



The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization. Informed by six decades of deep local experience. we work through a network of offices in 18 Asian countries.

LOCALLY DRIVEN FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT

80% of our worldwide personnel are LOCAL STAFF FROM ASIA, BASED IN ASIA

86% of BUDGET ALLOCATED for PROGRAMS











OUR PROGRAMS

are mobilizing responses to the CRITICAL ISSUES facing Asia

- 129 STRENGTHEN GOVERNANCE
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- 57 PROMOTE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN & PRESIDENT

In the sweep of The Asia Foundation's 66-year history, 2020 stands out as a unique and challenging historical moment. As we release this report, the world is in the grips of the worst pandemic in more than a century. Amidst the grief of losing hundreds of thousands of victims worldwide to Covid-19, people everywhere are coping with the economic hardship of a global recession. Across the globe, we are also confronting stark reminders of the need for continued struggle to achieve the goals of racial equality and social justice.

As daunting as this time may be, The Asia Foundation has surmounted seemingly intractable challenges before. The Foundation itself was created in the ashes of wars, disasters, and revolutions. The founders knew more would be coming and so established a durable, dynamic institution that would have the capability to address the critical issues facing Asia at any given time. Many of the places we work on the ground have, over time, been wracked by political convulsions, natural disasters, economic destruction, poverty, injustice, and conflict. But those experiencing these trials have shown remarkable resilience and determination, enduring hardships and working to achieve greater opportunities, human security, and a better quality of life, even in the face of great adversity. Covid-19 is a threatening, insidious pandemic, and Asian countries have already demonstrated remarkable leadership in their efforts to confront it.

As Asia has pivoted to counter Covid-19, so has The Asia Foundation. Working closely with our local partners, we quickly recalibrated our programs to address the social, economic, and public health threats posed by the pandemic. Whether it's expanding access to learning at home through Let's Read—Asia's first free digital library for children; helping women entrepreneurs market their products online and keep their businesses afloat; combatting rising domestic violence due to protracted lockdowns; or

countering pandemic-related misinformation, the Foundation has responded readily and flexibly to the needs on the ground. This rapid response has been possible because of the understanding, commitment, and generosity of our donors, champions, and sponsors—both public and private. For your unstinting support, we are deeply grateful.

As we prepare for the post-Covid world, there is both a need and opportunity to explore new areas of programming, different organizational models, and alternative ways of working. In fields as diverse as gender justice, community policing, environmental sustainability, conflict resolution, technology, and future of work, we are eager to work with government, civil society, and private sector partners to solve longstanding, increasingly urgent problems. In this spirit, the Foundation is thrilled to partner with ASEAN and Google.org on a new initiative to equip micro and small enterprises to bridge the impenetrable digital divide as they confront Covid-19. Go Digital ASEAN is empowering 200,000 workers from rural and underserved communities, including youth and women, with digital literacy and online safety awareness to ensure they can compete in a rapidly changing economy.

With the ongoing support of donors and partners, we are committed to the continued fulfillment of The Asia Foundation's mission of improving lives, expanding opportunities, and helping societies flourish.

R. Sunder

David D. Arnold

President and Chief Executive Officer

Sunder Ramaswamy

Chairman of the Board and

Executive Committee

ADDRESSING COVID-19



The Covid-19 pandemic poses enormous challenges for the communities The Asia Foundation serves. But the crisis also holds opportunities for us to think differently about how we do our work. There are significant implications for public health and safety, economic security, governance, and political stability across Asia, and the Foundation is aligning its work to battle the ongoing global health crisis and its economic impacts. Our 18 country offices are communicating closely with our local partners, donors, and counterparts in government, civil society, and the private sector to meet critical needs. Here is a brief look at some of our efforts:

Go Digital ASEAN

How do we ensure everyone has access to the digital economy, a necessity during a global health crisis requiring social distancing? As Southeast Asia's digital economy is projected to triple by 2025, we are partnering with Google.org to expand digital literacy across ASEAN and unlock economic opportunities for underserved communities. Together with our partners we are equipping micro and small enterprises and underemployed youth to join the digital economy.

