



March and April 2017

In this issue: China, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, India, Cambodia, Books for Asia, South Korea, Technology and Development, Gender-Based Violence, Bangladesh, Women's Empowerment, Disaster Relief, and Myanmar

Upcoming Events

March 31 – The Asia Foundation will launch a publication titled *China's Governance Puzzle: Enabling Transparency and Participation in a Single-Party State* (Cambridge University Press, 2017) at a panel event co-sponsored by the Brookings Institution. This study examines reforms promoting transparency and public participation in China and assesses whether the reforms are resulting in key governance outcomes such as reduced corruption and improved legal compliance. Expert panelists include Jonathan Stromseth (Brookings Institution); Edmund Malesky (Duke University); Dimitar Gueorguiev (Syracuse University); Wang Xixin (Peking University Law School). Please [click here](#) for more information on the Foundation's program in China.



April 25 - The Asia Foundation's Country Representative in Nepal, George Varughese, will offer his perspective on the Nepali government's new leadership and discuss opportunities ahead.

Recent Events

March 16 - Dinesha de Silva, The Foundation's Country Representative in Sri Lanka, provided an update on recent developments in the country and discussed the present political environment. For more information on our program in Sri Lanka, please [click here](#).

March 28 - Herizal Hazri, The Foundation's Country Representative in Malaysia, discussed current economic and political challenges facing Malaysia.

March 30 - The Foundation's Country Representative in India, Sagar Prasai, discussed the future of regional cooperation in South Asia and commented on developments in India.

In the News

Asia Foundation's Let's Read! E-Book Competition Launches Girls Empowerment Collection in Cambodia

This International Women's Day, The Asia Foundation honored eight stories of female ingenuity and bravery that have been chosen as winners of the Let's Read! children's story competition in Cambodia titled *Girls Can Do Anything*. The *Girls Can Do Anything* competition was organized to encourage the writing of children's stories featuring dynamic female characters and is part of the Let's Read! e-book hackathon project that incubates the

creation of local-language children's books in Asia. Five of the eight selected writers are women. From the tale of a little girl who travels to the sun to save her village to the story of a female cricket who devises a clever idea to chase away a wicked bird, all are original works by Cambodia's burgeoning children's literary community. For more information on the Foundation's program in Cambodia please [click here](#) and [click here](#) for more information on the Let's Read! initiative in Cambodia.



winners of the competition took part in a story workshop on Cambodia's National Reading Day, March 11, where they worked with editors to refine their narratives and were paired with an illustrator and graphic designer.

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Snap Elections in South Korea: What You Need to Know

On March 10, South Korea's Constitutional Court removed President Park Geun-hye from office after she was impeached over a massive corruption scandal. An election to choose her successor must be held by May 9, leaving less than two months for potential candidates to campaign. This political drama takes place at the same time as several other major challenges that have captured the public's attention, including investigation proceedings over Samsung Corp. and Park, and growing tensions over North Korea's recent actions, to name a few. It is said that an election isn't over until all ballots are counted and there is nothing to be taken for granted in Korean politics. Read more from Kim Kyoungtae, editor at Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation and Nieman Fellow at Harvard University, [here](#). For more information about the Foundation's program in Korea, please [click here](#).

Technology and Innovation

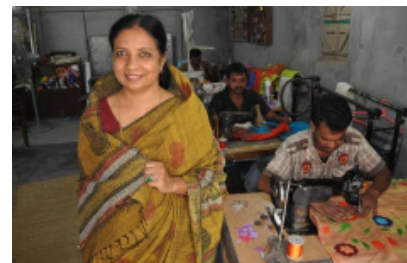
Asia Foundation Launches 2six4, Sri Lanka's First Mobile Application to Combat Gender Based Violence

Recently, The Asia Foundation, in partnership with Women In Need, launched the first mobile application (2six4) designed to combat Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Sri Lanka. The launch event on March 8th was held at the Sanath Jayasuriya Stadium Matara with the Minister of Law and Order, Mr. Sagala Ratnayake, and the Minister of Women's Affairs, Ms. Chandrani Bandara, along with several other Members of Parliament and Provincial Councillors. With the unprecedented growth of mobile technology in Sri Lanka, the 2six4 app is an innovative mobile solution designed to reach potentially millions of new beneficiaries and empower citizens, particularly victims of GBV, with vital information and services that can transform lives. Read more about the Foundation's Technology and Development work [here](#) and download the app [here](#).

