

# 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 governance, law, and civil society, including support for the development of a new constitution and national voter registration, civic education, and government-media relations. The Foundation provides long-term support and technical assistance to key governmental institutions responsible for the executive branch, parliamentary affairs, agriculture, sub-national government, and foreign affairs. Other programs focus on women's empowerment, and education.



## GOVERNANCE, LAW, AND CIVIL SOCIETY

### AFGHAN SURVEY

The Asia Foundation has conducted comprehensive public opinion surveys of the Afghan people since 2004. Together these surveys establish an accurate, long-term barometer of public opinion and help assess how Afghans perceive the progress and direction of their country. The surveys cover all 34 provinces and gauge Afghan opinion on reconstruction; security; governance; attitudes toward government and informal institutions; the status of women; the role of Islam; and the impact of media. The Foundation has a reputation for developing sophisticated empirical surveys to pinpoint citizen concerns, to gauge public support, development progress, and to inform policy debate.

### PERFORMANCE-BASED GOVERNORS FUND

Development of sub-national governance in Afghanistan has been a critical challenge. In September 2007, The Asia Foundation became the main partner assisting the newly established

Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) in developing its structure, strategy, policy, and concrete activities for an efficient sub-national governance framework. The Performance Based Governor's Fund (PBGF) is a new strategic national program of the IDLG, intended to bridge the gap between the Afghan people and local governments with the Foundation as implementing partner. The PBGF effectively assists Afghan Governors to meet operational and community outreach needs, enhance their relationships with citizens, and increase their overall management capacity. Governors' performance assessments are accessible to donors, Afghan Government officials, and the public at <http://www.pbgf.gov.af/>.

### SUPPORT TO MINISTRIES AND CENTER OF GOVERNMENT

Critically important to Afghanistan's development is the function of a central government. The Asia Foundation has contributed extensively to building capacities, systems, procedures and policies while remaining politically neutral. The Foundation has helped strengthen institutional



#### AFGHANISTAN

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

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capacity and skills of officials in key governmental institutions, including the Office of the President, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Independent Directorate for Local Governance, as well as the High Office for Oversight and Anti-Corruption and the Government Media Information Center.

#### MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, IRRIGATION, AND LIVESTOCK



In 2009, the Foundation initiated a change management project with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL), a potentially critical, central contributor to the rehabilitation and

growth of the Afghan economy. The program, part of the National Agriculture Development Framework, is helping to create a dynamic and effective ministry through administrative reform and re-structuring, helping to improve organization and function of the ministry for operational and staff efficiency in the various departments.

#### GOVERNMENT MEDIA AND INFORMATION CENTER



An important function of the Afghan government is to communicate its programs, activities and views to the broader public. The Asia Foundation helped establish the Government Media and Information Center in 2007 to bridge the communication gap between the government and the Afghan free media. Its establishment helped to empower

media entities and to promote professional communication practices within the Afghan Government's media and communication departments.

#### ELECTIONS AND CIVIC EDUCATION

The Asia Foundation cooperates with Afghan civil society partners in a range of civic education and electoral training activities to expose citizens (such as homebound women) to essential information about elections. This includes conducting mock elections, crafting radio messages, performing mobile theater, and conducting gender and election training.



The Foundation has also supported election observation by its Afghan partner, the Free and Fair Election Association (FEFA), and the regional body, the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL).

#### LAW AND JUSTICE

Basic labor rights are unavailable to many citizens in Afghanistan. The Asia Foundation works with the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD), and other Afghan partners, to effectively enforce the new law, and increase general understanding and awareness of the new law among members of the judiciary, workers, employers, and the general Afghan public.

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 elected and appointed 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 2007, President Hamid Karzai initiated a joint Afghanistan-Pakistan Peace Jirga to foster cross-border communication and cooperation. More recently, the Foundation cooperated with the Office of Administrative Affairs on the National Consultative Peace Jirga in June 2010.

## WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

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 religious leaders. These efforts build the capacity of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) to effectively advocate for policy reform and collaborate with influential religious and community leaders to promote women's rights within an Islamic framework. The Foundation also continues to expand support for programs that increase women's access to justice and quality educational opportunities.

### MINISTRY OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS



The Asia Foundation works with the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) to strengthen its capacity to serve as a visible and effective agent for policy and advocacy in Afghanistan. Today, the Foundation provides technical guidance and broad support through institution-building activities such as strengthening the policy advocacy process; supporting leadership development;

implementing a broad communications strategy; supporting resource and referral centers at the provincial level; and promoting increased transparency and accountability across the ministry.

## WOMEN AND ISLAM

The Asia Foundation works with Afghan governmental and non-governmental institutions, and with religious leaders, to increase understanding and support among Muslim leaders for human and women's rights and thus to strengthen understanding and support for women's rights in Afghan communities where Islamic teachers are



a major force. This year, delegations are visiting India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Turkey to gain a comparative perspective on efforts to advance women's rights in an Islamic framework.

## EDUCATION

In April 2010, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, The Asia Foundation completed the development of the environmentally friendly National Women's Dormitory at Kabul University. Foundation support also increased quality educational opportunities, providing remedial education to thousands of female students in eight provinces and helping conduct their teacher assessments. Support for the Ministry of Education's National College Entrance Examination Preparatory Course led to an increased number of students from across the country qualifying for university entrance.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Asia Foundation supported the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in implementing a new organizational structure, improved key departments' efficiency, trained and developed diplomatic and support staff, and strengthened the information and communication technology (ICT)

infrastructure within the ministry and in its seven provincial offices. The Foundation also worked with the ministry to establish the Center for Regional Cooperation, which is charged with developing mechanisms for cooperation with Afghanistan's seven regional neighboring countries.

## **BOOKS FOR ASIA**

The Asia Foundation's Books for Asia program donates approximately 40,000 new books annually to about 280 institutions across Afghanistan, including provincial schools, public libraries, schools, universities, and teacher training centers in support of youth and adult literacy; and non-

governmental organizations and government ministries. Donated by prominent publishers, these books are highly valued and appreciated by Afghan institutions.



In Afghanistan, The Asia Foundation's programs receive funding from the Australian Agency for International Development, U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Embassy - Afghanistan, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, and UK Embassy, Canadian CIDA, the Royal Netherlands Embassy, Belgian Government, the European Union, the National Geographic Society, the United Nations Development Program, International Trade and Labour Program - Canada, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, private donors, and the U.S. Congress.

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