Welcome to The Asia Foundation's Washington, D.C. February and March newsletter. This second issue of the year features recent in-person events on Harnessing Local Knowledge for Conflict Prevention and Development, Amplifying Change: Community-Centered Approaches to Ending Violence Against Women, and Working Politically: Supporting Local Coalitions for Development; two upcoming events on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Updates from Asia and the Pacific, and Women's Roles in Peacebuilding: Power of Women Leading Peace in Mindanao; two news posts announcing the second phase of The Asia Foundation's STEM ConnectHER program, and the Pacific Women Climate Leaders Fellowship Program; two InAsia podcasts episodes about the 100 Champions Network in Indonesia, and resistance and the cost of the coup in Chin state; an InAsia blog post on reading together to introduce children to complex subjects like disability; and a recent publication on exploring developmental policy reforms in Vanuatu.

Events

Recent Event – Harnessing Local Knowledge for Conflict Prevention and Development
February 29 – This session on *Harnessing Local Knowledge for Conflict Prevention and Development* shared lessons for policymakers on how local research can help to overcome challenges in analysis, access, and legitimacy in development programming by highlighting specific examples from Myanmar, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, while reflecting on analysis from elsewhere in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Findings were drawn from the Cross-Border Conflict: Evidence, Policy and Trends (XCEPT) program led by The Asia Foundation and illustrated the approach of XCEPT’s Local Research Network. Watch a recording of this event, and learn more about our conflict and fragility programs.

Recent Event – Amplifying Change: Community-Centered Approaches to Ending Violence Against Women

March 6 – The Asia Foundation has been leading and supporting important community approaches to addressing gender-based violence and trafficking in Asia and the Pacific for decades. This includes long-running programming in Timor-Leste, which has some of the highest rates of violence against women in the world. The panel discussion on *Amplifying Change: Community-Centered Approaches to Ending Violence Against Women* featured The Asia Foundation’s gender experts who discussed programs that are having real impact in addressing gender-based violence and trafficking in Asia and the Pacific, and how the approaches and strategies of the Nabilan Program may be helpful as other countries grapple with addressing violence against women. Watch a recording of this event, Learn about our
programs in Timor-Leste.

**Recent Event – Working Politically: Supporting Local Coalitions for Development**

**March 12** – Organized jointly by the World Bank and The Asia Foundation, this session featured a discussion on coalition building and how it can engage and mobilize stakeholders to support reforms, policies, and the effective implementation of projects. In 2023, the Foundation sought to elevate interest and debate on this experience through its publication *On the Right Track: Reflections on Coalition-Building Initiatives Across the Asia Foundation*, which examined examples from Bangladesh, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Timor-Leste. Speakers included Dr. Nicola Nixon and Jaime Faustino from the Foundation, and Mathew Verghis and Puteri Natalie Watson from the World Bank. Watch the [event recording](#).

**Upcoming Event – Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Updates from Asia and the Pacific**

**April 10** – Please join The Asia Foundation for a discussion with our Senior Director for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, Jane Sloane, who will provide an overview of the current challenges facing women and girls in Asia and the Pacific, and discuss the Foundation's work to address the gendered impacts of climate change and technology-facilitated violence. [Register](#) to attend this in-person event. Learn about our programs on women's empowerment and gender equality.

**Upcoming Event – Women's Roles in Peacebuilding: The Power of Women Leading Peace in Mindanao**

**April 23** – Women are critical to achieving sustainable peace and can play a significant role in peacebuilding and security efforts globally. Across Asia, there are many examples of women's contributions to peace processes. Please join The Asia Foundation to hear from key Bangsamoro women leaders who have played a crucial role in leading efforts to secure peace in Mindanao, and who continue to make vital contributions to the formation of the new Bangsamoro Constitution, Parliament, and government. [Register](#) to attend this in-person event. Learn about our programs supporting women leaders in the Philippines.

