



## The Asia Foundation



Welcome to The Asia Foundation's Washington, D.C. July and August newsletter. This latest issue covers our recent **roundtable on ASEAN**, a **visiting delegation including senior leadership of the National Assembly of Lao PDR**, InAsia blog posts on the **human rights sector in the Philippines** and **the rise in civic peacebuilding across Asia**, an InAsia podcast episode on **the Foundation's Young Asian Diplomats program**, as well as recent publications on **the role of technology in Cambodian MSMEs** and the **care economy in Malaysia**.

# Events

## Recent Event - ASEAN: Ineffective or Indispensable for Southeast Asia?



July 10 – ASEAN is often criticized as ineffective and divided. However, most Southeast Asian leaders still see ASEAN as an essential element of their foreign policy and remain committed to the ASEAN Way. Last month, [Thomas Parks](#), The Asia Foundation’s Country Representative in [Thailand](#), led 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.

# News

[The Asia Foundation Hosts Visiting Delegation Including Senior Leadership of the National Assembly of Lao PDR](#)



In July, the Foundation's Washington office hosted a visiting delegation including senior leadership of the National Assembly of Lao PDR. The delegation of 12 parliamentary officials – from Laos' National Assembly (NA), the Institute of Legislative Studies (ILS) and Provincial People's Assemblies (PPAs) – visited Washington as part of a capacity-building program that The Asia Foundation is implementing in Laos, supported by funding from the U.S. State Department. The Foundation designed the study tour program to provide opportunities for the participants to learn about U.S. legislative research and procedures, best practices, and approaches to common challenges, as well as to gain insights on optimizing the functioning of local and national legislatures. Highlights from the delegation's time in D.C. include meeting Members of Congress, visiting the Department of State, discussions with staff at the Library of Congress, and a day trip to Annapolis, where the delegation visited Maryland's state legislature. Learn more about the Foundation's work in [Laos](#).

## Voices from the Field



## [Promoting “Social and Behavior Change” in the Philippine Human Rights Sector](#)

Despite robust laws and institutions for protecting human rights, as well as a vibrant and active civil society, the past few years have witnessed an erosion of public support for human rights in the Philippines. Human rights workers face massive disinformation campaigns, rampant conspiracy theories, targeted harassment, and misogynistic attacks against women activists. The Asia Foundation’s *Initiative for Advancing Community Transformation (I-ACT)* is a USAID-funded project that supports Philippine civil society organizations to apply the principles of Social and Behavior Change to human rights advocacy. This [InAsia blogpost](#) outlines how the Foundation’s grassroots partners under *I-ACT* are navigating the Philippines’ challenging human rights environment. Learn more about the Foundation’s work in the [Philippines](#).



## [Catching Up with the Young Asian Diplomats](#)

Fifteen mid-career diplomats from Asia and the Pacific Islands visited the United States last month as part of The Asia Foundation’s *Young Asian Diplomats* program. The three-week program of dialogue and exchange included coursework at Georgetown University’s Walsh School of Foreign Service, a study tour in New York City, briefings with tech leaders in San Francisco, and a first-hand look at how climate change is affecting the Mississippi River in New Orleans. While in San Francisco, two of the participants sat down with the [InAsia Podcast](#) to share their reflections on their U.S. visit and their calling as diplomats. Click [here](#) to learn more about the Young Asian Diplomats program and listen to the episode.



## [Civic Peacebuilding on the Rise in the Asia-Pacific](#)

Polarized politics, democratic deficits, rampant online hate speech, unprecedented global security risks. In this turbulent era, how do peace campaigners and grassroots mobilizers bridge bitter divides and promote peace in their communities? A forthcoming study reveals that peacebuilders are finding new opportunities in this tough environment. In a project with the Initiative for Peacebuilding at the University of Melbourne, The Asia Foundation interviewed 25 civil society leaders in South and Southeast Asia who work to prevent conflict. While acknowledging that space to speak out is shrinking in many countries, the leaders expressed hopeful views of current opportunities to mediate and resolve conflicts. This [InAsia blogpost](#) provides an overview of the survey and unpacks how people are finding new ways to promote change and hold governments to account. [Learn more](#) about the Foundation's conflict and fragility programming.

## Recent Publications



## The Current State and Role of Digital Technology Adoption in Tourism MSMEs in Cambodia



The Asia Foundation



### [The Current State and Role of Digital Technology Adoption in Tourism MSMEs in Cambodia](#)

Most businesses in Cambodia are micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), which account for 99.9 percent of all businesses in the country and a sizable portion of employment in the private sector. The incorporation of digital technology among Cambodian MSMEs is still uneven and relatively low, even though it has become an essential component of successful business operations. This study examines the adoption of digital technology among MSMEs in Cambodia's tourism industry and empirically evaluates how it correlates with strong



The Asia Foundation  
Promoting Lives. Expanding Opportunities.

## CARE ECONOMY DIALOGUE

TOWARD A RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE  
CARE ECONOMY IN MALAYSIA



### [Care Economy Dialogue: Toward a Resilient and Sustainable Care Economy in Malaysia](#)

This brief presents the highlights of a recent dialogue on the care economy in Malaysia and is divided into the following sections: Care Economy in Malaysia, Understanding Care Sector Issues, and Proposing Ways Forward. In partnership with the Australian High Commission in Malaysia, The Asia Foundation convened the "Care Economy Dialogue: Toward a Resilient and Sustainable Care Economy in Malaysia" on March 28, 2023, in Kuala Lumpur. Bringing together senior officials from key government ministries and representatives from the

business performance. Learn more about the Foundation's work in [Cambodia](#).

private sector and civil society, the dialogue drew attention to the current status of the care economy in the country, gaps and issues in the sector, and potential solutions moving forward. Learn more about the Foundation's [women's empowerment and gender equality](#) programming, as well as its work in [Malaysia](#).



## 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

**The Asia Foundation • Washington, D.C.**

1779 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 815, Washington, D.C. 20036

Tel: (202) 588-9420 • Fax: (202) 588-9409

[dc.general@asiafoundation.org](mailto:dc.general@asiafoundation.org) • [asiafoundation.org](http://asiafoundation.org)