

# Engaging Asia's Diverse Development Actors



The Asia Foundation

Improving Lives, Expanding Opportunities

21st century aid is more diverse and, in unprecedented ways, more reflective of the needs of the countries it is intended to serve. Significant changes in the aid landscape have meant less dominance by traditional, western-led institutions and governments, and new opportunities for other players to emerge with their own resources to help identify and address global challenges. In this context, Asia has become both a generator of huge development resources and an incubator for new ideas and practices. At the same time, practices and institutions which have been longstanding in the west are taking new direction in Asia, changing the way development cooperation is understood and delivered.



While some observers fear that the emergence of new actors may undermine Development Assistance Committee (DAC)-led efforts to promote aid transparency and harmonization for greater development effectiveness, others see opportunities for innovative and responsive modalities such as South-South and Triangular Cooperation. Global development forums such as The Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF-4), and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation have launched a more inclusive development compact in recognition of these diverse actors and approaches. The Asia Foundation implements several complementary programs to enhance development dialogue and cooperation among diverse actors in the region.

## ENHANCED NETWORKS AND KNOWLEDGE-SHARING

In 2010, the Korea Development Institute approached The Asia Foundation with the idea for a program on Asian Approaches to Development Cooperation (AADC). Korea, as the newest DAC donor, recognized that the development discourse was dominated and organized by Western countries

and that Asian approaches were not being heard or provided with a platform for discussion. Since then, the Foundation and the Korea Development Institute (KDI) have jointly organized an AADC dialogue series that brings together leading experts and practitioners from China, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Mongolia, and Thailand, as well as partner countries and “traditional” donors, to share and contribute their perspectives on development cooperation and Asia’s critical challenges.

Annual meetings sharing Asian perspectives have been held since 2011 on topics including climate change mitigation and adaptation, rising inequality and inclusive growth in Asia, social mobility in Asia, advancing South-South Cooperation (SSC), and the role of non-state actors—both NGOs and the private sector—in Asian development cooperation.

Since 2014, the Foundation has jointly convened the Australasian Aid Conference with The Development Policy Centre of the Australian National University. The conference brings together researchers and practitioners from across Australia, the Pacific, and Asia who are working on aid effectiveness and international development policy to share insights,

## ASIA'S DIVERSE DEVELOPMENT ACTORS

AADC has three program areas: network development and knowledge-sharing among Asian providers and traditional donors and other key stakeholders; development and dissemination of cutting-edge knowledge on Asian approaches to development cooperation; and increased knowledge and strengthened capacity of Asian development partners and policymakers.

promote collaboration, and apply research to improve development outcomes. The Foundation has sponsored the participation of prominent Asians to provide their expertise and insights on issues ranging from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to what the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) mean for Asia.

In June 2015, in Bangkok, the Foundation convened a forum on China's Overseas Development Policy in a World 'Beyond Aid'. Consisting of eight sessions and 20 presentations from leading Chinese and international researchers, policymakers, and international development experts, the roundtable provided a wide range of national and institutional perspectives on China's overseas development policy.

### SHARING KNOWLEDGE ON ASIAN DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND APPROACHES

India has been pro-actively taking a lead in convening southern providers to establish a distinctly southern platform and voice on development cooperation – and therefore providing more information and transparency on its own aid program is timely. Asia Foundation programs have seized on this opportunity and helped to break some new ground in India. *India's Approach to Development Cooperation* (Routledge, 2016) is the first comprehensive compilation of Indian and international perspectives on India's role in South-South Cooperation. The book was launched in Europe, India, and the U.S. in 2016. The Foundation also supported the first and only rigorous database of Indian development cooperation, and this data is already being widely used by the Indian government and other stakeholders.

The Foundation also assists Asian providers to assess the impact of their development cooperation efforts. The Foundation supported partners in China, India, and Thailand to assess the impact of their country's South-South Cooperation. Chinese representatives assessed China's development cooperation in Cambodia and Laos; Thai scholars studied Thailand's cooperation with Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam; and Indian experts examined India's longstanding technical training program.

### CAPACITY-BUILDING

Asian providers, especially China and India, have increased the domestic and international transparency of their aid programs, their ability to deliver

and measure impactful SSC, and their efforts to build domestic capacity to design, deliver, and manage their assistance. The Asia Foundation tries to play a helpful role in this evolution, supporting national experts and advocates of more effective development cooperation within Asian provider countries.

Since 2014, the Foundation has been supporting the Mongolian government's capacity as an emerging provider of SSC. Together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Foundation organized a workshop on "Asian Approaches to Development Cooperation: Strategies for Mongolia's International Cooperation Fund." Mongolia also hosted a delegation of 10 senior government officials from Myanmar for a knowledge exchange and capacity development seminar on Mongolia's experience in democratic and economic transition. The Foundation also facilitated a South-South knowledge exchange between Malaysia and a Bangsamoro delegation from the Philippines to learn about Malaysia's Halal Food Industry and pioneering work in Islamic banking. Since 2013, The Asia Foundation in China has supported capacity development for Chinese professionals in humanitarian assistance. Learning visits to Australia, Thailand, and the Philippines provided the opportunity to see, discuss, and learn from the policies, practices, and experiences of agencies in different countries in responding to recent disasters. The Foundation's China office also works with Chinese NGOs to develop their skills to respond to humanitarian disasters outside of China. As a part of that effort, the Foundation recently supported the production of an operational manual that provides guidelines for Chinese NGOs who want to work abroad in areas such as conducting feasibility studies, working with foreign stakeholders, daily operations, fundraising, and project management.

For almost a decade, the Foundation has partnered with the Korea Development Institute School of Public Policy and Management to expose and train young Korean international development professionals to address critical issues facing Asia. Since 2008, more than 100 young Korean professionals have participated in exchanges and learning opportunities in many Asian countries, arranged by the Foundation's country offices. Most recently, a delegation visited Myanmar to learn about development challenges in that country's critical time of transition.

*The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. Headquartered in San Francisco, The Asia Foundation works through a network of offices in 18 Asian countries and in Washington, DC. Working with public and private partners, the Foundation receives funding from a diverse group of bilateral and multilateral development agencies, foundations, corporations, and individuals.*

#### The Asia Foundation

**HEADQUARTERS**  
465 California Street,  
9th Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94104 USA  
Tel: (415) 982-4640  
Fax: (415) 392-8863  
sf.general@asiafoundation.org

**WASHINGTON, DC**  
1779 Massachusetts Ave., NW  
Suite 815  
Washington, D.C. 20036 USA  
Tel: (202) 588-9420  
Fax: (202) 588-9409  
dc.general@asiafoundation.org

[www.asiafoundation.org](http://www.asiafoundation.org)