



The Asia Foundation

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

#ChangeStartsHere



A person with dark hair and glasses is leaning over a desk, writing on a document with a pen. The image has a strong blue and purple color cast. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a classroom or office setting with shelves and papers.

**#ChangeStartsHere**



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The background of the entire page is a photograph of a construction site at dusk or dawn. The sky is a deep purple. In the foreground and middle ground, the silhouettes of construction workers and their equipment are visible against the sky. One worker is on the left, pushing a wheelbarrow. Another worker is on the right, also pushing a wheelbarrow. They are working on a structure that is heavily scaffolded with metal poles and cross-braces. The overall mood is one of industriousness and progress.

# WELCOME TO OUR 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

This is the story of our year in numbers and profiles featuring our communities, partners, and donors. Working together with leaders and changemakers on the frontlines, we address the dramatic economic, political, and social changes taking place in nearly 20 countries across Asia.

# AT A GLANCE

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The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia.

Our approach is unique. To create change, we work at the highest levels of public policy, where discourse is shaped to change discriminatory laws and policies that disproportionately affect marginalized populations, and at the grassroots level, to support local communities engaged in action.

In 2017, we increased opportunities by providing \$83.7 million in direct program support and distributed textbooks and other educational materials valued at \$8.7 million while maintaining a low administrative ratio of 13 percent.

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## ADDRESSING COMPLEX DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES IN ASIA



**137** PROGRAMS  
STRENGTHEN GOVERNANCE



**87** PROGRAMS EMPOWER WOMEN



**52** PROGRAMS EXPAND  
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY



**21** PROGRAMS INCREASE  
ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE



**49** PROGRAMS PROMOTE  
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

LOCALLY-DRIVEN FOR  
MAXIMUM IMPACT AND  
LASTING CHANGE

**80%**

OF OUR WORLDWIDE  
PERSONNEL ARE LOCAL STAFF  
FROM ASIA, BASED IN ASIA

**87%**

OF BUDGET ALLOCATED  
FOR PROGRAMS

## Message from the Chairman and President

Asia as a region fully exemplifies the changes occurring across the globe—rapid urbanization, environmental challenges, population movements, dramatic shifts in the job market, exploding use of technology, the empowerment of previously marginalized groups, and impatience with ineffective leadership and institutions.

Dramatic reforms in Myanmar, for example, have activated a powerful but uneasy transition from half a century of military rule. Our landmark year-long study, *The Contested Areas of Myanmar*, examined the relationship between conflict, aid and development, and created the first-ever comprehensive database of conflict and violence indicators in the country, a step toward building a system of government that is recognized as legitimate by people of all ethnic nationalities.

A key dimension of the country's reform is gender equality and inclusion of women in all facets of life, including government, entrepreneurship, and peacebuilding. Earlier this year, at our annual Lotus Leadership Awards, we honored the Colorful Girls, our grassroots partner in Myanmar empowering adolescent girls of all ethnicities (or colors) to become leaders to transform their own lives.

We heard from teenager Zar Chi Win, who created a campaign to combat harassment of women and girls on public buses. Zar Chi even talked to local bus conductors to enlist their support in protecting women on their way to school and work: "If we girls do not take action, we cannot expect long-term change in our country." Change, as it is often said, must start somewhere. At The Asia Foundation, we like to say change starts here.

Indonesia is made up of more than 17,000 islands, with 700 languages spoken across the archipelago. Access to books and information is difficult, especially in remote and underserved areas, but this past year we successfully launched a free digital library that is rapidly growing in popularity and now features hundreds of books by Indonesian authors and others.

Rising inequality, gender violence, bloody conflicts, and rapid urbanization require the need for highly creative, inspired, and transformative next-generation Asian leadership. Our new and ongoing Asia Foundation Development Fellows build on our history of supporting emerging Asian leaders like Jalila Haider, a young human rights attorney, who despite daily threats to her own safety, is successfully defending women's rights in Pakistan and is the first female attorney in her Hazara community, an ethnic minority group in Balochistan.

From building resiliency against extremist movements among young people in conflict-riddled Malaysia to bringing together Chinese first responders with U.S. Forest Service counterparts to introduce a standardized approach to emergency response in disaster zones, change starts here. And change starts with individuals like you.

This year, we will launch a private fundraising effort unlike any in the history of the Foundation. In the coming weeks and months, you will hear more about this effort on [asiafoundation.org](http://asiafoundation.org) and in our various social channels.

