



## April 2019

**In this issue:** Cambodia, Update on Nepal's Federalism, Addressing the Gender Divide in India, Lotus Leadership Awards Dinner, Let's Read! Initiative, Indonesian Elections, Pakistani Women in Law, 2019 Development Fellows, Myanmar's Energy Sector, and Shifting to Planned Urbanization in Asia

## Upcoming Events

**May 3**— The Asia Foundation will host a discussion with [Dr. Kheang Un](#) on his recently published book "[Cambodia: Return to Authoritarianism](#)," in which he argues that following the 1993 United Nations intervention to promote democracy, the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) perpetuated a patronage state weak in administrative capacity but strong in coercive capacity. Please email [Alexandra Matthews](#) or call 202-588-9420 to register for the event.

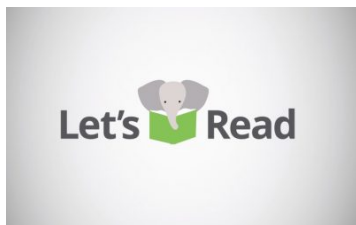
**May 16**— At the event on "Emerging Lessons from Nepal's Federalism," [Meghan Nalbo](#), The Asia Foundation's country representative in [Nepal](#), will provide her on-the-ground perspective on Nepal's political context and share emerging lessons on engaging at the municipal and new provincial level, conflict transformation and access to justice, and the adaptive, politically informed approaches that seem to be allowing for traction, all based on the Foundation's programming supporting Nepal's transition to federalism.

**May 22**—[Nandita Baruah](#), The Asia Foundation's country representative in [India](#), will share insights on women's security in public spaces, their access to services and economic opportunities, their engagement in the new age virtual labor market, as well the overall economic and social implications for women in India.

**San Francisco, May 29**— [The Lotus Leadership Awards Dinner](#) is hosted annually by The Asia Foundation's [Lotus Circle](#), a group of committed individuals, foundations, and corporations who are advancing the rights and opportunities of women in Asia through their support of the Foundation's [Women's Empowerment Program](#). This year's dinner will honor Lana Condor, Actor, Philanthropist and Education Advocate; [Jennifer Cabalquinto](#), Chief Financial Officer of the Golden State Warriors; and the [Center for Education and Development](#), a nonprofit supporting education and development in [Vietnam](#). See the [slideshow](#) and our newest Lotus Circle film "[Shining a Light on Gender Equality](#)" from the Lotus Leadership Awards Gala in New York City honoring [Christiane Amanpour](#) and [SafetiPin](#).

## Technology and Development

[Let's Read Dismantles Barriers to Literacy by Uniting Technology and Local Communities in Asia's Free Digital Library for Children](#)



The Asia Foundation unveiled [Let's Read](#), Asia's free digital library for children, a locally-driven solution to book scarcity in Asia at the annual [Comparative & International Education Society \(CIES\) conference](#) in San Francisco. A [new film](#), shot on location in Cambodia and Laos, exploring how Let's Read is building sustainable book ecosystems by advancing the skills of local book creators and a unique translation tool across Asia, while contributing directly to local economies, was also debuted. The lifelong benefits books offer to children and families ripple beyond the home and into communities where they live: reading children become reading adults who are more likely to be employed and able to contribute to local economies. In addition to cultivating a love for reading in children, Let's Read also energizes communities by developing local writing and publishing ecosystems. Read more about the Foundation's [Books for Asia](#) program and other [work](#) in Asia.

## Notes from the Field

### [Watching and Waiting: Indonesia's Upcoming Elections](#)

On April 17, Indonesia held its sixth democratic election since the Reformasi protests, with presidential, parliamentary and regional elections taking place simultaneously on the same day. Incumbent President Jokowi, sporting a less secular demeanor and with debate raging over his first-term achievements, again faces former general Prabowo Subianto, with his less-than-resplendent record on human rights. Many new parties—the nouveaux riches of Indonesian politics—that have been active this election season are money driven, personality centered, and powered by social media in a country saturated with mobile phones. Large parts of the country's vast and vibrant civil society, previously vocal supporters of Jokowi, took a back seat in this election, while school and university “alumni associations” emerged as a new force for social advocacy. Indonesia's procedural democracy has come a long way, as testified by this election, but its substantial democracy, challenged by the intolerant discourse, laced with exclusionary identity politics, is a work in progress. Learn more about the Foundation's programs in [Indonesia](#) and [elections](#).