Coalitions for Change

Millions of people live in densely populated areas of Asia where access to running water and primary health care is limited. The Asia Foundation's Coalitions for Change in the Philippines supports the efforts of longtime partner Action for Economic Reforms and its health-focused networks to track case infection demographics, and monitor the effectiveness of local government and community mitigation policies, and facilitate platforms for government, civil society, and the private sector to coordinate information sharing and advocacy to address the spread of Covid-19

Let's Read at Home

Across the globe, the pandemic left 1.5 billion children out of school. In response, our Books for Asia program quickly created and launched Let's Read at Home (www.letsreadathome.org), a free digital resource site that supports families and children with books and enrichment activities in 10 languages focused on health, STEM, critical thinking, and resilience. The Foundation's recently developed and most popular volume — COVIBOOK— demystifies the pandemic for children, and is available in 22 languages.



Preventing the Spread of Gender-Based Violence

Quarantines, emergency settings, overcrowding, and other circumstances amplified by Covid-19 pose serious risk of increased incidents of gender-based violence (GBV) including child abuse. Across Asia, the Foundation is strengthening women's networks to respond to GBV and providing prevention strategies and services for survivors, including hotlines, virtual counseling, emergency supplies, and referrals for economic support.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Network



The common histories of war, conflict, violence, and more recently responding to global pandemics such as Covid-19 leave a psychosocial imprint on vulnerable populations. While Asia Foundation offices in Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Timor-Leste have well-developed Mental Health and Psychosocial Support programs, there is no platform for meaningful dialogue, exchange, or innovation across the three countries or to replicate the much-needed work in other parts of Asia.

Looking ahead, the Foundation will continue to adapt our programming to address the most critical issues facing Asia during the crisis.

Photo: Skanda Cautam



AFGHANISTAN

Surveys shine light on challenges

Our annual *Survey of the Afghan People* sheds light on concerns regarding a potential peace deal with the Taliban, insecurity, and the economy. Sampling 17,812 individuals across all 34 provinces, the fifteenth edition of the *Survey* reflects persistent fears and pessimism, but a reluctance to jeopardize gains made in women's rights. As 3.2 million Afghans returned to Afghanistan in recent years, The Asia Foundation, for the first time, conducted an additional *Survey of Afghan Returnees* to provide empirical data, unavailable anywhere else. The first of three waves, this information will guide the government of Afghanistan, the international community, and NGOs as they manage reintegration, employment, housing, education, and basic human needs for returnees and host communities.

BANGLADESH

Advancing the SDG agenda

In Bangladesh, the media, private sector, and civil society are helping achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Working with Center for Policy Dialogue and Citizen's Platform for SDGs Bangladesh, we organized "Addressing an Understated Issue in the SDG Discourse: Contributions of the Southern Non-State Actors" at the July 2019 UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development with 30 development organizations from across the globe. We facilitated workshops for more than 300 youth representatives, and prepared a study assessing media engagement and how to strengthen its role in advancing the SDG agenda: Role of Media in Delivering the SDGs: A Mapping Exercise on Bangladesh. Additionally, we organized a residential media camp to improve the technical insights of media professionals reporting on Bangladesh's SDG journey.









CAMBODIA

Women in TEK

This year, with support from USAID through Pact, The Asia Foundation launched Cambodia's very first network of female-owned tech startups: the Women in TEK Network (WTN). Building on our success with a program called TEK4Good, these young women entrepreneurs gained access to the tools they need to get their startups off the ground: a vibrant member community, a customized mentorship program, and opportunities. Women business owners in Cambodia face significant barriers and a challenging policy environment resulting in few in the tech sector. WTN is strengthening government support for women-led technology startups and building a more favorable policy environment.