The catalyzing role our donors play is remarkable. The Colorful Girls, for example,

received funding from Chong-Moon Lee's generous multi-year gift to combat trafficking in Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia. And the Lotus Circle—a dedicated group of philanthropists supporting The Asia Foundation's work to empower women and girls—is made up of donors like Lucy Lee. Lucy, the daughter of Chinese immigrants who settled in Australia and then returned to China as entrepreneurs, is an investor in early stage companies and is passionately expanding the Lotus Circle in the Bay Area, the gateway to the Asia-Pacific and our global headquarters. We are grateful to Lucy for inviting new individuals to venture with her into the life of our programs for women and girls.

The massive digital library in Indonesia mentioned in this letter—that was made possible only with the generous support from our Indonesia-based trustee Jared Frost, who has sponsored Foundation projects throughout Asia since the early 1980s and believes in our commitment to create a love of reading in young people, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, or income, and to turn those readers into leaders.

And Jalila Haider's ability to participate in our Asia Foundation Development Fellows program that provided her with an unparalleled opportunity to strengthen her leadership skills and advance her desire to address critical issues is made possible by supporters like Brooks Entwistle, a senior executive based in Asia at companies including Goldman Sachs, Everstone Capital, and Uber. Brooks, also a trustee, understands the power of excellence in leadership, and is literally moving to the frontlines with us and our Fellows as we tackle critical development issues threatening the lives and well-being of nearly half our planet.

The Asia Foundation has always invested in leaders in Asia, from those at the peak of their careers to those just embarking on their journey. This is a time of transformation in Asia, and we hope you will join our efforts to help societies flourish by bringing together the local leaders, visionaries, communities, and governments who are positively shaping the future of the region. Fulfilling their desire for change, economic opportunity, and social justice is only possible with you.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David D. Arnold".

**David D. Arnold**  
*President*



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David M. Lampton".

**David M. Lampton**  
*Chairman of the Board  
and Executive Committee*



80% EXPERIENCE



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN  
ON A DAILY BASIS

## Increasing access to justice by enforcing laws

Violence against women is prevalent, with 80 percent of Afghan women stating they experience it on a daily basis. In 2017, 22 percent of women polled in our annual *Survey of the Afghan People* said domestic violence is one of the biggest problems facing Afghan women. We are pioneers in the protection of Afghan women's rights, and work to increase women's access to justice. Although Afghan law criminalizes numerous forms of violence against women, an understanding of women's rights in Islam and capacity to enforce the law are limited. An ongoing effort, with funding from The Royal Netherlands Embassy, allowed us to provide training in 20 provinces to help enforce the law, including for more than 700 government staff, 2,000 representatives from Community Dialogue Groups, and 400 religious scholars, whose sermons on women's rights reached more than 50,000. We also supported an effort in 2017 that provides restorative justice to victims of domestic violence, with activities benefitting nearly 1 million.

## AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is a country in transition and continues to face significant challenges that require improvements in security, the economy, governance, and education. The past year saw steps forward in education and women's rights, declining levels of migration, and continued commitments from the international community at the Brussels Conference, but much more progress is needed to create a stable and democratic society. The Asia Foundation supports the Afghan people through local programs and partnerships focused on improving rule of law, access to and quality of education, women's rights and empowerment, regional cooperation, and security.



# BANGLADESH

With a focus on gender equality, civic accountability, and social cohesion, our Bangladesh office encourages innovation in tackling community challenges, building leadership capacity that reflects the country's diversity, and facilitating broad-based participation in the country's development.



## Growing the Bangladesh economy with women entrepreneurs

Women in Bangladesh face a distinct set of challenges when they seek to start or grow a business: many run the household and care for families, and society expectations impact property ownership and access to collateral, finance, buyers and markets. They are challenged by often limited access to networks for support and to strengthen their voices. With funds from the GSRD Foundation and the Lotus Circle we are equipping women's business associations in six districts to increase networks, facilitate loan opportunities, and promote the use of information technology among these new entrepreneurs. We sponsored six district-level networking events, trained more than 550 women entrepreneurs, built six online marketing and sales portals to gain access to buyers, and hosted public private dialogues promoting new policies to support women's entrepreneurship.



# CAMBODIA

Cambodia's remarkable private sector-driven growth over the past decade has resulted in development benefits for many Cambodians, but it is uneven. Women, girls, and the poor remain vulnerable. Addressing these challenges, our Cambodia office works to empower women by supporting educational opportunities, economic inclusion, and safety and security; equip youth with the skills needed for the future economy; support integrated regional development; and improve public service delivery. All of these efforts reinforce the Foundation's long-standing commitment to the Kingdom's continued peace and prosperity.

