Afghanistan



Since The Asia Foundation's Kabul office re-opened in 2002, the Foundation has assisted Afghan efforts to rebuild the country and accelerate development. Our programs focus on five strategic areas: Governance, Islam and Development, Women's Empowerment and Development, Survey and Research, and Education.





GOVERNANCE

CENTER OF GOVERNMENT

Critically important to Afghanistan's development is the function of a central government. The Asia Foundation, while remaining politically neutral, has contributed extensively to building capacities, systems, procedures, and policies in key governmental institutions, including the Office of the President; Office of Administrative Affairs; Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Women's Affairs; Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs; State Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs; Independent Directorate for Local Governance; the High Office for Oversight and Anti-Corruption; and the Government Media and Information Center.

Since 2001, the Foundation has been instrumental in supporting Afghanistan's central government. The Foundation works with the three pillars of state – the Office of the President, National Assembly, and Supreme Court to provide technical assistance and support in building core institutional capabilities. The Strategic Enhancement Program (STEP) is the Foundation's effort to continue to support the three pillars of state in navigating the transition period through 2014 and beyond.

In support of Afghanistan's search for peace and reconciliation, the Foundation has supported all of Afghanistan's national jirga efforts in the last decade. A long-standing Afghan custom, the jirga is a traditional council comprised of elders and influential men and women representing their communities as community representatives. These jirgas include the 2002 Emergency Loya Jirga that facilitated the transition from an interim administration resulting from the Bonn Agreement to the formation of the transitional administration. The new constitution was debated and approved at a Constitutional Loya Jirga in January 2004. In 2007, President Hamid Karzai initiated a joint Afghanistan-Pakistan Peace Jirga to foster crossborder communication and cooperation and in June 2010 the Foundation facilitated cooperation with the Office of Administrative Affairs on the National Consultative Peace Jirga (NCPJ).

The Asia Foundation worked with Afghan civil society to support 30 representatives to travel to Japan in July 2012 as delegates to the Tokyo Conference and participants in the Afghan Civil Society Voices Conference. This was the first time Afghan civil society representatives were recognized outside of Afghanistan for their work. Half of the participants were women and many were from provinces outside Kabul. This provided a unique platform for Afghan civil society to express their needs and articulate their views to



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The Asia Foundation re-established its Kabul office in 2002.

The Asia Foundation's Books for Asia program donates approximately 40,000 new books annually to Afghanistan.

The Foundation works to advance the status of Afghan women through collaboration with government agencies and through building constituencies of support among influential nonstate actors, particularly religious leaders.

the international donor community gathered for the official Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan. Participants included organizational leaders from across Afghanistan who work on a wide range of issues including cultural, educational, community development, anti-corruption efforts, women's empowerment, and humanitarian assistance.

SUBNATIONAL GOVERNANCE

The Performance Based Governance Fund (PBGF) is a strategic subnational governance program of the Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) intended to bridge the gap between the Afghan people and local governments with The Asia Foundation as implementing partner. The focus of PBGF is to improve access to operational resources and funding for Provincial Governor's Offices (PGOs) to respond to provincial citizen needs more effectively; provide governors and their offices with the means and incentives to improve planning and budgeting; and forms the basis of a long-term performance-based program for PGOs through the regular evaluation and ranking of PGOs. The performance of each PGO is measured through regular assessments and is accessible to donors, Afghan Government officials, and the public at http://www.pbgf.gov.af/.

Phase II of PBGF includes a significant focus on capacity building initiatives aimed at developing the skills of PGO staff to improve their ability to manage future projects. PBGF is also developing a standard costing approach to budgeting for PGOs whereby future operational budgeting is focused on a norms-based approach.

ELECTIONS



The Asia Foundation supported the electoral process in Afghanistan starting with the first presidential election in 2004.

