



GOVERNANCE: THE CRITICAL ELEMENT

Asia faces growing vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters, with severe consequences for rural and urban communities, food security, economic growth, and political stability. Environmental problems, by their very nature, are as complex as they are inevitable. They are the unintended by-products of the very development activities nations pursue to grow their economies. Addressing environmental issues requires strong governance structures to facilitate multi-sectoral and multi-level dialogue among government agencies, private sector, civil society, research institutions, and other stakeholders. Ultimately, solutions require collective political will: stakeholders from across sectors working toward a shared vision for socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable development. The Asia Foundation, drawing upon 60 years of governance experience, plays an essential role in helping Asian countries address critical national and regional environmental challenges.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO ASIA'S ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

The Asia Foundation employs a systemic approach that promotes the active engagement of key actors and stakeholders to advance progressive change on complex environmental challenges. Informed by a deep understanding of the political, social, and economic dynamics that shape governance reform, the Foundation cultivates change agents, facilitates partnerships, conducts research, and helps to build stakeholder networks—to inform public policy formation, decision-making, and public scrutiny of governance standards. Using political economy analyses, we balance demand-side inputs that organize and document community participation, oversight, and claims for justice, while offering supply-side technical inputs to improve government processes and performance.

The Foundation's long-standing presence and networks throughout the Asia-Pacific region enables us to work across a wide range of sectors and boundaries, employing unique capa-

OUR PROGRAMMING AREAS

- DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION
- CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND GREEN GROWTH
- NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

bilities in multi-stakeholder engagement; public participation, transparency, and accountability; and transboundary cooperation. Our reputation and capacity as a neutral convener, moreover, allows us to play a critical role in building consensus and developing stakeholder-driven solutions.

Recognizing the integrated nature of environmental challenges, Environment programs intersect with other Foundation program areas in governance and law, economic development, and women's empowerment.

DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

Natural disasters and climate change pose a significant threat to the infrastructure, economies, and progress in Asia's development. For over 20 years, The Asia Foundation has been helping communities to strengthen their resilience to natural disasters and climate change. It cultivates leadership within local and national governments, builds the capacity of vulnerable communities, and engages the private sector in disaster risk management and climate change adaptation planning.

Mobilizing the Private Sector in Vietnam: Since 2008, the Prime Minister of Vietnam has authorized several programs on climate change, and the National Assembly has issued new guidelines to address its potential impacts. Unfortunately, implementation faces many barriers, threatening the sustainability of the country's economic growth. In response, the

Foundation has focused on private sector engagement in building resilience to natural disasters and climate change. Over the past five years, the Foundation has trained over 2,000 individuals from 900 small and medium enterprises in disaster risk management from 12 highly vulnerable provinces in Vietnam. It also works with local businesses and the Da Nang city government to reduce carbon emissions from industry. It gained approval from the city government to develop low-carbon action plans for two industrial zones, representing the first-ever effort of its kind in Vietnam. In 2015, launched a new project on developing a comparative city resilience index for Vietnam, with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation. This pioneering effort aims to assess cities' resilience to climate change and catalyze action.

Disaster Alerts via Thailand's Smart Phones: Natural disasters affect the lives of the poor and marginalized in profound ways. The Foundation is working with local innovators, experts, and policymakers in Thailand to expand the reach of early warning systems, and improve the coordination of preparation and response efforts among government partners. With 62% of Thailand's population using smartphones, there is an untapped opportunity to link existing alert systems to broader internet-based networks. In collaboration with the National Disaster Warning Center and the Department of Disaster Mitigation and Prevention, the Foundation is engaging an emerging community of Thai entrepreneurs, software developers, and civic tech experts to enhance access to data. It also aims to integrate deliver real-time alerts to citizens through social media platforms.

China: from National Capacity to Regional Support: In China, where natural disasters have long posed a threat, the Foundation is working with national and local governments and communities to foster a culture of disaster preparedness. We have trained local officials and leaders in six provinces to mitigate community-level disaster risks. Recognizing the potential to significantly improve the resilience of communi-

ties against disasters, the Chinese government formulated standards for a national system of community-based disaster reduction based on this project. It also named several of the pilot communities as models for the system, facilitating knowledge sharing on project experiences across the country. By the end of 2015, there were more than 5,000 prepared communities, far surpassing the government's goal. The Foundation is also supporting efforts to build China's capacity in regional disaster management. It works to foster networking among key humanitarian actors, enhance dialogue with donor countries, and improve understanding of Chinese NGOs' potential role in international aid and assistance.

GREEN GROWTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

Many of the key social and environmental problems facing Asia—poverty, ecological degradation, climate change, and rising inequality—are integrally linked to the pathways countries have taken to achieve economic growth. More governments are recognizing that they can no longer afford to pursue growth strategies that negatively impact the well being of communities and the environment. Over the last decade, countries have begun to integrate the core values of social equity and environmental sustainability into their national development plans. The private sector is following suit, making investments in green growth strategies, while donors and multilateral agencies are increasingly emphasizing a transition to low carbon development. The Asia Foundation is strategically positioned to promote and implement the green growth agenda.

