



March 2018

In this issue: Empowering Women, Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, Open Data in Nepal, Strengthening Governance, 2018 Australasian Aid Conference, Supporting Myanmar's Transition, and Mongolia

Upcoming Event

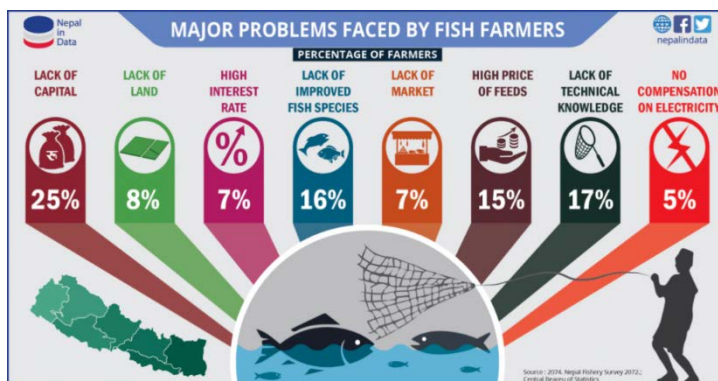
April 12 – The Asia Foundation will host a roundtable discussion on *The Situation in Southern Thailand*, featuring Don Pathan, Director of Foreign Relations at the Patani Forum, a civil society organization that promotes critical dialogue about the nature of the ongoing conflict and insurgency in the southernmost Malay Muslim provinces of Thailand. Don is a Thailand-based security analyst and consultant with more than 20 years of experience in reporting on diplomacy, international relations, transnational crime, and insurgency in Southeast Asia. Read about the Foundation's country programs in Thailand [here](#), and about our conflict program [here](#).

Recent Events

March 6 – The Asia Foundation hosted an event on *Gender-Based Violence in Asia: Prevalence, Protection, and Perspectives from the Field* which discussed gender-based violence, particularly in conflict-affected settings, and shared findings from new Foundation studies on [The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia](#), and [Global and Regional Trends in Women's Legal Protection Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Harassment](#). The panel featured [Sofia Shakil](#), Asia Foundation's country representative from [Pakistan](#), and Adrian Morel, acting director of the Foundation's Conflict team. Watch a recording of the event [here](#), and read our blogpost on [Four Things to Know About Gender-Based Violence in Asia](#).

San Francisco, February 21 – The Asia Foundation recognized Mrs. Akie Abe, spouse of the prime minister of Japan, for her commitment to advancing women's empowerment in Japan and Asia at the inaugural [Lotus Leadership Awards Dinner in San Francisco](#). [Colorful Girls](#) also received a Lotus Leadership Award for empowering adolescent girls in Myanmar. Read the blog post where InAsia [speaks with Brooke Zobrist](#), Colorful Girls technical advisor, and an [exclusive Q&A with Mrs. Abe](#). Watch [this slideshow](#) that captures highlights from the evening.

Technology and Development



An infographic available on [Nepal in Data](#) visualizes major challenges faced by fish farmers in Nepal.

[Building an Open Data Ecosystem in Nepal](#)

Nepal's current process of transitioning to a new federal structure of governance has raised hopes of pushing forward an open government agenda. It is well known that freely used, re-used, and redistributed data can increase revenue opportunities, allow for greater government transparency, and support a broader provision of public services. Software developers rely on open data resources to build apps that improve citizens' lives such as access to transit schedules, neighborhood crime rates, etc., while journalists use open data to report on government performance and other areas of public interest. Independent web portals like [Nepal in](#)

[Data](#) and [Open Nepal](#), and some other NGOs and donors provide datasets on a variety of issues in Nepal but to develop stronger open data practices in Nepal, changes must occur on both the supply and demand sides. Read more about the Foundation's [initiatives on open data](#) and learn more about our country programs in [Nepal](#).