CHINA

Anti-domestic violence toolkit

China's Domestic Violence (DV) Law has increased awareness and prosecutions. But four years on there are still no standard procedures to protect victims, and no national implementation guidelines. The Asia Foundation is working to address these gaps, including supporting development of a danger-assessment tool for governments and civil society organizations (CSOs) and the first-ever workplace anti-DV toolkit for employers, HR managers, employees, and advocates. We supported a study—*Challenges and Priority Needs of CSOs in China*—that maps organizations currently serving or who have potential to serve victims of DV. These findings led to trainings for 165 participants from 93 CSOs and 18 webinars for nearly 4,000 CSO practitioners across China.

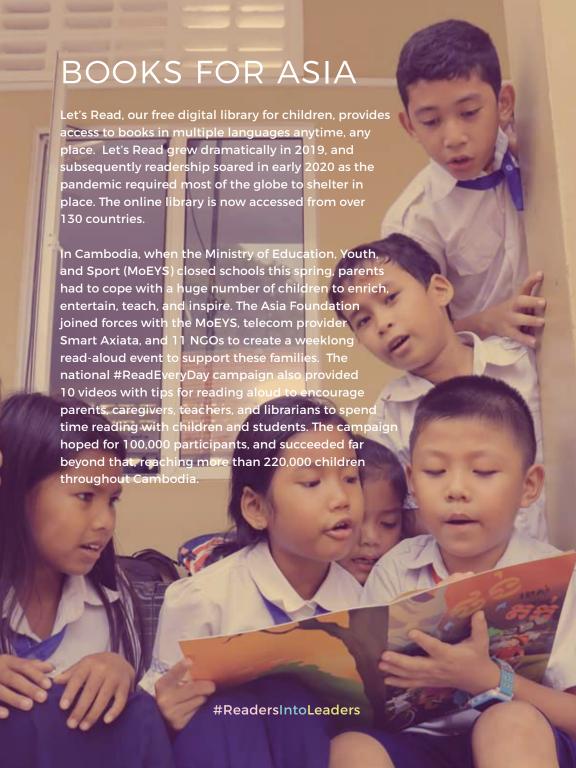


INDIA

#SafetyforShe

Gender-based violence remains a critical concern for India in both public and private spaces. As the Indian economy develops, more women and girls are accessing public spaces, particularly in urban areas. Now in its second year, the Making Cities Safe for Women in India project has made significant headway in highlighting the importance of making public spaces in urban areas accessible to everyone. The issue gained traction through the Foundation's concerted media engagement strategy around #SafetyforShe. In addition to convening over 200 government, police, civil society, media, and youth stakeholders, the project published three city-level safety audits and the Gender Sensitization Manual for Law Enforcement that will become an integral part of the Bhopal Police Training Academy's curriculum.







INDONESIA

Wheelchairs in the mosque

In 2019 for the first time, wheelchairs were allowed to enter mosques in Indonesia. Starting at Istiqlal Mosque, the country's largest and most influential, a special place was reserved in the front row for wheelchair-bound worshippers. To underscore inclusion, two large screens in each corner displayed sign language during the sermon, and volunteers showed up before dawn to help worshippers with disabilities perform their prayers. The key that opened the door to change was a reconsideration of Islamic jurisprudence, or *fiqh*, around people with disabilities and especially their equal right to worship. The Asia Foundation's *PEDULI* social inclusion program was instrumental in supporting research and promoting advocates that argued for this Disability Fiqh, a landmark ruling, and one made possible with the formal endorsement of Indonesia's Nahdhatul Ulama, the largest independent Islamic organization in the world. Later, the fiqh was adopted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, elevating disability issues to the national mainstream.

KOREA

Accelerating women's entrepreneurship

Korea boasts the world's twelfth-largest economy in terms of GDP but struggles to close the economic gender gap. Female-owned businesses account for just 39.5 percent of all businesses in Korea, and their five-year survival rate is 6.7 percent lower than male-owned businesses. To better understand the opportunities and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, we conducted *Accelerate Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Opportunities in Korea*, a women's entrepreneurship study in Gyeonggi Province, South Korea. The study identifies opportunities for growth among women entrepreneurs in the region and provides practical recommendations for policy and programmatic engagement based on different stages of business growth for women entrepreneurs, which will be the focus of the program's next phase.





