



January 2018

In this issue: Philippines, Technology, China, Women's participation, Nepal Elections, Afghanistan, and Timor-Leste

Upcoming Events

January 17 – At the *Prospects for Peace and Stability in Mindanao* event, [Sam Chittick](#), Asia Foundation's country representative in the Philippines, will provide his on-the-ground perspective on the ongoing conflicts and discuss some of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for the southern Philippines, in the aftermath of the Marawi siege and ongoing peace process. Please click [here](#) for more information on our Philippines.

Technology and Development

The Asia Foundation recently launched its new Data Portal at surveys.asiafoundation.org, a key element of the organization's commitment to innovative and evidence-based development program. The new portal provides visualizations of the Foundation's extensive survey collection across Asia and builds on its leadership in data transparency. Data is critical not only to inform public policy decisions, but enables the public to hold governments accountable. Currently, The Asia Foundation Data Portal includes 24 surveys from 11 countries, and covers a wide range of topics including data on post-earthquake reconstruction in Nepal, the state of community relations in post-conflict communities in Sri Lanka, and public opinion polls conducted in Timor-Leste and Afghanistan, including the annual [Survey of the Afghan People](#).

2018 Asian Prospects and Challenges

[Asia's Biggest Issues in 2018: Experts Weigh In](#)

There is no doubt that [2017 put Asia to the test](#). From religious and ethnic tensions spilling out onto the streets to game-changing elections that brought forward new leaders and toppled old ones, to coping with devastating natural disasters like the floods in South Asia, Asia has seen many ups and downs. Continue reading the [blogpost](#) to find out what Asia Foundation's experts view as the pivotal issue in their respective countries in 2018. Click [here](#) to find out where the Asia Foundation works and [here](#) to find out what we do.



Afghanistan continues to face enormous challenges in 2018, and whether or not the National Unity Government can hold elections in 2018 will be critical.

In the News

[To Make China's Female Entrepreneurs Count, Let's Go Beyond Just Counting Them](#)

China is home to the highest number of [self-made female billionaires](#) in the world and [set a record high](#) in venture capital investments in 2016 despite global slowdown, often being regarded, in recent years, as one of the models for gender equality in women's business and entrepreneurship. More women entrepreneurs not only mean higher gender equality at work but also an increase in China's economic growth. However, making women count requires beyond simply counting women, startups, and investments. Women entrepreneurs in China continue to face a range of cultural and institutional barriers like sexism that entrenches gender discrimination as the norm, and lack of access to business capital. Much remains to be done despite numerous government, non-profit and private sector initiatives to fill in the credit gap and to encourage entrepreneurship with a gender perspective. Learn about the Asia Foundation's work in [China](#) and in [expanding economic opportunities](#).

Notes from the Field

[Unlikely Counterparts: Lessons from Cambodia and South Korea on Women in the Workforce](#)



13 Cambodian delegates working in the government, private, and development sectors got a first-hand look at these similarities and contrasts during a study tour to South Korea to explore challenges and solutions surrounding women's economic participation.

taking measures to promote gender equality such as the [Family-Friendly Certificate System program](#) and subsidies for working mom support centers and other women's groups established to support career-disrupted women reenter the workforce, which Cambodia could learn from. Better data in Cambodia could also support evidence-based advocacy for women. Read more from [Jongbeom Choi](#) and [Menghun Kaing](#), program officers for The Asia Foundation in [Korea](#) and [Cambodia](#), respectively.

Among the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, Korea has the [largest gender wage gap](#) and also [one of the lowest women's participation rate](#) in the labor force despite having the [highest percentage of 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education](#). Korean women often leave the workforce between mid-20s and early 40s to care for their children and family. When these women want to reenter the job market, they are perceived to have "fallen behind" on the career ladder and are forced to take huge pay cuts, often taking up employment in part-time positions or menial jobs. Cambodian women face similar societal and professional barriers but their education obtainment rate remains low, making it difficult for them to get highly skilled work, thereby resulting in [70 percent of employed women being engaged in "vulnerable employment"](#) such as unpaid family work. Despite challenges, the Korean government is

[Nepal Elections: More Women Have a Seat at the Table, But Will They Have a Voice?](#)

Nepal hit a milestone in 2017 by successfully conducting the [provincial and federal elections](#) in November and December, and its first [local elections](#) in two decades, earlier in May, electing a total of 35,041 local representatives across 753 local levels. Nepal's 2015 Constitution's mandate to reserve 40.4% seats for women resulted in the highest number of women ever elected to public office. While the Constitutional mandates are building inclusive participatory spaces for women, women elected leaders will continue to be confronted by deep-seated gender expectations, questions on capacities, and often divisive political ideologies, caste, ethnicity, religion, and class. Engendering the formal political space requires intensive behavior change interventions targeting both men and women as well as investments that go beyond building the operational skills and capacity of the elected women representatives. Read more about our programs in [Nepal](#).

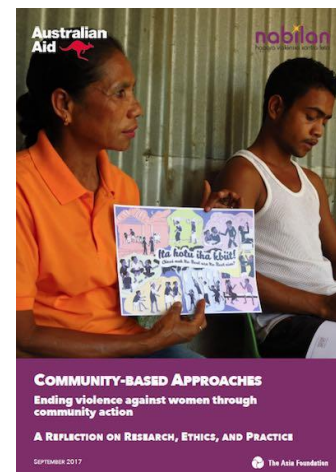


Elected women representatives in Janakpur Sub-Metropolitan, Dhanusha District. Local elections resulted in the highest number of women ever elected to public office.

Publications of Interest

[Community-Based Approaches: Ending Violence Against Women Through Community Action – A Reflection on Research, Ethics, And Practice](#)

This report documents what has been learned to date through Nabilan’s Community-Based Approaches program in Timor Leste, including key research questions on violence against women and program implementation. Learn more about the Asia Foundation’s programs in [Timor Leste](#).



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.