## TEKHUB

With a median age of 25, Cambodians have eagerly adopted the latest mobile and internet technology, but young Cambodian entrepreneurs in the tech industry need support and an enabling environment to bring their ideas to fruition. We've built an open co-working and incubator space for tech startups in our office in Phnom Penh. Along with our partner, Impact Hub, we've supported three startups already and hosted multiple skill-sharing events for entrepreneurs, students and experts. These programs have already been recognized for their impact. Education start-up WeduShare increased its revenue by 2000 percent in 2017. Web and mobile developer Codingate won the 2017 Cambodia Rice Bowl Awards for best startup and best founder, and its founder has been featured in *Forbes Magazine's* "30 under 30" in Asia: Enterprise Tech.



A woman with dark hair, wearing a grey sweater, is seated at a desk. She is looking down at a large stack of papers on the desk, with her hand resting on her chin in a thoughtful pose. On the desk, there is a white cup and saucer, a pen, and various documents. The background is slightly blurred, showing a wooden cabinet and some books.

## Addressing violence against children

After China's first Anti-Domestic Violence Law came into effect in March 2016, and with funding from the Royal Netherlands Embassy, we began working to ensure its enforcement. In 2017, we built on our commitment to address domestic violence by supporting workshops for professionals from nine pilot schools/communities in Changde, Hunan Province, increasing the number of trained professionals since 2016 from 1,010 to 1,760. We created a toolkit for child welfare officers in Shanxi, Sichuan, and Yunnan Provinces that inspired the launch of a free online course for the general public. And we conducted a comparative study that analyzed mandatory child abuse reporting and response systems in the U.S. and Australia to help inform the system in China.

## CHINA

In China, the Foundation focuses on developing the charitable sector, disaster management, gender equality and women's development, child welfare and protection, regional cooperation, and constructive U.S.-China relations. As China pursues the "Belt and Road Initiative," and regional development, the Foundation continues to utilize its technical expertise and well-established network in the U.S. and Asia to encourage China's constructive global engagement. We work closely with local partners to improve the understanding of China's development strategy, development assistance, and responsible overseas investment, while strengthening the capacity of Chinese civil society organizations to tackle the intersection of these issues with disaster relief and assistance, environment resilience, and gender equality.



# LOTUS CIRCLE

**The Lotus Circle is a vibrant community of philanthropists who support The Asia Foundation in its work across 18 countries to strengthen women and girls' rights and security, political participation, and economic opportunities. It catalyzes pilot programs and provides resources for women and girls to become leaders, transforming their lives and their communities. Lotus Leadership Awards are presented annually to recognize outstanding individuals and organizations that have made major contributions to the well-being of women and gender equality in Asia.**







# #VentureWithHer

## Women and girls using their power and voice

As Myanmar emerges from decades of military rule, challenges surrounding urbanization, governance, and gender-based discrimination are evident. In this critical transition, organizations are stepping up to ensure women and girls can wield their influence, including Colorful Girls, an Asia Foundation partner that is supporting a movement of adolescent girls with the confidence and leadership skills they need to prevent violence and advocate for their own rights. This movement is led by girls like Zar Chi Win, who launched a successful campaign to fight harassment of women on public buses in Yangon so they can travel to school and work. This spring in San Francisco, the Lotus Circle honored the Colorful Girls along with Mrs. Akie Abe, spouse of the prime minister of Japan, for her steadfast commitment to advancing women's empowerment in Japan and Asia, notably in Myanmar.

We gratefully acknowledge our sponsors for the Lotus Leadership Awards: **SAN FRANCISCO PRESENTING SPONSOR:** MUFG Union Bank **BENEFACTOR SPONSORS:** Boeing International and Connell Brothers **FRIEND SPONSORS:** AIG, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Burma Inc., Charles Schwab & Co., Inc., Squire Patton Boggs **NEW YORK PREMIER SPONSOR:** Bank of America Merrill Lynch **GOLDEN BENEFACTOR:** Mastercard **BENEFACTORS:** Bravia Capital, EY, Morgan Stanley, The Starr Foundation **PATRON:** Carnegie Corporation of New York **SPECIAL THANKS TO:** Tiffany & Co., The Estée Lauder Companies, Christie's



## Crowdsourcing data to make cities safer for women

As more women and girls migrate to urban areas for work and education, Indian cities need solutions to cope with growing levels of gender-based violence. With support from the Lotus Circle, our partner Kalpana Viswanath expanded Safetipin, a free mobile app that collects information about the safety of public spaces using “safety audits” that measure nine parameters (lighting, visibility, walking paths, etc.). Each audit appears as a pin on a map and is used to compute an area’s Safety Score. What was conceived as a single app has now developed into a technology platform, and is available in more Indian cities including Guwahati and Bhopal, through the Foundation’s support. The Asia Foundation is planning to introduce Safetipin in Cambodia.