### [Meet One of Pakistan's Rare Women Judges](#)



The patriarchal culture that prevails in Pakistan generally deems women “unsuited” for the rough and tumble of legal practice, and they are routinely discouraged, in ways both subtle and overt, from joining the profession. However, with determination and persistence, a few women like judge Shazia Kausar in Punjab's Okara district have broken the mold. Speaking about the gender discrimination she faces in her professional life, she says “Many people won't refer cases to a woman, some even going so far as to say, *how can a woman resolve a case!*” “Even women don't favor a woman when it comes to selecting a lawyer; they consider men more competent for the task.” In addition to the many occupational hurdles, there is also an overwhelming expectation that women professionals in Pakistan must also carry the burden of managing the home and looking after children. The Asia Foundation's alternative dispute resolution (ADR) project places a special emphasis on recruiting women like Shazia, from law schools and bar associations, who can act as champions for women in the justice system. Her swift ascent in her chosen profession has set an encouraging example for other women in the law. Read more about the Foundation's work in [Pakistan](#), and [law and justice](#).

## In the News

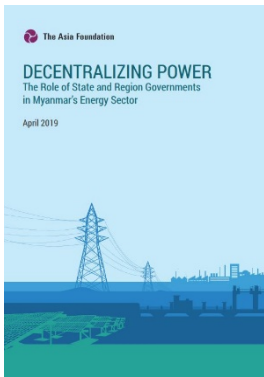
### [2019 Asia Foundation Development Fellows Meet in Korea and Indonesia](#)

The Asia Foundation welcomed the 2019 class of [Asia Foundation Development Fellows](#) coming together for the first time as a community of young changemakers, representing 12 Asian countries, for a Leadership Training Program in Seoul, in partnership with the [KDI School of Public Policy and Management](#). The 2019 Fellows continue on to Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Bali in Indonesia in late-April for an applied Workshop on Asian Development, where development challenges and innovations will serve as a contextual backdrop for applying concepts in international development. Learn more about [the 2019 Asia Foundation Development Fellows](#) and [watch this video](#) featuring our past emerging leaders across Asia.



Photo: Amanda Benseil

## Publications of Interest



## [Decentralizing Power: The Role of State and Region Governments in Myanmar's Energy Sector](#)

This report is a companion report to *[State and Region Governments in Myanmar](#)*, covering the subnational aspects of Myanmar's energy sector. The Asia Foundation has been providing support and technical assistance to seven states and regions, and has been conducting training with all 14 of the states and regions, with the aim of building technical capacity and better articulating the need for government reforms. Increasingly, we have found that the states and regions recognize energy as an emerging issue on which they would like guidance, assistance, and greater clarity on the overlap between the Union and state/region governments in terms of policy, investment, and legal frameworks. Read the [executive summary](#), and learn more about the Foundation's programs in [Myanmar](#).

## [Shifting to Planned Urbanization in Asia: The Role of The Role of Development and South-South Cooperation](#)

Rapid urbanization is one of the most critical trends facing the world today. By 2025, Asia will be home to 60 percent of the world's megacities, suggesting that the Asian century is also the urban century. While home to the world's most populous cities, Asia also offers a trove of successful urban strategies and solutions. Begun in late 2010, the Asian Approaches to Development Cooperation series — hosted jointly by the [Korea Development Institute \(KDI\)](#) and The Asia Foundation—has provided a forum for Asian officials, experts, policymakers, and practitioners of development and South-South cooperation to explore and debate ways of confronting the challenges and opportunities that the region faces. In 2017, the series focused on Asian lessons and partnerships addressing the region's urbanization challenges, in the context of the NUA and SDGs. Learn more about the Foundation's programs on [international cooperation](#), and other programs in [Korea](#).



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.