Notes from the Field

[A Front Row Seat to Five Years of Rapid Change in Myanmar](#)

[Kim N. B. Ninh](#), Asia Foundation's country representative for [Myanmar](#), moved to Yangon to [re-open](#) the Foundation's Myanmar office in 2013, a year after Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) won 43 of the 44 seats it contested in [April's by-elections](#). The primary concern was understanding the opaque country context as the international community began interacting with Myanmar's government. The Foundation produced [research](#) documenting state and regional governments in Myanmar for the first time. A series of analysis on the country's governance structure and reform process improved the availability of information but huge gaps still exist. Supporting the government and CSOs revealed a lack of local capacity, coordination and long term critical thinking in navigating the country's transition from military rule to a civilian democracy. Rapid reforms also underestimated the critical need to build trust in society which knew little about basic governance institutions and the values underpinning democracy, as mapped out by the Foundation's [2014 national civic knowledge and value survey](#). The Rohingya crisis in Rakhine state, which became a full-blown humanitarian crisis in late 2017, showed just how raw and incomplete the transition is in Myanmar. Persevering through the challenges ahead require tough choices to be made about the nature of the state and society that can respond to public needs and aspirations but also bring the best out of its people. Read more from Kim N. B. Ninh [here](#).

In the News

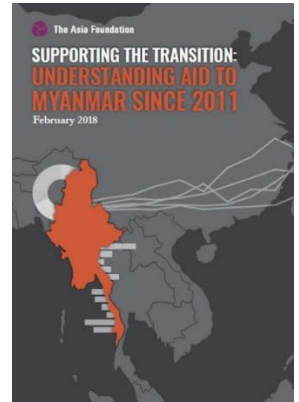
[5 Things You Need to Know From 2018 Australasian Aid Conference](#)

From February 12-14, the fifth [Australasian Aid Conference](#) was held at the Australian National University in Canberra. **(1)** Australian Senate Opposition Leader Penny Wong criticized the Coalition government's cuts to Australia's aid program by over \$11 billion since coming to power in 2013, envisaging the return of a Labor government in which development assistance would be central to Australia's realization of its foreign policy priorities. **(2)** Nancy Birdsall, president emeritus of the Center for Global Development, brought attention to "strugglers," a vulnerable group mostly living in middle-income countries that are no longer poor but have a 40 percent risk of falling back below the \$2 a day poverty line. By 2030, strugglers will comprise 60 percent of the world's vulnerable. **(3)** The traditional, state-led approach of [Asian development cooperation](#) has softened to include and share responsibility with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector, though governments still play a deciding role in impacting the ability of their national [civil society organizations \(CSOs\) and NGOs](#) to engage in international work. **(4)** The winning 3-minute aid pitch by Rosanna Duncan argued for the benefits of diversifying talent in the aid industry and presented solid strategies to do so. **(5)** Politics and "doing development differently" were the 2 dominant themes of parallel sessions, featuring robust debate and learning on development cooperation policy and practice in the Indo-Pacific region. Learn about the Foundation's programs on [development and aid effectiveness](#), and read more from [Anthea Mulakala](#), the Foundation's Director for International Development Cooperation, [here](#).

Publications of Interest

[Supporting the Transition: Understanding Aid to Myanmar Since 2011](#)

This report describes the characteristics and constraints of aid in Myanmar. It provides a historical grounding on international development cooperation, an overview of current trends in aid provision, and analysis of particularly challenging policy areas. The report draws on interviews conducted between June 2016 and June 2017 and survey data which covers donor programs in Myanmar as of November 2016. This publication is well timed considering the recent formation of Myanmar's Ministry of International Cooperation. We hope the report will support reflection on aid programming in Myanmar and encourage more dialogue and debate between both the government and its cooperation partners. Learn more about the Foundation's programs in [Myanmar](#).



[Study of Private Sector Perceptions of Corruption \(STOPP\) Survey 2017](#)

Study of Private Sector Perceptions of Corruption (STOPP) is an annual survey The Asia Foundation conducts in collaboration with the Sant Maral Foundation in Mongolia. This is the eighth installment, surveying Mongolian businesses based in Ulaanbaatar. Compiling the perceptions of the business community, STOPP illustrates how the business community is affected by corruption. The survey provides a unique and robust tool to raise awareness of corruption, encouraging the business community to take part in anti-corruption efforts, and policymakers and service providers to reduce bureaucracy and improve practices. The survey is part of the Strengthening Democratic Participation and Transparency in the Public Sector in Mongolia project, funded by Global Affairs Canada and implemented by The Asia Foundation. Find more of our annual STOPP survey publications in [Mongolia](#), [here](#).

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.