## INDIA

The prospects for India as a rising power depend upon how the country addresses domestic challenges and relations with its neighbors in the region. Our New Delhi office supports local initiatives to enhance women’s safety, security, and economic empowerment, and initiatives that facilitate India’s engagement in regional and global affairs. The office also serves as a focal point for the Foundation’s regional programs in South Asia.



# INDONESIA

The Foundation creates effective partnerships with innovative local government, civil society and private sector leaders. Our efforts advance reforms that improve environmental governance, increase social inclusion, strengthen justice systems, protect human rights, and promote tolerance and equitable economic growth.

## Overcoming widespread corruption and ineffective regulations to protect Indonesia's forests

Indonesia's forests are among the largest and most biologically diverse in the world: they contain 10-15 percent of the world's known plants, mammals, and birds. But deforestation destroys two million hectares (roughly two million football fields) per year, devastating local communities and swelling greenhouse gas emissions. Ineffective regulation and widespread corruption in key sectors such as mining, palm oil, logging, and paper have hobbled the nation's response. The Asia Foundation's Environmental Governance Program, SETAPAK, funded by the UK Climate Change Unit, supports sustainable forest management tied to local communities. SETAPAK and its partners' efforts have helped achieve 15 percent of the government's 2019 target of 12.7 million hectares of community-managed land, protected 3.6 million hectares of forest in North Aceh, and led to the revocation of 501 noncompliant mining permits. This year, we made further progress revitalizing the Tesso Nilo ecosystem, home to some of the largest unbroken stretches of rainforest remaining in Indonesia.

# KOREA

South Korea today is a powerhouse economy and robust democracy, and the country is now actively sharing lessons of its own transformation from post-war aid recipient to donor. Our office in Seoul works to strengthen the capacity of South Korean government agencies and NGOs involved in international development and facilitates regional cooperation in Northeast Asia.

## Asian approaches to development cooperation

The Korea Development Institute and The Asia Foundation convene a yearly high-level dialogue series on Asian Approaches to Development Cooperation (AADC). Experts from throughout Asia and beyond examine a key development challenge in-depth each year. With additional support from the Australian Government, this year's dialogue focused on women's and girls' empowerment. AADC participants convened in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, in September to examine how Asian countries are approaching the women's empowerment agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals. Case studies presented included: new ways Chinese textile companies are working to protect women workers; Indonesian women reformers collaborating with women's organizations in southern Thailand; and why regional infrastructure schemes must address gender issues.



# LAOS



RULE OF LAW STATE BY 2020

By 2020, Laos aims to graduate from lesser-developed country status and become a “rule of law state” by enhancing access to justice and enabling people’s legal empowerment. Our office in Vientiane works with local partners and Lao government agencies to improve governance and access to justice for all Lao citizens, advance women’s rights and opportunities, help communities manage development and safeguard their natural environment, increase access to information, and promote Laos’ international cooperation.

## Strengthening national legislation with credible, independent data

Governance in Laos has traditionally been seen as opaque and arbitrary, but now the National Assembly, Laos’ parliament, is being recognized as a channel for enabling citizen voice and feedback. With funding from the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, The Asia Foundation is building capacity for representative law-making and government oversight. For the first time, there is now a parliamentary research service—the Institute for Legislative Studies—which enables staff to conduct high-quality research prior to legislative sessions. The neutral, evidence-based research products examine all sides of key issues that parliamentarians need to govern on, such as land and decentralization. Parliamentarians report that the research is extremely valuable for their decision-making.



A photograph of four young women wearing hijabs, smiling and making peace signs. They are sitting on the floor, and there are some papers and a pen in front of them. The image has a teal overlay.

# MALAYSIA

As an advanced, upper middle-income country, Malaysia is poised to achieve developed-nation status as early as 2020. We work closely with our partners on the ground to strengthen the business environment, provide opportunities for women and girls, improve security in vulnerable regions, bolster Malaysia's international development cooperation, enhance the country's electoral integrity and public accountability, and engage young Malaysians on current issues.

## Building resilience among youth leaders to counter violent extremism

The state of Sabah has seen a rise in domestic and transnational crime in recent years, including an increase in violence and extremism. With funding from the U.S. Department of State and the Australian Government, the Foundation launched a project to build resilience among youth leaders to counter violent extremism. We've engaged 400 potentially vulnerable youth through cultural and football camps, and trained 125 community paralegals and 47 community police. We've built community partnerships with local law enforcement agencies in Sabah, greatly improving knowledge among border communities on basic human rights and understanding the workings of extremists.