LAOS





Access to justice

In Laos there are 244 registered lawyers for a population of seven million, and many citizens remain unaware of their rights, how to seek justice, or how to resolve disputes. Our Laos Legal Aid Support program partners with the Ministry of Justice to provide legal assistance in three provincial and two district legal aid offices, as well as mobile legal aid clinics for remote villages. Through our partner, the Bridges Across Borders South East Asia Clinical Legal Education Initiative, the program is expanding Clinical Legal Education at the National University of Laos and Champassak University. Students from these universities conducted community outreach to help build awareness of the steps involved in seeking legal assistance, as well as common barriers to justice, including human trafficking, the drug trade, and gender-based violence.

MALAYSIA

Equipping educators for 21st century classrooms

A goal of 21st century education in Malaysia is to help students develop into life-long, active, independent learners. This means teachers have a very big job, essentially acting as learning coaches who can deliver personalized support for students' social, emotional, and academic development needs. But how do teachers do this? In partnership with StartupMalaysia.org, The Asia Foundation designed The Young Southeast Asian Leadership Initiative Regional Workshop: Empowering Southeast Asian Educators. The goal is to equip and inspire 100 educators from the region to adopt a successful, personalized teaching approach. The program engaged teachers in a two-month online program, brought them together for a three-day workshop in Kuala Lumpur, and then continued with two more months of online mentoring.











MONGOLIA

Mobile app lets citizens say where taxes get spent

Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar, was designed for a population of 500,000; today there are 1.5 million residents. This rapid urbanization has shifted and increased demand for public services. The Asia Foundation's Urban Governance project gets citizens directly involved in decision making as the city grows and evolves, and in 2019 with support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, we expanded our electronic voting system as a part of the Municipality of Ulaanbaatar's SmartUB mobile application. 76,206 citizens across 42 neighborhoods used the application to voice their opinions on what local infrastructure priorities should be. Building on the pilot's success, and in light of restrictions put in place to fight Covid-19, mobile voting was scaled up city-wide in 2020. In total 43 percent of eligible citizens participated: 159,000 males, and 187,000 females. Prior to this critical e-voting system enabling every citizen to vote, each household was allowed just one vote.











MYANMAR

Citizens heard on urban safety priorities

Myanmar's urban citizens lack opportunities to voice their safety concerns—from dangerous sidewalks and roads, to frequent flooding, and other quality of life issues—to local authorities. Government responses have not traditionally been effective nor driven by the realities of people's safety needs. Our Urban Safety project addresses these concerns by encouraging government security actors to adjust their role toward more public-oriented approaches, providing opportunities for citizen engagement in identifying pressing problems, using data to verify them, and then collaboratively determining action. The Township GIS Tool combines public perception data and government data for more effective pattern-spotting, analysis, and decision-making through visualization of safety issues. One example of a successful outcome: The *Hpa An Flood Preparedness* report, which provided preparedness guidance and produced flood hazard maps that local officials used to create their flood risk-analysis and plans.

NEPAL

Community mediation de-escalates conflicts

As Nepal transitions to federalism, the Foundation's Dialogue program has helped resolve governance and political disputes and built consensus on deadlocked issues at a regional effort. In the same way, to de-escalate conflicts related to land, property, business transactions, family quarrels, defamation, and domestic violence, the Foundation's Community Mediation program provides effective alternative mechanisms to resolve disputes at the local level. In the past year, the program settled 90 percent of the 2,805 cases registered. A total of 5,066 disputants received mediation services, 39 percent women and 46 percent from indigenous or marginalized communities. Local governments have demonstrated increased ownership and commitment to the program: it recently expanded to reach seven municipalities, and local governments tripled the amount of money mediators receive for their work. They are also providing direct funding to support trainings and refresher courses, and supporting mediation centers by providing books, furniture, and other equipment.









