government accountable for the responsible use and management of natural resources and the environment.

Through its 18 field offices in the Asia-Pacific and extensive network of on-the-ground partners, the Foundation is initiating high-impact programs to strengthen the institutions and processes through which environmental resources are managed and improve the development and enforcement of sustainable environmental policy.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The Asia Foundation is addressing some of the most pressing challenges to achieving sustainable development in Asia. Recognizing the integrated nature of these challenges through our work in governance, economic reform, regional cooperation and women’s empowerment, the Foundation’s Environment programs address and prioritize critical issues that benefit from a coordinated effort among these areas, coupled with a grounded understanding of the local context where we work. These priorities include:

• Natural Resource Management and Use
• Transboundary Water Resources Management
• Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience
• Disaster Preparedness and Risk Reduction

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

The Foundation is committed to long-term engagement on environmental priorities in Asia. It employs a distinct, integrated approach informed by deep local knowledge and extensive on-the-ground partnerships in order to:

• Improve understanding of the unique environmental challenges in each country where we work;
• Develop innovative, collaborative approaches to environmental issues alongside our Asian partners;
• Develop greater consensus and cooperation among government, elected officials, business, civil society, religious leaders, and local communities around environment, climate change and disaster risk reduction issues;
• Promote cross-border collaboration and sharing of best practices in environmental management among different Asian countries; and
• Generate pilot projects and new models for achieving environmental progress and sustainability.

The Foundation’s added value and approaches to environmental programming include:

• Incorporating an understanding of the broad political, social and economic dynamics of governance reform in the countries in which we work, without which environmental reform efforts cannot be effective.
• Utilizing extensive presence and networks in the United States, Europe and throughout the Asia-Pacific region, which enables us to work with a wide range of local and international environmental organizations.

• Drawing on our reputation and capacity as an effective, neutral convener of diverse stakeholders from government, business, and civil society, which is essential for balancing sustainable environmental stewardship with economic development priorities, as well as ensuring increased transparency, accountability, and public participation in environmental reforms and decision-making.

• Utilizing our ability to access expertise in academic, non-profit, research and government communities from the U.S., Europe, Australia, and Australia, in order to build the capacity of local partners.

• Identifying and integrating gender dynamics, economic development, governance reform, and regional cooperation to address critical environmental management and climate change challenges.

• Applying analytic and empirical approaches to environmental programming throughout Asia.

ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA

Asia is a dynamic region that has experienced unprecedented economic growth, population expansion, and urbanization, which have increased the demand for food, energy, water, and other natural resources. As the region continues to develop and expand, environmental problems – such as the lack of access to clean water and air, degradation of natural resources, and loss of biodiversity – threaten the sustainable development of many countries in Asia. The combination of these factors can have a profoundly negative impact on development, human well-being, and the incidence of local and regional conflict over natural resources. Additionally, the significant impact of global warming and climate change places increased pressure on these valuable resources, and can potentially undermine many of the achievements that have been made in Asia’s development and poverty reduction efforts over the last several decades.

Despite its impressive economic advances, the region is also home to many poor, rural communities who rely directly on shared natural resources for their livelihoods but who often have no voice in their management. These resources include the grasslands in Mongolia, major rivers that originate in the Himalayas and flow through South and Southeast Asia, rich forests in Indonesia, and diverse marine ecosystems around the Pacific Islands, among many others. Due to the close interrelationships between people and these natural systems, environmental resources play a critical role in overall national and regional development strategies.

Now more than ever, Asia’s urban and rural communities, governments, businesses, and broader civil society are voicing their concerns regarding the effects of degraded and vulnerable ecological systems and the negative impacts of climate change. In response, The Asia Foundation is expanding and scaling up its environment and climate change programming, recognizing that sound management and governance of natural resources is essential for sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region.

BUILDING ON EXPERIENCE, EXPANDING OUR EFFORTS

For more than two decades, The Asia Foundation has initiated successful environment programs throughout Asia. It has worked with civil society, government, and the private sector as the region’s development environment agenda evolves. The Foundation understands the nuances of the costs and benefits between economic development and environmental health, regional and local government relations, and private sector incentives.