# MONGOLIA

The Asia Foundation was the first nonprofit invited into Mongolia in 1990, and we have played a unique role in the country's development ever since, supporting the transition to democracy and a market economy. Today, Mongolia is experiencing rapid political, economic, and social transformation. A major priority is to establish the conditions for sustainable and inclusive economic growth. As such, we help strengthen anti-corruption efforts, improve governance of cities and citizen engagement, increase gender equality, advance responsible resource use and environmental conservation, and support Mongolia's multilateral foreign policy engagement.



180 TRAINING COURSES  
FOR 5,000 PARTICIPANTS

## An incubator for women entrepreneurs

Mongolia has experienced profound changes since its emergence as a democracy, but women still confront unique barriers to economic participation. With pioneering support from the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), the Mongolian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Golomt Bank, and Development Solutions, the Foundation and the City of Ulaanbaatar have established Mongolia's first Women's Business Center to support women's entrepreneurship. Since opening in 2016 the Center has already received close to 5,000 visitors, and registered 2,000 entrepreneurs who are learning to access capital, loans, and customers; build networks; and market, manage, and grow their businesses. In June 2017, the WBC opened a new-business incubator, offering state-of-the-art facilities and specially-designed studios for craftsmen, artisans, food-processors, and producers. A four-month, accelerated incubator program for small and startup businesses includes operating space, training and mentoring, and access to a business development fund.





## BOOKS FOR ASIA

**Books for Asia puts brand-new books and digital content into the hands of students, educators, and leaders in 20 countries to increase their access to valuable information. Through technology and book donations, we infuse students with a love of reading essential for literacy; build knowledge in the business, legal, and science professions; sharpen vocational and research ability; and enhance language skills to participate in the global economy. Our digital initiative—*Let's Read!*—creates, translates, and delivers educational content to children any time, any place, in languages they use at home and school, dramatically improving access. This year, Books for Asia was honored by the U.S. Library of Congress Literacy Awards for innovations in literacy promotion. While print remains an effective means of delivering information in many parts of the developing world, e-books are fast becoming a cost-effective, scalable model given mobile technology's increasing affordability.**

## #ReadersIntoLeaders





## **Building a children's digital library in Indonesia and beyond**

Indonesia is made up of 17,000+ islands with 700 languages spoken across the archipelago, and access to quality books is difficult, especially in remote and underserved areas. This year, with generous funding from Trustee Jared Frost, The Asia Foundation launched *Let's Read!*, a free children's digital library in Asian languages at the International Book Fair in Jakarta. Accessible via web and Android app and with offline and print capabilities, this rapidly growing library hosts nearly 1,000 books from around the world, including 88 percent sourced in Asia and over 100 from Indonesian authors. Recently, YBM, one of Korea's largest publishing and education companies, announced it will help scale the ability of *Let's Read!* to work with local authors and editors to create high-quality, locally relevant stories in five countries—Indonesia, Cambodia, Nepal, Thailand, and Laos.



# MYANMAR

The Foundation's office in Myanmar from 1958-1962 provided wide-ranging support for the country's political, economic, social, and educational institutions. We reestablished a resident country office in Yangon in 2013, working with partners in government, the private sector, and civil society to address Myanmar's critical needs as it continues to undergo the challenging transition from military authoritarianism to democracy and from war to peace. Our work includes building the country's capacity for regional and global integration; strengthening institutions and processes of democratic governance; contributing to informed dialogues on key issues related to the peace process; supporting initiatives for inclusive economic development; promoting women's empowerment and political participation; and increasing public access to information.

## Understanding Myanmar's contested areas

After decades of isolation and authoritarianism, since 2011 Myanmar has made progress toward peace and development, but conflict has intensified in many of the country's contested areas. A landmark year-long study by The Asia Foundation, *The Contested Areas of Myanmar*, examines the relationship between foreign aid, development, and conflict. Funded by the World Bank, the study built the very first comprehensive database of conflict and violence indicators and gained widespread attention from donors and aid agencies. Among its major conclusions: development alone will not lead to peace, and development interventions can sometimes intensify conflict. Myanmar's conflicts, among the world's most enduring, are inherently political, and the study underscores the critical need to build a system of government that is recognized as legitimate by people of all ethnic nationalities.



