

# Bangladesh



**The Asia Foundation**

Improving Lives, Expanding Opportunities

For 65 years, The Asia Foundation has worked with government, civil society, community, and religious leaders, and the private sector in Bangladesh. Together with our partners, we work to tackle community challenges, build leadership capacity that reflects the country's diversity, and facilitate broad-based participation in the country's development. Our programs currently focus on strengthening governance, empowering women, and expanding economic opportunities.



## STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE

Governance is a central and cross-cutting focus of the Foundation's Bangladesh programs. Our work to engage religious leaders in development discussions and approaches, programs promoting active and inclusive citizenship, community policing initiatives that enhance public security, and confidence in criminal justice agencies, are complemented by the nationwide *Survey of the Bangladeshi People* of attitudes on gender, education, the economy, and other issues.

The Asia Foundation implements the *Strengthening and Promoting Active Citizenship in Bangladesh* program to enhance active citizenship and accountability by supporting civil society and their work with citizens, government decision-makers, and other stakeholders on issues relevant to local areas.

Religious and secular leaders are well placed to contribute to development efforts. For more than a decade, we have worked with religious leaders from Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian backgrounds and other community leaders of influence at the national and local levels to advance social justice for women, citizen understanding of good governance, and interfaith tolerance and dialogue. These efforts

built on the Foundation's successful *Leaders of Influence* program, engaging leaders of religion, government, media, civil society, and the private sector.

*Promoting Community-Driven Early-Warning Systems to Reduce Religious Freedom Violations* contributes to solutions for development challenges and to advance democracy, tolerance, and social harmony in Rajshahi district.

*Police Engagement Approach for Countering Extremism* empowers law enforcement agencies to engage citizens in raising awareness, information sharing, and prevention initiatives. The program is implemented in collaboration with local partners in Chittagong, Rajshahi, and Sylhet.

## EMPOWERING WOMEN

Bangladeshi women and girls are disadvantaged at multiple levels and across all sectors – social, educational, political, and economic – with women and men alike perpetuating the gender norms that impact women's security and basic rights, voice, and participation.

*Advancing Women's Rights in Bangladesh* has raised awareness of and support for women's rights and social justice in Rangpur and Rajshahi



## BANGLADESH

The Asia Foundation opened an office in Dhaka in 1954 and has implemented programs across the country for 65 years

The Asia Foundation ensures active participation of women by integrating women's empowerment efforts across all programs

The Asia Foundation annually distributes more than 30,000 books and educational materials in Bangla and English.

districts, as well as promoting women as key sources of information and advice within their communities. The program aims to achieve this by enhancing imams and imams' wives understanding of women's rights in the context of Islamic teachings and texts, and by helping position them to discuss and advocate for women's rights more effectively.

*Women's Economic Empowerment through Strengthening Market Systems* increases women's participation in the labor market in rural and peri-urban Bangladesh through pathways to connect women-owned and -led businesses to market value chains, and integration of activities and approaches to directly address socio-cultural barriers to women's entrepreneurship. The program is being implemented in partnership with International Development Enterprises Bangladesh across nine districts under the Khulna and Rangpur divisions.

## EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

The growing business sector holds great potential for responding to increased domestic demands for goods and services at a reasonable price and in supporting a less developed country's graduation to a flourishing economy. Implemented in collaboration with the Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation, *Promoting Decent Work and Acceptable Working Conditions in the Tannery Sector* aims to achieve decent work and acceptable working conditions by increasing knowledge, awareness, and advocacy skills among workers, tannery supervisors, and other relevant stakeholders on occupational safety and health and labor rights.

## BOOKS FOR ASIA

Since 1954, the Foundation's Books for Asia program has placed brand-new books into the hands of students, educators, and government and other leaders to increase their access to valuable information, promote human resource development through education and training, and expand the access in rural Bangladesh, reaching all of the country's 64 districts.

Annually, we donate about 30,000 English and Bangla language books to educational and public institutions nationwide. The first of the Foundation's private partnerships in Bangladesh, Pubali Bank has been instrumental in promoting educational opportunities for girls and women in Bangladesh.

*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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