Rehabilitating Bangladesh's Leather Tanning Industry: Under its partnership with the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Foundation played a critical role in the relocation of the leather tanning industry from central Dhaka to an environmentally





compliant industrial estate outside the city. Nearly 2,000 tanneries were releasing untreated toxic chemical waste near residential areas, negatively impacting the health of workers and residents and destroying the river ecosystem. The relocation project, first proposed in 2003, had been stalled due to political and institutional barriers. To overcome the impasse, the Foundation created a broad coalition of reform supporters within the industry, empowered them with timely action-oriented research, and fostered participatory dialogue in pushing for relocation. These efforts led to a breakthrough agreement in 2013 between leather sector leaders and government policymakers to share responsibility for the relocation. The successful initiative has significantly contributed to the resilience of the urban environment by ensuring that toxic wastes are properly processed, environmental regulations are enforced, and the health of Bangladeshi communities is prioritized. It also helps to resolve a long-standing image problem associated with the Bangladeshi leather industry, opening up possibilities for boosting exports to ecologically conscious leather markets in Europe.

Strengthening Cooperation between Northeast Asian Cities on Green Growth: In September 2015, the Foundation organized the first Northeast Asia Mayors' Forum on Green Growth, bringing together municipal leaders from eight cities in China, Mongolia, and Korea. The forum created a platform for participants to exchange best practices and discuss common challenges in working toward inclusive and sustainable urban development. The agenda covered topics such as redevelopment of old city areas; effective municipal governance; reductions in carbon emissions; and mechanisms for cross-city cooperation. The Foundation also supported the development of Ulaanbaatar's progressive Green Devel-

opment Strategic Action Plan. Ulaanbaatar's Mayor Bat-Uul Erdene presented the conference findings at the December Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, or COP21, in Paris.

Improving China's Environmental Governance and Foreign Investment: The Foundation supported implementation of China's improved environmental governance standards and priorities. It also developed the first training manual for Chinese companies interested in investing in Southeast Asia and encouraged awareness of environmental corporate social responsibility policies and increased businesses' capacity for compliance with these policies. The Foundation also supported its local partner, SynTao, to host a study tour of delegates from Cambodia to explore best environmental practices for Chinese foreign investment and corporate social responsibility in ASEAN countries, and Cambodia in particular. Chinese government officials, private sector representatives, and NGO representatives participated in the study tour. It also provided one-on-one trainings and an experience-sharing workshop for Chinese civil society organizations on using the "Pollution Map," a mobile phone application developed by a project partner to identify pollution emissions from businesses. The app currently has more than 50,000 users, with real-time air quality data from nearly 200 cities and pollution source locations in 30 cities across China. This program also supported the development of case studies related to business environmental information disclosure for future business trainings.

Tapping Korea's Climate Resilience Expertise to Promote Regional Capacity Building: Korea's emergence as a regional leader in climate change planning has created new opportunities for peer learning in the region. Among the first

countries to integrate green growth and climate resilience into its national development strategy, Korea has restructured its industries to focus on clean technology exports and to reduce overall levels of greenhouse gas emissions. It has institutionalized climate change as a priority, establishing dedicated government agencies and research institutions that have been sustained across political administrations. To learn from Korea's successes in climate action, the Foundation piloted a peer-learning program in 2015 in collaboration with the Korea Development Institute School of Public Policy and Management. Fourteen representatives from government, academia, and NGOs from Bangladesh, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam, were guided through Korea's national, provincial, and municipal planning, policy, and institutional frameworks for managing climate change risks.

NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Natural resources are the basis of local livelihoods and national economies across Asia. Rapid economic development, poor resource management, and corruption, however, have had devastating impacts on the region's ecological systems. These impacts have been compounded by transboundary environmental problems such as pollution and climate change. There is a pressing need for improved governance of natural resources across the region. The Asia Foundation approaches these challenges by facilitating stakeholder engagement, policy dialogues, and regional cooperation.

Engaging Civil Society in Transboundary Water Governance in South Asia: Rivers in South Asia bear the brunt of the growing demand for fresh water. The three major transboundary river systems—the Indus, Ganges, and Brahmaputra—are under considerable stress from population growth, industrial development, urbanization, and climate change. Despite these growing concerns, cooperation between countries remains piecemeal due to the subcontinent's complex and contentious geopolitics. Working in partnership with civil society organizations in Bangladesh, India, and Nepal, the Foundation began providing small grants in 2013 to enhance the capacity of civil society organizations in the South Asia region to engage more effectively on transboundary water governance issues while fostering multi-country, basin-wide dialogues to advocate for policy change and joint management of water resources. This early work has led to the Foundation's current role as manager

for DFID's Civil Society Fund for the South Asia Water Governance Program. This program works across Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, and Nepal to bring people and ideas together to frame and resolve the challenges they face by the decisions made on rivers at regional and national levels. It provides a platform to share experiences and deepen knowledge of and experience in the types of innovations, approaches, and methods that work best – and ultimately, to build capacity to better address these challenges.

Improving Forest Governance in Indonesia:

Indonesia is home to some of the world's largest and most biologically diverse tropical forests, and its resources are critical to the livelihoods of over 50 million people. Rapid deforestation, combined with peat land degradation, has made the country one of the top three emitters of greenhouse gases in the world. The Foundation is supporting the Indonesian government's ambitious efforts to reduce carbon emissions from deforestation by 26 percent by 2020. The Foundation's forest governance initiative, which began in 2012 with support from DFID, engages national and local-level partners from government, civil society, and the private sector to promote transparency and accountability in spatial planning and permit processes. Improved governance can mitigate climate change while delivering crucial benefits for biodiversity and forest dependent communities. The program, now in its second phase, aims to build multi-stakeholder coalitions that are capable of addressing land use

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.



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