

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

INCREASING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Across Asia, women face serious challenges as they strive to be effective leaders and active citizens. When women are unable to contribute to the decisions that affect their lives such as the distribution of clean water and access to sanitation, healthcare, and quality education entire communities suffer. To ensure that public policy and resources meet the needs of all citizens, it is critical that women share in public decisionmaking with their male counterparts, as leaders and participants.

TRAINING WOMEN LEADERS & CONSTITUENTS

The Asia Foundation and its Asian partners help women develop the skills they need to run effective political campaigns and build broad-based public support. Our programs encourage women to engage in political and decisionmaking processes and contribute to increased government accountability to all citizens.

- In **Indonesia**, in preparation for the upcoming 2009 elections, we are supporting the activities of women's organizations to advocate for electoral reform and political party regulations affecting women's political participation. To increase public awareness of women candidates, we support an innovative database to track women candidates and make it easier for citizens to access information on the policies of women candidates in their districts.



- In **Cambodia**, we supported Women for Prosperity, a local organization, to train women to run for elected offices. Since 2001, women have gone from holding less than one percent of commune council positions to more than 14 percent in 2008. The Foundation also supports a women's commune councilor network to increase women's skills as effective leaders in local government.
- In hill-tribe communities in **Thailand**, we are empowering women to effectively influence local politics by training women to lead workshops on actively engaging with local government. More than 30 ethnic women leaders have trained hundreds of community members through these workshops.

PROMOTING FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

While free and fair elections are a first step in a robust democracy, it is equally crucial that voters cast informed votes. Yet, women's access to information on the election process is often limited by low levels of literacy as well as cultural and social restrictions on their mobility. To address this need, we organize major pre-election voter education campaigns, tailored to ensure that women know their voting rights.

Before the 2004 election in Afghanistan, we worked with Afghan partners to develop a women's magazine which highlighted candidates' policies and created a women's forum on the right of all citizens to cast an independent vote. As a result of these and other efforts, women constituted a remarkable 43 percent of total voters in the 2004 election.

In Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province, where women voters make up only one percent of the electorate, we have increased women's ability to engage in local politics through an innovative civic education program for semi-literate and illiterate women living in rural areas. We have also supported targeted information campaigns to educate women about when, how, and where to vote.

OUR DONORS MAKE OUR PROGRAMS POSSIBLE

With contributions from private individuals, corporations, foundations, and public funders, we are able to create exciting new models and expand successful programs that are making a significant difference in the lives of girls and women across the Asia-Pacific region. To support our programs, please visit the Women's Empowerment Program page at: www.asiafoundation.org.

The Asia Foundation is a private, non-profit, non-governmental organization working to advance mutual interests of the United States and the Asia-Pacific region. It is funded by contributions from corporations, foundations, individuals, and governmental organizations in the U.S., Europe, Canada, Australia, and Asia, and an annual appropriation from the U.S. Congress. Through its programs, the Foundation builds leadership, improves policies, and strengthens institutions to foster greater openness and shared prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT:

YUPA PHUSAHAS, PROGRAM OFFICER, THAILAND

"We support real needs. We believe in what we do, and we believe in what our partners do. I am very proud to tell people I work for The Asia Foundation."

Yupa Phusahas is a program officer in The Asia

Foundation's Bangkok office, where she manages a range of programs from counter-trafficking and human rights, to women's political participation and legal reform. Believing that gender issues are closely tied to all development goals, Yupa has worked for over 10 years to promote the participation of women's groups in general elections, and to raise awareness about constitutional reform and its impact on women's rights.



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