

Thailand



The Asia Foundation
Improving Lives, Expanding Opportunities

For nearly 65 years, the Asia Foundation has been a partner in Thailand's development. Today, our programs are helping to strengthen Thailand's leadership in ASEAN, address critical challenges such as inequality and middle-income trap, promote digital technology, and protect the rights of women and vulnerable groups.



THAILAND ASEAN CHAIRMANSHIP

As Chair of ASEAN in 2019, Thailand is expanding ASEAN's role in promoting sustainable development, and maintaining geopolitical balance in the region. The Asia Foundation programs are helping Thailand to achieve these goals through research, technical assistance, facilitating regional dialogues, and policy forums. In September 2018, the Foundation released a study entitled, *ASEAN as the Architect for Regional Development Cooperation*, which provides recommendations on how to maintain ASEAN Centrality through an expanded ASEAN role on development issues. In partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation, The Asia Foundation is supporting efforts to expand ASEAN's role on development cooperation, and pursue recommendations from the study. We also collaborate with Australia to support ASEAN efforts under the Bohol Trafficking-in-Persons Work Plan (2017-2020) through assistance to ASEAN sectoral bodies.

THAI-U.S. RELATIONS

The Asia Foundation works with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the U.S. Government, and prominent leaders from both countries, to strengthen bilateral relations between the United States and

Thailand. In July 2018, we organized a bilateral dialogue (track 1.5) between senior leaders from both countries, held in Washington. In August, the Foundation released the report *The Future of Thai-US Relations*, which includes outcomes from the dialogue, and findings from a year-long research program. We support the American Studies Association of Thailand to conduct research and outreach on the views of Thai young people on the US. We also support a fellowship for Thai diplomats to spend a year in Washington to gain valuable exposure to the U.S. Congress and system of governance. The Foundation also organizes roundtables and forums in Bangkok to deepen bilateral relations, and advance the recommendations from the bilateral dialogue.

MIDDLE INCOME CHALLENGES

Thailand is facing many of the challenges associated with the middle-income trap, including declining economic competitiveness, inadequate skilled workforce, and economic reform challenges. The Asia Foundation is helping Thailand to address these challenges through flexible support for Thai reform leaders in government, the private sector, universities, and the think tank community.



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We organized a series of *TechCamps* for young people across ASEAN to on how to use digital technology to address social challenges.

In partnership with Australia, the Foundation is implementing the Australian-Thailand Middle Income Initiative, which provides targeted technical assistance, policy research, and coalition-building in high-priority reform areas. The Foundation is also supporting research and policy forums on improving Thailand's economic competitiveness, to inform policy-makers and private sector leaders.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

The Asia Foundation is supporting initiatives that promote digital platforms to address social challenges and improve livelihoods. In cooperation with the U.S. Department of State, we organized a series of *TechCamps* for young people in Thailand and across ASEAN to exchange ideas on how to use digital technology to address social challenges. In cooperation with Google, the Foundation is promoting online safety and secure practices for people who are new to the Internet. Our programs also promote policy dialogue on cyber-security and responsible social media use that includes policy-makers, the private sector, and civil society. We have also hosted *hack-a-thons* to encourage developers to create tools that address key development challenges, including natural disasters.

INEQUALITY AND REGIONAL DISPARITIES

Economic inequality and regional disparities are major challenges in Thailand. The Northeast region, home to one-third of the Thai population, has the lowest per capita incomes, and is falling further behind the rest of the country. The Asia Foundation is conducting research on the economic and social conditions in the Northeast, including a household perception survey. In late 2018 and early 2019, we will release a series of reports, datasets, and policy recommendations on closing the gap between the Northeast and the rest of Thailand. Foundation programs will support key reform efforts by government, the private sector, and civil society in areas such as integrative water management, organic agriculture, community enterprises, handicrafts, and small business growth. The Foundation's education reform efforts also focus on the Northeast region.

EDUCATION REFORM

Thailand's education system was an early leader in Asia, reaching universal primary school access well

ahead of most of countries in the region. Today, Thailand is struggling to keep up with neighboring countries on educational performance, and there are significant regional disparities in education quality. The government has recognized the problem, and is pursuing several reforms, often in partnership with the private sector and think-tank community. In partnership with Australia, The Asia Foundation is implementing an initiative to address the challenge of functional illiteracy, or the inability of students to understand what they read and apply in their daily lives. This initiative is supporting multi-stakeholder coalitions to dissect this complex problem, and promote locally-led, innovative approaches to reform. The Foundation is also supporting promising young leaders in Thailand through pilot projects and exchanges between Thai and Australian university students.

GENDER AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

The Asia Foundation is helping to reduce discrimination and stigma against women and girls, people with disabilities, and the LGBT community. In cooperation with the U.S. Department of State, the Foundation is supporting Thai civil society partners Gender and Development Research Institute, Rainbow Sky Association, and Disabled Persons International Asia-Pacific to increase awareness and application of Thailand's landmark Gender Equality Act by vulnerable groups to protect their rights. In addition, the Foundation previously supported the Peace Agenda of Women in the Deep South (PAOW), an umbrella group of 23 women's organizations, to increase women's collective voice in the peace process, and facilitate dialogue between Muslims and Buddhists.

PEACEBUILDING AND TOLERANCE

The Asia Foundation supports policy research and dialogue to improve the prospects for peace in the southernmost provinces, through improved government programs and policies, and better relations between the government and local populations. We support programs by Buddhist and Muslim media organizations to encourage support for peace. The Foundation also supports programs to improve confidence in the justice sector, in partnership with police and prosecutors, through more professional, evidence-based investigations and community engagement.

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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