The Foundation cooperates with Afghan civil society partners on a

range of civic education and electoral training activities aimed at increasing the meaningful participation of women and youth. The Foundation encourages increased public awareness especially women's, and civic rights and democratic processes by training and establishing a cohort of registered female election observers, conducting student government elections, and working

closely with the Afghan Electoral Reform Consultative Forum (AECRF) to strengthen its ability to effectively advocate for electoral reform. The Foundation works closely with the Independent Election Commission (IEC) to improve its ability to conduct free and fair elections in addition to assessing the public perception of democracy in Afghanistan in order to assist policy and program developers. The Foundation has also supported election observation by its Afghan partner, the Free and Fair Election Association (FEFA), as well as the regional body, the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL).

ISLAM AND DEVELOPMENT

The Asia Foundation works through religious institutions and leaders to promote positive change in women's rights, education, access to justice, and community conflict resolution.

Through its Traditional Leaders Discovery Program The Asia Foundation arranged a comprehensive and carefully designed series of exposure visits for Afghan traditional leaders including Imams to other Muslim countries or countries with large Muslim populations including Egypt, India, Malaysia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. Through these visits, religious leaders established durable relationships with a variety of universities, government ministries, and civil society organizations. The program also organized a three-day workshop in Kabul on Women's Rights and Responsibilities in Islam where prominent Egyptian and Afghan scholars presented on women's social and educational rights in Islam, Islamic conditions of marriage, women's wealth and property rights in Islam, and violence against women in Islam. Overall, the program has instilled in participants a greater sense of tolerance and has provided some participants with the subsequent initiative to establish culture and research centers, women's madrassas, and a new university, the National University established in Kabul in 2012.

The Foundation works in Faryab province to re-assert the role of the formal legal system and improve the capacity of the provincial and district governments to reach out and respond to the needs of local people and to engage religious leaders and institutions in the process. The Foundation works closely with six provincial level government departments, including Department of Islamic Education; Department of Hajj and Religious Affairs; Department of Women's Affairs; Department of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs, and the Disabled; the Attorney General's Office; and Provincial Governor's Offices. The Foundation also supports the development of computer programs in two girls high schools in Faryab province. The project identifies key stakeholders within

the religious hierarchy to champion stronger engagement with the government. Activities include consultation workshops and conferences, the establishment of libraries in private *madrassas*, and a strong focus on engaging youth to enable their greater representation in the community decision-making process.

In March 2012, the Foundation in coordination with the internationally renowned Al Azhar University in Cairo enabled a delegation of 27 religious scholars from across Afghanistan to receive training at the World Association of Al Azhar Graduates (WAAG) in Cairo. The training focused on Islamic positions on issues such as human rights, women's rights, peaceful dialogue, tolerance, development, state and citizenship, Fatwa, relations between religions, and discrimination.



WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

The status of women in Afghanistan has been a deep concern since they were stripped of their fundamental rights under Taliban rule. The Asia Foundation works to advance opportunities for Afghan women through collaboration with government agencies and through building constituencies of support among influential non-state actors, particularly traditional community decision makers and religious leaders. The Foundation continues to expand support for programs that increase women's access to justice and quality educational opportunities.

The Foundation works in Kunduz province to increase the understanding of women's rights among local women and key provincial actors, and to build support for women's rights among community groups and the formal and informal justice systems. The Women's Access to Justice Model Community Program in Kunduz province supports female and male Community Dialogue Groups; trains homebound women on women's rights; instructs teachers, schoolchildren, and male and female *madrassa* students on women's rights; encourages both formal and informal justice leaders to resolve cases in favor of women's rights; and builds the capacity of the provincial Elimination of Violence Against Women

(EVAW) Committee. The Foundation plans to expand this program to three additional provinces in Afghanistan.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs Organizational Restructuring and Empowerment (MORE) program aims to support the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) and the provincial Department of Women's Affairs (DoWAs) by improving institutional reform; strengthening capacity; and building public awareness, education, outreach, and media relations. The Foundation works with MoWA to build their capacity to effectively advocate for policy reform, and collaborate with influential religious and community leaders to promote women's rights in Afghanistan.