## POST EARTHQUAKE

4,000

MEDIATORS

19

DISTRICTS

7,000

LOCAL DISPUTES

80%

SUCCESS RATE

## Using data to solve conflicts and violence in post-earthquake recovery

After years of political turmoil and two devastating earthquakes, the transition to federalism in Nepal has created new opportunities for managing conflict and violence. Since 2001, our flagship community mediation program has been instrumental in institutionalizing mediation in Nepal, with coverage in 19 districts throughout the country. With funding from the Governance Facility, The Asia Foundation has worked extensively on knowledge creation and policy reform. With funding from the Australian Government, our partners have deployed some 4,000 mediators and handled 7,000+ disputes related to post-earthquake recovery. The Foundation has also developed a computerized database system to analyze, track, monitor, and evaluate the mediation process. Using data tools to untangle the complexities of conflict in Asia, the Foundation, supported by the International Development Research Centre, has pioneered the use of Violent Incident Monitoring Systems. As elections were approaching, our partner, Collective Campaign for Peace, used the violence data to produce 15 reports on political dynamics and violence in Nepal.

## NEPAL

Nepal's new Constitution enshrines a federal form of governance, and local, provincial, and national elections were held in early 2018. The return of elected local government after nearly two decades represents an opportunity to bridge the historical gap between the state and the people. The Asia Foundation supports Nepal's efforts to strengthen subnational governance, mitigate conflict, empower women, expand economic opportunity, increase environmental resilience, and promote regional cooperation.

# PAKISTAN

While having witnessed rapid economic growth and a substantial reduction in poverty in recent years, Pakistan continues to face governance, security, and social challenges. Our programs foster greater participation of all citizens, particularly women and minorities, to benefit from shared prosperity accruing from economic development. We work with local partners to strengthen the democratic and political process, promote inclusive participation, and build the capacity of local institutions to meet the needs of citizens and sustain the gains of economic and social development.



# 80%

**OF THE WATER SUPPLY  
IS CURRENTLY UNSAFE**

## Addressing water security in Pakistan

Pakistan is the third-most water-stressed country in the world: inefficient agriculture, rapid population growth, and unplanned urbanization give it the world's fourth-highest rate of water consumption. Over 80 percent of the nation's water supply is currently unsafe, and experts fear Pakistan will run out of water by 2025. In 2017, the Foundation began a series of initiatives to increase technical knowledge of water security, promote policy dialogue, and empower vulnerable communities. We are collecting baseline data on water availability, sanitation, and hygiene focusing on key issues of drinking-water safety. With the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the Ministry of Climate Change, we conducted a political economy analysis of water security and governance, and our partner, the Hisaar Foundation, is currently developing recommendations for a national water policy.



# PHILIPPINES

The Asia Foundation's programs in the Philippines promote better governance to support economic growth, strengthen the rule of law, and foster peace and development in Mindanao. Building on its wide network of partners, the Foundation is helping government, local NGOs, and the private sector to strengthen democratic institutions and create sustainable economic growth.

## Disaster risk management— empowering frontline responders

The Philippines' fund for disaster prevention and recovery was ineffective when Coalitions for Change (CfC), a Foundation partnership with the Australian Government, began to examine it in 2015. Since its creation in 2010, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund (NDRRM), a crucial national resource, had allocated just 2 percent of its funds to local government preparedness programs. The problem was outdated rules that impeded local government access and emphasized disaster recovery over preparedness. In 2017, the Office of Civil Defense updated the NDRRM guidelines, streamlining local government access to the fund and shifting the focus from response and recovery to preparedness and mitigation.



# LEADEx

**The Asia Foundation has always invested in the human capital needed for societies to develop, and for decades has identified and supported emerging leaders across Asia. As the most dynamic and transformative region in the world, Asia faces pressing development challenges such as unemployment, rising inequality, pervasive conflicts, environmental degradation, and rapid urbanization. Given the depth and complexity of these challenges, the need to support creative and transformative next-generation leadership becomes even more urgent. The Asia Foundation's Leadership and Exchange (LeadEx) unit, through programs such as Asia Foundation Development Fellows, Luce Scholars, the Chang-Lin Tien Distinguished Fellowship, and the William P. Fuller Fellowship in Conflict Resolution, and a range of exchange programs is dedicated to advancing the region's emerging leaders and changemakers.**



# #MoveToTheFrontlines

## Equipping Asia's changemakers

The Asia Foundation Development Fellows program empowers a dynamic community of emerging leaders from across Asia to strengthen their leadership skills and advance their mission of addressing Asia's critical development challenges. The situations many of these young leaders place themselves in, working in the face of adversity and resistance to change, are daunting. One such change-maker is 2017 Development Fellow Jalila Haider, the first female attorney of her Hazara community in Balochistan, Pakistan, who founded We the Humans to advocate for the human rights of women and children. Other Fellows are recognized for pioneering better means of inclusive economic development, such as 2017 Fellow Savin Mao, co-founder of Cambodia's first private equity impact investing firm. Through his company, Emerging Markets Investment Advisers (EMIA), he is building innovative, transparent, and sustainable businesses in Southeast Asia.



