

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

CAMBODIA

For more than 15 years, The Asia Foundation has worked on the ground in Cambodia to improve the lives of women and girls. Due to growth in the garment, agricultural, and tourism sectors, Cambodia has made considerable economic and social gains in recent years. However, for many women, challenges such as access to education or employment remain, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and human trafficking. The Asia Foundation's Women's Empowerment Program works to ensure that women are at the forefront of development in Cambodia and can reap the benefits of—and contribute to—their society.



COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking is one of the most pressing human rights abuses in Cambodia today. Conviction rates of offenders remain low and human traffickers thus continue to operate with little fear of retribution. There also remains a vast information gap: victims often do not know where to turn for help and law enforcement officials lack sufficient training on how to handle trafficking cases.

In 2006, the Foundation, with the support of the U.S. Government, initiated the Counter-Trafficking in Persons Project (CTIP) to address issues of human trafficking in a holistic and inclusive manner by involving both government and civil society organizations. The Foundation has worked closely with the Cambodian Government to facilitate the establishment of a government and civil society forum to combat trafficking, which is headed by a Deputy Prime Minister and includes 11 key ministries. Through this

joint effort, the Foundation was instrumental in the development of the first-ever standards of care for victims of human trafficking, as well as a landmark policy that calls for unprecedented levels of protection for human trafficking victims. Launched in September 2009, the policy promotes continuity of care for victims across multiple service providers—from shelters to counselors to lawyers. The Foundation also supports shelters that help victims recover and safely reintegrate into society.

To ensure the new anti-trafficking law will be effective, the Foundation also supports training on international human trafficking protocols and the anti-trafficking law for judges and prosecutors; the provision of legal aid for victims; a court monitoring program to promote transparency in legal proceedings; and the development of a national police training curriculum. We also support a training program for journalists to improve their coverage of trafficking cases.

INCREASING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Cambodian women are severely underrepresented in politics. Since 1996, the Foundation has supported training for women candidates of all political parties at the local level, providing the skills Cambodian women need to step forward as political leaders.

In preparation for the 2002 local elections, the Foundation helped thousands of women gain leadership skills and develop more effective campaign strategies. As a result of these and other activities, nearly 1,000 women were elected to local councils across Cambodia. In 2007, 15 percent of elected commune councilors were women, a significant increase from just eight percent in 2002.

Once women are elected to positions of leadership, the Foundation works to create professional networks of women councilors to increase their effectiveness in office. Through these professional networks, elected women leaders are able to share experiences and lessons-learned with their peers. In addition, these networks are forums for continued technical training and skill-building on advocacy, public speaking, and good governance. In 2009 alone, the Foundation organized 12 network forums for women leaders from 25 districts across Cambodia.



PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: WOMEN FOR PROSPERITY



The Asia Foundation has worked with Women for Prosperity since its founding in 1994. Women for Prosperity is a local organization that aims to increase women's political participation by supporting women to take on leadership roles in their community. Together with the Foundation, Women for Prosperity has worked to strengthen women's leadership skills, promote women's legal rights and advocacy, train female candidates to successfully win seats in national and local elections, and build solidarity among women leaders across political party lines and provincial borders.

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.



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