

Governance in the Philippines

The Asia Foundation's governance program in the Philippines has focused on supporting key democratic institutions and strong civil society organizations, encouraging respect for the rule of law and human rights, promoting peace and security and supporting trends towards more democratic, open and accountable governance. Currently, the Foundation partners with government, civil society and the private sector to advocate for effective national governance, strengthen subnational governance, reduce corruption, improve the credibility and legitimacy of elections, increase citizen voice and participation through coalition building and contribute to the discourse on the reform of central-local relations, including federalism.



The Asia Foundation's governance program harnesses the contribution of civil society to engage with government and improve policies that will lead to more beneficial economic and social development outcomes. The Foundation supports the formation of local coalitions or networks to contribute to transformational change by seeking out technically sound and politically feasible solutions.

The Foundation has successfully supported coalitions across a range of sectors, including land reform, education, and disaster management. Land governance is a long-standing reform focus and the Foundation's support was instrumental in the upsurge of issued residential free patents resulting from the Residential Free Patent Act and the ensuing partnerships between the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and local governments. To promote agricultural productivity, the Foundation is evaluating policy options that could make agricultural lands (awarded with agricultural free patents) bankable and tradeable.



The Foundation has also worked with national and local governments on disaster management to streamline regulations, facilitating improved local government access to emergency funds. In education, the Foundation identified policy reforms to help title public school sites, as well as to reduce school congestion through the purchase of land for new schools.

SUBNATIONAL GOVERNANCE

The Asia Foundation works closely with government at all levels to strengthen the capacity to establish and implement open, equitable, and effective systems. The Foundation's programming in decentralization and subnational governance is rooted in the belief that local governments are well-positioned to connect with constituents and respond to their concerns, and that given the proper incentives, resources, and authorities, local governments can address the most pressing development issues. The Foundation worked with



PHILIPPINES

The Asia Foundation supported the Fully Abled Nation initiative, improving voting processes for the disabled. In 2016, 5,000 Accessible Polling Places were set up nationwide.

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15 provinces in Western and Central Visayas, and Northeastern Mindanao to promote broader participation and evidence-based prioritization for road investments, based on local economic drivers and aided by geospatial information to indicate connectivity (e.g., farm to market). Local governments and national government agencies in turn increased funding for these priority roads by more than 66 percent in 2016 over 2015.

ELECTIONS

The Asia Foundation supports programs across Asia that promote free and fair elections and an informed citizenry. In more established democracies like the Philippines, the Foundation works to improve voter turnout and transparency in the elections process. For the May 2016 national elections, the Foundation collaborated with the Carter Center to support two teams of long-term observers who were based in Mindanao.

The Foundation also supported the Fully Able Nation (FAN) initiative which works to improve the overall voting registration and voting process for the disability sector. From only two Accessible Polling Places (APPs) in 2013, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) set up more than 5,000 APPs for the 2016 elections. The Foundation supported FAN to make the elections disability-inclusive by implementing the accessibility law, developing a disability-inclusive set of rules and guidelines through training for the Board of Elections Inspectors and ultimately providing access to people with disabilities.

TRANSPARENCY AND ANTI-CORRUPTION

For nearly 10 years, The Asia Foundation imple-

mented the Transparent Accountable Governance program which promoted good governance and transparency and accountability in Mindanao. The Foundation partnered with a network of 116 organizations from business, civil society and academic institutions to build national Counter-Corruption Advocacy and accelerate the development and spread of improved practices in local governance in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and neighboring provinces.

Since 2000, The Asia Foundation has supported the annual Philippines Enterprise Survey of Corruption. The survey is conducted by Social Weather Stations, in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry's National Competitiveness Council, the Makati Business Club, and the Australian Embassy. The survey is a time-series measure of Philippine enterprise managers' experience with corruption, and is a reliable diagnostic tool of the government's and stakeholders' anti-corruption efforts.

FEDERALISM

The Asia Foundation continues to support independent, informed analysis of possible reforms in central-local relations, including but not limited to a shift to a federal form of government in the Philippines. Recently, the Foundation supported study groups on the federalism model by the Local Government Development Foundation and other local organizations.

In the Philippines, The Asia Foundation's programs are also funded by the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the UK's Department for International Development, the British Foreign Commonwealth Office, UNICEF, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, and private organizations, companies, and individuals.

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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