



The Asia Foundation

**70** Celebrating  
Seventy  
Years



## UPDATE FROM WASHINGTON, D.C.

Welcome to The Asia Foundation's Washington, D.C. July/August newsletter. This issue features updates about our recent event on **Thai Public Views on International Issues**, 70th anniversary impact highlights on **building and sharing Korean electoral democracy** and **transforming the care economy in Asia and the Pacific**, and InAsia blog posts about the **2024 Young Asian Diplomats program** and **mentorship initiatives for young legal professionals in Mongolia**, as well as a recent publication on **women's voice and leadership in Sri Lanka**.

## Recent Event

[Survey of Thai Public Views on International Issues](#)

# Survey of Thai Public Views on International Issues



**July 9** - What do Thais think about foreign policy, including democracy, geopolitics, and ASEAN? To understand how “ordinary” Thais view these issues, The Asia Foundation conducted a national survey from July to November 2023 in Thailand on key foreign policy and regional cooperation issues. [Thomas Parks](#), the Foundation’s former country representative in Thailand from 2017-2024 and recently appointed Vice President for Strategic Partnerships, provided an overview of the findings of the [Thai Public Views on International Issues](#) survey and discussed implications for Thailand’s role in Southeast Asia and its foreign policy more broadly. Learn more about the Foundation’s work in [Thailand](#).

## 70th Anniversary Impact Highlights



### [Building and Sharing Korean Electoral Democracy](#)

After decades of struggle against military rule, the Declaration of Democratization in June 1987 marked a pivotal moment in South Korea’s modern history, affirming the right of Koreans to directly elect their national leaders. Having reached this milestone, the nation took up the essential task of building a system to conduct elections. With extensive experience in sharing the lessons of mature electoral systems, and a history of trusted support for Korean institutions and civil society going back to 1954, The Asia Foundation saw a unique opportunity to help South

Korea consolidate its democratic gains, including developing programs of electoral research to broaden the understanding of election issues and outcomes, and supporting organizations like the Korean League of Women Voters to boost women’s participation. The Asia Foundation was an early and effective advocate of inclusive elections in South Korea, and South Korea is now sharing the lessons of its success with nations worldwide. Learn more about the Foundation’s work in [Korea](#).



### [Women’s Economic Empowerment: Transforming the Care Economy in Asia and the Pacific](#)

Throughout Asia and the Pacific, an overlooked workforce of caregivers—most of them women—labors tirelessly to perform the essential tasks of childcare, eldercare and caring for those with disabilities, their contributions undervalued and largely unseen. To address this disproportionate burden that has long perpetuated gender inequalities and hindered women’s economic participation, The Asia Foundation and its partners have been at the forefront of developing a bold strategy to elevate the regional care agenda, gathering in November 2022 for the Bali Care Economy Dialogue. The Foundation is now a leader in developing a Global Roadmap for Action, which will be unveiled this year. By amplifying voices of care workers, building the evidence base, and fostering collaboration, we are paving the way for a future where care work is valued and supported—an essential step towards gender equality and unlocking the economic potential of women across Asia, the Pacific, and beyond. Learn more about the Foundation’s [Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality](#) program.

## Voices from the Field



**Podcast:** [Meet the Young Asian Diplomats](#)

Seminars at Georgetown University, a tour of the White House, and a trip to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame were some of the highlights for 11 mid-career diplomats in this year's *Young Asian Diplomats* program. The program offers a select group of young foreign service officers from Asia and the Pacific the opportunity to study U.S. foreign and domestic policy and to forge relationships of enduring benefit as they pursue their careers. The two-week study tour explored perspectives from across the United States, while the fellows in turn shared views and experience from their own countries. The program offered a unique opportunity for participants to form relationships with foreign service peers that will endure for years to come. Learn more about the Foundation's [Leadership and Exchanges](#) program.



[In Mongolia, a Hand Up for Young Legal Professionals](#)

[Mongolia](#) urgently needs lawyers to support its rapidly growing and increasingly complex society. While the Mongolian justice system is expanding to meet these demands, outdated training methods and insufficient capacity building often leave young legal professionals unprepared for the rigors of their careers. Through its *Capacity Development of Young Legal Professionals to Strengthen Mongolia's Justice System* project, funded by the U.S. State Department, The Asia Foundation worked closely with the Mongolian law and justice system from 2018 to 2023 to introduce mentorship programs for young legal professionals. In particular, the Foundation worked with the Judicial Training, Research, and Information Institute, the General Prosecutor's Office, and the Mongolian Bar Association to launch these mentorship programs and extend their effectiveness. Through collaborative efforts and institutional support, these initiatives hold the promise of fostering an increasingly vibrant legal community in Mongolia. Learn more about the Foundation's [Law and Justice](#) program.

# Recent Publication



## [Women's Voice and Leadership Sri Lanka Approach Notes](#)

These approach notes developed by the [Women's Voice and Leadership Sri Lanka project](#) explore the feminist approaches used to achieve project outcomes. Each document delves into the strategies implemented, results achieved, insights gained, and lessons learned throughout the project's journey. These resources serve as a reflective guide for those interested in implementing similar programs, highlighting the critical role of feminist approaches in driving positive change. Learn more about the Foundation's work in [Sri Lanka](#).



A group of five women stand in a row, smiling for the camera.

Image Caption: Dedicated staff and second tier leadership of the Women Center in Galle District.

The Women's Voice and Leadership Project in Sri Lanka (WVL-SL) worked with over 60 women's rights organizations, representing women in all their diversity, over a period of four years spanning 2019 to 2023. The fundamental approach of the project was to strengthen feminist approaches to women's empowerment and gender equality. Woven around the ultimate aim of women's empowerment for change, WVL-SL took a gender equality approach in identifying, recognizing and understanding women's disempowerment in their gendered roles, responsibilities, access, and control over resources, in decision making and ultimately in the lives of women in Sri Lanka.

Firmly guided by Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy, a novel and groundbreaking presentation of a foreign policy document, WVL-SL adopted the exploration of how a feminist approach to development and to programming on women's rights has worked in Sri Lanka. The initial exploration of the ideology on empowerment, followed explicitly and often implicitly by women's rights organizations, provided valuable insights. Women's rights organizations were initially reluctant to call themselves 'feminist organizations' based on misconceptions about feminism. But



## 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.