

# UPDATES from Washington, DC



## April 2018

**In this issue:** Thailand, Leadership Development & Exchange, Launch of the Partnership for Online Platforms & Sustainable Development (POPS), Asian Views on America's Role in Asia, Protecting Women and Girls in Pakistan, and Myanmar

### Upcoming Event

**May 15 —** [Sara L. Taylor](#), the Asia Foundation's country representative in [Bangladesh](#), will provide an update on recent developments in the country. Event details will be sent via an invitation email soon.

### Recent Events

**April 12 —** The Asia Foundation's roundtable discussion on *The Situation in Southern Thailand* featured Don Pathan, Director of Foreign Relations at the Patani Forum, a civil society organization that promotes critical dialogue about the nature of the ongoing conflict and insurgency in the southernmost Malay Muslim provinces of Thailand. Read about the Foundation's country programs in [Thailand](#), and about our [conflict programs](#) in Asia.

### Leadership Development and Exchange

#### [Applicants Selected for YSEALI Critical Thinking in Classrooms Regional Workshop in Thailand](#)

The Asia Foundation announced the successful applicants for the [Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative \(YSEALI\) Critical Thinking in Classrooms Regional Workshop](#) sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. This regional workshop will take place from May 21-26, 2018 in Bangkok, Thailand, and bring together 60 participants from ASEAN countries. Follow coverage of the event through [YSEALI social media platforms](#) and our website. Check out our [News Room](#) for press releases from the Foundation.

### Technology and Development

#### [The Asia Foundation Launches Partnership for Online Platforms & Sustainable Development \(POPS\) in Support of Inclusive Growth](#)

The Asia Foundation launched a brand-new initiative, the [Partnership for Online Platforms & Sustainable Development \(POPS\)](#), on March 30 in Bangkok during United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific's (UNESCAP's) [5th Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development](#). The prevalence, adoption and influence of online platforms make them powerful new tools in the fight against poverty and the promotion of social inclusion in the region. POPS aims to harness this power of online platforms to establish an Asia-wide network led by regional experts and entrepreneurs and who are dedicated to highlighting the importance of platform entrepreneurship and startup culture to achieving sustainable development goals in Asia. Read from our [POPS blog](#), and learn more about our [technology and development](#) programs in Asia.

### Notes from the Field

#### [Views from the Region on U.S. Policy in Asia Today](#)

A symposium on U.S. policy toward Asia was held on March 15 in Hong Kong as a part of The Asia Foundation's signature foreign policy initiative, "[Asian Views on America's Role in Asia](#)" (AVARA), which brings together diverse perspectives from influential Asian thought leaders for ongoing discussions around U.S. foreign policy priorities in Asia. One year into the presidency, Trump has outlined major departures in U.S. policy that has left Asians feeling fascinated from the regular drama that unfolds in the White House, confused by the contradictory changes in policy statements, particularly about North Korea, China and trade, and concerned about U.S. commitment to maintaining robust and sustained presence in the region, beyond the U.S. military. Watch a [video](#) on AVARA with perspectives from the chairs, and learn more about the Asia Foundation's programs in [international cooperation](#).



Photo: Giulia Marchi

## In the News

### [Will Justice for Sahar be the Tipping Point for Pakistan's Rule of Law?](#)



Pakistan has seen a disturbing rise in sexual abuse of children, as well as vulnerable groups such as women, religious and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and transgender people who also face severe discrimination and violent acts and have little recourse to justice. Photo/Conor Ashleigh

The parents of [Sahar Batool](#), a seven-year-old girl who was raped and murdered in Quetta in 2014, finally got justice on March 20 when the Anti-Terrorism Court sentenced the accused to three counts of rape, terrorism, and the murder of a minor. The case brought into question Pakistan's [ability to deliver justice](#) and to protect its children. In a country where the provision of justice is often delayed, the judgement in Sahar's case is a hopeful step in the direction of bringing the perpetrators of heinous crimes against children to justice. Despite the grim reality of dysfunctional District Legal Empowerment Committees (DLECs) providing access to legal aid, the dearth of monitoring mechanisms to ensure their optimum functioning, and the lack of awareness on the part of those seeking justice, there are signs that things are changing.

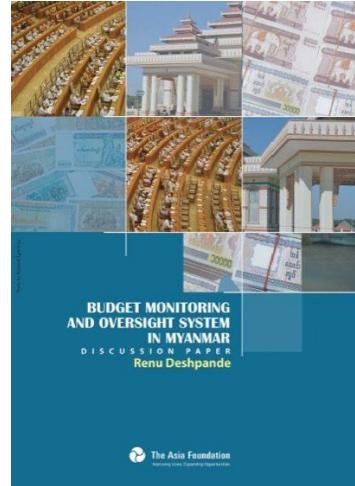
Pakistan has seen an increase in rule of law programs over the last decade, including the Asia Foundation's "Access to Justice for Vulnerable Populations in Pakistan" program that began in 2014 to provide free-of-cost legal aid to

persons with disabilities, survivors of gender-based violence, and ethnic and religious minorities in 13 districts. Sahar's case was one among 1,422 cases managed by these legal aid centers. Learn more about the Foundation's [law and justice](#) programs as well as our programs in [Pakistan](#).

## Publications of Interest

### [Budget Monitoring and Oversight System in Myanmar](#)

This paper discusses how budget monitoring and oversight are currently practiced in Myanmar. We hope the insights provided in this report would be useful to inform government, civil society organizations, and development partners will help inform the ongoing public discourse and interventions aimed at improving public financial management in Myanmar. There is a critical need in Myanmar to review budget expenditure and reassess its alignment with national priorities, as well as the efficacy of existing policies and procedures that support the budget oversight and monitoring process. Given the complex and varied factors relevant to budget execution and fiscal transparency, a range of qualitative approaches were employed to address these topics, including desk review, consultations and semi structured interviews with key government officials, data triangulation, and consultations with donor partners. Learn more about the Asia Foundation's programs in [Myanmar](#).



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.