The Asia Foundation’s programs in the Philippines promote better governance to support economic growth, strengthen the rule of law, and foster peace and development in Mindanao. Building on its wide network of partners, the Foundation is helping government, local non-government organizations, and the private sector to strengthen democratic institutions and create sustainable economic growth.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

As one method to overcome the Philippine’s long-standing “low growth, low investment” pattern, the Foundation is assisting the private sector and local governments in the cities of Angeles and Iloilo to monitor the infrastructure investment process, from plan to implementation, to improve efficiency. To further spur growth and investment, the Foundation works with local partners to improve “connectivity” within the Philippines and to the region through such initiatives as the March 2011 open skies policy in civil aviation and a Regional Roll-on, Roll-off network with ASEAN and China in sea transport.

The Foundation also focuses on promoting secure property rights as a means to increase investment for job generation and poverty reduction. The Foundation supported key stakeholders such as the Rural Bankers Association and the Chamber of Thrift Banks in the discussion of the recently enacted Residential Free Patent law providing for faster procedures to title nearly 8 million unti-titled residential properties. The pace of titling has already sped up as government agencies begin to implement the law. To further drive the program, the Foundation is supporting local governments to establish land management offices. To date, three have been established.

**FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS**

In the May 2010 elections, The Asia Foundation supported the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting, partners in Muslim communities in Mindanao, and local coalitions to deploy more than 500,000 volunteers to monitor precincts throughout the Philippines and combat election violence. The May 2010 elections were adjudged in surveys of citizens and electoral workers as the most accurate and peaceful in the country’s recent history. Under its Disability-Inclusive Elections project, the Foundation and its partners will increase the participation of persons with disabilities in the 2013 elections.

**COUNTERING CORRUPTION**

The Asia Foundation helps city governments increase the accountability of local officials, and build partnerships with local chambers of commerce and civil society organizations to curb corruption to foster better environment for economic growth. For over a decade, Foundation support allows Social Weather Stations to survey Filipino enterprise managers on their experience on corruption in order to establish a time series of measurements of progress in fighting corruption. In the run-up to the May 2010 elections, the Foundation partnered with the Hills Program on Governance of the Asian Institute of Management to support anti-corruption expert Michael
The Asia Foundation is a private, non-profit, non-governmental organization. Through its programs, the Foundation builds leadership, improves policies, and strengthens institutions to foster greater openness and shared prosperity in 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.

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Johnston to develop a fact-based approach toward crafting an anticorruption agenda for the Philippines. His latest monograph, based on interaction with business people, government officials, academics, and civil society leaders, is “Political and Social Foundations for Reform: Anti-Corruption Strategies for the Philippines.”

URBAN AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE
The Asia Foundation provides customized local technical assistance and works with leagues of local governments to develop self-reliance and improve performance and services of Philippine local governments. The Foundation has helped over 90 localities across the country enhance fiscal responsibility, improve service delivery, institute transparency measures, and foster in local government organizational culture the values of public service ethics and excellence. The Foundation supports civic engagement and public-private collaboration for government reform with groups such as the Mindanao Business Council and the Mindanao Coalition for Development NGOs. The Foundation’s Budget Tracking for Transparent Accountable Governance (BTTAG) in 22 local governments in Mindanao and the findings of the Foundation’s 2010 Rapid Field Appraisal of Decentralization influenced the Department of Interior and Local Government’s thrust to partner with civil society and its issuance of a full disclosure order to enhance transparency and accountability practices of Philippine local governments. To enhance the ability of the League of Municipalities and the Leagues of Cities of the Philippines to lead on issues affecting local governments, the Foundation helps build the capacity of these leagues on policy analysis, and project management.

LEGAL AND JUSTICE REFORM
To strengthen the respect for human rights in the Philippines, The Asia Foundation is working with the Supreme Court, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), the Department of Justice, and human rights NGOs to develop a National Human Rights Action Plan. Institutional capacity is enhanced through training of judges, public and private prosecutors, and human rights defenders, including forensic training of CHR investigators and medical practitioners. Other activities include the establishment of Multi-Sectoral Quick Reaction Teams to provide legal aid to human rights victims and their families. The Foundation does an annual audit of human rights cases filed and supports the publication of popular materials on human rights such as manuals, comic books, and a weekly radio program focused on human rights.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT
In conflict-affected areas of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago, The Asia Foundation has supported a variety of efforts by local actors in preventing escalation of localized crises, which include endemic clan conflicts (rido), community conflicts over natural resources, interethnic violence, separatist fighting, conflicts caused by criminality, and election violence. In 2010, the Foundation supported the efforts of civil society groups and the joint ceasefire committees in a series of interventions to deescalate fighting between feuding members of the MILF and MNLF in Laguitan, Maguindanao. Before the conflict was deescalated, the fighting displaced 7,000 and killed 66 people. The Foundation is also supporting innovative people-to-people approaches and joint collaborative engagements that would build critical relationships to bridge societal divides that perpetuate conflict and underdevelopment.

The Foundation has significantly increased its support for the peace processes involving government, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and the Moro National Liberation Front by working with partners in the academe and the religious sector, with Philippine government agencies, including the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), and various peace constituencies such as the Institute of Bangsamoro Studies, Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society, and Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy. Since 2009, the Foundation has been part of the International Contact Group for the peace talks that are being conducted between the government and the MILF, under Malaysian Facilitation. This involves attending peace talks, offering technical assistance when requested, and serving as a bridge to various stakeholders in Mindanao and throughout the country.

BOOKS FOR ASIA
The Asia Foundation’s longest-running program provides quality academic books for all levels of education at a rate of over 100,000 volumes per year to more than 2,000 schools and reading centers.