

Pakistan

Through a continuous presence in Pakistan since 1954, The Asia Foundation has developed strong ties and valuable expertise on local, regional, and international issues. With an extensive network of local and regional partners in both government and civil society, our projects extend throughout the country, and range from large, nationwide programs to small, local initiatives. In Pakistan, efforts focus on promoting economic development and social inclusion, especially for women, strengthening citizen-state relations, and fostering human rights.



WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

In partnership with Aurat Foundation, the **Gender Equity Program** was implemented to increase gender equity in Pakistan where women are often denied basic human rights, and where they face gender-based violence (GBV), marginalization, and suppression. There have been active partnerships with national civil society organizations that advocate for gender equity, academic research and training institutions, media, professional and business associations, as well as key government institutions across all districts of Pakistan to expand women's access to justice, increase women's empowerment, and combat GBV. An innovative model has been to facilitate survivors of GBV through provision of seamless service hubs, which include support to private shelters, economic rehabilitation, helplines, and psychosocial and legal counseling. A National Advisory Forum has been formed that brings together key players working on gender equality, including the government, and provides broad policy guidelines in line with Pakistan's international and national commitments on gender.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Under the **Enhancing Trade and Regional Cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan (PACT)**, the Foundation worked closely with the private sector and government to create an enabling environment for greater



trade and regional integration. By encouraging coordination between key private sector representatives, government, and development partners, PACT mobilized broad support for a structured Pak-Afghan economic dialogue process led by the business communities in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Through a partnership with the Institute of Public Policy, Lahore, we also supported applied research in Pakistan to inform macroeconomic policy, helping shape economic policy at national and provincial levels.

Now in its second phase, PACT is stimulating economic growth and regional cooperation by continuing critical dialogues between the private sector in both countries, supporting cooperation on trade and investment policy issues through shared research, and building the organizational capacity of the Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chambers of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI). In phase II, we will facilitate PAJCCI in expanding its membership, coordinate research on regional trade issues and opportunities, facilitate greater trade cooperation, and make and execute investment decisions in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

HUMAN RIGHTS

The **Human Rights Fund** (Phase III) enhanced the capacity of Pakistani civil society organizations to promote and protect human rights with a specific focus on rights of expression, assembly, association,



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Books for Asia provides Pakistan with up to 90,000 books each year.

and thought (REAT), including religious freedoms. An Early Warning System was established in 10 districts where minorities were most vulnerable, and operationalized by a network of more than 500 dedicated human rights defenders; this is an increasingly recognized mechanism for ensuring timely surveillance of anticipated threats and violence against religious minorities. A REAT Network continues to operate independently to advocate for minority rights.

The **Human Rights Small Grants Project** has supported solutions to address specific human rights violations in seven districts of Sindh, Balochistan, and Punjab. Support has been extended to eight small civil society organizations, enabling them to engage with local authorities to address the most pertinent violations in their communities. These initiatives included advocacy for the rights of the transgender community and minorities, the labor rights of industrial workers, and the socio-economic rights of the fisherfolk community. Other interventions at the district level have included reducing the number of early child marriages; elimination of honor killings; and promotion of inter-faith harmony.

The Asia Foundation's **Access to Justice for Vulnerable Populations in Pakistan** addresses inequities in the country's legal system and is improving access to justice for persons with disabilities, survivors of GBV and ethnic and religious minorities. The establishment of Dastageer Legal Aid Centers in 12 selected districts across Pakistan has increased access for the most deprived and underserved segments of the population. The NGO-led legal aid center is increasingly recognized as an effective model for addressing legal barriers of the most marginalized communities.

Strengthening the Human Rights Capacities of Provincial Governments contributes to reducing gaps and improving the existing government infrastructure to address human rights violations; and facilitates increased collaboration among the provincial governments, relevant federal ministries, civil society organizations, and human rights networks. The project is building capacities of government officials of federal ministries and provincial departments dealing with human rights, civil society organizations, and networks in human rights to respond to human rights violations more responsively. The project, in consultation with federal and provincial governments, is providing technical assistance, including development of strategic plans, review of existing laws/Acts, and recommendations in rules of business that contribute overall to strengthening institutional structures. These interventions will enhance the institutional capacity of federal and provincial departments to address human rights issues more efficiently.

The Pakistan Religious Freedom Initiative: Leaders of Influence established an enabling environment for policy change and enforcement of the existing regulatory framework for protecting and promoting religious freedom. A significant first was the formation of Religious Freedom Caucuses in the National and two Provincial Assemblies (Punjab and Sindh). The Asia Foundation helped the National Commission for Human Rights develop its bylaws and strategic plan. We provided technical assistance to parliamentarians in drafting legislation; sensitized elected representatives and government officials on the effective enforcement of laws for minorities; and worked with media representatives to raise awareness and improve coverage of issues concerning religious minorities. In addition, we held a South Asia Religious Freedom Workshop for leaders, activists, and change agents to garner support for religious minorities.

Mainstreaming Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) for Equitable Access to Justice in Pakistan aims to increase awareness among lawyers and bar associations about ADR; build the capacity of bar associations, law graduates, the Gender Justice through Musalihat Anjuman Project, and women agents of change to help vulnerable populations resolve disputes; and raise public awareness on the use of ADR to settle civil disputes. The Asia Foundation and Search for Common Grounds (SFCG) will launch public awareness campaigns in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces for citizens, especially women, on their legal rights under the constitution and how ADR can be used to settle disputes.

BOOKS FOR ASIA

An educated population is a powerful tool to combat poverty and promote stability. Since the 1950s, The Asia Foundation's Books for Asia program has provided more than three million books to Pakistani organizations including those serving students and marginalized groups, as well as many other nonprofit organizations. In recent years, Books for Asia has provided Pakistan with up to 90,000 books each year. Through these donations and complementary activities, Books for Asia strengthens institutions including primary and secondary schools, NGOs, and science research centers. The program is also an important source of much-needed English-language material for schools in underprivileged areas. With English a compulsory subject in secondary schools and universities, these texts enable schools to better prepare students for the university system and a job market that places a premium on English-language ability.

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.



HEADQUARTERS
465 California Street,
9th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94104 USA
Tel: (415) 982-4640
info@asiafound.org

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

PAKISTAN
P.O. Box 1165
Islamabad, Pakistan
Tel: + 92 (51) 265-0523
tafpk@asiafound.org

www.asiafoundation.org

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