The Asia Foundation supports Korea’s efforts to expand and deepen international development cooperation and knowledge-sharing within the Asia-Pacific region. The Foundation’s Korea programs also facilitate Northeast Asian regional cooperation, including exchanges with North Korea.

Since 1954, The Asia Foundation’s programs in Korea have responded to a rapidly changing economic and political environment. Korea has undergone a dramatic transition, developing into an advanced economy and robust democracy that is considered a model for others. Ready to share the lessons of its own development experience, Korea has now transformed from aid recipient to donor. The Foundation, with its 17 Asian offices, is uniquely positioned to cooperate with Korea as it expands its development assistance programs. The Foundation partners with Korean nongovernmental organizations and the Korean government to expand its official development assistance and to strengthen their development capacity through joint development projects, training, and knowledge exchanges.

The Foundation’s Korea office serves as the hub for regional cooperation initiatives in Northeast Asia, and aims to strengthen Korea’s relations with its Asian neighbors. Building on a long and successful track record, the Foundation works with Korean partners to help meet the challenges and opportunities associated with Korea’s expanding role as a democratic and economic leader throughout the region.

Since 2010, The Asia Foundation and the Korea Development Institute (KDI) have collaborated to enhance development effectiveness by facilitating mutual learning among emerging development and traditional donors. In anticipation of the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF-4) in Busan in 2011, the Foundation and KDI established a platform for research seminars among experts in the region to compare strategies in development assistance and evaluate aid effectiveness. As a result, the Asian Approaches to Development Cooperation (AADC) dialogue series was established, convening development cooperation experts from ‘non-traditional’ Asian donor countries and aid recipient countries, as well as selected traditional development partners. Together these experts examined Asian aid approaches, provided critiques on conventional aid architecture, and shared perspectives on emerging Asian donor approaches. A report summarizing their findings, entitled “Emerging Asian Approaches to Development Cooperation,” served as the basis for a widely acclaimed side event at the HLF-4, which the Foundation, KDI, and Vietnam’s
The Asia Foundation has a strong relationship and cooperates with the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), the official Korean aid agency, in regional development projects.

In 2011, the Foundation and KOICA agreed to launch a collaborative three-year project focused on local economic governance in Sri Lanka, to be implemented in four eastern cities that have been hard hit by civil war and natural disasters. The program focuses on rehabilitating infrastructure to encourage economic growth, including improving public facilities for tourists, upgrading a solid waste disposal site, and installing a new parking garage. This cooperation includes Foundation oversight of project implementation, KOICA technical assistance, and provides training and assistance to participants to improve public facilities for tourists.

In South Korea, the Foundation has facilitated access to educational opportunities for young people of North Korean origin. Working with the British Council, the Foundation supported 10 students for enrollment in the Council’s English-language program. The Foundation also administers a program funded by the Coalition for North Korean Women’s Rights, which is designed to help North Korean women in South Korea find employment, and gain vocational, entrepreneurial, and leadership training through three-month classroom and placement sessions.

Since 1996, The Asia Foundation’s Books for Asia program has donated more than 170,000 books and printed materials to North Korean institutions, the national library of North Korea, the Grand People’s Study House, and various university libraries including the South Korea-funded Pyongyang University of Science and Technology, the Pyongyang University of Foreign Studies, Kim Chaek University of Science and Technology, and Kim Il Sung University. The majority of the donated books are in the areas of science, technology, medicine, economics, and English, and other topics include art, history, international relations, and law. The major donors include McGraw Hill, Lynne Rienner, and W.W. Norton & Company.

As a fellowship program for Korean development specialists, to introduce them to development issues and strategies in developing countries. The Asia Foundation has sponsored training programs to strengthen the capacity of government aid workers, NGO leaders, and postgraduate students of international studies to plan and carry out effective development projects. This includes a fellowship program for Korean development specialists, to introduce them to development issues and strategies in developing countries. An exchange fellowship enables international development specialists to visit Korea to study Korea’s economic development experience, work on projects with local experts and conduct research on development issues. The Foundation also holds an annual public conference in Seoul on development cooperation.

In partnership with the KDI School of Public Policy and Management (KDI School), The Asia Foundation has sponsored training programs to strengthen the capacity of government aid workers, NGO leaders, and postgraduate students of international studies to plan and carry out effective development projects. This includes a fellowship program for Korean development specialists, to introduce them to development issues and strategies in developing countries. An exchange fellowship enables international development specialists to visit Korea to study Korea’s economic development experience, work on projects with local experts and conduct research on development issues. The Foundation also holds an annual public conference in Seoul on development cooperation.

The Asia Foundation in Korea. The board of directors is comprised of some of Korea’s most distinguished statesmen and business people, including former Prime Minister Lee Hong-koo, former Foreign Minister Han Sung-joo, and