PACIFIC ISLAND NATIONS

Medical texts arrive in Fiji

The first of the Foundation's scheduled Books for Asia shipments recently arrived in Fiji, including a special collection of medical textbooks for the Fiji National University School of Medicine. In partnership with the U.S. Embassy in Fiji, which also serves Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga, and Tuvalu, and to support education, literacy, and skills building, needed books are being distributed to over 30 educational and government institutions including libraries, schools, learning centers, and government offices. In addition, through Let's Read, our free digital library and reading initiative for children, the Foundation is partnering with Bilum Books to translate, digitize, and deliver books in three Papua New Guinea languages.

PAKISTAN

Mobilizing youth leaders to address water shortages

Stress on water resources is widespread in Pakistan, exacerbated by the looming effects of climate change. Our National Awareness Program on the Water, Energy, and Food Nexus brings together policymakers and those directly impacted by water stress. With funding from the Australian Government's Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio, the program includes grassroots stakeholders, government, the private sector, and academia, and has resulted in a new National Framework on Water, Energy, and Food Nexus. Looking to the future, the program succeeded in mobilizing youth leaders to design social action projects—and the top four young entrepreneurs have received seed funding for their innovative water solutions.



PHILIPPINES







Covid-19 information hub

In the Philippines, local government units (LGUs)—the cities, provinces, municipalities, and barangays—are expected to mitigate community risks. But there was no reliable repository of information on what LGUs should do to prepare for Covid-19, nor any compilation of the growing number of national issuances on the pandemic. To address these needs, The Asia Foundation launched the LGU vs. Covid PH information portal—a central hub for all crucial Covid-19 related information, to empower provinces, cities, and municipalities with verified updates, innovations, and best practices regarding Covid-19. LGU vs. Covid PH features national issuances, legal templates, resources for vulnerable populations, health guidance, support for frontline workers, and information on medical facilities, transportation, and other critical resources which have been essential in fighting the health crisis. The portal has subsequently expanded to partner with the national Department of Interior and Local Government and other government agencies in order to maximize collaboration between national and local governments, along with civil society. By early June, the portal had already reported 31,605 users and 143,753 pageviews.



Solving critical development challenges relies not only on solid ideas and strategies, but on people. The Asia Foundation prioritizes investing in the human capital needed for societies to flourish, including equipping the next generation of transformational leaders. Each year, our Development Fellows program supports 12 emerging leaders across Asia at a pivotal moment in their leadership trajectory. United by a strong network, they share a commitment to achieving positive social impact in their communities.

Asia Foundation Development Fellow Akshat Singhal is out to change the world's gender narrative one boy at a time. Over the past year, 2,500 boys from 61 schools in Mumbai, Indore, and Delhi, India, took a journey to redefine masculinity and stand up to gender-based violence through Singhal's Gender Lab for Boys program. The Gender Lab engages boys to disrupt discriminatory social norms and abuses of power that lead to violence against women. Singhal and Gender Lab co-founder Ayushi Banerji received The Asia Foundation's Lotus Leadership Award in 2020 for this groundbreaking work.

SRI LANKA

Solving land-related disputes

People in Sri Lanka's war-affected northern and eastern provinces are increasingly accessing land mediation boards to receive a fast and cost-effective hearing for land-related disputes. In a very short span of time, these boards have become an important source of redress, resolving disputes over boundaries and lack of access to documents. Where traditional court cases take a minimum of five years to resolve, mediations are able to settle in a couple of weeks. Building on our long history supporting community mediation in Sri Lanka, we support these efforts by teaching mediation skills, facilitating the strengthening of legal frameworks, managing boards, and documenting processes and resolutions. The Foundation has helped establish land mediation boards in Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Vavuniya, and Mannar districts. A total of 2,859 land disputes were addressed by six active boards; so far 471 have been settled. Due to the success of these land mediation boards, the government is now planning to establish land mediation boards across the country to address hundreds of thousands of disputes over state and privately-owned land.



