

UPDATES from Washington, DC



June and July 2017

In this issue: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Women's Empowerment Program, Technology, The Philippines, Mongolia, Elections, and Timor-Leste

Recent Events

June 13 - Sara Taylor, The Foundation's Deputy Country Representative in Bangladesh, provided an update on recent developments and discussed findings from a new survey, "Bangladesh's Democracy – According to its People," conducted by the Foundation in January and February 2017.

Upcoming Events

July 18 - The Honorable William Heidt, United States Ambassador to Cambodia, will provide political and economic updates on Cambodia.

July 20 – The Foundation's Women's Empowerment Program will co-host an Asian Perspectives panel event with the Australian Embassy on engaging the private sector in women's economic empowerment moderated by Jane Sloane, Director of the Foundation's Women's Empowerment Program. The event will feature speakers from the Asia Foundation's Vietnam and Mongolia offices and a local partner in Bangladesh.

Technology and Innovation

APEC's Most Talented App Developers Tackle Business Challenges at Trade Meeting

As trade ministers prepared to gather for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) trade meeting in Hanoi a few weeks ago, a group of the region's most talented developers were in a nearby room, competing in the first-ever APEC App Challenge. Eleven developer teams from nine APEC economies were challenged to come up with innovative apps and online platforms to help micro, small, and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) leverage the internet to gain access to foreign markets, to export, and expand their businesses to better contribute to local economies. An initiative of The Asia Foundation, the APEC Secretariat, the Ministry of Industry and Trade of Viet Nam (MOIT), and Google, the App Challenge highlighted the importance of MSMEs in Asia-Pacific economies and the role that the mobile internet plays in supporting their development. Read more from Benjamin Lokshin, a program officer for The Asia Foundation's Technology Programs and Katherine Loh, a consultant and former Asia Foundation program officer, here. Click here for more information on the Foundation's technology program.



The winners of the APEC App Challenge. Eleven developer teams from nine APEC economies were challenged to come up with online solutions to help MSMEs expand.

In the News

Marawi and Beyond: A Look at Violent Extremism

The clash in Marawi will at some point be over—the extremist insurgents will be expelled, security forces and civilian government officials will exert control, and displaced residents will return to a city whose center has been devastated. The aftereffects will be lasting—this is a “game changer,” in the words of analyst Sidney Jones. Just the physical rebuilding and infrastructure recovery will be difficult—even harder than the rehabilitation of Zamboanga City was after the September 2013 siege that burned five urban poor villages to the ground. Internally displaced persons from that attack are still, more than three years later, being moved back into housing in those villages. Both the national government and the ARMM have begun talks about rehabilitation plans, but of course while fighting continues, an assessment, much less planning, is not possible. Read more from Steven Rood, The Asia Foundation’s former country representative in the Philippines, [here](#).

Five Critical Issues Facing Mongolia’s Fifth President

On June 26, Mongolians went to the polls to vote for their fifth president since Mongolia’s transition to a democracy in 1990. Despite a high voter turnout of over 66 percent, the General Election Commission officially announced on Tuesday, June 27 that none of the candidates had received the necessary 51 percent of the vote to declare a winner. As a result, officials called for the country’s first-ever presidential election run-off to take place on July 7. So, what has been perceived as lacking from the campaign is what the new president is committed to addressing during his four-year term. Here are five critical issues facing the country that will no doubt confront the new president. Read more from Meloney C. Lindberg, The Asia Foundation’s country representative in Mongolia, [here](#).



Staff prepare ballot boxes ahead of Mongolia’s presidential election.

Notes from the Field

Timor-Leste Parliamentary Election: Resistance Credentials Likely to Dominate

On July 22, Timorese will once again cast their vote in the country’s fourth parliamentary election since independence from Indonesia in 1999. With the March presidential election now almost a distant memory, all eyes are on the hotly contested parliamentary election. It is interesting to note that despite all the news and controversy surrounding the three front-runner parties, more than 20 parties are registering to contest the election. While the country may witness a crack in a very strongly cemented system in this election, the beliefs and habits of old are more likely to prevail over any major shift away from the established parties’ proud resistance credentials. Nevertheless, even a minor political shift away from the status quo could potentially lead to significant changes in future elections. Read more from Susan Marx, The Asia Foundation’s former country representative in Timor-Leste, [here](#).

Publications of Interest

2016 Tatoli! Public Opinion Poll

In Timor-Leste, the Foundation has successfully partnered with the Australian Government to implement a series of public opinion polls since 2013. Through this, the fifth and final Tatoli! Public Opinion Poll under the Foundation's Australian Government-funded Support for Good Governance program, we hope to equip policy makers in the incoming 7th Constitutional Government, as well as those engaged in specific services and ice sectors, with a clear understanding of people's perceptions toward government, services, and their own priorities.



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.