



February 2020

In this issue: Mitigating Hardship in Refugee Camps; Annual Young Lotus Circle Soiree, Myanmar, YSEALI Ecotourism Workshop, Philippines, Green Entrepreneurship in Pakistan, Advanced Middle-Income Country (AMIC) Initiative, Myanmar's Economic Governance Actors, and Vietnam

Upcoming Events

March 5 — Join The Asia Foundation to learn about the study on [Mitigating Hardship with Mobility: The Coping Strategies of Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh](#), documents the role of remittances, diaspora and other connections with the outside world in the coping strategies of refugees. The study, based on a survey of 1500 Rohingya households performed by Rohingya enumerators and several rounds of more in-depth interviews, is a product of the [X-Border Local Research Network](#), a DFID-funded research program that improves understanding of political, economic and social dynamics in the conflict-affected borderlands of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Learn more about the Foundation's programs on [conflict and fragile conditions](#) and others in [Bangladesh](#) and [Myanmar](#).

New York City, March 11 — The Foundation is pleased to host the [8th Annual Young Lotus Circle Soiree](#) being held in anticipation of the [2020 Lotus Leadership Awards Gala](#) on April 15, 2020. Co-hosted by Lotus Circle Advisors [Lin Jamison](#) and [Leyli Zohrenejad](#), the event will raise funds to improve the social, economic, and political opportunities for girls and women across developing Asia. Click here for more information on our [Women's Empowerment Program](#).

Recent Events

February 11 — At the event on *Myanmar: Prospects for 2020*, [Matthew Arnold](#), The Asia Foundation's country representative in [Myanmar](#), provided his observations and insights on the conflict dynamics, prospects for policy making, the upcoming election, including other challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Notes from the Field

[Stemming Asia's Plastic Tide One Banana Leaf at a Time](#)

The recent tourism boom has unfortunately resulted in an influx of garbage which predominantly ends up in the Mekong river, damaging the environment and communities who rely on the river for sustenance. In March 2019, 50 young entrepreneurs from ASEAN and Timor-Leste met in Luang Prabang, Laos, for the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) Ecotourism Workshop, organized by The Asia Foundation, to consider how to leverage the tourism boom to make things better. In five days of intensive group work, the participants developed strategies for their own communities, received one-on-one mentoring from ecotourism experts, made site visits to successful ecotourism businesses, and learned how to pitch their ideas for seed funding, with 12 participants emerging victorious. Learn more about the Foundation's programs in [Laos](#) and on [leadership and exchanges](#).



Participants from Vietnam showcase their display on tourism in their home country. (Photo: Amanda Bensen)

Participants from Vietnam showcase their display on tourism in their home country. Learn more about the Foundation's programs in [Laos](#) and on [leadership and exchanges](#).

[Philippine Courts Go Paperless](#)



The Philippines Supreme Court.

The Continuous Trial Monitoring System (CTMS) is software that monitors compliance with the court's Continuous Trial system, a new set of rules to streamline procedures and expedite criminal cases, including strict timetables for trial courts. A pilot project developed in collaboration with The Asia Foundation, CTMS captures information on the nature of each case; the identity, age, sex, and birthdate of the accused; and the case history, including dates for each stage of the proceedings. The scope of the CTMS is limited to criminal cases for now. The project is part of a broader push by the Supreme Court to use electronic information systems to bridge long distances, streamline court bureaucracies, and reduce the paper-based transactions that have defined judicial administration in the country since the 1930s. Read

about the Foundation's [Philippines](#) and [law and justice](#) programs.

Program Highlight

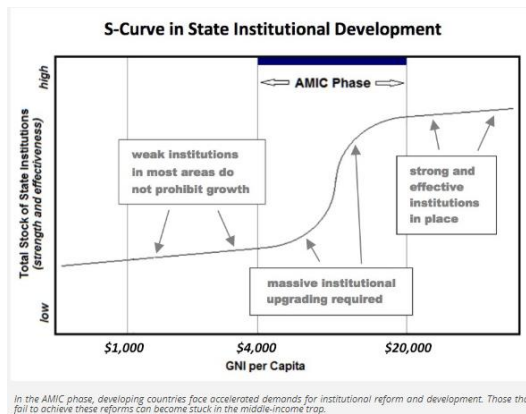
[Green Entrepreneurship Incubator in Pakistan](#)

The Asia Foundation's [Pakistan](#) office launched the Barhta Pakistan Ecopreneurship Platform 2019 in partnership with the Ministry of Information Technology, Pakistan's national incubation center. An initiative to engage the nation's youth in creating the green businesses of the future, the program features a competition for sustainable business plans that offers networking opportunities and provides microgrants to competition winners. Learn more about the Foundation's programs on [increasing environmental resilience](#).

In the News

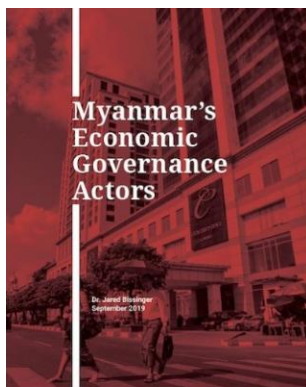
[The Advanced Middle-Income Challenge and the Future of Bilateral Aid: An Interview with William Cole](#)

In the last 50 years there have been significant advancements in human welfare throughout Asia, however, there is an ongoing challenge for middle income countries to transition to upper-income status. This month, The Asia Foundation (TAF) sat down with TAF's senior advisor for program strategy, William Cole, to discuss the Advanced Middle-Income Country (AMIC) Initiative. Cole describes AMIC's as later-stage developing countries with between \$4,000 gross national income per capita and about \$20,000 GNI per capita. In his interview, Cole discusses the set of challenges AMIC's face and the importance of this transition from middle to upper-income status for developing countries as well as the international community. Read the [full interview](#).



Publications of Interest

[Myanmar's Economic Governance Actors](#)



This report examines the actors engaged in economic governance in Myanmar, the factors that shape their authority, and the ways they can contribute to improved economic governance outcomes. It connects the [Myanmar Business Environment Index \(MBEI\) 2019](#), which focuses on the views and experiences of Myanmar businesses, with The Asia Foundation's work on governance, particularly reports such as [State and Region Governments in Myanmar](#). In this report, we lay a foundation for further research into best practices in economic governance in Myanmar. This future research will outline actionable strategies that can be adopted by subnational levels of government to improve economic governance outcomes. Learn more about the Foundation's programs on [strengthening governance](#), [expanding economic opportunity](#), and others in [Myanmar](#).

[Made in Vietnam Energy Plan 2.0](#)

This Made in Vietnam Energy Plan (MVEP 2.0) updates the previous report and has been developed during a time of fast-paced transition in global and local energy markets. The sustainable energy technologies of the future, such as solar, wind, and lithium-ion battery storage – once thought only to become economically feasible by the late 2020s or 2030s – have drastically decreased in cost and subsequently accelerated in scale. Today, they are now frequently out-competing unsubsidized fossil-fuel-based power technologies across the world. Coal power plants that were once highly bankable and the lowest-cost option for rapidly developing economies are now harder to finance as investors see a trend in concerns over health and environmental degradation, the deterioration of plant load factors, and early plant retirements. Read about The Asia Foundation’s programs in [Vietnam](#).



The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. Informed by six decades of experience and deep local expertise, our work across the region addresses five overarching goals—strengthen governance, empower women, expand economic opportunity, increase environmental resilience, and promote regional cooperation.