Notes from the Field

Gender Equality in Bangladesh's Growing Economy

Last month, iDE Bangladesh brought together international and Bangladeshi experts, practitioners, and policymakers for a workshop to discuss new ideas and approaches to market development in Bangladesh. After decades of strong growth, Bangladesh's ambition to become a middle-income country by 2021 seems to be within reach, and many experts claim that strengthening the country's market-based economy is needed to achieve this goal. A significant challenge remains, however, in ensuring that this growth benefits all levels of society. Though women comprise just under half of the total population in Bangladesh, their participation in the formal labor market lags far behind that



Bangladesh, their participation in the formal labor market lags far behind that of men, and the rates of business ownership by women are even lower. Photo/Geoffrey Hiller

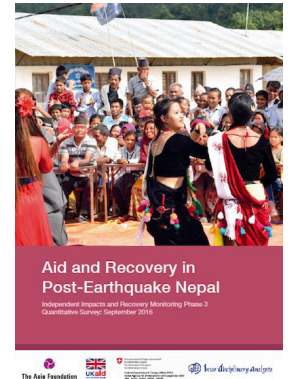
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of men, and the rates of business ownership by women are even lower. It's no surprise, therefore, that a main area of focus at the workshop was on gender. Read more from Sara L. Taylor, The Asia Foundation's deputy country representative in Bangladesh, here.

Publication of Interest

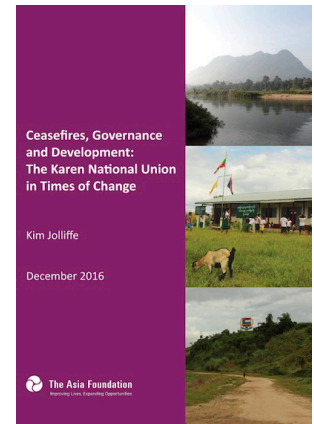
Aid and Recovery in Post-Earthquake Nepal: Quantitative Survey September 2016

Eighteen months from the earthquakes that hit Nepal in April and May 2015, the third wave of the Independent Impacts and Recovery Monitoring project (IRM) tracks the extent to which people have recovered, what coping strategies they are using and how effective they are, how aid is helping and which groups are being left behind. IRM involves both large-scale quantitative surveys and in-depth qualitative fieldwork. This report provides data and findings from the third quantitative survey. The monitoring focuses on five key areas: aid delivery and effectiveness; politics and leadership; social relations and conflict; protection and vulnerability; and economy and livelihoods. IRM is longitudinal, conducted at six month intervals over the course of two years. The fielding of the first wave was carried out six weeks after the earthquake, and the second wave in March 2016.



Ceasefires, Governance, and Development: The Karen National Union in Times of Change

This report examines the governance dynamics in southeastern Myanmar around the 67-year-old conflict between the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Myanmar state. Ceasefires and political change over time have enabled the state to expand its presence in areas where previously only the military had operated, but at the same time, the KNU has also gained much greater freedom to interact with communities in areas of contested authority. The emergence of a quasi-civilian government in recent years has generated intense public discourse on the country's nascent democratic transition and the need to resolve longstanding ethnic conflicts. In this evolving context, new opportunities for peacebuilding are emerging but also potentially new risks which need to be better understood given that the KNU is likely to continue to be an important governance actor for some time to come.



The Asia Foundation improves lives, expands opportunities, and helps societies flourish across a dynamic and developing Asia. We work with innovative leaders and communities to build effective institutions and advance pathbreaking reforms. Together with our partners, we are committed to Asia's continued development as a peaceful, just, and thriving region of the world.