



## May 2017

**In this issue:** Malaysia, Nepal, Young Lotus Circle, Women's Empowerment, Elections, Cambodia, Laos, Environment, India, and the Philippines

### Recent Events

**May 2** - Khin Zaw Win, Director of the Tampadipa Institute, presented his thoughts on the prospects and challenges for Myanmar one year after the National League for Democracy (NLD) election victory. [Click here](#) for more information on our programs in Myanmar.

**April 25** - George Varughese, The Foundation's Country Representative in Nepal, provided an update on recent developments in post-earthquake Nepal and offered his perspective on Nepal's decentralization efforts and challenges in governance. [Click here](#) for more information on the Foundation's programs in Nepal.

**April 20** - The Foundation's Young Lotus Circle, a diverse group of young professionals who support our Women's Empowerment program, held an event in New York City to raise funds to improve social, economic, and political opportunities for women and girls in developing Asia. Held at the Klein Sun Gallery, the event brought together individuals from diverse fields with a shared interest in advancing rights and opportunities for women and girls. [Read more](#) about the Foundation's work on Women's Empowerment here.

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### In the News

#### Why Nepal's Upcoming Local Elections Matter More than Ever

On May 14, Nepalis will go to elections for newly-delineated local (village and municipal) governments. These comprise one of three constitutionally mandated elections to be completed by January 2018. The local elections will be a significant step toward implementation of a new constitution that mandates a restructured nation-state reflecting for the first time in Nepal's history a federal, secular republic with a plural political order and inclusive social character. If successfully concluded, the elections will instill confidence and ownership of the constitution in the general public and rebuild trust in the country's choice of system of political representation. Additionally, successful local elections would ease the path for the two following elections to provincial and national government. Thus, local elections are closely linked with institutionalization of the new constitution. [Read more](#) from George Varughese, Country Representative in Nepal, [here](#).



*Voters cast their ballots in Nepal's 2013 Constituent Assembly elections. On May 14, Nepalis will go to the poll again in local elections.*

# Technology and Innovation

## Cambodia's Online Reform Initiative Inventory

After two decades of steady gains at the ballot box under Prime Minister Hun Sen's rule, in 2013 his Cambodian People's Party lost 22 seats to a newly formed coalition, the Cambodian National Rescue Party. Many interpreted this unexpected result as a popular call for change. Since then, some have wondered whether these calls for change have translated into real reforms, and the extent to which the electorate's expectations have been met. Visit the "Reform Inventory Initiative" (RII) wiki page [here](#) and read more about the Foundation's programs in Cambodia [here](#).

## Notes from the Field

### Love Laos: Keep it Clean

Sitting beside the Mekong River, sipping a cold drink and enjoying the scenery is a welcome break for tourists and locals alike in Laos. You can usually see men out in their boats following the large seine nets that float down the river, and women dipping and then hoisting their large lift nets as they catch fish for their supper. But as one's gaze is drawn to the shoreline, this idyllic setting is spoiled by another view: plastic bags, drinking water bottles, plastic foam containers, and other rubbish scattered along the banks of the river. In 2016, The Asia Foundation launched a new campaign targeting waste management called "Love Laos: Keep it Clean." The campaign is coupled with several projects meant to inspire and encourage people to stop littering and to start recycling and composting. In partnership with the Luang Prabang Film Festival (LFFF), we announced a short film competition in September 2016. The competition encouraged Lao national filmmakers to produce a three-minute video and public service announcement looking at the problems with waste, littering, and improper waste disposal in their country to encourage the public to develop more sustainable habits. Watch all the winning films [here](#) and click [here](#) for more information on the Foundation's programs in Laos. Read more from Derin Henderson, the Asia Foundation's environment program advisor in Laos, [here](#).



*A truck carries bottles for recycling. Some estimates show that despite there being few sanitary landfills, recycling and composting could reduce the amount of waste being discarded by about half. Photo/Conor Ashleigh*

### Creating an Ecosystem of Support for Trafficking Survivors in India

South Asia has the dubious distinction of being the fastest-growing and second-largest region for human trafficking in the world, with India at its epicenter as a source, destination, and transit country. Despite recent government data that indicates that reporting of cases of human trafficking in India has increased by almost 25 percent, the conviction rate remains abysmally low. Last year, The Asia Foundation began supporting a new research project, conducted by local partner Women Power Connect (WPC), to map the support structures and services that exist for trafficking survivors, and better understand how they collaborate, if at all. On March 31, WPC released the research findings in a new resource directory, available on The Asia Foundation's website. Read more from Diya Nag, Senior Program Officer in India, [here](#) and click [here](#) for more information on the Foundation's programs in India.

## Publication of Interest

### Coalitions for Change Helps Promote Clark and Ease Manila Airport Congestion

The severe congestion in Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), the Philippines' international gateway, is hampering growth and investment. Designed for 30 million passengers but possessing a single runway, NAIA is prone to flight delays. Using technical analysis and coalition building, Coalitions for Change's effort contributed to the government's policy commitment to develop a second international gateway airport away from Manila. This story traces the events that transpired from this significant policy direction in Philippine air transport.



The Asia Foundation improves lives, expands opportunities, and helps societies flourish across a dynamic and developing Asia. We work with innovative leaders and communities to build effective institutions and advance pathbreaking reforms. Together with our partners, we are committed to Asia's continued development as a peaceful, just, and thriving region of the world.