The Foundation gathered feedback and recommendations on the Elimination of Violence Against Women's (EVAW) Law from community and religious scholars. The Foundation will use this information to conduct consultations in four regions of Afghanistan which will then be used to provide recommendations for the next iteration of the EVAW law. The law was temporarily passed by a Presidential Decree in 2009 and is currently under review by parliament for permanent status.

SURVEY AND RESEARCH

The Asia Foundation has conducted comprehensive public opinion surveys of the Afghan people since 2004. These surveys establish an accurate, long-term barometer of public opinion and aim to provide decision-makers with relevant and useful data on

development strategy, policy analysis, and governance. The surveys cover all 34 provinces and gauge Afghan opinion on 11 different themes: the national mood, reconciliation and reintegration; development and service delivery, the economy, political



participation, security; governance; justice systems, women in society; corruption, and access to information.

In addition to the *Survey of the Afghan People*, in-depth research is carried out resulting in a series of occasional papers exploring key thematic areas in more detail with a view to informing the design of the survey and pro-

moting a greater understanding of the primary findings. The Foundation also carries out surveys to meet the specific needs of donors. A survey was recently conducted on the impact of Japanese Development Assistance for the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and another survey was completed to assess the current state of the labor market in Kabul for the government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

EDUCATION

The Asia Foundation addresses higher education and basic education needs in keeping with the government's strategic objective of expanding access to education. Activities include support for women's and girl's education, improving access to educational reference resources, and educational exchange programs.

The Foundation's Strengthening Education for Afghanistan (SEA) program provides technical and programmatic assistance to education institutions and NGOs, with an emphasis on women. Access to quality materials on Afghanistan's history and culture increased through support to the Afghan Center at Kabul University (ACKU), a sub-grantee of the SEA program. The Foundation supported ACKU in the production and distribution of more than 17,000 primary and secondary level books in local languages across all 34 provinces in Afghanistan through ACKU's Afghanistan Box Library Extension (ABLE) program which aims to enhance and encourage reading among people of all ages and abilities throughout Afghanistan. These books are widely read by new literates in local public schools and libraries. In April 2010, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, the Foundation completed the development of the environmentally friendly National Women's Dormitory at Kabul University. Ninety women completed a civic leadership course in 2011. The Foundation's Carnegie Corporation Scholarships for Afghan Women program addresses the greater challenges facing women in gaining a university education and enabling them to have the education needed to become future leaders. This program enables 88 academically qualified and financially needy Afghan women to

gain in-country university degrees. From all regions of the country, 78 Afghan women will enroll in undergraduate degree programs (43 in public universities and 33 in private universities) and 10 women university professors will enroll in advanced degree programs.

Now in its third year, the Afghan University Student Exchange Program (AUSEP) seeks to enhance and broaden the professional skill sets of potential adjunct instructors in English Departments at Afghan universities and develop cross-cultural understanding and exchange between Afghanistan, India, and the United States. Each year's program supports 50 students from Afghan universities to study in a democratic, multicultural, and English-speaking neighboring country and to an American-style, student-centered, and interactive educational program. For the 150 graduates of AUSEP, the Foundation also established a national alumni network to enable them to continue their professional learning and promote cooperation on local English-language activities.

In support of the English-Language Fellows (ELFs), The Asia Foundation provides administrative and logistical support to ELFs embedded in English-language faculties in universities in Herat and Kabul. This program supports the aims of the Ministry of Higher Education in Afghanistan by directly contributing to the professional development of student and faculty in key universities, as well as to the university's institutional development.

Since 2002, the Foundation's Books for Asia program in Afghanistan has donated nearly 1.7 million new books and educational materials to institutions in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan. The institutions include provincial schools, public libraries, universities, nongovernmental organizations, and government ministries. Donated by prominent publishers, these books are highly valued and appreciated by Afghan institutions. In 2012, the Books for Asia program donated a special collection of 1.2 million traditional Afghan folktale storybooks in Dari, Pashto, and English published by Hoopoe Books to 548 schools in 33 provinces throughout Afghanistan.

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 17 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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