**News**

The Asia Foundation’s Future Skills Alliance Launches Phase Two of STEM ConnectHER, Paving the Way for Women in STEM
The Asia Foundation's Future Skills Alliance (FSA) has launched the second phase of STEM ConnectHER. The initiative aims to promote women's participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) in Asia and the Pacific. Building on its successful pilot in 2021, the program will expand its network in Korea, Japan, India, Malaysia, and Singapore and provide mentorship and professional development opportunities to up to 1,000 aspiring and early-in-career women in STEM. Learn more about the program at stemconnecther.org and our Future Skill Alliance initiatives and partnerships on our The Future of Work showcase on LinkedIn.

The Asia Foundation Announces the Pacific Women Climate Leaders Fellowship Program

The Asia Foundation announced the inaugural class of Pacific Women Climate Leaders, who will participate in a 10-day fellowship program designed to recognize, support, and amplify women's voices driving climate solutions across the Pacific region. The three fellows, selected for the 2024 class from Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and Tonga, will attend the San Francisco Bioneers Conference and engage in climate diplomacy training in New York City. The fellowship also offers seed grants to translate the fellows' ideas into action. This news post introduces the 2024 Pacific Women Climate Leaders. Learn more about our leadership and exchange programs and our work in the Pacific Islands.

Voices from the Field

Cultivating Women's Forest Stewardship: The 100 Champions Network

Since 2015, The Asia Foundation's Indonesia office has been implementing the SETAPAK program, a UK-funded environmental governance program that supports sustainable livelihoods, particularly for women and other vulnerable groups, while protecting Indonesia's forest resources from destruction by extractive industries. Through this program, the Foundation has helped to establish the 100 Champions Network, which encourages women to assume leadership roles in preventing
deforestation by producing sustainable forest products, a solution called social forestry. Today, the 100 Champions Network includes more than 200 gender champions who continue to lead the work and show what can happen when women have an opportunity to lead in climate-sensitive domains such as forestry. Listen to this InAsia podcast episode about women in the vanguard of forest stewardship in Indonesia. Learn about our work on environment and climate action.

Myanmar: Resistance and the Cost of the Coup in Chin State

The first of February marked the third anniversary of the military coup that upended Myanmar's decade of democracy in 2021 and plunged much of the country into open conflict. Three years later, popular resistance, from peaceful protests to armed insurgency, remains strong, particularly among communities in the country's border regions, where central control has been contested since Myanmar was a British colony. Listen to this InAsia podcast episode, drawn from research supported by The Asia Foundation, which illustrates how Chin State, on the country's northwestern border with India, is both a center and a broader microcosm of today's resistance. Learn about our programs in Myanmar.

“Let’s Read” Indonesia Helps Children Understand Mental Disabilities

This InAsia blog post discusses how reading together is one of the best ways to introduce children to complex subjects like disability. Sooner or later, they will encounter people from other walks of life and people who are “different,” and reading can prepare them to open their minds and step into others' shoes. The Asia Foundation’s Let’s Read program in Indonesia has recently developed several new picture books for children with plots and characters revolving around mental disabilities. Play Me the Harmonica depicts bipolar disorder, Colorful Messages focuses on selective mutism, and Let’s Have a Water Fight! portrays a child with an intellectual disability. Each story is designed to help young readers make sense of these disabilities and remove the stigma that surrounds them. These and other stories on similar themes are available in multiple languages at www.letsreadasia.org.
Recent Publication


This paper is part of the Navigating Successful Policy Reform series undertaken by The Asia Foundation’s Coalitions for Change project and the Institute for Human Security and Social Change at La Trobe University. It is one of three case studies exploring developmental policy reforms in Vanuatu, Kenya, and Indonesia that demonstrate politically smart and learning-oriented ways of working to achieve change in challenging political contexts. In particular, the cases investigate whether those reform stories bear similarities to the development entrepreneurship model that has been highly successful within the Philippines. Learn about our programs on good governance.

The Asia Foundation

The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives and expanding opportunities across Asia and the Pacific. Informed by 70 years of experience and deep local knowledge, our work is focused on governance, climate action, gender equality, education and leadership, inclusive growth, and international cooperation. We work in more than 20 countries through our 17 permanent country offices and programs across Asia and the Pacific, supported by a headquarters in San Francisco and an office in Washington, DC. Our funding comes from a diverse array of bilateral and multilateral development agencies, foundations, corporations, and individuals.