



## The Asia Foundation



Welcome to The Asia Foundation's Washington, D.C. June newsletter. This latest issue covers our upcoming **in-person roundtable on ASEAN's role in Southeast Asia**, InAsia blog posts on **our Lao office's journey to going carbon neutral**, **evidence-based policy making in Nepal**, and **the Foundation's Skills2Work program**, as well as recent **publications on women's inclusion in India's trade ecosystem** and **accessibility on Phnom Penh's public transport system**.

## Events

## Upcoming In-Person Roundtable – ASEAN: Ineffective or Indispensable for Southeast Asia?



**July 10, 11:00am-12:00pm** - ASEAN is often criticized as ineffective and divided, particularly in its response to the 2021 Myanmar coup, and the South China Sea. However, most Southeast Asian leaders still see ASEAN as an essential element of their foreign policy and remain committed to the ASEAN Way. To understand ASEAN's enduring appeal, it is essential to see the emerging geopolitical competition through the eyes of small and middle powers in Southeast Asia, as well as middle power external partners. Join [Thomas Parks](#), The Asia Foundation's Country Representative in [Thailand](#), for an in-person roundtable discussion on why ASEAN's appeal is so enduring, why it is often misunderstood by external analysts, and the implications of new minilateral platforms such as the Quad and AUKUS. Seats are limited. RSVP [here](#).

## Voices from the Field



## [Why Go Carbon Neutral? Aren't We Too Small to Make a Difference?](#)

When The Asia Foundation's [Laos office](#) announced that they were going carbon neutral, many friends and colleagues questioned their efforts, and some went so far as to say they should leave it to bigger companies where reductions would make more of a difference. However, as [Todd Wassel](#), the Foundation's Country Representative in Laos, writes in this [InAsia blogpost](#), the Laos office staff "are supporters of the opposite proposition, that we can't wait for others to lead us, that we must start to make changes ourselves." Todd outlines the Laos office's journey to going carbon neutral and shares a [guide](#) to encourage other organizations to start making the transition themselves. Learn more about the Foundation's [environment and climate action](#) programming.



## [Evidence-Based Policymaking: A Path to Data Culture](#)

Too often local governments in [Nepal](#) narrow their focus to address one specific issue, such as road infrastructure, and neglect other larger challenges, like inadequate healthcare facilities for pregnant women or school shortages. Part of the problem is that local governments in Nepal still struggle to integrate evidence-based practices into their planning and policymaking. Local planning in Nepal is meant to follow a bottom-up approach, starting at the settlement level, and community, government, and civil society stakeholders are expected to participate. One key factor that is missing, however, is the application of reliable data throughout the process, from the identification of problems to the deliberation of solutions. This [InAsia blog post](#) provides an overview of how The Asia Foundation's *Data for Development (D4D)* project has grappled with this issue through three

approaches: supply, policies and processes, and deliberation and ownership.



## [Skills2Work Caps Customer Experience Training Pilot in Malaysia to Address Talent Gap](#)

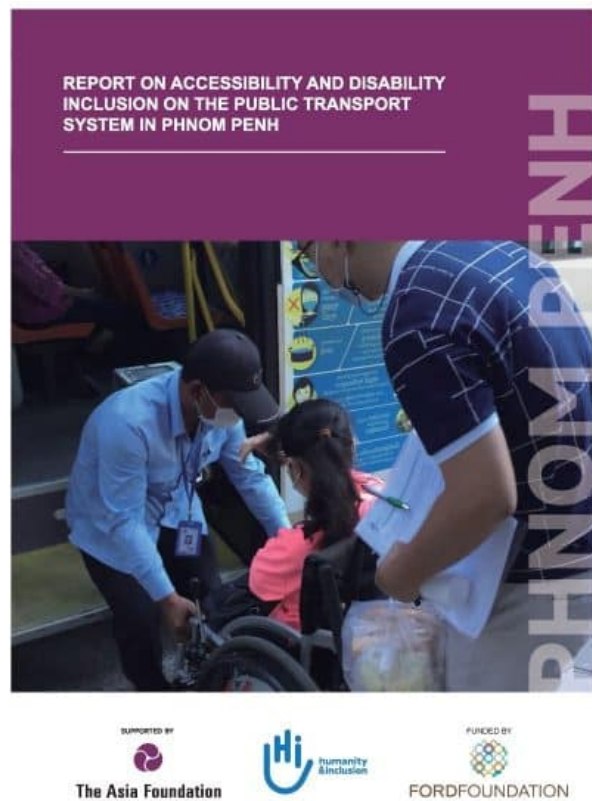
Skills2Work welcomed 32 Malaysian graduates of the Customer Experience (CX) Pathway to its alumni network after completing the three-week training program. Part of The Asia Foundation's Future Skills Alliance, [Skills2Work](#) is an online upskilling program designed to help people start or shift to in-demand digital careers. This program snapshot highlights how the Skills2Work program in [Malaysia](#) prepared graduates for careers in Global Business Services (GBS). Learn more about the [Future Skills Alliance](#).

# Recent Publications



## [Policy Brief – Women’s Inclusion in India’s Trade Ecosystem: From Talk to Action](#)

Trade policy is inherently inequitable when it comes to gender because women face systemic disadvantages. However, women's ability to participate effectively in trade is dependent on more than what trade policy can address alone. It requires trade policy, domestic reforms, and capacity-building initiatives (including digital, financial literacy, and other trade-related skills) to work in tandem. This policy brief outlines how a more equitable and inclusive trade ecosystem can enable [India](#) to make greater strides in regional partnerships, primarily the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity.



## [Accessibility and Disability Inclusion on the Public Transport System in Phnom Penh](#)

For persons with disabilities living in urban areas in Cambodia, access to public transport is essential for getting around the city. However, persons with disabilities have reported incidents in which they had to pay extra fees for mobility devices or were denied access to public transport. With support from the Ford Foundation, The Asia Foundation commissioned the NGO Humanity & Inclusion to conduct an assessment of disability services in Phnom Penh’s public bus system. This assessment identified the existing disability inclusion services and how the public transport system can be made more

The brief details some of the key ongoing initiatives to improve women's participation in international trade and presents actionable recommendations for addressing gender gaps in India's trade ecosystem. Learn more about the Foundation's [women's empowerment and gender equality](#) programming.

accessible for persons with disabilities. Learn more about the Foundation's work in [Cambodia](#).



## The Asia Foundation

The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. Informed by six decades of experience and deep local expertise, our work across the region addresses five overarching goals—strengthen governance, empower women, expand economic opportunity, increase environmental resilience, and promote regional cooperation