

Bangladesh



Over the past 70 years, The Asia Foundation has worked with the government, civil society, community, religious leaders, and the private sector in Bangladesh. Together with our partners, we work to tackle community challenges, build leadership capacity that reflects the country's diversity, and facilitate broad-based participation in the country's development.

Project Highlights

Perception survey spotlights citizen voices

The Survey of the Bangladeshi People has received widespread media attention this year for its insights on the state of Bangladesh's political governance, development, and society as perceived by its citizens.

Bilateral dialogue to aid Bangladeshi migrant workers in Maldives

Organized a Track 1.5 dialogue with critical stakeholders to ease restrictions for Bangladeshi migrant workers in Maldives. The discussion resulted in a consensus to strengthen the law and enhance collaboration to benefit the workers.

Public-private dialogue on tannery industry

Facilitated a platform with tanners, government agencies, research institutes, and other key stakeholders to agree on an independent board for the industry and a way forward to achieve Leather Working Group certification for factories in the future.

Adaptive management for more inclusive governance

The Foundation's flagship coalition-building approach aims to overcome previously existing systemic constraints or bottlenecks to enable key policy and institutional reforms.

2023 Snapshot



Facilitated access to financial readiness training for 200 women entrepreneurs



12,996 individuals in RMG communities have received a diverse range of services



2,265 individuals trained on countering violent extremism using the Community Policing Approach



Flagship Initiatives



Fostering religious equality and equal access to justice

Despite legal safeguards, inconsistent implementation and limited access to justice persist. The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL), has partnered with the Foundation to promote religious equality and access to justice in Bangladesh. The project supports equal protection for religious minorities in Bangladesh by reducing intercommunal tensions and inequalities among religious communities.

Ensuring safe and decent work for tanneries

The leather sector is one of the oldest industries in Bangladesh, and despite a robust legal framework, tannery workers face severe occupational safety and health risks. In collaboration with DRL, The Asia Foundation collaborates with tannery workers, owners, civil society organizations, community leaders, government, and other key stakeholders to promote decent work and acceptable working conditions in the tannery sector.

Equipping women garment workers for the future of work

The Ready-Made-Garments (RMG) industry employs approximately 4.1 million people in Bangladesh, with women holding roughly 58 percent of the jobs. As this trend declines, with the industry increasing the adoption of automation and digitalization, it creates uncertain futures for women workers. With the support of the H&M Foundation, Sweden and COS, The Asia Foundation has onboarded 11 implementation partners in a collective impact initiative to increase women's employability in Bangladesh by ensuring enabling environments, skill development, and competitiveness of the sector.

An alternative way to policy reform

Despite encouraging economic progress, Bangladesh continues to confront significant governance challenges. Enabling policies, together with capable democratic institutions and a vibrant civic space, will be essential to ensure equitable economic development. The United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office has partnered with the Foundation to support its most extensive governance program in Bangladesh, the Promoting Effective, Responsive, and Inclusive Governance in Bangladesh program. This locally-led, adaptive management program uses a coalition-building approach to pursue policy reform work. The first reform track work is on fairer labor migration practices in Bangladesh. The consequent reform tracks will be identified by placing "small bets" to test ideas and assumptions, building relationships, and networks, and reflecting, and adjusting before moving on.

The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives and expanding opportunities across Asia and the Pacific. Informed by decades of experience and deep local expertise, our work across the region is focused on good governance, women's empowerment and gender equality, inclusive economic growth, environment and climate action, and regional and international relations.