our Combating Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) program supports collaboration among government, civil society, and international development partners. In six migrant source districts, CTIP has created safe spaces for survivors and witnesses of trafficking and GBV, and supports judicial outreach programs to build trust between judicial officials and the community. CTIP extended additional advocacy, legal aid, and counseling support to trafficking and GBV survivors in earthquake-affected districts, where GBV rose rapidly following the disaster.

CTIP provides leadership training to women members of the Village Committee for Controlling Human Trafficking to help them better exercise their political and socioeconomic rights and increase their involvement in decision-making at the local level. The Foundation also provides mentorship support and adult literacy classes to selected women parliamentarians to build their capacity to represent their constituencies.

EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

The Asia Foundation continues to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth by illuminating the connections between effective governance and the institutions and stakeholders that shape policy in Nepal.

The Foundation supported a strategic study of the incentive structures influencing various state and non-state actors involved in foreign direct investment. Disputes over resources are a growing concern in development investment, and the Foundation is testing strategies for preventing, mitigating, and managing future disputes that may arise from large infrastructure projects.

INCREASING ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

The earthquakes revealed numerous shortcomings in Nepal's ability to respond to disasters. To begin to address these shortcomings, we conducted a policy analysis of civil-military coordination under Nepal's national disaster preparedness framework. Existing law including the Disaster Management Act was also reviewed to identify gaps in the legal framework for disaster management.

PROMOTING REGIONAL COOPERATION

The Asia Foundation's approach to international cooperation includes strengthening the regional discourse on themes such as access to justice and conflict transformation and peacebuilding. In collaboration with the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation in Law (SAARCLAW) Nepal, the Foundation hosted a conference, "Connecting SAARC Through Law, Justice, Good Governance and Development," on post-conflict reconciliation and restorative justice for sexual and gender-based crimes in the formal and alternative justice systems of South Asia.

Another regional conference, "Peace and Justice Through Mediation," explored how mediation, traditionally understood as an access-to-justice mechanism, can become a broader peacebuilding tool.

The Foundation also supported the "International Seminar on Responding to Human Trafficking." Participants from Bangladesh, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines, the Australian federal police, and the government of Nepal agreed to form a working group to develop cooperative mechanisms for agencies investigating human trafficking to share operational and tactical information.

BOOKS FOR ASIA

The Asia Foundation's Books for Asia program continues to support the expansion of English-language readership in Nepal, helping to advance professional knowledge and build research and vocational skills among children and young adults. In 2016, the government of Nepal and the Ministry of Education honored Books for Asia as the "Best Institution of the Year" for its donations to libraries across the country. In 2016, the program distributed 25,226 books in English and Nepali to 228 organizations, including educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, public libraries, resource centers, and training institutes in 37 districts of Nepal.

In Nepal, The Asia Foundation's programs are funded by the American, Australian, British, Danish, and Swiss governments and private foundations.

The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. Headquartered in San Francisco, The Asia Foundation works through a network of offices in 18 Asian countries and in Washington, DC. Working with public and private partners, the Foundation receives funding from a diverse group of bilateral and multilateral development agencies, foundations, corporations, and individuals.

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