# SRI LANKA

Sri Lankans are eager to move beyond the good governance rhetoric that ushered in the historic coalition government in 2015 and are now focused on concrete challenges like rising prices, growing unemployment, and weakening momentum in national reconciliation. Ongoing sporadic ethnic clashes highlight the fragility of the hard-won peace dividends. The Foundation's portfolio includes strengthening subnational governance to advance local democracy; enabling access to justice and community security; facilitating post-trauma psychosocial support; supporting localized inter-ethnic peacebuilding efforts; and creating opportunities for ethnic groups to strengthen economic linkages.



Identified 150 pollution sources in the most polluted 40km of the river

## Educating communities to press for vital resource management

The lush Kelani River is the main source of drinking water for over four million people in greater Colombo. It is also Sri Lanka's most polluted river. The Asia Foundation and local partner the Environmental Foundation Limited (EFL) have been educating communities to press for better stewardship of the river on which they depend. In 2017, EFL extensively mapped the most polluted 40 km of the river and produced a comprehensive guidebook identifying 150 pollution sources, primarily from industry. Sixty-three volunteers from 15 community-based organizations received training to monitor water quality and identify pollution sources. In partnership with other experts, the project has begun to enable communities to engage with polluters and bring their findings to the government's Central Environment Authority to spur investigations of illegal discharges and make much needed changes.





# THAILAND

With the second largest economy in ASEAN, Thailand is one of the most dynamic countries in Southeast Asia. But over the past decade, despite reaching upper middle-income status, Thailand has faced slowing economic growth, declining foreign investment, and political instability. With growing concerns about trade, education, inequality, and the environment, the Royal Thai Government is moving forward on several major reform initiatives, government programs, and new investments. Thailand is also in the midst of a major political transition, with elections scheduled in early 2019. Meanwhile, the conflict in the southernmost provinces continues, with prospects for a peaceful settlement elusive.

## TechCamp promotes peace and dialogue

Like the rest of the world, Southeast Asia has seen the dark side of social media, and in May 2017 our Thailand office, with funds from the U.S. State Department, organized TechCamp Thailand: Promoting Peace and Dialogue with Technology. We convened technology experts and 60 young social activists from Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia to explore technology-enabled strategies to promote tolerance and reduce online disinformation and hate speech. Small follow-on grants allow participants to take their ideas from concept to implementation. The program is already generating spin-offs in Thailand's conflict-affected southern provinces, including a Mini-TechCamp in Pattani.



# TIMOR-LESTE

Sixteen years after independence, Timor-Leste remains free and democratic. Despite this, development is at risk due to gender inequalities and high rates of violence against women, dwindling oil reserves, corruption, and unsustainable spending. Addressing reform and inefficiencies in its young institutions, increasing the understanding of the role of government by citizens, building a non-oil based economy and ensuring safety for all are key focus areas of the Foundation in Timor-Leste.

## Strengthening democracy by focusing on critical issues

Party loyalty rather than issue-oriented debate has defined Timor-Leste's young democracy since independence, but dissatisfaction has grown over issues like health care, education, and agricultural services, eroding public confidence in the distribution of development gains. The Asia Foundation's recent *Tatoli!* survey, funded by the Australia Government, provided hard evidence of this discontent. Released just before the country's fourth parliamentary elections, the survey's analysis of public concerns enabled the Foundation, through meetings, presentations, and publications, to encourage politicians to campaign on the issues. The effort bore fruit in 2017, when an interagency government panel asked the Foundation to prepare concept notes and a code of conduct for Timor-Leste's first-ever presidential debate. On March 17, eight presidential candidates debated the critical issues live on national radio and television.





## Using blockchain to ensure supply chain security

Opportunities can be found in unexpected corners of the rapidly evolving technology sector. A case in point: blockchain, a distributed ledger technology with built-in cryptographic authentication that first emerged as the underpinning technology that maintains Bitcoin. With support from the Australian Government, our Vietnam office is adapting blockchain technology to create a digital proof-of-provenance platform for the Vietnamese dragon fruit supply chain. For the growers and other actors involved in the supply chain, mostly micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, the blockchain creates a secure brand identity that cannot be faked, while importers and consumers receive trusted information on the provenance of the fruit, from point of origin to point of consumption, including important food-safety information. The blockchain creates trust, increases transparency, and ensures regulatory compliance, and is likely to be a component of future Foundation programs.

## VIETNAM

For Vietnam to reach its goal of achieving middle income status by 2035, government, business, and citizens will need to meet the challenges of globalized markets, mitigate climate, environment and health risks, and respond to the rising expectations of an emerging middle class. This requires a transformation of political, economic, and social institutions. The Foundation's office in Hanoi is supporting these efforts by promoting effective governance and informed policy making; improving the quality and inclusiveness of economic growth; addressing environmental challenges; and creating opportunities and strengthening protections for women.