THAILAND

Study examines Thailand's Isan region

Economic inequality is a major roadblock in Thailand's path to prosperity and democracy. The massive development gap between the central and eastern seaboards and the outlying agricultural regions has been a source of political division and unmet economic potential for decades. In Thailand's northeast, the 20 provinces commonly known as Isan are home to a third of the nation's population and have been ground zero for this daunting national challenge for generations. Our study, Thailand's Inequality: Myths and Reality of Isan, surveyed 1,400 households across six provinces in Thailand's poorest region. Findings provide new evidence and insights into the challenges that people in Isan face and the underlying views that shape their political decisions. This region has great political importance due to its large population and record as a swing vote region. The release of the study was timed to coincide with the formation of Thailand's first elected government since 2013, a critical moment when all of the major parties included inequality in their policy priorities, with many proposing specific new programs for the Northeast.



TIMOR-LESTE

Ending a cycle of violence

Timor-Leste has among the highest rates of violence against women globally, with 59 percent of ever-partnered women experiencing physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetimes, and over three quarters of men and women have reported experiencing some form of childhood abuse. With support from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) the Nabilan program supports the Timorese society and government to end this cycle of violence by promoting social norms change and ensuring high-quality support services for victims. This past year Nabilan helped civil society organizations support 1,520 new clients with legal aid, medical examinations and treatment, crisis shelters, counseling, education, referrals, and reintegration support, across all 13 of the country's municipalities. We supported 23 students in completing their Certificate III in Social Services through a Nabilan training program now accredited by the Timor-Leste government.





VIETNAM

Made in Vietnam Energy Plan 2.0

As financing for thermal coal in Vietnam declines and the costs for sustainable energy technologies plummets, demand for more sustainable energy sources, renewables, and increased efficiencies has soared. In collaboration with the Vietnam Business Forum, the Foundation produced *Made in Vietnam Energy Plan 2.0*. The report makes a business case for the primary use of Vietnam's domestic resources to stimulate investment in clean, secure, and affordable energy generation. Accurate assessment of cost, tariffs, taxes, and pricing can lead to a regulatory environment that mobilizes the private sector to meet Vietnam's energy goals of reducing energy intensity and increasing clean energy production. This report recognizes the rapid growth of solar and wind energy generation projected for Vietnam, but also recognizes the need to get the regulatory structure right in order to extend the current boom in renewables to battery storage systems, increased energy efficiency, and natural gas. The Government of Vietnam, through the Central Economic Commission, has welcomed the report, and Electricity of Vietnam, through the Energy Regulatory Agency, has endorsed five of the report's six recommendations.

2019 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS (in thousands)

REVENUE, SUPPORT, & INCOME					
Government: Bilateral & Multilateral Institutions	91,838				
Foundations, Corporations, and Individuals	5,247				
	97,085				
EXPENDITURES					
Programs, Grants, and Related Services	84,875				
General Administration	12,495				
Fundraising	891				
	98,261				
Change in Net Assets from Operations	-1,176				
Non-operating Income	633				
BOOKS IN-KIND Donated Books and Related Services Distribution of Books and Materials	7,543 7,308				
Inventory Increase	235				
ALLOCATION OF EXPENSES					
Programs	86%				
Administration	14%				
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80	90 100%				
PROGRAMS ADMINISTRATION					

Management is responsible for the preparation of The Asia Foundation's financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, and for the financial information presented in this report. This responsibility includes maintaining the integrity and objectivity of financial records, protection of Foundation assets, and compliance with funder restrictions and instructions. The Foundation's financial statements have been audited by Clark Nuber, P.S., independent certified public accountants. It is the opinion of the independent auditor that the financial statements as of and for the year ended September 30, 2019, are fairly stated in all material respects in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. The independent auditor's report and complete audited financial statements and accompanying footnotes are available at asiafoundation.org.

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