

# Cambodia



Starting in 1955, resuming program activities in 1989, and then reestablishing an office in 1993, The Asia Foundation has worked for peace and prosperity for the people of Cambodia. Through periods of instability, turmoil, reconstruction, and growth, the Foundation has provided support to thousands of schools and universities, government agencies and NGOs, citizens' groups and business associations to help them advance Cambodia's economic, social and political development.



## PROMOTING RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE & CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Since 1993, The Asia Foundation has supported Cambodian efforts to address citizen demands for efficiency and transparency in economic and social regulation. With Cambodia now engaged in a long-term process of decentralization, our governance programs, including the World Bank-funded Demand for Good Governance program and the multi-donor-funded Civil Society and Pro-Poor Markets program, promote citizen participation and engagement, particularly at the local level, and explore new strategies for improving the quality of governance.

### DEMAND FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE (DFGG)

The DFGG program seeks to empower citizen demand for transparent and accountable governance. The Asia Foundation implements the non-state actor component of the program, and uses capacity-building approaches to promote citizen participation, increase access to services, and strengthen the ability of non-state actors to hold government accountable. More than 50 grants, both large and small, for social accountability projects have been awarded to organizations in 20 provinces.

### CIVIL SOCIETY AND PRO-POOR MARKETS

Roughly 85 percent of poor Cambodians live in rural areas that depend on rapidly dwindling natural resources. The Foundation helps these

vulnerable communities secure a greater voice in how their vital resources are managed. Working with nearly 1,000 community-based organizations, our training initiatives have reached more than 165,000 community members in more than 300 communities across Cambodia. These rural citizens have been able to establish community forestry and fishery advocacy groups, protect their communities' natural resources, and launch new income-generating activities.

## ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND PROTECTING CITIZEN RIGHTS

The Asia Foundation has been a pioneer in its support for the work of leading human rights organizations in the promotion and protection of human rights. Our justice and rights programs in Cambodia have focused on issues such as resolving land disputes and expropriations, monitoring imprisoned human rights workers, investigating human rights abuses, and providing legal representation to victims.

The Foundation has encouraged, trained, and mobilized human rights organizations to strengthen their advocacy networks. We work with a broad range of national and grassroots NGOs reaching down to the poorest and most remote communities. These partners play a vital role in monitoring, investigating, and reporting violations of human rights, and advocating for greater protections against abuses.



## CAMBODIA

The Asia Foundation first opened its Cambodia office in 1955. In 1989, after a 15-year hiatus, the Foundation resumed program activities with Cambodians. The Phnom Penh office reopened in 1993.

Books for Asia donates books on subjects including government and politics, business administration and management, economics, culture, the environment, information technology, medicine, and English.

## STRENGTHENING LOCAL ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE

The Cambodian economy was hard hit by the global financial crisis, and remains vulnerable to macro-level economic fluctuations. Through our economic reform and development programs, The Asia Foundation promotes public and private sector engagement at the sub-national level, with the goal of improving the business environment.

## PROVINCIAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT SCORECARD AND PROVINCIAL PUBLIC-PRIVATE DIALOGUES

Developed in 2006 in collaboration with the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Provincial Business Environment Scorecard (PBES) is an empirical assessment tool that ranks provinces by their quality of economic governance. Results from the most recent scorecards, based on interviews with 1,234 different firms in all 24 of Cambodia's provinces, reveal the obstacles and constraints that hinder business performance in different regions and localities. The PBES gives micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) a powerful tool to raise issues with local authorities and organize to improve the business environment through policy advocacy.

To help MSMEs establish their collective voice, the Foundation supported Cambodia's first cross-sector business associations in three provinces. In a series of Provincial Public-Private Dialogues, these associations met with local authorities to discuss improvements in the business environment. A pilot project in Kampong Thom resulted in streamlined forestry and fishery licensing, improved quality standards for fish and agriculture products, and critical mediation between community fisheries and outside commercial fishing groups.

## EMPOWERING WOMEN

Human trafficking is one of the most serious issues facing Cambodia today. The Asia Foundation's counter-trafficking program takes a comprehensive, end-to-end approach, from community-based interventions to prevent trafficking, to improving government coordination of anti-trafficking efforts, increasing prosecution of perpetrators, and protecting the rights of victims and improving their prospects for reintegration into their communities.



With funding from USAID through the Counter-Trafficking in Persons program, the Foundation has supported the establishment of a national committee on trafficking, which coordinates the efforts of 14 Government ministries, dozens of international and local organizations, and key provincial bodies. This program was instrumental in the adoption of first-ever national minimum standards for the treatment of victims, and the establishment of anti-trafficking training programs for judges, police, and front-line social service providers. The Foundation also launched a national prevention and awareness campaign using positive images, based on traditional Khmer values, to encourage reduced societal acceptance of trafficking and prostitution.

The Foundation also promotes women's participation in politics, governance, and the economy. Through councilor-led forums, and provincial and national dialogues, the Foundation has supported female commune councilors in Kratie, Stung Treng, Monduliri, and Ratanakiri provinces to network, share challenges, and work together to find solutions.

## BOOKS FOR ASIA

Cambodia's future rests on educating youth for the future, but with a weak educational system, access to books and learning materials remains limited. To date, the Foundation has donated nearly 800,000 books and other educational resources to hundreds of Cambodian universities, secondary schools, and other government and non-government institutions. We have also supported library renovations at secondary schools, coordinated training programs for school librarians, sponsored English-essay contests and reading festivals, and held a radio talk show to highlight the importance of literacy and reading.

In Cambodia, The Asia Foundation's programs are also funded by the governments of Australia, Denmark, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as The World Bank and many private donors.

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