# WASHINGTON, DC

With field offices throughout Asia, The Asia Foundation has extraordinary access to current and emerging leaders and to staff experts in the field, who contribute their on-the-ground perspectives on developments and dynamics affecting the region. The Foundation's office in Washington organizes substantive meetings with key audiences on policy issues facing the Asia-Pacific. Roundtables, forums, lectures, and dialogues provide policymakers, nongovernmental leaders, journalists, and scholars with opportunities to hear contemporary views from Asia.

## Assessing Reform in Myanmar

Myanmar is emerging from decades of authoritarianism, ethnic armed conflicts, and poverty, and its government is challenged in achieving political and economic reform. Given the lack of experience in the government to implement reforms, results have been mixed, with a widening gap between high public expectations and what the elected government can actually deliver. With generous support from Chevron, a half-day conference in Washington in 2017 introduced two significant new Foundation reports: first, an analysis of executive policy-making in Myanmar, and second, an examination of the relationship between aid and the national peace process. Along with Discussant Min Zin of the Institute for Strategy and Policy-Myanmar, Matthew Arnold and Su Mon Thazin Aung, who co-authored the executive policy-making assessment, presented findings and assessed Myanmar's wider transition. Their research study was made possible by support from the Australian Government.



## 2017 Financial Condensed Highlights (in thousands)

### Revenue, Support & Income

Government: Bilateral & Multilateral Institutions	90,910
Foundations, Corporations, and Individuals	5,639
	<u>96,549</u>

### Expenditures

Programs, Grants, and Related Services	83,665
General Administration	11,645
Fundraising	418
	<u>95,728</u>

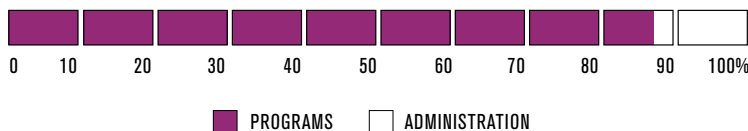
Change in Net Assets from Operations	821
Non-operating Income	1,432

### Books In-Kind

Donated Books and Related Services	10,183
Distribution of Books and Materials	8,655
Inventory Increase	1,528

### Allocation of Expenses

Programs	87%
Administration	13%



Management is responsible for the preparation of The Asia Foundation's financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, and for the financial information presented in this report. This responsibility includes maintaining the integrity and objectivity of financial records, protection of Foundation assets, and compliance with funder restrictions and instructions. The Foundation's financial statements have been audited by Clark Nuber, P.S., independent certified public accountants. It is the opinion of the independent auditor that the financial statements as of and for the year ended September 30, 2017, are fairly stated in all material respects in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. The independent auditor's report and complete audited financial statements and accompanying footnotes are available at [asiafoundation.org](http://asiafoundation.org).

# #MoveToTheFrontlines

There's no substitute for game-changing leaders. I have lived and worked across Asia for the last two decades and seen up close the impact excellent leadership can have and how rare it is. I invest in The Asia Foundation because they have always invested in the human capital needed for positive change. The Asia Foundation's Development Fellows program is taking the next generation of game-changing leaders higher, equipping them to take on challenges threatening nearly half our planet.

— **Brooks Entwistle** is a senior executive based in Asia leading companies like Uber Asia, Everstone Capital, and Goldman Sachs





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I come from an immigrant family and I've made it my life's work to empower women and fight for their economic, social, and political freedom. The Asia Foundation is committed to empowering millions of women entrepreneurs to grow their businesses, develop strong networks, and participate fully in the global economy. I support The Asia Foundation because they can scale my efforts; together we can make a broader, lasting impact.

— **Lucy Lee** is an investor in early stage companies working at the nexus of technology and innovation; she helped launch The Asia Foundation's Lotus Circle in the Bay Area

**#VentureWithHer**

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My home, Indonesia, is made up of more than 17,000 islands, with 700 languages spoken across the archipelago. I am painfully aware of the limited supply of local language texts available for children here and in many parts of Asia. Access to books is crucial to unleash young people's imaginations, possibilities, and heighten awareness of opportunities. That's why I support The Asia Foundation's state-of-the-art digital library, getting books into the hands of young readers, anytime, in languages they use at home and school, and in some of the remotest places on earth. The Asia Foundation is helping me turn readers into leaders, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, income, or geographic location.

— **Jared Frost**, co-founded and was CEO of the RMI group and lives in Indonesia

**#ReadersIntoLeaders**

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