Improved governance of Asia’s natural resources and response to climate change is one of the key elements in achieving successful, sustainable development. This includes expanding government capacity to develop sound climate change adaptation and mitigation policies from the national to the local level, strengthening the rule of law to enforce environmental protection, and mobilizing a range of diverse constituents to hold government and industry accountable for the responsible use and management of natural resources and the environment.
IMPACT: The Asia Foundation measures its progress in environmental stewardship through successful partnerships, strengthened government commitment, enhanced institutional capacity for environmental protection, active and effective public participation, expanded regional coordination, and ultimately, the improved prospects for a secure and sustainable environment. Areas where the Foundation is having an impact in Asia include:

MONGOLIA: RESPONSIBLE MINING AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
Sustainable natural resource management and development is the foundation upon which Mongolia’s future prosperity resides. The Foundation works with local communities, government, and small-scale artisanal mining groups to improve their environmental responsibilities and safeguard environmental conservation at both local and national levels. The Foundation is also working closely with stakeholders on establishing best practices for water quality and sanitation in local schools and households.

SOUTH ASIA: TRANSBOUNDARY WATER-SHARING
The Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna river basin spans the borders of India, Nepal, and Bangladesh, while the Indus River basin straddles historical rivals India and Pakistan. The use and development of these waters are highly contentious and are further threatened by climate change, which is projected to result in reduced flow of water in these rivers. The Foundation is contributing to the analysis of cross-border water issues and fostering increased cooperation for the management of these shared waters.

LAOS: WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
Laos’ rich water resources are vital to the communities that rely on them for their livelihoods. The Foundation promotes environmental awareness and local ownership among communities and students throughout the country by empowering them to monitor and manage river water quality and assess the environmental impact of development.

THAILAND: FLOOD RECOVERY, RECONSTRUCTION, AND MITIGATION
In October 2011, Thailand experienced some of the worst flooding in nearly 60 years. It submerged one third of the country, killed nearly 700 people, and caused millions of dollars in damage. The Foundation is working to improve communication, coordination, and collaboration among diverse flood-affected stakeholders to advance common interests and influence future national policies, plans, and protocols on water and natural disaster management.

PILOT PROGRAMS
The Foundation is also implementing pilot programs on climate change governance and perception in Bangladesh, environmental education in Malaysia, and urban environmental issues in Nepal.

INDONESIA: ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE, LAND USE, AND FORESTRY
Indonesia’s rapid rate of deforestation and land degradation makes it one of the top emitters of greenhouse gases in the world. Guided by an understanding of the economic, social, and political factors, the Foundation is addressing underlying forest governance and land tenure issues. Programs aim to increase transparency and accountability of land use planning, improve land use policies and increase rule of law to better govern these resources and contribute to sustainable, low-carbon economic growth and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

CHINA: INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN CHINA’S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND STRENGTHENING DISASTER MANAGEMENT
China’s economic growth provides an opportunity to integrate environmental factors into the country’s fast-paced development. The Foundation supports the engagement of diverse stakeholders to contribute to discourse in areas pertinent to sustainable development, including strengthening environmental information transparency and regulation, increasing public participation in environmental decision-making, and in China’s low-carbon development priorities. Additionally, the Foundation supports government, schools, and communities in emergency management and disaster preparedness.

VIETNAM: NATURAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND YOUTH FOR ENVIRONMENT
Rapid economic growth in Vietnam is contributing to environmental degradation, while the country is also highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. To mitigate these risks, the Foundation is engaging private sector enterprises to participate in disaster risk management, and to improve low carbon development processes in industrial zones. It is also supporting journalists and NGOs to increase access to information and broaden public policy debate and improve environmental dispute resolution.

PHILIPPINES: NATURAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN METRO MANILA
The Philippines is one of the most vulnerable countries to natural disasters in the world, facing risks from flooding, typhoons, earthquakes, and volcanoes. To mitigate the impacts from these disasters, the Foundation is supporting policy and operational reforms to vulnerable areas by working with community organizations, non-profits, and government on low-cost and safer housing options in metro Manila.

PACIFIC ISLANDS: PREPARING FOR NATURAL DISASTERS
The Pacific Island nations are extremely vulnerable to natural hazards such as tsunamis, drought, flooding, and tropical storms. As climate change increases this vulnerability, the Foundation is building on its long history of strengthening organizational and leadership capacity of regional and provincial partners, and empowering at-risk communities in 14 Pacific Island nations on disaster management and early warning and alert systems.